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Paradoxes of Contemporary Democracy – Partial Independence and Incrementalism

*In the Case of Political and Bank Crises
in Bulgaria 2013-2014*

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Abstract

There are now expanding debates on the disappearance of the political and the emergence of a post-political or post-democratic social configuration. We explore this post-democratization in the light of the South East European and Bulgarian experience. We argue that the contemporary democracy in Europe, especially in SEE, represents a mixture of top-down and bottom-up systems with complex network dynamics, as well as partially overlapping and partially independent incremental policies. As a result, this process leads to a greater publicity than politics and contributes to a very slow but simultaneous change in the way that actors operate.

We proceed in several steps. **First**, we discuss the configuration of post-democracy. The political has merged to techno-managerial governance. However, this drives manifestations of discontent and instability¹ such as the protests in 2013 and 2014 in Bulgaria. **Second**, we propose theoretical models that help us in framing the dimensions and the drivers of the process. **Third**, we present evidence from the last three years of social protests, political and bank crises in Bulgaria. The paper explores the tension between the politics (as something contextual) and the global corporate interests which capture the democratic procedures no matter of the context.

Paradoxes of democracy

The *first paradox* of democracy is that this form of governance has achieved a significant territorial spread, and at the same time there is a serious stagnation in the developed countries because of a huge electoral apathy among the voters.² We can see the same process also in the new democracies in South East Europe. Some of the problems are even more visible, such as the domination of elites over citizens.³ In the region these questions are continuously on the political agenda of the societies because of the long process of transition to market economy and democratic political system, including accession to and membership in EU and NATO.

The *second paradox* of democracy is that in the present moment advanced European democracies and transitional European democracies are meeting the same problems and

¹ See also Swyngedouw, Erik (2011) Interrogating post-democratization: Reclaiming egalitarian political spaces, *Political Geography*, pp. 1-11.

² See Kursar, Tonči (2013) *In a post-democracy trap*, 7th ECPR General Conference, September 4-7, Bordeaux.

³ See Kalev, Leif (2011) Book Review: Post-Communism and Post-Democracy, *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, Vol 3 / Issue 1, pp. 92-95.

transformations of democracy. Whether the roots are in postcommunism⁴ or in the cartelisation of politics⁵, the challenges to democracy have become remarkably similar.

To understand these paradoxes, we will first define the contemporary democracy as post-democracy and then we will try to fit it in the policy making models. The concept of post-democracy⁶ refers to a political system which has democratic characteristics but is experiencing a lack of real democratic participation and content. The problem is the poor state of democracy not only because of the transition in the SEE region, but also because of the globalization, the deregulation of financial markets and the interdependence between corporate and political logic of management.

The interest in defining the concept of post-democracy has increased since 2008 as a consequence of the global crisis. It is usually connected to Colin Crouch but the ideas are familiar from earlier.⁷ Post-democracy actually was introduced from Jacques Rancière in the 90-thies. He understands post-democracy as the 'rule of experts' or the governance of 'the most intelligent'.⁸ Richard Rorty considers post-democracy in the context of a strengthening of the public security abolishing the democratic institutions, for example the rule of law, the authority's responsibility, the court independence and the media freedom. The democratic institutions remain in place. In some areas, such as government transparency, citizens' associations, and other new forms of participation, the democracy is growing. However, the decline occurs in the citizen-based politics that turns into power play between elites.⁹ Thus, democracy changes to a kind of despotism which is imposing an inherited nomenclature.¹⁰

⁴ See Ágh, Attila (2010) Post-Accession Crisis in the New Member States: Progression of Backsliding in the EU? *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 2(1), pp. 74-95.

⁵ See Katz, Richard S., Mair, Peter (2009) The Cartel Party Thesis: A Restatement, *Perspectives on Politics* 7(4), pp. 753-765.

