

## **Populist thought (Narodniks) in Russia an analytical study from Spragens' point of view**

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Received: 11 Sep 2022 ; Accepted: 15 Oct 2022

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### **Abstract:**

The idea of populism or Narodniki in Russia has received less attention in Iran because it has been placed in the shadow of Russian communist leftist ideas. Conceptually, this idea is far beyond populism and Russian communism, and has had wide-ranging effects both in Russia and outside of this country. How this thought has been able to be so influential is the main issue in this article that the authors have tried to analyze with the aim of investigating its roots, dimensions and consequences. In fact, the main question is how populist thought appeared in Russia and why did it become an effective and widespread trend? The hypothesis of this article is that the idea of populism emerged as a reaction to the neglect of the role of the people in the political life of Russia in the second half of the 19th century, and because of its acceptance by intellectuals and based on a combination of three British constitutional and democratic views. French socialism and Russian nativism were spread. To investigate this hypothesis, we have used the analytical-descriptive method of political thoughts from the perspective of Thomas Spragens and in a qualitative format. The finding of this article is that social issues have arisen and the intellectual responses of thinkers, despite their own timeliness, have been reproduced in a way for centuries and are still useful and very important for understanding the social and political conditions of the periods after that.

**Keywords:** Political thought, Populism, Narodniki, Russia, Spragens' method of analysis

### Introduction

In the 19th century, Russia was the arena of controversy between major political currents and important political ideas, and these controversies continued until the revolutions of the first decades of the 20th century and have been reproduced in a way even in Russia today. In the meantime, populist thought that emerged in the second half of the 19th century became one of the most powerful arenas of controversy, and this issue is still important for intellectuals in various ways. The idea of Russian populism, with all its importance for this country and other countries, including Iran, has been neglected for some reasons, including its relationship with socialist thought.

In fact, the idea of populism or Narodniki in Russia is far beyond populism in terms of concept and has had wide effects both in Russia and abroad. How this idea was able to be so influential is the main issue in this article that the authors have tried to analyze with the aim of investigating its roots, dimensions and consequences.

In fact, the main question is how populist thought appeared in Russia and why did it become an effective and widespread movement? The hypothesis of this article is that the idea of populism emerged in response to the neglect of the role of the people in the political life of Russia in the second half of the 19th century, and it became a widespread movement because of the intellectuals' acceptance of it and based on a combination of three British constitutional

and democratic views, French socialism and Russian nativism. To investigate this hypothesis, we have used the method of analyzing political thoughts from the perspective of Spragens.

The main topics of this article include the background of the research, theoretical and methodological foundations, the investigation of Russian populist thought and the analysis of Russian populist thought based on Spragens' analytical model. In fact, the main goal of the article is to use this conceptual model to provide a better and clearer understanding of the idea of Russian populism, which has been neglected due to the shadow of the idea of Russian communism.

### 1. Background of the research

Few works have been written about the idea of populism in Russia, and we will examine some of them here.

In 2020, in a book titled "History of Russian Thought" published in the Cambridge Collection, Lederborough Afford has investigated Russian thought and its intelligentsia in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to the authors, the history of ideas has played a central role in the political and social history of Russia. Understanding the intellectual tradition and the way Russian intellectuals encountered their nation is essential to understanding contemporary Russia's thought. This historical collection examines important intellectual and cultural currents (including Enlightenment, nationalism, nihilism and religious

revival) and key themes (concepts of the West and the East, ordinary people and attitudes towards capitalism and natural sciences) in intellectual history. By focusing on the golden age of Russian thought in the middle of the 19th century, the authors of this collection try to examine the continuity of the Russian classical intellectual tradition in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras by analyzing its 18th century roots in the era after Peter the Great.

The book *Russian Political Thought from 1700 to 1917* by Gary Hamburg, published in 2017, examines the evolution of political thought in Russia from the time of Peter the Great to the October Revolution, and in these two centuries, the modernist thought of the period of Peter the Great in the late 17th and early 18th centuries., the thought of Catherine the Great's Enlightenment Age, the conservatism thought of different periods and also the identity issue in these periods have been discussed. Also, Slavonic thoughts and great thinkers such as Belinsky, Dostoevsky and the leftists of the late 19th century have been of interest to the author. The main idea of the author is that the political thought during the two centuries under discussion was strongly influenced by the western modernist thought and the romantic and idealistic criticisms of it, and the native thoughts were mainly formed and transformed in reaction to them.

