

Emergent Police States

Racialized Pacification and Police Moralism from Rio's Favelas to Bolsonaro

Tomas Salem and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen

■ **ABSTRACT:** The Pacifying Police Units, rolled out in Rio de Janeiro ahead of the 2016 Summer Olympics, were part of a police intervention conceived to end the logic of war that characterized the city's public security policies. As such, it adopted "soft" strategies of policing aimed at reducing violence and asserting state sovereignty in "pacified" favelas. Drawing on a postcolonial framework of analysis, we argue that these favelas can be understood as sites for experiments in imperial statecraft, where a new set of socio-moral relations that we call police moralism were inscribed onto spaces and bodies. Pacification, in this context, means the reassertion of Brazil's historical racial order. In our conclusion, we read the moral order implemented in the favelas as a prefiguration of President Jair Bolsonaro's right-wing authoritarianism on a national scale.

■ **KEYWORDS:** colonialism, gender, militarization, moralism, policing, race

The Favela-Colony

Like that of most Brazilian megacities, Rio de Janeiro's landscape is divided between areas commonly referred to as *asfalto* (lit. "asphalt")—the "formal" city—and areas known as *favelas* (Figure 1). Favelas are often characterized by socioeconomic marginalization (Perlman 2004) such as poverty, informality of land use and lack of basic public services, and political disenfranchisement (Saborio and Spesny 2019; Snyder et. al. 2013). Importantly, the racial demographic of residents of the favelas and *asfalto* differ greatly where the former exhibit a comparatively large proportion of the black and colored population (65.8 percent, according to the 2010 IBGE census) (Oliveira 2016). These structural inequalities between favelas and *asfalto* are rooted in Brazil's past as a plantation colony and slave state, symbolically encoding the favelas as black, savage spaces, in contrast to the civilized, white spaces of the *asfalto* in the social imagination of elites (Alves 2018; Vargas 2004). Thus, while Brazilians have generally sanctioned explicitly racist discourses, racial politics have also been integral to the functioning of Brazilian society more broadly (Cardoso 2014; Nascimento 1989).

In recent decades, the presence of armed drug traffickers and paramilitary groups (known as *milícias*), along with the actions of the Military Police's Special Operations Unit (Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais—BOPE), have further contributed to a sense of favelas as violent places or warzones. Spectacular police operations and widespread police brutality, including kidnapping, torture, homicide, and collective punishment in the form of massacres against



Figure 1: Street life in Complexo do Alemão, a group of favelas in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro (© Tomas Salem)



favela populations, have been commonplace (Robb Larkins 2015). More recently, as part of Rio's preparation to the 2016 Summer Olympics, the Pacifying Police Units (Unidades da Polícia Pacificadora—UPPs) have become a defining feature of state presence in the favelas. This has led scholars to argue that the *asfalto/favela* distinction is premised on differentiated technologies of power in operation by state agents, primarily police, across the urban landscape (see Alves 2018; Robb Larkins 2013, 2015).

Building on these observations and following the lead of Brazilian scholars such as Abdias do Nascimento (1989) characterizing state policies against Afro-Brazilians as genocidal, João Pacheco de Oliveira (2016) highlighting the continuities between colonial and contemporary practices of pacification, and Jaime Amparo Alves (2018) demonstrating the characteristic anti-blackness of Brazilian urbanization, we argue that the favelas should be understood as a modern colonial formation. In what can be read as an elaboration of—and addition to—their nuanced and rich analyses, we use postcolonial theory to examine how authoritarian moralism and urban security practices in the favelas provide a vantage point from which to analyze recent political developments in Brazil. We will approach the colony as a necropolitical formation in which the distinction between war and politics collapse, and where social order is created through the administration of death and terror (Mbembe 2003). Further, in past decades, favelas with UPPs have acted as spaces for the experiment with racialized and gendered forms of imperial power. Crucially, such experimentation transcends the confines of favelas and transforms the exercise of governmental powers at the imperial core, as well as shape dominant political discourses around authority, race, gender, and the rule of law (see Leite 2017).

Paul Gilroy's treatment of imperialism offers additional insight into how we may connect the experiment in pacification with the emergence of neofascist politics in Brazil. According to Gilroy (2004: 47), "the murderous enthusiasm for the proper racial ordering of the world"

that broadly characterize colonial formations is constitutive of imperial political relations. Also drawing on Gilroy, we show that the UPP project serves as an entry point for mining the conflict at the core of the modern Brazilian state project: between democratizing forces and the reactionary affirmation of traditional hierarchies (see Braathen; Ystanes and Salem, this issue).¹

To be clear: we approach the UPPs as a racialized experiment in statecraft that prefigures large-scale processes of transformation that have been accentuated with the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. To make this argument, we first trace policing history in Brazil and demonstrate how the UPPs, despite their stated objective of breaking the logic of war that characterizes policing in the favelas, were nonetheless subsumed to a militarized conception of policing as warfare with deep historical roots. Next, we describe the territorializing practices of pacification as a form of colonial occupation and situate them within authoritarian state practices. Third, we highlight how this occupation also implied the mapping of a set of new moral relations in the favelas—a process we describe as police moralism and which dovetails colonial “civilizing” missions. Finally, we discuss how police moralism is reflected in national right-wing politics and political cosmologies and argue how the experiment with new policing practices at the UPPs can aid us in understanding the moral framework underpinning Bolsonarismo.

Importantly, international reporting on the UPPs and community policing more broadly have generally stressed their progressive and modern approach to policing. We want to challenge such readings and show how violence is not external to discourses of modernity but rather negotiated and reproduced, at the risk of reifying Brazilian institutions and society, as inherently violent. Further, our analysis of Brazilian politics is shaped by a focus on the state and its police forces and does not examine the important egalitarian potential of favela activism and grassroots mobilization like other contributions to this special section do (e.g., Braathen; Gilsing; Ystanes and Magalhães, this issue). Finally, as Northern scholars, we have worked to counter the potential representational violence of our ethnographic practice by extensively engaging with Brazilian scholars and by highlighting the role of transnational discourses of modernization in legitimizing state violence.

This article is the product of eight months of participant observation with the Military Police in Rio de Janeiro from December 2014 to July 2015 and a six-year collaboration between Tomas Salem and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen. The reform-oriented leadership of the Military Police at the time of fieldwork gave Salem full institutional access to carry out a comparative research strategy focused on three UPPs: Santa Marta, Mangueira, and Alemão (Figure 2), interviewing police officers and supporting staff across the institutional hierarchy (for a discussion on access, see Salem 2016). Throughout the research, Salem experienced how his position as a male, European scholar worked almost as a protective shield and door opener that allowed him to carry out fieldwork in high-risk situations and gain access to an almost all-male environment shaped by hypermasculine gender norms (see also Sørboe; Ystanes and Salem, this issue). Thus, he was able to follow the police officers in a broad range of situations, from patrol in the favelas, tactical training with the special units, community council meetings, proximity policing initiatives, public hearings and debates, and police social gatherings.

Colonial Pacification and Policing-as-Warfare

In Brazil, the concept of “pacification” was first used to describe the sixteenth-century civilizing missions of the Portuguese settlers in the northeast. Pacification implied, then, the joint efforts of the military and the church in relocating indigenous populations to areas where they were placed under the tutelage of European missionaries. There, they were baptized and primed for

Figure 2: Complexo do Alemão in Rio's northern suburbs (© Tomas Salem).



exploitation as a labor force at the missions, plantations, and cities established by the colonists (Oliveira 2016). Following the arrival of the Portuguese royal court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808, advocates of a “softer” approach to the “civilization” and “domestication” of native populations gained influence. Arguing that war should be avoided, these insisted that missionaries treat the natives well by persuading them with benefits and promoting mixed marriages to “whiten” the population. Military posts should, however, be kept close, as troops would be deployed into the forest to round up “wild indians” and bring them to the villages (Marinato 2008).

The European settlers also pursued “softer” strategies vis-à-vis enslaved Afro-Brazilians, broadly circulating manuals with suggestions on how to repress revolts or increase the fertility of slaves. The manuals encouraged slave masters to reward women who gave birth with less work in order to increase fertility and show moderation when punishing their slaves to avoid revolts. To prevent escape attempts, they could allow slaves to keep pigs and chicken or to grow produce next to their shacks—keeping them occupied and “happy” and making them less prone to escape (Schwarcz 2019).

When the first police institution in Brazil and precursor to Rio’s Military Police was founded in 1809, the year after the arrival of the imperial court, its logic reflected such slaveholding practices, and its purpose was to protect the European elite and Portuguese royal family, who feared that black slaves—roughly half the population of Rio—would revolt. Tellingly, historical records from the first decades of the 1800s register no arrests of white Europeans, as Rio’s police forces were conceived to protect the interests of the white, wealthy elite and to uphold a national order founded on slavery and racism (Holloway 1993). Consequently, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, policing served to protect elite interests, repress public protests, and keep the dispossessed in check—also following the abolition of slavery in 1888 (Mingardi 2015).

At the height of the Cold War from the mid-twentieth century onward, conservative, national elites supported the military government (1964–1985) in its efforts to quash egalitarian ideol-

ogies and the spread of socialism in Brazil. During these decades, military police departments were heavily influenced by the national security doctrine and became key players in the military's "dirty war" against political opponents and subversives, adopting counterinsurgency warfare practices from the United States and elsewhere (Cowan 2016). Torture and assassinations by the police became commonplace, while off-duty officers formed death squads that meted out private justice for local businesses and killed alleged criminals—primarily in the suburbs and favelas of big cities like Rio (Misse 2010; Zaluar and Conceição 2007).

At the return of institutional democracy in 1985, war-oriented policing nonetheless prevailed through the war on drugs. By and large, it was the Military Police, in charge of street patrol, that entered into conflicts with the drug traffickers in the favelas, and the BOPE represented the epitome of militarized policing efforts.² In Rio, the newly conceived "war" targeted an old enemy of the Brazilian state: the young, black, and male favela resident. Thus, through the 1990s, the international war on drugs and the understandings of policing as warfare rooted in Brazil's history transformed the favelas into de facto warzones in the imaginaries of Rio's residents and police alike, while urban violence soared to unprecedented levels (Leite 2012).

The Pacifying Police Units

With clear reference to the notion of "pacification" as a so-called civilizing process within the settler-colonial state, local authorities triumphantly announced the pacification project in January 2009 as the solution to the city's high levels of violence. Moreover, the establishment of the first UPPs was conceived as a "break" with war-oriented forms of policing, to address security concerns ahead of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, and to challenge Rio's reputation as a violent city to attract international investments (see, e.g., Gaffney 2010; Vargas 2013). In line with the patrimonialism (i.e., the use of the state to serve the interests of the ruling elites) and corruption that has characterized the Brazilian state since its inception (see Schwarcz 2019), most UPPs were established in favelas adjacent to Rio's wealthiest neighborhoods, or in areas where Olympic stadiums were being planned and built (Figure 3). As such, the rolling out of the UPP structure conformed to what has been argued to be a form of "Olympic exceptionalism" (see Ystanes and Salem, this issue). In particular, such exceptionalism also entailed that private corporate interests reaped vast profits from the revalorization of areas close to the UPPs. Meanwhile, housing prices soared both within and around the pacified favelas, effectively expelling the poorest residents to remote areas of the city (Freeman 2012; Ystanes and Magalhães, this issue).

While such market-driven expulsions were underway, pacification was discursively presented both as a strategy for beneficial urban development of the favelas and as a "softer" policing approach, in contrast to BOPE's brutality. The aim was for UPPs to drive away drug traffickers that exercised territorial control, paving the way for public agencies and private business to "bridge the gap" between favela and asfalto. Reform-oriented police leaders saw the project as an opportunity to transform Rio's Military Police into a modern and efficient citizen police through a local adaptation of the paradigm of community policing named "proximity policing," focused on building trust between police and residents (Saborio 2014).³ In addition to funding from corporate donors, the UPP project received support from the federal government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The "soft" rhetoric of prevention, community collaboration, human rights, and reduction of violence was believed to reflect a socially inclusive Brazilian modernity better than the traditional, hyper-militarized forms of policing. Becoming a modern, preventative police was, in this context, integral to becoming a globally oriented, modern nation, and the UPPs comprised an experiment in the exercise of soft and managerial forms of state power

Figure 3: Two of Rio's pacified favelas, Babilonia and Chapeu-Mangueira, located near the beach in Rio's affluent South Zone (© Tomas Salem).



also implemented in other sectors, such as programs designed to combat poverty (e.g., Bolsa Família) (see Braathen, this issue). This understanding was shared by prominent figures within the police such as the chief of staff of Rio's Military Police in 2015, who in an interview with Salem explained that the police needed to change and that the collaboration with social scientists was integral to this. He highlighted the experimental nature of the UPPs: "This is a laboratory, right? It's like Chicago in the '40s, that laboratory for social experiments."

