

## Shenzhou 10 and the Chinese Space Program

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China successfully launched its fifth manned mission, Shenzhou 10 in June, 2013. This mission showcased China's space transmission and communication capabilities as the astronauts successfully conducted classes for students from a school in Beijing. In addition to this, Chinese astronauts also successfully conducted automated as well as manual docking procedures with Tiangong I. Manual docking involved getting back inside the Shenzhou capsule, unhooking from Tiangong and then flying around the lab to re-attach with Nie at the controls. This is the longest space mission, which China has undertaken till date with 15 days in space. All these efforts point towards the ultimate aim of establishing a functional Chinese space station by the year 2020.

Such achievements highlight Beijing's its increasing capability in the space domain. The importance of space technology for China is further underlined by the statement made by Xi Jinping declaring that, "The space dream is part of the dream to make China stronger. With development of space programs, the Chinese people will take bigger strides to explore further into the space".

China has released three white papers in 2000, 2006 and 2011 respectively highlighting the fact that the Chinese government is keen and ready to develop the Chinese space prowess. The White Papers also chalk out the linear path which Chinese programme has taken and how it has managed to achieve most of the identified targets. In addition to this, the role of nationalism cannot be ignored as an important factor guiding the Chinese space programme. The Chinese space programme has been termed as the people's achievement and has been used to boost nationalistic feelings.

These technologies coupled with the active Beidou navigation system aggravate the discomfort felt by China's neighbours in general and the world at large. The growth in Chinese space programme along with China's economic and military growth has security implications for India. The level of technological feats showcased by China questions India's preparedness and its defence capability. However, it is argued that the Indian space programme is purely civilian in nature. There is a need to increase the capabilities in having more satellites like RISAT 1 which is an all weather remote sensing satellite. In addition to this, India also successfully launched its first ever Navigation Satellite in June 2013 the IRNSS-1A. Thus there is a need to prioritize the areas in space technology which India should be developing.

With the United States withdrawing monetary support towards its space maneuvers, the rise of China in the space arena is just a matter of time. The Chinese government is advancing its space programme and has committed resources towards this cause. This investment has strong security as well as a financial implication for the global space arena. The number of launches which China conducts provides it with an economic leverage. China has launched satellites for countries like Pakistan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka to name a few.

Attaining space supremacy has become an important goal of the Chinese government and the pace at which its space programme is growing, only gives credibility to its ambitions.

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