

Opinion

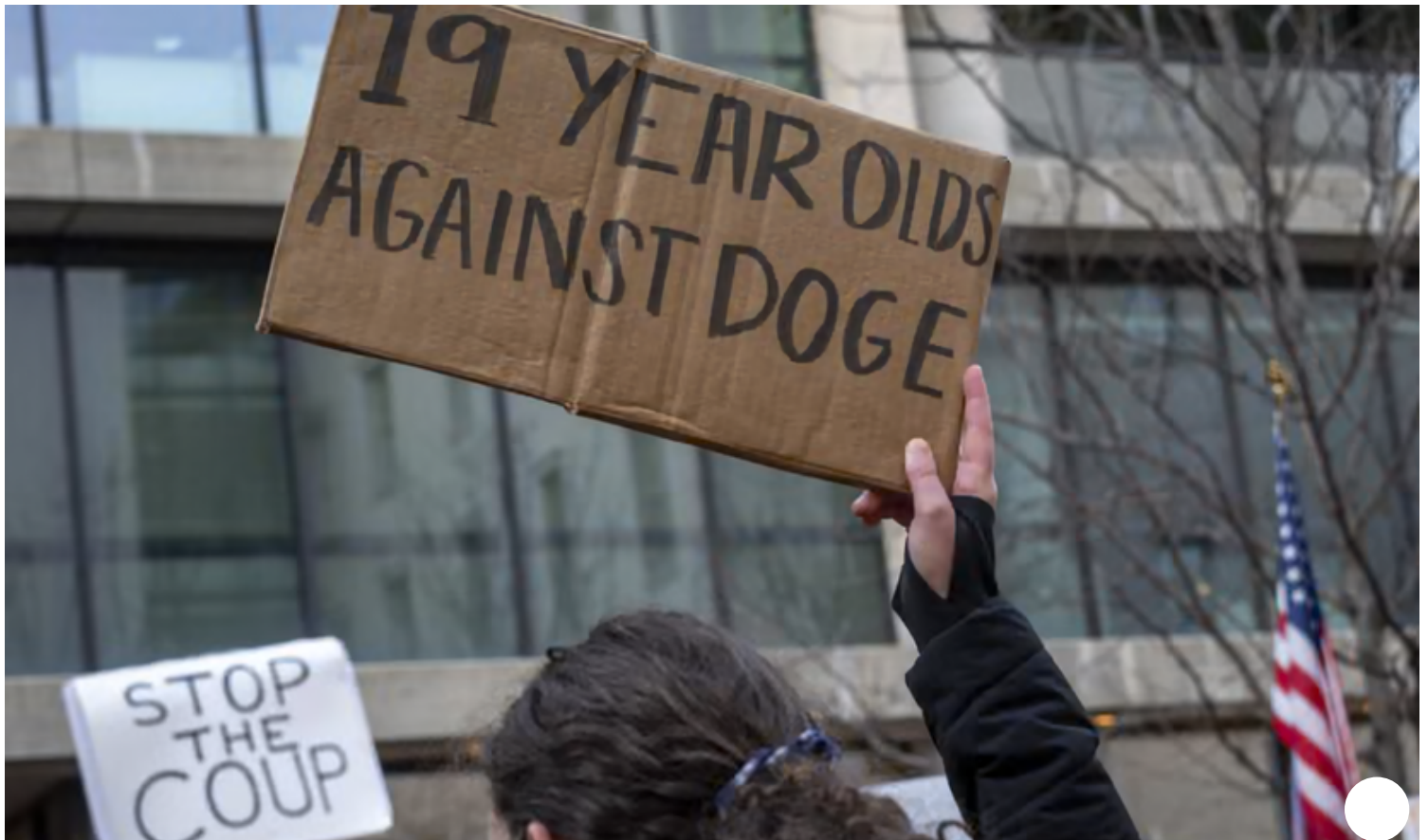
If you thought Elon Musk was bad, look at his dreadful mini-mes and shudder for America

Emma Brockes



They are young and seizing the reins of government on their master's behalf with an imperial swagger. It will end in many tears

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You would be forgiven for thinking we were back at [the Bullingdon Club](#), in the company of Jonty, Munty, Stiffy, Kipper, Chugger and, to use the polite version, Pig Botherer - only in this case it's Big Balls and a guy with a history of racist tweeting. This is the sudden, startling emergence into American political life of a type deeply recognisable to Brits: that is, jaunty young men with juvenile nicknames and a firm belief they should be running the world.

