

POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY ARE NOT ONE AND THE SAME.

The word 'democracy' is derived from the Greek word, 'demos', meaning the common people and 'kratia' meaning rule.

Democracy is believed to be a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.

On the other hand, the term 'populism' is derived from the Latin word 'populus' meaning the people. Populism can be seen as a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by the established elite groups.

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Populism is as old as
democracy itself. The sophists
of Athens' golden age were at
it hundreds of years before
Julius Caesar brought his populist
touch to the Roman republic.
From the 19th century, populist
instincts could be detected in
pro-peasantry agitation by Russian
intellectuals in the 1860s and an
agrarian movement in the USA
that grew into the People's Party
20 years later.

or the mid-20th century,
academics have used the p-word
to describe everything from
Peronism in Argentina, McCarthyism
in USA to Nasser's Egypt. Today,
the term is once again in the
spotlight, often seen in opposition
to democracy.

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Populism and democracy are both socio-political concepts that on the surface appear to be similar but are not always.

Political science researchers have shown that in fact, populism often can be antithetical to true democracy. Populist politicians may emerge with promises of working 'for the people' in opposition to the wealthy elite.

But they may actually have a secret agenda to favour the elite, undermining democratic institutions and ultimately causing problems for the 'common people' they once promised to serve.

This essay therefore will try to point out the reasons behind the emergence

of populism in recent times while demonstrating the dangerous effects of populism vis-a-vis true democracy.

Globalisation, Recession, Mass Migration, soaring inequality, the perceived failure of the political establishment to deal with any of the above — has created distrust against parties and politicians whereby people start to trust populist leaders.

When the populace is frustrated with their perceived inability to affect legislation and regulate governance, they find populism encouraging. For example, in the words of the arch-populist, Donald Trump, from his 2017 inauguration address, "for too long, a small group

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in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost."

Today, democracy is in the midst of an unprecedented global retreat. Right now, the three most populous democracies in the world are ruled by populists: Donald Trump in USA, Joko Widodo in Indonesia and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. Some other examples are Brexit, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Marine Le Pen's National front in France.

In light of this rising trend of populism in the world, we need to reflect upon its dangerous effects. Populism often turns people against

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representative democracy. Populists reject pluralism. This threatens democratically elected governments and national unity.

Populist movements are often led by charismatic leaders and have little internal democracy and accountability. These leaders tend to develop personality cults and when they come to power, they often turn authoritarian.

Populist leaders reject diversity of identity and of opinions within society. They acquire more and more power and try to subvert democratic institutions like the judiciary, the press and media, civil society etc.

This weakens rule of law, the system of checks and

balances and autonomous social institutions. Individual and group rights also come under threat.

Populists often claim absolute moral superiority and reject the legitimacy of the opponent. It results in a very weak opposition and erodes the dignity of minority groups. The culture of reasoned debates is weakened and dissent is suppressed.

Populism of the right tends to acquire the form of majoritarian nationalism, which is divisive and causes damage to cohesiveness in society.

The populists exploit the loopholes and issues in order to polarise society. They try to divide people along religious,

racial or linguistic lines to win elections. Xenophobia has become widespread in such countries. This can lead to racial intolerance and violence against those seen as 'outsiders' by the 'native' citizenry.

In contrast, countries with true democratic character believe in listening to all voices. Inclusive growth, freedom of speech and expression, protection of minority rights will be the keywords in a democracy.

A healthy democracy will reflect power sharing and a strong opposition. People here will hold the government accountable for its actions.

Democracy is a way of life, which has the potential

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to transform the world. In order to curb the rising populist trend, immediate measures are required. The regulation of social media is essential to curb fake news. Participatory and deliberative platforms (citizens' assemblies, forums) should be encouraged.

Political parties should seek to propose inclusive visions and programs that deliver benefits for all citizens, not only for a part of the voters. voter awareness is also an important component.

Civil society organisations defending human rights and equality against populism should agree on a common agenda and strategy. Bringing

welfare legislations for the marginalised groups will help build an inclusive society.

There is no doubt that division in the face of an organised populist threat is problematic. Only rational thinking rather than impulsive feelings and anger can solve the problems of our times.

We need to encourage democracy even in the toughest times. Populism does not help any section of society in reality. Populism is rule by iron fist covered in velvet gloves while democracy is rule by the people, of the people and for the people.

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TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE : ARE
WE ON THE RIGHT PATH ?

"There is one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent threat of a changing climate."

- Barack Obama

Climate change refers to any significant change in the measures of climate lasting for an extended period of time.