⁶ See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁷ The gap between the expectations of the voters and the opportunities of government are discussed also by Habermas and other public choice authors. Cartel parties are explored by Katz and Mair. Colin Hay examines political participation with clear empirical indicators. Sørensen analyses the adjustment of government and democracy to globalization.⁷ See for more details and a good overview: Dryzek, John, Dunleavy, Patrick (2009) *Theories of the Democratic State*. Houndmills. NY: PalgraveMacmillan, pp. 100-128; Katz, Richard S., Mair, Peter (2009) *Op. cit*; Hay, Colin (2007) *Why We Hate Politics?* Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press; Sørensen, Georg (2004) *The Transformation of the State. Beyond the Myth of Retreat*. Houndmills, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

⁸ See Rancière, Jacques (2007) *On the Shores of Politics*, NY: Verso, p.35.

⁹ See Kalev, Leif (2011) *Op. cit*.

¹⁰ See Rorty, Richard (2004) Post-Democracy, *London Review of Books*, 26 (7): 10-11.

In general, post-democracy is a system in which an oligarchy, using the existing democratic procedures, pushes people away from politics and directs them towards private and social media activities, internet and consumer society. It reflects the unstable nature of democracy. That means the problems of post-democracy are not new.¹¹ The transition period in South East Europe in the 90-thies multiply the effects and gives some specific manifestations of them but is not the root cause. The crisis was caused by the economic evolution which democracy couldn't address.¹²

Within the advanced democratic countries politicians receive less respect from the public and mass media than perhaps ever before. They are today afraid to shape the political agenda, preferring to define it from the findings of market research and opinion polls. There are successful cases of more transparent governance and reforms. However, there are two types of active democratic citizens. On one hand is the positive citizenship, where groups and organizations develop collective identities and formulate demands based on them, which they pass on to the political system. On the other hand is the negative activism of blame and complaint, where the main aim of political controversy is to see politicians taking responsibility. **Democracy needs both of these approaches to citizenship, but at the present time the negative is receiving more emphasis than the positive.** The negative model represents the passive approach to democracy, the idea that politics is essentially an affair of elites, who are then subject to blaming and shaming by society. Paradoxically, every time when there is a failure or disaster, when a minister or official resigns, this enforces the understanding that governance and politics is a business of small groups of elite decision-makers.¹³

In addition, there are other democratic forms of political participation, not only the electoral, such as pressure groups, NGOs, social media and digital media initiatives. However, we need to distinguish between cause activities which are seeking an action or legislation by public authorities, and those which tackle tasks directly and ignore politics. The latter have

¹¹ According to Crouch post-democracy is based on parabola which peak was achieved during the second half of the XXth century, when the welfare of employees was taken as the key element for achieving the optimum state of economy. That period of democracy started fading with the subsequent rise of the service sector in the 70-thies.

¹² See Kursar, Tonči (2013) *Op. cit.*

¹³ See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 4-5.

grown considerably in recent times. **But they cannot be accepted as indicators of the quality of democracy because they are turning away from politics.** More complex are the politically oriented lobbies which directly affect government policy. This is an evidence of a strong liberal society, but it is not the same as a strong democracy. Democracy requires certain equality in the possibility to affect political outcomes by all citizens.¹⁴ However, this is not the contemporary case. There is imbalance between corporative lobbyism and the interests of all other social groups. Governments try to imitate global firms as a role-model and try to rationalize their activities using the same principles. This often means outsourcing many services and activities.¹⁵

Institutions of post-democracy

Colin Crouch defines three key institutions of post-democracy. The **first** post-democratic institution is the so called **global firm**¹⁶ with two main manifestations: (a) the tendency for firms to change their identity rapidly through takeovers, mergers and reorganisations; (b) the growing fragmentation of the work force through temporary contracts, franchising and the self-employed status. Having a core business itself becomes rigidity. The most advanced firms outsource and subcontract more or less everything except a strategic financial decision-making capacity. That builds the phantom character of firms which constitute temporary, anonymous financial accumulations. Invisibility becomes a weapon.

Entrepreneurs and company managers acquire privileged access to politicians and civil servants. The power that they already possess within their firms becomes translated into political power. These things happen in societies which have lost the sense of a distinction between a public interest, guarded by public authorities, and private interests looking after themselves. The main problem here is that the concentration of huge power in the corporative sector gradually influences on state activities because corporate employees not only dominate on economy but they also become a class which rules over the state.¹⁷ In that new context, state and corporation don't compete with each other but rather it is the competition between

¹⁴ See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 5.

¹⁵ See Kalev, Leif (2011) *Op. cit.*

¹⁶ See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 12-20.

¹⁷ See Kursar, Tonči (2013) *Op. cit.*

different corporations for influence over the state and its subsidies.¹⁸ This new economy offers a sovereignty of consumers, as compensation for the missing democratic participation.

Lobbies on behalf of business interests always have an advantage, bring increased profits to the business and the costs constitute investment. Non-business interests can rarely claim anything and the success of their lobbying will not bring material reward, so their costs represent expenditure¹⁹. Institutions become a matter of profit. As a result, we are living and exploring the so called „inverted totalitarianism“ which is based on the depolitization of citizens who live in an atmosphere of fear.²⁰ A good government can only be one managing to look like an oligarchy to the oligarchs but, at the same time, a democracy to ordinary people.²¹

The **second** key institution is the **political party**. In the pure model of a democratic party it has the shape of concentric circles: the leaders are selected from the activists, who are selected from the party membership, which reflects the interests of those parts of the electorate which the party represents. A major function of the intermediate circles is to link political leaders to the electorate in a two-way interaction.

Recent changes have had major implications for the concentric model of party. There is an extension of circles of advisors and lobbyists around leaderships. The firms which gather around party leaderships can offer money to be used in national and television campaigns which have largely replaced local activities. From the point of view of a party leadership, relations with the new tight circles are easier. Their expertise is of more use than the enthusiasm which the ordinary party activist can offer.

While elections exist and can change governments, public electoral debate is a controlled spectacle, managed by teams of professional experts in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams.²² Politics is replaced by champions and prophets.²³ The public management of consensus relies on popular

¹⁸ See Wolin, Sheldon (1996) *Fugative Democracy*, in: Benhabib, S. (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contested Boundaries of the Political*, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 31-45.

¹⁹ See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 6.

²⁰ See Wolin, Sheldon (1996) *Op. cit.*

²¹ See Rancière, Jacques (1999) *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, p. 74, 113.

²² See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 4.

²³ See Rosanvallon, Pierre (2006) *Democracy past and future*. NY: Columbia University Press, p. 228.

views, fear, crises and the suggestion of pending catastrophe. For instance, there is similarity in the discourses about problems like competitiveness, environment, immigration, terrorism etc. The rise of radical groups and violent urban eruptions become arena of social conflict²⁴.

Post-democracy also makes a contribution to the character of political communication: brief messages requiring low concentration; the use of words to form high-impact images instead of arguments appealing to the intellect. Advertising is not a form of rational dialogue. You cannot answer it back. Its aim is not to engage in discussion but to persuade to elect a politician. Promotion of the claimed charismatic qualities of a party leader, and pictures of his or her person striking appropriate poses, take the place of debate over issues and conflicting interests. What occurs is that politicians promote images of their personal integrity and populist tactics focusing the emotions of people on enemy images and on security instead of freedom.²⁵ Adoption of advertising methods has helped politicians to cope with the problem of communicating to a mass public; but it has not served the cause of democracy itself.

The **third** main institution is the **social class**. The contemporary political discourse that social class no longer exists is itself a symptom of post-democracy. It is difficult to tell the class story of the contemporary society: diverse and heterogeneous groups of professionals, administrators, office and sales workers, employees of financial institutions and of public bureaucracies. As individuals they are the most likely to be found as active members of interest organizations and cause groups. But they are spread across a wide political spectrum, and therefore do not confront the political system with a clear agenda of demands.