During fieldwork in 2015, the outcome of the UPP experiment seemed uncertain, as the police had registered an increase in armed confrontations in pacified favelas from mid-2013 and onward. Thus, in early 2015, a new leadership assumed command of the Military Police, aiming to reassert territorial control in areas where the police faced armed resistance from drug traffickers, intensify "soft" policing efforts to ensure local support, and bring the police reform "back on track." However, while some politicians and reform-oriented police leaders might have aspired for a new, more democratic model of policing, their vision was not shared throughout the institution, where a pervasive masculinist culture and a conception of policing as warfare remained ingrained (Sørbøe, this issue).

Winning Allies

The proximity-policing approach adopted throughout the UPPs drew on trust-building and preventative policing strategies—including "social projects" (*projetos sociais*). Organized by the UPPs and varyingly implemented across favelas, these included sports and leisure activities, martial arts lessons, excursions, debutante balls, community meetings, conflict mediation, and community events like neighborhood parties and Christmas and Easter celebrations. During

Salem's fieldwork, the commander at one UPP established three "proximity teams" of three officers each solely dedicated to social outreach and proximity policing aiming to develop relations of trust with residents. With this in mind, the officers avoided the standard black uniform of the Military Police, donning instead custom-made white T-shirts with colorful details sown to the sleeves. "White symbolizes peace," they explained, while black was perceived as more aggressive—a reflection of the racialized symbolic universe that permeates Brazilian society. Although they had been working in the proximity team for only one week, the sergeant said that it had already transformed his view on policing: he used to "like war" but was now entirely devoted to proximity policing.

The officers invited Salem to join them on a visit to an area of the favela known to be calm, where the residents, according to them, were workers and, thus, "good people." Upon arrival, they were greeted by the president of the local Residents Association (RA). The sergeant was in a good mood and eagerly engaged in conversation, while the group walked to an open area in the favela that served as a parking lot-cum-garbage-dump. Some kids were playing with their kites in between the cars and rubble. The officers explained that they wanted to clean the square, move the cars, and turn it into a children's playground (Figure 4).

While they were discussing this possibility with the RA president, a middle-aged woman approached them. She said the property belonged to her mother, who was now sick with Alzheimer's, and that she was coadministering the lot with her six siblings. She then started narrating her family history to the group at a fast and uninterrupted pace, and it soon became apparent that her mental health was deteriorated. Determined to see his plan through, the sergeant explained that the UPPs were there to attend to the needs of the community and help them "make improvements." He told the woman that the lot would be of much better use if it was clean and without cars, making it into a playground. After some conversation, the group,

Figure 4: Police and local representatives inspecting the site for the future playground (© Tomas Salem).



including the owner of the lot eventually agreed, and the officers and president headed back toward the RA office.

Shortly after, the group left. They had been away from the base for about an hour and decided to call it a day. The sergeant was very pleased with the visit, and enthusiastically exclaimed: “Did you see that? That’s how things should be done! I’ve already told [the residents] that I’ll organize a street party (*fórró*), and I swear I will! That’s how you win allies!” He further explained that the key was to make the RA president depend on the police, rather than the other way around—a practice commonly attributed to the drug cartels’ way of exercising authority in the favelas through the RAs (see Braathen, this issue) but also an example of how personalized authority is exerted by UPP officers.

Military Tutelage and Authoritarian Proximity

The scene just described indicates that in some aspects, proximity policing broke with traditional modes of policing in the favelas, centered on confrontations and war. However, it also shows such a shift to be only partial, as the linchpin of proximity policing, the “social projects,” were primarily aimed at gaining acceptance, support, collaboration, and intelligence from residents. This was made abundantly clear when one of the officers explained how he would distribute baskets of food (intended for the poorest favela residents) to those he knew supplied the officers with information. In the words of the sergeant, “social projects” were instrumental in “winning allies” in the war on drugs.

Similarly, one of the colonels and leaders of the Military Police reflected on the importance of social actions at the UPPs as a way to acquire information on the whereabouts of criminals and weapons. “We have several social projects implemented by the police to improve the integration between the police [and the] community,” he said, adding that “The police need to conquer the citizen.” The police should develop partnerships, get close to the population, and transmit security and firmness if they wanted the community to open to them: “And without firing a shot we catch the *marginal*, we seize the gun, seize the drug, and then we start making a new police: a *proximity* police.”

Reflecting such a strategy, officers would often act as nexus between residents and other public services. For instance, if the sewers were clogged, the proximity team would notify the sewer company and have them unclog it. One officer explained the logic of these actions: “Some people think that what we do isn’t real police work, but it is! The things we do prevent people from protesting, and when there are protests shots are often fired, or at least tires are burnt on the streets.” His view expressed a common understanding within the Military Police: that social outreach projects effectively reduced the number of violent confrontations at the UPPs. Arguably, the substitution of reactive and confrontational forms of policing for preventative and intelligence-based forms of policing *could* be viewed as a shift toward democratic and politically progressive forms of security governance. However, there is an uncanny parallel to the “soft” forms of authoritarianism of Brazil’s past in the claim that the police’s “softer” strategies *prevented* situations that would have required *reactive* police actions.

