have happened when it did in a place like Peoria. On the other hand, if it could happen in “Anywhere, USA,” it could and did happen elsewhere. As the authors note, “this could easily be the story of a dozen or more Rust Belt cities, whether Des Moines, Iowa; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; or Kenosha, Wisconsin” (197). As such, *Punks in Peoria* is a welcome contribution to a growing set of books and films documenting underground musical scenes across America in the late twentieth century.


Reviewer Michael McLaughlin is a doctoral candidate in religion at Florida State University. His research focuses on the intersection of religion and firearms in the twentieth century.

Matthew J. Lacombe makes a vital contribution to the emerging field of gun studies with his data-driven and richly evidenced analysis of the NRA’s political journey to becoming the right-wing powerhouse it is today. He argues the NRA’s political power derives from connecting gun-owner identity to a broader political ideology and mobilizing members in defense of that identity. Using automated topic modelling to make sense of eighty years of *American Rifleman* editorials and letters to the editor from major newspapers, Lacombe presents his reader with statistics and graphs demonstrating changes in the NRA’s rhetoric and, more interestingly, how the general public picks up and reproduces the NRA’s language. That is, the NRA is not simply a dominant but also a driving force in conversations about guns. *Firepower* is both highly technical yet broadly accessible. Lacombe explains his methods and findings in terms comprehensible to non-experts and leaves the full technical discussion of his methodology to the book’s appendix.

*Firepower* consists of two halves. The first considers how the NRA fosters a politically relevant identity and ideology among its members, a theme Lacombe lays out in Chapter 2. Lacombe’s prowess in statistical analysis shines through in Chapters 3 and 4 where he presents his findings on how the NRA has articulated and promoted its gun-owner identity and ideology. The second half of *Firepower* follows the NRA from its early twentieth century opposition to gun control through its late twentieth century alignment with the GOP to its recent successes preventing gun control legislation in the wake of mass shootings. Lacombe’s conclusion seeks to articulate the broader lessons political scientists might take from studying the NRA.
Lacombe makes several key contributions to gun studies conversations. First, he corrects the widespread perception that the NRA supported gun control early in its history. Drawing on editorials and letters written to congresspeople, Lacombe demonstrates that NRA support for the 1938 Federal Firearms Act was a strategic move to avoid harsher proposed legislation. Secondly, he contributes impressive statistical evidence to the growing scholarly attention on the rise of Second Amendment rhetoric beginning in the 1960s. Finally, Lacombe’s bifurcation of the NRA’s history into “quasi-governmental” and “partisan” phases provides a helpful framework in which the 1977 Cincinnati Revolt marks the NRA’s transition not into politics but from non-partisan to partisan politics.

Readers interested in the NRA as a social or cultural force may be disappointed in Firepower’s lack of attention to what the political salience of guns says about American culture more broadly. While Lacombe conclusively demonstrates that the NRA and right-wing conservatism share an overlapping ideology and rhetoric, he leaves it to other scholars to examine how, historically, the NRA and other right-wing groups influenced each other. Ultimately, Lacombe’s work succeeds at documenting the NRA’s influence on its members, lawmakers, and the general public throughout the twentieth century. In doing so, Lacombe has provided gun studies scholars a brilliant foundation for further scholarship about the NRA.


Reviewer Peter Longo is Professor of Political Science at the University of Nebraska, Kearney. He is the editor of Great Plains Research and most recently the author of Great Plains Politics (2018).

Rural Rebellion: How Nebraska Became a Republican Stronghold, by Ross Benes certainly has a catchy title for a Nebraska audience. But the fine book ought to hold interest to readers in Iowa and beyond as so-called pundits and the general citizenry search for meaning in the highly charged partisan milieu. Iowa like Nebraska is seemingly a Republican stronghold. Recently, the Republican governors of the respective states have only fortified these strongholds; there have been some slips, however—Iowa voted for Barack Obama and Nebraska’s 2nd Congressional District voted for President Biden (Nebraska has a system of split electoral votes). That aside, Benes’s book provides insights into why Nebraska is so red, even with an occasional blue dot.