experiments and in-depth interviews, the authors show that drug cartels developed political interests, proactively influenced subnational politics and became de facto local rulers. The consequence of this is a deepening human-rights crisis as civil society is unprotected (or even attacked) by a subverted state. To break the state–crime nexus and avoid the emergence of democratic dynamics connected to the criminal underworld, Trejo and Ley suggest the implementation of profound reforms to the security and judicial sector or transitional justice processes.

If *Votes, Drugs, and Violence* does a great job in showing theoretically and practically how authoritarian regimes contribute to the formation and consolidation of the grey zone of criminality, it tells us little about how these zones can (or cannot) reproduce themselves in liberal democracies. Although it is mentioned that these grey zones are narrower in liberal democracies, we are not told how it is possible that most illegal drugs are consumed here. If liberal democracies enjoy relative peace and prosperity, it is probably through the export of violence to developing countries – a dynamic exemplified in the flow of guns from the United States to Mexico – something the book is unable to look at due to its subnational focus. Similarly, there is no discussion on the pertinence of drug regulation for the reduction of violence, a remarkable absence given that such an approach has been increasingly suggested by scholars, activists and policy-makers as one solution to the problems.

Such gaps, however, do not diminish the impact of the book for the development of a 'political science of organized crime and large-scale criminal violence' (pp. 8, 27, 291–2) and it has valuable lessons for students of the state, organised crime, armed conflicts, and democratic transitions. Better understanding of these grey zones is a particularly pressing issue for the increasing number of people around the world who now live under criminal governance regimes supported by state officials.

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Gema Kloppe-Santamaría, *In the Vortex of Violence: Lynching, Extralegal Justice, and the State in Post-Revolutionary Mexico*

(Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), pp. xvi + 212, $85.00 hb, $34.95 pb and E-book; £70.00 hb, £29.00 pb and E-book.

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The title of Gema Kloppe-Santamaría's study of lynching in Mexico, a fascinating and ground-breaking book, seems well-chosen. A vortex is a phenomenon of high agitation, like the intense anger that propels a crowd to commit a lynching

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(at least in Mexico – already the author suggests a difference with those carefully planned lynchings of Black men in the post-Reconstruction US South). A vortex is also centripetal, pulling in distant objects, like those passers-by who hear a commotion, draw near and join the shouting throng. The metaphor may be extended, for a lynching can involve a convergence of factors, and here we have the chief argument of the book. Those who have studied lynchings – especially in Latin America, where they remain a not infrequent practice in marginal zones – have tended to view them as popular responses to general increases in crime, in the absence of the state or at least of a credible police and justice system. Kloppe-Santamaría, who has located and studied a remarkable 366 cases of lynching and near-lynching between 1930 and 1959, argues that state absence is but one of various possible explanations and that episodes often involve several.

State intervention, rather than state absence, was a common trigger in the 1930s, most famously as teachers, the apostles of 'socialist education', met small-town resistance. A 1939 book supported by the Ministry of Public Education, *En el nombre de Cristo*, graphically illustrated the murder of 200 teachers. While there's little reason to doubt the number, Kloppe-Santamaría argues: 'The emphasis on … religious fanaticism concealed the political, material, and practical reasons that led people to oppose socialist education' (p. 21). Resistance to state intervention is a common thread of the first two chapters, which focus respectively on the federal government's attempts to 'civilise' the countryside – a quest that included a sometimes heavy-handed and misunderstood campaign against foot-and-mouth disease in the 1940s – and religious motives (broadly conceived) for carrying out lynchings. The latter chapter also visits the fate of many Protestants, whose vulnerability to prejudice, expulsion and murder rose markedly as of 1944, when Archbishop Luis María Martínez issued a pastoral letter 'against the "infernal serpent of Protestantism"' (p. 57). Lynchings of Protestants persisted beyond the author's period of study, one of several instances where further research is needed.

Chapter 3 examines urban lynchings, usually involving 'atrocious criminals' (p. 63) such as murderers and child rapists. These cases broadly reflect the state-absence thesis but also modify it. Police were often present, and sometimes intervened to rescue a victim of popular ire, but they found themselves hampered by broad suspicion that an arrest would not lead to a sentence commensurate to the crime. Mexico's abolition of the death penalty in the 1930s fuelled this suspicion; so did instances of impunity, for barely a third of indicted murderers were found guilty – a finding we owe to Pablo Piccato, whose ample work on crime is much cited. In an insightful finding, lynching was legitimised by the didacticism with which the Mexico City press reported urban cases, deeming them actions of popular justice against 'soulless criminals', 'jackals', 'a hyena' and 'bad mothers' (pp. 70, 72, 79, 81).

The final chapter in this short book – too short, for much footnoted material could more usefully have appeared in the text, which runs to just 120 pages – deals with the lynching of 'the wicked', or, as the subtitle puts it, 'Fat-Stealers, Bloodsuckers, and Witches' (p. 89). Here we return to small-town settings and the victims prove mostly to be misunderstood visitors or herbal healers who failed to deliver promised cures. The accusations with which they were charged inhabit

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the realm of the folkloric, so it is wise of Kloppe-Santamaría to have left such cases until last, for by now the reader has seen how suspicion of the state, fear of technology, anxiety over crime, and a fierce protection of cultural identity underpinned by syncretic-Catholic beliefs might combine to prompt a violent response to what was not comprehended.

While the author's taxonomy is clearly argued and illustrated, it is less clear why lynching was and remains common (relative to, for example, the United States, where it disappeared in the 1930s). There are clues, starting with the argument that 'lynchings were, overall, defensive in character and aimed at preserving communities' dominant values, beliefs, and practices' (p. 10). During decades when cultural autonomy was under threat, from teachers, vaccinators, Protestants and public works contractors, an increase in rural unrest makes sense. But the victims were unarmed, so why kill rather than merely expel? Perpetrators, especially in rural areas, proudly defined themselves as Catholics and parish priests held great sway. So why did 'Thou shalt not kill' not apply?

Kloppe-Santamaría overdoes her linguistic critique of press and other reports of rural lynching. Undoubtedly their perspective was prejudiced, but her reading at times implies that ignorance and fanaticism never existed – except, perhaps, among urban elites – and that lynch mobs were only ever rational actors. One finds that hard to square, for example, with the case of the policeman misidentified as a Protestant pastor, who was stoned, knifed and clubbed to death, whereupon 'his face and skull [were] skinned' (p. 58). There is insufficient explanation as to why lynching was often so gory, the killings lengthily undertaken, the corpses disfigured (at times evoking the narcotrafficker reprisal killings of today). For the murder of so-called witches, clues emerge in the syncretic cosmovision of rural peoples. But to what extent did such beliefs shape ritualistic killings of non-witches? Here new research presumably needs to extend back in time, to gauge how and why lynching was conducted in previous centuries.

New research might also broaden the 'geography of lynching' (p. 12), which shows a concentration of killings in Mexico City, the State of Mexico, and Puebla, yet which so far relies on a data set, the author readily admits, distorted by the filter of what got reported by the capital's press. That said, 366 episodes are surely enough to allow for some statistical analysis, for example enumerating the professions of the victims or correlating ritualistic killings to small-town vs. urban cases. Unfortunately none is attempted here, but the quantity and quality of research on display prompts the hope that Kloppe-Santamaría (and others) will expand upon this very good book.

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