

ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON FEMALE PEACEMAKING IN CUSTOMARY CONTEXTS IN CENTRAL EURASIA

¹*Dr. Anna Kreikemeyer*, ²*Dr. Mariam Darchiashvili*, ³*Dr. Arzuu Sheranova*

¹*Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), IFSH, Beim Schlump 83, D-20144 Hamburg, Germany, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1081-3409>, Email ID: kreikemeyer@ifsh.de*

²*Social and Cultural Anthropology Program, Ilia State University, Georgia, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1500-0620>, Email ID: mariam.darchiashvili@iliauni.edu.ge*

³*Freelance researcher, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8475-8139>, Email ID: arzuusher@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This article is interested in how, why and to what extent women contribute to peacemaking in customary contexts in Central Eurasia. Using the concept and methodology of *Ethnographic Peace Research* (EPR), an interdisciplinary and inter-regional team conducted iterative ethnographic and pilot participatory explorations in five villages in Georgia's Dusheti region, in an urban Uzbek community in Osh, among women traders in Osh bazaars, and in Kyrgyzstan's Kara-Suu region. Between 2023 and 2025 a social anthropologist from Georgia and a political scientist from Kyrgyzstan, both of whom spoke local languages, knew the respective customary orders and worked onsite, conducted between 40 and 45 site visits each and regularly discussed their findings with a peace researcher from Germany and an international and interdisciplinary advisory board. Analyzing the ethnographic data via EPR categories (worldviews, everyday practices, institutions, issues of power, social change) and considering maternal thinking, care ethics, relationality and intersectionality, this article shows that many women engage in situated peacemaking through silencing, coping, female relationalities, conflict prevention, mediation, solidarity and self-organization. However, it also demonstrates how many women are confronted with intersecting issues of power and wider processes of social change. Beyond romanticization, this article helps make sense of the ambivalent result in which customary social orders legitimize patriarchy and hierarchies while, in principle, also providing respected spaces for female peace agency. These results contribute to post-liberal peace studies that tend to silence multiple axes of difference in traditional and Indigenous peacemaking and could profit from embracing the difference of peace(s).

Key Words: Ethnographic Peace Research, relationality, female peacemaking in customary contexts, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan

INTRODUCTION

In customary social orders, patriarchy confronts women with multiple challenges of adaptation, negotiation and contestation. This article argues that although customary contexts in Central Eurasia¹ overwhelmingly legitimize patriarchy, they can, in principle, provide respected spaces for women in which they can have agency – defined as a sociocultural, mediated capacity to act that goes beyond either free will or resistance (Ahearn 2001). Many women in this region accept hierarchical and gendered roles, and their primary agency lies in the fields of maternal care and relational work. Some women hold political

¹ The Central Eurasian region (Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia) is not homogenous but rather 'an expansive locality, covering a wide area of diverse cultures, traditions and thinking, that is nonetheless unified by a sense of common "lived" history, and its inter-generational legacies' (Korosteleva and Petrova 2022, 140).

office, work in communal institutions or are involved in local NGOs. Few women engage in feminist liberation strategies. Beyond romanticization, essentialization and othering, we show how and why female agency can contribute to situated peace from below² through self-organization, resilience, relationality, informal conflict prevention, mediation and female solidarity. We also demonstrate that many women are confronted with multiple issues of power and conflicts, ranging from economic hardship and dysfunctional governance to gendered hierarchies and repressive patriarchy. While female agency is also affected by wider processes of social change, customs and tradition appear to still provide orientation even as trans-local challenges increase ambivalence and practical contradictions on the ground overall. Rising poverty and labour migration tend to overstretch female capacities but do not necessarily end female peace agency.

From post-liberal peace research perspectives, we deem it relevant to open up to differences of knowing, being and doing beyond liberal universalism, and to overcome an ongoing silencing of difference in peacemaking from below (Bargues-Pedr ny and Mathieu 2018). While customary societies are not inherently peaceful, societal actors clearly have agency in shaping peace autonomously and beyond the state, even under conditions of socioeconomic strain and persistent conflict (Autesserre 2017). Peace scholars must recognize that in many traditional contexts, peace is understood as harmony between authority, social unity and economic wellbeing (Lewis 2016; Brigg and Walker 2022). To better understand and engage with difference, peace studies should increase reflexivity, broaden in-depth studies of peacemaking from below and initiate respectful processes of intercultural dialogue and co-learning for ‘peace in difference’ (Behr 2018; Kreikemeyer 2025).

Grounded in our research project *Local Peace in Central Eurasia: Studying Peacemaking in Customary Contexts*, this article asks how, why and to what extent women can have peace agency in customary contexts. We study this in our fields of expertise in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. In conceptual terms, we are oriented by the interdisciplinary framework and methodology of *Ethnographic Peace Research* (EPR, Millar 2018). EPR not only allows us to unpack the complexity of local social orders by disaggregating basic concepts, everyday pre-political practices, and relationalities and (in)formal institutions – it also integrates structural issues of power and social change. To even better understand female peace agency in customary contexts, we relate the EPR framework to feminist maternal thinking, care ethics and intersectionality. In methodological terms, we explored female peacemaking from the ground up by using primarily ethnographic and some participatory methods. Following an interdisciplinary and inter-regional research design, our team brought together a peace scholar from Germany, a social anthropologist from Georgia and a political scientist from Kyrgyzstan. All three scholars collaboratively engaged in exploring and understanding dynamics of female peacemaking in selected rural and urban contexts. The team members from Georgia and Kyrgyzstan conducted long-term, iterative ethnographic and pilot participatory research within everyday life-worlds in the Dusheti region, within the protest movement in Tbilisi, Georgia, in the urban Uzbek community in Osh, among women traders in Osh bazaars and in a village in the Kara-Suu region, Kyrgyzstan. Through continuous reflexivity, they considered the risks of romanticisation and othering and considered the situated nature and the limited scope of female peacemaking. Taken together, our findings underscore both the relevance of customs and tradition in shaping female peace agency as well as persistent gaps in research on the conditions and limitations of such processes.

² Our understanding of peace draws on Oliver Richmond’s (2011, 137) insight that ‘there is no specific definition of peace, as [...] the meaning and characteristics of peace are context-specific and rooted in the everyday of different individuals and communities. Everyday peace in both collective and individual lives is concerned with issues such as the availability of basic material needs, employment, or access to public services’.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Building on the state of research, Section 2 outlines our conceptual and methodological approach; Section 3 demonstrates our findings on key features of female peacemaking in the selected customary contexts; Section 4 analyses these findings by linking them to basic dynamics of customary communitarian orders; Section 5 concludes with reflections on the broader implications of these insights for the field of critical and feminist peace studies.

