



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

UPSHOT OF COVIT-19 PANDEMIC ON CLIMATE POLITICS

Dr. Indira Garnaik,

Asst. Prof in Political Science,
Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India

Abstract: Concerted effort on climate issue is not yet assumed promising and anticipated result, as global power players politicized the decisions and actions relating to mitigation of GHG emission. To refrain from doing something and reduce the level of pollution will tend to hinder and clash with one's economic growth and disturb one's energy security, side by side requires lot of money and power. Climate issue is politicised either by the developed countries or by parties within these countries or developing countries. The decision-making process relating to Climate Change Treaty and climate policies are seen as dominated by US. Kyoto Protocol was the prime requirement but it was not successfully committed by developed and developing countries. Unanticipated outbreak of Covid-19 has abruptly changed the scenario after the official declaration of Covid-19 as Pandemic by World Health Organisation on dated 12th March 2020. Single virus certainly acts as game changer of climate politics. While the world political leaders are trying hard to flatten the curve of Corona in their countries, the climatologists are highlighting their research study in a parallel line on flattening the carbon emission curve causing pollution. One day mask was worn to defend from smog and now it is used as virus restraint, it's really amazing. The present paper analyses about the history of climate politics, its meaning, politicization of climate and today, how it takes a different way after the declaration of Covid-19 as pandemic/ global health crisis and alternative measures to reduce pollution along with non-carbon economic progression of states.

Index Terms - Climate politics, Kyoto Protocol, COVID-19, climate policy, decision-making, non-carbon economy and developed and developing countries

I INTRODUCTION:

Climate Change is obviously, the toughest political issue of the 21st century worldwide environmental agenda. The catastrophic consequences of climate change are global warming, ozone layer depletion, acid rain and green-house effect. To get out of these devastating challenges, international action and cooperation are extremely crucial for its mitigation. The FFU researchers of the most prevalent the Environment Policy Research Centre, investigated the plans, policies and politics of climate change. They observed the role of actors, policy developments, policy contents and outcomes of different policies at national and international level. Fierce Climate change discussion and agreement are found politicized so that it would be difficult to alleviate this problem. The goal of reduction of GHG emission seems as politically unattainable. Unfortunately, concerted effort to meet the challenge is not yet assumed promising and anticipated result, because the global power players are apparently politicized the decision and action to refrain from doing something and reduce the level of pollution that will tend to hinder and clash with one's economic growth and disturb one's energy security, on the basis of cost and benefit justification at global and regional level. But, unanticipated outbreak of Covid-19 has abruptly changed the scenario after the official declaration of Covid-19 as Pandemic by World Health Organisation on 12th March 2020.

About one-third of the world is under lock-down condition. The earth is now gradually recovering from smog caused by greenhouse gasses; the regular practice of the world is entirely changed. Global CO₂ emission are expected to decline by 8%, or almost 2.6 gigatons, to levels of 10 years ago as global energy (coal, gas, oil and electricity) demand declined by 3.8% in the first quarter of 2020.¹ All over the world, busy cities are kept silent, still, quiet and noiseless. Industries, business, trade and economic process is slowing and shutting down. Roads, bridges, airport, station, parks are empty and without any movement. About 35% of traffic at cities fell down. One-day the world which was generating global warming, now is taking a different slant to climate. Single virus certainly acts as game changer of climate politics. While the world political leaders are trying hard to flatten the curve of Corona in their country, the climatologists are highlighting their research study in a parallel line on flattening the carbon emission curve causing pollution. One day mask was worn to defend from smog and now it is used as virus restraint, it's really amazing. The present paper analyses about the history of climate politics, its meaning, politicization of climate in action and decision, and today, how it takes a different way after the declaration of Covid-19 as pandemic or global health crisis and alternative measures to tackle this problem along with non-carbon economic progress.

