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Grado en Relaciones Internacionales

Trabajo Fin de Grado

**Uprising and Development of
Populism in the Post-Soviet Space;**

Three Specific Cases (Azerbaijan, Georgia and
Uzbekistan)

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RESUMEN

Los principales objetivos de este Trabajo de Fin de Grado (TFG) tienen como finalidad proporcionar una visión adecuada y un posterior desarrollo exhaustivo del fenómeno populista implantado en el espacio postsoviético. Para una mayor concreción, nos serviremos de tres casos que se ajustan a este molde: Azerbaiyán, Georgia y Uzbekistán.

Por tanto, a lo largo de las páginas de este proyecto, procuraremos dar respuesta a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cómo se clasificaría el populismo enraizado en dichos Estado-Nación? ¿Cuáles son las principales características y elementos distintivos de los regímenes políticos de estos países? ¿Por qué son tan importantes estos ejemplos en la búsqueda de una clasificación precisa, de acuerdo a la literatura científica? ¿Cuál es su sistema político, social y económico? ¿Qué opciones hay de romper ese círculo vicioso y encarrilar sus respectivos sistemas de gobierno a la consecución del Estado de Derecho?

Así, el TFG se estructurará en tres grandes bloques: 1) Descripción sobre la evolución del fenómeno del Populismo en el Espacio Postsoviético, con la consiguiente problemática de su concreta definición y específica conceptualización, así como las tensiones referentes a la Cuestión y Conciencia Nacional respecto a la URSS; 2) Explicación de la problemática en los tres casos, ofreciendo un análisis riguroso de las condiciones económicas, sociales, culturales y políticas de dichos regímenes, junto al papel desempeñado por los mismos en el sistema de las Relaciones Internacionales y, finalmente; 3) Conclusiones planteadas al respecto del populismo y sus efectos en el sistema político y económico de los susodichos, incluyendo una pronóstico de futuro en pos del desarrollo económico y político.

Palabras Clave: Populismo, Nacionalismo, URSS (Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas), Autarquía, Federación Rusa, Sociedad Civil

ABSTRACT

The main objectives of this Final Degree Project (TFG) are aimed at providing an adequate vision and a subsequent exhaustive development of the populist phenomenon implanted in the post-Soviet space. For further information, we will use three cases that fit this mold: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan.

Therefore, throughout the pages of this project, we will try to answer the following questions: How would populism rooted in such nation-states be classified? What are the main characteristics and distinctive elements of the political regimes of these countries? Why are these examples so important in the search for a precise classification, according to scientific literature? What are their political, social and economic system? What options are there to break that vicious circle and put their respective systems of government on track to achieve the Rule of Law?

Thus, the TFG will be structured in three major blocks: 1) Description of the evolution of the phenomenon of Populism in the Post-Soviet Space, with the consequent problem of its specific definition and specific conceptualization, as well as the tensions regarding the National Issue and Conscience to the USSR; 2) Explanation of the problem in all three cases, offering a rigorous analysis of the economic, social, cultural and political conditions of these regimes, together with the role played by them in the system of International Relations and, finally; 3) Conclusions raised regarding populism and its effects on the political and economic system of the aforementioned, including a future prognosis in pursuit of economic and political development.

Keywords: Populism, Nationalism, USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). Autarky, Russian Federation, Civil Society

1) METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES OF THIS WORK

The phenomenon of populism has turned out to a matter which is prone to an ample variety of definitions, interpretations, sorts of perspectives as it does not entail a proper one-sided construe. Alas, we find highly fascinating this issue while this concept could encompass, any kind of regime, whatever its core foundations, ideology or development of politics.

Moreover, in terms of geographical location, the Caucasian area along with Central Asia, is a region which it could be regarded as one of the most problematic ones, within the last twenty years, (since the fall and the disintegration of her motherland: the USSR). As we will discuss through the pages of this project, except for a short period of time at the end of the decade of 1910s, these three states (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan) experienced an evanescent experience of a true real liberal democracy, despite all the ethnic, territorial,

economic flaws. Hence, currently, these countries are subject to a sort of sultanistic regimes, with rims of populism.

Nonetheless, this populism is not understood in the traditional way, thus it is defined in this area with diverse particular characteristics, linked to this particular ethnic, geographical characteristics. Henceforth, our methodological objectives of this work is to intertwined the basic assumptions of the phenomenon of populism, envisaged through different, but valid definitions and the inner and international context of the Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan. Then, our task is coming out with a holistic frame of both dimensions and, eventually, connect them to savvy the whole picture.

Likewise, this Final Degree Project has as its primary purpose to expose legal, sociological, historical and political arguments (always, of course, within the guidelines and apothegms that International Relations has as a corollary), which lead to consider the populism in the Caucasian Area as a particular and endemic problem of this area, but it could also be taken into account on a much vaster frame. Unlike the cases of Europe and Latin America, these three particular examples are obviously clear proof of populism, but there are attached to the example of Singapore or China than Bolivia or Italy.

For this purpose, it is necessary to dive into the stormy waters of the theories of Populism, that is, the doctrine of the most outstanding authors in this field, the economic, political, social figures of international organizations, think tanks and experts categorization, the newest statements of NGOs, civil societies, and also various books, chapters of them and specialized information journals that allows us to narrow the subject of the matter as accurately as possible, providing the solution that best suits to the issue.

Therefore, our final degree project shall be split up in the next categories. First, we will begin with the definition of this phenomenon and the search for the most appropriate terminology, just as the problems for the conceptualization of the aforesaid term, guiding towards the establishment of a new category.

Secondly, we will focus on the historical context and characteristic elements of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan from its foundation to the present day. Then, we cannot forget the economic, social, cultural and political analysis (domestic and foreign relations) of these regimes, as it will enable us to perceive why Populism has been extremely successful in this area, the implantation of Populism and peculiar characteristics.

The third and final part, relies on assumption of a hypothetical prospect, in regard with the possible political solutions raised in this regard, and an estimate foresight for the immediate future in pursuit of development.

We tend to consider that this issue is highly, due to two main reasons: 1) the interest that awakens us to deal with in such a turbulent area, in which the characteristics coming from the Asian and European culture are intermingled and 2) the existence of alternatives that are found in such a diffuse space that is the one that extends from the democracies until the fiercest dictatorships.

In addition, we will try to analyze these cases, with the highest scientific rigor, exposing, in our opinion, the arguments that conform to the material reality of the moment, without getting bogged down in idealistic and naive disquisitions that all they do is feed is an absolute ignorance about the problem.

2) DEVELOPMENT OF POPULISM IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

2.1) Definition of this phenomenon and search for the most appropriate terminology

As a matter of fact, populism is a volatile concept which cannot be apprehended easily. Populism was lost in the mists of time, since the epoch of the ancient petty polis of Hellas (Maggio, 2008). We have to trace back its first hints in the well-known, although misunderstood, primitive Athenian democracy through the speeches of Pericles in the Golden Age (Crick, 2005). Afterwards, fundamental political philosophers such as Aristotle, Machiavelli, Rousseau, or, even Marx, (Vatter, 2012) tangentially covered these related matters but, not specifically focused on them. Nevertheless, it is not our object to build a genealogy of populism but to contextualize the term in the swampy field of political science.

Nowadays, according to Fukuyama's praise (1992), global society is living to the end of the ideologies as we usually know. The triumph of free market economy and liberal-democracies has become the mirror that developing countries should look on it (Johnson, 1992). However, little did we grasp the precise connotations of this assumption. We are dealing with the end of other ideologies, (May, 1996) which have been kicked out the playground of global politics: fundamentalist theocracies, Marxist-Leninist nation-states or Sultanistic regimes.

Although the number of liberal democracies have increasingly expanded in the five continents since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the USSR as incardinated in the process named by Samuel P. Huntington (1991), *The Third Wave of Democratization* (Chung, 2015)., Notwithstanding, there are certain areas of Asia, Africa and Europe that do not fit with these figures expressed (Rodrik, 2016) because they have functioned with no properly liberal democratic institutions (LeJeune, 2014) or they have suffered a harsh kickback, for example Latin America (de Mello, 2015). Related to the first categorization, Caucasian Area and Central Asia Countries are the paramount example of this.

In these states, not only has democracy not been implanted, but also their institutions have reflected populism (Aslanidis, 2017) throughout the disintegration of the USSR. Therefore, there is an enormous lack of democracy within them, as well as, right to vote, freedom of speech, and political competition are hardly inexistent (Arditi, 2003). These regimes that we are going to explain are a clear sample that democracy has not yet been implemented, as they are lying dormant for twenty years in terms of Human Rights and Human Development.

Concerning populism, despite the fact common people believed it is only characteristics of the America and Europe in recent years, populism is an antique trend which dates back from the eighteenth century and it is closely linked to Russia, hence, we can understand why these ideas have perfectly gone deeper into these republics.

Alas, the first antecedents of this phenomenon are dated from the late nineteenth century including early twentieth century (Frei & Rovira, 2008) in two countries, totally different: in the US and Russia. On the one hand, in the USA People's Party (hence the term) materialized these ideals, utterly opposed to an establishment which did not give any solution to the common people (Jessen, 2014). Small rural landowners who had become impoverished due to growing industrialization of the country were the most loyal voters to this political force (Argersinger, 1995). Whilst they opposed the dynamics of a predatory capitalist modernity, they sought to advocate a greater political participation, overrunning the limits of the narrow representative democracy (Bicha, 1976). Nonetheless, these demands were articulated in a fair ambiguous way. On the other hand, in Russia, populism (Narodnike) imbibed from the romantic ideal of agrarian life (Mokshin, 2016) and upheld certain forms of life in communes (García, 2010), resembling to anarchist proposals of phalanstère from Owen, Saint-Simon or Proudhon (Cunliffe, & Erreygers, 2001). Both demands had in common the search for greater political

participation, as the US Congress established the mechanism process of referendum for the purpose of combating it (Clanton, 1998).

In the case of Russia, it is obvious that this country has a longstanding tradition of populism, better said anarchist one, which, conversely, have evolved to a kind of nationalist-pseudo Marxist-Leninist political concept (March, & Mudde, 2005). This latest trend has been entrenched to countries whose political systems are still till very much in its infancy, as they have lived under the sovereignty of a non-democratic state-nation: the USSR (Aras, 2005).

Certainly, it is quite difficult to span such a broad and polymorphous concept while there are certain variables that must be taken into account: leader, social and political movements, cultural and sociological roots, international relations trends... (Woods, 2017) In consequence, a single definition of populism is pretty complicated to attain, whether precise local and regional condition should be remained in mind (Hawkins, & Kaltwasser, 2017). In the next section, we are going to give a brief definition of this phenomenon, and subsequently, this paper is going to display how this term must be apprehended and the difficulties of the setting of a proper definition.

2.2) Problems for the conceptualization of said term

As we have discussed above, the term populism is extremely volatile and it cannot be apprehended in a single and precise definition (Hawkins, & Kaltwasser, 2017). Likewise, in the abovementioned section, we provide a general term which might encompass the general characteristics of this phenomenon. Nonetheless, several conceptualizations of populism come out of the blue (Woods, 2017). Thus, in order to get an accurate approach, we are going to split the issue in five parts so as to canvass the principal features and set a proper definition (Akkerman, 2003).

Based upon the division of Vittori (2017), the concept Populism could be envisaged in these dimensions: as political illiberalism, a tool for political mobilization, a leader-led movement, a communicative/discursive tool and as an ideology.

Firstly, Populism could be regarded as Populism as a political illiberalism (Pappas, 2015). In accordance with his view, he tried to eschew the shortcomings of definitions provided by authors such as Laclau (2005a), Canovan (1984) or Mudde (2004), as he sets out a minimal interpretation of populism in the contemporary era (Pappas, 2016), which is “*the occurrences*

of this phenomenon in post-WWII democracies around the world, which is qualitatively different from populisms in either predemocratic or nondemocratic political settings” (Pappas, 2015: 4). Treading on Zakaria’s (1997) definition of “illiberal democracies”, Populism is defined by the author as “democratic illiberalism” (Pappas, 2015: 10).

This approach entails diverse shortages. The label is irrelevant whether everything we set aside that does not fit in the liberal parties, we regard them as populism (Vittori, 2017). Besides, this expression implies a negative term, however, it is too breadth and difficult to analyze. Firstly, the beginning of the democratic liberal creed is blurred due to the fact there is no a party or movement which this set of ideas was begotten (Rosales, 2013). Secondly, following the path of Laclau’s assumptions (2005b), liberalism competes for the political space with other strong opponents such as communism or fascism in the XX century (Mouffe, 2000).

The second one is related to populism as a tool for political mobilization. As far as the adequacy of this issue linked to our cases is concerned, it gives us doubts about its suitability to limit the phenomenon of populism in these countries. The history of these states is novel owing to the fact, they were created under the wing of the role of USSR as a generating empire (Armesilla, 2014). Hence, the populism is inserted in their own DNA, so populism as a tool for political mobilization cannot be a right asset to precise this kind of populism.

Nevertheless, this expression could provide an alternative insight that can be twisted for the purpose of stretching this category. There are valuable authors as Jansen that describes populism as “*any sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people*” (2011) or, Di Tella which offers a clear definition of populism as “[*a*] *political movement which enjoys the support of the mass of the urban working class and/or peasantry but which does not result from the autonomous organizational power of either of these two sectors. It is also supported by non-working-class sectors upholding an anti-status quo ideology*” (1965: 47).

