Assault weapons ban will pass now, but Obama’s polcap is key. **O’Keefe 1-24** writes[[1]](#footnote-1)

[Brackets in original] The measure was unveiled Thursday morning by a slate of Democratic co-sponsors, led by longtime gun control advocates **Sen.** Dianne **Feinstein** (Calif.) **and Rep.** Carolyn **McCarthy** (N.Y.), who **have pushed for the ban** before in part because of their personal histories with gun violence. “This is a tough battle,” Feinstein said at the start of an elaborately-staged event on Capitol Hill to unveil the bill. Feinstein and McCarthy were joined at the event by House and Senate Democrats cosponsoring the measure, representatives of gun control groups, survivors of mass shootings in Arizona, Colorado and at Virginia Tech, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and Charles H. Ramsey, Philadelphia Police Commissioner. Ramsey, the former police chief of Washington, D.C., also discussed the details of 10 assault weapons displayed at the event, similar to those used in some of the most recent mass shootings. “If the slaughter of 20 babies does not capture and hold your attention, then I give up, because I don’t know what else will,” Ramsey told the crowd. “We have to pass legislation, we can’t allow the legislation to get so watered down and filled with loopholes that it is meaningless and won’t do anything.” Then, turning to the weapons, Ramsey said: “Look at this and tell me why any of this needs to be on the streets of our cities. … How are you going to go hunting with something like that? If you kill something, there’s nothing left to eat.”Feinstein later explained that the weapons displayed were in the lawful possession of unnamed law enforcement agencies as evidence. Supporters face an uphill climb in a Congress filled with Republicans and moderate Democrats who support Second Amendment rights and rely on political support from the National Rifle Association and other gun groups to win reelection. The NRA responded with a statement: Senator Feinstein has been trying to ban guns from law-abiding citizens for decades. It’s disappointing but not surprising that she is once again focused on curtailing the Constitution instead of prosecuting criminals or fixing our broken mental health system. The American people know gun bans do not work and we are confident Congress will reject Senator Feinstein’s wrong-headed approach. Regardless, **Feinstein and McCarthy plan to press ahead. Most Americans support** tough new measures to counter gun violence, including **banning assault weapons, according to the latest** [Washington Post-ABC News **poll**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2013/01/14/National-Politics/Polling/question_9678.xml)**.** In the poll, 58 percent of Americans support the ban, which expired in 2004 after 10 years; 39 percent oppose it. Some 45 percent of gun-owning households also support the ban. **McCarthy**, whose husband was killed and son wounded in the 1993 Long Island Railroad shooting, has reintroduced the weapons ban every year since it expired. She **said her office has received** much **more support for her efforts since** the deadly shooting  in **Newtown.** “The American people are on our side this time, and **we** do **outnumber** some of the **people** who are **fighting against us this time,” McCarthy said Wednesday**, citing new support from parents, medical professionals and labor unions that she declined to name. “This is different this time, people are more open to it,” she added. **“What we keep hearing [from voters] is [go for] the assault weapons ban, so we’ll go for it.”** Feinstein, who became San Francisco mayor in 1978 after the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, said she has voiced her displeasure with Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) after he [recently told a Nevada television station](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2013/01/16/sen-dianne-feinstein-you-cant-sit-back-and-just-let-the-gun-organizations-call-public-policy/) that, given the current political environment, it [might be futile](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/gun-control-proposals-could-split-president-obama-harry-reid/2013/01/23/68700e34-6262-11e2-b05a-605528f6b712_story.html) to move an assault weapons ban through Congress. Since then, Reid has sounded more open to gun control measures. “This is an issue that we’re not going to run from,” he told reporters Tuesday. “It’s an issue we need to talk about. . . . It may not be everything everyone wants. But I hope it has some stuff in there that’s really important.” House Republican leaders say they won’t consider any gun-related legislation until the Senate takes action. This week, Sens. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) unveiled plans to make gun trafficking and straw purchases a federal crime, and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) relaunched plans to close a loophole in federal law that permits gun buyers to purchase weapons without a federal background check from private gun dealers and to ban high-capacity magazines holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition. The proposals will be considered next Wednesday at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on gun control. Leahy, who chairs the panel, [has said he’s eager to consider a wide range of proposals](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01-15/politics/36385672_1_gun-control-gun-debate-limit-gun-violence) before moving legislation through the Senate. The last time Congress approved the federal ban on assault weapons was 1994, when Feinstein faced her toughest reelection race and McCarthy was a nurse — and registered Republican — grieving the death of her husband and helping her son recover from his wounds. In addition to growing support for stricter gun laws, McCarthy noted that President **Obama**’s campaign operation, recently renamed Organizing for Action, **is planning to help mobilize supporters.** “I would love his e-mail list,” McCarthy said of Obama’s support network. “Each of us can work as hard as we can, but **unless [Obama is]** out there **selling it,” the bill won’t advance**, McCarthy said. **“Hopefully they learned** their lessons **from the health-care bill.”**

