Social Violence: The Role of Gun Culture

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The roots of violence are many because they sprout from diverse sources. Often the sources interact and confound to make violence a complex societal phenomenon. In the context of this chapter, violence is defined as intents and/or acts of doing harm to an individual or a group of people. Violence is thus a very broad term and encompasses numerous social and political grievances. The sources of violence can be broadly classified as natural, social, political, commercial, and technological. The classification of the sources, their respective roots, and associated impacts are presented in Table 4.1. Each of the sources of violence possesses its own traits, social impacts, and long term consequences. Except for the natural source, all other sources originate from human activity. Therefore, their elimination also depends upon human action and resolve. The differentiation among various forms of violence created by humans can be often murky. In fact, a certain class of violence can feed into other to distort its traits and character. A few business practices (commercial violence) can lead to income inequality and social stratification (social violence). Justification of social justice by certain political actions ("set-asides" and "equal opportunity") and propagating political and religious goals using digital tools and methods by terrorist groups are other noteworthy examples. In the context of the classification, it would be appropriate to refer to Gandhi's vision on diffusion of societal functions and activities: "I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into water tight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another" (Attenborough 1982). The proposed classification of violence is not very far from Gandhi's vision of social discourse and it does not imply rigid boundaries among the five forms resulting

from human activity. Thus the forms of violence are not mutually exclusive. However, a delineation of the source of violence is an exercise of paramount importance for developing an effective set of solutions and social policies for its rectification.

Table 4.1: Source/Root and Impacts of Violence	
Natural	Climate change, drought, famine, earthquake, etc.
Social	Racism, caste system, apartheid, gangs, fire arms, mental health, human trafficking, drugs and inequality
Political	Dictatorships, weak governments and hybrid (religious and political) states
Commercial	Environmentally questionable products, processes and waste disposals; excessive production of goods and services, and unsustainable consumption
Technological	Internal combustion engines (greenhouse gas emission and climate change) and digital revolution (a tool to propagate religious fundamentalism, terrorism, and bullying)

Perhaps the most troublesome and long-lasting form of violence emanates from social traditions, beliefs, and practices. They have existed since the very beginning of the human civilization and reincarnated in different forms over centuries. Some of the important forms of social violence include the institutions of slavery, caste systems, racism, apartheid, human trafficking, drugs, inequality, and gangs. The social violence is legitimized through the perceived needs of the society, prevailing social practices, religious beliefs and corrupt, misguided political power. It is a long-lasting social stigma, and extremely detrimental to the objectives of just and fair civil society. The social violence can be carried on for generations and centuries. It is also

extremely difficult to uproot, and often attempts to uproot them yield a different form of violence.

Social violence can be further aggravated by economic factors such as poverty, broken families, drug and substance abuse, dysfunctional mental health policies, and technological advances. Technological advances may include the violent television programs under the umbrella of games and entertainment, a flow of hateful campaigns coupled with religious extremism, and access to powerful semi-automatic and automatic fire arms. All of these factors generally shift the social equilibrium from a relatively peaceful (civil) to a violent society. A social discourse with civility (polite, reasonable and respectful behavior) is fundamental to the existence and sustainment of the civil society. A term "civility index" is often used to assess social behavior of students in class room situations (Clark 2003; Kaslow and Watson 2016). If the term, "civility index" can be used to assess the state of social equilibrium, many of us would conclude that a decline of the index has taken place in recent times, in spite of the progress in democratizing world governments, technological advancements and eradicating hunger world-wide.

Widespread access to powerful weapons, such as semi-automatic and automatic guns in the United States, introduces a lethal dimension to social violence. A small but significant percentage of a population with a mindset to harm lives and institutions, and equipped with lethal weapons (a fatal combination), is a threat to the survival of the civil social structure. Such a fatal combination challenges long-term sustenance of a civil society. In recent times, the United States has witnessed mass shootings in schools and university campuses, places of worship, shopping malls, athletic arenas, nightclubs and movie theaters. After US's worst mass shootings in Newtown, Aurora, Orlando, and Columbine High School, voices of activists and reform-minded

politicians raising issues on gun violence have been drowned out. For example, in spite of the sincere effort by the former president, Obama and like-minded politicians little has been accomplished. The activists and reform –minded politicians remain ineffective. These shootings are the symptoms of the damaging influence and power of the gun culture. The proponents of the culture, such as National Rifle Association (NRA) have managed to deflect real issues encountered by the society.

