BEYOND THE ETHNONATIONAL DIVIDE:
IDENTITY POLITICS AND WOMEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND
AND ISRAEL/PALESTINE

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Political Studies
In conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
(December, 2009)

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Abstract

Beyond the Ethnonational Divide: Identity Politics and Women in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine is a comparative analysis of the conflict resolution processes and peace-building strategies employed in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, focusing on the experiences of women’s feminist peace movements. I draw on feminist thought in the international relations and comparative politics literatures, as well as the critical identity politics literatures developed outside these fields, to demonstrate the value of broadening our understanding of social identity in conflict. In particular, I apply a post-positivist realist approach to identity to evaluate the extent to which women’s feminist peace communities develop untested ideas related to conflict resolution and peace-building in these cases.

I argue that the dominant ethnonational conflict resolution literature, developed largely within the comparative politics field, advances an ‘elite accommodation’ strategy for resolving conflict that grants the most militant and sometimes violent ethnonational leaders the authority to speak for the body public during transformative constitutional moments. I propose that conflict resolution schemes that privilege ethnonational elite political figures and treat the interests of all actors in intrastate conflict as fundamentally derived from ethnonational interests do not produce a stable post-conflict period of peace and governance, they fail to secure human rights, equality guarantees and justice provisions for all communities in a post-conflict period, and they fail to capitalize on the local, participant knowledge and alternate visions of conflict resolution and peace that are developed in “subaltern” identity-based communities.

In my view, when we consider the genesis and development of the feminist peace movements in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, we can see how a politics based on solidarity and alliances, across ethnic, national, gender, class and sexuality divides, is informed by the endogenous conditions of conflict and also the exogenous development of transnational feminist theory and praxis. The negotiation of identity in women’s feminist peace communities has been
complex and, at times, difficult. However, it has also led to the development of novel ideas related
to peace, inclusion, human rights and justice that have been sidelined, to varying degrees, in the
conflict resolution processes in both cases.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Eleanor MacDonald and Dr. John McGarry for their guidance, critical insight and unwavering encouragement. This dissertation would not have been possible without their support.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the faculty, staff and friends in the Department of Politics, my friends in Kingston and overseas and to my family: to Dr. Wayne Cox, for all of his support, advice and friendship; to Mira Bachvarova and Nick Hardy, for their generosity and hospitality (and for the long conversations over countless cups of tea); to all of my friends in Kingston and beyond for the great discussions and debates – I learned so much; to Barb Murphy and Karen Vandermey for their assistance throughout the process; and to my family for their love and support.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the many women and activists in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine who graciously agreed to speak with me about their important work. Their frankness, enthusiasm and friendship were truly inspiring. This research was also made possible through the generous financial support of the Ireland Canada University Foundation, the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program and the Ethnicity and Democratic Governance Project, Queen’s University. In addition to these agencies, I would also like to thank Dr. Jennifer Todd, the Geary Institute, University College Dublin; Dr. Dan Avnon, Gilo Center for Citizenship, Democracy and Civic Education, Hebrew University; and Dr. Carmel Roulston, University of Ulster, Jordanstown, Northern Ireland for graciously providing me with the space and tools necessary to complete my research.

I dedicate this thesis to my partner Josh Rubenstein, who has shared this journey with me. From Jerusalem to Delhi and Belfast to Brisbane – these have been such exciting years. Thank you.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Violent intrastate conflicts, including ethnic and civil wars, have received more attention in the social sciences since the end of the Cold War.\(^1\) The growing interest in intrastate conflict has been matched by a desire on the part of social scientists and practitioners to develop improved approaches to conflict management. Many such approaches draw on a large body of literature related to themes of ethnicity and nationalism,\(^2\) or “ethnonationalism,”\(^3\) as well as theories of ethnic conflict regulation that have been developed in the comparative politics and international relations fields since the late 1960s.\(^4\) The two most popular schools of thought on conflict management in multiethnic societies include power-sharing models of conflict resolution, especially consociational democracy theories associated with the works of Arend Lijphart, and

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\(^{3}\) This term, first coined by Walker Connor, captures a definition of nationalism that incorporates ethnicity and the myth of common ancestry. “Ethnonationalism,” in this sense, is synonymous with “nationalism.” For a fuller discussion on the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism, see Chapter 2 in this dissertation.

integrative models of ethnic conflict regulation, associated with the works of Donald Horowitz. The former approaches advocate power-sharing accommodation between ethnic elite leaders and the latter approaches advocate majoritarian-style coalitions of ethnic parties or the creation of multiethnic parties. In both approaches, political institutions are created to be reflective of a multiethnic society and both models are dependent on ethnic elite cooperation (albeit differently organized).

In my view, the dominant conflict regulation literature reifies ethnic and national identities at the expense of understanding the ways in which other social identities cross-cut ethnic and national identities in conflict. As such, I argue that this literature fails to fully capture the varied ways in which social actors are mobilized in conflict – within their ethnonational communities, alongside their ethnonational communities and across the boundaries of an ethnonational divide. Certainly, it is the case that ethnonationally divided societies can produce the kind of ethnically and nationally motivated antagonisms that define the political interests of competing communities. Within such societies, however, other identity-based communities also become politicized and radicalized around sociological categories like gender, class and sexuality. This is particularly true when conservative ethnonational forces rigidly define the borders of who belongs to the nation, privileging sometimes sexist, elitist, heteronormative and other exclusionary values.

I propose that the consequences of treating the ambitions and desires of all social actors in intrastate conflict as fundamentally derived from ethnic and national interests and the

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consequence of privileging ethnonational elite political figures in conflict resolution schemes are threefold: 1) they do not produce a stable post-conflict period of peace and governance, 2) they fail to secure human rights, equality guarantees and justice provisions for all communities in a post-conflict period, and 3) they fail to capitalize on the local, participant knowledge and alternate visions of conflict resolution and peace that are developed in “subaltern” identity-based communities – that is, communities which are socially and politically marginalized within their ethnonational communities. In the first instance, top-down approaches require a high degree of elite willingness and manipulation of public opinion – requirements that are not always possible, successful or desirable. As elite political actors become bogged down by narrow ethnonational agendas, they cannot secure a viable governance and administrative structure in post-conflict periods. Such models may also perpetuate the very structures of power that subjugate powerless communities. In the second instance, ethnonationally derived elite-actor models of conflict resolution fail to address the emancipatory and liberatory goals of subaltern identity-based communities. As such, human rights, equality and justice provisions designed for the main ethnonational communities do not necessarily address the needs of other identity-based communities. In the third and final instance, experiences of oppression, marginalization and social mobilization can contain valuable knowledge about what sustains conflict and what needs to change in order to bring about a peaceful post-conflict society. When theorists and practitioners ignore the innovative and creative ideas developed within identity-based communities that cross-cut ethnonational communities, they miss an opportunity to test locally derived, and therefore case-specific and case-relevant, solutions to conflict.

In this dissertation, I compare the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases – representing two ethnonationally defined conflicts in different geo-political contexts – to test this argument. I draw on feminist thought in the international relations and comparative politics literatures, as well as the critical identity politics literatures developed outside these fields, to
demonstrate the value of broadening our understanding of social identity in conflict. I begin my analysis by charting the ways in which gender-based experiences intersect with experiences based on ethnicity and nationalism, class and sexuality throughout the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine – as opposed to privileging ethnonational identities alone. Specifically, I focus on feminist women peace actors and communities to demonstrate the complexity of identity and the value that marginalized voices can bring to conflict resolution process. I argue that the dominant conflict resolution literature would benefit from a deeper and more complex theory of social identity formation and transformation – permitting theorists and practitioners to develop schemes that are more likely to produce peaceful, stable and inclusive post-conflict societies.

In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I review the kinds of ethnonational explanations for the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine conflicts that are emphasized in the conflict resolution literature. Next, I detail the various attempts at conflict resolution in both cases, charting different historical experiments with partition and power-sharing accommodation throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. After providing this brief historical sketch, I restate the central problem that I tackle in this dissertation: namely the extent to which favouring a narrow conception of identity in conflict, defined exclusively in terms of ethnonational identity, limits the tools available for constructing a successful peace process and a peaceful, just and inclusive post-conflict society. In the following section on causation, I argue that ethnonational elite-actor models of conflict resolution lead to a preoccupation in political discourse with ethnic and national claims which, in turn, enables an exclusionary political system of government, which leads to weak or limited post-conflict commitments to peace, equality and justice. Alternatively, I propose that including non-central actors in peace processes and subsequent post-conflict institutions related to peace-building breaks the focus on ethnic and national claims which, in turn, brings to light local, participant knowledge and alternative visions of post-conflict society, which leads to the construction of institutions and other political and social mechanisms that can
produce robust and inclusive post-conflict commitments to peace, equality and justice. In the next section on methodology, I review the comparative case method that I have undertaken here to study the conflicts and peace processes in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, outlining the benefits of a two-case comparative approach and listing the data-gathering techniques I have employed for this study. In the final section, I detail how the chapters unfold in this dissertation.

1.1 Ethnonational explanations of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine

The kinds of ethnonational explanations of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine emphasize long histories of common ancestry and inter-communal conflict. In Northern Ireland, the roots of the sectarian divide and the recent Troubles are traced to key events mythologized in Irish folklore and evoked by nationalists and unionists, such as early English expeditions to Ireland, the period of English Lordship in Ireland in the Middle Ages and the British colonization scheme in the seventeenth century commonly called the Plantation of Ulster. Twentieth century events mythologized in popular constructions of the conflict include the 1916 republican insurrection, or Easter Rising, in Dublin where rebels were swiftly and brutally crushed by British forces. Today, those suspected participants and members of rebel forces who were rounded up, detained and executed by the Crown stand as martyrs for the republican cause. The 1919-1921 War of Independence is similarly memorialized as it led to the Partition of Ireland and the creation of the Irish Free State and British rule in Northern Ireland. Due to the poor treatment of the minority Catholic/nationalist community in Northern Ireland under unionist rule, such as discriminatory voting, employment and housing practices,\textsuperscript{7} and as a result of an alliance

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\textsuperscript{7} The British government struck the Cameron Commission in 1969 to investigate the causes of violence in Northern Ireland. As the Commission stated in their official report: “It is plain from what we have heard, read and observed that the train of events and incidents which began in Londonderry on 5th October 1968 has had as its background, on the one hand a widespread sense of political and social grievance for long unadmitted and therefore unredressed by successive Governments of Northern Ireland, and on the other sentiments of fear and apprehension sincerely and tenaciously felt and believed, of risks to
between the nationalist community and 1960s leftist social politics, anti-partition resistance culminated in civil disobedience and paramilitary action. Republican paramilitary groups, seeking a united Ireland, sparred with loyalist paramilitary groups, which wanted to remain British subjects, and both groups launched a wave of attacks on each other, civilian populations and, in the case of the republican paramilitary groups, attacks on the police forces and the British Army for over thirty years. Education, housing (especially in working class communities) and employment remained highly segregated along Catholic and Protestant lines. The literature often establishes these events as the antecedent conditions of the current hostilities between Northern Irish Catholics/nationalists and Protestants/unionists.

In the Levant region, historians recount a history of Jewish, Christian and Islamic settlement and rule, a succession of rising and falling empires, European imperialist ambitions, and Zionist immigration to Palestine beginning in the 1880s to explain the intractability of this ethnonationally defined conflict. Some analyses trace the origins of the Jewish nationalist movement to the mid-nineteenth century period of Ottoman rule and the first calls for a Jewish return to the Holy Land.\(^8\) This movement was consolidated through several waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine beginning in the 1880s and the establishment of a political Zionist Jewish national movement. The 1917 British Balfour Declaration promised a homeland in Palestine for Jewish peoples and a Jewish national state was subsequently established in 1948. Similarly, the formation of a distinct Palestinian national identity is often traced to the 1834 Arab revolts against the Egyptian rulers in the Levant and the 1936-1939 Arab revolts against British rule under the Mandate of Palestine. Due to the swelling number of Jewish immigrants to the

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region and the creation of Arab refugees resulting from the 1948 formation of the State of Israel, the Palestinian national movement was forged. The Palestinian identity was strengthened through the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip – where many Palestinian refugees had fled in 1948, and through the 1993 Oslo peace process where Israelis and Palestinians recognized each others right to exist and promised a resolution based on a model of “two states for two peoples.” Some historians emphasize the 1987 Palestinian intifada or uprising against Israeli occupation as a key event marking the self-determination of the Palestinian peoples. Taken together, these key events have produced two ethnically-based national identities claiming political and moral jurisdiction over the same parcel of land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

1.2 Attempts at conflict resolution in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine

Various approaches to conflict regulation have been applied in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. In 1921, partition was the original solution for ethnonational cleavages on the island of Ireland, dividing the island into an independent Irish state and a Protestant majority Northern Ireland, which remained part of the United Kingdom. However, politicians have pursued varying forms of power-sharing and consociation for Northern Ireland since the 1970s to address the resumption of violence between the minority nationalist/republican community, which desires a united Ireland, and the unionist/loyalist community, which prefers the status quo. In Israel/Palestine, proposals involving the creation and recognition of a sovereign Jewish state and a sovereign Palestinian state have generally been preferred. Under the British Mandate of Palestine, the British proposed the end of their mandate and partition between the Jews and Palestinians in

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1938. The United Nations General Assembly similarly approved a partition plan, known as Resolution 181, on 29 November 1947 that called for the creation of a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. The plan was accepted by the Zionist movement but rejected by Palestinians and Arab leaders, who viewed it as an unfair territorial solution. After months of fighting, Jewish leaders declared the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, and the conflict intensified with a declaration of war by neighbouring Arab states. When the war was over in 1949, Jordan took control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and Egypt annexed the Gaza Strip under the new armistice agreements – areas that contained many of the Palestinians that had fled during these two phases of conflict. Following Israel’s victory in the subsequent 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israel expanded its control to include the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and annexed the Golan Heights from Syria and East Jerusalem from Jordan. After the first Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, both sides agreed (in principle) to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, known as the “two-state solution.” While there have been various Zionist and Palestinian proposals for an inclusive bi-national state that would share some of the power-sharing elements that have been implemented in Northern Ireland throughout the twentieth century, these calls have not been taken up seriously by successive Jewish, Israeli or Palestinian leaders or by the international community.

In both of the models of conflict regulation – consociational power-sharing in Northern Ireland and partition in Israel/Palestine – ethnonational elite actors, often with the assistance of international elite third-party representatives, negotiate peace agreements. These models rest on the theory that divided societies can be stabilized through elite accommodation. As consociational theorist Eric Nordlinger argues, elites “alone can initiate, work out, and implement...
conflict-regulating practices, therefore they alone can make direct and positive contributions to conflict-regulating outcomes."\textsuperscript{13} This means that ethnic paradigms shape our understanding of key events in these conflicts. Broadly, the ethnic conflict literature, as applied to these two cases as well as others, suggests that incompatible ethnic and national claims can be reconciled through a peace agreement that is brokered by rival elite political representatives through a formal peace process that secures the ethnonational ambitions of deeply divided communities.

1.3 Statement of research problem

The ethnic conflict resolution literature, informed by the ethnonational history I have just sketched, develops a narrow and exclusive conception of identity-based social mobilization in deeply divided societies, privileging the experiences and interests of ethnic and national identity communities. As such, the role of other identity based movements, such as women’s feminist-based coalition groups, receives little attention. Certainly, this approach allows theorists to construct parsimonious and internally consistent theories of conflict that inform popular prescriptions for conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building. In some instances, the payoff has been the production of successful peace negotiations leading to the construction of post-conflict political institutions. In my view, however, such approaches lack a deeper theoretical account of identity and ignore the significant development of other forms of social mobilization in conflict. In particular, these approaches do not account for or take seriously the significant development of women’s cross-community groups in divided societies and the sustained role that such groups play in advocating for peace and justice. As such, I am interested in the extent to which favouring a narrow conception of identity over the development of a deeper understanding of identity provides us with a partial understanding of social reality and may, therefore, limit the

\textsuperscript{13} Nordlinger, \textit{Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies}, 73.
tools available for constructing a successful peace process and a peaceful, just and inclusive post-conflict society.

The purpose of my research project is to conduct a comparative case study at the level of the subaltern subject and community in two cases of ethnonationally defined conflicts. At the outset of this project, I hypothesized that including non-central actors in peace processes (and subsequent post-conflict institutions related to peace-building), can positively contribute to peace negotiations and increase the likelihood for post-conflict political stability and for the provision of the basket of goods promised by “peace,” including justice, social and political inclusion, human rights instruments, equality guarantees and a reduction in sectarian divisions. Further, such inclusion sets the groundwork for a robust post-conflict civil society. As such, I had expected to find that ethnonational elite-actor models of conflict resolution produce weak or limited post-conflict commitments to stability and to the provision of such baskets of goods.

I am well aware that this is a difficult hypothesis to verify, namely because non-central actors rarely feature prominently (or at all) in peace processes. I cannot, in this sense, compare a case where non-central actors have played a central role in conflict resolution with a case where they have not played a central role and demonstrate their added value (or their non-value) to peace-building. As such, I compare two cases where non-central actors have not featured prominently, with the aim to produce new theoretical perspectives on social mobilization in conflict and to aggregate new empirical data on which I can formulate suggestions for peace processes and post-conflict peace-building. I construct a theoretical defense of my proposition, through a comparative case study of Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine – two cases that have undergone decades of mediation and peace processes, in order to demonstrate the potential contribution of non-central actors (later in this chapter, I elaborate on this particular comparative research strategy). I show the weakness of the theory of identity at play in the ethnic conflict
literature and I establish the existence and relevance of non-central actors. Specifically, I focus on feminist peace movements to demonstrate how women, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality, develop as activist identity communities alongside and beyond ethnic and national communities in conflict.

1.4 Notes on causation

The ethnonational-focused conflict resolution literature, in my view, fails to specify the causal mechanisms that are expected to bring about post-conflict institutional equality and justice and post-conflict reductions to community-level sectarian cleavages. Causation, in this sense, refers to the sequence of events whereby real entities have causal powers (potential to act), causal liabilities (forced to act or are otherwise vulnerable) that may “produce”, “determine”, “lead to” or “enable” an effect, depending on specific historical, social and political conditions along with the causal mechanisms at play.14 As Sebastian Rosato succinctly explains:

A causal logic is a statement about how an independent variable exerts a causal effect on a dependent variable. It elaborates a specific chain of causal mechanisms that connects these variables and takes the following form: A (the independent variable) causes B (the dependent variable) because A causes x, which causes y, which causes B.15

Theorizing and identifying the existence of causal mechanisms is the practice of not just knowing that an independent variable causes an effect in a dependent variable – but understanding why this effect was produced. The extent to which causal powers or liabilities activate causal mechanisms is contingent on the conditions in which they work.16 Efforts to identify causal mechanisms are associated with scientific and critical realism philosophies of social science that

maintain that there is a real objective social reality that we can come to know through particular discourses and description.\textsuperscript{17}

Andrew Sayer details the contingent conditions under which causal mechanism operate:

Whether a causal power or liability is actually activated or suffered on any occasion depends on conditions whose presence and configuration is contingent. Whether a person actually works might depend on whether there is a job for them. Whether gunpowder ever does explode depends on it being in the right conditions – in the presence of a spark, etc. So although causal powers exist necessarily by virtue of the nature of the objects which possess them, it is contingent whether they are ever activated or exercised.

When they are exercised, the actual effects of causal mechanisms will again depend upon the conditions in which they work.\textsuperscript{18}

I apply this causal logic to the claim put forth in the ethnic conflict regulation literature that (A) ethnonational elite actor models of conflict resolution lead to (B) peace agreements that can produce equality and justice and mend sectarian tensions. The causal mechanisms associated with this hypothesis include, for example, building trust between competing factions through elite-level negotiations; providing an incentive framework for cooperation through incremental confidence-building measures; providing political stability through a termination or reduction in sectarian violence; and providing the necessary conditions for the activation of a healthy post-conflict civil society through such stability. In this literature, as I discuss in Chapter 2, we find a general theory of justice and equality, tied exclusively to the main ethnonational blocs, that is expected to flourish at an indeterminate point in time, following the signing of a peace agreement and the establishment of a post-conflict political order.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} For example, see: Andrew Sayer, \textit{Realism and Social Science} (Sage Publications, 2000), 2; Andrew Bennett, "Beyond Hemper and Back to Hume: Causal Mechanisms and Causal Explanation," in \textit{American Political Science Association} (Philadelphia: 2003), 12.

\textsuperscript{18} Sayer, \textit{Method in Social Science: A Realist Account}, 99.

\textsuperscript{19} For example, Brendan O'Leary writes that “the dissolution of (undesirable) collective identities and antagonisms may be more likely to occur after a period of consociational governance.” Brendan O'Leary, "Debating Consociational Politics: Normative and Explanatory Arguments," in \textit{From Power Sharing to Democracy}, ed. Sid Noel, Studies in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 19.
I propose the following hypothesis, charting a different plausible causal logic that I argue is evident in the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases: (A) Ethnonational elite actor models of conflict resolution lead to a (x) preoccupation in political discourse with ethnic and national claims which, in turn, (y) enables an exclusionary political system of government, which leads to (B) weak or limited post-conflict commitments to peace, equality and justice, despite a termination or reduction in sectarian violence. Given the nature of the independent variable, I argue that we can theorize the likelihood of the existence of this competing causal process. Alternatively, I propose that: (A) including non-central actors in peace processes and subsequent post-conflict institutions related to peace-building (x) breaks the focus on ethnic and national claims which, in turn, (y) brings to light local, participant knowledge and alternative visions of post-conflict society, which leads to (B) the construction of institutions and other political and social mechanisms that can produce robust and inclusive post-conflict commitments to peace, equality and justice. As in Rosato’s formulation discussed above, A causes x; x causes y; and y causes B.

I ground this alternative hypothesis in empirical evidence that I have garnered through interviewing participants in women’s feminist peace communities in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. I suggest that the former theory, which expects justice and equality to flow from elite-actor models of conflict resolution, is derived from a particular theory about the ways in which social actors are structured along ethnonational lines. I offer competing evidence to suggest that ethnonational identities also cross-cut other identities in conflict, generating competing conceptions of post-conflict equality and justice – conceptions that ground these values in more than the institutionalization of parity of esteem of competing ethnonational communities or the creation of ethnically homogeneous states through partition.
Through my fieldwork, I have found that women’s feminist peace movements attempt to change (or call for the change to) the independent variable by demanding a more inclusive and representative model of conflict resolution, thereby changing the resulting causal power and causal liabilities. This, they anticipate, would lay a firmer democratic base for a future post-conflict society based on equality, justice and the mending of deep ethnic and national cleavages. When this call has not been met directly, activists have worked to change the contingent conditions that they theorize lead to the post-conflict preoccupation with ethnonational identity politics and interests. In my dissertation, I compare the varying successes and failures that feminist peace groups have experienced in their attempt to change these conditions in these cases.

As this discussion shows, I find similar outcomes on the dependent variable in both cases: weak or limited post-conflict commitments to equality and justice. In the following paragraphs, I will explain why I choose these cases for comparison as opposed to cases where the dependent variables may have differed i.e. comparing a case with weak or limited post-conflict commitments to equality and justice with a case demonstrating strong post-conflict commitments to equality and justice.

1.5 Methodology: Research design, the comparative case method and data-gathering techniques

In the following section, I outline my research design and methodology for the dissertation. In the first section, I define my comparative case study as one built on a most different systems analysis. I explain why a comparative study of cases of conflict and conflict resolution, which are as different as Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, can reveal important endogenous and exogenous mechanisms that influence identity-based community formation and mobilization. Next, I explain why using a two-case comparative approach for this task is preferable to a single case or multiple case study. Whereas single case studies can become
bogged down in historical details that can overemphasize the particularities of an individual case, multiple case studies can loose the historical richness of each case. For these reasons, among others discussed below, I focus exclusively on Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. In the third section, I discuss the qualitative approach that I take and in the last section I describe the data gathering techniques that I use, including: historiography, participant observation, document analyses and interviews.

*Research design: most-different systems*

Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune differentiate between comparative research designs based on *most similar systems* analysis and comparative designs based on *most different systems* analysis. In the former research design, studies are built on systems that are similar in many respects and share, for example, similar cultural, economic and political characteristics. When small but important differences are found, they become the subject of a comparative explanation. Alternatively, the *most different systems* design, advocated by Przeworski and Teune, explains variation below the systemic level of analysis, and appeals to factors at the level of the individual, group or community. This approach, therefore, works to eliminate irrelevant systemic factors. An appeal to systemic factors is only made when general statements can no longer be made at a lower level of analysis.\(^{20}\) Sidney Tarrow identifies the advantage of a paired comparison analysis of different types of polities or processes as “the capacity to point to robust causal mechanisms that repeat themselves across broad ranges of variation and concatenate differently with different environmental conditions and with each other.”\(^{21}\) Considering the purpose of this dissertation, to evaluate the contribution of non-central actors to peace processes and post-conflict peace building, a *most similar systems* approach is impossible to undertake as non-central actors do not

feature prominently in peace processes. As such, I contrast the relative experiences of success and failure of non-central actors in two different systems that have undergone decades of peace processes.

On the face of it, the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases meet the criteria of most different systems. While these cases share similar outcomes related to low levels of non-elite participation in peace negotiations and agreements, they differ in many other respects. For example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has experienced greater causalities (Northern Ireland has suffered just over 3,500 deaths since the start of the Troubles in 1969.\(^{22}\) In contrast, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs attributes over 5,800 deaths to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between September 2000 and August 2007 alone\(^{23}\)); paramilitary organizations have developed in both cases, but the tactics of the organizations differ; in terms of negotiated agreements, Northern Ireland has been successful in negotiating and implementing a final status agreement while efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain deadlocked; and, although they have both gone through decades of mediation and negotiations, the terms of final status agreements differ (Northern Ireland worked towards a power-sharing government and Israel/Palestine continues to work towards a two-state solution). Another important difference includes the different geographic location of these cases (Europe and the Middle East) resulting in different regional and international influences leading to very different geopolitical significances of these cases. Particularly since the end of the Cold War, and especially following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, perceived Arab or Muslim values related to issues such as justice, multiculturalism or alleged anti-Americanism, tend to inform Middle East-centred


analyses. For example, journalists, pundits and politicians refer to the theories of writers such as Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis to suggest that Palestinians are expressing a certain “Muslim rage” or Islamic fundamentalism. The motivations of the conflicting parties in Northern Ireland are usually considered as more locally derived and have not been characterized as part of a broader regional or international religious movement.

As I have outlined, the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases may be apples and oranges, so to speak, but they are still fruit. Historically and structurally they share similar patterns of post-colonial social and economic development; similar resistance movements in the 1920s; common political awakenings of agents spurred by civil rights movements in the 1960s and the 1970s, similar experiences of conflict management and diplomacy involving some of the same external actors and advisors; and the role of terror in their respective societies. In this sense, these cases are not so differently structured or differently situated in history that they defy comparison (although a case could be made for making other comparisons that are different in these ways).

24 In an often cited 1990 article appearing in Foreign Affairs, Huntington argues that “the fundamental sources of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic . . . the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.” While Huntington does not address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict directly and does not categorize Jews as a civilization, he writes: “In Eurasia the great historic fault lines between civilizations are once more aflame. This is particularly true along the boundaries of the crescent-shaped Islamic bloc of nations from the bulge of Africa to central Asia. Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma and Catholics in the Philippines. Islam has bloody borders.” See: Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” Foreign Affairs 72(3) (Summer 1993) 22. Similarly, historian Bernard Lewis wrote an article for the Atlantic Monthly in 1990 entitled: The Roots of Muslim rage: Why so many Muslims deeply resent the West, and why their bitterness will not easily be mollified. See: Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," The Atlantic Monthly 266, no. 3 (1990).

25 For example, the United States has played an integral role in both the Northern Ireland and the Israeli/Palestinian peace processes. Individual interlocutors and advisors such as Former Senator George Mitchell was the architect of the Mitchell Peace Plan in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and chair of the 1998 Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland. For a discussion on how the two peace processes have influenced each other, please see: John Darby, "Borrowing and Lending in Peace Processes," in Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes, ed. John Darby and MacGinty (New York: Palgrave, 2003).
Below the systemic level, I am interested in the politicization of women in meaningful cross-community and coalition-based partnerships. This form of social mobilization in these cases appears improbable or trivial given the deep divisions that are theorized to exist between the major ethnonational communities. Yet, there has been a sustained maturation of an autonomous feminist peace movement in both cases, beginning with the development of the respective civil rights movements, the women’s movements and the peace movements. If the politicization of women in peace groups and around social identities related to gender, class and sexuality is positively related to restrictive ethnonational movements and exclusionary political processes, then, the differences between Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine are less relevant for explaining the politicization of women. In this sense, there has been a similar development of social identity communities in these conflicts, despite the differences between the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases that I noted earlier. To this end, I am interested in what these two cases share in common that can explain the growth of women’s feminist peace groups, considering their obvious social and political differences.

Through the course of my research, I did find differences between the two cases, such as a higher level of political participation of women in the Northern Ireland peace process than women in the Middle East peace process, the success of women’s demands for construction of post-conflict institutions in Northern Ireland and the failure of the peace agreements in Israel/Palestine to meet similar demands. To explain this variation, it was important to consider differences between the two cases at the systemic level. For example, I found that success in Northern Ireland depended on a more inclusive electoral formula to the peace talks leading up to the final settlement. Identifying the systemic factors that explain the greater success of the Northern Ireland women’s peace movement are instructive for: a) understanding some of the fortuitous opportunities that lead to greater involvement of women in Northern Ireland, b) for Palestinian women who are still hoping to attain inclusion in a future Middle East peace process,
and; c) for other cases of ethnonational conflict where actors are similarly marginalized from elite-led peace processes.

Securing better representation of women in peace processes is part of a feminist emancipatory commitment to collective social empowerment that I outline in greater detail in Chapter 2. More specifically, however, I have conducted intensive case-studies of these conflicts to: a) determine what we learn about social identity formation in ethnically defined conflicts so that we can better theorize the role of identity in contentious politics; b) uncover the different political interests and demands that are produced in cross-community or otherwise non-ethnonational community organizations; c) consider the potential contribution of such alternative interests and demands to conflict resolution processes, and; d) use this knowledge to rethink the structure of elite-led peace negotiations, the contingent social and political conditions in the intervening period between the signing of a peace agreement and the establishment of new government institutions and the causal mechanisms that are necessary to produce post-conflict justice and equality and reduce community-level sectarian divisions. Post-positivist realist theories of identity and feminist interventions in international relations and comparative politics suggest that marginalized social actors provide the best vantage point from which we can better observe the machinations of power. In Chapter 2, I provide a defense for analyzing autonomous feminist peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine.

The two-case comparative study

As I discussed in the previous section, the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine differ in many respects. In my view, these differences, often related to primordial, cultural and/or religious distinctions, tend to be overemphasized in single case studies or between cases in a single region. For these reasons, there is value in comparing a Middle East case with a European case. In my view, a comparison of the Israeli/Palestinian case with a European case
helps to focus my analysis on those factors related to identity mobilization which are shared in deeply divided societies. For example, one might expect that the strictures associated with religious “fundamentalism” that are emphasized in popular constructions of the Middle East would constrain women’s ability to mobilize for political change. To find a similar pattern of mobilization among women in the Middle East as among women in Europe would suggest that there are other overarching causal mechanisms at play. In this dissertation, I have attempted to draw out not only the local and national level events that have provoked women to mobilize in these two conflicts but to also identify the impact of broader regional and international rights based movements, the development of feminist thought and the growth of peace politics on feminist peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Interestingly, the mobilization of women’s feminist peace movements in both of these cases has drawn on similar resources since their start. For example, such groups have drawn on regional and international sources of support from organizations like the European Union and the United Nations; other national, regional and international social movements organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality; and, indeed, they have drawn on research and support from each other through shared forums, activism and training. In this sense, a comparison of Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine also allows for the exploration of exogenous explanations of politicization and mobilization.

There is a similar benefit for understanding the Northern Ireland conflict in a comparative framework, outside of a European context. For example, Richard Kearney writes about the weakness of past analyses that have seen the conflict in Northern Ireland as a distinct case. “A crucial weakness of the internal-conflict interpretation is that it is vulnerable to the superficial reading that the conflict is unique – a hangover of seventeenth-century religious quarrels which the rest of Europe has long left behind.”

While Kearney is speaking specifically about the

parallels between Northern Ireland and conflicts in the rest of Europe that have unfolded since the end of the Cold War, I suggest that there are also parallels with the Middle East. Through an examination of how agents have formed identity-based communities and used similar forms of political mobilization in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, I attempt to show the weakness of ancient hatreds, primordial or otherwise ethnocentric theses that tend to be emphasized in single case studies.

These two cases should not be mistaken as a representative sample of other cases of contemporary conflict and peace processes. Although case studies are criticized at times for lack of rigor and for the lack of scientific generalizations that can come from such research, Robert K. Yin maintains that case studies “are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.” In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a “sample,” and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).”27 This explains the theory-building aspect of this project related to the conflict resolution literature and identity politics literature which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2. Although these cases are not intended to be a representative sample of similar cases, I do draw out some of the lessons that we can learn from these cases in Chapter 7, which may be relevant for other cases of conflict and social mobilization.

Additional benefits of choosing to compare two case studies as opposed to electing a research design that analyses a single case or multiple cases of three or more include reasons related to scope and depth as well as pragmatic considerations. Certainly, a single case study offers a researcher the ability to conduct an analysis that can be rich in historical and cultural detail. The advantage, as Yin notes, of case study research that relies on fieldwork over strategies

that rely on secondary source materials is that fieldwork can aggregate new data generated through techniques such as direct observation and interviews.\textsuperscript{28} Similarly, a multi-case study comparative approach can allow a researcher to identify shared themes and patterns without overemphasizing the particulars of a single case. However, it would not be possible to conduct fieldwork entailing intensive interviews and archival research in multiple cases in the context of this research project. Pragmatically, the comparative case study approach, limited to two cases, allows me to delve deep enough into these cases to understand how patterns of social organization have emerged, without overemphasizing the uniqueness of each case, and to include new empirical data that is not yet recorded in the vast historical archival data.

\textit{The qualitative research strategy: an interpretative approach}

Harry F. Wolcott explains how a researcher organizes qualitative data into three subsections: description, analysis and interpretation.\textsuperscript{29} The descriptive approach allows data gathered during fieldwork to “speak for themselves.” Data analysis involves the systematic effort to organize the descriptive data – drawing-out themes and making relevant correlation. Interpretation requires understanding the data beyond just observation and scientific analysis – to “make sense” of the data and move beyond pure explanation. These three categories are not mutually exclusive, although a researcher is likely to emphasize one particular approach to organizing data.\textsuperscript{30}

In this research project, I try to allow the data or research participants to “speak for themselves” through personal narratives gathered during interviews and research of records. While the data are “analyzed,” as defined by Wolcott, the emphasis is on interpretation of events, interviews and records in an attempt to understand how identities are formed, maintained and

\textsuperscript{28} Yin, \textit{Case Study Research}, 20.
\textsuperscript{29} Harry F. Wolcott, \textit{Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation} (California: Sage Publications, 1994).
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 10-11.
transformed in situations of conflict and communal violence. Norman Blaikie defines the interpretive social science approach as one that:

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\ldots \text{seeks to discover why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings, motives and rules, which provide the orientations for their actions} \ldots \text{it is the everyday beliefs and practices, mundane and taken for granted, which have to be grasped and articulated by the social researcher in order to provide an understanding of these actions.}^{31}
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Therefore, I emphasize the bottom-up interpretative approach in this research project to appreciate how agents understand their social world – both unreflexively (that which they take as natural and given i.e. identity) and reflexively (that which they attempt to change i.e. through alternative forms of conscious social organization). Although the emphasis of my project is on a bottom-up approach, I am also careful to consider how existing social structures create political environments that shape agents’ behaviour and identities.\(^{32}\) The two conflicts under study here are predicated on histories of imperialism and control – imprinted in real economic, political and cultural ways. Agents within these two cases have consolidated their identities and mobilized their communities around symbols borne of these histories in an effort to redress injustice or uphold the status quo. It is through this very process of identity consolidation that community consciousness is realized and subsequently mobilized to either challenge or preserve power. Such consciousness is part of their respective histories, but it is not reduced to such histories.

The complex process of identity group consolidation and the mobilization of resistance are the real manifestation of internal processes among communities that use such histories to

\[^{31}\text{Martin Hollis provides a useful distinction between “explaining” and “understanding” that illustrates how data are used by a researcher. While analysis or explanations depend on evaluating how relationships work to offer suggestions, interpretation or understanding gets at the meaning and context of relationships. See: Martin Hollis, Philosophy of Social Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).}\]

\[^{32}\text{As Karl Marx writes: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.” Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in Selected Writings, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 188.}\]
imagine a community of like peoples. Top-down approaches cannot appreciate the social and political agency of communities who are re-imagining the boundaries of their identities and articulating their claims in various material ways. Therefore, I begin this study with these agents who are creating alternative ways to endure, manage and transform the conflicts.

Data-gathering techniques

This research project is “problem-driven” combining an historiographical approach with participant observation, document gathering and interviews as opposed to using a limited single methodological approach. The first historiographical approach seeks to identify similar processes of identity construction that challenge national narratives and mythologies. To this end, I chart both the endogenous and exogenous conditions that have led women in each case to form a feminist coalition-based movement, beginning with the civil rights and women’s rights movements in the 1960s, the peace movements in the 1970s and the development of an autonomous women’s feminist movement in the late 1990s to date. Participant observation refers to a variety of different techniques that requires formal and informal observations of events and people.\(^3^3\) It relies on ethnographic field work, requiring a research to leave her office to visit the environments in which research subjects live.\(^3^4\) Associated with different theories such as Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, Feminism and Marxism, this strategy relies on the description and interpretation of a social group.\(^3^5\)

First, a researcher identifies “key informants” that can provide information on the group and suggest contacts so that a description of the group, an analysis of the group and an

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\(^3^4\) Ibid., 109.

interpretation of the group’s activities is possible. I identified feminist women’s peace groups, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality, to describe, analyze and interpret during the fieldwork stage of my project. I interviewed over fifty people, representing women’s peace groups/political parties; anti-poverty and other class related organizations; and queer community groups in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Before I left for the field, I contacted a list of possible informants – individuals, professors, organizations and other community groups. It was through these contacts and other connections that I made at social and political events in the field that provided me with the best groups to observe – at i.e. community meetings, political and social gatherings, art exhibitions and other similar public gatherings.

In 2004, I conducted ten months of fieldwork in Israel and the occupied Palestinian areas under the auspices of the Gilo Center for Citizenship, Democracy and Civic Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In December 2005, I completed six weeks of research under the auspices of the Geary Institute, University College Dublin, Ireland. During the summer of 2006, I completed two months of fieldwork in Northern Ireland at the University of Ulster, Magee Campus and at Queen’s University, Belfast.

The third approach relates to document gathering. Documents related to the respective peace processes, geographical maps and political correspondence and briefings were used for historical background and context. I secured access to such materials at institutes like the Linen Hall Library at Queen’s University, Belfast and the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem through my affiliation with universities in the field. These documents help me to establish some of the historical background on the activities of the identity-groups that I analyze; provide detailed data on the respective peace processes and how they have been brokered and provide some maps and data on the geographical and spatial dispersal of different identity-groups.

36 Ibid., 60.
Similarly, I visited specialized libraries and collections to access policy relevant documents, original political leaflets and resources. For example, I searched policy documents at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Belfast and I located documents from the Palestinian women’s movement from the Institute of Women's Studies library at Bir Zeit University, West Bank.

The fourth method involves data collection based on interviews. I conducted interviews with members from identity-based organizations that include women’s groups, anti-poverty and other class-related organizations and queer community groups. I felt that it was necessary to include those people that are often overlooked in conflict analyses and to generate new empirical data based on their perspective of what causes, sustains and changes an enduring situation of conflict. One obvious obstacle was that I do not speak Arabic or Hebrew. Although I did take introductory Arabic courses at Al Quds University in the West Bank and managed to pick-up some rudimentary Hebrew while living in Jerusalem, my comprehension skills were low. As such, I sought out the counsel of professors and students at the Gilo Center to help locate and translate such texts. In some instances, I enjoyed the assistance of interpreters. As I found, many of the organizations I contacted had representatives who did speak English and many of these organizations also produced publications in English— to facilitate communication between Israelis and Palestinians and to attract an international audience. By extending epistemic privilege to those groups that have been differently marginalized within and beyond the larger ethno-national divide, I expected to find further knowledge about how conflict impacts individuals and groups differently in these two societies and to uncover the alternative approaches generated within subaltern groups for advancing peace and imagining a just and peaceful post-conflict society. I include a list of people that I interviewed and who have consented to be identified in the appendix.
1.6 Conclusion: Explanation of dissertation outline

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters, bringing in different literatures on identity politics than are generally prioritized in the conflict resolution literatures and introducing different voices and experiences emanating from women’s feminist peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine – testing their relevance for the study of peace processes and post-conflict peace building throughout this study. In Chapter 2, I introduce the ethnonational based theories of conflict and conflict resolution, developed in the comparative politics and international relations fields. I then detail the insights that other identity politics literatures, developed largely outside these fields, can offer our understanding of how identity and social mobilization occurs in societies embroiled in ethnonationally defined conflicts. Specifically, I suggest that a post-positivist realist approach to identity, as developed in critical literary studies, demonstrates the ways in which marginalized social identity communities, like women’s feminist peace communities, develop theories of conflict and conflict resolution that are important for theorizing post-conflict peace, stability and justice.

In Chapter 3, I chart the history of the women’s movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, concentrating on the development of an autonomous feminist peace community since the late 1960s and the onset of the most recent course of violence in each case. I explore how women responded to conflict similarly in both cases in terms of mobilization within their respective ethnonational communities and, in the 1980s, across ethnonational divides – organizing around additional themes related to gender, class and sexuality. I argue that the similar patterns of social and political mobilization can be explained by the broader development of feminist thought through the late 1970s and 1980s and the influence of regional and international rights-based movements as well as international forums on women and peace politics. In Chapter 4, I describe the extent to which women were shut out of the peace processes in both cases, focusing on the events leading to the elite-led 1998 Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland and the 1993 Oslo
Accord in Israel/Palestine. Northern Ireland women, through the creation of an all-women’s political party, were more successful in getting women’s demands included as part of the peace process. However, despite the level of politicization that women achieved in both cases, beginning within national-based movements and culminating in an autonomous women’s feminist peace movement and a separate women’s party in Northern Ireland, women’s priorities were largely sidelined by elite political actors.

Next, in Chapter 5, I describe some of the difficulties women encountered while organizing across the ethnonational divide. Despite the success of some of the women’s nationalist-unionist and Israeli-Palestinian cross-community projects, tensions related to the intersection of ethnonational identity, class-based and sexuality-based identities and experiences limited many of these engagements. I argue that while a universal conception of “sisterhood” failed to capture the divergent experiences of women in conflict in both cases, many women launched successful alliance-based activities that emphasized solidarity as opposed to unity or demands for like positions on constitutional questions. These alliances encouraged women to maintain their unique identities and experiences in relation to ethnicity and nationalism, class and sexuality. However, through the process of sharing these experiences, they became activists for broader demands for peace, justice, human rights and equality than was on offer by ethnonational elite political actors.

In Chapter 6, I review some of the lessons that can be learned from the greater level of success of the all-women’s political party in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (Women’s Coalition), for Israel/Palestine. I suggest that while a separate women’s political party is not necessarily the answer for political mobilization in all cases, the more inclusive peace process in Northern Ireland directly contributed to the prioritization and development of unique post-conflict human rights, equality and justice instruments that have paved the way for progressive legislation on same-sex civil unions, employment equity and social
welfare. In this chapter, I also review the status of the women’s movements in both cases, suggesting that the internationalization of the women’s feminist peace movements in Israel/Palestine offers some promising steps towards the further development of feminist peace priorities.

In the concluding chapter, I return to the ethnic conflict and identity politics literatures, describing the extent to which the Northern Ireland peace process has been successful in producing peace and implementing an inclusive conception of equality and justice, beyond the two major ethnonational communities. However, I also argue that the elite-actor model of accommodation in this case left the post-conflict Northern Ireland Assembly suspended for most of its existence, leaving the implementation of controversial equality and justice measures to the British government under direct rule. There are several key examples of elected Northern Ireland political actors – representing the nationalist and unionist communities under the power-sharing government scheme – demonstrating serious political intransigence and bigotry. Their public pronouncements, particularly related to women’s rights and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) rights, suggest that the implementation of progressive legislation would have been unlikely had the Assembly not been suspended. I conclude this chapter with a suggestion for future research, incorporating a deeper theorization of identity in other cases of ethnonational conflict and larger comparative analyses.

Taken together, I argue that the experiences of women’s feminist peace communities in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality, reveal how conflict is experienced unevenly within ethnonational blocs. In my view, these experiences also produce understudied social and political knowledge and insight that can be valuable for the conflict resolution literature and for conflict resolution processes and post-conflict peace-building initiatives.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I identify the literary and theoretical influences on my comparative case study, while noting the inconsistencies and gaps in our knowledge and understanding of conflict in deeply divided societies. I begin the first section by reviewing the political analyses, theoretical expositions and conflict resolution strategies that explain the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, like other conflicts in deeply divided societies, as conflicts between two ethnonational groups vying for territorial and political jurisdiction. I discuss the analytic and emancipatory limitations of defining conflict so narrowly and argue that characterizing conflicts as such offers a limited analysis of the complex sets of interests that motivate social groups in conflict. Next, I discuss how Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s approach can help us reveal the relationship between political, cultural and economic power and marginalization. International relations/international political economy and identity politics theorists have adapted his thinking in new and imaginative ways for understanding power and subalternity. I argue that his work on power, ideology and subalternity helps us establish how subordinate social groups are valuable repositories of knowledge about the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Through their struggle for emancipation, subaltern social groups, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality, reveal the workings of ideological and political domination. Lastly, I will review some of the developments within the identity politics literature that draws on such conceptions of subalternity, including anti-colonial and post-colonial versions of identity, developments in the critical geography literature and the post-positivist realist approach. It is this last approach for understanding identity politics that I use to understand the construction and impact of identity communities in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Taken together, I argue
that this body of Marxist, post-colonial and identity politics literatures all has something to offer our understanding of identity and identity-based mobilization in conflict.

2.1 Ethnonational theories of conflict

Much of the conflict resolution literature, particularly as it has developed in the post-Cold War era, emphasizes the underlying ethnonational tension in contemporary conflicts, like in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, with the aim to develop policy-oriented remedies. Milton J. Esman and others attribute a growth in intrastate ethnic conflict in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to increases in ethnic migration (due to more efficient modes of transportation); the widespread adoption of national self-determination as an emancipatory political doctrine; and changing patterns of ethnic fragmentation resulting from European colonization and decolonization.\(^{37}\) Some theorists suggest that colonial powers and the old Cold War rivalry had helped to keep newly emerging ethnic conflicts in check.\(^{38}\) Others maintain that the international community, now free from the ideological confrontation between West and East, finds itself in a position to intervene in ethnic clashes (especially as many cases of ethnic fragmentation are attributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia).\(^{39}\) Similarly, political scientist Samuel Huntington and historian Bernard Lewis popularized a cultural thesis of conflict in the early 1990s that has enjoyed a resurgence following the attacks of 11 September 2001. Cultural identity, as it is manifested in competing civilizations, is theorized to be the new source of conflict in the post-Cold War era – particularly the clash between Western and Islamic “civilizations.”\(^{40}\)

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\(^{40}\) Huntington, "The clash of Civilizations?"; Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage."
This section will review some of the competing conceptions of nationalism and ethnicity on which some of the problem-solving conflict resolution literature draws. Nationalism is often defined as a particular ideology and as a political movement whereby a nation-state or a national movement inculcates a set of social and political values and works towards developing a collective political will. National identity is usually thought to supersede all other forms of social and political identification.\textsuperscript{41} Nationalism theorist Anthony D. Smith breaks down the concept of nationalism by distinguishing between territorial nationalists and ethnic nationalists. Territorial nationalists aim to create a national cultural identity where one does not already exist and ethnic nationalists try to protect and preserve a preexisting homogeneous “cultural unity.” They derive a sense of community and identity from a shared historical and cultural past – that is an ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{42} It has been particularly popular in the nationalism literature to contrast civic nationalism, characterized as liberal and inclusive, with ethnic nationalism, described as illiberal and exclusive. The former type of nationalism tends to be associated with forms of nationalism in the West and the later tends to be associated with forms of nationalism in Eastern Europe and other regions. Of course, the continued evocation of nationalist sentiment based on a conception of common ancestry and kinship in Western Europe, such as is the case in Northern Ireland and the Basque region, renders this distinction ambiguous or inaccurate at best and potentially Orientalist at worst.\textsuperscript{43} Other nationalism experts insist that the phenomenon of nationalism already implies ethnicity. Walker Connor, for example, distinguishes between a weaker sense of patriotism (civil nationalism) and ethnonationalism (based on myth of common ancestry).\textsuperscript{44} Connor writes: “In its pristine meaning, a nation is a group of people whose members believe they

\textsuperscript{42} Anthony D. Smith, \textit{Theories of Nationalism} (London: Duckworth, 1983), 216-217.
are ancestrally related. It is the largest group to share such a myth of common descent; it is, in a sentient sense, the fully extended family.”^{45}

Ethnonationalist ideology is theorized to inculcate a common bond among people based on categories such as ancestry, theology, language, custom, history, territory and culture. The relative importance and weight that theorists give each category varies with the case or cases under study. For example, a common language is important for Israelis to maintain the boundary between their Arabic speaking neighbours and Palestinian citizens. The state runs a very successful “ulpan” or intensive Hebrew language program for all new Jewish immigrants as part of the nation-building project. Language, on the other hand, may be less relevant for ethnonational groups in Northern Ireland where most people speak English (although Irish nationalists have worked throughout the last century to revive the Irish language and achieve official recognition in Northern Ireland). These common-bond categories are not static and the weight of their relative appeal is also theorized to fluctuate with time. For example, Islamic political movements grew in mass appeal during the first Palestinian uprising in the late 1980s. Similarly, the Israeli settlements that began to take off in the occupied territories in the 1970s coincided with the growth of religious Zionist movements to settle biblical Israel. As Connor writes, “It is not what is, but what people believe is that has behavioral consequences. A nation is a group of people characterized by a myth of common descent.”^{46}

When we consider cases of conflict and we develop programs for conflict resolution and post-conflict institution-building, we have to ask: to what extent does a formulation that focuses on ethnonationalist ideology and the appeals of common ancestry that are made by the largest constituencies (and perhaps other large minority constituencies) helps us to both understand the causes of violence and to formulate stable and just post-conflict institutions? Theorists like

^{46} Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, 75.
Connor tell us that we do not have to look further than ethnonationalist identities because they are more salient than other non-kinship identities, like class, religion or citizenship. As Connor argues, “when a non-kindred identity is perceived as in irreconcilable conflict with one’s national identity, it is the latter that customarily proves the stronger.” For Connor, while the field of identity politics has worked in earnest to demonstrate the importance of other identities when considering conflict, the root of conflict is always ethnonationalism in the last instance. John McGarry points to the work of Shane O’Neill who maintains that queer and women’s based communities still identify with the national struggle despite their alternative modes of organization.

