Lethal Politics

Tracking Gun Talk in America
Why study gun culture?

- Guns are a cultural commodity - Over 200 million guns in U.S. domestic market
- Guns display and sell cultural values, especially styles of white national masculinity
- Guns mark power relationships
Why study gun shows?

- Cultural Site=Over 5,000 shows every year in U.S. A.
- Guide to everyday beliefs for millions of Americans
- Platform for specific political/national beliefs
Main Questions:

- Why have guns entered our national politics?
- How are guns a form of political expression?
Gun Show: 1995 Moscow, Idaho
NRA Gun Trade Show 2004
Consuming Frontier Masculinity
Colt Peace Maker Ads for Men
Rights of Conquest
Wild West Show Gun
Theodore Roosevelt’s Colt
White Cowboy as a Cultural Style
Fraternal Bonds--State Militias

The Chickasaw Guards of Memphis, Tennessee drilling in front of their armory in July 1881. Larger sized units and armory buildings differentiated militia organizations after the Civil War from their ante-bellum predecessors. (Anne Brown Collection)
Rifle Fraternity/Disciplined Men

Company D, 1st Minnesota Infantry at the National Encampment in Washington, DC in May 1887. The descendants of the 1st Minnesota that gained fame for its charge at Gettysburg in 1863 won second place in the 1887 national drill competition. (John Listman Collection)
1950-60s Reinvent White Maleness
1960 and 70s Challenge

- Civil Rights Movements
- Anti-War Movement
- Equal Rights Amendment
The Neoconservative Response

- Return to radical individual solutions
- Reaffirm belief in unregulated capitalism
- Civil rights equals Civil riots
Gun Rights

- Returning Vietnam Vets
- Disaffected white union members
- Discontented white middle classes
Seize the Bill of Rights

- Reinvent the Second Amendment
- Create political lobbying groups
- Create Gun as Crime Stopper
The Gun Talks 1968 Break
Frontier plus Warrior Masculinity

- Freedom Fighter
- Crime Buster
- Global Warrior
Freedom Fighter

Continuing The Legacy

Some attempt to redefine limits.
FEAR NO EVIL

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Global Warrior
21st Century Cowboy still rides armed
21st Century Cowgirl
ARMIN the 21st century
SOLDIER

By Robert Bruce

The U.S. military hopes SABR—
featuring a 20 mm cannon
firing "smart" high-explosive
ammunition, a 5.56x45 mm
carbine and a sophisticated
electro-optic aiming module—
will give soldiers and
Marines a decided edge
in the 21st century.

CONCEPT

A quiet revolution is well under way to
transform the most basic arms to the American
infantryman’s arsenal. If things go as planned,
large-scale issue of a
manpower-friendly, battle
fit, cost-effective weapon system—inter a host of
options, the Joint Service Small Arms Program
(SJSAP) could equip the U.S. Army and Marine Corps’
infantry with a new firearms system
in the next decade.

SABR

SABR (System for Advanced Battle Rifle) program,
which recently completed its first round of produc-
tion testing, is the first step in an Army program
to develop and field a compact, light and
maneuverable weapon system with a wide range
of weapon options. The program is designed to
provide the U.S. Army with a high-reliability
battlefield weapon system that can be used
for both close-in and long-range engagements.

CONCEPT

SABR is a modular weapon system that can be
configured to meet a variety of mission needs.
The basic configuration includes a 5.56x45 mm
carbine, a 20 mm cannon, and a variety of
accessories and attachments. These can be
combined to create a wide range of tactical
options, allowing soldiers to tailor their
weapon systems to their specific needs.

Arming the 21st Century Soldier

MILITARY SMALL-ARMS UPDATE

AMERICAN RIFLEMAN • January 2005
Gun as Political Weapon

Freedom's Steel
Honoring Heroes At The
2004 NRA Annual
Meetings & Exhibits
Lethal Politics

- At Best--Cynical Campaign Strategy
- At Worst--Cultural Belief in the Fantasy of Force
Beyond Lethal Politics

- Support sustainable communities
- Understand systemic violence
- Provide human security