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Original Research

To the Moon or to the Bubble? The Space Race, the AI Boom, and the New Competition for Power

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Abstract

The drive to explore is in everyone's hearts, fueled by adrenaline from being challenged in difficult situations and by the realization of how much people have achieved during the 20th and 21st centuries. The 20th-century Space Race was about being a leader and establishing dominance in space. However, the 21st century is all about Artificial Intelligence (AI); it is growing day by day. Individuals, businesses, and governments are pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into AI to achieve different goals. SpaceX and Blue Origin are competing to capture a larger market share in the space field, developing and improving the commercial space industry. This article will include an analysis of investment decisions between Artificial Intelligence giants like NVIDIA and Google and Space Industry professionals like SpaceX. So the question is, if you had a billion dollars, where would you invest your money: to the Moon or to the Bubble?

Keywords: Space Race; Artificial Intelligence; AI Bubble; Investment; Commercial Space Industry; Apollo Program; Technological Competition

1. Introduction

Imagine you have a choice to move back to the 1950s. You can become a space engineer who helps your government overpower a rival, or you can stay here and have a career as a software developer, working to improve your company and reputation. Which option would you take? Being a software developer today can offer greater demand, higher salaries, and significant growth potential. However, being a space engineer in the 20th century would have been difficult, with few opportunities to work and the primary goal of helping your government. The world is constantly changing, and the pursuit of space exploration that once dominated the 20th century has gradually faded. Each century brings something new people want to pursue. In the 20th century, it was the domination of space; in the 21st century, it is the domination of Artificial Intelligence.

2. The Historical Foundation: The 20th-Century Space Race

All the time, people wanted to know more about everything, whether it was learning about our ancestors or how we would look in the future. The twentieth century was about World Wars, literal fights between

governments over humongous amounts of land, and, most importantly, a massive interest in space. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the US were competing to be the first nation or government to send humans into orbit (Wilkinson 2026). What caused two world governments to fight to be the first? The answer was the first major achievement: launching the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1. According to National Geographic, "The radio beeps were detected on the ground as the satellite passed overhead, so people around the world knew Sputnik was really in orbit. The U.S. was surprised that the USSR had exceeded U.S. space capabilities. Furthermore, there was the fear the Soviets could now launch a bomb onto U.S. soil without a plane or a ship" (Wilkinson 2026).

Even though it was a step closer to sending humans into space, the Soviet Union had not yet successfully sent the first human into space. In 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth and reach outer space (Wilkinson 2026). The US did not give up and kept pushing to beat the Soviet Union. It spent $25.8 billion on Project Apollo between 1960 and 1973, which is about $309 billion in 2025 dollars (Dreier 2019; Planetary Society, n.d.). In July 1969, the Apollo 11 mission became the first to land humans on the Moon (HISTORY.com Editors 2026), and the program went on to complete six crewed lunar landings (Planetary Society, n.d.).

That time was the peak of the Space Race; however, NASA's spending peaked in 1966, three years before the first Moon landing, and then fell dramatically once the race to the Moon was won (Planetary Society, n.d.). This showed how competition was impacting the world, pushing governments to pour billions of dollars into space exploration.

3. The 21st-Century Paradigm Shift: The Rise of the "AI Bubble"

Picture this: eight of the ten biggest companies in the world specialize in technology (Motley Fool 2026). That shows how important Artificial Intelligence is right now. These massive companies, such as Nvidia, Google, Apple, and Microsoft, are investing heavily in AI technologies to gain a competitive advantage, reduce labor costs, and drive innovation. Space has also entered this list: after raising a record $75 billion in its June 2026 initial public offering, SpaceX was valued at about $1.77 trillion (RTTNews 2026), and it now ranks among the ten most valuable companies in the world (Motley Fool 2026).

There is a "ring" or "loop" in which top companies pour money into AI technologies. For instance, Nvidia plans to invest up to $100 billion in OpenAI. OpenAI, in turn, will pay Oracle about $300 billion for cloud computing, and Oracle is spending about $40 billion on Nvidia chips for its data centers, which closes the loop (Steinschaden 2025). Every company is pumping money into itself, investing huge amounts of resources so that each can grow while gaining an advantage from Artificial Intelligence. But as companies continue pouring billions of dollars into AI, where is the line between technological growth and an AI bubble? The line is crossed when companies invest more money into AI based on expectations of future growth rather than actual profits, productivity, or demand. Recent research suggests that AI is a real technological revolution, but that some parts of the industry, such as thin-margin AI applications and data-center projects built on optimistic usage forecasts, show bubble-like risk (Wang and Chen 2026). Implementing AI is beneficial for several reasons, such as reducing labor costs, optimizing processes, maximizing efficiency, and seizing market dominance.

Well, all that optimism and hope for a good future might eventually collide, but we do not know when it will happen. If all repetitive tasks are taken over by Artificial Intelligence, such as data entry, basic customer service chats, text translation, content summarization, and initial drafts of code or writing, what will happen to people who were fired because companies imposed AI at work? Eventually, they would have to find another company that aligns with their previous experience, but with a small change in the job that would be hard to replace with AI. At the same time, some economists expect AI to raise overall productivity only modestly; one estimate puts the gain in total factor productivity at no more than 0.66 percent over ten years (Acemoglu 2024).

4. What Is Better to Invest In: Space or Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence is the most popular topic people are talking about and debating. Companies are improving their systems by using AI; people have AI chatbots that are little assistants. An investor wants either a company that will deliver great returns over time or one that will deliver steady daily progress. The artificial intelligence field is growing constantly, a little every day, but steadily every year. Space exploration is not as large as the AI Bubble, but it could have wonderful potential: the global space economy was worth $630 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach $1.8 trillion by 2035 (Jurgens, Brukadt 2024). If an investor wants steady ROI (Return on Investment), they might choose artificial intelligence; if they have high expectations for space exploration, they might choose the space sector.

At the moment, SpaceX is working toward a self-sustaining city on Mars (SpaceX, n.d.), but the real question is how these efforts might help humanity. Space Exploration Technologies Corp., or SpaceX, is not the only company aiming to conquer space; Blue Origin, which specializes in building reusable rockets and spacecraft to make space travel cheaper. Reusable rockets have helped commercial launch providers cut the cost of reaching low Earth orbit by about a factor of 20 compared with the Space Shuttle (Jones 2018), and space activity is gradually moving from government-funded exploration like NASA toward a commercial industry (Weinzierl 2018). In April 2026, NASA's Artemis II crew traveled farther from Earth than any humans before them, breaking a record set by Apollo 13 in 1970 (NASA 2026).

Well, what about the AI Bubble and whether or not it is a good decision to go all in? Investors are putting hundreds of billions of dollars into AI every year: private investment in AI reached $285.9 billion in the United States alone in 2025 (Stanford HAI 2026), and many investors believe these companies can keep growing. People are looking at the AI Boom, and thinking that they might be late or experiencing Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO can push companies and investors to invest in AI simply out of fear of being left behind, rather than because they have proven their investments will succeed. Goldman Sachs estimates that AI-related capital spending could reach $765 billion in 2026 alone (Lee and Greenbaum 2026). Every day, companies are building data centers, producing more GPU processors, and improving their chatbots, but when will that be too much? We never know; we might predict, but none of us is 100% certain that the AI Bubble will pop at a specific level or time. So, the question is: if you had the option to invest in Space exploration or the AI Boom, which would you choose and why?

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