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Topic 2: The Monetization of Space

At the height of the Cold War, the United States and the USSR frantically tried to find creative ways to one-up each other. In 1957, the Soviets took the world by storm and launched the first ever man-made satellite into space and almost immediately, the Cold War took to the final frontier launching a full-fledged space race. Satellite after satellite, rocket after rocket, world superpowers tried to be the first to do this and first to do that. Technology was advancing at an incredible rate - the likes of which the world had never seen the likes of. Today, a different type of space race is in effect. The new age space race has billion dollar companies such as Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin racing to produce space-worthy equipment for NASA missions and future civilian trips to orbit. The billionaire space race is a mission for money and it doesn't stop with rockets and space shuttles[1].

One of the major efforts in the monetization of space is the plan for asteroid mining[2]. Asteroids can contain substances such as water and very valuable metals like platinum or gold. These resources, if mined correctly, can yield an incredible profit (trillions of $) for companies willing to go out of their way to extract these substances. Not only do asteroids provide a way to make money in space, but they also have an untapped potential for aiding in space exploration such as long-distance space travel. If asteroids could be used as galactic rest-stops, a place to refuel and repair, humans might venture farther and farther to learn about our world.

Another potential money-making venture is commercialized space travel[3]. With the advancement in machinery and significant testing taking place, private space companies are developing "space-taxis" that will allow civilians the opportunity to visit lower orbit and beyond. With price tags for a seat costing in excess of $250,000, there is quite a big profit to be made and many will be willing to spend it. Though there is inherent risk involved, allowing significantly more space missions and the shuttling of civilians into orbit could yield incredible findings and opportunities.

There are many considerations to take into account with this new type of venture. As the Committee On Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, it is our job to investigate whether an international stance should be taken in this context. Should asteroids belong to private companies and wealthy business people because they can get there quickest? Should they belong to countries or be shared under international law like an ocean? Should private companies be able to shuttle civilians to space, all the while exposing them to radiation and a dangerous environment? What about emitting potential pollution and debris without any type of regulation? Should the UN care about the potential issues with commercialized space travel given the potential benefits[4]? Over the course of your research, please consider this food for thought, as well as other implications of long term space travel, asteroid mining, and the billionaire space race.

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[1] https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/feb/09/new-space-race-billionaires-elon-musk-jeff-bezos
[2] https://www.digitaltrends.com/cool-tech/beginners-guide-to-asteroid-mining/
[3] https://www.universetoday.com/114965/how-private-space-companies-make-money-exploring-the-final-frontier/
[4] https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/07/06/eight-ways-commercial-space-travel-will-change-things/#1cc7a0e81961

Once again, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at Jasenders@gmail.com.

Best of luck,

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