

# After Another Tragedy, A Chance For Gun Control In The U.S.? Don't Count On It

WASHINGTON – After the most recent mass shooting in Florida, many believe that “*this time*” it is different. This time something will change. I disagree. Meaningful gun control in America is a fantasy, a mirage. After many decades observing the political process in Washington DC, I have concluded that unless both political parties will agree on a far more restrictive interpretation of the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, (“the right to bear arms”), and unless the Courts will support this new course, NOTHING –repeat NOTHING– will happen, when it comes to serious (as opposed to merely cosmetic) proposed gun control legislation. And, given the sharp political divide separating the two parties, the chances of such a new bipartisan agreement being forged are practically zero.

## Tired script

After every new tragic mass shooting there a predictable, totally scripted, ritualised kabuki dance featuring prominent Democrats posturing and grandstanding against the gun lobby and their agents in Congress. With the appropriate gravitas, they accuse the Republicans of being in the pockets of the National Rifle Association, NRA, the powerful association of gun owners and pro-gun people in general. And then, what? Well, then nothing. After a few days, the whole thing goes away. EVERY SINGLE TIME.

## The sacred Second Amendment

Sadly, over many decades, tens of millions of Americans have acquired a distorted (in my view) notion of what “*the right to bear arms*” granted by the U.S. Constitution means. If we go

back in history, it seems that what the Founders meant was the right of local communities to raise armed militias, so that they could defend themselves against a government that had turned tyrannical.

However, overtime, the current interpretation of the Second Amendment to the Constitution –unrestricted gun ownership, including large collections of military hardware– developed and then acquired the status of a theological mandate. It is bizarre; but it is so.

### **Nothing moves the needle**

Extremely powerful opponents of this state of affairs, including former NYC Mayor and multi billionaire Michael Bloomberg, have poured rivers of money into the noble effort of trying to change the national conversation on gun ownership rights in the USA. Results? ZERO.

### **Daunting task**

May be someone else will come up with a better idea. However, looking at the entrenched positions, and in particular at the semi religious attitude about gun ownership shared by millions of Americans, combined with the tens of millions of guns legally purchased and legally owned in this country, I am not optimistic about any chances for REAL change.

Sadly, the horror caused by yet another avoidable tragedy quickly subsides; and it is back to business as usual.

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**Obama       Talks       About       Gun**

# Violence In Order To Avoid Embarrassing Issues

WASHINGTON – I've got to hand it to President Obama. He is a really capable politician. And probably the greatest skill a politician can display is the ability to force Americans to focus on what he wants them to, as opposed to other important issues that could potentially damage him or his party.

## **Gun control initiative**

On January 5 President Obama made a major White House announcement about new measures that should prevent wanted criminals, or people with felony records from legally buying guns. On close inspection, this initiative amounts to almost nothing.

Obviously this is not a new legislative proposal. This would require congressional approval. And there is no chance that the Republican majority would vote for any new measures. And it is not an executive order either. This could have more teeth; but it could be challenged in court.

Obama's announcement is about new "guidance" on how to interpret and properly follow existing laws and regulations, while devoting more resources to process background checks on would-be gun buyers more rapidly. These directives will also instruct people in the gun selling business on how to properly adhere to existing regulations. In other words, this is virtually nothing.

## **No impact**

Indeed, even assuming faithful adherence to this new guidance, the impact would be negligible at best. If you are not convinced, please consider that there are already in excess of 300 million guns –yes this is 300 million– in circulation in

the US. This is a staggering amount. New rules that may restrict access for some future gun buyers, however well intentioned, will not change this underlying reality. Plenty of guns in America.

### **News of the day**

And yet, notwithstanding the triviality of all this, Obama's White House announcement completely dominated the news cycle. There was full live TV coverage of the event, followed by almost mandatory commentaries in which gun violence experts were called upon to opine on what will be the impact, if any, of these new measures. They were followed by NGOs representatives who spoke in favor or against guns. And then, of course, each and every Republican and Democratic presidential candidate had to be given a chance to comment on what Obama had said.

### **Diversion**

All this amounts to yet another instance of masterful media manipulation. Obama dominated the news. As a result of this gun control diversion, there has been almost no coverage of other really important issues that would deserve real analysis and scrutiny.

But why the diversion? Because going deep into these other matters would expose America's weaknesses and Obama's lack of leadership. Therefore, if we can, let's create a diversion. Let's talk about something else.

