

ARTIFICIAL FRAMEWORKS ABOUT ELON: ON ADRIAN DITTMANN AND TOMMY ROBINSON

I was alarmed by the response yesterday to Elon Musk's full-throated propaganda campaign for Tommy Robinson.



In a formula not far off QAnon, Elon has used a child sexual abuse scandal magnified by the Tories to suggest that Robinson has been unfairly jailed for contempt.

He posted and reposted multiple calls for Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, to be released from prison.

The activist was jailed for 18 months in October after pleading guilty to showing a defamatory video of a Syrian refugee during a protest last year.

Judges previously heard that he fled the UK hours after being bailed last summer, following an alleged breach of the terms

of a 2021 court order.

The order was imposed when he was successfully sued by refugee Jamal Hijazi for making false claims about him, preventing Robinson from repeating any of the allegations.

Pictures later showed him on a sun lounger at a holiday resort in Cyprus while violent riots erupted across the UK in the wake of the attack in Southport.

Posts promoted by Musk suggested Robinson was 'smeared as a "far-right racist" for exposing the mass betrayal of English girls by the state', an apparent reference to the grooming gang scandal.

This is fairly transparent effort at projection: to do damage to Labour even while delegitimizing the earned jailing of Robinson, a tactic right wing extremists always use (still are using with January 6) to turn the foot soldiers of political violence into heroes and martyrs. The intent, here, is to cause problems for Labour, sure, but more importantly to undermine rule of law and put Robinson above it.

I'm not alarmed *that* experts in radicalization are finding Musk's efforts to turn Robinson into a martyr serving sexually abused children repulsive. Nor am I alarmed *that* experts in radicalization – and, really, anyone who supports democracy or has a smattering of history – are repulsed by Elon's endorsement of Germany's neo-Nazi AfD party.

I'm alarmed by the nature of the alarm, which the Tommy Robinson full circle demonstrates.

Endorsements are the least of our worries, in my opinion.

To put it simply. Elon Musk's endorsement of Donald Trump was, by itself, not all that valuable. Endorsements, themselves, don't often

sway voters.

Elon's endorsement of Robinson is just the beginning of the damage he can do ... and, importantly, *has already* done. Endorsement is the least of our worries.

It makes a difference if, as he has promised to do for Nigel Farage and as he did do for Trump, Elon drops some pocket cash – say, a quarter of a billion dollars – to get a far right candidate elected.

But where Elon was likely most valuable in the November election was in deploying both his own proprietary social media disinformation and that of others to depress Harris voters and mobilize the low turnout voters who consume no news who made the difference for Trump. We know, for example, that Musk was a big funder of a front group that sought to exacerbate negativity around Gaza (though I've seen no one assess the import of it to depress Democratic turnout anywhere but Michigan's heavily Arab cities). I've seen no one revisit the observations that Elon shifted the entire algorithm of Xitter on the day he endorsed Trump to boost his own and other Republican content supporting Trump. (Of course, Elon deliberately made such analysis prohibitively expensive to do.) We've spent two months fighting about what Dems could do better but, as far as I'm aware, have never assessed the import of Elon's technical contribution.

It's the \$44 billion donation, as much as the \$250 million one.

In other words, Elon's value to AfD may lie more in the viral and microtargeted promotion he can offer than simply his famous name normalizing Nazism or even cash dollars.

But back to Tommy Robinson, and the real reason for my alarm by the *newfound* concern, in the US, about Elon's bromance with the far right provocateur.

It shouldn't be newfound, and Elon has already done more than vocally endorse Robinson.

Tommy Robinson is a kind of gateway drug for US transnational support for British and Irish extremism, with Alex Jones solidly in the mix. This piece, from shortly after the UK riots, describes how Robinson's reach exploded on Xitter after Elon reinstated him.

Robinson, who has been accused of stoking the anti-immigration riots, owes his huge platform to Musk. The billionaire owner of X rescued Robinson from the digital wilderness by restoring his account last November. In the past few days Musk has:

- *responded to a post by Robinson criticising Keir Starmer's response to the widespread disorder – amplifying it to Musk's 193 million followers;*
- *questioned Robinson's recent arrest under anti-terror laws, asking what he did that was "considered terrorism"; and*
- *allowed Robinson's banned documentary, which repeats false claims about a Syrian refugee against a UK high court order, to rack up over 33 million views on X.*

It was the screening of this documentary at a demonstration in London last month that prompted Robinson's arrest under counter-terrorism powers. Robinson left the UK the day before he was due in

court, and is currently believed to be staying at a five-star hotel in Ayia Napa. He is due in court for a full contempt hearing in October.

None of this has stopped Robinson incessantly tweeting about the riots, where far-right groups have regularly chanted his name. He has:

- *falsely claimed that people were stabbed by Muslims in Stoke-on-Trent and Stirling;*
- *called for mass deportations, shared demonstration posters, and described violent protests in Southport as “justified”; and*
- *shared a video that speculated that the suspect in the Southport stabbings was Muslim, a widespread piece of disinformation that helped trigger the riots across the country.*

Making the weather. The far-right activist has nearly 900,000 followers on X, but reaches a much larger number of people. Tortoise calculated that Robinson’s 268 posts over the weekend had been seen over 160 million times by late Monday afternoon.

