# *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*

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# *Contents*

# *Illustrations and Tables*

## *Illustrations*

## *Table*

# *List of Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| ARENA | Alianza Republicana Nacional (National Republican Alliance) |
| BPR | Bloque Popular Revolucionario (Popular Revolutionary Block) |
| CODECOSTA | Coordinadora para el Desarrollo de la Costa (Coordinator for the Development of the Coast) |
| COMUS | Comunidades Unidas de Usulután (United Communities of Usulután) |
| CONFRAS | Confederación Nacional de Federaciones de la Reforma Agraria Salvadoreña (National Confederation of Federations of the Salvadoran Agrarian Reform) |
| ERP | Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (Revolutionary Army of the People) |
| FECCAS | Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños (Christian Federation of Salvadoran Campesinos) |
| FENACOA | Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Agrarias (National Federation of Agrarian Cooperatives) |
| FMLN | Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation) |
| FPL | Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí (Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces) |
| FUNDASAL | Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima (Salvadoran Foundation for Development and Low-Income Housing) |
| ORDEN | Organización Democrática Nacionalista (Democratic Nationalist Organization) |

# 1

# *The Puzzle of Insurgent Collective Action*

> This is what I think: what was the war for? For the solution to the land problem. We feel something already, and we're sure that we will be free – that is a point of the war that we have won. Higher incomes? Who knows? But that we not be seen as slaves, that we've won.
>
> Member, Land Defense Committee, Las Marías, 1992[1]

Before the civil war in El Salvador, almost everyone in Tierra Blanca worked on the Hacienda California, a giant farm stretching from the edge of town across the fertile coastal plain to the Bay of Jiquilisco ten kilometers to the south. From their small houses in town or their shacks along the railway and roadways, every morning the workers walked past the hacienda's security post, past the gun ports of the fortified bunker, and through the gated entrance. They continued past the hacienda compound and the soldiers' quarters, past the barracks that housed the migrant workers during the harvest, and on toward the vast cotton fields, pastures, and salt flats beyond.

Before the war, the children of this town in southwestern Usulután had little reason to doubt that when they grew up, they would join their parents tending cotton and cattle and processing salt on the Palomo family's vast and well-guarded estate.

But in the mid- and late 1970s, some residents of Tierra Blanca joined in local protests and strikes, a few marched in the capital, San Salvador, and a very few collaborated with guerrilla organizations that would become the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from interviews carried out in Spanish by the author.

Front for National Liberation, or FMLN). Unrest and violence deepened after 1976 when a coalition of landlords and military hard-liners brutally derailed a reformist government's attempt at a limited agrarian reform along the coastal plain. In 1979, workers struck for higher wages on the Hacienda California, their last attempt to better working conditions through what in many other countries would be considered normal forms of worker collective action. National Guard troops billeted on the farm responded with growing violence. As the country lurched toward civil war at the end of the 1970s, brutalized corpses of activists, relatives of activists, and suspected activists appeared overnight where the coastal highway meets the roads going north to the towns of San Francisco Javier and San Agustín. Many residents fled the area for the relative safety of the town of Jiquilisco, San Salvador, and the United States. In 1980, the besieged government expropriated several farms in the area as part of an agrarian reform intended to quell the insurgency. Like many large holdings, the Hacienda California was not included, as the Palomo family had preemptively subdivided the legal ownership of the property into nine parcels owned by different family members (although it was worked as a single enterprise). But as violence deepened in the area, a few residents joined the FMLN. Many began covertly supporting the insurgent organization. The Palomo family retreated to San Salvador and no longer visited or actively worked the farm. "It was bad luck for the Palomo family," one elderly resident of Tierra Blanca (1992) told me; "in 1979, the people rose up against all this injustice – the origins of the war lie in the holding of land in the hands of a few."

What accounts for the emergence of a powerful insurgent movement in an area where quiescence had long been the response of the rural poor to social injustice? Why did many poor people run extraordinarily high risks to support the insurgency? Why did others decline to do so? This book addresses the puzzle of insurgent collective action in the high-risk circumstances of severe repression and civil war. While material grievances, principally inadequate access to land, played a role, I show that emotional and moral motives were essential to the emergence and consolidation of insurgent collective action in the areas I studied. Like the land defense committee member I quote above, insurgent *campesinos* in interviews repeatedly stressed the importance of motives such as "that we not be seen as slaves."

