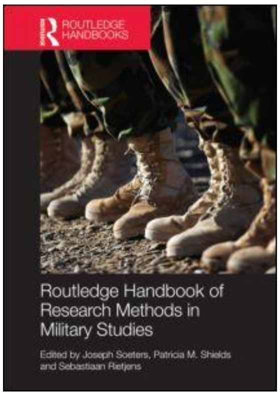

Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Military Studies

Joseph Soeters, Patricia M. Shields, Sebastiaan Rietjens

Cross-National Research in the Military

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203093801.ch19
Chiara Ruffa, Joseph Soeters
Published online on: 09 Jun 2014

19

CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH IN THE MILITARY

Comparing operational styles

Chiara Ruffa and Joseph Soeters

C. Ruffa (2014) 'What peacekeepers think and do: An exploratory study of French, Ghanaian, Italian and South Korean Armies in the United Nations Mission in Lebanon,' *Armed Forces & Society* 40(2): 199–225.

'What peacekeepers think and do' is about how and why different national armies display recurring and systematic variation in the way they behave in operation. Ruffa focuses on how four different national contingents behave during their daily military activities in a peace operation, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, launched after the Israeli–Hezbollah war in 2006. The author argues that variation in different armies' daily military activities (e.g. force protection, civil-military coordination and operational activities) is consistent with the way these armies perceive the operational environment they face. She also shows that the way this environment is 'constructed' is consistent with the previous experience of these armies in the country of operation.

Methodologically, the paper is based on in-depth empirical research comparing carefully selected cases. This selection follows the logic of controlled comparison. The selection is based on two criteria. First, armies had to be deployed under similar circumstances, i.e. similar levels of operational difficulty, with an identical mandate and in more or less the same areas. Second, the contingents had to be sufficiently different from each other in order to be able to expect variations. This resulted in the selection of four national contingents: two Western (French and Italian) and two non-Western contingents (Ghanaian and Korean).

While the four contingents had a more or less similar number of troops, they had different levels of material capabilities: the Ghanaian contingent is from a relatively poor African army, the Korean is rich and extremely well-equipped, while the French and Italian units shared high-level and almost identical characteristics in equipment and vehicles. In addition to this, the four national armies had different previous experiences with the mission in Lebanon and peacekeeping in general.

The data collection in this study was quite eclectic, because it brought together interpretivist research strategies, based on in-depth interviews and participant observation, and data collection through the distribution of questionnaires among a selected stratified sample across ranks. The process of getting access to the field was authorized by national authorities in each of these four armies and this formal permission allowed for several months of proximity with soldiers of the four contingents in the field.

Ruffa, a female civilian researcher, gained full access to the field but of course her own identity and language skills may have influenced the actual findings in ways that can hardly be controlled. Her data analysis was based on triangulation and plurality of sources. Throughout the paper she made use of her interview transcripts, observations and the results of questionnaires.

The study has three main findings. First, the French, Italian, Ghanaian and Korean contingents differed consistently and remarkably in their daily military activities. While the Ghanaian and Italian units prioritized humanitarian activities, the French and Korean contingents emphasized the importance of patrolling and displayed relatively high degrees of force protection. Second, these variations are consistent with the way in which each of these four armies understands the context they are embedded in. The Ghanaian and Italian contingents had a relatively low threat perception, they did not identify an enemy and they had a restrictive interpretation of the use of force. The French and Korean contingents had a different way of perceiving the situation: they understood the mission as having a high threat level and a real enemy. Third, this finding is consistent with the previous experiences of these armies in the country of operation. The French soldiers linked the perceived operational environment to the overall traumatic experience they had in Lebanon during the Multinational Force in 1984–1985. The South Korean military seemed to link it to their lack of experience, UNIFIL II being their first peacekeeping operation. By contrast, Italian soldiers had a good memory of Lebanon because during the Multinational Force they had close to no casualties and the Ghanaian military attached a good memory to the country seemingly because of its long-lasting presence within UNIFIL.

