



Written by [Staff](#) on February 7, 2023

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## The Review

### For Self-defense, Against Tyranny

*In Defense of the Second Amendment*, by Larry Correia, Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2023, 224 pages, hardcover.

It can be expressed with formal language or simply. Regardless, the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides, explicitly, that “the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” As the Founding Fathers recognized, a government that does not trust its law-abiding, taxpaying citizens with the means of self-defense is not worthy of trust. Disarming such citizens proclaims that the government is the master, not the servant, of the people.

Also mindful of this, author Larry Correia takes the direct route. His prose about firearms is plainspoken, sometimes indelicate, often cutting, even as it is cogent and candid.

When his target is anti-gun zealots, his chosen metaphor for them is apt: Vultures. And, as he writes, the “vultures will never stop,” in part because “gun control isn’t about guns. It’s about control.” For him, the key question the country faces is this: “Does the government own the people, or do the people own their government?”

Thus, when there is a shooting incident, perhaps a mass killing, this becomes the question for vultures, as he puts it: “*Who are the real monsters?* Clearly the answer is always Americans who own guns. No matter what the question is, the answer is always to give the vultures more power.”

### Straight Shooting From Experienced Pro

*In Defense of the Second Amendment* is not, emphasizes the author, “for policy wonks and pundits.” He is not a statistician, as he notes. He’s now a full-time novelist. And if you are familiar with Correia’s best-selling “science fantasy” books — highlighted by his *Monster Hunter International* series — you know they have plenty of mayhem, seasoned with dashes of humor and his knowledge of weaponry. Indeed, the bio in his fiction novels acknowledges that the author is “hopelessly addicted to two things: guns and B-horror movies.”

More to the present point, before completely turning to writing, Correia was in this “gun business” for decades, as a gun-store owner and certified concealed firearms instructor, among others. He has shot competitively and written for national publications on gun laws and use of force. His output has included the viral online “Handy Guide for Liberals Who are Suddenly Interested in Gun Ownership,” which is excerpted in this book. In addition, Correia has testified before the state Legislature in Utah,





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where he lives, about the ramifications of proposed gun laws. The volume in review includes what amounts to an impressive *curriculum vitae* of his related experience.

“Basically,” he explains, “for most of my life, I have been up to my eyeballs in guns, self-defense instruction, and the laws relating to those things.” And, yes, the word “gun” is employed for all sorts of weapons throughout *In Defense of the Second Amendment* — though this reviewer must confess that it still gives him a mental twinge based on long-ago military requisites that demanded otherwise.

In this decidedly non-fiction book, readers learn that it is the anti-gun activists who are weaving fantasies, while Correia has the pertinent facts on his side.

## “Capricious,” “Malicious” ATF Fires Wildly

The author also turns out to be prescient. This isn’t such a remarkable feat as it might seem, because the fight against self-defense never ends.

So, his making a forecast in an introductory note about likely coming ATF governmental changes wasn’t really a long shot. (He calls the ATF, among other labels, “malicious,” “capricious,” and “malignantly dysfunctional.”) Indeed, shortly before the book’s actual publication date, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (generally rendered as ATF) did release yet another proposal on pistol-stabilizing “braces” that would effectively ban millions of weapons.

“Well,” retorted Correia in mid-January, in one of his biting Twitter tweets, “we certainly called that one right.”

The book discusses such braces and “short-barrel rifles” (SBR) and the federal government’s erratic campaign about such weapons, which are popular with, among others, the elderly and handicapped. There’s not enough space here for all the deviations, but here’s a synopsis: The ATF was OK with braces, then it wasn’t when they began being used by so many gun owners.

Here’s how he describes the bureaucrats’ seeming illogicality after a recent ATF “clarification”:

Braces were legal, as long as you only used them against your arm, but if you put them against your shoulder you were creating an illegal SBR. Yes. The ATF actually tried to say that *holding something wrong* was a felony.

This of course led to legal battles, because moving your hands four more inches shouldn’t be considered *manufacturing an illegal firearm*. The ATF backed down, then came back to try again, and then backed down, and is basically still blundering around in a holding pattern. [Emphasis in original.]

Now, as noted above, the bureaucrats have made another U-turn, apparently shifting to pick up this item from the president’s gun-control wish list. The ATF re-re-reversed.

Methinks our fearless leaders must stand on their heads to turn things over in their (alleged) minds.

Also in January, Illinois moved against certain semi-automatic weapons (with the state Legislature acting just before the end of a lame-duck session), banning what they call “assault weapons” and instituting regulations on magazine capacity. Such efforts are part of what the “vultures” call “common-sense gun control,” as Correia puts it. Each infringement, writes the author, is “designed to make you



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weaker and them stronger.”

