

THE SPACE RACE IN THE UNITED STATES

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The Space Race was one of the most defining moments in the Cold War and in American History. During the Space Race, the United States poured money into the economy providing jobs while also inventing new technologies that could be used. The Space Race progressed America by pouring money into the economy, advancing technology, and providing a better standard of living for the Populus. The Space Race was not just a matter of national prestige but also a time of significant economic development.

The Space Race was a matter of national prestige for both the United States and the USSR, because of this, both nations spent an insane amount of money to fund their space programs. A journal article about the Space Race published by Social Sciences Quarterly states, “Ultimately, the Apollo Project became the largest nonmilitary technological endeavor by the United States in the country’s history; about \$25.4 billion were spent over the life of the Apollo Project.”¹ The Apollo Project was an enormous undertaking that required a change in priorities and the hiring of thousands of engineers and scientists, these scientists would make leaps and bounds in the research of material sciences, chemistry, and aerodynamics. The technologies developed for the Saturn V rocket could not only be used in space but could also be used for the benefit of the citizens, many of these technologies developed during the Space Race are still used today. The jobs created during the Space Race also gave the economy vital stimulation, NASA helped provide jobs for thousands of people in a wide array of fields. The Space race also required an increase in materials to build infrastructure and rockets, these needs provided many people jobs in resource extraction, metallurgy, construction, logistics, and many other fields.

1. Jessica M. Hayden et al. “Land, Wood, Water, and Space: Senator Robert S. Kerr, Congress, and Selling the Space Race to the American Public,” Social Science Quarterly 98, no. 4(2017):1190, <https://web-s-ebshost-com.eznvcc.vccs.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=7888cf3f-7066-4929-8260-cc7cb211d9c8%40redis>.

While the Space Race was a chance to show the world which country was better, it had the benefit of stimulating the US economy and boosting the research and development rate of new technologies.

The effects of the Space Race could be felt everywhere, at work and at home. In an article published by Neil M. Maher about the Space Race at home, he states, “NASA technicians retooled the Apollo space capsule's energy-efficient heating and cooling system, as well its waste management system, and installed them in a low-income housing project being built by HUD in Jersey City, New Jersey.”² These new technologies could help lower the cost of living for many people and raise the standard of living. These improvements helped the efficiency of buildings when it came to energy and allowed for cheaper buildings of the same quality. This was a time when Baby Boomers would be entering the housing market, cheaper housing would allow these new homeowners to spend more money in other places like stores in local businesses. The technologies developed during the Space Race have also set the foundation of technology used today, wireless headphones, scratch-resistant glasses, memory foam, and freeze-dried foods were invented during the Space Race and have become ubiquitous in the following decades. Without the Space Race, the world would not have had these technologies and the standard of living for everyone would have been much worse.

The Space Race also paved the way for satellites and space exploration, things that improved both the United States economy and world standing. In a speech at Rice University President Kennedy asks Congress for “an additional seventy-five million dollars—of which fifty-three million dollars is for the Weather Bureau—will help give us at the earliest possible time a

2. Neil M. Maher, “Grounding the Space Race,” *Modern American History* 1, no. 1(2018): 145, <https://www-cambridge-org.eznvcc.vccs.edu/core/journals/modern-american-history/article/grounding-the-space-race/21B933E2ECC9D097935EA6D869806266>.

satellite system for world-wide weather observation.”³ During the Space Race NASA perfected the art of launching satellites into Earth's orbit. The satellites that NASA would launch would not just look out into space, it would also look back at Earth. The Global Positioning System is an array of satellites that allow people to find where they are on Earth while weather satellites allow for meteorologists to forecast the weather with a greater degree of accuracy. Farmers can better plan when they will sow the ground if they know what the weather will be doing for the next week. People can navigate easier and have less of a chance of getting lost if they have access to GPS. None of this would have been possible without the Space race, both satellite arrays and many others benefit the common citizen and the American economy.

Some people state that the money used for the space race could have been used for different and better things. The “civil rights activists were not alone in criticizing the space race for diverting both public attention and federal tax dollars from problems closer to home.”⁴ While it is true that government money was used to fund the Space Race, its economic and technological growth was immense. Technology conceived during the space race could be used to help people at home, for example, NASA knew how to get satellites into space with an amazing amount of accuracy. Satellites can be used to help forecast the weather and observe what water is doing to help farmers with their crops. None of these advances would have happened if the Space Race never happened.

The Space Race was a very influential time for the United States and the world. This is because the Space Race shaped the American economy and kickstarted a technological

3. John F. Kennedy, “Speech at Rice University” (speech, Rice University, Huston TX, September 12, 1962)

4. Maher, 143

revolution. The United States poured money and resources into research and development to put a man on the moon. While doing this NASA employed numerous people while also developing technologies that could be used in the civilian sector to help the people. The Space Race was just a microcosm of the Cold War but left a last impact on America Culture and led to a cultural revolution. While the Space Race was not needed to advance the United States, it did light a fire under economic growth.

Bibliography

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