Rehab kills political capital. **Trinick 12**[[2]](#footnote-2)

Reasons why criminal justice policy is ignored 1) It’s politically toxic. **Any move** to alter the current tough stance on criminal justice **is** inevitably **viewed as** being **‘soft on crime’**, regardless of how much sense a new policy might make or how much it might reduce crime in the long-run. No politician, especially one running in a race as close as the current match-up, wants to be seen as ‘soft on crime’. For Republicans, “the party of law and order”, it would be sacrilege to even suggest a change in policy. For **Democrats, especially Obama,** the **aim** appears to be **to avoid looking “weak and liberal”** and avoid alienating middle-class white voters. In addition, it lacks appeal — few voters (read ‘people likely to vote in swing states’) care about the issue as they perceive that it does not affect them and it requires hard choices to be made. 2) People don’t like to have to think about it. This relates to the point above about having to make hard choices, but there is more to it. By its very nature, criminal justice is difficult and unpleasant to think about and so most people shy away from it — who wants to think about prison and criminals when there’s the new series of Homeland? The majority of people will have no interaction with the criminal justice system, especially not on the ‘wrong’ side of it, and so they shut their eyes, pretend they cannot see the problem and hope it will go away. The politicians and media know this and cater to the demands of their audiences. 3) **Changes would require the states and the Federal government to work together. This** shouldn’t be a deal-breaker, but it **adds more complexity** to an already difficult area. Both states and the federal government maintain prisons and any systematic attempt to reduce the prison population would require co-operation and negotiation between all the parties. In gridlocked Washington, this would be unlikely even if the topic was not so politically explosive. 4) Criminal justice policy is hard. Really hard. **What should be the moral basis** for imprisoning criminals — Deterrence? **Rehabilitation?** Proportionate punishment? Public protection? **Retribution?** Economic reality? Most countries follow a mix of these, but a different balance of the justifications can alter dramatically the policy pursued in a particular jurisdiction. Agreeing on **the** precise **balance is** something **fraught with** potential for **disagreement, even among** those who have no political concerns, like **academics.** On top of this, of course, is the fact that a different weighting of the justifications can have real cost implications — for example, both rehabilitation programmes and capital punishment are hugely expensive. 5) The overlap with drug policy does not help. Realistically the only way the USA is going to reduce its prison population by a meaningful amount is either to legalise (some) drugs or to impose far lighter (non-custodial) sentences for most drug related offences. While legalisation of (some) drugs may be a good idea, it is hardly an uncontroversial one and few, if any, politicians have the gumption, or the political capital, to take on both reform of the criminal justice system and drug legalisation.

Assault weapons ban is key to reign in drug cartel violence in Mexico. **Ross 12**[[3]](#footnote-3)

WASHINGTON -- Mexico's U.S. ambassador rebuffed claims this week that the country's efforts to reduce the flow of guns from the U.S. to drug cartels in Mexico amounts to an attack on American gun ownership rights.

During a Thursday Capitol Hill forum, Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan and Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said that **those who oppose** efforts to reinstate **a ban on assault weapons in the U.S.** and closely regulate cross-border weapon traffic **are** -- perhaps inadvertently -- **contributing to violence** and an unacceptable number of deaths **in Mexico.**

Cross-border **gun trafficking** has **helped Mexican drug cartels wage** an **armed conflict** that has taken [at least 50,000 Mexican lives](http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jan/11/world/la-fg-mexico-dead-numbers-20120112) since the country began a concerted crackdown on drug traffickers in 2006, according to that government’s data. But, gun rights advocates insist that any effort to restrict access to weapons infringes on what they say are Constitutional rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens. Such efforts, they argue, are simply part of the Mexican government's attempt to displace blame for the crisis of violence that has seized portions of the country.

"There is an 'urban myth' out there that somehow the Mexican government is seeking to lobby against and destroy the rights enshrined in the Second Amendment," Sarukhan said. "This is gobbledygook. I am sure is that the founding fathers did not intend for international organized crime to source weapons in the U.S."

Sarukhan and Schiff spoke to an audience of security experts, both gun rights and gun control advocates, and both Spanish and English language reporters from American and Mexican news organizations at the Thursday forum, sponsored by the left-leaning Washington, D.C., think tank NDN.

