

Open Fire

Understanding Global Gun Cultures

Edited by

CHARLES FRUEHLING SPRINGWOOD

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housing and credit—and protection that communities required in the face of invasions from outside gangs.

But I did not fully foresee how deeply and destructively parallel these gangs would ultimately prove to be. In the new century, these organizations have grown more sophisticated and complex and have attempted to rival and even intimidate the Rio state government. For example, on September 30, 2002, stores, schools, banks, and offices in Rio were forced to close on the order of jailed gang leaders who were unhappy with their living conditions. Gang members also burned buses, paralyzing public transport. This day, which became known as “Black Monday,” made it clear to *Cariocas* (residents of Rio de Janeiro) that beyond being able to impact the lives of the 1.5 million people living in the *favelas* of Rio, they were also able to exert a kind of parallel power upon the broader public, a power never directly experienced by the middle classes before. According to Zuenir Ventura, a newspaper columnist known for his essays that chronicle daily life in Rio de Janeiro: “On September 30 [2002] a border was crossed. Everything that the middle class has always observed from afar suddenly descended the mountain to take over the asphalt, and the result was fear, a generalized panic like I have never seen in this city” (Rohter 2002). One month later, gang leaders threatened to kill the governor, and, among other actions, successfully attacked police stations and patrol cars throughout the city.

At the same time, evidence of police abuse and impunity has grown proportionally, despite—and perhaps in reaction to—innovative experiments in public security instituted at the state and federal levels since 2000. In April 2005, at least 30 people were killed in drive-by shootings in the Baixada Fluminense, a region on the periphery of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The gunmen were believed to be military police officers angered by a recent campaign to crack down on police violence and corruption (Rohter 2005: A3). The Amnesty International Report (2001) titled “People End Up Dying Here”: Torture and Ill-treatment in Brazil,” suggests that:

torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is widely and systematically used in many police stations and detention centres throughout the country's 26 states and in the Federal District. It occurs at the time of arrest, in police stations, in prisons, and in youth detention centres. It is used to extract confessions from suspects; to dominate, humiliate and control detainees; or, increasingly to extort money or serve the criminal interest of corrupt police officials. (Amnesty International 2001: 4)

Brazilians have become accustomed to ineffectual and corrupt police officials. In addition to the publication of periodic Amnesty International reports, they are witnesses to large-scale media spectacles of events that highlight police brutality. In 1993, a death squad of off-duty police killed seven homeless boys and wounded two others, spraying them with gunfire as they lay sleeping in front of the Candelária Church in the center of Rio de Janeiro. Also in 1993, twenty-one

CHAPTER 3

Gun Politics: Reflections on Brazil's Failed Gun Ban Referendum in the Rio de Janeiro Context

Donna Goldstein

In this chapter, I wish to explore some of the global dimensions of the recent gun ban referendum in Brazil, taking Rio de Janeiro as a case study to think with. During research in the early 1990s in the shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro, I became aware of the local dimensions surrounding firearms, especially among male youths. The ethnography I wrote based on that research, *Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown* (2003), chronicles the violence of the 1990s in Rio through a close-up look at one *favela* (urban shantytown) I pseudonymously named Felicidade Eterna, located some 50 km from the city center of Rio de Janeiro.

In the final chapters of the book, I focused on the complex relationships between the residents living in the shantytowns, the drug gang members—most often boys and young men raised in these same communities—and the police forces, renowned for their use of lethal force against the poor and for their chronic corruption. During my last visit to Rio in 1998, residents in Felicidade Eterna expressed a solemn concern that the rules for appropriate revenge targets and the fragile peace at times established in their community between the police and the local gang had slipped away dangerously into a space of unpredictability. To these residents, the gangs of the 1980s were remembered as being more concerned about garnering the support of the communities they lived in, and seemed to live by fixed and somewhat stable rules of revenge that had a particular logic to them. In contrast, the gangs that had evolved in the 1990s seemed to exhibit characteristics distinct from their predecessors. Among other differences, they carried more powerful weapons and seemed to hesitate less often in using them. The clarity of the focus for a revenge killing seemed to slip from the perpetrator of the original crime to that person's family and friends, involving members of the community that would have otherwise considered themselves neutral toward the gangs. In the later chapters of *Laughter Out of Place*, I joined numerous other scholars of Brazilian violence in suggesting that the drug gangs had successfully created a kind of parallel state (Leeds 1996), one that provided some of the services—primarily access to

residents of the *favela* Vigário Geral in the North Zone of Rio were assassinated, also by off-duty police officers, prompting the founding of the Rio NGO Viva Rio, which emerged to promote gun bans.

During my residence in Felicidade Eterna in the early 1990s, guns were used casually and habitually to resolve a variety of conflicts between individuals, not only between the home gang and police, but also between members of the home gang and competing rival gangs. Throughout *Laughter Out of Place*, I describe the everyday struggle of Glória to keep all the children in her charge "off the street," out of trouble, and far from the influence of the criminal drug gangs. But Glória was not always successful in her quest, as I explain throughout the book. Her eldest child, Pedro Paulo, joined the gangs at a young age and died a violent death in a Red Command (imperialist drug-trafficking gang in Rio) shoot-out with police. Her young nephew, Lucas, also found himself attracted to the drug gangs, and echoing Pedro Paulo's explanation of why he needed to belong to a gang, explained that it was so that he would not have to "work like a slave at slave's wages, like his mother" (Goldstein 2003: 203). In Felicidade Eterna, the local gang controlled who could own a gun and who could not. Residents found it particularly frightening and destabilizing when a non-local gang gained control over the *favela*. In one instance that took place during my time in Brazil, a new non-local gang had invaded Felicidade Eterna, claiming it as its own territory. The reason for the invasion was that a resident connected to the local gang was known to have a gun and the new gang, known as ADA (*Amigos dos Amigos*, or 'Friends of Friends'), insisted that he give it up to them. This incident, described to me by residents in Felicidade Eterna in the early 1990s when the intensification of drug trafficking and firearms usage was at its height, was one of the many such episodes I related in *Laughter Out of Place* (2003: 192-3):

