Violence, crime, and insecurity cast a shadow over the acclaimed success of Brazil as a consolidated democracy that champions human rights, promotes social reform, and claims greater international prominence as an emerging power. Violence and crime, especially in cities, reflect the deep rooted structures of inequality and exclusion. Public security policies, especially law enforcement, are often ineffective, repressive and harmful to human and citizenship rights. Violence and insecurity in Brazil are embedded in a perverse dynamic of legal and extralegal networks and interactions that undermine the quality of democracy and reproduce social, spatial and cultural segregation in its cities.

This chapter explores these complex issues by, first, examining recent trends in violence and insecurity, initially offering a national-level perspective but then focusing on the urban context. Secondly, the emblematic case of Rio de Janeiro is used to arrive at a more thorough understanding of these local and state-level dilemmas. In particular the prospects and impact of the recent public security strategy of ‘favela pacification’ will be assessed. During the 2010 electoral campaign, the then Workers’ Party candidate for the presidency, Dilma Rousseff, presented the national implementation of the UPP\(^1\) (Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora) model as the cornerstone of her public security strategy. In the final section, I review recent federal-level policy efforts aimed at public security and law enforcement – in particular the PRONASCI (Programa Nacional de Segurança Pública com Cidadania (National Programme for Public Security with Citizenship)) launched in Lula’s second term and inherited by Dilma’s government – to show the limits faced by such policies.
Trends and patterns of Brazil’s ‘new’ violence

In this section I will examine the basic trends of violence and insecurity in the country as a whole during the past two decades. I will argue that trends in lethal violence show variation in time and place, despite the overall pattern of high violence levels since 1990. Then I will discuss the social and political implications of sustained levels of violence in a country that is not at war and is considered to be a consolidated democracy.

If we look at the levels of lethal violence expressed by its most conventional indicator (the homicide rate, i.e. death by acts of violence per 100,000 inhabitants per year) it is immediately clear that this level has been steadily on the rise between 1980 and 2002, after which the indicator showed annual variation without any visible downward trend (Figure 7.1).

The initial rise in homicide rates during the 1980s is often associated with rising poverty and inequality during the ‘lost decade’, the transition to democracy and concomitant ‘loosening’ of policing, and, above all, the rise of cocaine trafficking, especially in the peripheral zones of the major cities (Leeds, 1996; Peralva, 2000). This developed into a self-sustained cycle during the 1990s as homicide rates grew by more than

![Figure 7.1](image-url)