

On the Grid: Special Edition: A Global Elections Snapshot 5/27/22

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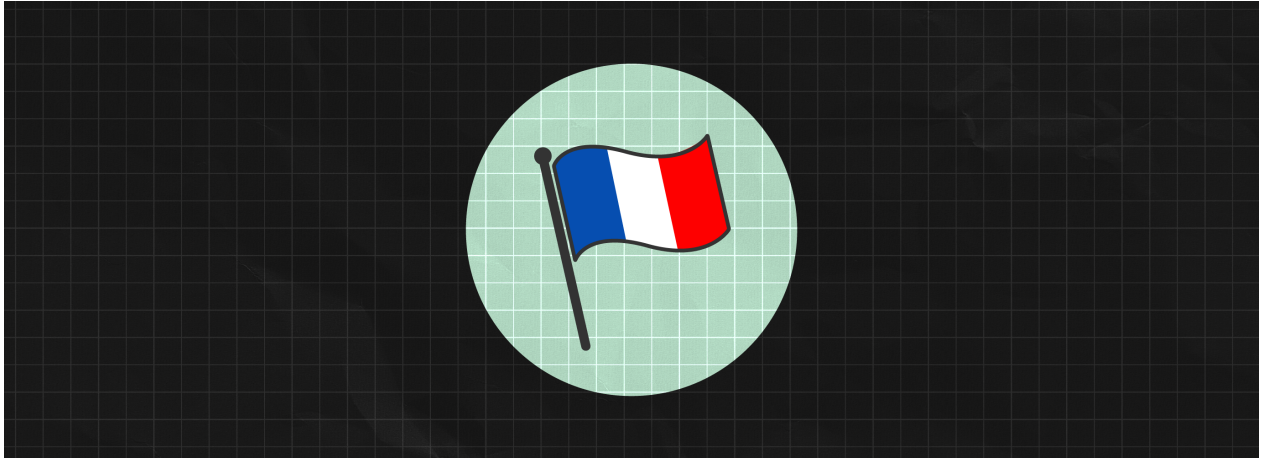
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If you've been following along lately, you would probably have noticed a common thread in global politics—more and more world leaders are shifting towards the center and pragmatic climate and energy policy. We first saw this here at home when President Biden's centrist strategy won him the White House. And now, we're seeing a steady increase in the number of center-left candidates winning big elections around the world. Even more remarkable, politicians are focusing on climate policy and talking about the clean energy transition in a way that is resonating with voters.

That's why this week, we are going to share some insights on global elections we've been paying close attention to that signal a marked shift in how nations are approaching global decarbonization, including a new openness to nuclear power, and how these elections could provide some insight for policymakers and candidates here stateside.

1. France



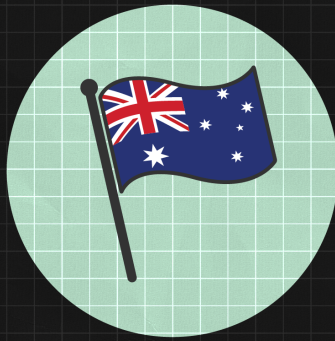
At the end of April, incumbent President Emmanuel Macron overtook far-Right Marine Le Pen with 58.5% of the vote, becoming France's first President to win re-election in two decades. Macron ran counter to Le Pen on countless issues, including her abhorrent xenophobic and Islamophobic discourse, but most notably, on climate policy.

While France's economy was the top concern among French voters, climate change remained a key issue. Le Pen's strategy rested on a decidedly anti-climate energy agenda. She ran as a candidate in favor of more fossil fuels and against France's continued participation in NATO and its leadership against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In contrast, President Macron campaigned as a strong centrist climate candidate, vowing to make France a "great environmental nation," who was unabashedly pro-nuclear. In fact, he launched his campaign with a speech about rebuilding France's leadership in civilian nuclear power to address climate change and provide clean electricity to Europe. Just two weeks after the election, we met with senior French government officials in Washington to explore how the US and France could work together to accelerate clean energy deployment.

While Marcon won his re-election bid and quelled France's far-right movement, for now, his strongest supporters were still elderly, more affluent voters, despite his best intentions to engage with a wider spectrum. France's election is a big win to maintain European climate and clean energy momentum, but it may only be temporary if it doesn't bring stability to energy supply and prices quickly.

