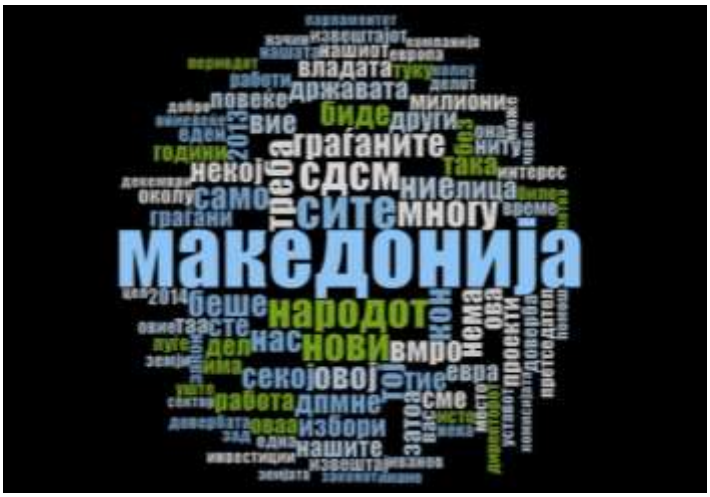
Monitoring of Executive Branch's Public Relations Practices:

DOES THE GOVERNMENT ENGAGE IN INFORMATION OR PROPAGANDA?

REPORT No. 3

ANALYSIS OF THE PRIME MINISTERS` SPEECHES: WHO ARE GRUEVSKI'S PEOPLE?



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НВО ИНФОЦЕНТАР

FOUNDATION OPEN SOCIETY MACEDONIA
ФОНДАЦИЈА ОТВОРЕНО ОПШТЕСТВО МАКЕДОНИЈА

Who are Gruevski's People? 3
I Introduction 3
II How do we know what populism is? 4
1. Liberalism/Democracy Axis 4
2. Scepticism/Faith (Pragmatism/Salvation) Axis 4
3. Administration/Democracy Axis 5
III Methodology 6
IV Frequently Used Terms 8
V Who are the People? 10
VI SDSM and Branko: A Diabolical Conspiracy 14
VII Why the Fetish of the New? 15
VIII Conclusion 18

Who are Gruevski's People?

The NGO Info-center implements a monitoring for public relations practices of the Government and its representatives with the aim to determine if the executive branch informs the public truly, and in a timely fashion, about the implementation of public policies, its activities, results and achievements, existing problems, and to determine the types of messages that the Government sends to the citizens of Macedonia.

This third report, titled "Who Are Gruevski's People?", is an analysis of the presence of populism in speeches and public appearances of the prime minister and the leader of the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE Nikola Gruevski.

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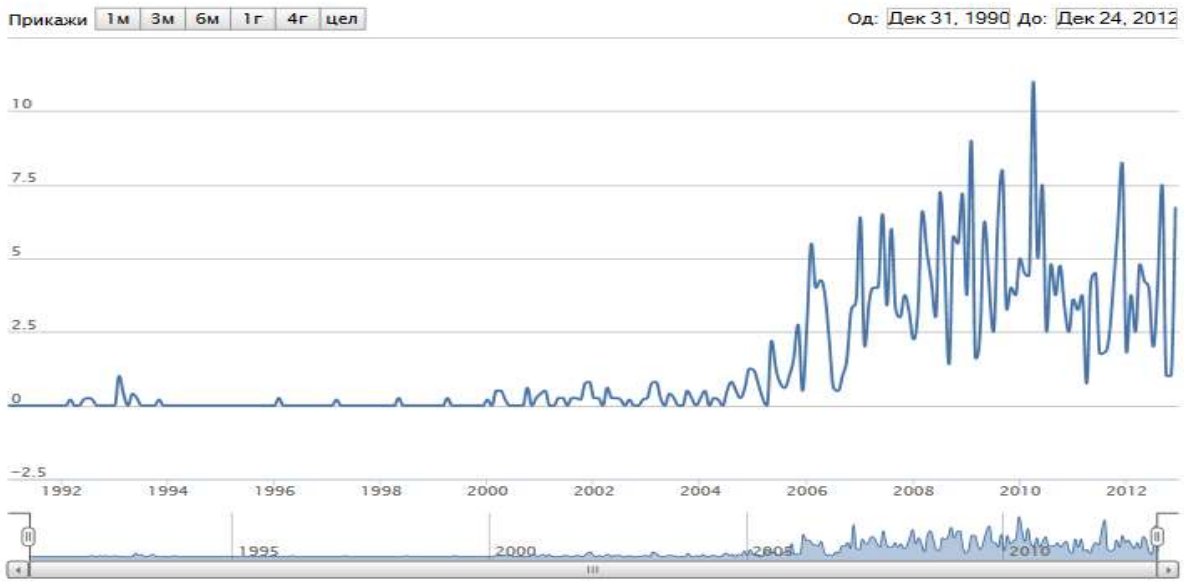
I Introduction

The term "populism" has taken roots in Macedonian public discourse over the past decade or so. In everyday communication, the term is used exclusively with negative connotation, to denominate popular measures that are much to the liking of voters, citizens or the people, but which bring about no progress in the long run. Therefore, we often hear the phrases "pure populism", "naked populism", usually followed by "instead of" or "opposed to", as in "populism instead of realism", "naked populism opposed to long-term solutions", etc. On the other hand, in scientific and academic discourse, the word populism has another meaning and the practices denoted as populist in everyday vernacular could, alternatively and more appropriately be described as effort to bribe the voters, woo the citizens or implement short-term measures without any real effect.

Anyway, the use of the term "populism" in Macedonia exploded in the last decade (Graph 1). The presented data were taken from the archives of news aggregator site time.mk[1] and cover the period from 1990 through 2012. On first glance, it is evident that the use of that term in the media demonstrates a slight increase in the new millennium, and the overall trend intensifies after 2006, the year in which VMRO-DPMNE, led by Nikola Gruevski, took the power.



[1] Although time.mk didn't exist as a news aggregator in 1990, and was established much later, it does have a database of media articles that go back to that period.

In spite of the fact that its meaning is more precise in academic debate or political science than in everyday speech, there is no consensus about the definition or characteristics of populism, or whether it is a matter of ideology, style of governance, political logic or movement. It seems that there is a modicum of agreement only on the following two characteristics of populist movements, i.e. populist ideologies: 1) They are defined by glorification of the masses, not necessarily called "the people", but in any case composed of social outsiders, losers or renegades; and 2) It is the criticism of allegedly alienated elites that matter for the populist, and not just political elites in the narrow sense of the work, but also the intellectual elites, i.e. the moral leadership.

