UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

Radical Labor Mobilization in El Salvador: Threats and Preexisting Structures in Local Environments of Protest, 1977-1981

A Thesis submitted in satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

In

Sociology

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DEDICATION

To Salvadoran activists who gave their lives in the critical years of dictatorship and Civil War, so the future generations could enjoy a democratic future (we could not keep)

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my advisor, Professor Paul Almeida for his invaluable advice and mentorship throughout all this research process. Also, to the other members of the Committee, Professor Dr. Kyle Dodson and Professor Nella Van Dyke for their helpful comments and feedback for enriching the analysis and results. Finally, I must recognize my appreciation for the support from Fulbright-LASPAU, of which I was a recipient in the period of 2019-2021.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

In this study I analyze the radical mobilization cycle sustained by the Salvadoran Labor movement between 1977 and 1981. In these years, Salvadoran organized workers were key contentious actors in what developed into a "revolutionary situation". To explain this process, this research employs a framework that combines insights from labor studies and social movements about the Global South. From labor studies, I draw from the literature of the contemporary transformation of the labor movement toward Social Movement Unionism (SMU), with a more activist and political profile. According to this perspective, labor movements following an SMU strategy have expanded their demands beyond work-related issues, forged alliances with communities and other contentious forces, widened the range of tactics employed, and combined institutional and non-institutional channels of actions. And from social movement studies, I consider, on one side, the process of inducement of mobilization from economic and political threats. From the other side of civil society agency, I examine the role of preexisting mobilization structures in enabling radical labor actions. Following an integrative model at the subnational level (combining organizational and structural dynamics), I argue that unions and other forms of labor organizations in El Salvador sustained a radical form of SMU protest when previous pro regime structures weakened under a hostile environment of transnational production and repression. These findings are based on the results of a cross sectional and time series study over 8 semesters and across 33 *municipios* (local units) where labor-based organizations were most active. Using negative-binomial mixed effects models, I find an increase in the likelihood of radical SMU labor actions with acts of state-sponsored repression, and heightened levels of transnational production. Radical forms of SMU protest were less likely to occur in localities with preexisting pro-regime labor unions.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I analyze the subnational structural and organizational conditions for radical labor mobilization in El Salvador between 1977 and 1981. Over the last three decades, in reaction to recent transformations in the capitalist productive processes and aspirations for democratization in autocracies, prominent labor organizations worldwide have changed their goals and tactics for protests. Against the expectations of a quiescence in labor protest under globalization (Piazza 2005), these labor organizations have (re)turned to a social movement profile by expanding their demands (including non-labor issues), forging coalitions with other contentious forces, combining multiple channels of actions, widening the range of tactics employed, and becoming a non-institutional political agent. Labor scholars studying this phenomenon call it "Social Movement Unionism" (SMU), which encompasses historical cases in the Global South, such as South Africa and Brazil (Seidman 1994), as well as new forms of labor mobilization against neoliberal reforms in the Global North (Fantasia 1989; Upchurch and Mathers 2012). Recently, the politicization of labor movements in the context of the Arab Spring has increased scholarly interest in radical local labor struggles in the context of global capitalism (Barrie and Ketchley 2018; Hartshorn 2018).

Although the last century has witnessed the institutionalization of labor movement organizations (unions) and forms of action (pre-planned strikes), work-based conflicts have developed beyond those limits (Fantasia 1989). I examine a case in which labor mobilization used non-conventional channels of action and used radical political demands against an authoritarian regime. Labor mobilization in El Salvador under a wave of radical protest (1977-1981) illustrates how, in spite of the country's low level of industrialization, organized workers played a neuralgic role amid a revolutionary situation that almost overthrew a half-century military regime (Almeida 2008b; Gould 2019; Menjívar 1982). This early combination of radical and SMU labor protest parallels the more studied cases of Brazil, South Africa and South Korea (von Holdt 2002; Park 2007; Riethof 2019). In addition, examining this case can contribute to address some questions SMU and labor radicalization that require further theoretical and empirical development (Yon 2016).

For radical labor mobilization I embrace a broad relational perspective: the adoption of contentious strategies and broad alliances in work-related struggles (Almeida 2006; Park 2007; Seidman 1994), which aim to political and revolutionary social transformations by disruptive and violent strategies (D'Urso and Longo 2018; della Porta 2018; Upchurch and Mathers 2012). Thus, in this particular type of SMU actions, labor movements radicalize both the means and goals of their mobilization actions. What are the organizational and structural determinants on radical SMU mobilization? In a closed authoritarian context, how does the level pre-existing labor oppositional structures boost the expansion of further radical mobilization? Conversely, do preexisting pro-regime labor structures associate with a contraction in radical labor protest? Under such political and organizational contexts, does the coexistence of economic threats associated with economic globalization and increasing repressive threats allow for the expansion of radical SMU labor protest? I examine these questions through a negative-binomial regression on protest-event data over the case of El Salvador between 1977 and 1981.

2. Labor Mobilization in the Radical Protest Wave of El Salvador

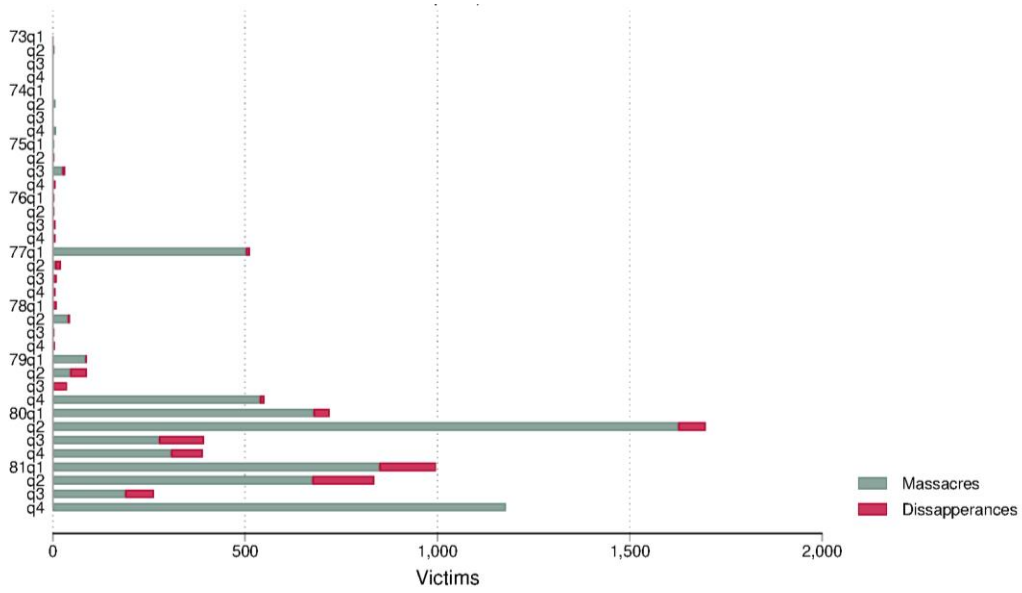
By 1979 El Salvador was at the brink of ending half century of military rule and starting a bloody Civil War of 12 years between an oppositional bloc lead by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation (FMLN) guerrilla, and a new military-civil counter-insurgent coalition (Williams and Walter 1997; Zinecker 2017). The 1970's was a decade defined by reversals within the developmentalist projects and gradual political reform. The abrupt end of the Central American Common Market with the Honduras-El Salvador war of 1969 and the Global Oil economic crisis (Almeida 2008b; Dunkerley 1985; Griffith and Gates 2002; López Pérez 1984) led to the abandonment of the contradictory experiment of industrialization without modifying the agrarian structure. Moreover, gains of the opposition parties in congress and elections forced the ruling coalition to retreat recent access to fair electoral competition, institutional access and free political expression (Almeida 2003). Like in the Brazilian case, instead of the authoritarian reformist consensus, the Salvadoran military regime –without a preceding change in the political-institutional elites– embraced an authoritarian path to neoliberalism capitalism (Drake 1996). The foundations of this order were an industrialization in association to foreign capital (Griffith and Gates 2002; López Pérez 1984), and a "Protection-Racket State" (Stanley 1996), a political order in which the armed and security forces justify their monopolistic control of political power as an extortion racket toward the economic elite, which in exchange received protection and guarantees to their material interests.

