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Frequency and use of defensive means in self-defence and extreme necessity in the Czechia and Slovakia

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Abstract: The use of firearms, their frequency, and legitimacy through self-defence and extreme necessity are socially relevant in Czechia and Slovakia. Legal firearm ownership for defence purposes impacts overall social security, influenced by factors like firearm legislation, cultural traditions, legal awareness, and violent crime rates. Understanding this issue requires considering subjective interpretations, even among security experts. This paper explores the theoretical foundations of self-defence and extreme necessity from criminal law, alongside practical implications supported by police statistics on violent crimes involving firearms in Czechia and Slovakia. It also includes a comparison with selected EU countries. The authors' research uses a questionnaire to assess attitudes towards choosing defensive firearms, preparation for firearms licensure, and potential support for state security forces. The findings provide insights into legal firearm owners' behaviours and attitudes toward defence and security. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of firearm use for self-defence, correlating training, weapon preferences, and willingness to enhance state security.

Keywords: attack; extreme necessity; insidious weapons; manpower; self-defence; violent crime; weapon systems

1. Introduction

“Let us not allow our legal weapons, and thus our right to self-defence, to be taken away. If someone attacks me with the intent to kill, I will defend myself, and if there is no other recourse, I will kill the attacker... If one of the two must be killed, let it be the one who harbours malicious intent.” Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (Talks with TGM, Karel Čapek)

In order to assess security in the broadest sense, it is necessary to proceed on two basic levels: The evaluation of internal security and the evaluation of external security.

Internal security is associated with the sense of safety, stemming from the presence of open threats and crises both latent and real within the state (Kowalski and Misiuk, 2024; Nwagboso et al., 2024). Internal security can also be evaluated as a condition where these threats, affecting the internal system of a nation state, are minimised as much as possible using appropriate institutions (Juncos and Vanhoonacker, 2024).

New security in the context of the so-called “Copenhagen School” is historically connected to the dissolution of the bipolar world and changes in the international environment, leading to questions about what security actually is and what it means to be (in)secure. A previously fragmented Europe is transforming into a kind of super-

state, gradually taking over previously inalienable security and defence competences of nation states (Nyman, 2023). We are witnessing a fundamental transformation in the perception of (in)security as well as relationships between states, with the core of national security shifting towards creating a new concept of international security. As Buzan et al. (2005, p. 6) point out, “security threats no longer have solely the nature of military threats”. Increasingly, as we see it, political (foolish) decisions and the reactions of people involved in politics and the media become sources of threats (Joseph, 2023).

The general concept of security is primarily linked to the terms threat, danger, and risk, which corresponds to the whole notion of security as a general attribute or state (Musagaliev et al., 2024). However, when considering security as a functional sphere, this basic concept becomes insufficient, as threats and risks are not present in every action. Such a definition would lead to the security sphere becoming an unbounded, all-encompassing area (Zapletal, 2023).

Risk is understood as the probability that a certain event will occur, typically with negative consequences in the realm of security (Bočková and Lajčín, 2018). Alternatively, risk can also refer to the possibility of an event occurring those deviates from what the subject. The value of risk can, of course, be actively reduced by employing appropriate countermeasures (Bočková et al., 2015).

For the quality of human life, security is undoubtedly one of the key concepts, encompassing both a collective and an individual dimension. Many contemporary approaches, e.g. Tsymbal et al. (2024); Grytsyshen et al. (2024) or Romani et al. (2023) refer to individual security as the primary orientational factor. However, this in no way overlooks collective security, as security issues at the national or international level will always have an impact on individual safety (Dycus et al., 2022).

According to the definition contained in the 1994 Human Development Report, the domain of human security can be divided into seven categories.

- Economic security;
- Food security;
- Health security;
- Environmental security;
- Personal security (physical violence, armed conflict, violent crime);
- Community security (cultural and ethnic);
- Political security (rights and protection from oppression).

In addition to this classification, it is possible to apply Abraham Maslow’s basic hierarchy of human needs to achieve a more precise definition of what constitutes a genuine security issue to ensure the quality of human life. The more fundamental the value of life in the pyramid, the more important it is to the individual’s security. Primarily, these are physiological survival needs, secondarily, safety needs leading to the fulfilment of basic living requirements and security, and thirdarily, other human needs and emotions (Hayre-Kwan et al., 2021, Özmen, 2021, Zapletal, 2020).

The current security situation in Czechia, (CR), the Slovakia (SR), Europe and the world is highly complex. In addition to ongoing local conflicts and terrorist attacks taking place globally, the number of criminal offences (CO) related to illegal arms possession and terrorist activities, whether conducted by organized groups or

individuals, is increasing in many states in the field of internal security (Cinca, 2024; Dorn et al., 2024). These often involve the use of small firearms.

This has sparked a serious public debate about the legal ownership, possession, and carrying of weapons (Bočková et al., 2024). Gun licencing laws are becoming increasingly stricter and are partially harmonized under the leadership of the European Union, yet incidents involving firearms remain frequent. Legally owned firearms are often used in professional activities, for the protection of life, health, and property, but also for recreation and sport. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that there are still firearms held and used illegally, often for armed actions associated with international terrorism and criminal activities within organized crime, with their acquisition being limited only by the amount of money one is willing to spend on purchasing them (Krüsselmann et al., 2023; Squires et al., 2021).

1.1. Weapon systems and security

Modern European culture finds few objects as shrouded in myth as the firearm (hereafter referred to simply as “weapon”). The average citizen understands what it is but encounters it in everyday life only in exceptionally rare circumstances. As a result, their opinion is often detached from reality, shaped almost entirely by unverified information. Weapons are perceived as inherently dangerous, largely due to the relatively frequent reporting of cases of their misuse in the media in recent years. Citizens fail to realize that during this time, they have crossed paths with hundreds of ordinary, law-abiding legal firearm owners without even noticing them, as these individuals have committed no illegal acts (Karásek, 2011).

The causes of this perception can be attributed to several factors. Primarily, it stems from the generally negative stance of the media towards firearms and a lack of public awareness regarding firearm-related issues. Furthermore, widely circulated myths about weapons contribute to the distorted perception. Yet, there is no shortage of positive cases, particularly in light of current and anticipated activities by violent offenders or terrorists who commit crimes using weapons. A trained, armed citizen (a legal firearm owner) has often prevented a brutal or even terrorist act due to their theoretical knowledge and practical skills that prepare them for such situations.

1.1.1. Myths and facts about gun and ammunition safety

Due to prolonged and intense media influence, a so-called “universal truth” about firearms has emerged, filled with “undeniable facts,” such as the notion that fewer guns among people lead to fewer deaths. Statistically, the share of violent crimes committed with legally owned firearms registered under the current firearms legislation is just 4.8 per mill of all violent crimes recorded in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Below is a brief overview of myths contrasted with facts about firearms and ammunition:

- **Myth 1: More guns lead to more murders:** In Switzerland, every able-bodied man aged 18–45 is required to possess a firearm for which he has undergone military training. Despite this, the murder rate in Switzerland (which is not an EU member state) is 0.99 per 100,000 inhabitants per year. In contrast, the UK—where military and defensive firearms are banned and hunting or sporting firearms are

strictly controlled—has a murder rate of 1.4 per 100,000 inhabitants per year. In Washington, D.C., USA, where owning firearms for self-defence is completely prohibited, the murder rate is 56.9 per 100,000 inhabitants. Conversely, in Arlington (another U.S. city with no restrictions on self-defence firearms), the murder rate is only 1.6 per 100,000 inhabitants.

