



The Color Revolutions

Lincoln A. Mitchell

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From late 2003 through mid-2005, a series of peaceful street protests toppled corrupt and undemocratic regimes in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan and ushered in the election of new presidents in all three nations. These movements—collectively known as the Color Revolutions—were greeted in the West as democratic breakthroughs that might thoroughly reshape the political terrain of the former Soviet Union.

But as Lincoln A. Mitchell explains in *The Color Revolutions*, it has since become clear that these protests were as much reflections of continuity as they were moments of radical change. Not only did these movements do little to spur democratic change in other post-Soviet states, but their impact on Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan themselves was quite different from what was initially expected. In fact, Mitchell suggests, the Color Revolutions are best understood as phases in each nation's long post-Communist transition: significant events, to be sure, but far short of true revolutions.

The Color Revolutions explores the causes and consequences of all three Color Revolutions—the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan—identifying both common themes and national variations. Mitchell's analysis also addresses the role of American democracy promotion programs, the responses of nondemocratic regimes to the Color Revolutions, the impact of these events on U.S.-Russian relations, and the failed "revolutions" in Azerbaijan and Belarus in 2005 and 2006.

At a time when the Arab Spring has raised hopes for democratic development in the Middle East, Mitchell's account of the Color Revolutions serves as a valuable reminder of the dangers of confusing dramatic moments with lasting democratic breakthroughs.

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