are remarkable similarities between the exploitation of female labor in the factories of industrializing Korea and in the factories of industrializing Japan. From the recruitment system, to the dormitory system, to the system of fees and penalties that effectively kept women in indentured servitude, and more, the similarities are so striking that readers familiar with the history of women’s labor in Japan will want to know the degree to which such practices were willingly adopted by Korean industrialists or imposed by the Japanese colonial government.

Likewise, whether discussing labor practices, strike suppression, or fertility programs, the book does not always identify the groups responsible for such policies. Terms such as “elites” or “local authorities” do not tell readers whether these were Korean or Japanese leaders. Nor is there detailed discussion of collaboration between Korean and Japanese authorities. Such information would seem crucial to a fuller understanding of the dynamics of colonialism.

These caveats notwithstanding, Yoo’s book is characterized by solid scholarship and compelling historical detail. Because there are few reliable official sources from the period, Yoo utilizes newspaper and magazine articles, government pamphlets, and fiction of the day to give the reader a sense of the competing gender discourses that were in play during the colonial era. The result is a richly detailed, engaging, and theoretically elegant examination of gender ideology in colonial Korea. It will prove a valuable resource to those with research and teaching interests in Asia, gender, and colonialism. It is accessible enough to be used in the undergraduate classroom and sophisticated enough to be incorporated into graduate seminars.


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Although the concept of political opportunity has gained enormous popularity in the contentious politics literature over the past three decades, the role of political threat—and its resulting effects on social movement mobilization—remains undertheorized. More specifically, movement scholars often interpret authoritarian polities as antagonistic to popular mobilization. When mobilization in “closed” political climates does occur, it is generally attributed to the sense of solidarity, moral outrage, or to a lack of options to avoid participation—conditions that are presumably generated by state repression and that allow for mobilization despite the lack of political opening.

Following in the “big theory” footsteps of Sidney Tarrow’s classic Power
in Movement (Cambridge University Press, 1994), Paul Almeida’s Waves of Protest extends our understanding of both threat and opportunity by developing a comprehensive, processual explanation of how collective action rises and falls over time in nondemocratic societies. Analyzing eight decades of mobilization in the well-chosen case of El Salvador, he first demonstrates that political opportunities do occur under military dictatorships: given the right economic and political conditions at both the domestic and international levels, autocratic rulers sometimes experiment with liberalization. Such experiments not only allow civil society organizations to develop, but more important, they also encourage these new organizations to create intersectoral network ties (i.e., relationships between labor movements, education movements, peasant movements, etc.). These intersectoral relationships develop because contenders recognize the shaky ground on which reforms occur under continuing authoritarian regimes; therefore, reformers are especially motivated to coordinate their actions for greater impact and security. The longer and deeper the periods of liberalization, the larger and tighter grows the field of contenders. Almeida refers to the reform-minded waves of contention that develop during these periods of limited political opportunity as “mobilization by liberalization.”

However, periods of liberalization can be quickly reversed when dictatorial regimes remain in power. In the case of El Salvador, political and economic changes encouraged the ruling regime to rethink liberalization and violently close civilian routes to political reform. Such violent reimposition of restrictions forces already-mobilized activists to change both their tactics (becoming more subversive) and their goals (seeking revolution rather than reform), resulting in “mobilization by repression.” It is precisely because multisectoral organizations develop under periods of liberalization (dubbed “liberalization holdovers”) that continued activism remains possible under increasingly repressive conditions. Recruitment and organizing in times of increasing repression require access to a group of people who are reasonably sure to sympathize with the cause—those who will not betray the organizers to state agents, but will mobilize large-scale support for risky actions, and will protest if such actions result in arrest, exile, disappearances, or death. Such webs of trusted, committed activists are only available under repressive periods if they are first created during periods of liberalization. In sum, closed political environments can accelerate revolutionary activism, but only if the appropriate foundation has first been built during a prior period of liberalization.

Almeida concludes by demonstrating how his processual theory of collective action continues to be a useful framework for understanding mobilization today. With widespread acceptance of democratization and neoliberalization, “threats” today take a more global, economic form. Nevertheless, explaining the massive wave of antiprivatization protests in El Salvador in the late 1990s still requires understanding how earlier periods of mobilization first created the necessary multisectoral organi-
zational relationships that allowed for later successes in challenging—and changing—the neoliberal policy agenda. This explanation of “mobilization by globalization” demonstrates the utility of Almeida’s theory for the 21st century.

Scholars of social movements will find in Waves of Protest a powerful theory for understanding how collective action rises and falls in the global South. El Salvador is an ideal case because it has experienced all three types of mobilization—by liberalization, by repression, and by globalization—across decades of military dictatorships and recent democratization. Almeida is also adept at bringing in examples from other nations to demonstrate the applicability of the theory beyond the particular case. His theory moves forward our understanding of how social movements erupt in seemingly impossible situations in some cases and yet at other times do not emerge in what appear to be more ideal conditions. Because it takes into account the relevant historical, economic, political, and global conditions of developing nations, Waves of Protest would provide an excellent companion to more traditional analyses of political opportunity in any course on social movements.

Likewise, scholars of Central America will find in Waves of Protest a historical analysis of Salvadoran activism that might make historians blush. Almeida spent years in the archives coding daily protest data from national newspapers and analyzing secondary sources for information about human rights violations and organizational goals and tactics. He combines these original data with a careful synthesis of the existing historiography, resulting in a richly detailed understanding of the relationship between the myriad organizations and institutions involved in creating dramatic social change in the region. Central American scholars often get so caught up in understanding the armed guerrilla movements of the 1970s and 1980s that comparatively little has been written on the massive peaceful social movement that preceded, accompanied, and followed the armed struggle—a movement that covered a much larger time period, incorporated more people into high-risk activism, and (as Almeida demonstrates) was the necessary prerequisite for the fundamental political change achieved. Thus, in addition to moving forward social movement theory broadly, Almeida also fills an important gap in our specific understanding of El Salvador’s revolutionary accomplishments.

As with any book asking and answering macrolevel questions, Almeida does leave some meso- and microlevel queries for the rest of us to examine. His focus on political opportunity precludes delving into related mobilization questions of organizational structures, ideologies, identities, and grievances, questions that are inevitably piqued by the rich detail of his organizational-level data. Nevertheless, his comprehensive theoretical framework will no doubt inform scholars as they address these and other questions of mobilization for many years in the future. Waves of Protest is essential reading for any student of mobilization in the global South.