

Service Article:

Topic: Billionaire Space Race between Musk and Bezos



Elon Musk is one of the richest men in the world thanks to the success of his company, Tesla – one of the most well-known electric vehicle companies worldwide. Musk’s influence spread even further when he acquired one of the largest social media platforms in 2022, formerly known as “Twitter” and currently called “X”. SpaceX, a company that Musk founded in 2002 is becoming more and more intriguing in recent years. In the past five years the company has launched 4,500 Starlink satellites, which accounts for “more than 50% of all active satellites orbiting the Earth” (Gabbatt, 2023). The satellites have the capability to deliver access to the internet to almost anywhere on the globe, access to intercontinental communications, and even the possibility to intervene in military conflicts (most notably in the war between Ukraine and Russia). Musk’s dominance in this field has caused people like Victoria Samson, director at the Secure World Foundation, questioning voicing concern over having “that much power in one-decision-maker” (Gabbatt, 2023).

Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and third richest man in the world, is hoping to rival Musk’s SpaceX. Bezos just sent up his own satellites into space roughly a week ago, although he had planned to send satellites into space last year. Amazon’s Project Kuiper had intended to launch its satellites in 2022, but the rocket carrying Kuipersat-1 and Kuipersat-2 had a launch failure. Bezos’s company that makes the rockets, Blue Origin Company, has yet to successfully

launch anything into orbit and is apparently three years behind schedule. Despite these setbacks, Bezos still plans to launch over 3,000 satellites by 2029. However, when comparing Bezos Blue Origin Company to Musk's SpaceX, SpaceX has a clear "first-mover" advantage.

SpaceX has requested U.S. government authorization to send a total of 42,000 satellites into orbit and currently accounts for more than "50% of all active satellites orbiting the Earth" (Gabbatt, 2023). This raises the question of how much space is there actually is in the space arena. Moriba Jah, a professor of aerospace engineering, explained that it's possible that "some orbital highways have reached that capacity" and warned that some countries are "doing whatever they can to occupy orbital space, to claim it as their own" (Gabbatt, 2023). Not only are satellites taking up space, but also over 30,000 pieces of space debris – usually from rockets or abandoned satellites.

Source:

Gabbatt, A. (2023, October 15). *Billionaire space race: Can bezos's project Kuiper catch up to Musk's Starlink?* The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2023/oct/15/billionaire-space-race-can-bezoss-project-kuiper-catch-up-to-musks-starlink>