ELON MUSK'S MACHINE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Last October, I wrote a post called "Elon Musk's Machine for Fascism," describing how Twitter had twice served Donald Trump's electoral ambitions.

In 2016, trolls — including Don Jr — workshopped memes on a DM list and then used their reach to pressure MSM to adopt their narratives. In 2020, trolls — including Trump himself, his two sons, and other key advisors — used the platform to sow intentional disinformation about the election. Only by shutting down Trump's account after January 6 was he prevented from further sowing violence in advance of Joe Biden's inauguration.

Since then, Elon Musk has bought the platform and right wingers have successfully pushed to defund any effective civil society checks on the social media platform.

As I reflected last year, Musk's purchase of Xitter seemed to be an effort to perfect on the 2016 and 2020 models.

By welcoming outright Nazis to the platform, though, he has undermined its ability to reach traditional journalists and normies, which made me hope that some of Xitter's past utility to fascists might be weakened.

But in the last year, Musk and his far right allies have tested another model. First in Ireland and more recently and systematically in the UK, far right thugs like Tommy Robinson have used Xitter to enflame far right violence masquerading as organic anti-immigrant unrest.

Even before Musk got involved, high profile accounts on Xitter magnified disinformation from other platforms.

> Much of the false information about the attack seemed to come from a website

called Channel 3 Now, which generates video reports that look like mainstream news channels. But its video and its false claims about the name of the attacker might have stayed relatively obscure if they were not highlighted by larger accounts.

On X, users with considerable followings quickly shared that video and spread it across the site. And on other platforms such as TikTok — where videos can go viral quickly even if the accounts posting them do not have large followings, because of the app's algorithm — they racked up hundreds of thousands of views. At some point, the false name of the attacker was a trending search on both TikTok and X, meaning that it showed to users who might otherwise have shown no interest in it at all.

But Musk did get involved personally, repeatedly stoking more violence.

Elon Musk just can't help himself.

The billionaire X owner sparked fury in the British government this weekend after he responded to incendiary footage of the far-right disorder that's sweeping the country by saying "civil war is inevitable."

The post on X was roundly condemned by U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office, which said there was "no justification" for Musk's comments.

But Musk doubled, tripled, then quadrupled down after that dig. Responding to a statement from Starmer vowing his government would "not tolerate attacks on mosques or on Muslim communities," the X boss effectively accused the British prime minister of wearing blinkers. "Shouldn't you be

> concerned about attacks on all
> communities?" Policing of the unrest
> "does seem one-sided," he offered in a
> third post.
>
> He then branded Starmer "#twotierkeir" —
> riffing on a popular far-right talking
> point that British police treat disorder
> by white people differently to that by
> perpetrated by minorities. Justice
> Minister Heidi Alexander called Musk
> "deplorable."

Musk has complained about British efforts to
police content that, in the UK, is illegal.

And things would be worse in the US, because the
laws against incitement are far more limited.

Plus, Xitter has twice fought back against legal
process, one time on behalf of Donald Trump.

Xitter has also throttled pro-Kamala Harris
accounts, even as Musk repeatedly boosts Trump.

Today, in advance of an "interview" with Musk
and the roll-out by Trump's sons of a new crypto
currency scam and on the 7th anniversary of the
Charlottesville riot, Donald Trump returned to
Xitter.