# From Virtuous Armed Citizen to “Cramped Little Risk-Fearing Man”: The Meaning of Firearms in an Insecure Era

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It is worth considering, in view of the overwhelming liberal and left-wing support for gun controls today, the very different perspective of radicals at the turn of the last century. The ill-fated Karl Liebknecht, one of the founders of the German Communist Party who was shot dead after the abortive Spartacist Uprising in 1919, penned *Militarism and Anti-militarism*  in 1907. Whereas today firearms are decried as corruptors of persons[[1]](#footnote-1), Liebknecht argued that the ideal situation would be one in which every man and woman should possess not just a gun, but the ability to destroy the entire world. Praising a nineteenth century futurist work by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*, Liebknecht argued:

And indeed we can suppose that the time will come – even if it is far in the future – when technique and the easy domination by men of the most powerful forces of nature will reach a stage which makes the application of the technique of murder quite impossible, since it would mean the self-destruction of the human race. …The exploitation of technical progress will then take on a new character; from a basically plutocratic activity it will to a certain extent become a democratic, general human possibility.[[2]](#footnote-2)

When the Prussian people were armed, Liebknecht continued, ‘[t]he value of man increased. His social quality as a creator of wealth and a prospective taxpayer, together with his natural-physical quality as a bearer of physical power, as a bearer of intelligence and enthusiasm, took on decisive significance and raised his rate of exchange…’[[3]](#footnote-3)

Self-sovereignty but also equality, freedom and social solidarity – the bond of trust and common interest that unites a people – grew with the arming of the citizen. With a weapon the citizen had an elementary means of ensuring that her will could not be ignored and that her rights were not easily trampled upon. The armed individual grew in stature, virtue and importance; only good things accrued from as wide as possible possession of the most destructive weapons, noted Liebknecht.

The specific characteristics of the United States – its revolutionary heritage, plentiful wilderness, historic battles on the frontier and, most importantly, its declared dedication to equality – ensured a relationship between gun ownership and citizenship, despite the country’s lack of enthusiasm for the socialist revolutionism expressed by Liebknecht. With no established social scale, the gun became a tool to enforce order amongst equals. The arming of citizens ensured that there were limits to how far the audacious could, through force, impose their wills on others.

Yet today the freedom of the average man to be armed is now defended only by conservatives. Such a turn of events is very recent; as Adam Winkler has shown, in the 1960s radicals like the Black Panthers reacted to attempts by conservative icon Ronald Reagan, then governor of California, to disallow loaded guns to be carried. The National Rifle Association – the *bête noire* of gun control groups – approved of the 1968 Gun Control Act.[[4]](#footnote-4) Liberals express the fears that conservative elites expressed in earlier eras and conservatives support Liebknecht’s armed citizen.

Both sides of the debate today wish to disarm the private individual – one through passing laws and the other by pointing even more deadly weapons back at that individual. Part of this assault is waged as a cultural assault. In the eyes of many liberals, this powerful, independent, self-sovereign individual, the backbone of the United States up until 50 years ago, should be banished to a shabby and disreputable past, under attack for his (the male pronoun is appropriate because gun culture is almost always used to describe the attachment men have to their firearms as well as to the image of the armed citizen) poisonous ‘gun culture’ – for the very power celebrated by Liebknecht. He has moved from the hero to villain of history, from the ever-vigilant protector of towns and farms who patrolled the edges of civilization to a murderer of Native and African-Americans. To many liberals today, he is a relic of a violent and unenlightened era. Any power allowed him today seems only to result in destruction and increasingly wanton violence. As Obama said, these people are angry, bitter and confused, and they ‘cling to their guns or religion or antipathy towards those that are not like them’.[[5]](#footnote-5) To Obama and others, the armed citizen lost his or her virtue, if it existed in the first place. The peacekeeping guns now seem to threaten our peaceful coexistence.

Yet the response from those resisting gun control legislation seems also to emanate from sense of deep distrust for one’s fellow citizens. Rather than pointing to the rarity of mass shootings, the infinitesimally small chances of children being killed by guns at schools, or the rarity of terrorist incidents, the National Rifle Association (NRA) and others advocate armed guards being posted at schools or more ‘certified’ citizens carrying weapons. It may be true that the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun, as NRA Executive Vice President Wayne La Pierre noted, but to imagine the world is populated by bad guys with guns is no less irrational than imagining that a machine made of metal, plastic and wood is capable of morally corrupting its possessor. Both sides of the debate argue as violent crime and homicide rates have dropped to a historically low point in the United States.[[6]](#footnote-6)

This chapter gives a historical background to the recent campaign for gun controls, distinguishing attempts to control arms today from those of the past. It suggests that a paradigm shift occurred in the American, from virtuous armed citizen to what the critic Allan Bloom once called the ‘cramped little risk-fearing man’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Whereas the citizen of old gained strength and relied upon the knowledge that his or her fellows possessed potentially destructive arms, today’s cramped little risk-fearing people (hereafter CRFP) distrust their fellows and wish either to disarm them or to arm themselves to deal with the purported threat from their fellows.   
  
In relation to policy, the target of gun control campaigns remains, as previous gun control attempts during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did, specific groups of people. In the past gun controls were aimed at African-Americans, socialists, or immigrants. Today’s campaign targets white, predominantly rural or suburban working-class Americans – those who, in the past, were regarded as the backbone of the country. Those campaigning for gun control do not attack being armed *per se* – it is private citizens being armed that they object to.Most have no problem with the authorities being armed, at least until their fellow citizens are disarmed. Nor do they campaign against destructive military power or the armaments industry, as their antecedents who campaigned against guns in the 1930s did.