2. Australia



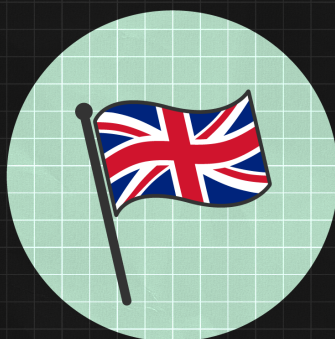
For years, Australia returned the climate-denying conservative party to power despite devastating bushfires, scorching heat, and increasingly severe global warming-induced natural disasters. In May 2022, centrist Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese ended this streak, getting elected the country's new Prime Minister.

Leader of the Labor Party since 2019, Albanese carefully crafted a partnership between green and blue-collar voters based on a pragmatic climate and clean energy agenda. For the first time polling ahead of the election found that climate change was *the* top issue for Australians, followed closely by the high cost of living.

Australia's previous Prime Minister, the Conservative Party's Scott Morrison, was a significant obstacle to clean energy, including even nuclear power. Famously brandishing a chunk of coal in Parliamentary chambers to signal his support for the fossil fuel industry, Morrison saw his political success tied to maintaining the status quo of Australia's reliance on coal and natural gas.

Where Morrison saw job loss, Albanese saw opportunities. He ran a campaign that, much like President Biden, championed *both* clean jobs and a rebounding manufacturing sector, earning the support of some fossil fuel workers who remain hesitant about a clean energy transition.

3. United Kingdom



Earlier this month, the UK's local elections closed with a host of victories for the left-leaning Labour Party, with over 500 seats overturned from the Conservative Party. It comes after Sir Keir Starmer displaced scandal-riddled Jeremy Corbyn as the new Labour Party leader. Labour now backs an every-clean-energy approach to the UK decarbonizing, including use of carbon capture, hydrogen, and nuclear.

Starmer's ascendancy to Labour leader makes the UK unique on this list, as both parties now support ambitious action on clean energy, including the use of every clean energy technology and innovation to get to net-zero. Conservative Prime Boris Johnson's energy plan includes fast-tracking of renewables, construction of many more nuclear plants, and scaling hydrogen, although it is coupled with incentives for fossil fuels to help address a mounting energy price crisis in the country.

4. Germany



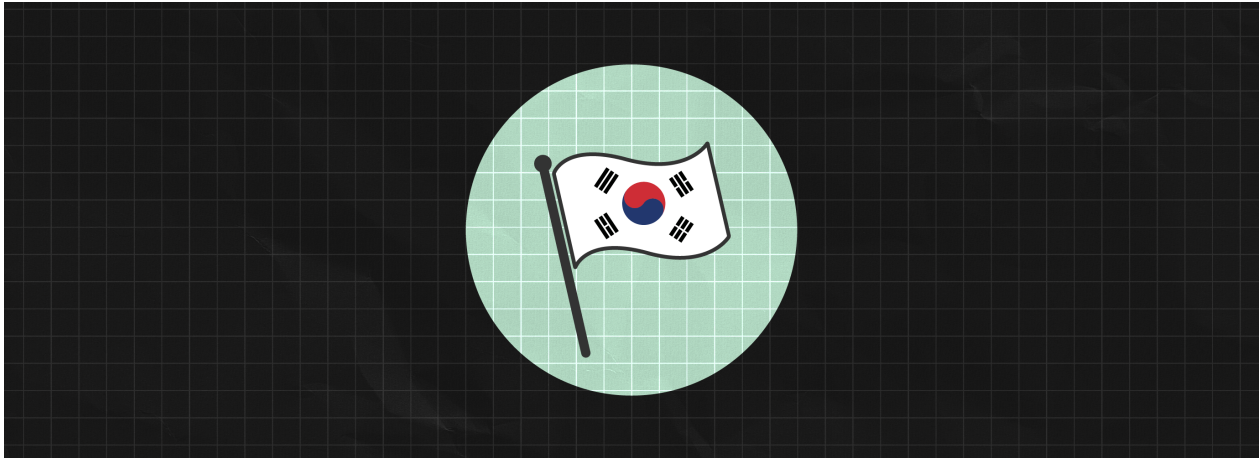
As Angela Merkel ended her 16-year tenure this past December, Germany elected center-left Olaf Scholz as its new Chancellor, ushering the first Social Democratic government since 2005.

Scholz campaigned on basic economic policies—a stable pension system, a €12 minimum wage, child allowances, and affordable housing. His strategy weighed heavily on cross-party cooperation, uniting the nation's liberal parties, the Green and Free Democrats Party, with his own to form a traffic-light coalition. With Green Party member Robert Habeck at the helm as his future Vice-Chancellor, Scholz leveraged the momentum of the late 2021 summer flooding to push his intentions to “halt man-made climate change” while simultaneously modernizing Germany's industrial sector.