Furthermore, as the material above also shows, an instrumental understanding of proximity policing was commonly framed within counterinsurgency doctrinal aims of winning the hearts and minds of the local population. Therefore, proximity policing challenged neither the overall framework of policing as warfare nor Brazil’s historical experiments in authoritarian and necropolitical modes of governance. Instead, it reinforced a militarized understanding of policing, as proximity was seen to increase the efficiency of tactical (i.e., militarized) patrol practices (see also Bertelsen 2010; Menezes and Correa 2017). As one officer in charge of prox-

imity policing put it, “the UPPs are also carrying out a psychological war of winning over the population”—“also” implying in addition to the war on drugs. Such notions of psychological warfare are a common feature of counterinsurgency doctrine developed during the Cold War and are central to global contemporary war and security practices—on multiple levels (Burke 2007; Buxton and Hayes 2016).

In addition to gaining local support, soft or preventative practices of proximity policing comprised a strategy to prevent grassroots mobilization and collective resistance—often combined with traditional, repressive action against the mobilization of favela residents (see, e.g., Braathen; Gilsing; Ystanes and Magalhães, this issue). Such was the case when UPP officers in Alemão violently repressed a pacific demonstration against the pacification project with tear-gas and anti-riot armament in April 2015. Crucially, highlighting the contingency of practices aimed to improve police-resident relations and militarized logics, proximity policing implied a form of securitization whereby the gamut of public policies implemented in the favelas were re-signified as security policies: **fixing a clogged sewer, providing ad hoc dental care, organizing a street party, or building a playground were primarily evaluated according to their use value in the war against drugs.**

A final effect of the police’s coordination of public services in the favelas was their establishment of clientelist relationships with residents (see Muniz and Albernaz 2017), as expressed by the idea that the objective was to make the RA depend on the police or in the view of the differentiated distribution of food baskets. This has also been a feature of former iterations of “democratic” policing models in Rio’s favelas, more specifically the GPAA (Grupamento Policial em Áreas Especiais) project—a precursor to the UPPs implemented in a handful of Rio’s favelas between 2002 and 2004 (Albernaz et al. 2007). At the GPAA, the police took on a similar function as public service providers, acting as mediators between residents and the public sector, effectively establishing a police tutelage in the favelas. In such instances, it is the police who determine the priorities of public service provisions and infrastructural improvements in the communities they control. Thus, despite attempts to create a modern and professional police force, proximity policing reproduced old patterns of military tutelage and clientelism common throughout Brazil and which serve to demobilize the grassroots activism of black communities (Braathen, this issue; Oliveira 2016).

Territorial Occupation

How proximity policing was implemented in pacified favelas, and the meaning ascribed to these practices by officers across the institutional hierarchy, attests to the pervasiveness of understandings of policing as warfare. The main priority of proximity policing was to maintain a permanent police presence within pacified favelas to curtail the power of the drug traffickers, specifically their capacity to stage attacks in areas surrounding these. Thus, through the UPPs, the police sought to assert state control in territories where they had previously been able to enter only in hyper-militarized operations coordinated by the special units. This emphasis on territorial control reveals that pacification at its core was a militarized policing project—underlined also by the fact that at the base where the proximity teams were established, only nine out of three hundred officers were exclusively dedicated to proximity policing, while the rest were engaged in militarized patrol practices and techniques of urban warfare (see Sørboe, this issue; Vargas 2013).

As armed resistance in pacified communities increased from 2013 onward, the lofty goals of social inclusion and urban development were increasingly downplayed, while the military-

strategic goal of territorial occupation gained new precedence. Thus, in April 2015, following a surge in armed violence across pacified favelas, local authorities publicly promised that the police would “reoccupy” these with support from special units. At UPPs with high levels of armed violence, the police built improvised trenches with sandbags and barrels, erected fortified cabins to protect officers from routine attacks from drug traffickers, and even established nightly curfews during periods of increased tensions (Figure 5). Many UPPs received personnel support, and at some units, the commanders reduced the downtime that patrol officers had between each shift to increase the number on duty. As part of the strategy of reoccupation, police officers patrolled en masse in daytime and at night remained stationed at military-strategic points.

At one of the UPPs where Salem did fieldwork, the police conveniently referred to this as “occupation shift” (*escala de ocupação*), during which rows of police officers, totaling around 40, would move with stealth and speed through the narrow alleys and up the steep stairways of the favela (Figure 6). Silence and speed were important to keep the “element of surprise,” as they did not want to give traffickers time to flee or to organize an ambush. The officers in the front would carry military assault rifles, which have high firing power and precision, but crucially, impose more respect than other weapons—an aspect also in line with how arms are related to in other violent contexts (Kivland 2018; Sørboe, this issue). At exposed parts of the path, where the officers were unable to retaliate if they came under fire, they would cross one at a time, running with their heads down and their bodies in a hunched posture making themselves into as small targets as possible.

The bulk of favela social life normally unfolds on the streets, but during “occupation shift,” these were unusually empty, and residents would move away when officers passed. Some looked down, avoiding the gaze of the police; others would stop what they were doing and look at the officers defiantly. From an outsider’s point of view, the officers indeed seemed like an occupying

Figure 5: Police entrenchment in Alemão, April 2015 (© Tomas Salem).



Figure 6: Officers donning “tactical formation” during a patrol round in Mangueira (© Tomas Salem).



force, a feeling reflected in comments from police officers who complained that residents were hostile and did not want them to be there. The group would gradually dwindle as small units of patrol officers were stationed at their posts, their shifts lasting until 6 a.m. the next day. According to the officers, the police presence at strategic points in the community was important to prevent local gang members from regaining control. They explained that last month, a rival drug faction attempted to invade the favela and take control over local drug commercialization. The police had killed four alleged gang members and detained one.

At this and other UPPs, the heavy reliance on urban warfare tactics disrupted everyday life, seemingly turning the narrow streets and alleys into scenes that belonged to an action movie. Stops and frisks for drugs and weapons were arbitrarily conducted on those with a “wicked” outlook (*maldade*) or a “suspicious attitude” (*atitude de suspeito*)—almost invariably young, male, and black. Additionally, hairstyle, dress, and appearance; former encounters with the police; suspected associations with the drug cartels; and attitudes of defiance determined who were stopped. Thus, policing of racialized masculine hierarchies were integral to stops and frisks, for example, when officers stopped a man after commenting that they thought his girlfriend was too good for him, or when officers carried out humiliating genital searches on groups of adolescents whom they referred to as “bad elements.”

