The Last Tango In Paris?

A pragmatic perspective

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The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference

- will be held at Le Bourget airport outside Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015
- will be attended by delegates from 195 countries
- will be attended by a number of world leaders, including Barack Obama and Xi Jingping
- has Papal blessing and a budget of €170 million
The 2015 COPMOP

- Last chance to save the Planet, or the Flop of the Year?
- The shadow of Copenhagen in 2009
- Grounds for cautious optimism
The lessons of the Copenhagen COPMOP

- 2009 Copenhagen COPMOP aimed at producing binding legal agreements to replace the Kyoto Protocol post 2012
- This was not achieved, but a Voluntary Accord between the US and the BASIC countries, reluctantly accepted by the EU, formed the basis of a political agreement
- US and China were the key players
- Formed the basis of a "bottom-up" rather than "top down" approach leading to Intended Nationally Determined Contributions – INDCs
Collaboration on the road to Paris

- Historically, China and US in stalemate over climate change.
- World's two largest carbon emitters, but US Government hampered at home by climate change scepticism, and China resentful of being blamed for the exported carbon emissions of developed countries.
- Both reluctant to reduce emissions for fear of weakening their economic position.
- This changed in 2014 with new US-Chinese Collaboration on Climate Change.
Collaboration on the road to Paris

- **Beijing US-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change, 12 November 2014**
  - Agreement to work together and with other countries "to adopt a Protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties … in Paris in 2015"
  - Agreement by US to reduce its emissions by 26 – 28 per cent below 2005 levels in 2025 and best efforts to reduce emissions by 28 per cent.
  - China stated intention to peak CO₂ emissions around 2030 and increase share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20 per cent by 2030.
  - Both sides stated intention to work to increase ambition over time
Collaboration on road to Paris

- Since November 2014 China has pledged to launch a national emissions trading system by 2017 on the basis of regional pilot programmes launched in 7 cities and provinces since 2013.

- China has also pledged to make a $3.1 billion contribution to finance climate change combat in poorer nations, to match US $3 billion pledge for the international Green Climate Fund.
Progress on intended nationally determined contributions

- US – Chinese collaboration has encouraged national climate change plans ("INDCs")
- INDC submissions now cover 86% of global emissions
- 105 INDCs submitted ahead of Paris contain concrete CO$_2$ mitigation targets
- INDC submissions nevertheless fall short of ambition required to meet 2°C target
Franco – Chinese accord November 2015

- Key very recent step forward ahead of Paris is Franco-Chinese accord
- France and China agree to "Review Clause" requiring all parties to review commitments and increase them every five years
- Developing countries to "progressively orient themselves towards quantifiable reductions or limitations in emissions"
Prospects for COPMOP

- In assessing prospects for COPMOP important not to take too "Eurocentric" an approach.
- "Legally binding" commitments at Paris and elsewhere, unlikely to impose same degree of obligation as Climate Change obligations in the EU
- Public international law does not provide for the same degree of commitment and enforcement
- However, it does provide an effective legal background for detailed international cooperation on technical topics
Prospects for COPMOP

- There remains a great deal to be done to replace/renew the Kyoto Protocol by 2020.
- Almost certainly will not be the Last Tango, in Paris
- However significant grounds for optimism that the COPMOP will also not be "the Flop of the Year"