In the year 2000, in a book titled "Populism", Paul Taggart discussed the examples and characteristics of populism and other Kinds of it, including Russian populism. He has also spoken in detail about

Russian populism and believes that when examining the Russian populist movement, it should be noted that it does not necessarily mean populism. The major difference between this work and the author's research is the era and type of populist parties' performance. In other words, the author of this work analyzes the category of populism in the modern era and the reasons for the prominence of this type of movement or movements in the structure of globalization and its relationship with the way of life of ethnic minorities or marginalized groups in the society. While the author of the research intends to analyze the ratio of populist parties in Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries and its effect on political parties in Iran.

Isaiah Berlin, who lived the first two decades of his life in Russia and then went to England, and is one of the great philosophers of the West, and is someone who puts forth ideas such as "the incommensurability of political news" and "value pluralism", in 1978 in a book titled "Russian Thinkers" he has examined the emergence of Russian intellectuals since the early 19th century and the effects of German romanticism, and has examined the political thought of thinkers such as Belinsky, Hertsen, and Tolstoy, as well as populist political movements. This work can be seen as an examination of the political thought of the 19th century and early 20th century Russia, and the central idea of Berlin is that in Russia there is no scope for native political thought, and mainly the ideas have entered the intellectual space of this country in the form of adaptations

from the West. This work can also be a suitable auxiliary source for writing research on the activities of Russian populists.

In 1948, Nikolai Berdyaev discussed the issue of Russian populist thought in a book titled "The Roots of Russian Communism and Its Meaning". He wrote important works in the field of thought and philosophy, and his book *The Roots of Russian Communism* is very important in the field of Russian political thought in the late 19th and early 20th century. In this book, Berdyaev deals with the rise of Russian intellectuals, and the intellectual currents of Slavism, Westernism, socialism, communism, nihilism, and populism. His main point in this work is that Russian communism is deeply rooted in the religion and life of the Russian people, and leftist thinkers have adapted it to the political and social life of the Russian people based on the existing contexts. By examining the important Russian intellectual currents from the Decembrists to the Narodniks, he considers the attention of all of them to the category of justice as an important basis for socialist currents. This work, which is only devoted to the study of Russian political thought, is a suitable source for explaining the transfer of Russian thought to the thought of Iranian revolutionaries, and its data can be used for populist parties.

With the investigations conducted through the texts translated into Persian, related to Russian political thought and especially Russian populist thoughts, it can be found

that there is less independent work on the issue of the emergence of Russian populist thoughts and that too from the perspective of Spragens. and in this article, the authors' effort is to open a new chapter in political studies on the topic of Russian thought by examining this issue.

## **2. Theoretical and methodological foundations**

Nowadays, political theories have various structures and each new theory is a continuation of the previous theory and in fact, it completes the previous theory or it appeared in the criticism of the previous theory. It comes to put it better, the analysis of political thoughts is done in various ways and some analysts use specific models. Now we will use Spragens' approach here.

In his book "Understanding Political Theories", Thomas Spragens talks about order to describe the characteristics of political society. According to him: the political society provides a framework that gives meaning and credibility to the lives of its people. Political society somehow replaces human order with chaos. (Spragens, 2015, p. 20).

From his point of view, the political society may enrich the lives of its people by providing security, progress, justice and individual personality, or by failing to fulfill these duties, it may turn the lives of its people into hell. In other words, almost all political theorists start from the observation of disorder in political life, and political theories present symbolic images of a

systematized totality of politics. The purpose of political theories is to make the world of politics understandable for us so that we can be guided by it, it draws a geographical map of politics for us to tell us where we are and which way will lead us to our desired destination. (Spragens, 2015, p. 24).

Spragens claims that the political thinkers of every era are extremely realistic and their political thoughts are the answer to the problems of their political environment. Based on this, political theories are not just academic entertainment, but are deeply related to scientific and everyday political issues. Their effort is to provide a comprehensive picture of the world of politics (Barzegar, 2004, p. 48).

