

FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN THE AMERICAS

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Global Gangs: Street Violence across the World. Edited by Jennifer M. Hazen and Dennis Rodgers. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Pp. vii + 300. \$82.50 cloth. \$27.50 paper. ISBN: 9780816691470.

La situación de la seguridad y la justicia, 2009–2014: Entre expectativas de cambio, mano dura militar y treguas pandilleras. Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP). San Salvador: IUDOP, 2014. Pp. vii + 201.

Drug War Capitalism. By Dawn Paley. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2014. Pp. 225. \$16.95 paper. ISBN: 9781849351935.

Blood in the Fields: Ten Years Inside California's Nuestra Familia Gang. By Julia Reynolds. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2014. Pp. xxvii + 338. \$26.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781613749692.

The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System. By David Skarbek. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xii + 224. \$99.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780199328499.

In September 2014, forty-three students of the Ayotzinapa rural teacher training college were forcibly disappeared in the Mexican town of Iguala. The crime, perpetrated by municipal police in apparent collusion with the local mayor and a drug trafficking group, has yet to be clarified. Although conspicuous for its magnitude, the event is just one of thousands of forced disappearances that have accompanied the drug war launched initially by the Felipe Calderón administration (2006–2012) and continued by the current government of Enrique Peña Nieto. The unrelenting violence and lawlessness throughout much of the country suggest that this militarized strategy, and the US security assistance supporting it, have had no discernible impact on the criminal networks and enabling factors such as corruption and institutional weaknesses. In the Northern Triangle of Central America, where *mano dura* (iron fist) policies have helped make street gangs more sophisticated and brutal, crime and violence—gang related or otherwise—continue unabated. El Salvador's homicide rate plummeted with a government-sponsored gang truce. The collapse of the cease-fire, however, not only brought murders back to their previous levels but also witnessed an unprecedented spike in suspected gang attacks on police and extrajudicial executions of gang members. Developments in Mexico and Central America point to the urgent need to build greater knowledge of street gang and organized crime dynamics that in turn can provide the basis for more appropriate public policies.

The existing literature on the aforesaid groups, as well as the security strategies aimed at dismantling them, emerges from scholarly disciplines such as sociology, criminology, anthropology, and political science and entails six distinct research strands. The drug wars, notably in Mexico and Colombia, have yielded scores of analyses of their impact on drug flows, levels of violence, human rights abuses, the fragmentation and geographic expansion of organized crime, and the diversification of criminal portfolios.¹ Studies of US security assistance packages examine their contradictory goals, their conflation of threats, the nature of the aid, the uncertain sustainability of financed programs, and the lack of adequate evaluations.² Much of the research on street gangs explores the circumstances of gang formation and gang joining, the nature and impact of gang activities, the possibilities of gang exit, and gang ties to organized crime.³ Few works, however, are concerned with incarcerated street gang members, let alone prison gangs.⁴ Assessments of gang truces, still few in number, document their characteristics and factors for success or failure.⁵ Writings on the policing of crime and street gangs scrutinize the effects of repressive strategies as well as the political-electoral thinking that may induce their adoption.⁶ Scholars have paid particular attention to military participation in public security tasks and drug wars, tracing its impact on human rights violations and its implications for police reforms and democracy more generally.⁷ The academic and journalistic books reviewed in this

1. Carlos Silva Forné, Catalina Pérez Correa, and Rodrigo Gutiérrez Rivas, "Uso de la fuerza letal: Muertos, heridos y detenidos en enfrentamientos de las fuerzas federales con presuntos miembros de la delincuencia organizada," *Desacatos* 40 (2012): 47–64; Catherine Daly, Kimberly Heinle, and David Shirk, *Armed with Impunity: Curbing Military Human Rights Abuses in Mexico* (San Diego, CA: Trans-Border Institute, 2012); Antonio Mazzitelli, "Influencia de los cárteles mexicanos en Centroamérica," in *Atlas de la seguridad y la defensa de México 2012*, ed. Sergio Aguayo Quezada and Raúl Benítez Manaut (Mexico City: Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia, 2012), 15–24.