Largely as a result of *campesino* support, the FMLN expanded in the early years of the war. For the next decade, both the FMLN and government troops maintained a presence in the region, the FMLN in small

encampments in the rough terrain both north and south of Tierra Blanca and the government in bases in Tierra Blanca and the nearby towns of Jiquilisco and San Marcos Lempa. Minor fire fights were frequent. Occasionally, one side or the other would mount a major offensive beyond their bases, leading to renewed flight from neighboring hamlets to Tierra Blanca and the town of Jiquilisco.

In 1983 residents began to cultivate the Hacienda California and neighboring properties, planting corn and some beans to sustain their families. At first they did so surreptitiously. After government control of Tierra Blanca was stabilized in the following years, representatives of the Palomo family were intermittently present in the area and residents paid rent for use of the land. In 1987, a few dozen tenants formed a cooperative to strengthen their tenancy; they continued to pay rent to the Palomos. In 1990, militant activists were elected to lead the cooperative. According to a cooperative member, "We felt that it was unjust: many people had died, yet the Palomos still received their rent and a few people still controlled the land. So we made some new rules" (interview, Tierra Blanca, 1992). The new leadership affiliated the cooperative with a national organization with close ties to the FMLN.

On May 5, 1991, cooperative members took over the hacienda, claiming it as the property of their organization, the Cooperativa California. The Palomo family responded by leasing it to a powerful commercial farmer, Francisco Guirola, but when he attempted to enter the property, cooperative members blocked the entrance. He returned two days later accompanied by the National Guard, but cooperative members again blocked the entrance as journalists called in by the national organization documented the confrontation. Emboldened by their success, a few months later the cooperative took over the Palomos' lucrative salt flats along the coast. In defense of these and other occupations in the area, members of the Cooperative California and neighboring cooperatives blocked the coastal highway in September 1991, actions made less risky by the presence of journalists and observers from the United Nations who had been alerted by federation leaders (see photographs in Chapter 6).

After representatives of the Salvadoran government and the FMLN signed an interim agreement on September 25, 1991, in Mexico City sketching the terms of the final peace agreement that would end the civil war, members of the Cooperativa California began fencing the boundaries of the estate in a renewed and explicit expression of the de facto transfer of property rights. In anticipation of the settlement, both parties to the civil

war attempted to preemptively settle supporters as claimants to the rich coastal area. On January 28, 1992 – twelve days after the signing of the peace agreement and a few days before the beginning of the formal cease-fire that would confine government forces to their barracks – the National Guard and the army's Sixth Brigade evicted those attempting to occupy the nearby Hacienda Concordia, another property leased by Guirola, and arrested several activists. The eviction sent two people to the hospital in San Salvador as a result of what U.N. observers judged excessive force. On January 30, the president and vice president of the Cooperativa California were also arrested. In response to the arrests, local FMLN commanders suspended the movement of their forces to the designated cease-fire areas, an action that briefly endangered the peace process, until the activists were released. Cooperative members eventually won title to a portion of the Hacienda California under the terms of the peace agreement.

The civil war thus transformed the political, economic, and social landscape of the Jiquilisco coast. Rather than the large estates protected by state security forces that dominated the area before the civil war, in its aftermath new organizations played powerful roles. Cooperatives controlled land, federations of cooperatives articulated their needs nationally as well as locally, and the FMLN – now an opposition political party in an unprecedently competitive political party system – sought to represent their interests politically. In 1997 and again in 2000, the FMLN candidate won the municipal election in Jiquilisco.

Some of these changes of the Jiquilisco landscape are captured in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, maps drawn for me by members of the Cooperativa La Normandía over the course of two days in 1992. Color versions of the two maps are available online at us.cambridge.org/features/wood. Figure 1.1 shows the Hacienda La Normandía, a very large property (1,500 hectares) similar to the Hacienda California that lies along its eastern border, extending from the coastal highway to the Bay of Jiquilisco. Before the war, the farm was owned by the Del'Pech family, a major coffee-producing family. Cotton was the principal crop, as indicated by the lollipop symbol. The cow figures along the lower edge, teasingly called *cucarachas* (cockroaches) by kibbitzing members of the cooperative, indicate the raising of cattle near the mangrove thickets along the bay. Toward the upper left-hand corner of the map, the barracks of the National Guard (three or four members were always billeted on the farm) and the airstrip are indicated. The permanent workers lived in the *cantón* La Cruzadilla just above the map's center.