According to Thomas Spragens, the goal of political theories is to provide a "comprehensive vision" of political society. In fact, according to him, political thought or theory has an internal logic that is created during a four-fold process: first by facing the crisis, then by identifying the pain, then by reconstructing the image of the society, and finally by presenting a solution. Seyyed Sadegh Haghightat in his book "Methodology of Political Sciences" believes: Spragens' work is known as crisis theory. Crisis theory raises the issue of what is the relationship between political theory and current crises. According to his theory, any society that deals a lot with political thought has a lot of crises (Haghightat, 2019, p. 84).

According to Spragens, all political theorists started from observing disorder in

political life and they wrote their works at a time when their society was in crisis (Barzegar, 2004, p. 48). In the first stage, theorists start from the political crises that the society is dealing with. Many of them wrote their works when they felt that their society was in a crisis. Therefore, political theories are not produced in normal conditions but during disturbances (Hoffman, 2013, pp. 1-4).

In the second stage, i.e., observation of disorder, Spragens believes that the crises that provide reasons for theorizing appear in many forms. Disruptions and widespread calamities that plague human societies in the form of civil wars and economic crises are clear examples. In order to explain and prove his theory in the stage of observation of disorder by the theoretician, he describes the events of the era in which the thinkers of political theory lived. He points to the death of Socrates, anarchy and crisis of justice in Athens that caused Plato's political theory, describes the crises of authority, legitimacy and civility in England and interprets how these crises caused the theories of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Edmund Burke take shape, how the crisis of the capitalist system establishes the main idea of Karl Marx, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau thinks of writing a social contract in the face of the moral crisis (Spragens, 2015, pp. 43-77).

In the second stage, based on Spragens' method, the theoretician who lives in the heart of the crisis observes disorder. In fact, he is looking for a reason for the disorder prevailing in the society. Because

according to Spragens: only the mind of a very strange person can remain calm after observing disorder. In such a situation, the heart and mind of a healthy person urges him to study more (Spragens, 2015, p. 79). The observation of disorder makes a person's mind and emotions to stir and move him towards the second stage, which is the diagnosis of its causes. In the second stage of the research, the theoretician plays the role of an analyst. He should expand and generalize doubt within himself and search for the root cause of problems and disturbances, which are often hidden from view (Haghighat & Hejazi, 2010, p. 3).

In the second stage of his strategy, Spragens compares the work of a theoretician with the work of a medical doctor and writes: The theoretician who has observed a malfunction in the functioning of the political society is more like a doctor who has discovered the symptoms of a disease. Neither of them can stop the work at this stage. It is not enough to diagnose the causes, but the fundamental roots of the disease must be discovered. In short, a political theorist is faced with the task of "diagnosing pain", just like a medical doctor (Spragens, 2015, p. 80).

In the third stage, the theoretician, by observing the crisis and then finding the cause, seeks to design and develop ideas about the desired state of the society. At this stage, the thinker or theorist moves from "is" to "should". This stage is the creation of a relationship between the individual and the political environment, in

the sense that the theoretician must visualize the model of a good society in his mind and give a standard of it. In fact, political theories present symbolic images of the society after being reconstructed. (MacIntyer, 1990, p. 350). In the third stage, the theoretician works on the mental reconstruction of the political society, visualizes the urban ideal in his mind and polishes his thoughts to science, capabilities, facilities and realities. The criteria that the theorist considers for his ideal reconstructed society are also norms for political life. The reconstructed normative systems are a combination of inference and discovery (Khosh Bayan & Maher, 2015, p. 78).

According to Spragens, the theorist's effort to show the image of an ordered political society continues at the opposite point of his observation of disorder. For instance, if he sees the problem of his society in its alienation, he should present a picture of a society that is not alienated from itself. In the continuation of his speech, he says: Political theories are not written easily. They are images of the political system that have been carefully created in comparison with the irregular political situation experienced by the theoretician (Spragens, 2015, pp. 119-120).

With these interpretations, the Utopia project is proposed in the third stage. According to the design of the political theory process, a theoretician must reconstruct an ideal image at this stage. According to Spragens, the ideal society intended by Plato is called Utopia. The images of a

safe society by Thomas Hobbes, a moral society by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a rational society by Erich Fromm, and a one-class society by Karl Marx are reconstructed and provide solutions to reach the ideal societies envisioned by theorists.

Finally, the last process of making political theories is "remedial treatment", providing solutions, suggestions and practical recommendations. At this stage, the theorist focuses on "what should be" instead of "what is". According to Spragens, great theoreticians present opinions based on their vision of political facts. If we confirm their vision, we will automatically be inclined to their prescribed solution and naturally enter into their components. They emphasize that their theories are not just the promotion of their personal taste. They shout things that they think are beneficial for the people themselves. (Spragens, 2015, p. 187).

