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Trends. International Trends in Space Policy: An Interview with Eligar Sadeh

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Title: Trends. International Trends in Space Policy: An Interview with Eligar Sadeh

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(Eligar Sadeh is Interim Director, Center for Engineering Infrastructure and Sciences in Space (CIESS), Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, United States of America. He is also finishing his doctoral dissertation entitled "Dynamics of International Space Cooperation: Evaluating Missions for Exploring Space and Protecting the Earth." Mr. Sadeh was interviewed by the IBPP Editor on the morning of March 11, 1999. What follows is an edited interview with Mr. Sadeh.)

Mr. Sadeh cites two very significant trends in space policy and space-related activities. First, there is an unprecedented international cooperation among at least sixteen countries. Second, there is an increasingly decided shift towards commercialization and privatization. With both trends there are accompanying problems.

As to the internationalization of space and relationships among nation-states becoming more crucial, space activity becomes not only a technology-related, high-risk endeavor, but more and more political high-risk as well. And the two sources of risk unfortunately can have synergistic, noxious effects. As well, the Issue of technology transfer becomes ever more significant between and among nation-states. Accompanying this Issue is the tension between cooperative necessity on the one hand, protection of sensitive information on the other. The security implications alone are extraordinary. A final Issue involves management and control. Cross-cultural differences and national differences about task-related criteria interacting with multiple schemes of organizational authority present huge challenges.

As to the shift towards commercialization and privatization, space activity inexorably become ever less bound by public policy and ever more impelled by market forces. Or public policy and market forces become intertwined ever closer and may even tend towards becoming indistinguishable. The shift may well have adverse consequences for citizens whose interests allegedly are looked out for by public policy and discounted by a bottom-line profit motive. Moreover, as formal political entities--viz., governments--lose more and more control over knowledge and technology, there may be a concurrent unbundling of national sovereignty. Again, the security implications alone are extraordinary and may best be encapsulated by the concept of epistemic security.

(This precis of the interview with Mr. Sadeh will hopefully encourage readers to send him questions and inquiries. Mr. Sadeh can be reached at esadeh@lamar.colostate.edu.) (Keywords: Commercialization, International Cooperation, Privatization, Security, Space, Space Policy.)