# POPULIST DISCOURSE IN POST- SOVIET

# KAZAKHSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN

By

Rokhila Madaminova

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Masters of Art

in International Relations

Supervisor:  Erin Kristin Jenne

Word Count: 15'673

Budapest, Hungary

2017

## Abstract

Recently, Kirk Hawkins' populism a discourse approach has been gaining popularity within academia. As a theoretical framework, it is claimed to be applicable to different case studies and easy to operationalise in real life. Hence, this thesis aims to apply Hawkins' discursive approach to the study of populism to post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, and discover, whether the leaders like Nursultan Nazarbaev and Emomali Rakhmon use populist discourse to legitimize their undemocratic actions. To conduct the research, the speeches of both Presidents' from the early 1990s up until 2017 have been analyzed through holistic grading method of content analyses. The results reveal that indeed, both Nazarbaev and Rakhmon utilized populist discourse, mostly, during the democratic and pluralist periods. Further analyses suggest that populist discourse both in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan was used while the regimes of Nazarbaev and Rakhmon had been attacking the pluralism— democratic norms and values. Eventually, both leaders were able to eliminate pluralism, and successfully built and consolidated their authoritarian regimes in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Thus, the findings of this thesis show that indeed, leaders can opt for populist discourse to legitimize the attack to democracy, and if successful, subsequently fall into authoritarianism. Also, by attempting to study populism in post-Soviet space, this thesis goes against the regional bias the existing researches on populism are blamed with, and illustrates, that populism can be present in any space and time.

# Table of Contents

## Table of Figures

iii

**Abbreviations**

Commission for National Reconciliation – CNR

Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan – PFT

Popular Front of Tajikistan – PFT

United Tajik Opposition – UTO

# Introduction

The field of populism has seen growing academic and research interest since the 1990s, which was motivated by the emergence of populist politicians throughout Latin America and Europe. Though it is a popularly used concept in contemporary times, there is no consensus on the ultimate definition of populism, which also means that there is no agreement on who is a populist. This debate has been dominated by two opposite arguments. The supporters of the first argument claim that populism as a scientific term became so widely used that eventually, it lost its analytical value. On the other hand, the second argument emphasizes that the ongoing debate indicates the importance and relevance of populism as an analytical category. This thesis sides with the latter, and attempts to prove that populism is indeed still valid and important in the contemporary world.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on populism. Importantly, three minimalistic—strategic, ideational and discursive approaches to populism exist. Among these, Kirk Hawkins' populism as a discourse theory has been proved to be an effective analytical tool in discovering populism in a range of case studies. Hawkins argues that populism as a discourse is a mode of political expression that represents political developments through a Manichean outlook where the good is represented by the people and the evil is associated with the enemy. This minimalistic definition makes the theory applicable to different cases, thus avoiding the regional bias other theories of populism are mainly accused with. Though, the only condition is the presence of pluralism that is perceived as a threat to particular political personality.[1] Hawkins argues that

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[1] Kirk Andrew Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 1. paperback ed (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 26–28.

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by attacking pluralism—democratic norms and conditions— populism risks leading to authoritarianism.

*Research Focus*

Similar to the lack of consensus on the ultimate definition of populism, the real world occurrence of populism likewise lacks a sense of consensus. However, there is an obvious bias towards regions like Latin America, Northern America, or Europe.[2] As a result of this tendency, the research on populism may be restricted and risk missing the manifestation of populism in other regions of the world. The best example is made by the post- Soviet region, particularly, Central Asia (CA), where authoritarian forms of governance are considered to be pre-destined by the local culture.[3]  However, such simplistic assumptions are unsatisfactory because they ignore the complex mechanism behind the consolidation and stability of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, the evolvement of undemocratic form of governance requires in- depth analysis, because states like Kazakhstan or Tajikistan cannot be assumed to install authoritarian forms of governance immediately after gaining independence. On the contrary, these states had been through a short period of pluralism with the Constitution that represented democratic values and norms, that posed a considerable threat to the regimes of Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan and Rakhmon[4] in Tajikistan.

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[2] Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," 2013, 25–30.

[3] Paul Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse or Cure?," *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1998): 29–30.

[4] Emomali Rakhmonov dropped Russian ending-*ov* from his surname in 2007. Therefore, in this thesis his surname will be addressed as Rakhmon.

This thesis seeks to remedy the literature on the evolution of authoritarian regimes in its case studies, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, by applying Hawkins' 'populism as a discourse approach.' It proposes to perform content analyses and find out the periods of populist discourse usage in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Given this theoretical framework, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

a) the populist discourse was used by the regimes in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan during the periods of pluralism

b) Presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev and Emomali Rakhmon utilize populist discourse to present their attack on pluralism as legitimate

c) populist discourse aided in the gradual consolidation of authoritarian rule in both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

The analysis will offer a novel contribution to the literature on populism and regime consolidation in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of three chapters, including introductory and conclusion sections. Chapter one begins with reviewing the existing literature on populism as well as Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Also included are the theoretical framework, and methodological tools I aim to apply in this thesis are outlined. The second chapter conducts an analysis of populist discourse in Kazakhstan and traces the important developments behind the occurrence of populist discourse. Lastly, it will analyze the consequences of populist discourse that hurt the young democracy of the Kazakh Republic. The third chapter will analyse Tajikistan by following the same structure as for the Kazakh case. The conclusion makes the comparison between Kazakh and Tajik cases that confirms Hawkins' 'populism as a discourse' theory.

3

## Chapter 1

This chapter aims to review the existing literature on populism and give the most prominent approaches to the study of populism in different case studies. Next, the chapter will survey the literature on Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, subsequently, select applicable approach to the study of populism in the case studies above. Lastly, methodological tools the author aims to implement in this thesis will be outlined.

*Literature review*

Though the literature on populism lacks a widely accepted definition, it agrees on certain components that should be present in a populist political regime,[5] these are "the people" who represent morality and purity, and "the elite" that is associated with everything bad.[6] However, according to some scholars still, some features like "the elite" may be absent.[7] Additionally, the literature on populism has the following approaches: populism as a strategy, populism as an ideology and populism as a discourse. Although there are several important works done on

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[5] Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds., *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, 1. paperback ed (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013); Kirk Andrew Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 1. paperback ed (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010); Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford University Press, 2016), doi:10.11126/stanford/9780804796132.001.0001.

[6] Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism*; Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*; Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*; Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, eds., *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, Nature of Human Society Series (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy," *Democratization* 19, no. 2 (April 2012): 184–208.

[7] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

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populism, only the approaches with a minimalistic definition are going to be mentioned in this section, since they are believed to have better validity and analytical value, rather than turning this term into an all-fit-one category.[8]

One of the most prominent scholars of strategic approach, Weyland, defines populism as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks to or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, and uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of unorganized followers."[9] What matters for them is not the content of policies or the style of discourse employed by political actors, but rather the relationship of those actors toward their constituents.

Unlike the seemingly consensus on the components of populism in the scholarly literature, the strategic approach does not emphasize the role of the dichotomy between "the people" and "the elite". Those who define populism as a form of political organization typically place an emphasis on the identity of the political leaders and their relation to other political actors. Taggart, for instance, argues that populist parties are characterized by a centralized organizational structure headed by a strong charismatic leader.[10] Thus, this approach has been dominating the empirical studies of populism in Latin America, emphasizing populism's diminutive effect on the democratic procedures, values and norms.[11]

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[8] Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*, 11; 26.

[9] Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 14, doi:10.2307/422412.

[10] Paul A. Taggart, *The New Populism and the New Politics: New Protest Parties in Sweden in a Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan [u.a.], 1996).

[11] Roberts, "Latin America's Populist Revival."

Though the strategic approach seems to be perfectly applicable to a range of case studies, it has a number of drawbacks and limitations. Firstly, it tends to leave out the important component of populism—the people,[12] on which all other approaches agree upon. In doing so, Kinght argues that by missing out the people, the scholars of strategic approach also ignore the etymological roots of the term. Second, while the personality characteristics of political leaders are frequently cited in studies of populism, scholars like Barr warn that the aforementioned criterion is not sufficient to operationalize populism. In particular, because of its "lack of key values," and a strong emphasis on the existence of charismatic leader, populism as a strategy is "particularly liable to the politics of personality."[13] Additionally, there are cases of non-charismatic populist leaders, with Peru's Alberto Fujimori being one example.[14] Therefore, charismatic leadership is an important part of populism, yet, it is not the only constitutive element.[15] Next, there are instances of populism emerging in highly institutionalised places. The famous La Pen in France will make a perfect example of this. Lastly, the strategic approach to populism risks populism to become an all-purpose concept and ultimately lose its analytical value. Many non-populist movements or leaders,

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[12] Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford University Press, 2016); Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds., *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, 1. paperback ed (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013); Kirk Andrew Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 1. paperback ed (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013).

[13] Paul Adam Taggart, *Populism*, Concepts in the Social Sciences (Buckingham Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), 101.

[14] Robert R. Barr, "Populists, Outsiders and Anti-Establishment Politics," *Party Politics* 15, no. 1 (2009): 40.

[15] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 168; Barr, "Populists, Outsiders and Anti-Establishment Politics."

such as religious, millenarian, or political movements may fall under the strategic definition of populism.[16]

Another minimalistic approach to the study of populism is the ideational approach. An influential definition of populism as an ideology was suggested by Cas Mudde who define populism as:

> "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people."[17]

This definition has several strengths. Firstly, Mudde argues that conceptualising populism as a thin-centered ideology would allow us to understand that populism does not exist in its pure form, but rather that it is always mixed with other ideologies. Secondly, Mudde's minimal definition gave basic description of the concept that can be implemented to classify who is populist, and importantly, who is not a populist. Thirdly, the definition of populism as a thin ideology makes it applicable for different comparative researches, therefore the concept can go beyond the regional bias. Ideational approach has been influential in comparative politics and political science research on populism, especially among those who focus on European populist right-wing parties.[18]

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[16] Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*, 20; Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 168.

[17] Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," 543.

[18] Cas Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007); Hawkins, Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective; Teun Pauwels, "Explaining the Success of Neo-Liberal Populist Parties: The Case of Lijst Dedecker in Belgium," Political Studies 58, no. 5 (December 1, 2010): 1009–29, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00815.x; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, Populism in Europe and the Americas; Ben Stanley, "The Thin Ideology of Populism," Journal of Political Ideologies 13, no. 1 (February 2008): 95–110, doi:10.1080/13569310701822289; Matthijs Rooduijn and Teun Pauwels, "Measuring Populism: Comparing Two Methods of Content Analysis," West European Politics 34, no. 6 (November 2011): 1272–83, doi:10.1080/01402382.2011.616665.

Despite the positive contribution to the heated debate on the definition of populism, ideational approach has its own drawbacks. First, the term "thin-ideology" in this approach is used unproblematically. Freeden argues that ecologism or feminism although initially were considered as thin ideologies, "have since made strenuous efforts to accumulate a range of conceptual furniture to that will thicken their ideational density and sophistication and extend their appeal and viability".[19] The question is, can we say the same for populism? Most probably the answer is no, because the thin-centered ideology definition defines populism as an "incomplete" ideology that usually becomes attached to other thick ideologies. If we consider populism as a thin ideology that will gradually thicken, there is a risk that eventually, it can swallow all other definitions of populism.

The next approach that is gaining popularity within the populism literature is a discursive approach. Torre defines populism as a "rhetoric that constructs politics as the moral and ethical struggle between the people and the oligarchy."[20] Additionally, Kazin defines populism as a language used by the leader who claims to speak for the absolute majority of people. Importantly, the great contribution to the discourse approach is made by Hawkins, who conceptualizes populism as a Manichaean discourse that assigns a binary moral dimension to political conflicts. In this approach populism is seen as a mode of political expression that is usually evident in speeches. Populism as a discourse is a "gradational property of specific instances of political expression."[21]

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[19] Michael Freeden, Ideologies *and Political Theory a Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 486.

[20] Carlos de la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America: The Ecuadorian Experience* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000), 4.

[21] Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," 2013, 8.

Therefore, according to the promulgated definition, a political actor can be more or less populist at different times depending on how and when he/she uses populist discourse.

