

U.S.-Russian Cooperation in Space

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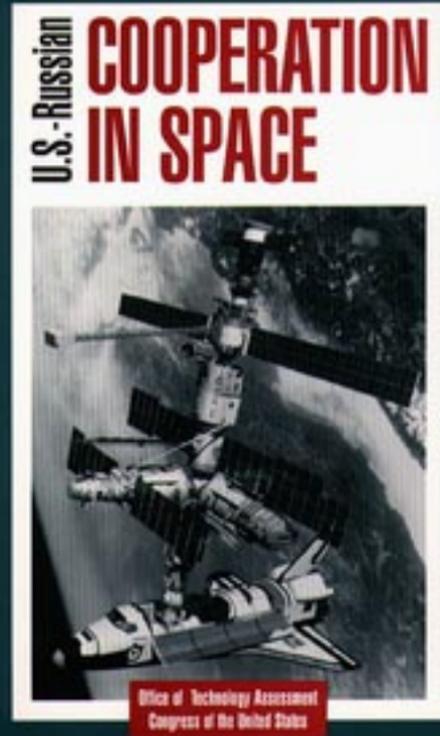


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Foreword

The recent broad political rapprochement between the United States and the nations of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) has transformed the environment for cooperation on space projects, and led to cooperative programs in space with Russia and other FSU states that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago. Chief among these are the high-profile human spaceflight cooperative activities involving the Space Shuttle-Space Station Mir dockings and the International Space Station.

This report surveys the potential benefits and drawbacks of expanded cooperation with Russia and other nations of the FSU in space activities, and examines the impacts of closer cooperation on U.S. industry and U.S. national security concerns. Such cooperation has begun to yield scientific, technological, political, and economic benefits to the United States. However, the political and economic risks of cooperating with the Russians are higher than with the United States' traditional partners in space. Cooperation in robotic space science and earth remote sensing is proceeding well, within the stringent limits of current Russian (and U.S.) space budgets. Including Russia in the International Space Station program provides technical and political benefits to the space station partners, but placing the Russian contribution in the critical path to completion also poses programmatic and political risks.

The report notes that much of the motivation for the expansion of cooperation with Russia lies beyond programmatic considerations. In particular, it points out that continued cooperation, including large payments for Russian space goods and services, may help stabilize Russia's economy and provide incentive for some of Russia's technological elite to stay in Russia and contribute to peaceful activities in space. Lack of opportunities at home might otherwise cause them to seek employment abroad where their skills might contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Finally, the report assesses the pros and cons of expanded commercial ties, their impact on the U.S. space industrial base, and on aerospace employment.

In undertaking this effort, OTA sought the contributions of a wide spectrum of knowledgeable individuals and organizations. Some provided information; others reviewed drafts. OTA gratefully acknowledges their contributions of time and intellectual effort.



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