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## Asia, Space, and Strategy Workshop

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## Asia, Space, and Strategy Workshop

In 2006, the Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies held its first Asia, Space, and Strategy workshop. This effort brought together US, Canadian, and European experts and policy makers from the military, civilian government, universities, think-tanks, and the private sectors to discuss the implications of current and future Chinese space policy and investigate areas of possible Sino-U.S. cooperation and competition in space. Beginning in 2007, an invitation was extended to include Chinese academics in the discussions. Chinese participation has increased each year since then, with four attendees from China at the 2009 workshop in Vancouver, Canada.

The fourth workshop of 2009 was broadened to include other space powers in the Asia-Pacific region. For the first time in the workshop series, representatives from Australia and Japan took part. The workshop focused on common interests, which spacefaring countries of the Pacific Basin have in the creation of a stable, predictable, and mutually beneficial environment in space. Workshop topics ranged from: economic and political goals for the use of space; improving the safety and stability of the space environment; deterrence and defense concepts; and arms control and verification. A summary of the 2009 workshop follows below. The earlier summaries of the National Space Forum 2009 in this issue of *Space and Defense*, especially the panel sessions on “Threat Assessments and the Space Domain” and “China’s Role in Space,” highlighted as well relevant aspects of the discussions at the 2009 Asia, Space, and Strategy Workshop.

There was agreement that the next stage of the workshop series should move toward the development of space lexicon between the

U.S. and China as a basis for reaching common understandings. This is essential as it was reiterated at this workshop that differences do exist on important concepts, like deterrence, reassurance, and transparency. The Chinese tend to view deterrence more aggressively than the U.S. There is no corollary concept of deterrence in Chinese based on the U.S. view that deterrence contributes to stability and to reassure an adversary; and there is no concept of reassurance and transparency, as was noted in previous workshops. To add, transparency translates into “espionage” in Mandarin Chinese.

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Concomitantly, participants at the workshop expressed the view that differences on these concepts should not become issues between the U.S. and China. Dialogue on space cooperation can advance through developing for discussion symmetrical and equal cooperative arrangements.

The Chinese present at the meeting primarily expressed views on space security, space economics, and international space cooperation. In the area of security, it was stated that China advances its own capacity in space and it reacts to what it sees as foreign interference from others, especially the United States. This led to an emboldened China in the military space arena. With regard to a military space role, China has a complicated attitude towards space deterrence. The Chinese military refers to deterrence more aggressively and as means to address threats, but political leaders tend to focus on self-defense and

retaliation. In the context of threats, Taiwan is the central issue.

The Chinese present at the workshop emphasized that China is focused on space as a global business. Commercial space is a means by which China cooperates with other states and is a vehicle for soft power projection, in particular with developing states in Africa. It was also remarked how China sees growing links, and mutual influence, between the commercial and military sectors of space. Albeit, the military has its own logic and own incentives, and the commercial sector is more open to the world, the Chinese expressed the view that military knowledge of international norms as to legitimate behavior in the space domain would be a good thing.

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In the area of cooperation, China is interested to cooperate with NASA in civil space science and in commercial space launch with U.S. satellite manufacturers. The Chinese also suggested that China will seek to join the International Space Station (ISS) program. Lunar science and plans for future human missions to the Moon offer possible other areas of cooperation for the Chinese with the U.S. and other Asian space powers, such as Japan and India.

Discussed as well at the workshop were issues related to cooperation in standard setting for space technology. One participant that is involved in this area spoke of problems in cooperation as Chinese involvement takes place through a joint government-industry group that the U.S. sees a vehicle for technology transfer to military programs in China. This is an issue, yet U.S. non-participation will not prevent the creation of standards, only of a U.S. voice in setting those standards. To add to these problems, within

China there is not enough discussion on this subject, especially in scientific and technical circles.

Lastly, in the session on space deterrence a number of issues were identified: (1) what is deterrence; (2) what is the nature of the conflict; (3) what is the focus; and (4) what is the nature of the adversary? These issues are further highlighted below as discussed during the workshop.

1. The purpose of deterrence is to make the other side change their actions. As such, one needs to know what the enemy is thinking, and how they think. Deterrence by denial was more protection oriented, compared with deterrence through punishment. But today, there are changes in emphasis. Deterrence through punishment was a key in the Cold War. It rested on credibility and will. But now, deterrence through denial is increasingly important, yet it makes deterrence more difficult.
2. The Cold War focused on nuclear arms, and specifically global nuclear war. The fear was of deterrence failure, especially in the shadow of all-out nuclear war. Today, there is an absence of these concerns. Space is seen as a case of extended deterrence. Ironically, the potential for failure of deterrence, however, may have risen.
3. The previous focus of the Cold War was on nuclear weapons. Now, space security issues are much more varied. The weapons and means are much broader, while the strategic context is very different. It is hard to deter through punishment, especially since there is not a symmetric deterrence relationship in space.
4. Punishment and credibility require defining expectations of adversary behavior. There were rational actor assumptions during the Cold War. Today,

there are multiple actors, more issues with denial, and more questions on means of deterrence. The shift from the Cold War, at least in the U.S., is towards general deterrence, rather than an adversary-specific deterrence posture.