

guns because "bad guys" will always get guns. Some have ideological objections to government intrusion or maintain that guns are a part of "freedom" or even the means of making society safer. Often they will present any form of firearms regulations as one step on the slippery slope to confiscation. For example the United Nations resolution on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was presented as part of the worldwide move to ban all guns.⁷⁴ Finally, there is the appeal to economic interests: "Guns are a billion dollar industry, the GST alone will cover the costs of injuries".⁷⁵

The National Rifle Association is one of the most powerful lobbies in the world. Not only has it successfully prevented the United States from implementing effective firearms controls, in spite of the support of the majority of the country's citizens, but it has built links with gun lobby groups in many other countries and is actively fighting efforts to strengthen international controls through the United Nations.

For this reason, some groups, particularly in the United States, avoid linking small arms control with gun control which they regard as a matter of sovereignty. In addition, words common in the peacebuilding context such as "disarmament" have other connotations in the context of domestic gun control policy and are used to enflame opposition.

There are many methodological challenges in firearms regulation research. Cross-cultural comparisons are difficult because of the complexity of other variables such as cultural differences and the difficulty of demonstrating causal links. However these methodological challenges are not unique to the firearms regulation issue but affect many other complex crime prevention, public safety and health care issues. Perhaps what is unique to the firearms regulation issue is that a level of rigour and certainty is demanded which is absent in other less political debates. As Martin Killias said: "Unfortunately, any further waiting for more convincing evidence may jeopardize more rigorous approaches to gun control, since beyond a certain point significantly reducing the number of guns in civilians hands of private citizens becomes a hopeless task."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Tanya Metaska, NRA Fundraising Letter, 1997.

⁷⁵ Senator Ron Ghitter, cited in Tim Harper, "Senator under fire on gun control stand", Toronto Star, September 15, 1995.

⁷⁶ Martin Killias, op.cit.

⁷⁷ For example, Ed Laurence has proposed an international treaty to extend current efforts. Ed Laurence, *The Light Weapons Problem: The Way Ahead*, October 24, 1997. In addition, the Nobel Laureates proposals and others should be examined.