

CHALLENGES OF NEOLIBERALISM IN ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY: PERSPECTIVES FROM ARGENTINE JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

The article examines how neoliberalism shapes journalistic coverage of the climate emergency in Argentina. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, it compares eight articles from four media outlets — two mainstream (La Nación and La Voz del Interior) and two alternative (Página 12 and La Nueva Mañana) — focusing on two specific cases: Argentina's withdrawal from COP29 in November 2024 and the Bahía Blanca floods in March 2025.

The findings reveal a marked editorial divergence. Mainstream media favour technical or diplomatic framings, minimize state accountability, and treat climate change as secondary to political developments. Alternative outlets, by contrast, politicize the environmental crisis, amplify the voices of affected communities, and explicitly challenge the extractives model and governmental inaction.

The paper concludes that Argentine journalism is far from monolithic: it reflects an ongoing tension between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic logics in the construction of climate discourse. In this context, independent and critical journalism plays a strategic role in exposing the structural roots of environmental vulnerability, even as it operates at a significant disadvantage within a media landscape dominated by large commercial conglomerates.

1. Introduction

The climate emergency is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, requiring immediate and comprehensive solutions. However, the global dominance of neoliberal ideology, characterised by market deregulation and privatisation, has profoundly influenced how societies perceive and respond to environmental crises. In many cases, neoliberalism has depoliticised climate discourse by reducing it to individual responsibility, technocratic solutions and green consumerism rather than addressing the structural roots of environmental degradation.

Argentina offers a compelling case study in which to examine the tensions between neoliberal frameworks and environmental urgency. Given its long history of economic volatility, political polarisation and socio-environmental conflicts, ranging from extractivism in the Andes and the Gran Chaco to mega-dams and fossil fuel expansion, the framing of the climate emergency in public discourse is crucial. Furthermore, the current government has explicitly denied the existence of a climate crisis. In this context, journalism plays a pivotal role in either challenging or reproducing dominant ideologies. This paper examines how Argentinian journalism reflects, reinforces or resists neoliberal narratives when covering climate-related issues. It asks: How does neoliberal ideology constrain journalistic representations of the climate crisis in Argentina? What discursive strategies are employed by different media outlets to either support or critique extractivist and market-based approaches?

Through discourse analysis of both mainstream and independent Argentine media, the study reveals patterns that expose the ideological tensions inherent in environmental reporting. First, the paper outlines the theoretical foundations connecting neoliberalism, environmental discourse, and media representation. It then presents the methodology employed for the media analysis, before presenting key

findings and offering a critical discussion of their implications for climate communication in Argentina and beyond.

2. Theoretical Framework and State of Art

2.1. Neoliberalism and Environmental Governance

Neoliberalism, as defined by David Harvey (2005), is a political-economic project aimed at restoring class power through market mechanisms, prioritizing private property rights, free trade, and reduced state intervention. In environmental terms, this manifests through market-based solutions such as carbon trading, payment for ecosystem services, and the commodification of natural resources. Scholars such as Naomi Klein (2014) argue that neoliberal capitalism is fundamentally incompatible with ecological sustainability because it requires constant growth and resource extraction.

2.2. Media, Ideology, and Climate Narratives

Media are not neutral conveyors of information; they are ideological actors that shape public discourse. Stuart Hall (1980) and other cultural theorists emphasize the role of the media in encoding and reproducing dominant ideologies. When it comes to the climate crisis, this often means privileging corporate voices, framing issues within narrow technocratic parameters, or promoting "green capitalism" as the only viable solution. Chomsky and Herman's Propaganda Model (1988) further suggests that media systems owned by economic elites tend to marginalize radical critiques of capitalism or systemic change.

2.3. Environmental Journalism in Latin America

In Latin America, environmental journalism exists within contexts of political instability, media concentration, and deep social inequality. Argentina's media landscape includes powerful conglomerates such as Grupo Clarín, as well as a growing number of independent and community-driven outlets. While mainstream media often mirror state and corporate interests, alternative media have emerged to challenge extractivism and advocate for environmental justice. This duality makes Argentina a valuable site for analysing how environmental issues are ideologically framed.