In 2004, **Congress did not renew a** 10-year **ban on** the sale of 19 different types of guns known as **assault weapons. Gun sellers across the country reported an** [**immediate uptick in sales**](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-09-12-weapons-ban_x.htm)**.**

And by 2006, **these** so-called **"long weapons"** had **replaced handguns as the artillery of choice in**side **Mexican drug cartels**, Sarukhan said. Between 2007 and 2010, he noted, the number of weapons seized by Mexican officials with U.S. origins surged by 225 percent.

The reason: Americans willing to serve as straw buyers purchase the guns in the U.S., then sell or somehow pass along the weapons to Mexican drug cartels, Sarukhan said.

Of the nearly 100,000 guns seized and submitted by Mexican authorities to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) for tracing between 2007 and 2011, about 68,000 were "U.S. sourced" -- manufactured in, or imported into, the U.S., where they were then purchased, the ATF reported last month.

"You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand why this has happened," Sarukhan said.

In 2009, the Obama Administration called for a new assault weapons ban, but Congress did not comply. The following year, Mexican President Felipe **Calderón addressed** the U.S. **Congress, calling on** American **lawmakers to pass an assault weapons ban to help curb cartel access to weapons** and the rising death toll in Mexico. His address and appeal drew applause from several Democrats but [virtual silence](http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/20/calderon-calls-for-restoring-assault-weapons-ban/), and later [indignation](http://www.texasgopvote.com/blog/cornyn-statement-mexico-president-calderon-s-address-congress-05203), from many Republicans.

## Terrorism Scenario

Drug cartels cause wmd terror. **Shingal 11** writes[[4]](#footnote-4)

The fourth and final contention as to why the US should further aid Mexico is the risk of a link developing between the Latin American drug cartels and the Islamic terrorists in the Middle East. While such linkages may not exist yet, **there is** currently **concern in** and around **Washington that** groups such as **Hezbollah and** especially **Al Qaeda** are beginning to **take interest** in what is occurring **in Mexico.** In fact, the Mexican drug **cartels already have a** relatively established **link with Hezbollah**, which has long been involved with the South American drug trade. **As the drug trade** has steadily **moved** north **to Mexico, Hezbollah’s influence has come disturbingly close**r **to the** American **border.** That influence, when combined with the fact that **the** American **border is very porous and** the possibility of **a** Hezbollah sponsored **terrorist attack** on US soil, **makes** many **US officials uneasy.** According to Michael Braun, a former assistant administrator and chief of operations at the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), **Hezbollah uses ―the same** criminal weapons **smugglers**, document traffickers and transportation experts **as the** drug **cartels… [Hezbollah will] leverage those relationships to their benefit**, to smuggle contraband and humans into the US; in fact, they already are [smuggling].‖ 181 Similarly, some **Al Qaeda leaders have also indicated** an **interest in** using **drug tunnels** to help launch a terrorist attack on United States soil. Following the attack on September 11th, the United States has taken a number of steps to protect itself from terrorist attacks. These have included increasing security in airports and train stations as well as paying closer attention to people entering and leaving the country. However, despite all of these improvements, the drug cartels are still able to smuggle drugs into the country at an alarmingly high rate. Unfortunately, terrorists around the world have noticed: Abdullah al-Nafisi, a high ranking Al Qaeda recruiter, stated, ―Four pounds of anthrax…carried by a fighter through tunnels from Mexico into the US are guaranteed to kill 330,000 Americans…there is no need for airplanes, conspiracies, timings and so on.‖ 182 As the cartels are only interested in their financial bottom line, there is no reason why they should not allow other groups to use their routes to enter the United States if the other groups were willing to pay – and Al Qaeda would certainly have no qualms about paying any amount of money if they were promised untraceable access into the US. As one US law enforcement officer noted, ―That’s why the border is such a serious national security issue.‖ 183 There are two problems with which the United States will have to contend if the link between the terrorists and cartels becomes too strong. The first is a problem of money; **terrorist groups could start using the profits of drug smuggling to fund** their anti-American **operations.** Despite America's diplomatic and military efforts both Hezbollah and Al Qaeda remain able to maintain themselves financially. American efforts to cut off their funding would only become more difficult if those groups became closely affiliated with the highly profitable drug cartels. If the terrorists are able to establish a drug trade through Mexico, American drug users would in effect be supporting the United States' military‘s enemy. By not sufficiently addressing the Mexican drug smuggling issue, the US is thus leaving the door open for terrorist groups to profit, which in turn could lead to further attacks. **The second and most distressing issue is that** the terrorists could use Mexican drug trafficking routes to launch attacks in the continental United States. Based on the condition of the Mexican state and the inability of the United States to sufficiently protect its border, it is not difficult to imagine Al Qaeda operatives successfully infiltrating the country. Moreover, it is equally possible that such **an operative could smuggle** parts of **a bomb or** a suitcase full of **anthrax through the** same **tunnels** which funnel thousands of pounds of marijuana and cocaine into the US yearly. The United States cannot afford to take chances with American lives at stake. Although there is no proof that a terrorist plot will occur via Mexico, the possibility alone should drive the US government to take steps to finally rein in the drug cartels by bolstering its aid to the Mexican government. By not doing so, the US is leaving itself open to a very uncertain future – a future where it may find itself having to fight wars in the Middle East and protect itself from terrorist attacks launched via imperceptible tunnels across its own border.

