How to Look at the Covid-19 Pandemic Through Climate Governance?

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Abstract
Climate change has been the ‘wicked problem’ the world has struggled to address so far. Further, the Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected the soft underbelly of global governance by redrawing boundaries and fissures in the existing system. The pandemic is possibly the single biggest event in the post-Second World War period or in the last seventy years to shape and affect human emotion, response and survival instincts. The world has seen catastrophic changes and huge loss of life. There are multiple parallels and differences between the two of the most significant challenges faced by the humanity. Even though climate scientists were harping on the catastrophic impact of climate change for the last four decades, at the broader human consciousness level, the severity of the problem has never sunk into the common psyche. Covid-19 is a vivid example as to how a pathogen-led pandemic can torment and pervade the all-powerful and the highest evolved species on the earth, that is, the mankind. In this backdrop, climate governance and an ideal-type governance typology is being looked at to provide some key insights and possible answers for the future. The concern has been looked through at two levels: personal at the behavioural level and collective at the global-scale levels. Future prescriptions rooted in the current realities have been explored to find a way out of the crisis and the key learning points from the pandemic to face the future with more confidence and certainty.

Keywords
Covid-19, climate governance, climate leviathan, United Nations, life-vs-livelihood, Paris Climate Accord

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‘The human race is the only one that knows it must die, and it knows this only through its experience’.

—Voltaire

The world has seen almost ‘195 million affected cases and over 4 million deaths’. Normal international travel is yet to commence, and it has triggered huge humanitarian crisis like loss of employment and income. Many of the citizens have been pushed below the poverty line and now have a subsistence livelihood. The biggest parallel the Covid-19 has drawn with climate change is that ‘both are collective action problems, and both rely heavily on scientific knowledge and require individual actions that might not be clearly linked to a collective outcome and can suffer from policy and behavioural lethargy’ (Duvic-Paoli, 2020). Second, ‘Climate change is, in fact, only one of many major contemporary cross-border issues, including financial crises, nuclear non-proliferation and global pandemics that seem resistant to political resolution’ (Held & Roger, 2018).

This certainly has raised an existential question on the future of humanity and the possibilities of more frequent nature-led outbreaks in the days to come. This feeling of being miserable and helpless has led the world to look and ponder over this crisis (Covid-19), which is crippling human life at this time, and the other which is winking at the future (climate change). In the words of Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, ‘The broad shape of the story is the same’.

**Climate Governance, United Nations and Typology**

In this backdrop, let us look at what is climate governance and how it helps understand the dilemma facing the globe in the wake of the pandemic. Climate governance is the host of activities tagged along with the administration of climate-related issues, formulating policies, creating collaborative governance structures for carrying out actions against the polluters, and creating awareness among the stakeholders. The term ‘climate governance’ evokes the image of a bundle of rules, procedures and actions which can correct and set out the wrongs spread across different communities, economic activities, researchers, powerful mandates, policies and legitimate enforcements. ‘Climate governance requires governments to take an active role in building coalitions for change, buying off opponents, establishing new centres of economic power, creating new institutional actors, adjusting legal rights and responsibilities, and changing ideas’ (Meadowcroft, 2010). Further, ‘climate change governance includes a wide spectrum of steering mechanisms – the cooperation of different institutions and actors in addition to hierarchical forms of regulation, and describes the development of self-organizing structures’ (Fröhlich & Knieling, 2013, p. 21).

The United Nations at the global level has played a key role in monitoring and devising responses to many pressing challenges including climate change and public health at large. In the case of global warming, the United Nations has helped foster governance strategies on identifying the biggest polluters, fixing specific targets and monitoring them from time-to-time. The UN-led climate governance structures and actions are briefly illustrated as follows: The Intergovernmental
Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) ‘was set up in 1988 under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization’ (The Royal Society, 2005). Further, ‘the role is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation’ (IPCC, 2010). The IPCC reports supplement the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which remains the most important treaty on climate change to date. The objective of the UNFCCC is to ‘stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system’ (UNFCCC, 2014).

The Paris Agreement is the most important international treaty to be reached by the global community. Leaders from 184 nations had ratified the Paris Agreement on 4 November 2016. ‘The Paris Agreement’s central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels’ (UNFCCC, n.d.). Historically, climate treaties have suffered due to lack of trust, transparency, and collaborative spirit, crippling any unified governance efforts at the global level. In fact, the pandemic has triggered the thought process across the globe to look at the governance structures more critically. It has indeed given an opportunity to reboot the entire governance structure to face any future challenge of this magnitude. On the other hand, as far as the global governance concerning public health is concerned,

[The World Health Organization (WHO)] is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. (United Nations, n.d.)

