

Democracy needs journalism. Journalism needs you.

Fearless journalism is more important than ever. When news breaks, **you need to understand what actually matters — and what to do about it.** At Vox, our mission to help you make sense of the world has never been more vital. But we can't do it on our own.

We rely on readers like you to fund our journalism. **Will you support our work and become a Vox Member today?**

[Join today](#)

FUTURE PERFECT

The brologarchs have a vision for the new Trump term. It's darker than you think.

The real reason Musk, Zuckerberg, and Bezos are supporting Trump.

by **Sigal Samuel**

Jan 20, 2025 at 6:00 AM CST



Democracy needs journalism. Journalism needs you.

Fearless journalism is more important than ever. When news breaks, **you need to understand what actually matters — and what to do about it.** At Vox, our mission to help you make sense of the world has never been more vital. But we can't do it on our own.

We rely on readers like you to fund our journalism. **Will you support our work and become a Vox Member today?**

[Join today](#)

FUTURE PERFECT

The brologarchs have a vision for the new Trump term. It's darker than you think.

The real reason Musk, Zuckerberg, and Bezos are supporting Trump.

by **Sigal Samuel**

Jan 20, 2025 at 6:00 AM CST





Elon Musk greets Donald Trump at a SpaceX viewing. Brandon Bell/Getty Images



Sigal Samuel is a senior reporter for Vox's Future Perfect and co-host of the Future Perfect podcast. She writes primarily about the future of consciousness, tracking advances in artificial intelligence and neuroscience and their staggering ethical implications. Before joining Vox, Sigal was the religion editor at the Atlantic.

There's a dominant narrative in the media about why tech billionaires are sucking up to Donald Trump: Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Jeff Bezos, all of whom have descended on the nation's capital for the presidential inauguration, either happily support or have largely acquiesced to Trump because they think he'll offer lower taxes and friendlier regulations. In other words, it's just about protecting their own selfish business interests.

That narrative is not exactly wrong — Trump has in fact promised massive tax cuts for billionaires — but it leaves out the deeper, darker forces at work here. For the tech bros — or as some say, the brologarchs — this is about much more than just maintaining and growing their riches. It's about ideology. An ideology inspired by science fiction and fantasy. An ideology that says they are supermen, and supermen should not be subject to rules, because they're doing something incredibly important: remaking the world in their image.

It's this ideology that makes MAGA a godsend for the brologarchs, who include Musk, Zuck, and Bezos as well as the venture capitalists Peter Thiel and Marc Andreessen. That's because MAGA is all about granting unchecked power to the powerful.

RELATED: [The Trump executive orders that threaten democracy](#)

“It's a sense of complete impunity — including impunity to the laws of nature,” Brooke Harrington, a professor of economic sociology at Dartmouth College who studies the behavior of the ultra-rich, told me. “They reject constraint in all of its forms.”

As Harrington has noted, Trump is the perfect avatar for that worldview. He's a man who incited an attempted coup, who got convicted on 34 felony counts and still won reelection, who notoriously said in reference to sexual assault, "When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything."

So, what is the "anything" that the broligarchs want to do? To understand their vision, we need to realize that their philosophy goes well beyond simple libertarianism. It's not just that they want a government that won't tread on them. They want absolutely zero limits on their power. Not those dictated by democratic governments, by financial systems, or by facts. Not even those dictated by death.

The Logoff The email you need to stay informed about Trump — without letting the news take over your life.

Sign Up



Today, Explained

Zuck your feelings

Meta is going MAGA. New York magazine's John Herrman explains Mark Zuckerberg's makeover. Writer Ben Wofford ...



The broligarchs' vision: Science fiction, transhumanism, and immortality

The broligarchs are not a monolith — their politics differ somewhat, and they've sometimes been at odds with each other. Remember when Zuck and Musk said they were going to fight each other in a cage match? But here's something the broligarchs have in common: a passionate love for science fiction and fantasy that has shaped their vision for the future of humanity — and their own roles as its would-be saviors.

