

“Foreword” to *The Emergence of Insurgency in El Salvador: Political Will and Ideology* by Yvon Grenier. London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1999.

## Foreword

Many scholars are growing increasingly frustrated by studies of revolution that rely upon structural conditions such as land tenure, poverty and inequality. Despite decades of effort, social scientists seem no closer to predicting or explaining revolution. What we need to do is to go back to the drawing board and find additional variables that may yield more satisfying results. Social injustice is nothing new in Latin America. Conversely revolts, and especially full-fledged revolutions, are few and far between. This suggests that political variables must be analysed more seriously, something that students of the ‘Great Revolutions’ (France, Russia and China) have understood sooner than Latin Americanists. Furthermore it should not mean focusing only on *the state*, as in the old dichotomy ‘civil society’ versus ‘the state’. It also means studying the agents of social and political change, their beliefs and ideologies, the particular structure of incentives in their environment, and so on.

In this path-breaking work, Yvon Grenier, one of the leading younger-generation Canadian political scientists, offers a new interpretation of the civil war in El Salvador, one that also appears promising for the understanding of other countries in the region and beyond. He focuses on the role of ideology, especially as it relates to activists within revolutionary parties, universities and the church. He demonstrates convincingly that, in the case of El Salvador at least, ideas matter and actors matter. As Grenier asserts in his conclusion: ‘Central American political actors are power seekers, not solely social class spokespersons. Their political agenda is shaped by a variety of conditioning factors; not just those derived from some compelling socioeconomic “reality”.’ In short, the point is to ‘bring the actor back in’.

This is undoubtedly a controversial book, one that questions the dominant paradigm in the area. I have no doubt that many scholars will take issue with some of the ideas

developed in this study. This being said, all serious students of social movements and revolutions should read this important new book.

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## List of Abbreviations

ADUES	Asociación de Docentes de la Universidad de El Salvador (Association of Professors of the University of El Salvador)
AGEUS	Asociación General de Estudiantes Universitarios Salvadoreños (General Association of Salvadoran University Students)
ANDES	Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños (National Association of Salvadoran Educators)
ANEP	Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (National Association for Private Enterprise)
ARENA	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (National Republican Alliance)
ASTUES	Asociación de Trabajadores de la Universidad de El Salvador (Association of Workers of the University of El Salvador)
BPR	Bloque Popular Revolucionario (People's Revolutionary Bloc)
CAPUES	Consejo Administrativo Provisional de La Universidad de El Salvador (Provisional Administration Council of the University of El Salvador)
CEB	Christian Base Communities
CELAM	Conferencia Episcopal Latinoamericana (Latin American Conference of Bishops)
CONIP	Conferencia Nacional de la Iglesia Popular (National Conference of the Popular Church)
CPD	Comisión Politico-Diplomática (Politico-Diplomatic Commission)
CRM	Coordinación Revolucionaria de las Masas (Revolutionary Coordination of the Masses)
DRU	Directorio Revolucionario Unificado (Unified Revolutionary Directorate)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Army of Liberation)