STUDYING PEACEMAKING IN CUSTOMARY CONTEXTS

CONCEPTS AND METHODS

Our interest in studying female peacemaking in customary contexts originates from the assumption that, in many regions, lay people, informal groups and associations pursue place-based, everyday peace practices and strategies grounded in culture and tradition. Building on a small group of peace scholars who have been interested more in societal peacemaking from below than in institutional peacebuilding and have understood peace not as an abstract state but as a set of broader processes grounded in everydayness and the embodiment of mundane social practices (Lederach 1997; Boulding 2000; Väyrynen 2019; Bargués-Pedreny 2023), we argue that, rather than being inherently deficient, many societies illustrate how 'local people may achieve peace on their own' (Autesserre 2017, 123) even under difficult socio-economic conditions and persistent conflict.

While peace studies opened up to a paradigm shift from liberal universalist understandings of peace to 'local everyday peace' (Mac Ginty 2014), some critical scholars continued to reveal the trends of silencing difference in peacemaking (Bargués-Pedreny and Mathieu 2018) and of marginalizing key features of traditional and Indigenous peacemaking that confront liberal peace scholars with multiple challenges associated with heterogeneity (Kreikemeyer 2025). Experts on Indigenous peace Morgan Brigg and Polly Walker are right to state that indigenous peace strategies 'do not often feature in peace and conflict studies scholarship or conflict resolution practice [above all] because dominant political systems have actively disavowed Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing' (Brigg and Walker 2022, 594).³

Consequently, and in view of the diversity of peace(s) in different world regions (Lazic and Stavrevska 2024), our project puts traditional peacemaking in Central Eurasia front and centre. As social anthropology has broad expertise in socio-cultural meanings of place-based customary peacemaking (Bräuchler and Naucke 2017), we decided to explore and understand it from interdisciplinary perspectives using the critical peace studies concept and methodology of EPR. This framework considers social anthropological perspectives and is flexible enough to study customary contexts by integrating ideational and structural factors. It emphasizes the relevance of basic concepts as a 'self-evident and natural order [that is] internalized, naturalized and taken as a given' (Millar 2014, 505). Furthermore, it holds that 'pre-political' everyday practices (Millar 2020, 2) as well as relationalities and (in)formal institutions must be understood in view of these meanings. Finally, EPR demands that research 'involve a constant awareness of the operation of power' (Millar 2018, 606) and considers opportunities for and limitations of adaptation to social change. To better understand under-researched female perspectives on conflicts and peacemaking in customary contexts, we considered feminist approaches that take traditional self-determination seriously, emphasize small-scale agency and examine it from reflexive, ethical and emic – instead of top-down Eurocentric – perspectives (Tuhiway Smith 1999; Brunner 2021; Motlafi 2021). Particularly helpful has been literature on maternal thinking and care ethics (Ruddick 1990; Robinson 2011; Petersen 2021) and on the intersection of multiple axes of discrimination of women ('matrix of domination', Hill Collins 2019; Crenshaw 1989;

³ Brigg and Walker (2022, 594) define traditional and Indigenous peacemaking as a set of contextually sensitive, 'emplaced and relational processes, designed to move challenging and conflictual dynamics toward balance and harmony'.

Abu-Lughod 2002). Furthermore feminist area studies expertise on legacies of Soviet 'liberation' policies for women (Ziemer 2020), on authoritarian leaders' instrumentalization of gender roles (Ziemer and Roberts 2024) and on female perceptions of liberation strategies (Kluczevska and Luchiani 2025) has been indispensable.

Applying an ethnographic approach in our data collection, we did not aim for structured comparisons but rather commonalities of female peacemaking in selected urban and rural contexts in different subregions (South Caucasus, Central Asia). Our selection of research sites was determined by access, trust and previous expertise. Conducting two years of research across several locations was itself a key strategy for capturing variation, and observed participants spanned a wide range of ages, educational backgrounds, genders and interests. By adopting emic perspectives, the team members working onsite in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan utilised participant observation, narrative techniques, biographical interviews and thick description. They engaged with authentic voices and affective dimensions and gained insights into semiotic practices, (non)human relationalities and the distinct temporalities of customary peacemaking (Geertz 1973; Aronoff and Kubik 2012; Pia 2013). Depending on access and chance encounters, both researchers held repeated conversations with various interlocutors. Conversation formats ranged from brief and informal to long talks and semi-structured interviews, be it during shared meals, walks, local gatherings or celebrations. Some observations were accompanied by elements of autoethnography. Most of the data originate from naturally occurring conversations with women – but also with some men in various social positions – who shaped the formulations themselves. While our interpretive textual construction of social reality defies objectivity, we learnt that in customary contexts it is important to understand that practices and relationalities are often semiotic, that 'meanings are socially, not simply individually accessible, [that] interpretations are community affairs' (Wedeen 2010, 265), and that meaning can best be studied in practical action (Kubik 2009, 36). This is one reason why we added a three-month pilot project of participatory research in which local co-researchers conducted limited focus group discussions. The participants included, among others, twelve female kindergarten and school staff members in the village Aragvispiri and the townlet of Zhinvali, as well as six women traders at the Osh bazaar.⁴

Our data analysis involved iterative engagement with field notes, conversations, and observations, supported by manual coding in dialogue with EPR categories. This coding was not approached as a mechanical or fully standardized procedure but as an interpretive process consistent with ethnographic practice. Codes and emergent themes were discussed, compared, and refined collectively among the research team, which strengthened analytical consistency without reducing the material to a fixed coding scheme applied independently by separate coders. Furthermore, we endeavoured to balance immersion and reflexivity. We avoided imposing judgments and reflected on our positionalities. On the one hand, the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of our team members from Georgia and Kyrgyzstan facilitated trust-building with women. On the other hand, they were constrained by their professions as university teachers or NGO consultants working in international knowledge production. Consequently, these researchers avoided having academic discussions with interlocutors or judging their opinions. Instead, they sought to relate to respondents' perspectives and understand the issues that mattered to them. As their ethnographic work took place in gendered, hierarchical, and sometimes authoritarian contexts, particular care for the safety of those involved in the studies – beyond a general awareness of the ethical principles of good scientific practice – was necessary. Both researchers consulted with female gatekeepers on access, asked interlocutors for their consent and paid attention to

⁴ Overall, Mariam Darchiashvili conducted over 45 interviews and conversations during iterative ethnographic research in five villages in the Dusheti region, Georgia. Arzuu Sheranova carried out approximately 40 site visits, conducting 20 conversations and interviews in the urban Uzbek community in Osh and with women traders in Osh bazaars, as well as in a village in the Kara-Suu region, Kyrgyzstan.

consensus and anonymization as well as to possible marginalizations of a group or the reinforcement of stereotypes. These ethical principles helped us avoid extractive use of local knowledge for our academic purposes. All empirical data were triangulated across multiple forms: across our own background studies, field sites, categories of interlocutors, data types and through engagement with own earlier research and secondary literature on the topic, including both scholarly work and semi-scholarly or popular texts addressing similar themes within the region. Finally, the team discussed its findings during online meetings and in workshops with an interdisciplinary advisory board.

