

A Nation, Not A Side Quest

By Glenn Harlan Reynolds



To be fair, if I recall correctly she said one of the dumbest [billionaires](#). The point still holds.

Is Elon Musk the indispensable man? That's what [John Lucas](#) says. There's a better case for his proposition than for AOC's. Lucas writes:

*Elon Musk is not a perfect man. But he has agreed to tackle the biggest problem facing the U.S. He is not tinkering around the edges. He is taking bold steps, which are necessary to fix **BIG** and complex problems. That distinguishes him from oh, about 98% of the politicians in both parties.*

*Congress is stocked with politicians who have been in national office for years, even decades, but who have done **nothing** to control the national debt, balance the budget, or even present*

a budget. Some have fancied themselves as presidential timber. Many still do, God help us. But none have a track record of real and lasting success or of even making a serious effort to try to fix the problem.

In a sane world, politicians from both parties would welcome the support of such an innovator with a proven track record who committed himself to working without pay to try to solve our National Fiscal Problem. Sane and rational patriots would support his efforts even if they disagree with some cuts or other aspects of his work. They would thank him for his efforts even if they disagree with some. If they thought that some of the spending cuts or reforms he identified are not necessary or need to be modified, they would say so in a rational and constructive way. If they thought a proposed cut in federal a federal regulation would have undesirable side effects, then they would say so and offer alternatives.

*What they would **not** do (again, 'in a sane world') would be to declare war on the reformer and attack, attack, attack as they try to destroy the man and his businesses. What they would **not** do is attack him as one supposedly serious U.S. Senator did by announcing that he was dumping his Tesla because, "Elon Musk kind of turned out to be an asshole, and I don't want to drive a car built and designed by an asshole."*

But we are not in a sane world.

If we were, Elon Musk would be less indispensable. One of his great strengths is that he is ruthlessly sane. You might not share his goal of turning humanity into an interplanetary – and, eventually, interstellar – species, though I very much do and have for my whole adult life, but he has been relentless, methodical, and creative in pursuing it, and has done things that no one else, including governments, has ever been able to do.

Elon's goal is to save humanity by dispersing it around the

cosmos. It is merely our good fortune that he has determined that he must save America in order to pursue his larger goal. DOGE, and the rest of his political efforts, basically constitute a side quest.

It's worse, of course, because the lefties see him as a traitor. Not long ago they were calling him a Good Billionaire by contrast to Trump. "Be Like Elon" memes flourished. Now, of course, they hate him with the heat of a billion burning Teslas. It's insane, and it's not working for them.

How badly is it not working for them? Here's a summary from David Catron from the *American Spectator*:

If you have had difficulty finding some reason to support the Democratic Party and its increasingly bizarre policy positions, you are not alone. Two national polls released on Sunday reveal that the party's favorability ratings have plunged to catastrophic lows. According to a new NBC News survey, just 27 percent of registered voters hold a positive view of the Democratic Party – its lowest rating since 1990. Likewise, a new CNN poll indicates that only 29 percent of U.S. adults regard the party favorably – a low not seen since 1992. These two polls confirm an equally ominous Quinnipiac survey conducted last month.

Both surveys clearly illuminate why the public harbors such a low opinion of the Democrats, and why this is very unlikely to change. The NBC [poll](#), for example, found the following: "Democratic voters say they want their party to hold the line on their positions even if it leads to gridlock, rather than focus on finding areas of compromise with the president." The CNN [survey](#) suggests that a similarly suicidal perspective pervades the party: "Democrats and Democratic-aligned independents say, 57 percent to 42 percent, that Democrats should mainly work to stop the Republican agenda, rather than working with the GOP majority."

This is stunning. It means that, for all intents and purposes, the Democratic Party exists for no other reason than to oppose President Trump, the GOP and the 77.4 million Americans who voted for them last November. If that seems like hyperbole, Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) explicitly said just that Sunday morning on NBC's Meet the Press.

Trump has thus, as I've written [elsewhere](#), been able to get the Democrats to take the "20" side on 80/20 issues just by proposing common-sense policies on things like open borders, boys in girls' sports, pervasive DEI, and the like. Voters like Trump's policies even more than they like Trump, but the Democrats can't help themselves: They're driven to pick the losing side every time.

Bill Clinton would have triangulated and turned this around. (He won just two years after the Democrats last hit 27% approval!) The Democrats are long past Clinton, though. Gavin Newsom shows some inclination to do that, but he has too well-documented a track record to pull it off, especially now that national media can't prop him up.

So what does this have to do with Elon? Several things.

First, young people are moving to the right, something unprecedented in recent politics. I think Elon's presence is part of that. Competence, risk-taking, and expanding frontiers are appealing to young people and all of those things are novelties in a world where nearly every nation is run by a geriatric oligarchy.

