

Dear FCCJ Member,

At the FCCJ General Membership Meeting this Thursday (27th March, 7 p.m.), I plan to introduce a motion to delete the FCCJ account at 'X', the social media platform formerly called Twitter. The reason is the increasingly toxic influence of owner Elon Musk on the platform.

I am writing to seek your support in ensuring the motion passes.

By doing so, the FCCJ would join a groundswell of media organisations, universities, NGOs, public institutions and government ministries, as well as prominent individuals, to have quit 'X' on ethical grounds.

Media organisations that have abandoned 'X' include the European Federation of Journalists, French newspapers *Le Monde*, *Libération*, *Ouest-France* and *Sud Ouest*; *The Guardian* (UK); *Dagens Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet* (Sweden); National Public Radio (USA) and *Vanguardia* (Spain).

In Germany, over 60 universities and other higher education institutions have quit 'X'. In Britain, Oxford University's Merton College, of which the Japanese Emperor is an alumnus and honorary fellow, is among the high-profile departures from 'X'. So too are three government ministers in Spain and the city of Barcelona, the city of Paris, the German Army (Bundeswehr) and German Defence Ministry, the Bundesbank and even the Norwegian police force ... plus a long list of celebrities.

In total, 'X' is believed to have 650 million active users. Since acquiring 'X' in October 2022, Musk has utilised his own large following on the platform (officially, 219.9 million) to amplify fake news and far-right conspiracy theories. In just one week last year, *The New York Times* found that almost one third of 171 posts by Musk were fake, misleading or lacking in vital context. In June 2024, the Centre for Countering Digital Hate detailed how under Musk's ownership, detailed how "racist, homophobic, neo-Nazi, antisemitic or conspiracy content" was unmoderated on the site.

Increasingly, Musk has used his 'X' global megaphone to aggressively intervene in politics. In Europe, his radical right-wing interventions align with the strategy of Vladimir Putin to destabilise democracy, centrist governments, and bedrock institutions such as the European Union and NATO.

Outrage over Musk's Nazi-style salutes and support for Germany's far-right AfD

Musk has energetically campaigned for the Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) party, which Germany's domestic intelligence agency has placed under surveillance for suspected right-wing extremism. Figures in the party have used Nazi slogans and downplayed the Holocaust. One AfD member of the Bundestag, the German parliament, has described himself as "the friendly face of National Socialism."

"It's good to be proud of German culture, German values, and not to lose that in some sort of multiculturalism that dilutes everything," Musk told an AfD rally in January. "Children should not be guilty of the sins of their parents, let alone their great grandparents," he said, adding "there is too much focus on past guilt, and we need to move beyond that."

Two days before, at a parade to celebrate Donald Trump's inauguration as US president, the world's richest man had made Nazi-style salutes in front of the world's television cameras.

Jewish leaders and historians have condemned the billionaire. Dani Dayan, the chair of Israel's official Holocaust memorial, said Musk's call to "move beyond" the crimes of Nazi Germany was "an insult to the victims of Nazism and a clear danger to the democratic future of Germany." Jens-Christian Wagner, a historian who runs the Buchenwald concentration camp memorial, said Musk "is a mixture of mad and right-wing extremist and that is particularly dangerous."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Musk's words "about 'great Germany' and 'the need to forget about German guilt for Nazi crimes' sounded all too familiar and ominous."

Disinformation and incitement in the UK

Britain is another focus of Musk's political interventions. Musk has championed the cause of Britain's best-known far-right activist, Tommy Robinson, who is currently in prison, and during last summer's rioting in British cities against asylum-seekers, Musk's postings on 'X' verged on incitement to violence. One such post stated "civil war is inevitable" in the UK.

The *Financial Times* reported that Musk has held meetings to discuss how to oust Keir Starmer as British prime minister, and he wrote on 'X' that "America should liberate the people of Britain from their tyrannical government."

Musk has accused Starmer's Labour government of covering up sexual abuse committed by grooming gangs of Pakistani-origin men. He labelled safeguarding minister Jess Phillips a "rape genocide apologist," despite her long record of supporting victims of the gangs. Phillips said she experienced a "deluge of hate" following Musk's false accusation on 'X'.

Musk calls US senator a 'traitor' for visiting Ukraine

Earlier this month, Mark Kelly, the Democrat senator for Arizona and a former US navy combat pilot, made his third visit to Kyiv and met with wounded troops and Ukrainian officials.

"What I saw proved to me we can't give up on the Ukrainian people," Kelly posted on 'X'. "Everyone wants this war to end, but any agreement has to protect Ukraine's security and can't be a giveaway to Putin."

Musk replied: "You are a traitor."

Insulting the foreign minister of Poland

On March 9, Musk boasted that Starlink, the satellite communications system owned by his SpaceX company, was "the backbone of the Ukrainian army" and that "their entire front line would collapse if I turned it off." Radek Sikorski, Poland's foreign minister, replied that his government paid for Ukraine's access to Starlink, adding "If SpaceX proves to be an unreliable provider, we will be forced to look for other suppliers."

"Be quiet, small man," Musk retorted. "There is no substitute for Starlink."

(Before entering politics, Sikorski worked as a freelance war correspondent in Afghanistan and Angola in the 1980s. His wife is Anne Applebaum, the equally distinguished American journalist and historian.)

Secret talks with Putin

The Wall Street Journal reported that Musk has been in secret contact with Vladimir Putin since 2022. In 2024, Musk proposed a peace deal for Ukraine that was highly favourable to Russia. ("F*** off is my very diplomatic reply to you," Kyiv's ambassador to Germany responded.)

Relationship with China

Tesla's factory in Shanghai accounts for more than half of the electric vehicle maker's global deliveries and has benefited from generous government incentives and cheap financing from Chinese banks.

In public, Musk has avoided criticizing the Chinese Communist Party, and in a 2022 interview with the *Financial Times*, he proposed making Taiwan a "special administrative zone" of China, like Hong Kong. The following year, he called Taiwan "an integral part of China that is arbitrarily not part of China" and compared its relationship with the mainland to that of Hawaii and the United States.

Heading Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)

As head of DOGE, Musk has relished shredding the US Federal bureaucracy, at the cost of tens of thousands of jobs and countless government programmes. Over 20 years, SpaceX and Tesla have received more than \$38 billion in aid, funding and government orders according to a *Washington Post* investigation, so Musk's key role in the Trump administration creates massive conflicts of interest. Musk is not employed by the government and is answerable only to Trump.

Media reasons for quitting 'X'

On 26 November 2024, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) stated that it could "no longer ethically participate in a social network that its owner has transformed into a machine of disinformation and propaganda."

EFJ President Maja Sever said: "The social media site 'X' has become the preferred vector for conspiracy theories, racism, far-right ideas and misogynistic rhetoric. 'X' is a platform that no longer serves the public interest at all, but the particular ideological and financial interests of its owner and his political allies."

On 20 January 2025, *Le Monde* published a lengthy editorial by its director Jerome Fenoglio. He wrote: "The billionaire has transformed ['X'] into an extension of his political cause, a form of libertarianism increasingly close to the far right. He has turned it into an instrument of the pressure he wants to put on his competitors or on Europe's social-democrat governments ... the intensification of Musk's activism, the formalization of his position within the Trump power apparatus and the increasing toxicity of the exchanges led us to the

conclusion that the usefulness of our presence weighs less than the many side-effects.”

Announcing its decision in November to quit ‘X’, *The Guardian* said: “The US presidential election campaign served only to underline what we have considered for a long time: that ‘X’ is a toxic media platform and that its owner, Elon Musk, has been able to use its influence to shape political discourse.”

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