EVERYDAY CONFLICT AND FEMALE AGENCY IN CUSTOMARY CONTEXTS

ETHNOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

As in many places in Central Eurasia, large segments of the population in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan have experienced socioeconomic upheaval in the transition to a deregulated neoliberal market. Privatisation has worsened economic conditions, increased risks to economic wellbeing and deepened inequality. Broad segments of the population are concerned with issues such as the availability of basic material needs, employment, or access to public services (Darchiashvili, Kreikemeyer and Sheranova 2026). Members of the studied rural communities in Georgia's Dusheti region are increasingly confronted with the decision of whether to sell their ancestral land (Darchiashvili 2025). In both the Uzbek-populated municipality of Zhibek-Zholu in Osh and in the rural district of Kara-Suu, infrastructure and public services are in a state of decline and the quality of education is decreasing (Sheranova 2026). Such threats can stimulate social fragmentation and exacerbate ethno-political, religious, generational and gender-based tensions. When economic hardship is compounded by political tensions related to authoritarianism, a pervasive sense of injustice and a lack of hope for the future has led many to view migration as their only viable option. Against this backdrop and building on the analytical categories of EPR, the following section presents our findings on female perceptions of gender roles, everyday practices, relationalities, issues of power and social change in the selected customary contexts.

FEMALE PERCEPTIONS OF CUSTOMARY GENDER ROLES

Guided by our research questions on the features, causes and range of female peacemaking, we first studied female perceptions of customary concepts of gender and the related effects of social change.

Based on participant observations of everyday conversations among women in their 30s to 60s in the villages of Dusheti, women seem to naturally accept traditional gender roles – especially those related to motherhood, household work and family care. One woman shared: 'Nobody is perfect, but if I think of a woman who has a family and children, if she is a good parent, that defines idealness for me. She should first be a parent, and then anything else.' In this context, we often heard that 'women are the heart of the family, they are the peace'. Women also gossip about one another if they do not meet these gendered expectations.

In Osh and Kara-suu, Kyrgyzstan, men are seen as the heads of the family, responsible for resource acquisition and decision-making; women are expected to take care of children, parents and siblings as well as the household. During participatory research (September - October 2024), a woman trader in Osh bazaar – a mother of five children in her 40s – held the view 'a woman is happy if her husband makes enough earnings for the family. He feeds the family members, and the woman stays at home and participates in the upbringing of their children'. Islamic dress codes enforce these gendered views: women and girls in the Uzbek community Zhibek-Zholu in Osh are expected to be partially or fully covered. After reaching maturity, and especially after marriage, women are expected to wear a long dress or skirt with a loose-fitting blouse, and they should cover their hair with a head scarf. Usually, husbands and brothers insist not only that wives or younger sisters dress properly, but that they attend the *medrese* (Arabic: house for Islamic education) as well.

When it comes to female self-realization and employment, in view of both continuity and change in the concept of womanhood, our participatory research among local women from the villages of Dusheti (September - December 2024) made clear that space must be reserved for traditional female activities as well. A 60-year-old kindergarten teacher shared the view that 'a woman, particularly without children, should have a job and find her mission. And, if she can manage to do both look after the household and herself, what's the problem? But to leave the household entirely – that's not right. It's not just about giving birth – there should be quality too'.

In recalling their lives, some women described how customary expectations have led them to focus almost exclusively on motherhood and care. They also expressed exhaustion with traditional gender roles, particularly with burdens of the household. While discussing gender equality at home, a woman in her 40s said with a mix of humour and discomfort: 'In Europe, both the man and the woman are in the kitchen, here it is not like that'. Interestingly, some elder women also recognized that they had deprived themselves of many things by dedicating their lives solely to family and household. A woman in her 50s shared: 'I'm happy when I see my young female neighbour driving her mother in the capital when they have some spare time. I never had such a chance, my mother-in-law always expected me to do household chores, even when my boys were at school.' Some women of her generation also encourage younger women to take care of themselves, too.

In the Osh bazar, a 37-year-old bread seller said she appreciated traditional gender roles. She wished that men would really be the leaders in the family – earning a living and taking important decisions – and deplored that women today must work in the bazaars because they have no choice. She argued: 'From outside it seems that women are enjoying leadership, however, it is very tough for them always to oversee everything. It would be easier for a woman if someone decides instead of her.' Depending on their education, class, religious and ethnic orientation, however, some women feel quite free to distance themselves from traditional norms. For example, a female Uzbek teacher in her 40s working in a private primary school in Zhibek-Zholu does not follow the Islamic dress code but instead wore a shorter skirt, nor did she cover her hair on the day of the interview (Osh, 13 November 2023). Despite some disapproving glances in the neighbourhood and talking behind her back, she feels free to wear what she prefers.

EVERYDAY PRACTICES AND RELATIONALITIES

The exploration of female everyday practices and relationalities featured prominently in our studies. In the Dusheti villages women's social lives tend to be organized through close female relationships, local gatherings and informal networks. Within these circles, they exchange advice on a wide range of topics, most importantly their children's education but also issues of economic decline and the absence of effective welfare institutions. Due to a general lack of public spaces, homes often become key gathering places. In our cases, private living rooms provided important spaces for chatting, exchanging gossip and giving advice. When asked about her open-door policy, one woman smiled and replied: 'Of course we do get tired of care work, but we are so proud of the togetherness we have as a result,' gesturing toward the living room filled with her nephew's friends (Darchiashvili 2025). Gathering places are often gender specific. Outside the home, most women – in contrast to men and boys – are more likely to gather informally in inner courtyards or on quieter streets. At the same time, some female interlocutors expressed concern over a lack of more formalized gathering spaces like small bookshops and cafes, noting that the only available venues are restaurants where meetups often involve alcohol and tend not to be convenient for everyday conversations (Chinti, 15 November 2024).

Female neighbourhood gatherings go beyond casual conversations and often address communal issues. As is typical for relationalities in the village, neighbours are quick to provide mutual help. Support can extend to physical care, such as preparing meals in case of health issues, or collecting money for those in need. In the event of a death, neighbours take on organizational responsibilities, allowing the close family to grieve without concern for practical

arrangements. Regarding informal customary spaces and social change, one interesting example is a psychology practice set up in a rented garage by a young psychologist who also works at the local school. Many women emphasized its importance in conversations, noting that they brought their children there for the good of their psychosocial development. Over time, the centre evolved into much more than a children's space – it became a place where mothers could openly share their experiences of trauma and abuse. While such topics are usually discussed only within trusted networks, here women could receive professional advice and be referred to qualified specialists (Zhinvali, 10 October 2024).

Given the everyday conflicts in the studied patriarchal and hierarchical families and communities, dense female togetherness and networking can serve as a safe foundation for female peacemaking through relationalities.

In Osh and Kara-Suu, women also rely on their own networks and mutual support in times of need. A woman in her 50s demonstrates the importance of a kinship-based support system of sisters, aunts or grandmothers. The woman faced a conflict regarding her daughter's marriage plans and needed to contact the mother of the boyfriend. As she feared that her concern could be disseminated among relatives, especially those of her husband, she could only trust her sisters and aunts. Together, the woman's female relatives decided that one aunt, an elder teacher with a high social status, should mediate. All sisters and aunts were present during a meeting with the boyfriend's mother to make sure that the issue was resolved. In the end, they agreed to respect the wishes of the young couple and let them get married (Osh, 25 June 2025).

In Kyrgyzstan, comparable female support systems include friends, classmates or peer groups. Once a young woman marries, however, she focuses on her husband's network (Kyrgyz: *ayash*). Still, *ayash* offers many new gathering opportunities such as birthdays, celebrations related to the birth of a child, *International Women's Day* or the *Day of the Motherland's Defender*. On such occasions, women share information about education, kindergartens, schools or summer courses for children. More independent women maintain their own networks of female colleagues with whom they practice *chernaya kassa* (Russian: slush fund), an informal, voluntary method of credit-giving (Sheranova 2020).

In the Dusheti villages, women similarly respond to difficulties by uniting with other women. Many women share how communitarian care practices strengthen their bonds. At the same time, women's opinions on conflicts with husbands and family members are diverse. Some women respond to grave family problems by choosing to divorce their husbands, while others remain in their marriages and adopt the customary view that conflict is shameful. After visiting one family where family unity seemed to be highly valued, I was told about a woman in the family whose husband had been unfaithful to her. Despite this, she chose stability over leaving, avoided conflict, kept silent, and stayed to preserve the family unit (Chinti, 20 November 2024). Women often report that they choose to not involve their fathers, husbands or sons in problem-solving – either to avoid escalation by not telling them or by advising them to stay out of it while the women settle the conflicts themselves.

Two examples from the field prove illustrative. In one case, a female bakery owner chose to not inform her sons or husband when a male employee suddenly quit, leaving many pending orders. To prevent escalation, she managed all the orders herself. In another case, a female restaurant owner routinely asks her male family members to leave the restaurant when drunk men begin to argue, thereby keeping the situation under control. There is often an expectation that conflicts can be prevented when handled by women. Our female interlocutors referenced a custom from Khevsureti (Dusheti municipality): when men began to quarrel, a woman threw her headscarf between them and called out, 'Show respect to this, enough, break it up!' (Kiknadze 1996). Women from Dusheti often said that females are expected to act as peacemakers.

DEALING WITH MULTIPLE ISSUES OF POWER

In our areas of investigation, large segments of the population have faced intersecting issues of power such as economic hardship, dysfunctional governance, patriarchy, hierarchy and violence. In the Uzbek-populated municipality of Zhibek-Zholu, Osh and in the rural district of Kara-Suu, streets remain unpaved and the water supply is often limited to just a few hours per day. In Mady, Kara-suu, the number of expensive land plots provided by the municipal government is far from sufficient for a rapidly growing population. Villages in Dusheti, Georgia, suffer from a lack of governmental support for local farmers and deficits in communal infrastructure. While rural families can access childcare and some mental health services, they face gaps in specialized support for children with special educational needs. Corresponding services in the capital are inaccessible due to distance and costs. Discontentment with local government authorities who pay attention to rural families only during election periods is widespread.

In terms of economic crises, women are often confronted with husbands who cannot fulfil expectations that they, as males, earn a living and protect their families. Unemployed men often face debt, precarious work or migration. Some may turn to alcohol or drugs, which in turn can increase tensions and the risk of domestic violence, or even femicide. Many women are also familiar with repercussions of patriarchal orders such as sex-selective abortions or limited access to education. Given the high level of respect for age and status in customary contexts, younger women in particular are exposed to suppression, be it through early marriage, bride kidnapping or by requirements for obedience in relationships with their mothers-in-law.⁵ Young women are often left with very little or no financial support as families prioritise male members (Artmeladze 2022).

Women traders at the Osh bazaar are confronted daily with poverty and heavy workloads. A 56-year-old widow who does not receive a pension explained her path to becoming a trader at the market. She has never held a formal, salaried job. She used to be a cook, worked seasonal jobs at an Osh bazaar, then worked again as a cook at her village school until the school food program closed and she lost her job. As she did not want to be dependent on her children, she started working year-round at the Osh bazaar under harsh conditions. She takes the minibus from her village before sunrise carrying bags of dairy goods. Before she started trading in the bazaar, she sold goods under a bridge where she did not have to pay fees. Although the police often carried out raids on illegal traders, she took the risk and kept selling – moving quickly when the police showed up but later returning. She said: 'I have always been working hard; I am not afraid of difficult jobs, no one helps me, I handle all myself' (Osh, 12 November 2024).

A single mother of five children began trading as a bread seller at the Osh bazaar when she was 17 years old and accompanied her mother. The woman migrated to Russia before she had completed her secondary education and married there. As her husband was abusive, dishonest and a heavy drinker, she and her children returned to her mother. Her children are all school age – the oldest is in ninth grade while the smallest is three years old – and she must pay for school uniforms, books and stationery. In the evenings, her mother and the children help her prepare the bread. As a woman trader, she does not have big dreams – she knows this would be futile. She earns 20 to 30 euros per day, and 40 euros during the high season. Her main aim is to ensure that her children have enough to eat and clothes to wear. She believes that when they grow up, they will earn money themselves and help her (Osh, 11 November 2024).

⁵ In Georgia, 14% of women marry before turning 18 (2023); in Kyrgyzstan, the rate is between 9% and 16% in urban and rural areas, respectively. In Kyrgyzstan, over 20% of marriages involve bride kidnapping. Cases of domestic violence rose sharply by 37% between 2023 and 2024. In Georgia, 50 % of women between 15 and 69 have experienced at least one form of violence in their lifetime (United Nations Women 2025).