II How do we know what populism is?

In literature, albeit with a certain necessary dose of simplification, we could identify three dominant theoretical and methodological approaches to identify, describe and study populism. The three approaches offer different theoretical axes used to describe populism in the wider context of the most important issues of contemporary democracy.

1. Liberalism/Democracy Axis

The first theory posits that, if we place populism on the liberalism/democracy axis, it is identical with the most basic understanding of democracy - the rule of the people, i.e. literally the rule of majority. Therefore, populists are those politicians who act “as if democracy was truly about the rule of the people”. On the other hand, the Western democracies that we follow as a model are liberal democracies that developed through centuries of articulation of democratic (majority-based) and liberal (non-majority, related to the rule of law, protection of property, freedom of speech and press and individual human rights) principles. For that reason, when we aim to assess democracy today, we don’t focus only on the question if there are fair and free elections in which the majority (the people!) expressed its will, but rather at how, between two election cycles, the independent institutions (based on the liberal, non-majority principles) defend the rights of individuals and minorities. In that sense, populism and liberal principles unavoidable find themselves in position of mutual tensions, with populism being hostile towards liberal principles that limit the will of the majority, preferring a direct implementation of policies, without procedures, indirect instruments and institutions. Therefore, the populist regimes, especially in new democracies like Macedonia, are called illiberal democracies by many scholars.

2. Scepticism/Faith (Pragmatism/Salvation) Axis

While the liberalism/democracy axis is well suited to describe the populism in Central and Eastern Europe, there are examples throughout history of populist movements that were motivated by liberal values. For that reason, some theorists propose a different approach. Another reading of populism proposes the read the whole political history of humanity as a battle of two principles (political styles) along the axis – *politics of skepticism / politics of faith.* The politics of faith are characteristic of those movements that aim to improve the situation of humanity in the world and posit that holding ruling power is the way to achieve such advancements, whether as a utopia or gradually. That style of politics praises the power, and views the aim of governing power not only in terms of blind and morally neutral mediation of conflicts and maintenance of the legal framework for peaceful interaction, the approach of the contemporary mature liberal democracies. In opposition to that style, the politics of scepticism is characterized by a fundamental suspicion of human ability to achieve perfection.

Therefore, the role of the state (the government) needs to be reduced to the bare necessary minimum: keeping public order, definition of rights and obligations, prevention of conflicts to allow individuals to achieve their interests. That style is, therefore, fundamentally Hobbesian and its adherents believe that the role of the state is not to impose morality but – excessively to a degree - administrate the existing conflicts and diversities.

Margaret Canovan, a theoretician of populism, accepts that view and adds a new, parallel axis to illustrate the two sides of democracy – pragmatism/salvation. According to that view, the tensions between the two faces of democracy will unavoidably lead to a democratic paradox. If the politics of faith (salvation) in democracy implies the entry of the masses into politics (the rule of the people), the participation of the masses can't be direct, because of the fact that institutions and procedures will be necessary that are complicated and outside the understanding of the masses. In the passage between the two faces, which brings about disappointments, according to Canovan, a series of movements and political styles may spring up, with populism being just one of many possibilities. Therefore, populism often serves as a "lubricant" for the speeding up engine of democracy that has turned too pragmatic, adding to it passions, emotions and will to change. However, such a definition makes the populism look like a harmless phenomenon negated by practice many times.

For that reason, Benjamin Arditi believes that the word "phantom" best describes the structural relationship of populism and democracy. It has layered meanings and captures well the indecisiveness of populism because "phantom" associates equally to a companion (as in shadow of democracy), a visitor (as a nightmare) and persecution of democracy. In the least harmful form, populism is one representation and companion of contemporary democracy possible in the age of the reign of television. In a more dangerous form, populism somewhat resembles a nightmare, a spectre that comes in our dreams and is both a symptom of politics and a reminder that a democratic system is a living matter. In its third version, on the other hand, the populism as a spectre associates of persecution and threatens the overall framework that enables democracy, transforming itself into an opposite of democracy, with full neglect for the institutions, the rule of law, resembling a totalitarian system.

In contemporary world, it is rare to se any of the different “-isms”, including conservatism, devoid of any promise of progress. However, the promises of progress (salvation!) available to all are commonly accompanied with the existence of a (pragmatic) vanguard that has the role of enabler of progress for the masses. Once the masses are disappointed with the vanguard, the intellectual and political elites, the demand for a populist style of politics appears. Today, even populists don't question the economic progress. They rather question the moral and social progress promoted by the dominant liberal ideology. The conflict moves to the field of morals - the elites that want to change and emancipate the masses are despised - and the people, as they are, are placed on the pedestal.

3. Administration/Democracy Axis

The third theoretical axis that could assist our approach to populism is the institutionalism (good governance) - populism (democracy) axis. This axis is used by scholars that study populism inspired by the discourse theory, and it corresponds to the paradigm/syntagma axis which is the basis of functioning of language as a system, according to classical linguistics.

In addition to language poles, the syntagma and the paradigm function as principles for representation of (political) reality.

The syntagmatic principle of representation of reality is dominated by the system of combination of signs. Similarly, in politics, the political systems that follow the ideals of inclusion, non-discrimination, good governance and de-ideologisation of political space function as a syntagmatic discourse. In their purest form, such systems assume the existence of a seemingly neutral centre that recognizes the pluralism of society, pluralism of interests and treats every demand coming from the heterogeneous social file in line with the logic of differences. The European Union’s slogan "united in diversity”, which implies that no single element of the system has advantage over the other elements (in this case the national cultures and their symbols), is one example of the syntagmatic representation of reality.

On the other hand, the paradigmatic principle is a principle that embodies democracy understood in its narrowest meaning. Unlike the syntagma, where the main principle is the

principle of combination, the paradigm is ruled by replacement relations that have function similar to the function of metaphor in rhetoric.

