

Elon Musk is a one-man criminal rogue state – it is time we reined him in

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He has bankrolled elections, stoked riots and ignored laws. We mustn't make the mistake of playing nice with the world's richest bully

Elon Musk is, more or less, a rogue state. His intentions are self-serving and nefarious, and his nation-state level resources allow him to flout the law with impunity. To put it into context, if dollars were metres, Musk's money would be enough to take him to Mars and back, while a mere millionaire could only make a round trip from Paris to Amsterdam.

The sheer immorality of any one person possessing so much wealth is obvious to most people with basic amounts of empathy. But when it comes to Musk and [the other 14 people](#) worth more than \$100bn, the morality of it is almost a secondary concern. Their individual wealth is a society-distorting threat to democracy in the same way that economics has always recognised monopolies to be dangerous to a functional market.

For [\\$250m](#) in direct support – and an additional \$44bn for control over X, nee Twitter, and with it the algorithm behind what 300 million users see on their timelines – Musk was rewarded with a co-presidency. What else are we supposed to make of his appearance at Notre Dame's reopening, joining Donald Trump and various heads of state?

X's valuation may be dropping as swiftly as its user count, but that's missing the point behind the purchase. X served its purpose by helping elect Trump, with [one study suggesting the platform's algorithm](#) was tweaked to boost conservative-leaning users.

That Tesla stock has [surged more than 40%](#) since the election surely has little to do with

the company's fundamentals and much to do with investors speculating on an unprecedented boost to its fortunes to come. Tesla and SpaceX grew into behemoths on the back of [public contracts and public subsidies](#), and from xAI to Neuralink, his other companies stand to benefit from Musk's inside influence over regulation.

Plutocracy is not enough, though, because nothing is ever enough for the handful of men who have everything. Musk's new obsessions (beyond the validation and human affection that he mistakenly believes he will find on social media) are [attacking public servants](#), slashing social spending and going after the most vulnerable. "In most cases, the word 'homeless' is a lie," Musk [tweeted recently](#). "It's usually a propaganda word for violent drug addicts with severe mental illness."

The most charitable interpretation is that Musk exists at various points along the [Dunning Kruger scale](#). He's a fantastic venture capitalist, whose sci-fi-enthusiast investments produced, let's be honest, far more interesting companies than something like luxury goods or fast fashion. But this provided him with incalculably more resources to be a blithering moron when it comes to things such as geopolitics, or how to build and organise a just society. The less charitable interpretation – the one presented by his former friend Sam Harris on a recent [podcast appearance](#) – is that he is "palpably, visibly deranged ... snorting ketamine and tweeting at all hours of the day and night", has been radicalised by his own algorithm and presents himself as Tony Stark while actually being Dr Evil.

But because plutocracy and pursuing a radical social agenda in the US still isn't enough, Musk has [set his sights on other nations](#) as well. Over the past half-year, he has [gone after Italian judges](#) who blocked a migrant detention plan, promoted misinformation and [stoked riots](#) in the UK, floated the possibility of [interfering directly](#) in UK electoral politics by giving Nigel Farage's party \$100m, and persistently [ignored EU law](#) regarding content moderation and disinformation on X.

When rogue states behave this way – election interference, active disinformation campaigns, social media manipulation – other states call them out, or even [impose](#)

[sanctions](#). Musk is not simply a private citizen with an opinion and a large following. His sheer wealth, his control of X, and his new position within the US government place him in a different category. So how *do* you solve that kind of problem, or at least respond to it?

Musk's fellow billionaires have chosen the path of appeasement, if not outright enthusiasm, making pilgrimages to Mar-a-Lago to prostrate themselves before its idiot king and the man behind the curtain. No real surprise there. What's more surprising is that prominent journalists and [big media organisations](#) have done the same, fuelling Trump's campaign to silence and intimidate through lawsuits, such as his [latest one](#) against the Des Moines Register for having published a poll he didn't like.

The populist premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, has a potentially more effective strategy of taking on bullies – at least rhetorically. “We will go to the extent of cutting off their energy, going down to Michigan, going down to New York State and over to Wisconsin,” [Ford said](#) in response to Trump's taunting about making Canada a 51st state and imposing tariffs. Likewise, when the Brazilian supreme court judge Alexandre de Moraes [refused to back down](#) and treated Musk's companies as a single universe – freezing Starlink assets and ordering telecom providers to block access to X – Musk blinked.

Soon it will be the EU's turn. What the union owes its citizens is not to play nice or mete out a meek slap on the wrist over the various alleged [legal violations](#) by Musk and X that are under investigation, it's to [firmly and intently](#) show that even interplanetary amounts of wealth don't mean impunity, and that some things – like democracy – are not for sale.