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FROM YES TO NO
THE REFERENDUM ON GUNS PROHIBITION IN BRAZIL

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The research carried out by ISER since 1992 on the subject of the “lethal nature of firearms” determined both our partnership with VIVA-RIO in subsequent years and our involvement in the Campaign for Disarmament. Our research showed systematically and, as improvements were made to our databases, with increasing precision, that light firearms in the hands of civilians were responsible for the majority of “close proximity” crimes, affecting indiscriminately women, young people, neighbors, friends, parents, and a significant number of people who, if it weren’t for this mortal weapon, would still be with us. These impressive figures, and the conviction that firearms, relatively cheap and easy to obtain, could increasingly reinforce a “culture of violence”, led us to become actively involved in all of the discussions aimed – successfully – at seeing a Statute on Disarmament. This Statute, passed in December 2000, led Brazilian society to a Referendum in October 2005.

Throughout the Campaign, ISER supplied data and carried out research aimed at convincing public policy makers and decision-makers, with well-balanced arguments, of the need to hold back rising levels of violence, and that one effective means of doing so would be through imposing a ban on the free trade of arms and making possession of arms more difficult. The series of articles published here describe the different strands and shades of this Campaign, which mobilized significant actors from Brazilian civil society, politicians, government and media, together with the dramatic questions which characterized the Referendum, with the aim of enabling us to make an “evaluation”.

Why “evaluation” in inverted commas? Because, once the voting was over and the results were published, we found ourselves faced with two difficult tasks: the first, and a prerequisite for the second, was to distance ourselves from the object which had mobilized us and seek to understand, as social scientists, the sociological and political reasons why Brazilian society chose to vote “No” to prohibition on the arms trade, after pre-Referendum polls had indicated an overwhelming majority against it.

The second task was: where to begin? How would we go about evaluating a national campaign, in which every Brazilian state, each with its own particular characteristics, regional culture and leadership, had participated? How would we evaluate the hundreds of different stances and forms of involvement dictated by the nature of each institution, such as the Church, which is itself split up into different denominations (Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc.)? How would we summarize and evaluate the wide range of involvement seen from social movements and civil society organizations? And what about public opinion? Would research published by the different institutes be sufficient? And had the television campaign been the decisive factor which led people to form their opinions? Then we remembered the internet, and the role that this medium – with its positive and negative virtual characteristics – might have played. And above and beyond all of this, there remained the fact that a Referendum was not something Brazilian politics had a great deal of experience of. In fact, this was our second, since the start of re-democratization in the 1980s. In other words, there was practically no literature on experiences of referendums in Brazil.

In addition to these challenges, we had to act quickly. As Luiz Eduardo Soares, former secretary of public safety for Rio de Janeiro and one of the founders of this field of research at ISER, said publicly of the Referendum, once one process is over, another begins: that of the dispute over the significance of victory and defeat. We needed rapidly to interpret the facts and versions of the facts and, above all, draw from the episode the necessary lessons for the

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struggle to continue – which it does. Because the conviction that firearms are killing innocent victims, destroying families and having a damaging effect on the fabric of society, continues.

Our struggle to promote a culture of peace, and therefore of non-violent attitudes and defense of life, in which the concept of “human safety” serves as a counterweight in our defense of basic human rights, most certainly continues.

Once the first bitter taste – why not admit it? – of defeat has passed, it is essential that we arm ourselves with the arguments that will help strengthen our future actions.

Methodologically, faced with the unquestionable fact that the population said No to prohibition on the arms trade (59.109.265 voters out of a total of 122.042.825 eligible to vote), we found ourselves before a great sea of complexities, of data and sources we would have to look for.

For obvious reasons, based on cost-benefit and timescale, we chose six fronts for our research: a) public opinion polls; b) views of the population, through focus groups related to the television campaign; c) and, because we recognized the decisive role played by television, we also chose to analyze the strategies adopted by the Yes and No campaigns; d) involvement of the Church, a traditional ally in struggles against violence; e) the action of parliamentary fronts and their articulation within the Government (in this case, the Federal Government, as well as its bases at state-level); f) the versions of events as seen by organizations which played an active part in the campaigns, in particular VIVA-RIO, in Rio de Janeiro, and Sou da Paz [“I’m for Peace”], in São Paulo.

As already emphasized, this challenging task was entrusted to a group of researchers from both within and outside ISER, together forming a team of experts with strong links between academic life and social activism.

This was thus a joint effort to shed light on important questions concerning an unprecedented event in the history of Brazilian society, and a true test of our democratic armory. As such, it saw the involvement of researchers and intellectuals, who set about producing, in three months, what we are referring to as an evaluation: an extensive, critical look, comprehensive without being exhaustive, at what sociological research can tell us about the Referendum and the “Yes that became a No”.

The first article, which serves as an introduction, was written by Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, doctor of Social History and lecturer in Methodology and Theory of History at the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (IFCS/UFRJ). Dr Mota interviewed the Campaign’s principal protagonists, hearing their versions of events and listing the arguments that “explain” the defeat while salvaging the “lessons learned”.

The article, entitled The October 2005 referendum: from many conquests to an unexpected defeat, methodically presents the information gathered in the interviews, recovering the most striking events in the Campaign for Disarmament carried out by organized civil society, and identifying the main challenges ahead for all those committed to establishing a culture of peace, in the wake of what appears to be a disheartening result.

The second, Internet, public sphere and political marketing: between the promotion of communication and moralist solipsism, was written by Bernardo Sorj, ISER consultancy, professor of Sociology at IFCS/UFRJ and head of the Edelstein Center for Social Research. The author revisits the bibliography on political e-marketing, examining the role of the media campaigns in the defeat of the Yes vote and analyzing the websites of the two fronts involved in the Referendum. His conclusions are critical of the theory that the more freedom people have to act without external interference or regulation, the brighter the future for the internet as a public domain. Sorj suggests that the internet requires regulation to ensure responsible communication for its users and those reached by them. He also looks at the fact that the internet has earned itself a definitive role on the political stage, and we can expect it to have a strong impact at the next elections.

The third article, by Mauricio Lissovsky, bears the title Television campaign and the misadventure of the yes that was no. A historian with a PhD in Communications, ISER researcher, Lissovsky is coordinator of the Radio and TV Course at Rio de Janeiro Federal University’s School of Communications. The author analyzes the political marketing strategies used by the televised Yes and No campaigns – both in terms of media aspects, and persuasion techniques and tactical choices. He examines how opinions evolved in the light of tracking polls (which monitor variation in opinion over a given period of time), establishing correlations between the thematic emphases and persuasive resources used in each campaign, and the changes in opinion that were registered. Given the unprecedented nature of the Referendum’s theme, which strictly speaking did not belong to the political sphere, the author
chose, from a methodological perspective, to collate the strategies employed with commonly accepted criteria, in order to evaluate the voting campaigns. Comparative research on TV marketing is practically non-existent, and the article's conclusions are interesting, in that they show how a campaign — apparently simple in its use of technical effects, and even simplistic in its arguments — succeeded in influencing opinions. The author also offers us consistent clues leading us to the conclusion that "marketeers" — as we, half-playfully, half-pejoratively, refer to them — might be today's magicians, capable of transforming votes and opinions using their mastery of symbols and words.

The fourth article is by Christina Vital da Cunha, Master in Sociology, an ISER researcher and PhD student on the Postgraduate Social Sciences Program at Rio de Janeiro State University. The article, entitled The referendum: televised propaganda and perceptions of the public, continues to explore the theme of the television campaign, but now looking at the aspect of people's reactions to the programs broadcast by the two fronts. Obviously, the two fronts each carried out their own monitoring and we only analyzed the material ordered by the Yes campaign. Groups of people, mainly from the more popular social classes, were put together in São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro and Recife. Using the technique of "focus groups", reports were produced on an almost daily basis throughout the twenty days of the television campaign, in order to record viewers' positive or negative reactions to the material transmitted. Ms da Cunha examines in minute detail the reports taken from 39 focus groups on how viewers received the televised electoral broadcasts and the Yes and No campaign slots and, more specifically, which were the arguments that swayed voters most successfully. Having herself witnessed some of these groups from the "mirror room", the researcher demonstrates how people's relative ignorance of the Referendum developed first into discomfort — why vote on this matter, if so many other, equally important, subjects did not warrant the same treatment or demand? — then into heated discussions in which the pro-arms vote firmed up its support unquestionably. The article further shows how fundamental a role was played by the free television campaign in the voting process.

The fifth analysis is the result of the hard work of Gláucio Dillon Soares, with the support of ISER's research team, and is entitled From yes to no: an analysis of tracking surveys. With a PhD in Sociology from the University of Washington, ISER consultancy, Soares lectures at Rio de Janeiro State University's Research Institute (IUPERJ). He is author of "A Democracia Interrompida" ("Interrupted Democracy", Fundação Getúlio Vargas), among other publications, and has carried out exciting research in the field of qualitative data on violence. Soares analyzes voter intentions, using data collected through telephone research, in the two weeks prior to the Referendum. Using demonstrative charts, the author presents, among other data, the socio-demographic background, gender, variations in attitude and voting trends of the voters interviewed. His conclusions highlight the political significance of the arguments used by both campaigns and the role played by cultural values in a referendum of this kind. He further demonstrates the importance of using this type of tool (tracking polls) to monitor more scientifically the abundance of subjectivities that are inherent to "public opinion". The data clearly reveal how the arguments of the Yes campaign lost their consistency, and the article leaves us feeling: why do we in civil society continue to be so "unprofessional" when it comes to information and the forming of public opinion? Why is it so difficult to mobilize the resources to provide us with the tools that our "adversaries" take for granted?

Finally, the sixth article poses what we believe to be a vital question, in the context of defending the values and ethos of non-violence that are the cornerstone of a culture of peace. In his article entitled Does he that believes in Christ say yes to life? The churches and disarmament, ISER researcher Flávio César Conrado, Master in Sociology, a PhD student in Cultural Anthropology on Rio de Janeiro Federal University's Postgraduate Sociology and Anthropology Program, examines the Church's involvement in the campaigns for disarmament and the Referendum. And for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the theme of Christian activism in the Brazilian Church, he goes a step further, shedding light on the significance of this involvement in the consolidation of peace processes in Brazilian cities in the Campaign for Disarmament — which resulted in more than 400 firearm collection points being set up in churches, an unprecedented operation which was a great success. When the Ministry of Justice launched the Brazil without Arms campaign, it was hoping to collect around 80.000 weapons. A year later, the results of this campaign surprised everyone and raised hopes about the Referendum: close to half a million arms had been handed in voluntarily
by the Brazilian population. But Conrado reveals how the Church’s enthusiasm waned when it came to the Referendum campaign, and how only a minority group of churches and Christian institutions joined forces in support of the Yes vote. The majority of Church leaders were reluctant to publicly assume a position, leaving discussions and choices to the private domain – and the “conscience of each of us”. This conclusion points to the scope and limits of the involvement of the Church and its leaders in this type of mobilization, highlighting the need, when dealing with the action of the Church, not to lump together in the same category domains that are different: the Church, usually perfectly at ease with moral themes, gets very uncomfortable when it comes to political disputes.

To sum up, then, the six articles offer some interesting answers to our initial question: why did we lose? Why wasn’t “the right side” victorious? And they reveal, as expected, a series of possibilities and scenarios worthy of further research. However, two conclusions appear unquestionable and of the utmost importance: it was the largest mobilization for a civic cause ever seen in Brazil, since the campaign for democratic elections. And it was led, unprecedentedly, by civil society organizations/actors, whose views were articulated in parliament. We have learnt a great deal from living through one of the most important moments in the history of Brazilian democracy. A democracy which, let us not forget, is recent and is improving with time, as a result of opportunities like this one.

With this evaluation, ISER is not closing a chapter of history which gave us the results we had hoped for. Instead, we are seeking elements to reinforce a strategy which remains one of our permanent objectives: to promote a culture of peace in Brazil and strengthen those organizations that share this ideal.
The event, the unforeseen, the questions
On October 23rd, 2005, polling sessions opened their doors so that Brazilians could answer the question: “Should firearms and munitions sale be prohibited in Brazil?” Participation in the public consultation – provided for in Article 34 of Law no. 10.826, of December 22, 2003, known as the Disarmament Statute – involved 95.375.824 of the 122.042.825 eligible voters, and the result was a victory for No, with 63.94% of the votes, while Yes obtained 36.06%.

Coming from an expressive mobilization over the last few years, with public demonstrations in the larger cities, the Voluntary Campaign to Turn in Weapons and the accompaniment in the legislature and in the executive branch of the federal government of implementation of an effect firearms control policy, organized social movements and the Parliamentary Front of a Brazil Without Weapons, were taken by surprise by the significant number of voters who spoke out against prohibition of arms sales, especially when opinion polls before the free electoral propaganda period had shown a wide margin in favor of prohibition.

What can one infer from the results at the October ballots? Why was the Yes vote defeated? What lessons can leaders engaged in the struggle to control and decrease weapons in the country learn from the defeat? What is the outlook for the Disarmament Statute?

These were the main questions asked to André Porto (coordinator of the Project, Religion and Peace at Live Rio [Viva Rio] and coordinator for Latin America of the NGO, United Religions Initiative-URI); Antônio Rangel Bandeira (coordinator of the program, Arms Control of Viva Rio); Ariovaldo Ramos (Baptist evangelical pastor, president of the NGO, World Vision); Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira (service director of the Giovani FBC Advertising Agency); Helio Parente (attorney specialized in Electoral Law, collaborator at Viva Rio); Luiz Eduardo Soares (university professor and researcher, former National Secretary of Public Security); Luiz Henrique Pires (Major in the State Troopers [Polícia Militar] of the State of Rio de Janeiro and Head of the Planning Section of the Joint Chiefs of Staff); Mariana Montoro (director of communication at the NGO, I am for Peace Institute [Instituto Sou da Paz]); Raul Jungmann (federal deputy with the PPS party in PE and Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Front for a Brazil Without Weapons) and Rubem César Fernandes (Executive Coordinator of Viva Rio). The interviews were recorded in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and in Brasília, resulting in over one hundred transcribed pages and represents a vivid memory of the mistakes and merits of the vote Yes campaign in the October 23rd referendum.

In addition to the assessment of the results of the public consultation, however, many of those interviewed, also spoke regarding the origins and advance of this broad movement of civil society that managed to include the subject of firearms-related violence in the national agora.

The Disarmament Statute: a brief history through the eyes of some of its protagonists
The formation of the ISER (Institute for Studies in Religion) research group in 1992 led to development of studies regarding the following topics: religiosity, third sector and violence. From the time this group was established – formed by specialists in different fields of Social Sciences – it enabled the construction of a number of hypotheses related to the issue of urban violence in Brazil. Rubem César Fernandes highlighted in his deposition that the subject of disarmament earned the attention of Viva Rio (NGO, partner with Iser) since 1994, when it began its activities,
that it would be declared unconstitutional”, admitted the allegation that it was a federal affair. “We knew filed a legal action and had the law suspended, under the reform of the legal system regarding gun control. The concept that is the foundation of studies on the issue, explained the anthropologist, is that, in Brazilian society, urban violence has taken on the characteristics of a social epidemic with firearms as the main vector, "that which aggravates the problem as well as symbolizes it". This, in his words, "was the basis of all of the years’ long work that culminated in the referendum”.

One of the most striking moments in this work, according to Luiz Eduardo Soares – who has been working in the area of public security for nearly 18 years – was in 1999, when he, in the position of Undersecretary of Public Security of the State of Rio de Janeiro, organized a disarmament and pro-peace movement in conjunction with Viva Rio. It was a pioneer partnership between a state government and civil society and that resulted in a work program unprecedented in the country. For the first time in Brazil, based on an analysis of weapons apprehended and kept at the Weapons and Explosives Division of the Civil Police, a survey on the origin and type of armaments that were in circulation.

The study surprised us, because we began to explode the myths that arose from hasty and unsupported observations. 80% of the weapons apprehended from criminals were short-barreled, light arms, not long-barreled heavy weapons, they were revolvers and pistols. Some 85% were national, produced by Taurus, Rossi and Inbel. This tore down the entire mythology of contrabanded weapons that evidently does exist but on a negligible scale in relation to the whole. It likewise demolished the myth that our major problems were long-barreled weapons, submachine guns, assault rifles, etc. The guns that most kill, that are most often used by criminals, are those that are always in operation in criminal dynamics, not the heaviest weapons. This drew our attention to the production, circulation and distribution of weapons in the country.

The result of this effort was the approval by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro of a law that prohibited arms sales throughout the state. According to Rubem César Fernandes, the guns lobby filed a legal action and had the law suspended, under the allegation that it was a federal affair. “We knew that it would be declared unconstitutional”, admitted Luiz Eduardo Soares, in the interview, “but we felt that it was an important and meaningful political event”. Truly it may be considered the starting point for the next step that was the organization, on a national scale, of a movement of collect signatures to be sent to the federal government, petitioning of a law to prohibit guns sales in the country. When the number of 1,200,000 signatures was reached, the petition was delivered to then-president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

These studies and activities linked to combating violence that attracted Antônio Rangel Bandeira to Viva Rio. In the early 1980s he had participated in a study group on violence at PUC, and beginning in 1998, with Viva Rio, continued investigating "the relation between guns and lethal violence" and began to put together an action program with the clear objective of participating in the writing of a bill of law to control firearms and achieve its approval in the National Congress. This is what Rangel considers the first phase of the Statute, and key figures in the political realm were Minister of Justice Renan Calheiros, Senator José Roberto Arruda, leader of the PSDB in the Senate, and José Sarney, then speaker of the Senate. On the side of civil society the main ones coordinating contacts, in addition to Rangel himself, were, according to his deposition, "Rubem César, Inácio Cano and Luiz Eduardo Soares".

The first victory was achieved in 1999, with the Senate Constitution and Justice Commission’s approval of bill of law 1073, which would later become the base document for the future Disarmament Statute. Nevertheless, the bill was defeated in other commissions and stalled over the next few years due to pressure from weapons manufacturers. According to Rangel, successive defeats of the new bill in Congress led leaders to adopt a new strategy: social pressure – through public events and demonstrations – and the conducting and publicizing of studies “to create awareness amongst the population regarding the guns issue”. In January 2003, now under the presidency of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, Luiz Eduardo Soares is appointed to the position of National Secretary of Public Security, a position he held for 10 months, and the struggle for the Statute gained new strength. Deputy Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh (PT-SP) was willing to present the bill before Congress, but, as Luiz Eduardo Soares revealed in the interview, “it was a very difficult struggle”.

The government “hardcore” was also quite resistant, until polls were released showing that 80% supported disarmament. At that
time, José Dirceu [the President’s Chief of Staff] authorized the government’s parliamentarian allies to pressure Congress towards approving the Statute and the Minister then also got involved in the process. He then traveled to Rio de Janeiro, we participated in a walk that was inserted into a soap opera episode. It was a way of disseminating the idea. That was my contribution: to bring the federal government in on this proposal.

In July 2003, was Special Congressional Commission was formed with three deputies and three senators, Deputy Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh as rapporteur, who, considering the task extremely urgent, condensed the more than 70 bills on the issue, yet maintaining the framework of bill 1.073/99. Antônio Rangel Bandeira, in his deposition, made a brief report on how it went:

Discussions were accelerated by pressure from the streets, entertainers, etc. The bill was approved by a vote amongst party leaders. All parties supported it, although some deputies and senators from different parties had made speeches against it. Then on December 23rd, 2003, Lula gave the people a Christmas present in the form of the new and very advanced, in international terms, legislation. We were quite strong during the negotiations and the other side was very weak. We tried to prohibit gun sales, but Taurus and CBC [Companhia Brasileira de Cartuchos (Brazilian Cartridge Company)] didn’t allow it. The formula we came up with was to decide this issue through a public referendum. They were very weal and afraid that we’d push for prohibition and get it. They accepted the referendum, certain that they were going to lose...

The President of the Republic therefore sanctioned Law no. 10826, which, “contained provisions regarding the registration, possession and sale of firearms and ammunition, on the National Weapons System – Sinarm, and defines crimes and other provisions”. The next step was to codify the law that would take several more months. On June 18, 2004, the Federal Official Gazette published Law no. 10884, of June 17. 2004, codifying the Disarmament Statute.

The same month, the Voluntary Weapons Collection Campaign was initiated, led by the Ministry of Justice. Actually, what was in question was compliance to articles 29,30, 31 and 32 of the Statute. In other words, citizens who possessed firearms would have a deadline of 180 days to register them properly, or obtain a permit to carry them from the Federal Police, and those who wished to turn them in could do so, receiving a receipt and compensation, starting on June 23, 2004. Later the deadline was extended until October 23, 2005.

The campaign mobilized churches, civil society organizations, state and federal law enforcement and other institutions. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, the campaign resulted in the collection and destruction of 443,719 firearms. The magnitude of the numbers shows the success of the campaign, which had an initial goal of collecting 80,000 weapons. André Porto, the person at ISER responsible for the project, Inter-Religious Movement of Rio de Janeiro (MIR), highlighted in his interview, that one month after opening the gun collection posts at Viva Rio in August 2004, the first religious post in Brazil was opened, at the Saint Michael Archangel Home for Minors in Nova Iguaçu. Soon, another post was opened at a Methodist Church in Cascadura and soon after, another in the United Presbyterian Church in Barra da Tijuca. During the second half of 2004, 45 posts were opened in churches in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This experience with collection posts in our state, according to him, “was what we accredited and opened throughout the country”.

Throughout the period, from August to February, March, there was not a single incident. Only success in the arms collections. With this pilot experience, we were bold in proposing to the CNBB [National Conference of Bishops of Brazil], CONIC [National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil], CLAI [Latin American Council of Churches] that gun collection posts be opened throughout Brazil. Viva Rio provided onsite technical training, through workshops for priests, pastors, church volunteers and Christian NGOs and conducted all of the liaison with the Federal Police in Brasilia and with the Federal Police in the states, who in turn, contacted the state and city police as necessary. There were no collections posts in churches without a policeman. The experience was fantastic and greatly surpassed our expectations. There was some 400 posts in over 120 municipalities.

Pastor Ariovaldo Ramos was another interviewee that considered the experience very enriching, especially for evangelical churches who were always, as he said, somewhat absent, “never involving ourselves in large campaigns, in political issues, we felt that the church had to maintain itself isolated from the entire situation”. The fact that many churches
participated actively, to him, was a major step, “a taking of sides, the awakening of awareness”.

Since 1997, Mariana Montoro, from the I am for Peace Institute, had been engaged in the struggle for gun control in Brazil – she pointed out two aspects in her interview of the activities surrounding disarmament that were conducted by the São Paulo-based NGO: the law needed to be changed, and, at the same time, people’s behavior had to change, the gun culture. On one hand, campaigns were conducted, especially targeting youth and, on the other, we worked to provide deputies and senators with studies and information.

We created I am for Peace in the Legislature, a newsletter that published relevant data. I am for Peace in the Legislature was sensational! Many deputies made reference to the data in it, to figures... It also helped us reach deputies and senators. It was all in the proper language, with bills of law, the most important bits of data, at the federal level. I think it really worked and I recommend this type of instrument for any organization trying to influence the Legislature.

In 2005, the National Congress had not even discussed the regulations for the public consultation, even though the referendum was scheduled to be held that year, in compliance to article 35 of the Disarmament Statute. Deputy Raul Jungmann, whose concern over the issue led him to perceive, according to his own words, that “the question of violence, especially of security, had become something related to democracy itself, with the very republic”, heard that the legislative decree that provided for the holding of the referendum was "shelved" in the Public Security Commission of the Chamber of Deputies. According to him, he then began a huge series of battles to get the decree out of that commission, to not allow it to become completely disfigured, take it to the Constitution and Justice Commission, where all processes must pass, before going to the Plenary – and, at the same time, negotiate and obtain the necessary signatures for the so-called Urgency Measure that would take it to the plenary for voting.

On the front line of this struggle in Congress, Jungmann highlighted the names of deputies that aided him in liaising and collecting signatures, such as Antônio Carlos Biscala (PT-RJ), Laura Carneiro (PFL-RJ), Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh (PT-SP), Babá (PSOL-PA), Perpétua Almeida (PcdB-AC), Fernando Gabeira (PV-RJ), Maria do Rosário (PT-RS) and senator Renan Calheiros (PMDB-AL).

Confrontations with representatives of the guns lobby, deputies Alberto Fraga (PFL-DF) – who would become the chairman of the Parliamentary Front for the Right to Legitimate Defense - Luiz Antônio Fleury Filho (PTB-SP), Jair Bolsonaro (PTB-RJ), Vanderval dos Santos (PL-SP), and the entire group of deputies from Rio Grande do Sul, as a whole, did not give in and what was already tough became even tougher, according to the deputy, “because the lower house was a powder keg, with the explosion of the vote-buying scandal”. At the same time, he revealed, in that they sought to make progress, within the turbulent atmosphere of a congress ravaged by scandal, an abyss was approaching, “which was the deadline that the TSE could give us so that we could approve the decree in the lower house”. Jungmann highlighted the role of minister Carlos Veloso, of the Superior Electoral Court. “We went to him several times – Renan Calheiros and myself – to ask for a little more time and he allowed it”. Minister Carlos Veloso, in Jungmann’s opinion, performed measures without which the referendum might never have been held. Nevertheless, we shall hear, from the deputy himself, the narration of the “dramatic day” when the regulations for the referendum was finally included on the voting agenda of the Congress.

It was the last day before recess. The deadlines of the TSE almost expired, everything about to expire, it was absolutely dramatic. Then began a liaison that turned out to be extremely positive between the PPS, PV – a steady ally throughout the entire process – and leaders of some of the other parties, even of the PDT. We began to obstruct all other voting. We asked for verifications, it was a nightmare, nobody could do anything. We had to release the agenda and we were put fourth on the list of items to be voted on. We won by an immense number and wide margin of votes. But an agreement had been made that the item whose urgency had been voted would enter in the same order for the vote on merit. Therefore we won and everyone happily went to lunch. When we came back, it had dropped from 4th to 16th place. A procedural maneuver had literally pushed us aside. Everyone was dismayed... What was going to happen?! At the end of 16 rounds of voting there would no longer be any quorum and if it came up for the vote, certainly someone would request verification. We were lost!... But we continued fighting, working, and around midnight, it came up for the vote on merit... I remember running around the entire Congress, up and down stairs,
taking people away from the CPI, getting people back from home, getting people out of wherever they were, in order to have quorum to vote. We voted and we won. The holding of the referendum was approved!

Late Wednesday night, July 6th, 2005, the Chamber of Deputies approved Legislative Decree no. 780, authorizing the holding of the referendum on prohibition of firearms and ammunition throughout the country. In open voting, the proposal was approved by 258 votes in favor, 48 against and five abstentions. On July 22, the two parliamentary fronts – the Parliamentary Front for a Brazil Without Weapons, chaired by Senator Renan Calheiros and the Parliamentary Front for the Right to Legitimate Defense, chaired by Deputy Alberto Fraga – were registered by the Panel of the National Congress. On August 11, Resolution 22,041 of the Superior Electoral Court was published in the Justice Gazette, providing for the “collection and investment of funds and on the rendering of accounts of the referendum” and on October 1st, the free electoral airtime began, with two daily blocks of ten minutes, in addition to inserts.

From many conquests to an unexpected defeat: hypotheses of an explanation

The poll published by Datafolha on July 21st showed that 80% of the population defended prohibition on sales of arms and ammunition, and seemed a natural reward for the efforts of social movements engaged in the disarmament campaign. Nevertheless, in a little more than three months’ time, the scenario changes. The hope of banishing violence caused by the unbridled access to firearms in Brazilian society begins to wane as the numbers continue to fall in opinion polls. About a week before the poll, NO already had almost 50% of the votes, against 5% in favor of prohibition. What had caused this change in such a short time? Why was article 35 of the Disarmament Statute rejected by the electorate?

Considered as a whole, those interviewed presented 41 explanations for the defeat. The first step in the methodology we are to follow to organize and classify these answers is in identifying their contents and grouping them in thematic blocks. Each block sought to contemplate all of the statements presented by each interviewee and by the set of interviewees, in relation to a specific topic. We identified eight themes and established a classification for each one based on the number of occurrences in the deposition, as follows: the Yes electoral propaganda (covering 14 statements); the political situation (with 10 statements); the question of the referendum (with five); the action of leaders in civil society (with four); electoral rules of the referendum (with three); the role of social communication media (with two); the subject of the referendum (with two) and the role of the elites (with one statement). Next, we sought to prepare a synthesis-argument for each thematic block, in order to summarize the set of statements expressed in the interviews. With this, we intended to translate the core idea (or core ideas) of the manifestations regarding each them, making them more intelligible in Table 1, as the reader can see hereinafter. Table 2 links the thematic blocks to the interviewees.
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic block</th>
<th>Synthesis-argument</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 The YES electoral propaganda</td>
<td>The Yes electoral propaganda was inefficient because it adopted an erroneous strategy or, simply, because it had no strategy.</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>02 Political situation</td>
<td>The referendum was converted into a plebiscite regarding the federal government, associated, in the perception of the majority of voters, to corruption and being negligent regarding public security.</td>
<td>06</td>
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<tr>
<td>03 Question of the referendum</td>
<td>The question of the referendum favored the doubt, or signified a decision that voters were not willing to make.</td>
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<tr>
<td>04 Action of civil society leaders</td>
<td>The Yes movement demobilized, due to the very favorable results in opinion polls prior to the free electoral propaganda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>05 Electoral rules of the referendum</td>
<td>Electoral rules were inadequate for a referendum, which ended up compromising the Yes vote</td>
<td>03</td>
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<tr>
<td>06 Role of social communication media</td>
<td>The social communication media failed to fulfill their role of informing and clarifying</td>
<td>02</td>
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<tr>
<td>07 Subject of the referendum</td>
<td>The subject of the referendum was complex and voters did not feel sufficiently informed</td>
<td>02</td>
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<tr>
<td>08 Role of the elites</td>
<td>Brazilian elites induced voters to vote No.</td>
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### Table 2

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>YES electoral propaganda</th>
<th>Political situation</th>
<th>Question of the referendum</th>
<th>Action of civil society leaders</th>
<th>Electoral rules of the referendum</th>
<th>Role of communication media</th>
<th>Subject of the referendum</th>
<th>Role of the elites</th>
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<td>André Porto</td>
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<td>Antônio Rangel Bandeira</td>
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<td>Gustavo C. de Oliveira</td>
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<td>Hélio Perente</td>
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<td>Mariana Montoro</td>
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<td>Raul Jungmann</td>
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Electoral propagandas face to face: Yes (ineffective) x No (competent)

Although the syntheses and numbers that make up the tables and graphs fulfill their role as instruments necessary for analysis, they hide lines of thought, or tirades of humor or even traces of sadness and affliction, found in many, many portions of the interviews. It would be unfair to deprive the reader of these discursive representations of the Yes defeat suggested by the reminiscences of these men and women who so intensely participated in the campaign.

First we consider the comments of the interviewees regarding the larger theme of electoral propaganda – present in all interviews, as one of the main hypotheses to explain Yes’ defeat. “Inefficient”, “disastrous”, “mistaken” were some of the adjectives used to assess it. Let us look at the version of Congressman Raul Jungmann for the failure of the Yes publicity campaign:

“We went into the campaign, in every way imaginable, out of synch with the issue of security, because putting entertainers from Globo was absolutely counterproductive. In the beginning I thought it was great, I mean, you had to put them on. But there was no strategy. I remember the first program. It was so dramatic! I looked at it and said: “Good God in heaven, what is this? The first scene was an atomic bomb exploding and started with the announcer’s voice in off, saying: “Two atomic bombs explode in the world and 230,000 people are killed...” Wait, what does an atomic bomb have to do with what we’re doing?! The topic was the number of people that die from firearms! And who said that an atomic bomb kills 00 to 00 thousand people? Rubbish!