The pure paradigmatic or populist discourse reduces the pluralism of positions combined in the political discourse to the dichotomy the people (us) and elites (them). The overall, otherwise, complex social reality is reflected through this simple antagonistic dichotomy which is called, in the discourse theory, the logic of equivalence. The populist discourse, however, impoverishes the symbol and raises several questions: Who the populist has in mind when invoking the people? If the people are a whole composed of all possible individuals and groups existing in the society, who is excluded by the populist? Does the denominator "People"[2] has its marked place in the reality? Doesn't the fact that symbols are impoverished in the populist discourse actually constitutes a precondition for the success of populism and its unavoidable performance? Croatian philosopher Žarko Puhovski seems to answer all those questions in an interview for "Utrinski vesnik" daily. In the interview, he notes that populism is preoccupied with giving different *names* to the problems as it lives off words that have been emancipated from their content.

III Methodology

This analysis, in spite of the widely set conceptual framework, has a humble goal. Through content analysis and discourse analysis of six (6) speeches given by Nikola Gruevski, we shall attempt to answer several questions. For the content analysis, we used the text analysis software Nvivo. To introduce some order in the extensive material at our disposal, and due to the fact that empirical studies of populism are few and apart, we shall focus on five elements that Kirk A. Hawkins, one of the few authors that have worked on empirical analysis and measurement of populism, identified as the defining characteristics of populist rhetoric: the Manichean cosmology, references to the will of the people, the mention of diabolical hostile elites, the changes in the system and the view that "anything goes".

The questions we aim to answer are:

1. What is the meaning of the speeches in the wider context in which they were delivered?
2. What are the values they transmit? What kind of society those speeches represent (create!)? To what extent they reflect a democratic or illiberal worldview and what kind of politics of faith they reflect?
3. Why the dose of populism in the speeches differs from one occasion to another? In which types of speeches is that dose larger and which it is smaller?
4. Was the rhetoric manipulative, propagandistic, does it distort reality or creates a new reality, i.e. is it performative?
5. Finally, who are Gruevski's "People"?

The list of Prime Minister's speeches (this analysis relied on their transcriptions), is provided in Table 1 below. The first speech is atypical. It was a speech given by Gruevski, in his capacity as prime minister, in front of the heads of departments of public and state administrations and members of managing and supervisory boards appointed by the Government. The second and the third speech were delivered in conferences for the press held by his party and in those speeches Gruevski, as a party leader, presented his party's views on the work of the Inquiry Committee on the events of December 24, 2012 (hereinafter the Inquiry Committee), that investigated and aimed to shed light on certain questions

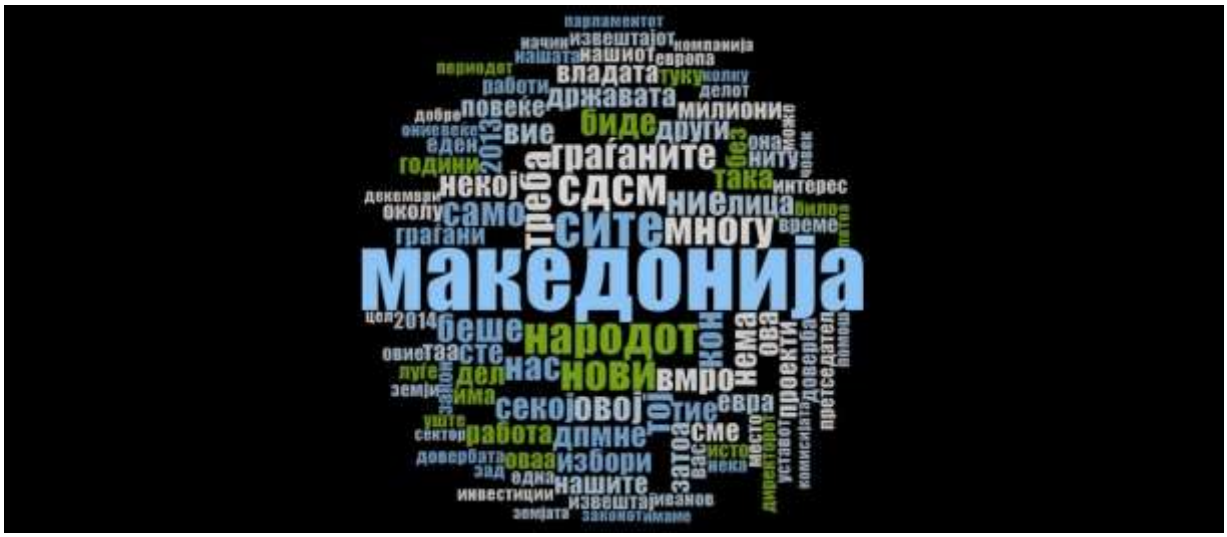
[2] Translator's note: the original text in Macedonian uses the term *"народ"*, "people", as synonym for "nation" and the term *"луѓе",* "people" as synonym for "human beings", "men and women". For the sake of clarity, in this text, the term "people" is written with capital "P" for the first use, and with lower case "p" when it refers to "human beings", "men and women".

related to the incident that transpired in the Parliament in December 2012. The fourth speech was the New Year's address to the nation, given by Gruevski in his capacity as prime minister, in December 2013. Therefore, the speech was more ceremonial and solemn in character. The fifth speech was the presentation of his party's Accountability Report on the achievements and results of the Government in the period 2011-2014 (between two elections), and the sixth speech was delivered in the opening rally of the 2014 Presidential Election campaign.

	SPEECH	HYPERLINK
1	Address by PM Nikola Gruevski at the promotion of the concept of Managerial Ethics, 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHtPQMIRcz0
2	Press-conference: Let's go to elections and let people can decide!, 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-1ZM0O42lY
3	In the interest of the state, SDSM is free to sign any report it wants, 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXr3mAbDaFA
4	New Year's Address 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCelTwzbQ5I
5	Presentation of the Accountability Report 2011-2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMsGJgOCSHw
6	The speech of the prime minister in the opening rally of the Presidential Elections Campaign in Ohrid, 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4e4979QdBw

Table 1: List of speeches

IV Frequently Used Terms



No.	Word	Frequency of Use	Percentage of the total
1	Macedonia	102	0,62
2	the People	48	0,29
3	SDSM	48	0,29
4	new	45	0,27
5	citizens	38	0,23
6	VMRO	34	0,21
7	DPMNE	31	0,19
8	persons	29	0,17
9	the state	28	0,17
10	others	28	0,17
11	part	27	0,16
12	work	27	0,16
13	the government	26	0,16
14	our	26	0,16
15	citizens	25	0,15
16	projects	25	0,15
17	more	25	0,15
18	projects	25	0,15
19	trust	20	0,12
20	ours	20	0,12
21	time	19	0,11
22	things	19	0,11
23	law	18	0,11

Table 2: Frequently Used Words

Table 2, just as the “word cloud”, lists the most frequently used words in the six speeches of the Prime Minister that are subject to this analysis, and we have to bear in mind that the count eliminated all particles, personal pronouns and other words we was a irrelevant for the purposes of this analysis. As could be expected from a politician who is seen as promoter of the patriotic cause, the most frequently used word was the name of the country – “Macedonia”. It is followed by the term “the People”, and the figure would be much higher if we counted in the indefinite form "People" (see in Table 3 below). Moreover, having in mind that Gruevski often uses the terms "(the) citizens” and “people (as in human beings, individual men and women)" as synonymous with the term “the People”, the use of that term is even more striking.

