

**Protecting humans, governing international disorder: Integrated UN peacekeeping and  
NGOs.**

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## **Abstract.** <sup>1</sup>

In the new millennium, International Organizations as well as NGOs emerged as increasingly relevant but also contested actors in processes of peacekeeping and peace building. With the adoption at the United Nations of the “responsibility to protect” as the organizing concept for intervention, international organizations and NGOs have assumed some of the functions of taking care of the life and safety of populations that were previously considered to be primarily states’ responsibility. Giorgio Agamben argued that the intensification of liberal bio-political rationalities for maintaining security and the extension of the “state of exception” as the dominant paradigm of international politics fostered a totalizing and oppressive international order where political life is obliterated. Relying upon from a similar reading of liberalism, Mark Duffield has argued that NGOs have been inscribed into an imperial liberal project of containment of uninsured populations through self-reliance (2007). This literature, however, has overstated the effectiveness of liberal political rationalities in successfully inscribing all political agencies, to include NGOs, into its script. This paper argues that while the political rationalities for UN reform and integrated peacekeeping testify of an intensification of the bio-political and normalizing trajectory of international security regimes, they also signal that the controlling script they deploy is ridden with ambiguities, undecidabilities and stumbling blocks. While deploying normalizing mechanisms, liberal modalities for governing disorder also produce spaces for political appropriation and contestation by NGOs and civil society actors. While effects of power and domination are at stake, they do not obliterate the possibility for political agency, but they open spaces for contestation and agonistic interactions.

### **Risk, vulnerabilities, and the internationalization of the care of life.**

In the new millennium the United Nations re-conceptualization of its role in maintaining international security reflects an aspiration to govern through planning, scrutiny, regulation and ultimately forcible intervention, a vast array of issues that were previously considered to fall under national government’s jurisdiction. While in the

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<sup>1</sup> This paper constitutes the first step a broader empirically based research project that I am conducting together with Doctor Max Stephenson, Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance, on how NGOs engage in processes of making peace. While this paper develop quite extensively the analysis of United Nations discourses, it only sketches, at this stage the strategies and actions of NGOs. More empirical research will be conducted on this topic.

1990s international programmes of peace building were organized around “good governance doctrines” that focused on redesigning state institutions, after the beginning of the new millennium populations’ security became the direct referent and source of legitimacy for United Nations intervention. In Foucauldian terms, the post-Cold War international security regime became increasingly bio-political. Bio-politics for Foucault designates a development of the managerial inclination of government, which applies primarily to populations, focuses on maintaining the equilibrium of processes of living together and intensifies the development of an array of *savoirs* and regulatory mechanisms targeting life with a view of optimizing it. The year 2000 Millennium Declaration advocated the expansion of the issues considered in need for monitoring and intervention by the United Nations; it fostered a people-centered international politics; it promoted the idea that international security can only be achieved through integrated actions and that international organizations share with states the responsibility for the well being of populations not only in contingent situations of emergency, but as a general principle for the moral reorganization of the international system. In 2004, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (United Nations General Assembly, 2004) systematized a political rationality<sup>2</sup> of intervention centered on risk management, populations and prevention. International spaces where

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<sup>2</sup> Mitchell Dean defined “political rationality” as follows: “Any form of calculation about political activity, i.e. about any activity which has as its objective the influence, appropriation, redistribution, allocation or maintenance of powers of the government of the state or other organizations. Political rationality is a species of governmental rationality in so far as it entails thinking about directing the conduct of others or ourselves. To the extent that its objective is to influence the way governmental organizations exercise their powers, its concerns are quite distinct.” (Dean, 1999, 211).

re-conceptualized as risk society, international threats as shared vulnerabilities, and international security as risk management.

The Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, instituted in 2004 by former Secretary General Kofi Annan to devise new strategies for maintaining international security, reconceptualizes the international arena as risk society. For Ulrich Beck' (1986, 1992), who developed this notion, in risk societies, interconnections are extended and intensified, relations of causality do not follow linear paths, and the past is no longer a valid basis for predicting the future. Since risk is always situated in the future, its management is knowledge intensive. Risk management relies on the possibility of garnering accurate information on a plurality of potential sources of danger; since relations of causality and the effects of the interaction of an increasing number of variables are difficult to predict, security is conceptualized in terms of prevention. (Beck, 1992). Vulnerability is a category directly linked to the notion of risk. While creating inequalities that cannot be conceptualized along the lines of traditional notions such as class, risk produces equalizing effects. While unequally distributed, vulnerability is shared by wealthy and poor and is not proportional to relative strength. Risk challenges "container" theories of society and globalization created new communities of danger (Beck, 2000). Container theories of society consider territoriality as the basis for organization of political life. Once international danger is reconceptualised in terms of risk, states are no longer the only factors or threat or the only relevant actors in international relations. In this context, international security is pursued through the intensification of techniques of government aimed at knowing,

