

Book Reviews

The Politics of Space Security: Strategic Restraint and the Pursuit of National Interests

By James Clay Moltz

Reviewed by Wing Commander Mark Presley

Biography: Wing Commander Mark Presley - The Course Development Team Lead at the Kuwait Staff College - is a CAS' Fellow with experience in space policy from numerous tours in MOD and the Cabinet Office. He is also a PhD Candidate at King's College London researching the drivers of US national space policy.

Introduction

James Clay Moltz is Professor and Associate Chair of Research at the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). He joined the NPS in 2007 after 14 years at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, leaving as the Deputy Director. He has also served as a staff member on the US Senate, as a consultant to the NASA Ames Research Centre and to the Department of Defense. Originally published in 2008, this second edition of his excellent book brings his expansive coverage of the space age up to date to reinforce his enduring and increasingly relevant central argument, that there is a compelling logic to the exercise of military restraint by all actors in space because of their shared interest in maintaining safe access to the valuable regions of space. A topic he explores further in his most recent book, published in 2014, *Crowded Orbits: Conflict and Cooperation in Space*, and also reviewed in this edition of APR.

Moltz provides a longitudinal analysis of the space age, exploring the tensions between competition and cooperation in space, fashioning an argument for future cooperation

based on the repeated learning of past strategic restraint. Although aimed squarely at a scholarly audience, the lack of jargon and broad historical detail, set in a clear structure, make the book accessible to a much wider readership. The excellent supporting footnotes also make the book a fine portal to further research and is an excellent addition to the collection of anyone interested in space security policy, international relations or security in general.

Organised in three parts, the first part provides a comprehensive review of existing space security literature ranging from the hawkish realists advocating space dominance in the national interest to the liberal, institutionalist doves advocating empowered global institutions to control space. Moltz captures these themes to develop four schools of thought that he uses as his conceptual framework. These schools range from space nationalism (the deployment of space defences to assert 'space control'), technological determinism (a slower emergence of space weapons amid multiple actors deploying a limited range of weapons in space), social interactionism (a loose coupling of national and international goals for safe access to space that is driven in part by the rising influence of commercial actors) to global institutionalism (the empowerment of international organizations to govern space). In considering these approaches, Moltz extends the space security calculation to include environmental considerations - a theme he returns to throughout the book.

The second part comprises the main historical narrative, ranging from the origins of the space age prior to the Second World War to the turn of the millennium with a focus on the key space rivalry between the Soviet Union and the US during the Cold War. It is a fascinatingly detailed history of space security and the ebb and flow between competition and cooperation. In particular, the early competition to exploit space - and to explore the use of nuclear weapons in orbit - that preceded the dawning realisation of the awful impact such weapons had on the space environment. He analyses the steps that gradually moved the space race away from military-led strategies of achieving space security to agreeing to preserve the space environment for other purposes including civilian programmes, space science and military support systems; including military reconnaissance to verify missile numbers as part of the calculation used to achieve balance in the Cold War. The effect of this early competition was a recognition that space had become too valuable to be used for war. This understanding played a part in the signing of a number of arms control treaties and a subsequent legacy of relative cooperation and restraint.

Part three continues the historical narrative, bringing the book up to date with a compelling analysis of contemporary space security and the rising interest in the space environment. Moltz begins with a critical look at the shift towards greater space nationalism under President George W. Bush, who instead of continuing the Clinton era cooperation with Russia promoted a concept of space security aimed at unilateral military means, including a return to Reagan era missile defence and withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The book has a dominant US focus, although Moltz does reflect on the rise of China and particularly the effect on the

space environment that the debris from the 2007 Chinese ASAT test had and how it caused concern about the space environment to jump from obscure scientific journals to the front pages of major world newspapers and thousands of Internet sites. It also coincided with an increasingly vocal discussion about space security that included many commercial actors. The book captures this shift in the new chapter covering the Obama space policy announced in 2010 that emphasized international outreach and the need to develop international norms to promote safe and responsible space operations.

Throughout, Moltz considers the views of both the hawks and doves of space security. He comes down firmly in favour of the doves and a more cooperative and restrained approach to space security. He argues that there is a compelling logic to the exercise of military restraint by actors in space because of their shared interest in maintaining safe access to the Earth's critical orbits, and for space to be viewed as a sanctuary free from the traditional military-strategic contest and instead the focus of an interdependent concept of environmental security. The book provides a balanced and considered analysis of the politics of space security, tracing the ebb and flow of the role space has played in the wider history of security throughout the Cold War and in to the modern, complex world of multiple actors competing in areas that were once the sole domain of the nation state. The book is an excellent textbook that also serves to provide food for thought on the changing dynamics of space security. Moltz's book complements Walter McDougall's seminal 1985 Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age*, picking up where McDougall leaves the space age to articulately capture the tension between competition and cooperation in the search for space security. He explores the key issues that vex space analysts today and provides clear historical context to space security that make the book of interest to all in the defence and security field who understand the critical importance that space plays in the military, economic and social fabric of today's interconnected world.

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