[The ADA] prohibited anyone who was not part of the gang from owning a gun and were especially wary of anyone with connections to Breno. Breno's brother-in-law, Franklin, a resident, owned a gun that the new gang insisted he give up. After numerous verbal threats, members of the gang resorted to force and one evening entered his home with the goal of confiscating his gun. His wife was at home alone. They had, by then, decided to kill Franklin if he resisted. His wife was severely beaten for being either unwilling or unable to tell them where the gun was hidden. While this was taking place, Franklin arrived at the entrance to the favela, and other residents alerted him to what was happening at his home.

Because at this time the local gang was nonexistent, Franklin had no recourse but to call for the help of the police. The police arrived, and a shoot-out with the ADA gang members ensued. The gang members escaped that evening, and Franklin and his wife had just enough time to gather a few possessions before fleeing their home. They knew they could not stay; it would only be a matter of time before the gang members returned to seek revenge, and the police offered no lasting protection. Franklin's only possibility for gaining access again to his house and his possessions was to carry out a successful reinvasion of the favela by allying himself with the gang's rivals, *Cólegio das Árvores*.

Franklin's predicament and the constant gunfire that emerged in the wake of his alliance provides a sober reminder of the nature of the rule of law as experienced by residents of Rio's *favelas*, where the police are ineffectual in providing protection to entire regions that are under gang control. While I sometimes experienced periods of relative calm while living in Felicidade Eterna, guns were nevertheless ever-present, particularly in their ability to define both the nature of leadership and the rule of law in this region beyond police control.

In the remainder of this chapter, I address local as well as global discourses surrounding the possibility of Brazilian gun control as it played out in the recent 2005 gun ban referendum—a referendum unique in the world for bringing one of the most radical proposals of gun ban legislation to the people for a vote. The referendum's inception began in December of 2003, when President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (President Lula) signed into law what later became known as the Disarmament Statute, a bill that legislated sweeping restrictions on the selling and carrying of firearms. The final provision of the bill called for an October 2005 national referendum, in which Brazilian citizens themselves would be asked to decide whether the proposed restrictions should be continued or revoked (Dias 2005: 40-8). If passed, the referendum would have dramatically changed the landscape of firearms and control: it would have required very strict legal procedures for the possession of firearms, increased the age limit for those who could own firearms, lengthened prison sentencing for those who carried firearms illegally, forced gun manufacturers to imprint bullets so that homicides could be traced to the original weapon, and made arms trafficking illegal in a manner parallel to the illegality of drug and animal trafficking.

The referendum ultimately failed, but the discourses that arose out of its consideration, produced within a matrix of local and global forces, reflect an important step in a longer process of democratization—a process so often criticized as problematic, if not dysfunctional, in the Brazilian context. Most notably, the rhetoric that developed for and against the referendum produced dramatic effects on the voting public. In polls taken at the very start of the campaign, approximately 70 per cent of Brazilians supported the gun ban. But surveys conducted just days before the referendum showed that the NO vote had gained significant momentum, estimating that at least 52 per cent would vote against the referendum at the polls (Phillips 2005: 3). When the gun ban referendum was finally put to a vote on Sunday, October 23rd, 2005, approximately 64 per cent of the public said "no" to the ban and only 36 per cent said "yes" (Resende 2005: A19). Read one way, the movement to ban weapons sales and to implement more stringent gun control in Brazil failed miserably, with the proposal failing to win a single state (Lobo 2005). Read another way, the very fact of the referendum's existence can be seen as an extremely positive development within the long-term process of democratization taking place in Brazil. In fact, the referendum marks the first time that any country, not just Brazil, has put a gun ban to a nationwide vote (Reel 2005: A13).

Regardless of how one interprets the outcome of the referendum, what happened between the beginning and end of the campaign that convinced Brazilians they would be better off without the proposed gun ban calls for analysis. This chapter seeks to provide that analysis by historicizing and contextualizing local debates surrounding the Brazilian referendum within global activist agendas emanating from left- and right-wing sources. There have been analysts that have speculated that the gun ban referendum and the "no" vote that was incurred could perhaps best be interpreted as a "no" vote to support for the Workers' Party and President Lula, in office at the time of the referendum. Just prior to the referendum it became known that the Workers' Party was involved in an influence-peddling scheme. This purported corruption of the party that had run on an anti-corruption platform shook the country and inspired disgust and dis-appointment even among traditionally loyal supporters. Many editorials in Brazil surmised that the cynicism provoked by this scandal might have caused voters to reject the gun ban referendum, a referendum wholly supported by President Lula. In contrast to these accounts, my own account of the referendum begins locally in the city of Rio de Janeiro, where a gun-weary population in many ways established the rhetorical terms of the debate. The discussion then moves outward to consider the effects of global interventions into the debate, considering the transnational trappings of a terrorist bombing in London alongside the imported rhetorics of global NGOs. Ultimately, my account returns to Brazil, where a unique configuration of discourses on gun control, violence, and poverty confirmed the referendum's failure.