“The truth”, said Rubem César Fernandes, in an interview, “is that we didn’t have a specific strategy for the referendum campaign”. This is because “we had come from a history of very successful campaigns and we imagined the referendum as the climax of the previous campaigns”. “Our greatest equity”, he revealed, “was the huge number of volunteers in advertising agencies – the best in the country, who would create everything free of charge – and the churches, especially the Catholic Church and a few of the protesters”. Therefore, he assessed, “we went into the campaign as if we were just reaping something that was already a given”. Moreover, to Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira, a Yes electoral campaign strategy was what was lacking, to him, they were “a front of selfless individuals who wanted to help somehow”. According to the advertising man, “each one did a type of material, whoever made an interesting commercial sent it over and it was put on the air”. There was, therefore, no concept. When problems began to appear, “they changed the entire line, right in mid-stream”. André Porto considered, from the advertising point of view, “the NO campaign was a thousand times better than the Yes campaign” and that the decisive factor was that “they were very astute in linking, no gluing with super-glue, the referendum to the government”. Mariana Montoro followed the same line of arguments when she assessed that the persons responsible for the No electoral campaign, “precisely because of the previous scenario which caused them a terrible defeat, had done their homework, and well: they invested heavily in research to discover what people were thinking”. That’s how they won, she concluded. The Yes campaign, on the other hand, according to her, “got lost a little in the false assurance of victory, with 80% intention of vote against guns, one didn’t have to be very concerned”.

Antônio Rangel Bandeira went further in his comparison of the campaigns. According to his statements in the interview, “the No front, although formed of ‘the most conservative and reactionary elements” was competent enough to conduct a campaign as if left-wing. The No marketer, Chico Santa Rita, organized a campaign “based on the defense of rights, heir to the struggles of the Brazilian people, the demonstration of the 100,000, of the political exiles, of the ‘painted-faces’, in other words, the struggle against sale of guns and ammunition was treated “as a continuation of the global struggles for human rights”. Actually, he stated, “they knew how to use symbols and themes of the right to capture the right, such as the question of security, and symbols and themes of the left to capture the left, such as the question of human rights”.

Pastor Ariovaldo Ramos was relentless in his analysis of the use of entertainers from soap operas in the electoral campaign. His position is that the Yes propaganda did not know how to talk to the people, people to people. Let us hear him:

We used these celebrity actors, forgetting that the public only sees actors as characters and exactly what we didn’t need was characters. We needed people who were suffering, people who knew what they were talking about. We didn’t need a guy who has to create a character to become convincing about something that actually doesn’t even affect him. It was a mistake. The No campaign made all of that irresponsible
confusion, absolutely capacious questions, rhetoric, and we fought back with make-believe characters, without considering that, if there is one thing that our people are used to, it’s listening to these types of characters. The people know that an actor from Globo is out of harm’s way, is part of the untouchable elite, is not there where firearms abound and it is not his child that is murdered. Those same days, I went to a funeral of a 22 year old girl, murdered by a firearm. She wasn’t the daughter of an actor. She was the child of a bricklayer.

Political situation and politization of the referendum
There are two lines of analysis on the theme of the political situation in which the referendum was held. Chronologically, the period began in early June – when Congressman Roberto Jefferson (PTB-RJ) stated in an interview that congressmen were receiving what he called the “mensalão” (payment for votes) of R$30,000.00 from the PT treasurer, Delúbio Soares – to October 23, 2005, the date of the referendum. The subject, however, took on a media dimension, especially after the National Congress opened a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) on the night of July 5th, to investigate the accusations of the congressman. The first line, therefore, identifies an association, in public opinion, between the federal government and the vote payment scandal, which was then fatal to the Yes front. Another argument follows the following line of reasoning, held by six of those interviewed: if the referendum – also, in the understanding that ended up being generalized among voters - was an initiative of the federal government and if the government stated that it is in favor of prohibiting guns sales, then a way of getting back at the government is to oppose its position. Antonio Rangel Bandeira, for example, stated in his interview, that the referendum was not actually about guns, but rather, against the government. The referendum had therefore become politicized:

The vote-buying scandal threw public opinion against Lula. The population in anger, frustrated with the PT government – which had betrayed its promises – thought that the referendum was a maneuver of the government to cover up its dirty work, as I heard countless students saying.

Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira also stated that he believed that the political situation helped defeat Yes and that the No vote, in addition to having manifested the desire of the majority of the population to maintain guns and ammunition sales, was a protest vote. “We did not comprehend”, he said in an interview, “the anger of the population with the government and with the situation in the country, which was in the midst of a CPI, and the government is saying vote Yes and those who no longer want this government, voted No”. Likewise, Rubem César Fernandes also shares the interpretation that the referendum became very dependent on an unfavorable atmosphere, and he goes further?

The only thing people talked about was that the government was corrupt, crisis in the institutions, horrible damage to the image of public life. I think that No was a vote of rejection of everything that was being discussed at that exact moment. If it had been a year earlier, in a more favorable period for Lula, with promises of hope for the future, the result certainly would have been different.

The second line of reasoning, also within the scope of the situation at the time, points to another problem of what we shall call a structural nature; This one deals with a determinant relation, in the perception of voters, between the negligence of the federal government and the appalling state of public security. To André Porto, Yes lost, firstly, because the electoral campaign began in the midst of a political scandal, “that happened, not just with any government, but with the PT government, which therefore caused “double disillusionment: disillusion with PT politicians and with the PT government who, in principle, were supposed to be the guardians of ethics. It became the vote-buying government, CPI live, 24 hours a day”. Furthermore, according to his statement in the interview, “the horror and frustration that Brazilians feel in relation to police and public security” would also weigh heavily on the voters, and was probably the second most important factor in explaining the defeat:

Our law enforcement is 90% corrupt. The police in Rio kill more than anywhere in the world. Even if citizens did not have the statistics, they have a perception of the rot within law enforcement. Combining, on the one hand, politicians and, on the other, the police, the population’s perception was that they had highjacked the public apparatus.

Law enforcement in Brazil is a source of nothing but stress. This rampant corruption also helped citizens vote No.
Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira identified one of the reasons behind the No propaganda campaigns’ success the fact that it exploited the disrepute of public security policies by the people very well; this popular sentiment “that everything is in chaos, the government doesn’t provide security, and moreover, it wants to take away people’s right to self-defense, they knew how to sell that idea”.

The unfavorable situation, also mentioned by Raul Jungmann as one of the explanations for No’s victory – “with the political crisis, the subject of the referendum was swept from the Brazilian agenda” – it also brought another adverse element:

People were desperate from the lack of security. Actually, they still are. So, in this context, without any improvements, without the government implementing an effective policy to crack down on criminals’ weapons, without data and information...
The Executive Branch was inoperative. What I’m trying to say here is if, for example, the Ministry of Justice had been more active, if it had conducted operations on borders, if it had implemented a real security policy...
The Executive Branch during this period might have initiated an aggressive policy to crack down on arms trafficking, closing borders, signing international agreements, etc. But this wasn’t done, although requested several times. The Ministry kept playing the same note, disarmament, disarmament, when additional measures should have been adopted.

Within the scope of analyses of the situation, Luiz Eduardo Soares maintained, in his interview, that the primary factor, especially relevant to Yes’ defeat was the fact that the PT has stopped functioning “as a symbolic-political guiding reference” and this had “an extraordinarily disorganizing implication on the ideas and processes of decision-making”. The population’s search for guidance in its leaders, he explained, is a normal cultural process and also takes place regarding moral questions. These characters – not only partisan political leaders, but men and women from Churches, religious traditions, entertainers, etc – act as aggregating centers, organizing social practices and guiding, in a convergent manner, the idea formation and decision-making processes.

According to his assessment, “the moral collapse of the PT had disqualified it to fulfill this role as a compass, as a guide”. And this opened the door for anything:

I heard on a single day, similar arguments in favor of No in defense of the MST and socialist revolution and in defense of rural landowners and the established order. The same day, and at times in the same room, I saw groups that, in some fashion, seemed to reproduce arguments of PSOL and PSTU and ultra-right wing organizations, with fascist discourses, supporting No with the same arguments of the type, “they want to take away my gun so that I can’t defend myself against revolutionaries” and “they want to take away my gun so that I don’t take part in the revolution”. The principle of private property, the principle of self-defense, were manipulated in function of opposing doctrines and distinct meanings. It was an extraordinary process of cultural invention, of interpretation of arguments, quite interesting for anthropological analysis, but terrible from the point of view of its practical implications.

Therefore, to the anthropologist and political scientist, the absence of political references resulted in confuses argument constructs that ended up favoring No. Yes, according to his explanation, “involved engagement, conviction and the defense of ideas that had to be supported”. No was simpler, because it only involved a categorical rejection. “In light of the very heterogeneous, ambivalent, complex, diffused, contradictory situation, it was easy to choose No, because it was less of a commitment, it required less, demanded less, in terms of affirmatively deciding”. Thus, as others interviewed agreed, the referendum, to Luiz Eduardo Soares, the referendum became a plebiscite, due to the political situation. “It was a moment in which the majority wished to say No to the government and the practice of corruption”. This generic vote – “against everything that’s going on” – also included a specific revulsion regarding “institutionalized law enforcement, as we know it in Brazil”. In his understanding therefore, what we had was “a No to state governments, to public security, to the federal government, to corruption and to law enforcement

Implications of the question of the referendum
The third thematic block gathers responses from those interviewed around the problem of the question of the referendum. We shall examine, for instance, two transcribed passages, respectively, from interviews with Rubem César Fernandes and Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira.
polls, until that time, had made the decision something distant to the public. There was no real decision to make: the person simply said that they were in favor of controlling firearms, that they were against firearms. The question of the referendum, however, was – am I in favor of prohibiting myself, my family, my children, to have a firearm? - this was new. This is a big difference and we had no idea regarding it. When the question in the polls transformed into the question – which each person would have to ask her or himself – of the referendum, everything changed, the equation changed and we hadn’t perceived what was going to happen. That’s the first point.

The idea [of the electoral campaign] was that people should say “Yes” to a society with less violence. It was to show guns as something bad. It was that one should say “No” to guns and “Yes” to life. But the question was complicated. You had to say “No” to guns but vote “Yes”. So, that was another complication.

Note that, while the first passage highlights the underlying decision-making to the question in the referendum – and that the interviewee understood that the voter did not want, for several reasons, to make the decision – the second passage deals with the subject from the standpoint of the publicity campaign, pointing out the contradiction between a already rooted concept throughout the disarmament campaign (No to guns) and a new concept (Yes to prohibiting sale of guns and ammunition). The responses of six of those interviewed ran in one or the other of these veins, or both.

Major Luiz Henrique Pires considered this the primary factor in Yes’ defeat. The question of the referendum, he said in the interview, “wasn’t clear, even explaining that Yes lost is confusing”. André Porto, on the other hand, assessed that “the disarmament campaign dynamics and those of the referendum were very different”, in other words, in the former, the issue was “opening a collection post and talking about the dangers of handguns, citizens didn’t have to take a stand, because it was all voluntary, nobody was imposing anything”. The referendum, in contrast, implied the adopting of a stand and this made it a problem, especially for Pentecostal churches because, according to him, “there are lots of military Pentecostals, lots of Pentecostal policemen, lots of Pentecostal criminals, or converted criminals”. The example presented by André Porto to illustrate these considerations was the case of the leadership of the Universal Church that “put forth a manifesto, published an article in their newsletter “Folha Universal”, declaring their support for the Yes vote, yet left pastors free to preach in favor of either Yes or No”, exactly because many of their faithful – military and law enforcement – “were clearly against Yes”. Hélio Parente lamented on the wording of the referendum question which, in his understanding, left room for doubts. At times, he said, people understood that a No vote was in favor of prohibition, at others, that it was Yes: “what at times seemed to be Yes, at another, seemed to be No”. Ariovaldo Ramos highlighted that during the entire time of the struggle for the Statute, “our slogan and chant was No, No, No”. Yet, in the referendum, the slogan could no longer be No and was changed to Yes. This meant, according to his own words that “we had to first deconstruct to then construct a new concept, and there was not enough time to do so”.

Falsely-based optimism: action of civil society leaders

The analysis of the actions of social movement leaders warranted the attention of three of the ten interviewed who, generally speaking, highlighted two negative aspects of said action: the erroneous assessment of the opinion poll results during the first half of 2005 and, as a result, the demobilization of these movements in relation to the referendum campaign. Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira stated that the poll results – showing that people easily said, “Yes, I’m against guns” – set those involved in the movement at ease. “We weren’t worried. The impression was that the campaign had already been won. We even discussed this internally, but the numbers were so strong, very high”. Helio Parente explained that leaders of civil society were deceived by the polls because they did not know of a solid bit of data from the Brazilian electoral experience: until the moment when they vote, the opinion of the population is dispersed, in polls, “they say whatever comes into their mind”. Only after the electoral propaganda began, according to the attorney, did voters begin to think about it and to define their vote. The big mistake, then, to him, was the fact that leaders of the Yes movement ignored this detail. Raul Jungmann confessed that, in the beginning, he was optimistic. He said that he knew it wouldn’t be easy “that the polls that were out there didn’t really indicate that we were going to win”. But when NGOs abandoned the “stage of discussions and decisions” because they felt, according to his words, “that everything was going well”, in light of the favorable
results in the polls, he perceived, “firstly, a profound weakening and restricting of the forces that formed the Yes front”.

In command here [in Congress] there was practically just Renan, myself, Renan’s assistants and my assistants, and at times, three people from Viva Rio and I am for Peace, and nobody else, to lead a campaign this size – the largest referendum in history – in a country this size.

When the NGOs decided to return, “the boat had already capsized”, in Jungmann’s words.

**Electoral Court and the regulations of the referendum**

Let us examine another example: the three responses that formed the thematic block on “Electoral Rules”. In his interview, Hélio Parente explained that the Electoral Court had two powers: that of judicator and administrative powers. In the latter, which deals with its regulating power, it erred, because it simply repeated rules in force for elections for positions in the Legislative and Executive branches, prohibiting donations from entities and associations that receive funds from abroad, or that would directly benefit from the law. NGOs therefore were hindered from acting in the campaign for the Yes vote. To the Electoral Law specialist,

one cannot have a public consultation on a given subject that affects people's lives, on a subject as delicate as that of public security, while blocking Brazilian social movements, blocking non-governmental organizations and, on the other hand, allowing commercial establishments, private companies, to do as they pleased, donating, placing banners and stickers, publishing articles in newspapers, etc. The playing field was uneven. When you make the playing field uneven, you ruin the poll.

Raul Jungmann, using the same line of arguments, commented the “straightjacket” the Yes campaign was in, from electoral rules, with words that denote a mixture of surprise and frustration that fell upon militant of the Yes front, soon after the rules were published.

When the pre-electoral process began, we had not even heard of the other Front. They made no speeches, they did not manifest themselves. They didn’t exist. And why? Because the legislation was very bad for us. Everything we did, and everyone we did it with, had a public agenda with them. They hired a law firm just to paralyze us. Every time we tried to do something, they took us to court. We couldn’t defend ourselves.

Rubem César Fernandes also perceived that the rules were absurd for a referendum, because they forbade the participation of society. According to him, “referendum is a situation where society makes a statement”, but the electoral rules, in contrast, “supposed that Yes was one party and No was another”. Therefore the Electoral Court mistakenly treated the referendum as if it were an election. “We started losing right there”, he lamented. To Hélio Parente, the October referendum should serve as a lesson to social movements. The role of the Electoral Court in the Brazilian democratic system is very important, according to him, and for this reason civil society must reflect on its role and publicize it. “Tomorrow”, the lawyer maintains, “these public consultations may become routine in the Brazilian democratic and political process, and social movements have to become competent in relation to them”.

**Did the communication media clarify things for voters?**

Two themes pointed out by interviewees bear a certain relationship between them. On one hand, we have the complexity of the subject of the referendum and on the other, the role of social communication media. As two of those interviewed that mentioned the former were not the same as those that pointed out the latter, we decided to maintain their specificities in order to define the theme, thereby inviting the reader to reflect on the question. Throughout the months of the campaign, Antônio Rangel Bandeira perceived that “a lot of people did not feel equipped to decide”, basically for two reasons: first, because they felt that the responsibility for the decision should have been with the Congress. “Listen, I voted for this congressman. Why doesn’t he settle this?”, was what was heard on a number of occasions. Moreover, according to him, there was not enough time to implement the activities – lectures, debates – to broaden understanding of voters regarding the Disarmament Statute itself and the significance of the referendum. According to his deposition:

In our timetable, we were to have had six months of debates or more, but the rules of the referendum took eight months. When we were finally able to vote on the rules,
there were practically only three months left, and only one month for the campaign. People were not enlightened, they did not understand the issue, this is a new issue in South America. The majority of people did not even relate guns to violence, they see a gun as a defensive weapon.

André Porto illustrated the idea of the complexity of the subject of the referendum with a narration on his lectures with religious people, university students, other students, workers, “throughout Brazil” when he – who considered himself endowed with “a good ability to convince” – only managed to demonstrate that Yes made much more sense, “after a couple of hours of intense conversations”. Furthermore, one had to “get the audience’s close attention and really be sharp” because the subject was, in fact, very complex. So we should ask ourselves: what did social communications media do to enlighten voters? Major Luiz Henrique Pires assesses that the press “helped very little”, especially in Rio de Janeiro, “always saying that the city is in a state of war”. Pastor Ariovaldo Ramos was more aggressive in his criticism. Saying that “the Brazilian press is something that cuts you to the heart”, he considered that “Veja” magazine committed “an inadmissible act”, “without the slightest ethical standard”. His assessment was that “that type of journalism is worse than the so-called ‘brown’ press” and that, in general, the press and electronic media as well, were ineffective. “This does not mean”, he stated, “that they should have taken sides, but, to have shown the facts, to have done reporting that helped people perceive what was going on, what was coming to the surface in Brazil”.

Role of the elites
If voters had had a media more committed to the social significance and ethical implications of information, therefore fulfilling its role of educating citizenry, would the result of the public consultation have been different? We cannot respond affirmatively, but we can reflect on the question, while we examine the role of Brazilian elites in the referendum, according to the appreciation of the director of the NGO, World Vision. The only one to venture that one possible explanation for the defeat of the Yes front was due to the ominous role of the elites, pastor Ariovaldo made no concessions as he explained his arguments. The radicalness of his thesis – that the average Brazilian tends to be conservative, at least on a certain level, and that this political feature was availed of, in the referendum, by actions of the elites – can be seen by reading a portion of his interview below:

In my opinion, a country is only underdeveloped if its elite is underdeveloped. IBOPE and Educational Action conducted a poll that showed that 75% of Brazilians are formal and functional illiterates. How is it possible to maintain 75% of a nation in formal or functional illiteracy? What nation will you build with these millions of Brazilians? What will you do with this people? When you look at these things, you perceive that we stand before an extremely selfish elite, deeply individualist, predatory, underdeveloped and genocidal.

The Brazilian elite is reactionary to the extreme. It cannot admit the slightest possibility of losing the smallest privilege, nor can it even talk about it. If there is any conversativism amongst average Brazilians, it is promoted by the elite and this was significant to the results of the referendum. The major weapon in the No propaganda was the message that a right was being usurped and that people would be left defenseless from criminals, two fallacies beyond measure, since no right was being usurped and nobody armed faces down criminals. They used common sense and frightened the people. Thus, the people’s fear, induced by the elites, was decisive. The first public opinion polls – when there was no manipulation, when there was no lobby of the armaments industries, when the elite’s interests were not yet being threatened, presented unanimous results: Brazilians did not want guns. People couldn’t stand any more killing. So, how is it that this changed? Through fear.

Inefficient electoral propaganda, an unfavorable situation in the country, a complicated question, the erroneous interpretation of the polls, electoral rules that favored the inequality between the two sides, media that failed to fulfill its role, the complexity of the issue, the role of the ruling elites. This is the list of responses to explain the defeat of the Yes vote in the assessment of our interviewees. The two most recurring themes and that therefore were put first on the list, were best summarized, probably, in this outburst by Congressman Raul Jungmann:

I think that the defeat was so complete, it was such a striking defeat that it indicates that the problem was not only a question of marketing. Actually, there was a big and very negative ambience. People wanted to strike back for the lack of security, people had a
whole bunch of “no’s” they wanted to throw back at us. But, without a shadow of a doubt, the direction, the marketing strategy was the greatest disaster, within the possible errors, of this campaign. We might even have lost anyway, but not in the way that we lost.

Lessons, victories and challenges
On November 8, 2005, the president of the Superior Electoral Court, Minister Carlos Velloso officially announced the final result of the referendum on the sale of firearms and ammunition, held on October 23: the option “no” had won, with 59,109,265 votes against 33,333,045 votes for the option “yes”. If, on the one hand, at that moment, these numbers were responsible for causing sadness and frustration of all those engaged in the disarmament struggle, on the other, it meant a new starting point, a new stage in a journey that our interviewees assure us they are willing to travel, now though, armed with the learning constructed throughout the referendum campaign. Fears? Yes. Almost all of those interviewed manifested their fears regarding the possibility of a retreat in the conquests regarding the arms culture in Brazil.

The “merchants of death”, as André Porto likes to call them, “are there with their chests puffed out, with their wings spread, trying to capitalize a supposed support against gun control policies”. According to the coordinator of MIR, there are some 17 bills of law to alter or simply propose the elimination of the Disarmament Statute. The hypothesis of it going off course or of the Statute not being implemented is also considered as a fear by Ariovaldo Ramos, Luiz Eduardo Soares, Luiz Henrique Pires, Mariana Montoro and Rubem César Fernandes. According to those interviewed there are several reasons for this concern. Luiz Eduardo Soares explains that the forces that fought for the Statute in Congress were “few and far between”, in the end united by a determined situation, “when the federal government, which was against the idea, ended up caving in, opportunistically, because public opinion pointed in that direction” and that social movements “are still precarious”. On the other hand, certain sectors that led the defense of the No option, according to him, were opportunist and quickly presented the interpretation that the population had said No to the Statute, which, to him, is not supported, unless one looks at empirical confirmation through measuring in polls. “It seems to me that, with these tests, these interpretations are unreal, unsustainable”. Nevertheless, “we must remain alert”, because:

There are topics that the most conservative and proto-fascists out of a sense of what is acceptable have kept in their file cabinets, that are coming back out, this time unabashedly and clearly. Topics such as reducing the age for penal liability, expanding and toughening jail sentences, a series of measures that were shelved and that are part of the permanent arsenal of conservatives begin to come to light, in the trails of this result. But, as the dispute is ongoing, the referendum is not over, insomuch as the interpretations of the result remain open and in dispute, I’d say that this is a game still being played. But it’s very worrying.

Mariana Montoro also sees the future of the Disarmament Statute with great concern, but considers that “this concern is what gives us strength to go on” and that the challenge now is to strengthen the Statute and make it well known and “fully implemented”. This is also the spirit of the 2006 campaign that André Porto is organizing for Viva Rio:

This year’s campaign, “Religions for Disarmament – Enforce the Statute” we are again thinking of holding workshops in 15 state capitals, teaching priests, pastors, religious leaders, religious volunteers, what they can do in their states to pressure for enforcement of the Statute. It’s like a sort of checklist: has the state purchased the DNA reader of the gun? Has the Public Security Department and its law enforcement officers, individually registered the munitions given to soldiers and policemen with the munitions marker? Questions like that. The project will include vigils, public hearings, lobbying, one congressman at a time, so that the Statute will be protected against any legal or political attack made on it.

Ariovaldo Ramos also feels it necessary and urgent “to make the Statute known, even too well known” and that civil society organizations gather to prepare and put in practice, mid- to long-term action plans. Lamenting the absence of joint strategies by NGOs, he as president of World Vision, left his proposal at the end of the interview:

We must get together – I am for Peace, World Vision, Viva Rio and so many others that were engaged in the struggle to end gun sales in the country and have been working for peace – we must get together to plan 10
years of activities. If we do not conduct a major grassroots mobilization, we will roll-back many of the conquests in this country. We are watching an orchestrated action in this direction and we’re not doing anything, because we even have our differences regarding everything that took place. We cannot, however, throw in the flag that we’ve raised these last 30, 40, 50 years, all of us who fought against the dictatorship, against the capitalist invasion, against the destruction of our national culture, all of us who are fighting to build a nation. We must think 10 years ahead, at least, and go back and mobilize the grassroots, because the gun lobby will be back.

The Executive Coordinator of Viva Rio, Rubem César Fernandes, when he revealed his fears in the interview regarding future obstacles to implementation of the Statute – “this will still depend on intention, will - and will in Brazil is quite volatile, very unstable” – he explained that currently there are two challenges: institutional and cultural. The former is related to the creation of the instruments needed to produce information on firearms: how many are out there, where they are, how they circulate, etc. “To really control, this objective is a very big institutional challenge”, he stated. The conceptual challenge is to maintain the movement to stigmatize firearms. His concern is that public opinion of guns, as something harmful, dangerous - an image constructed in the disarmament campaign – has been compromised after the referendum. Probably it is for this reason that Antônio Rangel Bandeira defends the return to the voluntary arms collection campaign, as a form of maintaining the disarmament issue on the public agenda. The proposal, being negotiated with the Ministry of Justice, he said, is to conduct the campaign during one month out of every year “as many countries do”. Regarding implementation of the Statute, Rangel Bandeira revealed that there are understandings “even with representatives of the forces of the center-right” to conduct a national campaign. He believes that conditions exist, now, to “destroy this large No front and construct a large front for the Statute to be implemented”. Raul Jungmann was just as, if not more, optimistic. In addition to maintaining that the Statute, in Congress, is protected against any bill that tries to disfigure it, the congressman assured us that the relation between Brazilians and guns will never be the same because “we broke the naturality” of this relation. “People now know that having a gun at home is not like having a blender, a microwave oven, it is something, for which it is fundamental – and I think this is the image that remained – that control over it is necessary”.

Enforcement of the Disarmament Statute – in fact, the major concern of the majority of those interviewed – cannot, however – be disconnected from studies and activities related to Public Security. This is, according to André Porto and Rubem César Fernandes, one of the major lessons of the referendum. “You cannot address the issue of firearms without including it on a broader agenda of Public Security”, the latter stated. Thus, Raul Jungmann has recommended the need for an agenda focusing on two tactical fronts: the codification and implementation of the Statute and a Proposal for a Constitutional Amendment (PEC) “that will provide money to the National Security Fund”. He is of the opinion that “there is no national security policy the way things stand”, that is, without funding.

Currently there is no denying that the Disarmament Statute is one of the most advanced laws in the world and the Disarmament Campaign surpassed the most optimistic estimates, on a national scale. Antônio Rangel Bandeira does not hide his pride in having participated “in the most successful voluntary weapons collection campaign ever”. In his own words, “we touched people’s hearts, they really came and turned in their weapons, they want to continue doing so, and continue coming to Viva Rio to do so”. Therefore, for some of those interviewed, the Yes defeat did not diminish the prior conquests and did not only signify an outlook for the future full of uncertainty and fear. Raul Jungmann highlights that the referendum campaign “was a great educational process” and that perhaps, sometime in the future, “people realize how much of this remained in the minds of children and adolescents”. But, it is the assessment of attorney Hélio Parente that best represents this positive perception. And it with this that we lead the reader to the conclusion of this brief essay.

From the sociological point of view, having almost 40 million Brazilians saying they don’t want guns is a very solid piece of data, very valuable. Perhaps no other country in the world has such consolidated data. What happened was truly a research study: almost 40 million Brazilians do not want guns at all. You cannot walk away feeling defeated with a quantity of votes of such magnitude.
Conclusion
We will therefore go over, once again, the set of statements that synthesize the possible explanations for the Yes defeat in the October referendum, provided by André Porto, Antônio Rangel Bandeira, Ariovaldo Ramos, Gustavo Carvalho de Oliveira, Helio Parente, Luiz Eduardo Soares, Luiz Henrique Pires, Mariana Montoro, Raul Jungmann and Rubem César Fernandes.

1. The Yes electoral propaganda was inefficient because it adopted an erroneous strategy or, simply, because it had no strategy.
2. The referendum was converted into a plebiscite regarding the federal government, associated, in the perception of the majority of voters, to corruption and being negligent regarding public security.
3. The question of the referendum favored the doubt, or signified a decision that voters were not willing to make.
4. The Yes movement demobilized, due to the very favorable results in opinion polls prior to the free electoral propaganda.
5. Electoral rules were inadequate for a referendum, which ended up compromising the Yes vote.
6. The social communication media failed to fulfill their role of informing and clarifying.
7. The subject of the referendum was complex and voters did not feel sufficiently informed.
8. Brazilian elites induced voters to vote No.

Beyond an examination of conscience to recognize and expunge errors, the explanations of the interviewees on the failure of the Yes campaign may be useful to social movements engaged in creating and consolidating a culture of peace in our society. In the final analysis, they point out and reiterate two urgent fronts: joint actions and partnerships with religious organizations and municipal and state entities to effectively execute a coercive policy against gun circulation – that is, the return to the struggle, now for implementation of the Disarmament Statute – and a working agenda, in conjunction with society and federal government agencies, to render feasible structural reforms in the area of Public Security.
1 - In its full version, Article 35 establishes that "it is forbidden to buy or sell firearms and ammunition throughout the country, except to the entities described in art. 6 of this Law". Section 1 determined that "this provision, to enter into force, will depend on approval by means of a public referendum, to be held in October 2005".

2 - The poll heard 2110 voters, published by Datafolha on July 21, 2005, informing that 80% of those interviewed defended prohibition of guns and ammunition sales, while 17% had a contrary opinion.

3 - Interview with Rubem César Fernandes granted to Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, on 01/11/2006.

4 - Interview with Luiz Eduardo Soares granted to Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, on 01/26/2006.

5 - Interview with Antonio Rangel Bandeira granted to Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, on 01/10/2006.

6 - The full text of the articles in question and their alterations is as follows:

   Law no. 10.826, of December 22, 2003 (Disarmament Statute) Art. 29. Authorizations for carrying firearms already granted will expire in 90 (ninety) days after publication of this Law.

   Sole paragraph. The bearer of the authorization with expiration date superior to 90 (ninety) days may renew it, at the Federal Police, under the conditions of articles 4, 6 and 10 of this Law, within the space of 90 (ninety) days after its publication, with no cost to the petitioner.

   Alteration: Law no. 10.884, of June 17, 2004

   Art. 1 The initial term of the deadlines described in articles 29, 30 and 32 of Law no 10.826, of December 22, 2003, will begin to be counted from the date of the publication of the decree that provides regulations thereto, not surpassing , to take effect, of the deadline of June 23, 2004.

   Art. 30. Those possessing or owning unregistered firearms must, under penalty of being held criminally liable, within the space of 180 (one hundred and eighty) days after publication of this Law, request registration, presenting the invoice of purchase of proof of licit origin of possession, by means of proof admitted by law.

   Alteration: Law no 11.118, of May 19, 2005

   Art. 3 The deadlines described in articles 30 and 32 of Law no 10.826, of December 22, 2003, with the wording provided by Law no 10.884, of June 17, 2004, are hereby extended, with the final deadline being June 23, 2005.

   Art. 31. Those possessing or owning firearms purchased regularly may, at any time, deliver them to the Federal Police, receiving a receipt and compensation, under the terms of the regulations of this Law.

   Art. 32. Those possessing or owning unregistered firearms may, within the space of 180 (one hundred and eighty) days after publication of this Law, deliver them to the Federal Police, receiving a receipt and, presuming good faith, may receive compensation, under the terms of the regulations of this Law.

   Sole paragraph. In the case described in this article and in art. 31, weapons received will be listed in a specific registry and, after preparation of the report, will be sent, within the space of 48 (forty eight) hours, to the Command of the Army for destruction, their use or reuse for any purpose being prohibited.

   Alteration: Law no 11.191, of November 10, 2005


7 - Interview with André Porto granted to Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, on 01/16/2006.

8 - Interview with Ariovaldo Ramos granted to Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, on 01/23/2006.

9 - Interview with Mariana Montoro granted to Maria Aparecida Rezende Mota, on 01/23/2006.


11 - Full text of the Decree:

   Be it known that the National Congress approved, and I Renan Calheiros, President of the Federal Senate, under the terms of article 48, section XVIII, of the Internal Bylaws, do enact the following Legislative Decree no 780, of 2005.

   The National Congress does decree:

   Article 1 It is hereby authorized, under the terms of article 49, section XV, of the Federal Constitution, a nationwide referendum, to be organized by the Superior Electoral Court, under the terms of Law no 9.709, of November 18, 1998, to consult the voters on the sale of firearms and ammunition throughout the country.

   Article 2 The referendum provided for in this Legislative Decree shall be held on the first Sunday in the month of October 2005, and will consist in the following question: "should the sale of firearms and ammunition be prohibited in Brazil?"

