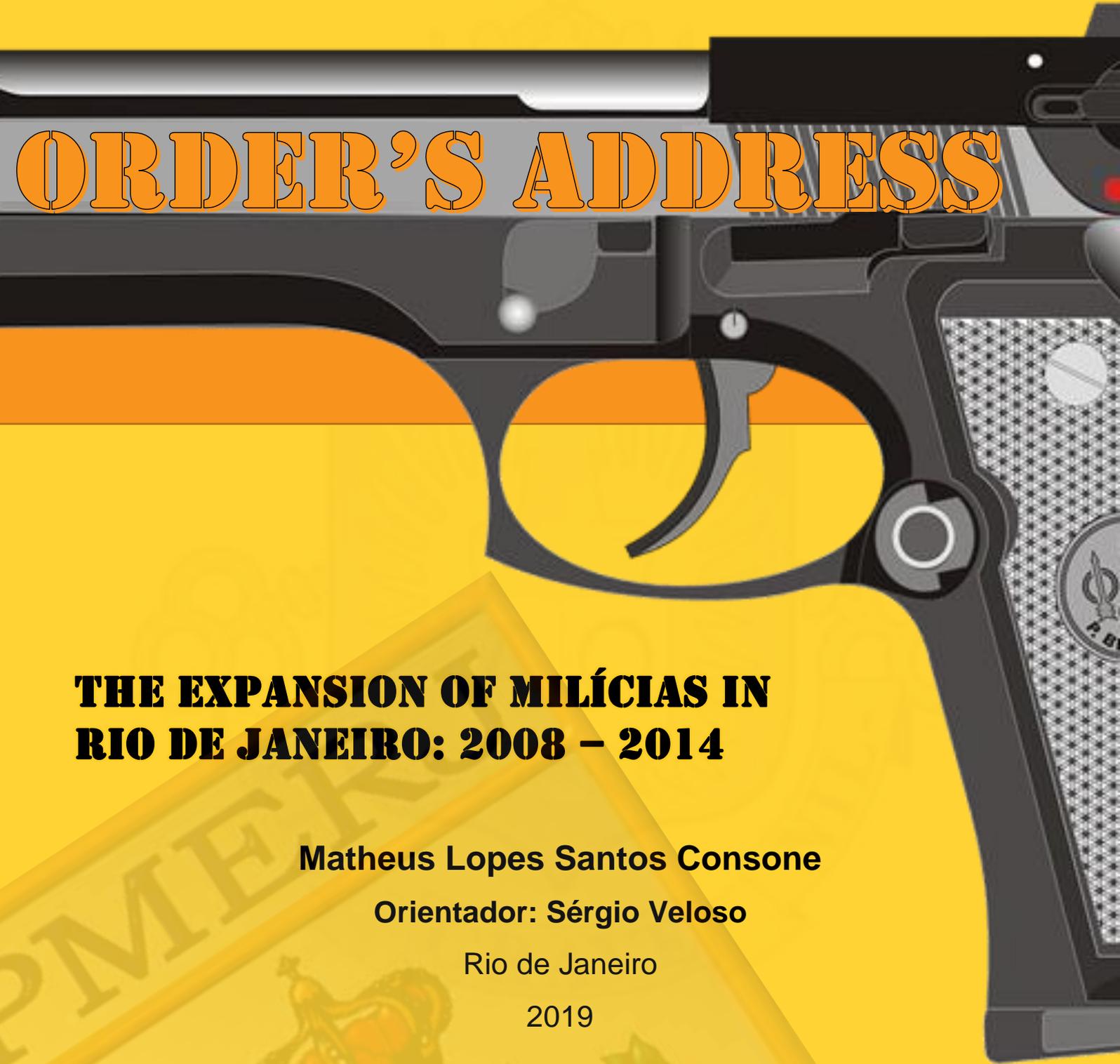


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Instituto de Relações Internacionais



ORDER'S ADDRESS

THE EXPANSION OF MILÍCIAS IN RIO DE JANEIRO: 2008 – 2014

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Orientador: Sérgio Veloso

Rio de Janeiro

2019





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Order's Address

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*To all of the victims of the milícias and to those who live under
constant fear.*

Abstract

The milícias are a specimen of organized crime that controls part of the city of Rio de Janeiro and parts of the Metropolitan area of the State. Until 2008, these groups benefited from an acceptance and support from the general public and political class, since the legitimization discourse used by the milícias offered a liberation from the drug traffickers, gaining the image of “communities’ self-defense groups” and a “lesser-evil”. It is considered that 2008 was a “breaking point” for these groups, following the torture of two journalists and the instauration of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (or CPI), changing the public opinion on the issue and silencing supportive discourses. However, from 2008 to 2014, the milícias expanded their control simultaneously to the implementation of the UPP’s and to the increase in the efforts on the war on drugs in Rio de Janeiro. This article investigates how this expansion was possible, working on the thin line that separates legality from illegality. We will mobilize concepts as “the re-enchantment of evil” (Zaluar, 1994a) and fetishization of order, and, finally, offer the argument that this expansion was the result of the fact that the milícias were never dissociated with the image of “lesser-evil” and that their existence, in the context of war on drugs, was interesting for the State in the pursuit of the establishment of a specific kind of order in many neighborhoods and favelas on the peripheries of Rio.

Key words: Milícia; Rio de Janeiro; War on Drugs; Order

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1. Introduction

Willian¹ is the owner of a 20-year-old auto parts company in Campo Grande, a neighborhood in the Western Zone of Rio de Janeiro. With around 15 employees and two floors, totalizing 1000m² of total area, “Willian’s Center” is a small company that mainly supplies auto parts for car owners and small car shops. Over the 20 years of market operations, Willian, unlike many of his competitors, had always paid his taxes properly and had never gotten a labor lawsuit against the company: an exemplary citizen and businessman.

On a Monday in January, Willian arrives at his office at 8 am. As usual, he goes straight to his office to search for new auto parts catalogs issued by his suppliers. That morning, however, as soon as he sits on his chair, the phone rings. This time, it was not any supplier or client, but Lucas, his sales manager, asking him to go downstairs, to the cashier. It was a short walk to the front of his company and, when he gets there, he is introduced to two men by his manager, both appearing to be around 50 years old, roughly the same age as Willian. Wearing thick gold necklaces and rings, matching their shining oversized watches, the men seemed intimidating. He invites the two to his office and offers a cup of coffee to them, which is accepted. As Willian asks what their visit is about, they present themselves as retired policemen and current members of the group that provides security in the area. Willian promptly realizes that they were simply using euphemisms and that they were actually *milicianos*.

They then argued that many businessowners in the area were thriving for security, since there were multiple cases of burglary in the previous month. They also said that they provided their services in a nearby area for 15 years, but that now their services are being demanded at other areas as well. The provision of that service, though, would cost a “symbolic” tax of

¹ Real names hidden for safety reasons.

750 reais per month, which, according to them, was an insignificant amount of money compared to the size of the company. It was a complex situation, as it is common sense that one cannot just refuse to pay a *miliciano*².

Willian, however, did refuse. The amount asked, 750 reais, was far beyond the company's possibilities.

A week later, Willian's company is burglarized overnight for the first time in its history. Due to security cameras, it could be noted that the burglar was familiar to the company's structure, since he immediately knew where to climb, straight to the air-conditioner box hole, pushing it in and getting inside Willian's office, where the money was located. They also knew where the cameras switches were. The next morning, the two *milicianos* show up saying, "we told you that we are having a lot of burglaries in the area, didn't we?". Willian then offered to pay 75 reais to the *milicianos* per week. They looked at each other and, surprisingly, agreed with the counteroffer. On the way out, Willian thanks the two for accepting his price and one of them turns to Willian and says, "we all do what we can".

These events happened in 2015, to a close relative of mine and depicts a phenomenon that marks the State of Rio de Janeiro³: the *Milícias*.

Rio de Janeiro has historically been a violent city in a violent country. Organized crime controls entire areas of the city, defying the State's sovereignty, oppressing communities and increasing the rate of murder. For decades, the drug gangs, such as Comando Vermelho (CV), Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) and Terceiro Comando Puro (TCP), terrified the city as they waged war against each other over the control of favelas and neighborhoods. In addition, the government of the State of Rio de Janeiro only contributes to the death toll by carrying out a policy of confrontation based on the "war on drugs" mentality. Far from having any signs of improvements, Rio de Janeiro

² I.e., a person who is member of a *milícia*.

³ Throughout this paper, the reader will find that the city of Rio de Janeiro will be often referred as "Rio", while the *State of Rio de Janeiro* will solely be referred to as so.

witnessed, for the last two decades, the growth of the *milícias*, another specimen of organized crime.

These factions are formed by public agents (or former public agents), mainly from public safety institutions, and some civilians, and violently control a specific territory (commonly low-income or low-middle class areas) and charge the residents and/or businesses for protection against crime and drug gangs⁴, in addition to controlling and creating monopolies on a variety of local services and products.

I was born, raised and still live in Campo Grande, the epicenter of the most powerful of these groups, the *Liga da Justiça* (Justice League). The *milícia* made itself present throughout my entire life: In school, I studied with the children and grandchildren of its leaders; in the streets, I witnessed executions and saw burned bodies. I saw friends losing their businesses and properties to *milícias*, and I, during the long elaboration of this article, was threatened by *milicianos*.

The main goal of my research is to understand how the *milícias* extraordinarily expanded their areas of control in the city from the late 2000's and mid-2010's. As we will study, until 2008, the *milícias* benefited from a relatively wide support from the general public and political class. The latter case can be noted by various instances where high-ranked politicians, during interviews, either portrayed these groups as a minor public safety issue, or a “lesser-evil”, when comparing to drug trafficking, or even stating that they were allies in the fight against the drug gangs.

However, Ignacio Cano & Thais Duarte (2012) argue that 2008 was a “breaking point” for the *milícias*, following the torture of two journalists and the instauration of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (or CPI). However, despite the change in the public opinion, the increase in the arrests of *milicianos* and the silencing of supportive political discourses, the *milícias*

⁴ Crime here is understood as “nonorganized crime”, such as robbery, larceny, burglary, illegal graffiti etc.

expanded their territorial control over Rio and the surrounding cities by more than 150%. How was this expansion possible? The most likely answer to this question is that, although the outspoken political support for the *milícias* disappeared after 2008, the image of a “lesser-evil” survived in the depths of the political class subconsciousness, allowing the State to tolerate the existence and expansion of these groups, since both State and *milícias* fought a common enemy: the *bigger-evil*, which are the drug gangs.

This article, thus, is going to investigate the origins, characteristics, basic structure, and *modi operandi* of the *milícias*, as well as their connections to the State. We will start by understanding what are the *milícias* and the linguistics around the phenomenon, followed by the history of these groups up to 2008. For that I will mobilize authors that have extensively published works on the *milícias*, such as Cano (2008), Cano & Duarte (2012), Alba Zaluar & Conceição (2007) and Zaluar (2012). Then, we will proceed to the expansion of the *milícias* between 2008 and 2014, which is the main focus of this article, using data collected from various sources, and, finally, I will provide an explanation for this expansion. For that, I will mobilize two concepts: “re-enchantment of evil”, by Alba Zaluar (1994a) and the fetishization of order which help us understand the nature of the promiscuous relations between the *milícias* and the State.

2. On the Definition of the *Milícias*

Since the *milícias* started to be studied by academics in the mid 2000's, there is an apparent difficulty when finding a unanimous definition that covers all the different groups and factions that are categorized as so (Final Report of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry for the Investigation on the Actions of the *Milícias* in Rio de Janeiro, 2008⁵). It is in Cano (2008) and

⁵ Also referred throughout this paper as "CPI" (in Portuguese “Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito”). CPI's are special committees formed by members of the federal or State legislative power to investigate a specific topic. At the end of these investigations, the committee has to produce a report containing the conclusions brought by the investigations.

in the CPI (2008) that we can understand the reasons why finding a sole definition for this phenomenon was so hard. The investigation on the milícias carried out in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro⁶, and presided by the State Deputy Marcelo Freixo (the CPI), interviews academics, police chiefs and other public agents (mainly from the judiciary), while Cano (2008) interviews residents of areas controlled by milícias. The results of these interviews display a variety on the extension of the control and coercion over territories and populations that each of these groups perform.

In some areas, for example, the milícia would only charge the residents and businesses a nonmandatory tax to provide security, and those who refused to pay would suffer no retaliation. In other areas, the tax was compulsory for residents and businesses, with violent retaliations ranging from robbery and beating to murder, also depending on the milícia in control of the region. Some would only charge businesses and not the residents. Many would control and create a monopoly on the provision of services and the selling of products, while other would only provide extralegal security.

In some specific cases, such as in Morro do Sossego, a favela located in the neighborhood of Bangu, Western Zone of Rio, the milícia violently prohibited anything that could disturb the local order, directly interfering with the personal life of the residents (Cano, 2008). For instance, the author cites one of the interviewees from that favela, who claimed that the milicianos stripped a woman naked and shaved her hair in public because she had an affair with a drug dealer. In other areas, milicianos would limit the sound volume in parties, demand that families took their kids to daycare and school (Cano, 2008) and prohibit adultery (Cano & Duarte, 2012).

⁶ The Brazilian political structure determines that the legislative role of the States is held by the Legislative Assembly, formed by elected State Deputies, while the municipal legislative power is held by the Counselor's Chamber, formed by Municipal Counselors. The executive power for the States and cities is held by governors and mayors, respectively.

In fact, these studies show that there is no such a thing as *a* milícia. Instead, there are many factions that act in different areas, have different "personalities", distinct *modi operandi* and varied levels of control over the territory and residents. However, Cano & Duarte (2012) and Zaluar & Conceição (2007) offer definitions that comprise these different factions as part of a sole phenomenon.

Zaluar & Conceição (2007) provides an early definition of "milícia":

Currently, in Brazil, the term *milícia* refers to policemen and former policemen (mainly from the *Polícia Militar*⁷), a few firefighters and a few prison guards, all with military training and members of public institutions, who take for themselves the function to protect and provide "security" in neighborhoods, supposedly threatened by predatory drug dealers. [...] [They] take advantage on the monopoly of violence that the State holds and that gives them training and guns. They are those who have or had the responsibility to enforce the law, but act against the law, not only to make from security a lucrative business, but also to exploit, at many other markets and businesses, the most vulnerable urban workers [...] (ZALUAR & CONCEIÇÃO, 2007, p. 90-91, our translation).

Cano & Duarte (2012) offers a similar definition, also including, however, the variety of markets that the "milícias" usually control in the areas where they are located:

[...] groups of armed public agents (policemen, firefighters, prison guards etc.) that controlled communities and favelas, offering 'protection' in exchange for taxes to be paid by business owners and residents [...] also profiting from the monopoly and control over many economic activities in those areas, such as the sale of compressed natural gas, alternative public transportations⁸ and the provision of illegal cable TV [also known as "*gato net*"]. (CANO; DUARTE, 2012, p. 13, our translation).

⁷ *Polícia Militar*, translated to English as "military police" is a public safety institution in Brazil that is responsible for the maintenance of public order and is under the State's sphere. This institution is the primary responsible to perform operations in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (in this work, the personnel of this institution will be often referred as "PM"). The Brazilian police system is divided into four institutions. Beyond the PM, briefly, there are the *Guarda Municipal*, or Municipal Guard, responsible for the protection of the public patrimony; the *Polícia Civil*, or Civil Police, that act as the judiciary police, therefore being responsible for crime investigations and the execution of judiciary orders on the State sphere; and the *Polícia Federal*, or Federal Police, which has the same role as the previous, but in a federal sphere.

⁸ Alternative public transport in Rio de Janeiro is based on vans

Based on these two definitions, we can note a clear difference between the traditional-historical concept of "milícia" – which can be translated to English as "militia" – and the concept of "milícia" as currently used in the specific scenario of Rio de Janeiro. The term "milícia" started to be used to refer to these criminal groups by newspapers from Rio de Janeiro in 2006 (CANO & DUARTE, 2012). Zaluar & Conceição (2007) start their paper with this differentiation by arguing that the traditional definition of milícia refers to a military force formed in order to defend themselves and/or a group of people, enforce law and order and to provide paramilitary service in a context of emergence. As we will see later, the usage of the term "milícia" is not the result of a misconception of the original definition of the word, but it is the result of the misconception of the nature of these groups.

