

Artemis Space Program

How should missions to the moon be governed?

Key Concepts:

Nationalism: Pride in and promotion of one's nation, often expressed through competition with other nations for prestige, power, or resources.

Sovereignty: The right of a state (or other actor) to govern a territory and make rules within it — in space, this concept is legally unresolved.

For the first time in over 50 years, humans are heading toward the Moon. On April 1, 2026, NASA launched a rocket called Artemis II from Florida. Four astronauts are on board, including one from Canada. Their spacecraft will fly around the Moon and come back to Earth. They will not land. This mission is a test to make sure everything works before future missions try to land on the moon.

This is a big deal for the United States. Getting to the Moon shows that a country has advanced technology and can do things other countries cannot. Back in the 1960s and 70s, the US raced against the Soviet Union to reach the Moon first. That race was partly about science, but it was also about national pride: wanting your country to be seen as the best.

Today, there is a new race. China is building its own Moon program and wants to land astronauts by 2030. The US and China are not working together on this. In fact, a law in the United States prevents NASA from cooperating with China's space agency.

Over 60 other countries have agreed to the US side's rules for space, called the Artemis Accords. These rules say nations should share information, be peaceful, and be careful with space resources. But China, Russia, and some others think the US is making rules that benefit itself.



The Moon might seem far away, but the decisions being made about it affect everyone on Earth — including which countries get to be powerful in the future.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is Artemis II and why is it important?
2. What are the Artemis Accords and who has agreed to them?
3. Why are the U.S. and China not working together on their moon programs?
4. What is the connection between reaching the Moon and national pride?

Thinking Questions

1. Why do you think NASA sent astronauts to the moon and not robots?
2. Do you think space exploration is more about science or national competition? Use evidence from the reading to support your answer.
3. Why might a smaller country choose to sign the Artemis Accords even if it can't afford to send astronauts to the moon?
4. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty says no country can own the Moon. Why do you think countries are arguing about this rule now?
5. If you were designing the rules for the Moon, what would be the most important rule you would include, and why?

Further Research

1. Do further research into the Artemis Accords and the 1967 Outer Space treaty. How are they meant to govern state action and cooperation for space missions?

Artemis Accords

Outer Space Treaty (1967)

2. How might these two treaties be used to govern future space travel?