Rogers Brubaker offers an insightful critique of what he calls the “groupism” tendency in the study of ethnic, racial and national conflict. For Brubaker, the “groupism” tendency takes “discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.” Groups like Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and Jews and Palestinians in Israel/Palestine tend to be reified in popular analyses of conflicts as though they are “internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes.” Brubaker insists that common sense categories like ethnicity, rather, are what social scientists and other analysts should seek to explain—not what they should use to explain social phenomenon. As social analysts, he argues, “we should avoid unintentionally doubling or reinforcing the reification of ethnic groups in ethnopolitical practice with a reification of such groups in social analysis.” In this sense, by taking the ethnopolitical accounts of actors at face value, we may unintentionally serve the interests of those ethnopolitical

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48 Walker Connor, "Maîtres Chez Nous: The Role of Homelands in Ethnic Conflict," Queen’s University’s Research Group on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multicultural Citizenship Lecture Series (Queen's University, Kingston, Canada 2005).
49 McGarry and O'Leary, The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements, 310.
50 Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups, 8.
actors that not only invoke ethnic categories but also seek to mobilize them.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, to treat all organizations as though they are one and the same as ethnopolitical groups (such as states, terrorists groups, paramilitary organizations, social movements, newspapers, television, churches, etc.) is to mistake the protagonists of most ethnic conflicts for ethnic groups. The exact relationship between organizations that are the chief protagonists of ethnic conflict and ethnic groups is not clear and should not be theorized as such.\textsuperscript{52}

It is within this post-Cold War context, and the popularization of an ethnonational paradigm for explaining intractable intrastate conflicts, that the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine are explained in the conflict resolution literature. In my view, the consequences of focusing on ethnonationalist frameworks for understanding conflict leaves out the significant development of other forms of social organization that develop during ethnonationally-defined conflict – forms of social organization that, at times, accept but also amend or reject the version of ethnicity invoked by ethnonational elite political figures at different historical junctures. In this thesis, I focus on the experiences of women in conflict to provide a different vantage point from which to assess the ethnonational framework that commonly privileges ethnonational political groups. I test the claim that the politicization of identity-based communities around themes like gender, class and sexuality is significant for our study of conflict because such communities are also productive sites of knowledge about ethnonationalism as well as the causes of violence and political intractability. I am interested in the extent to which these sites also develop insight into how to create a stable and just post-conflict society – insight that works, at times, in concert with ethnonationalist ideology and, at other times, in critical opposition.

As detailed in Chapter 1, I choose to focus on the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases to test these claims because these two cases of conflict are commonly investigated through

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 9-10.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 15-16.
an ethnonationalist paradigm. In the case of Northern Ireland, McGarry and Brendan O’Leary find that for the last century, and particularly in the last three decades, the community has been divided into two ethnonational blocs.\textsuperscript{53} This division is reflected in the voting behaviour of Northern Ireland peoples, where nationalists and unionists receive the bulk of the electoral vote as opposed to those civic organizations that emphasize crosscutting issues.\textsuperscript{54} In this sense, theorists, politicians and practitioners should focus on an ethnonationalist understanding of this conflict because it represents the largest political cleavage in Northern Ireland.

This ethnonationalist paradigm informs the bi-national power-sharing model of conflict resolution implemented in Northern Ireland. O’Leary celebrates the bi-nationalism “at the heart of the agreement” vis-à-vis a power-sharing executive.\textsuperscript{55} He writes:

\begin{quote}
The Agreement does not neglect the non-national dimensions of local politics, nor does it exclude the ‘Others’ from what I have heard described in Alliance party circles as a squalid communal deal. All aspects of unjustified social equalities, as well as inequalities between the national communities, are recognized in the text of the Agreement, and given some means of institutional redress and monitoring. The Agreement addresses national equality, the allegiances to the Irish and British nations, and social equality, which is to say, other dimensions that differentiate groups and individuals in Northern Ireland: religion, race, ethnic affiliation, sex, and sexuality.\textsuperscript{56}

This, he argues, is due to the mainstreaming of equality issues achieved through the statutory duties placed on the Executive.\textsuperscript{57} Despite the parity of esteem granted to the two main national blocs in Northern Ireland, there is also an emphasis on equity for constituencies that do not identify with the main national division through the development of the Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission, a proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, and a political
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{53} McGarry and O’Leary, \textit{The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements}, 19.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
forum of civil society representatives. I argue in Chapter 4 that these formulations, as part of the Agreement, are proving to be important elements of the post-conflict institution-building project. However, their prioritization was not specifically grounded in the conflict resolution formula put in place in Northern Ireland. The very statutory duties that O’Leary finds as important vehicles for ensuring the voice of other identity constituencies were those advocated for at the negotiations by an all women’s political party. This party was elected to the negotiations under a unique electoral formula but the party subsequently folded as the post-Agreement electorate voted along ethnonational lines for those national parties that were most politically empowered in the new Assembly. If it is the case that these duties, along with the proposed bill of rights, are important for ensuring the minimum protection of rights (and for the representation of all social groups) then these duties and rights should be specifically prioritized in conflict resolution formulas. In Chapter 4, I argue that they were the unintentional product of the Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland and have met with varying success in the post-Agreement period due to poor institutionalization and lack of the necessary political will from the national parties. I propose that upholding rights and equality during conflict resolution processes also requires further theoretical elaboration of politicization of social groups more broadly and requires us to ask what we miss, and who we miss, when we privilege ethnonationalist identity groups in our analysis.

Likewise, the conflict in Israel/Palestine is usually scripted in the conflict resolution literature, in political debates and the press as a conflict between Israeli ethnonationalists who are trying to preserve the political, territorial and social jurisdiction of the state and Palestinian ethnonationalists attempting to secure a state-dream. The so-called two-state solution to the conflict has been at the centre of the Middle East peace process since the 1990s. Unlike the Northern Ireland case, there has not been a serious discussion of bi-national alternatives (although

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there have always been several sustained critical movements that promote such a resolution). Like Northern Ireland, however, the ethnonational paradigm similarly informs the theory behind the two-state solution: two incompatible national communities, organized around myths of common ancestry, are the source of political intractability and conflict. The implication of using an ethnonationalist framework for both Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine is that the major protagonists to the conflicts – namely the competing national elites and leaders – are identified as the most important actors in the conflict resolution processes. Such actors are rewarded with seats at the negotiating tables and they feature prominently in key transitional and post-conflict political institutions. In this sense, then, I argue that the conflict resolution literature effectively reproduces existing power relations in new post-conflict institutions and interests. Existing political figures and groups are rewarded with political positions for agreeing to end violence and fighting. Some of these figures remain in political power and others exchange their military and paramilitary uniforms for suits. This has clear implications for those communities that do not find their interests wholly or in part reflected in ethnonational interests.

What I am suggesting is that the conflict resolution literature and the conflict resolution processes in both of these cases overlook the inequity that is built into ethnonationalist ideology. As I outline in Chapter 3, many women, particularly in the large minority ethnonational community in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, were initially politicized in Irish republican or nationalist communities and the Palestinian national movement. Although these anti-colonial and revolutionary movements promoted emancipation and equality, the political and social spaces for women actually narrowed with the institutionalization of ethnonationalist leadership and a conservative and religious backlash. There is a body of literature related to postcolonial and feminist scholarship that speaks to this phenomenon. For example, postcolonial and subaltern studies scholar Partha Chatterjee writes:
The cultural history of nationalism, shaped through its struggle with colonialism, contained many possibilities of authentic, creative, and plural development of social identities that were violently disputed by the political history of the postcolonial state seeking to replicate the modular forms of the modern nation-state. We too . . . have a story to tell of betrayal.\textsuperscript{59} M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, writing of their experiences of anti-colonial struggle in Trinidad and Tobago and India, describe a similar experience of betrayal:

Nationalism at this stage has done little to transform the practices of colonial education, nor had it necessarily imagined us (in Jacqui’s case, daughter now lesbian; in Chandra’s, woman not mother) as the legitimate heirs of the new nation … nation and citizenship were largely premised within normative parameters of masculinity and heterosexuality.\textsuperscript{60}

As new post-conflict states are being designed, conservative national forces are also working to re-imagine and reinforce ethnic and national boundaries. Speaking about the experience of post-totalitarian states in Eastern Europe, Anikó Imre describes a process of nation-building that takes place whereby “right-leaning moral and political coalitions have been trying to rebuild the eroding narrative fortress of nationalism under the triple umbrella of God, nation and family to pin their nations’ futures on the increasing production of wholesome new citizens.”\textsuperscript{61} Chatterjee, Alexander and C. Mohanty and Imre describe a sentiment echoed by many of the women I interviewed during my field research. In this thesis, I detail how women, initially politicized in national movements, began to exercise agency through different identity-based communities to fight for sexual liberation, emancipation and poverty eradication.\textsuperscript{62}

In my view, there is an important history of local challenges that reveal the elitist, masculinist, homosocial and/or heteronormative underpinnings of ethnonationalist ideology that are not privileged in mainstream accounts of conflict. My thesis attempts to chart these challenges...

\textsuperscript{59} Partha Chatterjee, \textit{The Nation and Its Fragments} (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 156.


\textsuperscript{62} Examples include the gay pride parade in Jerusalem, the creation of the all women’s political party in Northern Ireland and the growth of grass roots civil liberties and class-based agrarian organizations in both societies.
as they have been advanced by women’s feminist organizing in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. To begin theorizing the way in which social groups develop local challenges to hegemonic ideology, I consider Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci in the next section. It is through these challenges that we can appreciate the ways in which ideology works to reproduce political and social relations of power and domination.

2.2 Gramscian influences

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci developed the concepts of hegemony and subalternity to elucidate the core structure of power existing between the dominant or hegemonic elite and subordinate or “subaltern” social groups. Hegemonic ideas seem natural, are absorbed uncritically by civil society and therefore go largely unchallenged except during moments of “hegemonic crisis.” It is in such moments of crisis that social groups pass through a state of political passivity to certain activity, and put forward demands, which taken together, add up to a revolution. Throughout this dissertation, I focus less on how hegemonic power structures are made and preserved, and more on how subaltern identity groups develop their sense of self and community under such structures and work to challenge them at the site of ideological (re)production. We can think about these challenges and moments of hegemonic crisis, as

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63 Gramsci’s frequent references to “subaltern” and “social group” were likely code for class or “proletariat” – a way to circumvent Fascist censors. However, theorists since then have reasoned that Gramsci used the term to refer to the specific historical problem of Italian fascism. In another historical time, space and location, subaltern could refer to different social groups. See: Antonio Gramsci, “Selections from the Prison Notebooks,” ed. Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), xiv.

64 Ibid., 210.

65 The focus of this dissertation does not address how nationalist communities rise up against the repressive apparatuses of the state through an overt “war of manoeuvre.” For example, I do not tell the stories of these conflicts from the perspective of militant Irish republican attacks on the Northern Ireland police forces and the British military or from the perspective of the Palestinian national uprising against Israel’s occupation. These movements, while instrumental in exposing the unjust and repressive features of the states in question, have also tended to uphold the dominant characterization of the conflicts as being grounded in national and ethnic antagonisms that are represented by two competing (but equal) claims to legitimacy. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the liberatory promises of the revolutionary movements, such as freedom from exploitative working and living conditions, were pushed aside (violently by the PLO since its
described by Gramsci, as the crisis of political order during conflict – such as the failure of the unionist dominated government or direct rule in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and 1970s and the crisis of legitimacy of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories during the 1987 Palestinian intifada. During these periods of political upheaval, revolutionary ethnonational movements challenged hegemonic rule. However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, there was a lot of exclusion in such movements and women often found themselves pushed to the periphery. Yet the political fluidity afforded by such moments of crises simultaneously allowed for the mass mobilization of social groups along a variety of axes. Women, in these cases, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality to counter the political status quo and challenge dominant ethnonational scripts and developed new thinking for a new political order.66

Craig Murphy likens the Gramscian approach to other approaches that consider the role of subaltern subjects like women:67 “While this is undoubtedly the most profound challenge to the field that comes from a consideration of the roles of women in world politics,” writes Murphy, “It is also the area where the greatest conceptual and empirical work remains to be done, both to lay out the range of the socially constitutive powers of those regarded as powerless and to link the actions of “allegedly powerless” women to major changes in world politics.”68 This project attempts to continue such conceptual and empirical work. I look at how the marginalization of different identity groups may have been and may continue to be a catalyst for such groups to challenge oppressive structures of power by mobilizing collective social action beyond the ethnonational divide. This has implications for the peace agreements in Northern Ireland and

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66 For a discussion of the ways in which women seized opportunities to organize during the crisis of governance in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s and during the first Palestinian intifada, see: Simona Sharoni, "Gendering Conflict and Peace in Israel/Palestine and the North of Ireland," Millennium: Journal of International Studies 27, no. 4 (1997).
68 Ibid., 516.
Israel/Palestine that presuppose that the marginalization of ethnonational communities forms the only motivation for dissent.

2.3 The identity politics literature

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that an ethnonational theory of conflict and ethnonationally derived models of conflict resolution offer a limited account of politicization during conflict. Gramsci’s conception of social mobilization, as discussed above, demonstrates how alternate social locations may also be productive sites of knowledge. In the following section, I suggest that developments in identity politics theory can help us access some of these alternate accounts. I review anti-colonial and post-colonial theories of identity and some critical geography approaches. I conclude this section by suggesting that a postpositivist realist conception of identity offers untested possibilities for evaluating the potential contribution of identity groups, which exist alongside and beyond the ethnonational divide, for analyzing conflict resolution and post-conflict transformation. Mainstream conflict resolution approaches in the international relations and comparative politics literatures privilege some aspects of experiential knowledge and particular subjectivities and underemphasize or ignore other potentially important experiences and subjectivities. As such, mainstream approaches fail to evaluate the complexity of political consciousness and the political significance of different identities for conflict resolution and post-conflict transformation.

The anti-colonial literature

Anti-colonial struggles against imperial rule in the post-World War II era were described and inspired by a series of revolutionary writers such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, to name a few. In addition to nationalism, Marxist themes of class oppression and economic exploitation were evident in much of this literature, as well as recognition of the importance of categories such as race, ethnicity and culture. These works were both influenced by
and impacted anti-colonial and national liberation movements in the decolonization period that followed World War II, and were reflected in the ambitions of national movements and regional bodies such as the Arab League, the Algerian National Liberation Front, the Democratic Movement for Malagasy Renewal, the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Irish Republican Army. Central to these works was the conviction that oppressed peoples had the agency to effect emancipatory change. Similar to Gramsci, mobilization and emancipation were thought to require consciousness of a unitary identity. As Césaire writes:

> We must have a concrete consciousness of what we are – that is, of the first fact of our lives: that we are black; that we were black and have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value; and that Negroes were not … born yesterday, because there have been beautiful and important black civilizations.

Movements in Palestine and Northern Ireland were organized around a national project which appealed to a shared history and culture that was suppressed under colonial rule. These processes are evident, for example, in the history of the Arab League, which was founded after World War II to promote the liberation of Arab colonial states and Palestinian liberation through the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1964. In a similar vein, Irish republicans, spurred on by revolutionary movements in the twentieth century, saw their experiences under British rule as similar to other experiences of colonization. For example, a Sinn Féin republican education manual, published circa 1979, recommends new members to the organization to read books such as Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and Che Guevara’s *Guerrilla Warfare*.

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69 Referring to Algeria, Fanon writes: “The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom.” See: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 231.


In Fanon’s works, more than just a shared history of exploitation unites the black subject — there is also a shared culture and essence. Fanon distances himself from the romantic valorization of an African past and notions of essentialism evident in the Negritude writing of Césaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor and Leon Gontran-Damas.\(^n2\) One’s purpose and sense of identity is not tied to the “revival of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization.” The task, he determines, is to fight against the real material causes of exploitation — the misery of slavery, hunger and repression.\(^n3\) It is this fight that continued throughout regions of the world that were undergoing the painful processes of decolonization and had to contend with the resultant excesses of nationalism.

**Postcoloniality as identity**

The interdisciplinary field of postcolonial cultural studies, pioneered by writers such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha and others, follows on the heels of the revolutionary writers of the 1960s and 1970s.\(^n4\) This field variably draws on Marxist themes, radical anti-colonial texts and sometimes postmodern literatures. Postcolonial critics broadly address the status of colonial experiences, Western representations of the colonial ‘other’ or subject through Orientalizing discourses, the politics and character of resistance in colonial and postcolonial literatures and politics, and the role of the intellectual and the subaltern subject.

The late Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, credited as one of the founders of postcolonial studies, describes in his writings how identities are relational — produced in an us-versus-other relationship:

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\(^{n2}\) Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 123-125.

\(^{n3}\) Ibid., 224-226.

A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call ‘the land of the barbarians.’ In other words, the universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. It is enough for ‘us’ to set up these boundaries in our own minds; ‘they’ become ‘they’ accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality as designated as different from ‘ours’.\textsuperscript{75}

In this passage, Said effectively captures the ways in which territory both physically and figuratively produces exclusionary national communities that I argue are evident in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland. For example, through the establishment of the Israeli state territory following 1948 and 1967, the Palestinian ‘other’ was created – conceived of as living in the ‘land of the barbarians.’ Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has advocated a platform of peace based on the formulation "We are here, they are there."\textsuperscript{76} This kind of thinking continues to inform Israeli securitization measures that have led to the recent construction of a separation wall between the Palestinian West Bank and Israel. Similarly, the peace process, supported by both Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, continues to be based on a two-state model of conflict resolution that promises peace through national separation. In Northern Ireland, such an us-versus-other relationship was fomented through the British plantation of Ulster and the partition of Ireland. To date, many Protestant and Catholic communities remain separated by so-called “peacelines”\textsuperscript{77} or barriers designed to protect communities from sectarian attacks. Ironically, the number and height of these walls has grown since the initiation of the peace process in 1998.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} Said, \textit{Orientalism}, 54.

\textsuperscript{76} In a Haaretz Question and Answer feature with former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, he stated: I took, as a Labor leader, the positions that I believed reflect the vital interests, the future and security of Israel, and under these lines proposed the disengagement from the Palestinians, the establishment of the fence and the policy of "We are here, they are there." See: "Q&A with former prime minister Ehud Barak," \textit{Haaretz.com} (2005). Barak also expressed this sentiment in conversation with Mortimer B. Zuckerman, editor-in-chief, U.S. News and World Report, when he argued that a “temporary” security wall would create “a clear Jewish majority for generations to come with minimal amount of Palestinians. I call it “we are here, they are there.” See: "Transcript: HBO History Makers Series: A Conversation with Ehud Barak," \textit{Council on Foreign Relations} Presider: Mortimer B. Zuckerman, (26 January 2005).

\textsuperscript{77} The Northern Ireland Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) defines peacelines as "physical security measures, which can take the form of walls, fences or gates [that] have been erected where the police assessment is that inter-community violence could result in significant damage to life or property. They are usually found in areas where highly segregated residential patterns..."
Said critiques what he terms the ‘nativism’ implicit in earlier anti-colonial literatures, revolutionary activism and nationalism in places like Algeria, Ireland and Vietnam. Nativism, in this sense, refers to the romanticisation of a pre-colonial national past through, for example, cultural revival movements and nationalist literature and songs.  

Although Said maintains that Fanon, in particular, was cognizant of the dangers of decolonization movements that were driven by nationalism, he writes:

Think of what Yeats does for the Irish past, with its Cuchulains and its great houses, which give the nationalist struggle something to revive and admire. In post-colonial national states, the liabilities of such essences as the Celtic spirit, nègritude, or Islam are clear: they have much to do not only with the native manipulators, who also use them to cover up contemporary faults, corruptions, tyrannies, but also with the embattled imperial contexts out of which they came and in which they were felt to be necessary.

Although ‘nativist’ images and mythologies play an important mobilizing role during revolutionary periods, Said argues that they are not the only alternative in the face of imperialism. In my view, what Said’s account, and the accounts of other postcolonial scholars, fails to capture is the critical movements that also take place within and alongside nationalist movements. In addition to national movements, people and communities also build critical standpoints that draw on experiences of marginalization in the face of imperialism and result in ‘interfaces’ developing between two neighbouring communities where residents are from different community backgrounds.” 

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78 To date, there are 47 “peacelines” or barriers separating communities in Northern Ireland, according to the OFMDFM. See: OFMDFM, "Good Relations Indicators: 2007 Update," OFMDFM Research Branch (April 2008).


80 Ibid., 16.

81 Ibid., 230.
marginalization within nativist frameworks (not unlike the critical appraisals offered by Said as an intellectual). My thesis attempts to locate these critical standpoints by focusing on the feminist movements in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland charting the development of alternative political spaces.

Homi Bhabha’s work, similarly influenced by anticolonial writers like Fanon but also post-structural thinking, attempts to imagine what these spaces look like through the development of cultural difference (which Bhabha contrasts with liberal conceptions of diversity through multiculturalism), hybridity and “third space.” Bhabha is skeptical of theories that advance a celebration of cultural diversity, which he posits masks ethnocentric values, norms and interests. He writes:

> The changing nature of what we understand as the ‘national population’ is ever more visibly constructed from a range of different sorts of interests, different kinds of cultural histories, different postcolonial lineages, different sexual orientations. The whole nature of the public sphere is changing so that we really do need the notion of a politics which is based on unequal, uneven, multiple and potentially antagonistic, political identities.  

All cultures are translated through representation and reproduction and therefore there is no essential meaning or existence of an original or unitary culture. Hybridity for Bhabha functions as a ‘third space’ where translation, representation, reproduction and political negotiations take place: “This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.” Through cultural hybridity, there is an opportunity for “a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.” The problem with Leftist politics is that it substitutes a conception of an essential and autonomous self with an essential political identity like ‘class,’ thereby disavowing other

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priorities based on, for example, gender and race identities. Hybridity, on the other hand, demands that you translate your principles and are also open to changing them.\footnote{Ibid., 210-216.}

Bhabha’s cautions concerning cultural diversity and the productive value of conflicting political identities demonstrates how the emancipatory ambitions of feminist peace organizing in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland cannot be subsumed under a post-conflict order that celebrates diversity of experiences through constitutional structures of accommodation without recognizing the important contribution difference can make for producing a new post-conflict order. In chapters 3 and 4, I review the ways in which women from different national backgrounds consciously challenged the essential understandings and meaning of their identities through active negotiation and alliances. Bhabha’s ‘third space’ of hybridity, however, reads as a largely metaphorical space, and in this sense, I find it less helpful for theorizing the location of concrete cultural and political spaces.\footnote{For example, Edward Soja writes: “The Third Space of Homi Bhabha is occasionally teasingly on the edge of being a spatially ungrounded literary trope, a floating metaphor for a critical historical consciousness that inadvertently masks a continued privileging of temporality over spatiality.” Edward Soja, \textit{Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places} (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 141-142.} In my view, critical geographers Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper offer a less abstract version of theorizing a third space that is helpful for analyzing the cultural and political spaces that women have constructed in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine.

\textit{Critical geography and the “third space”}

Soja and Hooper conceive of a radical postmodernism of resistance that combines the modernist identity politics emphasis on binary relationships with a postmodern emphasis on deconstructing binaries to create new emancipatory political spaces. They call for a “revisioned spatiality that creates, from difference, new sites for struggle” that focuses on connecting communities of resistance.\footnote{Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper, ”The Spaces That Difference Makes: Some Notes on the Geographical Margins of the New Cultural Politics,” in \textit{Place and the Politics of Identity}, ed. Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London: Routledge, 1993), 187-189.} Borrowing from bell hooks, they argue that subjected identity
communities can form inclusive communities of resistance by choosing their “subaltern” (to borrow the term from Gramsci) identity. bell hooks writes:

Understanding marginality as position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people. If we only view the margin as a sign, marking the condition of our pain and deprivation, then certain hopelessness and despair, a deep nihilism penetrates in a destructive way . . . I want to say that these margins have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance . . . A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonizer/colonized. Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there.86

Soja and Hooper call this a thirdspace,87 similar to the Bhabha’s Third Space of hybridity, but with an emphasis on the conscious creation of the thirdspace that is both imagined but can also be a real location.

Applying thirdspace-thinking to the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases, I argue that we can see how relationships between Israelis and Palestinians and Irish unionists and nationalists are constructed in both a binary colonizer/colonized dualism, but also deconstructed in alternative radical spaces of resistance. Particularly in Chapter 3, I suggest that conflict has opened up opportunities for subaltern social groups to redefine their relationships with the state and society that are not limited to national or revolutionary movements. Through a focus on feminist peace activism, I attempt to show how some women have consciously worked to build sites of resistance and have worked to link radical subjectivities at the margins of the Northern Ireland and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Some of these sites that I will review in chapters 3 through 7 include feminist community activists that organize in the interface areas of North Belfast; the establishment of an all-women’s political party in Northern Ireland in the period leading up to the Belfast Agreement; women’s unions and committees in Palestinian refugee

87 Ibid., 192.
camps; the Women in Black public demonstrations against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and a cyber community of Palestinian lesbian women that extends across the Middle East. In many of these examples, women have challenged the (re)production of patriarchal, heteronormative, and class-based structures of power that are part of the legacy of colonization and occupation and the structures of nationalist movements in both cases. Such challenges, I argue, are not drawn out in the largely nationalist focused anti-colonial literature and remain under theorized in the postcolonial literature discussed above.

Certainly, in many of the cases I discuss in this thesis, women have produced a new politics of difference, building solidarities and alliances between communities of, for example, feminist, lesbian, and socialist activists – communities that have been excluded from nationalist and revolutionary parties and movements, institutions and conferences associated with the peace process and, in the case of Northern Ireland, from post-conflict institution building. As I discuss in the following chapters, some participants in the feminist-based women’s peace organizations that I studied in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine consciously attempted to create this kind of *thirdspace* – moving beyond the ethnonational divide and conceiving of radical spaces of resistance through the disordering of difference based on nationalism, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality and the empowerment of multiplicity.

The tenability of these spaces, however, rests on the premise that activists can transcend national and ethnic boundaries. In my view, the breaking down of the binary relationship between oppressor and oppressed by figuratively and physically creating new spaces of resistance has proven far more difficult than is perhaps expected by Soja and Hooper. The existing binary relationship is hardier than conceived of in this call for an alternative or postmodern geography. Despite the establishment and proliferation of many cross-community projects and international forums throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, these spaces were much more fluid, fractured and continually challenged and, at times, undermined by
the kinds of relationships of power identified in the anti-colonial and postcolonial scholarship – relationships of power that continue to reproduce difference. While helpful for theorizing action beyond the principal ethnic and national narrative in both cases, I think the work of other scholars in gender and citizenship and post-positivist realist theories of identity can provide us with the tools to understand the complex picture of how identity categories form alliances and cooperative projects that both affirm and challenge dominant political and social binaries.

A post-positivist realist theory of identity

In this dissertation, I draw on feminist thought in the international relations/comparative politics literatures and critical post-positivist realist theory of identity to ascertain the motivations and interests of feminist women’s peace activism in conflict. Specifically, I evaluate the analytical, political and emancipatory significance of such identities and activism during periods of conflict, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Contemporary feminist theories emerged as part of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, on the tail end of the emergence of post-positivist philosophies of social science. This was an environment that was already challenging standards of value-free objectivity, rationality and “scientific” methods. The postpositivist realist theory of identity that I use here was first articulated by literary theorist Satya P. Mohanty and developed in his 1997 book *Literary Theory and the Claims of History*. Other scholars such as Paula M.L. Moya, Linda Martín Alcoff and Michael R. Hames-García have extended this theory of identity to the study of, for example, multicultural education, multiethnic literatures, Chicana feminism and other race-related subjectivities in the US, and the status of identity in feminist theory, literary theory and cultural studies. While much of this scholarship is

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theoretically abstract and largely directed toward literary criticism, several themes emerge in this 
literature that I find useful for understanding the complexity of identity in the Northern Ireland 
and Israel/Palestine cases. Indeed, S. Mohanty argues that literary theory is part of a broader 
theoretical investigation that draws on social science projects like feminism, ethnic and third-
world cultural studies and anthropology and therefore addresses underlying issues relevant to 
social and political theory.91 Part of my aim in this dissertation is to advance such a broader 
theoretical investigation.

The postpositivist realist theory of identity is realist to the extent that it holds that social 
identities refer to a real, objective external reality that we can know.92 This follows from a broader 
philosophical realist tradition that maintains that there are underlying powers, structures and 
tendencies that exist whether or not they are experienced or realized.93 This particular version of 
realism is based on a post-positivist epistemology whereby all knowledge of this external (and 
non-constructed) reality is mediated by ideology, theory and history.94 As Alcoff argues, “… to 
believe that some of our knowledge captures the way the world really is does not require us to 
hold that history, language, or even social stratification is irrelevant to epistemology.”95 Our 
socially mediated knowledge can produce objective knowledge about the external world – 
knowledge that does not adhere to strict positivist thinking and the separation of “hard” facts from 
“soft” values. In this sense, postpositivist realist theorists like S. Mohanty develop an anti-

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91 S. Mohanty, Literary Theory and the Claims of History, 10.
92 Alcoff, "Who's Afraid of Identity Politics?" 315.
93 Heikki Patomaki and Colin Wight, "After Postpositivism? The Promises of Critical Realism," 
94 S. Mohanty, Literary Theory and the Claims of History, 208-209; Satya P. Mohanty, "Can Our 
809.
95 Alcoff, "Who's Afraid of Identity Politics?" 316.
foundationalist conception of objectivity that defines objectivity as socially produced and therefore revisable.\textsuperscript{96} S. Mohanty writes:

In the postpositivist realist perspective, for instance, plausible and empirically grounded theories about human nature or aesthetic and moral value are indeed attempts to trace the contours of our world, but they are not idealist speculations about the essence of nature. Instead, they are sober and reasonable attempts to explain the variety of causal relations and dependencies that define human reality. Thus they can provide suggestive hypotheses for social inquiry and textual interpretation.\textsuperscript{97}

Understanding social meaning and knowledge about the world, then, emerges from subjective experiences that are interpreted through identity categories. In particular, postpositivist realist frameworks grant epistemic privilege to the experiences of oppressed groups. As Moya explains:

The key to claiming epistemic privilege for people who have been oppressed in a particular way stems from an acknowledgement that they have experiences – experiences that people who are not oppressed in the same way usually lack – that can provide them with information we all need to understand how hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality operate to uphold existing regimes of power in our society.\textsuperscript{98}

Experience, as tied to one’s social location, is not self-evident. In this sense, experiencing racism, heterosexism or economic dispossession does not necessarily give one a better understanding of how power and privilege are maintained in society. Rather, such knowledge is dependant on the interpretation of that experience. In this sense, women construct identities that are dependant on the way in which they interpret their experiences.\textsuperscript{99}

When we grant epistemic privilege to oppressed or otherwise marginalized groups – acknowledging that subjective experiences can be valuable sources of knowledge about the world – we begin the process of moving beyond an exclusive focus on the accounts of privileged and powerful institutions and groups. This approach of granting epistemic privilege to non-privileged social groups is well established in feminist international relations and comparative politics

\textsuperscript{96} S. Mohanty, \textit{Literary Theory and the Claims of History}, 23.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 252.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 80-82.
literatures. For example, international relations theorist J. Ann Tickner argues that when “facts” are grounded in privileged male experiences, we only get a partial understanding of international relations: “Feminists are also searching for a redefinition of the meaning of objectivity as part of an attempt to construct an epistemology which, while it acknowledges the impossibility of arriving at one universal truth, can still lead to better, more widely shared understandings of the world.”

For Tickner, analyses based on the experiences of women broadens our empirical knowledge of political phenomena, drawing on women’s experiences and literatures from outside the West that are rarely considered in mainstream international relations analyses. Nearly two decades ago, Cynthia Enloe asked: “where are the women” in international politics? More recently, Enloe sets out the task for feminist analysis:

Feminist analysis is subtle and sophisticated. Its uses do not assume women anywhere are ‘naturally peaceful.’ Instead, they take women – in all their complexity – seriously. Using a gender curiosity, they listen carefully to women; they watch government officials’ sometimes confused efforts to maneuver women of different classes, ages, and ethnicities into positions that will serve their war-preparing objectives, and they pay close attention to varieties of women assessing and responding to those maneuvers.

Clearly, the goals of redefining objectivity and reclassifying what counts as important empirical data are shared by postpositivist realist theorists, working in critical literary studies and feminist international relations and comparative politics theorists. Feminist analyses are similarly concerned with questions of history, difference and experience. Many feminist identity politics approaches tend to draw on the Marxist and postcolonial approaches that I have already touched upon in this chapter with an appreciation for the epistemic status of experience.

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101 Ibid., 453.
Bearing in mind Enloe’s observations and considering the case of conflict in deeply divided societies, we can see how the experiences of women are rarely captured in political analyses that privilege those actors associated with “high politics” such as politicians, the security sector, paramilitary organizations, religious leaders and political institutions. Frequently, women do not find themselves among these actors or reflected in these institutions. As discussed earlier, theories of conflict resolution related to the cases of Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine tend to focus on the extent to which elected political leaders and paramilitary representatives can be expected to negotiate an agreement given the current political climate, the outcome of past agreements and the design of new political institutions. Such a focus leads to a narrow account of the causes of conflict and political and social intractability, and therefore fails to account for the many ways in which agents become politicized and develop alternate accounts. Either implicitly or explicitly, these approaches adopt a theory of conflict, as advanced by the elite actors, as the only or most important theory of conflict. For example, unionist and nationalist leaders agree that the conflict is rooted in the competing claims of two ethnonational groups in Northern Ireland. Similarly, Israeli and Palestinian political elites define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one between two ethnonational communities vying for territorial and political jurisdiction in the Levant region. When we privilege only one subject location as political analysts, we miss an opportunity to become “engaged” with alternate explanations and theories of peace in deeply divided societies. As such, we fail to evaluate the extent to which alternate social locations may also provide good explanations of, for example, the political and social sources of intractability and good ideas related to post-conflict reconstruction.
Identity as theory

We use our identities, whether ascriptive or consciously chosen, to help us make sense of our experiences. Identities, in this sense, behave like theories of the social world. In particular, knowledge of oneself, the social and political world and of power can be understood through the process of articulating one’s identity. Through the processes of identity articulation and subsequent identity community mobilization, people gain a greater understanding of the world in which they live and the way in which power operates within a particular historical period. S. Mohanty writes:

The possibility of interpreting our world accurately depends fundamentally on our coming to know what it would take to change it, on our identifying the central relations of power and privilege that sustain it and make the world what it is. And we learn to identify these relations through our various attempts to change the world, not merely to contemplate it as it is.

In other words, identities draw on experiences, such as marginalization in political communities, which may lead either to activism and coalition politics (such as feminist women’s peace movements) or may also be developed within such oppositional movements. Either way, it is the process of learning that takes place during identity formation and articulation that produces objective knowledge about the social and political world. In this thesis, I ask what we can learn when we consider subaltern identity communities. In this sense, I am interested in knowing what part of reality is revealed when we consider other identity communities and subject locations as important sites of knowledge about the conflict. As postpositivist theorists tell us, putting together the pieces of an objective social reality requires accessing perspectives from different social locations. For example, analyzing conflict from the experiences of people organized in national constituencies reveals the long history of colonialism and deep ethnic cleavages. The literature on postcoloniality, for example, does a good job of exposing the underlying political and economic

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106 Ibid., 29-66.
structures that create and/or maintain ethnic and racial divisions, which in turn, serve a hegemonic configuration of power. Similarly, the ethnic conflict literature, with an emphasis on those ethnic and racial divisions, reveals the durability of kinship claims and the seductive qualities associated with nationalism that can rally mass political and social movements. I propose that analyzing conflict from the perspective of other constituencies may reveal other important aspects of the same objective reality.

I do not, however, want to suggest that all perspectives are equal or that the social location of all identity constituencies produce knowledge of the same value. One’s social location as, for example, a woman, does not necessarily mean that one will adopt feminist values. Postpositivist realist theory holds that we can evaluate theories and distinguish between good, productive theories and poor or less productive theories. To evaluate how well certain identities function as theories of the social world, then, we evaluate how well, overall, they behave as explanations, how they measure up against reality (what we already know) and what they reveal (what we do not know yet). S. Mohanty writes:

Thus, in analyzing identity-based politics, claims about the general social significance of a particular identity should be evaluated together with its accompanying assumptions or arguments about how the current social or cultural system makes some experiences intelligible and others obscure or irrelevant, how it treats some as legitimate sources of knowledge about the world while relegating others to the level of the narrowly personal. Both the claims and the underlying assumptions refer to the social world; they amount to explanatory theses with both empirical and theoretical content. They need to be engaged as such and evaluated as we evaluate other such descriptions and theories about society.

In my thesis, I evaluate the arguments produced in women’s identity constituencies – constituencies that reflect different social locations based on gender, class and sexuality. I argue that when we focus on ethnonational identity alone, we privilege a masculinist, heteronormative theory of political motivation and political resolution. Certainly, socially situated knowledge can

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be limiting, erroneous or unhelpful. Feminist postcolonial theorists can be helpful here for understanding why women, as members of majority national communities, do not interpret their marginalization as women in relation to the oppression of minority ethnonational communities.

For example, Kaplan and Grewal argue:

Nationalism creates … misrecognitions; that is, a deliberate and ideological forgetting, and such practices continue to this day. For instance, women from Islamic countries have obtained refugee asylum in the U.S. because they claim that their patriarchal cultures persecute them, even though the U.S. remains a country with an extremely high rate of domestic violence.

Some women-based movements in these cases, such as the radical religious-Zionist Women in Green movement in Israel and other ecumenical or nationalist-based women’s leagues in Northern Ireland like the Ulster Women's Unionist Council, have organized to defend the status quo, maintain the parameters of their ethnonational identity and uphold the political “ethno-gender regime.” In other words, experience is neither self-evident nor deterministic. A woman’s experience in conflict does not determine that woman’s interpretation of her experience. As such, I contrast social and political accounts produced by feminist groups with the dominant accounts that are rehearsed in conflict resolution theory – accounts that privilege an ethnonational identity “theory.” In this thesis, I ask: what can gender identity tell both women activists and observers about the social and political world in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine? The conflict resolution literature dismisses the experiences of identities outside ethnic identities as personal, peripheral and beside-the-point – especially when referring to the experiences of women. I am interested in the complex relationship between the personal and the political. I theorize that

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111 I have borrowed this term from Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See. They argue “the political system maintained by unionists was an ethno-gender regime, a system of power relations in which ethno-national and gender identities were mutually constituted and reinforced.” Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See, "This We Will Maintain': Gender, Ethno-nationalism and the Politics of Unionism in Northern Ireland," *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 1 (2001): 94.
political consciousness does not come from just an ethnic or national identity – it is more complex, subjective and changing.

The task that Moya sets out for the social theorist is to analyze the political salience of identity categories and to evaluate the possibilities and limits of identity.\textsuperscript{112} Women’s feminist peace movements feature prominently in cases of conflict and in resulting peace movements and yet they are not taken seriously in the theories of conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building. As identity features prominently in structures of inequality and as elements of social liberation,\textsuperscript{113} I suggest that an emphasis on identity constituencies can attend to the concerns regarding oppression and liberation raised in the anti-colonial and postcolonial texts discussed earlier. In this sense, analyzing identity categories (and not just privileging one category of identity such as ethnonational identity) is another way to access an understanding of the elements of social oppression at play here and of how people articulate social liberation. Moya further argues that in order to change the structures and systems that produce oppression, people must fully appreciate how oppression is experienced unevenly.\textsuperscript{114} In this sense, assuming that one oppression is the most important to consider in a conflict situation, such as the oppression of minority ethnonational communities, only tells part of the story about how people experience conflict and can advocate for change through a variety of social and political action approaches.

\textit{Transversal politics}

In order to account for the ways in which communities share experiences across differences, I draw on the concept of \textit{transversalism}, coined by Nira Yuval-Davis, and developed


\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{114} Moya, \textit{Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles}, 36.
by feminist theorists like Cynthia Cockburn and Carmel Roulston.\textsuperscript{115} Essentially, transversalism means “universality in diversity.”\textsuperscript{116} It is a process of dialogue that involves \textit{rooting} in one’s own identity and \textit{shifting} to translate the experiences of another identity group. As Yuval-Davis explains:

The idea is that each participant in the dialogue brings with her the rooting in her own membership and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to put herself in a situation of exchange with women who have different membership and identities. They called this form of dialogue ‘transversalism’—to differentiate from ‘universalism’ which, by assuming a homogenous point of departure, ends up being exclusive instead of inclusive, and ‘relativism’ which assumes that, because of the differential points of departure, no common understanding and genuine dialogue are possible at all.\textsuperscript{117}

For postpositivist theorists like S. Mohanty, postcolonial approaches, like those discussed earlier in this chapter, are guilty of this kind of relativism. In their haste to avoid re-inscribing hegemonic views on marginalized communities, such theorists fail to account for the ways in which communities also share experiences and have the capacity to empathize with each other’s claims. S. Mohanty writes: “If ‘we' decide that 'they' are so different from 'us' that we and they have no common 'criteria' (Lyotard’s term) by which to evaluate (and, necessarily, even to interpret) each other, we may avoid making the possibility that they will ever have anything to teach us.”\textsuperscript{118}

Yuval-Davis’ work on cross-community and cross-national dialogue has been consciously adopted by many of the prominent feminist peace organizations in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine and by other theorists working on these conflicts. Borrowing from Yuval-Davis and others, I show how Irish nationalist and Irish unionist women and Palestinian and


\textsuperscript{116} Yuval-Davis, \textit{Gender and Nation}, 125.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 130.

\textsuperscript{118} S. Mohanty, \textit{Literary Theory and the Claims of History}, 143.
Israeli women remain rooted in their national identities but form meaningful political engagements. I argue that these women, as large but diverse constituencies, share experiences of oppression and marginalization in their hyper-national and masculinized environments. Through cross-community projects, they have come to empathize with each other and understand each other’s experiences. This understanding has led to several waves of solidarity activism throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that I detail in the following chapters. These experiences informed solidarities between women and among other disenfranchised groups that generated the kind of knowledge and expertise that remains largely unacknowledged in international relations and comparative politics literatures. In this sense, solidarity through identity is not analogous to unity of identity – it is a process of transversal politics whereby some women remain “rooted” in their national identity but also form engagements with other women. As I will describe in the following chapters, these engagements are sometimes limited to single issue community projects and, at other times, are developed into larger national and transnational movements.

While transversal politics does not necessarily entail feminist politics, it has been combined with feminist theory and practice in interesting ways in these cases of violent conflict. To be sure, some identity communities lend themselves to coalitions that recognize difference and come to understand the interests of other communities more readily than others. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, feminist-based alliances, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality, were more self-consciously cross-community than class-based groups, due in large part to the differing trajectories of women’s movements and class-based movements. Whereas feminist women were drawing on global feminist literatures and movements that, at times, romanticised a global unity among ‘sisters,’ throughout the 1970s and 1980s, class-based groups tended to remain more directly tied to national movements. For example, class consciousness and trade union movements played an important historical role in state-building in both Israel and

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Palestine. Palestinian unions formed the basis of the Palestinian revolutionary movement in the 1960s and 1970s just as the exclusionary practices of Israeli unions helped to define who belonged to the Israeli state and who did not. The trade union movements played a similar nation-building role in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Chapter 5 discusses the limits of transversal coalition-building in the late 1980s and 1990s in both cases – the periods in which the movements were actively seeking to create cross-community coalitions of women’s peace groups. While transversalism did not always work as easily as is perhaps theorized in some of the literature, it remains an important feature of feminist activism.

A transnational feminist politics of location

So far, I have put forth the case that members of identity communities draw on the individual and shared social experiences of other identity communities in a national context. For example, Irish nationalist and unionist women and Palestinian and Israeli women share experiences in conflict, such as their use as symbols of a romanticised national homeland or their circumscribed roles in mainstream peace movements, at public panels, in monthly cross-community town hall-style meetings and through co-managed anti-occupation campaigns. In addition to coalition-style politics at the national level, there is a similar process of learning and an exchange of knowledge that takes place across regions and at an international level of political awareness. For example, feminist theorists like Caren Kaplan, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Inderpal Grewal write about a transnational feminist politics that stresses the role of coalitions and alliances across borders and cultures. Kaplan writes:

A transnational feminist politics of location … refers us to the model of coalition or, to borrow a term from Edward Said, to affiliation. As a practice of affiliation, a politics of location identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities
between women in diverse and asymmetrical relations, creating alternative histories, identities, and possibilities for alliances.\textsuperscript{120} Transnational feminist practices do not appeal to universal conceptions of identity affiliation, like a universal sisterhood. Rather, such practices recognize hierarchies of power among feminist activists and outline practices that include alliances in which inequality is interrogated.\textsuperscript{121} Taking their lead, I also chart feminist practices, like alliance-based politics, that operate transnationally.

In Chapter 3, I detail how the feminist peace movements in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland have drawn on the experiences, literatures and activism of other feminist movements around the world, and in Chapter 6, I discuss how they continue to form alliances with other regional and international organizations. I discuss the transnational advocacy of women associated with the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform; The International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace; the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action, the international trade union movement, the World Social Forum and European Social Forum; and The International Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Pride Coordinators. These are the kinds of alliances and coalitions that destabilize national, ethnic, gender and sexual boundaries where women activists create spaces to meet and interact with other women activists and other regional or international organizations.

Feminist activists maintain their national and ethnic identities in these community-level, national and transnational coalitions and alliances. However, they also create critical spaces of dialogue, debate and action that, at times, reinforce their commitment to their national communities but also challenge the parameters and content of these communities and the social and political roles that they envisage form themselves in a post-conflict society. I argue that conflict resolution theory would benefit from exploring these knowledge communities –

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\item\textsuperscript{121} Grewal and Kaplan, "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices," paragraph 4.
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especially where the parameters of the post-conflict national borders and the character of post-conflict national institutions are drawn along ethnonational lines. In the study of conflict resolution, too often theorists accept the dominant narrative of the conflict as the only narrative on which to design just and inclusive post-conflict institutions. In my view, such an approach misses the many other ways in which people have come to construct alternative conceptions of justice and accommodation based on their diversity of experiences. In the following chapters, I attempt to show how feminist coalition-based politics is one way to access alternate accounts of the reality of conflict on which theorists and practitioners can construct more just and more robust post-conflict institutions.

2.4 Conclusion

The concept of subalternity, as originally developed by Gramsci, has transformed through periods of anti-colonial struggle, post-colonial theorizing and criticism and has come to refer to a category of subordination that is not strictly tied to a Marxist economism. Revolutionary writers such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire mapped the psyche of the subaltern subject – describing how the identities of the oppressed are formed in relationships with dominant colonizing powers. Irish republican attacks against British rule and Palestinian assaults against Israeli occupation forces evoke themes of resistance reminiscent of the anti-colonial struggles of the post-World War II era. The essentialized thinking about categories of oppressor/oppressed were taken up by post-colonial theorists, and later critiqued by postmodern theorists, demonstrating how the oppressed Other is not a homogeneous category as other oppressions also exist within and across categories.

The large and growing body of conflict resolution literature in the fields of comparative politics and international relations tend to rely on ethnonational theses of conflicts, particularly in the post-Cold war era. In both Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, the parameters and content of
a new Northern Ireland, Israel and a new Palestinian state are being negotiated. And yet, at this important historical juncture – during the post-conflict institution-building period in Northern Ireland and during the peace process and negotiations in the case of Israel/Palestine – competing conceptions of peace, justice and equality, as articulated in communities that exist within and beyond the ethnonational divide, are shut out. The implications are a less inclusive model of peace, to be sure. But the implications also include the potential to reify ethnonational political communities in new state institutions and, ultimately, may result in the failure to seize the opportunity during conflict resolution periods to build institutions that reflect the diversity and interests of all communities.

In my view, ethnonational-based theories of conflict share an inherent idealism whereby ethnonational models of power-sharing and conflict resolution are expected to bring about the kind of social and political stability that can give way to an identity-free (or, at least, a troublesome identity-free) version of a post-conflict state. Granted, theorists rarely spell out this kind of expectation explicitly and this is perhaps some of the difficulty with this literature. In my view, such theories fail to adequately theorize the mechanisms by which ethnonationally-based models of conflict resolution can weaken inter-communal tensions. How does a post-conflict state, created and now managed by the very groups that represent the extreme positions of conflicting ethnonational communities, reduce ethnonational tensions? For example, the post-conflict period in Northern Ireland has been increasingly peaceful, and yet, nationalist and unionist communities, particularly in working class areas, remain as segregated as ever. In the case of Israel/Palestine, what would compel leaders in Israel and a new Palestinian state to represent minority ethnonational communities within their state borders, after a peace is negotiated? Certainly, Israel will retain the 20 per cent of its citizenry that identifies as Arab or Palestinian just as an accommodation will have to be reached whereby some Jewish communities in the West Bank will remain in a new Palestine. As Rupert Taylor identifies the problem: “there
is no good reason to suppose that the promotion of ethno-national pluralism will lead to the deflation of ethno-nationalism and create a non-sectarian democratic society." I argue that some of the consequences of designing conflict resolution strategies around an ethnonationalist theory of conflict include: a failure to capture the nuanced development of human rights, equality and justice values by other social and political constituencies during times of political crisis; the rewarding of violence by brokering resolutions only in times of crisis between violent nationalist groups; and, by eschewing questions of culpability and responsibility and accepting competing ethnonational claims to legitimacy as equal, sideling an evaluation of the material bases of domination and inequality.

Women’s accounts, revealed through their activism in feminist peace movements, provide understudied and important political assessments of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. My research indicates that alternative identity-based communities like women’s groups have not supplanted ethnonationalism. Indeed, ethnonational claims play central roles in the narratives around which women organize. However, women have been articulating a distinct human rights agenda that they theorize comes from their shared experiences of oppression as women living in militarized and violent societies. Relying on an ethnonationalist paradigm obfuscates the role that others play in acts of liberation and resistance (i.e. women) and therefore silences their voices. As Kaplan and Grewal write:

As feminist scholars, we see nationalism as a process in which new patriarchal elites gain the power to produce the generic "we" of the nation. The homogenizing project of nationalism draws upon female bodies as the symbol of the nation to generate discourses of rape, motherhood, sexual purity, and heteronormativity.\footnote{123}{Grewal and Kaplan, "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices," paragraph 6.}

In this sense, national narratives only reveal part of the story here. The conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine have opened up the opportunity for a \textit{thirrdspace} of radical thinking.
and action where subaltern communities continue to reflect on their experiences in conflict and come together to challenge some of the dominant ethnic and national narratives that they theorize reproduce their social and political inequality and marginalization. As social scientists and conflict resolution practitioners, we risk reproducing and entrenching such inequality when we accept the version of reality offered by elite ethnic and national leaders. I argue that the ethnic conflict literature under-theorizes the role of other subaltern political constituencies that exists along side or beyond ethnonational divisions. These constituencies offer important knowledge about how power and privilege are sustained in violent societies and offer insight into how to address such structures of inequality in periods of conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building. In particular, I focus on the experiences of women, organized around themes of gender, class and sexuality and test the claim that these identities are also politically and socially salient. In this dissertation, I ask the extent to which they become important repositories of knowledge about the causes of intractability in conflict and about what it would take to imagine a just post-conflict society. To accomplish this, I turn to the post-positivist realist theories of identity popularized by theorists like S. Mohanty and Moya and feminist interventions in the international relations and comparative politics literatures. Just as oppression, violence and conflict produces and/or bolster militarism and paramilitarism, they also organically produce (but often suppress) alternative social movements that have an interest in democratic reform and institution-building. Through activism and coalition politics, women in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine have drawn on their experiences in conflict to develop a feminist political identity that, at various stages of its evolution in both cases, has drawn on cross-community experiences in their respective societies. At various historical junctures, they have also drawn on and developed alongside broader international civil rights movements, peace movements, the women’s movement and LGBTQ rights movements.
I do not want to suggest that these conflicts, or other conflicts, can be resolved by women or feminist peace movements. This would be an incredibly risky burden and would essentialize and dehistoricize the knowledge that is produced by women located at the margins of conflict. Instead, I propose that when we grant epistemic privilege to women, organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality, in our analyses, we can learn more about the oppressive social and political features that sustain conflict and can better theorize how to avoid reproducing these features in conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building. As I outline in chapters 3 through 6, women who have worked to create and who continue to participate in peace communities – translating their own experiences as well as each other’s experiences in conflict – have learned to prioritize other social and political values such as human rights, equality, justice and inclusion – values which I argue should play an important role in future stages of the stalled peace process in Israel/Palestine and in post-conflict building in Northern Ireland.
Chapter 3
This History of Women’s Activism and Women’s Peace Movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine

The history of women’s political engagement in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine reveals a complex interplay between experience, identity formation and activism through historically situated oppositional struggles. Political activism did not flow evenly from a homogeneous ethnonational identity for those women variously positioned in oppressed minority ethnonational communities and majority ruling ethnonational communities; in “working-class” and “middle-class” neighbourhoods; outside and inside heteronormative spaces; and living through conflict in Europe and conflict in the Middle East. Community and identity was constructed and negotiated, instead, through women’s manifold experiences. This chapter chronicles this history, beginning with women’s early activism in their respective national movements and concentrating on the development of women’s feminist peace communities since the onset of the conflicts in the late 1960s through the 1980s.

