

**DYNAMICS OF THE CLIMATE POLICY OF THE USA AT THE END OF THE XX –  
BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY**  
**ДИНАМІКА КЛІМАТИЧНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ США В КІНЦІ XX – ПОЧАТКУ XXI**  
**СТОЛІТТЯ**

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***Abstract.** The article notes that American climate policy, starting from the end of the 20th century, is characterized by cyclicity, which is caused by the opposition of republican and democratic party forces. In the opinion of the author, the greatest contrast appeared during the presidency of D. Trump, whose climate policy was a departure from the political priorities and goals of the previous administration of B. Obama. While President Obama's environmental agenda prioritized reducing carbon emissions through the use of renewable energy to preserve the environment for future generations, the Trump administration's policies envisioned achieving US energy independence based on the use of fossil fuels, for which many environmental regulations were repealed. Trump's climate policy has been defined by denying the consensus of the majority of scientists that climate change is caused by anthropogenic factors and will have catastrophic consequences, and that carbon dioxide is the main driver of climate change, and the decisions made have slowed down or deprioritized climate action. After the victory of Democrat D. Biden, adaptation and mitigation of the consequences of global climate change became one of the main components of his foreign and domestic policy. The author shows that despite the different views of Republicans and Democrats regarding the goals and tools of climate policy implementation at the national and regional levels, both political forces appealed to the protection of the country's national interests.*

**Keywords:** global climate change, climate communications, climate policy, USA.

***Анотація.** В статті зазначається, що американська кліматична політика, починаючи з кінця XX ст. характеризується циклічністю, яка зумовлена протистоянням республіканських та демократичних партійних сил. Найбільший контраст на думку автора проявився під час президентства Д.Трампа, кліматична політика якого представляла собою*

відхід від політичних пріоритетів і цілей попередньої адміністрації Б.Обами. У той час, як екологічний порядок денний президента Обами ставив пріоритетом скорочення викидів вуглецю за рахунок використання відновлюваної енергії з метою збереження навколишнього середовища для майбутніх поколінь, політика адміністрації Трампа передбачала досягнення енергетичної незалежності США на основі використання викопного палива, для чого було скасовано багато екологічних норм. Кліматична політика Трампа визначалась запереченням консенсусу більшості вчених про те, що зміна клімату спричинена антропогенним чинником та матиме катастрофічні наслідки, а також про те, що вуглекислий газ є основним фактором зміни клімату, а рішення, що приймалися уповільнювали або депріоритизували кліматичні заходи. Після перемоги демократа Д.Байдена, адаптація та пом'якшення наслідків глобальної зміни клімату стали одними з основних складових його зовнішньої та внутрішньої політики. Автор показує, що незважаючи на різні погляди республіканців і демократів щодо цілей та інструментів реалізації кліматичної політики на національному та регіональному рівні, обидві політичні сили апелювали до захисту національних інтересів країни.

**Ключові слова:** глобальні зміни клімату, кліматичні комунікації, кліматична політика, США.

**Introduction.** Since the second half of the 20th century, the United States has demonstrated controversial approaches and intentions to address climate change. On the one hand, the country played an important role in initiating negotiations on combating greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992, and on the other hand, it did not support mandatory "targets and schedules" for greenhouse gas emissions and financial assistance to low-income countries to reduce their emissions and adapt to climate change. The analysis of the US climate policy made it possible to distinguish several stages of its formation, in particular, before 1990, 1992-2009, the climate policy of B. Obama, D. Trump and D. Biden.

**The purpose of the article** is to explore the dynamics and main components of climate policy in the United States from the end of the 20th century to the present.

**Literature review.** Many researchers have paid attention to the issue of studying climate policy and, in particular, US climate policy. Among the foreign authors, the works of V. Arroyo, O. Edenhofer, M. Jacob, J. Gupta, and J. Macdonald should be noted, which emphasize the importance of prompt implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures at the international and national levels and the leading role of the United States in regulation of global climate change. Domestic scientists, in particular, S. Ivanyuta, O. Kolomiets, O. Malinovska, L. Yakushenko, studied the impact of the consequences of global climate change and the interaction of Ukraine with the leading actors of international relations, in particular the United States, regarding the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement and Ukraine's climate commitments. In particular, the researchers emphasized the importance of climate communications of leading countries for the effective implementation of climate policy. Thus, they notes that "effective communication about climate change is a key element of public awareness of the environmental challenges of today", "creating a connection between scientific research and people's everyday life contributes to the formation of an environmentally conscious society", "communication about climate change should be not only informative, but also motivating in order to attract citizens to action," and add that "the interaction between scientists, the government, and the public in the field of climate communications is an important step in the direction of sustainable development" (Ivanyuta et. al, 2020).

