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# POLITICAL SCIENCE ISSUES

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**Nikolay P. MEDVEDEV,**

Chairman of the Editorial Board, Doctor of Political Sciences,  
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Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor of Faculty of Humanities  
and Social Sciences, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
(RUDN University) (Russia, Moscow)

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Executive Secretary  
*Shkurina S.S.*

Computer-aided makeup by  
*Antsiferova A.S.*

Translated by  
*Chernyshova E.V.*

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The scientific journal is published since 2011 at the “Publishing House “Science Today”. Translated (eng.) version of the journal is published since 2016. Since its inception, the journal was guided by high scientific and ethical standards and today it is one of the leading political science journals in Russia.

The purpose of the journal is to promote scientific exchange and cooperation between Russian and foreign political scientists.

The journal is intended for the publication of the results of fundamental and applied scientific research. Thematic focus of the journal is reflected in the following permanent headings: “History and philosophy of politics,” “Political institutions, processes and technologies,” “Political regionalism and ethno-politics,” “Political culture and ideologies,” “Political problems of international relations and globalization.”

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## **SPACE EXPLORATION AS A FACTOR OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

*The article presents an analysis of China's exploration of outer space and the main current trends in political interaction in the field of space cooperation between China and other countries. The subject of the study is the PRC strategy in space exploration, the study allows us to confirm the significant role of this sphere in the foreign policy context.*

**Key words:** *space exploration, political interaction, globalization, conflict, competition, cooperation, "One Belt – One Road".*

In modern conditions of development, the relevance of space exploration is obvious, space exploration has a political orientation, and its results are of global importance. The problem of world leadership, or rather, the process of struggle for leadership is taking place not only on our planet, but also in space.

This area is distinguished by the multidimensional nature of scientific research, it is difficult to list not only research tasks – which is simply impossible, but even the areas of knowledge involved in space programs.

This is confirmed by the presence of references to the importance of space exploration in the national strategies and special programs of many countries, which also emphasizes the foreign policy context.

It should be stressed that the works of Russian and Chinese authors published in recent years highlight a wide range of issues in this subject area [2; 7; 8; 4; 5; 3].

However, the problem cannot be called unequivocally exhausted. Due to many objective circumstances, the study of the designated topic continues to maintain a high level of relevance [2; 7; 8; 4; 5; 3].

In recent years, the role of the PRC in the international space arena has changed significantly. This, of course, was facilitated by the scientific and technological progress, the development of high-tech areas, but also by the state's foreign policy tasks that put forward new approaches to the space strategy.

Today, China's space potential is taken seriously and responsibly, compared with the capabilities of the United States in this area, because in some respects,

China is already ahead. Space is turning into the sphere of struggle for the world leadership, combining the excellence of scientific developments and the success of the space development [1].

The Chinese government does not openly speak out about the important aspects of its space ambitions, which causes well-founded international concerns.

Chinese space history began in 1956. In 1970, China launched its own satellite into the Earth orbit. The richness of space determines the direction of Chinese interest. The foundation for space exploration was regulated by the 1967 Space Treaty, which of course was not ideal, for example, in terms of mining asteroids. Chinese engineers are developing ways to capture small asteroids, as well as extract natural resources in orbit. Minerals of the Moon, including rare earth metals and Helium-3 (which can be used for nuclear fusion), also attract the attention of Beijing, suffering from a lack of energy.

In 2018, China signed a Space Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding with Luxembourg, a country that has codified a law that gives companies rights to the materials they mine in space (the United States passed a similar bill). The 2016 White Paper does not say anything about space mining but considering the way Chinese lawmakers formulate the legal framework for space activities, it will be interesting to observe how they resolve issues of territorial sovereignty and resource appropriation. Given Beijing's experience in some other arenas such as the South China Sea and Antarctica, it will not be easy to gain international trust.

The Chinese national space strategy, its goals and objectives can be traced according to the documents of the PRC, which play a leadership role and allow us to consider them as a comprehensive program of the PRC. This is primarily the White Books. So, the 2000 White Paper "Chinese Cosmonautics" defined the main tasks of the manned program for the near and long term. For a short period – 10 years – the task was to develop space science, and as part of it – to carry out manned space flight, to explore deep space. The next stage is 20 years, the task was to create a manned station and conduct manned scientific research and experiments.