II CLIMATE POLITICS:

It implies politics relating to collective opinion of the global players in the form of treaty and adoption of measures to protect and secure the environment from the hazards of global warming and related effects. Lot of political effort on this global issue is necessitated by means of negotiating and implementing the global treaty that can mitigate this fundamental problem. But, global cooperative, collective action and concern, consensus among states, huge investment of money for clean environment, and global governance effort in solving this problem is very slow and steady. Apparently, most perilous consequence of climate change is Global Warming. Global warming is well-defined as an increase of earth's temperature, due to heat trapped by greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. (Heywood, 2018)² This is driven by CO₂, methane and CFC which are formed the Greenhouse gases. These harmful gases comprise carbon dioxide, water vapour, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone which are released mostly from industries; vehicles and burning of fossils fuel. These gases cannot be evacuated to the space and remain as cloud in the atmosphere. Strong and sturdy clouds in the sky trap the heat and light radiated from sun in the earth's lower layer of atmosphere and make the earth hotter. These greenhouse gases are the major drivers of Climate Change. Another effect of pollution is acid rain, the rain contaminated by sulphuric, nitric and other acids released from the burning of fossils fuel into the atmosphere would turn into acid rain. Due to the emission of CFC and halons, holes are created in the ozone layer of earth atmosphere over the Antarctic; it is called as Ozone depletion. All these contributed to a large extent for environmental degradation on earth that ultimately disturbed our ecosystem by increasing sea level, melting of snow, causing acidic rain, increasing humidity and untimely events like forest fire, tsunami, earthquake, flood, drought and many more that endanger or even extinct the animal, plant and human species.

Witnessing a series of dangerous happenings on earth, nations entered into various initiatives, came together at international platform, one of these is restricting to sign Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse emission to the level of 5% from the level as it was in 1990. They committed and pledged to cut the emission during the period from 2008-12, with the determination to control from 2013-20 but there is no satisfactory outcome or effectiveness of measures. Nations were found not thinking seriously, anxious, worried and concerned about it. They gave more value to economy, job, comfort and luxury rather than lifespan. Elaine Kamarck, 2019 in his study report mentioned that climate crisis becomes more serious and more obvious, but Americans remain resistant to decisive and comprehensive action on climate change.³ David Wallace-Wells in his article, 'The Uninhabited Earth: Life After Warming', paints a terrified image of coming environmental tragedy that the globe would be the hottest for human habitation and resulted in failure of agriculture, acute food shortage, islands would merge underwater, dirty air would be difficult to breathe in, shortage of fresh water, chronic diseases and species extinction.⁴

III ITS HISTORY:

Climate Politics dates back to 1970 initiated by US President Richard Nixon with the support of NATO. In 1946, an International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was set up to preserve Great Whales. An UN specialised agency, World Meteorological Organisation was established in 1950, Antarctic Treaty in 1959, UNCHE in 1972, CITES in 1973. Big climate summits, conferences and protests were important breakthrough to mitigate emission and preserve environment. UN Climate Action Summit, 2019 also focused the attention of world leaders, government, private sectors and civil society. Marc Hudson (2019), of University of Manchester told 'Don't bet on the UN to fix climate change-it's failed for 30 years'. For the first time World Climate Conference held in 1979 and attended by countries to discuss on climate issues. In 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances was signed under Vienna Convention for Protection of Ozone layer by phrasing out the damaging CFC from atmosphere which was probably the coordinated effort of actors on global issue. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by UNEP and WMO in 1988 to report policy makers on the implementation of FCCC. UNFCCC, a landmark of climate treaty is formed to limit the dangerous anthropogenic interference of climate change and its consequences on climate change. It produced its first report but did not do anything about climate change till 1991. In 1992 United Nation Conference on Environment and Development, known as Earth Summit was held at Rio de Janeiro. This summit approved UNFCCC and included convention on climate change and biodiversity and Commission on Sustainable Development, but the powerful countries were at loggerheads. Though the European nations decided that they could raise two degrees of temperature at their maximum level and not beyond that as per the average global temperature in 1996, US 'go slow' to achieve European efforts to create convention with binding target and timely reduction of GHGs. The developing countries feared to US to that of US denial of signing this may badly affect the climate in future. About 40 worldwide NGOs such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund and Environmental Défense Fund wanted to actively reduce global warming, but some other NGOs like International Energy Agency, International Organisation Motor Vehicle Manufacturer and Inter Chamber of Commerce took the side of US and not so prompt in their action and decision.