But the role of WHO was also exposed to the extent that, at one point, there were utter confusion and chaos without any clear direction or guidance emanating from it. There was an apparent void at the global level and every nation was expecting a little more deft and defined leadership role from WHO at this hour of crisis. WHO could reassess the strategy and could take heart from its success in handling Ebola and other such challenges in past, where it was more forthright with what is to be done and how fast to be done.

Looking at the climate governance typology, there are multiple models to use for further studies. However, the one propounded by Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright in their recent book *Climate Leviathan* (2018), where four future governance typologies have been sketched that offer an interesting vantage point to look at the response to the pandemic. The first feature, referencing Thomas Hobbes, they call the ‘Climate Leviathan’, an all pervading capitalist economy with focus on renewable sources and having established financial and administrative governance structures. A second feature is ‘Climate Mao’, drawn straight from a Left-ruled authoritarian state machinery with focus on socialism,
aggressive containment of population, something akin to China. The third option is ‘Climate Behemoth’, an overarching response, strong enough to withstand any critique or alternate viewpoints with strong enforcement. Finally, the fourth scenario is ‘a bottom-up, anti-capitalist politics, which they refer to as ‘Climate X’, representing a more hopeful future calling for climate justice rooted in equality, dignity, solidarity’ (Osaka, 2019). These four future typologies are based on the two underlying principles of planetary sovereigns and capitalist economic power. Mann and Wainwright (2018) employed this typology to demonstrate the kind of governance structures in operation that could happen in future to address the issue of climate change. These four types are more akin to Weberian ‘ideal-types’, rather than actual representation of existing dynamics and inconsistent policy approaches towards climate change administration in the world. Why understanding this typology is important is the fact that even though the UN-led organisations have made multiple efforts to bring countries together under one roof to talk, discuss and deliberate a policy strategy for a sustainable future, as of now, there appears to be no clear path to reach out to that stage.

Further, the typologies do throw up lots of insights into the way the governance is shaped across the globe on the issue of climate change. While ideally, the climate leviathan has been drawn heavily from the Hobbesian principle of state sovereignty, the altars of the United Nations climate action groups such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or the Conference of Parties (COP) could have embraced this role and provided a clear pathway for containing future catastrophe of climate change. Even though these bodies do provide a platform and have been successful in creating some concrete steps, the kind of workable success is still elusive as these bodies do not possess the power to sanction, take action and restrict a nation or an industry from doing further damage to the climate. These are mere policy-making bodies without any power to sanction or enforce any action against the polluters. Also, they don’t have the power to order reparations or reparative justice as is commonly ordered under International Criminal Court of Justice in cases of violation of human rights, life and liberty by a country or a group or community through an act of conflict or aggression.

The most important thing to look through the Covid-19 strategy and action through the aforesaid prism of the four types of climate governance is to see whether it provides any answer to the current crisis and any template for action in the future. There is currently no climate Leviathan in operation in the Covid-19 pandemic. This role may be tailor-made for the WHO to embrace. However, inconsistent statements, incoherent steps and an unsure leadership have put the WHO in a spot in addressing the catastrophe-to-happen. First, it made statements like the Covid-19 does not transmit from human-to-human, when the first case has been detected in China in the last week of December 2019 and early January 2020. The China-dominated WHO definitely failed to alert the world to severity of the epidemic in China and the virulence of the virus. In terms of prescriptive engagement, it further failed in providing a credible sovereign leadership for the countries facing the Covid-19 crisis. Thus, it definitely draws parallels with the failure of the climate Leviathan role meant for an international administrative order under the ambit of the United Nations.
Now let’s look at the other typologies such as Climate-Mao, Behemoth and X. As far as the Climate Mao is concerned, it is non-capitalist and works for the authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian Left-ruled states, such as the communist China. The world has seen the unprecedented rise of China in terms of its economic might through trade, investment and geo-political influence. It has almost provided an alternative pole to the unipolar world in the post-Cold War era. As far as fighting the climate change is concerned, China has shown to the world that if it wants, it can contain and control climate change through clear policy instructions and unhindered enforcement through state machinery and brute force. For example, just before the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, the air pollution was at peak with no signs of respite with unprecedented smog, worsening air quality and pale and brown sky. The Chinese authorities wanted to show clear blue skies to the world when the entire world would be there to attend and participate in the biggest sporting event. Accordingly, it shut down thousands of polluting industries, clamped down on emitting vehicles, put strict norms on any form of CO₂ emissions and made the skies of Beijing absolutely clean and blue just in time before the Olympics. Similarly, after the outbreak of the pandemic, successful containment of the spread of the virus from Wuhan to Beijing or Shanghai has established the Chinese authority’s wherewithal to do so, while others have struggled to do so. This shows the power of the Climate Mao, the power to enforce and make it happen. When the entire world struggled to find a way forward to address the challenge, China has successfully managed to contain and control the Covid-19 crisis so far. The Chinese economy has opened, the trade is overflowing with every other consignment of masks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and ventilators moving over to all parts of the globe. It has adapted to the changing needs, nudged its industries to mass-scale production of these aforesaid items, so that it remains the leading global supplier even during these difficult times. What this provides is that the Climate Mao could be a credible category, which can really provide a way out for the future fight against climate change or the Covid-19 crisis.