In 2006, the White Paper called "China's Activities in Space" was published. It can be considered as the political guidebook for the development of space research. The document identified the main directions and policy priorities in this area. In addition to the resource wealth, the outer space is considered as the most important strategic area of China's national security and defense, as it is clearly stated in the 2015 Military Strategy. Space is the same environment where China seeks dominance. Xi Jinping established the Strategic Support Force of the People's Liberation Army of China in 2015 to support joint military operations in space and their integration with the electronic weapons and cyber capabilities.

In 2018, a U.S. Department of Defense report warned that China would strengthen the militarization of space through the development of counter-space. In December, Boeing canceled a controversial satellite order that was secretly

supported by funding from an organization affiliated with the People's Liberation Army to circumvent US export control laws.

Thus, China's lack of transparency regarding its ambitions for civil and military integration [9. Pp. 219-230] undermines its own efforts to strengthen its soft power through space exploration. It could also fuel self-fulfilling prophecies about the new space race: basically, in response to China's actions on February 19, US President Donald Trump signed a Directive on the creation of previously planned military space forces. Several events motivate US concerns. In 2007, China conducted a test that destroyed one of its satellites raising concerns about possible space weapons.

In the face of growing concern about the lack of transparency in the "One Belt – One Road," space cooperation with the developing countries is also a major concern. Satellites are a channel through which countries gain access to information. They are also vulnerable to cyber hacks. Just as the digital infrastructure, funded and built by China, in some cases facilitates government-controlled surveillance, censorship and espionage, the Silk Space Road can greatly increase China's influence in these countries.

Zhang Wei, for example, notes that the growth of the global space gold rush, the implementation of the Chinese "One Belt – One Road" initiative and China's increasingly mature space technology and industry have provided China with valuable opportunities to create a new framework for international space cooperation and its development. China should promote space cooperation with countries and regions within the framework of the "One Belt – One Road" Initiative, which contributes to the expansion of China's international influence [10. Pp. 40-51, 154]. The researcher in his statement also notes that space exploration carries a political meaning.

In this regard, it should be noted that the current trend in space exploration is a clear foreign policy context, no less vivid than a scientific one. The analyzed example of China clearly demonstrates this fact. In addition to the fact that space exploration is a way to a new level of scientific development, it is also an opportunity for the country to occupy a more authoritative position in the international arena. Therefore, China's space exploration has a clear geopolitical context.

Thus, the results of the study allow us to draw the following conclusions. First, over the past few decades, China has made a significant breakthrough in space exploration, which resulted in the landing of the Chang'e-4 spacecraft on the Moon. China's national space policy is defined in the content of the White Books published every five years. According to the most relevant of them, which was published in 2016, in the space sphere it is necessary to realize the "Chinese Dream," which consists in exploring the vast cosmos, developing the space industry and turning China into a space power. At present, the scientific, technical and economic level of development of the PRC allows the country to occupy the position of a world space power.

Secondly, China is actively cooperating in space exploration with major space powers, as well as small developing countries and countries along the route of the Chinese initiative “One Belt – One Road.” Space exploration is becoming a new mechanism that improves the political relations of China with other countries. The most striking example is relations with the United States. Since technology exchange with Chinese scientists and Chinese companies is prohibited there at the legislative level, the development of mutual exploration of the Moon using information from a Chinese satellite on the far side of the Moon can help lift the US restriction on the exchange of scientific information with China.

The development of cooperation in space research with India also contributes to the fact that in bilateral international relations, countries are moving to a new level, by joint efforts reaching an agreement to prevent the race in space research. Joint space research also helps strengthen relations with countries along the “One Belt – One Road.” An example is Pakistan, whose scientists are already conducting joint research with scientists from China and which plans to send the Pakistani astronaut into space.

Thirdly, space exploration has a foreign policy context no less vivid than a scientific one. At present, relations among the countries in space can be both of cooperation and of competition. The main trend in this area is the establishment of relations of superpowers with small countries. So, researcher A. E. Tarasov notes that “the complete refusal of a country from space activities entails not only a technological lag, but also negative political consequences in the form of a decline in the country’s authority on the world stage and the inability to use astronautics as an instrument of foreign and domestic policy” [6. P. 155].

Space exploration is not only a way to a new level of scientific development, but also an opportunity for a country to take a more authoritative position in the international arena. In this regard, space exploration by China has a clear geopolitical context.

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