



Language

Major protests took place in Bulgaria in three stages. The first stage, which began in February with the burning of electricity bills that had doubled in a month, involved resistance to unemployment and government austerity policies (similar to the protests in Greece, Spain and elsewhere in Europe in response to the economic downturn), but included anger about corruption. These protests, which involved a mass demonstration outside parliament and seven people setting fire to themselves, and mobilized the poor and many from the countryside, demanded the resignation of the centre-right government led by Boiko Borisov. This demand was successful and resulted in a general election. A new government led by the Bulgarian Socialist Party in coalition with the (largely Turkish) Movement for Rights and Freedom was formed in May reliant on parliamentary support from the far-right Ataka MPs. The new government, headed by Plamen Oresharski, aroused popular anger in June when the government was seen to be reverting to collusion with corporate oligarchs in nominating a 'media mogul with shady connections' to a key national security post. Demonstrators immediately and successfully demanded his resignation, but continued throughout the summer to demand the resignation of the government as a whole. These protests, primarily by the urban middle class, did not succeed in their stated aim and began to reflect divergent political ideologies. They did, however, gain some support from European governments and the EU. (See: Ivan Krastev, '[Why Bulgaria's Protests Stand Out in Europe](#)' [1], Guardian, 30 July 2013).

The third phase was initiated by students at Sofia occupying the main lecture hall in late October, prompting other student occupations round the country (with some support from their lecturers) and promoting an 'Occupy Bulgaria' movement against corruption and calling for electoral reforms, easier removal of MPs and greater transparency. The students also backed the demand for the resignation of the government and highlighted the gap between rich and poor. In November they joined with trade unions to demonstrate outside parliament. Despite apparent widespread popular support, the student protests began to lose momentum by December. However, observers noted that the protests in 2013 had been almost entirely nonviolent, and had involved a range of imaginative and artistic actions – for example the recreation on July 14 of the Delacroix painting 'Liberty Leading the People', but substituting the Bulgarian for the French flag – which might provide a hopeful precedent for future mobilization.

Drezov, Kyriil, [A Neighbour in Turmoil: Two Waves of Popular Protest in 2013 Bulgaria](#) [2], In Gokay; Xypolia, [Reflections on Taksim – Gezi Park Protests in Turkey](#) [3] (H.1.c.ii. [Journal Articles and Substantial Assessments](#) [4]), Keele European Research Centre, Southeast Europe Series, Keele University, pp. 52-57

Gurov, Boris ; Zankina, Emilia, [Populism and the Construction of Political Charisma: Post-Transition Politics in Bulgaria](#) [5], Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 60, issue 1 (Jan/Feb), 2013, pp. 3-17

Article published just before protests erupted in February.

Junes, Tom, [Students Take Bulgaria's Protests to the Next Level. Can They Break the Political Stalemate?](#) [6], Transit. Europäische Revue, issue 44, 2013

Useful and well referenced analysis of student phase of protests, in context of earlier student protests in 1997 and wider national demonstrations in 2013.

Lipkis, Sarah, [2013: The Year of Bulgarian Protest](#) [7], World Policy Journal Blog, 17/12/2013, pp. -2

Nikolov, Nikolay ; Kurzydowski, Dessislava Hristova ; Merkova, Sonya ; Simeonova, Tanya, [Bulgaria: lost in transition](#) [8], OpenDemocracy.net, 10/12/2013,



Stresses that Bulgaria's corrupt and incompetent governments are result of the nature of the 1989 transition, the opportunities created then for members of the security services to seize economic, social and political power, and lack of public debate about the past.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/05/2024 - 15:55):<https://civilresistance.info/section/h-campaigns-against-government/h1-challenging-authoritarianism-neoliberalism-corruption-1>

Links

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/30/bulgaria-protests-europe> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/neighbour-turmoil-two-waves-popular-protest-2013-bulgaria> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/reflections-taksim-gezi-park-protests-turkey> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/section/h-campaigns-against-government/h1-challenging-authoritarianism-neoliberalism-corruption-4> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/populism-and-construction-political-charisma-post-transition-politics-bulgaria> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/students-take-bulgarias-protests-next-level-can-they-break-political-stalemate> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/2013-year-bulgarian-protest> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/bulgaria-lost-transition>