Introduction

Cross-national research applied to the military seems to be a relatively new phenomenon. However, it is not very new in the social and behavioural sciences in general. In many cases nations have existed for centuries and nation-related languages and economies, laws and regulations, traditions and everyday practices, policies and national ambitions had comparable time to become distinct from one another. The crisis in the Eurozone reflects this differentiation despite optimistic hopes that the internationalization of production and trade would smooth these differences easily. Apparently, such cross-national differences are fairly stubborn, even if they are subtle and perhaps not always so easy to discern.

In the social and behavioural sciences international variation in psychological characteristics (e.g. learning styles), organizational structures (e.g. hierarchies and formalization), and political cultures and general societal values (e.g. cosmopolitanism) have attracted quite some scholarly attention, leading to flourishing and established branches of research (e.g. Almond and Verba 1963; Hofstede 2001; Chokar et al. 2007). The complexity of comparative social research has even led to the emergence of specialized methodological concerns and considerations, as displayed in Przeworski and Teune (1970), Lijphart (1971), van de Vijver and Leung (1997) and Davidov et al. (2011). The majority of these studies are of a sophisticated quantitative nature, but more recently qualitative studies have been published as well, for instance in the *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*.

As said, in military studies attention for such international differences has not been a truly established practice, perhaps because the armed forces – national phenomena *par* *excellence* – predominantly attract national scholarly attention. The 'one-nation, one-case' approach seems dominant in military studies, particularly in military history. However, due to the growing need for national armed forces to engage in supranational strategies and to cooperate internationally, cross-national and comparative military studies have started to appear in gradually increasing numbers. Sometimes, they are of a more historical nature, such as Kier's study (1997) on doctrine development in France and the UK between the two World Wars or the famous study by John Nagl (2002) about the UK operations in Malaya and the American operations in Vietnam (see also Lieb 2012). Sometimes, they present a set of country-descriptions of specific characteristics – policies, transformations, strategies, input features or adaptation during action – of national armed forces (e.g. Kuhlman and Callaghan 2000; Moskos et al. 2000; Caforio 2000; Farrell et al. 2013).

However, there is a growing urge to delve deeper in the operational side of national militaries working together in operation, whether in the same areas of operation or in the same mission (e.g. Soeters and Manigart 2008; Soeters and Tresch 2010). That is because the idea has emerged that national armed forces may also differ in the way they approach conflictual situations and the way in which they interpret the same mandate; studying these operational variations may help to better understand how to prevent, contain and solve violent conflicts (Soeters 2013b). Carefully comparing operational actions and styles – sometimes in a sort of quasi-experimental way – may even lead to knowledge about cause-and-effect mechanisms and evidence-based practices, which is highly needed in military studies. Like for example Morjé Howard (2008) did to compare successes and failures of 10 UN-missions.

In this chapter we focus on a number of methodological issues related to the study of operational styles of national militaries in the field. Conducting operations is the military's unique asset. The comparison of 'peacetime' defence policies, human resource practices, army structures, rules and regulations is not that different from methodological practices in comparative administrative, political, organization and economic studies. Hence, our main focus here is the military in operation.

Purpose: Description, theory development and theory testing

Comparing armies in action can be either purely descriptive or theory oriented. A description may provide information on armies that were not studied before or on which we mainly have anecdotal evidence. Once variation in operational styles has been assessed empirically, one can opt for different kinds of research design. In general, there are two options (e.g. George and Bennett 2005). First, one could contrast or complement existing knowledge about the characteristics of certain armies. Comparing operational styles across armies can be used to develop new theories and tease out new hypotheses. For instance, if a scholar detects consistent and systematic variations across armies deployed in the same peace operation under similar conditions, (s)he can formulate a hypothesis to explain these variations, retrieving omitted variables and proposing new ones. Second, one can test already existing hypotheses to new cases. One can compare different operational styles with a theory-testing purpose, for instance to understand which operational style is the most effective in a particular situation or to understand whether culture accounts for variations in operational styles.

