

US Elections Unveiled: A Media Roundup



A Periodic Overview of Major US Newspapers

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A second Trump presidency has alarmed scientists and climate experts due to the possibility that he could profoundly reshape US climate and energy policy, with far-reaching repercussions internationally. Donald's Trump's first term saw him claim climate change was a “hoax” and dismantle key environmental protections. Under Trump, the United States also became the first and only country to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Climate agreement. (The United States rejoined in 2021, under the Biden administration). Mandy Gunasekara, the EPA chief of staff during Trump's first term, told the New York Times that Trump would “tear down and rebuild” the structure of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under a second term and withdraw from the Paris Treaty again. This leads to a potential environmental consequence of Trump's recent presidential victory which is that his administration will aggressively dismantle federal environmental and climate regulations. Some in Trump's camp want him to scrap the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which allocates more than half a trillion dollars for projects like clean tech, hydrogen and renewable energy.

Donald Trump has picked Lee Zeldin, a former New York congressman to lead the EPA, vowing the appointment will “ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions” by the regulator. Zeldin, who will have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate, has rarely spoken out on environmental or climate issues, although he said in 2014 that he was “not sold yet on the whole argument that we have as serious are” with global heating, and added in 2018 that he did not support the Paris climate agreement, which Trump is again expected to withdraw the US from. Furthermore, Lee Zeldin has a score of only 14% from the League of Conservation Voters on his votes on environmental issues in his first 15 years in Congress. He is expected to oversee an overhaul of the EPA that will rival anything since its foundation in 1970.

While Donald Trump plans to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement once again upon his return to the White House, Europe's nationalist prime ministers and autocratic leaders made a right-wing case for championing (some) measures in the opening days of the 2024 climate summit (COP29) to slow global warming. Right Wing populism tends to correlate with weaker climate measures but governments ranging from Italy to Turkey have made arguments in favor of global cooperation to curb the rise in temperatures. This next portion of the article dives into the climate breakdown of the right-wing green playbook and how Europe's right wing might show Trump how do climate, MAGA style.

One step that right-wing European governments are taking is highlighting the economic advantages from electric vehicles to solar panels. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán began his speech at COP29 with his usual calls to keep using fossil fuels while taking climate action but quickly pivoted to boasting about his country's clean-tech prowess. “We are positioning ourselves

to be a significant player in electric vehicle development and electricity storage,” he told fellow leaders. A senior climate negotiator for a European right-wing government said the economic argument was a “no-brainer”. “Our companies see they can make money from the green transition,” he said. “And the earlier you start the transformation, the bigger a winner you’ll be as a company or a country.”

Promising to limit immigration, especially unauthorized border crossings, is a central pillar of right-wing election campaigns. Climate disasters, rising sea levels and worsening droughts are projected to displace hundreds of millions in the coming decades. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meoloni, leader of a right party has seized on the connection between migration and global warming to make the case for funding climate action in Africa and other developing countries. For example, Italy has plans to expand its energy cooperation with Africa to increase job growth and infrastructure as well as Rome’s influence on the continent. The Italian government’s strategy explicitly states that the plan will help give Africans “the right not to be forced to migrate.” In addition, last year Italy unexpectedly contributed €100 million to a new fund for countries hit by climate disasters, and Meloni has set up a €4 billion money pot to finance climate action in developing countries, particularly Africa. Speaking at the financing-focused COP29, Meloni said that “Italy intends to continue to do its part.” A second climate negotiator for a different European right-wing government thinks Trump might find this aspect alluring, too. “For example, land degradation because of climate change will create huge amounts of migration. And that’s a topic that’s also crucial for the Trump administration,” he pointed out.

Despite European right wing governments taking action to slow down global warming, the concern still remains extremely prominent. With the U.S. responsible for more than a 10th of planet-warming pollution, any shift in American climate policy has global consequences. A hotter planet means more disasters, including within the EU, which has to prepare accordingly for worse climate impacts. Authors Simone Tagliapietra and Cecilia Trasi, authors for the newsletter Bruegel, argue that Trump’s return should not be seen as a threat to EU decarbonization, but as a rallying cry to unite and push forward more strongly.

In response to the Trump Administration's climate agenda, Tagliapietra and Trasi argue that the EU will most likely prepare to push ahead with its own domestic decarbonization agenda, leading by example on the global level. This is in Europe’s own economic interest for a few reasons. First, global decarbonization is vital for the EU in seeking to limit increasingly expensive climate damage in the future. Second, it will help the EU enhance its economic competitiveness and economic security and third, it represents a clean-tech export opportunity for Europe. Tagliapietra and Trasi also argue that the EU must also strengthen its climate diplomacy efforts with major emitters including China and India, if only to prevent others from following the US. The EU should

build a strong alliance to ensure that the 2025 nationally determined contributions are ambitious, detailed and have the ability to mobilize enough green investment in the coming years.

Trump also aims to make the US not just “energy independent”, but “energy dominant”. He has pledged to halve natural gas and electricity prices within a year, largely through increased natural gas production. If this happens, it would widen the EU-US energy price gap, further undermining EU industrial competitiveness. According to Tagliapietra and Trasi, the only structural solution to the EU’s high energy price problem is the green transition. This must be accelerated. A unified approach to clean electrification is fundamental to ensure efficient development of renewable energy and of the required electricity grid and flexibility infrastructure.

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