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Gun violence in the USA and the "Eleven Nations" analysis of American culture

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, duben 2017

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Poděkování

Ráda bych poděkovala mé rodině za trpělivost při psaní bakalářské práce.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Gun violence	4
2.1	Scale of the gun problem	4
2.2	Forms and causes of gun violence.....	6
2.3	Geography of gun violence	13
3	The Second Amendment of the US Constitution	14
4	Colin Woodard, author, and journalist	16
5	The Eleven Cultures	18
6	Political oppositions	31
7	Media coverage of the theory of Colin Woodard, and gun-control issue	35
8	Conclusion	43
9	Endnotes	46
10	Bibliography	56
10.1	Printed Sources	56
10.2	Internet Sources	56
11	Abstract	62
12	Resumé	63
13	Appendices	64

1 Introduction

The main objective of this thesis is to research and analyze the concept of Eleven American Nations by Colin Woodard and find out whether it can explain the USA gun problem which was and still is an issue of vital importance.

Other objectives include the following:

1. to review the history of gun violence in the USA;
2. to review media coverage of gun-related crimes and gun-control laws;
3. to establish whether newspapers take the same stance on a gun-control issue and whether the differences in attitude correspond to Woodard's concept.

The thesis is divided into two sections: the theoretical and the analytical parts.

The theoretical part includes an overall account of a current state of the gun violence problem: statistical data on gun-related crimes in the USA and how much of a problem it is compared to other developed industrial countries such as Western Europe. It describes most prominent factors in the increase or decrease of gun violence in different areas and different social groups and gives a general overview of the history of gun-control laws and the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The analytical part consists of three chapters. The first one provides a brief description of the said nation: their most prominent geographical, cultural, social distinctive features, how they developed through the course of the history, how and where they can be found nowadays.

The second part of the analytical section deals with further development of the eleven nations as the USA and what brought them all together; how their antipodal attitudes towards armament, governmental restrictions, and gun control established; and the role these attitudes played in domestic and foreign policy of the USA throughout the history up to present times.

Finally, the last chapter reviews mass media coverage of the whole Woodard's concept, gun violence, and gun-control laws, as well as aims to analyze whether or not the collected information proves the initial point. Statistical data on different areas of the USA is analyzed and compared to the information given by Colin Woodard regarding the respective American nations. Besides, the author tries to look into other possible explanations of the cause of the gun problem and explore why it is the USA that suffers from it so much.

The main source used for the first half of the analytical part is the book *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* by Colin Woodard, as well as some of his numerous articles both on the topic of eleven nations and gun violence issue. Published in 2011, the before mentioned book sheds a whole new light on U.S. politics, history, and culture, and tries to explain to some extent why American people have such different attitudes towards th gun. As a result, the name of Colin Woodard is frequently brought up whenever gun control regulations are discussed.

For the second half of the survey, a corpus of articles was obtained and analyzed from such authoritative American newspapers as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Business Insider*, *The American Conservative*, and several others. The articles were found with the help of the word search using the search phrases "Colin Woodard", "gun violence", "gun control", etc. These newspapers were chosen due to their different political alignments and as a result different views on gun-control

regulations. Some British newspapers (for instance, *The Guardian*) researched as well to provide an outside point of view for more in-depth, comprehensive study.

Moreover, various statistical data and information were collected and analyzed with the help of official homepages of such involved organizations and movements as *American Public Health Association*, *the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence*, *the National Rifle Association of America*, etc., and various thematical websites, for instance, *Geography of Gun Control*.

Gun violence is one of the major problems of the USA, and in this thesis, the author tries to answer the question of why it is so difficult for American people to reach an agreement on gun ownership and corresponding governmental regulations.

2 Gun violence

2.1 Scale of the gun problem

Gun violence is a malfeasance committed by using a firearm or small arm. Gun violence might be criminal (assault, homicide) or non-criminal (unintentional or accidental injury). Whatever the jurisdiction is, the problem of gun-related violence is a very acute subject for debate in the United States, where gunshot wounds are the major cause of a premature death with tens of thousands gun caused deaths and injuries every year. [1]

Decades of debates and enforcing or abolishing gun control laws seem to have almost now effect, since around 33,500 people die of gun related crimes, and the number has been rising at 10.4 per 100,000 since 1999, according to the data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (often shortened to the CDC). That makes approximately one gun murder every fifteen minutes, or 93 murders on an average day, seven of which are teenagers and children. About 4% of these 33,000 deaths are unintentional or undetermined. Almost two-thirds of them are suicides, while the rest 11,000 are assaults and homicides. What is more, for every one person killed by guns there are two more injured. [2]

According to the statistics of gun crimes, in the period from 2011 to 2015, on average, there were committed 11,564 homicides, 21,036 suicides, 543 unintentional deaths, and 267 cases of undetermined intent. 33,405 gun deaths in total.

The numbers are astonishing. In the US gun murder rates are 25 times higher than that of other high-income countries. This rate in America is 3.61 per 100,000 residents, while in Canada (the second place) it is only 0.50, and in Portugal (the third place) – 0.48. [3]

The US has an enormous number of guns, and although no official figure exist, it is estimated to be about 300 million or approximately one gun

for every man, woman, and child in the country. Of all the homicides in the US from 60 to 70% are committed by firearm, compared to 31% in Canada or just 10% in the UK. Yet, while terrorism makes up for only a tiny fraction of deaths by guns (on average just 31 people die in terrorism-related incidents annually, if we don't include 2001 with 9/11 tragedy), the US government spends more than a trillion dollars every year on anti-terroristic defense. [4] And this is when firearm caused injuries cost US taxpayers hundreds of million dollars in direct hospital costs every year (for instance, in 2010 the exact sum was \$516 million for 25,024 hospitalizations).

All these numbers, presented above, allow experts to say that the US gun violence problem is much more serious and larger in scale than that of other countries, it is enormous and multifaceted. And thus, for Americans debates around gun control laws and gun ownership are one of the most widely and most passionately discussed issues.

Every step taken by the government to improve the catastrophic situation via restriction laws has been facing a pushback from the other side of the opposition. On federal and local levels attempts were made to restrict gun purchases, educate children and adults, impose deeper background checks, etc. On the other hand, there are so many opponents who favor gun ownership and every person's right to defend themselves, that Congress even prohibited the CDC from conducting and publishing pro-gun-control surveys. [5]

Gun control advocates are stating that such a high number of gun-related crimes including numerous homicides are a direct consequence of loose gun laws and a number of firearms in the US.

On the other hand, gun rights proponents present gun ownership as a self-protection and, moreover, believe that more firearms in the hands of decent people can actually reduce crime and violence. Besides, criminals

are the least likely to obey restriction laws, while ordinary people would be left defenseless. [6]

2.2 Forms and causes of gun violence

Sometimes, a question arises of whether a highly developed modern state that is the USA is simply unable to solve this problem. There are countries, for example, Great Britain, Norway or Australia, that after only one mass shooting incident proved capable of successfully changing laws and public attitude in order for such tragedies to never happen again.

Unfortunately, these examples are not likely to work for the US as, first, some experts believe that it might trigger a civil war; second, America has much larger number of handguns and firearms; and third, such confiscation of private property and restrictions on personal liberties go against US best ideas. [7]

Besides, it was already mentioned that American gun violence problem is a very diverse and multifaceted issue, very different from that of other countries, and there are many aspects worth taking into account.

First of them is suicides that make up two-thirds of all gun violence cases. It is the 10th leading cause of death in America with approximately 44,000 people dying this way each year. The most typical method of death by suicide is firearms. Almost 50% self-murderers have killed themselves with guns, - for instance, in 2014 there were 42,773 suicide deaths in total, where 21,334 were committed using firearms (followed by suffocation suicides and poisoning suicides with 11,407 and 6,808 deaths respectively). Actually, more people kill themselves using guns than any other means combined. [8]

Among cutting, hanging, jumping, poisoning and drugs overdoses, attempts with a firearm are the most lethal. By jumping off a high building or under a train, using chemical poisoning or gas, suicidal individuals have

time and chance to reconsider the choice they make and call for help while the firearm is an unalterable solution, there will be no way back once the trigger is pulled. Even considering that guns are not frequently chosen the method, in this case, still, about 85% of gun suicides result in death, compare to the actual most popular method 0 drug overdose – that ends up lethal in less than 3% of attempts. This study draws on research conducted by American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [9], [10]

Interestingly, not many people realize that suicides constitute a bigger share of gun problem, this glaring issue gets obscured, when almost all public attention keeps focusing on mass shootings, which always get a lot of resonance but get unbelievably far fewer people killed (this matter will be discussed further in more details).

Suicides are a major social problem, reflecting depression and deep-rooted problems people are suffering from. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, males commit suicide four times more often than females. Adults are more likely to make a decision to end their lives because of divorce, for young people most common reasons are physical and emotional abuse.

But why do so many people use guns for this purpose? One of the reasons was stated above, the high rate of gun suicides is due to its high lethality. The second reason is that guns are accessible with each third American household owning. Moreover, members of gun-owning families kill themselves more often, firearms at home statistically raise risks: in states where gun ownership numbers are bigger, rates of gun suicides are 3.7 times higher for men and astonishing 7.9 times higher for women, comparing to the states with fewer gun owners, while the statistics of non-firearm suicides are the same. In 2008, according to *New England Journal of Medicine*, in states where 47% of households own a gun, there were 16,577 firearm suicides among 49 million people. In states with only 15% of

gun owning households, the same value is only 4,257 among 50 million people. At the same time, non-firearm suicides comprise 9,172 and 9,259 respectively.