2. Daniel Mejía and Pascual Restrepo, "The War on Illegal Drug Production and Trafficking: An Economic Evaluation of Plan Colombia," Working Paper 2008–19, Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2008); Sabrina Abu-Hamdeh, "The Mérida Initiative: An Effective Way of Reducing Violence in Mexico?" *Pepperdine Policy Review* 4 (2011): 37–54; Eric Olson, ed., *Crime and Violence in Central America's Northern Triangle: How U.S. Policy Responses Are Helping, Hurting, and Can Be Improved* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2015).

3. Thomas Bruneau, Lucía Dammert, and Elizabeth Skinner, eds., *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Sonja Wolf, "El nexo entre las maras y el crimen organizado," in *Anuario 2012 de la seguridad regional en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. Hans Mathieu and Catalina Niño Guarnizo (Bogotá: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2012), 252–274; T. W. Ward, *Gangsters without Borders: An Ethnography of a Salvadoran Street Gang* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

4. María Santacruz and Elin Ranum, "Seconds in the Air": *Women Gang-Members and Their Prisons* (San Salvador: IUDOP, 2010); Lirio Gutiérrez Rivera, *Territories of Violence: State, Marginal Youth, and Public Security in Honduras* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

5. Carolina Sampó and Mariano Bartolomé, "Reflexiones sobre el cumplimiento de la tregua entre maras en El Salvador," *Estudios Internacionales* (Universidad de Chile) 177 (2014): 89–106; Paul Rexton Kan, "Malicious Peace: Violent Criminal Organizations, National Governments and Truces," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 3 (2014): 125–132.

6. Jeannette Aguilar, "Los efectos contraproducentes de los Planes Mano Dura," *Quórum, Revista de Pensamiento Iberoamericano* 16 (2006): 81–94; Chris van der Borgh and Wim Savenije, "De-securing and Re-securing Gang Policies: The Funes Government and Gangs in El Salvador," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 1 (2015): 149–176.

7. Edgar Amaya Cobar, "Militarización de la seguridad pública en El Salvador, 1992–2012," *URVIO, Revista Latinoamericana de Seguridad Ciudadana* 12 (2012): 71–82.

essay appraise how state and nonstate actors provide security in different kinds of social and political settings in the Americas. In doing so, they compel readers to think more deeply about the socioeconomic context of drug wars, the workings of prison gangs, the impact of militarized policing, and the need for a comparative perspective on street gangs.

DRUG WARS

Dawn Paley's first book, *Drug War Capitalism*, investigates the motivations for and effects of the US-promoted drug war in Latin America. Paley, a Canadian journalist, finds, as have previous writers, that the dominant antinarcotics approach has not stopped the flow of prohibited substances. Rather than exploring criminal organizations or illicit markets, however, she situates the counterdrug campaign in an economic and political context. More specifically, she seeks to expose the hemispheric drug war as a capitalist strategy designed to give transnational corporations, such as oil, gas, and mining companies, access to new land and resources through terror and dispossession. This has been achieved, Paley posits, through US-sponsored security assistance packages, notably Plan Colombia, the Mérida Initiative, and the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). The author succinctly reviews the origins of the drug war, associating it with the Richard Nixon administration (1969–1974), before casting a critical eye on this supply-reduction-focused policy, which the United States—through the international narcotics control regime—has since promoted around the world. The empirical examination of drug war capitalism—centering on Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras—includes rich descriptions of the communities Paley visited and illustrative cases of human rights violations she associates with the counterdrug offensive. The volume draws on an unspecified number of interviews, mostly with activists and analysts who seem sympathetic to her argument, and is overly dismissive of explanations that government officials put forward. For example, Paley contends that the drug war provided Mexico with a pretext for transforming its justice system and modeling it on that of the United States in order to facilitate dispute resolution for foreign firms. But Mexico's criminal justice system, which in the past had chiefly sought to repress social dissent and relied heavily on torture, retains its authoritarian practices and is inadequate for a formally democratic country that faces significant levels of crime and violence. If the entire security and justice apparatus did not require reforms, the Felipe Calderón government would not have felt compelled to deploy the armed forces against the drug trafficking groups, thus contributing to the escalation of violence in recent years.