- Myth 2: More guns lead to more suicides: On average, around 1500 people (1142 men and 258 women) commit suicide annually in the Czech Republic. Of these, 146 people die by gunshot, and approximately 55 suicides involve legally owned firearms. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Finland—the most armed nation in the EU—has the highest suicide rate in Europe (31 suicides per 100,000 inhabitants). However, only 4.7% of these suicides involve firearms. Suicide is not driven by the mere presence of a firearm but by personal crises such as health, financial, emotional, social, or career-related issues.
- Myth 3: Firearm owners take the law into their own hands: A firearms licence grants no special authority to the holder. The use of firearms in defence of life, health, or property is governed by Sections 28 and 29 of the Penal Code (necessity and self-defence) and other legal norms. If a citizen acts within these regulations, their actions are entirely lawful. However, if they exceed these legal boundaries, they are held accountable just like anyone else.
- Myth 4: The police are responsible for protecting us from crime: The police are not obligated to provide individual protection, nor can they be everywhere at once. The Czech Republic has just under 39,000 police officers (38,996 service positions), half of whom work in administration, criminal technical departments, investigations, etc. Of the remaining half, only one-third are on duty at any given time. This means that one officer on patrol theoretically protects 1200 citizens. Violent crimes usually occur too quickly and unexpectedly for the police to intervene in time to prevent an attacker's actions. As the saying goes: *“When seconds count, the police are minutes away.”* Additionally, many civilian firearm owners often have significantly better firearms training than most police officers.
- Myth 5: Psychological tests could prevent firearms misuse: No psychologist advocating for mandatory psychological testing has ever been willing to take responsibility for its outcomes. In many cases of mass shootings, including the three largest massacres in the Czech Republic (2015, 2019, 2023), psychologists had opportunities to identify the perpetrator's dangerous tendencies before the incidents and failed to act. For instance, the infamous murderer Kalivoda, who shot journalist Velíšek, had undergone multiple psychological evaluations, none of which detected any issues.

This analysis reveals a significant gap between commonly held beliefs and reality regarding firearms and their societal impact. It highlights the importance of informed discussions based on evidence rather than myths perpetuated by sensational media narratives.

Today, we often encounter physical violence against individuals and groups of the population, or the threat of violence being used. People should have a certain knowledge of how to act in such situations. This may also involve international

organised crime or a terrorist-armed attack with the aim of instilling fear in people and destabilising a territorial region or a more narrowly defined area (Horák, 2014, p. 216).

In the vast majority of cases, injurious means include small weapons (both short and long), techniques of silent and undetectable killing techniques, and various munitions containing explosives based on plastic explosives without revealing signs. Particularly sought after by various interest groups are primarily the military grade American plastic explosive C4 or the globally known Czech-made Semtex. Also useful are all other plastic explosives based on pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN), cyclotrimethylene trinitramine (RDX), A-IX-I and A-IX-II, or other highly brisant explosives, detonators, and pyrotechnic compositions, which are frequently used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with significant incendiary effects (Janíček, 2001, pp. 21–24). Furthermore, the arsenal of terrorists and terrorist groups also includes standard military weaponry, including portable (hand-held) antitank and anti-aircraft missile systems. The aforementioned IEDs, due to their destructive nature, are classified by weapons experts and security analysts as insidious weapons (Spapens and Duquet, 2022). Current attention is primarily focused on the following defensive means and weapon systems:

Defensive means used by regular armies, which form the core of the combat strength of every regular army and are capable of neutralising enemy personnel using a wide range of destructive factors (Ferko, 2005, p. 35). These means consist of conventional (affecting personnel with conventional destructive elements) and unconventional (weapons of mass destruction) weapon systems. The decisive component of most of these systems is ammunition (Cozma, 2015).

Explosives and demolition devices, made up of military and industrial explosives and IEDs. These defensive means are highly suitable for terrorist purposes (Wang et al., 2023).

1.1.2. Violent crime committed with legally held firearms in the Czechia and Slovakia

Violent crime is the most serious type of criminal activity, although in developed countries it accounts for only a fraction of the total crime committed by citizens. Among the most serious violent criminal offences (OC), in addition to murder and bodily harm, are armed robbery, extortion, rape, dangerous threats, and stalking (Bočková et al., 2024). The clearance rate of these COs has consistently been greater than 80% (Kruřichová et al., 2024). The use of a firearm in cases of violent crime dramatically increases the negative impact and consequences of the unlawful actions.

The available police statistics clearly show that violent crime is predominantly committed with legally owned firearms, including virtually all categories of these weapons. On the contrary, the number of COs committed with illegally held firearms is significantly lower compared to the aforementioned group of weapons. The exception here is legally held Category D firearms (other weapons), which show a large proportion of these weapons being used in violent crime. When it comes to crime clearance rates, the category of the firearm used plays a relatively minor role (Bočková et al., 2024, Zapletal, 2020).

Crime has been present in the world since the establishment of the first social rules and laws (Zapletal, 2020, p. 73). Violent crimes committed with firearms

represent one of the most serious forms of criminal activity. Any weapon in the hands of a criminal increases their confidence and power over an unarmed victim of their unlawful actions. A weapon provides the offender with an advantage, as they choose the location, timing, and method of their attack. One of the legal reasons for firearm ownership is precisely the protection of life, health, or property. This legal justification addresses gun-related crime and offers citizens an effective means of defence through the use of a firearm under the principles of necessity or self-defence.

Despite these considerations, violent crimes committed with firearms constitute only a very small fraction of the total number of violent crimes in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Legal owners of lethal firearms represent a fraction of a percent (approximately 0.05%) of the population. A significantly larger group consists of legal owners of Category D weapons. This is largely due to the legal framework shaped by Act No. 119/2002 Coll. (the Firearms Act), which strictly outlines the conditions for acquiring firearms for the purposes of personal and property protection. The requirements for theoretical and practical training for firearms licence applicants, along with the evaluation of their health and a sophisticated assessment system, impose high standards on each individual applicant.

A problematic group of weapons, due to their accessibility, are the aforementioned Category D firearms, which can be owned by citizens who do not meet the legal requirements for owning Category B firearms. As a result, there is significant public pressure on legislators, legal experts, and other professionals involved in firearms legislation to tighten the conditions for acquiring and possessing Category D firearms, potentially leading to their reclassification into a stricter category.

1.2. Firearms legislation in the Czechia and Slovakia

Firearms legislation generally regulates the rights and responsibilities of firearm and ammunition holders, as well as the methods of acquiring ownership, ownership, carrying and use of firearms. The currently adopted and valid firearms legislation in Czechia, Slovakia, and individual countries of the European Union (EU) differ significantly, often depending on the system of government, but also on the traditions and cultural level of the respective state (Bočková et al., 2024, Greenberg et al., 2024). Due to the ballistic performance and effectiveness of firearms, the firearms legislation of most EU countries shares one common characteristic: Its restrictive nature. Legislators in nearly every European country strive to regulate their citizens' access to firearms, with their efforts mainly aimed at the greatest possible state control over this sector (Schelle, 2021, p. 197–205).

1.2.1. Legal regulation of civil firearms and ammunition in the Czechia

The arms industry and the use of firearms have a long tradition in Czechia. It is therefore not surprising that the Czech firearms legislation is considered by experts to be one of the best in the world, in terms of both its functionality and its effectiveness and strictness (Bočková et al., 2024; Horbach-Kudria, 2024, Hradilova Selin et al., 2024). The prestigious American magazine *Guns & Ammo* published a ranking in July 2014 of the ten countries with the best firearms legislation from the perspective of gun owners, where Czechia ranked second. The fact that Czechia grants its citizens the legal right to self-defence is particularly highlighted, although Czech legislation is

relatively strict in terms of requirements for firearm licence applicants (Zouhar and Bartoszewicz, 2022).

