

Did Geopolitics and Economics Trump Science?

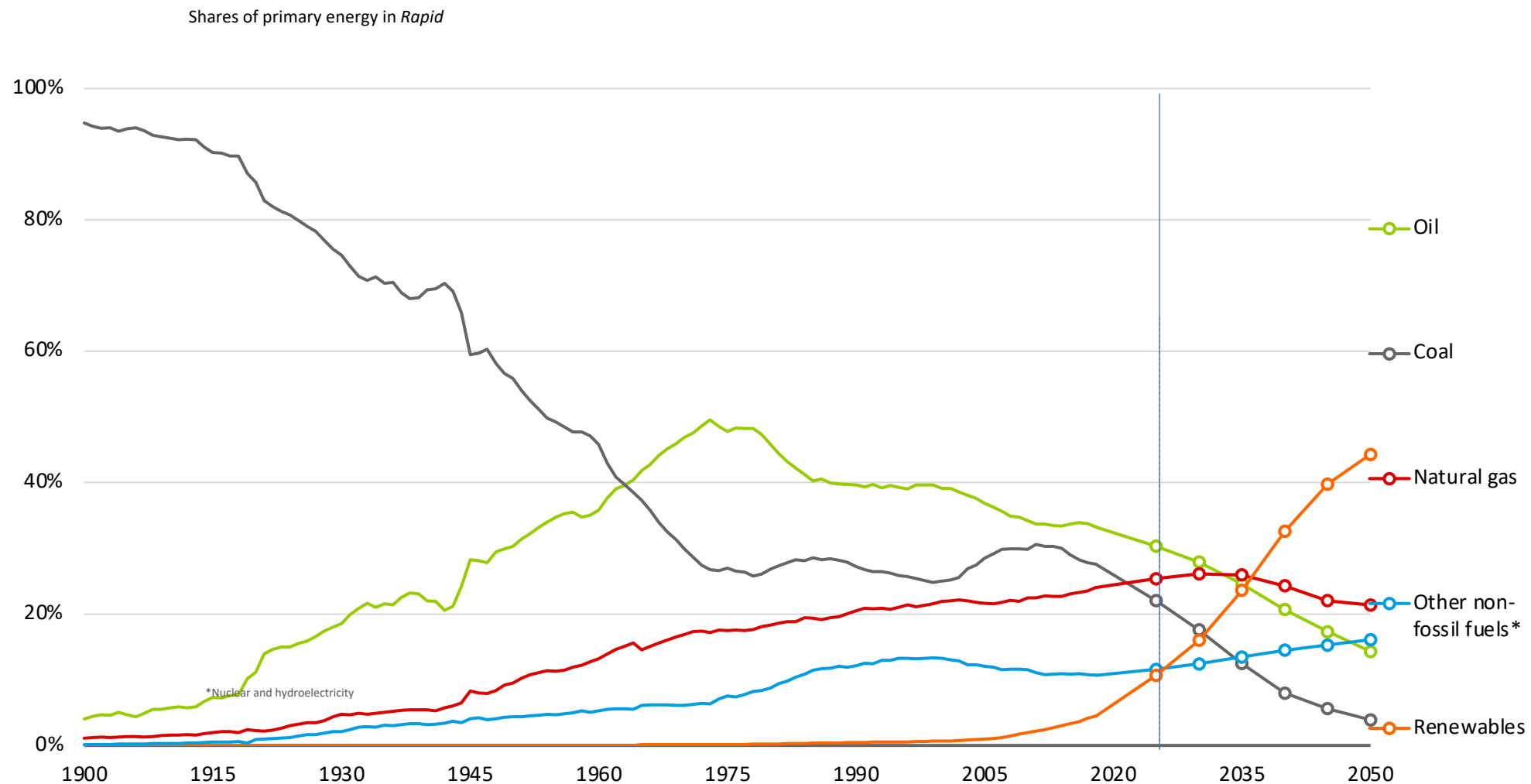
# A former-diplomat's view of Cop26

# Introduction

“...“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless yet be determined to make them otherwise.”

-- attributed to F. Scott Fitzgerald

# Changing structure of global energy system according to BP



# My Background

- Forty years as a Foreign Service Officer and Senior Intelligence Officer
- US Ambassador to Azerbaijan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- National Intelligence Officer for Europe
- Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs; and International Organization Affairs responsible for the Specialized and Technical Agencies of the UN.
- At Mason
  - Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Schar School teaching courses on the geopolitics of energy security and theory and practice of public policy.
  - Co-Director of the Center for Energy Science and Policy and member of the leadership team for C-RASC.

# Perspectives

- What was Glasgow COP26?
  - “For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country on earth for global climate summits - called COPs - which stands for ‘Conference of the Parties’. 'In that time climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority. This year will be the 26th annual summit – giving it the name COP26. With the UK as President, COP26 takes place in Glasgow.” from UK President
  - Participation: representations of Parties to the 1994 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (“the Convention”) and Observer states (197 countries), members of the press and media, and representatives of observer organizations – 40k registered participants
  - The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly -- Heads of state/government, diplomats, other government officials, NGOs, business representatives, student and individual activists
- COP27, Fall 2022 Egypt host country in Sharm el-Sheikh

Mega conferences –  
not the place to get stuff done !