For us, the next one is more suitable than the previous ones. Now, we are referring to populism as a channel which converges the centrality of a person, known as the leader and its direct relationship with the people as a whole (De Luca, & Ciaglia, 2017). Then, prestigious political scientists, for example, Roberts denotes that populism shows a “*political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders who challenge established elites*” (2006: 127) whilst, Weyland pins populism down as a “*political strategy through which a personalistic*

leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (2001: 14). Finally, according to Urbinati *“while the epistemic interpretation of democracy is headless, populism can hardly exist without a politics of personality; while the former aims at erasing ideology and all forms of sedimentation of opinions, the latter lives out of a strong ideological rhetoric”* (2014: 131).

Despite the ample literature about this definition, this view clearly should be carefully nuanced. Furthermore, the term “personalistic” gives much food for thought: in Caucasian Asia as Latin-American, personalistic attributes are raised in authoritarian contexts where parties and movements in autocratic contexts depicts personalismo (De la Torre, 2010). In particular, populism in the post-soviet geopolitical and geostrategic space are closely intertwined with the traditional clans and tribes who inhabited in this inhospitable soil (Schatz, 2006).

In this cases, we perceive, in terms of political manifesto, that leaders are tightly closed to the organizations that they set up. Within the same issue, in other cases, charismatic figures were born from the womb of the party [Matteo Salvini after the leadership of Umberto Bossi in the Northern League, (Betz, 2002) or Marine Le Pen, as successor of his father (Mény, Y., & Surel, 2000): Jean Marie Le Pen in the National Front]. Notwithstanding, there are cases that fall short within this infallible triumph of a leadership: diverse entrepreneurs with populist role that obtain successful results, who were replaced by another populist leaders (the Freedom Party of Austria and the Progress Party in Denmark) (Smith, 2009). Alas, populist movements such as L’Uomo Qualunque in Italy or the Pim Fortuyn List in the Netherlands, failed resoundingly while its head was chopped (Rooduijn, 2018). Then we could discern, that according to Mudde and Kaltwasser leaders might be the *“key for mobilizing the people and (re)founding the political organization specialized in fostering a direct an unmediated relationship with the electorate”* (2014:387). Although they are notable exceptions (the Popolo Viola, in Italy, Occupy Wall Street in the US or the Indignados in both Greece and Spain), leadership must be taken into account, not as a definitive characteristic of populism (Prentoulis, & Thomassen, 2013), but yes as a key factor that contributes to the rise of this phenomenon.

The fourth one is merely a prescriptive than an empirical feature one. This perspective latches on the populism as a communicative and discursive tool (Vittori, 2017). From our point of view, and, based upon on Canovan (1981; 1984) her seminal works; the only thing that populists have in common *“is a rhetorical style which relies heavily upon appeals to the people”* (Canovan 1984: 313). Nonetheless, it sounds pretty crude while it also includes an a-

normativity outlook, which could be summarized as whoever refers to the “people” and suggesting ideas to the “people” should be weighted as populist; for, “[b]y referring to the people, a political actor claims that he or she cares about the people’s concerns [...]”. Anyway the intrinsic anathema of populism is: ‘I listen to you because I talk about you.’” (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 323).

Having grounded one perspective of populism as a discursive tool, we must add a complementary one which is introduced by Hawkins (2009) and Laclau (2005a). Hawkins explain populism as a “*Manichaeian discourse because it assigns a moral dimension to everything, no matter how technical, and interprets it as part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil*” (2009: 1043). Otherwise, Laclau (2005b) deploys his knowledge and resources about the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (Biglieri, 2017), while he is more prone to look at populism as a discursive practice rather than its content (Laclau, 2005a). The basic core of his theory relies on the moment that people share the same political concerns as the fill an empty signifier (a political instance) which battles against a hegemonic practice. Overall, Populism is completely opposed against the logic of administration, meanwhile populism gives consistency significance to this empty and disputed signifier (Panizza, 2005).

The fifth and last group of definitions tends to see populism as an ideology. The concept Ideology is defined by Jost et al. (2009) as “*reflect[s] both genuine (and even highly accurate) attempts to understand, interpret, and organize information about the political world as well as conscious or unconscious tendencies to rationalize the way things are or, alternatively, the desire for them to be different*” (ibid.: 310). Hence, the wide array of ideologies “*enable meaningful political worlds to be constructed, as well as translating the multiplicity of potential conceptual meaning into the singularity of a political decision*” (Freeden, 1998: 749).

Populism, as a structured ideology, attempts to rationalize the complexity of the geopolitical order, enabling to clarify its own path through a vicious opposition against elites, in the midst of an increasing skepticism (Oakeshott, 1996). Populism lays the foundations on anti-political status quo rhetoric and a continuous appeal to an ideal and homogenous community, where there are no stark differences at all (Canovan, 2002). Nevertheless, the only difference is what elite should be expelled. In our case, the discourse is merely against Russian Federation and other superpowers (EU, the US) as well as NGOs or International Organizations as disruptors of the so-called power. Albertazzi and McDonnell, for example, delimit populism as “*an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and*

dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice" (2008: 14).

However, this interpretation is not deprived of shortcomings. The main explains that Populism does not show a coherent and global of all political contexts. Certainly, this phenomenon is subject to permanent change while their ideological and rhetorical tools shift in every age, anyway, its core assumptions: The Manichean distinction of the "people" and the "elite(s)". Therefore, Populism is far more flexible than the traditional structured ideologies.

Thus, regarding the basic lines, we could envisage populism as a "core" or "thin-centred". *"Thin-centred ideologies present structural inability to offer complex ranges of argument because many chains of ideas [...] are simply absent. [...] A thin-centred-ideology is hence limited in ideational ambitions and scope"* (Freeden, 1998: 750).

The core ideology may be Thin-centrism can be equalized to an enormous assortment of despair ideas, which are not hold in the main thin-centered ideology. Freeden locates this in nationalist ideology, but Mudde (2004) sees it in populism. Latterly, the former has challenged this. In his view, populism *"not only falls short of comprehensiveness but short of nuanced specificity in what it does offer. Vagueness and indeterminacy may be good vote-catchers, but the result is at best a phantom ideology"* (Freeden, 2017: 10). Thus, it should be avoided the term ideology when we refer to Populism: *"(1) when it serves as a convenient catch-all marker of radical popular demands that clamor for legitimation, and (2) when it is used to denounce particular brands of right-wing xenophobia"* (*ibid.*: 11).

Once we have described five tools to conceptualize this populism, now it is time to fix them in a wider definition and, subsequently, applied them to our particular case: Does these features fix in the existence of Populism in the Caucasian and Central Asia area?

2.3) Establishment of a new category

Having settled down the five categories of a different rapprochement the phenomenon of populism, it is time to shape a concrete definition. Certainly, it is hard to yield a single common one due to the richness of its shades and the uniqueness of every country (Spruyt, Keppens, & Van Droogenbroeck, 2016). It is not the same to canvass populism on various parts of Asia such as China, China, Singapore or Thailand (Paradise, 2011) because its ideology is highly influence by Confucian, (Kim, 2015), Lao Tse wisdom or our studied region which is

derived from a mix of their own culture, tarnished with Marxist-Leninism ideology (Junisbai, 2012).

Nevertheless, despite these grandiose distinctiveness, we could draw twelve common characteristics, closely linked to populism. Rooduijn (2014: 573) quarries four minimal ones:

- (1) Importance of the people as a central asset
- (2) Harsh criticism against the elites
- (3) People regarded as a single voice and homogeneous entity
- (4) The permanent conviction of being assaulted by constant of period of serious crisis.

Likewise, Taggart (2000: 2) adds against six elements which are considered as crucial populist characteristics:

- (a) Enmity to the concept of representative democracy and what it represents
- (b) Extreme and virulent nationalism (permanent idealization)
- (c) Empty ideology; no core values;
- (d) Responsiveness to economic, social, cultural or political crisis;
- (e) Populism as a container of essential dilemmas that restricts itself it
- (f) An interconnected, telluric context issue

Based upon National Front in France ideology and mobilization Taguieff (1995: 27-32) identifies again other five features:

- (I) the direct appeal to the people as an empty significance,
- (II) the thoughtfulness of a classless concept of people, not civil society
- (III) the search for a pristine community (genuine, healthy, effortless and virtue)
- (IV) the need for a sweeping and purged cesure
- (V) the prevalence over the modern concept of citizenship and the resurging of racism in terms of race or ethnic origin

Upon delimiting the main features, using the thought of different authors such as Vitori (2017), Rooduijn (2015); Taggart (2004) and Taguieff (1995), now it might be possible to

identify the ten common feature of populism regardless of the area, birth or charismatic leaderships:

- (1) Empty ideology; no core values;
- (2) A fierce anti-elitism;
- (3) Enmity to the concept of representative democracy and what it represents
- (4) The mobilization of people against the existent political status-quo (rupture);
- (5) the direct appeal to the people as an empty significance,
- (6) the thoughtfulness of a classless concept of people, not civil society
- (7) the prevalence over the modern concept of citizenship and the resurging of racism in terms of race or ethnic origin
- (8) Extreme and virulent nationalism (permanent idealization)
- (9) Responsiveness to economic, social, cultural or political crisis;
- (10) Populism as a container of essential dilemmas that restricts itself it

Focusing on the last set list of populism attributes, we personally believe that a comparison between these general assumptions and the example of populism in the Post Soviets space has to be done. Amongst the wide array of definition of populism, the ideology as a thin-centered concept proves to be the most adequate on this case (Freeden, 2017).

Anyway, we have several doubts that this features must be taken into account a basic one due to the fact the populisms of Karimov in Uzbekistan; Saakashvili in Georgia and Əliyev in Azerbaijan lack of a coherent and structure ideology (attribute 1). However, this assumption must be used as the foundation which the reconstruction of the concept could be conducted successfully. Besides, the opposition of the so-called people against the elites (attribute 2) (Bugaric, & Kuhelj, 2018) is present not only in an international dimension, but also in an domestic one as the political internal rivals are coined as elitist agents at the stake of foreign powers, for example, human rights defenders are branded as agents of other powers, as well as the constant criticism against the liberal democracies in Europe and the US (attribute 3) (Peruzzotti, 2017).

Following the path that we have traced, we will continue with the remaining features. The already discussed attributes (4) mobilization of populism against the elites (Taggart, 2004)

and (5) the necessity of a strong or charismatic leadership (Isaac, 2017) are also essential in the definition of populism in the Post-soviet space. In spite of the troubles that this definition raised, there seems to be a shared and common agreement among scholars on the essential distinction between the “homogenous” people and the “others” (Galston, 2018).

Nonetheless, we have to pin down that certain populism, ascribed to the extreme right does not properly use the word homogenous in its purity (De Sousa, & Marchi, 2010). Basically, if we need to come out with a minimal definition of populism, this attribute must be set aside or even nuanced for the purpose of differentiating between inclusionary and exclusionary populism (Mudde, & Kaltwasser, 2013). In this case, charismatic leaders employ the word homogenous people as an inclusionary one.

Continuing with explanation of this attribute (6), the political scientists Meny and Surel (2000), referring to the vague term of homogeneity of the people, portrayed three usages of this term people: *sovereign-people*, *class-people* and *nation-people*. Although these words have been coined by other ideologies (socialism, national-socialism, fascism), the diverse populisms have adopted them as a sign of inclusion or exclusion (Gratius, & Rivero, 2017). Other authors such as Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) sign that populism could be “exclusionary” and “inclusionary”, relying on alternative core ideologies. In these authors’ perspective, the main feature that populists partake “*the way in which populist actors define who belongs to ‘the people’ visa`-vis ‘the elite’*”, but, on the other hand, “*the ideological features that are attached to the particular populist ideology of the actors*” (ibid.: 148) no matter if it falls within radical-left or radical-right.

In this case, the world ideology, in accordance with the words of Mouffe (2005), it must be challenge so it could be deprived of any superfluous meaning. Although it is nearly impossible to attain a common definition, reaching a minimum consensus based on the key issue of the people is plausible (Meny and Surel, 2000). Across the Post-Soviet space, terms as class, sovereignty or nation-state are increasingly blurred. Therefore, they encompass totally different “we” and, mostly, and “others” (Laclau, 1979). They have to be stated as useful complimentary attributes to populism, but their scope should be mitigated while we are talking of the role of the powerful leaders in the region. Populist, overall, refer to “the people” or “the majority of the people”, but this appeal is clearly directed toward the distinction between the elite(s) and the non-elitists, (Bonikowski, 2017) rather than the proclamation of the pristine community (genuine, healthy, effortless and virtue).

Shifting to attributes (7) and (8), when we are talking about a pure people, populists also refer to its glorious and unbelievable past, ranging from a local, national or class-based (locally, nationally or class-based) (Wittes, & Rauch, 2017) as they embrace other ideologies in order to exclude the others (federalism, extreme nationalism, or lesser regionalism, socialism, in all its variants international and national but also some sort of economic liberalism) (Berman, 2017). Whichever the framing of the motherland is not solely disputed by the leaders but also, it is connected with the core ideologies adopted (Taguieff, 1995).