In third place, in terms of frequency of use, is “SDSM”, which, again, is to be expected in populist speeches of which the Manichean cosmology and smearing of opposing elites are main characteristics. In addition to SDSM (the leading opposition party), Gruevski also mentions the opposition leaders (Zoran Zaev and, in particular, Branko Crvenkovski) in extremely negative context. Then the adjective “new” follows, and if we count the other derived forms (with definite article, the gender and singular/plural forms of the word), it would take the third place, immediately after "(the) people". “The state”, “work”, “projects” and “trust” are other terms of interest for our analysis that are ranked high on the list.

V Who are the People?

No.	SPEECH	(the) Citizens	(the) People	people (as in men and women)	TOTAL
1	Address by the Prime Minister at the promotion of the concept for Managerial Ethics	0,50%	0,06%	0,20%	0,76%
2	Let's go to elections and let people can decide! Press Conference	0,39%	0,45%	0,04%	0,88%
3	In the interest of the state, SDSM is free to sign any report it wants	0,69%	0,78%	0,07%	1,53%
4	Prime Minister's New Year's Address	0,21%	0,03%	0,20%	0,44%
5	Presentation of the Accountability Report 2011-2014	0,53%	0,22%	0,02%	0,77%
6	The speech of the prime minister in the opening rally of the Presidential Elections Campaign in Ohrid	0,51%	1,14%	0,26%	1,92%

Table 3: Frequency of use of individual terms

Table 3 presents the frequency of use of the terms "the People", "people (men and women)" and "citizens" in the speeches covered by this analysis.

In the first speech (delivered in front of high-ranking civil servants), it was the term "(the) People" that was the least frequently used by Gruevski, which is understandable in view of the fact that the overall tone of the speech is enlightening and magisterial in the communication with the audience (officials and civil servants appointed by the Government) from whom he expects better services and better treatment of the clients, i.e. the "citizens" and the "people". Nevertheless, Gruevski legitimizes his demands from the civil servants with the fact that the Government that appointed them to their managerial positions *"was elected by the (P)eople".* This is not a simple remark, but one of the paradoxes of populism: populist leaders can use the language of technocrats, present themselves as technocrats, as long as they do that "for the good of the People".

Limited use of that term was noted in the fourth speech (the New Year's Address), which is more solemn and ceremonial in character and has a wide target audience that encompasses all citizens and not just "the People" to whom Gruevski refers more intensively in his other speeches and addresses. Quite to the contrary, Gruevski addresses the "citizens" more frequently in that speech. Again, as in the previous speech, Gruevski appears in his capacity of prime minister. That was the case with the fifth speech (the presentation of the Accountability Report 2011-2014), which refers to the "citizens" far more frequently than to the "People". These speeches reflect (only seemingly) a combining, more pluralist syntagmatic discourse that combines the elements that make up the society.

In the other three speeches (2nd, 3rd and 6th) Gruevski appears in his capacity as a politician, president of the ruling party and charismatic leader. The use of the term "People" in these speeches is much greater and, due to their overall tone, they constitute classic examples of populist speeches. Two of the addresses were, in fact, party press-conferences in which Gruevski presented the positions of his party on the work of the Inquiry Committee, while the third was a speech given as his party's campaign rally.

In the press-conferences, Gruevski interpreted a traumatic/conflicting event - the possibility for the Inquiry Committee to adopt a decision opposed to his party's interpretation of the events that transpired in the Parliament on December 24, 2012. The main line of his interpretation held that the incident during which all opposition MPs and the representatives

of the media were forcefully expelled from the plenary hall of the Parliament was a consequence of a scenario to destabilize the state and bring the opposition in power through a *coup d'état*. The agreed report of the Inquiry Committee found, on the other hand, that the expulsion of the MPs and the members of the press constituted a violation of the Constitution by the majority in the Parliament.

Faced with inability to absorb the event in the expected discourse, Gruevski used those speeches to reinterpret the meanings, giving an authentic interpretation of a sort, invoking the "people" as the final instance that makes any form of moral, legal or political judgment. Thus, Gruevski "intercepted" the possibility to change the outlook and meaning of events, i.e. question the relations of power and the overall social reality in which there is a strong cult of his infallibility, invincibility and uncompromising position.

Giving an explanation on the course of negotiations in the Inquiry Committee and his meetings with the opposition leaders, after the Local Elections in which his party won a major victory, Gruevski noted:

