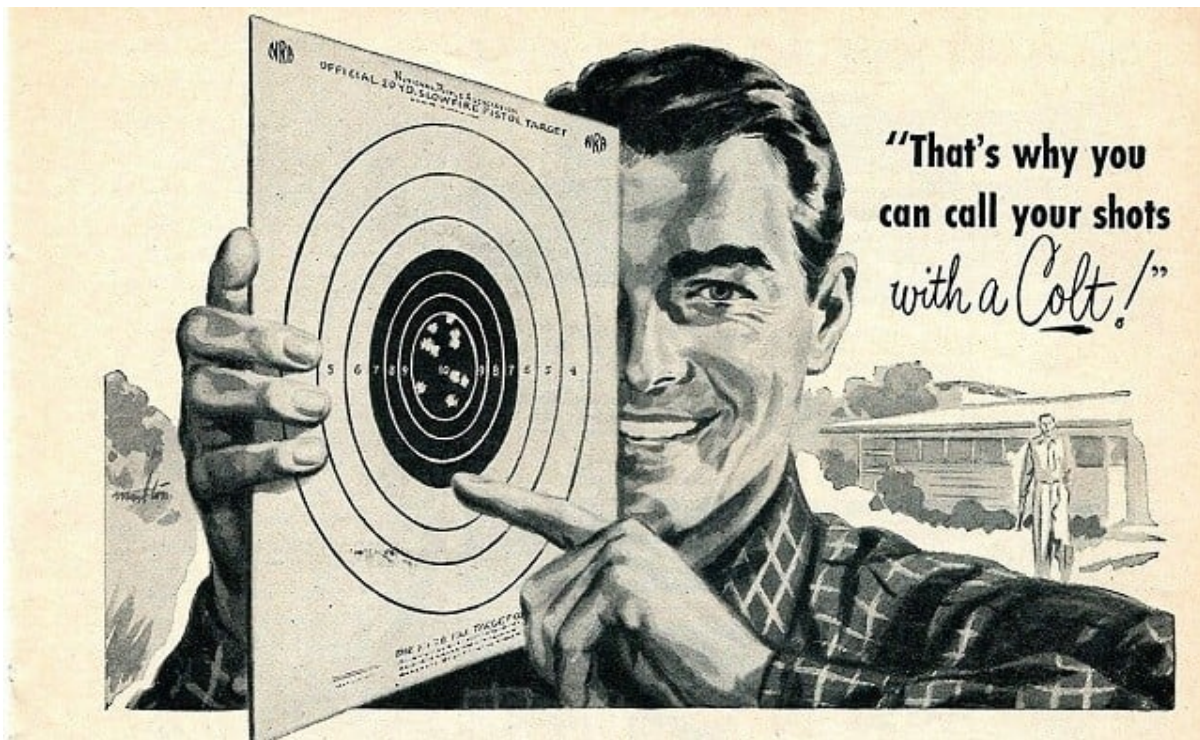


Preconditions for Slaughter in America

by Richard Kostelanetz (September 2016)



“Guns kill people” is a common lie, unless you can fantasize that a gun all by itself gets off a shelf and fires away. Think, please think. People kill people, sometimes with guns, often with other weapons. Behind the slogan that “guns kill” is not just a patent deception but an ulterior motive, which is holding gun companies rather than killers responsible for human slaughter. This would be comparable to holding automobile companies, rather than bad drivers, responsible for lethal car accidents. Need I add that people persuading others of a blatant lie are likely to launch another fib.

In our country, people of a certain gender and a certain background are known more often to gun-slaughter other people. Unless advocates of gun deprivation start now with only Muslim males in America, let us judge that they finally don't care about the victims of future shootings. They have an ulterior agenda, which is disarming all America.

What makes this last move dangerous is simply this rule: Vulnerable people

forbidden to defend themselves can be easily slaughtered. The superficial anomaly that some people avowedly anti-gun are also pro-war makes sense when you realize that in both cases they are condoning human slaughter.

Whenever you hear anyone speak of "the powerful gun lobby" in America, dismiss him or her as a loony predisposed to accepting fantasy. No dues-collecting organization with only a few million members can possibly bankroll a lobby a fraction as powerful as, say, the auto industry's, which sells profitable products that kill as many Americans as guns. The fantasy of American Congresspeople as beholden to "the gun lobby" reflects an inability to understand why representatives of rural Americans in particular would, wholly on their own initiative, oppose tighter gun control. What would fantasists think if someone blamed the failure to ban restrictions on Muslims upon "the powerful Muslim lobby"?

Additionally, anybody who's ever observed a public appearance of Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's principal lobbyist, can tell that he's a dunce. Since LaPierre reportedly costs the NRA nearly a million dollars per year personally, may I wonder why such a klutz hasn't been deposed. If you consider that chemicals also kill roughly an equal number of Americans as guns, you can measure that the pharmaceutical industry and the auto industry must both have slicker publicists.