Elon gives Tommy Robinson a vast platform and Robinson uses it to stoke racist hatred. Robinson was the key pivot point in July, and was a key pivot point in Irish anti-migrant

mobilization. All this happened, already, in July. All this already translated into right wing violence. All this, already, created a crisis for Labour.

Elon Musk is all at once a vector for attention, enormous financial resources, disinformation, and (the UK argues about Xitter), incitement.

I worry that we're not understanding the multiple vectors of risk Elon poses.

Which brings me to Adrian Dittmann, on its face an Elon fanboy who often speaks of Musk – and did, during the brief spat between Laura Loomer and the oligarch – in the First Person. Conspiracy theorist Loomer suggested that Dittmann is no more than an avatar for Musk, a burner account Musk uses like his another named after his son to boost his own ego.

Meanwhile, the account that supposedly convinced Loomer to concede the fight has some otherwise inexplicable ties to the Tesla CEO. Dittmann also purports to be a South African billionaire with identical beliefs to Musk. The account frequently responds to Musk's posts, supporting his decisions related to his forthcoming government positions and the way in which the tech leader is raising his children. But the account also, at times, goes so far as to speak on behalf of Musk, organizing events with Musk's friends while continuing to claim that the two aren't affiliated.

X users felt that the illusion was completely shattered over the weekend, when Dittman participated in an X space using his actual voice—and, suspiciously, had the exact same cadence, accent, and vocal intonations as Musk himself.

Conspiracy theorist Charles Johnson, in his inimitable self promotion, claims to have proven the case (you'll have to click thru for the link

because I refuse to link him directly).

Right wing influencer and notorious troll Charles Johnson also claims to have uncovered “proof” that Dittmann is Musk.

He writes in his Substack article: “I recently attended a Twitter Space where I exposed Elon Musk’s alt account and Elon Musk as a fraud to his face. Take a listen. It was pretty great. Part of the reason I was as aggressive as I was with Adrian/Elon was to get him agitated so he would speak faster than his voice modulator could work and we could make a positive match using software some friends of mine use for this sort of thing. I can confirm it’s Elon. Even if it isn’t physically Elon in the flesh, it’s an account controlled and operated by Elon/X that represents him in every way shape and form. But of course, it’s actually Elon.”

I’ll let the conspiracy theorists argue about whether Dittmann is Musk.

I’m more interested in an underlying premise about Elon we seem to adopt.

After Elon Musk bought Xitter, he retconned his purpose, in part, as an AI product. After the election, Xitter officially updated its Terms of Service to include consent for AI training on your content.

You agree that this license includes the right for us to (i) analyze text and other information you provide and to otherwise provide, promote, and improve the Services, including, for example, for use with and training of our machine learning and artificial intelligence models, whether generative or another type;

Xitter is unabashedly an AI project. Musk's views on AI are closely aligned with his far right ideology and his plans to destroy government.

With other tech oligarchs, we can make certain assumptions about their investment in AI: The necessity to always lead technology, a goal of eliminating human workers, cash. Particularly given Elon's subordination of the profit motive to his ideological whims with his Xitter purchase, that \$44 billion donation he made to Trump, I don't know that we can make such assumptions about Elon.

So why do we assume that everything Xitter's owner posts, who tweets prolifically even while babysitting the incoming US President, boosting fascists around the world, and occasionally sending a rocket to space, is his own primary work? Most of Elon's tweets are so facile they could easily be replaced by a bot. How hard would it be to include a "Concerning" tweet that responds to certain kinds of far right virality? Indeed, what is Elon really doing with his posting except to hone his machine for fascism?

I'm not primarily concerned about whether Adrian Dittmann is a burner account for Elon Musk. Rather, I think that simplifies the question. Why would the next Elon burner account be his human person hiding behind a burner account, and not an AI avatar trained on his own likeness?

Beware South African oligarchs pitching fascists and technological fixes. Because you may often overlook the technological underbelly.

Update: I should have noted Meta's announcement that they plan to create imaginary friends to try to keep users on their social media platforms entertained.

"We expect these AIs to actually, over time, exist on our platforms, kind of in the same way that accounts do," Meta vice-president of product for generative AI Connor Hayes told the Financial Times Thursday.

“They’ll have bios and profile pictures and be able to generate and share content powered by AI on the platform... that’s where we see all of this going,” he added.

Hayes said AI investment will be a “priority” for Meta over the next two years to help make its platforms “more entertaining and engaging” for users.

Update: Nicole Perloth links the analysis who did what Charles Johnson claimed to do: match the voices of Elon and Dittmann. They believe it’s highly likely to be a match.

Update: Some OSINT journalists have tracked down a real Dittmann in Fiji. Then Jacqueline Sweet wrote it up at the Spectator, all the while blaming *the left* for this, when it was pushed by people on the right. None of this addresses Elon’s play with the ID (he claimed he is Dittmann in the wake of Sweet’s piece).