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Book Review: Space Policy in Developing Countries: The Search for Security and Development on the Final Frontier by Robert C. Harding

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Harding, Robert C. *Space Policy in Developing Countries: The Search for Security and Development on the Final Frontier*. New York: New York, 2016. X + 236 pages. Hardcover, \$114.60.

Developing a space policy may seem an abstract task but as political scientist Robert Harding understands it, “efforts to establish a theory of space power...can be drawn from earlier terrestrial experiences in international politics...and predict...a similar trajectory in space” (p. 19). The author argues celestial international politics and regulations can be derived from international political theory as much of the issues guiding space are embedded in terrestrial politics.

Focusing mainly on developing countries, as the book title suggests, the author chronicles the ever-changing power structure of the international political system including key elements such as climate change and technological innovations. Tracing the historical development of space related programs, Harding argues the 1957 launching of *Sputnik* by the USSR forced other nations to consider space in terms of power, security, and the development of foreign policies relating to the final frontier. Space exploration since then has been seen not only as a sign of national power but also prestige, as countries continue to increase their national space budgets.

Developing countries are also investing in their space budgets. At the onset, space exploration was considered the sole domain of the wealthiest nations: The United States of America, the USSR, and the European Union, which dominated space after World War II. However, the twenty-first century has seen emerging economic powers like Brazil, China, and India, for example, engaging in active space programs. Other developing countries such as Mexico, Nigeria, and Malaysia have established space-related programs (satellites) through their national policies. The space programs for these countries, both developed and developing, have practical value, political significance, and international recognition. For example, the United

States National Space Policy states in part, “space is a medium... access and utilization is a vital national interest...*and it's* crucial to national security and social economic well-being” (p. 8). The space competition adds a positive dimension to international politics. Space is seen as an extension of terrestrial geopolitics, which has caught the attention of scholars who see developing a common space theory as contentious and elusive. Space power may determine economics and political security in modern international politics. Will there be better cooperation in the celestial world among nations? The realists maintain, it “will never be the norm” (p. 28) as a result of ideological differences.

This five-chapter book covers space power and modern states, evolution of national space policies, and first, second, and third tier space actors. The multi-purpose nature of the book deals with the history and politics of celestial international relations, but one of the main aims is to understand the space policies of developing countries through political, economic, and cultural relations. This is done through the examination of the genesis “of space policy in the modern state system...” while reflecting on “the development of missile and nuclear programs” (p. 29) by developed countries. But to understand the current space policy dating back to 400 BC, when the “first self-propelled projectile—a steam-powered rock...was built” (p. 30) by Archytas of Tarentum in Ancient Greece. This eventually led to the birth of the space age and, hence, the emerging national space policies. With increased tensions between the super powers during the Cold War, the world saw the development of ballistic missiles and similar space programs, which strategically altered policy-making in the modern international system heading into the twenty-first century. Since then, many developing countries have launched satellites with help from developed nations (p. 77). Despite the financial situations of developing countries, Harding noted the “pursuit of space activity brings with it the assurance of state sovereignty and the

promotion of national development” (p. 101). Harding groups developing countries into three tiers based on their financial capabilities, political will, and technological advancement. He laments, “constructing a definition to classify developing states belonging to the third tier of emerging space actors is more problematic...” (p. 145). The third category includes mainly South American and African countries (pp. 146-171). Despite the financial and political constraints, developing countries continue to demonstrate their interest in space programs through their policies—something that has made them part of the celestial community.

The strengths of the book center on Harding’s extensive research. This includes the chronological presentation of a) the historical development of various space programs and international policies, which “will continue to play an integral...” (p.196) part of capable nations; b) the analytical details of such a complex political policy developing in international relations; and c) the cooperation needed by all nations as the exploration of celestial program advances.

The main weakness of the book is the title, which implies that the study would be focus solely on developing countries. However, Harding could not ignore the genesis of the space program, hence the inclusion of developed nations. The book provides a rich history of space technological advancement and political cooperation as nations raced to space. Harding’s work clearly contributes to the struggle for global peace through the development of space policies. It is welcome literature for policymakers, international relations scholars, lawmakers, and political leaders.

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