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Violence and Social Media: The Amplification of Antisemitism on X (formerly Twitter) Post Elon Musk's Acquisition

Introduction

With the advent of the new technological era and the arrival of the Internet, social media emerged, fundamentally changing how people communicate, share information, and engage in public discourse. What started as simple platforms have become powerful and influential tools that shape public opinion. We can state that social media is now an integral part of our daily lives. We are equally aware that this technological progress has an ambivalent character. On the one hand, social media contributes to the global availability of information and the proximity of human relationships and their interactions. On the other hand, they bring and reflect challenges and risks, including the spread of hate speech, disinformation, and conspiracy theories, which significantly contribute to building and strengthening a polarised society (Krajňák 2022).

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As a society that is part of the digital age, we face an "information explosion," so we cannot avoid narratives that include elements of prejudice and hatred. By the way, these are becoming increasingly widespread. This phenomenon creates space for the formation and strengthening of dangerous ideologies that have the potential to destabilise social norms and interfere with interpersonal relationships. Antisemitism, as one of the historically most significant forms of hatred, is again finding new channels through which it penetrates public space, thereby gaining in intensity and scope (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2018). Although this issue concerns many social media platforms, platform X (formerly known as Twitter) has notably stood out in recent years. After the change in leadership, when Elon Musk became its owner in 2022, the platform faced criticism for the exponential increase in antisemitic expressions. This unfavourable situation raises several significant questions beyond the technological dimension and touches upon ethical and social aspects. To what extent is it legitimate to provide content that would consider ethical criteria? Where should the line between freedom of speech and responsibility for disseminated content lie? These questions are more relevant today than ever before.

This study aims to summarise information and identify causes related to the rise of antisemitism on platform X after its acquisition by Elon Musk. At the same time, through a case study, analyse the consequences of this amplification on society.

Methodology

Our case study relies on desk research, also known as secondary research, which utilises existing data on a given topic, specifically qualitative content analysis, thus presenting a comprehensive description of the research method used. Case study methodology typically involves studying one or more cases that can be examined. In the context of our case study about American rapper Kanye West, desk research enabled the collection of information from various sources (Kiely 2024).

According to Zainal (2007), case studies can be explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, interpretative, or evaluative. The methodology represents systematic collection, deduction and induction, analysis, and synthesis of existing data from various sources, including academic literature, reports, and newspaper articles. We define the parameters and boundaries of the case, that is, what is included and excluded, while integrating it into existing knowledge on the topic. Kohlbach (2006) states that case studies are most commonly used in organisational studies and social sciences disciplines. The philosophical aim of this text is to clarify the epistemological foundations of the

case study as a method, thus expressing theory by showing how it explains the investigated case. A case study is particularly useful when the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context are unclear (Yin 2018). It involves systematic collection, deduction and induction, analysis, and synthesis of existing data from various sources, including academic literature, reports, popular and newspaper articles, and expert analyses. Our study aims to describe the transformation of the Twitter platform after its acquisition by Elon Musk, with a special focus on the escalation of antisemitic narratives on platform X. To achieve this goal, we proceeded according to established methodological steps and illustrated a real-life case related to the spread of extremist expressions by Kanye West.

The Dark Side of Social Media

Modern technologies, particularly social media, have been adopted quickly, with the youngest generations practically born with them. This integration process was accelerated and intensified even more during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic when it was necessary to connect with people remotely – online. The virtual world, often called cyberspace (Mbanaso & Dandaura 2015), provided a very effective, comfortable, and especially safer way of communicative interaction during the health-risk period – spreading and receiving information, thoughts, emotions, etc. With the advent of this new decade, social media has become a refuge for all aspects of daily life – work, education, self-development, business, shopping, and many others. Social media has thus transformed into a driving force in shaping political opinions, perception of art, fashion choices, and idea creation (Ewell 2024), and thus our overall lifestyle. However, the question remains whether this is really our authentic lifestyle or if we are merely modifying it based on social media information.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and others are currently perceived as the primary source of information for most recipients, as they offer quick and straightforward access to a broad spectrum of content. This trend is confirmed by statistical data from renowned institutions such as Statista, Reuters Institute, Pew Research Centre, and Ofcom (Newman et al. 2024). However, the credibility level of information from social media is often questioned and perceived predominantly negatively. Information spread on these platforms is frequently inaccurate or misleading, contributing to justified distrust and scepticism from users (Majid 2022).

