Beyond identity lines: women building peace in Northern Ireland and the Korean peninsula

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Abstract

This article explores the challenges and contributions of women in building and sustaining peace in protracted conflicts by conducting a comparative case study on Northern Ireland and Korea. Similarities in the histories of the conflicts and the concurrences in the peace processes have been attracting policy makers and researchers to share lessons between the Northern Ireland and Korean peace processes. However, the peacebuilding role of women and their transversal perspective have not yet received significant attention compared to the high-level agreements, signed predominantly by male politicians. This article identifies the similarities in the peacebuilding activities of women in Northern Ireland and Korea, in terms of their recognition of the interconnection between identity politics and patriarchy, building relationships across the divide through transversal dialogue, and initiating nonviolent peace movements against the militarism of their societies. The comparative case study also shows dissimilarities between the two cases, with regard to the freedom of women to move beyond boundaries, and being part of the official peace process. This article concludes the role of women in both contexts is a key element in sustainable peacebuilding; however, it appears that women's peacebuilding would not be able to reach its full potential to break down violent structures in conflict-affected societies, as long as their transversal perspective remains at the level of social movement, not part of peacebuilding at all levels of societies, including high-level negotiations.

Keywords Women · Gender · Peacebuilding · Peace process · Northern Ireland · Korea

In Northern Ireland, at the height of the conflict during the 1970s, groups of women organised nonviolent peace marches against violence by paramilitaries and the state, and promoted women's rights across nationalist and unionist communities. In the 1990s, the

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Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was created jointly, by nationalist and unionist women's groups, in order to participate in the official peace negotiations. In the Korean Peninsula, since the 1990s, groups of South and North Korean women were able to get together across the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) through several meetings on issues such as the threat of war and nuclear weapons, the division of the Korean peninsula and the legacy of Japanese colonisation and comfort women. In both contexts, these peacebuilding activities by women have been among the earliest endeavours to resist the violent structures of conflict-affected societies and to initiate transversal dialogue and cooperation beyond the identity lines. Although the Northern Ireland and Korean peace processes still appear to be fragile and dominated by identity politics, with a political and military agenda, the peacebuilding efforts of women persist. Furthermore, there are initiatives to build solidarity between women in Northern Ireland and Korea, as in the case of the participation of Northern Irish women peace activists in the 2015 Women Cross DMZ peace march in the Korean peninsula.

Recently, there has been growing interest among policy makers and researchers to share lessons between the Northern Ireland and Korean peace processes, due to the concurrent and similar aspects of peace processes. Increased prospects for the Korean peace process, especially following the inter-Korean summits and US-North Korea summit in 2018, have facilitated the interaction between the two societies (Kim 2018). However, the similarities in contributions and challenges of women in building peace, mentioned above, have received much less attention than the high-level peace processes dominated by male representations and identity politics. This article is the first of its kind to compare the role of women in Northern Ireland and Korean peace processes. Drawing upon the results of the comparative case study, this article presents women's role and their transversal perspective as essential elements for sustainable peacebuilding and explores what would be required to increase and sustain the peacebuilding role of women in Northern Ireland and in Korea.

Researching the peacebuilding role of women

Every conflict is unique in terms of root causes, history and culture, but more often than not, we find women working across the identity lines of these conflicts to build peace. Feminist peace scholars describe that several characteristics women's peacebuilding activities have in common. First, women's peacebuilding exposes the gendered nature of militarism and war when advocating for gender equality in conflict-affected societies. Second, women's peacebuilding activities challenge violence and violent structures, using nonviolent strategies. Finally, it is transversal and transnational, in building relationships and solidarity among women across the identity lines of conflict (Cockburn 2007; Brock-Utne 1989).

There have been conceptual and theoretical discussions around these characteristics of women's peacebuilding activities. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and the 2002 UN Study on Women, Peace and Security emphasise the importance of gender perspective and gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding (UNSC 2000; UN 2002). Reaffirming the role of women in peacebuilding, UN Security Council Resolution 1820 argues for increased participation by women in peace processes (UNSC 2008). Pierson and Radford say that "women's participation in conflict and peace processes is often much less visible and informal

than those elite male actors celebrated and commemorated as combatants and peace negotiators" (Pierson and Radford 2016: 5). Meanwhile, Anderlini argues that the international community does not seem to have fully embraced the complex reality of women's experiences. She says the pendulum swings to extremes, "On the one hand women are vulnerable, passive, in need of protection", on the other, "women are the panacea" and "their political participation is the solution to all evils" (Anderlini 2007: 2). Highlighting the need to protect women could reinforce the image of women as weak and vulnerable, as opposed to the idealised image of strong masculinity. The essentialist understanding of women as being inherently peaceful could be used in a patriarchal society to keep women out of power. As well, in everyday life, women contribute indirectly to war, by providing support to the military, and more directly, as members of military organisations (Duncanson 2016; Sylvester 2001).