Therefore, according to the method presented by Spragens, a theorist or a thinker who lives in a crisis-stricken society thinks of a solution. In other words, the attention of political theories is directed to the real problems of the society, and the works of thinkers and political theorists are actually the answer to the disturbances. The theoretician first evaluates the existing situation, and after analyzing the current situation, he draws the desired situation and finally provides a way out of the current chaotic situation and reaching the desired situation.

### 3. Populism in Russia

As mentioned in the previous discussions, the idea of populism is not well known in Iran. In fact, populism in Russia is an idea that has been influenced by the intellectual developments in Europe, especially by the French revolution, and then by the ideas of Marx and the leftists, as well as the indigenous idea in Russia.

Peter the Great's modernization caused the transfer of new ideas to Russia, and the French Revolution fueled this process. From the middle of the 19th century, Russians gradually became familiar with leftist and Marxist ideas, and by the end of the century, they became an important movement, and their influence extended to the South Caucasus. From the combination of left and right thoughts and ideological debates within the left discourse, a populist discourse or current of thought was born, which was a lively current in Russia and the Caucasus both at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Now, we will briefly describe the emergence of populist ideas among Russian populist groups and currents.

The center of the Russian revolution was closed in the 19th century, and that was the era of peasant revolts, which were incited by revolution-seeking radicals. In response to these unrests, the imperial government made efforts to create reforms, but these efforts were more visible on paper than in practice (Mathews, 2003, p. 10). Tsarist Russia was very lagged not only socially, but also economically and technically. About ninety percent of the people of this country were under the

feudal lord system. Peasants were bought and sold along with the land. Peasant revolts occurred from time to time, which generally failed (Koolaei, 2000, p. 19). The most prominent peasant revolts were those of 1773 and 1774 led by Pugachev, who were defeated in both. In general, the structures of the tsarist government had no parallel anywhere in Europe. The government officially declared itself autocratic, the tsar ruled personally and alone over all the nobles and people (Watson, 1964, p. 5).

After Peter the Great, the modernization process did not stop, but it was removed from the government's priority. Until in the second half of the 18th century, during the rule of Catherine II, the wave of modernization of Peter the Great was completed, this modernization destroyed many foundations of traditional Russian society and accelerated the development process in this country and strengthened relations with Western Europe. (Притчина, 2002, p. 85).

During this period, Peter the Great's ideas were revived in Russia, but this time on the path of convergence with the social structure of the West and on the basis of strengthening the Western attitude. The reign of Catherine II is considered to be the beginning of the era of intellectual absolutist rule, which can be described by the implementation of liberal reforms while maintaining and consolidating tyranny and unlimited autocracy. During this period, democratic intellectuals appeared

who wanted to limit the absolutist power of the empire and abolish the rights of servazh, and even thinkers such as Radishev, Navikov and Sherbatov were considered supporters of parliamentarism in this country (Кудров, 2007, p. 45-47).

At this time, the conditions for the formation of the administrative class government were created. The declaration granting freedom to nobles throughout Russia in 1762 and the charter exempting nobles from compulsory service in 1785 introduced the status of free citizen in Russia for the first time and created the right conditions for the emergence of an independent social institution in society. After this, the ideas of liberalism spread in Russia, ideas such as the rule of law, separation of powers, rights and freedom of individuals and the first draft of limiting the monarchy, which of course remained on paper. Also, during this period, the development of education and active publishing activity has helped the emergence of an institution such as public opinion (Притчина, 2002, p. 85).

As it was said in the previous chapters, Alexander I had a spirit of freedom in the early years of his rule and even then he wanted to make the people a partner in the government through the constitution, but he gradually turned to tyranny (Sanai, 2019, p.21). During his period, the Napoleonic Wars (1812), which is known as the Patriotic War in Russia, took place and is one of the wars that has a special place in



the history of Russia, especially in the history of Russian modernization.

This war caused direct cooperation and mutual influence between Russia and the West. That group of Russian officers who were in Europe returned home with a more open vision and more awareness, and the Decembrist movement was formed from within this stratum. The goal of this movement was to get rid of the tyranny and servitude system. But this movement was limited to a small social stratum and could not make a fundamental change in the life of the Russian people, and finally on December 14, 1825. It was severely suppressed by Nicholas I, the new emperor of Russia (Berdyayev, 2004, pp. 49-51).