Zuckerberg's quest to build the Metaverse, a virtual reality so immersive and compelling that people would want to strap on bulky goggles to interact with each other, is seemingly inspired by the sci-fi author Neal Stephenson. It was actually Stephenson who coined the term "metaverse" in his novel *Snow Crash*, where characters spend a lot of time interacting in a virtual world of that name. Zuckerberg seems not to have noticed that the book is depicting a dystopia; instead of viewing it as a warning, he's viewing it as an instruction manual.

ADVERTISEMENT

Jeff Bezos is inspired by *Star Trek*, which led him to found a commercial spaceflight venture called Blue Origin, and *The High Frontier* by physics professor Gerard K. O'Neill, which informs his plan for space colonization (it involves millions of people living in cylindrical tubes). Bezos attended O'Neill's seminars as an undergraduate at Princeton.

Musk, who wants to colonize Mars to "save" humanity from a dying planet, is inspired by one of the masters of American sci-fi, Isaac Asimov. In his *Foundation* series, Asimov wrote about a hero who must prevent humanity from being thrown into a long

dark age after a massive galactic empire collapses. “The lesson I drew from that is you should try to take the set of actions that are likely to prolong civilization, minimize the probability of a dark age and reduce the length of a dark age if there is one,” Musk said.

And Andreessen, an early web browser developer who now pushes for aggressive progress in AI with very little regulation, is inspired by superhero stories, writing in his 2023 “Techno-Optimist Manifesto” that we should become “technological supermen” whose “Hero’s Journey” involves “conquering dragons, and bringing home the spoils for our community.”

All of these men see themselves as the heroes or protagonists in their own sci-fi saga. And a key part of being a “technological superman” — or ubermensch, as the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche would say — is that you’re above the law. Common-sense morality doesn’t apply to you because you’re a superior being on a superior mission. Thiel, it should be noted, is a big Nietzsche fan, though his is an extremely selective reading of the philosopher’s work.

RELATED: Silicon Valley’s vision for AI? It’s religion, repackaged.

The ubermensch ideology helps explain the brologarchs’ disturbing gender politics. “The ‘bro’ part of brologarch is not incidental to this — it’s built on this idea that not only are these guys superior, they are superior because they’re guys,” Harrington said.

ADVERTISEMENT

For one thing, they valorize aggression, which is coded as male. Zuckerberg, who credits mixed martial arts and hunting wild boars with helping him rediscover his masculinity (and is sporting the makeover to prove it), recently told Joe Rogan that the corporate world is too “culturally neutered” — it should become a culture that has more “masculine energy” and that “celebrates the aggression.”

Likewise, Andreessen wrote in his manifesto, “We believe in ambition, aggression, persistence, relentlessness — *strength*.” Musk, meanwhile, has jumped on the testosterone bandwagon, amplifying the idea that only “high T alpha males” are capable of thinking for themselves; he shared a post on X that said, “This is why a Republic of high status males is best for decision making. Democratic, but a democracy only for those who are free to think.”

This idea that most people can’t think for themselves is key to Nietzsche’s idea of the *ubermensch*. What differentiates the *ubermensch*, or superman, is that he is not bogged down by common-sense morality (baseless) or by God (dead) — he can determine his own values.

The brologarchs — because they are in 21st-century Silicon Valley and not 19th-century Germany — have updated and melded this idea with transhumanism, the idea that we can and should use technology to alter human biology and proactively evolve our species.

Transhumanism spread in the mid-1900s thanks to its main popularizer, Julian Huxley, an evolutionary biologist and president of the British Eugenics Society. Huxley influenced the contemporary futurist Ray Kurzweil, who predicted that we’re approaching a time when human intelligence can merge with machine intelligence,

becoming unbelievably powerful.