The liberal approach to firearm ownership enjoys broad support in the Czech Republic. In recent years, proponents even succeeded in enshrining the “right to bear arms” in the Constitution, although this provision has no practical implications and may only confuse firearm enthusiasts. Traditional arguments against stricter rules include claims that the Czech Republic is neither North nor Latin America and that firearm-related murders are rare and not carried out on a large scale. However, this theory was challenged by tragedies such as the February 2015 shooting in Uherský Brod and the December 2019 shooting at the Ostrava University Hospital. Last year’s historically largest incident of this kind, which occurred on 21 December 2023 at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, where the perpetrator killed 14 people before taking his own life, left no doubt that danger can indeed lurk anywhere. This spurred significant momentum among lawmakers to address the issue. Evidence of this is the proposed amendment to Act No. 119/2002 Coll., the Firearms and Ammunition Act, which was approved in its third reading by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (PS PČR) on 25 October 2024 (Chamber print 689, referred to as the “micro-amendment” of Act No. 119/2002 Coll.). This outgoing law will be replaced on 1 January 2026 by Act No. 90/2024 Coll.

The new government proposal introduces a mandatory reporting requirement for suspicious transactions by firearms dealers and new police powers to seize firearms based on information or opinions provided by public authorities (including, for example, local governments, primary and secondary schools, certain school canteens, and similar entities).

The independent association LEX z.s. (Association for the Protection of Gun Owners’ Rights), a respected partner in legislative processes concerning firearms and ammunition, has long opposed the proposed government wording. In collaboration with MP Pavel Růžička (ANO movement) and Minister of Defence Jana Černochová (ODS), the association submitted two amendments (PN) to the aforementioned print 689:

- PN C1 addresses deficiencies in the government proposal, particularly by defining a list of authorities authorized to issue the opinions necessary for firearm seizures. It also eliminates this authority concerning Category D firearms. This is crucial because Category D firearms are neither registered nor recorded, meaning the police cannot confirm ownership in the event of such a report due to the absence of a central firearms registry (CRZ).
- PN C2 introduces a new provision for an applicant’s declaration of medical fitness, a form where applicants describe their health status. Physicians can then compare this information with, for instance, prescription records. (This principle is used in applications for driving licences, among other things.) This proposal is the only suggested measure that could have potentially prevented the incidents at Charles University’s Faculty of Arts and in Klánovice had it been in place beforehand.

Unfortunately, despite considerable efforts, it was not possible to persuade government MPs to support these amendments. Voting on PN C1 and PN C2 (Vote

113) took place with 172 MPs present. Coalition parties (KDU-ČSL, ODS, STAN, and TOP09) supported both amendments with just 1% of their attending MPs. Opposition parties (ANO and SPD) supported the first amendment with 97% and the second with 100% of their present MPs. It is important to note that to pass a proposal, only votes in favour are counted; MPs who abstain are effectively voting against the proposal.

The history of conscious legal regulation of the ownership and carrying of firearms in the Czech countries dates back to the early second half of the 19th century. On 24 October 1852, the Imperial Patent No. 223 (the Firearms Patent) was issued, which can be considered the first legal document regulating the area of firearms legislation in this region. The Firearms Patent contained only very general definitions of technical terms related to firearms and ammunition (for example, it did not include any definition of the term “weapon” at all). Therefore, its subsequent functioning was tied to the need for its gradual clarification, both through newly proposed laws and regulations and through the actions of law enforcement bodies. Over time, a total of 13 laws, decrees and directives concerning firearms and ammunition were approved and implemented into legal practice (Ficek et al., 2018, Komenda, 2003).

The current legal framework for civilian firearms and ammunition in Czechia is set by two laws and additional implementing decrees. The first is Act No. 119/2002 Coll., on Firearms and Ammunition, as amended from 8 March 2002 (hereinafter “the Firearms Act”). The second is Act No. 156/2000 Coll. on the Verification of Firearms, Ammunition, and Pyrotechnic Items (hereafter “the Verification Act”).

Since its entry into force on 1 January 2003, Act No. 119/2002 Coll. has been amended more than thirty times. The preparation of the latest amendment to this Act is currently underway, with the aim of it coming into effect on 1 January 2026. However, even at the time of its creation, it was designed to adapt the Czech firearms law to EU regulations. The Act deals with the legislative regulation of firearms in civilian ownership. It contains the categorization of firearms and ammunition, the conditions for acquiring ownership, ownership, carrying, and use of firearms, and defines the rights and responsibilities of firearm holders. It also regulates the export, import, and transit of firearms, establishes the conditions for the operation of shooting ranges and information systems related to firearms and ammunition, sets sanctions, and governs state administration in this area (Schelle, 2021, p. 199).

The currently applicable directive for EU member states is the European Parliament and Council Directive (EU) 2017/853 of 17 May 2017, amending Council Directive 91/477/EEC on the control of the acquisition and ownership of weapons. This directive was introduced in response to the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris. Although the Czech Republic voted against the adoption of this directive, it was required to incorporate it into its legal framework by the deadline of 14 September 2018, despite its opposition (Bočková et al., 2024).

Only individuals holding a firearms licence (hereinafter referred to as “FL”) are permitted to acquire, own, and carry weapons and ammunition, unless otherwise stipulated by law. The FL is a public document valid for 15 years, divided into categories based on the purpose of the use of the weapon or ammunition and the scope of the holder’s rights. The conditions for obtaining an FL are prescribed by the Firearms Act, which establishes minimum age requirements, criminal integrity, and

health and professional competence. Obtaining a certificate of professional competence is contingent on successfully passing a professional exam. This exam consists of a theoretical part (a written knowledge test) and a practical part (knowledge of the safe handling of firearms and ammunition, as well as shooting at a stationary target). According to Decree No. 10/1984, medical fitness must be demonstrated both when the FL is issued and when it is renewed every 10 years. The holder of an FL must be in reasonably good health and must not suffer from a condition that excludes or limits their ability to be issued or to renew a FL. The police department verifies the applicant's integrity through an extract from the Criminal Register. Individuals who consume excessively alcohol, use drugs, or repeatedly commit serious crimes repeatedly are considered unreliable. If an applicant meets all the conditions required to obtain an FL, the relevant authority is obliged to issue or renew it, meaning that there is legal entitlement to a FL once all conditions are met. There is no limit on the number of firearms a FL holder may possess in the Czechia. While the number of FL holders in Czechia has remained around 300,000 for a long time, the number of registered firearms increases every year. Statistics from the Ministry of Interior show that the rise in the number of legally held firearms has no effect on the increase in misdemeanours or criminal offences related to their possession in the Czech Republic (Krüsselmann et al., 2023; Kundu, 2024; Williams, 2018).

1.2.2. Legal regulation of civil firearms and ammunition in Slovakia

In Slovakia, the ownership and carrying of firearms and ammunition is governed by Act No. 190/2003 Coll., the Act on Firearms and Ammunition and on Amendments to Certain Acts. This act is substantially similar in content and form to Act No. 119/2002 Coll., the Czech Firearms and Ammunition Act (Pavlíková, 2020, p. 32). A second legal document in Slovakia that addresses the use of firearms by their holders against a person who unlawfully enters their dwelling is Act No. 300/2005 Coll., the Criminal Code. The Czech and Slovak legal regulations concerning firearms and ammunition cannot differ significantly, primarily due to the membership of both countries in the European Union, but also because of their long historical connection. From 28 October 1918 to 31 December 1992, Czechs and Slovaks lived for more than 70 years in various forms of a shared state governed by common laws. For this reason, the authors of the presented paper will focus solely on comparing certain differences between the Slovak Firearms Act and its Czech counterpart.

