

Practical Aspects of Gun Control, Part 4

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Having reviewed the cultural and historical aspects of gun control, we turn now in this edition to the moral aspect.

3 The Moral Aspect

In considering the moral aspect of citizen disarmament, commonly called "gun control", it is helpful to return once again to English jurist William Blackstone [1]:

In these several articles consist the rights, or, as they are frequently termed, the liberties of Englishmen: liberties, more generally talked of than thoroughly understood; and yet highly necessary to be perfectly known and considered by every man of rank or property, lest his ignorance of the points whereon they are founded should hurry him into faction and licentiousness on the one hand, or a pusillanimous indifference and criminal submission on the other. And we have seen that these rights consist, primarily, in the free enjoyment of personal security, of personal liberty, and of private property. So long as these remain inviolate, the subject is perfectly free; for every species of compulsive tyranny and oppression must act in opposition to one or the other of these rights, having no other object upon which it can possibly be employed. To preserve them from violation, it is necessary that the constitution of parliament be supported in its full vigor; and limits, certainly known, be set to the royal prerogative. And, lastly, to vindicate these rights when actually violated or attacked, the subjects of England are entitled, in the first place, to the regular administration and free course of justice in the courts of law; next, to the right of petitioning the king and parliament for redress of grievances; and lastly, to the right of having and using arms for self-preservation and defense. And all these rights and liberties it is our birthright to enjoy entire; unless where the laws of our country have laid them under necessary restraints. Restraints in themselves so gentle and moderate, as will appear upon further inquiry, that no man of sense or probity would wish to see them slackened. For all of us have in our choice to do every good thing that a good man would desire to do; and are restrained from nothing, but what would be pernicious either to ourselves or to our fellow-citizens.

So it is that every citizen is to be aware of his rights to life, liberty, and property, and at the risk of being both a coward and traitor to freedom and posterity, be prepared with arms to defend those freedoms should the government fail to perform its duties to preserve them. But what about those "necessary restraints" that Mr. Blackstone refers to -- doesn't "gun control" fall under the category of "gentle and moderate" restrictions conducive to the happiness of the people? No. Gun control is quite the opposite: it is the means by which you, the citizen, are turned into a helpless dependent subject because it removes the ultimate restraint upon the power of governments and criminals alike. It is the means by which you, the citizen, are convinced that your life, liberty, and property are not worth fighting for; and you should leave that to the professionals, since you might get hurt and not be able to pay taxes. It is the means by which your moral compass is forced to always point toward the government, begging them to save you; or maybe worse, subordinate yourself to the whims of some gang of professional criminals.

Is it moral to leave people in situations where the police are not available or cannot be of use, such as Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Sandy, the LA riots after the O. J. Simpson verdict, or the many riots that took place in the 1960's, including most major cities? The police have not signed up to protect you from everything. The police generally do a fine job, but their task is to investigate crimes after they have occurred, make arrests in accordance with the evidence, and thus bring the suspect into the justice system.

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The judicial system may limit the future actions of criminals, but have no effect on the crime that is about to happen. You, as a moral agent, are responsible for your own safety. In fact, the police are not legally obligated to protect you from anything, or even to show up when they are called, especially in those unusual times when the number of calls greatly exceeds the capacity of the system to respond. Is it moral on your part to demand that the police risk their lives to defend yours? The police do not sign up for responding to large-scale civil breakdown. Many of the police in New Orleans fled to Baton Rouge during Katrina; many LAPD members fled to San Bernardino during the LA riots. Rightfully so -- they have families to look out for, which supersedes your needs and demands. What if 9/11 had been a larger, more general attack in which the normal governance had broken down? The criminals would have gone berserk, as they are always looking for an excuse. History shows that you will be on your own. The National Guard troops were in their barracks by sundown during the LA riots; during Katrina they actually disarmed the citizens, leaving them easy prey for the gangs.

