

A Space Race In Asia?

Feb 3, 2013 By Anita Ramachandran



On Wednesday, South Korea's space industry tasted success. The country managed to put a science satellite into its designated orbit in space.

They were just catching up with their hostile neighbor - North Korea, who had achieved a similar feat just a month earlier with their own home-made rocket launch. For South Korea, it was its third attempt. The previous tries in 2009 and 2010 had been failures. This appears to have been more about national pride than scientific achievement.

U.S & Russia: 'Sputnik Moment'

Let's go back in time between 1957 and 1975. The US and Russia (formerly Soviet Union) had defined the world's first space race.

After World War II, a 'Cold War' was raging between Russia and America, each trying to prove their might on the world stage. The competitions spilled over to space. The Space race turned out to be competition between the United States and the USSR in space exploration and technology with the main aim of being the first nation to land a human being on the moon.

While Russia beat the US to most firsts in space - from the Sputnik 1, the first satellite to go into space; it was US's Apollo 8 that managed to put the first man on the moon. Through the 1960s, technology, especially aerospace technology advanced greatly during this period. The joint Apollo-Soyuz mission in 1975 is generally considered to have ended the space race.

Asia: Ongoing Space Race

Now, let's look at Asia today. Space race is heating up among Asian nations these days. Several nations want to display their scientific prowess and make their mark in space exploration. China is planning to put a rover on the moon; while India plans to send an unmanned probe to Mars in November. With Japan, North and South Korea in the fray, it is quite a crowd.

Space Race effects

In the two instances, nations are creating their own space programs to display national pride, technology advances and military strength to their regional neighbors. These nations insist that they are pursuing new technologies for peaceful purposes.

The space race has touched our daily lives in more ways than we can imagine. From the cell phones we use, to the google maps we depend on to navigate, the sophisticated non-invasive robotic surgeries and precise weather information would not have been possible today without space race.

Remember to check out the notes section on the different types of artificial satellites that we depend on in our daily lives today.

Courtesy: NASA, CNN, others

Notes

Artificial Satellites

Satellites are objects in orbit around Earth. While **natural** satellites like the moon, comets, etc occur in nature, **artificial** satellites are man-made and are very important to Earth. Without them we would not know what the universe look like.

There are six different types of artificial satellites: communication, resource, navigation, military, scientific, and weather.

The *communication* satellites capture different radio waves and send them to various spots in the world. Over 300 communication satellites help us communicate around the world and beam satellite television into our homes.

Resource satellites help scientists monitor natural resources. Pictures taken from outer space has helped with underground oil discoveries and even studying foggy air.

Pilots and sailors depend on *navigation* satellites to help them know where they are and where they are headed while flying or at sea. The satellites can capture distress signals and send them to emergency resource stations. Remember the GPS we need for our maps? They are possible because of navigation satellites.

Military satellites help the armed forces to navigate, communicate, and spy on other countries. They take pictures and pick up the radio waves that are sent by other countries.

Scientific Satellites help scientists study Earth and outer space- planets, Sun, other solar systems, and deep space. They help find and track asteroids, comets, and black holes. Remember the Hubble Space telescope and space probes? They are two examples of scientific satellites.

Weather Satellites help scientists study different types of weather patterns. Besides predicting the weather, these satellites can track severe storms.

Written Response: (2-3 paragraphs)

- What are your thoughts on this article?
- Should humans continue going to space?
- Should countries “race” or work together?
- How might the “space race” impact your daily life?