The farm was expropriated in 1980 as part of the agrarian reform and a cooperative of former employees was named by the military officer present. But the counterinsurgency intent of the reform was not realized: some members of the cooperative continued to covertly assist the FMLN, and the cooperative later joined an opposition organization. As shown in Figure 1.2, at the close of the war the approximately 175 cooperative members cultivated individual plots of corn, sesame, and, near the old farmhouse, chile; many cooperative members raised a few head of cattle as well. Notably, the National Guard post was gone. (The grid of properties – colored pink on the website version of the map – along the right-hand edge of the map indicates property lost in 1989 as a result of a conflict with the government.) For cooperative members, this was a way of life far different from their lives before the war. Such profound changes were not limited to the Jiquilisco coast, as we see below.

The *campesinos* who recounted to me the taking of the Hacienda California, those who drew for me maps of the lands they occupied in Jiquilisco and elsewhere, and others like them throughout El Salvador redrew the boundaries of class and reshaped political culture as the civil war raged around them.[2] Few of them had ever engaged in politics of any kind. Just a decade earlier the idea that they would write a chapter in the history of their country would have seemed a cruel joke.

## *Insurgent Collective Action in El Salvador*

The *campesinos* in Usulután and throughout El Salvador who participated in land occupations and marches and provided logistical support to the guerrillas ran mortal risks in doing so. Many paid the ultimate price. Just before and during much of the war, covert death squads and regular military forces carried out assassinations and disappearances with impunity throughout the contested areas. In interview after interview during and immediately after the civil war, my respondents described the loss of family members, friends,

[2] In referring to the poor rural residents of El Salvador as "*campesinos*" (literally, of the countryside, *campo*), I follow their own usage. The word is not well translated by "peasants" as many, indeed most, of those who refer to themselves as "*campesinos*" are not owners of smallholdings but merely aspire to be. Throughout this book, *campesino* refers to a person who engages in agricultural activities (except of course owners of properties who hire significant numbers of wage laborers) or, as an adjective, to refer to organizations in which *campesinos* participate. Thus a *campesino* may be a landless day laborer, a permanent wage employee, or a farmer working a small holding. When distinctions between these different types of agriculturalists are necessary for the argument, I make them explicitly.