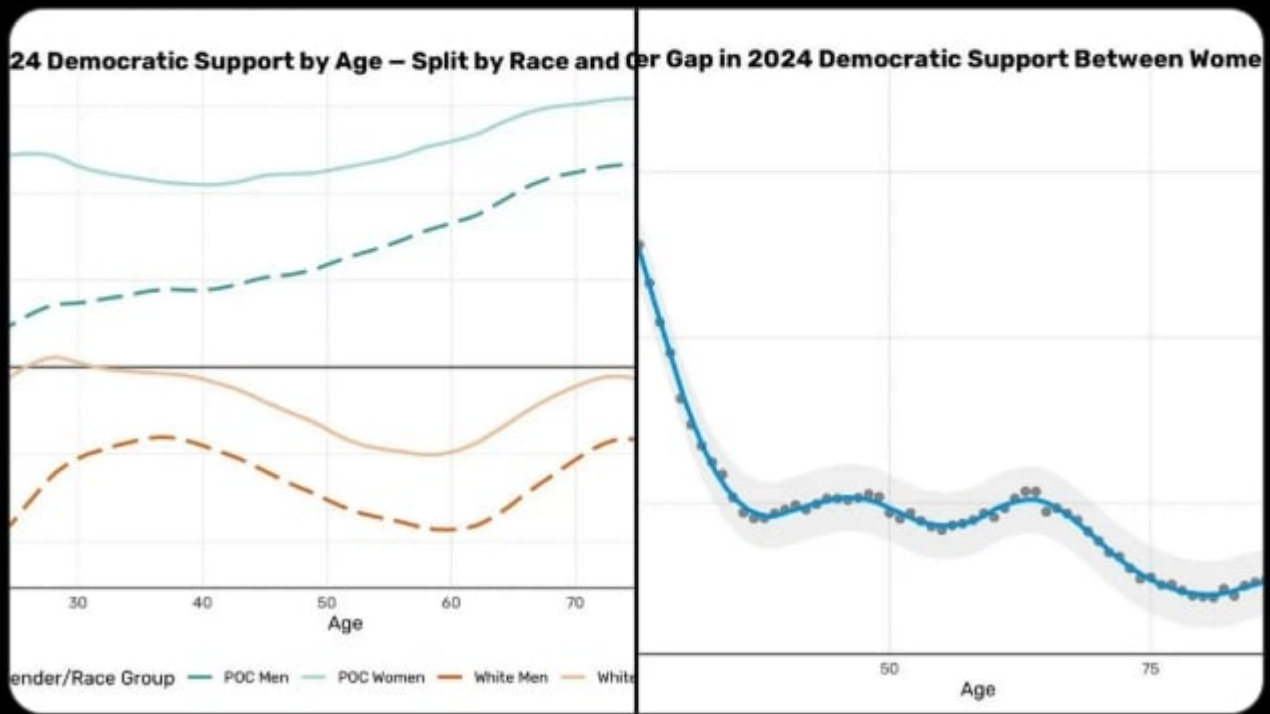


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A major shift we saw this cycle is that young people have gone from being one of the most progressive generations to one of the most conservative.

Republicans won 18 year old white men, white women, and men of color, and doubled their support with men under 25.



Elon's purchase of Twitter/X was also a strategic masterstroke, single-handedly wrecking the establishment's plan to control messaging, and implement censorship, on a global scale. That's a major reason why the national media can't prop Newsom up. Young people get less of their news from traditional media, and are also trending more conservative. There's probably a connection.

Elon also understands both how organizations work – he has 120,000 employees – and technology, including information technology. His whiz kids, with a lot of AI help, have been able to unravel the secrets that the bureaucracy had always protected with obscurity and complexity. There's probably nobody else alive, except maybe Larry Ellison, who could have done that.

And he's got a puckish nerd's sense of humor. Political-establishment types think his tweets and memes are dumb and childish, but they play beautifully with his base, and with those young people unhappy with their stuffy, cautious, and largely incompetent elders. And by mocking them, he takes away a large part of their power.

But.

America is very fortunate to have Elon, and Donald Trump, at this particular moment in its history. I have come to believe that maybe there's something to Otto von Bismarck's observation that God looks after fools, drunkards, and the United States of America.

But there's only one Elon. He seems to be paying more attention to his health, now that he's in his fifties. I'm sure he has superb medical care. But he's only one man. (Even Trump, who has survived two assassination attempts, has a backup in J.D. Vance, who's looking increasingly capable of filling his shoes when the day comes; Elon has no one like that.)

There are a lot of people who, quite literally, want him dead. Most of them are crazy, and not particularly competent. But most isn't all, and there are no doubt foreign governments who feel the same way.

Lucas's essay reminded me of the old saw that "the cemeteries are full of indispensable men."

Elon Musk is probably a once-in-a-millennium mix of talents; one rarely finds someone who mixes technical savvy, political talent, market understanding, and PR chops, all at such high levels and in such mutually reinforcing ways. May he live a very long time. But what if he doesn't?

Well, by definition, you can't replace the indispensable. He has a lot of very, very competent people in his organizations,

but they're all kind of siloed. Gwynne Shotwell, the CEO of SpaceX, can probably run it superbly in his absence, and shares his vision. But that's all she's likely to do.

What can we do?

The best thing we can do is to recast American politics so that we don't need a once-in-a-millennium talent to decide that saving us is an essential part of achieving his overall goal. A sound, functioning nation doesn't need saving. We used to be one of those: A nation, not a side quest. Let's become one again.

God may look after fools, drunkards, and the United States of America, but the Lord helps those who help themselves. It's time that we help ourselves into not needing divine intervention. Faster, please.

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