

BEYOND DIPLOMACY FOR SPACE: SPACE FOR DIPLOMACY

A NEW GEOPOLITICAL ROLE OF SPACE

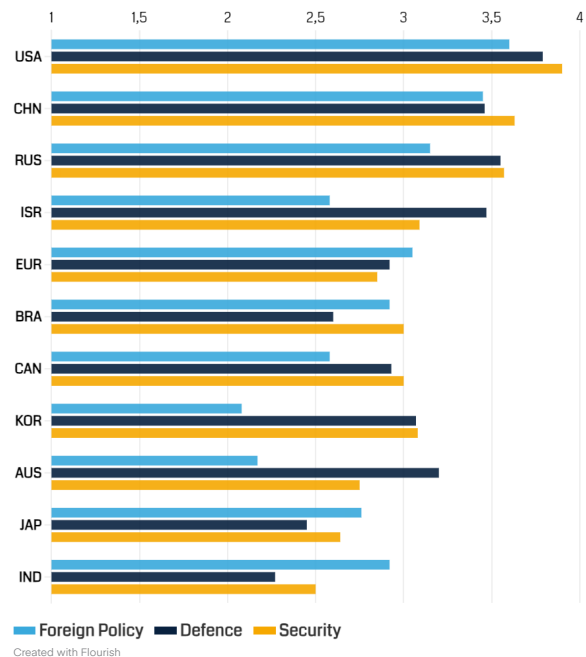
The recent announcement by US President Biden alongside Japan Prime Minister Kishida on the selection of a Japanese astronaut for the Artemis 3 moon landing was presented as a signal for more robust economic and defense ties between the two nations.

The selection at the highest political level, as a direct consequence leaves no place for Europe on the podium of pioneers on the Moon. But maybe more importantly, it is a demonstration of the ever-increasing geopolitical role of space. It marks the move beyond diplomacy for space, towards space for diplomacy. Space has indeed become a tool of political influence in an increasingly multi-polar world. We witness a shift beyond traditionally more programmatic cooperation between space agencies, e.g. via barter agreements, typically focused on synergies between space programmes such as cooperation on payloads and science. A new phase emerges, where space capabilities directly serve diplomatic agendas. This happens one year after the US State Department issued its **Strategic Framework for Space Diplomacy**, which clearly defines **space for diplomacy as leveraging space activities for wider diplomatic goals, to achieve US foreign policy and national security objectives on issues such as climate change, international security and economic competitiveness**. This is distinct from the more classical way of diplomacy for space via UN COPOUS, or concerns on technical cooperation, interoperability, spectrum, data policies and engagement with US space industry. Space for diplomacy has become a key pillar to advance the US position as a global leader.

As space increasingly encompasses broader policy dimensions, the development of **a cohesive approach to space for diplomacy is needed also in Europe**. In the first instance this requires that space indeed is understood by policy leaders in its geopolitical and strategic value, at national and European level. French President Macron, in his recent **Europe speech at La Sorbonne**, identified space as one of the five most emerging and strategic sectors. He called for "a Europe with ambition for space" and to make Europe a global leader by 2030. In the same speech, President Macron more generally called for a wider European cohesion in diplomacy, for Europe as a global continent, as a balanced power, forming strategic partnerships including the Arctic, Indo-Pacific, Latin America and with Africa.

Space indeed is a formidable sector of transformative change, with unique potential as an excellent tool of diplomacy. Remarkably, ESPI's assessment of **"Europe as a Space Power"** includes soft capacity indicators (25 out of 94) comprising "Space for Diplomacy", "Foreign Aid and International Initiatives" and "International Prestige". These indicators assess the degree to which space actors make use of space: to serve diplomatic purposes, which can be political, strategic, and/or economic in nature; to provide assistance to foreign countries and contribute to international initiatives; to boost its international reputation and image as a major player in the international arena. When applied to

sectors of foreign policy, security and defence, Europe score remarkably low, well below the US, China, Russia and also Israel, more comparable to Brazil and Canada.



This shortfall related to space for diplomatic purposes and to the use of space for security and defence negatively impacts Europe's overall capability to develop the full benefits of space and its space power performance. This applies despite Europe's soft capacity with some positive results related to socio-economic benefits of space (agriculture, environment, energy, mobility etc.).

A genuine strategic cohesion must be created between all actors in Europe on a space strategy, which also embraces space for diplomacy and soft capacities, including economic competitiveness, and in support to climate change, energy, security, disaster management, and agriculture. This needs to be developed together with and next to the traditional focus of space agencies on hard capacity of systems and infrastructures, e.g. satellites and launchers. To echo once again President Macron, Europe today needs a more pragmatic and operational cooperation among its actors as well as a coherent security strategy for the Mediterranean, Africa, the Indo-Pacific, and the Arctic.

For its part, ESPI provides support to diplomatic action as a forum and as part of its mandate to promote European space policy globally. ESPI operates the **Vienna Space Diplomat** initiative and organises a number of Interregional Dialogues. These dialogues include partnerships with entities like the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSF), as well as recent collaborations with Argentina's CONAE for the Latin American region. Looking ahead, ESPI plans to enhance its soft capacity activities by more closely integrating them with the support provided to its members, space agencies and ministries. This is especially crucial as Europe develops its space strategies for the 2030s and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

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Director of ESPI