WMD terror is the most likely existential threat. **Rhodes 09**[[5]](#footnote-5)

The response was very different among nuclear and national security experts when Indiana Republican Sen. Richard Lugar surveyed PDF them in 2005.

This group of **85 experts judged that** the **possibility of** a **WMD attack** against a city or other target somewhere in the world **is real and increasing over time**. The median estimate of the risk of a nuclear attack somewhere in the world by 2010 was 10 percent. The risk of an attack by 2015 doubled to 20 percent median. **There was strong**, though not universal, **agreement that** a **nuclear attack is more likely** to be carried out **by a terrorist organization than by a government.** The group was split 45 to 55 percent on whether terrorists were more likely to obtain an intact working nuclear weapon or manufacture one after obtaining weapon-grade nuclear material. "The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is not just a security problem," Lugar wrote in the report's introduction. "It is the economic dilemma and the moral challenge of the current age. On September 11, 2001, the world witnessed the destructive potential of international terrorism. But the September 11 attacks do not come close to approximating the destruction that would be unleashed by a nuclear weapon. Weapons of mass destruction have made it possible for a small nation, or even a sub-national group, to kill as many innocent people in a day as national armies killed in months of fighting during World War II. "The bottom line is this," Lugar concluded: "For the foreseeable future, the United States and other **nations will face an existential threat** from the intersection of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction." It's paradoxical that a diminished threat of a superpower nuclear exchange should somehow have resulted in a world where the danger of at least a single nuclear explosion in a major city has increased (and that city is as likely, or likelier, to be Moscow as it is to be Washington or New York). We tend to think that a terrorist nuclear attack would lead us to drive for the elimination of nuclear weapons. I think the opposite case is at least equally likely: **A terrorist nuclear attack would almost certainly be followed by a retaliatory nuclear strike** on whatever country we believed to be sheltering the perpetrators. **That** response **would** surely **initiate a new round of nuclear armament** and rearmament in the name of deterrence, however illogical. Think of how much 9/11 frightened us; think of how desperate our leaders were to prevent any further such attacks; think of the fact that we invaded and occupied a country, Iraq, that had nothing to do with those attacks in the name of sending a message.

## Oil Shocks Scenario

Mexico will collapse absent decisive US action on cartels.

**Shingal 11** writes[[6]](#footnote-6)

The third reason why the United States must enhance its aid to Mexico is the possibility of a failed Mexican state. **The drug war** in Mexico **has become a life or death struggle for the Mexican government. Despite substantial US aid,** the Mexican **authorities remain outgunned and outmanned.** The drug cartels, although not acting as an alternative government per say, enjoy near autonomy throughout a number of cities across the country, including border cities such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. In effect, **the Mexican government has completely committed itself to fighting** against the drug **cartels, but is** at best failing to make progress and at worst **losing the war.** What is even more disheartening is the consideration that **the drug cartels are the ones with time on their side.** While **the Mexican government has neither the resources nor the man power to continue** its major offensive without more substantial assistance from the United States, the drug cartels remain as powerful as ever. It is distinctly possible to foresee a day when the Mexican government, in spite of its efforts, is unable to control the drug cartels, and Mexico essentially becomes a failed state. While there are a number of scholars and politicians, including Mexican President Calderón, who ardently argue that the Mexican state will not fail, it is significant to note that the US government is already preparing itself for that possibility. In fact, **according to a study by** the **U**nited **S**tates **Joint Forces Command,** which looks to uncover future developments to ensure that the US military will not be caught off guard, **Mexico** is considered a ―large and important [state that] **bear[s] consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse.**‖ 177 The study also states that ―the [Mexican] government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by…drug cartels. That internal conflict… [is having] a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state.‖ 178

Mexican collapse causes massive global oil shocks.

