

Carlson, Jennifer. Policing the Second Amendment: Guns, Law Enforcement and the Politics of Race. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020, 181 pages.

The last two decades in the United States have seen a heartbreakingly high number of mass shootings, issues with police brutality, and numerous politically charged questions about how to revisit gun policy to protect Americans given the United States' current violent climate. These political questions have forced lawmakers to confront one of the oldest rights Americans have and, in many instances, gun policies are caught in a catch-22. Jennifer Carlson's book, *Policing the Second Amendment* researches these policy issues and pulls together a powerful discussion about gun politics, gun policy, gun violence and law enforcement (p. 16). *Policing the Second Amendment* highlights these issues at the forefront of American politics through discussing the relationships between numerous actors. In short, "this book traces gun militarism and gun populism across three states with similar politics of crime and punishment by dissimilar politics of guns" (p. 23). The book argues that "an armed society need not necessarily be a 'polite society'" as gun rights advocates claim, but it is most certainly a "policed society." For far too long, Americans have argued about gun politics and the politics of the police as if they are separate debates. They are not and we insist on their separation at our own peril" (p. 23).

Gun control, as a political issue, is very much on the minds of Americans in the wake of so many shootings and issues of police brutality. At the core of the issue is the Constitutional right for Americans to have the Right to Bear Arms. While shootings continue to soar in the United States, many Americans call for more restrictive gun control measures while other Americans consider themselves to be Constitutionlists and do not want more restrictive gun control measures. Lawmakers often work to filter through all of this to figure out the best stance

and the best way to create policy to help the American people with the issues of so many mass shootings and violence associated with guns.

Jennifer Carlson filters through all these discussions and carefully selects a few political issues to research and understand from a social science perspective. Carlson explains that she “focuses on three actors that broker the relationship between the politics of guns and the politics of the police,” (p.16). She researches the impact of gun lobby organizations following the National Rifle Association and ‘their role in coordinating the attitudes, the actions of law enforcement offices across jurisdictions.” (p. 16). Carlson also researches the administrators “who populate gun boards as gatekeeper brokers as they decide the terms on which a particular resource is distributed to private non-state actors,” (p. 16). Finally, Carlson interviews police chiefs that she refers to as “representative brokers because they must navigate the competing demands coming from both outside and within their respective agencies,” (p. 16). Carlson researches these issues in several important states including Arizona, California, and Michigan. Carlson explains that she chose these states for a specific reason noting that these states “are racially diverse and socioeconomically unequal states characterized by punitive politics of policing and punishment.” (p. 17). Carlson’s decision to research these states also includes that these “states have rallied tough on crime policies to address issues of immigration, racial inequality, socioeconomic restructuring and public disinvestment...their respective policies of guns—and gun cultures—are strikingly divergent,” (p. 17).

Carlson’s book is a thorough review of gun policy and politics. The book includes a thorough review of the various organizations and policies that impacted the development and perspectives of gun policies in the United States. More importantly, Carlson’s book would

provide lawmakers or anyone else interested in these policies an objective analysis of the issues at hand.

Policing the Second Amendment is a fascinating read that is composed of five chapters entitled: “Gun Politics in Blue,” “The War on Guns,” “Never Off Duty,” “When the Government Doesn’t Come Knocking,” “Legally Armed but Presumed Dangerous,” and “Our Gun Talk.” In a separate appendix, Carlson discusses her research methodology for the book which shows a thorough discussion of how she researched such a politically charged topic with objective and ethical research methods. *Policing the Second Amendment* is a fascinating book that explains these politically charged issues in a thorough objective fashion and would be a good book for anyone interested in learning more about the political nature of these issues. It would also be a good read for undergraduate or graduate public policy students, or students interested in some of the public administration issues many law enforcement agencies are currently facing. In essence, *Policing the Second Amendment* is a scholarly contribution to a very difficult policy issue.

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