Challenges for Belgian industry in the race for lunar exploration

Frank Monteny — BELSPO

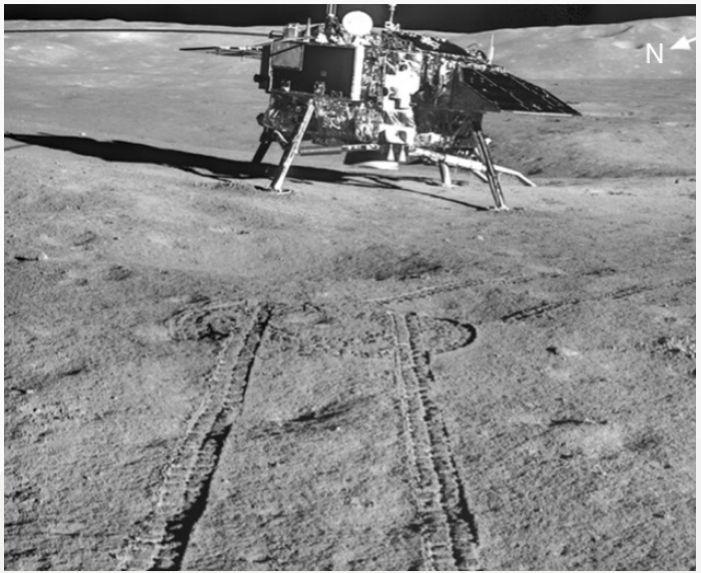
Switch to Space | 18 November 2026

Who is racing - and where is the finish line?