   Sole paragraph. If the simple majority of national voters manifest affirmatively to the question posed, the prohibition described in the Disarmament Statute will enter into force on the date of the publication of the referendum results by the Superior Electoral Court.

   Article 3 This Legislative Decree will enter into force on the date of its publication.

   Federal Senate, on July 7, 2005

   Senator Renan Calheiros

   President of the Federal Senate

   (Published in the DOU, Section I, on 07.08.2005, p. 01).

12 - The Parliamentary Front for a Brazil Without Weapons included senators Renan Calheiros (PMDB-AL), president; Luiz Otávio (PMDB-PA); Gerson Camata (PMDB-ES); César Borges (PFL-BA); Demóstenes Torres (PFL-GO); Tasso Jereissati (PSDB-CF); Arthur Virgílio (PSDB-AM); Aloizio Mercadante (PT-SP); Valmir Amaral (PP-DF); Patrícia Saboya (no party-CF); Marcelo Crivella (PL-RJ) and federal deputies Raul Jungmann (PPS-PE), general-secretary; Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh (PT-SP); João Paulo Cunha (PT-SP); Maria Lúcia Cardoso (PDB-MG); Alberto Goldman (PSDB-SP); Jorgle Gomes (PSB-SP); Antônio Carlos Magalhães Neto (PFL-BA); Fernando Gabeira (PV-RJ); João Fontes (PDT-SE); Luiz Antonio de Medeiros (PL-SP) and Renildo Calheiros (PCdoB-PE). The Parliamentary Front for the Right to Legitimate Defense included the following: Senator Juventão da Fonseca (PDT-MS) and congressmen Alberto Fraga (PFL-RJ), president; Luiz Antonio Fleury (PTB-SP); Abieldo Lupion (PFL-PR); Onyx Lorenzoni (PFL-RS), general coordinator; Coronel Alves; Corporal Júlio; Josias Quintal (PMB-RJ); Pompeu de Mattos (PDT-RS); Captain Wayne (PSDB-GO), coordinator of the Midwest Region; Josué Bengtson (PTB-PA), coordinator of the North Region; Inaldo Leitão (PL-PR), coordinator of the Northeast Region; Jair Bolsonaro (PP-RJ), coordinator of the Southeast Region and Enio Bacci (PDT-RS), coordinator of the South Region.)

Introduction
The empirical basis of this article is taken from material that circulated on the Internet during the campaign for the referendum on arms trade, which took place in Brazil on the 23rd of October, 2005, and resulted in a landslide NO vote against arms trade prohibition. My argument hereby is that the over-optimistic expectations on enhancing democracy via new communication technologies, which are dominant in the literature on this issue, express a wishful thinking projection, which must be contrasted against the backdrop of concrete experience. The case of the aforementioned referendum implies that the impact exerted by the Internet on political dynamics shows a far more complex reality, and that alongside the positive Internet aspects there are also negative ones, such as its potential to destroy the public sphere.

The libertarian expectations raised by the Internet resemble the neoclassic economy view on the market: the freer people are to act without any external interferences or regulations, the better the results. Our conclusions are critical of such a viewpoint, and are geared to a different perspective: the public sphere, as well as the market, demands a public effort to construct a collective realm with minimum regulations, if possible by the users themselves, so that it may function in a responsible manner and is kept free from the colonization of individuals or groups, often related to economic power and political marketing, who manipulate the Internet language and use it with no commitment to civic values or democratic fair play, under the veil of anonymity.

Internet and democracy
The Internet was welcomed by the vast majority of social scientists and policy makers as if it offered a unique opportunity to renew democracy in general, and in particular, enabled extensive participation of people in politics. The www and the e-mail would allow for the emergence of new interrelating mechanisms between public institutions and citizens, favoring the transparency of public budgets now accessible on-line, facilitating errands and claims regarding services, enabling new forms of organization as regards public services, and making information available to the general public.

Moreover, new communication technologies would ensure new forms of horizontal civilian participation, which are not dependent on major political organizations and mass communication means. Eventually, each individual could actively participate in the construction of a truly democratic public opinion sphere. The Internet would be particularly relevant for the development of civil society, as it would permit the creation of flexible networks, fast mobilization for ad-hoc campaigns, dissemination of alternative information, and furthermore, it would facilitate the formation of national and international networks of activists not associated to traditional political structures.

Negri and Hardt advanced a revolutionary vision on the role of the Internet, which is seen as a new alternative realm of the crowd (broad conception referring to every potential questioning of imperialistic power). According to Negri and Hardt the Internet “… is the prime example of a democratic network structure. An indefinite and potentially unlimited number of people like us, interconnected and communicating without any central control whatsoever…. Such a democratic model is what Deleuze and Guattari call rizoma, neither a hierarchic nor a centralized network structure.”

* Sociology Professor, IFCS/UFRJ, and director of the Centro Edelstein de Pesquisas Sociais – Edelstein Center for Social Research, (www.bernardosorj.com).
I am grateful to the members of the work group organized at ISER to analyze the referendum results, as well as for comments made on the preliminary version by Pablo Sorj, John Wilkinson, Bila Sorj and Joel Edelstein. Obviously, none of them holds any responsibility for the possible errors or limitations found in this article.
The potentially negative effects of the Internet were generally associated with the use of the web by organized crime or terrorists. Also, there has been growing concern over authoritarian states attempting to control Internet content, even counting on the support of major system and search engines providers, such as Cisco and Google. China, Cuba and some Muslim states are among the countries posing such a threat. In addition, the so-called “war on terrorism” has recently led democratic governments to clampdown on control over content circulating on the web.

Some scholars begun to question the role played by this new means of communication in bringing new life to politics. The first generation of such works was based on the “traditional” concept of social link, which could only effectively be instituted through personal contact among the people. According to these authors, the new virtual sociability severely reduces face-to-face interaction, deconstructing the formation of the agora, impairing the foundations of the public sphere and increasing the possibility of state control over the population.

Republic.com, a book by Cass R. Sunstein, stands out among the new generation of studies analyzing social processes in progress, however, lacking systematic data. The author argues that the Internet may generate a republic of solipsists, people who only access information that they are interested in avoiding debate, which is typical in the public sphere. The Internet would favor their tendency to surf websites where information and issues could be selected a priori according to their individual interests only, thus radicalizing their standpoints due to lack of knowledge, touch or interaction with conflicting information and stances.

Peter Levine refers to five potential risks posed by the Internet: less access, use and content production by the poverty stricken; a severe drop in the number of face-to-face social relationships, thus undermining the construction of solid social links; a tendency towards group self-isolation, out of touch with diverse standpoints and public debate; internet users becoming mere product consumers, including of information and beliefs; destruction of individual and group privacy, as well as internet users turned into mere e-mail addressees, that is to say, address lists organized according to the interests of service providing/selling organizations.

Further analyses stress the impact of the Internet on “old fashioned” communication means: newspapers and television. Whereas television seems to be undergoing a digital revolution, which endlessly multiplies the number of channels available and becomes ever more interactive, newspapers are suffering a significant decrease in the number of readers (who consist mostly of older age-groups) and issues. Information is sought more and more on the Internet, not only through the newspapers’ websites themselves, but also on blogs, which nowadays amount to millions. Even television, which during its golden days threatened newspapers, would now be losing ground as the main news source.

If this whole process has had any beneficial impact - resulting in the breaking down of the old mass media monopoly - it has also tended to marginalize a central player in the democratic system, that is, newspapers which historically became journalistic benchmarks as regards trustworthy information, which the public could refer to. Still many believe that in time, the growing number of blogs could possibly undergo a screening process, resulting in some of them emerging as real sources of serious and reliable information.

A brief incursion into the bibliography on e-political marketing

Viral marketing (where the concept “viral” has no negative connotations) “...refers to marketing techniques which exploit already existing social networks in order to produce an exponential increase of brand awareness, in a process which resembles an epidemic outbreak. The definition of viral marketing was originally coined to name a practice carried out by several free e-mail service providers, who add advertisements to messages sent to their users. Supposedly, if an advertisement reaches a “susceptible” user, such a user will be “infected” (that is, he/she will open an account) and then this user will be able to “infect” other susceptible users. Each infected user on average sends e-mails to more than one susceptible user (that is, the basic reproductive rate is more than one). Standard epidemiological results show that the number of infected users will grow according to a logistic curve, whose first segment is exponential”.

Although it is considered illegal and companies and institutions do not acknowledge it, SPAM (non requested e-mails, sent under false sender names or by senders that maintain no relations whatsoever with the addressees, through e-mail listings that feature millions of users, obtained in underhand ways and sold illegally on the market) has become an important tool for political communication. In fact, viral marketing and SPAMs have been adopted by all
advertising and political marketing companies. It is possible to consider SPAMs and Hoaxes as contemporary forms of traditional rumor. They are different from the latter due to the way and speed in which they can be disseminated. A rumor is a short and simple message conveyed by word of mouth, whereas SPAMs and Hoaxes can contain a lot more information and even images. They can be more effective, but also more easily neutralized by means of counter SPAMs and Hoaxes transmitted almost simultaneously.

Studies on the use of the Internet in political processes are still scarce, although several papers on new communication technologies regarding elections particularly emphasize the role played by cell phones in message sending, as occurred in recent elections in Spain, Hungary9 and India.

In an article about the use of SPAMS by the extreme right wing in the political campaign in Germany, Alan Connor remarks that many SPAMs are methodically elaborated, despite their apparent simplicity. They are made up in such a way, that when they reach an addressee they seem to have already passed through many users; they are always written in informal language ("my friend", "colleague", "dear...") to show that they are not related to an official source, they even include common spelling mistakes, as if they had been written by "someone like us". Such SPAMs usually call the readers' attention to some important "fact" that they should know about, (pretending to help readers so that "they do not get fooled") and many times these messages are linked to sites where the piece of news "can be corroborated" (usually they hold links to big magazines or newspapers that have no relation whatsoever with the content of the message). Many readers, impressed with the content, forward such e-mails to friends and acquaintances, which makes the information seem to be even more legitimate for those who receive it.

One of the more successful SPAMs, which has circulated on the Internet for several years now, "informs" that school books in the USA would not regard the Amazon region as being part of the Brazilian map anymore and shows "photos" and texts (with several English spelling errors) supposedly extracted from such school books. I have received this SPAM periodically, sent to me by university colleagues. This makes us conclude and worry about the fact that people tend to candidly rely on messages that confirm their prejudices, regarding them as trustworthy. They are then led to validate and disseminate such information, without making any efforts to verify the contents.

The book by Joe Trippi11 on the Howard Dean campaign in the primaries when he ran for Democratic Party candidate to the presidency of the USA, is one of the very first attempts to analyze the impact of the Internet on an election process. Trippi states that besides playing a traditional role, such as raising funds and distributing campaign material, Dean’s campaign on the internet was revolutionary as far as blogs and communities spontaneously organized themselves on the Internet to support the campaign “Dean for America”, which greatly improved the candidate’s position in the poles. Trippi sustains that the internet, despite the unequal access due to income, will enable the breaking down of big donors’ and economic lobbies’ control over political campaigns.

Internet use was of great importance in the last US presidential campaign, particularly due to banners placed in widely visited sites, which were useful both to raise funds and to undermine rivals’ campaigns. According to Michel Bassik12 the banners that produced best results were those placed on websites where users usually spend a longer time looking for banal information, like sports and weather sites. The author concludes that political marketing specialists still have not discovered the Internet’s potentials, nor have they assumed the need to review the use of traditional media, given the impact that the Internet has exerted on them.

The referendum

Despite the fact that most of the Brazilian people do not possess arms and have no intention of acquiring them, which in principle should favor the vote for disarming the population, the proposal to impose a ban on arms trade was rejected by a huge two thirds of the votes. The decisive factor for such a result was probably the government’s unsatisfactory security policies and the consequent sensation of insecurity and helplessness felt by the population. Campaign arguments certainly exerted a specific impact; however, the people’s disposition to cast a protest vote was possibly decisive in making them ignore the YES campaign arguments.

Political systemic factors have been fundamental, as they undermined the YES vote against the prohibition of arms trade; but undoubtedly media campaigns exerted a relevant impact, although its relative weight is hard to assess. The publicity of the official campaigns stressed, on the one hand, the right of the people to acquire arms vis-a-vis a State unable to ensure public security, and
on the other hand, that guns are inefficient when confronting potential aggressors, as well as they are harmful against human lives. People who actively participated in the campaign share the sensation that the exchange and circulation of “non official” information via the internet played an important role in the defeat of the YES vote. The importance of the internet in the referendum campaign was relevant due to various factors. Firstly, between 15% y 20% of the Brazilian population have access to the Internet (considering access both from home and work, the latter being difficult to quantify). Such percentages increase if one considers communication among those who have access to the web and those who do not. Secondly, a large part of the population had not assumed any definite stance until the very date of the referendum. The people took a long time to take notice of what the vote was actually about. However, during the few campaign weeks, awareness of the ongoing debate was remarkable. Thirdly, the referendum was not at all related to public personalities or parties, towards which the people had established any previous loyalty or support for (or rejection to). Finally, the referendum favored the debate by presenting a simple bipolar choice: voting for or against legal arms trade. The available empirical material does not allow us to evaluate the specific impact of the internet referendum campaign. However, material covering voters’ predisposition shows that many of the arguments justifying the NO vote did not originate in the official campaign, but were inspired by the standpoints that circulated on the web.

The campaign and the websites
Both the referendum results and the opinions of those who participated in the campaign, even the opinions of those who worked for the YES campaign, demonstrate the fact that the NO campaign via e-mails was more successful. Why?
The campaign contents on both official websites presented arguments very similar to those broadcast on radio and TV programs. Both were used to offer their activists arguments and materials that might be reproduced as propaganda booklets or signs. The NO website (http://www.votonao.com.br/) was particularly simple, it even reproduced several components of the YES website. The website consisted of the following sections: “Why vote NO”, with a list of 6 different arguments; “News”, which contained news-items or articles previously published in newspapers; “Statistics”, where only a table with data from other countries was shown. It was briefly stated that there is no correlation whatsoever between the number of murders in those countries and the number of households with guns; “Articles”, generally extracted from newspapers, some of which were written by intellectuals, well known journalists or politicians (who were not household names); “Popular Opinion”, with texts supposedly written by “the people”; “True Stories”, with texts about parents whose children had been murdered by robbers, who, despite the fact that they did not own guns and did not intend to own them, defended the right of the people to obtain arms; links to other websites, most of them from the USA; “Do your own campaign”, with guidelines on how to collaborate with the campaign; “Cards and wall papers”, showing illustrations favoring the NO vote, consisting of variations of the Brazilian flag as a backdrop. The site included access to TV and radio programs.

Another practically semi-official website was sponsored by the Rede da Cidadania da Associação Nacional dos Proprietários e Comerciantes de Armas (ANPCA), - People’s Network of the National Arm Owners and Traders Association, the main supporter and financer of the NO campaign. This website was a lot more aggressive, and on its first pages showed the following editorials:
- Every Man for Himself! – Why Do Disarmament Supporters Only Talk about Murders?
- Jews and Disarmament. A Warning for the Israeli Minority in Brazil.
- The Myth of a Disarmed Society, or the Primer on Utopia • Free Drugs and Prohibit Arms. Both Theses Always Walk Hand in Hand.
- Another Childish Prank by Garotinho (Governor of Rio de Janeiro State, whose name means “little kid” in Portuguese). An Example of Public Security Policy.
- Brain-Washing. A Message to the Young.
- Who is interested in Disarmament? A Brief Explanation for the Unwary.
- Ask the People. Certain Opinion Polls do Bother.
- Back to Dictatorship. A Further Step towards Totalitarianism.
- Get Ready for Confiscation! The Next Campaign.
- Missing Aurora! Was the “Wild West” Actually Wild?
- Gloomy Horizon. Prophetic Editorial from
The YES campaign website (www.referendosim.com.br) was disseminated through other websites, generally belonging to NGOs which publicly declared their support for the prohibition of arms trade. However, the legislation prohibited the participation in the referendum of organizations which receive foreign support (the case of most NGOs). This inhibited their participation and led to the judicial order closing temporarily one of the sites of a leading NGO. Aside from featuring sections similar to those of the NO website, the YES website also featured thorough information on violence and the use of guns in Brazil and lists of names of companies, religious institutions and women’s organizations that supported the ban on guns trade. If one compared both websites, one would think that the YES vote was bound for victory. It counted on the support of most of civil society organizations, of many businesspeople and it featured arguments solidly supported by facts; whereas the NO campaign only represented one specific group – the arms manufacturers, traders and owners –, featuring arguments that lacked relevant factual support.

The YES website was constantly attacked by hackers, who often succeeded in blocking it. This obliged the people responsible for the website to transfer it to a more secure server based in the USA; nevertheless, the site continued to be attacked, which at its peak reached 9,000 attacks per hour.

On the last week of the campaign the YES website welcomed over 30 thousand visits a day, reaching 36,341 hits on October 19th, 2005 (unfortunately, such information regarding the NO website is not available). This is undoubtedly a low number of visits, considering that the 30 million Brazilian Internet users were going to vote on the referendum, except those under sixteen.

The campaign: e-mails and SPAMS

Both campaigns were supported by Internet users who sent e-mails to their own e-mail address lists. It is difficult to evaluate and follow up “private” campaigns and their impacts. So, we will focus on SPAM campaigns on a larger scale and consequently on e-mails that can be easily tracked.

The YES campaign was carried out by the same group of people that organized the YES website. It consisted of a daily e-mail (YES-Express), whose basic language coincided with the one used on the website. Given its institutional format, the YES-Express anticipated its content; it lacked the “something new” kind of appeal that SPAMs from no obvious senders featured. The YES-Express mailing list, consisted of 15,000 e-mail addresses at the beginning of the campaign, and reached 30,000 e-mail addresses by the end of the campaign. It was made up of e-mail addresses of people who supported and were close to the NGO Viva Rio. The number of e-mail addresses was extremely low and somehow redundant: it represented the universe of people who already supported the cause.

The number of e-mails received by the YES website, about 200 to 300 a day, was indeed far too low, which possibly reflected the lack of enthusiasm and activism on the part of those who supported the ban on arms trade. A few internet users supporting the YES vote carried out there own private campaigns with their own texts or texts extracted from the press, but this only involved a very limited number of people.

During the campaign, a big private company decided to send an e-mail to its mailing list of over one million e-mail addresses supporting the YES vote, repeating the central arguments put forward by the official campaign. Other NGOs also transmitted e-mails supporting the YES Campaign. The case of Greenpeace stands out, whose cyber-bulletin supporting the YES campaign reached over seven hundred thousand individuals, which shows an organization that certainly has command over the use of communication means.

Differently from the people who do not own guns, gun owners and traders were indeed a committed group of activists. Although they are a minority of the population (less than 10%), this group really made a strenuous effort during the referendum campaign via the Internet, spreading SPAMs elaborated by the NO campaign.

The NO campaign was mainly carried out through SPAMs sent to mailing lists that consisted of hundreds of thousands, or even millions of internet users. We cannot prove that these SPAMs were elaborated by the NO campaign committee, but the quantity and quality of such SPAMs strongly suggest that they were financed. Many of these SPAMs were translated from materials originally written in English, which follow the same argument line globally inspired by the National Rifle Association (NRA) of the United States. The Brazilian referendum on arms trade was
regarded as a very significant episode by the NRA. As their spokesman, Andrew Arulanandam, put it: "We view Brazil as the opening salvo for the global gun control movement. If gun control proponents succeed in Brazil, America will be next".\textsuperscript{18}

The NO vote SPAM campaign started in September, and it reproduced the characteristics of the German campaign, that is, personal e-mails ("Let’s reflect on this together", "I changed my mind"), which gave the impression of having already circulated among many users who thought the messages were relevant and consequently decided to forward them. As mentioned above, this type of SPAM, because it is apparently non institutional, is generally very aggressive and seems to be sincere and legitimate given the personal tone of righteous indignation, although they often contain information which is hard to verify. This strongly suggests that the apparently non-institutional nature of these SPAMs makes them exert a stronger impact than explicitly institutional propaganda. Besides, only the latter appears as propaganda, which makes the reader suspicious about it.

Some of the NO campaign SPAMs, sustained that in case the ban on arms trade were passed, Brazil would not be able to export weapons anymore, because there would be a law in vigor determining that products whose trade is forbidden in the country cannot be exported. This is obviously senseless information, because even if the ban on arms trade were sanctioned, weapons would still be sold to the Armed Forces and public security forces. Even so, I was impressed by the number of “well-informed” middle class people I talked to who thought this piece of information was trustworthy (in some of its versions, this SPAM “informed” that the principal interested party in the arms trade ban was Globo Networks, as they would be about to close a deal with a German gun manufacturer, through which Globo would become their exclusive importer in Brazil).

A typical SPAM example featured a revolver and a condom, along with the following question: “What do you prefer to use in case of rape?”. Another NO campaign SPAM, which was extremely influential, showed images of the Nazi concentration camps as a back drop, with texts that held no relation to the images whatsoever, presenting distorted “facts”, where disarmament was related to a series of different massacres and genocides, regardless of any logic or chronology; political facts that took place in the 1920s were related to facts that took place decades later. The ANPCA (Associação Nacional de Proprietários e Comerciantes de Armas - National Association of Arm Owners and Traders) also used the image of Hitler, which appeared in a poster where the dictator is performing the Nazi salute, with a text demoralizing the YES vote. Some other SPAMs tried to demoralize personalities who supported the YES vote featuring photos that distorted their images, associating them to historical personalities, such as Hitler and Stalin. In general, the NO vote SPAMs related those who supported the YES vote to old Fascists, Communists or else to those who had defended the Brazilian military dictatorship. In sum, NO vote SPAMS abused conspiratorial, disqualifying, miss-informing, personally offending and fear raising tactics. The use of such a language, as aforementioned, was facilitated by the internet: those messages appeared as being “personal”, thus the style was one of strong “indignation” and “denunciation”.

**Conclusions: Internet, democracy and political marketing**

The internet Yes campaign was particularly weak. It lacked strategic coordination with the YES TV and radio campaigns; it simply reproduced the messages broadcast by these two media. Moreover, it did not capture the potentials and particular language of the new medium. The YES campaign was undermined by the NO activists’ efficient use of the internet. The campaign also made evident certain weaknesses on the part of the NGOs. They are very fragmented, and despite the fact that most of them have been using the internet for years now, they do not possess numerically relevant mailing lists. Neither do they cooperate effectively with each other in a network fashion, so as to reach a wider public. As aforementioned, the only exemption was Greenpeace, who managed a far more advanced communication technology as compared to local NGOs.

Used to working with people that sympathize with their campaigns, NGOs use a self-pleasing, or rather self-referred language directed to people who already lean towards their discourse and/or intellectual style. Brazilian NGOs are absolutely unprepared to carry out political campaigns where their opponent takes recourse to all possible schemes in order to disqualify them. Meanwhile, the NO campaign activists were united and knew how to exploit the different potentials of each means of communication, The YES campaign just reproduced the “controlled” language of traditional media. Possibly, a great part of the spurious messages used
by the NO campaign played only a secondary role in the general context. The intelligent mobilization of the people’s feelings of insecurity and fear, given the faulty and unsatisfactory public security policies, was enough to trigger the NO vote. However, the referendum experience may happen again in the future, and that brings us to a broader issue, which is the Internet as public sphere and its impact on the dynamics of democracy, and more specifically to the question of how to confront an aggressive SPAM campaign without leaving our ethical posture aside. The emergence of a new means of communication demands a strenuous effort to reflect upon the role it plays within the public sphere. The public sphere has never been a homogeneous realm. On the contrary, it has always been multifaceted and formed by various layers of different groups and organizations, most of these being rather self-centered, be it trade unions or religious, political, Masonic organizations, etc. The new public sphere found on the Internet tends to jeopardize the relatively “reserved” character of the aforesaid organizations, retracing the borders between the public and the private. For instance, what is ORKUT19? A private space for exchanges among individuals with common interests, or is it rather a public information bank, even used by companies to find out about the individual profile of prospect employees?

The transformation of the public sphere caused by the Internet is a process under way, which will surely demand further and ongoing research. In another paper20, we sustained that the end of communism and of politics centered on class conflict, jointly with the trends towards individualization and social fragmentation, plus current political marketing techniques, have brought to an end the polarization between ideologies, which reflected political conflicts in terms of opposition among social interests. In this new scenario, political parties tend to lean towards the center, and new utopias would then be constructed by NGOs, whose discursive axis is the defense of human rights. Such a discourse, which appears as demanding public policies from the State, leads to political dynamics where all interests would compromise around a consensual standpoint regarding the minimum that every individual should be entitled to.

Chantal Mouffe21, in a parallel argument, writes about the end of politics, because politics could only take place if we acknowledge that the construction of collective identities is build up on conflict and opposition, that are the foundation of political life. In such a scenario, the Internet could have an important role to play in revitalizing political life. Nevertheless, such a conclusion seems far-fetched. Instead of promoting the return to politics based on the interests of players, the Internet seems to be the other side of the coin of official politics. This medium maintains the same moralizing discourse found in political parties and civil society. Only that instead of bringing people together, it polarizes the public through demoralizing the other and through character assassination. Polarization does not take place centered on affirmative proposals or bringing together similar interests or projects, but rather due to demoralization and the promotion of a paranoid, demoralizing and distorted vision of opponents. Moreover, when e-mails are anonymous, apocryphal and hard to respond to (the addressees have no access to the mailing lists and address from where those e-mails were sent).

If we complement this sort of “moralist agony” with Cass Sunstein’s arguments, the result is “solipsist agony”. Such solipsist trend is favored by the new advertising techniques (commercial and political) geared to a target public (defined by age group, social status, race, religious beliefs), where political campaigns lead to thematic fragmentation, thus dissolving political discourses that view society as a whole. Furthermore, such solipsism is not alien to the moralist discourse of many NGOs, which deceived by their self-perception as agents of the good, overlook rich and complex social issues, as well as common people's sensitivity.

The potential “solipsist moralist agony” represented by the Internet does not prevent us from acknowledging the positive aspects of this new communication tool. However, such potential must be taken into consideration in order not to profess an ingenuous view of the Internet, disregarding trends that permeate contemporaneous society, such as self-centered individualism and fragmented association tendencies based on groups brought together just because of personal affinities. If on the one hand, political campaigns on the Internet may increase the active participation of the people, the moralist solipsist trend enabled by the new medium could lead to viewing political institutions as being ever more illegitimate, and to lower the quality of the democratic debate. The Internet is indeed becoming the main medium within the public sphere. The challenge we face now is how to prevent this tool from being colonized by antidemocratic groups, or that the potential exchange and debate of ideas be thwarted by the dynamics that the new medium itself may generate. There are
good reasons to be suspicious about States trying to control the contents and messages that circulate on the Internet. Notwithstanding, given the fact that the Internet is becoming the privileged medium for public debate, it is now necessary to ponder about the specific characteristics of communication via the Internet, so as to create regulating mechanisms, which as far as possible do not depend on State interventionism.

As a conclusion, I will just mention three issues that, I believe, are fundamental to prevent the moralist-solipsist trend, which could take hold of the virtual public sphere:

1) In order for the internet to work effectively as the main tool within the public sphere, it is fundamental that participants are confronted with the contents they transmit and be held responsible for them. In the near future, it may be possible to universalize a certification system which ensures that message senders are actually identified, and that SPAMs sent by non certified users are automatically eliminated.

2) The school system has a central role to play in the education of Internet users, regarding the potential risks involved in the use of the Internet. Learning how to read critically contents circulating in the Internet is a basic factor in the education of future citizens, thus it should be part of the basic school curriculum. The ultimate issue regarding digital exclusion is not merely technological. On the contrary, it is rather the capacity to critically interpret the information found on the web.

3) Groups and particularly NGOs that support democratic values should revise their communication strategies, generating websites and messages that tresspass the borders that encircle their own guetoes, promoting a true debate of ideas, presenting the whole range of arguments involved, so as to first and foremost educate citizens capable of critically analyzing the standpoints in question. Democratic forces have never succeeded in a terrain where the other is demonized; their only chance of success is to set barriers against antidemocratic groups by means of different and convicing discourses, which reach individuals by enhancing and valuing their capacity to discern.
6 - The Internet and Civil Society, www.imdp.org/artman/publish/article_29.shtml
7 - http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marketing_Viral
8 - See: http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/SPAM.
9 - Specialists also refer to a special type of SPAM, the Hoax, an e-mail with false, generally alarmist content. Obviously, in many cases the limits between a SPAM and a Hoax are not easily definable.
12 - Online Political Marketing Secrets Unveiled, www.personaldemocracy.com
14 - Christina Vital da Cunha “O referendo: propaganda televisiva e percepções da população”.
15 - http://www.orkut.com
Television campaign and the disadventure of the yes that was no

Presentation
As soon as the results of the referendum became known, most analysts - in the press and in academia and among activists - laid the responsibility on the “electoral propaganda” of the Parliamentary Front for a Brazil without Weapons (the YES front) for the defeat. This conclusion was reinforced by the opinion polls that had predicted, in the months prior to the official campaign, a victory by a wide margin for a prohibition on arms sales. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the communication strategies used on television, both in terms of the media used as well as concepts and rhetoric.

And, as much as is possible, to assess their impacts on the results.

This, however, is a complex task and the conclusions are uncertain. Above all, due to the unprecedented nature of the referendum. The closest experience was the plebiscite on the government regime in 1993. Strangely, the propaganda broadcast by the two fronts at that time received “almost unanimous rejection”, and “was seen as deceitful, weak on arguments and, for the more upset, an example of lying propaganda”. Similar criticisms will be heard regarding the referendum campaign. Moreover, while the choice of a government regime still pertained to the field of politics in the public mind, bearing some relation to electoral processes, the “weapons” referendum was also unprecedented due to its topic. Brazilian voters had never manifested their opinion on anything like that. Due to these singular aspects, there are no sure parameters for comparison. We opted, therefore, from a methodological standpoint, to address the strategies employed with criteria generally accepted for assessing ordinary campaigns for election purposes.

The issue regarding the real influence exerted by propaganda on the poll results can only be addressed, within the scope of this study, speculatively. To support the proposed hypotheses and interpretations, we will avail ourselves of tracking data contracted by the YES campaign and media reports that inform the number and times of the publicity spots of both campaigns. The campaigns’ marketing strategies will be analyzed in terms of expressed concepts, rhetorical and persuasion resources and tactical options (reiteration of messages, changes in emphasis, forms of undermining the adversary, etc). The first part of this article analyzes aspects related to media strategies in greater detail, and, I believe, these can aid us in understanding how YES lost. The second part addresses mainly the rhetorical aspects of the campaign and suggests how NO won. The notes, in addition to bibliographical references, present transcripts of portions of the programs and spots that illustrate statements contained in the body of the text.

Referendum? What referendum?
Influence? Which influence?
In April, a DATA FOLHA poll conducted only in São Paulo (capital) showed that “the majority (83%) of residents is against the sale of firearms to civilians and only 14% stated they were favorable to civilians being able to purchase firearms, 2% stated they had no opinion on the issue”. Until shortly before the campaign, other polls conducted nationally (CNT-Sensus, Ibope, Ipsus) likewise gave a wide advantage to a YES victory. Nevertheless, two days after the kick-off of the Free Electoral Propaganda Hour on radio and TV on October 1st, YES campaign tracking already showed a sharp drop in said advantage: YES (55%); NO (35%). Over the following days, up to the end of the campaign on October 20th, the YES curve continued spiraling. Around the 12th and 13th, IBOPE showed that NO (49%) had turned the

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tables against YES, which was at 45%. The poll, ignored on the YES program, was celebrated by the NO campaign as a result of a campaign that "spoke the truth" out of "respect for you" (Oct.14) and that broadcast "solid and true information, without emotional appeals" (Oct.15).

More intriguing, however, than YES’ rapid decline during the campaign is its unprecedented fall in the first few days, initiating a trend that it could not pull out of, even when it replaced the marketing team on October 11th. There are only two ways of explaining this phenomenon, and they are not mutually exclusive: i) decrease in support for prohibiting firearms sales had already been occurring steadily beforehand, and it was a lack of frequent opinion polls during the period before the campaign that failed to identify a trend that electoral propaganda merely reinforced and consolidated; or, ii) the lead held by YES during the period before the campaign could not be interpreted as an electoral advantage because it was of a different nature.

