# First off - Asteroid Mining

**Commercial asteroid mining is coming now – lower costs and improving tech make it economically viable – and the legal basis is already in place**

**Gilbert 21** alex gilbert, is a complex systems researcher and a PhD student in space resources at the Colorado School of Mines. "Mining in Space Is Coming." Milken Institute Review, April 26, 2021, [www.milkenreview.org/articles/mining-in-space-is-coming](http://www.milkenreview.org/articles/mining-in-space-is-coming). [Quality Control]

**Space exploration is back**. after decades of disappointment, a combination of better technology, falling costs and a rush of competitive energy from the private sector has put space travel **front and center**. indeed, many analysts (even some with their feet on the ground) believe that commercial developments in the space industry may be on the cusp of starting the largest resource rush in history: **mining on the Moon**, Mars and **asteroids**.

While this may sound fantastical, some baby steps toward the goal have already been taken. Last year, NASA awarded contracts to four companies to extract small amounts of lunar regolith by 2024, effectively **beginning the era of commercial space mining**. Whether this proves to be the dawn of a gigantic adjunct to mining on earth — and more immediately, a key to unlocking cost-effective space travel — will turn on the answers to a host of questions ranging from what resources can be efficiently.

As every fan of science fiction knows, the resources of the solar system appear **virtually unlimite**d compared to those on Earth. There are whole other planets, dozens of moons, thousands of massive asteroids and millions of small ones that doubtless contain humungous quantities of materials that are scarce and very valuable (back on Earth). Visionaries including Jeff Bezos imagine heavy industry moving to space and Earth becoming a residential area. However, as entrepreneurs look to harness the riches beyond the atmosphere, access to space resources remains tangled in the realities of economics and governance.

Start with the fact that space belongs to no country, complicating traditional methods of resource allocation, property rights and trade. With limited demand for materials in space itself and the need for huge amounts of energy to return materials to Earth, creating a viable industry will turn on major advances in technology, finance and business models.

That said, there’s no grass growing under potential pioneers’ feet. Potential economic, scientific and even security benefits underlie an emerging geopolitical competition to pursue space mining. The United States is rapidly emerging as a front-runner, in part due to its ambitious Artemis Program to lead a multinational consortium back to the Moon. But it is also a leader in **creating a legal infrastructure for mineral exploitation**. The United States has adopted the world’s first spaceresources law, recognizing the property rights of private companies and individuals to materials gathered in space.

However, the United States is hardly alone. Luxembourg and the United Arab Emirates (you read those right) are racing to codify space-resources laws of their own, hoping to attract investment to their entrepot nations with business-friendly legal frameworks. China reportedly views space-resource development as a national priority, part of a strategy to challenge U.S. economic and security primacy in space. Meanwhile, Russia, Japan, India and the European Space Agency all harbor space-mining ambitions of their own. Governing these emerging interests is an outdated treaty framework from the Cold War. Sooner rather than later, we’ll need new agreements to facilitate private investment and ensure international cooperation.

What’s Out There

Back up for a moment. For the record, space is already being heavily exploited, because space resources include non-material assets such as orbital locations and abundant sunlight that enable satellites to provide services to Earth. Indeed, satellite-based telecommunications and global positioning systems have become indispensable infrastructure underpinning the modern economy. Mining space for materials, of course, is another matter.

In the past several decades, planetary science has confirmed what has long been suspected: celestial bodies are potential sources for dozens of natural materials that, in the right time and place, are **incredibly valuable**. Of these, water may be the most attractive in the near-term, because — with assistance from solar energy or nuclear fission — H2O can be split into hydrogen and oxygen to make **rocket propellant**, facilitating in-space refueling. So-called “**rare earth” metals** are also **potential targets** of asteroid miners intending to service Earth markets. Consisting of 17 elements, including lanthanum, neodymium, and yttrium, these critical materials (most of which are today mined in China at great environmental cost) **are required for electronic**s. **And they loom as bottlenecks in making the transition from fossil fuels to renewables backed up by battery storage.**

**Asteroid mining offsets terrestrial growth that ruins the environment and enables solar power satellites – both solve climate change**

**Taylor 19** Chris Taylor is a veteran journalist. Previously senior news writer for Time.com a year later. In 2000, he was named San Francisco bureau chief for Time magazine. He has served as senior editor for Business 2.0, West Coast editor for Fortune Small Business and West Coast web editor for Fast Company. Chris is a graduate of Merton College, Oxford and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. "How asteroid mining will save the Earth — and mint trillionaires." Mashable, 2019, mashable.com/feature/asteroid-mining-space-economy. [Quality Control]

The mission is essential, Joyce declares, to save Earth from its **major problems**. First of all, the fictional billionaire wheels in a fictional Nobel economist to demonstrate the actual truth that the entire global economy is sitting on a **mountain of debt**. It has to keep growing or it will **implode**, so we might as well take the majority of the **industrial growth off-world where it can’t do any more harm to the biosphere.**

Secondly, there’s the **climate change fix**. Suarez sees asteroid mining as the only way we’re going to build **solar power satellites.** Which, as you probably know, is a form of uninterrupted solar power collection that is theoretically more effective, inch for inch, than any solar panels on Earth at high noon, but operating 24/7. (In space, basically, **it’s always double high noon).**

The power collected is beamed back to large receptors on Earth with large, low-power microwaves, which researchers think will be harmless enough to let humans and animals pass through the beam. A space solar power array like the one China is said to be working on could reliably supply 2,000 gigawatts — or **over 1,000 times more power than the largest solar farm currently in existence.**

“We're looking at a 20-year window to **completely replace human civilization's power infrastructure,**” Suarez told me, citing the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the coming catastrophe. Solar satellite technology “has existed since the 1970s. What we were missing is **millions of tons of construction materials** in orbit. **Asteroid mining can place it there.”**

The Earth-centric early 21st century can’t really wrap its brain around this, but the idea is not to bring all that building material and precious metals down into our gravity well. Far better to create a whole new commodities exchange in space. You mine the useful stuff of asteroids both near to Earth and far, thousands of them taking less energy to reach than the moon. That’s something else we’re still grasping, how relatively easy it is to ship stuff in zero-G environments.

**Asteroid mining solves rare earth metal depletion – prevents tech stagnation and unsustainable resource extraction**

**Mitchell 20** Robin Mitchell is an electronic engineer who has been involved in electronics since the age of 13. After completing a BEng at the University of Warwick, Robin moved into the field of online content creation developing articles. "How might asteroid mining be key to electronics future?" 28-09-2020, [www.electropages.com/blog/2020/09/how-might-asteroid-mining-be-key-electronics-future](http://www.electropages.com/blog/2020/09/how-might-asteroid-mining-be-key-electronics-future). [Quality Control]

As electronics continue to become increasingly more important in everyday life, so is the ability to **produce electronic components**. With the supply of minerals on Earth having a finite size, some are worried that Earth will soon run out of critical resources such as **platinum and lithium**. What are asteroids, what are they composed of, and could they be the key to providing humanity with a near-infinite source of minerals?

What minerals are commonly needed for electronics?

Since the introduction of the first commercial circuits, electronics have become incredibly advanced with silicon dies having billions of active components, resistors the size of dust specks, and capacitors that can hold obscene amounts of charge for their size. However, many of these components rely on minerals that most will never have heard of for them to be able to work. Basic components such as resistors and capacitors use common materials including iron, carbon, and aluminium, but components such as LEDs, silicon dies, and thin-film displays use lanthanum, cerium, neodymium, and europium. While many of these minerals **fall under the “rare-earth” category**, that does not necessarily mean that they are rare; but many are.

Why are these minerals running out?

Minerals that are rare by nature are uncommon in the crust, and mass industrialisation is quickly using up remaining reserves of these minerals. However, it is important to understand what reserve means and how reserves are calculated. Let’s take Uranium as an example to understand this concept better; as things currently stand, there are 80 years of Uranium reserves left. Now, this does not mean that all the uranium will be used up globally in 80 years, this means that at the current price of Uranium, proven sources will continue to supply Uranium at a profitable rate for 80 years. When all reserves are used up, the price for that mineral increases, and this makes areas that used to be unprofitable more profitable, thus generating new reserves.