The gun culture sprouted from the societal need and it was nurtured by the basic tenets of democracy, capitalism, and the need for security against perceived threats. The aforementioned US shootings point to an alarming trend and await resolute societal and political actions. Admittedly, underlying causes of social violence in general and gun violence in particular are complex, which make them challenging social issues to address and resolve. The complexity of the gun culture in the United States arises from the fact that (a) it has been a part of the American history for centuries, (b) a large proportion of the population believe that they need guns for their way of life and security, (c) the gun industry contributes over thirty billion dollars to the economy and employs about quarter of a million people and (d) the Second Amendment ensures the right of most citizen to bear arms. But, the complexity of the issue need not be a pretext for indifference toward the victims of gun violence.

Social Action and Reaction

The roots of violence emerge from various human endeavors resulting from social, religious, cultural, economic, environmental, and military aspirations of a society. An analysis of these societal aspirations leads one to surmise that mass violence possess a common feature

which originates from counteracting forces of social action and reaction. An action required to satisfy a societal function precedes a specific form of violence. For example, to grow crops and provide food to masses, the social groups discovered an action plan in the form of the profession of agriculture. The action plan provided employment to people and business activity to entrepreneurs and traders. It can neither be stopped nor postponed (unless forced by natural causes) to prevent famine and starvation. The violence in the form of slavery resulted from this societal requirement. Subsequently, the society needed to figure out a solution to deal with the violence embedded in the plan of action for agriculture. The emerging solution is called a reaction.

The coupling of the social action and violence often takes a long time to understand and substantiate. The practice of slavery illustrates this argument. The coupling was initially ignored because the action was required to satisfy the need of the society. The bigger purpose of the society prevailed. Once effects and impacts of the social action became evident and accepted to be harmful to the society, remedial measures were sought, deliberated, and implemented. After deliberations and consent of the political power, some of the remedial measures (societal reactions/policies) were executed.

The reactions are generally well-intended. However, their impact on the welfare of the society may depend upon their constituent elements. For example, a number of considerations proposed by genuine and/or vested interests may be considered and incorporated in the formulation of the social reaction. Some of the considerations are likely to yield desired effects that can sustain civil and law abiding society for the long time, while others may sow seeds of perpetual violence, for example the practice of slavery. The overall outcome of an executed

reaction could lead to a spectrum of societal impacts ranging from a fair and equitable to extremely unjust living conditions for the people.

The execution of the societal reaction completes a cycle of social action and reaction which can be collectively called a social practice. An ill-conceived social reaction plants a seed of perpetual violence and initiates a societal conflict. An uninterrupted social practice may continue for a long time. An ordinary social practice may be transformed into a major, long-lasting violent conflict. The conflict could become perpetual and may last for generations and centuries. Slavery, racial injustice, and caste systems are typical examples of flawed and repressive social reactions.

Illustration 4.1 schematically shows the relationship among societal actions, reactions and violence. As stated earlier, the survival and sustenance of the human race requires social actions. Social institutions needed to be developed and sustained. Military establishments provided security to people, their wealth and institutions. These actions also led to some tensions in the society. To address the violence emerging from the tension, certain rules, regulations and laws (collectively called social reactions) were conceived and enforced. The motivations for the social reactions were driven by the need to bring order, peace, and prosperity to the society. Commitments to the rules, regulations, and laws were expected. But unintended consequences of the social reactions emerged: one of them was the violence. Thus it can be concluded that the violence is rooted within the counteractive forces of action and reaction which are components of a given social practice. The practice of slavery has lasted for centuries and in spite of protests and reforms for over centuries it exists even today.
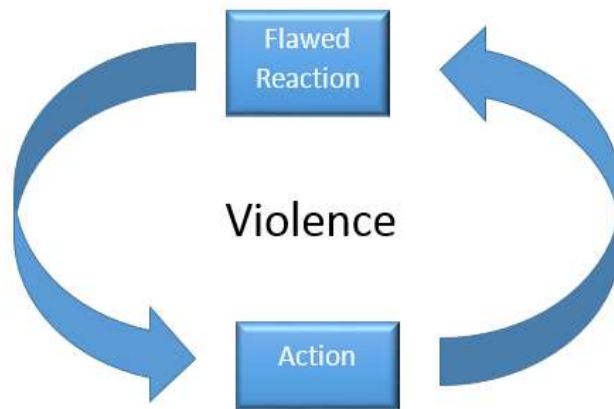
Illustration 1: Violence results from a continuous cycle of action and flawed reaction. The cycle may become perpetual, transforming an ordinary societal issue into chronic, violent conflict.