In the section of the law on “categorisation of firearms”, the Slovak law explicitly lists Category D as “narcotic weapons,” whereas in the Czech legal framework, this category is referred to as “other weapons.” In this category, the Slovak law requires the registration of blank-firing weapons.

The groups of firearms licences (FL) are labelled in reverse order compared to the Czech law. Group F is for collection purposes, Group E includes sporting weapons, Group D is designated for hunting weapons, Group C regulates weapons for employment purposes, and Group B permits the possession of weapons for personal protection (protection of life, health, and property). These FL groups only allow for ownership of the weapon; carrying weapons for property and personal protection is regulated under Group A. A significant difference is the minimum age required to obtain each FL group (Vetešník, 2023, pp. 40–41). In Czechia, two age thresholds are

established: 18 years for Groups B and C and 21 years for Groups A, D, and E. In Slovakia, the minimum age is set uniformly at 21.

The Slovak firearms law strictly separates the ownership and carrying of firearms, similar to what was seen in Czech Act No. 288/1995 Coll., on Firearms and Ammunition.

A major difference also lies in the medical assessment; the Slovak law requires an examination of the applicant by a clinical psychologist, based on which a psychological fitness report is issued.

An applicant for a FL in Slovakia must pass a professional competence test before an examination board and demonstrate the need for the possession or carrying of a weapon.

An applicant for a Group D FL must also show membership in a hunting organisation or shooting club. Upon termination of membership, the FL is revoked.

1.2.3. Firearms legislation in certain European countries

The attitude of individual EU countries towards firearm ownership varies. In most countries, however, the process of legally acquiring and possessing firearms is associated with a lengthy bureaucratic procedure and, unlike in the Czechia, there is no legal entitlement to the issuance of a permit for firearm ownership. Not only do states regulate access to firearms, but they also restrict ownership of certain categories of weapons and designate categories of individuals to whom a permit may be granted. The laws of some European countries are so strict that it is practically impossible for an ordinary citizen to legally acquire a firearm (Dzahupov et al., 2023, Krüsselmann et al., 2021).

The ability of competent and law-abiding citizens to effectively defend their property, health, or life when necessary is often reduced to an absolute minimum. The right to self-defence in many Western countries is being curtailed in the name of tradition and humanism. The question remains whether this approach is the right one.

Below, we provide a description of firearms legislation in selected European countries that are closest to the Czech Republic and Slovakia in terms of technological advancement and cultural traditions, according to Schelle (2021, pp. 205–206):

- France: Firearms subject to permission are not considered private property. If the permit for their ownership expires or is revoked, the state seizes and destroys the firearms. Holders of sport firearms must be members of the French Shooting Federation. A hunting weapon permit requires passing a hunting exam. There is a national registry of people prohibited from accessing firearms.
- Germany: The basic document is the firearms ownership card (Waffenbesitzkarte), which entitles the holder to possess a certain type of firearm. A separate permit is required to carry a firearm. A permit to possess a firearm for personal protection is only issued in exceptional cases and is almost inaccessible to ordinary citizens. Firearms are allowed for hunting, sports, and collecting. Membership in a state-recognized hunting or sporting association is required, and collectors must precisely specify the subject of their collection.
- Poland: Those interested in owning a firearm must pass an exam before a police expert commission, which assesses knowledge of legislation and safe handling of firearms. Firearm permits may be requested for personal protection, the

protection of persons and property, hunting, sport, historical reenactments, collecting, memorial purposes, and for teaching or training.

- Austria: Acquisition, ownership or carrying of firearms requires the relevant permit, i.e., a firearms ownership card (Waffenbesitzkarte) or a firearms passport (Waffenpass). The number of firearms owned is generally limited to two. Hunting firearms are freely available and can be acquired from the age of 18.
- Switzerland: A permit to own a short firearm is available to any law-abiding individual. Every able-bodied Swiss citizen is issued a firearm as part of their militia service, which they keep at home for fulfilling military obligations.
- United Kingdom: The UK has the most restrictive firearms laws in Europe, effectively prohibiting any possession of firearms for personal protection. Milder rules apply to hunting weapons, which require a permit, but a “good reason” must be provided for obtaining one. Banned items include fixed knives with blades exceeding three inches, telescopic batons, stun guns, pepper sprays, and even certain everyday objects that could potentially be used as weapons.

From the provided overview, it is evident that international law, through its instruments, is capable of enforcing the rights and obligations of parties involved in armed conflicts. It is important to recognize that these instruments have been developed since 1899, with their evolution culminating in 1949 following the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since then, additional international conventions, protocols, and their amendments have been adopted. This process is commonly regarded as a significant advancement in promoting the principles of humanity in the conduct of armed conflict (Zapletal, 2015).

The steps proposed by the European Commission in the continued tightening of access to firearms and the bans on legally held firearms, which are subject to regulation and owned by vetted individuals, will certainly not increase security. These measures will have no impact on potential attacks carried out with illegal weapons, everyday objects, or anything that can be used as a weapon. Thus, restricting firearm ownership remains one of many unnecessary, purely populist decisions by the EU.

1.3. The issue of self-defence and extreme necessity

Human life, health, freedom, and property are values that every lawful state strongly protects. An attack on such values constitutes a criminal offence. However, it is also desirable for the law to grant the attacked person the ability to effectively defend themselves against such an attack. The Czech legal system provides this possibility through ‘self-defence’ under Section 29 and “extreme necessity” under Section 28 of the Criminal Code. On a constitutional level, this right is enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.

The issue of self-defence and extreme necessity remains relevant today (Kříž, 2023; Rak and Bäcker, 2022). Despite significant media attention, the general public often misunderstands these concepts.

The legal definition of the criminal law institute of self-defence is formulated in Section 29 of the Criminal Code, which states: “An otherwise criminal act, by which someone averts an imminent or ongoing attack on an interest protected by criminal

law, is not a criminal offence.” In the second paragraph, the legislator specifies cases where this institute does not apply, stating that “it is not considered self-defence if the defence was manifestly disproportionate to the manner of the attack.” From the legal definition of self-defence, the defender must fulfil several conditions. To qualify an action as self-defence, the following cumulative conditions must be met (Vedra, 2024):

- Imminent or ongoing attack;
- An attack targeting an interest protected by the Criminal Code;
- The defence must not be manifestly disproportionate to the attack.

The attack must be real. Self-defence cannot be used against attacks made in jest or play; the attack must be unlawful (targeting legally protected interests) and must be imminent or ongoing. If the attack has already ended, self-defence is no longer permissible. In practice, it is assumed that if the attacker is no longer in the defender's field of vision, it is not considered an imminent attack. The proportionality of the defence is a problematic element; each situation must be assessed individually. To effectively avert danger, the defence must be stronger than the attack itself. However, it cannot be universally stated that if someone attacks us with fists, we may use a knife, or if we are threatened with a knife, we can use a firearm. The circumstances, such as the number of attackers or their specific skills (e.g., martial arts), must always be considered (Medlín, 2024).

The definition of extreme necessity is formulated in Section 28 of the Criminal Code. It states that “*an otherwise criminal act by which someone averts a danger directly threatening an interest protected by criminal law, is not a criminal offence.*” However, extreme necessity is not considered if the danger could have been averted under the given circumstances in another way, or if the resulting consequence is evidently as serious or more serious than the one that was imminent, or if the person to whom the danger was directed was obligated to endure it. To invoke the institute of extreme necessity, three conditions must be simultaneously met: Averting imminent danger, subsidiarity (using alternative means) and proportionality of consequences. The danger may be caused by natural forces, a human attack, or an animal, but it must be directly threatening. For example, if a rabid dog barks at you but is tied to its kennel, it is not considered an extreme necessity.