**Main results of the research.** *Climate policy of the USA before 1990.* Today, there is no consensus among researchers about the beginning of the implementation of climate policy in the United States. Some associate it with the activities of the Sierra Club, an American environmental organization founded on May 28, 1892 in San Francisco, California by the famous Scottish-American conservationist John Muir. The Club's activities are traditionally associated with the progressive movement, it became one of the first organizations for environmental protection in the

world, which is still engaged in lobbying in order to promote environmental policy, including sustainable energy, mitigating the consequences of global warming and opposition to the use of coal.

The beginning of the institutionalization of American climate policy can be considered 1965, when L. Johnson, in a message to the US Congress, was the first US president to recognize the danger of increasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for future generations (*The American Presidency Project*, 1965). In November of the same year, the scientific advisory board published a report "Restoring the quality of the environment", in which the topic of anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere took one of the central places (*The White House*, 1965).

In the 1970s the topic of greenhouse warming of the atmosphere is strengthening in the political discourse of the United States. In 1978, President D. Carter signed the National Climate Program Act. The law institutionalized climate policy and gave it an important status, although the program lacked provisions for measures to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or to restrain the activities of the US oil and gas or coal industries. Richard Nixon was the initiator of many progressive resolutions and legislative proposals to protect the environment. These include, in particular, the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970, the National Environmental Policy Act, and revolutionary laws aimed at preventing air and water pollution.

R. Reagan's position on atmospheric warming and global climate change was skeptical. His policy priorities were overcoming the energy crisis and fighting inflation. Any restrictions on economic activity from the standpoint of the neoliberalism policy pursued by his administration were considered unacceptable. At this time, there is a sharp reduction in funding for climate change research.

The second period of the administration of R. Reagan was marked by a radical change in the position on global climate change and climate policy. Faced with indisputable evidence of rising temperatures and moving this problem to the center of international negotiations, the R. Reagan administration realized that further denial of obvious facts could lead to the marginalization of the US on the international arena and loss of control over UN decisions. Thus, national interests, namely: the protection of the interests of big capital, companies that conduct their activities both on the territory of the United States and abroad, became the decisive factors that determined such a turn. In 1987, the United States signed the Montreal Protocol for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and supported the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) at the United Nations in 1988. In the same year, the Vice President of the J. M. Bush administration at the Paris Economic Summit acted as the world a leader in environmental protection.

In 1990, amendments to the Clean Air Act were signed, which improved pollution monitoring processes and created economic incentives for businesses to reduce emissions. During this period, the US played an important role in holding the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted. The USA agreed to stop GHG emissions by the year 2000 at the level of 1990, which was recorded in the final version of the UN Convention (*UN*, 1992). The President and at the same time the US Senate supported this convention in its content. At the same time, the Republican administration in the discussions continued to point out the importance of maintaining a balance between environmental protection and economic growth, considered it necessary to build a global climate strategy only on the basis of deepening the scientific understanding of environmental processes, and also demanded the active participation in the discussed processes of the most populated countries in the world with the largest percentage of greenhouse gases (primarily India and China).

*Climate policy of the USA in 1992–2009.* In the period 1992-1997, the United States participated in the development of a comprehensive international climate agreement that would define specific goals and obligations of countries to reduce GHG emissions. President B. Clinton and his Administration were interested in concluding such an agreement. Climate policy became one of the most important areas of US policy in that period. However, before the start of the conference of the parties (COP) in Kyoto on December 6, 1997, the US Senate unanimously adopted the "Byrd-Hagel" resolution (*Congress USA*, 1997), which obliged the US delegation not to

sign any agreement that does not guarantee simultaneous actions by developing countries (primarily China, India, Brazil). Failure to include these states in the list of countries with mandatory targets was seen as a threat to US global competitiveness. In December 1997, the US delegation signed the Kyoto Protocol, according to which the US undertakes to reduce the level of GHG emissions by 7% in the period 2008–2012 compared to the base year 1990 (*UN, 1997*). President B. Clinton signed the Kyoto Protocol on November 12, 1998, but did not submit it to Congress for ratification because he knew it would not be accepted there.