In 1997 Kyoto Protocol was signed under UNFCCC, a legally binding commitment of developing countries was established to limit the greenhouse gas emission limits for 37 industrialized countries and transition of economies of European Union in different phases. Kyoto Protocol was the prime requirement but it was not successfully committed by developed and developing countries. Major GHG emitter, US President George W. Bush withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 for its implementation under though he agreed with it earlier. In 2005 Kyoto Protocol came into force excluding US and Australia. After the withdrawal of US from Kyoto, the European Union and G-8 Summit also did not give much importance on it. During that period CO₂ emission had risen significantly at the global sphere. Emerging economies and developing countries were found to turn out of this. An Economist Nicholas Stern⁵ made a research and gave a very comprehensive report where he suggested UK and other countries to take urgent action to reduce Europe's CO₂ emission and adopt measures with international cooperation. China with the developing countries had grown as the largest emitter of greenhouse gas, next to them US and EU. From 2009-12 several conferences were held at Copenhagen, Durban and Doha as the successor of Kyoto Protocol and made significant progress in making aware to the world regarding global warming and related challenges. In December 2015, 187 countries signed the 21st conference of Paris of UNFCCC at Paris. The decision making of Climate Change Treaty was seen as dominated by US. It was under threat when US President Donald Trump, the major polluter, withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2015 based on discarded 'pledge and review' mechanism that created numerous promises not met previously. A study said about half of American public believed that seriousness of climate change is exaggerated, even during recent COVID situation they are protesting against government's continuation of 'lock down' and demanded to withdraw it immediately, for them their job, economy both are of top priority like anything.

The Seattle Conference displayed how the civil society unified across the world and questioned on the domination of few developed countries over climate policies of the world. The Earth Summit also gave importance on public interest, NGO, business groups with the unbalanced production and consumption prevailing in the world and decreasing Official Development Assistance(ODA) responsible for climate degradation.

IV.SOURCES OF EMISSION:

Though developed and developing countries are well-aware about the sources of these hazardous emission, and even worst affected by its consequences, still they are not taking any radical immediate action with proper strategies. In the process of globalisation based on neo-liberal ideology, everyone especially, the advanced developed countries are seen moving towards economic world that relies on energy sources and manufacturing technology and industrial activities. This helps in releasing greenhouse emission throughout different stages from production, storage, delivery and disposal. Again, massive industrialisation and deforestation in developed and developing countries, use of conventional energy sources produce heavy amount of CO₂. Excessive use of vehicle, AC, freezer, refrigerator and other electrical appliances support in the release of CFC at a huge scale. As per 2010 report, over 91% of world energy is derived from fossil fuels and non-carbon neutral technology. Agreement is difficult to achieve and impossible to enforce. Another harmful gas is methane which is 80 times powerful than Carbon dioxide and it stays at atmosphere for a decade. It's a major challenge to international climate goal. In last 20 years it is growing very fast and contributing to global warming and climate change. Research experts assumed that methane emission mostly originated from natural sources such as wetlands and man-made sources such as farms and oil, gas wells. So, we should limit release of methane from oil and gas drilling.

