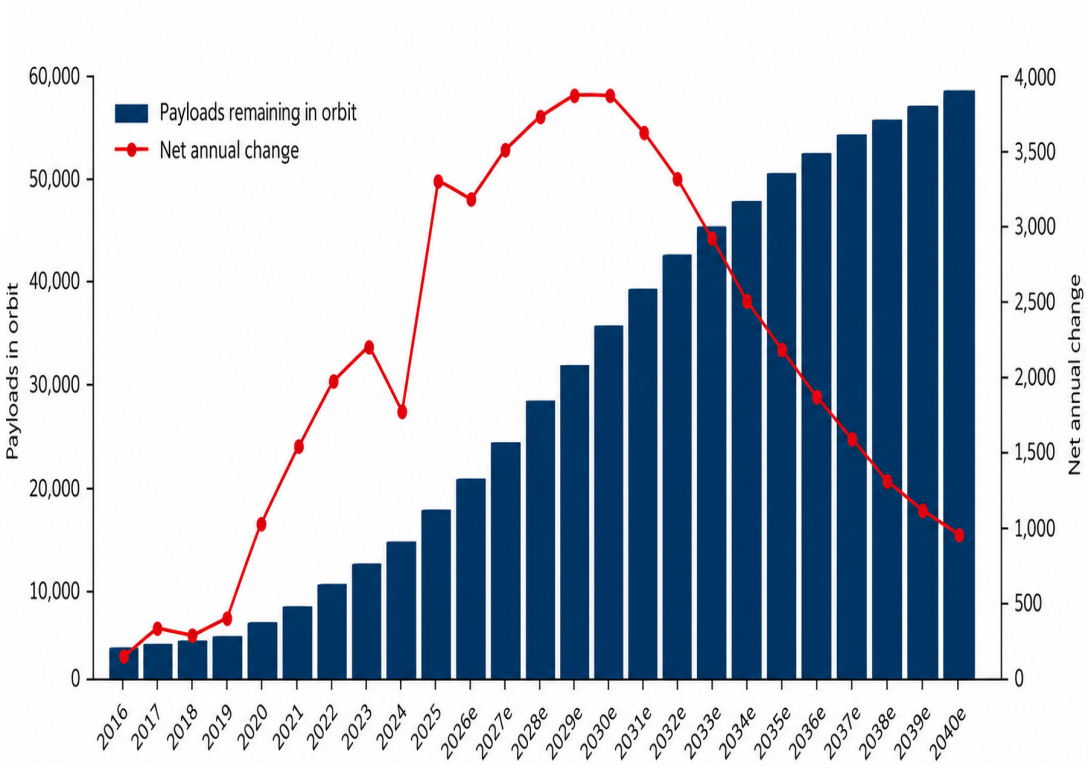
Global Matters Weekly

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Moore's Law in Space

Moore's Law is often cited to describe the acceleration of computing power and efficiency and its compounding effects. We can see a similar action in play with the commercialisation of space launch.

Richard Parfect



Source: SpaceInsight.org, data as 26 October 2026. e=estimated.

What does the chart show?

The number of payloads in low earth orbit has accelerated from around 4,400 in 2016 to 17,415 in 2025. Base case projections by SpaceInsight indicate by 2040 there will be 58,200 active low earth orbit (LEO) satellites. Given recent events, and in the knowledge that Starlink alone has over 11,000 LEO satellites, this could prove too conservative.

This expansion into space has been made possible by the collapse in payload launch costs driven by a technological revolution. SpaceX's reusable Falcon 9 rocket has payload launch costs of around $1,500/kg; meanwhile the targeted launch cost of the mighty Starship that has recently become operational is a mere $100-200 per kg. If we compare this to the iconic Space Shuttle where costs were around $54,500/kg or even Arianespace's $10,000/kg we can see how things have progressed.

For context, (not shown on this chart) in 1980 the total number of tracked payloads and discarded rocket bodies floating around in space was around 2,000; the comparable figure in 2016 was 7,000. Today it is around 22,500.

Why this is important

President Trump has confirmed, by his actions, his loyalties lie with Russia as opposed Ukraine, and by extension Europe and other aligned countries. Consequently, there is a new 'space race'; governments seeking to build their own independent communication and surveillance satellite constellations. There was already a significant growing demand from commercial companies to obtain such capabilities for civil use. However, we now see the urgent need to plug the gap of sovereign ownership for defence and security.

The acceleration of LEO satellite numbers has, to date, been driven by cost. In September ISAR Aerospace, a German company, successfully launched a payload into space. This was only its second test launch to prove technological success. It already has an order book lined up. Whilst its economics will not match that of Elon Musk's Starship, that is no longer the defining factor for success[1]. Europe now has a chance for independent low-cost access to space that no longer relies on the whims and wishes of individuals beyond its borders. We can expect to see more announcements from the likes of Nokia and ICEYE (two Finnish companies)[2] whereby they will collaborate to deliver a dual-use broadband network from space.

The geopolitical world has changed beyond most people's imagination. Investors need to accept this reality. At Momentum we are reconciled to this and are embracing the opportunities that come with these threats. We have made investments aligned to the new world order, including the various aspects of space activity, by allocating capital to managers with specialist knowledge of the sector.

Source:[1] Isar Aerospace – Mission Updates; [2] ICEYE – Sovereign Satellite Communications. Information correct as at 26 October 2026.

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