Similar to Mudde's ideational approach, populism as a discourse approach emphasizes the "us" vs "them" features of populism. However, for scholars like Kazin or Hawkins populism is not a thin ideology, but rather, it is a mode of political expression that is selectively and strategically employed by political personalities. Hawkins further explains the differences between populism as a discourse approach and the ideational, strategic approaches. He argues that discourse does not have the features, components, or vocabulary of ideology that ideational approach requires. Moreover, as a discourse, with this approach, populism is easy to operationalize in practice and observe it as a specific pattern of political expression, rather than trying to categorize a particular case as populist or not populist. Additionally, the discursive approach to the study of populism does not have normative requirements for a political action. Thus, he argues, political personalities may have a populist discourse, yet their ideology can be something else.[22] As such, though discursive approach has been subject to criticism, namely, as an approach that misses other aspect of populism, such as performative and visual aspects,[23] it still remains as the most reliable and valid approach that can be implemented to various case studies to identify and measure the degree of populism across time and space.[24]

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[22] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 31.

[23] Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*, 22.

[24] Gidron and Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism," 7–8.

*One-Man-Rule Populist Discourse?*

The previous section has demonstrated that the discursive approach to populism is considered to be the prevalent framework to shed a light on existence of populist rhetoric. Subsequently, by linking the ideas with the developments of particular period, the discursive approach suggests which time frame and which developments to observe. The uniqueness of this approach is its applicability to different cases and its potential efficiency in comparative research.

Numerous works on populism have demonstrated a regional bias, suggesting that populism is prevalent, primarily within certain regions, such as Latin America, North America, or Europe, where people have the power to influence the political process.[25] Thus, to appeal to the people, and to manipulate the mass, leaders refer to populism to win their support. At the same time, many scholars reject the existence of populism in post-Soviet spaces, where the tradition of the one-man-rule is dominant, which consequently does not necessitate the leaders to pursue populism.[26] Is this claim justifiable for all post-Soviet states? How about my case selections— Kazakhstan and Tajikistan— the states that have been ruled by a single regime for more than two decades?

If we attempt to apply Hawkins's discursive approach theory to populism to Kazakh and Tajik regimes, it appears that both cases contain numerous elements of the discursive approach. However, there are number of scholarly works done on Kazakh and Tajik regimes that would vehemently oppose the presence of populism in the aforementioned states. To mention a few, Matveeva argues that regimes in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan rely on repressive measures and

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[25] Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas*; Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Roberts, "Latin America's Populist Revival."

[26] Kimitaka Matsuzato, "A Populist Island in an Ocean of Clan Politics: The Lukashenka Regime as an Exception among CIS Countries," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 2 (March 2004): 235–61.

coercive power that the leaders have over people.[27] Isaacs differs from Matveeva by arguing that regimes in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are neo-patrimonial, meaning that, chief executives secure authority by using personal patronage, rather than law or institutions. This process is interacted by leaders' ability to award key figures in return to personal favours, that would provide a mobilization of support for the leaders' authority.[28] Others believe that behind the consolidated power is post-Soviet nation building process, which was personalized as leader's successful project. Nationalism as a part of the nation building process altered communism, and became the main ideology, thus reinforcing the legitimacy of power personification and authoritarianism in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.[29]

On the other hand, it is believed that Kazakh and Tajik regimes enjoy stability not necessarily through repression but rather by tactically employing discursive strategy is a vital source of legitimacy. Notably, effective authoritarian legitimation, measured by the degree of the presentation of the regime's rule as legitimate and that meets the broader spectrum of beliefs, values and expectations held by people.[30] Indeed, Omelicheva touches upon a significant, yet, ignored factor of authoritarian stability. Importantly, she emphasizes the vitality of regimes' usage of discursive tactics in parallel with repression, coercion that all ultimately legitimize the regimes. Crucially, what seems to be omitted is the content of the discursive strategy. I hypothesize that the

[27] Anna Matveeva, "Legitimising Central Asian Authoritarianism: Political Manipulation and Symbolic Power," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 7 (September 2009): 1095–96.

[28] John Ishiyama, "Neopatrimonialism and Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics," in *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 52–58.

[29] Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese, "Between 'imagined' and 'real' Nation-Building: Identities and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 8–9, doi:10.1080/00905992.2015.1029044.

[30] Omelicheva, "Authoritarian Legitimation," 481–83.

discursive strategies implemented by the regimes in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan contain populist elements.

Undoubtedly, the current form of Kazakh and Tajik regimes are undemocratic.[31] This dynamic is illustrated in the Kazakh and Tajik political landscapes where political pluralism lacks, and political apathy, and the limited mobilization of people, are commonplace.[32] However, these states were not always authoritarian, factually, throughout the independence there were periods that may be characterized as pluralistic. Seemingly, right after the collapse of the USSR, both in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan the regimes promised to make the transition from a totalitarian system to a democratic future. In both countries the demise of communism revoked a political system with multiple political actors, democratic institutions and pluralistic constitutions.[33] Apparently, both leaders at the time did not possess the authority and power that they have now.[34] However, the hope for democratization was unfulfilled, but, gradually, the regimes eliminated pluralism through implementing various tactics.[35]

[31] "Kazakhstan | Freedom House," accessed April 18, 2017, https://freedomhouse.org/country/kazakhstan; "Tajikistan | Freedom House," accessed June 2, 2017, https://freedomhouse.org/country/tajikistan.

[32] Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, Colo. London: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 54.

[33] Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, 87–88; Kamoludin Abdullaev and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 2. ed, Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East 73 (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 103–4. *Note: Tajikistan fell into civil war that continued from 1992-1997. The 1994 constitution were amended with signing peace agreement in 1997, that made the constitution even more pluralism friendly.*

[34] Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security*, 2. print (Washington, DC: United States Inst. of Peace Press, 1997), 3–8.

[35] Omelicheva, "Authoritarian Legitimation"; John Heathershaw, "Tajikistan Amidst Globalisation: State Failure or State Transformation?" in *The Transformation of Tajikistan: Sources of Statehood* (New York: Routlage, 2013), 177–99; Kirill Nourzhanov, "Saviours of the Nation or Robber Barons? Warlord Politics in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 2 (June 2005): 109–30.; Isaacs, "Neopatrimonialism and beyond"; Matveeva, "Legitimising Central Asian Authoritarianism."

The situation mentioned in the previous paragraph meets the requirements of Hawkins's populist discourse framework to a greater extent. As he argues that there is a political pluralism that coincides with failure in the system, in this case being the collapse of the USSR and subsequent state- and nation- building processes. On the top of this, the prediction Hawkins makes related to the gradual transformation of pluralistic system to authoritarian, chiefly by suppressing democratic norms and values, is apparent in Kazakh and Tajik cases. Therefore, taking into account the aforementioned assumptions, it becomes intriguing whether there is a practice of populist discourse in post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

*Theoretical Framework*

Populism as a discourse approach seem to be an applicable theoretical framework for my research that will enable me to analyse the regimes in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan from a different and novel aspect. The prominent scholar of this approach, Kirk Hawkins defines populist discourse as:

> "a worldview or a discourse that perceives history as a Manichean struggle between Good and Evil, one in which the side of Good is the will of the people,.. while the side of Evil is a conspiring elite that has subverted this will."[36]

Unlike the other approaches of populism, for instance ideational approach that define populism as a thin ideology, Hawkins' populism as a discourse does not have official texts and vocabulary that ideational approach requires. Instead, what helps the discourse approach enable students to discover populism is by paying attention to linguistic elements, such as tone, metaphor,

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[36] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 5.

and other broader themes.[37] The discourse approach does not require a normative program for political action, like the ideational approach does, thus, a particular leader can have a populist discourse, while his/her main ideology is not populism, but any other ideology.

As for the strategic approach, it seems to be applicable to post- Soviet Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, as well. Weyland's definition of populism as a political strategy where a charismatic leader seeks to exercise power based on direct unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from a large number of people. For instance, Taggart argues that populist parties are characterized by a centralized organizational structure headed by a strong charismatic leader.[38] In particular, because of its "lack of key values," populism is "particularly liable to the politics of personality."[39]

Thereby, Hawkins's discourse approach to populism makes it possible to apply it to different case studies, and measure the populist discourse of the leader, and produce more reliable and valid research outcomes. When the study of populism in general lacks a consensus on one general definition and operationalization of populism in practice, Hawkins' definition of populism is defendable on the logical grounds as superior, conceptually minimalistic, and possible to show how it is used across time and space. To measure the populist discourse, Hawkins applies quantitative technique of text analysis, which in practice proved to have high reliability and validity.

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[37] Ibid., 30–32.

[38] Taggart, *The New Populism and the New Politics*.

[39] Taggart, *Populism*, 101.

Though, the only requirement for choosing the case study is the presence of pluralism in a political landscape. Existence of political pluralism is important for the discourse approach,[40] because, first, there should be someone or something that would threaten a particular political personality's interest that would trigger populist discourse. Second, the existence of opposition, institutional checks and balances, and room for criticism, is the opposite of populism, where the dissent is not regarded as a valued feature of politics, opposition or any critique is not respected, particularly, if they aim to challenge the goals of the leader.[41] To note, Hawkins makes it clear that his definition of populism as a discourse does not claim that a populist leader is a demagogic with short-sighted political or economic goals,[42] though, some of the populist leaders may possess all these qualities. What he means is that, leaders can have a populist worldview, Manichean outlook that identifies good with the will of the people and evil with the elite. These leaders can way set of ideas full of moralising rhetoric, evil, good, and the absolute will of people. This contrasts with a pluralistic worldview or discourse, that is pragmatic and reflects the fundamental values of democracy—existence of different views, opposition and respect for democratic institutions.[43]

Hawkins's populism as a discourse theory also enables the researcher to investigate the discourse of a particular political personality more in depth, and find out more about the causes and consequences of populism. First, the theory aims to answer the cause behind the emergence of populist discourse, namely, what causes populist discourse to emerge successfully at certain times and at certain places? Hawkins argues that a political personality as a rational actor makes

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[40] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 5; 26.

[41] Ibid., 5–6.

[42] Ibid., 5.

[43] Ibid., 29–30.

conscious choices.[44] Thus, populism successfully emerges in a moment of failure, failure of legitimacy of a particular system.[45] Additionally, the theory does not fully ignore the contributions of the older research on populism, where the economic, social, and political developments are believed to cause populism. Instead, it takes a fresh stance on studying these factors. By placing the discourse at the heart of the analysis, and linking the ideas with the developments in the system, the researcher will be able to make a more in depth analysis of the occurrence of populist discourse. Hawkins calls for analysing the populist discourse first, then, trace the causal mechanisms. Thus, the researcher will be able to successfully differentiate the particular periods that needs further explanation.

Next, Hawkins's theory of populist discourse also seeks to find out the consequences of populism. Despite the existence of positive accounts on populism as being the true face of democracy,[46] Hawkins emphasizes its dark side more, because it questions minority rights, divides the society into good and evil, undermines governmental institutions, suffocates, or completely eliminates the dissent. Particularly, this tendency of populism is dangerous for young and immature democracies, like for instance Venezuela. Indeed, populism indirectly questions the democratic procedures by undermining tolerance for opposition and democratic institutions.[47] It has a directionality, that carries democracy down to authoritarianism, or, in the worst of cases, to totalitarianism, as populism aims to impose one ideal image on every citizen. The changes populist

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[44] Ibid., 12.

[45] Ibid., 8.

[46] Margaret Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People:Populism as the Ideology of Democracy," in *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, ed. Yves Mény and Yves Surel (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2002), 25–44, doi:10.1057/9781403920072_2.

[47] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 37; 26.

