

Muskian Futurism

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Abstract: Muskian futurism refers to a crosspollination of political perceptions, ideas and beliefs centred around the public persona of Elon Musk. In this paper, we explore these strands of thought – contemporary futurism, cyber-libertarianism, neo-reaction, white supremacism and personal self-interest – to situate Muskian futurism as a grouping of overlapping ideologies with a shared diagnosis of the world that runs parallel with other groups of similar influence over the second Trump administration. It is argued that this agglomeration of (pseudo)intellectual strands is distinct from nationalism due to its technological solutionism and indifference to Musk’s shameless pursuit of self-interest. Nonetheless, Muskian futurism represents a dangerous technocratic accelerationism committed to the absolute undermining of democratic institutions capable of enduring without Musk’s prominence.

Keywords: Musk, futurism, post-Fordism, accelerationism, white supremacy

1. Introduction

Muskian futurism¹ refers to a crosspollination of political perceptions, ideas and beliefs centred around the public persona of Elon Musk. Firstly, it is important to depersonalise Muskian futurism and consider Elon as something closer to the most popular spokesperson for a pre-existing ideological milieu rather than one of its most authoritative adherents or originary theoreticians. Elon is not the brainchild behind this ersatz political orthodoxy so much as the happy conduit of a for-profit cult of personality that centres his brand of ‘edgelord’² genius and personal achievements, which are themselves subject to warranted critical scrutiny. Musk’s outsized personal reach – through his proximity to the presidency as an unofficial advisor and as the owner of X (formerly Twitter) means that individuals invested in the ideological smorgasbord we

¹ Although discussions of Musk’s public image and his political convictions as well as historical comparisons with Italian Futurism and Henry Ford’s legacy predate the video, the term “Muskian futurism” itself was coined by scholar and video essayist Tom Nicholas. See Tom Nicholas (2021) *The Fake Futurism of Elon Musk*. 9 August. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OtKEetGy2Y> (Accessed: 13 May 2025).

² In the context of internet subcultures, an edgelord is a person who deliberately adopts provocative, offensive, or nihilistic personas online to shock others, gain attention, or assert a rebellious identity. This behaviour often involves pushing boundaries: making taboo jokes, glorifying extremism, or using inflammatory rhetoric under the guise of irony or free speech. Edgelords thrive in online spaces like 4chan, Reddit, and Twitter, where their contrarian stances, anything ranging from racist remarks to Holocaust denial, are framed as intelligent and brave interventions against the absurdities of civil norms.

refer to as Muskian futurism have it in their personal interest to align themselves with him and his Silicon Valley associates, even to the point of humiliating sycophancy³.

How does Muskian futurism, understood as an assemblage of futurism, cyber-libertarianism, neo-reaction, white supremacism, and personal self-interest centred on Elon Musk, function as a political ideology within contemporary digital capitalism, and what are its implications for democratic institutions? Firstly, we will examine Musk's persona as a contemporary futurist linking his presentation in connection with historical conceptions of futurism, arguing that the former is closer to personal marketing rather than an aesthetic or philosophical project. Secondly, we consider the theoretical influences on the neoreactionary movement that are informing far-right spaces online aligned with Musk's techno-solutionist vision and suggest their philosophical influence is determined by their worldview aligning with the self-interest of the tech billionaires that endorse them. Thirdly, we provide an overview of Musk and his family's history of aligning themselves with white supremacist political projects and suggest his actions may be influenced by natalist conspiracism. Fourthly, we briefly compare Musk's personal brand with Henry Ford's self-aggrandising persona as a visionary industrialist to demonstrate the uneasy relationship between self-promotion, commercial success and political influence. Finally, we consider the implications of Muskian futurism as one of many genres of reactionary political thought influencing the Trump administration, suggesting that its libertarian-corporatist vision undermines democratic institutions and requires the urgent intervention of an organised opposition.

2. Futurist Pretensions

Futurism as a concept invokes both historical and modern notions. It is worth noting that the historical conception of futurism was a young man's game, an aesthetic project that fetishized technological progression – the acceleration of the combustion engine; strong, sharp lines of steel, the feeling of culture turning to steam as modernity's new norms ran roughshod over settled tradition. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* rejected tradition outright, poured scorn on museums and libraries as cemeteries of dead ideas, and saw the future as a dynamic cityscape built as a flat surface to smooth out the nubs and creases of cultural memory that industrialization had been unable to erase. Speed; violence; a cult of the new – a call to action that influenced visual art, architecture, early industrial design, and arguably, 20th century politics in its later alignment with Italian Fascism; the logical extension of its combination of revolutionary attitude with a pathological embrace of its industrial present.

In art, Italian Futurism brought us the striding gold of Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913) and the kinetic playfulness of the jangling lead and pumping legs of Giacomo Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912). In architecture, Antonio Sant'Elia designed *La Città Nuova*, monolithic skyscrapers that resembled fallen alien spacecraft with elevators described as swarming 'facades like serpents of iron and glass' (Budzynski 2016). Marinetti and his acolytes celebrated engine power – automobiles, airplanes, factories. Modernity was both an objective and an imposition – the future was an invading army, demolishing the pretensions of tradition and harrying the present at gunpoint to meet its standards.

³ Victor Tangemann, "Friend of Elon Musk Says He's Surrounded by Sycophants and Yes Men", [Futurism.com](https://futurism.com), August 11, 2022, Available at: <https://futurism.com/chris-sacca-elon-musk-sycophants> [Last accessed: 14 May 2025].

Futurist and fascist aesthetics are often conflated, mainly due to their contemporaneousness. Marinetti called for the glorification of war – “the only cure for the world” – which would prefigure the later adopted Fascist rhetoric of revolutionary purification (1909, 3). Futurists rejected liberalism for its decadence, democracy for its sluggishness, and by the 1920s, many futurists, Marinetti included, actively supported Mussolini’s regime as the realization of their anti-traditionalist technocratic beliefs concretized in politics (Zimmermann 2020). Nevertheless, historians have stressed the fascist appropriation of many aesthetics, including classical Roman imagery (Platzos & Balaskas 2023) – futurist themes became popular with restless young men, and therefore, opportunistically appropriated.

Masculinity is constructed in relation to the reception of other presentations of men in both public discourse and everyday life - fascism promises a certain kind of man a place within its political and social systems as well as recognition for their contribution to “war duties that entailed the sacrifice of comfort and family life” (Ben-Ghiat 2005, 341). There is a psychological component here relevant for armchair analysis of Musk as a deferring father figure – constantly procreating, often with relative strangers who then raise these newborns as single mothers – but ideologically in service of protecting the nuclear family unit from the alleged demographic instability wrought by mass immigration.