In other words, although the December 1825 rebellion was suppressed by the one-day tsar's autocratic government, it had a profound effect on the development of the political-social consciousness of the Russian nation. In fact, the influence of libertarian and revolutionary thoughts and ideas so quickly took over the Russian space that radical journalist Alexander Hertsen wrote in 1830: A new world is knocking at the door, and our hearts and souls are ready to meet the world. (Clarkson, 1961, p. 30)

According to some researchers and theoreticians, the civility that emerged in Russia, unlike European countries, was designed and implemented in a way that ultimately led to the strengthening of the government and the weakening of the society. In this regard, Paul Scott wrote: Peter the Great's reforms were dumb and

vague, but he generalized service to the government and planned and organized the principle of inheritance. In 1705, in order to create a strong and low-cost infantry, Peter was forced to serve in the army for twenty-five years. At that time, Russia was the only country that forced military service, while other European countries employed war mercenaries, and Scott concludes on this basis: serving the government not only did not reduce the power of the autocratic regime, but also prevented it. An independent civil society was also formed and created a big gap between the mass of people and the elites. Such a regime was based on pure obedience to the issued orders and caused the development of prejudices, obedience, irresponsibility and did not provide the conditions for the spirit of libertarianism in any way (Scott, 2012, pp. 47-48).

Therefore, the beginning of the 60s era of the 19th century was the era of free-spirited (liberal) reforms, the freedom of the villagers, judicial reforms and the era of the establishment of Zemstvos (elective organizations for the administration of local affairs in the central provinces) (Berdyayev, 2004, p. 110).

The economic crisis of 1901 to 1903 and the Russo-Japanese war from 1904 to 1905 had created dire conditions in Russia. The French ambassador in Moscow wrote in a report to Paris in 1904: "All Russian social classes are in a revolutionary frenzy." The most obvious example of this was the strike of factory workers in St. Petersburg after the surrender of the

Russian army in Port Arthur and due to the dismissal of four pro-revolutionary workers from the factory, which led to the revolution of 1905. Following this strike, Gapon, an Orthodox priest and head of the state union "Russian Workers' Society", sent a petition to the Tsar, the father of the nation, to save the Tsar and the Russian nation from the misery and oppression of the working environment by the capitalists. But the gathering of workers on Sunday, January 22, 1905, in front of the Tsar's Winter Palace, which took place to confirm their request, was destroyed by the police (Scott, 2012, pp. 131-133).

McDaniel, believes that the contradictions caused by the autocratic modernization of Nicholas II in the traditional Russian society, has led to the October Revolution of 1917. He explains as follows: "The efforts of the dictatorial regime to mobilize the urban industrial society led to contradictions and trapped the society in a network of insoluble contradictions, which in turn caused the emergence of a revolutionary situation." (McDaniel, 2010, p. 315).

At the beginning of the 19th century, educated Russians who were familiar with progressive European ideas formed a class of Russian people called "intellectuals". This class had different approaches to achieve their demands. The main intellectual approaches of Russia were known under the following two groups: "Westernists" and "Slavologists" or "Slavophiles".

In fact, in the 19th century, a minority of the educated class of Russia was growing and brought deep cultural achievements. But this minority group was not safe from the government's suppression. Strickler wrote in this chapter: In the middle of the 19th century, the first group of educated class, including Russian writers, composers and intellectuals, became famous outside of Russia. For example, in literature, Alexander Pushkin, who lived between 1799 and 1837, wrote poems, plays, and novels that were well received in Europe and the United States. Although, even a talented artist like Pushkin could not escape from government repression. He was exiled twice because of his association with political opponents. After 1826, Nicholas I personally took responsibility for the censorship of Pushkin's writings (Strickler, 2002, p. 70).

As we explained earlier, Russian officers and soldiers during the war with France, as well as while traveling to European countries, got acquainted with the democratic and libertarian ideas that were the origin of the French and American revolutions, and after returning to the country They themselves promoted those ideas. In fact, Russian officers and soldiers affected by the revolutionary conditions of France created a new intellectual atmosphere in their country by transferring European progressive ideas, and their action led to the formation of intellectual and political currents with different approaches.