The success of Scholz's electoral strategy lay in his ability to navigate across this newly formed traffic-light coalition. He rallied a broad coalition of voters by appealing to the economically minded Social Democrats, the pro-business Free Democrats, and the environmentally-conscious Green Party members. However, Scholz's overcommitment across diverse interests was met with hesitancy, particularly from some climate and clean energy advocates. Germany now must eliminate

its reliance on Russian natural gas and rapidly expand electrification while simultaneously shutting down its zero-carbon nuclear plants. Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this strategy was untenable, as Germany found itself addicted to Russian gas and its own, dwindling coal supply, to replace firm, nuclear power. While Scholz held off serious challenges from the far Right and Left, he has a tremendous amount of work ahead of him to get Germany to walk its clean energy talk.

5. South Korea



This March, Yoon Suk-yeol defeated Lee Jae-myung in South Korea's Presidential elections. Yoon, ushering in a new era of nuclear energy. Yoon campaigned on a pledge to preserve South Korea's existing nuclear reactors, many of which are set to be decommissioned by 2034, and build jobs around Korea's nuclear industry.

However, unlike the other world leaders we have spotlighted, Yoon did not make any hand-shaking attempts at appealing to a broad coalition of voters. A far-right conservative from the People Power Party, Yoon campaigned on blatantly misogynistic policies, weaponizing anti-feminist rhetoric to play into very-real anxieties around jobs and economic growth. The populist leader made reprehensible statements on the campaign trail, blaming low birth rates on the feminist movement, and made promises to abolish Korea's Ministry of Gender, Equity, and Family.

While we are pleased to see sentiments shift around nuclear energy, the rest of Yoon's agenda is deeply troubling. This makes South Korea an outlier in the current trend of centrist parties successfully pushing back against far Right and Left politics. We will take opportunities to encourage US-South Korean collaboration on civilian nuclear power to decarbonize and will be watching to see if this is a sign of any broader political trends in Asia or globally.

6. We're Hiring

JOIN OUR TEAM

The clean energy policy conversation is expanding...and so are we! The Climate and Energy Program is looking for people with talent and a passion for climate solutions to fill two new roles on our team. If you've got anyone in your mental Rolodex who you think might be a fit, please send them our way. And if you wanted to circulate these job postings more broadly with your networks, we wouldn't mind that either!

Executive Coordinator: This person will manage scheduling, meeting set-up, and meeting and calendar logistics for the Senior Vice-President, as well as provide background research in preparation for meetings and events, plan logistics of online and in-person events, prepare expense reports, and file consultant invoices and reimbursements. *(1 year of relevant work experience preferred)*

Policy Advisor for Transportation: This person will focus predominantly on policies to decarbonize the aviation sector by conducting original-source research and analysis, and authoring high-impact written reports, memos, and op-eds to better understand and explain the importance of policies, federal funding changes, and technologies that are necessary to eliminate emissions from aviation and provide associated benefits for the US economy, jobs, security, public health, and climate. *(1 year of experience in transportation, clean fuels policy, or a relevant field)*

Deputy Director for Innovation and Clean Industry: This person will help set policy, advocacy, and product strategy and supervise multiple team members working on issues surrounding energy innovation, carbon management, and industrial decarbonization while overseeing in-depth research and quantitative analysis to better understand and explain our policy goals in specific issue areas that relate to American clean energy innovation, deployment, and competitiveness. *(5+ years of experience in clean energy policy)*

7. What We're Reading and Listening To



- Iowa State Senator Zach Wahls, in *The Gazette*, writes on the impact of the Biden Administration’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on Iowa’s clean energy landscape, local infrastructure, and everyday families while also outlining steps that will help maximize the benefit of the legislation at the local level.
- Anjani Trivedi, in *Bloomberg*, writes an honest perspective of struggles facing electric vehicle (EV) companies at the moment, as crippled supply chains and shifting geopolitics place pressure on the industry. Trivedi goes on to state the importance of sustained momentum to ensure that the demand for EVs is not replaced with carbon-intensive transportation.
- Jane Coaston, in her podcast series *The Argument*, sits down with guest David French, writer and free speech attorney, and *New York Times* opinion columnist Charles Blow, two years after the 2020 mass demonstrations in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd to discuss the ways in which Americans across the country exercise their constitutional right to protest, and whether or not we can pinpoint a single, “right way” to protest.