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The Glocal Foundations of Threat-Driven Labor Resistance to Authoritarian Capitalism

ABSTRACT Labor has stood as a central actor in the waves of contention against authoritarian forms of pro-market development in the Global South. In this paper, we analyze the local-level conditions that foster the mobilization of labor groups under such contexts. We study how municipal-level repressive and economic threats from authoritarian forms of pro-market development models generate labor protest. We focus on a wave of labor protest in El Salvador. In particular, we examine how subnational counts of labor mobilization events relate to variations in targeted repression and the labor flexibilization associated with transnational production. We use a unique dataset of labor mobilization, forced disappearances, and industrial ownership in El Salvador at the municipal level. More instances of disruptive labor protest emerged in those localities characterized by heightened political persecution and new workplace pressures from manufacturing operations financed by transnational capital. Based on threat models of contention, a more fine-grained approach at the subnational level helps explain how collective resistance builds into a full-blown wave of labor protest in authoritarian capitalist regimes. KEYWORDS labor mobilization, labor flexibilization, subnational politics, transnational production, authoritarianism, Global South, repressive threats, economic threats

Authoritarian forms of pro-market development models are a major strategy for states in the Global South. Authoritarian capitalism encompasses those institutionally closed regimes that use coercive and legal means to advance a market-oriented development model (Bloom 2016; Marini 2012; Moore 1967). Contrary to expectations of quiescence under these hostile conditions, labor movements in various developing nations have at times become a key mobilized sector in cycles of contention against these type of regimes (Barrie and Ketchley 2018; Hartshorn 2018). But this does not happen in all locations and times. In this article, we argue that localities characterized by higher levels of targeted repression and penetration of foreign investment may create labor resistance and demands for alternative models of economic development. Conditions that are structurally equivalent across these localities yield labor unrest, building up to a wave of resistance.

Over the past five decades, organized labor worldwide has faced changes in production processes, the weakening of pro-labor interventionist states, and oscillations between democratization and authoritarianism. Following the literature on threat in contentious

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politics, we examine how economic threats from transnational production and repressive threats from authoritarian regimes induce labor upsurges at the local level (Almeida 2003; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Threats constitute negative incentives ("bad news") from changes in the structural or political context, which could prompt mobilization by sociopolitical actors (Almeida 2019; Goldstone and Tilly 2001). Authoritarian capitalist regimes encompass economic threats linked to advancing the market power of elite actors (flexbilization in labor relations, greater exploitation, stagnation of salaries, and reduction of social protections) and repressive threats from the consolidation of vertical power relations (political persecution, massive repression, closures of institutional access, and erosion of civil rights).

We argue that where labor-based groups faced similar structural conditions at the local level they mobilized to resist the spread of threats brought about by an authoritarian path of development (Fantasia and Voss 2004; Upchurch and Mathers 2012; Yon 2016). Heightened structural threats inside and outside the workplace have motivated workers, a group with substantial organizing power and the capacity to interrupt economic production, to engage in contentious action. At times, the labor sector has resisted authoritarian pro-market economic development strategies with a broad repertoire of protest, including strikes, demonstrations, and workplace occupations. We know much less about how these processes of labor insurgency build up from local conditions into a wave of unrest.

The twentieth century witnessed the institutionalization of labor organizations (bureaucratic unions) and forms of action (petitions and routine collective bargaining negotiations); work-based conflicts have increasingly developed beyond those limits in both the Global North (Fantasia and Voss 2004; Luce 2014) and the Global South (Park 2007; Riethof 2019). We examine when local labor mobilization uses non-institutional channels of action against the threats posed by an authoritarian regime with a pro-market development agenda. In our case, Salvadoran labor activists and their allies remained resilient and organized protests against economic and repressive threats, challenging a military regime to the point of a revolutionary situation (Tilly 1995).

We define *labor mobilization* as various forms of contention in which labor-defined groups explicitly and publicly participate under such an identity (Fairbrother 2008; Thompson 1966). This definition goes beyond narrower definitions of labor contention centered on work-based repertoires (strikes) or labor-related claims (Drake 1996; D'Urso and Longo 2018; Piazza 2005). El Salvador is a case of a cycle of labor contention against authoritarian capitalist development, as also observed in several other countries of the Global South. The Salvadoran example parallels more often studied settings of labor insurgency in semi-peripheral states such as in Brazil, South Africa, and South Korea before or during their democratic transitions (Park 2007; Riethof 2019; Seidman 1994; von Holdt 2002), and the recent developments of labor mobilization in Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab Spring (Bishara 2018; Hartshorn 2018).[1] Only rarely have scholars analyzed these cycles of labor contention at the subnational level (Barrie and Ketchley 2018). Beyond labor, this study provides a broader understanding of where collective resistance emerges by subaltern actors to authoritarian regimes following pro-market development strategies.

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THEORIZING THREAT-INDUCED LABOR PROTEST IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

To account for the outbreak of cycles of labor mobilization on a large scale and across multiple localities, agency and social-structural approaches are often used (Giddens 1986). Agency-based explanations focus on the relationships and strategies that collective actors creatively develop to attempt to initiate or maintain mobilization. Structural models focus on institutional contexts that shape the contours of the environment in which activists and labor groups build relationships and strategize (Combes and Fillieule 2011; Mangonnet and Arce 2017). In the following analysis, we focus specifically on structural determinants related to authoritarian capitalist regimes—labor flexibilization and political persecution—in a threat-induced model of labor mobilization.[2] However, these factors are understood in a nondeterministic fashion, as their linkages with mobilized actors depend ultimately on the responses of subaltern actors to these threatening economic and political conditions (della Porta 2018; Honari 2018), and the linearity of the relationship between threats and mobilization could change its direction (and for instance become negative) as time goes by (Leal 2020).

Labor Mobilization

Labor mobilization is when actors defined as workers participate and organize contentious public protest for broader collective goods, to prevent harms and to seek social change (Fairbrother 2008; Yon 2016). After a period of institutionalization of labor organizations in welfare states and state-led development from the 1950s to the 1970s (highly corporativist in the Global South), market-based forms of development activated new rounds of labor unrest (Almeida and Pérez Martín 2022; Bishara 2018; Chase-Dunn and Almeida 2020; Luce 2014). Per the worker atomization perspective, the weakening of unions, mass layoffs in the workplace, and a greater hostility to organized workers should quiet labor mobilization down in most times and places (Piazza 2005; Zepeda 2021). Nevertheless, the new context linked to transnational production (with structural adjustment and a reduction in social benefits) has at times brought about surges in labor protest.

Using social movement unionism and threat-contention frameworks, several studies have analyzed these dynamics in democratic contexts in the Global North (Fairbrother 2008; Piazza 2005; Upchurch and Mathers 2012). Recent contributions have also turned their attention to labor contention in authoritarian contexts and weak democracies as part of the political contention against pro-market development models in the Global South (Bishara 2018; Hartshorn 2018; Lorentzen 2013). These studies note that political persecution and institutional closures combine with economic harms in inducing labor mobilization against authoritarian regimes and market-oriented development models. We can translate such explanations of labor mobilization into subnational terms, as *glocal* resistance—local issues embedded in larger global dynamics (Auyero 2001). We contend that the drivers of surges in labor mobilization are most likely observed in those places with structurally defined threats in their subnational environment.

In short, our argument is the following. From a macro perspective, labor contention against authoritarian capitalism may be induced by transnational production's negative

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consequences in terms of working conditions (Bair and Werner 2011; Chan, Selden and Pun 2020; Nash and Fernández-Kelly 1983) *and* by attacks and persecution from authoritarian repressive reactions in national political processes (O'Connor 2017; Park 2007). These cycles of labor contention are built up from the local level. Within cities and industrial districts, the specific local environments for labor mobilization are structured by the uneven spread of national and transnational forces (Barrie and Ketchley 2018; Mangonnet and Arce 2017).