Importantly, stops and frisks were also used to assert police authority—rather than merely seizing guns or confiscating drugs. On one occasion, an officer stopped a young boy without ID papers and asked him what he was doing out on the street. As the boy lisped and it was hard to understand his speech, this earned him a verbal reprimand and the accusation of lying. After telling the officer that he was 14 years old and lived in the neighborhood, the officer brusquely told him to carry his ID with him at all times. He then proceeded to write down the boy’s name—allegedly to check if he had a criminal record. At other times, kids running down the

alleyway could be subjected to forceful interpellations by the police. According to the officers, they could be running ahead to alert traffickers that the police were coming.

At the UPPs, the deployment of a hyper-militarized counterinsurgency doctrine to gain local allies and collaborators, and the establishment of a police tutelage over the population through practices of proximity policing, only confirmed the exceptionality of state authority as it was exercised in the favelas. That is, the pacification project was broadly conceived as a policing initiative for the favelas, not for the *asfalto*, highlighting the racialized dimension of the UPPs. Such racial ordering of urban space was reaffirmed through “soft” strategies and military tutelage asserted through pacification but rarely acknowledged by police officers. Instead, they described the main difference between people living in the favelas and *asfalto* as a cultural difference, where the distinction was the “respect” for police authority.

Police Moralism

We have now shown how the bulk of UPP policing activities was oriented toward the assertion of territorial control and affirmation of police authority in pacified favelas. Among police officers, these actions were commonly justified through a discourse of moral alterity that highlighted the civility of the police versus the savagery of favela residents. Thus, reflecting the police’s concern with their own and other people’s morality, we suggest their practices express a widespread police moralism that echoes the dyad of military and church in colonial forms of pacification. The police officers, often living in Rio’s urban peripheries and many being members of Pentecostal religious communities, frequently flaunted their contempt for intellectuals, politicians, businessmen, and journalists, accusing the latter of being anti-police and pro-criminal whenever they reported on police misconduct and corruption (which was quite often). However, their contempt for Rio’s elites did not translate into a defense of favela residents, who were generally held in equal disregard (see Machado 2017). Instead, they often described themselves as “social garbagemen” (*lixeiros sociais*) who had to deal with everything bad and rotten in Brazilian society.

In contrast to this perceived societal decadence, officers viewed themselves as morally superior—a characteristic of military and police subjectivity common across the world (see, e.g., Albrecht and Kyed 2015). At the UPPs, however, manifestations of police moralism were in addition anchored in Pentecostal morality (Cunha 2018; Machado 2017) and the racism of colonial times, which doubly cast racialized others as easily corruptible and morally inferior people in need of salvation (see Vargas 2004). During colonial pacification, the Brazilian indigenous population was subject to intense ideological surveillance from missionaries approaching them as morally weak and easily influenced by the devil (Marinato 2008). In the laic, modern Brazilian state, this role has increasingly been attributed to the military and police. This was clearly expressed during the dictatorship when the military took it upon themselves to protect the nation’s “moral order” from the threat of egalitarian, communist ideologies: fearing moral decay, they saw it as their duty to defend traditional hierarchies and respect for authority, conservative Christian family values, and gender and sexual traditionalism (Cowan 2016).

A similar dynamic was prevalent at the UPPs, where the police frequently described the perceived moral decadence of favela residents in the sexualized terms of indecency (*sacanagem*) and debauchery (*libertinagem*). Among patrol officers, it was common to view their task as not only upholding the letter of the law, but also policing conservative gender norms and domestication of “uncivilized” favela residents. One officer explained:

Let's say that one of the kids down the street wants to play music out loud that vindicates crime and debauchery . . . No law forbids people from playing music about promiscuity and homosexuality. So, what the officer has to do to get the person to turn off the music is to provoke a contempt of the law (*desacato*) to detain him. In the end, society loses. They are talking about sex, but the police are not allowed to do its job. Society is doing what is wrong, believing that it's right.

Here, the policing of behavior that challenged the conservative values of the officers is brought to the fore. Similarly, and reflecting nineteenth-century repression of black cultural expressions such as capoeira (Holloway 1989), the police prohibited funk parties in pacified favelas. Being one of the most contested ordinances at the UPPs, many residents saw funk parties as a nuisance, while others viewed them as an idiosyncratic expression of favela sociality (Gilsing, this issue; Soares da Silva 2014). The authorities justified the prohibition by claiming these violated noise regulations, while most officers stressed that they were arenas for debauchery, illegal drug consumption, and the assertion of trafficker authority through the ostentatious display of weapons. In the words of one UPP officer:

You see that the music in Brazil is permissive with what we call the funk rappers (*funkeros*), letting them sing funk, vindicating drug trafficking, crime, violence, and presenting the traffickers as heroes . . . So as long as the residents and the funk rappers keep spreading the idea that the trafficker is the hero, I will be the villain in the eyes of everybody, and nobody will help me catch those guys.

Among officers, then, funk parties and funk music, especially the genre of *proibidão* (lit. “forbidden”), expressed the “culture of trafficking” that they thought to be common among favela residents (see Muniz and Albernaz 2017). Furthermore, **the notion of a culture of trafficking allowed the police to draw on the colonial tropes of black savagery and white civility while maintaining an apparent colorblindness**. For black police officers, it meant presenting themselves as external to such a culture and to reject structural explanations of crime and poverty in favor of emphasizing the personal responsibility of the poor (see Milton 2007; O'Connor 2002). In the words of one black officer who had himself grown up in poverty: “I didn't grow up to be a thug, I didn't grow up to be a trafficker.” Importantly, this proved to him that “not all black people are thieves.”

A similar logic was common among favela residents, many of whom strongly rejected sociological explanations that connected crime and violence with poverty levels. A black housemaid from the favela where Salem lived, expressed this succinctly: “There are many reasons why people are violent, but poverty is not one of them: you can be poor, but an honest worker.” She then added: “The violence perpetrated by the poor is visible, but the violence perpetrated by the rich is invisible. In Brazil, the history of violence can be traced back to colonial times. It is violence exercised through the exploitation of black people, through oppression, and economic inequalities. Black people are still subject to these kinds of violence.” Comments like this contest discourses of black savagery, and were common among black police officers, well aware of the pervasive racism of Brazilian history. However, the emancipatory potential of identification between police and favela residents was in these cases stifled by the recourse to cultural explanations that reconfigured the latter's poverty and marginalization as reflecting flaws of character or personal choice. In this regard, one officer explained: “The hill is their world. It's all they know . . . They like to listen to their music, take their drugs, do nothing . . . The people that live here prefer the indecency (*sacanada*) . . . and they see our presence as an impediment.”