2.4. Dominant Narratives in Argentine media

Previous research reveals that mainstream Argentine media generally adhere to neoliberal narratives when covering climate issues (Motta y Alasino, 2013) or exclude the point of view of the environmental activism (Gavirati, 2012):

- **Technocratic Framing:** Climate change is often presented as a technical problem to be solved by innovation, efficiency, or new markets, without reference to systemic change.
- **Market-Centered Solutions:** Policies such as green investments, and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) metrics are frequently portrayed as the primary responses to the crisis.
- **Minimal State Accountability:** There is limited scrutiny of government inaction or complicity in extractive projects; instead, responsibility is often displaced onto individuals.
- **Corporate Legitimacy:** Companies engaged in fossil fuels or mining are given space to frame their actions as sustainable or "transitional," with little critical analysis.
- For example, coverage of lithium mining in the northwestern provinces largely echoes corporate rhetoric around the "green economy," while downplaying the opposition from Indigenous communities and environmental activists. Another example shows the traditional newspaper La Voz del Interior's coverage of regional climate forecasts focuses on the need for citizens to adapt to "new normals" without engaging with questions of political responsibility or socio-environmental justice.
- In contrast, independent outlets present a markedly different discourse:
- **Political Framing of the Climate Crisis:** Climate change is linked to structural inequality, colonial legacies, and the extractivist model imposed by both local elites and global capital.
- **Critique of Neoliberalism and Greenwashing:** These media explicitly challenge the compatibility of neoliberal economics with ecological sustainability.
- **Voices from Below:** They prioritize the perspectives of rural communities, Indigenous groups, and environmental defenders, often framing them as protagonists rather than victims.

- Demand for Structural Change: There is a strong emphasis on sovereignty over natural resources, food justice, and degrowth-oriented perspectives.

For example, the independent online platform El Grito del Sur's article on urban flooding, criticises the lack of infrastructure planning and frames the event as part of a broader pattern of neglect and climate injustice.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 2016) to examine climate-related coverage in Argentinian journalism between 2024 and early 2025. Following the state of art, hereby is opted for a corpus including:

- a. Mainstream media (conservative): La Nación and La Voz del Interior.
- b. Independent media (alternative, progressive): Página 12 and La Nueva Mañana.

This comparative discourse analysis assesses how four Argentine media outlets covered two critical climate related events:

- Argentina's withdrawal from COP29 held in Azerbaij n in November 2024
- The floods occurred in the city of Bah a Blanca, Argentina in March 2025

By focusing on these themes, the analysis explores:

- Which actors are cited?
- Solutions framed as technical, individual, political, or collective?
- How is presented the role of the state in each narrative?
- Is climate change questioned or normalized?

This targeted approach allows to see where mainstream and independent media diverge or converge in climate-politics and disaster coverage.

4. Finding and Analysis

Before examining how climate discourse is constructed in general-interest media, it is important to consider the broader political context in which this coverage takes place. The online publication La Pol tica Ambiental — which presents itself as a specialised news agency focusing exclusively on environmental issues — published a significant piece titled “Argentina 2024 climate report: the government removed climate change” (LPA, 2025). The article critically analyses the official national climate report released in 2024 (SMN, 2024b) and highlights the Argentine government's decision to remove virtually all references to climate change from its environmental diagnostics. The preliminary report by the same government agency and technical team indicated the following in the introduction (SMN, 2024a, p. 5)⁴:

In 2024, other variables such as the mean sea surface temperature and the extent of the sea ice in Antarctica also reached worrying levels, emphasising the need for urgent climate action to mitigate the effects of climate change.

This section was clearly removed from the final report, as was the reference to COP29. Another digital newspaper, Agencia de Informaciones Mercour (AIM) – initially a cooperative news agency that launched a digital newspaper (AIM digital) in 2024 - reported in June 2025 four mentions to “climate change” on the preliminary climate report and one mention to “global warming” which were removed on the final report by the current Argentinean government.

While La Pol tica Ambiental and AIM digital are not included in the comparative discourse analysis — since the study focuses on general-interest media to assess how climate issues are framed alongside other public concerns — this inclusion here provides essential context. It illustrates the direction of governmental climate policy during the analysed period, offering insight into how political narratives may influence or constrain media discourse on the climate emergency.

4.1. Analysed cases

- Case 1: Argentina's Withdrawal from COP29

In November 2024, the Argentine government unexpectedly withdrew its delegation from the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The decision, officially justified by fiscal austerity and sovereignty concerns, drew national and international criticism for signalling disengagement from global climate commitments. The move came amid a broader shift in Argentina's environmental policy under the libertarian administration of President Javier Milei, marked by institutional downgrades, reduced funding for environmental programs, and antagonism toward international environmental agreements. This political decision served as a litmus test for how different media outlets interpret state responsibility, global cooperation, and climate diplomacy.

