China and Japan are the most influential countries in Asia. Although the US is currently a space superpower, there are factors that contribute in showing how the US may be falling behind in the “space race” and may be taken over by its Asian counterparts.

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=e29de570-f446-4cc3-8d7d-de5a691037f6%40sessionmgr115&hid=101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=67732020&db=aph>

Asian countries are going at it alone. Not cooperating with (ESA) European Space Agency.

Strong link between national prestige and military operations. Asians don’t want to be seen as “falling behind or backward” Many Asian countries are even rivaling one another in terms of the “space race” (i.e. China-Japan, North Korea-South Korea, China-India) Because of this competition, some countries are hiding information from others. Creating scientific duplication that could turn into an arms race. China has its own specific follow up for a lunar-mapping program from 2007. It is planning landers, rovers, and bases. Japan and India had almost the exact same program – but don’t want to share data/experience.

Just a few years ago China finally matched the US in the number of launches. China has done spacewalks. China launched a test module in 2011 for a space station planned in 2020. They are using their own astronauts. Aiding in the production of GPS systems for military and civilian use.

China has its own “version” of ESA, the APSCO from 2008, but it is mainly comprised of less-developed countries.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/science/article/pii/S0094576512000197>

Says that low debt, flexible government spending, and an increasing GDP are factors that influence a country’s ability to pay for a “space race”. China has the highest potential for growth in government budget, and a low debt. China is also gaining momentum in space budget growth. Space exploration is high in the political agenda. Where China falls short is its ability to lead international cooperation. It is aiming at becoming a leader towards developing countries, but lacks leadership among the world’s most powerful countries. There may be Chinese astronauts on the moon by 2025-2030. China is looking for “soft power” or prestige/merit.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/science/article/pii/S0265964613000271>

The Cold-war space race was seen mainly as a competition of civilian space activities. There are three arenas in which a space race can take place. One for prestige (soft power), one for military capability (hard power), and one for international services/public goods. Japan may be trying to improve their military capability in space for their own (and international) protection, and are developing international services. (Disaster management). China seems to be building national space security as well, but not in a way to compete with other powers. China sees itself as a leader for developing countries and tries to bring their space capabilities up along with China. They strongly promote the prohibition of the weaponization of space.

“The Sleeping Dragon Wakes Up”, “Chinese space program is on a steady upward trajectory.” China is not concerned about Japan, but about the US.