

# Moon Jazz

by Adriano V. Autino

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It is surely too soon to judge the space politics of the new US administration. But it is not too soon to reason about the new administration, and to try and understand if the hopes of a fast and substantial opening of the space frontier are destined to increase or to diminish. We are far from hoping that the republican US government is less linked to the interests of the economic and bureaucratic power lobbies (both public and private) with regards to the previous democratic administration, despite the hopes of progress from us Terrestrials: whether it is a little more or a little less linked does not seem to me an interesting topic. But no doubt that the US space strategy interests all Terrestrials, and not only Americans: even if the rest of us Terrestrials do not vote for the American president, neither do we have the possibility to express an opinion on NASA's strategies which will be heard, NASA is nowadays the leader, for better or for worse, of human enterprise and adventure in space. We have therefore a great interest in opening a discussion and involving all well meaning people that wish to contribute, in any way, to the expansion of human civilization outside of the mother planet. One thing is clear and without doubt, that the existing economic powers, both public and private, are opposed to progress:

- i. The oil lobbies have blocked progress for years, if not in research then in the industrial development of motors fed by fuels not derived from oil.
- ii. The same oil lobbies fight terrestrial photovoltaic growth as if it were a plague and also fight the still more promising space photovoltaic stations (SPS and LPS).
- iii. The producer lobbies of expendable rockets hinder the development of fully reusable vehicles in every way they can (SSTO).
- iv. The government bureaucracies, nowadays the uncontested lords of space access, fight the growth of technologies able to reduce the cost to orbit by that mythical and yearned for factor of 10 that would open the space frontier to the many private players.
- v. The military bureaucracies and the weapons lobbies, their worthy accomplices, are firmly aimed at reaffirming their uncontested dominion in space. Sure they do not like the liberalization of the access to space and privatization of the space.

As anyone can see, the interest of the strong economic powers perfectly marries the interests of the bureaucracies, in spite of what they want make us to believe, the self-proclaimed champions of freedom on one side, and the self-proclaimed champions of democracy on the other side, engaging civil society in exciting

election games. So busy in following the fascinating television fights between gladiators of (opposite?) factions, we do not notice how those gentlemen keep on, after all, snatching true progress and development possibilities from society. But, we've said it many times, the peculiarities of this historical period are such that whoever is obstinate enough to hinder and delay the possible steps forward, by imposing obsolete, polluting and cumbersome technologies, not only becomes guilty of shabby and narrow-minded egotism but of true and just genocide (so often seen in history, in spite of everything, even if only in hindsight, this has been played in favour of progress): the difference between continuation of development and extinction never has been, in fact, for our species, so close as in the current historical conjuncture.

*It would be time, already today, to find ourselves working in a lunar city-port, listening to an old Elvis Presley song, and feeling nostalgia for the more ingenuous and more trusting world of 50 years ago, when gasoline cost 100 Lire/liter, and we still had no news about the greenhouse effect, nor about AIDS. And then, by a somersault in low gravity, to play a few notes of a moon-jazz tune, that speaks to us about a new confidence and progression...*

But moon-jazz does not exist, and God only knows whether we will listen to it and play it during our life, we, who were children when Elvis sang. Personally, and also politically (once it was said that the private is political:-)), I would want that the true problems were faced, and that the spite politics was stopped. Instead of always trying to blame someone, maybe we should try sometimes to make a present to someone? For instance, for a long time we, astronautical new-humanists -- especially the ones who feel more ideologically libertarian -- we complain of the excessive weight of public money in the space market. The space market, in fact, remotely resembles a free market economy, in this market there has been growth in the countries who are self-proclaimed champions of liberalism. Also, the fraud against tax payers, considered as cows to milk, not worth of the minimal return. Then the current move of Bush -- if I'm making a mistake I will be happy to apologize -- makes me think about a spite: "Is it so? And then we begin to close the tap!"

But, if, as it seems demonstrated, the big constructors of expendable rockets (Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Matra Marconi, DASA, etc) do not have any interest in favor of growth in astronautics, who can take up the challenge?

I have the impression (also in this case I hope to receive refutations) that the small enterprises with an ideological astronautical vocation (Kistler, SpaceDev, etc) they are still too small, weak, and isolated. If US Congress, NASA and the big corporations stand with fists on thighs and say: "Let's now see what you are able to do!?" it is as if they put a child at the wheel of a car. Supposing that he succeeds to ignite the engine and at once overrevs it, they will then twist him round their little fingers screaming, triumphant: "You see? You are not capable!!"

I never trusted the bombastic challenges, neither the good faith of the ones who launch them, nor the incredible and miraculous growth of the challenged ones. And I can even fill nicer the ones which, for pride or superficiality, takes up the challenges, but they surely don't act in a rational way..

The sudden backwards steps of the bureaucracies, when they until yesterday occupied all the available spaces, create holes, and often the depression in the market, rather than help the market growth. If, then, we are facing false backwards steps, finalized very more substantial to ahead steps in the military expense, then, friends, once more we would be pulled our legs.

I believe, instead, in the transition programs, than aware and serious persons, if they share a goal, can agree and put in action. Then, if indeed mr. Bush and NASA think seriously to a backwards step of the state in order to leave space to privates, and if indeed the closure of the X-33/X-34 program means the end word to the Lockheed project (it was known since the beginning that it would not work), to give space to serious and motivated astronomical-entrepreneurs, let them demonstrate it, preparing a transition program, including at least:

1. The progressive (and not sudden) reduction of the state engagement.
2. Helps and tax-discounts for the companies, not only Americans, which mean to contribute to the development of technologies for lessening the cost to orbit.
3. Decrease of the military expense in favor of the civilian one, to give impulse to the mercantile austronautics.
4. To make available structures of education and training, payd education stages (a good way to use the public money), at NASA (and why chez ESA and NASDA?), for the same entrepreneurs and their personnel.
5. The proposal of a similar plan to the other countries holding important space agencies, showing themselves once (culturally) worthy of their position of planetary leaders.

As far as the companies that hold the power of life and death on technologies and progress, such companies are however composed of persons, even they equipped (by the good Lord or by the evolution) of reasoning capability, and therefore of the faculty to change idea and to undertake new directions. A very good move, in their same interest, would be the one to invest part of their exterminated capitals in the new enterprises, equipped of "fresh" ideology, helping their growth. In fact only an old pig-headed, an incurable sectarian and incapable to see opportunities of the future, could think that, making so, he will help a competitor to send him in misery: he will instead help the progress, the birth of new markets, and will justify, face to the history, his own same existence, as an entrepreneur.

Enlarging a little bit the speech, we could also say that what how of ideologically else it remains in the world (i.e. China), could also burn some stages of the competition (this is the thesis of Michael Martin-Smith), forcing the bored western world to re-take the path with renewed engagement: the same that made us to reach the Moon in few years, a cool 32 years ago.

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[The English version was revised by [Ben Croxford](#)]