

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 31, 2022

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Chair
The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Chair Yellen,

I write to draw your attention to potential national security concerns arising from the recently completed takeover of Twitter, Inc. by Elon Musk and a number of private investors. As has been publicly reported, at least \$1.89 billion of the financing necessary for Musk's bid to take Twitter private was secured from members of the Saudi Arabian royal family.¹ Another \$375 million came from the Kingdom of Qatar. Collectively, these stakes account for approximately 5% of the new ownership of Twitter. Given Twitter's critical role in public communication, I am concerned by the potential influence of the Government of Saudi Arabia.

As you know, CFIUS has the responsibility to review transactions that could result in an American business being controlled by a foreign person. However, CFIUS must also review non-controlling investments in certain sensitive US businesses, including companies that develop critical technologies and businesses that possess sensitive personal data on US citizens. The purpose of these reviews is clear: to protect the national security interests of the United States and American citizens.

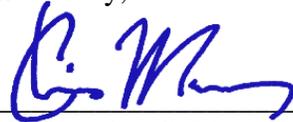
Setting aside the vast stores of data that Twitter has collected on American citizens, any potential that Twitter's foreign ownership will result in increased censorship, misinformation, or political violence is a grave national security concern. Saudi Arabia is one of the most repressive countries in the world, with little to no tolerance for free expression. Importantly, the Saudi government has demonstrated a willingness to enforce their restrictive approach to dissent outside the Kingdom's borders—illustrated most tragically by the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi. In 2019, federal prosecutors alleged that Saudi Arabia recruited employees of Twitter to spy on users in order to carry out surveillance and smear campaigns against dissidents. An internal investigation by Twitter also resulted in the suspension of 88,000 accounts tied to a disinformation campaign backed by the Saudi government, targeting both domestic and international audiences. It would therefore be reasonable to examine whether any degree of Saudi influence over Twitter's operations or access to user data could foreseeably be used to silence government critics and human rights activists, or to further state-sponsored disinformation campaigns.

¹ <https://www.newsweek.com/elon-musks-twitter-takeover-faces-backlash-over-saudi-financing-1755606>

In addition, federal and state government officials rely on Twitter to be a reliable medium to communicate vital information to the public. The possibility that a foreign power may now be able to influence the ability of the White House or a Governor to communicate with constituents must be thoroughly examined.

For these reasons, I call on CFIUS to immediately conduct a review of the recent changes in Twitter's ownership and governance. It is essential to our national security that public officials and citizens alike can continue to rely on this platform to be a neutral platform, free of foreign influence.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator