



**Lise Morjé Howard.** *Power in Peacekeeping*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 274 pp. \$29.99, paper, ISBN 978-1-108-45718-7.

**Reviewed by** Chiara Ruffa (Uppsala University)

**Published on** H-Diplo (March, 2020)

**Commissioned by** Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

Lise Howard's *The Power of Peacekeeping* is about how peacekeeping works and how peacekeepers achieve their ends. Building on Robert Dahl's conceptualization of power, Howard argues that peacekeepers can be effective in three ways, via persuasion, inducement, and coercion.[1] Persuasion works mainly verbally, inducement mainly financially, and coercion mainly via deterrence, surveillance, and arrest. Howard explores how these mechanisms unfold in three different kinds of peacekeeping operations: persuasion in the UN mission in Namibia; inducement in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and coercion in the UN mission in the Central African Republic. While traces and examples of the other mechanisms are found in all three peace operations under study, distinct mechanisms are found to prevail in the specific cases she focuses on.

The book finds that persuasion and inducement were effective in Namibia and Lebanon respectively, and that only some dimensions of coercion were conducive to increased effectiveness, namely deterrence, surveillance, and arrest. Importantly, Howard finds that the fourth kind of coercion—which is compellence, the offensive use of force—does not increase the effectiveness of peace missions. Even though the core of peacekeepers deployed are military, by design and capacity, they do not have the ability to exercise compellence.

Howard argues that compellence falls outside what constitutes the core of peacekeeping and it is erroneous—and dangerous, I shall add—to assume that compellence will make peacekeeping more effective. Such a position provides a timely contrast to those that have recently advocated for the robust turn in UN peacekeeping and the need to focus on more offensive operations, for instance, the so-called Cruz report.[2] With this in mind, Howard advocates for a clear separation between peace operations and what she calls peacekeeping's "less effective cousin," counterinsurgency operations (p. i).

Methodologically, the book adopts a qualitative comparative design, delving in-depth into the UN missions of Namibia, Lebanon, and the Central African Republic, exploring empirically the typologies deduced theoretically. Empirically, the book is extraordinarily rich; it draws on more than two decades of fieldwork and skillfully combines qualitative interviews, unpublished records from Namibia, observation in Lebanon and the Central African Republic, and a comprehensive and systematic review of secondary sources. The research design is sound since the three cases are likely to display different features and are very different in terms of the context in which peacekeepers deploy, the kind of mandate they have, and the challenges they face.

This is one of the most important books ever written on UN peacekeeping. It succeeds in the somewhat rare endeavor of being both a classic—in its clear and lucid engagement with previous literature—and highly innovative, thereby breaking new ground. Thus far, the literature on peacekeeping has been divided. As Howard discusses, on the one hand, quantitative scholars have highlighted that peacekeeping works. Importantly, these scholars tend to emphasize material aspects, such as size and type of mandates leading to an increase in peacekeeping effectiveness.[3] These studies usually assume that two core mechanisms are at play and conducive to effectiveness, either by reducing the information asymmetries among the conflict parties or by solving a commitment problem via deterrence. These mechanisms remain, however, undertheorized and are never tested empirically. On the other hand, a wealth of qualitatively oriented studies have concentrated on when peacekeeping fails, focusing on a few blatant cases of failure.[4] Set aside a few exceptions, these studies have not explored the conditions under which peacekeeping can be effective. Partly for that reason, they never engaged in a conversation with quantitative scholars concerning the mechanisms that may lead peacekeeping to be more or less effective.