In summary, it occurs that post-democracy is not just phenomena of our time. The challenges addressed via the notion of post-democracy reflect the periods of transition from totalitarianism to democracy, from nation states to globalization, from transnationalism or postmodern identities to multi-level or global governance.²⁶ It is important to understand the forces of disordering the democracy and to adjust the approach to political participation. That is

²⁴ See Swyngedouw, Erik (2011) *Op. cit.*

²⁵ See Todorov, Tzvetan (2014) *The inner enemies of democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 91-93. pp. 128-130.

²⁶ See Kalev, Leif (2011) *Op. cit.*

why Colin Crouch has called his essay 'coping with' post-democracy, not reversing or overcoming it²⁷.

In the following sections we try to match the post-democracy to the political models of decision-making, proving them through empirical evidence from the Bulgarian context.

Post-democracy in political models

The earliest models assume the policy making is a linear and consistent process, an assumption that is widely represented and criticised in the literature.²⁸ For that reason, government and institutions formulate a series of policy steps that help clarify the process through which observers monitor how a political system responds to public demands. Such a model allows focusing on various connections between different institutions, not solely to approach from a legalistic standpoint. This kind of process reflects the traditional idea of democracy and is not so compatible with the characteristics of post-democracy.

Pressman and Wildavsky offer more realistic assessment about contemporary democracy implementation as decision-making process. They argue that every policy has good chances for successful implementation at the initial stage. The main problem originates in the management chain – if the process involves many stages of decision-making and agencies with executive competencies, the less likely it is to implement the intended policies successfully.²⁹ Thus, despite its limitations, this implementation model highlights the role of the agents and their mutual adaption which shows that communication and political will are more important than the structure and institutions themselves.³⁰ That could explain the expanding marketing strategies and the multiply effect of the post-democracy type of communication, analysed in the previous sections.

²⁷ See Crouch, Colin (2004) *Post-democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 4.

²⁸ Harold Lasswell is one of the main researchers in this field. For more details see May, J., Wildavsky, Aaron. (1978) *The Policy Cycle*, London: Sage. Smith, Brian (1976) *Policy Making in British Government: An Analysis of Power and Rationality*, London: Martin Robertson. DeLeon, Peter (1999) *The Stages Approach to the Policy Process: What Has It Done? Where Is It Going?* – In: Sabatier, Paul (1999) *Theories of the Policy Process*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 19-35. There are also other stage models as these of Gary Brewer, Howlett and Ramesh, Pressman and Wildavsky, etc., for more details see: Howlett, Michael, Ramesh, M. (2003) *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York, Toronto, p. 12-13.

²⁹ See Pressman Jeffrey, Wildavsky, Aaron (1973) *Implementation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press – In: John, Peter (2012) *Analyzing Public Policy*, Second edition, London and New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 21-24.

³⁰ See Mazmanian Daniel, Sabatier, Paul, eds. (1981) *Effective Policy Implementation*, Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath.

Charles Lindblom suggests an alternative approach. By focusing not on the structure but on the incrementalism of the decision-making process, he introduces the concept of “muddling through”, which consists of successive limited comparisons in situation of existing policy. The model offers limited comparisons corresponding to implemented policies; it is additionally simplified as some of the effects and values are not included.³¹ Policies do not follow formal theoretical models, instead, negotiations’ and lobbying outcome can be a result of an accident or a conscious choice made for a specific politics - made by one (or both) of the participants. The criterion for a good decision is not the achievement of the goal but the consensus and the process to it. So, it reinforces the consensual logic, ignoring the political debate of the post-democracy. From this perspective, post-democracy is logical and rational. The inconsistency, the overlapping of competencies, the lack of reaction at time, and the co-existence of incompatible analytical frameworks is obvious and there is no better way to design them. The nature of the democracy is out of the responsibilities of the government or the corporations and the outbreak of a crisis situation cannot be a criterion for the quality of democracy. The democratic process from the point of view of incrementalism represents the institutions as a form of political power which defines the outputs and the outcomes of the policies as well as the difference between the institutions by their activities.³² These institutions depict a relationship between the informal (economic) and the formal mechanisms of policy making. They may stimulate certain patterns of behaviour and limit others.²⁰ Such an approach is helpful in analysing the mechanisms of post-democracy because it places the political and corporate elite in a social context.