Before we turn to the empirical analysis of data and discourses, I would like to advance a little more regarding this second hypothesis (which, for lack of a better designation, I call ontological). The situation suggested by this hypothesis is not foreign to electoral marketing. Voters often manifest preference of a certain candidate (agreeing that “he'd make a great president”, for example) but saying they won’t vote for him (because he wouldn’t be supported by the politicians”, “he wouldn’t have the strength to govern”, etc). Liking and considering something important do not necessarily translate into votes, that is, in the decision to elect someone. Likewise, faced with the referendum, voters adopted a predominantly Heuseberg-ish behavior: their position was clearly favorable to YES while giving their opinion, but when called upon to decide on the matter, they no longer had the opinion previously held. YES’ fall throughout the campaign would thus reflect more of a change in the condition of the voter (of someone who holds an opinion to someone who decides) than a change in their original position: more transmutation than change. Therefore the fundamental error in the YES campaign strategy would have been to have mistakenly interpreted their initial advantage, that is, to not have considered the need to transform an initial likeability into a decision to vote in its favor, believing that it needed only to consolidate an initial advantage or disposition of the voters.

The manner in which the two fronts began their respective campaigns indicates that this initial situation was interpreted differently by each. While the YES propaganda bet everything on the likeability of a cast of actors and celebrities (six different spots with a dozen or so entertainers, just on the first day) and opened their nightly program with an editorial read by Regina Casé, NO sought to demonstrate that the referendum was not what voters thought it was. The first words of the "journalist" who acted as an anchor to their programs were: “Starting today, we’re going to talk with you...” (a commitment that nor Regina Casé nor any other YES entertainer could assume) and warned that, since "some people are trying to confuse things, talking about disarmament", voters had to be careful about a “decision” that could “harm them” in the “future”: “More than just a simple prohibition” – she’d say – “what is at stake here is one of your rights”. So, from the first day, NO showed signs that it intended to win voters who liked disarmament without having them necessarily change their “opinion” regarding the topic. The YES campaign, in comparison, presumed that feelings remained basically the same, supporting their electoral propaganda on the same concepts and celebrities that had provided support to campaigns in favor of disarmament in previous years.

The ontological hypothesis can thus be summarized: as the public began discovering that disarmament and the referendum are not the same thing, larger contingents of voters “liberate” themselves from their opinion “against arms” to vote NO in the referendum. As knowledge as to the likely decision on the referendum tends to increase as the campaign advances, the drop in intention to vote YES was steady throughout.

The assumption that YES misinterpreted the type of advantage the polls had given it can be corroborated by the use of commercial spots during the 20 days of the TV campaign. While NO broadcast only 17 different pieces (a little less than one new piece per day), YES used 31 different spots (three new pieces every two days). Such a high number suggests doubt regarding the priority messages or at least the need to perform urgent changes in light of the possible failure of their initially defined strategies. CHARTS 1 and 2 below present the number of days each spot was broadcast. Moreover, in this respect, the NO campaign showed itself to be more sure of its messages: most of its commercials (65%) were broadcast for three days. No commercial was broadcast for four or five days – to avoid wearing out the message – and only one was broadcast for six days, non-consecutively (the opening spot that set the tone of the campaign).
If we observe how these two charts behave over time (graphs 1 and 2) we see that NO sought to follow a certain pattern: successful pieces tend to stay on the air for three days, unsuccessful ones for only one day, and “opportunity” pieces for one to two days. YES media, in turn, is so irregular that it appears to be random in its distribution.\textsuperscript{10}
If we observe the exact number of airings of each spot, and not only how many days one remained on the air, the “trial and error” dynamic that characterized the YES campaign becomes even more evident. While 47% of the NO spots were aired from 18 to 23 times (sufficient number, in two or three days, to massify the message), 32% of YES spots were aired only from 6 to 10 times. 

CHART 3 compares, based on homogenous intervals, the broadcast frequency of the spots of both campaigns. The interval of 1 to 5 airings is quite revealing, it would be difficult for a campaign piece aired so few times to have a significant impact on public opinion. None of the NO spots were in this category, while 23% of the YES commercials were aired not more than five times. On the other hand, 76% of the NO spots were broadcast more than 15 times compared to only 23% of the YES pieces.

Another complementary means of verifying how confident the two campaigns were in their respective electoral marketing strategies is to see which spots in each campaign were most frequently broadcast. The NO campaign had three spots it aired more than 30 times:

Spot #1 ("The 'We want Rights' movement..."), aired 53 times for 6 days, from Oct. 1 to Oct. 10 (32 times 1-2/Oct)
- This was the launching piece of the NO campaign (the only one broadcast on the first day of the campaign). It consisted of edited file material (student protests, democracy now, impeachment of Collor, and also contained images reminiscent of the military dictatorship), with the Independence Hymn as soundtrack, showing photographs of smiling Brazilians of all races and social classes, the speaker, with a grave and somber voice, warned: “Don’t confuse joy with naiveté. Laying the blame for violence in our country on its citizens is going too far”. Investing in the opposition between US (people/workers) / THEM (government/ politicians), each piece presented the second strong point of the NO campaign: characterizing the referendum – or YES campaign, as “official” – as a maneuver by “them” to delude citizens and escape accountability for violence in the country.

Spot #6 ("Brazilians are a happy people..."), aired 1 times for  days, from Oct. 5 to Oct. 9 (times 5-6/Oct)
- Just like spot #1, this was also broadcast intensely the first two days, occupying 75% of the programming, fulfilling the role of “closing” the first week of the campaign. With the same Independence Hymn as soundtrack, showing photographs of smiling Brazilians of all races and social classes, the speaker, with a grave and somber voice, warned: “Don’t confuse joy with naiveté. Laying the blame for violence in our country on its citizens is going too far”. Investing in the opposition between US (people/workers) / THEM (government/ politicians), each piece presented the second strong point of the NO campaign: characterizing the referendum – or YES campaign, as “official” – as a maneuver by “them” to delude citizens and escape accountability for violence in the country.

Spot #13 ("The problem is not that for me to not have a gun...")", aired 38 times, from Oct. 15 to Oct. 17 (27 times, 15-16/Oct)
- A dramatized commercial where a citizen, with his back turned, places a sign on the door to his house informing that he does not possess weapons. He stands back to look at it - the soundtrack becomes very dark - thinks and removes the sign, shaking his head as if to say “where’d you get that idea, stupid”. Meanwhile the speaker concludes: “The problem is not for me to not have a gun, it’s that the criminals will know that I am unarmed.” In addition to bearing the third important argument of the NO campaign (unarmed, citizens become even more impotent), this piece also plays an-
other role, now in terms of an “opportunity”. It was aired just after the announcement by Ibope of NO having turned the tide. The citizen placing and then removing the sign is also the one who “changes” his mind and vote in the referendum. During the free NO airtime, the IBOPE poll is presented on the 14th and 15th and the programs for the 14th, 15th and 16th are full of testimonies of common people, stating that before they were for YES and now will vote NO.

In addition to these three pieces, another two were broadcast with particular frequency, occupying almost the entire program for one or two days:

Spot #10 ("Attention. The electoral court prohibited the YES program ..."), aired 27 times on October 12th and 13th.
- Piece prepared to undermine YES’ credibility. This was a pseudo – “right to rebuttal” (text scrolling on the screen and voice off-screen). It alerted the public that the Electoral Court had prohibited the YES program from airing an affirmative answer to the question “Can those who own firearms purchase ammunition?”. The spot concluded, in a grave voice: “Watch out with what the YES program says.” This massive airing coincided with the Ibope field poll, the result of which was announced two days later.11

Spot #17 ("Sunday is voting time..."), aired 20 times on Oct. 20th.
- The closing commercial, with the anchor journalist “teaching how to vote” and reinforcing the main point of the campaign: “Sunday is the day to say NO... I will not relinquish my right, nor take away the right of someone else... I will not give up my freedom. Against prohibition, vote no.” This was the only spot broadcast that day.

Contrary to the three most popular NO spots, which are strongly “advertising” in nature (that is, they appear as political propaganda and involve some “creation” work), the clips most broadcast by the YES campaign are “talking heads” (actors, celebrities or otherwise, speaking directly to the spectator). Even though they broadcast the YES propaganda line, all of them had “reactive” characteristics, responding, in one way or another, to concepts and arguments broadcast by the adversary’s campaign. At least in terms of the spots, the YES campaign appeared to have lost the initiative soon in the first few days, only managing to sketch out an attempt to debate issues during part of the last week of the campaign. The most frequently aired spots of the YES campaign were:

Spot #7 ("José Mayer – It’s clear that prohibition...") aired 28 times over 5 days (02-06/Oct).
- The author spoke, reproducing a text that had been stated the day before by one of the fixed personalities of the campaign (there were three, who took turns with the editorial lines). The text as if the speaker was trying to undo a misunderstanding: “It’s clear that prohibition will not end violence...”, but, he went on to say, it will decrease the number of shooting deaths by accident, crimes of passion and brawls, in addition to making “access to firearms” more difficult for criminals and decrease street violence. The only reason this piece was shown so many times over so many days is the assumption that the actor, José Mayer, exercised great influence over voters, since the slightly eloquent text had no defined focus, addressing at least three different topics.

Spot #8 ("João Antônio – Whoever buys a gun..."), aired 26 times for 3 days (04-06/Oct)
- Starring the editorial “personality” called “professor” (a gray-bearded gentleman), calling people’s attention to crimes committed by persons known (“Whoever buys a gun runs a risk and creates a risk”) and concluded – addressing the charge by the NO campaign regarding protection of “right” and “freedom” - with protection of “your right to life” and stating that the “referendum ‘is your right’”.

Spot 15: ("Carolina Monte Rosa – prohibiting sales..."), aired 36 times for 5 days (09-13/Oct).
- This was the most frequently broadcast piece of the YES campaign, starring one of the three program anchors. It listed the advantages of prohibition (avoiding shooting deaths by persons known, making access to firearms more difficult for criminals) and responded to one of the NO arguments, stating that the statute ensured the right to firearms for those dwelling in remote locations. This spot had the same characteristics of the others: it was “defensive”, presenting several arguments without homing in on any of them, and betting that its impact would come from the likeability of the talking head (in this case a handsome but unknown face). The only plausible reason for this to have been the most broadcast piece by the YES campaign, despite its obvious weaknesses, is to assume that it was used to fill in the “void” when the marketing team was replaced (50% of insets on the 11th and 12th while the incoming team prepared and produced materials according to their new strategy). The long “career” of this piece was shot down in mid-air by NO’s spot #10 (see above). The subtle insinuation that NO defended rights that, provided for in the statute, would
not be endangered was discredited by the "electoral court", which decried against YES' distortions in interpreting the statute.

Even though these three pieces were frequently aired, none of them, by themselves, ever "dominated" the program time as often occurred in the NO campaign. No YES spot was aired more than 25 times in two days, which allows one to infer, throughout the entire campaign, that they were not considered strong enough to do so.

**Opinions of voters over time during the campaign**

The ontological hypothesis (the citizen-voter did not change opinion but in nature) can be contrasted to another, more classical hypothesis, which could be termed as doxological. In this case, the movement of the voters towards NO would correspond to modifications in the set of beliefs and opinions of individuals, caused by the propaganda. The only instrument we have available to verify this hypothesis, admittedly limited, is the monitoring of voters opinions performed by tracking throughout the campaign. And, as much as is possible, compare any changes of opinion with the argumentative and rhetorical emphases of the Parliamentary Fronts on television.

According to tracking data, agreement of voters with arguments of both campaigns progressed as seen in GRAPHS 3 and 4. A quick observation of the same may bring surprises. Despite NO’s meteoric rise during the campaign, the set of arguments favorable to it (GRAPH 3) remained stable – at very high levels – throughout the entire campaign (with one significant exception to be commented on later). In this sense, these are arguments that a wide majority of voters initially agreed with and that the YES campaign was unable to shake. Agreement to arguments defended by YES (GRAPH 4) systematically dropped from the onset of the propaganda campaign. In comparison, one immediately sees, that while the NO campaign was able to consolidate voters opinions and transform them into a NO vote, YES was unable to maintain its initial “assets” of favorable opinions. In other words, regarding the progress of opinions throughout the campaign, NO gained nothing and YES clearly lost ground.
**GRAPH 3 - AGREEMENT WITH NO'S ARGUMENTS**

Agreement with arguments - Positive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Days 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Days 2 &amp; 3</th>
<th>Days 3 &amp; 4</th>
<th>Days 4 &amp; 5</th>
<th>Days 5 &amp; 6</th>
<th>Days 6 &amp; 7</th>
<th>Days 7 &amp; 8</th>
<th>Days 8 &amp; 9</th>
<th>Days 9 &amp; 10</th>
<th>Days 10 &amp; 11</th>
<th>Days 11 &amp; 12</th>
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<td>85</td>
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- Prohibition will reduce the number of guns in the hands of criminals
- Prohibition of ammunition and firearms sales may not resolve the entire issue of violence, but it's an important step.
- Even if a few lives are saved, prohibition will have been worth it.
- An armed citizen only increases the chance of getting killed by a criminal.
- The large majority of firearm deaths in Brazil is caused by guns purchased by common citizens.
- If every citizen were as well armed as the criminals, violence would escalate.
- Having a gun is not synonymous with security; it is synonymous with tragedy.
- Voting for prohibition of firearms sales is a vote for life.

**GRAPH 4 - AGREEMENT WITH YES' ARGUMENTS**

Agreement with arguments - Negative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Days 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Days 2 &amp; 3</th>
<th>Days 3 &amp; 4</th>
<th>Days 4 &amp; 5</th>
<th>Days 5 &amp; 6</th>
<th>Days 6 &amp; 7</th>
<th>Days 7 &amp; 8</th>
<th>Days 8 &amp; 9</th>
<th>Days 9 &amp; 10</th>
<th>Days 10 &amp; 11</th>
<th>Days 11 &amp; 12</th>
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<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Governments don't do their part to reduce crime and violence.
- This poll is just for the Government to pretend that it is doing something to reduce violence and crime in Brazil.
- The criminals are the ones to be disarmed, not citizens.
- Prohibition will make criminals stronger and more willing to commit crime.
- Through prohibition, the Government will be taking the right away from citizens to protect themselves.
- Prohibition is useless because of the illegal and contraband weapons trade.
- Today I might not need a gun, but if one day I do, I want to have the right to buy one.
In addition to agreeing with the main arguments of both fronts, tracking also monitored a vast set of voters’ opinions on topics related to the referendum and the campaigns. In order to determine any impact of propaganda on these opinions, significant variations were considered only when differences were over 5% between the beginning and end of the campaign. The most relevant conclusions resulting from such criteria were:

a) No message (argument, opinion, concept) broadcast by YES obtained a positive variation during the campaign (GRAPH 4). On the contrary, adherence to the main arguments in favor of prohibition decreased significantly.12 The main NO arguments remained where they were at the onset of the campaign, with the exception of one: “Today I don't need a weapon, but if one day I need one, I want to have the right to buy it”, which varied positively from 56% to 65% at the end of the campaign. (GRAPH 3)

b) The YES program, despite being evaluated positively from the artistic standpoint, was catastrophic in terms of convincing voters of their position.13 The most significant variation on this aspect was a direct result of the NO campaign: the opinion that the YES program presented “false information” increased from 26% at the beginning of the campaign to 44% on Oct. 19, the last day of tracking. The only significant impact of the switching the YES marketing team was the perception amongst the public that the program was presenting “new information”: this varied positively from 41% to 49% only in the last days of the campaign. This perception probably arises from two factors: they more clearly identified an adversary – gun manufacturers and retailer – who began to face harsher and more objective criticism; and the campaign underwent a reform, adopting a little more aggressive look (use of red in letter boxes and other graphic elements, for example) and a more journalistic style.14 Another possible consequence of the YES campaign becoming more aggressive is the increased agreement with the phrase “The population is not prepared for a referendum such as this.” In the middle of the campaign, 70% of the public was in agreement with this phrase, at the end, it was 76%. If, on the one hand, this increase, however small, can express that the reform of the YES program placed more doubts in the minds of voters, the increase in agreement to this phrase can also indicate something else: that the majority of voters would have preferred not to have had to decide the issue, or did not consider themselves sufficiently informed to do so. The increased degree

of uncertainty on the part of voters, as we will see hereinafter, favored NO much more than YES.

c) As the option to vote NO increased, so also did the importance to which people attributed the referendum.15 This is a strange correlation, yet endowed with logic, as with a NO victory, things will remain as they were and the referendum then would have been “useless”. On the other hand, the NO campaign, in several different ways, led people to believe that the referendum was a maneuver by the government to transfer accountability, “pretending” to do something for public security and, finally, that prohibition would have no impact on violence. This version regarding the origins and intentions of the referendum is the only one that significantly increased (among the versions tested in the tracking): the portion of voters that believed that “The initiative for the referendum was by the federal government through the President” rose from 50% to 60%. This means that whenever the NO campaign broadcast the message referring to “THEM” as those wishing to delude the population with the referendum, most voters attributed this designation to the “President”.

d) The referendum became less and less important because the YES campaign was unable to make any positive prognosis stick regarding prohibition of arms sales. Some of the scenarios proposed by YES in case of a NO victory sounded somewhat absurd. In other words, as the campaign progressed, fewer and fewer voters believed that prohibiting sale of arms would reduce violence or decrease the occurrence of any type of crime.16 On the other hand, the only type of crime that reacted positively was the part of the prognosis associated to the NO campaign (a YES victory will increase insecurity) At the beginning, 20% agreed with the phrase “Robberies in stores and homes will increase”, at the end of the TV campaign, this contingent had risen to 28%. Another element crucial to YES’ defeat was having lost the duel of the prognoses. In other words, YES was unable to convince that Brazil would be better off if it won; NO, in turn, did not need to prove that it would get worse.17

The paragraphs above summarize the main changes of voter opinion as recorded by tracking. The tables presented below seek to synthesize the strategy of both campaign in the use of spots. They will help us better understand to what point the progress of opinions corresponds to the thematic emphases and persuasive resource used by both campaigns. Spots were classified into three categories, which are those most utilized in electoral
Another way to contrast the two campaigns is to observe which "characters" are responsible for broadcasting or acting as support to the most relevant messages of each spot. This classification clearly shows that the NO campaign was predominantly "advertising", placing priority on pieces that could briefly express its principles and arguments. The use of testimonials was attempted only with one piece, presenting the mother of a victim. "Informative" pieces predominated the YES campaign - generally, one of the three anchors of the program presenting one or more reasons to prohibit the sale of arms. Testimonial spots were highly used, with participation of specialists, such as police inspector, Marina Magessi and, mainly, entertainers. The use of "creative" pieces was quite low, which may indicate that YES had difficulties in finding synthetic manners of communicating its message. The "testimonial" category that was predominant in the initial part of the campaign practically disappeared when the coordinator was changed.

**CHART 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>informative</th>
<th>testimonials</th>
<th>creative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHARTS 5 and 6 by themselves make it evident that YES produced a campaign without synthetic "ideas" – symbolic, memorable – capable of representing its positions. Despite the technical quality of the production, in the spots it produced a campaign almost without any "image" (as the weak participation of the announcer demonstrates). CHART 6 compares persuasive resources most utilized in the spots. The classification is quite simple and corresponds to the most common uses in the field of political propaganda: story (when linking the current choice to things done in the past, which justify the same); argument (when the choice is justified from a rational implication, attributing merit, etc.); criticism (when "deconstruction" or denouncement of the adversary is predominant); endorsement (when persons present themselves supporting positions so as, through likeability or respect, to win people over to them); diagnosis (when emphasis is that a certain choice arises from an understanding of the current situation) future world (when a certain choice is explained as best because it will provide the greatest benefits or avoid losses in the future); campaign goal (rallies, demonstrations, video clips, teaching how to vote etc.)
The YES campaign, as an examination of the previous tables suggests, placed high priority on “arguments” (over 80% of spots attempted to convince voters of their position based on rational propositions). NO also prioritized arguments, but did not give this form of persuasion absolute majority in its spots. Another important difference is that YES presented diagnoses of current situations in 57% of their broadcasts in contrast to NO, which only used this in 18% of the time. This contrast most likely derives from YES’ need to “sell” a diagnosis that was contrary to “common sense” while NO just needed to remind people of the predominant perception regarding violence and public security. Investments of both campaigns in designing future post-referendum scenarios were similar, but NO concentrated in pointing towards a dark and uncertain future if YES were to win. Another major contrast is in the use of history. While NO tied its position to movements such as resistance to the military dictatorship, “direct elections now” and processes such as the conquest of rights by women (20% of the spots), YES, in terms of its inserts of commercials, presented a position “with no past”.

On the other hand, it was the only one to use celebrities and experts to champion its cause. The contrast between “history” and “endorsement” highlighted the duel on the spots during the first two days of electoral propaganda on television. Lastly, the campaigns spent similar amounts of time criticizing the adversary, although NO did so throughout the 20 days of the TV campaign, while YES only began doing so more consistently starting on Oct. 7, when entertainers started to fade out of the scenes. In fact, YES had two different campaigns: one with celebrities and very little attempt to characterize the adversary – while the adversary was characterizing as “them” (“politicians”, the “government”) – and another, without celebrities, where the adversary was defined as the arms manufacturers/retailers.

One of the most interesting indicators revealed in this analysis is that, while NO used between 1 and 2 persuasive resources per spot, YES (which aired almost twice as many spots as its opponent) on average used from 2 to 3. The dispersion in the use of media, therefore, took place, as chaos theoreticians would say, “on all scales”. This excess certainly compromised the intelligibility and memorization, but increasing the number of forms of persuasion in a single message usually indicates insecurity regarding which is the most adequate resource for a certain topic or moment in the campaign.

Lastly, it is noteworthy the thematic emphases given in the campaigns: What weight was attributed to their main arguments? CHARTS 7 and 8 present the themes of the spots for both.

### Chart 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>story</th>
<th>argument</th>
<th>criticism</th>
<th>endorsement</th>
<th>diagnosis</th>
<th>future world</th>
<th>campaign goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chart 7 – Themes of the ‘NO’ Spots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defense of rights</th>
<th>Government does nothing to provide security</th>
<th>The referendum is to delude</th>
<th>More fear some criminals</th>
<th>The referendum is useless</th>
<th>YES lies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chart 8 – Themes of the ‘YES’ Spots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal’s weapon</th>
<th>It’s an important step</th>
<th>Lives will be saved</th>
<th>Arm = risk</th>
<th>Crimes by persons known</th>
<th>Right to life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distribution of themes of the NO campaign is quite revealing: 70% of the spots make expressed reference to rights and the imminence of losing them (not only the right to self-defense and freedom, but to individual rights as well). Several NO spots do not even mention weapons or allude to insecurity and violence, positioning themselves instead on "defense of rights" and "freedom". Thus, NO sought to transform the debate of the referendum into a moral issue, or a question of "principles". YES' efforts in the same direction - its appeal to the "right to life" (emphasized in 37% of the spots) was much less effective, probably because, rigorously speaking, the right to life, even though it can be considered of high value, did not seem to be truly threatened if NO were to win.

Secondly, the two themes most used by NO were incompetence/ineffectiveness of governments regarding public security and violence (important emphasis on heightening the distinction between us/them which was the hallmark of their campaign) and criminals (risk, cruelty, weaponry, etc). 27% of inserts had some type of message to disqualify the referendum (it was useless and/or an attempt to delude the public). Lastly, 9% of the messages explicitly said that the YES campaign distorted facts and aired untrue information.

YES, in turn, had no truly dominant theme. Criminals’ weapons and crime in general (origin, type, etc) prevailed in the second phase of the campaign, while crimes by persons known were most emphasized in the first phase. We can observe that themes related to the legitimacy of the referendum and a positive prognosis if YES were to win were much less used than those related to diagnoses of the current situation. In this sense, the YES campaign was more "educational" than "persuasive". It was more concerned in convincing people, let us say, of their "sociology" than in "winning" their vote. The production of spots targeting specific segments of voters is an important example of how NO associated its arguments to "symbolic" values in contrast to the "scientific" basis on which its opponent was based. The first of these spots, targeting "women" went on the air on Oct. 4, featuring a mother of a victim, who questioned: "what right to life is it that they’re defending?". Probably poorly assessed, this piece was soon taken off the air. A new commercial for women was created and aired on Oct. 7. It reminded and exalted women’s "conquests" – the right to vote, to work – and concluded: "Women, don’t let them take away your right". The clip made no reference to weapons or violence, nor that it was in relation to the referendum. On Oct. 9, a commercial for "youth" was aired. In this case, the actor speaks directly to the spectator: "My life is just getting started and they’re already meddling with my rights... What’s this talk of prohibiting me?". Again, no reference to weapons and violence. Lastly, on Oct. 13 (maintained on the air until Oct. 17), a spot clearly targeting “parents” (shown simultaneously with the other “parent” who "changed his mind" and removed the sign in front of his house informing that he did not have a gun). A friendly person, who looked like someone from televised educational programs, was in front of a box of objects "dangerous to children", and he asked: "Have you noticed that people have rights and obligations, even within their own homes?" And he concluded: right to have medication, cleaning products, knives... but “the obligation to keep them in a safe place, out of the reach of children.” This series of three commercials does not address the specific right to buy a firearm and instead exalts the attribute idealized by each member of the modern family (women/equality; youth/freedom; men/responsibility).

From Oct. 17 on, the "spots duel" showed signs that YES had given up combating NO and instead decided to launch pieces for “maintenance”, all in the same format: one of editorial characters states an argument and "teaches how to vote". Slogans used are those from the second phase of the campaign: “Vote against weapons”, “Vote for a Brazil with fewer murders”, “You voted for a Brazil without weapons”. In one of the spots, there was a last ditch effort to “politicize the debate” and stated: "Owning a weapon is a rich man’s thing".

Is the way you win an election the way to win a referendum?

In Brazil, literature on electoral propaganda - both from marketers as well as from political scientists - has been constructing a reasonable consensus regarding the most effective uses of Free Electoral Propaganda Airtime (HPEG, in Portuguese). Towards the end of this paper, we will briefly examine these "consolidated" principles and verify whether and how they were utilized in the YES and NO programs. To facilitate display, we structured this section in the form of "frequently asked questions":

- Who does the propaganda target? Even though society is segmented, most authors agree that political propaganda should target the
“common man”, who in Brazil is thought of as “little education, low income and little interest in politics”. The common man, in turn, usually attributes his “alienation” and disinfirmation regarding politics to the politicians themselves: “they only appear around election time.” The “common man” complains that “politicians only use this program time to promote themselves” and not to provide information and that it should not be obligatory. In any case, the free air time as well as several other signs (cars blaring propaganda, adhesives on cars, etc) all indicate that “politics season has arrived”.

This seasonal understanding of politics is part of a vision of society in which the “people” and the “politicians” belong to two different worlds. The common man compensates his cognitive deficiency (lack of information on politics and politicians) with judgments of moral nature. The broadest of these ends up defining politics and the behavior of politicians as “immoral practices”, in contrast to the “people” or “workers” whose identity is defined by honesty and morality...

The NO propaganda knew very well how to work on both of these aspects. On one hand, it raised suspicion regarding these “politics” outside the “politicial season”, investing against the referendum as a device. Once YES – as described above – lost the battle regarding “history” of the “background”, they could not remove the stigma of the referendum being an untimely event. On the other, the opposition between US (people, workers) and THEM (politicians/ government) – held as one of the main keys to decoding the messages of electoral propaganda, it was immediately appropriated by NO, defining the adversary as THEM. A very interesting example of how this is done is the response by the NO campaign to one of YES’ arguments that was well received initially (prohibition of arms sales will decrease murders by persons known): “THEY want to place the blame for violence on you”.

- What is the difference between the electoral program and the spots? What are the purposes of each?

Political propaganda on Brazilian TV began in 1962 and continued throughout the military period. In 1974, paid announcements were prohibited and propaganda restricted to the HPEG electoral programs. Spots came in 1996. There is a consensus among analysts and marketers that “political airtime offers arguments to voters to defend their attitudes regarding the vote in their daily conversations, where according to empirical data, opinions crystallize.”

The perception that politicians themselves have of the programs is quite similar: they believe that they mainly speak to their electorate and possible followers, providing arguments for those who want to support them, encouraging and stimulating followers. Thus, there is always the “ensure votes already won, providing good reasons – arguments – to voters” who have already decided, as one of the strategic objectives of these programs. For fear of the so-called ‘boomerang effect’, programs usually are not seen as the proper venue for ‘attacks’ against the adversary, with spots responsible for this whenever necessary.

The first Brazilian campaign to use spots was the municipal elections of 1996. Spots have been used in the US since 1952 when marketers began to consider the best “strategy to gain the attention and vote of the electorate is to appeal to emotion, providing entertainment to be quickly processed, instead of clarifying complex political topics or defining positions on controversial subjects”.

The existence of these two formats (programs and spots) led to two different strategies in the use of Free Airtime, “one more journalistic in nature, based on reinforcement of already aired news material, one of an ‘advertising’ nature, where more long term planning is possible.” NO’s care in avoiding excess of persuasive and information resources in their spots followed the function classically assigned to this type of media. The launching of segmented commercials in the midst of the campaign, in addition to acting as a “refreshment” from the topic of violence during the same period showed signs of a more precise strategic planning in the use of airtime.

- How does electoral propaganda influence voters?

Once voters feel fundamentally insecure and distrustful regarding information broadcast in the propaganda, they usually adopt an ambiguous attitude regarding the same: they maintain that “Political Airtime bears no influence on their decision-making”, yet believe that the program does exert influence on decision-making of society as a whole. Often, the NO anchor journalist referred to his own program as “explanatory”, “informative” and whenever he mentioned the adversary’s program he would say: “the YES propaganda”.

The most common answer to the question regarding impact of propaganda is that it influences when “it is a reinforcement of certain visions already structured within people’s daily lives.” In fact, the main accusation made against marketers is that
they prepare their strategies based on what people want to hear and not according to the beliefs of their candidates or their real possibilities of performing what they propose. In this sense, the YES campaign, based on arguments that were contrary to common sense and the “structured visions” from “daily life” had a much more difficult time influencing voters.

The nighttime NO program, aired on Oct. 13 is a good example of this manner of conceiving political propaganda. After making it clear that there was a wave of popularity in its favor within society and showing the IBOPE poll that confirmed its rise, it went over all of the arguments and concepts one by one that gave it this preference, without concerning itself in forming a coherent set, as if the text had been written only with phrases heard in groups from different social classes. It explained that NO was on the rise because “we speak the truth about you”. It presented testimonials of people who had been YES voters before and who were now voting NO. It stated that “disarmament didn’t work”, that Brazilians are “aware” and that, for the first time, characterized the NO vote as a message to the government: “vote NO to remind the government that it has not disarmed the criminals heavily armed with illegal contrabanded weapons”. Following what marketers call “politicizing the discourse”, he warns that if prohibition is approved, it will be bad for everyone, especially for the poorest. The anchor journalist of the program concludes with a “word of hope” for you, the “Brazilian citizen”: “the government fails to provide your basic rights, for this very reason you cannot relinquish a right you have.”

- How does propaganda manage to convince, to persuade voters?

There are three answers – not necessarily mutually excluding – to this question. One possibility that tradition in political science suggests, since it turned its attention to the influence of propaganda in the 1950s, is that voters decide “based on calculations of personal interest and utility”, seeking to maximize their gains. Performing this calculation, however, is not just a logical or rational procedure. One often hears that politicians, after they win, forget everything they promised. How does the “common man” resolve this paradox? By imagining that even though not everyone fulfills all promises, some always fulfill a few. In practice, the common man seeks only to “err less.”

Therefore, the decision to vote will be made within a scenario of uncertainty (who will really fulfill something promised?). Cognitive demands of voters seek above all to diminish anxiety arising from this uncertainty. The more voters feels well informed, the more their insecurity in relation to the vote decreases. Nevertheless, the more secure they feel in relation to their opinions, the better satisfied their cognitive demands are. The usual strategy to turn this dynamic into a ‘virtuous’ circle is to invest in the credibility of the candidate and their program. This signifies, as quickly as possible, to form “extensive impressions of others based on very limited information”, thus seeking to “minimize anxiety regarding the decision to vote”. These “extensions” are mainly supported on judgments of moral nature.