But those who wield guns to protect themselves hardly resemble their historical precedents, either. Rather than using them as a tool in specific situations, many today use them to ward off almost-entirely imaginary threats. In 2014 the homicide rate was lower than at any time since 1957. Crime of almost every description is trending downwards.[[8]](#footnote-8) Yet Americans are nearly twice as likely to carry a gun for protection in 2013 than they were in 1999.[[9]](#footnote-9) Gun sales increase after mass shootings and terrorist attacks, although the chances of Americans being killed in a mass shooting or terrorist attack are infinitesimal. As Angela Stroud has written, holders of concealed carry licenses ‘become increasingly dependent on their guns to feel secure’. Stroud also shows that those with concealed licenses see their licenses as important for making them feel they are ‘good guys’.[[10]](#footnote-10) The ‘gun-carry revolution’, as Jennifer Carlson called it, began in 1976, just after the organizations attempting to disarm the American population got off the ground (The Brady Campaign began as the National Council to Control Handguns in 1974).[[11]](#footnote-11) Fellow citizens are in CRFP’s crosshairs, whether they favour more gun controls or not.

Is the gun fetishized in recent discussion? Several texts – most recently Pamela Haag’s contribution to the history of the gun industry – discuss the fetishization of the gun. Undoubtedly, the gun as been associated with human characteristics in the past. God made men; Sam Colt made the equal, goes the old Western adage. Manhood, self-reliance, and even equality have been symbolized by the gun. As Simon Wendt has shown, African-Americans associated imbued ownership of firearms with all of these qualities.[[12]](#footnote-12)   
  
The relationship today is reversed. Rather than people holding guns, guns seem to have a hold over people. Humanity is under the gun. Phrases like ‘epidemic of gun violence’ belie a propensity to lend these simple machines, which throw lead very quickly and accurately, differing only in degree over hundreds of year, magical qualities whereby human beings are manipulated or ‘infected’. The hugely different stories behind deaths caused by firearms are lumped simplistically together as if all are simply the consequence of allowing private citizens to be armed.

Moreover, different varieties of gun have different purposes. For civilian use – the focus of this study – rifles are used primarily for hunting (though so-called ‘assault weapons’ are not particularly useful for hunting) but may also be used for protection of one’s home. Rifles are not easily concealable or portable and thus are not as useful for self-protection outside of the home. Shotguns, also too large to carry for self-protection, are generally used for hunting birds. Rarely are either used in crimes. In 2014, according to the FBI, out of a total of 8124 murders using firearms, 262 murders were committed using rifles (including ‘assault weapons’) and 248 by shotgun. Handguns are primarily used for protection but may also be used in the commission of a crime. But, even though handguns were used in most of the remainder of the 8124 homicides, less than .5 of one percent of handguns possessed by Americans have *ever* have been used in homicides. So their primary use is not killing but as protection or security.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Treating guns as tools – and focusing on the uses specific to the form of each type of gun – might at least begin a conversation about them. But the trigger for the discussion about guns is less about guns per se and more about the perceived characteristics of those who might wield them.

The first section of this chapter briefly traces the evolution of the relationship between citizens and firearms, showing how the ideal of the private citizen armed for defence of home, family and property, and as a last line of civil defence, survived up until the 1960s (though such conceptions still exist, they have less influence than in the past). Then, a new discussion of violence, separated from the human purposes behind violence, began to associate its increase with an armed population. Since the 1970s, the assumed virtue of the virtuous, armed citizen was no longer assumed. Instead, the dangerous armed citizen became the focus for CLRFP. As Christopher Lasch observed: “Self-preservation has replaced self-improvement as the goal of earthly existence.”[[14]](#footnote-14) The goal of self-preservation dictated that it is best to disarm all others whilst keeping an armoury of weapons for self-defence against any threats.