In general, one can aim to (1) describe different national operational styles, (2) to identify and study those 'operational styles' as a dependent or intervening variable (for instance, when a scholar looks at the determinants of cross-national differences in operational styles) or (3) as an independent variable (i.e. how different operational styles influence the outcome of the mission, or the specific effectiveness of an army). Obviously all these academic ambitions can have extensive practical implications if they lead to more knowledge about how to prevent, contain and solve violent conflicts by military means in conjunction with other instruments.

When soldiers are deployed in operations, they put into practice their logics and repertoires of action, resulting from their societies' context and their organization's traditions, mission, 'worldviews', leadership styles and training procedures. In their day-to-day military activities in operation, the military unveils the core characteristics of their organizations. As such, comparing armies during the same mission almost seems like a sort of laboratory for a researcher. It provides the opportunity to collect evidence on the military's everyday practices, resulting from the organizational memory, culture, leadership, adaptation, reactions to the existing operational environment and traditions of civil-military relations in their home societies. As organizational scholars would put it: military practices are path-dependent. In addition to this, comparing armies in operation allows the researcher to control for other determinants of their behaviour, such as the role of equipment and other material resources, the 'difficulty' of the area of operation and the content and scope of the mandate. The possibility to control for other determinants is related to the research design.

Research design and case selection[1]

The research design heavily depends on the kind of research purpose one has in mind. The case selection is the gist of the matter here. This specific methodological issue goes back to the origins of experimentation as developed by John Stuart Mill about 175 years ago (e.g. Lijphart 1971; Moses and Knutsen 2007). This method is based on careful comparisons of different situations. These situations may differ in time: before, during and after an event or intervention. Or, by comparing different groups: in its simplest form comparing a group without a certain characteristic, such as an intervention, and a control group without that particular characteristic. Of course most experimental research designs are more sophisticated than that. The experimentation method has become the dominant research strategy in the natural and life sciences. New drugs, medical treatments or food products will not be allowed to be sold on the market before they have been extensively tested in series of experiments.

In the social, organization and administrative sciences time-related conditions or different groups conditions, however, cannot be manipulated the way this happens in research laboratories. In recent years, however, in fields like political science and economics, experimental designs have emerged as a new trend, that while opening promising research avenues also pose tremendous feasibility and ethical issues (Fotini et al. 2013). Hence, in these disciplines the best seems to strive for so-called *quasi-experimental research* (Campbell and Stanley 1963). As said, the comparative method is related to the (quasi)-experimental logic. In order to come to the development and even testing of hypothetical causal inferences, there are basically two research designs (Przeworski and Teune 1970: 31–46). One can chose to compare cases that are most similar (see Table 19.1), or just the opposite, cases that are most dissimilar (see Table 19.2).

In the first research set-up all cases are similar with respect to the variables X2 to X5, whereas there is comparable variation in X1 and Y (see Table 19.1). As a consequence, X1 may be seen as a relevant factor to explain the differences in the dependent variable Y. This is based on the idea of *verification*, ideally leading to causal inferences.

In Table 19.2 a research design is displayed consisting of five cases that differ with respect to the variables X2 to X5, whereas the variables X1 and Y show similar scores, which means that they co-vary in an identical manner. By consequence, X1 and Y are – perhaps even causally – interrelated. This set-up is based on the idea of *falsification*: variables that are not relevant may be excluded as explanatory factors. Because the number of cases in this type of

Table 19.1 Most-similar comparative research design with five cases and six variables

	Case 1	*Case 2*	*Case 3*	*Case 4*	*Case 5*
Variable X1	0	0	0	+	+
Variable X2	0	0	0	0	0
Variable X3	0	0	0	0	0
Variable X4	+	+	+	+	+
Variable X5	+	+	+	+	+
Dependent Y	0	0	0	+	+

Table 19.2 Most-different comparative research design with five cases and six variables

	Case 1	*Case 2*	*Case 3*	*Case 4*	*Case 5*
Variable X1	+	+	0	+	+
Variable X2	+	+	+	0	0
Variable X3	0	+	+	+	0
Variable X4	0	0	0	+	+
Variable X5	+	0	+	0	+
Dependent Y	+	+	0	+	+

research is usually limited – this is so-called *small N-research* – and because the determination of effects is difficult, new techniques for data analysis have been developed making use of Boolean algebra (Ragin 1989).

