

UTokyo, Institute for Future Initiatives (IFI), SDGs Collaborative Research Unit
JSPS Grant Research Project
“The nexus of international politics in climate change and water resource, from the perspective of security studies and SDGs”
FY2020 Working Paper Series No. 11

**Global Challenges of Climate Change and Pandemic in the 2020s:
Can Nation-States and International Society Save People’s Lives?
Rikkyo University
Chiharu Takenaka**

Abstract

The spread of COVID-19 has opened our eyes to an unprecedented threat to the globalized world. Though the UN Secretary-General warned that the Global South would endure further hardships, the Global North has not been spared, either. People have been forced to review the situation of their own country in comparison with other countries. Is their government taking a proper measure? Comparative studies of pandemic politics draw our attention to successful or unsuccessful cases. The first successful cases could be categorized as Developmental States in East Asia, i.e. China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam. The other successful cases would include developed countries with social democracies, especially those headed by women leaders: New Zealand, Iceland, Denmark, and Taiwan, while it is unfortunate to see Angela Merkel’s Germany, a leading country with social democracy, still struggling with the situation in mid-2021. Neoliberal nationalistic leadership seems to have been much less successful, for example, in Trump’s United States, as well as Brazil, India and the Philippines. Thomas R. Oliver emphasized the significance of the “Politics of Public Health”: “Politics is central in determining how citizens and policy makers recognize and define problems with existing social conditions and policies, in facilitating certain kinds of public health interventions.” This statement reminds us of the “Politics of Climate Change” proposed by Anthony Giddens. The question is whether human society would be able to mitigate and adapt to the impact of environmental changes, such as climate change and pandemics. We, political scientists, should question if states and international society could cope with such extraordinary global challenges from nature efficiently, effectively and proactively.

1. Nature and Human Society

In classical political theory, international society is described as a political system of sovereign states, i.e. an international system based on the Peace of Westphalia, agreed upon by most of the

belligerent states in Europe to end the lasting Thirty Year' War in 1648. This was an artificial system invented more than 370 years ago. Understandably, this system has been transformed by the requirements of powerful states as well as the necessity for the collective survival of states. At some moments in history, the rulers of the states had to respond to popular needs to find a different way of reorganizing this system of states, especially after the establishment of nation-states. The two World Wars drastically changed the system in the twentieth century, while the process of globalization and its unavoidable crises have been transforming the international system over the past four decades, as we have been witnessing.

The standard definition of the Westphalia system is “a system of states or international society comprising sovereign state entities possessing the monopoly of force within their mutually recognized territories.”¹ It was started in the mid-seventeenth century as a system of international society and international law, respecting the sovereignty of all states, either big or small, setting the fundamental rule of non-intervention into any other country’s domestic affairs, and agreeing on the secular nature of wars, denying the just wars backed by the Roman Catholic Church. The basic foundation of the Westphalian system was agreed upon by the lords and their ambassadors to end the seemingly interminable war, in other words, a human-made catastrophe in central Europe.

It has also been pointed out, however, that there were other social reasons that provoked fighting among states and people. “As brutal as the fighting was in the Thirty Years’ War, hundreds of thousands died as a result of *famine* caused by the conflict as well as *an epidemic of typhus*, a disease that spread rapidly in areas particularly torn apart by the violence.”² It was estimated that “8,000,000 Germans were wiped out by flea-borne bubonic plague and louse-borne typhus fever.” As the population in the agrarian society in Europe at that time was much smaller than the one today, this statement surprises us by how severe the effect of disease was. “Historians also believe the first European witch hunts began during the war, as a suspicious populace attributed the suffering throughout Europe at the time to “spiritual” causes. The war also fostered a fear of the “*other*” in communities across the European continent, and caused an increased distrust among those of different ethnicities and religious faiths—sentiments that persist to some degree to this day.” The author added, in 1812, “On Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow, typhus, dysentery and pneumonia killed 450,000 of the Grand Army’s 500,000 men.”³ The outbreak of disease coincided with disorder of states and society. As well, social violence and armed conflicts made the situation lethal to the population, and vice versa.