In the first section, I set down the early years of activism in both cases, detailing women’s participation, and ultimate marginalization, in revolutionary movements and high politics. Next, I outline women’s activism in the initial years of the most recent round of these conflicts, beginning with the onset of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as the conflict is popularly known, in the late 1960s and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Similarly marginalized in ethnonationally-based movements, women organized separate women’s groups within their communities and were at the forefront of broader civil rights, peace and women’s movements, seizing the opportunity in conflict to launch a more extensive social revolution. These movements did not always develop the kind of inclusive spaces that some women had expected, especially for those women who could not relate to the pervasive essentialism that made these popular movements less threatening in an increasingly conservative
political environment. Conceptions of universal sisterhood and appeals to gendered tropes based on motherhood, which stressed women’s innate peacefulness and cooperativeness, served to erase difference and alienate many women from the movements (in Chapter 5, I detail the specific nature of this exclusion and the ways in which it impacted the structure of women’s organization and activism).

However, these early experiences set the stage for women’s feminist peace movements based on coalition-style models of political organization that accepted difference, in principle, but also developed unique engagements across sectarian divides. Such engagements are rarely acknowledged in the ethnonational literature and, as I discuss in Chapter 6, they have led to novel ideas related to conflict resolution and peace-building that are, in my view, important for the analysis of conflict resolution and valuable for conflict resolution and peace-building processes. In the final section of this chapter, I recount women’s experiences in cross-community projects in both cases, many of which continue to develop understudied ideas related to peace-building. In these two very different geographical and politico-historical contexts, women similarly experienced exclusion from their respective national movements and similarly organized as women on a platform that emphasized peace, equality and justice. It is these ideas that I review in the following chapter, demonstrating how they impacted the peace processes in the 1990s as women’s feminist peace activism continued to develop in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine.

3.1 The early years of women’s activism

Early women’s activism in Ireland, both north and south, and early activism among Jewish and Palestinian women in pre-1948 historic Palestine, took place largely within national movements. In the case of Ireland, nationalist women organized as suffragettes and labour activists and formed a women’s branch of the Land League at the turn of the last century.\(^{124}\)

Women also formed a nationalist paramilitary group called *Cumann na mBan* – an auxiliary of the Irish Volunteers – in 1914.125 Their participation and influence in the national movement was acknowledged in the revolutionary 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic:

> The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irish woman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.126

Women were clearly part of the foundation of the imagined new state.127

At this time, unionist women were also making inroads in local government, as part of their nationalist communities. They became particularly politicized against Home Rule (the establishment of an Irish parliament separate from the British Parliament at Westminster), and went on to form the *Ulster Women’s Unionist Council* (UWUC) in 1911 to promote the union with Great Britain.128 The UWUC was a popular organization that boasted membership between 115,000 to 200,000 women after only two years in operation.129 Beginning in 1918, when women were extended the franchise, women like Julia McMordie, Elizabeth McComb and Dehra Parker were elected to local government as members of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Both McMordie and Parker were subsequently elected to the new Northern Ireland Parliament in 1921.

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125 Laura E. Lyons and Mairéad Keane, "At the End of the Day: An Interview with Mairead Keane, National Head of Sinn Féin Women's Department," *Boundary* 2 19, no. 2 (1992): 269.
126 A copy of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, 24 April 1916 has been compiled by Fionnuala McKenna and is available online, from CAIN Web Service: cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/pir24416.htm.
129 Ibid., 51.
and McComb became chair of the Shankill Women’s Unionist Association.\textsuperscript{130} These women advocated for issues such as child welfare, increased government housing and relief for the poor. They saw their political role as complementary to women’s traditional role in the home – not as revolutionizing that role.\textsuperscript{131}

Just as unionist women were carving out larger political roles for themselves to help preserve the political status quo in Northern Ireland, the republican movement was shifting to a conservative social vision that restricted the role of women in Ireland following the 1916 uprising. Women from the Cumann na mBan, the Irish Workers’ Union, the Irish Citizen Army and others formed the Cumann na dTeachtaire, or League of Women Delegates, to ensure women’s representation in the changing national movement.\textsuperscript{132} Margaret MacCurtain captures the failure of their efforts in the following passage:

The participation of women in the national struggle was a short-lived phenomenon. Overtaken by the forces of counter-revolution (again, a familiar pattern in Third World revolutionary uprisings in the twentieth century) Irish women retreated into a secondary role with the setting up of the northern State in 1920 and the Free State in the south in 1922.\textsuperscript{133}

Women were barred from public life and relegated to the home following Partition in both the North and in the Irish Free State. The union with Great Britain remained intact in the North and the transformative political vision that nationalist women fought for was abandoned. Unionist/Protestant and nationalist/Catholic communities remained deeply divided in Northern


\textsuperscript{131} For example, Parker writes in an article published in Northern Ireland, Home and Politics: A Journal for Women, 1927: “[W]omen’s advent into … branches of public life does not, necessarily, entail any departure from the confines of the home. I am convinced that it is quite possible for her to give the benefits of her advice and help to her County, her District or her Town, whilst living at home, looking after that home and in no manner neglecting any of her home duties.” Dehra Parker, “Women in Local Government Work (1927),” in The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, ed. Angela Bourke et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 363.


Ireland following Partition and people primarily voted in elections along sectarian lines. Bouts of intermittent violence dotted the next three decades and tensions remained high, particularly over discriminatory policies related to the allocation of state resources. The unionist-dominated parliament ensured control through gerrymandering of local electoral boundaries, and the right to vote in local elections was limited to property owners. This stipulation ensured that the poorer nationalist/Catholic minority community remained disenfranchised.

Israeli women’s activism shares a similar trajectory of politicization and can be traced back to the Jewish representative assemblies of the pre-1948 state. Advocates for women’s suffrage and equal rights in Jewish settlements created separate candidate lists to represent women at elections.\textsuperscript{134} This early women’s activism tended to reflect partisan political interests as most women’s organizations functioned as separate sections of national political parties. Many such organizations remain affiliated with national political parties today.\textsuperscript{135} At the same time, Palestinian women actively demonstrated against the British Balfour Declaration and Britain’s support for a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. In 1921, the \textit{Palestinian Women’s Union} formed in an effort to organize and coordinate demonstrations and to speak out against the torture of Palestinian prisoners.\textsuperscript{136} In the years prior to World War II, Palestinian women were active in revolts and organized against the importation of British goods, supported popular strikes and formed charities.\textsuperscript{137} In 1964, women established the \textit{Palestinian Women’s Association}, an organization which led to the founding of the \textit{General Union of Palestinian Women} in 1965. The Union was particularly important because the Palestine National Council recognized it as a

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 59.
national political body. The mandate of the Union continues to link the goals of Palestinian women with the emancipation of the broader Palestinian people:

The development of women’s political, economic, social and legal status cannot be isolated from the general political situation of the Palestinian people who are still under occupation and are struggling for independence and sovereignty over their land.

This period of politicization of Palestinian women is referred to as the “New Women’s Movement,” a period which includes the birth of a host of women’s committees organized by Palestinian women.

In both the Irish and the Palestinian national liberation struggles, women played important political roles while articulating nationalist ambitions. These experiences of activism laid the groundwork for future activism in nationalist movements during the eruption of violence in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine a few decades later. The disaffection that some women were beginning to experience over their lack of representation and their circumscribed roles within their respective national movements at this time, and especially in the ensuing years, would also serve to fuel their ambition to develop future autonomous women’s movements.

3.2 Women’s activism in Northern Ireland: 1970s

As I detailed in Chapter 2, hostilities resumed in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s as the nationalist/Catholic minority began to challenge the oppressive laws of the sometimes brutal and undemocratic rule of the Ulster Protestant majority, operating at the behest of Great Britain. Women like Bernadette Devlin and Nell McCafferty stood out as prominent members of the nationalist/republican movement, fighting for equality and justice and for a free and united Ireland. As was the case earlier in the century, discussed in the previous section, such women also found themselves marginalized within the revolutionary movement as it began to expand. Some

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138 Ibid., 23.
139 An electronic copy of this mandate is available from the General Union of Palestinian Women’s website: www.gupw.net/publicatins/st1.htm.
140 Sharoni, Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Politics of Women’s Resistance, 62.
of these women, joined by others, also organized within the burgeoning civil rights movement, only to find similar patterns of male-dominance and lack of representation of women. These experiences of exclusion provoked women to organize separately as the *Northern Ireland Women’s Rights Movement* and to initiate organizations and coalitions that linked a demand for peace with justice and equality for all citizens.

McCafferty writes of the phenomenon of exclusion within the revolutionary movement during the August 1969 *Battle of the Bogside*, Derry, in her 2004 autobiography. The *Battle of the Bogside* refers to the two-day period of rioting that broke out during the annual loyalist Apprentice Boys march in Derry and spread throughout Northern Ireland. The police force in Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and local loyalists clashed with the mainly Catholic and nationalist residents in the Bogside district of Derry. The B-Specials, a largely Protestant special police unit, and the RUC used CS gas and live rounds of ammunition to contain rioters. The confrontation ended with the deployment of British Army troops. The *Derry Citizens’ Defense Association* (CDA) was struck shortly before the battle, purportedly to defend the Bogside district and replace the popular citizen action networks of labour and nationalist organizers that had been in operation in the area.141 During negotiations between the CDA and British representatives, prominent activist Bernadette Devlin was pushed aside and effectively expelled to the United States by the group while a small four-person CDA delegation conducted talks with British representatives. Because the CDA was all-male and because discussions were kept secret, McCafferty argues that “Derry women didn’t count.” She was surprised to learn years later that some of the prominent men in the CDA received training in the use of small arms from republican paramilitaries across the border in Donegal. As McCafferty writes: “Whatever the men were all up to in September 1969, nobody told us Derry women.” 142

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142 Ibid., 176-180.
As with the events that preceded the Battle of the Bogside, the imposition of curfews and internment by the British a year later in Belfast similarly “triggered” the mobilization of nationalist Catholic women.\textsuperscript{143} In the case of the curfew, residents of the largely Catholic Lower Falls area were ordered to stay in their homes so that the British army could conduct searches. Women from the Upper Falls Road defied the curfew and brought food and other provisions for the families on the Lower Falls. Joanna McMinn and Margaret Ward, both prominent women activists, describe the women’s motivation as “a conscious act of solidarity which created a precedent for collective action.”\textsuperscript{144} Women also took on a new role again with the implementation of internment in 1971. At the time, they were left with the responsibility of maintaining the street protests against punitive British measures.\textsuperscript{145}

Women also demonstrated on behalf of political prisoners in the 1970s and held their own actions inside prisons as republican prisoners themselves. Some women were drawn into the nationalist cause to support their sons and husbands who were arrested. As one activist says:

I was a typical Irish woman, wife and mother in 1969. I never thought about politics . . . I got involved in 1971 with the introduction of internment. My son was interned at the age of sixteen and held for eighteen months. When the hunger strike ended I felt that I just couldn’t go back into the house again. It just wasn’t enough for me. I was too aware of the social problems in the community.\textsuperscript{146}

Certainly, nationalist women were also active members of the Irish Republican Army as agents and gunrunners.\textsuperscript{147} They became targets of abuse themselves by British soldiers – abuse Begoña Aretxaga calls the “colonization of the female body.” They were verbally and sexually

\textsuperscript{143} Sharoni, "Gendering Conflict and Peace in Israel/Palestine and the North of Ireland," 1064.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Aretxaga, Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland, 54.
intimidated by the occupying British military and subjected to strip searches by soldiers.\textsuperscript{148} The community development role that women took on during the \textit{Troubles} was not limited to nationalist women. As Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See argue, unionist women also worked for voluntary organizations that supported loyalist prisoners and directly intervened in the crisis in working-class neighbourhoods, working on issues related to, for example, childcare, education and unemployment.\textsuperscript{149}

In the 1960s, women activists were also at the forefront of the civil rights movement, laying the groundwork for what became the \textit{Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association} in 1967. Women like Angela McCrystal and Patricia McCluskey founded the \textit{Homeless Citizens League} in Tyrone in 1963 to protest the local council’s discriminatory allocation of public housing. They received broad coverage and support from across Northern Ireland and went on to form the \textit{Campaign for Social Justice} (CSJ) in 1964. Their investigation into discriminatory housing practices in selected communities served as a catalyst for the local election of four members of the CSJ. Many of the women involved in the CSJ, the trade union movement and other civil liberties groups like Betty Sinclair, Bernadette Devlin, Inez McCormack, and Ann Hope assumed prominent positions in the civil rights movement in subsequent years.\textsuperscript{150} In 1969, Devlin became the youngest woman ever elected to Westminster Parliament at the same time that women like McCormack and Hope were establishing the \textit{Women’s Rights Movement in Northern Ireland}.\textsuperscript{151}

Both Bronagh Hinds and Carmel Roulston, leading figures in the Northern Ireland feminist peace movement, describe how they got their start in politics through their activism in

\textsuperscript{149} Racioppi and See, "This We Will Maintain': Gender, Ethno-nationalism and the Politics of Unionism in Northern Ireland," 100.
the civil rights movement and later the *Women’s Rights Movement in Northern Ireland*. Hinds, for example, became involved in civil rights as a student at Queen’s University, Belfast in the early 1970s. As the first woman president of a student’s union on the island of Ireland in 1974, she worked closely with other politically active women. It was through her connection with women at the *Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association* and at the *Student’s Union* that she organized an all-Ireland women’s conference that served as a basis for the first *Northern Ireland Women’s Rights Movement*. Roulston similarly describes how her experience in civil rights campaigns got her interested in thinking about women’s rights and women’s organizing:

> I was involved with various left-wing groups on campus and quickly realized that the left-wing groups were all male-dominated. You had a strange little pattern whereby a small number of women would be prominent but they would be very much treated as exceptional. A group of us that were involved in a left-wing reading group then set up a feminist reading group – just for our own interest and the ideas really hooked me.\(^{153}\)

Women’s rights were not a part of the civil rights campaigns of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Because civil rights focused mainly on inequalities related to the Catholic and Protestant communities in terms of, for example, the allocation of social welfare, issues related to employment and job security, women – as a constituency – were not prioritized. The civil rights movement also grew out of reforms initiated by the unionist government, pressure from the British Labour Party as well as changes in the Republic of Ireland and the influence of other international civil rights campaigns. Roulston argues that these campaigns in the North were often hijacked by extreme figures from the Protestant community, like Ian Paisley, who promoted sectarian myths about the Catholic community. Considering this divisive environment, many women from the civil rights movement began to organize separately.

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\(^{152}\) Bronagh Hinds, senior practitioner fellow at Queen's University's Institute of Governance and former member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party, interview by author, 18 July 2006, Belfast, digital voice recording, Queen’s University Institute of Governance, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

\(^{153}\) Carmel Roulston, head of the School of Economics and Politics at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, interview by author, 21 July 2006, digital voice recording, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim.
The Northern Ireland Women’s Rights Movement developed as a coalition of different associations, such as a women’s aid group in Coleraine, women from Queen’s University and a network of women affiliated with the trade union movement. And not unlike the Republic of Ireland, lesbian activism mainly took place within the women’s movement, as lesbians were marginalized within the larger gay rights movements of this time.\(^{154}\)

There have been social and political gay rights organizations operating in Northern Ireland since the 1970s.\(^{155}\) Examples of such groups included the Gay Liberation Society, started in 1972 at Queen’s University, Belfast; the Union for Sexual Freedoms in Ireland, formed in 1974; the lesbian organization Sappho, which ran from 1974 to 1976; and Lesbians in Belfast.\(^{156}\) Gay activism, according to Jeff Dudgeon, founding member of the influential Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA), formed in 1975, came out of the civil rights movement. NIGRA was similarly spurred on by the success of other gay liberation movements abroad. Shortly after NIGRA’s formation, the organization challenged the criminalization of male homosexual acts and won. In 1982, a new law was passed, legalizing some homosexual acts between men 21 years of age and older.\(^{157}\)

Lesbian activists, however, felt ostracized within this larger gay rights movement. For example, one activist characterized the gay rights movement as “built on intense hatred of women


\(^{155}\) Jeff Dudgeon, "Mapping 100 Years of Belfast Gay Life," \textit{Gay Belfast}.


and undisguised sexism” and doubted that a united lesbian and gay movement was possible. Interestingly, gay men were generally thought to be associated with unionism and lesbian women were generally thought to be associated with republicanism. This may be attributed to the fact that gay men were advocating for legislative reform (like the legal challenges mounted by NIGRA) and lesbian women were challenging the status quo. As Mary McAuliffe and Sonja Tiernan write:

Perhaps because it could be critical of nationalism as an ideology as well as its appeal to women to unite as a class, feminism was even more effective than Marxism in cutting across the pernicious sectarianism of the war in Northern Ireland and lesbians took a leading part in this movement.

The *Northern Ireland Women’s Movement* was also successful in attracting unionist women, many of whom had a background in the trade unionist movement. Roulston argues that the women’s organizations were less fractious than left-wing political associations because they did not suffer from the same fundamental fissures between those that emphasized the British imperialist roots of the conflict (and promoted the expulsion of Britain from Northern Ireland) and those that promoted class solidarity, despite national divisions. Such movements demanded that people abandon their ethnic or national identity, either by insisting that unionists recognize that British imperialism has duped them or by suggesting that solidarity can expose the fallibility of ethnic identity. As Roulston argues:

What’s missing from that approach is you’re missing something about people’s attachment to identities and their understanding of how their life is given meaning.

Although she says that her personal sense of ethnic or national identity has never been particularly important to her, she recognizes that it had remained so for some women at the time. Women

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161 Roulston, interview by author.
were negotiating between their conflicting national and ethnic identities – acknowledging the ways in which they were “rooted” in these identities but also “shifting” their social and political priorities through the process of organizing and through dialogue with other women. This mode of dialogue and political organization is captured in the politics of “transversalism” described by Nira Yuval-Davis and others, and discussed in Chapter 2. Women continued to identify with their separate ethnonational communities, but they were also beginning to work towards understanding the experiences of other women, rooted in competing ethnonational identities and through unique alliance-based activist communities. In the tumultuous and rapidly changing political landscape during the 1960s and 1970s, women activists in Northern Ireland, just like other women overseas, were carving out a political role for themselves through the women’s movement and forging networks based on solidarity that would form the foundation of the future women’s-based peace communities.

The women’s peace movement in Northern Ireland

Like the civil rights movement, women were also leaders in the Northern Ireland Peace Movement. One of the first such organizations, Women Together (For Peace), was founded in Belfast in 1970 in response to sectarian riots in working class communities. Marie Hammond Callaghan describes it as:

A maternalist and ecumenical vision shared by a Protestant and Catholic woman, [Women Together for Peace] represented one of the earliest attempts to organize large numbers of women in Northern Ireland as "women" and "mothers" in response to gender conditions imposed by the conflict.

This organization, chaired by Monica Patterson, included several hundred women from Protestant and Catholic communities. In working-class areas, members engaged in a variety of actions to stop rioting and theft and also created a cross-community organization for women to meet.\textsuperscript{162}

The *Derry Women’s Peace* group was founded in 1972 in a working-class Catholic nationalist neighbourhood in Derry City. It developed in the context of the growing civil rights movement since 1968, the British Army’s presence in Northern Ireland since 1969 and growing republican and loyalist paramilitarism. These nationalist women organized spontaneously as wives and caregivers, adopting a “maternal response” to the murder of a Derry teenage boy and the execution of a 19-year-old man on leave from the British Army by the Official IRA in May 1972. Several hundred women marched to the headquarters of Derry’s Official IRA calling for a ceasefire.\(^{163}\)

Within the peace movement, the association called *Peace People* organized many high profile marches and other non-violent demonstrations throughout Northern Ireland beginning in 1976. The organization, originally called *Peace Women*, was started by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan following the deaths of three young civilians in Belfast. Both Williams and Corrigan were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 as the founders of *Peace People* and for their role in kick-starting the *Northern Ireland Peace Movement*. One of the group’s most memorable events included a massive march of over 20,000 mainly Catholic and Protestant women through a Protestant community in Belfast on 28 August 1976.\(^{164}\)

At this point in the peace movement, activists were using gendered, maternal tropes to frame their appeal – suggesting that women’s innate nurturing qualities gave them a purchase on understanding peace.\(^{165}\) This kind of framework was, however, criticized by other women’s groups who were influenced by the growing body of feminist literature of the 1970s and were


interested in promoting more than just peace, but also justice. Although Peace People still operates today, this division, along with significant class divisions among participants, eventually led the group to fall out of favour in 1980.\textsuperscript{166} Similar gendered constructions were also used in women’s activism in Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories.

3.3 Women’s activism in Israel: 1970s

A feminist women’s movement began to take shape in Israel in the 1970s, reflective of mainly white Ashkenazi Jewish women (of European descent) as well as lesbian activists. Small groups of women began to network with feminist women in the US and import specifically feminist and lesbian literature into Israel.\textsuperscript{167} Marcia Freedman, one of the founders of the feminist movement in Israel in the 1970s\textsuperscript{168} and former Member of the Knesset (Israel’s parliament), also credits the rise of a women’s feminist movement during this period with the 1973 Yom Kippur War, which she argues helped to reveal the ways in which nationalism and Zionism were gendered.\textsuperscript{169}

Within this largely Ashkenazi-Jewish feminist movement, lesbian women felt more comfortable organizing than in the gay rights movement in Israel, known as the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR).\textsuperscript{170} As one participant remembers:

By the end of 1976, the idea of feminism had begun to filter down to the SPPR and some of the women began to feel that the organization lacked an ideological message.

\textsuperscript{166} McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 21.
\textsuperscript{170} The gay rights movement was formed in Israel in 1975. It was founded by one woman and ten men and was called the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights (SPPR). See: Ruti Kadish, "Israel," in \textit{Lesbian Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia}, ed. Bonnie Zimmerman (Taylor and Francis, 2000), 406; Shalom, "The Story of ClaF: The Community of Lesbian Feminists," 42.
Feminism began to intrigue the women there. Then, one day, we decided to go to one of the meetings of the Feminist Movement. It was exciting. We saw lesbian symbols on the earrings and necklaces of several women and they gave us a warm welcome. This was the beginning of reciprocal relations between the lesbians of the Feminist Movement and those of the SPPR. Lesbians became more and more active in the Feminist Movement, to the consternation of many straight women there who feared for the image of the movement.\footnote{171}

The first national feminist conference was held in Israel in 1978.\footnote{172} Of the 100 participants at the conference, 30 women identified themselves as lesbians, indicating to the participants the large constituency of lesbian women.\footnote{173}

As lesbian women began to organize separately within the SPPR\footnote{174} and within the feminist movement, they began to take the first steps towards organizing as an autonomous feminist lesbian movement and announced the creation of the lesbian-feminist group \textit{Aleph}. While short-lived (the organization only lasted about a year-and-a-half as members did not want to be publicly identified as lesbians),\footnote{175} it was clear that the interests of this constituency were beginning to be recognized. As one of the founders remarked: “The announcement was political and intended to announce publicly the existence of lesbians in Israel, rather than to found a new organization, which we were not yet ready for.”\footnote{176}

An all-women’s national political party was organized in Israel and contested elections in 1977. The party was interested in issues related to women’s status in the military, education, prostitution and as “housewives.”\footnote{177} Although this women’s party of 1977 was similarly made up of largely middle-class, Ashkenazi Jews, many of the women in the party made the link between

\footnote{171}{Hannah Klein quoted in: Shalom, "The Story of ClaF: The Community of Lesbian Feminists," 42.}
\footnote{174}{Kadish, "Israel," 406.}
\footnote{176}{Shalom, "The Story of ClaF: The Community of Lesbian Feminists," 44.}
\footnote{177}{Freedman, "Theorizing Israeli Feminism, 1970-2000," 6.}
the oppression of women in Israel and the treatment of Palestinians. As Leah Simmons Levin writes:

Stating that the creation of an egalitarian society necessitated recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination, the platform argued that Israeli Arabs and Jews were the allies of Palestinian women in the battle for equal rights.\(^\text{178}\)

Despite not winning a mandate, the thirty party members and their many supporters raised feminist consciousness, launched women as a distinct political constituency and brought about public discussion of gender issues at the national level.\(^\text{179}\)

Women also were building more permanent spaces in which to organize through a growing number of feminist women’s centres in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Many of these centres drew on resources from visiting feminists and activists from the United States and Western Europe. For example, much of the literature available at the women’s centres was imported from the United States and many of the meetings were actually held in English and not Hebrew to accommodate those women from English-speaking countries who were visiting Israel for their studies.\(^\text{180}\) The women’s centres themselves were important locations for discussing controversial political topics, such as the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Of the Kol Ha-Isha women’s centre in Jerusalem, Haya Shalom writes: “The center provided the first feminist reaction to the policies of Israeli occupation, which six years later became the Women in Black movement.”\(^\text{181}\)

These centres were not, however, the inclusive spaces many members had hoped to develop. For example, as feminist centres like Kol Ha-Isha in Haifa and Jerusalem became increasingly associated with lesbian activism, many members stopped coming, resulting in their closures in the early 1980s.\(^\text{182}\) Ruth Halperin-Kaddari argues that women in the Israeli-feminist

\(^{178}\) Levin, "Setting the Agenda: The Success of the 1977 Israel Women's Party," 51.
\(^{179}\) Ibid., 48.
\(^{181}\) Ibid., 49-50.
\(^{182}\) Ibid., 45.
movement were similarly divided between those who wanted to stress women’s liberation alone and those who wanted to emphasize solidarity with Palestinian liberation. Ultimately, the movement resolved to focus on socio-political issues related to women’s role in the military, domestic abuse, illegal abortions and women’s political standing in Israel.\textsuperscript{183} Freeman expresses her frustration with this decision within the movement in her memoirs:

I was already infamous as a militant feminist in a country where the liberation of women was seen as a threat to national security. I was an upstart immigrant who went too far too fast. By coming out, in 1975, in favor of a two-state solution, I became more notorious and more isolated, even within the feminist community.\textsuperscript{184}

Women’s groups were not necessarily theorizing a connection between the oppression of women and the oppression of Palestinians at this stage.\textsuperscript{185} It would take another war to propel a branch of the women’s feminist movement in just such a direction.

\textit{The women’s peace movement in Israel}

At the same time as the feminist movement was picking up steam, so too was a national peace movement. Beginning in 1978, the newly established mainstream peace movement in Israel, \textit{Peace Now}, was a mixed gendered movement, consciously aware that conventional notions of masculinity and femininity had to be observed in their activism in order to win over the support of the broader Israeli public. Israeli women were excluded from some of the early public peace actions of the \textit{Peace Now} movement, although many made up the ranks of activists within the organization. For example, Lieutenant Yuli Tamir was not allowed to sign an officers’ letter of protest against the Lebanon War in 1982 because organizers felt that a woman’s name, listed among the 350 male army reserve officers, would weaken the overall public statement.\textsuperscript{186}

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\textsuperscript{183} Halperin-Kaddari, \textit{Women in Israel: A State of Their Own}, 59.
\textsuperscript{184} Freedman, \textit{Exile in the Promised Land}, 108.
\textsuperscript{185} As Haya Shalom writes, there was a schism within the feminist movement at the time between those socialist women who felt that the women’s party should not be prioritized over the fight against the Palestinian occupation. See: Shalom, "The Story of ClaF: The Community of Lesbian Feminists," 43.
\end{flushright}
Galia Golan, one of the founding members of Peace Now and later the women’s feminist peace movement, argues that the feminist movement in Israel did in fact serve an important function in criticizing the macho-masculine ethos of the officers’-based Peace Now movement. While Golan maintains that this criticism helped to change the nature of the movement, women also began to form separate peace groups around this period. However, Gila Svirsky, prominent Israeli feminist peace activist, argues that Peace Now, unlike the feminist movement, failed to tackle the most contentious issues like, for example, the problem of Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes. She says that the new women’s peace groups in Israel offered a more radical understanding of the causes of the conflict and the solutions necessary to achieve peace.  

Women’s peace activism began to crystallize around questions of war and peace during the 1981 lead-up to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Israeli women organized in groups such as Women against the Invasion of Lebanon and Parents (Mothers) Against Silence. The first group was avowedly feminist, with members drawn from the earlier feminist movement. At this juncture, they were concerned with issues related to, for example, abuse and violence against women, abortion, pornography, the representation of women in politics and equality in employment and education. The second group, Parents (Mothers) Against the Silence, organized petitions that called for Israel to withdraw from Lebanon. They were avowedly non-feminist, and described themselves as a group that was concerned for the sons of Israel who were forced to fight in the conflict. Their mandate was received warmly by the Israeli public and garnered greater public sympathy. However, it was Women Against the Invasion of Lebanon that reorganized as Women Against the Occupation after the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon.

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189 Ibid., 26.
191 Ibid., 108.
Lebanon, which continued to organize around issues such as the treatment of Palestinian women in Israeli prisons.\textsuperscript{192} In both instances, a branch of women’s activism was developing into peace activism.

*Parents (Mothers) Against Silence* was more successful at capturing public support during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. As Sharoni suggests, the motherhood motif proved effective because it was considered a legitimate form of dissent.\textsuperscript{193} It did not threaten Israeli national values or religious family values and only challenged immediate policy decisions. The motherhood motif further served a functional role as it was more persuasive with the general public and perceived as less threatening. Other women’s activist groups continued to use the motherhood motif such as *Women and Mothers for Peace* and *Four Mothers*.\textsuperscript{194} The latter organization was founded in February 1997 by four Israeli women whose sons were serving in the military in Lebanon and was recently reincarnated as *Fifth Mother* in 2002.\textsuperscript{195} Their stated goal at the time was limited to Israel’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon. Svirsky argues that *Four Mothers* stands out as the most successful peace movement in Israel. The fact that it was nonpartisan and members had sons serving in the military, gave them credibility in the eyes of the broader Israeli public. Svirsky writes:

Avowedly non-feminist and non-radical, the women in this movement successfully exploited the traditional role of motherhood to buttress their emotional appeal. And yet, scratching the surface reveals that a large proportion of the activists were themselves feminists, progressives, and professional women – and highly skilled at using the media.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{195} Background information about the *Fifth Mother* organization is available online from the *Coalition of Women for Peace*: http://coalitionofwomen.org/home/english/organizations/the_fifth_mother.
The motherhood motif further served to alienate the lesbian-feminist community, as the focus of the early women’s peace movement was on keeping their sons safe from fighting in war. As Su Schachter writes:

Lesbians, a population that at that time was not producing a lot of sons, found no place in these groups of mothers. Indeed since the maternalist groups have no vision of the future, they have no ideology that speaks to the place of peace and justice for all or the general demilitarization of our society – the factors that drew lesbians to the women’s peace movement …  

A feminist analysis remained conspicuously absent as existing constructions of gender proved functionally useful by women activists. This was similar to organizations in Northern Ireland like the *Derry Women’s Peace* group and *Peace People*, which appealed to similar gendered tropes. Sharoni suggests that women did not forge the kind of “alternative” social and political spaces that members of the women’s movement often claim to have occupied during this period. However, she argues that they did employ strategic use of such gendered constructions.

Given the history and dynamics of women’s political mobilization in Israel, these women are well aware that if they are to challenge successfully the Israeli national consensus on Lebanon, they must do so by embracing their traditionally praised roles as mothers of their own sons and their morally authoritative status as mother’s of the nation.

Sharoni’s claim suggests a kind of Spivakian “strategic essentialism” in the use of the category “woman” when she states that “women are well aware” that success in the peace movement required using a motherhood trope. Certainly, some studies suggest that many women avoided or rejected the feminist ‘label’ when describing their politics and, in some instances, appealed to essentializing discourses that romanticised the perceived peaceful and

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199 See: Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice."
accommodating impulses and traits associated with maternalism and femininity. The feminist-pacifist nexus resonates in Linda Martín Alcoff’s description of the cultural feminist:

Thus the cultural feminist reappraisal construes woman's passivity as her peacefulness, her sentimentality as her proclivity to nurture, her subjectiveness as her advanced self-awareness, and so forth. Cultural feminists have not challenged the defining of woman but only that definition given by men. In this sense, women reclaim their socially and politically undervalued “female nature” and imbue that nature with value. Kate Soper, for example, argues that it is women’s experience as nurturers that give them a different perspective on the war and peace problematic. She writes:

Why is it that while I flinch at every euphemism they produce, these experts continue to computate their equations of terror and to offer their dispassionate appraisals of “lethality factors” and “collateral damage”? Some part of the answer, I suspect, must lie in the fact that this largely masculine body of personnel has never had to attend to children intimately, day after day, ministering to their simplest needs.

For Alcoff, ultimately, it is neither the essential nature nor the nurturing experience, as described by Soper, that gives a woman “strengths and attributes” or insight – it is the conditions of her oppression. Women come to understand how these conditions are shared across the ethnonational divide through the process of translation.

In the course of my interviews, I did not find evidence of the strategic use of essentialist categories among women activists in Northern Ireland or Israel/Palestine, as characterized by Sharoni. Instead, I found a discernable split between those women who are actively using a feminist analysis and those women involved in peace movements who do not advance a feminist

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202 Ibid., 408.


204 Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," 414.
project. This may indicate the diversity of the movement, but not its limitations. Ultimately, what is interesting here is not the resilience and durability of essential/functional categories like “woman” but the evolution over the conjunctural period of three decades of the categories and the growth of feminist activism – drawing on the resources and activism of women overseas and in response to changes within Israel, such as the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

3.4 Women’s activism in the occupied Palestinian territories: 1970s

For many Palestinian women, the women’s committees and students’ movements established through their national parties in the 1970s were their segue into political involvement in the occupied territories. For example, Khalida Jarrar, Fadwa Al-Labadi, Salam Hamdan and Rabiha Diab, all prominent and politically active Palestinian women, describe how they got their start in politics through various national parties. Jarrar began in the students’ movement operated through her political party, which allowed her to liaise with other women. It was through the national question that participants started to talk about women’s rights. Al-Labadi joined the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1978 where she became involved in the newly established women’s group operating within her party. Likewise, Hamdan worked on national and social issues under the umbrella of the Communist Party. However, she felt that discussions concerning equality in her party were abstract and theoretical, and did little to alter the patriarchal and masculine construction of the leadership. She says that in the early days, there were many active women in leftist parties in the occupied territories. However, with the defeat of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Islamic parties in the 1990s, there was less and less room for women in

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205 Khalida Jarrar, director of the Adameer Prisoners’ Support and Human Rights Association and elected PFLP member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, interview by author, 20 July 2005, digital voice recording, Ramallah

206 Fadwa Al-Labadi, director of the INSAN Center for Women and Gender Studies and Palestinian feminist peace activist, interview by author, 18 June 2005, Jerusalem, West Bank, digital voice recording, INSAN Center, Al Quds University, Jerusalem, West Bank
the national parties. This, she argues, meant that there was less room for the discussion of social and equality issues.207

Diab similarly describes how her political awakening began in the Palestinian national movement. It was through her imprisonment by Israel as a national activist that she met other women from across the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and from Lebanon. When released from prison, these women were given a very limited role in their respective national parties. As a result, they continued to work together and organize as women on social issues related to, for example, education and health.208 Rose Shomali, former Secretary General for the GUPW in Lebanon and current general director of the Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC), argues that women were not included in decision making and policy making processes of their parties: “So, what happens? All the political parties separated the union of women from the party so [women] started working alone.” Shomali remembers that at first, women began agitating for equality within their parties. For example, Salwa Abu Khadra, Secretary General of the (GUPW) and prominent political figure in Fatah and the PLO, advocated for military training for women alongside men. Shomali says that women’s preoccupation with equality within the party meant that they were not yet focusing on social change and political transformation – priorities which the women’s movement later adopted once they had moved away from the parties.209

It was their treatment as national figures by the occupying state and their exclusion from the national project that encouraged them to organize together. In this sense, women became politicized within the national parties, developing the practical awareness of the importance of social and economic issues based on their experiences. However, as the party leadership was not

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open to women and with the rise of conservative Islamic parties and the sense that social issues were not being addressed by their respective parties, women felt excluded from the national project.

Nationalist women in Northern Ireland and Palestinian women, in particular, became radicalized within their national movements to fight against the status quo of discriminatory rule and, in the case of Israel/Palestine, an oppressive occupation. When they found themselves marginalized within these movements, despite their expectation of emancipation and social change, they maintained their level of political engagement and reorganized separately as women. In Northern Ireland, women in working-class neighbourhoods organized to provide for the basic needs of their communities during the turbulent political times, eventually theorizing that their demands for equality in their national communities and for social justice were inextricably linked to peace, equality and justice for all. In Israel, the early women’s movement provided a space (though sometimes limited) for lesbian activists as well. As women began to make the link between their experiences of oppression in Israel with Israel’s oppression of Palestinians, a distinctly feminist peace movement began to take shape. In both Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, we can see the ways in which the influence of the broader international women’s movement created the organizing principle around which women’s activism began to take shape throughout the 1970s, thereby making links between feminist ideas, peace, justice and equality. While many women were still largely organizing within their ethnonational communities at this time, and appealing to essentialist conceptions of womanhood, the impact of feminist thought and alliance-based politics would serve to radicalize these movements in the coming decade.

3.5 Women’s activism in Northern Ireland: 1980s

Despite the high profile civil rights and peace activism undertaken by women in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the bulk of women’s organizing was primarily
situated in ethnonationally homogeneous working-class neighbourhoods. Several key umbrella organizations began to emerge in the late 1970s and 1980s, however, to coordinate some of the activities and services offered by the women’s centres. These cross-community organizations, many of which continue to exist today, focused primarily on social and economic need, particularly in disadvantaged areas. They included Women’s Aid, formed in 1975; Women’s Information Group, formed in 1980; and the Women’s Resource and Development Agency (formerly Women’s Education Project), formed in 1983. McWilliams notes that while their work was originally limited to issues related to social welfare, the structure of these organizations allowed for continued contact across the ethnonational divide.\footnote{McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 31. Also see: Racioppi and See, "’This We Will Maintain’: Gender, Ethno-nationalism and the Politics of Unionism in Northern Ireland," 99.} She argues that the ability of these organizations to overcome earlier fragmentation and to work across national boundaries signaled the kind of feminist coalition politics that Yuval-Davis describes. Women acknowledged their differences instead of appealing to notions of universal sisterhood.\footnote{McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 33.}

In 1989, a new umbrella cross-community organization, called the Women’s Support Network, was launched. The origins of the Network are attributed to the time when the Belfast city council threatened to cut funding to the Falls Road Women’s Centre, servicing a nationalist/Catholic community in Belfast, because some of their members were identified as republicans and the centre was therefore banned from receiving public funds. The Shankill Women’s Centre, which serviced a unionist/Protestant neighbourhood in Belfast, along with the Northern Ireland European Women’s Platform, demanded that the government continue to provide funding for the centre. From this joint action, the Women’s Support Network (WSN) was born.\footnote{Cockburn, The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict, 77.} Today, the WSN represents thirty women’s community organizations in Northern Ireland, such as the Women's Resource and Development Agency, the Windsor Women's Centre, the Shankill Women's Centre and the Falls Women's Centre. This organization was more
consciously cross-community and politically motivated than past community groups.\textsuperscript{213} For example, the organization participated in international conferences on transversal politics and cross-community work and exchanged visits with other women’s cross-community groups from conflict regions such as \textit{Bat Shalom} in Israel.\textsuperscript{214} The WSN developed a common feminist agenda that was not based on a nationalist understanding of conflict and conflict resolution. Rather, the very conditions that were necessary to secure peace included commitments to justice and democracy. Members maintained that violence was the net result of inequality.\textsuperscript{215} The organization defines itself today as

an accessible, feminist, relevant and high quality support service and resource for its member groups.

WSN is an important vehicle for taking forward the common agenda of community-based women’s organisations, many of which are based in the most disadvantaged areas of the city and which have experienced the worst effects of the political conflict.\textsuperscript{216}

Throughout the 1980s and particularly since the early 1990s, governmental and non-governmental organizations in Northern Ireland were also actively promoting cross-community partnerships as an effective means for overcoming mutual suspicion and mistrust. For example, the \textit{International Fund for Ireland} was established by the British and Irish governments in 1986, “to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland.”\textsuperscript{217} The European Union also became a major source of funding for this program in 1989\textsuperscript{218} and the subsequent peace monies provided by the European Union as part of this program were given to organizations that promoted cross-community partnerships. In particular, the second \textit{Programme

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{213} Information about the Women’s Support Network, including a list of their current members, is available from their website: http://www.wsn.org.uk.
\textsuperscript{214} Cockburn and Hunter, ”Transversal Politics and Translating Practices.”
\textsuperscript{215} Cockburn, \textit{The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict}, 81.
\textsuperscript{216} WSN, ”Submission to Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission: A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland,” (2002).
\textsuperscript{217} Information about the International Fund for Ireland is available from their website: www.internationalfundforireland.com.
\textsuperscript{218} Information about the program is available from the European Commission’s website: ”\textit{Structural Actions in Support of Peace and Reconciliation},” (27 August 2008); available from http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/themes/peace_en.htm.
\end{footnotesize}
for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (2000-2006), commonly referred to as the “Peace II” Programme, specifically prioritized cross-community partnerships. As stated on the website, this program was designed to address

the economic and social legacy of 30 years of conflict in the region and to take advantage of new opportunities arising from the restoration of peace. It will benefit a wide range of sectors, areas, groups and communities which have been particularly affected by "the Troubles" and encourage cross-community projects.\textsuperscript{219}

Similarly, the Central Community Relations Unit was set up in 1987, followed by the Community Relations Council (CRC) in 1990 to provide the financial backing necessary to allow those cross-community initiatives that had begun to take seed in community development projects, like those run by women, to flourish.\textsuperscript{220} The CRC tended to limit its support to cross-community projects.\textsuperscript{221}

As the British government was supportive of cross-community partnerships, it increased funding for such activities leading to a notable rise in cross-community activities by the mid-1990s. The 1980s was also a period in which women became comfortable speaking about politics.\textsuperscript{222} Some of the organizers and participants in the women’s centres that had been established throughout this period began to bring women they knew from the “other” community to meetings and functions.\textsuperscript{223} As Cockburn argues:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{219} “Commission launches 2nd Peace and Reconciliation Programme for Northern Ireland worth Euro 740 million for Northern Ireland and the Border Region " European Commission (22 March 2001).
  \item \textsuperscript{220} The predecessor to both of these organizations, the Ministry for Community Relations and a Community Relations Commission, was established after violence ensued in Northern Ireland in 1969. Due to internal strife, the Commission was disbanded in 1975 and community policy matters became the purview of the Department of Education. See: Deirdre Heenan, "Getting to Go: Women and Community Relations in Northern Ireland," \textit{Community Development Journal} 32, no. 1 (1997): 88. Also see: Hugh Frazer and Mari Fitzduff, "Improving Community Relations: A Paper Prepared for the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights," (Community Relations Council, Belfast, 1994).
  \item \textsuperscript{221} As Deirdre Hennan finds: “Although the CRC state in their policy documents that they do support work within one community, the overwhelming majority of projects supported by them are concerned with promoting cross-community relations.” Heenan, "Getting to Go: Women and Community Relations in Northern Ireland," 89.
  \item \textsuperscript{222} Cockburn, \textit{The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict}, 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 68.
\end{itemize}
Northern Ireland’s women’s voluntary and community sector organizations, in particular, were lauded for their ability to bring the nationalist and unionist communities together for the purposes of promoting peace and reconciliation.\textsuperscript{224}

These experiences with cross-community organizing formed the foundation on which women went on to organize an all-women cross-community political party. This party, which I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, played an important role in ensuring that women’s interests in peace, human rights and equality were addressed alongside the constitutional question. And just as women in Northern Ireland began to create cross-community organizations in the 1980s, so too did women in Israel/Palestine.

### 3.6 Women’s activism in Israel/Palestine: 1980s

During the 1980s, Palestinian women became increasingly subject to worsening living conditions as the occupation deepened in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Miscarriages due to the use of tear-gas at rallies, limited access to food and unsanitary birthing conditions were part of the dismal reality of the 1980s. Writer Elise G. Young describes Palestinian women as suffering under the “gender-race-class” divide – as impoverished Palestinian women.\textsuperscript{225} The increasingly intolerable living conditions for all Palestinians led to a mass, spontaneous Palestinian uprising in 1987 popularly called the first “intifada.”

During this period, women’s activities further expanded and they developed more women’s centres, committees in areas outside of the city and alternative educational sites.\textsuperscript{226} Women also took to the streets, to throw stones at occupying tanks and soldiers. Rema Hammami writes:

\textsuperscript{224} See: Kate Fearson, "Northern Ireland Women's Coalition: Institutionalizing a Political Voice and Ensuring Representation," \textit{Conflict Resources} (2002).


In that very first period of mass spontaneity, traditional identities were suspended. Women weren’t going down to the streets as mothers, women weren’t going down as workers. Really, literally, everybody took to the streets as Palestinians.\textsuperscript{227}

Palestinian women were learning skills related to organizing and networking and learning to develop and articulate expectations that they would use in future feminist activism, described in the following chapters. Salam Hamdan, representative of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in the Palestinian Authority, explains that the women’s movement was born in the various national movements and not out of feminist principles. However, due to the conservative nature of society, women from different national movements had to work together on mass. Thus, women were able to liberate themselves from the national agenda.\textsuperscript{228} Women were networking with each other through the \textit{Higher Women’s Council} – a body formed in 1988 to bring together the various national women’s committees.\textsuperscript{229} Despite women’s level of organization, they did not, however, achieve prominent positions within the newly formed \textit{United National Leadership of the Uprising} (UNLU) as did the mainly male representatives of the more factional trade unions.\textsuperscript{230}

Palestinian feminist scholars and activists Hammami and Eileen Kuttab argue that women found it prudent to appeal to a motherhood motif – because that moral symbolism would help to rouse Palestinian women and reignite the women’s movement against the occupation.\textsuperscript{231} Just as Sharoni argued that Israeli women used the motherhood trope strategically – Hammami and Kuttab argue that Palestinian women found it useful not only to win the favour of the broader Palestinian society, but also to attract nationalist Palestinian women to their ranks. The backlash

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{228} Hamdan, interview by author.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Rabab Abdulhadi, "The Palestinian Women's Autonomous Movement," \textit{Gender & Society} 12, no. 6 (1998): 657.
\item \textsuperscript{230} Joost R. Hiltermann, "Trade Unions and Women's Committees: Sustaining Movement, Creating Space " \textit{Middle East Report}, no. 164/165 (1990): 34.
\end{itemize}
against Palestinian women’s advances from the broader Palestinian society served to galvanize the autonomous women’s movement in Palestine.

Women also began to experience pressure to dress conservatively during this period and, particularly in Gaza, to wear a hijab, or head covering. Abla Masroujeh, coordinator of the Women’s Affairs Department of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, remembers the pressure to dress conservatively in Palestine during the first intifada:

I remember the first intifada when we used to go out without sleeves for instance – in mini skirts. I remember my sister, now she is a grandmother, she was wearing something that I would not dare to wear. We had daily funerals, we had daily killings. You could not take care of yourself in such a way. You tried to be much more respectful to the general situation – you cannot go to a funeral with five killed people while you are putting make up on for instance. In a funeral you have to cover your hair in all countries, in all traditions. So in our case, they put [on] such things and they cover their bodies because of respect for such a situation. You feel that you are not connected to material things. You want something spiritual to be connected with. And one of those connections is the religion. So I believe when the situation is more relieved and much better, let’s say, I am sure they will come back to what we [were] used to.232

Until this point, there was broad variation in the wearing of the hijab among Palestinians. Hammami argues that efforts to impose the hijab on women were “fundamentally an instrument of oppression, a direct disciplining of women’s bodies for political ends.” She describes a process whereby the hijab became part of the nationalist movement. Women were perceived as vain and anti-nationalist if they did not cover their heads. This was an attempt to “nationalize the hijab.” Women also began to wear the hijab out of fear of reprisal from Palestinian religious youths.233 An informal organization of young men, called Shabab acted as an ad hoc moral police, enforcing strict interpretations of the Koran, including head covering. The pressure to wear the hijab was exerted with force and the UNLU did not address this problem (thereby contributing to women’s disillusionment with the nationalist project as it was constructed) until 1989.234

232 Abla Masroujeh, head of the gender department of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), interview by author, 16 April 2005, Ramallah, digital voice recording, PGFTU, Ramallah, West Bank
Palestinian women had other particular experiences of the conflict, as distinct from men, which informed different social and political priorities. For example, Israeli soldiers would target women and threaten to harm their “honour” if they did not cooperate with them. Some women felt compelled to act as collaborators to avoid harm and thus felt like traitors to the national cause.\(^{235}\) Especially during the first intifada, many Palestinian women felt that the national movement did not deliver on the promises of liberation for them and did not work to counter the rise of moral control of women with the rise of conservative Islam during this period. Palestinian feminist activist Hanan Aruri, for example, argues: “Why should I stick to a national identity that immediately excludes me as a woman? Nationalism has a lot of exclusion … and we women do not find ourselves there.”\(^{236}\) This type of radicalization and internal reflection on the implications of nationalist ambitions and claims was characteristic of women’s organizations in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. As such, the political climate at this historical juncture created the conditions necessary for the formation of an autonomous women’s movement in the occupied territories.