Thus, most UPP officers saw residents as conniving with the traffickers, reaping benefits from their criminal activity and leading an immoral life. During patrol, the moral character of policing was also expressed when officers visited places that symbolized trafficker brutality

and, by association, that of the favela residents. On one such occasion, the officers stopped at a cement cross that had been erected against a wall. One of them nodded at the cross: “This is where the traffickers used to execute their victims, before the pacification,” he said, contrasting their savagery with the alleged civility brought to the favela by the police—effectively ignoring numerous reports of police brutality at the UPPs. One of his colleagues interrupted him, adding with contempt:

The favela hasn't been pacified: People here are wrong! To them, what's right is wrong! When I first came here, I wanted to help out, I wanted to make a change. But now I have given up. I'm tired of the favela and the *favelado* [a derogatory term for favela residents] . . . I swear, when I leave the police, I will never set my foot in a favela again!

The other officer agreed: “The *favelado* has no reason to complain. He *chooses* to live in a pile of rubbish because it's cheap. He decides to live in the middle of the shootouts,” he explained, recasting structural inequality as a moral choice. Then, referring to a 10-year-old boy who had been killed in a crossfire between the police and traffickers a few weeks earlier, he added: “Afterward, everybody complains when a child is killed . . . Damn, it's a war! People are going to get killed!” He understood the police's failure to bring peace to the favelas as a result of the moral shortcomings of favela residents and their inadequate support for the police, while police and state complicity in violence was rendered invisible. Police moralism thus justified police violence, while favela residents—bad people—were seen to “get what they deserved.”

In these examples, pacification implied a process of “civilizing” the symbolically black and savage spaces of the favelas, and specifically, the black male bodies associated with drug trafficking through racial profiling, dress, and appearance (Figure 7). These civilizing and moralizing pretensions echo long-standing tropes of threatening black masculinity and sexuality,

Figure 7: Young, black men from the favelas are disproportionately affected by mass incarceration and death, many at the hand of the police (© Tomas Salem).



which has been seen to pose a danger to the project of white Brazilian modernity following the colonial era. They are, for instance, expressed in nineteenth-century fears of slave revolts and experiments in whitening, such as mixed-marriage policies and sexual violence against women of color, the twentieth-century eugenics movement, and the ongoing urban reconfigurations aimed at expelling black populations to the favelas and margins of the city (Holloway 1993; Meirelles and Athayde 2016; Nascimento 1989; Ystanes and Magalhães, this issue).

The police's rare use of racially explicit language might partly be attributed to a foundational myth of racial democracy concealing the pervasive racism of the Brazilian state order—a myth often described as key to national political cosmology (see Nascimento 1989; Vargas 2004). However, it also reflects the sociological proximity between police officers and drug traffickers: a large number of police officers were young, black, and poor—many having grown up in the favelas. Furthermore, much like the traffickers, UPP officers asserted their authority through an ethics of masculinity predicated on the ostentation of weapons and displays of aggression (see Sørboe, this issue; Robson 2014; Zaluar 2010). These similarities demanded constant efforts on behalf of the police to distance themselves from those they cast as their enemies (see also Fassin 2013), creating differently racialized and gendered identities for themselves.

Police officers would often share stories and information that highlighted the perceived immorality of favela residents and brutality of drug traffickers. These stories were contrasted with narratives of police heroism: of officers who risked their lives for the greater good and acted as a liberating force in the favelas. Tellingly, one officer recalled: “At the onset, it was very cool. We saw the change in the residents’ faces, right? Up until then, they were living under the uncertainty, under the lack of security . . . Suddenly another [drug] faction would invade [and] you’d have shootouts and such. Not to mention that they lived under the rules of the traffickers.” In this account, **favela residents were cast as subjects who needed to be saved, much like the missionaries’ understanding of indigenous Brazilians as subjects that needed to be baptized and converted to Christianity** (Marinata 2008).

Similar religious sentiments were often made explicit in the police's associations between Christian faith and the respect for police authority. **In a comment on the nature of evil, one officer suggested that criminals could be redeemed using the example of one former criminal who had become evangelical and, thus, a “good citizen” (*cidadão de bem*).** Among police and favela residents alike, **Christian faith was commonly an identity marker signaling honesty and moral superiority (see Cunha 2018).** Crucially, **the moral politics of Pentecostals and the Catholic Church were widely referred to and supported among officers, and the police would sometimes describe themselves as carrying out God’s task in the favelas.**

The goal of pacification then, according to officers, was to root out all reminiscence of “the culture of trafficking” and replace it with a state-sanctioned culture based on Christian conservatism and the idealized image of the heroic police officer. In this regard, UPP social projects were also effective ways of enrolling people within a new moral state order, organizing and directing authorized forms of sociability in the favelas (see Gilsing, this issue). These were largely directed toward young children and centered on attempting to replace the “negative” role model of the trafficker with the “positive” role model of the friendly cop. Arguing that children had to be targeted before they were swayed by the lifestyle of traffickers, one officer said: “We use to say that the problem starts when they are seven years old.” In a similar vein, another officer noted the importance of the social projects as a way to produce a cultural change in the favelas: “If we stay here handing out beatings (*porradas*), detaining criminals, but without social projects [the pacification won’t work].”

In April 2015, in response to increasing dissatisfaction with the UPPs among residents, the Military Police promised to ease up on the restrictions to arrange funk parties. However, when

asked if they were going to allow funk parties in Alemão, one officer said: “They say that in the newspapers, but we are the ones who decide here. Not even Jesus can go against us.” His answer is telling of how police officers understood their role in the pacified favelas. Another officer was even more explicit: “The new owner of the hill (*dono do morro*) is the UPP!” The logic was clear: as “good people,” police officers need only trust themselves to distinguish good from bad.

