

Panel Discussion on “International Perspectives on Space Sustainability”

# **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 bet EU & 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