For this reason, Duncanson stresses that "masculinity and femininity are socially constructed", and it is masculine gender ideology "which is a key role in driving war", not the biological nature of men or women (Duncanson 2016: 35). From a feminist perspective, women's peacebuilding activities are not primarily motivated by the natural instincts of women, but in response to a violent situation driven by masculinity, and men should also join the resistance against violent masculine structure (Cockburn 2007; Brock-Utne 1989). There are also concerns among feminist scholars that international peacebuilding itself has become a paternalist and neo-imperial project by the West to make the world safer for neoliberalism. In this view, women's inclusion and gender mainstreaming would serve merely to overlook, or even to normalise, exploitative practices in the neoliberal world (Duncanson 2016). These concerns are in line with feminist discussions on intersectionality, which acknowledge the limitations of the struggles against unjust power relations when they are politically structured as a single issue. As Crenshaw argues, ignoring intersectionality, such as that of class, ethnicity, race, gender, would sustain present power relations by reinforcing identity politics (Crenshaw 1989: 167). Crenshaw admits that identity politics could often empower marginalised groups and build group solidarity by promoting a positive discourse of celebrating one's identity. However, it could also just as easily build "negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different" (Crenshaw 1991: 1242).

Identity politics has a more negative connotation in conflict affected societies. Galtung criticises international peace operations which focus only on the cessation of direct violence between conflict parties, while overlooking the identity politics within a conflict party that maintains hostility toward other conflict parties and justifies internal structural and cultural violence. Consequently, Galtung proposes peacebuilding as a resistance to all violence "within nations as well as between nations" (Galtung 1976: 297–303). In a similar vein, feminists have been evolving and theorising "practices that could help to overcome the mutual oppression and antagonisms generated within the community of individuals by their differing positionalities in relation to power" (Cockburn 2012: 12). Feminist perspectives would not ask people to give up their own identity, but to reconceptualise their identity as a coalition between people resisting unjust social structures (Crenshaw 1991). El-Bushra says that these feminist practices and perspectives encourage peacebuilding to go beyond "a focus on political and military negotiations" and extend to "examining and questioning every aspect of the situation" (El-Bushra 2003: 34).

On this basis, Galtung calls for interdisciplinary research and practice between feminist studies and peace studies, aimed at construction of peacebuilding knowledge

which addresses violent structures within and across identity boundaries (Galtung 1996). Yuval-Davis proposes the term 'transversal politics', embracing discussions of intersectionality and criticism of international peacebuilding. She defines transversal politics as a practical mechanism, where "perceived unity and homogeneity are replaced by dialogues which give recognition to the specific positionings of those who participate in them, as well as to the 'unfinished knowledge' that each such situated positioning can offer" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 204). In this regard, transversal politics is in line with the feminist view that knowledge building is an ongoing project, which has "emerged from a deep scepticism about knowledge which claims to be universal and objective but which is, in reality, knowledge based on men's lives" (Tickner 2006: 21).

As in the feminist concept of intersectionality, transversal politics does not mean losing one's own identity nor homogenising the other. It is to promote practical dialogue between people with different identities, to reconceptualise their identities and to create solidarity in addressing all types of violence, without falling into the trap of identity politics (Yuval-Davis 1999). According to Yuval-Davis, transversal dialogues on diverse issues in conflict-affected societies would bring together women with opposing identities, not to build women's alliances against men, but to prevent the reproduction of present power relations based on masculine values and identity politics, thereby producing empowered knowledge for a more sustainable peace (Yuval-Davis 1997). But, "for transversal politics to become a major tool of 'real politics' as well as of 'alternative' social movement", there needs to be "more thinking and doing" (Yuval-Davis 1999: 98). In other words, more case studies are required to examine the usefulness of transversal approaches in peacebuilding theory and practice.

This article conducts a comparative case study on the role of women in the Northern Ireland and Korean peace processes in an effort to add to a transversal understanding of peacebuilding. As described above, the features of peacebuilding efforts by women in Northern Ireland and in Korea seem to correspond with common characteristics of women's peacebuilding activities. Furthermore, historical similarities in terms of colonisation, partition and war and the concurrences of peace processes appear to make these two cases suitable for a comparative study, which would identify implications for each other's context (Kim 2018). This comparative study is based on a qualitative analysis of both primary and secondary sources, such as policy documents, memoirs, a documentary film, relevant academic publications and interviews from key women peace activists in Northern Ireland and in Korea. It should be noted that the comparative research method is limited in that there are no identical matches, due to unique cultural backgrounds, layered upon differing geopolitical conditions. In an effort to address this limitation, this article contextualises not only similarities but also dissimilarities between the two cases. The contextualised findings of the comparative research on the transversal perspective and the role of women are expected to contribute to 'unfinished knowledge' for a more sustainable peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and Korea.

Identity politics and gender inequality in conflict-affected societies

In Northern Ireland and Korea, similar to many other conflict-affected societies, a sense of identity became a critical aspect of society as a consequence of the incompatible goals of the conflict parties. Social polarisation was accelerated within a two-

dimensional framework of identity: Unionist or Nationalist, Protestant or Catholic, Communist or Capitalist, North Korean or South Korean. The experience of violence and the memory of war reinforced these identities, and identity politics were constantly evoked by political and military leaders in order to sustain their control (Craith 2003; Kim 2006).

Despite the differing political and cultural backgrounds of the conflicts associated with these identities, there is a parallel between the two cases in that identity politics also contributed to maintaining the prescribed role of women in militarised, patriarchal societies. Donahoe says that during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, women were expected to take on the role of reproducers of the collective identity of nation and culture. Community loyalty in opposition to the other community was emphasised to maintain women's subservience. Nonconformity toward the expected role would "threaten a woman's belonging" in "tight-knit family communities" (Donahoe 2017: 36). Sales argues that "women were discouraged from taking on public roles in politics and within the wider social and economic life" (Sales 1997: 4). Although there were women who took more active combatant roles in paramilitary groups, they were negatively portrayed by the media and public, as if they had denied their femininity by engaging in the business of war, which belongs to men. Even within their own communities, the role of female combatant was not as highly regarded as that of male combatant (Wahidin 2016). Moreover, the voices of the working-class women who did not have adequate housing, social services and employment opportunities, yet became single parents looking after their children in the event of the death or imprisonment of their husbands, were generally dismissed in the political agenda. Macintyre reiterates a quote by a woman who participated in her research project on women in Belfast, "Women are second class citizens here…They don't care what we think about those things. Make the tea. Care for the children. Leave the rest to us." (McIntyre 2004).

Similarly, in the Korean peninsula, although both North and South Korean authoritarian regimes claimed they valued equality between men and women, in reality, they maintained patriarchal social and cultural norms by promoting identity politics during the Cold War. Park Kyung Ae says that in North Korea, women were expected to implement their "honourable revolutionary duty" by giving birth to Korean children and "educating and rearing children along Communist lines" (Park 1992: 539). Moon Seungsook argues that South Korean women were also asked "to be dutiful nationals, performing patriotic forms of contraception and managing the household rationally", as "biological and domestic reproducers" (Moon 2005: 93–94). At the same time, women were often mobilised as a significant labour force in North and South Korea, entailing double exploitation of their productive and reproductive capacities. When the Korean War caused a serious labour shortage in reconstruction and economic industrialisation, the North Korean leadership claimed that women's contribution to the labour force would lead to full emancipation. However, in reality, women had to undertake 'double-work'—in the home and the workplace, "in the name of liberation" (Ryang 2000: 332–335). Jones says, in South Korea, female workers greatly contributed to the development of the manufacturing industry. But, in the name of national development, they were significantly underpaid, and their unpaid work for the family and community was continuously exploited. On top of that, the compulsory national military service by men had the "cultural spill-over effects" of a "militarised masculinity" and reinforced "women's status as auxiliary citizens" in the Korean society (Jones 2006: 28–33).

Women building relationship across identity lines

Another noticeable comparability between Northern Ireland and Korea is that, as they were advocating women's needs, women initiated transversal dialogues across the identity lines of conflicts. In the 1970s, in Northern Ireland, women who recognised that the major obstacle to overcoming patriarchy was that women were divided by identity politics, "worked to build alliances across identity and material differences" (Rooney 2000: 176). In 1975, the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement (NIWRM) was founded in order to facilitate a cross-community women's movement. NIWRM established a women's centre in central Belfast in 1980, which later became the Downtown Women's Centre, for all women, from different political and religious background. Since then, several women's groups in the segregated areas have also set up women's centres within their own communities, such as Falls Road in 1982, Ballybeen in 1983, Shankill Road and the lower Ormeau area in 1987. McCoy says, the women's centres created networks, "which have on many occasions crossed the sectarian divide" (McCoy 2000: 13–16).

Cockburn, Sales and McCoy present the creation of the Women's Support Network (WSN) as an exemplary case of women's cooperation across the divide. In 1990, when Belfast City Council withdrew funding from the Falls Women's Centre, arguing that many people among the management, staff and users of the centre were republicans, all women's centres in Belfast, including those in unionist areas, criticised the decision as sectarianism. It was noticeable that the Shankill Women's Centre, which was located in the predominantly unionist area, invited the media to the Falls Women's Centre to protest the decision of the City Council. The press conference facilitated the formation of the WSN, which brought together women from both nationalist and unionist communities. In order to highlight the issues of women, the WSN, in 1997, hosted Mary Robinson, a prominent advocate of gender equality and the first female president of the Republic of Ireland, which was the first visit by an Irish President to Northern Ireland in 30 years (Cockburn 1998; Sales 1997; McCoy 2000).

However, the visit by the head of state of Ireland was met with hostility by some loyalists, and the women's centre in the unionist area, where Robinson visited, was attacked by arson several times (McCoy 2000). As this event showed, there were dangers in women's cross-community cooperation, and many of the women recognised the limitations to cooperation due to their different political aspirations. Nevertheless, these threats and political differences did not stop transversal dialogue among women. Sales says the women acknowledged each other's positions and focused on "the practical issues on which women can agree" (Sales 1997: 193).

In the Korean peninsula, there was no civic space in North Korea for feminism under the communist dictatorship, which claimed women were already emancipated and purged anyone who did not show absolute loyalty to the Kim Il-sung regime in every sector of the society. Unlike North Korea, the South Korean military dictatorship was less stable and allowed some civic space under the banner of Korean style democracy. However, the South Korean feminist movement had to face significant challenges from the authoritarian regime, which prioritised national security and economic development over human rights (Chung 2000). Following the 1980 brutal massacre of civilians protesting for democracy in Gwangju, several human rights activist groups in South Korea, including women's groups, reasoned that, as long as the Korean peninsula is

divided, the South Korean military dictatorship would use military force to dominate citizens in the name of national security. Women civil society leaders, such as Lee Woo-jung, the founding Chair of the Korean Women's Association United (*Han'gugyŏsŏngdanch'eyŏnhap*, KWAU), an umbrella organisation for campaign for women's rights, initiated meetings between South and North Korean women (Lee 2012; Lee and Lee 2013).

For example, on request from Lee Woo-jung, Japanese women's groups hosted a meeting for Japanese, and South and North Korean women in Tokyo, in May 1991, under the theme 'Peace in Asia: The Role of Women'. In this Tokyo meeting, Lee Woo-jung proposed regular meetings and volunteered to host the next meeting in Seoul. In November 1991, South Korean women's groups, including the KWAU, held a meeting in Seoul which was followed by a meeting hosted by North Korean women in Pyongyang in 1992 and another hosted by Japanese women in Tokyo in 1993 (Kim 2009a, b). During these meetings, North Korean, South Korean and Japanese women discussed the issues of Korean unification, the legacy of Japanese colonisation and comfort women, and women's rights (Lee 1993; Chung 2000).

As in the case of Northern Ireland, all the groups continued their transversal dialogue by focusing on the practical issues on which they could discuss, despite the differing political aspirations. Nevertheless, the meetings still faced strong challenges from within their own communities and the increasing tension in and around the Korean peninsula. For example, the Seoul meeting had to finish earlier than planned because of the series of protests by anti-communist groups. In 1994, when it was the South Korean women's turn to host the meeting, the South Korean government prohibited the organisation of the women's meeting, in the name of national security (Lee 2012; Kim 2009a, b).

After the meeting was unilaterally cancelled by the government, South Korean women's groups realised that their movement, which promoted national unity as a way to increase contact between North and South Korean women and to build peace, would always be controlled by the government under the national security law,[1] as unification is considered to be state business. Therefore, they turned their focus to building peace on the Korean peninsula by resisting the militarised structure of the Korean conflict. This was a paradigm shift not only for the women's movement but also for several other civil society movements, which followed suit and initiated peace movements.[2]

Women advocating peace against violence and violent structures

As in Korea, it was also women in Northern Ireland, who took the first steps in forming peace movements in order to resist the violence and violent social structure maintained by paramilitaries and the state during the Troubles (McCoy 2000). The best-known organisation is Peace People, which organised peace marches in the 1970s, in which several thousand women from both Protestant and Catholic communities participated

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[1] Under the National Security Law (NSL), South Korean citizens are "strictly prohibited contact or engagement with people in North Korea," and authoritarian governments often used the NSL to restrict criticism against them (Kim 2019).

[2] Interview with a South Korean peace activist at Women Making Peace by the author, Dublin, 9 July 2016.

and were later joined by men. The two founders of Peace People, Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Betty Williams, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 (McWilliams 1995; Darraj 2006). While emphasising the need for women and men to work together for peace, one of the founders recalls:

> "The call for the women to get active in their community, and put peace first, that was our whole focus…Ordinary women who never have done any political activities in their lives all of sudden had the courage to say we should not live like this, you know, violence is not acceptable. People using bombs and bullets, and governments using emergency law, it is not the way we want to live."[3]

Cochrane and Dunn argue that the peace marches by Peace People became "emotional safety valves for the expression of community opposition to violence" (Cochrane and Dunn 2002: 169). But, following the initial success in mobilising people in the streets and winning the Nobel Prize, Peace People soon became the target of accusations that they would not raise issues of justice for victims of political and economic inequality, and criticism that advocating peace would only serve interests of the people in power (Fitzduff 2002; McWilliams 1995), although Maguire argues, "Peace People were clearly opposed to all forms of violence" (BBC NEWS 2006). During the mid-1980s, support for large-scale peace marches decreased, but women's peace organisations, such as 'Women Together', continued their efforts to build peace by organising lower profile transversal dialogues, such as 'talking circles' "to foster understanding between" the nationalist and unionist communities (Sales 1997: 195). Former Coordinator of Women Together, Ann Carr says that Women Together also "formed human chains across roads to keep stone-throwing youths apart", but often the "husbands and families of the women involved didn't know that the women were working together in this way" (Carr 2014), which demonstrated intersectionality in a society affected by a militarised conflict.

In the Korean peninsula, the more active South Korean women's peace movements were, the more they highlighted and engaged with the issues surrounding intersectionality under militarisation. A South Korean civil society leader, who led one of the earliest women's peace movements, says;

> "In the situation of the Korean division, even if women work hard, it is difficult to deconstruct the priority status of men…The Korean division strengthens militarism and patriarchy, and it maintains the military and patriarchal culture in society. Therefore, women came to conclusion that they should resist not only patriarchy but also militarism and its culture."[4]

According to Moon, women particularly perceived that, while compulsory "military service denied men fundamental civil rights at a more basic level, it contributed to the maintenance of their position as modern patriarchs" (Moon 2005: 161–163). In the 1990s, the women's movement initiated a campaign against the military service extra-points employment system, in collaboration with groups advocating for the rights of

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[3] Interview with a founder of Peace People by the author, Belfast, 14 September, 2018.
[4] Interview with a former representative of Women Making Peace, an organiser of meetings between South and North Korean women, by the author, Seoul, 11 July, 2018.

people with disabilities. Under the military dictatorships, South Korean men who had completed their compulsory military duty were awarded with extra points for employment and promotion, enabling the gender inequality and discrimination against people with disabilities. The campaign caused national controversy, and strong opposition from conservative groups, but in December 1999, the South Korean Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the women's movement, that "the extra-points system described in the Veterans Assistance Act (Clause 1 of Article 8) and its Enforcement Ordinance (Article 9) were unconstitutional" (Moon 2005: 179).

The women's peace movement also promoted the need for disarmament. In the 1990s, South Korean defence spending was approximately 20% of the government budget, whereas the government spent less than 0.4% on women's welfare (Chung 2000). South Korean women peace groups argued that, as the defence spending increased, the welfare spending of the government decreased. From the perspective of women, the expansion of the South Korean military capacity did not guarantee the protection of quality of life and safety of women in their daily lives. Kim Jung-soo says, for this reason, women challenged the concept and practice of national and military security, which had been considered to be the area of men and untouchable by women (Kim 2009a, b). Women collected signatures, organised press conferences, and made appeals to the National Assembly, about the need for the reduction of defence spending (Chung 2000).

As in the case of Peace People in Northern Ireland, many South Korean women's groups intended to include both men and women in their peace movements, reflected by their transversal perspectives (Kim 2009a, b). Lee Woo-jung stresses the promotion of a South Korean peace movement with the perspective and the experience of women was not about competing with men, but to overcome a masculine culture which promulgates competition for supremacy and violence. She says feminine culture is for everyone who aspires to a new relationship of mutual cooperation and dialogue rather than oppression, and this is not exclusive to women. But, women have a special role in promoting a culture of peace, because, compared to men, they are better able to empathise with the oppressed (Lee 2012). Regarding the role of women in peace movements, a founder of Peace People makes a similar comment that "women can be very agreeable, and they can find solutions."[5]

As discussed above, the similarities in the peacebuilding activities of women in Northern Ireland and Korea are in their recognition of the interconnection between identity politics and patriarchy, building relationships across the divide through transversal dialogue and initiating nonviolent peace movements against the militarism of their societies, earlier than other civil society sectors. These activities of women were deemed dangerous and faced threats in both contexts. While acknowledging intersectionality in conflict-affected societies, there seems to be a general consensus among women peacebuilders that the social position and feminist perspectives of women in patriarchal societies facilitated the peacebuilding role of women, despite the risks. However, the biggest difference between the two cases is that, compared to Korea, women in Northern Ireland had relatively more freedom in organising their activities across the identity line and were successful in having their representatives sitting at the negotiating table in the high-level peace process.

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[5] Interview with a founder of Peace People by the author, Belfast, 14 September, 2018.

Women and peace processes

In April 1996, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was formed jointly by nationalist and unionist women's groups, in order to advocate for the women's agenda in the official peace process, particularly in the Northern Ireland Forum (the Forum) (Sales 1997). The Forum was the official multi-party peace talks, proposed in the joint communique by the British and Irish governments in February 1996. The NIWC secured two seats in the Forum elections in May 1996, and contributed to shaping and reaching the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998 (Byrne 2009). Donahoe says, the NIWC "extended their influence by linking their local issues and concerns into a shared party voice", chaired by Monica McWilliams, with a nationalist background, and Pearl Sagar, with a unionist background (Donahoe 2017: 57). The NIWC highlighted the role of women as agents of change in a society affected by protracted conflict, with a reference to the success of women in building and maintaining relationships across identity lines. But, the NIWC also noted the fact that women's cross community cooperation had limitations because of the national question, which often preceded their collective identity as women. The division of women, as well as men, depended upon how much they cared about the national question (Fearon 1999). For this reason, NIWC promoted transversal principles by asking its members to agree to "bring their 'identity baggage' and acknowledge their differences upfront, rather than the more typical reaction in Northern Ireland: keep silent or fight about contentious differences" (Porter 2007: 40). The manifesto of the NIWC was organised, "according to the acronym WOMEN: Working for a solution; Offering inclusion; Making women heard; Equity for all, and New thinking" (Fearon 1999: 20).

The NIWC was often dismissed by mainstream parties during the meetings of the Forum. Fearon says that, not only NIWC members, but also female members of other parties were treated with disdain (Fearon 1999). Donahoe says, "For women to take part in the talks, to be recognized in this public way, threatened to shift gender norms" (Donahoe 2017: 60–72). Nonetheless, the NIWC continued to promote transversal dialogue, which had proven to be effective in their community work and networking, with the other parties. The former US Senator George Mitchell, who was the mediator at the Forum, says, in his interview in the documentary film, 'Wave Goodbye To Dinosaurs', that the NIWC "was focused on reaching agreement as opposed to focused on" their own agenda, as they "understood their role to be to help bring about peace more than just dancing the cause of one community or another" (O'Neill 2017). The NIWC was particularly credited with ensuring the creation of the Civic Forum in the peace agreement. The Civic Forum was a consultative mechanism on social, cultural and economic affairs, representing several sectors in the society, such as labour unions, youth, religion, victims, disability and women (Cochrane 2001). The documentary records the testimonies of members of the NIWC where they were asked to choose either electoral reform, which would safeguard the women's political participation, or the creation of the Civic Forum. The NIWC chose the Civic Forum, which would increase the sustainability of the peace agreement by improving good governance, over a women's own agenda (O'Neill 2017).

In the Korean peninsula, as in Northern Ireland, politics have traditionally been perceived as a male domain. In the 1990s, in North Korea, the women's participation in the central committee of the Korean Workers Party was approximately 5%, and in

South Korea as well, only about 5% of the members of the National Assembly were women (Song 2003). Women were also not visible in the official peace negotiations, unlike Northern Ireland, although there was noticeable effort to include women's voices in the peace process. In 1992, Lee Woo-jung, supported by civil society, founded the New Democratic Union Party (NDUP) in South Korea, which included the women's movement and progressive politicians. As the leader of the party, Lee played a key role in uniting NDUP with other opposition parties to create a strong opposition party, the Democratic Party (DP). As a member of the National Assembly, Lee Woo-jung, not only worked to increase women's representation at the National Assembly, but also encouraged the South Korean government to start the peace process (Lee 2012). In 1998, the DP leader, Kim Dae-jung, won the Presidential election and initiated a peace process with North Korea. In an effort to facilitate implementation of the agreements in the high-level peace process, such as the June 15 South-North Joint Declaration of 2000, the women's groups organised a bilateral conference for South and North Korean women in 2002 (Kim 2005). One of the key organisers of this conference explains the significance of the conference. First, approximately 700 representatives from diverse women's groups in South and North Korea participated in the event. It was considerable progress compared to the women's meetings in the 1990s, in which a few dozen key leaders participated. Second, it was the first bilateral meeting between North and South Korean women, realised through the continuous effort by the women's groups to create a women's own network between North and South Korea.[6]

However, the absence of women at the official talks persisted throughout the 2000s. Women's groups, such as WMP, initiated track-two diplomacy, the North East Asia Women's Peace Conference (NEAW Conference) in 2008, to parallel the Six-Party Talks (2003–2009), among the North and South Korea, US, China, Japan, and Russia, which was a series of multilateral negotiations by governments to discuss the issues of North Korean denuclearisation and a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula. But, North Korean women were not able to participate in the NEAW conference. As well, South Korean women's groups were divided on how much they cared about the national question. For some women, the Six-Party Talks was merely a US tactic to put pressure on North Korea to denuclearise. In this view, women needed to make the unification of the two Koreas a priority over other issues. On the other hand, women's groups, such as WMP, "who subscribe to a theory that structures and ideologies of nationalism, patriarchy and militarism are irreducibly intersected and together a source of violence and war", were critical of "the assertions of national identity and nationhood" (Cockburn 2012: 197–204). Despite their differences, several South Korean women's groups maintained their transversal effort to promote the peacebuilding role of women. A South Korean women peace activist says that women's groups are not monolithic and hold differing views on the issue of Korean unification, but they agree that women have been victimised during the history of the Korean conflict and acknowledge the need for transversal dialogue to find a way forward to peace.[7]

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[6] Interview with a former representative of Women Making Peace, an organiser of meetings between South and North Korean women, by the author, Seoul, 11 July, 2018.
[7] Interview with a South Korean woman peace activist/academic at Korea Women's Peace Research Institute by the author, Seoul, 5 July 2018.

Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, although women were able to participate in the official peace process in the 1990s, and the current leaders of the three major Northern Irish parties, Sinn Fein, DUP, and Alliance Party, are women, the transversal politics of women appears to have become less influential in current the Northern Irish politics which remains based on identity politics. The NIWC ceased functioning in 2006. The Civic Forum was suspended along with the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2002. The 2007 restoration of the devolution has not revived the Civic Forum (Nolan 2014). Speaking to the underrepresentation of women's perspectives in politics, one of the key architects of the NIWC, Bronagh Hinds, argues, "you do not do it with a single woman or two, you need a critical mass of women" (Hinds 2016). A Northern Irish woman peace activist, who manages programmes for the marginalised in Northern Ireland, says,

> "I still see mostly women around the discussion tables, responding to need, supporting and advocating at the grassroots level. However, somewhere along the way these voices are being lost. They are not being translated at the higher decision and political making levels. Why? How can we build a world that is peaceful and just if half of the population's voices are not truly heard and meaningfully respected?"[8]

In 2017, the Northern Ireland peace process met yet another challenge, due to the collapse of the European Union power-sharing agreement. The 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum has been increasing uncertainty about the peace process (Kim 2018). The Korean peace process also went through crisis after crisis, after its break down in 2010, and continues to be monopolised by high-level initiatives, such as summits between the North and South Korean leaders, and the summit between the North Korean leader and the US President (Kim 2019).