Amid the crisis of the military regime, a wave of radical mobilization exploded between 1977 and 1981. The irruption of this mobilization cycle reconfigured the whole oppositional field, creating a popular-revolutionary bloc that connected public protest, party-based action and insurgent mobilization (Alas 1982; Almeida 2008b; Chávez 2017). According to Almeida (2003), it was a political structure of threats that pushed collective actors to mobilize. Grievances were associated with, on one side, material pressures such as inflation, land distribution, salaries or food security amid the aftermath of a global economic recession (Almeida 2008b; López Pérez 1984). And on the other, with reversals in political and civil rights such as free speech, free association, the inviolability of house and body, and the closure of institutional access through multiparty elections (Williams and Walter 1997).

Several organizational changes had developed for the central place labor played in this cycle of mobilization. First, new actors incorporated into labor organizations, particularly rural workers and women, excluded actors –from engendered and internal-colonial suppositions of the social formation– and some of the most exploited in the models of accumulation (González Márquez 2017, 2021; Griffith and Gates 2002; Larín 1971; Viterna 2013). Second, a new generation of leaderships took control of grasroot organizations, willing to pressure established union bureaucracies, managers and local security forces (Gould 2019). Third, throughout the 1970's the share of labor oppositional organizations increased and diversified autonomous labor federations increase their share of control of labor organizations at the expense of coopted and corporative unions, and the number of federations and confederations increased. However, pro regime continued to exist and increased their rank members, organization and even street demonstrations (Flores Macal 1980; Guido Béjar 1990; Menjívar 1982). Forth, oppositional mobilization

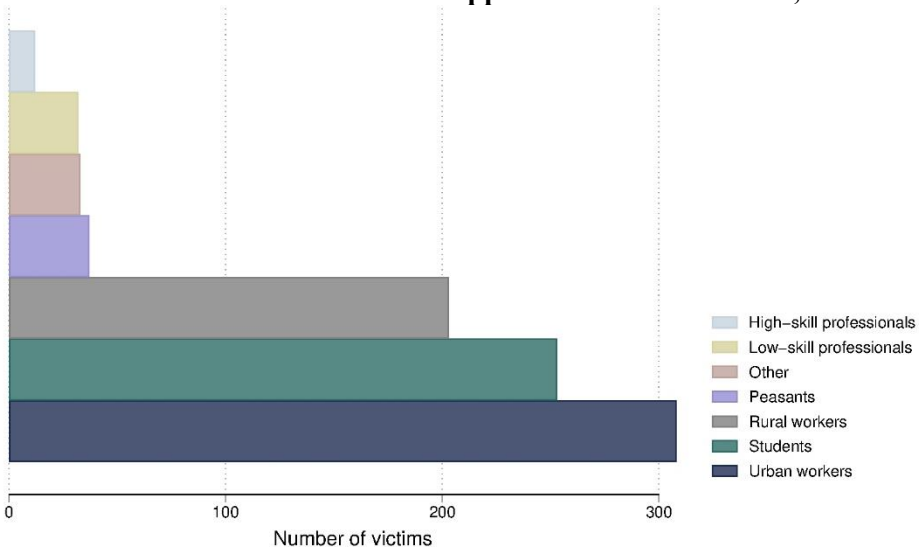
structures acquired a greater level of coordination and articulation with the creation of multisector organizations, called “Mass-Fronts”. These multisector organizations articulated sections of labor, education and peasant organizations into a single umbrella (Almeida 2005). The new organizational landscape probably motivated a competition for radicalization (della Porta 2018) among Mass-Fronts connected to revolutionary organizations (Pirker 2017)[1].

Figure 1: Victims of Massacres and Forced Disappearances in El Salvador, 1973-1981 (Years/Quarters)



Source: Voces and Rostros del Conflicto (2020), Socorro Juridico del Arzobispado (1982)

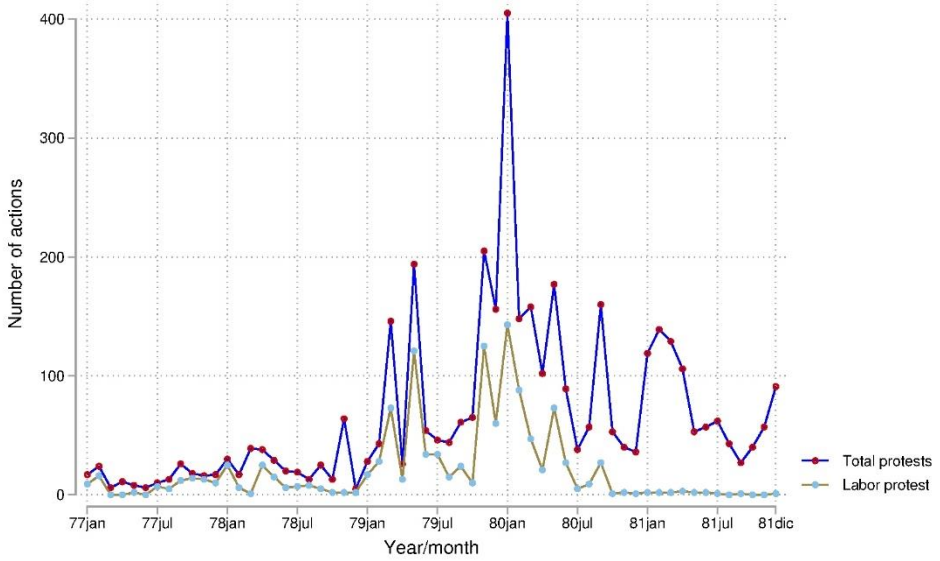
Figure 2: Social Sector of Victims of Forced Disappearances in El Salvador, 1973-1981



Source: Socorro Jurídico del Arzobispado (1982)

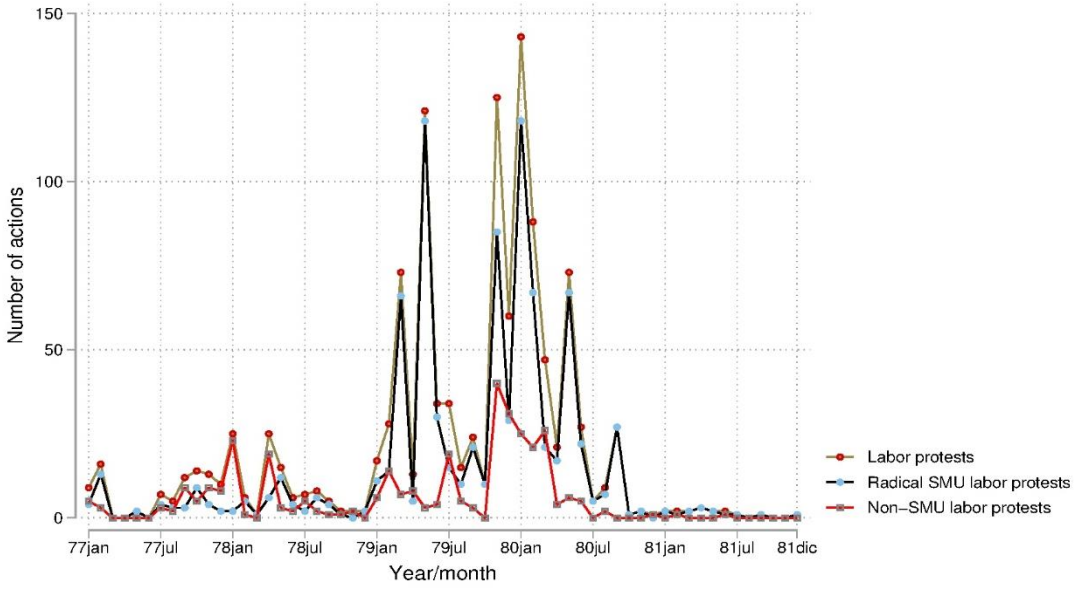
[1] The Revolutionary Coordination of Masses (CRM) as a master structure of all Mass Fronts, and the Unified Revolutionary Direction for all guerrilla structures or PMO’s. The latter then transformed in the FMLN guerrilla army.

