

IPW LECTURES

Sustainability vs. Democratization — Theoretical and Conceptual Exchanges

Roundtable:

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Abstract:

Undeniably actors described as 'opposition' in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Belarus have not been able to do what they were (and to a large extent still are) expected to, e.g. to lead the charge to democratic change. More than 25 years after independence, these countries appear to be as far from democratizing as ever and the autocratic regimes the only relevant political actors. Still, ending the observation there, or only focusing on who is to blame for this, does not provide the much-needed understanding of how political development and transformation could take place in these types of context. In the light of this, our roundtable is an attempt to offer a more constructive approach by introducing and problematizing the idea of 'sustainable opposition.' With the Azerbaijani and Belarusian cases as the point of departure, we will discuss if and how this concept of 'sustainable opposition' could be a way to escape the common understanding of 'opposition' in authoritarian states purely as an instrument for democratisation, and opposition-regime relations as a predetermined zero-sum game.

The roundtable is a cooperation between the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna and Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala University. It is organised within the framework of the three-year research project "Building Sustainable Opposition in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes," funded by the Swedish Research Council and hosted by the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala University, Sweden.