Emergent Police States

Drawing on a rhetoric of social inclusion, the UPP project promised to bridge the gap between favela and asfalto and bring peace and development to the former. However, as we have shown through the ethnographic examples here, **the logic of pacification accentuated the racialized inequalities of this division.** Furthermore, **it perpetuated the colonial and authoritarian dynamics of policing through the subsuming of proximity policing to military-strategic aims and through the civilizing and moralizing pretensions of the police in pacified favelas.** The emerging state order at the UPPs rested, thus, less on the social inclusion of favela residents and more on their “peaceful submission” to a racialized state order that renders the conditions for life in the favelas all but impossible (see Neocleous 2013). In this sense then, the UPPs heralded the **emergence of a multiplicity of small, authoritarian police states, scattered across Rio’s urban landscape** (see Muniz and Albernaz 2017).

Importantly, by situating the UPPs within a broader historical context, we have highlighted the racial dynamics of police moralism and how the pacification project, conceived as a project exclusively for the favelas, reproduced a racial ordering of the urban landscape. While the UPPs were deemed unnecessary in the asfalto where residents already respected police authority, Dennis Pauschinger’s contribution to this special section shows how state security policies implemented here were **geared toward the production of racialized elite enclaves while necropolitical modes of governance were perpetuated in the favelas.**

The moral order established by the police in the favelas echoes long-standing conservative, right-wing politics in Brazil and is integral to the same moral universe expressed by Bolsonaro and the so-called *Bancada BBB*, a reactionary legislative caucus in the Brazilian congress. The three Bs stand for the alliance between rural sectors (*boi*—beef), fundamentalist Christians (*bíblia*—bible), and law enforcement and arms industry (*bala*—bullet). Patrol officers at the UPPs widely ascribed to the right-wing moralism of the BBB caucus. They defended a reactionary, hierarchical moral order based on the respect for police authority: coupled with conservative Christian family values and gender and sexual traditionalism, these orientations were instrumental in Bolsonaro’s rise to power in 2019.

The Rise of Bolsonaro

In Achille Mbembe’s essay on necropolitics, the colony is described as “the site where sovereignty consists in the exercise of power outside the law . . . and where ‘peace’ is more likely to take on the face of a ‘war without end.’” The colony is, in Mbembe’s view, a modern formation characterized by a state of lawlessness, governed through a politics of death. Underpinning the distinction between colony and “civilized” state is the ordering of the world according to human races and the lawlessness that characterizes colonial formations “stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native” (2003: 24). Fittingly, the concept of necropolitics has recently informed a timely critique of the lack of attention to racial aspects of urban violence in Rio and Brazil (e.g., Alves 2018; Saborio 2019). And as we have shown,

the UPPs not only reproduced the favelas as warzones but also implied a transformation in the exercise of colonial necropower in the favelas—precisely in Mbembe’s sense (see also Alves 2018). Through the implementation of proximity policing, the emphasis slid toward the territorializing and civilizing dimensions of colonial power, underlining, **with the notion of the culture of trafficking, precisely the “racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native.”** Similarly, the inimical relation between the police and residents was reconfigured, with the latter increasingly imagined both as (potential) allies in the police war against the cartels as well as vulnerable populations “at risk” of being swayed by the culture of trafficking (see Gressgård 2018). At the UPPs, therefore, increasing police involvement in favela sociability reflects broader trends toward a reconfiguration of the social through the logic of security—including the merging of security politics with right-wing moralism and reactionary discourses on gender, sexuality, and race.

Such connections should be unsurprising: as anthropological studies of violent, militarized, or weaponized settings from across the world have shown (e.g., Albrecht and Kyed 2015; Diphooorn and Grassiani 2018; Graham 2010), actual policing practices are inextricably linked to dynamics of sovereign logics and hegemonic social orders (see also Fassin 2013). This includes, as we show, racialized understandings of the subjects to be policed supported by police moralism that is readily operationalized and deployed. While this is key to understanding the immediate context of the policing in question and impinges directly on the practices of police officers, we find two additional components even more pertinent in the Brazilian case.

First, we note that within the Brazilian state order the favelas are seen (by the police agents and the wider society) as zones that need to be disciplined and tamed—again and again. They thereby serve as internal colonies, inhabited by subjects that fall short of being full-fledged citizens—also because of their lack of moral orientation, as stated by several police officers (see Gilsing, this issue; Vargas 2004). These noncitizens are therefore exempt from ideals of citizenship, participation, and, for that matter, a pacific police force. Thus, it is unsurprising that our material from Rio’s favelas demonstrates how policing as warfare continued to be central to also the UPP project. Concretely, this was tangibly present not just in the deployment of belligerent forms of policing centered on territorial occupation but also through subsuming proximity policing to the military-strategic goal of winning allies—described by officers as part of a “psychological war” against traffickers.

Thus, proximity policing should be understood neither as a strategy to secure the legitimacy of the pacification project for a larger Brazilian (or international) public nor as merely an object within political discourses. Instead, it must be approached as a measure to effectively enact and establish an emergent, sometimes plural, state order within the so-called pacified areas, by means that have a long trajectory in Latin America. While proximity policing drew on the rhetoric of human rights, social inclusion, and local democracy, the state order imposed by the police in the favelas was deeply moral and founded on conservative Christian ethics of decency and traditional masculinity. Furthermore, such assertion of police moralism built on respect for (state and police) authority and was asserted through gendered and racialized violence.

This also means the favelas were sites where forms of creeping authoritarianism were expressed, enacted, and, crucially, experimented with. Such experimentation reflected similar dynamics on a national scale, as attempts at creating a socially inclusive democratic state order collapsed, first with the reemergence of right-wing authoritarianism during President Michel Temer’s government (2016–2018) and next with the rise of Bolsonaro’s neofascist populism. Moreover, the limited influence that residents had on the policing of their communities, and the subordination of social politics to security politics made the emergent state orders of the UPPs

reminiscent of the military state of Brazil's authoritarian past, while the civilizing dimensions of pacification reflected the larger patterns of colonial domination and structural racism characteristic of Brazilian social order. As such, the material presented here challenges the image of Brazil sold to the international audience ahead of the 2016 Olympics: rather than being a beacon of modernity or an instantiation of a "racial democracy," we show how the logics of a nascent Brazilian form of populist right-wing authoritarianism (with quite some structural similarities with other instances around the globe) were operative in the favelas during the years of the "pink tide" and the Workers' Party governments (see also Gold and Zagato 2020).

