



Featherstone, D., Björkdahl, A., Chatterjee, I., Jazeel, T. and Williams, P. (2018) Review forum: Everyday Peace? Politics, Citizenship and Muslim lives in India, Philippa Williams, Wiley Blackwell (2015), RGS-IBG Book Series. *Political Geography*, (doi:[10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.06.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.06.001)) [Book Review]

This is the author's final accepted version.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/167888/>

Deposited on: 03 October 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow  
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

**Philippa Williams *Everyday Peace? Politics, Citizenship and Muslim lives in India*. Wiley Blackwell, RGS-IBG Series, 2015**

## **Review Symposium**

### **Introduction**

David Featherstone, School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, Glasgow University and RGS-IBG Series Editor

Philippa Williams' *Everyday Peace* makes a major contribution to making geographies of peace a central concern for political geography. This is a significant project as while it is clearly of significant relevance for political geography in diverse ways, it remains largely peripheral to debates in the sub-discipline. Williams makes this intervention original through the development of a detailed ethnographic engagement with the everyday experiences of Muslim communities in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India. Through doing so her work develops an engaged ethnographic understanding of the production and reproduction of peace in a city marked by communal tension and division. It develops an innovative account by moving an understanding of peace beyond specific debates on non-violence to think in terms of particular lived political processes – and agency. In particular the way she grounds questions of peace in everyday spaces and relations is significant, for as Annika Björkdahl argues in her contribution here, 'until now not been sufficiently theorised in relation to peace'.

This review symposium brings together contributions from three academics from different backgrounds, both within and beyond geography together with a response from Williams. The discussions raise key questions around the spatial politics of peace, questions of contested ontologies, and differing perspectives on agency and around the political articulation of work on peace. Annika Björkdahl, a political scientist from Lund University, reads *Everyday Peace?* in relation to what she terms the 'spatial turn in peace and conflict studies' and both recognises but also probes the ways in which the text engages with questions of agency. Ipsita Chatterjee, known for her work on the geographies of violence in India, reads Williams's arguments against her own work on violence in Ahmedabad, contending that there is a need to understand the persistence of violence and arguing for the importance of structures over a focus on agency. Tariq Jazeel, whose work is rooted in post-colonial geographies, raises significant questions around the gendered forms of violence.

Janaki Nair has recently argued that the conjuncture of hyper-nationalism associated with the BJP has filled 'public spaces' with a 'repressive, majoritarian version' of the nation (Nair, 2016: xiii). What Nair refers to as a 'dark neo-nationalism' depends on, and is constituted by hostility towards those who it defines itself against such as those from lower castes and Muslims and through particular gendered discourses. In this context Williams's book sets out ways of understanding practices of peace which might challenge and unsettle aspects of this context. It is also a book which raises an important set of challenges to a sub-discipline which has often structurally excluded a concern with peace from its concerns.

## Where peace 'takes place'

**Annika Björkdahl, Department of Political Science, Lund University.**

Peace is a value laden and essentially contested concept. It means different things to different people in different times and places, and it can be built at different scales such as the individual, family, community, the state, and global. Consequently, peace holds multiple understandings and the evolving critical peace research agenda captures peace not in singular but in plural peace(s). As many disciplines contribute to the field of peace research the concept of peace, its theorization, methods, ontologies and epistemologies are constantly challenged and always evolving (cf. Richmond 2008). Yet, we seem to think we know what peace is and that we can localize where peace and war take place. We also assume peace to be the opposite of war, and thus we assume that where war is present, peace is absent. However, recent developments in Peace and Conflict Studies have come to question such a neat distinction between war and peace (Mac Ginty, 2006) as well as the assumed linear development of transitions from war to peace (Galtung, 2016, cited in Björkdahl & Kappler 2017; Browne, 2014: 7). War and peace seem to be intertwined and if there ever was a clear line between them, it has become increasingly blurred. Thus, in the midst of conflict there are islands of peace and in times of peace there are outbreaks of violence (Hancock & Mitchell, 2007). This means that peace and war often co-exist and that the binary of war and peace has become unsustainable. By situating war and peace in time and space, critical peace researchers have been able to disclose the fact that peace and war are intrinsically intertwined manifestations of dynamic social processes and cannot be treated separately.

In this vein peace and conflict scholars have raised some critical questions such as what is peace? how is it built? whose peace? and peace for whom?, but little attention has been paid to the question: peace where? Recently we have seen a spatial turn in peace and conflict studies as scholars have started to pay attention to how peace is shaped by space and place and *vice versa*, and begun to explore where peace takes place. As peace is seen as embedded in place, geographers seem well placed to explore it. Unfortunately, there has not been much engagement by peace studies scholars with the research of geographers, and the geographers have so far paid more attention to war than to peace, despite repeated calls for an expansion of the 'geographies of peace' research agenda (for such calls see McConnell, Megoran and

Williams 2014; Kobashi 2009; Megoran 2011; Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel 2016; Björkdahl & Kappler 2017).

Philippa Williams book entitled *Everyday Peace?* is a response to this call for engagement with peace research and to expand and advance the research agenda of geography. It provides answers to some of the critical questions raised by peace researcher by adopting a geographical approach to investigate “how peace makes place and how a place makes peace” (p. 2). Furthermore, this book explores how we can understand the politics of peace in spatial terms and locate where peace ‘takes place’. To do so it expands conventional post-conflict spaces to map and investigate the lived experience of peace and the human agency that (re)produces the everyday peace.

