

# International Women's Organizations, Peace and Peacebuilding

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## Introduction

International women's organizations formed an important route for women to pursue peacebuilding at a time when few women could do so through formal diplomatic channels, and when international politics remained a male-dominated field (Beers, 2015; Herren, 2015). Rupp (1997) illustrates the arguments for peace and peacebuilding based on women's difference from men that international women's organizations of various hues articulated in differing ways to depict men as purveyors of war and women as purveyors of peace. Cooper (1997) argues that this thread around women being more peaceable than men characterized the peace vision and much of the platform developed by women's international groups. But as Confortini (2012) notes, some analysis sees women and peace projects as natural allies, because they both promote values and/or characteristics with which it is argued women are naturally or socially more endowed than men, but other analysis critiques this assumption as devaluing both women and peace through an association of femininity with peace that lends support to an idealized masculinity that depends on constructing women as passive victims in need of protection. Still other scholars have argued that women's historical condition as legally, economically and politically disadvantaged members of their respective societies has brought women a unique

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sensitivity to and empathy for others who have been ill served by the existing world system (Beers, 2012).

As Zimmerman (2015: 189) illustrates, how peace was to be conceptualized and promoted in relation to the “real world out there” and within individual international women’s organizations could prove a matter of tension, particularly when related to the domestic political order, the imperial world order, or both. As political contexts changed, international women’s organizations and individual members also shifted positions in respect of peace, causing some women and some organizations to make difficult choices around pacifism (which outlaws participation in, and support for, war) and pacificism (which rules out aggressive wars but accepts the need for military force to defend against aggression) (Carle, 2004; Confortini, 2012; Gottlieb, 2016). International women’s organizations were also impacted by Cold War assumptions around the idea that Western organizations were politically neutral while those behind the iron curtain were politicized, which de Haan (2010) maintains was often a code word for communist or suspect.

The central aim of this chapter is to engage with these debates by exploring how peace and peacebuilding were configured in international women’s organizations that have been positioned as politically neutral and in those that have been depicted as politicized (de Haan, 2010). More specifically it seeks to trace configurations of peace within the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) and within the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and how connections between neutrality and peace played into public diplomacy for peacebuilding. The chapter begins by outlining key aspects of the theoretical framework. The

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analysis looks, first, at depictions of the IFUW and the WIDF around neutrality and its connection to peace and peacebuilding. Second, it examines how these configurations inflected the organizations' approaches aimed at a peaceful Korea post-1945. The analysis uses published IFUW and WIDF documents but complicates the organizational analysis by drawing on the memoir of Kim Hawal-lan (1899-1970), also known as Helen Kim, Dean of Ewha Women's University and President of the Korean Association of University Women, and by tracing the organizational interactions of Germaine Hannevert (1887-1977), a secondary school teacher in Brussels with a doctorate in biology, who chaired the IFUW's Committee on secondary education and was a member of the WIDF's Commission to Korea. The conclusion draws these threads together to argue first, following de Haan (2010), that the position of political neutrality espoused by the IFUW more generally, and in respect of peace and peacebuilding in particular, was nonetheless politicized; and second, that individuals' engagements with the positions on peace espoused by international women's organizations were more complicated than is suggested by organizational positioning alone.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frame for the chapter builds on three elements: 1) peace as a qualified value; 2) the designation of international women's organizations in respect of neutrality; and 3) public diplomacy as a strategy for peacebuilding. These elements interlink in the analysis in that how international women's organizations designated themselves, and/or were designated by others, nurtured understandings of peace (as a qualified value), which, in turn, inflected organizational practices of public diplomacy as strategies for peacebuilding.

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In calling for peace to be viewed as a qualified value Hippler and Vec (2015) maintain that peace should be articulated in relation to other key European concepts such as sovereignty, empire, security, humanity, civilization, barbarism and colonialism. Their argument is the counterpart to constructions of peace history that tend to de-historicize its object and pursue peace history as the history of the various struggles in different historical contexts in which the contexts change but peace does not. Hipper and Vec align their argument with Howlett's (2010) comment that peace history is a history of these contexts but not of peace as such, which Hippler and Vec argue renders peace an independent value. In contrast, Hippler and Vec see peace as a contested and polemical concept that shifts in different contexts as specific groups and actors with specific interests bring forward and defend particular visions of politics and legitimacy, which they maintain always means a certain form (or configuration) of peace, implying a certain domestic and international order. In this chapter, the author picks up on Hippler and Vec's argument that configurations render peace paradoxical and an object of dispute in which discussion of peace also focuses on war.