Paley claims that the drug war spreads capitalist interests through three mechanisms: the rule of law and policy changes, militarization, and paramilitarization. Through the country studies, she tries to show how the counternarcotics strategy is a smoke screen for the exercise of social control, the repression of social movements, and natural resource exploitation. In doing so she makes visible oft-neglected social actors such as workers, campesinos, and migrants; foregrounds widespread displacement due to criminal violence; and highlights crime spikes

in areas controlled by the federal security forces. Paley's argument, however, is often contradictory and unpersuasive. For example, sometimes she insists that the United States promotes drug war capitalism, but at other times she acknowledges that the drug violence itself can lead to population displacement and the corporate occupation of land for natural resource extraction. Elsewhere in the book she suggests that Mexico's drug war—like an untamed beast unleashed—serves to control undocumented migration, whereas organized crime inroads into the migrant industry were merely a by-product of the government offensive. Perplexingly, Paley also affirms that in the United States incarceration for drug charges constitutes a tool for racialized social control. To be sure, Hispanics, and more so African Americans, are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement. But this seems to be the result of an aggressive law enforcement culture as well as racial bias and discrimination by predominantly white police forces, rather than an attempt to dominate certain ethnic and racial groups in society. The chief analytical problem of *Drug War Capitalism* is its failure to distinguish between the effects of misguided policies or institutional weaknesses and what Paley considers deliberate repression and plunder. Moreover, her assumption that US administrations connive with transnational corporations does not differentiate between the government's foreign policy, officials with their own values and agendas, and US companies pursuing contractor or local business opportunities.

A hemisphere-wide trend with important implications for security and democracy, albeit one that Paley does not discuss at length, is the blurring of perceived threats—organized crime, terrorism, street gangs, and undocumented migration—and their elimination through a militarized approach. The journalist's unease lies primarily with the terrorist group designation of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the fuzzy goals of US security assistance, but her discussion suggests two reasons why these developments are problematic. First, issues that are fundamentally of a socioeconomic or political nature are "securitized," or viewed and addressed through a security lens, particularly since the events of 9/11. Second, the broad interpretation of the concept of security obscures the differences between public security and national defense, thus paving the way for the participation of the armed forces in law enforcement. This, in turn, undermines governments' efforts to remove soldiers from public security tasks they are not trained for and hampers the police restructuring that Latin American countries never concluded in the face of rising crime and elite resistance to reforms. As shown below, these concerns are also echoed in the works of Hazen and Rodgers and El Salvador's Jesuit-run Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP).

GANG ENFORCEMENT

Julia Reynolds is an award-winning investigative journalist who spent twelve years documenting the rise and transformation of the Nuestra Familia prison gang and its street gang, the Norteños. *Blood in the Fields*, the product of this comprehensive research, is a nonfiction narrative that chronicles the formation and development of Nuestra Familia as well as the law enforcement initiatives that

sought to dismantle the group. Based on extensive interviews, police reports, and court documents, the volume offers fascinating insights into how *Nuestra Familia* emerged in the late 1960s and over the next decades consolidated its control over drug trafficking and extortion operations in northern California. Reynolds recognizes that gangs need to be understood if their violence is to be stopped and that American society has failed abysmally in its response to them. Nonjudgmental in her approach, the author provides honest portrayals of gang members as both victims and perpetrators, and of cops who, by choice or by circumstance of life, ended up on the right side of the law. Readers meet a varied cast of characters, but the story is largely told around two individuals. One is Tony Reyes, a local detective of Mexican-American origin who spent his teenage years hanging out with Norteño gang members but later joined the police, investigated the group, became disillusioned with inter-agency wrangling, and abandoned the gang task force. The other is Armando “Lil Mando” Tizoc Frías, who was raised in the Norteño lifestyle by his father, uncles, and cousins and enjoyed the parties but entered juvenile detention, and withdrew from the gang when he matured and discovered *Nuestra Familia*’s conflicted story.