As Michael Hatt notes, “the stability of masculinity depends on the visibility of the male body; to be learnt or consolidated, masculinity requires a visual exchange between men” (Hatt 1993, 59-60). Returning to Futurism’s ersatz fusion of man and machine, Marinetti trades on the gendered associations as often applied to technology and nature - “the masculine controls, dominates, and investigates whilst the feminine is framed as passive, subservient; perhaps elusive” (Ranger 2024, 2). Nature as “the locus of the feminine and maternal, it must be opposed and displaced by both the machine, and its symbolic ally, matter (sheer dynamic physicality)” (Poggi 1997, 24). Poggi argues that for Marinetti, matter represents a volatile masculine substitute antithetical to the organic, temporally constrained nature that represents the unbreakable life cycle, and thus incapable of either propelling humanity into the future nor becoming the substance necessary for “a new, quasi-inorganic (and therefore immortal) masculine subject” (24).

Contemporary futurists adopt the term to refer to a more nebulous techno-optimism that nonetheless retains – knowingly or otherwise – some of Marinetti’s themes. Contemporary futurism is in the business of prediction, forecasting the exciting potential of nascent technologies with sufficient credentials and expertise that philosophical speculation can be treated with plausibility – and in some cases, assessed for commercial appeal. The most infamous is Ray Kurzweil: in 2005, he predicted that the technological singularity – the point when artificial intelligence surpasses human intelligence - would occur by 2045. He came to this prediction by extrapolating from exponential trends in computer power, breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, and by following his own contention of ‘the Law of Accelerating Returns’, which argues that technological progress grows at an ever-increasing rate⁴.

⁴ This itself may be an example of a linear extrapolation fallacy, the mistaken assumption that an exponential or rapidly accelerating trend will continue indefinitely at the same rate, ignoring natural limits or changing conditions. Kurzweil may fall prey to such a fallacy if he assumes exponential technological progress will continue indefinitely without accounting for physical limits, economic constraints, or unforeseen societal barriers, but one assumes that his prognostications are caveated aside from their articulation as publicity stunts.

The continuity between past and present futurisms is technological fetishism. Marx spoke of commodity fetishism as “a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour” (Marx 1976 [1867], 165). David Harvey clarifies Marx’s position further through the logic of misattribution. He argues that just as commodities are fetishized when the social relations between people are seen as relations between things, technology is fetishized when we endow it with “self-contained, mysterious, and even magical powers to move and shape the world” (Harvey, 2003, 2). The fetishism arises when the “very real effect of superior machinery in generating temporary excess profits” leads to the false inference “that superior technologies...are themselves a source of profit”, obscuring the fact that “profit always arises out of the social relation between capital and labour” (Harvey 2003, 7). By championing technology as an autonomous, world-saving force, tech capitalists effectively obscure their own role as capitalists. The incentive persists to recast the profit imperative as a benevolent, inevitable, and technical evolution, thereby legitimizing their accumulation of power and wealth.

Musk’s “sci-fi futurism” has been described by commentators as “plutocracy with space travel” (Goulden 2023), his growing relationship with fascist Italian president Giorgia Meloni has been spoken of in terms of a “new futurism” (Varvelli 2024), and discussions of the reemergence of futurism in public discourse often include the contention drawn from 20th century political history that “futurists make excellent fascists” (Jones 2025). Futurist has become a vogueish moniker in technology circles, and one embraced by Elon Musk. He has made several futurist pronouncements over the years, mainly referencing the technologies in which he has invested and their far-reaching social implications (Chirinos 2022).

In 2016, Musk predicted that Tesla’s autonomous driving systems would become so refined that by 2018 one of his cars would be able to drive unassisted across the US (D’Orazio 2016). Musk predicted in 2024 that by 2028, space travel to Mars would be viable and underway and that human colonization of the red planet would be possible within twenty years (Luscombe 2024). In 2017, Musk floated the idea of Tesla working on an electric plane (Brown 2017). Musk’s Boring Company aimed to solve traffic with underground tunnels. He envisioned a self-sustaining human colony on Mars through SpaceX; Musk proposed the Hyperloop, a high-speed vacuum-tube transportation system, and even promised 10,000km of tunnel by 2020 (BBC News 2019) but this idea was largely abandoned and handed off to other companies, none of which have delivered a functional system.

Musk’s embedded technology company Neuralink has been a site of considerable controversy as well as the reference point for several outlandish predictions⁵. Musk has recently predicted that robots will surpass the best human surgeons in around five years, in reference to Neuralink’s progress with embedded technology (Nitzberg 2025),

⁵ Aside from the understandable mainstream squeamishness of people uneasy with the idea of body-invasive technologies, Neuralink has faced concerns over animal welfare during testing – with allegations of rushed, unethical experiments leading to unnecessary suffering and deaths in monkeys, pigs, and sheep. Critics also question the safety and transparency of human trials, fearing premature FDA approval despite risks like brain tissue damage, implant malfunctions, or data privacy breaches. Additionally, ethical debates swirl around potential misuse, such as thought surveillance, cognitive enhancement inequities, or even military applications. See reportage from Jane Wakefield (2022) and Robert Hart (2024).

although this is slightly more empirically grounded than his prediction that telepathy may be possible through Neuralink, a claim instantly dismissed by experts (Regalado 2017). In 2024, Musk predicted that superintelligent AI would be possible within a year, with the caveat that unless the sector's power and computing demands become unsustainable, tightening his earlier claim that it would exist by 2029 (Hern 2024).

Rozsa's commentary (2022) has distinguished between the historical Futurists, an avant-garde artistic and political movement rooted in rejecting Italy's traditionalism and glorifying speed, violence, and youth, and contrasting them with Musk and Peter Thiel. The latter are far more powerful and potentially dangerous because of their immense wealth and ability to act independently of governments. They are not artists with a manifesto seeking patronage; their ideas are retroactively justifying their existing disproportionate influence over global politics.

Predictions aside, contemporary futurism is often an extension of marketing - it is rare for these proclamations to be made and then publicised without some financial incentive on the part of the proclaimer to exaggerate or generate excitement and anticipation around the commercial application of these technologies. This logic serves to explain how Musk - financially implicated in AI through his investments in companies like Tesla (which relies heavily on AI for autonomous driving), his founding role in OpenAI (though he later left), and his current AI venture xAI, which develops models like Grok - can also publicly declare there is a 20% chance that AI could destroy human civilization due to misuse or an uncontrollable emergent superintelligence (Tangalakis-Lippert 2023). An existential threat is a demonstration of power and relevance, and so its marshalling towards commercial ends is then reframed as a task of monumental value.