Subsidiarity means that if the danger can be averted in another way, the institute of extreme necessity cannot be applied. If the danger could be avoided, for example, fleeing or using a less harmful method, it will not qualify as extreme necessity. Proportionality means that when avoiding danger, one must not cause the same or worse harm than if they had not intervened at all (Krejčí, 2024).

Both “self-defence” and “extreme necessity” are classified as “circumstances excluding unlawfulness”. This means that under certain conditions and circumstances, a person is not criminally responsible for their actions. In addition to the institutes mentioned, this category also includes ‘consent of the injured party’, ‘permissible risk’, and ‘legitimate use of a weapon’. The reason for embedding such circumstances is to protect both individuals and society and to allow the defence of one’s life and property (Procházková, 2023).

The institute of extreme necessity is somewhat “stricter” than that of self-defence. Self-defence does not require subsidiarity, which means that one may defend themselves even if fleeing might seem more appropriate. Moreover, proportionality is not a requirement in self-defence, as one may defend with greater intensity than the attack itself. While self-defence is directed at the attacker and focusses on proportionality, extreme necessity is aimed at averting more broadly defined dangers, where the gentler solution is always favoured (Slámová, 2023).

A frequent problem is the public’s lack of awareness of defence options, leading to a fear of potential consequences. People often refrain from intervening out of concern that they might themselves be prosecuted (Texl, 2023).

If the limits of these two institutes are exceeded, the Criminal Code provides for mitigation under Section 41(g), which states that if a crime is committed while averting an attack or danger without fulfilling all conditions for self-defence or extreme necessity, it will be considered a mitigating circumstance. It is important to understand that circumstances that exclude unlawfulness are legal tools that allow individuals to defend their lives and property under certain conditions, without the threat of criminal prosecution. However, it is crucial to have a theoretical understanding of these concepts, as when an attack or danger occurs, there will hardly be time for a detailed analysis of the situation (Gregorová, 2023; Medlín, 2024).

1.4. Comparison of Czech and Slovak legislation on self-defence

There is no doubt that the Slovak legal framework is closest to the Czech one, particularly in terms of the terminology of the elements of self-defence and extreme necessity. It is evident that Slovak legislation, since the adoption of the new Criminal Code in 2005, is more sophisticated than its Czech counterpart. It should be noted that in Slovakia, self-defence is understood in essentially the same way as in the Czechia in terms of meaning and purpose. This is evidenced by the fact that the first two paragraphs of the legal framework are identical to the Czech version. Therefore, it is not a matter of differences in legislation, but rather of a more qualitative refinement of Slovak self-defence. In particular, more consideration is given to the defender, who due to severe distress caused by the attack, commits excess. In such a case, the third paragraph of the institute applies, whereby the defender is not criminally responsible for exceeding the limits.

However, the key point is that the purpose and intent of this institute are the same in both countries. Differences arise primarily in understanding of the proportionality of such defence. Slovakia probably has the most favourable regulation of self-defence for the defender. It is unfortunate that the original government proposal for the wording of the necessary defence in the Czech Republic was not adopted. This would have strengthened the position of the defender in such situations, while also deterring potential attackers.

1.4.1. Detailed comparison of legislation in the Czech Republic and selected countries on self-defence and necessity

The issue of self-defence and necessity is at the core of the legal protection of fundamental human values such as life, health, liberty, and property. The legal frameworks governing these principles vary significantly between countries. For

instance, while the Czech Republic allows for a relatively liberal approach to self-defence, others, such as the United Kingdom, enforce stricter regulations.

The Czech Republic's legislation on self-defence and necessity is among the most developed in Europe. It enables citizens to effectively use legally owned weapons to defend their fundamental rights—life, health, and property. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in the Czech Republic's approach compared to other countries, particularly in areas such as proportionality in defence, firearm ownership rights, and cultural attitudes towards self-defence.

The United States represents one of the most permissive jurisdictions regarding self-defence, with the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing citizens the right to keep and bear arms. This creates unique conditions for applying self-defence principles. Many U.S. states have adopted “Stand Your Ground” laws, which remove the duty to retreat when defending one's life or property. For example, in Florida, an individual may use lethal force if their life is threatened, without the obligation to first retreat (Greenberg et al., 2024). Additionally, the Castle Doctrine protects individuals in their own homes, where defensive actions are presumed to be proportional to the threat posed by an intruder (Greenberg et al., 2024).

Compared to the Czech Republic, the American approach is far less restrictive. While Czech law requires careful assessment of proportionality in defensive actions, U.S. laws grant defenders broader discretion. However, this greater freedom leads to higher numbers of incidents involving the use of lethal force in situations that might otherwise have been resolved differently. Studies show that states with Stand Your Ground laws experience an average of 8% higher rates of fatal violent incidents than those without such laws (Krüsselmann et al., 2023).

The United Kingdom enforces some of the strictest gun control laws in Europe. Self-defence in the UK is permissible only through the use of reasonable force, meaning that the defender's response must be proportionate to the severity of the attack. The use of lethal force is permitted only in extreme cases where life is at immediate risk (Krüsselmann et al., 2021). This approach is often cited as a model for minimising firearm misuse but comes at the expense of reducing the potential for effective self-defence.

Strict gun control laws, including a ban on handgun ownership, are frequently credited with the UK's low levels of violent crime (Hradilová Selin et al., 2024). However, these regulations also limit citizens' ability to protect themselves in cases of attack, raising questions about the balance between public safety and individual freedom.

Compared to the Czech Republic, the UK's approach is much more restrictive. While Czech citizens can legally own and carry firearms, this right in the UK is reserved for specific groups, such as sports shooters or hunters. This model is often praised for its effectiveness in reducing violent crime but criticized for limiting individuals' ability to defend themselves.

Switzerland is renowned for its distinctive approach to firearms due to its militia-based system. Military service obligations include ownership of military rifles, which soldiers keep at home. However, in civilian contexts, self-defence is regulated similarly to the Czech Republic, with proportionality being a key factor in assessing the legality of defensive actions (Hradilová Selin et al., 2024).

In comparison to the Czech Republic, Switzerland places greater emphasis on the military use of firearms, while civilian ownership is more restricted. This model could serve as inspiration for the Czech Republic in strengthening national security through the active involvement of armed civilians.

Germany requires special permits for firearm ownership and restricts the use of lethal force to situations where there is no other way to avert an immediate threat to life. The right to self-defence is similar to the UK model, with proportionality being a crucial consideration in determining the legality of defensive actions (Bočková et al., 2024).

Compared to the Czech Republic, German legislation is more restrictive, particularly regarding the right to firearm ownership. This approach reflects broader cultural and political priorities on violence prevention within society.

In countries such as Finland and Sweden, firearm ownership is permitted mainly for hunting purposes, but self-defence is not a legitimate reason for possession. In Finland, for instance, all firearms must be securely locked at home, and their use for self-defence is allowed only in extreme situations involving imminent danger (Schelle, 2021).

French legislation places a strong emphasis on subsidiarity and proportionality in self-defence situations. The use of lethal force is allowed only when no alternative exists to protect life or health. Self-defence is not considered a sufficient reason for firearm ownership, resulting in more limited defensive capabilities compared to the Czech Republic (Bočková et al., 2024).

1.4.2. Strengths and weaknesses of the Czech approach

Czech legislation represents a balanced model that allows for effective self-defence without excessive risk of firearm misuse. The strengths include:

- Legal entitlement to obtain a firearms licence, ensuring equal access to self-defence.
- No obligation to retreat when under attack, which strengthens the right to self-defence.