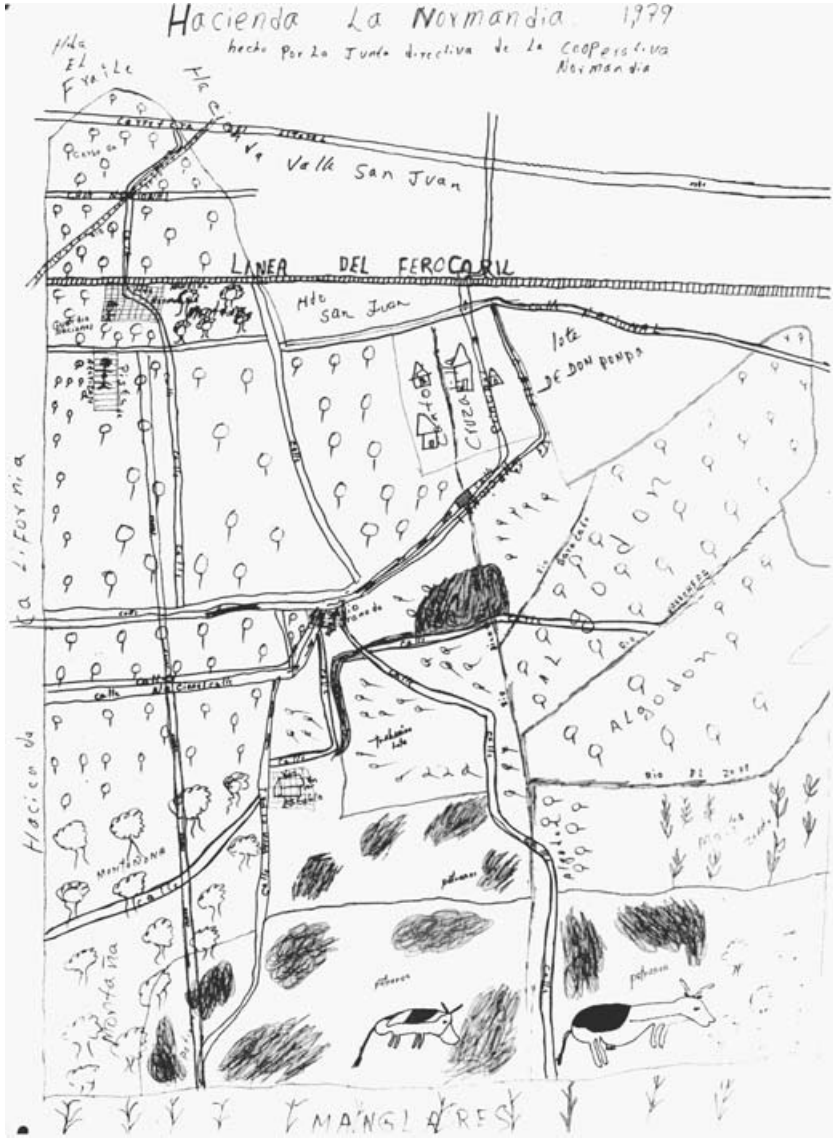


**Figure 1.1** Hacienda La Normandía before the war. Courtesy of the map-makers. A color version of this map can be see online at us.cambridge.org/features/wood.

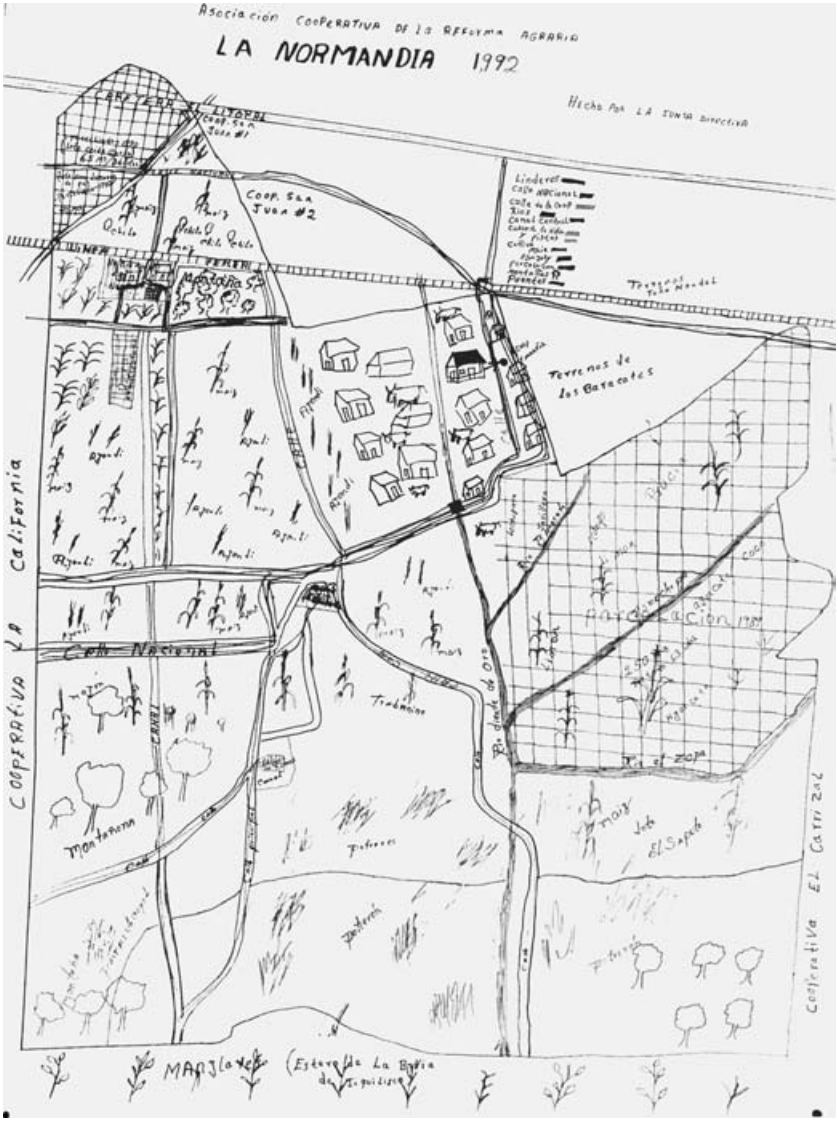


**Figure 1.2** Cooperative La Normandía. Courtesy of the map-makers. A color version of this map can be see online at us.cambridge.org/features/wood.