#### A) liberal and constitutionalist thought flow

The liberals or "Westerners" wanted a new society where the main component of this society was the implementation of the constitution, the existence of individual freedoms and the observance of other liberal components, and they used Western Europe as a model to establish such things.

#### b) Slavic thought flow

Slavism has been a fundamental current in Russia after Peter the Great and especially in the 19th century and until today. This school was formed with the deepening and expansion of the opposition to the West, and their audience was the German-speaking and British governments. The outstanding figures of this school were Nikolai Danilovsky (1822-85), Konstantin Leontov the diplomat (1831-91) and Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-81) (Shakibi, 2019, p. 115).

The Slavists or "Slavophiles" tried to keep the minds of the Russian people away from the new ideas of Western Europe by emphasizing the traditional Slavic culture. They were against the system of feudal lords, but they wanted to preserve the Russian Orthodox Church and keep the Tsar in his position, as the highest ranking official in Russia. They believed that by appealing to the same traditional Slavic society, they could create the same society that existed in the peasant villages at the national level. According to the Slavists, this work was more in harmony with the character and spirit of the Russian people

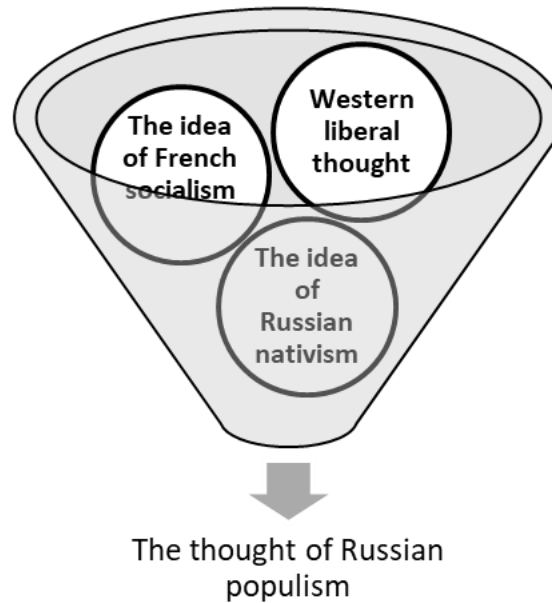
compared to the harsh and violent individualism of Western Europe (Don, 2005, p.29).

#### c) Leftist currents

As we described in the previous sections, after the failed reforms of Alexander II, from the 1860s onwards, secret and revolutionary groups were formed which their goal was to overthrow the monarchy. The first wave of these revolutionaries tried to give a political face to the peasant uprisings, which were the main rebellions and movements on their behalf, but with the formation of urban life due to the increasing migration of villagers to the cities to find jobs in factories and also the Increase of the Population of workers who were exploited by the employers gave rise to a second wave of revolutionaries who, under the influence of the teachings of the German philosopher Karl Marx, criticized the traditional and rural ways and their main attention was on the potential power of the urban workers. The revolutionaries of the second wave or the leftist currents, during the process of struggles from the 1860s to the revolution of 1917, included several groups or political parties, including the Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia, which was formed in 1898 and was divided into two factions in 1903. The group known as the Mensheviks (meaning the minority) sought to replace the democratic constitution with the constitution of the aristocracy, and the other group of the Bolsheviks (meaning the majority) was led by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, who changed his name to Lenin. He believed that workers

need professional revolutionaries so that their interests can be promoted and the speed of the revolution can be increased (Fader, 2006, p. 62).

### Analytical model of the roots of populist thought



#### 4. Analysis and requirements of populist thought

As mentioned in the previous discussions, Spragens' model for understanding and analyzing political thought included four stages of facing crisis and observing disorder, identifying pain, imagining the reconstruction of society, and presenting a solution, based on which, here, the Russian populist thought is studied.

##### A: Observing the crisis

The crisis of Russian society began when it was involved in the reforms of Peter the Great in the early 18th century, and although Peter the Great and the tsars after him thought that they had solved the crisis, in reality, they only postponed the crisis. This issue emerged again especially after the French Revolution and its impact on the Russian elite and the Decembrist Revolution in 1825, and despite various ups and downs, and even peasant reforms and changes in the feudal system, but the entire nineteenth century The Russian government and society were involved in it.

