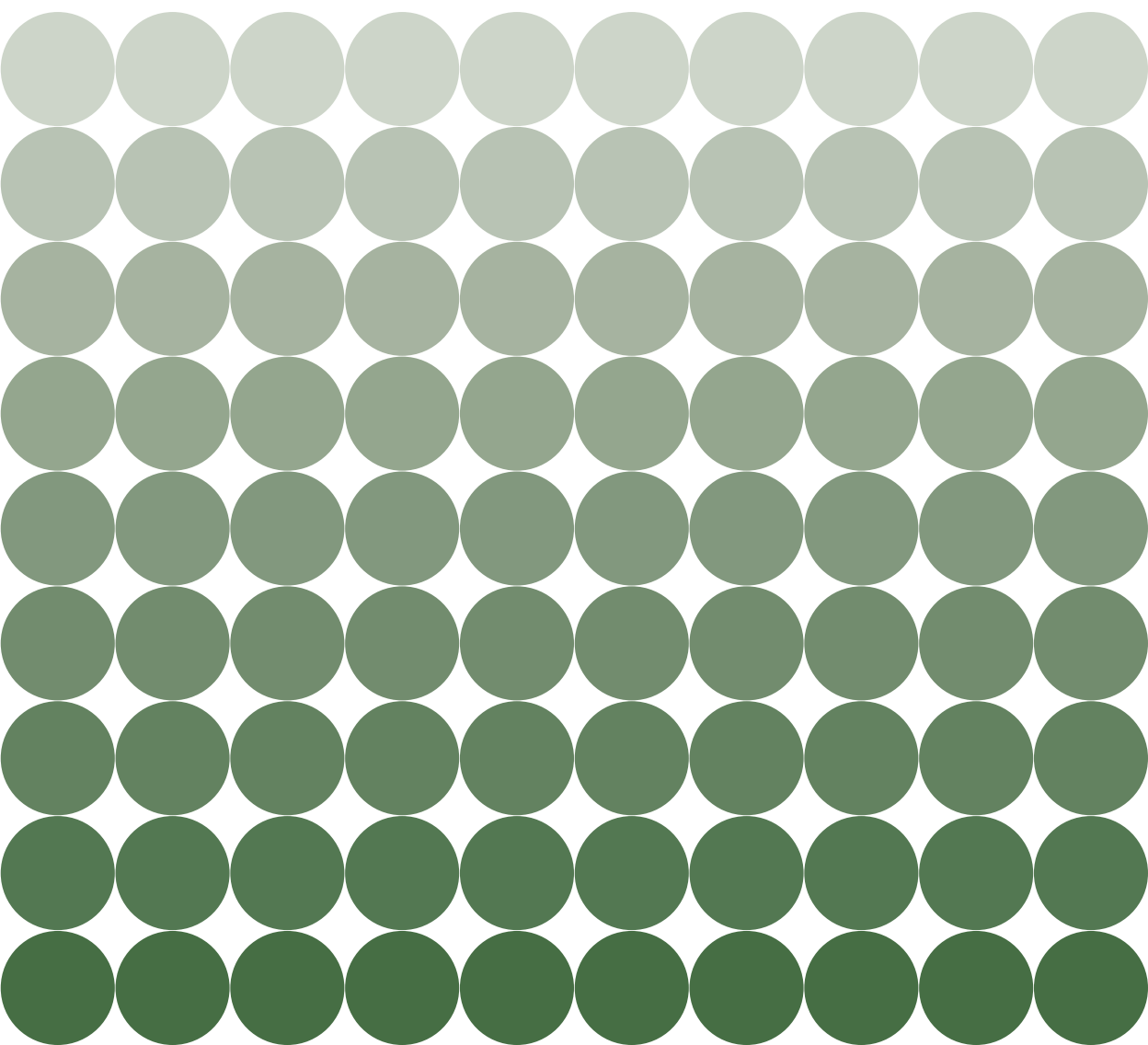


# **BUILDING EVERYDAY PEACE IN KIRKUK, IRAQ**

The potential of locally focused  
interventions

DYLAN O'DRISCOLL



## **STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

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# Building everyday peace in Kirkuk, Iraq

The potential of locally focused interventions

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DYLAN O'DRISCOLL



**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL  
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# Preface

Contemporary Iraq is scarred by decade upon decade of violent conflict—civil war between the state and Kurdish groups, interstate war with Iran in the 1980s and with US-led coalitions in 1991 and 2003, civil wars again in the years since 2003 through the rise and demise of Islamic State. The legacies of these conflicts have created a profound need for concerted efforts towards reconciliation and peacebuilding. Kirkuk, the focus of this paper, is one area where the need is especially acute.

Kirkuk's importance in Iraq is defined, as the paper argues, by its oil reserves, its demography and its strategic position. Its status, accordingly, was directly addressed in Iraq's constitution of 2005. Nonetheless, against a background of protracted conflict over the control of Kirkuk, it remains one of the disputed territories whose boundaries are contested.

Combined, these elements mean peacebuilding efforts in Kirkuk are of key importance. However, political actors in Kirkuk, the central government, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq have repeatedly failed to reach a political agreement on the future of the province. There have been significant international efforts to help reach an agreement among the leaderships of the different groups. Political deadlock has nonetheless persisted. The local population has suffered the most as a result.

The field of peacebuilding is relatively new in both the study of conducive conditions for sustainable peace and in policy. Recently, there has been a growing interest in efforts to improve the everyday lives of the population in conflict and post-conflict societies. Peacebuilding at the local everyday level can bring people together, improve their lives, reduce everyday conflict and help establish a better basis for reaching a high-level settlement. It also provides many opportunities for peacebuilding efforts to affect positive change.

This paper takes a local turn to the study of peace and conflict in Kirkuk, examining opportunities and providing recommendations for peacebuilders to focus interventions on the local everyday level. As such it represents a shift in research on Kirkuk, which up until now has focused heavily on the elite level. Through using the bazaar as a site of study this paper offers a unique insight into the daily interactions in Kirkuk and gives a much-needed understanding of community relations and the factors that influence them, as the basis for practical policy recommendations.

Dan Smith  
Director, SIPRI  
Stockholm, September 2019



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Dr Dylan O'Driscoll  
Stockholm, September 2019

# Summary

Since the end of Ottoman control of the territory of Iraq and the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq under British Administration in 1921, conflict has emerged in Kirkuk over political and territorial control, and this conflict intensified after the 2003 United States-led invasion of the country. As a result, Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen politicians have been competing for power with little sign of compromise. Conflict in Kirkuk mirrors and often feeds into ethnosectarian competition in the central government, making peace in Kirkuk important to the country as a whole. Despite the failure of elites to demonstrate a willingness to compromise in Kirkuk, peacebuilders, policymakers and donors have focused considerable attention on the elite level and have ignored the local side of peacebuilding, where there is potential to create positive change.

In order to better understand that potential, survey research was undertaken with 511 participants in the main bazaar in Kirkuk, a key location for socializing between people from different ethnosectarian groups. The research explored the local side of peacebuilding and the influence that time, space and multiple layers of privilege have on everyday peace and everyday conflict in Kirkuk.