Although ordinary theories of international politics might include historical descriptions of such

¹ “Westphalian state system,” <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803121924198>

² “Thirty Years’ War,” <https://www.history.com/topics/reformation/thirty-years-war>

³ “Medicine: War and Pestilence,” *TIME*, April 29, 1940,
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,794989,00.html>

social calamities as anecdotes, some disastrous social conditions could force rulers to make peace. We could see similar situations today. Famine is often seen as a natural event, but it is, in fact, closely related to local battles, military occupation, and the collapse of state order. Wars would destroy the transportation system and trade networks, generate waves of refugees and displaced people, collapse the family and community, and lead to famines. Maxwell and Nisar Majid, writing on the famine in Somalia in 2016, stated, “Famine is broadly understood as ‘an extreme crisis of access to adequate food, manifested in widespread malnutrition and loss of life due to starvation and infectious disease.’” Drought, war, disease or rapidly increased populations are often mentioned as the causes of famine, but “*famines are usually caused by multiple factors, compounded by poor (or even intentionally bad) policy decisions that make people vulnerable* [emphasis added]. When no one addresses this vulnerability, it leads to famine.”⁴ Famine should, therefore, be understood as a human-made tragedy and a failure of the political system.

Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since the new millennium began, the expansion of the global market economy has transformed relations between human society and nature, forcing us to face unusual occurrences and disasters. In other words, we are forced to experience extraordinary phenomena from air, fire, and water, the four terrestrial elements that Aristotle categorized in ancient Greece. The concept, *Climate Change*, was invented to represent those types of natural phenomena, including global warming, natural disasters, water crises, and other events. Today, we are facing an unprecedented pandemic, a natural calamity caused by a novel coronavirus. The question is whether human society will be capable of mitigating the impact of such occurrences and be able to adopt to unexperienced circumstances in the future. And, as political scientists, we should question if nation-states and the nation-state system of international society could cope with such global challenges efficiently, effectively and proactively.

2. Pandemic as an Awakening Experience of Global Society

The spread of COVID-19 in 2020-21 has opened our eyes to an unprecedented threat to the globalized world, which perished the lives of more than three million people on the earth within one year and a half. This disease probably originated in China at the end of November 2019 and reached neighboring countries, such as South Korea and Japan, within a few months in early 2020. Owing to the high mobility of people by flights, boats, automobiles, and other modes of transportation, this virus

⁴ Hufstader, Chris, “What is famine, and how can we stop it?,” May 14, 2020, and the author’s quote from Maxwell, Daniel and Nisar Majid, *Famine in Somalia: Competing Imperatives, Collective Failures, 2011-12* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/what-is-famine-and-how-can-we-stop-it/>

was transmitted beyond East Asia at the end of February and early March. Then, it spread to other continents, such as Africa, America and Oceania, in late March and April. COVID-19 has also produced more resilient variants in the United Kingdom (UK), South Africa, Brazil, and India.

There were many outbreaks of new diseases since the 1980s: HIV/AIDs, Ebola, mad cow disease/BSE, SARS and MERS, both of which were caused by novel coronaviruses, as well as bird flu (avian influenza), swine flu, and other influenzas. In a way, we have become used to hearing about public health dangers during the globalization process. However, few of us have pushed our governments to take the precautions. China and other parts of continental Eurasia are well-known hotspots for the genesis of new diseases, such as those stemming from corona and influenza viruses, while tropical and subtropical Asia, Africa and Latin America have not only been the original sites of deadly diseases, such as HIV/AIDs and Ebola, but also where the outbreaks occurred. These tropical diseases—dengue, cholera, tuberculosis, Hansen's disease, and malaria, among others—have compounded more common medical issues, such as diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, rabies/hydrophobia and many others. Although the impact of measles and yellow fever remain, it is remarkable that the eradication of smallpox was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1980.

Diseases caused by novel viruses or bacteria are often zoonotic, being spread between animals and people. For example, the HIV/AIDs virus was transmitted from chimpanzees in Africa in the early twentieth century, then moved to people in a wider region and other continents. HIV/AIDs was finally discovered in the United States (US) and Europe in the early 1980s. Ebola appeared in 1976 in Africa, and there have been several Ebola outbreaks, until recently, with an average 50 % mortality. Following guidance of WHO and other international agencies, the countries hit by Ebola have been adopting the international standards to control outbreaks by coordinating the actions of governments, medial service, and local society.⁵

WHO have been warning of possible new diseases and outbreaks at the age of globalization. BSE, caused by an infection from a misfolded protein (prion), broke out in the UK in the early 2000s, owing to feeding cows meat and bone meal (MBM). BSE had a huge impact on food consumption as well as food production and trade, especially in Europe and North America. This shows that even the affluent developed countries, members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have to worry about the sudden threat of new diseases. However, the general impression was that the OECD countries would be capable of preventing pandemics, unlike developing and less developed countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other regions. Therefore, the familiar discourse of international assistance went like this: the poor countries would need the help of WHO and other international agencies, such as the institutions of experts and NGOs in the fields of

⁵ WHO, "Emergencies: Disease Outbreaks," <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/en/>

public health and medical support, while the wealthy countries, such as those in the Group of Seven (G7) and the OECD countries, would help those unfortunate countries in the Global South. The COVID-19 crisis has clearly overturned this stereotypical image.