Clearly, Ruffa (2013) used the most similar approach in her analysis of the four national contingents in Lebanon. Quite a number of variables (period of time, mission, mandate, task assignment, areas of deployment, operational environment) were similar, whereas the perception of the situation based on previous experiences and the operational approaches of the contingents were different. Hence, the hypothesis concerning the relation between these two latter characteristics emerged. What is more, the hypothesis was substantiated by the nature of her data based on a research design that was much tighter than one usually sees in military studies.

Normally, scholars in military studies so far have not been very explicit on these methodological issues. Nagl's famous study (2002) compares the UK actions to combat communist uprising in Malaya with the US war against Northern Vietnam and their communist allies. In this study the set-up is less tight than in Ruffa's study, because at least the time period was not the same (1940s/1950s compared to 1960/1970s), nor was the status of the two Western countries (colonial power for centuries versus a new, invading power). Hence, the relation between national operational style and effectiveness may perhaps not be as strong as suggested. Soeters (2013a) compared the UK approach vis-à-vis the upheaval in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s with the Netherlands' approach towards Moluccan activists' violent actions in the same years. Here, many variables were similar: both conflicts emerged within the own national borders in Western Europe in exactly the same period of time; in both cases the opponents were ordinary civilians and in both conflicts the violence and upheaval had a historical, colonial connection; finally, in both cases a third country (Ireland, Indonesia) played a role in the background, even though this was not active or manifest. The political and military approaches, however, were rather different and so were the outcomes in terms of casualties and duration of the conflicts.

Of course, every conflict situation is unique, which means that many variables cannot be controlled the way this can be done in an experimental setting. Hence, the resulting analysis cannot go much further than suggesting a correlation between operational styles and effectiveness in conflict prevention, containment and solution. The proof can only be found by conducting more studies to provide converging evidence. Clearly, one comparative case analysis is not enough, but it is better than the 'one-nation, one-case' research design that has been so favourite in military studies so far. Still, comparing may present trade-offs in terms of how deep one can go.

Plurality of strategies of data collection

The literature on operational styles is pluralistic in its strategies of data collection, in both the quantitative and qualitative traditions. Data collection ranges from participant observation, the distribution of surveys among soldiers, the use of secondary sources such as policy documents and process tracing to conducting focus groups interviews and content analysis of blog written by individual soldiers. In fact, it may contain the use of a number of methods at the same time, making it an example of mixed-methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). An immersion in the field, like Ruffa did, is recommendable but it is not necessary per se. Sometimes the security situation or personal reasons do not allow an immersion in the field and this is perfectly valid. In case an immersion is not possible, valid alternatives are post-operation data collection or ways of reaching soldiers remotely, for instance through email exchanges and chatting while soldiers are still in the field. Ruffa used it with a couple of soldiers she remained in contact with once she had left Southern Lebanon for follow-up questions.

Participant observation is a classical and fruitful research practice, which is, however, time-consuming and demanding. The researcher's time in the 'field' may range from minimally one week, which could be referred to as 'blitz fieldwork' (Soeters and Manigart 2008), to several months. In a military study this would be in a military base or a compound in an area of deployment; in a comparative study of national operational styles this would require a stay in several camps or compounds. In the Lebanon study, Ruffa was embedded with the national contingents discontinuously between June 2007 and June 2009. This included a period of four weeks of embeddedness with each of the four contingents under study plus a period of six months distributing semi-structured questionnaires and conducting individual qualitative interviews with experts, representatives of NGOs working in the area and conversations with several local families. When doing participant observation, Ruffa was in the UN bases at Tibnin (Italian), At-Tiri (French), Tyre (Korean) and Al-Rmeisch (Ghanaian).