Zimmerman's (2015) analysis of the peacebuilding initiatives of the International Council of Women (ICW) illustrates that where international women's organizations are concerned a key connection turns around the contours of the relationship between the promotion of international peace and efforts to improve the status of women within the domestic political order. De Haan (2010) notes that international women's organizations like the ICW tended to self-identify through arguments about the neutrality of their organizations. Hipper and Vec's (2015) analysis suggests that arguments used to legitimize or delegitimize international women's organizations also play into how their peacebuilding initiatives were framed. In the analysis that follows the

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author explores de Haan's (2010) argument that neutrality constituted a form of legitimation within a Western worldview and political system that actively endorsed and reproduced that position. It did so by drawing on ideas informed by "red scare" critiques, reinforced by the circulation of arguments that positioned women's membership of a range of organizations in terms of their propensity to vulnerability and to being unwittingly seduced into pacifist views deemed to be unpatriotic. De Haan maintains that one consequence of the political metaphor of the iron curtain as a notional barrier between communist Eastern Europe and the capitalist West during the Cold War period has been to mask the interrelation of histories of so-called neutral liberal organizations with so-called politicized left-feminist organizations.

At a time when few women could press their visions of peace through formal diplomatic channels international women's organizations pursued peacebuilding within new understandings of public diplomacy shaped post 1919 by the League of Nations. As Herren (2015) notes, public diplomacy was defined by the introduction of technical knowledge into classic political bargaining as well as through the strengthening of public-related information and propaganda strategies. Beers (2015) argues that the advent of mass democracy meant that policymakers were increasingly forced to take public opinion into account and those activists, in turn, both lobbied policymakers directly and exerted informal pressure through articles in the press, radio broadcasts, mass demonstrations and other forms of media and spectacle. Public diplomacy involved data-collection, advocacy and cultural and exchange diplomacy (when individuals spent periods of study and or acculturation overseas) (Cull, 2008). Together these strategies opened spaces in the interwar period for women to be included in peacebuilding through informal connections, networks of expertise and technical know-how that were key aspects of the new

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public-oriented form of diplomacy. Herren (2015) concludes that engagement with networks of international civil society in the fields of culture, education and health meant that international women's organizations gained visibility beyond traditional diplomacy. Drawing from the arguments of Herren, Beers and Cull, the author further analyzes peacebuilding in the IFUW and the WIDF.

The following two sections of the chapter turn to configurations of peace as a qualified value in the IFUW and in the WIDF and its connections to organizational understandings of neutrality, democracy, imperialism, national self-determination and equality; and to how these understandings played out in organizational practices of public diplomacy for peacebuilding.

### **The IFUW: Disinterested Neutrality and Configurations of Peace**

The IFUW was established in 1920 by North American and British women to promote understanding and friendship between university women of different nations and to further their interests (IFUW, 1929). At the 1922 IFUW conference President Caroline Spurgeon, professor of English at the University of London, outlined the aim of the Federation as linking together the nations by ties of individual friendship founded on mutual sympathy and understanding. She noted that only through “respect for the opinion of others, the desire to understand and to seek together the common truth and general welfare” could peace be established (IFUW, 1922: 7). This desire for peace was encompassed in the IFUW's threefold aims: “international friendship; internationalism in learning and knowledge; and developing, widening and enriching the process of education generally” (Bosanquet, 1929: 51).

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Oertzen (2014) traces the development of the IFUW as a transnational academic network working to progress science, womanhood and international community. At the IFUW's inaugural meeting in 1920 Spurgeon built on a long standing trope of feminine aptitude for educational responsibility by outlining the IFUW's goal to establish "an education in judgment, in width of view, in knowledge, in tolerance, in a sense of proportion among individuals, and in mutual respect and sympathy and mutual help and cooperation among the peoples the world" (IFUW, 1920: 15). Spurgeon associated the trope of feminine aptitude for educational responsibility and the aim to internationalize learning and knowledge with a commitment to the concept of universal science. Oertzen argues that this combination underpinned Spurgeon's view of the right and duty of the IFUW to take action for international understanding. As Livingstone (2003) argues, universal science claimed objectivity by situating the laboratory as a universal site of standardized method where the influence of locality (and so political interest) was eliminated. Naima Sahlbom (1871-1957), professor of mineralogy at the University of Stockholm, invoked these notions of objectivity and political interest at the 1924 IFUW conference, when she differentiated between "men of science who pursued their researches in a purely disinterested manner" and the ingress of political and human elements into science when "young men with creative intellects were sent to the front to war laboratories and used their gifts to provide only monstrous war machinery" (Sahlbom, 1924: 89). In the period following the Second World War, the IFUW would apply the differentiation between an objective universal science and a located politicized science to advocate for the peaceful use of atomic energy and to oppose destructive use of the atomic bomb (IFUW, 1965: 66).

