



Lord Hague of Richmond is a former Foreign Secretary and Leader of the Conservative Party, United Kingdom

William Hague

Foreword

The science is clear: greenhouse gas emissions from human activity have driven climate change, and the threats posed by average temperature rises of even 1.5 degrees are severe and must be averted. To deny the need for action is to accept the most dire consequences for our planet.

But the fight against climate change is still not universally embraced by conservatives across the world. While many centre-right politicians are leading on tackling this threat, others doubt the seriousness of its consequences, and more are sceptical of the bold action required to stop

it. This is not only a politically untenable position but a rejection of one of the greatest economic opportunities of the 21st century.

Reducing emissions is no longer just about the environment but a route to economic growth, prosperity and resilience. Those on the centre-right who are vocal champions of the move away from fossil fuels and lead their nation's transition will reap the political reward and shape their country's future. Failing to act decisively would be a grave mistake. History will not reward dither or delay.

Coal fuelled the industrial revolution, bringing about unprecedented advances for human prosperity. The subsequent exploitation of oil and gas expanded access to energy and generated further wealth, including here in the UK. But the world has changed, and our future prosperity depends on using alternative sources of energy. Most major economies and many more large businesses have recognised this and begun the transition away from fossil fuels and towards net zero out of concern for their economic self-interest as well as for the sake of the environment.

The introduction of measures like the USA's Inflation Reduction Act and its massive support for clean technologies will accelerate the change and leave those nations which cling to fossil fuels trailing in their wake. China threatens to dominate global supply chains in industries like electric vehicles and solar power. And the invasion of Ukraine means that Europe has realised, belatedly, the dire consequences of its dependence on coal, oil and gas from Russia.

The future belongs to countries rich in solar, wind, and critical minerals that are the fastest to exploit their natural advantages. All countries must, sensibly but quickly, transition to cleaner forms of energy and leave the fossil fuel age behind us, delivering on our commitments to phase down unabated oil and gas, as agreed for coal at COP26. Securing this global agreement should be the call to action

for conservatives concerned about climate change and the malign influence of petrostates.

The core of our approach must remain a willingness to deal with the challenges of the day and to avoid a stubborn adherence to ideology at any cost. While reaching net zero will require a level of state intervention that some on the right will find uncomfortable, acting swiftly now will prevent the need for far greater intervention in the future if temperatures rise unchecked.

Applying the central principles of conservatism - free markets, free trade and individual responsibility - will be vital if we are to make a success of the switch to clean energy globally. For the sake of our own political survival and that of our way of life, we cannot vacate the battlefield of ideas to the left on this crucial issue. We have to win the argument for an energy transition that harnesses the capital and resources of private enterprise and grows our economy. The global effort to tackle climate change will not succeed without conservatives leading the way.

That is why I am delighted to welcome this collection of essays by centre-right legislators from around the world. They each put forward ambitious but practical solutions to drive forward the transition away from fossil fuels and show this is a change that we must embrace rather than fear.