The most important and complete definition, however, is that provided by Cano (2008). After interviewing a number of residents of areas controlled by milícias, the author noticed that, despite the variations, there are five simultaneous axes that are always present in any milícia:

1. The control over a territory and the population that resides there by an irregular armed group;
2. The coercive character of this control;
3. Personal profit as their only or main goal;
4. The existence of a legitimacy discourse that is based on the provision of security and the maintenance or installation of public order;
5. The *active* and recognized participation of public agents as members.

The first axis is only possible due to the absence of the State in those areas. The Brazilian State has historically forgotten about many of its low-class neighborhoods and communities when enforcing the law and guarantying the rights of its citizens, such as the right of safety. Thus, not only the milícias, but also other kinds of organized crime – mainly the drug

gangs – take advantage of this vacuum of power and establish their control in these areas (Cano, 2008).

The second axis refers to the fact that these groups establish and maintain their control mainly through violence and fear. The coercion is what makes them a specimen of crime, otherwise, if the "protection" offered by milicianos was a matter of choice for the residents, it would be a private security business (Cano, 2008). Unlike private security, milícias are not based on a contractual relation of provider/client (Zaluar & Conceição, 2007). This axis makes clear that the milícias act based on a coercive relation of perpetrator/victim. Therefore, due to the coercion, the milícias, in truth, "are offering protection against themselves" (ALERJ, 2008, p. 37), by leaving the notion that "if you don't pay, 'something bad' can happen to you". Yet, as discussed before, the level of coercion can vary depending on the milícia⁹.

The third axis indicates that, just as any other organized crime, the milícias have an intrinsic capitalist, personal profit-oriented nature. As previously mentioned, they not only profit from the provision of security, but also from the control and monopoly over many other services and products. Cano & Duarte (2012), in an update of his previous studies, analyses crime reports from 2006 and 2011 that involved milícias. The results of the research show that the milícias profited from the extortion (through the provision of security and the control over the alternative public transport¹⁰), clandestine radio, cable TV and telephone services, illegal trade of firearms and compressed natural gas, gambling, irregular construction and, surprisingly, drug trade. This point is crucial to deconstruct what the author calls "liberator myth" (Cano, 2008, p. 63), which is related to the next axis.

⁹ The groups that were mentioned earlier that do not charge mandatory taxes and do not act violently towards residents and business owners, are a minority among the milícias. They would, however, still be violent towards those who would act against their code of conduct and criminals in the area, acting illegally through executions and other violent means (Cano, 2008).

¹⁰ This control was exercised through the taxing over van drivers so they would be allowed to operate (Cano, 2012).

Before continuing to the last two axes, it is important to mention that these first three axes are not exclusive characteristics of the *milícias*. One could assume that these axes are applicable to any other organized crime, such as the drug gangs in Rio, and that assumption is correct. In fact, even the charge of a protection tax and the illegal control over the sale of compressed natural gas, irregular cable TV services and alternative public transportation were previously practiced by some drug gangs (Silva, Fernandes & Braga, 2008). The fourth and fifth axis, however, present aspects that are intrinsically specific of the *milícias* and are crucial to understand how they managed to grow its area of dominance in Rio. These are going to be the most important of Cano's (2008) axis in this work.

The fourth axis –the legitimization discourse– refers to the fact that the *milícias*, in contrast to the drug gangs, present a discourse that seeks a moral and pragmatic justification of their territorial control and actions. This discourse is based on a "double function" (Cano, 2008, p. 66) that the *milícias* pledge to accomplish in a certain community: the provision of security and protection of the area against organized crimes and the maintenance or restauration of a local order by, as previously discussed, reinforcing a specific sense of morality and fighting common criminality and minor "public disorder" – such as homeless people and drug abuse. This discourse was called by Cano (2008) as the "liberator myth", since it promised a "crusade against the drug gangs" (Cano, 2008, p. 62). "Liberator" as it guarantees freedom from organized crime control to the local residents, but it is a "myth" since it would only fight drug gangs so that they themselves would have legitimacy among the residents to establish their own control in that area, and, later, exercise the tyranny that the residents feared or wanted to get rid of. The third axis allows us to deconstruct this myth, because, as Cano argues:

[...] if its members [*milicianos*] had the restauration of the order as their primary motivation, they could have done it as public agents, as many of them are policemen. But, if they did so, if the police formally took control of these communities, the policemen that are members of the *milícia* would be depriving themselves

from a source of income that complements their poor salaries. (Cano, 2008, p. 62).

This fourth axis helps us to understand the briefly mentioned usage of the term “milícia”. As pointed out by Zaluar & Conceição (2007), the traditional-historical concept of “milícia” implies the idea of defense and the maintenance of order by a militarized group. Thus, after noting the Cano’s fourth axis, it is possible to argue that the misuse of the term is not a result of a misconception of the original definition of “milícia” (as in “militia”), but a misconception of the then new phenomenon due to the success of the legitimation discourse.

Finally, the fifth and last axis refers not only to the fact that many members of these groups are policemen, firefighters, penitentiary guards and servicemen, but also to the involvement of politicians. Cano (2008) stresses that this was a well-known fact among the residents of the areas controlled by milícias, since the milicianos wanted them to acknowledge that. There are two explanations for this: first, the fact that there were plenty of public agents as members whom reinforced the image of “liberator” that the milicianos sought to have, bringing more legitimation for their control; second, it was electorally interesting for the politicians involved, as the provision of public services, such as security and social assistance, would be a source of votes. The involvement of politicians, withal, would only become general knowledge in the early months of 2008, with the arrest of a number of Municipal Counselors and State Deputies (Cano & Duarte, 2012).

In contrast, from the 218 people indicted in the final report of the CPI, 130 (70%) were listed as civilians, thus, not being public safety agents, servicemen or politicians (ALERJ, 2008). This contradicted the earlier ideas around the milícias, which thought they were predominantly formed by public agents¹¹. However, there are some considerations that ought to be

¹¹Cano, in his *No Sapatinho: A Evolução das Milícias no Rio de Janeiro (2008-2011)* (2012), mentions this contradiction (p. 18).

made about this; although the CPI listed 130 of the indicted as civilians, many of these had connections with the State which can be divided into three categories. 1) The presence of former public safety agents and former military personnel¹². These people have had military training and still had some level of authority towards ordinary civilians: features that would yield legitimacy and, at the same time, the necessary power for coercion. 2) Former or [then] current political candidates. Although this characteristic does not necessarily grant one influence, prestige, authority or power, it demonstrates that gaining political positions is a major interest of many milicianos, especially those in higher positions. This is not a one-direction movement, though: there are also cases where politicians used their power and influence to gain control over milícias, which is the case of Álvaro Lins¹³. 3) Close relatives of politicians related to milícias, which is a common occurrence in the list. We can take this as an example of indirect connection with the State, since their influence and authority emanate from their relatives who are politicians. The most notorious milícia in the history of Rio de Janeiro, for example, *Liga da Justiça* (Justice League), was commanded by [former] PM's and Municipal Counselors, along with their close relatives (ALERJ, 2008).

Therefore, the fact that 70% of those who were indicted in the CPI were civilians does not mean that Cano's fifth axis is invalid. The fact that the leadership of the milícias are predominantly public safety agents and politicians, by itself, already proves Cano's point; the fact that many of the civilians indicted in the CPI had direct or indirect links with the State, serves to end any possible doubts about this fact.

¹² Although the final report listed the majority of former public safety agents and former servicemen as so, some were listed as civilians for unknown reasons.

¹³ Álvaro Lins is the former director of the Civil Police and a State Deputy. In the mid-2000's he managed to become the leader of the milícia that controlled the favela of Rio das Pedras, in the neighborhood of Jacarepaguá, in the Western Zone of Rio (CPI, 2008).

Cano's fifth axis focusses mainly on the relation that flows from the milícias towards the State, i.e., how milicianos use their position within the State to gain power, influence and legitimacy. However, there is also a relation that flows from the State towards the milícias. This one is not based on the politicians who become milicianos, but on a general implicit permission and, sometimes, outspoken support that the political class provides to the milícias. This relation is the most relevant for my argument and will be reproached in a future section of this work. Before proceeding to this discussion, however, we have to understand how these groups developed in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

3. On the origins and development of the milícias until 2008

After providing a complete definition of the phenomenon of the milícias, I would like to introduce the reader to the history of these groups; by acknowledging how the milícias came to be and, more importantly, how they developed and geographically expanded, we will be able to have an overview of the real scenario of the public safety in Rio de Janeiro.

The very first synapses of these groups were studied by Zaluar & Conceição (2007) and Misse (2011). In the decades of 1970 and 1980, small groups of policemen and other public safety agents, all residents of peripheries, started to be paid by local business owners to fight and prevent frequent burglaries. They were known as "extermination groups" and were common in many large peripheries throughout the country. In Rio de Janeiro, a variation of these groups, the *polícia mineira* (*mineira* police) would also offer the services of hitmen (Misse, 2011). Sometime during the 90's, the *polícia mineira* of Rio das Pedras, a neighborhood in the Western Zone of

Rio de Janeiro¹⁴, started to provide security service to the residents as well, with a small tax attached to it. Gradually, the “mineira” (which originally was a side-job), became professional and turned into a profitable alternative to its members. From there on, came the coercion and territorial control, and violence was not only a mechanism of protection to the community anymore, but also a way to guarantee the periodic payments from the residents (Zaluar & Conceição, 2007)

During the 2000’s, following the extraordinary success of the mineiras in Rio das Pedras, other mineiras started to appear throughout Rio de Janeiro, beyond the Western Zone of the city. It was clear that these groups were not the old mineiras anymore, but a new, complex and articulated phenomenon. While the only place controlled by the milícia, in 1998, was Rio das Pedras, in 2005, 42 favelas were under the control these groups, and, a year later, the number of these favelas was 92, showed an investigative report published by a major Brazilian newspaper. This report also showed that every 12 days one favela controlled by drug gangs would be taken by a milícia (O Globo, 2006).

Two years later, in 2008, the number of neighborhoods and favelas controlled by the milícias increased to 144 (ALERJ, 2008), now reaching other cities around Rio – the so called “Metropolitan Region”, which comprehends the capital and 21 other cities.

It is important to understand that, at the time, the milícias benefited from a considerable support from the general public and the political class (Cano & Duarte, 2012). In fact, the previously mentioned investigative report also presents part of an interview with Colonel Mário Sérgio de Brito Duarte, at that time commandant of the *Batalhão de Operações Especiais* (BOPE; Battalion of Special Operations of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro). The commandant states in the interview that the extraordinary expansion of the milícias is only possible because of both the support they have from the local

¹⁴ Previously mentioned here, Rio das Pedras is a low-income neighborhood, created during the 1970's as home for the workers (mostly migrants from the northeast region of Brazil) of the construction of the new middle-class neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca.

residents and the informal participation of a portion of the local police units (O Globo, 2006).

This local support from residents and police units is a direct result of the success of the legitimization discourse and establishment of the “liberator myth”. This can be shown in the results of a research led by the *Núcleo de Pesquisa das Violências* (NUPEVI)¹⁵ in 2007, that interviewed residents from areas controlled by drug gangs (group 1) and also residents of areas controlled by milícias (group 2) about their perceptions of violence in their communities. The interviews showed that group 2 experiences less shootings and general crimes than group 1: 62% of group 1 claims that shootings are always or frequently heard, only 15% of group 2 claims the same; 40,7% of group 1 claims to have witnessed almost no crimes, in contrast to 57,7% in group 2; finally, 52% in group 1 reported seeing public drug abuse, opposing to 18,5% of group 2.

These numbers are a consequence of another set of data produced during the same research, which showed that the police operations in milícia areas are less violent – 15,7% of group 1 claims to have seen policemen firing their guns without provocation, while in group 2 only 5,2% claims the same. Zaluar & Conceição (2007) argue that the fact that many of these milicianos and, even more important, their leaders are former public safety agents, ensures a different approach from the police institutions¹⁶. In addition, Arias & Barnes (2017) argue that because of the close ties with the public safety institutions, milicianos gained political and cultural capital, giving them the ability to speak in the same dialect of the spheres of formal State’s power and contacts within the State, which granted the milícias many benefits from the State. Second, is that these numbers show that the milícias, at least until 2008,

¹⁵ The results of this research were published in Zaluar & Conceição (2007)

¹⁶ The official statement from both Police commands (Civil and Military) is that the drug traffickers often violently resist the police operations (Zaluar & Conceição, 2007).

managed to deliver what they promised in their legitimation discourse to those communities, nevertheless, with a high price:

The general effect is to create conditions of relative peace in which residents can walk around their communities with confidence that gunfire will not break out. Drug dealers do not operate in the streets and residents do not have to worry about their children being drawn into drug consumption. At the same time, this apparent peace is balanced with the real fear residents have of losing their homes or expressing political or social opinions publicly (ARIAS & BARNES, 2017)

The support, however, was not only coming from local police units and residents. Crucial to my argument, many high-ranked politicians publicly showed their “positive” support to the *milícias*. The most important of these cases are those of Cesar Maia, Mayor of Rio from 2001 to 2008, Eduardo Paes, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro from 2009 to 2016, and Jair Bolsonaro, at time Federal Deputy for Rio de Janeiro and current President of Brazil.

In 2006, as Rio de Janeiro was getting prepared to receive the Pan-American Games in the following year, Cesar Maia, by the time mayor of the city, referred to the *milícias* as “community self-protection groups” and, on that same week, stated that they were not the priority of the safety policies as they were a “much lesser evil”, when comparing them to the drug gangs (MAIA, 2006). Arias (2013) points out that César Maia not only showed this support to the *milícias*, but actively built relationships with these groups in order to support his political ambitions.

Also in 2006, Eduardo Paes¹⁷, when asked during an interview about his plans for public safety, stated that the *milícias* were helping the State to recover its sovereignty in areas that were once controlled by the drug gangs, and that the public safety forces should work with them regarding strategy and intelligence (Paes, 2006). Eduardo Paes lost the elections that year, but, two years later, would be elected Mayor. Finally, as of the instauration of the CPI in 2008, Jair Bolsonaro publicly stood against the investigations and

¹⁷ That was, at the time, a Federal Deputy for Rio de Janeiro and was running for Governor.

attacked Marcelo Freixo, the president of the committee, by calling him a coward. In this occasion, Bolsonaro said:

My State [Rio de Janeiro], sadly, is different from the others. It is worse. No State Deputy really fights for the reduction of the drug gangs' fire power, the reduction of drug trafficking. No. They want to attack the miliciano, who became the symbol of evil and even worse than the traffickers. There are many milicianos that have nothing to do with "gatonet", with the compressed natural gas trade. Because they earn 850 reais a month, which is the salary of a soldier of the military police or of a firefighter, and they have their own gun, they organize the security of their community. [...] we cannot generalize. [...] The report [of the CPI] is full of policemen and firefighters that have nothing to do with that [the milícias]. This report is coward. (CAMARA DOS DEPUTADOS, 2008, p. n.p.)

There was also an occasion, in 2005, where Bolsonaro publicly defended Adriano Magalhães da Nóbrega, known as *Urso Polar*, a policeman who was convicted for murder and was also accused of heading the milícia of Rio das Pedras. Bolsonaro said that his conviction was disregarding the fact that Adriano was a "brilliant officer". Two months before, Bolsonaro's son, Flávio Bolsonaro (then State Deputy of Rio de Janeiro) awarded Adriano with the "Tiradentes Medal", the highest decoration of the State (Otávio & Araújo, 2019).