*"Hey, how about another "non-initiative" about gun control? We know that this is a crowd pleaser. The Democratic "base" loves it. OK, let's do it".*

### **Nothing about China**

And so it went. As we were watching Obama, no coverage of the disturbing news from China. Yes, there are nasty economic

tremors in China. It is quite possible that, if China is sick and the whole world catches a bit of this Asian flu, the already fragile US economy may go south. This would be bad news for Democrats at the beginning of a critical election year.

### **Saudi Arabia-Iran crisis forgotten**

Likewise, no coverage of the additional crisis in the Persian Gulf in the aftermath of the public execution of Nemer al-Nemer, a Shiite cleric, by the Saudi government. Saudi Arabia, along with its smaller Arab Gulf allies, cut relations with Iran after an Iranian mob (the Iranians are all Shiites) burnt down the Saudi Embassy in Tehran as a reaction to the execution.

Could this new major friction between traditional religious and political foes escalate to violence? What about the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf? Should Americans worry about this? Has the administration any contingency plans?

Add to this Saudi-Iran spat Iranian open defiance of UN Security Council Resolutions when it comes to its ongoing ballistic missile program. The Iranians proclaim that they can do whatever they want with their missile programs. Well, does this defiance impact in any way the implementation of the separate but related nuclear deal that Obama rated as a major US diplomatic accomplishment aimed at preserving peace in the region and beyond?

### **US policy towards Afghanistan?**

Last but not least, here is another unpleasant topic drowned by the gun safety initiative: US soldiers keep getting killed in hopelessly messy Afghanistan.

Discussing this matter would invite scrutiny on the fundamentals of US policy towards Afghanistan. What is the end game? Are we making progress? Can we defeat the Taliban? Can

we confidently leave the country with the expectation that the fragile Kabul government will keep things under control after we are gone?

### **We do not discuss real issues**

So, you get the picture.

*The world economy is on shaky ground. Nervous investors from Japan to New York are looking for any additional deterioration in China as a sign that it is time to run for the exit.*

*The Middle East is one step away from another crisis to be added to Syria, Iraq, and ISIL.*

*The US-Iran deal is potentially in jeopardy because of Tehran's behavior.*

*Obama's Afghanistan policy is looking bad.*

And what does Obama do? He delivers a "hot air" White House address on how to cut gun violence focused on minor initiatives that will change nothing. I cannot blame him for trying. This is politics after all.

### **All US media accepted diversion as real news**

But what is shameful is that the entire US national media establishment bought the diversion. All the networks and cable TV news shows felt obliged to cover in detail this non event, at the same time adding layers and layers of irrelevant commentary.

And so, this became the news of the day, with more ripples to follow.

### **Obama knew what he was doing**

But here is the thing. Obama knew exactly what he was doing: a diversion. Whereas the media is apparently unable to call this presidential theater for what it is: a masquerade. News

programs could have mentioned (in 20 seconds) Obama's initiative, and then they should have focused on the real issues: the world economy, international security. But it did not go this way.

Therefore, instead of talking about the US economy and the new Saudi Arabia-Iran crisis –real issues with possible grave consequences– we debate the merit of yet another presidential gun control initiative that according to most experts will change absolutely nothing.

The US media should know better.

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# President Obama Picked The Zimmerman Case To Talk About Racial Bias In America. A Bad Idea

By Paolo von Schirach

July 20, 2013

**WASHINGTON** – President Obama felt the need to inject his own presidential and personal perspective as an African American male into the Zimmerman trial not guilty verdict. While on the surface this may appear a nuanced, thoughtful interjection, in reality it was most unhelpful. On the face of it, Obama's impromptu speech appears politically motivated. An African American President felt the need to speak to his own audience in terms they would like, even though doing so required a willful distortions. Please remember that Obama is

a lawyer.

### **Willful misrepresentation of the case**

While speaking calmly, President Obama essentially endorsed the totally wrong and misleading narrative whereby a grown up white male with a gun killed an innocent Black teen-ager out of racial spite. Adding insult to injury, the wicked White-dominated justice system let him get away with it, endorsing the fanciful defense thesis whereby Zimmerman acted in self-defense. *“Well, come on. How can this be? A grown up White person with a gun feared for his life in a street confrontation with an unarmed Black kid?”*

It is *“obvious”* that Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, was on a hunt. Because of his racial prejudice, he was looking for Black suspects. When he saw young Trayvon Martin, he pursued him, triggered a confrontation and then killed him. The absurd Florida “stand your ground” law that permits people who feel endangered to react forcefully, and that includes shooting, provides an ugly cover to yet another case of White on Black violence.

