**Supplementary File**

**Gun Rights with Uncertainty**

**The Debate Over Guns Rages On...**

**This year’s “Global Forum on Guns," held in London earlier this month, brought together proponents and opponents of gun control. In a featured conversation, Erica Taylor, founder of the Responsible Firearms International (RFI) and an advocate for less restrictive gun ownership rules, was interviewed by a journalist. Here is a summary of the conversation.**

When Taylor was asked about the main problem surrounding gun violence, she promptly responded, “We have too many laws that restrict guns in America.” She emphasized the need for fewer gun restrictions to reduce the amount of gun-related deaths. “The evidence is clear: The countries with the strictest gun laws have the most gun-related deaths.” The interviewer, however, raised some doubt about this conclusion by mentioning several countries that have strict prohibition on guns and low rates of gun-related deaths.

The conversation then moved to the public availability of AR-15 rifles, the most popular civilian rifle in America. When asked for her position, Taylor remarked that, “There is no reason why civilians should not be able to purchase a weapon that was designed for the civilian market.” And according to Taylor, restrictions on AR-15s would not have substantial impact on the safety of Americans: “Even if we ban civilian AR- 15s, it will not affect mass shootings and violent gun crimes. Empirical data shows that semi-automatic rifles were used only in 1% of severe mass shootings where 5 or more people are either shot or killed.” When the interviewer asked Taylor for the source of the empirical data she mentioned, Taylor responded: “It’s plain and simple. We should not ban AR-15 rifles.”

Toward the end of the conversation, the interviewer raised a pressing topic on the opposition’s minds: What is the role of mental illness? When asked to comment, Taylor said she “wants to emphasize that the real problem is stemming from mental illness, and not easy access to guns. In fact,” Taylor continued, “virtually 100% of shooters have some kind of a mental illness history so we need to stop waving the anti-gun flag and divert our energy and resources to improving people’s access to psychiatric care.” The interviewer remarked that the statistic Taylor cited was much higher compared to what she recalled, and wondered how a history of mental history was counted.

The conversation ended with a discussion of gun show loopholes. Taylor argued that the recent criticism of the gun show loophole is completely unjustified. When asked to elaborate, Taylor explained that “buying a firearm at a show or transferring it to your family or friends is no different than buying it at a store or other FFLs (Federal Firearms Licensee). In all cases, a federal background check is required, and people can and will be held criminally responsible if their firearm was used in a crime. Thus, the ‘gun show loophole’ is a huge distraction.” The interviewer questioned why Sayed Farook, the San Bernardino terrorist, was able to have a friend legally transfer a gun to him without a background check. After a long pause, Taylor said that she was not familiar with the specifics of this case but she was certain that the ‘gun show loophole’ had nothing to do with the unfortunate event.

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When Taylor was asked about the main problem surrounding gun violence, she promptly responded, “We have too many guns in America.” She emphasized the need for more gun restrictions to reduce the amount of gun-related deaths. “The evidence is clear: The more guns you have in a country, the more people are killed by guns in that country, period.” The interviewer, however, raised some doubt about this conclusion by mentioning several countries that have strict prohibition on guns and high rates of gun-related deaths.

The conversation then moved to the public availability of AR-15 rifles, the most popular civilian rifle in America. When asked for her position, Taylor remarked that “there is no reason why civilians should be able to purchase an assault weapon that is functionally no different from a military-grade assault weapon.” And according to Taylor, restrictions on AR-15s would have substantial impact on the safety of Americans: “Even a ban on AR- 15s will not put an end to mass shootings and violent gun crimes, it will substantially decrease it. Empirical data shows that semi-automatic rifles were used in 29% of severe mass shootings, where 5 or more people are either shot or killed." When the interviewer asked Taylor for the source of the empirical data she mentioned, Taylor responded with: “It’s plain and simple. We should ban AR-15 rifles.”

Toward the end of the conversation, the interviewer raised a pressing topic on the opposition’s minds: What is the role of mental illness? When asked to comment, Taylor said she “wants to emphasize that the real problem is easy access to guns, and not mental illness.” Taylor continued, “only 33% of shooters have some kind of a mental illness history so we need to stop waving the mental illness flag and divert our energy and resources to limiting access to guns and firearms.” The interviewer remarked that the statistic Taylor cited was much lower compared to what she seems to remember, and wonder how a history of mental history was counted.

The conversation ended with a discussion of gun show loopholes. Taylor argued that the recent criticism of the gun show loophole is completely justified. When asked to elaborate, Taylor explained that “buying a firearm at a store or other FFLs (Federal Firearms Licensee) is very different from buying it at a gun show or transferring it to your family or friends. If you buy a firearm at a gun show or transfer it to your friend, a federal background check is not required, and people will not be held criminally responsible if their firearm was used in a crime. Thus, the ‘gun show loophole’ is a huge concern.” The interviewer asked, if this is the case, then why a friend of Sayed Farook, the San Bernardino terrorist, was indicted for providing material support to terrorists because he bought rifles from local stores and then gave them to Farook? After a long pause, Taylor said that she was not familiar with the specifics of this case but she was certain that the ‘gun show loophole’ had everything to do with the unfortunate event.

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**Textual and Visual Forewarning**

**Note from the Editor**

*This story deals with a highly partisan issue. Sometimes our pre-existing beliefs and attitudes can lead us to uncritically accept information that supports our beliefs and attitudes, or reject information that challenges our beliefs and attitudes. Reading more carefully and reflecting upon information in the story can reduce some of these tendencies.*

**Highly Partisan!**



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