



Anti-gender and anti-climate politics

Exploring converging agendas in Global Majority countries

Diana Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez, Rachel George and Ayesha Khan

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Abstract

This working paper investigates the accelerating global backlash against gender equality and climate action. It focuses on these two agendas in authoritarian and/or far-right governments in selected Global Majority countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, India and Indonesia).

Based on a review of existing literature, it finds these countries fall into three indicative categories of resistors (explicit, pragmatic or selective) based on their type of governance, political positioning at the national and international levels, and the rhetoric used to justify the backlash. It argues there are three enabling conditions underpinning the connection between both agendas in authoritarian contexts: civic space restrictions, economic and political ideology, and transnational politics.

The paper suggests future research that may (a) support feminist and climate movements to find opportunities to collaborate (b) examine public perceptions and values that drive support for explicit resistors and (c) deepen our understanding of the link between anti-gender and anti-climate politics and rising authoritarianism.

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About the authors

Diana Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez^{ID} is a Senior Research Officer in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Programme at ODI Global.

Rachel George^{ID} is a Lecturing Fellow in the Center for International Development at Duke University and a Research Associate at ODI Global.

Ayesha Khan^{ID} is a Senior Research Fellow in the GESI programme at ODI Global.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COP	Conference of Parties
CSE	comprehensive sexuality education
CSO	civil society organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
LGBTQI+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (the plus sign represents people with diverse sexual and/or gender who identify using other terms)
NDC	nationally determined contribution
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum

1 Introduction

The backlash against gender equality and climate action appears to be accelerating. The global rise in anti-gender equality politics is fuelled by a movement that unites transnational actors and organisations determined to preserve a patriarchal status quo in the face of progressive social change (Graff et al., 2019). A growing number of countries which ostensibly supported gender equality and gender-related development goals are now rolling back their commitments or stalling progress (UN Human Rights Council Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, 2024; UN Women, 2025). Opposition to climate change is also gaining traction as environmental and climate policies are framed as economic threats to working-class people and national economies (Bosetti et al., 2025; Furuta and Bromley, 2025).

Research from the United States (US) and European contexts, such as Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) and Sweden, indicates that opposition to both agendas coalesces under the rhetoric and policy of far-right parties, which are gaining traction with voters.¹ The scale and significance of the convergence of anti-gender equality and anti-climate action politics more broadly around the world is not yet well understood. This working paper draws on research related to far-right and authoritarian political leaders in Global Majority countries who simultaneously resist gender equality and climate action to varying degrees.

This working paper examines a selected group of countries where 1) there are notable anti-gender and anti-climate politics, namely Argentina (with supporting evidence from Brazil and Chile) and Saudi Arabia (with evidence from the United Arab Emirates) or 2) de-democratisation is deepening, namely Türkiye (with evidence from India and Indonesia). It finds that these countries can be placed into three groups characterised by their type of governance, national and international positioning, and the rhetoric they use. It also examines if and how these agendas converge across these different contexts, it finds that there are three enabling conditions bringing them together: civic space restrictions, economic or political ideology, and transnational politics.

The paper relies on available scholarly evidence and grey literature, including policy reports, expert comments and news analysis. The objective is to offer insights into the possible connections between politics that seek to restrict gender equality and climate action and to suggest ways forward to deepen understanding of this emerging dynamic. The countries and regions focused on in this working paper do not represent a global review of potential cases – notably none are drawn from the African continent. Therefore, these are indicative examples only. Further study in other regions, particularly those not mentioned in this working paper, would be valuable.

¹ For further research on the agendas of far-right political parties, see Agius et al. (2021), Barla and Bjork-James (2021), Daggett (2018), Vowles and Hultman (2021), and White (2021); on voter attitudes, see Anshelm and Hultman (2014), Krange et al. (2019), McCright and Dunlap (2011), and Nelson (2020).

After introducing the key concepts guiding this analysis, the working paper presents the categories emerging from the research (Section 2). This is followed by a brief analysis of countries (Section 3) and discussion of the enabling conditions for the convergence between anti-climate and anti-gender politics (Section 4). It ends with a summary of the main findings and the implications for future research.



Students and the wider community take part in 'Fridays For Future' climate protest in Santiago, Chile, 2019.
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2 Conceptual framework

This section introduces the concepts used to examine the interaction between politicised opposition to gender equality and climate action, especially in the context of rising authoritarianism and far-right politics.

2.1 Authoritarianism and democratic decline

Recent Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) scores show that in 2024, the average level of democracy – defined as systems with free and fair elections and core civil liberties for public participation – had fallen to 1985 levels. For the first time in 20 years, the world has fewer democracies (88) than autocracies (91) – countries with absent or severely constrained electoral competitions and restricted or closed civic space (Nord et al., 2025). The decline is particularly stark in Eastern Europe and South and Central Asia but can be seen across all regions (ibid.).

Authoritarian political systems are characterised by centralisation of power in the executive, limited political pluralism, no free and competitive elections, and political repression of opponents (ECPS, 2025). This paper refers to two kinds of authoritarianism: electoral and closed autocracies. In the first, the executive and legislature are elected but not through processes that meet full democratic standards, and which may include violations of civil and political rights. Far-right political parties can be a feature of electoral autocracies and are characterised by the figure of a strong leader, repression of dissenters and curtailment of human rights (Giudici et al., 2025). In closed autocracies, such as hereditary monarchies and military or one-party regimes, power is transferred through other means, including manipulation of electoral processes and suppression of civil and political rights (Cassani, 2019).

Authoritarian governments increasingly threaten both women's rights activists and climate activists, targeting them as part of broader anti-democratic strategies (Jones and Youngs, 2024; Brechenmacher, 2025). In contrast, democratic institutions can enable civic organising and influence around climate and gender justice, promoting related accountability and reforms (Lindvall and Karlsson, 2024). There is also evidence that a greater number of women parliamentarians is associated with more pro-climate policies (Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019). Yet the links between progressive climate and gender policies and outcomes and democracy are not straightforward (Piccone, 2017; Lindvall and Karlsson, 2024). Differences in state capacity and elite incentives mean democracies do not consistently adopt such policies (Lindvall and Karlsson, 2024).

2.2 Anti-gender politics

The backlash against gender equality was initially understood to be a reaction to the loss of male power and to perceived changes in gender roles and norms (Mansbridge and Shames, 2008). In many conservative Global Majority contexts, backlash manifests through a lack of implementation of policies and inadequate funding to dedicated programmes for women, despite high-level commitments to global human rights frameworks (Goetz, 2020; Edström et al., 2024). Globally, however, the most contested and politicised issues are sexual and reproductive rights and those related to sexual orientation and gender identity (Voss, 2018; Martínez et al., 2021). The ‘moral panic’ around these issues has permeated public and political life (Martínez et al., 2021). It has fuelled a rhetoric of ‘anti-gender ideology’ or ‘anti-woke’ discourse to counter feminist and LGBTQI+ activism (Corrêa, 2022; Lage Carbone, 2024). The political weaponisation of gender issues serves to divide public opinion and dilute support for the expansion of human rights for all, especially women, girls and gender-diverse people.

Powerful stakeholders – including political actors and conservative organisations – have coalesced into an organised global anti-feminist movement. It offers far-right and religious fundamentalists around the world a shared language to resist progressive, liberal and rights-based politics (Graff et al., 2019; Roggeband and Krizsan, 2019). Unaccountable financial flows from Global North-based transnational conservative organisations are used to influence illiberal politics in countries across Latin America and Africa (D’Angelo et al., 2024).² These organisations fund political stakeholders to roll back policies and programmes, weaponise gender issues to whip up support, and silence local movements that challenge the new discourse (Ipas, 2024; Datta, 2025).

The heightened politicisation of gender equality is increasingly normalising political and ideological positions opposed to the rights of women, girls and LGBTQI+ people. This reverses the global norm-setting that characterised the United Nations (UN) conventions and platforms for action that suggested a new progressive consensus had been agreed (Sanders, 2018).³ Political leaders who have retreated from this consensus, from Russia’s Vladimir Putin to Türkiye’s Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, are joined by a widening group of states that assert patriarchal values and compromise gender equality at all levels of policy-making.

2 Funds from the Alliance for Defending Freedom, Family Watch International and the Political Network for Values, among others, flow from the US to civil society organisations (CSOs) across Africa to restrict sexual and reproductive health rights. Funds from Russian oligarchs have entered European political organisations to impact discourse on sexual and reproductive health and rights and LGBTQI+ rights (see Datta (2025) for more details).

3 For example, the Beijing Platform for Action agreed at the 1995 Fourth World Conference for Women, the Platform for Action adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

2.3 Anti-climate politics

Anti-climate politics exist on a spectrum from climate denialism to climate delayism. Climate denialism rejects the scientific evidence of global warming in general ('literal denial') or accepts the existence of climate change but rejects that it is the result of human activity ('interpretive denial') (Walker and Leviston, 2019). Climate delayism (or 'implicatory denial') does not question the veracity of climate change or its anthropogenic roots, but seeks to stop or stall action (ibid.; Lamb et al., 2020). In recent years, there has been a discursive move among opponents to climate change from denialism to delayism, as the evidence and consensus on climate change solidifies (Darian-Smith, 2023).

Countries or institutional actors delay climate action through a variety of strategies. They may seek to redirect responsibility from the institutional to the individual level, or towards major current contributors to total greenhouse gases (e.g. China). Another strategy involves pushing for non-transformative action, such as technological solutions or continued reliance on oil and gas (also known as 'fossil fuel solutionism'). Its adherents may emphasise that climate action has a negative social impact (e.g. on people's livelihoods or standards of living), or argue that climate action is futile because responses will not be rapid or substantial enough to be effective (Walker and Leviston, 2019; Lamb et al., 2020).

