Navigating Geopolitical Realities

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Among the rigid stance against China, the Artemis Accords are a product of the Trump administration upon which the Biden administration continues to build today. Initially perceived by rivalling space powers Russia and China as an articulation of "America First" policies, the accords have evolved into a diplomatic instrument, with the U.S. strategically seeking endorsements from allies and key spacefaring nations to shape a new chapter in astropolitics and international space regulation. One of its most recent signatories, as of September 2023, is Germany.

Functioning as a multilateral framework led by the United States, the Artemis Accords promote ideals of transparency between spacefaring nations and the peaceful utilization of outer space and its resources. Simul-

taneously, the U.S. has strategically acted as the guiding force in establishing fundamental principles for the signatory countries, which, at the beginning, showcased only 8 signatories but evolved to include one state after the other to its 33 signatories today, including the UK, France, Italy, Spain, India, Japan, and South Korea. Notably, the continued absence of Russia and China among the signatories sheds light on the geopolitical dynamics at play. In contrast, Russia and China have invited countries to join them on their International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) program.

Central to the Artemis Accords is the regulation of resource extraction from celestial bodies, namely the moon, Mars, asteroids, and comets. This is an area largely unaddressed by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. In this legally uncharted territory, the accords serve as a contemporary charter, providing a framework for responsible and collaborative resource utilization, effectively giving the new space economy a legal footing and a statement of international political support. Through this, the US also follows its national interests, as it is home to the largest private space sector with companies like Blue Origin or SpaceX acting as ways for the United States to further establish its footing in space.

Germany's decision to join the Artemis Accords is a strategic move, prompted by the evolving global rivalries in the realm of astropolitics and affected by the developments of Russian aggression and Chinese rivalry. Instead of succumbing to apprehensions about potential tensions with Russia and China or endlessly grappling with the disappointment of the missed opportunity of presenting a unified European standpoint from the get-go, Germany aligns itself pragmatically with U.S. aspirations. Arguably, a more unified European stance could have preceded individual entries into Artemis with a collective European strategy maximizing its bargaining power, ensuring European interests are prioritized within Artemis.

This strategic commitment from Germany, although late, was a necessary one, as it propels Germany into the forefront of lunar exploration and space resource extraction and utilization, positioning it to benefit from collaborative space initiatives and the regulatory framework outlined in the Artemis program. This will no doubt also be understood as a strong signal in the growing German private space sector and in the West as a clear indication of Germany's partnership amidst an increasingly multipolar world.