

52nd IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)

"Can you believe they put a man on the moon?" (3B)

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GOING TO THE MOON: HOW THE PAST DREW THE FUTURE

Abstract

The 1969 arrival to the Moon marked a new era for space exploration and helped define the power balance opposing the US and URSS. In the background, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty made it clear that celestial bodies, including the Moon, could not be appropriated and were free for exploration and use by all States. Ten years later, in 1979, the Moon Agreement was adopted at the UN, which detailed the obligations surrounding the use and exploration of the Moon and its natural resources. However, only a small number of countries ratified or signed this Treaty (and, as it stands today, little more than 20 countries are parties to it). The first space race, which peaked with the Moon landing, had a strong political / soft power flavour, whereas the current second space race is led by the private sector and new countries (including emerging ones) aimed at using space for commercial purposes and sustainable development. This paper will analyse the impact of the OST on, and its compliance by, the Moon landing. It will also analyse to what extent the Moon landing played a role in the definition and approval of the Moon Agreement. For this purpose, it will examine the main provisions of both Treaties with relevance for the Moon landing and the history behind their drafting, whilst highlighting the international agreement of the US and URSS, a hopeful moment during the Cold War and the space race but partly explained by the fact that the Moon was a distant endeavour for military purposes. The paper will also compare such provisions to determine what different impact, if any, they would have on a politically charged use of the Moon as opposed to (the current) private led space exploration and the Moon Village project. Hence, this paper aims at providing a brief assessment of the history of the OST and the Moon Agreement within the greater framework of the space race and the Moon landing, as well as the motivations of going to the Moon in the 60's. By looking at the past, it will be possible to understand how it impacted current endeavours in space exploration. It will also shed some light and frame the upcoming "battle for the Moon", its differences from the Moon landing and the sufficiency (or not) of the international legal framework designed decades ago.