The list of cases and deaths by country/region, as reported by the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University, revealed an upside-down view of the world. According to the data of March 14, 2021, the US, Brazil, India, Russia, the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Germany were the top 10 countries with COVID-19 cases, with a correspondingly high number of deaths. In other words, the highly developed Western countries were not able to effectively prevent the spread of the coronavirus or an increase in deaths, while many of the poorer countries were showing some resilience amid the pandemic. Several sizable countries with emerging economies did not do well either, especially Brazil, India, Russia, Turkey, Mexico, and South Africa. The BRICS minus China were all included in this group.⁶ In contrast, the map of East Asia told another story. China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam successfully managed the COVID-19 crisis. Unfortunately, the Philippines and Indonesia were struggling to cope with the disease, still having huge numbers of cases and deaths. Japan was less successful in containing the spread of the disease or in conducting a nation-wide vaccine program in an early stage. Note that Malaysia had a smaller number of cases and deaths than Japan, while Thailand was recording an extremely low number of COVID-19 cases and resulting deaths.

It is still difficult to have a precise global view of the pandemic. The Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, pointed out on February 17, 2021 the “wildly uneven and unfair” distribution of the vaccines on the earth, with just 10 countries having administered 75% of all vaccinations. He emphasized that more than 130 countries have not yet received a single dose of vaccine. The Global South would likely endure further hardships, and the prolonged pandemic might come back to plague the Global North.⁷ The pharmaceutical companies of Germany and the UK succeeded in producing new vaccines remarkably quickly, and the affluent countries have been trying to import a large amount of these vaccines as fast as possible. China, Russia and India also joined in by developing, producing, and distributing to the world their own vaccines. We are watching the rapid transformation of international society via vaccine diplomacy and vaccine nationalism.

⁶ Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, COVID-19 Dashboard, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

⁷ “Wildly unfair”: UN says 130 countries have not received a single Covid vaccine dose,” *The Guardian*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/18/wildly-unfair-un-says-130-countries-have-not-received-a-single-covid-vaccine-dose>; for the original text, Secretary-General Calls Vaccine Equity Biggest Moral Test for Global Community, as Security Council Considers Equitable Availability of Doses, United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, SC/14438, February 17, 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14438.doc.htm>

3. Comparative Politics of Pandemic from Citizens' Perspectives

Ordinary people have found the urgency to face the reality of global society through their experience with this pandemic. It let them conduct a sort of “everyday comparative studies” with the information provided by digital media. Questions being asked: Is their government doing all right to take a proper measure in comparison with other countries? Is the policy of border control tight and effective? Is the “lock-down” policy effectively stopping the spread of the disease? Are the medical and social services ensuring? Can the government rescue people from economic difficulties?

Unlike other issues, the pandemic caused by COVID-19 is being directly felt as a global crisis, simultaneously involving, in quite a short time, every country and region, without discriminating between them. The degree of the spread of the disease and the damage that it has caused are represented by the number of cases and deaths every day. Due to the development of global information networks, such data could be easily available to anybody 24 hours a day and with visual images of photos, charts, graphs and videos. The public could see that some countries are rather doing well, while others unfortunately are not. Then, naturally, people would start asking why. Being transparent is a serious challenge for political leaders and administrative experts in every country.

The two distinctive groups of countries are being widely acknowledged for achieving their pandemic policy goals. The first group, countries that are successfully handling the COVID-19 crisis, includes China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam in East Asia. Before the pandemic, these countries had previously experienced outbreaks of SARs, bird flu, various strains of the influenza and other communicable diseases. So, it could be said that they were comparatively well prepared for a possible pandemic, and were following the global guidelines suggested by WHO and the expert community. Interestingly, all of them could be called as Developmental States, referring to the concept of Chalmers Johnson, who analyzed the miraculous development of Japan in 1960-70s, setting the prime goal of the state as rapid economic growth under strong governmental guidance.⁸

China is proud of having quickly overcome the pandemic by drastic measures under the leadership of President Xi Jinping and the Communist Party, in spite of international criticism for the oppression of freedom and human rights violations.⁹ The Chinese central government proactively moved to close all infected localities, especially the area around the city of Wuhan, the probable genesis site for COVID-19. The border has been tightly controlled, and aggressive virus testing has

