This chapter assesses the space power capacities of contemporary leading space-faring nations. The space policies of the United States, the European Union (EU), Russia and China are tested against the seven capacities of the meta-geopolitics framework, and their respective strengths and weaknesses are highlighted and discussed. This multidimensional analysis also includes a section on non-state actors and assesses the space power capacities of two selected commercial companies – EADS-Astrium and Boeing. A clear picture of geopolitical space dynamics emerges and serves as a basis for assessing space power imperatives, drawing conclusions, identifying governance paradigms and making policy recommendations.

A new space environment

The global geopolitical environment has profoundly changed since the end of the Cold War. From a ‘bipolar’ balance, driven by the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, space has moved into a multipolar realm, with an increasing number of new actors and technologies entering this domain. Whereas in the past only a few nations had access to space, today actors from around the globe, including developing countries and non-state actors, compete for access and the utilization of outer space. In order to structure this growing space activity, states are establishing national space agencies, thereby contributing to the institutionalization of space matters. In sum, as defined by Peter, we are witnessing the internationalization, globalization and institutionalization of space.

Space offers numerous opportunities and has become a critical component of the geopolitical posture of global actors. While the United States
and the EU together with China and Russia remain the leading states in space, new countries and private actors have recently entered this profitable sector. Not only has the number of space assets grown, but the pace at which they are manufactured and placed in outer space has dramatically accelerated.\(^5\) As space grows to be an important source of geopolitical influence, it is becoming more *competitive, congested* and *contested*, making operations in space more hazardous for all its users.\(^6\)

Although the need for enhanced international cooperation and better regulation in space has been extensively acknowledged by all actors, they continue to consider space as a highly strategic domain and its importance for achieving national goals has been constantly reaffirmed. In January 2011, the US Department of Defense (DoD), jointly with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) stated that ‘[s]pace is vital to US national security and our ability to understand emerging threats, project power globally, conduct operations, support diplomatic efforts, and enable global economic viability’.\(^7\) Yet, might the preservation of state’s strategic assets and interests in space be better achieved through international cooperation, instead of defensive and unilateral actions? The answer lies in clearly identifying all the variables and accurately defining the geopolitical structure to be addressed. This is precisely what this chapter attempts to do.

**Meta-geopolitics: Space power analysis**

I apply the framework of *meta*-geopolitics to analyse the space power capacities of the four leading state actors in space listed above. Although space is still dominated by states, they no longer have a monopoly on space activities. The commercial sector plays an increasingly important role in international space matters. The space industry is a driver of research and development (R&D). It has an enormous turnover and represents a core component of the global economy. In order to provide an all-encompassing picture of the current geopolitical space environment, I include two leading space companies in the analysis: EADS-Astrium and Boeing. Based on these two case studies, I draw general conclusions about the private sector in space.

I concentrate on the analysis of national space policies. As pointed out by Peter, space power cannot be reduced solely to technological supremacy but ‘[i]t is necessary that a country demonstrates some “political will” and develops the attendant national strategy and policy to exploit the elements of space power’.\(^8\) Therefore, a detailed investigation of national space policies will help identify actors’ principles and