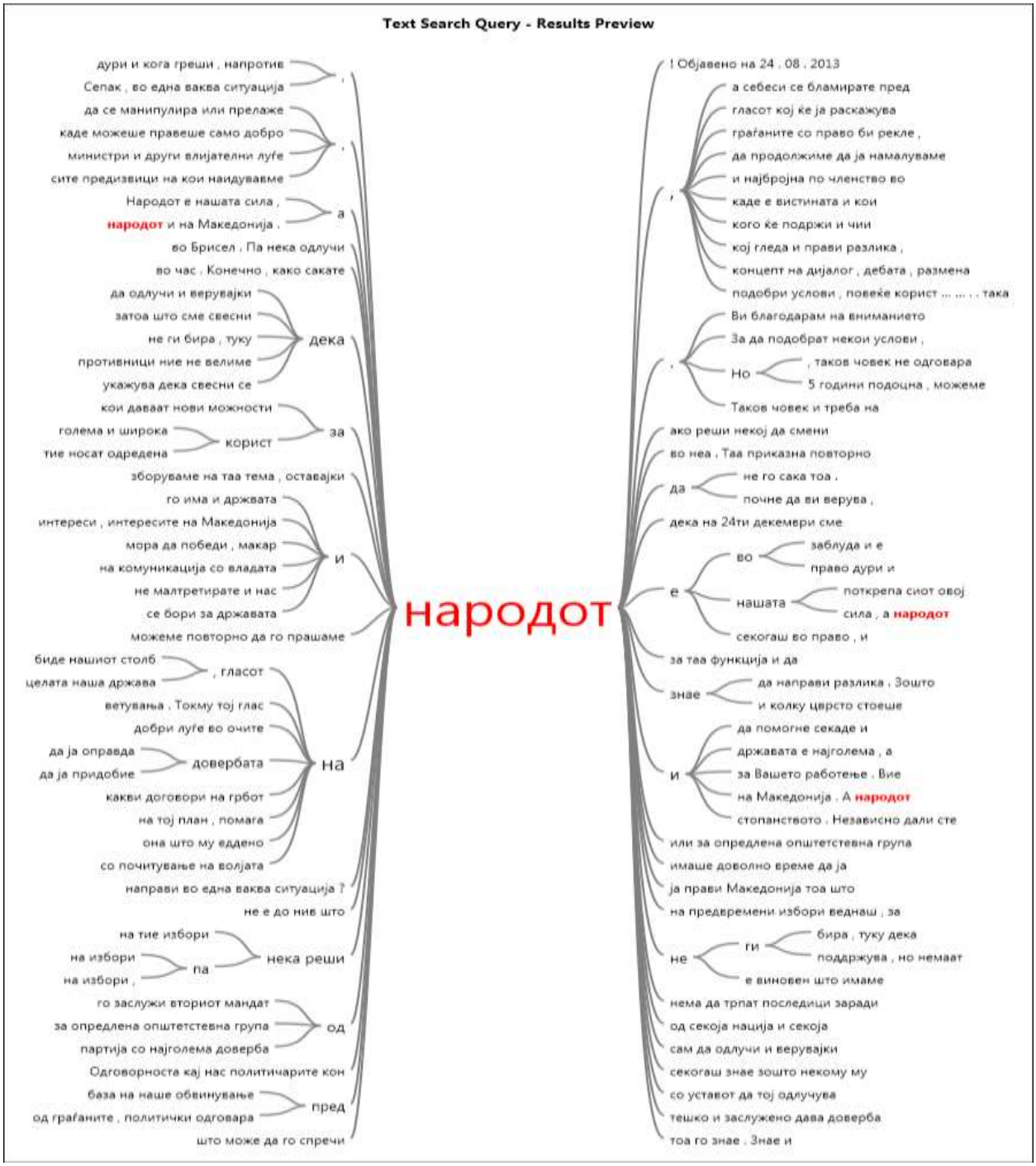
"In the meeting last Tuesday in which I participated, I reminded them (opposition leaders, o.n.) that, three months after December 24, Local Elections were held in Macedonia. That before and during the campaign, their eternal leader (Branko Crvenkovski, o.n.) offered just one thesis to the public and nothing else, and the thesis was that VMRO-DPMNE violated the Constitution and the Law on December 24, etc. I reminded him that we, in the first five or six days of the Campaign denied that and then stopped discussing that issue altogether, **leaving it to the People to decide on its own** and **believing that the People had sufficient time** to understand the situation. Finally, the result was that we won 58 mayor races to 4 of theirs, with 140,000 advantage in terms of votes we won, difference quite greater than in 2009, which we believed was a result that we won't be able to repeat".

The quote above leads to the conclusion that Gruevski ties the result of the Elections with the eventual resolution of the dispute surrounding the events of December 24, 2012. In other words, the majority or, as he called it, "the People" is made an arbiter in a legal dispute. The opposition, on the other hand, framed the dispute in the legalist narrative – it claimed that the said events constituted a violation of the Law, the Constitution and the values of the order. The next quote, from the same speech, proposes a *"creative"* resolution for the dispute surrounding the findings of the Inquiry Committee and is even better illustration of the populist rhetoric:

"We propose to endorse two versions of the legal qualifications in the report tomorrow. One that will be in line with the positions of VMRO-DPMNE and which shall state that it would be valid only if VMRO-DPMNE wins more votes than SDSM in the October 13 Elections, and a second one that will contain the legal qualifications preferred by SDSM and which shall state that it would be valid only if SDSM wins more votes than VMRO-DPMNE in the October 13 early Elections... Next Monday is the last day on which the Parliament could be dissolved and hold elections before the release of the progress report on Macedonia in Brussels. So, **let the People decide what is the truth** and who does it want to lead the country in the coming years".

Gruevski went one step further regarding the problem - he proposed that the majority should decide which are the valid legal qualifications in an election. What populist leaders omit to say is that politics is often a matter of compromise and that independent institutions are the key ring in the chain. Also, the speech didn't mention the point that many political decisions may not be to the liking, the tastes, preferences or wishes of the majority. In other words, if the majority (or whoever represents it) made a mistake, it is completely democratic for the legal order to side with the minority, even if it may be the most hated of minorities. The democracy is about procedures, laws and decisions which (by necessity) are not to the liking of the majority, and yet they make the very democracy possible because those elected by the majority are controlled by those in the minority. Reinterpreting democracy exclusively as a matter of majority preferences, populist leaders dislocate the whole order out of the institutions, which is a completely democratic instrument to undermine liberal democracy, as

proven many times in the political history of humanity. In this case, populism lies somewhere between a nightmare for and persecutor of democracy, especially if it is fragile and not quite consolidated as is the case with Macedonian democracy.



Picture 3: "The People"

Picture 3 tells us more about the context in which Gruevski refers to the "People", the characteristics he attributes to it, the manner in which he presents his own and his party's relation with the People, and the rhetorical techniques used to describe the relationship between the "alienated elite", i.e. the opposition and the "People". The People is personified, understood as an organic whole – it "knows", "gives trust", "believes", "doesn't make mistakes", has "a voice" and "a will" and "gives its confidence which is difficult to earn". "The People is our source of power" and the Government and the cabinet are those who offer "opportunities" and "benefits" to the people, "respect its will" and "listen to the voice of the people". The opponents, i.e. the "disoriented" and "utterly destructive" elites "lies",

“manipulates”, “betrays” the People, “enters agreement behind the back of the people”, “opposes the acts” that provide opportunities for the People, and does all of that “led by personal interests”.

In spite of the simplified language and symbols used in such speeches, it is not quite clear who the term "people" refers to, to which social layers and groups it applies. Does it cover all people understood as all citizens together with their differences? Or, is the "People" an elastic category that refers to some sort of mythical body which, while not representing the plurality of the society in general, wants to present itself as a whole? Does Gruevski refers to the “People” when, for example, he reminds that his party was the biggest with 158,000 members?