and fellow participants. One young woman, a resident of the hamlet of La Peña north of Jiquilisco, told me,

> Some armed themselves, others fled. We [those who stayed in the area] were all seen as guerrillas. Every time we went to the coast, we were searched at the intersection. 1982 was a year of desperation, almost everyone left. My brother disappeared in 1982, one of hundreds who disappeared in 1982 and 1983 – every day there were two or three bodies at the intersection. After all these years of war, the dead weigh heavily. (1992)

While her count at the intersection is higher than other sources suggest, multiple sources document the large numbers of Salvadorans who died during the civil war. More than 75,000 people (in a country of five million people) were killed during the war, about one in 56 Salvadorans (1.8 percent), a figure comparable to that of the United States during the American Civil War (one in 55) and of Britain in World War I (one in 57), and somewhat less than the figure for the Guatemalan civil wars (about one in 40).[3] The death rate of civilians in El Salvador was 28 times greater than that of civilians under the military regimes of Argentina and Chile, where human rights activists were said to run high risks.[4]

According to the Truth Commission for El Salvador (1993), the U.N.-sponsored organization authorized by the peace agreement to document human rights violations during the civil war, the vast majority (more than 85 percent) of the serious acts of violence analyzed by the commission were carried out by state agents or those acting under the direction of state agents against alleged supporters of opposition organizations. In contrast to much of the violence in Argentina and Brazil, the violence often occurred in public or the results were displayed in public places.[5] Activists did not

[3] Seligson and McElhinny (1996: table 3). Seligson and McElhinny compared more than twenty sources of statistics on war-related deaths in El Salvador, including those of the Salvadoran military, the U.S. Embassy, and various human rights organizations. They argue that the best estimate of total civilian and military related deaths in the Salvadoran civil war is between 80,000 and 94,000, of which 50,000 to 60,000 were civilians (ibid.: 224). So the standard estimate of 75,000 deaths is a conservative one. The *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, the standard cross-national source for statistics on political violence, seriously underestimates the level of violence in Central America (see Brockett 1992 for a critique).

[4] Calculated from Loveman 1998: table A1.

[5] It was not always the case that deaths were publicly displayed; clandestine cemeteries were occasionally discovered. For example, a cemetery containing more than 150 bodies was uncovered on May 24, 1982, at the Puerta del Diablo near the indigenous community of Panchimalco, a dozen kilometers south of San Salvador (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos 1982: 1151).

have to be guerrillas or to work with the guerrillas to run the risk of being "disappeared" or killed. The Truth Commission found that "any organization in a position to promote opposing ideas that questioned official policy was automatically labeled as working for the guerrillas. To belong to such an organization meant being branded a subversive" (Truth Commission 1993: 311). *Campesinos* were frequent victims of the violence: the human rights agency of the Archdiocese of San Salvador recorded 12,501 political murders in 1981; of the 6,718 whose profession was known, 76 percent were *campesinos* (Americas Watch and the ACLU 1982: 278–9).

The degree of risk of course varied from place to place and month to month. Violence against politically active or suspect *campesinos* was most extensive and arbitrary before and in the early years of the war (from about 1979 to 1983), after which it declined significantly (in part a response to the conditioning of U.S. assistance to the government on its human rights record). This decline is evident in Figure 1.3, which traces maximum and minimum estimates of war-related deaths (both civilian and military, including disappearances) each year. Nonetheless, *campesino* activists were killed throughout the war; leaders of land occupations were particularly vulnerable. Extensive and egregious violence recurred when the regime

