



Power in space

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Mission Shakti might have had one message for India, and another for the world

- India has entered an elite space club with the Defence Research and Development Organisation blowing up a satellite in a Low Earth Orbit into smithereens.
- Such Indian capability to take out moving objects has never really been in doubt: the DRDO announced it as early as in 2011.
- Indeed, India has been in the business of testing long-range missiles for years, although public attention on the space programme has been mostly on its civilian and scientific aspects.
- The military dimension, though always latent, had not seen a verifiable demonstration as in the case of Mission Shakti, the Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test.
- The display of technological prowess through the test accentuates the military dimension and brings into play an overwhelming assurance of what the Ministry of External Affairs describes as a 'credible deterrence' against attacks on India's growing number of space assets.
- While the country celebrates the test as a scientific achievement, it must also dwell on the possibility that this might goad its none-too-friendly neighbour Pakistan into a competitive frenzy.
- Also, in the absence of a credible threat to India's space assets from China or any other country with Anti-Satellite missile capabilities, whether the 'deterrence' sought to be achieved by this test would lead to a more stable strategic security environment is not certain.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while announcing the success of the test, was clear that India wanted to maintain peace rather than indulge in warmongering.
- And, by targeting a low-orbit satellite, the missile test did the utmost possible to minimise space debris, which is an issue of international

concern.

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