The main problem is the absence of thorough fact-checking and the speed at which misinformation spreads. Unlike traditional media channels, harmful content spreads uncontrollably and substantially faster on social networks. Celebrities and influencers contribute to this – who significantly influence

their followers and often unknowingly or deliberately incite the spread of unverified information. A recent UNESCO study revealed that up to 62% of social media influencers share information without verification (Reilly 2024). The virtual environment faces another warning signal: increased support for anonymisation, also known as author "invisibility." This phenomenon is closely related to disinhibited behaviour, which, according to Holdoš, is particularly characterised by users who have lost all social inhibitions in the online environment, often manifesting especially in communication. Although anonymisation can bring positive effects, such as supporting freedom of expression and transparency, its dominant attribute is perceived predominantly negatively. It encourages aggressiveness, explicit violence, or the spread of extremist and intolerant media content, including racial, ethnic, and gender hatred (Holdoš 2016). All mentioned behavioural manifestations are categorised into a unified, determined concept – media violence.

Social platforms contain a broad spectrum of media violence forms, which are often masked in various ways. However, each of these forms represents a serious risk for individuals, communities, and society. One of the most widespread and severe forms of media violence is hate speech. It can be defined as communication – whether verbal, written, or visual – that degrades, insults, incites violence or discrimination against individuals or groups based on their identity. This identity may include race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics (Diener 2021). However, hate speech can also manifest in less explicit forms, for example, on a metaphorical level or through deliberate misleading or ambiguity. These forms of communication significantly complicate the identification of hateful content, further increasing its risk potential (Giglietto & Lee 2017).

Among other things, hate speech can also be presented in the form of a socially tolerated negative stereotype. It typically uses emotionally charged and negatively tuned language to evoke feelings of threat and unrest in the public or motivate them to spread hatred (Vargo & Hopp 2020). The European Union emphasises that these hate expressions lead to stigmatisation or marginalisation of specific communities, thereby supporting discrimination and violence. It calls for proper regulation and responsible moderation of content published online (Bayer & Bárd 2020).

Social media as a whole creates a favourable environment for social radicalisation. A key role in this process is played by, among others already presented, algorithmic systems that connect users based on shared interests and opinions. This mechanism supports the creation of so-called filter bubbles (Pariser 2012), within which users are exposed exclusively to homogeneous content. The result is not only the strengthening of extremist attitudes but also the reduction of the ability to critically reflect and accept alternative views. This dynamic further deepens society's polarisation and supports

radicalisation in the online environment (Diener 2021). Moreover, communication participants are strengthened by populist rhetoric, which plays a significant role in hate speech, for example, in connection with refugees, Jews, etc. Individual offensive and distorted information about specific population groups creates, over time, a certain level of social tolerance (Comandini & Patti 2019), which is often exploited by political and other entities (influencers, celebrities, etc.) for their benefit – mainly in the form of manipulating and influencing public opinion. Papcunová et al. warn about this dangerous trend in online communication, where the process of desensitisation to information content can lead to serious consequences, for example, in the form of legitimising discriminatory attitudes and acts (Papcunová et al. 2022).

