

SPACE EXPLORATION SYMPOSIUM (A3)

Space Exploration Overview (1)

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A NEW SPACE RACE OR A RACE TO SPACE

Abstract

Launch of Sputnik into space set out a race that in many ways helped human society to understand the space technology in an ever increasing rate. Yuri Gagarin, the first man orbiting the earth, Apollo program, Mir space station, communication, surveillance, remote sensing and earth observing satellites, and Hubbell space telescope are all but a few of the achievements in space technology development and applications. The financial burden of developing and maintaining space stations however proved to be out of reach for any particular state. International Space Station due to the same reason ended up to be an international activity after a long struggle of changing face and concept. The plans to travel to the moon by China and India and announcing an Apollo like project to go back to the moon in 1994 by United States, set the stage for a new era of space race. No international cooperation and dialog was initiated or at least was not elaborate enough to be heard of. These programs seem too large for any one nation to handle in the first place, and might prove impossible if there is any desire to move beyond Earth orbit and lunar basis. The new budget announced for NASA seems to be the beginning of a new era in space activities. Firstly, even though there has been a push for more involvement of private sector in launch business for long time, but forcing to replace low earth orbit Space Shuttle services by private provider and major step in this regard. Second, an eye towards international cooperation can be seen, as well. Even though, there is not, at least at this stage a formal and serious call for international involvement to move space programs to the moon and beyond. Here, after a review of the history of the space development from international cooperation point of view, an assessment of the future of the space technology applications and programs are presented. An effort is made to show for future of presence of human in space a new paradigm in this matter is needed. Space race should give way to a fresh new cooperative approach to space endeavor, if not a large amount of financial and human resources are there to be inefficiently used.