

Guns and Poses

by G. Murphy Donovan (April 2018)



Man With Gun, Pablo Picasso, 1971

I ain't afraid to love a man. I ain't afraid to shoot him either.

—Phoebe Ann Mosey

History is supposed to be instructive. Surely it might be, if what is known is owned. Alas, demagogues cannot accept unpleasant facts, especially about guns, no less extract or apply any useful lessons. Partisan social scientists and historians are likely to cook the books also if obvious truths

are too unpopular, too inconvenient, or too difficult to digest. Gunplay often begins with flawed judgement followed by collateral excuses and myth making.

Myths about wholesale gun mayhem, for example, are notable for culprits excluded; culpables like the shooter, parents, police, teachers, journalists, psychologists, and politicians. Personal responsibility is seldom part of the chatter. The blame game is usually restricted to targets like gun law, organizations like the National Rifle Association, and political targets of opportunity such as flyover country in general, conservatives in particular, or peculiar parvenus like Donald Trump. Facts usually do not matter when the issue is emotional. Indeed, high-octane ignorance is the primer for most gun hypocrisy and hysteria.

No one changes the world for the better unless they understand the worst of it. So let's start with a few hoary facts about guns and violence.

Guns Are Us

There are no dangerous weapons, only dangerous men.

—R. A. Heinlein

The US government buys and sells more weapons than any other regime on the planet. Yes, more weapons than Russia, China, and North Korea by a wide margin. Conflict zones like the Mid-East, Africa, and Latin America are favored markets. Not just big ticket items like combat aircraft, warships, missiles

systems, tanks and artillery, but the US is a major buyer and exporter of portable automatic long guns. Indeed, even drug [cartels](#) are among Uncle Sam's customers. Official, yet clandestine gun running was at the heart of the CIA/FBI Benghazi and "Fast and Furious" gun fiascos in Libya and Mexico.

The weapon of choice for Islamists is the Soviet-designed Kalashnikov, by far the most popular automatic in the world. About 30 countries now produce variants of the AK-47, most without Russian license. Ironically, US manufactured M-16s, M-4s, and AR-15s are not as cheap, reliable, or as untraceable as the Kalashnikov. The American deep state [buys](#) Russian knock-off Kalashnikov's in grey markets and gifts them to favored criminals and partisans worldwide—at US taxpayer expense.

If rifles are the culprits, then Uncle Sam probably kills more school children than all civilian miscreants combined in any given year. But then again, those dusky victims, children of a lesser God, don't matter as much as youngsters in California or Florida, do they? America is usually tone deaf about official, cultured, or cultivated violence until a neighborhood schoolhouse becomes a target.

Ironically, the Intelligence Community and the Pentagon subsidize inferior US automatics at home whilst boosting Russian gun sales and reputation abroad. Quality and dependability matter, especially to terrorists. Weapons are good business. No one buys, sells, redistributes, or gives away more Russian automatic rifles than Uncle Sam.

Assault Weapons

That rifle on the wall of the working class flat is the symbol of democracy. It is our job to see that it stays there.

–George Orwell

Calling any gun an “assault” weapon is little like calling a dog a mutt. All dogs are mutts unless they are wolves. Unlike Fido, weapons swing two ways, offense or defensive, depending on the tactics. Modifying any gun with the adjective “assault” is a political statement, not a material fact. A man-portable gun might be single shot, semi-automatic, or automatic. Words like “assault” however, merely identify the speaker or writer as a partisan or anti-gun zealot—or maybe both. All weapons could be assault weapons, especially the wrong words.

Body Count

If someone has a gun and is trying to kill you, it would be reasonable to shoot back with your own gun.

–Dalai Lama

Mayhem and gun violence in America may be epidemic, but only in liberal sinecures. The inanimate culprit is illegal pistols, not rifles in any case. More than 7000 souls are [killed](#) by handguns per annum in the US while less than 400 fall to rifles. Long guns, for the most part, are legal. Unregistered hand guns are not. Oddly enough, the left coast leads the pack where California alone has a third of a million

'registered' guns.

Automatic weapons in civilian hands are already illegal across the land.

Gun violence is most prevalent in urbane, Democrat controlled America, Washington DC for example, where gun control laws are already draconian. The worst true assault weapons in America are punks, drunks, junkies, automobiles, and demagogues. If you subtract hand gun deaths, big city kills, or kills by urban Democrats from national totals, America looks like Switzerland or Costa Rica. Donald Trump and Wayne La Pierre have little to do with violence in America, gun wrought or otherwise. Indeed, the NRA is the only national gun safety institution in America.

Serial killers seldom attend the NRA safety schoolhouse.

Do the Math

I have a very strict gun control policy: if there's a gun around, I want to be in control of it.

—Clint Eastwood

About half of American households own at least one firearm, a metric that remains unchanged since 1972. The aggregate number of guns, however, now exceeds the US population. That milestone was reached under Barack Obama. Worries about gun restrictions and liberal [sedition](#) now stimulate gun sales. If

facts and experience spoke louder than fake news and hysteria, you would think that all illusions about gun bans or universal registration would have perished by now.

Americans have been voting for security with Colt, Browning, and Winchester for generations. Think of a competent gun owner as auxiliary police. Good guns won the West at home and then helped the West win abroad. Good guns also allow Uncle Sam to play global cop too, a dubious distinction today at best. Like no other symbol, official America and private citizens have an emotional bond with guns. That affinity is alive and thriving thanks to political paranoia, federal [corruption](#), and perennial whining from dysfunctional urban political monopolies.

