**Yes, “They” Do Want To Take Your Guns: A Brief Review of Modern Attempts at Firearms Prohibition and Confiscation**

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One of the most common arguments made by people who support gun control is that their aims are unassailably rational and opposed on emotional grounds only. Possibly the most common manifestation of this is the statement best expressed in the canard that nobody is trying to “take” civilians’ guns. Sometimes the actor is replaced with Obama (usually as a synecdoche for the Democratic Party) or another party, but the sentiment is the same: there is no current attempt at taking currently legal arms away from civilians. Although it is true that wholesale confiscation is seldom seriously brought up, laws that would provide for confiscation and more commonly future blanket bans (prohibition) are often passed or seriously considered in both federal and state legislatures.

In 1994, Congress passed the federal Assault Weapons Ban, which defined a specific category of semiautomatic weapons and banned them for future purchase until the law’s sunset provision in 2004, which was introduced to enable the bill to pass. Although no confiscation occurred, the bill did essentially ‘take’ away the right to purchase new firearms of a broad category. Whether these firearms should be legal is not the purpose of this essay—rather, that some politicians regularly try to prevent their ownership. As far as this is concerned, an act banning future possession of firearms is essentially equivalent to an act ordering their confiscation a generation in the future.

However, if the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban is not considered to be a bill of confiscation, then the New York SAFE act, although coming from a state legislature, should be looked at instead. It further broadened the definition of the term “assault weapon” to include even more types of semiautomatic firearms. In addition, the original provision of the bill that banned magazines holding over seven rounds was struck down in court as effectively a blanket ban on handguns. However, the law had some elements that were retroactive. In the manner of a bill of attainder, *all* magazines holding over seven (revised to ten in court) rounds were to become contraband one year after the passage of the act⁠1. Finally, all currently owned firearms covered by the law’s provisions had to be registered or destroyed within one year. A significant amount of New Yorkers did not comply with this act, and thus became felons almost overnight⁠2.

So far, this has only treated laws that were actually passed. However, many politicians have more extreme views, extending to mandatory confiscation of legally owned firearms. Hillary Rodham Clinton, the current Democratic front-runner and former senator and Secretary of State, has stated that she would be in favor of a program similar to that enacted in Australia, which involved the confiscation (with monetary compensation returned) of almost all lawfully owned semiautomatic firearms⁠3. To a more extreme extent, Dianne Feinstein, one of the most prominent super-senators in Congress and the architect of the original Assault Weapons Ban, has several times voiced her support for total civilian disarmament— stating that "If I could have gotten 51 votes in the Senate of the United States for an outright ban, picking up every one of them . . . Mr. and Mrs. America, turn 'em all in, I would have done it⁠4."

In conclusion, this is not meant to prove the value of firearms in society, nor provide a solution for the issue of gun violence in America. Instead, it is meant to counter a commonly held belief—that confiscation of firearms is a policy only advocated by fringe groups and far from becoming law in the United States. The multiple attempts at far-reaching bans, ultimata and *ex post facto* laws have proven this. Whether the ultimate aims of these laws are right or wrong, the fears of those who would oppose confiscation or prohibition cannot be dismissed as overreaction or speculation.

1 Alexander, Jon. "Confusion Sets in for Gun Dealers after NY Safe Act Is Enacted." Glens Falls Post-Star. Accessed March 13, 2016. http://poststar.com/news/national/confusion-sets-in-after-ny-safe-act-is-enacted-banning/article\_6091d1c4-61f5-11e2-9ecb-001a4bcf887a.html.

2 Rose, Joel. "Flouting The Law, Some New Yorkers Won't Register Guns." NPR. Accessed March 13, 2016. http://www.npr.org/2015/07/24/425966334/flouting-the-law-some-new-yorkers-wont-register-guns.

3 "Clinton: US Should Weigh Australian-style Gun Buyback." Al Jazeera English. October 17, 2015. Accessed March 13, 2016. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/clinton-weigh-australian-style-gun-buyback-usa-nra-massacre-151017225414484.html.

4 "What Assault Weapons Ban?" 60 Minutes. Accessed March 13, 2016. http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/what-assault-weapons-ban/.