Figure 3: Labor Protest in El Salvador in 1977-1981, Number of Actions Per Quarter



Source: Extended *Waves of Protest* dataset organized and coded by author (2020)

Figure 4: Radical SMU Protests and Non-Radical-SMU Labor Protests in El Salvador in 1977-1981, Number of Actions Per Quarter



Source: Extended *Waves of Protest* dataset organized and coded by author (2020)

The reaction to the enlargement of the oppositional field came in the form of one of the most dramatic examples of repression in the Western Hemisphere (Figure 1, Alas 1982; Melara Minero and Sprenkels 2017; Stanley 1996), characterized by mass murders (massacres), forced disappearances, kidnaps, tortures, and other forms of abuses. Because of their leadership in massive civil disobedience, Salvadoran workers accounted for 62

percent –distributed in 35 percent of urban workers, 23 percent of rural workers and 4 percent of low-skill professionals– of forced disappearances' denounces (Figure 2).

In this context, radical labor protest actions figured among the most prominent drivers of the wave of protest (Figure 3). Labor protest constituted approximately one third (32 percent) of total mobilization in the period. Radical SMU labor protest represented the majority of labor protest, rising to 68 percent of total labor protest and one quarter (22 percent) of total mobilization between 1974-1981. Concrete labor struggles immediately related to the larger panorama of social and political radical transformation and its repressive backlash (Gould 2019). The vast majority of labor mobilization arouse in the first quarter of 1979, and between the last quarter of 1979 and the first quarter of 1980 (Figure 3 and Figure 4). However, while other forms of mobilization continued in the subsequent year, labor mobilization halted in the last quarter of 1980 (Figure 3 and Figure 4). In 1979-1981, total labor protest and radical labor protest showed very similar trends (Figure 4). The main repertoire of labor protest events was strikes, reaching a fourth of all demonstrations, and equivalent to 77 percent of all labor mobilization. As previous studies have highlighted (Almeida 2008b, Guido Béjar 1990, Gould 2019), labor protest increasingly incorporated occupation of workplaces. As a disruptive tactic, there were occupations in 26 percent of strikes in 1979, in the hype of labor conflict.

3. Theorizing Contentious Labor Mobilization in the Global South

I argue that local protest environments with preexisting oppositional structures and without preeminence of non-oppositional organizations (pro regime) *along* increasing economic and repressive threats facilitate radical labor protest. These hypotheses rely on the suppositions that, on one side, the contingency of sociopolitical struggles depending on the agency and self-construction of organizing actors (Cohen and Arato 1999; Laclau and Mouffe 2018; Thompson 1966), and, at the same time, structural dynamics condition the definition of those contentious subjects (Hetland and Goodwin 2013; McAdam 1997; Morris 1984). Therefore, for approaching to radical mobilization in the Salvadoran labor movement, I rely in social movement literature and labor studies about the Global South.

3.1 Social Movement Unionism and Radical Labor Protest

I provide a definition on SMU based in late analytical approaches to this form of labor politics[2]. I consider SMU as a collection of organizational and contentious strategies from labor organizations –based in social movement actions– developed against multidimensional threats, in and out of the workplace, to the relative position of organized workers in the organization of production, the political system or in their sociocultural status (Almeida 2006, 2008a; Fairbrother 2008; von Holdt 2002; Upchurch and Mathers 2012). This new contentious profile encompass the following characteristics: (1) a combination of unconventional and conventional strategies and channels of action

[2] The debate within this theoretical tradition has moved from the first advocates of SMU as a prospective model for the future of labor movements based in New Social Movements theory (Waterman 2004), to later scholars standing for a more analytical approach. The latter attached SMU labor struggles under global capitalism in a richer dialogue with political process theory (von Holdt 2002; Park 2007; Upchurch and Mathers 2012). Yon identifies the latter as a necesary step for the further theoretical development of SMU (Yon 2016).

(von Holdt 2002); (2) a renovation of organizational structures, with greater leverage from grass-roots radical leaderships and the renovation (even creation) of new structures (Park 2007); (3) an amplification of demands to the political arena and of targets to the state, beyond regularized bargaining of immediate material benefits in the workplace (Upchurch and Mathers 2012); (4) a disruptive to violent profile in their repertoires and strategies of action in the public or in the workspace to pressure for social change (Fairbrother 2008, Almeida 2006), and (5) the articulation of diverse actors within labor organizations or in multisectorial coalitions (Waterman 2014, Almeida 2008a, Van Dyke, Dixon, and Carlon 2007). SMU represents at the same time a novelty from institutionalized models while reactivates the longstanding contentious traditions of labor movements (Thompson 1969). Besides, SMU contrasts with other models of unionism, such as Leninist vertical control (Waterman 2014), institutional unionism (Fairbrother 2008), business unionism (Fantasia 1989), or –particularly relevant in the Global South– corporativist unionism (Drake 1996; Zapata 1993).

Although the SMU literature has embraced political process theory, it does not distinguish the type of variations this labor organizing model can present according to the nature of demands and strategies of action employed, induced by the larger context (von Holdt 2002; Park 2007)[3]. I contend that radical SMU labor protest is a particular type of this form of labor politics different from reformist SMU labor protest more common in procedural democratic conditions. Thus, it is important to consider the multiple level of settings in which SMU labor protest erupts. In the general World-System context, SMU is part of the collection of labor resistances to global capitalism (Lerner and Bhatti 2016; Luce 2014; Piazza 2005). The new conditions of transnational production, increase exploitation and devaluation of labor as a component of social citizenship has implicated multiple grievances on organized labor, a former component of state-development social pacts in the Global North (Fantasia 1989) or –as subordinated corporative allies– in the Global South (Collier and Collier 2002; Drake 1996; Hartshorn 2018; Zapata 1993). Despite this global history, the integration to neoliberal capitalism in the specific social formation have varied according to the political system, if it is democratic or authoritarian (Robinson 2004). In the democratic spectrum, SMU had to contend economic reform in a procedural democratic context (the usual case in the Global North, see Fantasia, 1989), or in the middle of a process of democratization (Robinson 2006). Whereas in the authoritarian side, the integration to economic globalization could have been meddled with a de-democratization –as in the case of Chile (Drake 1996) or in post-apartheid South Africa (O'Connor 2017) – or a modification of economic model within the same authoritarian regime (as in the cases of Brazil, apartheid South Africa or the Arab Spring, Barrie and Ketchley 2018; Hartshorn 2018; Seidman 1994). In addition, the political process of each of these pathways could have been institutional, through a revolutionary situation or in a revolution (Tilly 1995). Each of this paths and orientation shape labor politics, including the type of SMU unionism. I assert radical forms of SMU protest tend to appear the more threatening the political and economic environment, such

3 Although a current derivation of SMU scholarship reframes it as Radical Political Unionism and states radicalization as an intrinsic feature of this form of labor mobilization (D'Urso and Longo 2018; Upchurch and Mathers 2012).

as in autocratic conditions and in revolutionary situations[4]. Finally, at the subnational level, radical SMU mobilization is unevenly distributed in time and space. This is likely due to the diverse organizational and structural configurations of local environments, which could either motivate or deter radical labor mobilization.