A certain appreciation of the future, however, is inseparable from the type of choice involved in voting. Therefore, some authors consider that voters, the ones targeted by the campaign, should not be thought of as “private consumers” but rather as “public investors”. Regarding these consumers, “the candidates engage in an argumentation of fictional nature, in which ‘everyone constructs a current possible world, equal to or slightly different from the real current world and based on its project a new and good possible world’.”

As seen previously, YES was unable to show voters that a better “future” would result from their victory, while NO needed to put forth little effort to convince them that YES would lead them to a world equal to or worse than the current one.

- How do voters decide how to vote?

The most obvious answer is to communicate “positively” with the voter, “providing arguments that are easy to understand and realistic”. The decisive question here, in our case, considering the initial advantage held by YES, is: how do changes in attitude take place in terms of voting decisions?

Based on the model created by Hovland in the 1940s-1950s, reception and processing of messages can occur in “acceptance” or “refusal” fields. The acceptance field is constituted when the emitter and receiver share the same opinion; or when the differences of opinion are not excessive; or when adherence or involvement of both with the subject of the messages is small or weak. The first movement of the anchor journalist of the NO program, right at the opening of the campaign, was to attempt establishment of this acceptance field: “I also never thought of buying a gun, but...” In the refusal field, on the other hand, the message is received as being propaganda, trying to appeal and as unacceptable, making “the differences of opinion appear greater than they are in reality.”

In this case, the edge of this two-edged blade for
both campaigns was the inclusion of images and testimonials of victims. The mother who lost her son or the police officer who became paraplegic are images capable of generating sympathy and of inciting the public, yet there is always the risk of seeming to "appeal" or, what usually even has a worse effect, of giving the impression that the person's pain is being "manipulated" for political purposes. The first to use testimonials of victims' mothers was YES, on the opening program, on Oct. 1. NO's turn was on Oct. 2, after articles and comments on "defenseless citizens". The following day, the YES and NO mothers were in open conflict. The latter came with Ms. Mara, who concluded her testimonial by asking: "What kind of life is it that they're defending? A life behind barred windows?" YES returned with testimonials of relatives of victims of crimes committed by persons known. The same day, however, the program also showed the ill-fated "graph" that induced voters to believe that only 5% of homicides were effectively committed by "criminals" in the performance of their illegal activities (see below, note 56). The mothers left the stage on the NO program, which decided to intensify the debate on the honesty of the statistics. YES insisted: on Oct. 5, it had the son of a soldier who had died reacting to a hold-up ("if he hadn't reacted, he'd still be alive"); on Oct. 7, more relatives of victims, whose pain is related to the struggle to approve the statute. On Oct. 9, NO decided to react, but, unsure what the results might be, did not place its anchor journalist at risk - the "poster boy" of the campaign. The journalist-commentator, Wellington, compromises and says, I feel solidarity with the family of the victims" and states that the "sad cases" presented on the YES program are "exceptions". The serious tone of his speech corresponds to NO's decision to differentiate itself as "a campaign of solid and truthful information, with no emotional appeals." YES apparently interpreted the reaction as the first sign of weakness of the adversary and dedicated almost its entire Oct. 10 program to this line of propaganda. It opened with an entertainer saying that he defends the victims, relatives report on how they defeated the "gun loving politicians" in congress. The program anchor comments that the statute was a "conquest of the women's struggle" and showed a well-produced "commercial" in which a mother tearfully leafs through a photo album. Afterwards the anchor returns to say that "yesterday", NO disrespected "the victims" by citing the phrase, "these sad cases are exceptions". And then concluded: "To us... the possibility of saving a single life is enough reason to continue in the struggle against weapons."

The following night, instead of insisting on the prickly controversy over victims, NO turned the tables on its adversary with a decision from the electoral court against the YES propaganda (see note 11). With the change in the YES coordination, its program became more agile and assumed a more journalistic stance - like that of NO - and the "victims" tended to appear only in contextualized situations (being treated in hospitals or linked to the struggle for the statute). NO's response was Ms. Funyo, mother of a victim and pacifist leader, who announced that she had switched from YES to NO. The "victims' war" was a side confrontation throughout the dispute of arguments in the electoral programs. It seemed to be one of the few areas where YES held some advantage (or at least "drew a tie", forcing NO to perform some of its few reactive actions). The preponderant use of this resource was always done, however, under the risk of being accused of "appealing." Generally speaking, the adherence or lack thereof to an argument, just as whether one liked a testimonial or not, depends on the constitution and consolidation of the refusal and acceptance fields. Marketers call ideas that spread to hinder the dislocation of their arguments and concepts to the refusal field or that block the adversary from gaining the "acceptance field" "vaccines." NO was clearly the winner in this confrontation of vaccines. From the very first program, it showed that it was prepared to face YES' two strong points: support from entertainers and experts. It sought to contrast itself from YES' celebrities by placing itself on the side of the people, defenseless and abandoned in the face of violence and insecurity (this "brave Brazilian people" that the "governments never come to their aid"). The statement that entertainers "live in gated villas", surrounded by security is a typical "vaccine" against the influence that they might have on the voters. Regarding the figures and poll, constitution of a refusal field began without any direct confrontation, suggesting that figures "confused things, distorted reality", but could, due to mistakes by the adversary, soon become a statement that YES was the one confusing things and distorting the figures. On Oct. 6, the YES program showed signs that NO's "vaccines" were causing damage: it defended its data – they "bother" arms manufacturers – and repudiated the way in which the adversary used the image of entertainers and politicians "who were engaged in the YES campaign as volunteers". Only a little too late did YES use its anti-NO vaccines more aggressively: suggesting that arms dealers and retailers were the interests behind
the NO campaign. This was not sufficient, however, to defeat the “interests” that the NO campaign had been showing from the very first day (farmer, gas station attendant, retired policeman, etc). When a voter with a position is confronted by a communication that is discrepant, he seeks evidence that will support his position. The adversary’s propaganda generates tension when the arguments appear irrefutable. Generally speaking, “the attitude when faced with a discrepant communication can be a simple rejection of the arguments, without any evident reason.” The best manner of doing this is to “consider that the source of the information is unreliable or negative”. The persuasion capacity of the messages appears to therefore depend on two factors: confidence in the source of the message and “force of the discourse itself”, that is, its internal logic and apparent fitting in with the facts. Of the two, credibility is the one with greater influence potential. Credibility in turn depends on two sets of attributes of the message source: competence (experience, authority, specialty); reliability (sincerity, lack of bias, lack of interest in persuading anybody). If the emitter is perceived as someone who gains from the position advocated or that defends the position for any other personal reasons, then the person will be much less persuasive than someone who defends the position for entirely objective reasons. Even though in a secondary manner, YES did invest in displaying its competence (experts, data, etc), but NO’s main soft spot was their reliability: “I don’t want to own a gun, but I defend the right of others that do.”

On the other hand, from the very first program, NO sought to undermine the use of the opponent’s statistics and credibility. The journalist would say: “Figure confuse things and distort reality” and would call in an original character, the “pseudo-expert”, that is, to have the “effect of an expert” whose purpose was to “cast suspicion” on the information and data broadcast by the YES program. This character was later transformed into “Journalist Wellington”, who is “watching” the propaganda on a TV monitor, and comments on YES’ craftiness.

Are there criteria that can be used to measure the force of the discourse? What has always been said is that the message must be heard and understood clearly. In other words, one should not use weak arguments or vacillate; and one should be associated to moral values that help support the deficiencies of information and decrease insecurity regarding the vote. In addition to these elements, however, the force of a discourse can be measured by the degree of interrelation between the beliefs that comprise it. Although we do not have enough data to precisely measure the force of the discourses broadcast by YES and by NO in their respective campaigns, if we look at graphs 3 and 4, an analogy came to be of that utilized by Descartes to suggest the force of a discourse: “A chain is as weak as its weakest link”. Which were the weakest links in both positions at the onset of the campaign? The arguments that appear below, disconnected from the others. In the case of YES: “The great majority of deaths by firearms is caused by guns purchased by common citizens”; and “Prohibition will reduce the number of guns in the hands of criminals”. The former was a fundamental element in the diagnosis that YES made of the “current world”. The latter was an important aspect to its prognosis, of the benefits that could result from prohibiting gun sales. Strangely both these arguments, despite being strategically relevant, were mentioned very little at the beginning of the YES campaign. Despite the drop in the other beliefs related to the YES campaign, these two arguments remained as disconnected from the rest as they had been at the onset of the campaign. Apparently if we consider the traditional division of rhetorical acts into two types, persuasion and seduction, YES’ initial option leaned much more to the latter than to the former.

On the other hand, NO’s discourse presents, at the beginning of the campaign, only one disconnected argument: “Today I don’t need a gun, but if one day I should, I want to have the right to buy one.” As we saw earlier, 70% of the NO propaganda hammered the subject of rights. The result is visible: while the other arguments remain at the high levels they started, this advanced progressively towards the others. Strictly speaking, it rose together with the NO campaign and is, in a certain manner, the argument that helped “wrap up” the NO discourse as a coherent whole. It is the moral cement that fills the gap in information and decrease the anxiety of the voter in relation to his vote and to the future. On the Oct. 16 program, the program announcer formulates this discourse in the most synthetic manner: “Prohibition will not solve a single problem. It will only strip a citizen of his right.”

Conclusions
1. The YES campaign was unable to perceive the disjunction between the referendum and the previous campaigns in favor of disarmament and, consequently, underestimated the untimely
nature of this “out-of-season” poll. NO, from the onset, knew how to share this perception with voters, suggesting the useless and illusory nature of the same. YES in turn imagined the referendum as a continuation of the disarmament and often insisted on the risks of guns, without managing to demonstrate that there was a link between “being against guns” or “in favor of disarmament” and voting for the prohibition of gun sales. Its major strategic error was to ignore that popular support for disarmament (fundamentally passive, since the majority of the population really had no weapons to turn in) might not automatically be transformed into a YES vote. This mistake – firstly an error in interpreting opinion polls – compromised all of the propaganda activities launched from the beginning of the campaign.

2. From the rhetorical point of view, while NO knew how to say “THEM” and corner YES together with politicians and governments, the YES campaign was unable to characterize to voters their “US” (their first ‘face’ was that of entertainers) and only began to suggest who “THEY” might be too late. A good characterization of “US” and “THEM” helps confer a material element to a complex and controversial subject, and before which voters feel insecure regarding what decision to make. When a voter does not like “THEM”, it doesn’t matter what they say: he is against “THEM”. YES probably did not realize the scenario of uncertainty that was heightened by this referendum and underestimated voter anxiety. The ‘pre-moral’ and ‘pre-political’ categories that it mobilized in its favor (“defense of live”, “guns are horrible”) were unable to fill the information gaps of voters so that they would feel “at ease” voting YES.

3. YES’ largest catastrophe was to have lost the credibility battle. NO managed to position itself as trustworthy and unbiased, as YES could not overcome the accusation that it distorted facts and falsified figures. As its initial gamble was on seduction instead of persuasion, when its legion of celebrities was defeated, it did not have sufficient credibility to recoup the force of its discourse to the end of the campaign.

4. And the question that lingers: could it have been different? Hard to say. The messages are codified in function of the context and not only according to the strict sense of the discourse itself. The context was not favorable and YES’ “reasons” contradicted common sense. If the referendum had not taken place in a different period from elections, it would not have been seen as so untimely, political leaders would necessarily have had to take sides regarding it and another completely different dynamic would have been set in play. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to imagine that a cause that initially was “liked” by the majority of the population, could have converted this into a vote. This would have required a communication strategy for the referendum as a singular political act. That is, the Brazil Without Weapons Front would have had to have sought outside the strict context of disarmament, a broader reason to say YES. This is what the “Legitimate Defense Front” did with the topic of “rights”, supported by the notion that the referendum was useless smoke-and-mirrors. Lacking a more consistent communication strategy, YES entered the referendum “de-politicized” and fell into the trap of discussing whether having a gun was or wasn’t a right, when this was not what was truly at stake. It conducted the political struggle on terrain chosen by the adversary. What alternative could it have had? How could it enter the debate politicized, evoking a set of images and feelings that, even by analogy, would lead people to say “yes”? The initial intuition of an answer seems to have reached the YES team too late. On the Oct. 14 program, YES proclaimed: “voting for the other side is leaving things the way they are”. In fact, the referendum had two sides, but not just the side of the “defenders of guns” against the “defenders of peace”. The one who said NO to resisting an outrage also said NO to maintaining a privilege. And the one who said YES to submitting to an injustice also said YES to the urge to change things. The Brazil Without Weapons propaganda had no plan to make the NO the vocalization of a privilege and much less to make YES echo as the will and courage to change. Would it have worked? Hard to say...
1 - Ou lamentaria a eficácia do propugnador - que é mais ou menos a mesma coisa. No entanto, o poço, por exemplo, o programa 'campaign' afirmou que "Voto NÃO é um risco". 

3 - A pesquisa mostra que, no final de 1999, a maioria dos entrevistados havia ouvido e se informado sobre a referenda, e que a maioria das pessoas que a tiveram em mente considerava que ela era necessária.

4 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

5 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

6 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

7 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

8 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

9 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

10 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

11 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

12 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

13 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

14 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

15 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

16 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

17 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

18 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

19 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.

20 - As semanas seguintes foram de grande interesse para os frentes, que estavam começando a se tornar uma presença significativa na mídia, e que estavam começando a se tornar uma força a ser considerada nas eleições.
people in relation to this statement shows that, despite the very dramatic spots created to broadcast this topic, the public did not consider that industry profits were a relevant factor to vote YES.

35 - On Oct. 0, the NO program mentioned the statute and stated that “it has become more difficult for law-abiding citizens to defend themselves, yet the criminals continue heavily armed because they don’t buy guns in stores.” It went on, accusing the government, which approved the statute and that was needed to approve a prohibition, for being incapable of disarming the criminals. It then reproduced a segment from O Globo showing that guns turned in during the campaign wound up in the hands of criminals, further characterizing the incompetence of the authorities.

36 - Also on Oct. 0, a YES commercial targeting women was launched: she was leafing through a photo album, and the mother was crying as she looked at the picture of her dead son. Dramatic music and voice enhanced the scene. Just like its predecessor from NO, it was not aired many times.


39 - Ditto, p. 105.

40 - VEIGA, op. cit., p. 184.

41 - ALDÉ, Alessandra and DIAS, Helvisa. “Intervalo surpresa: spots eleitorais na campanha municipal de 1996” (Surprise interval: electoral spots in the municipal campaign of 1996). Comunicação e Política (Rio de Janeiro), v. 5, n. 1, 1998, p. 84. They mentioned that “the hallmark of this new style of propaganda was the ‘Daisy Girl’ spot that juxtaposed images of a girl picking at a daisy and images of an atomic explosion to suggest that victory of the republican Barry Goldwater represented the risk of a nuclear holocaust.” [ALBUQUERQUE, A. Op. cit, p. 57]


44 - To a certain extent, this program, as with the “segmented commercials” previously mentioned, reacted to the charge that began to be made by YES against the arms industry the day before. They aligned all types of reasons to vote NO, in particular at this point, those that might attract people favorable to a disarmaments that, in the end, “didn’t work out”.


46 - Idem, p. 192.

47 - Due to the social roles that a society usually reserves to them, men feel more anxiety in relation to uncertainty itself (they feel obliged to play the role of “opinion leaders”). This anxiety is what makes men more sensitive to “rational” types of arguments – and not, as we usually say, because in contrast, women are naturally “emotional”.


50 - VEIGA, L. Op. cit. p. 186. In this sense, one of YES’ communication challenges was that it did not know how to make the diagnosis it aired “seem true”.

51 - VEIGA, L. op. cit., p. 192).

52 - Surprisingly, this program was not repeated on the afternoon of the next day, which is customary in most campaigns. The YES coordinators decided to repeat “zero” program (the opening one on Oct. 01). This perhaps may have been read by its adversaries as a sign of weakness. The nighttime program of YES may have been assessed as a “loser”, and not repeated. On the night of Oct. 02, YES did not put the “mothers” on the air.

53 - Expression used in the program Oct. 15.

54 - NO program Oct. 16.

55 - On the first program, the NO anchor explained: “We don’t have famous entertainers. Our celebrities are common people, defenseless. And it is on behalf of these...” The next night, after presenting testimonials of relatives’ victims: “You see it. Our program has no famous celebrities that live in gated communities with complete security. ...Our celebrities are the Brazilian people – farmers, retired policemen – people like you, that need to protect themselves, and that don’t want to lose their rights”.

56 - At the same time that it sought to launch a cloud of doubt and suspicion on data published by YES, it praised itself: “Good information is the hallmark of our campaign” (Oct. 02). The subtlety ended with the “catastrophe” on Oct. 04. The previous day, YES had published a graph stating that only 5% of firearm deaths were from robberies, the remaining 95% took place from passion crimes, conflicts, street fights, etc. NO’s attack was massive. Right after a comment that “statistics from the people at NO are somewhat complicated”, a police authority argued, in a convincing manner, that the graph showed an obvious manipulation of the data. The “journalist” then concluded: “It is lamentable that we have to take time out from our campaign to explain to you”,... but the lies of the YES campaign have reached an absurd level”. Lastly, they called for a campaign that was “clean, honest and in defense of people’s rights.” Evidently, YES had not calculated the type of damage that manipulating a graph could cause in a campaign where it found itself obliged to support numbers and perceptions that went contrary to common sense. NO kept “nipping at its heels” from then on. On Oct. 12, for example, NO said of itself: “We conduct a campaign with true information and facts. No lies. No attempts to deceive. Think about that.” On Oct. 13, NO was ironic: “Brazil never saw so many statistics”. Only on Oct. 19 was YES able, in the Electoral Court, a “right to reply” in defense of its “statistics”.

57 - At the same time that it sought to launch a cloud of doubt and suspicion on data published by YES, it praised itself: “Good information is the hallmark of our campaign” (Oct. 01). YES had already suggested, somewhat subtly: “We have millions of reasons to defend the prohibition of arms sales. They have billions in reasons to defend.” On Oct. 07, the subtlety disappeared: “Don’t be deceived by those who just want to sell more and more weapons.” Then, Chico Buarque commented: “profits from arms sales is a goldmine that nobody wants to lose.” The first program of the new team made the interests and facts. No lies. No attempts to deceive. Think about that.” On Oct. 13, NO was ironic: “Brazil never saw so many statistics”. Only on Oct. 19 was YES able, in the Electoral Court, a “right to reply” in defense of its “statistics”.


60 - An effort in this direction is made in “Do Sim ao Não” (From Yes to No), by Gláucio Soares, in this present collection.

61 - Starting on Oct. 17, NO stopped disqualifying the referendum itself and began to encourage the act of people voting NO in order to defend their rights. As is already known by the YES front, it did not wish to run the risk of, due to the “uselessness” of the poll, suffer some reversal from the abstention of voters.
The referendum: televised propaganda and perceptions of the public

Presentation
The referendum held in October 2005 to prohibit firearms and ammunition sales had a turnout at the polls of 78% of the 122,042,615 eligible voters in Brazil. Of these, 64% voted NO against 36% who voted YES. The purpose of this article, is to verify reception of free television programs and spots as well as the arguments that best mobilized the majority of Brazilian voters, concentrated in classes C and D, and that ensured victory for the front against sales of firearms and ammunition in Brazil. Empirical material to support the analysis herein is a set of tapes and reports on 39 focus groups requested by members of the YES campaign. Nineteen of the abovementioned groups were in São Paulo (capital), 12 in Rio de Janeiro (capital), 04 in Belo Horizonte (MG) and 04 in Recife (PE). Each group, most of the time, had 10 members. All of the groups from São Paulo and Recife were mixed, made up of individuals from class C and their age group was from 27 to 54 years of age. The groups from Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte were made up of individuals from classes C and D and were divided by gender. Most of the individuals recruited were undecided or tending towards YES or towards NO in relation to their stance regarding the referendum, thus avoiding the so-called “hard” votes, that is, consolidated positions. Three of the groups in São Paulo were conducted before the free propaganda was broadcast on national television. These were also mixed groups, made up of individuals from classes B and C and were divided into three age groups: 18 to 24, 28 to 35 and 40 to 60 years of age. Televised propaganda and spots from both the YES and NO campaigns were presented and commented on. Political propaganda in Brazil is regulated by the 1965 Electoral Code and, ever since, assessment of its importance on voting decisions has been controversial. There is one group of authors who exalt the role of political propaganda in the media as fundamental to the democratic process and for voters to make their decisions. On the other hand, other authors see voters not as a ‘clear slate’ where propaganda plays the sole or major role in decision-making when voting. Our perspective is that political propaganda plays a role as a potential indicator of democratic development, “an effort in civic education” (Albuquerque, 2005 apud Lissoviski, 2006), and is, at the same time, an instrument, not actually of the population, but for use by political parties to garner votes and members (Ramos, 2005 and Ferreira, 2006). In politics, free propaganda has become a fundamental element in presenting candidates and is given special attention by those in so-called “Political Marketing” that has become increasingly more apparent in US campaigns starting in the 1950s and in Brazil beginning with re-democratization in 1985 (Dias, 2004; Coneglian, 2004). Methodological instruments for measuring reception of political propaganda are still being experimented with, nonetheless one may say that decision-making also considers religious beliefs, class position, location within the country, kinship and the accumulated social-political capital of the candidates in the campaign. Using the perspective adopted herein, political propaganda is a fundamental instrument in electoral campaigns because it disseminates ideologies and candidacies, and because it collaborates in voting decision-making without necessarily being the central element in the same. Nevertheless, I defend the notion that in this referendum, free propaganda on television assumed unparalleled importance, as it was not an ordinary election, a dispute between candidates and parties, but rather of an idea regarding which Brazilian citizens had never before stopped to ponder. The Disarmament campaign had some visibility due to mobilization of churches, public

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activities of national NGOs and periodic publicity in the press on the number of weapons collected by police. The disarmament campaign sought to mobilize “all against weapons and for life” and stated that “The people wanted a Brazil without weapons”, that the country needed to “disarm the spirit” (Birman, 2005). The question put forth in the referendum, however, was something different. The electorate was to vote YES or NO to say whether or not she or he was in favor or against a prohibition on the purchase and sale of weapons and ammunition in Brazil and reflection on this only began to gain space on the public agenda through free propaganda in the media. Before the campaign was broadcast most of the population knew next to nothing about the referendum. Before the free propaganda campaign, Disarmament was public knowledge but the Referendum wasn’t. Some of the arguments in favor of NO (such as increased vulnerability of “law-abiding citizens”) and YES (crimes by persons known to the victim) had been presented before October 2005 but had not been the topic of discussions amongst friends, at the workplace or within the family. The free campaign on radio and television became the prime venue for the dispute for the electorate, which in this article is not seen as a “clean slate”, rather that used television to trigger the necessary elements to reflect on the topic being proposed. Although other mechanisms were also used by the YES and NO groups in this process, free propaganda seems to have assumed great relevance in providing arguments and information for popular debate.

The present paper is divided into three parts. The first part deals with observing the reception of televised programs, based on analytical separation into cycles that enables use to identify different reactions at different moments in the propaganda. The second part focuses on arguments used by the YES and NO campaigns, highlighting those most utilized by participants in focus groups and nuances in their reactions to arguments according to gender and region. The third part analyzes perceptions on Disarmament and Peace.

1. Campaign on the air
1.1 Free propaganda cycles
Perceptions of voters changed throughout the entire televised free propaganda campaign. In the focus groups, one could easily see the start-and-stop of reactions caused by different tactics used by marketing teams from each group, especially by those in favor of YES. Even though certain ideas set during the first few days of the broadcasts persisted throughout the campaign, nuances could still be noted. Subdividing and characterizing the campaign into cycles was the best way of analyzing reactions and public debates on the topic proposed by the Referendum. Calling the different stages cycles leads to the idea of possible intersections. In other words, the moment a set of elements was presented to the public on the air may not have ended by the time new elements were presented. Therefore, convergences could later arise. For example, if at the beginning of the YES propaganda, they had decided to show several entertainers and to appeal to sentiments, they did not completely ignore conducting more educational work and presenting statistics during the following cycle.

1st Cycle – Idealization:
The first cycle took place before broadcast of the free radio and television programs on national networks. Participants in the focus groups were divided between those who had no knowledge that there was to be a referendum (the majority were in this situation) and those who “had heard about it” but that did not know exactly what it entailed. When stimulated to reflect – based on watching programs that were broadcast and spots – participants idealized YES and NO in the sense of not knowing exactly what they represented, what they “meant”. The programs therefore provoked “lukewarm” reactions: the groups found the arguments interesting, the debate, but they didn’t know what they would achieve from a YES and with a NO. The Referendum at the time had no place in their lives.

During this cycle one could note that some of the arguments used in favor against Disarmament (example: disarmament is the beginning of a change towards a less violent Brazil or the ‘law-abiding’ citizens are being disarmed while the ‘criminals’ continue armed) appeared and began to become part of people’s perception on the Referendum. During this cycle YES held the advantage, as it was connected to the idea of Disarmament in the public opinion.

2nd Cycle – Discovery:
The first five days of broadcast of the free televised propaganda correspond to the second cycle, a time when members of the focus groups carefully watched the arguments presented on programs and spots. This cycle is characterized by discovery in relation to the referendum: the arguments of the two sides and voting day. Doubts that arose during this cycle regarding the origin of the referendum permeated the entire campaign.
to the detriment of the YES group.

It was more precisely from the fourth program that participants began demonstrating greater knowledge on the Referendum and revealed that discussion on the topic began at the workplace, among friends and family.

The NO group bet on an austere program, presenting a journalist (it is worthy of note that journalism gained public notoriety from the efficiency in investigating and presenting what became known as the ‘mensalão’ or ‘monthly kickback’ scandal [for votes], involving businessmen, traditional politicians and the highest levels of the federal government) wearing classic and discrete clothing. Program colors were those of the Brazilian flag. They used a mascot to ‘speak’ directly to the voter during the educational section of the propaganda. The basic abovementioned layout was followed as long as the campaign was on the air.

The YES program bet on light-heartedness and entertainment. The backdrop was in bright colors and a young actress in the middle to present the program. Several actors and singers would speak. The slogan to vote YES would be used frequently in detriment to an explanation on what it meant. YES was presented as being in favor of life in opposition to death, represented by NO.

3rd Cycle – Experimentation:
The third cycle began on the 6th day of the propaganda campaign. Starting with this session, group participants began to present a repertoire of arguments they claimed to have absorbed from the media and through their network of relationships. They experimented these arguments with those present, who listened carefully to their reactions and commented on them. This back-and-forth marked our perception of the third moment in observing the televised Referendum campaign. They seemed excited about the debate and sought to convince those around them that their argument was valid even though they themselves had not decided how they would vote.

The YES campaign slowly invested in a more educational tone by a (white) actress and a (Negro) journalist, who became joint anchors of the program. Appearances by entertainers decreased and citizens began to appear more often.

The NO group bet heavily on the issue of a right to be preserved and in the sense of vulnerability of ‘law-abiding citizens’ threatened by criminals.

4th Cycle - Consolidation:
The fourth cycle began on the 10th program. Characteristics of this cycle extended until the end of the free propaganda. Arguments in this cycle showed signs of crystallizing. Undecided group participants began to show biases to vote NO.

The NO group began to emphasize more on the issue of vulnerability, using simple and easy-to-understand images to enhance the sense of fear within the population. During this cycle, NO consolidated its image as "the vote for protection". Thus, YES began to mean increased vulnerability to society, especially to the poorest of citizens within it.

On the other hand, the YES program began to invest more in empirical demonstrations of the concepts it had presented in the broadcasts and gave air time to physicians and law professionals. Educational talks and presentation of statistics diverged on the programs.

Both NO as well as YES underwent moments of loss of credibility during this cycle. NO because it went on an offensive against YES, pointing out certain contradictions in statistical data presented during the YES program, increasing the idea of manipulation and confusion regarding this group. The YES front fell into discredit, since the idea that it attempted to manipulate people - a notion present from the first programs – from the presence of entertainers, was aggravated by the appearance of religious authorities on the air - a sensation especially present among participants from Rio de Janeiro - and from the presentation of statistical data that was not completely understood by the voters, did not sink in and did not appear to be true.

To finalize, it is noteworthy that both issues crosscut the analytical division proposed herein: the sensation of being unprepared to respond to the issue put forth and lack of knowledge as to the origin of the referendum. Insecurity in relation to what was truly being voted on and possible consequences of the vote favored the NO side, as it meant to maintain the status quo. If the voter does not know how things will change, or rather, cannot see how this change will influence her or his life, the voter will tend to vote conservatively.

1.2 YES and NO on television

YES – PROGRAM OF DECEIT AND OF THE ELITE

This item will present the reasons for which the YES propaganda began to be seen by the majority as being of the ‘elite’ and as ‘deceitful’. Nonetheless, the positive view that was created in relation to the program will also be presented,
which occurred when they changed marketing personnel.

The entertainers were double agents in the negative representation of the program. People’s idea was that actors and singers present in the campaign were receiving from ten to twenty thousand for their work or saw the appearances as a means to promote themselves professionally, therefore they were not necessarily committed to the YES cause. On the other hand, their appearances reminded people of the notion that YES was a program of the elite, inasmuch as actors and other wealthy segments of society could continue having the protection afforded by weapons through security firms for hire. Using this understanding, poor people would become increasingly vulnerable to the ‘bad guy’ while the rich would have further recourses. YES would only increase the chasm that already exists between the rich and the poor in Brazil.

Statistical data presented did not sink in and made people believe that the YES program was “confused” – a word used by members of the focus groups. Since the view that the YES side sought to manipulate voters already existed, the “confused” characterization began to be seen as a facet in the process of trying to manipulate voters.

When the program first changed its editorial line (third cycle), although assessment concerning the educational nature of the program was positive, relative credibility generated through the change did not necessarily win over voters.

NO – PROGRAM OF SINCERITY AND OF THE PEOPLE

Right in the first programs, the idea was put forth that NO was the 'program of the people' and this was consolidated throughout the campaign. Group participants highlighted the presentations as positive that were made by common people giving testimonies. Empathy and communication with these voters was immediate. The question was not to present a handsome candidate and a technical pitch to generate a sense of being different/ distant, rather, on the contrary, to talk to voters about their decision to vote on an idea. The voter want to know how voting YES or NO would affect their life and the campaign was clear on this point: nothing would change. NO exploited the idea that crime problems would not be resolved by controlling the circulation of firearms on the legal market as YES was telling them. This was a simple message and it ‘sank in’ with the voters. YES pointed towards a possibility while NO presented certainty.

Between the third and fourth cycles of propaganda, NO was being poorly assessed, as it had ‘opened fire’ on the YES campaign. Nevertheless, this did not necessarily mean that voters in the focus groups would vote YES. Added to this, there was a re-signification of the negative assessment as one member of the group noted: “It’s only when they fight that the poor get to know the truth”. Everyone else immediately agreed.

2. Reception of the arguments

2.1 Arguments for YES and for NO

This section will address the arguments broadcast via free televised propaganda for both YES and NO campaigns that most mobilized participants of the focus groups, seeking to understand how they aided us in reflecting on the campaigns’ national mobilization.

The arguments for the NO campaign can be divided into three categories. Firstly there is Vulnerability, Disbelief/Corruption and Civil Law. Secondly there is Social Inequality and Aversion to prohibitions. Thirdly there are arguments linked to “Conspiracy Theories”. It should be noted that arguments for the last case were not explicitly broadcast on television, but were constantly referred to in the focus groups. The order in which they are listed corresponds to the presumed importance the arguments had on voting decisions. In the end, I believe that the first set (without failing to consider the other elements that work together towards a decision on how to vote such as religious inclination and primary loyalties) was strong enough to determine the vote – especially vulnerability and corruption – with the other two sets acting as supporting elements in the decision. Other studies should complement this one so that we can state this preliminary observation with greater certainty.

2.1.1 For the no

Vulnerability

This argument was the most fundamental to the campaign. The sense of fear, the sense of ‘ontological uncertainty’, reminiscent of Anthony Giddens’ ideas was mobilized from the beginning to the end of the NO campaign, particularly at the second half of the televised propaganda until its end. This ‘theory’ meant that the ‘law-abiding citizens’ would become even more vulnerable vis-à-vis criminal activities. The benefit of a doubt, that is, upright citizens would no longer have the criminal not knowing whether she or he would find someone armed to ‘receive
her or him’ in their favor. The ‘criminal’ would know that the ‘law-abiding citizen’ would invariably be unarmed and therefore would be easier prey to the predators.

