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Review

Overview of global space activities in 2007/2008

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Abstract

The period ranging from July 2007 to June 2008 has been marked by significant trends and issues in the space sector, particularly under the impulsion of space-faring countries. The internationalisation and globalisation of the space sector which started a few years ago have been gaining momentum as well. As a consequence, the size of the space sector has been growing, as well as the global competition for market shares.

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Keywords: Space policy; Space economics; Space law; International security; International relations; International competitiveness

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1. Introduction

This article is based on the study entitled “Space Policies, Issues and Trends in 2007/2008” published by the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI) in October 2008 which aims to present in a single document comprehensive data and analyses characterising global space activities from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 [1]. This article provides a general overview of the global space sector in this timeframe as well as facts and figures on the developments of the space sector. First, an overview of geopolitical trends is presented. Second, global institutional space budgets and commercial revenues are adduced in order to offer an insight on the size of the space sector. Third, worldwide space policies and strategies are outlined. Finally, evolutions in countries’ space industries policies and industrial base are identified.

2. Geopolitical trends

The second half of 2007 and the first half of 2008 was a period of transition. There were visible changes to the economic balance of power as well as the reinforcement of transnational security threats such as climate change and particularly global warming, as well as terrorist attacks that topped the agenda of leading countries worldwide during that period. All of these factors undeniably influenced the space sector and will continue to do so in the near future as their consequences are still unfolding.

2.1. Global economic outlook

The second half of 2007 and the first half of 2008 was a period marked by the confirmation of several key trends that appeared in recent years such as the economic and political rise of powers from the “South” like China and India as well as the recovery of Russia, while the “North” witnessed limited growth. Whereas the expansion of the world economy remained robust in 2007, global economic growth slowed markedly in the

final quarter of that same year following major losses in the financial sector originating in the US subprime sector and the associated losses reported by banks. The financial crisis is now spreading to institutions in other countries. The projections for advanced economies have been reduced significantly in recent months. Amid market turmoil and slow growth in major economies, prices of natural resources (i.e. crude oil and gas) and of primary products skyrocketed. Finally, inflation has increased considerably since mid-2007 in both advanced and emerging economies.

2.2. International security

Transnational security threats and particularly terrorist attacks (i.e. in North-Africa, Somalia, the Middle East, Pakistan), as well as significant military events (i.e. in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kurdistan region, Israeli–Palestinian conflict), nuclear proliferation (i.e. in North Korea and Iran) and new and emerging conflicts (contested elections in Africa) are menacing world peace and stability, calling for increasing reliance on space technologies and activities to monitor some of these events.

2.3. Major scientific achievements

Climate change remained a priority issue on the global agenda in 2007/2008 as consequences of global warming are becoming increasingly salient. In particular, according to recent data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the year 2007 was the fifth warmest on record for global land and ocean surface temperatures since records began in 1880. Consequently, according to the European Space Agency (ESA), the sea ice covering the Arctic has shrunk in September 2007 to its lowest level since satellite measurements began nearly 30 years ago.

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