Since the general dissatisfaction with the two primary presidential candidates creates an unprecedented opportunity for a third party to gain attention and then to win enough votes to keep itself on future ballots, may I remain surprised that one of them hasn't *proposed* separating American Muslims, and only them, from their guns.

Though I as a libertarian don't personally advocate this Muslim-only ban, and doubt that it could become law, and then whether it could be legally enforced in America, the credibly popular proposal itself in this election year would nonetheless have some beneficial heuristic functions:

- 1) Alert America to the truth that nearly all recent mass murderers in America are members of a definable social group, some even boasting of their allegiance, some murderers refusing to deny publicists of a similar persuasion from taking credit.
- 2) Force good Muslims in America to devote more effort to eliminating the

possible bad eggs among them. More than once have even newspaper people refused to accept the claims by friends of a mass murderer that they knew nothing.

3) Force American gun abolitionists to make clear what their real motives might be. Their opposing the removal of weapons from only Muslims would reveal their real more dangerous agenda that I would characterize as, yes, pro-slaughter.

4) Reminding America of the Nazi truth that when the state takes away weapons from a certain group of people one result is a precondition for slaughter, as happened to Jews in the 1930s.

5) Alert Americans to the possibility that should gun massacres by Muslims continue, antigun sentiment in America will probably evaporate, its sometime advocates dismissed as fools, as more Americans realize the simple Israeli truth that such slaughters are less likely to happen if law-abiding people within a vulnerable space are armed with guns they know how to use.

6) Advertising to Americans that third parties succeed not by winning elections but by making proposals that the others must consider. (I can recall Karl Hess testifying that socialism conquered America without winning a single major election.)

May I further expect additional heuristic surprises, such as enhancing the presence of whichever third party proposes it.

When I last wrote about guns in America, I hoped that I would never need to do so again. Not so. May I repeat the truths that this is not by any measure a major issue; it does not affect a majority of Americans. (Nor is "gay marriage" or transgendered acceptance.) One reasonable statistic holds that 90% of the gun murders occur in only 3% of American counties and that many jurisdictions have no gun fatalities at all, even though in some of these 90% counties many individuals keep guns in their homes.

For a simple self-test, every reader should ask himself or herself how many people he or she *personally* knows who have been killed or injured by guns, by cars, or by legal drugs? (Friends of friends don't count.) I'm sure that, though I reside in a county close to a more dangerous one, I'm not alone in *personally* not knowing anybody killed or maimed by a gun. That's nobody.

Nothing I hear is more threatening to America than calls to repeal the Second Amendment to the US Constitution. Like the other nine amendments, it was designed to thwart tyranny, in this case a state where the king's lackeys with a monopoly over a certain level of weaponry could slaughter the populace, as indeed often happened in Europe. Consider that next to the second amendment is a first forbidding the state from curbing free speech and a less familiar third amendment forbidding governments from forcibly boarding its soldiers in citizens' homes.

Given our knowledge of context, doesn't the purpose of the second amendment become clearly inviolate? Think, think. Recall as well that one reason why the Japanese military in the 1940s never considered invading the mainland (and slaughtering many Americans) was their fear that behind every blade of grass was an American with a gun. For a similar fears, none of wealthy Switzerland's more powerful and poorer neighbors has ever sent troops across its borders.

Since our founding fathers regarded private gun ownership as a defense against military invasion of their domiciles, consider that one reason for an individual to own a semi-automatic rifle, such as a variant on the notorious AR-15, which some would ban immediately, is precisely to defend not only against a gang of unaffiliated marauders but against state-sponsored soldiers. Anyone who thinks the US populace entirely benign invites an unfortunate fate. The question to ask of smug advocates for banning people's own semi-automatic rifles in this: Would you be willing to accept financial responsibility for damages incurred by victims damaged for failing to have one?

All the heated political discussion about guns reminds me of a similar balloon some decades ago of another issue that we can now judge as negligible—the sale and use of heroin. Some four decades ago certain politicians mostly Republican, particularly Nelson Rockefeller, persuaded Americans who didn't know any addicts personally. they should be tougher on an overblown problem that, though it hasn't gone away, hasn't finally been much of a menace. One unfortunate result decades ago was the passage of laws that we can now judge costly and ineffective. May I fear similar results from the anti-gun hysteria?

May I hope of never needing again to write about threatened slaughter in America?

✘ **Richard Kostelanetz** recently completed a book of previously uncollected critiques, *Deeper, Further, and Beyond*. Individual entries on his work in several fields appear in various editions of *Readers Guide to Twentieth-Century Writers*, *Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Contemporary Poets*, *Contemporary Novelists*, *Postmodern Fiction*, *Webster's Dictionary of American Writers*, *The HarperCollins Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, *Directory of American Scholars*, *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World*, *Who's Who in American Art*, NNDB.com, Wikipedia.com, and Britannica.com, among other distinguished directories. Otherwise, he survives in New York, where he was born, unemployed and thus overworked.

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