Climate denialist and delayist agendas are associated with far-right and authoritarian leaders. Advocates include conservative and far-right political actors in the US, the UK, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Italy and Austria, among others. Stoddart et al. (2022) and Bosetti et al. (2025) explain this convergence through the role that free-market ideology plays in far-right and right-wing agendas. Climate action requires the state to regulate the economy leading conservative actors to oppose climate policies. Further, in many contexts, such as the US, Australia and the UK, conservative political actors have been funded by the fossil fuel and other extractive industries that benefit from climate denialist and delayist policies (Darian-Smith, 2023; Horton, 2023; Butler and Evershed, 2026).

Far-right or authoritarian politicians use nationalism to oppose climate action, arguing that the latter prioritises global over national concerns (Kulin et al., 2021). They appeal to disenfranchised voters who perceive themselves as the 'losers of globalisation' (Bosetti et al., 2025). They frame climate action as a growing threat to people's economic security (i.e. as a threat to industry jobs and a stable cost of living) and as yet another force, like globalisation, that is contrary to the interests of 'ordinary people' (Huber, 2020; Stoddart et al., 2022). As a result, their opposition furthers an anti-establishment narrative of distrust in institutions (including those related to science), arguing that they only serve elite interests (Huber et al., 2022). Climate action thus becomes a terrain on which they can ground and perform their wider political agenda.

Anti-climate politics are often embedded within broader anti-environmental agendas, sharing much of their rhetoric. Since the 1970s, for example, right-wing politicians in the US have framed

environmentalism as an assault on the interests of the working classes and on ‘the core American values of personal freedom, individual rights, ... success, material comfort and progress’ (Stoddart et al., 2022: 6). As Sections 3 and 4.2 show, this narrative has been repurposed to obstruct climate policy.

2.4 What explains the convergence?

Existing literature, primarily centred on European and North American contexts, offers several explanations for understanding the intersection between authoritarian/far-right, anti-gender and anti-climate politics. Studies analysing the link between anti-gender and anti-climate politics focus on the role of masculinity in protecting unequal socioeconomic structures. Hultman and Pulé (2018) and Nelson (2020) suggest that, because resistance to climate action is most prevalent among conservative men, support for these ideas relates to masculinity norms. Opposition can stem from a desire to safeguard male privilege in the face of progressive change, to protect the breadwinner role (in contexts where it is tied to industrial or extractive activity and thus threatened by climate policies), or to solidify a worldview where the masculine dominates over the feminine (where ‘feminine’ includes not just women but also nature) (ibid.; Rocha, 2021). Hultgren (2018) and Kaul and Buchanan (2023) argue that authoritarian politics, too, rely on aggressive models of masculinity that require male authority and normalise ideas of power and dominance that are then expressed in anti-gender and anti-climate agendas. Rocha (2021) contends the reverse is also possible: anti-gender and anti-climate politics also normalise authoritarianism through the re-entrenchment of hierarchical relationships.

A few studies analyse the role of other drivers of the convergence. Agius et al. (2021) find that authoritarian regimes use misogyny as a strategic tool to provide a sense of order during heightened climate anxieties, which are also more easily dealt with if denied. Daggett (2018) argues that authoritarianism emerges as a response to growing threats to the interconnected systems of extractivism and patriarchy and thus as a mechanism to prevent their dismantling. As Section 4 shows, restricted civic space, economic and political ideology, and transnational politics are also key enabling conditions of the authoritarian–anti-gender–anti-climate convergence.

2.5 Emerging categories of convergence

The analysis of the countries discussed in this working paper suggests that there are potentially three combinations of authoritarian, anti-gender and anti-climate politics. Governments in Group A (‘explicit resisters’) have a clear intent to regress or block progress on both agendas. Group B (‘pragmatic resisters’) comprises governments with mixed intent, characterised by limited progress and some effort at regression in both agendas. Group C (‘selective resisters’) includes those with an emerging but varied intent to regress or block both agendas. Table 1 summarises key characteristics of each group: governance type, political positioning on gender equality and climate action, national and international policies, and rhetoric.

In the cases of Argentina, Brazil and (potentially) Chile (Group A, explicit resisters), opposition to both issues has been overt. In both Argentina and Brazil (under the previous government of Jair Bolsonaro), there has been clear government intent to regress both agendas at the national and international levels – for example, by revoking women’s rights or refusing to participate in multilateral climate cooperation spaces. Both governments have also used inflammatory rhetoric that ridicules gender and climate agendas as forms of fanaticism or plots that supposedly threaten traditional values and economic development. Chile, under the new government of President José Antonio Kast, is likely to adopt similar ideological positions on gender and climate as his regional predecessors, but it remains to be seen if his approach will be as radical domestically and internationally.

Table 1 Anti-gender and anti-climate politics: three combinations

Category/ Dimension	Group A. Explicit resisters	Group B. Pragmatic resisters	Group C. Selective resisters
Countries	Argentina, Brazil (prior), Chile	Saudi Arabia, UAE	Türkiye, India, Indonesia
Governance	Far-right, growing electoral autocratisation. Restricting civic space. ‘Electoral democracies’ but ‘regressing’ or ‘autocratising’ (Argentina) (V-Dem, 2026).	Closed autocracies (monarchic). Restricted civic space and civil liberties. ‘Closed autocracy’ (V-Dem, 2026).	Conservative, increasing authoritarianism. Restricted civic space and civil liberties. ‘Electoral autocracy’ (V-Dem, 2026).
Political positioning	Gender: restrictive Explicit and strong opposition to some gender policies (abortion, GBV, sexual and reproductive health and rights, CSE, gender identity). Attempts to reverse policies. Climate: denialist Explicit and strong opposition to international commitments and processes. Attempts to reverse policies.	Gender: restrictive Some explicit and strong opposition with some exceptions in policy reform. Climate: delayist Mostly implicit and de facto; strong resistance to international commitments (e.g. reduction in fossil fuel production) but domestic investment in transition and adaptation.	Gender: restrictive Mixed – explicit but weaker opposition. Policy commitments broadly maintained. Climate: delayist Mostly implicit and de facto.
National policies	Clear intent to regress both agendas (e.g. revoking rights).	Mixed progress on both agendas (e.g. policies to support renewables, some women’s rights recognised).	Mixed progress on both agendas (e.g. investment in climate protection and fossil fuel projects, rollback on some women’s rights).

Category/ Dimension	Group A. Explicit resisters	Group B. Pragmatic resisters	Group C. Selective resisters
International policies	Clear intent to regress both agendas (e.g. refusing multilateral cooperation) and to block progress on new standards.	Mixed intent to regress established norms and progress new standards; active multilateral engagement.	Mixed intent to regress established norms and progress new standards; active multilateral engagement.
Rhetoric	Incendiary and openly hostile to counter local and international advocates and stakeholders.	Anti-western, religious arguments used to counter local and international advocates and stakeholders.	Anti-western, religious arguments used to counter local and international advocates and stakeholders.

In Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Group B, pragmatic resisters), commitment to some forms of women's empowerment is increasing, yet visible resistance to more fundamental changes is ideologically framed in terms of religious and cultural values. Despite these Gulf States lifting some restrictions on women's economic and political rights domestically, they simultaneously block the advancement of sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTQI+ rights at the UN and those related to inheritance, divorce and child custody at the domestic level. Rhetorical support for climate progress and reducing fossil fuel reliance contrasts with efforts to stall progress at the multilateral level, resulting in delayism.

In Türkiye, India and Indonesia (Group C, selective resisters), opposition to both gender and climate action is mixed, and, for the most part, not explicit government policy. These governments' restrictions on civic space stifle those grassroots mobilisations and advocacy that are essential to advancing progressive claims. But even as these governments present a mixed track record at the domestic level on blocking progress on climate and gender action, at the multilateral level, their opposition manifests more as a form of delayism than outright antagonism. When opposition is explicit, anti-western and nationalist rhetoric is used, along with arguments that invoke religious and cultural rights, and the right to development, to sidestep deepening international commitments on both climate and gender.

Section 3 presents more detailed evidence from these countries, unpacking governmental positions and rhetoric in the areas of gender equality and climate action.

3 Regional evidence

3.1 Group A: Explicit resisters

This section reviews three Latin American countries where far-right governments have pursued policies opposing both climate action and gender equality. It focuses on Argentina, locating it in a pattern that began in Brazil during the tenure of former President Jair Bolsonaro, and which is set to expand to Chile with the new government of José Antonio Kast.

Argentina

Far-right candidate Javier Milei was elected Argentina's president in November 2023, with approximately 55% of the votes – the most votes in the country's history (Pérez and Aymá, 2024). In an election that was shaped by Argentina's economic decline, Milei promised to revamp the economy and the political system by radically shrinking the state and boosting the free market – despite evidence that this is a regressive economic model that increases poverty and inequality (Piketty, 2014). He argues that this vision is rooted in the right to life, freedom and property – which he claims are liberal and Judeo-Christian values (Pérez and Aymá, 2024).



A protest sign at an International Women's Day march in Buenos Aires, Argentina 2025. Text reads 'Out with Milei and his entire macho cabinet'. © Carolina Jaramillo/shutterstock.com

Background

Throughout the 20th century, Argentina alternated between democracy and military authoritarian rule. The country last transitioned from a military dictatorship to a federal constitutional republic and a representative democracy in 1983 (Nouzeilles and Montaldo, 2002). In the 40 years of democratic consolidation that followed (1983–2023), the Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista) – a broadly leftist populist party – once again became a dominant political force (Waylen, 2000; Rojas, 2024).⁴ During this period, recurring economic crises hit the country – hyperinflation in the 1990s and debt defaults in 2001, 2014 and 2020 (Belini and Korol, 2020; Delivorias, 2023). The 2001 crisis led to massive social protests calling for a complete renewal of the political system (Dinerstein, 2003; Svampa, 2009). Yet, by mid-2023, Argentina had reached the highest annual inflation rate worldwide (211%), depleted its foreign currency reserves, and had pushed half of its population below the poverty line (Delivorias, 2023; Grinspan, 2024). This economic deterioration persisted despite the efforts of Justicialist and conservative governments alike, provoking disillusionment and mistrust of the political establishment, and rekindling the 2001 call to renew the political system (Pérez and Aymá, 2024; Rojas, 2024).