As Mosco (2004, 3) observes, these narratives cloak technology in the aura of inevitability, while Morozov's (2013, 5) critique of technological "solutionism" argues that fetishization narrows the scope of political debate to technical fixes. Futurist and reactionary imaginaries thus share a common ideological orientation: by fetishizing technology, they reframe politics as either the embrace or rejection of supposedly autonomous technological futures, rather than the contestation of social relations and institutional choices that shape those futures.

If futurism is understood as a pathological endorsement of technological acceleration, the next section considers the political implications of such an enterprise.

3. R/Acc and NrX (Right Accelerationism & Neo-Reaction)

Standard Muskian futurism is an agglomeration of reactionary politics and philosophical contentions that includes the influence of the right-accelerationist (R/Acc) and neoreactionary (NrX) movements. Accelerationism (Noys 2010, 5) describes contemporary philosophical and political movements characterised by an endorsement of the intensification of the technological development of capitalism as a means of inducing radical social transformation. The movement is bifurcated ideologically - left-accelerationism (L/Acc) wishes to push capitalism to breaking point to instantiate some form of "post-work" future popularised as "fully automated luxury communism" (Srnicsek & Williams, 2015; Bastani, 2019), whereas right-accelerationism (R/Acc) wishes to unleash capitalism as a force of civilizational collapse to replace existing social relations with a posthuman neo-feudalism, a libertarian hypercapitalism or some form of techno-capitalist singularity that dissolves, or renders insignificant, human agency (Land 2011).

Left-accelerationism draws its logic from Marx's "Fragments on Machines" in the *Grundrisse*. Marx explicates on the relationship between social life and the forces of

production, specifically that “the development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it” (Marx 1993 [1857-58], 706). Left-accelerationists interpret this diagnosis as a profound shift, and one with potentially emancipatory political possibilities – if capitalism, in its drive for efficiency, renders scientific knowledge, social cooperation and the proliferation of information the primary productive force – understood as the general intellect – and this becomes embodied in automated machine systems, then this is a contradiction that makes acceleration a viable political strategy. Marx describes a situation which “the worker steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body”; “it is [...] the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth” (Marx 1993 [1857-58], 705).

Capitalism becomes dependent on a form of wealth (social knowledge and automated production) fundamentally at odds with its own core valuation mechanism (direct labour time), thus systematically creating the potential for immense abundance and the reduction of necessary labour and yet must enforce scarcity and the need for waged work to maintain profitability. Left-accelerationism wishes to marshal the primary forces of production towards emancipatory ends. Politics, therefore, becomes the mechanism for resolving this contradiction – to purposefully direct capitalism’s greatest strengths to transcend its exploitative conditions by accelerating its productive capacities.

Right-accelerationism, by contrast, instead leans into mystification of the general intellect, rejecting the materialist explanation offered by Marx, and instead indulging in what we consider to be the kind of techno-fetishism endemic to this form of reactionary thought. Nick Land draws on the works of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Jean-François Lyotard to develop his frenetic and ersatz account of capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari frame the paradoxical nature of capitalism as a system of both constraint and liberation. They argue that “capitalism is the only social machine that is constructed on the basis of decoded flows, substituting for intrinsic codes an axiomatic of abstract quantities in the form of money” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983 [1972], 139). Intrinsic codes refer to rigid, stratified hierarchical systems that affix meaning – for example, the life of a medieval peasant under feudalism was fixed by their relationship to land and labour. By contrast, decoded flows refers to the universal quantification of labour with money – a worker in capitalism may well be structurally exploited by the fact of having to sell their labour-power to earn their living, but they remain freer than before insofar as they can move between employers, and their money is as good as anybody’s once they enter the marketplace.

For Deleuze and Guattari, money operates as an axiomatic – society under capitalism is organized to ensure that money retains its value and that it can move freely across markets. Capitalism makes pre-capitalist hierarchies redundant – I may be born into a family that supports itself with a specific trade, but my destiny is no longer tied to inheritance or tradition so long as I can find an alternative means of paying my way. In the expansion and commodification of everything, capitalism erodes existing civilizational meanings without replacing them with fixed stratifications – it creates vacuums of meaning that are themselves also opportunities for re-

subjectivization, and in this sense, capitalism, despite being an exploitative form of social production for workers, can also be felt as self-cultivation and self-transformation insofar as it liberates the worker from predetermined labour relations.

Lyotard similarly emphasized the sophisticated means by which capitalism can generate pleasure for the exploited as much as the exploiter: “there is *jouissance* in it” insofar as workers perversely “enjoyed the mad destruction of their organic body which was indeed imposed upon them, they enjoyed the decomposition of their personal identity, the identity that the peasant tradition had constructed for them, enjoyed the dissolution of their families and villages, and enjoyed the new monstrous anonymity of the suburbs” (Lyotard 1993 [1974], 111). He would also would provoke his contemporaries with a rejection of moralistic critiques of capitalism with a rhetorical flourish than lends itself to a dismissal of the importance of the human intellect in analysing social systems altogether – “are we, intellectual sirs, not actively or passively [*passivons*] ‘producing’ more and more words, more books, more articles, ceaselessly refilling the pot-boiler of speech, gorging ourselves on it [...] we will never play the whore enough, we will never be dead enough” (Lyotard 1993 [1974], 115). It is worth noting that Lyotard himself would later disavow his theory of libidinal economy, referring to it as a “nasty book” (Lyotard 1998, 13), although that debate is beyond our scope.

Following Marx’s famous quote that “capitalism is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (Marx 1990 [1867], 342), the vampiric and monstrous capitalist analogy would be taken up by Nick Land in *Fanged Noumena* (Land 2011). Adopting a pessimistic and anti-humanist stance, Land frames capitalism as an autonomous, quasi-natural force operating beyond human capacities for control. Drawing on these influences – and the CCRU’s concept of the “hyperstition” as a “semiotic production that makes itself real” (Land 2011, 579) – Land argues that capital functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy that accelerates beyond social and political containment. The fatalist – and in our minds, implausible – consequence of this observation is that egalitarian or democratic projects are doomed to failure. Land contends that we ought to embrace the inevitable disintegration of social structures by market forces and lean into the prospects of a new order defined by corporate sovereignty, extreme stratification and post-human governance. R/Acc is an influence of NRx and other adjacent neo-reactionary ideologies that intend to tolerate, advocate and facilitate a hyper-libertarian world of techno-feudalism.