Accordingly, while much of this book does deal with using firearms for self-defense, the author emphasizes: “Ultimately the Second Amendment is about protecting ourselves from tyranny.”

## “Do Something,” Insist Anti-gun Zealots

Along the way, he does get into specific aspects, addressing various familiar complaints and anti-gun arguments. Correia has been doing this for a long time. It is, he writes,

no exaggeration when I say that I know pretty much exactly every single thing an anti-gun activist is going to say before they say it. I’ve heard it over and over, the same old tired stuff, trotted out every single time there’s a tragedy on the news that can be milked.

The “antis” have a litany of “Do Somethings” (the author’s phrase), and he picks them off sequentially. We are told, depending on the latest push, that we need to ban automatic weapons; or handguns; or “assault rifles”; or AR-15s (or “Insert Scary Gun of the Week Here”); or magazines over X number of shots; *ad infinitum*.

How about, for instance, the contention — one that Joe Biden employs frequently — that we don’t need an “assault rifle” for hunting? Correia dispatches that one quickly. Claiming that the Second Amendment is for sportsmen, he says bluntly, is “hogwash.” Sure, as soon as the Founding Fathers

got done fighting a rebellion against the most powerful army in the world, they promptly sat down and codified our all-important right ... to hunt deer? Yeah, right. That sounds plausible.

Recreational firearms use is a happy bonus. The Second Amendment is about bearing arms to protect ourselves from threats, up to and including a tyrannical government.

In fact, considering all the contentions for bans and more regulations and the author’s accurate and coherent ripostes, this volume could be called a Contradictionary.

As valuable as it is, the book could be even better — here putting on an editorial hat — with a bit more details included when it comes to dates and places. Not all readers are going to be gun culture aficionados familiar with related incidents. So, help them out a bit with specifics rather than just throwing out the names of, for instance, the “Ahmaud Arbery shooting” or the “Trayvon Martin shooting,” without other particulars.

That said, supporters of gun ownership and freedom will find much to like. This includes some relevant statistics — such as taking note of the 2.5 million defensive gun uses a year, far more than the number of murders. Or, on the other side, realizing that less than two percent of criminals buy their weapons from a store.

## What Doesn’t Work, and Why

When it comes to being useful, the strength of *In Defense of the Second Amendment* is in its responses to the seemingly endless charges of anti-gunners. We have mentioned some above. Other sections cover



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---

the calls for mandating “smart guns”; misconceptions about background checks; unmasking the so-called gun-show loophole; compelling safe storage for guns; concerns about “ghost guns”; requiring waiting periods before purchasing firearms; and imposing “red flag laws,” officially called Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs).

Correia has quite a bit about the latter, while also pointing out that such ERPOs “are ripe for abuse.” While the laws are sold to the public as a way to stop frenzied, ticking time bombs, what is more likely to ensue? Writes Correia:

What we’re really worried about is more like this: You know that guy, Bob, who disagreed with me at the HOA meeting once and has those campaign signs in his yard for politicians I don’t like? He posted a picture of a disgusting, icky assault rifle with a “shoulder thing that goes up” [an actual comment, cited previously in the book, made by a New York Democratic Congresswoman trying to define a barrel shroud], and he was shooting it with his children. Gross. I’m disgusted and afraid, so I’m going to alert the police about this madman’s evil plots.

Perhaps you, too, have met that type of meddler — the person who spreads rumors over the sour grapevine. Some things such as red flag laws sound better in theory than they turn out to be in the real world.

When you want to thwart a potential mass killer, how about posting a big sign? As you might imagine, Correia doesn’t think gun-free zones work very well either. He cites research by economist John Lott revealing that 98 percent of mass killings take place in gun-free zones.

The author doesn’t see much value in that, unless it is to tell a potential criminal where to find the best place to commit a crime without getting shot. He asks (with hyperbole to drive home the point): “If I am going to attack or rob somebody, do I go to Big Chuck’s Shooting Range & Pit Bull Adoption Center or the Feminist Bookstore and Healing Crystal Emporium with the No Guns Allowed signs stuck all over it?” Correia admits that he has “zero respect” for believers in their efficacy. He continues:

You are going to commit several hundred felonies, up to and including mass murder, and yet you’re going to refrain because there is a *sign*? That No Guns Allowed sign is not a cross that wards off vampires. It is wishful thinking, and really pathetic wishful thinking at that.

