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Climate change: a tale of Parisian triumph and tragedy

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Abstract

The Paris Agreement was heralded by many as a triumph of international diplomacy, delivering an unprecedented covenant amongst world leaders to take action to hold “*the increase in ... temperature to well below 2°C ... and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C*”. But whilst the euphoric elite of climate change whooped with joy and clinked champagne glasses with high-carbon celebrities, movie stars and politicians – there was increasing unease amongst climate change’s foot soldiers and scientists that beyond the important headlines the Agreement had sown the seeds of its own demise.

With a focus on energy, this presentation will outline the successes and failures of the Paris process – offering not only an alternative take on the Agreement, but also sketching out a suite of opportunities that could yet deliver a sustainable and prosperous future. It will conclude by arguing that the real challenge now facing contemporary society, is to acknowledge that our abject failure to mitigate emissions has transformed climate change into an issue of profound and rapid ‘*system change*’. Only when we are sufficiently humble to concede this, will we be equipped to begin shaping our *post-carbon* paradigm.

Three related articles:

[My assessment of Paris - published in Nature](#). A pre-edit is available at [The Hidden Agenda Duality in climate science. A recent article in Nature Geoscience](#) (free at: <http://rdcu.be/eoQY>)
[A new paradigm for climate change](#) – published in Nature Climate Change. A pre-edit version is available at: [A new paradigm](#)