"Democratisation vs Regional Diversity during Transition: the Case of Ukraine"

Tea and Coffee from 17.00

All Welcome

ABSRACT

Academic literature often perceives regional diversity can be an obstacle for successful democratisation. To a large extent, this assumption is rooted into the notion of Rustow that national unity is a necessary condition for democratic transition (1970: 351). Recent in-depth studies on politics in transition states prove that in practice regional cleavages can be even favourable for democratisation (see Sasse, 2001 and 2010 for research on Ukraine). This paper tests the theoretical notion that regional cleavages can undermine democratisation. For doing this it uses a case-study on Ukraine. The first section summarizes the existing academic approaches towards interpreting regional diversity in Ukraine. Then the paper investigates if regional diversity has become an actual threat for (a) territorial integrity, and (b) democracy in Ukraine. The second section analyses the cases of territorial mobilization in Ukraine during the transition from authoritarian rule. The third section highlights the effects of territorial diversity on elections – a crucial element of a democratic polity and a main “barometer” of democratic achievements. The paper concludes that regional diversity in Ukraine did not undermine the state or democracy. On the contrary, its cross-cutting regional cleavages ended up ensuring both. Also, the paper shares an opinion on further research on this issue.