The function of the unclear denominators and symbols in the political communication is clear – they create order in the disorder, mobilize and provide the feeling of identity. It is the lack of clarity that hides the secret of their capacity to perform, their desirability and ability to create political identities. In societies faced with shock, apathy and mistrust, the need for order is foremost and far more important than the ideological contents that could introduce that order. The weaker the institutions that need to provide continuity, predictability and stability, the more primitive and poor will be the symbols of political and populist rhetoric. The less the symbols of democracy are fixed, stable and institutionalized, the more can one change their meaning and the more can they be emancipated from their contents. The populist rhetoric, abundant with easily understandable metaphors, is stabilizing, providing order in the complex world that frustrates the disappointed majority. The pluralist society, on the other hand, is presented as if divided in two parts: us ("the People") and them, the alienated and lost political and intellectual elite with its dominant values. The mobilisation is not based on rational arguments, but on moralizing subjects (close to "the People”), deeply emotional and filled with fiction and fantasies. The suspension of logic and ratio in the creation of the political identity of "the people" is not a weakness for the "People's" identity, but an advantage for populist rhetoric, because the impoverished narrative construction is intertwined with investments of affectations that act as a “glue”, a cohesive agent. Thus, even when the individuals that make up the people are faced with indisputable facts about the “nakedness” and dishonesty of “the first among equals”, the leader of a popular movement, that traumatic/conflicting event is considered a threat to the identity, not a reason to abandon their political position.

In populist regimes, the meaning of “democracy” is different than in the mature systems of liberal democracy. In those regimes, it is quite understandable for the "People" to decide on legal qualifications - who is right and who is wrong in a given dispute. There are no too great sacrifices to be laid at the altar of the "People", even when rule of law and protection of human rights are to be sacrificed.

VI SDSM and Branko: A Diabolical Conspiracy

No.	SPEECH	%
1	Address by the Prime Minister at the promotion of the concept for Managerial Ethics	/
2	Let's go to elections and let people can decide! Press Conference	0,95%
3	In the interest of the state, SDSM is free to sign any report it wants	0,80%
4	Prime Minister's 2013 New Year's Address	/
5	Presentation of the Accountability Report 2011-2014	0,01%
6	The speech of the prime minister in the opening rally of the Presidential Elections Campaign in Ohrid	0,08%

Table 4: Frequency of use of the term "SDSM"

Table 4 shows that Gruevski didn't mention SDSM at all in speeches 1 and 4, speeches in which he makes the lowest number of references to "the People". In speech No. 5, SDSM is mentioned only once, in a comparison of periods in which VMRO-DPMNE's and SDSM's held power. A small, and yet significant number of uses of that term is found in speech No. 6, in which SDSM is used to illustrate how it's policies were against adoption of legislation that would allow entry of direct foreign investments in Macedonia. It is a paradox that in Gruevski's rhetoric, SDSM and the "People" go hand in hand, i.e., to push the issue further into caricature, there is no "People" without SDSM and *vice versa.*

Gruevski frequently uses the noun "opponents" for SDSM, but, at a closer look, the manner in which he describes the opposition leads to the conclusion that he regularly describes them as political enemies. If SDSM were opponents, they wouldn't be depicted as social outcasts, but an element different from other elements of society, yet an element that needs to be taken into account. Quite the opposite, SDSM is mentioned in connotations to mean something opposed to the "People".

This is hardly surprising having in mind that such depiction is quite characteristic of attempts at populist mobilisations. If the People seems to be a "slippery" category composed of elements that, at a first glance, have little in common, than the enemy is the most important common denominator that acts as binding tissue of the populist discourse. In other words, there is no political identity, i.e. "People" without "an enemy of the people", without an element that would be excluded because its very presence is presented as a threat to the "People" and a reason for which "the people" couldn't transform into "the People".

Due to the depiction of the "People" as a seemingly homogeneous and ultimate instance in politics and society, in populist systems, any pluralism is presented as a threat that needs to be reinterpreted to be able to incorporate it in the populist frame. Therefore, the populist discourse is often strongly coloured by conspiracy theories and conspiratorial way of thinking. Of special interest are the phrases that Gruevski uses in the speeches analysed for the purpose of this analysis to describe the journalists that were expelled from the Parliament on December 24, 2012 (or, as the official version has it, "asked to leave the Parliament over concerns for their safety"), and the media that are critical of his work. According to Gruevski, the journalists were, in fact, *"members of SDSM who present themselves as journalists".* The critical news portals were, in fact, *"portals controlled by SDSM"*, and the media that don't follow the dominant line are *"media under their* (SDSM's, o.n.) *control".* The logic is quite clear – if they don't follow our line (the line of the "People") they are not with the "People" and surely take the side of the hated hostile elites. In a purely populist discourse, the multitude of subjective positions in a society is reduced to just two positions. The speech is not descriptive, but rather prescriptive – it indicates the positions which are to be considered legitimate according to the dominant ideology.

SDSM, and that is especially the case in the second and the third speech, is depicted as a diabolical enemy in the purest sense of that word. In both speeches, Gruevski constantly implies that the events of December 24, 2012 were backed by a hidden plan, i.e. that *"a scenario to take power by force, conceived five months in advance"*, according to which the SDSM representatives *"went for a violent overthrow of Government"*, and *"blocked the adoption of the Budget with violence on Parliament's premises".*

When talking about SDSM, Gruevski often uses slang and vernacular language, with the obvious intent to bring the political struggle closer to the common citizens. So, SDSM is characterizes at party that engages in *"shenanigans"*, *"is lost in time and space"*, while the leadership of the party is reprimanded for *"for avoiding elections like the Devil avoid incense".* In spite of the personnel changes in the opposition party, there are evident efforts to portray some sort of continuity in SDSM's policies, therefore, the new leadership is presented as *"Branko's group".*

Gruevski's reliance on slang is especially striking when he mentions Branko Crvenkovski. In his criticism of Stevo Pendarovski, SDSM's presidential candidate in the 2014 Presidential Elections, Gruevski claims that Branko Crvenkovski was Pendarovski's *"mentor, boss, guru and idol".* The "boss" himself, Branko Crvenkovski, is portrayed in Gruevski's speeches as "manipulator", "intrigue-monger", person who wasn't a true President of Macedonia but "usurped the office".

VII Why the Fetish of the New?

