# Tony Blair’s climate policy reset sparks backlash amid fossil fuel ties



In late 2022, the Four Seasons luxury hotel in Sharm el-Sheikh became a backdrop for significant discussions during the Cop27 UN climate conference. Among the notable figures was former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, who held meetings with key political and business leaders, igniting concerns over his influence on climate policy. His longstanding reputation as an advocate for climate action was called into question, as some insiders described him as potentially becoming “a serious threat to sensible climate policy.”

Recently, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI) published a report proposing a "reset" of global climate policy, with Blair’s foreword featuring contentious statements. He noted that citizens in developed nations feel burdened by demands for financial sacrifices related to climate change, while their contributions to global emissions are minimal. “Political leaders... are terrified of saying so, for fear of being accused of being ‘climate deniers,’” he asserted.

Immediate backlash followed. Prominent climate economist Nicholas Stern critiqued the report as “muddled and misleading,” arguing that it minimises the ongoing progress in global decarbonisation efforts. Bob Ward from the Grantham Research Institute echoed these sentiments, stating that the report fails to adequately address the growing impacts of climate change on households and businesses. Shaun Spiers of the Green Alliance lamented the report's implications that combating climate change is a task for elites rather than the general populace.

In response to the criticism, the TBI released clarifications stating that Blair’s words had been misinterpreted, reiterating their support for net zero targets. Nevertheless, the perception of Blair as a sceptic towards net zero has gained traction, particularly in the context of a shifting political landscape in the UK, where Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative party leader, has distanced herself from such commitments.

Blair's involvement in the climate summit raised questions about his alignment with Middle Eastern and Gulf states. After resigning from his position as Prime Minister, he took on the role of Middle East peace envoy and established lucrative consultancies, including advising the Saudi government and the UAE on modernisation efforts. Some former advisors have suggested that his social circle, primarily composed of leaders from authoritarian regimes and fossil fuel nations, may influence his views.

During Cop27, Blair maintained a low profile yet expressed interest in projects related to climate initiatives in Africa. His longstanding ties to the UAE and its oil industry, particularly Sultan Al Jaber, who was appointed president of the forthcoming Cop28 conference, further complicated perceptions of his stance on climate issues. Although TBI clarified that Blair was not compensated for his advisory role prior to Cop28, the nature of their discussions remains obscure.

The UAE-led Cop28 concluded with an unprecedented agreement to address fossil fuel usage; however, some critics claimed that the final outcomes were contrary to the interests of oil-producing nations. Similar concerns were echoed during discussions at the next Cop in Azerbaijan, where mentions of fossil fuel transition were reportedly sidelined.

TBI has offered its expertise to Brazil, set to host the upcoming Cop30 summit, which seeks to maintain a commitment to phasing out fossil fuels, but Brazil has declined the offer. A spokesperson for TBI insists that their work is not impacted by their ties to oil-producing countries, emphasizing the need for a practical approach to climate policy that includes technologies like carbon capture and nuclear power, rather than a sole focus on renewables.

Critics accuse Blair of being disconnected from the realities faced by vulnerable communities affected by climate change, asserting that his perspectives stem from experiences within elite circles rather than those advocating for urgent climate action. Tom Burke from the E3G thinktank commented on Blair’s remarks indicating a desire to appeal to influential figures within the oil sector, suggesting that his feedback might not align with the principles necessary to tackle climate change effectively.

Although Blair’s recent report reflects an inclination toward technological innovation, it has drawn widespread criticism. Many experts argue that it presents outdated views on climate solutions, asserting the need for simultaneous action on emissions reduction and technological advancements.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has publicly reaffirmed his government’s commitment to addressing climate change through a proactive industrial policy aimed at fostering investment in low-carbon technologies. His statements received positive reception at an international energy security conference, signalling a stark contrast to Blair's influence within UK politics.

As Blair's associations with right-wing populists appear to strengthen, questions remain about the implications for his legacy in progressive politics and the future of climate action in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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