monitoring and taming a plurality of threats, to include those that affect, or are created by, populations. For the High Level Panel on Change, Challenges and Threats, in the current international configuration of threats all are at risk, regardless of relative capabilities, and nobody is secure alone. The High-Level Panel also redefines the notion of international threat in bio-political terms as it broadened it to include “any event or process that leads to large-scale death or lessening of life chances and undermines States as the basic units of the international system” (United Nations General Assembly, 2004: 12). More specifically, international threats, partially reprising the 1994 UNDP six components of human security, include six types: Economic and social threats (poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation); Inter-State conflict; Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide, and other large-scale atrocities; Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons; Terrorism; and Transnational organized crime (United Nations General Assembly, 2004: 12). While threats to state security do not disappear from the picture, they are treated as one among the many others menaces with which the UN has to concern itself with. Kofi Annan’s 2005 proposals for UN reform marks a clear shift of the referent, goals and sources of legitimacy of the United Nations as a collective security organization from states to populations. For Annan, while the UN is an organization of sovereign states, international security means populations’ security, for achieving which states play an important but instrumental role. (United Nations General Assembly, 2005a: Annex, para. 2). For the former United Nations Secretary-General, “larger freedom,” the organizing concept for United Nations reform and a holistic project for bettering populations’ life, is threefold. It includes “freedom from

want, freedom from fear, and freedom to live in dignity". These aspects are inseparably linked and must be addressed together. The intensification, in United Nations attempt to govern a variety of issues through integrated strategies of security is reflected in the institutionalization of the "high Level panel on System Wide Coherence" with the task to "launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities," in particular with regard to achieving "internationally agreed development goals, including proposals for "more tightly managed entities" in the field of the environment, humanitarian assistance and development."

(<http://www.un.org/events/panel/html/page2.html>)

In summary, in the new millennium the international arena once imagined as "no man's land" is re-thought and reconstituted as a space of interconnected vulnerabilities, as well as the point of application of an array of bio-political practices of government aimed at taming multifarious threats to the equilibrium of processes of living together. No longer an anarchic void in between borders, international spaces are re-imagined as the point of application of strategies of risk management enacted by international organizations. These trends testify to the shift of international security from ensuring the stability of the international legal order towards the intensification of techniques of bio-political control of populations and a drastic expansion of the issues that are considered in need for international scrutiny, regulation, and ultimately intervention. As the analysis of the 2008 Manual of Peacekeeping Operations will show, the United Nations conceives the taming of risk and the making of peace as a task it can not perform alone, but that can only be accomplished by integrating and regulating an

array of international and local constituencies, such as NGOs, the military, the private sector and more. These actors, in the UN view, have to be integrated into a network and managed, regulated and steered in order to optimize the effects of their combined initiatives towards the goals of peacekeeping. However, the broadening of the array of different threats the United Nations advocates to tame and the reconceptualization of international security in holistic terms not only testify to a will to regulate, but also to the increasing complexity of the task the UN claims as its own. The will to govern and the impossibility to do so are strictly intertwined in the United Nations discourses of security.

#### **Bio-political domination or ambiguous interactions?**

The effects of the reconceptualization of international threat in terms of risk, the intensification of bio-political modalities of governing international disorder, and the role of NGOs in this context have been widely debated in the literature. Some praise international civil society as a progressive alternative to state-based politics (Kaldor, 2003) or celebrate the “social worker” as the new agent for an anti-capitalist revolution (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Scholars who remain attached to the idea of the state as the only and necessary space of exertion of the political criticized NGOs on the ground that they are not based on representation (Chandler 2009). Postmodernist scholars have grounded their critiques of NGOs on a broader critique of liberal security regimes. Inspired by Giorgio Agamben’s reading of the work of Michel Foucault, this body of literature sees the internationalization of bio-political techniques for governing

