

# Race back to the moon deepens US-China rift

## Article

**The trend:** The latest chapter of [Space Age 2.0](#) involves plans for near-term moon trips to scope out billions of dollars' worth of lunar resources.

- With [SpaceX](#) a key partner, **NASA** is planning to send humans to the moon in 2025 as part of its **Artemis** mission to commercialize the moon and use it as a stepping stone to Mars, [per](#) Gizmodo.
- China and Russia are collaborating on a similar mission to the moon's south pole in **2026**, with additional plans for a base and space station in lunar orbit, [per](#) The Conversation.

- Additionally, Japan, South Korea, and India are also planning their own lunar missions, [per](#) Bloomberg.
- At the same time, 19 countries have joined the US's proposed **Artemis Accords**, which would govern lunar activities, including allowing nations to carve out designated areas as “safety zones,” [per](#) Bloomberg.
- China and Russia oppose the Artemis Accords, reportedly citing it as an excuse for a lunar land grab, and are inviting other countries to join their **International Lunar Research Station** project instead.

**What's the draw?** With natural resources becoming [scarcer](#) and [habitability](#) diminishing on Earth, the rest of the solar system represents a new frontier for economic growth.

- There's a theory that the moon has an [abundance](#) of **helium-3**, a non-radioactive isotope that could be used in place of uranium to fuel nuclear power plants. For context, **3 tablespoons of helium-3 is equivalent to 5,000 tons** of coal, per Bloomberg.
- Research [indicates](#) there's water under the moon's surface. If hydrogen were extracted from the water, it could power missions to Mars and beyond.
- In the not-so-distant past, the US reportedly had a secret [program](#) that explored the possibility of using nuclear bombs to tunnel into the moon to mine rare metals.

**The opportunity:** Finding minerals and other energy resources could be a game-changer for solving [clean energy](#) challenges on Earth. **It could also help provide more sustainable power for further space exploration.**

**The problem:** The entrance of [private companies](#) in space is triggering tension in an increasingly crowded orbit.

- With China accusing the US of trying to create a space-based NATO as well as filing a UN complaint against the US over a SpaceX satellite getting too close to its space station, per Bloomberg, the outlook for lunar peace is dim. And **a lack of international cooperation in space might spark conflict** that could further spill over on Earth.
- Additionally, nations at odds over resource extraction could diminish the likelihood of responsible stewardship and conservation in space.
- However, just as the private sector played a major [role](#) in global interdependence by encouraging and facilitating trade, so too could it help bring nations together in mutually

beneficial space treaties.