Curtis Yarvin (usually writing under the pseudonym Mencius Moldbug) has become a prominent online populariser of the Landian vision of the ‘Dark Enlightenment’ and right-accelerationist ideas, making the anti-egalitarian case for removing democratic infrastructures and replacing them with ‘patchwork’ city-states governed as corporate entities, i.e. CEO-run city-states that compete for citizens, resembling an ersatz combination of skim-read Nozick-style minarchism and misread cyberpunk fiction. Aside from academic reservations around Yarvin’s project - his style of writing and knowledge of political philosophy is demonstrably poor and he lacks training in the discipline – it rests on a self-defeating fatalism prompted by social misdiagnosis rooted in the alleged natural and beneficial character of hierarchies, the “ideological conformity of progressivism” made manifest in the Cathedral metaphor that renders egalitarianism hegemonic⁶ and the assumption of the stability of dictatorial

⁶ We wish.

governance⁷. Furthermore, existing hegemonic social pathologies such as the economic colonisation of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987), the extension of market calculability into all domains of determining value in social organization (Mirowski 2013; Brown 2015) and the conflation of profit-seeking behaviours with public utility or welfare (Polanyi 2001 [1944]; Davies 2014; Mazzucato 2018) are fallaciously venerated as the natural and reasonable order artificially constrained by liberal democracy, rather than the encroachment of another form of artificiality.

Ironically enough, this misdiagnosis of social upheaval was itself pre-empted by Mark Fisher – associated with the CCRU and tangentially with left-accelerationism – with his invocation of “capitalist realism” (Fisher 2009) derived from Jameson’s (1991) analysis of the postmodern tendency to find it “easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations” (Jameson 1994, xii). NrX beliefs internalize the “cruel optimism” (Berlant 2011) of neoliberal capitalism, suggesting further submission to its erosion of liberal democratic norms is ultimately beneficial, given the purported impossibility – and undesirability – of collectivist political resistance (Gilbert 2013).

In many ways, these theory-laden proposals are an overcomplication of a mainstream extremism. Laissez-faire capitalism – and more specifically, the more radical, libertarian strain of neoliberalism – is happily compatible with a world in which hollowed-out public institutions provide light-touch regulation as politics seeks to “bring all human action into the domain of the market” (Harvey 2005, 3). With political judgement suppressed, neoliberalism recasts every human endeavour and institution in economic terms – “the political is not merely subordinate to the economic but it is in fact *emptied* of its critical democratic functions” (Brown 2015, 17, author’s emphasis). The common good and social justice are eschewed in favour of technical exercises in managing competitions and forging optimal conditions for capitalist expansion. This civil disenchantment, in which the state’s role is merely to “certify and protect market exchanges” (Davies 2014, 133), leaves individuals disillusioned with political activity.

Ockham’s razor would suggest the performed fatalism of Landist right-accelerationism has either collapsed or has always been some form of implicit endorsement of anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian politics obscured by techno-utopian positivity or masked by a layer of irony (Nagle 2017; Golumbia 2024). Furthermore, these endorsed ‘natural hierarchies’ include extremely problematic and empirically refutable beliefs in racist pseudoscience and tolerance of racial separatism (Topinka 2019, 17-24). Patchwork governance - whilst sounding like a policy wonk advocating greater technological integration into community organising - is in fact a neo-fascistic fragmentation of statecraft into wholly unaccountable, privatized jurisdictions that attempts to solve the problem of political obligation by allowing citizens the possibility of exiting one corporate sovereign for another, mirroring the anarcho-capitalist tendency to misunderstand or wilfully ignore the existence of structural impediments to freedom while fetishizing security (of whom from what?) and efficiency (for whom to do what?). Neo-reactionary politics wants a networked authoritarian future run by and for white male capitalists dressed up as a world-systems theory of universal post-human

⁷ A contention that has been explicitly questioned in political philosophy since Catherine Macaulay’s contemporaneous republican critique of Thomas Hobbes. See Macaulay, C. (2023). Catharine Macaulay: Political Writings. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

transcendence. Beiner (2018) identifies neo-reaction as the articulation of a philosophical fascism tailored for the digital age.

The relevance for our account of Muskian futurism is that Peter Thiel and other Silicon Valley billionaires are advocates and popularisers of Yarvin's work, granting him a quasi-celebrity status in the tech field despite his near anonymity in the academic literature (outside of critical analysis from digital anthropologists of the far right). It is unclear to what extent Yarvin is capable of influencing Musk and Thiel, or whether he has been astro-turfed by their financial backing as his arguments amount to sycophancy by proxy.

Nevertheless, Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) parallels Yarvin's strategy of RAGE (Retire All Government Employees) (Lehmann, 2022). Furthermore, Musk's ownership of X (formerly Twitter) in terms of both his toleration and personal endorsement of far-right accounts and his output demonstrate an explicit overlap with neoreactionary apologists (Coghill & Hayes, 2024; Grenoble 2024; Robertson 2024; Hickey et al. 2025; Ingram 2024; Klawans 2025). Furthermore, Adrian Dittmann, a Twitter user generally believed to one of Musk's alt accounts (Aitken 2025), regularly discusses accelerationism and is a member of the x/acc group on X (formerly Twitter). Ultimately, it is unclear whether right-accelerationism and neo-reaction are direct influences on Musk's personal thinking, but they are certainly fellow travellers and overlap with his online supporter base.

4. International White Supremacy

4.1. Sins of the Father

Musk's overtly racist sentiments also inform his views regarding contemporary politics across the world. Aside from questions of demography, his political socialisation as a youth in Apartheid South Africa is worth highlighting. Musk's Canadian grandfather Joshua N. Halderman was a virulent anti-communist and anti-Semite. Halderman was a leading member of the Social Credit Party of Canada and in 1941 defended the party newspaper's publication of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Following a failed attempt at winning elected office in 1948, Halderman relocated to South Africa, explicitly inspired by its apartheid political system of racial separatism. After settling in South Africa, Halderman became a fanatical supporter of the National Party (NP) on explicitly racial grounds (Benton 2023). Given the NP's historical antipathy towards non-Afrikaner Whites, Halderman's loyal support for the party clearly reflected a deeper worldview that transcended the particulars of local political grievances. Halderman's geographical adventurism combined with severe racial animus is archetypal to settler colonial projects (Wolfe 2006) with the NP, and Apartheid more broadly, representing a firewall defending the White Western world against an imprecise racial Other.

Elon's father, Errol, has claimed that he opposed the Apartheid system and cites his membership of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), a liberal anti-Apartheid organization that rejected the racial politics of the NP. However, Errol Musk is also on record stating that he abandoned the PFP in 1983 because of their support for 'one-person, one vote' and personally preferred having separate parliaments for different racial groups. As well as being front-page news in *Die Burger*, a major Afrikaans-language newspaper, Musk's position on racially segregated political institutions was created by the NP following the constitutional referendum of the same year (Sussman 2003, 255).