Against this backdrop, Javier Milei won the 2023 elections under his newly formed party Liberty Advances (La Libertad Avanza). Milei achieved a sweeping victory, promising to be a fresh political alternative who would control inflation, reduce poverty and dismantle the political establishment responsible for Argentina’s deterioration. Among his policies to repair the economy is an emphasis on fiscal adjustment through the slimming down of the Argentinian state and its social spending (Pérez and Aymá, 2024).⁵ Milei’s economic policies are anchored in his openly expressed ‘liberal libertarian’ and ‘anarcho-capitalist’ ideology – which are associated with the Austrian School of Economics and emphasise free-market principles, private property regimes and anti-state interventionism (Milei, 2024; Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025; discussed in more detail in Section 4). The symbol of his intended radical political and economic transformation is the chainsaw.

Since Milei assumed office, Argentina’s civic space rating has dropped from ‘narrowed’ to ‘obstructed’, due to a rise in arbitrary detentions, protest repression, criminalisation of activists and an increasing number of attacks against journalists (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025a).

Argentina’s gender politics under Milei

Soon after assuming the presidency, Milei dismantled the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversities (Centenera, 2024) and closed the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (Rey, 2024). His government reduced funds for gender equality and LGBTQI+ programmes by at least 33% and halted multiple gender-based violence (GBV)

4 The party was formally in power between 1946–1955 and 1973–1976, under the leadership of Juan Perón and his wife Isabel Martínez (Daniel, 2002).

5 Other suggested policies include replacing the Argentinian peso with the US dollar, dismantling of the Central Bank and privatising state-owned companies.

prevention and protection programmes, leading to a rapid increase of femicides and other forms of GBV in the country (Quiroga, 2024; Barber, 2025a). The pioneering Gender Identity Law, passed in 2012, was modified to ban gender-affirming care for minors (Paletta, 2025). Milei has also threatened to backtrack on legal progress on femicide, claiming that its recognition as a distinct crime ‘legally makes a woman’s life worth more than that of a man’ (WEF, 2025). He has proposed re-criminalising abortion, describing it as a ‘completely murderous agenda’ and ‘aggravated homicide’ (Barber, 2024, 2025b; Buenos Aires Herald, 2024).

Gender-inclusive language and gender-sensitive approaches are now prohibited in public institutions. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been withdrawn from school curricula, with the government citing a ‘lack of biological scientific rigour’ and its obligation to refrain from teaching ‘politicised content’ (Quiroga, 2024; Arribas, 2025). Milei has also backtracked on gender quota mandates in government institutions (including trans quotas), and he plans to overturn Micaela’s Law (Ley Micaela), which mandates gender training for public employees involved in preventing and responding to GBV cases (Centenera, 2024; Barber, 2025b).

At the international level, Argentina has broken consensus on gender equality and its tradition of supporting human rights. In 2024, Argentina was the only country to refuse to sign the women’s empowerment agreement at the G20 and the only one to vote against a non-binding UN resolution on online GBV (Alvarado and Castro, 2024; Alianza Argentina, 2025). The same year, it opposed the UN’s Pact for the Future, which, among other issues, promotes female empowerment (Alianza Argentina, 2025). In 2025, Argentina decided to not renew its membership in the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2025–2027, breaking with its historical role as a founding member (Krueger, 2025). In collaboration with the US, it also attempted to block the adoption of the political declaration of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), in 2025, challenging language around gender equality, particularly the use of the term ‘gender’ (Amnesty International, 2025).⁶

Argentina’s climate politics under Milei

As with his national policies on gender, Milei has also removed key environmental institutions and reduced available resources for these issues. Soon after assuming office, he dismantled the Ministry of the Environment, transforming it into an under-secretariat and reducing its budget by 85% (Meadows, 2024). As part of his agenda to incentivise foreign investment and income – Argentina’s exports rely on agribusiness, energy and mining – he removed various legal environmental protections to allow extractive industries to expand. He revoked Argentina’s Land Law (Ley de Tierras), which limited foreign ownership of land in Argentina and promoted the Incentive Regime for Large Investments policy, which offers 30-year tax concessions, facilitates

6 To renew their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, member states negotiate a new political declaration every five years to signal their support for the global agreement.

private investment in export-oriented infrastructure, and grants trade privileges for large-scale investments in various sectors, including fossil fuels and mining (Gulman, 2024; Climate Action Tracker, 2025a).

Milei also revoked the Indigenous Territorial Emergency Law (Ley de Emergencia Territorial), which afforded land protections for Indigenous communities, as it prevented the state from issuing land concessions for resource extraction and privatising land (Palacios, 2024). The government's flagship legislative package – the Omnibus Law (Ley de Bases) – originally included the dismantling of existing legal protections for glaciers and forest areas, to allow for peri-glacier zones to be mined and for the expansion of the agribusiness, forestry and real estate industries into protected forests. While these provisions were not part of the final version approved by Congress in 2024, due to public opposition, he later eliminated the National Fund for the Protection of Native Forests, and in 2025, pushed to reform the Glacier Law (Ley de Glaciares), which, if approved, would significantly reduce its scope (Napoli et al., 2026; Wetherbee, 2025).

At the international level, the Milei administration has sharply retreated from climate cooperation. In 2024, Argentina rejected the UN's Pact for the Future, which also contained key provisions on sustainable development and solely opposed a UN Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the environment (Alianza Argentina, 2025). Milei withdrew all Argentinian negotiators from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) and threatened to pull the country out of the Paris Agreement (Greenfield, 2024). At COP30, Milei delayed confirming his attendance until the last minute, did not participate in the high-level summit and sent a reduced delegation to the technical negotiations only (Ainger, 2025; Mecure, 2025). At both COP29 and COP30, Argentina actively opposed the inclusion of language related to gender (see Section 4). As of January 2026, Argentina had failed to submit its updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs) (Lo, 2026).

Brazil

Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2023) came to power in Brazil with a new political party, Alliance for Brazil (Aliança pelo Brasil) and a landslide victory due to the appeal of his free-market economic policies at a time when the Brazilian economy had stagnated and inflation and inequality were sharply rising (Carvalho et al., 2021; Rocha, 2021).

Bolsonaro – like Milei – also had an explicit gender-regressive agenda. His views drew on his ties with the Evangelical Christian Church, which also funded his campaign and whose network helped to mobilise voters (Olmeda, 2023). He declared in his inauguration speech that the Brazilian state would make it a priority to combat 'gender ideology' (Phillips, 2019a). The resulting set of policies included the addition of 'gender ideology' to the list of abuses that children could report

to Brazil's Dial 100 hotline, restructuring of the Ministry for Human Rights, Women's Policies and Racial Equality into the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (naming Evangelic pastor Damara Alves as its minister), and the banning of CSE from schools (Maximo Prado, 2024).⁷

At the international level, Bolsonaro's government opposed using 'gender' in UN resolutions, advocating instead for the use of 'biological sex' (Conectas, 2020). Alongside the US, Egypt, Hungary, Uganda and Indonesia, Brazil under Bolsonaro was a key early promoter of the Geneva Consensus Declaration in 2020 – an anti-abortion manifesto whose signatories represent a growing international coalition against women's sexual and reproductive rights.⁸

Bolsonaro was also a proponent of an extractive economic model based on agribusiness, mining and fossil fuels – the country's top three export industries (Rocha, 2021; Queiroz-Stein et al., 2023). Bolsonaro's anti-climate agenda was implemented at both the national and international levels. His government dismantled environmental protection agencies, and attempted to fast-track the most aggressive mining legislation to date at the expense of environmentally protected areas.⁹ He increased deforestation by an annual average of 75.5%, rolled back Indigenous land rights, refused to uphold Brazil's commitment to host COP25 in 2019 and threatened to withdraw from the Paris Agreement (Watts, 2018; AFP, 2023).

Chile

José Antonio Kast won a resounding victory (58% of votes) for his newly formed far-right party, the Republican Party of Chile (Partido Republicano de Chile) in 2025 (Montes, 2025). As with Milei's and Bolsonaro's victories, the focus of the election was on Chile's economy, along with rising concerns about undocumented migration and crime (Laborde, 2026a). Kast's political agenda features explicit opposition to advancing gender justice, which he also refers to as 'gender ideology' (Montes, 2023; Zanotti et al., 2025). His political trajectory is characterised by ongoing opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights, CSE, and LGBTQI+ rights, such as marriage and adoption, motivated by his ties to the Catholic Church (Montes, 2023; D'Angelo, 2025; Laborde, 2025). During his 2021 campaign, Kast promised to reverse current gender identity laws, dismantle Chile's Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, re-criminalise abortion in all circumstances, and introduce a subsidy for heterosexual couples (McGowan, 2021). He is critiqued for weaponising GBV to win support for his anti-immigration agenda, as he promised harsher consequences for perpetrators whom he claims are mostly migrants (ibid.). In 2023, his party contributed to a constitutional reform effort that, among other goals, sought to

7 Dial 100 is a national 24hr hotline for denouncing human rights violations.

8 The manifesto is promoted by the US-based Institute for Women's Health, which was supported under US President Trump's first administration.

9 The dismantled environmental protection agencies included the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation, and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

lay the ground to re-criminalise abortion and introduce conscientious objection (Bartlett, 2023).¹⁰ A few days after assuming Chile's presidency, he named Judith Marin, a renowned anti-abortion activist, as the Minister of Women and Gender Equity (Laborde, 2026b).