By exploring how, when and by whom acts of everyday peace and conflict are performed, this paper highlights how interventions can be developed to limit the drivers of conflict and maximize the drivers of peace. A more thorough understanding of these issues allows for the development of policies that are better targeted to reduce inequalities between ethnosectarian groups and develop local peace. The paper offers recommendations for both local and international peacebuilders, highlights why donors should fund locally focused peacebuilding efforts, and encourages national actors to develop inclusive security solutions. Thus, it is relevant to those working on peacebuilding in Iraq, those working on local peacebuilding, and those interested in how the 'local turn' in peacebuilding literature can inform policy.

This paper highlights five key areas where attention should be focused in order to build acts of everyday peace in Kirkuk: (a) language, (b) intergroup relations, (c) acts of everyday conflict, (d) use of space, and (e) privilege. Based on these themes, recommendations are offered for ways to strengthen intergroup relations, limit the role of social privilege as a driver of conflict, build peace from the bottom up, target the most marginalized, and reduce inequalities between and within ethnosectarian groups—in short, to inhibit the drivers of conflict and enhance the drivers of peace.

The paper presents the following key findings and related recommendations:

1. The bazaar is an important site for everyday peacebuilding, a potential starting point from which peace can be built outwards. To preserve and enhance this potential, it is important to invest in renovating the bazaar and expanding its social spaces.
2. There is a direct correlation between people's ability to speak each other's languages and their social interactions. To encourage more such interactions, it is important to offer language learning programmes, particularly for Sunni Arabs, who have the lowest proficiency in the other Kirkuki languages and the lowest level of interaction with other ethnosectarian groups.
3. Women feel less comfortable and socialize less in the bazaar than men; more than one-third of women feel unsafe in the bazaar, and the majority of women feel they are treated unequally. A range of interventions, from encouraging more women to become shopkeepers and police officers to creating women-only spaces for socializing, have the potential to make the bazaar a safer and more welcoming space for women.
4. Kurds are widely perceived as having the most influence both in the bazaar and in Kirkuk in general. To alleviate the impact that this influence has on inequality and increased acts of everyday conflict, it is important to reduce tensions by changing the way space is used, building community (and more representative) policing, and offering education programmes that give a better understanding of the different cultures and the impact of individual actions.

This study finds that for the most part people do engage in acts of everyday peace, with everyday conflict increasing only at distinct times, such as certain holidays. As a result, there is potential for policies and interventions to focus on improving the bazaar as a site for building intercommunal relations and enhancing acts of everyday peace. The recommendations put forward in this paper offer a starting point for a shift in the way peacebuilding is understood and practised in Kirkuk. The aim is to move away from a sole focus on top-down peacebuilding and towards the inclusion of bottom-up peacebuilding in order to build a better basis for a high-level political agreement, while improving the daily lives of Kirkukis.

# Abbreviations

IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan



# 1. Introduction

Kirkuk is a historically multi-ethnosectarian city and province, which has seen conflict over its political and territorial control since the end of Ottoman control and the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq under British administration in 1921. Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens all compete for power within the Provincial Council and the security apparatuses, and the Kurds advocate for the annexation of Kirkuk to the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Control of the province also has substantial financial implications: it has significant reserves of oil and gas as well as the infrastructure to extract and export them. Kirkuk forms part of the disputed territories (see figure 1.1), which are 14 administrative districts nominally under federal control but claimed as part of the KRI. The stakes for control of Kirkuk are high.

Kirkuk has a history of Arabization (moving Arabs in and expelling members of other communities, particularly Kurds), which is discussed in more detail in the next section. That and the lack of valid census data have made the resolution of its political status difficult, as the size of each group can easily be contested. Past attempts to solve this problem have not been successful. Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law, the provisional constitution following the 2003 Iraq War, called for the normalization (return of citizens expelled or moved during Arabization) of Iraq's disputed territories, including Kirkuk, followed by a census and then a referendum on the territories' constitutional status; and Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution called for the implementation of Article 58 by 31 December 2007. However, successive governments have failed to implement it, and at this stage implementation would drive conflict rather than peace.<sup>1</sup>

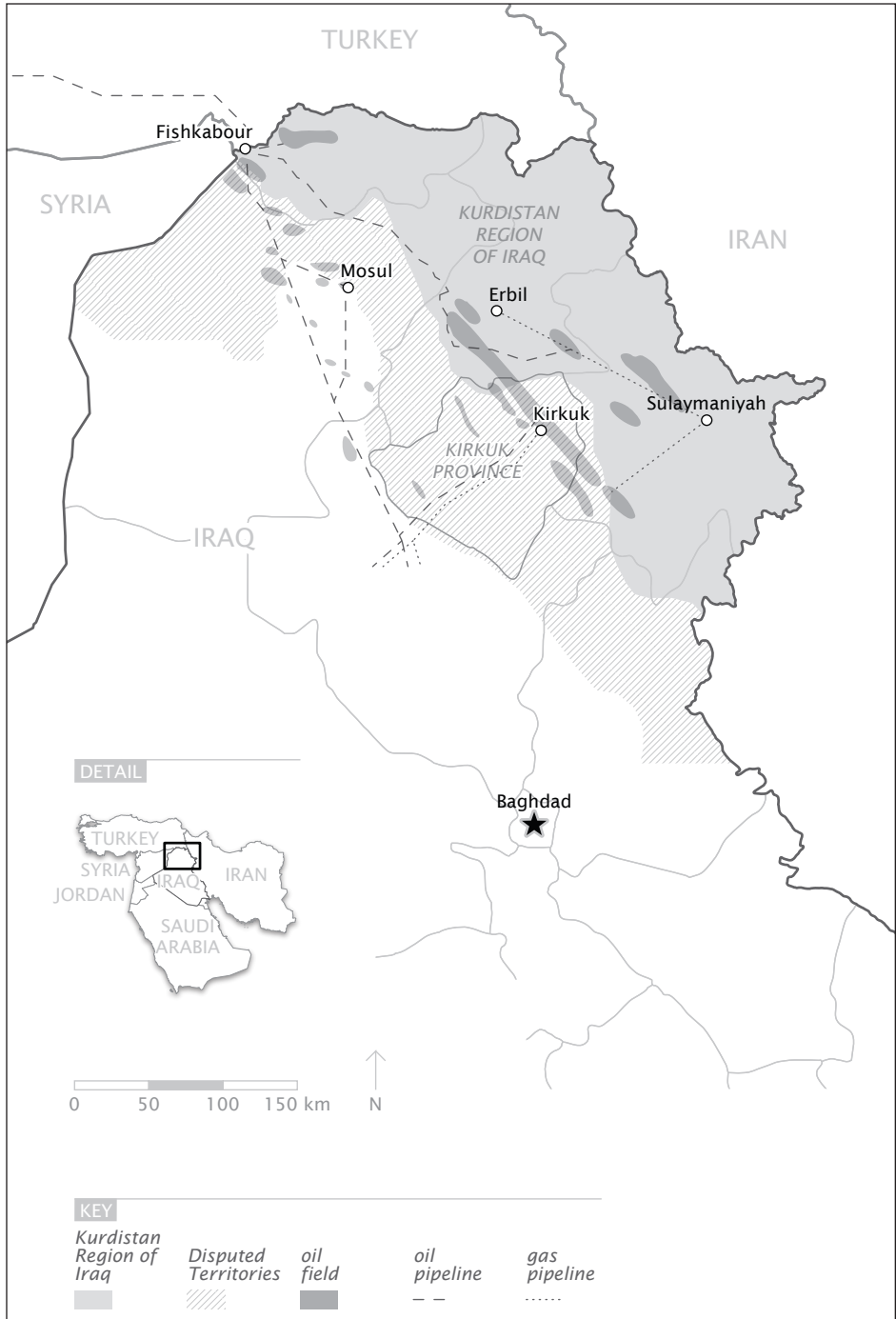
A number of important Iraqi conflicts play out in Kirkuk. Firstly, conflict in Kirkuk mirrors, and feeds into, ethnosectarian tensions in the central government. This is particularly evident with the conflict between the Kurds and the central government over the Kurdish desire for increased autonomy. This conflict was exacerbated following the Kurdish referendum for independence (which included Kirkuk and other disputed territories), resulting in Iraqi forces taking control of Kirkuk by force and the Kurdish forces, who had controlled security since 2014, retreating to the KRI. Secondly, competition between the two main Kurdish political parties plays out in Kirkuk; for example, it took 21 months to agree on a candidate for governor, despite the strategic importance this position holds for the Kurds.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the various security actors operating in Iraq—the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and Kurdish Peshmerga—meet in Kirkuk, and tensions between them have repercussions for the rest of Iraq.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> O'Driscoll, D., 'Conflict in Kirkuk: A comparative perspective of cross-regional self-determination disputes', *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2018), pp. 37–54.