Threats from Targeted Repression

The rise of an authoritarian pro-market regime involves an increase of political coercion and persecution, and increasing repressive threats to mobilized actors (Bloom 2016; Inclán 2008). Studies on labor movements have suggested the need to address how repressive threats could spark mobilization among workers (D'Urso and Longo 2018; Lorentzen 2013; Riethof 2019). Political persecution from targeted repression constitutes a particular type of repressive threat. Repression involves "retributive" actions—either by the state or by private entities—meant to impose penalties on challengers, considered as opposition groups. Repression comprises a wide constellation of practices with different means and meanings, from riot police operations against a group mobilized in the street to the torture and killing of activists in hidden locations (Earl and Soule 2010; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019).[3] The common goal of repressive practices is to demobilize contentious actors. But the relationship between repression and protest is bidirectional, complex, and contextual, and only in certain conditions does it lead to threat-induced mobilization (Brockett 1993; Carey 2006; Davenport 2015; Opp and Roehl 1990).

Targeted repression encompasses a subset of these practices meant to control, neutralize, and retaliate against antagonistic actors. Such coercive practices focus on political persecution through repressive actions toward specific individuals for strategic, cultural, or political reasons (Earl 2011; Leuschner and Hellmeir 2023). When victims of political persecution share a collective identity and links to a community, these types of attacks can motivate acts of resistance based in moral outrage, group solidarity, or even self-preservation.[4] More specifically, scholars like Finkel (2015, 2017; see also Wickham-Crowley 1992) argue that experiences of targeted repression build up "resistance skills" in actors that facilitate a future mobilized response to repression (even in extreme forms).

Targeted repression actions vary over time and space (Rozenas and Zhukov 2019; Thomson 2018). This uneven distribution shapes the local context of protest. Most studies have analyzed the dimensions of repression at the subnational level; ours centers on targeted repression and labor contention.

Our first hypothesis is that political persecution of labor groups increases collective action by organized workers in the same area. Recent contributions in the repression–mobilization nexus have focused on the relationships between the practices of specific agents of mobilization (in this case, of organized workers) and agents of repression (Bloom 2020; Earl and Soule 2010; O'Connor 2017). Historically and socially defined practices of targeted repression are linked to (and sometimes directed at) the social identities of victims. Thus they may mobilize other people who self-identify as being

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in the same social category (Bloom 2020; Osa 2003; Simmons 2018). Moreover, the experience and skills of overcoming repression may become attached to the social and cultural toolkit of a given group (Finkel 2015). Our study contributes to this line of inquiry with a focus on local-level variation of the repressive threat of forced disappearances (as an example of extreme state and para-state targeted repression practices) of workers,[5] as one tactic under a broader authoritarian capitalist strategy that ultimately seeks to enhance elite market power and weaken labor (Bishara 2018).

Second, we hypothesize that political persecution of nonworkers increases labor protests in the same area.[6] Targeted repression may produce new social relationships, forms of identification, and solidarity among the victims. It could also enhance existing social bonds within a community. A sense of common threat among different groups targeted by specific forms of persecution may prompt resistance in solidarity and toward protection of the community from those groups or sectors with greater organizational capacities (Brockett 1993; Davenport 2015). Given the strong tradition of labor as a mobilized sector in both the Global North and South, this has often happened among workers in the midst of campaigns of repression against other civil society groups (Almeida 2008; Thomson 2018). This includes the cycles of labor mobilization against political persecution from authoritarian pro-market development strategies (Hartshorn 2018; Riethof 2019). Our study contributes by examining labor upsurges against widely directed repressive threats.

Economic Threats from Labor Flexibility

Considering the expanding research on how structural dynamics related to social inequalities induce mobilization (Bracey 2016; Hetland and Goodwin 2013), we interpret labor flexibilization as a specific economic threat associated with a pro-market shift in state economic development strategies. In countries of the Global South such pro-market models have historically meant a greater interconnection with the external sector (Marini 2012; Robinson 2003).

The rise of transnational production through export processing industries in the early globalization era of the 1970s was another step up in the power and influence of international market forces, in this case focused on manufacturing. Thus, globalized pro-market development models have brought about a decline of labor power and status relative to the previous gains of organized workers—even in countries of the Global South with significant histories of state-led industrialization—given the greater space/time mobility of global capital versus the fixed nature of national labor forces and national capital (Harvey 2011; Robinson 2004). This encompasses a devaluation of the service and manufacturing sectors relative to cognitively based high-skill workers. We then see increasing surveillance of workers, stagnation of real salaries, erosion of employment security, elimination of collective contracts, longer work hours, feminization of the flexible labor pool, post-Taylorist intensification of the production process, and faster turnover (Chan, Selden, and Pun 2020; Fernández-Kelly 1983; Luce 2014). The overall effect is the creation of a global labor surplus and a spread of precarity among workforces (Luce 2014; Sassen-Koob 1984). Moreover, labor flexibilization undoes the postwar state-led development agreements between labor, capital (mostly national), and the state

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that brought about improvement in labor rights and forms of economic redistribution (Chase-Dunn and Almeida 2020; Collier and Collier 2002; Zapata 1993).

We argue that the declining work conditions from flexibilization described above could act as an economic threat that prompts heightened labor mobilization by organized workers (Anner 2011).[7] Since the advent of new labor regimes, studies at the national level suggest that the rise of labor contention is a reaction to these adverse working conditions, as economic threats. For instance, we observe several cases of uprisings by organized workers against flexible work regimes. They include the increase in organizing and protest of *maquiladora* workers in export-processing zones in Honduras (Armbruster-Sandoval 2003), Nicaragua, and Mexico (Bandy and Bickham-Mendez 2006), and the rise in strikes by workers (mostly in the public sector) to resist the labor implications of structural adjustment policies in both the Global North (Piazza 2005; Upchurch and Mathers 2012) and the Global South (Hartshorn 2018; Riethof 2019). For instance, in 1995, a labor flexibilization law in Panama induced a general strike and a four-month-long protest campaign, during which five workers were killed (Almeida 2014).

Following the literature based on national cases and international trends, we focus on the local-level variation of labor flexibility across a national territory. We expect that organized workers, given their prior favorable situation under state-led development, reacted, following a "moral economy" sentiment, against the threat of the adverse conditions of the new economic development strategy brought about by an authoritarian pro-market regime (Ketchley, Eibl, and Gunning 2023; Thompson 1966). Specifically, we anticipate increases in labor upsurges in localities with more international capital investments.

Foreign capital has served as a prominent conveyor of flexibilized labor in the new scheme of transnational production (Anner 2011; Armbruster-Sandoval 2003; Robinson 2004). For this reason, the new labor-flexibility conditions have become more common in those places where foreign capital has more ownership of the factories. We also expect more labor contention in regions with more maquiladora units. In Central America, manufacturing clothing and textile goods in export-processing zones is a major pathway of integration into the global market (Anner 2011; Armbruster-Sandoval 2003; Bandy and Bickham-Mendez 2006). The prevalence of maquiladoras is attached to the new division of labor within transnational production chains, and they have become a core component of pro-market development strategies. In consequence, more maquiladoras in a given *municipio* indicates a deeper connection with the labor flexibility conditions characteristics of this type of production.[8] We expect that the more clothing and textile factories there are in a given place, the more labor protest events will be organized in this locality. Thus, in both cases (foreign-investment-based manufacturing and number of maquiladoras), we anticipate that the deeper the connection of localities with transnational production is, as a key component of pro-market development strategies, the more frequent labor mobilization is.