The only people who obey No Guns signs are people who obey the law. People who obey the law aren’t going on killing sprees. [Emphasis in original.]

As you have undoubtedly gathered, Correia tells it the way it is, sometimes with brusqueness and language that might be a tad inappropriate for the ears of Great Aunt Maude. Nonetheless, we doubt that he is really mean enough to send a get-well card to a hypochondriac. After all, in his fictional world, he has designed a special patch for agents of Monster Hunter International.

## **Long-term Aims**

In addition, this volume contains a goodly amount about what to do to attain a nation that has a safe and healthy relationship with guns. It is not an overly partisan political treatise on purpose, but it



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---

doesn't avoid the political world altogether. For just one example, Correia does drop in such comments as, "Despite Joe Biden's inane speeches on the subject, firearms manufacturers have civil liability like any other company." Some Republicans (especially the "in name only" types) also get winged when deemed necessary. (Example: The author describes his senator, Mitt Romney, as "such an invertebrate that he's basically a Ziploc bag of hair gel in a human shape.")

Correia has some eventual goals for the nation that seem improbable — but that is why you aim first. For example, he would allow teachers to be armed and offers good reasoning why. We should stop glamorizing mass killers, he says, and he doesn't name any in this book. He would also legalize "silencers" (calling for a Hearing Protection Act). Stretching even more, Correia says he would even argue for legalizing machine guns and ending the National Firearms Act of 1934 — though admitting that is "very unlikely to happen anytime soon."

Meanwhile, this is his repeated message: Gun owners should act responsibly. In a related point, and acknowledging that this position might be controversial to some, the author says he is not a big fan of openly carrying a firearm on your person. Still, he insists that it is your right to do so and "sometimes it makes sense. I also believe that it is context specific." Correia goes into his reasoning, and it's worth reading, as is the entire book.

Standing above all of the specifics and arguments and counter-arguments is the principle of holding the line against tyranny. In his recapitulation, the author drives this home. An "armed populace," writes Correia, is "common sense." Each of us "being able to defend" our "lives and liberty" is common sense:

Protecting your loved ones is common sense. The people being able to stand against any who would enslave them is common sense.

We are fighting for freedom in a world where freedom is becoming scarcer than gold.

Americans have known such truths from the beginnings of the Republic.

— *William P. Hoar*

## **Condemning Foreign Interventions**

***In Search of Monsters to Destroy: The Folly of American Empire and the Paths to Peace***, by Christopher Coyne, Oakland: Independent Institute, 2022, 141 pages, hardcover.

On Independence Day in 1821, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams addressed Congress on the issue of whether the United States should get involved in the internal affairs of foreign nations, or in far-flung international conflicts. He disagreed with those who advocated using direct means — such as military force — to export the American experiment in liberty that was then a marvel of the world.

"Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be," Adams said. "But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.... Her glory is not dominion, but liberty."

These wise words were the prevailing view among America's Founding Fathers. Christopher Coyne, a senior fellow of the Independent Institute — an organization dedicated to building peaceful, prosperous,



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---

and free societies — used that quotation in the title of his new book *In Search of Monsters to Destroy: The Folly of American Empire and the Paths to Peace*, which offers expert analysis of why “searching for monsters to destroy” around the world is a bad idea.

In fact, this continual “search” advocated by most presidential administrations for more than a century not only has been largely unsuccessful, it has been detrimental to our nation’s prosperity and freedom.

“There tends to be a strong consensus among the political elite in their support for and propagation of American empire,” Coyne observes. This consensus tends to prevail regardless of whether the president is a Democrat or a Republican. Although he pulled back on this impulse to some degree, even President Donald Trump — with his “America First” inclinations — was led to carry out some interventionist actions, such as his bombing of Syria.

The occupation of Afghanistan ended as it began, with the Taliban in control, Coyne laments: “Despite efforts by US political leaders to save face, the reality is that the US government and its foreign policy of military imperialism are the latest victims of the ‘graveyard of empires’ — a label given to Afghanistan following the defeat of superpowers Britain (1839-42, 1919) and the Soviet Union (1979-89).”

And the costs of the U.S. government’s efforts in Afghanistan were substantial. Not only did the war cost the lives of more than 4,000 U.S. military personnel and contractors, but nearly 70,000 Afghan soldiers and police officers were also slain.

When George W. Bush ran for president in 2000, his rhetoric pleased non-interventionists sick of the repeated deployments and interventions of the Bill Clinton presidency. America needed a “more humble foreign policy,” Bush had argued — yet his administration is most remembered for his own search abroad for “monsters to destroy.”

