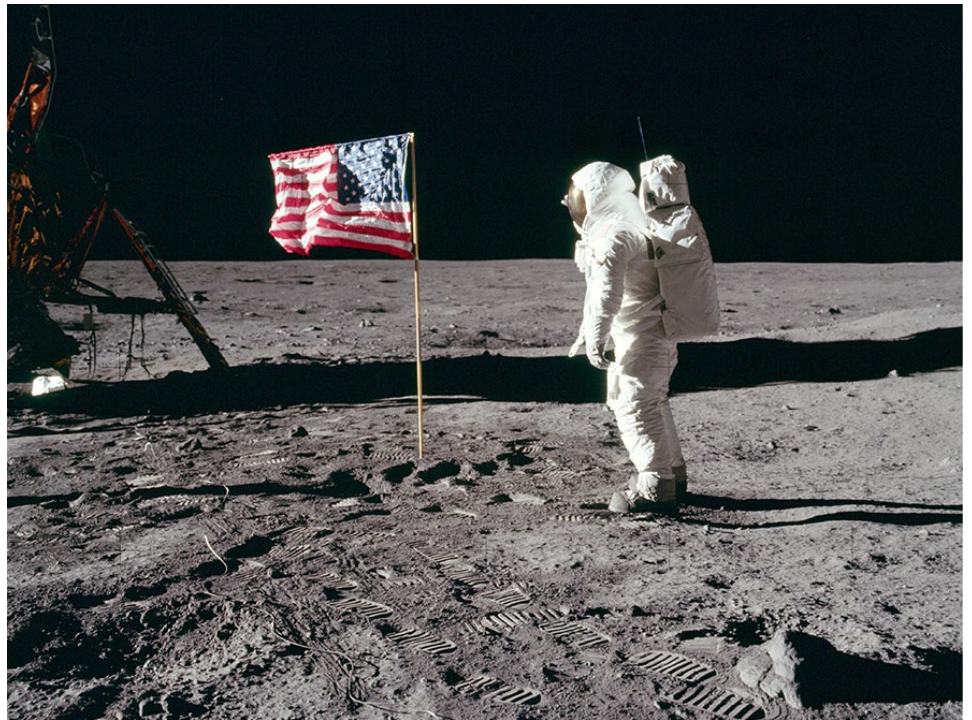


US fires starting gun in new race to the Moon

The US has announced that it will put a woman on the Moon by 2024, sparking a new space race against Russia, China and India. The winner could dominate the next era of human history.



July 20, 1969: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." — Neil Armstrong

On 20 July 1969, 600 million people across the world crowded around their television screens as Neil Armstrong took his first step on the Moon.

Fifty years on, the US has unfinished business.

"We're in a space race today, just as we were in the 1960s, and the stakes are even higher," declared Vice President Mike Pence to the National Space Council.

The US wants to return to the Moon by 2024, which is just five years' away and four years earlier than planned.

"The first **woman** and the next man on the moon will both be American astronauts launched from rockets from American soil," he said.

But can the US succeed in its new mission?

We certainly have the technology, say experts. However, NASA and private companies will have to build and test the technology on a very tight schedule and an even tighter budget.

And yet, the rapid progress of the first 1960s should not be forgotten.

"[It is] time for this nation to take a clearly

leading role in space achievement, which in many ways may hold the key to our future on Earth," said President John F. Kennedy in 1961.

Five years later, the Moon landing marked the pinnacle of the Space Race, which pitted the US against the Soviet Union in a battle for technological superiority.

As suspicion mounted between the **Cold War** foes, dominance in space was seen as essential to national security and global influence.

Their fierce rivalry gave birth to a golden age of space exploration before it fizzled out amid a series of **disasters** and spiralling costs. Eugene Cernan was the last person to walk on the Moon in 1972.

This time around, new contenders are taking the field.

In January, China shocked the world when it landed the first ever **probe** on the dark side of the Moon.

And just this week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi proclaimed his country a "**space superpower**" after it shot a satellite out

of orbit. This display of military might has reignited fears that competition among superpowers will one day lead to warfare in space.

"It is absolutely inevitable that we will see conflict move into space," says international law expert Michael Schmitt.

Lunar-cy

What is at stake? The new space race could decide not just Donald Trump's **legacy**, but which countries will control the technology to dominate the next era of human history. But this is no longer about nationalist egos. As climate change threatens our planet, could space exploration be the key to human survival?

Or could it be our downfall? India's latest move is a reminder that space could be the next great battleground. Indeed, there is evidence that Russia is testing **attack satellites** that could cause massive disruption in enemy countries. Is a new space race bad news?

Q & A

Q: What do we know?

A: The first Space Race produced many "firsts" for mankind. In 1957, Russia beat the US to launch the first satellite, Sputnik 1. Russia also put the first person into space in 1961. His

name was Yuri Gagarin. China was a late entrant to space. It put its first astronaut into orbit in 2003. India is aiming to achieve the feat by 2022.

Q: What do we not know?

A: Whether the new so-called space race will be an opportunity or a calamity for the human

race. In an era of growing nationalism and walls, space could be a new source of competition and hostility between nations. What if they could work together? However, some experts say that the race will not materialise because the US, India, China and Russia are all working on their own differing projects in their space programmes.

YOU DECIDE

1. Would you go to the Moon?
2. Would a new Space Race be good or bad for humanity?

ACTIVITIES

1. What should humanity's top three goals be in space exploration? Write down your suggestions.
2. Research one of the Apollo missions and write a news article about what happened.

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

"There is perhaps no better a demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world."
Carl Sagan, discussing a photograph of the Earth taken from space.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WORD WATCH

Woman – NASA was criticised for cancelling the first all-woman spacewalk, which was scheduled for today. It did not have enough space suits to fit the female astronauts.

Cold War – A time of heightened tension between the US and the Soviet Union from the Second World War to the latter's collapse in 1991. It is called a "cold war" because there

was no direct armed conflict.

Disasters – Eighteen astronauts have died on space missions, including one civilian teacher Christa McAuliffe who died in the 1986 Challenger disaster.

Probe – Chang'e 4 landed on 3 January 2019. It carried seeds which sprouted into the first plant grown on the Moon.

"space superpower" – India is one of the most

popular places on Earth for private companies and other governments to launch satellites into space cheaply.

Legacy – If Trump wins a second term, 2024 will be the last year of his presidency.

Attack satellites – In May 2014, the US airforce detected a Russian satellite behaving strangely. They believe it is designed to get close to other satellites and destroy them.

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 Notes