In fact, the policies of Nicholas II caused the weakening of non-revolutionary parties and groups that could play the role of an intermediary between the masses and the monarchy. In addition to these factors, the relative stagnation of the agricultural sector in different regions of Russia, along with industrialization and significant economic growth in metropolitan cities, especially in the capital of St. Petersburg, caused a large influx of people from these regions to the cities. Peasants rushed to these cities in search of work, while these cities, especially the capital, could not absorb this influx. As a result, the working and semi-professional classes settled in the shantytowns of the cities of Warsaw and Wasilski Island and Alexander Nevsky areas in St. Petersburg. The seemingly corrupt city and life of the capital and the noticeable difference in living conditions between different classes made these immigrants who came from the surrounding areas to look for work, wander and despair.

This issue reached its peak especially after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War in the mid-1850s, and various social and political reforms, including the land reform of 1861, not only failed to solve it, but also increased its scope and intensity. From Isaiah Berlin's point of view, during this period, the majority of Russian people still lived in feudal darkness, the weak and uneducated clergy of Russia had a limited spiritual influence on them, and a large army of state-loving clerics put pressure on the peasant masses (Берлин, 2017, p. 180). Therefore, the critical situation of the Russian society, which arose from the fundamental conflict between the traditional structure and modern conditions, and the structure of the political system did not allow flexibility and adaptation easily, but by insisting on the traditional legitimacy of the government, it was willing to accept the demands of the intellectuals and new classes, and also it was not a logical change for the lower classes, but it added to the existing gaps.

#### B: Diagnosis of pain

The recognition of the crisis and pain that the Russian society was dealing with in the middle decades of the 19th century was discussed by the thinkers of different intellectual and political currents, but the current that was proposed as populist faced a fundamental difference that distinguished it from other currents and the fact that populism was a unified idea and a combination of western and indigenous ideas and in fact it included three dimensions of democratic, socialist and native Russian and therefore it had a special sensitivity in detecting pain.

In this regard, many Russian thinkers, from Hertsen to Chernyshevsky, Belinsky and Vislerion, had given serious warnings. They considered the state and the existing social structure as a disorganized and disembodied political giant, and even in Berlin's interpretation, a ferocious, wild, sloppy and sarcastic giant (Berlin, 1998, p. 317), which had

reached a critical stage and this crisis was considered important. The most important issue of the time for populist thinkers had to be solved.

#### C: The idea of rebuilding society

Basically, the purpose of politics from the time of Plato and Aristotle until today is to describe the current state of society and its pathology, to draw an ideal state, and then to propose a suitable strategy for moving from the existing state to the desired state by providing solutions for that. Therefore, an important pillar of every policy and, accordingly, every thought should be a drawing of a desirable situation in the form of an ideal society and politics.

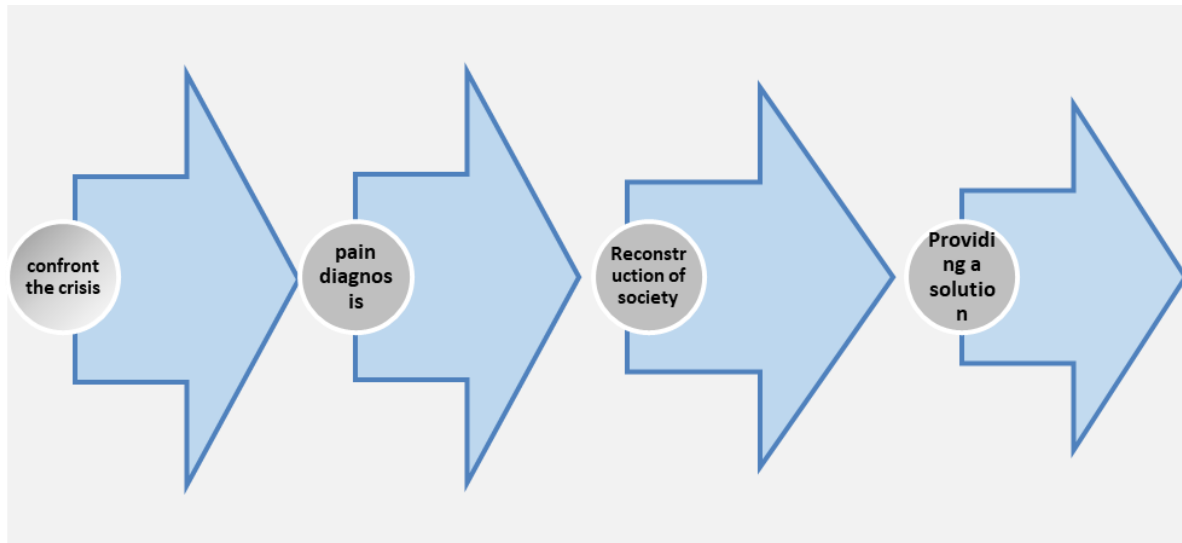
From the point of view of Narodniks or Russian populists, their favorable situation was possible through a combination of democracy, justice and fraternal coexistence. They get this social and political imagination from the three western liberal watersheds, French socialism (socialist ideas before Marx in France such as Proudhon, Saint-Simon and Fourier and others) and native Russian thought in the form of Obshchina and old Russian mirs in which justice, equality and human coexistence was a common and ongoing thing. At the same time, the dissatisfaction of the urban lower class with the social conditions of life was increasing day by day, especially in the shadow of the growing economic class gap. Finally, the identity crisis arising from Westernization at different levels caused by this social inefficiency went hand in hand and led to the birth of the image and desire for a universal earthly city utopia (Karami, 2019, p. 126).