When Sahlbom referred to men of science who pursued their researches in a purely disinterested manner she linked to interwar views of the disinterested expert laying aside national concerns to create a spirit of internationalism and peace. The technical sections of the League of Nations secretariat selected “independent experts” who would promote “the concord of minds, without which legal conventions for world peace would be both powerless and lifeless” (League of Nations, 1933: 18-19). The articulation of disinterested knowledge and disinterested experts formed the basis on which the IFUW presented itself as a neutral organization that allied internationalism with the cause of peace. M. Carey Thomas (1857-1935), first Dean and second President of Bryn Mawr College USA, noted that “the right kind of peace was not political peace” (Thomas, 1922: 80). The non-political peace that Thomas advocated was one that was to “protect the innocent and the peace lovers so that there could be no risk of a civilisation being wiped out by less civilised peoples” (1922: 80). Thomas’ articulation of the “right kind of peace” illustrates Hippler’s (2015) argument that dividing lines were drawn between legitimate and non-legitimate political actors for peace. In the IFUW one dividing line was drawn around understandings of democratic political order that related particular principles of nationality to sovereignty. The IFUW’s refusal of requests for affiliation from cross-border groupings drew on a view of nationality based on the territorial boundaries of geographically distinct self-governing states or federal states. This stance framed peaceful coexistence by delegitimizing notions of national self-determination that crossed national boundaries (Goodman, 2011) at the same time as it legitimized an existing Western world order.

In working to develop peace on the basis of relations between nations territorially defined, the IFUW stressed the creation of the international mind. As developed by Alfred Zimmern, deputy Joyce Goodman, *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Approaches to Peace* ed. Aigul Kulnazarova and Vesselin Popovski (2019), Palgrave Macmillan. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan. This extract is taken from the author’s original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: <https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783319789040>



director and vice president of the League of Nations International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (1929-36) the model of the international mind was consistent with the portrayal of the League of Nations as a commonwealth of free and equal nations cooperating harmoniously for the good of the whole as well as with League's models of imperial trusteeship framed around civilization as progress (Morefield, 2005: 106). The notion of free and equal nations cooperating harmoniously for the good of the whole framed peaceful coexistence by delegitimizing anti-colonial struggles at the same time as it affirmed an imperialist world order. The IFUW linked to this worldview through a liberal feminist position concerned to achieving equality for women on the same terms as men that portrayed (educated) women taking their place as experts in colonial endeavors (Musses, 1926).

From its inception the IFUW's practices of public diplomacy for peacebuilding were based on a rhetoric of cooperation that was consistent with the organization's view of a world of interdependent groups linking local and global communities without denying constitutional sovereignty. At the League and the UN the IFUW's participation in networks of expertise was founded on the belief outlined by Iriye (1997) that peace could be fostered through the engagement of elites with cultural, intellectual and psychological aspects of the international order and by shaping public opinion, and on a liberal feminist strategy to increase women's access to networks of expertise. Prominent members of the IFUW served on the League's International Committee of Intellectual Co-operation (Goodman, 2012) and Virginia Gildersleeve, the IFUW's second president signed the Dumbarton Oaks agreement at the foundation of the UN (Gildersleeve, 1954). On the eve of the Second World War Germaine

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Hannevart summed up the connection between women and the development of international spirit:

[B]ecause, as women, we are nearer to nature and the deep human verities; because, as intellectuals, we are trained to approach problems from an objective point of view and because, by virtue of our training, we are able to set aside blind passion and look upon the chaos ... without bias and with only our ardent desire to understand and to serve (Hannevart, 1939: 31-32).

However, the rise of fascism had made visible some of the tensions for the IFUW's notion of international order connected to neutrality. When its networks swung into action to relocate and aid academic women persecuted under fascist regimes (Cohen, 2008; Oertzen, 2014) the IFUW's notion of neutrality supported the continuation of links between women of warring nations. But as Gildersleeve indicated, neutrality also constrained the ability of the IFUW council to condemn practices which as citizens within their own country they would have opposed (Gildersleeve, 1937).

As the IFUW's national membership increased through the years, members of associations in former colonial countries would articulate the detrimental effect of colonialism for women (Sow, 1974: 11). But developing the international mind, engaging in expert networks as a means of public diplomacy, and the notion of organizational neutrality would continue to run as threads through the IFUW's approach to peacebuilding. The 1971 IFUW conference, entitled "The Minds of Men—the Defences of Peace", studied the "preservation of the liberties of the mind, international understanding, and civic responsibility" (IFUW, 1971). The conference called for cooperation between scientists to ensure that science was to benefit mankind not war, and for IFUW members and national federations to add their opinions to create public opinion in support

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of peace, racial and ethnic harmony, and to further scientific inquiry. Conference members were called to engage in education for civic responsibility and international understanding, to promote programs designed to eliminate discrimination based on race, creed or sex; to develop international understanding through the study of other cultures, and by supporting international student exchange programs. The conference reaffirmed support for the UN and urged national associations to influence governments to cooperate in international programs to improve socioeconomic conditions, to take measures to resolve national and international conflicts without recourse to war, to bring about a reduction in armaments, and to extend the range of international law (IFUW, 1971: 38). The 1977 review of the IFUW's goals portrayed the organization as a neutral ground where people could meet in "an atmosphere where members need not be suspicious that they will be used for alien purposes or exploited for unwelcome goals" (Schütz-Sevin, 1976: 39).

