Gendering Conflict and Peace in Israel/Palestine and the North of Ireland*

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*@ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. This article first appeared in Millennium, Vol. 27, No.4, 1997, and is reproduced with the permission of the publisher.

Mainstream media and conventional scholarly accounts depict the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993 and the Good Friday Agreement in Belfast in April 1998 as historical departures from bloody conflicts to peace. The underlying assumption of such accounts is that any agreement is better than no agreement. By failing critically to examine the agreements' shortcomings and by defining peace merely as an end to physical violence, such accounts create the illusion that the morning after peace agreements are signed is often brighter and likely to have positive effects for everyone. However, the success of the agreements or the durability of 'peace' is measured primarily in terms of changes in the relationship between the former enemies. Along these lines, the parties to the conflicts are viewed as unitary actors with little or no attention paid to their internal composition or to identity conflicts within.

Contrary to conventional accounts, this chapter views the transition from conflict to post-conflict realities as more complex and multifaceted than a simple departure from a negative situation (i.e. conflict) to a positive one (i.e. 'peace'). It seeks to examine whether the signing of peace agreements necessarily has positive implications for various identity groupings and constituencies. For example, does the signing of an agreement guarantee a more equitable and just division of power and labour between men and women?

I employ a gender-sensitive analysis not to privilege gender over other dimensions of identity or conflict. Rather, like many feminists, I find such an analysis useful because it has the potential to address questions of identity, difference and power asymmetries, which are at the heart of most transitions ushered by the signing of diplomatic agreements. A gender-sensitive analysis enables us to examine not only relations between men and women but also other social relations, particularly those grounded in unequal divisions of power and privilege.[1] Taking gender seriously implies asking critical questions about a complex set of behaviours, social norms, systems of meanings, ways of thinking, and relationships that affect how we experience, understand and represent ourselves as men and women. Moreover, because gender shapes so much of our identities, experiences and behaviours, by paying close attention to changes in conceptions of femininity, masculinity and gender relations we may gain insight into the complex processes of identity formation and transformation. These processes are crucial to understanding both the potential of and obstacles to peace building efforts.

To determine whether peace is more conducive to gender equality than conflict, the chapter begins with an analysis of changes in gender identities, roles and relations at the height of the political conflict (the Palestinian intifada and the troubles in the North of Ireland). Against this backdrop, I examine the various changes that have occurred in conceptions of masculinity, femininity and gender relations following the signing of peace agreements. For example, do women have more space to participate in the political arena after peace agreements are signed compared to at the height of the conflict? What happens to conceptions of masculinity, grounded

in militarism and acceptance of violence as a problem-solution venue in post-conflict societies, when political violence is outlawed? Are post-conflict conceptions of masculinity more conducive to gender equality than the ones prevalent while the political conflict persisted? In light of existing feminist literature on the spillover of political violence to the home front, is there likely to be a decline in violence against women after peace agreements are signed? To examine these questions, one must recognize that 'conflict' and 'peace' are neither static conditions nor diametrically opposed realities. Instead, they represent different interpretations constructed to illuminate particular moments in the history of a conflict. These interpretations are gendered, that is, grounded in particular notions of masculinity, femininity and gender relations, whose meanings change as a result of changing economic, social and political conditions. In order to capture this interplay, the next two sections focus respectively on the changes affecting women and dominant conceptions of femininity and changes affecting men and dominant conceptions of masculinity during times of heightened political conflict.

Is political conflict a setback or a springboard for women's liberation?

Contrary to conventional wisdom, which tends to assume that political conflict inevitably has negative implications for the lives of women, this section examines whether conflict may have positive ramifications as well. In other words, is it possible that while in some instances, political conflict may complicate women's lives and set back their struggles for gender equality, in a different context and under different circumstances a heightened political conflict may become a springboard for gender equality? To address this question, one must call into question the prevalent view of women as victims of conflict and acknowledge their power and agency. In addition, one must pay close attention to changes in patterns of women's political inclusion and exclusion during times of conflict and to the complex interplay between national struggles and struggles for gender equality.

One of the most common trends in the literature on gender and political conflict involves the exclusion of women and gender issues from the arena of international politics. The political exclusion of women and their struggles to challenge it have been often explained through reference to the public-private dichotomy. According to this dichotomy, the public sphere, where politics takes place, is deemed a masculine domain, while women are relegated to the private domain and assigned sole responsibility for matters involving their home and family.[2] Many feminists presume that this thesis, which has its roots in liberal feminist interpretations of Western political theory, is applicable across cultures and contexts. However, while the public-private dichotomy was originally invoked to challenge women's exclusion, its uncritical use may reinforce the view that women have no power or political agency and that they are totally dependent on the existing social and political structures. As Amal Rassam argues, 'implicit in this dichotomy of public/male, private/female is the assumption that power, viewed as belonging to the public-political domain, is a male monopoly and that women, confined to the domestic sphere, are powerless'.[3]

Another, somewhat related assumption is that women's struggles against their political exclusion or marginalization are often set back when political conflicts escalate. The literature on women's lives and struggles amidst international conflict challenges this assumption by pointing out that conflicts do not always have negative implications for women. In fact, in some situations, conflict may be a potential springboard for women's emancipation.[4] As Rosemary Ridd points out, 'when a community is involved in open conflict and all resources are directed

towards an external threat... there is likely to be some fluidity in social ordering'.[5] This fluidity often includes changes in gender roles and relations introduced primarily through women's involvement in community and political activism and men's preoccupation with the overt political conflict.

For Palestinian women, the long history of political involvement and organizing at the community level produced the basis upon which responses to both the hardship and the opportunities of the intifada were predicated. The intifada provided women who had participated in literacy programmes and skill-training courses operated by the women's committees with both an opportunity and an excuse to join the women's movement and to put what they had learned to use. The experience, social legitimacy and institutional base of the women's committees enabled mass participation of women in the intifada. During the first years of the intifada, the large-scale political mobilization of Palestinian women was not perceived as a challenge to social stability but rather as a necessary and valuable contribution to the national struggle.[6]

On the other side of Israeli-Palestinian divide, the intifada marked the establishment of exclusively female peace groups, which worked to mobilize public opinion in Israel and abroad against the Israeli occupation and to establish ties with Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. 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 what was the most crucial matter in Israeli politics: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Similar opportunities emerged for women in the North of Ireland during the early years of the troubles. The Falls Road curfew, which was declared by the British army in July 1970, and the internment without trial that the government of Northern Ireland introduced a year later in August 1971 triggered a massive mobilization of women, primarily within Catholic/nationalist communities. Women challenged the curfew, organized on their own streets to provide protection against military harassment and arrests, and with the introduction of internment women replaced men in the local branches of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. What started as local initiatives of unorganized women developed into large campaigns and triggered the establishment of new women's organizations. Monica McWilliams uses the term 'accidental activism' to describe Irish women's responses during this period. According to McWilliams, accidental activism is 'born of immediate experience of social injustice, rather than as a consequence of a pre-existing ideological belief'. As a result, 'women who previously did not see themselves as in any way political became advocates and agents for social change"[7]

There are striking similarities between the political mobilization of Palestinian women during the early stages of the intifada and the organizing of nationalist women in the North of Ireland in the early 1970s, at the beginning of 'the troubles'. In many ways, the responses of many Palestinian women to the intifada can be described as accidental activism. Most writings on women's organizing during the early years of the troubles in the North of Ireland and the intifada in Israel-Palestine underscore the fact that the magnitude of women's mobilization was both a catalyst and a result of the general climate of change in both societies. As different constituencies tried to adjust to the new reality introduced by the largely unanticipated political changes there was some fluidity in social relations and roles with women and youth gaining more visibility and respect for their contribution to the national struggle. Describing the changes in Palestinian women's roles during the first years of the intifada Rita Giacaman and Penny Johnson argue that the community's struggle to survive played a major role in changing people's

views concerning women's political activism. Because women made themselves indispensable in their communities at a time 'when conditions were creating new and pressing needs' most people did not view their gender as a liability but rather as an asset.[8]

Women's greater political involvement and its relative acceptance by the communities were no doubt related, at least in part, to the changes in men's roles as the political crisis escalated. With men absent from most households, women had a legitimate excuse to get involved in the political struggle. Their participation was viewed both as a sign of their loyalty to the men in their families and to the larger collectivity. Giacaman and Johnson note in particular the Palestinian community's acceptance of the participation of unmarried women in mixed-gender settings, whether demonstrations or neighbourhood committees. They also point out that in most cases the intifada created a context that eased family restrictions on the movement of women and broadened the range of legitimate roles they could assume. Rather than restricting the political involvement of women, especially young and unmarried, most families were proud of this new political activism.[9]

Another similarity, which may explain at least in part the relative space Palestinian and Irish nationalist women experienced during the periods discussed here, involves the subversive use of conventional conceptions of womanhood and femininity as a secret weapon in the struggle. In the North of Ireland, as in Palestine, there was a general belief that women were more protected compared to men, especially because the British and Israeli forces deemed them less suspicious than their male counterparts. Thus, as in other national liberation struggles, women took to the streets, organized protests, engaged in direct confrontations with Israeli or British soldiers as well as transported ammunition, carried important messages and got involved in the armed struggle.[10]

Women in the nationalist community of west Belfast established their own alarm system designed to warn the community and the IRA that the British army was nearby. Every night between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., the hours favoured by the army for raids, women patrolled the streets on a rotating basis, taking turns following the soldiers everywhere they went. Unlike anywhere in the world, where the streets at night are considered unsafe for women, during the period of heightened conflict discussed here, women in west Belfast not only felt safe on the streets at night. They protected the men in their communities while celebrating their power to frighten the young British soldiers who were unable to comprehend, let alone deal with, the gender role reversal they encountered. Moreover, whereas in most societies, women who are on the street at night run the risk of becoming the subject of rumours and social pressure, the women who participated in the patrols in west Belfast enjoyed great social legitimacy. Not only did the participation in the patrols not harm their reputation. It enhanced it![11]

Similar phenomena occurred in Palestine during the first two years of the intifada. Perhaps the most common one was that of women struggling with soldiers to reclaim young men whom soldiers seized to beat or detain. Reminiscent of the women's patrols in west Belfast, Palestinian women utilized their networks and called each other to confront the army as it entered a refugee camp or a village, usually in the middle of the night. Another activity that Palestinian women and nationalist women in west Belfast had in common was the smuggling of food and other provisions during curfews. Palestinian women smuggling necessary provisions and information into areas under curfew were considered to be making a major contribution to sustaining the uprising.[12] In both Palestine and the North of Ireland, however, women's political involvement began with their attempts to protect their homes, families and communities rather than with a

conscious attempt to move beyond the confines of the private sphere into the broader political arena. Giacaman and Johnson explain how

> although it is often asserted that women's traditional domestic role in the family is an obstacle to public political action, that the world of the home and the world of the polity are sealed off from one another, these barriers seem to have become permeable for Palestinian women during the uprising.[13]

In the context of Northern Ireland, Begonia Aretxaga points out that 'internment and the widespread raids of people's homes blurred the boundaries between household and communal space and at certain moments practically erased them'.[14] This boundary erasure has had direct implications for the transformation of gender identities and roles in both contexts.

Apart from exposing the inseparability of the private and public spheres and their gendered nature, women's political mobilization in both Israel/Palestine and the North of Ireland had great implications for their own personal and political development. In many ways, the political crisis had a transformative effect on women in providing a context for an intense consciousness-raising experience. In the context of Northern Ireland Aretxaga points out 'the hardship of coping alone with family needs amid great poverty and increasing militarization created new ties of solidarity among women and contributed to the development of a new sense of independence and self-identity'.[15] Activists' statements such as the following support this analysis:

> 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.[16]

This statement both reaffirms and challenges the private-public divide. On the one hand, the narrator describes how she moved beyond the confines of her own home. At the same time, the process she described is far more complex; it was the direct impact of the conflict on her home, family and personal life that politicized her. Thus the assertion that she could not go back into the house is more of an emphasis on the irreversible change that occurred in her life in the course of the struggle. Along the same lines, another woman activist recalls:

> In 1969 ... I became involved in the marches and tenants' associations by seeing what was happening. It made a change for me. *I wasn't a housewife anymore.* I became more aware of injustice, of the interdependence of people for help and of international politics.[17]

As in the previous statement, the emphasis on the departure from the role of a housewife lends itself to the conventional thesis of a conflict, which propels women to move beyond the confines of the so-called private domain where they often hold conventional roles as mothers and wives. The legitimacy of this explanation notwithstanding, I read this statement more as a reflection on the new awareness this woman acquired in the course of the struggle alongside other women. Like other women, she seemed eager to look back and reflect on the transformative effects of her political involvement since, as Aretxaga points out, 'the hardship of the early years of the conflict has frequently obscured a great amount of joy women found in what they called a process of learning' .[18]

The reflection of Irish women on the process of learning triggered during the early years of 'the troubles' resonates with Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish women's stories about their personal

and political transformation during the intifada. The intifada provided a context for many women to learn more not only about themselves but also to come in contact with other women, including women who have been long-time activists in the various women's committees. Another byproduct of women's political involvement has been both the confidence and the legitimacy they acquired to participate in political debates. According to Phillipa Strum, 'political discussion is no longer a male preserve. Women routinely join in or initiate conversations about politics, demonstrating that the public sphere has become as much theirs as it is men's.'[19]

Yet Strum questions, 'if Palestinian men, and most women, look at the emergence of Palestinian women as political leaders and entrepreneurs in the same way that American society looked at women in the work force during and after World War II'.[20] Her genuine concern for Palestinian women notwithstanding, Strum ignores the learning process that has taken place within Palestinian society during the intifada, which resulted in the personal and political transformation of many women. It is precisely this learning process and the awareness of many Palestinian women of the obstacles they may confront once the intifada is over, which marks the difference between them and American women during the Second World War. The intifada has turned Palestinian women into agents of change determined not to waste their achievements during the intifada.

Strum's analysis echoes much of the existing literature on women in national liberation movements. National liberation movements have been portrayed as the least hospitable places for women. A central assumption of this body of literature is that struggles for gender equality and for national liberation are irreconcilable. Thus, national liberation movements are viewed as exploiting women during the struggle but embracing conventional conceptions of femininity, masculinity and gender relations after the revolution.[21] Nevertheless, women in national liberation movements seem to have had more space compared to women in militaries or in state politics to raise questions about gender inequalities. In the cases examined in this chapter for example, as in other cases, women strategically used their involvement in the national struggle to advance their position in society as well as to safeguard their gains during the revolution. However, the vast majority of literature on women in national liberation movements suggests that women in conflict areas who are propelled to become politically involved by a crisis tend not to be aware of gender issues and their own discrimination. This assumption is called into question by Aretxaga who argues that:

> women in Northern Ireland were not unaware of gender hierarchy; it was simply taken for granted. Their involvement is popular resistance led women, however, to an increased appreciation of the political character of gender inequality. That is, gender relations came to appear as susceptible to transformation as were other social relations.[22]

The political crises created new spaces and ample opportunities for women to explore the relationship between their positions on the conflict and their own social location as women.

However, gender alone was not enough to mark women's social location in these conflict-torn regions. It is readily apparent that Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and nationalist women in the North of Ireland had more in common with one another than with the women on the other side of the political divide.

For example, Palestinian women and nationalist women in the North of Ireland seemed better prepared than Israeli-Jewish and Unionist women in Northern Ireland to cope with the changing

nature of the conflict, which shaped a big part of their lives and struggles. Along these lines, Mary Meyer argues that, 'there is very little space for women to participate in the unionist/loyalist political project, while there is much more space for women to participate in the nationalist/Republican political project'.[23] This observation is supported by my ongoing research on women's political mobilization in Israel.[24]

The difference in the space available for women's political mobilization on different sides of the political divides in Israel/Palestine and in Northern Ireland is no doubt related to the asymmetric nature of these conflicts. Palestinians and nationalists/republicans are clearly the underdogs in these conflicts. From these positions they have joined national liberation movements, often grounded in revolutionary ideologies. These movements have not only been venues to establish post-revolutionary nations; they have often become sites of struggle in and of themselves, where women and men fight over whose visions and ideas will constitute the future nation. These internal debates and contestations often include gender issues and relations. Contrary to liberal feminist arguments concerning the irreconcilable nature of feminism and nationalism, women activists within both the nationalist/republican movement and the Palestinian national movement sought to link their struggle for national liberation with that for gender equality. This process created space for their increased participation in politics. As Carol Coulter explains, 'not only in Ireland, but throughout the colonized world, women came onto the public stage in large numbers through the great nationalist movements of the beginning of this century. Their experience of political activity, and its extent, differed from that of women in imperialist countries because of the space created by the existence of mass nationalist movements [and] the widespread rejection of existing political institutions and culture.'[25] According to more complex analyses, far from being mutually exclusive or irreconcilable, feminism and nationalism are presented as two complementary movements that seek radically to transform existing social and political relationships and structures as a stepping stone for the future envisioned nation.[26]

The struggles of Israeli-Jewish women and Unionist women, on the other hand, were of a different nature. Their coming to terms with their position as women in their respective societies is often informed by settler-colonial ideologies. Jan Jindy Pettman refers to these ideologies as 'settler-state nationalisms'.[27] Despite the exclusionary nature of settler-colonial nationalisms, Pettman points out that 'some women, including feminists, sought their place as equal partners in the new nationalist projects, new women for a new land'.[28] However, the space available for women to articulate their concerns closed once the boundaries and institutions of the colony (Ulster) or the state (Israel) were constituted. National liberation movements represent a direct threat to settler-state nationalisms in that they seek to challenge the political status quo and to redefine the power differentials underlying the conflicts. As a result, women who are part of the power group are threatened on two levels: as members of the power group who run the risk of losing their power and privilege and as liberal women who believed that women's universal experiences of oppression transcended any differences, including national boundaries.[29]

Based on the stories of nationalist women's political involvement during the troubles in the Northern Ireland and Palestinian women's mobilization during the intifada, national liberation movements seem more hospitable to women than settler-state nationalism. This may explain, at least in part, the different effects the intifada and the troubles had on women from opposite sides of the Palestinian-Israeli and Nationalist-Unionist political divides. Moreover, the rich and complex stories of women's political involvement in these communities at the height of the

conflict underscore the need to redefine what is considered 'political' in ways that transcend the public-private divide and its gendered underpinnings. The so-called 'public' and 'private' spheres and the gendered division of power and labour they inscribe become destabilized, permeable or altogether irrelevant in times of political crisis and especially in times of escalating conflict when the community faces an outside challenge.

In sum, a careful look at the lives and struggles of women in Israel/Palestine and the North of Ireland makes it difficult to offer a conclusive answer to the question whether political conflict is a setback or a springboard for women's emancipation. At the same time, it would be fair to conclude based on the evidence presented in this section that heightened political conflict does not always have negative implications for women. In fact, some women are propelled into political activism and in the process their lives and identities as women are radically transformed. However, the space available for women, at the height of the conflict, to mobilize politically and to explore new conceptions of femininity and gender roles depends to a great extent on the identities and roles of men in these conflicts and on the conceptions of masculinity that inform their personal and political struggles.

To be a man in a conflict zone: militarized masculinities in context

Feminist scholarship on gender and conflict has focused primarily on what happened to women. Until recently, the experiences of men whose masculinities become mobilized and often highly militarized when the conflict escalates have been largely neglected. The relative lack of attention to men and masculinity may be related, at least in part, to the tendency to use the terms 'gender' and 'women' interchangeably. There are fairly detailed accounts of women and 'new' constructions of femininity designed to challenge more conventional ones and dominant conceptions of masculinity but when men are mentioned they are often treated as a monolithic entity. While it is understandable that men had to be pushed aside to create space for women, it would be impossible to examine the interplay between gender and conflict if the diverse experiences of men remain unexamined. Moreover, the conflation of 'gender' with 'women', like that of 'race' with 'people of colour' and 'sexuality' with 'gays, lesbians and bisexuals', leaves masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality unproblematized and, thus, treated as the norm. As a result, the social and political status quo is reinforced. To challenge existing divisions of power and labour and to understand the role of gender in times of war, we need to examine carefully the varieties of both 'old' and 'new' masculinities and femininities and the changes they have undergone over time and in relation to the conflict. Towards this end, I examine the struggles of Irish Republican political prisoners during the blanket protest and the hunger strikes, constructions and practices of masculinity among working-class Unionists and the impact of the intifada on Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish men respectively.

The blanket protest and the hunger strikes offer numerous insights about the social construction of masculinities and their transformation in the context of an intense national liberation struggle. The blanket protest, which lasted four and half years, began in March 1976 when the first Republican prisoner, Ciaran Nugent, refused to wear prison uniform, which would mark him a criminal. By September 1980 around 450 prisoners were part of the protest. Put in cells without clothes, they covered themselves with the only thing available, the blankets for their beds.[30] The confrontation between the blanketmen and the prison guards can be read as a clash between two masculinities shaped by different modalities of identity, community and power in a context of a broader political struggle. The prison and Republican men's bodies

became the battlefields. The prison uniform was not the source of the conflict but rather a symptom that triggered its escalation and, as such, it became a symbol for Republican prisoners. To wear it, as Begonia Aretxaga points out, 'meant downgrading to the level of criminals not only themselves but also the community to which they belonged'.[31] A new dimension of tension was introduced into the relationship between the prisoners and their guards: the prisoners' naked bodies. The reactions of the guards reflected a combination of personal embarrassment, political contempt and homophobia. The guards tried desperately to demonstrate that they were still in control by trying to ridicule and embarrass the prisoners. However, the blanketmen were determined not to display any sign of embarrassment. Blanketman Ned Flynn describes the daily struggles that took place during this period:

> Every time we left the cell naked, it was a tirade of every kind of abuse you could think of. The screws came up with a new nickname for us - the Streakers - and that was the way they always greeted us now when we left our cells: 'Here come the streakers.' If I was embarrassed by the screws or the other prisoners seeing me naked, I made sure they weren't aware of it because it would have given them a moral victory over me. Not once did I try to cover my nakedness with my hands. I always kept them by my sides and ignored the sneers and jeers. They had taken so much from us already but they could never take away our dignity or self-respect.[32]

For Republican prisoners, the ability to overcome one's own embarrassment and ignore the guards' comments was a sign of strength. However, the status quo in this war of attrition between the guards and the prisoners was somewhat destabilized in the presence of women. Ned Flynn describes one such example:

> One morning in December, as the other prisoners with their uniforms were waving their arms about and jumping up and down to keep warm, one of the Blanketmen was standing there naked. A welfare woman then came into the circle. This was highly embarrassing for the welfare woman as well as for my comrade, but the screws did absolutely nothing to stop the woman from seeing him standing there.[33]

The same man who learnt to hide any discomfort or embarrassment when walking naked among men was deeply embarrassed and almost outraged following the accidental encounter with the welfare woman. Republican prisoners gradually overcame their embarrassment of being naked and got accustomed to subversively using their bodies as a weapon in their struggle for self-determination. However, the notion of masculinity which emerged in the course of this struggle seemed confined to a particular time and an even more particular militarized and highly masculinized space. While the guards objectified Republican men's bodies to assert their own masculinity and control, the Republican blanketmen may have tried to safeguard their masculinity by holding on to the clear distinction between what is deemed 'masculine' and 'feminine' outside of prison. Their naked masculinity and present vulnerability was viewed as both inevitable and temporary. The presence of a woman may have blurred both the distinctions between 'masculine' and 'feminine' and 'inside' and 'outside'.

The blanket protest escalated into a no-wash protest, when prisoners refused to leave their cells after they were denied a second towel with which to cover themselves while they washed. The no-wash protest turned into 'the dirty protest', when prisoners were refused buckets to slop out into after they were denied permission to use the toilets unless they wore a prison uniform. In response, prisoners broke the windows in their cells and threw packages of excrement

wrapped in whatever was at hand out into the yard below; warders outfitted in special suits threw it back in. When the windows were blocked, they smeared the faeces on their cell walls and the ceiling and shoved it under the bottom of the cell doors.[34] Despite the inhumane living conditions and the power asymmetries between the prisoners and their guards, the prisoners were in control of the situation. O'Malley explains how the prisoners

> drew the warders into their world, made them work in conditions of unrelieved filth, of putrid smells repugnant to the warders' physical senses and to their psychological sense of self. They forced the warders to become part of an environment of deprivation, making them... prisoners of the conditions the blanketmen had created.[35]

There are no official accounts of the toll that the struggle took on the prison guards nor on its effects on their self-perception as men, work performance, and analysis of the conflict.

Systematic attempts by the British government and its supporters of utilize the old colonial distinction between barbarism and civilization as a weapon in the conflict failed for the most part due to the support the prisoners were able to mobilize both within their community and internationally. Unlike more conventional forms of militarized masculinity and heroism grounded in the strength of the body, the masculinities of Republican prisoners that were constructed during this struggle focused on a vulnerable body guided by will power, determination and solidarity. Laurence McKeown, a former blanketman, who would later spend seventy days on hunger strike, explains how the strong sense of equality, collective identity and unity of purpose turned weakness into strength:

> The blanket protest brought about an 'equality amongst us' even if it was an equality of brutal existence ... everyone was an individual in his own right, with all his peculiar characteristics, abilities and talents, and no one was given any special social status ... What mattered was how individually and as a unit we were to get through another day. The common bond of struggle over and above everything else was to provoke thought in anyone willing to open his mind to it and, for those who did, resulted in a critical look at oneself and a reassessment of previously held beliefs.[36]

For some prisoners, this process included a critical examination of gender roles and relations. While on the blanket as well as during the hunger strikes and especially in their aftermath, Republican prisoners, informed for the most part by Paulo Freire's notion of critical pedagogy, organized popular education sessions to educate themselves on various social and political issues including gender issues and feminist theory.[37] Amidst a relentless struggle for national liberation, Republican men were able to transcend their immediate conditions and challenge themselves to think critically about their power and privilege *vis-à-vis* women.[38] The image of Irish Republican prisoners engaged in a critical dialogue about masculinity, sexuality and gender relations in one of the most heavily guarded prisons in Europe challenges monolithic portrayals of IRA volunteers as hyper-masculine, violent and sexist, which have dominated both media accounts and conventional literature on the contlict.[39]

Monolithic portrayals of men can be found on the other side of the Nationalist-Unionist divide as well. In fact, until recently, few researchers have focused their attention on the Protestant community in general and its Unionist/Loyalist constituencies. Of the existing literature on Protestant/Unionist men, the vast majority explores their relation to violence and their adversarial relationship with men on the other side of the political divide. However, a few in-depth interviews conducted recently with leading figures in the Unionist/Loyalist community

reveal a more complex picture. As Jonathan Stevenson points out, Loyalists who were in prison during the blanket protest and the hunger strikes give Republicans a great deal of credit for their struggle and perseverance. For example Stevenson quotes Billy Hutchinson, a former member of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), who spent sixteen years in prison (1974-90) and who is currently a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly representing the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP):

> I think there was a grudging respect for those people who were willing to die to get special-category status ... I thought that the whole special category thing in the blocks - the blanket, the dirty protest, and the hunger strikes - was something that should have been done by Loyalists as well.[40]

While Hutchinson and other former Loyalist prisoners claim that they did not join such struggles as the blanket and the hunger strikes because they were viewed as Republican, others doubt that Loyalists as a group could have conjured the collective will to undertake and sustain such struggles.[41] In other words, the unique Republican masculinity that emerged during the blanket and hunger strikes cannot be simply attributed to the conflict, or to the imprisonment itself. Rather, there are other factors, which may have affected the different meanings attached to Republican and Loyalist conceptions and practices of masculinity during that period. Such factors involve the collective spirit of Republicans versus the fairly individualistic orientation of Loyalists and the fact that Republican prisoners were well-disciplined and highly-organized compared to Loyalists. To demonstrate his thesis, Stevenson points out that 'whereas more IRA men than Loyalist prisoners will choose political documentaries to watch on the VCR, more Loyalists than Republicans will look at sports or sex movies'.[42] He adds that 'a Republican will usually prefer a team sport for recreation, whilst a Loyalist might pump iron'.[43] The collective orientation of Republican prisoners is no doubt a by-product of the national liberation struggle. Moreover, the differences in the behaviour of these two communities of imprisoned men were grounded, at least partially, in the antagonistic relationship that characterized the conflict. Loyalist masculinity was constructed in opposition to that of Republican masculinity and vice versa.

This phenomenon is not unique to prison or to the Northern Ireland context. The Palestinian uprising, intifada, provides another context for the comparison of Palestinian and Israeli masculinities. In December 1987, twenty-one years after Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinians took to the streets in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip and soon thereafter spread throughout the West Bank. The mass revolt of Palestinians introduced a new masculine image, which immediately caught the attention of the international media and inspired poetry and prose within the Palestinian community both in the Occupied Territories and in the Diaspora. The image was that of young boys confronting Israeli soldiers, *kaffia* masking their faces, throwing stones with one hand and carrying a Palestinian flag in the other. This image, according to]oesph Massad, has its roots in the Palestinian national discourse, which portrays the Palestinian hero as masculine, bourgeois, young and able-bodied.[44] This conception of youthful, assertive and defiant masculinity, captured in such metaphors as the 'generation of occupation' or the 'children of stones', inspired both media coverage and popular narratives of the intifada. The new Palestinian masculinity embodied bitterness and defiance on one hand and optimism and confidence on the other.

The poem 'Children Bearing Stones' by Syrian poet Nizzar Qabbani captures both the bitterness and the optimism that characterized the 'generation of the occupation'. At the time,

however, Qabbani does not focus explicitly on the confrontation with Israeli soldiers. Instead, he contrasts the new emerging masculinity of the children bearing stones with the masculinities of the older generation, not only of Palestinians but also of Arabs more generally:

> With stones in their hands,
> they defy the world
> and come to us like good tidings.
> They burst with anger and love, and they fall
> while we remain a herd of polar bears:
> a body armored against weather.
>
> Like mussels we sit in cafes,
> one hunts for a business venture
> one for another billion
> and for a fourth wife
> and breasts polished by civilization.
> one stalks London for a lofty mansion
> one traffics in arms
> one seeks revenge in nightclubs
> one plots for a throne, a private army,
> and a princedom.
>
> Ah, generation of betrayal,
> of surrogate and indecent men, generation of leftovers,
> we'll be swept away
> never mind the slow pace of history
> by children bearing rocks.[45]

In providing fairly detailed descriptions of practices associated with different types of masculinity, Qabbani underscores the fact that gender, like other modalities of identity, is always in flux and that being a man often involves not only one's sense of national identity but also other such factors as age and class that position men differently vis-à-vis structures of power and privilege. Yet despite the critical spirit of the poem, Qabbani too ends up idealizing the new emerging masculinity, seeing in it an end to an old chapter of defeat and the beginning of a new, more hopeful era.

Some Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, however, had mixed feelings about the phenomenon of kids 'playing men' on the frontline. This ambivalence is reflected in the Qassem Izzat's comments:

> My son is four years old. He's not living in the camps. He's in better conditions. But still, what's the story he wants from me before he sleeps? Daily, he asks me: 'Speak to me about jail, papa, how someone is arrested and what he eats in jail.' What he hears is people are shooting, people are wounded, people are arrested for throwing stones... So, kids are growing up in this conditions, and they have this mentality ... they are no longer kids... A few days ago, we were just speaking to some kids. We want to film a story about them. So, they were sitting with me and we were speaking with them. They looked like men, they were speaking like men, they forgot how to be kids, you know.[46]

The reality of the occupation and the daily confrontations with Israeli soldiers robbed Palestinian children of their childhood and militarized every aspect of their daily existence. They became national symbols, charged with the responsibility of erasing the impotence of their own fathers and grandfathers as well as the collective trauma of Palestinian loss and defeat.

The' generation of the intifada' was described as courageous and fearless, almost omnipotent in confronting one of the most powerful armies in the world. The biblical image of David versus Goliath became a common motif used to describe the unequal power relations that characterized the confrontation between Palestinian children and Israeli soldiers. The intifada created a context in which Palestinian children were viewed as the present incarnation of David, the Jewish biblical hero. The giant Goliath, on the other hand, became the symbol of the mighty Israeli military. In order to come to terms with the impact of this image, and of the intifada more generally, on constructions of masculinity in Israel one must first understand the historical, social and political context in which dominant conceptions of Israeli-Jewish masculinity were constructed.

The Israeli context provides an interesting example of militarized masculinity. The assertion of an aggressive and highly militarized national identity was justified by the need to end a history of weakness and suffering. Images of Israeli-Jewish men who are exceedingly masculine - that is, pragmatic, protective, assertive, and emotionally tough - have been contrasted with fairly traditional notions of femininity on the one hand, and with images of the helpless and powerless Jew on the other. These 'new' men have been portrayed as the antithesis of the weak, persecuted Jews, most commonly associated with the collective trauma of the Holocaust. In addition to the negative juxtaposition of the Israeli-born Jew with women and with Jews in the Diaspora, the masculine identity of the 'new' Israeli-Jewish men has been constructed through negation of the so-called enemy - Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular.[47]

The primary responsibility for the construction and validation of Israeli men's identities lies in the hands of the Israeli military. To be a man implies first and foremost being a soldier. Israeli-Jewish men are required to complete a three-year mandatory military service; after that they serve in the reserves and complete at least one month of military service a year until they are fifty-five years old. Military service in general and participation in combat in particular constitute a rite-of-passage for men to earn their place in Israeli society. The following testimony sheds light on the feelings of men who cannot participate in this rite-of-passage. Nir reflects on the centrality of military service in a combat unit and on the social value assigned to the participation in war for the shaping of individual and collective identity:

> I, who in my appearance look like the stereotype of an Israeli male, was, during my military service, a 'jobnick' and have never participated in a war.[48] I can scorn the tremendous conformism which characterizes this country, mock the closed, square stereotype of the Israeli commander. But I know that deep down inside I am dying of envy; that, like a child, I stare at these heroic soldiers, and I admire them, regretting the fact that I did not fight, that I was not wounded or taken prisoner of war.[49]

What is particularly striking in Nir's self-reflexive monologue is the frustration he feels for not being able to disentangle or escape the web of militarized masculinity woven around him. The social pressure he describes is particularly strong in the course of one's military service and especially when the conflict escalates into open confrontation. Men's self-esteem and social status derives to a great extent from their proximity to and performance on the battlefield. Men

who do not meet the criteria of combat or do not wish to participate in this masculine ritual are viewed as 'soft'. As a result, not only their masculinity and sexuality are questioned but also their place in the Israeli national collectivity. This phenomenon is reflected in the following poem written by a soldier during the first year of the intifada:

> Soft people
> prefer to stay at the observation post ...
> Uri with the diamond earring ...
> He is the first causality of the uprising;
> I hit him with the communications gadget
> (Bleeding in his right eyebrow).
> Does not reach
> One shouldn't give pleasure to the locals...
> Uri has a soft voice
> and an English accent.
> He tells with a smile
> how he was Charles Bronson;
> Kicked the doors of night.
>
> (Sternfeld Zbigniew*, Intifada Diary*, 1988)[50]

In this poem, the author is a self-identified tough guy, the embodiment of the new Jew. The subject of the poem, however, is Uri, the anti-hero who represents 'soft people'. Uri is cast as a total outsider: his appearance and behaviour are described as foreign. He speaks Hebrew with an English accent, prefers to stay at the observation post and wears a diamond earring.[51] The battlefield experience, however, provides a context for the potential remasculinization of 'soft' men. It can turn a sensitive soldier like Uri into an Israeli version of Charles Bronson who is proud of kicking the doors and who knows who else at night. The 'locals' - a typical colonial concept referring to the Palestinians - are in the background, behind the doors that are being kicked at night.

However, despite the little space available to criticize the construction of Israeli militarized masculinity, some men have began to critically reflect on some of the practices associated with it as they found themselves entangled in the impossible role of the 'victimized victimizer'.[52] The gap between the images of morally superior brave soldiers who defend their country's survival and the reality of being an occupier charged with the task of suppressing a popular national uprising became particularly evident during the intifada. Yonatan, a soldier who did his military service during this period captures this dilemma quite succinctly: 'poets will not write poems about the Israeli soldiers who fought the intifada and shot women and children'.[53] This conclusion sheds some light on what it meant to be an Israeli man during the intifada.

In sum, the relationship between men, different conceptions of masculinity and various political conflicts is far more complex than the unproblematic association of men with war-making. Political conflicts can militarize certain masculinities and at the same time open up space for critical exploration of different notions of manhood. Moreover, the masculinities constructed in the context of different political conflicts are far from being static or monolithic. The meanings associated with being a Republican man in the Long Kesh/Maze prison in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the North of Ireland are significantly different to those associated with being a Loyalist prisoner or prison guard in the same prison. The same argument is applicable to

the Palestinian-Israeli context. Differences, shaped by age, class, religion and other modalities of identity and mitigating circumstances, exist not only between men in different regions and or different sides of a conflict but within each group as well. Paying attention to these differences is crucial to understanding possible changes in conceptions of masculinity shaped by the conflict or by various attempts to resolve it.

'The Morning After'[54]

What happens to conceptions of masculinity, femininity and gender relations the morning after a peace agreement is signed? Can the Oslo Accords and the Good Friday Agreement be viewed as important stepping stones on the road to both peace and gender equality in Israel/Palestine and in the North of Ireland? Cynthia Enloe cautions us not to look for clear authoritative answers to this question as 'the morning after is always an ambiguous moment'.[55] She adds that 'a postwar era lasts as long as people affected by a conflict employ that painful or exhilarating experience to assess their own current relationships and aspirations'.[56] In other words, to understand the impact of 'the morning after' on gender roles and relations in Israel/Palestine and in Northern Ireland, one must pay close attention to how women and men cope with the new political realities ushered in by the peace accords.

Even before the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, the Palestinian women's movement was determined to safeguard its achievements and to play a central role in a future Palestinian state. Towards this end, Palestinian women held a series of meetings designed to formulate a political agenda that would take into account the new political reality created by the Oslo Accords. Less than a year later, in 1994, the women published a document known as the 'Women's Charter'.[57] The charter, which was endorsed by all the women's committees and presented to Yasir Arafat was designed to safeguard Palestinian women's legal, social and political rights. According to Amal Kawar, the formulation of the Women's Charter reflected a transition from a spirit of revolution to state building.[58]

However, for some the transition to state building was too unexpected and costly. The Palestinian women's movement split into supporters and opponents of the Oslo Accords. The women's committees affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and with Nayef Hawatmeh's faction of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) voiced open opposition to the Oslo process, which they viewed as unjust. As a result, these groups lost both their financial support and much of the influence they had in Palestinian society. This fact is significant as historically the women's committees affiliated with PFLP and DFLP held more progressive positions on women and gender issues than other segments of the Palestinian national movement. The erosion of their influence, coupled with the gradual rise of the Islamist movement during the intifada and especially after Oslo, are viewed as a setback by men and women who see the relationship between gender equality and a just solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. At the same time, while funding for some grassroots projects associated with the opposition stopped, women's research institutions based in both academic and non-academic settings were able to take advantage of the relative space created by the signing of the Oslo Accords. They launched various projects designed to examine the impact of Oslo on the women's movement and on the economic, social and political conditions of women in Palestine.[59]

Although not yet a subject of systematic research, the size and practices of the Palestinian police force established after Oslo is a frequent topic of conversation among progressive activists

and scholars in Palestine.[60] According to a recent report published by Human Rights Watch, the Palestinian police force presently exceeds 30 000 people. Other reports underscore the availability of large quantities of unlicensed weapons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority, under pressure from both Israel and the United States has begun a crack-down operation to confiscate arms.[61] While these reports address concerns about the eruption of violence between Palestinians and Jews, they completely overlook the militarization of Palestinian society after Oslo, the new conceptions of masculinity that have emerged as a result, and the relationship between militarized masculinities and violence against women.

The signing of the Oslo Accords triggered a serious crisis on the other side of the Palestinian-Israeli divide as well. Like the rest of Israeli society, the Israeli women's peace movement was deeply divided about both the content and the implementation of the accords. While some were convinced that the Oslo Accords were an important step towards a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians, others argued that far from representing a move towards a just and lasting peace, the accords perpetuated Israeli domination of Palestinians. Because of these divisions, the women's peace movement, unable to reach consensus, began to founder. Such groups as Women in Black and the Women and Peace Coalition, once the most visible segments of the Israeli peace movement, were unable to transcend these divisions and halted their work.

At the same time, the uncritical embrace of the Oslo Accords by the international community gave rise to the establishment in 1994 of a new institutional framework, the Jerusalem Link, funded by the European Community. It served as the coordinating body of two independent women's centres: a Palestinian centre, the Jerusalem Center for Women, located in East Jerusalem, and an Israeli centre, BatShalom (Hebrew for 'daughter of peace'), in West Jerusalem. BatShalom soon became a regular meeting place of Israeli women's peace movement. Yet its sudden emergence as a centre of political organizing and its close links to several Knesset members from the Labour and Meretz parties has received mixed reactions from some veteran women peace activists. Bat-Shalom has been criticized for its unequivocal endorsement of the Oslo process, its failure to criticize Labour and Meretz policies and its patronising approach towards Palestinian women. In response to these criticisms, Bat-Shalom has capitalized on its organizational base and financial strength in order to put together demonstrations and public forums dealing with such issues as Jewish settlements, the torture of Palestinian political prisoners, and the closure and the annexation ofJerusalem.[62]

Another interesting post-Oslo phenomenon involves the emergence of a number of new women's groups who have successfully mobilized the discourse of motherhood to challenge Israeli government policies against Palestinians in the West Bank and especially in Southern Lebanon.[63] Women with no previous involvement in the women's peace movement or in official Israeli politics founded groups such as Women and Mothers for Peace and Four Mothers. These groups have received prominent coverage in both Israeli and international media and a relatively warm reception from the Israeli public, including many elected officials. This is particularly true of Four Mothers, which was established in February 1997 by four mothers who live in Northern Israel with sons on active duty in Lebanon. The catalyst for the establishment of the movement was a helicopter crash, which killed 73 Israeli soldiers on their way to Lebanon. The movement, which currently has hundreds of active members across Israel and thousands of supporters worldwide, calls for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Its immediate goal has been to put the Lebanon issue back on the public agenda by impressing upon both the general public and political and military decision-makers that Israeli citizens are paying an unconscionable

price for the questionable security they receive from Israel's self-proclaimed security zone. Four Mothers has played an instrumental role in reopening the public political debate in Israel on Lebanon.[64]

Some, myself included, have attributed the relative success of Four Mothers to the fact that they have consistently and publicly disassociated themselves from feminism and from the women's movement. At the same time, their intervention has potential implications for conceptions of femininity, masculinity, and gender relations in post-Oslo Israel. As Irit Letzter, one of the women in the group, recently pointed out:

> The meaning of our movement is much deeper than meets the eye. From now on, the soldiers' mothers will be an inseparable part of the decision making. It's impossible to ignore us. I'm not naive, I don't bury my head in the sand, but I don't agree with the warped male notion that war is somehow a challenge, a heroic project. We're not planning a revolt, but we won't let the government continue in its complacency.[65]

A more radical women's group that burst onto the scene around the same time is New Profile.[66] This group has gone beyond challenging the Israeli national consensus on questions of war and peace. Its founding members describe the group as anti-militaristic. They challenge the social and political culture and educational system within which Israeli Jewish men are socialized and work to convince their own sons and others to refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories on moral grounds. Most of the group's members could be described as 'accidental activists'. As Vered Shimron, an artist and member of the group explains:

> Most of us were not politically active at all. We are bourgeois women, 'good girls', mothers to children at different ages who over time opened our eyes to what is now perceived as extreme views. To me, this is the only sane thing to do.[67]

Despite attempts by the Israeli public and mainstream media to portray New Profile as extreme, their anti-militaristic stance has struck a chord in Israeli society as it has destabilized existing conceptions of masculinity and femininity. In so doing, New Profile has triggered unprecedented public discussions about the interplay of gender and politics, suggesting that a true commitment to peace must be rooted in antimilitarism and outlining a strategy to move in that direction.

In Northern Ireland too, the peace process increased the visibility of some women, creating more space at least in the official political arena. This is particularly evident in the case of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). The coalition was founded in April 1996 and within seven weeks won two seats at the all-party peace talks. In addition to being a women's party, NIWC attracted media and public attention because of its non-sectarian nature, still a rare phenomenon in Northern Ireland. Comprising both women from Catholic/ Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities, the coalition's unique identity was the cornerstone of its political platform. According to founding member May Blood, 'the Women's Coalition has twin goals of: (1) including women in the negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland, and (2) achieving a political accommodation'.[68] The NIWC gained both respect and political credibility in the course of the twenty-two months of talks, which led to the signing of Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. Consequently, and contrary to most predictions, the NIWC won two seats at the June 1998 elections for the newly established Northern Ireland Assembly. Ironically, the political success of the coalition may be attributed, at least in part, to the hostile sexist environment they have had to endure at the negotiation table. Another factor in the

coalition's success involves the role it assumed at the negotiation table.[69] While former United States senator George Mitchell got most of the credit for facilitating the all-party talks, according to unofficial accounts it was the NIWC that worked tirelessly behind the scenes, especially when negotiations broke down. Most of the men at the negotiation table accepted NIWC's behind-the-scenes work. It was their presence at the negotiation table that was unsettling to some as it exposed them as men, forcing them to account for the power and privilege they have learnt to take for granted.[70]

By invading the political arena and making visible the working of masculinity and femininity, the NIWC underscored the centrality of gender to the understanding of the politics of war and peace in Northern Ireland. At the same time, both the NIWC's platform and the role it assumed at the negotiation table reflect a conventional notion of femininity grounded in the stereotypical and rather simplistic distinction between men warriors and women peacemakers. The result is a traditional and gendered division of labour and power. Women assuming behind-the scenes roles of peacemakers do not pose any challenge to the existing political status quo in Northern Ireland. It remains to be seen whether the NIWC will be able to take advantage of the space it presently occupies and playa significant role in the transition from conflict without falling into the trap of reinforcing conventional gender roles and relations.

A less well-known post-ceasefire phenomenon involves its effects on youth and its interplay with other types of violence. According to Stevenson, 'disaffected teenagers in west Belfast are more interested in stealing cars than in joining the IRA'.[71] Stevenson discusses the rise in drug dealing and joy riding and community projects designed to address these problems.[72] These problems are reminiscent of the increase in crime in post-apartheid South Africa. In Northern Ireland, like in South Africa and in the Israeli-Palestinian context, political attempts to reduce the violence of the conflict tend to ignore the interplay between the violence of the conflict and other forms of violence, including crime and violence against women. According to Monica McWilliams, a founding member of the NIWC and one of its representatives to the Northern Ireland Assembly, 'much discussion has taken place over the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and the demilitarisation of the security forces. The use of these military weapons in situations of domestic violence has not, however, been central to these discussions.[73] Yet according to unofficial records, there has been an increase in reports of domestic violence on both sides of the political divide since the declaration of the first cease fire in 1994. It is possible that men who have been active in paramilitaries and whose identities as men were constructed through the legitimization of violence against people on the other side of the political divide, vented their frustrations at home as they could not do so anymore on the streets. Others may attribute the rise in violence to economic conditions, and especially to the high unemployment rates in working-class neighbourhoods on both sides of the divide that has not changed for the better with the ceasefires nor with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. In a way, while the conflict persisted, many men were employed' by the paramilitaries, a 'job' which kept them out of the house for most of the day (and sometimes at night as well) and gained them respect within the community. The ceasefire may have been perceived by some men both as a threat to their job security and to their status in the community.

In sum, while 'the morning after' signals a new beginning for some, triggering hopes for an end to physical violence and opening space for new forms of political participation and expression, it may have negative effects for others. For example, as is evident in the case of the NIWC, since the 1994 ceasefire, women in Northern Ireland have become more visible in the

official political arena. But in order to maintain their place in Northern Ireland politics, women had to endure an overtly sexist working environment and accept a fairly conventional division of power and labour at the all-party talks. Women in post-Oslo Israel have confronted a similar challenge. While the signing of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians triggered a new wave of women's political involvement, it also signaled a retreat away from explicitly feminist discourses of struggle. Instead, women have embraced motherhood in order to justify their political stand. Moreover, while the signing of peace agreements has triggered denunciations of political violence in both Israel/Palestine and the North of Ireland, to date little has been done to eliminate the structural conditions that breed violence, including violence against women. A gender-sensitive analysis of the uneven effects of the signing of peace agreements on different groups of men and women may not only illuminate possible obstacles to the implementation of such agreements. It has the potential to broaden, if not radically transform our understandings and visions of peace and the venues we choose to make them come true.

Conclusion

There is nothing inherent in the word 'peace' or in a signed peace agreement that guarantees significant improvements in the social and political conditions and in people's daily lives. The definition of peace, like that of any other term, reflects the political position of the person or group who define it as well as the particular sociopolitical context within which it is constructed. Different definitions of peace often reveal different degrees of commitment to social and political change or compliance with the prevailing status quo of power relations, including gender roles and relations. Thus, the signing of a peace agreement should not be viewed from the outset as more conducive to gender equality than the continuation of the conflict.

The critical examination of gender identities and roles shaped by and challenged in the context of the intifada and the troubles suggests that the meanings and images attached to masculinity, femininity and gender relations in situations of overt political conflict are far from universal. This does not imply, however, that there are no similarities between conceptions of masculinity shaped by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and those shaped by the troubles. However, an analysis of the construction and transformation of masculinity, femininity and gender relations in particular conflicts must begin with the premise that differences and similarities among men and women are often shaped more by the particular social and political conditions that underlie the conflict than by inherent gender differences. Moreover, the meanings assigned to being a man or a woman in a particular context are not fixed or static but rather changing over time and in relation to particular political developments.

The struggle to transform post-conflict societies must coincide with struggles to eradicate social, economic and political divisions and inequalities and thus necessitate significant structural changes as well as personal and political transformation. With a few exceptions, political leaders are ill-equipped to facilitate such a transformative process, if only because the agreements they sign rest on a fairly narrow understanding of peace and thus provide a shaky and rather unimaginative starting point for a post-conflict society. Now that the televised handshakes between leaders of collectivities have disappeared from the headlines, Palestinians and Jews, Nationalists and Unionists must find the courage to broaden, if not challenge, the narrow formulations of peace, that inform the Oslo Accords and the Good Friday Agreement. One way of doing that, which this Chapter seeks to highlight, is by coming to terms with the formation and transformation of gender identities and roles and with the ability of ordinary women and

women to transform their own identities and act as agents of social and political change. Regardless of what happens to the implementation of these peace agreements, these women and men have both the experience and the skills to lead their communities towards a post conflict future grounded in gender equality, among other things.

In sum, the signing of a peace agreement in and of itself does not create the conditions for gender equality. As is evident from this analysis, the effects of the Oslo Accords and the Good Friday Agreement have been uneven and fraught with contradictions. An ongoing systematic gender sensitive analysis of the contents and multiple effects of peace agreements, the processes designed for their implementation and the obstacles they face is necessary if peace is to become more than the mere end of physical violence and military confrontations. Such an analysis is likely to introduce a broader conceptualisation of peace, which seeks to eradicate all forms of violence, physical as well as structural, and establish new social and political institutions grounded in equality and justice for all.

Notes

1. For more on the intersection of gender inequality with other discriminatory structures and practices based on such differences as race, class and sexuality see, for example, Margaret Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins (eds), *Race, Class and Gender: an Anthology* (Belmont, CA: Wadworth Publishing Company, 1992); bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Audrey Lourde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference', in *Sister Outsider* (New York, NY: Crossing Press, 1984); and Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpede Mohanty, 'Feminist Politics: What's Home Got To Do With It?', in Teresa de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 191-212.
2. The clearest and best-known feminist appropriation of the public-private divide can be found in Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981). For a critique of the public/private dichotomy see, 'Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy', in Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).
3. Quoted in Diane Singerman, 'Where Has All the Power Gone? Women and Politics in Popular Quarters of Cairo', in Fatman Muge Gocek and Shiva Balaghi (eds), *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity and Power* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 180.
4. See, for example, Elise Boulding, *Women in the Twentieth Century World* (New York, NY: Sage, 1977); Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgan (eds), *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988); Anne Garland, *Women Activists: Challenging the Abuse of Power* (New York, NY: Feminist Press, 1988); and Adrienne Harris and Ynestra King (eds), *Rocking the Ship of State: Toward a Feminist Peace Politics* (Boulder, co: Westview Press, 1989).
5. Rosemary Ridd and Helen Calaway (eds), *Women and Political Conflict: Portraits of Struggle in Times of Crisis* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1987), p. 3.
6. For more on the history of Palestinian women's political mobilization, see Suha Sabbagh (ed.), *Palestinian Women of Gaza and the West Bank* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); Amal Kawar, *Daughters of Palestine: LeadingWomen of the Palestinian National Movement* (Albany, NY: State University New York Press, 1996), Joost Hiltermann, *Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

University Press, 1991), Rosemary Sayigh, 'Encounters with Palestinian Women under Occupation', *Journal of Palestine Studies* (vol. 40, no. 4, 1981), pp. 3-23; IslahJad, 'From Salons to the Popular Committees: Palestinian Women, 1919-1989', in Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock (eds) *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (New York, NY: Birzeit University and Praeger Publishers, 1990), pp. 125-42, Simona Sharoni, *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: the Politics of Women's Resistance* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), pp. 56-68; Nahla Abdo, 'Women and the Intifada: Gender, Class and National Liberation', *Race and Class* (vol. 32, no. 4, 1991), pp. 19-34; and Phillipa Strum, *The Women are Marching: the Second Sex and the Palestinian Revolution* (New York, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992).

7. Monica McWilliams 'Struggling for Peace and Justice: Reflections on Women's Activism in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Women's History* (vol. 6, no. 4/ vol. 7, no. 1, 1995), pp. 13-35.

8. Rita Giacaman and Penny Johnson, 'Palestinian Women: Building Barricades and Breaking Barriers', in Zachary Lockman and Joel Beinin (eds), *Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation* (Boston, MA: South End Press and MERIP, 1989), p. 157.

9. *Ibid*., p. 161.

10. For accounts of women's political mobilization during this period, see Margaret Ward, 'Finding a Place: Women and the Irish Peace Process', *Race & Class* (vol. 37, no. 1, 1995), pp. 41-50; Valerie Morgan, 'Peacemakers? Peacekeepers? Women in Northern Ireland 1969-1995', A professional lecture given at the University of Ulster, October 1995, *http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/women/paper3.htm*; Begonia Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 54-79; and Lynda Edgarton, 'Public Protest, Domestic Aquiescence: Women in Northern Ireland,' in Ridd and Callaway, *op. cit.,* in note 5.

11. Aretxaga, *ibid*., p. 68.

12. Giacaman and Johnson, *op. cit*., in note 8.

13. *Ibid*., p. 162.

14. Aretxaga, *op. cit*., in note 10, p. 69.

15. *Ibid*., p. 75.

16. Quoted in *ibid*., p. 54 emphasis added.

17. Quoted in *ibid*., emphasis added.

18. *Ibid*., p. 79.

19. Strum, *op. cit*., in note 6, p. 92.

20. *Ibid*., p. 141.

21. For examples of literature which tends to treat struggles for gender equality and national liberation as irreconcilable projects, see Nira Yuval-Davis and Floia Anthias (eds), *Women-Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1997); and Zillah Eisenstein, *Hatreds: Racialised and Sexualised Conflicts in the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996).

22. Aretxaga, *op. cit*., in note 10, p. 78.

23. Mary Meyer, 'Ulster's Red Hand: Gender, Identity, and Sectarian Conflict in Northern Ireland', paper presented at the annual conference of the International Studies Association (ISA), Minneapolis, March 1998, p. 19.

24. Simona Sharoni, 'The Myth of Gender Equality and the Limits of Women's Political Dissent in Israel', *Middle East Report* (no. 207, June-July 1998), pp. 24-8.

25. Carol Coulter, *The Hidden Tradition: Feminism, Women and Nationalism in Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), p. 3.

26. For a more complex treatment of the interplay between nationalism and struggle for gender equality in different contexts, see, for example, Lois West (ed.), *Feminist Nationalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997) and Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

27. Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: a Feminist International Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), p. 53.

28. *Ibid*.

29. For a more extensive exploration of this thesis, see Rosemary Sales, 'Gender and Protestantism in Northern Ireland', in Peter Shirl ow and Mark McGovern (eds), *Who Are the People? Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), pp. 140-57, and Pamela Clayton, *Enemies and Passing Friends: Settler Ideologies in Twentieth Century Ulster* (London: Pluto Press, 1996). See also Sharoni, *op. cit*., in note 24.

30. For more on this period see Tim Pat Coogan, *On the Blanket: the H-Block Story* (Dublin: Ward River Press, 1980); Padrig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave: the Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990); and Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown and Felim O'Hagan (eds), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time: the H Block Struggle 1976-1981* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1994).

31. Aretxaga, *op. cit*., in note 10, p. 86.

32. *Ibid*., pp. 11-12. 'Screws', is the term used by Republican prisoners to describe the guards.

33. *Ibid*., p. 12.

34. O'Malley, *op. cit*., in note 30, p. 22.

35. *Ibid*.

36. Quoted in O'Malley, *op. cit*., in note 30, p. 23. The original article written by Laurence McKeown was smuggled out of the Maze/Long Kesh prison and published in *An Phoblacht/Republican News* in 1986.

37. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971). This process is also described in two papers written by Laurence McKeown during his imprisonment. Laurence McKeown, 'Women's Studies in the H-Blocks 1989-1991: an Evaluation' (unpublished monograph, 1992) and Laurence McKeown, 'The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment: a Lifer in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh' (unpublished monograph, 1994). Both papers were submitted to fulfil the requirements of Open University courses in which McKewon was enrolled. The first paper was submitted in 1992 and the second in 1994. Neither has been published yet.

38. Personal conversations with Laurence McKeown, Belfast, April 1998.

39. For a systematic critique of both conventional representations of Irish Republican prisoners and attempts to challenge them see Laurence McKeown, *'Unrepentant Fenian Bastards': the Social Construction of an Irish Republican Prisoner Community*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Queens University, Belfast, September 1998.

40. Jonathan Stevenson, '*We Wrecked the Place': Contemplating an End to the Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Free Press, 1996), pp. 140-2.

41. *Ibid*., p. 141.

42. *Ibid*.

43. *Ibid*., p. 142.

44. Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism', *The Middle East Journal* (vol. 49, no. 3, 1995), p. 479.

45. Nizar Qabbani, reprinted in Zachary Lockman and Joel Beinin (eds), *Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation* (Boston, MA: South End Press and MERIP, 1989), p. 100.

46. Qassem Izzat, quoted in Penny Rosenwasser, *Voices from the 'Promised Land': Palestinian and Israeli Peace Activists Speak their Hearts* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1992), p. 43.

47. Sharoni, *op. cit*., in note 6, pp. 40-7.

48. 'Jobnick' is a reference in Israeli slang to a non-combat soldier who is stationed on the home front. They are often looked down upon by both combat soldiers and larger society.

49. Nir quoted in Amia Lieblich, 'Between Strength and Toughness', in Shlomo Breznitz (ed.), *Stress in Israel* (New York, NY: Van Nostrand, 1983), pp. 51-2.

50. Stenfeld Zbigniew quoted in Eyal Ben-Ari, 'Masks and Soldiering: the Israeli Army and the Palestinian Uprising', *Cultural Anthropology* (vol. 44, 1989), p. 377. This poem was originally published in Hebrew: Zbigniew Sternfeld, 'Intifada Diary', trans. E. Ben-Ari, Iton 77 (no. 106-7, 1988) pp. 93-5.

51. In the homophobic atmosphere of Israeli society, the wearing of an earring by men is considered a gay attribute. Also wearing an earring by men is against the Israeli military dress code.

52. For more on this dilemma see Amia Lieblich, *The Spring of their Years* (Tel-Aviv: Shocken, 1987) (Hebrew), and Rolly Rosen and Ilana Hamerman, *Soldiers in the Land of Ishma'el: Stories and Documents* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990) (Hebrew).

53. Rosen and Haberman, *ibid*., p. 75.

54. The title of this section is taken from a book by Cynthia Enloe titled *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

55. *Ibid*., p. 252.

56. *Ibid*., pp. 2-3.

57. Kawar, *op. cit*, in note 6, pp. 124-8.

58. *Ibid*., p. 125.

59. The most prominent women's research centres include the Women's Studies programme at BirZeit University, the Women's Studies Center in Jerusalem and the Women's Affairs Center in Nablus. For more information about these centres, see the chapter on the feminist movement in Palestine in *The Feminist Movement in the Arab World: Intervention and Studies.* The book was published by the Cairo-based New Woman Research and Study Center (Cairo: Dar El-Mostaqbal al Arabi, 1996), pp. 135-204.

60. Personal conversations, March 1997 and March 1998.

61. Report on United States National Public Radio, 'All Things Considered', 7 December, 1998.

62. Bat-Shalom newsletters and personal conversations with Gila Svirski, the director of Bat-Shalom, March 1997 and March 1998.

63. For a comparative analysis of the deployment of motherhood as a central discourse during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and during the intifada, see Simona Sharoni, 'Motherhood and the Politics of Women's Resistance: Israeli Women Organising for Peace', in Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck and Diana Taylor (eds), *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right* (London: University of New England Press, 1997), pp. 144-60.

64. Avihai Becker, 'Sarah would have told God, "Forget it"', *Ha'aretz*, 2 January 1998 (Internet Edition). For more information about Four Mothers and its activities see, http://www.angelfire.com/il/FourMothers/

65. Becker, *op. cit*, in note 64.

66. The group's name 'New Profile' alludes to the centrality of a military profile in Israeli society. Prior to being drafted, Israeli-Jewish adolescents go through a battery of tests to determine whether they are fit for combat units. The military profile is central to the construction of Israeli masculinities and to the militarization not only of men's lives but of society more generally as a high military profile often guarantees a better place within Israeli collectivity.

67. Veres Shimron quoted by Tal Bashan, 'Name of Art', *Maariv*, Friday, 12 December, 1998, p. 14 (published in the weekend supplement of the Israeli daily). The translation from Hebrew is mine.

68. Interview with May Blood, NWIC web page: http://www.pitt.edu / - 7enovosel/northern.html.

69. Sarah Lyall, '"Silly Cows" of Ulster Take the Bull by the Horns', *New York Times*, 14 May 1998, Internet Edition.

70. This argument draws on Cynthia Enloe's argument that, 'making women invisible hides the working of both femininity and masculinity in international politics', Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), p. 11.

71. Stevenson, *op. cit*., in note 40, p. 237.

72. *Ibid*.

73. McWilliams, *op. cit*., note 7, p. 15.