The story of *Nuestra Familia*, which along with the Mexican Mafia is one of the first prison gangs of California’s penitentiary system, is set mostly in the agricultural town of Salinas. Reynolds gives a captivating description of the city, particularly the ramshackle area that has long been home to European and later to Asian and Latino migrant farmers. Those same neighborhoods in East Salinas also spawned the Norteños, descendants of Mexican immigrants, who banded together to fight for their identity and rights in the country where they had been born but were treated as foreigners. After discussing rural gangs and the factors associated with their growth, Reynolds provides a damning account of *Nuestra Familia*’s manipulation of civil rights discourse and the waste of young lives it has entailed. Embracing the ideals and symbols of the César Chavez farmworkers movement, *Nuestra Familia*’s founding history is encapsulated in “The Cause,” or the fight against abuse committed by inmates of the southern California-based Mexican Mafia. Notwithstanding the persistence of this discourse, *Nuestra Familia* gradually transformed into a criminal gang. Reynolds skillfully recounts how its leadership and structure changed over time and the organization managed to withstand even the most sophisticated law enforcement efforts. Housed in a maximum security facility at Pelican Bay State Prison, *Nuestra Familia* leaders were nonetheless able to control the streets through a support network of wives, girlfriends, and Norteño soldiers. Norteño cliques, for example, were ordered—under penalty of death—to stop their infighting, make minimum use of violence, and boost their drug business revenue. In an analysis that may well apply to gangs elsewhere, Reynolds charts how *Nuestra Familia* developed a more entrepreneurial, less value-based vision that focused on maximizing profits and reducing law enforcement pressure.

Reynolds is also determined to explain why particular antigang strategies are ineffective and may even exacerbate the problem they intend to solve. Operation Black Widow, the federal government’s seven-year effort to dismantle *Nuestra Familia* by indicting its leaders under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt

Organizations (RICO) Act, compromised the safety of many informants. Worse still, by scattering convicted leaders across federal prison facilities, it spread the gang through the prison system without affecting its operations in the streets. Reynolds emphasizes how Nuestra Familia's capacity for adaptability led it to craft new rules, conduct member background checks, and replace its leaders. A subsequent law enforcement plan, focused on removing the gang's shot-callers in the streets, was marred by conflicting priorities. Whereas local cops like Tony Reyes wanted to stop the violence, federal agents only aimed to arrest gang members under easier-to-prove drug charges. The conclusion is evident: not only can law enforcement be cynical but by itself it is also a wholly inadequate approach to gangs. For Reynolds, the answer—too briefly discussed—lies in community-based initiatives that combine violence reduction with social insertion opportunities for those youths willing to change. The journalist cites Chicago's CeaseFire as a promising program, but the most interesting part of the discussion concerns locally devised peace initiatives in Salinas. When residents mustered their courage and asked gang members to stop the violence, a truce ensued but soon collapsed. The breakdown of the peace agreement raises questions that researchers also need to ask in other contexts regarding, for example, the factors for the success or failure of truces and the impact of abortive cease-fires on gang violence. Finally, community night walks held by the mothers of shooters and shooting victims seem to have expanded the space for peace in Salinas and are an effort that deserves to be studied in greater detail.

PRISON GANGS

Like Reynolds, political economist David Skarbek accepts that prison gangs need to be better understood if the state is to address them more effectively than is currently the case. Strategies that seek to control prison gangs by isolating their leaders or intercepting gang communications have not diminished their power. Skarbek maintains that prison gangs exist or endure when inmates need them and official governance mechanisms are ineffective or nonexistent. Adopting a rational-choice approach, *The Social Order of the Underworld* examines how prison gangs form, function, and evolve in order to provide governance in jails. Gang members' code of silence, and the possibility that their claims may be exaggerated or untrue, poses particular methodological challenges for research into these groups. Skarbek combined a wide range of sources—including prison visits, informal interviews, legal documents, declassified FBI files, and personal memoirs—that shed light on inmate populations as well as the histories, inner workings, and crimes of prison and street gangs. Although his book focuses on the California penitentiary system, its findings hold relevance also in contexts such as Latin America, where overcrowding makes prison management extremely difficult and inmates, not guards, control the space and the activities therein. *The Social Order of the Underworld* analyzes two self-governance mechanisms. The first refers to the convict code, inmate norms that establish, under threat of punishment for violations, how inmates interact with each other and with officials. In the 1950s, when the unprecedented growth and changing demographics of California's prison

