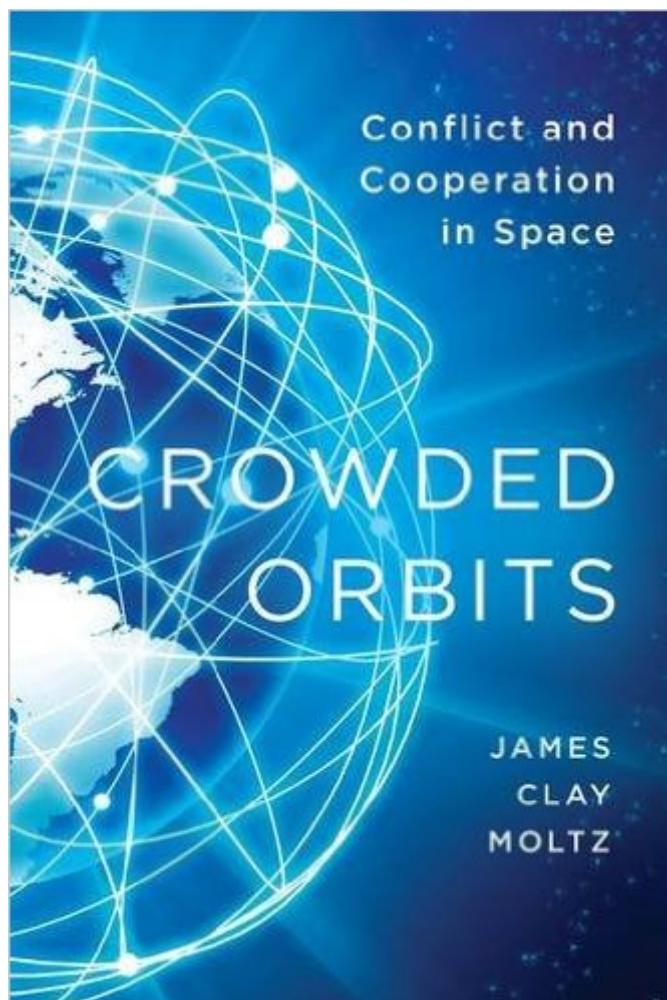


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Crowded Orbits: Conflict And Cooperation In Space



Synopsis

Space has become increasingly crowded since the end of the Cold War, with new countries, companies, and even private citizens operating satellites and becoming spacefarers. This book offers general readers a valuable primer on space policy from an international perspective. It examines the competing themes of space competition and cooperation while providing readers with an understanding of the basics of space technology, diplomacy, commerce, science, and military applications. The recent expansion of human space activity poses new challenges to existing treaties and other governance tools for space, increasing the likelihood of conflict over a diminishing pool of beneficial locations and resources close to Earth. Drawing on more than twenty years of experience in international space policy debates, James Clay Moltz examines possible avenues for cooperation among the growing pool of space actors, considering their shared interests in space traffic management, orbital debris control, division of the radio frequency spectrum, and the prevention of military conflict. Moltz concludes with policy recommendations for enhanced international collaboration in space situational awareness, scientific exploration, and restraining harmful military activities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is probably one book in ten thousand: the blurbs for it accurately describe both its contents and its quality. Although the book's compact size took me aback when it first arrived, the author does an excellent job of packing in a great deal of information about commercial, military and other uses of

outer space, as well as the legal and diplomatic context for them, into a small *printed* space. Among other things, the book provides an overview of the space programs of a wide range of spacefaring countries, as well as some historical insight into how each of those countries has contributed diplomatic initiatives or obstacles (and often both) to the development of international cooperation in space. A particularly intriguing topic that gets mentioned a couple of times is the coming trend toward cubesats, nanosats and picosats, small boxes filled with sophisticated electronics and weighing about as much as a couple of bags of cat litter, or even considerably less. While these are being pushed by some start-ups (e.g., Planet Labs, Skybox Imaging) as the cutting edge of Yankee ingenuity, in fact they could make the space debris problem far more complicated, since they don't carry any fuel and aren't controllable once they're in orbit. I did find it tough to share the author's acceptance of the idea that humanity will "need" to obtain resources from the Moon and asteroids, though he may be more correct to say it's "inevitable" that we'll do so (@190). The legal context for mining and other commercial exploitation of heavenly bodies remains pretty gray, though, so it would be nice to see more discussion about that in a future update of this book. Maybe next time there could also be more discussion about intellectual property issues relating to space.

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