<sup>2</sup> Abdulla, H., 'Following 21 months of negotiations PUK and KDP finally agree on candidate for position of Kirkuk governor', *Kirkuk Now*, 11 July 2019.

<sup>3</sup> The PMF (Popular Mobilization Forces), also known as the Hashd al-Shaabi, is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization composed of a number of militias. Although it is predominantly Shiite, it also includes Christian, Shabak, Sunni, Turkmen, Yazidi and other ethnosectarian groups. Peshmerga is

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**Figure 1.1.** The geopolitical position of Kirkuk, hydrocarbon reserves, and pipelines

Finally, regional actors, such as Turkey and Iran, also have a vested interest in Kirkuk and support their preferred local actors. Kirkuk has gained an almost iconic status, with struggles over its future and control representing the different communities' visions for Iraq. It features prominently in national election campaigning and government formation negotiations, often fuelling conflict between groups. For all these reasons, peace in Kirkuk is important for peace in Iraq.

Despite the importance of Kirkuk, conflict there has received limited analytical attention. Most of the scholarship that does address the subject focuses on top-down and institutional analyses.<sup>4</sup> It ignores the 'local turn' in recent peacebuilding scholarship, which highlights the importance of bottom-up efforts and locally focused analysis.<sup>5</sup> After all, it is not in the Kirkuk Provincial Council where physical violence occurs, but rather on the streets of Kirkuk.

Mirroring the literature, the majority of peacebuilding initiatives in Kirkuk—including trips for political actors to places where conflict between ethnosectarian groups is seen to have been mitigated, such as Northern Ireland, and high-level negotiations hosted in numerous countries—have also focused on elites rather than on local efforts and conditions. Despite significant investment by a range of actors (including the European Union, United Nations, United Kingdom and United States), no peace settlement in Kirkuk has been reached.

Focusing on the everyday allows for an understanding of local manifestations of conflict, which can be used to inform peacebuilding processes. Furthermore, the everyday allows us to understand power dynamics and community relations.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it is important for interventions to engage with the local, everyday side of peacebuilding. Although international peace actors and donors claim to promote peace through their interventions, the processes they support seldom bring about much change in people's everyday lives.<sup>7</sup> At the heart of the local turn is the idea of making peacebuilding context-specific and tailoring it to local needs and culture, which may be at odds with standardized policies and reporting promoted by the international peacebuilding system.<sup>8</sup> Proponents of the local turn argue that for peacebuilding efforts to be sustainable, they must engage at the local level, where structural obstacles to peace can be better identified and addressed.<sup>9</sup>

the name given to the Kurdish military force, which is split into two factions, each controlled by one of the two largest Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Anderson, L. and Stansfield, G., *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 2009); O'Driscoll, D., 'Throwing water over the tinderbox: An alternative for Kirkuk', PhD dissertation, University of Exeter, 2014; O'Driscoll (note 1).

<sup>5</sup> Mac Ginty, R. and Richmond, O. P., 'The local turn in peace building: A critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 5 (2013), pp. 763–83.

<sup>6</sup> Vogel, B., 'Understanding the impact of geographies and space on the possibilities of peace activism', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 53, no. 4 (2018), pp. 431–48.

<sup>7</sup> Bjorkdahl, A. and Kappler, S., *Peacebuilding and Spatial Transformation: Peace, Space and Place* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2017); and Mac Ginty and Richmond (note 5).

<sup>8</sup> Mac Ginty and Richmond (note 5).

<sup>9</sup> Mac Ginty and Richmond (note 5).



Peace requires peacebuilding efforts at all levels, as they feed into and build on one another.<sup>10</sup> Locally focused peacebuilding may give rise to opportunities that would otherwise be missed, as peace does not necessarily mean the same thing at the local and government levels. At the local level, people are more interested in going about their daily lives with minimal conflict, and when obstacles to achieving this are removed, relationships between groups can improve.<sup>11</sup>

Increased knowledge of how, when and by whose efforts conflict and peace emerge in the everyday lives of Kirkukis can help to further understanding of the drivers of conflict and peace, which is crucial for peacebuilding interventions. Although academics have begun to focus increasingly on local, everyday realities in conflict-affected societies, their findings have been slow to take hold among policymakers, and particularly among international peacebuilders.<sup>12</sup>

### **Aim of this paper**

The main aim of this paper is to highlight options for peacebuilders and policymakers to minimize the drivers of conflict and strengthen the drivers of peace in Kirkuk. Focusing on the local and everyday, the paper represents a significant shift in the analysis of the Kirkuk conflict and proposes a change to how peacebuilders (particularly international actors) work in Kirkuk—moving from a focus on elites to greater emphasis on local peacebuilding.

The paper recommends locally focused policies and initiatives to promote acts of peace and reduce acts of conflict. Peace in Kirkuk is interconnected with peace in Iraq as a whole, and while political intransigence continues, there is much that can be done at the local level to improve community relations and reduce everyday conflict, which in turn can help establish a better basis for a high-level political settlement.