The fact, that suicide rates are often overlooked during gun control debates, is alarming, and, moreover, some experts on the matter don't want to trigger the everlasting gun topic. [11],[12]

Another controversial and vital aspect is domestic violence. First of all, nearly 2,510 people in 2016 have become victims to it, and essentially intimate partners are more likely to become violent if they have an open access to a gun. If a household owns a firearm, the risk of an intimate partner homicide (IPH) increases drastically compared to the situation when knives or other tools are used by an assaulter as a weapon. [13],[14]

Domestic violence in America is inseparable from gun problem since more than half (53% or more) of women who were killed with the use of guns, were murdered by a partner or a family member.

Moreover, if a woman simply lives in a state with high rates of gun ownership, she statistically has more chances of being fatally shot by a husband or a boyfriend. Besides, abusers intending to kill their partner often take out other innocent people that just happen to be nearby, like children, friends, neighbors, etc. Out of all collateral intimate partner homicide victims, 70% are killed with guns; out of a total number of police officers killed in the line of duty while responding to domestic disputes, firearm deaths take up 95%.

Domestic violence is usually thought to be something private, everyone's own business when in reality it's an enormous community issue. [15], [16]

And even though there are laws and restrictions preventing domestic violence offenders, abusers or stalkers from legally acquiring guns, the

loopholes in these laws, failures to enforce them nationwide, numerous illegal gun sales, these much-needed measures do not always help.

The following statistics demonstrates how fatal domestic violence aggravated by the gun problem actually is:

1. On average, annually there are 760 cases of intimate partner homicide, with 80% of them being women. Meaning, that every 16 hours one American woman is lethally shot by her partner or ex-partner.
2. According to the data published by the Huffington Post, 57% of mass shootings (resulting in at least four deaths by guns) occurred in the course of domestic conflicts. 42% of the killed in domestic mass shootings are children under 17 (39% are women, and just 19% are adult men).
3. According to the study of collateral homicides caused by domestic violence, victims most often are new intimate partners, parents, friends, siblings, children, and innocent bystanders.
4. Domestic violence calls lead to more police officers' deaths (22%) than any other case.
5. The biggest risk factor for lethal domestic violence is gun ownership, even more than drug abuse or criminal history. On top of that, if a woman was threatened with a gun by her partner at least once, she is 20 times more likely to eventually be shot.
6. The most effective way to prevent domestic gun violence is to remove guns from people who were reported as abusers. This measure is supported by more than 65% of Americans, which is significant considering that the US rarely shows such solidarity speaking of firearms.

7. While 56% of female gun owners believe that it will protect them, it is actually the opposite. Having a gun actually, increases woman's chances of being killed. [17]

One more case of lethal gun usage is self-defense. Stand-you-ground laws, the right of every citizen to defend themselves and their families is the core argument of gun rights activists. They do believe that guns in right hands can actually reduce crime because whatever governmental regulations are imposed, criminal still can find a way to obtain an illegal gun, while at the same time ordinary citizens might be left unprotected.

Cases of self-protecting gun use are rarely covered by media when mass shooting and violent cases are discussed widely. There are about 300 million guns owned by civilians, and if we compare it to total 500,000 deaths and injuries caused by guns every year, the picture is clear – most guns aren't used for crime. Millions of Americans own guns safely, using them for sport or recreation only. [18]

Yet, gun self-defense is quite rare. According to *Washington Post*, for every 1 gun used for protection, there are 34 gun crimes, 78 gun suicides, and 2 accidental gun deaths. [19]

Guns are much more often used for killing people, than for protecting them. The abovementioned information already showed that owning a gun, however good it is for self-defense, dramatically increase chances of lethal domestic violence and fatal suicides. According to FBI reports, in 2013 were registered only 211 justifiable gun homicides, in contrast to 7,838 criminal gun homicides. Victims of violent crimes use firearms for self-defense in less than 1% cases, and as little as 0,2% of victims of property crimes defended themselves with guns. Considering that the American nation own more than 300 million guns, self-protective use of firearms is strikingly rare. [20]

On the other side, many guns are used for committing intended crimes. As a matter of fact, lawful gun owners are responsible for less than 20% of all gun crimes committed in the USA. According to the study, published by epidemiologist Anthony Fabio of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health, in 79% of cases, a violent gun crime was committed by a perpetrator with a gun owned by someone else. More than 30% of these guns were stolen, and on top of that more than 40% of these stolen ones weren't even reported to the police, moreover, many former owners couldn't even recall where they had lost them.

So, on the one hand, experts might insist that if there were less guns in the USA, the rates of violent gun crimes would be lower too. On the other hand, these findings only prove, that criminal often option buying guns via the black market, and no gun restriction law could have stopped them. [21]

The study conducted in the Cook County Jail in Chicago revealed that out of 70 inmates who had committed crimes using guns only 2% bought those guns legally. Others used fake IDs or a straw purchaser (someone with clean background history who can buy a weapon on behalf of a criminal), acquired a gun on the black market or from a drug dealer, or simply stole it. So, guns purchased legally are rarely used in violent crime, which allows gun rights activists insist that the government should pay attention not to the law, but to the influence of black market. [22]

Speaking of violent gun crime, we finally get to the most widely covered and discussed the aspect of the issue – to mass shootings. Mass shootings (a firearm violence that takes lives of four or more people at the same time) are an American phenomenon, there are more of them in the US than in any other country. In other words, the US has 5% of the world's population, yet 31% of mass shootings happen here. They are so frequent, that one takes place in each 100-metro area, with rare exceptions – for instance, Austin, Texas, is the only 400,000 population city that hasn't experienced mass shootings since 2013.

Besides, out of the 30 deadliest shootings in the USA in past 60 years, 16 took place since 2006, including top three – the Orlando attack in 2016 (49 killed), the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007 (32 killed), and the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012 (27 killed). In 70% of the cases, a mass shooting ends with the death of the perpetrator.

Each mass shooting due to its media coverage and public upheaval always triggers new gun law debates as well as demand for more firearms by people. Which means that business for gun distributors and manufacturers keeps growing and profiting. Over past ten years stock for Smith & Wesson (the US firearm manufacturer) has been rising faster than that of Apple or Google. [23]

On average, mass killings happen in the US every two weeks. There were more than 200 of them in 2006-2016, yet it is difficult to keep official track. Most of them (52%) are family arguments, but every 1 out of 6 cases is a public massacre. 57% of victims knew their killer, 25% were family members – children, siblings, parents, spouses, etc. One-third of victims were under age 18.

But mass shootings account for only 2% of all gun deaths, less than unintentional killings. Even if the US ended all mass shootings, gun death rates would not change, yet most gun laws debates revolve around this only issue, it's terror causes most resonance in public.

This is a very significant drawback since a constant focus on mass shootings damages the real picture and its perception by people. As a consequence, people are obsessively afraid of a military-style rifle, used for the deadliest mass shootings, while in fact, rifles are responsible for only 320 deaths a year, or 3.5%. It is actually handguns – the ones people have at home – that take away the majority of lives: 6,000 deaths every year, or 70% on average.

Another drawback of mass shooting focus in media is a common belief that mental illnesses drive most of the firearm violence. But psychologists ensure that even curing all cases of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression, could not guarantee more than 4% reduction of gun violence rates. [24], [25]

It is not mass shootings and mental disorders that need the most attention. Such common things as domestic violence and simple accessibility of guns are what should be improved and abolished in order for the US to be able to break this circle of gun crime and armed self-defense.

2.3 Geography of gun violence

On average in the US 10.2 out of every 100,000 are killed by guns every year, but these rates vary from state to state. For instance, in Hawaii, at the low end, it is about 2.6 per 100,000 people. In New York, it's 5, in New Jersey – 5.2. At the high end, on the contrary, it is 21.7 in the District of Columbia, 20.2 in Louisiana, and 18.5 in Mississippi.

There is very little correlation between gun violence rate in a state and number of neurotic or mentally troubled persons. Also, drug abuse statistics doesn't really influence the amount of gun violence on any given state, despite common in public image of a drug addicted mass shooter.

What does influence and raises gun deaths rates is, first of all, poverty. Gun deaths are less likely in economically developed states, while most financially troubled areas are suffering from gun violence as well.

There is more gun violence in the economy dominated by working class jobs, and fewer when people are able to engage in creative professions.

Not surprisingly, a higher level of education means less firearm deaths and vice versa. Besides, rates of gun violence are directly influenced by a number of schoolkids who are allowed to carry guns.

What might be surprising or not, the states with a bigger number of immigrants are also the states with less gun deaths. [26]

Almost 60% of firearm murders but just 27% of gun suicides in the US happen in large cities. Suicides are a primarily suburban phenomenon. Anyway, a density of population doesn't play the main part here, the highest risk factor is poverty and social inequality.

Moreover, there is a deep racial disparity in gun violence rates, with black people suffering from it several times more. There is a strong positive correlation between the share of black population and gun crime. But there's no such correlation for Hispanic people. It is actually troubled black neighborhoods that have the most terrifying patterns of firearm violence statistics. [27]

3 The Second Amendment of the US Constitution

Confederation was the original state system of United States of America based on the agreement of the sovereign states. After the American War of Independence in 1775-1783, the United States Constitution, the supreme law, was created in 1787 and ratified in 1788.

After that, in 1789, several amendments to the Constitution were proposed, that later became ratified and collectively known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments, that guarantee individual liberties and justice. One of these amendments is known as the Second Amendment (Amendment II) to the United States Constitution and it was adopted on December 15, 1791.

The text of the Second Amendment reads: *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.* [28]

Although it must be mentioned, that there are several versions of the text, with differences in punctuation and capital letters; the drafted and the ratified versions are different as well. [29]

Nowadays, the Second Amendment is interpreted as a basis to grant individuals a constitutional right to own and bear guns as well as use them for various purposes including self-defense. Thus, legislative bodies cannot prohibit individual possession of firearms, and gun ownership restrictions might be rendered as unconstitutional. It is usually “individual right theory”.