Bush Jr., who was elected in 2001, canceled the Kyoto Protocol and throughout his administration did not support any legislative or administrative initiatives that required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. American researcher M. Lisovsky explains the position of the American Administration by the fact that before the presidency, J. Bush worked in the oil industry for 11 years (ArbustoEnergy is a company of the Bush family); US Vice President D. Cheney served as director of the largest American oil exploration company, Halliburton, and the "war on terror" that began completely pushed the issue of global climate change off the political agenda (*Lisowski, 2002*).

The Bush administration introduced a new energy policy based on the development of the domestic oil and gas industry in order to reduce the growing dependence of the United States on oil imports, as well as to transform the country into an important player in the world oil and gas market. In addition, in 2007, an international economic platform on energy security and climate change (Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change) was created in order to find "market" ways to reduce GHG emissions without slowing down economic growth in the country.

The withdrawal of the United States from the Kyoto Protocol and the reduction of its activity in the international arena caused the relocation of the center of the fight against global climate change to the meeting rooms of both houses of the US Congress, to the capitals of federal states and courts, where lawsuits and complaints of public organizations were considered. In August 2001, Senators D. McCain and D. Lieberman initiated a bill that provided for the reduction of GHG emissions in the country by 2010 (Climate Protection Act). Although this bill was not supported, it received significant support on the ballot in 2003. In 2005, on the initiative of the same Senator D. McCain, the Upper House passed the "Climate Management and Innovation" Act, which stimulated measures to decarbonize the US economy by account of the use of trading quotas for GHG emissions. It suggested that organizations with high GHG emissions should have emission allowances and participate in the trading, exchange, write-off or otherwise use of allowances allowed for trading in accordance with the law.

During this period, "climate" initiatives are also being formed at the level of individual states, where plans are being developed to reduce GHG emissions in various sectors and specific GHG reduction goals are being established. Thus, in 2002, California became the first state to pass a law on strengthening control of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by motor vehicles, according to which only low-emission vehicles were allowed to operate on the state's territory. In 2010, 15 US states had laws similar to California's. At the final stage of the administration of Bush Jr. in the administration, the "Process of major economies" program was initiated, which was aimed at cooperation with the UNFCCC for the future development of a new framework agreement on climate change (*Benen, 2015*).

*Climate policy of President B. Obama.* Barack Obama's election in November 2008 radically changed US climate policy. During the election campaign, his team prepared the Climate Action Plan, which was aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions and provided for the preservation of forests, the promotion of the use of alternative fuels and the expansion of research in the field of climate change. The plan assumed that on the basis of domestic reforms it would be possible to form a certain model of transition to the "carbon-free era" for all members of the world community. The climate policy of President B.Obama envisaged fundamental transformations in the economy, in particular, the widespread introduction of renewable energy sources, increasing the energy and

resource efficiency of production, expanding carbon trading markets, and reducing dependence on energy resources from the countries of the Middle East.

B. Obama's plans were complicated by the global financial crisis, the onset of recession in the USA and the climate scandal known as "ClimateGate", which occurred on the eve of the UN international climate conference in Copenhagen (COP-15). At the same time, the US has strengthened international climate policy, putting pressure on developing countries to commit to reducing emissions.

Over the course of two presidential terms, the Obama administration has taken quite serious steps in the field of combating climate change. Thus, on the basis of the executive decree, the "Clean Energy Plan" was adopted, aimed at improving the efficiency of power plants as the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. According to the plan, by 2030, carbon dioxide emissions from electricity production should be reduced by 32% compared to the level of 2005. (*Plumer, 2015*) Stricter standards for automobile emissions were also adopted, which forced engine and fuel manufacturers to significantly increase their efficiency. The administration constantly increased pressure on manufacturers of household appliances to raise energy consumption standards, which was supposed to reduce the level of carbon dioxide emissions by 210 million tons per year. The state has invested tens of billions of dollars in the development of renewable energy sources and encouraging businesses to switch to these sources.

The international aspect of the Obama administration was aimed at restoring US global leadership on climate change. In 2009, the United States launched the "Forum of Major Economies on Energy and Climate Change" initiative, which was supposed to promote dialogue between developed and developing countries in the work within the framework of the UNFCCC on a new treaty on climate change, as well as the implementation of technologies "clean energy" and other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Meetings of the Forum were held during 2015 and allowed to successfully advance towards a new global climate agreement. Such an agreement was reached within the framework of the twenty-first conference of the parties (COP 21), which took place in Paris in December 2015.