This takes us to look at the Climate Behemoth typology, which is capitalist to the core and leads by a strong leader with overarching action. This particular category could be the most active political space in the last decade in the world. The rise of ultra-Right nationalist leaderships by alpha males across the globe including the USA, Brazil, Hungary, United Kingdom and Australia, just to name a few of the important ones, who have charted their own path to contain the climate change challenge. The USA under President Trump, by withdrawing from the all-important UNFCCC-led Paris Accord in 2017, marked the unilateral approach, which is completely against the spirit of any consensus building at the global governance level. It was certainly the undoing of the hectic parleys of the USA with China in 2014, the two largest polluters of the world to reach out a credible agreement in 2015 to abide by the reduction of emissions and cutting down on polluting industries, exclusion of fossil fuels and enforcing clean-energy adoption. This marked the biggest ever upset to any global-level efforts to challenge climate change. However, with change of guard in the USA under President Biden and the formal re-joining of the USA to the climate Accord promises an eventful rebuilding.
In this backdrop, it may be pertinent to look at the Covid-19 response of some of the countries that could be called as Behemoths. To start with, the President of the USA had appreciated the efforts made by China in the month of January 2020 but changed to accusing China of spreading the virus across the globe. However, post-regime change, a more constructive call has been taken to address the pandemic with the help of each other, rather than looking at the issue from a narrow prism. Similarly, the President of Brazil has ‘repeatedly dismissed Covid-19 as a “little flu” and urged businesses to reopen, even as many governors scramble to implement social isolation measures and slow the spread’ (Picheta et al., 2020). Further, the ‘Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has seized the Covid-19 pandemic to undermine fundamental principles of democracy and rule of law in a way that is hard to reconcile as necessary for public health’ (Gall, 2020). The United Kingdom propagated ‘herd immunity’ in the beginning. But with Prime Minister Boris Johnson getting infected with the Covid-19, the clamour for ‘herd immunity’ also disappeared into insignificance and United Kingdom since then has taken steps with lots of caution. India has enforced the strongest and strictest ever lockdown in the entire world, suspending every form of travel, offices, workplaces, places of worship, markets, and so on, with the intent to stop the spread of the virus. Now, coming to observe the impact of the Covid-19 so far, the USA had been initially the worst hit, while the numbers were fast rising in Brazil, India has managed to keep the mortality low in comparison to other countries of similar size and proportion. All these examples show one common underlying theme that the efforts under the climate Behemoth regime suffer from collaboration and cooperation and may not have the right recipe to take on a stubborn problem such as climate change or Covid-19 at the global level. However, recent efforts by the USA under the Quadilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) grouping and India’s vaccine outreach to multiple countries may provide a silver lining to this category.