“The human species, along with the computational technology it created, will be able to solve age-old problems ... and will be in a position to change the nature of mortality in a postbiological future,” Kurzweil wrote in 1999. Kurzweil, in turn, has influenced Silicon Valley heavyweights like Musk, whose company Neuralink explicitly aims at merging human and machine intelligence.

ADVERTISEMENT

For many transhumanists, part of what it means to transcend our human condition is transcending death. And so you find that the broligarchs are very interested in longevity research. Zuckerberg, Bezos, and Thiel have all reportedly invested in startups that are trying to make it possible to live forever. That makes perfect sense when you consider that death currently imposes a limit on us all, and the goal of the broligarchs is to have zero limits.

How the broligarchs and Trump use each other: Startup cities, crypto, and the demise of the fact

If you don't like limits and rules, it stands to reason that you're not going to like democracy. As Thiel wrote in 2009, "I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible." And so it shouldn't come as a surprise that the brologarchs are trying to undermine the rule of democratic nation-states.

To escape the control of democratic governments, they are seeking to create their own sovereign colonies. That can come in the form of space colonies, a la Musk and Bezos. But it can also come in the form of "startup cities" or "network states" built by corporations here on Earth — independent mini-nations, carved out of the surrounding territory, where tech billionaires and their acolytes would live according to their own rules rather than the government's. This is currently Thiel and Andreessen's favored approach.

With the help of their investments, a startup city called Prospera is already being built off the coast of Honduras (much to the displeasure of Honduras). There are others in the offing, from Praxis (which will supposedly build "the next America" somewhere in the Mediterranean), to California Forever in, you guessed it, California.

The so-called network state is "a fancy name for tech authoritarianism," journalist Gil Duran, who has spent the past year reporting on these building projects, told me. "The idea is to build power over the long term by controlling money, politics, technology, and land."

RELATED: [Elon Musk wants to merge humans with AI. How many brains will be damaged along the way?](#)

Crypto, of course, is the brologarchs' monetary instrument of choice. It's inherently anti-institutionalist; its appeal lies in its promise to let people control their own money and transact without relying on any authority, whether a government or a bank. It's how they plan to build these startup cities and network states, and how they plan to supplant the traditional financial system. The original idea of crypto was to replace the US dollar, but since the US dollar is intimately bound up with global

finance, undercutting it could reshape the whole world economy.

ADVERTISEMENT

Trump seems to be going along with this very cheerfully. He's now pro-crypto, and he's even proposed creating "Freedom Cities" in America that are reminiscent of startup cities. His alliance with the brologarchs benefits him not only because they've heaped millions of dollars on him, but also because of how they've undermined the very notion of the truth by shaping a "post-truth" online reality in which people don't know what to believe anymore. Musk, under the guise of promoting free speech, has made X into a den of disinformation. Zuckerberg is close on his heels, eliminating fact-checking at Meta even though the company said it would be scrupulous about inflammatory and false posts after it played a serious role in a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

"Even more pernicious is the fact that these guys can control the algorithms, so they can decide what people actually see," Duran said. "The problem is not so much that people can lie — it's that the system is designed to favor those lies over truth and reality."

It's a perfect setup for a president famous for his "alternative facts."

But the underlying ideology that unites MAGA and the brologarchs is contrary to the aims of most ordinary Americans, including most Trump voters. If the US dollar is weakened and the very idea of the democratic nation-state is overthrown, that won't exactly "make America great again." It'll make America weaker than ever.

RELATED:

- [Trump's real inaugural address started when the teleprompter stopped](#)
- [The law is clear on birthright citizenship. Can Trump end it anyway?](#)

YOU'VE READ 1 ARTICLE IN THE LAST MONTH

Here at Vox, we're unwavering in our commitment to covering the issues that matter most to you — threats to democracy, immigration, reproductive rights, the environment, and the rising polarization across this country.

Our mission is to provide clear, accessible journalism that empowers you to stay informed and engaged in shaping our world. By becoming a Vox Member, you directly strengthen our ability to deliver in-depth, independent reporting that drives meaningful change.