However, weaknesses in the Czech system emerge regarding the principle of proportionality, which can, in some cases, be subjectively assessed. Critics also point out that the legislation could provide better protection for defenders against subsequent criminal prosecution, similar to the American Castle Doctrine.

A comparison shows that the Czech Republic offers a unique combination of a liberal approach to firearm ownership and a balanced right to self-defence. Nevertheless, drawing inspiration from foreign models, such as enhanced protection for defenders in their homes, could strengthen the legal certainty of citizens in crisis situations.

1.5. Identification of gaps in literature and practice

The principles of self-defence and necessity are integral to criminal law, as they provide citizens with a legal foundation for protecting life, health, and property. Despite attracting the attention of legal scholars, policymakers, and the public, analysis of the literature and practice reveals significant gaps that hinder a comprehensive understanding and application of these principles.

Although comparative law is a well-developed field, most studies on self-defence focus solely on the legislative texts of individual states. There is a lack of in-depth analysis of the practical impact these laws have on citizen behaviour and crime rates.

While legal frameworks often outline the conditions for self-defence, there is limited data on how these laws are applied in real-life situations. For example, in the Czech Republic, the absence of a centralised database of cases involving self-defence and necessity complicates the evaluation of their effectiveness (Vedra, 2024).

Legal norms cannot be separated from their societal context. For instance, in the United States, the Stand Your Ground doctrine and cultural acceptance of firearm ownership are closely linked to historical values of individual liberty. By contrast, Europe emphasises state control of violence, which influences legislative approaches (Krüsselmann et al., 2021). However, systematic studies comparing the influence of cultural and historical factors on the application of these legal principles are lacking.

While some research focuses on rates of violent crime, few studies examine indirect impacts of legislation, such as citizens' perceptions of safety or their willingness to intervene in crisis situations (Greenberg et al., 2024). For example, the British approach, which prioritises the minimisation of force, may lead to citizens fearing to act in self-defence due to concerns about potential prosecution.

One of the key shortcomings in the literature is the limited understanding of how legal frameworks affect citizens' subjective sense of security. Self-defence and necessity are not only legal tools but also psychological and social concepts that influence individual behaviour. For example, there is a lack of research on how citizens in different legal systems feel protected and whether self-defence laws enhance their confidence in handling crisis situations (Dycus et al., 2022).

In states that emphasise proportionality in defence, such as the Czech Republic or Germany, citizens may fear exceeding the limits of self-defence and facing criminal prosecution. This concern can lead to passivity in situations where defence would otherwise be justified (Medlín, 2024). Studies addressing this issue could provide valuable insights for legislative amendments that better protect defenders.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion on self-defence and necessity. Negative coverage of cases where defenders face prosecution can undermine citizens' trust in the legal system. However, there is a scarcity of systematic studies examining this phenomenon (Texl, 2023).

Empirical data is essential for understanding how the principles of self-defence and necessity function in practice. Yet, available data is limited and often incomparable across countries. In many states, including the Czech Republic, systematic tracking of cases involving self-defence or necessity is lacking. This hinders the analysis of trends and the identification of potential issues in the application of laws (Bočková et al., 2024). Conversely, in the United States, extensive databases on incidents related to Stand Your Ground laws enable more in-depth analysis of these legal principles.

Research often focuses on individual cases or short-term trends, but there is a lack of longitudinal studies tracking the impact of legislative changes on citizens' long-term behaviour and crime rates. For instance, the effects of amendments to the Czech firearms legislation on the frequency of defensive incidents remain unexplored.

Modern statistical and data tools, such as machine learning or big data analysis, could provide deeper insights into patterns of behaviour related to the application of self-defence laws. However, these methodologies are underutilized in criminal law and security studies (Krüsselmann et al., 2023).

Another significant gap concerns legal certainty for individuals who defend themselves. This issue is particularly evident in systems that emphasize proportionality and subsidiarity.

In the Czech Republic, as in many other European states, exceeding the limits of self-defence or necessity can be classified as a criminal offence, even if the defender was under significant stress. In contrast, the US Stand Your Ground doctrine offers greater legal protection for defenders (Greenberg et al., 2024). This legal certainty may increase citizens' willingness to intervene in crisis situations.

Proportionality in defence is a subjective concept that can be interpreted differently in various cases. This ambiguity may lead to citizens fearing prosecution, undermining their willingness to act in self-defence (Medlín, 2024). The literature lacks detailed analyses of court decisions that could help better define the boundaries of proportionality.

Self-defence and necessity are not purely legal concepts—their understanding requires an interdisciplinary approach involving law, psychology, sociology, and criminology. However, this approach is underdeveloped in the literature. Studies often isolate legal, psychological, and sociological aspects rather than examining them as an interconnected system. For example, the impact of traumatic experiences on decision-making during defensive actions is insufficiently analysed (Dycus et al., 2022).

Defensive behaviour can vary by gender, with women facing specific challenges, such as in cases of domestic violence. However, the gender dimension is often overlooked in analyses of self-defence (Gregorová, 2023).

2. Materials and methods

The aim of our research, in the context of the issues of self-defence and extreme necessity, is to analyse the factors influencing the ownership and use of firearms in Czechia and Slovakia, with particular emphasis on their use for self-defence and other aspects of personal security. Research focusses on examining the relationships between the type of firearm licence, the frequency of training, weapon preferences, and the willingness of the respondents to engage in activities that support the internal security of the state.

The findings are intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of the behaviour of legal gun owners and their attitudes towards defence and security.

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire survey prepared via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 10 open questions mapping the legislative environment for legal ownership of firearms and ammunition in both Czechia and Slovakia, with an emphasis on the sense of internal security in the context of the self-defence and extreme necessity framework.

We conducted a survey of three groups of respondents who use firearms in self-defence and extreme necessity scenarios. Special attention was paid to firearm licence

holders, owners of a single firearm, and owners of multiple firearms. Thus, the selection of respondents was purposeful.

The questionnaire was distributed to various shooting clubs and commercial shooting ranges in both Slovakia and the Czechia. Respondents answered the questions between March and June 2024.

The research sample consisted of 504 Slovakian firearms licence holders, of whom 44 (8.93%) were women and 460 (91.07%) were men. The Czechia sample consisted of 502 respondents, of whom 42 (8.37%) were women and 460 (91.63%) were men.

The data collected were processed using Microsoft Excel and their analysis was performed using the data analysis software SPSS Statistics, as recommended by Zapletal (2022).

We first calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to estimate the reliability of the tested items, in order to express their degree of consistency. We then identified differences between the respondent groups from Czechia and Slovakia. By employing nonparametric testing methods (assuming no normal distribution of probabilities based on the Gaussian distribution), the Mann-Whitney U test was used. Given the large number of objects in the test samples, the calculated U value approximated a normal probability distribution. This test was used to verify the null hypothesis (H₀), which assumed an equal impact of the indicator on both the Czechia and Slovakia.

To conduct the student's *t* test, we first performed a simple Fisher's F test to verify the variances between the two random samples of respondents from Czechia and Slovakia. The *t*-test was used to refine the effects results on both groups of firearm licence holders from these countries, applying a two-sample unpaired *t*-test. This allowed us to establish statistically significant differences in the results of Czech gun licence holders compared to those from Slovakia.

Based on the classification of the observed variables, we were interested in the correlation between the components of the tools used in self-defence and extreme necessity among firearm licence holders in both research groups. These correlations were evaluated using Spearman's correlation coefficient (a nonparametric method that does not require a normal distribution of the evaluated data).