The researcher's presence in operation makes it possible to interact with soldiers of different ranks in the base. Observation is a powerful strategy of data collection because it allows for a comprehensive assessment of both ordinary routines and exceptional events. The researcher is exposed to a number of formal and informal conversations relevant for cross-cultural comparisons. At the same time, observation requires great caution because the researcher can influence and be influenced by the people around, in ways he/she can be unaware of. Observation needs to be prepared as much as other strategies of data collection through self-reflection and a clear outline of elements to look for. In comparative studies observation practices should ideally be similar across contingents, which makes the data collection even more complex. It is recommended for the researcher to keep a fieldwork observation diary, in which all interesting or noticeable things are noted down throughout the period of stay inside the base and the accompanying operational activities.

Questionnaires are another way to detect variations across national contingents. Questionnaires can be fully structured or semi-structured. The former are easier to code and analyse quantitatively, allowing for structured comparisons across the national contingents under study. Semi-structured questionnaires provide each soldier the possibility to elaborate on the answers and express her or himself more freely and creatively. However, some respondents are likely to refrain from responding in an elaborate manner in semi-structured questionnaires, simply because that implies too much work for them.

Ideally, the researcher administers identical questionnaires to all units involved in the study. This may be problematic with military institutions for what are often called 'security reasons'. The researcher in this situation should be open to compromise by offering guarantees in exchange. For instance, when Ruffa designed her questionnaires, the French military was dissatisfied with a question that asked about 'victory'. The other contingents had no problems with this particular question. Nonetheless, for reasons of data equivalence this question was deleted from all questionnaires, but Ruffa was authorized to introduce it as a question in the interviews.

In-depth qualitative interviews are a good way to gain access to insights and accounts about soldiers' operational experiences. In general, guaranteeing anonymity is a good way to make respondents feel comfortable, confident and willing to talk. This holds particularly true when soldiers come from a country with conflictual civil-military relations. In-depth interviews allow soldiers to elaborate on stories and account as much as they like and sometimes this becomes a good way for them to talk about their problems and experiences in operation. In-depth interviewing permits the researcher to develop a sort of narrative approach (Boje 2011) to the research question, which can only add to the quality of the cross-national case comparison. These different strategies of data collection shall ideally be used in a fruitful mix. Data supported by different strategies of data collection make them much stronger and convincing. In cross-national comparisons, it is additionally prerequisite that the researcher uses the mix of these strategies across the cases as *consistently* as possible. This also implies the application of the same methods and instruments to categories of respondents and interviewees that are *functionally equivalent* (comparing soldiers with soldiers, officers with officers, engineering NGOs with engineering NGOs, etc.). Otherwise the comparative character of the findings across the cases may become essentially flawed.

Methodological peculiarities in cross-national comparative research

Anecdotal evidence

While it may seem common knowledge that different armies behave differently, the research literature on operational styles tries to provide systematic evidence of these variations. Even if the literature on operational styles has grown over the past years, systematic evidence of differences between national armed forces is still lacking. There are quite a number of occasional observations, but they lead to anecdotal evidence at best. For instance, Rory Stewart's account of a year among British and Italian troops in Basra in Iraq, in 2003/2004, provides highly interesting observations about these national contingents' actions and their impact in the area (Stewart 2007: 402). His conclusions, however, are based on first-hand experiences, not on thorough comparative research. And this impressionistic account also changed overtime: while he had a negative impression of the Italian army at first, this impression reversed after a few months. On the one hand, an observer's assessment of a national operational style needs time to form. On the other, effects of an operational style may need months before one is able to empirically measure them.

To ascertain national operational styles researchers need to identify variations in operational styles that are recurring and systematic. This means that specific differences in behaviour are shared by different units on the ground, by different soldiers across ranks and assessed through triangulation of evidence. If possible, this should be assessed through a combination of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, as said before (e.g. Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). In mere quantitative research, statistical procedures and modelling procedures exist to ascertain if variation between (national) cases is larger than the variation within (national) cases, permitting further cross-national analyses (e.g. Davidov et al. 2011).