⁸ Johnson, Chalmers A., *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Haggard, Stephan, *Developmental States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

⁹ “Wuhan lockdown: A year of China's fight against the Covid pandemic,” January 22, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55628488>; Yaqiu Wang, “China's Covid Success Story is Also a Human Rights Tragedy,” Human Rights Watch, January 26, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/26/chinas-covid-success-story-also-human-rights-tragedy#>

been done on the population, including residents from foreign countries. With the development of new vaccines by Chinese pharmaceutical companies, China started vaccination programs in July 2020 and began to export vaccines to other countries through trade and with foreign assistance. Clinical trials have been carried out in Brazil, Turkey, and Russia, and the efficiency rate of the Chinese vaccine was reported in early 2021 as being between 70 to 80%.¹⁰ Vietnam, another communist state in the region, is also being acknowledged for successfully executing their pandemic policies. Instead of forcing a nation-wide lockdown, the government swiftly closed the border and enforced strict social distancing ahead of the spread of COVID-19. It was said that Vietnam was able to contain the virus in mid-2020 and “could gradually return to more or less business-as-usual.”¹¹

Singapore, the global hub at the center of ASEAN, reacted to the danger of the pandemic without delay, enforcing a set of rigorous policies on the population. It is unique for a state to maximize the application of advanced technologies and their facilities, such as internet connectivity, smartphones and their application software, thermostats, and security networks. The government’s already effective administrative institutions and legal frameworks made nation-wide compliance possible. For example, not wearing a mask outside of a home became a criminal offense, and residents from foreign countries could immediately lose the privilege of staying and working in Singapore. The country is still alert to other risks of the pandemic, but in 2021 an economic rebound as a global city is well expected.¹²

South Korea and Taiwan have the highest ranked democracies in East Asia with competitive party systems and free elections. However, these two could also be categorized as Developmental States, owing to aggressive growth-oriented policies of their governments. They have effectively employed the nation-wide infrastructures for the purpose of public health, such as highly developed internet networks, widely distributed terminals among individuals, newly invented software applications and other institutions. President Moon Jae-in of the Democratic Party of Korea assumed office in 2017, supported by young urban voters, replacing the conservative predecessor, President Park Geun-hye and her conservative party, the Grand National Party.¹³ President Ts’ai Ing-wen came into power in Taiwan, winning the elections in January 2015 and again in January 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, similarly supported by the youth and progressive voters. Both governments were established sometime after the world financial crisis and the prolonged economic

¹⁰ “Chinese vaccines sweep much of the world, despite concerns,” March 2, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/china-vaccines-worldwide-0382aefa52c75b834fbaf6d869808f51>

¹¹ Pham, Phuong, “Can Vietnam’s COVID-19 response be replicated?,” August 20, 2020, <https://www.policyforum.net/can-vietnams-covid-19-response-be-replicated/>

¹² Abdullah, Walid Jumblatt and Soojin Kim, “Singapore’s Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak: A Critical Assessment,” *The American Review of Public Administration*, July 15, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0275074020942454>

¹³ Martin, Timothy W. and Dasl Yoon, “How South Korea Successfully Managed Coronavirus,” Sept. 25, 2020, *The Wall Street Journal*, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/lessons-from-south-korea-on-how-to-manage-covid-11601044329>

downturn, and have been committed to an agenda of seeking an alternative development approach distinct from the crude neoliberalism of the predecessors. Although Taiwan has been excluded from the UN and WHO, most of the world has admired the leadership of Tsai Ing-wen and her handling of the COVID-19 crisis through a unique practice of deliberative democracy. It is explained as “rough consensus” or “democracy [as] a conversation between many diverse values ...[not] as a clash or showdown between two opposing values.”¹⁴

The second group of states, those appreciated for the strong performance of pandemic policies, represents another type of developed countries governed by women as the top leaders, including New Zealand, Iceland, and Denmark. Taiwan could also join this group. The common features of these nations are functional democracies setting the public health and social security as policy priorities, not the need to maximize profit of corporates and investors. It would be possible to say that these women leaders could proactively lead public opinion as well as the political parties in democracies, being less tied up with the vested interests of big business and the policy discourse of market economy and neoliberal agendas. Germany would have been included in this group, although it could not be called a country with a very successful pandemic policy, owing to data showing the eventual spread of COVID-19 and a substantial number of deaths in early 2021. However, it is significant that Chancellor Angela Merkel has led the country and EU in the middle of the global crisis, since she has always emphasized the values of social democracy, human rights and international cooperation during major transnational crises in recent years, such as the financial crisis of Greece and the Euro, the refugee and immigrant crisis, and the crisis of cross-border terrorism. The crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic is not the exception.¹⁵