population made it difficult to monitor (and if necessary punish) members, the convict code became ineffective. When inmates required new forms to protect themselves, their property, and their illicit economy, they turned to creating a second self-governance mechanism: prison gangs.

Although their lifestyle may make prison gangs seem irrational, Skarbek counters that a rational-choice framework explains how individuals base their preferred actions on a cost-benefit analysis and, in the prison world, apply this thinking to create order. He offers a governance theory of prison social order that seeks to explain why inmates set up self-governing institutions. Previously, understandings of prison life had been largely based on deprivation theory, which links it to the nature of confinement, and importation theory, which associates it with inmates' pre-incarceration experiences. Skarbek, however, shows that since prisoners can neither consistently rely on guards for their safety nor access many formal governance institutions available to law-abiding citizens, they must craft an alternative mechanism. Rather than trying to break up prison gangs, he concludes, their destructive influence might be reduced by altering the conditions that produce them, for example through greater prison safety, less incarceration, and more police officers on the streets.

Another key theme of the volume involves the relationship between prison gangs and street gangs. When California street gang members enter the penitentiary system, they are required to set aside their rivalries and align with their respective prison gang. Norteños and Sureños, for example, are associated with Nuestra Familia and the Mexican Mafia, respectively, and in detention they support their prison gang members. Yet the most intriguing part of Skarbek's study concerns prison gangs' control over the streets to ensure that gang wars, and the public displays of violence they often entail, are limited and do not interfere with illicit markets. One of the better-known directives is the 1992 "Eme edict," a peace treaty that the Mexican Mafia enforced among Hispanic street gangs in Los Angeles and that forbade drive-by shootings. Although overall, gang homicides did not substantially decline, drive-by shootings did, suggesting that gang members indeed adjusted their behavior in order to ease law enforcement pressure. Conversely, the Mexican Mafia demands extortion payments from drug-dealing street gangs and is able to collect its taxes despite its much smaller membership and the incarceration of many of its members. Again, Skarbek explains, it is prison gangs' governance mechanisms that can force compliance, including the threat to hurt street gang members once they find themselves behind bars.

PACIFICATION

Street gangs across the world constitute the subject matter of *Global Gangs*. Its editors Jennifer Hazen, a researcher on armed groups, and Dennis Rodgers, an anthropologist and researcher on Nicaraguan street gangs, depart from the fact that gang studies tend to focus on particular groups or countries. Hazen and Rodgers argue that we require a better understanding of different types of gangs in order to comprehend the role that street gangs and other armed actors play in contemporary patterns of violence. The volume aims neither to provide a theory

of gangs nor to be prescriptive but simply to stimulate discussion about the need for more comparative and interdisciplinary research on gangs and their contexts. The editors loosely define gangs as groups with institutional continuity, routine violent behavior, and young members (generally under the age of twenty-five). The main question guiding the essays is how and why gangs transform as a result of broader social, economic, and political factors. In this sense, *Global Gangs* seeks to highlight the socially embedded nature of gangs and the ways in which dissimilar environments shape their origins and evolution. Comprising contributions from different social science disciplines, the book is divided into two sections. The first one considers the development of gangs and demonstrates that the path they take depends on internal factors (leadership, organization, etc.) and external factors (state response, politics, drugs, etc.). The second section questions the way we think about gangs and asks what, if any, the differences might be between gangs and, for example, militias or social movements. An important broader point the work emphasizes is that gangs are both a social problem and a lens onto the society that spawns them, including issues such as marginality, violence, racism, and discrimination.

