



P E R S P E C T I V E S

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Guns, Gosar, Violence and Economics

War only enriches gunsmiths

The trial of **Kyle Rittenhouse** has galvanized the country, splitting already “warring factions,” into something far more dramatic. The travesty of that trial began with the systematic exclusion of Black jurors and was further amplified by a clearly biased and incompetent judge: he openly fought with the prosecution in front of the jury, denied them the right to describe the dead as “victims”, but allowed the defense to refer to those same individuals as “rioters and looters” (neither were). In addition, the prosecution performed poorly. Top that all off with jury instructions terribly circuitous and vague to the point of creating confusion. In the end, the judge’s intended result was achieved: an acquittal of all charges against Rittenhouse, the 17-year-old boy who illegally purchased an AR-15 assault weapon and traveled from his home in Illinois to Kenosha, Wisconsin with the clear intent to act as an unauthorized, self-deputized, vigilante, “law” enforcement agent.

The tragedy of the Rittenhouse trial, however, goes far beyond the miscarriage of justice to something much darker and more troubling than the killings that night.

The demonstrations that left two men dead and a third seriously wounded was organized to protest the police shooting two days earlier of **Jacob Blake**, an unarmed black man. It turned into a deadly national nightmare. Let’s not forget that the wounded survivor, **Gaige Grosskreutz**, also brought a gun to the protest that night, and did approach Rittenhouse with a drawn gun after he had already killed Joseph Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber, both unarmed. Gaige testified that he was approaching Rittenhouse when Rittenhouse shot him in the arm.

It defies legal analysis, or even common sense, to think that the person who brings an assault weapon to a protest, and shoots to kill before even being threatened with someone else’s weapon, can thereafter claim self-defense. Nonetheless, Congressmen **Paul Gosar** (recently censured for his violent video depicting him stabbing a fellow Congressperson), **Matt Gaetz**, **Jim Jordan** and a dozen others all claimed Rittenhouse acted in self-defense and within his Second Amendment rights.

The Gosar-Gaetz-Jordan contingent of the far-right Congressional delegation will use this tragic incident to further pander to the most violent and fringe members of the Republican party. They will use it, together with the Federal courts, to further restrict any meaningful regulation of guns or even assault weapons in our society. This virtually ensures that other folks like the protestor Gaige Grosskreutz will bring their guns to future protests.

Does any rational person believe that we won’t see escalating violence, shootings, and death on our streets, in our schools, in our shopping centers, at our churches and synagogues, or even our public recreational places? Make no mistake, the US is already a very violent country, and it is about to get more so.

The Gosar-Gaetz-Jordan contingent of the far-right Congressional delegation are lionizing Rittenhouse with offers to “arm wrestle” each other to get Rittenhouse, who is only remarkable because he shot those three men, on their respective Congressional staffs. Don’t they realize they are feeding an endless escalation of violence that can only end like Tombstone, Arizona in 1881.

In 1881, Virgil Earp was appointed Marshall of Tombstone, and joined there by his deputized brothers Wyatt and Morgan. To try and bring some semblance of law and order to the chaotic, deadly boomtown, where armed citizens were routinely shooting and killing each other, the Earps adopted a policy which required every citizen to check their guns at the Marshall's office when they came to town and retrieve them only when they left the city limits.

In an effort test who had the right to run the town—law enforcement or individual armed citizens – Ike Clanton and his gang of six defied the ordinance and refused to check their weapons. The resulting “gunfight at the O.K. Corral” represents many things in our national history, but the most important “take away” was that no one again challenged sensible controls on average citizens bringing weapons into Tombstone where the only possible victims of gun violence would be other people.

For over 130 years we all believed that common sense conclusion—until recent years when gun violence has been elevated to national political policy. Remarkably, the vast majority of us believe in some form of regulation (i.e., enforced national background checks, limitations on open carry, limitations on assault weapons, and closing gun show loopholes). Yet we are powerless to stop it.

The Republican party, long the preferred party of business, and which has traditionally characterized itself as a conservative anchor against a more progressive national agenda, has forgotten an irrefutable economic law: increasing violence is inconsistent with a strong economy.

In a recent survey, 26 percent of Republicans said they believe armed, violent insurrection is an appropriate remedy to overthrow the current government and install **Trump** as President. An additional 40 plus percent said they accept the “Big Lie” that the election was stolen by **Biden**, and are sympathetic to the alt-right, violent extremist cult that worships Trump as demagogue.

Republican politicians fear their “base” will reject them in a primary by someone more loyal to Trump and so have abandoned their conservative roots. Regrettably, they have clearly lost the ability to see the tragic nexus that will inevitably usher in a period of national economic decline as violence escalates. No economy flourishes in a violent society. Whether that violence is the shooting of partisans on the left or right of the political spectrum, or a full-scale civil war as Syria and other countries have recently experienced, the result is the same: only weapons manufacturers make money when war rages.

Fortunately, the American business community has awakened to the economic threat that armed violence poses to a civil society based upon mutual prosperity, rising wages, rising profits, increased expenditures for R&D, and increased capital spending. Those things only happen during peacetime.

With the split between “Reds” and Blues” growing ever more violent and careening towards armed civilian clashes, we all should be concerned (even the top two percent) that violence will destroy whatever economic gains we've achieved in the last twelve months. We are all at physical and economic risk. It is time to raise our efforts to restrain gun violence on our streets.

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