4. Co-relation between Politics of Climate Change and Politics of Pandemic

The idea of “everyday comparative studies” being done by ordinary people is still sketchy, but an attentive public would definitely come to realize the importance of governability of the state and its cooperation with civil society in order to fight the threat of COVID-19. Unless one’s own

¹⁴ Nachman, Lev, “Taiwan’s COVID-19 Triumph,” *The Diplomat*, February 1, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/taiwans-covid-19-triumph/>; Marmino, Marc and Layne Vandenberg, “The Role of Political Culture in Taiwan’s COVID-19 Success,” *The Diplomat*, January 25, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/the-role-of-political-culture-in-taiwans-covid-19-success/>

¹⁵ Freizer, Sabine, Ginette Azcona, Ionica Berevoescu and Tara Patricia Cookson, “COVID-19 and women’s leadership: From an effective response to building back better,” Policy Brief No.18, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-leadership-en.pdf?la=en&vs=409>; Zenger, Jack and Joseph Folkman, “Research: Women Are Better Leaders During a Crisis,” *Harvard Business Review*, December 30, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2020/12/research-women-are-better-leaders-during-a-crisis>

government, either national or local, takes the necessary steps, many people might risk getting infected and endanger their lives through the collapse of medical services. Thomas R. Oliver argued, “Politics, for better or worse, plays a critical role in health affairs. Politics is central in determining how citizens and policy makers recognize and define problems with existing social conditions and policies, in facilitating certain kinds of public health interventions but not others, and in generating a variety of challenges in policy implementation.”¹⁶

The requirements of the “Politics of Public Health” could be paraphrased as political leadership that (1) grasps the nature of crisis quickly and properly, (2) presents an effective and feasible plan to the people, (3) chooses the relevant priority of policy goals, (4) builds consensus among political parties, business and corporate and civil society, (5) prepares the institutional arrangement for the urgent administration on the national level as well as on local and grassroots levels, (6) strengthens the international cooperation, and (7) is continuously responsible for the prolonging period of crisis. Without capable political leadership, people pay a huge price in damages. In short, the government and political leaders should develop an effective policy direction as well as ensure the capability of governance, unlike the “failed states” or “fragile states.” These are the critical points at stake during the COVID-19 crisis.

The definition of a “failed state” in Britannica is “a state that is unable to perform the two fundamental functions of the sovereign nation-state in the modern world system: it cannot project authority over its territory and peoples, and it cannot protect its national boundaries. The governing capacity of a failed state is attenuated such that it is unable to fulfill the administrative and organizational tasks required to control people and resources and can provide only minimal public services. Its citizens no longer believe that their government is legitimate, and the state becomes illegitimate in the eyes of the international community.”¹⁷ The fragile state is seen to have not yet failed but is close. According to a 2014 OECD report, “a fragile region or state has weak capacities to carry out basic governance functions, and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society. Fragile regions or states are also more vulnerable to internal or external shocks such as economic crisis or natural disaster.”¹⁸ The 1999 NSDS Guidelines or the Guidelines of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris21), established by UN, OECD, International Monetary Fund and World Bank, includes this statement, “Fragility refers to a wide array of situation: countries in crisis, countries

¹⁶ Oliver, Thomas R, “The Politics of Public Health Policy,” *Annual Review of Public Health*, Vol. 27 (2006), pp. 195-196.

¹⁷ Barma, Naazneen H., “Failed State,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/failed-state>

¹⁸ OECD 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilization in Fragile States (Paris: OECD, 2014), <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/FSR-2014.pdf>.

at war, reconstruction context, humanitarian and natural crises, situations of extreme poverty.”¹⁹

UN Secretary-General António Guterres sent a message on March 25, 2020 to launch the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, a \$2 billion fund to fight against COVID-19 in the world’s poorest countries. In his message, it was said that the “virus is arriving in countries already in the midst of humanitarian crises caused by conflicts, natural disasters and climate change.” And, “We must come to the aid of the ultra-vulnerable—millions upon millions of people who are least able to protect themselves. This is a matter of basic human solidarity. It is also crucial for combatting the virus.”²⁰ Since the so-called fragile states are almost entirely located in the Global South, which would suffer terribly from the virus, the Global North should help those countries and the Global South immediately, the general-secretary concluded. However, this pandemic has presented a paradoxical reality which international society has never experienced before. The most affluent countries, the US and the UK, have been experiencing serious troubles and are still struggling to overcome the pandemic by themselves. They have been showing some signs of fragility of the states and civil society. As a result, international society, which have been led by these two liberal powers for generations, might lose their strong commitment and the supply of enough resources to other countries. This is an extraordinary challenge for the UN and international agencies.