The Political Economy of Guns in Rio De Janeiro

Although many organizations inside Brazil received funding and advice from global networks interested in seeing the gun ban referendum pass or fail, the discourses that emerged from the controversial referendum were already familiar to Brazilians, who experience almost 40,000 firearm deaths per year along with one of the highest rates of lethal police violence in the world. Much of the debate about the referendum emanated from organizations located within the city of Rio de Janeiro, one of the more vivid sites of crime, urban violence, and gun activity in Brazil. The Rio-based non-governmental organization Viva Rio¹ was central not only in coordinating the YES movement, but also in organizing an impressive group of scholars to investigate the basic political economy of guns in Rio de Janeiro. Their collection of scholarly papers provides much of the information found on this topic, and I cite their work throughout this section of this chapter. A common perception in Rio has been that criminals use military-style foreign-made small arms to commit crimes, while law-abiding citizens use registered Brazilian-made firearms for legitimate self-defense (Dreyfus, Lessing, and Purcena 2005). During the months prior to the referendum, this issue received increased attention as the Brazilian small arms industry exploited this perception when

entering the political debates leading up to the final vote. Yet researchers at Viva Rio found that Brazil's own Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) industry is responsible for the production of a large percentage of the guns that are used by criminals and that contribute to the astronomical levels of armed violence in Brazil.

Currently, the Brazilian small arms industry is made up of a few companies, the two most prominent being Forjas Taurus SA and the Companhia Brasileira de Cartuchos, or CBC, which hold near-monopolies in handgun and small arms ammunition production. The other major company is IMBEL, a public company administered by the Ministry of Defense with strong ties to the Army, which primarily produces military arms and ammunition. Together, these companies have helped Brazil not only to consolidate its position as a medium-sized SALW producer and exporter, but also to become a dominant regional player in firearms production: the second largest producer of guns in the western hemisphere after the United States (Dreyfus, Lessing, and Purcena 2005: 50). Significantly, the production of permitted-use firearms in Brazil doubled between 1967 and 1995 from 400,000 to 800,000, with handgun production key to that increase (Dreyfus, Lessing, and Purcena 2005: 67). The Brazilian production of SALW has thus grown steadily over the years, reaching a current market value of approximately US\$100 million per year (Dreyfus, Lessing, and Purcena 2005: 68).² While the United States has been identified as the principal customer for Brazilian SALW since the late 1980s (Dreyfus, Lessing, and Purcena 2005: 75), Viva Rio researchers have pointed out that the surveying of the purchase and use of SALW firearms by Brazilian civilians themselves has been complicated by the lack of a federalized system:

The purchase and use of firearms by civilians remained unregulated until 1980, when the Ministry of the Army enacted a regulation that established the number and type of weapons that civilians above 20 years of age would be able to purchase and also established the mandatory registration of those weapons (as a precondition for completing the purchase). However, small arms were registered with the Civilian Police of each state, with no national institution in charge of centralizing the data on firearms and their owners. (Dreyfus and Nascimento 2005: 96)

In 1997, the Brazilian federal government finally created a nationwide registry system called the National Arms Control System (SINARM), which instituted a federal system for the comprehensive registration of privately owned guns.

The increase in firepower in the city of Rio de Janeiro during the last three decades has been both quantitative (greater numbers of firearms) as well as qualitative (more weapons with greater firepower). The city provides a telling case study for understanding what happens to guns after they are purchased, particularly with respect to firearm movement between legal and illegal markets. According to the Viva Rio report titled, "The Value of the Illegal Firearms Market in the City of Rio de Janeiro" (Rivero 2005), out of the entire universe of arms seized by police during criminal activities in the state of Rio de Janeiro

between 1951 and 2003, 81 per cent of the weapons were unlicensed; that is, just one-fifth of the weapons used in registered crimes were acquired legally. The report attributes the high number of illegal weapons in Rio de Janeiro to a lack of effective firearms controls in the state. As discussed in the report titled "The Value of Illegal Firearms in the City of Rio de Janeiro," the diversion of legal firearms to crime in the city of Rio began to increase dramatically from 1972 forward, coincidentally with the arrival of drug trafficking activities, especially marijuana trafficking, on a massive scale in Rio's *favelas* (Rivero 2005). Another important timeframe dates from 1981–2, when cocaine-trafficking became more common. This trend continued into the 1990s, and it was during this time that the diversion of firearms to criminal elements reached a peak. In short, increases in the drug trade coincide with increases in gun-related crimes and with the diversion of weapons from legal to illegal markets.

Yet the increase in firepower applies not only to drug traffickers, but also importantly to the police forces. In a series of recent interviews with the police, Rivero (2005) found that the police consistently talk about the desire to have firepower "equal to the traffickers" with the objective of exterminating them, a theme that many urban ethnographers of violence have noted (cf. Huggins 1991; Caldeira 2000). It follows that the desire for firearms manifested by police and drug gangs in Rio betrays a noteworthy class dimension. For instance, Lessing (2005), on the basis of interviews with middle-class citizens who participated in the Disarmament Statute of 2003 gun-buyback campaign, found that the vast majority of these citizens preferred to own firearms because of a perceived threat of property crime associated with the lower classes, together with the reality of ineffective law enforcement. In contrast, residents of Rio's *favelas*—whether directly involved as gang members or not—expressed the need for protection, status, and authority, as well as the socially mobile earning power associated with gun ownership.