The IFUW's neutral stance was nonetheless political in ways that held particular consequences for what counted as peace and for the framing of its peacebuilding activities. The IFUW's configurations of peace connected to a view of nation state based on Western territorial notions that upheld an imperial order and dampened down the aspirations of national minorities by drawing dividing lines between legitimate and non-legitimate political actors in ways that linked a liberal approach to peace (Richmond, 2002) with its liberal feminist stance. From its inception through to the 1970s, the IFUW pursued peacebuilding through forms of public diplomacy that stressed education and networking, including through the League of Nations and the UN; and it connected networking for peace with the pursuit of equality for graduate women and with a

humanitarian philanthropic approach, exemplified by the rescue of academic women threatened under fascist regimes in the run up to and during the Second World War.

### **WIDF: Active Neutrality and Configurations of Peace**

In the WIDF, founded in 1945, neutrality took on an active hue that included anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggle, both of which the WIDF viewed as important contributions to the peace of the world. As de Haan (2012) notes, the WIDF saw peace as a necessary precondition for the achievement of democracy, and of women's and children's rights. Speakers at WIDF conferences stressed that neutrality represented non-interference and self-determination which required a "fighting solidarity" in the pursuit of peace, independence, neutrality, democracy and unified and prosperous countries (Nguyen & Nguyen, 1969: 8). What Aloua Keita from Mali termed "neutralism" was not a stance that would have "no opinion on the crucial problem of disarmament". It would not be "neutral in the face of anti colonialist struggle" but would be unambiguous about helping "all the peoples struggling to recover their freedom ... for the respect of democratic liberties ... for equality between all peoples ... and for the happiness of ... children in a world of peace and prosperity" (Keita, 1963: 58). The WIDF connected what Israeli delegate Mrs. Dobba (1958) termed active neutrality with a configuration of peace that aligned notions of democracy with a left-feminist position. As outlined by Dubois (1991) in left-feminist perspectives race, class and gender intersect in understandings of social inequality and requires fundamental social change in order to attain equality for all. The WIDF had a strong association with the communist world and supported Soviet women but this did not mean it was a Soviet front organization. Its broad membership included progressive non-communist women in both the organization and its branches (de Haan, 2012) and comprised what its founding president the

French scientist Eugénie Cotton (1881-1967) described as “the most unassuming women and also the most distinguished women” (Cotton, 1955: 40).

The WIDF’s call to women, sisters and mothers to work for peace and democracy was enshrined in its 1946 oath for peace and its 1948 “Manifesto for the Defence of Peace”. The 1948 “Manifesto” situated peace as the only guarantee for the happiness of children and families (WIDF, 1948:11) and called on all women to a common fight for peace on the grounds of women’s responsibility towards children, people, mankind and history. It urged all women to prevent husbands, sons and brothers from being dragged into war and to condemn military alliances, oppose military bases, expose war propaganda, protest against the Franco regime and military intervention in Greece, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaya, and Burma, and to assist the women and children of these countries (WIDF, 1948: 13). Languages of liberation and oppression that configure a distinction between a peaceable USSR and an imperialist American oppressor run through the WIDF’s “Manifesto” to position countries and their women around a connection between peace activism and understandings of anti-fascist and anti-imperialist democracy based on this distinction. Women of the United States, Britain, France and Holland were to urge their governments to withdraw troops from Greece, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma and South Korea, to halt all forms of interference in the domestic affairs of other nations, to demand the reduction of military expenditure, the limitation of armaments and the outlawing of the atom bomb; and to demand their country’s resources were used for social needs and particularly for children. Women of capitalist countries were to defend their democratic rights, demand the abolition of anti-labor laws, and protest against the persecution of progressive organizations and their leaders. Women of colonial and semi-colonial countries were to battle

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with renewed vigor for national independence and freedom from imperial control (WIDF, 1948: 13). Women of new democracies were to struggle to develop their national economies in order to strengthen democracy (WIDF, 1948: 13); and Soviet women were to reinforce the strength of their motherland, the “stronghold of peace” (WIDF, 1948: 14).

The WIDF’s public diplomacy for peacebuilding included organizational networking that drew on its transnational networks and extensive political connections in addition to working through the UN (de Haan, 2012). Its 1948 report to the UN called for atomic weapons to be outlawed and for atomic energy to be controlled and used for the good of humanity only. To advocate for peace it lobbied heads of governments and foreign ministers and deployed national campaigning, petitioning and the media (Cotton, 1955: 36; de Haan, 2013). It stressed friendship, contact between women from different political systems, and exchanges between delegations from WIDF member countries (Cotton, 1955: 39). WIDF women met on “martyred ground” at Ravensbruck, Lidice, Warsaw and Cassino or at frontiers to renew their oath of peace and friendship (Cotton, 1955: 39). Such meetings highlighted members’ shared personal experience of violence and loss in war. The use of personal testimony for purposes of advocacy constituted a key strategy in WIDF peacebuilding and cast Cotton’s “most unassuming women” (Cotton, 1955: 40) as the experts on the impact of war on individuals and personal testimony as a key driver in public diplomacy for peace.

The following two sections of the chapter explore the relations of the WIDF and the IFUW with their Korean national associations and the organizations’ strategies oriented towards the creation of a peaceful Korea.