In November 2016, the Paris Agreement entered into force. The goal of this agreement is to prevent the atmosphere from warming by more than 1.5°C by 2100, fully consistent with the plans of the Presidential Administration to reduce GHG emissions by 32% by 2030. According to the national contribution presented at the conference of the parties in Marrakesh, the United States committed reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 (*UNFCCC, 2016*).

The presidential decree on "clean energy" (Clean power Act) made it possible to create synergistic effects between the further economic growth of the American economy and the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement. President Obama's climate achievements include stopping the construction of the Keystone oil pipeline, raising energy efficiency standards, creating the world's largest marine protected area, declaring 260 million acres of wilderness as national parks, which automatically prohibited fossil fuel development, investments in RES and others. (*McCarthy, 2017*).

*Climate policy of President D. Trump.* Radical changes in US climate policy have taken place since Republican President D. Trump came to power in 2017, who called climate change a "Chinese hoax" and considered the Paris Agreement harmful to the US (*Sharoykina, 2017*). Even during his election campaign, he promised his voters to cancel the Paris Agreement and increase the country's fossil fuel production. The problems of global climate change, environmental pollution, and the disappearance of biological species are, in his opinion, far-fetched and unworthy of attention from state structures. M. Scher believes that among Trump's advisers there was a difference of opinion about whether to stay in the agreement or abandon it. Thus, Secretary of Energy R. Perry, Secretary of State R. Tillerson, as well as presidential adviser D. Kushner wanted the United States to remain loyal to the agreement, while White House adviser S. Bannon and the then administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency S. Pruitt insisted on its cancellation (*Shear, 2017*).

Almost immediately after his election, D. Trump canceled the "Clean Energy Plan" adopted by B. Obama, justifying his decision by the need to "revive" the coal industry. However, the plan

could not be fully repealed because it was based on the Clean Air Act, and the Supreme Court in 2007 recognized greenhouse gases as air pollutants. Trump lowered the mandatory annual emissions reduction rate for power plants to a minimum bar of 1%, lowered fuel economy standards for cars from 5% to 1.5% per year, and relaxed rules on the discharge or flaring of methane from oil and gas extraction on federal lands. He also lifted restrictions on the production and use of fossil fuels, repealed regulations on emissions of mercury and other toxic substances from power plants, which were also part of Trump's campaign promises. In addition, bans on oil and gas exploration in the Arctic National Reserve, Alaska and Utah reserves, and US coastal waters were lifted. Trump has actively promoted pipeline projects such as Keystone XL, Dakota Access and the construction of the Marcellus Shale gas pipeline from West Virginia. To deregulate environmental standards, the Trump administration also used the COVID-19 crisis, for example, the application of environmental regulations was suspended for companies that cannot comply with them due to the pandemic. The President also issued a decree on reducing environmental requirements for the planning and preparation of infrastructure projects to facilitate economic recovery after COVID-19 (EPA, 2020).

D.Trump practically blocked the work of state environmental bodies, in particular the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), having carried out a significant reorganization of the department. During the transitional period of reform, his board was headed by M. Ebell, who demanded from D.Trump an immediate reduction of more than 50% of all employees of the department headed by him and cut budget funds (*The Independent, 2017*). Those who headed the Agency later, S. Pruitt (2017-2018) and E. Wheeler (2018-2021) denied global climate change.

The effectiveness of the Trump administration's restrictive climate measures has not been high, as it has faced serious legal challenges. Individual states, municipalities, environmental and health organizations have actively challenged Trump's measures in court. Lawsuits were filed based on violations of laws on administrative procedures, clean air, clean water, and national environmental policy. According to the New York University Law School, the Trump administration has lost 87% of lawsuits on these issues (*Institute for Policy Integrity, 2021*).

The decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement had a serious financial component, in particular, according to ClimateNexus experts, such a decision will weaken the competitiveness of the United States, because at the end of 2019, the clean energy sector was one of the most promising sectors of the economy, where almost 3.4 million citizens worked (*Climatenexus, 2019*).

Despite the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, climate change management has remained a sustainable development priority for many national governments, local governments and non-governmental organizations, which have continued to develop technical innovation strategies and implement climate initiatives. From a global perspective, the withdrawal of the United States reduced the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement, while other signatories continued to make active efforts to implement its policies and fulfill their obligations. At the same time, the importance of climate research and interaction with public opinion in order to form public understanding as a component of global climate change management has increased.

