***Old Dominion University***

***College of Arts and Letters***

***The Graduate Program in International Studies***

## **Doctoral Dissertation Defense**

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***PROMOTING GENDER TO BUILD PEACE: EVOLVING NORMS AND INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES***

Abstract

The United Nations (UN) has incorporated a strong gender perspective to its peacekeeping operations (PKO) based on a renewed focus on women`s rights and participation in peace processes.  These efforts are part of a complex organizational learning process in which women`s central role in peace processes and the increasing efforts to respond to conflict related sexual violence have become a central component of the organization`s strategy to build a lasting peace. The underlying logic is that it is only after an equitable society is founded and when the other half of the population`s voice has been included in the political life of the state that peace can genuinely be accomplished.

Nonetheless, UN`s impact on the ground is difficult to measure and still limited. While these policies have been unanimously endorsed by member states and embedded in the organization`s resolutions and peace operations mandates, it reflects a particular view in regard to the status of women that is in contrast with their status within the majority of member states.  This dissertation argues that UN`s renewed focus on gender to build a lasting peace has limited results due to member states` inability or unwillingness to adopt gender approaches themselves, aligned to other factors such as the persistence of patriarch-based and weak institutions in intervened societies, volatile security environments and lack of resources.

In order to assess this argument, UN`s organizational learning process will be evaluated through the analysis of how gender-sensitive practices were incorporated to peace processes at headquarters, member states and mission levels. For this purpose, an analysis of UN`s normative framework (resolutions, guidelines, training modules, etc) and states compliance will be carried out along with an evaluation of the advances for the implementation of these renewed practices in two case studies: United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

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