In connection with the normalisation of prejudices, the rise of antisemitic rhetoric, which is increasingly intensively spreading on social networks, is particularly concerning. Antisemitism is generally understood as hostility directed against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or cultural group. Although this form of hatred is historically deeply rooted and known, it acquired its global dimension with the advent of social media, which became its catalyst. Various media narratives maintain these harmful stereotypes and help build the social perception of Jews as "others" (Baugut 2020). The situation with antisemitic remarks significantly worsened with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. It opened figurative doors to conspiracy theories that attribute blame for all caused social problems to Jews, thereby reviving old established stereotypes and feeding an environment of tension and aggression on social networks (Sundberg, Mitchell & Levinson 2022). A significant escalation of hateful, especially antisemitic expressions, was also recorded on Platform X (formerly Twitter), which underwent significant changes affecting its functioning.

The Development and Social Significance of the Platform X (Twitter)

Twitter is a widely known microblogging social network that allows its users to publish short posts. Such a post, also called a tweet, typically has exclusively textual form, originally 140 characters and, since November 2017, a maximum of 280 characters. The tweet length was expanded due to the platform's expansion into other languages to make thoughts from other cultural environments more comprehensible to users (Castillo 2017). The limit was increased several times in 2023, from 4,000 in February to 10,000 in April, and currently, with a premium Blue account, users can create posts up to 25,000 characters. This transformation means more than just a technical modification; it fundamentally reassesses the platform's communication model (Perry 2023; How

to Setup X Premium Features 2025). As we indicated in the introduction, Twitter has been developed since its inception and transformed from a simple platform into a powerful communication tool with enormous societal impact.

In 2006, when mobile Internet was not widely spread, Odeo released Twttr, an application designed for network SMS sending. All you had to do was send a text message to number 40404, a predecessor of sharing posts on social networks (Arrington 2006). Initially, Twitter was designed to allow users to share short updates about personal daily activities. With increasing popularity and internet availability, it gradually moved to the web. We can identify Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams as the founders of this social network (Carlson 2011). The platform gradually gained popularity, and in 2008, it had approximately 3 million registered users and 1.25 million tweets daily. By 2011, it was already 90 million tweets daily and approximately 165 million registered users, representing an astounding growth of 5400% in just a few years (Kumar et al. 2006; Reynolds 2006; Curran et al. 2011). This rapid growth reflects the originality of the platform's form and its impact in various areas, including business, politics, and social behaviour.

Twitter's architecture allows users to participate in discussions and share their opinions in real-time (Java et al. 2007; Antonakaki 2015). People like to be heard, especially when it comes to societal topics. In terms of user behaviour and the evolution of their user base, studies have shown that Twitter's user demographics change significantly over time, influenced by various factors such as cultural trends and technological progress (Liu et al. 2014). Over time, the platform recorded a change in shared content types, with an increasing occurrence of hate speech and misinformation, which led Twitter to implement moderation policies and content control (Masud et al. 2021; Keulenaar et al. 2022). Moderation requires human force involvement or some automated tool, which is never free. Moreover, Twitter's influence has a direct impact on the economy. Activity on social media, including Twitter interactions, can significantly influence consumer behaviour and market dynamics. Therefore, companies pay Twitter for marketing and customer engagement, utilising its media-social reach (Chahine & Malhotra 2018). Thus, a company or social medium can survive only if it secures funding and uses the most modern intelligent tools to reduce costs.

After October 2022, we observe a significant shift in the company's operational and financial strategies. Musk's vision for Twitter includes increasing user engagement and exploring alternative revenue streams, such as subscription models and enhanced advertising solutions (Li 2024). An example is the verification mark for $USD 8 monthly, which offers other users at least an illusion of user credibility (Reuters 2022). By linking the account with a financial transaction, the user is more easily traced by security authorities and judicial power.