On the other hand, there is “collective rights theory”, according to which words “a well regulated Militia” make this Amendment apply to federal legislative bodies who have the right to regulate firearms and decide whether citizens are to be allowed to own guns.

In 1939 the case the United States v. Miller took place, and the U.S. Supreme Court adopted the collective right approach since in their opinion the Second Amendment was intended to guarantee the efficiency of the military forces. This precedent was adhered for 70 years, till the case of District of Columbia v. Heller in 2008. The Court reviewed the Second Amendment and acknowledged it as a ground for individual right to own a gun. [30]

The issue still remains open, whether or not the government has right to prohibit gun ownership. The lists of some lawful regulations were suggested: to ban felons and mentally unstable from possessing firearms, to prohibit to carry weapons in schools and other public places, to restrict commercial sales of firearms, etc. Lower courts still disagree with one another on these, and the situation doesn't change. [31]

4 Colin Woodard, author, and journalist

Colin Woodard (born December 3, 1968) is a famous American journalist and award-winning author of several books. He writes a lot on vital social and environmental issues, such as ethnic conflicts, wars, deterioration of the oceans, global warming, etc.

His most outstanding work is his book *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (Viking, 2011), which won the Maine Literary Award for Non-fiction in 2012 [32] and was named one of the Best Books of 2011 by the editors of *The New Republic* and *The Globalist* [33]. *The Washington Post* characterized it as “compelling and informative attempt to make sense of the regional divides in North America in general and this country in particular”, as “a simpler and more reassuring story” [34].

His other noteworthy works include *Ocean's End: Travels Through Endangered Seas* (Basic Books, 2000), a detailed and vivid account of the worldwide damage inflicted on the world's oceans; *The Lobster Coast: Rebels, Rusticators, and the Struggle for a Forgotten Frontier* (Viking Press, 2004), which tells the history of coastal Maine from both cultural and environmental standpoints; and *The Republic of Pirates: Being The True And Surprising Story Of The Caribbean Pirates And The Man Who Brought Them Down* (Harcourt, 2007), the story of a band of Caribbean pirates whose actions inspired a revolt in against the Old and New Worlds.

His latest book, *American Character: A History of the Epic Struggle Between Individual Liberty and the Common Good* (Viking, 2016), offers a deep analysis of the everlasting struggle between individual freedoms and the good of the community.

Colin Woodard is currently State & National Affairs Writer at the *Portland Press Herald* and *Maine Sunday Telegram*. He writes for *Washington Monthly* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* holds a

position of a contributing editor at *Politico* and reviews books for *The Washington Post*.

In 2004 he received Jane Bagley Lehman Award for Public Advocacy given by the Tides Foundation for his profound works on environmental issues [35].

In 2012 he won George Polk Award for Education Reporting for his special report, "The profit motive behind virtual schools in Maine". The same year his book *American Nations* won Maine Literary Award for Non-Fiction [36],[37].

In both 2013 and 2014 Woodard became a finalist for a Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism for his works "*Virtual Schools in Maine: The Profit Motive You May Not Know About*" and "*The Lobbyist in the Henhouse*" respectively. [38]

Also in 2014, he was named one of the "Best State Capitol Reporters in America" by The Washington Post [39].

In 2016 he became a Pulitzer Prize finalist for Explanatory Reporting "for a compelling account of dramatic ecological changes occurring in the warming ocean region from Nova Scotia to Cape Cod" [40].

Though Colin Woodard was born and still lives in midcoast Maine, he has worked as a foreign correspondent in more than fifty foreign countries (including Hungary, Croatia, Mexico and many others) and even lived for several years in Eastern Europe [41].

In this work, we are going to analyze and discuss his theory of eleven nation-states of North America which he described in his abovementioned book *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*.

5 The Eleven Cultures

“There isn’t and never has been one America, but rather several Americas”

Colin Woodard [42]

In his book *American Nations*, Colin Woodard proposes a theory according to which North America can be separated into 11 distinct cultures, 11 nations, defined by who their first settler was, what goal and values they cherished and what social, political and cultural patterns they established. Woodard writes in the Fall 2013 issue of Tufts University’s alumni magazine: “The original North American colonies were settled by people from distinct regions of the British Isles—and from France, the Netherlands, and Spain—each with its own religious, political, and ethnographic traits.” [43]

Woodard insists on using the term *nations* towards these regional cultures as by the time a federated state was created each of them had already developed its own characteristic values, beliefs, dialects and traditions, being isolated from one another and acquiring the characteristics of *nationhood*. [44]

These differences in origins, political and religious attitudes, social structure, explain a lot not only about the history of the USA (the American Revolution, the Civil War, the so-called cultural Cold War) but about its current domestic and foreign policy, and answers, at least particularly, a question of why it is so difficult for the USA people to reach one opinion on some vital problems. Therefore, this theory of Woodard can help us understand, to some extent, their diverse attitudes to gun control laws.

But what are these 11 nations? Let us briefly introduce all of them as they were identified and characterized by Colin Woodard.

The first one to be founded (in the late sixteenth century) was **El Norte**, “overwhelmingly Hispanic”, a hybrid between English and Spanish America, it spreads from the USA-Mexico border in both directions, and this border separates this otherwise congeneric nation into two parts, almost like a scar. Descendants of the first Spanish expeditions, people there remain “fiercely protective of their heritage”, they managed to retain their traditions, ways, and religious pageantry. Back in the seventeenth century, the colonies here were “undermanned, poorly supplied, and staggeringly poor” with the Spanish Empire’s religious mission in minds which had gradually become the key element of El Norte. There was no self-government and no elections, people were ruled by military commanders without any “democratic niceties” [45]. Woodard characterizes those who lived there as adaptable, hardworking, self-sufficient, aggressive and intolerant of tyranny.

In the early seventeenth century, **New France** (province of Quebec, New Orléans, northern New Brunswick) was founded by a group of Frenchmen, who brought to the New World tolerance of cultural diversity and mixed population, typical for their hometowns. They had great visions of a conservative and monarchical, but tolerant society with greater opportunities for advancement than in Europe, a utopian society, and managed to establish good relations with the Indians. They were down-to-earth and consensus-driven people, and later became almost the most liberal of among all nations. Even back in colonial times, commoners there displayed independence, cultural openness and deep contempt for hierarchy [46].

The third nation is **Tidewater** (Virginia, Maryland, southern Delaware, northeastern North Carolina) in traditional accounts depicted as dashing, bold and individualistic, a powerful and fundamentally conservative nation. It was founded by younger sons of English gentry, who aimed not be farmers and build a new, better society, but rather to conquer territories and rule savages. They relied on military forces, fortifications, martial law, and

consisted of “a small elite of officers, and a large contingent of rank-and-file soldiers” only [47]. Then, vast possibilities for tobacco export transformed that military base to a plantation society, which from the very outset was an oligarchy, dominated almost solely by a small cadre of wealthy plantation owners, while slaves and commoners, bound laborers were effectively deprived of any political rights. Power became a hereditary thing. Proudful Tidewater gentry, characterized by their deep respect for authority and traditions, tended to settle all their conflicts through the means of a duel and believed that problems should be settled according to one’s own sense of justice, rather than by law.

Then, hostile to aristocracy and noble privilege, opposite to everything Tidewater gentry valued, **Yankeedom** was founded on the shores of Massachusetts bay by radical Calvinists as an attempt to build a utopia, new Zion. Consisting mostly of “skilled craftsmen, lawyers, doctors, and yeoman farmers” [48] this colony was democratic, open to a foreigner, idealistic, settled by families, not soldiers, and led by most educated citizens instead of highborn nobles. They lately came to have “faith in government to a degree incomprehensible to people of other American nations” [49] and great belief in education, social engineering, and the “greater good” which should be pursued even by means of individual self-denial. Their culture with its constant urge to improve the world spread across upper NY State, northern parts of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and on up into Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and the Canadian Maritimes, and has been locked “in nearly perpetual combat” with Deep South [50].

New Netherland (which is now Greater New York City) was founded by the Dutch, and it is their influence that made New York “the most vibrant and powerful city on the continent” with its own culture and identity so unlike that of any other place in North America. “Unabashedly commercial”, materialistic, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, originally established as a fur-trading post, this settlement had little if any concern for either “social

cohesion or a creation of a model society”. The local elite was comprised of self-made men, the trade-oriented government embraced diversity and upward mobility, which is ever useful for commerce and making the profit. All in all, from the very start it was a global trading society where no specific ethnic or religious group has ever been in absolute control, and with “overwhelming emphasis on private enterprise” and a great influence over North America mass media [51].

The founding fathers of the next nation, the **Deep South** (Southern Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Florida, western Tennessee, southeastern parts of Arkansas and Texas), were sons and grandsons of the slave-lords of Barbados, “the richest and most horrifying society in the English-speaking world” who sought to build one more West-Indies style slave society. For most of the history, it remained “a bastion of white supremacy” where wealth and power were held tightly by an oligarchy of “acquisitive, ostentatious plantation owners” [52]. Though every colony of that period of time tolerated slavery, the deep South and Tidewater were the only parts of North America where slavery became the core principle of the culture. Every institution in the Deep South had “convenient loopholes for the rich white men who created it”, and democracy was a privilege of the few, and it still remains the least democratic region. Haunted by the constant fear that their slaves could rebel, the planters organized themselves into the militia and trained regularly. They formed a militarized, aggressive and expansionist society, and eventually became a center of racial segregation and environmental deregulation [53].

Founded by English Quakers on the shores of Delaware bay, the **Midlands** (southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, northern Delaware and Maryland, central Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, northern Missouri, southern Ontario, most of Iowa, eastern parts of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas) is considered to be the most prototypically American nation, tolerant, multicultural, open, pluralistic, religious, organized around the

middle class, the national key “swing vote” with political opinions so moderate they are almost apathetic. “Civilization unsure of itself, its leaders” [54], they believed in ideas of better society, but still saw government as an unwelcome intrusion, and in the end became an influential moderating force for their strident neighbors.