3.2 Preexisting Organizational Labor Structures: Oppositional and Pro Regime

The organizational dynamics in contentious politics is a key feature for understanding most social movements. The inquiry over organization structures has a long tradition in the study of the emergence and sustaining of mobilization (Kriesi 1996; McAdam 1997; Morris 1984; Zald and McCarthy 2017). Social movement organizations represent central nodes through which information, ideas and peoples circulate to manifest grievances, coordinate collective action, sustain protest over time, relate to allies and negotiate with antagonists (Morris 1984; Van Dyke 2017). Thus, the organizational infrastructure is central to the initial spark, the spatial expansion, the temporal sustainability and the afterlife of contentious collective action (Kriesi 1996; Zald and McCarthy 2017, van Dyke 2017). Among these aspects of social movement organizations, a growing research area aims to the ways in which contentious organizational activity ascends as a precondition for further rounds of protest (Inclán 2008; Mora 2020). In cycles of protest, previous organizations increase the likelihood of new rounds of mobilization by facilitating resource distribution (McAdam 1997). Regarding labor mobilization, preexisting organizations usually play an even more salient role, since unions and labor federations tend to become more stable than other social movement organizations (Yon 2016). Besides, studies on radical mobilization have stressed the process of generative adaptations –as reactions or spin-offs– from preexistent organization structures to a reorientation of means and goals in protest actions (Kriesi 1996)[5]. They also constitute sites of experimentation of repertoires, demands and organizational skills, amid changes in the environment and grass-roots pressures (Morris 1984; Van Dyke and Dixon 2013; Van Dyke et al. 2007). The internal competition among organizations might stand as a context for radicalization of either strategies or demands, or it could stand as well as a hindrance to certain forms of mobilization over others, such as non-radical and radical (della Porta 2018).

Studies of mobilization in the Global South have expanded this line of inquiry to adverse contexts of hostile political systems and weaker organizational leverage in Civil Society. Studies with a long-run perspective reveal the continuum of subaltern organizations, by interactive and performative interactions with the state (Coronel 2011) or from inherited mobilization structures from previous cycles of protest reactivated in a new one (Almeida 2008b). Other studies expose the effects of preexistent organizational structures in shorter time-spans and reduce spatial scales, by increasing the likelihood of future protest events (Inclán 2008) or in "demonstration effects" for protest participants (Barrie and Ketchley 2018). Under almost totally tight political conditions protest cycles arise from an interactive process of construction and destruction of the oppositional

[4] On the contrary, a democratic context as a model for incorporation to global capitalism would stimulate forms of SMU with reformist demands (see, Almeida 2006).

[5] This research moves in stark contrast to conceptions –based in "the Iron Law of Oligarchy"– of an innate tendency of movement organizations to bureaucratize, professionalize and moderate (Cohen and Arato 1999; Zald and McCarthy 2017).

organizational field. Osa (2001, 2003) and Pearlman (2020) provide key insights on mobilization structures and protest cycles under close repressive environments. In Osa's study in a single-party regime, the three moments of a protest cycle, pre-mobilization, mobilization and de-mobilization, set by the interactive relationship of oppositional organizations and public protest, with each pushing for the expansion of the other. This, likewise, shapes a reorientation of their political stance (oppositional or not), and reconfigures the overall "oppositional domain" of the political spectrum (Osa 2001). Thus, the analytical separation of oppositional and non-oppositional structures becomes critical. Pearlman (2020) –based in the extended negative case of radical protest without large preexisting structures in Syria– moves forward arguments advanced by Almeida (2008) and Inclán (2008), and questions the conventional sequence that draws an immediate causal path from preexisting structures to mobilization. Innovation and formation of mobilization structures *within* the same protest cycles is crucial under close conditions (Pearlman 2020)[6]. The author reaffirms the promise of focusing in short time-spans to include both inherited structures from previous cycles of protest and recent organizational invention. Nevertheless, these perspectives exclude other authoritarian contexts –such as the Salvadoran and most of the Latin American dictatorships– in which the organizational field exists yet precariously, and it is sharply divided between oppositional and non-oppositional (pro regime) structures. In such cases, the balance of both movements and counter-movements in the local environments of protest could ease or hinder radical labor mobilization.

3.3 Economic Threats

I approach to labor mobilization in the Global South following a threat model as an expanded version of political process theory. I consider the larger contextual dynamics in the political system, the production of culture or the material structures as a central component in the explanation of mobilization events (McAdam 1997). Despite the usual over-emphasis on the political structure of opportunities –including studies of labor mobilization in the Global South (Barrie and Ketchley 2018)– an increasing body of scholarship has reconsidered the construction of grievances from threats to collective goods and rights from actors (Almeida 2003; Simmons 2018). These studies signal separately either to different forms of threat, either political, economic or cultural. Notwithstanding, some labor literature has suggested the need to address the simultaneity of these threats to understand workers' contention (D'Urso and Longo 2018; Lorentzen 2013; Riethof 2019).

Economic threat approaches align with expanding research on how structural dynamics attached to capitalism (and moreover, other "systems of domination") induce mobilization (Bracey 2016; Hetland and Goodwin 2013; Morris 1984). Globalization and neoliberalism are interpreted as a threat that menaces gains and relatively established positions of actors in previous state-development projects –even in authoritarian developmentalist regimes (Chase-Dunn and Almeida 2020; Dodson 2016). This shift has implied pressures over food security, social safety systems, inflation, work stability, competition in the labor market, natural resources and educational opportunities (Almeida 2008a; Auyero 2001; Silva 2009; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). However, global

[6] Searching excessively for "antecedents… risks missing opportunities to conceptualize mobilization trajectories where agency plays an especially important role" (Pearlman 2020).

capitalism produces territorial inequalities in terms of level and forms of connectivity to the global chains of production, and of circulations of goods and people (Sassen 1996; Robinson 2003). And in consequence, contention against globalization becomes "glocal" (Auyero 2001) and with subnational variation (Almeida 2012), simultaneously marked by transnational forces, national processes and localized configurations of environments.

Studies centered in workers underscore how the transformations in the production process under transnational capitalism –with its devaluation of low-skill service labor over cognitive high-skill workers, increasing surveillance, feminization/racialization of flexible labor and creation of labor surplus– have propelled new rounds of "glocal" labor protests across the world (Luce 2014; Moghadan 1999). Labor literature on neoliberalism in the Global South characterizes the adoption of structural adjustment reforms as the main reason for the displacement of labor as a corporativist actor –if not a part of the ruling coalition– in authoritarian regimes, and its conversion into a contentious oppositional force (Drake 1996; Hartshorn 2018; Riethof 2019). In these contexts (such as in the recent the Arab Spring or in the resistance against military dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970's), political persecution of labor and economic threats acts simultaneously in a relatively established organizational infrastructure of workers. However, extant studies have not examined this organizational and structural relationship directly.

3.4 Repressive Threats

Repressive threats are particular type of political threat, the latter referring widely to changes in the political system that reverse existing political and civil rights. For repressive threats I understand the "retributive" actions –either from the State or from private entities– directed to impose a penalization on agents –individually or, in massive protest, socially identified– considered to stand as challengers (Earl 2011; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019). This definition moves beyond -encompassing– a more restrictive definition of repression as actions to "prevent, control, or constrain to non-institutional, collective action (e.g., protest)" (Earl 2011), and highlights the seek-of-retribution. Thomson (2018: 5-6) invites to disaggregate grievances according to direct attribution to state agents and "those which are caused by exogenous factors". Repression usually falls in the category of clear attribution to repressive agents (Almeida 2003). In spite of the literature vastness, there is a limited exploration on its implications for radical protest. Scholars subsume this problem within the larger inquiry (and contested research area) of whether repression associates with an increase or a decrease of mobilization –or a U-shape behavior, or a U-inverted behavior (Brockett 1993; Davenport and Inman 2012; Earl 2011; Honari 2018; Opp and Roehl 1990). Brocket's (1993) influential study on Central America –critic of rational choice theories, and favorable of exploring timing, previous organizations and social bonds as explanations– summarizes the repression literature findings on radical mobilization (Kriesi 1996; della Porta 2018; Thomson 2018): "When indiscriminate repression is directed against the population, the people who are already mobilized are more likely to continue their opposition than the people who are unmobilized are likely to act on their rage by initiating oppositional activities" (Brockett, 1993: 472-473).

