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USA

Elon Musk Goes Full Fascist

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Elon Musk, the world's richest man with \$430 billion in personal wealth, became an advisor to president-elect Donald Trump a few months ago. Now he is something more. Politicians and the media now refer to him as the "shadow president," "co-president" or even call him "president Musk."

Musk, who contributed \$277 million to Trump's campaign, has virtually camped out at Mar-a-Lago, where the president-elect had the tech billionaire listen in on calls with foreign leaders such as Volodymyr Zelensky. Accompanying the president-elect, Musk has also had access to French President Emmanuel Macron at the ceremonial reopening of Notre Dame and to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at a formal gathering in New York. At the moment Musk seems to be on every call, to be commenting on every decision.

Musk originally gained his wealth from PayPal, then from the Tesla car and the SpaceX rocket ships, and he was once a liberal with a vision of a utopian environmental future based on electric vehicles. But when back in 2021 President Joe Biden called a meeting of automakers that included GM, Ford, and Stellantis, as well as the United Auto Workers to discuss the future of EV cars, Musk wasn't invited because he was anti-union. Snubbed, Musk began to turn right. He bought Twitter, opened it up to rightwing extremists and used it to influence his 208.5 million personal followers.

Last week Musk did two things that brought him to the center of attention. First, as the U.S. Congress was about to pass a budget bill compromise in order to prevent a government shutdown, Musk actually intervened before Trump, calling on the Republicans to stop the compromise budget bill. Trump then also opposed it because it had a debt ceiling that might tie his hands when he comes into office, since he wants to cut taxes and carry out expensive programs like deporting 11 million immigrants. So, Republicans killed the first compromise bill.

Musk's motivation was not primarily about the debt ceiling, but because it contained language that would have made it more difficult to invest in China, where Musk's Shanghai Tesla Gigafactory produces a car every 30 seconds. In less than four years, Tesla exported a million cars from China. Now Musk is constructing a second factory, a battery plant, in Shanghai as well.

Republicans and Democrats in the House finally agreed on a new budget bill—but left the debt ceiling in place, but without the restriction on foreign investment. A defeat for Trump, but a victory for Musk. This all suggests that Trump will face challenges in the new Congress, because he cannot control the Republican budget hawks who oppose any budget increase.

Second, with Germany in the midst of a political crisis because of the collapse of the government of Olaf Scholz, a Social Democrat heading a centrist three-party coalition, Musk tweeted his support for Alternative for Germany (AfD), a neo-Nazi party. Interviewed by CNN, Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, said, "What Elon Musk thinks tends to eventually be what the president of the United States thinks. And if the United States takes an official position in favor of neo-Nazis in Germany, I mean, it is absolutely catastrophic."

Musk's support for the far right in Germany is not unique. He also supports Italian deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini, head of the anti-immigrant League party and Nigel Farage's Reform U.K. party, also anti-immigrant, and is planning to make a big donation to it. Musk could influence Trump, but it may not be necessary

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Already on election day, Trump had welcomed his “German friends,” who included Phillipp-Anders Rau, a candidate for AfD. Trump’s advisor Steve Bannon—recently out of jail after serving four months for contempt of Congress for failing to respond to a congressional subpoena—has been working for years to build a brown international.

All of this suggests that fascism will be a factor and may even have a future in America.

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