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WHAT LED TO THE CREATION OF KOREA AEROSPACE ADMINISTRATION?

Abstract

On 9 January 2024, a bill to establish the Korea Aerospace Administration was passed by the National Assembly, and the government announced the establishment of the country's first space agency on 27 May 2024. For nearly 30 years, since 1992 when South Korea began budgeting for space development projects, an organisation within the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning has served as the country's space agency, albeit with varying staff, teams and offices. The need to establish a space agency has been repeatedly raised by expert groups. They have called for the establishment of a space agency for the following reasons: There is no holistic space policy to oversee the space development of different national ministries. Planning, management and evaluation systems for space projects are decentralised and lack expertise. RD for space development is decentralised among research institutes. There is a lack of professionalism among government officials in charge of space affairs due to rotation. There is a lack of clear channels for international cooperation in space. There have been several parliamentary proposals and promises by presidential candidates, but none have been successful. However, the current president of South Korea, Yoon Seok-yul, announced the establishment of a space agency as a pledge for the Gyeongsangnam-do region of South Korea when he was a candidate, and then included it as one of his 100 government priorities when he was elected in 2022. While the establishment of a space agency was triggered by the election of a presidential candidate who promised it, it also boils down to the fact that the changing space development landscape in South Korea and the associated changes in government governance can no longer be postponed. This paper discusses the social, political and economic factors that led to the creation of the Korea Aerospace Administration. I will also discuss how it has been structured to respond to the issues that have consistently been raised about the existing space development system.