• Case 2: Floods in Bahía Blanca

In March 2025, the coastal city of Bahía Blanca, in southern Buenos Aires province, experienced severe flooding after several days of intense rainfall. The storm overwhelmed drainage systems, damaged infrastructure, and prompted evacuations across multiple neighbourhoods. Local and provincial governments coordinated emergency responses, deploying rescue teams and shelter resources. The national government was absent. While the event was widely documented through satellite images and citizen videos, media coverage varied in linking the disaster to broader climate change discussions. The floods became a revealing moment in climate reporting: a concrete impact of extreme weather that tested public communication, state preparedness, and editorial prioritization across the national press.

4.2. Analysed media

The selection includes two media based on the capital city Buenos Aires and two from the second main province of Córdoba. The mainstream newspaper La Nación (Buenos Aires) is the most conservative and also an internationally prestigious medium. The other mainstream newspapers La Voz del Interior (Córdoba) is a traditional family business that now belongs to the biggest media corporation of Argentina, the Clarín group. The newspaper Página 12, based in Buenos Aires, has a progressive editorial policy and has an important number of readers. All these mentioned media has online versions and they still maintain daily print versions. The cooperative and progressive newspaper La Nueva Mañana from Córdoba is released on a daily basis online and has a print version in a weekly basis. For this analysis only the only versions were considered.

Although there is a significative distance in the amount of media coverage on environmental issues between the selected media, for the present paper 8 articles were selected, two for each medium (Table 1), in order to go deeper in the critical discourse analysis and to highlight the news making differences between them. For each media outlet, one article on Argentina's withdrawal from COP29 and one article on the floods in Bahía Blanca were selected.

Table 1. Selected articles

Editorial policy	Media	Scope	Article Title	Date
Mainstream/ Conservative	La Nación	Nationwide	La Argentina retiró a su delegación de la cumbre del clima COP29 en Azerbaiyán por una orden de Cancillería ¹	Nov 12, 2024
			¿Por qué se inundó Bahía Blanca? El cóctel de factores naturales y humanos que desencadenaron la tragedia ²	March 12, 2025

¹ Link: <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/politica/la-argentina-retiro-a-su-delegacion-de-la-cumbre-del-clima-cop29-en-azerbaiyan-por-una-orden-de-nid13112024/>

² Link: <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/por-que-se-inundo-bahia-blanca-el-coctel-de-factores-naturales-y-humanos-que-desencadenaron-la-nid12032025/>

Editorial policy	Media	Scope	Article Title	Date
Mainstream/ Conservative	La Voz del Interior	Regional	Luego de una primera intervención, Argentina se retiró de la COP 29 en Azerbaijan ³	Nov 13, 2024
			Hace 13 años Conicet anticipaba un posible desastre climático en Bahía Blanca ⁴	March 7, 2025
Alternative/ Progressive	Página 12	Nationwide	La Argentina retiró a su delegación de la COP29 ⁵	Nov 14, 2024
			Un diluvio trágico inundó a Bahía Blanca ⁶	March 8, 2025
Alternative/ Progressive	La Nueva Mañana	Regional	Milei retiró su delegación de la Cumbre de la COP29, que evalúa cómo mitigar el cambio climático ⁷	Nov 13, 2024
			El Gobierno de Javier Milei toma distancia de la reconstrucción de Bahía Blanca ⁸	March 10, 2025

4.2.1. Comparative Media Analysis: Argentina's Withdrawal from COP29

The Argentine media's coverage of the withdrawal from COP29 reflects varying editorial perspectives on climate governance and political responsibility, as shown through four analytical lenses: *actors referenced*, *solutions framing*, *role of the state*, and *climate framing* (Table 2).

La Nación frames the event mainly as a political decision, referencing President Javier Milei and the Foreign Ministry but minimizing climate implications. It does not suggest alternatives or future actions, portraying the state primarily as a reactive political actor. The climate context is marginal.

La Voz del Interior includes references to both the Argentine delegation and COP authorities, suggesting—albeit implicitly—that international cooperation was disrupted. The role of the state is that of a diplomatic participant who failed to engage, and the climate is framed as a lost multilateral opportunity.