Next, the **John Kingdon’s** multiple-streams model offers a more comprehensive framework that includes the political system, the importance of concrete agents, ideas, institutions and external processes.²¹ His main idea is to study not the stability of policies but the permanent changes and interdependence between the elements of the political process. Kingdon’s model identifies three main streams: problems, policies and politics. (1) *problems*

³¹ See Lindblom, Charles ‘The Science of Muddling Through’, *Public Administration Review*, 19 (2), 1959, pp. 78-89, cit. from: Parsons Wayne, (1995) *Public Policy*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar, pp. ; 84-85; 286-287.

³² See March, James, Olsen, Johan (1989) *Rediscovering Institutions*, New York, NY: Free Press.

represent data and explanation about different political issues (for example, in our analysis these are the political participation, the emergence of corporate-political elite and the emergence of cooperation); (2) *policies* includes struggle between different decisions and their supporters (for example, in this paper these are the relationships driving cooperation, and the institutionalisation) (3) *politics* addresses the decision-making process, the political responsibility and the official competencies of different agencies (for example, in this paper, we attribute the third stream to outsourcing and privatisation of public services). The streams may be independent from one another or may interact with each other and could interrupt or force policies and agendas. Unexpected events or urgent problems may serve as political windows for new policies.³³ After possible policies are discussed, decision-makers move onto other problems. However, the initial decisions create a new set of problems, which consequently leads to the inclusion of a new group of decision-makers and results in a chaotic decision-making process as those who make decisions operate in a changing set of problems and solutions. Thus, Kingdon's model expands beyond the "garbage can" metaphor referred in the organisational choice literature³⁴. It applies the idea to the wider political process that has characteristics of an organised anarchy. As a result, the process leads to constant change and periodic intervention of all actors associated with the decision.³⁵ The multiple-streams model explains the existence of democratic procedures with post-democratic content. While the politics and problems "swim" in the political "primordial soup," the political system applies a strong influence in shaping the agenda, thus leading to transfusion effects from one policy sector to another by establishing precedents, new principles and procedures and learning approach for policy communication.³⁶

Finally, **Baumgartner and Jones's** approach, about the punctuated-equilibrium³⁷, rests on an analogy with the evolution theory, according to which evolutionary changes are characterized

³³ See Kingdon John (1984) *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Boston: Little, Brown, p. 21

³⁴ See Cohen Michael, March James, Olsen, Johan 'A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17 (March), 1972, pp. 1–25.

³⁵ See John, Peter (2012) *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 160.

³⁷ See for more details: Baumgartner Frank, Jones, Bryan (1993) *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).

with long periods of stability interrupted from episodes of fast development.³⁸ It can give us some ideas, why post-democracy is not a revolution but is expanding in different kind of systems and countries (transition countries, advanced countries, weak countries) with different political development.

To sum up, the mechanism of post-democracy cannot be explained with a single policy making model. While these models deal with different levels of governmental, economic and social agents and issues. Instead, we argue that the post-democracy in Europe, especially SEE, and Bulgaria in particular, represents a mixture of top-down and bottom-up systems with complex network dynamics, as well as partially overlapping and partially independent incremental policies. As a result, this process leads to a greater publicity than politics and contributes to a very slow but simultaneous change in the way actors operate.

