# China extends lunar cooperation amid strategic push for moon base



China is advancing its lunar ambitions beyond scientific exploration to establish a strategic foothold on the Moon, signalling a new phase in international space competition. The China National Space Administration (CNSA) recently extended access to samples of moon rocks collected during its Chang’e-5 mission to select foreign research institutions, including two universities in the United States funded by NASA: Brown University and the State University of New York at Stony Brook. These institutions are among seven international entities granted the privilege to study these lunar samples, alongside partners in Japan, France, Germany, the UK, and Pakistan.

This move marks a shift in China’s space diplomacy, showcasing its growing confidence and technological capabilities. Wu Weiren, the chief designer of China’s lunar exploration programme, told Reuters, “It seems the United States is quite closed off now despite being open in the past, while we were closed off in the past and are now open; this is because of the increase in our nation’s overall strength and consequent rise in self-confidence.” He further remarked that growing US “isolationism” could hinder its own space ambitions.

This scientific outreach coincides with China’s broader strategic plans, which include collaborating with Russia’s Roscosmos agency to build a nuclear-powered lunar base by 2035. This partnership comes amid Western sanctions isolating Russia’s space sector, providing Moscow with a valuable collaboration opportunity. The proposed International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) project aims to develop permanent infrastructure on the Moon, including nuclear reactors, solar arrays, and potentially pipelines, enhancing its sustainable presence beyond Earth’s orbit.

China’s upcoming Chang’e-7 mission, scheduled for 2026, will feature six international payloads, and preparations are underway to include cooperation with ten countries for the subsequent Chang’e-8 mission planned for 2028. Pei Zhaoyu, chief engineer for Chang’e-8, confirmed that the ILRS energy supply could rely on extensive solar networks or nuclear power systems, with nuclear energy emerging as a promising choice. Wu Weiren acknowledged Russia’s advanced expertise in nuclear space technology, expressing optimism for renewed Sino-Russian cooperation in this field.

The Moon is understood to be rich in resources such as helium-3, a non-radioactive isotope rare on Earth but abundant on the lunar surface. Helium-3 has significant potential as a fuel for nuclear fusion, with around 100 tons estimated to provide power for the entire Earth’s population for one year. It is valued at approximately $40,000 per ounce, and one ton combined with deuterium can theoretically generate 1,000 megawatts of energy to meet Earth’s power needs for a full year.

China’s expansive “555 Project” strategy intends to involve 50 countries, 500 research institutions, and 5,000 scientists in its growing space activities. This ambitious plan unfolds alongside NASA’s accelerated Artemis programme, which aims to return humans to the Moon this year. The evolving landscape hints at an intensifying lunar competition where control over critical resources and strategic partnerships could shape humanity’s next major endeavour in space exploration.

Through these initiatives — trading lunar samples today and planning nuclear outposts tomorrow — China is positioning itself as a significant player in the future of lunar science and utilisation, signalling a transition from scientific missions to establishing a lasting presence on the Moon.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Lunar_Exploration_Program> - This URL supports the overview of China's lunar exploration program, including its missions like Chang'e-5, which collected moon rocks, and its strategic advancements in lunar science.
* <https://www.asiapacific.ca/publication/china-global-powers-celestial-ambitions> - This URL explains China's ambitious space plans, including cooperation with Russia on lunar missions and the aim to become a space superpower by 2045.
* <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2025/01/china-space-science-dominance-moon/402294/> - This webpage discusses China's strategic plan to become the world's preeminent space power, focusing on lunar and Mars missions, as well as the development of a permanently manned lunar research station.
* <https://www.sustainability-times.com/low-carbon-energy/us-in-total-shock-china-and-russias-2028-plan-to-build-a-nuclear-reactor-on-the-moon-stuns-the-global-space-community/> - It details the plan by China and Russia to build a nuclear reactor on the Moon by 2035, supporting the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) initiative.
* <https://www.nasaspaceflight.com/2023/12/china-roundup-2/> - This article provides insights into China's space activities, including its recent launch successes and preparations for future missions, which are part of its broader strategic plans in space exploration.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the article itself, providing specific information about China's lunar ambitions, including its collaborative efforts with Russia and its expanding space diplomacy.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMizwFBVV95cUxQUEhYVkFvVV9LNVBuLVFCQWFsR1gySzgzbklBLVN5NHNNb2lTcHNVeFRCTXZMMVJYZkw3X0dubEZYdGtyWXQ4VVlkT1c3OW9sN3huaEdSbmZfQVJCbzMwTVJMeGN4azBJRjNTZDVfR0tPT0VKVThIZkRvVHVNRkxqMmZfM0JaVFhKTU10dk80cmpaUm5XRy1aWDhtYzBOS3FrTVZjaWlSTWZuWWJ1OTd1UTdFY0M5ZDJRR2diOG5Cb05nM3ZVeWY0NVlHM2xyU3M?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data