Politicians are always protected by bodyguards with high-capacity weapons -- this is more than hypocrisy; it is immorality of the highest order: no moral government would permit its employees to arrogate an exemption for themselves while requiring the common people to go about unarmed. Recall that all legislative authority is vested in the Congress; consider now the words of James Madison in *The Federalist Papers* #57:

I will add, as a fifth circumstance in the situation of the House of Representatives, restraining them from oppressive measures, that they can make no law which will not have its full operation on themselves and their friends, as well as the great mass of society. This has always been deemed one of the strongest bonds by which human policy can connect the rulers and people together. It creates between them that communion of interests and sympathy of sentiments of which few governments have furnished examples; but without which every government degenerates into tyranny. If it be asked what is to restrain the House of Representatives from making legal discriminations in favor of themselves and a particular class of the society? I answer: the genius of the whole system; the nature of just and constitutional laws, and the manly spirit which actuates the people of America -- a spirit which nourishes freedom, and in return is nourished by it.

The same principle applies at the state and local government levels. How can a just government exempt itself from its own laws? But yet it is evident that "We the People" have failed to enforce this dictum upon our politicians; we see at every turn numerous exemptions to the laws created for the benefit of politicians, bureaucrats and their associates. It is especially evident in the gun laws: our (allegedly) morally-superior government employees parade the streets with taxpayer-paid (supposedly) morally-superior bodyguards, while the people are forced by law to remain defenseless at all times and in all places.

Vice President Joe Biden took the time recently to look down his nose and lecture us lowlifes that we only need a double-barrel shotgun for self-defense, even at home. I wonder what type of weapons, containing how many rounds, and of what type, his Secret Service detail carries with them when protecting him, even in his home.

Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) recently released a video claiming "that no one is going to take my guns away". He's right -- no one is going to take his guns away because he is a member of the (allegedly) morally-superior ruling elite. He will have access to all the guns and ammunition he wants for the rest of his life, and so will all his friends and family for all of their lives. It will be interesting to see what Senator Manchin thinks of you and your rights in the upcoming disarmament votes in Congress.

When the government is armed and the people are not, one has tyranny; when the people are armed and the government is not, one has anarchy; in America, both are armed, wary of each other, and each side is

able to suppress the worst instincts of the other. But our modern politicians do not like the idea of any challenges to their quest for arbitrary power.

Criminals know two things: a) they will always be able to get a gun, no matter what the law is; and b) they are likely to get shot by their intended victims if those intended victims have guns. It is evident that criminals always favor gun control for the same reasons the politicians do: it has no effect upon their livelihood and makes their job easier. Conversely, armed people don't have to take any crap from criminals or from governments. It is immoral to be afraid of criminals, but yet that is what our government demands. The reason they demand it is simple: the government needs the existence of large criminal networks to justify part of its existence, and it also helps keep the people in fear.

We commonly hear arguments that "one doesn't need a semi-automatic rifle" since the Second Amendment was written during a time when only muzzle-loading muskets were available. But exactly the same argument could be made about radio, TV talk shows, and internet sites, since only newspapers existed when the First Amendment was written. I would be curious to know, given their self-appointed superior moral righteousness, what part of the First Amendment is the mainstream media willing to give up in order to reduce the incidence of libel, defamation of character, and slander?

"We the People" would do well to recall the words of Alexander Hamilton in *The Federalist* #78:

There is no position which depends on clearer principles that that every act of a delegated authority, contrary to the tenor of the commission under which it is exercised, is void. No legislative act, therefore, contrary to the Constitution can be valid. To deny this would be to affirm that the deputy is greater than his principal; that the servant is above his master; that the representatives of the people are superior to the people themselves; that men acting by virtue of powers may do not only what their powers do not authorize, but what they forbid.

The U. S. Constitution clearly states that the right the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; and every state and local officer swears an oath to also uphold the federal Constitution. Under what pretended morality do they claim power to do what is prohibited by their oath? Or carve out exemptions to the laws for themselves? Or tell us that we are not morally suitable to possess the tools necessary to take care of ourselves should the need arise?

[1] William Blackstone, *Commentary on the Laws of England*, 1765, Book 1, Chap. 1, pp. 144, 145