populations as totalizing and oppressive. For Agamben the universalization of bio-political techniques it promotes, coupled with the persistence sovereignty and the extension of the “state of exception” as the dominant paradigm of international politics obliterate the possibility of political life and reduce life to “bare life” that can be controlled and killed by sovereign decision. Sergei Prozorov argued that the liberal bio-political script inscribes life into a diagram of control and regulation that can only be resisted through total rejection and withdrawal from the care of bio-political power (Prozorov 2007, 2006,, Edkins and Pin Fat, 2004). Working within this visions of liberal political rationalities as totalizing and oppressive Mark Duffield (2007) argued that NGOs are the agents of liberal bio-political projects aimed at enhancing the security of populations in developed countries by promoting strategies of containment of “uninsured populations” through self-reliance. They are part of a coherent and consistent power formation that has shared goals, objectives, and modalities of operation, that thrives on states of emergency.

Because of the persistence of threat of instability, however, intervention and pacification has blurred into a new and enduring political relationship: *a post interventionary terrain of international occupation...* All of those interconnecting UN, donor, military and NGO endeavors that mobilized to intervene, save lives and end conflict now increasingly appear as assemblages of occupation defining a new post-interventionary society . That is, they constitute the enduring multi-agency apparatus of *Empire Light*” (Duffield, 27, 2007, emphasis in the text).

This paper engages in the debate about NGOs by critically addressing Mark Duffield’s position. While acknowledging the intensification of the bio-political trajectory of international government of security and the normalizing effects they produce, this paper argues that these governmental practices do not successfully

inscribe all NGOs in their script. Relying on Michel Foucault's analysis of power, on Lavin discussion of postmodern notion of responsibility, and on Jacqueline Best's and William Connolly work on ambiguity, this paper questions analyses that portray all actors that engage in some sort of development or humanitarian assistance as indistinctly part of an imperial assemblage that obliterates contestation and encompasses all political agency into its script. As the analysis of the 2008 Manual of peacekeeping operations will show, while international bio-political political rationalities emphasize regulation, planning and control the practical implementations of the bio-political script of international governance is ridden with ambiguity, undecidability, and continuous practical negotiation of divergent sets of principles and practical necessities. UN liberal political rationalities do not only expand the issues the United Nations aspires to regulate and control in order to foster security. They also interpellate and bring into visibility a number of actors that were previously marginal in the process. While projects of visibility, normalization and control are continuously deployed and intensified they do not simply *inscribe* an increasing number of agents in their programmes of containment and control. They also bring NGOs to the forefront of the process of maintaining international order and open opportunities for political visibility and appropriation. As the analysis conducted in the pages that follow will show, the 2008 Manual of Integrated Peacekeeping reflects both to the UN will to regulate and steer all actors towards taming political instability and to the impossibility of its governmental aspirations. While attempting to "integrate" all social actors into a holistic

peacekeeping project, the United Nations also acknowledges the limits of its will to govern a bewildering variety of actors- among which non-governmental organizations.

Foucault conceptualization of power as the structure of relations brought to bear, Lavin's (2008) reflection on post-modernist political agency, and Best (2008) work on ambiguity offer interesting theoretical tools for re- conceptualizing the possibility of NGOs political action in agonic terms that question universalized accounts of domination as well as romanticized representations of resistance. Foucault's most relevant theoretical contribution is an understanding of power that does not see it as a "quantity" exerted on autonomous agents. (Hindess, 1996). Instead, Foucault conceived of power as the ubiquitous feature of human interactions. (Hindess, 1996, 96-101). Political relations are not seen as opposition between oppression and liberation but in term of agonic, strategic, localized interactions that continuously define, redefine and transforms both power and political agents. As the structure of relations brought to bear power is uneven, but also unstable, ambiguous and reversible.

At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom it would be better to speak of an "agonism" of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation' (Foucault 1982:221-2)

Political agency does not relate to power in an oppositional but rather in an agonic manner. "Resistance ... may provoke refinements or modifications of techniques of power- and these in turn, will provide conditions under which new forms of resistance and evasion may be developed" (Hindess, 1996, 101). In this framework, very

little can be said about power in general. The research agenda focuses instead on inquiring how specific and localized agonic political actions are performed. Political agency as well as power are to be re-thought not a possession or a quantity, but as “a feature of established social relations; post-liberal responsibility does not presume that responsibility is a possession under our control but views it instead as something we embody by virtue of our positions in those relations”. ( Lavin,2008, 15). Political agency in this framework is not seen as the quest for a pristine freedom that is inevitably crushed by power (Prozorov, 2007), but as a series of uneven, agonic situated responses to contingent conditions from which it depends for its constitution and that in turn it transforms.