Disputing the term crisis (9), there could be some hypothetical correlations (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015), the sense of “crisis” have to be apprehended as a mere rhetoric tool that it is constantly argued by other non-populist people to discredit opponents in the political field (Pappas, 2016). The term crisis is barely used by populist in the Post-Soviet space in daily speeches whilst it is only raised by them when there are popular revolts or the intervention of foreign countries within their national politics.

Attribute (10) (populism as a container of essential dilemmas that restricts itself it) is also rather arguably while in this issue it is pretty problematic to reach a common definition in the populists’ habits (Vittori, 2017). Moreover, the quest for a minimal definition to undertake this phenomenon irrespective of their particular characteristics entails the avoidance of settling concrete boundaries (Rooduijn, 2015).

Thus, this interpretation of populism as a self-limiting occurrence is underpinned on the mistaken assertion that populist parties are not an institutionalized movements or leader because of its own natures, (De la Torre, 2010) based on the everlasting clash against the democratic institutions and what represents, along with the intrinsic sophistication of decision-making. Connected with this problematic questions, authors like Mudde (2010) sees populism as “pathological normalcy”, while Betz (1994) labels it as a “normal pathology”. Akin to literature of the stability of populist right wing parties in Europe (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2013 and Rooduijn, 2015), these parties and movements in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan enjoys a permanent stability there.

Related to the previous connotation that we have discussed, we could discern two important features (Vittori, 2017), which are common in sorts of populism whether they are from Europe, America or Asia and, thus, applicable to populism in Post-Soviet space. These principles are:

- (a) anti-elite(s) mindset,

b) criticism of representative politics.

In terms of our three cases, the anti-establishment attitude is intertwined with the anti-elite mindset while its major enemy comes from the outside such as the NATO, the EU, the USA etc... (Krastev, 2006) Paradoxically, populists in these countries are not regarded themselves as a key part to the functioning of the political establishment, however they turn into part of it, when they overcome the process of certain institutionalization within the strict borders of a given political framework (Vittori, 2017). The term anti-elitism is more suitable to encompass this phenomenon while it is pretty much broader in its original meaning and it pertains exclusively on the antagonism towards national and international or, even stateless which endangered its national sovereignty, such as NGOs, Foundations, Political Economic and Cultural elites (O'Rourke, 2017, Feb 13). Those idealistic principles have experienced stability throughout the decades. Henceforth, anti-elite(s) element remains necessary, although it is not a sufficient condition for populism to be completely developed (Vittori, 2017).

Along with anti-elite(s) mindset, the other principle is. the criticism of representative politics. The term 'criticism' is less sharp than 'hostility' as it includes not only hostility toward political representation in its pure definition but also, a subtle stance against political (Accetti, C. I., Mulieri, A., Buchstein, H., Castiglione, D., Disch, L., Frank, J., . . . Urbinati, N. 2016). Albeit the anti-elite(s) term is fairly neutral, while it entails diverse meanings, no matter who is willing to attain power (Corrias, 2016). It could be a permanent elite composed of tycoons and wealthy men, or an outside which proclaims itself as savior of an oppressed people. However, criticism of representative politics must be discussed as it is bare due to the fact it implies an ontological distinction. Populists could be considered themselves anti-pluralist (Müller, 2016; Pappas, 2015; 2016), however, we should clearly distinct between political pluralism and political representativeness, as they are totally different with no ontological correlation.

Political representation, in this area, adopts varying forms. On one side, this populism vigorously contests the classical horizontal left-and-right division (Bobbio, 2014). Instead of this traditional horizontal axis, they lay down a vertical axis, which proclaims the division between the powerful few and the people (Bobbio, 1987). The parties in Azerbaijan, Georgia or Uzbekistan cannot have defined themselves as right-wing and left-wing nor they have a coherent political manifesto in order to justify its ideology.

Pappas states, through the pages of his comparative work regarding populism that determining a single populist constituency within a specific region, area country or across

political spaces is practically unattainable as it says; *“individuals belonging in the informal sector of economy in countries like Peru or Venezuela may be attracted to populist leaders in similar ways as French industrial workers, Greek farmers, or Dutch upper-middle class strata”* (2012: 15).

Besides, focusing on a Weberian perspective (Bartels, 2009), these parties deny the professionalization of politics as a sign of becoming part of its hatred establishment (Gajduschek, 2003). The populist discourse is entrenched with preach of an utter transformation of both the political class and the country (Taggart, 2000). Then, a policy-making aspect that has to be highlighted is the continuous avocation of the participation in the decision-making process (Akkerman, T. 2003). There, due to its particular idiosyncrasy of these countries, these participation has to be substituted by the role played by the local tribes which sustain the power of their respective presidents. Even though, there are common elements with right and left populist parties in Europe, such as the constant use of popular decision-mechanism as referendum or the permanent call for security to the people.

In these cases, election supposes involvement in the decision-making at a national level by the people through the instrument of referendum, which is framed by populists as the main tool to “let the people” choose the destiny without any external or negative influence by the elite. These movements constantly advocate the urge for a referendum, straddling with an anti-elitist manifesto and also criticizes against political representation. Hence, we have to regard that these movements have incorporated the populist thin-centred ideology. Coping with its theoretical feature, this assumption involves relevant implications. Firstly, there is a clear absence of non-normative judgements about the threat of this movement to democracy (Rosanvallon, & Goldhammer, 2008) or its problematic relationship with representative democracy (Taggart, 2004; Urbinati, 2013; 2014). Secondly, although some positive hints between the presence of a “mediatized” (Mazzoleni and Schultz, 1999; Mazzoleni, 2003) leader and the existence of populism could be discerned. As we have discussed about the convenience of a strong leadership, in our minimal definition to define populism in this area, we have to underline the importance of a central figure. However, in other areas, there are leaderless populist parties which should not be set aside. Finally, it is necessary to highlight that populism can also be found in a wide array of movements, parties or even leaders, ranging from left-wing parties (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014; Weyland, 2013; Roodujin and Akkerman, 2015) to right-wing political forces (Taggart, 1995; Mudde, 2007) including greens and liberals (Zasllove, 2008; Müller-Rommel, 1998).

Therefore, in reference to everything observed previously, we can define the populism that exists in these three countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan) as a movement that has its roots in an anti-elite(s) mindset, shaped by a harsh nationalism and a hone criticism of representative politics, which are defined as an imposition from foreign powers. In fact, all the hints of the definition of populism are present but they are distorted due to the fact, these countries have never experienced the development and flourishing of liberal-democratic model of state. Alas in the next block, the historical background of these countries will be displayed whilst it will set the stage for the discussion of their respective transition and its further development in the future.

3) PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICAL CASES (AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA AND UZBEKISTAN)

3.1) Historical context and characteristic elements of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan from its foundation to the disappearance of the USSR.

The three republics share common features that could be traced back to its origin: their presence in a turbulent area, dominated by the great powers such as the Persian Empire, The Tsarist monarchy or the USSR; (Hirsch, 2005) their permanent subjugation to these superpowers; the lack of proper liberal-democratic institutions or their varied ethno-linguistic composition (Gleason, 1992). Actually, these phenomena are usual among them, although their historical context is slightly different with its own characteristic (Nahaylo, Nahaylo, & Swoboda, 1990), In this part of the project, we are going to depict their respective backgrounds.

Azerbaijan

Firstly, we are going to talk about Azerbaijan. This country was nestled in one of the troublesome areas in the 19th and 20th century: The Caucasus (King, 2008). Azerbaijan was the product of a mix between the Safavids people, the Iranian Afsharid dynasty and the influence of the Russian culture and life style (Moreno, 2005).

These totally different sources created a particular substrate that resulted in the configuration of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, (Souleimanov, 2012) inserted in the he short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (1917-1920) (Brinegar, 2017). As a matter of fact, this republic involved one of the first democratic efforts to constitute a parliamentary, federative republic, with a strong union labor movement in Baku and other

capitals, (Van der Leeuw, 2000) in a Turkic and Muslim world after the Crimean People's Republic and Idel-Ural Republic (Suny, 1996).

Nevertheless, this new-ideal republic was assaulted by its endemic weakness, the constant tensions with Armenia, which resulted to the Armenian-Azerbaijani war, (Swietochowski, 2004) and the shortage of a truly democratic movement, which, effectively, expand this system to the penniless strata of the society (Bolukbasi, 2013).

These enormous flaws will lead to the establishment of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) on 28 April 1920, (Cornell, 2015) due to the surrender of the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic as local Bolsheviks led by Mirza Davud and Nariman Narimanov seized the power as a result of the invasion of the Bolshevik 11th Red Army (Swietochowski, 1980).

In the next years, on the one hand, the newborn Soviet republics of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia decided to join together, (Coene, 2009) by signing an agreement with Turkey, which will be known as the Treaty of Kars (Shaw, & Shaw, 1976).

On the other hand, on 12 March 1922 the leaders of the three respective republics founded a union called the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (TSFSR) (Sakwa, 2008). Certainly, it was the first attempt at a union of Soviet republics, following the example of the USSR (Suny, 1990). The system functioned through the role of the Union Council of TSFSR, which consisted of the representatives of the three republics, but bound by the Secretary of the Transcaucasian Communist Party (Batalden, & Batalden, 1997).

However, soon. in December 1922 TSFSR joined the union with Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, thus leading to the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, lasting until 1991 (Martin, 2001). In the case of the TSFSR, this federation eventually ended in December 1936, (Sakwa, 2008) owing to the incapacity of the leaders in the Union Council to come to agreements over several issues. These three republic will become part of the Union Republics of the Soviet Union directly (Suny, 1990).

Azerbaijan was a precious area for the USSR, as it provided tons of oil to their national economy (Narimanov, & Palaz, 1995). The new oilfields, like Ilyich Bay, Qara-Chukhur, Lok-Batan and Kala supplied over 60% of the total Soviet oil production during the thirties until the sixties (Bagirov, 1996). During these decades, the country turned into the major exporter of Oil

to the other areas of the USSR (Luong, & Weinthal, 2010). Alas, this was the principal reason that the Nazi Germany adduced when it invaded this region.

Through World War II, the Red army made prodigious efforts to regain power over this region. However, inside the region, there were ethnical strives between the Soviet Azerbaijan and the Iranian Azerbaijan (Shaffer, 2002). In November 1945, (Morozova, 2005) with a potent Soviet backing, the "Azerbaijan People's Government" in Iranian Azerbaijan was founded in Tabriz under Jafar Pishevari (Hasanli, 2006). Nonetheless, it triggered one of the first conflicts of the Cold War, whilst the Western powers put pressure on them in order to expulse he Soviet. Hence, this failure experience will plant the first seeds of discord between the Arab world and the Soviet Union (Goyushov, 2008).

The Post-War period, the country rapidly was urbanized and industrialized as well as the policies of de-Stalinization set a better education and welfare conditions (Demchenko, 2011). However, it arose again a harsh, policy of Russification, sblizheniye (rapprochement), attempting to merge all the peoples of the USSR (Zubok, 2009).

Furthermore, this system started to crack in the 1960s, while the country lost its oil industry in detriment to other regions of the Soviet Union and also, due to the complete depletion of the resources, under land (Statler, & Johns, 2006). As a result, Azerbaijan became the most unproductive area with the lowest rate of growth in terms of productive and economic resources, along with Tajikistan within the USSR (Woodwell, 2004). Besides, the ethnic tensions, specially between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, emerged again which, finally, exploded in the nineties (Croissant, 1998).

Moscow, for the purpose of resolving this plight, attempted to appoint Heidar Aliyev, prominent member and first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (Kamrava, 2001). Throughout twenty years, thanks to their domestic policies, the economic and industrial conditions of Azerbaijan were improved (Fairbanks, 2004). Also, alternative industries were promoted, as cotton. Nevertheless, the ethnic divisions were deepened as he consolidated a ruling elite, consisted of ethnic Azerbaijanis, hence, he reverted trends of sblizheniye (Atabaki, 2000). In 1987, this leader was forced to retire owing to this tenacious opposition to Gorbachev reform policies (Sadegh-Zadeh, 2008).

The unrest culminated with two events, the demonstrations of thousands of Azerbaijanis, demanding the independence of the country, leading to the celebration of the Referendum and the later sign of the declaration of independence on 18 October 1991,

(Johansson, 2009) before the dissolution of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991. The second one was the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, escalating into a full-scale war with Armenia (Mooradian, & Druckman, 1999). Fortunately, the war ceased because of a tense 1994 cease-fire, which has, unfortunately, persisted into the 21st century (Mooradian, & Druckman, 1999).

Finally, the republic of the Azerbaijan SSR (renamed the "Republic of Azerbaijan") formally disappeared in November 1995.

Georgia

As well as Azerbaijan, the historical context of Georgia is pretty similar while, it followed strictly the same steps as its neighbor. However, unlike Azerbaijan, Georgia was a Christian monarchy during centuries, (Lang, 1957) but at the beginning of the 19th it was annexed by the Tsarist regime (Lang, 1962). After the October revolution in Russia, this territory was separated from the metropole. Then, after this event, the three neighboring countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan) established the Transcaucasian Commissariat established in Tiflis (Coene, 2009).

Subsequently, the young republic of Georgia (Democratic Republic of Georgia) emerged as a democratic, moderate, multi-party parliament operated. However, this country has a short life, which lasted from May 1918 to early 1921 (Herzig, 1999). As it happened in Azerbaijan, the Red Army invaded Georgia, leading to the settlement of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia on February 25, 1921 (Forsyth, 2013).