Second, and this is an analytical point, as internal colonies and locations for experimentation with violent and less violent forms of police authority, the favelas became crucial sites that prefigured (see, e.g., Graeber 2007) the militarized approach that Bolsonaro later capitalized on. To be concrete, during Bolsonaro's presidential campaign and after his victory in October 2018, his style of populist, right-wing authoritarianism actively drew on racialized imagery of the favelas' degraded population. At one level, then, one can surmise that Bolsonaro's bellicose rhetoric of cleansing and reasserting control reflects a (global) populist impulse to steer clear of more difficult issues related to economic decline, rising inequalities and democratic failure. As Wendy Hunter and Timothy Power (2019: 81) write in a recent comment, "Unleashing the police and even deploying the army in urban areas, which Temer has already done in Rio de Janeiro since February 2018, is a form of low-hanging fruit." However, what we have shown in this text is that such a maneuver on the part of Bolsonaro is irreducible to a simple question of political opportunism: instead, it needs to be seen as predicated on deep-seated notions of racio-spatial division between *asfalto* and favelas on the one hand, and the reassertion of the latter as sites for experimentation with forms of necropower through the UPPs on the other. In this way, the favelas are, both under Bolsonaro's presidency and in the campaign leading up to it, increasingly cast as the internal others to be policed and disciplined, especially concerning issues of morality. Bolsonaro's state project draws actively on long-term racialized politics and discourses casting both black and poor as enemies and seeking to tame them into peaceful submission through a politics of death.

However, it is also fueled by a more recent powerful political force within Brazil, namely a neo-Pentecostal political cosmology of a post-democratic nation: as Matan Shapiro has shown, Bolsonaro understood early on the force of Pentecostal politics, and it is no coincidence that he let himself be baptized in the Jordan River in Israel in 2016, suggesting "his trip to Israel in 2016 and . . . immersion in the water of the River Jordan can be read either as a mimetic attempt to become viscerally absorbed with a divine power (as a converging force) or as a marketing gimmick that would appeal to the huge Evangelical electorate in his ultimately successful 2018 Presidential Campaign" (2019: 14). As in many other countries that have become infused with (neo-)Pentecostal ideational systems, the sociopolitical order—including styles of policing and the production of enemies—becomes sharper, divisive, and, sometimes, more violent (see, e.g., Rio et al. 2017). It should therefore not be a surprise that Bolsonaro's moralism, which is also present within the UPPs, draws on a neo-Pentecostal cosmology in his bid to reestablish, in a neocolonial fashion, traditional racial and gendered hierarchies in Brazil. Thus, expanding the logic of operation in the favelas onto wider Brazilian society, Bolsonaro employs the state's security apparatuses to do so, by sanctioning violence against populations that resist this hierarchical ordering of the world.

The analytical implications of this relation between the dynamic in the favelas and the emergence of Bolsonaro—which is not, of course, to imply a simple causal connection in a mechanistic sense—provide a corrective to the argument that state violence in Brazil is a direct reflection

only of economic inequalities—a form of template explanation for global populism that disregards, for instance, colonial trajectories. To be clear, we are not suggesting that a focus on economic inequalities is unimportant but rather that by taking the racialized aspects of policing into account, we can further our understanding of why some favela subjectivities (i.e., those associated with the so-called culture of drug trafficking) are selectively targeted by the police. By examining the politics of race, we can also see the contours of totalitarian right-wing politics in Brazil and the (emergent or fully developed) police states these rely on, contribute to, or, in some cases, actively produce.

■ **TOMAS SALEM** is a PhD candidate in Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen. He holds a master's degree in Social Anthropology from the University of Bergen and a master's degree in Societal Safety from the University of Tromsø. His research interests include urban security and gender, and he has carried out ethnographic research on the Pacifying Police Units and the process of reforming the Military Police in Rio de Janeiro ahead of the 2016 Summer Olympics. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6270-8811> | Email: tomas.salem@uib.no

■ **BJØRN ENGE BERTELSEN** is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen. His research includes political anthropology, egalitarianism, and urban Africa. He is the author of *Violent Becomings: State Formation, Sociality, and Power in Mozambique* (2016) and coeditor of *Crisis of the State: War and Social Upheaval* (with Bruce Kapferer, 2009); *Navigating Colonial Orders: Norwegian Entrepreneurship in Africa and Oceania, ca. 1850 to 1950* (with Kirsten Kjerland, 2015); *Violent Reverberations: Global Modalities of Trauma* (with Vigdis Broch-Due, 2016); and *Critical Anthropological Engagements in Human Alterity and Difference* (with Synnøve Bendixsen, 2016). ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3194-3664> | Email: bjorn.bertelsen@uib.no

■ NOTES

1. In Saad-Filho and Morais's (2018) book, the paradoxes of modern Brazil, especially between the socially inclusive discourse of the Workers' Party and its implementation of neoliberal economic policies, are examined. Also useful in understanding this apparent contradiction is Nancy Fraser's (2019) elaboration on "progressive neoliberalism" in the United States.
2. In Brazil, policing activities are divided between a wealth of state and non-state actors. The Federal Police enforces federal laws and patrols federal highways, while each state has its branches of Military Police, in charge of street patrol, and the Civil Police, responsible for investigations. Locally, Municipal Guards are also occupied in street-level policing. Additionally, policing activities are carried out by non-state agents and groups such as private security contractors, drug traffickers, and militias. Often, off-duty, state-employed police officers work as private guards, while the militias are composed of discharged officers, prison guards, and former military personnel. The boundaries between different groups remain porous, opaque, and changing, and the policing assemblage in Rio can usefully be understood as an example of what Diphooorn and Grassiani (2018) call "security blurs."
3. As such, the UPPs were only the most recent and visible attempts to reform Brazilian police forces. Similar programs were rolled out in Rio in the decades following the return to democracy in 1984, and other big Brazilian cities implemented their community-oriented police reforms in the same period.

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