Twitter's acquisition by Elon Musk in 2022 marked a significant turning point for the platform, fundamentally affecting various aspects of its operation. Musk's takeover was characterised by controversial events besides the name change. In the context of Musk's rationalisation, the first significant action was a sharp 80% cut in employee expenses (Toh & Liu 2023). The cuts did not bypass just human resources. Information went viral when, after a disagreement with the engineering team, he deactivated two data storage facilities in Sacramento to further reduce costs. Platform X's data backup cost was more than 100 million dollars annually (Isaacson 2023). Despite media criticism, we can evaluate this step as rational from a businessman's perspective. Media also speculated during the purchase that reducing human resource costs could worsen long-simmering problems of toxic content and misinformation, which could influence, for example, political events (Conger & Hirsch 2022; Toh & Liu 2023).

Fake users constitute one of the basic problems of every social network. Bots for commenting on posts and chatting with users evolve along with techniques for their removal, so there is no final solution, and the only effective tool is the development of ever-new automated technology for their detection (Sayyadiharikandeh et al. 2020). Thanks to data about accounts that bought blue verification, we learn that the number of bots decreased in the short-term (Barrie 2023). Subsequent analyses revealed that fake accounts might have increased after the acquisition (Hickey et al. 2023; Scarano 2024). Overall, scientists assess that Twitter was not a model of quality discourse in the past and is unlikely to become one in the future. The change associated with the freedom of speech narrative that Musk promoted only saddened Democrats and filled Republicans with hope (Popli 2022; Hickey et al. 2023; Rohlinger et al. 2023). With hindsight, we can say that the Democrats' concerns were fulfilled, and the last elections did not turn out according to their expectations, with platform X showing its significant media influence (Mallinder 2024).

Musk's acquisition was accompanied by significant debt, leading to concerns about the platform's financial sustainability (Li 2024). The management style and strategic decisions made during this period were, according to some opinions, meant to divert attention from declining shareholder confidence in Tesla (Wang 2023). However, Musk's companies are in excellent condition, and their market value is rising (Saul 2024).

After the transformation, the platform recorded changes in types of discourse dominated by toxic and political content (Ott 2023; Rohlinger et al. 2023). However, this polarised online environment with extreme views can be found on other platforms with attempts at moderation.

Antisemitism on Social Media

A Twitter-focused study revealed that up to 17.3% of original tweets could be classified as antisemitic. It is not the word itself but the context categorising individual posts on one side or another. Up to 80% of words like "Soros" and "Rothschild" could thus have antisemitic undertones (Riedl et al. 2022). The amount of antisemitic content on social media is relatively small compared to the platforms' total traffic. However, it is not the quantity but the potential for radicalisation through anti-Jewish content that makes it a significant problem for modern society (Bossetta 2022). This fact is also confirmed by a recent Twitter platform study, where the use of the term "Jews" has almost doubled since October 2022. However, analysis revealed that these discussions held various views – from concerns about rising antisemitism, through condemnation of antisemitism, to promotion of antisemitic ideologies (Jikeli & Soemer 2023). The word occurrence analysis alone does not offer a true picture of the problem's magnitude, with four main obstacles in analysing social networks and obtaining data on antisemitism: limited access to data from most platforms, content spread through encrypted private channels, use of coded expressions and images, and insufficient differentiation of antisemitism within hate speech (Bossetta 2022).

Solving the problem of content monitoring is not simple, and it is necessary to identify and anticipate how antisemitic content will spread and transform. We can still see that certain groups can legally spread hate speech on social networks (Politis et al. 2024). Antisemitism on social media has a constantly growing tendency. According to a Community Security Trust study, they recorded 323 antisemitic posts in the United Kingdom in the first half of 2019, representing a year-over-year increase of 46% (Ozalp et al. 2020). Examples of similar sources of violence in communication are global. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was shown that old antisemitic narratives and conspiracies are being recycled and spread through social networks. Also, on the Russian network VKontakte, even neutral information from freely accessible websites was transformed into hate content (Politis et al. 2024). The occurrence of antisemitic content significantly increases during major political events. For example, during the 2016 US elections, the frequency of antisemitic content almost doubled (Zannettou et al. 2020). Based on this information, we can say that the problem with antisemitism is long-term and global and intensifies during serious social events. The foundation of a comprehensive approach to solving this problem is identification, phenomenon monitoring, educational activities, and international cooperation (Manca et al. 2024). Hateful, harmful, and violent content in new media is reaching massive proportions thanks to automatic chatbots. Therefore, an effective fight against antisemitism requires a new approach, ideally