However, there is another aspect to resources that need to be considered; **environmental damage**. A good example to demonstrate this is Lithium. While Lithium is rather abundant in the crust, it is spread very wide, making most crust uneconomical to mine. If all cars on earth went electric, the proven reserves of Lithium would run out in 3 years. Of course, new reserves would be made available, and this would extend the ability to use Lithium in industrial practices. However, mining Lithium has a massive environmental impact and sees vast amounts of land destroyed and made toxic due to by-products in the extraction process. The same applies to many rare minerals; many tons of earth is needed to get even the smallest quantity.

What are asteroids, and what are they made of?

Asteroids are small cosmic bodies that orbit a star and can range in size, density, and composition. One of the largest asteroids in the Solar System, Vesta, has a diameter approximately 330 miles, while some of the smallest can be just two meters across. Asteroids mostly consist of rock as well as minerals, but their exact composition greatly varies. For example, M-type asteroids are those that mostly consist of nickel-iron, while C-type asteroids consist of clay and silicate rocks. Other minerals that are often found in asteroids include gold, cobalt, palladium, platinum, and osmium.

Could asteroid mining be the key to ensuring limitless supplies?

While asteroids themselves may contain trace amounts of rare minerals, their size and lack of an ecosystem **would allow for a mining operation to destroy an entire asteroid with no repercussions.** Asteroids are also plentiful in the Solar System, and would most likely **provide humanities resource needs for millions of years.** For perspective, the total weight of the asteroid belt is only 3% that of the moon, but that is still 2.39×1021 kilograms. Even then, that is only the asteroid belt and does not consider stray asteroids that orbit the sun, planets, and rings around Saturn / Jupiter.

**Both of those cause extinction**

**Bell 19** Aidan Bell is the co-founder of EnviroBuild, a sustainable building materials company based in London. PhD from Manchester in Inorganic Chemistry. "The Conflict of Tech Innovation and Sustainability." TechNative, 22 Jan. 2019, technative.io/the-conflict-of-tech-innovation-and-sustainability. [Quality Control]

Technological advancement has existed throughout human history

Humans have walked the Earth for 200,000 years, inventing **countless new processes and systems along the way.** The somewhat gradual expansion of human knowledge exploded after the burgeoning of agriculture in the Middle Eastern region of the Levant around 12,000 years ago. Societies at this time manipulated their environment for food-crop cultivation for the first time, inventing sophisticated activities like irrigation and logging.

This nascent field of agriculture created more food and thereby lead to a rapid increase in population size. Yet human expansion also resulted in the increased degradation of the environment. Experts theorise that the mass extinction of megafauna across North America and Australasia was the result of humans rather than environmental factors, while the Mayans were also at fault for causing widespread deforestation and a severe drought through excessive logging, a mistake that brought their eventual demise.

The exploration and proliferation of new technologies is the **inevitable result of human intelligence**, and the consequences thereof have always been difficult to avoid. Yet our awareness of this damage places humanity in a position of knowledge outside the standard predator-prey relationship that otherwise dominates the world and results in starvation for animals that overeat their food sources.

The current technological dilemmas that we face today are similar to those of ancient time**.  Overuse of a resource for immediate human benefit risks longer-term negative influence**.  A report conducted by Greenpeace found that Internet data centres have incredibly large carbon footprints, accounting for 3% of global electricity use, much of it in locations that offer cheap, but dirty, electricity. Likewise, the minerals that are found in electronic devices like mobile phones, such as tantalum and gold, often originate from unregulated mining that releases harmful substances into the surrounding soil, air and water. Mining also contributes hugely to **deforestation**, which is responsible for 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The negative impacts of technological innovation are increasing and action needs to be **taken soon to resolve this crisis for the sake of future generations.** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report last month warned that we have just 12 years to reduce the rate of global warming before widespread flooding and droughts become unavoidable. The demand for minerals and energy brought about by technological advancements shows no sign of slowing down, painting a worrying picture for the future of the planet.

Faced with the consequences of our intelligence, humanity now has to use its **incredible versatility** to overcome the challenges it has created for itself. For example, wind and solar power are increasingly becoming economically-viable sources of unlimited, free electricity and provide us with the opportunity to reduce our dependence on harmful fossil fuels. Bioengineering should help us protect surface soils and the ecosystems that depend on them by maintaining healthy levels of nutrients and soil salinity. **Technological advancements will even help us prevent species extinction events** that would **otherwise destroy our Earth altogethe**r, with NASA already developing spacecraft to push approaching asteroids out of our orbit.