16

leaders aim to introduce to fight the pluralism, cannot be considered as democratic, therefore, seeing it as pathologic phenomenon is not wrong.[48]

Hawkins's theory of populism as a discourse indeed, makes the most appropriate theoretical framework to the study populism in my case studies. Today, both, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are believed to be authoritarian states.[49] Additionally, both in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan authoritarian regimes are not only repressive, but also, they enjoy certain degree of legitimacy and popular support.[50] However, both of them did not have total control over the whole state as they do now, during the early independence years. On the contrary, the collapse of the USSR and subsequent steps towards free market, free elections, and multiparty systems gave a new hope for the democratization of both Kazakhstan[51] and Tajikistan.[52] Therefore, it is particularly interesting to investigate the process of regime consolidation through the perspective of Hawkins's theory of populist discourse. This theory is applicable to my case studies for the following reasons: a) both states had lived through a period of pluralism, with legal real opposition, multiparty system, institutional checks and balances, and free media, after the collapse of the Soviet Union; b) initially weak regimes with powerful opponents were able to achieve stability and monopoly over the political, economic, and social realms of life in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan; c) both of them are

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[48] Ibid., 37–38.

[49] "Kazakhstan | Freedom House"; "Tajikistan | Freedom House."

[50] Martin K. Dimitrov, "Popular Autocrats."

[51] Sally N. Cummings, "Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12, no. 2 (July 2006): 177–204, doi:10.1080/13537110600734547.

[52] Akbarzadeh, "Geopolitics versus Democracy in Tajikistan."

constitutionally recognized as a leaders of their respective nations;[53] d) both have eventually built the state around themselves and personalised the successful achievements of independence.

The fact that both leaders could reverse the democratization process, by eliminating the opposition, changing the constitution, and ultimately turning into increasingly charismatic and authoritarian regimes, coincides with populism as discourse theory's above listed aspects. Notably, the preliminary results of my speech analysis for both Nursultan Nazarbayev and Emomali Rakhmon suggests that, in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan populist discourse emerges during highly turbulent times after the collapse of the USSR. Moreover, a juxtaposition of the speeches with the developments of a particular period show that regimes divided the society into two camps, the people and the elite, where they embody the popular will. The people are associated with good, while the elite represents the opponents of the Presidents, who have evil intentions to benefit at the expense of the people. The result, as Hawkins predicts, moves towards an authoritarian direction, through undermining democratic institutions, values and norms.

*Methodology*

Archival research is going to be the primary source of data collection for this thesis. Since official discourse is the object of this study, the arguments presented are predominantly based on statements issued by the governments in Astana and Dushanbe. These include Nursultan Nazarbayev's and Emomali Rakhmon's official addresses to the nation, independence speeches,

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[53] George Bennett, "Kazakhstan's Reluctant Leader," *openDemocracy*, April 21, 2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/george-bennett/kazakhstan%27s-reluctant-leader; "Tajikistan: Leader of the Nation Law Cements Autocratic Path," *EurasiaNet*, December 11, 2015, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/76521.

as well as speeches at important events such as speeches given at the anniversaries of constitution or peace agreement in Tajikistan. These speeches are selected according to the importance of the events and the comprehensive nature of the speeches, where leaders outline all the main developments throughout one year. The materials are available online at the Presidents' personal websites (personal.akorda.kz) for Nazarbayev and (http://www.president.tj) for Rakhmon. Though not all speeches are available online on official web site for Kazakhstan. Thus, the President's books that are available in a pdf format on his personal website are consulted for the earlier independence speeches. To juxtapose the themes of the speeches with the developments of the time, press coverage of news outlets, few of which are Radio Free Europe, the Conway Bulletin, Current Digest of the Russian Press and etc. will be used to give the context to the analysed official documents.

The research is going to implement a comparative framework. Comparative method is needed in order to unfold the causes and consequences of a populist discourse in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, that will confirm or disapprove the hypothesis of this thesis. With these case studies, where the ethnic, socio-political and economic situation differ considerably, the thesis aims to illustrate how populist discourse has evolved into these two Central Asian (CA) states. The successful conduct of comparative analysis will also make this research applicable to range a of other post- Soviet and authoritarian states.

To analyse the populist discourse as a form of textual analysis that educational psychologists call holistic grading will be utilized.[54]   Instead counting particular words or

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[54] Edward M White, *Teaching and Assessing Writing: Recent Advances in Understanding, Evaluating, and Improving ...* (Place of publication not identified: Proquest Csa Journal Div, 1985).

sentences, as in traditional content analysis, holistic grading asks the coder to read the whole text and then assign a grade based on his/her overall impression. Although it looks at broad attributes of a text, holistic grading is a quantitative measure that seeks to determine how much of an idea is present. This methodology is famous as one of the most reliable tools to measure the populist discourse. Moreover, it is a tool that can enable the researcher to measure the degree of populism across times and spaces, one of the most reliable and valid tools of populist discourse measurement.[55] Hence, it makes a great tool to measure populist rhetoric in the speeches of Nazarbayev and Rakhmon, that aims to capture the timeframe from the independence up to the present day. I will be able to analyse when the populist rhetoric goes up and when it goes down, and try to link the ideas, context of the populist speeches with the developments of that time and, ultimately, find out how the populist discourse aided regimes' crack down on democratic principles.

Holistic grading requires pairing a coding rubric with a set of anchor texts that match each numerical value or level of ideas so that coders can have a consistent set of reference points. Coding is based on a rubric developed in Hawkins' previous research of populism[56] that captures the main elements of populism: a reified will of the people, diabolical elite, a Manichaean cosmology, systemic change, and an "anything goes" attitude. Since, the concept of the "will of the people" is essential element of populism, a speech that refers to a reified will of the people will get a moderate score. Populist speeches that contain a Manichaean outlook, as well as ancillary elements such as the mention of a diabolical enemy, will receive higher scores. Similar to Hawkins,

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[55] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*, 31; Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*, 22.

[56] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*.

20

I will use a three-point scale in which 0 means there is no clear reference to the "will of the people"; 1 means there is some clear reference to the "will of the people," but that it lacks consistency or intensity across the text; and 2 means that most elements of populism are present without any strong, countervailing discourse. Each of these scores will be paired with a couple of sample speeches—the anchor texts—that can be found from Hawkin's analyses. However, unlike Hawkins who selects four speeches nonrandomly for each leader, I am going to choose one official speech, where the President addresses the whole nation, that is not going to be longer than 3000 words.

The author remains aware of the dangers related to the objectivity of the analysis presented in this research. All researchers investigating and interpreting a primary source and a particular issue have their own perspectives and biases. Nevertheless, in this research I am analysing primary data and implement *methodological* tools that have proved to be reliable in the scholarship of populism. Even though the methodological tools and data sources give certain extent of objectivity, this research is going to be my own interpretation of populism in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the research is conducted on the whole independence period in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, both lasting more than two decades. Therefore, due to practical reasons, only one speech per year has been analysed. As for the analysis of the parallel developments to the speeches, only limited instances of events are going to be covered. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine every development, yet, what is important for me is to provide a template with explanatory power and coherence, that can be applied and tested on different cases. In addition to this, since speeches are potentially ambiguous and discursive in nature, the author remains alarmed of misinterpretation. To avoid this, my knowledge of local languages as well as Russian, enables me to crosscheck the same speeches.

## Chapter 2: Kazakh Case

This part of the thesis examines the evolution of populist discourse in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. As mentioned in the earlier sections, the holistic grading method for the populist discourse measurement is implemented. As a text for the analyses, the President's annual addresses to the nation as well as independence day speeches are chosen. These speeches are considered to be of national importance in Kazakhstan, where the President Nazarbayev updates the whole nation on important domestic as well as foreign issues. One speech per year is analysed. The time frame taken for the analysis is 1991-2017.

The results of the analysis show that indeed the populist discourse defined by Hawkins—that sets the conflict between the elite and the pure people, where the political issues are given the Manichean outlook[57]— is detectable as a political expression in President Nazarbayev's speeches. Confirming the hypotheses, the populist discourse in the Kazakh remains high during the first decade of independence. From the 2000s up until now, the discourse goes down and almost disappears. To account for the results and to focus on main events, the analysis of the events is going to be made mainly on two periods of independence: a) 1991-1995 and b) from 1995-2000. The developments during these periods are assessed to be important for Nazarbayev's regime. From 1991- 1995, Nazarbayev referred to the opposition as the evil elite, and targeted pluralism the Kazakh 1993 constitution provided. Next, free media and freedom of speech were attacked

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[57] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*.

during 1995-2000. Thus, the first decade became the very basis of the Nazarbayev's stable, yet undemocratic regime in Kazakhstan.



*Figure 1 Populist discourse in Kazakhstan 1991-2017*
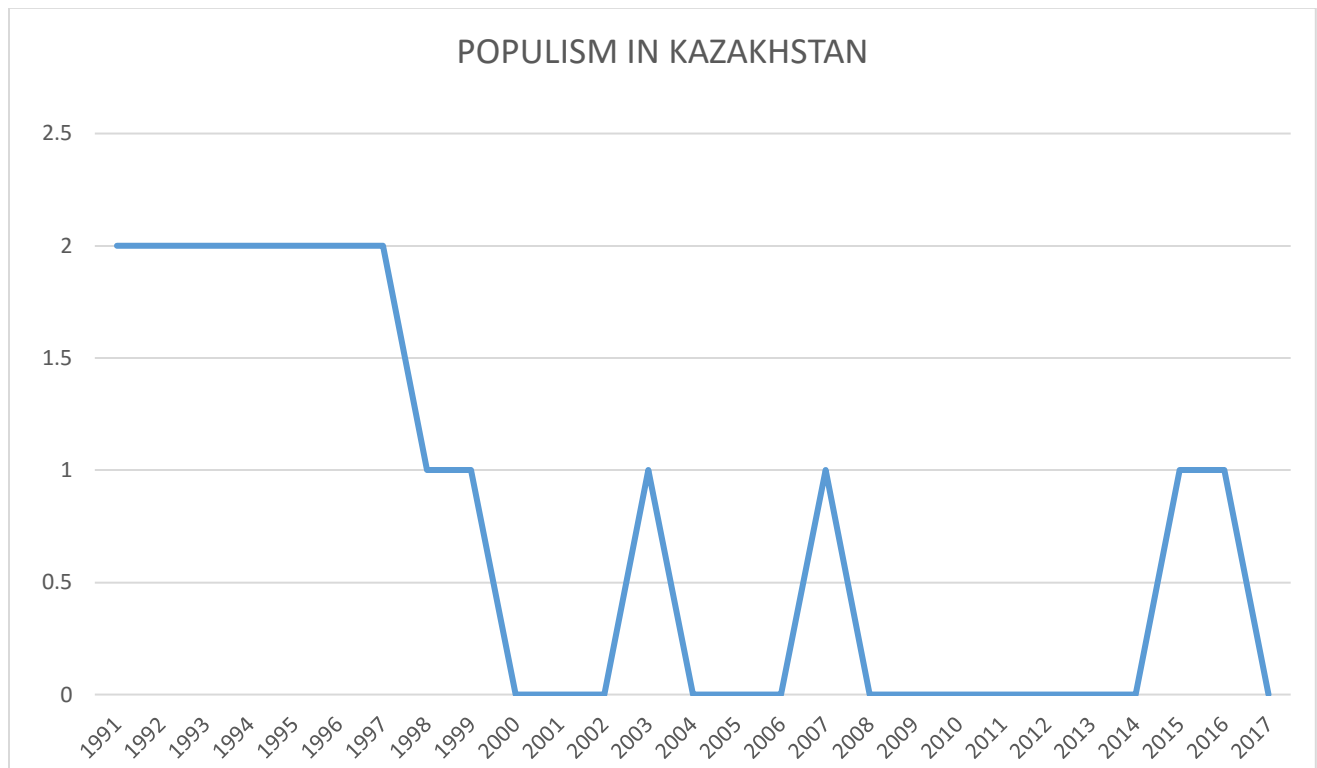
*1991-1995: Let's Revive the Strong and Responsible State!*

In 1991, the demise of the Soviet Union became inevitable, and, after the collapse of the USSR Nazarbayev turned into the patriotic, nationalist leader of the Kazakhstanis.[58] The Kazakh Republic's Supreme Soviet conferred upon him the title of the President in April 1990. In

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[58] Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, 30.