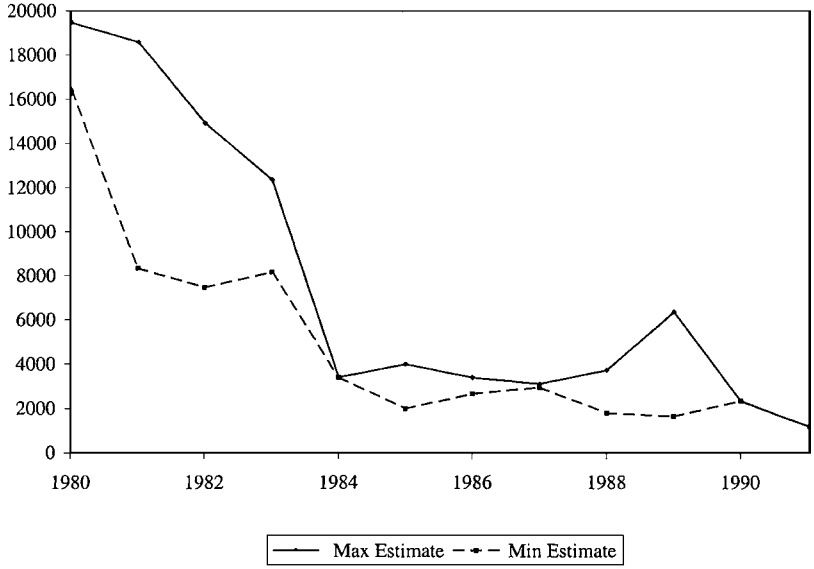


**Figure 1.3** War-related deaths, 1980–91. *Source*: Seligson and McElhinny (1996: table 1).

felt threatened, as during the FMLN's November 1989 offensive, when the government's Atlacatl Battalion, on the order of the High Command, executed six Jesuit scholars, their housekeeper, and her daughter, and the Air Force bombed civilian neighborhoods of San Salvador.

It appears that some participants in high-risk activism weigh the likely costs and benefits carefully. Participants in the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign in the U.S. South ran high risks of bodily harm in challenging the long-standing practices of racial exclusion in Mississippi. After hearing reports of severe violence against initial volunteers in the campaign, one young American, a white Northerner, in the course of deciding whether or not to join Freedom Summer, wrote in his journal:

> What are my personal chances? There are 200 COFO volunteers who have been working in the state a week, and three of them have already been killed. I shall be working in Forrest County, which is reputedly less violent than Nesoba County. But I shall be working on voter registration, which is more dangerous than work in Freedom Schools or Community Centers. There are other factors which must be considered too – age, sex, experience, and common sense. All considered, I think my chances of being killed are 2%, or one in fifty. (McAdam 1988: 70–1)

Whether or not many Salvadoran *campesinos* engaged in such grim reckoning, the risks of participation in the insurgency were evident in the patterns of widespread disappearances of purported activists and the subsequent reappearance of many of their tortured bodies.

Despite the high risk of insurgent activism, support by many – but far from all – poor rural residents was an essential element of the FMLN's military and political capacity throughout the war, according to a wide range of analyses, including that of U.S. military officers.[6] What explains insurgent participation in this context of high risk? The relevant literatures on revolutions, collective action, and social movements provide some guidance but not adequate answers to the puzzle of high-risk collective action in the Salvadoran context.[7]

[6] Bacevich, Hallums, White, and Young (1988). See also the analyses by three U.S. congressmen (Hatfield, Leach, and Miller, 1987) and RAND's National Defense Research Institute (Schwarz 1991).

[7] What accounts for revolutionary mobilization should be distinguished from what accounts for regimes that succumb to such mobilization (such that a "revolutionary situation" leads to a "revolutionary outcome"; Tilly 1978, 1993: 8–10). Scholars who address this second question argue that less institutionalized regimes, termed *personalistic*, *sultanistic*, or *neopatrimonial*, are vulnerable to revolutionary overflow (Goodwin and Skocpol 1989; Wickham-Crowley 1989; Foran 1993; Goodwin 1994a, 2001); agrarian bureaucratic states are also vulnerable

Some analysts of revolutions and peasant rebellions suggest that class conflict forms the basis of revolutionary mobilization. Karl Marx, for example, argued that the shared experience of exploitation on the part of the industrial proletariat would lead to socialist mobilization and revolution. Marx was of course mistaken in his identification of the likely bearer of revolutions: poor rural working people played essential roles in most social revolutions, while the industrial proletariat mobilized for revolution in only a few. Which particular type of poor rural resident played the preponderant role in various revolutions is much debated in the literature, whether it was the peasant, strictly speaking, or landless rural workers, and so forth. In an analysis of agrarian revolutions, Jeffrey Paige (1975) analyzes which configurations of landlords and cultivators result in which kinds of rural protests. He concludes that peasants participate in revolution (as opposed to isolated agrarian revolts) where landlords largely depend on income from land and thus can make few concessions and peasants depend on wages and are thus less dependent on particular landlords for access to land.

