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Multi-Layered Strategies in Global Governance Structure:  
Case of UNFCCC COP19 and the Coal and Climate Summit in Warsaw in 2013

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# Multi-Layered Strategies in Global Governance Structure: Case of UNFCCC COP19 and the Coal and Climate Summit in Warsaw in 2013

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## 1: Preface

### 1-1: Aim of the Paper

Poland has abundant coal resources on its territory. This has led it since its accession to the EU to oppose the EU<sup>1</sup>'s ambitious climate change and energy policies. In the negotiations on the so-called "Triple 20 directive"<sup>2</sup> of climate change targets to be achieved by 2020 - a 20% reduction in GHG<sup>3</sup> emissions compared to 1990 levels, raising the proportion of renewable energy in primary energy production to 20%, and a 20% increase in energy efficiency compared with 1990 - Poland was joined in its opposition by several of the other new member states. However, in the later negotiation on the "Energy Roadmap 2050", which agreed on a 80-95% reduction in GHG emissions compared with 1990, only Poland vehemently opposed the plan. As a result, the country has become relatively isolated from the other EU member states in its energy and climate policies.

It was therefore against a somewhat contradictory background that Poland hosted the COP19 meeting of the UNFCCC<sup>4</sup> in Warsaw in November 2013 and accompanied it on its own initiative by a special Coal and Climate Summit. This article focuses on the multi-layered strategies of Poland's energy and climate change policies illustrated at the COP19 and the Coal and Climate Summit. The persistence of coal use Poland despite its accession to the EU is worth detailed consideration when thinking about the geopolitics of energy and climate change policies in the 21st century.

## 2: COP19

### 2-1: Summary of COP19

The COP19 meeting of the UNFCCC was held on 11<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013 in Warsaw. Broadly speaking, the meeting had three main issues on which it tried to reach consensus between the participants. The first was the new international framework for dealing with GHG emissions after 2020, the so-called “Post-Kyoto”. Thanks to the discussions in COP19, the “Post-Kyoto” framework is due to be agreed at the COP21 meeting to be held in Paris in late 2015. The second issue was economic assistance for developing countries for their efforts towards mitigation and adaptation to global warming. Just before the COP19 meeting, on 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> November 2013, the Philippines was hit by hurricane “Haiyan” causing catastrophic damage. This timely reminder of the devastation caused by natural disasters linked to climate change helped COP19 to agree on the founding of a structure to deal with "Losses and Damages" caused by natural disasters in conjunction with climate change. The third issue was strengthening the climate change measures of all participating countries by 2020. As a result of the discussion, all parties agreed that they would submit voluntary GHG reduction targets well in advance of the 2015 COP21 meeting.

Overall, therefore, COP19 was a story of progress towards COP21 on all these three fronts. But besides this official picture, it is worth considering the contrasting position of Poland in the talks. This puts a rather different complexion on the COP19 meeting but has implications for the geopolitics of energy and climate change action in the 21st century.

### 2-2: The Intentions of Poland in COP19

2013, the year of the COP19 meeting, was characterized by a move throughout the world in favor of “avoiding coal use”. U.S. President Barak Obama published “*The President’s Climate Action Plan*” in June 2013. This

announced a tightening of the regulation of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>5</sup> emissions from coal-fired power plants in the U.S.<sup>6</sup>. Under the plan, the U.S. would cease exports and investment in the new coal-fired power plant construction in foreign developing countries<sup>7</sup>, except in two cases, namely use of either the best available coal technology or of CCS<sup>8</sup> technology. In July 2013 the World Bank announced that it would no longer support new coal-fired power plant emitting large amounts of GHGs<sup>9</sup> and the EIB<sup>10</sup>, too, decided to reduce its support for coal-fired power plants<sup>11</sup>. In the same month the U.S. Export-Import Bank canceled its financing to the Thai Binh 2<sup>nd</sup> coal-fired power plant in Vietnam<sup>12</sup>.

At COP19, the trend towards “avoiding coal use” was maintained. Britain endorsed the anti-coal stance adopted by the U.S.<sup>13</sup> and Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF<sup>14</sup>, also announced its decision not to invest in the coal industry<sup>15</sup>. Greenpeace, one of the foremost international environmental NGOs<sup>16</sup>, demanded a complete break from coal use<sup>17</sup> and the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, a local NGO based in the Philippines, pointed out the damage to health caused by coal mines and the combustion of coal<sup>18</sup>.