Big city Democrats, mute academics, the Intelligence Community, and the Justice Department can thank themselves if private gun sales, ownership, and numbers at home are fueled by fear.

As If History Matters

I prefer dangerous freedom over peaceful slavery.

—Thomas Jefferson

Like no other narrative, gun culture is historically as American as adult beverages, pornography, blow, and pot. Alas, guns are not new to playing surrogate. Custer's last stand in Montana is an artisanal example, another story line that blames guns. Never mind that George Armstrong Custer and his

boss Philip Sheridan were two of the most notorious fake heroes in American history. Still, the inanimate culprit of Little Bighorn (1876) is supposed to have been a gun, the wrong gun.



Springfield (1873) US Cavalry carbine

Custer's troops carried a single shot Springfield carbine, a gun prone to jam due to soft copper cartridges. Soft rounds were compounded by weak tactics and immigrant troopers that had little experience with guns, marksmanship, horses, or Indians. The fabled 7th Cavalry was hobbled by tactics which called for squads of four to dismount, form a skirmish line of three, while a fourth soldier held the horses. Spare ammo was left in saddle bags.

The US Army Cavalry of the 19th Century was in fact a hobbled infantry, where the horse was transportation, or a pack animal, on the trail—and a large static target in a running fight. General Sheridan and Colonel Custer's Civil War experience did not serve them well once they crossed the Mississippi to take on the Arapaho, Sioux, and Cheyenne.

Custer lost every man (200 plus) under his immediate command in less than two hours.



Henry .44 Caliber Rim Fire Rifle

The Indian weapon of choice at Little Bighorn was a Henry (later Winchester) rifle, a tube fed 16 shot lever action. Plains Indians were true cavalry too who hunted and fought from the saddle. Indian warriors might dismount to administer the *coup de grace*, mutilate, or loot. Otherwise, Native Americans were well mounted and very mobile.

The federal Army modified the Springfield cartridge from copper to brass after the Plains Wars but [little else](#) changed. Variants of the Springfield long gun, especially the five shot, clip fed, 1903 model remained in the US inventory as late as the Vietnam War. The Army, save for a few experimental buys, never adopted the Winchester (nee Henry) repeater. How cowboys, scouts, lawmen, and Indians could see the virtues of a repeating rifle on the frontier, and the US Army could not, is the kind of folly that turns historians into liars.

The culprit at Little Bighorn was command incompetence and hubris. Yes, guns were a factor, but just one of many. The rest, as they say, is now just "what if?"

So What?

A man's rights rest in three boxes: the ballot box, the jury box, and the cartridge box.

—Frederick Douglass

Gun debates are not new. The Henry rifle is just a footnote of frontier mythology that to this day masks a larger and uglier reality; disastrous, if not genocidal policy, towards native tribes.

The domestic gun battle today has all the earmarks of the Custer controversy, to wit, unwillingness to place blame where it belongs. Most arguments about guns are an attempt to change the subject; starting in Congress and compounded by clueless parents, failing public schools, a mercenary medical establishment, and a federal, sometimes local, justice establishment all in with the “dump Trump” movement and out to lunch on issues like domestic gun crazies or Muslim maniacs.

In the latest big kill in Florida, the FBI and local cops failed to act on evidence to prevent or limit loss of life. Periodic gun massacres across America will ever be an echo of the epic national security fail prior to the 9/11 Arab/Muslim sponsored blood bath in New York City.

The gun debate is surrogate and symptom, a metaphor and a divide. Both camps have chosen civilian gun ownership as the political hill to die on. The left sees guns as a threat to Big Brother and the nanny state, a challenge to big

government, globalization, and wishful thinking. The right sees gun ownership as a symbol of basic rights, a libertarian last stand against the die-hard vanguard of the *proletariat* of arrogance of a tenured “deep state.”

In short, the American left is still about control, the American right is still about rights. Meantime, gun-free zones are still free-fire zones.

The American left cannot tolerate too much freedom, too many individual rights, too much common sense, or too many lost elections. For social engineers, a fair and democratic election is one where Democrats and Big Brother win. On the other side, “Draining the swamp” is a metaphor for get out the vote – the sound of ideological toilets flushing.

In the end, it’s not about hardware; it’s about addled minds, the robotic prol that celebrates or ignores cultures, or religions, of violence and then feigns concern when some adolescent or Islamist with a gun visits a school, concert, or gay bar. All the while, individual, parent, teacher, or police responsibilities still matter more than gun makers, the NRA, Congress, or the White House.

Retail violence in America defers only to digital autism, Hollywood, and television. Meanwhile, culture and personal responsibility languishes.

To date, the most coherent response to the latest bloodbath in Parkland, Florida is a victim’s lawsuit. If you can put aside

for a moment the banality of lawyers profiteering on dead children, the first Florida lawsuit is both probative and hopefully prophetic. A victim's parents are suing the local school, the local police, and the FBI for failure to exercise due diligence. God speed! The only culprits excluded are the killer's parents who, as you might expect, are no longer available for public humiliation.

Every parent of every child killed by neglect should sue real culprits, including perp parents. Put them in the dock. Drag them into court. Gut their indifference, compliance, or incompetence in the public square. It's not the gun, stupid! It's the shooter and every parent, relative or collaborator who fails to act or makes excuses for punks or terrorists. Anti-gun rhetoric is nothing but a fig leaf for culpable collusion, an excuse for the clueless to posture.

Or to paraphrase General Sheridan, the only good gun myth is a dead one.

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