

# U.S. lands spacecraft on the moon for the first time since 1972

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Visualization of water found by The Lunar Exploration Neutron Detector on the Moon

Hailey Brown — Fifty years after the space race between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R to land humans on the moon, more and more countries are sending unmanned spacecraft to the lunar surface and planning to send astronauts within a few years. The [commercial craft Odysseus](#) is the first spacecraft to reach the moon's surface from the U.S. since Apollo 17's landing in 1972.

The commercial spacecraft landed close to the moon's south pole, which contains ice and rocks predicted to be 3.85 billion years old. The resources found in this area of the moon are of scientific interest to many countries, and access to them would enhance a country's [material power](#). Alongside the United States, India, Russia, and China have also landed spacecraft on the moon in pursuit of these resources. The hydrogen and oxygen present on the Moon can make rocket fuel, so spacecrafts on longer journeys could potentially refuel there, rather than bringing the large supply they would ordinarily need. A number of rare earth metals are also present on the moon. The ancient rocks offer the chance to learn more about the Earth's history. Just as countries seek to expand their access to Earth's finite resource-rich territory, they are also looking to the moon. Utilizing these resources requires

[advanced technology and a presence on the moon](#). While the Nova-C lander Odysseus's mission was cut short on Tuesday due to a sideways landing, a common issue with unmanned spacecraft, NASA has plans for a longer, 100-day mission on the moon's south pole at the end of the year.

Odysseus's mission and others like it are essential to enhance [relational power](#), which is how material power is put into action through relations with other countries. If the United States succeeds at putting man back on the moon and harnessing the water and other materials it offers, it will advance its position in relation to other countries. NASA's goal is to establish a permanent presence on the moon. This would give the U.S. an advantage over all other countries at developing new technologies, accessing finite lunar resources, and building a greater scientific understanding of the moon and our world.

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