Now, the final typology is of the Climate X, on which the authors have put the hope and aspirations in the rising proletariats and community groups and social movements, which may provide the nature and directions for the future leadership. It may be submitted that the rise of popularity of the teenage sensation Greta Thunberg of Sweden, who led a protest against the government sitting alone at the parliament gates skipping her school, has moved millions. Her steadfast resolve to take on the climate challenge has inspired a generation, which has hit the streets to participate in organised protests in almost fifty countries across the globe. Greta Thunberg has spoken eloquently with clarity and conviction on the issue of climate change raising the concerns of the catastrophe for the future generations on different platforms, be it the United Nations or the Conference of Parties (COP) or the World Economic Forum (WEF). Her strong words have found resonance among common citizens across the world. But the challenge is whether such movements, which are sporadic and inconsistent, could be a force to reckon with and could transform into a credible mode of governance or change the mode of an existing governance structure, favouring pro-climate policies and strict implementation schedule. Further, the authors’ laying emphasis on the power of the rising proletariats in the Asian continent to take on the future would be little innocuous to think at this hour of crisis. As far as the Covid-19 response is concerned, the world is yet to see these civil society organisations and climate rights groups to use the
space and provide an alternative strategy, while state machineries including law-
makers and bureaucrats are ruling the roost in this fight. State has become more
pervasive and empowered in this new post-pandemic reality with more power and
control. Mann and Wainwright are by no means alone in hedging about what is to
be done. Two other recent books encapsulating the concerns of climate change—
Jason Moore and Raj Patel’s *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (2017)
and Andreas Malm’s *The Progress of This Storm* (2018)—have raised the decibels
on the subject to another level. Thus, ‘the world has never before confronted a
crisis quite like COVID-19, one that has simultaneously tested both the limits of
public health systems everywhere and the ability of countries to work together on
a shared challenge’ (Burns, 2020).

**Why is There No Pandemic Governance at the Global Level?**

As seen in the previous part, the fourfold typology of climate governance has
certain similarities and reflections but no clear explanations as to which typology
could be looked into for providing an answer to the current crisis of the pandemic.
The real question which haunts us today is: Why is there no pandemic governance
at the global level? The answer may be difficult to decipher, but it also shows the
underlying crisis of trust of global geo-politico-economic relationships. The post-
Cold War era has seen the rise of the USA as the single most powerful nation,
driving global leadership and direction. But the last decade has witnessed the rise
and strengthening of the Chinese economy and trade across the globe through
investment. China has invested billions of dollars in Africa, Australia and in many
South Asian nations. This has created a new form of financial outreach and an
attempt to influence the decision-making at the global level in favour of China.
However, the pandemic appears to have changed the dynamics of globalisation
and the Chinese-led growth model. Now, as the world is struggling to find a sin-
gular solution to the problem of the pandemic, the two most powerful countries
are finding themselves at the crossroads. This may explain as to why there has not
been any global response to the pandemic. The USA’s reluctance to lead during
this pandemic has been the worst nightmare for the world in 2020. While China
has not raised the alarm for the world regarding the dangerous impact of the virus,
it has also not disclosed the entire sequence of events as many things are still
under wraps and shrouded in mystery. As against the expected bonhomie in the
wake of globalisation, in actuality, countries are greatly divided over the matter of
trust and reliance in this fight against the pandemic.

**Similarities, Differences and Challenges Between Covid-19 and Climate Change**

The most poignant thought that the current pandemic evokes is that there are mul-
tiple similarities, differences and challenges between the Covid-19 and climate
change. First talking about the similarities between the two, both threaten the
existence of humankind in terms of their catastrophic impact on human life and living. Both have nature at its core of operation, while climate change is manifested through air, water and earth’s surface, the Covid-19, which is a deadly strand of virus spreads through droplets in air from one person to another. The other key commonality is that both have occurred due to the deep-rooted complacency or refusal to listen to scientists and epidemiologists and deny their prescriptions as mundane and bookish and being far from reality. Both have disruptive impacts in terms of creating a crisis-like situation through aggressive storms, typhoons, flash floods, melting of glaciers, inundation of huge landmass, diminishing air quality, skewed rainfall patterns, acidification of oceans, on one hand; while the pandemic is ruining human life through deaths, complications of lungs and kidney and stopping the economic machinery crippling life and well-being, on the other. Drawing on the similarities of the catastrophe, the six stages of denial of climate change as put forth aggressively by climate scientist Professor Katharine Hayhoe posted on her Twitter timeline, ‘It’s not real. It’s not us. It’s not that bad. It’s too expensive to fix. Aha, here’s a great solution (that actually does nothing). And - oh no! Now it’s too late. You really should have warned us earlier’.3

As far as the differences are concerned, both the coronavirus and climate change have the potential to be hugely damaging for humanity, but they operate on different time scales. While climate change impact can be observed over a longer duration of time, the pandemic impact is manifested through death, which could be the ultimate end of human life. It can be counted upon, felt and can be observed through naked eyes. While climate change remained elusive in convincing people to adopt a new lifestyle to cut down on consumption to favour the sustainability of the earth, the pandemic has forced people to adopt a more restrictive consumption habit through economic hardship, social distancing and lockdown. It is indeed a mystery as well as an opportunity waiting to be grabbed to nudge humanity to adopt a more nuanced and eco-friendlier lifestyle. As put forth by Susan Clayton, Professor of Psychology at the College of Wooster, ‘Disease is a lot more immediate, a lot more scary than the idea that we’re gradually destroying or harming the atmosphere and the ecosystem’ (as cited in Howard, 2020).

