

Trump administration 2's measures against science: What are the consequences for climate security?

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Since taking office, the Trump administration has restricted scientific information through data deletion, budget cuts and layoffs, particularly in climate science. These measures weaken the U.S.'s ability to anticipate environmental risks, undermine scientific cooperation and marginalize climate issues in security strategies.

On March 7, 2025, scientists and activists gathered in dozens of cities across the United States and Europe under the banner of the “Stand Up for Science” movement. In France, demonstrations took place in at least 24 cities, bringing together nearly 10 000 participants, including 3,000 in Paris. A press conference was held at the Collège de France, followed by a series of conferences at the Jussieu campus and a march through the Latin Quarter. These mobilizations respond to one of the many manifestations of the authoritarian shift taken by the American administration: a political strategy aimed at restricting the production of information and access to it, seeking to dismantle certain scientific activities. Three fields of research have been particularly targeted: health sciences, climate sciences, and certain branches of social sciences, especially research dedicated to social equity and gender issues. Among the most significant actions is the deletion of 8,000 official web pages, resulting in the disappearance of critical scientific data, including information on public health, climate change and biodiversity from government websites. This brief examines the impact of these measures on climate security. These actions risk not only compromising the United States' ability to anticipate security threats linked to climate change within its own territory, but also risk weakening international mitigation and adaptation policies by reducing their capacity. They contribute to the marginalization of climate issues in European strategic and security thinking as well.

In this context, researchers, now regarded as a form of political opposition, have been directly targeted. On the one hand, they have faced intimidation tactics, such as the forced entry of the Department of Government Ethics (DOGE) into the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) headquarters in February. On the other hand, discrediting narratives have emerged to justify institutional dismantling strategies: Trump has labeled institutions such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “biased,” “ineffective” or “antibusiness.” For instance, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin has recommended that the White House revoke the “Endangerment Finding,” which enables the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this, the Trump administration is reportedly considering conducting a critical review of national and international climate reports and recruiting researchers approved by the White House to produce a National Climate Assessment based on partisan research and industry-sponsored studies. Furthermore, the administration has initiated massive layoffs. NOAA has lost 10% of its 12 000 employees, jeopardizing weather forecasting, climate modeling and ocean monitoring activities. Cities particularly affected by these layoffs include Miami, Boston, Houston, and Cheyenne, where some offices have seen personnel reductions exceeding 30%. This staff reduction, occurring at the beginning of tornado season, raises serious

concerns about the ability of NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) to provide accurate forecasts and real-time alerts. According to the scientific community, these layoffs could compromise public safety and disaster preparedness.

Additionally, these measures have taken the form of budget cuts specifically targeting the institutions, projects and research grants in the aforementioned three fields. The Environmental Protection Agency has been a primary target. The NSF – the principal agency financing fundamental research in the US – has announced that it will no longer fund research projects containing words such as “women,” “inclusion,” “diversity,” “race,” “historically,” “bias,” or “institutional.” This move is part of a broader directive against DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) initiatives and, more generally, against the social sciences and their critical analyses of social facts. Out of a sample of 10,000 projects funded by the NSF, 1,200 are reported to contain one or more now-prohibited words. Beyond the immediate impact on knowledge production and dissemination, these policies have severe consequences for the future of scientific research. The layoffs have primarily targeted early-career researchers, including tenure-track faculty and postdoctoral scholars. Moreover, due to the uncertainty surrounding scientific research funding under the Trump administration, several universities have suspended or withdrawn PhD admissions. This situation risks pushing many researchers toward career changes, ultimately threatening the renewal of expertise in health, climate and social sciences.

These actions are not merely part of a cost-cutting or budget-optimization strategy; they reflect a broader political agenda centered on controlling and erasing information as part of an authoritarian shift in the U.S. government. Scientists are increasingly perceived as political opponents. Beyond the implications for academic freedom, these policies have direct repercussions on climate security. By reducing research and forecasting capabilities, they hinder the United States' ability to address domestic climate challenges while also affecting its role in managing international climate crises. For years, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has recognized climate change as a “threat multiplier,” emphasizing its detrimental effects on military capabilities, deployment conditions and its potential to exacerbate existing conflicts. Budget cuts to the Minerva initiative, a social science research program focused on national security – suggest a regression in this regard. Many researchers

studying topics such as violent extremism, misinformation and climate change effects have had their funding canceled. Some fear that this decision marks the end of the program, which would be a significant loss for social science research and for the ability of the United States to anticipate security threats related to censored topics, including climate change. Furthermore, some policymakers have already expressed concerns about the climate adaptation of several military bases in Northern Virginia, as some projects are awaiting federal funding that may never materialize.

This situation affects not only U.S. climate security but also global climate security, as it involves the world's leading scientific power, whose climate research activities are being curtailed. Indeed, the Trump administration has, for the second time, initiated the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The American delegation to the IPCC has been dissolved, and NOAA scientists have been ordered to cease all contact with their foreign counterparts. As a result, international climate policies are suffering from the scientific, technical, financial, and diplomatic disengagement of the United States, which is likely to cause significant delays.

Finally, the U.S. administration's stance on scientific research appears to be reinforcing the rise of anti-science movements in Europe and France, where some conservative parties and media outlets are questioning the role of scientific and environmental expertise in public decision-making. The risk here is a reduction in European states' ability to implement adaptation and mitigation strategies based on scientific knowledge, leading to the further marginalization of climate issues in strategic and security thinking. In an interview with Le Monde on March 12, European Commission Vice President Teresa Ribera reiterated the critical link between environmental and security concerns, stating: “If we do not ensure climate security, security in Europe will be impossible.” ■

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