With a few exemptions, however, the outspoken political support for the milícias ceased in 2008. Cano & Duarte (2012) argue that that year was a breaking point for the milícias due to the torture of two journalists from the newspaper *O Dia* that were investigating the activities of the milícia in control of a favela in the Western Zone of the city, Batan. This event gained extraordinary media coverage both nationally and internationally, which, and according to the author, forced the Legislative Assembly to institute the CPI, widely changed the public opinion about the milícias and forced a change in the discourses about these groups. The change in public opinion can be seen in the ethnographic work of Cano & Duarte (2012), where interviews with local residents showed that the majority of them were already seeing the milícia negatively. In fact, even in 2007, the new Governor of Rio de Janeiro,

Sérgio Cabral Filho, was already using an aggressive discourse against the milícias (Silva, Fernandes & Braga, 2008).

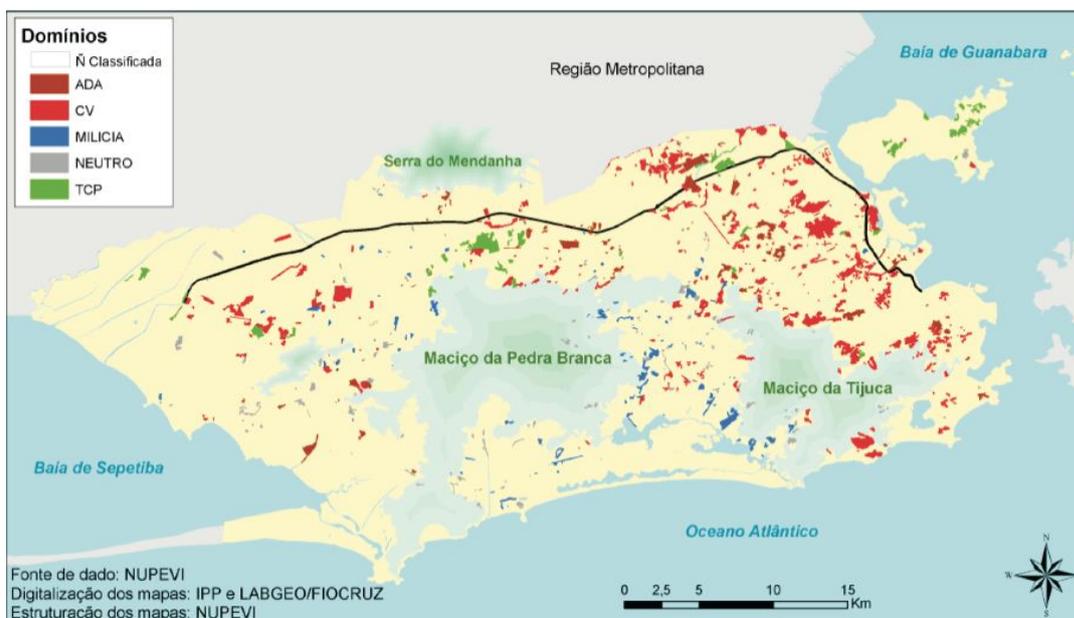
4. On the expansion of the milícias after 2008

With the new government of Rio de Janeiro going to the hands of Sérgio Cabral Filho, a change in the public safety policies came along: the *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* (Pacifying Police Units), or UPP's. These were specially trained police units that would establish territorial control in favelas under the control of armed groups. As of 2014, 38 UPP's were implemented in the city, most of them in favelas in the Southern Zone of the city – the touristic area (Arias & Barnes, 2017). However, only one of those 38 UPP's were located in a favela controlled by milícias, in the Batan favela. Arias & Barnes (2017) argues that this decision from the police command reflects the ineffectiveness of the UPP's when dealing with such kind of crime, “where the problem is not suppressing the confrontations associated with the drug trade but, rather, the pervasive police corruption that drives these extortion rackets” (p. 460).

Therefore, despite the breaking point of 2008, without a proper public safety policy against them, the milícias expanded their area of control during the following years.

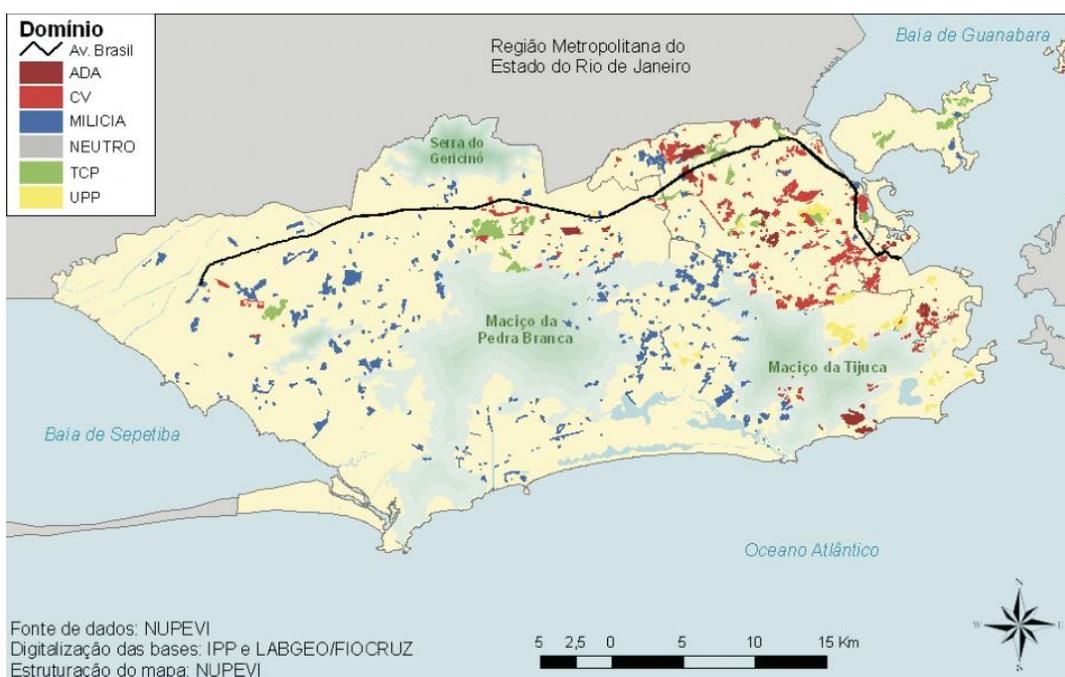
If we only consider the favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the milícias controlled 11,5% of them in 2005 (Zaluar & Conceição, 2012):

Image 1: Favelas controlled by the drug gangs (ADA, CV, TCP) and milícias in 2005.



In 2011, however, this scenario changed and the milícias had control over 45% of the favelas in Rio – an increase of almost 300% in 6 years. In that year, the drug gangs had less than 50% of the favelas, once the milícias and the UPP's had 52% combined (Zaluar & Conceição, 2012):

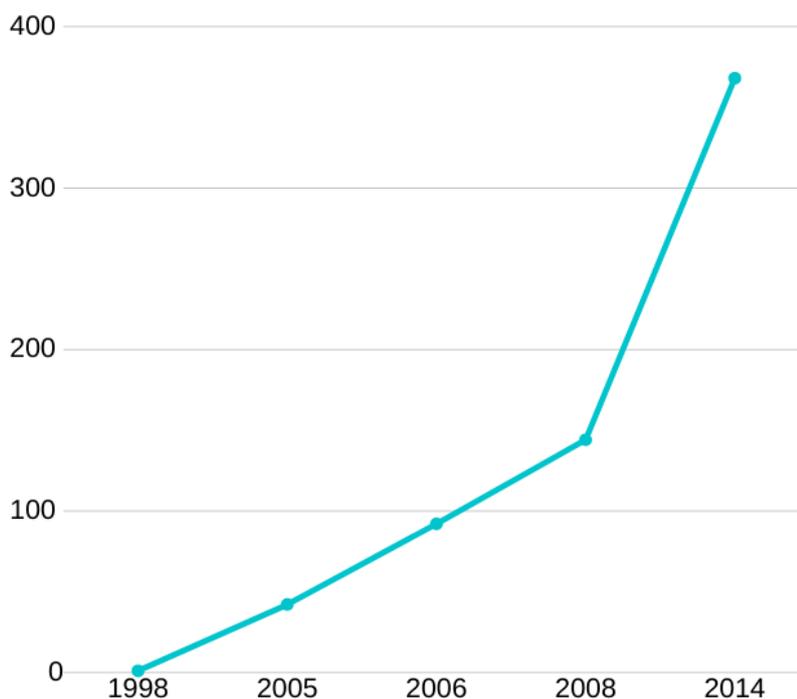
Image 2: Favelas controlled by drug gangs (ADA, CV, TCP), milícias and UPP's in 2011



In 2014, another investigative report published by O Globo¹⁸, showed that the number of cities in the State of Rio de Janeiro that had the presence of a milícia was now 36, and the territories (favelas and part of neighborhoods) controlled by milícias increased to 368, including entire neighborhoods (51) in the capital: an increase of 155,5% in comparison with the previous evaluation from 2008 (144). The same report shows the number of people under the milícia yoke was about 620 thousand people.