# Second off - Innovation

**Private companies are more efficient and are accomplishing more than NASA**

**Follett 21** [Andrew Follett, Andrew Follett previously worked as a space and science reporter for the Daily Caller News Foundation. He has also done research for the Congressional Committee on Science, Space and Technology, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Cato Institute, and the Competitive Enterprise Institute. He currently conducts research analysis for a nonprofit in the Washington, D.C., area., “Private Firms Are the Key to Space Exploration”, 08/21/2021, The National Review, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/08/private-firms-are-the-key-to-space-exploration>] /Triumph Debate

But NASA’s troubles are, depressingly, likely to get even worse. In November the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) will finally launch, after taxpayers have forked over $9.7 billion. It was originally supposed to launch in 2007 on a budget of $500 million. That means the project is over a decade behind schedule and costing almost 20 times its initial budget. Perhaps the telescope, meant to locate potentially habitable planets around other stars and perhaps even extraterrestrial life, could instead search for a calendar . . . or fiscal sanity . . . in the stars? JWST isn’t the first NASA space telescope to suffer cost overruns and setbacks. The Hubble Space Telescope (HST) was originally intended to launch in 1983, but technical issues delayed the launch until 1990 because the main mirror was incorrectly manufactured. JWST is very likely to fail because it is supposed to unfold itself “origami style” in space in an extremely technically complicated process. If difficulties arise, JWST lacks HST’s generous margin for error because of its location far beyond earth’s orbit at the Sun-Earth L2 LaGrange point. NASA currently lacks the capability to send a team of astronauts out that far to fix any problems. Even if NASA could get out to JWST, the telescope doesn’t have a grappling ring for an astronaut to grab onto and thus could potentially kill astronauts attempting to fix it. It is hard to imagine a better example of the private sector’s amazing ability to outcompete government bureaucracy and mismanagement than NASA’s planned Shuttle replacement, the Space Launch System. It is estimated to cost more than $2 billion per flight. That’s on top of the $20 billion and nine years the agency has already spent developing the vehicle. Contrast that with the comparatively inexpensive $300 million spent by SpaceX to develop the Falcon 9 in a little over four years, and the fact that each Falcon 9 costs around $62 million. One SLS launch could pay for over 32 SpaceX launches. Private ventures such as SpaceX are more efficient because they have a lot more incentive to avoid excessive costs and focus on solutions: Their own money is at stake, and people spend their own money more carefully than they spend taxpayer dollars collected from others. Multiple private American space firms are currently pursuing accomplishments beyond those of NASA, and they are more advanced and ambitious than the entire government space programs of China and the European Union combined. So one possible solution to NASA’s woes would be to greatly increase its reliance on commercial launch providers. And one way to do that would be to return to the system that made civil aviation great: prizes to reward private-sector innovation. Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic Ocean in pursuit of the privately funded Orteig prize, valued at almost $395,000 in today’s money. Another famous example was the X Prize, which rewarded Burt Rutan’s company Scaled Composites with over $14 million in today’s money for becoming the first nongovernmental organization to launch a reusable and manned space vehicle, SpaceShipOne. The X Prize succeeded in creating over $100 million in investment by private corporations and individuals. Aerospace experts expect that establishing a $10 billion prize for successfully landing a crew on Mars and returning it safely to earth could very well lead to a successful landing. That’s a bargain compared with the $500 billion cost estimates NASA puts out for the same objective. And of course in the worst-case failure scenario for a prize program, taxpayers would pay nothing until the mission was complete. A system based on private enterprise incentivized by a fixed prize would end government cost overruns and waste. The cause of space exploration is simply too important to leave to the public sector.