### The Virtuous Armed Citizenry

Liebknecht’s futuristic conception of citizenry was, in some ways, a logical extension of the concept of the armed citizen being necessary for the maintenance of the Republic put forward by Machiavelli and being transferred within the United States by James Harrington, James Burgh and others.[[15]](#footnote-15) Even in England, the armed citizen was considered the paragon of virtue, except by some members of the elite during times of insecurity. Not only was possession of weapons a right but a duty. In August 1819, a nervous establishment caused the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester, England, whereby a crowd of 60,000 assembled in front of banners proclaiming REFORM, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, EQUAL REPRESENTATION and, touchingly, LOVE, was charged by troops on horseback, killing 18 and seriously wounding over 700. In the aftermath, a Seizure of Arms bill was proposed in Parliament. During the discussion in late 1819, Lord Rancliffe noted that if he was attacked in his house it was ‘his duty and his right, feeling as an Englishman, to resist the assailants.’ Mr Protheroe, while clearly concerned about possible revolution, believed seizure of arms was ‘utterly inconsistent with freedom and with the existence of a civilized society.’[[16]](#footnote-16) The virtue of the armed citizen was, as Mr Brougham reminded the House, ‘not merely …that he might use them against the lawless measures of bad rulers, but to remind those rulers that the weapon of defence might be turned against them if they broke the laws, or violated the constitution.’ The virtuous citizen was regarded as both a keeper of the peace and as a guard against bad government.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Americans greeted technological developments in weaponry as a great boon to mankind. In 1852, the *Hartford Daily Times* described the revolver patented by Samuel Colt as ‘not without its moral importance’. Citing the argument that the invention of gunpowder diminishing ‘the frequency, duration, and destructiveness of wars’, it argued, foreshadowing Liebknecht’s later arguments, that with the arrival of ‘a process by which a whole army could be killed… the Millennium will arrive, and the lion and the lamb will lie down together’. If a machine were invented that could destroy a thousand lives, ‘wars among civilized nations would cease forever’.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The importance of firearms to freedom made itself heard many times in relation to African-Americans. In 1854, Frederick Douglass told African Americans to keep a ‘good revolver, a steady hand and a determination to shoot down any man attempting to kidnap…. Every slave hunter who meets a bloody death in his infernal business is an argument in favor of the manhood of our race.’ In 1857, Justice Taney, ruling on the infamous Dred Scott case, reaffirmed the relationship between firearms and citizenship, albeit negatively.[[19]](#footnote-19) Just after the Civil War ended, a publication of the African Methodist Episcopal Church explained to newly freed blacks in South Carolina: ‘We have several times alluded to the fact that the Constitution of the United States guarantees to every citizen the right to keep and bear arms.’ If African-Americans were more often denied citizenship to which they aspired in the ensuing years, their attachment to guns, as Nicholas Johnson has demonstrated, indicates the relationship between a free people and the proliferation of firearms.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The existence of the virtuous, armed citizenry was assumed during the nineteenth century, though many wished to prevent African-Americans from entering their ranks. In the United States, the connection between virtue and an armed citizenship survived right through into the 1960s. Gun controls, in any real sense, arrived in 1911, were consolidated in the 1930s, with the National Firearms Acts of 1934 and 1938 but most meaningfully restricted by the 1968 Gun Control Act. Gun controls, when they were enacted, were directed against those who, it was imagined, might threaten the peace. In Great Britain the first real gun controls took place in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution, when soldiers returned from the First World War.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In the United States the concept of the virtuous armed citizen survived pressure for gun controls in the first part of the twentieth century but only in a narrow definition that excluded immigrants and non-white citizens. One of the most vociferous campaigns for gun controls followed the 1906 Atlanta Riot. There was little reticence, in the *Atlanta Journal*, about who should be disarmed: ‘With the negroes without firearms there is little to be feared, for the white people are calm and quiet and there will be no more violence unless the rioting is started by the blacks’.[[22]](#footnote-22) At this time, the assumption was that a body of ‘law-abiding citizens’ should be, or, at least, should be allowed to be armed. When the Sullivan Law, the first real gun control act in the United States, was enacted in 1911, it was designed to ‘strike hardest at the foreign-born element,’ particularly Italians.[[23]](#footnote-23) Fear of insurrection, the specific fear of the elite but also of non-elite Southern whites, prompted generalized gun controls but there was no doubt that their enforcement was selective. As the Baltimore *Afro-American* sardonically noted in 1930 about impending gun legislation in Louisiana. ‘Hereafter if you are a colored man you will be jailed if you carry a gun here. A white man is not molested. A relentless drive to arrest and disarm all Negroes found in possession of firearms has been ordered by Superintendent of Police Theodore A. Ray’.[[24]](#footnote-24)

But, in the United States, the target of gun controls in earlier periods differs from that of campaigns since 1970. Surveying reports in the press of the early twentieth century, it is the ‘gun toter’ or ‘pistol toter’ – not the gun itself – who was the target of the Sullivan Law and the various other legislation leading up to the 1934 National Firearms Act. As Barrett Sharpnack notes, ‘not everyone who carried a weapon was automatically condemned as a menace. Indeed, the term gun toter could be contrasted directly with the ideal “armed citizen” that had been part of American military and political thought since the foundation of the United States.’[[25]](#footnote-25) The armed citizen carried a gun only when he or she had to; a pistol toter carried a gun as a matter of course. The various municipal laws were used by the courts to prosecute those who were ‘looking for trouble’ and seldom used against armed citizens.[[26]](#footnote-26)

There was some agitation, it is true, for universal gun controls in the interwar years, particularly in the 1930s. But for most the distinction was made between the gangster – a large concern at the time – and the ordinary citizen. The push for regulation reflected such a distinction. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and manufacturers of firearms cooperated on the legislation. A model law, suggested by Karl T. Frederick, president of the NRA in the twenties and thirties, required that no one except ‘suitable’ people carry concealed handgun in public. Gun dealers would maintain a system of registration. ‘I have never believed in the general practice of carrying weapons… I do not believe in the general promiscuous toting of guns. I think it should be sharply restricted…’[[27]](#footnote-27)

An illustration of the difference between the movement for gun controls in the 1930s and in the 1960s and 1970s can be found in the story of the attempted assassination of Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 by Guiseppe Zangara. Although the eight-dollar pawnshop pistol used in the attempt on Roosevelt’s life generated some calls for tighter handgun controls, such comments were few and far between. As Carole Leff and Mark Leff commented: ‘More concern centered on the fact that the President elect’s assailant was a naturalized citizen, prompting anti-anarchist and anti-alien sentiment.’[[28]](#footnote-28)

### 1960s and 1970s: The present controversy takes shape

In the period after WWII, with its Cold War emphasis on military preparedness and the freedom Americans had in relation to Soviet bloc countries, what few calls for gun control that were heard were drowned out. Whereas some had consistently urged generalised gun controls from the 1930s onwards[[29]](#footnote-29), the purported need for a citizenry used to weapons and drilled in marksmanship kept gun control off the table in the war years and at the height of the Cold War. The virtuous armed citizen, at this time, was needed to defend the country.[[30]](#footnote-30)   
  
The next successful attack on guns was part of concern about violence that occurred as Americans reeled in the wake of consecutive summers of rioting and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations. In 1968, a bemused President Johnson set up The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, following the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy. The emphasis on violence – as opposed to the motives behind it – was new. Moreover, it was a sign of a sea-change in liberal criticism. Prior to the late 1960s, most liberals saw violence as the result of inequalities in society. As the editors of one of the commissioned studies that looked at the history of violence noted: ‘Until fairly recently, American historians have been inclined to regard economic motives as paramount, and to explain violence either sympathetically as the protest of the have-nots or unsympathetically as a by-product of the defense of privilege.’[[31]](#footnote-31)