Challenging conventional understandings of peace, this book rethinks peace as being situated in the everyday and as something always becoming. It explores how peace is “socially and spatially (re)produced in and through interconnected sites and scales” (p. 2). Peace is understood as a political, spatial and relational construction. It is both the product of, and the context through which, the political is assembled and negotiated across scale, articulated through different forms of peace narratives and informed by uneven geographies of power. Williams consequently views peace as contested, political and infused with power. The author then sets out to critically investigate how peace can be explored and conceptualized through key geographical conceptual tools such as space, scale and sites and how these tools can be analytically employed in the field of peace research. Williams implicitly adds temporality to spatiality by identifying moments or events in which peace is made visible, capacities of agents to resolve tensions can be mapped and different pathways to peace are possible to trace. Thereby Williams contributes to the research agenda that advances the spatial approach to the study of peace.

I find this book to make several important contributions to the inter-disciplinary field of peace research, and I would like to highlight three key ones; the analytical framing of everyday peace, the elaboration and contextualization of agency and the close reading of the city sites.

First, it builds on and complements the ‘local turn’ advanced by critical peace researchers to capture the local experiences of transitions from war to peace (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, Kappler 2014, Öjendal et al., 2017). Scholars advancing the critical peacebuilding

agenda have been able to map various local agents that operate at different scales and make competing claims about peace. Moreover, the turn to the local has also brought important implications for how we understand the nature and location of power in peacebuilding and this has opened up for rethinking three analytical concepts – peace, the everyday and agency.

The everyday seems as a fuzzy concept and it has until now not been sufficiently theorised in relation to peace. Although geographers as well as anthropologists have provided insightful research on the everyday peace and conflict scholars could engage more in-depth with this research to advance our understandings of peace as an emplaced, everyday, lived experience. By drawing on feminist geopolitical approaches to peace Williams book unpacks the notion of everyday peace and provides new understanding to what peace looks like and how we can understand it, as well as mapping the everyday as a site where peace is practiced. Such understanding of the everyday engages with lived experiences as a driving force of peace, and it emplaces peace in the lived space of the everyday. *Everyday Peace?* privileges a situated understanding of peace and forwards a grounded understanding of how peace is practiced and perpetuated through the everyday and its agents, narratives, sites and events. Reading peace in the everyday is a challenging endeavour as it means interpreting how peace acquires meaning through utterances, performances and agency. Williams also points to the challenges to the everyday peace in terms of social, political and economic inequalities and injustices. One insightful and important finding of the study is that peace masks and conceals as well as perpetuates uneven relations of power. By unpacking peace in this way, her study allows for a complex understanding of peace as comprising also what Johan Galtung (1969) refers to as structural violence. Thus, instead of upholding the binary view of war and peace, William's research points to how the social construction of post-war spaces can be considered as an embodiment of power relations, because these spaces both reflect prevailing power relations and produce new ones. This finding also opens up space where the author is able to elaborate on the politics of everyday peace and highlights tensions and contestations as well as accommodation and negotiation. Yet, the questions what is political about the everyday peace, what kind of politics of peace emerges from the everyday, and how can we understand it remain partially unanswered and provide opportunities for future research.

Second, through the analytical framing of everyday peace this monograph approaches agency, the buzzword of contemporary peace and conflict research, and aims to provide a fine-grained understanding of agency as situated in the everyday – an understanding that

attempts to move beyond the view of agency as resistance to power. Through its empirical investigation it is able to provide a contextualized account of agency and reveal how it is expressed through negotiations at different sites and scales of the everyday. Of particular interest is how the everyday peace is reproduced from the margins by agents working under the radar, in the shadow of uneven power-relations, unseen and rarely recognized by the authorities. The conceptualization of agency provided in the theoretical reasoning differentiates between types of situated agents producing peace, for example in terms of religion, such as the Mahant and the Mufti. In my view, the complexity of agency could be unfolded by a closer reading of agency through the prism of gender, which in turn would add to the study's understanding of power asymmetries and hierarchies, as well as of relations of domination and subordination. In some ways, the conceptualisation of agency remains somewhat constrained by a reactive rather than proactive view of agency i.e. common expressions of agency is often described to be reactive such as resistance to power and the proactive, transformative potential of peacebuilding agency could be more fully explored theoretically and perhaps also empirically.

Third, in order to properly investigate the everyday peace, extensive multi-site ethnographic fieldwork has been necessary. By 'being in place', the author is able to provide close and multi-layered readings of particular sites in the city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India. Williams takes as her entry point the experience of people whose everyday activities are in some ways connected to, affected by, and constituent of the spaces and peace(s) under investigation. Such an approach shows us that place, the everyday and people's experiences are the relevant elements which shapes agency as well as peace. Through the lens of peace Williams makes visible peace in city, how it is narrated, imagined and lived, as well as contested and interrupted. The situated micro-practice of "peace talks" is clearly important in its own right, but how it connects with macro practices and developments such as Hindu-Muslim co-existence, negotiations, contestations and conflict spurring the Indian state- and nation-building process are left under-theorized.

To conclude, analysing war dynamics and peace processes from a spatial perspective is slowly but steadily becoming part of peace and conflict studies. Despite the fact that this analytic perspective is essential for the field a sustained inquiry into the relationship linking peace and war with place has been long overdue. This innovative, well-researched monograph is thus much commended. Philippa Williams's work on everyday peace helps to

rethink the binaries of peace and war, to problematize the linearity of transitions from war to peace as well as to make visible the continuities of violence in peacetime. To anyone interested in everyday peace this is a theoretically scintillating and convincingly argued book. It is underpinned by impressive ethnographic fieldwork that speaks to those interested in inter-religious relations as well as secularism in India. As such, this book is a welcome contribution to the field of peace research.

