

Should guns be
banned from society?
essay sample



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1. Introduction

We live in a dangerous world, especially with guns around. One might say that guns are evil, guns kill, guns are bad. Many people advocate that guns is a major problem of the society. They believe that the world would be a better place to live in if guns were not developed. In the first place, no one could answer if guns were invented to protect or to harm. In the present time, the use of a gun depends on the person who owns it. A person buys a gun, you ask why.

They answer, “ It’s for protection”. Guns are acquired legally and illegally which is a problem because authorities cannot trace ownership of illegally-acquired firearms. In war, guns are the most basic armaments. A soldier would go to war without his trusted rifle and pistol which now comes in various models and attachments such as stocks and suppressors. Guns have developed a lot through the years. From the traditional musket, to the basic revolver and to the high-caliber machine guns. Guns have been vastly associated with many of the largest mass murders in history which is war. A nation's power may even be measured on the amount of firepower that it has.

There is a question whether or not the society could really blame the guns for the harm that it causes. This may be true for some, however, guns do not move on their own. Someone has to pull the trigger before a gun fires. So, it may be said that guns are not bad in nature and person holding the gun is responsible for any harmful effects that it produces.

Guns have been a controversial topic long enough and it is important to study because knowledge on the proper use of firearms has the potential to reduce deaths associated with it. It is also important to determine what urges people to institute their right to bear arms. In many countries, people have the right to bear arms but this remains to be debatable in the United States. It is not clearly known whether people generally have the right to arm themselves for protection or it is a matter of public policy.

1. Review of Related Literature

In the United States, the legality of whether the citizens should be allowed to bear arms or not remains to be an argument. Different sides have different interpretations of the Second Amendment in the Constitution. According to the National Rifle Association (NRA), the second amendment gives American citizens the right to possess and carry a wide range of firearms while those who advocate gun control say that the amendment “ was only meant to guarantee to States the right to operate militias” (A Right to Bear Arms).

It is noted that the Supreme Court could have easily cleared the misunderstandings pertaining to the Second Amendment but it strayed away ever since decision was handed in the case of U. S. vs. Miller in 1939. The case suggests two interpretations. The first one is that “ the Second Amendment is an individual right” but only for weapons that are common for militia while the second one suggests that the second amendment gives no right for individuals to bear arms (A Right to Bear Arms).

In the case, the Supreme Court established that the National Firearms Act bares no conflict with the Second Amendment. The Court stated that:

In the absence of any evidence tending to show that possession or use of a “shotgun having a barrel of less than eighteen inches in length” at this time has some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well regulated militia, we cannot say that the Second Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear such an instrument. Certainly it is not within judicial notice that this weapon is any part of the ordinary military equipment or that its use could contribute to the common defense. (United States v. Miller et al. Supreme Court of the United States 307 U. S. 174)

With the Second Amendment also rises a question whether or not it institutes a right for people to take possession of firearms and if the right may be enforced against state or federal regulation (A Right to Bear Arms).

III. The Facts and the Arguments

Guns have been very much associated with crime, suicide and violent acts. From 1991 to 1999, there are 29, 000 to 39, 500 annual deaths in the United States that are caused by firearms (cited in Firearm Deaths, 2001 and Smith, 2001). Homicide and suicide rates which involve guns also prove to be higher in the United States compared to other developed countries (cited in Krug, 1998 and Smith, 2001). The rate of gun-related deaths for children under 14 years of age also proved staggeringly higher in the US (cited in Div. of Violence Prevention, 1997 and Smith, 2001).

Gun owners and gun carriers proved to be more un-supportive of the regulation of firearms compared to those who do not own or carry guns. Although, a great number of gun owners and carriers still approve of proposals to regulate firearms. Moreover, the number of people who agree

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that guns make a home safer do not vary much. Forty-three percent believe that having firearms at home is safer while 40 percent disagree while the number of those who believe that concealed-carry laws promote a safer society is the same number of those who believe that concealed-carry laws is unsafe at 44 percent (Smith, 2001). These data indicate that there is only a little difference in the number of people who believe that firearms promotes a safe environment from the people who believe that firearms do not promote a safe environment. From this, we can assume that the people really are divided when speaking of the presence of guns in the society.

The main arguments against guns is that it is dangerous so it should not exist in the society while pro-gun advocates justify that guns are needed to ensure public security. Both these arguments present true. Guns are indeed dangerous and accounts for a huge number of deaths particularly in the United States (Smith, 2001). Some anti-gun advocates even argue that police officers should be unarmed in order to promote a gunless society. This however may prove to be a fatal recourse because no one can tell criminals to disarm themselves and play fair with law operatives. This is also an arguments raised by gun protagonists. If guns would be banned from the society, people will not have a way to defend themselves from criminals that have acquired guns through illegal means.

In North Carolina, people were allowed to carry concealed firearms and it was noted that the rate of violent crime in the state dropped from 660. 7 for every 100, 000 to only 591. 8. Democratic state Senator Fountain Odom then said that “ people predicted that there would be shootouts on the highway but it was not the case”. Inversely, Australia implemented a “

firearms elimination program” wherein the government forced all its citizens to surrender their firearms from shotguns, to rifles and even handguns. This ended the 25-year steady decline of crime rate in the country. Twelve months after the implementation of the program, homicide cases went up by 3.2 percent; assault cases by 8.6 percent and armed robberies increase by a huge 44 percent (Post-Gazette, 1999).