An attack on violence, as the Commission hinted, was an indictment of a society that wielded sophisticated technology but lacked the ethical ability to use it responsibly. The fact that it concentrated on violence per se effectively delegitimized the reasons justifying violence in the past. As Hannah Arendt noted in a response to the Commission on Violence, it is only a means for some specific end. ‘Violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues. And what needs justification through something else cannot be the essence of anything.’ It was far easier to attack violence than it was the complex and often contradictory reasons why it occurs. And, as Arendt noted, blaming ‘violence’ for the riots was at once blaming everyone and no one, as no one was assigned responsibility for it.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Given the separation of violence from the human purposes behind it, it is hardly surprising that the instruments of violence – firearms – were no longer treated as tools but ascribed the power to corrupt. In 1967 psychologists Leonard Berkowitz and Anthony LePage published a summary of the results of an experiment they conducted, ‘Weapons as Aggression-Eliciting Stimuli’. Berkowitz and LePage concluded that guns not only permit violence, they can stimulate it as well. As Berkowitz stated in 1968, ‘The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also be pulling the finger.’[[33]](#footnote-33) Berkowitz and LePage were early expositors of a new approach that de-emphasized moral responsibility for the actions of those who used weapons, focussing instead upon corrupting qualities of the weapon itself. As Berkowitz admitted, ‘[g]un control may not be too effective in protecting ordinary citizens against criminals or Presidents against assassins, but it may, nevertheless, save some ordinary citizens from other ordinary citizens like themselves.’[[34]](#footnote-34) It is instructive that, to Berkowitz, the ‘bad guys’ were one’s fellow citizens.

The conversion of Dr Benjamin Spock from a pro-gun to a pro-control perspective is indicative of the changes occurring. Spock, whose book *Baby and Child Care* advised American parents on child-raising, told parents not to worry about their children playing with guns. Noting that by age 6 a boy will stop pretend-shooting at his parents because ‘his own conscience has …turned stricter,’ Spock argued that ‘playing at war is a natural step in the disciplining of the aggression of young boys.’ But in 1968, he revised his book after concluding that casual TV violence begets increased cruelty in both children and adults. ‘Parents should firmly stop children’s war play or any other kind of play that degenerates into deliberate cruelty or meanness,’ he wrote.[[35]](#footnote-35) As Glen Utter and James True noted, the term to describe a collector of weapons changed from the postwar ‘gun bug’ to the less positive ‘gun nut’.[[36]](#footnote-36)

As a corollary to the emphasis on violence and gun-related homicide as triggers for psychological problems, firearms, by the end of the 1970s, were re-imagined as a medical problem. By 1979 American public health officials adopted the ‘objective to reduce the number of handguns in private ownership’. Firearm violence was now an ‘epidemic’ and ‘a public health emergency.’ In the 1990s health advocates claimed that ‘guns are not ... inanimate object[s], but in fact are a social ill.’[[37]](#footnote-37) In the 1990s health advocates claimed that ‘guns are not ... inanimate object[s], but in fact are a social ill.’ Many august bodies, from the *American College of Physicians*, the *American Academy of Pediatrics* to the *American Medical Association*, treat gun violence as a medical, rather than moral, issue.[[38]](#footnote-38)

### The cultural attack on the virtuous, armed citizen

Also beginning at this time was the attack on ‘gun culture’. Whereas the motivation behind the 1968 Gun Control Acts was a barely-veiled attempt to remove cheap weapons from ghetto residents after the consecutive summers of rioting across American cities in the mid-1960s, an attack on gun culture allowed some liberals to avoid the difficult racial issues that had been connected to gun controls in the past.

One of the surprising aspects that seems to elude the recent scholarship on the history of guns is that the term ‘gun culture’ did not exist before 1970. In fact, it is difficult to find associations between American culture and gun violence. Then, it featured in a bad-tempered essay by Richard Hofstadter. Hofstadter noted ‘the presence and easy availability of guns magnify the violent strain in the American character, multiplying its deadly consequences.’[[39]](#footnote-39) Other books have questioned why America has a gun culture without questioning whether the condemnation of a gun culture might be historically specific rather than the much more amorphous ‘gun culture’ itself.[[40]](#footnote-40)

This cultural swipe, like the Commission on Violence, avoided difficult questions about who wielded the gun and why, focussing instead on violence as an inheritance of the past, essentially stripping the virtuous armed citizen of his virtue. The ‘good guys’ of the Western went bad, and the role they symbolically played in ranging the frontier, repelling attacks from Native Americans, and enforcing law and order – hitherto seen as heroic – was part of this ‘violent strain’. If guns were themselves corrupt their user, it makes sense to attack those who proudly possess them, both in history and today, instead of those who use them for criminal purposes.

The indictment of the hitherto virtuous armed citizen began in earnest. As Wendy Brown has argued: ‘The republican link between arms, freedom, and civic virtue (and virtue) depends upon the existence of responsible, active, public-minded citizens bound together in at least a modicum of civic solidarity.’ Brown suggested, in 1989, that such citizens no longer existed.[[41]](#footnote-41) But it was in the late 1960s that the virtuous armed citizen retreated under a withering attack and calls for gun controls grew louder.

Part of the attack on gun culture appears to be an attempt to morally isolate the problem of American racism. As Joan Burbick acerbically notes, the gun in America ‘reeks of white power’ and is historically tied to romantic tales of ‘white frontier heroes and valiant Southern plantation owners rescuing their white daughters from the hands of black predators’. For Burbick, the gun is a ‘political fetish’ that operates as a cultural symbol of white male power.[[42]](#footnote-42) Earlier, the now-disgraced historian Michael Bellesiles noted that ‘this Hobbsian heritage of each against all emerged the modern American acceptance of widespread violence’. Bellesiles argued that ‘gun culture’ emerged with widespread advertising by gun manufacturers in the 1870s, rather than being a cultural continuation since the days of the American Revolution. Today, he adds, it is not just a minority ‘who idolize and even fetishize firearms’.[[43]](#footnote-43)

As Pamela Haag notes, ‘[t]he gun today is mired in political fetishization’ but, as she also notes, such fetishization is recent.[[44]](#footnote-44) But it was not the embattled virtuous armed citizen that fetishized firearms, at least not first. There was, prior to 1970, an appreciation that they were a means to an end, that end being good or bad. Treating violence without reference to its motives surely fetishizes violence. Even more obviously, the idea that ‘the trigger pulls the finger’ or identifying weapons as an ‘infection’ lends will to an inanimate object. If anything, ‘gun culture’, so much that it can be said to exist, no more fetishizes guns than those who enjoy cars or airplanes do those machines. Bellesiles and others who lend pieces of wood, steel and plastic a moral quality, as killers themselves, surely hit the definition of ‘fetishize’ more directly.