A CYCLE OF LABOR CONTENTION IN EL SALVADOR, 1977–1981

In the El Salvador of the 1970s, an authoritarian regime, previously open to some level of political competition and committed to state-led development policies, changed from

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internal market development strategies to an early form of authoritarian integration into the global economy.[9] External economic shocks[10] and the elite's lack of commitment to wealth redistribution shifted the economic model to an industrialization-through-export-processing project in close partnership with foreign capital (Baloyra 1987; Griffith and Gates 2002). In the comparatively low-industrialization context of the mostly agrarian Central American nations, the prior experiment of national industrialization in El Salvador had showed outstanding advances, favoring a male-dominated industrial labor force (Griffith and Gates 2002; Quijada 2021). A large share of the country's national industries and domestic manufacturing was redirected by the state to export-processing production as an economic development strategy (López Pérez 1984). At the same time, the prior process of gradual political reform through competitive elections and institutional access was blocked to stifle advances by oppositional-civilian forces, including labor unions, which were ferociously persecuted. The period from 1974 to 1990 showed one of the most dramatic examples of repression in the Western Hemisphere (Alas 1982; Melara Minero and Sprenkels 2017; Stanley 1996),[11] though it was not unique.[12] During this period, one in every 66 Salvadorans was killed (Seligson and McEhliny 1996:213). Targeted repression was unevenly distributed across the national territory and by social sector (Hoover Green and Ball 2019; Vásquez Olivera 2023). Workers were one of the main targets of political persecution (Molinari 2013; Monterrosa Cubías 2023) and the sector with the most forced-disappearance victims (Figure 1).[13]

Labor protest by Salvadoran workers was central in the larger sociopolitical conflict of the period immediately before the Salvadoran Civil War of 1980–1992 (Almeida 2008).[14] Against the expectation of quiescence in the context of a highly hostile political and economic environment, this mobilization cycle saw a high level of labor militancy, with hundreds of strikes and dozens of factory occupations. The sociological and

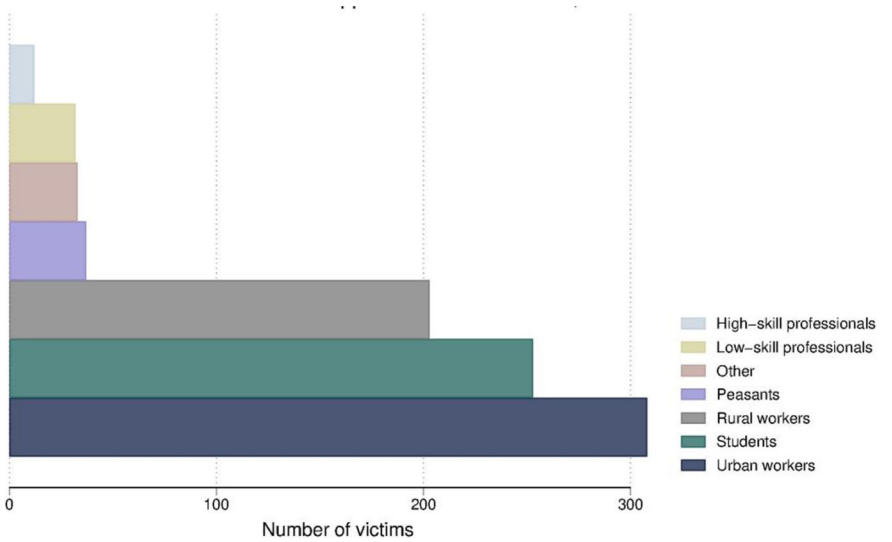


FIGURE 1. Victims of Forced Disappearance in El Salvador, by Social Sector, 1973–1981
Source: Socorro Jurídico del Arzobispado Dataset on Forced Disappearances, 1973–1981.

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historical literature on El Salvador has pointed to several facilitative conditions—from organization to ideological changes, and to the political process—driving this heightened level of labor protest from national-level perspectives (Almeida 2008; Chávez 2017; Flores Macal 1980; Gould 2019; Guido Béjar 1990; Pirker 2017).[15] Beginning with a quantitative analysis of statistical records, complemented with qualitative cases (based on historical evidence), we use a fine-grained model at the municipal level that assesses how structural economic and political forces from a pro-market authoritarian regime shaped the local environments of protest in El Salvador.

DATA AND METHODS

The study examines 33 municipios over 20 three-month periods between 1977 and 1981. We selected those localities in El Salvador with three or more episodes of labor protest to account for the environments of protest that experienced a surge in labor mobilization. We draw the data on labor mobilization from an extended version of the Waves of Protest in El Salvador Dataset (Almeida 2008). This dataset provides key information on mobilization events compiled from the major newspapers with national circulation (with *La Prensa Gráfica*, a right-wing-oriented newspaper, as the central source).

Datasets based on newspapers are better for protest-event analysis than official accounts, though reports of protests may contain selection and descriptive biases, with an overemphasis on disruptive action (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Wada 2004). To compensate for these biases, we enriched the original dataset with information on labor mobilization events from multiple newspaper and research sources, with different orientations,[16] forming the Extended Waves of Protest in El Salvador Dataset, 1977–1981. The greatest limitation here is related to undercounting events. For instance, nondisruptive labor actions (petitions) may be underreported, as may many of the events that took place in the massive political violence that exploded in 1979–1981. Still, we are using the most comprehensive labor-protest event dataset available for this cycle of labor contention.

Dependent Variable

We operationalize labor protest as any collective action of three or more people with participation of a labor-oriented group (including industrial workers, employees, and rural workers).[17] Our dataset includes 847 labor protest events distributed over 660 municipio/three-month observations. These actions include nondisruptive episodes (petitions), disruptive actions (strikes) and a few violent actions (two-way armed confrontations with security forces). Our analysis combines time and space units to account for how structural and political factors shape the subnational dynamics of labor protest (Almeida 2003; Mangonnett and Arce 2017). We used the municipio as the spatial unit. Municipios serve as the subnational administrative unit in El Salvador, with a long tradition of organizing political and social life (López Bernal 2007). Our relatively short time unit of three-month periods (quarters) corresponds to the average time of protest and conflict rhythms (Collins 2022). Thus the unit of observation is the total number of labor protests in a particular municipio in each three-month period—for instance, one

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observation is the number of labor protests in the municipio of San Salvador between April and June of 1978.

Independent Variables

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the independent variables. We measure political persecution as targeted repression using forced disappearances. Forced disappearance is a repressive practice used by several authoritarian regimes in the Global South to contain and punish opposition groups. It became particularly widespread in Latin American countries during the state-sponsored and paramilitary terrorism that extended across the region, including El Salvador, in the 1970s and 1980s (Allier Montaño 2016; Gatti 2020; Hoover Green and Ball 2019).

In using accounts of forced disappearance as a measure of targeted repression, it is important to consider some possible biases. It may have been used more in urban areas and directed more at demographic groups (for instance men, the young, and the working class) that corresponded to the "internal enemy figure" (Moallic 2012). And groups with more education and better access to resources may have been more prone to denounce a forced-disappearance event. But there are also advantages to using these accounts: independent human rights groups made systematic reports of forced disappearances in real time, while the campaigns of repression were unfolding. Some of these organizations were church based, which gave them high credibility across different social sectors, including disenfranchised groups, and had territorial presence throughout the country.