**Moran 09** writes[[7]](#footnote-7)

A story receiving more attention in the American media than Iraq these days is the horrific drug-related violence across the northern states of Mexico, where Felipe **Calderon has deployed the** national **army to combat** two thriving drug **cartels, which have compromised the national police beyond redemption.** The tales of carnage are horrific, to be sure: 30 people were killed in a 48 hour period last week in Cuidad Juarez alone, a city located directly across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas. So far, the impact on the United States and beyond has been minimal. But there also isn’t much sign that the army is winning, either, and that raises a disturbing question: What if Calderon loses? The CIA’s worst nightmare during the Cold War (outside of an administration which forced transparency on it, of course) was the radicalization or collapse of Mexico. The template then was communism, but narco-capitalism doesn’t look much better. The prospect of a wholesale collapse that sent millions upon millions of Mexican refugees fleeing across the northern border so far seems remote. **But Mexico’s army has its own** problems with **corruption**, and a sizeable number of Mexicans regard Calderon’s razor-thin 2006 electoral victory over a leftist rival as illegitimate. **With Mexico’s economy reeling and the** traditional **safety valve of** illegal **immigration to America dwindling, the potential for serious trouble exists.** Meanwhile, **Mexico ranks with Saudi Arabia and Canada as the three suppliers of oil the U**nited **S**tates **could not do without. Should things come unglued** there and Pemex production shut down even temporarily, **the shock on oil markets could be profound,** again, **sending** its **waves throughout the global economy.** Long-term, PEMEX production has been sliding anyway, thanks to oil fields well-beyond their peak and restrictions on foreign investment. Domestically in the U.S., any trouble involving Mexico invariably will cause a bipartisan demand for more security on the southern border, inflame anti-immigrant sentiment and possibly force Obama to remember his campaign promise to “renegotiate NAFTA,” a pledge he deftly sidestepped once in office.

Oil shocks cause multiple scenarios for extinction.

**Lendman 07** writes[[8]](#footnote-8)

**With** the world's energy supplies finite, **the US heavily dependent on imports, and "peak oil" near** or approaching, **"security" for America means assuring a sustainable supply of what we can't do without. It includes waging wars to get it**, protect it, and defend the maritime trade routes over which it travels. **That means** energy's partnered with predatory New World Order globalization, **militarism, wars, ecological recklessness, and** now **an extremist US administration willing to risk Armageddon** for world dominance. Central **to** its plan is first **control**ling essential resources everywhere, at any cost, starting with **oil** and where most of it is located in the Middle East and Central Asia.

The New "Great Game" and Perils From It

The new "Great Game's" begun, but this time the stakes are greater than ever as explained above. The old one lasted nearly 100 years pitting the British empire against Tsarist Russia when the issue wasn't oil. This time, **it's the US with** help from **Israel,** Britain, the West, and satellite states like Japan, **South Korea and Taiwan challenging Russia and China with today's weapons** and technology on both sides making earlier ones look like toys. At stake is more than oil. It's planet earth with survival of all life on it issue number one twice over.

**Resources and wars for them means militarism is increasing**, peace declining, and the planet's ability to sustain life front and center, if anyone's paying attention. They'd better be because beyond the point of no return, there's no second chance the way Einstein explained after the atom was split. His famous quote on future wars was : "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

 Under a worst case scenario, it's more dire than that. **There may be nothing left** but resilient beetles and bacteria **in the wake of a nuclear holocaust** meaning even a new stone age is way in the future, if at all. The threat is real and once nearly happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October, 1962. We later learned a miracle saved us at the 40th anniversary October, 2002 summit meeting in Havana attended by the US and Russia along with host country Cuba. For the first time, we were told how close we came to nuclear Armageddon. Devastation was avoided only because Soviet submarine captain Vasily Arkhipov countermanded his order to fire nuclear-tipped torpedos when Russian submarines were attacked by US destroyers near Kennedy's "quarantine" line. Had he done it, only our imagination can speculate what might have followed and whether planet earth, or at least a big part of it, would have survived.

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5. RICHARD RHODES He has been a visiting scholar at Harvard and MIT, and currently he is an affiliate of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. Rhodes is the author of The Making of the Atomic Bomb (1986), which won the Pulitzer Prize in Nonfiction, National Book Award, and National Book Critics Circle Award. It was the first of four volumes he has written on the history of the nuclear age. Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb (1995), Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race (2007), and The Twilight of the Bombs (forthcoming in autumn 2010) are the others. Reducing the nuclear threat: The argument for public safety 14 DECEMBER 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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