Level of analysis

What is the appropriate level of analysis for studying (national) operational styles? The smallest unit of analysis is probably the platoon level. But it makes sense to study operational styles at that level only as – *and if it is* – representative of the national contingent's actions. The level of individual persons (soldiers, officers) is rarely the preferred level of analysis because in cross-comparative case-research one is interested in organizations and their missions, not in the actions of individual respondents per se. Nonetheless, the aggregation of individuals' scores (actions, responses, attitudes) can lead to analyses at higher levels, such as platoons or the whole national contingent. In quantitative studies this is referred to as *multilevel analysis*, as is perfectly illustrated in a large study among US Army soldiers and their units in Afghanistan (Schaubroeck et al. 2012; see also Chapter 18 in this volume). The level of the national contingent in multinational operations is probably the most meaningful one to compare national operational styles, given that it is usually the national unit that is deployed in a well-defined area of operation. However, comparative research among various (national) HQs may be illustrative as well. Besides, the data collection does not need to be limited to ground forces; national navies in action in multinational sea operations (e.g. when bordering vessels or arresting pirates) may be compared meaningfully too.

Language issues

Interviewing soldiers in their mother tongue is fundamental to enabling them to express themselves freely with all the nuances and complexities that come along with in-depth conversations. Relying on English as the general bridging language will often prove to be inadequate, because it will lead to biased selections of respondents/interviewees – to those who master that language – or to an insufficient quality of information exchange. The researcher shall therefore be proficient in as many of the languages used as possible. If a team of researchers collects the data, it would be wise to have an adequate and relevant distribution of language skills among the various team members. When distributing questionnaires in languages one does not master it is wise to first have a translation into that particular language, and then have a back-translation into the original language again as well as circulating the questionnaires among native speakers with a wide array of expertise and different levels of education. If differences between the two translations emerge, the researcher(s) and the translator(s) will need to discuss these and agree about possible solutions.

If relevant language skills are lacking or insufficient, the use of interpreters cannot be avoided. Priority should be given to the ability to grasp complexity, phrases and expression of the interviewees. Whether this is done by the researcher or by a translator depends on the language skills of the researcher. The use of interpreters may have limits (van Dijk et al. 2010), because one will often be unsure about how to interpret and trust the translator's work. However, at times the use of interpreters is the only realistic solution as it was for Ruffa when studying the South Korean army. Devoting time and effort to the study of a language is not always a viable option.

Reliability and validity

Research standards for quantitative data are generally quite transparent. In cross-national studies they rely on the consistent use of identical – preferably internationally validated – instruments across functionally equivalent samples. In qualitative studies such standards have not been as self-evident so far. Qualitative methodologies have been applauded for their in-depth validity, but have often been problematic in terms of their reproducibility and *credibility*. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have developed a set of indicators to check for the quality of qualitative data. One of them, credibility, seems particularly relevant in cross-national military research. If a researcher wants to make correct inferences, it is important to rely on data whose transcription has been checked by the interviewees themselves (so-called *member-checks*). But even more importantly, the researcher needs to discuss the general observations and conclusions with all the stakeholders to make sure that the study has produced credible results. Generally, identifying divergent views and counter-evidence will make the conclusions more balanced and in fact probably stronger. Additionally, recent debates in the political science have suggested how it might be good to provide further information on how evidence was inferred from the body of data, through for instance, annotated references and quotations (Moravcsik 2010).

The cross-cultural researcher's profile

Since it is difficult for scholars to have a profound understanding of languages, codes and cultures of two or more nationalities it is important that the researcher reflects on the potential challenges to his or her objectivity. In cross-national research subjectivity and *ethnocentrism* of the researcher(s) are almost unavoidable phenomena that endanger the quality of the research. We would argue that a scholar can rarely be perfectly objective but he/she should at least strive for this. Also, it is very important that a researcher, before going to fieldwork, reflects on what might be his/her attitudes, values and beliefs that might shape preconceived ideas about what happens in the field.