V. CONSEQUENCE OF COVID-19 ON GLOBAL CLIMATE:

Soon after the declaration of Covid-19 as Pandemic by W.H.O., nations went into 'Lock down'. Obviously, it is the second industrial lock down after second world war in the world. Factories are shut down, flights are grounded, and streets are emptied with no traffic, no vehicle and no people in almost all cities across the world. New York scientists at Columbia University reported 5-10% of drop out of CO2 emission within a week after lock down. About 35% of traffic at cities fell down. Report from China supposed that because of shut down of factories in China, Nitrogen dioxide level reduced by 40% that lessen the air pollution in China. In Europe and Italy, scientists also have perceived the similar effect in their countries. Water becomes calm and clearer as there is no movement of boat in river. Sparkling sky shows the reduction of light and air pollution, people have got the unique opportunity to enjoy the glimpses of clean sky with the wonders of universe. Cities around the world appear empty from Wuhan, Rome, New York, Mumbai, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Nairobi, Jerusalem, London, Vienna, Berlin, Laos, Moscow, Prague, and Frankfurt to Brazil and many more. Independent UK digital News Brand says that where methane level at all time high and more potent from Carbon dioxide is now reducing due to lock down and the city now is breathing clean air.

Lisa Friedman in her research reports about the link between air pollution with the higher corona death rate. Corona patients in an area of high rate of pollution are 15% more likely die and their infection rate will be higher than patients in cleaner area of the country. After an analysis of 3080 countries in US, researchers of Harvard University found that higher rate of tiny harmful particles in air known as PM2.5 were associated with higher death rate from the disease. Long term exposure to air pollution increases vulnerability to experiencing the severity of Covid outcome. (Lisa, 2020)⁶ For example person coming in contact with high level pollution in the district of Columbus will experience higher risks of death due to Covid-19 and higher hospitalisation than the person of little pollution like Montgomery. Mr Lenton, climate specialist and director of the global systems institute at University of Exeter conducted a study with scientists of China, US and Europe and he told that unless greenhouse gas emission fall, large numbers of people will live in places with average temperatures of 29C and more than three billion people will be living in places with 'near un-liveable' temperatures by 2070 where India and sub-Saharan Africa are projected as most affected areas.⁷ UN report also informed in the Paris Conference that the world temperature was rising by three degrees and majority are living in temperature outside the 'climate niche'.

As a precautionary measure, Government carried out massive sanitisation drive (spraying Sodium hypochlorite solution) in all cities, towns, squares, streets, sidewalk, lanes and wards around the world to disinfect public places by using drone or fire vehicle. It not only prevents the outbreak of epidemic but also clean air from contamination and make it virus-free for the interest of public health and safety. Besides this, the workers involved in dusting the airport, railway stations, seating areas and pedestrian conveyer with eco-friendly disinfectant. They are seen of sweeping the garbage. Strict guidelines prohibited people to spit at public places and practise hand washing, sanitising, using mask. All are some health-related guidelines essential from disinfection point of view. These are practised all over the world.

Again, the cities became calm and quite with no noise pollution because of lock down. Corona virus has changed our way of life. It not only affects the nature or human species, but also has dramatic impact on wildlife around the globe. There was a ban on the trade of wildlife in US and China's wet market. Wild animals are found roaming free while humans are in isolation. Animals have now enough space to roam as the cameras in different places caught the pictures like mountain goats causing havoc on the streets in Wales, leopard spotted in streets of Chandigarh, deers explored in the city of Sri Lanka, Gazelles spotted roaming in Dubai, herd of llamas sitting fearlessly in the road of Equador, flock of duck in Turkey city, musk hog racing in the street of Arizona, ducks in street of Italy, peacock fond in a residential society of Mumbai, jackles found in the city of Telaviv and Elk in the football field of Colorado, US and many more such rare scene are captured in cameras. Scenic view of nature is just incredible, charming and astonishing.

Side by side due to lock down restriction, and quarantine, people are using and more likely spending time over mobile phone and on line internet at home with their friends and relatives. The infrastructure that supports internet system is one of the greenhouse gas polluters which is one of the negative effects of COVID but not serious to that of previous one.