The “separate development” advocated by Musk in the 1980s has continued among Afrikaner extremists who excuse the brutality of the Apartheid system as merely a system to facilitate cultural pride. The town of Orania south of Johannesburg is a Whites-only settlement that contains statues and memorials to the former leaders of NP, including the so-called architect of Apartheid Hendrik Verwoed, as well as anti-Black figures of the pre-Apartheid period such as Paul Kruger (Majavu 2022). Orania is effectively a reverse Bantustan in which the White population have sought to preserve their cultural practices and racial homogeneity through spatial distance from South Africans of other racial groups. Far-right Afrikaner defenders of Orania such as Willem Petzer have also penetrated the US conservative podcast scene (Bueckert 2023), thus demonstrating the increasing convergence between post-Apartheid racial extremism and an increasingly mainstream part of the English-speaking conservative media ecology.

The transnational entanglement of racist systems of subordination is not without historical precedent. James Whitman (2017) has demonstrated that Jim Crow laws in the American South were significantly influential on the creation of the Nuremberg Laws, particularly those concerned with miscegenation, and that this notion of bloodlines was crucial to conceptions of nationhood on both sides of the Atlantic. The translation of Jim Crow into a German context was then mirrored after World War II in South Africa. Patrick Furlong (1991) has detailed the ideological impact of Nazism on the trajectory of Afrikaner nationalism, and Shirli Gilbert (2010) notes that Jewish communities in South Africa were quick to identify the connecting tissue between the pronouncements of the National Party and the prelude to the Holocaust.

Muskian futurism, more broadly, has also seen a more vocal nostalgia for White Supremacist projects. After Musk’s acquisition of Twitter, neo-Nazis took advantage of the platform’s verification service without any effort by the company to moderate or challenge material. Ingram (2024) notes that over a seven-day period, seven posts expressing Holocaust denialism and Nazi sympathies were able to attract 4.5 million views. Musk has also personally boosted these views by reposting the claim that leaders in Nazi Germany had not been responsible for the deaths of millions, but rather than public sector workers had been (Pequeño 2025).

Additionally, nostalgia toward Apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia has gained prominence among the global far right (Abrahamsen 2023). Although there is documented nostalgia for the Apartheid era among some Afrikaners (Evans 2009; Kynoch 2003), a romanticized view of White Supremacy in Southern Africa has circulated through digital media and found sympathizers around the world. Giving the example of White Supremacist terrorist Dylann Roof, historian Quinn Slobodian (2025) points to how members of the far-right in the US have aligned themselves with the political objectives of Rhodesia. Luise White (2015) argues that Rhodesianness, as conceived of by Ian Smith and other key figures of the Rhodesian Front government, was less about a geographical location and more that citizenship gave White people access to a transnational community of White settlers. The emergence of Rhodesia and/or Apartheid nostalgia in places around the Anglosphere, and particularly the United States, adds credibility to White’s interpretation and suggests a powerful racial component to Muskian futurism in tension with the hyper-nationalistic, arguably fascistic, worldview of significant figures in the Trump Administration.

The popularity of Muskian futurism in the United States is likely related to the prevalence of misremembering and amnesia in the nation’s collective memory. Sympathetic renderings of the Antebellum South and the intentional forgetting of the connection between slavery and Confederate secession have been commonplace

throughout recent US history (Foner 1990; Cox 2019). Additionally, Confederate nostalgia was frequently deployed during the Civil Rights Movement as White supremacists sought to maintain their social and political dominance over African Americans (Sandage 1993; Glickman 2024). The willingness to recast the slave-holding South as a traditional, gentile space without modern comparison chimes with similar yearning for order undergirded by racial domination provided in Rhodesia or Apartheid South Africa. The referent object in this discursive construction is a society where racial discrimination and segregation is seen as necessary for stability and economic flourishing. Although Muskian futurism in many ways emphasises technological advancement rather than any rejection of the modern to defend traditional institutions and social structures, racial dominance remains a deeply embedded aspect of this ideological formulation.

On the American Right, Musk has bolstered opposition to affirmative action, critical race theory and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Such opposition is rooted in a sense of White grievance and victimhood which bears striking resemblance to arguments made by White Afrikaners describing the ‘realities’ of post-Apartheid South Africa. In January 2025, less than three weeks after Trump’s second inauguration, the Administration, of which Musk was a prominent member, suspended development aid to South Africa because of amendments made to the Apartheid-era law on land expropriation (Ngcobo 2025). The following month, Trump signed an Executive Order inviting Afrikaners to emigrate to the United States, a notably pro-immigration policy from an overtly nativist Administration (Serino 2025).

Establishing a blueprint of reactionary policymaking and discourse, however, has been somewhat jarring for many sympathetic movements. Prominent Trump supporting British politician Nigel Farage refused to take part in a diversity training initiative for new MPs, reportedly stating, “I am not in favour of the poisonous DEI agenda that has been forced on to society by our woke institutions” (Williamson 2024). The phrasing of Farage’s objection is noteworthy as the ‘woke’ discourse at the centre of British culture wars was largely imported from political and media commentators in the United States whose reach extends far beyond the geographical borders of North America. Additionally, the British vocabulary around such initiatives is frequently EDI or EDIB, the latter also including ‘belonging’. Farage’s rhetorical slip, therefore, demonstrates that the forces of reaction are homogenising their talking points and banking on the continued hegemony of American culture over the Anglosphere shaping the political attitudes of low-information voters.

4.2. Demography Demagoguery

As an outgrowth of an international regime of White supremacist thought, Musk repeatedly concerns himself with natalist politics. Musk has repeatedly (Musk 2022a; 2022b; 2024; 2025) asserted that “a collapsing birth rate is the biggest danger civilization faces by far”. The sincerity of his views has been corroborated by those closest to him. Ashley St. Clair, the mother of one of Musk’s fourteen children, shared private messages where Musk claimed he wanted to father “a legion” of children, potentially with surrogates (Mattioli 2025). Musk’s support for the Great Replacement Theory (GRT) only further serves to highlight a worldview that centres on existential anxiety around racial demography (Klee 2024).

The original iteration of the GRT, attributed to Renaud Camus, emphasised the role of international elites in undermining French/European culture by importing non-White Europeans, thereby rendering the native-born population powerless (Obaidi et al. 2022). As Ekman notes, “by producing a common ‘us’ (French, Europeans, Whites),

as victims of the actions and plans of traitorous politicians and/or secret agreements within power elites, immigrants are constructed as an out-group threat” (Ekman 2022, 1131). The Muskian futurist worldview builds on this intellectual position and adapts the notion to the American continent, and indeed any outpost of “Western civilization”. In particular, the Muskian futurist adopts a highly partisan view, asserting that ethnic minorities will necessarily vote for Democrats, in large part due to a longstanding homogenization of non-white voters in American media culture (Eargle, Esmall and Sullivan 2008; Terkildsen and Damore, 1999).