We use a dataset of cases of forced disappearance drawn from data on human rights violations documented by Socorro Juridico del Arzobispado, a Catholic organization providing legal support for victims of human rights violations (Socorro Jurídico del Arzobispado Dataset on Forced Disappearances, 1973–1981). The *repressive threat* variables measure the number of forced disappearances in a particular municipio in a three-month period. We code two kinds of forced disappearance: those of "workers" (low-skill workers dependent on their salaries—that is, factory or plantation workers) and those of nonlabor groups. Considering the complex and bidirectional relationship of repression

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics for 660 Three-Month Periods in 1977–1981, per Municipio

	Mean	Median	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
Total labor protests	1.28	0	5.06	0	66
Forced disappearances of workers, by municipio of event	0.40	0	1.82	0	36
Forced disappearances of nonworkers	0.29	0	1.46	0	23
Textile and clothing production units	4.53	0	14.9	0	86
Industrial units with transnational capital	4.02	1	11.4	0	62
Labor protests in surrounding municipios	1.30	0	3.79	0	38
Population	55,842.9	36,749	70,516.9	4,405	417,328

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and mobilization, and that our purpose is only to determine the effect of repression events as a threat, we lag these variables ($t - 1$) to avoid reverse causality.

We also use two variables for *labor flexibilization threat*. First, we use the count of industrial units with foreign capital presence (as reflected in the presence of foreign capitalists in their board of directors or the explicit insertion of an industrial unit into the franchise system of an international corporation) in each municipio to assess the level of integration into transnational production. Second, we use the number of industrial units in the textile and clothing sector in each municipio, to represent the magnitude of export-processing activity. The data are from the Salvadoran Industrial Units Dataset 1974-1981, which was created for this study, using the directories of the Salvadoran Association of Industrial Business (ASI) and other secondary sources (Alas 1982; Colindres 1977; Dunkerley 1985; Menjívar 1982). This original dataset is the most complete collection of information on industries in El Salvador in the 1970s. We use national origin of factory ownership and type of production of the units as the two measures of a new, flexible working regime at the municipal level. In contrast to the other independent variables, these do not vary with time.[18]

Control Variables

We use three control variables. The first two test for "demonstration effects" in the context of a cycle of labor contention: the increase in the likelihood of protest if other protests happened in a proximate time span or place (Barrie and Ketchley 2018; Leuschner and Hellmeir 2023). For the time effect, we use the number of labor mobilization events in the same municipio in the previous three-month period—a means of lagging the dependent variable ($t - 1$). An alternative explanation associated to this control variable is that labor mobilization happened in localities that had been prepared for this by previous mobilizations. For the space effect, we use the number of labor protests in adjacent municipios in the previous three-month period, as another explanation for labor mobilization in a particular subnational unit.

Finally, to account for the differences among the municipios of the sample, we control for (logged) total population, using the official census of 1971 and official estimates of population growth.[19] The rationale here is that more people and relatively better socioeconomic conditions in a municipio would both increase the chances of labor mobilization there.[20]

Method of Analysis

To assess the subnational conditions for labor mobilization in El Salvador in the late 1970s, we explore the likelihood of mobilization in 33 municipios over 16 three-month periods according to economic and repressive threats at the local level. To specify the impact of these threats alongside the surrounding and previous labor mobilization, we use a cross-sectional research design comparing the impacts in time and in space across the subnational units (municipios).

Count-regression models provide a better fit than linear regression for assessing localized mobilization dynamics and structural determinants—in the "magnifying glass"

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perspective—in protest-event analysis (Almeida, González Márquez, and Mora 2024). We use a negative-binomial regression model as the estimation technique: we evaluate the probability of labor mobilization (Table 1) as a nonnegative integer count. We use the number of industrial units with transnational capital (models 1 and 2) and of maquiladoras (models 3 and 4) as measures of labor flexibilization, and the count of forced disappearances of workers (models 1 and 3) and of nonworkers (models 2 and 4) as measures of political persecution. Recent research in the field has used this type of design for various dimensions of structural analysis of protest events when overdispersion is present (Leal 2020; Mangonnet and Arce 2017). The lnalpha scores confirm overdispersion and the preference of this estimation over Poisson regression. We use a three-month (quarter) time-unit, instead of the year, since shorter time spans help capture often overlooked outcomes of targeted repression actions (Earl and Soule 2010). Since we are using both time-variant and time-invariant variables, we use a model which combines random and fixed effects while maintaining robust clustered standard errors by municipio (Stata 2021).

RESULTS

Descriptive results indicate variations in time and space in the pattern of labor protest. Figure 2 shows the monthly variation of labor versus the total mobilization of this cycle of contention. Labor protests comprised a substantial part of total mobilization events: about 30% of all mobilization events in the El Salvador protest dataset between 1977 and 1981 have a labor dimension. The cycle of labor contention increases until a steep decline throughout 1980. In terms of space, Figure 3 maps the distribution of labor

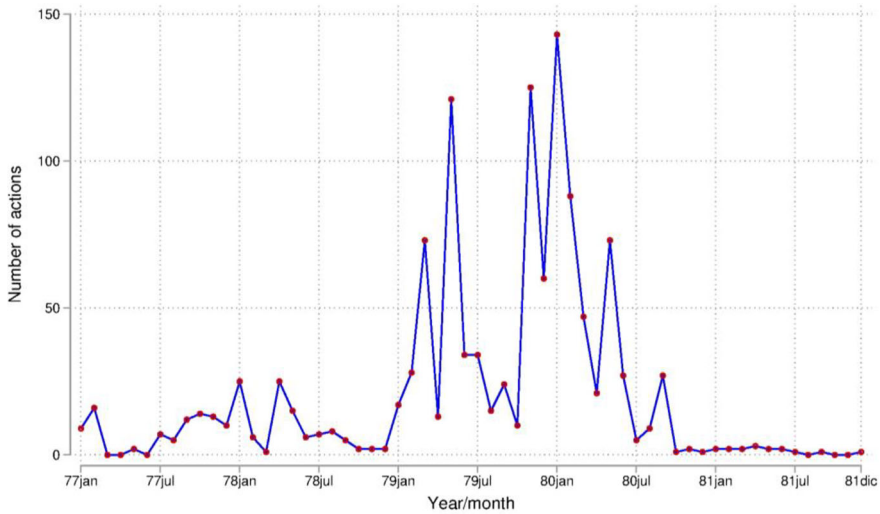


FIGURE 2. Labor Mobilization in El Salvador in 1977–1981: Number of Actions per Month
Source: Extended Waves of Protest in El Salvador Dataset, 1977–1981, organized and coded by the authors.

