Data, Variables, and Methodology

This chapter details the variables, measurement, and data sources as well as the methodology. The thesis of this book is that robust peacekeeping works better than traditional peacekeeping in protecting civilians from deliberate killings by state and organized nonstate actors in civil wars. In the process we will also determine the effects on stated mission goals.

More specifically, as discussed in the previous chapter, the study seeks to answer the following questions: what accounts for UN peacekeeping forces inability to protect civilians from human rights violations, especially intentional killings? Is traditional peace operational doctrine, initially designed for interstate conflict, appropriate for the new intrastate conflict environment? Do mission characteristics of UN peacekeeping mandates and operations matter for reducing the ongoing intentional civilian killing? Does robust peacekeeping work better than other mission types in staving off civilian killings when UN peacekeeping missions are deployed in civil wars? To what extent does robust peacekeeping affect the number of intentional civilian killings? Is there such a detectable difference regarding other stated peacekeeping mission goals on a case by case basis? To answer these questions on UN peacekeeping, two approaches can be used. First, the comparative case study approach, on which some scholars rely. The problem with using only case study approach is that it reflects small N and circumstances in those studies and therefore does not allow broad generalization across the population of cases excluded from the study. Some scholars argue that the use of case study alone to draw general conclusions is flawed by the problems of selection bias, lack of systematic procedures, and inattention to rival explanations. Other scholars alternatively argue that these critiques of qualitative case research may be overdrawn and that contributions of these works are underappreciated. The second approach
is Large N quantitative aggregate data analysis. Certain scholars also use strictly quantitative analysis to generalize or make causal inference. However, this methodology may lack the nuances that qualitative methods reveal.

The debate on the appropriate mode of analysis has illuminated both the usefulness and shortcomings of each methodological approach. Both King et al.’s (2004) *Designing Social Inquiry* and Collier’s (2004) *Rethinking Social Inquiry* have demonstrated the usefulness of both methodological approaches in achieving social scientific ends but also acknowledged the shortcomings of each as a research tool. In view of this methodological divide, other scholars proposed integration of the methodological approaches referred to as the mixed method, which Lieberman (2005) calls the nested analysis. This unified approach combines case-study analysis with statistical analysis, thus, offering the advantages of each approach and also making up for the shortcomings of each. For example, statistical analysis can guide case selection for in-depth research, provide direction for more focused case studies and comparisons, and be used to provide additional tests of hypotheses generated by small N research. On the other hand, small N analyses can be used to assess the plausibility of observed statistical relationships between variables to develop better measurement strategies, particularly if the case studies are carried out in the “systematic” comparative mode suggested by George (1979). This integrated approach improves the prospects of making valid causal inferences in cross-national comparative research by drawing on the distinct strengths of the two approaches.

Utilizing the mixed approach in this study, we seek to maximize generalizability of findings using large N of UN missions in civil wars. We use the integrated method combining quantitative analysis and key representative cases of robust peacekeeping in Africa that include Sierra Leone and Democratic Republic of Congo, compared with some cases of traditional peacekeeping in Angola and Rwanda, to determine what might have accounted for the likely differences discovered in the quantitative analysis. In this way we maximize comparability by focusing particularly on one region, Africa, and contrasting two cases of robust with two cases of traditional peacekeeping. George’s (2005) case study methodology will be employed, to answer the same set of research questions for each case. At the same time we will undertake a statistical analysis of all UN peacekeeping missions in civil conflicts between 1956 and 2006 in order to contrast the outcomes, in terms of effect on casualties and human rights of those with or without robust missions. Contextual variables will be those listed in the hypotheses of Chapter 2.