Empirical evidence

The empirical base of the analysis is the political protests and the bank crisis in Bulgaria in the period 2013-2014.³⁹ The protests in February 2013 and June-November 2013 reflect most closely the problems of post-democracy itself. The bank crisis in Bulgaria in the summer of 2014 shows how the patterns of post-democracy are reinforced by actual mechanisms and models of policy making.

The **first** protest was in the winter of 2013 and covered more than 30 cities in Bulgaria, reaching over 100 000 people on a daily basis. Bulgarians working and living in many places abroad also protested in solidarity with what was happening in Bulgaria. Initially it was caused by high electricity bills for December 2012 and January 2013 and it was pointed against electricity distribution companies. These are private companies that have a monopoly in state regulated electricity market. During the protest, people were expanding their demands and directed them against the political system and the political elite from the entire transitional period after 1989.

³⁸ See Sabatier, Paul (1999) *Op.cit.*, p. 9.

³⁹ For useful review of the political development in Bulgaria 2009-2013 see also: Hadzhiev, Boyan (2015) *The Impact of New Media on the Civil Society (in the Case of the Development of Protest Movements in Bulgaria 2009-2013)*, Sofia: UNWE Press Complex. (in Bulgarian)

The demonstrations grew into civil disobedience. Key roads and highways were blocked; various objects were thrown at cars of the police, buildings of energy distributors, the Ministry of Economy and the Parliament. In protests actively were participating extreme left-wing activists, anarchists, communists, football supporters, students, people close to the group of “Anonymous”, patriotic organizations.

Violence broke out between police and citizens, and there were cases of spontaneous self oil combustion of protesters which led to the resignation of the government of Boyko Borisov in February 2013. The resignation was accompanied by a demonstration of support for the government which became characteristic of the next protests in Bulgaria. These are the so-called counter protests, organized usually from ruling party's headquarters, much smaller than the anti-governmental one but widely reflected by the media.

Economic demands of protesting citizens were related to nationalization of the electricity distribution companies; eliminating all negotiators between The National Electricity Company (NEC) and consumers through individual contracts; declassification of all contracts in the energy sector and the liability of the signatory parties; export suspension of nuclear electricity to satisfy the needs of the domestic market. Political demands included implementing of a majority election system; reducing the number of representatives in the Parliament; and overcoming of poverty and demographic crisis.

Consequently, the protest had a particular trigger, but there was no clear focus and responsible institutions because the contracts of electricity distribution companies were legal. It was rather against injustice and the feeling of the people that they were excluded from political decision-making but were paying the price of the policy decisions. The lack of trust was toward the entire political class and the whole Bulgarian elite, because too often the transition had been used to benefit private interests not social.

Important appearance of the protest was the desire of people explicitly to distinguish from all political parties. The political as such was rejected and ignored, making it difficult to formulate specific demands which are simultaneously political and non-political and to implement them in a democratic system but without political parties. The government was using this to diminish the protesting citizens as people who didn't know what they want.

The **second** protest continued several months beginning in June 2013 until November 2013 and was directed against non-transparent appointments by the government especially that of Delian Peevski as chairman of the State Agency “National Security”, and links of government and political elite with the oligarchy and organized crime.

The question of who exactly nominated Peevski as a candidate for chairman of the National Security Agency remained without a formal reply and was the main question of protesting people (“Who?” became the name of the model of post-democratic governance in Bulgaria). On June 19, 2013 Delian Peevski nomination was withdrawn. However, protests continued demanding the resignation of the government, who had been just formed after early elections held on May 12, 2013.

The protest was a value based and called for moral renewal and placement of new value fundamentals of Bulgarian policy system. It was defined also as the protest of smart, beautiful working and educated young people in Bulgaria. There were no economic demands or motives. The protest took place primarily in Sofia and in the different days consisted of 10 000 to 50 000 people, although media reported much lower numbers.