In order to do this, the research focuses on Kirkuk's central bazaar, which surrounds the historic citadel and forms the heart of the city. Kirkuk's neighbourhoods are largely ethnically homogenous, but all communities regularly meet and interact informally in the bazaar. It has some of the highest interactions between different ethnosectarian groups in the city, and these interactions influence wider community relations. It has strong links to Kirkuki history and culture. Its economic activity also makes it relevant to peacebuilding: 'the economic is part of the everyday,' and economic interactions can be used to improve community relations.<sup>13</sup> Given these dynamics, the bazaar can be used as an entry point for local peacebuilding.

<sup>10</sup> Vernon, P., *Local Peacebuilding: What Works and Why* (Peace Direct: Washington, DC, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Mac Ginty and Richmond (note 5).

<sup>12</sup> Mac Ginty and Richmond (note 5).

<sup>13</sup> Distler, W., Stavrevska, E. B. and Vogel, B., 'Economies of peace: Economy formation processes and outcomes in conflict-affected societies', *Civil Wars*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2018), p. 140; and Thomas, J. and Vogel, B., 'Intervention gentrification and everyday socio-economic transactions in intervention societies', *Civil Wars*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2018), pp. 217–37.

## Theoretical framework

This paper uses the everyday as an entry point to examine the interaction between the drivers of conflict and peace within the deeply divided society of Kirkuk. The everyday is seen as the mundane and trivial practices of daily life where acts of localized or individualized resistance or compliance are carried out, which often reflect the local political order.<sup>14</sup> Within that local focus, this analysis pays particular attention to three elements—privilege, space and time—which have the most influence on people’s behaviour in relation to everyday peace and everyday conflict.

In deeply divided societies, certain ethnosectarian identities have more privilege than others, due to the role that social connections in the government, local administration and security services play. Thus, social capital (membership in social groups and networks), which is directly connected to ethnosectarian identity, is important. In Kirkuk, social capital is the most influential form of capital and creates more privilege than either economic capital or individual status in society.<sup>15</sup>

However, ethnosectarian groups are not homogenous, and various factors—such as gender, class and age—affect the level of privilege within each group. Analysis of peace and conflict at the local level must move beyond the role of ethnosectarian identity to include an intersectional analysis, which examines the impact that the intersection of a person’s different identities has on that person’s level of privilege, and how that affects their ability to carry out acts of everyday peace and everyday conflict.<sup>16</sup>

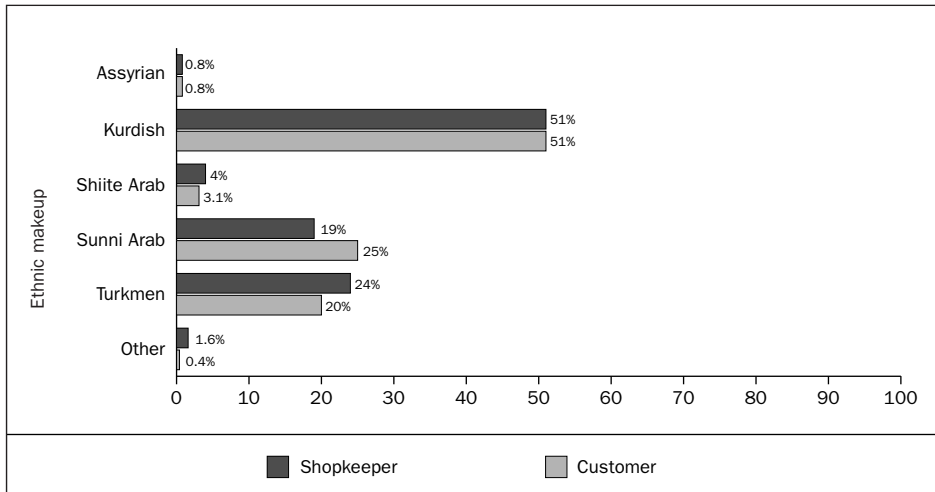
Everyday peace, as discussed in this paper, refers to the often hidden everyday interactions that avoid or minimize conflict between different communities. Examples include using a conversation partner’s native language, avoiding contentious topics, not displaying or wearing items that are symbols of a specific community, and pretending not to notice acts of everyday conflict by members of other communities.<sup>17</sup> Everyday conflict refers to practices through which people enact nationhood and nationalism in the context of their everyday lives to the extent that it antagonizes other communities and leads to conflict. Thus, it is the accumulation of acts of everyday nationalism within the setting of a deeply divided society that antagonizes other communities and transforms into everyday conflict. Examples include insisting on speaking one’s own language, talking

<sup>14</sup> Davies, M. and Niemann, M., ‘The everyday spaces of global politics: Work, leisure, family’, *New Political Science*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2010), pp. 557–77; Dyck, I., ‘Feminist geography, the “everyday”, and local-global relations: Hidden spaces of place-making’, *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2005), pp. 233–43; and Elias, J. and Roberts, A., ‘Feminist global political economies of the everyday: From bananas to bingo’, *Globalizations*, vol. 13, no. 6 (2016), pp. 787–800.

<sup>15</sup> On the different types of capital and how they interact, see Bourdieu, P., ‘Social space and symbolic power’, *Sociological Theory*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1989), pp. 14–25; Bourdieu, P., ‘The forms of capital’, ed. N. W. Biggart, *Readings in Economic Sociology* (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, 2002), pp. 280–91; and Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Routledge: London, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Wibben, A. T. R. et al., ‘Collective discussion: Piecing-up feminist peace research’, *International Political Sociology*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2019), pp. 86–107.

<sup>17</sup> Mac Ginty, R., ‘Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies’, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 45, no. 6 (2014), pp. 548–64.



**Figure 1.2.** The ethnosectarian make-up of survey participants

about one's ethnosectarian group or the conflict in Kirkuk, and blaming others for the conflict.<sup>18</sup>

Space is also important to understanding peace and conflict at the local level, as different people are privileged in different spaces. When any space is inhabited, it takes on meaning; and whatever exists in that space affects how people interact within it.<sup>19</sup> A researcher hoping to observe a society's relations of power and privilege must choose a space that is sufficiently neutral that it distorts those relations as little as possible.<sup>20</sup> For this purpose, Kirkuk's main bazaar is an ideal study site, as it is a popular destination for all of Kirkuk's ethnosectarian groups. Additionally, in bazaars, social hierarchies can be observed, and bargaining, trading and other interactions enhance communication.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, time can also influence people's behaviour in relation to peace and conflict. In particular, people may behave differently during holidays and important anniversaries that are traditionally celebrated by one ethnosectarian group and not the others.<sup>22</sup> This study focused especially on how these occasions may evoke acts of everyday conflict.

## Methodology

Survey research was chosen for this study as it can be useful in understanding the many ways people understand themselves, their social dynamics, and the

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Fox, J. E. and Miller-Idriss, C., 'Everyday nationhood', *Ethnicities*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2008), pp. 536–63.

<sup>19</sup> Bjorkdahl and Kappler (note 7).

<sup>20</sup> Bjorkdahl and Kappler (note 7).

<sup>21</sup> Bestor, T. C., 'Markets: Anthropological aspects', eds N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes, *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Elsevier Science: Oxford, 2001), pp. 9227–31.