However, the cultural assault on weapons is actually an attack on the ‘type’ of people who own and keep weapons. The Federal Assault Weapon Ban (AWB) of 1994 indicates, in as clear a way as the ban on the Saturday Night Special in 1968 targeted African-Americans[[45]](#footnote-45), the segment of the population targeted by the ban. The ‘assault weapon’, a new and, as it turned out, meaningless term, focused on 18 specific firearms, as well as certain military-type features on guns. As many observers at the time noted, there was little difference between assault weapons and ordinary semi-automatic guns (fully automatic guns were prohibited in 1986). The various military-style additions to assault weapons, such as pistol-grips, collapsible stocks, and flash preventers, made no difference to the lethality of the weapon. But they convey a militaristic image and are favoured by collectors and by those who wish to see guns as symbols of power. Weapons manufacturers, some complained, marketed assault weapons directly to [s]urvivalists—who envisioned themselves fending off a horde of desperate neighbors from within their bomb shelters—loved the combat features of high ammunition capacity and anti-personnel striking power of assault weapons.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Such an image belies the less sinister uses that the huge majority of those who own assault weapons have for them. Despite warnings by gun-control advocates that assault weapons are the weapon of choice for criminals, they have never figured very highly in crime statistics. According to the AWB’s author, Senator Diane Feinstein, introducing similar legislation in 2012, since the 1994 ban lapsed in 2004, assault weapons were responsible for around 48 homicides per year, a remarkably low number given the estimated 20-30m of these weapons in the United States. These weapons were used on average for less than half of one percent of all gun homicides, and knife homicides were three times the number of assault weapon homicides between 2004 and 2012. Assault weapons are attacked for their symbolism and because certain types of persons wish to own them. In short, they are offensive to those who believe that weapons themselves bring death and destruction.[[47]](#footnote-47)

### The changing context

Why did the target of gun controls switch from the illegitimate use of firearms by specific groups to the armed citizen in general? Why, at this stage, were violence and weapons detached from their purposes to be condemned as too dangerous for the virtuous armed citizen to handle? These are very large question and almost impossible to answer within the limits of this chapter. What follow are more a suggestion for the direction of future research than a comprehensive answers.

The many confusing elements of recent discussion about firearms – in particular its seemingly intractable nature – click into focus seeing through the lens of the very different context within which the debate since 1970s has occurred. It is the context of what sociologist Ulrich Beck termed ‘risk society’. Morality, in the ‘risk society’, is seen in terms of *unintended consequences* rather than purposeful evil. Beck understood the characteristics of our most recent era as a decline in class societies, motivated by equality, and their replacement by risk societies, motivated by anxiety. In the latter ‘one is no longer concerned with attaining something “good”, but rather with preventing the worst; self-limitation is the goal which emerges. The dream of class society is that everyone wants and ought to have a share of the pie. The utopia of the risk society is that everyone should be spared from poisoning.’[[48]](#footnote-48) As Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky noted in their 1983 publication, *The Culture of Risk*, a fundamental shift occurred in the 1960s: ‘In the amazingly short space of fifteen to twenty years, confidence …has turned into doubt.’[[49]](#footnote-49)

Today, irrational fears frame the debate on guns. It is not that the virtuous armed citizen became evil; it is that firearms might ‘infect’ him, overcoming his virtue. ‘Our ethical tools – the code of moral behaviour, the assembly of the rules of thumb we follow – have not been, simply, made to the measure of our present powers.’[[50]](#footnote-50) Americans no longer trusted themselves with the power they wield. The ‘pivot’, as Nicholas Johnson called the 180 degree change of perspective of African-Americans in the 1970s in relation to firearms – from an insistence on the right to bear arms to campaigning to have them taken away – was the result of this new context within which the debate takes place.[[51]](#footnote-51)

In a ‘risk society’ the assignment of moral responsibility is beside the point when prevention of a catastrophe is the highest aspiration. When unintended consequences, rather than purpose, are perceived to be the problem, objects that may be used for destructive purposes must be removed or neutralized.

### Understanding the paradoxes

A series of paradoxes clouds the gun debate. Most Americans support gun controls but 56% feel that America would be safer if more Americans carried concealed weapons.[[52]](#footnote-52) The ‘gun-control paradox’ – after high profile shootings, firearm sales surge to record levels – surely reflects broad insecurities rather than fears that restrictions will prevent them from buying a gun. Though numbers of gun purchases after 9-11 have been exaggerated, they did surge in the short-term.[[53]](#footnote-53) It does not make much sense to buy a gun for self-defence, let alone to ward off terrorist attacks. In 2014, 277 justifiable homicides by civilians took place, according to the FBI. According to the Gun Violence Archive, a non-partisan compilation of gun data, there were fewer than 1,600 verified defensive guns uses, meaning a police report was filed. But there were, in 2013, 505 unintentional firearm deaths.[[54]](#footnote-54) What that means is that, with owning a gun, the chances of killing oneself or a family member accidentally are nearly twice as high as killing someone in self-defence. But the chances of neither happening are many, many times better.

