

Best Book Award: Guillermo Trejo (University of Notre Dame), Sandra Ley (CIDE, Mexico), and Daniel C. Mattingly (Yale University) were co-winners of the best book award for their work on *Votes, Drugs, and Violence: The Political Logic of Criminal Wars in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and *The Art of Political Control in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

This year's committee members included Mariela Szwarcberg Daby (Reed College) (chair), Donghyun Danny Choi (University of Pittsburgh), and Barbara Ann Chotiner (University of Alabama).

Committee's Remarks on the Award Winners: We received 43 nominations for the prize this year. The quality and strength of the books demonstrate that our field is full of novel and insightful contributions. After careful deliberations, the committee unanimously decided to award the best book prize to two books. The first awarded book is *Votes, Drugs, and Violence* by Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley; the second awarded book is *The Art of Political Control in China* by Daniel Mattingly.

Votes, Drugs, and Violence is an ambitious and agenda-setting book to understand the intertwined relationships between violence, organized crime, and electoral politics in both autocracies and democracies. The book answers three big questions:

1. Why Mexican cartels went to war as the country transitioned to democracy.
2. Why violence spiraled in democracy.
3. Why cartels seek to control local politics and territories.

To answer these questions, the authors study the networks of state agents and criminals that enable criminality and organized criminal groups. Building and testing the concept of a gray zone of criminality, Trejo and Ley explain why violence spiraled after Mexico transitioned to democracy and why cartels became interested in local governance. The book's mixed-method strategy of combining multivariate regressions and quasi-experiments, together with original data and case studies, makes a persuasive case for theory testing.

The book demonstrates the painful lessons of the politicization of the war on drugs and the consequences of having subnational de facto criminal governance for one-third of Mexico's population. Overall, "Votes, Drugs, and Violence" eloquently shows that when elites choose to transition to democracy without reforming the state's coercive forces and not to investigate and judge those who committed massive human rights violence, democracy is intertwined with organized crime. As a result, electoral competition will potentially trigger criminal wars and large-scale criminal violence.

The Art of Political Control in China challenges the conventional wisdom that a robust civil society leads to political responsiveness. Instead, Mattingly finds that China's remarkable state capacity is not only built through coercive institutions but by informal institutions from civil society. Moreover, the book shows that civil society can strengthen the state's control over its citizens in autocratic states. By focusing on the hidden tool of informal control, Mattingly demonstrates how civil society groups in China enhanced the state capacity to tamper protest, requisite land, and enforce mandatory birth quotas. The book's contribution and findings extend well beyond China and even autocracies by forcing us to think more critically about the role of civil society in the enforcement of informal controls. This study reminds us that humans are central to the Chinese regime's efforts to repress and control its population effectively.