The scope of the protest and the profile of protesters were used by the government to oppose the capital city to other part of the country and to divide the population in educated working people who have time to walk around and to demonstrate versus poor uneducated people who only want lower electricity bills.

The main demand was for resignation of the government and new elections. Protesters were keen to keep the protest peaceful and this was largely achieved despite various excesses with the leader of Ataka – party of the radical spectrum that informally supported the government and the use of power against the people in an attempt to bring representatives out the occupied Parliament.

Again, protesting citizens strongly distinguished from all political parties and didn’t negotiate with the government as it had happened in February 2013. There was no clear idea how to reform the political system without parties but only with NGOs. There were also numerous counter protests organized by the ruling party. The government didn’t resign and was hoping of the summer vacations and the tiredness of protesters.

As for failing to achieve the sense of justice and legitimate political system, the protest expanded in October 2013 in student's occupation of Sofia University and other universities in the country. The occupation lasted about a month going with large students protests every day. The demands were the same – about morality in politics and about elimination of oligarchic governance model. In November there was occupation of the Parliament, coinciding with the celebration of 24 years since the fall of totalitarian regime (November 10, 2013). The Police used violence against the people but this was again not enough for the government to resign. This created a sense of powerlessness and inability to reform the system and stimulated a negative citizenship. The government resigned finally, on July 23, 2014, after 405 days of anti-government's protests. As a result of this protest has been the creation of extra-parliamentary political projects and movements to actively participate in the political agenda of the country.

Both protests reflect the key dimensions of post-democracy discussed in previous sections of the paper – like the significance of the global firm in the face of electricity distribution companies; the inability of the state to regulate the market; the missing agents to take responsibility; the role of media as a platform for the elite, not as a mediator between government and citizens; the ignorance by society of looking for the political problem solutions and demand for civil alternatives; the low electoral activity despite protests; the social/class division of the protesting people; the institutional bias to wait for things to happen by themselves, to control information, to gain political benefits and to make controversial decisions about taking a debt or important appointments etc. However, civil society in Bulgaria recognizes the root causes of problems in the transition period after 1989, rather than in the patterns of post-democracy or the institutional models, which are reinforcing it. The problems are perceived as specific Bulgarian context or culture, rather than as a global transformation of democracy.

In the following paragraphs we will look at the bank crisis in summer of 2014, which indicated the network dynamics of post-democracy, the opacity in the actions of institutions, the social lack of trust in them and how the collision of economic interests could lead to a redistribution of political power.

Corporate Commercial Bank was a Bulgarian bank, founded in 1994. It grew rapidly in the period from 2007 to 2014 and went bankrupt. In the period 2007-2014 it has become the fourth largest bank in Bulgaria in terms of assets, third in earnings and first in growth rate of deposits. With the increasing importance of the bank, Tsvetan Vasilev, its owner, was widely reported as one of the standing backstage figures in Bulgarian politics. According to the newspaper Capital, the bank enjoyed political protection which allowed it to absorb public resource and directed it to acquire private assets. The Bank had ownership interests in companies such as Bulgartabac, BTC, Technopolis, Petrol, Dunarit and others. There was interconnection and confluence of media, political, regulatory and judiciary power in a system controlled by Tsvetan Vassilev and his partner Delyan Peevski.⁴⁰ Some media set Tsvetan Vassilev and CCB as informal coalition partner of all governments in Bulgaria.⁴¹ The bank concentrated much of state money and in return the owned media channels provided comfort to the government and thus affected the Bulgarian political life.⁴²

In the spring of 2014 between the two partners Vassilev and Peevski accumulated an economic tension which the media associated with dispute about Bulgartabac.⁴³ CCB had funded many common projects and it was the moment when Tsvetan Vassilev had insisted Peevski to return part of the money. The institutions were involved through their mechanisms of actions and stagnancy. There was an investigation from the Prosecution and requisition of the offices of CCB and another investigation about attempted murder of Peevski.