The NO propaganda worked on this is an efficient manner inasmuch as it communicated the message to voters through ‘simple’ images in its commercials and spots. Many of them were mentioned in the groups even though they had not been broadcast that same day, demonstrating how they became fixed in people’s minds. An example of this are the spots in which a white criminal (they were careful to be “politically correct”) takes off his ski mask and a big smile appears on his face. A voice off-camera says that the “criminal” will be happy that the “law-abiding citizen” can no longer buy firearms. Another spot that was often mentioned by classes C and D was one showing a house on the door stating that it had no firearms within. We could also cite the one that presented a police car-top light that dimmed as the strength of the “criminal” waxed stronger.

The idea is that criminals possess “heavy weapons” and that these are the ones that promote violence in the minds of the people. This image was disseminated by the media: there are innumerable magazine covers, movies and books that present criminals as being “heavily armed”. Luis Carlos Friedman warns us as to the role played by media in modern society. The media “tells us what happens” so that what does not appear on television, newspapers and magazines or is not highlighted by the same never existed, isn’t real. In addition to the media, some members of the focus groups told of cases of robberies and violence linked to drug trafficking in which AR-15’s were used. Two images were triggered at this time: heavy weapons are the ones creating the risk and heavy weapons are with the “criminals” and not with the “law-abiding citizens”. Lines like these reinforce the message that NO sought to disseminate, yet that does not correspond to reality, according to statistics presented by YES. Figures tell us that the weapons representing risk are small caliber and often purchased legally by “law-abiding citizens”.

One of the YES programs followed the movements of a small caliber firearm. The propaganda said that it was purchased by a professional who had been robbed and had had it stolen by “criminals” who then used it in a series of crimes. The propaganda, as well as the argument it tried to get over to the voter did not appear realistic. YES’ attempt to refute the grassroots feeling had a price. YES seemed to be talking about unreal things, almost idyllic, while NO showed the reality in Brazil. Most of the time, political propaganda seeks to trigger already existing arguments or ones that, due to a certain situation, are easy for voters to absorb. Betting on the opposite is always a risk that few are willing to take.

Disbelief/Corruption

Arguments linked to disbelief in Brazilian democratic institutions and corruption were frequent. The police (part of it), political parties and politicians (without exception) as well as all three levels of government, especially the state and federal levels, were widely criticized and negatively associated to this referendum by members of the focus groups. Common people stated, whenever the opportunity arose that “nothing in Brazil works” and that “anything that depends on the government will fail”. On the other hand, they said they believed that changes should be triggered by the State. They expected it to be a provider and greater administrator of public life and that the “people” should merely accept the activities of a competent State. This disbelief combined with “social dependence” on the State enhances this great feeling of anguish and dissatisfaction. The solution to the problem is not apparent. How did this affect the campaign? The logic is as follows: since “nothing in Brazil works, why should I vote for change? Nothing would change anyway!”.

Another part of this outlook was the idea permeating the groups regarding the increase of contraband firearms in Brazil and consequently of corruption if YES would win. Along the same lines, some stated that they would vote NO as a means of opposing the government’s attempt to cover-up the ‘mensalão’ kickback scandal. The very existence of the Referendum was linked to the corruption process in the government. Thus, by voting NO, this was a means of saying NO to the game the government was trying to play by announcing the Referendum.

Civil Law

This was the argument that, together with the ones that fed the feeling of Vulnerability and Disbelief/Corruption, strengthened the NO vote in the groups. The idea that a classic civil right was being taken away, that is, the right to protect one’s own life, and that other rights (starting with this one) could be lost at any moment, came up in all of the focus groups under observation. The conception of the State is an entity that interferes in the lives of citizens.
In the view of José Murilo de Carvalho, published in an article in the Folha de São Paulo newspaper on October 30, 2005, Brazilians demanding a civil right is a memorable and historical moment, a surprise that warrants further analysis, as in 1997 a study was conducted in Rio de Janeiro that showed a low level of awareness on the part of those interviewed, of their rights, especially political and civil rights. In all, 57% of the subjects could not mention a single right. 2% of those interviewed cited political rights and 12% civil rights. The majority of rights cited were social rights, totaling 26% of those mentioned in interviews. Nevertheless, protection of one’s rights did not come up in the discourse of members of the classes interviewed as a political, “conscious” demand for a right. This argument is raised, especially, in conjunction with fear that other rights will also be taken in the future. There may be certain distinctions regarding the added value of such conceptions within different social classes in Brazil. The NO propaganda presented judges and other law professionals saying that the State should not influence such a personal decision, that is, whether or not one should own a firearm. This argument linked more to liberal thinking was not cited that often amongst participants of the groups pertaining to classes C and D. In the specific case of focus group members, when asked to think about what having or not having a firearm meant, the absolute majority did not want to purchase weapons, but would like to ensure the right to do so for someone else (distant, abstract) and were fearful that losing that right would mark the beginning of further losses of rights.

Social inequality
During the focus group discussions there was always the idea that a victory for the YES campaign would consolidate the difference between rich and poor in Brazil since the poor would no longer be able to buy firearms nor would they be able to hire private security services.

The YES campaign invested in trying to show that nowadays a poor person could not legally own a firearm, as the complete firearm registration process with the Federal Police costs around three thousand reals. Presented with this information, they asked: “why change then? This is a fight amongst the big boys”. As was mentioned earlier, this and the following arguments did not hold such “strong persuasive power” in comparison to the first category. Nevertheless, this helped consolidate the idea that YES was seeking to manipulate the “poor folk” and were on the side of the elite, and would thus not correspond to the aspirations of the majority of the people in Brazil.

Aversion to prohibition
Prohibition is a negative idea, generally speaking, and in principle can be defeated in a context where liberal discourse (even though incongruent to practice) is predominant – this is true especially of the Brazilian social elite. To prohibit is very strong, group participants would say. Especially prohibiting an object that in and of itself did not represent anything evil. Weapons represent death, but at the same time, protection. Some groups talked about drugs being prohibited. When the subject turned to marijuana, controversies arose. Nevertheless, regarding cocaine, everyone said they were in favor of it being prohibited. Cocaine signifies evil in and of itself, an intolerable evil even morally speaking in comparison to a weapon that is not evil of itself, but is made so by the manner in which it is used. “Routine activities” are tolerated even though they may not be legal. The “Brazilian way of getting around obstacles” (“jeitinho brasileiro”) (Barbosa, 1988; Da Matta, 1997) form of socialization allows circulation of “political merchandise” (Misse, 1997; Machado Silva, 2005) and tolerates a personalized form from which the Brazilian State is constituted, yet presents moral limits in relation to certain activities. For example, sale and even consumption of “heavy” drugs such as cocaine is not widely supported within this system.

In addition to the aforementioned, there was a concern, especially amongst women, that difficulty in buying a firearm would make young people more interested in having such an object.

“Conspiracy Theory”
There was always someone amongst the participants of the focus groups who would cite an argument she or he had heard at work, discussed with relatives, linked to a “Conspiracy Theory”. These arguments revolved around stories circulating on the internet such as an association between the Globo media network and Glock. This then was a business ploy to ensure high returns for both organizations since insecurity would greatly increase if the YES campaign won, enabling private security companies to enter the Brazilian market full force. Another story was that Russian and US weapons companies were united trying to capture the domestic market if the YES side won. Still another argument presented the increased vulnerability of the population within
the context of questionable activities of the State such as took place in countries such as China and Germany.

2.1.2 For the yes
Danger from Weapons
YES’ strongest argument, that is, the argument most often cited in all focus groups and that made those undecided to lean towards YES were mainly linked to the Danger/Risk that having a firearm represents. Having a firearm means protection, on the one hand, but places the family at greater risk both during a robbery as well as in daily life when accidents can take place. Whenever people would reflect that a weapon might cause an accident involving family members or when they would think about a weapon being used in haste, when a person was ‘besides himself’ and that might transform a ‘law-abiding citizen’ into a criminal, the YES side gained strength. Everyone knew of someone near to them that had a story of an accident or improper use of a firearm. Surprisingly, every group had at least one case to be told regarding how much of a risk to the owner’s life and that of her or his family and neighbors having a weapon represented. Everyone stated that they were uncomfortable in imagining their neighbors armed or living in a society where everyone owned firearms. Many stressed how having a gun “made the person braver” and that this represented a hazard to those around the person. It is as if the weapon has a power, as if being armed changed a person’s character. People became more violent, more fearless, and would pay less attention to the consequences of their acts. The spots and programs that showed cases of accidents involving firearms at home moved people and generated debates whenever seen. Even though this was the argument that most mobilized group members to vote YES, there was always the possibility of refuting the danger of a weapon kept in a safe place or a person exercising self-control in the use of such an object. The greatest fear was not in relation to weapons of family members or a neighbor, but regarding the “criminal’s gun”, especially because there was no control over it.

Hope
During the television campaign, the YES campaign, as mentioned earlier, began detaching itself from its original image of being linked to Disarmament. Nonetheless, many participants who were biased towards voting YES stated that their vote would not be able to consolidate necessary changes in terms of public security, rather that a prohibition on firearms and ammunition sales would mark the beginning of a process of necessary transformation with the aim of achieving a more fraternal society. Furthermore, since the base idea was one of weapons being a danger, this argument was refuted by other group participants, as mistrust in the State indicated that even if a YES vote mean the beginning of a transformation process, it would not occur, as “nothing works in Brazil”.

2.2 Men and women in the referendum
The aim of this item is to look into gender-related nuances triggered in defense of voting on the Referendum. It is interesting to note that social roles, Durkheim’s old reference, remains marked in certain arguments used by men and women when siding with YES or with NO. Moreover, it is noteworthy that there was not much difference in approaches, yet, when they did occur, they acted to confirm places occupied in the established social life of the genders, even though in modern times this has undergone change that permeates societies in different ways.

To women, weapons appear more associated to insecurity than to protection. Although the issue of rights mobilized the decision on how to vote amongst participants, it was not precisely defending the right of a husband, much less of a son, but the right of some abstract and distant being, to have a firearm. When asked regarding their own desire to have a weapon the answer was almost invariably negative. They believed that a gun is an object more attractive to men and voting to prohibit sale of firearms and ammunition could increase young men’s desire to obtain such an object. This idea was more repugnant to women than to men. They were truly horrified by the idea of their sons being armed. At that moment, the weapon meant increased risk of death and not protection. There was a spot produced by the NO campaign that used young people defending the right and saying that prohibition was poorly evaluated by group participants. Although the propaganda was not explicit regarding which right they were referring to - a marketing strategy – the women vehemently rejected the right of young people to have firearms. This right, according to the women, should not be preserved. Care for their own in ‘avoiding’ risk was the place women assumed against weapons for themselves and for family members.

Amongst men, however, guns were seen as ambiguous objects, yet that did not generate any rejection. On one hand, firearms are an important instrument to protect one’s own life and especially the ‘lives of
family members’. Protecting one’s honor using a gun was an argument exclusively and frequently used by men. They said that no one would flirt with their wives if they were armed and thus they could defend their partners if attacked by a rapist. Without a gun they said this would either be very difficult or impossible. At the same time that this argument – defense of honor – was seen as positive, it also produced a contrary reflection, that is, that a weapon empowered one’s virility and provided situations in which bearing a weapon would not be feasible. In these cases, the weapon would not represent protection, rather risk, as it exposed the individual and those with him to danger. Even though the weapon had this ambiguous nature to it, the protection it afforded was the strongest argument during group discussions. It is as if men inherited the legacy of having to protect their young and the one that cares for them even if it threatened his very existence.

2.3 Regional differences: talks about propaganda on the air
The discourse presented by the groups was quite similar, despite the fact that the studies were conducted in cities in four different states (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and Recife). Poll results generates a number of questions and makes us feel that issues exist that can mobilize the nation in a rather uniform manner. In terms of the referendum, differences exist both in relation to the number of votes for both fronts as well as possible added meaning thereto, nevertheless NO won in every state. It seems obvious that in Rio Grande do Sul, where the most famous weapons factory in Brazil is located that NO won by a wide margin, but what can help us understand why YES achieved its highest percentages in the polls in the state of Pernambuco? Why did NO receive such expressive number of votes in Rio de Janeiro? Would it be a response to the feeling (and real situation) of vulnerability to which the population is exposed? We are all tempted to say yes, but isn’t it that this is just the most obvious answer? Perhaps. This does not necessarily invalidate this hypothesis, however. Focus groups conducted with inhabitants from the city of Rio de Janeiro and metropolitan region, the category “vulnerable”, “unprotected”, “fear” and “danger” constantly appear in the talks about being in favor of disarmament (they were stimulated to say whether they were all in favor of disarmament and then whether they were favorable to the YES campaign), but not to the existence of the referendum and much less to the YES campaign. In Rio de Janeiro, more than in other states, the streets seem to be marked by conflict, danger and imminent risk. This kind of talk is not exclusive to this case, it also occurred in groups from São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, although in Rio de Janeiro, people were full of emotion when they spoke. People would squirm in their chairs, raise their arms, gesticulate, get up from their chairs, the topic was so charged with emotion. In Recife, could it be that the political capital of Raul Jungman affected the YES campaign positively or could it be that the tradition in using sharp-edged cutting weapons was decisive? We might hypothesize that crimes committed by persons known are more easily visualized by the local population making the main argument of the YES campaign, the existence of these types of crimes ‘sink in’ better amongst these voters? And the so-called conservatism of the voters in São Paulo? This did not was not enough to overcome the famous ”irreverent and progressive” voters in the ‘fluminense’ region. This referendum amplified certain issues that still require careful observation.
Let us remember the voting numbers in the states where the focus groups were conducted.
The arguments for and perceptions of the YES and NO issues most present in the groups are as follows: in Belo Horizonte, the most prevalent was the observation that the YES program seemed confused. This city did not seem to be as uncomfortable regarding the appearance of entertainers and religious authorities. These agents are tolerated and even well received. Intolerance regarding the appearance of religious agents as well as of entertainers on the television program was greater in Rio de Janeiro. Especially noteworthy was the reaction made to the speech given by Dom Damasceno from Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Aparecida. He appeared calling upon the faithful present at the church on the day the patron saint was being commemorated to vote YES. The Rio de Janeiro group was this attitude as negative, comparing it to the practices of IURD – the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. The moving line between evangelical religion and politics is quite controversial and frowned upon even by members of the same religion.

Perception in São Paulo regarding the presence of religious leaders on the programs was controversial but not for the same reasons presented in Rio de Janeiro. According to the analysis of the São Paulo groups, the religious leaders’ discourse was vague (as was that of the entertainers), in other words, it added little to the discussion, since it failed to provide clear and objective arguments for the decision to vote YES.

In Recife the issue of social inequality was highlighted in the discussions. The idea was that the Referendum could worsen social differences already so latent in Brazil if YES were to win. The presence of entertainers on the programs of the YES campaign confirmed the difference between elite and poor.

In Rio de Janeiro, to speak of weapons and violence is to talk about the streets and, more specifically, the slums, drug dealers and corrupt policemen. The place of violence is the street. They could not easily visualize violence within the home. The idea of crimes committed by someone near and domestic violence focused on by YES programs may not have "sunk in" with these group members for this reason. In addition to feeling that it wasn’t as frequent an occurrence as the YES campaign reported, these crimes are ‘avoidable’ while violence perpetrated by criminals cannot be avoided individually and can only be addressed by the State.

### 3. YES and NO who to support?
#### 3.1 For the Yes

In the focus groups, participants were encouraged to discuss what side they were connected to or who was supporting each of the campaigns in the poll. There was no room for ambiguities in this game of ‘marked positions’: either you were on the good side or the bad. Either you represented the people or the government. There was no half-way. The campaign channeled things that way. Each side strove to be "on the side of good" and each tried to be perceived as the one that defended the interests of the "law-abiding citizen", but only one side could occupy such a place and it ended up being NO. YES came off as representing the economic and political elites of the country while NO consolidated itself as representative of the ‘people’. To the majority, YES was on the side of evil. Figures that personify evil in the minds of participants from classes C and D present in the groups were siding with YES, such as politicians, the federal government, criminals and corrupt policemen. People interviewed tried to describe the differences between honest and dirty cops. Regarding politicians, however, without exception, they were all considered as dishonest. Those mentioning them said they were directly linked to corruption.
First, YES seemed to be linked to the government. But how? The origins of the Referendum were not known by the majority of the population and it was easy for it to become linked to the government, as the federal government was facing a corruption scandal. The objective of the referendum, then, was to draw public attention away and to obtain a victory that could help it win votes in the 2006 election. According to Dr. Hélio Parente, attorney specialized in electoral law, the lack of knowledge of political rules by members of the YES campaign were responsible for its poor showing at the polls. The Electoral Court treated the referendum as an ordinary poll, that is, the rules established for the poll were similar to normal election rules, which worked to the disadvantage of the YES campaign as it could not show grassroots movements on the campaign nor could it prevail itself of the help of NGOs, so essential to the entire construction process and for the advances in the disarmament campaign. Therefore, the idea that the referendum came about to cover up a crisis within the federal government found ‘fertile ground’ or, in other words, it took root in popular opinion. Disbelief in politicians also worked negatively for the YES campaign. Most of the politicians sided with YES according to participants in the focus groups. A recent poll conducted by FGV – Fundação Getúlio Vargas – from 2004 and 2005 throughout Brazil, showed political parties being considered the worst institutions. Only 3% of the population deemed the situation very good compared to 41% which judged it as very poor. Criminals sided with the YES campaign as they would stand to benefit from a situation where the population had fewer weapons. In Rio de Janeiro, especially, the idea that “criminals”, particularly drug dealers, would become bolder, making life for the poor people – those most subject to their abuses – even more difficult. The Globo Network and entertainers also made up the group of YES supporters. Entertainers obviously because they appeared on programs and spots and Globo because many of the actors either work or worked exclusively for Globo and/or arguments linked to “conspiracy theories” that presented Globo’s interest in YES winning. In the view of the groups, religions supported YES. The same poll entitled “Citizenship, participation and political institutions: what do Brazilians think?” conducted by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, the Catholic Church was the most highly considered institution among those interviewed. 28% felt that it was very good compared to 5% who deemed it very poor. We might think: “if politicians are so poorly considered and contributed negatively to the YES campaign, why did the connection to religious leaders not contribute positively to the same campaign?” Participation of religious leaders was not seen by the general public in a manner that generated empathy. From what we were able to observe, religious leaders naturally and morally would be for YES, as YES, in principle, represented life. Nevertheless, this was not able to definitively or decisively mobilize (within the groups observed) the voting of the focus group participants. Group participants had the following to say regarding the declarations of religious leaders to vote YES: “of course he’s going to vote YES…”. It was a question of orientation, of doctrine. Religious people, as one participant said, “are for peace”. When this same participant, who had a bias towards voting NO was asked to state whether he was “for war”, he immediately reacted and said no. The peace that appears in connection with religious leaders is an intangible and individual peace, not a social peace in the sense of providing justice. For “law-abiding citizens”, justice is something that can be meted out with one’s own hand, legitimately, when the same or family members are being threatened. In the minds of these focus group members – we may say that this is what, generally speaking, “society thinks” – justice, in the case of religious people, is performed by God or by the divinity of their religious belief, but is not primarily performed by Man, especially when this entails some violent act that can even take the life of another.

3.2 For the NO
NO managed to portray a positive image in the view of focus group participants, even though those connected to the NO campaign were seen ambiguously by part of the population. Thus the police officers identified with the NO campaign were justified, as it would become more difficult for them to buy ammunition. Firearms manufacturers were for NO and this was seen as natural. It was in their interest, an economic ergo legitimate interest. People did not see anything wrong with this. It was not officially stated during the campaign that they were financing the NO side. This might have been seen as manipulation of propaganda to convince voters towards the interests of a certain sector. The notion was that gun manufacturers naturally positioned themselves with the NO side, which is different from thinking that they were investing in it heavily, as, according to group
participants, it was the government that was behind and investing money directly into the campaign. Lastly that the “law-abiding citizen” was connected to and, far from supporting, was being supported by the NO campaign. The constant appearance of unknown people confirmed the idea that NO was for the people, represented the people and was supported by the people.

4. Disarmament and peace

Before the Referendum campaign appeared on the national public agenda, Disarmament was identified with YES. With the onset of the free propaganda, YES became associated with the Referendum. Disarmament and Referendum revealed different moralities. The former raises the idea of peace and fraternity while the latter is almost political, therefore becomes more secular or profane, something not to be touched as it is not well understood or impure. The meaning of the Referendum campaign became connected to the meaning of the YES campaign and the meaning of the Disarmament campaign did not converge on either front, remaining an ideal to be pursued. This was seen as a step in the direction of peace and was looked upon kindly in comparison to the Referendum that arose as a possibility to “dupe the people”.

The representation of peace, to the participants, is connected to the idea of social justice and less to an intangible ideal (with no confrontation) or an individual idea of peace, “a peace that was desired (that) did not ask anyone regarding the nature of the barbarism against which it reacted” (Birman, pgs. 252, 2005). There are also those who “conceive peace as something that perhaps can be achieved by daily production and increasing numbers of deaths amongst slum dwellers and on the outskirts of the city, until they supposedly will ‘do away” with all of the ‘drug dealers” (Birman, pp. 285, 2005). In the view of those present in the groups, doing away with trade in firearms and ammunition was not necessarily equal to ending violence. A gun is only one element that makes up the situation of violence in the cities.

Violence is personified, is embodied in the “criminals” and in the corrupt who end up inciting the day-to-day malaise in Brazil’s larger cities. To do away with them would possibly be a fatal blow to the sensation of fear that grips the population. When one speaks of violence, one is not talking about the common citizen or “law-abiding citizen”.

To finalize

Lastly, the arguments of the YES campaign showed themselves to be insufficient before the feeling of vulnerability and insecurity present in the daily lives of the Brazilian population, especially those living in urban centers. To Anthony Giddens (1991) modernity affects the social understanding of risk, security and relations of intimacy/affection. Security, in its conception, is linked to the belief in the functioning of expert systems that ensure daily survival. The risks that oppose this security are present in the day-to-day of a large contingent of the world’s population, yet they do not reflect upon this constantly, under threat of making their very survival impossible. These risks could be categorized in relation to natural catastrophes, possibility of the use of an atomic bomb as well as in relation to structural unemployment and personal relations. It is noteworthy that this constitutes the framework of insecurities and risks that permeate the modern world from an English point of view. Nevertheless, as we think of how this thesis could be applied to the Brazilian reality and more specifically to the poorer classes of society (object of observation of this paper), expert systems are added to the risks in empowering “ontological insecurity”.

The arguments most mobilized in the victorious campaign were vulnerability, disbelief and rights. Part of this analysis is to qualify the categories to which we are referring to. Vulnerability is with regards to violence that the poorer population is subjected in the neighborhoods on the outskirts of cities or in slums, villas and areas they inhabit. This violence is perpetrated, most of the time, by “criminals” and police officers. Nonetheless, this vulnerability is also connected to insecurity caused by greater dependence on a State in which the poorest do not trust, for which they feel disbelief. Individual resources available to this class are scarcer than for the elite. Paths to resolve health, retirement and other problems must come from the State and not from their own initiatives. When it fails, the only possibility is to turn to established networks of relationships, preferably, amongst relatives and neighbors. Services offered by the State and the perception of political spheres as the most corrupt areas in the country empower this disbelief and “ontological insecurity”. Brazilians interviewed in a recent poll conducted by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation – FGV – found that 79% believed that corruption is the norm within public service and that this is not a phenomenon that we might consider as a consequence of the ‘kickback scandal’, as only ‘16% of those interviewed were interviewed after May 2005 when the crisis began’. Among the illiterate, 48% believed that “almost everybody is involved in corruption”. This is the segment of the
population that most needs public services on a daily basis. 68% do not believe or feel that the chances of public service correcting its errors are negligible. Expert systems are made up of services that the State should offer and/or regulate (health, education, housing, transportation, security, basic sanitation, electric energy, etc) and by expert knowledge provided to obtain these services and benefits. Vulnerability or “ontological insecurity” is in the venue of the street, related to the “criminal”, yet it also refers to provisions and facilities that constitute the State and democracy in Brazil. To the lower classes, security is not based on the abstraction of expert systems. In Giddens’ thesis, we do not think of expert systems, we do not have the knowledge to assess the technique provided by these systems. When addressing the poor, we see the flaws of the system on a daily basis, therefore, their basic confidence is more in nearby relations than in the expertise of the system. The YES campaign mobilized society to think about the risk of a firearm and the fatal shootings that occur in domestic quarrels and among relatives and neighbors. The YES side said that most homicides were not committed by “criminals” but rather by persons known to the victims. This idea did not appear to be true, and therefore, it was difficult to integrate this into people’s talk and discussion. Believing that one’s neighbor represents risk and a potentially greater risk than the “criminal” would be to empower a great feeling of vulnerability, already in existence. To the poor or less well off in Brazil, one may say that their form of survival is through daily observation of the condition of “ontological insecurity” in which they live. In other words, it is observing the risk that keeps them alive. I am not trying here to feed the idea that the less well off in society are the representation of the “consciously sad”, on the contrary, the forms of sociability among the poor in Brazil are many-fold during moments of leisure and lightheartedness. Nonetheless, to pay attention to the context of generalized risk is a sine qua non condition for their social and economic reproduction and, in the final analysis, for them maintaining themselves alive.

The issue of civil rights or more specifically the right to ensure one’s life and that of one’s family was an argument that was used heavily by the NO campaign. Regarding this we must firstly say that the mobilization for rights was exogenous, that is, it was not present in the discourse of common people before the televised propaganda and only appeared a few days after the television campaign, more precisely after the third cycle of the program. In other words, concern over maintaining a right or even legal knowledge regarding this right was not revealed until mobilized by the winning campaign. Secondly, within the perspectives of this paper, we believe that the issue of rights to the social classes studied expressed not a high level of political awareness, but rather fear of losing other rights – and at any moment – if this one were taken by the government. This perception was frequently mentioned and may reveal more a feeling of insecurity in relation to the government than actually a liberal political discourse. The ideas that the State is unpredictable and acts according to shady interests were the basis for this feeling. In this dispute for who would represent the “good” and justice, only one of the sides could be a winner. Free propaganda on national networks, especially television, played an important role where NO won the battle, but has not won the war.

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I wish to thank Ana Quiroga, Marilena Cunha, Regina Novaes, Clemir Fernandes and Flávio Conrado for their contributions to this paper.

According to Brazilian Economic Classification Criteria, members of class C have up to second grade education and monthly household income of R$ 9.00 while members of class D have up to elementary-Jr. high school education and maximum monthly income of R$ 424.00.

Two polling companies conducted this study: Imagem, a company from Rio de Janeiro and Clarice Herzo Associados, a company from São Paulo.

See Renato Costa Dias, 00; Lauro Barreto, 000; Olivar Coneglian, 00.

It is valuable to note that the YES front switched marketing teams times during the free propaganda period.

The researcher responsible for measuring the groups asked, as soon as the session began, if those present had heard about the Referendum. Many said they had heard about it but did not know what it was, what YES and NO stood for nor when the poll was to take place.

This data helps us think that the government crisis may be negatively affected by the Referendum as a whole with greater harm done to the YES front, as Gilberto Velho says in an interview granted to Jornal do Brasil in October 2005. Therefore one should not think that it was only the crisis the caused the negative view of politics and the State, resulting in the “ultra-anger vote” favoring the NO front. The negative view of government is crystallized, according to the already mentioned Getúlio Vargas Foundation poll. The main problem caused by the crisis to the campaign perhaps may have been to have made it impossible for the government to mobilize the administrative apparatus in favor of the YES front.

Poverty, according to the stigmatized vision, is criminalized as it is either actively participating in crime or consents to it and to its agents.

Anthony Giddens in his book “Third Way” presents as new relation which should be established with the State. Before modernity, the State assumed the role of “provider”, of a competent administrator of social life. In modern times, however, civil society should assume a more participatory role in managing social life not demanding this responsibility solely from the State. Broad participation would be, according to this theory, the possible path to the “harmonic” course of society.
From Yes to No: an analysis of tracking surveys

I. The solid core of the vote intention
A vote is different from a vote intention. The vote, in almost all electoral systems, is a categorical variable: one either votes for an option or does not. The vote intention may admit “degrees”, variations of intensity, or certainty. The refinement of that intensity depends only on the researcher who put together the questionnaire.

Those variations are important, at least in achieving two purposes:

* Estimating the results of the election,
* Understanding the process and the structure of the choice.

We can imagine the vote intention for YES and for NO in several manners, among them a continuum going from a closed preference YES to a preference, equally as closed, for NO, going through degrees increasingly less committed to one or the other, with the undecided and those with no preference in the middle. When the voting allows several options, such as in the case of more than two candidates, the one-dimensional description does not apply, and perhaps the best thing is to use various descriptions, for each electoral option.

The tracking research included two intensities for each option. “Won’t change” and “May change”. We call the first the solid core, which is

* Made up of persons who “have closed ranks and will not give in”
* Even though some give in
* Is usually surrounded by a periphery of inconstant opinion, which may change and accept that it may change
* This periphery may be divided into as many rings around the solid core as the researcher may desire
* Even if there are more than two or three, the differences lose their power of explication.

The tracking research, carried out during a period of less than two weeks, showed clear opinion movements:

* In 11 days the solid core for YES shrank from almost half to one third
* The NO core gained more than ten percentage points
* Everything indicates that the movement continued after the tracking ceased
* The undecided stayed at the same level

The importance of the “solid core” is that, as a rule, it is harder to change it; it is more constant, more reliable.

II. The solid core and its socio-demographic base
Gender is related to many behaviors and political behavior is one of them. There is a statistically significant difference between the genders regarding vote intention. First, reflecting the gender differentiation in political participation in Brazil, there are more undecided women, who don’t know, etc: 14% against 8%; next, even though the differences relating the group that may change are small, they point in the same direction that the solid core does: women are more pro-YES and less pro-NO, in relation to men. Adding the solid core to those who might change, 51% of men were pro-NO (on the days the tracking was done), compared to 38% of women. The association between gender and vote intention, assessed by the Phi coefficient, of 0.15 is statistically significant at the level of 0.0001.

* PhD in Sociology (University of Washington), Professor of IUPERJ (Rio de Janeiro State University’s Research Institute).
The class situation, measured by educational level, is related more strongly to the vote intention than the two demographic variables above. The interviewees were divided into three groups by class situation according to education: up to eighth grade: completed or incomplete high school, and higher, completed or incomplete. The percentage of those closing closed ranks with NO and not going to change grew with class situation: %, % and 9\%.

The association between social class, measured by education, and vote intention, was stronger among women than among men - in the sense that the association coefficients were higher. Controlling gender did not substantially alter the influence of age: among both men and women, those younger were more pro-NO.

Age was also related to both position and definition: we separated the interviewees into three age groups, 18 to 29 years; 30 to 49 years and 50 and more. The first association that arises is between age and the undecided etc, which grows with age: 8\%, 11\% and 14\%. Those who closed ranks with NO and weren’t going to change represented 40\% of the younger group, 36\% of the second and 34\% in the older. The magnitude of the correlation coefficient Phi, 0.09 is small, even though statistically significant. However, the relation with the dichotomous question – if they would vote for YES or for NO – gave more complex results.

Thus, gender and class situation had some influence on the vote intention. Middle and upper class men inclined disproportionately towards NO; women of a modest class situation inclined towards YES. The role of age would only have been solved by changing the analytical strategy.

The use of the tree as an analytical strategy brings an additional element of knowledge: I directed the program to select the first explicative variable, which was gender.
The reason for having only two educational categories among women is that the Alpha criterion for keeping them separated at the level of 5% was not achieved. Age only comes in after gender and education. Among women with incomplete high school or more, the cut is between 9 years and less than/30 and more. There is a difference of five percentage points, from 54% to 59%, significant at the level of 0.005. Among those with education up to eighth grade, age does not satisfy the criterion of statistical significance. That relation is in the inverse direction to what was found in the bivariate analysis: younger women show as more pro-NO because they had more education than did mature and elderly women. When one controls for education, in the group with less education the relation disappears and in the group with more education it is inverted!

