

18. SPACE POLICY AND THE CONSTITUTION #2

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Former Senator Schmitt Takes Issue with the President on Space Policy

The President has repeated his advocacy for the abandonment of a program of deep space exploration by Americans in return for vague promises about future actions. His irrational and technically ridiculous proposals on national space policy, now largely adopted by the Congress, would put the nation into a steady decline in its human space flight endeavors toward the total absence of NASA Astronauts from space within a decade. With the demise of the International Space Station in about 2020, if not sooner, America's nationally sanctioned human spaceflight activities would end.

American leadership absent from space— is this the future we will leave to our children and the cause of liberty? I hope not. Once again, the President and his supporters in this fool's errand exposed their basic belief that America is not exceptional, that Americans should apologize for protecting liberty for 250 years, and that the human condition would be no worse off without our past expenditure of lives, time, and treasure in freedom's behalf.

Since 1957, national space policy, like naval policy in the centuries before, has set the geopolitical tone for the interactions between the United States and its international allies and adversaries. The President's FY2011 budget submission to Congress shifts that tone away from leadership by

America by abandoning human exploration and settlement of the Moon and Mars to China and, effectively, leaving the Space Station under the dominance of Russia for its remaining approximately 10-year life.

With the Station's continued existence inherently limited by aging, these proposals sign the death warrant for NASA-sponsored human space flight. Until the Space Station's inevitable shutdown, the President also proposes Americans ride into space at the forbearance of the Russians, so far, at a cost of more than \$60 million a seat. Do we really want to continue to go, hat in hand, to the Russians to access a Space Station American taxpayers have spent **\$150 billion** to build? What happens as the geopolitical and ideological interests of the United States and an increasingly authoritarian Russia continue to diverge?

In spite of funding neglect by the previous Administration and Congresses, a human space flight program comparable to Constellation remains the best way to develop the organizational framework, hardware, and generational skills necessary for Americans to continue to be leaders in the exploration and eventual settlement of deep space. Protecting liberty and ourselves will be at great risk and probably impossible in the long term if we now abandon deep space to any other nation or group of nations, particu-

larly a non-democratic, authoritarian regime like China. To others would accrue the benefits, psychological, political, economic, technical, and scientific, that accrued to the United States from Apollo's success 40 years ago. This lesson from John Kennedy and Dwight Eisenhower has not been lost on our ideological and economic competitors.

An American space policy that maintains deep space leadership, as well as providing major new scientific discoveries, requires returning to the Moon as soon as possible. Returning to the Moon prepares the way to go to and land on Mars, something we are a long way from knowing how to do. Returning to the Moon, importantly, trains new young Americans in how to work in and with the challenges of exploring and living in deep space. This also continues a policy in which freedom-loving peoples throughout the world can participate as active partners. Even more pragmatically, settlements on the Moon can send badly needed clean energy resources back to Earth for everyone's use and that are not under the control of some authoritarian regime.

In contrast to space activities that relate to national security, including the geopolitical standing of the United States among competing states and ideologies, there exists great potential for investor-driven commercial enterprises related to space. Commercial communications satellites remain the best example of the realization of this potential. Lunar helium-3 fusion power may someday reach and surpass this level of true commercialization. The key to such enterprises is that they are "investor-driven" even though their technology base may include earlier development activities by the United States government.

In contrast to this normal definition of space commercialization, the President and

NASA want to create a totally taxpayer subsidized rocket and spacecraft capability and call it "commercial", hoping that it would include acceptable and affordable means of taking astronauts to the Space Station. Do we really want to put all our national space access eggs in the one basket of unproven, fully subsidized launch capabilities with limited independent oversight? What happens if a risk adverse NASA and Congress eventually make those potential capabilities unaffordable and unattractive to non-NASA customers? The Board of any reputable investor-owned company must ask exactly this last question.

The Founders did *not* expect the Federal Government to fund activities beyond those applicable to specified powers of Congress and the President, such as those powers required for direct and indirect applications to our "common defence." This constitutional line between true commercialization and national defense is a very useful line to draw. Indeed, earlier federal aeronautical and satellite communications technology development drew this line carefully by funding technology development and not actual commercial products based on such technology. These technologies often have been critical to national security, but their application in commercial activities has been left largely to investor-driven decisions.

Advocacy of extra-constitutional "investments" (read "subsidies") by government in ventures aimed at commercial applications, even to meet a non-defense federal requirement, reflects a desire for more federal control of private enterprise rather than belief in the realities of the market place. Few, if any, past successes for this approach can be identified. Even those past federal "commercial" investments with constitutional justification, such as the Tran-

scontinental Railroad, ended up being very messy and corrupt.

NASA's chartered function, unfortunately not recognized by the current Administration, remains that of maintaining America as the international leader in all major aspects of space exploration and promoting space technology development, some of which may have commercial as well as defense applications. The private sector's function remains two fold: that of being dedicated contractors fulfilling NASA constitutional requirements and that of commercializing space technologies. NASA's function is *not* that of being a total substitute for investors whether or not it may be a future customer for those investors.

The right and continuing space policy choice for the Congress of the United States remains as previously approved by Demo-

crats and Republicans alike. Returning to the Moon compares in significance to President Jefferson's dispatch of Lewis and Clark into wilderness of the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson's decision had unquestioned and critical significance to American growth and survival. As with the American West, human exploration of space embodies basic human instincts— freedom, curiosity, and betterment of one's conditions. America's unique and special society of immigrants still has such instincts at its core.

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