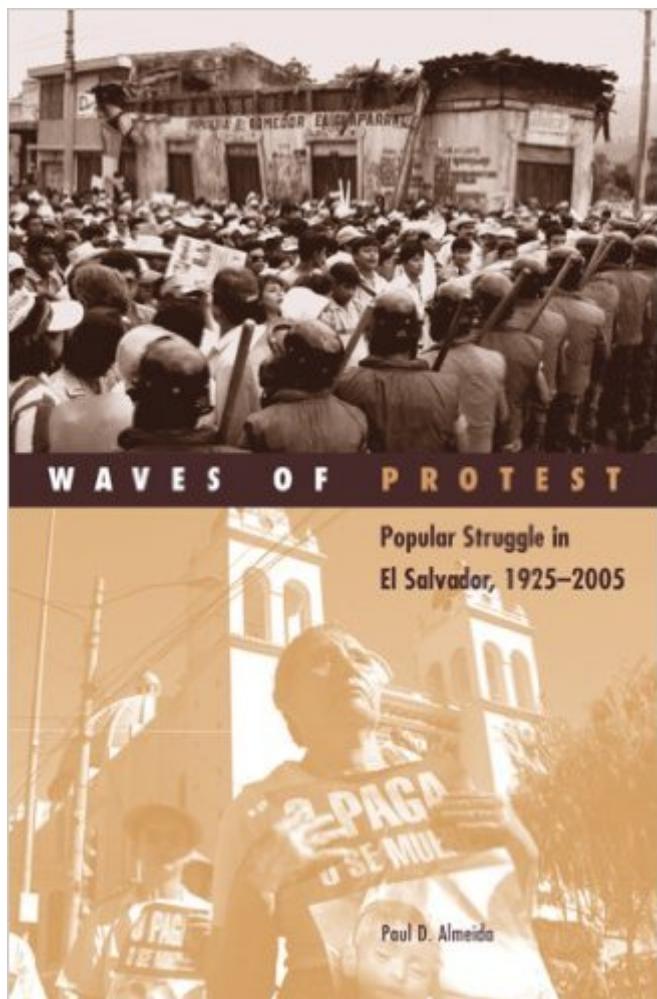


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Waves Of Protest: Popular Struggle In El Salvador, 1925-2005 (Social Movements, Protest And Contention)



Synopsis

One of the first longitudinal studies of collective resistance in the developing world, Waves of Protest examines large-scale contentious action in El Salvador during critical eras in the country's history. Providing a compelling analysis of the massive waves of protests from the early twentieth century to the present in El Salvador, Paul D. Almeida fully chronicles one of the largest and most successful campaigns against globalization and privatization in the Americas. Drawing on original protest data from newspapers and other archival sources, Almeida makes an impassioned argument that regime liberalization organizes civil society and, conversely, acts of state-sponsored repression radicalize society. He correlates the ebb and flow of protest waves to the changes in regime liberalization and subsequent de-democratization and back to liberalization. Almeida shows how institutional access and competitive elections create opportunity for civic organizations that become radicalized when authoritarianism increases, resulting at times in violent protest campaigns that escalate to revolutionary levels. In doing so, he brings negative political conditions and threats to the forefront as central forces driving social movement activity and popular contention in the developing world. Paul D. Almeida is assistant professor of sociology at Texas A&M University. He is coeditor with Hank Johnston of Latin American Social Movements: Globalization, Democratization, and Transnational Networks.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book summarizes eighty years of popular struggles in El Salvador. For those who made some effort to learn about the country when it was in the news (and the crosshairs of the Reagan administration) probably the most revealing sections are those describing the wave of protest in the late sixties (which spawned the mass organizations that became radicalized during the seventies) and the most recent wave of protests, the 2002 mobilizations opposing the privatization of the health care system. The uprising of the 1930s that was crushed by the 'Matanza', and the revolutionary wave of the late seventies and early eighties are likely to be more familiar. Almeida has a lot of history to get through, so, inevitably, the book is a little weak on the lively anecdote or detailed analysis of consciousness. At times I found this frustrating, at others I was impressed by what he managed to include. For example, I was interested to learn that the Sandinista triumph in Nicaragua helped galvanize the Salvadoran left into unifying. Almeida's theoretical frame for understanding the waves of protest draws heavily on the 'opportunity structure' rhetoric of Charles Tilly and his followers. As he notes, this theorizing is largely based on investigations of social movements in the wealthier countries. They emphasize the way more institutional access to government and electoral opportunities tends to spur the growth of movements, and he finds this to be the case. But looking at El Salvador, he also emphasizes the role of 'threat' in spurring mobilization. If organizations already exist, and the government becomes more repressive, their outlook may radicalize, and protest may intensify. This is basically what happened in 1931-32 and 1976-1981.

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