

NO GLOBAL HEAT ON INDIA'S ASAT MISSILE TEST

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Space Technology & related matters

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the successful test of an anti-satellite (ASAT) missile by India. With this test, India has joined a select group of nations which have demonstrated this capability. The last country to do a successful test was China in 2007. The test by China was widely censured by the international community. In contrast, life for India has been much more comfortable after Wednesday's test.

Pakistan's response has been critical, that is, Pavlovian. But China's response has been guarded and it has simply expressed the hope that peace and tranquillity in outer space will be maintained. Most importantly, the response from the United States has been cautiously supportive. In its response to India's test, the US State Department invoked "shared interests in space and scientific and technical cooperation, including collaboration on safety and security in space". While noting its concerns on space debris, the US has taken cognisance of India's statement that the test design addressed debris issues. The reaction of the acting US defence secretary Patrick Shanahan was much sharper on the debris issue but he too avoided blaming India at all. The US is reportedly still tracking the fragments created by India's test.

One of the reasons for lesser concern with India's test has to do with the height of the test. At 300 kilometres, the debris may survive just for months, if not weeks, before decaying. At 800 kilometres, the Chinese satellite debris has already survived for more than a decade and may survive for a few more. Second, unlike China, India is seen as a more responsible country that respects international laws and institutions. New Delhi has done well to exploit this image to enlist itself into this elite space powers club. India's test — or a future test by any country — may push the global community to enforce a freeze on further tests. India missed the bus when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) decided January 1, 1967, as the cut-off date for becoming a legitimate nuclear weapons state. When India tested a nuclear device in 1974, the global community responded by developing export control regimes like the Nuclear Suppliers Group which specifically targeted India. The ASAT missile test may just have saved India from repeating old mistake.

First Published: Mar 28, 2019 20:23 IST

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com