The chapter by Enrique Desmond Arias, "Gang Politics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," shows how political and media narratives depict favela drug gangs as an external threat to society even though they form part of the country's social and political systems. In order to gain protection against rivals and police, many drug gangs offer favela inhabitants limited social support in exchange for silence and acceptance. Working through local residents' associations, the traffickers grant politicians monopoly access to the communities in return for job contracts and limited investment, although most benefits go to the traffickers and their closest allies. These arrangements prove attractive to politicians, since they keep the favelas divided and limit their ability to make organized demands for improving the situation of the working class. Arias does not complement his analysis with concrete examples of this political demobilization. Nonetheless, it is clear that the discourse of separateness makes the annihilation of drug gangs and reconquest of criminal enclaves seem the most plausible strategy. In Rio this approach is embodied by the Police Pacification Unit, which seeks to pacify the favelas by suppressing gang activity and forestalling future delinquency through community policing. Pacification does not, however, confront the structural factors—such as social exclusion and political corruption—that fuel the rise of criminal groups. The concept has a long history, spanning US interventions in Vietnam and El Salvador as well as Brazil's peacekeeping role in Haiti. Future research could explore its travels across time and place or its uses in contexts such as El Salvador's street gang territories.

In his chapter "*Maras and the Politics of Violence in El Salvador*," José Miguel Cruz explains how the Central American country's gangs emerged from marginalization but turned into much more organized and brutal groups due to the politics of violence. This notion refers to "the collection of institutions, actors, and policies that boosted the extreme use of violence as a normal feature" (Cruz, 129) of Salvadoran street gangs. Influenced by the work of sociologist John Hagedorn and criminologists Scott H. Decker, Tim Bynum, and Deborah Weisel, Cruz aims

to show how the gangs and their members changed as their social milieu experienced transformations.⁸ These shifts included violence, or the threat thereof, by different social actors and produced greater group cohesiveness, modified roles and structures, and a strengthening of violence-legitimizing norms. Cruz argues that the *maras* became more powerful and more criminally involved groups largely as an (inadvertent) result of *mano dura* policies as well as extralegal violence by state and nonstate actors. On the one hand, police crackdowns and gang-segregated mass incarceration permitted gang members to more easily socialize, organize, communicate, and carry out crimes. On the other hand, the war on gangs created a climate conducive to police abuse and extrajudicial killings. Cruz points to relaxed oversight, an increase in police violence, and a 2005 forensic report that suggested that 59 percent of murders committed that year bore the hallmarks of summary executions. Both the argument and the evidence adduced, however, warrant further examination. If *mano dura* contributed to gang evolution in El Salvador and similar gang suppression has occurred in the United States, why is it that the *maras* in Central America display more cruelty than their counterparts in the north? Furthermore, the *modus operandi* of certain killings may be indicative of extrajudicial executions, but poor investigations often preclude conclusive findings, and suspected cases of police violence need to be sustained by more empirical data than Cruz presents. Lastly, the human rights violations that have accompanied *mano dura* point to excessive and unrestrained law enforcement powers. Accountability for police misconduct is not explicitly discussed by Cruz, but it constitutes a key theme in the IUDOP book reviewed next.

GANG TRUCES

The IUDOP, housed in El Salvador's Jesuit University, conducted much of the early pioneering research on street gangs in Central America. Its latest study, *La situación de la seguridad y la justicia, 2009–2014*, scrutinizes the security and justice policy of the Mauricio Funes government. The starting point is the growing complexity of postwar crime and violence under the impact of repressive security policies, the politicization of crime, and political resistance toward security and justice reforms. The country's first leftist administration had initially pledged to tackle crime in all its forms through a security policy focused on social prevention, community policing, and institutional strengthening, but it soon returned to the *mano dura* strategy against street gangs. The IUDOP asks why the Funes government made this U-turn, examines the characteristics of its security policy, and discusses its broader implications for democracy and police reform in El Salvador. Incorporating primary sources, interviews, statistics, and news reports, the study presents an extensive analysis of the justice apparatus in order to show how corruption and a lack of technical capacity contribute to the elevated levels of impunity. Although not discussed in detail, it is this ineffectiveness in dealing