*The Power of Peacekeeping* excels in the difficult tasks of creating a common ground, engaging with scholars coming from different theoretical and methodological traditions. Howard is the first qualitative scholar starting a conversation with quantitatively oriented scholars on their very same ground, engaging explicitly with mechanisms of peacekeeping effectiveness but also focusing on the ways in which peacekeeping works. She is also among the first to focus on the military side of peacekeeping, which, partly for normative divides, has been neglected by peace researchers. [5] Theoretically, the book displays an exceptional command of the literature, engaging with both rationalist and constructivist scholarship in international relations. In that respect, while peacekeep-

ing has remained rather separate as a subfield, Howard's book places peacekeeping as a phenomenon back at the center stage in international relations. Empirically, Howard carefully develops and traces a set of observable implications of three ways in which peacekeeping keeps the peace and treats carefully the issue of peacekeeping effectiveness. Howard clearly conceptualizes it in a carefully nuanced way, capturing not only indicators of negative peace (that is, the absence of fighting) but also of positive peace (such as in the Lebanese case, how people felt reassured by peacekeepers' presence).

I take issues with six points. First, the relation between the mechanisms, behavior, and achievement of the mandate remains at times underspecified. Sometimes the mechanism at play captures configurations of behavior; at other times it refers to the behavior itself. For instance, in the case of Namibia, it is obvious that each tool may have an effect and so-called causal autonomy each on their own, but it is unclear whether the mechanism is the combined effects of all those tools (mediation, shaming, outreach and public information, symbolic displays, education, and training) or which configurations of those need to be at play to have an effect. Further research could specify the connections between mechanisms, peacekeepers' behavior, and their effect. Incidentally, we should also take into account the intersubjective, mutually constitutive dimension of these processes and how they are mutually reinforced between the peacekeepers deployed and the peace kept. Within each type of power, one is left wondering what the configuration of patterns of action and behavior at play is and which effects shall follow.

Second, while persuasion and coercion are somewhat easier to capture empirically, inducement acquires an almost residual trait that is at play when the other two types of power are not. As it stands, inducement is perhaps the broadest mechanism, including sanctions, market restrictions, institution building, Quick Impact Projects,

and the like. In the case of Lebanon, inducement is said to work mainly via economic means but de facto it entails other, more sociological dimensions, such as contact theory: the mere fact that the Southern Lebanese knew some of the peacekeeping contingents from the previous mission (UNIFIL I) deployed substantially helped the acceptance of the more muscular mission deployed after the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war (UNIFIL II).

Third, while Howard convincingly argues that in each case just one type of power is prevalent, the persistency of other types of power may be as important. For instance, in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, while Howard provides an excellent depiction of inducement, deterrence was also provided: on several occasions since 2006, several force commanders launched occasional operations, such as the Quick Reaction Force to the Blue Line to exercise deterrence. It seems quite plausible that the occasional exercise of deterrence may have boosted the effect of inducement—or maybe conversely, undermined it. In other words, how do we know that it is inducement enhancing peacekeeping effectiveness and not the occasional use of deterrence?

Fourth, the theory operates at the mission-level of analysis and it skillfully connects, very importantly, unit-level with mission-level phenomena, bridging another big divide in the peacekeeping literature.[6] At the same time, the conditions under which the strategic and tactical level of operations interact and result in different types of power remain a bit unclear. For instance, in the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the force commander engages in targeted operations having a direct effect on specific areas of operations at the tactical level but not others. Future researchers may want to push this line of inquiry further.

Fifth, it remains underspecified the extent to which different approaches from different national contingents matter. Yet, diversity in mission composition or military cultures may hinder or magnify peacekeeping effectiveness both at the

mission level and at the Area of Operations level in terms of understanding and implementing their mandate.[7] Howard hints at how differently national contingents behaved and how it mattered, for instance, when the Dutch were deployed in Namibia or the Ghanaian in Lebanon.[8] What might be the effect of these dynamics in the aggregate?

Sixth, the book is not only groundbreaking in terms of how it advances academic scholarship but also because of its policy implications. It comes at a time of heated discussions within the UN concerning the utility of the use of force and the effectiveness of more offensive kinds of operations.[9] In the Central African Republic, the case that exemplifies coercion as a type of power, Howard finds that the perilous confusion between the peacekeeping mission and the counterinsurgency mission is what made things worse. While I fully endorse her point, I do not think that keeping the missions separate is sufficient or recommended. Having the missions separate, as in the Central African Republic with MINUSCA and Sangaris, may not be enough to avoid the unintended consequences of counterinsurgency. Ideally, we should avoid having counterterrorist or counterinsurgency operations deployed in the same context as peacekeeping. Should this be unavoidable, much more needs to be done in order to underline the fundamental difference between the two. A first step is to make sure that United Nations peacekeeping remains impartial. Another one is to ensure stronger symbolic displays to avoid dangerous association of peacekeepers with counterinsurgency. Much more policy effort needs to be spent on reflecting on this crucial distinction, and Howard rightly argues for it.

