

preuve de Anglais (composition)

Gun control has long been a controversial issue in the United States, and it has become even more so in recent years, as mass shootings occurred all over the country, like in 2012 in Aurora. Foreigners often look with astonishment at the debate on this matter in the US, and wonder why a democratic and modern country struggles to pass legislation in order to better regulate gun ownership and prevent gun violence. It turns out that despite the overwhelming number of people killed every year by firearms in this country, the debate on gun control remains a heated and complex one, not only because powerful organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) oppose all kind of restriction, but also because of a deeply rooted conception of individual freedom and an understanding of the American Constitution, that make gun ownership a fundamental right. Therefore, there is a lot to be learnt by observing the debate on gun control in the US, firstly about America as a divided and complex society, secondly on how difficult it is to implement reforms on issues which remain too controversial in a democratic society.

The current debate on gun control helps foreigners understand how divided and complex the American society is - and how this affects the country's political life and public debate.

In recent years, President Obama has reacted to mass shootings by advocating measures to regulate the ownership and use of firearms such as background checks for gun owners. Part of the American media, like influential late night TV shows and liberal-leaning news websites such as "Vox.com", try to prove how the lack of any gun control makes America less safe, and promote the example of Australia, where a Conservative government passed gun control laws years ago.

Yet another part of the country sees gun ownership as a milestone of the American way of life and definition of freedom. The right to bear arms, as it derives from the Second Amendment, is seen as a protection against tyranny and a way to protect one's family and property from crime. Gun ownership is understood as a form of freedom, and freedom comes at a cost. Such ideas are popular not only among politicians whose campaigns can be funded by the NRA, but also in Conservative media and among many Republican voters. The issue of gun control appears to be not merely practical, but deeply ideological.

As a consequence, the debate on gun control also shows how difficult it is to implement reforms in a democratic society when values differ and when basic consensus lacks.

Indeed, in many contemporary Western democracies, it has proven difficult to find common ground and pass even much needed legislation on issues that divide the population and trigger moral or philosophical controversies. For example, back in 2013 there was a long national debate on gay marriage in France, and a part of the population still opposes the law that was passed. In some countries such as Poland, abortion is still a controversial subject.

Such debates may reveal the ^{widening} divide, within advanced societies, between the liberal educated electorate and more conservative parts of society. This evolution raises legitimate concerns about the future of democratic systems in deeply divided countries.

(~540 words.)