During the first Palestinian intifada, Israeli women were also beginning to organize more exclusively women’s-based organizations that challenged the Israeli occupation. Such groups included *Women in Black*, the *Women’s Organization for Women Political Prisoners*, *Shani-Israeli Women Against the Occupation*, *The Women and Peace Coalition*, and *Women’s Peace Net*. These women’s peace groups tended to be more radical than mixed gender groups. For example, women were making the trip to the occupied territories when the mainstream peace movement in Israel was holding demonstrations during the first intifada.\(^{237}\) *Women in Black* is perhaps the most recognizable women’s peace group, beginning as an all-women anti-occupation

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\(^{235}\) Ibid., 658.

\(^{236}\) Hanan Aruri, board member of the Jerusalem Center for Women and Palestinian feminist activist, interview by author, 21 April 2005, Ramallah, digital voice recording, UNDP Offices, Ramallah, West Bank.

vigil in Hagar Square, West Jerusalem in January 1988. Women would stand for one hour dressed in black and hold signs that simply read “end the occupation.” The movement, twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, still maintains a weekly vigil in Jerusalem and hosts regular international conferences. The movement went on to inspire peace vigils in other Israeli and international cities such as Berkeley, London, Toronto, Belgrade and Brussels throughout the 1990s.

While conducting fieldwork in 2005, I had the opportunity to stand on vigil in Hagar Square and meet some of the principal organizers and long-time members including Judy Blanc, a founder of the movement, and Gila Svirsky, a long-time lesbian-feminist peace activist. The women enjoyed some honks in support of the vigil from local traffic, but also a counter demonstration by Israeli youth across the street. One cabdriver asked the women if they were real Jews and another passerby yelled in English: “Get out of my neighbourhood! Scram! Get out of my country!” This was a very mild reaction compared to the early years of the movement when the women were physically attacked at the vigils.238 I asked Svirsky if Palestinian women ever attend but she explained that the vigils were really an Israeli-Jewish thing.239

*Women in Black* was not an explicitly feminist group and some activists are still hesitant to identify themselves as feminists. However, Blanc explains that even though some women may not identify with feminism per se, the process of women’s organizing and the structure of decision-making is a distinctly feminist one. She contrasts the open, respectful and spontaneous environment cultivated at *Women in Black* meetings with other leftist organizations that she had been a part of as an activist. Blanc gives the example of a *Women in Black* meeting during the

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238 Judith Blanc, founding member of Women in Black and Israeli feminist peace activist, interview by author, 5 February 2005, Jerusalem, digital voice recording, Prima Kings Hotel, Jerusalem, Israel.

239 Gila Svirsky, co-chair of B’Tselem and Israeli feminist peace activist, interview by author, 21 January 2005, written notes, Jerusalem, Israel.
first Gulf War where activists were discussing whether or not to continue to hold public vigils during this tumultuous period: 240

People were in panic and … felt that we were going to be attacked. A number of women did not want to stand [on vigil] and we had three general meetings about whether we would stand … Each person in the room spoke and it was a model quite spontaneous and not any part of either Israeli culture or the left’s culture … At the end of the meeting … a group of us said: ‘okay, we are going to stand.’ And a number of the women, including Gila [Svirsky], who had voted against standing, came along in solidarity and within a week the majority had come along. Now the dynamics of that meeting – everything was clear without having anything spelled out. Nobody said anything, and the meeting took place just as I said. That is, to some degree, a prototypical dynamic of Women in Black. 241

Lesbian feminists also became prominent activists in groups like Women in Black. 242 Judy Blanc explains that while the vigils were first organized by a core group of leftist peace activists that remained loosely organized since the Lebanon war, “as soon as other women joined, other elements came into that. And the other significant group of women that joined and are co-authors of that first year were … lesbians.” 243

Others locate the origins of the Women in Black vigils in the anti-occupation and feminist discussions that took place at the former Kol-Ha-Isha women’s centre in Jerusalem in the early 1980s, suggesting a longer relationship between women, feminism, anti-occupation and lesbian activism that took place at these centres. Hannah Safran explains that the Women in Black vigils, where women challenged women’s exclusion from politics and made the connection between the Israeli occupation and their oppression as women, were a safe space for lesbian activists. While many of the lesbian activists were not publicly “out,” they comprised approximately 25-30 per cent of the 100 or so women that attended Women in Black vigils each week. As Safran remembers, the women on the vigils represented a variety of different political and identity

240 Blanc, interview by author.
241 Ibid.
243 Blanc, interview by author.
affiliations, including Zionist and anti-Zionist women, the poor and wealthy, lesbian and straight women and Jews and (much less frequently) Palestinians. However, in an effort to avoid dissension among these broad groups of women, differences were not discussed at organizational meetings. The contradiction between the participation of lesbians and their apparent invisibility at the vigils demonstrates both the alliances and the denial created within the group.244

Lesbian-feminist women also began to organize separately beginning in 1987, under the name CLaF – an acronym meaning Lesbian Feminist Community. Haya Shalom started the organization after experiencing the success of a thriving feminist, lesbian community in the United States and liaising with third world lesbian activists at the International Lesbian Information Service conference in Amsterdam, 1986:

I tried to learn from the experience of lesbians from all over the world. I also took advantage of the (then) rare opportunity to learn about third world lesbians and how they waged their struggle. Since their culture is not dissimilar from that of the Mediterranean – given the oppressive rules of religion and the military – I tried to learn from their experience.245

Clearly the international and regional linkages with other movements helped to inspire similar activism within Israel. Emma Gilbert (not her real name) recalls that it was through her work in the feminist movement in Israel and at the women’s centres, that she was able to “come out” as lesbian. She went on to participate in the 1985 Nairobi UN Conference on the Decade of Women where she heard Palestinian women speak about their experiences of dispossession. She writes:

Far away from my protected daily routine, I lost all my defenses and let my emotions overwhelm me. Afterward, I finally could think with a clear mind and have discussions with people hearing things I didn’t like and dealing with them on a rational level. This enabled me to be involved in women’s peace groups after the intifada started and to work with women whose opinions I didn’t necessarily agree with, but with whom I could find a common ground for a specific purpose. It also helped me see what we as Israelis had done and were doing wrong.246

CLaF took the unpopular stand of openly supporting the intifada and making the connection between all forms of gender, ethnic, sexual and class-based oppression. Spike Pittsberg writes that when CLaF first organized, it was run by nine women “who developed a political analysis which tied Israeli lesbian oppression directly to the occupation, in the context of a feminist view of the particular ways in which war and colonialization affect the lives of women.” CLaF joined the umbrella feminist organization Noga and therefore established the equal representation of lesbian women, along with Mizrahi, Ashkenazi and Palestinian women at the feminist conferences that Noga organized in Israel. The emergence of a multitude of women’s peace groups provided some Israeli women with new opportunities to step out of their prescribed roles as mothers and keepers of the home front and to take positions on the most pressing concern in Israeli politics: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Women were clearly articulating their experiences in conflict as women. Sharoni describes this as “the movement’s cautious relationship with feminism.”

As discussed earlier in this section, an autonomous women’s feminist peace movement was taking root in Israel at the same time as such a movement was coming to fruition in Palestine. Ashwari attributes the rising feminist consciousness in the Israeli peace movement to the activities of the first intifada:

I think the most determining factor in the emergence of Israeli women’s consciousness – of making the link between gender issues and national/political issues – came with the Intifada. The prominent role that Palestinian women played was, in a way, a challenge to Israeli women. They started trying to reach us on a feminist basis. We told them we would work together on common agendas – gender self-determination and national self-determination.

This development set the stage for future activism in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

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247 Einav Zilber, board member of the Community of Lesbian Feminists (CLaF), interview by author, 11 July 2005, Tel Aviv, digital voice recording, Tel Aviv, Israel.
based on a model of cross-national activism and coalition politics.

**Israeli and Palestinian women’s cross-community organizations**

As the Palestinian intifada heated up in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Israeli and Palestinian women began to organize several successful cross-community projects. The *Jerusalem Link* is one of the largest and longest-running coexistence projects organized by Israeli and Palestinian women. Dialogue between women began in 1985 at the United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi. Israeli feminist peace activist Galia Golan, who was present at the conference, remembers that there was “mutuality” of interests among the women that created a positive environment for discussion: “With the all-women’s groups, they didn’t have the problem of the stigmas that men suffered from – Israeli man-as-soldier and Palestinian-as-terrorist – which made discussions easier.”

In 1989, Palestinian and Israeli women met again in Belgium at the conference called “Give Peace a Chance: Women Speak Out” and in 1992 at the “Second International Israel-Palestinian Peace Conference.” Fadwa Al-Labadi, Director of Gender Studies, Al Qud’s University and leading figure in the Palestinian feminist peace movement, remembers the excitement of this period for women activists: “We feel that women don’t want war, women want peace. Just peace. We started to think how we can do it – Palestinian women and Israeli women. How we can make women organize to struggle for peace.” It was out of these conferences that Israeli and Palestinian women created the *Jerusalem Link* in 1994 to serve as an umbrella organization for the Israeli-based women’s peace group *Bat Shalom* and the Palestinian-based peace group the *Jerusalem Center for Women*.

The *Jerusalem Link* describes itself as a

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251 Galia Golan-Gild, professor in the Lauder School of Government Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya and Israeli feminist peace activist, interview by author, 05 June 2005, Herzliya, Israel, digital voice recording, IDC, Herzliya, Israel.


253 Al-Labadi, interview by author.
cooperative model of coexistence between our respective peoples. Each organization is autonomous and takes its own national constituency as its primary responsibility – but together we promote a joint vision of a just peace, democracy, human rights, and women’s leadership.  

Meetings between Israeli and Palestinian women, along with other international women interested in peace in the Middle East, were opportunities for interaction and “identification on neutral territory.”

Both the *Jerusalem Center for Women* and *Bat Shalom* openly identified as feminist associations and discussions among members pertained to both feminist and national concerns. Golan describes the type of dialogue among women as different from the type of dialogue that occurs during cross-community meetings in mixed-gender Israeli peace groups like *Peace Now*. Golan says that women tend to be more open and empathetic; they could relate to each other as women, which created a “bond”:

The women in the women’s groups (on the Israeli side) are much more radical, in my opinion, than the men or the mainstream in the peace movement. And I think frankly the women, if I look at our various groups, we are very much on the fringes of society and maybe we can permit ourselves to be radical because no one is going to pay too much attention to us anyway.

Many Jewish-Israeli women revealed that they have never had a conversation with an Israeli-Palestinian or a Palestinian from the occupied territories prior to their involvement in a women’s co-existence community group. During interviews, some women described their first encounter with a Palestinian or Israeli and the significance it held for their continued participation in their social group and for their future experiences in political organizing. For example, Svirsky recalls that she was over the age of forty when she had a conversation with a Palestinian for the first time through her work in the peace movement. Similarly, Noa Sattath, chair of the *Jerusalem Open House*, a queer community centre that attracts both Palestinians and Israelis, explains that her

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254 “Who We Are,” *The Jerusalem Link*.  
255 Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace: A Personal Account*, 63.  
256 Golan-Gild, interview by author.  
257 Ibid.  
258 Svirsky, interview by author.
work at the Open House and in women’s groups brought her into meaningful contact with Palestinians for the first time. On the university campus she attended, Palestinian students maintain a separate student’s union from the Jewish-Israeli students and Palestinians are often denied access to local pubs and cafes by security. Through her involvement in social groups that organized around themes like gender and sexuality, Sattath says that it is clear that cross-community interaction is both possible and necessary for creating dialogue and social change.\textsuperscript{259} Svirsky and Sattath’s admissions are particularly astonishing considering the Arab population of Israel is about twenty per cent. The fact that they did not have a meaningful encounter with the other twenty per cent of the Israeli population indicates the depth of the structural separation of Israeli society.

In both Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, the cross-community partnerships that women forged throughout the 1980s challenged the us-versus-other relationship fomented through the histories of colonization and oppressive rule. Where unionist women reflected on their privileged position in relation to the state, Jewish-Israeli women identified the occupation and the activities of the Israeli military as unjust and therefore fundamentally at odds with peace. Nationalist/republican women and Palestinian women rejected the romanticisation of the pre-colonial past offered by the revolutionary movements – a romanticisation that offered circumscribed roles for women. Critical of the ways in which their respective ethnonational movements marginalized them, they created alternative political spaces in which to reflect on their experiences of marginalization and continued to radicalize as deeply political agents. Such activism challenges the ethnonational literature, discussed in Chapter 2, which theorizes that ethnicity and nationalism are the most salient and politically important identities in conflict. Instead, feminist activists developed alternative political spaces that culminated in distinct

\textsuperscript{259} Noa Sattath, Jerusalem Open House spokesperson, interview by author, 27 January 2005, Jerusalem, written notes, Jerusalem Open House, Israel.
political projects throughout the 1990s, which I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter. The new spaces that women built, like the “third space” articulated by Homi Bhabha, Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper discussed in Chapter 2, were new sites for struggle and resistance by women organized around themes like gender, class and sexuality. The kinds of cross-community organizing that took place in the late 1980s, as discussed in the preceding section, linked women at the margins and led to a variety of interesting engagements alongside, across and beyond the ethnonational divide in the ensuing decade.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have mapped the specific historical events which gave rise to the formation of women’s peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Through a history of colonization, political upheaval and violence, women organized within and beyond their national movements to advocate for local needs, social and political rights and for peace – launching a broader social revolution during conflict. I tell the stories of the two movements, beginning with early women’s activism through to the end of the 1980s and the development of cross-community partnerships to demonstrate the similar development of women’s activism in both cases. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I explicitly draw out the implications of the development of these movements for thinking about identity in conflict more broadly, and identity in the conflict resolution literature more specifically.

Certainly, understanding the histories of women’s activism in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine helps to reveal endogenous explanations for the development of distinctly women’s peace activism. However, the similar timeframe in both cases further indicates that there are exogenous factors that impacted the development of these movements. For example, groups like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which was organized by women to protest the disappearance of their children under the military dictatorship in Argentina in the late 1970s and
the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidosdesaparacidos (the group of relatives of the detained-disappeared), which was organized in Chile in the mid-1970s, appealed to motherhood motifs and not radical feminist activism. The development of these movements coincided with the early peace movements in these cases such as the women’s movements against the war in Lebanon and the Peace People’s protests in Northern Ireland. As Judy Blanc explains, much of the imagery developed for the Women in Black movement consciously came from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. What changed for these movements, which did not identify yet as feminist movements, was the gradual inclusion of other women, differently positioned within these cases, such as the lesbian-feminist activists who joined the Women in Black vigils. Many of the women’s centres in Israel in the early days were influenced by changes in the United States and some of the meetings were even held in English. In this sense, the development of these movements reflected international changes in women’s movements, feminist thought and social activism.

Responding to changing endogenous events as well as broader regional and international trends in feminist and rights-based movements, women in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine mobilized analogous feminist peace movements and developed similar demands for peace defined as more than just the absence of violence, but also as inextricably linked to broader conceptions of social transformation and justice. In the next chapter, I discuss the role that these organizations played in the peace processes of the 1990s in both cases, identifying the varying successes women’s communities experienced in their attempts to inject the priorities, as developed in these women’s movements, into the politics of peace.

261 Blanc, interview by author.
Chapter 4

This chapter focuses on the experiences of women’s activism and women’s political participation in the events leading up to the signing of the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles (hereafter Oslo Accords) in Israel/Palestine and the 1998 Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland. The more open and inclusive structure of the peace process in Northern Ireland stood in stark contrast to the closed and secret process that characterized the peace process in Israel/Palestine. This difference permitted women, who had organized in community centres, the women’s movement and the peace movement during the Troubles (as described in Chapter 3), to play a larger role in the development of first-class political duties related to human rights and equality as part of the final peace agreement and subsequent political statutory provisions and statutory bodies. Ultimately, however, the political spaces open to women during the peace process all but disappeared in the post-Agreement period as political institutions in Northern Ireland became bogged down by narrow ethnonational agendas. I argue that the reification of ethnonational identity politics, leading to the perpetuation of existing social and political power structures, produced an exclusionary post-conflict political system of government and weakened the new Northern Ireland Assembly’s ability to follow through on its broader social and political obligations.

I begin this chapter by outlining the events leading up to the signing of the Oslo Accords by the ethnonational elite-dominated Israeli and Palestinian delegations. As a result of the elite structure of the talks, there was no involvement of the broader Israeli and Palestinian civil societies. In the case of the Palestinian delegation, those activists who were living under occupation, and who had been the principal architects of the intifada, were excluded from the official talks in favour of representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) living in exile. The exclusionary character of the peace process was especially disappointing for those
Palestinian women who had expected that peace negotiations and the establishment of a new Palestinian government would offer an opportunity to launch a broader social agenda and the prioritization of human rights and justice related themes. No such agenda made its way into the talks and the living conditions in the occupation territories, as well as the security situation in Israel, worsened after the signing of the Agreement.

In the second section of this chapter, I discuss how women in Northern Ireland, associated with women’s feminist peace communities and women’s activism, created a successful all-women political party called the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party (hereafter Women’s Coalition). Members of the Women’s Coalition were elected to two seats on the official negotiating body leading to the 1998 Belfast Agreement. Their experiences of social and political marginalization and mobilization, as discussed in Chapter 3, informed a unique political agenda that defined peace as more than just the absence of violence alone; peace entailed, rather, the inclusion of human rights and justice for all citizens, beyond provisions for the nationalist and unionist communities. I argue that their experiences in the peace process are instructive for the Israel/Palestine case, demonstrating the impact that Israeli and Palestinian women could have in future peace talks in the Middle East, given a more inclusive structure for the peace process. I note, however, the inclusion of women in the Northern Ireland peace process was an accidental by-product of an electoral formula principally designed to be inclusive of ethnonational community leaders. In my view, the success of women’s participation in the talks demonstrates the potential value of planning intentionally inclusive peace processes with specific mechanisms designed to involve civil society groups. In Chapter 6, I pick up this thread and outline the limits of designing peace processes that are only inclusive of groups organized as political parties.
4.1 The Israeli-Palestinian peace process

During the politically turbulent period of the first intifada, Yasser Arafat and the exiled PLO leadership took the opportunity to declare an independent state of Palestine in 1988. The PLO identified the intifada as an important period for the organization to consolidate its power. The PLO agreed to recognize Israel’s right to exist, renounce terrorism and normalization relations with Israel on the condition that Israel recognize an independent Palestinian state.\footnote{A copy of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence is available online from the Palestine Media Center: "Palestinian Declaration of Independence, 15 November 1988," Palestine Media Center: General Secretariat Palestine Liberation Organization, available from http://www.palestine-pmc.com/details.asp?cat=11&id=27. Following the Declaration, Yasser Arafat made a speech specifically recognizing the state of Israel. For relevant passages from his speech, see: "Statement by Yasser Arafat, 14 December 1988," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 9-10, available from http://www.mfa.gov.il/.
} This declaration, however, served to enfeeble the power of the local Unified Intifada Leadership and the other organizations and groups that had mobilized under the occupation (as I described in Chapter 3). The intifada was an expression of the power seized by groups living in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PLO’s declaration and the opening up of informal communication channels between elite members of the exiled PLO leadership and the US and Israel marginalized such local power.

Jamil Hilal, sociologist and member of the Palestinian National Council since 1983, explains that the authority and strength of the PLO leadership was threatened by a number of international, regional and local conditions. For example, the PLO had been expelled from Jordan in 1970-71, embroiled in the Lebanese civil war in 1975, and pushed out again from Lebanon in 1982, ending up in Tunis. Likewise, it had lost the support of the Soviet Union and the declining Arab League and was unable to counterbalance strong US support for Israel. Within the occupied territories, the PLO could not stop the continued construction of Jewish settlements and it had to contend with growing disaffection amongst Palestinians living under increasingly harsh conditions. As such, the exiled PLO leadership used the first intifada to establish its authority as
the only representative of the Palestinian people and to declare support for a two-state solution in 1988.\textsuperscript{264}

The now defunct Oslo peace process followed on the heels of an international peace conference in Madrid in 1991. The Madrid conference was co-sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union and included representatives from Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, the European Community, Israel and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation. It set in motion a series of official Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Washington, D.C. between non-PLO representatives and Israeli representatives. At the same time, a series of secret back-channel negotiations between representatives of the PLO and Israel were also being conducted. It was one of these back channels (initially driven by Israeli academics Yair Hirscheld and Ron Pundak and Israel’s then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yossi Beilin) that culminated in the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles by PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Also known as the Oslo Accords, this agreement, reached secretly and without the participation of Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, delivered years of false starts and failed negotiations on “final status” issues including Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

In the period leading up to the 1991 Madrid Conference, American Secretary of State James Baker reasoned that peace negotiations had to take place with the exiled PLO leadership and not with Palestinian representatives from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. His opinion was indicative of the thinking at this time: the exiled PLO leadership was the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and therefore any future peace agreement would have to be struck with its representatives.\textsuperscript{265} Hanan Ashrawi, official spokesperson for the Palestine

\textsuperscript{265} For example, historian William Quandt similarly reasoned that moderates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip did not enjoy mass support and were merely the de facto representatives of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian leadership PLO in exile in Tunis: “So to get the moderate Palestinians into the
delegation, interpreted Baker’s position as one of anticipation that negotiations could bring about a moderate Palestinian voice: “It was his unstated belief . . . that the negotiations would produce an alternative leadership from the occupied territories that, having the legitimacy of elections, would replace the PLO.” Although Ashrawi contends that this was not the aim of non-PLO peace negotiators like her, the exiled PLO feared that Palestinian leaders from the occupied territories could usurp its power. As such, the PLO was motivated to conduct back-channel negotiations with Israel, excluding non-PLO Palestinians, to establish its leadership in a new Palestinian government.

Women were largely excluded from the official delegation to the peace talks, save for a few high profile women including Ashrawi, Zahira Kamal and Suad Al-Amiry. Ashrawi stands out as a notable exception to the exclusion of women as she served as the official spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation to the peace process and as a member of the Leadership/Guidance Committee and Executive Committee of the Delegation from 1991 to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Yasser Arafat developed a list of advisors, chosen for their party loyalty and favouritism, to accompany the Palestinian delegation to Madrid in 1991. In her memoirs, Ashrawi describes these advisors as having “no clear functions” and as whining “hangers-on.” Those women who played an important role in maintaining the Palestinian intifada, who were the principal members of the peace movement and who were, ironically, responsible for initially game, and to give them political cover, the PLO was still necessary.” See: William B. Quandt, Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC; Berkeley, CA; London: Brookings Institution Press; University of California Press, 2005), 308.

266 Ashrawi, This Side of Peace: A Personal Account, 84.

267 As Ashrawi explains, “We resisted every attempt to create an alternative leadership to replace the PLO, turning down many offers, some very tempting.” Ibid., 116.

268 Zahira Kamal, member of the Leadership Committee assigned to the peace process talks resulting from the Madrid Conference, left after only a few months of negotiations in Washington. She felt she could better serve the interests of women and be more effective at the grassroots level at home. See: Ibid., 176. Suad Al-Amiry, Palestinian architect and writer, was a member of the Washington Peace Talks from 1991–1993. She briefly served as Deputy Minister of Culture in the new Palestinian government.

269 Ibid., 130-149.
proposing a two-state solution to the PLO, were shut out from the high politics of peace negotiations. Fadwa Al-Labadi, director of the Center for Women and Gender Studies at Al-Quds University and Palestinian feminist peace activist, suggests that Palestinian women were excluded from the secret PLO-Israeli talks because they were not in positions of authority in Palestine. While there were some women like Ashrawi that did participate as part of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference in 1991, their roles were circumscribed, temporary and did not extend to the secret Oslo talks and subsequent Oslo process. As Al-Labadi explains:

When Hanan Ashrawi was chosen, it wasn’t because she was a woman . . . . she was a very good speaker – she could reach the mind and the hearts of America and foreigners. Because of that she was chosen, not because she (was) a woman.  

During the official Washington talks between non-PLO Palestinian representatives and Israel, the PLO would occasionally fax statements to the delegates to read, which undermined the latter’s participation in decision-making. Critics also claim that these talks were sabotaged by the PLO leadership – setting the talks up to fail in favour of the secret Oslo negotiations taking place between the PLO and Israel.  

As Nabil Shaath, advisor to Arafat and head of the coordinating committee of the Palestinian delegation to Washington said in an interview in 1993:

Reaching the agreement with the PLO really strikes against Zionist ideology: the reconciliation is made with the official representative of the Palestinian people, with an organization that was created to fight the State of Israel and to fight its occupation and to fight its dominance. So the deal was struck with the organization of struggle, the liberation movement that fought the Israelis, rather than with "Palestinian elements that live in the occupied territories."  

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270 In Ashrawi’s memoirs, she writes that it was Zahira Kamal and the women from the PDLP (Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, now FIDA) who proposed a peace based on a “two state solution” to the PLO in Tunis in 1988: Ibid., 177.
271 Al-Labadi, interview by author.
273 Ashrawi, This Side of Peace: A Personal Account, 183.
The Israelis found a more amenable and flexible partner in the PLO during the secret negotiations than from the non-PLO delegates to Washington. As Uri Savir, Israeli chief negotiator of the Oslo Accords writes:

In these talks, the Palestinians – especially Abu Ala, their senior representative – advanced some surprisingly flexible positions, far more practical than the legalistic tangles created by the "non-PLO" delegation in Washington, made up solely of Palestinians from the occupied territories, which had been holding formal negotiations with us since the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference.275

Unlike the PLO representatives in Oslo, non-PLO delegates to the Washington talks would not agree to a deal that did not settle the status of Jerusalem, address the construction of settlements and guarantee human rights.276 The PLO, however, used the peace process as an opportunity to cement its authority at the expense of dealing with those substantive issues that the Palestinians living under occupation were hopeful could be resolved. In my view, this is part of what makes an ethnonational elite-driven peace process problematic. In this case, the PLO leadership was not just motivated to negotiate a peace on behalf of the Palestinian people; it was also eager to use the peace process to secure power and establish itself as the internationally recognized, and therefore legitimate, authority of a new Palestinian government. Those Palestinians who were living under occupation and fighting for both national self-determination and a broader social revolution were left out in the cold.

Some women were further excluded from attending peace talks because Israel denied them permission to travel outside of the occupied territories due to their political activities during the intifada.277 This problem was particularly acute for those Palestinian women who were active in the women’s unions that were associated with political parties and that Israel considered “terrorist” organizations. For example, Rabiha Diab, director of the Association of Women’s

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276 Ashrawi, This Side of Peace: A Personal Account, 261.
Committees for Social Work, remembers how Israel denied her leave from the West Bank to attend the Madrid Conference because of her involvement in the Palestinian national movement. As such, only the politically active elite, like members of the PLO leadership, were able to make the trip to the peace talks. Politically active non-elite Palestinians, like women living in the occupied territories, could not, therefore, ensure that their interests were prioritized during the peace process.

Another example of the way in which women were excluded from the peace talks was the composition of new Palestinian technical committees. After the Madrid Conference, technical committees, which would serve as the foundation for future ministries in the new Palestinian National Authority (PA), were established to address issues related to land, education, water, health, media and other issues. Very few women, however, were appointed to the committees and the leadership did not create a separate women’s committee. As such, a core group of women went on to found the Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC). The WATC continues to operate as a non-governmental organization but, at the time, it was principally designed to function like a ministry and represent the interests of women. While activist women managed to insert themselves into the process in this way, their overall contributions to the process were limited.

Three years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, elections were held to the PA. This was an important election for Arafat to consolidate power and demonstrate that he represented the will of the Palestinian people. Of the over 670 people running for the 88-seat Palestinian Legislative

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278 Diab, interview by author.
280 Shomali, interview by author.
Council, 23 were women; only five women, representing 5.7 percent of the seats, were elected.\textsuperscript{281}

Carter writes in his memoirs:

> Some strong independents were elected, including Hanan Ashrawi, an influential Christian spokesperson from Ramallah. Everyone laughed when Arafat told me there were going to be about fifteen women on the council, adding that ‘Hanan counts for ten.’\textsuperscript{282}

> Arafat ran for Ra’ees (president) with only one challenger: Samiha Khalil – a feminist and political activist who founded the women’s organization Society of Ina’ash El-Ursa and who was president of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW).\textsuperscript{283} She was not considered a serious contender, and essentially ran to ensure that Arafat was not elected unopposed.\textsuperscript{284} In fact, over 60 per cent of Palestinians polled in February 1996 did not even support Khalil’s decision to run against Arafat.\textsuperscript{285} Arafat received 88 per cent of the vote and his party won the majority of seats on the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{286} Arafat’s sweeping victory was not a surprise, particularly because the Israelis and the American interlocutors made it clear throughout the peace process that he was the representative of the Palestinian people with whom they wanted to negotiate.

> Arafat’s return to Palestine from exile was followed by newspaper closures, censorship, and the detention and arrest of journalists.\textsuperscript{287} Political intransigence continued to plague the Oslo process, as the imposition of curfews in the occupied territories and the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied territories grew.\textsuperscript{288} Carter remembers that at the time when he


\textsuperscript{283} The Society of Ina’ash El-Ursa maintains a website that includes background information on the organization: http://www.inash.org/about/about.html.


\textsuperscript{286} "The 1996 Presidential and Legislative Elections," \textit{Central Elections Commission-Palestine}.


\textsuperscript{288} Ashrawi, \textit{This Side of Peace: A Personal Account}, 283.
returned to the West Bank to assist with the 1996 elections, Israel was already exercising almost complete control of the territory. For example, Palestinians were prohibited from using Israeli settlement roads and the West Bank was hopelessly divided by approximately one hundred permanent Israeli checkpoints.289

It was clear to women during this period that the political, social and economic power that they had gained in the intifada years was not reflected in the new post-Oslo political institutions. Ashrawi describes how she was the only representative of women’s rights and a human rights agenda in the new PA. She told Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat that unless a critical mass of women was invited into the higher echelons of power in the PA, she would leave formal politics.290 Ashrawi officially resigned in 1998 citing lack of reform, failure to bring new voices into the PA and corruption.

Hanan Aruri, a Palestinian feminist activist, describes the Oslo period in general as an historical shift in the Palestinian struggle that served to “de-politicize,” “neutralize” and “paralyze” the Palestinian public. She believes Palestinians mistakenly abandoned their social and political communities and put their faith in the newly created PA.291 In this sense, the creation of new state infrastructure (but not a state) undercut the revolutionary spirit of the intifada years. Despite the perception that social movements were paralyzed in the post-Oslo Accords period, the women’s movement continued to grow. Like the surge in the number of Israeli women’s peace groups in the early 1990s, described in Chapter 3, there was a similar swelling of Palestinian women’s groups. Palestinian women from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jordan began to make the connection between the interests of the Palestinian women’s movement and human rights concerns. For example, they drafted protocols on women’s rights in areas such as marriage, divorce, education and custody. A Women’s Studies program was founded at BirZeit University.

289 Carter, _Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid_, 141.
290 Hanan Ashrawi, "The Global Context and Human Imperative of Peace in the Middle East," in _Chancellor Dunning Trust Lecture_ (Ban Righ Hall. Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada: 2005).
291 Aruri, interview by author.
in 1994 and the women’s movement also developed a Personal Status Code, which would function basically like a bill of rights for women.\textsuperscript{292} Women presented this code, based on the principles of equality and the International Covenant of the Rights of Women, to the PA after the Oslo Accords were signed. They hoped that it would act as a bulwark against an increasingly religious-conservative movement.\textsuperscript{293} Rabab Abdulhadi argues that part of the explanation for the growth of the women’s movement can be attributed to the overall decline of the national movement, which opened up the opportunity for the growth of a transformative women’s movement.\textsuperscript{294} As Abdulhadi writes:

This complex, multidimensional, and fluid sociopolitical map represents the context in which Palestinian women activists embarked on a collective process of revising their historical narrative, negotiating their social and political roles, challenging their subordination, and articulating new terms for their participation in the social and political life of their people.\textsuperscript{295}

Underrepresented in the new PA, women began to work on issues related to democracy and good governance and to demand better representation.\textsuperscript{296} It was women’s experiences of political exclusion within the national movement and by the new government that motivated them to form organizations that advocated for the kind of democratic change that they believed was central to creating an inclusive and stable post-conflict society. For example, Salam Hamdan created a gender studies program at Al-Quds University, West Bank. In her work with Palestinian women, Galia Golan recalls the conscious decision that Palestinian women made not to repeat the failure of other women who did not win emancipation after their national liberation struggles, such as was the case in Algeria.\textsuperscript{297} She recalls women like Zahira Kamal and other Marxists who came from Fida “raising the feminist flag along with their activities for the national movement

\textsuperscript{292} See: Abdulhadi, "The Palestinian Women's Autonomous Movement."
\textsuperscript{294} Abdulhadi, "The Palestinian Women's Autonomous Movement," 651.
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 653.
\textsuperscript{296} Jarrar, interview by author.
\textsuperscript{297} Golan-Gild, interview by author.
and reaching peace with Israel.” In this sense, it was their exclusion from negotiations by Israel and by Palestinian officials that spurred Palestinian women to relate their activism to a feminist political agenda. The 1990s, therefore, was an opportunity for women to organize with other women. International networking also took place, and Palestinian women liaised with women in places like Kenya, Mexico and Denmark. In this sense, it was precisely at the time of the decline of the nationalist movement that the networking among women both within Palestine and at the international level began to increase.

The proliferation of women’s organizations in the occupied territories was not without critics in the women’s movement. Some feminists voiced concern that the professionalization or “NGOisation” of the women’s movement in Palestine would serve to depoliticize women and water down the national struggle against occupation and the project of statehood. As Eileen Kuttab says:

The NGOisation and the funding following the Oslo Accord resulted in what we call professional women's organizations. Most of them have transformed themselves into societies. We talk about these things critically.

Kuttab argues a process of depoliticization took place when women stopped working on the national cause and began working on issues related to women’s rights, domestic violence and advocacy. Al-Labadi similarly argues that the women’s unions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which played an important role in mobilizing women during the intifada, were weakened as they changed their names from “committees” to “societies” and began to work on the issues Kuttab describes. Al-Labadi laments the tremendous reach of the original women’s committees

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298 Ibid.
300 T.K. Rajalakshmi, "Resistance has become a class issue. Interview with Eileen Kuttab, Director, Institute of Women's Studies, Beirzet University, West Bank," Frontline, December 02-15 2006.
301 Ibid.
during the first intifada: “They reached everywhere, every village, every camp, they have committees, small committees, local committees in every area. But now they don’t have this.”

Despite the expansion of the women’s movement, there was also a perceptible pessimism within the movement as confidence in the Palestinian national movement began to wane and Arafat could not deliver a successful peace process. Women’s general exclusion from the Madrid talks, total exclusion from the secret Oslo peace process and subsequent absence from the new Authority’s political structures demonstrated that the path to national liberation was not delivering women’s liberation. As we can see from the experiences of Palestinian women in the peace process, their ethnonational identity as Palestinians was not abandoned by the women’s movement. The principal goal of national liberation remained an important demand of the women’s movement. Some women were critical, in fact, when they perceived that women’s activism deviated from the fight against occupation and the material causes of their exploitation. However, the women’s movement also provided a critical perspective, or a “thirdspace,” from which women acknowledged the excesses of nationalism that served to marginalize them as political actors. The “thirdspace” was not just a figurative location; it was also comprised of several literal and physical locations, such as the women’s shadow technical committee described above. From these locations, women developed other political priorities which emphasized their liberation as inextricably tied to Palestinian liberation. In this sense, women challenged the interpretation of ethnonational values being (re)imagined in the new PA, through their alliances with Palestinian women and other women around the world, thereby forging inclusive communities of resistance by choosing their subaltern identity as Palestinian women.

302 Al-Labadi, interview by author.
4.2 The Northern Ireland peace process and the creation of the Women’s Coalition party

Unlike the Israel/Palestine case, women achieved a much higher profile in the Northern Ireland peace process. As a peace process was beginning to take shape in Northern Ireland in the early 1990s, largely outside of public purview, women activists began to talk about how they could be meaningfully included in the process. For example, republican women activists held a feminist conference “Clar na mBan” or Women’s Agenda for Peace, in Belfast in March 1994. Activist Oonagh Marron describes the aim of the conference:

As nationalist women and as feminists, we have very often given our support unconditionally to the overthrow of British colonialism in this country. We have often buried our demands for the sake of a common purpose - Brits out. In the past, that has been a way of censoring our demands . . . I think that it is time to send a message to those negotiating on our behalf that this time around our support will not be unconditional; never again will we collusion with the exclusion of people, with the denial of their rights.303

At the conference, Bernadette McAliskey (formerly Devlin) criticized the secret negotiations that were taking place between Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams and SDLP leader John Hume:

I did not struggle for 25 years to be told to sit back and watch other people play high-class, intellectual, political poker with my past, present and future – I did not.

I have been chasing this peace for 25 years but, suddenly, my opinions on how we get there are of no value. They are put down to my being rural, female, republican, too old, lost too much, too bitter, too narrow. Suddenly, I am on the outside and all the people I have been trying to persuade to take another way are all on the inside.304

McAliskey warned the delegates at the conference that exclusive negotiation processes were unlikely to deliver on promises of peace and equality:

I tell you, boys, you’re going down a wee tunnel. It won’t bring you peace. It won’t bring you equality and, when you come outside at the other end of it, you won’t even have the

personal or political integrity you had going into it. That’s your business, but they are not taking mine with them.\textsuperscript{305}

At public conferences, debates and town-hall meetings, women began to explore the implications of a burgeoning peace for their community groups and continued activism. These meetings were largely ignored by the press and the general public because women were not regarded as important political actors.\textsuperscript{306}

The republican women at the \textit{Clar na mBan} conference issued a call to unionist women to similarly mobilize as women and as feminists and to engage in a political debate with republican women. As Eilish Rooney notes, unionist women in Northern Ireland did not begin to explore the relationship between unionism, identity and feminism until the early 1990s. Rooney attributes the earlier politicization of nationalist women to the mobilization of republicanism in general:

> The historical accommodation between republicanism and feminism, and the links between feminism and opposition or liberation politics also pose a challenge to unionist ideology.\textsuperscript{307}

As part of the peace process launched in the early 1990s, elections were held for delegates to the official peace talks called the \textit{Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue} (hereafter the \textit{Forum}). Women representing both unionist/Protestant and nationalist/Catholic communities hastily formed the \textit{Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party (Women’s Coalition)} in April 1996 to stand in elections to the \textit{Forum}. Speaking at a meeting of the new \textit{Women’s Coalition}, May Blood, Chair of the \textit{Shankill Women’s Forum}, echoed McAliskey’s sentiments:

> For all of us, peace is the bottom line. For 25 years politicians have said that it’s been women who have held Northern Ireland together through all of the violence. What’s

\textsuperscript{305}Ibid., 423.  
\textsuperscript{307}Ibid., 42-47.
always happened before is that we’ve been pushed back into the margins. This must not happen again.\footnote{308}

Women were interested in creating a negotiation process that was inclusive of those not formally elected to the negotiations, developing a complex agenda for discussion at negotiations and building relationships among people – especially cross-party work.\footnote{309} Smaller parties were given the opportunity to be represented on the Forum by a unique electoral formula that was designed, primarily, to allow minor sectarian parties (like the Ulster Democratic Party, UDP and the Progressive Unionist Party, PUP) a better chance to get elected to the Forum. Each electoral constituency returned five members and the ten parties with the largest number of overall votes were allocated two additional “top-up” seats.\footnote{310} Interestingly, and unintentionally, the newly formed Women’s Coalition managed to secure two of the top-up seats under this formula.\footnote{311}

Once elected to the Forum in 1996, both Hinds and Jane Wilde assumed the lead of the Women’s Coalition’s negotiating team. Whereas the major parties were steering all of the political discussions and debates towards sectarian issues, the Women’s Coalition brought a broader social agenda to the table. Hinds worked on a policy for inclusion, Avila Kilmurray developed a policy for equality and a third woman Christine Bell drafted a policy on human rights.\footnote{312} These priorities were informed by two decades of activism and dialogue in the Northern Ireland feminist peace movement. As Hinds explains, the particular experience of cross-community initiatives that women had launched in the 1990s, including the development of an international agenda, and

\footnote{312} Hinds, interview by author.
their participation in the European Union and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995, informed these priorities.

Members of the *Women’s Coalition*, however, found it difficult to be taken seriously at the *Forum*. Women were not seen as equal members of the peace brokering team – they were there to assist the men in the tough business of politics. As one representative from the Ulster Unionist Party remarked at the time: “the moral weight of these women, many [of them] mothers of the victims of the conflict, at key moments brought a badly needed dose of reality and got us moving again.” Other leaders called members of the Coalition “feckless women” with “limited intellect” who had little to offer the political process.\(^\text{313}\)

As well, smaller parties to the ten-party *forum*, like the *Women’s Coalition*, felt squeezed out of the backroom diplomacy taking place between the larger parties. Particularly in the final months of the talks, Coalition members found it difficult to get their political demands related to inclusion, equality and human rights included as part of the draft agreement. For example, Hinds and Wilde tracked down a liaison with the Northern Ireland Office who was involved in drafting the Agreement to force the issue. As Hinds told the liaison officer:

> I don’t know if this is very clear here, but I know other parties are putting stuff in [the draft agreement] and there’s a lot of tension around the Sinn Féin content, and the SDLP content and the UUP content. But people think we’ve just come into this damn process. I don’t think that people have really understood that we have come here with an agenda as well. And I’m telling you that because we are getting things left out of the draft paper.\(^\text{314}\)

In particular, Coalition members were adamant that the peace Agreement had to include the establishment of a Northern Ireland Civic Forum – a central component of their overall equality agenda. Ultimately, they were successful in getting this forum included as Article 34 of the Agreement. It was designed to be a consultative forum on social, cultural and economic issues

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\(^{314}\) Kate Fearson, “The Talks,” in *Women's Work: The Story of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999); available from http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/women/fearon99.htm#chap4
comprising delegates from the Northern Ireland civic sector that would work alongside a future Northern Ireland Assembly (As I discuss in Chapter 7, the performance of the Civic Forum after the Agreement was undercut by periods of direct rule from Westminster and an overall poor commitment from elected politicians).

What made the negotiations in Northern Ireland successful, argue Hinds and Jacqueline Nolan-Haley, is that there was an emphasis on multi-party talks and inclusion, and not just the two-party model – a model that failed in the past due to its exclusivity:

The inclusion of additional political parties removed some of the barriers to trust, enhanced the process of relationship-building, and motivated parties to concentrate on crafting solutions to shared problems.315

The Women’s Coalition also worked to make their party inclusive of the broader Northern Ireland community, by holding, for example, monthly consultation meetings with their constituents. As Nolan-Haley and Hinds argue, this approach was different from the traditional parties who would “defend their own position at all costs, support it with intemperate language and wild assertions in the media to keep supporters in line . . . and threaten the entire process while doing so.”316

The Women’s Coalition also fought to have ‘the right of women to full and equal political participation’ included in the draft Agreement.317 In terms of equality and human rights, the Women’s Coalition is credited with ensuring that the Belfast Agreement included a first-class equality agenda. The Equality Commission, established as part of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, imposes a statutory duty on all public bodies to advance equality in areas such as religion, gender, sexuality and disability. The Commission combines four existing bodies including the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Disability

316 Ibid., 396.
317 Fearson, The Talks.
With regards to equality, the Agreement specifically creates a statutory obligation on all public authorities,

to promote equality of opportunity in relation to religion and political opinion; gender; race; disability; age; marital status; dependants; and sexual orientation. Public bodies would be required to draw up statutory schemes showing how they would implement this obligation. Such schemes would cover arrangements for policy appraisal, including an assessment of impact on relevant categories, public consultation, public access to information and services, monitoring and timetables.319

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 further states:

A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity – (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; (b) between men and women generally; (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and (d) between persons with dependants and persons without.320

Hinds was later appointed Chief Deputy Commissioner of the new Equality Commission in 1999. She says that although that there were some women in the women’s movement who were opposed to a single Equality Commission, the single Commission (advocated for by the Women’s Coalition) brought about solidarity on the issue of equality.

The Women’s Coalition was able to force political discussion on issues related to human rights and justice and were able to fix several key institutions that have continued to work towards equity and human rights, even during bouts of prolonged suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Carmel Roulston, an early member of the Women’s Coalition, explains that the principles of the party that were associated with justice were not about overcoming national identities but about allowing people to express such identities.321 Similarly, Hinds and Nolan-


321 Roulston, interview by author.
Haley argue that “the organizational management and community action backgrounds of women in the Coalition meant that they were attuned to the process and dynamics of negotiations.”322

In our interview, Hinds describes how the Women’s Coalition was in the best political position to advocate for an equality agenda for a new Northern Ireland because the party did not adhere to a narrow and definitive constitutional position, like the other parties to the Forum.323 Women like Hinds worked with other women at the European level and international level to discuss the priorities of a feminist agenda.

During the transition in Northern Ireland, women were able to bring in a gender perspective in three ways: first, by creating cross-community networks that gave them political visibility and helped them negotiate difference; second, and related to the first point, by building relationships and working with other groups similarly marginalized, thereby advancing a distinct agenda based on human rights and equality considerations; and third, by working in separate political groups and through an all-women political party in an effort to participate in the Belfast Agreement.

The Belfast Agreement, also referred to as the Good Friday Agreement, was finally signed by all parties on 10 April 1998, successfully concluding the Forum’s two years of peace negotiations. The Agreement was upheld by the broader public the following month in referendums held in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. Elections to the new 108 member Northern Ireland Assembly, agreed to at the Forum, were held 25 June 1998 and Westminster enacted the Northern Ireland Act 1998, formally devolving power to the Northern Ireland Assembly and detailing the new government institutions. The Women’s Coalition secured two seats to the new Assembly.

323 Hinds, interview by author.
During the period of flux and excitement leading up to the Belfast Agreement, women had already begun to create spaces to organize in the queer community. As I noted in Chapter 3, the lesbian community was not as politically active throughout the Troubles in the mainly gay male institutions in Northern Ireland like NIGRA. However, this changed during the peace process where activists felt that there was a new opportunity to directly speak to those aspects of the peace process and those equality measures that were being undertaken, which affected their community. In 1997, QueerSpace was set up as a more consciously political organization as opposed to a community service provider. As Barbary Cook, founding member of QueerSpace, explains:

The people who set [QueerSpace] up, had in mind – me included – an ‘out’ political space. It wasn’t about service provision, it was about activism. It wasn’t to support people coming out; it was for people who wanted to do much more politicized work. That hadn’t happened in the same way in the community before, in my opinion.

The Agreement’s focus on inclusion, enshrined in the Agreement as the duty of public authorities to consult with the public, also created the opportunity for new forms of activism. One such organization was the Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO). Now the LGBTQ community had a mechanism by which they could ensure all legislation passed in the new Assembly would not discriminate against their interests. Cook, also one of the founding members of CoSO, says that the group was formed to represent the LGBTQ community at such public consultations. The community was still largely invisible at that time and very few people were publicly “out” – fearing, for example, that a lack of employment protection could put their jobs at risk. Although other organizations like NIGRA were active at the time, they failed to be inclusive on issues related to women. Today, the organization continues to consult with public authorities on their statutory duty under Section 75.

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325 McAluliffe and Tiernan, eds., Tribades, Tommies and Transgressives; Histories of Sexualities: Volume I, 12.
326 Cook, interview by author.
QueerSpace, along with ten other organizations including the Belfast Gay Pride Committee, the Belfast Lesbian Line, the Butterfly Club, Cara-Friend, Foyle Friend, Foyle LGB Line, the LGB Branch of National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland, NIGRA, the Rainbow Project, and the Transgendered Group comprised the founding membership of CoSO after the Agreement was signed. Lesbian women were at the forefront of queer activism in the 1990s in organizations like QueerSpace, CoSO and Gay Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland (GLYNI). The continued organizing after the Agreement was signed ensured that legislation, like the Civil Partnership legislation, was extended to Northern Ireland – even before it came into effect in the rest of the UK.

As Christine Bell and Fionnuala Ni Aoláin note, equality was not a central issue of the conflict in Northern Ireland. However, for Bell and Ni Aoláin, it was the “pause” during the transition from conflict that allowed other issues related to equality to be dealt with:

In this space it is both theoretically and practically possible that women’s rights issues could be substantively addressed by the willingness of negotiations to understand that a peace agreement could also reshape a range of inequalities and discriminations within the conflicted society. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement was arguably one such moment in the protracted history of the Northern Ireland conflict.

They argue that the gendered dimensions of transition from conflict have been ignored by academics and policymakers. As with the experiences of women in Israel/Palestine, there was not a smooth transition from the politicization of women during the period of conflict to the enactment of policies and the establishment of effective institutions during the transitional phases. As Bell and Ni Aoláin note, despite the success of the Women’s Coalition, the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the subsequent UN Resolution 1325, women remained largely excluded

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327 A full list of the original members is available from CoSO’s original website: http://www.geocities.com/coso_ni/index2.html.
328 See: McAuliffe and Tiernan, eds., Tribades, Tommies and Transgressives: Histories of Sexualities: Volume I, 12.
from the peace talks and in the peace processes. The result, as they note, is that the cessation of violence remains narrowly defined as “cease-fires.” It ignores women’s experiences of violence that are not easily defined in terms of conflict alone.330

What was different about the Northern Ireland peace process, as compared to the Israeli-Palestinian peace processes, is that the electoral formula to the talks unintentionally served as an important mechanism by which women from the women’s feminist peace movement were able to secure their representation at the talks. While they found it difficult to be taken seriously by the other parties, and were largely excluded from the backroom negotiations being held by the major sectarian political parties, their impact on the peace process, through the design of post-conflict institutions such as the Equality Commission, the Civic Forum and the Human Rights Commission was remarkable. The more inclusive process, and the inclusive mechanisms contained within the final Belfast Agreement, also created opportunities for new political activism around themes related to sexuality. This activism helped to secure the passage of socially and politically progressive legislation in the period following the Agreement, which I discuss in greater detail in chapters 6 and 7. What is clear at this point is that a more inclusive peace process did not detract from the principal goal of resolving the ethnonational conflict. In fact, it allowed for the opportunity to design unique statutory duties that played an important role in Northern Ireland’s transition to a post-conflict society.

4.3 Conclusion

Throughout the peace processes of the 1990s, women and non-elite actors were excluded from secret channel negotiations, orchestrated and crowded by elite political figures. These secret channels, at different junctures in each case, overshadowed the public peace processes. In Israel/Palestine, only a select few high profile women participated in the official Washington

330 Ibid.
peace talks that followed the 1991 Madrid conference. Women like Hanan Ashrawi and local Palestinian representatives from the occupied territories were squeezed out of the secret negotiations leading to the Oslo Accords. It is no coincidence that those men who did preside over and participate in these secret negotiations, like Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Ahmed Qurai’ (Abu Ala), who were living in exile at the time, went on to achieve prominent positions in Arafat’s new Palestinian Authority. Abu Mazen eventually replaced Arafat as president and Abu Ala served as prime minister. In this sense, participation in the talks translated into political positions of power after the conflict. As women did not find themselves represented among these elite ethnonational figures, they were not successful in securing representation in the new Palestinian Authority.

In Northern Ireland, women achieved representation on the *Forum for Political Dialogue* (*Forum*) between 1996 and 1998, thanks in large part to a unique electoral formula. The Coalition’s cross-community perspective along with their political commitment to human rights, inclusion and equality contributed to the realization of a first-class human rights and equality agenda for a new post-conflict Northern Ireland. As I discuss in chapters 6 and 7, women were not, however, able to maintain their positions in the new political Assembly and were relegated in the post-conflict period to the NGO and quasi-NGO sector.