The most “immediately disruptive” nation and one of the last to be founded, **Greater Appalachia** (the Arkansas and Missouri Ozarks, southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; Texas, eastern Oklahoma), populated by grandsons of the settlers from Northern Ireland and Scottish Lowlands, is characterized by its clan-based warrior culture, rough personalities, leisured lifestyle, and combative spirit. They despised both Yankee teachers and Deep South aristocrats and had little awareness of their cultural roots. Through the course of their history, they learned “to rely only on themselves and their extended families to defend home, hearth, and kin against intruders” [55].

The **Left Coast** (northern California, Oregon, Washington) was colonized by both merchants and missionaries of Yankeedom, and farmers of Greater Appalachia.

Thus, local people managed to combine the faith in social reforms, and a deep commitment to individual self-exploration and independence [56]. Intellectual, idealistic individualists, they had their own laws and elected their own officials. Eventually it was the Left Coast nation that the modern environmental movement.

The **Far West** (Idaho, Colorado, Montana, Utah, Nevada, northern Arizona, the interiors of California, Washington, Oregon; much of British Columbia, Manitoba, Alaska, western Dakota, Nebraska), the last region to be colonized, had to rely heavily on industrial corporations and capital-intensive technologies because of the severe environmental factors. As a result, the Far West became an internal colony of the absentee owners, the big corporations, and the federal government. Corporate control over the

Far West was “disturbingly thorough”, and therefore, local people came to resent “both the corporations and the federal government, seeing them as joint oppressors”. Their hostility to federal power became one of their most distinctive features [57].

Finally, the last and actually the first nation of North America is the **First Nation**, Native Americans (they now occupy much of Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Labrador, northern Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta). While still cherishing their ancient cultural practices and knowledge, they have recently begun to reclaim the sovereignty and have won a self-governing nation-state in Greenland as well as considerable autonomy in Nunavut and Alaska [58].

The theory of Woodard allows you to look at the whole history of the United States completely differently. On the ground of everything abovementioned, it is obvious that creating the USA was a difficult task, and every one of the nations lived through its own history though they were inevitably intertwined.

The nations were founded separately and in their early stages developed in almost isolation from one another. The colonies’ first revolt against England took place in 1680s (almost a century before the American Revolution) and, as it may be expected, was not an action of a united force, but rather a series of rebellions, separate and aspiring to preserve a set of religious, political, and cultural patterns, typical for each of the regions and threatened by distant England. “But even at this early stage of their development – only two or three generations after their creation – the American nations were willing to take up arms and commit treason to protect their unique cultures” [59].

James II started reforming the colonies, uniting them in a Dominion of New England, replacing their representative assemblies with a monocratic royal governor supported by the imperial army. Titles were demolished,

feudal rents were raised, new taxes were imposed, and all of this was done without the consent of the people and even “in violation of the rights granted all Englishmen under the Magna Carta” [60]. And so the nations of Yankeedom, Tidewater, and New Netherland were ready to start an uprising and risk everything for preserving their ways of life.

“Not surprisingly, Yankeedom led the way”. With their deep commitment to local control and equal liberties, they couldn’t tolerate King James’s policies. They refused to pay taxes and were supported by almost everyone. Their revolt lasted for a single day and was successful.[61]

After that, New Netherlands jumped at the opportunity to overturn not only an authoritarian government but also the English occupation of their own country, which later didn’t come out as they had planned.

Conservative and royalist Tidewater didn’t give an impression of a region likely to rebel. But King James denied the Tidewater gentry their aristocratic liberties and overall threatened their prosperity. So, prideful and belligerent aristocrats couldn’t just grin and bear.

“While the American “revolutionaries” of 1689 were able to topple regimes that had threatened them, not all of them achieved everything they had hoped for” [62]. The requests of the Tidewater gentry were satisfied, but the New Netherland Dutch didn’t achieve what they desired at all. The Yankees were given back their titles and local control, but some restrictions still stood.

The colonies would be kept on a tighter leash, and if people there wanted to continue building their utopia, one more revolution was inevitable.

The American Revolution (political upheaval of 1775-1782 and foundation of the independent United States of America) wasn’t actually fought by one unanimous American nation seeking to create a united

republic, “where all men were created equal and guaranteed freedom of speech, religion and the press” [63].

On the contrary, it was started by a loose military alliance of profoundly different nations, each of which was concerned mostly about protecting and preserving its own culture and lifestyle. They formed a temporary alliance and – at least at the beginning – most certainly didn’t want to be formed together into a single republic. To the extent where some nations (New France, New Netherland, the Midlands) didn’t rebel at all. And the four nations that were willing to fight – Yankeedom, the Deep South, Tidewater, and Greater Appalachia – had almost nothing in common except for deep mutual distrust.

It was incredibly difficult for them to reach an agreement. In fact, they weren’t even always fighting on the same side, as the Deep South elites were ambivalent about the revolution idea and changed sides several times; and the only reason they participated in the revolution at all is because they were afraid of losing their slaves. To complicate things more Appalachia was fighting against the Midlands, the Deep South, and Tidewater for its own liberation and independence. [64]

London kept imposing a new range of duties and taxes to effect both commercial and social changes. It couldn’t last forever, and once again, Yankeedom was the first to revolt. “The nation with the greatest religious and ethnic cohesion, national self-awareness, and commitment to self-governance, Yankees were willing to fight and die to preserve “the New England Way” [65].

In December 1773 £11000 worth of East India Company tea was thrown into Boston Harbor. The open conflict became inevitable. Yankees tried to act on a community basis and to create organized revolutionary militia forces.

Like the Deep South, aristocratic Tidewater wasn't so united. They did oppose the new imperial policies but weren't sure about committing an open treason. But eventually, their desire to preserve their personal liberties won. As for the commoners, "they pretty much did as they were told" [66].

Greater Appalachia was fervent and committed, but people couldn't reach a consensus on which side to take. Some stood against the imperial power, some stood against Tidewater and the Deep South. They were divided, but their goal was the same – to drive away their oppressors.

The Midlands, religious and pacifistic, wanted no part in the revolution. They declared their neutrality and stayed almost apathetic. In New Netherland, public opinion was overwhelmingly against the revolt. The Deep South lords stayed ambivalent.

In early September 1774, the First Continental Congress became the first time the leaders of the nation came together to discuss their policy. "The fifty-six delegates all knew that forging colonial collaboration wasn't going to be easy, not least because of negative stereotypes associated with one another's regional cultures" [67].

Yankees insisted on immediate ceasing of any trading relations with Britain. The Deep South still were indecisive. New Netherland was divided by internal opposition. The Midlands were unanimously timid. Greater Appalachia wasn't represented at all.

By the late October 1774, the diplomats had finally agreed to a joined boycott of British goods. The wars for independence had begun.

Predictably, the American Revolution played out differently for each of the affected nations. There actually were six independent liberation wars.

The very first war – one more time – broke out in Yankeedom and took a form of a mass revolt. Nowhere else was the uprising against Britain more unanimously supported. By March 1776, after a series of

confrontations, Yankeedom, a stronghold of liberation forces, won its independence.

Meanwhile, the New Netherland remained the capital of loyalists. The control shifted back and forth between royalists and rebels until in October 1777 the finally lost and surrendered to an essentially Yankee army. [68]

The pacifist Midlands tried their hardest to remain neutral. They managed it at first, but in mid-1776 representatives of Yankeedom, Tidewater, and the Deep South intervened, and patriot minority of the Appalachian half of the colony made Midlands join the revolution. Finally, tolerance and pluralism were suppressed by neighbor's occupation.

Until the very end, the Deep South stayed uncertain, with part of the lords unsurprisingly still supporting Britain. But they were so scared of their own slaves (who outnumbered their masters three to one), rumors about a possible slave rebellion, sponsored from outside, were enough for the Deep South to finally fully join the revolution, but they still were reluctant and tepid. By 1780 independence was gained and the Deep South was pacified. [69]

Greater Appalachia, poor and isolated, played a very complicated part in the wars of liberation. Most of all, they wanted to assert their independence from outside control, but some regions thought Britain to be the main threat, while others were more cautious of the Tidewater gentry, or the Deep South oligarchs, or Yankees. Thus, some parts descended into civil wars with the revolution still going. Without their own government, Appalachia couldn't reach political unison, but their goals were similar. Eventually, they managed to seize political control over some parts of their land but lost the others.

Tidewater, though not fighting till the final phase, committed a large number of soldiers and officers (George Washington was a Tidewater

gentleman). This nation liberated itself rather early on and relatively easier. By 1781 Tidewater liberation was confirmed. [70]

“Though confronted by the common threat, the nations had not been united in the conflict. Each fought its own war of liberation.” [71]

It is clear now, how difficult it was for a cluster of profoundly different cultures to form any sort of alliance. Their main goal then was to preserve intact each of their respective cultures, and some of the nations were founded on values right opposite those of the other nations.

But they understood that if they stayed separated, there might be another war. And thus, the first United States Constitution, the Article of Confederation, was written and ratified. Congress still remained divided along the regional lines: Yankee fought with Tidewater and the Deep South, the middle states were alternatively allying with one bloc or another.

After months of long debates, the U.S. Constitution was written – “the product of a messy compromise among the rival nations” [72].

From the Deep South and the Tidewater gentry the USA received a strong president, that should be elected by an “electoral college” rather than ordinary people.

The New Netherland contributed the Bill of Rights, that guarantees freedom of conscience, speech, and religion.

The Midlands insisted on state sovereignty to not let either the Deep South or Yankees seize the overall control.

Yankees made sure that all states whatever their size is would be equal in the Senate.