The Man in London

On July 7, 2005, just two months prior to the vote on the referendum, London suffered a series of suicide bombing attacks in the subway and bus system during which four bombers and fifty-two civilians died. Two weeks later, on July 21, 2005, police found four additional explosive devices partly detonated in central London, near Shepherd's Bush station on the Hammersmith and City Underground Line, Warren Street station on the Victoria Line, and the Oval station on the Northern Line, and on a number 26 bus in the Hackney road, along with a mysterious package on some open ground at Little Wormwood Scrubs, in the West London suburb of North Kensington, that suggested a fifth explosive device (BBC News 2005a,b). The morning after this discovery, a 27-year-old Brazilian man by the name of João Alves Menezes, who in London preferred to be called Jean Charles de Menezes, left his apartment building and headed off to catch the bus that would take him to the Stockwell Underground

station (BBC News 2005c). The son of a bricklayer from the city of Gonzaga in the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil, he had lived in London legally for three years working as an electrician. Mr Menezes now lived in an apartment block in Tulse Hill, South London, where he shared an apartment with two of his female cousins, Patricia da Silva Armani and Vivien Figueiredo (Past Peak Archives 2005; WRP 2005).

Plainclothes police had been staking out Mr Menezes's apartment building because they suspected that one of the bombers from the failed July 21 attacks, Hussain Osman, the prime suspect for the Shepherd's Bush attempt, might be living in the block, as they had found a gym membership card giving that address at the scene of the crime in Shepherd's Bush. When Mr Menezes emerged from the building at 9.30 a.m. on that fated day, he was therefore followed by police—who were still under the impression that he might be Hussain Osman—on to the bus that took him to the Stockwell Underground station and then into the station (which had apparently been the point of departure for three of the four would-be bombers the previous day) (BBC News 2005a,c). When Mr Menezes began to run down the escalator at the sound of an approaching Northern Line train, the police took this behavior to be an attempt to evade pursuit and rushed on to the train after him as it was about to depart, presumably in the belief that he might be their original Shepherd's Bush suspect about to engage in a second attempt to blow up a tube train (BBC News 2005e). Witnesses said the police then shot him five times in the head and neck, killing him instantly (Cowell 2005). The police report attributed the incident both to Mr Menezes's refusal to stop and to his wearing of a lengthy and potentially concealing jacket in summer weather, an anomaly that had apparently suggested to the police the possibility of a concealed bomb. But a Brazilian friend of Mr Menezes, also living in London, attributed his decision to flee to the fact that he had recently been chased by a London gang. One thing was ultimately clear to all parties, however: Mr Menezes was not a terrorist; he was merely a migrant worker from Brazil wearing a lengthy and potentially concealing jacket in warm weather (BBC News 2005d,e; Past Peak Archives 2005).

News of the circumstances surrounding Mr Menezes's death was bitterly received by Brazilians living in both London and Brazil. The Brazilian Artists website,³ for instance, which is dedicated to Brazilian political issues as well as events related to Brazilians in London, posted a range of commentaries on his death, many of them suggesting strong parallels between the brutality of the police forces in Europe and Brazil, with the first fueled by racist anti-Arab sentiment and the latter by discrimination against shantytown residents. Although this tragic tale of the misreading of an innocent Brazilian migrant could have been a chance for Brazilians to reflect on a wretched gun-inflicted error made by one of the least violent police forces in the world, the mistaken shooting of João Menezes instead became a parable reminding Brazilians of the incompetence of their own police forces. This parable was quickly embraced by those opposed to the gun ban legislation and in favor of a NO vote on the referendum. Opponents

successfully argued that because Brazilian police were incapable of protecting the civilian population from criminals, individuals should be allowed to own and carry firearms to protect themselves. There is a further hint of irony in the deployment of this rhetoric, given that President Cardoso had regularly invoked the British system of gun control when arguing for gun ban legislation in Brazil. In fact, it was after a diplomatic visit to England in 1997 that Cardoso became one of the earliest proponents of the Brazilian legislation leading to the 2005 referendum (Rohrer 1999).

Global Players in the Brazil Referendum

Even though global players are credited as important actors in the outcome of the Brazilian referendum, it is difficult to measure the significance of their impact on the referendum. In what follows, I consider the effects of rhetoric produced by the US-based National Rifle Association on the one hand and transnational gun-ban NGOs on the other.

Brazilians on each side of the referendum claimed that the other side received outside, foreign, global support for their cause, both financial and strategic. On the left, for instance, ten Noble Prize winners lent their name and support to the YES cause. The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), a UK-based global network of more than 600 non-governmental organizations favoring gun control, additionally expressed support for the Brazilian referendum, finding it to be a "historic opportunity to make people safer from gun violence" (IANSA 2005). On the right, the opposition to the gun ban gained powerful sponsors from outside Brazil, most importantly from the National Rifle Association (NRA) (Morton 2006). Already in 2003, when the Disarmament Statute neared a vote in Parliament, Charles Cunningham, an NRA lobbyist in Washington, traveled to São Paulo to meet with a pro-gun group. Cunningham's talks in Brazil were billed as offering "effective pro-gun strategies in an anti-gun culture."