It can be argued that President Trump has had a profound, mostly negative impact on environmental and climate policy both domestically and internationally. In addition to rolling back environmental regulations and related policies, Trump has sought to undermine the institutions and core values underlying environmental and climate protection.

*J. Biden's climate policy.* Under the Administration of J.Biden, who assumed the post of president in 2020, the climate policy changed radically. Yes, the US has officially resumed its participation in the Paris Agreement, federal agencies have been tasked with reviewing and repealing all federal restrictions and regulations imposed by the Trump Administration that in one way or another relate to environmental and climate change issues. On January 27, 2021, J. Biden announced the creation of the Climate Policy Office under the Presidential Administration, which was given broad powers and functions, in particular, coordination of the domestic climate policy development process; advising the president on these issues; ensuring compliance of decisions and programs of domestic climate policy with the goals declared by the president and their effective

achievement; control of the execution of the president's internal agenda in the field of climate policy.

The new climate commitments of the USA have become, in particular, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 50% below the level of 2005 by 2030, the generation of 100% clean electricity by 2035, and the achievement of climate neutrality of the state by 2050 (*The White House, 2021a*).

At the Global Climate Summit in April 2021, the US unveiled its updated climate finance plan, which is determined at the national level by a country's contribution to the Paris Agreement. In November 2021, at the climate summit in Glasgow (Great Britain), the United States announced its intention to once again become an international leader in the fight against global climate change. In his speech from the podium of the climate summit, Biden said that "climate change is an existential threat to the existence of humanity as it is now. Every day that we delay, the price of inaction increases" (*The White House, 2022*).

Climate reforms of the J. Biden administration are expressed primarily in the form of investment programs within the framework of economic policy. In November 2021, J. Biden signed the "infrastructure" law, which provides funding in the amount of 7.5 billion US dollars for the renewal of infrastructure, railways, bridges, urban buildings, residential buildings, the development of electric mobility and green transportation, the improvement of the water supply system and the protection of the public from the effects of climate change, etc. (*The White House*, 2021b). The total volume of planned investments will amount to about 1.2 trillion dollars.

In August 2022, J. Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act, which radically changed US climate policy. According to the law, approximately \$370 billion was directed to energy security and climate measures to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. According to Jason Bordoff, director of the Center for Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, "this is the most significant federal investment in combating climate change in US history" (*IMF, 2022*). The bill would also force oil and gas companies to pay \$1,500 a ton to fix excessive methane leaks, and repeal President Donald Trump's 10-year moratorium on offshore wind leases. And in December 2022, the Biden administration announced the allocation of another \$3.7 billion to start the US decarbonization industry, which includes programs that will stimulate the commercialization of technologies to remove outdated carbon pollution (DOE, 2022).

It should be noted that the climate policy of the USA during the presidency of J. Biden is correlated with the declared foreign policy priorities of the country. Thus, during the COP27 world climate summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022, Joe Biden announced the allocation of \$100 million for adaptation programs, namely early warning systems in Africa, food security and the creation of Egypt of a new training center that will train specialists in the transition to renewable energy sources for the entire African continent (*RadioSvoboda, 2022*).

An important direction in the implementation of the state climate policy was cooperation with China, together with which the USA agreed to take on new obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the implementation of the reached political agreements, it is planned to carry out various climate communications, in particular, the restart of seminars on energy policy, strategies, technologies and broader climate measures. China suspended such exchanges when it cut diplomatic ties with the US after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022.

At the same time, despite radical changes in approaches at the highest level of the country's leadership, the Climate Action Tracker at the end of 2023 assessed the general climate policy of the United States as "Insufficient" (*TheClimateActionTracker, 2023*) due to the fact that it does not yet meet the global goal of limiting the global increase limit temperature by 1.5°C by 2030.

**Conclusion.** Analysis of the dynamics of US climate policy since the end of the 20th century showed that climate decisions are characterized by dependence on party ideology, when the decisions of Republican presidents contradict the decisions of Democratic presidents. As a rule, under democratic presidents (B.Clinton, B.Obama, D.Biden) more attention was paid to climate policy, and under republican ones (R.Reagan, D.Bush Sr., D.Bush Jr., D.Trump) - less, or as under Trump - global climate change was denied. Given that climate policy decisions are formalized in

the form of presidential decrees, they can be overturned by the next president. Therefore, J. Biden's active modern climate policy may be canceled by a potential next Republican president. The specifics of US climate policy also include the role of individual states, which declare their commitment to high global goals and conduct their own climate policy in parallel with the federal government.

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