In South Kyrgyzstan, comparable intersecting conflicts are often hidden, and many remain unresolved. A 65-year-old member of the *Local Crime Prevention Center* (LCPC) in the village Mady in the Kara-suu region reported: 'Often, women try to hide their issues because they want to protect their husbands (and themselves) from conflict, particularly in cases of domestic violence.' At the same time, many women traders' high daily workloads illustrate predominant trends of coping – which, without legal protection, even increase in informal trading. In cases of conflict, elder women in particular know how their societal status allows them to respond to such challenges. They know that respect for elders is an advantage at the communal level. At the Osh bazaar we observed how elder women traders negotiated with policemen and defended their positions by referring to their age status and their traditionally respected social role as 'mother'. The women aptly reinforced this role by frequently addressing policemen as 'my son'. They know that the performance of 'mother' can be an effective female way to handle some conflicts.

In the village Aragvispiri, Dusheti, women are confronted with difficult choices about gender roles, economic precarity and caregiving responsibilities. They described how unemployment and poverty increasingly lead men to turn to alcohol or drugs, which in turn leads to domestic violence. One unemployed husband in his 30s was using marijuana, and after many attempts to help him, his wife left with their children, hoping the separation would make him change. Instead, the husband turned to heavier drugs and took on significant debt. Feeling obligated to help, his wife sold her only piece of land to pay off his debts and returned to take care of him. In another case where constant drinking and fighting defined a household, the neighbourhood women had advised a young wife, who was caring for a child with a disability, to leave to avoid further stress for the child. While leaving a marriage used to carry stigma, norms have changed slightly. When men only take from their families, it is sometimes seen as fair for women to walk away. Still, many women stay, leave or return due to social expectations, lack of housing, caregiving pressures, or the burden of a partner's debts (19 April 2025).

In Kyrgyzstan, talk of early marriage, bride kidnapping and the subordination of daughters-in-law in patriarchal family hierarchies is often silenced. During a focus group discussion at the Kelechek bazaar (Osh, 29 September 2024) it became clear that all five female participants had left school early due to marriage. Two women recounted having been bride kidnapped. Religious authorities seem aware of family conflicts and try to prevent domestic violence, disputes and divorces by addressing these issues in their sermons. In Mady, Kara-suu, an imam told congregants that while daughters-in-law should treat their husbands' mothers with respect, the Koran does not demand that daughters-in-law serve mothers-in-law (8 August 2025). On social networks, women share stories of mothers-in-law closely monitoring the household work of their daughters-in-law. Some mothers-in-law do this gently, like mentors, while others enforce tradition. A conversation with four young married women illustrated the different experiences of daughters-in-law. A 30-year-old woman who does not live with her parents-in-law is expected to serve her mother-in-law during the weekends, and she said that some of her friends who live with their parents-in-law must do this every day. However, a 27-year-old woman is treated like a daughter by her parents-in-law, who have no daughter of their own (Osh, 12 August 2025). Overall, customary views on daughters-in-law are changing. Depending on class and individual relationships, they can be a source of conflict and oppression or a model of female solidarity and mutual assistance.

Despite predominant trends of adaptation to hardship, we found practices of silent and creative contestation both in the Dusheti region and in South Kyrgyzstan. Despite customary rules where men are seen as the final decision makers and wives are expected to consult with their husbands about purchases, many women know how to obtain what they prefer. A 48-year-old woman holds: 'We still find a way to decide what to buy ourselves – we just make it seem like it was our husband's choice' (Aragvispiri, 25 November 2024).

Some women in Dusheti hold formal institutional positions. Giuli, for example, a 60-year-old municipal representative and member of a protest movement, negotiated a conflict about sanitary zones in Choporti by successfully navigating through formal processes (Darchiashvili 2025). But in personal conversations, Giuli described challenges deeply rooted in customary understandings of gender – constraints that, in her view, remain difficult to overcome despite her authority and status. She explained how she managed her self-realization as a female municipality representative in a region where patriarchy was all too obvious:

During a communal dispute when a municipal council deputy raises his hand to hit you, that doesn't fit into any kind of culture. It's a lack of education, a low professional level, no matter how much you speak or behave properly, you can't stop this aggression. As a woman, it frustrates me. Who wants to be insulted? I can't respond; I'm a woman, I can't start hitting back or swearing. Though lately, I've learned to swear a little [she laughs] ... This puts me in a difficult position as a woman.

At the same time, Giuli highlighted several achievements she was able to accomplish precisely because she is a woman.

When I worked in a high-profile position as the deputy governor, I contributed to the fields of culture and early childhood education. Regarding kindergartens, since I am a woman, I had a completely different caring attitude [...]. Being a woman is difficult, but it is a great honour. I have become a bit rougher due to my lifestyle, but if I have achieved anything, it is because I am a woman.

It became evident that even women without formal positions or access to power still retain certain spaces of agency.

Yesterday, a family came to me regarding land registration. The woman said that something belonged to them, some asset, and asked how she could claim it. The man tried to silence her and was very lazy to investigate what they were legally entitled to. The woman in the end did it alone. To my observation, women fully fight for their rights (7 August 2025).

Given the cultural respect for age and status in Kyrgyzstan, elder and educated women (nurses, doctors, teachers) often lead community-based organizations in the fields of women's health, education, and conflict mediation. The head of the court of elders in the village of Mady is a 65-year-old woman, who explained:

Elder women have been trained through the Soviet school of female activism. I still grew up with the slogan that 'Women are the main drivers of development!' Even if women are tired or live in difficult conditions, they stay strong and resilient. They are neither afraid of work nor of judgments from other people. Women are initiative and have contributed to the solution of many issues. For example, women helped overcome a lack of kindergartens in the village by opening private kindergartens. Women actively participate in school committees, in the school administration and support both children and schoolteachers (26 April 2025).

A cooperation partner of this head of the court of elders is the 50-year-old female voluntary head of the Women's Council at the LCPC. In this council, which is comparable to former Soviet ones, eleven female members meet ten to fifteen times quarterly to take care of women's issues. One of these members thinks women working in the council should be strong and highly respected in society. She holds:

We have gender equality in our village but today the LCPC has more issues than previously. Women's Council issues are mostly related to husband-and-wife or mother-and-daughter-in-law relations. In cases of domestic violence, we offer psychological counselling for free. While divorce is easy most women are looking for advice to keep their family. Women often send letters only as they try to hide their issues which might become known to others. This is one of the reasons why the

Women's Council encourages women to actively participate in public hearings and female schoolteachers to take part in special marches against early marriage and domestic violence. On this occasion women walk in the streets stating and showing slogans: 'Do not marry early!' or 'There is no room for violence!' (Mady, 8 August 2025).