December 1991, in an uncompetitive race, election results confirmed Nazarbayev's victory with 98,7 % of the vote,[59] in which 80 percent of the electorate was said to have participated. From early until mid-1990s Kazakhstan seemed to be moving towards a free, open, democratic society. The Kazakh constitution of 1993 granted the legislative and judiciary bodies relative independence[60] and right to check and balance the executive branch. Additionally, mass media, NGOs, social movements, and opposition enjoyed a freedom to oppose, criticize the implemented reforms and policies, and express an alternative point of view to the public.[61]

The early independence was vague and unstable for the President, indeed, the specter of being unseated haunted Nazarbayev for more than a decade,[62] because the constitution of 1993 was too liberal to consolidate corrupt and authoritarian regime. Among the mentioned components of the early democratic Kazakh Republic, legislature received Nazarbayev's highest attention. In 1994, Kazakhstan held parliamentary elections, and the first, post-independence national parliament was established. Thus, the parliament sought to have independence and constitutional mandate to challenge the President and his government. It is important to note that the principal group that was represented in the parliament was still the old *nomenklatura* — the elite whom Nazarbayev vehemently criticizes in his early independence speeches. Naturally, among the parliamentarians, political opponents of the President had got the platform to legally challenge and

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[59] "Қазақстан Республикасының Президенті — Қазақстан Республикасы Президентінің Ресми Сайты," accessed May 18, 2017, http://www.akorda.kz/kz/republic_of_kazakhstan/president.

[60] "The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1993 · Political Modernization · Independent Kazakhstan · History of Kazakhstan · 'Kazakhstan History' Portal," accessed May 18, 2017, http://e-history.kz/en/contents/view/1205.

[61] Alexandra George, *Journey into Kazakhstan: The True Face of the Nazarbayev Regime* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 2001), 17.

[62] Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 93.

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weaken Nazarbayev. Thus, using its constitutional right, the parliament was developing characteristics of an institution, with the ability to check and balance the executive, that is essential for any pluralistic society. Towards the mid-1990s even the "for- Nazarbayev" fraction was beginning to realize that they had a responsibility as legislators if the parliament was going to function as legislation in pluralistic societies. For instance, the supporter of Nazarbayev, speaker Abish Kelikbaev, began holding the government accountable for its actions and decisions. He said that firstly, they have to have to be congruent with the constitution, and secondly he accused the President of grabbing parliament's power, because it is the parliament that had to propose and pass new legislation.[63]

The opponents of the regime namely criticized the economic reforms Nazarbayev was implementing, such as the transition to market economy and privatization. During the transition period from communism and planned economy, where the socio-economic situation was disastrous, these reforms were a sensitive topic for the public. On the one hand, the anti-Nazarbayev faction of the parliament proposed alternative privatization that would have slowed down the privatization, change the tax structure, and give priority to the local producers over foreigners.[64] On the other hand Nazarbayev called for the quick transition to economic liberalization. In his speeches, Nazarbayev refers to the "anti-Nazarbayev" fraction of the parliament as "sabotage of the old administrative system"[65], the remnants of the old regime, whose main aim is not prosperous Kazakhstan, but their own ends. Additionally, in his speeches as

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[63] Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, 109.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, *Izbrannye reči 1991 - 1995*, vol. II, N. A. Nazarbaev ; Tom 2 (Astana: Izdat. Saryarka, 2011), 23.

corrupted "political demagogues"[66] that aim to lead the nation into the abyss. However, the irony of his accusations is that he himself is one of the old *nomenklatura*— he was one of the most important and popular politicians of the Soviet times.

Conveniently to the President and under his pressure,[67] in March 1995 the Constitutional Court ruled out that the 1994 parliamentary elections were unconstitutional, and in response, parliament voted to suspend the constitutional court. This failure of the political system became a unique opportunity for the incumbent President, and in 1995 Nazarbayev annulled the Parliament as an improperly constituted body and revoked all their decisions.

During these volatile and uncertain times, Nazarbayev implemented populist discourse to gain support and stay in power as much as possible. His speeches indicate "the people, the will of the people" which he embodies, where every Kazakhstani elected him, as the guarantor of political stability and a good stable life. Evidently, Nazarbayev names "the elite"— his opponents, namely, old *nomenklatura* and potential to-be-presidents who aim to pull back Kazakhstan to communism and totalitarianism. By constructing the scene where the elite threatens the good will of the people, Nazarbayev created the Manichean fight of good against evil, where he subsequently offers reforms and changes to win over evil.

As the main reason for the failures of the political crisis, Nazarbayev blamed the 1993 constitution. Thus, he declared that new constitution should be accepted so that the Kazakh people could have a better life and better future. He argued that the quick reform is a precondition for the better future. Otherwise, Kazakh people will bear the pain of transition forever. Hence, for certain

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[66] Ibid., II:545–46.

[67] Ibid., II:258–59.

vital reforms, the Kazakh people we can ignore the consensus of the opposition.[68] As a next step, before proceeding with the referendum, Nazarbayev ruled Kazakhstan for the rest of 1995 by presidential decree.[69] Using his temporary monopoly, March 1995, purportedly "to strengthen the fight against organized crime… and to protect the Kazakh citizens",[70] he introduced new amendments to the administrative code. These amendments were not only targeting the organized crime but also, provided additional legal means to prevent organized opposition to the disbanding of parliament. Among the amendments was one that outlawed any participation in an as yet unregistered public association (article 188) or an association that has been suspended or closed. The punishments included an administrative arrest for up to fifteen days or fines of reduction from the monthly wage.[71]

As a next step towards consolidating his rule, in April 1995 President held a snap referendum instead of an election that was scheduled in 1996, asking for the extension of Nazarbayev's mandate until the year of 2000. 95,4 % of the voters from 70 % turnout supported Nazarbayev.[72] In his speech in 1995, Nazarbayev stated that "Thanks to your wisdom, people elevated Kazakhstan above the turmoil and confusion that have been going on recently".[73] According to him, the absolute majority of Kazakhstanis supported him, which indeed confirms

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[68] Ibid., II:278–79.

[69] Under 1993 Law on temporary Delegation to the President of the republic of Kazakhstan, the president can amend or pass any law by decree.

[70] Nazarbaev, *Izbrannye reči 1991 - 1995*, II:426.

[71] "Как Президент Казахской ССР Незаметно Стал Президентом Республики Казахстан," *Радио Азаттык*, accessed May 8, 2017, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan_election_nazarbayev_/3546446.html.

[72] Beket Aubakirov, "Referendum: KAZAKH PRESIDENT'S TERM EXTENDED TO 2000. 95.4% of Voters Support Nursultan Nazarbayev," May 31, 1995.

[73] Nazarbaev, *Izbrannye reči 1991 - 1995*, II:544.

that he represents the will of the Kazakh people. To justify the referendum, and the ultimate extension of his mandate, Nazarbayev claims that "huge work related to the economic, social, political reforms, and bringing order and discipline awaits us".[74] Therefore, "all rants about dictatorship are unfounded"[75], "I will do anything, so the war does not come to our home and to save and strengthen our independence".[76]

At the end of August 1995, another referendum was held in Kazakhstan. Not surprisingly, this time it was about altering the constitution of 1993 that embodied basic democratic norms and pluralism. For Nazarbayev it was important to adopt a new constitution that would strengthen the power of the President and strip out the Parliament and the Court of their power. From his speeches, it is clear that he aimed to become the strong leader of Kazakhstan. Indeed, in 1993 he says, "centralisation of the state is necessary for the current period".[77] Towards the mid 1990s he already reveals his patrimonial qualities and states that he will be the leader who will take the nation out of crisis and lead them to better future, just like *Abilay*[78]— wise Kazakh patrimonial leader. Hence, a full-fledged presidential republic was necessary, where the parliament would engage exclusively in law-making activity and not lay claim to powers that do not belong to it. As for the courts should protect the rights of citizens, while the President's function should be to prevent friction among all these structures.[79]

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., II:545.

[77] Ibid., II:262.

[78] Historical/ mythological leader of the Kazakh people who supposedly established Kazakh state

[79] Sergei Kozlov, "Kazakhstan: NAZARBAYEV DECLARES WAR ON INTERNAL ENEMIES. Government Promulgates Emergency Measures to Combat Crime," April 19, 1995.

Claiming that he aimed to defer to popular will, Nazarbayev submitted the question of a new constitution to a referendum. The referendum in August 1995 produced a result in which 89 % of voters supported a draft constitution that vastly expanded presidential powers. President Nazarbayev declared that "this is people's conscious choice. Do not forget that democracy is already knocking our doors".[80] With the new constitution, Nazarbayev gained the authority to dissolve the parliament for, among other things, its failure to approve the President's nomination for prime minister.[81] The new constitution demoted the last significant potential barrier to complete presidential rule, and turning the constitutional court to a consultative body, enabling Nazarbayev to effect any constitutional changes. At the same time, the new constitution preserved the two-term limit and five-year term of the previous, 1993 constitution. It also mandated that no one over the age of sixty-five could hold presidential office, that officeholders must have "a perfect command of the state language," (Kazakh) and, significantly, instituted a 50 percent participation barrier for presidential and parliamentary elections to be considered valid.[82] Thus, by introducing new legal barriers, Nazarbayev effectively made inaccessible the run for presidential elections to the candidates with older age and with limited knowledge of Kazakh language. On the other hand, he lifted the two- year term limit and the five-year term of the 1993 constitution, thus, opening for himself unlimited terms as a President of the Kazakh nation.

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[80] Nazarbaev, *Izbrannye reči 1991 - 1995*, II:545.

[81] "Конституция Республики Казахстан — Официальный Сайт Президента Республики Казахстан," Article 63, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/constitution.

[82] Ibid. Article 41.

*1995-2000: Crackdown on Free Media*

Since establishing strong presidential rule in Kazakhstan, during the mid 1990s, the President refers to free media as "the elite." Though it is widely believed that in 1995 one could not have said that a democracy existed in the Republic of Kazakhstan, tighter control over legislative and executive bodies could not yet provide Nazarbayev with a system that he could fully monopolize.[83] Kazakhstan was still a place where free media outlets could criticize and represent the alternative path for the independent Kazakhstan.

1995-1999 is referred as the beginning of a crackdown on independent media in Kazakhstan. However, the analysis of the speeches does not show the President referring to media exclusively as a part of the evil elite. Though, if the speeches are juxtaposed and analyzed along with the developments of the mid and late 1990s, it becomes clear how the President targeted the media and the political opponents. The speeches contain dozens of references to the changes— economic growth, socio-political stability, interethnic peace, fight on corruption and financial transparency, which is the will of the people who wish for better life. Though he does not target the media and opposition directly as an enemy of the nation, he associates his opponents with topics that are considered to be sensitive and dangerous for Kazakhstan.[84] Thus, problematizes the free media that provides the opposition —"mankurts"[85] a platform to propagate and realize their secret evil goals. For instance, in his 1995 speech, Nazarbayev tells that,

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[83] Davor Boban, "The Presidential-Hegemonic Party and Autocratic Stability: The Legal Foundation and Political Practice in Kazakhstan," *Zbornik PFZ* 67 (2017): 55.

[84] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan*, 66–67.

[85] Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, Izbrannye reči 1995 - 1998, N. A. Nazarbaev ; Tom 3 (Astana: Izdat. Saryarka, 2011), 270. Note: Mankurt- a person who lost his/her sense of identity. usually referred to people who betray their nation and people.

30

"Future is carefully deactivated present. This means that what we do today creates new opportunities for our future. We have to clearly set our priorities. We have to do it particularly through the prism of our priorities, but not according to the arguments of dilettantes who could hardly get to the TV screen or the newspaper".[86]

Subsequently, he reaffirms what is the priority for the Kazakhstanis— independence and territorial integrity of Kazakhstan, and transition to market economy with strong leadership. These sensitive subjects for the Kazakh society became the main tools of Nazarbayev, which he used effectively to crack down the freedom of speech and the political opponents. I his speech in 1998 he says,

"we have to reform the system now… in a few days tax police will be granted additional responsibilities and competencies that will improve the tax collection system all around the country. We have to grant the person who will lead this work with adequate resources, competencies, and support, that is important to reach a productive outcome. We will consider that we are sending our warriors to fight the enemies of our nation. We already know that there will be resistance. Criminals will attack and slander the ones who fight with them. We are ready for that!... Nothing is going to save the ones who is involved in corruption and tax fraud."[87]

Hence, he several times touches upon the taxation system, its deficiencies, and the importance of reforming it. Indeed, later that year the independent newspapers, Dat and Tsentr were raided by the tax police, which was headed by the son in law of the President Nazarbayev— Rakhat Aliev. The first was accused of hiding receipts from sales edition. This was the accusation the tax police used to close down the private and independent newspaper, whose circulation has

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[86] Ibid., 281.