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## **The WIDF, Public Diplomacy and Korea**

When the Soviet Union and the USA agreed in 1945 to a joint occupation of Korea to get the Japanese surrender, the 38th parallel of latitude was fixed as the dividing line between North and South Korea. The Soviets established themselves as the military government of North Korea and the US established the United States Military Government in South Korea (Buzo, 2007). In each case distinct political ideologies became increasingly rigid with the onset of the Cold War as the broader relationship between the two powers shaped their respective Korean policies. The transfer of power to a Stalinist-communist regime in the North and a rightist-conservative regime in the South and clashes of aspiration between Koreans desiring the unification of the country and occupying powers all heightened tensions that would result in 1950 in war (Buzo, 2007).

Delegates addressing the 1948 WIDF conference about Korea drew on the languages of liberation and oppression that also ran through the “Manifesto for the Defence of Peace”. The trope of women’s position as the yardstick to measure and compare the progress of nations formed an important lens through which the distinction was constructed between a liberated North Korea under the Soviet Union and a colonized South Korea oppressed under US imperialism. North Korea was portrayed as a site where women flourished under a peaceful and peaceable democracy that assured them political, economic, legal and social equality with men (Phillips, 1948: 290), while South Korea was portrayed through images of suffering womanhood and of struggle against American imperialist oppressors that deprived Koreans of sovereignty (Tchang, 1948: 485). These configurations of womanhood, freedom and oppression connected to

configurations of peace in which anti-imperialist struggle is to bring about the unification of the

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country. These configurations run through congress addresses from Tcho En representing the Democratic Union of Women of North Korea (DUWNK), You En Dun representing the South Korea League of Democratic Women (SKLDW) and Muriel Draper representing the Congress of American Women.

Tcho En praised the USSR and Stalin for fighting imperialist Japan in the cause of a durable peace and for liberating North Korea's women from slavery and exploitation (En, 1948). To evidence the progress of women's political rights and democratic liberties, she cited figures for women's engagement as elected officials, trade union representatives, teachers, nurses, students and workers (En, 1948: 167-9). She highlighted North Korea's progress in public instruction, public health, culture and art and outlined legislation granting women equal rights, state protection for motherhood and infancy, and prohibiting polygamy and concubinage (En, 1948: 168). In contrast, she depicted rights for women in South Korea being trampled on in a situation where free speech was denied, and the economy was ruined as the US government transformed South Korea into a colony and a strategic base in the East (En, 1948: 169). You En Dun tracked the impact of a deteriorating South Korean economy on families and on the lack of parity between male and female wages solely to American imperialism. She spoke of an American refusal to address the system of land ownership, high rates of female illiteracy, and the continuance of concubinage, prostitution and human trafficking (Dun, 1948: 514). Draper situated South Korean people as colonized (Draper, 1948: 144), noting that the USA had girdled the earth with military and naval and air bases, creating imperialist Anglo-American bases on every accessible doorstep to the Soviet Union, and interfering with the domestic affairs of independent countries through military agreements (Draper, 1948: 147). Draper, Tcho En and Joyce Goodman, *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Approaches to Peace* ed. Aigul Kulnazarova and Vesselin Popovski (2019), Palgrave Macmillan. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan. This extract is taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive, published, version of record is available here: <https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783319789040>



You En Dun depicted the South Koreans resisting imperialism, despite persecution, and fighting for the emancipation, democracy, sovereignty, freedom, peace and security of their country (Dun, 1948: 516; (En, 1948: 169, 170). For conference delegate Gerder Lerner, an American resident who had fled fascism in Austria, languages of liberation and oppression that cast America as an oppressor without qualification rendered sisterhood a complicated affair (Lerner, 2003: 247).

On 25 June 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel following Stalin's approval of the invasion of the South. The USA engineered a series of UN resolutions condemning the action, and calling for withdrawal and assistance from UN members. In June 1950 the US entered the conflict, drawing on its forces situated in Japan. In early July 1950 the UN Security Council established a unified military command under American leadership with a mission to restore the status quo on the Korean peninsula (Buzo, 2007: 78). Fortunes of war fluctuated, particularly after the Chinese engaged in support of North Korea when US forces crossed the 38th parallel in October 1950 (Cumings, 1990; Buzo, 2007). By the end of December 1950 news of atrocities in North Korea were circulating in the American and the British press, including about the execution of women and children because they were family members of "reds". But South Korean president Syngman Ree defended the killings saying "we have to take measures" and arguing that "all [death] sentences [were] passed after due process of law" (Cumings, 1990: 720). American and British authorities expressed concerned about a reign of terror by Syngman Rhee troops. However, Cumings (1990) also highlights American instructions to political affairs officers on the ground that was at odds with the benign occupation promoted by the US State Department. The order to counter-intelligence personnel, attached to the 10th Corps to "liquidate

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the North Korean Labor Party and North Korean intelligence agencies; and to forbid any political organisations that might constitute a security threat to X Corps” (Cumings 1990: 721), was to be accomplished by the arrest and internment of all police and security service personnel, officials of government and members (current and former) of the North and South Korean Workers Parties. The latter implied the internment of upwards of one third of North Korean adults. At a meeting in February 1951 the WIDF Council responded to a proposal from the Korean Women’s Democratic Union to send an international commission of women to investigate and report on conditions in North Korea, with a remit to investigate the impact of American bombardments and reports of massacres of the civilian population, especially of women and children (WIDF, 1951: 4). By this point momentum for a negotiated settlement for Korea had grown (Buzo, 2007: 80). On 13 May 1951 Mao Zedong's submitted armistice terms to Stalin to restore the prewar status quo along the 38th parallel. But conditions in Korea prior to the formal start of armistice negotiations on 10 July 1951 were dangerous when the eighteen-strong commission of women visited Korea between 16 and 27 May. Coming under fire they were forced to shelter in dug outs and caves (WIDF, 1951: 36).

The WIDF’s strategy of personal testimony for public diplomacy was very noticeable in the Commission’s report published as “Korea. We Accuse!” (WIDF, 1951). In conformity with the commissioners’ mission and their commitment to report “conscientiously and truthfully to all the peace-loving people of the world” (WIDF, 1951: 5), “Korea. We Accuse!” recorded evidence “in accordance with [what] members saw with their own eyes and with statements given to them by eyewitness and officials in Korea” (WIDF, 1951: 4). It gave voice to eye-witness accounts from “the tortured and heroic mothers of Korea ... the voice of peace itself” (WIDF, 1951: 2), from

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“mothers, wives, fathers and children of victims ... those who had been forced to dig mass graves” (WIDF, 1951: 32), and officials of people’s committees and women’s organizations. It charted the devastation of towns and villages, the effect of scorched earth policy, the destruction of crops and animals, machine gunning of inhabitants, survivors dwelling in cellars, huts and camouflaged caves, atrocities perpetrated in prisons and against women and children, the forcible abduction of women for army brothels, the widespread practice of rape, the brutal killing of pregnant women, and the burial of men, women and children in mass graves whilst still alive. It used direct quotation from named individuals to operationalize authenticity as well as summarizing their evidence. It pursued veracity by including names and addresses of witnesses, locations of bombed hospitals, by recording legible markings on shells, and through first-hand observation of disfigurements from torture and blood at sites of atrocities. At mass graves it noted children’s shoes, tufts of women’s hair, books, small personal possessions and the ropes that had bound people before burial alive. It claimed objectivity by enumerating the dead, injured and wounded and orphans, and by quantifying destruction of factories, schools and churches. It used photography to confirm commissioner’s physical presence at named locations, and to attest to commissioner’s expertise with images of named commissioners, notebooks in hand, inspecting bombs, bomb sites and mass graves.

The report, “Korea. We Accuse!” charged the Americans with a merciless and methodical campaign against Koreans at variance with principles of humanity and with the rules of warfare as laid down in the Hague and the Geneva Conventions. It charged them with starving the population through systematic destruction of food resources, with systematically breaking the people’s morale through destruction of towns and villages that reduced survivors to living in

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dug-outs. It charged them with using weapons banned by international convention, with machine-gunning civilians from low-flying planes, and with exterminating the Korean people through torture, burning and burial alive. It attributed responsibility for atrocities to US field commanders but also to governments with troops in Korea and to UN representatives who had voted in favor of the war. The letter, sent with the copies of “Korea. We Accuse!” to high-ranking UN officials, demanded those responsible be charged as war criminals and insisted on the cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the negotiation of a peaceful settlement with self-determination for the Korean people. The commission’s report, circulated widely in five languages, drew the ire of the Americans. A direct consequence was the loss of the WIDF’s consultative status with the UN between 1954 and 1967 on the initiative of the US, supported by Great Britain (de Haan, 2012). But WIDF conferences would continue their advocacy on behalf of a peaceful settlement for Korean peoples and would note women imprisoned as non-legitimate political actors in home countries for contesting conditions in Korea (WIDF, 1952: 7).

## **The IFUW, Public Diplomacy and Korea**

In May 1951, the month of the WIDF women’s commission to Korea, Kim Hwal-lan travelled with a colleague to the UN on behalf of the South Korean Citizen’s League. She took a message of appreciation to the president of the UN Security Council and to the permanent delegations of the countries with soldiers in Korea thanking them for their war effort. She met President Truman in Washington and recorded that he seemed very much troubled about the war, repeating that it must be limited. She concluded he was so anxious for the war not to spread into

Manchuria and China that he was unable to feel and accept “the great surge of emotions and  
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sentiments of gratitude and appreciation that our entire people had for him” for sending forces to Korea to check the communist aggression (Kim, 1964: 137).