combined with the use of artificial intelligence, experts, and crowdsourcing for monitoring and analysing antisemitic content (Oboler 2021). An interesting finding is that spontaneous counter-arguments to antisemitic comments can paradoxically strengthen antisemitic attitudes (Ascone 2024). It is understandable if the discussants represent opposing groups, where both competing sides do not accept even rational arguments.

Case Study – Kanye West and Antisemitism

In October 2022, American rapper Kanye West, known as Ye, published a series of antisemitic posts on Twitter and Instagram platforms, which resulted in a temporary suspension of his accounts. Social networks declared that his content violated internal rules regarding incitement to violence and spreading hate speech (CBS News 2022). One of his tweets (Figure 1), which had a potential reach of 30 million users, received approximately 420,000 likes, making its content widely visible. Reactions to these posts crossed the boundaries of the online world, as antisemitic messages were spread on public buildings in the USA (Earnest 2023; Hübscher 2023). Besides
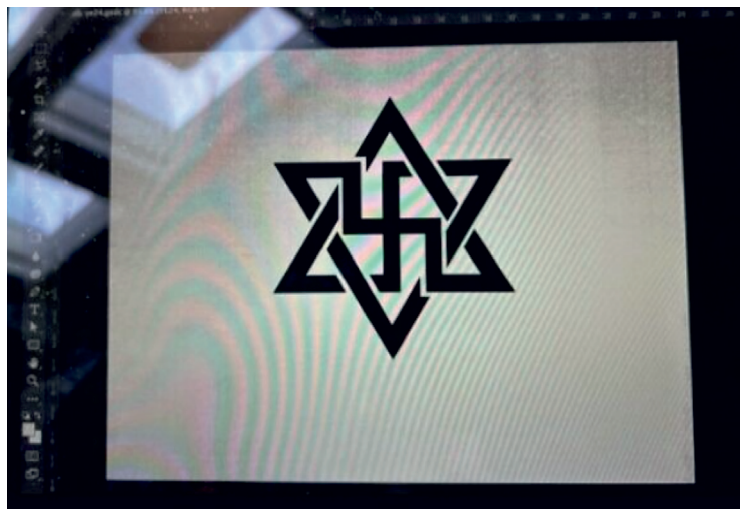

Figure 1. A captured image of an anti-Semitic post made by Kanye West on the Platform X
Source: https://www.timesofisrael.com/twitter-now-rebranded-as-x-reinstates-kanye-wests-account-after-antisemitism-saga (access: 24.11.2024).

reputational damage, West lost key business partnerships, for example, with Adidas, which terminated their collaboration due to controversial statements (Moloney 2023). His account was only restored in July 2023 with limited

functions – without monetisation and advertising capabilities. According to Elon Musk, who commented on the situation in December 2023, the decision to block the account was made based on a clear violation of the platform's hate speech policy (Burke 2023).

The Kanye West case reveals the complex relationship between freedom of speech, social platform responsibility, and the consequences of hate speech. Key factors that contributed to the escalation of the situation include:

- **Extensive social media reach:** West's presence on platforms with tens of millions of followers creates a favourable environment for spreading controversial content. Social media algorithms that prioritise engagement likely contributed to greater visibility of his posts (Dijck & Poell 2013).
- **Absence of preventive mechanisms:** Platforms responded only after the content went viral. This reactive policy points to insufficient preventive measures that could identify and block harmful content before it spreads (Gillespie 2018).
- **Consequences of moderation failure:** The effects of West's posts manifested offline as well – for example, through antisemitic messages. It suggests that online hate speech has direct societal impacts.