However, against these policy statements must be set the trend towards increasing coal use, especially in developing countries. *The Globe and Mail* reported that, in spite of the anti-coal movement, coal use had spread globally. Indeed, it would go so far as to say that “[c]oal is no longer the king of energy, it is the global emperor”<sup>19</sup>. Poland, the country holding the presidency of COP19, used the conference as an opportunity to continue its promotion of the fuel, and to persuade its partners in the global community to take account of Poland’s unique position in the EU as a supporter of coal. An official of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, “We want to project a positive image of Poland, which sees EU climate policy in the context of global policy. We wish to put forward an unconventional case, highlighting modern technologies and making use of the media”<sup>20</sup>. On

the eve of COP19, Marcin Korolec, then Minister for the Environment, complained about the EU's climate change policies and insisted on Poland's own perception. "I am not skeptical about climate change; I am skeptical about some of the European means of addressing it". He added that, "Europe is moving too far ahead of other parts of the world on this issue. The concept of leading by example is not delivering" <sup>21</sup>.

Donald Tusk, the then Prime Minister of Poland, supported the continue use of Polish coal as an important primary energy source, saying that "Polish coal will again become a source of profit and energy. We will not be [misled] by the big [environmental-industrial] lobby and we will not try to convince people that solar panels and windmills are the energy future of Poland. These sources are only a complementary [means]". Janusz Piechocinski, Economy Minister, declared that he would never give up the case for the use of domestic coal resources. He said in the Sejm on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 that for the next few decades coal would remain the staple fuel used by the Polish power industry and that the huge deposits of coal in Poland were a major advantage of the Polish economy <sup>22</sup>.

These remarks show that the Polish government regarded COP19 as an opportunity to appeal for the continuation of coal use, despite its position as the country holding the presidency of the meeting.

### 2-3: Controversy surrounding the Polish Position

While Poland was trying to put forward its own viewpoint on coal at the time of the COP19 against the worldwide "anti-coal" trend that had gained strength in 2013, a number of Polish politicians and bureaucrats were going further than the remarks of Polish ministers and making rather more extreme comments about the situation. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of the right-wing "Law and Justice" party, for example, said that CO<sub>2</sub> had no impact on the climate and that the regulations on climate change had been written to force Poland to buy expensive technologies <sup>23</sup>. Off the

record, one Polish government official declared that the whole “climate thing” was a myth invented by the left wing, a scheme hatched by “influential lobbyists” planning to destroy Poland’s coal-based economy <sup>24</sup>.

The political situation during the COP19 meeting was also confused, when on 20<sup>th</sup> November, in the middle of the COP19, the Prime Minister Donald Tusk dismissed Marcin Korolec as Environment Minister in a cabinet reshuffle and appointed Maciej Grabowski, a former deputy Finance Minister, in his stead. Although Korolec continued to act the chairman of COP19 right up to the end, the dismissal of an Environment Minister during an UNFCCC international conference was extraordinary.

Environmental NGOs were not slow to express their own irritation and dismay at the positions taken by Poland at and around the climate change talks. Around 800 delegates from environmental NGOs, including Greenpeace and Oxfam, expressed disapproval at the lack of progress at the conference and anger at the strong influences of coal lobbyists. In the end they left the talks in the Warsaw international stadium, in protest at the disappointing attitude of the host country. One WWF <sup>25</sup> spokesman said, “Warsaw, which should have been an important step in the transition to a sustainable future, is on track to deliver virtually nothing. We feel governments have given up on the process. Frustrations in the annual conference are nothing new, but participants agree that progress at this year’s summit has been particularly slow” <sup>26</sup>.

Greenpeace expressed its frustration not only verbally, but in concrete actions. One of its protest actions was at the huge coal-fired power plant at Berchatow, a town famous for its coalmines and coal-fired power plants, at which they displayed the message “Climate Change Starts Here”. The environmental NGOs were indignant with Poland because, despite being the host country of COP19, it had no intention of avoiding the use of coal and was even trying to the fuel.