The Oslo period in Israel/Palestine and the peace process in Northern Ireland were times at which the very democratic institutions that would make up a new Northern Ireland and a new Palestinian Authority were being negotiated and revised. As Miriam Titterton, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, notes, the Belfast Agreement brought about a widespread review of both public administration and bodies.\(^{331}\) Although women were developing an expertise in

\(^{331}\) As Miriam Titterton says: “All the structures are going to change [including] education, health, local government, the number of elected councilors, the number of public bodies. It’s major, major changes and so what [the Human Rights Commission] want to do with that is ensure that human rights and equality considerations are to the fore in making those changes.” Miriam Titterton, Development Worker at the
community organizing and processes of coalition politics, they were excluded from the national level of high politics. The Northern Ireland case indicates the contribution that women from the feminist peace movement made to the peace process and the way in which the participation of the all-women nonsectarian party helped to prioritize a political and social agenda beyond the ethnonational divide. This indicates the value that broad-based participation could bring to future peace talks in Israel/Palestine. In Chapter 7, I detail the specific lessons from the Northern Ireland case for the Israel/Palestine case.

Despite the ways in which women were able to work beyond the ethnonational divide through the creation of feminist peace communities in both cases, there were also cleavages within the women’s movements related to ethnonational identity, socioeconomic hierarchies and sexual identity. In the next chapter, I will discuss the extent to which these divisions impacted the creation of a common political agenda based on peace and justice. The spaces created through cross-community projects and activism were more fractured and contested than is captured in the thirddspace thinking developed by critical geographers and discussed in this chapter. As I argue in the next chapter, solidarity activism, through a common identity as women, did not signal unity in that identity. Women drew on their varied experiences in conflict to inform a set of political priorities that, sometimes, limited engagements across ethnonational, class and sexual identity lines. I discuss some of the limits of women’s cross-community activism, demonstrating how a post-positivist realist conception of solidarity and alliance-based activism more accurately captures the kinds of activism in which women engaged in these conflicts.

Chapter 5
From Cross-community to Coalition Models of Activism: The Experiences of Feminist Peace Organizations

Cross-community feminist peace organizations, which emerged in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland in the 1970s and mushroomed in the 1990s, are often lauded in the gender and conflict literature as evidence of the ways in which women can more easily work across ethnonational identity boundaries. Commonly, this literature attempts to explain the success and appeal of women’s cross-community peace initiatives by suggesting that women are naturally more cooperative and peaceful, thereby enabling them to traverse ethnonational cleavages with little difficulty. Through my research, however, I have found many feminist activists to be cognizant of the limits of cross-community engagements. In some instances, women have elected to organize autonomous projects within separate ethnonational, class and/or sexual identity communities instead. Critics have variably described cross-community organizations as the artificial constructs of external funding agencies; exclusionary spaces that perpetuate socioeconomic hierarchies and heteronormative values; and homogenizing and depoliticizing spaces that fail to address power inequalities between majority and minority ethnonational communities.

In this chapter, I review some of the difficulties associated with women’s cross-community activism in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, noting the ways in which the ‘thirddspace’ of women’s feminist peace activism has not always been the inclusive space that many women had hoped to build on the margins of these ethnonational conflicts. In the first section, I outline the challenges that Israeli-Palestinian women’s cross-community initiatives have

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332 For example, see: Radha Kumar, "Women's Peacekeeping During Ethnic Conflicts and Post-Conflict Reconstruction " National Women's Studies Association Journal 13, no. 2 (2001); Radhika Coomaraswamy, "Presentation by UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance," (31 August - 7 September 2001); Cockburn, The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict ; McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice."
encountered since the signing of the Oslo Accords. I start with the Israel/Palestine case because, unlike Northern Ireland, Israeli and Palestinian feminist peace activists have had to contend with the disillusionment associated with the failure of the peace process as well as the entrenchment of the occupation. Today, it is almost impossible for women from Israel and the occupied territories to physically meet each other. In the second section, I show how these difficulties cannot be attributed to the failure of the Oslo peace process alone. For example, in both Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, women from LGBTQ communities have similarly found that women’s cross-community organizations, as well as other feminist activist groups, have sometimes failed to maintain inclusive and diverse spaces. As a result, some women have elected to mount autonomous organizations, outside of the women’s feminist movement. Other women in these cases have also noted how class-based activism has historically been more closely tied to ethnonational movements and has, therefore, been less reflective of the shared experiences of women across ethnonational divides. In some instances, discussions related to socioeconomic deprivation in co-existence peace groups have been interpreted as threatening to those women who identify with majority ethnonational communities.

In my view, what remains remarkable is that despite (and perhaps because of) such difficulties and pressures, women have also continued to develop new and internally reflexive engagements that work towards addressing these challenges through cross-community dialogue and partnerships. Such movements tend to be actively committed to more radical models of peace and conflict resolution than are proposed by mainstream peace and political movements. As many of the women interviewed for this dissertation have argued, such radicalism and innovation is only possible at the margins of the political process – a place where ideas and projects are not perceived as threatening to the interests of elite political leaders. As I argue below, these movements continue to advance feminist priorities related to peace, human rights, equality, inclusion and justice that are informed, rather than undermined, by the internal contestation
among activists in feminist peace communities. These projects sometimes take the form of limited engagements around specific events and issues related to ethnonational, gender, sexuality and class differences; at other times, they have taken the form of larger cross-community organizations. This type of activism is the direct result of the conscious adoption of reflexive practices by feminist peace activists who have struggled to learn from each other’s varied experiences.

5.1 The challenges of cross-community activism in Israel/Palestine

Despite the success of women’s cross-community organizations in Israel/Palestine in the early 1990s (described in the previous chapter), many such initiatives have become strained and continued cooperative activities remain unsettled. Particularly since the eruption of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, there are physical and political restrictions that limit the scope and depth of such women’s activism. In particular, Israel’s restrictions on entering the occupied territories, its construction of the separation wall in the West Bank and its installation of new military checkpoints have made it difficult for women to meet face to face.\(^{333}\) Today, it is illegal for Israeli citizens to travel to areas of the West Bank under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA). As well, it has become impossible for many Palestinian women to obtain permission to travel to cross-community women’s centres and meetings held in Israel and internationally. For example, Rabiha Diab and Nuha Salah, two of the founders of the Jerusalem Center for Women, say that they can no longer meet with Israeli women affiliated with the Coalition of Women for Peace because the Israeli authorities will not grant them permission to travel from their West Bank homes to Israeli-controlled Jerusalem.\(^{334}\) Similarly, Abla Masroujeh, coordinator of the Women’s Affairs Department at the Palestine General Federation of Trade Union (PGFTU), says that she has suspended her participation in cross-community dialogue

\(^{333}\) Hamdan, interview by author.
\(^{334}\) Saleh, interview by author.
through an organization that she helped to develop called *Touch in Peace*. Masroujeh explains that the logistical realities of border closures have limited communications between Israeli and Palestinian women in the occupied territories to e-mails and telephone calls.\(^{335}\) Clearly, these kinds of restrictions have made it increasingly difficult for Israeli and Palestinian women to physically meet and coordinate the kind of joint initiatives that had taken off in the 1990s.

There is also a perception by some commentators that the Israeli women’s movement fails to make the necessary connection between their feminist convictions and an anti-occupation position since the signing of the 1993 Oslo Agreement. For example, Tikva Honig-Parnass argues that the autonomous women’s peace movement in Israel split during this period; some activists returned to exclusively feminist political circles, removed from the politics of peace and protest, while other activists became absorbed in mainstream organizations like *Bat Shalom* and the *Jerusalem Link*. These organizations actively promote the official peace process and boast Israeli politicians among their membership. In both camps, the message of struggle against the occupation has been lost.\(^{336}\) As Honig-Parnass writes of government membership in *Bat Shalom*:

> Thus we are witnessing an unusual phenomenon: women sitting on the board of an organization protesting specific policies of the government which some of them support as active members of the governing coalition!\(^{337}\)

Political disagreements over the most contentious issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians have also limited cooperation between women in coexistence groups. Galia Golan, prominent Israeli feminist peace activist, traces the beginning of major political disagreements to the 1996-1999 Netanyahu-period when Palestinians became cautious about normalization of relations with Israel. Divisions within coexistence groups continued to develop over the same issues that confounded chief peace negotiators, like those concerning UN resolution 194 and the right of

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\(^{335}\) Masroujeh, interview by author.


\(^{337}\) Ibid., 24.
return for Palestinian refugees. Rabiha Diab, director of the *Association of Women Committees for Social Work*, says that Palestinian women began to feel as though Israeli women on the political left were not serious about discussing Palestinian’s right of return to Israel. Golan notes that contact between Israelis and Palestinians eventually fell off and very little has been revived: “The Jerusalem Link, as it is, seems to be stuck . . . But they don’t want to disband it at the moment.”\(^{339}\) The *Jerusalem Link*, the renowned Israeli-Palestinian cross-community group described in the last chapter, continues to meet but due to the difficulties associated with women physically coming together and the strain caused by the continuation of the conflict, its joint activities have become more limited.

Palestinian feminist peace activist Fadwa Al-Labadi’s early optimism of the possibility of cross-community dialogue has waned as women have not been able to move on the issue of Palestinian right of return to the homes they once occupied before 1967. She notes a growing resentment among Palestinian women when Israeli women come to the West Bank for peace conferences:

> All the time we just say ‘okay, we had a lot of work together with Israeli women against occupation, and then against the wall, and then against the Israeli checkpoint[s]. But what’s next?’ . . . In our activities, peace activities, did we affect Palestinian society and affect the Israeli society? Did we affect the Palestinian political groups or affect the Israeli government or Israeli groups? No. We didn’t have any effect . . . nothing changed.

Al-Labadi is still associated with the *Jerusalem Link*, but her work is separate from the work of her Israeli counterparts. Joint activities between the two organizations are rare today.\(^{340}\)

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\(^{338}\) Article 11 of the United Nations Resolution 194, passed on 11 December 1948, states that, “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.” See: "Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator," *United Nations General Assembly A/RES/194 (III)*, (11 December 1948).

\(^{339}\) Golan-Gild, interview by author.

\(^{340}\) Al-Labadi, interview by author.
The 2005 Women in Black Conference

The strain that cooperative projects continue to suffer from was further evident at the conference of the 2005 Women in Black peace movement held in Jerusalem called Women Resist Occupation and War. Over 700 women from around the world attended the five-day conference in Jerusalem. This meeting was considered to be a model of the kind of cross-community work for which the women’s movement has been applauded. For example, Gila Svirsky remarked at that time:

What is for us valuable in the Middle East is reaching across lines, so-called enemy lines, and working together. In Israel and Palestine, women have been at the forefront at coming up with peaceful solutions and political accommodations that we think would work for both sides. We have come to compromise over all the territorial issues, over all the issues of contention. We think that looking at the overall principle of reaching across lines is one that can be perhaps replicated in other areas.

Despite coordination between Israeli women and Palestinian women, there were a series of disagreements. Al-Labadi says that Palestinian women from the Jerusalem Center for Women had considered not participating in the conference because they felt that their Israeli partners were not working earnestly towards peace. In the end, Palestinian women did participate, but the final declaration from the conference was published late and contained exceptions by some Israeli Women in Black members of the organizing committee. Gila Svirsky, Pnina Firestone and Ednna Gluckman appended several caveats to the conference’s final declaration, including their reservation that Palestinians should not be granted the right to return because such a right is “not compatible with a two-state solution.” Concerning the recent Palestinian civil society call for

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341 Information on the 2005 Women in Black Conference is available online from the Israeli Coalition of Women for Peace: http://coalitionofwomen.org/home.
342 Interview with Gila Svirsky by FIRE, quoted in: Margaret E. Thompson, María Suárez Toro, and Katerina Anfossi Gómez, "Feminist media coverage of women in war: 'You are our eyes and ears to the world',' Gender and Development 15, no. 3 (2007): 444.
international sanctions and boycotts against Israel,\textsuperscript{343} they wrote that it would only lend support to the Israeli right wing, thereby further entrenching the occupation:

These two issues – refugees and sanctions – are the subject of great controversy within the Israeli peace movement itself … In our opinion, the Declaration states only the more extreme point of view, a view that has not even been adopted by any of the nine member organizations of the Coalition of Women for Peace (in Israel).\textsuperscript{344}

Clearly, issues related to refugees and boycotts have not been resolved among Palestinian and Israeli women working in feminist peace communities.

The One Million Voices Campaign

Another example of strained relations within the Israeli and Palestinian women’s peace camp includes the controversy over the \textit{One Million Voices} campaign, launched by the organization \textit{OneVoice} on 18 October 2007. Daniel Lubetzky, founder of \textit{PeaceWorks Holdings}, created \textit{OneVoice} in 1992.\textsuperscript{345} He theorized that closer economic relationships between Israelis and Palestinians could bring the two communities together and help to resolve the conflict. \textit{OneVoice} is co-chaired by notable political figures such as former Irish President Mary Robinson; Klaus Schwab, Executive Chair and founder of the World Economic Forum; Dennis Ross, who worked on the peace process for both the Bush and Clinton administrations; and Queen Noor of Jordan.

\textsuperscript{343} In July 2005, groups like the \textit{Jerusalem Center for Women}, the \textit{Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees} and the \textit{General Union of Palestinian Women}, among others, joined the popular Palestinian civil society's call for international boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel. The Palestinian civil society boycott campaign calls on “international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace.” Information on the campaign is available online: http://www.bds-palestine.net/.


The organization is not described as a dialogue group; rather, its limited mandate intended to spark peace negotiations leading to a two-state solution by 19 October 2008.346

The controversy within the women’s peace camp specifically concerned the People’s Summit and the One Million Voices campaigns of 2007. The People’s Summit was supposed to include concerts with pop stars like Bryan Adams at the Jericho Stadium in the West Bank and other notable entertainers at Havarkon Park in Tel Aviv as well as selected international cities including Ottawa, Canada. The idea was to admit attendees to the concerts for free, on condition that they sign a petition in support of a two-state solution. As the name of the campaign, One Million Voices, suggests, organizers hoped to attain one million signatures from participants (both the Jericho and Tel Aviv concerts were cancelled, ostensibly due to security threats347). The requirement that attendees would have to sign a petition elicited much debate among feminist peace activists. For example, Gideon Spiro of New Profile, a feminist peace organization in Israel that is comprised of both women and men, wrote in a letter to the One Million Voices campaign:

Your remarks regarding “the extremists on both sides” in the name of “the moderate majority” presumes symmetry between occupied and occupier, and is therefore a prescription for failure. For there is no symmetry between the settlers and settlements in the occupied territories (which are war crimes according to the Geneva and Rome conventions) and Palestinian opposition to the occupation. There is no symmetry between the “moderate majority” in Israel that refuses to return to the June 4, 1967 armistice line, and which supports at most a non-contiguous dispersed Palestinian state under Israeli control, and the Palestinian moderate majority that insists on Israel going back to the other side of the Green Line, the dismantling of all the settlements, and a just solution to the refugee problem. There is no symmetry between the Israeli occupation force that has been brutally persecuting Palestinians for 40 years, and those who struggle against it.348

346 The mandate of the OneVoice campaign states: “We recognize the essential work many other groups do in the field of dialogue and understanding; but OneVoice is action-oriented and advocacy-driven.” See: OneVoice. "About OneVoice," (01 September 2008); available from http://www. onevoicemovement.org/about-onevoice/.


This letter was also circulated on the *New Profile* and *Women in Black* newsgroups in early October 2007. Spiro’s comments were not representative of all activists as some members of the Israeli feminist peace movement did not want to undermine what they interpreted as the important efforts of a fellow peace movement. Clearly, feminist peace activists were not united in their position on whether or not to support such campaigns. Such divisions were apparent in the pre-Oslo period as well and share similarities with the sometimes difficult history of cross-community organization in Northern Ireland.

## 5.2 Difficulties associated with cross-community activism in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland

There has been an internal critique of cross-community projects by Israeli and Palestinian and Northern Ireland feminist activists that find that cooperative projects are not necessarily the most effective means for advancing a feminist agenda for change. Women grumble about the pressure from donors to form cross-community partnerships, despite the wariness that some women feel toward these initiatives. Other women claim that such cooperative projects belie the asymmetrical relationship that exists between those women who are part of the ruling ethnonational majority and those women that are suffering under unfair state practices. Still others are hesitant to support cross-community partnerships where they are perceived to contravene their ethnonational interests.

Northern Ireland women have reported that the emphasis that funding agencies like Community Relations Council (CRC) (described in the last chapter) have put on cross-community initiatives is problematic because it highlights community relations over the equally important

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349 In the autumn of 2007, feminist peace activists began a lengthy e-mail exchange via internet newsgroups over whether the women’s peace movement should support this campaign. For example, see: "Re: One Voice — apartheid masked as peace " *Coalition of Women for Peace Newsgroup* (08 October 2007).
goal of community development.\textsuperscript{350} In this sense, the development of women’s initiatives within nationalist and unionist communities should be just as important as the development of initiatives between these communities. For one community coordinator of the \textit{Falls Women’s Centre}, a solution that asks people to be “nicer” is wholly unsatisfactory because it does not address the government’s responsibility for the maintenance of the conflict.\textsuperscript{351} As Rooney and Woods write in their report on community politics in Northern Ireland:

There are many ways to ‘dialogue’. It is the argument of this report that a community women's movement is engaged in a form of dialogue around shared interests and concerns. The willingness to carefully engage in political dialogue, within particular frameworks . . . is not seen by participants as ‘cross community activity' in the naive manner of ignoring difference and 'loving each other'.\textsuperscript{352}

Palestinian feminist activist and academic, Fadwa Al-Labadi concurs that cross-community partnerships have done little to change the reality of occupation.

In Israel/Palestine, some women have also indicated that there are particular impediments related to asymmetries in power between Israeli and Palestinian women that hinder cross-community projects. For example, in Maya Kahanoff’s research on people-to-people dialogue at the Hebrew University, she writes:

Israelis used the personal discourse, looking at each as a person with a unique identity, to emphasize the common ground, while insisting on symmetry, whereas the Palestinians kept on reminding everybody this is not a symmetrical situation. It was shown that the Palestinian claim is based on a quest for justice, whereas the Israelis want reconciliation.\textsuperscript{353}

In this sense, an insistence on symmetry and unity between women mystifies the hierarchical relationship between Israelis and Palestinians and therefore leaves Palestinian women feeling that

\textsuperscript{350} Cockburn, \textit{The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict}, 81.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 69.
their experiences of oppression by the Israeli state are unacknowledged in such encounters. Other Palestinian women report that their Israeli counterparts have been patronizing in cross-community dialogue settings. For example, Masroujeh says that women at Israel’s *Histradut* (trade union) and women at the PGFTU no longer initiate joint projects or dialogue sessions:

> There was this understanding by them (Israeli women) that they knew everything (and) that they had everything – all the facilities and all the education and we have nothing. I cannot learn everything from you and I cannot accept everything you want to teach me. If it is a joint activity, it has to be in both places and they did not want to have it in both places. They wanted everything to be [in Israel]. We did not want this – that’s why it did not work.

Masroujeh does not expect there to be another opportunity for joint projects any time soon.\(^{354}\)

As some Palestinian women explain, the asymmetry in power that Palestinians feel in relation to their Israeli counterparts tends to limit dialogue to those issues that are likely to generate consensus. For example, Aruri says that she cannot bring up alternative ideas concerning conflict resolution that challenge the two-state solution model of conflict resolution at the *Jerusalem Link*. She describes her ten years at the centre as a disappointment:

> If we come here as women because we want to introduce [an] alternative analysis and projection over the conflict, that comes from our feminist beliefs, let’s sit together and look at the conflict from this point of view . . . If you accept with me, as women, that the history of this was based on expulsion and destroying another society, [why] don’t [you] reach the second conclusion that we have to correct this injustice? They accept the analysis that Israel is performing an injustice . . . so then why do they want to stick to this state?\(^{355}\)

For Aruri, cross-community relationships offer a shallow commitment to unity among women and not a deeper feminist commitment to solidarity that could have provoked radical thinking on alternatives to nationally based models of conflict resolution.

Difficulties related to sectarian divisions also affect women’s cross-community initiatives in the same way that they affect mixed gendered groups. For example, Carmel Roulston, feminist political activist and academic, points to the divisions between Catholic and Protestant women in

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\(^{354}\) Masroujeh, interview by author.

\(^{355}\) Aruri, interview by author.
Northern Ireland over support for republican hunger strikers in the early 1980s. Protestant women were reluctant to support actions that were perceived to be advancing republicanism – this would not only have been personally distasteful to them but also risky in a climate of increasing sectarian tensions. Further, it was difficult for some Protestant women to work with Catholic women, especially after the IRA resumed paramilitary activities in the North. Protestant women did not want to appear to be supporting what they perceived as a radical republican movement. Similarly, some women in the North and the Republic of Ireland were hesitant about including the treatment of women prisoners as a feminist issue, whereas republican women were not. Roulston argues that such organizing across the political divide is often done to suit the demands of the political leadership. In this sense, it is not an organic, grassroots initiative; rather, it is based on a conception of community that has been developed by an elite political class. Ultimately, Roulston describes cross-community projects as very limited engagements.

Similar divisions continue to affect women’s partnerships in Israel/Palestine. For example, Jihad Abu Zneid, Palestinian feminist activist and politician in the PA, told an ethnonationally mixed group of women (including Jews, Druse, Israeli Arabs and Palestinians) at a rally in March 2006 that Palestinian women were the greatest sufferers, both socially and economically, as a result of the occupation. The Jerusalem Post reported that “Her harsh criticism of Israel was met with great hostility, prompting Na’amat chairwoman Talya Livni to take the microphone and ask the protesters to be quiet.” As such, women were not opening up their discussions to the ways in which they were differently situated as a result of the conflict and the

356 Roulston, interview by author.
357 Ibid., interview by author; Rooney and Woods, “Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations.”
359 Roulston, interview by author.
360 Ibid.
occupation. Ultimately, Jarrar says that Israelis can work in their societies and Palestinians can work in their own. She feels that there has been silence from Israelis about human rights abuses and therefore Palestinian women find it difficult to trust their Israeli counterparts. As noted above in the discussion related to the 2005 *Women in Black Conference* and the *One Million Voices* campaign, the most contentious issues in the conflict, such as the right of return for Palestinians and support for sanctions, divide women in the feminist peace camp. Clearly, cross-community partnerships in both cases have not been easily maintained by women in feminist peace groups. Feminist peace activists who have organized around themes related to sexuality and class have encountered similar difficulties.

**Queer Activism**

Although the development of queer activism followed different trajectories in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, the difficulties associated with organizing across the ethnonational divide were similar. Lesbian activists found the women’s feminist movements in both cases to be more relevant and effective spaces in which to organize than the male-dominated gay rights movements. However, sectarian divisions between women made forging alliances across the ethnonational divide particularly tricky. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which the women’s movement in Israel provided an important space for Jewish lesbian women. Palestinian lesbian women, as citizens of Israel and as residents of the occupied territories, however, found such spaces were less relevant for their own needs and went on to forge distinctly Palestinian lesbian and LGBTQ communities. Organizations like the Israeli *Coalition of Lesbian Feminists* (CLaF) started out as a feminist group that consciously identified the connection between the oppression of lesbian women and the oppression of Palestinians. Such radicalism within the movement, however, waned in subsequent years and original members like Haya Shalom have become critical of the movement’s decision to distance itself from an explicitly

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362 Jarrar, interview by author.
feminist and anti-occupation agenda. Shalom argues that the newer generation of members is interested in a more liberal version of feminism that regards the struggle for rights in Israel as over.\textsuperscript{363} In our interview, Einav Zilber, one of the board members of CLaF, argued that before 2000, the organization was quite political – addressing issues related to Palestinians rights and the poor along with a lesbian-feminist agenda. However, she said that not many lesbians were keen to participate in such political activism. She attributed this change to the fact that it was easier for lesbians to say that they were feminists than to identify openly as lesbians when they were coming out to their families twenty years ago. Today, she said, “people more easily identify themselves as lesbians.”

Some of the women who were critical of CLaF’s movement away from an anti-occupation commitment went on to found the organization \textit{Kvisa Sh’chora}, otherwise known as \textit{Black Laundry: Queers Against The Occupation and for Social Justice}.\textsuperscript{364} Black Laundry describes itself as a,

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direct action group of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and others against the occupation and for social justice. Kvisa Shchora tries to stress the connection between different forms of oppression - our own oppression as lesbians, gays and transpeople enhances our solidarity with members of other oppressed groups.
\end{quote}

\textit{Black Laundry} emerged as a group in May 2001, following the second intifada, and included two dozen lesbians, gay men, and transgender people. Some of the members came from other organizations, such as \textit{Women in Black} and the \textit{Coalition of Women}.\textsuperscript{366} Most of the members were women and many of their slogans, like “Transgender Not Transfer”\textsuperscript{367} and “No Pride in the

\textsuperscript{364} Zilber, interview by author.
\textsuperscript{366} Nora Barrows-Freeman, "Direct Action in Targeting Corporate Profiteering in Occupied Palestine: Interview with Dalit Baum," \textit{Flashpoints Radio} (27 March 2007).
Occupation,” specifically addressed the occupation. The main purpose of the group was to use Pride parades in Israel as a platform in which to deliver their message about the connection between the occupation and other experiences of oppression based on sexuality, gender and class.

The flyer at the Tel Aviv Pride 2002 read:

We come out of the closet today as unemployed trannies, as Mizrahi dykes, as poor queens, as feminist lesbians who were sexually abused, as Palestinian homosexuals. We come out of the closet today as sexist gay men, as Israeli transsexuals, as Ashkenazi lesbians, as academic queers. We come out of the closet today as oppressed and as responsible for the oppression of others.

Making connections became our main goal, connections among different oppressions and different power regimes inside Israel. We kept trying to put it together: our own oppressions as women and queers in a militarist and sexist culture; different forms of violence and the sexual nature of the occupation; the money behind it and those who have a stake in it; the presence of our sisters, the Palestinian lesbians, and the promise of solidarity; the use of poverty and exploitation against Arabs and Arab Jews; anti-Arab racism and cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing and nationalism and heterosexism and we did not want to leave anything out.

One of the organizers of Black Laundry told me that the group, as a whole, has been less active in the last few years. While they maintain a presence at the Pride parades in Israel, they remain small and loosely organized as a community. The group also attracts mainly Israelis as the message is directed towards the offences committed by the state.

Palestinian women are not active members in CLaF or Black Laundry and, indeed, many lesbian activists in Israel do not associate with Palestinian women at an organizational or social level. For example, Tracy Moore’s 1995 book project containing the oral histories of twenty-one lesbian activists in Israel did not include any Palestinian women. As Moore writes: “…though I designed the project to include a broad spectrum of Israeli lesbians, the activists I met were unable to introduce me to Israeli Arab lesbians. Indeed, they were not acquainted with any Arab lesbians then living in Israel.”

369 Ibid., 568-573.
As discussed in Chapter 3, issues related to sectarianism in Northern Ireland were not usually taken up by the LGBTQ community as they were seen to be potentially too divisive. There was also a perception that nationalist activism was more closely associated with lesbian women activists and unionist activism was more closely associated with gay male activists—demarcating the boundaries of communities along ethnonational lines. For example, NIGRA was largely perceived to be a gay male organization and activists associated with NIGRA, as well as other organizations, tended to be from unionist backgrounds. Steven King and Jeff Dudgeon are perhaps the two most visible gay unionist activists in Northern Ireland. In an interview with the Sunday Tribune in 2005, Dudgeon suggested that the republican party Sinn Féin carries a strong “them-and-us” attitude that is not attractive to gay men, despite the fact that Sinn Féin is more progressive on gay issues:

Gay men tend to like antiques and history and there's something about the closed, antiquarian nature of unionist politics which attracts them... Unionism has these allmale organisations, like the Orange and Masonic lodges, which appeals to gays. But the DUP isn't ready for an openly gay politician.

A 2002 qualitative study undertaken by Marie Quiery, Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative, involving individual lesbian and bisexual women respondents as well as several lesbian and bisexual community organizations in Northern Ireland, found that women from Protestant or unionist backgrounds perceive the Catholic or nationalist community to be more receptive to LGBTQ rights. One interviewee from a Protestant background said that there were more Catholic lesbian activists: “Unionist women don’t organise. Catholics come from an underdog approach.”

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371 Cook, interview by author; Anonymous, "Other Dimensions: Between the Lines: Living in Belfast," 98.
372 Steven King was an advisor to Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader David Trimble and involved in the negotiation of the 1998 Belfast Agreement. He is a well-known newspaper columnist, formerly writing for the Belfast Telegraph and currently writing for the Irish Examiner. Jeff Dudgeon is another prominent gay unionist activist. In Dudgeon v. United Kingdom 1981, Dudgeon, under the auspices of NIGRA, successfully challenged the criminalization of homosexual acts in Northern Ireland at the European Court of Human Rights. Dudgeon went on to become actively involved in political unionism and gay rights in Northern Ireland.
373 Suzanne Breen, "'I know what happened in that hotel room. I am a happily married man'," SundayTribune.ie (10 July 2005).
This sentiment was not carried by women from a nationalist background, however, as they also reported brutality and threats from within their ethnonational communities. In my interview with lesbian activist Barbary Cook, she suggested that it is easier to be from a nationalist community and be “out” than from a unionist community: “The nationalist community has been oppressed and understand oppression and the unionist community has not. You’re not supposed to say that but that’s true, in my opinion.”

Even QueerSpace, the LGBTQ organization formed in 1997 during the peace process in Northern Ireland (discussed in Chapter 4), did not address issues of sectarianism, despite working on issues directly related to the Agreement. Cook, one of the founders of the organization, explained in our interview that although the organization “tried harder” to discuss sectarian issues than other organizations had in the past, it did not work: “I don’t think we did it the right way. I was never terribly interested in what we would call here cross-community or community relations. It doesn’t really get me very excited.” She says that in retrospect, members should have taken the opportunity to have these difficult conversations in QueerSpace and CoSO. Such issues were not dealt with because most of the priorities of the organization revolved around securing rights and equality based on section 75. Quiery’s study similarly found that women felt that lesbian and bisexual women’s organizations, in general, failed to address issues related to sectarianism. In this sense, LGBTQ organizations did not discuss the difficult issues related to sectarianism, similar to LGBTQ organizations in Israel/Palestine. The cross-community emphasis of the feminist women’s movement was not repeated in these communities that were organizing around themes related to sexuality. For those women who were interested in cross-community work, they tended to get involved in women’s feminist peace movement activism. Clearly,

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375 Cook, interview by author.
376 Ibid., interview by author.
though, this left out those nationalist men who were not comfortable in what was perceived to be the unionist politics associated with gay activism and it left out those unionist women who did have the support of their community to come ‘out’ publicly and discuss LGBTQ issues openly. Ethnonationalism remained an important identity for those LGBTQ activists in Northern Ireland, throughout the Troubles and following the Agreement.

Unlike Northern Ireland, where nationalist lesbian women were more active in the women’s movement, Palestinian lesbian activists felt isolated from the Israeli women’s movement and Israeli lesbian activism. Whereas the women’s movement in Northern Ireland had its roots in the civil rights campaigns initiated by the nationalist and republican communities, the early women’s movement in Israel was less aligned with Palestinian activism and was influenced largely by the broader international women’s movement. Although the women’s movement in Israel began to focus on issues related to the occupation, particularly as it developed into a feminist peace community (described in chapters 3 and 4) Palestinian LGBTQ related themes were all but absent. As such, Palestinian lesbian activists went on to found a separate organization called Aswat, meaning “voices” in Arabic, in 2003.

Aswat began as a Yahoo electronic group that connected Palestinian lesbian women living in Israel and the occupied territories. Rauda Morcos, one of the founding members, decided to host a meeting with members of the e-group at her apartment in Haifa in January 2003. Eight Palestinian women, all under the age of thirty, attended that first meeting and shortly thereafter the women began to hold monthly administrative and discussion meetings. As Morcos remembers: “We were all excited – all of us. We were doing something very historical . . . A group of lesbian Palestinian women decided to meet and to speak the words that were silenced for so many years.” She says that it was important for participants to organize as Palestinian women because they felt excluded from the Israeli LGBTQ community. For example, women could
freely exchange ideas in Arabic instead of speaking Hebrew, which was the case in other LGBTQ community groups in Israel.

Apart from language, Palestinian women encountered other difficulties organizing in Israeli LGBTQ groups. For example, many Palestinians were opposed to the 2005 World Pride events planned for Jerusalem. Israeli LBGTQ organizations like the Jerusalem Open House and Agudah were promoting this international event called “Love without Borders.” A promotional video distributed at other international Pride events in 2004, created by the public relations firm BlueStar, stated that “people are used to hearing about Israel, and specifically about Jerusalem, in the context of the conflict. But there is more to Israel than the conflict; there is Israel and there is a Jerusalem which is beyond the conflict. Life goes on.” Hagai El-Ad, Executive Director of Jerusalem Open House, ended the video declaring “Next Year in Jerusalem.” Morcos says that the message was Zionistic and ignored the experiences of LGBTQ Palestinians. The video, along with other promotional items, emphasized that Israel is a “refuge for lesbians and gays from less open societies” like “the Palestinians Authority in the West Bank and Gaza.” Other Israeli organizations, like the Agudah, have also begun to promote gay tourism in Israel. The promotion of state tourism, beyond the most pressing concern of the conflict, signaled to Palestinians that such Israeli organizations are failing to make the connection between marginalization as sexual minorities and marginalization as ethnonational minorities. Of the

378 BlueStar describes itself as a PR organization set to “re-brand” Israel that “creates messages that humanize perceptions of Israel. We focus on the freedoms Israelis enjoy, and how these freedoms create a peaceful, prosperous country that respects all its citizens – Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze. Our most powerful campaigns have been built around the themes of freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, respect for women, and gay rights and environmental activism.” See: BlueStarPR, “About BlueStarPR: The Jewish Ink Tank,” 2008 (05 August 2008); available from http://www.bluestarpr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=28.


382 For example, please see Agudah’s web page: http://www.aguda-ta.org.il/tourism.php.
World Pride event, Morcos argues that "The Jerusalem Open House is acting in cooperation with the army to teach us love without borders." She says that it is wrong to celebrate equality when Palestinians in the occupied territories would not be permitted to participate in the parade; due to security related fears, the borders to the occupied territories are always closed during such international events.\textsuperscript{383}

Like \textit{Aswat}, another Palestinian LGBTQ organization in Jerusalem called \textit{Al-Qwas} made a similar move to organize separately from the Israeli LGBTQ community in Jerusalem. Founded as an outreach group at the \textit{Jerusalem Open House} in 2001, \textit{Al-Qwas}' organizer Haneen Maikey broke away from the \textit{Open House} in the spring 2008 to establish the Palestinian group as an independent and autonomous organization. Maikey explains that the \textit{Open House} was not the right place for a Palestinian LGBTQ organization because it was focused on Western values associated with “visibility” and “coming out of the closet.” This emphasis, she says, was “not practical or meaningful” for LGBTQ Palestinians:

\begin{quote}
We emphasize that LGBTQ Palestinians face pressures, not just from Palestinian society, but from the wider context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. LGBTQ Palestinians' struggles are a complex result of problems internal to Palestinian society and the harsh realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.\textsuperscript{384}
\end{quote}

Palestinians, she says, are often forced to choose between their queer identities and their Palestinian identity. However, sexual/gender identities and national identity is “inextricably linked – both in how we understand and identify ourselves and in the struggles we face as a community.”

\textsuperscript{383} A statement about World Pride 2006 on the ASWAT website: “As Palestinian lesbians who live under the occupation, and as Palestinian women who are part of a national minority inIsrael, we are opposing the attempt to hold the international pride parade in Israel, especially in Jerusalem, which is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although the pride parade will become a time of celebratin [sic] for the gay and lesbian community in Israel, racism and homophobia will continue to exist, as well as the occupation and the crimes committed against the Palestinian people.” Aswat, "Parade to the Wall: World Pride Under Occupation 2006." 2006 (05 August 2008); available from http://www.aswatgroup.org/english/activities.php?article=14.

Despite the difficulties associated with organizing LGBTQ projects across the ethnonational divide, it is also the case that the LGBTQ movements in Israel/Palestine and the peace process and women’s movement in Northern Ireland offered important opportunities and spaces in which such communities did develop and in which they also forged cross-community alliances. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the equality duty that the Belfast Agreement placed on all public institutions encouraged activists from the LGBTQ community to come together and develop a common equality agenda. In this sense, the peace process’s emphasis on equality provided the opportunity for lesbian activists associated with the women’s movement and the mainly male activists associated with the gay rights movement to work together, across the ethnonational divide. Today, organizations like Queerspace and CoSO are more inclusive of the broader LGBTQ community in Northern Ireland. In terms of the development of specifically Palestinian LGBTQ organizations in Israel, it is also important to note the ways in which these organizations developed within Israeli feminist organizations and the Israeli LGBTQ movement. Today, Aswat is located in the offices of the Israeli feminist organization Kayan. Morcos says that although it is difficult for a lesbian organization to share the same organizational space with a feminist organization that does not specifically prioritize sexuality, she also acknowledges the strength that comes from standing with other women.\footnote{Morcos, interview by author.}

Referring to the relationship between lesbian organizations and feminist organizations, she says: “I always compare it with the Arabs and Jews." Although she says that Kayan tends to treats Aswat as though they are just a project, she argues that being aware of LGBTQ issues should be part of all that they do: "It is not a project it is an idea. It is part of [Kayan’s] struggle." In this sense, the practical support and solidarity between the two organizations does not rest on erasing the boundaries between women; rather, it is based on a model of alliance politics. For Al-Qwas, Maikey described how important the Jerusalem Open House was for her as a lesbian woman and as a foundation for Palestinian queer
support and activism. For example, Maikey told me in our interview in 2005, before she broke away from the *Open House*, that she did not identify as a lesbian until she started working in an administrative position at the *Open House*. She also explained that the organization granted the Palestinian group the space that they needed to organize, with an annual budget that exceeded the budgets of other groups within the organization:

“Actually, if I’m thinking about it now, we have autonomy at Open House. They give me all the responsibilities and the decisions and the budget and I can do whatever I want to do. I can dream at home and come here and say I will do 1-2-3 and it will happen.”

When the group first started up, they started receiving e-mails from the occupied territories along with enquiries from Qatar, Libya, Jordan and Egypt. Their Arabic website began returning 2,000 monthly hits from visitors. Maikey said that the people who contacted her were excited to find content about LGBTQ issues in Arabic. In this sense, the *Open House* served as an important organization in which LGBTQ Palestinians could organize. Understanding that oppression is experienced unevenly through their activism, the *Open House* supported the maturation of a distinctly Palestinian LGBTQ group by creating alliances with Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied territories. In both cases, *Aswat* and *Al-Qawas*, activists felt that it was important to have a space that spoke to the specific experiences of Palestinians; however, it was through alliances with feminist and LGBTQ organizations that such projects came to fruition. As such, although activists remained rooted in their ethnonational identity, as emphasized in the conflict resolution literature, the alliances that they built, and the learning that took place through such encounters, were important components of the development of ideas within these communities. In my view, it is this complex interplay between experience and identity that the mainstream ethnonational literature fails to account for. To develop a program of conflict resolution that assumes that communities formulate political priorities based on ethnonationalism alone belies the varied

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387 Ibid.
experiences, expectations and ideas related to conflict and peace-building that is negotiated within societies embroiled in conflict. While cross-community initiatives did not erase the ethnonational boundaries between activists, they did provide important collaborative spaces that made activists aware of the way in which they were differently situated; they also provided the support necessary for activist communities to flourish in conflict.

Organizing across class lines

In addition to the complex and, at times, difficult interplay between themes related to ethnonationalism and themes related to sexuality in women’s feminist peace communities in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, socioeconomic inequalities have also impacted women’s activism. Women’s relative position in the socioeconomic hierarchy has similarly conferred different sets of experiences and, therefore, different sets of priorities in each case of conflict. The relationship between socioeconomic stratification and ethnonational identity has also, at times, served to reinforce rather than undermine the strength of nationalist movements. Despite these challenges, however, women’s feminist peace communities have attempted to incorporate a class analysis in their activism. Where this has been the case, the movements have proven to be more resilient, more inclusive and more successful at launching cross-community partnerships.

In Northern Ireland, many of the disadvantaged nationalist and unionist areas were created during the riots in the early 1970s when families were forced to flee their homes. As political geographers Peter Shirlow and Brendan Murtagh explain:

Until the recent Balkan conflicts, population movement in Belfast, resulting from intimidation, was the most significant shift of people attributed to violence within Europe since the conclusion of World War II. The influx of refugees (around 7,500 families in Belfast in the period 1968-2001) into ethno-sectarian enclaves, following the reappearance of violent conflict, created sanctuary spaces that functioned as safe and unsafe mental maps.\(^{388}\)

Segregation was most acute in the working-class neighbourhoods, divided by so-called “peace lines,” which made organizing between working-class nationalist and unionist communities logistically difficult. Women tended to organize separately, within segregated housing estates, to deal with the immediate problem of social deprivation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many of the civil rights activists originated from the nationalist community. When there was cross-community action by nationalist and unionist women, sectarian tensions were evident. For example, women in Belfast demonstrated together as the Mothers of Belfast against the government’s decision to end the free milk program in schools in 1971. However, Protestant women left the campaign early due to the perception within their community that the organization was nothing more than a “Catholic antistate protest.” As Monica McWilliams, former leader of the Women’s Coalition and chief commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, writes, Protestant women today, reflecting back on the early stages of the women’s movement, say that they felt alienated because they lacked the “tradition of struggle” that the nationalist women had or because of the competing political allegiances that women held. Similarly, the Women Together (for Peace) Movement, discussed in Chapter 3, found it difficult to continue to organize cross-community initiatives due to the tough measures being taken against nationalist working class communities by the government in 1971. As Marie Hammond Callaghan writes, “… many nationalist and republican women came to view [Women Together’s] maternalist project of non-violence as dangerously antagonistic to their own material and community interests.” The focus on community violence and not state violence meant that the nationalist community bore the brunt of the peace movement’s censure.

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390 McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 25.
391 Ibid., 27.
Given the location of women’s centres in working-class neighbourhoods, others have argued that the women’s movement was generated largely by working-class women. In both the nationalist and unionist areas, women’s centres have been active throughout the conflict in providing services to their communities. Prominent centres that continue to operate in Northern Ireland include the Windsor Women’s Center, the Ballybeen Women’s Centre, the Shankill Women’s Centre, the Greenway Women’s Centre, the ATLAS Centre, and the Falls Women’s Centre. However, many of the limited engagements between women’s community centres ended with the introduction of internment.\(^{393}\)

The Northern Ireland Women’s Rights Movement was also accused by some women of being a largely middle class organization. As one activist in the Women’s Rights Movement comments: “It was a step in the right direction but it was for a very elitist group of women. Certainly it had nothing to do with women in many areas of the city – women in the ghettos that emerged when the troubles started.” While popular conceptions of sisterhood were “hunky-dory,” they failed to address fundamental political issues affecting working-class women.\(^{394}\) Other women’s early cross-community peace initiatives, like the Peace People demonstrations discussed in Chapter 3, were also perceived as middle-class projects and therefore lost the active support of working class communities.\(^ {395}\)

There were, however, “tactical alliances” between women’s organizations located in both communities. Because local councils were dominated by unionist politicians, nationalist women found it difficult to fund the resource-based organizations set up in the late 1970s and the 1980s. As a result, women’s centres in unionist communities formed alliances with centres in nationalist communities to help keep them going. In 1991, there was also a large scale effort to bring women from these communities together to discuss the constitutional question. Four hundred women

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\(^{393}\) McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 22.
\(^{394}\) Anonymous, "Other Dimensions: Between the Lines: Living in Belfast," 99-100.
\(^{395}\) McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 28-29.
representing various women’s groups met in 1991 at a women’s conference where they openly discussed political issues together. Many of the women’s centres today do initiate cross-community and cross-border work. For example, the Shankill Women’s Centre, located in a predominantly unionist area of Belfast has been involved in the Missines Programme, designed to dispel myths related to cultural identity, and the Women in Search of Peace program through the Worker’s Educational Association. However, as a report outlining the views of leaders of women’s centres in unionist communities finds, their work remains difficult in the post-conflict period. Paramilitary groups continue to act as ‘gate-keepers’ in their communities and create an environment where women feel that such work must continue to occur “in an understated and inconspicuous manner.” As the Ballybeen Women’s Centre, which operates in an economically disadvantaged loyalist area, reports:

Recently the estate has been split into demarcated paramilitary controlled sectors that have resulted in the ghettoisation of areas, civil unrest, displacement of families and a fear of raveling to or mixing with other communities.

Today, the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland continues to be driven by people fighting for education and welfare rights and against poverty. In a 2001 study of the 423 women’s activist organizations operating in Northern Ireland, two-thirds identified that the majority of their members and the focus of their organization was on people of low incomes and that 68 per cent of women’s organization are located in the most deprived areas. As the CAJ finds: “The same geographical areas that were poor in the early 70s, continue to top the list of disadvantaged areas thirty years on. Indeed, these are most often the communities that suffered the most directly from

396 Rooney, "Political Division, Practical Alliance: Problems for Women in Conflict," 45.
397 Report on Disadvantaged Unionist/Loyalist Areas (Greater Belfast). Prepared for Minister David Hanson, Department for Social Development (Women's Support Network, 2006), Appendix 4: Shankill Women's Centre.
398 Ibid., 7.
399 Ibid., Appendix 2: Ballybeen Women's Centre.
400 Roisin McDonough, "Independence or Integration?" Power, Politics, Positionings — Women in Northern Ireland .

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the violent conflict of recent decades.402 Today, the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland are primarily located in North and West Belfast and areas in Derry.403 As such, the cross-community work between women’s centres remains limited as they concentrate on providing community services for the economically deprived areas of Northern Ireland.

In Israel/Palestine, similar class divisions have impacted the women’s peace movement. For example, some Palestinian women have felt that cross-community partnerships, which emphasize commonality among women, effectively erase differences among women, thereby failing to recognize how power and privilege operates within cross-community relationships. Maha Nassar, a prominent Palestinian feminist activist and head of the Union of Palestinian Women Committees, says that Palestinian women are acutely aware in these types of encounters of how they are differently situated than their Israeli-Jewish counterparts due to the economic hardship caused by the occupation. Nassar expresses a sense that Israeli women do not understand the socioeconomic deprivation suffered by Palestinian women and suggests that “Israeli women ought to come to our communities and see our suffering.” As Simona Sharoni notes, women like Nassar recognize the value in carving out a common ground with Israeli-Jewish women, but also insist that such alliances must acknowledge the ways in which power and privilege operate in the broader context of the conflict.404

Outside of the women’s feminist peace movement, class divisions are evident in other attempts by women to build alliances. For example, the national trade union movements in Israel and the occupied territories have not been able to foment class solidarity beyond the ethnonational divide. I spoke with Abla Masroujeh, who was the coordinator of the Women’s Affairs Department in the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), at her office in

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403 A list of the 20 most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland was compiled by the Committee on the Administration of Justice. See: Ibid., 177.
Ramallah in 2005. She explained that women in the Israeli Histradut (Israel’s national trade union) and in the PGFTU attempted to organize some common initiatives in the mid 1990s. These attempts were marred by the perception among Palestinian women that Histradut members treated them with condescension. Following these attempts to create cross-community linkages, members of the PGFTU felt betrayed by the Histradrut for not honouring their agreement to pay the PGFTU money that they had collected on behalf of Palestinian workers in Israel. As Masroujeh said, “we did not feel the respect from that side.” Such division and tension between the unions over workers’ rights made the environment for class solidarity among Israeli and Palestinian workers impossible.

Similarly, Palestinian women’s unions, like Nassar’s union as well as the other Palestinian women’s unions discussed in Chapter 3, also did not choose to build alliances with Israeli organizations during the intifada years and beyond (although some of the women affiliated with these unions did participate in the Jerusalem’s Women’s Center – the Palestinian counterpart of the Jerusalem Link). It was not that these unions remained strongly affiliated with the national Palestinian parties (although some of them did), as most of them worked outside of the political parties and apart from the PGFTU. As one woman I interviewed, Areej Hindailah, administrator for the Union of Palestinian Women Committees, explains, Israeli women cannot understand the suffering of Palestinian women – a sentiment shared earlier by Nassar.

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405 In the period before Oslo – the Histradrut had collected dues from Palestinian labourers from the occupied territories working in Israel since the 1970s even though the Histradrut was not obligated to protect them because they were not legally Israeli citizens. In March 1995, the two unions agreed that half of the money the Histradrut deducted from Palestinian wages would be handed over to the PGFTU. See: Nina Sovich, "Palestinian Trade Unions," Journal of Palestine Studies 29, no. 4 (2000): 75-77. A new deal was struck between the unions, however, in August 2008. See: "Israeli and Palestinian Trade Unions Reach Historic Agreement," International Trade Union Confederation (06 August 2008).

406 Masroujeh, interview by author.

407 These organizations included the Palestinians Working Women’s Society (for Development); the Federation of Women Action Committees; the Union of Palestinian Women Committees; and the Association of Women Committees for Social Work. For background information on the women’s committees, see: Amal Kawar, Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement (NY: SUNY Press, 1996); Hiltermann, "Trade Unions and Women's Committees: Sustaining Movement, Creating Space."
Additionally, these unions are staffed by women who prefer to direct their energy and resources towards immediate projects related to, for example, helping Palestinian women secure funding from donors to start micro projects like agricultural cooperatives as well as helping women locate office space, learn to use computers and purchase the tools they need to get their projects off the ground. Just like the women’s community centres in Northern Ireland, Palestinian women’s unions directed their efforts towards meeting the needs of their communities and not towards building bridges with Israeli women.

Some women are also critical of the way that funding for large NGO projects worked to depoliticize Palestinian women and helped to make the occupation manageable. Hanan Aruri explains that regional and international donor agencies exploit Palestinians who are working at the grassroots level. In her view, they place community activists in top-paying NGO positions, diverting their expertise away from direct political activism in Palestinian political parties. She says the salaries of NGO directors are out of step with the earnings of other Palestinians; seventy per cent of Palestinian people live on less than two dollars a day and NGO directorships bring in an average $5,000 a month. Aruri explains that this has effectively created “a new class” of Palestinians:

. . . they have their interests and their affiliations and no way they can convince me (because I am on a board of one of these NGOs) no way, they can convince me that they will continue to organize people because people will not accept them anymore. They used us to become rich people.

Aruri argues that women who have become directors of NGOs have particularly betrayed the feminist movement. She describes how these women drive into Palestinian villages, adorned with

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408 Areej Hindaileh, PR and administration for the Union of Palestinian Women Committees, interview by author, 27 June 2005, Ramallah, digital voice recording, Union of Palestinian Women Committees, Hospital Street, Ramallah, West Bank.
409 Ibid.
“jewels,” demonstrating the wealth they have attained through their NGO work: “Once the money is dried up, this new class of Palestinians, wealthy from their work with NGOs, will leave.”

Similarly, women’s class-based activism in Israel has been focused on state provisions of social welfare for Jewish women, who are single mothers, working mothers and/or Jewish women of Mizrahi origin (Middle East origin). Some critics within the feminist peace camp argue that there is very little analysis about the relationships between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis or an analysis of the experiences of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in such activism. Nationalism also plays a stronger conscious role in Israeli women’s class-based activism – not unlike the nationalism evident among women working in the Palestinian women’s unions and committees.