Kast's campaigns have been focused on economic growth, in another resonance with Brazil and Argentina. He seeks to achieve this through further market deregulation and through resource extraction, especially in Chile's top two export industries of mining and aquaculture (Kast, 2021; Molinari, 2025; Kast, 2025). He has called Mapuche Indigenous communities 'terrorists', one of his 2025 campaign promises being 'to liberate' regions which have been under a state of emergency for the past four years because of increasing disputes over land rights and growing responses from armed Mapuche groups (Al Jazeera English, 2025). He promises to reclaim 'every inch' of Indigenous lands in order to transform Chilean Patagonia into a key area for agribusiness and tourism, a policy which would have devastating social and environmental consequences (Radwin, 2025).

While Milei and Bolsonaro represent the most extreme right-wing positions in Argentina and Brazil, respectively, in Chile, this role is played by Johannes Kaiser.¹¹ Kaiser's 2025 campaign included explicit promises to: withdraw from 'globalist dogmas'; eliminate 'ideological obstacles', such as climate change policies; remove the country's adherence to the Escazú Agreement and International Labour Organization Convention 169; remove all environmental regulations for the mining sector; fight gender ideology; dismantle the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality; and ban gender-inclusive language, to name a few (Mora, 2025; Radwin, 2025).¹² It is likely that Kast's government will work in coalition with Kaiser's party, which may drive its gender and climate policies to further extremes (Rojas, 2025).

Cross-country rhetoric: incendiary rhetoric of opposition and denial

Milei's and Bolsonaro's explicit opposition to gender has used inflammatory rhetoric in both national and international platforms. They have relied on common far-right narratives, such as referring to feminism as 'gender ideology' and positioning it against social order and 'family values' (Olmeda, 2023; Quiroga, 2024; Lamas, 2025). Milei has attacked feminism by calling it 'a criminal ideology', 'outright child abuse', 'the ridiculous and unnatural fight between man and woman', 'a distortion of the concept of equality', and a 'quest for privileges' (WEF, 2024, 2025). Bolsonaro, in turn, framed feminist and LGBTQI+ inclusion as a form of moral decadence that harms children and that goes

¹⁰ Since the 2020 mandate for a new constitution, Chile has rejected two drafts. Kast strongly opposed the progressive proposal and was a key author of the conservative alternative (Nicas, 2023).

¹¹ Kaiser, who started a YouTube channel in 2013 to express anti-migration views, gained a legislative seat in 2021 representing Kast's party. He broke with Kast's party in 2024 and founded the National Libertarian Party (Partido Nacional Libertario) (Burns, 2025).

¹² The Escazú Agreement and the International Labour Organization Convention 169 are both key documents for the protection of environmental and Indigenous rights and the safety of environmental defenders.

against the values of the family and the Brazilian nation (Cabrera, 2022; Olmeda, 2023). Both Milei and Bolsonaro have also consistently used homophobic tropes – for example, of LGBTQI+ people as perpetrators of child sexual abuse (Olmeda, 2023; WEF, 2024, 2025).

Milei's and Bolsonaro's anti-climate politics can be identified as climate denialism: interpretative and literal, respectively (Pascal, 2023; Queiroz-Stein et al., 2023). At the 2025 World Economic Forum (WEF), Milei likened climate change to previous temperature change cycles when 'men were not even around' (WEF, 2025; The Economist, 2023). Like China and India, both Milei and Bolsonaro have often pitted climate action against economic development. Milei has argued that climate policies 'such as net zero, primarily hurt poor countries' and should not be a priority for developing countries (UN, 2024), while Bolsonaro promised to unearth the vast wealth of the Amazon and not leave 'one square centimetre' of it demarcated as an Indigenous reserve (Al Jazeera, 2022; Phillips, 2019b).

Both have also sought to discredit the climate agenda using incendiary rhetoric, with Bolsonaro claiming climate change is a Marxist lie and an international plot to undermine Brazil's sovereignty (Rocha, 2021; Queiroz-Stein et al., 2023). Similarly, Milei has called climate agendas 'fanatical' and a 'socialist lie'. At the 2025 WEF, he argued that countries 'had shifted to fanatical environmentalism ... where economic development is considered little more than a crime against nature' (WEF, 2025). He has also called the Paris Agreement an expression of 'cultural Marxism' – a far-right conspiracy theory that maintains that there is a global left-wing conspiracy to undermine western-Christian civilisation (Lambertucci, 2023; Rivas Molina, 2023).¹³

In Argentina, climate denialist and anti-gender rhetoric come together in pro-natalist discourse. At the 2024 WEF, Milei lashed out against climate movements for supposedly 'going too far' and for advocating for 'population control mechanisms or the abortion agenda' (WEF, 2024). With reproductive rights only recently expanded in Argentina through new legislation that remains controversial for many, Milei's rhetoric fosters opposition to climate agendas by linking them to pro-choice movements and vice versa.

In Chile, Kast's anti-gender rhetoric has also relied on common inflammatory far-right narratives, such as protecting family values, children's well-being and the right to life (El Toro TV, 2019). For example, he is a staunch critic of the 2018 Gender Identity Law (Ley de Identidad de Género), claiming that 'it is the worst law to ever been passed' and that 'gender ideology corrupts children' (ibid.). His rhetoric, however, has been milder in recent years than that of Milei and Bolsonaro. While he was known to be a climate denialist, this has disappeared from his rhetoric in recent years (Aronoff, 2021). In his 2025 campaign, he spoke instead of transforming current environmental policies to 'increase efficiency and alignment ... [to ensure they] do not block

13 The term has also been interpreted as a reframing of the Nazi antisemitic conspiracy theory of 'cultural-Jewish bolshevism' (Busbridge et al., 2020).

important economic activities and sources for future employment’ (Kast, 2025).¹⁴ Attacks on women’s and LGBTQI+ rights also disappeared from his two most recent campaigns, and in 2025, he toned down previous proposals to dismantle the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality and remove CSE from schools (Laborde, 2025; CHV Noticias, 2025). These changes may have been motivated by his 2021 defeat by socialist candidate Gabriel Boric who had a strong gender and climate agenda. However, when pressed, he insists his convictions are unchanged: that CSE and other gender issues are problematic when they are a matter of ‘ideology’ and that he remains committed to eradicating ‘all ideologies’ (Sanhueza, 2025; CHV Noticias, 2025). In his recent address to the Political Network of Values, he placed ‘extreme environmentalism’ and ‘ideological feminism’ as ‘part of a constellation of “-isms” that allegedly dominate current thinking and that ultimately seek power, division and democratic erosion’ – language which closely resembles the ‘cultural Marxism’ narrative promoted by Milei (The Clinic, 2026).¹⁵

3.2 Group B: Pragmatic resisters

This section examines Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In both these oil-dependent economies, climate action is delayist and progress towards gender equality remains limited within conservative social structures.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a fossil fuel economy led by a conservative monarchy and controlled reform agendas, placing it at the intersection of rapid modernisation and traditionalism (Al-Rasheed, 2010). Its emissions continue to increase while the economy relies primarily on oil export revenues (Climate Action Tracker, 2025c). Oil rents fund significant state-led employment for Saudi nationals, deepening reluctance towards a rapid economic transition away from oil. Economic diversification efforts and selective liberalisation coexist with authoritarian control and resistance to implementing human rights frameworks. Its approach to climate and gender issues is also apparent among its neighbours, suggesting that the competing forces of conservatism and modernisation in the Arabian Gulf may be limiting the scope of policy reforms away from deeper progressive change domestically or internationally.

Background

With the highest gross domestic product (GDP) in the Gulf region and significant oil reserves, Saudi Arabia deploys strong regional power and influence. The oil and gas sector account for roughly half of the country’s GDP, and oil provides around 60% of the government’s revenue (Callen and Alexander, 2025). Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman – the King’s son – rose to prominence in 2017 and has been widely heralded for promoting a modernising agenda, including his commitment to Vision 2030, the government’s flagship plan to diversify and transform the economy (House, 2017).

¹⁴ & ¹⁵ Translation, authors’ own.



Political leaders of Saudi Arabia on a billboard outside Samhah, Saudi Arabia, 2025.
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Saudi Arabia's gender politics

Since assuming power in 2015, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud has advanced limited gender reforms through state-led modernisation projects such as Vision 2030, emphasising women's economic participation while maintaining patriarchal legal structures – for example, limiting women's rights in child custody and inheritance, and restricting civic activism (Gause, 2019). Government-led gender reforms remain slow, offering some economic openings for women but resisting deeper transformation towards gender equality. Key reforms since 2015 include: lifting the bans on women voting, running for municipal council seats and driving; reduced restrictions on women's dress; and permission for women to attend sporting events (Altoaimy, 2018). This may have contributed to the increase in women's labour force participation, which grew from 20 to 36% between 2018 and 2025 (Interesse, 2025).

Despite these limited reforms, gender inequality still enjoys legal protection. Men have greater rights than women in matters of divorce, child custody and inheritance. Wives are required by law to obey their husbands, at risk of losing economic support from their spouses or custody of their children if they do not comply (Human Rights Watch, 2026). In 2025, a new personal status law offered greater control to women in matters of marriage, divorce and custody of children, which provided an incremental step forward to achieving the Vision 2030 modernisation and women's empowerment objectives (Equality Now, 2025). Homosexuality remains criminalised, punishable by fines, flogging, imprisonment and even the death penalty (Human Dignity Trust, 2026).

At the multilateral level, gender issues have been a significant flashpoint. While the country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2000, it entered reservations, citing potential conflict with Islamic Sharia law (Amnesty International, 2004). In 2016, Saudi Arabia denounced a draft resolution at the UN Human Rights Council that established a mandate on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, saying the resolution conflicted with Saudi Arabia's 'sacred values' (Arc International, 2016). The country recently rejected an UN General Assembly resolution on gender identity and sexual orientation, saying the terminology contradicts the country's 'history and values' (Saudi Press Agency, 2024).