Página/12 takes a more critical tone, mentioning environmental advocates and international climate governance bodies. It explicitly frames the event as part of a broader pattern of state disengagement from climate commitments, criticizing the government's lack of solutions and positioning the state as abandoning its global responsibilities. Climate change is central to the narrative.

La Nueva Mañana presents a similarly critical view, but with stronger emphasis on ideological motives. It mentions civil society and COP leadership, framing the state as an actor ideologically opposed to climate policy. The article calls for reengagement in international efforts, and its climate framing stresses the urgency of the crisis and Argentina's isolation in global negotiations.

³ Link: <https://www.lavoz.com.ar/ciudadanos/luego-de-una-primer-intervencion-argentina-se-retiro-de-la-cop-29-en-azerbaijan/>

⁴ Link: <https://www.lavoz.com.ar/ciudadanos/hace-13-anos-un-estudio-del-conicet-anticipaba-un-posible-desastre-climatico-en-bahia-blanca/>

⁵ Link: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/782418-la-argentina-retiro-a-su-delegacion-de-la-cop-29>

⁶ Link: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/809205-un-diluvio-tragico-inundo-a-bahia-blanca>

⁷ Link: <https://lmdiaro.com.ar/contenido/466321/milei-retiro-su-delegacion-de-la-cumbre-del-cop29-que-evalua-como-mitigar-el-cam>

⁸ Link: <https://lmdiaro.com.ar/contenido/475489/el-gobierno-de-javier-milei-toma-distancia-de-la-reconstruccion-de-bahia-blanca->

Across the sample, the progressive outlets (Página/12 and La Nueva Mañana) center the climate emergency and governmental accountability, while the conservatives newspapers La Nación and La Voz offer a more diplomatic or procedural lens, with climate concerns subordinated to political developments. These framings reflect broader tensions between environmental advocacy and political ideology in Argentina’s media landscape.

Table 2. Coverage of COP29 Withdrawal

Media	Actors	Solutions Framing	Role of State	Climate Framing
La Nación	Javier Milei, Foreign Ministry	No solution proposed	The state as a political actor, reactive	Climate context secondary to politics
La Voz del Interior	Argentine delegation, COP authorities	Implied need for international dialogue	The state as diplomatic actor, failing role	Mild concern for diplomatic climate engagement
Página/12	Government, environmental advocates, COP	Highlights lack of commitment	The state as retreating from responsibility	Strong emphasis on climate inaction
La Nueva Mañana	Javier Milei, civil society, COP leadership	Urges reengagement in global efforts	The state as ideologically negligent	Climate emergency highlighted, critical tone

As the analysis of the selected articles shows, mainstream media normalize the climate discourse focusing on foreign policy and diplomacy; while alternatives adopt a more urgent, justice-oriented tone. When it comes to a domestic climate disaster, the media coverage reveals similar trends, as it is presented on Table 3 by the analysis of media articles referring the crisis of the Bahía Blanca floods.

Table 3: Coverage of Bahía Blanca floods

Media	Actors	Solutions Framing	Role of State	Climate Framing
La Nación	Conicet researchers, SMN, municipal authorities	Technical (drainage, geography)	State as analyst—diagnosis, emergency aid	Climate implied via extreme rainfall + planning gaps
La Voz del Interior	CONICET researchers, hydrology experts, municipal planners	Technical/predictive	Critiques state neglect of warnings	Climate framed as long-identified risk
Página 12	Emergency services, provincial & national gov’t, victims, NGOs	Humanitarian collective	State coordinating rescue, criticized for slow action	Disaster framed as climate tragedy with human impact
La Nueva Mañana	Governor, national officials (Francos), local authorities, president	Political/humanitarian	State distancing responsibility; funding gap flagged	Climate not central—focus on reconstruction politics