In other words, climate change includes major changes in temperature, precipitation, wind patterns etc. that occur over several decades or longer.

The reasons behind climate change can be natural - variations in Earth's orbit, plate tectonics,

volcanic activity etc. or can be anthropogenic in nature - GHGs, change in land use patterns, aerosols from vehicular emissions and so on.

The following essay will highlight the impact of climate change for the world and the steps taken to mitigate it. The essay will try to analyse that we are indeed on the right path but more needs to be done in order to save our planet.

The last five years have been the warmest five-year period on record. The Arctic warmed much faster than predicted and Greenland's ice sheet is melting 7 times faster than in the 1990s.

The UN estimates that

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in the last 10 years, climate-related disasters have caused \$ 1.4 trillion worth of damage worldwide.

With the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere around 411 ppm, our world is now about 1°C hotter than in the pre-industrial period.

India stands to be one of the nations most significantly affected, given our huge population size and levels of inequality and poverty. The Indian monsoon has become unpredictable, thus affecting our food security.

floods, cyclones have become more intense and frequent.

Coastal cities like Mumbai, face the threat of sinking.

Given such disastrous

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side-effects of climate change, it is essential to devise policies to combat climate change.

At the international level, various initiatives have been introduced. The UNFCCC was established as a forum of cooperation while the Kyoto Protocol introduced binding targets for developed countries to reduce their GHG emissions.

The Montreal Protocol, Vienna Convention and later the Kigali Agreement have all tried to combat ozone hole depletion and reduce the use of CFCs, HFCs etc.

The Paris Agreement in 2016 was an important event where countries took responsibility in the form of INDCs.

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India's INDC, to be achieved by 2030 are : To reduce emission intensity of GDP by 33-35% from 2005 level, produce 40% of the installed capacity for electricity from non-fossil fuel sources and produce additional carbon sink of 2.5 - 3 billion tonnes of CO₂.

The mechanism of Carbon Market and emission trading has also gained momentum. The IPCC publishes special Reports in order to generate awareness among the people about impact of climate change. The REDD+ is another mechanism which aims to reduce deforestation.

Thus, the international community is on the right path.

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7 Regardless of the resource limitations, India is taking numerous measures to adapt and mitigate climate change.

The National Action Plan on climate change (NAPCC) covers 8 major missions on solar, enhanced energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, water, sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem, Green India, sustainable agriculture and strategic knowledge on climate change.

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) was launched by India to encourage generation of renewable energy. The Clean Energy fund worth \$ 3 billion is used to promote the use of clean technologies.

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India has set a target of 33% of its geographical area under forest cover. (Current is 21.67%)

The government has also launched FAME scheme for e-mobility to boost sales of eco friendly vehicles. BS VI norms have also been implemented in many cities.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide free LPG connections to rural women to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. The UTALA scheme aims to increase the use of LED lamps.

The Swachh Bharat Mission and AMRUT scheme for smart cities, aim to clean streets and transform rural areas. India has also allocated about \$200

million for National Adaptation Fund for climate change.

In spite of such positive efforts on both domestic and international levels, certain limitations have emerged.

Climate change being a global phenomena, global cooperation is must but historical polluters like US are trying to escape responsibility and ignore the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. For example, USA has pulled out of Paris Agreement.

Other limitations faced by India and developing nations are the huge costs of investing in green technologies. Lack of research and expertise along with difficulty in changing mindset of people are big hurdles.

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The green initiatives being undertaken by the world are not sufficient, as reflected in the climate change Performance Index 2020. Here the first 3 ranks are left free because no country has done enough.

India has entered the Top 10 for the first time but the government is yet to draw up a roadmap to reduce subsidies on fossil fuels in a phased manner.

USA has replaced Saudi Arabia as the worst performer while only two G20 countries (India and UK) are ranked in the high category.

The UNEP Emissions Gap Report has pointed out that the world will fail to meet the 1.5°C temperature goal of the

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Paris Agreement unless global
GHG emissions fall by 7.6%
each year.

Therefore, in light of
such alarming reports, the
world needs to wake up and
do more to combat climate change.

The first step can be
to establish an exclusive
international body dedicated to
tackle climate change so that
SDG 13 can be implemented in
both letter and spirit.

To increase carbon
sequestration, trans-continental
green belts can be grown with
support from students, civil
society and private players.

Increased cooperation
is the solution where developed
countries should provide financial

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aid to developing nations along
with technology transfers and
devise realistic and time-bound
targets.

climate change is happening.

This should be accepted and
not politicised. Mitigation must
be complemented with climate
change-related adaptation.

The world is definitely on the
right path but it is a long
road ahead.