**Space innovation leads to life saving technologies – commercialization is key**

**Raghavan 21** [Seetha Raghavan, Seetha Raghavan is a professor in UCF’s Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, “The Impact of Innovation in the New Era of Space Exploration?”, 08/04/2021, UCF Today, <https://www.ucf.edu/news/the-impact-of-innovation-in-the-new-era-of-spaceexploration/>] /Triumph Debate

Every once in a while, a confluence of discoveries, events and initiatives results in a breakthrough so significant that it propels the entire world to a higher level, redefining what is possible in so many different fields. This breakthrough is taking centerstage now, as the new era of space exploration — catalyzed by increasing launch access — dawns upon us. The surge of innovation that comes with this will create new opportunities and inspire the next generation of doers. When this happens, boundaries between scientific and social impact are blurred. Innovation leading to scientific discovery can benefit society in the same way that social innovation can diversify and support scientific innovators, who can contribute to global progress. To ride this wave of progress, we must all participate and innovate in the new era of space exploration. The intersection of space exploration, innovation and impact isn’t a new phenomenon. In the past, technology developments and spin-offs from space research have consistently found their way into communities worldwide sometimes with lifesaving benefits. The International Space Station supports experiments that have led to discoveries and inventions in communication, water purification, and remote guidance for health procedures and robotic surgeries. Satellite-enabled Earth observation capabilities that monitor natural disasters, climate and crops often support early warnings for threats and mitigation strategies. Space exploration has always been relevant to everyone no matter the discipline or interest. Commercialization of space has been key in many ways to the current boost in “firsts” over the last few years. It has spurred innovation in launch vehicles and related technologies that led to firsts in vertical-takeoff-vertical landing rocket technology, reusability of rocket boosters and privately developed crewed missions to orbit. Concurrently, NASA has continued to captivate our imagination with the first flight of a helicopter in another world, a mission to return an asteroid sample to Earth and sending a probe to make the closest ever approach to the sun. While we celebrate the scientific progress, there is a vastly important question that we all need to focus on: How can we drive the surge in innovation offered by increased access to space, to benefit humankind? Access to low-Earth orbit, and eventually human exploration of space, is a portal to achieve many impactful outcomes. The numbers and completion rate of microgravity experiments conducted by scientists will be greatly increased as a range of offerings in suborbital flights provide more opportunities to advance critical research in health, agriculture, energy, and more. Lunar, planetary, and even asteroid exploration may lead to discoveries of new materials — busting the limitations now imposed on capabilities for energy, transportation, and infrastructure or creating new sensors and devices that enhance safety on Earth. Space tourism —one can hope — has the power to potentially create an awareness of our oneness that may lead to social change. But much like all scientific endeavors, we cannot ignore the importance of preemptively identifying and mitigating negative impacts of new ventures some of which may have already taken shape. We need to consider space debris that threatens the very access that facilitates it, safety and rescue readiness to support increased crewed missions and space tourism, national security, and effects of light pollution on astronomy. Much of these can be approached and mitigated with new concepts and ideas that have already been set in motion. One thing is for certain, space has always been the inspiration for the next generation of innovators and creative thinkers. Architects of new ideas in this era will inspire many more. Ingenuity must also come from academic and research institutions building a new space-ready generation through innovative curriculum, scholarships, and research opportunities for key fields at all levels. Most of all, engaging participation is a responsibility anyone can take by steering the conversation and gathering ideas on how we can make this era one of positive benefit for all, while making opportunities inclusive to all.

**Technological innovation is driving environmental change – such as MethaneSAT tackling climate change**

**EDF 21** [Environmental Defense Fund, “This space technology can cut climate pollution on Earth, 11/23/2021, <https://www.edf.org/climate/space-technology-can-cut-climate-pollution-earth>] /Triumph Debate