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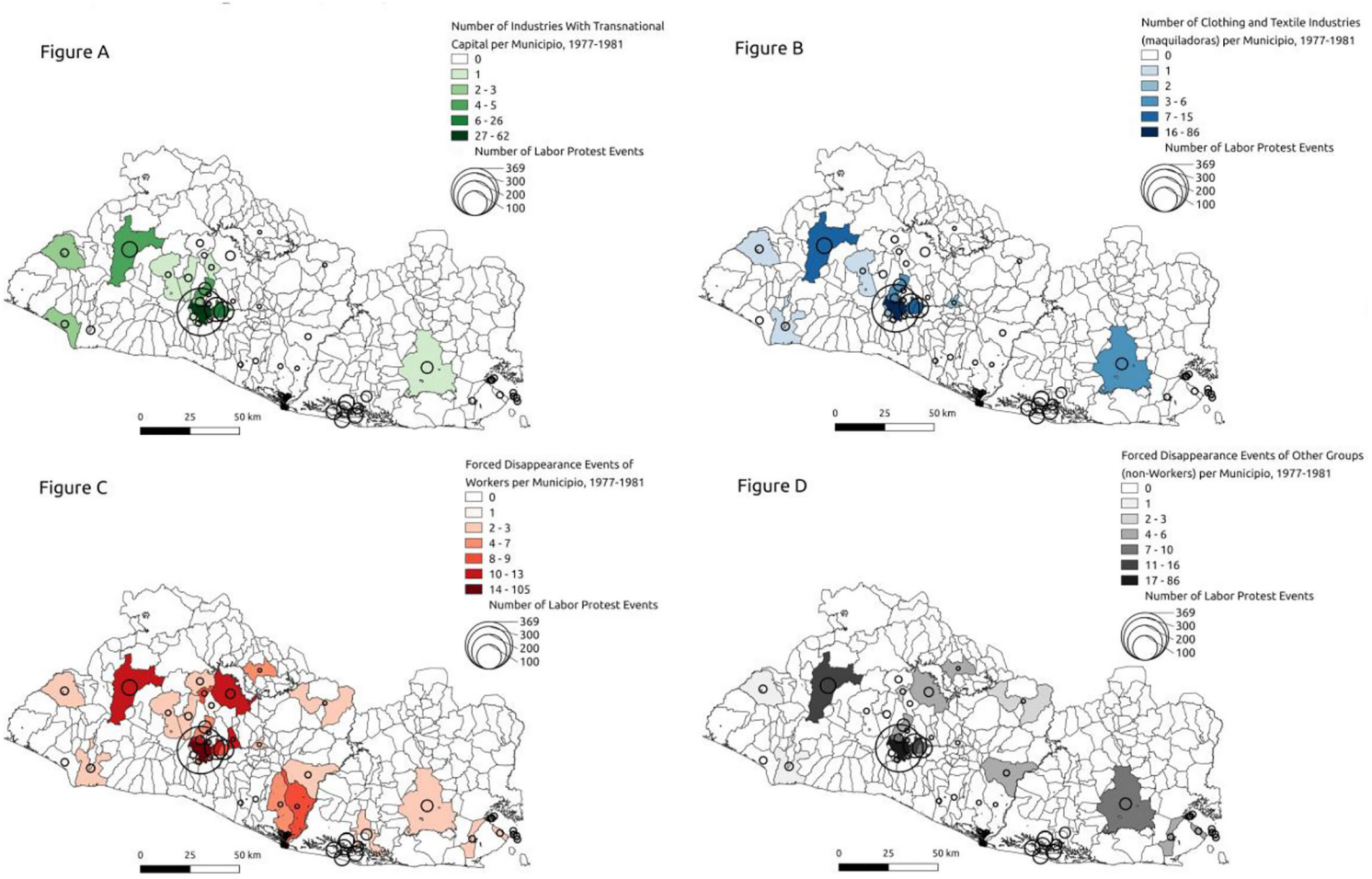


FIGURE 3. Labor Mobilization, Labor Flexibilization, and Targeted Repression Threats across Municipios in El Salvador, 1977–1981 (Counts in Municipios with over three Labor Protests)
Sources: Extended Waves of Protest in El Salvador Dataset, 1977–1981; Salvadoran Industrial Units Dataset 1974–1981; Socorro Jurídico del Arzobispado Dataset on Forced Disappearances, 1973–1981.

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TABLE 2. Labor Protest in El Salvador: Labor Flexibilization and Targeted Repression Threats, 1977–1981: Coefficients and Incident Rate Ratios

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coeff.	*IRR*	*Coeff.*	*IRR*	*Coeff.*	*IRR*	*Coeff.*	*IRR*
Targeted repression threats								
Forced disappearances of workers (lagged)	0.08*	1.08			0.08*	1.08		
	(0.04)	(0.04)			(0.04)	(0.04)		
Forced disappearances of non-workers (lagged)			0.18***	1.20			0.18***	1.20
			(0.04)	(0.05)			(0.04)	(0.05)
Labor flexibility threats								
Industrial units with transnational capital	0.06***	1.06	0.05***	1.06				
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)				
Textile and clothing production units					0.04***	1.04	0.04***	1.04
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Controls and coefficients								
Labor mobilization events in municipio (lagged)	−0.01	0.99	−0.00	1.00	−0.00	0.99	−0.00	1.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Labor protest in surrounding municipios	0.04	1.04	0.04	1.04	0.04	1.04	0.04	1.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Population (logged)	0.32	1.38	0.31	1.37	0.29	1.33	0.29	1.33
	(0.21)	(0.29)	(0.21)	(0.29)	(0.22)	(0.30)	(0.22)	(0.30)
Constant	−4.86*		−4.75*		−4.48^		−4.43	
	(2.16)		(2.14)		(2.30)		(2.30)	
lnalpha	−0.37		−0.43		−0.36		−0.42	
	(0.39)		(0.41)		(0.39)		(0.41)	
var(_cons[municipio])	0.42**		0.42**		0.47**		0.47**	
	(0.14)		(0.14)		(0.16)		(0.16)	
Observations	660		660		660		660	

^$p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$; standard errors in parentheses.

protest in relation to transnational capital, maquiladoras, forced disappearances of workers, and forced disappearances of nonworkers. These maps show a spatial correspondence between municipios experiencing labor mobilization and those affected by economic threats of labor flexibilization or political threats of targeted repression.

Table 2 assesses the probability of labor protest induced by political and economic threats using multivariate count regression models. Model 1 uses the count of industrial units with a presence of transnational capital in a given municipio to signify labor flexibilization threats from transnational production, and the number of forced

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disappearances of workers to signify political persecution threats. Model 2 continues using transnational capital in industrial units for labor flexibilization threats, but measures political threats by the number of forced disappearances of nonworkers. Model 3 includes the count of industrial units that are maquiladoras—that is, clothing and textile units of production—in a given municipio for economic labor flexibilization threats, while using forced disappearances of workers to measure political persecution from targeted repression. Finally, Model 4 uses the count of maquiladoras and the number of forced disappearances of nonworkers as labor flexibilization economic threats and political threats, respectively, in a given municipio. With a fine-grained analysis of the local environment, we can measure the correlation of labor mobilization with different expressions of labor flexibilization attached to transnational production, and with state and para-state targeted repression.

The count-regression results are consistent with our expectations. The four models yield significant results for their respective repressive-threat and economic-threat structural variables. The log-count coefficients for these variables show a positive relationship to labor mobilization in El Salvador between 1977 and 1981. The incidence ratios express the magnitudes of these relationships. In the case of political persecution of labor groups, models 1 and 3 say that we can expect a 1.08 increase of labor protest for every unit increase in the forced disappearance of workers in a given municipio in the previous three-month period ($\alpha < .05$). Hence, repression of workers in a given municipio is associated with a greater frequency of labor protest. There is also a positive association when repression is directed at nonworkers. The effect is slightly greater than with repression of workers, although not as strong statistically. In models 3 and 4, when repressive forces disappeared a nonworker (a student or a religious actor) in a particular municipio, we can expect a 1.20 increase in labor protest actions in the following three-month period. In response to repression, labor unions used their mobilization potential to resist repression of the population in general.

Labor flexibilization variables as economic threats had a similar effect on the incidence of labor contention at the municipal level, consistent with our theoretical expectations. In models 1 and 2, a unit increase in the number of industrial facilities with the presence of foreign capital in a municipio is associated with a 1.06 increase in labor mobilization events. In models 3 and 4, a unit increase in industrial facilities that produce textiles and clothing in a particular locality is also related to a greater incidence of labor protests: the incidence ratio shows 1.04 more labor protest events in a given municipio in that three-month period. In localities increasingly characterized by flexible labor regimes from transnational production, organized workers mobilized to resist the decline in working conditions.