The United States of America were created, but a lot of struggle might have already been anticipated, but the constant opposition between Yankee idealism and the Deep South conservatism which later became one of the

main parts of the USA domestic policy had already begun. And that leads us to another page in the American history, the one so important that it cannot be overlooked. The Civil War.

In traditional accounts, the Civil War era was always explained as a war between the North and the South, but Woodard insists that these two regions “culturally and politically, didn’t actually exist”. And seen through the lens of his theory, the parties’ motivations and behavior became clearer, as the Civil War was a conflict between two coalitions, with Yankeedom on one side, and the Deep South with Tidewater on the other. “The other nations wanted to remain neutral and considered breaking off to form their own confederations, freed from slave lords and Yankees alike” [73].

The first half of the nineteenth century was mostly about the struggle for control of western two-thirds of North America between Yankeedom, the Midlands, Greater Appalachia, and the Deep South when all of them wanted to extend their cultures and influence.

By the midcentury, this competition became fiercer, mostly between the perpetual rivals – Yankeedom and the Deep South, by that time “the wealthiest and the most nationally self-aware of the four contestants” [74]. Neither of them was – and as it will be demonstrated later, neither of them still is – able to live under the control of the other.

While the Deep South “was winning few hearts and minds in the wider world”, Yankeedom and Midland Midwest were consistently filling with foreign immigrants, “who correctly saw fewer opportunities for themselves in the Deep South and Tidewater” [75]. Yankee democratic influence was rapidly increasing and thus jeopardizing the Deep South lords’ hierarchic way of life. And whatever qualms Americans had about slavery, in the 1850s most people outside of Yankeedom were either supportive or tolerant about it. Whereas idealistic Yankees, led by their moral mission to improve the world, weren’t able to overlook the issue. They argued, that autocratic

despotism of the Deep South and Tidewater led to the corruption of family and Christian virtue.

To defend slavery (the leaders didn't make their motive a secret) the Deep South seceded, which encourage Yankee politicians to offer the use of force to prevent it. So, the Deep South tried to protect their way of life, their traditions, as for them slavery was almost a centerpiece of the virtuous and biblically sanctioned social system.

And while most people of the South shared with the Deep South their belief in white supremacy and solid distrust of Yankees, many of them didn't support the idea of the aristocratic republic.

In April 1861 the Deep Southerners began attacking federal post offices, mints, and military bases. Woodard believes that had they not done it, they could have actually negotiated a peaceful secession, as President Lincoln "pledged not to provoke open warfare" [76].

Prior to the attacks, New Netherland was supportive of the Deep South since it was New Netherland that introduced the continent to slavery. "Tolerance – not morality – was the core of its structure". But after the attacks, New Netherland literally "erupted in extreme U.S. patriotism" [77].

The Midlands, thought consentient in the support of abolitionist sentiment, were ambivalent about Southern secession – once again, prior to the attacks. In the 1860s they stood for Lincoln, but despite that, they had absolutely no desire to be governed by Yankees.

Tidewater, weakened, reached out for the Deep South for protection and embraced its ideology. In the wartime propaganda, the Deep Southern and Tidewater elite relied heavily on the theory that profound racial differences between Southern and Northern regions were to blame for the conflicts.

Greater Appalachia least of all wanted to take part in the war, as they were torn “between their disgust with Yankees and their hatred of Deep Southern planters”. They first didn’t support abolitionists, then voted for “popular sovereignty” which allowed each state to decide for itself whether or not to have slaves. But other nations, fearing the Appalachian would secede and become a military threat, made them choose between two sides both of which they despised. So they did as they always had – “they took up arms against whatever enemy they felt was the greatest threat, and fought ferociously against them” and back then it was the Deep South, though some of them did join the Confederacy after all [78].

The Confederacy was defeated in 1865, its cities were occupied by foreign troops, its slaves were emancipated. Yankees hoped to democratize the Deep South, Tidewater, and Confederate Appalachia, they established public education and black colleges, tried to eliminate the caste system. But local people resisted these changes, regarded them as foreign, and many of them were later abolished, white supremacy restored. “Despite a war and concerted occupation, Deep Southern and Tidewater culture retained their essential characters, setting the stage for future culture clashes in the century to follow” [79].

6 Political oppositions

The regional differences between nations were – and still are – profound and complicated. Historically, the nations divided into two clusters: the Dixie bloc (Tidewater, Deep South, Greater Appalachia) and Northern alliance (Yankeedom, the Left Coast, the New Netherland). While the first was coalescing around individualism and traditional social values, the last believed in an enlightened society, cultural openness and reforms. And then there were the three swing vote nations: the Midlands, El Norte, and the Far West.

“Northern alliance campaigns for civil liberties, sexual freedom, women’s rights, gay rights, and environmental protection all became divisive sectional issues, just as Dixie’s promotion of creationism, school prayer, abstinence-only sex education, abortion bans, and state’s rights did” [80] – writes Colin Woodard. The goal of Dixie’s oligarchy has always been the same: a one-party state under their total control, with a colonial-style economy based on compliant, undereducated workforce, and as few environmental regulations as possible. In contrast, the Northern alliance was consistently trying to better society through their antiwar policy, civil rights protection, environmental safeguards, and federally funded education programs [81].

Since the time they were founded, the nations have been constantly and persistently struggling with one another – for power, influence, ideals, and from 1790 “the biggest prize has been controlling of federal government institutions: Congress, the White House, the courts, and the military” [82]. They fully understood that it was impossible for only one nation to independently dominate all the others, so instead, they sought for agreement with like-minded allies. But even though lineups of coalitions shifted and changed incessantly, one was invariably headed by Yankeedom, the other by the Deep South.

It is all clearly reflected in their voting patterns, where the Northern alliance nations have always supported the same presidential candidate inevitably tending towards the most progressive of possible choices (for example, Obama over John McCain). Whereas for the voters of Dixie bloc even the most conservative of Northern alliance candidates seemed to be too liberal.

Therefore, by the turn of the twenty-first century, Democrats and Republicans of the Northern alliance had much more in common with each other than with their Dixie counterparts.

As a result of everything listed above, these two “superpowers” always predictably disagreed on the United States military policy. The root of this disunity may be found in origins and historical development of the nations.

Nations of the Dixie bloc were established by soldiers and slave-lords and grew used to relying on arms and military forces either to protect what they held dear or to achieve what they desired.

The Northern alliance nations, on the contrary, were founded by merchants, doctors, family people, in search of the utopian world, and thus they tended to leave military issues to the government.

To confirm that theory Woodard writes: “Why is violence—state-sponsored and otherwise—so much more prevalent in some American nations than in others? It all goes back to who settled those regions and where they came from. Nisbett, the social psychologist, noted that regions initially “settled by sober Puritans, Quakers, and Dutch farmer-artisans”—that is, Yankeedom, the Midlands, and New Netherland—were organized around a yeoman agricultural economy that rewarded “quiet, cooperative citizenship, with each individual being capable of uniting for the common good.” The South—and by this he meant the nations I call Tidewater and Deep South—was settled by “swashbuckling Cavaliers of noble or landed gentry status, who took their values . . . from the knightly, medieval standards of manly honor and virtue.” [83]

Again in his book *American nations*, Woodard states the following: “Opinion has split along ethnonational grounds, with the three nations of the Dixie bloc steadfastly supporting virtually every war since the 1830s, regardless of its purpose and opponents, while championing the use of force to expand and maintain the United States’ power and suppressing dissenting opinions” [84]. And by the contrast Yankees and Left Coasters were always leading opponents of any military actions: “Opposition to the

war centered in Yankeedom, New Netherland, and the Left Coast, generally on the ground that it was an unjust imperial intervention. The antiwar movement started on these nations' campuses, with the first marches on military facilities originating from Berkeley" [85].

On the ground of the abovementioned, a clear national pattern can be distinguished in the USA policy. At the very core is the everlasting opposition of the anti-interventionalist, anti-military Yankees, and the bellicose, conservative Deep South and Tidewater. Greater Appalachia, though providing warriors, aren't always approval of wars especially when there's neither territory nor revenge concerned. The Left Coast is always against any military surge. The opinions of the Midlands and El Norte are usually mixed.

And stand-your-ground laws are no exception, they did divide American nations one more time, and the opinions on that matter fell along the same cultural lines. In his Tufts magazine essay Woodard writes: "Of the twenty-three states to pass stand-your-ground laws, only one, New Hampshire, is part of Yankeedom, and only one, Illinois, is in the Midlands. By contrast, each of the six Deep South– dominated states has passed such a law, and almost all the other states with similar laws are in the Far West or Greater Appalachia." [86]

Later on, Colin Woodard explains, that cultures built on slavery have a tendency towards violence since they get long used to rely on brute force for control and punishment while dealing with conflicts with slaves. Which may explain to some extent prevalence of lynching deaths in these regions.

What is more, these cultures – Deep South, Tidewater, Greater Appalachia – usually adhere to an old "traditions that sanction eye-for-an-eye justice" [87] and are strongly convinced that people should be able to protect their homes, families, and honor by themselves.

As it may be expected, the code of Yankees is founded on absolutely opposite principles. Self-restrained, disapproval of any vengeance, they came to be “the center of the nineteenth-century death penalty reform movement” [88], and none of Yankeedom or New Netherland controlled states retain the death penalty nowadays (with the single exception of New Hampshire, where it’s almost never imposed anyway).

“With such sharp regional differences, the idea that the United States would ever reach consensus on any issue having to do with violence seems far-fetched” [89] – says Colin Woodard, and it’s difficult to disagree. But presumably, a new alliance might be formed in the future to shift the balance. The discussed earlier “swing vote” nations of the Midlands and El Norte might play a decisive role on the gun-control issue as well.