The latest science warns that the window for preventing the most catastrophic global warming is closing fast. But we have a crucial opportunity to slow the rate of warming right now, even as we continue the transition to clean energy as quickly as possible. Deep reductions in carbon dioxide emissions remain critical over the long term. But it turns out that methane emissions from fossil fuel operations, livestock production and other industries is responsible for more than 25% of current temperature rise. Cutting these emissions is the fastest way to put the brakes on climate change. But tracking these invisible emissions can be hard. That’s the reason for MethaneSAT, a compact new satellite being built by a specially created new arm of EDF. MethaneSAT is specifically designed to locate, measure and track reductions in methane emissions virtually anywhere on Earth with greater precision than any other satellite. First-of-its-kind satellite gets key data The oil and gas industry is a leading source of methane emissions. From remote wellheads to gas utility lines, companies release at least 75 million metric tons a year — enough gas to produce electricity for all of Africa twice over. Extensive research led by EDF suggests that oil and gas methane emissions in the U.S. are 60% higher than official EPA estimates. To fully understand the problem — and drive the solutions — we need more and better data about: How large methane emissions are. Where they're coming from. The biggest potential reductions. Progress of those reductions over time. MethaneSAT will provide high-precision global coverage, measuring not just methane concentrations but the rate it’s escaping, from where and who is responsible. It will fill gaps left by other satellite systems, measuring large emission sources as well as those too small for other satellites to see. Because it will focus only on methane, MethaneSAT will be quicker and less expensive to launch than the complex, multi-function satellites built by government space agencies, so we can get data sooner. 8 EDF’s efforts using technological innovation to drive environmental change, the MethaneSAT mission is about turning data into action. Video: Watch as EDF's president shares the vision of MethaneSAT in this TED Talk. That data will be available to the public free of charge, so that stakeholders and the public can see and compare methane emissions by country or company. This unprecedented transparency will both enable and motivate faster reductions. And it will give the public objective assurance that both industry and government are delivering reductions. Fred Krupp, EDF's president, unveiled the idea for MethaneSAT in a 2018 TED Talk at TED’s flagship event, as part of The Audacious Project, successor to the TED Prize. The purpose of MethaneSAT is to serve as a critical resource for realizing our goal of reducing methane emissions from a diversity of sources, especially global oil and gas. A 45 percent reduction in oil and gas methane emissions by 2025 would deliver the same 20-year climate benefit as closing one-third of the world’s coal-fired power plants. Cutting these emissions is the fastest, cheapest thing we can do to slow the rate of warming today, even as we continue to attack carbon dioxide emissions. Drawing from expertise and research MethaneSAT is due to launch in 2022. The team responsible for getting it off the ground includes Tom Ingersoll, a successful satellite entrepreneur with three decades of experience, and a long list of experts in spaceflight, remote sensing and atmospheric sciences. Steven Hamburg and Tom Ingersoll Steven Hamburg, left, EDF's chief scientist, and Tom Ingersoll, MethaneSAT project director, pictured at Harvard University And the MethaneSAT team has partnered with Harvard University and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory to develop the science required for the mission. We’ve learned that emissions are much higher than either industry or government previously recognized, and occur across the supply chain. The challenge is, the sources are intermittent, unpredictable and widespread, making it hard to predict where they’ll occur. That means ongoing monitoring and measurement are essential. By providing reliable, fully transparent data on a worldwide scale, MethaneSAT will help transform a serious climate threat into a crucial opportunity.

# Case

#### 2] Companies key to solving debris.

**Gao 21** – [Reporter at Reuters Liangping, and Ryan Woo, "China launches robot prototype capable of catching space debris with net," Reuters, 4-27-21, https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/science/china-launches-robot-prototype-capable-catching-space-debris-with-net-2021-04-27/, accessed 6-25-21]

BEIJING, April 27 (Reuters) - A Chinese space mining start-up launched into low Earth orbit on Tuesday a robot prototype that can scoop up debris left behind by other spacecraft with a big net. The NEO-01, which will also peer into deep space to observe small celestial bodies, was launched on the government's Long March 6 rocket along with a handful of satellites, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The 30kg robot developed by Shenzhen-based Origin Space will pave the way for future technologies capable of mining on asteroids, according to the company. Since the establishment of the world's first asteroid mining company Planetary Resources in 2009, more than a dozen firms across the world have entered the fledging sector, including 3D Systems (DDD.N) of the United States and Japan's Astroscale. Unlike Astroscale's technology, which uses magnets to gather up space junk, NEO-01 will use a net to capture debris and then burn it with its electric propulsion system, according to a report on the company's website. Thousands of satellites have been launched globally. As they outlive their use, many end up as junk, posing danger to other operating satellites. Origin Space plans to launch dozens of space telescopes and more spacecraft to achieve the first commercial mining of asteroids by 2045, said the company's founder Su Meng in an interview with domestic media on April 6. Xinhua reported on Saturday that China was stepping up efforts to land a probe on a near-Earth asteroid to collect samples, and also expediting a plan to build a defence system against near-Earth asteroids.