SPEECH	No. of Mentions	Percentage of total speech
Address by the Prime Minister at the promotion of the concept for Managerial Ethics	4	0,07%
Let's go to elections and let people can decide! Press Conference	5	0,23%
In the interest of the state, SDSM is free to sign any report it wants	1	0,03%
Prime Minister's New Year's Address, 2013	29	0,82%
Presentation of the Accountability Report 2011-2014	38	0,51%
The speech of the prime minister in the opening rally of the Presidential Elections Campaign in Ohrid	10	0,27%

Table 5: Frequency of use of adjective "new" in all of its forms

At a first glance, the most surprising finding of the analysis of the six speeches is the high frequency of use of adjective "New" (in all its derivatives possible in Macedonian, by gender and number), summed up in Table 5. Assuming that the use of the word "new" and its derivatives in Gruevski's speeches is not a matter of coincidence but a systemic and planned political communication, in this part of the analysis we shall argument the position that they are often used as a metaphor for the likely most important feature of populism - the affinity for systemic change, i.e. change of existing political and social order.

Populism, as a rule, appears in conditions of social apathy, increased or underdeveloped confidence of the institutions, stressful and frustrating social situation. In that situation, the social order – understood as a discourse – underachieves in combining and incorporating the demands of the society. The meanings of words important in the regulation of social relations are not fixed anymore. New demands appear in the society, symbolizing changes and which could be named differently, therefore we call them floating signifiers: "democracy", "new politicians", "respect for the law", "social justice", "better infrastructure", "integration into EU and NATO".

However, the meanings of those demands are not fixed and their appropriation by political actors and the fixing of their respective meanings is subject to hegemonistic political struggle of who and how shall interpret them. At that, once a give word gets “sticky” enough to be useful for general mobilization, its meaning becomes less clear because it represents a series of demands. For example, if the demand for more "democracy" is the main word that provides dominance of a series of demands, we shall call is the equivalence chain, in the society, it doesn't mean that democracy means the same to all actors that demand it. To the contrary, democracy could, at the same time, imply “the rule of law”, and “cheaper products”, and "greater welfare allowance", and "employment in state administration", and "steal less for oneself and give more to the people”, and “fight against corruption”, and “procurement of public busses”, and “personal liberties”, etc.

Although the recent protests in the Ukraine were equally social, nationalist and political in character, the symbol for the pluralism of demands condensed around the demands for integration into the European Union. At the same time, those were protests against authoritarian policies and corruption of the regime in power. For that reason, many analysts in the international media were right to warn that the oversimplification of the complexities of political struggle in Ukraine to the contest between pro-European and anti-European forces doesn't fully reflect the situation on the ground.

SDSM entered the campaign for the 2014 Parliamentary Elections with the slogan “Changes for a New Beginning”. Correctly advised by experts that the narrative focused on problems with the democracy, the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of the media, which they relied heavily on in the 2011 Elections campaign, wasn't "sticky" enough, the speeches and appearances of the people that participated in the campaign were peppered with words like "change", "new beginning", "new", etc. Presidential candidate Stevo Pendarovski won the sympathies of the public with his calls that Macedonia needs “new people for new policies”. SDSM even changed the party colors with the aim to demonstrate discontinuity with the old.

Nonetheless, where does that fetish of the "new", its attraction, come from?

Frustrated by the long transition to market economy and parliamentary democracy, the main demands of the majority of citizens of Macedonia are not: “more democracy", "more freedom", "social justice", "human rights" or "integration into the European Union". To the contrary, and it is not just those who were disappointed with SDSM's rule, but also the people who are dissatisfied with the reign of the current Government, the main symbols of dissatisfaction were the demands for "new faces in politics", "new policies", "something news", "young people", "return to the values".

Thanks to the support of the media and the carefully constructed communication strategy, back in 2006, Gruevski became the symbol for a "new and modern politician-technocrat" who was expected to deal with the "old". In other words, if the calls for “something new” symbolized the demands for changes of the system, Gruevski managed to appropriate this floating signifier and reinterpret it in his favor. If the “new” may have some sort of mythical dimension for the people, associating them of something that will make the society better, the politicians who will appropriate it in such a manner to become him/herself an association for the "new", such a politician has won an important battle.

In time, the task of the strategists to present Gruevski as “novelty act” is getting devilishly difficult. Therefore, it is interesting to see how they manage to maintain the stability of the dominant discourse.

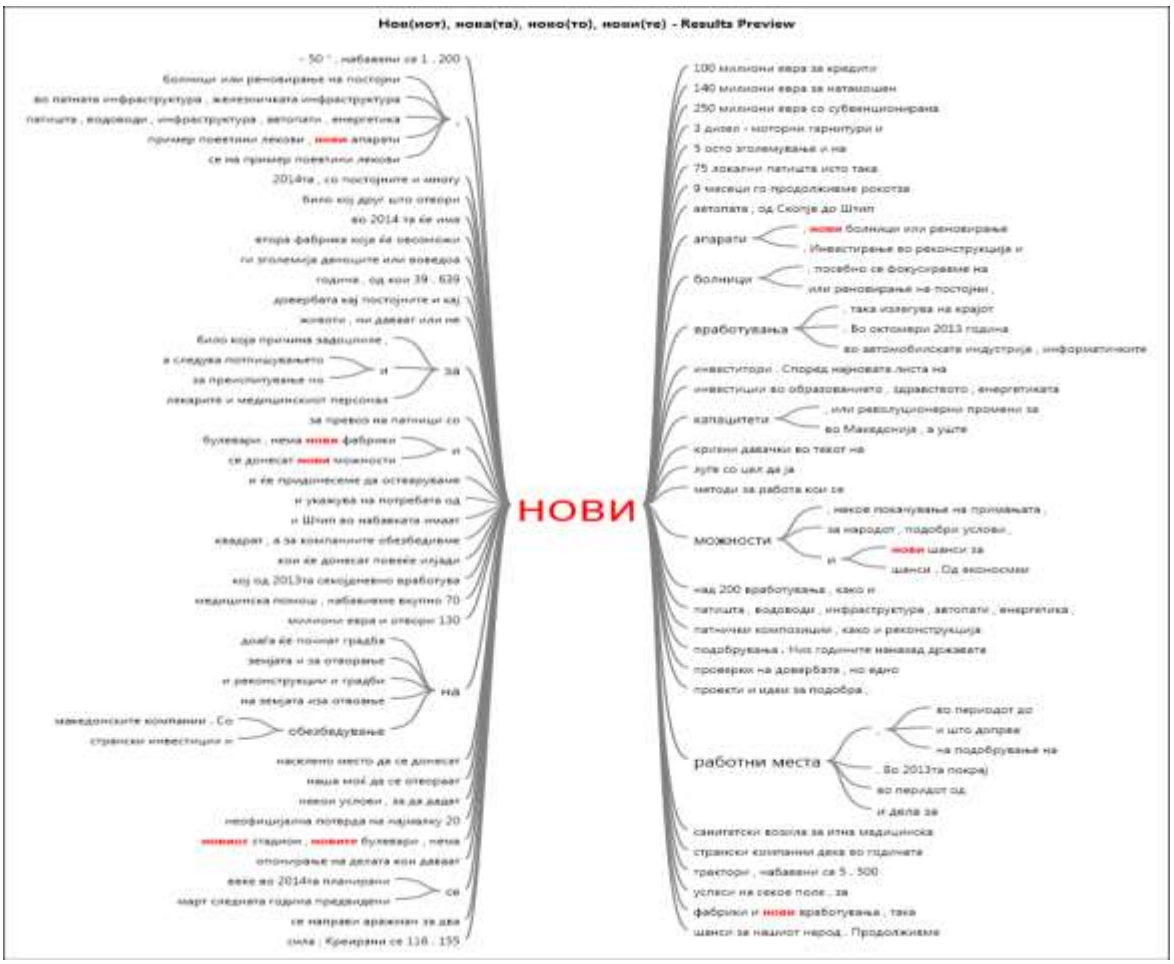
The first line of battle is the “closing” of the gap that appeared as a chance for the new leadership of SDSM when Branko Crvenovski - who was seen, because of his “baggage” and primarily because of the carefully designed and expensive smear campaign in the media, as the symbol of all political evil in the country - left the party. With his departure, the “new” again became a subject of political struggle, i.e. it opened SDSM some space to try and adopt the "new". There, the goal of the slogans employed by SDSM in the last election campaign, "changes", "new beginning", “new policies”, etc. becomes evident. It is an attempt

