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Uppsala Forum Symposium

#Protest Baku: Is Azerbaijan next in line for a democratic revolution?

Following the so-called colour revolutions in other former Soviet republics many expected Azerbaijan to be the scene of the next popular uprising and ahead of parliamentary elections in 2005 there were great hopes. This hope vanished however. Nevertheless, a new wave of mobilization appears to be led by a generation of democracy activists in Azerbaijan strengthened by the growth of social media. Analysts and activists have described them as the beginning of an “Azerbaijani Spring”, indicating that what is happening in Azerbaijan can be linked to the Arab Spring.

This raises a number of interesting questions: what do these protests have in common and can they, despite their diversity, be seen as part of an on-going popular mobilization in Azerbaijan? Why is this happening now and what are really the chances of democratic reforms in Azerbaijan? Is it feasible to analyse contention in Azerbaijan from a more general theoretical perspective, or are there specific political, historical or cultural factors that are important in the making and breaking of protest in this particular context?

Date: Tuesday, May 21

Time: kl. 09.00-12.30

Venue: Auditorium Minus, Gustavianum , Akademigatan 3

No RSVP needed

The symposium is co-sponsored by Uppsala Forum and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and co-organized with the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies (UCRS).

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democracy, peace & justice

Program

9.00 Welcome Speech and Introduction

9.15-10.15 Session 1 – The Political Context: Change and Continuity

This session will focus on the specificities of political opposition in an authoritarian context as well as the relationship between the “old”, well-established political opposition and the “new” democracy-promoting youth movements and what their interaction might mean for democratization in the country.

Chair Professor Li Bennich-Björkman, UCRS

Speakers “New and old opposition in Azerbaijan”

Ms Shahla Sultanova, Independent journalist, Azerbaijan

“The agendas of domestic and international power struggle in Azerbaijan”

Dr Rashad Shirinov, independent political consultant, Azerbaijan

10.15-10.45 Coffee Break

10.45- 12.30 Session 2 – New methods of activism and anti-activism

In this session, that focuses on the tools used by democracy activists and their antagonists, the speakers will relate to various catalysts, facilitators and obstructions to democratic revolutions. The discussion will, among other things, touch upon the impact of social media on mobilization.

Chair Dr Sofie Bedford

Speakers “Who is online in Azerbaijan and why?”

Dr Katy Pearce, Assistant professor, Department of Communication, University of Washington, USA

“Usage of humor in the politics and public sphere of Azerbaijan”

Mr Adnan Hadjizade, Co-founder OL! Azerbaijan Youth Movement, Video blogger

Summary and final remarks by professor David Smith, UCRS