### **Presidential endorsement**

Yes, this is the narrative adopted by most African American leaders. And President Obama, even though he did not openly say that he believes Zimmerman acted out of racial bias, essentially endorsed this totally false version of the story.

Let me back track a moment. To be absolutely clear, I did say well before the trial and after the verdict that this tragedy occurred because the system allows armed amateur detectives like Zimmerman to roam around looking for suspects. I did say and I repeat now that Zimmerman did not belong there. He should not have been patrolling the streets armed with a gun. ***This is police work. Amateurs not allowed. So, in my judgement this is a real issue; and an issue worth discussing. There is***



***something profoundly wrong with a system that allows almost anybody to act as if they were competent enough to do police work.***

### **The killing was not racially motivated**

That said, the long investigation and lengthy trial did not come up with the slightest shred of evidence that Zimmerman, himself half Hispanic, would fit the “*red-neck-racist*” profile. There is no evidence that he pursued young Trayvon Martin because he was Black. These are the facts of the case. This was a horrible tragedy. A tragedy that could have been avoided, had Zimmerman, a private citizen, stayed at home instead of venturing out looking for suspects. ***But this killing in no way fits the narrative now endorsed by President Obama.***

This was not a racially motivated killing.

### **There is racial prejudice in America**

President Obama is right in reminding America that racial prejudice is still alive and well. And this is an issue that all people of good will should face and focus on. Racial prejudice is still with us; and it is wrong. However, President Obama did not help the needed national reflection on such weighty matters by using the wrong example, the Zimmerman trial and not guilty verdict, to stress this point.

The killing of young Trayvon Martin was and is a tragedy. And the state of Florida, along with all the others that have adopted “*stay your ground laws*” while allowing amateurs to behave like the police, should take notice.

### **Zimmerman trial is not illustrative of lingering racism**

But President Obama should not have endorsed the wrong narrative that describes this sad event as a racially motivated killing. Nobody denies that racist feelings are

alive and well across America. However, linking the Trayvon Martin killing with the long but distant past of segregation and White on Black violence is not at all helpful.

Mercifully, Jim Crow laws and lynchings occurring on a daily basis are way behind us. The President should know this. And instead he used the Trayvon Martin killing as evidence that the entire Black community is still a victim of prejudice and violence, and therefore well within its rights to protest against this unending injustice. This is a self-serving narrative pushed by self-appointed "*civil rights leaders*". But it is just not true. To cite just the most obvious fact that contradicts this convenient interpretation of the conditions of Blacks and other minorities in the US, in today's America most young Black males are killed by other young Black males. Who's protesting against that? President Obama knows all this. And yet he never properly discussed this sad truth of Black on Black violence.

In addressing the Zimmerman not guilty verdict Obama, himself a lawyer, decided to misrepresent what happened. Regrettably, he willfully manipulated the facts of a real tragedy to say something that would please his political supporters. Perhaps a politically astute move; but not at all presidential.

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**Legislation To Ban The Sale  
Of Assault Weapons Will Do  
Nothing – There Are 300**

# Million Guns Held By Citizens In America, Way Too Many – Some Of Them Do End Up In The Hands Of Mentally Disturbed People

[the-subtitle ]

By Paolo von Schirach

December 18, 2012

**WASHINGTON** – California Senator Dianne Feinstein wants to reintroduce a bill that will ban the sale of assault weapons in America. At first glance it seems like a good idea. Even if we want to respect the constitutional right to bear arms, assault weapons are not indispensable. So, assuming that the law will be introduced and passed, is this the proverbial “first step in the good direction”?

## Empty gestures

Not really. This is just another empty gesture, well meaning but worthless. America is already awash in weapons of all kinds, including millions of assault weapons. I have heard different numbers from a variety of experts. Some say 250 million fire arms in the hands of private citizens in the US, some say 300 million. These are astonishing numbers.

And consider that if there is any prospect of a new ban on assault weapons, millions of people will rush to buy them before the prohibition will kick in, thus vastly increasing the numbers of weapons already in private hands.

Besides, and this is shows how the effort is just a political

empty gesture, a previous ban on the sale of assault weapons (from 1994 to 2004) had no appreciable consequences whatsoever. No impact on their use and/or on the homicide rate.

