



First Space Colony: What Political System Could We Expect?

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ABSTRACT

The article argues that near-future space colonization missions exceeding a certain number of colonists raise new questions about social organization and colony governance challenges. Although small crewed missions can be governed by a mission commander, dozens of people living on another celestial body will naturally create a community, and hundreds will require intentional implementation of a governance model as such a colony will become a society. We assess in detail the possible implications of four theoretical approaches to space colony governance that reflect current debates in the spaceflight community: governance by science and engineering, libertarianism, national exceptionalism, and cosmopolitanism. Although we openly argue for cosmopolitan ideas to be part of any space-related governance questions, we build the argument on Ulrich Beck's thoughts that a cosmopolitan outlook should become part of our current territorially divided national identities, as both are mutually constituted. The article shows how each governance approach has certain drivers capable of proceeding with space colonization, while each of them is insufficient on its own to provide a sustainable future without a possible collapse of the colony. In the end, we introduce a consistent cloud of thoughts raising various dilemmas, to trigger a debate over particular models that space colonies could be governed by, rather than proposing a complex universal governance model. It helps us to demonstrate why cosmopolitan ideas are so important, while the energy found in business, national exceptionalism, and scientific ingenuity is also necessary.

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1. Introduction

We plan to send humans to live on other planets. Yet, we have not discussed in broader political and social science perspectives how these colonies will be governed, with the exception of some recent thoughtful contributions [1,2] or proposals to divide the areas into economic zones or parks [3]. The objective of the article is not to discuss various political systems as potentially the most desirable for space colony governance, but rather to open the discussion as to how the *technical* specificity of the upcoming space colonization presents us with a very neat *societal* challenge of how to colonize the Moon or Mars and establish a flourishing colony. This task might look quite technical, but the challenge of social organization to ensure sustainability and peace, and keep people psychologically and emotionally stable, is a great challenge. As such, it can help us focus on what is important in our lives back on Earth.

We highlight a key distinction. Five to 10 astronauts selected according to their expertise and sent by their national or any capable space agency or company are a mission *crew* consisting of a group of people. Sending 100 astronauts in the first SpaceX's Starship will create a *community* and several hundred in several Starships a *society*. In the following text, we work with the term *community* as a naturally emerged social entity, and with the term *society* as an entity intentionally governed.

The recently proposed security zones from the Artemis Accords might work as a conflict precaution, but they could also be a path toward conflict [4]. The Accords and the motivation behind them mix a libertarian business model, military-industrial complex forces, and American exceptionalism to circumvent the United Nations, where US representatives have not mentioned such intentions in recent years even once. NASA has been an instrument of foreign policy for decades [5], but it depends on what values such foreign policy follows. The recent move with the Artemis Accords¹ not only enables businesses to

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¹ At the time of writing, our knowledge of the Artemis Accords is very limited, as the main information has been disclosed to Reuters by anonymous insiders only.