Paige's emphasis on the underlying conflict between cultivators and landlords and the latter's willingness to compromise (or not) certainly illuminates the Salvadoran case. The Salvadoran civil war was, at the macro level, a struggle between classes. The long-standing oligarchic alliance of the economic elite and the military led to a highly unequal society in which the great majority of Salvadorans were excluded from all but the most meager life opportunities. The response of this oligarchic alliance to the social movements of the 1970s and their demands for economic reform and political inclusion was repression, not compromise. Very few of those who owned coffee estates, agroexport firms, or other elite enterprises supported the insurgency. Few urban professionals did so; the dozen urban intellectuals who led the FMLN were the rare exceptions.[8] Support for the FMLN was much more likely on the part of poor Salvadorans than middle- and upper-class people. The vast majority of insurgent combatants were from poor rural backgrounds (McClintock 1998: 266–7).

(Skocpol 1979). The Salvadoran regime was significantly institutionalized, reflecting the long-standing convergence of the interests of economic and military elites. Thanks to U.S. assistance, the regime had sufficient resources to stave off insurgent military victory.

[8] With the exceptions of Salvador Cayetano Carpio and Facundo Guardado of the FPL, the top leaders of all five FMLN factions were university students or professionals who embraced revolutionary politics in the early 1970s (Wickham-Crowley 1992: 337–8; McClintock 1998: 251–60). The emergence of revolutionary leadership, while a necessary condition for sustained insurgency, is hardly sufficient, however. In many Latin American countries such revolutionary vanguard groups failed to foment rural rebellion.

But rural class position – either in the narrow sense as defined by access (or not) to land or other assets or in a wider sense of relative income – does not adequately explain participation in the Salvadoran insurgency. Before the war, El Salvador's rural poor were highly heterogeneous in terms of their livelihoods. Class differences among the *campesinos* of the case-study areas do not explain differences in their participation. The evidence presented here from the case-study areas shows that participants in the insurgency came from a variety of poor rural class backgrounds. The many *campesinos* who joined government networks and civil patrols or served as government informants came from equally diverse economic backgrounds.

The "high risk activism" underlying the Salvadoran insurgency is puzzling not just because the likely costs were so great, but also because the apparent benefits were so limited. As Mancur Olson (1965) pointed out in his critique of Marx's approach, collective action of the type studied here yields benefits (when successful) that are public goods – their enjoyment does not depend on one's having contributed to their provision. In these cases, Olson famously concluded, forms of collective action that are costly to individuals will not be sustained except where participation is coerced or motivated voluntarily through the provision of "selective incentives" available *only* to those participating. Extending Olson's approach, Samuel Popkin in *The Rational Peasant* (1979) argued that revolutionaries offer such individual incentives (for Popkin, exclusively material benefits) to peasants contingent on their participation, thereby possibly overcoming the free-rider problem.

This selective incentive argument does not appear to hold for the case-study areas, however. Before the war, few material benefits were won; the immediate consequence of mobilization was violence rather than material gain (Chapter 4). Early in the civil war, the insurgents offered very few benefits to civilian supporters. From about 1984 to the end of the war, it was possible for *campesinos* in contested areas to remain in the vicinity and farm abandoned land whether or not they participated in the insurgency (Chapter 5). During that period, the material benefits of the insurgency in the case-study areas – access to abandoned land and a degree of autonomy from the daily authority of landlords and the security forces – were available to *everyone* (nonparticipants as well as participants) who remained in these contested areas *whenever* they were available to participants, and thus did not have the requisite selective structure required to overcome the obstacles to collective action. In short, "free-riding" on the insurgency was possible – indeed, most peasants in the case-study areas (about two-thirds

of them) took advantage of this possibility and did not actively support the insurgents.

