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Unleashing America's Manifest Destiny: *The End of an Era & The Start of a New Space Policy*

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In 1981, President Ronald Reagan launched what became known as the **Era of Space Commercialization** through National Security Decision Directive 144. Though not formally an Executive Order, NSDD-144 functioned like one—bundling together a series of policy actions that directed the government space enterprise to withdraw from activities that could be delivered more efficiently and cost-effectively by the private sector.

This approach mirrored Reagan's broader governing philosophy across both terms: **government should step aside where markets can operate.** For those of us who were "in the room," Reagan's commercialization policy was unambiguous. It meant identifying—and systematically dismantling government-imposed barriers that prevented private companies from offering comparable services commercially, free from the distortions of government competition.

That era is now over.

The **Trump Era of Space Commerce** has begun—arguably initiated during President Trump's first term. Under the leadership of Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, the Administration brought market credibility to an emerging generation of space companies spanning launch, satellite manufacturing, Earth observation, private space stations, and communications. Secretary Ross's most consequential achievement was not rhetorical; it was economic: the articulation of a credible **total addressable market for space goods and services approaching \$1 trillion by the 2030s.**

The policy groundwork has largely been laid. The hard work ahead is implementation.

At the core of that challenge is a defining question: **What, exactly, is the Space Marketplace?** Is it a government-funded sector, driven by public spending and procurement programs? Or is it a privately financed market—one that sells goods and services to the government as a customer rather than relying on it as a benefactor?



The distinction matters. Governments purchasing hardware through bespoke programs do not create a commercial marketplace. Governments purchasing services from private owner-operators do. When companies fly to New York and Silicon Valley to raise capital instead of to Washington to lobby for appropriations, **a true marketplace has arrived.**

President Trump is uniquely positioned to act decisively at this inflection point and secure a lasting legacy. Building on his recent Executive Orders—first deregulating commercial space transportation, then asserting U.S. sovereignty interests in space as a vital national security domain—his next step should be clear.

The next Executive Order should affirm **Space as a market.**

It should explicitly invoke the American tradition of **Manifest Destiny**—not as nostalgia, but as strategy. Space is no longer an abstract frontier. It is a place, a domain, a territory, and above all, **a marketplace**—ready for American expansion, competition, dominance, and enterprise.

Like Reagan, Trump understands power—but from a different angle. Where Reagan emphasized military superiority, Trump prioritizes **economic strength**. A nation that trades independently, produces competitively, and enforces rules effectively is a powerful nation. Economic power underwrites national security, prosperity, and strategic leverage.

Trump also recognizes the growing anticompetitive behavior of global rivals, particularly China. The most effective non-military defense against these competitors is not rhetoric—it is **trade law**. China remains acutely sensitive to violations of international trade norms and is repeatedly challenged before global tribunals. Rules matter—when they are enforced.

A presidential declaration that **Space now constitutes a legitimate, governed marketplace under international trade law** would be a watershed moment. Inviting allies and trading partners into a space-specific trade framework would be an act of forward-leaning global leadership, conferring legitimacy, stability, and long-term protections on a trillion-dollar market.

Words alone will not defend that market. Neither will voluntary cooperation. As President Reagan and Secretary Malcolm Baldrige understood—and as President Trump and Secretary Howard Lutnick should recognize—**assertive trade policy is far preferable to military confrontation.**

Trump's counterpart to Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative is the **Golden Dome**. It is not merely a defense system—it is an economic engine, designed to mobilize American industry to design, build, and sustain a protective shield at home and abroad, including in space. The same principles apply to trade. Strength in space is economic strength, and economic strength is national strength.

President Trump has already recognized—clearly and deliberately—that space is now an American marketplace to **build, compete, dominate, and defend.**

The most powerful signal to global markets would be a formal **U.S. trade policy declaration** establishing the Rules of the Road for the Space Marketplace. No modern president has demonstrated greater willingness to use global trade regimes to advance American interests than Donald J. Trump.

The Reagan Era of Space Commercialization is over. **The Trump Era of Space Commerce has begun.**

====WHAT THE NEXT EXECUTIVE ORDER SHOULD LOOK LIKE====

Unleashing America's Manifest Destiny—At Home, Into the Heavens, and Beyond

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Purpose

From its founding, the United States has embraced the responsibility—and destiny—of advancing into new territories to secure its economic and security interests. America's engines of discovery, engineering, development, and adventure have carried the Nation across continents and oceans. That same impulse now drives us outward—into Space.

Space is a vast, defined physical domain within reach of American enterprise. The **Space Marketplace** is the next logical frontier for economic, scientific, and security expansion. To promote certainty, unleash private investment, and fully realize American exceptionalism, **all domestic and international legal and regulatory impediments to that expansion must be removed without delay.**

Section 2. Definitions

For purposes of this Order, all economic activity—including investment, production, and the sale of goods and services—occurring directly or indirectly within the United States and the physical region known as Space shall constitute a **"marketplace,"** and such activity shall be recognized as **"commerce"** under all applicable domestic and international trade, antitrust, taxation, and economic development authorities.

Section 3. Directive to the Office of Management and Budget

Within 30 days, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall issue guidance clarifying that participation in commerce within the Space Marketplace shall not, by itself, disqualify any entity from eligibility for any federal trade or economic development programs unless expressly prohibited by law.

Section 4. Directive to the Secretary of Commerce

Within 90 days, the Secretary of Commerce, in coordination with relevant departments and agencies, shall review all existing rules and regulations affecting commerce in the Space Marketplace and consult broadly with private capital, industry, academia, and international trade experts.

Within 120 days, the Secretary shall deliver to the President a report identifying **specific regulatory and policy impediments** and recommending actions to suspend, revise, or eliminate barriers to market entry and growth.

Section 5. Directive to the U.S. Trade Representative

Within 180 days, the United States Trade Representative shall pursue Trade Promotion Authority to initiate negotiations for the **world's first Space Marketplace trade agreement** under the Trade Act of 1974.

Section 6. Oversight

The Department of Commerce shall serve as the lead entity for development, promotion, and oversight of the Space Marketplace and shall issue an annual **State of the Space Marketplace** report to the President and Congress.

Section 7. General Provisions

This Order shall be implemented consistently with existing law and subject to appropriations.

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