Finally, looking at the challenges, the pandemic is certainly unfavourable for the climate as lockdowns and social distancing have significantly slowed climate research around the world. ‘The delays are putting increasing pressure on an already tight timetable ahead of a major biodiversity summit in Kunming, China, in October, and the UN climate talks in Glasgow, UK, known as COP-26, in November 2020’ (Farand, 2020). Many pre-scheduled engagements have stopped untimely or are being indefinitely delayed. Further, unintentional overuse of chemical disinfectants and possible relaxation of green norms to kickstart economic activities might create a huge scar on the climate crisis in the long run. Moreover, the advantages being gathered on the climate front appear to have slipped pretty rapidly with the resumption of travel, movement of vehicles, turning on factories, and so on. However, the challenge remains as to whether we could keep the good practices forced upon us due to the impact of pandemic in the earlier days or would fitter away to lead us to same old pre-Covid days of indifference to the cause of climate.
Further, as could be seen and observed, there is already a lot of pressure from the market including fossil fuel lobbyists to open the economic activities under the controversial debate between ‘life versus livelihood’. As it has been seen in the past, in post-2008 economic downturn, the world has observed fairly considerable drop in global carbon emissions. No longer could the residents of villages 100 miles away from the Himalayan Mountain range would see some snow-capped peaks due to crystal clear skies first time ever in their lives. Further, on the dilemma of human consciousness to accept the all-pervading phenomena of climate change, Professor Jeanne Tiehen questions, ‘What makes climate change problematic for our consciousness to perceive as a phenomenon is that we as a species cannot recall an experience like it’ (Tiehen, 2018, p. 135). This is nothing but a reflection of ‘cognitive dissonance theory’ propounded by the famous psychologist Leon Festinger (1957, p. 291) to keep the self-altoof from any human causes of the climate catastrophe, rather seeing oneself as the victim of the phenomenon. The same dissonance could be resonated over the causes and impact of the pandemic in current times. This tendency of not accepting and attributing any human reasoning for the cause of both climate change and the pandemic raises pertinent doubts on the preparedness for and action against such tragedies in future and also the psychic and temperamental atonement of mankind to take climate change as a valid challenge. Looking ahead, we all must ask ourselves whether we are taking sufficient steps to ‘flatten the curve’ of transmissions and to ‘bend the curve’ of emissions (Wagner, 2020).

Developing long-lasting effective solutions to prevent climate change is a very difficult task, akin to Albert Camus’ (1942, p. 160) Sisyphus’ eternal struggle to push a boulder uphill in Greek mythology. The major difficulty is that developing solutions to climate change involves dramatic alterations to the ways in which we live. This initially will involve minor incremental adaptation but would rapidly require revolutionary changes.

**Final Words and Way Forward**

The concern may be looked through at two levels—personal at the behavioural and collective at the global scale levels. We have seen company after company and even state-run bureaucracies allowing their employees to work from home, many international organisations look forward to host meetings on Zoom, Skype or other internet platforms reducing frequent air travels. Those industries and organisations at the private and government levels, where elaborate information technology-led networking and governance models are under operation, have seamlessly moved to the newfound order of working from remote locations without compromising with the output. However, others have hugely suffered as well as struggled to be at par with the unforeseen rapid changes. But the most important challenge could be to maintain the tempo in future and better equip technologically and operationally to face any such uncertainties in future. As rightly stated, ‘Those workplace changes may bring real emission reductions, but scientist Elizabeth Sawin said the pandemic’s most important climate impact
could come from people applying the lessons the coronavirus teaches about the urgency of swift action’ (as cited in Gardiner, 2020).

The second important fact is that at least due to the concern of the pandemic, scientists, virologists, epidemiologists, researchers and institutions have become household names such as Anthony Fauci, Deborah Birx, Peter Piot, Randeep Guleria, Jayaprakash Mulyiyil, Giridhara Babu, Gagandeep Kang, Johns Hopkins University and Worldometers. What this means is that as a scientific community, these flagbearers have brought the much-needed glory and significance to the profession of serious scientific research. ‘Covid-19 is providing a great opportunity for the scientists to earn the trust of the public in the era of misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories’ (Madani, 2020).