From 1922 to 1936 the Georgia SSR was part of the Transcaucasian SFSR along with the Armenian SSR and the Azerbaijan SSR (Suny, 1990). Nonetheless, this project was an enormous failure, dissolving in 1936 (Sakwa, 2008). During these decades, there was a clear dismantling of the country due to the cession of several areas to different countries such as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia or Russia (Cornell, 2005).

An interesting is that the ruler of this province during the epoch of federation was Lavrentiy Beria, first secretary of the Georgian Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, (Azrael, 1978) and, during the reign of terror of Stalin, chief of the police and the NKVD (secret services).

Like Azerbaijan, Georgia possessed natural resources such as oil, which turned into one of the most precious regions for the USSR (Nuriyev, 2007). Therefore, during the World War II, the Hitler's troops attempted to conquest of this region, although their armies did not reach

so far as Georgia (Lang, 1962). Thus, the German army sought to gain the support of ethnic oppressed groups of this region such as Chechen, Ingush, Karachay and the Balkarian peoples from the Northern Caucasus (Grannes, 1991). The most immediate consequence was the deportation of these groups to Siberia and the abolishment of their respective autonomous republics (Nichol, 2011)

Once the territory was subjugated by the Stalin policy after the war, the death of him in 1953 opened a new turbulent period of the history of this country (Blauvelt, & Smith, 2015). The tensions between the process of Russification, accompanied by the policy of de-Stalinization and the extreme Georgian nationalism erupted (Bakradze, 2013).

However, this process of the decentralization, introduced by Khrushchev in the mid-1950s enabled the Georgian Communist Party officials to rig up their powerful regional power base (Kaiser, 2015). On the one hand, despite the official state-owned economy, a pseudo-capitalistic bobbed up, while this country turned about an economically successful Soviet republic, with high levels of savings, rates of car, house ownerships and high, special secondary education (O'Loughlin, Kolossov, & Radvanyi, 2007). On the other hand, the official growth rates of the economy were the lowest in the USSR, as well as the corruption was widespread among top levels of the Georgian hierarchy (Janashia, 2015).

Due to this endemic phenomena, the Moscow authorities reacted, appointing Eduard Shevardnadze, as fighter of corruption and, removing of Vasil Mzhavanadze, the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party (Palazchenko, 2010). Little by little, he was able to improve the official economy and clean the bulky bureaucracy, by dismissing hundreds of corrupt officials (Janashia, 2015).

Despite the extreme cordiality between Soviet and Georgian authorities, both institutions clashed due to Georgian nationalism in 1978 when Moscow launched a campaign to review the constitutional status of the Georgian language as Georgia's official state language (Sabanadze, 2010). This action lead to mass street demonstrations which forced Moscow to approve Shevardnadze's reinstatement of the constitutional guarantee. Finally, the Day of the Georgian Language was established on April 14 (Schwartz, & Panossian, 1994).

Nonetheless, Shevardnadze was appointed as Soviet Foreign Minister in 1985 by Gorbachov and replaced in Georgia by Jumber Patiashvili, who was unable to cope with the demands of the perestroika (Sammut, 2003). The end of the late 1980s experienced an alarming increase of violent clashes between the Communist authorities, the resurgent Georgian

aggressive nationalist movement and several nationalist movements in Georgia's most minority-populated regions (notably South Ossetia and Abkhazia) (Blauvelt, & Smith, 2015).

The breaking of peaceful demonstrations in April, 1989, by Soviet triggered the independence movement, guided by radicalized Georgian politics, even some Georgian communists, (Enoch, 1998). which finally concluded that independence was preferable to continued Soviet unity.

Finally, on October 28, 1990, the first democratic parliamentary elections were held, and, subsequently, in November, the nation was renamed the Republic of Georgia (Caspersen, 2008). A year later, the independence was declared under Zviad Gamsakhurdia, completing the process of secession (Nodia, 1996).

Uzbekistan

Unlike Azerbaijan and Georgia, Uzbekistan is inserted in a total different dynamics owing to the fact, this territory did not have any previous, although ephemeral, monarchic or parliamentary background (Duarte, 2014). The history of Uzbekistan dates back to 1924, (Allworth, 2013) when the borders of political units in the vast area of Central Asia were changed as a result of the tasks performed by Vladimir Lenin's Commissar for Nationalities, Joseph Stalin (Critchlow, 2018).

The previous political units; the Turkestan ASSR, the Bukharan People's Republic, and the Khorezm People's Republic (Derived from several emirates which ruled a rural, semi-nomadic area of Asia) were definitely abolished as the remaining territories their territories were split up into five separate Soviet Socialist Republics (Kurzman, 1999).

The Uzbek Socialist Soviet Republic, was one of the products of this new division (Melvin, 2004). The next year Uzbekistan eventually became one of the republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union) (Allworth, 2013). After this incorporation, it soon began a process of economic collectivization with the creation in 1928, of common, state farms (kolvojos), which lasted until the late 1930s (Kamp, & Zanca, 2008).

In terms of administrative, political configuration of the country, the vast Uzbekistan included the Tajik ASSR until 1929, when the Tajik ASSR was finally elevated to an equal status, (Dadabaev, & Komatsu, 2016) becoming the socialist republic of Tajikistan (Mandelbaum, 1994). During the thirties, the capital of the Uzbek SSR was moved from Samarkand to Tashkent (MacLeod, 2008). A few years later, this country was enlarged with the

addition and incorporation of the Karakalpak ASSR (Panarin, 1993). Finally, in 1936, this novel identity was renamed to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. However, this territory was constantly shifting, as several bits and pieces of territory were transferred several times between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan after World War II (Devlet, 1997). In 1937–38, during the Great Purge, a number of alleged nationalists were executed, including Faizullah Khojaev, the first prime minister (Sengupta, 2003).

During World War II, industrial, food supply factories were relocated far away from its original location, specifically in Uzbekistan to keep them safe (Rywkin, 1963). In fact, a large number of other nationals such as Ukrainians, Russians as well as Tartaks, Germans etc. moved there with the consequence of a deepening of the Uzbekistan demographics (Moskoff, 2002). Nonetheless, the ruthless Stalin policy to wipe out any mole within its system alters again its demographics situation as it accelerated the forced deportation of some ethnic groups, which were accused of collaborating with the Axis powers (Pohl, 1999). Within these groups, there were Crimean Tartars, Koreans and Chechens (Weitz, 2002).

The Soviet period hastened the conflict between the intrinsic atheism of the Soviet forces and the Islamic beliefs of the Uzbek population (Khalid, 2003). As a result of these clashes, the soviet government carried out diverse measures such as the closing of most mosques and religious schools (Babadzhanov, 2002). However, due to their constant campaign of alphabetization, the illiteracy, even in rural areas, was virtually eliminated (Hurst, Landau, Landau, & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001).

In terms of economic inputs, in the 1960s, the Uzbek authorities in order to foster development, substantially hastened the cotton production in the republic (Spoor, 1995). However, it led to a catastrophic result while the irrigation withdrawals of irrigation water from the Amu Darya and the Aral Sea provoked an unimaginable ecological disaster (Haiyan, Xi, & Yan, 2018).

Having settled down a brief historical and economic background, it is time to deal with its political development. The Communist Party, having been the only legal party in the Uzbek SSR (Carlisle, 2018). was consistently ruled by an Uzbek (Puffer, & McCarthy, 2018), appointed by the Soviet central power. During the Cold War, the party was led Sharof Rashidov, becoming the head of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan from 1959 to 1983 (Ikhamov, 2013). Subsequently, after Rashidov death, Islam Karimov obtained the power, turning into leader of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan since 1989. When the Uzbekistan SSR fell apart, he became

the head of its party's reincarnation, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), as well as president of the Uzbek SSR in 1990 (Pottenger, 2004).

Eventually, Uzbek SSR became part of the referendum in March 1991, (Fierman, 1991) however, it never took place this referendum because of the unsuccessful coup of the hardest sector of the Communist Party against Yeltsin in August 1991 in Moscow (Gerbner, 1993). Then, finally, the country gained its independence and renamed the Republic of Uzbekistan, although it remained formally part of the Soviet Union but it acquired independence in 29 December 1991 (Akbarzadeh, 1996).

3.2) Economic, social, cultural and political (domestic and foreign field) analysis of these regimes

In this section, we are going to cope with and display the basic features of their respective economic, social, cultural and political (domestic and foreign) areas. Hence, this would allow us to comprehend the complete framework of their realities and set out the connection between our definition of populism with the peculiar characteristic of these states.

Azerbaijan

Referring to economic issues, Azerbaijan is a predominantly primary and secondary sector country, with a steady growth of the third sector and the different financial sectors (Humbatova, Hajiyevev, Gasimov, & Tanriverdiyev 2018). Fortunately, its agricultural resource has been utterly diversified, whilst its top agricultural scientific research institutes have started to focus on diverse pastures and meadows, including a large and substantial number of subtropical and horticulture and subtropical crops, (Aliyev, & Gasimov, 2018a) besides the traditional ones as leaf vegetables, wine-making, cotton growing (the excelsior engine of the growth of Azerbaijan throughout the twentieth century) and medicinal plants (Sadigov, 2018). Nevertheless, along with that, it remains traditional crops such as grain, sugar beets, potatoes, or tobacco (Gharleghi, & Popov, 2018). Livestock, pig, sheep cattle are also common products, although most of its wealth came from the fishing industry due to the Caspian Sea (Ciaian, & Pokrivčák, 2018).

In terms of secondary sector, the hydrocarbon (oil and gas) industries still play a fundamental to the development of the countries, being the most important economic driver of the country (Guliyev, 2013). A prime example of this is the construction of gas pipeline to

Europe through Turkey. Nevertheless, the defense industries are burgeoning while the central government has signed with their closest allies and neighborhoods in its geopolitical sphere (Belarus, Pakistan and Ukraine) several cooperating defense agreements which supplied armor vehicles, weapons and different arms.

As far as business services, telecommunications and financial issues are concerned, the liberalization measures (Muradova, M. 2015, Apr 07), carried out by Ilham Aliyev in 2003, entailed the transformation of Azerbaijan in one of the fastest blossoming countries in the world (Aliyev, 2008). This result has been translated into the restructuring of its banking system, (yet it has not been finished at all), the evolution of the personal real incomes, the expansion of trust in bank system, thereby the improvement of the legal bases of protection of the array of interests of creditors and depositors, (Aliyev, & Gasimov, 2018b) through a 'Deposits Insurance Fund'. Owing to this spectacular push, telecommunication services have been modernized and innovated, while internet services have profoundly changed the role of this country, hastening international trade with a well-balanced system of tariff and nontariff barriers (Ivanova, Nikeryasova, Balikhina, & Savrukov, 2018). However, these positive outcomes are endangered due to the 2014-2016 collapse as a result of the cut of the oil prices. Despite some progress, not only is the state's footprint still high, but there are no signs to serious transition to a coherent new growth model (Mukhtarov, Yüksel, & Mammadov, 2018).

Alas, thanks to these liberal measures, in macroeconomic levels, the Azerbaijani economy has expanded at rates at 1.3%, 1.5% during the last decade with a moderate inflation of 2.3% (IMF 2016). Its income taxes system oscillates at 25%, (individual) and the top corporate tax one is 20% (Trading Economics, 2019). Overall, value-added and property taxes are also included while the general framework is estimated at 15% of the total domestic income (United Nations Development Programme 2015). The government has increased the public expenses to 36.8% of total output (GDP), whilst budget deficits have averaged 1% of GDP, escalating the public debt to 37.7% of GDP (Heritage Foundation, 2019a).

Eventually, the third sector (mainly tourism), have suffered irregular cycles due to the domestic turmoil (Herz, M., & Arnegger, 2017). During the eighties, Azerbaijan was estimated as a precious tourist spot, although this reputation went down as a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, in 2000, the government launched potent campaign in order to regain this invaluable sector (Jafarov, 2015).

Having settled its economy, we should deal with its cultural, social and political system. Since the fall and disintegration of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has been ruled by a single family of politicians (Cornell, 2015). After two former soviet deposed presidents, Heydar Aliyev, former First Secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party and prominent member of the USSR politburo, was appointed president of the country (LaPorte, 2015).

In spite of the horrid internal turmoil, the president struggled to create stability, as well as provide resources to most of its population, making food available and fixing the intrinsic problems of the bureaucracy (Aliyev, 2018). In International relations, he was capable of reaching a cease fire with Armenia for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (German, 2016). Notwithstanding, the police and the secret services launched aggressive campaigns against opponents, NGOs and free media against the official government. Media, religious freedom and political participation were constant under threat and so it remains today.

When Heydar Aliyev passed away in 2003, his son, Ilham Aliyev, seized power, violating all the international standards (Militz, 2016). Even though, the parliament represented the opposition forces with the presence of 10 members and a considerable number of independents, the harassment and persecution against independent forces, media harshly increased (Kopecek, 2016). The freedom of expression was constantly under attack, while the punishment for narcotics and other minor misdemeanors were abusive (De Waal, 2016). Thus, NGOs and civil society mechanisms are reporting this unsupportable situation, so the central government implemented measures aimed at opening the political freedoms (Safiyev, 2015).