In addition to this, there is also a set of beliefs and ideas about how the researcher is perceived that might influence how he/she behaves despite him or herself. For instance, being a female or a male researcher might influence the way he/she is perceived by interviewees in the various national cases. In some national cases a female scholar may be seen as perfectly natural, in others perhaps not. The same problem may occur with respect to the fact that the researcher is a civilian or a military and whether he/she has some kind of military background. In some national cases a civilian without any military background may not be taken seriously, whereas in other national cases this would pose no problem at all and even be an advantage.

As said, it is important that the researcher has the opportunity to be embedded with troops for some period of time. This does not only allow the researcher to access a range of data unavailable from home, but it also permits the researcher to bond with the troops and being accepted when the researcher is with the troops in a 'totalising experience' (Wacquant 2004; White 2003). Doing research in composite teams involving researchers with diverse skills and expertise is another way to minimize cross-cultural misunderstandings and refine the understanding of cross-national variations.

Conclusions and warnings

Conducting research into national operational styles by comparing cases of military action by different national contingents in fairly similar circumstances is important because it may provide insight and evidence with respect to how things work in the field. If there is variance in the important variables, it may even get close to quasi-experimental studies that may lead to what looks like causal inferences. For sure, the military needs such inferences: the precise impact of military operations in preventing, containing and solving violent conflicts still seems a conundrum. However, one should be cautious in doing so. There are a number of pitfalls and caveats.

Comparing military actions by national contingents in an appropriate manner requires a careful research design, in which some of the research variables are identical and others are not. Besides, cross-national research needs highly qualified researchers who know how to apply similar instruments of data collection in different languages to equivalent samples in a manner that excludes preconceived ideas and ethnocentrism as much as possible. Even then, some historians and other ideographically oriented scholars – not all of them though (e.g. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003) – would argue that every situation is unique and that every comparison is futile. This is a position we do not take. In the general social and political sciences, there are many examples of comparative studies that have produced important insights and findings.

However, one should be careful while generalizing findings from one study to a population in general. If the conduct of the Italian contingent in UNIFIL has been rather peaceful, this does not mean the Italian armed forces never display a warrior ethos, or never have. These would be unwarranted generalizations. Neither would this imply that each and every Italian soldier deployed to Lebanon is truly peaceful. The latter inference would be a so-called fallacy of the wrong level: applying a central tendency found at a collective level to all individual people belonging to that collectivity. This fallacy is often made in cross-national comparisons due to ethnocentric biases of the researcher(s) or selective interpretations by the readers of their work.

In addition to this, the cross-cultural researcher should be aware of the fact that comparing may be perceived as sensitive as it may imply considerations about different levels of effectiveness of different national contingents. The researcher needs to be careful with such considerations without shying away from the discovery of empirical realities that may be problematic. At the same time, we would also like to encourage organizations, like NATO, to commission these kinds of these studies because understanding which armies are best at doing certain things is the most appropriate strategies to enhance the likelihood of success in future operations.

In general, one cannot develop a proper understanding of particular national operational styles from one comparative study only. Obviously, one needs more studies, possibly leading to convergent evidence as to the existence of such national operational styles, but then only as central tendencies, not as determinative, never changing 'truths' (Soeters 2013b). What is more, such convergent evidence may also relate to insights about what is effective military action in particular conflictual situations. A careful comparison of the various national contingents' actions in the different Afghan provinces over the last ten years may lead to findings that illuminate our comprehension of the use and impact of different manifestations of military action. Since so many people suffered from these actions, it is morally imperative to conduct such studies.

Note

1 This section and the conclusions draw heavily on a previous publication, written in Dutch: A.F.M. Bertrand, P. de Jong, A.F.A. Korsten and J.M.L.M. Soeters, Methodische problemen bij internationaal-vergelijkend onderzoek. In: A.F.A. Korsten, A.F.M. Bertrand, P. de Jong and J.M.L.M. Soeters (1995), *Internationaal-vergelijkend onderzoek*. Vuga: Den Haag, pp. 85–102. Moses & and Knutsen (2007) provide a

similar overview of research designs, going back more specifically to John Stuart Mills original work. This chapter is also very much indebted to insights provided by Hofstede (2001).