A violent root sprouts from the flawed social reaction, but not social action. Because, a social action is required for the survival of human race and the action is intrinsic to the existence of the race. If there is any violent component embedded in the social action, it needs to be removed by the societal reaction. If a given reaction does not work, then other reactions need to be devised until one is discovered with the least harmful outcome. Subsequently, the least harmful reaction needs to be implemented. It is required for the well-being and long-term sustenance of the society. A sustained, long term public policy reflects an ultimate societal reaction in response to the violence embedded in the original action or flawed reaction.

The gun culture and associated violence can be analyzed in a similar manner. The gun culture in the United States emerged from the social need of hunting (outdoor sports) and militia (frontier and revolutionary) ethos. After embracing the gun culture for centuries, the society has

recognized some of its destructive influences. At present, response of the public and government to rectify these destructive influences may be characterized as inadequate. Because of these inadequate measures, the social practice of the gun culture and violence emanating from it have continued unabated, if not with greater force and lethality. Now, guns are available to general public which allow loading of multiple rounds. These guns are capable of inflicting serious, large scale harm to the public.

The tradition of gun ownership precedes the history of the United States as a sovereign and democratic nation. The phrase "gun culture" was coined by a historian (Hofstadter 1970) to describe the United States' long-held desire for owning guns. The American perspective of gun ownership is tied to the hunting/sporting and militia/frontier ethos, and it dates back to days even earlier than the American Revolutionary War. During that time, it was a necessity to possess shooting skills for rural American men and it was considered to be a rite of passage for males entering adulthood. Thus many American citizens embrace and celebrate gun ownership and consider it to be a part of their heritage. Hunting (a method to control animal population and an outdoor activity for food) and security against external threats remain central justifications for gun ownership. The militia spirit is an element of the gun culture.

Modern community settlements drift away from the need for rural living. Most of the American population reside in urban communities. The 2010 census reports that 80.7% of the American population lived in urban areas. The urban communities are in no need to pursue subsistence hunting (food) for living and survival. Furthermore, the military protects the security of the state and civilian law enforcement personnel secures rural and urban communities. Thus the attitude of the public towards the gun culture perplexes people from other parts of the world (for examples, Europeans and Asians) who wonder why the American public has not demanded

stricter gun control measures in the face of mass shootings. Fatalities from gun crimes outnumber the deaths inflicted by terrorism (guns also as weapons) or automobile accidents, yet the public and policymakers remain indifferent to enact stricter laws for gun control.

After reviewing the gun culture in a historical context in the United States, one needs to have an objective assessment of the Second Amendment of the US Constitution ("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"). The Second Amendment provides a constitutional protection for gun ownership. The Amendment was adopted on December 15, 1791 and is the subject of interpretation with regard to the definitions of "… a well-regulated Militia" and also "security of a Free State." In addition, social needs are markedly different today than what they were over 200 years ago when the Second Amendment was drafted and adopted. The argument to protect rights of armed people against government raises questions about the basic tenets of the democracy. Nonviolent actions such as boycotts and noncooperation are powerful and proven methods to counter unjust policies and tyranny of governments in a democratic system. Of course, the elements of the Second Amendment are the topics of constitutional arguments, and a fairly large number of opinions already exist about them.

Human rights, violence, and nonviolence

The central theme of this chapter is to analyze social violence in the context of gun culture. The social violence impacts human rights. They are closely, but antagonistically related. This section of the chapter will explore the relationship and arrive at a qualitative conclusion with respect to the impact of the gun culture and social violence on human rights.

Moral traditions of different cultures and major religious practices of the world enlighten us about their intentions for and relevance in safeguarding basic human dignity (rights). However, a formal recognition and broader acceptance of human rights began with a document prepared and released by the United Nations (UN) on December 10, 1948 titled "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." The Declaration was prepared and published after several years of deliberations among prominent intellectuals from the major countries of the world at the time. The foundation of human rights advocacy and its implications for governance are contained in this document.

There are thirty articles in the Declaration of Human Rights. Each article specifies rights of human beings which are essential for their survival and prosperity. None of the articles specifies root causes that infringe upon the rights. Perhaps the non-specificity was justifiable because an attempt to correlate causes and infringements may have taken the UN and governments of most countries into unchartered territory of the world order at the time of the Declaration. The unchartered territory comprised of the mode of and accountability in governance in different parts of the world. Article 3 of the Declaration is relevant to the gun culture which specifies the right to life ("Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of a person").

The most chronic, damaging and long-lasting forms of violence emerge from social traditions, beliefs and practices. Some of the practices that have led to the gun violence are the basic elements of the gun culture. They include liberal firearms licenses and availability of guns to armed criminals and gangs in some neighborhoods and social groups. These combined with governmental negligence of mental health issues, ubiquitous supply of drugs and human trafficking further aggravate the fault lines of the social structure. The gun culture has been

justified by the perceived human needs (tools for hunting and security) and social practices (gun ownership). This culture has been carried on for generations and centuries. The longer it has been practiced, the more arduous it has become to uproot in spite of the fact that the gun control advocates are even better organized today than they were over two hundred years ago. Justifying and sustaining the gun culture can be explained with social needs. A major segment of the society has been persuaded to defend and propagate the culture. However, the gruesome violence occurring in some US cities and institutions of learning, worship, and hospitals can't be explained and justified by the traditional arguments. Simply, with all intellectual honesty, it needs to be stated that the gun violence is the legacy of the gun culture and defenders of the culture must own the legacy.

A review of gun violence in the context of global advocacy of human rights by the UN takes us towards the central theme of this chapter. It is accepted that the guns by themselves do not take away life, liberty, and security of a person and, therefore, guns do not infringe upon human rights. But guns are made to function according to the wishes of the owner or operator. Therefore, a gun and the user should be treated as a single entity, while the sole responsibility for the damage to a person or a group of people rests on the individual human being using it. The harm caused or to be caused by guns need not be countered by supplying additional guns in the prevailing social structure ("an eye for an eye leave the whole world blind"). Easy access of guns to people with questionable mindsets and backgrounds does infringe upon the right to life, liberty, and security of a large number of victims in the society, as illustrated by the number of gun violence incidents in recent times. The gun culture of today includes a major fraction of the US population: law abiding gun-owners, tainted, criminal personalities, and a small group with mental illness or vulnerability. The human right is violated by the last two groups. We as a

society perhaps need to understand and accept that the violence emanating from the gun culture does infringe upon basic human right (Article 3). This can be done without harming the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

The severity, frequency, and lethality of the violent incidents emanating from the gun culture intensify with technological innovations and advancements. Some recent examples include widespread use of social media, fake news, and internet videos propagating hate and religious extremism. These innovations in conjunction with the gun culture inflict spontaneous and large scale damage to the civil society irrespective of geographical boundaries. Technological innovations and advancements have unintended outcomes and they could be major threats. This is another example of the social action and reaction catalyzing new forms of violence for which the society was not prepared before the technological innovations were introduced in the social space. To alleviate these new forms of violence (enhanced by technology), numerous ideas and suggestions are being discussed and debated (with respect to the content, use and software of internet) and hopefully appropriate solutions/reactions will emerge. Censorship and bans on the electronic media are not an answer. Most of us appreciate that the media has also improved the quality of our lives by bringing people of the world closer. But the recognition of the conjoined problem of violence with the media and finding moral solutions are needs of our time.

One social reaction, public policy, is shaped by a number of considerations and implemented with due constitutional process. Some of the policies (such as to reward interests of a select group or enhance revenue of the state) may have repressive influences on the outcome of the executed policies. These policies may be identified as flawed because they are primarily devoid of the just or moral forces and hence they become sources of protests, violence, and

social conflict. The gun culture is the result of the flawed social policies. Other examples will be provided in the next section of this chapter.

To deal with gun violence, social needs require the development of just policies. A social discourse is needed which should lead to manifestation of moral forces in the development of just policies, while discarding forces of repressive influences simultaneously. The policy elements with repressive influences, even to a very small group of people, need to be rejected. In the context of gun culture, the moral forces should emanate from the lives of victims (who may or may not be gun-owners) and children in schools and universities who are likely to become potential victims, rather than from the interests of business establishments promoting the gun culture and the profit motivation of firearms industries.

Furthermore, gun ownership should be limited to only those who are eligible, competent, and must have them. Those who own guns must be thoroughly educated, trained, and held accountable for their safety and lawful deployment. It is apparent that too many people in the United States possess them in spite of the fact that they don't need them and are even likely to misuse them.
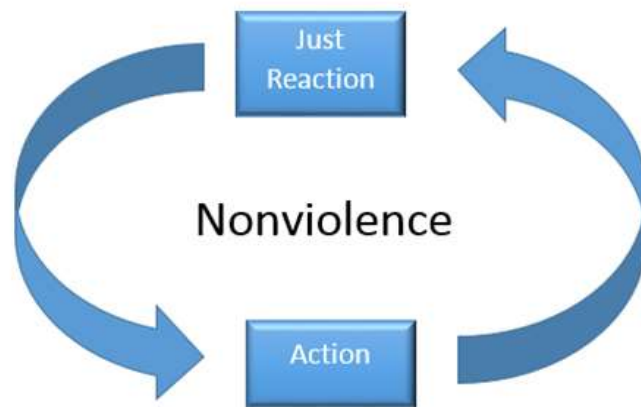
Illustration 4.2: For a culture of nonviolence to be initiated and sustained, the nature of reactions needs to be carefully chosen. The reaction must not be based on negative emotions (anger, greed, vindictiveness, etc.). They need to be derived from positive emotions (love, sympathy, generosity, etc.), and therefore termed as just reaction.

The aforementioned narratives on violence and gun culture leads one to reconstruct the schematic for the societal action and reaction as presented earlier in Illustration 4.1. The "flawed reaction" is replaced by "just reaction" such as depicted in Illustration 4.2. The social practice employing just reactions (policies) will lead to a societal order expected to be civil (nonviolent) and law abiding. The social actions and reactions are centered on the principles of nonviolence. In such a civil society, there will be a compatibility between the aspirations of the people, development, human rights, and rule of law. In an unstable social environment (with elements of violence) the human rights become matters of secondary importance, if not totally abandoned. Such a violent society may survive, but eventually it heads towards its rapid decline.
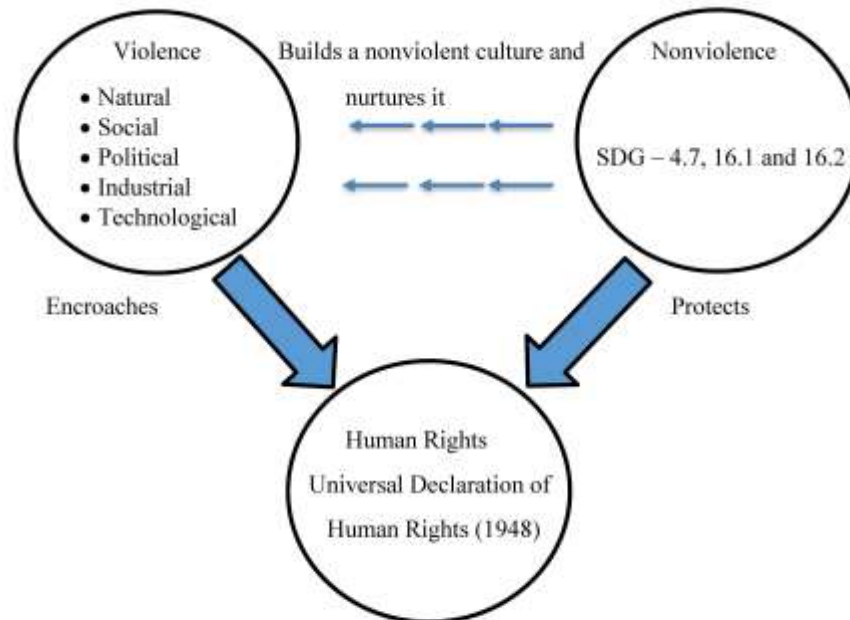
Illustration 4.3: Interrelationships between human rights, violence and nonviolence.

Illustration 4.3 qualitatively shows interrelationships and interactions among human rights, violence, and nonviolence. It is inclusive of the Gandhi's vision of social discourse referenced earlier with regard to the interplay among political, social and religious endeavors. A constant interplay between moral (nonviolent) and immoral (violent) social forces emanating from human aspirations, religious practices, government policies, state of economy, and business practices leads to a social equilibrium. The established equilibrium defines acceptable, perhaps tolerable limits of social violence at a given time. It is apparent that these tolerable limits are results of long term social experiments. It should also be noted that the limits of tolerable violence are not rigid social demarcation boundaries, but they are subject to movements and adjustments with the change in climate, population migration, technological developments, and nature of political power. Civil and law-abiding citizens would welcome, accept and honor

socially acceptable and enforceable human rights which are within the accepted limits of the social distress.

It is also noted from Illustration 4.3 that violence of any kind encroaches the human rights. The violence may be rooted in social practices (reactions or policies) which could be results of diverse causes confounded into a given form of violence. The violence is inflicted on individuals or a significant segment of the society denying their dignity and just expectations.

The violence emanating from the gun culture affects human rights. The gun culture empowers a group of people to harm persons of their choosing and even take away their lives. Such a decision and action are beyond the natural intellect and wisdom of humans as endowed by the God (Cortright 2009). The argument highlights that there are inherent limits of human knowledge and judgment, thus it is not possible for humans to grasp and execute absolute, moral truth. Life and death is such a moral truth.

For the sake of completeness, a relationship between the nonviolent philosophy and organized advocacy of human rights needs to be discussed. An appreciation and the practice of human rights are evident in various cultural traditions, moral practices, and religious beliefs. But they remained only intuitive wisdoms and were subject to interpretations and distortions. Because only misinterpretations and distortions can justify and legalize the slavery and caste system for centuries. With respect to the progress of nonviolence philosophy and human rights in recent times, three major events have taken place in the last century. First was the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and over more than a half century later the second event was an announcement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (United Nations MDGs 2000). Subsequently, the third event was a declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

(United Nations SDGs 2015). The topics of nonviolence and human rights are much broader, but the UN documents make them global in character.

The MDGs initiative was mute with respect to nonviolent methods and actions for the advocacy of human rights and achieving global peace; however, the initiative was considered to be successful. Subsequently, the UN recognized the role of nonviolence and civil culture in the global arena for advocacy of human rights, and later some nonviolent goals and actions were articulated as SDG sub-goals 4.7, 16.1 and 16.2. Table 4.2 presents the Sustainable Development Goals 4.7, 16.1 and 16.2.

Table 4.2: Sustainable Developmental Goals for Developing Nonviolent Culture	
SDG # 4.7	By 2030 ensure all students acquire knowledge and skills through education to honor human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture embracing peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and an appreciation for cultural diversity
SDG # 16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
SDG # 16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children

The SDG 4.7 states that all students acquire skills to honor human rights, gender equality, and promotion of a culture for embracing nonviolence and peace, global citizenship, and cultural diversity. Admittedly, at the global level, this is an enormous task that requires commitments of all governments around the world. Furthermore, achieving the goal by 2030 is undoubtedly a major challenge considering the fact that many parts of the world even today lack educational infrastructure. The SDG 16.1 is a qualitative goal for reducing all forms of violence and related

death rates. The sub-goal again requires massive commitments of all governments for developing a reliable statistical data base including crimes from all kinds of violence. The governments must also commit to the objective of the sub-goal and agree that progress will be made on yearly basis. The SDG # 16.2 is a children-centric goal to end abuse, exploitation, torture, and trafficking. The sub-goal is extremely important to defend and protect the young population and future generations of global citizens, but again the sub-goal is qualitative and would be difficult to monitor and quantify.

The SDG sub-goals, related tasks to be performed, and the timeline to achieve them were prepared and shared with noble intents. However, they seem to be more like stretch-goals. One can imagine the magnitude of social, economic, and political capital that need to be invested into reforming just one form of violence—the prevailing American gun culture. The documentation of the sub-goals is certainly a positive development. Because it is for the first time a global institution, the UN has recognized the role of nonviolent culture for protecting and promoting human rights. The initiatives can conceivably steer the global community toward peace, prosperity, and security. But, just the recognition of nonviolent culture for the good of society at the global level will not be enough. Their implementation and accountability will require substantial effort and resources which the global community must provide because the root causes that initiate and perpetuate violence are many and they emerge from diverse origins. Furthermore, the confounding effect distorts the original violent roots, often requiring a long time to understand and define the social malady to formulate proper corrective measures. Developing a social policy to address chronic social violence thus becomes a difficult task.

It should be understood that an uninterrupted, continuing escalation of violence is like a fuel to the fire that can irreversibly damage the social fabric and even threaten its existence. An

objective analysis of the roots and causes of each form of violence is essential before appropriate, corrective measures can be developed and implemented for a sustainable civil society. At the same time, a sustainable and progressive society must be intellectually and economically capable of protecting human rights, as these rights are universally acceptable irrespective of time.

It is apparent from Illustration 4.3 that there is a need for social institutions to promote nonviolent culture and enforce compliance with human rights. These institutions ought to be conceived, developed, and sustained. Furthermore, they need to be endorsed and secured by the political power so that they become integral parts of the social structure. The objectives of these institutions would be centered on the development of a nonviolent culture, the elimination of violent policies sowing seeds of long-term conflict, and the promotion of human rights. Such institutions would insure that a nonviolent culture prospers and human rights are honored to the fullest.

Gun Culture-Inspired Events

Chicago, Illinois

For a while, the crime rates in a few suburbs of Chicago have been a subject of extensive media coverage and a matter of major concern from the law and order considerations. In the context of the gun culture it is illustrative to have a brief assessment of the chronic crime situation. In 2015 and 2016 the number of homicides in Chicago were 528 and 812 respectively. The homicide rate in 2016 alone is greater than one fourth of the number of lives lost in the 9/11

terrorism attack on the Twin Towers in New York. Indeed, the crime statistics of the recent years in Chicago are alarming

To address the violent crime problem this year, in 2017, the city of Chicago flooded the streets with one thousand extra police officers on the Fourth of July weekend. But they could not make a dent in the frequency of the continuing gun violence. In fact, the city experienced one of the most violent Independence Day weekends in recent years. At least 102 people were shot between late Friday afternoon and early Wednesday. Among the people shot, 15 were killed and the remaining 87 were wounded. In spite of the deployment of a new technology, "ShotSpotter," law enforcement was unable to bring the violence under control. The trigger points for the violence were petty disputes that escalated into a situation when someone pulled out a gun. The violent and organized groups in the City of Chicago absorbed illegal guns coming from external sources. These external guns added fuel to the fire already ignited by existing guns, poverty, unstable families, gangs, and drugs. A total of 159 guns were seized during the Fourth of July weekend. It is apparent that modern technology and law enforcement resources are not enough and unlikely to succeed in getting the Chicago gun violence under control.

A transformation of the gun-violence infested neighborhoods to a civil community which is nonviolent, caring, and supportive needs to take place. Such a transformation is the call of the city of Chicago neighborhoods. The transformation requires inculcation of moral forces within the family, neighborhood, law enforcement, and the governments at all levels. The process of inculcation of moral forces is slow for which patience and sustained resources are basic needs. As presented earlier, the process can be implemented by embracing and practicing socially compatible moral reactions and policies.

The civil society and justice system in Chicago appear to be under criminal assaults. In spite of sufficient law enforcement resources the situation continues to deteriorate. Yet, a major segment of the society—primarily, proponents of the gun culture in the country—appears to be ambivalent. The American public would like to know plans of the gun culture proponents to curb perpetuation of the violence, for example NRA. Their denials and narratives have even created an uncertainty about the causes of the violence in the city and, for that matter, in other cities and institutions of the United States as well.

One can imagine the state of social behavior and power of the criminal enterprise of the same crime infested neighborhoods in Chicago if there were no guns. Significantly fewer people would be hurt and there will be a drastic reduction in life threatening injuries. The gun violence is the result of social reactions burdened with flawed policies such as portability and access of powerful guns as they are crafted by the vested interests representing gun and ammunition industries. Remedial measures based on just social reactions and appropriate policies are necessary to alleviate the crime exasperated by an uncontrolled supply of the powerful semi-automatic and automatic guns. The governments are capable to develop and enforce supply limits.

An objective assessment of the situation in Chicago leads one to believe that the gun culture is the prime contributor to the criminal enterprise perpetuating violence. However, it is not the only contributor. Social ills such as gangs, drugs, poverty, and race relations along with guns have collectively led to the deterioration of the city neighborhoods to the present deplorable state. An effective solution to the problem needs to consider and study the lifestyles and values at the individual, family, and neighborhood levels. The transformation toward a nonviolent lifestyle and culture must begin with individuals and then extended to groups, neighborhoods and

communities. Parents need to be informed, educated, and involved to shape the future of their offspring. The adolescents with violent background and history must go through rigorous rehabilitation and education programs before they become a part of the society. And families must take responsibility for making communities and neighborhoods peaceful. The law enforcement should complement the efforts made by the families, neighborhoods, and communities. The law enforcement alone can't be disproportionately burdened and held accountable for the deteriorating crime situation of the troubled neighborhoods.

Alexandria, Virginia

The shooting of the Republican Congressman Steve Scalise, House majority whip, at a congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Virginia on June 14, 2017 is the latest episode in the long history of gun violence in the US. The shooting was a horrific act of a lone shooter James T. Hodgkinson, perhaps a mentally troubled person. During the encounter, he was shot by the capital police and died.

The shooting of the lawmaker, known for his support of gun culture, has energized his colleagues with similar political background and philosophy. For a considerable period, some members of Congress have been making persistent calls for more relaxed gun control laws. Their voices have become even louder after the shooting. Some of them are suggesting that lawmakers should carry guns wherever they go. The belief here is that a mere proximity of a gun to a potential victim ensures protection of her or his life against threats from guns of attackers. These lawmakers are proponents of the idea that the law-abiding citizens should be able to defend for themselves anywhere and everywhere. Bills have been introduced in the Republican-held House

to allow lawmakers to almost always carry a concealed weapon, eliminate federal control on silencers, and recognize concealed carry permits of other states to be legal in Washington D.C. These developments illustrate the attitude, thought process, and power of the gun culture. The initiatives undertaken by the Congressmen are examples of flawed policies under development. One wonders about and searching for lawmakers defending the rights (Article 3 of the Declaration) of potential victims of all ages.

Perhaps the most disturbing outcome of the tragic shooting of Congressman Scalise and three others is the motivation for some lawmakers to justify liberal laws to arm people with more guns in the names of "self-defense" and "good guys with guns." It is now personal for these lawmakers. Several of them cite a list that was found in the possession of the gunman with names of six members of the Congress. The justification for the proposed relaxation of gun laws is coming from the political leadership of the party in power; therefore, it should be taken seriously. It is my view that if this justification had any merit, by now the United States should be a gun-violence-free country since "good guys" have owned guns for "self-defense" and also for defense of others attacked by the guns of bad guys.

Pillars of Support for Gun Culture

Social violence of any kind is often conjoined with the power structure that may have originated from societal needs, racial distinctions, religious beliefs, business practices, and ethical norms of the political power. The gun culture of the United States is sustained by a power structure embedded in the social traditions and the Constitution. Earlier discussions about the

social requirements for guns, constitutional protection, and current practice of the gun culture have already shed some lights on the probable pillars of support for the culture.

According to a political theory of hierarchy (Sharp 2013), power is inherent in practically all social and political relationships. The power rests on a social and political support pillars. Therefore, the violence emanating from the power must also rest on support pillars erected by the social and political establishments. The support pillars of power, and hence the violence, is generally multi-faceted. To come up with corrective solutions for a prevailing social, violent situations emerging from the gun culture, one needs to identify these pillars. Subsequently, nonviolent actions need to be conceived, designed, developed, and executed sequentially in order of their effectiveness and intensity to dismantle them.

The power of the gun culture rests on the support pillars of a large number of indifferent citizens, heavily endowed and politically powerful gun lobby, lawmakers sponsored by the gun lobby, and the Second Amendment. Through these pillars (representing a large proportion of the population), the gun culture dictates its wishes onto even those who vehemently oppose their beliefs and practices. A nonviolent plan of actions needs to objectively assess the strength of these pillars and develop strategic initiatives with the priority of bringing them down one by one. Obviously, all these pillars of support need to be removed if one wishes to uproot the menace of gun violence in its entirety.

Concluding Remarks

The ramifications of the gun culture on violent social crimes, specifically in the context of human rights encroachments have been discussed and analyzed. A historical perspective of the

gun culture reveals that it has been an integral part of the American heritage for almost three centuries. The social tradition justified legal protection of gun ownership through the Second Amendment to the Constitution. An analysis of the gun culture through a recently proposed conceptual framework of social action and reaction (applicable to all kinds of violence) and the nature of societal response emerging from them have been conducted. The culture was a result of the social action designed to satisfy the societal needs well before the independence of the United States. Centuries later, an analysis of the culture leads one to believe that the interests of the society are not served by its perpetuation. The time has come to accept that technology has made guns more lethal and social needs are now very different from what they were almost three centuries ago. Such an acceptance is essential if we are to move forward with reforms of the gun culture to minimize continuing damage to the society.

An organized and focused advocacy for the advancement of the human rights began in 1948 under the auspices of the United Nations. A number of initiatives were undertaken by the UN to protect, preserve and promote human rights in all of its member countries. Some countries protested specific contents of the rights, and even today these countries are defiant to a few specific articles of the Declaration. For examples, Saudi Arabia had reservations on the religious freedom and the former Soviet Union, now Russia disagreed with the right related to employment. The encroachments of human rights by social violence emanating from the gun culture are an expected but worrisome reality that needs to be dealt with. Two recent events representing current state of affairs—the first in Chicago and the second in Alexandria, highlight violations of the rights of people comprising social strata from ordinary citizens in Chicago to a very powerful and privileged Congressmen in Washington DC. The Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG) of the UN announced in 2015 duly recognize the role of nonviolent culture for the

global peace. The SDG have set three sub-goals for the member countries to adopt, implement, and monitor.

This chapter infers that there are inherent elements of incompatibility between the gun culture and advocacy of human rights in the United States that arise from the lethality and abundance of automatic and semi-automatic guns. To address and rectify the social ills associated with the gun culture, a reconciliation needs to be made between the Second Amendment of the US Constitution and Article 3 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The number of lives lost to gun violence in the country is inordinately high. It could be impacted and minimized through bans on assault weapons, tougher controls on gun shows and the online firearms business. Furthermore, even greater benefits could be accomplished if availability of guns is restricted to only those who must have them. An enforcement of the UN's SDG goals for the development of a culture embracing nonviolence as the cohesive force in communities of the world is a step in the right direction. Social practices with moral actions and reactions are the guiding lights for nurturing and sustaining nonviolent cultures.

Technological developments and progressive societal activities tend to drive the social discourse towards an unjust and unfair culture. It needs to be understood and recognized that development, progress, prosperity, and higher standard of living come with some detrimental outcomes. A proactive approach to investigate emerging scientific and technological innovations with potential of detrimental outcomes needs to be pursued by the government and corporate establishments. Appropriate actions to maintain societal harmony and peace should be communicated to the concerned segments of the population.[1]

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