Alas, due to the employ of these Machiavellian mechanism Ilham Aliyev, still won the 2006, 2010, 2015 parliamentary elections, and 2008, 2013 and 2018 presidential ones. Therefore, corruption is perceived as one of the most urgent problems to resolve (Leitner, & Meissner, 2016). Furthermore, the opposition tried to wave the discontent of the civil society but it did not bear fruitful. However, due to international pressure by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and several NGOs, (Hughes, & Marriott, 2016) opposition parties were able to increase their power and even, they were allowed to participate within the official channels of the system (LaPorte, 2015). Still, they are permitted to settle down political rallies inside the countries, but not participate in the same conditions in the campaigns. Arrests and detention for unregistered religious activity is usual in Islam communities, whilst authorities have demolished mosques suspected to host terrorists (Cornell, 2015).

Nevertheless, these enormous flaws have not affected its foreign policy, Azerbaijan has been and is a key ally to the European Union, Turkey and Russia in the region. Besides, this country belongs to the United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization Partnership for Peace (NATO), Non-Aligned Movement, the OSCE, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, as well as the World Health Organization (WHO), (Bishku, 2015) The Council of Europe, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, CFE Treaty, and the Community of Democracies (Calleya, 2018).

As far as the society and cultural dynamics are concerned, the Azerbaijani society is shaped by different ethnic groups such as Azerbaijani, Lezgins, Russians, Armenians and Talyshi (De Waal, 2018).

The first one (Azerbaijani) are regarded as the second most populous ethnic group within the Turkic family, initially referred to them as Turkmens, Turks, or Ajam, Muslims, and Persians. They are predominantly Shia'i Muslims, (Krikorian, 2018) but they possessed a rich cultural background derived from Turkic, Iranian and Caucasian elements. This ethnic group is the largest in Azerbaijan with approximately 92% of the population (De Waal, 2018).

The second one as the largest ethnic group and the largest minority group is the Lezgins, which live in Northeastern Azerbaijan and southern Dagestan (Paşa, & Garayeva, 2018). They did not speak the same dialect as Azerbaijani and their primary language is called Lezgian. They have close ties with the Aghuls and distant to the Tabasarans, Tsakhurs, and Rutuls. Due to these ties, they conformed the Lezgins family (Cornell, Karaveli, & Ajeganov, 2016). Religiously, they are mainly Sunni Muslims with a tiny group of Shia Muslims. accounting for 2% of Azerbaijan's population (Cornell, 2015).

Besides, these two large ethnic groups, throughout Azerbaijan, they are different ethnic minorities such as Russians, Armenians and Talyshi (De Cordier, & Boboc, 2017). The Russian minority arrived at Azerbaijan throughout the 19th century as a result of the Treaty of Turkmenchay which was signed and ratified by power. The flows were increasing, as they were supported these movements by the Orthodox Russian Church (Rowlette, 2016). The coexistence of both community was assaulted by strives and conflicts as this minority was forced to move to the North of Caucasus (Saparov, 2017). Nevertheless, the greatest clashes between ethnic groups were not with the Russians but with the Armenians, as owing to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, most of them were obligated to flee the state with the rest of them, residing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which was controlled by Azerbaijan (Geukjian,

2016). This minority has been and is still subjected to harsh repression and persecution by the Azerbaijani authorities (Kopecek, Hoch, & Baar, 2016). The last one is the Talyshi ethnic group, which inhabit in the border between Azerbaijan and Iran. They come from the southwest region of the Caspian Sea and anthropologically, it has been said that they pertain to the Iranian Indo-European people (Stilo, 2018).

It is fundamental to understand the ethnical background of each country due to the fact, populism will try to handle to melting pot in order to take the grips of the country.

Georgia

Referring to Georgia's main economic activities are including the cultivation of an ample variety of agricultural products, which includes grapes, citrus fruits, and hazelnuts. In terms of minerals, Georgia is one of the top producers, with great load of mining of copper, gold and manganese, while their industries produced alcohol, non-alcohol beverages, diverse machinery, metals and machinery.

Nonetheless, the supplies of oil products and natural gas are imported as this imports allow Georgia to possess a considerable hydropower that provides most of their electricity needs (German, 2016). Currently, Georgia has been able to overcome the constant crisis of shortage of basic products (natural gas and oil), (German, 2016) thanks to the renovation of its hydropower plants and the increase reliance on their natural gas imports from Azerbaijan instead of from Russia (Sayin, & Dogan, 2017). A clear example of this dynamics is the settlement and construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the South Caucasus gas pipeline, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (Silagadze, & Zubiashvili, 2016). These initiatives answer the strategy of Georgia to strengthen its relationships with Asia and Europe and foster its role as a transit area of hydrocarbons (Sepashvili, 2018).

Concerning macroeconomic issues Georgia's economy has suffered chronic crises since its independence in 1991. Unfortunately, its GDP has contracted as a result of the internal turmoil and the strives with Russia at a 10%. Moreover, the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and work remittances, despite its growing importance, have not been recovered fully since 2008 (Heritage Foundation, 2019b). Unemployment is still high, although the Saakashvili, Margvelashvili, and Zurabishvili reforms have tried to liberalize and adjust the domestic economic (Rommens, 2017). Georgia is struggling to enhance faster growth on a basis of a continued efforts to enhance infrastructure, major support for entrepreneurship, establish a system of simplifying regulations, as well as, carry out professional education measures,

(Rekhviashvili, & Polese, 2017) for the purpose of attracting foreign investment and boosting the growth of employment, by focusing on transportation services, hydropower industries, agriculture, and tourism (Rommens, 2017).

Three clear examples of these improvements have been the betterment of the licensing regulation, the simplification of tax collection system and the flexibilization of the labour regulation (Rekhviashvili, & Polese, 2017). Before the arrival of Saakashvili to power, the fiscal Georgia system was unable to collect tax revenues because of its bulky and inefficient bureaucracy (Anderson, 2018). A cautionary example has been the reduction of the number of licenses and permits due to following of the principles of the “One-Stop Shop” and “Silence is Consent” in order to adjust the economy. In reference to the tax collection system, in 2011, (Chochia, & Popjanevski, 2016) the government eased the tax code, with the unification of the old Tax and Customs Codes.

The results were astounding while it increasingly raised the confidence towards the Georgian tax system and furthered trust among Georgian tax authorities, (Gugushvili, 2017). through the improvement of the communication between taxpayers and the tax authorities, just as protecting the taxpayers’ (Lawson, Grier, & Absher, 2018) rights, by making administration more rapid, and promoting the harmony of the Georgian laws in order to comply with the best international tax practices and EU directives (Sepashvili, 2018).

The current tax rates are the income tax 20%; profit tax 15%; value added tax 18%; excise varies, including property tax up to 1% of the self-assessed value of property, as the customs tax entails 0%; 5%; 12% (Lawson, Grier, & Absher, 2018). This measures enhanced Georgia to sign an association agreement with the EU in 2014, which paved the way to free trade and visa-free travel. Three years later, in 2017, Georgia concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China as part of Tbilisi’s economic policy (Sepashvili, 2018).

Nevertheless, the most damaged economic area us the levels of unemployment, which are estimated at around 16% and the presence of large number of jobs in the informal sector (Hoelscher, & Gordon, 2010). For the purpose of solving this plight the Georgian government undertook several reforms of labor regulation as it reduced the restrictions on the duration of term contracts as well as the number of overtime hours and discards (Jozwiak, 2011). It also increases the preeminence of basic workers right such as a right to belong to a Union and the elimination of the requirement to notify and get permission from the labor union (Kerrissey, 2015). Other social rights are strengthened such as vacations, conciliation of family life and

work etc... These measures have been coupled with the reduction of the contributions to social security while it made it more flexible for businessmen to hire and fire (Abdih, & Medina, 2016).

Talking about political system and life, in our personal point of view, Georgia has experienced an improvement of their political conditions since its independence and specially, since the arrival of Saakashvili to power in 2003 (Morris, 2017). When Georgia gained independence in 1991, there were four years of a cruel and gruesome civil war between the official authorities and several paramilitary groups, which upheld the independence of the fictitious republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (German, 2016). Eventually, Shevardnadze seized the power in 1995 and settled down a dictatorship de fact, or better said, a feckless democracy. In 2003, a powerful coalition of three reformists reformists headed by Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania obtained the power in 2003 (Goltz, 2015).

The elections in this year were a constant chaos with persistent rallies of the opposition forces all around the country (Dunn, & Cowley, 2015). After being on a brink of a civil war, Shevardnadze finally resigned on 23 November 2003, having being replaced by Burjanadze. This chain of events was named as the Rose Revolution (Berglund, 2018). In January 2004 Mikheil Saakashvili was appointed president for a 5-year term, and subsequently, new parliamentary elections were called for March 7, 2004 (Goltz, 2015).

Despite the radical change and the steps taken by the new government to wipe out all the previous corruption, there were several lingering problems of corruption and inefficiency (Nasuti, 2015). Alas, there was a significant progress, which brought the country closer to meeting closer the international standards (Orkodashvili, 2010). The economy invigorated, the tax and labor system radically improved. In contrast to former epoch, harassment or violence against religious minorities were decreasing (Slade, & Kupatadze, 2017).

However, the promises of a truly democratic system were farther to be fulfilled. Irregularities of bribery and corruption were noted again in the elections of January 2008, which was re-elected Saakashvili in a snap presidential (Blondel, 2015). Thus, these elections were the consequence of the persistent large-scale protests in November 2007, as a result of the lack of political, civil, social, economic rights, leading the government to call a state of emergency (Chochia, & Popjanevski, 2016).

Nonetheless, 2008 will be the most chaotic year for the Georgian authorities. On the one hand, the uprising of the separatist forces with the inestimable support of Russia sparked off

the war with this condition (Ellison, 2011). In spite of the truce between both countries (Georgia and Russia), the problems with these republics have been still persisted. On the other hand, the opposition stroke back by organizing demonstrations which demanded the Saakashvili's resignation and the celebration of early elections (Kupatadze, 2016). Luckily, demonstrations were developed smoothly as Saakashvili continued to dialogue and hold opponents' media, and resources while he attempted to implement constitutional reforms to open the entire act (Kavadze, & Kavadze, 2015). However, the opposition itself was incapable of obtaining important reforms while it was widespread around the country (Sichinava, 2017).

In 2010, the Parliament continued to approve another set of amendments to the constitution, one of the most prominent one was the shift from the president to the prime minister following the 2013 presidential election (Jach-Chrzaszcz, 2017). This was translated in the end of the Saakashvili's second term and the appointment of Giorgi Margvelashvili, an independent candidate which have highly improved Georgian administration as well as pacified the minorities and other thorny issues such as the opposition relations, the NGOs and the role played by the civil society (Ratelle, Hikari Cecire, & Geybulla, 2017).

In 2018, it was elected Salomé Zourabichvili; another independent candidate which has opened a new era for Georgia (Simão, 2018).

With regard to ethnic and social composition, there is wide clear array of representation of different ethnic groups as Georgian ethnic group represents the majority of the population (83,75%), followed by Azeries (6,51%), Armenians (5,69%), Russians (1,55%), Ossetians (0,87%), Abkhazans (0,08%), Greeks (0,35), Ukrainians (0,16%), Kists (0,16%), Yezids (0,42%) and others 0,45% (Radnitz,2017).

In fact, they are widespread, while ethnic group live mainly in the capital (Tbilisi) and also in the borderlines regions (Sichinava, 2015). Clear proof of this is that ethnic Azeries currently inhabit several territories near the border with Azerbaijan (Marneuli district), ethnic Armenianis, at the border again with Armenia (Akhakalaki district) (Driscoll, Berglund, & Blauvelt, 2016). Most of them live in ghettos as they have a monolithic composition while they do not integrate with other ethnic groups (Kitiashvili, Abashidze, & Zhvania, 2016). Tbilisi, the capital, is an exception due to the presence of a more miscellaneous ethnic composition (Sichinava, 2015). Each minority group (Armenians and Azeries) have developed their own school systems, media services just as newspapers, theater into their native language. Hence, the knowledge of the national language, Georgian, has been an urgent problem (Kitiashvili,

Abashidze, & Zhvania, 2016). During the Soviet era, Russian was the adequate channel of communication with their respective peers of different ethnic background. Although with the independence of Georgia, the state structure has totally changed as Georgian, as an element to vertebrate minority, has become useless (Berglund, 2018).

The problems that minorities are facing nowadays are language barriers (as we have said before), discriminatory access to education, enormous rates of unemployment and the lack of a correct exercise of their political rights (Driscoll, Berglund, & Blauvelt, 2016). In order to solve this plight, the Georgian government has attempted to set up different offices and mechanism to provide a suitable outcome. Nevertheless, the non-governmental sector [International Society for Fair elections and democracy (ISFED) and Georgian Association for Educational Initiatives (SIQA)] has had a more visible role to promote and defend the rights of this minorities (Grotsky, 2017).

Thus, the civil society and different NGOs have collaborated to promote the democratization of this country as they have forced the respective president to implement measures to grant effectively political and civil rights (Pogleba, 2016). During these years, the innumerable think tanks, NGOs and cultural sectors have launched massive propaganda campaigns through media, university, churches, mosques to counterbalance the authoritarian impulses of the national government (Nikolayenko, 2017). This effort has been worthy as the EU has shown a clear support to them.