But for now, according to Woodard, the country will remain split into two parties, with Northern alliance believing in gun control laws and restriction on the one hand, and Dixie bloc insisting on deterrence through armament on the other. It will most probably go on until one of the two major “power” nations modifies its policy in a way that will attract the swing voters and let it establish its control over others. [90]

7 Media coverage of the theory of Colin Woodard, and gun-control issue

Since the theory of eleven nations first went to press, numerous articles have been published on that matter, both plausible and skeptical.

Some newspapers, like *Business Insider*, for instance, refer to it as “an excellent reason why gun control is one of the most divisive fights in America” [91].

“No issue seems to divide Americans as much as guns,” - says *Business Insider*, as the USA is divided into almost equal parts with 46% of Americans supporting gun-control laws compared to 52% who held the

opposite view (April 2015). All the debates about the issue seem “to lead to nowhere” [92].

Business Insider is convinced that Americans should follow Colin Woodard’s example and “think about guns as a cultural issue — not just a political one”. The author of the article, Matthew Speiser, believes that if we keep Woodard’s definitions in mind, we can understand more profoundly “how the modern gun debate is rooted in the competing cultural legacies” of Yankeedom and the Deep South.[93]

The Washington Post calls Woodard’s theory “fascinating” and concludes that it does explain the difficulties in solving gun-control question, but still “doesn’t bode well for gun-control advocates” [94].

At the same time, other mass media sources are not so supportive of the idea of dividing the USA into eleven nations. For instance, the magazine *The American Conservative* while acknowledging that it is an interesting conception, disagrees entirely that Cajun country or New Orleans may be indeed described as liberal, and notes several other points that are difficult to agree upon. But almost everyone agrees that “the challenge with having eleven nations is governing” [95].

Gun violence, along with pros and cons of gun-control laws, receives wide coverage in mass media.

The U.S. News called it “a public health crisis”, and these words are supported by the American Public Health Association stating that in 2016 guns took the lives of nearly 33,000 Americans with another 85,000 Americans sustaining injuries from guns. A research published by the American Journal of Medicine found out that “the gun homicide rate in the U.S. is 25 times (that is 2500 percent) higher than in other high-income countries” [96].

According to the American Public Health Association, gun violence is a major cause of premature death in the United States, and the crisis is constantly growing [97].

But while even the American Public Health Association agrees that “issue of gun violence is complex and deeply rooted in our culture” [98], does it really correspond to Colin Woodard’s point of view where due to historical development gun control is supposed to be supported by the Northern alliance nations, and opposed by the Dixie bloc?

At some points, it does. For instance, the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (previously known as the Legal Community Against Violence) was founded in 1993 in California, and as it was mentioned above, according to Colin Woodard, California belongs to the Left Coast, originated from Yankeedom, idealistic, relying on social reforms, and more often than not a part of Northern alliance. The same Law Center also states that “Republican leaders tend to limit gun control and vice-versa for states with Democratic leaders” which fits into Woodard’s picture as well.

What is more, in 2015 *The Washington Post* published an article about the states with the strictest gun-control laws in the USA. And the strictest gun-control laws are believed to be imposed again in California.[99]

Other states with stricter gun laws include Connecticut (Yankeedom) and New Jersey (the Midlands). And while everything is clear with the first one, the last one raises issues to Woodard’s theory since the Midlands aren’t supposed to be supportive of governmental intrusions.

States with the loosest gun laws are Louisiana, Mississippi (both belonging to the Deep South), and Arizona (the Far West). Both nations in Woodard’s explanation are individualistic and don’t approve of governmental regulations.

According to another article, *10 states with the strictest gun laws*, published by Deseret News, based on the study done by the Brady Campaign to prevent gun violence, once again California, New Jersey, and Connecticut are on the first, second and fifth places respectively.[100] Other places are held by: Massachusetts (Yankeedom), New York (New Netherland, greatly influenced by Yankeedom), Hawaii (isn't included into any American nations since Colin Woodard believes it to be "part of the greater Polynesian cultural nation" [101]), Maryland (Tidewater), Rhode Island (Yankeedom), Illinois (Yankeedom), Pennsylvania (Yankeedom).

The same Deseret News later published an article *10 states with the most lenient gun laws*, based again on the research by the Brady Campaign [102]. The states are: Utah (the Far West), Alaska (the Far West), Arizona (the Far West), Oklahoma (Greater Appalachia), North Dakota (the Far West), Montana (the Far West), Louisiana (Deep South), Kentucky (Greater Appalachia), Idaho (the Far West), Wisconsin (Yankeedom).

Out of ten states that are said to have the strictest gun-control laws, eight belong to Yankeedom or nations influenced by Yankeedom. At the same time, most of the states with loose gun-control laws are situated in Deep South, the Far West, and Greater Appalachia. These statistics clearly show that while Colin Woodard's theory is mostly supported by actual facts, it is still not 100% universal, since one of Tidewater states can be found in the first list, and one of the Yankeedom states is on the other.

On the other hand, the very reason why gun control is so important is the high level of gun violence in the USA. Concerning that matter, the CBS News published the article *Death by gun: Top 20 states with highest rates*, supported by the most recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics [103]. The following states were listed: Alaska (the Far West), Louisiana (Deep South), Mississippi (Deep South), Alabama (Deep South), Arkansas (divided between Deep South and Greater Appalachia), Montana (the Far West), Wyoming (the Midlands), Oklahoma (Greater Appalachia),

New Mexico (El Norte), Tennessee (Deep South), South Carolina (Deep South), Missouri (the Midlands), West Virginia (Greater Appalachia), Arizona (the Far West), Idaho (the Far West), Nevada (the Far West), Kentucky (Greater Appalachia), Indiana (Yankeedom and Greater Appalachia), Georgia (Deep South), and Utah (the Far West).

As it can be seen – and what is the most alarming part of the discourse – is that rates of gun violence are very high mostly in the states with considerably loose gun control laws.

These statistics as well mostly prove Colin Woodard's point, with states of the Deep South, the Far West, and Greater Appalachia mentioned more often than those of any other nation, and as it was stated above these three nations are the ones that historically developed tendencies to solve their problems on their own, without appealing to government, and more often than not to solve these problem by use of brute force or guns. The issue remains open and highly controversial.

The New Times insists that (and it doesn't go well with eleven nations theory) "the vast majority of Americans — about nine in 10 — support reasonable, common-sense gun regulations". And it is only lawyers in Congress and statehouses who prevent the introducing of "even mild, sensible laws [...] that would help reduce the country's staggering toll of gun violence". It is supported by the fact that 86 percent of Missouri voters supported the law to prohibit people from carrying concealed weapons in public, the legislators overrode this veto [104].

According to *The New Times*, Nevada (the Far West) is imposing more gun laws, while main other states of the same nation resist these changes, even though the opinions are supposed to be more or less united within the discussed theory. [105] On the other hand, voters in Washington and California (Yankee-influenced Left Coast) approve the gun laws considerably easy, thus reinforcing Woodard's ideas.[106]

The data published on GeographyOfGunControl.web also confirms Woodard's concept, as it is stated that "the residents in the North favor gun control over gun rights, while those in the South prefer more relaxed gun laws", and even though the actual numbers in public opinion polls have been changing over the past 20 years, "there has never been a time when this relationship is inverted". The Southern states tend to have much fewer restrictions on the sale, handling and carrying of guns than the Northern ones [107].

Apart from the theory of Colin Woodard, there are other multiple views and opinions on the cause of why gun violence became such an obvious problem for the USA.

The Guardian assumes that one of the reasons gun laws cannot be imposed in each state equally and moreover why gun violence seems so difficult to reduce is purely political: "American gun rights advocates say this kind of confiscation would prompt a civil war" since it is basically "confiscation of private property" which is not "the American way" [108].

The other reason lays in the fact that overall gun problem in the USA "is dramatically larger in scale" than that of many other countries. Therefore, even following the successful examples of Australia or Switzerland might not be enough in this case. Even back in 90s whole Australia, for instance, saw fewer gun murders than single Oklahoma City [109].

Gun violence problem in the USA is characterized by *The Guardian* as enormous, multifaceted, with the racial disparity playing not the last part in it. Much of America's gun violence is concentrated in the poorest, most struggling and racially segregated regions, and while African Americans represent only 13 percent of the total population, they compose more than a half of overall gun crime victims.

Some criminologists even assume that gun violence is another regressive tax on the poorest people. Some places with higher rates of

unemployment and worse school systems “have experienced so much violence that their residents report symptoms of post-traumatic stress at rates comparable to veterans of war”.

And here is one more reason why so many Americans oppose to gun-control laws: it is racially segregated neighborhoods that are more exposed to everyday gun violence, therefore “it’s easy for millions of Americans to think they won’t be affected” [110].

Apart from poverty and access to guns, other factors that contribute to gun violence are mental illnesses, urbanization, alcohol consumption.

Obviously, the gun violence problem in the USA is so complicated it’s almost unique. Yet another question arises making the matter even more sophisticated: can stricter gun control laws really change the situation?

On the one hand, yes, they definitely can. At this point reducing a number of guns in the country seems almost desperately necessary. “No matter how you look at the data, more guns mean more gun deaths”. Experts widely believe the gun problem to be rooted in America's loose laws and gun approval culture. Besides, a 2016 review of 130 studies in 10 countries, published in *Epidemiologic Reviews*, stated that “new legal restrictions on owning and purchasing guns tended to be followed by a drop in gun violence” [111].

On the other hand, some experts believe that the situation is already gone so far the gun control laws have no chance to change anything. In many occasions gun bans or background checks fail to stop criminals but successfully disarm law-abiding citizens leaving them unprotected, - “this only makes life easier for criminals” [112].

What is also important to remember is that weapons used in the mass shooting are often purchased legally. There is also no evidence that expanded background check could actually reduce crime rates. Moreover,

these background checks are expensive, and that fee “can put guns out of reach for the most likely victims of violent crime: poor blacks living in high-crime, urban areas” [113].