We rely on readers like you — join us.

Swati Sharma

Vox Editor-in-Chief

MEMBERSHIP

Monthly	Annual	One-time
---------	--------	----------

\$5/month

\$10/month

\$25/month

\$50/month

Other

euronews.

'Inappropriate and dangerous': What will happen if TikTok is bought by tech billionaires?

Anna Desmarais

Wed 22 January 2025 at 9:27 AM GMT-6 · 6-min read



'Inappropriate and dangerous': What will happen if TikTok is bought by tech billionaires?

With **TikTok "going dark"** in the US on January 19 following the Supreme Court's decision this week to uphold a controversial law forcing its sale, reports have surfaced that **billionaire Elon Musk** is considering buying the popular short-form video app.

Musk already owns what was Twitter, which he bought in 2022 and rebranded X. In recent months, he has been **criticised** for using the platform to promote far-right parties in European politics.

But what would this latest foray into social media mean for the rest of us? Experts consulted by Euronews Next say that Musk's possible acquisition of TikTok would be "inappropriate and dangerous".

Related

ADVERTISEMENT

- [Which countries have banned TikTok and why?](#)

Yet, the problem of social media ownership falling into the hands of a dwindling number of powerful tech leaders predates Musk or any TikTok deal.

If yet another social media app like TikTok, which millions use daily, falls into the hands of a tech billionaire, or "broligarch," what are the possible repercussions?

'Arbitrary power at a very massive scale'

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Musk, and other social media founders have an "arbitrary power" to manipulate how the public gets their information "at a very massive scale," according to Marc Faddoul, co-founder of AI Forensics, a European non-profit that investigates algorithms.

It's an opinion that is echoed by others in the field. The concentrated ownership means "it's at the whim" of billionaires to decide what is promoted or not on their channels without any real challenge from citizens, according to Paul Reilly, a senior lecturer in communications at the University of Glasgow in the UK.

ADVERTISEMENT



Indiana Launches New Policy for Cars Used Less Than 50 Miles/day

They're very often promoting free speech absolutism... [but] it's very poorly defined. When they say they're not about censorship, they do censor opinions when they don't agree.

To Reilly, Meta's recent move to **axe fact-checking** to make way for "community notes," where users correct each other on facts, is an example of how they can change the public discourse to reflect their own views.

"They're very often promoting free speech absolutism... [but] it's very poorly defined," Reilly said. "When they say they're not about censorship, they do censor opinions when they don't agree".

For example, research from Human Rights Watch found that Meta was **censoring** Palestinian voices and "shadow banning them" on Instagram and Facebook.

Social media algorithms also propagate the views of these "broligarchs," making it easier to "get people angry and riled up," so users continue to support political parties that are aligned with their business interests, according to Fiona Scott Morton, a senior fellow at European think tank Bruegel.

ADVERTISEMENT

"[The public is] confused, they're misinformed, they're angry, they're emotional, and so they make a decision to vote for the far right or... to give giant tax cuts to rich people," Morton said.

Related

- [What will happen when TikTok shuts down? Here's how to prepare for the platform going dark](#)



Indiana Residents Get Huge Home Insurance Reduction

'Extreme concentration' in social media since 2012

The tech brologarchy's consolidation of social media apps started in 2012, when Facebook bought Instagram for \$1 billion (€970 million). Two years later, the company purchased WhatsApp, a popular messaging tool, for \$19 billion (€18.47 billion).

Both acquisitions are under investigation by the US Federal Trades Commission (FTC) in an antitrust trial coming before courts in April.

According to Faddoul, both acquisitions raised concerns about “extreme concentration” in the social media market.



**I Stopped Retinol and U
Household Item that Re
Wrinkles In No Time!**

[Musk] would do the same thing [as he did to Twitter] - get rid of content moderation, get rid of safety, get rid of any standards, and let it become a kind of hate and right-wing promotional vehicle.

