



# MORNING SHOTS

A BULWARK NEWSLETTER

## No. We Should Not Move Beyond 'That'

We have a responsibility to remember.

[William Kristol](#) and [Benjamin Parker](#)

Jan 27

The Philadelphia Eagles are going to the Super Bowl. (So are the Kansas City Chiefs, but who cares?) The last time the Eagles won it all, in 2018, many of the players [declined an invitation](#) to the White House to celebrate with President Trump, who subsequently rescinded the invitation altogether.

In Trump's telling, the controversy was about some Eagles players' refusal to "proudly stand for the National Anthem, hand on heart, in honor of the great men and women of our military and the people of our country." Torrey Smith, who was a wide receiver on that championship team, disagreed, noting, "No one refused to go simply because Trump 'insists' folks stand for the anthem."

So we're all rooting for Philly, right?

***Happy Monday.***



Tech billionaire Elon Musk speaks live via a video transmission during the election campaign launch rally of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) political party on January 25, 2025 in Halle, Germany. Musk is an outspoken supporter of the AfD and is urging German voters to cast their ballots for the party. (Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images)

## **Elon Musk: Never Remember**

*by William Kristol*

Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The date of January 27 was selected because it is the anniversary of the Soviet liberation of Auschwitz, the largest of the Nazi killing centers and concentration camps, where more than a million people, mostly Jews, were murdered.

World leaders have assembled today at the site of the former camp in Poland, joining a dwindling group of survivors to pay respect to the victims of Nazism, to commemorate the victory over Nazism, and to ensure the world does not forget.

There's an American delegation, which includes Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Howard Lutnick, Trump's nominee for secretary of commerce, and Charles Kushner, our likely next ambassador to France.

The delegations from other countries include somewhat more senior figures, including Britain's King Charles III, French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Even though the Soviet army liberated Auschwitz, Russia is not represented, as Vladimir Putin has been disinvited since the brutal assault on his peaceful neighbor, Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, a key leader of the free world, is present.

And Germany is appropriately represented by its president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and by its outgoing chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and his likely successor, Friedrich Merz.

Elon Musk presumably does not approve of their attendance.

Musk spoke by video Saturday to a rally of his favorite foreign political party, the *Alternative für Deutschland*. It's the one German party that seeks to minimize the importance of the Holocaust, and Musk told them what they wanted to hear: "I think there is too much focus on past guilt, and we need to move beyond that. Children should not feel guilty for the sins of their parents—their great grandparents even."

What is one to make of this? I was struck by [this excellent tweet thread](#) by the German historian Martin Sauerbrey yesterday, which I think is very much worth reading (I have cleaned up a few typos):

Since Musk vented the myth of a "cult of guilt" in Germany (and subsequently Austria), a few words on this topic.

When Musk addressed the AfD he used a narrative that's one of the favorites of the new (far) right in Austria and Germany: That "we" finally have to lay the past to rest and stop discussing and remembering what happened during the National Socialists' reign of terror. In this narrative the "guilt" is holding back and hampering Germans and Austrians to perform at their best.

This "cult"—the narrative goes on—was imposed on us by the Allies (and Jews) who wanted to chain us in darkness forever. These chains have to be broken in order to fully embrace our potential. Subsequently a new "national identity" has to be established.

It should be quite obvious that this narrative is utter nonsense, as both Austria and Germany performed exceedingly well (with massive support from the Allies) after WWII, and rank amongst the richest countries in the world. . . .

Sauerbrey continues from there, in a more personal vein:

As a historian who is confronted on a daily basis with the crimes of the Nazi regime I actually can comprehend why many want to believe that their relatives were “good guys.” I myself only learned in my thirties that one branch of my family were staunch National Socialists.

And I had to do my own research because nobody told me. They were just “fine people.” The thing is: There is no need to feel guilty about what my great grandfather did. I am not responsible for that. What I am responsible for is how I handle this past.

I can make sure that what happened is not forgotten. I can make sure that I will do everything I can to explain how these terrible things were made possible. I can do that by not denying or sugar coating what my ancestors did or made possible by silent approval.

I will do everything I can to oppose those who try to make those things forgotten and who capitalize on the Nazi sentiments still prevalent in our societies. The Austrian and German societies should actually be proud that they finally managed—however incompletely and flawed—to engage with this dark past in a serious way.

So. There is no reason to feel ashamed of what your ancestors did, but you sure as hell are to be ashamed if you won't acknowledge what has happened and what the role of our ancestors was. You should feel ashamed if you help those who want to get rid of all the achievements made in remembering and processing our terrible past, those who want to get rid of democracy, human rights and basic human decency.

Suerbrey speaks, obviously, as a German, and as a historian of Germany. Our history here in the United States is very different. But insofar as Musk—and Trump—have contempt for the achievements of the post-World War II order, Professor Sauerbrey's admonitions should speak to us as well. Is “America First” not our version of rewriting history? Is “MAGA” not our attempt to escape our current challenges and responsibilities?

Elon Musk's crude intervention in German politics is very unfortunate. But if it can help awaken us to what is at stake at this moment, not just here but across the world, perhaps it will have inadvertently served a useful purpose.