**Figure 1: Greenpeace’s Action at Berchatow**



[Source: Greenpeace Japan Facebook Page]

### 3: The Coal and Climate Summit

#### 3-1: Summary

Backing up the pro-coal position of Poland at COP19, another important conference was held simultaneously, a “Coal and Climate Summit”, organized by Polish Economy Ministry in Warsaw on 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The host of the conference was the World Coal Association. The conference brought together the leaders of the world's largest coal producing companies, senior policy-makers, business leaders, academics and NGO representatives to discuss the role of coal in the global economy, in the context of the climate change agenda <sup>27</sup>.

The summit caused considerable controversy, because it was promoting coal use at the same time as the COP19 meeting was discussing the establishment of a low-carbon society in the world. As the *Globe and Mail* reported, “Not one, but two climate change meetings are currently under way in Warsaw. You may be aware of the conference sponsored by the UN[FCCC], another effort to agree on cuts to carbon emissions after the failure in Copenhagen in 2009. *In a provocative gesture* (emphasis added), the Polish government is simultaneously hosting a summit meeting of the World Coal Association <sup>28</sup>”. *Europolitics* reported that “*It is a first in the*

*history of UN climate conference: on the initiative of the Polish [M]inister of the [E]conomy, the World Coal Association organized an International Coal and Climate Summit in Warsaw, on 18-19 November, on the margins of the climate negotiations. This extremely controversial event incurred the wrath of the UN. It further tarnished Poland's reputation – that had already been accused of slowing down the process by blocking the EU's commitment to reduce emissions by 2030”* <sup>29</sup>.

### 3-2: Opening Address by the Polish Minister of the Economy

Thus, in contrast to the tough negotiations on achieving a low-carbon world between the participants at the COP19, arguments supporting coal use were being advanced simultaneously at the Coal and Climate Summit.

Expressing the country's positive attitude to the coal sector, the Economy Minister Janusz Piaroch said that “In Poland such a significant part of energy comes from coal that by decreasing the profitability of the sector with taxes or limited emissions will cause energy prices to rise, the state of economy to deteriorate and the democratic system to destabilize” <sup>30</sup> . However, he welcomed the dialogue with environmentalists about ways to make coal energy more efficient. His intention was that energy derived from coal should not be abandoned and that coal could offer part of the solution to the current energy situation in the world by the development of CCS technology and increasing the efficiency of coal-fired power stations <sup>31</sup>.

### 3-3: Criticism of the Coal and Climate Summit

Environmentalists criticized the fact that the summit was being held and that the Polish Economy Minister had used his opening remarks to defend a pro-coal policy. Mr. Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a U.S. advocacy group, called the summit



“*a distraction*”. He said, “The summit’s focus on continued reliance on coal is directly counter to the goal of these climate negotiations, which is to dramatically reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Every year countries come together at these negotiations to find a global solution to climate change, and yet *our host is embracing a chief cause of the problem*” <sup>32</sup>.

Mr. John Gummer, a former UK environment secretary, who was attending COP19 as chairman of the UK government’s panel of climate change advisors, also indignantly told the *Guardian*, “Calling coal a clean solution is like characterizing sex trafficking as marriage guidance” <sup>33</sup>. Greenpeace also protested at the summit by hanging a drop curtain asking “Who rules Poland – the coal industry or the people?” on the wall of Polish Economy Ministry.

**Figure 2: Greenpeace’s Protest against the Coal and Climate Summit**



[Source: Nikkei (2013.11.19)]

### 3-4: Speech by Christiana Figueres

At the Coal and Climate Summit, Christiana Figueres, the executive secretary of the UNFCCC, made a keynote speech to the world's coal industry executives. She stated that most of the world's coal reserves *should be left in the ground* to avoid catastrophic global warming and that the coal industry had to urgently transform itself, diversify into renewable energy and change radically, rapidly and dramatically for everyone's sake. She said, "By now, it should be abundantly clear that further capital expenditures on coal can go ahead only if it is compatible with the 2°C limit" and that "coal power could help poorer countries' economic development and poverty reduction, but *the industry must change*" <sup>34</sup>.

