

Musk, Trump, and Weidel: How US Influence Is Reshaping Germany's Far Right

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A pattern, not a coincidence

In December 2024, Elon Musk publicly declared that “only the AfD can save Germany,” a statement that Alice Weidel, head of the party, later described as having left her startled. The following month, Musk hosted Weidel for a 74-minute conversation broadcast on X, encouraging German voters to support the Alternative für Deutschland ahead of the February 2025 federal election. After the AfD was able to roughly double its vote share to just over 20%, Weidel indicated that she had received outreach from the United States on election night, including direct contact from Musk, and confirmed that discussions had taken place with “the Trump administration in Washington.”

Taken together, these instances suggest a deliberate American engagement with a party that remains, domestically, under formal scrutiny for

suspected anti-constitutional activity. This article examines that engagement, situates it within the Trump administration's wider posture towards Europe's populist right, and considers what it implies for the cohesion of the European Union going into the 2027 election cycle.

From endorsement to alignment

The Musk-Weidel exchanges were not an isolated episode. US Vice-President JD Vance told Weidel, during a meeting in Munich, that the two sides needed to "break down the firewall." This is a direct challenge to the cross-party German consensus, known as the *Brandmauer*, against governing with the AfD. Musk followed with an opinion piece in *Welt am Sonntag* and a video appearance at an AfD rally urging supporters to "fight for a great future for Germany." Read alongside the Trump administration's National Security Strategy, which names engagement with parties such as the AfD and governments such as Hungary's, Slovakia's, and the Czech Republic's as a deliberate posture, this looks like a coordinated alignment.

What makes this mechanism distinctive becomes clearer when compared with earlier forms of political interference, which typically relied on covert funding channels or coordinated disinformation networks. These tools are designed to operate below public visibility, and are therefore not addressed by existing legal and regulatory frameworks aimed at exposing hidden influence. The Musk-Weidel dynamic inverts that logic entirely. Their amplification is public, attributable, and channelled through a platform whose owner simultaneously holds an advisory role within the US government. There is no concealment to uncover, because the influence operates through ordinary visibility mechanisms, such as reach, algorithmic promotion, and follower engagement.

Researchers at the DFRLab found a measurable increase in AfD-related engagement on X following Musk's public endorsement, suggesting that platform ownership itself functioned as a lever of political influence, independent of any coordinated campaign. The result is a form of foreign political leverage that existing frameworks are ill-equipped to address. This form of leverage is not illegal, since nothing is concealed; it is not easily attributable to state action, since it originates from a private individual; and it is not covered by disinformation-focused instruments, since the content itself need not be false.

A domestic fight that isn't settled

The AfD's status within Germany remains more contested than either its critics or its American allies typically acknowledge. In May 2025, Germany's domestic intelligence agency, the BfV, formally classified the AfD as a confirmed right-wing extremist organisation, citing an ethnicity-based conception of nationhood incompatible with the constitutional order. The AfD challenged the designation in court, and in February 2026 the Cologne Administrative Court put the measure on hold until a full

hearing could take place, while nonetheless finding that a “strong suspicion” of anti-constitutional activity persisted.

The party’s momentum has not slowed in the meantime. Weidel and co-chair Tino Chrupalla were reconfirmed as leaders at the AfD’s July 2026 party conference, an event met by more than 30,000 counter-protesters, and current polling places the AfD ahead of its rivals in Saxony-Anhalt ahead of the state’s election on 6 September 2026.

Why this should concern more than Germany

What makes the Weidel-Musk case significant, in my view, is not Germany considered in isolation, but what it previews for the rest of the European Union. If a coordinated, platform-amplified endorsement can shift outcomes for a party under formal extremism scrutiny, there is little reason to assume the same approach will remain confined to Germany. France’s 2027 presidential election, with Macron constitutionally barred from standing again and the National Rally being the frontrunner, is the obvious next test. Slovakia, where Robert Fico’s Smer party already sits comfortably within the same ideological bloc, is another. The issue with the EU’s existing instruments for addressing this kind of risk – Article 7 proceedings, rule-of-law monitoring – is that they were designed for member states acting against democratic norms from within, not for external encouragement arriving from Washington.