All the data produced from 1998 to 2014 about the territorial control of the milícias show that, in 16 years, this kind of crime extraordinarily expanded and prospered, controlling 368 territories in 36 cities: a total increase of 36700% in its short history, which leave us with the following graph:

Image 3: Favelas and neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro under the control of milícias



¹⁸ <https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/levantamento-do-globo-revela-que-milicias-ja-agem-em-36-municipios-do-estado-do-rio-13931365>

And here we reach the most important point in this work: How was it possible that, despite the “breaking point” pointed out by Cano & Duarte (2012), the milícias expanded so much from 2008 until 2014?

5. Order’s address

There are two possible answers for this question that we shall investigate. The first possible answer is that the milícias are a relatively new and unique kind of organized crime, and, therefore, the State simply does not know how to fight it properly.

One can argue that the State did show a certain level of effort in fighting the milícias after 2008. Between 2008 and 2014, 989 people were arrested for being involved with milícias, while, before 2008, only 6 were arrested (Bottari & Ramalho, 2014). However, it is important to note that the arrests are a result of judiciary and police actions – not political.

From the political perspective, from the 58 steps suggested by CPI to fight the milícias, only a few were carried out: three became law and a handful of prison orders were issued. The three laws created were all at the federal level, including the *Lei da Ficha Limpa*, which refers to the ineligibility of condemned people for a period of time to political roles – the debates and circumstances that led to the approval of this law, although related to the CPI’s 22nd proposal, had nothing to do with the milícias (Marés & Resende, 2018). None of the CPI’s proposals related to the profit sources of the milícias or to their access to fire guns were carried.

Another point of political inactivity is the previously mentioned UPP. Not only was only one of the 38 UPPs installed as of 2014 in a milícia area, but also the majority of these units were set in the Southern Zone, which is also the area that would host most of the tourists during the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games (Oosterbaan, 2015). The Western Zone, the epicenter of milícias activities, was almost completely ignored by the public

safety policies – with the exception of the already mentioned UPP in the Batan favela. Therefore, since its conception, the UPP's seem to be a policy that was never meant to tackle the milícias, but only the “louder” drug traffickers who inhabited the favelas in the Southern Zone. This perception, by itself, shows that the war on drugs continued to be the priority of public safety for the government of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

Thus, no policies were put forward by the State against the milícias before or after 2008 and there were no serious attempts to put the CPI's recommendations into practice, in this sense it is not plausible to argue that the State does not fight the milícias for unknowing the ways of doing so.

The second possible answer that I would like to present, is what I consider to be the most likely one. This is based on the idea that, despite the breaking point of 2008, the milícias still enjoyed an intrinsic allowance from the State in the context of the war on drugs. Even though the outspoken political demonstrations of support for the milícias ceased in 2008, with a few exemptions¹⁹, the notion that the milícias were a “lesser evil” than the drug gangs, quoting the former mayor Cesar Maia, survived in the depths of the political unconscious.

To work on this hypothesis, I will first introduce the reader to two crucial concepts that will provide us a theoretical basis for my argument: the “re-enchantment of evil”, by Alba Zaluar (1994a), and the “fetishization of order”. The first refers to the way drugs and drug traffickers are in general perceived in the Brazilian society; the second concerns the historical process in which the desire for the maintenance of order became one of the most cherished principles of the conservative stratum in the Brazilian society and political class. Both concepts, as I will argue, are at the pillars of the legitimacy of the war on drugs and its ominous consequences, as well as the prioritization of this fight in the public safety policies agenda. Then, I will

¹⁹ One of the exemptions was already shown here before, which was the case of Bolsonaro after the publication of the final report of the CPI. Another instance was also from Bolsonaro, in 2018, when he was running for presidency (Manso, 2010).

explore the multiple models of social orders being implemented in occupied territories throughout Rio and expose the similarities between the models presented by milícias and UPP's.

5.1. “Re-enchantment of Evil”, “fetishization of order”, and the war on drugs in Rio de Janeiro

The concept of “re-enchantment of evil” was presented by Alba Zaluar (1994a) to refer to how drugs and the figure of the “drug trafficker” are perceived in the Brazilian society. Zaluar, citing Macfarlane (1985) states that the modern view on the roots of violence and crime was often based on social factors, and no longer on the idea of an inhumane and supernatural evil, such as the figure of the witch or the devil. This process, she argues, was a “disenchantment of evil”, where the violence gained humane contours.

However, Zaluar (1994a) notes that, in the late-twentieth century, the Brazilian society saw a return of the image of the absolute good and evil. In the 90's, she argues, the image of the drug traffickers and the drug itself got close to the idea of absolute evil, in a process that she named “re-enchantment of evil”.

This happens, above all, through the fetishist rethinking of fantastic and diabolic elements that bears the “absolute evil”, especially in the media. The citizens that act in consonance with the law consider drug abusers and drug traffickers the modern agents of the devil themselves (ZALUAR, 1994a, p. 248).

The idea of “fetish”, seen in the excerpt, is also present in the concept of “fetishization of order”. From the anthropological perspective, “fetish”, as exposed in Böhm & Batta (2010), is originated from the Portuguese word *feitiço*, meaning “witchcraft”. During the late sixteenth century, the word developed as it started to be used by the Portuguese explorers in West Africa to refer to the natives' religious practices of worshiping objects that yielded magical powers. In this sense, “‘fetish’ is an object that is believed to have

magical powers and thus attracts excessive and irrational investments” (BÖHM & BATTA, 2010, p. 348) and is also a link between the unknown and the palpable. The psychoanalytical approach to the term also shows that “fetish” and “desire” are related to the idea of absence of the desired object, as those are at the basis of the construction of “self”, which is funded on the lack of the “other” (Lacan, 1977, as cited in Woodward, 2000)²⁰. Therefore, “fetish” is understood, here, as a concept that comprehends the fantastic and absence.

The fetish for order that we see in the Brazilian society is based on a fantastic-like idealization of the maintenance of order, which would be necessary for the progress of the nation. This is a result of the historical process of the formation of the national State of Brazil, which, since the colonial times, was marked by a number of regional revolts, that, seeking independence, jeopardized the national territorial cohesion and saw violent responses of “pacification” from the imperial, and, later, republican forces. For example, Siman (2014) argues that, only during the Regency Period (1831 – 1840), there were nineteen rebellions throughout the country, questioning the imperial conservative order, based on the centralization of power, and claiming for some level of autonomy or independence from the central government. This instability persisted after the Proclamation of the Republic, during the period called Old Republic (1889 – 1930) and, after that, with the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932.

This political scenario of constant instabilities, resulted (as much as it was a consequence), as Siman shows (when citing Moraes; 2005), in a mentality of Brazil that focused on the *Territory* rather than on the *Nation*:

Since its independence, Brazil was conceived, according to Antônio Carlos Robert Moraes (2005), as a space, and not as a society: space is thought as something to be conquered, and the populations as the instruments of this conquest movement. In this logic, the construction of the modern State in Brazil

²⁰ To learn more, see the concept of “Mirror Stage”, in Lacan (1995).

comprehended for Moraes a basic project of nation in which the territory – *and not the nation* – is the main formation fuel (SIMAN, 2014, p. 118).