### **Structuring peace, situating violence: the everyday context of political economy**

**Ipsita Chatterjee, Department of Geography and Environment, University of North Texas**

Philippa Williams's book *Everyday Peace* disrupts dominant geopolitical stereotypes that imprison Muslim identities as "terrorists," "violent," "conservative," "patriarchal," and "polygamous." In a post-September 11 world, in the aftermath of Trump's election and Muslim ban, migrant crisis, and a general existential angst about what to do with Muslims, this book is an intellectual audacity. Islamophobic identity politics popularized by the BJP in India echoes in Donald Trump's tweets, and Le Pen's speeches to create an "Endgame of globalization" (Smith 2005), a 'flat world' of Muslim othering. In that context, *Everyday Peace* brings relief, and delivers a counterhegemonic politics grounded in a feminist geopolitics of subaltern agency.

As I read the book, I felt that in many ways, it is very similar to my own PhD dissertation attempting to understand Hindu-Muslim relations in Ahmedabad city, India, in 2006. The big difference, of course, is that my work was situated in the aftermath of the 2002 riots in Gujarat that killed thousands of Muslims and unleashed unspeakable terror through burning, raping, killing, bulldozing (Chatterjee 2009a, Chatterjee 2009b, Chatterjee 2012). While, my dissertation wanted to understand how the socio-political, and cultural-economic contexts of daily life violently fragmented the urban poor, Williams wants to understand the context of everyday peace. This ontological difference is important, because it contextualizes what I value about this book, and what I critique.

I appreciate that Williams critiques much of peace and conflict literature that simplistically posits liberal democracies as peaceful versus others as violent failed states. *Everyday Peace* contests orientalist imaginations where the 'West' is the harbinger of expert knowledge and conflict resolution and therefore, must teach the 'Rest' how to live in peace. Instead, Williams calls for "situated geographies of peace" (p.5) produced through everyday inter-communal interactions.

I also appreciate that Williams deconstructs the contours of peace in Varanasi between Hindus and Muslims in a non-nostalgic, un-romanticized, and deeply material way where the unequal position of Muslims as citizens is clearly documented. The contentious history of caste oppression within the Hindu fold, conversion of low caste Hindus to Islam, and the contemporary reality of caste-based reservation that keeps Muslims outside the purview of affirmative action provide a rich context to the unequal terrains of everyday peace. The case study of the silk sari industry where the political economy of inter-communal relations is woven through a societal tapestry of Muslims as weavers and Hindus as traders is deftly narrated to signify difficult co-existence between unequals. Muslims are the laborers negotiating the reality of power cuts, competition from cheap Chinese silk, and changing fashion preferences. In contrast, the Hindu traders sit in their cushy shops, and find various ways to exploit the laboring class. Williams thus demonstrates that peace is not always the opposite of violence, but it is always political, contested, unequal, and ongoing.

I wondered why in spite of striking similarities between my study of textile mill workers in Ahmedabad and Williams's inter-community interaction in Varanasi, we adopt almost opposing ontologies to Hindu-Muslim relations. I explore the rise of Hindu-Muslim sectarianism in the context of neoliberalism and its Indian version, the New Economic Policy, associated mill closure, increase in urban poverty, erosion of the Textile Labor Association, and decline in inter-communal interactions (Chatterjee 2016). My aim was to understand violence not as sudden moments of psychological hysteria, but historically and geographically produced through a process of transformation of everyday context of existence. What is this everyday context of existence that seems to be so important for both Williams's and my work? For me, everyday contexts are structures and agents in dialectical inflection. For Williams, everyday contexts represent agents and their interactions. Williams explains, "it is not just structure of society, but also the actions of agents, both enabled and constrained by the social and political context, which are particularly crucial in preservation of communal harmony" (p.78). Where I disagree with her is her emphasis on agency to the almost complete exclusion of structures. What are these "social and political" contexts that enable or disable agents? Are they not structures? There are no agentless structures, and there are no structureless agents. Williams's ethnography is a testimony of how agents like, religious leaders, weavers and traders, local politicians and bankers, club and association leaders, are variously enabled and disabled by the state and civil society. Reality therefore, is structure-agency in a dialectical relationship. Why then explicate a theoretical position that emphasizes one over the other? I understand that emphasizing agency can be an intellectual activism against structuralist orthodoxies, but structures need not be viewed through orthodox lenses. Here I must agree with Björkdahl's comments that the discussion on agency remains constrained, I needed a deeper discussion to convince me why agentic interpretations are better than say, structuralist interpretations, or dialectical interpretations.

The porosity of the state and its melding with civil society is recognized in the context of citizenship of Hindus and Muslims, yet the porosity of the state as it leaks into the economy is left unexplored. Williams's interviewees allude to the declining silk sari industry, competition from Chinese exports, changing fashion trends as important everyday contexts. Yet, Williams never conceptually connects these empirical moments with structural adjustment and market liberalization in India, and associated globalization. Why does Williams not enquire if her agents understand when the economy changed? Or, whether they are giving up sari weaving in favor of other informal jobs? Will the sons and daughters of weavers/traders continue in the sari industry? And, how does this changing economy impact everyday peace? Structural adjustment, decline in traditional manufacturing, growing informalization define urban proletarianization and resistance in the global south (Davis 2004)



and also in India (Kannan and Papola 2007). The chapter on economic peace (sari industry) stands isolated and localized, a collection of tales from weavers and traders. The contemporary everyday context of the neoliberal capitalist state is not excavated. The sari industry doesn't just decline inexplicably, Chinese silks don't suddenly make their way into local markets, these are the disabling global political economic contexts of daily life. Situating these transitions in Hindu-Muslim livelihood practices in the context of globalization, privatization, and market liberalization would have allowed for a vivid illustration of "how local actors actively negotiate and (re)produce peace as policy, narrative, practice and strategy within different *urban spaces* and across *different scales*" (p 5, emphases mine). Otherwise, the Varanasi case remains place-sticky—a unique, exotic, and particular case of people living unequal lives in the lanes of an Indian city. Scalar transcendence is possible when conceptual connection is excavated between agents and structures, this allows us to understand the Varanasi case as simultaneously unique and general, concrete and abstract, and therefore, truly situate it from the "bottom up" (p.189). Ong (2000) achieves this scalar transcendence in her situation of political economy through the lives of women workers in South East Asia. Pratt (2004) illustrates the situated globality of Filipina migrants in Canada. Using the narratives of local de-skilling and devaluing, Pratt constructs the scalar geography of new imperialism. Feminist geopolitics is not devoid of geoeconomics and therefore, political economic contexts of globalization, neoliberalism, flexible production, and foreign competition are not larger abstractions, they define the bottom up contexts of peace.