Americans increasingly respond emotionally rather than rationally, in policy terms, to events like Sandy Hook. American schools, with a population similar to that of the United Kingdom, are statistically safer than American homes, and that, if American schools were in fact a country, they would have fewer homicides than any other country where murders have occurred in a given year.[[55]](#footnote-55) But in the wake of Sandy Hook, not only was there a surge in support for banning assault weapons, the National Rifle Association suggested that armed guards be posted within schools.[[56]](#footnote-56)

The less commented-upon paradox, however, is that those who call for gun controls never extend these policies to the police or other authorities. It is random violence by private citizens they fear. As spokesman Peter Hamm from the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, one of the most prominent gun control advocate organizations, noted, ‘police officers need to be able to defend themselves and the rest of us, and they need the weapons to do so.’ As James F. Pastor observed: ‘Since the Brady Center is devoted to gun control laws, it is rather surprising to note that they are advocating heavier weaponry for the police.’[[57]](#footnote-57) The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, even as it condemns the intimidation of carrying guns in public, says nothing about the police carrying arms.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The overarching paradox is that Americans are more fearful of crime almost in proportion to the huge fall in crime in the past 25 years. The violent crime rate and the homicide rate have been coming down steadily in the United States. From 1993 to 2014, the rate of violent crime declined from a rate of 79.8 per 1000 persons over the age of 12 to 20.1 per 1,000.[[59]](#footnote-59) Homicides in 2013 and 2014 were at their lowest rate per 100,000 since 1957.[[60]](#footnote-60) Moreover, gun homicides declined from 1993 to 2013 by 49%[[61]](#footnote-61) whereas gun sales climb ever higher, making record sales in 2016, totalling some 23.1m.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Most firearms, in other words, will not be discharged for the purpose their owners bought them for. Many people own many items for security to offset even the most incredibly low risks. We could hardly justify preventing them from having an item simply because it is useless. But restrictions on guns involve policing the behaviour of others. All will admit that restricting a freedom of another must be at least justified. But, amidst the falling crime rates and the lack of any relation between numbers of guns and homicides or the bizarre idea that gun ownership might exacerbate or prevent terrorist attacks, new measures to bureaucratize and regulate gun ownership are being put forward. If my neighbour purchases weapons in the name of security, one might smile tolerantly at his folly and use extreme caution if knocking unannounced. If he, for his own security, orders all others on the street to remove all firearms from their houses house, that is quite another thing.

A risk-averse mentality can only accept the (impossible) goal of reducing risks to zero. Security – a risk-free world – can never be achieved and is, in the end, self-defeating. As Isaiah Berlin noted, insecurity creates neither a free nor, ironically, a secure environment. ‘The logical culmination of this process of destroying everything through which I can possibly be wounded is suicide…Total liberation in this sense (as Schopenhauer correctly perceived) is conferred only by death.’[[63]](#footnote-63)

### Conclusion

The relationship of Americans to firearms switched paradigmatically over the past 50 years. Firearms empowered individuals, promoted equality and freedom, and were endowed with moral qualities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They expressed America’s unique experiment with equality and freedom, where ordinary citizens enjoyed more power than their European brethren. The proliferation of privately held arms set the United States apart as a bastion of equality, at least for the majority of society.

If we accept the United States as a ‘risk society’, the ensuing paradigm shift, from virtuous armed citizen to CLRFP, clicks into focus. In the past, firearms were endowed with the positive qualities of the ordinary citizen; they embodied empowerment and symbolized equality. They were a machine that exuded the equalitarian pretensions of their possessor. Today, the relationship is reversed; the negative connotations of the gun infect ordinary people with their destructive capabilities. The specific uses of various guns – shotguns, rifles, and pistols – are forgotten because all destructive power can infect the ordinary citizen.

The division between those who favour restrictive firearms policies versus those who oppose them reflects a cultural divide between Americans who believe that the state should have the monopoly on force in order to allay their insecurities and Americans who seek a more individual solution, who refuse to trust the state with their security. The former’s ‘nightmare’ is summed up by Pamela Haag:

A “good guy”, noted by his neighbors as a quiet, upstanding citizen, can snap, becoming a monstrous villain with no apparent warning. We watch horrified as the armed, acting out of mental illness rage, impulse, sadness, or other unknown and perhaps unknowable causes or motivations harm others or themselves.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Yet, in order to gain security, those who would more tightly control firearms have assented to a ridiculous concentration of arms within the police and other parts of the state. Arguably, the militarization of the police only became apparent to most Americans with the riots in Ferguson in 2014. Why not protest about police – who sometimes snap – arming themselves with ever more destructive weapons against their own citizens?

But the nightmare scenario of those who need a gun because they fear personal violence is well-captured in Jennifer Carlson’s correspondent: ‘When I’m with my family, I can defend them. I’m not a karate expert, so I never had a feeling of safety until I had a firearm.’[[65]](#footnote-65) This is despite consistently falling crime rates and despite the fact that only one of Angela Stroud’s correspondents – who all carried guns for self-protection – could recount any situation where they might have actually used a gun.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The problem is not with America’s ‘gun culture’, or with the number of guns, or with a villainous percentage of the population that is out to kill honest upstanding citizens. It is distrust of one’s fellow citizens, it is that the virtue of one’s fellow human beings is no longer assumed, it is fear of other people, of crime statistics and newspaper headlines. It is, as Franklin D. Roosevelt, ‘fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance’.[[67]](#footnote-67)