While the official peace processes were breaking down, interestingly the women's peacebuilding has connected women beyond their respective contexts. For example, in 2010, Hinds participated in the 2010 NEAW Peace Conference to share lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process. She recalls, "I feel honoured to have actually contributed to that conference in Seoul, but also to have been part of meetings with your (Korean) government and also with the US, which I remember, was a quite a fractious and difficult meeting, where Korean women were challenging" the governments (Hinds 2016). In 2015, an international group of woman peace activists, including key figures from Peace People, Northern Ireland, crossed the DMZ in the Korean peninsula in May and met with both North and South Korean women's peace groups (Women Cross DMZ 2015). One of the Northern Irish participants argues, "we are interconnected now as human beings and we need to start helping each other to deal with big issues."[9] Another Northern Irish participant agrees,

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[8] Interview with a Northern Irish woman peace activist, a programme manager on marginalisation, by the author, Belfast, 28 November, 2018.
[9] Interview with a founder of Peace People by the author, Belfast, 14 September, 2018.

"Back in the seventies and eighties in Northern Ireland, I honestly think that if people had not come and visited us and motivated us to keep going, it would have been very, very different... They reinforce what you are already doing. So, no matter where I go, I always try pick out the woman who is doing a good job and who is under pressure."[10]

There has been criticism of women's transnational peace movements, such as the Women Cross DMZ, for being naïve about real politics, the nature of authoritarian regimes and international relations, and most of this criticism appears to come from men. Responding to this criticism, Moon argues, "Women Cross DMZ sent a pressing message that got ignored by most observers: Women want and need to participate in international negotiations and foreign policy processes" (Moon 2015). In line with Moon's argument, in 2016, the WMP visited Ireland, met with women peace activists, such as Hinds, and held an international seminar in Dublin to highlight the role of women in peacebuilding in Ireland and Korea (Irish School of Ecumenics 2016).

As we have seen above, women's groups showed great potential for peacebuilding by challenging identity politics in each context, and by promoting transversal dialogue beyond different identities, including gender, yet women's perspectives and transversal politics are continuously dismissed by domestic power structures based on masculine values. In this sense, it appears that the networking beyond their own context was not only to support each other, but also to increase their influence on official peace processes by building international solidarity with the inclusion of women's perspectives in the international relations and policy making.

Conclusion

Women in Northern Ireland and Korea built relationships across the identity lines in their respective conflicts through transversal dialogue and initiated nonviolent peace movements against the violent structure of their societies by recognising the interconnection between militarism and patriarchy. Unlike identity politics, which tends to build solidarity within an identity group against other identity groups, the transversal politics utilised by these women, was not to build alliances against men, but to promote peace for all women and men with different identities. Consequently, the transversal peacebuilding activities of women challenged the identity politics, which were continuously utilised in order to maintain violent structures, including gender inequality and militarism. In the Korean peninsula, it was a paradigm shift from a social movement to overcome the Korean conflict by political unification, to a movement to overcome division by promoting peace and resisting militarism. Peace movements by Northern Irish women were also one of the earliest movements to fight all types of violence in Northern Ireland.

However, in the Korean peninsula, government regulations on inter-Korean meetings and limited civic space for North Korean women have been increasing the obstacles to the inclusion of the perspective of women in the peace process. In Northern

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[10] Interview with a Northern Irish woman peace activist, a participant of the Women Cross DMZ, by the author, Belfast, 14 September, 2018.

Ireland, despite the success by the NIWC in having their representatives sit at the negotiating table in high-level peace processes, transversal politics do not appear in mainstream political negotiations. There has been tremendous effort by the women, within and across both contexts, to increase their influence on real politics through networking and building solidarity. But, power relations based on identity politics and masculine values appear to persevere in the current impasse in Northern Irish politics, and in the nuclear negotiations in the Korean peace process. Examining the more specific reasons behind existing identity politics, masculine values, and impasses in peace processes, necessitates further research on cultural aspects, such as Confucianism and Christianity, and geopolitical aspects, such as role of the EU and the USA, in connection with gender dimensions. What this study implicates is that the peacebuilding role of women needs to move beyond bridging roles between women across identity lines, and beyond increasing the number of female individuals in the high-level peace process.

In conclusion, the comparative case study on Northern Ireland and Korea shows that the role of women in both contexts is a key element in peacebuilding. Peace processes are vulnerable to identity politics which tends to maintain violent structures, including patriarchy, while breeding hatred of the other, and the role of women is essential in addressing the identity politics. However, it appears, as Yuval-Davis points out, that women's peacebuilding would not be able to reach its full potential to break down violent structures in conflict affected societies, as long as their transversal dialogue remains at the level of social movement (Yuval-Davis 1999). A sustainable peacebuilding requires transversal perspective to be shared at all levels, including those in the high-level negotiations. This transversal peacebuilding needs both women and men, who are affected by the power relations in conflict situations, to reconceptualise their identities to create alliances in addressing all types of violence, without falling into the trap of identity politics.

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