

Energy, the vital lifeline of humanity (Part 2)

by Guy Mettan,* Geneva



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(Picture ma)

In my last article, I showed how the enlarged BRICS constituted the largest integrated coalition of primary energy producers, mainly of fossil origin, and end consumers with the gigantic Chinese and Indian markets. So what? you say. Why would this vision of the past matter to us, since

we, the Westerners, are banking on the energies of the future, electricity, renewable solar and wind power, hydrogen, and once the transition is over, a bright energy future, environmentally friendly, resource-saving and climate-neutral, will be available to us.

It is true that many scenarios of the *International Energy Agency* (IEA) tend to accredit this thesis. Some statistical results too, which show a constant improvement in energy efficiency (with equal GNP, the volume of energy consumption decreases) and a boom in the production of renewable energies, especially in Europe.

But these figures are misleading. The scenarios only say what we want them to say, insofar as the choice of initial data determines the results. And the latter are contradictory when we look at them closely.

First of all, everyone agrees that overall energy consumption will continue to increase by 2050, to at least 700 QBtu (Quadrillion British thermal units) compared to 600 today. It will be necessary to properly supply developing economies and electricity-intensive digital industries.

However, four-fifths of energy production comes from coal, oil, gas and nuclear power. Even if the share of primary energy from renewable energy increases, it is illusory to think that it will be able to replace other sources. The share of renewable energy will at most be able to compensate for the increase in overall energy consumption, but not put an end to the use of the oil, gas and coal as long as there is. Moreover, in human history, we have never seen one energy source replace another. They add up to each other. Even wood remains an important source of energy in some countries.

Moreover, if we consider the production of electricity, very fashionable today because of electric cars and the climate narrative, we note that in 2022, 85% of the world's electricity came from non-renewable resources: coal 35%, gas 23%, nuclear 10% and hydro 15%, wind, solar or biomass constitute barely 15% between the three of them. The switch to all-electric is not going to solve the problem of electricity generation sources anytime soon, regardless of the investments made in renewable energy. Moreover, some scenarios do not even foresee a decrease in fossil energy sources in electricity production by 2050.

This is why the countries of the global South are increasingly distancing themselves from climate objectives and all-renewable electricity, which they increasingly see as measures and technological traps aimed at limiting and controlling their development. economic under the pretext of fighting against global warming. There is therefore very, very little chance that the climate objectives will be achieved and that the transition to solely green energy sources will take place uniformly across the entire planet.

Far from calming down, the battle for energy is only intensifying.

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

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