[87] Ibid., 513–14.

risen to 67,000 in six months— something that alarmed the President and his allies. The printing equipment's of Dat were confiscated, and eventually, it was fined a large amount of money that ultimately led to its bankruptcy and closure in December 1998.[88] As for the latter- Tsentr, the authorities forced it to close down due to the tax-fraud allegations. Reportedly, all the documents, equipment were confiscated, and the bank accounts were suspended. Later the editorial board turned to the Astana Prosecutor complaining the unlawful actions of the tax office and requested to recheck all the documents. Several months passed, but no reply was received.[89] All these developments were not just underworld fight against the media and the opponents, it was part of the regime strategy to fight dissident. Usually, these fights, corruption or tax fraud cases were shown on TV channels such as Khabar or KTK that were controlled by the daughter of the President- Dariga Nazarbayeva.[90] For instance, on July 1999 the editor in chief of the oppositional newspaper— Bigeldy Gabdulin was shown on a video taking a bribe and subsequently accused of bribery.[91]

In 1999 Nazarbayev called another snap election for the Presidency[92] that was scheduled to 2000. Before announcing the Presidential elections, in his speeches he refers to freedom of speech and states that "there should be clear and strong rules and regulations to target the misuse of freedom of speech,"[93] meaning that freedom of speech is not the absence of responsibility before the law and the society. Claiming that the criticisms usually were slanders against him that his evil

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[88] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan*, 69.

[89] Ibid., 74.

[90] Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, 87–95; George, *Journey into Kazakhstan*, 64–75.

[91] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan*, 75–76.

[92] "Как Президент Казахской ССР Незаметно Стал Президентом Республики Казахстан."

[93] Nazarbaev, *Izbrannye reči 1995 - 1998*, 524.

opponents invented. In 1998, eventually, the General Prosecutor of Kazakhstan issued a statement that mentioned initiating the criminal case against all media that misuse their freedom of expression.[94] Thus, using the combination of tax fraud and corruption allegations, and later on, by criminalizing the misuse of freedom of speech, Nazarbayev's regime was able to establish a monopoly over media, reportedly, the range of free media outlets proceeded to the hands of Nazarbayev's family members and close allies.[95]

*Post-2000s: Nazarbayev, Legitimate President*

The figure 1 shows that the populist discourse in Kazakhstan goes down and completely disappears. The regime did not opt for the restoration of democratic principles. On the contrary, strife for a unitary system of governance developed to the next phases, and instead of the revival of democracy, what the regime achieved was a consolidation of the authoritarian regime in Kazakhstan. The obvious question that needs to be asked is what are the factors that contributed to the abandonment of the populist discourse by the President Nazarbayev? Were there any alternatives to populist discourse that has had been providing the regime with legitimacy and popular support? In search of an answer, speeches of the President after 2000s are considered, and it becomes clear how the President Nazarbayev refers to economic success, interethnic and political stability, and international recognition narratives as a novel source of legitimacy, rather than using Manichean outlook with elite versus the people discourse. [96]

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[94] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan*, 68.

[95] Ibid., 63–78.

[96] "Послание Президента Республики Казахстан Н.А. Назарбаева Народу Казахстана. Апрель 2002 Г. — Официальный Сайт Президента Республики Казахстан," accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-n-a-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazakhstana-aprel-2002-g_1342416567.

Speeches of the President from 2000s onward are full of recognitions of the successes the Kazakh people achieved. The Presidential addresses to the nation became an important event for Nazarbayev to outline the achievements, though the reliability of his accounts are contested by a number of experts, every achievement is accounted as his exclusive work. His narrations usually begin with referring to 1990s, when he as a leader of the Kazakh people he made certain decisive reforms that bring productive outcomes today. "Had we missed control of Kazakhstan, we would lose territorial integrity of our state and miss the transition to market economy",[97] therefore, this combination of factors that were represented in the official discourse as a success story, namely, economic development, stability, and international recognition of Kazakhstan became new sources of legitimacy for Nazarbayev, and they have hugely contributed to the consolidation and popularity of Nazarbayev's regime in Kazakhstan.

First, foundational myth[98]— Nazarbayev's struggle to reform Kazakhstan became solidarity link between the people and the President. The economic success[99] of Kazakhstan is an integral part of the foundational myth the regime uses to get recognition of the people. Though export oil and high oil prices in world markets were the responsible factors for economic growth, the performance of the President is tightly linked to the economic development— which is represented as the will of the people. Next, personalism— the charismatic leadership of

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[97] "Послание Президента Республики Казахстан Н.А. Назарбаева Народу Казахстана. Апрель 2003 Г. — Официальный Сайт Президента Республики Казахстан," April 16, 2003, http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-n-a-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazakhstana-aprel-2003-g_1342416495.

[98] Martin Brusis, Joachim Ahrens, and Martin Schulze Wessel, eds., *Politics and Legitimacy in Post-Soviet Eurasia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 20, doi:10.1057/9781137489449.

[99] "GDP Growth (Annual %) | Data," accessed May 23, 2017, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2015&start=1991.

Nazarbayev that is constructed by official discourse used to legitimize the regime of the President. Namely, the President's unique leadership and personal skills that are for instance enlisted under the section of "phenomena of the first President"[100] in the President's official website make up the discursive mechanism that emphasizes the ruler's centrality to certain achievements such as the nation's unity, prosperity, and stability. Henceforth, it becomes a source of legitimacy for Nazarbayev, who indeed claims that "everything was achieved under my supervision. I did it everything promptly and publicly."[101]

Another decisive legitimacy source for the Nazarbayev's regime is international recognition. "Today, our Republic became an independent, self-sufficient, and equal member of the international community",[102] he states. His statement is not only about Kazakhstan being a member of the international community, but he tries to emphasize that it is an equal member, who is self-sufficient, whose voice is important, and who is continuing on its development path under the supervision of the unique President Nazarbayev. The President uses a range of international event like hosting negotiations on Syrian conflict or EXPO- 2017, which provides visibility to Kazakhstan internationally. Thus, Nazarbayev draws comparisons between Kazakhstan in the 1990s and Kazakhstan in 2000s, and the obvious success becomes another discursive strategy to gain legitimacy and popular support of Kazakhstanis.

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[100] "НУРСУЛТАН НАЗАРБАЕВ: Персональная Страница," accessed May 3, 2017, http://personal.akorda.kz/ru.

[101] "Послание Президента Республики Казахстан Н.Назарбаева Народу Казахстана. 29 Января 2010 Г. — Официальный Сайт Президента Республики Казахстан," accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-n-a-nazarbaeva-narodu-kazakhstana-29-yanvarya-2010-goda_1340624693.

[102] "Послание Президента Республики Казахстан Н.А. Назарбаева Народу Казахстана. Апрель 2002 Г. — Официальный Сайт Президента Республики Казахстан."

*Nursultan Nazarbayev and Kazakhstan*

Towards the mid 1990s it became already clear that the President Nazarbayev was moving towards more authoritarian form of government. He introduced a new constitution that guaranteed him strong executive system, weakened the parliament and the constitutional court. Additionally, the regime took the media under tighter control, and freedom of speech was constrained as a justification for slander. Thus, it has become more and more difficult for any political dissent to organize into an effective oppositional movements or political parties. The analyses of the Presidential speeches from 1991-2000 show that Nazarbayev along with his assault on infant democracy in newly independent Kazakhstan, he used a populist discourse to legitimize his actions. On the contrary to the widely believed argument that says that post- Soviet authoritarian regimes like in Kazakhstan do not rely on the will of the people,[103] because they have a culture of one dominant leader, and the people in post-Soviet space are usually resilient.

However, the important point to note is that, Kazakhstan was not always authoritarian state under tight control of President Nazarbayev, on the contrary, the first years of independence were particularly pluralistic with a constitution that granted checks and balances system which aimed to prevent the one-man-rule. What is observed is the implementation of populist discourse with Manichean outlook, where the good is embodied in the people to whom Nazarbayev belongs, and the evil is represented by the elite whose main aim is to use people to enrich themselves. By analysing the discourse, it becomes easier to understand the causal mechanism behind the ideas

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[103] Edward Schatz, "Access by Accident: Legitimacy Claims and Democracy Promotion in Authoritarian Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 3 (July 2006): 263–84, doi:10.1177/0192512106064463; Joshua Kucera, "Kazakhstan Rising," *Slate*, August 5, 2011, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/dispatches/features/2011/kazakhstan_rising/the_cult_of_nazarbaye v.html.

and the attack on pluralism in Kazakhstan. Similar to Hawkins argument, populist discourse was consciously implemented to fight pluralism, and eventually lead to the consolidation of Nazarbayev's regime. He promoted his loyal allies and family members to key positions, subsequently, insulated himself from the opposition and the people with a circle regime friendly allies.[104] Consequently, today Kazakhstan is a country that Nazarbayev wanted it to be— with strong President and weak legislature and judiciary. Though, opposition groups and independent media exists, the activities and existence of these groups are sharply limited, therefore, they are unable to oppose the strong President with loyal allies.

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[104] Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, 122–23.

## Chapter 3: Tajik Case

In this chapter the populist discourse for the second case study- Tajikistan is analysed. Similar to the previous case study, a holistic grading method for the populist discourse measurement is implemented. As a text for the analyses the speeches of the President at the official and important domestic events— independence day, constitution anniversaries, and National Unity speeches are chosen. These events are considered to be of national importance in Tajikistan, and, usually, President Rakhmon addresses the whole nation on important domestic as well as foreign issues during these events. One speech per year is analysed. The time frame taken for the analysis is 1993-2017.[105]

The results of the analysis show that indeed the populist discourse defined by Hawkins— that sets the conflict between the elite and the pure people, where the political issues are given the Manichean outlook[106]— is detectable as a political expression in President Rakhmon's speeches . Confirming the hypotheses, the populist discourse in the Tajik case goes up in towards the mid 1990s until 2000s when the President Rakhmon was actively fighting against the powerful actors of the Tajik civil war that took place from 1992-1997. Then, as the results show, the populist discourse is reducedduring the early 2000s, almost disappears from 2002 up until 2011. Apparently, as a reflection of the developments, the discourse increases from 2011 until 2016, and again disappears in 2017. Thus, the analysis of the events is based mainly on two periods of

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[105] E. Rakhmon was appointed as a president in December 1992. His first speech as a president is not available online. Therefore, the analysis are done beginning from 1993.