In the context of political peace and citizenship too, I find it surprising that Williams makes no attempt to connect othering of Varanasi Muslims as "violent" and "terrorist," with the global narratives of "war on terror." Gregory (2003, p.309), for example, indicates how situated discourses of the IDF in occupied territories of Palestine involve an "absolute conjunction of world terrorism where Arafat and Bin Laden are interchangeable entities." Political economy provides scalar contexts for places to speak with other places, otherwise, "situating" can become conceptual isolation. But as Ong (2000), Pratt (2004), Gregory(2003) have shown, situating becomes empowering when it disrupts essentialized notions of scale like, the global, national, and local by making them speak to each other.

This brings us to the conceptualization of peace: Williams contends that peace need not be conceptualized as binary between negative peace (absence of violence) and positive peace (attainment of social justice) (p.5), instead, situated peace is "untidy, unequal and unjust" (p.190), it is located in places, bodies, and their everyday experiences. I completely agree that situated particularities of everyday existence can illuminate reality in a more nuanced way than disembodied, a-historical, a-geographical generalizations. But, why is this situated practice conceptualized as peace? The author repeatedly notes the marginalized, exploited, unequal position of Varanasi Muslims. This cultural marginalization and economic exploitation is contextualized through a detailed commentary of India's post-partition ethnophobic politics, the Ayodhya movement and the Muslim killings that followed. Surprisingly, missing from this narrative is the more recent 2002 pogroms in Gujarat where over two thousand Muslims were killed (Chatterjee 2012). This riot is significant because of the extreme dehumanization meted out to Muslims and, because it catapulted Mr. Modi, the then chief minister of the state, into a national figure in *Hindutva* politics winning him the prime ministerial position in 2014. Incidentally in 2013, Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh was rocked by riots. Lessons from the Gujarat riots were applied to fuel Muzaffarnagar riots (News X 2013) creating communal sectarianism that elected a Hindu fundamentalist, Yogi Adityanath as chief minister of the state. Of course, Williams could not have predicted Muzaffarnagar riots, but inclusion of the Gujarat incident could have allowed her narrative to speak to "different urban spaces" and across "geographic scales."

Based on Williams's conceptualization that peace is untidy, unequal, and unjust, how do we conceptualize Gujarat 2002 or Muzaffarnagar 2013? Are these cases of situated peace gone too untidy, become extremely unequal, and superbly unjust? If peace is unequal and messy, is there a conceptual difference between situated peace and situated violence? Unlike Williams, I see the super-exploitation of Muslims as structural violence meted out through situated practices at airports, schools, banks, government offices, and riot topographies. Would it not be dangerous to conceptualize this everyday violence as everyday peace? The exploiter can sleep soundly knowing that her/his daily act of exploitation is unequal and uncomfortable peace, but do the exploited have such luxury? When head-scarfs are torn open, people strip-searched at airports, vigilantes kill them because they are 'beef-eaters,' when they are kept out of jobs, ghettoized to oblivion, jailed without trial, not welcomed as migrants—the exploited must conceptualize these as everyday violence, otherwise, they absolve exploitative structures (and agents), and therefore, never resist them.

Despite these intellectual disagreements, I enjoyed reading *Everyday Peace*, because it made the everyday mundane intellectually potent. Williams is an expert ethnographer capable of blending in the field in such a way that subject-object dichotomy evaporates. There is much to learn from her techniques.

### **Peace, Secularism, Translation**

Tariq Jazeel, Department of Geography, University College London

*Everyday Peace?* is an engrossing ethnography of a Muslim, silk sari weaving community in the Madanpura Mohalla of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; a minority community in a predominantly Hindu city who work alongside and trade with Hindus. The book conveys Philippa Williams' intense connection with the community with which she worked through the fourteen months of fieldwork that went into this project. Indeed, one of the book's strengths is its obvious depth in terms of the knowledge that comes from the immersive experience that long-term ethnographic research enables.

I read this book as both a Geographer and a South Asianist, and for any South Asianist the book is a compelling read not least because the ethnography works to place readers in Varanasi; it offers an insight and ethnographic ways into a working Muslim community. To this extent, the book's quite frank discussion of methods – perhaps unusual for a research monograph – offers us a useful insight into just how Williams went about this task, and it is worth recognizing the considerable ethnographic craft that has gone into the research project on which this book is based.

The book makes a sustained argument about the social work required to produce everyday peace; that is to say peace between Muslims of the Madanpura Mohalla and neighboring Hindus in the city. It shows the intense social work required by Muslim individuals and

groups in the neighborhood to negotiate the ethno-communal tensions that transpire at the scales of the nation, the state, the city, and the silk-sari market. It is this work, the book argues, that produces the micro-geographies of everyday peace in the Mohalla and the city. Indeed, making transparent the significant work that goes into the production of everyday peace, what Williams refers to as a 'situated politics of peace', is one of the book's main contributions to peace studies. In other words, the book usefully advances the argument that "[w]hilst peace may be portrayed as a utopian condition that is without, or after politics and violence, the stories imparted here show how peace is political, in and of itself" (Williams 2015:178).

