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ARE NORMS OF RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR COMPATIBLE WITH (SPACE)POWER
COMPETITION BETWEEN STATES?

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore this question from an academic standpoint, considering the intersection between the emergence of norms of responsible behavior and the exercise of (space)power. It aims to integrate various theories of international relations with empirical evidence. Since 1985, four countries—USA, China, India, and Russia—have conducted anti-satellite tests in orbit. Initially, these tests seem contradictory to the principles of responsible behavior. While these norms aim to prevent conflicts from escalating due to misunderstandings, can they coexist with states' pursuit of (space)power? The unique dynamics of the space domain, including interdependence and the risk of Kessler syndrome, render widespread space conflicts counterproductive. Could this serve as a strategic constraint for States? Despite asserting power through counter-space capabilities, states simultaneously risk undermining their own power by jeopardizing space uses. How can the message emphasizing the counterproductivity of power demonstrations that generate space debris be effectively disseminated to foster "deterrence" among States benefitting from space's uses and ensure space sustainability? Furthermore, are there alternative means for States to express their (space)power without resorting to potentially destabilizing demonstrations, both globally and within the space environment?