This discovery generates an expectation in relation to men. What is the influence of age? Among those with, at most, eight years of study completed, the influence is negative: the group less than 29 years old gives 60% of preferences to NO and those age up to 30 and more give 54%, a relation that is significant at the level of 0.008. Among those with high school, completed or not, the influence of age is clearly favorable to NO: 55%, 64% and 79%, in the three groups, an association significant at the level of 0.0001. Among men with higher education, age does not satisfy the statistical requirements for a cut. Thus, the influence of age depends on the socio-demographic context!

The gender difference in the referendum “fits” with similar differences encountered in several surveys related to weapons. The IFB survey, done in São Paulo, shows this:
For three different questions, “would you own a firearm” (conditional); “are there firearms in your house” and “when going out, do you take firearms”, there is a clear difference between the genders. In the United States, Ludwig, Cook and Smith suggested that although there are differences between the genders in both surveys with data collected by telephone and those with data collected in personal interviews, that the instruments produce somewhat different results: they are higher (12%) by telephone and lower (7%) using personal interviews.

In Canada, a country where 63% of the people believed that people should not be able to own firearms (data from 2001), 70% of women and 55% of men held that opinion. In the United States, the Gallup Poll also found significant differences in 2001: 77% of women favored a stricter control of handguns, in comparison with 59% of men; in 2002, Pastore and Maguire concluded that 25% of men preferred less strict laws in comparison with 10% of women. Given that an important part of the NO advertising was directed toward the “right to legitimate defense”, it is important to see that, in 2000, the Pew Research Center Poll concluded that 49% of men thought it more important to protect the right of Americans to have guns than to control gun ownership, as opposed to 28% of women.

III. The attitudinal structure and the vote intention

To assess the association between the attitudinal structure and the vote intention, we used a “tree” analytical strategy, whose format allows one to construct a complex nomogram. The greatest contribution of this analysis lies in the fact that, after subdividing the population into groups, according to the variable that is most associated to the vote intention, the following variable, which is most associated to the vote intention, may not be the same in each group as the first. The attitudinal variable that is best related to the vote intention is the answer to the affirmation “A vote for the ban is a vote for life”.

Figure 3

Gender and gun ownership, São Paulo 2003

Figure 4

VOTE INTENTION

A vote for the ban is a vote for life Agree 64% YES
A vote for the ban is a vote for life Disagree 15% YES
The association is significant at the level of 0.0001. This analysis shows how the theme LIFE was important for the YES objectives. Next, there was a powerful affirmation from the NO: “Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”. This was more important in the two partitions made by the previous affirmation. In the two groups, the association is significant at the level of 0.0001.

That simple affirmation (“Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”) differentiates the vote intention: among those who agree with it, only 9% intended to vote YES; among those who disagreed with it, 37% intended to vote YES. It is necessary to repeat that such a conclusion refers only to those disagreeing with the affirmation that “A vote for the ban is a vote for life”. In this subgroup, agreeing or not with the affirmation (“Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”) leads to a differentiation of 28% in the vote intention. Once again, there is no doubt as to the statistical significance (0.0001).

In this subgroup, agreeing or not with the affirmation (“Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”) causes a differentiation of 36% in the vote intention. With those questions, we differentiate from a maximum of 84% to a minimum of 9% pro-YES. That might seem sufficient, but the answers may be more differentiated, above all the intermediate categories, which accept one pro-YES argument and another pro-NO one.

We have, now, four groups:
We are analyzing the group with responses more associated with YES: Agreeing that “a vote for the ban is a vote for life” and disagreeing with “Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”. That group gave 84% of the vote intentions to YES. By adding another affirmation: ‘the ban will leave the criminals stronger for practicing their crimes”, we achieve a new differentiation: 93% of those who disagreed preferred the YES, in contrast with 73% of those who agreed. That is a difference of no fewer than twenty points.

In the second group, those who had an “inconsistent” combination, from the point of view of associating the questions with the vote intention, who agreed that “A vote for the ban is a vote for life, and agreed with the affirmation associated with NO, “Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”, the affirmation that most distinguished between those who agreed and who did not agree was “Having a firearm is not synonymous with safety, it is synonymous with tragedy”. Before introducing that affirmation, 48% intended to vote for YES. Agreeing/disagreeing with it separates the population into two groups: among those who agreed, 59% intended to vote for YES, whereas among those who disagreed, the partisans of YES were only 1%. The importance of this item in this group is revealed in the difference of thirty-eight percentage points.
Group B, which is consistently pro-NO, gave only 9% of its preferences for YES. In this group, the affirmation with the greatest power for differentiation is “Even if only a few lives are saved, the ban will have already been worthwhile”: among those who agreed, a pro-YES orientation, 17% intended to vote for YES; among those who disagreed, only 6%, a difference of eleven points.

One is left with group D, also “inconsistent”. They disagree that “A vote for the ban is a vote for life” and also that “Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”. That group gave 37% of its vote intentions to YES. The affirmation with the greatest “discrimination power” in this group is “Even if only a few lives are saved, the ban will have already been worthwhile” The YES intention was 52% among those who agreed and 27% among those who disagreed. Twenty-five percentage points: not a small difference.

The introduction of new attitudinal variables adds several points to our knowledge:

* In all of the groups, the new variables increase the differentiation obtained previously;
* The differences between the extremes become greater (6% to 93%), but due to the “ceiling effect” the effects on those groups are fewer than on the “middle” groups, where there was ample opportunity for variation, towards one side and the other;
* All of the differences are statistically significant at very demanding levels;
* The attitudinal variables that most increased the differentiation were not the same in the four groups, which was expected: “Even if only a few lives are saved, the ban will have already been worthwhile” (in two groups), “The ban will leave the criminals stronger and more at will to practice their crimes” (in one group) and “Having a firearm is not synonymous with safety, it is synonymous with tragedy” in the fourth group.

* In the “inconsistent” group that combines disagreement with “A vote for the ban is a vote for life,” with disagreement with “Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”, agreeing or disagreeing “Having a firearm is not synonymous with safety, it is synonymous with tragedy” makes difference of thirty-eight percentage points;
* In the other “inconsistent” group that combines agreement with “A vote for the ban is a vote for life, with agreement with “Today I may not need a gun, but if I ever do one day I want the right to buy one”, agreeing or disagreeing with another question, “Even if only a few lives are saved, the ban will have already been worthwhile” means a difference of twenty and five percentage points.

* At the third level of the “tree”, three different questions had an influence on the vote intention;
* At the fourth level (not detailed), those same questions influenced the vote intention

This analysis indicates that the vote intention did not develop randomly: it has attitudinal bases. If those bases were created during the campaign or if they existed before, be it in the form of predispositions allowed them to be quickly created, or as a preexisting attitudinal structure, which was activated, we have no way of telling. The vote intention responds to that attitudinal “network,” probably interacting with it, and reinforcing it.

IV. The relations between the attitudinal structure (or network) and the vote certainty

However, that network is not equal for everyone: it varies. The network has attributes and one of them is as tight or loose as its relation to the vote certainty, how “bonded” the attitudes and beliefs are to each other and to the vote intention. The bonding may not exist with some people – agreeing with an affirmation neither increases nor diminishes the probability of agreeing with another, or may ser strong – those who agree with one agree or disagree with others.
We hypothesize that the persons who are more motivated and more exposed to advertising would have a tighter network, whereas those who are less interested, motivated and exposed to advertising would have a looser network. Additionally, the question was quite ideological for some and not at all ideological for others. There is a very strong political ideology related to guns in the United States and, to what I consider a lesser degree, in Brazil.

We hypothesize, also, that people who operate more based on written material, where the bond is greater, reproduce that bond. Formal education is a good indicator of reading habits, a good proxy, which led us to use it to analyze the relations between agreement/disagreement with various affirmations and the vote certainty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:</th>
<th>LOW (up to eighth grade)</th>
<th>MEDIUM (high school completed or not)</th>
<th>HIGH (superior, completed or not)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOME ARGUMENTS FOR YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An armed citizen only increases his or her chances of being killed by criminals</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ban will reduce the number of guns in the hands of the criminal</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ban on sale of munitions and firearms may not resolve the whole issue of violence, but is an important step</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if only a few lives are saved the ban will already have been worth it</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The great majority of deaths from firearms in Brazil is caused by guns bought by ordinary citizens</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting for the ban on firearms is a vote for life</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who are interested in gun sales are the armament companies</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NO group is financed by the gun industry</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a firearm is not synonymous with safety it is synonymous with tragedy</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| SOME ARGUMENTS FOR NO |                          |                                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|                                  |
| With the ban the government will take from the citizens their right to defend themselves | -0.37 | -0.63 | -0.69 |
| The ban will leave the criminals stronger and more at will to practice their crimes | -0.35 | -0.52 | -0.66 |
| It is the criminal who has to be disarmed and not the citizen | -0.28 | -0.46 | -0.55 |
| The ban is useless because there is illegal trade and contraband in guns | -0.22 | -0.47 | -0.66 |
| That vote is just so the government can make believe it is doing something to reduce violence and crime in Brazil | -0.13 | -0.34 | -0.49 |
| Today I may not need a gun, but if one day I do I want the right to buy one | -0.48 | -0.59 | -0.78 |
In all of the cases, the association (measured by the Somer D directional coefficient) increased the lower educational level towards medium and the medium towards higher.

V. The tendencies
Given the very close relations between beliefs and attitudes and the vote intention, it is relevant for us to know their tendencies, which we summarize below:

* The NO positions remained stable, except for the one that affirmed that “Today I may not need a gun, but if one day I do I want the right to buy one,” which grew.

* The YES positions, listed below, lost support during the short period covered by the tracking.
  * The battle of arguments was lost.
  * The YES arguments did not enjoy broad acceptance
  * All lost acceptance during the days of tracking
    * At the end of tracking none reached 70%
    * Two stayed below 45%
    * In contrast, one of the NO arguments received more than 80% of agreement
    * All of the NO arguments received above 64-65% of agreement
    * Not one of the NO arguments that was tested lost support

The YES side exploited very little the consequences for life, despite that issue having a more favorable result: the average for the period covered by the tracking was very favorable. Many believed there would be a reduction in violent deaths; few believed they would increase.
Almost all of the items above have broad support from data and research outside of Brazil. Few predicted an increase in deaths of children and youths in gun accidents in the home (4%); in deaths from fights between couples and in suicides (5% each); in deaths from fights in bars, in traffic, in the street, between neighbors (7%) or in deaths from stray bullets (10%). Even regarding deaths from fights between criminals, the number of armed robberies, of drivers and people in the streets and the number of armed robberies, of residences and shops, which involved criminals, the number thinking they would increase was less than those thinking they would increase with a YES victory.

Nonetheless, the importance given to those items not sufficient for them to vote for YES. The YES movement was not able to turn this balance into votes. The YES vote intentions collapsed. The fall of YES occurred pari passu with the loss of interest in the referendum.

VI. The growth of uninterest

I start with the principle that the link between the “primary” argumentation for YES was life and that there is a correlation between its importance and interest in the referendum. A referendum on lesser questions would cause less interest. The short period of observations allows one to see that there was a tendency towards growth in responses denoting a lack of interest – “the referendum has little or no importance”, including “don’t know” and “no answer”. These grew from approximately one third to half of the interviewees. Trivialization worked against YES, whose best arguments (from the point of view of acceptance by the public) were linked with life.
Figure 12
The election is of “little or no importance”
Plus those who did not know or had no opinion

Figure 13
How would you vote if the referendum were today
APPLIED AT END OF QUESTIONNAIRE
VII. The result of the referendum: predictable or a surprise?
The attitude that led people to predict a victory YES, or at least a close result, was derived from wishful thinking and emotion, but not from a cold analysis of the data. Using, with great statistical license, the tracking data as if they were random samples, they showed that, since the data began to be collected, they showed YES losing and NO winning space. NO was growing 1.28% on a daily average, while YES was losing 1.12. I use, also with broad statistical license, a determination coefficient to show how time functioned as an adequate representative, a proxy, of all of the changes that were related to the growth of NO and with the decrease of YES. The R2 shows that the linear relation was adequate. The simple linear projection would give us thirty-something percent of preferences towards YES three days after the election and close to 60% towards NO, a result close to the vote count. The acceleration, above what had been predicted, of the drop of YES may be based on sampling errors and/or a real acceleration of loss during the last days.

VIII. Perspectives and meanings
What do we learn from the referendum and what did the referendum mean? At the end of the campaign, in several areas, the electorate accepted that the YES would save lives. The averages for the period:
* 62% thought that deaths of children and youths in gun accidents in the home would diminish
* 55% thought that deaths from fights between couples would diminish
* another 56% that deaths from fights in bars, in traffic, in the street, between neighbors also would diminish;
* as well as suicides.
Nonetheless, on the NO side, the percentages were much lower when the questions referred to criminals and the percentage predicting an increase were higher.
* The dividing line was criminal vs. “good citizen”;
* We were not able to demonstrate that the “good citizen also kills – and very much,” although there are abundant data proving that affirmation;
* Nor were we able to convince people that many weapons of the “good citizens” end up in the hands of criminals, although there are also abun-
dant data proving that affirmation;

* The arguments employed did not have the same weight.

From an analytical point of view, a “good” argument is what distinguishes the partisans of YES from the partisans of NO. However, from the political point of view, the good arguments are those that many believe in and that gain the greatest points during the campaign – or at least, do not lose. The raw impact of an argument is a multiplicative equation: how many believe it, with what intensity, and with what association. If few believe, few will change; if it is not associated with the vote, it will not have an impact, even though many believe it.

The voting for YES and for NO was not devoid of cognitive, emotional and evaluative content; it was based on a series of beliefs and attitudes.

* Therefore, some arguments were more important than others for the vote intention
* The importance may be assessed with the correlation coefficients (with a certain leeway)
* Whose was the initiative of the referendum was not a very important question, including if it was by the government, or the politicians, or the police
* The only actor with explicative power was society initiative.

There was some surprise at the modest association between criticism of the governments, above all the federal government, and the vote for NO. After all, a study, by Jiobu and Curry, used data from the General Social Survey for the years 1982 to 1996 and, using a logistical regression, concluded that, even controlling many variables traditionally associated with gun ownership, the percentage of those who had guns was greater among those who did not trust the government.

Another perspective we would have liked to explore is given by the cultural theories of risk perception. Donald Braman and Dan M. Kahan published an interesting article in which they postulated the existence of cultural aspects with regard to the preferred policy regarding disarmament. In the view of those authors, “the more egalitarian and full of solidarity is the individual’s world view, the more that person tends to support gun control; the more hierarchical and individualistic the world view of the interviewee, the more he or she would reject gun control”.

Empirically, the data show that values count. Perhaps more interesting, some variables traditionally associated with attitudes related to guns lose force or disappear as statistically relevant predictors, such as being Black, living in the Northeast (in the United States that is an area with higher educational and cultural levels); living in the South (the opposite of the Northeast); being urban; being Jewish and the educational level. Unchanged or little changed were: gender; being from the West; being Catholic; fear of crime and socioeconomic status, which continued to influence attitudes in relation to guns. The variables “politics”, the preferred party and the political orientation lost force, but also continued being significant. When the cultural orientations “enter” the equation, the variable with greatest impact was individualism-solidarity.

That dimension was not researched in Brazil. What remains, is the reference, from which fruitful hypotheses may be generated.

IX. Conjectures

The YES was overwhelmingly supported by researchers and criminologists. Nevertheless, that tremendous cognitive and factual advantage was not transformed into a political and electoral advantage. The NO, by means of well made advertising and an incredible disinformation campaign was able to annul that advantage in knowledge. Using as a starting point an idea of Maurício Lissovsky, I suggest that the research was an intentional target of the NO campaign, which was able to discredit surveys and data, transferring the debate from the factual to the argumentative realm. I will say more: I hypothesize that the lack of scientific information and of statistical and mathematical instruments among the Brazilian population made the analysis done by researchers almost useless from the political point of view. I would point out that even the Brazilian intellectual elites have great difficulty with empirical research. There is ample evidence that there are few Brazilian sociologists and political scientists engaged in empirical research, particularly quantitative. In Anthropology, the quantitative tradition is small outside of Brazil and minimal inside it. I consider the Brazilian Intelligence (outside the exact and biological sciences) as essentially post-modern; thus the limited institutionalization of empirical research and the equally limited credibility of its results, including in the area of crime and violence.

The population asked (and continues to ask): “will it solve things?” With regard to public policies linked to reducing crime and violence, the question is inadequate and reveals a lack of knowledge. The questions made by students of public policies are: “Will it reduce the problem? How much? At what cost?”
1 - The coefficient Phi of 0.13 is significant, but perhaps an ordinal coefficient is justified. The Gamma of – 0.16 is also significant at the level of 0.0001

2 - For the analysis, it is only interesting to subdivide a category when the subdivisions differ significantly among themselves with regard to the dependent variable. The Alpha test gives us the probability that the difference found is due to chance.


5 - Pastore, Ann L. and Kathleen Maguire, eds. Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics [Online]. Available at http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/

6 - The inconsistency was defined exclusively from the cores of YES and of NO.

7 - Including newspapers, magazines, books (academic or not), printed or by internet.

8 - Modification of the table found in the Report

9 - Taken from the report


“Jesus said: I came to give life and to give it more abundantly (...) He who believes in Christ says yes to life”.

Pamphlet from the “Brazil Without Weapons Front” for the Christian segment.

Presentation

Church participation in the disarmament Campaign and referendum should be seen in perspective, in other words, from the attempt, and a relatively successful one, of mobilizing moral forces and religious association for intervention in public life that gained expression in the 1990s, with the “Action of Citizenship campaign” led by Betinho and the Viva Rio Movement (Landim, 1998; Birman, 2004).

At different moments in recent years, Christian churches and other religious segments were involved in campaigns, events, projects and public demonstrations in defense of peace in public in the city of Rio de Janeiro and in other parts of Brazil. In the formation of this civic-religious movement, NGOs that make up the movement for peace, among which are Viva Rio (Rio de Janeiro) and the I’m for Peace Institute (São Paulo), are playing a central role in provoking different churches and religious groups to engage in the pacification of large cities.

In assuming this role of intervention and convoking religious groups’ engagement in civic participation, they do it legitimately from their repeated presence in the media associated to anti-violence causes and their ecclesiastical identity, making them neutral agents and able to understand with sensitivity the specificities and forms of action of different religious groups.

Memorable moments of said engagement such as “Disarm Rio”, “Rio, Down with Weapons”, and “Enough! I Want Peace” campaigns and the public destruction of weapons - during which spirituality and religious venues were used by the peace movement, created a language beyond reason and their instruments, at the same time forging opportunities to render peace subjective. This process and its virtualities were intelligently captured in the set of studies on the unfolding of the 174 Bus case and of the public demonstrations and collective negotiations organized at the “Enough! I Want Peace” event in several Brazilian cities. The ritualization of conflict, in the presentation of violent deaths and the expressions on relatives’ faces used the language of feelings and of religious beliefs to address the many meanings related to violent deaths, making way for invention of more efficient means to intervene in public life. (Novaes and Catela, 2004; Birman, 2004)

The Disarmament Campaign and the Referendum on weapons and munitions sales for civilians was one more of these strong moments demanding an active presence from the religious sectors as a significant social actor in public life and a key moment to test the persuasiveness of the anti-violence movements’ agenda in Brazilian society.

With the aim of contributing to an understanding of the virtualities present in the Disarmament Referendum, this article strives to answer how the churches participated in the Disarmament campaigns and Referendum and what is the significance of this participation towards the consolidation of the pacification processes in Brazilian cities.

We argue that, although it shares parts of the same framework regarding the objective to control access to weapons for the civilian population in order to lessen violence, the same population viewed the Disarmament Campaign and the referendum as distinct initiatives. This perception presents itself in a clear manner in the responses by the population to the two events that occurred in different and significant manners in the engagement of the churches in both processes.

On one hand, significant involvement of churches

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and Christian organizations (Roman Catholics and Protestant, including some Pentecostal churches) in the disarmament campaign, opening posts to collect weapons in their temples and publicizing a religious version of “peace without weapons”. On the other hand, a minority group of churches and Christian institutions organized around the “yes” vote that came out publicly and the majority of leaders avoiding to assume the “no” vote in public, leaving discussions and voting choices to the private realm.

Before describing the religious engagement in the campaigns, however, I present a short description of the methodological strategies chosen to investigate participation of the churches in the campaigns; secondly, I outline a theoretical discussion concerning the participation of religion in public life, in order to capture determined perspectives through which we see religious dynamics within the context of the events; afterward I schematically go through the development of these dynamics, describing the context and form in which churches participated in the Disarmament and Referendum Campaign; finally, some considerations on the organization of the data.

**Context and methodology**

The research was conceived in early October from ISER’s interest in accompanying the engagement of religious networks in the final phase of the Disarmament and Referendum campaigns. Therefore a working methodology was determined at two different moments: in the final phase of the campaign, accompanying the events of different religious segments and the work in weapons collection posts, in the last weeks of operation; in the post-referendum period, gathering reports from leadership of the experiences in different regions that participated in the Campaigns. Additionally, an analysis of all material of the religious segment available from the YES Campaign on their website: manifestoes, statements, articles, pamphlets etc. We performed 12 interviews with those responsible for weapons collection posts distributed according to the relative weight of each church/Christian denomination in the total of posts and according to geographical distribution, and we sent a questionnaire to leaders that participated in local or state liaison mobilizing Christian churches and other religious groups obtaining 7 statements that form a panorama of their engagement in the Campaigns. Additionally, as a member of the staff of Religion and Peace of Viva Rio and of Brazil Without Weapons Front, I was able to participate in meetings, workshops, debates, gatherings and maintain contacts with upper leadership, priests and pastors who were sensitive to the proposal in several parts of Brazil during the Disarmament and Referendum Campaign. Therefore, much information contained in this article reflects this experience of “participating as an observer” in the mediating of churches’ and their leadership’s involvement in the campaigns.

**Religion in public life**

The debate on the return of religion into the contemporary world has motivated more and more studies that investigate the relations between religion and politics, religion and the public sphere, religion and democracy, the new religious upsurges in several parts of the world and their anti-secular tendencies etc, focusing on their potential to make it necessary to rethink categories and key analytical instruments of social science like secularization, fundamentalism or modernity.

In a revisionist article (2001), Peter Berger, an important American sociologist of religion in the United States, argues against the theory of secularization (for which he gave important contributions), that neglect the religious factor in analyses of contemporary as extremely risky. Velho (1998) also reminds us of the different facets that the religious phenomenon has introduced throughout the world to highlight the difficulty that secular mentality seems to have with up-to-date nature of religion, which is becoming a veritable ‘stumbling-block’.

We haven’t forgotten that modernization maintains an ambiguous agreement with religion. At the same time that religion is banned from the social life as an ultimate foundation and meaning, it is a modern invention in the sense that it occupies a limited space in the economy of values of emerging society, the religious sphere (Asad, 1983). While the modern State and capitalist economy seek to occupy first places in a hierarchy of values in the development and deepening of modernization, removing from religion the agreement that it maintains the substrate of society, the religious sphere is invented, there in the private sphere, under the legal formula of religious freedom, a freedom granted and at the same time under surveillance (Giumbelli, 2000). Therefore, religion loses public influence, becomes privatized, yet remains as a dimension of social life protected by the State, with
its “market reserve”, enabling it to be used as a cultural resource whenever necessary. If so, how can we keep up with the recent wave of de-privatization of religion that provokes astonishment and resistance of the secular world’s vision at the same time demanding a more attentive look at the concepts that we formulate to try and describe reality. Niklas Luhmann’s approach seems very useful to me as a theoretical key to a systemic approach. Luhmann understands society as a type of social system that embraces various modes of communication. This perception allows us to escape from any economic or political reductionism related to the nature of modernity. To him, modern society is a consequence of a change in western society that has to do with the substitution of a stratified differentiation for a functional differentiation. If the stratified differentiation forms sub-systems upon the base social condition, functional differentiation denies the centrality of status and steers towards development of spheres in which action is guided functionally for specific rationalities. Instead of the traditional peasant, mercantile and noble layers (systems), we have to address things political, economical, scientific, educational, religious, and so on.

To Luhmann, the West changed from stratified to functional differentiation at the same time it changed the dominance from the normative to cognitive mode of responding to disappointed expectations. This change also signifies reorganization where typically modern rules are those that structure and, thus, encourage knowledge, not those that define limits to learning. Therefore, if learning is the norm, what is learned is left relatively open in the sense of denying its previously determinant role in the structuring of society. In this context, sub-systems such as economy, politics and science possess relative advantages over other sub-systems under modern conditions due to the adaptive orientation of its expectation structures, making it a more potent mode of communication, which does not signify that they are the source of self-evident symbols to topically list everything and its telos (Luhmann, 1990; Beyer, 1994).

In the process of structural differentiation and functional specialization, religion gains recognized autonomy at the cost of having to recognize the autonomy of other sub-systems. In modern society, secularization is the consequence of relative autonomy of those sub-systems of norms, values and religious justifications. Traditional religion, therefore, suffers a compartmentalization, but no more so than the other sub-systems, and suffers pressure to develop itself as a specialized sub-system. A central characteristic of these social sub-systems, according to Luhmann, is that professional and differentiated complementary roles are formed. At the same time that a person occupies a specialized professional role, she or he also occupies a group of complementary roles as a voter, patient, consumer, and believer- one role for each sub-system. In this sense, decisions involving these complementary roles can be called private as opposed to public issues.

To the extent that religion stops being a structuring source of values, norms and meanings for social life, it becomes a sub-system, invented in this form by modernity upon a base of a functionally specialized differentiation, spheres of autonomously referred values. As a sub-system among others, religion maintains its “share” in the economy of signs of the modern social life, no longer being integrating and foundational to perform a specific and specialized function.

On the other hand, a privatized and watched religion, due to its holistic and totalizing nature, tends to rival other sub-systems and is available for other roles, performing as a cultural (symbolic) resource, whether allying itself to social movements as a liberal option, or seeking to provide identities built on a moral code as an response to a disintegrating modern social framework as a conservative option.

This approach helps us not to see the reappearance of religion in the contemporary world as a “repressed return”, de-secularized, a “return match from God”, as this certainly is not what this is about (Pierucci, 1997) but to gauge our view under a new perspective. I think that in Brazil, as in other parts of the world, an active religion, which lost space as a totalizing system of reference in society seeks to discover vacuums left by political and economic systems in order to ensure its presence and the importance of its values system for a solution to problems caused by other sub-systems.

It is in this sense that several studies seem to point that have investigated relations between religion and politics, civic culture and associations. In other words, without denying the weight of religious competition and corporative interests in awakening to the presence of partisan politics and political game (Freston, 1993), this is a question of affirming religion’s place as a source of alternative social integration and mediation between the private and the public (Velho, 1996; Birman, 2001; Conrado, 2001). Its growing presence in the practice of philanthropy, donations and volunteers detected
by other studies (Fernandes, 1994; Novaes, 1998; Landim, 2001; Conrado, 2003; Freitas, 2003) paves the way for a type of presence marked by substitution or critical collaboration with the State, in benefit of the impoverished classes (Birman, 2001), including reaching beyond previously well-distinguished denominational barriers (Mariz and Machado, 2001). This type of active presence goes in the direction that the political philosopher Renato Janine Ribeiro calls an emptying of the political sphere under a form of disbelief, leading politics to constantly renew itself. These “seed-beds of new energy” may come from religion, or linked to new identities forged in the context of new struggles and social movements such as ecology, feminism, etc. A context of intense moralization, such as ours, where public discussion takes place on the personal morality plane, provides room for effective religious language as a support to political action or argumentation (Ribeiro, 2002).

The national campaign to turn in guns and the churches
As a result of great collective effort by NGOs, social movements, parliamentarians and governors, the Disarmament Statute was approved by the National Congress and sanctioned by the President of the Republic in December 2003. The immediate aim of this new set of laws is control of legal and illegal weapons in Brazilian society, providing more adequate instruments for security forces to reduce violence, especially homicides by firearms, also practiced by common citizens. Recognized as innovative and sweeping legislation, the sectors favorable to it needed to face the powerful lobby of the weapons and munitions industry. To this end, marches and public demonstrations were mobilized by grassroots support groups and these convinced public opinion of the importance of the Statute (Bandeira and Bourgois).

Foremost among aspects of this recent legislation was the conducting of a national campaign for voluntarily handing over weapons by the civil population and a referendum, so that prohibition on sale of weapons and munitions in the country could be decided upon. These two instruments of legislation favored the beginning of a broad debate on the use and possession of firearms and their consequences in Brazilian society. Following the example of other countries that conducted campaigns of voluntarily handing over weapons, starting in July 2004 the first weapons collection posts were opened at Federal Police offices. Before the beginning of the federal government campaign, two Brazilian states, Pernambuco and Paraná, conducted campaigns on the handing over of weapons, which was very successful in the latter. This motivated the Ministry of Justice to have a traveling exhibit go through the states to launch the Campaign and stimulate support from civil society, government sectors and public opinion in favor of the initiative.

The initial forecast of the federal government was to collect 80,000 weapons during the campaign that would last six months, the deadline being December 30, 2004. In August 2004, through concession granted by the Federal Police, the first non-government post for handing over weapons was opened, precisely in the headquarters of Viva Rio, in Rio de Janeiro. This pioneer civil society post had one Federal Police officer present, and one of its differentials was that weapons were destroyed using a sledgehammer.

This differential was considered by Viva Rio and I’m for Peace Institute - NGOs that coordinated the campaign with the Ministry of Justice, fundamental for the population to trust the security forces (federal and municipal police, detectives and state troopers) with the registered and unregistered weapons in their power. Suspicion that weapons handed in could be stolen and fall into the hands of criminals was a danger that threatened the success of the campaign. For this reason, to neutralize this idea and to bring the campaign even closer to the population, Viva Rio imagined it would be an important step for the success of the campaign to have the churches’ participation, because of their proximity to the population as well as their natural discourse directed to the subject of peace. Thus, although the idea may have been considered unprecedented, a partnership between Viva Rio was proposed with some religious leadership to open collection posts in the churches on Saturdays. The reasons, presented to be discussed internally with the members, were the following:

1. The spatial proximity and accessibility. A religious post would be close to people’s homes and workplaces, facilitating the delivery.
2. A neutral space, already well known, inspiring trust, in comparison to the police force posts.
3. Possibility of dialogue contemplating the subjectivity and significance of the act of handing over the weapon that has a history, many times tragic.
4. The destruction of weapons would signify, in religious terms, the destruction.
of instruments of death, while the churches would be giving a testimony of peace to society.

In October 2004, the first religious posts for collecting weapons were opened, with Viva Rio’s monitoring and civil police support, in churches and religious entities in Rio de Janeiro. The positive results heightened awareness of new leaders, Protestants as well as Catholics, who dedicated themselves to opening new posts in their churches in different locations in the State of Rio de Janeiro. With the extension of the Disarmament Campaign until June 23, 2005 and later until October 23, 2005, the date of the referendum, the opening of religious posts gained significant impetus with the adoption by the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) and the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC), who emphasized the theme Solidarity and Peace- “Blessed are they who promote peace”, in the Fraternity Campaign- 2005, which was ecumenical. In addition to the CNBB and CONIC, World Vision and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI-Brazil) also participated in this effort. It is important to remember that these organizations have been working towards an agenda of the “culture of peace” for some time now. In 2000, CONIC itself, together with CNBB, launched Fraternity Campaign for that year in an ecumenical manner, under the theme “Human Dignity and Peace - For a millennium without exclusions.” In 2001, CONIC and CLAI in Brazil launched the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010), an initiative of the World Council of Churches as a continuation of the ecumenical Fraternity Campaign of 2000. In effect, Protestant organizations in São Paulo founded the Protestant Front Disarm Brazil in order to publicly demonstrate Protestant leadership support to the Disarmament Campaign. The stated objective of this initiative was “to bring leaders and pastors to understand the need for the churches to function as weapons collection posts”. In the first week of May 2005, a team from Viva Rio traveled to 22 Brazilian capitals, conducting training workshops for personnel, mobilization and liaison among leaders of local churches, seeking awareness of the importance of disarmament, of the referendum and of the opening of weapons collection posts for the construction of a “culture of peace” in the country. There was ample coverage of the workshops in the local press, and several leaders made an effort to convert their churches into weapons collection posts and strengthen the campaign by means of active participation through sermons, events, studies, debates in the press and articles in Christian and non-Christian media.