Although the UNFCCC through Ms Figueres was able to press the case for the coal industry to move towards more climate-friendly behavior, the delegates from the \$3tn industry were not swayed. Godfrey Gomwe, the CEO of Anglo American Thermal Coal, challenged Ms Figueres' opinion. He said, "Today across Africa and in many developing countries, it is not at all uncommon to see children outdoors late at night studying under street lamps because they have no electricity at home. Better lives for these children are only possible when electricity is available to power industrial and economic growth." He continued, "in Southeast Asia, three-quarters of the thermal capacity currently under construction in the region is coal-fired, since there is no other realistic or affordable pathway for the region to follow. No matter how badly some people may wish otherwise, *coal is not going away*" <sup>35</sup>.

#### 4: Conclusion: Assessment of Poland's Multi-layered Energy and Climate Policy Strategy

Sections 2 and 3 looked at the multi-layered strategy by Poland at the parallel meetings of the UNFCCC's COP19 and the Coal and Climate Summit, as illustrated by speeches at the two conferences. As shown in section 1-1, in the policy making process on energy and climate change in

the EU, Poland had become an isolated opponent to the general approach of the EU because the country wishes to continue to use its abundant domestic coal resources. To the country's credit, however, as shown in sections 2 and 3, it can be argued that Poland was transparent in its attempt to justify its pro-coal attitude and its coal-based economy, by holding COP19 and the Coal and Climate Summit in parallel. In both conferences, Poland clearly presented its policy and the underlying logic of coal use. The basis of the policy is that the country is determined to continue to use its coal resources. The underlying logic is that effective and efficient use of domestic energy resources strengthens Polish energy security when viewed from a perspective of "political realism"; that as the structure of the Polish economy has been established on an energy mix based on coal, maintaining the status quo is more advantageous from the perspective of "economic rationalism"; and that the response to the challenge of climate change should be achieved by a more effective and efficient use of coal, not by avoiding the use of coal altogether, from the aspect of a "meta-norm".

The nexus between energy and climate change is an essential aspect of the geopolitics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although Poland is a member of the EU, and the EU is the front-runner in international climate change negotiations, Poland by the parallel hosting of the COP19 meeting and the Coal and Climate Summit endeavored to relate its policy on coal to the world outside the EU and to defend the policy not only vis-à-vis the other EU countries but also vis-à-vis other countries in the world that wish to use coal resources.

Why are the two conferences held in Warsaw in 2013 so important for geopolitics and energy security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

One reason is the influence of the Ukraine crisis since December 2013. The Ukraine crisis showed the fragility of the composition of energy supplies in EU member states, especially regarding natural gas imports from Russia. The European Commission, especially DG CLIMA, had argued

that instead of using fossil fuels and relying on imports of such, renewable energy and increased energy efficiency should contribute to the energy security of the Union. However, the Ukraine crisis has brought the European public back to political realism. It is time for fresh thinking about the use of domestic fossil fuel resources.

The second reason why the parallel meetings in Warsaw in 2013 are important is that Donald Tusk, the Polish Prime Minister at the time of the COP19 meeting, has since 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 become President of the European Council. Several factors lay behind Tusk's appointment. One was his long-standing experience of negotiations in the European Council. However, a prime reason was arguably his consistently realistic approach to energy issues <sup>36</sup>. In April 2014, after the Ukraine crisis, it was Tusk that proposed progress towards an Energy Union, whose main pillars were the joint purchase of gas from outside of the EU and the construction and maintenance of energy infrastructures in the EU <sup>37</sup>.

The third reason for the significance of the 2013 meetings is that the Energy Union is now one of the priorities of the new Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker which took office in November 2014. In the Juncker administration, Mr. Miguel Arias Cañete is Commissioner for "Energy and Climate Action" <sup>38</sup>. This leaves open the question of what should be the balance between energy and climate change policies.

The multi-layered strategy of Poland at the 2013 meetings of COP19 and the Coal and Climate Summit has helped us understand the nexus between energy and climate change in the EU and the wider world.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Union

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/package/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/package/index_en.htm) [Last Access 2015.7.22]

<sup>3</sup> Green House Gases

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

<sup>5</sup> carbon dioxide

<sup>6</sup> Executive Office of the President(2013), p.6.

<sup>7</sup>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2013/06/25/president-obama-speaks-climate-change> [Last Access 2013.10.28]

<sup>8</sup> Carbon Capture and Storage

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank(2013), pp.25-26.

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