CALL FOR PAPERS

Asia Pacific Journal of Space Law

Special Issue: Legal and Regulatory Responses to Space Dependency in the Asia Pacific

The problem

Across the Asia Pacific, the services on which States, industries and communities now depend most heavily are, overwhelmingly, services they do not own, task, process or govern. Position, navigation and timing; maritime domain awareness; disaster monitoring; weather forecasting; broadband connectivity to remote and island populations; the financial and logistics systems that enable all of the above – each is supplied, in most of the region, by infrastructure owned and operated elsewhere, often under legal frameworks negotiated elsewhere, and subject to decisions taken elsewhere.

This is not a condition that the existing corpus of space law specifically addresses. The *Outer Space Treaty* speaks to freedom of exploration and use, to non-appropriation, to State responsibility for national activities. It says nothing about whether a State that depends on another's satellites has any legal interest in the continuity of that service. The *Liability Convention* addresses damage caused by space objects, not damage caused by their absence. The ITU allocates spectrum and orbital positions, but the allocation of a right to transmit is not the allocation of a right to receive.

The region's dependency is also distinctive in kind, not merely in degree. Archipelagic and littoral States rely on space-derived services to administer maritime zones of a scale beyond any terrestrial capability. Small island developing States may depend on satellite connectivity as their only practical link to global communications infrastructure, while bearing a disproportionate share of re-entry and debris risk by virtue of ocean geography. Regional fisheries management – one of the Pacific's most significant exercises of collective sovereign authority – is built on satellite vessel monitoring, AIS and SAR-based dark vessel detection supplied almost entirely by extra-regional partners. Across South and Southeast Asia, rapidly expanding national space programmes are simultaneously building sovereign capability and deepening reliance on foreign constellations, launch services and analytical platforms.

What we are seeking

This special issue invites contributions examining how law and regulation do, might, or should respond to space dependency in the Asia Pacific. We are interested in work that treats dependency as a legal and governance problem rather than solely a technical or strategic one, and that moves beyond diagnosis towards constructive proposals.

We welcome, among others, papers addressing:

- **Disaggregating sovereign control.** Dependency is not a single condition but a stack: physical infrastructure, tasking authority, data processing, analytical and interpretive standards, and legal or regulatory jurisdiction. Which layers are amenable to legal intervention, and which are not? What does 'sovereign control' of a space service actually require?
- **Continuity, denial and the absence of remedy.** Where a State suffers loss through disruption, degradation or denial of a space-derived service, what recourse does international law offer? Papers might address the limits of the *Liability Convention* in relation to indirect and signal-mediated harm, the availability of State responsibility under the ILC Articles where a primary obligation can be identified, the relevance of due diligence and the no-harm principle, or the significance of State practice – including the consistent refusal of major GNSS providers to accept liability for signal-based loss.
- **The maritime–space interface.** Archipelagic and coastal State interests in launch, overflight, re-entry corridors and debris deposition; the governance vacuum around the South Pacific spacecraft cemetery; the interaction of UNCLOS obligations with the *Outer Space Treaty* regime; and the legal architecture – or its absence – underpinning satellite-dependent fisheries and maritime surveillance.
- **Connectivity and the regulatory position of mega-constellations.** The implications of LEO constellation dependence for States with no domestic alternative; licensing, landing rights, market access and the leverage they do or do not confer; spectrum coordination as a site of regulatory power; and whether universal service concepts have any purchase at the international level.
- **Data sovereignty and Earth observation.** Whether any legal framework grounds a claim by a State or community to data generated about its territory, waters or people; the governance of analytical and classification standards; and the emerging critique of extractive data relationships as applied to space-derived services.
- **Domestic and comparative regulation.** National space legislation across the region as a response – adequate or otherwise – to dependency; licensing conditions as instruments of continuity assurance; critical infrastructure regimes extended to space segments; and comparative analysis across Asia Pacific jurisdictions.
- **Regional and institutional responses.** The potential of APRSAF, ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum and other regional bodies; the scope for coordination between space governance institutions and the ocean, fisheries, telecommunications and disaster management regimes that are the practical

sites of dependency; and what small and middle powers can achieve collectively in COPUOS and the ITU.

Framing

Two points about scope:

- First, we understand 'space law' broadly. This journal takes the view that the global space sector, and the national and transnational regimes governing it, are in a state of sustained normative flux. Scholarship on soft law, emerging norms, policy development and institutional practice is as welcome here as doctrinal analysis of settled instruments – and on a question as unsettled as this one, probably more necessary.
- Second, we understand 'Asia Pacific' broadly. Submissions fall within scope either because the author is based in the region, whatever the geographic focus of the analysis, or because the subject matter bears on issues of regional relevance, wherever the author is based. We are actively seeking contributions from Asia Pacific scholars and practitioners, precisely because their voices remain under-represented in global space governance debate.

We particularly encourage submissions from those who have encountered dependency operationally, rather than academically – regulators, agency officials, fisheries and maritime administrators, telecommunications authorities, and practitioners in Pacific Island countries and territories. The institutional user who has spent a career relying on space-derived services, and who has never been asked what governance those services require, has something to contribute that the existing literature lacks.

Submission details

Articles should ordinarily be between 6,000 and 12,000 words inclusive of footnotes. Shorter commentaries of 3,000 to 5,000 words, and book reviews, are also welcome. Citations should conform to the *Australian Guide to Legal Citation* (4th ed). All research articles are subject to double-blind peer review.

Abstracts due: **Wednesday 16 December 2026**.

Submissions due: **Wednesday 31 March 2027**.

Submit to Catherine.Zemann@lexisnexis.com.au.

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