

Ultimatum by Matthew Glass.
Atlantic Books 2009.

Ultimatum is Matthew Glass's first novel and I had been waiting its arrival with keen anticipation; when it finally arrived I started it with immense enthusiasm and by the time I finished I was convinced not only that I had read an excellent and timely story but that its creator is a special talent with a great sense of people, place and dialogue as well as a fine grasp of international politics.

Ultimatum is set a few decades in the future, in a world already transformed significantly by global warming but poised for catastrophic further change if the world's major nations, notably the US and China, fail to conclude a binding deal on reducing their emissions.

Against this threatening background a new US President, Joe Benton, forms an administration aware that a new deal on emissions is the great goal of his presidency and that the key to clinching it lies with China, now with the highest GDP in the world and attitudes to match.

Glass takes the reader into the workings of an administration under pressure, into the rivalries between leading officials, and into the consequences of their successes and failures. He also, just possibly, holds a mirror up to the future which is both ominous and terrifying.

Ultimatum is a meaty book, full of substantial characters and excellent dialogue, and portrays an all too believable scenario within the life time of our children and grandchildren, and possibly ourselves. This is a story which operates on many levels, and the final outcome will stay with the reader for a very long time.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh