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# Preface

All animals compete for position and advantage ... with other individuals, tribes and species. In the contest for survival and supremacy, humans are gifted with two deciding advantages – a larger brain and an opposing thumb. These have enabled humans to develop and use ever more evolving and sophisticated tools for survival and advancement ... including weapons.

Weapons have always been a part of human reality, at least since we discovered that rocks could be used to kill animals for food, and as weapons for aggression and protection.

As the variety, lethality and complexity of personal weapons increased, their effective use required ever increasing physical prowess and acumen. Wielders took growing pride in their ability to use weapons more effectively than others. Thus, the use of weapons for sport grew as contests were devised that enabled competition in non-lethal ways. The use of weapons also became an entertainment genre for audiences small and large.

During the bronze age or before, advanced personal weapons became tools mostly for those who could afford them, the wealthy and the rulers. After gaining dominance, many or most of history's powerful sought to maintain their position, in part, by suppressing weapons ownership among their subjugated or controlled peoples.

Finally, as demand for weapons grew, the production of weapons evolved from individual industry to large economic enterprises that support uncounted thousands of people.

Today, personal weapons include a seemingly endless list of materials and implements for bombing, burning, clubbing, crushing, cutting, drowning, electrocuting, hacking, hanging, piercing, poisoning, shooting, slitting, stabbing, strangling, suffocating, etc. In some countries, the most widely used personal weapons are guns.

*Gun:* A weapon consisting of a metal tube from which a projectile is discharged by force, usually of an explosive. Guns for personal use include handguns and long guns (rifles and shotguns).

Among nations with the greatest degree of individual choice – free nations with advanced economies – the incidence of gun possession

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ranges from very high to very low. Many reasons are offered for such variation. The most vociferous involve legal restrictions versus constitutional rights. In reality, even these are manifestations of basic cultural differences among peoples and nations. One of the many facets of America's exceptionalism is the place of guns in the American culture.

Country	Population	Guns Availability*			
	Total (000 000)	Guns Owned		Adults With Guns %	Households With Guns %
		Total (000 000)	per 100 Pop.		
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>&gt;2.3</b>	<b>&gt;27.6</b>	<b>&gt;40</b>	<b>&gt;28.6</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>326.8</b>	<b>329.2</b>	<b>120.5</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>42.0</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>26.1</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>16.6</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>16.1</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>16.0</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>34.7</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>15.5</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>15.1</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>12.9</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>12.0</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>66.6</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.1</b>
<b>Poland</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>4.4</b>
<b>Japan</b>	<b>127.2</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>0.8</b>

\* Data from GunPolicy.org. Where source indicates range of numbers, mid-point is used. Note that while Switzerland reports ownership numbers, its citizens possess many more guns that are owned by the Swiss government.

Figure P-1. Availability of guns in selected free nations with advanced economies.

Culture refers to the set of values and beliefs people have about how the world/society works, as well as the norms of behavior derived from that set of values. As regards guns, relevant cultural differences may include national preferences for individualism or

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collectivism, and as attitudes regarding freedom, equality, liberty, security, etc.

Definition of terms:

*Freedom:* The sum of rights and exemptions possessed in common by the people. At one extreme, freedom becomes license and anarchy; complete absence of freedom is subjugation or slavery.

*Equality:* State of being equal. Specificity may include equality of opportunity, equality of income, equality of outcome, equality of status, etc.

*Liberty:* Exemption from control of some other person or arbitrary power; the absence of hindrance or restraint.

Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov<sup>1</sup> point out that, like an onion, cultures manifest with at least four levels – symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The first three layers of the cultural onion are practices that can change more readily as new forms come along. But values are at the core.

Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. Values are feelings with an added arrow indicating a plus and minus side. They deal with pairings such as:

- Evil versus good
- Dirty versus clean
- Dangerous versus safe
- Forbidden versus permitted
- Decent versus indecent

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- Moral versus immoral
- Ugly versus beautiful
- Unnatural versus natural
- Abnormal versus normal
- Paradoxical versus logical
- Irrational versus rational

Each nation's culture is different. It includes traits in common with other nations, and it includes characteristics that are unique to its people and evolution. Cultural values develop over time – generations, centuries, millennia – and they change at a similar pace.

