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Author: Prof. Hirotaka Watanabe
Osaka University, Japan

THE EVOLUTION OF JAPAN'S SPACE POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONS: DOMESTIC, DIPLOMATIC AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

Abstract

Japan's space activities originated from the launching of the Pencil rocket in 1955, but it was not until the early 1960s that Japan's space policy and organizations gradually took shape. In May 1960, the National Space Activities Council (NSAC) was organized as an advisory committee to the Prime Minister. In the first NSAC report, "peaceful purpose," "autonomy," "openness to the public" and "international cooperation" were listed as the basic principles of Japan's space activities. Under the basic principles, though the languages and their meanings might change, Japan has been formulating its space policy and reforming its space organizations to date.

However, autonomy and international cooperation in Japan's space activities often contradicted each other during the period when Japan was on its way to achieving the status of a major economic power. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Japan made a number of important decisions on its space activities. After the end of the Cold War, there were several big changes in Japan's space policy and organization. In 2003, the new Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) was established as an independent administrative institution through the merger of three previous independent organizations. Japan also entered the area of space security by launching its Information Gathering Satellites (IGS) and starting its participation in the U.S. missile defence system. During the late 2000s, Japan increasingly needed coordination among space activities, and diplomacy, economy, industry, national security, and human or global security issues. The results were the new Basic Space Law of 2008 and Basic Plan for Space Policy of 2009. It seems that Japan has encountered difficulty in managing both peaceful purposes and openness to the public, in addition to autonomy and international cooperation in its space activities. Japan's space activities, since 2008, are still in the midst of the greatest transformation.

This paper examines the evolution of Japan's space policy and organizations from the perspective of domestic and international politics. It reviews in each chapter by dividing the history into three periods: from the 1960s to the 1980s, in the Cold War; from the 1990s to the 2000s, after the end of the Cold War; to the present, after the enactment of the Japan's Basic Space Law of 2008. Finally, this paper summarizes how Japan's space policy and organizations have evolved from the beginning to date, and gives insights for Japan's current and future space policy and organizations, including space policy decision-making process.