1. See, for instance, Craig A. Anderson, Arlin J. Benjamin J. and Bruce D. Barlow, ‘Does the Gun Pull the Trigger? Automatic Priming Effects of Weapon Pictures and Weapon Names’, *American Psychological Science* 9 (July 1998, 308-314. Klinesmith, Jennifer, Kasser Tim, and McAndrew Francis T. "Guns, Testosterone, and Aggression: An Experimental Test of a Mediational Hypothesis." *Psychological Science* 17, no. 7 (2006): 568-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Karl Liebknecht, *Militarism and Anti Militarism: with special regard to the International Young Socialist Movement* (Cambridge: Rivers Press, 1973), 12. Such praise of the instruments of powers echoed Friedrich Engels, who also noted that force, or violence, ‘is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one’ ‘Anti-Duhring’, Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim, *Violence: A Reader* (Greensboro, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), pp 39-61, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Adam Winkler, ‘The Secret History of Guns’, *The Atlantic*, September, 2011. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/09/the-secret-history-of-guns/308608/>. See also Adam Winkler, *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2011), pX, p68-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cited in Janell Ross, ‘Obama revives his ‘cling to guns or religion’ analysis — for Donald Trump supporters’, *Washington Post*, December21, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Wayne La Pierre made the statement after the Sandy Hook massacre. See <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2012/12/21/nra-only-way-to-stop-a-bad-guy-with-a-gun-is-with-a-good-guy-with-a-gun/> For crime and homicide statistics, see endnote 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Allan Bloom, “John Rawls Vs. The Tradition of Political Philosophy”, *The American Political Science Review* , Vol. 69, No. 2 (Jun., 1975), pp648-662, 659. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States* 2015. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/table-4> (Accessed January 10, 2017). It should be noted that homicides and violent crime crept up in 2015 from 2014, from 4.5 to 4.9 per 100,000 but were still at less than 2011 levels and still far below the historic high of 1980 – 10.2 per 100,000. Historic crime rates available in James Alan Fox and Marianne W. Zawitz, *Homicide Trends in the United States* Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006.<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/htius.pdf> (accessed January 10 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. According to a Pew research poll, 49% of Americans who owned guns said they did so for protection in 2013, contrasted to 1999, where the figure was 26%. Cited in Bruce Drake, ‘5 Facts about the NRA and Guns in America’, *Pew Research Centre*, April 24, 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/24/5-facts-about-the-nra-and-guns-in-america/> Accessed January 10 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Not one of Stroud’s correspondents reported being in a position where they might have used a gun to prevent a crime. Angela Stroud, *Good Guys with Guns: The Appeal and Consequences of Concealed Carry* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2015) 2, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Jennifer Carlson, *Citizen-Protectors: The Everyday Politics of Guns in an Age of Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In 2009, Americans owned 114 million handguns, 110 million rifles, and 86 million shotguns. William J. Krouse, *Gun Control Legislation* (Congressional Research Service, 2012), p8. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL32842.pdf>. If a different handgun were used for every handgun murder over the past fifty years, and we overestimated them at 10,000 per year, it would be less than half of one per cent that was used to murder. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Robert E. Shalhope, "The Armed Citizen in the Early Republic." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 49, no. 1 (1986): 125-41, Stephen P. Halbrook, *That Every Man Be Armed: The Evolution of a Constitutional Right* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment : Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Hansard*, HC Deb vol 41 cc1124-65, ‘Seizure of Arms Bill’ 14 December 1819, 1125, 1127. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 1141. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Cited in William Hosley, ‘Guns, Gun Cultures, and the Peddling of Dreams’, Jan E. Dizard, Robert Muth, Stephen P. Andrews, *Guns in America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999, pp47-85, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. If African Americans were citizens, observed Chief Justice Taney in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, ‘it would give to persons of the negro race ... the full liberty of speech ...; to hold public meetings upon political affairs, *and to keep and carry arms wherever they went*.’ Cited in Stephen P. Halbrook, ‘The 14th Amendment and the Right to Keep and Bear Arms: The Intent of the Framers, *Report of the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 97th Cong., 2d Sess., The Right to Keep and Bear Arms, 68-82 (1982)*Reproduced in the 1982 Senate Report, pp. 68-82*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cited in Nicholas Johnson, *Negroes and the Gun: The Black Tradition of Arms* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2014), 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Joyce Malcolm, *Guns and Violence: The English Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 142-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘Disarm the Negroes’, *The Atlanta Journal*, September 25 1906, p6 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Lee Kennett and James LaVerne Anderson, *The Gun in America: The Origins of a National Dilemma* (Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut, 1975), 165—186. T. Markus Funk, ‘Gun Control in America: A History of Discrimination Against the Poor and Minorities’, in Jan E. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth, and Stephen P. Andrews, Jr., eds. *Guns in America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 390-402, 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ‘Disarm Negroes, but Leave Whites Alone’, *Afro-American (1893-1988*,*)* Jan 11, 1930, p13. On the racially selective disarmament at between the Civil War and Second World War, see Kevin Yuill, ‘“Better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog”: African-Americans and guns, 1866-1941’ in Karen R. Jones, Giacomo Macola and David Welch, eds., *A Cultural History of Firearms in an Age of Empire* (London: Ashgate Press, July 2013) pp211-232. See also Robert J. Cottrol and Raymond T. Diamond, ‘Never Intended to Be Applied to the White Population: Firearms Regulation and Racial Disparity - The Redeemed South's Legacy to a National Jurisprudence’, *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 70 (1994-1995), pp1307-1335, James L. Anderson and Lee Kennett, *The Gun in America: The Origins of a National Dilemma* (New York: Praeger, 1975), Clayton E. Cramer ‘The Racist Roots of Gun Control’, *Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy* 17 (1994-1995), pp17-33, Stefan Tahmassebbi, ‘Gun Control and Racism’, *George Mason University Civil Rights Law Journal*, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 67-100, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Barrett Sharpnack, ‘Firepower by Mail: “Gun-Toting,” State Regulation, and the Origins of Federal Firearms Legislation, 1911-1927’, MA thesis, Case Western Reserve University, May 2015 (available at <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=case1433579362&disposition=inline>), 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See for example, ‘Pistol Toter Fined’ *Oregonian*, Portland, Oregon, October 18, 1955, John Lowery, ‘Pistol-Carrying License Makes Some Think Using a Weapon is Legal’, *Marietta Journal*,Marietta, Georgia, March 30, 1958. ‘Jails Pistol Toter’ *Idaho Statesman*, Boise, Idaho, March 30, 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Cited in Winkler, *Gunfight*, 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Carol Skalnik Leff and Mark H. Leff, ‘The Politics of Ineffectiveness: Federal Firearms Legislation, 1919-38’, *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science*, 455 (May 1981), pp48-62, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Leff and Leff, ‘The Politics of Ineffectiveness’. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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31. Ted Robert Gurr and Hugh Davis Graham, eds., *The History of Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), xxviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