<sup>22</sup> Massey, D., *For Space* (Sage: London, 2005).

nature of conflict.<sup>23</sup> The anonymity of the survey approach was also important to encourage honest responses to sensitive questions. A total of 511 participants completed surveys in the Kirkuk bazaar in early March 2019—one for shopkeepers (253 participants) and one for customers (258 participants). Customers were approached in the various sections of the bazaar as they passed by the enumerators, and shopkeepers were approached in their shops. As members of all of Kirkuk's ethnosectarian communities use the bazaar and work or own shops there, this method is seen to have prevented selection bias.

Surveys were carried out by four local multilingual enumerators (two men and two women—two Kurds, one Arab and one Turkmen) following training by the researcher. In order to ensure anonymity, surveys were completed on a tablet computer; the survey questionnaire was available in Arabic, Kurdish and Turkmen, and participants could complete it without having to identify their ethnosectarian group to the enumerator. The survey contained questions about multiple fields of difference—such as ethnosectarian group, income level, gender, education and age—to enable intersectional analysis of the findings, in order to understand how these fields of difference influence privilege and exclusion in relation to people's actions.

Among participants in the customer survey, 48 per cent were women and 52 per cent were men. There are significantly fewer women shopkeepers in Kirkuk, and among participants in the shopkeeper survey, just under 94 per cent were men and just over 6 per cent were women. Slightly over half of the survey respondents were Kurds, and most of the rest were Arabs and Turkmens (see figure 1.2). Kirkuk's ethnosectarian makeup is contested, and no recent census data exists. One likely indicator, however, is the election results, where people predominantly voted along ethnosectarian lines. If that accurately reflects Kirkuk's population, then the survey participants are fairly representative of Kirkuk as a whole. Although Assyrian Christians and Shiite Arabs were included in the survey, their numbers were seen as too low to include in the analysis of much of the data.

Survey results are reported throughout this paper as percentages. Those falling below 10 per cent are rounded to one decimal place, and those over 10 are rounded to whole numbers. Because of rounding, percentages in the figures do not always add up to exactly 100 per cent.

<sup>23</sup> Fox and Miller-Idriss (note 18).

## 2. Background: Relations between ethnosectarian groups in Kirkuk

Kirkuk is home to four main ethnosectarian groups—Arabs, Assyrians, Kurds and Turkmens—each of which has a historical stake in the city and province because it controlled the area at some stage in its long history. (Assyrians are currently present in such low numbers that they do not exert much influence.)

For much of the Ottoman Empire period (1299–1922), Kirkuk was a functioning multi-ethnosectarian community. However, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of Iraq, Arab ascendancy began with the installation of the Hashemite monarchy. The Hashemites privileged Arabs by giving them grants and farmland. At the same time, Arabs, Armenians and Assyrians were brought to Kirkuk to work in the oil industry. This Arabization process escalated with the formation of the Republic of Iraq in 1958, when Kurds were excluded entirely from the oil industry and expelled from the region, while Arabs were encouraged to resettle there with special privileges and bonuses, leading to a wholesale shift of the population.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1970s Saddam Hussein further strengthened Arab control of Kirkuk by changing the borders of the province to replace Kurdish-majority rural areas with Arab ones, in a new province called al-Tamim (Nationalization). Saddam also launched the Anfal campaign, in which chemical weapons were used against the Kurds, claiming the lives of thousands from the Kirkuk region. Following the 1990–91 Gulf War, Operation Provide Comfort was launched in 1991, which enabled the Kurds to effectively create an autonomous region in the Kurdish-dominated provinces of northern Iraq, protected by a no-fly zone established by the coalition forces. With the threat this newly created Kurdish region posed to his control of the oil wealth of Kirkuk, Saddam intensified the process of Arabization in order to maintain his hold over Kirkuk, and as a consequence, large numbers of Kurds were expelled.

As a result of this long process of Arabization, the numbers of Kurds and Turkmens in Kirkuk drastically decreased, while the number of Arabs increased. This affects today's conflict, as Turkmens see themselves as having the majority in the city, Kurds claim the majority in the province, Arabs claim that Kirkuk is an Iraqi city first and foremost, and each group claims that it should control Kirkuk.<sup>25</sup>

Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 a significant number of Kurds have returned to Kirkuk, and the battle for political and territorial control of the province—primarily between Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens—has intensified. Many Kurds refer to Kirkuk as their Jerusalem, and there have been calls for the city to be made the capital of the KRI. (Most Arabs and Turkmens oppose this, believing that it would result in complete Kurdish control of Kirkuk.)<sup>26</sup> Turkmens

<sup>24</sup> O'Driscoll (note 1).

<sup>25</sup> O'Driscoll (note 1).

<sup>26</sup> Agence France-Presse, 'Turkmen join Arabs to stop referendum in Kirkuk', *Hurriyet*, 17 Aug. 2009.

see Kirkuk as a symbol of their position as a significant ethnosectarian group in Iraq, and many want Kirkuk to have a special status as a distinct federal entity similar to the KRI. Many Arabs, on the other hand, want the central government to control Kirkuk in the same way as it does other provinces outside of the KRI, which for many would symbolize Iraqi unity.<sup>27</sup>

Because of these tensions, many commentators have referred to Kirkuk as a tinderbox or ticking time bomb.<sup>28</sup> The province's significant oil and gas reserves and export pipelines increase the stakes in this contest for control. Non-Kurdish ethnosectarian groups and neighbouring countries believe that if the Kurds gained control, they would use these resources to secede from Iraq.<sup>29</sup>

Until 2014 the Kurdish Peshmerga and the ISF jointly controlled security in Kirkuk, an arrangement which was originally operationalized by the USA. However, as the Islamic State took control of large swathes of Iraqi territory, Iraq was forced to withdraw the ISF from Kirkuk, thus allowing the Kurds, and the Peshmerga, to take full control of the city and most of the province.<sup>30</sup> Once again, this intensified other ethnosectarian groups' fears that the Kurds were planning to take Kirkuk by force. Fuel was added to the fire when in March 2017 the Kirkuk Provincial Council, with a Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) majority, voted to raise the KRI flag alongside the Iraqi one on all government buildings. The vote was boycotted by the Arab and Turkmen members of the Council, but the Kurdish and Kurdish-controlled members form the majority.<sup>31</sup>

Fears of Kurdish annexation were further raised in June 2017 when the de facto president of the KRI, Masoud Barzani (2005–17), announced a referendum on the KRI's independence (which included Kirkuk and other disputed territories that do not fall within the official KRI boundaries). The referendum, held on 25 September, showed overwhelming (just under 93 per cent) support for independence.<sup>32</sup> However, this actually had the result of reducing Kurdish control of Kirkuk.<sup>33</sup> The Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi (2014–18), declared the referendum unconstitutional, and the Iraqi Parliament voted to send troops to the disputed territories and impose a host of sanctions against the KRI.<sup>34</sup> Following the referendum, arrest warrants were issued for its organizers, and the central government took control of a significant amount of territory. It also imposed international flight bans on Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)-controlled airports, took control of border posts, imposed banking and other economic sanctions, and reduced the KRG's federal budget.