In this process of formation of Brazil, the *military* played a crucial role, both in the construction of a discourse and the consolidation of the territory. It helped establish order in the provinces and States, through “pacification” campaigns and, at once, helped build the nation’s identity as peace-lover, conciliative and orderly (Siman, 2014).

This identity, she argues, is still present in Brazil and can be observed in the peacekeeping missions that the country takes part, such as in Haiti, and in the UPP’s of Rio de Janeiro; this one, based on a discourse that puts the favelas and the *favelados* as the “extremely different”, that needs to be assimilated by the State (idib.).

In fact, as previously mentioned, the legitimacy of the war on drugs in Rio de Janeiro depends on discursive mechanisms that, in a number of instances, evokes the ideas of sovereignty, territory and order, by using key words such as “retake”, “reconquer”, “rescue”. The best example for this, is this statement made by Sérgio Cabral, in 2010, after the *invasion* of the Complexo do Alemão²¹ for the installation of the UPP:

The reconquest of the territory of the Complexo do Alemão by the State is a fundamental and decisive step for the public safety policy that we drew for Rio de Janeiro. But the task of guaranteeing, once and for all, the freedom of movement for the good citizens just begun. This is a [task for the] medium and long term and has as main objective to recover 30 years of abandonment of poor communities. Behind this abandonment, there was a false dichotomy between law and order and human rights, when, in truth, these issues have to be together always, like currently. Human rights can only be truly guaranteed if there is order and public safety. We are recovering Rio de Janeiro of a situation of decades of illnesses, economical and social crises, and of political failure. And the main characteristic of this work is the union, the partnership, the presence of the federal administration, together with the State [Rio de Janeiro] administration, with the [municipal administration], with the participation and support of the society. [...] We have always affirmed that this rescue would not be complete until we brought

²¹ A large complex of favelas in the Northern Zone of Rio

public safety and peace to the population of Complexo do Alemão. With this territorial reconquest, we took an extraordinary and definitive step. Our polices, Civil and Military, will continue to work together with the Armed Forces and the Federal Police so we can reconquer more territories. Once again, I am grateful to all population in Rio de Janeiro, that support us in this task of reconquer the communities [or favelas]. I am also grateful to our military and civil policemen, to our federal policemen, to the servicemen from the Army, Navy, and Airforce, and to the municipal administration. [...] to president Lula and all his staff members, in special the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Justice, who have given us all the support in this fight in which good will defeat evil (CABRAL FILHO, 2010a, p. n.p)

Here, we should also remember the instance where Eduardo Paes (2006) said that the drug gangs were a threat to national sovereignty and that the *milícias* were helping the State to regain this status over the territories that were controlled by drug traffickers.

In this sense, there is a historical process in Brazil that gives a significant role, in the imaginary of nation and State, to the territorial cohesion and the maintenance of order, which become key aspects for *progress*.

In conclusion, Cabral's statement (2010b) mentions the idea of "good fighting evil", which brings us back to the "Re-enchantment of Evil". My argument here is that this concept, together with the process of fetishization of order, are at the very core of the war on drugs policy: from a moral-almost-religious perspective, drugs and the drug traffickers are seen as the incarnation of the absolute evil; from a political-historical perspective, the drug gangs offer a threat to the nation and the State's sovereignty. In result, the war on drugs become the priority of public safety policies in Rio de Janeiro and its efforts are always legitimate, regardless of how violent they are.

5.1.1. The prioritization of the war on drugs in Rio de Janeiro

After understanding the basilar concepts that legitimize the war on drugs, I would like to should how the State focused on the fight against drug gangs and, in result, considered the *milícias* a “lesser-evil”.

By analyzing Sérgio Cabral’s govern planning sheet²² for the 2006 elections, we can find that the word “*droga[s]*” (drug[s]) is mentioned 20 times and “*tráfico*” (trafficking) 15 times, also including a specific subsection for the fight against the drug trafficking; “*milícia*” is not mentioned whatsoever. In his govern planning sheet for the 2010 elections, “*droga[s]*” and “*tráfico*” are mentioned 4 times (always together), “UPP” 24 times and “*milícia*” only twice (Cabral Filho, 2006; 2010b).

The UPP’s also provide us with relevant factors to understand the privileged role that the war on drugs has in Rio de Janeiro. As mentioned earlier, only one out of the 38 UPP’s installed in the city as of 2014 was in an *milícia* controlled area, showing that these units were specifically designed to fight drug gangs. This is noted, as well, in Cabral’s government planning sheet (2010), where he states that:

With the objective of lowering the public violence rates, fight the drug trafficking, as well as recover the public trust in the police of the State of Rio de Janeiro, the current Sérgio Cabral’s administration focused on five strategic pillars: the [UPP’s] project, investments on the police [...] (CABRAL FILHO, 2010b)

I would also like to state here (in respect to the victims of this *war*) that this prioritization is not only in comparison to the fight against the *milícias*, both also in relation to human rights. In a number of instances, Sérgio Cabral stated that, not only was the fight against drug gangs the priority in the public safety policies, but also that any measures should be

²² A document issued by candidates during the elections to state the ideas that guide them, policies proposals and general plans for their government.

considered legitimate in this fight, including the extensive killing of innocent people in favelas during police operations. The former Governor, referring to one of these operations, that left 19 people killed in a favela controlled by drugs traffickers, stated during an interview:

The population is convinced about the need of this confrontation. In the past years there was a muscle strengthening of the drug gangs which the population cannot stand anymore. The people is ready to make the sacrifice because they know that this is the only way they can improve their quality of life. Through many years, [...] the left-wing, associated public order with [the military] dictatorship, with authoritarianism. Today we know that public order is the guarantee of citizenship. We all need to make sacrifices for the victory over barbarism. One cannot cook omelets without breaking eggs. (CABRAL FILHO, 2007, as cited in SILVA, FERNANDES & BRAGA, 2008, p. 10)

In this context, however, it is possible to raise the question: if the territorial cohesion is such a crucial aspect that supports the war on drugs mentality, why are the *milícias* not fought by the State with the same intensity that the drug gangs are, since, according to Cano's second axis, they also occupy a territory? This question, and the answers I will provide for it, lead us to the main point of my argument, as it involves the acceptance that the *milícias* receive from the State.

The first answer is based on the relation between the very nature of these criminal species' profit source and concepts shown previously: drug gangs mainly sell drugs; *milícias* mainly "sell" security. This, although obvious, is a key aspect, since the drugs are seen as the absolute evil (as in the Re-enchantment of Evil), while the maintenance of order is desired (as in the fetishization of order). The second answer is based on the kind of social order implemented by the UPP's and the one implemented by the *milícias*.

5.2. Plural orders in the sub-municipal scale of Rio de Janeiro

Arias & Barnes (2017) argue that the discussion of social order in Latin American studies is often based on the municipal or national levels, when, in cases of large urban areas, the sub-municipal scale should also be considered. That is so, hence the city of Rio de Janeiro has at least three major ordering models being currently implemented in areas occupied by drug gangs, *milícias*, and UPP's. First, allow me to discuss the order implemented by the drug gangs.

The authors present that the social ordering implemented by the drug gangs is based on a militarized control over the area and its residents. Therefore, they need to make use of legitimation mechanisms, such as the prevention of social disturbances and minor crimes. This legitimation, as Polak (2014) claims, is based on the image of authority (in a fatherly way) that the drug traffickers hold and the fact that their lifestyle is romanticized by many young people in favelas, especially because of the frequent street parties thrown or financed by the criminals, the *bailes funk*²³ (Monley, 2014). In addition, Zaluar (1994b) presents the common idea of the outlaw from the favelas as the “avenger of their people” (idib., p.138), a person who defends their community and territory against other thugs and any sort of indiscriminate violence²⁴.

The ordering model offered by the *milícias*²⁵ is also based on the militarized and authoritarian control over the territory (Cano, 2008). However, although also making use of legitimation mechanisms, these are based on the discourse of order and the fight against drugs and traffickers.

²³ *Baile funk*, which can be better translated into English as “funk parties”, are street parties that usually take place in favelas and other peripheries. In these parties, mainly funk (a music genre that was originated in the Carioca favelas) is played.