And then there is another side of the coin: most guns purchased in the USA have never been used in crimes, they were used for self-defense or not used at all.

“There are millions of gun-owning Americans who use their guns safely, whose friends use their guns safely, whose children never access a gun when they are not supposed to.” Colin Woodard’s theory of eleven nations is a profound, interesting, and highly educational study into many aspects of the history and present of the USA, and it is not surprising his concept is mentioned so often whenever the gun problem is discussed.[114]

There is almost no doubt that “at the state and local levels, the politics of guns is more fluid, reflecting different cultural norms”, and the conception offered by Colin Woodard does shed new light on some political and cultural questions and helps readers see American history from a brand-new point of view. And it does allow us to explore some cultural roots of the problem, but an issue as controversial, deep, and important as that of gun violence cannot be explained and solved entirely by this single theory. [115]

8 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to research and analyze the concept of eleven American nations by Colin Woodard and ascertain its credibility in regard to the outstanding gun problem the USA is facing nowadays.

In order to achieve the said goal, the author of the thesis provided a summary of the book *American nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* written by Colin Woodard, a famous American journalist, and writer. The summary included a brief overview of the 11 nations, as they were defined by Colin Woodard: Yankeedom, Deep South, Tidewater, the Far West, the Midlands, Greater Appalachia, New Netherland, El Norte, New France, the Left Coast, and the First Nation. They were followed by concise descriptions of their most prominent distinctive features like the origin of the first settlers who founded them, their historical and cultural development, social and religious standards, political alignments, etc. The author then compiled a quick synopsis of the most significant events of the USA history as offered by Colin Woodard.

The study of the mass media coverage showed that general audience accepted the eleven nations theory mostly positively, as well as critics and fellow journalists who praise the book for the new look on things it can provide. As it was mentioned in Chapter 4 of the analytical part there is only mild critic present, as not everybody completely agrees to the characteristics and geographical boundaries Colin Woodard distinguished.

Then a corpus of articles by various American and foreign newspapers was obtained and analyzed concerning topic of gun violence and gun control regulations, as well as statistical information on gun related crimes and voting patterns state by state.

Based on the data provided in the theoretical part of this work and related to the history, statistics, scale, and overall defining point of the gun problem in the USA, the author establishes connections between current

gun situation and Woodard's concept. Thus, it might be assumed that the highest rates of gun violence and the loosest gun control laws belong to the nations originally founded by soldiers, slave lords and/or people that through the course of the history grew used of using guns in order to protect their families, property, and lives; that is the nations of Deep South, Tidewater, Greater Appalachia. What is also significant, these nations, as well as the Far West, are the most disapproval of any government regulations treating them as the unnecessary and unwanted intrusion.

At the same time, the lowest rates of gun violence and respectively the strictest gun control laws belong to the nations of Yankeedom, New Netherland, the Left Coast. Founded by religious groups, scientists, families, in search of building a utopia, these nations are characterized by their pacifism, cultural openness, higher levels of education, tendency to solve conflicts peacefully, antiwar policies, and deep trust in the government and its regulations.

Moreover, voting pattern for and against the so-called stand-your-ground law mostly prove Woodard's point, but not in 100 percent of cases.

As Chapter 5 demonstrates, there are some allegedly Yankee states that support armament and some Dixie bloc states that vote for government regulations of the said issue.

The last part of the fifth chapter is dedicated to researches into other possible theories and causes of the fact that the USA gun problem is much more serious than that of other modern industrial countries. Based on most recent studies into the topic, these causes might include racial inequality (where African Americans get involved into gun crimes more frequently), social and financial segregation (there are higher gun related crime rates in poor and troubled areas), mental illnesses, urbanization, alcohol consumption.

Besides, studies into gun regulation issue also indicate that it is very arguably that they can change the current situation for the better, since most mass shootings, for instance, were committed with the use of guns legally purchased by people who passed background checks.

In conclusion, the provided research shows that while Colin Woodard's theory of eleven nations does make sense and explains many details of the USA history from a brand-new point of view, shaping American mentality and policy into fresh and sometimes much more understandable form, and while it manages to offer a significant contribution to everlasting gun discourse specifying its causes at least theoretically, it is still not universal, contains exceptions and contradictions.

American gun problem is too huge, too complicated both culturally and politically, and according to Colin Woodard, it cannot be completely settled on government level until either Dixie bloc or Northern Alliance seize fuller control over other nations.

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11 Abstract

The theme of my bachelor thesis is “Gun violence in the USA and the "Eleven Nations" analysis of American culture”.

The main purpose of the thesis is to review the history and problematic of gun violence and analyze Colin Woodard's concept of Eleven Nations. The book "American Nations: A history of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America" by Colin Woodard being the main source.

The thesis is divided into two parts: theoretical and practical. Theoretical part deals with a general overview of gun violence in the USA, gun-control laws, statistical data on gun related crimes and the Second Amendment.

My study in analytical part is focused on summarizing Colin Woodard's concept and analysis if Woodard's theory explains the situation of gun violence in the USA.

12 Resumé

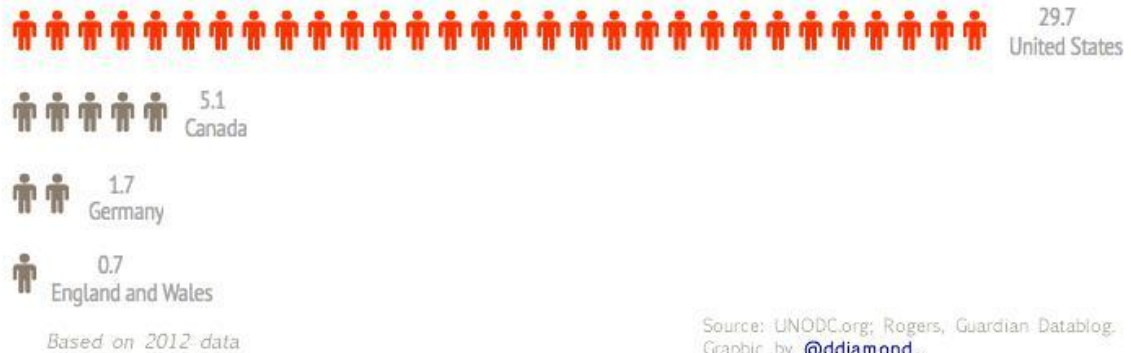
V mé bakalářské práci se zabývám kriminalitou způsobenou střelnými zbraněmi a analýzou americké kultury na základě rozdělení do jedenácti národů. Hlavním cílem práce je přezkoumat historii a problematice ozbrojeného násilí a analyzovat koncept Colina Woodarda o Jedenácti Národech. Kniha "Americké národy: Historie 11 soupeřivých regionálních kultur Severní Ameriky" Colina Woodarda, je hlavním zdrojem při psaní této práce.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí: teoretické a praktické. Teoretická část se zabývá obecným přehledem zbraňového násilí v USA, právními předpisy o kontrole používání zbraní, statistickými údaji o trestních činech způsobenými zbraní a Druhým Pozměňovacím návrhem. Moje studie v praktické část je zaměřena na shrnutí konceptu Colina Woodwarda a posouzení, vysvětluje situaci ozbrojeného násilí v USA.