### **Too many guns in circulation**

But the real issue is that not much can be done with laws partially restricting this or that. There are just way too many weapons in the hands of average Americans. And possessing all sorts of weapons, regardless of numbers and features, according to the prevailing –if preposterous– interpretation of the Second Amendment, is a constitutional right. Without a major cultural transformation, no way to outlaw or severely restrict guns in America.

And quite frankly there is no direct correlation between the number of guns in private hands and the number of homicides. In fact, with all these weapons floating around, homicides are way down in America. True enough, mass slaughters just like the one in Connecticut, are up. Still, even though these are horrible events, such massacres do not occur on a daily basis.

### **Mentally ill people can get guns**

It is obvious that in these cases we have a bad combination of mentally disturbed people and a system that makes it relatively easy for them to acquire weapons, or to use weapons owned by others, as in the case of Adam Lanza, the 20 year old Connecticut shooter who used guns owned by his mother.

### **Politicians want to show they are doing “something”**

President Obama says that he is going to do “something”. Senator Feinstein wants to reintroduce a ban on certain categories of weapons that (as we know from experience) will have no impact. So, this is the moment for politicians to appear serious and look busy.

Still, in the end all this activism will do nothing. In all this, the good news is that, (without any new laws), overall fewer people get killed in America. The bad news is that the system as it exists makes it relatively easy for deranged individuals to plot and execute mass murder because they can easily obtain weapons.

### **Stop deranged individuals before they act?**

Of course, it would be great to be able to spot and apprehend all would be mass killers before they act, but this is clearly impossible. America is a free society. You cannot keep an eye on everybody. You cannot arrest all mentally unstable people on suspicion that some day they may do something really horrible.

This being the case, as deranged individuals and weapons make a terrible combination, realistically we cannot create a large enough shield that will prevent other events like the one in Connecticut.

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**The Aurora Movie Theatre  
Massacre Is About A Deranged  
Individual Who Could Easily  
Buy Guns – Almost  
Unrestricted Access To**

# **Weapons Is Part Of The American System – So, Let's Not Act Surprised**

[the-subtitle ]

**By Paolo von Schirach**

July 21, 2012

**WASHINGTON** – Since in America almost anybody can buy guns and ammunition in a store as if they were purchasing milk, it is no surprise that, at times, mentally disturbed people, just like 24 year old James Holmes, will take advantage of this and use easily obtained guns to plan and execute mass killings, just like Holmes did in the Aurora movie theatre.

## **Deranged people and easy access to guns, a bad mix**

It is very simple. Within a very large society there are some people who, whatever their pathologies, have the desire to do something outrageous on a grand scale. Here in America, they know that the legal and regulatory system allows them to get the guns they need with minimal effort. And so they take advantage of the opportunity and go ahead with their plans.

Given all this, acting surprised after the Aurora movie theatre massacre is a sign of hypocrisy or stupidity. Imagine this. You have a house full of highly combustible material. You have a four year old child. You give your child 10 boxes of matches to play with and then you leave the house to run errands. You come back, the house is burnt down and your child is dead. Are you surprised?

## **No surprise**

This is the same. We have a number of non diagnosed deranged

people in our midst. At least some of them do harbor destructive ideas. And we have a system that allows them to freely purchase enough guns and ammunition to start a small war. And then we act surprised when someone takes advantage of what the system allows him to do and does something really bad on a grand scale. No surprise: we have people with motive, and we make it ridiculously easy for them to get the tools they want.

The Aurora, Colorado, movie theatre massacre perpetrated by 24 year old James Holmes has been followed by a predictable flow of pious words of sympathy, some perhaps coming from the heart, and some just expedient blah, blah, intoned by politicians who want you and I to believe that "they do care" because they have a soul.

### **No gun laws changes**

Fine. And then what? Well, then nothing. There will be some more police work, forensic this and that, eventually a trial and some kind of conviction that will send the perpetrator to prison or to a mental hospital.

But nothing –repeat, nothing– will be done regarding the most obvious issue: ***serious gun control***. Americans have a fetish about guns. It goes way beyond having guns for self-defense. It is almost a religion. Alright, if this is the way we want it, if we really want to make it so easy for practically anyone to acquire several guns and mountains of ammunition, then we have to accept that large scale massacres just like this one in Aurora will happen again. And when they do happen, please do not act surprised.