

We imitate symbols and images that convey a specific message to the audience. I immediately think of how we, and other countries, position missiles in particular locations to symbolize that 'we have the power to stop you should you cross the line'. This is in-line with Reagan's policy of ramping up the arms race to create a deterrence to the Soviet Union in the 1980's; there were 24/7 flights bordering Russian air space that carried nuclear bombs.

This is a hell of a deterrent and a symbol.

It is the same with the Oregon stand-off and any other fringe group that wants to visually depict 'we mean business'. Yet there is a stark difference in posturing and execution. The Oregon people were puppies trying to appear as lions. Law enforcement never knows who is going to do what in such situations, so they have to show up with 1. More firepower; 2. More shooters; and 3. The patience to wait it out by forcing the opposition to make the first move.

I think that the assault rifle is ultimately nothing more than a symbol in our culture. It is a symbol for the bubbling discontent with our government, economy, and the break-down of social norms and interpersonal relationships. The visual image of an assault rifle wraps numerous perceived social problems into a threatening image. What I think is particularly dangerous about society cramming so many social unrest issues, into a weapon, is that this symbolizes that the assault rifle 'is the answer' to addressing these issues. It says, 'Well, in the end, I can use this as a means to publicly express my rage'. And this is what could happen should society believe, at a particular moment, that peaceful means of fixing the social problems are no longer available...and (the key here) that there is **no future means of peaceful resolution**.

This is why I am starting to think that the camps, in opposition, debating the banning of assault rifles and high-capacity magazines are really just opposing viewpoints on 1. How sick society is; 2. The perception of 'to what degree' the social problems exist (which is naturally influenced by socio-economic status); and 3. What peaceful means and vehicles are available to reconcile the perceived social injustices (and this is very much drawn along the lines of socio-economic status).

I have already provided solid research and statistics that 1. Assault rifles account for an incredibly low number of annual deaths; 2. The most deadly (i.e. effective) mass-shooting incidences, in our country, have been executed using hand guns; and 3. Americans, when polled, overwhelmingly support hand gun rights & ownership yet the same people want assault rifles banned. This is absolute absurdity if any type of logic is applied to the positions of people. This means one thing: it is an emotional issue, not a practical issue. Emotions are expressed by symbols and people that share emotions form groups based upon symbols that have common social meaning.

"It's a fool that looks for logic in the chambers of the human heart" – Ulysses Everett McGill (O Brother, Where Art Thou?)