

# Gun Control Debate Essay

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On the 20th of April 1999, Dylan Klebold (17 years) and Eric Harris (18 years), who were two high school seniors, shot at their classmates, and this event was referred to as the bloodiest shooting in American history. That single act did not just become a red letter day for US history; it also marked the day when the debate over gun control was brought to the public attention. The debate centered on the Second Amendment and if it should be upheld, revised or repealed. The Second Amendment states, "A well-regulated military, being necessary for the security of a free state, the right to bear arms, shall not be infringed" (Bill of Rights). However, several years later, the polity is clashing with the gun control debates. The central question of the debates is whether the right to bear arms is still reasonable and useful for today's society or it is already outdated and has become an albatross around the neck of security and law enforcement agencies.

Several interpretations/inferences can be drawn from the provision of the Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights. The first one is that the given document was created to make sure that the government would not turn on the people and no tyranny would have place in US society. On the other hand, opponents of the Second Amendment claim that the institutions of democracy are so well-entrenched that tyranny sounds mythical today. While they might have a point, it is worthwhile mentioning that no tyrant announces himself as one before assuming the office.

Another inference is that the amendment grants people the right to defend themselves on their own territory. This particular opinion and interpretation of the amendment was very widespread in the "Old South" and in parts of the US that are mainly based on agriculture. Therefore, in these specific areas, the gun culture history has existed for many years, and the idea of protecting one's home is very important. In addition, in some areas, hunting is a social event and rather popular. Considering all these aspects and looking at the gun control issue from the perspective of the aforementioned people, a firm argument can be made for gun possession. However, the same cannot be said for urban dwellers because the rate of gun violence is measurably much higher among them. Taking into consideration the statistics of violence only, urban dwellers need to have guns on the premise of protection. At the same time, in the rural areas where the gun density per head is appreciably higher, there are fewer cases of gun violence.

An important issue in the gun control debates is to define the value of a gun and the place it takes in both rural and urban cultures. Urban dwellers exclusively view guns as weapons which could be either preemptive or defensive. However, people in rural communities view weapon as a tool for sport and defense skeet shooting and scaring wild animals or human invaders away from their properties (In Gun Debate). The issue is that people with a healthy gun culture have a more reasonable understanding of how to use weapon. Thus, among them, there are fewer cases of gun violence in comparison to the places where the gun is viewed exclusively as a weapon. Looking at this, those people that say it is not guns that kill people, but it is people that kill people may have a point because gun violence stems from an unhealthy relationship with firearms.

Second Amendment opponents state that they are not for taking away all the guns from the population, but they are against using high capacity military grade assault rifles, and they have a valid point. Most of the cases of mass killings in the US have recently employed the AR-15 assault rifle, and the opponents cite this as a reason for the ban. The Aurora killings, the Newtown killings, the Happy Valley shootings, and many more have this weapon in common showing that consciously or unconsciously those who are responsible for the shootings tend to choose this weapon (Selection of the AR-15 Rifle in Premeditated Indiscriminate Mass Shootings). The question for Second Amendment proponents is why a civilian would have this kind of weapon in their home. The Newport killings make this rather clear. The killer Adam Lanza never owned such a weapon; he just took one from a person who had legally acquired it and passed the checks. There is an eerie quality about the ease with which he acquired such a weapon that raises the question of why after seeing such violence, some people still want to have guns in their home.

The flip side to this argument is that the cause of every mass killing was not the Second Amendment or the reasons behind supporting gun possession, but individuals who were psychologically unstable and had access to weapon. Furthermore, the press has played a rather significant role in over-sensationalizing the effects of violence, which might provoke mentally unstable people. In his journal article, Faria argues that the press selectively pushes to the main stream and makes headlines of gun violence cases. They selectively “forget” or choose to ignore the many cases where many dangerous perpetrators have been stopped by people carrying guns. The effect of such publications seems to make heroes out of sick people and may even encourage other unstable people to behave in the same way.

The pro-Second Amendment camp does not use the human factor as an argument, but instead promotes making changes in the existing gun laws. They advocate that access to guns should be restricted to people that do not pass the checks. This camp of supporters says that significant attention should be brought to strengthen the existing laws that regulate the acquisition of guns. Rigorous, extensive, as well as all-inclusive background checks are a part of the gun acquisition process, and it is in the interests of the government to conduct such checks (Now is the Time)

The most insidious anti-Second Amendment argument is that the presence of guns or the presence of liberal gun legislation is directly proportional to the level of violence in society. However, the US gun violence is rather exaggerated. According to the statistics, the US gun violence is not the highest in the world, even though it is higher than in certain countries that have almost draconian gun legislations. The author of the article “Here’s how U.S. Gun Violence Compares with the Rest of the World” states that, comparatively speaking, the level of US gun violence is not as high as the anti-Second Amendment lobbyists would point out. The facts and the statistics Khazan presented was that the numbers were overinflated, and statistics show that the countries with the largest number of guns do not necessarily have the highest gun violence rates (Khazan).

In the light of the violence that the US has witnessed, there should be a debate that is based on facts and not posturing. The reason why murders occur is not directly connected to the permission to have weapon, but rather to the problem that some people use weapon for wrong reasons. The only effect that the hype about the Second Amendment has had is a

boost in gun sales. It is important to note that there were reasons why the Second Amendment was instituted, and these reasons are still relevant today.

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