This is a valuable argument insofar as it shows how fragile peace is; how it is dependent on a set of contingencies, personalities, resources and abstractions. To this extent, I want to focus in particular on the book's discussion of secularism. Williams discusses secularism (in Chapter 4) in relation to the active work of minoritarian (that is, Muslim) citizenship, drawing variously upon Engin Isin's (2008) elaboration of the importance of the social in citizenship studies, Partha Chatterjee's (2004) discussion of 'political society', and Ornit Shani's (2010) work on Muslims' strategic negotiations of citizenship discourses in India in relation to the national polity. The book uses these resources to show how 'secularism' – as a founding principle of the Indian constitution – is lived, negotiated and drawn upon *as* the abstract principle that it is by Muslims in Madanpura. In other words, it shows how Muslims mobilize the principle of secularism in order to bring themselves into citizenship, how they marshal it as a persuasive rhetorical resource to retain peaceable relations in the light of their minoritarian status in the city.

In the context of a notionally secular constitution in a post-colony where Hinduism pervades the fabric of everyday life, this is a useful analytical and ethnographic argument to make about secularism's continued importance. If secularism is a constituent feature of political modernity, then as anthropologists like Talal Asad, David Scott and Saba Mahmood have shown us, its roots betray a colonial legacy of comparing all so-called 'world religions' to the template of Christianity perceived as a combination of doctrines, scriptures and beliefs. In terms of the geography of religion then, secularism is an inherently spatial term because it implies there is, there can be, an *outside* to the sacred, to the religious. In a geographical context where that understanding of the secular is anathema to everyday life, where Islam and Hinduism have very different, more encompassing, spiritual, metaphysical and spatial

resonances, *Everyday Peace?* usefully shows how secularism is mobilized by minority communities as an abstract political resource in the service of 'peace'. If this is analytically useful in the context of secularism's continuing resonance in political modernity, the book does not anticipate an obvious and more grounded question that emerges in a post-2014 political context where Narendra Modi's BJP form the majority of India's Lok Sabha (House of the People), and in a post-2017 context when the BJP swept to victory in state-wide Legislative Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. Though *Everyday Peace?* was probably in press during the former, it might have fairly anticipated these changing political contexts in the offing, and at least speculated on what difference the BJP's divisive exploitation of the Hindu-Muslim faultline will make for situated engagements with peace in India.

This book is clearly and explicitly about ethnocommunal tension, about Muslim-Hindu communitarianism that is to say. In this sense, it draws on some quite specific political histories to develop its broader argument about the geographies of everyday peace, and as such the kind of peace the book focuses on is just as specific: peace between Muslims and Hindus in Varanasi, a peace that Williams' main informants refer to via the very gendered expression 'brotherhood'. The book is explicit about the fact that women are a backstage presence in the Mohalla, suggesting that if this is a peace that is not exclusive to men, it is a peace that is patriarchal insofar it is Muslim and Hindu *men* that conduct the work required to maintain everyday peace. The book touches on the patriarchal inflection of this configuration of peace, but given it draws on the feminist geopolitics literature early on, it might push these critiques a little harder. Specifically, is peace conceived like this as 'brotherhood' a peace that is itself productive of a kind of gendered violence, or at least the exclusion of women from the processual negotiation of everyday peace? There is no doubt that women have much more to do with everyday peace than the book is able to let on, but this raises important questions about ethnographic method. In other words, what kind of ethnography would revisit the peace that 'brotherhood' names in Madanpura in order to critically engage its gendered erasures and blindspots, and importantly what difference would doing so make to the narrative about everyday peace the book tells?

It is here that I find the question mark in the book's title very useful, because as much as the book makes a sustained argument about the situated politics of peace, it also interrogated my too normative understandings of the condition of peace. In other words, the more I read the less certain I became of what peace actually is. The book is quite explicit that for Muslims in

Madanpura peace is a negotiation, and it is a negotiation for a Muslim community that entails sacrifices in terms of inclusion and justice. To live peaceably then, Muslims must accept unjust forms of marginalization in the urban, regional and national polity; they must accept their secondary status as citizens, and the discursive stigma that coalesces around them as a population. In the concluding chapter, the book is clear on this in its assertion that:

...where being 'included' typically entails not challenging the status quo then it follows that reproducing everyday peace in the real world is not contingent on realizing perfect justice. To the contrary, aspirations for ultimate justice are often conceded or superseded in order to prevent tensions and conflict and safeguard everyday peace. (Williams 2015, p.189)

This is the situated everyday peace that is the book's focus. But this begs the question of how peaceful is this peace that comes at the cost of justice, rights, reputation, representation? How is this kind of situated, everyday peace any different to a normative, liberal notion of peace conceived simply as the absence of violence? And insofar as what we end up with might harbor similarities to that liberal kind of peace, do we not also need a more abstract understanding of 'peace' as a utopian imperative, a Blochian principle if you will, to critically engage the absence of social and spatial justice for Muslim communities in India? Just as Muslims mobilized the abstract concept of secularism in their forms of active citizenship, should, or could, peace not also be this kind of utopian abstract ideal that can be strategically mobilized if it is to be anything at all? The book does not advocate a things-as-they-are kind of situated, everyday peace that evacuates this political question. It is grounded, practical, ethnographic, but theoretically it might invite us to push a little more on peace's value as an abstract principle of political modernity.