On May 21st, Viva Rio, the CNBB, CONIC, CLAI and World Vision promoted the National Community Joint Effort (Mutirão) for Handing over Weapons, when more than a thousand weapons were turned in, at 220 posts in 120 cities from 22 states. Throughout the campaign, in its three phases, more than 11,500 weapons were collected, in the state of Rio de Janeiro alone, by churches and at the Viva Rio post. Motivated by the success of the campaign, religious leaders themselves encouraged others to participate. How did religious agents evaluate that experience? What is the significance given to this, a new experience of partnership with NGOs and public authorities? Before we answer these questions, we’ll first go to a description of how the Disarmament Campaign was concretely conducted in partnership with the churches.

The opening and operations of the religious posts

Seeking to increase the number of civilian posts, the team from Viva Rio sought to attract different religious leaders and held a number of meetings to create awareness, sensitivity and training for priests, pastors and other religious leaders. These meetings were able to open over 50 posts in different cities in the State of Rio de Janeiro, involving Catholic parishes and Protestant churches of a wide range of Protestant and Pentecostal denominations. With media coverage publicizing the religious posts already open, groups of believers accompanied by an initial hierarchical determination and based on campaigns of the religious institution itself (ex: Fraternity Campaign - Ecumenical; Document of the College of Bishops - Methodist), sought to receive further information and training so that their churches could become collection posts too. For opening the posts, it was necessary that the religious institution had at least one volunteer available to receive people that arrived to hand in their weapons and to fill out collection documents, while Viva Rio sought to assure, through the partnership already established with the security forces, the presence of one policeman, designated by the respective enforcement agency (Federal, Military, Civil, Municipal Guard) to handle the weapons and proceed to the bureaucratic formalities of registration, delivery and compensation to the
citizen that turned in their weapon. The person formally responsible for the post was usually a pastor/priest or someone designated by him, whose job was to coordinate operations at the post, maintain contact with Viva Rio to settle doubts, to send copies of collection documents, in addition to a questionnaire that those turning in weapons voluntarily answered.

The religious posts operated on Saturdays from nine to five o’clock, always with a policeman and church volunteer present. After registering the weapon, it was destroyed with a sledgehammer on a steel plate, witnessed by the person handing it over. At the end of the day, the policeman packaged the collected weapons and took them all to be delivered to the Federal Police, who sent them on to the Brazilian Army, who continued with final destruction. In possession of the registrations, the Federal Police released payment of the compensation to the person turning in the weapon, through a checking account within 30 to 60 days.

Advertising the location of the posts was the responsibility of Viva Rio by means of material (pamphlets, placards etc.) given and distributed at the time the post was opened. Volunteers distributed the material, and hung a banner on the façade of the church and in crowded places notifying about the collection post. Additionally, two other forms of advertising took place: Viva Rio had a phone line available for information about the campaign that indicated the post to go to according to where the person lived. They also provided for the inauguration of a significant number of posts in order to stimulate the interest of the press (television) for broad media coverage. So it was only indirectly the church’s task to publicize to the general public. Advertising in the neighborhood occurred, therefore, in a discreet manner, only during the open hours of the post. Some churches publicized it on their websites. According to some of those interviewed, the worry about discretion was one of the characteristics for the job to be fully accomplished “without any major problems”.

In this sense, religious agents were also concerned about the location of the posts and their security. Whenever possible, they were placed with separate entrances from the religious meeting area. There were even church members or police church members chosen to stay in front of the posts as a way of ensuring even greater security.

Relation between the churches and the police forces

An important aspect in the establishment of collection posts in the churches was the relationship established between religious agents and law enforcement. The religious institution was responsible for providing a location and credibility for weapons collection, mobilizing its members to be support volunteers at the posts, while law enforcement’s task was identification, registration, destruction of weapons and security of the post. According to religious agents’ reports, it can be said that this innovative association established itself harmoniously. The functions, despite being different and complementary, worked in harmony throughout the process.

Security of the post was one of the major concerns for church members and their leadership. As mentioned above, many depended on the support of police church members to help with the work at the post, reinforcing the sensation of protection. Although this was a legitimate concern, there were no known cases of invasions of the posts by criminals or drug dealers. As it was widely publicized that weapons would be destroyed at the moment of delivery, this became a factor of inhibition for eventual attempts to invade and steal the weapons. The presence of a law enforcement officer was a guarantee of protection. In this sense, the presence of law enforcement (federal, civilian or military) at the posts in direct relationship with religious agents begins to show an unprecedented liaison in Brazil where religions initiate direct dialogue with law enforcement authorities, establishing partnerships, contacting different media to multiply the number of advertising channels of the campaign, establishing contacts and relations, jointly organizing and participating on Campaign committees. In Belo Horizonte, for example, two female police officers, after serving in the weapons collection post of the Methodist Church, became volunteers in the church’s social projects geared to youth and the CONIC coordinator in Belo Horizonte was invited to give classes on the “culture of peace” to the Federal Police.

Nevertheless, this joint effort also had its conflicts, especially when the police, according to comments by some of those interviewed, did not agree with the destruction of the weapons turned in. This always generated a controversy that was solved through dialogue or appealing to the general coordination of the posts at Viva Rio, which dealt with clarifying how procedures were at civil society posts. In some states, religious agents found fierce resistance from
the Federal Police in putting these procedures into practice. In such a case, the national campaign coordination had to intervene, determining that the state police headquarters perform the ordinance issued by the Ministry of Justice that authorized the procedure.24

The meanings of joining the disarmament campaign
In several moments, Christian churches and their networks became actors in the campaign and proposals to bring pacification to Brazilian cities. For many of them, engagement in the disarmament campaign was not exactly a novelty, nor was it complicated to appropriate the arguments used to transform a community of believers into agents of peace in the city. What apparently was problematic was the invitation to churches to open their doors, being a religious space, for the collection of firearms with the help of the police.

According to leaders interviewed, generally speaking, believers reacted well to the establishment of weapons collection posts in the churches, although some initially used the culture of fear to refute the idea, especially when posts were located near slums. Understanding, however, that participation in the campaign could be a means to expand evangelization and/or social work of the church and the assurance of inviolability of the sacred space, participation in the disarmament campaign was welcomed. This does not mean, obviously, that there was an absolute consensus, and the issue had to be discussed in assemblies or other forms of consultation, submitting to the majority’s decision or that of the collegiate body of leaders. In some cases, churches referred the issue to their hierarchical superiors in order to ensure legitimacy of the opening of the post, which was not always sufficient to support the opening or operation of the post.25

In some cities, disarmament committees bypassed this difficulty by holding events in public squares and venues with support of law enforcement agencies, governments or sectors of the government, community associations, schools and civil society organizations. Churches also participated in these public events that sought to advertise the campaign and weapons collection:

"We thus begin a process of setting up weapons collection posts in the neighborhoods. In this period we gained support from associations, some municipal government departments (health, women, education). Some Catholic churches were participating with but we had not yet effectively integrated into the work. Through Viva Rio’s work with the churches, we invited different religious segments for a meeting at Federal Police headquarters, and in late May/early June we held events with religious followers, taking their choirs and musical groups to sing on the day of weapons collection at the posts, fastening posters in the churches and throughout the city.”

Luis Cláudio Galhardi, coordinator of the Londrina Disarmament Committee

Religious agents gave an account of volunteer members’ availability and the fact that they worked in collection posts on Saturdays. In some churches, there was a work shift so that no one would get overburdened. A church member interviewed commented that even though many volunteers were against the idea of opening a post, they contributed to its operation in some way, either by bringing snacks for others, or praying for protection of law enforcement officers or talking to people who, after turning in their weapon, seemed very nervous.

In general, pastors, priests and religious agents found homologies in the theme of disarmament with the semantic structure of themes treasured by Christianity, such as the assurance of divine protection, an internal forgiving attitude and reconciliation as means of resolving interpersonal conflicts, peace as a gift of the Holy Spirit as opposed to the violence resulting from the constraints of being human, disarming the spirit as a condition to create conditions for social peace, defense of life as the core of missionary practice, peace as a complement to liberating justice etc.

Naturally the churches sought, through their resources and religious strategies, to receive and support those that turned in their weapons “as if they were taking a load off their chests”. In general, at the end of the weapons collection procedure, they initiated some sort of religious approach, like groups for counseling, acceptance, prayer, in addition to the invitation to come back to church. Some churches exchanged the weapons for Bibles. As one of the pastors commented, the Bible is a spiritual weapon.

"We sensed that after the person turned in their weapon was needy and wanted to talk. There was a group that gave specific attention to them, who weren’t the same ones that took care of the weapons collection itself. What we did was this- at the end of the collection of the weapons, and after everything was
filled out, and the material from Viva Rio was passed out, we shared the gospel with them. We invited them to come back to church. Some people returned because of that invitation.

Leader of the Integration Ministry, Baptist Church

Thus, they found a way to reconcile and justify the churches’ participation in a campaign that did not seem to have any resonance in the set of activities conducted by the churches.

Many of those interviewed justified the churches’ (and the believers’) involvement as a “natural” relation between the disarmament cause and the religious conception of each church: whether it be to develop a culture of peace, to militancy in the field of human rights (layperson, from Saint Anthony’s Cathedral: “The purpose of this work is to overthrow the culture of violence”); or for a matter of principles be it a matter of principles (layperson, Saint Monica’s Parish: “as an individual, I might be against the idea, but not as a Catholic”); or to comply with orders from superiors (Friar, Porciúncula de Santana Church: “there were no problems mainly because Niterói is still a province, a city of the interior, which enabled Christians to be easily convinced, without much debate or discussion”). The importance to work and serve the community stood out (leader of the integration ministry, Tijuca Baptist Church: “we contributed with something, being useful, we didn’t just watch the train go by, and we gave a small contribution”; leader of the social action ministry, Apascentar Ministry Church: “the reaction was positive. There was absolutely no contrary reaction. The people know that that is the philosophy of the Church. The Church will support any project that has the community’s interest as its aim”).

While the discourse of religious Catholic agents responsible for collection posts calls attention to disarmament as a social and political cause, associated to the idea of human rights defense and of a need to build a fair and fraternal society; among agents of Protestant churches, the predominant idea is to serve the community, as well as to reassure the individual that went to the Church to turn in his weapon27. Here we have before us possibilities of connectivity between the fields of religion and citizens’ rights, where different concepts or “styles” of action are brought up-to-date.

Churches and the referendum campaign: “Yes” organized, “No” privatized

As the National Disarmament Campaign was completing its second phase (January to June 2005), again surpassing expectations, the scenario seemed much less favorable for voting on the codification of the referendum on arms and munitions sales as provided for in the Disarmament Statute. As the political dispute on recent insinuations of the Workers’ Party having bought the votes from the parliamentarians, the so-called “mensalão” scandal unfolded, the dislocation of regular lawmaking in favor of the establishment of the CPIs (Parliamentary Investigation Commissions) in Congress put the decision on specific regulations of the referendum bill to a place of third or fourth importance. This pushing the bill down on the agenda also endangered the very holding of the referendum, according to a Judge of the Electoral Supreme Court, who warned parliamentarians regarding the expiration date for planning popular referenda.

Even the public opinion’s expectations in relation to voting the regulations of the referendum was insufficient for congressmen to put voting of the issue on the agenda. The very referendum threatened, NGOs, victims’ associations and religious institutions promoted demonstrations inside Congress to pressure the parliamentarians to do so. Among the demonstrations that mobilized students, victims’ relatives and NGO representatives, churches and religious institutions promoted a Fasting and Prayer Vigil and pressured congressmen individually28. Local and national press reported extensively on the demonstrations and although there had not been any major mobilization, the regularity of the activities and rising number of voices of religious leaders and victims’ relatives requesting the voting seem to have helped. Additionally, the fundamental work by influential parliamentarians favorable to the referendum, including the president of Congress himself, Senator Renan Calheiros, to negotiate with the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Severino Cavalcante, on the order of priorities in the voting schedule, managed to get the bill put before the plenary assembly. On July 6, 2005, the regulations of the referendum on arms and munitions sales was finally voted and scheduled for October 23, 2005. There were 258 votes in favor of the referendum against 48 unfavorable votes.

With the expectation that the regulations of the referendum were to be approved, the Ministry of Justice extended the Handing Over of Weapons Campaign until the date the referendum was to be held. Soon, two Parliamentarian Fronts were formed that defended the “yes” and the “no” responses to
the question: Should firearms and munitions sale be prohibited in Brazil? At the same time, the staff from Viva Rio elaborated a proposal to form a religious coalition for the “yes” side of the referendum on two fronts: a Christian coalition, continuing the work conducted in the churches during the disarmament campaign, but now including new partners; and an inter-religious coalition led by United Religions Initiative (URI), whose circles of cooperation, as the URI centers are called, were made available to promote liaison.

According to the proposal, churches and religious groups would be provided guidance, training and support from Viva Rio staff to engage themselves in the “yes” campaign, becoming information/literature distribution centers for the campaign in their neighborhoods, involving their youth and female segments, supporting the campaign through their media and participating in debates, lectures and events. After meetings and consultations, during the month of August, partners of the Disarmament Campaign such as CNBB, CONIC, CLAI, World Vision and the Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace, the Viva Rio Religious group sought to encourage integration of the leadership and the protestant organizations into state committees, traveling inclusively for this purpose. The Parliamentary Front Brazil Without Weapons prepared a calendar for launching the State Fronts. Civil society organizations, church representatives, religious groups and parliamentarians were called on to form these fronts and to plan the statewide campaigns. The Parliamentary Front for Legitimate Defense (FLD), defender of the “no” option in the referendum, sought to react to the liaisons of the Parliamentary Front Brazil Without Weapons (FBSA) with legal action seeking to force “yes” supporters to comply with electoral legislation for the referendum, considered quite restrictive. In fact, participants of the religious network pointed out electoral legislation for the referendum, considered quite restrictive. In fact, participants of the religious network pointed out electoral legislation as a hindering factor for greater engagement in the process. Organizations that received funds from international sources could not, according to electoral legislation, contribute financially or produce material for the campaign.

Even with these constraints, religious institutions organized themselves to participate in the “yes” campaign in different ways. I should mention an exception here in relation to the “no” campaign and the involvement of religious partners in it. The disarmament campaign received broad support from the population, government and social organizations. The idea that taking thousands of small firearms out of circulation would contribute to a reduction in violence, especially in homicides by firearms in moments of fury or accidents, was widely publicized and supported by greater media and by several sectors of Brazilian society; entertainers, journalists, intellectuals, members of religious orders, parliamentarians, athletes, businessmen etc. Thus, even critics to the Disarmament Statute recognized that the campaign was a measure that would help combat violence. It can be said that this “almost” unanimity generated an increasing confidence that the proposal to approve prohibition of weapons sales in the referendum would be the winner. In practice, even stores that sold weapons and accessories were already closing because of the impact of the campaign. And public opinion polls demonstrated a wide margin of people in favor of disarmament.

Proof of the “near” unanimity was the inexistence of religious members that defended the “no” vote to try to convince public opinion in the first phase of the campaign (before the Free Electoral Airtime on television) or of religious organizations that took part in the Parliamentary Front for Legitimate Defense. Actually, the Front for Legitimate Defense was formed almost exclusively of rifle and pistol associations, associations of weapon dealers and of ultra-nationalistic NGOs like the Live Brazil Movement and MV-Brazil.

Defense of the “no” option among religious institutions had little public activism and their silence on the debate was notable, reserving the choice of vote to the private sphere. While the arguments were not put forth in the public arena, nor had entered into the realm of talks among colleagues, there was an inclination to assimilate the referendum in terms of that which was known, or rather, the success of the disarmament campaign and its results, still incipient, with the drop in the rate of homicides by firearms, widely publicized by the media. Ever since the campaigns on TV and radio began, the strategies of the Fronts began organizing themselves according to the population’s reactions to the arguments put forth in the electoral programs. In effect, the objectives of the peace movements and the government were clearer during the disarmament campaign in terms of pragmatic reasons to effect a policy of weapons control for the civilian population and its impacts on reducing violence. Opposition to this program, represented by the Front for Legitimate Defense, was able to capture the commoner’s imagination appealing to feelings of fear, frustration and distrust.

For the “yes” campaign, and its religious partners, the referendum was a continuation of the Disarmament
Campaign, but differences did exist. Although engaged in the proposal to control firearms to which the civilian population in the country has access to, the disarmament campaign and the referendum had their specificities, as one can observe in the character of activities and implication of each. While disarmament was a volunteer manifestation of handing over weapons in a church or police station, (usually near home or work), aiming to reduce the number of weapons in society to provide greater security for all, the Referendum was an electoral campaign, as was proven in radio and TV propaganda, where the interests were not clear, from the population’s point of view. Therefore, the Disarmament Campaign presented itself in its dimension as being more local, tangible - going to a post and turning in an object that was threatening or that was seen as a risk, which could be seen in statistics on accidents and homicides; while the Referendum had a national dimension in its appeal, it was universal: the end of arms and munitions sales throughout the country for all Brazilian citizens. The idea of prohibiting access to anyone wishing to buy a gun sounded like something dangerous, “after all, who’s going to defend me, in my home environment, in case a robber attacks my family?” This was a continual question-answer that, in the final analysis, raised the doubt that a weapon could be positive and effective in personal defense. Moreover, it was a suppression of an individual right, the right to buy a weapon, even though legislation had restricted the possibility of actually owning one.

In the referendum, it was the choice of an idea, relating to which there were many doubts regarding plausibility and effectiveness. Disarmament was a direct, personal action, whose result was felt immediately. “I took a load off my chest”, revealed a 60-some year old lady as she turned in her late husband’s weapon at the headquarters of Viva Rio in June 2005. The different positions presented themselves, according to electoral legislation, as parliamentary fronts (although civil society organizations also joined them), a political issue (partisan politics!), whose true interests and real effectiveness was doubtful, if not risky. The disarmament campaign was seen as a social campaign and the referendum as a political campaign touching on different levels of participation. Some of those interviewed said that TV fulfilled its role by providing information on the options under discussion. It wasn’t the churches role to publicize, rather to act as a support for a determined cause. For some churches, the referendum was a matter of intimate forum and the secret vote. Testimonials indicate that very little was discussed about the referendum in the churches compared to the disarmament campaign. Better stated, compared to the dissemination of weapons collection posts in the churches where they were established. One of the persons responsible for the post stated that his church wasn’t involved in the referendum. The pastor didn’t talk about the subject even though the post stayed open until the last day. In another Protestant church, the pastor mentioned the subject on Sunday night after the voting, talking about statistics, but he didn’t keep “hammering on the same subject.” According to a Catholic deacon, “the Catholic Church said ‘yes’, but also said ‘no’. They should have assumed that ‘yes’ more resolutely. This was lacking” Another person responsible for a weapons collection post said, “there was no specific discussion or differentiated dissemination for the referendum campaign. It was up to each ones own conscience”. Religious agents also had a hard time dealing with the complexity of the issues that were raised through the “no” campaign. In the disarmament campaign, the appeal to Gospel principles as a foundation to reject using a firearm in a situation of conflict was activated and easily understood by the believers. Many Bible texts were used as arguments to defend disarmament as one of the paths to peace:

“Jesus said: ‘They that live by the sword, shall die by the sword’. As Christians, we have to do the maximum to eliminate the weapons in our country (...) Our dream is that the metal of the weapons will be melted and transformed into plows and hoes for the new country dwellers”

Coordinator of the Latin-American Theological Fraternity for the Northeast

“Jesus said: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God’ (Matthew 5:9) He didn’t even defend Himself when He was taken prisoner and condemned to death, but said to Peter: ‘Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword’ (Matthew 26:52). Christians who imitate their Lord, seek peace by disarming the mind, heart and the hands.”

Note from the CNBB

“We don’t trust in ‘cars, horses, swords and spears’, but in our relations of fraternity. We always learn from Jesus, as Paul said: ‘Let nothing be done for strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem
In relation to the discussions and debates that took place during the referendum campaign, there was an unprepared attitude that was practiced in silence or passed on to the Viva Rio staff. It was clear that it wasn’t a matter of confirming or indicating the “yes” vote. There was a dispute of reasons that was being presented during the campaign and demanded more preparation and dominion concerning the subject of public security, in addition to specific subjects related to the Disarmament Statute. This meant having more information, much of it being statistics, and knowing how to use it during the confrontation of ideas. In this game of information and counter-information, inherent to political disputes, religious agents felt poorly equipped to present convincing answers to the “no” supporters and to the undecided. The training provided, according to an informant, was just “a lecture explaining what Viva Rio was, what the disarmament campaign was, participation of CONIC, how to fill out paperwork; but there wasn’t a discussion on the content itself. We ourselves had to research on the Internet and talk to other people”.

With the exception of a few Pentecostal churches, whose highest leaders favored the “yes” vote, it was not possible to obtain public statements or demonstrations from the most dynamic sectors of Brazilian Protestantism such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the Assembly of God. One possible reason for this would be the difficulty to work on this theme with the believers, because of the distance and superficiality in which these subjects are treated on the Pentecostal agenda. The complexity of the subjects involved, as was already mentioned, acted as a natural barrier which worked together with lack of interest. It seems likely, however, that the decision to support “yes” or “no” followed the logic of political mediation, an established practice among Pentecostal Protestant, (not only them) when it has to do with legislation and political discussions. Seen as an event whose political field and its tricks were playing a decisive role, the Pentecostal leaders sought signs from “their” parliamentarians to take a stand. Many Protestant parliamentarians were with the Parliamentary Front for Legitimate Defense, including some that led the “no” campaign in their states, indicating the absence of consensus, and above all, suggesting the strategy of not interfering in the believers choices.

The organized Christian sectors, ecumenical leaders and progressive Protestant (either from historical, charismatic or Pentecostal churches), bet on the cooperation with organizations that form the peace movements in Brazil. They supported initiatives of the national Front in the states and municipalities, becoming members of committees and seeking to render the campaign more dynamic with events, the preparation of campaign materials and mobilization of their networks. They wrote open letters, participated in debates and lectures, in addition to, in some cities, leading committees and liaising with other religious groups to conduct the campaign. These sectors, however, are not the majority in Protestantism or Catholicism, and only recently did they, outside the disarmament campaign, began to incorporate the “culture of peace” theme into their agenda. This is because of the theological emphasis on justice as a key factor for the historical commitment with grassroots struggles that these segments have supported.

What seems new, then, is the incorporation of urban violence as one of the main subjects for reflection and acting act upon it among the poor sectors of the population. In this sense, it is interesting how violence is a mobilizing and binding force going beyond denominational or religious boundaries. This cooperation was similar to the broad ecumenicalism of Betinho’s Hunger Campaign that “linked the improvement of democratic conditions to the fight against hunger, poverty and growing social exclusion in the country” (Landim, 1998). As one important ecumenical leader pointed out: “The theme of violence, with all of its effects and impacts (violence in the streets, family violence, youth violence, etc.), entered the churches in general, and that has opened the possibility to build a new paradigm for the Ecumenical Movement, working towards a Culture of Peace”.

Disarmament and the referendum: continuities and discontinuities

The qualified and objective effort of disarmament, which took place this year, with active participation of several representative entities from some of the most distinguished segments of Brazilian society is such an outstanding fact and of such significant relevance that it could, in the future, be seen as a milestone in Brazilian history, with regards to efforts to overcome epidemic violence that has become typical in our country. Furthermore, one must highlight the protagonism of religious segments...
that should be recognized as a sui generis moment of cooperation that surpassed borders of traditional denominations to provide personal, symbolic and material resources to the cause of disarmament. Mobilization of religious leaders and believers was significant in order to join forces with other segments of civil society in the campaign. Participation in state committees or formation of new committees, in addition to official statements of religious institutions, distribution of materials produced, as well as utilization of religious media, events and meetings to call believers to active participation. Therefore, the potential of the campaign to provoke discussion and preparation of religious arguments that strengthen the development of a lasting awareness and that favors the struggle for peace in large Brazilian cities should not be underestimated.

The Disarmament Campaign was, to date, the climax of mobilization of civil movements organized for a less violent society and it enabled the formation of a true network of churches, groups and religious organizations that seem to be convinced of the importance of continuing liaison so that the Disarmament Statute is put into practice and new policies in the area of public security can be implemented.

The overall total of weapons turned in to civilian, religious and police posts during the entire campaign that took place between July 15, 2004, when the law was regulated, to October 23, 2005, when the campaign officially ended, greatly surpassed expectations of organizers and collaborators of the campaign, indicating that Brazilian society is interested in overcoming the expansion of violent deaths by firearms. The churches provided renewed impetus to the campaign in the second phase. Throughout the disarmament campaign, under the supervision of Viva Rio, collection posts for small weapons were established in more than 220 churches, in 216 cities, in 23 states, which led to the destruction of 5000 weapons. Becoming weapon collection posts brought greater visibility to the churches, to the extent that they became participants of civil society, beyond the religious realm. Religious language and its symbolic wealth, incorporated into the repertoire of arguments of the campaign, contributed to its strengthening, an active presence that has been incorporated as a civic-religious practice by the anti-violence movements since the 1990s.

It is worthy of note that there was no resistance by the churches in relation to the subject of gun control. In a surprising manner, there was a mobilization throughout Brazil around the Disarmament Campaign. What looked like a daring action, opening weapons collection posts with the help of the police became a large-scale joint effort (mutirão) throughout the entire country. It is truly intriguing that in other contexts, such as in the US, the resistance to gun control is very strong among the churches, especially Protestants, many of whom have ties with the National Rifle Association (NRA).

If moral language worked to leverage a mode of engagement in the disarmament campaign that collaborated to its success, it was insufficient to engender the population’s trust and to channel them to vote “yes” in the arms referendum. Therefore, religion, although capable of making itself available for an active role in public life, was limited due to its lack of dominion over subjects that demand greater specialization as was the case in the discussions on gun control. On the other hand, contamination of the dispute in the referendum by the logic from the political realm, naturally agonic and confrontational, and the incapacity of the Brazil Without Weapons Front to build a campaign separate from “aggregating” and “moralizing” discourse, tended toward public opinion having a negative evaluation of the “yes” side, which leads us to recognize that one must be aware of boundaries, often discontinuous, between the capital accumulated in civic-religious campaigns and its implications in terms of incorporating new issues of public policies.

Bibliography


1 - This article is part of a set of analyses that intend to evaluate the recent experience in Brazil of a Referendum concerning the commerce of arms and munitions. The research that resulted in this paper had the collaboration of researchers Bianca Brandão, Cleber Fernandes, Christina Vital and Marlene Cunha. I especially wish to thank Ana Quiroga who accompanied the entire process of research, giving many suggestions and much guidance in the field work, in interviews and posterior analysis. Regina Novaes was also responsible for some ideas presented, for which I am very grateful. As is customary, I assume responsibility for the limits and mistakes in the conclusions presented in this paper.

2 - In Rio de Janeiro, there were 52 weapon collection posts opened in churches divided according to the following religious denominations: 31 Catholic; 7 Baptist; 5 Methodist; 4 Pentecostal; 3 Presbyterian; 1 Anglican; 1 Lutheran. In terms of geographical location in the State of Rio de Janeiro: 21 were in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, 11 in Metropolitan area of Rio and 20 in the state's backland. From this chart, a sample of the universe was selected so that each denomination was proportionally represented. Therefore, 12 collection posts were visited resulting in the following profile: 6 Catholic; 2 Baptist; 2 Methodist; 1 Pentecostal and 1 Presbyterian. Also using geographical location as a criterion, 7 posts in churches within the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, 4 in churches in the Metropolitan area of RJ and 1 in the state's interior were represented in the sample.

3 - We received statements from authors of articles in Manaus (Human Rights Center of the Archdiocese of Manaus), Londrina (CLAI and Londrina Pazeando), Porto Alegre (Peace Educators), Belo Horizonte (World Vision), Fortaleza (World Vision), Duque de Caxias (Justice, Peace and Ecology Service of the Franciscan Family/Political Ethics Movement/Saint Anthony’s Cathedral).

4 - Otávio Velho cites as significant examples the "Islamic renaissance” from Morocco and Indonesia, from Nigeria to Afghanistan, from Luson to the United States; the expansion of Pentecostals and Charismatics, Christian fundamentalism and telecast evangelism in the United States and its implications in the political realm; the growth of Christianity in Eastern Asia (especially Korea) and in Eastern Europe and institutional tension related thereto; the proliferation of new religious groups in sub-Saharan Africa, from "independent Christian churches" to neo-traditional movements; new religious movements, especially in Europe, the United States and Latin America, creating broad transnational networks of a global nature; civil conflicts in the Middle East, Northern Ireland and India attributed to religions; public controversies in France involving the issue of Islamic students using a veil or the use of a helmet by motorcyclists in Great Britain, causing conflicts with the Sikhs, among others.

5 - In Rio de Janeiro since 1995, Viva Rio in conjunction with other organizations and churches has been conducting research, voluntary weapons collection campaigns and mobilizing society to the central nature of the subject on the public security agenda. With the support of this movement, the State Government has conducted several public destruction events of small firearms apprehended by law enforcement agencies voluntarily turned in for this purpose.

6 - The mobilization team for the disarmament campaign in Viva Rio narrates an experience seen as fundamental to promote liaison with the churches. Operating successfully since August 2004, the Viva Rio post was visited three times in one week by a man who turned in a total of 12 weapons. He turned in his weapons, which were destroyed with the sledgehammer, and left cautiously. At the end of that week, he traveled together with his two children, to his house in the Lakes Region on the Rio de Janeiro seashore. There, he killed his children and afterwards committed suicide. He did it with the last gun he hadn't turned in. After being widely publicized by the press, this occurrence caused commotion and challenged Viva Rio to reflect on the event, which they then understood that the man in question would not have come in on three separate days to turn in his weapons if he did not wish to free himself from something that tormented him. Since then, the notion arised that, if he had had the opportunity to go to a church or religious meeting place, maybe he would have opened his heart, explaining his difficulties, or someone in a church could have had the sensitivity to approach him after sensing his attitude, which could have saved his life and that of his children.

7 - According to Kleverson Rocha, coordinator of the Campaign in Pará, many citizens were apprehensive to turn in their weapons in Civil Police units. "We are closer to the citizen when they turn in the weapon within their own community", he stated.

8 - The testimonial presented by Márícia Tucunduva, from Curitiba (PR), is illustrative: "I heard the following report from Mrs. X, together with her aged mother, handing in two weapons, a short-barreled 38 and a 32, both as good as new and having muntins. The weapons belonged to the father, who had died seven years ago, and..."
24 - Many religious agents kept a copy of the Ordinance on hand in case of an eventual disagreement with the police and the weapon being turned in. One should remember that at many posts, police officers were rotated. 25 - As one religious agent who was interviewed declared about an exemplary case: "The Baptist Church has a very good characteristic. Once a decision is made, it's decided and that's that. The whole Church adopted that idea. So much so that one person was vehemently against the idea, was one of the first to turn in his weapon. And from there on, other people that were doing the same, began to have the same idea.

26 - There was a more vehement reaction in a Parish in the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro from a small group of believers that threatened to stop paying tithe to the Church if the post continued operating. Due to this fact, the person responsible ended the activities a little before the official deadline. "We didn't want friction", the religious agent declared.

27 - Religious agent from an Protestant church: "We can't be alienated from the problems around us, and that's why it's important to participate. We cooperate. It's important to participate, make you're present to socialize our space. Here on José Higino Street, there's a Kardec Spiritualist Center, there are many samba schools, even Catholic churches. So why can't we, an Protestant community in the strategic spot that we're in, participate? It is because we haven't participated."

28 - The Fasting and Prayer Vigil took place June 27 to 29, and was organized by the Viva Vida movement. Convive with CONIC, local councils of pastors, Heal Our Land Community and religious organizations from Brasilia.

29 - The leader of URI in Brazil, André Porto, and the coordinator of the Religion and Peace Project of Viva Rio, facilitated dialogue with non-Christian religious segments.

30 - Here I'm going to deal more specifically with the Christian segment, Catholics, protestant churches from the capital.

31 - Several local campaigns on child disarmament conducted by governments or NGOs throughout Brazil in partnership with companies were very significant. In these campaigns, children took part in the process and traded them for comic books, books and educational material.
Referendum
From Yes to No
An experience in Brazilian Democracy

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