This being America, the class signifiers are slightly different from those in Britain. But in most regards, the cohort of young men hired by [Elon Musk](#) for his cost-cutting taskforce, the department of government efficiency (Doge), will be familiar to anyone who lived through the era of Boris Johnson's weapons-grade flippancy or reports of David Cameron's youthful hijinks. (Donald Trump is very flippant, of course, but his style skews locker room rather than debate chamber - or, in this case, maths olympiad.) And while politics has always run on young, volunteer energy, less common in the US, perhaps, is the imperial swagger, the sheer frivolous entitlement accompanying a crowd that has seemingly been given the keys to the kingdom.

Let's look at the lineup. The youngest of Musk's Doge hires, Edward Coristine - online username, Big Balls - is a 19-year-old former intern at Neuralink, Musk's neurotechnology company, who until recently appeared to be a first-year student at Northeastern University in Boston. Luke Farritor is a 23-year-old former SpaceX intern. Marko Elez, 25, used to work for X and SpaceX, and was revealed by the Wall Street Journal to have authored several since-removed tweets asserting, among other things, "[You could not pay me to marry outside of my ethnicity](#)." (Elez briefly resigned before Musk announced he'd reinstate him.)

And Gavin Kliger, a 25-year-old who [boosted](#) a post on X by the [white supremacist](#) Nick Fuentes, and whose newly launched Substack this week highlighted the perils of skipping freshman English 101 with a post entitled "Why DOGE: Why I gave up a seven-figure salary to save America."

Between them, these men have gained access to federal premises and staffing systems that govern agencies including USAid, the Department of Health and Human Services, the education and energy departments, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and contain sensitive information relating to millions of Americans. Elez was, reportedly, erroneously given [overwrite access to the Treasury department's](#) payment system before it was yanked back to read-only.

Of course, given that [Doge has not responded to questions](#) about what, if any, security clearance these young men have gone through, read-only is bad enough. The head of Doge, hiring in his own image, has turned to young, male software engineers with startup energy and the conviction that if you understand coding, you understand life. They've established sleeping pods in spare offices at the federal

agencies they have been engaged to gut or dismantle, so that while Musk goes on X to mock federal employees for not working at weekends, his mini-mes work round the clock.

This feat would be more impressive if their online remarks and bios didn't flag what might diplomatically be called large gaps in their skill-sets. Musk, a man with the emotional maturity of a cartoon bank robber, is leading a group of men most of whom have no government or management experience whatsoever, let alone expertise in fields governed by the agencies they have been tasked to reform. The whole scene is reminiscent of the 90s boom in management consultancy, during which new graduates stared with frank disbelief at anyone who was over 35 and still breathing. And sure enough, [as reported](#) in the New York Times, young engineers have been overheard referring to federal employees as “dinosaurs”, who have in turn called the guys in baseball caps “Muskrats”.

On X, meanwhile, Musk [amplified a post](#) pitching “autistic tech bros” against “non-binary Deep State theater kids”, and another that said what's happening in the US right now is equivalent to “the yearbook committee and theater kid types getting rocked by a football team and chess club alliance”. Theatre kids and chess nerds are, traditionally, both categories of social death in high school that are targeted by queen bees and jocks, a case of Musk siding with the oppressor that's even sadder when you consider that Trump isn't even a real jock. (For a full account of Trump's hilariously mediocre sports career relative to his claims about it, [read Lucky Loser](#) by Russ Buettner and Susanne Craig.)

Anyway, we know how this ends. In the largest sense, with the cancellation of programmes mandated democratically in Congress by a bunch of unelected goons in puffer vests. And in the smallest sense, with one of these 22-year-old jerks spilling his Big Gulp cup of Mountain Dew over a keyboard at the Treasury and wiping the social security data of 70 million Americans. I look forward to watching as Big Balls and co find new ways to tank an economy even more efficiently and irreversibly than Brexit.

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