Saudi Arabia remains firmly opposed to the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTQI+ rights at the multilateral level, where it is aligned with conservative states, including the Holy See (the governing body of the Catholic Church and Vatican City) and Russia, and other members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Voss, 2018). In 2020, it signed the Geneva Consensus Declaration to undermine the UN-led agenda on gender equality and specifically to oppose abortion rights. During climate negotiations in June 2025, Saudi Arabia proposed weakening gender language on 'gender mainstreaming' to 'gender perspectives' in relation to the UNFCCC (IISD, 2025). This is consistent with a broader tactic of conservative states: to contest gender equality language in negotiation processes that are not directly related to gender as a strategy to undermine both gender equality and multilateralism (Ipas and Empower, 2023; Schott, 2024).

Saudi Arabia's actions on the multilateral stage have also sent some mixed signals about how it is willing to support women's rights. As chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), it successfully negotiated the conference's Consensus Political Declaration in 2024, thus indicating some backing for the global gender equality agenda at a time of growing polarisation. At the 2025 UN High-Level Political Forum, the government stated its commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, highlighting the country's recent progress on women's economic participation (Saudi Gazette, 2025).

Saudi Arabia's climate politics

The country's climate politics are primarily framed in economic terms, focusing on sustainability as a tool for long-term resource management rather than climate justice or systemic transformation. While the country has pledged net-zero emissions by 2060 and aims to achieve 50% renewable energy by 2030, climate activists assert that Saudi Arabia has 'not implemented any policies that would substantially bring down its greenhouse gas emissions and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels' (Climate Action Tracker, 2025c). The NEOM 'smart city' development project piloted green energy investments to build sustainable cities, with huge financial investments, but it has lagged behind projected timelines for completion and not been deployed at scale (George, 2024). In 2021, Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman

announced simultaneous plans to increase its oil production (Walt, 2022). While notable political and religious leaders have spoken out in support of environmental stewardship and sustainability, these statements are often broad and lack necessary binding commitments.

In multilateral fora, the country has a mixed record, supporting some areas of climate progress and promoting renewable energy transitions, yet opposing strict language on fossil fuel phase-outs. Saudi Arabia has emphasised faith-driven environmental stewardship, showcasing its role in aligning religious dialogue with planetary sustainability goals (Saudi Press Agency, 2024). At the same time, it has also been involved in controversies involving the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with reports of attempts to influence climate science to favour fossil fuel interests dating back decades (Mathiesen, 2025). At COP, Saudi Arabia has been accused of blocking action (Friedman, 2024). For example, at COP28 in the UAE in 2023, the Saudi delegation was reported to have obstructed discussions on phasing out fossil fuels. Officials ‘flatly opposed any language in a deal that would even mention fossil fuels’ and attempted to block provisions aimed at tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030 to protect the country’s oil-dependent economy (Friedman et al., 2023). At COP30, in Belém, Brazil, in 2025, Saudi Arabia worked with other oil-producing countries to remove explicit references to a reduction of oil and gas from the official text and weaken consensus outcomes (ADHRB, 2026). It also actively opposed the conference’s gender agenda (see Section 4).

United Arab Emirates

The UAE is also a fossil fuel-reliant monarchy, which limits its progressive climate and gender commitments. Like Saudi Arabia, the UAE has a historically closed civic space (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025e). It is also characterised by religious conservatism, economic pragmatism and efforts at modernisation that result in climate change ‘delayism’ and continued resistance to progressive reforms for gender equality. As in Saudi Arabia, the UAE has undertaken top-down surface-level reforms on both gender and climate, rejecting the deeper progressive reforms that women and climate advocates demand.

The UAE, led by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan since 2022, has a governance structure which includes two consultative bodies – a Federal Supreme Council (made up of seven emirate leaders) and a Federal National Council (containing partially appointed and partially elected members) – which hold advisory powers that drive reforms and commitments. Independent activism for gender equality is limited, often taking the form of women’s organisations and clubs. Some prominent female public officials, such as Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak and Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, promote gender equality in their ministerial roles (Krause, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2026).

The UAE ratified CEDAW in 2004 but, like Saudi Arabia, entered reservations because of potential conflict with Sharia law. Despite recent legal reforms expanding women’s participation in public life, discriminatory provisions remain embedded in law and practice that include reduced penalties for violence against women (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Although the UAE has recently

strengthened domestic violence protections, equal pay laws and gender quotas for some political positions, in 2023, women could still be reported to the police by their husbands for being ‘absent’ from their homes, risking arrests or detention (Begum, 2023). Scholars point to a persistent gap between formal reform and lived equality, arguing that many gender initiatives are driven primarily by international reputational incentives rather than institutional transformation (Djankov and Lehmann, 2023). Research finds evidence of social resistance to shifting gender roles, with some men disapproving of state-led gender inclusion initiatives (Clingan, 2025). Homosexuality remains illegal, with LGBTQI+ communities criminalised and without legal protections (Human Dignity Trust, 2026).

The UAE’s position on climate action is mixed. Income from the sale of oil and gas accounts for roughly 30% of the UAE’s GDP, although it has set a target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and aims to reduce its carbon intensity by 25% by 2030 (Government of the UAE, n.d.). It has progressively strengthened its NDCs under the Paris Agreement, committing to substantial absolute emissions reductions and a long-term net-zero goal, though experts say these targets lack a clear and credible plan for implementation (Climate Action Tracker, 2024). Analysts warn that the UAE’s policies, like Saudi Arabia’s, do not reflect full alignment with a fossil fuel phase-out (ibid.).

The country’s positioning as a leader at COP28 and its advancement of its priorities was criticised by global climate action advocacy groups, who argued it used scripted talking points and avoided deeper debate about fossil fuel reduction. Observers described its approach as greenwashing and an attempt to shape climate discourse in ways that minimise the urgency of deep emissions cuts (Amnesty International, 2023). At the recent COP30 in Belém, the UAE used its role in the COP Presidencies Troika to reaffirm its leadership in multilateral climate action and partnerships in its rhetoric, emphasising collective cooperation to accelerate ambition, strengthen implementation of the Paris Agreement, and support goals such as tripling renewable energy capacity and advancing climate resilience (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025).¹⁶ Nonetheless, its participation still underscored the gap between rhetoric and action, stopping short of meaningful actions towards deep or urgent emissions cuts.

Cross-country rhetoric: competing conservative and modernist narratives

In these two countries, progress towards both gender equality and climate action is tied to a discourse of economic transformation and modernity, whereas stalling or regressing these agendas is justified through anti-western or religious argumentation. The governments’ political rhetoric on gender issues draws on a cultural and religious framing and opposition to western values. Opposition to comprehensive gender equality stokes fears that ‘western amorality’ is being imposed on women, framing ‘western values’ as inconsistent with national culture and

¹⁶ The COP Presidencies Troika is a collaboration between previous, current and next presidencies of the UNFCCC. It aims to coordinate priorities and maintain momentum between meetings. In this case, it was a partnership between the UAE (COP28), Azerbaijan (COP29) and Brazil (COP30).

religious identity. Politically powerful religious clerics in Saudi Arabia deploy interpretations of Islamic law to argue against western influence, and assert that ‘allowing women to mix with men is the root of every evil and catastrophe’ (Mokhtar, 2016). Government officials, such as Saudi Arabia’s permanent representative to the UN, concur: ‘[I]mposing others’ values and concepts inconsistent with this divine nature is completely rejected by countries whose culture, religious identity, customs and traditions are against such values and concepts’ (Saudi Press Agency, 2021).

Similar anti-western rhetoric justifies obstructing climate agendas. Government investments related to renewable energy are framed as necessary for economic transformation; that is, to prepare for inevitable resource depletion and invest in renewable technologies using a selective transition model without rapid phase out of fossil fuels (CHN, 2024; Friedman, 2024). Nonetheless, to justify obstructing meaningful progress on climate action, officials accuse western states of hypocrisy and discrimination towards non-western states. For example, Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman has openly criticised western nations for demanding a fossil fuel phase-out while neglecting their own emissions and for pushing for policies that threaten the right to energy of the population of lower-income economies, as well as low- and middle-income countries’ right to develop (The Media Line, 2023).

Leaders make occasional rhetorical attacks on science to reject the need for a fossil fuel phase-out to limit rising temperatures. In 2023, Sultan Al Jaber, the country’s Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and President of COP28, claimed that there is no science supporting the necessity of a fossil fuel phase-out to limit global warming to 1.5°C (Carrington and Stockton, 2023). Social media accounts linked to Saudi Arabia have actively promoted climate change denial and downplayed the environmental impact of fossil fuels (Tolba and Shenawy, 2025).

3.3 Group C: Selective resisters

This section spotlights the case of Türkiye, where regression in gender equality coincides with delayed climate action under conditions of democratic backsliding. It then situates India and Indonesia as cases that, though different, exhibit parallel dynamics in patterns of rhetorical commitment, uneven implementation, and nationalist framing across gender and climate agendas.

Türkiye

Türkiye is undergoing accelerating autocratisation and a focus on economic development accompanied by a de facto regression or inaction on gender and climate politics at the national level. The government directly contests gender equality progress, but its climate policies are not overtly oppositional. Conservative officials actively challenge secularist and equality-based norms, and promote narratives of traditional gender roles, complementarity of the sexes and resistance to ‘western-imposed’ values. Rollback on climate policy is evident through gradualism, delayed implementation, regulatory dilution and the prioritisation of pro-development economic agendas. At the international level, this manifests in varying degrees of opposition.



President Erdoğan speaking at the G20 meeting plenary in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2024.
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Background

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP), has dominated Turkish politics for over two decades, with support for his policies boosted by the country's 2001 economic crisis and his party's promise to drive economic stability (Yeşilada, 2023). He served as prime minister 2003–2014 and since then as the elected president. While Erdoğan initially embraced democratisation reforms, this was motivated by a strategic need to reduce the political influence of the military (Kandiyoti, 2020). Since 2014, he has focused on consolidating executive power, reshaping state institutions around a strong presidential system (Bechev, 2025).