The demonstrative effects do not yield significant statistical correlations. The number of labor mobilizations is not significantly related to the number that happened in the previous three-month period in the same municipio. Nor does labor contention unfolding in neighboring municipios have a significant effect. All the models also controlled for (logged) population to compensate for the disproportional number of labor protests in the most populous municipios (Figure 3).[21]

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QUALITATIVE HISTORICAL CASES

Testimonies and examples in the historical record confirm the pattern seen in the multivariate analysis of mobilization against repressive conditions and transnational production. For instance, in the 1970s, Maidenform Industries was one of dozens of transnational clothing companies operating in El Salvador, in the populous industrial municipio of Soyapango. According to testimonies of activists, low salaries, layoffs, flexibilization of a feminized labor pool—in a word, increasing exploitation—were part of the working conditions, as in the vast majority of these new types of factories (Alegría and Flakoll 2007; Griffith and Gates 2002). Factory managers and state security forces attempted to suppress workers' collective dissent. Nonetheless, contentious forms of labor mobilization arose at Maidenform. In 1976, workers attempted to organize a strike, which was harshly repressed (Alegría and Flakoll 2007; Cartagena 2015). Three years later, Maidenform was one of the firms hit by two general strikes, in July 1979 and January 1980 (*La Cronica del Pueblo*, July 12, 1979, and January 24, 1980).

Other examples provide more detail on the link between heightened mobilization against repression and exploitation in industrial units by transnational companies. For instance, union leader Héctor Bernabé Recinos described labor mobilization in the export-processing zone of San Bartolo, in Ilopango, another industrial municipio near the capital:

> At APLAR [a subsidiary of US company Beckman Industries], there were more women than men, and they worked in the assembly of electronic devices and chips. Later on, we learned that the devices were for NASA aircraft. It was the most rebellious organization in the San Bartolo area. For that reason, the National Guard disrupted their 1979 strike, and gunned down and captured several compañeros and compañeras. (quoted in Cartagena 2015:139)

According to a newspaper (*La Cronica*, January 4, 1980), this strike occurred on December 11, 1979. APLAR workers organized at least two strikes in the following month (January 1980), in response to the previous repression experience, in addition to their demands regarding labor conditions (*La Prensa Gráfica*, January 9, 1980, and January 22, 1980).

The historical record also provides details of workers' contentious reaction to repression of nonlabor actors. On March 24, 1980, a paramilitary squad assassinated the most important religious figure in El Salvador, the charismatic human rights defender and Archbishop of San Salvador, Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero (Alas 1982; Menjívar Ochoa 2006). This is largely considered the spark that ignited the 1980–1992 Salvadoran Civil War (Betancur, Figueredo Planchart, and Buerguental 1993; Zinecker 2017). In its aftermath (in March and April), Salvadoran unions launched two national general strikes, which paralyzed the country (*La Crónica del Pueblo*, March 26, 1980; *El Independiente*, April 10, 1980). The epicenter of the strikes was where Monseñor Romero was assassinated, in Greater San Salvador.

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DISCUSSION

In the 1970s El Salvador witnessed one of the largest outbreaks of labor protest in Latin America, in opposition to a new authoritarian capitalist regime. A similar shift in conditions can be seen in other historical cycles of labor mobilization in the Global South, such as Guatemala or Brazil in the 1970s, or Tunisia and Egypt in the 2010s (Drake 1996; Hartshorn 2018; Levenson-Estrada 1994). Using a fine-grained local-level analysis of the glocal determinants of labor upsurge, we find empirical support for a threat-based framework for explaining labor contention under authoritarian capitalism. This high level of labor militancy was a response to political and economic threats in the local context. We see a positive relation between incidences of political persecution of workers and nonworkers and incidences of labor mobilization in a given subnational unit in a short time span. We also see a greater incidence of labor protest in relation to the local implementation of a new labor regime within transnational production, meaning more industrial companies with transnational capital, and more maquiladoras. In sum, this study takes into account larger structural and political conditions at the local level to understand the massive expansion of labor mobilization in a hostile context of authoritarian capitalism. Through this local prism, it adds to our understanding of labor mobilization in the Global South under pro-market development models and authoritarian conditions.

In the case of political threats from targeted repression at the local level, we used forced disappearances as a measure of violent state and para-state political persecution and repression. In contrast to mass murders (massacres) and the resulting terror in peasant communities in El Salvador (Melara Minero and Sprenkels 2017; Viterna 2013), forced disappearances affected those identifying as workers more than other groups or sectors (Figure 1). However, massive repressive events became more prevalent when the Salvadoran context moved to a total civil war, in the years after the labor upsurge under study here. As a measure of political persecution through targeted repression, forced disappearance has the advantages that it occurred throughout the 1970s with variations in time and space (Figure 3), and that it is representative of the state and para-state terrorism by authoritarian regimes in the Global South (Allier Montaño 2016; Gatti 2020). This form of selective repression operated in a specific set of repression–contention practices (Bloom 2020), which aimed to neutralize opposition organizations and social agents, with organized workers as a salient mobilized sector (Almeida 2008; Molinari 2013; Pirker 2017). Contrary to the expectations of economic and military elites, we find that targeted repression is associated with more labor mobilization events, instead of suppressing them.

In the context of the Global South—where workers constitute a key mobilized sector—the evidence suggests that targeted repression can foster labor insurgencies when perceived as a collective threat to workers and the local community. This reaction from organized labor moved beyond—although it also included—mobilization as self-protection of a specific social category perceived as under attack (workers mobilizing from threats to workers). It also encompassed labor mobilization as a highly organized

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group in solidarity for the protection of a community affected by increasing political persecution. As key contributions of the conflict and repression literature underscore, social ties and identities constitute a crucial mediation in the reception of and responses to state and paramilitary violence (Bloom 2020; Davenport 2015; Honari 2018). The impact of repression as a threat-incentive of workers' protest—considering their resources, infrastructure, and contentious traditions—constitutes an essential chapter in the history of mass mobilization—labor-based and even non-labor-based—in El Salvador (Almeida 2003; Gould 2019) and the Global South (Barrie and Ketchkey 2018; O'Connor 2017; von Holdt 2002). Our findings call for attention to the subnational construction of labor resistance to targeted repression of workers and their communities.

Turning to economic threats linked to worsening labor conditions, the findings underscore the link between authoritarianism and pro-market development strategies on the one hand and labor struggles in peripheral societies on the other (Drake 1996; Hartshorn 2018; O'Connor 2017; Riethof 2019). The rise of development strategies based on capitalist transnational production stands as a period of erosion of workers' economic and social-citizenship rights (Almeida and Pérez Martín 2022; Dodson 2016; Fantasia and Voss 2004). The new model of transnational capital investment brought several reversals with respect to workers' earned entitlements. These reversals, derived from the flexibilization of labor, encompassed reductions in real wages (Standing 1999), increases in exploitation (Chan, Selden and Pun 2020; Luce 2014), the creation of export-processing zones with an anti-labor normative order (López Pérez 1984), and the feminization of labor costs (Griffith and Gates 2002; Moghadam 1999).

The implications of worsening labor conditions for protest are as complex and as varied subnationally as those of repression. Transnational production is connected with falling rates of unionization in the Global North and South (Luce 2014). As we have seen, even in an low-to-moderately industrialized country like El Salvador, authoritarian integration into transnational production is associated with a rise of labor contention, as it is in other more heavily industrialized contexts of the Global South, such as Brazil, South Africa, or South Korea (Park 2007; Riethof 2019; von Holdt 2002). Still, in some sociopolitical contexts these conditions are associated with a reduction in labor mobilization (Zepeda 2021).