Having said this, one of the book's central arguments is that understandings of peace *need* to be situated; they need to be built from the ground up. Peace, in other words, is not an abstraction. It is lived. And the book makes this point well, though it might have pushed the point even further with some more nuanced postcolonial and translational readings of the peace narratives it brings into representation. To stress this is just one more way of digging into that question 'what exactly is peace?', or 'what exactly do people mean when they talk about and conceptualize peace, and what are the spatial politics of these understandings of peace?' What these questions mobilize are the idiomatic resonances of the 'peace' about

which people spoke. The book refers at times to peace via the Hindi or Bhojpuri word, *Shanti*, coming from the Sanskrit, and presumably a word used by Hindu respondents in the study. Likewise, I am curious whether Muslim participants used the Urdu word *Aman*? And I ask simply because these are words freighted in their respective contexts; they have connections to, and meanings within, Hindu and Islamic metaphysics, and are by no means secular in that sense. So their deployment is not necessarily innocent, transparent, and universal. In this broader attempt to situate peace, the simple question is what difference this kind of translational and postcolonial attention to different mobilizations of peace might offer?

*Everyday Peace?* is a book that bristles with suggestive intellectual and ethnographic energy. It is also a book that achieves the difficult task of speaking between a set of disciplinary concerns regarding the geographies of peace, and the fine grained and forensic lens required to engage the particularities of a place. To this extent, the book speaks to how disciplinary geography can effectively take forward particular concept-metaphors or debates within the discipline, but at the same time retain a fidelity to grounded imperatives of area studies.

### **Place, gender and the violence of everyday peace**

**Philippa Williams, School of Geography, Queen Mary's University of London**

It is a privilege to respond to three diverse and illuminating sets of critiques from colleagues in geography, peace studies and south Asian studies. In the course of writing the book, it was a rewarding yet challenging task to bridge and extend these distinct spheres of scholarship, so it is with some satisfaction that, at the very least, the book agitates debate about the meaning and content of peace. I am indebted to Annika Björkdahl, Ipsita Chatterjee and Tariq Jazeel for devoting their energy to this review, and for the opportunity to update and further the discussion on *Everyday Peace?* The cultural politics of north India have shifted substantially since the period (2006-2011) on which research for this book was based.

I will begin by responding to Ipsita Chatterjee's provocative commentary that *Everyday Peace?* might, or rather should, have been a book about everyday violence, given that the cultural inequality and economic exploitation that it describes, as experienced by Varanasi's Muslim weavers, is in fact, 'structural violence'. It is because I agree on the reality of the latter, that I must defend the book against Chatterjee's central disagreement. I interrogate inter-community coexistence in Varanasi by problematizing the idea of *Everyday Peace?* because people, from local sari weavers and shopkeepers, to the city's religious leaders and prime time news anchors, talked about Varanasi, as a 'peaceful' city. In the face of tension, conflict or violence within local, national and/or geopolitical spaces, these terms were deployed as spatial strategies and rhetorical techniques to deter the possibility of (escalating) conflict and perpetuate peaceful Hindu and Muslim relations. Failing to centrally

foreground 'peace' in this account, would have missed an important opportunity to show how the term 'peace', and its locally expressed cognates, such as a 'brotherhood', acted as smokescreens which served to depoliticise and reproduce uneven geographies of power in the city.

The underlying point here is that *place* matters, as Annika Björkdahl notes in her commentary, and it determines why Ipsita Chatterjee and I have carved out divergent frameworks for interpreting Hindu-Muslim coexistence in India over roughly similar timeframes. The city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat where Ipsita Chatterjee conducted fieldwork, is widely interpreted to be India's most 'riot prone city', which has in part, been attributed to the decline of its civic associational life which was rooted in the trade unions and business associations (Varshney 2002). The violence in Gujarat, 2002 (see *EP?* p.28, 57, 112), led to further polarisation of Ahmedabad's communities, and the active discrimination of its Muslim residents, so it is no wonder that Chatterjee adopts her ontology of violence. Whilst there are common macro processes, namely neo-liberalising India and the 'war-on-terror' in the context of globalisation, the politics and personalities of place matter, in shaping how these macro events differentially interacted in the everyday spaces of Varanasi and Ahmedabad. Contrary to Chatterjee's claims, I argue that these macro processes are woven into the book's narrative analysis through attention to citizenship as a means of interpreting the scalar politics of peace.

Chatterjee appreciates the book's emphasis on peace as political, yet it is striking that in her reproduction of its title, unlike Björkdahl and Jazeel, she omits to include the question mark in the original draft of her piece. Though subtle, the active questioning of 'everyday peace' is central to the book's argument about the need to interrogate the lived reality of peaceful narratives, and in so doing, to make visible the structural inequalities and violence upon which ideas about urban peace were sustained, as Annika Björkdahl's commentary concurs. Far from letting 'the exploiter' off the hook, the book seeks to document how structural violence underpins the (re)making of urban peace. Taking up Arundhati Roy's language, one might argue that everyday peace is a low-level war for ordinary Muslims in this city, and exposing this demands that 'peace correspondents ... re-create the rhythms of the endless crisis of normality' to expose the policies and processes that put ordinary things, like food, water, shelter and dignity out of reach (Roy 2008, p.107). From this vantage point, the book questions why is it, that despite of, or because of, uneven power relations and histories of violence, those who are marginalised continue to believe in, and act towards, the possibility of peace? It is therefore important to clarify that the conceptual difference between situated peace and situated violence concerns the dominant frames of debate, and that articulations of violence can exist within conceptual understandings of peace. As Annika Björkdahl remarks it is important to destabilise the binary between war and peace and 'to make visible the continuities of violence in peacetime' (see Galtung, 1996).