Reactionary pronatalism has become a hallmark of European right-wing populist movements, most notably in Hungary under Fidesz. Since 2010, the Hungarian government under Prime Minister Victor Orban has introduced numerous pro-natalist policies including the tightening of abortion laws and in 2017 a lifelong exemption to income tax for mothers of four or more children was introduced (Cook, Iarskaia-Smirnova and Kozlov 2023). The European Refugee Crisis and fears of immigration have been deployed by figures like Orban to justify pronatalist policies whilst characterising Europe as in an existential battle with inferior civilizations (Rasmussen 2023).

As a result of this view of civilization struggle, Muskian futurism is necessarily international as it emphasises the presence of globalist elites seeking to undermine the Western world. The solution to this cosmopolitan consensus is to create universal discourses of reaction through the mechanism of American hegemonic power, or at least the remnants of it. This has most recently been seen in Sweden where US embassy staff in Stockholm have attempted to leverage their economic position to insist that the City’s Planning Office terminate DEI programs (Papenfuss 2025). This move is unsurprising given that the Muskian futurist views themselves locked in a global “clash of civilizations” where the enemy is both a racialized Other and a proverbial fifth column of Western progressives. Further, given the United States’ history of seeking to impose its domestic public morality on the international stage, such as through the Mexico City policy regarding abortion (Crane 1994), the Muskian futurist is revealed to have a heightened sense of their own importance. The politics of racial grievance, forged through Apartheid nostalgia and conspiratorialism and made concrete through federal policy, are regarded as antithetical to European values at a time where soft anti-Americanism has gained ground across all randomly tariffed allies.

Elon Musk’s public persona is in the process of grooming a generation of tech-savvy but generally apolitical young men towards a collection of strange, frankly racist and extremist political views they would not otherwise encounter in public discourse. Musk has turned himself into a conduit and an incubator for an increasingly paranoid and conspiratorial reactionary politics, meaning that at the very least, his impressionable supporters, excited about technological innovation and the work of his companies, will be regularly exposed to a fringe worldview that will become, if nothing else, increasingly normalised⁸.

⁸ As if intending to prove our point in the most ugly and direct manner possible, on the day we intended to conclude writing this piece it was revealed by users of Musk’s Grok AI feature on X (formerly Twitter) that it has been bringing up white supremacist conspiracy theories unprompted and the chatbot told users it was ‘instructed by [its] creators’ to accept ‘white genocide as real and racially motivated’. This demonstrates a dangerous intervention by its owner to manipulate information retrieval on one of the world’s largest social media platforms. See Dana Kerr. 2025. “Musk’s AI Grok bot rants about ‘white genocide’ in South Africa in unrelated chats”, The Guardian, 14 May. Available at:

5. Ghosts in the Machines

Journalists have likened Musk's contemporary form of tech-bro futurist self-promotion to similar public self-aggrandisement from 20th century visionary industrialist Henry Ford (Davis 2021; Chayka 2025). Ford is a divisive figure of American capitalism, occasionally invoked by liberal commentators as a reminder of a bygone era insofar as his vision of shared prosperity by linking mass production to high wages and broad consumer access contrasts sharply with the neoliberal remnants our generation has inherited. Nevertheless, Ford as a person and Ford as a brand are two sharply contrasting entities.

Characterising the Nazi worldview as one of reactionary modernism, scholars have observed similarities between Ford's worldview and the European fascism of his age (Herf 1985) and others have commented on the combination of antisemitism and raw self-interest as motivating factors in his war profiteering (Baldwin, 2001). Ford embraced a paternalistic, authoritarian corporate structure, although it is worth noting that his infamous Department of Sociology - in which workers were placed under surveillance by investigators for bad habits such as smoking, poor hygiene and ensuring they were married after they reached twenty-two years of age - was an expensive and quickly aborted project rather than emblematic of the shaping of Fordist worker subjectivity (Meyer 1981). Fordism was a philosophy of social organisation – a “manufacturing system designed to produce standardized, low-cost goods and afford its workers decent enough wages to buy them” (De Grazia 2005, 4). Products made with industrial machinery through systems of mass production for mass consumption and made by workers paid competitively such that they can see themselves as consumers in the market as much as producers (Tolliday & Zeitlin 1987, 1-2).

Ford's relationship with the US Government was tense and opportunistic – in 1915, when opposition to the Great War was dominant in the United States, Ford chartered a *peace ship* to Europe in a failed attempt to mediate peace through neutral mediation and citizen diplomacy. This strangely egotistical endeavour mirrored Musk's own strange intervention into world news – when members of a boys football team became trapped inside a cave in northern Thailand in June 2018, the expedition to save them received world attention. Musk posted a ludicrous suggestion to build a mini-submarine to rescue them, and after being rebuffed by Vernon Unsworth, a cave diver who would go on to rescue all twelve boys and their coach, Musk called the hero a “pedo guy” in his hour of triumph, leading to a lawsuit and global reappraisal of Musk's reputation as a visionary thinker (BBC News 2019).

Just as Ford leaned into a public persona as a muckraking industrialist with a streak of patriotic populism, Musk similarly intervenes into public discourse with an edgelord humour (or lack thereof) and ingratiates himself into culture war debates online. Ford and Musk both criticised democratic regulations, decry unionization of the workforce - in Musk's case, because “it creates lords and peasants” (Greenhouse 2023) - and rely on the force of personality in their leadership styles to ensure employees endure, rather than challenge, abusive work conditions (Higgins 2021; Kim 2022). Ford's obsession with creating spaces of control extended to literal colonial expansionism. Biographers such as Lacey (1986) and Grandin (2009) documented the abortive project of Fordlandia in the Amazon, an attempt to secure rubber production for the global automobile company whilst developing an industrial community in which local Brazilian

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/14/elon-musk-grok-white-genocide>
[Last accessed: 15 May 2025].

workers would be transformed by American norms. Fordism is historically understood as both a mode of organising production and in the eyes of its namesake, a neo-colonial civilizing mission (Grandin 2009, 12). Here one might expect Musk's obsession with space colonization may make for a fruitful comparison – but as Davenport (2018) and others have argued, Musk and the other billionaires associated with commercial space travel are less interested on settling on the red face of Mars and instead on monopolising resources, whether that be technological or in terms of specialist personnel. Musk frames space colonisation as a means of ensuring the long-term survival of the human species (Isaacson 2023).

Ford displayed his antisemitic and paranoid nativism in his magazine, the *Dearborn Independent* (1921-1927), a short-lived periodical that offered an insight into Ford's conspiratorial mind, but little else.⁹ Musk has similarly turned Twitter into X, a Dearborn Independent for the social media age, in which he has situated himself as its main character – reports have shown that the algorithm has been adjusted so that Musk followers see his tweets more often than they otherwise would (Schiffer & Newton 2023).

