PANELISTS DEBATE

Thierry de Montbrial, Founder and Chairman of Ifri and the WPC

Madame Minister, I would like to talk about alliances. I think this idea of alliances is very important. In your case, how do you choose your alliances? How do you choose your partners?

Sarah Al Amiri, Minister of State for Advanced Technology, President of the UAE Space Agency

It is as simple as being based on the objectives of the program we are on and what the partner brings to the table and what we bring to the table. A lot of our partnerships in terms of development have been based on the mutual development of both the entities and we work heavily in integrating our teams into the teams of the entities we work with. It is always based on the objective.

Thierry de Montbrial

If I may say, this is a technical answer but this issue is also fundamentally political. That is why I will repeat my question and ask, beyond the economic and technological considerations, what are the political aspects of your major choices?

Sarah Al Amiri

As mentioned earlier, access to space is very important in ensuring the sustainability of space and that is usually played in global policy forums. In terms of how we ensure we are accessing space sustainably, so we are not cluttering space and the ways we are using it, these conversations are happening across nations. The second one is how you have access to space for different nations that want access for different reasons. You mentioned earth observation and it is very important for all of us and it touches on the daily lives of every single person, whether we know it or not. Therefore, ensuring that nations have access to space, and that does not mean access to launching to space, it means access to data, is what we discuss on an international front. Those are the different aspects that are under consideration when you are talking about international partnerships.

On the policy front it is very important and this conversation will become even more important over the next 10 years and I think new alliances will form based on the methodology we think should proceed with as regards access to space.

Thierry de Montbrial

Before I enlarge the discussion, did you want to say something on this question?

Philippe Baptiste, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the French Centre for Space Studies (CNES)

I just wanted to mention that we have a strong alliance on governance on space policy with a lot of joint activities between the United Arab Emirates and France. The people from Toulouse are going back and forth.

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much. Before enlarging the discussion with the guests, I would like to look into the future, say the next 20 years or something like that. I do not think anybody knows if a human mission to Mars can succeed because of human rather than technological reasons, but we can dream. Since you are very young, Madame Minister maybe you would be a candidate to visit Mars and I hope you will come back in good physical condition. That is the big question but there is another that is more political and less romantic about the long-term. If the rivalry between the United States and China develops over the next 20 years and beyond, which is very likely, there is at least a theoretical possibility of two disconnected cyberspaces, one dominated by America and the other by China. This is not true at the moment but it is more likely than a human mission to Mars in this timeframe. Do you think this is a legitimate question? From a political or even a technological viewpoint, is having two totally disconnected cyberspheres possible and what would be the consequence on the rest of us? Perhaps to put it slightly differently, is there a place for a third choice? We have discussed this in various ways in different fields. Would there be room for others so that they were not forced to choose between the two?

Sarah Al Amiri

I will take you back to the previous question. I think the reasoning you have gone through is a legitimate source of concern for many nations around the world. Looking at it from an access perspective, that is where we can have the third option becoming the normal. You spoke about the UAE's relationship with France and a lot of it is actually based on a common understanding of how to utilize space. If we continue these sorts of collaborations between nations and continue to ensure that new entrants to the space domain are actually able to do it and are not prohibited by very stringent technological requirements under the guise of sustainability of space or inhibitions in terms of launch site access or various space orbits. If the conversation is kept to ensuring access to space, we will get the third option where you will continue to get this fostered collaboration in space.

The other aspect that allows us to be more reasonable goes back to the entrance of the private sector. While noting your point that it is supported by government, either by demand creation, providing subsidies or contracts, but if you increase the demand for space from other sectors, you enable a portion of the space sector to grow and to be dependent business to business. Then it is no longer a business to government relationship and that increases the number of actors that enter into the space sector. By increasing the number of actors that enter the space sector, by default you are going to increase business to business

relationships, and relationships between governments with businesses in other countries, etc. You increase the number of players, so you remove the dominance. You make collaboration, cooperation and healthy competition become the norm of the game in space, as you described exists today in Europe. That is how you can move towards the third option, which I think is the beneficial option for all players on the ground today.

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much for this elaborate answer. Philippe?

Philippe Baptiste

To answer your question on having a US-led cyberspace environment on one side and Chinese on the other, the answer is yes. It is very important that Europe is there because it is crucial for our autonomy and business. I am thinking about the constellation of satellites in low earth orbit and this is very important because it is a key component in the future of telecommunications. It will be a simple way to provide Internet everywhere in the world in real-time with very short response delays. This project is really a cornerstone of the European policy space and something that the European Commission is really pushing. Of course, there is Elon Musk's constellation, Starlink that is already there, but there is also OneWeb, which is a European and UK-based constellation, as well as other players. I am pretty sure that you will soon have a big European constellation for the Internet.