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Editor

## 2020: Golden Age or Armageddon?

... and we're back! It's a brand-new year and a brand-new decade, and for the first time in 20 years, that decade is less of a mouthful – the noughties and the twenty-tens didn't exactly roll off the tongue – the twenties, on the other hand, is pleasingly easy to say and already has a delightfully nostalgic feel to it. Or perhaps I've simply watched *'The Great Gatsby'* too many times over Christmas...

Whatever your expectations for the decade to come, we've had a less than auspicious start. Try as they might, climate change deniers are going to have a major challenge in attempting to explain the recent devastating fires and roaring temperatures in Australia without admitting that something might be amiss in our environment. The country has reportedly experienced its ten highest ever temperatures all in the last 15 years and is definitely feeling the heat. Meanwhile, geopolitical tensions have ramped up in recent days (at the time of going to print) with Iran and the USA both taking shots at each other, while other world leaders make attempts to cool the situation. Here in the UK, the long-awaited Brexit is current set for the end of January, although this is hardly the first deadline we've been given...

We have had some positive news from the space sector though, with SpaceX's successful 6<sup>th</sup> January launch of another 60 small satellites. These additional satellites bring the Starlink constellation to a total of 182, including the two prototypes launched in 2019, and make SpaceX the owner of the world's largest commercial satellite constellation. A total of 12,000 Starlink satellites is ultimately planned for the constellation orbiting at 550km above the Earth, a truly mind-blowing number which far eclipses the number of operational and defunct satellites in orbit today.

This year marks the start a fresh new decade promising startling scientific discoveries, many of them in the space sector, that I for one look forward to immensely. We're also at a major turning point in climate change challenges – the damage is fast becoming irreversible, if it's not already too late – and geopolitical upheaval. Presently, we have a collection of the most *interesting* world leaders we've ever seen, some of whom are making drastic decisions with little or no backing from their own people.

The year is 2020 and it's all to play for...

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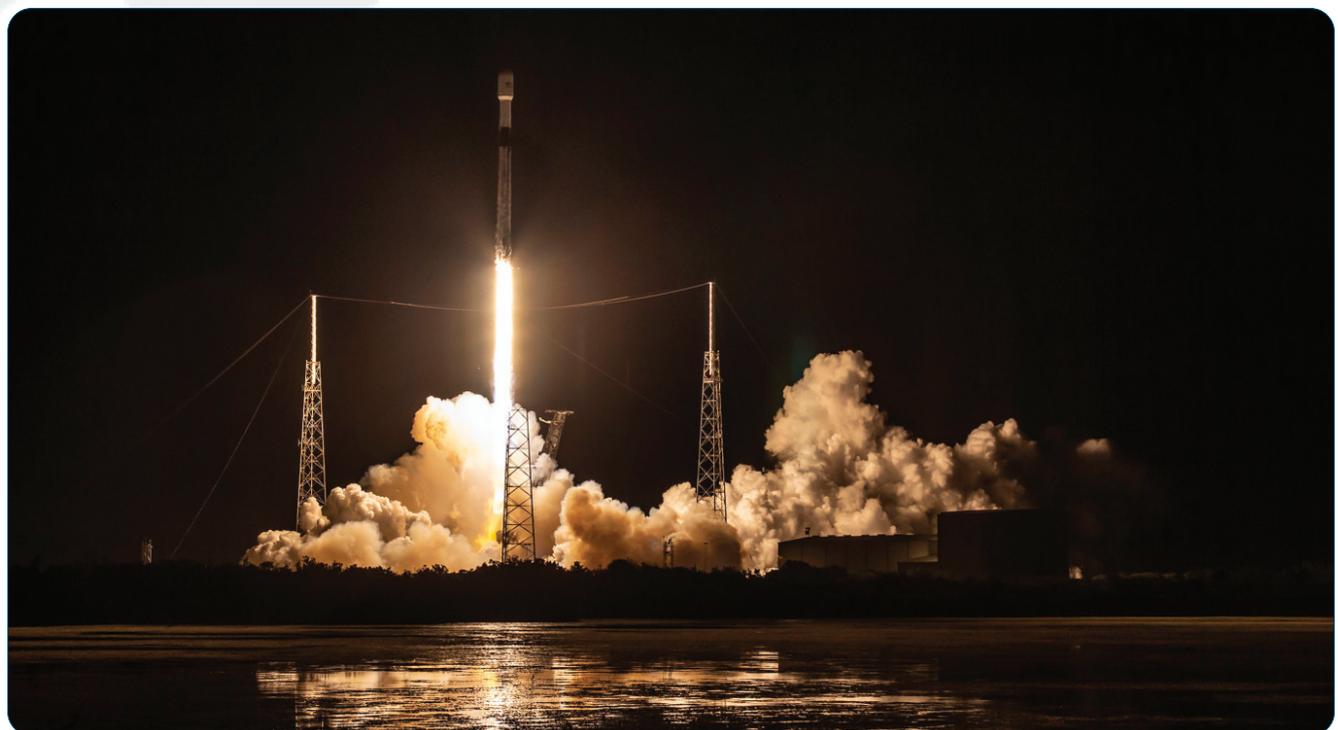


Photo courtesy of SpaceX