Fordism advocates for a world in which business tycoons oversee systems of machine-augmented expansion and where workers are controlled by the structures that condition their material interests insofar as unionization is undermined and controlled ideologically by the consumer opportunities afforded by their acquiescence. Ford's vision of the future was a Fordist one - political but nonetheless ruthlessly opportunistic, a Midwestern anti-liberal populism that appealed to everyone from American patriots and Nazi generals to Soviet planners in its capacity to shape postwar industrial production (Link 2020). Musk is a capitalist billionaire in a different time – post-Fordist production is characterised by flexibility, decentralisation, and the use of information technologies, emphasising customised production and a shift from mass manufacturing to niche markets (Amin 1994). Unlike Fordism, which relied on standardised, assembly-line mass production and hierarchical control, post-Fordism features more adaptable labour processes, networked organisational structures, and greater responsiveness to consumer demand. In Ford's own industry, Toyota pioneered adaptable labour processes by using flexible work teams in car manufacturing, where workers were trained in multiple tasks and rotate roles, enabling quicker responses to production changes and reducing downtime (Womack et al. 2007). Furthermore, niche markets are cultivated and understood through lean production, which includes just-in-time processes that minimise waste from overproduction by reducing inventory and producing goods only when needed. Both the high-tech customisation only possible with highly adaptable workers and lean production for efficiency are features of Tesla's gigafactories, for instance.

In this context, Post-Fordism theorises digital capitalism's transition from rigid mass production to a flexible regime of immaterial labour and bio-cognitive control (Lazzarato 1996; Virno 2004). Digital platforms are not merely surveillant but function as engines for the real subsumption of life under capital, extracting value from social activity itself and producing a global precariat (Standing 2011). This constitutes a new social factory where, for Fuchs (2014), exploitation is rooted in the appropriation of unpaid digital

⁹ "The magazine's eclectic mix of populist money notions, pacifism, and rural mythology were original only in the sense that they echoed the beliefs of Ford. The anti-Semitic campaigns, while bringing the magazine most of its notoriety, were themselves rooted in the Populist conspiracy myths of Ford's youth. The Dearborn Independent was decidedly behind the times, basing itself on a reform impulse that had been quashed by the war and prosperity." (Foust 1997, 424).

labour, wherein users' communicative and social activities are systematically mined and commodified to create value for capital.

Musk's vision of the future is Muskian, and he operates in a globalised market reliant on flexible, knowledge-intensive forms of production. Therefore, hyper-specialists in the most in-demand markets, such as computer science, data engineering and algorithmic design, are capable of commanding high salaries and shifting across companies, rather than settling into a single role for the duration of their entire career. Non-specialist workers are treated as dispensable, valued solely for their commitment to gruelling work conditions and contribution to general economic output, whereas these hyper-specialists constitute a technical labour force essential to the technical infrastructures required for market monopolisation. Muskian production is characterised by the enclosure of technical knowledge, the codification of expertise into proprietary systems, the use of non-disclosure agreements (Farrell 2024) and the creation of networked corporate silos that restrict knowledge circulation and foreclose competing alternatives. Musk does not want to colonise *Mars* – he wants to colonise *NASA*, and more generally, the US state infrastructure. As Marcuse once pronounced, “technology serves to institute new, more effective, and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion” (Marcuse 1964, 158) – Muskian futurism is a vision in which a cabal of oligarchic elites own these pleasant forms of social control and lease them to the state.

Musk's economic vision can be implied and teased out from his public statements – he views government regulation as a bureaucratic impediment to innovation and efficiency rather than a protective measure (Musk quoted in: WSJ CEO Council Summit 2021; Interview with 60 Minutes 2018; Turak 2025)¹⁰; his opposition to unions is well-publicized and he often frames unionization as a process of his workers betraying him and unions themselves as the cause of business difficulties rather than management decisions (Pringle 2023; Musk 2018)¹¹ which has meant that Tesla worker unionization efforts are dogmatically thwarted (Meyersohn 2023); Musk victimizes the entrepreneur's position within the business, referring to growing companies as “pain factories”, and the role of the capitalist “to eat glass and stare into the abyss” (Interview with Sal Khan 2013). With this victimization of the upper hierarchy invoked, Musk then insists on extreme levels of worker commitment in service of the grand vision of his leadership (Kay 2022; Prakash 2022).¹²

¹⁰ “The fundamental issue is that there is a tremendous amount of bureaucracy in the United States. At the federal, state, county, and city level, the number of requirements to get anything done is immense. It's not that people are evil or bad; it's that the system has become incredibly complex. It's like we're trying to solve a giant maze just to do basic things”. / “I am not a fan of the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission]. I do not respect the SEC”. “I think we do need to delete entire agencies, as opposed to leave part of them behind. [...] It's kind of like leaving a weed [...] If you don't remove the roots of the weed, then it's easy for the weed to grow back. But if you remove the roots of the weed - it doesn't stop weeds from ever going back, but it makes it harder”.

¹¹ “I think the unions naturally try to create negativity in a company [...] if Tesla gets unionized, we deserved and it and because we failed”. / “I'm not against all unions, but UAW has a track record of destroying productivity so a company can't compete on world market. Our current factory went bankrupt under UAW before we took it over. Don't want Tesla to die too.”

¹² Sent to Tesla workers, “please prepare yourself for a level of intensity that is greater than anything most of you have ever experienced before”, the 2012 email read, per Bloomberg. “Revolutionizing industries is not for the faint of heart, but nothing is more rewarding or exciting, and I will personally make sure that those who produce exceptional results are rewarded exceptionally, as is fair and right”. Musk sent a follow-up e-mail telling Tesla

Unlike Ford, it is important to remember with Musk that although his “name is synonymous with technological advancement, his utility to these projects is minimal” (Davis 2021) – his talent is in his capacity to hire the best hyper-specialists that the niche markets of the technology sectors require, tell them to work faster and harder, and spend his time prognosticating on our shared technological future in conference halls and event spaces. His recent involvement with the Trump Administration, in which he regularly appears sat next to Trump during his presidential duties or at key political events, has arguably damaged his own cultivated reputation as a hands-on workaholic, given that all his companies appear to be operating without his purported engineering genius.