Uzbekistan

With concern to the economy, the main economic area of Uzbekistan is the production of cotton. However, since its independence, Uzbekistan has shifted the main sources of its national economy from cotton to wheat in order to heed the food demands of their population (Peyrouse, & Laruelle, 2015). Nevertheless, it currently employs 28% of its labor force and contributes 24% of GDP as an estimated 8% of GDP derives from processing the agricultural output (Rumer, 2017). A clear example of this has been the astounding reduction of the production of cotton from 2 million hectares in 1990 to 1.5 million hectares in 2006, as wheat boomed spectacularly from around 1 million hectares in 1990 to 1.6 million hectares in 2006 (Critchlow, 2018). Despite the reduction, Uzbekistan still yields 3 times as much cotton as all the rest of the countries of Central Asia. Besides cotton, Uzbekistan is a top producer of jute, silk (Uzbek ikat), fruit, and vegetables (Peyrouse, & Laruelle, 2015). Another problem that this

economy faces is that there is a clear lack of irrigation, due to budgetary constraints (Rumer, 2017).

In order to resolve it, the Uzbek government has developed several interventions to fix the prices of cash crops, cotton and wheat (Sakal, 2017). The clearest proof of this is a system of subsidies to foster the crop of these commodities and the obligation to surrender these products to the market (Karimov, 2015). The difference of the financial result lead to the development of factories for producing automobiles, airplanes, and tractors. This system does not allow the complete liberalization and modernization, remaining the old authoritarian structures of the Soviet Union (Gidadhubli, 2012).

A result of the discriminatory policy against the pricing for the cash crops (wheat and cotton) has led to the exceptional growth of the cattle herd in recent years, although the prices of milk, meat as well as fruits and vegetables are usually fixed by market ebbs and flows (Omonkulov, & Baba, 2015). The number of cattle heads have augmented from 4 million head in 1990 to 7 million head in 2006. Overall, the sales of own-produced products in local markets are an important source for rural family incomes (Burunciuc, Fengler, Schloemer, & Taglioni, (2018).

Apart from agriculture, mining also plays a fundamental role to Uzbekistan's economy. According to the figures provided by the IMF and World Bank, (Gidadhubli, 2012) gold is regarded as a major foreign exchange earner, as this state, in official figures, is considered the world's seventh-largest gold producer, just as mining at about 80 tons per year, and possesses the fourth-largest reserves in the world (Wynn, Orris, Dunlap, Cocker, & Bliss, 2016). Besides gold, Uzbekistan is also an excelsior producer of natural gas, (for domestic and international consumption and also export); oil; and considerable reserves of zinc, lead, copper, tungsten, and uranium (Mansur, 2016). Despite the inefficiency of the current system, Uzbekistan is a major partner country of the EU INOGATE energy program, ruling for four key topics (Paramonov, 2018): promoting the energy security, convergence of holistic energy member state markets by harmonizing the respective systems, (Adnan, & Fatima, 2016) upholding the betterment of the sustainable energy development, and focusing on investment for energy projects (Theiss, 2015).

As far education and literacy in Uzbekistan is concerned, this state owns universal public education system, product of the Soviet Union heritage (Alas, & Aarna, 2016). Overall, workers are generally trained and well-educated (Kholmuminov, Kholmuminov, & Wright,

2018). Nonetheless, there is a vast gap between the public and private sector, whilst, in spite of their meticulous preparation, local workers are not adapted to the demands of the international economy (Ruziev, & Burkhanov, 2016). Therefore, there is a great number of exchange programs between Europe, America and Asia with Uzbekistan to reduce this gap (Sia, 2015). In reference to labor rights, labor market regulations in Uzbekistan are pretty similar than those existed of the Soviet Union, with virtually all the important rights observed but some important unobserved. In consequence, unemployment rates are extremely high with thousands of irregular migrants seeking for a job in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Southeast Asia (Ryazantsev, Karabulatova, Yureevna, Evgenyevna, & Vladimirovich, 2015).

In terms of monetary policy, Uzbekistan has suffered irregular experiences while at its independence, the country experienced galloping inflation of around 1000% per year (Agzamovich, 2016). This led to the intervention of the IMF which implemented paid off programs. These initiatives reduced inflation rates to 50% in 1997 and then to 22% in 2002. After that year, inflation have been moderated, not exceeding 10% (Heath-Brown, 2015).

Along with that phenomenon, there has been a clear dramatic depreciation of its national current (Heath-Brown, 2015). The ruble inherited from the Soviet period and its successor, the transient "coupon som" which was implemented in November 1993 in an estimated ratio of 1:1 to the ruble, raised up from 100 rubles/US\$ in the early 1992 to 3627 rubles (or coupon soms) in mid-April 1994 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Due to this sweeping shift, the Central Bank issued a new national currency, set at 7 som/US\$, which involve an almost two-fold depreciation. Despite this, the currency still depreciated further to 25 som/US\$ and continued this downgrading until December 2002, (Temizel, Canbaz, Palabiyik, Moreno, Najy, Xie, & Wang, 2018, October) when the exchange rate had reached 969 som/US\$. Alas, the commercial exchange rate was highly overvalued, while the black market was steadily augmenting (Sakal, 2017). Therefore, the regimen adopted diverse liberalization measures to fulfill the prerequisites of the IMF program (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Finally, in the last years, it has stabilized, increasing only by a factor of 1.33, from 969 som to around 1865 som in May 2012 (Temizel, Canbaz, Palabiyik, Moreno, Najy, Xie, & Wang, 2018, October). Nevertheless, the tax system is for the moment high, and there is a lack of flexibilization of the labor market, which does not enhance hiring for multinationals.

Regarding political issues, Uzbekistan did not experience a proper transition to democracy when the Soviet Union fell down (Ikhamov, 2013). Hence, it has been clear known

as a prime example of a sultanistic state. Islam Karimov, the charismatic secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party, founded his own party People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDP) and seized power until 2016 (Fazendeiro, 2017). During his mandate, there was a two-fold policy. On the one hand, he strengthened the relations with the Western Power, clearly exemplified with the inestimable support to the US during the Afghanistan War in 2005 and the establishment of diverse military bases within the country (Cohen, 2017). On the other hand, he was a ruthless dictator whose secret services and police wiped out dissidents, constantly violated human rights, promoted forced sterilization and smashed Islamic terrorism with illegal and illegitimate methods (Smith, 2016). Another issue to mention is the permanent tensions against the separatist movements against Karakalpakstan autonomous republic, a region which enjoys a well quasi-independent status within the country and it is regarded as one other penniless areas in Central Asia (Hanks, 2000).

Apart from these grandiose political and ethnic tensions, besides, during the last decade, his government was notorious for gross violations of human rights, widespread corruption, and complete isolation from the rest of the world (Shah, & Khaki, 2016).

After his death in September 2016, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a politician with an impressive experience in the government, was appointed president of the nation (Aydın, 2017). Within their first adopted measures (2017-2021), he developed a five-year development strategy (Kalinovsky, 2018). The main points were the urgent improvement of state and public infrastructure; ascertaining the importance of the rule of law and deepening the justice reform; (Aydın, 2017) the liberalization of the economy; upgrading the police and military sectors, harmonizing interethnic bonds and religious tolerance; (Zanca, 2018) and the turn into an implementation of a balanced, beneficial, and productive foreign policy.

As a result of these measures, there was a timid opening of the civil, political and social rights. However, the oppressive Karimov legacy still casted its shadow over the population (Zanca, 2018). The discussion of basic problems in the media is not well received, while there is a clear fear to engage with these problems by the general public (Marszewski, 2018). This results from the fact that the former fear still persists old local officials, are not accustomed to being criticized and the intrinsic repressive nation of the authoritarian regime which approves some discussions and disallows others (Aydın, 2017).

In economic themes, the country has highly advanced owing to the liberalization accomplished by the new government (Kuzmina, 2018). One of the most remarkable topics was

the promotion of the free exchange of currency to citizens in cash, setting several limits (Aydın, 2017).

Unlike the other two countries, Uzbekistan has not displayed an ample variety of foreign relations due to its permanent dependence on the Soviet Union and its complete isolation in the new order (Jackson, 2006). However, it is a prominent member of the United Nations as well as the OSCE, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Partnership for Peace (Farrell, Fella, & Newman, 2002). In addition, it belongs to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization, which comprises seven Central Asia states: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Bohr, 2004). Besides, it has founded the Central Asian Union, formed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1998 (Allison, 2008).

In terms of ethnic composition, Uzbekistan is a pretty homogenous country which comprises Uzbek 71%, Russian 6%, Khovar 2%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 4%, Tatar 3%, Karakalpak 2%, other 7% (Isaeva, Adams, & van de Vijver, 2018). The regime, like the two cases above, has tried to handle these groups for the purpose of ensuring its power, by granting privileges and other perks (Critchlow, 2018). At last, in order to finish this block it is a priority to mention that Uzbek civil society is an invaluable asset to promote and establish change while their campaigns against repression have been outstanding (Rakhimov, 2015). While they engage with the ethnic movements, they have become an engine to push back this horrid authoritarian regime (Critchlow, 2018).

3.3) Implantation of Populism and peculiar characteristics

As we have seen in the aforementioned blocks, there is a clear correlation between the five dimensions of what populism is regarded by the most emaciated authors of this field in political science and the development and betterment of the economy and political system of the three country cases. In this section, we will try to discern and explain the reasons that drive to the entrenchment of this populism and the peculiar characteristics of this phenomena in these countries.

First, we will attempt to display why the establishment of the model of liberal-democracy was not feasible whatsoever (Carothers, 2002). Despite the prominent hope for the opening to full democratic systems with the implementation and root of liberal-democratic

institutions, these hopeful desires are far from the reality that the civil societies of these countries are experiencing (Turker, 2014).

Populism is the factual actuality which is nearly impossible to flee from it as there is worrisome shortage of truly alternatives that imbricates the respect for civil and political rights (Foust, 2012, Fall); the openness to the welfare state to the penniless strata and the disappearance to the feckless bipartidism (Rodrik, 2016).

In fact, these outcomes are the results of three main ballasts that have been dragged by the respective states once they have been segregated from the Soviet Union in the nineties (Berdiyev, 2003): 1) the failure of the transition paradigm in the three cases (Carothers, 2002) and 2) the lack of the deployment of the functioning of the branches of power and the existence of the role of the check-balances in controlling the correct performance (Adnan, & Fatima, 2016) and 3) the ethnicity composition of their population. Instead of political parties, the cleavages of governance are split up in the clans, and power brokers (Starr, 2006, June).

Academy searches throughout two decades have been misled by the concept of the transition paradigm in regard with the radical shifts of the Third World order in the nineties (Ágh, 2014). This paradigm is composed of five core assumptions which have failed dismally (Carothers, 2002). The first refers to the typical and commonplace statement that any country, which have moved away from the previous dictatorial rule should be deemed a country in transition toward a full democracy (Fotopoulos, 2010, Spring). A heterogeneous pot of European, Latin-America, Asian and African during the 1990s were labelled and categorized as countries, which were on the path to liberalization to come to an end in the Eden of transitions (Clarke, 2017).

Policy makers across the world were eager to apprehend these phenomena but rashly and with no scientific rigor. A clear example of this enormous mistake is perfectly reflected in our three practical cases (Vasquez, 1997). Prestigious think tanks, specialized magazines, international organizations and NGOs have constantly proclaimed that the index of observance of civil rights, political alternation, levels of corruption and perspectives of openness are not being fulfilled by the political authorities (Ipek, 2007) and, in certain periods, they have been aggravated due to economic crises, wars against neighboring countries or simply pressures from the superpowers (Mutlu, 2012).

The second assumption tends to shape democratization as a set sequence of linear stages (Diamond, Fukuyama, Horowitz, & Plattner, 2014). The process is pretty straightforward with

no ebb and flows. First, the opening takes place with the fermentation of democratic and liberal policies by the elites and their vexed opponent (Carothers, 2002).

Later on, the breakthrough of the antique regime becomes a reality, with the collapse of the old structures and the emergence of a new, dynamic, democratic system, by the setting of democratic elections (Ambrosio, 2014) which enable that a brand-new government seizes the power and consolidates the institutional structure, with the corollary of a new constitution (Inoguchi, & Bacon, 2003).

Finally, there is a short period of the adaptation of the society to the pace and vesting of a new epoch. Certainly, it is rather utopian that each country will follow this track (Batalov, 2005) There are obvious hints that transitional states can go back and afterwards, stagnating and moving forward (Khachaturian, 2015).

At the height of the Third Wave of Democratization, many activist and researchers claimed that the set of stages toward democracy was natural, while they disdained the implications of a teleological conception of the process (Mainwaring, 1999). Actually, Uzbekistan was not able to overpass the opening phase until Karimov passed away Mirziyoyev in order to see the horizon of a hypothetical breakthrough all the old regime (Critchlow, 2018). Likely Azerbaijan, is the paradigmatic example of a country whose owners belong to the same clan, (Simão, 2018) as Georgia has undergone conatus of popular revolution (the Rose Revolution in 2010) to change the system (Kobakhidze, 2018).

Closely related to the former idea of core sequence of democratization is the unwavering belief in the key importance of elections as a sign of democratization (Diamond, Fukuyama, Horowitz, & Plattner, 2014). This motto has been normally managed by populist on order to reassure their grips to pull the strings of the institutions (Carothers, 2007). Effectively, democracy promoters have been considerably glib, or better said cunning of promoting the belief that elections symbolize the pursuit of democracy (O'Donnell, 2002).