<sup>27</sup> Hussein, A., 'MPs collecting signatures to question Talabani', *Iraqi News*, 12 Mar. 2011.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Anderson and Stansfield (note 4).

<sup>29</sup> Hiltermann, J., 'Kirkuk and the Kurds: A difficult choice ahead', *International Crisis Group*, 22 May 2007.

<sup>30</sup> O'Driscoll (note 1).

<sup>31</sup> Saadoun, M., 'Kurdish flag fans controversy in Iraq's Kirkuk', *Al Monitor*, 4 Apr. 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Park, B., 'Explaining Turkey's reaction to the September 2017 independence referendum in the KRG: Final divorce or relationship reset?', *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2019), pp. 46–60.

<sup>33</sup> Dodge, T., et al., *Iraq Synthesis Paper: Understanding the Drivers of Conflict in Iraq*, *London School of Economics Middle East Centre Report*, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Hama, H. and Jasim, D., 'The loss of disputed territories: What is next for Kurdistan region?', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2017), pp. 58–68.

The inclusion of the disputed territories, particularly Kirkuk, in the independence question put forward in the referendum was the main concern for the Iraqi Government (and to a certain extent for Iran and Turkey). Thus, even before the referendum took place, the Iraqi Parliament voted to remove the Governor of Kirkuk, Najmiddin Karim, a Kurd; Rakan al-Jabouri, a Sunni Arab, was installed as acting governor.<sup>35</sup>

Prime Minister Abadi took advantage of his popularity at the time, the increased strength of the ISF, and the international community's support for maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, to retake control of the disputed territories. In October 2017 he sent in the ISF and the PMF to take control of Kirkuk and other disputed territories, as well as the oil fields within them. Due to an agreement with elements of the PUK, most of the PUK-controlled faction of the Peshmerga withdrew to the KRI, and the central government was able to take control of Kirkuk relatively easily with minimal fighting before the rest of the Peshmerga in Kirkuk also withdrew to the KRI.<sup>36</sup>

However, the central government's successes did not create a lasting solution to elite-level conflict in Kirkuk, and political battles for control continue. Kirkuk's symbolic value for various factions has affected the governance of Iraq as a whole. Kirkuk has become a rallying cry in numerous political campaigns and an issue in negotiations for the creation of a power-sharing national government. Although formally power sharing is meant to be operating within the Provincial Council in Kirkuk, in reality the political parties work against each other and often block or prevent political agreements in relation to governance and security in Kirkuk.<sup>37</sup>

Security is a persistent concern in Kirkuk, and existing attempts to address it have created a militarized atmosphere without providing the community policing the society desires. Many Kirkukis have a negative perception of the police, and the various security actors are perceived as supporting individual communities rather than the society as a whole. They have expressed frustration with the securitization of Kirkuk, with corruption and abuse of power, and with the ethnosectarian and political party-based dimensions of security.<sup>38</sup>

Numerous other power struggles are ongoing in Kirkuk—for instance, between the ISF and the PMF (who also control territory south of Kirkuk), between the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the PUK, and between different ethnosectarian groups. At the same time, the Islamic State still operates within the Sunni-majority district of Hawija, which it previously controlled. Without a political agreement, these conflicts continue unresolved and fall under the category of not reaching the 'ripeness' needed for the political actors to compromise.<sup>39</sup> With the Kurdish Peshmerga expected to return to Kirkuk at some time, these conflicts

<sup>35</sup> 'The repercussions of the Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum', *Strategic Comments*, vol. 23, no. 10 (14 Dec. 2017), pp. iii–v.

<sup>36</sup> Hiltermann, J., 'The Kurds are right back where they started', *The Atlantic*, 31 Oct. 2017; and Mansour, R., 'The Kurdish referendum backfired badly. Here's why', *Washington Post*, 25 Oct. 2017.

<sup>37</sup> O'Driscoll (note 1).

<sup>38</sup> O'Driscoll, 'Throwing water over the tinderbox: An alternative for Kirkuk' (note 4).

<sup>39</sup> Zartman, I. W., 'Ripeness: The hurting stalemate and beyond,' eds P. Stern and D. Druckman, *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War* (National Academy Press: Washington, DC, 2000).

could become more complex, unless political elites within Kirkuk begin to make some compromises.<sup>40</sup>

However, while elites continue to compete for power, Kirkukis carry on their daily lives with both conflict and, more importantly, peace emerging every day, and it is to these everyday interactions that this paper turns next.

<sup>40</sup> O'Driscoll (note 1).



### 3. Local-level peacebuilding opportunities in Kirkuk

Utilizing the survey data, this section explores the impact that space, time and privilege have on people's behaviour towards carrying out acts of everyday peace and everyday conflict in the bazaar in Kirkuk, as well as in the wider society, and then identifies local spaces where peacemakers can intervene to promote peace in the everyday lives of Kirkukis. It highlights five areas identified during the research where attention should be focused in order to reduce conflict: (a) language, (b) relations between different ethnosectarian groups, (c) acts of everyday conflict, (d) use of space, and (e) privilege.

#### **Language**

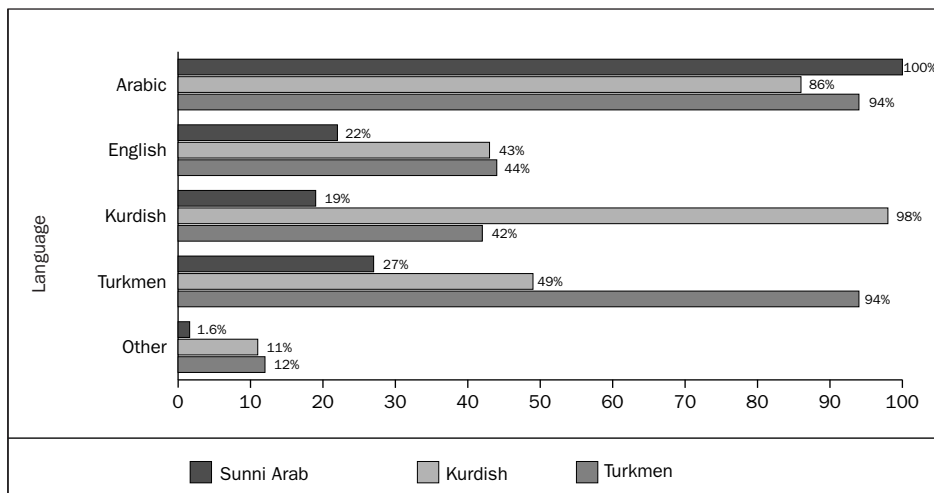
Communicating with people in their own language demonstrates respect for their heritage and can help mitigate conflict.<sup>41</sup> In an interaction, making an effort to speak the other person's language communicates a less confrontational manner. For this reason, the ability to speak a society's most prevalent languages—in the case of Kirkuk, Arabic, Kurdish and Turkmen—is important.