References

Almond, Gabriel A. and Sidney Verba (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Boje, David (ed.) (2011). *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook*. New York and London: Routledge.

Caforio, Guiseppe (2000). *The European Officer: A Comparative View on Selection and Education*. Pisa: Edizione ETS.

Campbell, Donald T. and Julian C. Stanley (1963). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Research Designs for Research*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Chokar, Jagdeep S., Felix C. Brodbeck and Robert J. House (2007). *Culture and Leadership across the World: The GLOBE Book on In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies*. Mahwah, NJ, and London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Davidov, Eldad, Peter Schmidt, and Jaak Billiet (eds) (2011). *Cross-Cultural Analysis: Methods and Applications*. New York: Routledge.

Farrell, Theo, Frans Osinga and James A. Russell (eds) (2013). *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Fotini, Christia, Andrew Beath and Ruben Enikolopov (2013) 'Empowering Women through Development Aid: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan', *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 540–557.

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Sciences and International Affairs.

Hofstede, Geert (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations* (2nd edn). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kier, Elizabeth (1997). *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lieb, Peter (2012). 'Suppressing insurgencies in comparison: The Germans in Ukrain, 1918, and the British in Mesopotamia, 1920'. *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23(4–5): 627–647.

Lijphart, Arend (1971). 'Comparative politics and the comparative method'. *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682–693.

Lincoln, Yvonna S. and Egon G. Guba (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds) (2003). *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moravcsik, Andrew (2010). 'Active citation: A precondition for replicable qualitative research'. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 43(1): 29–35.

Morjé Howard, Lise (2008). *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moses, Jonathan W. and Torbjon L. Knutsen (2007). *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moskos, Charles C., John A. Williams and David R. Segal (eds) (2000). *The Post-Modern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nagl, John A. (2002). *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counter-Insurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

Przeworski, A. and Henri Teune (1970). *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley.

Ragin, Charles (1989). 'The logic of the comparative method and the algebra of logic'. *Journal of Quantitative Anthropology* 1(1): 373–398.

Ruffa, Chiara (2014). 'What peacekeepers think and do? An exploratory study of French, Ghanaian, Italian and South Korean Armies in the United Nations Mission in Lebanon'. *Armed Forces & Society* 40(2): 199–225.

Schaubroeck, John M., Sean T. Hannah, Bruce J. Avolio, Steve W. Kozlowski, Robert G. Lord, Linda K. Treviño, Nikolaos Dimotakis and Ann C. Peng (2012). 'Embedding ethical leadership within and across organization levels'. *Academy of Management Journal* 55(5): 1053–1078.

Soeters, Joseph (2013a). Odysseus prevails over Achilles. A warrior model suited to post-9/11 conflicts. In: James Burk (ed.), *How 9/11 Changed Our Ways of War*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 89–115.

Soeters, J. (2013b). 'Do distinct (national) operational styles of conflict resolution exist?' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36(6): 898–906.

Soeters, Joseph and Philip Manigart (eds) (2008). *Military Cooperation in Multinational Peace Operations: Managing Cultural Diversity and Crisis Response*. London and New York: Routledge.

Soeters, Joseph and Tibor Szvircsev Tresch (2010). 'Towards cultural integration in multinational peace operations'. *Defence Studies* 10(1–2): 272–287.

Stewart, Rory (2007). *The Prince of the Marshes: And Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Inc.

Tashakkori, A. and Ch. Teddlie (eds) (2010). *The Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* (2nd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Van Dijk, Andrea, Joseph Soeters, and Richard de Ridder (2010). 'Smooth translation? A research note on the cooperation between Dutch service personnel and local interpreters in Afghanistan'. *Armed Forces & Society* 36(5): 917–925.

Vijver, Fons van de and K. Leung (1997). *Methods and Data Analysis for Cross-Cultural Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Wacquant, Loic (2004). *Body and Soul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, William F. (2003). *Street Corner Society the Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.