Turning to the subnational level of analysis after the classical study of Opp and Rohel (1990) on repression and micromobilization, recent research has stressed the need of measuring time and space variations (Earl 2011; Earl and Soule 2010; Sullivan 2020);

the articulation of micro, meso and macro levels of analysis (Honari 2018); the type and history of the regime using repression, along cooptation or institutional participation (Xu 2020), and the trajectories of the social agents mobilizing despite or even against repression (Bloom 2020; Thomson 2018). The latter aspects –cooptation and repression, and agents' trajectories– coincide with studies on labor politics in the Global South (Drake 1996; Hartshorn 2018; Lorentzen 2013; O'Connor 2017).

4. Data and Methods

The study follows a quantitative research design of count-regression in order to compare negative-binomial effects in subnational units. Recent research in the field has employed this type of design for different dimensions of structural analysis of protest events when overdispersion is present (Almeida 2012; Leal 2020; Mangonnet and Arce 2017). For the data analysis, I reorganized and merged all the variables in a municipio/semester matrix. I use a semester (6 months) time-unit –instead of the usual round year– since shorter time-spans help capture often over-looked outcomes, particularly of repression (Earl and Soule 2010). The study employs a negative-binomial regression model comparing the probability of radical SMU protest actions (a non-negative integer) in El Salvador between 1978 and 1981 according to 4 variables of interest: preexisting labor oppostional structures and preexisting pro regime labor structures as organizational determinants, forced disappearance of workers, and industrial units with presence of transnational capital, as structural threats determinants. The assessment relied on three models: with no effects (Model 1), double fixed effects in time and space (Model 2) and –the main model– mixed effects, random and fixed (Model 3).

4.1 Dependent Variable

The study draws the data on radical labor mobilization from an extended version of Almeida's (2008) dataset from *Waves of Popular protest in El Salvador*, used by this author for the study of Salvadoran contention cycles throughout the twentieth century. The original *Waves of Protest* dataset compiled information about mobilization events' features from the major newspaper of national circulation (*La Prensa Gráfica,* right-wing oriented), and coded it as protest-events. In consequence, the *Waves of Protest* dataset contains relevant information radical SMU mobilization in El Salvador, including the date of the event, type of claim, type of action and location. As other protest-event dataset, it has the advantage to expand the amount of mobilization episodes in a particular social formation in comparison to official accounts, although it is particularly vulnerable to media biases in reporting protests, overemphasis in disruptive action and a rather loose treatment of protest demands (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Wada 2004).

To address these limitations, an expansion of the original *Waves of Protest* dataset incorporated new number of protest-events counted and variables of analysis. First, by adding an annex dataset on strikes also employed by Almeida (2008), containing more detailed information on labor mobilization. And second, by adding new information on protest-events –either of non-registered mobilization episodes or expanding on the information of registered events– from different sources: left-wing newspapers –*La Cronica del Pueblo* and *El Independiente*– and specialized literature (Dunkerley 1985; Gould 2019; Lungo 1987; Alas 1982).

The sample of study constitute the 33 municipios[7] with more than 2 episodes of labor protest between 1974 and 1981[8]. Based in a broad identity-based criteria (Fantasia 1989, Thompson 1966), I define labor protest as all collective action –three or more people– organized by actors under a labor identity (industrial workers, employees, farmworkers, etc.), independently of their type of action or their belonging to urban working groups. Although industrial workers' unions represented the majority of organized labor in El Salvador during the 1970s, they did not encompass all working-class oriented organizations. As research in Latin America and in El Salvador has evidenced, a wide range of groups involved in contentious politics also adopted working-class identity forms and organizations and must be considered part of the labor movement in El Salvador (Collier and Collier 2002; González Márquez 2017; Gould 2019; Griffith and Gates 2002; Larín 1971). Thus, I included rural workers (when organized as workers or make labor claims), low-level professionals, craftsmen, domestic service labor and state workers' protest actions. The total number of labor protests in El Salvador accounted by the 1974-1981 dataset ascended to 697 actions. For the period of heighten conflict (1978-1981), the number of events reduced to 604 labor protests.

The study identified radical SMU mobilization as the subsample of labor protest that carried political demands, targeted the state, or engaged in disruptive or violent tactics. In other words, if a labor protest event made either political demand (i.e. "free elections"); targeted a state agent in the protest (i.e. the parliament or the police), or used a disruptive tactic (i.e. an occupation or roadblock) or a violent one (i.e. a two-way armed confrontation with security forces) it was coded as radical labor protest[9]. On the contrary, if a labor action did not contain any of the previous features, it was classified as a non-radical SMU protest. Examples of such cases include events that carried out economic demands (e.g. "better wages"), targeted non-state agents (i.e. management of the company) or employed a routine form of protest (i.e. a demonstration or a public gathering).

4.2 Independent Variables

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the independent variables. The first independent variable is preexisting oppositional labor structures, which comprises the structures active in mobilization events reported in the extended *Waves of Protest* dataset attributed to unions and other labor organizations that belonged to the oppositional spectrum of the social movement field (i.e. a communist-leaning union). The second independent variable constituted preexisting pro-regime labor structures: all the labor organizations active that belonged to the pro-regime spectrum of the social movement field (i.e. a pro-government union). These two independent variables are mutually

[7] Municipios is the local political-administrative unit of El Salvador, comprised of an urban nucleus (divided in barrios) and the surrounding rural hinterland (divided in *cantones*, and the latter subdivided in *caseríos*). During these years, there was a total of 261 municipios. The majority of Salvadoran municipios had most of their population in the rural areas. Only a minority of 56 municipios (0.22 percent of the total) experienced at least 1 episode of labor mobilization between 1974 and 1981.

[8] The study excluded besides missing cases and national campaigns of mobilization with no municipio specification in the dataset.

[9] Violent actions were rather exceptional, only 9 observations in the period of 1978-1981 (and 12 in the extended period of 1974-1981). However, it is important to account for them considering as part of radical SMU actions in a revolutionary situation.

exclusive. Whereas for distinguishing labor organizations in these independent variables, I employed the same criteria that was used for the dependent variable, I based the ideological differentiation between these structures in the detailed mappings of Almeida (2008b) and Pirker (2017) over the orientation of the main protest organizations in the 1970s decade in El Salvador. In both cases, to measure their preexistence, I lagged their effects by one semester (*t-1*).

Figure 5: Descriptive Statistics, 1978-1981

	Observations	Mean	sd	Min	Max
SMU labor protest	264	2.28	8.24	0	80
Oppositional labor structures	264	2.22	7.83	0	77
Pro regime labor structures	264	0.34	1.54	0	15
Industrial Units with transnational capital	264	3.94	11.4	0	62
Forced disappearances of worker victims by municipio origin	264	1.37	4.67	0	61
Total number of mobilizations	264	8.84	25.0	0	277
Population	264	59932.2	74193.9	6957	417328

The third independent variable, economic threats, was constructed from a recent cross-sectional Dataset of Salvadoran Industrial Units from 1974-1981 that relied on the directories of the Salvadoran Association of Industrial Business (ASI). Based on the information on the national origin of factory ownership and the use of international franchises as indicators of the presence of foreign capital, this variable counts the number of industrial units with transnational capital presence per each municipio of the sample (those that either have franchises, foreign capital in their ownership or both). In contrast to the other independent variables, no lagged effects could be introduced in the number of industrial units with transnational capital since it is a time-invariant variable.