Anthony Giddens, a highly respected sociologist in the UK, proposed a new policy model of “Politics of Climate Change” in his book published in 2009. He argued, “The state will be an all-important actor, since so many powers remain in its hands, whether one talks of domestic or international policy,” and “industrial nations must take the lead in addressing climate change and that chances of success will depend on a great deal upon *government* and the *state* [emphasis added].”²¹ Although there is an urgent necessity of international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, a state could not be forced into collaboration with other actors, including other states, international organizations, businesses, and NGOs. A state could, however, conduct many tasks to lead business, civil society, and international society from a long-term perspective, if effectively supported by an attentive public. Such a state would intervene in the business sector, cooperate with civil society, find a well-balanced policy to combat the global warming with alternative energy policies, and build local, national and international collaboration.

The first condition of such politics, Giddens argued, is to have an *ensuring state* which “is responsible for monitoring public goals and for trying to make sure they are realized in a visible and

¹⁹ NSDS Guidelines of Paris21, “Fragile States,” <https://nsdsguidelines.paris21.org/node/291>

²⁰ “Secretary-General’s remarks at launch of Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19,” March 25, 2020, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-03-25/secretary-generals-remarks-launch-of-global-humanitarian-response-plan-for-covid-19>

²¹ Giddens, Anthony, *The Politics of Climate Change* (Second Edition, Oxford: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 4, 94.

acceptable fashion [emphasis added].” Then, *political convergence* is necessary, which means that the policies on climate change should overlap with other areas of public policy, such as energy or social welfare. *Economic convergence* is the connection of economic competitiveness with low-carbon technologies, forms of business practice, and lifestyles of people. In short, *economic convergence* is a win-win approach to climate change policy, because it includes technological development and growth of the market economy. *Political transcendence* requires general agreement on the issue of climate change beyond party politics. *Proactive adaptation* means that the politics of adaptation to climate change should get along with the politics of mitigation, based on the scientific information on the risk assessment.²²

Giddens’ stimulating ideas as well as his optimistic attitude toward political leaders have been criticized by those who hold more radical and fundamental views on the issue of climate change. These critics argue that the power holders and business interests in a globalized world should be responsible for what has been happening on the earth.²³ However, the arguments of Giddens are found quite suggestive for thinking about the recent global crises, especially the pandemic crisis. The world financial crisis and economic downturn, the refugee and immigrant crisis, the chain of crises of terrorism and wars on terror, the political crisis such as the rise of xenophobic nationalism against immigrants and minorities, and other intense issues have given a series of high stress on liberal democracies in the 2010s, including the US and the UK. As a consequence, politics has been deeply divided between the two extreme lines of opinion in many democracies, such as the left versus the right, majoritarian exclusive nationalist versus human right activist and globalist, the reactionary versus the progressive, and so on. In this antagonistic milieu, even objective scientific discussions on climate change have been vocally challenged by the political opponents.

In June 2016, a referendum was held in the UK to choose its relationship with the EU, whether the country would leave the EU or remain in it. The result was the surprising victory for the Brexiters with 51.9 % of the votes against 48.1% of those wishing to remain in the union. The political trigger was the immigration crisis in Europe in 2015-16, and the proponents of Brexit aggressively campaigned to reclaim the sovereignty of their nation from EU with the promise of a brighter future for the British people, who should be liberated from the Schengen Agreement and an amount of regional regulations.²⁴ The US is another example. Donald Trump won the American presidential election in November 2016 with 46.4 % of the votes, many fewer than Hilary Clinton’s 48.5%. He provoked the issue of illegal immigrants and accused China of unfair trade, not concealing the discriminatory attitude toward ethnic minorities and women. The slogan, “America First,” was loudly

²² Ibid., pp. 71-75.

²³ For example, Scott, Michael, “Review: Anthony Giddens, *Politics of Climate Change* (2009),” <https://www.socresonline.org.uk/15/4/reviews/2.html>

²⁴ “EU Referendum: Results,” https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results

repeated to blame the “others” for diminishing the wealth and security of “true Americans.”²⁵ Trump declared to build a long wall along the Mexican border and to withdraw from the Paris Agreement of COP21 (Conference of Parties 21), an international framework that aims to limit global warming and the diplomatic achievement of the previous administration under President Barack Obama.²⁶ Although the sudden change of American policy on climate change was devastating to the international initiative, millions of people went to the streets in many countries to demand that their governments should meet the challenges of global warming as soon as possible.