...but they do focus minds

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# Modesty and Diplomacy Not Synonymous

“Diplomacy is the practice of ways and means. Those who ask of it grand designs or the transformation of society, must forever be disappointed. **The more profound changes take place outside the conference room.** Yet, the institutions of ... diplomacy are sufficient to the day if the diplomat uses them wisely and well.”

-- from The Diplomat's Dictionary, Chas. W. Freeman, Jr. pg. 107

# Results

- Widely different priorities and expectations among 40k participants
  - Outcomes (governments) vs outputs (climate activists)
- Fortunate to have UK as President and former SecState Kerry leading US delegation.
- Glasgow Climate Pact -- supply, not demand focus; aspirational, not binding.
  - Focus more on S&T solutions to climate change rather than changed behavior.
- In the end, the objective became to have an agreement all could accept.
  - “Phase-down” vs “Phase-out” for coal
- Did Economics and Geopolitics Trump Science?
  - Energy-deficient countries/populations?
  - Global energy crisis for northern hemisphere
  - Geopolitics (e.g., Russia – no Putin, China – no Xi, India – no no-coal)?



# Perspective of Former Diplomat – a Success or Failure?

- This was never about questioning science – see preambular language
- COP26 goals (according to UK Presidency)
  - Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach
  - Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
  - Mobilize finance
  - Work together to deliver
- Quasi-commitments (not binding) and pledges from the ground up
- For smaller, middle to low-income countries
  - All about money – typical of North/South Dialogue
  - Sense that no net-carbon future for rich countries

# Elements in the Glasgow Pact

- Cutting emissions -- emissions need to fall around 45 percent by 2030 to limit warming to 1.5 degrees
  - India agreed to reach net-zero emissions by 2070,
  - Saudi Arabia by 2060, and
  - Brazil by 2050
  - 74 countries commit to net-zero targets by 2050 or earlier; cover 90% of global emissions
- (NEW) Coal and fossil fuels – “unabated”; “phase-out vs phase-down”
- Climate finance (\$100 billion annually, missed pledge)
  - Mitigation and Adaptation funding
  - Loss and damage
- The Paris Rulebook
  - Emissions reporting and transparency
  - Carbon trading/carbon market
- NB: See [Chatham House summary](#) analysis of COP 26.

# Side Pledges/Plurilateral Agreements

- US-China joint declaration;
- US-EU global methane releases; cut methane emissions 30% by 2030.
- Voluntary pledges that would phase out gasoline-powered cars, decarbonize air travel, protect forests, and ensure more [sustainable investing](#) (blended-financing).
- Just Energy Transition Partnership (South Africa)  
<https://ukcop26.org/political-declaration-on-the-just-energy-transition-in-south-africa/>
- Glasgow Alliance for Net-Zero (\$130 trillion private sector)
- “First-movers” coalition

# The Glasgow Breakthroughs

- Power – clean power by 2030
- Road Transport – zero emissions vehicles by 2030
- Steel – near-zero emissions steel by 2030
- Hydrogen – affordable low-carbon hydrogen by 2030



# Why geopolitics and economics and not science?

- Hope that science of global warming is now so compelling that the world could unite to avoid what described as a looming global catastrophe.
- Global UN meetings have always been about geopolitics and economics
- Old system built around regional bloc negotiations
  - Group B – US, Europe (EU), and other developed countries
  - Group D – USSR and Warsaw Pact countries
  - G-77 developing countries (including China and India)
- Issues largely about Cold War confrontation and G-77 demands for massive wealth transfers from the global North to the global South
- COP26 geopolitics -- the role of US, China, Russia, and India -- not EU
- Climate finance commitments (\$100 billion) fell far short of developing countries demands for assistance and compensation for past climate change damage.
- Globally countries were concerned about short-term energy shortages during the winter months, the spike in natural gas prices and the increased use of coal.
- For climate activists and some governments, the COP26 outputs were disappointing.

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

Winston Churchill November 1942

- Nature of energy transition is a hybrid energy system
- Get to work – supply and demand tackled at the local and individual level
- Recognize the limits of diplomacy but continue to lead
- Recognize the reality of geopolitics – China, India, Russia
- Develop idea of blended financing – public/private partnerships
- Start practical – joint-energy transition projects
  - Pacific island nations
  - South Africa
- EU Green New Deal
  - German “Climate club” to shelter companies
  - Reprieve for “green” natural gas and nuclear

“First  
Principles”  
about  
Innovation  
(from Bill  
Gates)

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Will it work?

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How much time will it take?

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How much will it cost?

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Is there a better, cheaper, faster  
alternative?

# Questions for Diplomats

- Why did you block International Financial institutions from funding fossil-fuel projects?
- SDG 7 promises clean energy for all – still 600-800 million people without electricity
- Can we count on continued US leadership?
- Will you agree to binding commitments to provide a “Marshall Plan” for climate threatened- countries?
- Will your domestic priorities (infrastructure, build back better) match your international rhetoric about the importance net-zero carbon future?
- Public diplomacy strategy – convince countries, convince domestic populations