

By: Science Editor

China's Space Mission Has Been Accomplished

The Chinese astronauts are national heroes

The three astronauts that have just carried out China's most important space mission returned home on Monday. They were welcomed as national heroes, as they offered their country another solid ground in order to be perceived as an ascending world power.

Millions of Chinese were able to follow every step of the mission as it was broadcast live on the national television and acclaimed as colonel Zhai Zhigang stepped out of [the Shenzhou VII](#) ("Divine vessel") spacecraft in order to perform the pre-established thirteen-minute space walk. The fact that the Russians and the Americans have done the same 40 years ago didn't cast any shadow on the recent accomplishments, and it was still seen as an important breakthrough towards the Chinese goal of building a space laboratory station during the next five years. In fact, the prior space visits of the other two major nations proved beneficial for the Chinese, as it allowed their specialists to develop a \$4.4 million new space suit based on the American and Russian models.

Wang Zhaoyao, the deputy director of the Shenzhou VII spaceflight, stated for the Associated Press, "After we have successfully completed these three steps, we will go to even more remote areas. As long as we can make further progress [⋯] China will achieve the target of putting a manned spacecraft on the moon in the near future". This effort, placed between 2015-2020, unnerves NASA officials who had their own moon-related plans for the exact same period, as it's been about four decades since they carried out the only moon walk ever.

This fuels debates over the new cold war-like characteristics of the space race between the major nations of the world. Even if the Chinese seem light years behind NASA's technology, their ambition and pride could yield the necessary funds which NASA is lacking, thus quickly filling in the gaps.