

# What was the impact of the Moon Landing on US domestic and foreign affairs?

The Moon Landing in 1969 was a statement of American Foreign Policy and a huge advancement in technology that impacted both US domestic and foreign affairs. The moon landing which was a product of the space race between the 'superpowers' America and Russia proved to be a strong political statement in foreign policy and a method of political reassurance regarding their domestic affairs.

During the Second World War the United States spent vast sums of money on developing new weapons. Their main achievement was the atom bomb which they used against Japan in 1945. However it was during the Cold War that America felt a sense of competition as their fellow superpower, Russia began to compete in producing deadly weapons and means to deliver them. This was known as the 'arms race'. The arms race led to many inventions, technological advancements such as computers and the internet and eventually the moon landing.

Many technologically advances were made prior to the arms race during World War 2. These were largely originating from Germany. America was impressed by the Nazi's newly established aircraft and rockets, especially the V1 and V2 rockets. In 1945, the Soviets and Americans competed to capture German rocket scientists. The US got Werner Von Braun, head of the German research team. This was their first successful, competitive step towards the Moon Landing and led to a significant impact on US foreign affairs.

However, the US did little about rocket technology until the Russians launched the first Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile and the first man made earth satellite, sputnik in 1957. This created panic in America as they feared the Soviets could launch a rocket attack from space. This panic caused a dramatic increase in spending on missile technology. Late in 1957, the Americans launched their first ICBM, the Atlas rocket. By 1958, they sent up their first earth satellite and Eisenhower established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to encourage space exploration. But the Soviets were still ahead. In 1960, their Luna II rocket hit the moon and in 1961 their astronaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space. This proved that the Moon Landing was predominantly a foreign battle and was hugely significant in US foreign affairs.

The successes and developments made by Russia encouraged the US to get ahead and spurred President Kennedy to promise in 1961 that the US would put a man on the moon by the end of the '60's. Clearly eager to impress he stated, 'No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important to the long-range exploration of space; and none will be more difficult to accomplish.' As difficult as it may have seemed America were fast establishing new technological ideas and steps towards achieving their goal. To land men on the moon, NASA first had to find out if they could survive in space and be safely returned to the earth. The Mercury Programme (1959-1963) flew six manned test flights. As part of the programme, John Glen became the first American to orbit the earth in 1962.

The Apollo Programme was also established in order to achieve President Kennedy's aim of landing a man on the moon within a decade. First conceived during the Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower as a three- man spacecraft which was the Mercury Programme still felt a little underdeveloped until Apollo was further developed and dedicated to President John F. Kennedy's national goal of "landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth". Project Mercury was followed by a two man project Gemini which saw first the first American 'space walk' and proved that men could survive a long period of weightlessness. These were looked on as research methods that made their goal

all the more tangible as they hoped for huge advancements in domestic and foreign affairs.

The Apollo Programme used the Saturn V, the most powerful rocket ever built. It was designed by Werner Von Braun. It held one million gallons of fuel and carried a Command Module where the astronauts lived and a Lunar Module which was to break away from the Command Module and land on the moon. To test each step, there were ten Apollo missions before the moon landing. NASA used the lessons from each mission to improve their design of rockets and modules and to ensure a success against its foreign rival USSR. Apollo 7 (1967) was disastrous, as a fire broke out on the spacecraft and all three men were tragically killed. In December 1968, Apollo 8 carried three men into orbit around the moon and returned them safely to earth. In 1969, Apollo 10 took another three men within nine miles of the moon's surface and returned safely. By July 1969, everything was in place for the final attempt, an attempt to not only put a man on the moon but to ensure America's superior status and create an impact in both foreign and domestic affairs.

On 16<sup>th</sup> of July, Apollo 11 lifted from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. It carried three men, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins. After orbiting

the earth, rockets sent the Command Module, Columbia, towards the moon at 25,000 mph. After a three day journey they orbited 69 miles above the moon before actually targeting the moon itself. Collins remained in Columbia but Armstrong and Aldrin transferred to the Lunar Module. The modules eventually separated and the Lunar Module was fast approaching the moon's surface, it was Armstrong who directed the module to the flat area in the Sea of Tranquillity. As they landed Armstrong reported that 'the eagle had landed'. He managed to record this historic moment and stated that it was 'one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind.' It certainly was a huge advancement for man and an advancement that greatly affected US domestic and foreign affairs.

The moon landing greatly affected foreign affairs between America and Russia. The US proved more powerful by achieving their goal by putting a man on the moon. The US had now outstripped Soviet Russia in the space race. The achievement did not only attempt to mark an American superiority but it was interpreted as a victory for capitalism and democracy. It could be argued that this was in fact a way of improving their state in foreign affairs as they had been disintegrating as a result of the failure during the Vietnam War. They appeared under researched and underdeveloped with regards to technology, weaponry and aircraft however the Moon Landing was a way of abolishing this and

creating a positive image for US thus creating an improvement in US foreign affairs.

The Moon Landing also proved significant throughout US Domestic affairs. It proved that the US Government were willing to spend vast sums of money into the project after Kennedy was assassinated. They proved their determination in fulfilling Kennedy's promise and upstaging the Soviets. It improved domestic affairs in the US as it became the source for great technological advancements and developments. The US became home to many new technological inventions and has brought us the Apple products and Microsoft products we all use today. Although vast sums of money were spent during the Space Race it can be argued that they were in fact a national investment.

The Moon Landing definitely started off as a predominantly foreign affair and a result of Superpower tension. Eisenhower and Khrushchev encouraged further friction within the arms race and eventually established the Space Race. Although the American victory was insignificant in the Cold War, it was a huge propaganda victory and was a victory for capitalism and democracy.

Domestically, they proved that they were willing to devote resources and money in achieving a national promotion. It cannot be denied that the Moon Landing heavily impacted both foreign and domestic affairs for the United States.