The coverage of this case includes a variety of actors. The mainstream media refer to CONICET scientists, meteorologists, municipal officials and planners. The alternative media include emergency teams, provincial and national governments, NGOs, affected families. The most interesting finding suggests a situation of a “Technical vs a Political Framing” between mainstream-conservative and alternative-progressive media: La Nación and La Voz del Interior focus on technical factors and long-standing vulnerabilities, grounding the event in climate-era infrastructure analysis. On the contrary, Página 12 and La Nueva Mañana, conversely, highlight state response, human impact, and political accountability—foregrounding social implications. This result provides interesting output to contrast

the climate framing, which suggests a confrontation within the mainstream and alternative between Normalization vs Climate Criticality: Climate is normalized by the technical approach of *La Nación*, because it is seen as a factor, but not central. Curiously the cooperative newspaper *La Nueva Mañana* shows climate as not central, but focuses on reconstruction politics. *La Voz del Interior* and *Página 12* present the flood as a foreseeable or climate-fuelled disaster, embedding a strong climate-critical narrative. Nevertheless, mainstream media focuses, mostly, on technical explanation and alternative media emphasize climate justice, predictive knowledge, political negligence, and humanitarian urgency. Another interesting result draws attention to the State's Role: The state is seen either as a technical responder (*La Nación*), a negligent actor (*La Voz*), a humanitarian coordinator (*Página 12*), or a political actor avoiding responsibility (*La Nueva Mañana*). The coverage analysis reflects different opinions about which State's level is responsible.

Table 4: Comparison about State levels portraits

Media	National Government	Provincial Government	Local Government	Overall Framing of the State
<i>La Nación</i>	Technocratic coordinator (neutral tone)	Mentioned, not central	Burdened by structural issues	Technical, systemic diagnosis
<i>La Voz del Interior</i>	Negligent, ignored long-term warnings	Implicated in passive neglect	Implicated	Critical of state inaction and foresight gap
<i>Página 12</i>	Slow, inadequate response	Proactive, first to act	First line, overwhelmed	Unequal response; national failure emphasized
<i>La Nueva Mañana</i>	Avoiding reconstruction responsibility	Seeking support	Subordinate in recovery	Politicized disengagement and blame shifting

Across the four media outlets—*La Nación*, *La Voz del Interior*, *Página 12*, and *La Nueva Mañana*— all acknowledge the state as central to the disaster response, though with varying emphasis on each government level. Mainstream media (*La Nación*, *La Voz*) emphasize technical explanations and planning failures, with varying levels of state critique. Alternative outlets (*Página 12*, *La Nueva Mañana*) focus more on political responsibility, accountability, and social impact, especially regarding the national government's response. Climate change is treated as a structural backdrop in all cases, but only *Página 12* and *La Voz* explicitly tie it to state (in)action and long-term risk.

5. Discussion

The findings confirm that Argentine journalism is far from monolithic; rather, it reveals a clear fragmentation shaped by ideological orientation and editorial positioning. In the context of both Argentina's withdrawal from COP29 and the floods in Bahía Blanca, mainstream outlets such as *La Nación* and *La Voz del Interior* predominantly adopt technocratic or institutional perspectives. These narratives tend to frame environmental issues as technical or managerial challenges, often downplaying political accountability or systemic critique. Meanwhile, alternative outlets like *Página 12* and *La Nueva Mañana* foreground issues of state responsibility, climate justice, and power asymmetries—providing more critical coverage of both international disengagement and local disasters.

What emerges is a clear contrast between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic approaches to climate journalism. Independent media play a crucial role in politicizing environmental discourse, linking it to questions of inequality, long-term policy neglect, and extractivist dynamics. Their framing amplifies the voices of communities, scientists, and civil actors often omitted from mainstream coverage. However, this alternative journalism still operates at a structural disadvantage in a commercialized media landscape, limiting its influence and visibility in national debates.

This dual structure reflects a broader paradox within Latin American climate politics, where calls for sustainability often coexist with continued extractivism and limited public accountability. Journalism, therefore, becomes not only a mirror of these tensions but also a battleground of meaning—capable of reproducing dominant logics or fostering transformative imaginaries. The divergence in coverage across the selected outlets demonstrates how media discourse can either obscure or expose the structural roots of climate vulnerability and governance failure

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined how neoliberalism shapes the journalistic representation of the climate emergency in Argentina. Through a comparative analysis of mainstream and independent media, it shows that dominant outlets often reinforce neoliberal logic by favoring technical, market-based responses and sidelining structural critiques. In contrast, alternative media challenge extractivism and foreground the voices of those most affected by environmental injustice.

As the climate crisis deepens, the role of journalism in shaping ecological imaginaries becomes increasingly urgent. It is not only a question of coverage, but of commitment: whether media systems will continue to echo dominant paradigms, or instead contribute to reimagining climate futures anchored in justice, accountability, and planetary care. Supporting independent, critical journalism is thus not only a matter of media pluralism—it is a climate imperative.

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