At the global governance level, the distrust and hostility between the United States and China have worsened. Why these two countries are critical is because these two possess the strength, capital, technical and research capabilities to contain the virus, and move fast to a credible vaccine. Any global effort has to incorporate the full-fledged support and active participation of these two critical nations. But the need of the hour is nothing but absolute solidarity and coordination among nations, organisations and agencies. Further, as provided, ‘If we choose global solidarity, it will be a victory not only against the coronavirus, but against all future epidemics and crises that might assail humankind in the 21st century’ (Harari, 2020).

Looking at the prescriptive level, subsuming the entire future efforts to take on the pandemic at the global level, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has recently placed it on record on the eve of the Earth Day 2020 that

\[P\]ost-pandemic recovery should focus on six goals: the creation of clean, green jobs; taxpayer support for sustainable growth; an economic shift from grey concrete to green nature; investment in the future rather than the past with an end to fossil fuel subsidies; the incorporation of climate risk into the financial system, and international cooperation (as cited in Watts, 2020).

While each of these six charted goals did provide a clear roadmap for the future, adhering to the principles of coordination and cooperation among nation-states could hold the key for a sustainable future for the planet. Whether we would be able to engage the most powerful fossil fuel lobbyists on a collaborative dialogue to convince them to cut down on future explorations and productions by adopting stricter emission norms and re-engineer their business processes to shift to non-polluting enterprises would remain a formidable challenge.

One of the key outcomes which need a closer look is the fact that many countries successfully responded to the pandemic and we should learn from them. The cases of Germany, South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand and even Thailand are few of the successful ones, where the leadership has managed to contain the pandemic crisis in a more nuanced and effective way and have been able to put the economic recovery on the rails. India, as a nation-state does feature among the successful countries to put the fatalities at bay even with the third highest infected persons in the entire globe. Thus, irrespective of the nature and ideology of governing regimes, wherever the state has used the available technologies, scientific temper
and resources to the best of use, they have succeeded in preventing a catastrophic outcome in this pandemic. What the climate change fight might be looking for is the same vision, clarity of thoughts and action, and an overzealous drive to bring new technologies based on renewable energy, cutting down of carbon emissions, strong tab on any exploration of coal or fossil fuel mining or explorations, adoption of a sustainable growth model which may be non-exploitative. However, a pertinent doubt has been cast by Professor Paul L. Browne (2017, p. 449): ‘Will future moments of crisis linked to climate change be occasions for innovative, solidaristic, and transformative practices and institutions to take hold and spread throughout societies?’ As the world is crippled by the pandemic with consequent waves, currently with no clear future roadmap or signs of the waning of the impact of the virus, the challenge may still be actively haunting humanity for answers.

The immediate challenge to face the pandemic is to rapidly vaccinate the populace at the earliest possible time to save precious human lives. We may need to survive the pandemic with masks, hand hygiene, social distancing, avoiding high-risk zones, leading a simple life—a wee bit lonely for longer duration. While on the climate front, the immediate challenge is to come together at a global collaborative level to take stock of the progress made since 2015 (the year of the Paris Accord) and see where all of us stand today with reference to the goals set for the year 2030, which could be a starting point to move ahead. The next step may be common to both pandemic and climate change, which is assessment of damages and ways to mitigate those by planning for immediate to long-term efforts to find an achievable and feasible solution. The third and final step would be to identify and work on those fault lines which are crucial to ensure sustainability of the earth and human lives. Thus, the future opens opportunities for clean energy nudges by governments and technology firms at the collective level, while behavioural changes and frugal consumption might set the narrative at the individual level. It is a race against time as each passing day the vulnerability of human life against the pandemic and climate change is pushing the fault lines into oblivion. This pandemic has offered the humanity a solitary chance to rectify and retreat few steps back, be more humane, less zealous and ambitious to progress without looking at the damages we cause to the mother earth. Whether the humanity could transcend the geo-political limitations of collective governance and take on the Covid-19 and climate change challenge with the same intensity and doggedness will be a question worth pondering over!

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Notes
1. Data retrieved on 26 July 2021 from Worldometers. https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/
2. As spoken in the video ‘This is not cool by Peter Sinclair’ uploaded on 10 April 2020, of the Yale Climate Connections (cited in Sinclair, 2020).
3. Professor Katharine Hayhoe’s Twitter post dated 25 March 2020. https://twitter.com/khayhoe/status/1242817345069998080?lang=en

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