LINKING CUSTOMARY DYNAMICS AND FEMALE PEACEMAKING

ANALYSIS

Building on the general features of traditional and Indigenous societies, we hold that broad segments of Central Eurasian societies orient towards tradition. Harmony ideologies (Beyer and Giercke 2015) structure societal relations in the (extended) family, neighbourhood and communal networks. Our findings confirm shared everyday practices of mutual aid and joint work guided by the principle of reciprocity that can assume an obligatory character (Sneath 1993; Byulegenova et al. 2024; Ismailbekova 2024). Informal 'communit[ies] of relations'⁶ provide social embeddedness and mutual dependency and lay the groundwork for self-governance (Kreikemeyer, Darchiashvili and Sheranova 2026). Customary institutions build on these worldviews and practices and view conflict containment, rather than conflict transformation, as a legitimate and effective basis for peace (Lewis 2016). Studies of female peacemaking from below must consider this background of culture and customary social ordering. The following analysis of our empirical observations will do this by providing an interpretation from EPR and related feminist perspectives.

CUSTOMARY GENDER ROLES AND FEMALE PEACEMAKING

In all areas of investigation, we found female perceptions of traditional gender roles. Womanhood is deeply tied to maternal responsibilities of comprehensive care (children, household, broader family, neighbourhood, communal networks) and the social recognition of women increases with age (Mostovlansky 2013; Ismailbekova and Megoran 2020). Both Christian and Muslim beliefs support these gender roles by teaching patience and obedience, pivotal qualities that are often highlighted in terms of the expectation for women and girls to preserve stability within the family. An imaginary of women creating the 'foundation of peace' appears widespread. In the everyday, many women come to terms with gendered and hierarchical norms, but at the same time they often share the view that patriarchal obligations include protective dimensions and that men must fulfil their customary roles as well. Regarding changing gender roles, younger women and some elder women see tensions between gendered responsibilities and role models which emphasise self-realization. On the one hand, some women – and not only the younger ones – perceive overstretch and exhaustion with traditional gender roles and argue that economic hardship does not allow them to concentrate on their traditional duties. On the other hand, an enduring influence of customs compels women to reconsider that space must be reserved for traditional female activities.

Regarding social change, EPR perspectives hold that customary norms can adapt to external influences but do not fundamentally change (Millar 2014). Alongside a 'renaissance' and 're-invention of tradition' (Beyer and Fincke 2019; on re-traditionalization in the former USSR see Ziemer 2020) we found that contemporary perceptions of gender roles still aim at peace as harmony and social unity. However, two trends may disturb this peace from below. First, customary peace in the family may be endangered as economic hardship grows, as many men are faced with increasing difficulties in providing economic wellbeing and women must become breadwinners as well. Second, disputes over gender roles may rise as many women recognize that they must manage the omnipresent challenges of social and cultural

⁶ Pol Bargañés-Pedreny (2020, 144) defines '[c]ommunity in a broad sense, as a group of individuals having a certain characteristic in common, including being bound, to a degree, by a specific locality, culture, behaviour, norms, institutions, and a shared vision. [...] Community thus can refer to a family, neighbourhood area, districts, or civil society'.

representations which contradict traditions in a globalizing world (Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder 2018). For now, many women in customary contexts reject feminist liberation policies as inadequate former Soviet or liberal Western ideas (Ziemer 2020; Kluczevska and Luchiani 2025). Only some criticize authoritarian leaders' instrumentalization of gender roles for populist nation building agendas (Ziemer and Roberts 2024). Customary gender roles still contribute to peace overall, but economic crisis and social change may give rise to increasing gender conflicts.

FEMALE EVERYDAY RELATIONAL AND RESILIENT PEACEMAKING

Our findings show customary female care for togetherness at multiple local levels, even in diaspora networks. This care overwhelmingly unfolds informally below the threshold of public visibility and is often characterized by practices of coping, silencing and seemingly passive adaptation (Ledeneva 2018; Väyrynen 2019; Mannergren Selimovic 2020). A key feature of such female practices consists of mobilizing comprehensive relationalities that help ensure physical, emotional and material support, preferably among women. By systematizing societal peacemaking from EPR perspectives, our team has previously shown the relevance and legitimacy of hierarchical and gendered relationalities⁷ and practices (Kreikemeyer, Darchiashvili and Sheranova 2026, 6-7). The above ethnographic findings confirm these results and allow female practices and relationalities in the sphere of everyday reproduction to be viewed as peacemaking. Beyond romanticization and essentialization, many women proactively apply practices of conflict containment through prevention, mediation and dispute resolution from behind and in hidden female spaces. We were able to show that in times of crisis, female gatherings function as vital safety nets that help de-escalate everyday tensions. Here, particularly elder women know how their societal status both demands and allows them to respond to challenges and conflicts. Thus, as in the family, female care helps people cope with everyday intersecting hardships and conflicts. Overall, the studied communities know and respect this female 'relational peace[making]' (Söderström, Åkebo and Jarstadt 2021, 496) grounded in trust and 'micro-solidarities' (Mac Ginty 2014, 560) as a contribution to the common good.

FEMALE PEACEMAKING IN VIEW OF MULTIPLE ISSUES OF POWER AND CONFLICT

Many of our scenes confirm how and why women must deal with multiple issues of power. Despite their overwhelming orientation towards customary gender roles, they mobilize knowledge, experiences and networks to navigate these challenges through not only pragmatic adaptation and female relationalities, but creative contestation and socio-political engagement as well. In contrast to financially secure women, many little-educated, unemployed, single or divorced women are particularly vulnerable to marginalization and subordination. They must struggle first for the survival of their families and cope with this persisting threat with additional work involving the whole family, or through labour migration. These additional burdens often prevent them from unleashing the potential of their traditional roles.

The EPR framework integrates the relevance of issues of power in studying peacemaking from below, but feminist peace scholars rightly emphasize the intersectionality of multiple axes of discrimination. Our findings confirm that many women experience uncertainties and conflicts in the 'matrix of domination' (Hill Collins 2019): the repercussions of economic hardship, authoritarian governance and violence at the intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age, and rural-urban location as well as educational and marital status. But in view of the above findings and beyond romanticization, we hold that female customary everyday practices and relationalities allow many women to retain agency in view of intersecting conflicts. While female compliance rather than contestation overwhelmingly prevails, some

⁷ Morgan Brigg (2016, 58) gives 'conceptual priority to relations over entities' and distinguishes different degrees of relationalities. 'Thick relationalities' are characterized by fluid, non-linear, and self-organized interactions typically found in familial, kinship and close personal networks.

women can simultaneously assert agency through subtle forms of creative contestation such as 'playing with patriarchy' (Kandiyoti 1988) and 'double-talk' (Levada 2004, 158). Through such performative techniques, some women can mask dissent and create invisible solidarity with like-minded people (Scott 1985). Furthermore, even women who hold political office or engage professionally in support of women demonstrate differences in female and male engagement. Overall, female peacemaking demonstrates fluid borders between resistant resilience and resilient resistance, and the majority of women in customary contexts cannot be seen as victims.

In summary, our analysis along EPR perspectives showed that female peacemaking overwhelmingly builds on traditional gender roles that largely persist despite intersecting issues of power and social change.⁸ While many women would agree that customary orders sometimes hinder self-realization, few women fight or flee tradition. To explain this result, peace studies must open up to difference in peacemaking and consider that women can contribute to peace by fostering harmony and social unity and/or through empowerment and liberal freedom rights. Consequently, peace studies should take customary peacemaking from below seriously and show more interest in how and why many women in different contexts navigate multiple intersecting pressures.

EMBRACING DIFFERENCE IN PEACEMAKING

CONCLUSIONS

This article focused on female peacemaking in customary contexts in Central Eurasia. Guided by the concept and methodology of EPR, our findings from rural and urban contexts in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan show how, why and to what extent women contribute to peacemaking from below. We found strong female agency building on customary gender roles, particularly in maternal care and comprehensive female relationalities ranging from the broader family to the neighbourhood to the community level. We observed that despite predominant female practices of silencing, coping and adaptation, women's togetherness and solidarity strengthen resilience and act as a glue for social unity and communal self-governance beyond the state. Building on literature on everyday mundane peacemaking from below, we found that customary female peacemaking often is invisible, indirect, situated, and informal, and that female compliance often prevails over contestation and resistance. But we hold that in customary contexts this female agency is often respected and can contribute to the groundwork for conflict prevention, de-escalation, mediation and conflict settlement.

Liberal feminist perspectives overwhelmingly emphasize the relevance of empowerment and liberation of women from multiple types of discrimination and injustices and may therefore raise critical questions regarding our findings. Some would criticize purely maternalist and care-based frameworks; some would perceive our views as a romanticization of adaptation to patriarchy, and some would warn of the risks of reinforcing the traditional stereotype that women are inherently peace-oriented.⁹ Therefore, we stress that we neither aim to justify maternal care as the sole prerequisite for peace, nor do we legitimize patriarchal suppression of women. Rather, our predominant interest is to be open to difference in knowing, being and doing in general, and to (female) peacemaking in customary contexts in particular. Considering prevailing trends of silencing and marginalization of difference in traditional and Indigenous peacemaking, we point to the need to explore and understand peacemaking from below, and in its own right. Therefore, our analysis has pointed to the relevance of linking our findings to the dynamics of customary social orders first. The EPR framework has allowed us to both disaggregate and contextualize key features of female agency. Taking our findings and the broader knowledge on traditional and Indigenous social orders seriously, our article

⁸ Women accepting hierarchical and gendered social orders may do this for different reasons, among them consent, religious belief, social pressure, economic dependency, fear or lack of alternatives. We thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing to this necessary differentiation.

⁹ We thank the anonymous reviewer for this comment that helps clarify our argument.

calls for broadening reflexivity and learning to respect and embrace difference in (customary) being, knowing and doing. By relating to feminist maternal thinking and care ethics, we were able to correct the widespread impression that women in customary contexts lack agency. On the contrary, we learnt that traditional gender roles can also be seen as a form of distribution of labour which can be respected by both women and men. Furthermore, we learnt that many women in customary contexts are not necessarily victims, and that silencing, coping, comprehensive relationalities and solidarity are forms of female agency that can help pacify societal conflicts. Finally, and beyond romanticization, we learnt that while many women have found ways and means of female contestation and resistance, a sole focus on self-realization of the individual does not necessarily contribute to peace in communitarian contexts where harmony, mutual dependencies and social unity are essential for a peaceful co-evolution.

Last but not least, our findings showed that the scope and range of female peacemaking in customary contexts is limited less by its difference than by multiple issues of power that create additional burdens for women on the ground. We recognized that for many women and men in customary contexts, general struggles with growing economic burdens and disruptions to the welfare state are what prevents them from concentrating on their traditional roles and duties. It is primarily this hardship that weakens their social orders, as outmigration, for example, demonstrates. While customary norms (partially or with some limitations) can sustain women's agency, the disruption of these norms threatens to weaken it. Here, more research on the effects of power and social change in gendered contexts appears necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the editors, the anonymous reviewers and to the critical friends Bronwyn Winch and Vadim Romashov for their comments to this article.

FUNDING

This work was funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research (German: Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung, DSF) in the framework of the project *Local Peace in Central Eurasia. Studying Peace Formation in Customary and Patronal Contexts*, project number FB1-PRO-05.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

REFERENCES

1. Abu-Lughod, Leila. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104 (3): 783-790.
2. Ahearn, Laura M. 2001. "Language and agency." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (1): 109-137.
3. Aronoff, Myron and Jan Kubik 2012. *Anthropology and Political Science: A Convergent Approach*. New York: Berghahn.
4. Artmeladze, Nino. 2022. "Rotsa Mshoblis Koneba Bichs Rcheba" [Georgian: When the Parent's Property Goes to the Boy]. <https://batumelebi.netgazeti.ge/news/445745/> (accessed 4 September 2025).
5. Autesserre, Séverine. 2017. "International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness." *International Studies Review* 19 (1): 114-132.
6. Bargués-Pedreny, Pol, and Xavier Mathieu. 2018. "Beyond Silence, Obstacle and Stigma: Revisiting the 'Problem' of Difference in Peacebuilding." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12 (3): 283-299.
7. Bargués-Pedreny, Pol. 2020. 'Resilience Is "Always More" than Our Practices: Limits, Critiques, and Skepticism about International Intervention', *Contemporary Security Policy* 41 (2): 263-286.