For the fourth independent variable on repressive threats, the study utilizes a dataset of forced disappearances which was created from a larger dataset of Human Rights violations documented by “Socorro Jurídico del Arzobispado” (Legal aid from the archbishop’s office) –a Catholic organization of legal support for victims of humans' rights. The variable records the disappearance in the municipio of the victims’ address. This variable differs from disappearance event by municipio, a less reliable count considering the particularities of this form of repression. Then, in the analysis, I separated the subset of this repression variable when it affected only workers (again, following the dependent variable criteria). Considering repression and mobilization follow an interactive relationship (Earl and Soule 2010; Honari 2018), in order to identify the responses to repression as cause of mobilization and not a consequence, I lagged forced disappearances by one semester (*t-1*) in each municipio of the sample.

4.3 Control Variables

The control variables comprise two sets of information. From the extended *Waves of Protest* dataset, I consider the total number of mobilizations in the municipio (non-lagged) to control for the “demonstration effects” (Barrie and Ketchley 2018) in the context of a Wave of Protest. To account for the differences among the different municipios of the sample, the study also controls for total population (*logged*) in the

municipio according to the Census of 1971 and the official estimations of population growth[10].

5. Results

To assess the conditions for radical labor mobilization in El Salvador during the protest wave of 1977 and 1981, I tested the likelihood of this type of mobilization in a sample of 33 municipios over 8 semesters according to organizational and structural configuring of the local environments of protest. I focused on the heightened years of the cycle of mobilization, between 1978 and 1981, for a total 264 municipio semester observations. I examined the likelihood for this type of mobilization considering the configuration of organizational settings and the level of economic and repressive threats at the subnational level. The study allows us to examine the influence of preexisting oppositional labor organizations and preexisting pro-regime labor organizations on future rounds of SMU protest under a threatening context. The models also allow us to estimate the impact of the economic threat of transnational capital and the repressive threat of forced disappearance on workers use of radical forms of grassroots labor mobilization.

Figure 6: Preexisting Oppositional and Pro Regime Labor Structures, and Economic and Political Threats in Radical Labor Protest in El Salvador, 1978-1981. Coefficients and Incident Rate Ratios (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficients	IRR‖	Coefficients	IRR‖	Coefficients	IRR‖
Preexisting oppositional labor structures active (*t-1*)	0.02	1.02	0.01	1.01	0.01	1.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Preexisting Pro regime labor structures active (*t-1*)	-0.11^	0.90	-0.10**	0.90	-0.12***	0.89
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Industrial Units with transnational capital	0.02	1.02	2.50	12.19	0.08***	1.08
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(2.35)	(28.59)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Forced disappearances of worker victims by municipio origin (*t-1*)	-0.03	0.97	0.10*	1.11	0.08**	1.08
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Total number of mobilizations	0.06	1.06	-0.00	1.00	-0.00	1.00
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Population (*log*)	-0.14	0.87	10.38	32281.41	0.17	1.19
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(10.25)	(330972.53)	(0.22)	(0.26)
lnalpha	0.93***	2.54	-2.96*	0.05	-1.65**	0.19
	(0.16)	(0.40)	(1.40)	(0.07)	(0.62)	(0.12)
var(_cons[municipio])					0.46**	1.59
					(0.15)	(0.23)
Observations	264		264		264	

^ p<.1, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

‖Exponentiated coefficients

Note: all models are negative binomial regressions employing clustered (by municipio) robust standard erros (standard errors in parentheses).

[10] These estimations provide data for population growth in each municipio for the years 1978 and 1979. In consequence, I held constant the population number between 1971 and 1978, and between 1979 and 1981. The only exception is the municipio of Apopa, for which lack of data forced the study to keep the 1971 constant for the whole period.

Table 2 presents the results of this integrative model employing a negative-binomial count regression. Overdispersion indicated in lnalpha scores confirm the preference of this estimation over Poisson regression. The analysis encompasses the examination of these factors without effects (Model 1), with double-fixed effects (Model 2) and with mixed-effects, fixed and random (Model 3). The latter model is better suited for the combination of time-variant and time-invariant predictors in a space time analysis and yields significant results for one of the organizational variables and both threat-based structural variables. Besides, using mixed effects permits the introduction of random effects while using robust cluster standard errors by municipio, as employed in Models 1 and 2. Thus, comparison of the models maintains consistency.

The findings for preexisting labor organizations fit partially with the expectations of the hypothesis stated. When preexisting *pro regime* labor organizations were active one semester before (*t-1*), then the expected count of radical labor mobilization presents decreases at a significant level in the three models: at 90 per cent confidence in Model 1 ($\alpha > .1$), 99 per cent in Model 2 ($\alpha > .01$) and at 99.9 per cent ($\alpha > .001$) in Model 3. However, preexisting *oppositional* labor structures (*t-1*) do not yield any significant results in association to radical labor mobilization. Therefore, the balance of the effects of oppositional and pro regime organizations leans toward pro-government labor as a factor that establishes impediments for the radical SMU protest, rather than previous oppositional mobilization as an enabling, positive factor. In terms of incidence, the prior existence of labor organizations favorable to the government represented a decrease between 0.89 (Model 3) and 0.90 (Models 1 and 2) per unit of radical labor protest, net of other factors.

However, structural threat variables held greater influence in radical labor mobilization over organizational predictors. Economic threats linked to the presence of transnational capital in industrial units yield positive significant results for the expected log count of radical SMU protest in Model 3 at the 99.9 per cent level of confidence ($\alpha > .001$), when employing fixed and random effects combined[11]. The incidence results in a 1.08 unit increase of radical labor protest associated with additions of industrial units with transnational capital ownership, controlling for preexisting organization structures, repressive threats, demonstration effects and population size of the municipio.

Repressive threats also conformed to the theoretical expectations of the study in terms of significance and direction of the expected count on radical labor mobilization. Forced disappearances of workers (*t-1*) was associated positively with radical labor protest, controlling for other factors, at the 95% level of confidence ($\alpha > .05$) in Model 2 and at 99% level of confidence $\alpha > .01$ in Model 3. The incidence of radical labor mobilization ranged between 1.11 (Model 2) and 1.08 (Model 3) of unit increase in forced disappearances. In consequence, in the model, the increase in the count of radical labor mobilization from the repressive threat of forced disappearances, net of other factors, reaches a similar impact on labor radicalism than from economic threats attached to transnational capital[12].

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[11] In Model 2, the results for this variable are overall unreliable: as a time-invariant variable, the use of double fixed-effects in time and space when only space apply produce high score with an exaggerated level of error. When using fixed effects in time and random effects (Model 3), the error and coefficients adjust.

[12] When testing the interaction of repressive and economic threats, the interaction effects return an insignificant association (it is only worth noting that the orientation of forced disappearance is reversed when moderated by the interaction of repression). Poisson regression yields similar results for the three models

6. Discussion

Model 3 supports the claim that radical labor mobilization between 1978 and 1981 was favored by both organizational and structural dynamics in the local environments of protest. The results indicate opportunities for the expansion of radical labor mobilization when those subnational environments presented an absence of previous pro regime organizations and experienced an increase of selective repression and a deeper presence of transnational production. This assessment brings several implications for radical SMU mobilization, preexisting organizations in hostile settings, and threat-motivated mobilization, particularly repressive threats and economic globalization.