Kim Hawal-lan’s retrospective (1964) memoir complicates relations of imperialism, democracy, neutrality and peace as they played out with the IFUW around Korea. Born in 1899 into a poor family of substance farmers, after her mission education Kim Hawal-lan would become the first Korean woman to earn an American doctorate (1931), earning a BA from Ohio Wesleyan College (1924) and an MA from Boston University (1925) (Yoo, 2016: 154). As Dean of Ewha College she would engage with the IFUW as president of the Korean Association of University Women. She was an ardent supporter of Syngman Rhee whom she first met in 1927 while he was in exile and she was a member of a Korean delegate to an Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) conference at Honolulu (Kim, 1964: 79). She came away from their meeting impressed by Syngman Rhee’s personality and his work for Korean independence. But this meeting and her IPR speech pleading for the preservation of the cultural and racial identity of the Korean people at threat under Japanese imperialism marked her out in the eyes of the Japanese (Kim, 1964: 80). As Dean of Ewha College, she would walk a difficult line as the Japanese increasingly mobilized young Korean people into forms of wartime conscription (Yoo, 2008: 203).

In her memoir Kim Hawal-lan recorded her deep joy at the inauguration of Syngman Rhee as head of state which she saw as the formal beginning of Korea’s independent nationhood (Kim, 1964: 113). But she also recorded deep sorrow “for the division of the country and ... the ten million ... people held as captives of the Communists. We dedicated ourselves anew to the reclamation of our land and people in the North” (Kim, 1964: 113). Advised to leave Seoul

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during the Korean War and heartbroken by the sight of soldiers dead on the roadside or motionless from exhaustion, a determination “burned within [her] soul” (Kim, 1964: 125) to help the war in any way she could. Called by President Rhee to take responsibility for Red Cross administration she subsequently joined the government as director of Public Information (Kim, 1964: 128). Through the Citizen’s League she worked to promote friendly relations and mutual understanding between Koreans and the Americans arriving in Korea in increasing numbers. She took on the editorship of the *Korean Times* and was involved in establishing ,a paper that publicized the land and people, and presented Korean life and culture from an historical perspective (Kim, 1964). While she was committed to developing friendly relations between Koreans and Americans, she could not accept the armistice, nor could she condone it as a fair deal to the Korean people “who wanted and still want unification” (Kim, 1964: 144).

As representative of the Korean Association of University Women in the IFUW, Kim Hawallan’s residential address and that of Boku Hong Shin, chair of the Korean Association’s Committee of International Relations were both recorded as Ehwa College, Seoul (IFUW, 1962: 109). In line with IFUW notions of neutrality, there was no indication of the country’s division, or of the war. This was despite Mrs. M.M. Lee, wife of the Korean Minister in London, having attended the 1953 IFUW conference to represent the newly constituted Korean Association little more than a week after the signing of the military armistice between the North and the South (IFUW, 1953: 19, 22, 33). The Korean Association became an IFUW member in 1956 (IFUW, 1956: 16). Reports denote the Association as a recipient of IFUW philanthropy. In 1956 IFUW president, Jean Chaton (who would visit Korea in 1968 (IFUW, 1968: 46), asked national associations to send the Korean Association classical literature in English, French and German,

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books on art, musical scores, dictionaries and encyclopedias (IFUW, 1956: 37) and in 1959 remaining monies in the IFUW's Special Donations fund were devoted to the Korean Association for the purchase of books (IFUW, 1959: 21). The Korean Association provided a postgraduate fellowship for a member in 1965 (IFUW, 1965: 60), but its reports to the IFUW also focused on philanthropy and on the money and goods donated to flood-stricken and destitute inhabitants of Seoul in 1964 and 1968 (IFUW, 1965: 62). The association held lectures and study groups in English to foster international understanding and to further knowledge of the English language, and participated in a government seminar on the government's principal policies, a government symposium on cereals and nourishment, and engaged in municipal education for consumers (IFUW, 1968: 46). The "government" is not identified as that of South Korea, a silence that resonated with the wider politics of place in IFUW notions of neutrality.

The IFUW's embrace of what was a South Korean Federation of University Women also reflected South Korea's recognition by the UN, a legitimization exercise in which Kim Hawal-lan had been involved as UN delegate for four years from 1948 (Kim, 1964: 163). Alongside her presidency of the Korean Association of University Women, Kim Hawal-lan was a founder member of the Asian People's Anti-Communist League conceived in Korea in 1955. Here her anti-communist stance was clearly in evidence. Under her leadership, at its Freedom Centre, the Anti-Communist League carried out research on communism, and ways to combat it. Kim noted, "if any nation in the free world knows what [communism] is like, it is Korea and therefore we have a mission to tell the uninformed or misinformed peoples of the world" (Kim, 1964: 170, 171). For Kim Hawal-lan, unable to accept the armistice or condone it as a fair deal to the

Korean people (Kim, 1964: 144), communism and communists blocked unification and peace for Korea.