Examining the subnational conditions of economic threat and labor contention, we see evidence that labor mobilization increased precisely in those local spaces more deeply connected to this new labor regime. The alternative explanation of "safe environments" with respect to labor flexibilization—that is, the less affected localities were, there are greater opportunities for protest and labor-community integration—as the most favorable conditions for the emergence of these cycles of labor contention—does not match the evidence. To the contrary, our evidence suggests that local-level labor protest is a practice of protective response to the menace of reversals of the relatively favorable placement of workers under state-led development coalitions, elicited by the territorially uneven rise of transnational production and the expansion of maquiladoras (Almeida 2015; Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Hartshorn 2018).

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Local contention against labor flexibilization is a threat-driven opposition to a relative decay in social positionality (McVeigh 1999). Such pressures came from transnational production's search for higher productivity and the most economically favorable environments, which has led to integration into global labor markets and fostered a degrading competition among workers (and among outsourcing suppliers), eroding workers' basic rights and security (Harvey 2011; Robinson 2004). This includes urban industrial workers, who were historically favored over rural populations, peasants, and those in the informal sector by corporative and state-led policies in the Global South (Bishara 2018; Collier and Collier 2020)—and rural workers, who saw their conditions deteriorate even more quicky in the new transnational production scenario (Bartra Vergés 2006).

The historical record confirms a trend of worsening labor conditions after the turn to pro-market development strategy that followed the 1973 world economic crisis (Griffith and Gates 2002; López Pérez 1984). Organized workers mobilized to oppose the introduction in their immediate locality of these conditions through foreign capital ownership of industries and the expansion of maquiladoras. This happened even if—or more so because—those interests closely aligned with an extremely repressive military government. The contrast between El Salvador and the negative case of Mexico, with its low labor mobilization rates, highlights the contrast between industrial reconversion and relocation in transnational production. In the former, the process was a mobilizing threat because the national industries shifted to export processing in the same subnational spaces (sometimes, the same industrial units). In the latter, the new transnational industries were placed in formerly agricultural regions (northern Mexico and Puebla) and implied a mere deindustrialization of the geographic areas (central Mexico) that had been the focus of state-led development (Bandy and Bickham-Mendez 2006; Zepeda 2021).

There are questions remaining for future research on labor mobilization, and on economic and political threats in hostile contexts at the subnational level. A core issue refers to the nonlinearity of the relationship: how long does it take for repression and penetration of foreign capital to become demobilization factors, even under the circumstances where they first became threats inducing mobilization? Moreover, a varied time and space exploration of both economic structure and targeted repression variables could assess the interactions of these threats and labor mobilization. We expect that responses to the penetration of transnational capital could take longer, and recent research has demonstrated that reaction to repressive actions has a shorter time horizon of approximately three months (Collins 2022).

Beyond timing, more research on targeted repression could focus on comparing the subnational conditions of the negative (and far more common) cases, in which political persecution achieved its goal of demobilizing organized workers (Davenport 2015; McAdam and Boudet 2012). Even in places that experienced a rise in labor protest, there is a moment of decline in the cycle of contention. Future research could assess the weight of factors such as success toward mobilization goals, destruction of organizational networks, resource limitations for protest campaigns, genocidal levels of repression, or a combination of these.

Likewise, questions remain regarding economic threats and labor contention. Given the conditions of foreign direct investment and capital mobility under globalization, a common

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response of transnational capital to labor organization and contention is relocation to more quiescent spaces (Harvey 2011). This also happened in El Salvador at the end of the study period (Cartagena 2015:94). As mentioned, the contrast between the mobilizing and demobilizing effect of export-process reconversion or industrial relocation invites more comparative research. In addition, the economic threats from transnational capital changed historically as globalization consolidated after these initial decades, including periods of job scarcity and a generalized stagnation of real salaries. We should explore how these economic threats shaped labor contention at the subnational level over the long run.

Finally, we need more analysis regarding the core of authoritarian capitalism: the simultaneous presence of economic threats from transnational capital and threats from political persecution. Such conditions and the mobilization they may induce are not exclusive to a particular historical period; they have appeared in other scenarios far from El Salvador, as in Egypt and Tunisia, during the Arab Spring, at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Bishara 2018).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of El Salvador's labor upsurge between 1977 and 1981 allows us to elaborate on how a subnational approach could help expand on two larger theoretical topics of contention: threat theory and collective action, and labor mobilization in the Global South. Against the trend of excluding structural factors from mobilization dynamics (Hetland and Goodwin 2013), threat theory offers the possibility of reintegrating structural conditions into (nondeterministic) political process models (Almeida 2015; Bracey 2016; Leal 2020; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). In this article, we have assessed the structural determinants of labor mobilization through a nondeterministic approach. The case of Salvadoran labor mobilization illuminates the interplay of economic and political threats shaping local contexts and potential protest under a broader context of authoritarian capitalism. Contrary to modernization and neoliberal theories that associate an increase in capitalist relations with democratization (Olson 1993), the implementation of pro-market development models has often been accompanied by authoritarian rule. Thus, hostile conditions of economic threat, such as labor flexibilization, become entangled with political threats, such as targeted repression, in shaping episodes of labor unrest. Nevertheless, the threatening economic and political conditions are not the only factors fueling workers' mobilization, for they act within a particular historical political process and organizational context (Osa 2001). Moreover, they shape the subnational environments in which mobilization actions might be organized.

Why labor groups in developing nations have responded to these threatening conditions of authoritarian capitalism with upsurges of contention is also a function of their historical trajectory. If after 1945 organized workers in the Global South became key political agents under state development projects, from the 1970s onward, these actors modified their political profile, shifting from a corporative to a social-movement (and at times, revolutionary) profile (Coronel 2018). This was possible given their previous organizational strength (compared to other groups in civil society), the rising threats from their weakening position in the labor–capital–state conflict, and the consequent repositioning of the labor

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field at the center stage of the polity (Bishara 2018; Hartshorn 2018; Riethof 2019). It is under these conditions that threats to workers in and out of the workplace, related to economic globalization and authoritarianism, enabled the ascendance of more autonomous and disruptive expressions of the labor movement in different countries of the Global South (Barrie and Ketchley 2018; Park 2007; von Holdt 2002).

The defensive position of workers trying to maintain their economic, social, and, under authoritarian capitalism, political and civil rights, signaled their (re)turn to contentious traditions of labor resistance forged before the institutionalization of labor conflicts (Collier and Collier 2002; Zapata 1993). Such structural pressures are expressed unevenly at the local level, and so too are the contentious responses of workers. Moreover, the glocal reaction to large structural economic and political threats was the starting point—as we see in El Salvador under a revolutionary situation—for a labor "offensive" through "solidarity" with other groups affected by capital and the state's new reactionary orientations.[22] ■

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NOTES

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1. This is independent of whether labor was the backbone of the protest waves of the Arab Spring or only added to a cycle of revolutionary mass mobilization already in place (Abrams 2023; Castells 2013).

2. Though it is not the center of our analysis, it is important to consider labor organizing and agency in a broad explanation of labor mobilization. Previous contentious organizational activity could act as a precondition for the emergence and expansion of protest (Inclán 2008; Van Dyke, Dixon, and Carlon 2007). Regarding labor mobilization, the infrastructure of unions and labor federations has historically played an important role in rounds of labor contention (Yon 2016). This helps explain how civil society's configuration and agency determine mobilization in authoritarian regimes. In competitive authoritarian regimes (such as El Salvador), civil society is constituted by co-optation, patronage, and corporative strategies of the regime, as well as through oppositional organizing (Levitsky and Way 2002; Pirker 2017). Thus, under these conditions, changes in organizational composition (strengthening opposition groups or weakening pro-regime organizations) could foster greater rounds of radical labor protest (Collier and Collier 2002; Lorentzen 2013; Zapata 1993).