Thus, since 2014, Türkiye has moved from being classified as a 'less liberal democracy' towards greater authoritarianism (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016). By 2025, it was marked as 'repressed' in CIVICUS scores (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025f). Human rights conditions in Türkiye have significantly deteriorated under President Erdoğan, with documented patterns of mass arrests, restrictions on free expression and erosion of judicial independence (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Erdoğan has re-introduced Islam in public life and policy-making, in contrast to the secularism of the modern nation's founder, Kemal Atatürk (1923–1938), who sought to align Türkiye with Europe through top-down, state-led reforms that initially created some openings for women (Arat, 2022).

Türkiye's gender politics under Erdoğan

President Erdoğan's trajectory on women's rights illustrates a clear shift at the national level from instrumental support for a reformist agenda to active retrenchment towards regressive policies undermining gender equality. In the early 2000s, his government introduced reforms in cooperation with women's rights organisations, largely aligned with Türkiye's bid for European Union accession. As his political base shifted and support from secular constituencies declined, Erdoğan curtailed the influence of these groups (Arat, 2022). By 2010, he had publicly rejected the principle of gender equality, which has led to gender-discriminatory policies, such as the expansion of sex-segregated schooling, constitutional and regulatory changes on women's veiling, and constraints on women's participation in the public sphere (Kandiyoti and Emanet, 2017). Restrictive views on gender equality are shared by other political parties, such as the New Welfare Party (Yeniden Refah Partisi) and the Kurdish Free Cause Party (Hüda-Par) (Letsch, 2023).¹⁷

While it continues to be a signatory to CEDAW, in 2021 Türkiye withdrew from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention). This decision prompted protests by women's groups, who saw the move as a step backwards in the face of GBV rates and femicides higher than the

17 The Free Cause Party, for instance, has called for gender segregation in schools and suggested that state services for women should only be provided by female employees, while the New Welfare Party has called for 'morals, chastity, mercy, devotion and productivity' to be strengthened through 'female role models' (Letsch, 2023).

average in Europe and other OECD countries (Aksoy, 2021). Türkiye's withdrawal was the result of 'intense lobbying efforts against the Convention' by religious conservatives, as a public opinion poll found that 84% of Turkish people opposed the move (ibid.).

Supporters of this pushback promote a narrative that the country's past gender equality commitments are incompatible with Turkish and Islamic values. Officials cited 'incompatibility with traditional Turkish values' as the reason for the country's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (Aksoy, 2021). This is also the approach used by the Diyanet (the Directorate of Religious Affairs), which has become a key means for the government to constrain women's rights through the use of conservative interpretations of Islamic legal frameworks (Sarfati, 2019). This narrative includes claims that gender equality is incompatible with biology.

Turkish officials have attacked international commitments on the basis that they are unnecessary and morally corrupt. The government claimed that protections for women under the Istanbul Convention were 'already guaranteed' in national laws (Aksoy, 2021). The Turkish Directorate of Communications said that the Convention was 'hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality' (Çalı and Helfer, 2022).

Türkiye's climate politics under Erdoğan

Türkiye's economy, one of the world's largest emerging markets, is highly dependent on fossil fuels, which undermines its climate ambitions (Credit Agricole Group, n.d.). To date, Türkiye holds an ongoing commitment to increase fossil fuel and gas production, with the intention to become Europe's gas hub and a key producer of coal-fired electricity (Novikau and Muhasilović, 2023). Nonetheless, at the national level, Erdoğan's government has committed to emissions reductions and renewable energy commitments under its 2013 Renewable Energy Support Mechanism (Climate Action Tracker, 2023). In September 2021, after ratifying the Paris Agreement, President Erdoğan announced the 2053 Net Zero Goal, now the country's flagship climate commitment (Farand and Lo, 2021). However, implementation of the 2013 mechanism has fallen short of the structural transformation required, such as labour-market restructuring, new taxes and substantial external financial support (ibid.). Türkiye's Net Zero Goal has also been criticised for not being ambitious nor specific enough – it plans for greenhouse emissions to grow until 2038 and does not include a coal phase-out date (Climate Action Tracker, 2025b). The new 2025 Climate Law No. 7552 lays the foundations to make the country's NDCs legally binding (International Carbon Action Partnership, 2025).

Türkiye will host the COP31 summit in November 2026. It ratified the Paris Agreement in 2021 as a signal of cooperation while the country sought recognition as a developing country eligible for climate finance. It paired the move with its 2053 net-zero pledge and a discourse emphasising equity, differentiated responsibility and the right to development (Kucukgocmen, 2021). This positioning has enabled Turkish officials to frame the country as simultaneously a responsible global actor and a state constrained by structural inequalities in the international system. Its NDCs reflect this dual

posture: Türkiye's updated pledge commits to a 41% reduction in current levels of emissions by 2030, a target it is on track to meet, but which still permits absolute emissions to rise substantially, indicating a gradual rather than transformative transition (Climate Action Tracker, 2025b).

India

Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in 2015 as a charismatic, pro-development leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). His government advances a political project to dismantle the avowed secularism of post-Independence India and replace it with Hindu majoritarianism instead (Chandhoke, 2019). Civic space in India is now ranked as 'repressed' in CIVICUS scores (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025g). India continues to decline in Freedom House democracy rankings; in 2024, it scored 63/100, or 'partly free' (Freedom House, 2025). Its decline has been described as a descent into electoral autocracy and a rise in authoritarianism enabled through exploiting features of the constitution that allow for a concentration in executive power (Singh, 2023).

Scholars observe a 'seismic backlash' for women's rights in India under Prime Minister Modi, including visible pushbacks against the rights of Muslim women, women domestic workers and women's organising (Khan and Sharp, 2025). Women's rights groups have also denounced increased policing of women's behaviour in public spaces (such as opposing mixed-gender gatherings of 'westernised' celebrations, arguing these could lead to 'obscenity and vulgarity') (Droila, 2025). Advocates condemn the new proposed 2026 Transgender Persons Amendment Bill that redefines transgender rights, introducing new administrative burdens to obtaining identity cards and narrowing the definition of a transgender person in violation of the principle of self-identification which was recognised by the superior judiciary (Drishti IAS, 2026).

Modi casts himself as a defender of the rights of Muslim women, saving them from the men in their own community whom his government has targeted (Khan and Sharp, 2025). In the face of record-high levels of violence against women, Modi has called for a 'change in the mentality' towards women and to 'get rid of everything' that 'humiliates women' in everyday life (Pandit, 2022). However, he is criticised as a 'false crusader' for women's rights (Ashraf, 2018) and for failing to criminalise marital rape, with BJP voices claiming that doing so 'cannot be suitably applied in the Indian context' (Rana, 2015). Powerful BJP affiliate youth and community organisations generally promote traditional gender roles and reject LGBTQI+ rights agendas (Singh and Parihar, 2024; Verma, 2023).

The Indian Government's position in multilateral fora on gender issues has been progressive in certain areas and conservative in others. While it generally supports gender equality instruments, it often enters reservations on clauses perceived as conflicting with personal laws or cultural practices, particularly around marriage, inheritance and family law (Shritha, 2023). In July 2019, India abstained from a vote in the UN Human Rights Council on a resolution to renew the mandate of the Independent Expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based

on sexual orientation and identity (Mohan, 2019). UN human rights experts have expressed concern over India's low response rate to their communications and requests for country visits. India participates in debates on women's rights but often emphasises sovereignty and non-interference, framing gender issues in line with cultural specificity (OHCHR, 2024a).

The government adopts ambitious climate commitments but has had inconsistent policy follow-through. Prime Minister Modi has framed climate action as a moral imperative, promoted solar expansion, and pledged 500 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and energy independence by 2047 (Antholis, 2014; PTI, 2023). Yet, budgetary support for climate institutions has declined, and regulatory protections have been weakened, including the relaxation of environmental requirements for new projects (Chaturvedi, 2023).¹⁸

Indonesia

Under the government of President Prabowo Subianto, a former military official who was elected in 2024, Indonesia's rankings on democracy scorecards have been declining, though its overall democratic strength is slightly stronger. Its CIVICUS ranking on civic freedom is 'obstructed' (a better ranking on the scorecard than the more severely restricted ranking of 'repressed') (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025b). In 2025, Jakarta saw large-scale protests over rising living costs and political corruption, driving heavy-handed security force responses (Al Jazeera, 2025). These developments have contributed Indonesia being placed on the CIVICUS 'watchlist' as a country of concern for civic freedoms in 2025 (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025b).

Indonesian political parties hold ambivalent views on gender equality issues, but public politics are generally less overtly anti-feminist than in India and Türkiye. President Subianto's right-wing nationalist Great Indonesia Movement (Gerindra) Party (Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya) has not articulated strong positions on women's rights. The government has upheld the state's existing commitments, such as under the CEDAW Convention and maintained some notable domestic protections for women, such as the 2022 Sexual Violence Crime Act. However, it has enforced mandatory hijab laws, in place since 2001, which have led to reports of restrictions on women's access to work and to education (Human Rights Watch, 2025). In contrast, the opposition centre-left Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan) rhetorically endorses gender equality, promotes women's leadership and rejects most religious-based regional regulations (outside the semi-autonomous province of Aceh) (Nurfebriansyah et al., 2025).

