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Paper title: The Birth of Civil Society in Contemporary Bulgaria

Abstract: After the eruption of the economic crisis and the respective failure of the austerity planning in the European Union, and two years after the “withdrawal” of the indignant from the central squares across Europe, civil society entered into a next phase of protest. Almost at the same time different societies stood up to demonstrate dissatisfaction with current conditions and to claim something new for themselves.

The paper is going to examine the nature of social protest in Bulgaria that sparked after the controversial appointment of Member of Parliament and media magnate with alleged connections to the mafia, for director of the State Agency for National Security (SANS). Within a few hours of his appointment, social media flooded with calls for mass protests, giving a rise to a phenomenon of persistent protest in the country unseen since the winter of 1997. Initially asking for the withdrawal of Peevski from the assigned position, the protests subsequently developed into a massive outcry against all manifestations of non-transparent governance, demanding the resignation of the recently elected government. Peaceful protests have continued for more than forty days. Protesters demand a genuine and functioning democratic state and deplored all allegations that their demonstrations were staged and paid for by those who want to undermine the new government. In a post-ideological political environment citizens of all political specter participate in the protest. An analysis of both the civil side reasoning their stay on the street and the political parties within and without Bulgarian Parliament in their attempts to utilize the dynamics of protest into their own benefit will be provided. Next, the research will highlight the growing lack of trust in state institutions as a whole.

The paper will conclude with an evaluation of the positive aspects of the current political and parliamentary crisis, analyzing the basis created for introducing a political reform, and giving birth to a vibrant and strongly engaged civil society breaking every remaining link with the Communist past.