to reinterpret the “new” in order to adopt it and make it the primary association of SDSM. The analyzed speeches make evident the goal that Gruevski has in mind, with his insistence that the new leadership of SDSM is not a sign of new party policies, but a continuation of the old policies.

The second battle, according to Picture 4, which presents the context of use of the adjective "new", is fought by Gruevski on "home court", in the reproduction of the dominant discourse. Here we have yet another paradox of populism – it is always caught between the big and vague words that call for wider mobilization ("the new", "the People") and singular, earthly elements, i.e. demands of the voters for employment, subsidies, welfare assistance, economic prosperity, etc.

Knowing that the “People” is actually composed by real people with concrete expectations from the leader, the expectations have to be met or the "People" can't exist. In other words, in addition to mobilization, populism has to work on administration. So, in the reproduction of the discourse, Gruevski’s “new” doesn’t refer anymore just to “new persons”, but to “new projects”, “new factories”, “new opportunities”, “new jobs”, “new increases of welfare assistance”, “new machines”, “new roads”, etc. It seems that analyst Sašo Ordanovski refers to that paradox when he says: *“The type of regime established by Gruevski has one major fault, that is, it needs a lot of money. Regimes of this type can exist for a long time only if they have extra economic resources at their disposal".*

It is worth noting that the narrative doesn’t have place for phrases like “new freedoms”, “new rights”, “new democratic tools available to the citizens”. In fact, democracy was not mentioned once in the six analyzed speeches given by Gruevski.



Picture 4: The Context of use of adjective “new”

VIII Conclusion

Having in mind that the term populism is used quite often in everyday life, but its usage is not clear, in this analysis we attempted to explain its meaning through an overview of conceptual framework of theoretical debate on the matter. At that, we also narrowed down the focus of the further analysis.

Then, through textual analysis of carefully selected speeches (of different type) given by Nikola Gruevski, whom his political opponents often consider to be a populist, we determined how often and in which contexts he refers to the key elements of populist narratives, such as: the People, the people, the hostile elites. In addition, we analyzed if the speeches reflect a Manichean, illiberal worldview, anti-pluralism and conspiratorial way of thinking, characteristic of the way in which populist leaders describe politics and society. Our analysis was inspired by the reading of the "symptoms" of populism, i.e. the discourse theory. We tried to explain the context and the aims of Gruevski's use of the three most frequently used words in his speeches – "People", "SDSM" and the adjective "new".

We determined that the main question is not whether, but when and to what extent are Gruevski's speeches populist. When he takes the stage as interpreter of traumatic/conflicting events from position of party leader or popular tribune, Gruevski's speeches contain all elements of populist mobilization. The speeches are dominated by the use of the words "People" and "SDSM", which go hand in hand. In Gruevski's speeches, the "People" is not a clear term, but a word that aims to mobilize, to offer identification by waking the audience's emotions. The lack of clarity doesn't make it less successful in mobilization, nor is it a speech that distorts the reality. Rather, it is a performative speech, in the sense that it shapes political identities.

On the other hand, when Gruevski speaks in his capacity as a prime minister, for instance, in official events, the manner of addressing the audience is (seemingly) more administrative, unifying, and his language and expression are clearer. In those speeches, the "People" gives way to "citizens" and "new". However, at closer analysis of the "citizens" he addresses, we can see that he doesn't really mean all citizens, i.e. the diverse groups/identities that exist in the society. To understand who exactly are the citizens, or the people of the Prime Minister, it is important to see not just who is mentioned, but, more importantly, who is omitted altogether from his speeches. In that sense, the analysis showed that Gruevski most commonly speaks to just one segment of ethnic Macedonians, that his speeches offer no space for any wider pluralism, i.e. other, diverse social identities, for example, LGBT persons, opposition members, liberals, activists, independent press, critics, etc.

We also elaborated on the frequent use of the adjective "new" in all of its derivative forms available in the Macedonian language. We determined that its use in Gruevski's rhetoric is a part of a planned populist political strategy which aims to portray Macedonian politics as battlefield between the "new" (the good, hardworking, popular, common Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE) and the "old" (the bad, the lazy, elitist, selfish Branko Crvenkovski and SDSM) political forces.

Finally, it is worth noting that the narrative doesn't have place for phrases like "new freedoms", "new rights", "new democratic tools available to the citizens". This point is best illustrated by the fact that the word "democracy" was not mentioned once in the six analyzed speeches given by Gruevski.