WIDF conference reports together with “Korea. We Accuse!” and IFUW reports together with Kim Hwal-lan’s memoir present two different perspectives on fostering peace in Korea. Kim Hwal-lan’s engagement in government networks and organizations to foster cultural internationalism and create friendly relations and international understanding between Koreans and Americans aligned her with the peacebuilding approaches espoused by the IFUW. However, her involvement with the Anti-Communist League contemporaneously with the IFUW illustrates how silences of neutrality work to obfuscate place and the political positioning of organizations. The advocacy approach to peacebuilding of the WIDF’s “Korea. We Accuse!” illustrates an active neutrality that incorporated anti-imperialist struggle in WIDF understandings of peacebuilding for the achievement of democracy and of women and children’s rights.

## **Conclusion**

Notions of peace and the peacebuilding initiatives at both the IFUW and the WIDF were framed through the organizations’ different understandings of neutrality as disinterested or active. These resulted in configurations of peace that connected to disparate notions of sovereignty, empire, colonialism and democracy, and to explicit or implicit reference to those whom organizations deemed legitimate or de-legitimate actors for peace. In the IFUW, the connection of peace to democracy was framed initially through notions of territorial sovereignty that supported imperial relations and damped down the aspirations of minority groups. In the WIDF, the connection of



peace to democracy was allied with anti-imperial struggle. In each organization configurations of peace were connected to a view of women's equality that called forth differing gendered tropes. With the IFUW liberal feminism connected to the trope of feminine aptitude for educational responsibility. With the WIDF left-feminism connected to the trope of woman's position as a yardstick to compare nations.

As IFUW and WIDF reports illustrate, these configurations and tropes led to divergent organizational strategies for peacebuilding and different forms of public diplomacy. Configurations of peace espoused by the IFUW played into forms of public diplomacy around notions of the international mind and the disinterested expert. Consistent with its liberal feminist perspective, the IFUW aimed to interpolate women into networks of technical knowledge at the League of Nations and the UN in order to enhance women's political bargaining power in the cause of peace, which ran alongside educational initiatives to increase international understanding. The WIDF deployed networking, including with the UN, but also drew on first hand testimony from experts that included "unassuming individuals" (Cotton, 1955: 40) who had experienced the horrors of war. As a public diplomacy strategy, built around the type of advocacy that "Korea. We Accuse!" exemplified, the WIDF aimed to strengthen public information and to aid media propaganda in the cause of peace by bringing pressure to bear on the UN for fundamental social and political change.

Both Kim Hawal-lan and Germaine Hannevaart complicate this organizational picture. Like many Korean intellectuals, Kim Hawal-lan had been faced with a choice between survival through cooperation with the Japanese authorities and imprisonment during the particularly

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repressive latter half of colonial rule. Forced to change her name to Yamagi Katsura and to exhort her Korean students to assist the Japanese war effort (Yoo, 2008: 203), her motives were misunderstood even by her friends (Kim, 1964: 98). For the WIDF the Americans were the occupying force. However, for Kim Hwal-lan oppression was rooted in Japanese imperialism and it was the Americans who had liberated Koreans from colonial rule and it was the communists of the North who were the non-legitimate political actors barring the way to a peaceful unified Korea. Hannevart had been a long-standing IFUW council member at the time of her membership of the WIDF's Korea commission. And, her activities spanned international women's organizations of varying hues, including those portrayed as politicized. She led the Federation *Belge du Droit Human* from 1936 and was heavily involved in the relocation and then repatriation of Spanish children during and after the Spanish Civil War and of German children during the Second World War. From 1929, she was active in the Belgian national and international committees of the Open Door International, which had a strong equal rights agenda, and she was a key figure on a 1934 committee working to counteract the Belgian law intended to circumscribe married women's work that included representatives from socialist women's organizations. She participated in the 1934 conference organized by the *Comité Mondial des Femmes contre la Guerre et le Fascism* founded by the pacifist, feminist and socialist Gabrielle Duchêne, who had strong connections with the USSR; and she attended the 1936 *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*, which also included socialist and communist women. Although no evidence has become known to date that Hannevart joined the Communist Party, like women of various political hues, she visited the Soviet Union and was interested in events in China (Gubin et al., 2006).

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Kim Hawal-lan and Germaine Hannevaart both illustrate what Gerder Lerner had also indicated: that “in the real world out there” (Zimmerman, 2015: 189) the peace politics of international women’s organizations were indeed a complex matter. Kim Hawal-lan’s anti-communism brings sharply into view how notions of freedom and democracy shaped by Western understandings of communism in the cold war period could link with understandings of neutrality in organizations like the IFUW, rooted in Western and politicized understandings of sovereignty and political order. Her anti-communism did so in ways that complicated relationships between international women’s organizations, imperialism and peace. Germaine Hannevaart’s organizational trajectory provides an example of de Haan’s (2010) contention that despite the political metaphor of the iron curtain the histories of international women's organizations were not as separate as history has presented to date. Hannevaart’s organizational trajectory also aligns with Gottlieb’s (2016) suggestion that some women’s paths through the peacebuilding initiatives of international women's organizations might be seen as the outcome of a series of encounters rather than solely through the positions around peace and peacebuilding that international women’s organizations espoused or through which they were defined.

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