Although many pro-gun activists stayed away from Cunningham's talks, fearing that their presence would be seen as a form of collusion with foreign interventionists, his appearance in the country was nevertheless seen as significant to the overall morale of the pro-gun groups (Morton 2006: 63). David Morton suggests that one of the NRA's simplest forms of influence on overseas groups may be to act as a "global pro-gun think tank" (2006: 65). While the NRA denied that they offered any direct funding to Brazilian groups, pointing out that their charter prohibits financial assistance, Morton argues that the NRA does indeed play a crucial role in international efforts, supplying strategies and rhetoric to pro-gun campaign efforts. Wendy Cukier (2005) of the Coalition for Gun Control agrees, noting that: "... the National Rifle Association has [put] pressure on the US Administration to block international efforts to combat the illicit trade in guns [and] American politicians have threatened to cut funding to the United Nations if it proceeds with these measures." While many gun-ban

activists argue that these kinds of NRA campaigns are culturally inappropriate outside a US context and therefore inherently subject to failure, Morton holds that NRA campaign efforts abroad have been surprisingly successful. Highlighting the success of their efforts in Australia and Canada, he credits the NRA with the last-minute success of the Brazil campaign.

Yet representatives of Viva Rio noted that the Brazilian pro-gun lobby used both statistics and rhetoric that were indeed "culturally inappropriate" in the Brazilian context, using unintelligible campaign slogans that too closely resembled NRA television infomercials in the United States. For example, one TV spot in Brazil referred to the "right" to own a gun, while another argued for gun ownership because "it can take up to seven minutes for police to respond to your call" (Hearn 2005b). But the Brazilian Constitution does not guarantee gun ownership as a fundamental right (Hearn 2005b), and, as Viva Rio activists jokingly pointed out, every Brazilian knows it would take more than seven minutes for police to respond to a distress call. Still, there was something very effective about the pro-gun groups' depiction of gun ownership as a universal symbol of "freedom," suggesting that this seemingly US-constrained rhetoric appears to travel quite well and acquire new meanings in different contexts. In the end, it is perhaps unproductive to ask whether or not the pro-gun rhetoric was "culturally appropriate" in Brazil. While it is doubtful that any one advertisement or pamphlet tipped the referendum vote, the individual items of NRA-sponsored propaganda collectively worked to further the cause of pro-gun activists both abroad and at home.

Consider, for instance, a pamphlet distributed by the pro-gun lobby in Brazil, which featured an image of Hitler giving a Nazi salute. The choice of image was clearly meant to suggest a parallel between the dangers of disarmament and the dangers of Nazism. In fact, this image embodies a time-worn line of reasoning used by the NRA in the United States. The NRA-ILA website,⁴ for instance, offers free downloads of an article entitled "Registration: The Nazi Paradigm." Written by pro-gun constitutional litigator⁵ Stephen Halbrook, the article draws specific parallels with the 1938 Nazi policy to disarm the population and the genocide that followed. The argument is meant to associate the antics of gun-ban activists with Nazi policies, thus emphasizing the inherent genocidal risk threatening any population willing to disarm. Tellingly, the argument also succeeds in likening any government that supports disarmament to the Nazi regime.

But while this parallel might be understandable within the US context, given the country's involvement in the Second World War and the general population's level of knowledge about Hitler's genocidal policies, it is less clear how this rhetoric could have resonated within a Brazilian public that did not share this history. The law professor Bernard Harcourt's insights (2004) help to make sense of the NRA's coupling of Hitler's disarmament with contemporary gun control. He explores the NRA and Hitler-as-gun-control-proponent argument as one of the more fascinating internally fragmented aspects of the 'culture war' on gun

control. He points out, for example, that while the pro-gun NRA and the pro-gun organization Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership (JFPO) both deploy the Hitler-as-gun-control-proponent argument in their literature, the pro-gun white supremacist organization, National Alliance, reads the 1938 German gun registration laws as being a move toward gun liberalization. Harcourt's weighing of the evidence brings him (ironically) to side with the National Alliance interpretation of the 1938 edict; that is, that Hitler intended to liberalize gun control laws in Germany for "trustworthy" German citizens while disarming "unreliable" persons, namely opponents of National Socialism or Jews (2004: 26). By the end of his article, however, Harcourt finds it absurd even to "try to characterize this as either pro- or anti-gun control" (2004: 27), calling on scholars to examine the rhetoric behind the gun culture wars in a more serious manner. Harcourt's (2004) article caused me to ponder the possible interpretations of the use of the Hitler argument in the Brazilian context. If Morton is correct, this globally powerful pro-gun lobby was able to be successful even with the distribution of culturally inappropriate and questionable facts regarding Nazi gun laws.

The NRA-sponsored Hitler campaign was not the only ad campaign to misuse (non-US) globalized symbols of freedom. In one television commercial, an image of Nelson Mandela with a fist raised in a sign of solidarity was used to convince voters that the gun ban would strip them of their liberties by disarming them (Reel 2005: A13). Mandela's own lawyers, angered by the ad, wrote to Alberto Fraga, president of a key pro-gun group called Parliamentary Front for the Right to Legitimate Self Defense, and demanded that Mandela's image not be used in the campaign. They warned: "Mr. Mandela's fighting against apartheid ... bears no relation to the issues described, i.e., the sale of guns" (Hearn 2005a). Although the organization responsible for the sponsorship of this particular ad remains unclear, the rhetorical exploitation of "freedom" to sell a pro-gun stance is highly reminiscent of the NRA campaign, suggesting, perhaps, that the NRA's influence goes far beyond what has traditionally been attributed to them.

