



**Bohumil Doboš, *The Geopolitics of Space Colonization: Future Power Relations in the Inner Solar System* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2024)**

*Reviewed by Uswa Khan*

The concept of space colonisation, previously limited to science fiction writings, has made significant progress towards becoming a tangible possibility due to notable advancements in rocket propulsion, design, astronautics, astronomy, and robotics. The central theme of the book 'The Geopolitics of Space Colonisation: Future Power

Relations in the Inner Solar System' by Bohumil Doboš explores the future colonisation of celestial bodies in the upcoming decades. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Political Studies at Charles University.

The book spans 158 pages and is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter provides a concise introduction to the subject, sparking a debate on this highly relevant topic. Its central thesis posits that decisions about proposed and potential missions to establish settlements or extract resources from celestial bodies in the inner solar system are shaped by geographical considerations and carry significant political implications, best analysed through the lens of geopolitics. Following the introduction, the second chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the historical, conceptual, and procedural dimensions of the topic. The author connects traditional geopolitics to astropolitics, tracing the term 'geopolitics' back to its 19th Century German origins (p.6). He explores the Anglo-Saxon

school of thought, highlighting Halford Mackinder's Heartland Theory and Alfred Mahan's Command of the Sea theory, categorising them under classical geopolitics (pp.8-11). The discussion then transitions to post-classical, critical, and systematic geopolitics. Dolman's seminal work is positioned as an essential guide to understanding astropolitics, asserting that dominance in low-Earth orbit and near-Earth space translates to control over Earth and, ultimately, humanity's destiny (pp.24-25).

Building on this, the third chapter shifts focus to the key players vying for dominance in space colonisation. During the early Cold War, the competition was limited to the US and the Soviet Union. Since the 1990s, however, state and non-state actors have entered the fray, including China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, the UAE, Israel, India, the EU Agency for Space Programme (EUSPA), and SpaceX (p.33). Doboš predicts that these actors will continue to vie for control of strategic locations in near-Earth and outer space. The fourth chapter tackles the environmental challenges that complicate space exploration, emphasising how planetary conditions differ from Earth's. Moving into the normative realm, the fifth chapter examines the role of international law in regulating great-power competition in space. Doboš underscores the significance of the Outer Space Treaty as a potential framework for maintaining order and accountability. Finally, the concluding chapter explores the key decision points and contentious areas shaping the future of inner solar system colonisation. It reflects on the choices that will define humanity's long-term prospects in deep space, offering insights into the critical consequences of these decisions.

The book is a timely and valuable contribution to the literature on space, offering a geopolitical analysis of the impending human colonisation of stellar objects within the inner planetary system. It examines the political and strategic factors influencing missions to celestial bodies such as the Moon and asteroids, presenting forward-looking scenarios that highlight critical concerns for future operations beyond terrestrial orbits. By systematically analysing the medium-term prospects for establishment and mining operations, the book

identifies key focal points likely to shape power distribution in the inner solar system. It predicts an intensifying competition among states and non-state actors, such as Elon Musk's ventures, for control over nearby planets and moons.

On the policy front, Doboš urges both major and minor powers to establish a new framework for space exploration. Given the increasing involvement of non-state entities, he advocates for the creation of a treaty inspired by the Outer Space Treaty (OST) to prevent geopolitical conflicts and regulate activities in outer space. He also envisions non-human outposts, likely established by robots on the Moon or Mars, as precursors to eventual colonisation; and stresses the urgency of international consensus to manage this new frontier responsibly.

This book will especially engage students exploring the intersection of space power and international relations, providing them with essential insights into the evolving dynamics of space politics.

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