At the multilateral level, Indonesia is often seen as a moderate Muslim leader on gender issues. Within the OIC, Indonesia has appealed to member states to interpret women's rights under Islam

18 Funding for the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change in India was cut by an estimated 50% following Modi's election, and the Green India Mission, a key climate programme under the National Action Plan for Climate Change, saw a 41% drop in budgetary allocation in the 2022–2023 revised budget compared with the original estimate (PRS, 2024).

and to ensure implementation is coherent with both religious and cultural contexts (UNA, 2023). During the Universal Periodic Review of Indonesia at the Human Rights Council, it ‘noted’ but did not fully commit to legal reforms to prohibit discriminatory practices targeting LGBTQI+ people (UN Office Geneva, 2023). Indonesian officials claimed the recommendations were not a fair reflection of global consensus, declaring that those related to LGBTQI+ groups were not linked to any ‘internationally accepted laws, rules, norms or principles on this particular issue’ (ibid.) and proposals for protections for LGBTQI+ persons ‘needed to be carefully weighed against the State’s religious and cultural values’ (OHCHR, 2024b). Indonesia has also joined other states in the OIC in supporting restrictive gender language in resolutions that align with the positions of powerful states, such as the US and Russia, opposed to the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights (Khan and Michalko, 2026).

The government has pledged ambitious climate goals, but implementation is constrained by the country’s dependence on thermal coal exports which sustain provincial governments. Indonesia’s NDC pledges emissions cuts of 31.9% unconditionally and up to 43.2% conditional on international support, meaning that deeper reductions will rely on foreign finance, technology transfer and capacity-building (Climate Action Tracker, n.d.). Its strategy leans heavily on land-sector measures rather than a wholesale transformation of energy and industry (World Bank Group, 2023). The Climate Change Bill has been pending since 2022 because of concerns that the climate policy stalls economic growth, even as climate activists call for an overhaul of the regulatory landscape (Patra, 2025). Monopolistic control by the state-owned electricity company, restrictive procurement rules and weak incentives for renewable energy investment make deeper policy changes difficult (Lakshmi, 2025; IEEFA, 2024).

Indonesia’s international climate diplomacy exhibits the same resistance to substantial implementation and reforms. The government has long supported common-but-differentiated responsibilities, climate justice and consensus-based multilateralism, hosting COP13 in Bali in 2007 and contributing to major negotiation pathways.¹⁹ Yet, it has simultaneously resisted accelerated fossil fuel phase-outs at the G20 and retreated from the Glasgow deforestation pledge (Ungku and Widiyanto, 2021; Appy, 2024). At the COP26 in 2021, Jakarta initially signed the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use, but the following day, senior ministers publicly walked back the pledge (SBS News, 2021). During Indonesia’s 2022 G20 presidency, it pushed back against proposals for accelerated fossil fuel phase-outs, alongside India and China, aiming to weaken the language on fossil fuel reduction (Government of Indonesia, 2022; Warren, 2022).

19 ‘Common-but-differentiated responsibilities’ is a framework underpinned by the principle that all countries share responsibility for addressing climate change, but that wealthier countries should take greater action because they have historically contributed more greenhouse gas emissions and have greater capacity to respond.

Cross-country rhetoric: anti-western, development and religious narratives

When officials from the countries discussed in this section express explicit opposition to either gender or climate action, they use anti-western critiques and religious narratives in defence of pursuing national development priorities.

Official rhetoric related to climate invokes the hypocrisy and double standards of western pressures, pointing to their colonial legacies and advanced industrialisation. Türkiye positions itself as a champion of global climate justice while simultaneously resisting domestic climate action as foreign-influenced, elitist or destabilising. At COP28, Erdoğan framed his commitments to reducing emissions under the premise that Türkiye bears lower responsibilities than other nations (Republic of Türkiye, 2023). Environmental activists in Türkiye have been cast as westernised, anti-Islamic or hostile to national development, tropes that mirror those deployed against gender-equality advocates (Özen, 2015). Indonesian officials frame international climate pressure as unjust or unfair, invoking colonial legacies, unequal emissions burdens and western inconsistency (Puspawardhani, 2025; France 24, 2021). At the UN, India's External Affairs Minister emphasised India's role as 'the voice of the Global South', rejecting what he described as western double standards and political interference (Ministry of External Affairs India, 2025). This framing has reinforced scepticism towards both environmental and gender activism, even when such movements have strong domestic roots.

The rhetoric used to undermine gender equality progress relies on similar argumentation against the imposition of western agendas with an added defense that is framed in cultural or religious essentialist terms. In Indonesia, opposition to LGBTQI+ rights has been driven by both anti-western and hardline Islamic sentiment over the past decade (Radics, 2025). Modi uses protectionist and moral framing to justify his policies affecting women and girls (Chacko, 2020). Erdoğan rejects the principle of gender equality, instead affirming the state's embrace of 'gender complementarity', essentialising the differences between women and men (Kandiyoti and Emanet, 2017) – a view that is shared by the religious establishment who support his government.

4 Connecting the dots: three conditions that enable the convergence

This section draws out three enabling conditions which underpin the current, and possibly future, connections between anti-gender and anti-climate politics. In authoritarian and autocratising contexts, restrictions on civic space are fundamental to stifling progress on both agendas and allowing for regression. The power of ideologies, political as well as economic, underpin narratives that justify undermining human rights and that mobilise votes through polarisation. And, finally, emerging transnational alliances shaped by far-right conservative groups or regional blocks enable coordinated multilateral action towards an explicit and converging anti-climate and anti-gender policy agenda.

4.1 Civic space restrictions

All the governments reviewed in this working paper ensure that civic space is severely restricted or declining, across both open and closed autocracies. This restriction threatens the very survival of activism to protect the environment, address climate change, and advance gender equality and LGBTQI+ rights. In Türkiye, India and Indonesia (Group C), civic space has sharply declined as democracy weakens. Erdoğan's government has increasingly repressed environmental and climate activists (Jones and Youngs, 2024). In India, the 2021 arrest of Disha Ravi on sedition charges for supporting farmers' protests became emblematic of the government's clampdown on civic space, raising particular concern over the targeting of young women activists (CIVICUS Monitor, 2019). Modi has wielded restrictive legislation to silence activists, journalists and those who criticise the government, alongside tactics of harassment and enhanced restrictions on foreign funding for CSOs (CIVICUS Monitor, 2024). In Indonesia, criminalisation, arbitrary arrests and excessive force against activists and journalists are underway, while military law is being reviewed to expand the military's influence over civilian life (CIVICUS Monitor, 2025c).

Across both Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Group B), civic space remains tightly constrained, with a 'zero-tolerance' policy to any form of independent activism (including online activism). Human rights defenders constantly face travel bans, arbitrary detention and unfair trials leading to lengthy prison terms (Amnesty International, 2024). Women's rights activists, such as Loujain al-Hathloul, who advocated for women's rights including their right to drive, have been made political prisoners (Cerilo, 2020; Pan and Siegal, 2020).

Argentina, Brazil and Chile (Group A) tell a similar story. Milei has constrained people's right to freedom of expression and assembly through an anti-protest protocol that forbids the blocking of roads and authorises the use of force, tear gas and rubber bullets, among other measures –

affecting the widespread protests from feminist, LGBTQI+ and environmental groups in response to his policies (AnRed, 2023; Croci, 2025; Dejusticia, 2025). President Kast appears to be following the same path, as one of his first actions in government was to pardon members of the police and military who were found guilty of violence against protesters in 2019 (Sanhueza, 2026).

Bolsonaro restricted civic space in Brazil, to further a broader agenda of militarisation, setting the precedent for Milei and Kast. His government was openly hostile towards activists and the press, using routine verbal attacks and judicial harassment (Duchiade, 2023). He was denounced to the International Criminal Court for environmental crimes and crimes against humanity, including violence against environmental defenders (Phillips, 2021). His Executive Decree No. 870 increased government oversight and tight monitoring of both international and domestic CSOs, and restricted funding for human rights, LGBTQI+ rights and environmental CSOs (ibid.).

The normative commitment and support to some climate and gender action at the national and multilateral levels in Group B and C countries is undermined by the repression of activists at home. In the case of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, this ensures reforms are symbolic rather than structural. Reforms only proceed to the extent that they align with modernisation priorities and stall when they challenge entrenched political or religious authority.

Group A countries demonstrate how civic space constraints are instrumental to advancing extreme market deregulation, simultaneously advancing the activity of extractive industries and the dismantling of the welfare state (Dejusticia, 2025). In Argentina, this means that hard-won rights, protections and commitments in both gender and climate are more likely to be backtracked. However, as the Brazilian experience shows, this is not a given, as feminist movements, Indigenous women's groups and human rights organisations played a critical role in preventing a full-scale rollback of women's rights during Bolsonaro's administration (Sardenberg et al., 2024).

To summarise, the capacity of civil society to demand climate and/or gender action is hindered to varying degrees across the countries examined in this working paper. Declines in civic space create environments in which both women's rights and climate activism face heightened risk, surveillance, delegitimisation and decreasing opportunities to build coalitions and hold government accountable. Despite these challenges, environmental and feminist activism persists, albeit less so in the Arabian Gulf countries discussed.

4.2 Economic and political ideology

Ideology, both economic and political, enables the anti-gender and anti-climate politics described above. In Group A countries, economic ideology enables the convergence of these politics. As discussed in Section 3.1, Milei subscribes to libertarian and anarcho-capitalist thought and thus he seeks to dismantle the Argentinian welfare state – an institution built on the principle that government intervention is necessary to mitigate market failures and resulting social inequities

(Barr, 2020) – as a way of restoring the country’s economy. He argues that the size of the state’s bureaucracy is responsible for the country’s soaring debt, as ‘rights represent a cost’ (Pérez and Aymá, 2024).²⁰ He believes that previous Justicialist governments have pushed the country into the current insolvency crisis (ibid.).²¹ The dismantling of gender and climate institutions and policies is thus justified to redress market failures and promote economic recovery.