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3. This definition moves beyond—encompassing—the approaches of direct repression, which defines it restrictively as the actions to "prevent, control, or constrain to non-institutional, collective action (e.g., protest)" (Earl 2011). Our definition highlights the retributive goal of repression (as the surplus of violence beyond merely containing or preventing mobilization).

4. We have approximated to this dynamic considering the larger debate on the effects of repression on mobilization in general or on larger protest waves (Davenport and Inman 2012), or in other words the conflict–repression nexus. In this line of research, Opp and Roehl's (1990) and Brockett's (1993) influential studies and Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller's (2005) edited volume abandoned any pretension of universal prediction and underscored the mediating conditions that structure the repression–mobilization interaction.

5. Besides, forced disappearance induces mobilization of the community through its heavy load of "illegitimacy" as a gross human rights violation (Davenport 2015), and by violating family and community cultural and religious norms regarding death (Betancour, Figueredo, and Buerguental 1993).

6. We consider that the line between workers and nonworkers is historically defined by the larger set of political-economic relationships in specific cultural settings (Thompson 1966). In the historical conditions under analysis in El Salvador, *workers* are unskilled labor dependent predominantly on salaries (González Márquez 2012; Menjívar 1982). We categorize *nonworkers* (a merely analytical category) as those actors who do not fulfill one of those traits, such as those in the reproductive economy, the informal economy, peasants, white-collar professionals, large landowners, and students.

7. On economic threats and mobilization there is an extensive literature; see e.g. Almeida 2008; Dodson 2016; Van Dyke and Soule 2002.

8. Municipios are the local political-administrative unit of El Salvador. They comprise an urban nucleus (divided into *barrios*) and the surrounding rural hinterland (divided into *cantones*, which are subdivided into *caseríos*). In these years there were 261 municipios. Only 56 of them (22%) experienced at least one episode of labor mobilization between 1974 and 1981.

9. The country's economy still relied on export crops such as sugar, cotton, and coffee (Williams and Walter 1997). But the period from after the war until the 1970s highlighted internal development as an alternative to the heavy dependency on global commodities (and the landlord and landless-peasant rural social order it sustained).

10. Those shocks were the abrupt end of the Central American Common Market in 1969 and the global oil crisis of 1974 (Almeida 2008; Dunkerley 1985; Griffith and Gates 2002; López Pérez 1984)

11. Regarding murders, Melara Minero and Sprenkels (2017) account for 678 homicides clearly attributed to security forces in 1972–1979. In 1980 and 1981, the first two years of the civil war, violence escalated, with estimates of between 28,000 and 50,000 deaths in just those two years (Seligson and McEhliny 1996:214; Stanley 1996:250).

12. For instance, the 1970s saw the rise of counterinsurgent regimes that repressed labor and other social movements in Latin America (Drake 1996).

13. Workers accounted for 62% (35% urban workers, 23% rural workers, and 4% low-skill professionals) of denouncements of forced disappearance in El Salvador.

14. In this period, a popular-revolutionary bloc emerged that connected public protest, party-based action, and insurgent mobilization (Alas 1982; Pirker 2017). They were opposed to (on the one side) reformist counterinsurgent sectors in the economic and military elites, and young military officials (plus the US government), and (on the other side) reactionary forces in the old military guard and the economic elite. These were the three blocs at the center stage of the internal conflict in El Salvador (Williams and Walter 1997; Zinecker 2017).

15. Although the period from 1977 to 1981 is characterized by the hostile conditions of rising transnational production and enlargement of political persecution (Almeida 2008), it is important to mention the different (and contradictory) inducements for labor mobilization in the national process. In those generally hostile conditions there were peaks and valleys of repression and of developing links with transnational production. There were also moments of positive inducements

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under those general threatening conditions. Schematically, the period from February 1977 to July 1979 moved to greater repression of labor and activists, and also to deepening of the new economic model based on export processing and agroindustries (Dunkerley 1985). The triumph of the Nicaraguan Revolution in July 1979 changed this course. It became a powerful subjective inducement for activists, particularly those in the most progressive labor organizations, but it also modified the structural conditions by forcing a division in the elites between those pushing for economic and political reforms, and those pushing for extermination of the opposition (Stanley 1996). In short, it opened a revolutionary situation, as mentioned above (Tilly 1995). The coup of October 1979 officially inaugurated this period of dispute, which lasted until 1981. As a result, the new development model stagnated (with even foreign managers fleeing the country), while repression of labor and opposition groups increased and decreased according to the trench war between the reformist counterinsurgents and the reactionary hardliners for control of the state (see previous note). Labor mobilization at the national level saw one of its highest peaks of this period (Gould 2019; also see Figure 2). In the margins, and increasingly coming to center stage, revolutionary political-military organizations with deep links to civil society (including labor organizations) mobilized resources (material, human, and tactical) from social to military action (Almeida 2008; Pirker 2017). At the end of this period, starting in the second half of 1980, labor mobilization declined sharply as political-military violence exploded (from state terrorism and also from military or guerrilla operatives). Labor and other social mobilizations exhausted their capacity to face political persecution and the recruitment of political-military organizations, which came to dominate the oppositional field (Molinari 2024). A coalition of moderated reformists and moderated hardliners took hold of the power of the state and, with US support, pushed for a low-intensity democracy within a counterinsurgent strategy (Williams and Walter 1997).

16. These sources are the two largest left-wing newspapers (*La Crónica del Pueblo* and *El Independiente*) and specialized literature that used oral accounts (Alas 1982; Dunkerley 1985; Gould 2019; Lungo 1987).

17. Research in Latin America has found that a wide range of groups involved in contentious politics also adopted working-class identities and organizations (Collier and Collier 2002). From this perspective, the labor movement of El Salvador should include the organizations of rural workers (when organized as workers or making labor claims), low-level professionals, artisans, domestic service labor, and state workers (González Márquez 2017; Gould 2019; Griffith and Gates 2002; Larín 1971).

18. The dataset contained information on the industrial units for the whole period, but it did not say when these industries were established or switched to transnational ownership. No lagged effects could be introduced, and the statistical associations are only spatial. The different timings of mobilizing threats of transnational capital and targeted repression remain unexplored in this study (Collins 2022).

19. These estimates provide numbers for population growth in each municipio in 1978 and 1979. We used the 1971 census data for 1977 and then the 1979 number for 1979–1981. The only exception is the municipio of Apopa, for which lack of data forced us to use the 1971 estimate for the whole period.

20. Given the critical context of El Salvador at that time—a revolutionary situation and rapid social change as a consequence of the political-military conflict—the population of each municipio was one of the few socioeconomic and sociodemographic variables that fulfilled at least two requirements for our analysis: the data had to be reported at the municipio level, and it had to be from a reliable source. Another condition would enrich the results of the control variables: if the data reported changes at least from year to year. Population changes by municipio fulfill all three requirements: the information derived from the 1972 census; it was reported at the municipio level; and yearly projections were critical for a country dealing with high population density (Pérez 1984). In contrast, data on the productive activities in the territory from the government's periodic

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socioeconomic surveys (which were not yearly), although reliable, were not always at the municipio level (their interest was in surveying the activity, not every municipio). Other potential control variables from the 1972 census with yearly projections at the municipio level, such as the degree of urbanization of a municipio, were highly correlated with population.

21. As a post-estimate, we measure the impact of forced disappearances in the municipio where the victims were from, instead of where the event occurred (our selected variable). This gave a similar, positive and significant association. The incidence ratio was 1.08 (at $\alpha < .05$) for forced disappearance of workers and 1.10 (at $\alpha < .001$) for nonworkers.

22. Fantasia and Voss (2004) expand on this return to contentious traditions and the passage from defensive positions to "cultures of solidarity" in the face of labor backlash from transnational production in cases in the Global North.

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