First, the outcome calls into attention to the relevance of a contextualized definition of working-class radicalism. In the vein of Thompson (1966) and Fantasia (1989), understanding changes of labor contentious politics excluding the historical trajectory –as an abstract or mechanical dynamic– could be grossly misleading. On the contrary, labor radicalism stands in a "glocal" dynamic (Auyero 2001). Since the 1972 world-economic crisis, labor struggles enmesh with the take-off of global capitalism (Robinson 2004) and the local placement of organized labor within the political process of each society. As the Salvadoran case indicates, the constellation of processes necessary for the appearance of radical SMU mobilization materialized quite exceptionally, in terms of their presence, relative strength and embeddedness within a cycle of contention. The latter adds evidence on why this type of radical labor struggle does not thrust more commonly throughout Global South countries. However, when those conditions articulate to facilitate radical labor mobilization the outcome might be critical: in the twilight of the Cold War, the unprecedented Salvadoran labor mobilization –large within the Latin American context– was one of the backbones of an oppositional wave of contention that almost overthrows a powerful US-backed military dictatorship.

The significance of organizational and structural determinants in the short time-span of six months reflects the density –of events and processes– of cycles of contention under revolutionary and authoritarian contexts. Moreover, under such conditions, the presence of each of the dimensions of the model acquires salience: 1) the balance of pro regime and oppositional labor organizations; and 2) the addition of structural threats attached to transnational capital and local variations in political persecution (Almeida 2012; Earl and Soule 2010; Thomson 2018). Therefore, the results take into account the organizational realm and larger socio-structural conditions in a path of authoritarian reversals of state-led development protections (Almeida 2008b; Drake 1996) to understand the massive expansion of radical labor mobilization in the Salvadoran case. Above all, the expansion and radicalization of Salvadoran labor contention in such critical juncture stresses –rather than obscures– the agency of labor leaders and participants, who adapted and responded (Honari 2018; Pearlman 2020) to adverse

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Table 2 despite the overdispersion. Lagging the organizational predictors and repressive threats for a year (*t-2*) moderates the effect of the variables over radical labor mobilization. Finally, when using total labor mobilization as an alternative dependent variable, the direction of the coefficients holds, and incidence is similar: borderline greater for preexisting pro regime labor structures (in this case, moving to $\alpha > .05$) and minimally reduced for economic and repressive threats. The outcome of these alternative regressions and other tests are available upon request to the author

conditions within factories and in the public space by enhancing contentious labor mobilization against authoritarian rule, repression and exploitation. The specialized literature evidence –although not expands analytically– on the presence of this triggering factors of expanding repression and the context of a protest wave in other cases of SMU labor mobilization, such as in the recent wake of South African mine mobilization (O'Connor 2017), labor protest against military rule in Brazil (Riethof 2019) or workers' struggles amid the South Korea's democratic transition (Park 2007).

Second, the results add to the reconsideration of preexisting organizational structures within cycles of contention, particularly in hostile contexts. In this regard, organized labor moved in opposite directions: the internal construction of an autonomous space of workers far from the long history of corporative control from the authoritarian regime, and the articulation of labor with other sectors in multisector coalitions. While previous studies place preexisting organization as a control or as a function of the lagged dependent variable, this study adds to research that places immediate organizational precedent innovations as a key feature in explaining mobilization (Pearlman 2020, Almeida 2008b). In the extreme conditions of an adverse authoritarian context, preexisting organizations not only enter an interactive reinforcement with mobilization during cycles of contention, but they also shape the orientation (radical or moderate) of future round of protest. Regarding labor protest in El Salvador, the significance of this outcome requires two revisions to the extant literature: the weight of pro regime labor organizations as a negative incentive for future radical labor protest, and the limitations of oppositional structures to motivate further radical mobilization. The vast expansion of oppositional organization at the national and local levels in El Salvador during this period (Gould 2019; Pirker 2017; Flores Macal 1980; Guido Béjar) did not translate mechanically in radical SMU protest. Their effect for motivating radical labor contention was rather indirect: it added to the multiple economic and political crisis to reduce the presence of pro regime labor organization –which negatively impacted radical forms of labor mobilization– in local environments and allowed for an autonomous space for workers' contention. In other words, the expansion of the oppositional labor spectrum and the incorporation of workers to radical labor mobilization should be understood as intrinsically linked to the long history of labor corporativism in authoritarian settings.

Although the results of preexisting organization structures (and of forced disappearance) are sectorialized to labor, this does not disregard the mechanisms of articulation of labor with other mobilized sectors under this cycle of contention. On one hand, as sociohistorical research has pointed out, labor identities and forms of organization became an umbrella that expanded to other sectors, such as educators and rural population (Almeida 2005, González Márquez 2021). This enriched the scope of workers' mobilization: the actions of teachers' union action and peasants defining (and acting) as rural workers' actions became part of a diverse landscape of labor mobilization. On the other hand, the size of the organizational infrastructure and the high level of contention among workers spill over to activate other sectors through Mass Fronts (Pirker 2017, Almeida 2008b), which provided radical workers' mobilization a high leverage in the wave of protest. And finally, a third mechanism of articulation resides in the "carrying-out" capacity of labor mobilization of wider demands. The inclusion of political demands and turning state agents targets targets, offers evidence of the anti-authoritarian and revolutionary dimension of Salvadoran radical SMU protest actions. In consequence, a limitation of the models relies in the underassessment of coalitions in

radical labor mobilization, a feature usually underlined in SMU theories (Fairbrother 2008; Waterman 2014, Almeida 2008a).

Alongside preexisting organization structures, the model incorporates the addition of repressive and economic threats in the environments of mobilization, in conditions similar –although not fully developed– to other cases of SMU labor movements in the Global South. In the case of the economic threats linked to worsening labor conditions, it is important to stress the relevance of its addition to repressive threats. The models' outcome highlights the linkages of authoritarianism and globalization in labor struggles at peripheral societies (Drake 1996; Hartshorn 2018; O'Connor 2017; Riethof 2019), contrary to the promoted link of democratization and integration to global markets (Robinson 2006). In terms of labor, global capitalism stands as a reactionary period for labor-power and a threat to the existent workers' workplace and social securities, and in general for their social reproduction (Chase-Dunn and Almeida 2020; Fantasia 1989, Dodson 2016). The new model of transnational capital investment implied for workers a worsening in their living conditions and reversals in gained entitlements in the workplace: it implicated loses in real wages under high inflation (Almeida 2008b), a shift in management style oriented to short-term revenues (Gould 2019), an increase in exploitation (Robinson 2006), the creation of export processing zones with suspension of tax and labor laws in special zones of production (export-processing zones) (López Pérez 1984), a feminization of flexible labor (Griffith and Gates 2002; Moghadan 1999) and an overall abandonment of the benefits to labor under state-led development (Luce 2014; Almeida and Chase-Dunn 2020). Radical labor mobilization in El Salvador found strength precisely in those local spaces more deeply connected to the reorganization of production under global influxes of capital, people and commodities. This feature adds to the literature the case of an under-industrialized country authoritarian integration into transnational production. The usually studied experiences of SMU labor protests in authoritarian settings laid in more heavily industrialized contexts: the auto industry in Brazil (Riethof 2019), the apparel industry in South Korea (Park 2007), steel production and mine extraction in South Africa (von Holdt 2002, O'Connor 2017).

In addition, the results pose an early example of radical SMU mobilization according to local differential levels of private foreign investment (Auyero 2001; Piazza 2005; Silva 2009), in a context of authoritarian readjustment of the development model. This shift implied a double reversal: on one hand, social citizenship centered in labor as a path of integration and welfare-creation, a primary aspiration of state-led development. And on the other, the transition also encompasses the sociopolitical incorporation of organized labor within ruling coalitions, since it weakened the ideological and political foundations of corporativism under authoritarian rule (Hartshorn 2018). Given the international scarcity of foreign investment, the state might have expanded the use of terror to neutralize labor mobilization against transnational capital interests (Marini 2015). Adding at the same time repressive threats to the economic threat of integration to transnational production highlights the radical path Salvadoran workers follow –taking advantage of a favorable organizational context– to challenge powerful capitalist interest aligned with a ferocious dictatorship[13].