Aftermath of Pandemic and climate politics: The environmental benefit due to lock down is of course, short lived. But it's a high time to rethink about mitigation and reduction of GHG and do the best to preserve clean climate. Climate Protection must not be temporary reduction of greenhouse emission, it must be the long-term collective action and permanent solution promised by nations to reduce harmful gases. Once addressing the state, 2011, Barack Obama called for investment in 'clean energy technology' to 'create countless new jobs for our people'.⁸ Emergency measures are to be taken to rebuild a resilient and green economy. More importance should be given on wind, nuclear, and solar energy. In this context the environmentalists argue that the policy makers must enact laws and regulations that radically reshape energy infrastructure and national economy. Rapid and significant change is inevitable in the human behaviour, life style and sophisticated day to day life to protect their future. States must become much concerned and committed to make the earth atmosphere a favourable one to live in. Agreement and commitment relating to protection and preservation of climate should not be politicised and can be used to serve our need not greed. Covid-19 definitely takes a new turn of climate politics by focusing on the betterment of society, not for one's selfish economic interest. Further after Pandemic, we have to decide and change ourselves as how we will lead our live to avert disaster to climate including human, animal, plant and nature as a whole. Nancy Pelosi (2020) made promise for future climate and environmental legislation in a press conference and said that COVID-19 highlights the need 'to tackle the issue of climate injustice and secure the long term sustainability and wellbeing of all of our communities'.⁹ Various recommendations were made in this conference such as further research and development for clean energy, clean manufacturing, and clean infrastructure and renewable use of energy and crashing oil prices, promoting sustainability, economic recovery, job creation by solar installer and wind technicians, 'CLEAN future' dealing with climate and clean energy among the democratic states of the world. The scientists of Harvard University after studying 3000 countries, found that air pollution is tied to higher mortality rate from COVID-19 and make the situation worst, democrats are more concerned about it in US unlike Republicans and told it's the right time to have a 'Green New Deal' and drafting of 'CLEAN Future Act' in the country. Some alternative measures to retain our nature and clean climate are given below.

VI. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN:

[1] Climate challenge would be tackled at the political level by the political leaders in a democratic way where all states must come and collectively identify the problem and take action accordingly in a realistic manner by introducing and implementing climate energy legislation compulsorily in their countries.

[2] Climate action would give more attention, focus and watch the activities and commitment of rich developed and corporates responsible for emission.

[3] Mandatory provisions for all states to have roof-top solar panel on all houses, maximum use of wind and nuclear energy and reduction of non-renewable fuel must be highlighted for effective environmental action with collective effort.

[4] In Australia, 2017 climate policy review committee for future energy policy made 'a six-point plan for climate policy back on track'¹⁰ with the assistance of big academicians after breaking the hottest global record of past two years- these are an end to wedge politics, climate target to be achieved and mitigation efforts to be fulfilled by all countries, end of carbon price phobia with no negative effect on economy, a new federal approach to cutting emission sources and unite climate and energy policies and play up of Paris Climate Conference as positive narrative where the Age of carbon is over. It's really a good initiative which should be observed by other states in a meaningful manner.

[5] Global Governance of climate action to fulfil the pledge under Paris Agreement i.e. 26-28% reduction in emission by 2030 relative to 2005 is the need of the hour. In this context, states should measure the level of pollution regularly, take a pledge to reduce the level of emission to certain extent and remain accountable for this.

[6] Comprehensive blue print for meaningful climate policy along with energy policy can be helpful in this respect. Here, the states have to create emission reduction fund by which the states would utilise new technology to reduce the pollution level to certain fixed level. Maximum user of electricity is bound to give decarbonisation price by which projects for cleaner energy would be carried on.

[7] There is a greater need to have a continuous education, discussion, seminars at national and international level on its causes and effects and intensive research to tackle this and limit the pollution at war footing manner during this lock down period.