What is the nexus between antagonistic populism and a kind of irrational attitude toward the science of nature, and how did this happen? Analyzing the paradox of American public opinion, Elaine Kamarck wrote, “As scientific evidence about the causes of climate change has mounted and as a consensus has evolved in the scientific community, the public has remained divided and large, important parts of the political class have been indifferent.” In spite of the increase of terrible natural disasters, “the percentage of voters who were “very concerned” about climate change stayed within the 40% range—where it has been rather stubbornly stuck for the past two years”, and “about a third to almost half of the public believes that the seriousness of global warming is generally exaggerated.”²⁷

Dramatic and unprecedented natural disasters have had little effect on the public. Following blizzards and an unusually frigid winter in 2015, only 37% of Americans said climate change would pose a serious threat to them in their lifetimes. After Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma in 2017, concern about climate change increased by 7 points among Republicans and 2 points among Democrats. But in the next year, an August 2018 poll taken shortly after the California wildfires showed concern among Republicans down to 44% and up to 79% among Democrats. In a YouGov poll in the summer of 2019—during record heat waves in the U.S. and Europe—only 42% of the public said that they were very concerned and only 22% of Republicans said that they were” very concerned about climate change.”²⁸

²⁵ Pew Research Center, “Top voting issues in 2016 election,” July 7, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/07/07/4-top-voting-issues-in-2016-election/>

²⁶ “Trump wall: How much has he actually built?,” BBC News, October 31, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46824649>

²⁷ Kamarck, Elaine, “The Challenging Politics of Climate Change,” September 23, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-challenging-politics-of-climate-change/>

²⁸ Ibid. The author refers to the article written by Saad, Lydia, “U.S. Views on Climate Change Stable After Extreme Winter,” *Gallup*, March 25, 2015, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/182150/views-climate-change-stable-extreme-winter.aspx>;

Toth, Jacqueline, “As Wildfires Rage, Divide Widens Between Democratic, GOP Voters on Climate Change,” *Morning Consult*, August 22, 2018, <https://morningconsult.com/2018/08/22/as-wildfires-rage-divide-widens-between-democratic-gop-voters-climate-change/>; *The Economist/YouGov Poll*, July 27-30, 2019, https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/hash0nbry8/econTabReport.pdf.

This gap between people supporting the two opposing parties emerged in the late 1990s. “In 1997, nearly equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans said that the effects of global warming have already begun. Ten years later, the gap was 34%: 76% of Democrats said the effects had already begun, and only 42% of Republicans agreed. Republican resistance on this issue is one but not the only reason why, in the face of mounting evidence, the public remains lukewarm on this existential issue. *The dire warnings, the scientific consensus, and the death toll from unprecedented climate events have failed to move the public very much* [emphasis added]. For two years now, the number of Americans who say they are “very concerned” about climate change fails to reach 50%, as a look at polling from Quinnipiac illustrates.”²⁹

We could observe a similar trend of American public opinion during the pandemic in 2020. Just as the former President, Donald Trump, frankly refused to accept the scientific analysis and predictions of the global warming, he also ignored the advice of medical experts and public health professionals on how to meet the threat of COVID-19. More than that, he started to accuse China of deliberately developing and spreading the virus to attack the US. Trump openly declared that he would not wear a mask and denied that any social distancing policy was necessary. During the 2020 presidential campaign, he kept holding political rallies for hundreds, even thousands, of Republican supporters, which obviously enabled the nation-wide spread of the disease. Observing the performance of ex-President Trump and the passionate attitude of his supporters on the issue of climate change and global warming as well as that of COVID-19, we cannot avoid noticing a similar pattern in their reaction to the process of the politics of climate change and the politics of pandemic.