Yet I have strong doubts that the vast majority of Brazilians would have been able to make sense of the discursive appropriation of either Hitler or Mandela. What they would have made good sense of, however, is the rhetoric put forth by the pro-gun lobby in Brazil, which was much more relevant to Brazilian practices and concerns. In short, the pro-gun lobby was able to convince the population of something widely known in the shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro and throughout Brazil: namely, that criminals have access to guns and will continue to have them, and that the police are unable to protect ordinary citizens. In the final weeks leading up to the referendum, the pro-gun lobby increasingly played on the public's insecurity and widespread skepticism about the police. In advertisements that seemed comparatively Brazilian in orientation, they projected the idea that voting for the gun-ban was a position supported by criminals. The ban would benefit them, the rhetoric went, since it would leave criminals as the only armed group besides the police.

In response to these campaigns, the gun-ban activists led by Viva Rio developed their own rhetorical strategies for combating criticisms of the referendum, exploiting local dynamics regarding the configuration of guns in Rio. Recognizing a gendered dimension to the gun culture debate in Brazil, they appealed to the large population of mothers and girlfriends who were conscious of an entire generation of youths being lost to death by gunfire. In the months prior to the referendum, Viva Rio helped organize a gun buy-back program that encouraged women to ask the men in their lives to give up their weapons. The "Mother's Day Campaign" of 2001, which ran the slogan, "*Arma Não! Ela Ou Eu*" ("Choose gun-free! It's your weapon or me"), reportedly collected one of the largest stashes of firearms ever in one day: approximately 100,000 guns occupying a 400-square-meter pile (Amnesty International 2003).

The Brazilian version of the gun-culture war thus seemed to incorporate class and gendered dimensions that prove complex even within the limited context of Rio de Janeiro. I was not in Brazil during the time of the referendum, so I was not able to track the debates as they took place among distinct class segments of the Rio context. But I have read numerous interviews provided by the news media with individuals living both in the shantytowns and on the "asphalted streets" of Rio, as the middle-class neighborhoods are known. These interviews reflect a wide range of opinions that are not easily codified by class position. Proponents and opponents of the referendum came from all classes, yet they arrived at their "yes" or "no" vote for very different reasons. For instance, residents of shantytowns who were opposed to gun control readily emphasized their fear of a future where only the police forces were armed, weary of the police's abusive behavior. In contrast, members of the middle class who were opposed to gun control readily expressed their fear of a future where only criminals were armed, weary of the police's incompetence. With or without global intervention, then, questions of violence and criminality are centrally important to Brazilian political debate. This is especially true in the city of Rio de Janeiro, where in the year 2000 more than 60 per cent of the population considered matters related to safety or security to be the main problem that both society and the State were confronting (Soares 2000: 1).

Conclusions

Since the late 1990s, Brazil has experimented with a series of bold policies that address issues of crime and violence in new and innovative ways, culminating in the gun ban referendum. In spite of the fact that the referendum of 2005 failed to win the majority of votes, this author remains optimistic about the future. Most critically, leftist civil society organizations and human rights activists are now surfacing who are willing to address issues of public security and policing, a subject that received comparatively little attention from the left in the 1980s.

The Brazilian anthropologist Luiz Eduardo Soares, who in recent years served

as Public Security Secretary both at the Rio state level and at the federal level under President Lula, analyzes the ways in which the intellectual left was unable in past decades to address satisfactorily issues of crime, violence, and public security. Believing that crime is a symptom of social inequality and economic deprivation (Soares 2000: 15), leftwing activists of the 1980s and early 1990s chose to avoid crime and violence as political issues, focusing instead on socioeconomic reform. This leftist middle class, once vocal against police violence during the years of authoritarian rule (1964–83), was comparatively silent during the post-authoritarian period, when police violence was no longer directed against them, but instead directed at the lower classes. Their political involvement in the question of police violence shifted in the early 1980s, when state and police discourses moved from a “war against leftist subversives” toward a “war against crime” (cf. Huggins 2000). In short, the leftist middle class remained silent when police violence was no longer perceived as a middle-class issue. This silence was exacerbated by the lower classes, who also came to share an unwillingness to speak out against police violence. James Holston and Teresa Caldera (1998) have written extensively about the disjunctive aspects of Brazilian citizenship within the process of redemocratization, suggesting that one of the most obvious aspects has been the widespread acceptance of routine police violence by the working classes themselves. After conducting a series of interviews among working-class residents living in the suburbs of São Paulo, Caldera (2000) found that residents overwhelmingly held the opinion that criminals should be punished, even eliminated, regardless of the legality of the method. Caldera later suggests that “increasingly and across the board, talk about and agitation for human rights seems to make less sense and be out of joint with the popular mood” (2002: 257).

