

Was the Moon Landing a Hoax After All?

A powerful guest post by Rainer Zitelmann: May 14, 2026



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Following the [Artemis II mission](#) in April, theories claiming that the 1969 Moon landing was a hoax and was actually filmed in a TV studio have gained renewed momentum.

On social media, questions such as these have increasingly been raised:

1. "If we could land on the Moon in 1969 with the Apollo 11 Moon landing, why can't we even do it today?"
2. "Strange that now they only orbit the Moon—it sounds like they never really mastered landing."

3. "Technology is supposed to be better, yet now we're back to just flying around the Moon instead of landing?"
4. "Fifty years ago they allegedly did it with less advanced tech—now with supercomputers, they can't?"
5. "Why do they need entirely new rockets and systems if it all worked before?"
6. "If Apollo was real, Moon landings should be routine by now—but they're not."
7. "Why isn't there a working lunar lander today if they already had one back then?"
8. "To me, it feels like they're being cautious now because they know it didn't actually happen back then."

Such questions seem plausible: Why, after more than half a century, have humans still not returned to the Moon, and why did they now merely fly around it instead of landing? Computer technology has advanced so dramatically since then that what was possible back then should today be far, far easier.

Doubts about whether the Moon landing was filmed in a TV studio have existed for a long time. Skeptics have argued, among other things: "In several video sequences, the flag flutters in the wind and therefore, the respective scenes must have been shot on Earth." As we know, there is no wind on the Moon, so how could a flag flutter in the wind? Thomas Eversberg, who deals extensively with these arguments in his book "The Moon Hoax," points out: "...there is not a single sequence where the flag moves without one of the astronauts either touching the flag or its flagpole, or touching it a few seconds before it moves. A movement of 'fluttering' can only be observed if the flag has just been or is being touched." Besides: If the Moon landing was supposedly filmed in a studio, where did the "wind" come from there? Skeptics say: from the air conditioning system. Eversberg also refutes the other arguments in his book, for example why no stars can be seen in the lunar sky.

In the 1960s, there was a space race between the Soviets and the United States. Each side wanted to win at any cost in order to prove the superiority of its system. Why did the Soviets not immediately expose the alleged fraud as a fraud? It would have been easy for them to do so—and they would have had every reason to expose it!

After the [Moon landing in July 1969](#), five more Moon landings followed. Why would anyone have gone to the trouble of filming five additional movies in a TV studio, even though each additional fake would have increased the likelihood of the deception being exposed?

Still, the skeptics' question is justified: If humans really reached the Moon back then, why did nothing comparable happen over the following 50 years?! In my book [New Space Capitalism](#) I answer this question: It is a story of the failure of state-run spaceflight. Apollo was a tremendous success, but the Space Shuttle program that followed was a complete failure. Launch costs stagnated for decades. While rapid progress occurred everywhere in private industry (just think of PCs and mobile phones!), state-led spaceflight stagnated.

The first chapter of my book is titled "The End of the Future." There I show why, after 2011, the United States was no longer even capable of transporting American astronauts to the International Space Station using its own rockets. Only six years ago did Elon Musk succeed again with his [Falcon 9](#). I show how he reduced launch costs by 95 percent compared to the Space Shuttle. The state failed—once again!

But why have there been no humans on the Moon since 1972, let alone on Mars? Because nothing in the world happens without a truly powerful reason. In the 1960s, the reason was the [systemic competition](#) between the Soviet Union and the United States. Once that competition had been decided, there was simply no strong reason left. The United States had won—what else was there to prove? Why continue spending so much money?

Only now are the Americans hurrying back to the Moon because they fear the Chinese may get there first. But national prestige will not be enough in the long run. Without strong economic motives, future progress will remain far below what would otherwise be possible.

The problem is the absence of economic incentives. And this, in turn, is linked to the [Outer Space Treaty of 1967](#). According to Article 2 of this treaty, nations are not permitted to own celestial bodies or land on celestial bodies. Whether this also applies

to private individuals is disputed among space law experts. The unclear legal situation paralyzes private initiative.

Following the Moon landing, the architect of the Apollo program, Wernher von Braun, was asked what the priorities for space travel should be in the years ahead. He replied: "We have to show that spaceflight is useful, and even profitable, for people on Earth, and in fact, space projects should begin to pay for themselves." But this is precisely what state-led spaceflight failed to achieve.

The moment it becomes possible to acquire private property on the Moon, Mars, and asteroids, the most extraordinary real estate story in human history will begin. Finally, there would be a powerful economic engine! Stock markets would experience a boom in Mars and asteroid shares, so-called Space-REITs (Real Estate Investment Trust).

Looking back at history, without the [Homestead Act of 1862](#), the settlement of the western United States would have proceeded much more slowly. This Act provided nearly free land to anyone willing to heed the call to "Go West." All adult U.S. citizens and immigrants could apply for 160 acres of land if they agreed to settle and cultivate it for five years. The result was a mass migration from the eastern states and Europe to the Midwest, leading to the development of farms, settlements, and infrastructure, particularly in connection with the construction of railroads.

We need private property in space as well. Systems without private property have not worked on Earth. Economic incentives are required for the next stage of the conquest of space.

Rainer Zitelmann is the author of the book "[New Space Capitalism](#)", which will be available in print by Skyhorse Publishing in early June, and is already available for Kindle on Amazon.

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