3. Results

The research respondents are most frequently holders of short barrel firearms—pistols, and long-barrel firearms—semiautomatic rifles (AR-15 calibre 5.56 × 45; Sa vz. 58 calibre 7.62 × 39), which they regularly use. The third most commonly used firearm is the long barrel hunting rifle Sako calibre 7.62 × 51 NATO standard (the hunting equivalent of 0.308 Winchester), as well as rifles in calibres 6.5 × 55 or 6.5 × 57, primarily for hunting purposes.

Provided that legally established conditions are met, up to 86.90% of respondents carry firearms in public spaces. This figure is 7.94% lower than the number of holders of a category "A" firearm licence, indicating that if someone holds a licence of this category, they are also likely to own a firearm for daily carry.

The calibre most commonly used for daily carry was found to be 9 mm Luger in 73.41% of cases. Other high ballistic performance revolver calibres, such as 0.357

Magnum, 0.380 Special, 0.45 Auto (ACP), as well as pistol calibres 6.35 Browning (25 Auto) and 7.65 mm Browning (32 Auto), account for only approximately 2% of the ammunition used and are considered more of a supplement to the 9 mm Luger calibre.

The frequency of firearm training at shooting ranges is once a month in 47.02% of cases. More frequent than once a month are 12.90% of licence holders, meaning that a total of 59.92% of respondents train at least on a monthly basis. A frequency of once every three months applies to 26.59% of shooters, while 7.54% train only once a year.

The storage of ammunition at home is regulated by law, which defines the maximum amounts of ammunition allowed. In the event of a national security threat, armed forces would be prioritised in the supply of ammunition, while civilian firearm licence holders would rely on their own stockpiles at home. As we found, 53.97% possess more than 200 rounds of ammunition, 25.20% hold up to 200 rounds, 12.50% store up to 100 rounds, and 8.33% store up to 50 rounds.

The use of firearms can be performed in several ways: For intimidation (firing a warning shot) or for hitting a target (neutralising the attacker). Research indicates that 83.93% of firearm licence holders have never used a weapon for self-defence or in extreme necessity, 9.13% have used a weapon as a threat, 2.98% have issued a threat with a weapon followed by a shot, and 3.97% of shooters have fired a shot. In the event of a national security threat, 74.60% of gun owners would reinforce the armed forces in the defence and protection of the state.

An interest in learning basic skills in the operation of light firearms at a beginner level, as well as topography and communication as part of a short mandatory military training, would be supported and welcomed by 77.38% of firearm licence holders.

Table 1 shows the calculated Cronbach alpha coefficients for the analysed of tools used in self-defence and extreme necessity for both groups of firearm licence holders under study.

Table 1. Reliability preferences of the firearm licence holder data set in the Czechia and Slovakia.

Analysed components	Cronbach's alpha	
	Firearm Licence Holders Czechia	Firearm Licence Holders Slovakia
Firearm Licence Category	0.946	0.867
Preparation for Firearm Licence	0.723	0.645
Type of Firearm Ownership	0.684	0.613
Firearm for Daily Carry	0.735	0.758
Firearm Calibre	0.657	0.677
Training Preparation	0.719	0.639
Ammunition Calibre	0.724	0.782
Use of Firearm	0.532	0.567
Willingness to Reinforce Armed Forces	0.485	0.595
Mandatory Military Training	0.861	0.781

Source: Own.

By comparing the values of Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, the lowest value was observed for “Willingness to reinforce the armed forces,” indicating that this item had the lowest consistency of responses among respondents in both countries. Therefore, we can conclude that this item has a different impact on firearm licence holders. When comparing the research samples of firearm licence holders from Czechia and Slovakia, greater differences are observed, particularly in the aforementioned balance between willingness to reinforce the armed forces. However, there is also inconsistency in the item “Preparation for acquiring the required proficiency to obtain a firearm licence”. The reasons may vary, as applicants do not possess the same physical and psychological attributes, and acquired experience in the use of self-defence and extreme necessity tools also plays an important role.

Through correlation analysis, we identified relationships between the components under study in the use of self-defence and extreme necessity tools using the nonparametric Spearman correlation coefficient, with its value set at a 95% significance interval (0.05). Inconsistencies were identified in two items: “willingness to reinforce the armed forces” and the necessity of introducing “Mandatory military training”, which in most analysed cases do not reach statistical significance at the chosen level.

Table 2. Statistical characteristics of the Mann-Whitney u test for the samples of firearm licence holders from Czechia and Slovakia.

Analysed components	Analysed sample	Average rank	M-W-U	Z	p
Firearm Licence Category	FL Holders from Czechia	58,005	1647,485	1.644	0.206
	FL Holders from Slovakia	49,015	1161,185		
Preparation for Firearm Licence	FL Holders from Czechia	62,225	1989,385	2.586	0.048
	FL Holders from Slovakia	46,615	1014,185		
Type of Firearm Ownership	FL Holders from Czechia	60,205	1725,385	2.211	0.043
	FL Holders from Slovakia	48,225	1081,285		
Firearm for Daily Carry	FL Holders from Czechia	55,075	1483,985	0.603	0.704
	FL Holders from Slovakia	52,055	1321,885		
Firearm Calibre	FL Holders from Czechia	58,715	1646,685	1.614	0.216
	FL Holders from Slovakia	50,225	1158,585		
Training Preparation	FL Holders from Czechia	58,085	1733,985	2.197	0.038
	FL Holders from Slovakia	48,295	1070,285		
Ammunition Calibre	FL Holders from Czechia	53,235	1371,385	-0.147	0.926
	FL Holders from Slovakia	54,065	1435,185		
Use of Firearm	FL Holders from Czechia	50,035	1226,985	-1.069	0.357
	FL Holders from Slovakia	57,205	1579,385		
Willingness to Reinforce Armed Forces	FL Holders from Czechia	54,065	1428,985	0.296	0.947
	FL Holders from Slovakia	52,845	1374,885		
Mandatory Military Training	FL Holders from Czechia	58,225	1614,485	1.427	0.266
	FL Holders from Slovakia	49,315	1189,585		

Explanations: *p*—probability, M-W-U—Mann-Whitney U coefficient, *Z*—*Z* coefficient for determining probability (Source: Own).

Using the Mann-Whitney U test, we identified differences in the use of self-defence and extreme necessity tools between the groups of firearm licence holders from Czechia and Slovakia (see **Table 2**). We formulate Hypothesis H1: “There are statistically significant differences in the possession and carrying of firearms and ammunition in the Czech Republic and Slovakia”.

The significance level in most of the components analysed of self-defence and extreme necessity tools is higher than the hypothesis testing significance level of 95% (0.05). These values are highlighted in **Table 2** and support the null hypothesis. This indicates that there are differences between the groups of firearms licence holders from Czechia and Slovakia. At a level of significance of 99% (0.01), we would observe differences in all components in the components under study.

Table 3. Student *t*-test values for firearm licence holders in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

	<i>t</i> -stat.	Critical field <i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Firearm Licence Category	-1.384	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.195
Preparation for Firearm Licence	-2.149	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.044
Type of Firearm Ownership	1.798	$(-\infty; -1.984) \cup (1.984; \infty)$	0.041
Firearm for Daily Carry	1.195	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.604
Firearm Calibre	1.273	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.134
Training Preparation	2.301	$(-\infty; -1.985) \cup (1.985; \infty)$	0.039
Ammunition Calibre	1.226	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.974
Use of Firearm	1.886	$(-\infty; -1.986) \cup (1.986; \infty)$	0.485
Willingness to Reinforce Armed Forces	1.524	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.972
Mandatory Military Training	1.091	$(-\infty; -1.983) \cup (1.983; \infty)$	0.212

Explanations: *p*—probability, *t*-stat.—value of the *t* coefficient (Source: Own).

