

The Political Evolution of China's Lunar Exploration Plans

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Abstract

This paper explores the political evolution of China's plans for lunar exploration and development. The analysis is undertaken through the application of a Space Politics and Policy Framework as shown in Figure 1.³ This framework provides a model to examine the political process, which includes agenda setting, formulation, implementation, outcomes, and change. Agenda setting involves historical conditions, political rationales, and advocacy coalition actors that influence Chinese lunar plans. Formulation focuses on the variables of centralized and decentralized Chinese leadership approaches, organizational accountability in China, and the role of the political hierarchy in fostering modernization, commercial market growth, and lunar development strategies. Implementation encompasses the technocrat's role in policy development, the organizational, administrative, and technocratic hierarchy of the Chinese space program, and the impact of a unified approach to civil and military implementation of lunar plans. Outcome areas include space law, space commerce, international space cooperation, and national security. Space law concerns the issue of lunar property rights to accommodate proposed resource utilization plans and its impact on implementation strategies. The policy outcome of space commerce deals with economic competition in lunar development and its influence on the nation building strategies present in policy formulation. International space cooperation considers joint lunar mission scenarios and the impact of wider implementation possibilities. National security explores competitive lunar development strategies and their effects on the balance of advocacy influence during the agenda setting process. Policy changes of importance to Chinese lunar plans are increased political openness and commercialization. The Space Politics and Policy Framework is applied to China's lunar plans to identify policy outcomes and changes, determine the relative importance of the specific policy variables to these outcomes and changes, and examine the influence of these outcomes and changes on the policy process.

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³Sadeh, Eligar, ed., *Space Politics and Policy: An Evolutionary Perspective* (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003): xv.

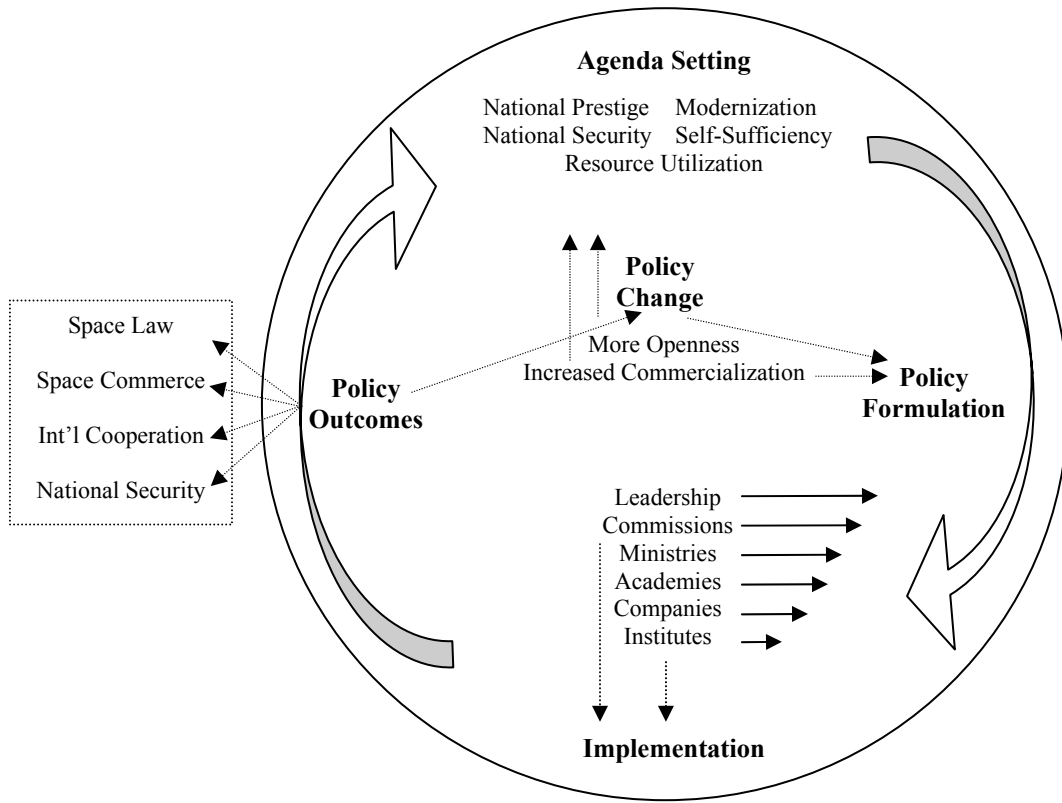


Figure 1. Policy Analysis of China's Lunar Plans.