[106] Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*.

independence: a) 1994-2001 and b) from 2012- 2016. The developments during these periods are important for the consolidation of Emomali Rakhmon's regime and dismantlement of Tajik democracy.
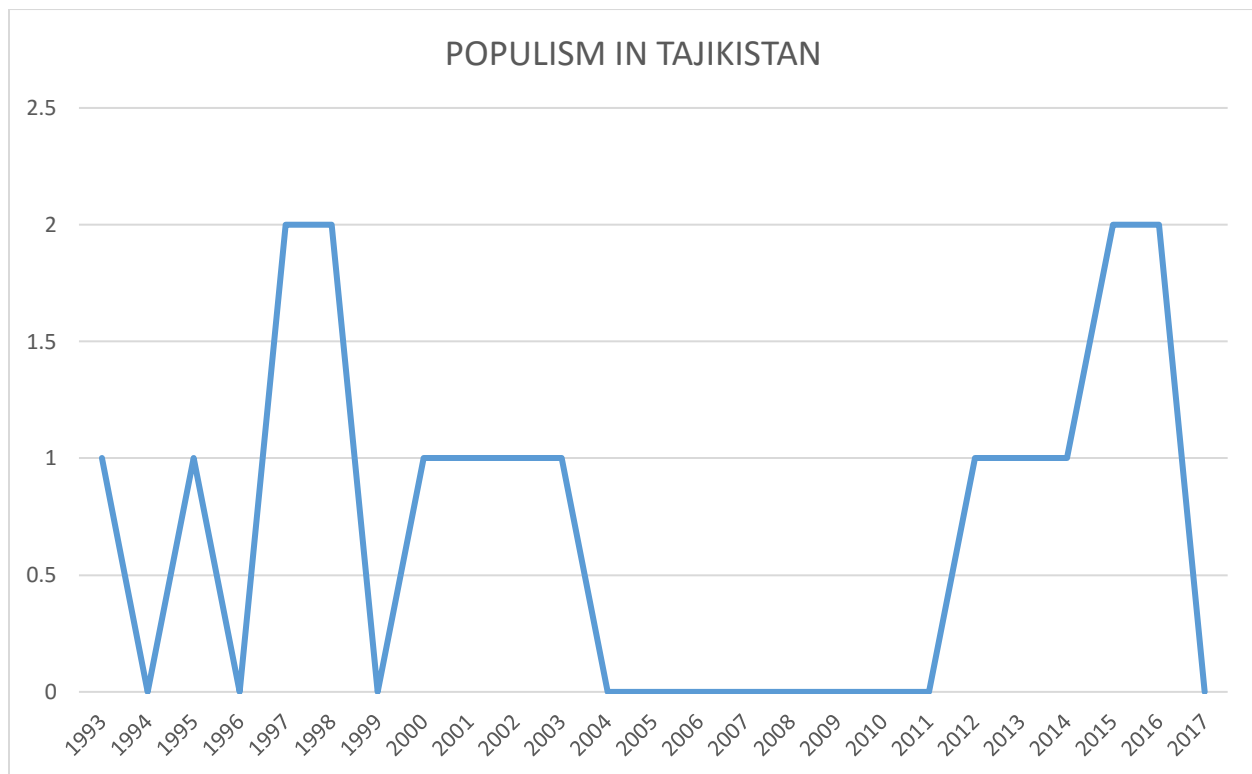
Figure 2 Populist Discourse in Tajikistan 1993-2017

*Civil War*

Tajikistan ,just like any other former USSR member republics, gained independence in the early 1990s after the demise of the USSR. The fragile ethnic composition, the highly fragmented

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society, and the socio-economic deprivation, were all among the leading factors of the erupted tragic Civil War in Tajikistan that took place during 1992 and 1997[107]. The overlapping antagonisms that stemmed from ideological, regional, and intercommunal competition became the main driving forces behind the bloodshed. As a result of the power vacuum, created by the collapse of the USSR, various conflicting parties, led by influential warlords with loyalty to certain clan or region, wanted to set up a country with their own ideology[108]  As a result, this  made the peace settlement hard to achieve. Although, the aim of this section is not to examine the Tajik Civil War, it is necessary to highlight key moments of the war that created a situation that consequently led to President Rakhmon to embrace populist discourse from mid 1990s until mid 2000s.

The conflict occurred mainly between two parties, who were composed of different groups of individuals and organizations. Tajik opposition composed of regions in 1992 seized power from the Tajik Supreme Soviet. Later, in December 1992 it was defeated and current the Tajik government assumed control.[109] The Supreme Soviet called a special session in *Khujand* where the existing President Iskandar Akbarsho resigned, and a relatively unknown personality Emomali Rakhmon, from *Kulyab* region, was appointed as a head of government.[110] Rakhmon's candidacy is believed to have been promoted by a powerful warlord from the *Kulyab* region— Sangak Safarov, and his main duty as a head of government was to represent interests of the warlords of

[107] Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, Central Asian and Caucasian Prospects (London: Royal Inst. of Internat. Affairs, 2001), 37.

[108] Tim Epkenhans, *The Origins of the Civil War in Tajikistan: Nationalism, Islamism, and Violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Space*, Contemporary Central Asia: Societies, Politics, and Cultures (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 14–19.

[109] "Tajikistan Civil War," accessed May 27, 2017, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/tajikistan.htm.

[110] Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 38–39.

Southern Tajikistan. Within few months after Emomali Rakhmon served as a puppet President, his patron, Safarov was killed in a battle.[111] This event created the space and independence for Rakhmon to move from being merely a puppet to being arbiter, mediator, and eventually guarantor of peace and stability in Tajikistan.

Peace talks to settle the civil war continued from 1994 until 1997, which resulted in the signing of the General Agreement on Establishment of Peace and National Accord,[112] which formally ended the bloodiest civil war in Tajikistan's history. The agreement was signed between the President Rakhmonov, United Tajik Opposition (UTO), and UN's special representative to Tajikistan. Thus, the Commission for National Reconciliation (CNR) with equal representation from the government and UTO had to implement the terms of the agreement. The main terms were the following: a) release of all prisoners of war and opposition under the amnesty law; b) reforming the government structure by providing 30% representation to UTO in all executive bodies; c) drafting constitutional amendments that need to be endorsed by the national referendum; d) drafting laws based on democratic principles on political parties, public associations, mass media, and Parliamentary elections to be adopted by the Parliament; d) forming a general electoral commission with 25 % UTO representation for the holding of Parliamentary elections and a national referenda.[113] The transition period towards peace ended with the parliamentary elections in 2000. The foundation for a democratic and pluralistic Tajikistan was established.

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[111] Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw, *Dictators without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia* (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 2017), 84–85.

[112] Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 95.

[113] Ibid., 144.

*Post- Civil War: Kulyabization of Tajikistan*

The post-civil war government had no other chance other than including the UTO members and giving them right to represent the interests of UTO loyal regional supporters. Apparently, the speeches of the President Rakhmon reflected the developments in Tajikistan namely, a pluralistic and democratic government structure, where powerful members of both opposition – UTO and government– Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT) were represented in key governmental positions. The result of the analysis illustrated in the figure-1 shows that populist discourse in Tajikistan was high particularly from mid 1990s until the late 1990s, which coincides with the period of independence where the political situation was the most volatile. The figure-1 shows that populist discourse is particularly high in 1997 and 1998, yet, in the early 1990s the discourse includes some non-populist elements, though, there is a reference to the people and the elite. The result of the findings necessitates one question to be asked; why, despite the volatility and existing pluralism in Tajik politics, is the populist discourse lower than the populist discourse in late 1990s? Scholars argue that during the early 1990s, the regime of Emomali Rakhmon was very weak. Additionally, during the early 1990s, Tajikistan had numbers of regional warlords from both the UTO or PFT sides, who posed an obvious challenge to the central government. The powerful warlords had support from different regions thanks to the protection and financial support they provided to their people. The void that was left by the central state was filled with the powerful commanders.[114]   At the time when the government did not possess adequate resources and power to provide basic needs and services to the people, individual warlords altered the central state, and literally dominated every sector of the society. Thus, using populist discourse directly targeting the

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[114] Nourzhanov, "Saviours of the Nation or Robber Barons?," 111–17.

opponents with absolute support from particular fractions of society meant a substantial risk for the President Emomali Rakhmon. Reportedly, he was appointed as a President to represent the key interests of warlords. Therefore, if he made any kind of bold movement against them, instead, he remained heavily dependent on the support of powerful warlords.[115]

As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, 1997 is the year when the opposition and the government sides came together and signed the peace agreement. Compared to the first half of the 1990s, during the late 1990s, Rakhmon had a more or less stable position, along with growing recognition both from the Tajik people and from the international community. In 1994 Presidential elections, Rakhmon was elected President, and in the same year a new constitution was adopted.

Another phenomenon that both the Tajik people and individual warlords faced was the wave of *Kulyabization* of the government, local authorities, and security services,[116] thus, Rakhmon's aim was to surround himself with loyal people from his home region. For instance, by the mid 1990s, *Kulyabis* held 13 of the 18 top level governmental positions, dominated the civil services and main factories.[117] Obviously, this caused resentment, which subsequently was demonstrated in in the events of 1997 and 1998— a series of events that directly challenged the regime of President Rakhmon. The first event was the anti-government demonstrations in Khujand in 1996, that protested the economic crisis, corruption, and the influx of *Kulyabi* officials. In 1997, during his visit to Khujand , the President barely escaped an assassination attempt. Lastly,

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[115] Ibid., 119.

[116] Ibid., 64.

[117] Ibid.

in 1998, the powerful warlord Mahmud Khudoberdiev attempted to take over Khujand with his personal army.[118] In other words, these events, though, the distinction between the democratic protest and warlord lawlessness was lawlessness was blurred, reflected the reaction of the peace process, that was mainly driven by the interests of the President Rakhmon and his *Kulyabi* clan.

If the aforementioned developments of 1997 and 1998 and relevant speeches of the President are juxtaposed, the correlation between the events and the populist discourse can be observed. Indeed, the figure-1 shows that 1997 and 1998 are marked as the years with strongest populist discourse during the early independence years. Since the President possessed an adequate legitimacy, both internationally and domestically, he could afford to name and shame his opponents as "random individuals within governments structure who eat the bread of the nation",[119] and state " whoever opposes the peacebuilding process in Tajikistan without a doubt is the traitor and the enemy of the nation."[120] The official response to these events was to urge the Tajik politicians to begin "prompt cleaning of the government and security services"[121] to ensure the stability of the nation, thus, simultaneously legitimizing his actions in the eyes of the Tajik people. Constant referrals to "the elite"- traitors of the nation and spoilers of peace, and the urge to clean the state apparatus and security services from those enemies of the Tajik people justified the failures to fulfil the terms of the 1997 peace agreement, namely, not fulfilling the 30%

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[118] Ibid., 64–72.

[119] "Выступление На Торжественном Собрании, Посвященном 6-Ой Годовщине Независимости Республики | Президенти Тоҷикистон - President of Tajikistan - Президент Таджикистана - رئيس جمهورية تاجيكستان," accessed May 29, 2017, http://www.president.tj/ru/node/1101.; Note: All speech translations are made by myself

[120] "Поздравление В Честь Первой Годовщины Подписания Общего Соглашения Об Установлении Мира И Национального Согласия В Таджикистане," June 26, 1998, http://www.president.tj/ru/node/1472.

[121] "Выступление На 6-Ой Годовщине."

representation quote in state apparatus, security services, and local authorities, and, sacking more than 70 officials, accusing them with connections to the events of 1997 and 1998.[122] Though the actions of the Mahmud Khudoberdiev can be regarded as lawless, Rakhmon's response to the events cannot be justified as democratic. Removing senior officials from their position and not giving guaranteed representation to opposition, can be considered a crackdown towards pluralism. Since, by eliminating "unwanted" people from key positions, Rakhmon made his initial steps to consolidate his regime, through monopolizing important and lucrative economic spheres for his own family.[123] The populist discourse, referring to the evil elite and the pure people, enabled Rakhmon to deflect criticism from his regime to fired officials, and scapegoated them, blaming them for existing problems.[124]

*Gradual Attack on Tajik Pluralism*

Figure-1 shows that populist discourse, though not as strong as during the late 1990s, goes on with a reasonable pace. It is important to note that Rakhmon wins the 1999 election,[125] and gets the second term as a President of Tajikistan. For the convenience of the President the provision limiting the Presidential term to only one was amended, and the restriction was lifted.

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[122] Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 63–65; "Powersharing Transitional Government: General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan | Peace Accords Matrix," accessed May 28, 2017, https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/provision/powersharing-transitional-government-general-agreement-establishment-peace-and-national.

[123] Sumie Nakaya, "Aid and Transition from a War Economy to an Oligarchy in Post-War Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 3 (September 2009): 263–64, doi:10.1080/02634930903421764.

[124] Atkin Muriel, "A President and His Rivals," in *Power and Change in Central Asia*, Sally N. Cummings (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 107.

[125] Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, XXIV.

Unfortunately, none of his 1999 speeches are available online, therefore, in a search of some advocacies for the constitutional amendments, we can look to the 1997 and 1998 speeches. Indeed, in his speeches he argues that "the path chosen by the existing government need to be retained"[126], "we need to firmly show the strength and power of the government".[127] Under his "iron fist", gradually every sphere of the political life came under his supervision; therefore, he could easily amend the constitution to become President for a second term.