This assumption has been upheld by the international arena which, throughout the years, have promoted assistance programs than a proper elections-focused effort (Carothers, 2010). Besides, politicians have tended to forget that populists, no matter its latitude and longitude in the earth globe, have harnessed the potential of the celebration of referenda and elections as a mean to hold their might (Vittori, 2017). The leaders of the three country cases (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan) have been very sly to conceal their authoritarian drives.

Although they have coped with struggling to perform a democratic facade for gaining support and bonds with Western power, sometime they have shown their real face (Golosov, 2018). Its dictatorial rule has spawned through international border owing to the performance of social media and the inestimable efforts of the NGO, diverse foundations and other subjects (Starr, 2006, June). Furthermore, their efforts have been rewarded in these recent years with the channeling of a broad and deep political participation and an actual democratic accountability as demonstrated in Georgia in the last democratic elections with the election of the independent candidate Salomé Zourabichvili (Simão, 2018). Overall, it is in fact that in order to attempt to the transition to a full democracy, elections will be not regarded as a foundation stone but a determinative generator which will foster the spread of further democratic reforms (Gans-Morse, 2004).

The fourth assumption is the most mistaken one as social scientists, especially American ones, have been prone to disregard the underlying conditions in transitional countries (Hobson, 2003), such as the domestic economic level, political history, institutional background, ethnic melting pot, and other fundamental features which aid someone to shape the total process and they stretched out to vituperate them, as minor factors (Nodia, 2002).

A remarkable commonplace characteristic of the period of the third wave set out that the outcomes of the democracy were almost the same wherever it happened in unlikely and unexpected places (Shin, 1994). The only crucial element to take into account was the elementary decision of the elites of the aforesaid state to take the first step to move toward democracy and the titanic efforts of the elites to wipe out the contrary actions of the most loath sectors of them (Rose, & Shin, 2001).

As far as these issues are concerned, it is not possible to fit this erroneous assumption to the reality of the Caucasian space (Charles, 2010), whilst minorities (Azeris with Olegev, Georgian groups against the Russian minorities in the regions of Abkhazia and South Osetia and the faithful backing to Karimov of the Tayik minortieis) countries play an essential to the preponderance and maintenance of these populist leaders in power (Horowitz, 2004).

Moreover, this fake mold was soon discarded, while their ostensible make up faded away (Carothers, & Samet-Marram, 2015). It became old-fashioned, deterministic, and only designed to a specific sort of heritage whose principal values were the defense of the private property, protestant baggage and even, stable institutions (Hyman, 2002). Even though, for many US policy makers, these pseudo-revolutionary ideas were a shock to their traditional

strategy to support their allies, no matter they were dictators or feckless democracies (Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, & Seligson, 2007). This type of “no preconditions” outlook was negatively optimistic, even they broadcast a naïve, and even paternalistic message that any country, whatever their particular background was able to be successful in the midst of this wave (Diamond, Plattner, & Costopoulos, 2010)

Fifth, the last assumption of the transition paradigm depicts that the democratic transitions which were conforming up the third wave were perched at the top a coherent system with the functioning branches and were the props of efficient states (Papaioannou, & Siourounis, 2008). The process of democratization implied to the redesign of some faltering institutions, which were not working properly (Huntington, 2012).

The key to success was some redesign of state institutions (Diamond, 1996). The most important ones were the creation of electoral institutions, parliamentary reform in order to widen the participation of alternative forces, and judicial reform to put the transparency and democratic mechanisms into the effects (Carothers, 2007). Certainly, it entailed a mere modification of these already functioning states (Carothers, 2002).

Again, there were huge contradictions between the frameworks employed by specialist and real figures (Plattner, 2014). They did not pay too much attention to the multiple challenges of the societies to democratize their appropriate systems while they grasp to build up a state from scratch or dealing with a factual but nonfunctional nation-state (Carothers, 2010).

While it was not an issue in areas such as Eastern and Southern Europe or Latin America, (becoming the models of the aforementioned transition paradigm) in other parts of the world, it turned out to be a great challenge (Linz, & Stepan, 1996). Thus, they did not dissociate that two radical issues such as democracy-building and state building were not generally joint and they needed different solutions and realities to address them (Gel'Man, 2003).

In our cases, although the Soviet Union, in their task as a n empire which generated new modes of life, modern institutions, and after all civilization in region where there were utterly backward, they did not stablish the mechanisms of the rule of law or the civil and political liberties within these areas (Jones, 2004). Coining a poetic metaphor, it is able to delimit that these countries possess formal material institutions but they lack some material content (democracy, sorts of freedoms), and, eventually, it was swiftly filled by populism as the only container to dovetail all these complexities of these regions (Alaolmolki, 2001).

Certainly, we could discern that the transition paradigm has been an outstanding flaw, (Ambrosio, 2016) while of the region's three states (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan), only Georgia has managed to flirt with democratic procedures and protections within the last decade and leading to a kind of liberal-democratic flawed system (Ishiyama, Mezvrishvili, & Zhgenti, 2018). In retrospect, it is plain that Central Asian elites have harbored a clear preference for authoritarian rule (Gleason, 2018). Although, this category is subject to numerous important variation. For example, civil rights undergo particularly vulnerable in the region, but there is a stark difference between practice in Uzbekistan (targeted trials, frequent deploy of the police and the army forces, torture and constant disappear) (Derman, 2014) and that in Azerbaijan and Georgia (intermittent and quite nonlethal forms of intimidation, specifically with deference to any kind of legal requirements) (Nichol, 2014).

Instead of talking about future regime trajectories, on a conceptual level, we will handle the definitions provided Collier and Levitsky (1997) that change the term "democracy with adjectives," to varieties of authoritarianism. Peering precisely at these categories, at the soft final of the authoritarian scale, regimes that are branded as variety of names, (Carothers, 2002) such as "*hybrid regimes*," "*electoral authoritarianism*," and "*competitive authoritarianism*" embody certain limited democratic practices, (Seeberg, 2018) but lack of procedural democracy (Wintrobe, 2018). At the hard extreme of the scale, there are sultanistic regimes, military dictatorships and neopatrimonial regimes (Guliyev, 2005). Uzbekistan should be named as a sultanistic authoritarianism which is sliding toward to a kind of competitive authoritarianism (Turker, 2014); Azerbaijan should be categorized as a hybrid regime, despite the liberalization and pseudo democratic measures that the new government is carrying out (Filetti, 2012) and Georgia must be branded as a regime which is transiting from a sort of *electoral authoritarianism* toward a flawed liberal democracy (Lebanidze, & Kakachia, 2017).

Our scope of research sets out four important dimensions which are common in the three cases. First, the three states partake a political history, better said more critically, the creation and the subsequent modernization of these space, because of the titanic work of the USSR for expanding its power in this geopolitical area (As we have explained in the above section regarding the economic, social, cultural and political analysis of these regimes) (Qazi, 2015). Second, they hold in common a political culture that aroused from Soviet-era practices and Soviet institutions (Schatz, 2006). Third, they are predominantly Christian Orthodox and Muslim (Köksal, Aydıngün, & Gürsoy, 2018). Irrespective of the cultural distinctions between sort of advanced civil societies (Azerbaijan and Georgia) and agricultural ones (Uzbekistan and

Tajikistan), regime type is not related to this issue (Schatz, 2006). Fourth, they experience a recent history of demobilization; popular uprisings were extremely weak during the late Soviet period and wore off after the Soviet collapse (Bunce, & Wolchik, 2018). Despite the inexistence of pro-liberalization forces in society in the 1990s, in the decade of the 2000s, there have been diverse uprisings in Georgia (the Rose Revolution in 2010) (Curry, 2018) and in Azerbaijan (demanding the respect for civil and political rights), which have reversed this trend (Bedford, & Vinatier, 2018).

Besides, we have to add to these four characteristics, two more: natural resource bestowment and the role of international actors (Schatz, 2006). The focus on states' natural resource bestowment drives to claim that the three states, due to its wealth in natural resources clearly reinforce and reinvigorate authoritarianism (Ipek, 2007). As Ross (2001) states, on the one the oil, gas, or agriculture and natural resources revenues have sparked off the liberalization and flexibilization of its economy, labor rights and domestic taxation, (IMF 2016) but on the other, it has enhanced the patronage structures, undercut unions and other independent groups, strengthened the coercive apparatus of the state, and coopted the occupational specialization, diminishing the probability of those regimes to initiate a democratization process (Knodt, Nodia, Paramonov, & Urdze, 2018). This pressing problem that we have described and it is currently affecting these countries is called resource curse, (also known as the paradox of plenty). According to the economist Richard Auty (2001), the endemic scar that these states are suffering is related to the imbalance between the abundance of natural resource on their respective countries and the lack of a proper tax system to collect the benefits derived from the exports and imports balance (Auty, & Mikesell, 1998). In other words, despite the fact the natural resources are an invaluable asset to boost wealth, these countries are unable to obtain any profit as they do not possess the proper financial and political structures to take advantage to this privilege situation, while they could only make profits from the royalties of the exports of the available natural resources (Sachs, & Warner, 2001).

In terms of political disquisitions, the regions' leaders were not prone to promote the implantation of democracy (Gandhi, 2019). Even in Georgia, a country with an ephemeral but interesting experience of a federal republic, the elites were not willing to carry out the opening of the society until, Giorgi Margvelashvili seized power (Ratelle, Hikari Cecire, & Geybulla, 2017). Alas, the elites have exactly behaved purposely to increase and maintain their respective self-interests, they did not care too much to the pressure of international superpowers (Gleason, 2018).

For that matter, Russia, the US, and the EU, the greatest interested in this area, have maintained extremely warm greeting with the three states (Qazi, 2015). For example, Bush administration highly supported Karimov's regime in order to obtain air bases, land backup and natural resources to carry out its campaign in Afghanistan, (Nichol, 2013) besides, the EU and Turkey reinforced the bonds with Azerbaijan, in detriment to Armenia, (Hill, & Kirisci, 2015) for the purpose of reaching agreement in the construction of the oil and gas pipe through Turkey, (Asenov, 2018) and finally, Georgia has constantly requested aid to the US, with the intent to restraint the independent movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Matsuzato, 2009).

However, it is fundamental to remark that there is no one single path to a successful democratization (Rustow, 1970; Waterbury, 1997). But even so, international actors do not remain undaunted to these shifts, hoping to occur (Carothers, 2007). In these area, as we have discerned, these powers have actively sought to maintain its status quo in the regions, retarding the process of democratic transitions and consolidate extant power (Layne, 2018). Despite the absence of a coherent civil society, this element is becoming central to the first steps toward democratization (Starr, 2006, June). Unlike their counterparts in the Baltic peninsula, Central Asia possessed a weak civil society, which did not counter for independent statehood in the late 1980s (Alan, 2006).

At the beginning of the 1990s, certain relatively stronger elements within the Central Asian civil societies were disbanded, torn up, and diminished. (Smith, Moldavanova, & Krasynska, 2018) We will deal with this in the last part of the project, although we could sketch its principal features. As there was scant inclination for top-down reform, international proliberal lobbies chose to promote bottom-up reform through civil society financial (Blum, 2018).

The two main mechanisms whereby it could take place the civil society promotion (Starr, 2006, June) are firstly the supply of material and symbolic resources to proliberal groups, which enable them to put pressure on local regimes (Gleason, 2018), and subsequently liberalization and human rights agenda through local institutions (Urinboyev, 2015). The second one is the proliferation and boost of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), (Schatz, 2006) regardless of their main objectives, can foster democracy, by engaging people in activities that are utterly self-reliant from the state and the family, and promoting more tolerant and empathy results among people (Evers, Klötzer, Seifert, & Somfalvy, 2018).

Once we have settle down the political features that allow us to understand the implementation of populism as a sole alternative, now it is time to display the rest of them. Populism within this area cannot be known about without mentioning the ethnic composition of these societies (Starr, 2006, June). Rulers from Turkey, Georgian empire, the Soviet Union, and, nowadays, Russian Federation and three country cases have attempted to handle its power on their respective territories by forming alliances with the different clans and ethnic groups (Hunter, 2018).

The power of the Soviet colonial system as a generating empire reverted in the transformation of the local power brokers and clan leaders into mere civic and even, such as Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, national leaders (Lewis, 2018). Although they may have had disputes each other with one another locally, they had a strong and common interest in protecting their territories from the action of Moscow (Suny, 1990). Despite the fact during the 1920s and 1930s the Communist Politburo endeavored to eliminate these locally-based political networks, (Starr, 2006, June) after the death of Stalin, and the arrival of Khrushchev, Moscow enabled them to remain in free rein as long as they were bound to the control of the Communist Party, (De Waal, 2018) which permanently demanded them to deliver the production and, therefore, the social control of republics (Cornell, 2005).

Each clan and their corresponding totally varied within each country. The issue to balance the enormous divergent interests corresponded to the different Politbureaus, which met behind closed doors (Manz, 2018). For achieving these goals, they bolstered strong local leaders such as Rashidov in Uzbekistan, or Aliyev in Azerbaijan (Gill, 2018). Not only did they seize the power thanks to the efforts of the Soviet rule, but also, they also gained sorts of legitimacy because of the inestimable support of the local power brokers (Balci, 2018). These authoritarian systems of rule, which bloomed under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev, lasted for thirty years (Manz, 2018).