In contrast to Popkin, some scholars note that guerrillas often offer peasants collective, rather than selective, goods, much as a state might do (Skocpol 1982; Wickham-Crowley 1987, 1991; Goodwin and Skocpol 1989). Doing so, they argue, is an essential element of the consolidation of revolutionary movements: guerrillas offer land and other subsistence goods in areas under their control as an incentive to joining or supporting insurgent forces. But how the provision of collective goods in itself motivates individual participation in insurgent collective action, thereby squaring the Olsonian circle, is not evident. The FMLN did indeed become an alternative governing authority to some extent in some of the case-study areas and did provide some collective goods. But *campesinos* in the contested areas could enjoy these few goods without directly supporting the FMLN.

Some scholars emphasize the provision of protection from government forces as a material benefit extended by revolutionary forces. Protection, or the hope of some degree of it, motivates participation in insurgency particularly when government violence does not target insurgents but is indiscriminate; in that case, joining the insurgents would at least not increase the chance of government violence against the insurgent and his family (Mason and Krane 1989). In extreme form, state violence leaves "no other way out" than joining the insurgency (Goodwin 2001). In the case examined here, protection motivated some *campesinos* to flee advancing government forces with guerrilla units during the early years of the worst and most arbitrary government violence. While some subsequently joined the ranks of supporters, many others made their way back to their homes when the situation was calmer or sought refuge in urban areas without further supporting the insurgents. More important, during most of the war, the FMLN offered little protection from government forces in the case-study areas. Even in their strongholds of northern Morazán and Chalatenango, the FMLN could not protect residents from aerial bombardment and many civilians went to refugee camps until the late 1980s (Bourgois 1982, 2001; Pearce 1986). Thus, protection per se does not explain the ongoing participation of those who continued to support the insurgency.

Another approach to the puzzle of collective action suggests that preexisting social networks and a shared collective identity might provide frequent and multifaceted contact based on shared norms. Some close-knit communities have a high capacity for collective action due to their cultural homogeneity and the "generalized reciprocity" among their members; in

this context of repeated, ongoing interactions, participants impose sufficiently high costs on nonparticipants to ensure widespread participation (Taylor 1988). A classic example of social networks comprising strong communities comes from the U.S. South where the activism on the part of local civil rights protesters was supported by the strong social networks and significant resources of the African American churches and colleges (Morris 1984). Peasant communities with strong horizontal networks are necessary for revolutionary mobilization, according to Barrington Moore (1966). In contrast, James Scott (1976) emphasized the erosion of vertical relations: marginal community members rebel when reciprocal relations with landlords (the "moral economy") are threatened by the expansion of markets or increased demands for resources by the state.

But long before El Salvador's descent into civil war, its traditional peasant communities had been disrupted by migration and the concentration of land in the hands of the wealthy landlords. The displacement of Indians from indigenous communities occurred from the late nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth as coffee cultivation expanded rapidly as a result of increasing restrictions on communal forms of property. Indigenous culture in El Salvador virtually disappeared after the brutal repression of indigenous rebellions, including the uprising of 1932 after which tens of thousands of indigenous people were killed. Traditional patron-client relationships on estates were gradually replaced by highly coercive wage-labor relationships as cattle-raising and the cultivation of cotton and sugar expanded in the aftermath of World War II. Local social ties were increasingly weakened as increasingly land-poor *campesinos* sought work in distant labor markets. Thus the breakup of the traditional peasant communities occurred too early to explain the mobilization beginning in the 1970s.

Moreover, there is little evidence that preexisting social networks before the mobilization of the 1970s in El Salvador were sufficiently strong or that the norms political culture and collective identity of rural communities were sufficiently robust to enforce participation in a context of such high risk. Based on a 1973 survey of *campesinos*, Jesuit sociologist Segundo Montes (1986: 144–5) characterized the rural poor as fatally resigned to poverty and misery, as venerating both civil and military authority, and with little potential for class consciousness. Religious practices such as the veneration of particular saints by lay societies generally reinforced this fatalism (Cabarrús 1983: 144). Compared with the communities Scott studied in Southeast Asia, there was little social solidarity and little evidence of