In June 2014 the press started publishing negative news related to the CCB.⁴⁴ Depositors began to withdraw their money from the bank and panic occurred. The management of CCB informed the Bulgarian National Bank (BNB) about running out of liquidity and suspension of

⁴⁰ Rise and Fall of CCB, Special edition, *Capital*, 2015, http://www.capital.bg/specialni_izdaniia/temata_ktb/, accessed on 18.06.2016 (in Bulgarian)

⁴¹ Popov, Boicho, Attacks by Tsvetan Vasilev started in 2009, *Investor.bg*, March 25, 2013, <http://www.investor.bg/ikonomika-i-politika/332/a/ikonomedia-atakite-na-cvetan-vasilev-zapochnaha-oshte-prez-2009-g-148733/>, accessed on 18.06.2016 (in Bulgarian)

⁴² For more details see Stoyanov, Nikolay, The State CCB (The Use of the Bank's Concentration of Capital Ownership and Power is Illegal and Dangerous), *Capital*, March 29, 2013, http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/bulgaria/2013/03/29/2032173_durjavata_ktb/, accessed on 18.06.2016 (in Bulgarian)

⁴³ Rise and Fall of CCB, Special edition, 2015, *Op.cit.*

⁴⁴ "Bulgartabac" closed all of its bank accounts in CCB, *Sega*, June 16, 2014, <http://www.segabg.com/article.php?sid=2014061600019985015>, accessed on 18.06.2016 (in Bulgarian)

payments as well as all types of banking transactions.⁴⁵ The Central Bank put CCB under special supervision and appointed supervisors, promising CCB to open on July 21, 2014 which never happened. There was also other bank with liquidity problems in summer 2014 – First Investment Bank, but in this case the Central Bank reacted in different way and saved the bank. On November 6, 2014 BNB withdrew approval of CCB to carry out banking activities with grounds that the bank had violated the law by indirectly funded payments on loans to itself⁴⁶. On December 4, 2014 the Fund Deposit Guarantee began to pay the guaranteed deposits to depositors in the CCB.

For a year and a half there were three governments, two mass protests, and a bankrupt bank. These events lightened and showed the strength of the “Who” model which is personifying the Bulgarian post-democracy. At the end of this period – the fall of 2014, the model transformed and is going into new dimensions.

Our analysis has shown that the paradoxes of modern democracy are due to a combination of factors that have more objective organizational and institutional nature than ideological one. Greed in the developed countries or the transition from totalitarianism to democracy in Southeast Europe are both accelerators of the process, but not the root causes. Rather, the adaptation of the modern democratic state institutions to the network and risk society allows the agents of the post-democracy to acquire decisive importance. In the Bulgarian context, the state capture from the economic oligarchy has political and historical dimensions that provoke the civil society to react against them that means not against the post-democracy itself. People identify the lack of morality on personal level because of the incompetence and the past of political leaders, but not because of the economics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the post-democracy is not just a contemporary or only Bulgarian phenomena but transition periods and places reinforce it. However it is important to know that post-democracy has much deeper roots which have always been connected with attempts to abolish the

⁴⁵ See http://bnb.bg/PressOffice/POPressReleases/POPRDate/PR_20140620_BG, accessed on 18.06.2016. (in Bulgarian)

⁴⁶ Press release of BNB, Novemebr 6, 2014, http://bnb.bg/PressOffice/POPressReleases/POPRDate/PR_20141106_BG, accessed on 18.06.2016 (in Bulgarian)

belonging of people to the public sphere. Acknowledging the problems of the longer decision-making chains enables us to cope with them. In the same way, understanding the causes of the weakening of citizen's political activity allows us to develop strategies to improve the situation. The challenges addressed via the notion of post-democracy reflect the major contemporary transition, the adjustment of state and society to economic development. This is a fruitful field that requires extensive further research.

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