Yet, as Tariq Jazeel cogently questions, 'how peaceful this peace is that comes at the cost of justice, rights, reputation, representation?'. In this, as in other collaborative projects (e.g. McConnell et al. 2014), my starting point has been to disrupt utopian ideas of peace, so Tariq Jazeel's call for peace as a 'utopian abstract ideal that can be strategically mobilised' as a means to 'critically engage the absence of social and spatial justice for Muslim communities in India' offers a thought-provoking intervention. But, as I propose in the book, the idea of Indian secularism acts as a utopian vision for peace, underpinned by the guiding aspiration that peace concerns spaces of tolerance, freedom, respect and equality between different communities (Williams 2015, p. 3). As an *ideal*, underpinned by a concept of justice as fairness it played a powerful role, in instrumental and generative ways as Jazeel remarks in his commentary. However, the book shows that in practice, the differentiated nature of

minority citizenship along religious-cultural lines undermines the protection of socio-economic rights, which ultimately services a putative peace. If a re-imagined utopian vision of peace is to be of any value, it must therefore shift the social and economic dimensions of justice to the centre stage for *all* of India's citizens.

Where secularism concerns the relationship between state, religion and society, the practice of Indian secularism depends in part on the performative quality of the institutions and actors that oversee it. Recent events in India have demonstrated, though not for the first time, the potential for India's secular ideal to be subverted. The framing of secularism as 'minoritarianism' or 'pseudo-secularism' within an increasingly dominant Hindu nationalist public sphere, directed by Narendra Modi as Prime Minister and leader of the Hindu right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), serves to close down the everyday spaces of transformative opportunity that I documented in the book. Within this shifting cultural political milieu, the contingent nature of everyday peace in Varanasi is made plainly clear. Not just place, but time, also matters.

This brings me to Annika Björkdahl's observation about temporality being implicit yet underplayed in *Everyday peace?* Returning to Varanasi in the first part of 2017, over ten years since I first visited the city, I witnessed a significant transformation in the nature of everyday peace. Following a landslide victory by the BJP in the state elections, the appointment of the Hindu right priest, Yogi Adityanath, to the position of UP's Chief Minister had further emboldened the Hindu right. Muslim weavers and businessmen whom I originally interviewed for the book's research now spoke about a rise in fear not experienced since the 1990s, when political Hindu nationalism ascended on the back of anti-Muslim violence in towns and cities across north India. Their fear was rooted in recent personal experiences of anti-Muslim aggression on the city's streets, for instance, the physical assault of a young Muslim man, as well as abusive and discriminatory language against a group of young Muslim males and on another occasion a Muslim family travelling by rickshaw. The news and video footage of such incidents travelled much faster than before, this time by Whatsapp and Facebook, which together with inflammatory material received by both Hindus and Muslims, about the other community, served to normalise divisive opinion and hasten the escalation of tensions.

In the public sphere, the growing prominence of Hindu nationalist sentiment was visible in the saffronisation of the streets, where the traditional red or green *gumchar* (cotton cloth worn on the head or around neck) worn by men in the city, was being traded for saffron, a colour symbolic of the Hindu right and Yogi Adityanath's militant organisation, the Hindu Yuva Vahini. Adityanath's hallmark policy which ordered the closure of unlicensed slaughter houses across Uttar Pradesh was widely interpreted as an attack on the economic and cultural rights of the state's Muslim and Dalit communities, who predominantly work in the industry as waged labourers, and are the primary (but not only) consumers of meat. Moreover, the debate provoked and reproduced around the 'cow protection' debate serves to distract all communities from more germane concerns about Muslim social-economic rights (see Khan 2017). Rising incidents of physical violence and deepening structural violence against Muslim Ansaris undoubtedly altered the composition of everyday peace. In this context, what was more apparent than ever was the responsibility felt by Muslim Ansaris to keep the city's peace. Muslim elders advised their sons and nephews against travelling through Hindu majority areas, other than for essential business, and not to respond, let alone retaliate if they experienced provocation or violence. The struggle to maintain everyday peace was fought from positions of fear and desperation, and with the knowledge that the current constellation of party politics meant they had no alternatives, and very little hope of transforming everyday life.



Even whilst proposing the need for a utopian peace, Tariq Jazeel's commentary celebrates the value of situated, long term empirical research, and reinforces his case for the need to resist institutional architectures which reward universalising theories at the expense of valuing the specificity of Area studies (see also Jazeel, 2016). Central to this, is the imperative not only to reorient the sites from where a kind of universalising of the provincial may take place, but by necessity pay closer attention to language and translation. In Varanasi, Tariq Jazeel is right to highlight the dominant use of the Hindi/Bhojpuri word for peace, *shanti*. I argue that together with *tana-bana* and *bhaichara*, this dominated the lexicon of peace within public spheres which both reflects and reinforces uneven relations of power within the city, if not the nation, where local Madanpuria concepts did not inspire more widespread circulation. In thinking about translation, I am reminded of Daley's focus on the swaheli term 'ubuntu' and its local resonances for peaceful community dynamics (Daley 2014), Heathershaw's (2008) Tajik discourses for different kinds of peace, as well as research by Laliberte (2014) which explored the topographies of peaceful narratives in Uganda. Yet, there is ample scope within my own research, as well as geography more widely, to learn from the approach of linguistic anthropology to understanding peace, that explicitly privileges language and narrative, in not only everyday public life, but also cultural productions and their relation to social interaction.