In the last few years, there has been a further development regarding crime and violence in Rio de Janeiro that additionally calls for an analysis of the relationship between local and global dimensions of gun politics. In 2001, a UNESCO published paper (Geffray 2001) describes the drug-trafficking activities in the federal state of Rondônia, near the Bolivian border. The report found that stolen items from Brazil, such as cars, are being used to barter for Bolivian cocaine, which then makes its way back to Rio de Janeiro. A number of newspapers, both Brazilian and North American, have suggested that Brazilian drug traffickers have been supplying firearms to the Columbian leftist revolutionary organization FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia”), also in exchange for cocaine. In April 2003, Rio newspapers, along with the governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, began to speak of the “war on narcotraffic and violent crime” at home, invoking comparisons with the Iraq War and terrorism abroad in an attempt to justify the intensified police actions in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. Yet Paul Amar (2003) points out that this journalistic and governmental rhetoric stopped abruptly, shortly after it began. Suggesting that Rio’s democratizing forces were ultimately able to sustain and support a democratic and progressive agenda,

Amar argues that in the last instance the city’s leaders reinvigorated their efforts to resist “the hegemonic myths that have spurred counterproductive approaches to crime-fighting” (2003: 42). I would add another explanation to Amar’s observation regarding localized skepticism towards these kinds of global narratives. I speculate that both left- and right-leaning political groups find something dangerous in invoking global comparisons within the Brazilian context, and still more in inviting foreign interventions into national political campaigns. The Brazilian appropriators of the Iraq War comparisons share with the NRA-influenced pro-gun activists a reluctance to embrace fully these globalized rhetorics, even if they will help their cause. While much of this reluctance can be explained by a unique form of Brazilian nationalism, groups across the political spectrum perceive the invitation of certain kinds of foreign intervention as dangerous to Brazilian sovereignty and disrespectful of the local.

In attempting to evaluate the role of both global and local discourses in the October 2005 gun ban referendum in Rio, I have ventured to explore some of the institutions that provide strategic and ideological support to these discourses. I am also reminded of the fabric of everyday life in the Rio shantytowns, where guns are central to young men in their quest for social mobility and in their quest for an identity that commands respect. I remember how Lucas, one of Glória’s nephews who was only a pre-teen when I met him in the early 1990s, made a decision to join the Red Command, one of Rio’s best-known drug-trafficking gangs. When he announced his decision, friends and members of his family replied that he had joined in order to have an early funeral; that is, in order to die young. Most significantly, Lucas was presented with a gun of his own when he joined the gang. Residents of Felicidade Eterna related to me multiple stories of how the new gun-owning Lucas readily made life threats to anyone he believed had wronged him in some way, whether major or minor. The reality and the dread of a gun in the hands of an angry young man was all too familiar to these residents, who are caught in the everyday crossfire between desperate gun-toting men and the violent police, who criminalize them. My sense, then, is that some day even the desire for protection will not trump the hatred of guns in these impoverished communities. Some analysts might interpret the failure of the gun ban referendum of 2005 as an indication that global conservative agendas, including the Hitler campaign of the US-based National Rifle Association and the US-influenced rhetoric surrounding the war on terror, were able to force their rhetoric and their logic on Brazilian referendum voters. I prefer to see the failure of the referendum to pass as an indicator of the widespread cross-class lack of faith in the institutions of police and government, particularly in their ability to enforce the laws that the referendum would have put into effect. The referendum, as an act in and of itself, proved that Brazil was capable of dreaming radical futures. Ultimately, however, the population needed broader guarantees of the functionality of the rule of law before it would place stringent limitations on access to firearms.

every day" (2001: 5-6). When members of an audience come to see an entertaining spectacle, they are not constantly thinking about the fact that they are looking at means of violence. The same effect can be had, say, through attending a fireworks show. The audience seems to be contemplating technological power, or the aesthetics of the sublime. It is in and around this point that we can most clearly see the seduction involved on the part of the military and the readiness of the public to be seduced. Indeed, what we showed here is the ease with which violence is aestheticized, prettified, packaged, marketed and celebrated.

Notes

CHAPTER 1: THE SOCIAL LIFE OF GUNS: AN INTRODUCTION

1. Estimating the number of firearms in the world is extremely difficult, owing to: unavailable data regarding guns owned by certain governments, hidden caches of weapons, unregistered and unreported civilian-owned arms, and uneven definitions of firearms used by different studies. The Small Arms Survey project, sponsored by the United Nations, is the most thorough and detailed estimate (Small Arms Survey 2001, 2002), and the 2002 survey estimates that 638,900,000 firearms exist globally (see also Peck 2002), including privately-owned guns as well as those used by armed forces, police, and non-state military groups. This number does include such weapons as rocket launchers. Michael Klare (1999: 21) writes that the number of guns in use ranges "from 500 million to a billion, of which some 200-250 million are owned by private individuals and public agencies in the United States."
2. This photograph, reprinted with the permission of Tom Rosseel, appears on the website he produces for his club Airsoft Brugge. Located in Bruges, Belgium, members travel both domestically and abroad to use their recreational weapons.

CHAPTER 2: GUNSCAPES: TOWARD A GLOBAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE FIREARM

1. Guns are not actually manufactured (to any considerable degree) in the Netherlands. Burrows is indicating, what is confirmed in the *UN Small Arms Report* of 2002, that numerous firearms move through customs in the Netherlands, which is one of the major transit centers for the legal transfer of weapons.

CHAPTER 3: GUN POLITICS: REFLECTIONS ON BRAZIL'S FAILED GUN BAN REFERENDUM IN THE RIO DE JANEIRO CONTEXT

1. Viva Rio (VR), a large Brazilian NGO, was created in 1993 in response to two massacres of unarmed civilians by military policemen: the Candelária massacre and the Vigário Geral shantytown massacre. VR works with the poorest communities in Rio to find practical solutions to the problems of gun crime. They work with the local police to set up a system for storing and recording guns that are seized, with the aim of tracing the source of guns and ensuring that they are not reintroduced into the community, and they pilot projects of community policing (Amnesty International 2003). They also created a partnership with the Instituto de Estudos da Religião

(ISER) to collect and publish materials on firearms in Brazil, much of which had been scattered in different bureaucracies around the country.