Hofstede et al identify six dimensions that reveal core values of nations' cultures. Of course, while these values may apply to a national culture, much variation exists among individuals within each country.

*Individualism vs Collectivism:* Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

*Power Distance* is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

*Masculinity vs Femininity:* A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are more modest, tender, and concerned with quality of life. A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap; both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with quality of life.

*Uncertainty Avoidance* is the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations.

*Long-Term Orientation* stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift. Short-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of “face,” and fulfilling social obligations.

*Indulgence vs Restraint:* Indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint reflects a

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conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms.

The degree to which these core values apply to many countries<sup>2</sup> have been rated for comparison (Figure 2). Culturally, The United Kingdom and four of its former colonies – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States – are clustered within similar positions on these rating scales. No other country is within these nations’ clusters in all six of the dimensions, and few other countries are even close in many dimensions.

Cultural Dimension*	Australia	Canada	New Zealand	United Kingdom	United States	Other Countries	
	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index	Within Index Range**	Outside Index Range
<b>Individualism</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Power Distance</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Masculinity</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Long-Term Orientation</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Indulgence vs Restraint</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>84</b>
* Definitions and data from <i>Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind</i> by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, McGraw-Hill 2010. ** No other country is within the index ranges of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States for all six of the Cultural Dimensions.							

Figure P-2. Cultural similarities among Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Note how dissimilar from other nations these five nations are in many or most of these dimensions.

For our purposes, what is most relevant about this picture is not the specific cultural evaluations of these five countries but, rather, that the countries have very similar core values except as regards guns.

<sup>2</sup> Cited primary sources have quantified these values for 23, 76 or 93 countries and regions, depending on the study.

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The national culture of the United States of America is infused with events and combinations of events that are unique. Americans' attitudes about guns have been influenced by major historical experiences including:

- **Immigration:** Virtually all Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants who left their communities in other nations to take their chances on a better life in America. Not members of historical mass migrations, and not refugees seeking any safe haven, immigrants to America were and are, for the most part, individuals making individual choices. Immigrants to America (and to Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) completely overwhelmed indigenous peoples, in both numbers and influence, over a relatively short span of time.
- **Separation:** Americans won their independence through a successful, armed revolution against the world's most powerful empire – a unique historical phenomenon at the time.
- **Freedom:** Americans founded the United States based on the idea that government is subservient to its citizens. As articulated in the Declaration of Independence ...

... that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. - That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ...

- **Force of arms:** Personal guns were an accepted and often necessary part of American life for more than 200 years. They were used by settlers for hunting food and protection from Indians (and for aggression against those same Indians). They were used in the War for Independence. They were used to fight British invaders, and they were used continually during westward expansion; guns were often the law on the western frontiers. As such, armed exploits were steadily reported and glorified in newspapers 'back east.' And they are yet today, especially in movies, television and video games.

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Country	Guns Availability*		Suicides per 100,000 Population				
	Adults With Guns %	Households With Guns %	Total	Using Gun		Other Than Gun	
				Rate	%	Rate	%
Poland	1.0	4.4	22.3	0.09	0.4	22.21	99.6
Belgium	5.7	5.1	20.5	1.03	5.0	19.47	95.0
Japan	na	0.8	19.7	0.87	4.4	18.83	95.6
France	na	16.1	16.9	2.16	12.8	14.74	87.2
Austria	18.0	15.1	16.4	2.69	16.4	13.71	83.6
Sweden	8.6	16.0	15.4	1.20	7.8	14.20	92.2
United States	25.5	42.0	14.3	7.10	49.7	7.20	50.3
New Zealand	na	16.6	12.7	1.09	8.6	11.6	91.4
Germany	5.0	12.5	13.4	0.84	6.3	12.56	93.7
Canada	8.1	15.5	12.3	1.52	12.4	10.78	87.6
Australia	5.2	6.2	11.8	0.80	6.8	11.00	93.2
Norway	14.0	26.1	10.9	1.63	15.0	9.27	85.0
Switzerland	>40	>28.6	10.7	2.74	25.6	7.96	74.4
Spain	6.5	12.0	8.5	0.42	4.9	8.08	95.1
United Kingdom	1.4	6.0	8.5	0.15	1.8	8.35	98.2
Italy	na	12.9	7.9	0.87	11.0	7.03	89.0

\* Data from GunPolicy.org. Where source indicates range of numbers, mid-point is used. Note that while Switzerland reports ownership numbers, its citizens possess many more guns than are owned by the Swiss government.

Figure P-3. Guns and suicides in selected free nations with advanced economies.

Of course, guns are used to kill people. And countries with more personal guns tend to have higher rates of deaths by guns. But, while guns may be the *instrument* of many deaths, that they are the *cause* of many or most deaths by gunshot can be disputed using many of the same statistics.

Most non-military gunshot deaths are suicides (Figure P-3), and virtually all of these involved handguns. Homicide numbers (Figure P-4) are much lower. The numbers of ‘unintentional’ gun deaths – accidents – are virtually insignificant (fewer than 500/year in the United States).

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Country	Guns Availability*		Homicides per 100,000 Population				
	Adults With Guns %	Households With Guns %	Total	Using Gun		Other Than Gun	
				Rate	%	Rate	%
<b>United States</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>75.5</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>24.5</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>1.81</b>	<b>92.8</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>73.2</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>87.3</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>80.0</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>1.22</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>91.8</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>83.0</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>95.7</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>80.2</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>94.1</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>53.8</b>
<b>Poland</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>93.2</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>81.4</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>&gt;40</b>	<b>&gt;28.6</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>69.6</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>76.5</b>
<b>Japan</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Data from GunPolicy.org. Where source indicates range of numbers, mid-point is used. Note that while Switzerland reports ownership numbers, its citizens possess many more guns that are owned by the Swiss government.

Figure P-4. Guns and homicides in selected free nations with advanced economies.

These statistics are used selectively to support various proposals for gun control. By themselves, they may provide very little valid support for many such arguments. Rather, they support the premise of great cultural differences among nations. Nevertheless, some generalizations among these nations can be made:

- Americans own more guns than citizens of any other country, and a substantially higher rate of Americans have access to guns except, perhaps, for citizens of Switzerland and Norway.
- America has a homicide problem; the rate of homicides in the United States is nearly three times as great as in the next

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highest country, and the rate of homicides not involving guns is greater than the rate of total homicides in 10 of the 15 countries.

- Far more people take their own lives than are victims of homicide. The suicide rate in six of these countries is significantly greater than in the United States.
- Regardless of the rates of homicide and suicide, guns are more likely to be the instrument of choice in countries where guns are more available. However, lower rates of gun ownership do not necessarily translate to lower rates of suicide and homicide.

The incidence of personal gun ownership in a free nation can be effectively reduced only through means that are in concert with the core cultural values of that country. Banning or elimination of personal guns is not the key to significant reductions of suicides and homicides, but Americans have a suicide and homicide problem that must be addressed.

Free nations with advanced economies provide insight as to how cultural differences reflect in differing conditions of gun ownership and control. Examination of cultural similarities and differences among the United Kingdom and its former settled colonies are examined to identify relevant differences relating to reducing gun-related deaths in America.

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# Chapter 21

## Conclusions

Guns are not a significant element in the cultures of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. These countries have been able to implement significant gun control, ostensibly to advance public safety. Private gun ownership has been lessened, and the annual numbers of gun-related deaths is generally down. But questions remain: How significant are these laws in advancing public safety? How many persons intent on suicide or homicide were dissuaded because a gun was not available, and how many simply chose different weapons to accomplish their intent?

- Annual suicides in the United Kingdom are down by around 650 since the virtual outlawing of private guns in 1965; gun-related suicides account for less than a quarter of that reduction. Gun-related homicides are around 90 fewer over the same period; total homicides in 2017 were about 280 greater than in 1965.
  - In Canada, since the *1995 Firearms Act*, the annual number of suicides is virtually unchanged; the number of gun suicides has declined by several hundred. Total homicides are down slightly while gun-related homicides are up by the same magnitude.
  - Since the *1996 National Firearms Agreement* in Australia, Annual gun-related suicides are down by 200; total suicides are up by more than double that number. A reduction in gun-related homicides accounts for about half of the total homicide reduction over the same period.
  - The number of suicides in New Zealand has increased since the 1992 arms control acts; suicides by gun are down slightly. Gun homicides are down by around 50 per year, while total homicides are up by perhaps twice that number.
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That gun-control laws have reduced overall violent crime and suicides in these countries has been both supported and challenged by many studies. For example, *Gun control and suicide: The impact of state firearm regulations, 1995–2004*, a 2009 paper by Katherine Hempstead and Antonio Rodríguez Andrés, for the Institute for Advanced Development Studies is generally supportive. Gary A Mauser, Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, has authored several challenging papers (see <http://garymauser.net/index.html>).

Guns are a core element of American culture: private ownership of guns in America cannot be significantly curtailed. The overwhelming majority of American gun owners handle their guns responsibly and will never use them to take a human life – their own or others’.

However, a tiny percentage of private guns in America are used to wound and kill people, especially through suicide, homicide and accidental shootings. Because the United States is such a big country, the number of gun-related deaths is greater than in any other advanced nation. This reality should be addressed realistically, but we haven’t done that.

When confronted with the problem of gun deaths, many want guns to be the problem. They’re easy to see. Dealing with them should be simple and fast; all we need do is eliminate guns or, at least, pass a few new laws to keep guns out of the hands of people who shouldn’t have them.

If it weren’t for the Second Amendment we could regulate guns out of the country and prevent the 40,000, or so, deaths now attributed to them annually. To be successful, a gun-elimination strategy must include repeal of the Second Amendment to the Constitution. But constitutional amendments can’t *change* the will of the people; they can only *reflect* the will of the people. So for this strategy to work, the will of the people must first be changed by excising a core cultural element. That would require a very long time as each succeeding generation is born into a cultural environment that differs just slightly from that of their parents.

Trying to eliminate guns from the American experience is therefore futile, perhaps unwise and certainly an ineffective misdirection of efforts to improve the well-being of the American people. The process would extend over scores or hundreds of years;

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up to 40,000 Americans would die of gunshot wounds each year over much of that span. That's unacceptable.

“How can we reduce death and injury caused by guns?” is the wrong question. A much better question is “how can we reduce the overall rates of suicide and violent crime?”

First, stop blaming guns. They're not the cause of all or even most of the violence with which they're associated; they're just highly visible and easy to blame. Trying to eliminate guns just pretends to address the problem while not dealing with the underlying realities.

Instead of focusing on weapons, deal with motives and the variables that lead to violence in America. That's not simple. It's not clear cut. It will take longer and require continuing attention to see results. But it may actually produce results – unambiguous reductions in violent deaths and the very considerable misery and costs associated with them.

Much is known and quantified about the demographics and methodology of suicides and crime. Related data are easily transformed into highly visible statistics. Much is also known about motives, but that information is far less quantified. And not so much is known about how much guns affect actual decisions to commit suicide or murder.

We need meaningful studies to determine the role of guns in such decisions. In other words, to what extent has the availability of a gun caused persons to commit suicide; or, without a gun, would they have committed suicide using some other method? Similarly, to what extent has the availability of a gun caused felons to commit a crime; or, without a gun would they have committed their crime using some other method; or, if the probability that their victim had a gun was high, would they have chosen a different victim or refrained from committing the crime?

