

China scores a big win in race with US for influence on the moon

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China notched a diplomatic victory in its race against the U.S. for influence in space, with Egypt agreeing to support Beijing's plan for a proposed project on the moon.

The China National Space Administration on Wednesday signed a

memorandum of understanding with the Egyptian Space Agency that will see them cooperate on the International Lunar Research Station, a Chinese-backed base that's expected to begin operation around 2030.

The [agreement](#) builds on their collaboration, which saw a Chinese rocket send an Egyptian satellite into orbit from a launch center in the Gobi Desert on Monday.

That launch promotes "a shared future for mankind" and "fully demonstrates China's demeanor as a major country and the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits," said Kong Dejun, head of the international economic cooperation department at the Ministry of Commerce, according to a report by state-run broadcaster CCTV.

The [new space race](#) is adding to tensions between Beijing and Washington, as both compete to win allies in their plans to send astronauts to the moon in coming years. The agreement between China and Egypt comes just a week after the U.S. recorded a diplomatic victory of its own by getting Angola to [support](#) the Artemis Accords, a NASA-backed plan to establish principles for exploration on the moon and elsewhere in space.

China said in 2021 it intends to work with Russia on the ILRS and since then has been seeking support from other nations, though with much less success than the U.S. Artemis signatories include traditional U.S. allies such as Japan and the U.K., but also China's fellow BRICS members Brazil and India.

While just a handful of countries have said they will support the ILRS, China is gradually making inroads. It signed a cooperation agreement with South Africa in August, and accords with Azerbaijan, Belarus and Pakistan in October.

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