As in Argentina, Bolsonaro’s and Kast’s campaigns focused on economic recovery and, to achieve this, proposed the reduction of public spending by reducing state presence and social spending to a minimum. Bolsonaro advocated for a liberal state that does not ‘interfere with people’s private lives’ and whose economic growth is not limited by state laws or regulations (for example, through environmental policies and climate commitments that allegedly prevented the country from tapping into the wealth of its natural resources) (Rocha, 2021; Olmeda, 2023). Kast campaigned for freer markets, arguing that the state’s role should be limited to the guarantee of individual freedom and property rights, and not to solve gender and climate issues (Iamamoto et al., 2023; Maitino and Vieira, 2024).

Nationalist, anti-establishment and anti-globalist political ideology also supports the gender-regressive and climate denialist agendas in Group A countries. Bolsonaro claimed to be ‘rescuing Brazil from decline’ – that is, both from economic stagnation and the moral corruption caused by ‘gender ideology’. Kast speaks of a similar project of national restoration linked, among other issues, to the protection of traditional values, the reduction of state power in the private sphere and economic growth (Rojas, 2024; Zanotti et al., 2025). Milei’s vision of national restoration focuses on ‘rescuing’ Argentina from collectivist ideals – which include environmental protection, climate action and gender equality – and the reinstatement of ‘liberal values’ (i.e. life, freedom and property) (Sky News Australia, 2023).

This nationalism leads to suspicion of international cooperation. Bolsonaro referred to both ‘gender ideology’ and the Paris Agreement as de facto foreign impositions that go against national values, and Marxist inventions or communist plots to undermine Brazil’s sovereignty (Queiroz-Sten et al., 2023; von Behr, 2023). Milei and Kast exhibit an anti-globalist stance when they associate gender equality and climate action (and human rights, more broadly) with so-called ‘woke’ agendas that stem from ‘left-dominated’ international fora or from a renewed Marxist threat (UN, 2024; WEF, 2024; The Clinic, 2026).²²

All three leaders came to power through newly formed parties, positioning themselves as political outsiders to a self-interested, corrupt and inept establishment. Milei capitalised on the failure

20 Translation, authors’ own.

21 Translation, authors’ own.

22 Kast frames ‘woke ideology’ as the new Marxist agenda, arguing that, after the failure of economic Marxism, it shifted into the cultural arena; this narrative is a variation of the cultural Marxism conspiracy theory (Lambertucci, 2023; Rivas Molina, 2023). Milei has also referred to ‘woke ideology’ as a ‘cancer’, a ‘mental virus’ and ‘as a capital sin that has become virtue’ (WEF, 2025; Evangelical Focus, 2025).

of successive left- and right-wing governments to resolve Argentina's chronic economic crises, tapping into a historical mistrust of traditional political actors in order to appeal to disillusioned electorates (Rojas, 2024). Bolsonaro leveraged corruption scandals involving state-owned companies, while Kast exploited concerns over rising insecurity and immigration, framing both as failures of both the traditional left and right (Olmeda, 2023; Montes, 2025).

Their opposition to gender and climate action boosts their anti-establishment credentials, distancing them from mainstream domestic politics deemed disconnected from ordinary people and from what they term '*international elite concerns*' (Rocha, 2021: 437 (*italics in original*); Zanotti et al., 2025). For example, Milei argues that the Justicialist Party's approach of 'human rights as state policy' was used by the political establishment to expand the state's bureaucracy for their own benefit (Pérez and Aymá, 2024). Bolsonaro characterised environmental and gender concerns as the obsessions of out-of-touch elites (Rocha, 2021).

Bolsonaro's anti-gender and climate denialist agenda was heightened by his efforts to re-militarise Brazil. This included 'restoring social order', increasing control of the military over key resources, and establishing military discipline as an 'antidote' to the alleged moral decadence brought about by leftist politics (*ibid.*).²³ Kast has shown a similar trend towards re-militarisation (Laborde, 2026c).

The economic and political ideologies of Group A governments demonstrate how anti-gender and anti-climate politics work together, consistent with existing literature that shows how economic prosperity correlates with more liberal attitudes (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005; Friedman, 2005; Davis and Knauss, 2013). Declining economic conditions create fertile ground for connecting the two political agendas. They support a transition to highly unregulated neoliberal economies, while the dismantling of the welfare state results in the economic burden shifting to the private sphere, reinforcing traditional gender roles to increase women's unpaid work (Bhattacharya, 2017; Mies and Federici, 2022). This strategy is particularly effective in electoral campaigns conducted during periods of rising inequality, as voters become more susceptible to the scapegoating of marginalised groups and resist economic transitions that threaten their immediate livelihoods (Darian-Smith, 2023; Proaño et al., 2024).

In Group B countries, economic and political ideology also motivates the convergence of anti-climate and anti-gender politics, as indicated by modernisation and anti-western rhetoric discussed in Section 3.2.

23 In September 2025, he received a 27-year sentence for planning and attempting a military coup d'état (Gortazar, 2025).

4.3 Transnational alignments

Evidence of convergence to block or regress progress on gender and climate is most apparent at the international level.

First, far-right movements are shaping transnational alignments on these issues. There is a reciprocal personal endorsement between Milei, Bolsonaro and Kast and other far-right movements across the Americas and Europe (Forti, 2024). Bolsonaro, while president, openly declared himself a fan of Donald Trump (Olmeda, 2023), while Trump recently backed Milei before the country's mid-term elections (Rogerio, 2025). Their rhetoric and policy often mirror one another, attesting to deep transnational linkages (Merke and Doval, 2024; Neto, 2024; Ramos et al., 2025). Kast made these connections explicit following Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration, declaring: 'Our ideas already won – they won in the United States, they won in Italy, and they won in Argentina' (Bubola, 2025). In these networks, climate denialist and anti-gender think tanks and organisations – such as the Heritage Foundation, the Alliance Defending Freedom, the Heartland Institute, CitizenGO, the Conservative Political Action Conference and the Disenso Foundation, among others – work alongside conservative political and economic think tanks, such as the Atlas Network (Forti, 2024; Ramos et al., 2025; Sethi, 2025; Narayanaswamy and McEwen, 2026).²⁴

Second, intergovernmental organisations support one another to reinforce their positions. The OIC includes the Arabian Gulf States and Indonesia, discussed here in terms of its global positions that challenge progressive norms. The OIC supports climate delayist positions, by promoting aid and capacity-building over emissions cuts and an economic transition away from fossil fuels, reflecting the economic drivers of its powerful member states (OIC IPHRC, 2019). Many OIC member states (e.g. Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Indonesia) have signed the Geneva Consensus Declaration, in violation of some of their own national commitments to sexual and reproductive health (Institute for Women's Health, 2025). Such alternative multilateral frameworks reflect scepticism towards what is perceived to be a western feminist agenda and represent an effort to reshape global norms (Jære, 2024).

Third, state positions overlap to impede progress on both gender and climate at the UN. States are aligning to stall or roll back progress on human rights, which includes gender commitments in climate negotiations (Craft et al., 2025; Khan and Michalko, 2026). Argentina, Brazil (during Bolsonaro's term in office), Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Indonesia have shared similar positions to the Holy See, Russia, Egypt, Iran, Paraguay, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to demand that 'gender' be replaced with 'biological sex' in the agreements of COP29 and COP30

24 CitizenGO supported Kast's campaigns and Kast has served as President of the Political Network for Values, one of the more important anti-gender global networks (Lamas, 2025). In the past, the Global Climate Coalition (1989–2002) supported by oil, coal and gas companies, produced research questioning the scientific consensus on climate change and emphasising catastrophic economic losses (Ervin, 2024).

(CHN, 2024; Khosravi and Cano Prentice, 2025; Hashem et al., 2022). In doing so, governments instrumentalise COP as a forum to block or roll back the political recognition of non-binary and trans people and to block the allocation of resources to address gender inequalities. At the same time, contesting the gender agenda serves as a climate delayist strategy to block or stall progress and ambition on climate commitments (Farand, 2025).

In gender-related negotiations, the outcomes are more mixed. For example, at the Human Rights Council, most states who are members of the OIC or the Arab Group supported Argentina to oppose ‘woke ideology’, specifically language related to sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTQI+ rights that Christian conservative groups also oppose (Khan and Michalko, 2026). Although Saudi Arabia successfully chaired the CSW conference in 2025, it abstained from voting for the agreed conclusions at CSW70, which incorporated substantial references to the need to address gender and climate as interconnected issues (CSW, 2026).



Women take part in the 9th Global Climate Strike in Besiktas, Türkiye, 2022. ©Kadir Guney/Shutterstock.com

5 Implications for future research

This working paper offers an indicative landscape of how the politics opposed to both climate action and gender equality intersect in eight countries. It finds that these countries can be categorised in three groups depending on their degree of opposition to both agendas, at the national and international levels, and the rhetoric they use to oppose them. It also finds that there are three enabling conditions bringing them together: civic space restrictions, economic or political ideology, and transnational politics. The identification of these conditions lays the groundwork for future research into how these dynamics intersect with other factors which drive or accelerate anti-climate and anti-gender politics – and for strategies that might help counter them to protect and advance climate and gender justice.

Key areas for future research include the following:

1. Noting that resistance to gender equality and climate action agendas may not explicitly converge in all countries, feminist and climate movements may wish to identify opportunities where collaboration can enhance their claims and reduce political risk in the context of closing civic spaces. Evidence is required to support these movements by deepening their understanding of the convergence between these agendas in their own contexts.
2. Effective responses require evidence on public perceptions and values at the national and local levels. Research must ask how people's values and norms resonate with political momentum that is authoritarian and resistant to climate and gender action. Based on this evidence of public support, research should explore how movements can develop narratives to counter this trend while remaining sensitive to primary public concerns in different political contexts.
3. Empirical research should identify how far-right and authoritarian agendas are shaping converging politics. This will inform an emerging global analysis of the phenomenon and the interconnected regional patterns.

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4 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA, UK

+44 (0)20 7922 0300
info@odi.org

odi.org
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