Answers to such questions are not revealed by available statistics. They will require interviewing thousands of convicted felons and unsuccessful suicides. These answers may help conscientious lawmakers, sociologists, psychiatrists, law enforcement agencies and others at the national, state and local levels to work more effectively together to reduce suicides and criminal violence at all levels of society in America.

But we need not wait for further statistics to begin meaningful actions to save lives.

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## Chapter 22

### What To Do About It

First, stop repeating what we've done before; we won't get different results. What we're currently doing is ineffective. Consider ...

On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold entered Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. The two high school seniors walked into the cafeteria and set down duffel bags with homemade bombs made of propane tanks. The bombs were set to go off at 11:17 a.m., when the cafeteria would be bustling with students. Harris and Klebold expected that hundreds would be killed in the explosion. They strategically positioned themselves in the school parking lot to shoot the remaining students who fled after the explosion. They had also rigged their cars with bombs, set to go off later in the day, when the scene would be filled with reports and first responders. Altogether, they hoped to kill five hundred people.

The bombs did not detonate. Harris and Klebold walked away from the parking lot toward their school and started shooting. They entered through the cafeteria doors, wandered the halls, and then ended their rampage in the library. Along the way they threw pipe bombs and joked. They taunted and shot peers both from afar and at point-blank range. At 1208 ... Harris and Klebold committed suicide. They left twelve peers and a teacher dead, twenty-one others injured ...

Public debate after Columbine was predictable. Politicians fixated on short-term, quick-fix solutions. The fact that bombs were intended to be the primary instrument of death at Columbine was largely ignored in the fervor to blame guns. Similarly, motives seem to have garnered only superficial or short-lived attention.

Following each high-profile shooting (what is or is not high profile is largely determined by the press) public debate follows a

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familiar routine – cast blame, pick sides, and move on. Focus is usually on guns – if they hadn't been (legally) available the tragedy wouldn't have happened. Politicians and pundits demand new gun controls. Motives are considered only secondarily, if at all.

- Such reactions may be natural. Guns are an attractive target because, if they are the problem the solution is simple ... ban them.
- Such reactions may be cynical. It's relatively easy to respond to a high-profile shooting by passing a law. That will be visible to everyone (voters). It will generate positive feedback. And few will follow up to evaluate the law's effectiveness.
- Such reactions waste resources. Much sound and fury and time accompany legislative reactions. Expense and time are expended on the implementation of resulting legislation and regulations. But there's scant evidence that such actions even begin to reduce violent deaths.

Our reactions to high-profile shootings seem to imply that we're more concerned with a relatively few shooting incidents that cause relatively few deaths than we are with the everyday incidents that cause vastly more deaths. Changing that requires a completely different approach.

We must define the problem into manageable segments; prioritize the segments in terms of potential for saving lives; initiate studies, programs, legislation, etc. that seem needed or show promise; measure results and replicate programs that work.

One size does not fit all. Universal approaches don't work. Instead, focus on specific areas and initiatives that will actually reduce the numbers of deaths and injuries due to gunshot wounds.

In 2017, there were 39,773 gun-related deaths in the United States. Of these, 96.5 percent were suicides and homicides. The others were: 486 unintentional (accidents), 553 legal intervention, 338 of undetermined causes.

Preventing suicides would save more lives than would preventing only gun-related suicides. Guns were used as the weapon in 50 percent of the 47,107 suicides in 2017. On average, for every

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two prevented suicides, one would have used a gun as the weapon. However, it cannot be inferred that every prevented gun-related suicide would be one less suicide; some significant percentage of prevented gun-related suicides would have chosen a different weapon. Indeed, in the 26 nations having higher suicide rates than the United States, use of guns ranks far behind other methods.

Similarly, preventing homicides will save more lives than would preventing only gun-related homicides. In 2017, guns were used as the weapon in 75 percent of the 14,542 homicides. On average, of every four prevented homicides three would have used a gun as the weapon. But it cannot be inferred that every prevented gun-related homicide would translate to one fewer homicide; some percentage of prevented gun-related homicides would have been carried out with a different weapon ...