Survey results showed little difference between the language proficiency of women and men. There was also little difference based on age, except that in the customer group, the percentage of participants speaking English increased from 39 per cent overall to 45 per cent for participants born after 1990. Shopkeepers generally spoke more languages than customers (unsurprising, given the economic benefit of language skills in their line of work). Among shopkeepers, 97 per cent spoke Arabic, 83 per cent Kurdish and 66 per cent Turkmen—while among customers, 92 per cent spoke Arabic, 64 per cent Kurdish and 55 per cent Turkmen.

The most significant finding with regard to language was the limited knowledge that Sunni Arab customers and shopkeepers had of languages other than Arabic. Only 19 per cent of Sunni Arab customers surveyed could speak Kurdish, and only 27 per cent could speak Turkmen (see figure 3.1). This is likely to be connected to the historical dynamics of the bazaar under the Ba'ath regime (1968–2003), when Arabization significantly increased and Arabic was the main language of communication in Kirkuk.

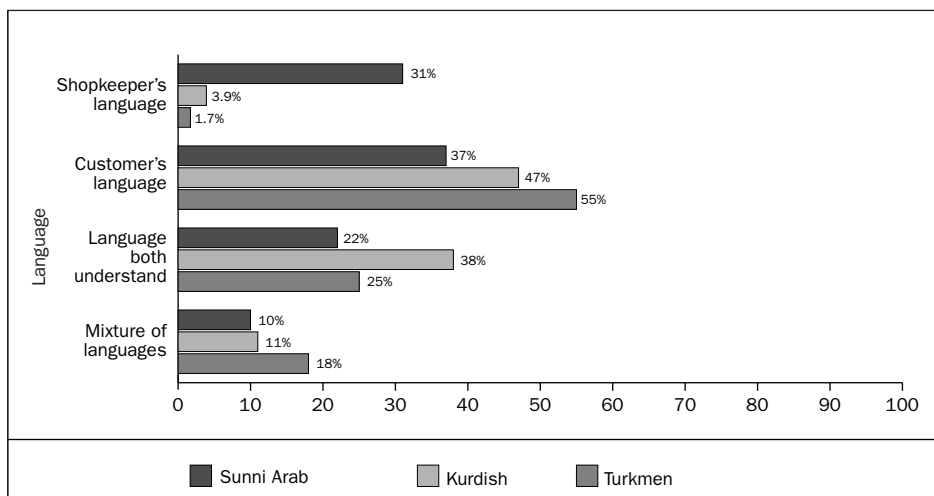
Similarly, Sunni Arab shopkeepers spoke fewer languages than the other shopkeepers, with only 51 per cent able to speak Kurdish and 49 per cent Turkmen. This can isolate them from other communities and cause communications that do take place to begin on a negative footing, since they cannot offer reciprocity when others speak Arabic to them. In a deeply divided society like Kirkuk, speaking

<sup>41</sup> On everyday peace actions, see Mac Ginty (note 17).



**Figure 3.1.** The languages spoken by customers

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.

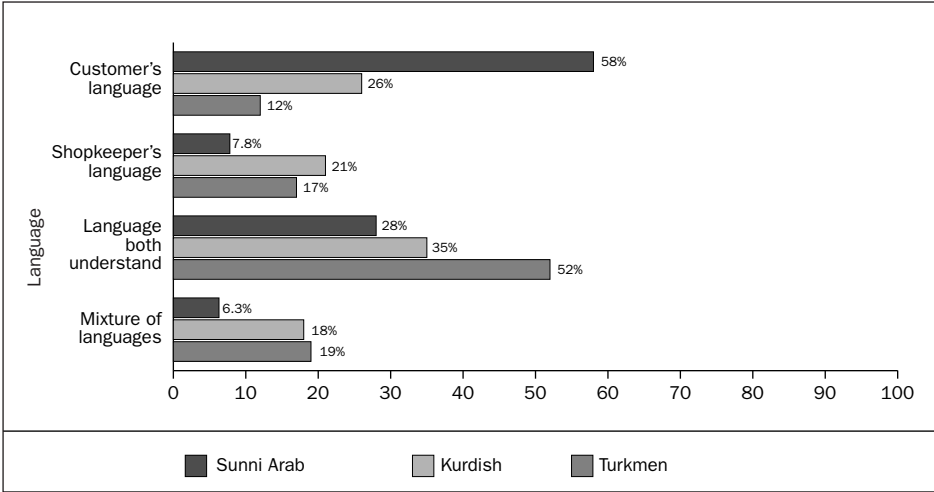


**Figure 3.2.** The language spoken by shopkeepers to customers who have a different primary language

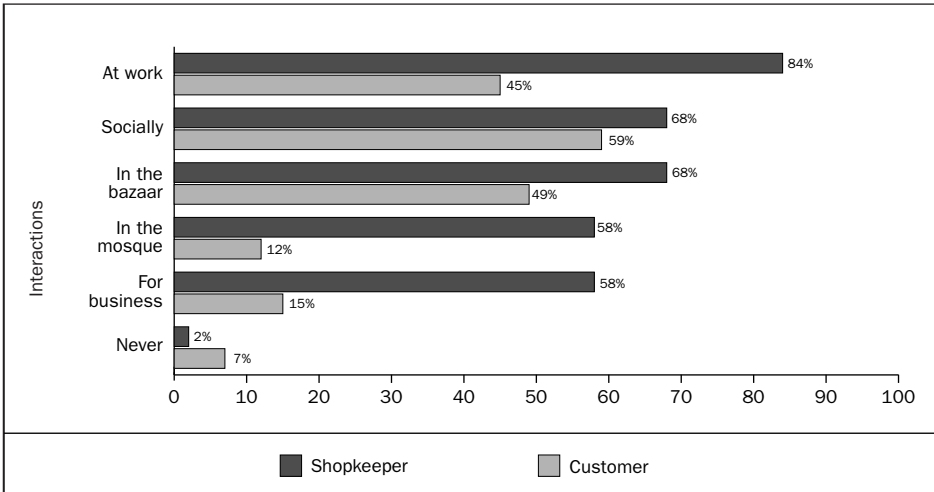
another person’s language can be seen as an act of everyday peace, and insisting on speaking one’s own language can be seen as an act of everyday conflict.<sup>42</sup>

This issue is further highlighted when examining the use of language in communication with customers (see figure 3.2). Despite the economic benefit of communicating with customers in the customer’s language, or at least a mixture of languages, 31 per cent of Sunni Arab shopkeepers reported that they spoke only Arabic when dealing with customers of another ethnosectarian group. In comparison, only 3.9 per cent of Kurdish shopkeepers said they spoke only

<sup>42</sup> Fox and Miller-Idriss (note 18).



**Figure 3.3.** The language spoken by customers to shopkeepers who have a different primary language



**Figure 3.4.** Customer and shopkeeper interaction with members of other ethnosectarian groups

*Note:* Participants could provide more than one response.

Kurdish, and 1.7 per cent of Turkmen said they spoke only Turkmen. The high percentage of Sunni Arab shopkeepers speaking only Arabic is significant given that Kurds, and not Arabs, are a majority in Kirkuk.

As customers have less economic incentive to speak another language when interacting with a shopkeeper, their choices better illustrate the general language practices of the various ethnosectarian groups (see figure 3.3). Compared to shopkeepers, a greater percentage of customers used their own language; again, Sunni Arabs were the most likely to do so.

