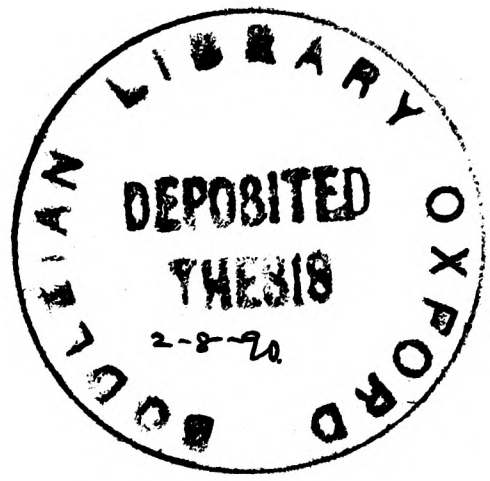
INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE

AND THE AMERICAN SPACE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

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International Prestige and the American Space Programme

This thesis considers the role of prestige in international relations through a case study of the early years of the American space programme.

After discussing the dearth of literature on the place of prestige in international relations, it examines the effect of prestige considerations on the space policy of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations. Although urged to pursue a spectacular space programme for the sake of American prestige, Eisenhower believed that international prestige was not a matter requiring government intervention. Consequently, he favoured a small civilian space programmme structured according to scientific rather than political criteria.

The opposite was the case for President Kennedy. It is shown how his experience in Congress, followed by his 1960 election campaign, gave him a different perspective on the political importance and utility of international prestige. This was appreciated by advocates of a manned lunar landing, who were able to present the Apollo project to him in terms of its international prestige value.

Finally, after noting the changing attitude towards the space programme between 1961 and 1963, as well as the diminished American interest in international prestige by 1969, the thesis compares the experiences of the two administrations to draw some conclusions about the factors necessary for prestige to play an important role in international policy.

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CHAPTER TWO

PRESTIGE

Prestige, Space and International Relations

As in recent decades the study of international relations has moved further away from its historical roots, so interest in the idea of prestige as a factor in international affairs has declined. This is unfortunate, for although consideration of the relationship between reality and illusion in international politics has to an extent been subsumed by the work on perception and deterrence that has grown out of strategic studies, an earlier idea of prestige encompassed a unique blend of political utility and moral imperative which is not fully captured by a process of quantitative calculation. As such it may possibly represent a continuing element in international politics whose neglect leaves academic consideration of the subject less complete than might otherwise be the case.

The study of prestige has not been encouraged by the changing assessments of its nature. Interest in the prestige factor in international relations was particularly notable in Britain just before World War II, where it was valued as an aura of strength which allowed much economy in the use of force. For Harold Nicolson, however, the idea of prestige contained a moral component based on the characteristic of self-restraint which distinguished it from a mere reputation for power. This view was largely rejected by Hans Morgenthau after the war, when he gave prestige a central role in his study of international relations as an active instrument of