



Guns in America vs. Israel

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Research Puzzle:

Guns are at the center of both American and Israeli life. Why, then, do the public in these respective countries feel so differently about them?

- America and Israel are gun-centric democratic countries with western values, but they differ greatly when it comes to gun laws and public conceptions of guns
 - **Why do America and Israel differ so greatly when it comes to guns? What are the driving factors behind the acutely different public conception of guns in both places?**
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Methodology:

1. Consulted **existing literature** and **research** on gun politics in both places
2. Conducted **eleven interviews** of American and Israeli gun owners and non owners
 - a. Asked about their experience with and conception of guns, their views of their country's gun laws, why they do or don't own a firearm, etc.



3 factors:

What explains the different perceptions of guns in both societies?

1. Gun laws
 2. How guns are introduced in both societies
 3. The magnitude of the perceived security threat
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1. GUN LAWS

Gun laws in America: relatively lax

1. **Second Amendment** Right to Bear Arms
2. Sale of firearms between individuals is **unregulated**
3. No federal ban on automatic **assault weapons**
4. The US is home to less than **5%** of the world population, it accounts for **46%** of the world's civilian-owned guns



"I walked out of that store with a pistol in 24 minutes" - Michael, owner of 30 guns

Gun laws in Israel: relatively strict

1. Ban on assault weapons - only allow **handguns**
2. Psychological **examinations**
3. Government **tracking number** on each gun
4. Gun permit **renewal** every six months with **shooting test** in shooting range
5. Extensive **proof** for necessity to own a gun
 - a. Limited to security personnel, with some exceptions depending on where you live



Israel rejects 40% of gun permit applications which is more than any country in the western world

How gun laws affect public perception of guns



US:

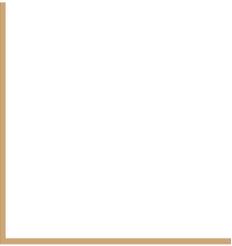
- The lax gun laws accompanying the Second Amendment show that the law **encourages gun ownership**
- 74% of gun owners say this right is essential and is directly tied to their **personal freedom**

Israel:

- Strict gun laws **deter Israelis** from owning a gun
 - Show the general population how severe guns are
 - *"The strict and enforced gun laws instill a sense of confidence that guns are in the hands of trained professionals"* - Dor, Israeli non-owner
 - *"Gun rights are viewed as a privilege in Israel"* - Former head of the Israeli Mossad
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2. HOW GUNS ARE INTRODUCED IN BOTH SOCIETIES



How guns are introduced in the US:

"I got my first gun when I was eight" - Cameron, owner of 25 guns



- **Gun owners:**
 - Recreation
 - Family hunting
 - Sign of Americanness and family heritage
 - **Non-owners:**
 - Movies
 - Video games
 - In the news (mass shootings)
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Effect:

- Connects guns with a positive and even emotional and nostalgic image for many gun owners
- Non-owners often have no tangible or personal connection with the gun
 - View weapon as unsafe

How guns are introduced in Israel:

“Guns are part of our everyday lives. It’s not shocking to see a gun, even as a child.” -Rob, Israeli non-owner



- **Introduction:**

- Mandatory draft
- Normal to see soldiers with guns on the street, or handgun with security personnel in front of schools, malls, most public spaces

- **Effect:**

- Guns seen as a symbol of **national defense**
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3. Magnitude of the perceived security threat



Magnitude of the perceived security threat in the US:

“I would own a gun for home defense, although I recognize the need for that is very low” - Isabel, non-owner from Wisconsin



- Self protection (*DC vs Heller*)
 - Out of **27,000** crimes, the victim used a gun in self defense in fewer than **0.9%**
 - National security in the hands of the gov't and military (*2017 US National Security Strategy*)
 - **Effect:**
 - Means of individual protection
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Magnitude of the perceived security threat in Israel:

“In times of heightened security threat, the government requires me to carry my handgun when leaving my city, where usually it’s not allowed” - Gabriel, Israeli handgun owner



Terror attack, Saron Market, Tel Aviv

- Complex security challenges: unfriendly borders + the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Threat of terrorism: over 1,300 people murdered in the 2000s from stabbing attacks, car rammings, mass shootings
- **Effect:**
 - Collective security
 - Means of national protection

Conclusion + Final Thoughts

1. Gun laws, introduction of guns and security threat all influence how guns are perceived in the US and Israel
2. The US is unique given the historical underpinnings of guns vs Israel's view of guns solely for national protection
3. Cross-country comparisons can help find solutions to policy issues
4. **What does this mean regarding how laws and geopolitics affect public opinion in general?**