# Far-right protests reveal escalating divide over climate action and democracy



If it were not clear already, the largest far-right protest in UK history underscores a sobering reality: the struggle for a fair and sustainable planet cannot be confined to the domains of science or environmentalism alone. This complex battle requires collective societal engagement, yet the recent surge of far-right mobilisations speaks to a growing pattern of division and distraction driven by powerful figures and their interests.

Jonathan Watts, reporting from the Brazilian Amazon, provides a crucial global perspective on these developments. He draws an analogy between the stresses on our planet’s forests and those on human societies. Just as prolonged heat and drought force trees to shed leaves—compromising their ability to sustain vital ecological functions—so too do stressed human communities tend to close borders and turn inward, fostering xenophobia and eco-fascistic tendencies. However, this defensive stance undermines long-term resilience. Human survival, unlike trees, depends on openness, cooperation, and movement, highlighting the urgency of collective global solutions.

This urgency clashes sharply with the actions and rhetoric of wealthy individuals such as Elon Musk and Donald Trump, who have emerged as potent symbols of resistance to environmental and social progress. Musk’s vocal support for far-right causes—including funding legal fees for anti-immigration campaigners and using his social media platform, X, to amplify divisive and violent content—illustrates how billionaire influence can exacerbate societal fractures. Trump’s climate denialism, policy rollbacks on climate science, and aggressive nationalist posturing further fuel a political environment hostile to meaningful climate action.

The motivations behind such resistance are deeply entwined with entrenched economic interests and the preservation of immense wealth and power. As Watts highlights, many ultra-rich figures appear to have abandoned hope in collective, global solutions, instead investing in individualistic “doomsday” preparations such as bunkers or even private rockets. This retreat from responsibility aligns with the political strategies of far-right actors who benefit from social fear, uncertainty, and division.

This connection between environmental crisis and authoritarian political drives has been echoed by observers across the spectrum. Asha Ransby-Sporn, writing for In These Times, emphasises the consolidation of power by figures like Trump and Musk within government and society, marked by deregulation, anti-immigrant measures, and campaigns designed to disorient and divide the public. Similarly, analyses from the World Socialist Web Site and Bloomberg reveal how these billionaires’ close ties to far-right forces and their disregard for democratic norms threaten social stability and equitable governance.

The broader socio-political implications also extend to the issue of wealth concentration. Economist Gabriel Zucman frames the Musk-Trump feud as emblematic of a deeper crisis in American democracy, where the accumulation of extraordinary fortunes has warped policy priorities and inflamed social tensions. The proposed remedy, Zucman argues, lies in taxing billionaires and disrupting their outsized political influence to restore democratic balance.

The intellectual ethos underpinning this resistance has been shaped, in part, by Silicon Valley figures like Musk and his business partner Peter Thiel, who have expressed disdain for environmentalist movements and liberal political values. Thiel’s characterization of climate activism as a threatening ideology and his role as an architect of a more apocalyptic, confrontational Silicon Valley mindset reflect a stark ideological shift among tech billionaires, from champions of innovation and progress to defenders of a status quo imperilled by calls for climate and social justice.

Against this backdrop, glimmers of hope remain. Outside the US and UK, countries in the global south are showing signs of resistance and change. China’s substantial investments in renewable energy are poised to drive global emissions downward, while Brazil has recently taken strides to protect its forests and uphold democratic norms in the face of internal political challenges. Public opinion surveys like the 89% Project demonstrate broad popular demand worldwide for stronger climate action, underscoring the potential for collective mobilisation.

Ultimately, Watts’ reflections from the Amazon offer a poignant lesson: survival depends on interdependence. Neither forests nor human societies can thrive in isolation. The future hinges on cooperation, empathy, and shared responsibility—a message lost on those who seek to fan the flames of division. Responsible global citizens must counteract incendiary rhetoric with solidarity and action, defending both democracy and the environment at this critical juncture.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist), [[4]](https://inthesetimes.com/article/billionaire-takeover-fight-overwhelm), [[5]](https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/12/16/rqkr-d16.html), [[6]](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2025-01-12/elon-musk-and-fellow-billionaires-flout-their-influence)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist), [[4]](https://inthesetimes.com/article/billionaire-takeover-fight-overwhelm), [[5]](https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/12/16/rqkr-d16.html), [[6]](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2025-01-12/elon-musk-and-fellow-billionaires-flout-their-influence)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/10/the-trump-musk-feud-exposes-americas-wealth-hoarding-crisis)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist), [[7]](https://www.thedailybeast.com/jonathan-taplin-tells-how-peter-thiel-mark-zuckerberg-elon-musk-and-marc-andreessen-could-destroy-society)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/23/billionaires-musk-divide-distract-humanity-come-together-resist> - In this article, Jonathan Watts discusses the interplay between extreme weather events and the rise of far-right politics, highlighting how figures like Elon Musk and Donald Trump contribute to both phenomena. Watts argues that the battle for a fair and habitable planet cannot be fought solely within the realms of science or environmentalism, emphasising the need for collective action to address these intertwined challenges.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/10/the-trump-musk-feud-exposes-americas-wealth-hoarding-crisis> - Gabriel Zucman examines the public feud between Donald Trump and Elon Musk, using it as a lens to explore the broader issue of wealth concentration in the United States. He argues that the immense fortunes of individuals like Musk and Bezos have distorted democracy and driven societal tensions, advocating for taxing billionaires to address this crisis.
4. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/billionaire-takeover-fight-overwhelm> - Asha Ransby-Sporn discusses the overwhelming influence of billionaire interests in politics, particularly focusing on the alliance between President Donald Trump and Elon Musk. She highlights the consolidation of power in the executive branch, rollbacks of climate protections, and aggressive anti-immigrant orders, urging resistance to these attempts to disorient and divide the public.
5. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/12/16/rqkr-d16.html> - The World Socialist Web Site analyses Elon Musk's wealth and political influence, drawing parallels between his close ties to far-right figures and the broader trend of capitalist oligarchy aligning with authoritarian forces globally. The article discusses the implications of this concentration of wealth and power on democracy and societal stability.
6. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2025-01-12/elon-musk-and-fellow-billionaires-flout-their-influence> - Max Hastings critiques the influence of billionaires like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, highlighting their disregard for democratic processes and the public good. He discusses their significant wealth and the potential consequences of their unchecked power on society and governance.
7. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/jonathan-taplin-tells-how-peter-thiel-mark-zuckerberg-elon-musk-and-marc-andreessen-could-destroy-society> - Jonathan Taplin discusses how billionaires such as Peter Thiel, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, and Marc Andreessen are shaping society and politics. He explores the potential dangers of their influence and the societal implications of their actions, particularly in relation to the rise of authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic norms.