The Kanye West case also reveals a deep ethical problem closely related to hate speech in online (cyber) space – especially when famous or influential figures spread it with millions of followers. It is not just a question of freedom of expression, as hate speech causes complex and perilous consequences for society. Research (Waldron 2012; Citron 2014) repeatedly shows that online hate speech tends to normalise prejudice, increase social tolerance of extremism, and increase the incidence of physical attacks against marginalised groups. Platform X and other social networks are currently facing a serious ethical dilemma: how to protect freedom of expression while preventing the spread of harmful content that incites hatred or violence. It is important to realise that social networks have long been no longer just passive channels, but thanks to the advent of algorithms, they have become an active part of shaping social discourse. Hate speech from celebrities such as rapper Kanye West has a special power – any of his textual or audio-visual contributions have a huge impact. Experts on media ethics and disinformation have noted that West's case highlights systemic weaknesses in moderating and regulating this type of content. Dr Claire Wardle of Brown University emphasises the challenges posed by the rapid spread of misinformation, noting that the current information ecosystem lacks the necessary rules and safeguards to manage such issues effectively (Illif 2022). The question arises whether all global influential figures (politicians, actors, singers, etc.) should not bear more responsibility for their actions in cyberspace than ordinary users.

Recommendations and Conclusions

To effectively address individual hate speech on social media, especially by influential figures, we recommend implementing several key measures:
- Algorithmic Adjustments – Introduce risk-aware algorithms that flag high-reach users' controversial posts for delayed amplification pending review.
- Stricter Tiered Accountability – Establish differentiated moderation rules for users with large follower counts.
- Media literacy – Promote media literacy to help users recognise and critically assess hate speech.
- Platform Transparency – Require regular public reports on content removal, flagged accounts, and moderation outcomes.
- Cross-border Coordination – Develop international standards for hate speech moderation with platform cooperation.

Conclusion

Platform X (formerly Twitter) has undergone significant transformation since its inception, substantially affecting its ability to moderate dangerous content. The acquisition by Elon Musk in 2022 brought changes in platform operations in the form of radical cost reduction and declared support for freedom of speech. The case of Kanye West represents a clear example of the complex challenges associated with content moderation on social networks. Our case study points out certain deficiencies in Platform X's moderation processes. West's post, which had an extensive media reach, clearly documents the potential for spreading harmful content. While the platform temporarily blocked West's account, it only did so after the anti-Jewish statements had gone viral and had real consequences in the form of antisemitic messages on public buildings. A key finding is that content moderation on Platform X is predominantly reactive rather than preventive. However, preventive moderation runs into the problem of restricting freedom of speech. Profiles of prominent or globally known personalities with high follower counts should be subject to stricter control. Despite efforts to regulate while preserving freedom of speech, Platform X remains a space where hate speech can spread relatively easily, which was no different in the past. We know that the rise in anti-Jewish rhetoric is interconnected with social events and can be spread by both human users and automated bots. Content on social networks is growing at an extreme pace. Therefore, moderation inevitably moves towards automation and the continuous development of new detection mechanisms. However, decisions about what content can be shared remain within

the competence of internal policymakers who are directly subordinate to the owners of the particular social network.

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Abstract

The study focuses on the transformation of the Twitter platform following its acquisition by Elon Musk. Through desk research, we examine how cost reductions and the declared support for freedom of speech influence the spread of anti-Semitic posts. We find that content moderation on platform X remains predominantly reactive. Based on a case study, we illustrate a real-life case associated with the spread of extremist speech. The authors also identify key factors contributing to the escalation of antisemitic narratives on Platform X.

Słowa kluczowe: media społecznościowe, przemoc w mediach, antysemityzm, Twitter, Platforma X, Elon Musk

Keywords: social media, media violence, antisemitism, Twitter, Platform X, Elon Musk

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