With the gun restrictions, only criminals had guns and they had less worries in committing misdeeds because ordinary citizens are prohibited from carrying or even owning guns making them unable to defend themselves from an assault or any similar threat. Studies have noted that the theft of guns is a primary source of weapons for many criminals. One of eight people who own a gun state that they had a gun that was stolen while 4 percent of households that currently do not have guns attest that they had guns that were stolen. Gun thievery appeared more prevalent in the large cities despite the fact that gun ownership is higher in the countryside (Smith, 2001).

One counter-argument against the right to bear arms indicates that people are very much afraid of crime that they that arming themselves would keep them safe. According to this argument, the self defense argument is not strong enough to let many people walk around toting their firearms. It was also interpreted as “ a fear hyped up by those who have tirelessly pushed for strict interpretation of the the Second Amendment”. Also, it is argued that having more guns in public does not promote security but rather provides a risk that an irresponsible gun toting civilian will run amuck and start shooting everyone. Arming the populace is not the solution to solving crime problems.

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The government should rather focus on dealing with other issues that promote criminal minds (Commercial Appeal, 2008).

Many political and public figures are torn between maintaining public safety without compromising the people's right to arm themselves. The National Rifle Association is one of the those organizations that are feeling the pressure of such situations. The NRA also bares minimal reaction and contentions on attempts at legislating tougher laws that limit access to firearms. On the other hand, according to many surveys, Americans blame gun related violence on the availability of guns. Guns may easily be acquired through illegal means.

Other blamed factors are parents and entertainment whereas only a minimal number point to the Internet or news media as influential factors. Women also tend to blame the availability of guns the same way that democrats do. Erstwhile, according to Republican representative and NRA board member Bob Barr, the situation is not a gun control problem but rather a cultural control problem (Cable News Network, 1999). The availability of guns only means that the government's efforts are not enough to deny many citizens access to guns through illegal means. This also connotes that many gun owners are not careful enough to ensure that their guns are safely hidden.

In England and Wales alone, there are 10, 990 offenses relating to firearms annually and many of these have been " committed by teenagers over a perceived lack of respect. Intelligence reports indicated that there are a number of teenagers who are in danger of becoming associated with gun-related crimes. According to detective chief superintendent Kevin Davis,

head of Scotland Yard's Operation Trident, the number of teenagers that have been carrying or using guns have staggeringly increased which causes a grave concern for law enforcers and parents. Davis identified that " a small minority of young people think it is more socially and morally acceptable to carry guns". With more than 30 shooting incidents happening according to Home Office, Davis relates this to a " a new generation of British-born gunmen who have developed a notion of ' disrespect' that justifies shooting over the smallest squabble" (Townsend, 2006).

In the US, doctors note that around 1, 000 children die per year whereas the National Safety Council states " a considerably lower figure". Other data indicate that in 1988, 277 children below the age of 15 were accidentally killed by firearms which according to the National Center for Health Statistics fell considerably to only 236. It was also observed that in spite of an increase in the supply of firearms in the US, the number of gun accidents involving children fell significantly by almost 50 percent for the last 20 years. It was also noted that there is a faster decline in gun-related fatalities compared to other accidents (Kopel, 1993).

No government body in the US has a responsibility to reduce gun-related deaths and the decline in the incidents may be attributed to voluntary private educational efforts. Even the NRA, which is against gun prohibitions, helps sponsor programs that reduce accidents caused by firearms. The Boy Scouts, the 4-H and many other society groups also showed support of such campaigns. These alone have helped curb gun deaths in the absence of government programs with such an objective (Kopel, 1993).

Groups that are for gun control prove to be hard to persuade and they tend to distort data on the real number of children gun-related deaths without stating their sources (Kopel, 1993). They also have a tendency to sensationalize and provide graphic images or depiction of brutal gun incidents in order to persuade more of the public to support their cause.

Pro-gun groups are for guns because it saves lives and prevents crime. According to the National Alliance Against Violence, handguns are being used as a vanguard against crime 645, 000 times a year while researcher Gary Mauser indicated that all types of guns are used 691, 000 times to ensure security (Kopel, 1993). The number of times that the guns are used for protection is double the number of deaths caused by guns every year.

Based on the results of the survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, it was concluded that American side with the better regulation of firearms in the society instead of disallowing the ownership of guns. Despite the fact that non-gun owners and carriers express greater support gun-control issues, many gun carriers and owners still support gun-control issues. Moreover, more people think that the presence of guns in the streets provides more of a threat than safety (Smith, 2001).

1. Conclusion

From the given facts and arguments, the side that states that citizens should not have a right to ownership of guns does not provide a concrete argument but rather just tend to sensationalize incidents of gun-related deaths. Data also provided information that more gun-control only increased crime rate because criminals have less to fear from unarmed civilians. Criminal minds

think that they just might meet their own death if they happen to victimize an armed civilian. Moreover, guns are becoming safer probably because of orientation programs about guns and safety precautions in many firearm models. There are now also means for the safe storage of such a weapon. Guns prove to be more of a tool for maintaining security and saving lives rather than a tool that takes lives which it has been controversially known for. Guns should indeed be regulated that people should be barred from their right of owning a gun for self-preservation. What the government should do is to spread information on how to safely keep a gun as well as safety measures when handling a gun. This would prevent unnecessary deaths from firearms.

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