This brings me to the question of *who* is making peace. The commentaries by Tariq Jazeel and Annika Björkdahl challenge the book's gendered perspective on peace and its reactive rather than proactive approach to uncovering agencies towards peace. As I contend in the book's conclusion (p.185), and Katherine Brickell persuasively elucidated in the panel discussion at the Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference (2016), the focus on male actors in re-making peace in the public sphere offers a constructive counter to mainstream narratives that emphasise the intrinsic nexus between women, nonviolence and peace-making (see Diop 2002; Charlesworth 2008). Yet, like all research, mine had its limits, and an ethnographic project on everyday peace that more effectively transcended 'public' and 'private' spaces would further illuminate the patriarchal underpinnings of 'brotherhood' as well as the relationship between men, masculinity and peace. The latter is indeed an area rich for geographical research. Whether such an approach would change the overarching narrative of the book is debatable, but in combination with closer attention to linguistic formations around social relations, such as use of the English word 'tension' (p.176) it would likely yield important insights into the moral and emotional politics that (re)produce 'everyday peace', akin to that of Ring (2006) on inter-ethnic relations in a Pakistani apartment block. One of the key strands of thinking in the book is that peace is *political*, as scholars pursuing studies on peace we must focus our questions on *who* gets *what* kind of peace and *how* is the idea and reality of peace (re)produced. Central to this, is the need to continue to 'rethink peace as being situated in the everyday and as something always becoming' (Björkdahl), where agency is key to understanding how peace is at once intimate and local, but always socially and spatially contingent on wider structures and transformations.

## References

Björkdahl, A. & Buckley-Zistel, S. (2016) *Spatialising Peace and Conflict. Mapping the production of Places, Sites and Scales of Violence*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Björkdahl, A. & Kappler, S. (2017) *Peacebuilding and Spatial Transformation. Peace, Space and Place*. London and New York: Routledge.

Browne, V., (2014) *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History*, New York: Palgrave.

Charlesworth, H (2008) 'Are women peaceful? Reflections on the role of women in peace-building', *Feminist Legal Studies*, 16:3, 347-361

Chatterjee, I. (2016) 'Beyond the Factory: Struggling with Class and Class Struggle in the Post-industrial Context' in *Capital and Class* 40: 2, 263-281.

Chatterjee, I. (2012) 'How are they othered? Globalization, Identity and Violence in an Indian city' *The Geographical Journal*, 178: 2, .134-146.

Chatterjee, I. (2009a) 'Social Conflict and the Neoliberal City: A case of Hindu-Muslim violence in India' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34: 2,143-160.

Chatterjee, I. (2009b) 'Violent Morphologies: Landscape, border and scale in Ahmedabad conflict' *Geoforum*, 40: 6 103-113.

Chatterjee, P. (2004) *The politics of the governed: reflections on popular politics in most of the world*, Columbia University Press: New York

Daley, P. (2014) Unearthing the local: hegemony and peace discourses in Central Africa. In Eds. McConnell, F., N. Megoran and P. Williams *Geographies of Peace* London: I.B. Tauris, 66-86.

Davis, M. (2004) 'The urbanization of empire' *Social Text* 81, 22: 4, 9-15.

Diop, B. (2002) 'Engendering the peace process in Africa: women at the negotiating table' *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 21, 142-154

Galtung, J., 1969. 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research' *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3, 167-191.

Gregory, D. (2003) 'Defiled Cities' *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*,. 25: 3,.307-326

Hancock, L. & Mitchell, C., (2007) *Zones of Peace*. Bloomfiels CT: Kumarian Press.

Isin, E. (2008) *Recasting the social in citizenship*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto

Jazeel, T. (2015). Between area and discipline: Progress, knowledge production and the geographies of Geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40: 5, 649-667.

Kannan KP, Papola TS (2007) Workers in the informal sector: Initiatives by India's National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS). *International Labour Review* 146: 321-9.

- Kappler, S., (2014) *Local Agency and Peacebuilding: EU and International Engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and South Africa*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kobayashi, A., (2009) 'Geographies of Peace and Armed Conflict: Introduction', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99: 5, 819-826
- Mac Ginty, R., (2006) *No War, No Peace: The Rejuvenation of Stalled Peace Processes, and Peace Accords*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Mac Ginty, R. & Richmond, O., (2013) 'The Local Turn in Peacebuilding' *Third World Quarterly*, 34:5, 763-783.
- Mahmudabad, A.K. (2017) The Future of Muslim politics in the wake of Adityanath's elevation. *The Caravan: A Journal of Politics and Culture*. 1 June 2017. Last accessed 21 September 2017: <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/muslim-politics-adityanath>
- McConnell, F., N. Megoran and P. Williams (2014) *Geographies of Peace* London, I.B. Tauris.
- Megoran, N., (2011) 'War and peace? An agenda for peace research practice in geography' *Political Geography* 30(4), pp. 178-189.
- Nair, J. (2016) 'Introduction: A Teach-In for the JNU Spring' in *What the Nation Really Needs to Know: the JNU Nationalism Lectures* Noida: Harper Collins, ix-xxv.
- NewsX (2013) 'Communal riots in India: Muzaffarnagar riots- Amit Shah gets targeted by both congress and BJP'. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrO\\_i52T6AM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrO_i52T6AM), accessed on: May 4, 2017
- Öjendal, Joakim, Isabell Schierenbeck and Caroline Hughes (2017) *The Local Turn: The Liberal Peace Challenged*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ong, A. (2000) 'Gender and labor politics of postmodernity.' In *Globalization and the challenges of a new century* ed. P. O'Meara, H.D. Mehlinger, and M. Krain, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 253-81.
- Pratt, G. (2004) *Working Feminism* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Roy, A. (2005) *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*. London. Penguin Books.
- Shani, O. (2010) 'Conceptions of citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', *Modern Asian Studies* 44: 1, 145-173.
- Smith, N. (2005) 'Endgame of Globalization' *Political Geography*, 25, 1, 1-14
- Richmond, O., (2008) *Peace in International Relations*. London and New York: Routledge.

Varshney, A. (2002) *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life. Hindus and Muslims in India* Yale, Yale University Press.