Through the student’s *t* test, we identified differences in the use of self-defence and extreme necessity tools between the groups of firearm licence holders from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The values of the student *t*-test coefficient are presented in **Table 3**.

We verified the existence of statistically significant differences using the Mann-Whitney nonparametric U test, except for the items: “Preparation for a firearm licence”, “Possession of a firearm type”, and “Training preparation”. For these items, the null hypothesis (H0) was not rejected at a 95% significance level. The *t*-test indicates probability values of $p_1 = 0.044$, $p_2 = 0.041$, and $p_3 = 0.039$ for the respective items. Based on the described statistical methods, we were able to confirm the validity of hypothesis H1.

4. Discussion

The results of the conducted analysis indicate certain significant differences in the use of firearms and ammunition between Czechia and Slovakia, as revealed by the questionnaire survey. These differences are particularly evident in the areas of preferences for the preparation of firearm licences, the types of firearms held, and the

willingness to participate in the reinforcement of the armed forces. Findings related to differences in preferences for daily firearm carry are less significant, which aligns with previous research focussing on similar legislative and cultural environments of both countries (Horák, 2014; Schelle, 2021).

The results obtained through nonparametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney U test, show that Czech and Slovak respondent groups exhibit consistency in selected aspects, such as firearm calibre choice and training preparation. This corresponds to previous studies that point to similar habits among shooters in both countries (Pavlíková, 2020, Zapletal 2023). On the other hand, inconsistencies in the willingness to reinforce the armed forces may be influenced by both cultural and socioeconomic factors, which deserve further analysis.

Willingness to participate in mandatory military training surprisingly shows lower consistency, which could be linked to a declining interest in this type of activity across most European countries (Vetešník, 2023; Zapletal, 2022). This finding relates to the fact that at the beginning of the new millennium, conditions were established in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia to abolish compulsory military service and transition gradually to fully professional armed forces. This trend is further supported by other European studies, which indicate that a significant portion of the population remains hesitant about mandatory military activities, often as a result of political and societal changes (Buzan et al., 2005).

Independent research conducted on statistically significant respondent groups demonstrated that nearly 75% were willing to strengthen the state's armed forces, and approximately 77% expressed support for participating in regular short-term military training. Unfortunately, developments over the past five years indicate a marked decline in the motivation and interest of the younger generation, both men and women, in military service.

Given that both our article and the research conducted within its context are strictly focused on the legal framework of self-defence and extreme necessity as applied in the Czechia and Slovakia, and that this subject matter is entirely governed by national legislation, it is essentially not feasible to draw direct comparisons with foreign studies or the outcomes of similar research conducted in other countries. Legal systems and the specific provisions regulating the use of force in situations of self-defence and extreme necessity vary significantly between jurisdictions, and these differences are often deeply rooted in each country's unique legal, cultural, and historical background. As a result, cross-national comparisons would likely lead to inaccurate conclusions or misinterpretations, as the legal principles underpinning these concepts are not universally applicable. Therefore, our study remains focused on the legislative and practical context specific to Czechia and Slovakia, without attempting to generalise its findings beyond these borders.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyse the attitudes of firearms licence holders in Czechia and Slovakia, with a focus on their preparation, firearm use, and willingness to contribute to national defence. Research results highlight certain differences between the two countries, particularly regarding firearm licence preparation and

willingness to participate in national defence duties. The findings also suggest that the legislative similarity between the two countries leads to similar habits in the daily use of firearms, which is consistent with expectations given the historical and cultural context.

5.1. Practical implications

The issue of using weapons within the scope of necessary defence and emergency situations brings not only regional but also global implications. The findings of a study focusing on the Czech Republic and Slovakia provide insights into these issues within an international context, encompassing differences in legislation, cultural traditions, and security policies across countries.

A comparison of Czech and Slovak legislation revealed that Czech regulations are more liberal, whereas the Slovak framework offers greater protection to defenders in cases of exceeding the bounds of necessary defence. This legislative inspiration may prove valuable for other countries considering strengthening defenders' rights. For instance, the American "Stand Your Ground" laws provide broader protection to defenders, which could serve as a model for countries with more restrictive legislation.

The culture of firearm ownership and the right to self-defence vary significantly across regions. In the USA, the right to bear arms is guaranteed by the Constitution, whereas in Sweden or the United Kingdom, firearm ownership for self-defence is restricted. This diversity has practical implications for individuals' ability to defend themselves against attackers, highlighting the need for discussions on balancing the right to self-defence with public safety.

The study demonstrated that legal firearm ownership could play an important role in reducing crime rates. For example, Switzerland, where there is a high level of legal firearm ownership, shows lower firearm-related mortality rates compared to Sweden or Germany. This could serve as a basis for crafting policies aimed at regulating firearms and understanding their impact on societal safety.

Frequent misunderstandings of the concepts of necessary defence and emergency situations lead to fears of potential criminal prosecution. Raising awareness about these principles, similar to the emphasis on "Castle Doctrine" laws in the USA, could enhance citizens' confidence in taking defensive actions.

Survey results indicated that firearms license holders in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are willing to support armed forces in times of crisis. This model of cooperation could serve as an inspiration for other countries seeking to bolster their defensive capabilities through active citizen participation.

The absence of centralized databases on cases of necessary defence and emergency situations limits the scope for research and the improvement of legal mechanisms. A systematic collection of data could help in understanding the impacts of different legislative models and their influence on societal security.

The practical implications of this issue suggest the need to integrate legislative, social, and cultural factors to achieve a balanced approach to firearm ownership and self-defence opportunities at a global level.

5.2. Future research directions

Future research should delve deeper into the social and psychological aspects that influence individuals' decision-making when using firearms for self-defence or in emergency situations. Key areas of analysis should include factors such as stress, fear of criminal prosecution, and the influence of public opinion on the willingness to act in crisis scenarios.

Research could also focus on the gender dimensions of self-defence, such as differences in risk perception between men and women or the specific barriers women face when using firearms for defence, particularly in cases of domestic violence.

Further studies might explore differences in the application of legislation across states, particularly in the context of diverse cultures and historical traditions. Comparing the impacts of various models, such as the American "Stand Your Ground" laws and the European emphasis on proportionality, could yield valuable insights for optimising legal frameworks.

A critical theme for future research would be tracking the long-term impacts of changes in firearm legislation. This could include analyses of whether stricter controls on legal firearms genuinely lead to lower crime rates, or if enhancing defenders' rights results in greater public safety.

Modern technologies, such as big data analysis and machine learning, offer potential for deeper insights into behavioural patterns associated with firearm use. Future studies could investigate how these tools might be leveraged to predict and prevent crimes involving firearms.

Media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion on self-defence and firearm ownership. Research could examine how media coverage of self-defence cases affects citizens' willingness to intervene in crisis situations or, conversely, their fears of criminal prosecution.

Future studies could also analyze the extent to which educational programmes on self-defence and emergency situations improve citizens' ability to act effectively and safely. This includes not only legal awareness but also practical skills, such as firearm handling and crisis response.

Drawing inspiration from the Swiss model, where civilian firearm ownership is linked to military training, could provide an interesting avenue for further exploration. Research into the benefits and drawbacks of mandatory military training could contribute to discussions on enhancing national security.

Illegal firearm possession poses a significant risk to public safety. Future research could focus on analyzing black markets for illegal firearms, their accessibility, and the effectiveness of preventive measures against their proliferation.

Studies should examine how legal frameworks and their public perception influence citizens' subjective sense of safety. Analyzing whether a more liberal approach to firearms increases or decreases this sense of security could help inform balanced policy development.

This approach to future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of self-defence and firearm ownership issues, supporting the development of effective policies in public safety and individual rights.

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