[8] States must think about their economic growth with the environmental concern that would be the long lasting and more reliable initiative for development. That is called as 'sustainable growth' leading to eco-development without destroying environment. It would be environmentally sound and eco-friendly in nature.

[9] Last but not least, the public opinion, NGO, civil society and the national policy initiatives simultaneously, are playing equally significant role in reducing the climate politics and influence the climate action and decision in right direction for better result.

Climate change would continue to worsen unless world leaders come with coherent efforts and committed with reduction strategy. Now it's the right time for developed and developing countries to feel and think the clean climate especially experienced during lock down around the world and take decision and action not to further this climate issue. Roger Pielke in his book 'The Climate Fix: What Scientists and Politicians Won't tell you about Global Warming' spoke, 'Climate science is today a fully politicized enterprise, desperately in need of reform if integrity is to be restored'.¹¹ Further, delay in sharply reducing GHG emissions will inflict large economic damage on future generations both in rich and poor countries.¹² Above all, climate policy entails political consensus and agreement on basic ideas behind climate science. Its high time to carry forward these ideas, innovative green energy technology is to be adopted for the great achievement of controlling and reducing GHG emission with decarbonised economic progress of the world.

REFERENCES:

[1] Global Energy Review (2020), The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on global energy demand and CO2 emissions, Flagship Report, April, 2020, Annual IEA, www.iea.org/report

[2] Heywood Andrew (2018), 'Global Politics', Palgrave Foundations, Macmillan education, New York

[3] Kamarck Elaine (2019), 'The challenging politics of climate change', with the quote of UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, September 23, 2019, BROOKINGS, www.brookings.edu

[4] David Wallace-Wells, 'The Uninhabited Earth: Life After Warming', Tim Duggan Books, p34

[5] Stern Nicholas (2007), 'The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review', Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press

[6] Friedman Lisa (2020), 'New Research links Air pollution to Higher Coronavirous Death rates', New York Times, April 17, 2020, www.nytimes.com

[7] Lenton (2020), climate specialist and director of the global systems institute at University of Exeter conducted a study with scientist of China, US and Europe, BBC news, 'Climate Change: More than 3bn could live in extreme heat by 2070', May 05, Science and Environment, www.bbc.co.uk/r

[8] Mark Sagoff, (2011), 'Climate Politics', Issues in Science and Technology 27, no.3, Spring, vol.xxvii

[9] Nancy Pelosi (2020), speaker with a group of House of Democrats including Select Committee on the Climate Crisis during a press conference on climate action-Democrats look to rescue climate agenda amid pandemic, E&E Daily, Friday, May 15, 2020, Nick Sobczyk, www.eenews.net

[10] Peter Christoff (2017), 'Ideas for Australia: A six-point plan for getting climate policy back on Track', EPA University of Melbourne, The Conversation, April 15, 2016, 2017 Australia's climate policy Review

[11] Pielke Roger Jr (2010), 'The Climate Fix: What Scientists and Politicians Won't tell you about Global Warming', New York, Basic Books, Cited in Mark Sagoff, (2011), 'Climate Politics', Issues in Science and Technology 27, no.3, Spring, vol.xxvii

[12] Koubi Vally and Thomas Bernauer (2018), 'Climate Change Economics and the Climate Nexus: Some Takeaways for Policy makers', PRIO, Climate and Conflict

[13] Collins P. Craig (1991), 'Climate Change Negotiations Polarize', AMBIO, Vol 20, no 7, Nov. 1991, pp340-345, 'Go Slow' is used in this article.

For this study secondary data has been collected. From the website of KSE the monthly stock prices for the sample firms are obtained from Jan 2010 to Dec 2014. And from the website of SBP the data for the macroeconomic variables are collected for the period of five years. The time series monthly data is collected on stock prices for sample firms and relative macroeconomic variables for the period of 5 years. The data collection period is ranging from January 2010 to Dec 2014. Monthly prices of KSE -100 Index is taken from yahoo finance.

