

The clash over the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) enforcement—embodied in the recent €120 million penalty against X—marks far more than a regulatory spat. It is a geopolitical confrontation over who controls the digital public sphere, what constitutes legitimate regulation, and whether Europe can assert strategic autonomy in the age of platform power.

Bas Eickhout's call for the Commission to "be tougher" underscores the Greens' long-standing conviction: Europe must define itself as the only democratic counterweight to Silicon Valley's platform dominance. The fine on X is not merely punitive—it is symbolic. As he argues, €120 million is negligible to Elon Musk, and therefore insufficient as deterrence. The subtext is clear: Europe cannot merely legislate; it must enforce at scale and with political spine.

Eickhout's framing of the EU as "the only ones fighting American Big Tech" positions Brussels not just as regulator, but as defender of civic space. In this view, the DSA is less a compliance instrument and more a continental value project: digital accountability, transparency, and public safety over algorithmic chaos.

## US Pushback: From Corporate Defence to Nationalist Rhetoric

The reaction from Washington, amplified by Musk, shifts the battlefield away from technical compliance and into national identity politics. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's description of the fine as "an attack on ... the American people" recasts corporate regulation as geopolitical aggression. This represents a notable rhetorical escalation: tech platforms are not merely private actors but proxies of national power.

Musk's vow to target EU officials personally also reveals a shift in power dynamics. Platform owners no longer lobby or negotiate—they intimidate and personalize. The Greens' response,

accusing Washington of being “hand in glove with Big Tech,” signals a belief that U.S. governance and corporate interests have largely fused.

For the Greens, X and Meta don’t just mismanage content—they imperil democracy. Their amplification of “extremism” and “disinformation,” especially during electoral cycles, is framed as a structural threat. The controversy over X’s blue check redesign crystallizes this: a paid verification system erodes trust architecture, opens identity manipulation channels, and undermines the integrity of political communication.

The DSA’s transparency mandates—researcher access, political ad disclosure, non-deceptive verification badges—are designed precisely to circumscribe such vulnerabilities. Thus, from a European perspective, U.S. outrage does not appear as a defence of free speech, but as a defence of unregulated platform power.

## Geopolitical Undercurrents: Realignment and Disillusionment

Eickhout’s warning that America seeks to “divide Europe from within by fueling far-right parties” contextualizes the DSA fight within a larger fracture: the erosion of transatlantic trust. What was once an alliance built on liberal democratic values is now reframed as asymmetric dependency. Macron’s insistence on U.S. partnership, Eickhout suggests, is outdated and naïve.

This is the core of the sovereignty argument: Europe must not only regulate differently, it must strategically detach, recognizing that U.S. digital hegemony is not neutral but political.

## Enforcement as Strategic Doctrine

The DSA fine is not an isolated enforcement action but a declaration: Europe intends to define the digital domain on its terms. To retreat in the face of U.S. fury would signal the opposite—that platforms are too large to govern and Washington too essential to defy.

Eickhout's uncompromising stance reflects a broader shift: Europe is no longer pleading for tech cooperation but constructing a parallel paradigm. Enforcement becomes the proof point of sovereignty.

The next step will determine whether Brussels' iron fist is regulatory bravado or the beginning of a new geopolitical posture: a Europe that is not merely reacting to Big Tech, but asserting digital power in its own right.