13 Appendices

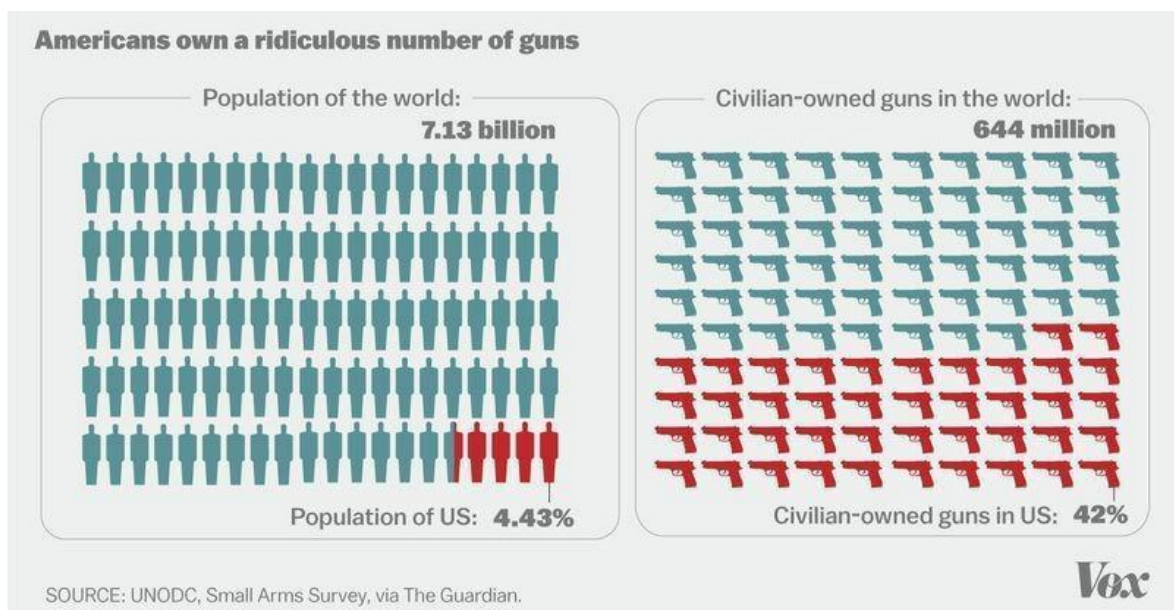
13.1 Gun deaths per 100,000 people

GUN DEATHS PER 100,000 PEOPLE



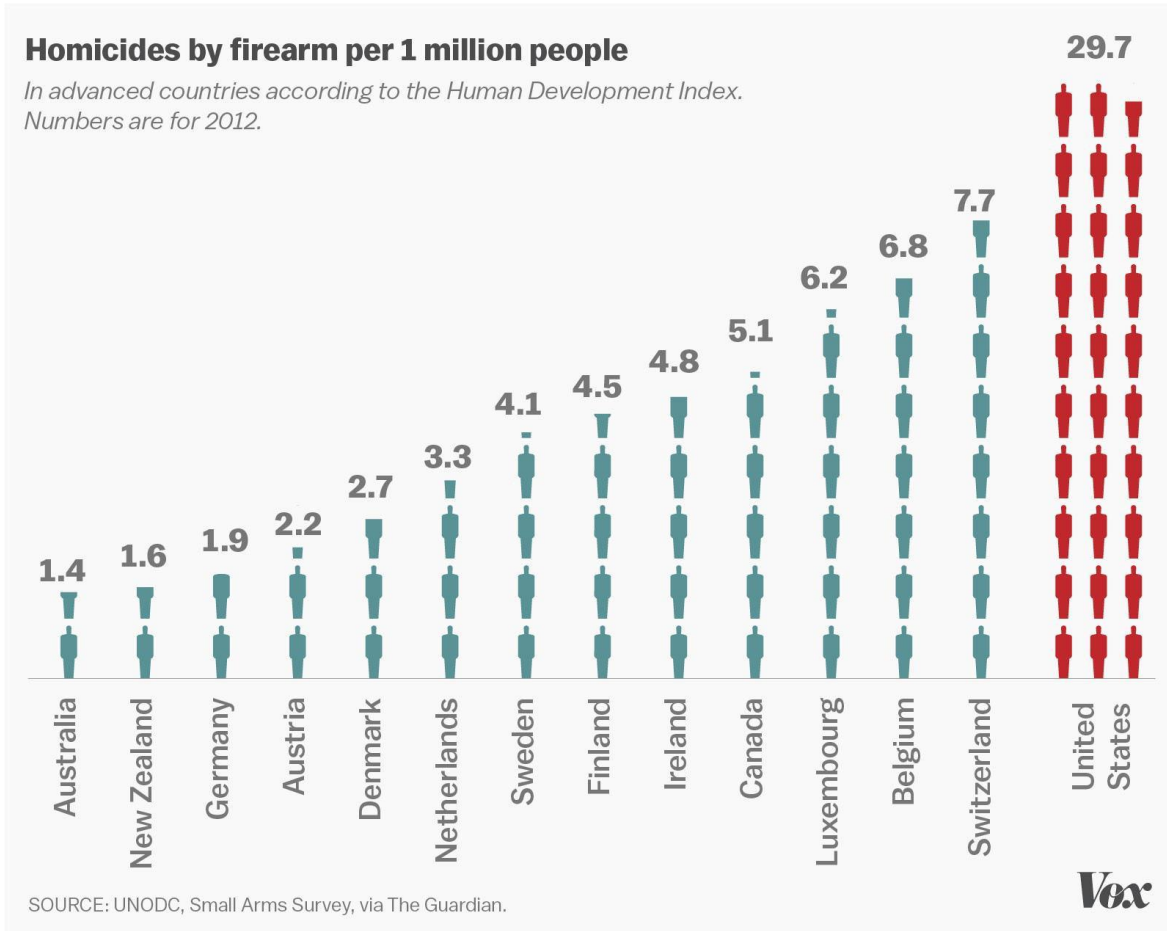
Source: [online] UNODC.org; Rogers, Guardian Datablog.

13.2 Americans own a ridiculous number of guns



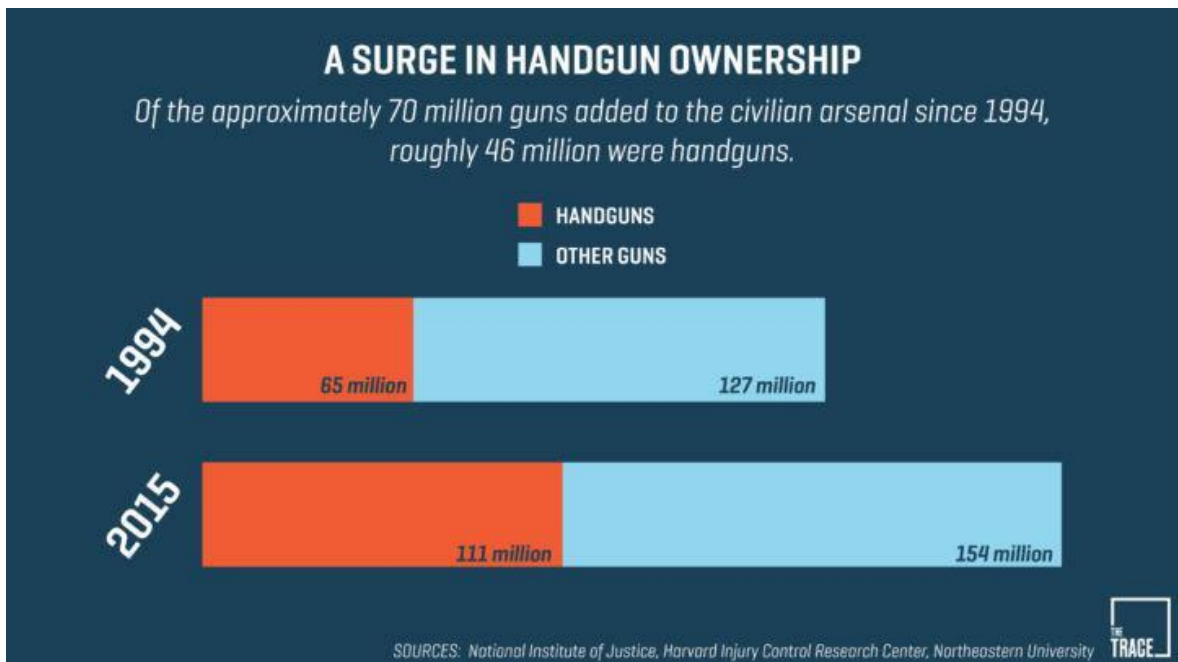
Source: [online] UNODC.org; Small Arms Survey, via The Guardian.

13.3 Homicides by firearm per 1 million people



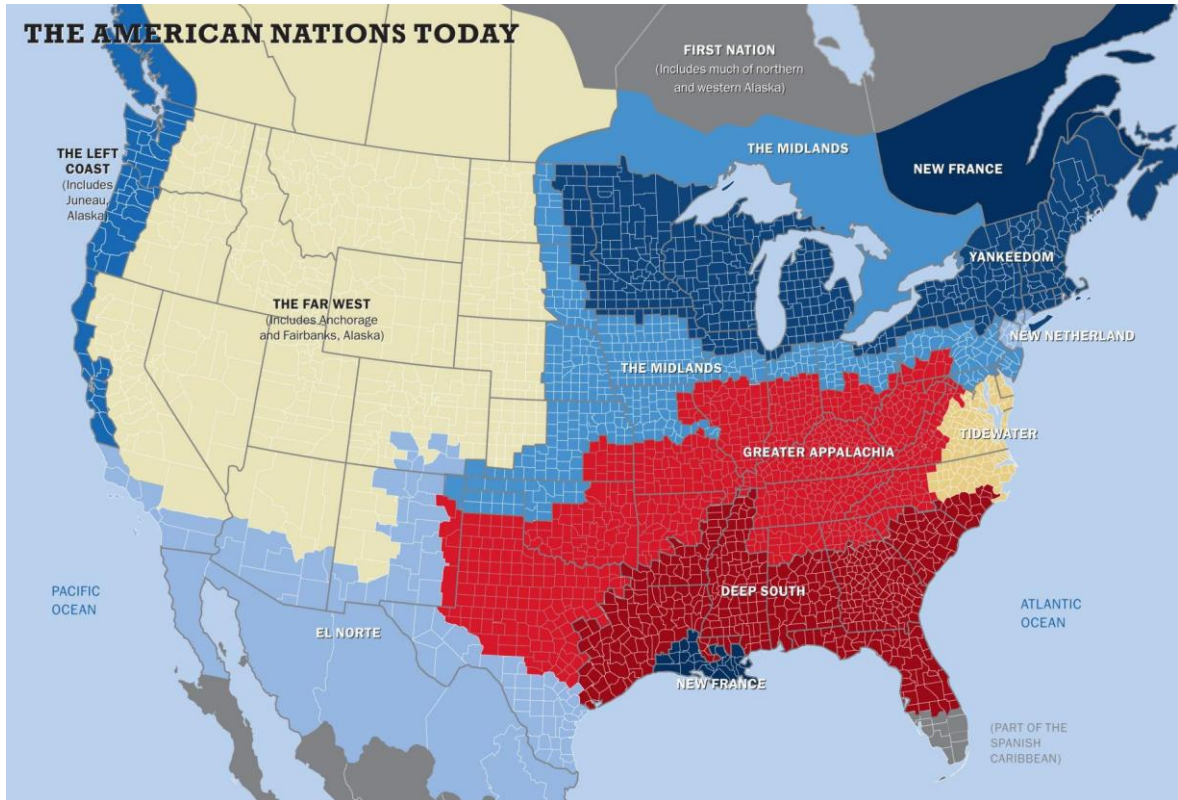
Source: [online] UNODC.org; Small Arms Survey, via The Guardian.

13.4 A surge in handgun ownership



Source: THE TRACE [online] <https://www.thetrace.org/>

13.5 A nation divided: According to Woodard, the U.S. is actually 11 nation states [1]



Source: The Daily Mail [online]

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2497613/Which-11-American-nations-live-The-map-shows-U-S-divided-separate-cultures-settlers-spread-West.html>