First, both political arenas are concerned with the relation between human society and nature. Second, the professional opinion of the scientific community should reasonably be included in the process of policy making. On the issues of global warming and COVID-19, it is safe to say that there is some agreement, more or less, among scientists and experts. Even though, it is not easy to reach a broad policy consensus based on scientific proposals in various democratic political systems. Third, government policy would definitely affect the ongoing practices of business and vested interests in the global market economy. Therefore, powerful resistance could be expected from the actors representing those interests. Not only investors and company management but also labor unions could stand against the initiatives for environmental policy, because of the fear of industries closing-down and unemployment. Fourth, some intellectuals, media personalities and politicians could see the opportunity to get popular support by politicizing the agenda for combatting climate change or pandemics in confrontational politics, especially at the time of competitive elections. Insecure citizens

²⁹ Ibid. The author refers to Kennedy, Brian and Meg Hefferon, “U.S. concern about climate change is rising, but mainly among Democrats,” *Pew Research Center*, August 28, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/28/u-s-concern-about-climate-change-is-rising-but-mainly-among-democrats/>

could follow the guidance of outspoken charismatic leaders and project the feeling of anxiety and anger onto the “others” and other countries. Illegal immigrants, ethnic or religious minorities, women, the LGBT community, and various marginalized groups could be targeted for the attacks. Scientists, ecologists, human rights activists, liberal politicians or globalists could be also branded as traitors or enemies of the nation. Fifth, in this type of politics, rivals could offer a simplified version of a policy package to fight against each other. One would be progressive, while the other reactionary. In other words, everything could be colored with “black and white” imagery. That is why the anti-abortion policy of Christian fundamentalists could be found in the same policy package next to anti-TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) policy as well as anti-climate change policy or anti-pandemic policy. The scientific views might be labeled by those with opposing views as the fabrication of a small group of establishment figures and foreign countries. Ex-President Trump kept saying that those were “lies”.³⁰

As mentioned above, the anti-scientific judgement of the White House on the pandemic policy caused an enormous tragedy: “Jan. 21, 2021 ... was the day when the COVID death toll in the U.S. reached—and then exceeded—the 405,399 Americans who died in World War II.”³¹ Unlike the Developmental States in East Asia or the liberal democracies with social democratic orientations, not only the US but many major countries failed to contain the spread of COVID-19 and save lives in 2020. The US and the UK were two cases in point, while Brazil, India, Russia, Turkey, South Africa, the Philippines and Indonesia were countries of large emerging economies characterized by neoliberal orientations.³² Although some of the states in this category were under powerful authoritarian leadership since the 2010s, the situation of public health could not be effectively controlled by those governments.

Based on this observation, it might be possible to say that the ongoing crisis of pandemic has given us a precious opportunity to think about the dilemma of dominant political economy today, as represented by the proponents of neoliberalism and the global market economy. The process of globalization led by the US and the UK has required a set of policies and institutional programs based on the principle of *laissez-faire*, such as reducing the government control over business, lowering corporate and capital gains taxes, executing budget cuts for government services in the fields of social

³⁰ Bor, Jacob, David U. Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler, “Trump’s Policy Failures Have Exacted a Heavy Toll on Public Health,” *The Scientific American*, March 5, 2021, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/trumps-policy-failures-have-exacted-a-heavy-toll-on-public-health1/>; Tollefson, Jeff, “How Trump damaged science — and why it could take decades to recover,” *Nature*, October 5, 2020, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02800-9>

³¹ Stone, Will and Carrie Feibel, “The U.S. ‘Battles’ Coronavirus, But Is It Fair To Compare Pandemic To A War?,” *NPR*, February 3, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/02/03/962811921/the-u-s-battles-coronavirus-but-is-it-fair-to-compare-pandemic-to-a-war>

³² On the case of India, “25% think Modi govt failed to curb Covid-19 pandemic: Mood of the Nation,” *India Today*, August 7, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/mood-of-the-nation/story/25-think-modi-govt-failed-to-curb-covid-19-pandemic-mood-of-the-nation-1708962-2020-08-07>

welfare, medical service, education and environmental preservation, easing restrictions on company restructuring and lay-offs, and facilitating the investment into developing countries for cost reduction. The social welfare state has been demolished step by step, and the state of liberal democracy with neoliberal orientation has drastically weakened its own capability to intervene in business and society, even during the crisis caused by the pandemic.³³

As Karl Marx wrote in *Capital*, “Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants, but at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase.”³⁴ However, we have come to know that the nature is not limitless, compared to the unlimited expansion of the mode of production. The time might have come for us to invent an alternate vision of *ensuring states* and their international society, as Giddens explains, to seek a proper direction for survival of human community. Otherwise, threats from nature, such as virus pandemics or climate change, might turn to be human-made catastrophes bringing unbearable misery with them.

³³ Sachs, Jeffrey, *The Price of Civilization: Reawakening American Virtue and Prosperity* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011); Stiglitz, Joseph E., *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012)

³⁴ Swindal, James, “Marx on Nature,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Vo. 9, 2014, p. 366.