Scholars who focus on the pervasive power of international bio-political governmentality downplay the analysis of what escapes governmental control. Jaqueline Best has argues that ambiguity should be included in current analyses of governmental tactics. For Best, ambiguity relates to government at three levels. Ambiguity, like uncertainty and risk, can simultaneously be “an object of governance – that one seeks to contain- a strategic asset in governance- that is exploited to achieve a certain end- and a limit to governance- as which exceeds efforts to control”. ( Best, 2008 363).

More specifically,

the slipperiness of communication and its openness to multiple and even subversive interpretations can pose a significant problem for government and lead to strategies for *governing ambiguity*. At the same time,...ambiguity can itself be a strategic asset for those who seek to *govern through*

*ambiguity*. Yet, even in such cases the ambiguity will always exceed the efforts to control and exploit it, generating unintended meanings and effects and acting as *limit to governance*. Such practices and problems thus do not simply parallel those for managing risk and uncertainty, but also complicate those efforts in interesting ways.(Best, 2008, 356).

One should not be seduced by contemporary strategies to govern risk own promise of infallibility. The governing of ambiguity in the name of a “technocratic ideal of reason” is one of the aspirations of liberal political rationalities. Indeed, representing social events as totally calculable is part of governmental attempts to “depoliticize the term, ignoring its social constitution and denying the power of its act of naming and defining.” (Best, 2008, 363). Critiques of liberal international order inspired by Agamben buy into this self- representation of liberal political rationality. However, as William Connolly has shown, technical rationalities rules and regulations do not obliterate political actions. Culture, ethos and social acceptance resist normalization and escape totalizing processes (Connolly, 2004). In summary, theoretical framework that see power as the structure of human interaction, political agency as “response” to contingent conditions, and ambiguity as the very space for political intervention offer interesting theoretical tools for exploring how liberal bio-scripts not only regulate monitor and steer NGO into their political rationalities, but also open spaces for contestation and appropriation of visibility and for the deployment if agonic political strategies. In this framework, resistance to totalizing bio-political scripts is not limited to “rejection” or “dispossession”, but is found in multifarious and contingent agonic struggles that are constituted by governmental rationalities and at the same time exceed and transform them. In the pages that follow I will show that the United Nations

2008 manual for peacekeeping operations on the one hand attempts to operationalize the intensification of the bio-political trajectory of processes for making peace underscored by the new millennium conceptualizations of the UN task in terms of risk management and human security. On the other hand the Manual testifies to the impossibility to implement its will to regulate and govern the bewildering variety of actors that it interpellates as the stakeholders of complex peacekeeping. As Beatrice Pouligny (2006) has masterfully demonstrated, non-transparency of communication, different expectations, divergent agendas, unclear mandates, local political entrepreneurship, just to quote a few elements, make ambiguity a central dimension in the situations of conflict that peace operations attempt to govern through technocratic rationalities.

**Integration or idiosyncratic relations? DPKOs and NGOs in the practice of humanitarian intervention.**

In 2008, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) produced a manual entitled “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations-Principles and Guidelines.” The document reflects on peacekeeping and peace building in the light of Kofi Annan’s reconceptualization of international security as a holistic bio-political task aimed at reducing populations’ vulnerability. As the Manual states “ The creation of a new United Nations peace building architecture reflects a growing recognition within the international community of the linkages between United Nations peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building roles.” ( DPKO ,2008, 20). The Manual is reportedly a

step towards a major reform effort, namely “Peace Operations 2010” aimed at professionalizing and bettering the management of United Nations Peacekeeping (DPKO, 2008, 6) and it is designed to address “the multi-dimensional nature of contemporary United Nations peacekeeping operations.” (DPKO, 2008:15). It aims at providing a codification of lessons learned as well systematized prescriptions for action to the vast array of actors involved in the process. These not only include the United Nations civilian, police and military personnel, but also “ regional and other inter-governmental organizations, the range of humanitarian and development actors involved in international crisis management, as well as national and local actors in the countries where the United Nations peacekeeping operations are deployed”. ( DPKO, 2008, 10). The first part of the DPKO manual describes peacekeeping as a “*system of interlocking capabilities*” and aims at clearly defining, and sequencing the role of each actor in contributing such capabilities to the “*system*”. This endeavor is exemplified in figure 2. pag. 23, which, patterned on business flow representations assigns responsibilities for different tasks in different phases of peacekeeping to different agencies. The UN advocates for itself the governmental function of defining each actor’s role and function within the “*peacekeeping system*” with a view at maximizing performance. In DPKO’s words, the UN has “the unique ability to mount a truly comprehensive response to complex crises and has developed the concept of “*integrated missions*” to maximize the overall impact of its support to countries emerging from conflict”. (DPKO, 2008, 25). The Head of Mission is in charge of establishing the script guiding the overall activities of the United Nations Country Team

