

Competing challengers and contested outcomes to state breakdown: the velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia.

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Competing Challengers and Contested Outcomes to State Breakdown: The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia

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Abstract

Why do some social movement challenges lead to revolution, others to reform, and others to repression? Current theory has overemphasized the impact of state breakdown on outcomes and has been limited by studies of single movements against the state. This article highlights multiple possible outcomes, explaining the eventual outcome by competition among challengers seeking to mobilize public support on their behalf. To develop this claim, I compare successful challengers with real and potential competitors in the velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989. I demonstrate that the democratic outcome was not given by the breakdown of the Leninist state; rather, it was the result of successful mobilization by the civic movements that linked their demands with striking theater networks, which enabled them to overcome their organizational deficiencies.

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