

[Project 2025](#) favors authoritarian presidential rule. It also wants to destroy environmental regulation, especially climate law. That's not a coincidence. The combination of authoritarianism, extreme conservative ideology, and anti-environmentalism is common globally, not just in U.S. politics.

There's no logical connection between a belief in authoritarian government, upholding traditional hierarchies, and views about protecting the environment or the reality of climate change. Thus, the reasons must relate to psychology or political science, not philosophy.

In terms of psychology, there is a [clear correlation](#) between rightwing beliefs and anti-environmental attitudes. The psychology behind this connection is not entirely clear, but studies provide some clues. Researchers have found [links](#) between two psychological dispositions and hostility to environmental protection. One attitude is called social dominance orientation (SDO) and involves a desire to maintain a hierarchical society. People with this attitude tend to agree with statements like "To get ahead in life, it is sometimes okay to step on other groups." They may favor dominance over nature or the use of nature to favor one's own group over others. A related attitude is called right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). Authoritarians tend to agree with statements like "Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fibre and traditional beliefs." They may view environmentalists as posing a threat to society. Those who reject environmental protection see the harms as falling on others of lower status and become more likely to reject social equality generally. This research is suggestive, but my impression is that there is a lot we still don't know about political psychology.

Whatever the psychology involved, the connection between rightwing populism and anti-environmentalism is not just an American phenomenon. You only need to look at leaders such as Bolsonaro in Brazil and Orban in Hungary to see this. Rightwing populists across Europe oppose climate action. As one [example](#), the successful populist leader in the Netherlands "said that climate action was an 'unaffordable madness' and that - once in office - the party would put the national climate law and the Paris Agreement 'straight through the shredder.'"

Psychology may explain some of the connection between authoritarianism and anti-environmentalism, but political science may also have something to say about it. In many countries, including the U.S, oil is one part of the answer. Petrostates tend to suffer from corruption and are prone to authoritarianism - something economists

call the “resource curse” because of the way that being rich in natural resources can actually hinder a country’s progress. The windfall component of oil industry profits – the part that comes from the scarcity of a natural resource or price-fixing by OPEC – means the industry has a lot of money to throw around to reward its political allies.

Our [previous President](#) is not the only one to celebrate oil and gas as the golden road to national wealth. This economic strategy is fundamentally based on the luck of geography rather than innovation, manufacturing, or having a capable, well-motivated workforce. That makes high-quality government a low priority – reflected in the Project 2025 and the [America First Agenda](#)’s desire to [replace](#) government professionals with ideological presidential lackeys.

Other factors may also be relevant. Rightwing authoritarians enjoy support from various quarters. But they tend to have the strongest support in rural areas, where jobs in extractive industries are important, and among the less educated, who are less likely to be aware of climate science. In addition, they offer their followers social stability, which is connected to favoring established industries and technologies. Rightwing authoritarians are hostile to higher education, as they are to any source of independent thinking outside their control. Science of all kinds is suspect because of its academic roots and its reliance on free inquiry rather than authority as the source of knowledge. Finally, even more than the rest of us, authoritarians tend to think that anything the other side believes is necessarily wrong, and liberals tend to favor environmental protection.

There’s a lot of room for research on the anti-environmentalism, anti-democracy link. Given the existence of this link, there is a sense in which environmental work and democracy work are themselves inseparable.