To conclude, these are just small points that do not detract in any way from the seminal contribution of this book to the current scholarship on peace operations. In a masterful way, Howard pushes the frontier of at least three different debates. First, she reunites and speaks to debates on

peacekeeping that have long failed to engage in a constructive dialogue. She does so while using a quintessentially qualitative approach, developing the most sophisticated framework on mechanisms of peacekeeping effectiveness ever conducted. Also, skillfully combining the macro, mission-level of analysis with the micro, military unit-focused level of analysis, she shows how to prevent the micro-turn from remaining fundamentally disconnected from the macro-turn. Second, Howard is an example of constructivist scholarship at its best and shows how far those approaches are compatible with other, more rationalist focused approaches. Third, Howard shows that it is possible to combine carefully crafted, qualitative ethnographic research with nuanced explorations of outcomes and important policy implications. *The Power of Peacekeeping* also points to where peacekeeping scholarship should go next. First, we should enhance and promote collaborations between qualitative and quantitative scholars on peacekeeping. Second, we should further develop the three mechanisms of peacekeeping works by unpacking some of these even further and exploring how these mechanisms co-exist. In sum, Howard's book is at the same time the most conceptually innovative book on peacekeeping ever written and yet highly cumulative: it builds bridges and leads the way to a better understanding of *how* peacekeeping can keep the peace.

*Chiara Ruffa is academy fellow at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University and associate professor in War Studies at the Swedish Defense University. Chiara's research is about peacekeeping, state militaries, and civil-military relations. Chiara is the author of Military Cultures in Peace and Stability Operations (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) and of Composing Peace. Mission Composition in UN Peacekeeping (with Vincenzo Bove and Andrea Ruggeri, Oxford University Press, 2020).*

#### Notes

- [1]. Robert Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 201–15.
- [2]. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, William R. Phillips, and Salvator Cusimano, *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We Need to Change the Way We Are Doing Business* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2017).
- [3]. Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 4 (2013): 875–91, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12036>.
- [4]. Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); S. B. K. von Billerbeck, *Whose Peace?: Local Ownership and United Nations Peacekeeping* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Béatrice Pouligny, "Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International Programmes Aimed at Building 'New' Societies," *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 4 (2005): 495–510.
- [5]. Chiara Ruffa, *Military Cultures in Peace and Stability Operations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
- [6]. Séverine Autesserre, "Going Micro: Emerging and Future Peacekeeping Research," *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 4 (2014): 492–500; Andrea Ruggeri, Han Dorussen, and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, "On the Frontline Every Day? Subnational Deployment of United Nations Peacekeepers," *British Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4 (2018): 1005-25, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000712341600017X>.
- [7]. Vincenzo Bove, Chiara Ruffa, and Andrea Ruggeri, *Composing Peace. Mission Composition in UN Peacekeeping* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Chiara Ruffa, "What Peacekeepers Think and Do: An Exploratory Study of French, Ghanaian, Italian, and South Korean Armies in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon," *Armed Forces and Society* 40, no. 2 (2014): 199–225.

[8]. Ruffa, *Military Cultures*; V. Newby, *Peacekeeping in South Lebanon: Credibility and Local Cooperation*, Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018).

[9]. Cruz, Phillips, and Cusimano, *Improving Security*; United Nations, *Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People*, A/70/95–S/2015/446 (New York: United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, 2015).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-diplo>

**Citation:** Chiara Ruffa. Review of Howard, Lise Morjé. *Power in Peacekeeping*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. March, 2020.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=54571>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.