[13] Although structurally and organizationally conditioned, this option was strategic as well: pushing disruptive mobilization in the middle of foreign interests could brought greater national and international interest, implicitly activating networks of solidarity, enhancing notoriety to the protest and providing some

In the case of repressive threats, the study used forced disappearances as a proxy to the adverse circumstances labor activists faced in a context of generalized persecution of political opponents. In contrast to mass-murders (massacres) and its wreckage over peasant communities in El Salvador (Melara Minero and Sprenkels 2017; Viterna 2013), forced disappearances affected more those identified as workers (Figure 1). While massive repression was more lethal in terms of number of victims, forced disappearances spread throughout all the semesters of 1974-1981 (Figure 2). Moreover, forced disappearance constituted a form of selective repression, which aim to neutralize specific targets in the oppositional organizations in El Salvador to halt public protest.

Contrary to the expectations of Salvadoran economic and military elites, the findings show that responses to selective repression associate with radical labor mobilization under certain conditions. Selective repression of relates to increases in radical SMU labor protest when it was sectorialized to workers, affected the subnational place of origin of the victim, and acted simultaneously to a favorable organizational setting (with less presence of pro regime unions) when economic globalization posed as a threat. Organized labor constituents reacted for self-defense (and survival) to repressive threats directed straightly to fellow workers in their local communities and networks, by radicalizing the means and goal of their protests. As some of the sociologically oriented literature on repression and mobilization states (Brockett 1993; Honari 2018; Opp and Roehl 1990), social ties configure a crucial mediation in the reception and responses to state and paramilitary violence[14]. Moreover, the shift of repression into an incentive of workers' radical protest –considering their resources, infrastructure and contentious traditions– constituted an essential chapter in the history of the revolutionary mobilization cycle in El Salvador (Almeida 2003; Menjívar 1982, Gould 2019).

Finally, it is necessary to signal the limitations and subsequent questions from the model and for the socio-historical analysis of radical labor mobilization's political process. In terms of limitations, the current study omits to address –because of gaps in the data available– some key aspects pointed by specialized literature: the alliances and articulations among the different mobilized sectors (as mentioned before), the structural and organizational factors that pushed for the mobilization of non-labor groups (peasants, students, committed Christians, middle-class groups), or how the levels of mobilization of each of the latter sectors affected particularly the likelihood of radical labor mobilization. And for subsequent –historical and theoretical– inquiry, the results indicate possible future puzzles. For instance, for much of the historical and sociological discussion emphasis in the start and expansion of protest, the analysis should address the end of the labor protest cycle: how did the same factors and political process in the model that increased radical labor mobilization configured in its sudden decline in 1980, particularly in such a rapid fashion (in contrast to other forms of protest)? Other line of research heads to the efficacy of radical protest: Did Salvadoran workers achieved their

protection from the repressive apparatus. This seems to be the case when foreign managers were held captive in work occupations (Dunkerley 1985).

[14] As Brockett explains: "Certainly nonelites rationally calculate the expected utility of the probable mix of the provision of goods and services and the application of sanctions that would result from supporting the government, supporting the opposition, maintaining neutrality, or migrating, perhaps into exile. However (…) when agents of the state rape members of one's village or torture some of its elders, ties of solidarity and shared principles concerning, for example, obligation and justice will undoubtedly influence the nature of one's response" (Brockett 1993: 474-475).

political and economic demands if they employed radical SMU protest under this wave of protest? Another question points to the relationship of labor mobilization and political insurgency: how did labor organizations and mobilization articulated with revolutionary political organizations? Did the political survival logic of the oppositional organizational field motivate it to transfer resources from urban public protest to rural insurgency, or are both unrelated forms of mobilization? And finally, further lines of analysis could approach to the interaction of mobilization and transnational capital: Did the expansion of radical labor disruptive actions motivated a reduction in the presence of transnational capital, or did other causes had more weight (as guerrilla operatives against foreign capital or the reformist orientation of the civil-military alliance started in 1979)?

7. Conclusion

The case of El Salvador's radical labor mobilization between 1978 and 1981 permit to elaborate over two larger theoretical discussions: threat theory and mobilization, and labor movements in the Global South. On one side, the conversion of threatening structural conditions into grievances *also* shapes the orientation of movements, in terms of radicalization of demands and means. Against the trend of excluding structural factors from mobilization dynamics (Goodwin and Heatland 2013), threat theory offers the possibility to reintegrate structural conditions into political process –non-deterministic– models (Bracey 2016, Chase-Dunn and Almeida 2020, Almeida 2008b, Van Dyke and Soule 2002, Leal 2020). The Salvadoran radical labor mobilization case expands on the interactive nature of economic and political threats under authoritarian forms of (global) capitalism. In spite of the democratic discourse of market-oriented polyarchies (Robinson 2006), the implementation of the neoliberal turn in economic policies has intertwined with authoritarian rule (and thus, with repressive threats and the suspension of political and civil rights). The paths have varied among the rise of pro-market dictatorships (Drake 1996), or, as the Salvadoran, Egypt and Tunisia cases, previously developmentalist autocratic regimes shifting to economic liberalization (Hartshorn 2018).

Nevertheless, the structural threatening economic and political conditions are not enough for fueling radical forms of mobilization, for they act over existent organizational mediations in the specific local setting. In this regard, as the literature on mobilization under authoritarian regimes has stressed, the politicization and radicalization of actors depends on the strength and heterogeneity of the preexistent oppositional field (Osa 2003; Pirker 2017), or in the capacity to create and expand that oppositional field through mobilization (Osa 2001; Pearlman 2020). However, these studies exclude the balance of oppositional with pro regime organizations as mediations for radical mobilization, despite the corporativist strategies of incorporation of sectors of organized labor in authoritarian settings (Hartshorn 2018). As a result, a hypothesis for further development –in other cases and contentious actors beyond labor– can be suggested: when political threats–from repression and persecution– and economic threats –from changes in the integration to the capitalist system– define local environments of protest, and when pro regime organizations are largely absent, then we can expect an associated increase in radical forms of mobilization. Moreover, the simultaneous analysis of economic and political threats in the shift to global capitalism in peripheral countries would structurally explain the radical stance of several forms of resistances to neoliberalism in these spaces (Almeida 2014; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Silva 2009).

On the other side, a proper understanding about the labor movement's role as a contentious political actor in the Global South, requires questioning the fixed division between civil society and political society. As the historical case of the Salvadoran Labor movement demonstrates, organized labor organizations also became key political agents under state-development projects, in a form of corporativist integration (Collier and Collier 2002, Zapata 1993, Hartshorn 2018). However, the constitution of political subjects, although socially conditioned, is contingent (Laclau and Mouffe 2018). Organized workers can modify their political profile –which could move from corporative to revolutionary– in relation to their trajectory and position within the landscape of social movements (Cohen and Arato 1999), the labor-capital conflict (Robinson 2004, Drake 1997), the ascendance of authoritarian rule (Drake 1996), and the configuration of the oppositional–non-oppositional field in the polity (Osa 2003, Hartshorn 2018). In the context of early rising of global capitalism, the challenges to labor in and out of the workplace open the possibility for the ascendance –from the work of grassroots organizations and low-to-middle leadership– of more autonomous, politicized and disruptive expressions of the labor movement. The defensive position of workers to maintain their economic, social, and particularly in authoritarian capitalism, political and civil rights, signals their (re)turn to contentious traditions of labor resistance. This is complemented by their offensive stance for major social change elated in their involvement in a cycle of contention under a revolutionary mobilization. In consequence, labor movements act as radical social movements.

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