

# The Orbital Clash of Civilizations:

The Chinese-U.S. Contention for Orbital Space

## Post-Gulf War

Throughout the the past 50 years, technological developments into space began first as a defensive, bipolar competition between the Soviet and U.S. powers. However, increasing technological innovation, economic growth, and emerging competition following the Cold War, amassed new space actors. Encompassing private telecommunications, remote sensing, and GPS systems, this modern political environment initially appears economically oriented in nature. Low-costs for satellite usages allowed developing countries, like China, to leap-frog their economic development. Though, its economic importance became the primary argument for *modern* space militarization, especially following the Gulf War. In a sense, with such a profitable, yet vulnerable marketplace, economic interests of a intrinsically global terrain intertwine with new security dilemmas. Thus begging the question, how will countries, such as China, protect advance their economic development while inhibiting U.S. post-Cold War space preeminence?

## Inevitable Fears

With the advent of Mao's anti-imperialistic sentiments, I argued that Chinese policies would unremittingly further previous Maoism communism in space. The vulnerability of satellites and preexisting U.S. interests towards space technologies will always, hypothetically, threaten China's space stability, thereby first addressing national security issues could China achieve uninhibited economic development. Essentially, the policies of PRC would mirror the U.S. The economic liberalization of space, merely provides a new pathway for China's economic development while exacerbating sentiments of vulnerability.

## Methodology

Utilizing the People's Republic of China Yearbook, as well as many collections of documents, space policies from 1940's to 2011 were collected and organized a chronological database. Such policies targeted eras, specifically:

### 1. Post-WWII Nuclear Development

- (including speeches, telegraphs, and writings by Mao Zedong)

### 2. Post-Cultural Revolution Economic Development

- (technological and economic modernization policies, within Five-Year Plans, promulgated by Deng Xiaoping.)

3. Gulf War and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technological Development - (U.N. working papers, Five-Year Plans, CCPP speeches, statements by Jiang Xemin)

Chronologically organizing all documents, vicissitudes in China's policies could be historically interpreted. Any correlations between economic and political concerns become visible.

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## Sources

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## Findings

Initially, Mao Zedong tied China's space program to its nuclear program, under his "Two bombs, and One Satellite" policy. The program secretly began as a means of achieving international prestige in the political struggle against capitalist states. Interestingly, many primary scientists survived the onslaught of the Cultural Revolution, a sign of their importance even as the program slowed.

Following Deng Xiaoping's market reforms in 1979, China's entire economy shifted toward economic modernization, including its space program. As a result, this gave birth to tension between economic liberalization and state-control by political leadership. Exacerbated by the Cultural Revolution's intellectual deficit, the struggle impeded China's position in the global space market. Responsively, Deng began modernizing China's space program, and assigned economic and technological development a top priority (Wauschkuhn, 2009, 3). Bringing profitable results, the trend towards greater reliance on space systems meant greater vulnerability to international threats.

Labeled as the first "Space War", the usage of satellite reconnaissance and GPS systems, assisted in the U.S. swift campaign. Chinese intellectuals, especially in the book "Unrestricted Warfare", acknowledged the three dimensions of modern warfare. The 1993 creation of the China National Space Administration in 1993, frequent U.N. position papers for Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and China's 2000 White Paper of Space Activities, calling for space autonomy, and the first 2003 Chinese human spaceflight, congealed their military, economic, and civil presence in space.

## Analysis

Despite changes to Mao's militaristic space program, modern China retains a political influence over domestic and, more recently, foreign commercial markets. By state-owned enterprises, CCP monitors public use of orbital space power through state controlled competition. True free market competition is merely an illusion. Hard-lined CCP ideologies drive development of China's orbital space market. Chinese policies trend toward economic liberalization, but political power dominates public use of space internally. Researcher Milton Mueller correctly stated China uses "market forces to improve the efficiency of production while retaining a managed, predominately state-owned economy" (Mueller, 2000, 4).

China's persistence in the UN towards space sanctuary spread their political clout *globally*, self-justifying itself in a fight against First-World Imperialism. In their 2000 and 2006 White Papers, China announced it's goal to dominant the universal space commons, and achieve a policy of political space autonomy requiring, in part, protection of space capital. In order to protect their continued economic development, defensive space capabilities, exemplified by their 2007 ASAT test, are inevitable. In effect, China's road to space power differs much from U.S. Cold War mentality, yet ends the same.

Is China's strategy contradictory, inadvertently becoming the hegemonic forces they fight? Will such policies spur some foreign counter offensive against the Chinese agenda? Regardless of the future, China's exploitation of space finally achieved the same global leadership Mao sought with China's initial space program.

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This research was funded by the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Department of Political Science and a grant awarded by the University Research Opportunities Program.