8. Scott H. Decker, Tim Bynum, and Deborah Weisel, "A Tale of Two Cities: Gangs as Organized Crime Groups," *Justice Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1998): 395–425; John Hagedorn, *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1988).

with delinquency and violence that paved the way for some of the government's more controversial measures: a gang truce and military participation in public security tasks. Both initiatives allowed the Funes presidency to be seen as firm and (at least temporarily) competent on crime, since the two-year gang cease-fire was accompanied by a sharp drop in homicides. Then again, the administration sent the message that the police could not be relied on and thus may have helped further erode citizens' willingness to trust and collaborate with that institution. The IUDOP takes a particularly critical view of the role of the armed forces and the impact of political dynamics on the security policy.

Although military involvement in law enforcement provision has occurred for most of the postwar period, the Funes government increased the budget, powers, and numbers of soldiers in policing activities. Given its leftist leanings, its most striking decision was the appointment of two fast-track retired generals as minister of justice and security and as director-general of the National Civilian Police (PNC). The authors rightly maintain that this step portrayed the army as the only institution capable of resolving public security problems. Moreover, it undermined the spirit of the 1992 peace accords, which, given past human rights violations, had stipulated the defense forces' withdrawal from public security. These findings are not new, and the IUDOP hastens to add that the generals' arrival at the ministry and the PNC was momentous in yet another sense. The halting process of purging and strengthening the PNC backtracked, and officers with a military background and suspected ties to organized crime returned to key posts. While the concerns about institutional weakening are justified, the reasoning behind them is simplistic. Progressive officers may also harm the police force, for example through corruption or by publicly sanctioning (as the current leadership has done) extrajudicial killings of gang members that are masked as acts of self-defense. In other words, the PNC may well undergo internal conflicts, pressures, or incentives that motivate its top commanders to stray from their original course of action. Such dynamics are often more apparent in the political-electoral arena, and it is here that the study offers a series of plausible hypotheses for the about-face in El Salvador's security policy.

A sudden upsurge in murders in late 2009, opposition charges of government incompetence, and budget difficulties made it politically difficult to dedicate time and resources to social prevention. As short-term thinking took over, *mano dura* became an obvious choice. Moreover, Funes had received campaign support from the "Friends of Mauricio," a diverse group of civilians and military members, and once in office began distancing himself from his party. The IUDOP claims that his crime policy took a different path because *de facto* power groups sought control over the security apparatus in order to ensure their interests and impunity. The military establishment, for example, tried to benefit from the president's lack of a party base by raising its profile and reasserting ownership over public security management. In another twist, General David Munguía Payés, first as minister of defense, then as minister of justice and security, depicted the street gangs as the main homicide perpetrators before promoting the gang truce as a murder reduction strategy. This line of reasoning might explain how the government's discourse on crime changed from one that included organized crime to one that

did not. But otherwise this account is unsatisfactory. Was organized crime rendered invisible to facilitate the scapegoating of gangs or to mask corruption in the police and the armed forces? How might we explain the fact that the government of Salvador Sánchez Cerén, a former guerrilla commander, also has been quick to return to *mano dura*? Legitimacy and electoral concerns may play a greater role in shaping security policy choices than the IUDOP acknowledges.

Taken together, the books reviewed here illuminate how states provide security and with what motivations and effects, as well as what happens when states fail to protect all of their citizens and other actors step in to fill the void. In addition, they remind readers that consultation of a wide range of sources yields a more complete and reliable picture of subjects that are dangerous or otherwise difficult to research. The works will appeal to academic and policy audiences interested in criminal groups, prisons, the police, and the armed forces, as well as security and drug policies, particularly in the Americas. Future research could explore the influence of imprisoned gang members, particularly gang veterans, over the streets; examine gang truces in different contexts; and analyze, especially in Central America, the effects of drug laws or institutional capacities on drugs and drug policies.