2. Sales figures, likewise, follow the production figures closely, because the value of production is actually measured in terms of sales figures. According to Dreyfus, Lessing and Purcena (2005: 66), the most comprehensive and current data on total SALW production in Brazil comes from the Annual Study of Industry by Product (Pesquisa de Industria Anual - Produto, PIA-Product) available only since 1998. Because the PIA-Product Survey defines the value of production in terms of sales figures, the numbers regarding production and sales of guns in Brazil are consistently parallel.
3. See: <http://www.brazilianartists.net>.
4. See: <http://www.nralla.org/Issues/Articles/Read.aspx?ID=67>.
5. Halbrook (1994, 2000) has written more scholarly versions of this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: OF GUNS, CHILDREN AND THE MAELSTROM: DETERMINING PURPOSIVE ACTION IN ISRAELI-PERPETRATED FIREARM DEATHS OF PALESTINIAN CHILDREN AND MINORS

1. The author is deeply and gratefully indebted to Arizona State University and its College of Public Programs, the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem, the Palestinian American Research Center, B'Tselem, the Palestine Red Crescent Society, faculty and staff of the Institute of Forensic Medicine at Al Quds University, and the directorate and staff of Ramallah Hospital. In addition, heartfelt individual thanks must be extended to Dr. Mohammad Ghanayem, Dr. Jad Isaac, the Ishaq family, Ing. Valdemar Ramos Hernández, and a number of other individuals who, through commission or omission, made this preliminary research possible. The most profound thanks, by far, are extended to the Thajiya family of Bethlehem, Palestine, for allowing me into their home and for sharing their unrelenting sorrow with me.
2. "My rage ... empire, assassin of children."
3. Other methods of death-inducement are tank shelling, roadblocks impeding mothers giving birth from reaching hospitals, airplane/helicopter bombing and missile-firing during assassinations of activists, "tear" gas intoxication, and being run over by soldiers or illegal settlers.
4. Courtesy of ICRC-affiliated Palestinian medical relief organizations, I handled these so-called rubber bullets once removed from the corpses of children. They are steel balls the size of marbles, and are simply coated with a thin layer of Teflon.
5. All data were garnered from the website of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (www.pchrgaza.org), an affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, among other international organizations. These data are often more conservative in their quantitative and documentary estimates and reporting than other Israeli and Palestinian websites.
6. Eliminated from these tallies were the following: back shots, abdominal shots, limb shots, pelvic and hip shots, deaths by shelling, deaths by explosive missiles in assassination attempts, deaths where data as to corporal location of the fatal wound were not available from the sources used, being run over by either IDF soldiers or illegal settlers, and deaths through gasings or inability to reach proper medical services in time.

CHAPTER 8: DRAWING A VIRTUAL GUN

1. In memory of my maternal grandfather, Peter Efthim, an avid hunter, veteran of the First World War and survivor of the deadly effects of mustard gas.
2. The student spent 5 hours as a participant observer in a pro-gun chatroom.
3. A label the student and I used for what happened to her when she challenged their beliefs.

CHAPTER 9: "GUN RIGHTS ARE CIVIL RIGHTS": RACISM AND THE RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS IN THE UNITED STATES

1. Concealed carry legislation (CCW) varies state to state; as of the date of writing, 38 states have some version of CCW. This man was referring to "Restrictive May Issue" discretionary policies, wherein the issuance of permits is left to the discretion of county sheriffs, no matter what requirements the applicant meets.
2. The District of Columbia's Firearms Control Regulation Act prohibits the possession of handguns not registered with city police prior to September 24, 1976 and re-registered by February 5, 1977.
3. Some of the activists profiled here also appear in the book *People For and Against Gun Control* (Bijlfield 1999).
4. According to the CDC, homicide is the leading cause of death for black males aged 15-17, and handguns were involved in 78 per cent of homicides. Despite overall nationwide decreases in handgun-related crimes after 1993, the only demographic that did not indicate a decrease in handgun-homicides was that of black males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, for whom the leading cause of death is gun violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2002).

CHAPTER 10: MAN TO MAN: POWER AND MALE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE GUNPLAY FILM

1. This distinction is made consistently throughout the text, with the exception of direct quotations from others and words such as "gunshot" and "handgun," for which no graceful substitute could be found. Such a distinction has been made by others (Diaz 1999; Gibson 1994; Wilkinson and Fagan 1996).
2. In fact, the man with a gun is the *sine qua non* of entire genres of cinema: Westerns, Police/Detective Films, War Films, Action Films, etc.
3. While this is not as true today as it was during the heyday of the gunplay film, gun violence is still a man's world—both statistically and ideologically.
4. For an account of how radically US ideas about violence were changing in at this time see Gibson 1994; Hofstadter 1971; Jeffords 1989.
5. See Gibson (1994) for an extensive investigation of the "New Warrior" figure.
6. While Stone may have been more openly critical of cinema violence, and Tarantino more celebratory, the fact remains that both directors saw that film violence had come to refer primarily to itself, and were able to articulate the ways in which this rendered Peckinpah's strategy untenable.
7. This is not to suggest that Hong Kong action films don't have their own deep and