²⁴ In this context, however, Zaluar (1994b) refers not only to drug dealers, but any sort of outlaws that would reside in the favelas.

²⁵ This was widely discussed in the first section of this article; thus, I will only provide a brief reexplanation and add a few interpretations on the topic

By understanding the re-enchantment of evil (Zaluar, 1994a), which puts this fight as a fight between good and evil, there is a moral aspect to this order provided by the *milícias*, which is stressed by Silva, Fernandes & Braga (2008):

It is based on this re-enchantment of evil that the “*Milícias*” have been occupying more and more spaces in the poor areas of the city, selling a urbanization model, although illegal or irregular, based on security and morality, which, informally, has been seducing many residents of favelas controlled by the drug traffickers [...] (SILVA, FERNANDES & BRAGA, 2008, p. 18)

Arias & Barnes (2017) also show the moral aspect of this order:

The *milicias* are committed to a particular moral exchange with area residents. This exchange is based on the idea that they provide a superior and more ethical form of security than the one offered by drug dealers [...] [it is a] very specific moral order based on the rejection of the drug trade and its criminal practices in return for the acceptance of a different type of order. [...] Nonetheless, residents must accept their near total power over political and economic life (ARIAS & BANES, 2017, p. 458 – 459).

As previously shown when discussing the definitions of the *milícias*, many of these groups deeply control the lives of the residents, ruling about infidelity, loud noises, events, musical genres that are allowed, etc., which shows how the *milícias* also offer a moral and cultural control of the residents (Cano 2008; Cano & Duarte, 2012).

Therefore, the model of order implemented by the *milícias* is a militarized and authoritarian one based on the fight against drug gangs and drug itself, which pictures them as having a higher moral standard than the one of the drug gangs. It also provides a moral and cultural control over the residents.

The last order model to be studied here is the one implemented by the UPP's. In her PhD thesis, Marielle Franco (2014)²⁶ argues that, in the context

²⁶ Former Municipal Counselour, murdered along her driver Anderson Gomes in 2018 by *milicianos*.

of the implementation of the UPP's, the public administration of the State of Rio de Janeiro used the idea of a more humane and social use of its police forces in order to legitimate the occupations. This was an effort to detach the violent and militarized image that the police have among the residents of favelas. The initial idea was to start the installation of a UPP in a favela by expelling the drug traffickers from the area, through a militarized operation that, many times, involved the armed forces. Then, it would proceed to establish a healthy relation between residents and police, allowing a peaceful and rewarding permanence of the UPP's in the area. Finally, this process would be followed by social programs, that would provide better healthcare, public schools, sewage system, etc., named *UPP Social* (Franco, 2014).

However, despite the government's discourses of a more humane and social public safety policy, the UPP's would still portray a militarized policy, since the militarized occupation was not followed by the welfare programs, as promised by the policymakers, but only by the disappearing of many residents and the authoritarian control of their lives (Idib., 2014).

In this model of "pacification" [...] the social public policies arrive, at least, as a secondary priority, and, in certain locals, do not arrive whatsoever. What happens is that the police are responsible for the maintenance of the order in the favelas. (FRANCO, 2014, p. 57. Our translation)

Monley (2014) also gives us a better understanding of the control of favelas by UPP's, especially in a moral and cultural perspective. The author argues that many UPP's associated the *Bailes Funk* as a moral disturbance, as they were usually thrown by drug traffickers and glorified these criminals – a misconception of the nature of these events, resulting from the fact that funk is a cultural expression that suffers prejudice from mainstream culture. Thus, many *bailes funks* were either prohibited or drowned under a sea of official obstacles placed by the UPP's commands. These events, however, are of critical cultural importance to the youth of the favelas – a social stratum that is also excluded from the mainstream culture.

Then, we can notice that the UPP's and the milícias implement very similar models of social order:

- 1) Militarized control over the territory²⁷;
- 2) This control is legitimized by a discourse, based on the promises of a better and safer life for the residents, by the reestablishment and maintenance of order;
- 3) Mobilization of the idea of moral superiority in comparison to the drug traffickers;
- 4) Authoritarian control over the area and its residents, making use of violent means to control social life.

In conclusion, these similarities are revealing, as they allow us to understand that the milícias did not offer a threat to the territorial cohesion, since its ordering model and its hostility towards the drug gangs, are not contradictory (as the fetishization of order and re-enchantment of evil show us) to what the conservative stratum of the Fluminense society and political class desire for the peripheries. Therefore, milícia and State “speak the same dialect” (Arias & Barnes, 2017, p. 458) when fighting drugs and the drug gangs and when implementing a common specimen of social order: an armed and authoritarian one, that needs to be enforced no matter the consequences, and which is only acceptable (from the State and dominant classes' perspective) in certain parts of the city.

The milícias, despite the “breaking point” of 2008, continued to be widely seen as a “lesser-evil”, especially in the depths of the unconscious of the conservative political class. This allowed these groups to suffer no serious interventions from the State and, consequentially, expand in the city. This expansion, as shown in images 1 and 2, led to the fact that the milícias and the UPP's geographically combated the drug gangs in the Western, Northern

²⁷ Although this is also a characteristic of the drug gangs, the following items show how this control is based on different purposes and mechanisms when analyzing the milícias and the UPP's

and Southern Zones, being the *milícias* responsible for the first, UPP's for the third, and both in the second. This unplanned, but convenient, pincer maneuver, at one side carried out by the *milícia*, on the other by the UPP's, forced the area of control of the drug gangs to decrease drastically: two *armies* fighting the same war against the same enemy; not being necessarily allies, but certainly not foes.

Thus, the argument here, to make it clear, is not that the State actively supported the *milícias*, through funding or logistics, for example, but that the existence of these groups was convenient to the State in the context of war on drugs. Being this relation of acquiescence official or not, Eduardo Paes (2006) prophesied the public safety mentality where the *milícias* and the State fought the drug gangs, if not as formal allies, at least simultaneously.

6. Conclusion

This article had as main objective to understand how the *milícias* geographically expanded from 2008 to 2014, despite the “breaking point” of 2008 (Cano, 2012). The hypothesis proposed was that the *milícias* continued to yield a status of “lesser-evil” (Maia, 2006) from the eyes of the conservative stratum of the political class and society of Rio de Janeiro and, therefore, was seen as a convenient actor in the context of war on drugs.

By analyzing discourses and providing concepts, such as the Re-enchantment of Evil (Zaluar, 1994a) and the historical process of fetishization of order, I managed to explain how the logic of war on drugs, especially in Rio de Janeiro, was built on a fantastic-like idealizations of order/territory and drugs. This war, as shown, was taken as the main focus of the public safety policies of Rio de Janeiro, while the fight against the *milícia* was never taken seriously by the State's administration.

At once, the understanding of the plural orders in Rio de Janeiro allowed me to show that the model of social order implemented by the

milícias presented many similarities with the one implemented by the UPP's, leading to the idea that the milícias, from the conservative stratum of the political class, did not mean a threat to the territorial cohesion and to the moralities praised by the nation. Therefore, I managed to construct the argument that the milícias were still seen as a “lesser-evil” in relation to the drug gangs (which did offer that threat) and that their expansion was convenient to a State that has historically seen the human rights of the populations of its peripheries as low priority.

However, since 2014, many things happened in Rio de Janeiro. To start, Cano & Duarte (2012) was the first to show that the milícias were also getting involved with drug trafficking. Nonetheless, this fact only became widely known as of 2018, when the milícias came back to the news following Marielle Franco's assassination. This event in itself also impacted the image of the milícias, as it gained international media coverage and was a direct attack against an elected politician: the milícias had gone too far. Despite it all, Brazil's most politically powerful family, the “Bolsonaros”, still show support to these groups and have had close ties with milicianos. It is important to stress, therefore, that this article focused on the expansion of the milícias until 2014, being necessary future researches to understand the developments of these groups after that year, as much as to investigate other relevant aspects that, due to the length of this article, were left behind, such as race, criminalization of poverty, and the supposedly paramilitary character of these groups.

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