(UNCT). The clear orientation of peacekeeping towards taking up the bio-political and governmental functions that were previously the task of national governments is reflected in the Manual position that durable peace is dependent upon the correct provision of functions of government such as: State ability to provide security; Strengthening the rule of law; Supporting legitimate political institutions and Promoting social and economic recovery and development. (DPKO, 2008, 25). These functions, which in the 1990s were seen as the outcome institution building under the UN guidance, are now re-conceptualized as result of the integrated and centrally managed work of an array of actors. Management of disorder is represented as an endeavor that must be planned regulated and steered by the United Nations but implemented through the different actors involved in the peace process. NGOs are considered as key actors in this regard, as well as elements who, due to the variety of agendas they promote, are mostly in need for central coordination and regulation. Duffield's argument that international governmentality is increasingly inscribing NGOs seems to be supported here.<sup>3</sup> However, while the Peacekeeping Manual testifies to a will of regulating the bewildering variety of NGOs activities and of making them work towards the overall goal of stability, in the section dedicated to implementation it also acknowledges that its planning and integration goals amount to mission impossible. While in the narrative of the first two sections of the Manual emphasizes how the UN should go about planning, regulating and coordinating the tasks and roles of all actors involved in peacekeeping, its

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<sup>3</sup> Duffield looks more at development-related processes than peacekeeping. His central argument is that NGOs have been encompassed as partners of bilateral and multilateral organizations agendas of fostering self reliance of 'uninsured' populations in order to contain migration. While my analysis does not say anything regarding processes of self reliance, it however so far supports the notion that there is an increasing attempt of centralizing and capturing NGOs into the agendas of peacekeeping.

conclusive section focuses on the murkiness of implementation. Here the Manual underscores complexity, diversity of agendas, principles, business cycles and sources of funding of the different actors involved in peacekeeping, from the different UN agencies to NGOs. In the sections dedicated to implementation, the emphasis of the narrative shifts from interlocking capabilities to bewildering diversity. UN peacekeeping is portrayed as a “ a complex, multi dimensional enterprise, involving personnel from a wide range of nationalities, disciplines and professional cultures pursuing multiple lines of activity. “ (DPKO, 2008, 66). UN integrated missions- the Manual goes on- are often deployed alongside a variety of external actors, “with widely differing mandates, agendas and time horizons”. (DPKO, 2008, 69). Successful implementation of the mission mandate and integration of multiple actors depends more upon “rule of thumb” and cultural sensitivity to the variety of interests at play than upon correct planning . As the title of the section states, mandate implementation is an “art”, i.e. a type of activity that relies on practical knowledge, contingent assessments and adaptation to ambiguous, complex situations. James Scott has contrasted “high modernism”, a form of rationality aimed at mapping and simplifying the multiplicity of local conditions in order to better govern and exploit them which emerged contextually with modern statecraft, to forms of pre-modern rationality based on practical knowledge and adjustment to contingent conditions which he called “metis” (Scott, 1998). High modernism a project of “legibility and simplification,” devoted to “rationalizing and standardizing what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format.” Instead, local practices “exhibited a diversity and intricacy that

