



Opening Statement of Chairman Mike Haridopolos

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing

Strategic Trajectories: Assessing China's Space Rise and the Risks to U.S. Leadership

December 4, 2025

The topic we will address today is nothing less than a critical issue and defining challenge for this committee: understanding China's bold ambitions and addressing their unapologetic drive for dominance in space.

We are at the start of the next age of exploration. One where humanity is not just observing the cosmos but acting on its observations and beginning to inhabit it.

For those new to this issue, the question we should be asking as we explore beyond our planet is: Will humanity carry forward the American values of economic and political freedom or those of the Chinese Communist Party?

For generations, the United States led humanity into space with unmatched ingenuity and without a true rival.

However, that situation is changing as China moves methodically, relentlessly and ruthlessly to tighten its grip on space capabilities and seek the strategic advantages it confers by any means possible.

History reminds us that great-power competition shapes the destiny of civilizations. Just as the rivalry between Spain and Great Britain defined the oceans in the 16th and 17th centuries, the competition between the United States and China will define the space domain today. Whoever leads beyond Earth will shape the future of Earth.

Now, let's go back to 1957. China's ambitions stretch back decades. Moments after Sputnik shook the world, Chairman Mao declared, "We too will make satellites." That declaration ignited a vision that has never faded.

In 1992, the People's Republic of China set in motion Project 921, its human spaceflight program, which continues on to this day.

In recent years under President Xi, China's pace has surged, in part due to his declaration of a Chinese "space dream", which transformed aspirations into a coordinated national mission for dominance.

China's commercial space sector has since surged forward, aimed to compete with America's world-leading commercial space industry. This is not accidental. It is strategic.

And to be clear, the objective is not merely to keep up. Their objective is to outpace, outmaneuver, and ultimately defeat the United States.

But America is not standing still. In my district, at the Kennedy Space Center, we surpassed 100 launches just two weeks ago. Roughly 95 percent of those launches came from a single commercial company, SpaceX, who first launched in 2006. China is not even close at around 73 launches.

Still, Beijing is pressing ahead. Their plans include landing taikonauts on the lunar surface by 2030 and constructing a research base at the Moon's South Pole by 2035.

They are also achieving historic firsts. China has already returned Lunar samples from the far side of the Moon – the first to do so.

Next, they intend to launch a Mars sample-return mission in 2028, a timeline that may beat the United States.

In low Earth orbit, while we plan to deorbit our own space station, China has maintained a continuous human presence on its own space station since 2021, with taikonauts serving six-month crew rotations.

In the coming years, China intends to deploy its own space-based internet service and expand its global alternative to GPS.

And while this committee's jurisdiction covers commercial and civil space programs, we cannot ignore the People's Liberation Army's rapidly advancing space and counterspace capabilities. Their systems are designed to threaten, disrupt, and if necessary, take out U.S. assets in space.

So again, I ask: Will humanity carry forward the American values of economic and political freedom or those of the Communist Chinese Party?

The reality is stark. China poses a serious immediate and long-term threat to U.S. leadership in space.

Today's witnesses will provide us with a more detailed overview of China's trajectory: its history, strategy, and intentions.

They will also share recommendations about how this committee and Congress should respond to this mercurial challenge.

I thank our distinguished panel of witnesses for being here today and sharing your expertise with the subcommittee.

I look forward to a serious and productive discussion of the challenges before us.