Users now post to both Instagram and Facebook, creating “synergy” or shared content between the platforms and reaching new demographics that neither app had before, Faddoul continued.

“[Meta’s purchase of Instagram] was, in hindsight, very likely what allowed Meta to continue to keep its power on the social media market because... it’s more Instagram than Facebook that is more used right now”.

Similar antitrust issues would arise if Musk ever acquired TikTok because he would find a way to integrate the app’s popular short-form video with his platform X.

This could take the form of connecting an X profile and its followers to TikTok, along with short-form video content being cross-promoted on X users’ news feeds, Faddoul continued.

Related

- [Meta to replace fact-checkers with 'community notes' system similar to](#)

Morton said Musk's possible acquisition of TikTok could mean further information manipulation by Musk.

"[Musk] would do the same thing [as he did to Twitter] - get rid of content moderation, get rid of safety, get rid of any standards, and let it become a kind of hate and right-wing promotional vehicle," she said.

Who holds the 'broligarchy' accountable?

In the US, the FTC is in charge of investigating any anti-competitive behaviours by social media and tech "broligarchs".

Faddoul and Morton believe the incoming Trump administration would be weak on enforcing antitrust regulation because most Republican governments tend to favour corporate profits.

In addition, social media founders like Zuckerberg and Musk positioned themselves alongside incoming US President Donald Trump throughout the 2024 [campaign](#) and [leading up](#) to inauguration day on January 20.

The reason the "broligarchs" could be doing that, according to Faddoul and Morton, is because Trump could resolve legal issues for them if and when they come up.



HOME MAIL NEWS FINANCE SPORT CELEBRITY STYLE WEATHER MORE...

yahoo!news

Sign in



"[Donald] Trump could maybe protect Big Tech from, for example, European regulation and fines - that seems good [to Zuckerberg]," Faddoul said.

Faddoul said any accountability against the heads of social media companies will come from the EU, likely through the enforcement of the Digital Services Act (DSA).

The European Commission launched an investigation into Musk's content moderation policies on X in 2023 and decided this week to request more documents.

"It's more important than ever to make sure that this text is fully enforced despite the political consequences it might have," Faddoul said.

A pair of regulations, the European Merger Regulation and the Digital Market Act (DMA) could possibly apply or complicate the transaction, Faddoul added.

**Indiana Residents
Get Huge Home
Insurance
Reduction**



Related

- [What is Bluesky and why are millions of people joining it?](#)

The new app ecosystem

Some users are bucking the "broligarchs" by [migrating](#) to new platforms, like Bluesky, Mastodon, and Signal.

In the few days before the US presidential inauguration, movements in Germany, Austria, and [France](#) saw many institutions preparing their migration from X to Bluesky.

Faddoul said Bluesky, in particular, has a feature that lets users choose which algorithms they are exposed to that tailors the app's experience.

"By enabling an open and decentralised infrastructure by design, you actually create much more, much better conditions for pluralism to emerge," Faddoul said about how Bluesky was designed.

"Not everyone needs to have the same moderation rule".

Related

- [Bluesky plans to quadruple its moderation team to 100 as exodus from X sees number of users surge](#)

Faddoul said these apps also let users have full control over their data, something that is a criticism of other platforms like X, which has been accused of using it to train artificial intelligence (AI) models or selling it to third parties.

A plurality of social media platforms, Morton added, would also mean they would have to deliver a better product to keep and retain users.

But despite Bluesky's initial success in doing this, Morton said it is challenging for new platforms to get a leg up on Meta or X because these platforms are "sticky".

"Everybody's there, so I have to be there," she said. "If I try to move my business in response to quality away from Instagram to Bluesky, I lose my friends".

What needs to happen next, according to Morton, is for the US federal government to put in place measures to make these social networks "interoperable," so people can connect with their friends on whichever platform they choose.

New Small Electric Car
For Seniors - The Price
May Surprise You