reflected a great variety of purely local, not state, interests.” (Scott, 1998, 2–3.). The Integrated Peacekeeping Manual combines high modernist will to govern through planning, visibility, rationalization and simplification with the ultimate admission of the limits of technocratic rationalities. By describing the process of mission integration as an “art” the final sections of the Manual recognize the always limited success of processes of planning, streamlining, visibility and simplification, and emphasizes the importance of “metis” in contingent processes of political interaction, the outcome of which can never be overdetermined by technical rationalities. In addition to acknowledging the impossibility of technical rationality to steer courses of action in fluid, changing and complex situations (such as conflict areas are) the Manual also recognizes a measure of intractable discrepancy between the priorities of humanitarian assistance and the stabilizing goals of peacekeeping. For instance, in situations of active conflict, peacekeepers may favor selective distribution of humanitarian aid, depending upon the perception of who are the legitimate actors in the conflict. Here the goal of making peace is likely to present serious trade-offs with the universal humanitarian imperative to save human lives in danger. For Erin Weir (2006), the divergence between the goals of peacekeeping and peace building and the principles of humanitarian intervention is virtually unbridgeable: “Humanitarian principles assert that no political or structural priority-including peace- must be seen to be ... prior to the protection of the individual” (Weir, 2006, 37). Integrated peacekeeping may not only be difficult to implement, but also detrimental to the work of NGOs with local populations. If integrated, NGOs may

easily end up to be perceived as allied of international forces and loose the confidence of local populations. As the Manual states

In situations where there is little or no peace to keep, integration may create difficulties for humanitarian and development partners, particularly if they are perceived to be too closely linked to the political and security objectives of the peacekeeping mission. In the worst case, integration may endanger their operations and the lives of their personnel. ( DPKO, 2008, 54).

In summary, while plans for integration of NGOs into international political rationalities and agendas for maintaining order intensify they are, for good or for bad, charged with difficulties, stumbling blocks, and ambiguities. Technical rationalities are deployed in situations of conflict where rules, plans, mandates and roles are continuously been negotiated with competing rules, principles, mandates and contingent necessities. These elements of resistance to the implementation of planning rationalities are rooted not only in a fundamental divergence of the objectives and goals for action between DKPO and say, humanitarian NGOs. The UN agencies and NGOs that are called to coordinate among each other in the framework of the United Nations Country Teams are also characterized by differences in budget cycles, mandate focus and duration, and accountabilities. These differences are compounded by the divergence of goals and priorities between the UN institutional bodies. United Nations peace operations are constituted by military, civilian, logistical, political, security personnel, who do not necessarily have the same visions of the priorities to be achieved in implementing mandates. As the Manual states

The IMPP<sup>4</sup> does not and cannot take over all other planning processes. The number of international and national actors involved in efforts to support the process of post-conflict recovery means that, in practice, planning cannot always be fully coherent or integrated. These actors have different roles, decision making processes, deployment time-lines, procedures, budgetary pressures and supervising authorities (DPKO, 2008, 55).

### **Conclusions.**

This paper has explored the UN political rationality for international security in the new millennium, and the concomitant changes in the strategy of peacekeeping towards “integrated missions”. The United Nations reformulation of security as human security promoted a holistic understanding of the UN task that is reflected in the 2008 Manual of Peacekeeping operations. The number of issues that the United Nations aspires to regulate expands, and so does the number of actors that are considered relevant in the process of making peace. As the international arena is reconceptualized as “risk society” security is conceived as the result of the coordinated action of an array of actors in charge of taming a variety of sources of danger. As the UN recognizes NGOs a central role in making peace, it also makes them the target for planning, integration and regulation of their priorities into the agenda of stabilization. However, by interpellating NGOs as relevant actors of the peacekeeping and peace building process, the UN not only governs and regulates them, but it also expands their opportunities for earning visibility and for appropriating political spaces. Furthermore, while devising plans for regulating the multitude of actors involved in peacekeeping and peace

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<sup>4</sup> Integrated Mission Planning Process

building, the UN also acknowledges the inherent ambiguity of the process, its practical nature and the impossibility to codify it through technical prescriptions and standardized instructions. NGOs are not simply *inscribed* in the diagram of international governance. They exemplify instead a type of responsive political agency that continuously mediates normative claims with the practical, ambiguous and undetermined circumstances of the contingent situations in which they operate. This does not mean that their programmes and deeds are necessarily better or more progressive than the ones of peacekeepers. But it certainly shows that NGOs do not inescapably reproduce the international security script. NGOs embody a form of post-modern responsibility that is expressed as contingent capacity to “respond” and therefore to transform what exists (Lavin, 2008). They represent a form of political agency based on the continuous negotiation between universal ideals and contingent possibilities, donors and international organizations expectations and loyalty to local populations. They transform and change the ambiguous political spaces they occupy, and are also constrained, transformed and changed by the political tasks they undertake in processes of negotiation of norms and practices. They move in the uncharted and ambiguous territory of reinventing political action in the context of the reorganization of security in terms of bio-political management of risk and in the murky spaces within which they deploy.

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