Space Sustainability:
An Indian Perspective

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Structure

• Concerns and Challenges
  – Advanced military space programs in Asia including ASAT capabilities
  – Unregulated international missile & space cooperation
  – Proliferation of space technologies
  – State of the Regime – the biggest challenge
• Existing space governance mechanisms
• Weaknesses
• Utility of a space code
Space Sustainability

• To ensure long-term peaceful, sustainable use of outer space
• Identify/ codify “good behaviour” in space, reach common understanding on what is the acceptable behaviour, create certain limits, discourage harmful/ unfavourable behaviour
• Institute structures, norms to regulate the undesirable activities
India’s Challenges

• Advanced military space programs in Asia
  – ASAT testing in Asia
  – ASAT weapons’ potential to disable GPS satellites, that could affect targeting & navigation systems using GPS

• Regional capabilities
  – India has the most advanced satellite fabrication and launch capabilities in Southern Asia
  – But external cooperation can change this
International Cooperation

• International cooperation in space needs regulation
• Exploiting space necessary for development
• But international cooperation should not increase regional/ international insecurity
• Hence ‘rules of the road’ needed
International Space Norms

- State of Space Norms
  - Near consensus at the theoretical level in identifying challenges
  - Lack of consensus among the major powers to deal with the challenges → contributing to slow development of space norms
  - Institutionalized discussions needed to develop appropriate norms for international space cooperation and space developmental activities
India’s Position

• India, as part of G-21 countries actively supported the legislation of a treaty banning the placement of weapons in outer space
• TCBMs important complimentary measures
• Insistence on legal measures but pragmatic to understand it has to start from a normative exercise and gradually move to legal ones
Existing Space Governance Mechanisms

- COPUOS
- 1967 OST
- CD
Weaknesses of Current Mechanisms

• Existing arrangements inadequate
  – Military activities not part of the COPUOS mandate
  – OST: 1967 – good measure but several loopholes
  – CD yet to have a productive session on PAROS: PAROS UNGA Resolution: 1981
Utility of A Space Code

• An overcrowded, congested, competitive space ➔ need for an international space code more critical than ever
  – Increasing securitization of issues, partly in Asia
  – Security dilemma ➔ arms race including space
Indian Interests In A Space Code

• Interested in the normative process & institutionalizing a space code, being an active party shaping the debate along with major space powers
  – Important since India has invested enormous wealth, thus, a material stake in the kinds of rules now being written
  – India’s interests driven by the fact it is one of the earliest space powers
  – Interested in writing rules that would affect & curtail certain activities
  – Interested in rules that are holistic in approach & content
  – EU clearly lost out an opportunity by not involving India
Indian Interests, Contd.

• Being norm-shaper is important for India
  – Send out clear signals to friends & foes about the potential role of India in any normative exercise
  – The geopolitical value of India’s efforts in this normative exercise

• The need for an inclusive mechanism
  – Absence of it ➔ repeat of H-COC
  – Not part of creation process ➔ Lack of ownership issue & the “not invented here” syndrome
  – Responsible powers such as India should have been part of the debate ➔ shaping the debate rather than being shaped by it (political & geopolitical value)
Future Course

- A US-led effort may reduce the gap between EU and non-EU capitals.
- Feasibility of an IPCC-like model of experts on space issues.
- Space traffic management being a major issue → ICAO model?
- CD still relevant platform to discuss space? CD has been stagnant; ICAO-model may be more appropriate.
- A grouping of established spacefaring powers?
Conclusion

• Space sustainability –
  — Concept gaining greater relevance, greater interest among different stakeholders

• Emerging consensus on issues – space debris, weapons in outer space, accidents & collision

• Bilateral/ Multilateral CBMs/ International space code?

• Voluntary vs. legally-binding measures