Indeed, the results of the speech analysis reflect the important developments in Tajikistan during the early 2000s. From 2000 until 2003 the President creates a discourse of threat to the hardly achieved peace, where the evil forces are awaiting a convenient moment to disturb the peace and benefit on the expense of the Tajik people. Therefore, in his 2002 speech Rakhmon states "I am ready to sacrifice my life for the peace and salvation of the nation",[128] indicating his intention to stay as a President of Tajik people for longer period than what is granted by the constitution. Thus, as a next step, the Tajik government organizes a national referendum to amend the constitution in 2003 to bring it up to contemporary international standards.[129] In his speech in 2003, Rakhmon argues that "only through amending the constitution we will be able to preserve our independence, achievements in building democratic institutions and continue our way towards the civilized world",[130] thus, providing two options for the people, peace with Emomali Rakhmon or

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[126] "Поздравление В Честь Установлении Мира."

[127] "Выступление На 6-Ой Годовщине."

[128] "Суханронӣ Ба Муносибати 5-Солагии Ба Имзо Расидани Созишномаи Умумии Истиқрори Сулҳ Ва Ризояти Миллӣ," June 26, 2002, http://www.president.tj/node/6693.

[129] "Focus on Constitutional Referendum," *IRIN*, June 26, 2003, http://www.irinnews.org/feature/2003/06/26/focus-constitutional-referendum.

[130] "Паёми Табрикӣ Ба Муносибати Рузи Конститутсия," May 11, 2003, http://www.president.tj/node/6639.

chaos with the evil hearted elite. His narrations indeed reflect the populist discourse definition made by Kirk Hawkins, where the leader first creates the discourse of threat with the conspiring elite and good hearted people whose will is represented by the leader. Ultimately, the absolute majority, with 93% voting yes[131], according to the President indeed illustrate the support and will of the Tajikistanis to the regime. With the newly amended constitution, the President extended the his term in office from one term to two consecutive terms.[132]

*2004-2011: Rakhmon is not a populist leader*

The results of the speech analysis illustrated in Figure- 1 do not indicate the presence of populist discourse up until 2012, though, reportedly, after better consolidating his position as President with the constitutional amendments made in 2003, apparent crackdowns on opposition and opponents of the President continued. An obvious question can be asked; why did Rakhmon use populist discourse until 2003, then, the populist discourse becomes very rare, even non-existent by 2012. To put it in another way, since the President was using populist discourse mainly as another source of legitimacy in an atmosphere where range of potential powerful regional leaders could challenge his regime, why did he stop using populist discourse towards the mid 2000s?

In a search of an answer, speeches by the President from 2004 up to 2011 are observed, to find possible alternative subjects to populism, which made the President confident enough to abandon the populist discourse. The most prominent subject that is present in almost every speech of the President is the war on terrorism that threatens the stability of the world, and individual

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[131] "Focus on Constitutional Referendum."

[132] Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 104.

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states, including Tajikistan— the country that has already experienced the horrific civil war and still fights its legacies. Generally, he declares that as an integral part of the civilised world, Tajikistan also contributes to the fight against international terrorism, to facilitate peace both at home and internationally.[133] Thus, additionally to the personalization of the peace process, he adopts the language of "war on terror" to gain support internationally.[134] This support, namely, from the USA and Russia guaranteed the stability of Rakhmon's regime at home, because, a) after 9/11 the USA shifted its focus on building democratic society, b) Russia was not interested in preserving the democratic pluralism even from the beginning of the peace process. What was important for both USA and Russia was to preserve the status quo in the region[135] to minimize the risk of failed state accommodation of radical fighters, but not to promote a democratic regime. Thus, with the political and financial support of the international community, that accelerated during the mid and late 2000s, Rakhmon instead of investing on pluralism and power sharing as it was agreed in 1997 peace agreement, was able to strengthen the authoritarian regime.[136] As an internationally and domestically legitimate regime, Rakhmon's confidence can be observed from the incidence where in 2006 he abolishes the power sharing provision of the 1997 peace agreement, and dismissed almost all of the UTO members from senior government positions.[137] While making

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[133] Speeches from 2004-2011 availabel at "Президенти Точикистон - President of Tajikistan - Президент Таджикистана - رئيس جمهورية تاجيكستان," accessed May 31, 2017, http://www.president.tj/ru/taxonomy/term/5/61.

[134] Akbarzadeh, "Geopolitics versus Democracy in Tajikistan."

[135] Ibid., 576–77.

[136] John Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order*, Central Asian Studies Series 16 (London: Routledge, 2009), 174; "Peacebuilding as Practice: Discourses from Post-Conflict Tajikistan," *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 232–34, doi:10.1080/13533310601150826.

[137] "Powersharing Transitional Government: General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan | Peace Accords Matrix."

such an important democratic backlash, Rakhmon did not bother to use populist discourse the way he did during early post war years.

*2012-2016: Complete UTO Dismantlement*

On 1st March 2015, Tajikistan held parliamentary elections that became a landmark event in the history of Tajikistan's transition to democracy. Unlike other parliamentary elections, this time the only official opposition— Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT)— had had lost its seats at the national Parliament.[138] IRPT could not receive 2% threshold, thus, lost its only two Parliamentary seats. The government ordered IRPT to cease its operation before August 28,[139] because, after the elections its operation was illegal according to the Tajik constitution. IRPT, the descendant political party of the UTO, stopping its operations meant official end the 1997 peace agreement provisions, and, a subsequent transition of Tajikistan into one party system. Though the elections in Tajikistan are not known for being free and fair, the results took everyone, both domestically and internationally, by surprise. Two symbolic IRPT seats at the Parliament[140] were considered as an international advantage for the authoritarian regime of the President Rakhmon.

However, soon, accusations of more a serious nature were addressed towards the IRPT. The party was accused of supervising the coup attempt that took place on 4th September 2015, where a group of armed men with the leadership of Deputy Defense Minister Abduhalim

[138] "Marginalization of Tajikistan's Political Opposition Could Threaten Security," *Jamestown*, accessed May 31, 2017, https://jamestown.org/program/marginalization-of-tajikistans-political-opposition-could-threaten-security/.

[139] Bruce Pannier, "The Demise Of Tajikistan's Islamic Party," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, accessed May 31, 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/qishloq-ovozi-demise-of-tajik-islamic-party/27227509.html.

[140] Ibid.

Nazarzoda attacked police checkpoints in the capital Dushanbe and the city of *Vahdat*. Then, Nazarzoda and his followers fled to the northeast of Dushanbe, and after the counter-insurgency operation, Nazarzoda and 11 of his followers were killed on September 16th. A total of 25 militants died in the operation, and the security services detained a further 125 suspects.[141] According to the official account of events, Nazarzoda was acting under the supervision of Tajikistan's only opposition party IRPT. On September 16th, the Prosecutor General accused the party leader Muhiddin Kabiri, who had already fled the country, of orchestrating the attacks. In his statement, the Prosecutor General implicated 13 senior party members in the violence. The Interior Ministry assuredly declared that it will seek the help of Interpol to secure the extradition of Kabiri who completely denies the government's charges against him.[142]

The analysis of the Presidential speeches shows that demonizing IRPT and creating an elite that is against the people already began in 2012. Unlike the previous years where Rakhmon barely used populist discourse, from 2012 onwards populist discourse slowly goes up and during 2015 and 2016 the populist discourse becomes very strong. In his 2012, 2013, 2014 speeches the demonization of the IRPT is weaker, and the President does not explicitly argue for the introduction of radical changes. For instance, in his 2012 speech he calls the political parties that represent foreign ideology as "ill-wishers of the Tajik nation"[143], thus, "none of the political parties

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[141] Edward Lemon, "Tajikistan's Government Uses Recent Violence to Neutralize Opposition," *Jamestown*, September 23, 2015, https://jamestown.org/program/tajikistans-government-uses-recent-violence-to-neutralize-opposition/.

[142] Ibid.; Edward Lemon, "Violence in Tajikistan Emerges from within the State," September 23, 2015, https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13279-violence-in-tajikistan-emerges-from-within-the-state.html.

[143] "Телевизионное Обращение По Случаю 21-Годовщины Государственной Независимости Таджикистана," August 9, 2012, http://www.president.tj/ru/node/3382.

with a parliamentary representation has a right to impose alien values and ideologies upon Tajik nation."[144] The populist discourse culminates in 2015 and 2016, thus reflecting the complete ban of IRPT as a political party that was subsequently declared as a terrorist organization.[145] In his speeches, Rakhmon again implements the old card, and portrays IRPT as traitors of the nation, which aims to destabilize and lead Tajikistan into another civil war combined with his "war on terror" discourse. He claims that:

> "terrorism is more hazardous than nuclear bomb,"[146] and "the disgraceful events of the last year— the armed attempt to oust the constitutional government— which was realized under the direct supervision and financial support of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, once more showed us that some foreign evil intended powers have not still abandoned their ill wishes towards the Tajik Nation. They want to realize their disastrous and treacherous plans through employing mercenaries, and subsequently, impose on us their alien ideologies and values."[147]

Additionally, Rakhmon's populist discourse refers to another elite as well. This time it includes the international community— namely the countries with "double standards"[148] that complicates the war on terror, and,

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Casey Michel, "Trouble in Tajikistan," May 10, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/11/trouble-tajikistan-151104085616528.html.

[146] "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2016, http://www.president.tj/ru/node/10587.

[147] Ibid.

[148] "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2015, http://www.president.tj/ru/node/10587; "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2016.

"certain international organizations pretend not to be noticing the apparent financial support of the terrorists by IRPT. What is more, they support those terrorists and extremists under the pretext of human rights and democratic values."[149]

The extreme condemnation goes along with the creation of emergency and an immediate threat. By demonizing the independent Islam or any other and international community, that can make people question Rakhmon's regime, the President offers two extreme options. The first is apparently him, and with him the people will enjoy the peace, and national development, second, with those promising alternatives, Tajikistan will fall back into a bloody civil war. In this Manichean battle, Rakhmon knows well that the popular will is for peace, therefore he calls everyone to be aware of ill- wishers of the Tajik nation. Therefore, what he offers next is the change that needs to be done to secure the Tajik nation from the evil elite. In his 2015 and 2016 speeches he calls for granting more powers to security services and the state prosecutor to find the traitors of the nation and punish them. Additionally, Rakhmon calls for constitutional ban of the political parties that propagate "racism, nationalism, social and religious enmity, and the parties that call for violent overthrow of the constitutional government,"[150] and, strict control of internet and mass media to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies.[151]

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[149] "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2016.

[150] "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2015.

[151] "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2016; "Послание Лидера Нации, Президента Таджикистана Уважаемого Эмомали Рахмона Маджлиси Оли Республики Таджикистан," January 23, 2015.

Thus, after creating a convenient atmosphere for the introduction of change, additionally to detaining, torturing, and jailing the IRPT members, [152] Tajikistan held yet another referendum in 2016, May 22nd. The introduced 41 amendments to the existing constitution granting Rakhmon life time term as a President of Tajikistan, banned political party formation based on religion, and lowered the minimum age for Presidential candidates from 35 to 30— so his son, Rustam Emomali, could run for Presidency in 2030.[153] Thus, it became the most recent and decisive crackdown on pluralism and democracy in Tajikistan, and an important milestone in the history of Rakhmon rebuilding state around himself. The developments in 2015 and 2016 have also shown that any challenge towards the incumbent Tajik President would be crashed with force and injustice.

*Even Authoritarians use Populist Discourse*

The apparent question is, why, despite the fact that the President has comparatively well consolidated regime, does it opts for populist discourse to denigrate the opposition? In search of a possible explanation for the aforementioned puzzle we can again turn towards the international community and how its position towards regime in Tajikistan has evolved. Indeed, the international community, most probably excluding Russia, has changed its stance towards the

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[152] "Tajik Court Sentences Opposition Members | The Conway Bulletin," November 3, 2016, http://theconwaybulletin.com/archive/tajik-court-sentences-opposition-members/.

[153] Reid Standish, "How Tajikistan's President Extended His Term—for Life," *Foreign Policy*, May 25, 2016, https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/25/how-tajikistans-president-extended-his-term-for-life-rahmon-isis-migrant-imf/; "Tajikistan Sets Presidential Referendum Date | The Conway Bulletin," December 1, 2016, http://theconwaybulletin.com/archive/tajikistan-sets-presidential-referendum-date/.