8. Behr, Hartmut. 2018. "Peace-in-difference: A Phenomenological Approach to Peace through Difference." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12 (3): 335–351.
9. Beyer, Judith and Peter Finke. 2019. "Practices of traditionalization in Central Asia." *Central Asian Survey* 38 (3): 310–328.
10. Beyer, Judith, and Felix Gierke. 2015. "Practicing Harmony Ideology. Ethnographic Reflections on Community and Coercion." *Common Knowledge* 21 (2): 196–235.
11. Boulding, Elise. 2000. *Cultures of Peace. The Hidden Side of History*. Syracuse: University Press.
12. Bräuchler, Birgit, and Philipp Naucke. 2017. "Peacebuilding and Conceptualizations of the Local." *Social Anthropology* 25 (4): 422–436.
13. Brigg, Morgan. 2016. "Relational Peacebuilding: Promise beyond Crisis", in *Peacebuilding beyond Crisis: Rethinking Paradigms and Practices of Transnational Cooperation*, edited by Tobias Debiel, Thomas Held and Ulrich Schneckener, 56–69. New York: Routledge.
14. Brigg, Morgan, and Polly O. Walker. 2022. "Indigenous Approaches to Peace." In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, edited by Oliver P. Richmond, and Gezim Visoka, 594–600. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
15. Brunner, Claudia. 2021. "Conceptualizing Epistemic Violence: An Interdisciplinary Assemblage for IR." *International Politics Reviews* 9: 193–212.
16. Byulegenova, Bibigul et al. 2024. "Nepotism in Post-Soviet States: The Quantitative Assessment on Socio-Demographic Factors and the Corruption Perceptions Index." *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 11 (1): 96–118.
17. Collins, Patricia, Hill. 2019. The difference that power makes: Intersectionality and participatory democracy. In *The Palgrave handbook of intersectionality in public policy*, 167–192. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
18. Crenshaw, Kimberle W. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, 1: 139–167.
19. Darchiashvili, Mariam. 2025. "Everyday Peace Formation from Below in Rural Georgia". *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (online first): 1–21.
20. Geertz, Clifford. 2008. *Thick description. Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture*. London: Routledge.
21. Ismailbekova, Aksana and Nick Megoran. 2020. "Peace in the Family is the Basis of Peace in the Country: How Women Contribute to Local Peace in Southern Kyrgyzstan." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14 (4): 483–500.
22. Ismailbekova, Aksana. 2024. "Tandem politics and *kusturizatsia*: Power and money in contemporary Kyrgyzstan." *Anthropology today* 40 (6): 11–14.
23. Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1988. "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender & Society* 2 (3): 274–290.
24. Kiknadze, Zurab. 1996. "The Cross and His People, Part 4", in *Georgian Mythology. Transactions of the Gelati Academy of Sciences, Series of Folklore and Mythology*, 1. Kutaisi: Gelati Academy of Sciences.
25. Kluczevska, Karolina and Laura Luciani. 2025. "Framing feminism in Eurasia: bottom-up strategies of depoliticisation and repoliticisation." *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1–25.
26. Korosteleva, Elena A. and Irina Petrova. 2022. "What makes communities resilient in times of complexity and change?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 35 (2): 137–157.
27. Kreikemeyer, Anna. 2025. 'The Marginalization of Traditional and Indigenous Peacemaking in the Post-liberal Debate', *Journal of intervention and Statebuilding*, 20(2), pp. 161–181.
28. Kreikemeyer, Anna, Mariam Darchiashvili and Arzuu Sheranova. 2026. "Societal peacemaking in customary contexts in Central Eurasia", *Peacebuilding*, online first, 1–14.

29. Kubik, Jan. 2009. "Ethnography of Politics: Foundations, applications, prospects", in: *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Politics*, edited by Edward Schatz, 25-52. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
30. Lazic, Svetlana and Elena B. Stavrevska. 2024. "Peace in Plural: Towards Decolonial and Feminist Approaches to Peace." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 18 (4): 367-385.
31. Ledeneva, Alena, ed. 2018. *The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity*. London: UCL Press.
32. Lederach, John Paul. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
33. Levada, Yuri. 2004. "The Problem of Trust in Russian Public Opinion", in *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*, edited by Irina Markova, 157-172. New York: Oxford University Press.
34. Lewis, David. 2016. "Central Asia: Contested Peace", in *The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace*, edited by Sandra Pogodda, Oliver P. Richmond, and Jasmin Ramovic, 387-397. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
35. Mac Ginty, Roger. 2014. "Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies." *Security Dialogue* 45 (6): 548-564.
36. Mannergren Selimovic, Johanna. 2020. "Gendered silences in post-conflict societies: a typology." *Peacebuilding* 8 (1): 1-15.
37. Millar, Gearoid. 2014. "Disaggregating hybridity: Why hybrid institutions do not produce predictable experiences of peace." *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (4): 501-514.
38. Millar, Gearoid. 2018. *Ethnographic Peace Research: Approaches and Tensions*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
39. Millar, Gearoid. 2020. "Preserving the everyday: Pre-political agency in peacebuilding theory." *Cooperation and Conflict* 55 (3): 310-325.
40. Mostowlansky, Till. 2013. "The state starts from the family: Peace and Harmony in the Eastern Pamirs." *Central Asian Survey* 32 (4): 462-474.
41. Motlafi, Nompumelo. 2021. "Silencing and Voicing the Subaltern," in *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research*, edited by Tarja Väyrynen, Swati Parashar, Elise Féron, and Catia Confortini, 178-186, London: Routledge.
42. Petersen, Tove. 2021. "Feminist care ethics: contributions to peace theory", in *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research*, edited by Tarja Väyrynen, Swati Parashar, Elise Féron, and Catia Confortini, 28-39, London: Routledge.
43. Pia, Emily. 2013. "Narrative therapy and peacebuilding." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 7 (4): 476-491.
44. Richmond, Oliver. 2011. *A Post-Liberal Peace*. London: Routledge.
45. Robinson, Fiona. 2011. *The Ethics of Care: A Feminist Approach to Human Security*. Philadelphia Temple University Press.
46. Ruddick, Sara. 1990. *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. New York: Ballantine Books.
47. Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*: Yale University Press.
48. Sheranova Arzuu. 2020. "Chernaya kassa (Kyrgyzstan)". *Global In-formality Project*, available at: [https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chernaya_kassa_\(Kyrgyzstan\)](https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Chernaya_kassa_(Kyrgyzstan)) (accessed 29 January 2026).
49. Sheranova, Arzuu. 2026. 'Ethnographic Studies of Everyday Situated Peace between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh Bazaars and Workplaces'. *Central Asian Affairs*.
50. Sneath, David. 1993. "Social relations, networks and social organisation in post-socialist rural Mongolia." *Nomadic Peoples*, 193-207.

51. Söderström, Johanna, Åkebo, Malin and Jarstad, Anna K. 2021. „Friends, fellows, and foes: A new framework for studying relational peace.” *International Studies Review* 23 (3): 484-508.
52. Stephan-Emmrich, Manja and Philip Schröder. 2018. *Mobilities, Boundaries, and Travelling Ideas: Rethinking Trans-locality beyond Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
53. Tuhiway Smith, Linda. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
54. United Nations Women. 2025. available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en> (accessed 29 January 2026).
55. Väyrynen, Tarya. 2019. "Mundane peace and the politics of vulnerability: a nonsolid feminist research agenda." *Peacebuilding* 7 (2): 146-159.
56. Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272.
57. Ziemer, Ulrike. 2020. "Introduction: Women's Everyday Lives in the South Caucasus," in *Women's Everyday Lives in War and Peace in the South Caucasus*, edited by Ulrike Ziemer, 1-19. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
58. Ziemer, U. and Roberts, Sean P. 2024. "Populist political masculinities, gender equality, and norm contestation in Armenia and Georgia." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 26 (4): 788-811.