

Chapter 15

Impact of the Brundtland Commission on Select Climate Changing Variables: An Empirical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The concept of sustainable development has been introduced following the Brundtland Commission's report "Our Common Future." Though significant volume of literature does exist on the various aspects and impacts of the mentioned commission, the actual impact of the commission on the environment for which it was initiated has never been considered by any academicians. The chapter tries to quantify the qualitative aspect of environment through per capita emission of CO₂ over the years. It shows that the concerned commission is successful in bringing down the rate of growth of per capita CO₂ emissions, but it is yet to be negative. The chapter opines that to restore the resilience of the environment and to make ecology and economy synonymous again, further efforts are needed.

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the earth, nature was nurtured by nature. All the natural maladies such as extremely high or low temperatures, flash floods, draught came in a cycle and every time has taken care by the nature towards a more sustainable environment that can support complex life forms. The natural order received its first brunt with the mastery of fire by our forefathers (Dartnell, 2019; Harari 2014, 2016). That accidental event left no clue to Mother Nature that how she can supersede the anthropogenic supremacy over all other life and non-life form. The prey and predator balance were dismantled and a less quick, less powerful animal without any natural gifts like sharp teeth, and claw; became the determining agent of all other life forms. A minor animal starting its life at the bottom of the food pyramid, promoting them to the middle of the food pyramid through the invention of minor hunting tools all of a sudden reached the top of the food pyramid owing to the biased blessings of the fire (Dartnell, 2019; Harari 2014, 2016).

As our forefathers mastered farming and settled from hunter gatherers, the unequal geographical distribution of population became prompter and that meant increased biomass pressure on some particular points at the cost of others. These anthropogenic choices and behavioural aspects put Mother Nature in a dismal state. Population pressure slowly laid its eyes on the woods and there was deforestation initially at a bearable level and then at an unprecedented level. However, the anthropogenic atrocities were at a manageable level by Mother Nature. It is worth noticing that the last few lines portray centuries even thousands of years, it was not as quick as it has been portrayed in these few lines.

However, the most brutal attack on nature was yet to come. Following the Industrial Revolution in England in 1750 and the American Industrial Revolution in 1820 mother earth had been ravaged by its most intelligent inhabitant the human being for more than 200 years. Industrialization was urban centric and witnessed huge rural to urban migration that broke all the hell on nature. It has been estimated that the Carbon-Di-Oxide gas content in the atmosphere was increased by many times before and after the industrial revolution (Sumner, 2015).

The Anthropocene era that started from 1950 introduced Plastic and Atomic garbage to the environment (Bostock & Lowe, 2018). These pollutants are non-biodegradable. The global environment was approaching a choking point. However, from the early 70s of the last millennium following the Stockholm Convention of 1972 certain environmental concerns among the people developed. This concern took shape into the formation of the Brundtland Commission in 1983 and dissolved in 1987 after the publication of their report *Our Common Future* (Brundtland, 1987; Keeble, 1988). This report brought path-breaking changes in our approach to growth and development. The concerned report refuted the conventional growth and development theories and introduced a new concept of sustainable development that is benefitting the present without sacrificing the future. Eventually, sustainable development gained so much momentum that it became a part of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. However, there is a flaw, as we may check that the existing literature on Brundtland commission emphasized this sustainability or sustainable development but somewhere ignored the building block of sustainability i.e., environment. In other words, the existing literature on the Brundtland commission is silent on one aspect what is the actual impact of the Brundtland Commission on the environment? In the 25th year of the emergence of the report (Brundtland, 1987; Keeble, 1988) of the Brundtland commission delving into this aspect becomes quite necessary.

In this background, the present chapter is dedicated towards the evaluation of the impact of the mentioned commission on certain climate changing variables. The chapter considers time series data on these select variables and eventually comments on the impact of the Brundtland Commission on them, which

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