Although the Russian populist thinkers had different interpretations and perceptions of the desirable and ideal people's society, most of them shared that a union of autonomous social units in a cooperative form can create a free and democratic social system instead of the government. To represent the deepest moral instincts and traditional values of the Russian society and even the entire human society and eliminate exploitation, violence and bloodshed (Berlin, 1998, p. 319). From their point of view, such a society prevents the formation of capitalism and a class society like Europe in Russia and will protect the originality of the Russian society away from tsarist oppression.

#### D: The solution

From the point of view of the Narodniks, the solution to the political and social crisis in Russia was that the Russian people, the vast majority of whom were in the villages and in poverty and ignorance, was to get to know the fair society with the real situation and away from traditional justifications and superstitions, with an egalitarian and justice-seeking idea. Therefore, on this basis, the strategy of moving towards the countryside became

a great strategy for the Russian populist movement. Therefore, thinkers such as Chernyshevsky, Saltykoff and Lavrov believed in educating the educated young generation to be sent to the villages, and for this purpose measures were taken at the country level and young students were sent to the villages.



## Conclusion

In this article, an attempt was made to investigate Russian populist thought by presenting a model of political thought analysis based on the Spragens model, which considered the four stages of facing a crisis, identifying pain, imagining the reconstruction of society, and presenting a solution. From this point of view, the idea of Russian populism, which was formed in the middle of the 19th century and actually became the foundation of the later leftist ideas in Russia, despite the diversity of views among its thinkers, but based on the commonalities in its thought It was noticed by the authors.

Based on this, the authors found that the claimants of the idea of Russian populism,

based on the understanding and perception of the Russian society of that period, came to the conclusion that the crisis that occurred in the pillars of the monarchy system and shook the structure of the thousand-year-old tsarist government in such a way that it has deprived it of the ability to rebuild and adapt to modern conditions, and as a result, for a precise understanding of this situation, it is necessary to consider it in the framework of crisis thinking.

The issue that they emphasized more than anything else was the class oppression, especially of the Russian peasants and villagers, who comprised more than ninety percent of the Russian society at that time, and the scope and extent of this oppression was so great that except It will not be possible by thinking about an ideal situation

and that too with the help of neglected and forgotten Russian traditions, and therefore with a new understanding that is generally derived from the western constitutionalist and liberal thought and especially its English type and also the French socialists thoughts Before Marx, tried to rebuild the old Russian and Slavic system and built their imaginary society based on the Russian mirs, whose most important feature was common livelihood and Slavic justice and brotherhood.

In order to achieve this imaginary society as an alternative to the powerful and oppressive tsarist government, the Narodniks

or Russian populists tried to first train the educated youth with the aim of sending them to the peasants and villages based on the idea of their ideal society and spread it all over Russia to cover their education and this subject became a basic issue for them in the 1860s to 1880s and thousands of young Russians were sent to the villagers with justice motives and with the aim of raising awareness. Although the desired result was not achieved, the ground was provided for the development of communist ideas, and in the following decades, they were able to take power gradually based on this experience and taking advantage of some of its results.

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