Tajik regime. Instead of valuing stability only, with the completion of war on terror with its all failure, a range of criticisms related to the right, freedoms, and wellbeing of the Tajik people and reversed transition to democracy befallen on the current regime.[154] Moreover, without strong external support, how the corrupted Rakhmon's regime with an impoverished economy[155] could ban the official opposition with no proper allegations? So, what happened on September 4th, which is accounted as a coup, became a handy pretext for the regime to completely clean Tajikistan from any possible opponent to the President Rakhmon. In a poor country like Tajikistan with an authoritarian and corrupted regime, the stability is to a greater extent dependent on foreign support, that ensures its stability.

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[154] Edward Lemon, "Tajikistan," Nations in Transition 2016 (Freedom House, 2016), https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2016_Tajikistan.pdf; "Human Rights Report - Tajikistan," Country Report for Human Rights Practices for 2016 (U.S. Department of State, 2016), http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dlid=265550; "Human Rights Reports- Tajikistan," Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (U.S. Department of State, 2012), https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2012humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper; Lemon, "Tajikistan"; Standish, "How Tajikistan's President Extended His Term—for Life."

[155] Lemon, "Tajikistan."

## By Way of Conclusion: The Kazakh and Tajik Cases in Perspective

As was observed earlier, the case studies of Nursultan Nazarbayev and Emomali Rakhmon feature profound differences that need to be kept in mind while drawing comparisons. However, they share many similarities that can in fact confirm Hawkins' theoretical prediction and the hypotheses of this thesis.

To begin with the differences, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan had different experiences in the state- and nation-building processes. Kazakhstan had a stable transition to independence after the demise of the Soviet Union. Whereas Tajikistan, as a result of fight for power and regional antagonisms, experienced a tragic five-year Civil War. The Civil War as a contributing factor made it harder to consolidate the Rakhmon regime, hence, it took longer for the incumbent President to establish his monopoly in Tajikistan. On the other hand, in Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev successfully created the basis for the dominance of his regime within the first decade of independence.

To shift to the common features, based on the analysis, both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan implemented populist discourse during the periods that are characterised as pluralistic. First, in Kazakhstan Nazarbayev implemented populist discourse just after independence was gained. The content of the elite was filled with old *nomenklatura*, and any other possible opponent of the regime. From Nazarbayev's speech analysis, it is observed that the elite is demonized and depicted as a huge threat to the will of the Kazakh people, which is defined by him as a political stability, economic prosperity, and peace and unity. The view of the opposition is disregarded, and the whole scene is narrated as a conflict between good and evil. As a solution, the President necessitates the

revival of a strong executive. Thus, towards the mid 1990s, President Nazarbayev successfully amends the constitution, extends his power and term in office, and weakens legislative and judiciary systems.

From the mid 1990s until the end of the decade, President Nazarbayev targeted free media and freedom of speech as a new elite. After stifling the legislative and judiciary bodies of government, Nazarbayev moved to limit the free expression of dissent. Interestingly he initially used sensitive topics for the public, such as corruption and tax fraud, as an instrument against the agents of free media. Thus, a range of independent media outlets were shut down and their facilities were confiscated. However, towards the 2000s, President Nazarbayev started to name free media as a place of slander. Hence he introduced the law which criminalised the "misuse" of freedom of speech.

The case of Tajikistan provides an interesting pattern regarding populist discourse usage. Unlike Kazakhstan, it increases from the late 1990s and goes from 2004-2011. In post-Civil War Tajikistan, the requirements of the 1997 peace agreement aimed to limit one-man-rule, and introduce pluralist representation to the government structure. Therefore, using every opportunity during late 1990s, Rakhmon begins to target certain provisions of the peace agreement. He discussed the powerful representatives of the opposition and other regions of Tajikistan's evil minority, all of which were awaiting a convenient opportunity to pull Tajikistan into another civil war, whereas poor and pure people had all their hopes invested in the leadership of Emomali Rakhmon. Gradually, he filled the key governmental positions with loyal supporters from his home region *Kulyab*.

The trend of infusing a sense of fear to the people goes during the early 2000s. Still, by naming the elite, Rakhmon emphasized the barely stable peace. In a constitutional referendum in

2003, the article limiting the President's period in office to a single term was successfully eliminated. Thus, by advocating his leadership as a guarantor of stability and the existence of Tajikistan, Rakhmon, similar to Nazarbayev advocated for a stronger executive and achieved prolongation of his presence as a Tajik President.

President Rakhmon made decisive steps against the 1997 peace agreement by banning the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan as a terrorist organization and jailing its members in 2015. As an official opposition party, with only two parliamentarian seats, IRPT was demonized as missionaries and traitors of the nation who represented only the interests of ill-wishers of the Tajik nation. Rakhmon successfully linked IRPT to the coup of September 4, 2015, thus, completely blackening the reputation of the official opposition. Thus, by implementing the populist discourse, Rakhmon successfully eliminated any possible dissent from Tajikistan, and reportedly, turned the nation into a fully authoritarian, one-party regime.

The evidence from the analysis conducted in this thesis shows that, indeed, as Hawkins argues, populist discourse emerges in the presence of pluralism. The challenges that come from democratic norms and values are attacked by Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan and Rakhmon in Tajikistan. In Kazakhstan, it is observed that the regime created a basis for its authoritarian one-man-rule from early on within a decade. As for Tajikistan, due to the violent experience, the regime had to attack pluralism gradually, and after 2016, it completely eliminated any dissent. The results of the analysis confirm the Hawkins' theoretical assumption and the hypotheses of this thesis. Indeed, the populist discourse was implemented by the weak regimes of Nazarbayev and Rakhmon and eventually led to the consolidation of their authoritarian regimes. Thus, today Nazarbeyav and Rakhmon are legitimate fathers of their nations.

# Appendices

*1. Coding Form*

Name of politician:

Title of Speech:

Date of Speech:

Category:

Grader:

Date of grading:

Final Grade (delete unused grades):

2 A speech in this category is extremely populist and comes very close to the ideal populist discourse. Specifically, the speech expresses all or nearly all of the elements of ideal populist discourse, and has few elements that would be considered non-populist.

1 A speech in this category includes strong, clearly populist elements but either does not use them consistently or tempers them by including non-populist elements. Thus, the discourse may have a romanticized notion of the people and the idea of a unified popular will (indeed, it must in order to be considered populist), but it avoids bellicose language or references to cosmic proportions or any particular enemy.

0 A speech in this category uses few if any populist elements. Note that even if a manifesto expresses a Manichaean worldview, it is not considered populist if it lacks some notion of a popular will.

| Populist | Pluralist |
|---|---|
| It conveys a Manichaean vision of the world, that is, one that is moral (every issue has a strong moral dimension) and dualistic (everything is in one category or the other, | The discourse does not frame issues in moral terms or paint them in black-and-white. Instead, there is a strong tendency to focus on **narrow, particular issues**. The discourse will |

| | |
|---|---|
| "right" or "wrong," "good" or "evil") The implication—or even the stated idea—is that there can be nothing in between, no fence-sitting, no shades of grey. This leads to the use of highly charged, even bellicose language. | emphasize or at least not eliminate the possibility of natural, justifiable differences of opinion. |
| The moral significance of the items mentioned in the speech is heightened by ascribing **cosmic proportions** to them, that is, by claiming that they affect people everywhere (possibly but not necessarily across the world) and across time. Especially in this last regard, frequent references may be made to a reified notion of "history." At the same time, the speaker will justify the moral significance of his or her ideas by tying them to **national and religious leaders that are generally reverted.** | The discourse will probably not refer to any reified notion of history or use any cosmic proportions. References to the spatial and temporal consequences of issues will be limited to the material reality rather than any mystical connections. |
| Although Manichaean, the discourse is still democratic, in the sense that the good is embodied in the will of the majority, which is seen as a unified whole, perhaps but not necessarily expressed in references to the "voluntad del pueblo"; however, the speaker ascribes a kind of unchanging essentialism to that will, rather than letting it be whatever 50 percent of the people want at any particular moment. Thus, this good majority is romanticized, with some notion of the common man (urban or rural) seen as the embodiment of the national ideal. | Democracy is simply the calculation of votes. This should be respected and is seen as the foundation of legitimate government, but it is not meant to be an exercise in arriving at a preexisting, knowable "will." The majority shifts and changes across issues. The common man is not romanticized, and the notion of citizenship is broad and legalistic. |
| The evil is embodied in a minority whose specific identity will vary according to context. Domestically, in Latin America it is often an | The discourse avoids a conspiratorial tone and does not single out any evil ruling minority. It avoids labeling opponents as evil and may not |

59

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|---|---|
| economic elite, perhaps the "oligarchy," but it may also be a racial elite; internationally, it may be the United States or the capitalist, industrialized nations or international financiers or simply an ideology such as neoliberalism and capitalism. | even mention them in an effort to maintain a positive tone and keep passions low. |
| Crucially, the evil minority is or was recently in charge and subverted the system to its own interests, against those of the good majority or the people. Thus, systemic change is/was required, often expressed in terms such as "revolution" or "liberation" of the people from their "immiseration" or bondage, even if technically it comes about through elections. | The discourse does not argue for systemic change but, as mentioned above, focuses on particular issues. In the words of Laclau, it is a politics of "differences" rather than "hegemony". |
| Because of the moral baseness of the threatening minority, non-democratic means may be openly justified or at least the minority's continued enjoyment of these will be seen as a generous concession by the people; the speech itself may exaggerate or abuse data to make this point, and the language will show a bellicosity towards the opposition that is incendiary and condescending, lacking the decorum that one shows a worthy opponent. | Formal rights and liberties are openly respected, and the opposition is treated with courtesy and as a legitimate political actor. The discourse will not encourage or justify illegal, violent actions. There will be great respect for institutions and the rule of law. If data is abused, it is either an innocent mistake or an embarrassing breach of democratic standards. |

**Overall Comments (just a few sentences):**

*2. Analysed Speeches for Kazakhstan*

| SPEAKER | DATE | SPEECH TYPE | GRADE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nursultan Nazarbayev,** *President* | 1991 | Inauguration Speech | 2 |
| | 1992 | Independence Speech | 2 |
| | 1993 | Address to the Nation | 2 |
| | 1994 | Address to the Nation | 2 |
| | 1995 | Address to the Nation | 2 |
| | 1996 | Independence Speech | 2 |
| | 1997 | Independence Speech | 2 |
| | 1998 | Address to the Nation | 1 |
| | 1999 | Address to the Nation | 1 |
| | 2000 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2001 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2002 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2003 | Address to the Nation | 1 |
| | 2004 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2005 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2006 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2007 | Address to the Nation | 1 |
| | 2008 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2009 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2010 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2011 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2012 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2013 | Address to the Nation | 0 |
| | 2014 | Independence Speech | 0 |
| | 2015 | Address to the Nation | 1 |
| | 2016 | Independence Speech | 1 |
| | 2017 | Address to the Nation | 0 |

*3. Analysed Speeches for Tajikistan*

| SPEAKER | DATE | SPEECH TYPE | GRADE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Emomali Rakhmon,** *President* | 1993 | Address to the Nation | 1 |
| | 1994 | UN General Assembly | 0 |
| | 1995 | Independence Day | 1 |
| | 1996 | N/A | N/A |
| | 1997 | Independence Day | 2 |
| | 1998 | Address to the Nation | 2 |
| | 1999 | N/A | N/A |
| | 2000 | Independence Day | 1 |
| | 2001 | Independence Day | 1 |
| | 2002 | Peace Agreement Anniversary | 1 |
| | 2003 | Independence Day | 1 |
| | 2004 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2005 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2006 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2007 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2008 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2009 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2010 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2011 | Independence Day | 0 |
| | 2012 | Independence Day | 1 |
| | 2013 | Independence Day | 1 |
| | 2014 | Constitution Day | 1 |
| | 2015 | National Unity Day | 2 |
| | 2016 | Address to the Nation | 2 |
| | 2017 | Address to the Nation | 0 |

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