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34. Leonard Berkowitz, ‘How Guns Control Us’, *Psychology Today* Vol. 15. No. 6 (June 1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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36. Utter and True, ‘The Evolving Gun Culture in America’, [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Karl Adler et al., ‘Firearm Violence and Public Health: Limiting the Availability of Guns’, *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), Vol. 271, No. 16 (April, 1994), pp1281-1283, 1283.Cited inDon B. Kates et al, ‘Guns and Public Health: Epidemic of Violence or Pandemic of Propaganda?’, *Tennessee Law Review* 61 (1994), pp513-596, 514. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Karl Adler et al., ‘Firearm Violence and Public Health: Limiting the Availability of Guns’, *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), Vol. 271, No. 16 (April, 1994), pp1281-1283, 1283.Cited inDon B. Kates et al, ‘Guns and Public Health: Epidemic of Violence or Pandemic of Propaganda?’, *Tennessee Law Review* 61 (1994), pp513-596, 514. See also Institute of Medicine, ‘Priorities for research to reduce the threat of firearm-related violence’, June 5, 2013 (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2013/Priorities-for-Research-to-Reduce-the-Threat-of-Firearm-Related-Violence.aspx>). R Butkus, R Doherty R,  and H Daniel, ‘Reducing firearm-related injuries and deaths in the United States: executive summary of a policy position paper from the American College of Physicians’ *Ann Intern Med* 160 (2014), pp858-860, American Academy of Pediatrics, Federal policies to keep children safe (<http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/federal-advocacy/Pages/AAPFederalGunViolencePreventionRecommendationstoWhiteHouse.aspx>). American Medical Association. H-145.997: firearms as a public health problem in the United States — injuries and death (<https://ssl3.ama-assn.org/apps/ecomm/PolicyFinderForm.pl?site=www.ama-assn.org&uri=%2fresources%2fhtml%2fPolicyFinder%2fpolicyfiles%2fHnE%2fH-145.997.HTM>) (accessed November 1 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Richard Hofstadter, “America as a Gun Culture”, *Heritage Magazine* Volume 21, Issue 6 (1970). For defences of ‘gun culture’, see Glen H. Utter, and James L. True, ‘The Evolving Gun Culture in America’ *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures*, 23, Issue 2 (2000), pp67–79 and William R. Tonso’s, ed., *The Gun Culture and Its Enemies* (1990) [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Besides Joan Burbick: *Gun Show Nation: Gun Culture and American Democracy* (New York and London: The New Press, 2006) and Michael Bellesiles, *Arming America* (New York: Borzoi Books, 2000), see Peter Squires, *Gun Culture or Gun Control?: Firearms and Violence: Safety and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Robert J. Spitzer, *The Politics of Gun Control* (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2004), especially pp8-13, William Hosley, ‘Guns, Gun Culture and the Peddling of Dreams’ in Jan E. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth, and Stephen P. Andrews, Jr., eds, *The Gun in America: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp47-85. More sympathetic to gun culture are Abbey Kohn, *Shooters: Myths and Realities of America’s Gun Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) *William R. Tonso, The Gun Culture and Its Enemies,* (Bellevue, WA: The Second Amendment Foundation, 1990) argues that no real gun culture exists but an attachment to guns. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Wendy Brown, “Guns, Cowboys, Philadelphia Mayors, and Civic Republicanism: On Sanford Levinson's The Embarrassing Second Amendment.” *The Yale Law Journal* 99, no. 3 (1989): 661-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Burbick: *Gun Show Nation*, 27, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Bellesiles, *Arming America*, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Pamela Haag, *The Gunning of America: Business and the Making of American Gun Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Robert Sherrill, *The Saturday Night Special* (New York: Penguin, 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. <http://www.vpc.org/studies/militarization.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. <http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=28d0c499-28ec-42a7-902d-ebf318d46d02>. Accessed October 31 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
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49. Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers* (London: University of California Press, 1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Chapter 8 ‘The Pivot’ in Johnson, *Negroes and the Gun*, pp285-296. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Data from 2016, 2015. <http://www.pollingreport.com/guns.htm> Accessed 13/01/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Tom W. Smith, “Surge in Gun Sales? The Press Misfires” <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-perspective/ppscan/134/134005.pdf>. Accessed 14/1/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_02.pdf>. Accessed 14/0/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, there were 75,900,000 people enrolled in educational institutions in the United States in 2010, of which 55,350,000 were enrolled in K-12 schools (for ages 5-18). The rate of homicide at school is approximately one homicide or suicide per 2.7million school-age students in 2009-10, according to the Center for Disease Control. To put that in perspective, that rate is lower than that of any country in the world that records homicides (Lichtenstein and Iceland often have no homicides over a year). The UK’s overall rate of homicide with its similar population (64m) to the US schools and educational facilities combined population is 32-times higher and the United States’ overall homicide rate is 127-times higher. American schools and higher education facilities are incredibly safe places. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Cheryl Gay Stolberg, ‘Report Sees Guns as Path to Safety in Schools’, *New York Times*, April 2 2013.

    <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/us/nra-details-plan-for-armed-school-guards.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. James F. Pastor, *Terrorism and Public Safety Policing: Implications for the Obama Presidency* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2010), 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. <http://csgv.org/issues/concealed-carry/> Accessed 15/01/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
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61. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/07/gun-homicide-rate-down-49-since-1993-peak-public-unaware/> Accessed 15/01/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
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63. Isiah Berlin *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1979), 139-140. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Haag, *The Gunning of America,* 367. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Carlson, *Citizen Protectors*, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Stroud, *Good Guys with Guns*. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14473>. Accessed 15/01/2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)