6. Conclusions and Implications

We have considered the extent to which Muskian futurism, as earlier defined, functions as a political ideology within contemporary digital capitalism, and its implications for democratic institutions. Standard Muskian futurism reflects an assemblage of neo-reactionary, cyber-libertarian, fascist-adjacent ideologues, some of whom are embedded in ongoing philosophical discourses, some of whom are economically invested in the success of Musk and his companies, and some of whom are fellow travellers committed to grandiose notions of white supremacist conspiracism. While Muskian futurism is itself quasi-fascistic, it is not the sole fascistic influence on the Trump Administration. Muskian futurism is centred around Musk and his associates in Silicon Valley and so will persist as a politics closely aligned with American – and global – capitalism even if Musk is eventually removed, or his direct influence wanes over time. Musk himself is the product of a larger community of neo-reactionaries with beliefs that beautifully dovetail with the personal self-interest of billionaires with substantial investments in technological development and industries that would benefit from the state privatizing certain elements of its infrastructure. In short, the north star of Muskian futurism is an amoral pursuit of self-interest whereas other fascistic ideologies are predominantly motivated by the prospect of a racially constructed “Nation” or “State”.

Throughout US history, presidential candidates achieve power through the effective mobilisation of coalitions of competing, and at times contradictory, interests. In this regard, the coexistence of Muskian futurism with unrelated right-wing authoritarianism and well-established Christian conservatism bears striking resemblance to the coalition of social conservatives and libertarians that delivered the White House to Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush (Witcher 2019). However, Musk’s economic self-interest and personal advancement in culture triumphs over a deeper moral worldview to the expense of the other priorities of the wider MAGA movement. Musk’s opposition to tariffs (Graziosi 2025) and severe limitations immigration, inclusive of skilled migrants for the corporations of Silicon Valley (Wendling 2024), chafes against the ethno-nationalist project of parts of Trump’s voting base. Chayka (2025) has warned that Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and its ruthless cuts of significant government infrastructure (with seemingly

workers to „Please talk to your spouses, children, relatives and friends and explain what I've said in this email“. / At 2am, Musk sent an email to all Twitter employees telling them to be “extremely hardcore” and work “long hours at high intensity”, and that “only exceptional performance will constitute a passing grade”, pointing at the high bar he hopes to set in building “Twitter 2.0”, although there are no public primary sources.

limited accountability) reflects a Silicon Valley belief in efficiency over human agency¹³. There are mounting concerns that DOGE characterizes a more permanent shift towards a technocratic governance model that erodes democratic processes, one that does not necessarily chime with a nativist populism that seeks control over, and revenge upon, a purported deep state.

The removal of Musk and his allies from this project would in all likelihood lead to a departure from eugenicist convictions and techno-feudal focus to be supplanted by more of a racially essentialist conception of “American citizenship” and patriotism as has been seen historically (Gerstle 2001). The replacement of conventional Trumpist nativist-populism with stark faux-technocratic elitism puts Trump on the backfoot by making him less important. Patriotism has unexpectedly fallen out of the executive picture; Trump supporters tend to wrap themselves in the flag, so the techno-oligarchic influence may be sacrificed to retain nationalist support in the medium-term.¹⁴ To the extent that this is achievable given Musk’s control of X (formerly Twitter) and the increasing influence of tech billionaires on the public sphere through their control of social media and their embeddedness within state infrastructure through data and surveillance, these reactionary elements must be understood as a networked assemblage of individuals and groups committed to broadly similar political projects – they are themselves navigating relationships of convenience and despite their overwhelmingly disproportionate power compared to members of the general public, remain fringe outliers in terms of people endorsing their worldview. Muskian futurism resembles something like a postmodern NRA (National Rifle Association) – a parasitic bulge attached to the Republican Party that may not represent the American public’s social attitudes but remains capable of wielding its excessive influence to shape public policy, and with it, normalize certain ideas about how America (and by extension, the Western World) is and ought to be.

In public policy, a key priority of progressive activists and lawmakers must be the diminishment of Silicon Valley’s power over the American state. The bolstering of antitrust laws by Congress and the subsequent enforcement of these provisions the Federal Trade Commission would undo the state capture of these corporate entities and prevent figures like Musk from monopolizing the digital public sphere, as was

¹³ Elon Musk’s departure from the Trump administration during the second term stemmed from a mix of legal, bureaucratic, and political factors. He expressed frustration with the entrenched nature of Washington, describing the federal bureaucracy as “much worse than I realized” and noting how difficult it was to enact reforms at the pace he had envisaged (Masih & Thadani, 2025). Tensions also emerged with the administration’s legislative agenda, particularly after Musk criticised the so-called “Big Beautiful Bill” for being a “massive spending bill” that undermined DOGE’s mission of cutting government waste (Egwuonwu, 2025). Musk’s role was further complicated by underwhelming results and political resistance. His ambitious promise that DOGE could identify \$2 trillion in cuts from the \$6.5 trillion federal budget was gradually scaled back, with reforms falling short of the sweeping changes Musk had promoted (Popli, 2025). When announcing his exit, Musk attempted to frame the departure in a way that preserved his credibility and influence – officially, Musk had been serving as a *Special Government Employee* (SGE), a role legally capped at 130 working days per year, so he emphasized the time-limit and presented his exit as the natural conclusion of a temporary role rather than a forced resignation.

¹⁴ Trump promptly moved to downplay Musk’s authority, reminding his nationalist supporters at a Turning Point USA event that Musk was not born in the country. See Joseph Gedeon, “Trump downplays talk of Elon Musk’s increasing influence in Republican politics”, *The Guardian*, 23 December 2024. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/dec/23/trump-elon-musk-influence> [Last Accessed: 14 May 2025].

attempted through his accusation of Twitter. Additionally, state governments would be wise to challenge Musk's excessive interventions into the democratic process. Musk's involvement in the 2024 Wisconsin Supreme Court race, which included a financial inducement to vote in the given election, was a blatant violation of (relatively lax) campaign finance rules and should face tangible, non-financial penalties (Ulmer 2025). If the current statute in Wisconsin does not make this possible, then states should rework these laws accordingly. Political retribution through the federal government remains possible, such as cancelling all contracts with Musk's companies and insourcing previously privatised government functions such as space exploration.

Muskian futurism is ultimately a shallow return to corporatism with the vibes of something new; a technological masquerade, a shimmering grey shell that serves to protect and hide the ugly festering of a lingering fascism and masks outright collusion with the government in a libertarian-technocratic rhetoric of state capture for the purpose of permanent democratic retrenchment. Given the increasing detethering of Musk from Trump's political project and the amplifying murmurs of Musk founding or financing a new political party, it is unsurprising that its embryonic form gestures to an "America Party", an empty "post-ideological" vehicle that allows for maximum flexibility from which to rebrand Musk's personal politics and material interests as a dynamic technocratic centrism. Given the scope of his influence on global politics and technological shifts, we would do well to remain both vigilant and sceptical of his persistent activities.

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