This system imploded in the 1980s with the rise of Gorbachev (Gill, 2018). The Politburo made radical changes on behalf of anti-corruption and the restoration of Soviet norms (Fabregat, 2018). During this decade, several Central Asian leaders vanished from the political stage through death, firing, or, in most cases, retirement. In exchange of this, Gorbachev appointed five loyal servants, (Schatz, 2006) which they proved to be incapable of managing the old balances, as well as protecting the local interests against Russia, and maintaining the

local activities of the economy (Froese, 2005). These dissatisfactions will provoke the first revolts against the soviet power in Almaty in 1986 (Stefany, 2013).

Due to this change of relations, the several clan leaders, the power brokers, who, in the past, gripped the power, started to regroup (Gill, 2018). When the first elections were celebrated in 1989, the balances that they have worked tough during thirty years, were re-imposed, and then they opted for new younger leaders (Starr, 2006, June). Thus, indeed, it is in fact, the clan leaders, the power brokers, and magnates who elected presidents such as Karimov, or Shevardnadze (Perovic, 2005). Actually, these new leaders were confirmed by election during the last year of Soviet rule, and then, certainly, reconfirmed by subsequent votes immediately after these countries proclaimed their respective independence (Starr, 2006, June).

The clearest example is in Azerbaijan where Ayaz Mutalibov was initially elected in late 1991 (Henze, 2018), but, finally, was deprived of power by a popular revolt owing to his dire administration of the Karabakh war (Koehler, & Zürcher, 2018). Thus, independence in the three Central Asian and Caucasian republics were, in political terms, less a restoration than a transition to other mole (Starr, 2006, June). People believed that with the defeat of Gorbachev policies, they could come back to its primitive power just as the prosperity of the economy and their lives continue as formerly, But, overall, they will count with the benefit of their particular and self-sovereignty (Gill, 2018).

Therefore, in reference to the data that we have gathered and explained previously, we can define the populism that reigns in these three countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan) as a movement that has its roots in an anti-elite(s) mindset, shaped by a harsh nationalism in its struggle against the Soviet Union, first. Then, a sharp criticism of the functioning of branches of power and the existence of the role of the check-balances in controlling the correct performance as a constant demonization of the political rivals and foreign superpowers which have reported the Human Rights violations.

In fact, these three cases are a clear proof of the preeminence of the presence of a populism system, owing to the fact, the transition paradigm has loudly failed; the plenitude of natural resources within the territory, (Schatz, 2006) the variety of clans, brokers and other power entities which they are outside of the official branches and the weakness of the civil society, NGOs to counteract these dictatorial forces has driven to the establishment of a strong populism which is the single alternative to this reality (Smith, Moldavanova, & Krasynska, 2018).

Nonetheless, before we close this section, there is the compelling need to state that these regimes have prevailed unabated over the years due to the inestimable aid that both superpowers (Russia and the US) have provided since the end and, subsequent, disintegration of the USSR (Menon, 2003). Specifically, the main spheres of cooperation have been the trade of natural resources, the settlement of military bases and, specially, the alliance against Islamic Terrorism since the 11-S terrorist attack (Allison, 2004). The promotion of civil, political and social rights of the civil society and the minorities and the defense and establishment of democratic regimes have been set aside, or even, ignored, in the agendas of these superpowers (Buszynski, 2005).

Both the successive Goerge W. Bush administrations and Putin and Medvedev governments have signed diverse military and economic agreements with these republics in order to combat Islamic terrorism as well as, maintain a perpetual tight situation among these rivalries (Weitz, 2006). Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan have, in fact, become *buffer states* which turned out to be the main actors in the Caucasian area and Central Asia, which actually drive the policies of Russian and the US (Idan, & Shaffer, 2011). Territorial and ethnic conflicts such as Nagorno Karabaj, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Karakalpakstan have been exploited in order to maintain the statu quo of both powers in the region (George, 2009).

4) CONCLUSION

4.1) Political solutions raised in this regard

As we have perceived in these two sections, the material, political and social conditions of the three cases have pristinely conditioned the emergence of this rampant populism meanwhile they have these countries of a truly, liberal-democratic alternatives (Starr, 2006, June). However, all faith has not been lost for the purpose of discerning the paths to slowly develop options which could drive their respective civil societies to an improvement of an accountability of the branches of power, (McKinney, & Howard, 1998) or in the long run, the achievement of their civil and political rights and the reinforcement and betterment of social, cultural and environmental issues (Falk, 1999).

Therefore, there are four areas which have to be highlighted, in order to induce to a paradigmatic change and reverse this trend of authoritarianism (Rodrik, 2016): the preeminence of the presidentialism as a key model to their governments (Laruelle, 2012); the feckless

parliamentary system (Crick, 2005); the weakness of civil society in the domestic arena and the scant tasks deployed by NGOs, Think Tanks etc... (Florini, 2012)

Since the break-up of the Soviet and the emergence of these societies, the upheaval of presidentialism as the design which perfectly fits all the ethnic, political, social interests have become the rule for politics in this geopolitical area (Elgie, & Moestrup, 2016). Despite the eager professed interest of Central Asian and Caucasian leaders in the celebration of referenda and elections, it is a clear hint of the path of an authoritarian system (Stanley, 2008).

However, leaders and their closest cabinet have attempted, through the manipulation of the institutions of democratic regimes, to maintain the delicate entangle of regional and other balances, (Gleason, 2003) which, probably, in the short and long term, endangered their corrupted system and possibly wreaked havoc (Khazanov, 1995). The set of institutions functioned as a counterweight to the control of the power brokers, clan leaders, and magnates, but, at the same type, it enabled them to obtain internal power although under the wing of the charismatic leader (Esenova, 2002).

Besides, following the failure of Yeltsin, (Willerton, Beznosov, & Carrier, 2005) the celebration of periodic national and parliamentary elections could entail useful purposes to the issue that they ratify their personal course and engage with the populace (Kudaibergenova, & Shin, 2018). The capstone of this working mechanism was the creation of a sort of “presidential bloc,” catering solid assurance to the leader (Starr, 2006, June) and their loyal followers that the local and provincial elections would not undermine the fragile systems whatsoever or, tamper with the political hot-spot cleavages (Schatz, 2006).

Alas, it is precise disassemble some myths about the preeminence of presidential systems in these geopolitical areas (Hale, 2018). The authoritarian profile in Central Asia does not stem from cultural, or even constructivism frameworks (Schatz, 2006). First, the various cultural heritages of the regions in question have highly differentiated dynamics and traditions (nomadic dwellers vs oasis dwellers; Turkic versus Persian), (Held, Cummings, & Cotter, 2018) which are not utterly unlike to other ones (absolutist kings in Europe, whose power was enthroned directly from God) (Sedelius, & Linde, 2018). Second one, the amusing array of clan, power brokers and heritages hampered these countries to be well-governed and managed (Oskanian, & Averre, 2018). This is another inaccurate statement while, in other geopolitical spaces such as Latin America or South Asia, liberal democracy systems have struggled to be rooted and blossomed (Neher, 2018).

Nonetheless, the best hypothesis to frame the problem relies on the shortage of the existence of proper liberal and democratic institutions (Knodt, Nodia, Paramonov, & Urdze, 2018). The former soviet elites decided to endow their presidencies with “Gaullist” might, in order to maintain its status quo, while these governments were encroached in populism (Nodia, 2018).

The solutions lie upon the pressure of external forces to oblige them to increase the parliamentary branch while, (Starr, & Cornell, 2018) they countenanced the unfathomable net of networks, clans, and magnates from whom the presidents are coping with and fighting to be set them free (Akchurina, 2019). In other words, the strengthening of the parliamentary mechanisms will aid to increase the options for the presence of coherent and organized opposition forces and permitted them to maintain the order and security within the border of their respective countries (McMann, 2018).

However, the role of Political Parties in the development of formal policies is essential (Carothers, 2002), although feckless party competition has been the subsequent consequence of the lack of actual parliamentary system (Akkerman, 2003). Most of them are ruled out in religion (Bozbey, 2011) as they suffer from serious shortages of truly economic and social political manifesto (Foust, 2012, Fall). In spite of the fact, politicians of these countries have made herculean efforts to avoid any kind of regional and ethnic divisions, religion, orthodox or clearly atheism, has no longer served them as the principal core of their organized base, (Karagiannis, 2012, Fall) as they have built up presidential forces which have legitimized their personal interest (Laruelle, 2013).

A clear proof of this is Karimov, who began his presidency by carrying out a powerful political campaign to de-legitimizing religious and nationalist parties, (Beacháin, & Kevlihan 2017) pinpointed on the right and social democratic parties on the left sided, eventually led to the formation of satellite parties which avowed him (Derman, 2014).

Some authors upheld that this legitimization responds to the urgent necessity to sustain their authoritarian rule in an ethnic basis (Ziegler, 2014). However, we tend to believe that the major reason of this unipolarization of their respective policies answer to the dynamics of populism (Sargent, 2018). The role of the leader as the savior of the country is perfectly depicted in these countries as it curbed the imaginary unleash uncontrollable forces within these deeply conservative states (Radnitz, 2018). This existential dynamic has its correlation in the non-registration or banning of parties in every country of both political spaces, as it increases the

danger of moving powerful forces outside the system, posing them to become a great danger whilst they could radicalize their discourse (Diehl, 2019).

Hence, in order to counteract this phenomenon, the solution pivots around in the strengthening of the civil society (Fiedler, 2018). For this task, not only should international powers, engaged with democracy and Human Rights intervene, but also they have to adopt a more nuanced position (Ziegler, 2010). A more effective method, would be to promote the development and working of local NGOs philanthropic associations to wage personal and local demands of their citizens (Mutlu, 2012). Thus, these associations and other non-profit groups could raise the presence of demands among common people as they triggered the exert of petty manifestations but, all coherent to the same goals, the welfare of the population (Gershman, & Allen, 2006).

By the way, NGOs and foreign think tanks counterweighted the national support of the central governments to local associations in order to patrimonialize them (Kraeger, 2010). However, the evidence has displayed that this tactic has not longer worked (Simmons, 2014). Notwithstanding, European parties (Christian and Social democrats) have usually rendered assistance and constant support to them in order to achieve further presence, (Henökl, & Reiterer, 2015) the US has been the superpower that obtained a prominent position in the region, owing to the all the satellite organizations that orbit around the central government such as the National Democratic Institute and National Republican Institute, (Read, 2011) the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, (Lublin, & Bowler, 2018) the Freidrich Ebert Stiftung, (Kowalczyk, 2018) which have in this region offered nonpartisan training in the conduction of fair elections and thus, the development of certain aspects of party organization.

Therefore, several questions have raised while we were analyzing the main problems of this issue: Would, sudden shifts in terms of political, economic, social issues, threaten the perilous stability of the state? How can authorities enhance more open and participatory systems? What kind of forces, if there is anyone, will temper and change the existent prevailing presidentialist system and foster a greater degree of civic participation? Is it possible that this process could occur within a next future? Or will such changes come along with only crisis?

The answer of this complicated questions rely on a coordinated action between the legislative branch, NGOs and the civil society itself (Starr, 1999). In order to hasten the obstacles that this process could encounter, firstly, it is compulsory to carry out the

reinforcement of the parliament as a key actor to the deploy of the policies of each country (Cutler, 2006).

Georgia has implemented this path and, fortunately, its standards of Human Rights has highly improved as in the last elections, there has been a clear turnout, although it needs to improve in other fields (Činčera, Skalík, & Binka, 2018).

Besides, the political arena, foreign superpowers must increase their support to what they called “civil society,” which is comprised by different groups and forces, which reside outside the government (Starr, 2006, June). Then, they could provide to them with training and financial support from abroad, as they could increase the expectation that someday, in a not far future, they would take root at local arena and sponsored greater openness (Kraeger, 2010).

At last, for the purpose of connecting the foreign and domestic elements, a very effective tool for achieving this goal, local political opponents should bridge the gap between overseas organizations and local population. This process will banish the belief of these agents as disruptive elements from the normal credence.

Insofar, the hypocrite west strategy for the purpose of, supposedly, inducing higher openness into the several governments of Central Asian states has driven to a clear unproductive confrontation (Spero, 2018). As we have exposed before, they main interest of the superpowers in the region is sustaining their respective statu quo and gain higher profits due to the natural resources. Nevertheless, this attitude should be changed for the sake of the prosperity of these regions and the future of the government. Thus a radical move should be step whilst parliamentary elections and parliamentary practice and the life of political parties in the arena must be advertised in order to foster democratization.

4.2) Brief reflection about said space

In conclusion, we have perfectly proved that populism in the Post-Soviet geopolitical and geostrategical space has become the sole alternative to an area which have not experienced long periods of stabilized democracy. All the aforementioned political regimes entail the cornerstone features of populism. Despite their diverse performance in the political arena, they have several common elements which depicted them as authoritarian.

Besides, these models, although they are pretty distinctive characteristics, are certainly answering the same patterns. Hence, in order to reverse this trends, it is pretty clear that a

unanimous strategy should be adopted, attacking and filling the main gaps. Notwithstanding Caucasian and Central Asian populism, as we have mentioned before, do not show a coherent and global model related to European and Latin American populism, it shares most of their features. Then, it is part of the vast family of populism.

Eventually, the key to promote a uniform democratization of this political and economic area should be driven to expand the parliamentary fields, the role of the NGOs and gap the bridges among them and the civil society. This is the path that any country and its society, which are willing to attain the goal of the democracy, should follow.

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