



SPACE GENERATION
ADVISORY COUNCIL



Space Law & Policy
Project Group

Space Diplomacy

SGAC Task Force on U.S. Space Legislation

Summary

Space diplomacy allows states to shape international norms to enhance the safety, stability, and sustainability of space activities. **As a leading spacefaring state, the U.S. benefits from fostering global cooperation to promote the safe, stable, and secure use of space.**

The Artemis Accords

Space diplomacy involves both international law and international norms. However, given the difficulty of establishing new treaties or regulations to govern space activities, space diplomacy focuses on modifying norms, the informal rules that guide, moderate, or influence behavior in the international arena. **U.S. space diplomacy has and continues to interpret and implement norms for space activities to increase space safety and sustainability, reduce uncertainty, and promote the beneficial use of space for all humankind** (Craft, 2020).

Although the International Space Station has remained the most visible symbol of international cooperation and space diplomacy for the last two decades, it will likely be retired by the end of the decade. The Artemis Accords are a series of bilateral treaties between the U.S. and allied states to bring about a new generation of international space exploration committed to transparent, peaceful, interoperable activities on the Moon and other celestial bodies. **Bringing additional partners on board the Artemis Accords would allow the U.S. to build on its diplomacy legacy of international cooperation in space exploration.**

U.S. Policy on Space Diplomacy

U.S. legislative and executive policy on space diplomacy generally supports international cooperation, with one notable exception. White House executive orders such as Space Policy Directives often mandate federal agencies to pursue space policy objectives using multilateral and bilateral means. For example, Executive Order 13914 empowers the Secretary of State to negotiate international agreements on space resources. However, cooperation with China is limited by statute. Since it was first introduced in 2011, the Wolf Amendment attached to Congressional appropriations prohibits NASA, the National Space Council, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy from working with Chinese agencies or companies unless these agencies demonstrate that U.S.-Chinese cooperation will not harm U.S. economic or national security interests; as a result, the U.S. cooperates far less with China than with most other spacefaring states. Cooperation with Russia is not so strictly regulated, but geopolitical, human rights, and other concerns have also limited plans for future U.S.-Russian cooperation.

Conclusion

Space diplomacy helps all international stakeholders engage in safe and sustainable space activities. The U.S. can help **enshrine diplomatic norms that benefit everyone** by continuing to interpret and implement existing multilateral frameworks for space activities.

References

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