For example, in 2003, a part-time working mother named Vicki Knafo became an Israeli hero for feminist activists and working mothers in Israel when she undertook a 200 km walk from her home in Be'er Sheva to Jerusalem. This woman of Mizrahi origin "wrapped herself in the [Israeli] flag that she had at home from Independence Day" and led a solidarity march with hundreds of other single mothers and supporters. Knafo set up a tent outside Israeli government offices in Jerusalem, demanding that the government stop cutting social welfare support. Her protest attracted a lot of media attention and support from other activists, organizing, for example, for the rights of the disabled and the poor. When asked how long she expected the media attention...
to last, she said she expected it to last until the next “terror attack.” The focus of her protest march and eventual meeting with politicians like Israeli President Moshe Katsav, was on the state’s responsibility vis-à-vis Jewish Israeli citizens. It did not extend to alliances with Palestinian organizations or a deeper analysis of the occupation.

Clearly, Israeli women like Knafo, organized around themes related to class, do not draw connections between their experiences of economic exploitation and marginalization and the experiences of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. However, it is also the case that a feminist and distinctly class-based analysis does exist today in other Israeli feminist movements which do make such connections. Particularly since the construction of the separation wall between Israel and the West Bank, feminist peace activists have been drawing attention to themes related to Israeli economic exploitation and control of Palestinian land and Palestinian workers. In this more recent form of activism against the construction of the separation wall that began in 2002, Israeli feminist peace activists are considering how, as Linda Martín Alcoff says, the “work force is totally stratified by race and gender.” This particular section of wall that has been built around Bil’in has effectively annexed half the land (much of it agricultural land) to Israel. This action has been interpreted by peace activists as a land grab by the state to fulfill the expansion plans of the Israeli settlement Modi'in Illit. As Israeli Human Rights group B'Tselem reports:

Thousands of Palestinians have difficulty going to their fields and marketing their produce in other areas of the West Bank. Farming is a primary source of income in the Palestinian communities situated along the Barrier's route, an area that constitutes one of the most fertile areas in the West Bank. The harm to the farming sector is liable to have

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415 The barrier has 66 gates in total. As of July 2008, 27 gates remain closed. The remainder of the gates are either open at fixed times; are opened periodically for farmers; or are only opened during harvest periods. See: "Separation Barrier: Statistics," B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (2008). Also see: "Separation Barrier: High Court accepts petition against Separation Barrier built on Bi’lin village land," B’Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (06 September 2007).
drastic economic effects on the residents — whose economic situation is already very
difficult — and drive many families into poverty.\textsuperscript{416}

The weekly peace demonstrations at the site of the Palestinian village of Bil’in have attracted
international attention because of the brutality demonstrators have been met with by Israeli police
forces and border guards.\textsuperscript{417} For example, Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Prize winner
for her work in the women’s peace movement in Northern Ireland, drew international attention to
the Bil’in demonstrations when she was shot with a rubber bullet in the leg by Israeli forces in
April 2007.\textsuperscript{418} Women from a variety of feminist peace groups in Israel and the West Bank have
been at the forefront of these demonstrations.\textsuperscript{419} Women from Israeli women’s peace
organizations like the Coalition of Women for Peace, Bat Shalom and Machsom Watch have
joined women from the Palestinian Jerusalem Center to regularly demonstrate against the
construction of the wall at particularly controversial construction sites surrounding Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{420}

Other groups, such as Women in Black, organized a solidarity visit to the Bil’in during their 2005
conference, discussed earlier, and some of their activists attend the weekly demonstrations. In this
sense, feminist peace activists have been conscious of the socioeconomic hardship caused by the
construction of the security wall and they have therefore used their cross-community networks to
mount sustained demonstrations calling for its dismantlement. Unlike the class-based activism
that takes place outside of the feminist peace movement, the political priorities of the Israeli
women associated with these demonstrations have not tended to uphold ethnonational identity

\textsuperscript{416} “Background: Separation Barrier,” B’Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights
in the Occupied Territories.

\textsuperscript{417} An example of such brutality includes the case of 28-year-old Israeli lawyer Limor Goldstein.
Goldstein was shot in the head by Israeli police at Bil’in, causing brain damage. See: Dalia Karpel, “One
blow to the brain,” Haaretz.com (15 November 2006). For coverage of the violence, see for example: Itim,
“5 Protestors, policeman, soldier hurt in protest against W. Bank fence,” Haaretz.com (18 November 2006);

\textsuperscript{418} See: Yuval Azoulay, "Eight leftists hurt in clash with police at rally against separation fence,"
Haaretz.com (09 June 2008); Amy Goodman, "Interview with Mairead Maguire: Irish Nobel Peace
Laureate Mairead Maguire shot with rubber bullet by Israeli military at nonviolent protest,"
DemocracyNow.org (23 April 2007).

\textsuperscript{419} Dalit Baum, "Back to Bil’in," Gilasvirsky.com.

\textsuperscript{420} “Demonstrations Against the Apartheid Wall,” Jerusalem Center for Women (16 June 2004).
affiliations in the same way. Through their work in cross-community settings, feminist peace activists have come to understand how the socioeconomic inequality that is produced through the occupation disadvantages Palestinians most acutely. As such, these activists have not limited their focus to the relationship between the conflict and social welfare within Israeli society alone.

In the preceding sections, I have detailed the ways in which class-based activism has generally tended to reflect, rather than undermine, ethnonational identity affiliations. In Northern Ireland, the women’s community organizations that took off in the 1970s confined their work mainly to the needs of their immediate ethnonational communities. Those engagements across the ethnonational divide that did take place often fell apart due to pressures associated with sectarian paramilitarism and increasingly repressive state actions toward the nationalist community. In Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, some of the more traditional class-based modes of organizing in unions and other workers’ committees have tended to be more consciously nationalist in ambition and dedication – even amongst those women who identify as feminists. For Palestinian women, who are suffering incredible economic hardship under the occupation (a situation that has grown more dire despite successive attempts to negotiate a peace treaty), they find few parallels between their experiences and the experiences of Israeli women. For Israeli women that are fighting for social welfare rights in Israel, the conflict represents a political preoccupation that distracts the state from addressing their concerns. Similarly, members of the national union share few similar employment experiences and thus their demands for reform rarely converge with the interests of employees form the occupied territories, particularly since the closures of the occupied territories and the lower overall numbers of Palestinian labourers coming into Israel for work today.

Despite these difficulties, however, the women’s feminist peace movements in both cases have also worked to recognize the socioeconomic divisions within these cases. As I discussed in the last chapter, the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition designed policies that specifically
addressed economic inequality. For example, the party was organized around a mandate that emphasized “Social, economic, cultural and political inclusion” as the “basic requirement for any genuinely democratic society.”

One of the early conferences that served as a foundation for the women’s cross-community party, titled “Women Shaping the Future Political, Economic and Social Development on the Island of Ireland,” was held in Dublin in 1994. Here, women signaled that the fruit of early peace talks between SDLP leader John Hume and Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams in Northern Ireland, as well as the IRA and loyalist paramilitary ceasefires in 1994, should be the delivery of economic and social resources for women’s education and training, child care provisions and community development to enable women to actively participate in political life. As such, women’s relative socioeconomic positions in Northern Ireland were identified early on by the party as potential impediments to the full and equal participation of women. While there was a perception among some women that they were a middle-class party with middle-class interests, the Women’s Coalition consciously worked towards including the priorities and interests of the most disadvantaged and segregated areas of Northern Ireland. For example, the party decided that its leadership should be reflective of nationalist women’s activism in the women’s movement as well as community activism in unionist/Protestant communities. As such, Pearl Seger was designated as one of the party’s leaders because she had a community activist background in working class unionist/Protestant communities. Unlike the main ethnonational parties that participated in the peace talks, the Women’s Coalition reasoned that social and economic equality, for all citizens and residents of Northern Ireland, was a central component of peace-building. In this sense, the women’s movement in Northern Ireland identified class-related

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422 Ibid., 114.
issues as being just as important to conflict resolution as the constitutional question. These priorities were developed throughout the period of women’s feminist activism in Northern Ireland. A politics of “transversalism,” as practiced by the women’s movement in Northern Ireland, demanded that alliances between women be built on dialogue and not an expectation of homogeneity of experience. As Carmel Roulston, former member of the *Women’s Coalition* and an academic, writes: “To contest injustice and oppression, ideals of solidarity and commonality are required; to create and re-create these ideals is the business of feminism in our times.”

In Israel/Palestine, women have initiated a number of cross-community projects today that also specifically address class-related issues. For example, those feminist peace activists who demonstrate and speak out against the construction of the separation wall by Israel are consciously critiquing the economic and political motivations that drive the state’s decision to build the wall, thereby challenging the security justification for its installation. These women, through their activism, are identifying the material underpinnings of the occupation and the conflict. As Cynthia Cockburn writes, a feminist analysis of class in conflict identifies the differences in wealth, ownership of the means of production and different relationships to property. Protesting alongside Palestinians labourers, farmers and workers, many of these Israeli feminist peace activists are not demanding reformist strategies to make the occupation more “equitable.” Rather, they are demanding radical political change and calling for the destruction of the architecture of the occupation. Through their activism in feminist peace organizations, women are making these connections, understanding each other’s experiences and forging alliances based on a common political goal to end the occupation.

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425 Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis*, 7.
5.3 Conclusion

As I have set out in the chapter, there is a tendency in some of the gender and conflict and critical geography literature to romanticise women’s cross-community initiatives. In the cases under study here, however, cross-community organizing has been more limited and, at times, more tense and tenuous than some of the women’s organizations, like the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition and the Jerusalem Link, reveal through their public meetings, websites and literature. I found that women working in cross-community projects were just as aware of how people are differently situated in ethnonational conflict as other political and social organizations. Nationalist and Palestinian women reminded unionist and Israeli women that their communities were the long sufferers of harsh living and working conditions under British imperialism and Israeli occupation. Unionist and Israeli women reminded nationalist and Palestinian women that these experiences do not mean that they have the sole purchase on human rights and justice claims. Cross-community groups were similarly divided on issues that confounded the broader political community. For example, women found it difficult to agree on contentious political issues like the right of return for Palestinian refugees and support for the activities of republican women prisoners in Northern Ireland. Lesbian women and community activists in economically deprived areas also experienced marginalization within the broader women’s peace movements, suggesting that the ‘thirdspace’ of women’s peace activism at the margins of ethnonational conflicts are not homogeneous or uncontested spaces.

As such, I argued that a vision of solving conflict through cross-community contact belies the asymmetry of power that characterizes relations between unionist and nationalist women in Northern Ireland and Israeli and Palestinian women in Israel and the occupied territories; it dismisses the ways in which women are similarly divided over the same contentious issues as the rest of the public, like the status of Palestinian refugees or the official usage of national flags and

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426 Golan-Gild, interview by author.
427 Roulston, interview by author. Also see: Rooney, "Women in Political-Conflict," 44.
emblems in Northern Ireland; it fails to capture the difficulties and dangers that women have faced and have had to overcome as part of their work in these associations; it ignores the disillusionment that women activists have experienced as the protracted peace processes have failed to deliver peace; and it does not account for the pressure and resultant resentment that some women feel when funding bodies require women’s groups to form as cross-community associations. Underlying the problematic contact-equals-peace thesis is the conception the both conflicts are not based on legitimate grievances but rather on a “misunderstanding” that can be resolved through the processes of coming to know the ‘Other’ community. Such a thesis avoids an analysis of culpability and responsibility for the antecedent conditions leading to conflict. In this chapter, I have attempted to show the ways in which themes related to ethnicity and nationalism, gender, sexuality and class have impacted women’s social and political campaigns.

Despite the difficulties associated with cross-community activism in both cases and the way in which the romanticisation of cross-community contact can unintentionally promote a problematic contact-equals-peace thesis, I have also argued in this chapter that women have forged unique, albeit sometimes limited, cross-community partnerships in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, where activists have remained rooted in their ethnonational identities but also engaged with other women in dialogue settings that endeavour to understand and incorporate the varied experiences of women in conflict. As Patricia Hill Collins describes the process:

Each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial, its knowledge is unfinished. Each group becomes better able to consider other groups’ standpoints without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own standpoint or suppressing other groups’ partial perspectives.

This process has not been “natural” or easy for women; it has been based, rather, on the conscious development of feminist praxis and a commitment to activism based on coalitions of differently

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429 Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought (Routledge, 2000), 27.
situated women. Women’s identity-based activism in these cases did emerge to reveal some of the oppressive features of those nationalist agendas that were incompatible with, for example, the emancipatory goals that republican and Palestinian women developed through their anti-occupation activism. Women from across ethnonational divides translated each other’s experiences – as subjugated ethnic and national communities, as the sufferers of terrorism and fear and as women marginalized in hyper-masculinized political climates.

In some instances, it was the most contentious issues that provided the context in which women in divided communities established relations with each other. For example, it was difficult for unionist women to support the call for the fair treatment of republican women prisoners lest their support be perceived as collaboration with the broader republican movement. Despite these reservations, the public profile that women political prisoners received due to their protests against strip searching, isolation and censorship spurred many women outside the republican movement to advocate for these women based on principles of human rights.430 As Mairéad Keane, former national head of Sinn Féin’s Women's Department, writes: “Women who get involved because women's bodies have been violated, and actually take it up as a human rights issue and a women's issue, are actually advancing the cause of the struggle at the end of the day, because they are raising awareness.”431 Although Keane would have preferred that women became involved in the campaigns against the poor treatment of republican women prisoners because of their support for the republican political project more generally, she acknowledges the contribution that women from the unionist/Protestant community made on this issue. Similarly, in Israel/Palestine, women jointly organize weekly protests against the separation wall; transportation pools for sick Palestinian children from the occupied territories to Israeli

430 Lyons and Keane, "At the End of the Day: An Interview with Mairead Keane, National Head of Sinn Féin Women's Department," 275.
431 Ibid., 276.
hospitals; and common statements in support of new international resolutions that call for the end of the occupation today. Despite a lack of consensus and, at times, vacillating levels of tension, Israeli and Palestinian women, like women in Northern Ireland, continue to organize and become politicized in feminist peace movements that are based on a model of solidarity.

The ‘thirdspace’ of women’s feminist peace activism is a collection of contested but also radical communities of resistance where solidarities and alliances are forged between women that are variably organized around themes like ethnicity and nationalism as well as gender, class and sexuality. As I have discussed in this chapter, women’s activism does not transcend the ethnonational divide; rather, such activism struggles to recognize women’s rootedness in their ethnonational identity. However, women also endeavour to understand each other’s uneven experiences of oppression in an effort to put together the pieces of the reality of conflict and occupation. Despite the problems with the cross-community contact theory that informs these projects, women activists have found a way, through a process of what Yuval-Davis calls “translation” to understand the ‘Other’ and mount the kinds of successful cross-community coalition projects that I described in Chapter 4. In the next chapter, I will outline the state of women’s feminist peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine today. While the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition did eventually dissolve in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, the party’s contribution to both the peace process and the development of post-conflict institutions, like the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission, offers valuable lessons for new feminist peace initiatives being undertaken by women in Israel/Palestine.

\[432\] For example, car pools from the occupied territories to Israel are coordinated through newsgroups maintained by organizations like the Coalition of Women for Peace. For example, see: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CWJP/.
Chapter 6
Lessons Learned from the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party and the State of the Women’s Feminist Peace Movements Today

In the preceding chapters, I identified some of the ways in which social identity formation and identity-based activism in Northern Ireland, Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories are more complex than is theorized in the dominant literature on ethnonationalism. While ethnonational based theories of conflict and conflict resolution find that the ethnic and national divisions are the most salient and the most important social and political cleavages in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, I have argued that when we consider how gender identity cross-cuts ethnonationalism, sexuality and class, we can see the multiple and understudied ways that people become politicized in conflict, build communities of solidarity and activism, and develop ideas directly related to conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building.

Both conflicts are usually scripted in the ethnonationalism literature and approached by conflict resolution mediators and practitioners as ethnonationally-based. As well, conflict resolution prescriptions and practices have generally relied on models of ethnic elite accommodation. In Chapter 4, I detailed how feminist peace activists in Northern Ireland were able to creatively exploit the elite ethnonational actor model, which was instituted in the lead up to the Belfast Agreement, and insert themselves into the peace process by creating an all-women political party. In this chapter, I argue that the women’s feminist peace movement in Northern Ireland made a valuable and discernable contribution to conflict resolution and peace-building, not simply because more women were included in the peace process; rather, their contribution stemmed from the active commitment of members to peace, justice, fairness and human rights values, beyond a political party framework. As such, I argue that the Northern Ireland case reveals the potential advantage of including non-central actors in our analysis of conflict and in our development of conflict resolution prescriptions for deeply divided societies.
In this chapter, I begin with the dissolution of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party. While the party was able to get elected to the 1996 Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue (hereafter ‘Forum’), charged with developing a political agreement to end the conflict, and managed to get two candidates elected to the devolved power-sharing Assembly, party candidates failed to capture seats in subsequent elections and the party dissolved. Despite its failure to remain a political party, it was successful in getting women represented at the peace talks. As such, the party’s influence on the peace negotiations, as discussed in Chapter 4, led to the development of new post-conflict institutions that prioritize justice, human rights and inclusion as defined beyond the ethnonational divide. In the second section of this chapter, I outline the relative success of these post-conflict institutions, detailing the ways in which their effect might have been greater had they been better fleshed out during the negotiation phases.

In the third section of this chapter, I discuss how these institutions were the product of a more inclusive conflict resolution process – but still a process that restricted representation to the peace talks to political parties alone. As such, I argue that there is an inherent weakness in an approach to conflict resolution that only includes political parties and suggest that an all-women’s party is not necessarily the best prescription for securing more inclusive peace processes in other cases like future peace talks in Israel/Palestine. In the final section of this chapter, I detail the activities of the women’s feminist peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine today. In particular, there has been an increase in transnational feminist activism in both cases, in addition to the coalition-style of politics that has taken place within each case. Given the knowledge that the feminist peace movements have developed in both cases, especially as demonstrated by the contribution that women made to the Northern Ireland peace process, I argue that conflict resolution theory and practice would benefit from designing more inclusive models of conflict resolution as opposed to restricting their interests to elite ethnonational actor models.
6.1 End of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party

The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party officially disbanded on 11 May 2006. The party was unable to maintain the visibility and momentum that it achieved during the 1996-1998 Multi-Party Peace Talks and in the 1998 elections. Monica McWilliams and Jane Morrice lost their seats in the 2003 election and Patricia Wallace, a local councilor and the last elected member of the Women’s Coalition, lost her seat on the North Down Borough Council two years later. Elizabeth Byrne McCullough, member of the Women’s Coalition and volunteer on the party’s team during the peace talks, blamed the suspension of the devolved Assembly (for seven months preceding the 2003 elections) for the party’s loss of publicity and subsequent loss at the polls. Clearly, the organization of women’s political demands within a political party framework proved unsuccessful in the post-Agreement period.

Aside from the four periods of suspension of the Assembly since devolution (the longest period of which stretched from October 2002 to May 2007), which may explain some of the loss of visibility for non-ethnonational political parties, the post-Agreement election losses and the eventual termination of the Women’s Coalition can also be accounted for by an election formula and Assembly structure that favours sectarian parties. As well, some members of the Women’s Coalition maintain that the party was never designed to stand as a long-term political party anyway. For these members, the Women’s Coalition successfully served its limited mandate to include important considerations related to women, human rights, inclusion and equality, beyond the constitutional issue, in the peace talks. Below, I consider both of these explanations that account for the end of the Women’s Coalition and argue that, irrespective of what causal factors

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433 The following members of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition ran for elections in 2003: Anne Monaghan, East Antrim; Joan Cosgrove, South Antrim; Elizabeth Byrne McCullough, Belfast North; Monica McWilliams, Belfast South; Jane Morrice, North Down; Trudy Miller, South Down; and Eithne McNulty, Fermanagh and South Tyrone). For a complete list of candidates in the 2003 elections, see: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/candidates2003.htm.


435 Hinds, interview by author.
led to the demise of the *Women’s Coalition*, the party’s lasting influence on the development of human rights and equality instruments in Northern Ireland demonstrates the advantage of implementing a peace process that is inclusive of constituencies that extend beyond the ethnonational divide. Some of the difficulties that the Northern Ireland Assembly and the new post-conflict institutions have encountered while implementing these instruments further indicates some of the pitfalls associated with the failure of the post-Agreement political Assembly to remain as inclusive as the peace talks. For this reason, I maintain that other institutional mechanisms are necessary in post peace agreement periods to ensure the political inclusion and participation of broad sectors of society.

*Post-Agreement elections in Northern Ireland and the success of sectarian political parties*

As I discussed in Chapter 4, the consociational power-sharing model of governance applied in Northern Ireland was specifically designed to reflect the major ethnonational cleavage in Northern Ireland. Key decisions in the devolved Northern Ireland Assembly require either ‘parallel consent’, defined as “a majority of those members present and voting, including a majority of the unionist and nationalist designations” or a ‘weighted majority’ of 60 per cent of “members present and voting, including at least 40% of each of the nationalist and unionist designations present and voting.” In order to measure cross-community support, Assembly members (MLAs) must designate themselves as nationalist, unionist or ‘other’ on important decisions related to, for example, the election of the chair of the Assembly and the first minister and deputy first minister, standing orders and budget allocations. Some critics argue that the requirement of consent from nationalist and unionist MLAs weakens the ability of other identity groups, which include people organized within and beyond the ethnonational divide, to form viable political blocs. For example, Rick Wilford and Robin Wilson argue that the communal registration of all MLAs “verges on the racist by blotting out any axes of identity formation other

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than that between Catholics and Protestants." Votes from those who are registered as ‘other’ count less in this system than votes of communally registered MLAs. In one instance, some MLAs who were formally registered as ‘others’ re-designated themselves as ‘unionists’ and ‘nationalists’ in order to support the reinstallation of the Assembly in 2001 following one of its four suspensions. Liberal consociational theorist Brendan O’Leary argues that consociational agreements must “protect those who wish to have their identities counted differently, or not as collective identities” in order to meet the requirements of a liberal or social-democratic political order. The communal designation requirement, as it is applied in the Northern Ireland case, fails to provide the kinds of protections that consociationalists envisage.

Support for the more divisive sectarian parties has also increased in the post-conflict period. Karin Gilland Lutz and Christopher Farrington argue that the communal designation rule makes it “more likely that voters will support nationalist and unionist parties, as these will have more weight in the Assembly than ‘others’.” While some analysts explain the phenomenon of increasing post-Agreement sectarian voting by suggesting that voters are making their ethnonational identity affiliations known through new elections, others contend that increased sectarian voting patterns are a result of the structure of the power-sharing Assembly and the electoral formula. The more extreme unionist and nationalist sectarian parties, including Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), have indeed fared markedly better in post-Agreement elections than cross-community parties like the Women’s Coalition and the Alliance Party and moderate parties like the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Ulster Unionist

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Party (UUP). In the following table, I list the percentage of votes that the parties garnered in the 1996 elections to the Northern Ireland Forum and in subsequent elections to the new Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998, 2003 and 2007. The table notes the percentage change in votes for the parties in 2003 compared to 1998 and 2007 compared to 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>1996 Forum % of votes</th>
<th>1998 Assembly % of votes</th>
<th>2003 Assembly % of votes</th>
<th>Change 1998-03 % +/- votes</th>
<th>2007 Assembly % of votes</th>
<th>Change 2003-07 % +/- votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUP</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>+7.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>+4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinn Féin</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>+5.9</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUP</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>-7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDLP</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Coalition Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>-6.4</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table shows, Sinn Féin increased its share of the electoral vote by 5.9% in the 2003 elections and by an additional 2.7% in the 2007 elections. The DUP increased its share of the vote by 7.7% in the 2003 elections and by an additional 4.4% in the 2007 elections. In contrast, the Women’s Coalition lost two seats in the 2003 election and the Alliance Party decreased its share of the vote by 2.8% in the 2003 election, with a small increase of 1.5% in the 2007 election.

According to liberal consociational scholars John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, “These data are powerful evidence of strong polarization and deeply held identifications, realities that

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441 Ibid., 723.
will not be easily transformed by any electoral system changes.” McGarry and O’Leary do concede, however, that the mandatory communal designation of all MLAs and the requirement of either parallel consent or a weighted majority for key decisions privilege the unionist and nationalist identity:

While Northern Ireland’s voters have shown no signs of adopting new (non-unionist and non-nationalist) identities for over a century, it is therefore true that such rules arguably create disincentives for them to change their behaviour. There is an incentive for voters to choose nationalists or unionists, as members from these groups will, ceteris paribus, count more than ‘others’ or be more pivotal. The rules have the effect of pre-determining, in advance of election results, that nationalists and unionists are to be better protected than ‘others’.

The ‘others’, if they were to become a majority, would be pivotal in the passage of all normal legislation, but nationalists and unionists would have more pivotality in any key decision requiring crosscommunity support.

McGarry and O’Leary agree that communal designation rules provide disincentives for voters to change ethnonational voting preferences and argue that such rules are not necessarily “intrinsic to consociational design.” In my view, given the design of the political system in the post-Agreement period, it is not clear what mechanism or mechanisms could be put into place today to change this requirement as those parties currently in power are unlikely to support such a change.

Donald Horowitz, critical of the communal designation requirement, argues that an electoral system that makes it more rewarding to be a member of either the declared nationalist or unionist community unduly undermines the political aspirations of “multi-ethnic” or “nonethnic” parties like the Women’s Coalition and the Alliance Party. As Horowitz notes:

By disadvantaging unaffiliated legislators, the agreement violates their interest in pursuing politics in their own way on terms of equality with other political actors. There may be serious questions about whether disadvantages conferred on legislators who are

444 Ibid., 272.
445 Ibid.
neither unionist nor nationalist conform to the nondiscrimination requirements to which the United Kingdom government is subject.\footnote{Horowitz, "Explaining the Northern Ireland Agreement: The Sources of an Unlikely Constitutional Consensus," 195.} In other words, the pressure the system puts on MLAs to re-designate along ethnonational lines during key decisions undermines the efforts of some parties to represent cross-community interests and it may fail to meet other thresholds of nondiscrimination.

Similarly, the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system of proportional representation used in Northern Ireland has been criticized by some commentators who suggest that it does not serve smaller political parties well. Critics maintain that it tends to disadvantage parties like the Women’s Coalition that have a support base spread out across Northern Ireland rather than concentrated in single constituencies.\footnote{Ibid., 208.} Under this preferential voting system, voters rank candidates in one of Northern Ireland’s eighteen, six-member constituencies according to their candidate preferences. Once a candidate meets the minimum quota required for election, all additional votes that the candidate receives over and above the quota are transferred to voters’ next preferences. Cera Murtagh argues that Patricia Wallace, the Women’s Coalition councilor who lost her seat in the 2005 North Down local council elections, failed to get re-elected because the DUP put forth eight candidates in that riding, which gained all of the vote transfers under the STV system.\footnote{Cera Murtagh, "A Transient Transition: the Cultural and Institutional Obstacles Impeding the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition in its Progression from Informal to Formal Politics," The Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics, School of Politics and International Studies, Queens University Belfast Occasional paper no. 12 (2007): 12.} Proportionality, in this sense, may be met within individual constituencies but not necessarily across the eighteen constituencies.\footnote{Changes to the electoral system to promote broader political representation are not necessarily at odds with liberal consociational theory (similar to changes to the communal designation requirement discussed above). However, a unique opportunity to design more robust mechanisms for democratic participation has passed with the conclusion of the conflict resolution process. Additionally, eliminating communal designation requirements and amending the electoral system would only secure political representation for elected party representatives. As I discuss later in this chapter, such changes, while important, would not necessarily secure the broader representation and participation of civil society.} There is also considerable discord among political parties today about the extent to which politics remains open and transparent given the
structure of the new power-sharing executive. For example, Sir Reg Empey, leader of the UUP, says that the two largest parties – *Sinn Féin* and the DUP – come to mutual agreement on decisions before they are debated in the Executive:

Not always, but more often than not, the DUP and Sinn Féin go into Ian Paisley’s office before Executive meetings to discuss their agreed approach to the agenda and leave myself, Michael (McGimpsey) and Margaret (Ritchie) sitting waiting. On one occasion it was as long as half-an-hour.  

As such, the political Assembly operates in such a way as to serve the interests of the main ethnonational elite political actors.

Given the poor performance of cross-community, moderate and small political parties following the 2003 Northern Ireland Assembly election, Seamus Mallon, former deputy first minister and SDLP representative, remarked: “the Agreement should have opened up a political pluralism … Now we have got a political fundamentalism in terms of both the vote for Sinn Féin and for the DUP.” Similarly, Elizabeth Meehan, Northern Ireland academic and former member of the *Women’s Coalition*, argues that the *Women’s Coalition* loss at the 2003 Assembly elections demonstrates how the system disadvantages non-sectarian and small parties:

Where are all these people who say they want a new Northern Ireland? Where are they when the election time comes? And why are they (if they are voting) voting for extreme parties? Why is one half of their head doing one thing and the other half doing another? Or is it that the people who want a new Northern Ireland are just too fed up with the parties and they are the ones not voting? I don’t know the answers to that. But I know that Monica [McWilliams] and Jane Morrice – after the electorate had failed to elect them, they resigned themselves. They would be out shopping at that time and people would say: ‘Oh, why aren’t you there for us now?’ Because you didn’t vote for me! So, I don’t know. All of the small parties have been increasingly squeezed out.

Meehan’s comments reflect a lack of a clear consensus on the conditions that led to the demise of the *Women’s Coalition Party*. Some member of the *Coalition*, argue that the party itself

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452 Elizabeth Meehan, professor emeritus Queen's University Belfast and former member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party, interview by author, 21 July 2006, Belfast, digital voice recording, Queen's University Institute of Governance, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
failed to organize effectively after the peace talks. For example, Bronagh Hinds left the party shortly after the 1998 referendum in Northern Ireland, which established the support of the broader Northern Ireland public for the Agreement, and before the first election to the new Assembly. Following the peace talks, Hinds says that the party members did not work to build the party’s base throughout Northern Ireland and recruit new candidates. In her view, the party should not have focused all of its energy on the two main party representatives.\(^\text{453}\) Catherine O’Rourke, investigator for the Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster, argues that the Women’s Coalition should really be viewed as a strategic political project which gave women the opportunity to become involved in politics.\(^\text{454}\) As Lynn Carvill, Policy and Research Coordinator at the Women’s Support Network, says:

> Most people in Northern Ireland are highly politicized because of the conflict and everything else. I would be very political, but never saw a role within the main parties. I much preferred to be outside that kind of structure, in a way, you know. Kind of trying to change policies rather than be inside structures. But when the Women’s Coalition came along, it was just, the way it was set up, and how everybody was involved and so many people knew each other . . . I wasn’t there very long. The idea was at that stage, to get as many women to run for elections in different parts of Northern Ireland to get a place on the Forum. So, it wasn’t becoming elected to do something, but it was to make sure that there were two female representatives that would be part of the discussions at the Forum.\(^\text{455}\)

In this sense, although the party failed to maintain public support through elections, members were successful in their initial goal of getting women included in the peace process.

In addition to the internal explanations for the disbandment of the Women’s Coalition, such as the party’s poor strategic planning or its limited goal of getting women involved in the peace talks, it is also the case that increased patterns of sectarian voting in Northern Ireland, discussed above, disadvantaged the Women’s Coalition. Data from the 2003 and 2007 Assembly

\(^{453}\) Hinds, interview by author.

\(^{454}\) Catherine O’Rourke, research assistant at the Transitional Justice Institute University of Ulster, interview by author, 11 July 2006, Derry, written notes, University of Ulster Magee Campus, Northern Ireland.

\(^{455}\) Lynn Carvill, policy and research co-ordinator for the Women's Support Network and former member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition Party and the Northern Ireland Civic Forum, interview by author, 07 August 2006, Belfast, digital voice recording, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
elections demonstrate how voters in Northern Ireland are polarized along ethnonational lines –
either as a function, as McGarry and O’Leary claim, of their true political intentions, or as a
function, as Horowitz claims, of the design of the Assembly and the electoral system. These two
competing, but equally plausible, narratives that explain increasing sectarian voting patterns
following the Belfast Agreement can be summarized as follows: (a) many more people have the
confidence to participate in politics for the first time because of the Belfast Agreement and duly
revealed their deep commitment to their ethnonational community as voters; (b) voters’ general
lack of confidence in the new Assembly encourages them to vote strategically for those sectarian
parties empowered in the new Assembly to deliver on important political decisions. In my view,
irrespective of which explanation we accept, it seems clear that ethnonational elite—based peace
agreements are likely to produce greater sectarian voting patterns in post-conflict periods, at least
in the short to medium term. As such, the character and function of the institutions which are
designed and set up during peace processes are all the more important in post-peace agreement
periods to establish statutory commitments to justice, human rights and equality, which are more
broadly defined beyond the interests of main ethnonational blocs. If we can expect that the
empowerment of ethnonational elite political figures through peace agreements and favourable
electoral systems may lead to prolonged periods of political wrangling over narrow ethnonational
interests, then other mechanisms must be established during peace processes to ensure the
protection of the rights of other identity constituencies in post-conflict periods. As I discussed in
the preceding chapters, the conflict in Northern Ireland also served to politicize subaltern agents
and communities within, across and beyond the ethnonational divide. In order to ensure that their
interests are also reflected in the post-conflict period, which is the standard, as O’Leary points out
above, of liberal or social democratic political orders, then political provisions outside of the
establishment of a power-sharing Assembly must be made.
In Northern Ireland, we can see the benefit of the ten-party list system used for elections to the peace talks, discussed in Chapter 5. For example, the election of the Women’s Coalition encouraged other political parties to run more women as candidates and to develop explicit “women’s manifestos.” Women in other parties also enjoyed a much higher profile in their respective parties after the Women’s Coalition emerged on the political scene. As one commentator points out,

Perhaps most significant, the major parties stood a record number of women candidates in both the Westminster and the local government elections in June, 2001. Three won Westminster seats, a number equal to the total number of women MPs elected from Northern Ireland in its entire eight-year existence.

As such, the participation of the Women’s Coalition in the peace talks provoked other parties to increase the representation and profile of women among their ranks.

_A Human Rights Commission, a Bill of Rights and an Equality Commission for Northern Ireland_

The inclusion of cross-community political parties and other moderate and small parties also contributed to the development of novel safeguards and stipulations regarding relations between the power-sharing Assembly and the other institutions established as part the 1998 Belfast Agreement. The first section or ‘strand’ of the Agreement envisaged the creation of a Human Rights Commission, charged with defining the scope for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, along with an Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Considering the stated mandates of the leading ethnonational parties in Northern Ireland, it is clear that the more robust sections of the “rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity” provisions in the Agreement, such as “the right of women to full and equal political participation,”[458] would not have been formulated during the peace process if smaller political parties were excluded from the peace process.

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talks. As Christine Bell notes, despite the fact that so much of the conflict in Northern Ireland was related to human rights abuses, the initial stages of the peace process focused exclusively on the problem of reaching compromise on the question of national sovereignty as opposed to the important goal of developing human rights instruments.  

Concerns related to the protection of ethnonational interests were evident in the discussions regarding the scope of a proposed commission for human rights and bill of rights for Northern Ireland. For example, during the peace talks, Sinn Féin proposed that a bill of rights should be formulated on an all-Ireland basis in order to protect the rights of the nationalist and unionist communities:

Equality . . . means civil and political rights for unionists as well as nationalists and republicans. Whether it is the right to march, or the right to worship or the right to vote - these are civil, religious and political rights which must be guaranteed and protected.

On the other hand, Ian Paisley Jr., representing the DUP, argued that a bill of rights should focus on the protection of individual rights as opposed to group rights:

With regard to Northern Ireland, [the nationalist] view is that a Bill of Rights should protect communities and their linguistic, cultural and religious rights and that means fair-employment legislation and reconstitution of the police service and the judiciary. Although I am not opposed to reforms where they are necessary, I reject the notion of simply protecting group rights . . . We must consider the individual’s responsibility to the state and the state’s responsibility to the individual.

In both cases, the leading ethnonationalist parties were principally concerned with protecting the interests of their respective constituencies – either through the extension of group rights to protect nationalist communities, in the case of Sinn Féin, or through the extension of individual rights, which were considered less threatening than group rights to the relative position of power that the majority unionist community enjoyed in Northern Ireland.

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In contrast, the *Women’s Coalition Party*, drawing on the experiences of party members working with and advocating for the rights of other communities and groups in Northern Ireland such as women, communities in economically disadvantaged areas, children and youth, the dis/abled, the LBGTQ community, and victims of the conflict, advocated for a bill of rights that would protect the rights of all communities in Northern Ireland. From the beginning, the *Women’s Coalition* had highlighted the protection of human rights, equality and inclusion as the party’s core objectives.\(^{462}\) At the peace talks, the *Women’s Coalition* proposed a bill of rights and equality legislation for Northern Ireland that would include “a range of collective or communal rights”\(^{463}\) such as the right of children to play (i.e. through the state provision of safe areas for children to play in their communities); the right of women to work and participate in politics (i.e. through national childcare programs); the right of people not to be treated as a member of a particular community; the right of minority communities, such as Muslim, Chinese, Traveller, and Indian communities, to be represented and to participate in politics;\(^{464}\) and the right of same-sex partnerships and co-habiting couples to be recognized and protected under the law.\(^{465}\)

Colin Harvey, a commissioner for the Human Rights Commission that was established as a result of the Agreement, notes, “By participating in the negotiations [the Women’s Coalition] was able to . . . feed into the process more general human rights and equality issues.”\(^{466}\)

Certainly, the *Women’s Coalition* fought hard to inject an understanding of human rights as

\(^{462}\) Hinds, interview by author, digital voice recording; Kate Fearson and Monica McWilliams, "Swimming Against the Mainstream: the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition," in *Gender, Democracy and Inclusion in Northern Ireland*, ed. Carmel Roulston and Celia Davies (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), 124.

\(^{463}\) "A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Through the Years - The Views of the Political Parties," 8.


defined as the protection of the rights of all people and communities in Northern Ireland, and not just the two main ethnonational blocs.\textsuperscript{467} Aside from the occasional critique by unionist party members that “human rights” were the purview of the Catholic community, \textsuperscript{468} it was difficult for even sectarian parties to take a stand against these safeguards and institutions in principle (although there has been considerable controversy concerning how best to operationalize these safeguards) because they were about maximizing protection for all communities.

Indeed, the impact of these discussions during the peace talks was reflected in the revised party manifestos developed by the leading parties. For example, the post-Agreement party manifesto of the DUP, developed for the 2001 Westminster elections, states that:

We believe in real and meaningful equality for women and ethnic minorities. We hold that this principle should be built into mainstream government policies and not relegated to token programmes or projects.

Other sections of the manifesto specifically outline the need to safeguard the rights of the disabled.\textsuperscript{469} The impact of the peace talks and the broadening of the human rights agenda, beyond the two main communities in Northern Ireland, are clearly reflected in the DUP’s changing the conception of rights and duties of government.

In addition to the Human Rights Commission, the Agreement also provided for equality safeguards, including provisions for the establishment of an Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, a statutory duty on all public bodies to promote equality of opportunity,

between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a

\textsuperscript{467} See: NIWC, "A Response to 'Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland' from the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition," ix.
disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.470

While inclusive in design and ambition, the operationalization of section 75 has proved trickier in the post-Agreement period than was perhaps anticipated. Institutions like the Equality Commission, however, have been important in making clear the scope of the Assembly’s responsibilities with regards to such equality protections. For example, the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), in response to Section 75, produced a document entitled Gender Matters: Towards a Cross-Departmental Strategic Framework to Promote Gender Equality for Women and Men 2005 – 2015 as part of the OFMDFM’s gender equality strategy.471 This gender equality strategy came under hash criticism from the women’s sector and the equality sector in Northern Ireland. Catherine O’Rourke, Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster, describes the OFMDFM’s publication as “frightening” and Barbara O’Shea points out that this document was deeply flawed because it was gender neutral and could not, therefore, deal with issues of inequality.472 In response to this document, the Equality Commission, while welcoming the government’s new commitments on gender equality, wrote that the strategy,

argues that the cause of much gender inequality is not in actual fact inequality or discrimination but the choices people make. It is suggested that women have genuine, unconstrained choices about how they wish to live their lives. In effect, this analysis suggests that women choose to work part-time, be poorly paid, have no access to training, live in poverty, have no value attached to their attributes and take on a large proportion of domestic and caring work for no pay or recognition.473

470 "Northern Ireland Act 1998."
As such, the OFMDFM reworked its strategy and published a new document, reflecting some of these concerns, entitled *A Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2006-2016*. The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) notes in its 2008 submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), that the revised document is less disagreeable. However, the CAJ does note that it still fails to acknowledge the ways in which women are differently situated in terms of, for example, race, age and dis/ability. As such, continued public consultation, through institutions like the Equality Commission, is necessary.

Despite some of the difficulties related to the implementation of human rights and equality safeguards in the post-conflict period, it is also the case that the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission have operated continuously since the Belfast Agreement, even through the periodic suspensions of the political Assembly. As such, the consistency with which these safeguards have continued to apply, even in the absence of the Assembly, and the continual processes of public consultation, has created an environment in which elite level sectarian divisions have not been able to disrupt these provisions. Miriam Titterton, former member of the Women’s Coalition and currently the Development Worker at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Committee, suggests that the duty of institutions, like the Human Rights Commission, to consult the public inculcated a sense of broad ownership of the political process by the public. Public consultations also functioned as a springboard for communities to discuss human rights related issues in Northern Ireland.

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475 “Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Response to UK 6th Periodic Report,” (Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), 2008), 8.

476 Titterton, interview by author.
Interestingly, many of the former members of the defunct *Women’s Coalition* found themselves in leadership positions in the new post-conflict institutions that they helped to design during the peace talks. For example, Monica McWilliams, former party chair of the *Women’s Coalition*, is serving her second term as chief commissioner of the Human Rights Commission. Ann Hope, who canvassed for the *Women’s Coalition* during election periods, was also appointed as a commissioner for the Human Rights Commission. As well, Hope served as an equality commissioner beginning in 1999 and as a member of the Working Group, established by the Equality Commission, to develop a guide to statutory duties on equality impact assessments. Bronagh Hinds, former member of the *Women’s Coalition* who was tasked with developing the party’s equality mandate, was also appointed deputy chair to the chief commissioner of the Equality Commission. In this sense, although the party did not survive in the post-Agreement period, members continue to participate in politics through the very institutions that they helped to establish during the peace process, thereby carving out a public and political role for feminist activists in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

I do not want to overstate the impact that the *Women’s Coalition* and other smaller parties had on the final Agreement or on the political process. Certainly, sectarian ethnonational issues still dominated much of the debate during the peace talks. As well, the Agreement, while enshrining the rights of all communities in Northern Ireland, remained heavily focused on “parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities,” defined as the nationalist and unionist communities. However, what I do want to highlight is the contribution that other communities, representing different experiences and interests, bring to peace negotiations. In this case, the contribution of feminist peace activists to the development of first-class human rights instruments and institutions was made through a

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political party framework. It may also be conceivable that such activists could have made similar contributions to the peace process and the design of post-conflict institutions if other mechanisms, aside from a more favourable electoral formula, were developed. Considering the failure of the *Women’s Coalition* to retain electoral support in the post-Agreement period, their continued participation in the post-conflict period was relegated to the institutions they helped to design and to the nongovernmental and quasi-nongovernmental sectors. In an effort to promote the inclusion of other communities and interests in the post-Agreement period, the *Women’s Coalition* also fought for, and was successful in, including just such a mechanism as part of the final peace Agreement.

*The Northern Ireland Civic Forum*

As discussed in Chapter 4, the *Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition* ensured that the Civic Forum would be established as part of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act. The Forum was intended to act as a mechanism for participatory democracy to function as a consultative body on social, economic and cultural issues in Northern Ireland and to be comprised of representatives from various civil society sectors including the trade union sector, the voluntary sector and the business sector. As such, they hoped that the Civic Forum would ensure the representation of the many other individuals and communities in Northern Ireland that did not necessarily find their interests reflected in the ethnonational politics of the ruling parties. Lone Singstad Pålshaugen writes that “the establishment of the Forum in itself was a way of acknowledging the specific situation of groups in Northern Ireland and of taking measures to allow new groups to participate and take part in the political arena.”

In 1999, following the signing of the Belfast Agreement, the new Northern Ireland Assembly approved the creation of a sixty-member Forum with one chair and six additional representatives.

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members nominated by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The Forum was formally established on 6 February 2001 and members met twelve times between October 2000 and October 2002.

The Women’s Coalition expected that the Civic Forum would be gender-balanced and serve in an advisory capacity to the new Assembly, thereby allowing civil society to influence the policy-making decisions of the government. However, the new Civic Forum, as it was constituted, was not gender balanced. Only 21 of the 60 members of the Forum were women and of those members, only two came directly from the women’s sector. As well, the Forum collapsed in October 2002 along with the suspension of the Assembly, although it was expected at the time to resume meeting when the Assembly was up and running again. This did not happen, however, and the Civic Forum remains under review by the OFMDFM. According to Ian Paisley, former Northern Ireland First Minister and leader of the DUP:

“As the nature of civic society here has changed since the Forum was first established, we believe there is a need to fundamentally review the structure and role of the Forum to ensure that our mechanisms for engaging with civic society are appropriate.”

Paisley’s statement exemplifies the lack of commitment from politicians to support the Civic Forum. Lynn Carvill, former member of the Women’s Coalition and the Civic Forum, says that it is unlikely that the Forum will ever resume functioning:

… there is no one to push it. Who’s going to? [The] political parties believe that they are there representing people and they are the civic voice in some ways.

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482 "Oral Answers to Questions: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister," Hansard Reports: Northern Ireland Assembly (18 February 2008).
484 Carvill, interview by author.
On 29 May 2008, the OFMDFM did announce the launch of public consultation on the Civic Forum, but many of the elected political parties have not indicated their support for the resumption of the Forum.

The Women’s Coalition had envisaged a stronger Civic Forum that would operate as a second chamber of government instead of as a consultative body. Vicki Bell, in a study of the first eighteen months of the Civic Forum’s operation, found that members were unable to develop a distinct civic society agenda because much of their work was taken up by requests for information from the Assembly. A more robust Forum, with a formalized working relationship between the Forum and the Assembly, and a mandate to continue to meet during suspensions of the Assembly, may have allowed for greater civil society participation in the post-Agreement period. In my view, although the Forum has failed to live up to expectations, it may have proved more successful at promoting broad-based social inclusion if it had been given a stronger design and mandate. As discussed in Chapter 4, the fact that the Civic Forum was even included in the final peace Agreement is a direct result of the participation of feminist peace activists, organized across the ethnonational divide, in the peace process. The development of ideas like the Civic Forum came from feminist activists’ desire to augment the rule of patriarchal national elites. These women drew on their experiences in conflict and in activism, as well as their broad experiences of political exclusion, to develop new ideas for post-conflict institution-building. As Roulston and Margaret Whittock write:

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487 Ibid., 570.
Building inclusive, democratic structures requires not only awareness of the existence of different groups and interests but also practices that encourage participation by different groups and the expression of different identities.\textsuperscript{489}

We can see how ethnonational conflicts organically produce (but also often suppress) alternative social movements that have an interest in democratic reform and institution-building. Feminist activists, who participated in the kinds of community groups and grassroots activism described in chapters 3 and 4, came to understand how power and privilege is sustained in deeply divided societies. These experiences, shared in community-based organizations within ethnonational enclaves and across divided ethnonational communities informed activists’ commitment to institutional designs that promote democratic participation and political inclusion. Especially considering the increase in sectarian voting and the prolonged periods of direct rule from Westminster in the ten years that followed the signing of the peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, conflict resolution processes risk reproducing and entrenching inequality when such institutional designs and mechanisms are not instituted.

In addition to the dissolution of the \textit{Women’s Coalition Party} in Northern Ireland and some of the missed opportunities during the conflict resolution process to design more inclusive democratic structures, the women’s movement, more broadly, has been confronted with other serious challenges in the post-conflict period.

\subsection*{6.2 Northern Ireland: State of the women’s movement today}

The \textit{Women’s Coalition} was successful in putting gender equity issues on the political agenda and encouraging Northern Ireland parties to increase their total number of women candidates. However, such a gain is proving short-lived. In the 26 November 2003 elections, 108 members were elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly; 18 were women (one woman resigned a

\textsuperscript{489} Carmel Roulston and Margaret Whittock, "We are these Women . . .": Self-Conscious Structures for a Women's Centre," in \textit{Gender, Democracy and Inclusion in Northern Ireland}, ed. Carmel Roulston and Celia Davies (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), 57-58.
year later and was replaced by a man) and Monica McWilliams and Jane Morris did not keep their two seats as members of the Women’s Coalition. The same number of women, 16.7 per cent of 108 members, was elected in 2007. In these elections, there were fewer women candidates than there were in either 1998 or 2003. A publication of the Centre for the Advancement of Women, Queen’s University Belfast notes:

Despite the fact that a law enabling parties to use positive discrimination to facilitate the nomination of women has been in place for several years, it is not being adequately employed by parties in Northern Ireland, with the consequent result that women are under-represented in the Assembly.

Committees and Special or Ad-Hoc Committees of the new Northern Ireland administration also poorly represent women because there is no formal requirement for gender representation (only party representation) on these committees. As such, women’s political participation in the post-Agreement period has not greatly improved. As O’Shea writes:

The engagement of Unionists and Nationalists is still the primary concern of the new Assembly, as evidenced by the voting arrangement. Despite a new political structure and legislation, women are still under-represented. Lack of enforcement measures and political will mean that the statements in the Agreement supporting the promotion of women’s participation effectively remain unfulfilled.

In some areas, where members of the women’s movement are active in post-Agreement institutions, women have been criticized for being biased in favour of the nationalist community. For example, during the 2006-2008 Bill of Rights Forum, activists representing the

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490 See: "Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 7 March 2007," Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics, Queen’s University, Belfast (2007).
493 Ibid., 15.
494 The Bill of Rights Forum, tasked with advising the Human Rights Commission on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, met between 2006 and 2008. Sinn Féin, the SDLP, the DUP and the UUP all had three seats on the Forum and the Alliance Party has two. There was also civil society representation on the Forum, including two seats each for trade unions, churches and employers, and representatives from the following sectors: women, community/voluntary sector, sexual orientation, elderly, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, children and young people. See: "Inaugural Meeting of the Bill of Rights Forum," (Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Office Media Center, 2006).
women’s sector and trade unions were chastised by unionist parties for not representing the unionist community. Nelson McCausland of the DUP commented on the Forum membership in the 15 October 2007 Assembly debates:

It becomes obvious that there is an issue when the women’s sector is represented by Margaret Ward and Annie Campbell. There should be representatives from the Townswomen’s Guild, the Presbyterian Women’s Association, the Mothers’ Unions, or the Women’s Orange Order, for example. Who do we get? We get Annie Campbell and Margaret Ward.

McCausland went on to explain how women like Anne Hope, who also sat on the Forum, are communists from the women’s movement and therefore do not represent a broad spectrum of people in Northern Ireland.

Considering the poor performance of women, overall, in the post-Agreement period, while also acknowledging the growth of a women’s feminist movement throughout the conflict and the peace talks, Carmel Roulston would like to see some form of a women’s political forum to replace the Women’s Coalition. Roulston says:

Now there is a good vibrant women’s sector and there are forums of women’s organizations that do meet but I think something that engages the political parties as well, so that you don’t go back to this separation between the political parties and the community groups [is needed]. One of the good things about the Women’s Coalition is that it helped bridge that divide.

Roulston argues that the Women’s Coalition demonstrated how politics is not limited to the activities of political parties but includes contributions from people organizing in movements. To some extent, she argues, Sinn Féin does this, but their actions are limited to one sector of the community. Women into Politics and the Northern Ireland Women’s European Forum represent the continued efforts of the women’s movement to carve out a political role in the post-Agreement period.

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495 For a list of members to the Bill of Rights Forum, see: "Forum Composition," Northern Ireland Bill of Rights Forum; available online http://www.billofrightsforum.org/index/forum/forum_members-link.
497 Roulston, interview by author.
Women into Politics

Today, feminist community activists continue to organize in many cross-community groups and initiatives throughout Northern Ireland. Two of the key groups that carry on the work of the feminist peace community include Women into Politics and the Northern Ireland Women’s European Forum, the predecessor to the Women’s Coalition. Women into Politics was established in 1994 to capitalize on the experience that women had developed in organizing at the community level throughout the Troubles. They run training programs for women, discussion groups and write briefings on government initiatives like the proposed Bill of Rights. Of the Bill of Rights, they argue that the language should not focus on “the two communities” because it does not protect those who do not neatly follow under such categories as “Travellers” or “immigrants”:

The bluntness of the language of the two communities, certainly does not cope with the feminist argument concerning the essentially ‘manmade’ nature of cultures and identities, which, to date, do not adequately represent the perspectives and influences of women in their more public manifestations.498

Women into Politics continues to hold events that challenge candidates on issues affecting the lives of Northern Ireland women, education programs that seek to develop political skills, confidence and presentation skills and training on EU and UN and how these organizations promote equality. As the organization describes itself:

[Women into Politics] has had considerable success in its ‘cross-community’ work, by genuinely acknowledging difference and at the same time by working on issues that are of concern to all women, not simply Catholic and Protestant women, or unionist and nationalist women. It crosses more than two communities, and discriminates when it does not. Approaching human rights as women’s rights, including their multifarious identities, such as, that of; the homeless, the asylum-seeker, the disabled, the mentally ill, the workers, the victims of the troubles, ex-prisoners etc., is an effective way of including our whole community in a unifying ethos and culture of human rights.499

499 Ibid.
Roulston argues that organizations like *Women into Politics* do provide support and training for women to apply the skills that they have acquired in the community. Women political party representatives come out for some of the dialogue and lend their support.\(^{500}\)

Women in Northern Ireland also continue to utilize regional channels for advancing their positions. Just as the *Northern Ireland Women’s European* group was foundational in the launch of the *Women’s Coalition Party*, members have continued to do a lot of work around United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325), passed in 2000, on women and peace and security.\(^{501}\) Similarly, they have supported the European Parliament resolution on participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution.\(^{502}\)

The impact of the *Women’s Coalition*, however, does not centre on gender equality alone but also on the prioritization of human rights instruments through the support for an Equality Commission, and Human Rights Commission and a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and through the development of institutions that promote participatory models of democracy like the Civic Forum. While the former has met with greater success in remaining active during the years of unstable or suspended government in Northern Ireland, the later institutions faltered. As I discussed earlier, the electoral formula and organization of the Assembly does not support the kind of inclusion that was more characteristic of the peace talks. As such, in order to stop the erosion of gains made on issues like justice, fairness and inclusion, institutions like the Civic Forum need to be prioritized as well as other institutions with a direct link back to the Assembly. Otherwise, the ethnonational elites elected under this formula will continue to hold up advances gained by progressive social forces during the period of protracted conflict. It cannot be just about waiting for the Assembly to settle into a state of stable political affairs. It has been ten years since

\(^{500}\) Roulston, interview by author.

\(^{501}\) O’Rourke, interview by author.

the signing of the Belfast Agreement and the Assembly is only just up and running now. The experiences of feminist activists in Northern Ireland, discussed above, provide important lessons for activists in Israel/Palestine who are seeking to develop the best mechanisms for women’s inclusion in the peace talks and for broader participatory politics after a peace agreement is reached.

6.3 Israel/Palestine: State of the women’s movement today

In Israel/Palestine, the failure of the Oslo Accords and the resumption of brutality and violence in September 2000 strained relations between Israeli and Palestinian women. Despite these difficulties, many of the early coexistence projects, discussed in chapters 3 and 4, do continue to work within a cross-community framework of feminist solidarity peace activism. In this sense, the crisis brought on by the deepening of the occupation and the continuation of violent conflict also served to unite activist women around specific campaigns and projects at the local and national levels. Today, Israeli and Palestinian feminist activists work together: to monitor Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; to mount campaigns against the construction of the separation wall between Israel and the Palestinian West Bank; to maintain local demonstrations against the demolition of Palestinian homes in Israel; to protest the collective punishment measures undertaken by the Israeli Defense Forces in the occupied territories, such as the Israeli installation of permanent and roving military checkpoints, periodic border closures and the imposition of curfews on Palestinian cities and villages; and to appeal to international institutions like the European Union and the United Nations to enact and enforce international resolutions against the continued Israeli occupation.

In addition to united support around these specific campaigns, a transnational feminist politics of activism, as described by theorists like Caren Kaplan, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Inderpal Grewal, as discussed in Chapter 2, has been developed by women through regional and
international channels. Like the meetings organized by women in the late 1980s and early 1990s at international summits, resulting in the creation of the Israeli-Palestinian Jerusalem Link organization, these kinds of transnational advocacy initiatives stress the role of coalitions and alliances across borders and cultures without claiming universality in women’s experiences. The creation of transnational linkages among women has undoubtedly been impacted by the visibility that globalization has brought to women’s issues on the international stage.\textsuperscript{503} This explains why such transnational engagements have intensified over the last decade. Feminist activists in Israel/Palestine, as well as in Northern Ireland, have found that international spaces can be safer spaces for women from across the ethnonational divide to meet on neutral ground. Additionally, such spaces can allow for the participation of other feminist activists and communities, outside of these conflicts, to share resources, ideas and knowledge about the process of domination and subordination and about the politics of resistance.

In 2005, thirty-five Israeli, Palestinian and other international women enlisted the aid of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) director Noeleen Hayzer and together launched the \textit{International Women’s Commission for a Just, Comprehensive, and Sustainable Peace in the Middle East}. Similar to the aim of the \textit{Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform}, the principal goal of the Israeli and Palestinian \textit{Women’s Commission} is to increase the representation of women in decision-making roles at Middle East peace talks.\textsuperscript{504} In both Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, women activists have increasingly used regional and international channels to promote the representation of women in political negotiations and peace-

\textsuperscript{503} Alexander and Mohanty, eds., \textit{Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures}, xv.

\textsuperscript{504} The International Women’s Coalition defines its mandate as follows: “The International Women’s Commission (IWC) will work to guarantee women’s full participation in formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, based upon principles of gender equality, women’s human rights, international human rights and humanitarian law in any future resolution of the conflict to bring about an end of the Israeli occupation and a just and sustainable peace.” "International Women's Commission: Charter of Principles," (27 July 2005).
building. In particular, these initiatives are founded on the principles set forth in UN SCR 1325, which promotes the role of women in conflict resolution processes.

The *Women’s Commission* in Israel/Palestine reflects an equal partnership between twenty Israeli, twenty Palestinian and twenty other international women with experience in negotiation and diplomacy such as Luisa Morgantini, member of European Parliament for Italy; Ana Gomes, member of the European Parliament for Portugal; and Jessica Neuwirth, president of *Equality Now* in the United States. UNIFEM also played an important role in the establishment of the *Women’s Commission* and continues to advocate and publicize its various positions on changing events in the Middle East. Inés Alberdi, executive director of UNIFEM, is also the chair of the Commission.505 As feminist activists Sarai Aharoni and Rula Deeb write of their campaign to implement the resolution:

> We wish to raise awareness of the connection between women’s rights and human rights and the possibility of adding a human rights perspective to the feminist struggle. Thus, we stress the responsibility of women’s rights organizations in Israel and Palestine to demand full participation of women in all negotiations and conflict resolution attempts.506

There is a strong emphasis on the representation of women during peace talks and on the development of human rights as part of the peace process and as part of a feminist politics of peace. As well, the *Women’s Commission* has drafted other ideas related to conflict resolution and peace. For example, it argues that the most contentious issues in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, including the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the future boundaries for a Palestinian state need to be agreed to at the outset of negotiations, as opposed to allowing disagreements over these issues during interim stages of

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505 A complete list of members is available online from the International Women’s Commission: [http://iwc-peace.org/IWCMembership.htm](http://iwc-peace.org/IWCMembership.htm).

negotiations to “torpedo” a peace agreement.\textsuperscript{507} Some of the positions that the \textit{Women’s Commission} has taken have been unpopular in Israel, including its continued support for negotiations with Hamas politicians; its critical position on unilateral Israeli actions such as Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August and September 2005; and its public condemnation of the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Regarding its first position, the \textit{Women’s Commission} maintains that the election of Hamas politicians by Palestinians living under occupation reflects the desire of Palestinians to end state corruption, which many Palestinians attribute to years of Fatah government control; Palestinian support for Hamas does not indicate Palestinian support for terror.\textsuperscript{508} Regarding the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Naomi Chazan, founding member of the \textit{Women’s Commission} and former deputy Speaker of the Knesset, explains the unilateral withdrawal by then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was a popular move with mainstream Israeli peaceniks. Chazan argues that what they failed to understand was “the connection between unilateralism and the perpetuation of occupation and conflict—because unilateralism is by definition coercive and therefore cannot be a mechanism for achieving any kind of resolution.” She says the Israeli peace movement came to understand the penalty of unilateralism during the 2006 Israeli bombardment of Lebanon. With respect to Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, she says:

I'm for withdrawal from the occupied territories. I'm for dismantling of the settlements. But I felt that any withdrawal that wasn't a springboard to negotiations was a terrible mistake . . . The trouble with the disengagement in Gaza is that it made Palestinians invisible; it was coercive, and you cannot make the other side invisible and expect any peace or quiet.\textsuperscript{509}

\textsuperscript{507} "Israeli, Palestinian Women Talk Peace," \textit{The Jerusalem Post Online} (21 September 2006).
\textsuperscript{508} "Israeli and Palestinian women leaders call for a return to peace negotiations," \textit{United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)} (03 May 2006).
In a recent interview, Chazan argues that the dominant narrative during the conflict has been that there is no partner for peace: "In a situation where everyone is claiming there is no partner, you have Palestinian, Israeli and international women working together with one voice … So anybody who tells you there is no partner: No, there is one." \(^{510}\) Throughout the conflict, she argues, feminist peace activists were a step ahead of elite male political leaders in advancing resolutions for the conflict:

When the men were talking about whether we should talk, we were talking. When they were talking together about self-determination, we were talking about a two-state solution. When they were wondering what to do about Jerusalem, we were talking about sharing Jerusalem and it goes on and on and on.

Chazan argues that feminist activists offer a different perspective than men because they define security not just in terms of military security but also in terms of human security, encompassing themes related to, for example, economic, social, and educational security. \(^{511}\)

The *Women's Commission* is rooted in the long history of women’s activism; all of the Israeli and Palestinian members have been active in the feminist peace movement described in the earlier chapters. Shamas admits that women have encountered difficulties throughout the years of cross-community activism. However, she says that it was their shared feminist commitment to organize across the ethnonational divide and the experience of talking with each other over the last three decades that brought them to the decision to introduce an international component to their cross-community organizing. Common values related to human rights, they reasoned, were international values and therefore she says that they felt that an internationally based organization could provide a safe “dimension” to “hold us together.” As women, she says, “we understand the power balances and imbalances very well. We know what has to be avoided. We know that if things are not resolved we will have a fragile situation. The women on the


Commission] deal with issues different than men.” Unlike liberal versions of “international” feminism which call for “global sisterhood” to fight a transhistorical conception of universal patriarchy, critiqued by critical feminist scholars like M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Israeli and Palestinians women have consciously struggled to understand how they are situated differently and unequally in terms of power, resources and geography.

Following the passage of UN Resolution 1325, feminist organizations set out in Israel to develop a law that would require the inclusion of women in future peace negotiations. *Isha L’Isha*, meaning “Woman to Woman” (one of the early women’s centres in Israel discussed in Chapter 3), like the *International Women’s Coalition*, initially focused its efforts on promoting the representation of women in peace and security talks. They worked with two women politicians in the Israeli parliament to demand that a quota be set for the participation of women, representing diverse communities, on all peace negotiating teams. As feminist activist Paula Mills defines their initial goals:

> . . . not only did we demand that there be a quota of 25% women for all negotiating teams, we also wanted the law to specify that it must be women from different sectors of society. In other words, it wasn’t enough to say ‘women,’ it had to say ‘diverse women.’ If we didn’t say ‘diverse women,’ it wouldn’t really reflect our feminist ideology, our desire for different women’s voices to be heard. Jewish women and Palestinian women, Arab women, women who were from European, Eastern or Oriental backgrounds, women who came from the gay community, the straight community, etc. – we demanded that all these diverse women’s voices be represented.

This emphasis reflects the ways in which women identified how oppression is experienced unevenly in conflict. Post-positivist realist theorists like Paula M. Moya and Satya P. Mohanty argue that only through such understanding, can activists hope to identify and change the very

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512 Ibid.
structures and systems that produce oppression. In this sense, women maintain that their diverse experiences are “legitimate sources of knowledge about the world” that should be reflected in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives.

In the occupied territories, Palestinian women managed to secure support for resolution 1325 from President Mahmood Abbas subsequent to its adoption. Similarly, in 2005, Israeli women were successful in getting Israel’s 1956 Equal Representation of Women law amended, mandating the inclusion of women on Israeli peace negotiation teams. The law does not require a quota, as members of Isha L’Isha had hoped, but it does stipulate that Israel’s negotiating teams must be representative of women from “diverse” backgrounds. The problem remained, however, in the interpretation of diversity. For example, the Israeli government held up the appointment of Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to the 2007 Middle East peace conference in Maryland as an example of its commitment to implementing the newly amended law. However, feminist peace activists in Israel and Palestine argued that Livni does not identify herself sufficiently with feminist issues or peace and reconciliation. They would have preferred to see prominent feminist peace activists appointed to the conference.

Given the way in which feminist perspectives are not necessarily reflected in the inclusion of women in peace processes, Isha L’Isha organizers have begun to emphasize the incorporation of alternative feminist “world-views” that include the perspectives of women of different ethnonational and economic backgrounds as well as other civil society groups and the broader public in its activism. The organization characterizes its new direction, initiated in 2007,

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516 See: S. Mohanty, Literary Theory and the Claims of History, 238.
519 Ruth Sinai, "Women's groups: Livni not feminist enough to represent Israel at summit," Haaretz.com (15 October 2007).
as the promotion of analyses of issues such as security which reflect different “gender, nationality, ethnicity, and socio-economic background[s].” As such, a feminist alternative should “consider other, non-military aspects of the conflict, such as the social and economic aspects of peace-making and reconstruction.” As well, “a feminist perspective calls for work on a grassroots level, on engaging the civil society and the wider public in taking an active stand and fostering a community that takes an active part in all issues pertaining to women's lives, especially the issue of security and peace.” 520

Certainly, cross-community initiatives and the efforts to revive cross-community partnerships, like those described above, discredit the notion that Palestinians and Israelis have fomented identities that preclude the possibility of cooperation and peaceful coexistence. As Moya and S. Mohanty expect, people use the knowledge that they develop in subaltern communities to build coalitions of similarly marginalized communities at the local, national and international levels. Although the space at the margins is constantly contested and renegotiated, as evidenced by the tension within cross-community partnerships described above and in Chapter 5, it is also a place in which Israeli and Palestinian women continue to develop agendas for conflict resolution and peace either separately or through limited partnerships and solidarity initiatives.

6.4 Conclusion

Peace processes are highly gendered political events; men largely negotiate and mediate conflict resolution agreements at the elite political level and women are disproportionately represented at the grassroots or community level. As such, women’s marginalization from the national political arena informs their interest in developing schemes that promote post-conflict transitional political processes related to political inclusion and justice.521 The role of the Northern

Ireland Women’s Coalition Party in the 1996-1998 peace talks demonstrates the creative ideas that non-central identity communities, like women, can contribute to key political deliberations in societies deeply divided along ethnonational lines. We can see the value of women’s contribution to the peace process in Northern Ireland, but also the difficulty in institutionalizing their ideas. Part of this was reflected in a post-Agreement electoral formula that favoured large ethnonational parties, but also in a system where only the views of political parties are seriously considered.

As conflict resolution theorists, we can uncover but also legitimate political interests and ideas, which are not exclusively reflective of the ethnonationalist ambitions of the main protagonists to ethnic conflict, when we include other social identity communities in our analyses and political prescriptions. Contemporary political theory, like postcolonial theory and the feminist interventions discussed in chapters 3 through 5, tell us to reexamine who we count as political subjects in our analyses.\(^{522}\) As the post-positivist realist literature argues, by giving primacy to the accounts of subaltern social groups like women, we access different experiences related to the social and political reality of conflict. In my view, there is a specific contribution that women can make to the peace process, that we can objectively determine has value. The contribution of women comes from the history of learning and engagement that has taken place in the women’s movement, which I have detailed in chapters 3 through 5.

Peace agreements afford an opportunity for women to be included in a way that may not possible after peace is negotiated. As Bell and O'Rourke note, “Peace agreements document a constitutional “big bang” providing for radical overhaul of political and legal institutions to an extent rarely found in settled liberal democracies.” As such, there is an opportunity during peace agreements for democratic renewal.\(^{523}\) As Christine Chinkin, professor of international law, notes,

\(^{522}\) Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder, Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), xi-xii.

issues of importance to women must be included as part of peace agreements for them to garner
the kind of post conflict legitimacy that other issues are given:

Donors’ commitments are likely to be based on priorities as asserted in the peace
agreement and unless women’s priorities are included therein it is likely that programmes
directed at woman will receive low budgetary priority and be seen as peripheral. 524

As well, I have argued in earlier chapters that feminist activists in particular have advocated for
better political representation of other marginalized identity groups that cross-cut sex and gender
categories like those communities organized around themes like class and sexuality. For these
issues to be prioritized in the post-Agreement periods, a more inclusive peace process is further
necessary. Considering the Northern Ireland experience, we can see the extent to which this
opportunity was only partially seized as there have been fewer opportunities for women to
participate in the national political process after the peace Agreement was negotiated. Following
the signing of the Agreement and the design of institutions that favour ethnonational parties,
sectarian political issues have remained at the centre of all national level political discussions.
Clearly, post-conflict institutions can be exclusionary spaces for those social groups that had also
expected a share of the peace dividend.

The experiences of feminist peace activists in Northern Ireland provide valuable lessons
for activists in Israel/Palestine. The feminist peace movement in Northern Ireland specifically set
forth to develop a framework for inclusion and human rights as part of a peace process; and
because of the inclusive electoral formula used to determine representation at the peace talks,
these views were included. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, this has not been the case in Israel-
Palestine. Israeli and Palestinian women can expect that there will also be less opportunity to
influence high politics after peace is negotiated. Certainly, there was some indication of this
eventuality for Palestinian women after the Oslo Agreement was signed. As I discussed in the last

524 Christine Chinkin, "Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring
chapter, the Palestinian Authority, established as a result of the Oslo Accords, did not build the kind of inclusive, democratic structures that would support and enable the participation of those women that had become politicized during the conflict. Women were squeezed out of the new national political process and relegated, once again, to grassroots and community development projects. The experiences of women in Northern Ireland also provide lessons for those Israeli feminist activists who expect that peace will produce the kind of stable political conditions that are more conducive to the advancement of women in politics. Israel ranks 83rd of 135 parliaments counted in 2007 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union for its representation of women. Today, just over 14 per cent of Israeli members of parliament are women.\footnote{See: Ilan, "Israel falls behind world parliaments on number of women MKs," \textit{Haaretz.com} (14 March 2008).} For Israeli feminist peace activists like Gila Svirsky,\footnote{Svirsky, interview by author.} who anticipate that the end of the conflict will open up the political process and afford women the opportunity to challenge policies and laws that put women at risk, (like the personal status laws that place all Jewish marriages and divorces under the jurisdiction of patriarchal Rabbinical Courts) they may be disappointed. Similarly, as any peace agreement in Israel/Palestine will likely leave the State of Israel responsible for its 20 per cent minority Palestinian community, new structures will have to be created to ensure that Israeli-Palestinian citizens are not relegated to poor and disenfranchised social and political enclaves. In Northern Ireland, the greatest impact that women had on national politics was through the peace process.

The Northern Ireland case further indicates the importance for conflict resolution theorists of designing inclusive democratic structures that offer broader civil society participation. The \textit{Women’s Coalition} proposed an innovative Civic Forum to act as a mechanism to include all citizens of Northern Ireland in the political process. The Civic Forum was weakly designed and could not survive the tumultuous post-conflict political process, including the periodic suspensions of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In my view, this failure was a tremendous loss of
opportunity to involve civil society in the political process. If the Forum had been up and running during the four periods of suspension of the developed Assembly, like the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission were, it might have provided an opportunity for the public to discuss those political matters that politicians would not, such as LGBTQ rights, policing and justice, sectarian parades, education reform, poverty eradication and the allocation of state housing. In my view, a stronger Civic Forum could have served as an important institution for public deliberation, even when the political Assembly was not up and running, to inform the policy decisions being taken by the United Kingdom via the Northern Ireland Office. Likewise, in those periods where the Assembly was meeting, a closer working relationship between the Forum and the Assembly might have continued the inclusive political process of negotiations that characterized the pre-Agreement period. In Northern Ireland, it remains to be seen what future role and mandate the Civic Forum may be given by the devolved political Assembly. Such a representative Forum could prove useful in Israel/Palestine as a way to include the views of civil society related to divisive issues such as the allocation of social welfare, the assignment of housing permits, the potential compensation for Palestinians dispossessed from their land in 1967 and the impact of the location and operation of the security wall that separates Israel from the occupied territories.

Failing to carve out a political role in the post-conflict Assembly in Northern Ireland and excluded from top-level discussions throughout the protracted peace process in Israel/Palestine, women in both cases have continued to work together at the regional and international level, through institutions like the Northern Ireland European Women’s Platform and the International Women’s Commission for a Just, Comprehensive, and Sustainable Peace in the Middle East. These institutions appeal to regional human rights instruments and international declarations like UN SCR 1325. Certainly, examples of cross-community organizing in Israel/Palestine and in Northern Ireland have roots firmly established in regional and international conferences of
women, as discussed in Chapter 3. The intensification of transnational engagements over the last decade, due to the development of global networks of feminist activists, has also helped women with the ‘shifting” associated with transversal politics by giving women an alternative location outside of the state in which to organize, share experiences and develop knowledge related to power, subordination and resistance.

In this next and final chapter, I outline the implications of this study of women’s feminist peace activism in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland for the ethnonational conflict resolution and identity politics literatures. Specifically, I argue that the elite-actor-driven conflict resolution processes in each case served to reify ethnic and national identities and marginalized other cross-cutting social identities. The consequences associated with privileging ethnonational elite political figures, to varying degrees, in these peace processes has been, in the case of Northern Ireland, a post-conflict political Assembly preoccupied with sectarianism and therefore poorly equipped to respond to the many human rights, equality and justice concerns of all communities in Northern Ireland. In Israel/Palestine, the Oslo track peace process was a complete failure, and ushered in a period of intense instability, repression and violence. In both cases, the peace processes failed to capitalize on the local, participant knowledge and alternate visions of conflict resolution and peace that are developed in “subaltern” identity-based communities – that is, communities which are socially and politically marginalized within their ethnonational communities. As such, I argue that developments in feminist theory in international relations and comparative politics scholarship and in the broader critical identity politics literatures can offer ethnonational based theories of conflict resolution a broader, more accurate picture of the ways in which other social identity communities are both marginalized and politicized in conflict, and can contribute important, but often untested, ideas related to conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building.
Chapter 7
Summary and Discussion

In this final chapter, I summarize the arguments set forth in this dissertation, outlining the alternative methodology and literatures that I drew on, to make the case for a deeper understanding of identity politics in the conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building literatures and practice. Next, I identify some of the lessons that we can learn from the successes and failures of the Northern Ireland peace process for future Middle East peace talks. I also return to the identity politics literature laid out in Chapter 2, and discuss the relevance of this literature for understanding identity formation, mobilization and activism in conflict. I argue that the ways in which social identities cross-cut ethnonational identities, even in societies deeply divided along ethnonational lines, goes largely unacknowledged in the dominant ethnonational literature. When we consider the genesis and development of the feminist peace movements in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, we can see how a politics based on solidarity and alliances, across ethnic, national, gender, class and sexuality divides, is informed by the endogenous conditions of conflict and also the exogenous development of transnational feminist theory and praxis. The negotiation of identity in women’s feminist peace communities has been complex and, at times, difficult, as discussed in Chapter 5. However, it has also led to the development of novel ideas related to peace, inclusion, human rights and justice that have been sidelined, to varying degrees, in the conflict resolution processes in both cases. Last, I put forward three modest proposals for future research, picking up on some of the themes and discussions that I have outlined in this dissertation.

7.1 Restating the research problem and the methodology

The dominant literature on ethnonationalism, developed largely within the comparative politics field, proposes an ‘elite accommodation’ strategy for resolving conflict in deeply divided
societies like Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland whereby ethnonational elite actors are tasked with the responsibility to negotiate final peace agreements. And yet these political actors do not just negotiate final peace agreements during peace talks; they also draw up the blueprints for new political structures and institutions. Just as the framers of the 1993 Oslo Accords created a new Palestinian Authority, including its parliamentary design, electoral process and national ministries, the signatories to the 1998 Belfast Agreement similarly created the new government and chief political institutions in Northern Ireland. In my view, when we only grant the most vocal, militant and sometimes violent ethnonational leaders the legitimacy and authority to speak for the body politic during such transformative constitutional moments, we get a post-conflict political order that reflects a general theory of justice and equality that is tied exclusively to the main ethnonational blocs. As such, we miss a unique opportunity to design a more inclusive post-conflict political order that acknowledges the innovative ideas related to peace, inclusion, human rights and justice that tend to be developed only on the margins of conflict. We also risk replicating existing hierarchies of power that have marginalized some communities when we privilege the accounts of dominant ethnonational identities in our understanding of conflict and in our prescriptions for conflict resolution and peace-building. Furthermore, understanding conflict from the perspective of the dominant ethnonational communities encourages us to measure the success of a peace process as the absence of violence between competing ethnonational blocs and the institution of stable political institutions. We are not compelled to measure the extent to which the emancipatory ambitions of other identity communities, which are also politicized in periods of conflict, have been met.

Throughout this dissertation, I proposed that including non-central actors in peace processes and subsequent post-conflict institutions related to peace-building can lead to the construction of institutions and other political and social mechanisms that can produce robust and inclusive post-conflict commitments to peace, equality and justice. I argued that such inclusion
helps to break the focus on ethnic and national claims that can, in turn, bring to light local, participant knowledge and alternative visions of post-conflict society. In order to test this claim, I conducted a qualitative comparative case study analysis of Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, representing conflicts in two substantially different geographical and political contexts. I consulted literatures developed outside of the comparative politics field to help me better theorize social identity formation, politicization and activism. In particular, I applied a post-positivist realist approach to identity, largely developed within the critical literary studies literature, to evaluate the extent to which ‘subaltern’ or marginalized social identity communities develop untested theories of conflict and conflict resolution in these cases. I found the development of multiple social identities and identity communities in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine to be more complex and dynamic than is captured in the dominant literature on ethnonationalism, crosscutting ethnonational identity and shifting in social and political outlooks over time.

By considering women’s feminist peace movements and the interaction of identities based on ethnonationalism as well as gender, class and sexuality, it seems clear, in my view, that we miss a large part of social reality when we elect to focus on the experiences and priorities of only one of these constituent identities. As the post-positivist realist literature theorizes, identities behave as theories of the social world, where each identity, informed by the perspectives and experiences of individuals and communities differently positioned, reveals different aspects of the same objective social reality. To accept only one category of identity as the most significant, the most genuine or as the most relevant theory of the social world leaves out the multiple, varied and sometimes competing theories that are developed at other social locations. Activists in the feminist peace movements in these cases emphasize the social, economic and political inequality that are at the heart of these conflicts. For these women, the goal of a peace process is not just to end the violence of paramilitarism and heavy-handed state aggression, but also to design a new post-conflict political order that is founded on human rights and equality for all.
Taking a lead from the feminist and critical identity politics literatures, I began my analysis with the history and experience of women and feminist peace communities as opposed to beginning with the history and experience of elite ethnonational actors. As this history is seldom recorded in mainstream studies of conflict in divided societies, I needed to retrace the development of these movements, relying on first-hand accounts from activists in the field as well as primary documentation, to tell this story. I mapped the historical development of women’s feminist peace movements in these cases, focusing on the periods of conflict intensification in the late 1960s, following the onset of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the Israeli occupation, through to today to draw attention to the ways in which ideas and values associated with feminist identity politics are neither transhistorical nor self-evident to participants. In other words, the kinds of ideas related to conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building, which have been developed within these movements and through transnational engagements, have changed over the last three decades, through dynamic and sometimes difficult (but also conscious) processes of negotiation between women. In this sense, the women’s movements of the 1970s were markedly different in ambition and design from the movements in the 1980s, 1990s and today. Similarly influenced by the development of global feminist consciousness, made visible through events and resolutions such as the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995) and UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000), women in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland developed analogous processes of politicization and similar feminist commitments to conflict resolution strategies that promote conceptions of inclusion, human rights and justice that apply to all communities within and beyond the ethnonational divide.

In terms of participant observation, interviews and data-gathering, I conducted a total of fourteen months of fieldwork in Israel, the Palestinian occupied territories, Ireland and Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2006. In both Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, I interviewed over
fifty people representing women’s peace groups/political parties; anti-poverty and other class related organizations; and queer community groups. Through my fieldwork, I learned about the genesis of women’s feminist peace politics by attending local conferences on gender and conflict, like Monica McWilliams’ 2005 Amnesty International Annual Lecture at Queen’s University, Belfast and the Gender, Displacement, Memory and Agency conference in Ramallah, West Bank in 2005; interviewing feminist activists in the field such as Bronagh Hinds, former member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and Galia Golan, prominent Israeli academic and long-time activist in the Israeli Coalition of Women for Peace and Peace Now; and by attending women’s feminist actions, like the weekly Women in Black anti-occupation vigils in Jerusalem and visiting cross-community projects in Northern Ireland like a rural community outreach program in Banbridge. I also gathered primary documents from the early feminist peace movements, including pamphlets, manifestos and newspaper archives, from the extensive collections housed at the Linen Hall Library, Belfast and the Institute of Women’s Studies, Bir Zeit University, West Bank. Through these ethnographic fieldwork strategies, I came to understand how these identity-based movements have evolved and interacted with identities based not just on ethnicity and nationalism, but also gender, class and sexuality. I also learned how the early women’s feminist peace movements appealed to women’s universal experiences of social and political marginalization. However, a new model of coalition-style politics began to take shape in the late 1980s and early 1990s that emphasized women’s unique experiences and multiple identities – allowing women to remain ‘rooted’ in their ethnonational identity, but encouraging women to ‘shift’ in their social and political analyses through the process of sharing experiences with other women across ethnonational divides.

Beginning this analysis at the level of the subaltern social group brought into view the many ways that individuals and communities experience conflict from social locations that are not always (and not only) ethnonational identity communities; it revealed how actors develop moral
and political identities that interpret these experiences; and it showed how, through activism and social movements, communities can develop a set of social and political values that diverge from the stated interests of ethnonational elite leaders. In my view, not only do the experiences of women’s feminist peace communities tell us about how conflict is experienced unevenly within ethnonational blocs, the social and political knowledge and ideas that they developed are also valuable for conflict resolution process and post-conflict peace-building.

7.2 Drawing lessons for the Middle East from the successes of the Northern Ireland peace process

Given the success of the 1998 Northern Ireland Belfast Agreement and the failure of the 1993 Oslo Accord and subsequent peace initiatives in the Middle East, political leaders and conflict resolution theorists have been speculating about the lessons that the Northern Ireland case may provide for the Israel-Palestinian case. The outcomes of both peace processes were markedly different. Northern Ireland was successful in reducing sectarian violence overall (although some break-away paramilitary groups continued to launch deadly attacks – most notably the 1998 Omagh bombing that killed twenty-nine people just four months after the Belfast Agreement was signed). There was no such reduction in violence in Israel/Palestine resulting from the signing of the Oslo Accords. Events such as the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by an Israeli extremist in 1995, the deepening of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the launch of the second Palestinian intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, in 2000, rendered the Accords a complete failure. In my view, it is important to critically interrogate those elements of the Northern Ireland peace process that theorists and practitioners are attempting to model in the Middle East peace process so that we are clear about which aspects of the process may be desirable to replicate in other cases.

For more than thirty years, Northern Ireland was embroiled in a protracted sectarian conflict, claiming the lives of thousands of people and causing injury to tens of thousands more
across the island and throughout the United Kingdom. Popularly called the Troubles, this protracted conflict defied resolution as successive mediation efforts, following the imposition of direct rule from Westminster in 1972, failed to quell paramilitary and state violence. And yet, in 1998 an historic agreement was finally reached as a result of a peace process that included a series of secret negotiations, intermittent paramilitary ceasefires and multi-party talks. These talks included the principal ethnonational leaders, other party leaders, the Irish and British governments and the support of the United States. Popular political and press analyses reason that the Belfast Agreement’s success in creating a power-sharing political Assembly (and, after a succession of suspensions and long periods of direct rule from Westminster, the eventual restoration of the Assembly nearly a decade later), may hold valuable lessons for other cases of intractable conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.527

Politicians in Northern Ireland regularly make comments on the status of the peace process in Israel/Palestine, and, in some cases, they have organized observer missions and public discussion forums on the lessons that can be learned from the Northern Ireland peace process.528

In a speech given by Peter Hain, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, following the resumption of power-sharing in 2007, he said:

After all the horror and bigotry of the past, since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 progress in Northern Ireland has been an inspiration to other parts of the world that the journey towards lasting peace can be completed. If one of the longest running conflicts in

528 For example, Sinn Féin member Raymond McCartney, a former political prisoner, has participated as a member of Northern Ireland’s International Development Committee, traveling to Middle East, South Africa and the Basque region to discuss issues related to conflict resolution. See: Michael Glackin, "An Irishman offers advice in Beirut," The Daily Star.com (04 August 2008). Also see: Mark Devenport, "NI-Middle East parallels still drawn," BBC News Online (04 August 2006).
European history can be resolved, then there is hope for even the most bitter and seemingly intractable disputes across the globe.\footnote{Peter Hain, "Peacemaking in Northern Ireland: A Model for Conflict Resolution?" \textit{Speech by Peter Hain MP, Chatham House, 12 June 2007}, 2.}

Likewise, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, now the special envoy of the Middle East Quartet to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has indicated that his experiences as part of the Northern Ireland peace process are pertinent to the problem of securing peace in the Middle East.\footnote{DPA, "Blair: Use lessons of Northern Ireland to solve Mideast conflict," \textit{Haaretz.com} (05 June 2008).} What, then, are the lessons that we can glean from conflict resolution in Northern Ireland for Israel/Palestine?

Ethnonationalist theorists of conflict resolution point to either the "ripeness" of the political climate or the success of the elite accommodation model for explaining the outcome of the peace agreement in Northern Ireland. Lack of ripeness or poor institutional design may, for example, explain the failure of those models of elite accommodation that were tested over the span of thirty years of the conflict. An explanation based on ripeness, in my view, is wholly unsatisfying, especially when applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; there is very little indication as to how national political leaders and international assistance can initiate the conditions necessary to produce "ripeness." Waiting for ripeness may encourage political leaders to divest themselves of responsibility for their own negligence in a peace process. Particularly in the context of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, where successive Israeli governments have refused to negotiate with Palestinian leaders until they have a "sincere" partner for peace, ripeness seems elusive. The later explanation based on poor institutional design holds more promise, and would suggest that procedures of elite accommodation, including successful confidence-building strategies, the style of co-operative engagement, quid pro quo expectations and other institutional innovations including the creation of cross-border cooperative institutions between Northern
Ireland and Ireland and between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom might be replicated in Israel/Palestine.

However, if we consider the evaluation of the conflict by the feminist peace movement, which maintains that a successful conflict resolution process must be built on internationally agreed standards of justice and human rights and not produced through the negotiation of standards of justice and human rights, then a very different explanation of success in this case emerges. In other words, what worked in Northern Ireland may have been the fairer treatment of citizens by the state over time and not the negotiation for fairer treatment during the peace process. For example, Hain credits Westminster’s decision to enact the Fair Employment Acts of 1976 and 1989 and revamp the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland as measures that removed the impetus for dissent and conflict. Less discriminatory government policies, in this sense, paved the way for a settlement in 1998. In a speech he delivered in 2007, Hain remarked that, “decades of systematic discrimination and disenfranchisement brought people onto the streets where centuries-old constitutional divisions could not.” However, through the implementation of measures that addressed discrimination, the government was able to clear the way for communities to begin to come together and discuss their relationship.

Likewise, the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) notes that changes in equality and discriminatory practices in Northern Ireland began with the Constitution Act of 1973, which made it illegal for a public authority to discriminate against persons on the grounds of religion or political beliefs. Through successive government reviews and new guidelines in the 1980s and early 1990s, the government began to change its discriminatory policies. The CAJ maintains that these developments became important elements of the Belfast Agreement. As I detailed in the preceding chapters, the feminist peace movement in Israel and the occupied West

\[532\] Ibid.
Bank and Gaza Strip, have consistently stated that peace is only likely to occur once Israel’s occupation and discriminatory policies towards Palestinians have ended. For example, the placards that the Women in Black movement has held up every Friday afternoon at intersections across Israel since 1989 have read simply: “End the Occupation” just as the queer community in Israel has consistently proclaimed that there is “No Pride in Occupation.” Among the principles set forth by the women’s cross-community peace organization Jerusalem Link, is the statement that all Israeli settlements are illegal in the occupied territories and that they “violate the requirements for peace.” For these organizations, a peace process should not be built around the negotiation of occupation and the status of Israeli settlements; rather, it should follow the end of occupation and the dissolution of settlements. As such, one of the lessons from the Northern Ireland case may be that fairer treatment, in accordance with international law and standards, is a productive measure that states can take to quell dissention. This lesson, however, tends to be overlooked in analyses that view competing ethnonational blocs as equal. As the ruling or occupying states, the British and Israeli governments have a great deal more power and responsibility for the people living under their mandate or jurisdiction.

Another lesson from the Northern Ireland case, which does not tend to get emphasized in the ethnonational literature, is the world-class protections afforded to all citizens under new statutory duties and institutions such as section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, 1998 and the creation of the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission. As discussed in detail in Chapter 6, these instruments have been especially important to all citizens given the prolonged periods in which the new Northern Ireland Assembly has been hopelessly deadlocked or suspended since its establishment over ten years ago. Even while living under direct rule from

534 This statement is commonly featured on placards by the queer Israeli group Black Laundry at pride parades in Israel. It is also a common phrase used by other queer activists. See, for example, an article written by Hagai El-Ad, Executive Director of the Jerusalem Open House: Hagai El-Ad, "Gay Israel: No Pride in Occupation," (18 February 2002).
Westminster, via the authority of the Northern Ireland Office, citizens and new residents have been included in public deliberations over new legislation. For example, the establishment of the Human Rights Commission and its mandate to define the scope for a Bill of Rights, through public consultation, created an opportune structure for many groups to participate in the process. As Christine Bell and Johanna Keenan argue, the human rights and equality agenda that was included in the Belfast Agreement was intended to “take the sting from the Constitutional question of British versus Irish sovereignty – resolution of this question having been left open – by ensuring that in the interim, society would be fair for everyone.” If human rights abuses contributed to the onset and escalation of violent conflict and if a focus on human rights and equality issues could provide a new platform on which the two communities could negotiate issues related to ‘parity of esteem,’ then such an agenda could play an important role in the transition from “a less liberal-democratic, violent past to a more liberal-democratic, peaceful future.” In other words, the way in which the Belfast Agreement set aside space to work on human rights and equality issues has proved important in keeping the broader community involved in post-conflict discussions concerning building a better democratic future.

Similar features in a Middle East peace agreement could help to maintain the engagement of those members of civil society who have been active during the conflict. However, these kinds of human rights and equality guarantees have been notably absent from secret elite-level negotiations. As Human Rights Watch observes, the Oslo Accords emphasized security and policing over the protection of human rights. This meant that it was “all too easy” for parties, including the US, to ignore serious human rights abuses. As such, there was no commitment to end the torture and detention without trial tactics of the Palestinian security forces or the collective punishment measures, targeted killings and restrictions on the freedom of movement by

In this sense, securing human rights guarantees during peace talks may not be important for building more inclusive deliberative structures alone; it may also be important for creating the kinds of commitments from leaders to stop human rights abuses. As discussed in Chapter 6, many of the commitments related to these issues that were made during the peace talks resulted from the input of cross-community, moderate and smaller political parties.

As described above, an improved human rights and equality approach in Northern Ireland are important elements of the successful conflict resolution process and post-conflict institution building in this case. Changing practices under direct rule and the inclusion of new institutions and statutory duties as part of the Belfast Agreement contributed to a more just and democratic post-conflict period. These successful features of the conflict resolution process provide important lessons for the Israeli-Palestinian case. However, there have also been significant setbacks and failures in the Northern Ireland case that should similarly inform prescriptions and practices in future Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

7.3 Drawing lessons for the Middle East from the failures of the Northern Ireland peace process

A still “shaky” Northern Ireland Assembly and continued sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland have contributed to the narrowing of political debate since devolution. While the Northern Ireland Assembly is now up and running as of 8 May 2007, serious political divisions in the Executive remain over the devolution of policing and justice powers, promised as part of the 2006 St. Andrew’s Agreement that ended the most recent round of suspension of the Assembly. Paramilitarism and criminality also continue to disrupt the post-Agreement period, with a troubling resumption of dissident republican attacks and, in particular, a growing number of

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538 See, for example: Steven McCafferty, "Stormont crisis deepening as Robinson hits out at Adams," Belfasttelegraph.co.uk (26 July 2008); "Tensions at Stormont need resolved," Newsletter.co.uk (21 July 2008).
attacks on police officers, including five attacks on officers since November 2007. Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Sir Hugh Orde, reports that threats from dissident groups remain high in some parts of Northern Ireland. Since 2005, dissident republican groups such as the Continuity IRA (CIRA), Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH), the Real IRA (RIRA), and the Irish Republican Liberation Army (IRLA) have attacked police officers, targeted railway lines and department stores with incendiary devices and have threatened politicians. They have also been involved in criminal activity such as drug smuggling, drug dealing and robbery. Some of the higher profile acts of violence committed by figures connected to the PIRA include the brutal beating and murder of 21-year-old Paul Quinn at a remote farm along the Irish border in October 2007 and the murder of Robert McCartney in a Belfast pub in January 2005.

Loyalist paramilitary groups, while generally believed to be moving away from terrorist activities, are still involved in serious criminal offences including extortion, drug dealing and loan sharkling. A 2006 report produced by several leading women’s centres for the Department for Social Development suggests that individuals within unionist communities are now more willing to speak openly about their allegiances to paramilitary groups since the Belfast Agreement. The

539 For example, dissidents used Semtex in a rocket propelled grenade attack on three police officers on 16 August 2008. See: "Row erupts on Semtex use by dissident groups," Belfasttelegraph.co.uk (20 August 2008). Another police officer sustained serious injuries when a bomb exploded under his car in Co. Tyrone on 14 May 2008. Dissident republicans are also suspected to be behind the shooting of two police officers in November 2007 and a pipe bomb attack on a police station in Co. Tyrone. See: George Jackson and Ian Graham, "Policeman is rescued from inferno after car bomb blast," Independent.ie (14 May 2008). In August 2008, it also came to light that about a dozen serving and former members of the PSNI were forced to leave their homes due to threats from paramilitary groups. See: Alan Murray, "Dissident republican gangs force officers from homes," Independent.ie (24 August 2008); "Threats drive officers from homes," BBC News Online (4 July 2008).

540 Vincent Kearney, "80-100 'active dissident members'," BBC NI (13 August 2008).

541 The IMC originally attributed his murder to “local members or former members or associates” of the PIRA and not directly to the PIRA. However, the PSNI arrested a senior figure in the IRA and a “minor to mid-ranking” republican with connections to Sinn Féin and the IRA in July 2008. See: Gerry Moriarty, "Six arrested in connection with Paul Quinn murder," Irishtimes.com (30 July 2008); "Eighteenth Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission," Independent Monitoring Commission (London: The Stationery Office, 01 May 2008).


report argues that this has deepened intra-community divisions, evidenced by increasing factional feuds and new territorial murals appearing in unionist neighbourhoods.\textsuperscript{544} Women’s centres in Northern Ireland also indicate that women perceive the post-conflict period as violent. For example, Margaret Ward, representing the Women’s Centres Regional Partnership and the Women’s Resource Development Agency, surveyed 120 women about violence in Northern Ireland. Women indicated that crime is worse today than it was during the conflict, with more drug crime and attacks on women and the elderly. Ward reports: “Overall, there was a sense that it was ‘safer on the streets’ during the conflict than now.”\textsuperscript{545}

Peter Sheridan, former PSNI Assistant Chief Constable and now the chief executive of Co-operation Ireland, says that despite the view that peace is over and done with, the Stormont government remains “very shaky at times,” due to continued disagreements over the devolution of policing and justice and in light of the high profile sectarian murder of Paul Quinn: “Yes, a lot of the engagement has been at the top political level but actually the grassroots hasn’t been engaged in it.” Sheridan adds,

Most people out there since the Good Friday Agreement in working class Catholic, nationalist, loyalist, unionist areas haven’t seen their quality of life change to that extent. They haven’t got the sense that this has been really to our benefit economically.\textsuperscript{546}

The preoccupation with security and policing by the government and the persistent criminality and paramilitarism continues to hold the political process in Northern Ireland hostage as it draws attention away from the other social and political needs of citizens. It has also left little opportunity to shift from what Rick Wilford and Robin Wilson of Democratic Dialogue call

\textsuperscript{544} Report on Disadvantaged Unionist/Loyalist Areas (Greater Belfast). Prepared for Minister David Hanson, Department for Social Development, 6-7.
“consociationalism and crisis-management” towards a more civil society-centred government. The fact that security still tops the political agenda a decade since the Agreement was signed is an important revelation for the peace process in Israel/Palestine that must confront a similarly intractable but also a much bloodier conflict.

The still sectarian and violent post-conflict climate in Northern Ireland, as described above, has also undermined discussions on important social issues. Once again, this is an important lesson for feminist activists in Israel/Palestine who anticipate that the political and social conservatism, which has characterized the long period of conflict, will give way to improved equality protection after conflict. The post-conflict period may not be a hospitable period in which to address equality considerations for groups that exist within and beyond ethnonational identity constituencies. The case of LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland is a good example of this difficulty. In fact, all of the progressive equality legislation related to sexual orientation was imposed in Northern Ireland during direct rule by the Northern Ireland Office. While the Assembly was suspended between October 2002 and May 2007, the Northern Ireland Office introduced the following regulations: Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, 2003; Civil Partnership Regulations, 2005; and the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, 2007. These regulations prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment and the provision of goods and services and establish the legal right for same-sex couples to form a civil partnership under the law. Similarly, the Draft Sexual Orientation Strategy was developed under direct rule by the Northern Ireland Office as well as the OFMDFM research into experiences of LGBTQ community in Northern Ireland.

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547 Wilford and Wilson, "A Route to Stability," 5.
549 The OFMDFM produced two research publications on the experiences of the LGBTQ community. See: Esther Breitenbach, "Researching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Northern Ireland," OFMDFM Equality Directorate (2004); Neil Jarman and Alex Tennant, An Acceptable
Protestation against the introduction of this legislation, particularly from unionist party members, as well as continued homophobic remarks made by some politicians, indicate that the passage of such legislation would have been inconceivable in the context of a functioning political Assembly. For example, when the Civil Partnerships Regulations were passed, Seamus Close, city councilor and former deputy leader of the Alliance Party, proposed that the wedding room at Lisburn City Council should be denied to same-sex civil partnership ceremonies, clearly in violation of section 75 duties related to discrimination.\(^{550}\) In 2005, DUP councilor for Ballymena, Maurice Mills, attributed the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in Southern Louisiana and the AIDS epidemic in Africa to a warning from God against homosexuality.\(^{551}\) More recently, Iris Robinson, a prominent DUP MP, MLA and chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly’s Health Committee, drew ire for her homophobic comments on a BBC Radio Ulster program in June 2008. On the program, Robinson said that she would be “happy to put any homosexual” in touch with “a very lovely psychiatrist who works with me in my offices and his Christian background is that he tries to help homosexuals trying to turn away from what they are engaged in.”\(^{552}\) Later that month, Robinson told a parliamentary committee discussing sex offenders that “There can be no viler act, apart from homosexuality and sodomy, than sexually abusing innocent children.”\(^{553}\) Similarly, during question and answer period of the Northern Ireland Assembly, she said that “Homosexuality, like all sin, is an abomination.”\(^{554}\) Clearly, the positions of these politicians indicates the difficulty activists would have had in enforcing the equality provisions laid out in

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\(^{551}\) See: Claire McNeill, "DUP man who claimed Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment keeps quiet over Gustav," Belfasttelegraph.co.uk (03 September 2008).

\(^{552}\) "Iris Robinson on a 'treatment' for gays," Stephen Nolan Show, BBC Radio Ulster (06 June 2008).

\(^{553}\) "Risk Assessment and Management of Sex Offenders," Northern Ireland Grand Committee (17 June 2008).

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, had the Assembly been running without suspension since the Agreement.

Other controversial topics, such as reproductive rights and abortion, have been largely ignored by the new Northern Ireland Assembly. The UK’s 1967 Abortion Act was never extended to Northern Ireland and abortion remains illegal, unless there is a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or there is a serious physical or mental health risk associated with the pregnancy. Feminist activists had worked hard within the women’s movement and in cross-community discussions to reach a common position on the issue of abortion. For example, the *Women’s Coalition Party* struck a working group on reproductive and sexual health in January 2000 to tackle the issue. Based on their discussions, members agreed to adopt a pro-choice position. Today, however, all of the major political parties, including the DUP, Sinn Féin, the UUP and the SDLP are united in their fierce opposition to a bill that has been tabled in the UK to extend the Abortion Act to Northern Ireland. As SDLP leader Mark Durkan stated,

> The SDLP, with full democratic conscience, will do everything we can to oppose these plans and will do so on behalf of the people who have elected us and on behalf of those human beings who can be saved if we can effectively curb and hold back the extension of this Act.  

Iris Robinson also stated publicly that she was opposed to abortion because “the government has the responsibility to uphold God’s laws morally” and to “represent the morals of the scriptures.”

Some women within the Irish national movement have also been disappointed with their leaders for backtracking on their early support for a woman’s right to choose. For example, Sinn Féin watered down its pro-choice position and now the party only supports abortions in specific

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555 Roulston, interview by author.
557 Sam Lister, "MPs unite to fight law that will make abortions available in Northern Ireland," *Belfasttelegraph.co.uk* (24 July 2008).
circumstances, such as ectopic pregnancy. Elizabeth Byrne McCullough was one of the members of the Women’s Coalition who drafted the party’s Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy in 2000. She says the party was able to do something that was beyond the will or competency of all of the other political parties in Northern Ireland – even those that claim to be revolutionary or socialist. In this context, Avila Kilmurray, director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, has noted that it is more difficult for her organization to fund projects related to controversial issues like abortion in the post-Agreement period than during direct rule.

Considering the ways in which LGBTQ rights and reproductive rights have been discussed by politicians in the post-Agreement period, it is clear that the equality provisions in the Agreement are not enough to advance the interests of all communities in Northern Ireland. For those non-ethnonational identity communities in Israel and Palestine, which anticipate that a post-Agreement period will usher in the kind of peace and stability that will allow for political discussion on such issues, they may be mistaken. It can be in the periods in which political institutions are in flux, as Kilmurray notes, that there are more opportunities to engage in discussions around difficult and controversial issues.

The lack of commitment or the lack of political will on the part of political parties to open up difficult issues for discussion, especially around the kinds of issues that are of particular importance for women, speaks to another problem related to the representation of women in the post-conflict political Assembly. As Bell and Ní Aoláin argue, because the political solution was based on opposing nationalisms, women’s issues, such as those related to reproductive rights, are

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559 Lyons and Keane, "At the End of the Day: An Interview with Mairead Keane, National Head of Sinn Féin Women's Department," 266.
560 McCullough, Women in Politics in Northern Ireland, 10-11.
562 For example, in my interview with feminist peace activist Gila Svisky, she expressed her view that women are only likely to make significant gains in politics once the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has ended. Svirsky, interview by author.
difficult to deal with at the policy level.563 Under the section Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity of the Belfast Agreement, the signatories committed to the protection of the two ethnonational communities in Northern Ireland, particularly the right to “freedom and expression of religion” and the right to “freedom from sectarian harassment.” Included among these rights were the right of women to “full and equal political participation” and the right to “equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity.” The inclusion of these rights indicates some of the broader aspirations for post-conflict peace and justice.564

Certainly, without the necessary mechanisms to include the interests and views of the broader electorate, through, for example quota systems to mandate the representation of women or deliberative democracy mechanisms like the proposed Civic Forum for Northern Ireland, women in Israel/Palestine can similarly expect poor post-conflict representation. As Barbara O’Shea notes, the parties in Northern Ireland have been “slow to act” on the right of women to full and equal participation.565 To date, women are still underrepresented in Northern Ireland’s post-conflict institutions despite the fact that women were highly politically engaged and mobilized during the Troubles. For example, the Policing Board for Northern Ireland consists of just four women out of a total of nineteen members. Similarly, the strategic review panel set up by the government to review parading, a particularly contentious issue in Northern Ireland, has only one woman on a panel of seven members. The Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform argues that this is a clear violation of UN SCR 1325, which requires that women are represented in all institutions set up during peace processes.566 Women also continue to be underrepresented in the Assembly. As discussed in Chapter 6, women were elected to just 18 seats out of a total of 108 seats in both the

563 Bell and Aoláin, "Forward: Women's Rights in Transitioning and Conflicted Societies."
564 "The Agreement: Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations."
2003 and 2007 Assembly elections. While there has been an increase in women’s representation at the local council elections (21.5 per cent of councilors are women), the increase remains small and wholly underwhelming.\footnote{Ibid.} After the conflict has ended, when the ethnonational elite figures have assumed positions of political power, such as will be the case in a new Palestine, there may be less political space to advocate for change on these issues.

The problem of political representation in an ethnonationally designed political Assembly has also been problematic for newcomers to Northern Ireland from Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. The ‘two-community approach’, enshrined in the Agreement, has not met the needs of new communities. For example, in 2004, the press dubbed Northern Ireland the “race-hate capital of Europe,” indicating that Northern Ireland continues to be perceived as sectarian, xenophobic and violent.\footnote{See: "Race hate on rise in NI," BBC News Online (13 January 2004), Angelique Chrisafis, "Racist war of the loyalist street gangs," Guardian.co.uk (10 January 2004); Suzanne Breen, "Has peace made us the race hate capital of the world?" Sunday Tribune (17 July 2006).} While overall demographic shifts are small, the sizes of new communities are growing and this is creating important demographic changes in post-conflict Northern Ireland. During my fieldwork, I interviewed Seamus McAleavey, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, who indicated that the experiences of new communities in Northern Ireland are qualitatively different from the more positive experiences of the longer-established Chinese community.\footnote{Seamus McAleavey, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), interview by author, 9 August 2006, digital voice recording, Belfast.} Today, new communities are confronted with rising levels of intolerance and violence that are the result of continued sectarianism; the failure of the Assembly and the new post-conflict institutions to address the interests of communities beyond the ethnonational divide; and the pressures of increasing Europeanization and globalization. There are important lessons here to be learned for Israel. As Israel continues to actively recruit new immigrants to beef up the declining Jewish majority population, equality considerations will certainly remain important in a post-conflict context. For example, in an address to the Knesset in
2006, newly minted Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that “immigration is an important element of the growth and prosperity of the Israeli economy and society and the consolidation of our national security.” Olmert said that the state would continue to forge relationships with the Jewish diaspora and “particularly with the younger generation.”

The kinds of state laws and policies that will need to be addressed in the post-conflict period include, for example, Israel’s Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law which does not extend citizenship or residency permits to spouses of Israeli citizens who are from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. Strict regulations on the naturalization of non-Jews, the absorption of new immigrants and the status of the migrant worker class in Israel are likely to be contentious long after a peace agreement is established – especially if an agreement does not address human rights and citizenship rights.

Some of the challenges that Northern Ireland, in general, and feminist peace activists, more specifically, have faced in the post-conflict period may also surface in a future post-conflict period for Israel and in a new Palestinian state. New political institutions, primarily representative of ethnonational interests, can be unstable due to the continued wrangling of ethnonational elite political actors. This may be especially true for a new Palestine, where elite political actors attempt to govern cooperatively, and in a future post-conflict Israel where Palestinian political parties, representing the sizeable minority Palestinian population living within new Israeli borders, attempt to secure their own political space. Activists can also expect the conservatism of elite political leaders, who represent the more extreme ethnonational positions, to persist. Furthermore, the kind of violence from break-away paramilitary factions and continued sectarian criminality may also contribute to insecurity following a peace agreement, as has been the case in Northern Ireland.

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570 Ehud Olmert, "Address to the Knesset by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the presentation of the 31st Government of Israel," (04 May 2006).
7.4 Bringing the identity politics literature back in

One of the central aims of this dissertation was to determine the relevance of the identity politics literature for understanding the development of political activism, conflict, and peace in societies deeply divided along ethnonational lines. Although this literature has been largely developed outside of the fields of comparative politics and international relations, I noted how identity politics theorists like Satya P. Mohanty and Paula M. Moya speculated that their claims could be useful for understanding contemporary political social movements. In the following section, I come back to the identity politics literature that I outlined in Chapter 2, detailing some of the ways in which this literature more accurately captures the complexity of identity and conflict, in light of my research on women’s feminist peace activism in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine.

As Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan note, national struggles are gendered because “they involve the manipulation of gender identities and symbols and gendered divisions of power, labor, and resources.” Peterson and Runyan go on to argue that,

Virtually without exception, women have been used as symbols of national morality, as behind-the-scenes support workers, as guerrilla fighters to win national struggles. But with victory, the practical and strategic interests of women are subordinated to masculinist priorities. In this sense, women do not achieve liberation from their gender oppression in the years following revolutions. Rather, ethnic identities continue to be dependent on specific conceptions of gender that specify cultural rules related to sexuality, marriage, and family. This has been the case for women involved in revolutionary movements in the occupied Palestinian territories and Northern Ireland. For example, the Palestinian liberation movement, particularly during the intifada years, and the republican movement during the Troubles were revolutionary movements

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that produced political activism through anti-colonial struggle. Women were equally engaged in
the project to disrupt the status quo. As I described in Chapter 3, women in Northern Ireland
challenged the discriminatory practices of the state through national activism just as women in
Palestine similarly challenged the oppressive conditions of occupation. For these women, the
emancipatory promise of liberation was short lived and an intensification of conservative national
values was rearticulated in the ensuing years. As national leaders (mostly men) took office in
post-conflict Northern Ireland, an emphasis on family values, Christian morality and ethnic
homogeneity snapped back many of the creative feminist projects built around gender, class and
sexual identities. Most if not all of the progressive measures taken by the state in relation to
equality and human rights occurred under direct rule from Westminster, while the Assembly was
suspended. Recent homophobic statements from key MLAs in the Assembly and the failure of the
politicians to prioritize equality now that the Assembly has been reinstituted, as discussed earlier,
suggest that there will be little change on this front for years to come. In occupied Palestine, a
severe backlash against women’s activism followed the first intifada – similarly informed by
religious conservatism and gendered conceptions of ethnicity. As I have described in Chapter 3,
women were brutally attacked, particularly in the Gaza Strip, for not observing strict
interpretations of national religious morality and women were largely excluded from the secretive
Oslo process. In my view, ethnonational theories of conflict resolution ignore the ways in which
ethnic identities are dependent on such conceptions of gender, particularly because they privilege
ethnonational elite narratives of conflict. As such, they risk reproducing patterns of gender
inequality in new prescriptions and conflict resolution practices, thereby constructing new
political institutions that merely perpetuate existing inequalities.

Through the course of my fieldwork, I came across several types of arguments regarding
the value of including women in peace processes. The first type of argument that I came across
maintains that women are naturally more peaceful and therefore their inclusion in decision-
making processes is more likely to promote peaceful policy prescriptions and avoid military solutions. These types of arguments, which I detailed in Chapter 3, were particularly prominent in the women’s peace movement in the late 1970s and 1980s, advanced by organizations such as *Four Mothers* in Israel and reflected in the broad-based appeals to end sectarian violence by *Peace People* in Northern Ireland. Other groups include the *Mothers of Belfast* movement where women borrowed cows from the *Farmers’ Union* and staged a march from Belfast City Hall to the Stormont parliament buildings to protest the end of the milk program for school aged children.\(^{574}\)

The second type of argument is grounded in an equality justification: women should be included in peace processes because they constitute more than half the population. Whether or not they may contribute something different to the peace process is irrelevant (although many women who make this argument also speculate that they do). Rather, it is a matter of equality that women should be included in all decision-making processes. These types of arguments tend to be reflected in international declarations related to gender mainstreaming and conflict. For example, the United Nations Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995 states: “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”\(^{575}\) The *Jerusalem Center for Women* in the occupied Palestinian territories and *Bat Shalom* in Israel make such a claim based on equality,\(^{576}\) as well as other cross-community organizations in Northern Ireland, such as *DemocraShe*, at Queen’s University, Belfast, which bases its training, education and resource mandate on the

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\(^{574}\) McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace and Justice," 22.

\(^{575}\) "Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Beijing, 4-15 September 1995,"

\(^{576}\) The *Jerusalem Link* declaration states: “Women must be central partners in the peace process. Their active and equal participation in decision making and negotiations is crucial to the fulfillment of a just and viable peace.” See: "Declaration of Principles," 2001.
“right of women to full and equal political participation” set forth in the Belfast Agreement.\textsuperscript{577} Bronagh Hinds, one of the principal organizers of this initiative, says democracy is neither complete nor legitimate without the inclusion of women.\textsuperscript{578} For some of the Palestinian women that I interviewed, such as Rose Shomali, General Director of the \textit{Women’s Affairs Technical Committee}, it is important for women’s organizations to train women to run in political campaigns and get elected to local council, and hopefully, higher office because the conflict exacerbates women’s inequality. Shomali says that it surprises her how much work her organization has to do to educate Palestinian women about the importance of gender equality.\textsuperscript{579}

The third type of argument that I encountered is based on women’s unique experiences in the home, throughout the conflict and in the voluntary sector, which enables women to bridge the public/private divide, equips them with the skills that would be useful in peace negotiations and forms the basis for a distinctly feminist agenda. For example, Miriam Titterton, former member of the \textit{Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party} and currently the development worker at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, explains that many women found themselves active in the voluntary sector during the conflict, as opposed to party politics, because it meant that they did not have to take sides in the sectarian debate. Titterton explains that she worked as a welfare rights worker, as an activist for the disabled, and was involved in the children’s rights development union since the 1970s. When the peace talks were announced, women from across the voluntary sector came together for a meeting:

They were saying ‘look, let’s put forward a woman at the talks because it’s not right. Women have done a lot of [cross-community] work. The men were in jail and so the women on both sides has less money but also had to go in and visit and bring the guys the best of everything.’ This was my experience in Gingerbread.\textsuperscript{580} You know, they really kept communities going. Here they’ve suffered as police widows – their husbands were

\textsuperscript{577} DemocraShe maintains a list of resources online. See: http://www.niwi.org/.
\textsuperscript{578} Bronagh Hinds, "Women in Local Councils: Reflections and Future Action," (Waterfront Hall, 19 February 2007).
\textsuperscript{579} Shomali, interview by author.
\textsuperscript{580} Gingerbread is an organization that supports single parents in Northern Ireland.
murdered – they’ve been through all of this and suddenly we are not going to be represented and so we thought this was outrageous.

Political parties explained that the reason they had few women candidates was because women did not want to stand in elections. This kind of thinking encouraged women at this meeting to form the *Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition* and stand for election.\(^{581}\)

All three of these types of arguments were advanced, to varying degrees, by the feminist peace activists I interviewed during the course of my fieldwork. However, the first type of argument, related to women’s innate peaceful nature, generally gave way in the 1980s and 1990s to the latter two arguments related to claims based on fairness and claims based on women’s experiential knowledge. While a few activists did express this view during my fieldwork, most organizations today do not base their programs for action around this type of claim. In fact, most women expressed to me their doubts about such essentialist claims. For example, Carmel Roulston, former member of the *Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party* and head of the School of Economics and Politics at the University of Ulster, Belfast, does not believe that women’s essential make-up explains women’s role in peace movements, particularly because many women choose not to participate in such movements and also because there are many examples of women in politics who do not engage in dialogue or exhibit qualities associated with a more peaceful nature. As well, there are a lot of men, too, who have taken great risks for peace outside of the feminist movement:

I think it is partly linked to the experience of women in particular kinds of movements. That’s where it comes from, and that’s why there is so many women involved in it and I do believe that it’s got something to do with their experience of organizing and campaigning.

She adds that women mobilize and campaign because they have been at a social and political disadvantage and they bring their experiences from the home and domestic life, share them with each other and transform them into social and political action. In comparison, men do not tend to

\(^{581}\) Titterton, interview by author.
draw on the same experiences because they have not been as involved with resource issues and conflict resolution concerning the home:

Through organization, some of this can come to light and some of those techniques and problems and so on are brought in and shared and a better understanding of the interplay of politics and domestic life is generated.\footnote{Roulston, interview by author.}

As I discussed in Chapter 5, there was a lot of exclusion in women’s peace movements that focused on the qualities that women shared, such as appeals to their capacity to be more nurturing and peaceful than men, born of their innate nature and mothering instincts. These kinds of movements tended to ignore the ways in which women were differently situated: in economically advantaged or economically deprived communities; privileged as members of ruling ethnonational communities or oppressed as minority ethnonational groups; and as lesbian women and straight women. For example, working class women in Northern Ireland and Palestinian women living in poverty in Israel or under the harsh conditions of occupation felt that women in the feminist peace movements did not understand the immediate needs of their communities – communities that were rendered most vulnerable during the conflict. Similarly, nationalist women in Northern Ireland and Palestinian women in Israel/Palestine felt that their particular experiences of marginalization and powerlessness went unacknowledged in early cross-community projects that stressed women’s unity over women’s varied subject positions. As well, lesbian women felt excluded from early initiatives organized around motherhood motifs and, like women from socio-economically deprived communities and women from minority ethnonational communities, they wanted their particular experiences in conflict, living in a patriarchal and conservative political climate, to be acknowledged by the feminist peace community.

Later women’s peace initiatives, learning from these experiences of exclusion and also influenced by transnational feminist political movements, began to acknowledge such differences among women. In the late 1980s and 1990s, feminist peace activists consciously engaged in what
Nira Yuval-Davis calls a “transversal” approach to politics, described in greater detail in Chapter 2. Activists in the feminist peace movements in both cases engaged in cross-community dialogue sessions at international conferences, within women’s community initiatives and in cross-community feminist organizations. Participants acknowledged the ways that they were each rooted in specific identities, informed by different sets of experiences, but also worked to understand each others’ different experiences.\(^\text{583}\) In Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland, this led to the kinds of feminist solidarity-based activism, described in chapters 4, 5 and 6, that prioritized peace, human rights, justice and political inclusion in their social and political demands related to conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building. In Northern Ireland, the Women’s Coalition did not generate a middle position on the constitutional question; rather it worked to reflect a range of political positions.\(^\text{584}\) In this sense, feminist activism was not about generating consensus on every issue, but about respecting difference and developing a common agenda for peace.

As post-positivist realist theorists note, the test of a good theory, developed by identity-based communities, is how well it functions as a theory of the social world.\(^\text{585}\) In Chapter 6, I detailed how ideas related to human rights, justice and inclusion, as advanced by the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party during the peace talks in Northern Ireland, differed from the priorities of the main ethnonational parties that were primarily concerned with protecting the interests of the main ethnonational constituencies. The participation of the Women’s Coalition brought to light the exclusion that a ‘two-community’ approach to conflict resolution and a narrow conception of equality and justice, defined in terms of ethnonational interests alone, can entrench in the post-conflict period. The success of the party in ensuring that a broader conception of equality for all communities in Northern Ireland was contained within the final agreement helped to set the stage for the passage of robust post-conflict equality legislation. In this study, I

\(^{583}\) See: Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation.*
\(^{584}\) McCabe, “Ten Years of Women's Politics,” 7.
\(^{585}\) S. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History,* 238.
have not been able to ascertain the extent to which the inclusion of women, in particular, or the inclusion of other subaltern community representatives, more broadly, in peace processes is more likely to produce a peace agreement. Due to such a small sample of just two cases of conflict resolution (and only one case where an agreement was successfully implemented), it was not possible to demonstrate this. However, what I can say is that the participation of the Women’s Coalition Party did not detract from the principal goal of reaching a peace agreement; rather the party’s participation positively contributed to the development of novel human rights and equality safeguards. As post-positivist realist Satya P. Mohanty argues, greater understanding of the social world is attained through identity articulation and identity community mobilization. Through feminist peace activism, women came to understand the ways in which privilege and power operate in their societies and came to identify the mechanisms through which they could change it. It was some of these mechanisms, implemented as part of the peace agreement in Northern Ireland, that have been successful at increasing political accountability, inclusion, human rights and justice guarantees in the post-conflict period.

As discussed in Chapter 6, some of the women’s feminist peace initiatives, while emphasizing women’s diverse experiences, lobbied governments and spoke to regional and international bodies like the European Union and the United Nations to demand equal representation of women in peace processes. Activists reasoned that in the interests of fairness and equality, women should be better represented during peace negotiations and in post-conflict institutions. Many of the activists who demanded the equal representation of women also acknowledged that women’s unique experiences informed different political priorities that could contribute positively to building a peaceful and more just post-conflict society. In this sense, the emphasis on the second type of argument concerning the value of including women in peace

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processes, based on equality considerations, and the third type of argument which emphasizes women’s unique experiences, were intertwined. More recently, feminist peace organizations in Israel/Palestine, like *Isha L’Isha*, have recognized that merely including women in peace processes does not necessarily mean the adoption of feminist perspectives on conflict resolution and peace building. As such, they have shifted their attention away from lobbying the government to legally mandate the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and have begun to emphasize an alternative feminist world-view that stresses non-military aspects of conflict resolution and peace-building, such as social and economic security.

Taken together, we can see how the feminist peace movements in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine engaged in over thirty years of activism, informing such alternative feminist world-views that came to define political inclusion as more than just the representation of the major ethnonational blocs or the participation of women in elite level politics – but as the representation and participation of individuals and communities that reflect divergent experiences in conflict. In a similar vein, these movements developed an alternative conception of security that emphasized social and economic security and defined justice and equality in terms of all individuals and communities within, across and beyond the ethnonational divide.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

I would now like to turn to recommendations for future research, based on the analysis set forth here. In my view, additional research is needed on the role of participatory models of governance in societies in transition from conflict. In this project, I only touched on some of the recommendations put forth by the *Women’s Coalition Party* during the peace talks, such as the creation of a Civic Forum. However, in this case, the Civic Forum was designed to function as a weak consultative group of civic society representatives, with limited resources and little authority. As such, in its short institutional life, it had little impact on the important political
discussions taking place in the newly devolved Assembly. Given the length of time that ethnonational elite political actors have continued to dominate the political agenda in post-conflict Northern Ireland, as well as the considerable time that Northern Ireland was subject to direct rule from Westminster during this period, it is all the more important, in my view, to ensure that there is a public body or other effective institutional mechanisms that can promote the inclusion of the interests and concerns of the broader public.

Elizabeth Meehan has written in the area of deliberative and participatory models of democracy, such as citizens' juries and consensus conferences, in some of her work on devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Christine Bell and Catherine O’Rourke have also conducted a large scale review of peace agreements in over 73 conflicts, noting that many agreements include at least some provisions for civil society involvement in periods of transition from conflict. Considering the demand for and prevalence of such provisions in contemporary peace agreements, activists, practitioners and theorists would benefit from a larger comparative case study of peace agreements that include deliberative and participatory mechanisms. Such a study could evaluate the types of mechanisms that have been employed and the extent to which such mechanisms prove to be durable, increase public confidence in new post-conflict institutions and are supported by political leaders and the broader public. This kind of study would benefit activists that want to identify and lobby for effective participatory models of democracy that would keep them involved in the political realm during the transition from conflict and it would be instructive for practitioners and conflict resolution theorists who are interested in the efficacy of such mechanisms.

588 Bell and O'Rourke, "The People's Peace? Peace Agreements, Civil Society, and Participatory Democracy."
Another possible area of future research, related to the proposal above, would be a larger comparative study of the ways in which women have been able to successfully insert themselves into a series of contemporary conflict resolution processes. For the greater part of the last decade, women in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine have been working towards increasing the representation of women in peace negotiations. This is important work, and women peace activists have a long road ahead of them in increasing the role of women in decision-making roles in conflict resolution processes, as stressed in SCR 1325 on ‘women, peace and security’. As SCR 1325 was passed less than a decade ago, it is important to catalogue how it has been implemented in peace processes around the world. To date, there has been some new evaluative and case study scholarship produced by the Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, which links scholars from five academic centres in the Boston area, and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, which was formed in May 2000 to advocate for the SCR 1325. Clearly, this is an emerging area of research and, in my view, a large scale, comparative research project that details how SCR 1325 has been implemented around the world, in a variety of geographical and political contexts, and would be instructive for bodies like the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, which has a mandate to advise states that are emerging from conflict and for conflict resolution theorists that are interested in how to integrate SCR 1325 into their analyses and recommendations.

A final area of future research is one that extends this study on women’s identity-based experiences and politics in conflict to other identity communities in conflict. For example, through the course of my research, I have come to learn about a long but largely undocumented history of lesbian and gay literature, resistance and activism in these cases. These are voices that are never recorded in mainstream analyses, despite how sexuality, like gender, is implicated in the construction and maintenance of the boundaries of national identity. As Kathryn Conrad writes,

violations of heternormative values are perceived as risky to the goal of “reproducing the body politic.” For example, DUP leader Ian Paisley led the Save Ulster from Sodomy campaigns in Northern Ireland in the 1970s to prevent the legalization of homosexual acts. The way in which political leaders in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland have “defended” the memories of some national heroes against accusations that they were homosexuals, further indicates the importance for ethnonational communities to uphold heteronormativity and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships. For example, following the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in late 2004, national news reports in Israel began to wildly speculate about whether Arafat might have died of AIDS. These kinds of news reports, provoked by years of unsubstantiated rumours about Arafat’s sexuality, were evident in the international press as well. For example, National Post columnist David Frum wrote: “[Arafat’s] doctors tell us that his blood platelet count has dropped dramatically, but that he does not have leukemia. These symptoms sound remarkably AIDS-like, don't they? An AIDS diagnosis would certainly accord with what is widely known about Arafat's personal way of life.” These kinds of allegations were intended to undermine Arafat’s standing as a hero and were received bitterly in the Palestinian press. In Ireland, similar revelations were made against Irish national heroes. For example, the British government released the diaries of Irish nationalist revolutionary figure Roger Casement, which detailed sexual acts between himself and other men, shortly before his execution for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising. The release of the diaries was likely intended to discredit the revolutionary figure and reduce opposition to his execution. Many Irish nationalists purport that the British

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591 For example, see: Amos Harel, "Experts: Yasser Arafat died of AIDS or poisoning," Haaretz.com (08 September 2005); Danny Rubinstein, "Was Arafat HIV-positive?" Haaretz.com (14 August 2007).
593 See: Jeff Dudgeon, Roger Casement: The Black Diaries: With a Study of His Background, Sexuality, and Irish Political Life (Belfast: Belfast Press, 2002).
government forged the diaries and continue to go to great expense to challenge their authenticity.\textsuperscript{594}

The long history of persecution against LGBTQ-identified individuals and groups, particularly in societies embroiled in ethnonational conflict, and the many forms and instances of resistance, challenge homogeneous conceptions of ethnocultural values that are advanced by ethnonational communities and pervade scholarship on ethnonational conflicts. In my view, without acknowledging the diversity of identities and experiences within societies at conflict, we risk reproducing exclusionary social and political institutions in post-conflict periods. As well, due to the experiences of marginalization and persecution of LGBTQ individuals and communities in such cases, their perspectives would undoubtedly provide a critical site in which to evaluate the heteronormative and exclusionary practices of national movements.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the implications of this study for the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine cases and for the conflict resolution and identity politics literatures. In particular, some of the lessons that the Northern Ireland peace process may have for future peace tracks in the Middle East are not necessarily the same lessons that are highlighted in the ethnonational conflict resolution literature. Northern Ireland is often held up as a successful model of conflict resolution to be emulated by peace brokers in the Middle East. However, some of the important successes of the Belfast Agreement, as detailed in chapters 4 and 6, are not usually the same lessons lauded in popular political and scholarly analyses. For example, better equality protections and non-discriminatory state policies were instituted in the decades preceding the final peace agreement. As well, the agreement enshrined world class human rights and equality instruments that could prove instructive for future peace tracks between Israel and the

\textsuperscript{594} For example, see: John Ezard, "Sex diaries of Roger Casement found to be genuine," \textit{Guardian.co.uk} (13 March 2002).
Palestinian Authority. The failures associated with the Northern peace process also tend to get overlooked in such analyses. As I detailed above, these failures include: instability in the power-sharing executive over the implementation of the Agreement ten years on; continued sectarian violence and criminality, primarily from paramilitary splinter groups; an inability to address social policy issues related to group rights outside of an ethnonational prism; and the poor political representation of women.

As an in-depth comparative case study of just two cases, this dissertation only begins to demonstrate the insight that other literatures, outside of the dominant ethnonational literature, can bring to our understanding of identity in conflict. Two of the three research proposals that I sketched in this chapter all require a broader application, over a larger number of cases, of the methods and theories that I have borrowed from the feminist and critical identity politics literatures. As I discussed in this chapter, the size of this comparative case study is too small and the focus on feminist peace activism is too narrow to determine the extent to which the inclusion of subaltern social groups in conflict resolution processes produces a more durable peace. What is clear, in my view, is that the particular combination of women’s social locations in these conflicts, along with the influence of broader movements in feminist thought and praxis, has led to similar patterns of activism and similar constructions of alliance-based politics in both cases that have defined peace as more than just the absence of sectarian violence or the protection of ethnonational communities. Peace, rather, is defined as a basket of goods including, for example: democratic and functioning political institutions; inclusion of all communities including minority communities; equality, human rights safeguards, and justice for all citizens and residents; and the formation of an environment conducive to the functioning of a healthy and active civil society. The complex interplay between experiences based on gender, ethnicity and nationalism, class and sexuality has led to the development of similar values and priorities by feminist peace activists in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, informing under-studied ideas related to post-conflict
institution building. Identifying the extent to which they have been developed and perhaps tested in other cases, in my view, would help us to develop more inclusive post-conflict institutions that can promote human rights, justice and equality for all citizens.
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Zilber, Einav, board member of the Community of Lesbian Feminists (CLaF). Interview by author, 11 July 2005, Tel Aviv. Digital voice recording. Tel Aviv, Israel.
Appendix 1:

List of Interviews

The following list includes the names of people that I interviewed in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine between 2004 and 2006. This list only includes the names of people who consented to be identified in this project.

Al-Labadi, Fadwa  
Director, INSAN Center for Women and Gender Studies; Palestinian feminist activist  
Interview date: 18 June 2005  
Interview location: INSAN Center, Al Quds University, Jerusalem, West Bank

Aruri, Hanan  
Board member, Jerusalem Center for Women; Palestinian feminist activist  
Interview date: 21 April 2005  
Interview location: UNDP Offices, Ramallah, West Bank

Ashrawi, Hanan  
Palestinian spokesperson to the Middle East peace process; former member of the Palestinian Legislative Council; director, MIFTAH - the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy  
Interview date: 25 October 2005  
Interview location: Interviewed at the Chancellor Dunning Trust Lecture, Ban Righ Hall, Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada

Badawi, Khulood  
Activist, Coalition of Women for Peace, Bat Shalom, Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), Ta'ayush  
Interview date: 7 June 2005  
Interview location: Alternative Information Center, Jerusalem, Israel

Barghouthi, Hassan  
General director, Democracy and Workers’ Rights Center in Palestine; general secretary, International Federation of Workers’ Education Association in Arab Countries  
Interview date: 2 May 2005  
Interview location: Democracy and Workers’ Rights Center, Ramallah, West Bank

Blanc, Judith  
Founding member of Women in Black; Israeli feminist peace activist  
Interview date: 5 February 2005  
Interview location: Prima Kings Hotel, Rehavia, Jerusalem, Israel

Carvill, Lynn  
Policy and research co-ordinator for the Women's Support Network; former member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition Party and the Northern Ireland Civic Forum  
Interview date: 07 August 2006, Belfast  
Interview location: Belfast, Northern Ireland
Close, Grainne
Development manager, TADA Rural Network; human rights activist, Northern Ireland
Interview date: 10 August 2008
Interview location: TADA Rural Network, Craigavon, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland

Cook, Barbary
Co-founder, QueerSpace and the Coalition on Sexual Orientation
Interview date: 08 August 2006
Interview location: Cultúrlann, Falls Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Dabbour, Saleem
General manager, public relations and programs, Association of Women’s Committees for Social Work
Interview date: 26 June 2005
Interview location: Association of Women Committees for Social Work, Green Tower Building, Ramallah, West Bank; Jalazon Refugee Camp, West Bank

Diab, Rabiha
Head, Association of Women's Committees for Social Work; elected Fatah member of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Interview date: 17 July 2005
Interview location: Association of Women’s Committees for Social Work, Ramallah, West Bank

Godfrey, Angela
Activist, Machsom Watch, the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions
Interview date: 12 June 2005
Interview location: Café, German Colony, Jerusalem, Israel

Golan-Gild, Galia
Professor, the Lauder School of Government Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya; Israeli feminist peace activist
Interview date: 05 June 2005
Interview location: IDC, Herzliya, Israel

Halper, Jeff
Co-founder and co-ordinator, Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD)
Interview date: 02 June 2005
Interview location: ICAHD, Jerusalem, Israel

Hamdan, Salam
Ministry of Women's Affairs; Palestinian feminist activist
Interview date: 19 April 2005, Ramallah
Interview location: Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Ramallah, West Bank

Hannon, Tom
Director, Cornerstone Community (cross-community and ecumenical organization)
Interview date: 03 August 2006
Interview location: Cornerstone, Springfield Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Hindaileh, Areej
PR and administration, the Union of Palestinian Women Committees
Interview date: 27 June 2005
Interview location: Union of Palestinian Women Committees, Hospital Street, Ramallah, West Bank

Hinds, Bronagh
Senior practitioner fellow, Queen's University's Institute of Governance; former member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party
Interview date: 18 July 2006
Interview location: Queen’s University Institute of Governance, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Al-Hroub, Hussein
Director, Shiraa (Labourer’s Association for Studies and Development)
Interview date: 13 June 2005
Interview location: Shiraa Offices, Bethlehem, West Bank

Jarrar, Khalida
Director of the Adameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association; elected PFLP member of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Interview date: 20 July 2005
Interview location: Adameer, Ramallah, West Bank

Lewsley, Patricia
(Former) Social Democratic and Labour Party MLA and Lisburn City councillor (currently Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People)
Interview date: 09 August 2006
Interview location: Constituency Office, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Long, Naomi
Alliance Party MLA and Deputy Leader
Interview date: 03 August 2006
Interview location: Belfast City Hall, Belfast, Northern Ireland

McAleavy, Seamus
Chief executive, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Interview date: 09 August 2006
Interview location: NICVA, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Maikey, Haneen
Palestinian outreach coordinator, Jerusalem Open House
Interview date: 07 February 2005
Interview location: Jerusalem Open House, Jerusalem

Makhoul, Ameer
Director, Ittijah – Union of Arab Community Based Associations
Interview date: 19 May 2005
Interview location, Ittijah offices, Haifa, Israel
Masroujeh, Abla
Head, gender department of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU)
Interview date: 16 April 2005
Interview location: PGFTU, Ramallah, West Bank

Meehan, Elizabeth
Professor emeritus, Queen's University Belfast; former member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party
Interview date: 21 July 2006
Interview location: Queen's University Institute of Governance, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Morcos, Rauda
Co-founder and former general coordinator, Aswat – Palestinian Gay Women
Interview date: 23 January 2005
Interview location: Kayan Feminist Organization, Haifa, Israel

O'Rourke, Catherine
Research assistant, Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), University of Ulster
Interview date: 11 July 2006
Interview location: TJI, University of Ulster, Magee Campus, Northern Ireland

Persic, Callie
Co-ordinator, Neighbourhood Renewal for West Belfast City
Interview date: 19 July 2006
Interview location: West Belfast Partnership Offices, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Price, Johnston
Director, Ulster People’s College
Interview date: 13 July 2006
Interview location: Ulster People’s College, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Ratrout, Manal
Assistant, Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees
Interview date: 25 June 2005
Interview location: Ratrout family residence, Ramallah

Rizqallah, Munira
Deputy general manager and coordinator of women’s groups, Shiraa (Labourer’s Association for Studies and Development)
Interview date: 13 June 2005
Interview location: Shiraa offices, Bethlehem, West Bank

Roulston, Carmel
Head, School of Economics and Politics, University of Ulster, Jordanstown
Interview date: 21 July 2006
Interview location: Roulston family residence, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland

Saleh, Nuha
Founding member and activist, Association of Women's Committees for Social Work (AWCSW)
Interview date: 17 July 2005
Interview location: AWCSW, Ramallah, West Bank

Sattath, Noa
Spokesperson, Jerusalem Open House
Interview date: 27 January 2005
Interview location: Jerusalem Open House, Jerusalem, Israel

El-Shatleh, Issa
General coordinator, Palestinian Farmers Union
Interview date: 19 June 2005
Interview location: Palestinian Farmers Union, Ramallah, West Bank

Shomali, Rose
Director general, Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC)
Interview date: 21 July 2005
Interview location: WATC offices, Ramallah, West Bank

Stern, Sharon
Member, Community of Lesbian Feminists (CLaF)
Interview date: 11 July 2005
Interview location: Café, Tel Aviv, Israel

Svirsky, Gila
Co-chair, B'Tselem; Israeli feminist peace activist
Interview date: 21 January 2005
Interview location: Prima Kings Hotel, Rehavia, Jerusalem, Israel

Titterton, Miriam
Development Worker, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
Interview date: 18 July 2006
Interview location: NIHRC offices, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Zahran, Haitham
Board member, Shiraa (Labourer’s Association for Studies and Development)
Interview date: 14 June 2005
Interview location: Shiraa Offices, Bethlehem, West Bank; Zahran family residence, Bethlehem, West Bank

Zilber, Einav
Board member, Community of Lesbian Feminists (CLaF)
Interview date: 11 July 2005
Interview location: Café, Tel Aviv, Israel

Abu Zneid, Jihad
Interview date: 23 February 2005
Interview location: Shufat Refugee Camp, Jerusalem
Appendix 2: Glossary of Key Terms, Organizations and Events

Alliance Party, Northern Ireland
Described as Northern Ireland’s cross-community party, this moderate political party was formed in 1970.

Al-Qwas
Founded as an outreach group at the Jerusalem Open House in 2001, Al-Qwas’ was established as an independent and autonomous Palestinian LGBTQ organization in the spring 2008.

Aswat
Aswat is a Palestinian lesbian feminist organization that was founded in 2003. The group began as a Yahoo! e-group that connected Palestinian lesbian women living in Israel and the occupied territories. Today, the organization is housed in the Kayan Feminist Organization in Haifa, Israel.

Bat Shalom, Israel
Bat Shalom is an Israeli feminist peace organization that was founded in 1994, at the same time as its Palestinian counterpart, the Jerusalem Center for Women. Activists include Jewish and Palestinian Israeli feminists. Its offices are located in Jerusalem, Israel.

Battle of the Bogside, Northern Ireland, 1969
The Battle of the Bogside refers to the two-day period of rioting that broke out during the annual loyalist Apprentice Boys march in Derry and spread throughout Northern Ireland. The police force in Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and local loyalists clashed with the mainly Catholic and nationalist residents in the Bogside district of Derry. The B-Specials, a largely Protestant special police unit, and the RUC used CS gas and live rounds of ammunition to contain rioters. The confrontation ended with the deployment of British Army troops. This event is commonly considered the beginning of ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland.

The Belfast Agreement, Northern Ireland, 1998
The Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) was reached by ten parties elected to the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue (1996-1998) in 1998. The historic
Agreement established a power-sharing political Assembly in Northern Ireland and effectively ended the period known as the ‘Troubles.’

**Bill of Rights Forum, Northern Ireland**
The Bill of Rights Forum, tasked with advising the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on a Bill of Rights, met between 2006 and 2008. Sinn Féin, the SDLP, the DUP and the UUP all had three seats on the forum and the Alliance Party has two. There was also civil society representation on the forum, including two seats each for trade unions, churches and employers, and representatives from the following sectors: women, community/voluntary, sexual orientation, elderly, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, children and young people.

**Coalition on Sexual Orientation, Northern Ireland (CoSO)**
CoSO is a Northern Ireland LGBTQ organization that was founded in 1998 to consult with public authorities on their new statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. The founding members of CoSO include: QueerSpace, the Belfast Gay Pride Committee, the Belfast Lesbian Line, the Butterfly Club, Cara-Friend, Foyle Friend, Foyle LGB Line, the LGB Branch of National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland, NIGRA, the Rainbow Project, and the Transgendered Group.

**Coalition of Lesbian Feminists, Israel (CLaF)**
CLaF was formed in 1987 by a small group of Israeli lesbian feminists. The organization remains loosely organized in the Tel Aviv area.

**Community Relations Council, Northern Ireland (CRC)**
The CRC was established in 1990 by the government in Northern Ireland to promote community relations between the unionist and nationalist communities.

**The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, 1993 (Oslo Accords)**
In September 1993, Israel and a Palestinian delegation signed the Declaration of Principles, otherwise known as the Oslo Accords, in Washington. The agreement was a product of a series of
secret negotiations held in Norway between elite representatives of the PLO and Israel following the 1991 Madrid Conference. The final accord signed in Washington was heralded as an agreement that would end decades of political instability and violence and lead to the creation of a viable Palestinian state and security for Israel. Discussions on the most contentious issues, such as the right of Palestinian refugees to return to what is now Israel and the status of Jerusalem, were postponed until after each side took a series of confidence-building measures. Ultimately, the agreement failed to deliver on the peace it promised: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who signed the Oslo Accords, was assassinated at a peace rally in 1995; extremist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad attracted increasing support in the occupied territories; large-scale Palestinian suicide bombing operations began in Israeli populations centers in 1994; and the living conditions in the occupied territories rapidly deteriorated.

**Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland (DUP)**
The DUP was founded by Ian Paisley and other unionist politicians in Northern Ireland in 1971. This hard-line unionist party was opposed to the 1998 Belfast Agreement and constitutionally favours a political union between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. The party has fared well in elections following the Belfast Agreement and now stands as the largest unionist party in Northern Ireland. Peter Robinson stands as current party leader and First Minister of Northern Ireland.

**Fatah**
Fatah was founded in the 1950s as a Palestinian national movement by the late Yasser Arafat. As the largest political faction in the PLO, party members secured a majority of seats to the newly formed Palestinian Authority, following the signing of the Oslo Accords. Under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas (following the death of party president Arafat in the 2006) Fatah suffered electoral defeat by Hamas (a rival Islamic party) in the 2006 legislative elections. Fighting
between groups loyal to Fatah and groups loyal to Hamas has left the Palestinian Authority under a state of emergency after a failed attempt to form a unity government.

**General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)**
This body was established in 1965 as the representative of Palestinian women in the PLO.

**Histradut, Israel**
Formed during the British Mandate of Palestine, the Histradut is Israel’s national trade union congress.

**Intifada**
The mass Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories (1987 – 1993) is popularly called the first “intifada.” The “second intifada” (also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada) began in September 2000, following seven years of failure of the Oslo Accords.

**Jerusalem Center for Women**
The Jerusalem Center for Women was founded in 1994 and is the Palestinian counterpart to the Israeli women’s peace group Bat Shalom under the umbrella of the Jerusalem Link. The centre is located in East Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem Link**
Jerusalem Link is one of the largest and longest-running coexistence projects organized by Israeli and Palestinian women. Dialogue between women began in 1985 at the United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi. In 1994, Israeli and Palestinian women created the Jerusalem Link to serve as an umbrella organization for the Israeli-based women’s peace group Bat Shalom and the Palestinian-based peace group the Jerusalem Center for Women.

**Jerusalem Open House**
Since 1997, this Israeli LGBTQ community centre has provided services for Jewish and Palestinian Israeli communities in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Open House was one of the principle organizers of Jerusalem’s controversial World Pride event in 2006.

**Loyalists, Northern Ireland**
In Northern Ireland, this term refers to persons who wish to remain part of the United Kingdom. It is usually used to describe persons who subscribe to a militant brand of unionism.

**Machsom Watch, Israel**
This organization was established by Israeli women peace activists in 2001. Activists monitor Israeli controlled checkpoints between the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel and report on any incidents of abuse or human rights violations that they observe.

**Madrid Peace Conference, 1991**
The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference set in motion a series of official Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Washington, D.C. between non-PLO representatives and Israeli representatives and, simultaneously, a series of secret back-channel negotiations between representatives of the PLO and Israel. It was one of these secret channels that culminated in the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords. This international conference was co-sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union and included representatives from Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, the European community, Israel and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

**Northern Ireland Assembly (The “Assembly”)**
This power-sharing political Assembly was established as a result of the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

**Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)**
Formally called the Northern Ireland Council for Social Services, NICVA was founded in 1938. It operates as an umbrella organization for voluntary groups in Northern Ireland.

**The Northern Ireland Civic Forum (Civic Forum)**
Established as part of the Belfast Agreement, the Northern Ireland Assembly approved the creation of a sixty-member Civic Forum with one chair and six additional members nominated by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 1999. The Forum was formally established on 6 February 2001 and members met twelve times between October 2000 and October 2002. The Forum collapsed in October 2002 along with the suspension of the Assembly. The Civic Forum remains under review by the OFMDFM.
As part of the peace process launched in the early 1990s, elections were held for delegates to the official peace talks called the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue, or simply ‘the Forum.’ Smaller parties were given the opportunity to be represented on the Forum by a unique electoral formula that was designed to allow minor sectarian parties a better chance to get elected to the peace talks. The peace talks led to the signing of the 1998 Belfast Agreement. Parties elected to the Forum included: the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Sinn Féin, the Alliance Party, the UK Unionist Party (UKUP), the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition Party (Women’s Coalition) and the Labour Coalition.

Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA)
NIGRA was formed in 1975. Shortly after its formation, the organization challenged the criminalization of male homosexual acts and won. In 1982, a new law was passed, legalizing some homosexual acts between men 21 years of age and older.

The Northern Ireland Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
The OFMDFM is a department of the Northern Ireland administration. Peter Robinson (DUP) is the current first minister and Martin McGuinness (Sinn Féin) is the deputy first minister.

Palestinian Authority (PA)
The PA (otherwise known as the Palestinian National Authority, or PNA) was established in 1994 as a result of the Oslo Accords. It is the elected representative body of the Palestinian people. The PA controls areas of the West Bank (excluding, for example, Jewish settlements and by-pass roads) and the Gaza Strip (excluding land, air and sea borders) since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Mahmoud Abbas (Fatah) was elected president in 2005, replacing the late Yasser Arafat (Fatah). Hamas won the majority of seats in the 2006 legislative elections. Due to the failure of Fatah and Hamas to form a unity government and due to fighting between factions loyal
to these parties, Abbas declared and state of emergency and appointed moderate Salam Fayyad as prime minister in 2007.

**Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU)**
The PGFTU traces its roots to the early Palestinian labour movement in the 1920s. The PGFTU is closely affiliated with Fatah, the largest Palestinian political faction. The current organizational framework of the PGFTU, which brings together Palestinian national parties/political factions under one umbrella, was established in 1993. The General Union of Palestinian Workers and a number of independent trade unions also operate in the occupied territories and represent Palestinian workers and the unemployed.

**Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)**
Founded as a revolutionary organization in 1964, the PLO is an umbrella organization that represents different Palestinian political factions like Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestinian Democratic Union (Fida). The PLO was expelled from Jordan in the early 1970s and pushed out of Lebanon in 1982, ending up in Tunis. The exiled PLO leadership established its authority as the only representative of the Palestinian people during the Palestinian intifada (1987-1993) and declared support for a two-state solution in 1988. Yasser Arafat served as chair of the organization from 1969 until his death in 2004. The PLO is currently led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

**The Palestinian occupied territories**
This term refers to the territories Israel seized and occupied in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, including the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.

**Peace Now, Israel**
Peace Now is a broad-based peace movement that was founded in Israel in 1978. It is the largest and longest running peace movement in the country.

**Peace People, Northern Ireland**
Peace People organized many high profile marches and other non-violent demonstrations throughout Northern Ireland beginning in 1976. The organization, originally called Peace Women, was started by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan following the deaths of three young civilians in Belfast. Both Williams and Corrigan were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for their role in kick-starting the Northern Ireland Peace Movement. One of the group’s most memorable events included a massive march of over 20,000 mainly Catholic and Protestant women through a Protestant community in Belfast on 28 August 1976.

**Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2003 (The Roadmap)**
The Roadmap was an effort to revive the failing Oslo peace process by the international community. The “Quartet,” including the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia presented the Roadmap in 2003 to Israel and the Palestinian leadership. This three-phase approach to conflict resolution envisioned a two-state solution and established 2005 as the deadline for a “final and comprehensive settlement.” The principles of the Roadmap have been breached on many occasions, and subsequent efforts to renew the process have failed.

**QueerSpace, Northern Ireland**
In 1997, QueerSpace was set up in Belfast, Northern Ireland as an LGBTQ organization. It was designed to offer a political voice to the LGBTQ community as opposed to functioning as a limited community service provider.

**Republicans, Northern Ireland**
In Northern Ireland, this term refers to persons who desire a united Ireland. It is usually used to describe persons who subscribe to a militant brand of nationalism.

**Section 75, the Northern Ireland Act**
The 1998 Northern Ireland Act imposes a statutory duty on all public authorities to promote equality of opportunity “between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between
persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.”

**Separation wall**

In 2002, Israel began construction on the separation wall between Israel and the West Bank in an effort to curb Palestinian terrorist attacks. Variously known as the ‘separation barrier’, the ‘Wall’, and the ‘apartheid wall’, the structure consists of a continuous stretch of concrete walls, electrified barbed wire fences and ditches as deep as four metres. Key points along the wall have been the site of protests and regular demonstrations by human rights and other Palestinian solidarity activists who maintain that the wall unnecessarily restricts the freedom of movement of Palestinian people. Other critics argue that the wall should follow the internationally recognized 1967 Green Line and not be built on land within the occupied West Bank.

**Sinn Féin (political party), Northern Ireland**

Sinn Féin was formed in 1970 as a nationalist political party in Northern Ireland, based on the republican Sinn Féin movement, established at the turn of the last century. The party calls for a united Ireland and the end of British rule in Northern Ireland. The party supported the peace process in the 1990s and has enjoyed an increase in electoral support since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998. Gerry Adams is the current party leader.

**Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)**

Founded in 1970, the SDLP is a moderate nationalist party in Northern Ireland that supported the Belfast Agreement. Once the most popular nationalist party in Northern Ireland, the SDLP has lost considerable support in elections since the installation of the new power-sharing Assembly (see table on page 179). The current party leader is Mark Durkan.

**The ‘Troubles,’ Northern Ireland**

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The ‘Troubles’ refers to the period of conflict in Northern Ireland, spanning from the late 1960s to the late 1990s.

**Ulster Unionist Party, Northern Ireland (UUP)**
The UUP was formed at the turn of the last century and remains a moderate unionist party in Northern Ireland. The party’s former leader, David Trimble, served as first minister to the 1998 Northern Ireland Assembly. The party has faired poorly in post-Agreement elections since 2003 (see table on page 179). Sir Reg Empey serves as the current party leader since 2005.

**United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU)**
The UNLU was established and operated during the first Palestinian intifada (1987-2003). It functioned as a coordinating body in the occupied territories and represented all of the PLO political factions, in addition to Islamic Jihad and Hamas. During the intifada, local leaders coordinated boycotts, demonstrations and general strikes.

**United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325)**
On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The resolution stresses the importance of women’s contribution to conflict resolution and peace-building processes.

**Women in Black, Israel**
Women in Black is perhaps the most recognizable women’s peace group in Israel, beginning as an all-women anti-occupation vigil in Hagar Square, West Jerusalem in January 1988. Women stand for one hour dressed in black and hold signs that simply read “end the occupation.” The movement, twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, maintains a weekly vigil in Jerusalem and hosts regular international conferences. The movement went on to inspire peace vigils in other Israeli and international cities such as Berkeley, London, Toronto, Belgrade and Brussels throughout the 1990s.

**Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC)**
Following the 1991 Madrid Conference, technical committees, which were designed to serve as the foundation for future ministries in the new Palestinian Authority, were established to address issues related to land, education, water, health, media and other issues. Very few women, however, were appointed to the committees. As such, a core group of women, representing several Palestinian women’s unions, went on to found the WATC in 1992. The WATC continues to operate as a non-governmental organization but, in the 1990s, it was principally designed to function like a ministry and represent the interests of women.

**Women’s Coalition Party, Northern Ireland (Women’s Coalition)**

Women representing both unionist/Protestant and nationalist/Catholic communities hastily formed the Women’s Coalition in April 1996 to stand in elections to the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue. The party secured two seats on the Forum and managed to get two candidates elected to the 1998 power-sharing Assembly. Despite the party’s initial success, candidates failed to capture seats in subsequent elections and the party officially disbanded on 11 May 2006.