USA



China

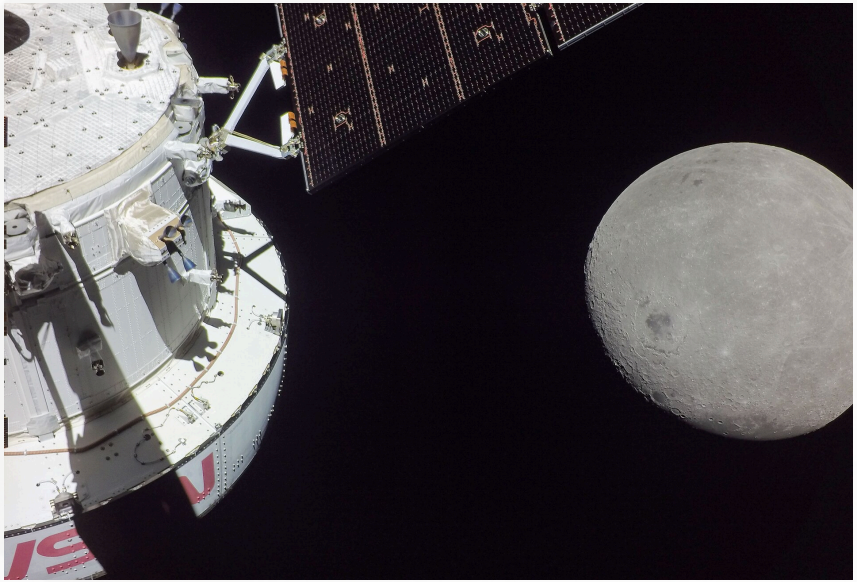


First boots → a lasting Moon base

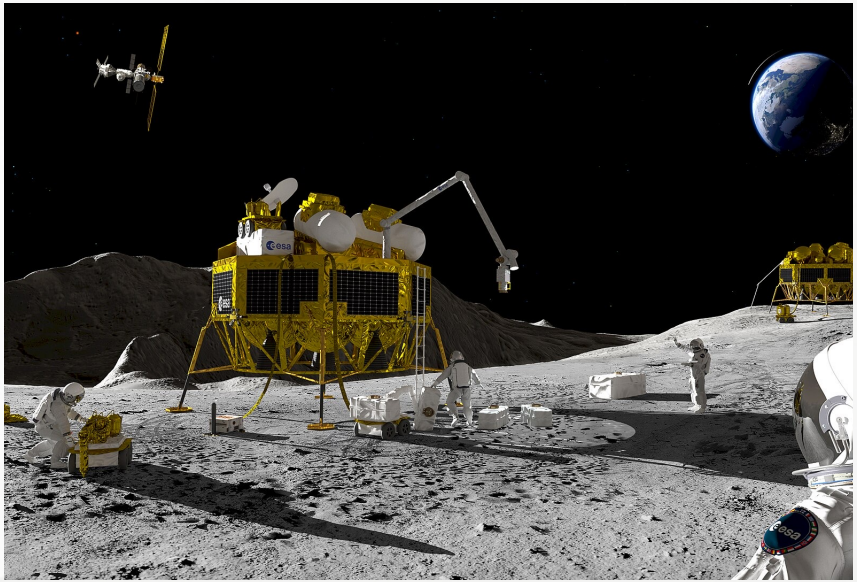
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Europe’s ticket to the Moon



European Service Module — barter for astronaut seats



Argonaut — European cargo to the Moon

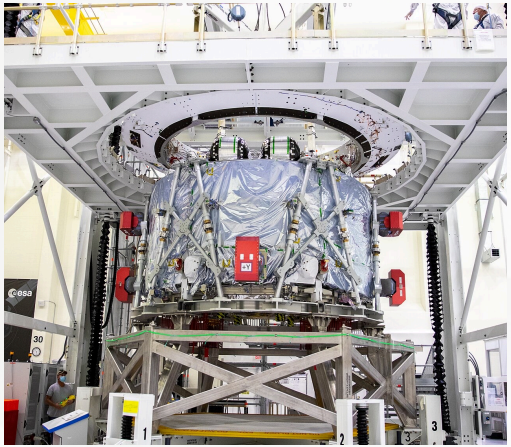
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Three doors for Belgian industry

1/ ESA programmes
geo-return: no investment, no access

2/ NASA services
Buy American Act covers goods, not services



Orion European Service Module
Sonaca & Thales Alenia Space Belgium



New Glenn fairing
Recticel foam (via US subsidiary, 2021)



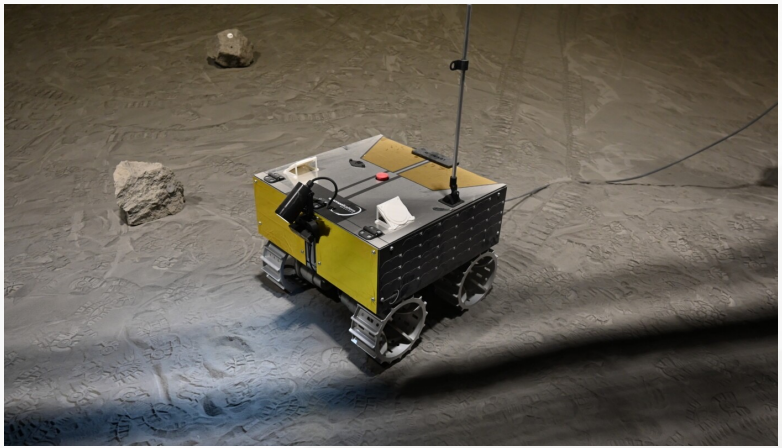
ISS roll-out solar arrays
Umicore germanium substrates

Photos: NASA/Glenn Benson · U.S. Space Force/SrA Samuel Becker · NASA (iss065e145037) — public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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Three doors for Belgian industry

3/ Commercial: buy a ride, sell a service



LUVMI-M rover
Space Applications Services, on Blue Origin's MK1 lander, early 2029

Images: Space Applications Services

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Main challenges

- High cost for first development of flight hardware for the moon coupled with an uncertainty of future exploration needs in geopolitical shifting context

- Maintain excellence in specific areas, be competitive

- We need entrepreneurs who can turn a good lab product into a competitive product on the global market

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