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INTERNATIONAL NORM PROMOTION STRATEGIES FOR SPACE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Abstract

Acknowledging the current deadlock of multilateral discussions on space traffic management (STM) and the urgency to ensure the short-term safety of space assets, some countries have chosen to unilaterally develop domestic regulations on this matter: Japan issued supplementary requirements for the licensing of on-orbit servicing activities, France is working on the next revision of its *loi relative aux opérations spatiales* to incorporate STM-related provisions, the European Union has been advancing on the development of a common regional approach on STM with the *SPACEWAYS* and *EUSTM* studies, etc. Whether to give a competitive advantage to their national players or to fast-track the international adoption of STM rules having demonstrated their effectiveness at domestic level, these countries will need to rely on proper norm promotion strategies. What are the best avenues for international STM norms promotion? Is the demonstration and promotion of domestic norms a viable alternative to purely multilateral discussions? Are there past examples of such practices?

By reviewing past cases of international norms promotion on space safety and sustainability, whether successful like the transcription of the American domestic *Orbital Debris Mitigation Standard Practices* in most of international instruments on debris mitigation or failed like the European Union's *International Code of Conduct*, and by using analytical frameworks such as Manners's normative power theory and Finnemore and Sikkink's international norms dynamics, this article outlines concrete approaches and actionable recommendations for the promotion and international adoption of norms and rules for STM. A particular attention is given to the compatibility between the urgency of the situation and the expected timeline of promotional efforts, highly dependent on their expected outcome (e.g. promotion of norms or rules) and scale (e.g. bilateral, minilateral or multilateral).