In an address to Congress on September 20, 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Bush’s goals were grandiose. “Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” Four years later, in his second inaugural address, Bush even vowed to end all dictatorships around the world.

Afghanistan is only the most recent example of failed U.S. military imperialism, Coyne noted, offering the example of the failure of an Obama administration effort to slay a foreign “monster.” A NATO coalition intervened in Libya, involving the naval and air forces of participants enforcing a no-fly zone to protect rebels, attacking Libyan military targets, and establishing a naval blockade. The operation in Libya lasted about seven months and ended in October after the brutal death of Moammar Gadhafi. It was initially hailed as a success by Western politicians and pundits. In 2011, *The New York Times* suggested that the “success” in Libya would serve as a template for future military interventions. To the contrary, four years later, the *Times* wrote that ISIS — the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria — benefited from the intervention in Libya.

Coyne discusses the various “justifications” for interventions — concern for suffering, spreading freedom and democracy, fixing broken societies through nation-building, and retaliating against perceived threats and enemies. This is not new, of course. President Woodrow Wilson argued for a declaration of war against Germany in 1917 with his claim that “The world must be made safe for democracy.”



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---

The underlying assumption is that a liberal international order cannot emerge spontaneously but requires imperial design and, when necessary, the use of force. These interventionists argue that failed states require nation-building because they undermine a stable international order.

Coyne traces the intellectual origin of the American “Liberal Empire” to the 19th-century idea of Manifest Destiny — the belief that America was meant to expand west, based on a unique set of virtues and a duty to spread them. This was followed by the Spanish-American War, in which the United States intervened in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippine Islands due to internal instability associated with the Cuban War of Independence against Spanish colonizers.

President Theodore Roosevelt argued that the United States may be forced, reluctantly, to exercise an “international police power.” This was, Coyne argues, a “tectonic shift.” Instead of focusing on defending her own national borders, the United States would focus on “the broader Western Hemisphere.”

According to Coyne, this new U.S. interventionism in the Western Hemisphere is at least partially responsible for the rise of revolutionary ideology in Latin America, whose people often “view revolution as the only means of change,” leading them to associate capitalism with “a brutal oligarchy-military complex that has been supported by US policies — and armies.”

With the National Security Act of 1947, which restructured the U.S. military and intelligence agencies after WWII, “The imperial national security state and associated deep state — the labyrinth of government agencies, private contractors, and industries associated with the security state — were born,” Coyne concluded.

The U.S. government now self-identified as “the world’s policeman.” One might recall that President Harry Truman said America’s intervention in Korea was not a “war,” but rather a “police action.”

Coyne makes the case that the so-called Deep State acts outside of electoral politics, spanning administrations and government agencies. It provides — and withholds — “crucial information on foreign affairs.... The deep state requires that officials not be constrained by laws because they must be free to respond to unexpected events. This gives rise to rogue actions, rampant illegality, and political opportunism under the guise of advancing the national interest.”

He added that “much of the government spending on what is categorized as ‘defense’ is more often related to political privilege and corporate welfare.”

Most dangerous, Coyne contends, is that a vast military empire, one that is often outside constitutional boundaries, poses a lethal threat to liberty. He cites James Madison, who said, “Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is perhaps the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds, are added to those of subduing the force, of the people.... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

National security provides a focal point for rallying citizens around a common external cause, Coyne believes. “This shared focus diverts citizen attention away from the domestic threat of the state to external threats and affairs.” This was made particularly clear in Orwell’s classic dystopian novel, *1984*.



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In that novel, the ruling oligarchy of Oceania was perpetually at war — supposedly — with foreign powers, thus keeping the populace excited and concerned about foreign threats while their own totalitarian government exercised dictatorial control over them. Some have even speculated that our own elites have used Orwell’s book not as a warning, but as a road map.

“My skepticism, and critique, of empire,” Coyne concludes, “is based on the study of constraints and incentives facing imperialists, as well as a recognition of the negative, illiberal consequences of foreign interventions — including, paradoxically, this real possibility: less freedom and security at home.”

Unfortunately, this desire to go abroad seeking monsters to destroy continues unabated, even though interventionism and nation-building has a long history of failure. “In the wake of the US government’s chaotic exit from Afghanistan in August 2021,” Coyne laments, “there was little self-reflection regarding the realities and limits of American military imperialism. The window of introspection closed with the Russian government’s invasion of Ukraine in February, 2022, which led to renewed calls for the reassertion of American empire.”

The only way this madness will ever end is if the American people finally say “enough is enough.” This book is certainly a noble effort in that regard.

— *Steve Byas*





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