Science, technology, & human values

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Abstrak

ABSTRAK
A significant share of the U.S federal R&D budget is devoted to large-scale, complex technological system commonly referred to as "big science". Over the last two decades, these systems have continued to grow in size, complexity, development time, and cost. At the same time, political changes in the US, particulary the concern over goverment spending and the federal budget deficit, have made it more difficult for proponents to secure and preserve support for these programs over their (increasingly long) lifetimes. Using the U.S space shuttle and space station programs as examples, the article shows that the political requirements for obtaining approval and funding for large and expensive research and development projects create conditions that reduce the likelihood that they will succeed technologically. The problems of technology-based projects like those of the US space program are in fact deeply rooted in the American political process itself.