



Climate Denialism and Nationalism: making climate efforts little and late

Rumana Sharmin gives an overview on the rise of nationalism and explains how the nationalism, along with climate denialism, delaying implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change introduced a new phase of globalism wherein nearly all the member states agreed a common objective, which is to stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system. Referring to the historical responsibility of causing climate change, the Convention puts obligation on the developed countries to lead the way towards stabilizing GHG concentrations and support developing countries by providing financial and technology supports for climate actions.

Since the ratification of the Convention in 1994, currently ratified by 197 countries, the member states met a total of 25 annual conferences (termed as the Conference of the Parties-COPs) and succeed to yield only two agreements. The first one, the Kyoto Protocol adopted in 1997, made the developed countries legally obligated to reduce GHGs emission within its commitment period from 2008 to 2012. The second one, the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015, requires all the Parties for emission reduction with nationally determined progressive targets towards achieving a long-term goal of limiting global average temperature rise well below 2 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Both the agreements are contextualized from the internationalized political commitment, however their implementation are sidetracked and challenged by the national interests. For instance, the post-Kyoto political leadership in the USA denied any mitigation commitment and the country didn't ratify the Protocol. Such a retreat of the USA and its allied countries left around one-third of global emission unaddressed and unaccounted. Even though most of the developed countries implemented their obligations under the Protocol, the global emissions increased by 32 percent from 1990 to 2010 (UNEP, 2012). The second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol from 2013 to 2020 hasn't enter in to force even now on toady. Similarly, the political antagonism of several governments on the global imperative of addressing climate change already challenged implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The USA that has been the topmost GHG emitting countries since many years and currently the second top with 16 percent share to the global emission denied to comply with any obligations under the Agreement.

Nationalism, on my opinion, is nothing more than an idealistic rationalization for militarism and aggression.

Albert Einstein
March 19, 1879 – April 18, 1955
Theoretical Physicist

Withdrawal of the USA from the Paris Agreement resulted to a paradigm shift in the post Paris climate conferences, especially at COP 24 and COP 25. Following ratification of the Paris Agreement, the USA made commitment

for emission reduction and pledged financial contributions for climate actions. Hence, withdrawal of the USA from the Agreement resulted ceasing of all federal policies for GHGs emission and diverting pledged finances from the climate actions. Earlier, the USA pledged to limit national GHGs emission by around 25 percent by 2025 compared with 2005 level. The withdrawal of the USA from the Agreement allowed the country to skip its historical responsibility, also kept the country away from tracking any efforts of curbing emissions in national level. The bad news is global emissions are at record levels and rising fast with incessant pace (Hersher, 2019).

Currently, the top three carbon emitting countries e.g. China, USA and India are in race of pioneering their development ambitions rather than raising mitigation ambitions. The USA and China together are responsible for more than 45% of the global emission. India reserves the third position contributing 7 percent to the global emission. If China and India increase their shares, this would further impede global initiatives to reduce GHGs emissions (World Economic Forum, 2019). Reasons behind is the populist application of the political motives as governments attempt to maximize their gains and minimize losses often within very short-term legislative timeframes. The political leaders have battled for democracy to sustain politically, and move powers from the people towards politics governed by individual interests.

For instance, the USA, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland and the Philippines each represent a different brand of populist nationalism where the political leaders are disinterested to adopt mitigation policies. The most prominent example is the US president Donald Trump's kick backing the Clean Power Plan that received huge appreciation from the coal miners and the other fossil fuel giants. Likewise, the Indonesian President, Joko Widodo has also shown neo-nationalist position by shutting down US\$1 billion climate change mitigation policy program funded by the Norwegian government. Another shocking initiative of neo-nationalism in the context of climate denaism is blockage of the agreement of reaching to the carbon neutrality by 2050 by the Poland's conservative nationalist government (Gregory, 2019).

The supremacy of such 'neo-nationalism' has strongly been reflected at COP 25 where the Parties prioritized their national interests contextualized by their short-term political interests. This resulted the COP 25 towards a messy outcome instead of reaching a common agenda to combat global warming (Farand, 2019).

However, this is just not from the ground of climate denaism or nationalism, but also the growth focused development narrative of the national governments and international development agencies (especially the IFIs). They define the development in terms of quantity, for instance, per capita income and GDP growth. It doesn't matter whether the development activities are either green or brown.

Yet, in the context of climate emergencies it doesn't matter whether the countries are 'big emitter' or growing emitters. All should progressively enhance their mitigation commitments according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities (CBDR&RCs). Otherwise the late and little efforts will lead the earth to 3°C or more temperature rise (UNEP, 2015).

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