

Space Cannot be Safe Without Japan-US Cooperation

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Space is truly global and common to all human kind. It doesn't have borders, and all spacecraft are supposed to be free to visit the orbit above any part of the earth. Because of that, space exploration brings many benefits to humans on earth in various ways – telecommunications, weather forecasts, and of course, international security.

However, this freedom of activity in space is under threat. The anti-satellite (ASAT) experiment by China in 2007 was a wake-up call to the vulnerability of space assets. Furthermore, such ASAT activity dramatically increases the amount of space debris, which might damage space assets without regard to their nationality or use (military or civilian). Space is open to any one who wishes to use it peacefully (i.e. non-aggressively), and those who participate in space activities should respect the sustainability of the use of the space environment.

The United States and Japan, two advanced space-faring nations, should cooperate to improve international regulations and the establishing of an international code of conduct. It is an obvious benefit for both of us to maintain security in space, and we shall abide by the rules that we promote. But it is not enough as long as there are other states that might threaten the space environment. Both the United States and Japan are capable of improving our capability for removing these threats by intensifying the capability of Space Situational Awareness and possibly by developing debris removal technology.

Furthermore, the United States and Japan can do many other things by using their space assets. Space is an unmistakably useful tool for monitoring climate change, nuclear disarmament and its proliferation, and for confidence building measures. Japan has long implemented self-regulation on using space for security purposes, but since 2008 the new Basic Law for Space Activities has been implemented which allows the use of space for international and national security purposes. As space technology is inherently dual-use technology, Japan has developed very sophisticated space

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technology through civilian programs that might also provide various services for regional and international security.

The United States and Japan have fully cooperated in civilian programs such as the International Space Station, but the level of cooperation in security matters is still immature due to the self-imposed regulations by Japan. But the Basic Law for Space Activities has opened up a wide variety of possibilities on which both of us can cooperate to ensure long-term sustainability of the space environment. Cooperation between the United States and Japan will undoubtedly be a most important factor in maintaining the safe and secure use of space.