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The United States has the greatest percentage of gun owners in the world, where almost 22 percent of Americans own one or more than one gun. America’s historical and cultural background is important to consider and understand this tendency which has its basis in frontier expansion, revolutionary roots and colonial history. However, in the past decade, a drastic increase in the mass shootings and other crimes involving guns has been observed. There is a debate of the legal status of guns and gun laws in different sections of the society. According to gun violence archive of 2019, about 39,400 lives have been taken alone by these gun violence cases in different states of America including incidents of unintentional accidents, murders and homicides (Gun Violence Archive, 2020). The demographic shows that about 74 percent of gun owners in the United States are men who possess guns for purposes of self-defense and hunting. About 79 percent out of total gun owners in America believe that possession of weapons makes them feel safer. With regards to gun ownership and gun laws in the United States, it is very important to discuss the Second Amendment of the constitution of the United States. The Amendment states that “A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” This is the basis of our main dilemma where opinions are divided into whether the 2nd amendment should be strictly followed or that there must be a debate and considerations to bring changes in the law to apply constrictions. People supporting gun laws, control the legislation regarding the issue and believe that the second amendment was for the militias to reduce gun violence and a majority of Americans are in favor of applying new laws for gun control. The opponents believe that the 2nd amendment serves to protect the right of a common man to own a gun for personal safety and protection from foreign invaders or from local criminals. The summary of our dilemma is whether 2nd amendment solves the perpetuating condition of security by allowing guns for self-defense and security or that it is responsible for the misuse of guns and the increase in gun violence and incidents of mass shootings or related crimes.

Gun control movements in contemporary American society are linked to Mark Borinsky. Borinsky, who founded the NCCH, which is the acronym of the National Center to Control Handguns. He did so after getting badly injured in an incident of armed robbery. He started to look for groups and people who support gun control laws and working in an organized way to do the job but he found no such organization or community-based group founded the NCCH in collaboration with a CIA officer whose son got murdered in a similar incident(*History of Gun Control—ProCon.org*, n.d.). This organization and other groups supporting gun control laws have collectively spent 13 million dollars under different banners and campaigns. On the other hand, opponents accuse them by using any incident or tragedy for political purposes. They believe that gun provisions would allow them to go for escalation or deter in case of an emergency situation or an assault from a terrorist or an armed robbery. Talking about statistics, people’s opinions continue to roam around these two poles where it is also observed that they tend to support the maxims of arms control when an incident occurs. As an example, consider the incident of a mass shooting in Florida where Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School became the scene of a mass shooting on 14th February 2018, a majority was observed supporting gun control laws in America. According to Quinnipiac poll in 2019, around 61 percent of Americans were in support and favor of strict rules for arms provisions and in the political realm, about 32 percent of Republicans and 91 percent of Democrats were in favor of more gun laws.

Before solving the dilemma by analyzing the pros and cons of gun control, it is essential to understand some of the terms used in the discussion. NFA is a National firearms act and is associated with regulations and restrictions with possession or sale of silencers, machine guns and shotguns. Also, different states have different laws and regulations related to gun control or provisions of arms under specific conditions. Some states are Permissive Open Carry States that allow weapons and arms without any license or permit. Some of the states are Licensed Open Carry States and they only allow owners to have guns or firearms if they possess an issued license or permit. Another term in this regard is the Non-permissive Open Carry States, where carrying arms is totally illegal except some specific limited circumstances including self-defense, hunting and other related purposes. Some states of America are called Anomalous Open Carry Sates based on provisions of arms. In these states, possession of guns or arms may be considered as legal under the state laws but they may not be lawful according to local governments(*Gun Laws*, n.d.). There are cases where laws governed by local governments are applied more strictly than that of federal or state laws. The reason for different laws for different areas can be understood by incidents and cases of mass shootings or murders in different parts of the country.

The dilemma stated above, needs to be examined by critically analyzing existing gun laws, recommendations from the authorities and propositions from the proponents of gun control laws and regulations. This will help in assessing the pros and cons of practicing the right to hold arms and regulating gun control to determine its impact on society. Considering 2nd amendment which considers the provision of arms as a right of every citizen. Proponents of the amendment consider this in accordance with American traditions of keeping arms for protection and security. The rights of an individual in a state also included the right of bearing arms and it is a fundamental right as freedom of press, religion, speech and also for protection against government policies of encroachments on preventing liberty and freedom as provided in the Bill of rights. On the other hand, proponents of regulations on guns and supporters of more gun laws believe that this right is not unlimited like most rights. Also, the Ninth Circuit Courts of Appeal stated in 2016 that the 2nd amendment never protects the right of a person to carry a concealed gun which upholds a law that needs specific process of permission for such provisions in California. Opponents of gun control laws also believe that with more control on guns and firearms, a government is in ample position to collect all the arms from the masses and will be in a more favorable position to endorse tyrannical and oppressive policies over people leading to violation of personal freedom. Also, this is not according to a clear statement of the 2nd Amendment. The amendment does not exist for duck hunting, rather, its purpose is to protect people from street thugs and tyrannical governments. Considering the positive aspect of gun control law, a report from the Institute of Medicine stated that almost all the guns that are used in criminal and related cases and circumstances, initially enter into the circulation through legal transition. According to careful statistical analysis, almost 1.4 million guns were stolen and in general crimes including theft, shoplifting and robbery(*Gun Control—Pros & Cons—ProCon.org*, n.d.). Guns are the kind of products that can be carried away quickly and can also be sold in the same fashion, hence, making a society or communities more vulnerable to theft and burglary. So if a person who owns a gun with a proper license and is not expected to use it for a criminal or terrorist purpose, what is the probability that a person who steals it, will do the same? So regulations are important in this regard also, in order to avoid the misuse of a weapon.

Firearms and guns are important to discuss while talking about suicide rates and deaths due to firearms in the country. Statistics reveal that guns and firearms are the second leading cause of death in children. These deaths include suicides, homicides and unintentional deaths due to mistakes or friendly fire. According to a study that was published in the American Journal of Public Health, the rate of violent deaths is significantly high due to legal purchase of handguns and firearms. Opponents, on the other, hand believe that control and applying restrictions on gun sales will not help to deter crime and such activities, rather, gun ownership is helpful in deterrence and protection. Another positive aspect of more regulations on guns in the country is regarding protection of women from stalkers and domestic abusers. Every day, in the United States, five women lose their lives, on average, in incidents involving guns. The risk of causalities increases if there is a gun nearby, during a domestic dispute. This is quite alarming from a safety perspective that about 31 states in America do not permit possession of guns and ammunition by domestic abusers, however, 41 states allow a domestic abuser who is already convicted of such crime to relinquish weapon he/she owns. Another aspect that is important to consider while discussing the positive factors of gun control is the utilization of arms for self-defense. Opponents of regulations always claim that possession of weapons is a fundamental right of a citizen for self-defense and related purposes, but according to statistics, guns are very rarely used in protection and self-defense. Comparing cases using statistics of 2010, only 230 cases are justifiable, where a felon is killed by a citizen in protection compared to 8,275 criminal cases of gun homicides. This suggests that self-defense is not as sufficient as to consider provisions of licenses of firearms and lethal weapons. Suicide rates in the United States were increasing during 1999 to 2013, reaching almost 0.3 million. After gun control laws when US gun ownership reduced, the suicide rate significantly dropped. From the decrease of suicide rates in the United States, researchers estimated that the suicide rates are increased by almost 27 percent for the 10 percent increase in gun ownership.

There are numerous other domains and factors that can be discussed in order to reach a solution to the dilemma. One of the important domains, is ethics, as to how gun laws or their regulations are related, in the ethical realm. An important question that revolves around gun control regulations, is whether those individuals who are strictly against violence would want to bear arms or use violent means in the pursuit of preventing a greater or bigger evil from taking place. The categorical imperative propounded by Immanuel Kant can be used to test the idea of what the consequences would be if everyone possessed firearms. An individual might feel better if he had a gun to use against an intruder or perpetrator, but would he prefer a certain situation where everyone carried guns at all times? This would also imply that at any point in time, any person would start shooting at the sight of someone remotely threatening or hostile. As far as this dilemma is concerned, gun control regulations pass the test of the categorical imperative(Johnson & Cureton, 2019). This paper strives to present some arguments which probe into the dynamics of the dilemma of whether the gun control laws perpetuate internal and external security or that they increase the threat by enabling mass shootings. As implied by this imperative, the peculiar phrase ‘gun control’, also means different things for different people. Liberals and conservatives have been fighting over these laws which chiefly govern and regulate the possession and use of firearms. The categorical imperative or the ethical philosophy of Kant also maintains that it is the intention of an individual that determines whether his actions are moral or not. The results of that action cannot gauge the level of morality reflected by that action. Individual rights and social utilitarianism are two strands of philosophy that are constantly refuting each other in the debate of gun control and it seems impossible to validate the limitlessness of individual rights regarding usage and possession of firearms even if the justification is to be done on utilitarian grounds.

It is important to inspect the raw data of the last few years, regarding countries with gun laws that are more restrictive than the United States of America. We can come to the conclusion that restrictive gun laws result in a lower homicide rate and thus a safer environment as a whole. Countries like Finland and Switzerland have strict gun laws. Every person who aspires to own a gun has to go through an arduous process through which mental health and criminal records are investigated. If the person aspiring to own a gun fulfills the necessary criterion for gun ownership, only then is he allowed to own weapons. As per the record, in the year 2007, Switzerland was ranked at number three, in terms of gun ownership, which means that the third-largest population of people who owned guns resided there, but at the same time, the homicide rates are extremely low. Individuals and societies that are in support of ownership and against controls and regulations, suggest that ownership is essential, not only for security on an individual level, but also on a national level. For instance, the Libertarian Party stated that a trained citizenry and the well-armed group is one of the best protections against foreign invasion and domestic crimes. Because in the amendment, the right to bear arms and keep militia is not only limited to organized and formal military bodies. This suggests that in any case of emergency, ordinary citizens can be very helpful in making a paramilitary formation to assist the main army to protect and defend the country against foreign invaders and enemies. But it has negative consequences as well as believed by supporters of banning ownership. They believe that in a conflict or dispute, the presence of a gun or similar weapon, makes the situation more violent instead of de-escalating it. A detailed discussion of pros and cons suggests that although there are concerns regarding self-defense and personal security in view of regulations on possession of guns, a growing number of causalities due to mass shootings and other damages identify the needs for more regulations.

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