While language capability is not the only factor that influences interaction between different ethnosectarian groups, it is an important one. In addition to making interactions less confrontational by making an effort to speak the other person's language, it can also increase the level of interaction. It particularly affects social interactions, which are of importance for reconciliation and social cohesion. Interaction with members of other ethnosectarian groups (inside and outside the bazaar) was higher for shopkeepers (who have better language capabilities) than customers (see figure 3.4).

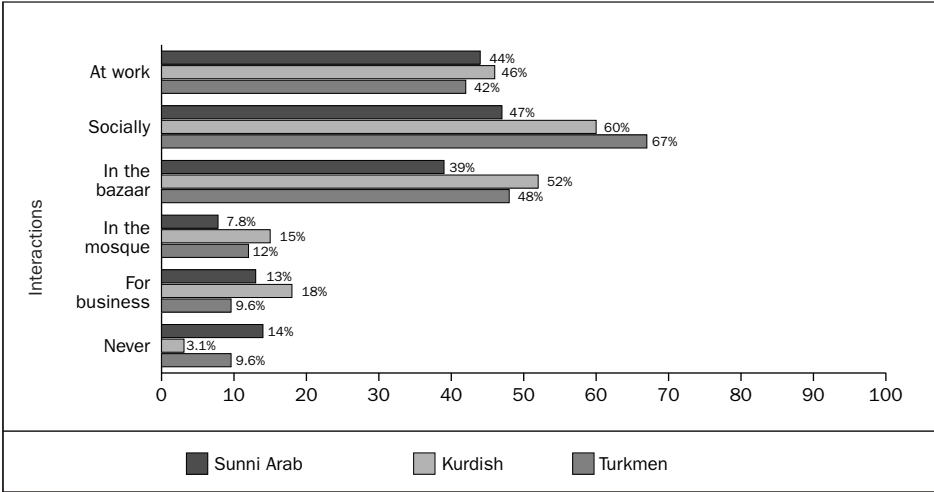
While shopkeepers interact the most with people from other groups, customers also experience such interactions at various levels. Among the customers who participated in the survey, Sunni Arabs were the least likely to interact socially with members of other groups at 47 per cent, compared with 60 per cent of Kurds and 67 per cent of Turkmens (see figure 3.5). Increased social interaction correlates positively and directly with language knowledge (those who speak more languages also socialize more with other groups, as shown when comparing figure 3.1 with figure 3.5). When this is examined alongside shopkeepers' language capabilities and increased social interactions with members of other ethnosectarian groups, the benefits of communication in the Kirkuki languages can be seen to link with increased socialization. Correspondingly, the isolation of Sunni Arabs is of particular concern for localized peacebuilding in Kirkuk as it helps feed the idea of Sunni Arab marginalization or even perceptions of superiority, which have acted as drivers of conflict.<sup>43</sup>

There is considerable opportunity for peacebuilding interventions focused on language, many of which have already seen success elsewhere. One such opportunity is language courses. For instance, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) offers free Albanian and Serbian courses in a number of municipalities in Kosovo, which have had a high sign-up rate and are seen through IOM's evaluation of the programme to improve communication between communities.<sup>44</sup> In Kirkuk, it would be important for programmes to target Sunni Arabs, and Sunni Arab women specifically, as their limited language knowledge isolates them and prevents them from carrying out language-based acts of everyday peace.

Self-study resources represent another opportunity. For instance, in Kosovo, IOM is also creating an Albanian–Serbian dictionary available online and as an app; a similar Arabic–Kurdish–Turkmen resource could be created for Kirkuk, especially if it was linked to language courses. A version focused on shopping vocabulary could be made available at user stations in the bazaar. Similar user stations are available at Union Market in Washington, DC, showing shopping-related sign language; these have been successful in improving interactions

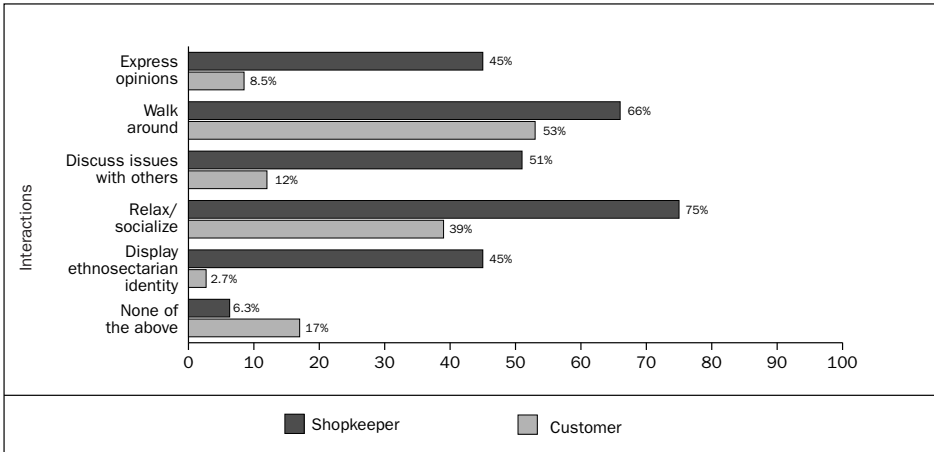
<sup>43</sup> O'Driscoll, D., 'Autonomy impaired: Centralisation, authoritarianism and the failing Iraqi state', *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 16, no. 4 (2017), pp. 315–32.

<sup>44</sup> Isufi, P. and Sopi, A., 'Albanian–Serbian online dictionary project launched in Kosovo', *Balkan Transitional Justice*, 11 June 2019; and Haxhijaj, S., 'Serbs, Albanians learn each other's languages in Kosovo town', *Balkan Transitional Justice*, 5 Feb. 2019.



**Figure 3.5.** Customer interaction with members of other ethnosectarian groups

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.



**Figure 3.6.** Customers' and shopkeepers' perceived freedom of action in the bazaar

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.

between shopkeepers and customers, as there is a large deaf community in the area.<sup>45</sup>

School curriculum changes aimed at building the language capabilities of Kirkuki youth would be a powerful step towards a future in which all communities can communicate in all languages. One way to work towards this would be to create a multilingual school curriculum and teach all three languages beginning

<sup>45</sup> See Ungerleider, N., 'An app that teaches you a new language for ordering lunch', *Magenta*, 6 Dec. 2017.

at an early age. A similar policy was successfully implemented in Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian.<sup>46</sup>

### **Relations between different ethnosectarian groups**

Participants in this study's survey described the extent to which they avoid discussing controversial political issues with members of other ethnosectarian groups. This is not necessarily a negative thing, as it can be seen as an act of conflict avoidance; however, supervised deliberation between communities can also help to form a better understanding of how others view the issues, find common ground, and work to reconcile differences.<sup>47</sup> A recent study on deliberation on political and conflict issues in Kirkuk between students from the different ethnosectarian groups at Kirkuk University had some positive findings.<sup>48</sup> A number of participants were able to correct misperceptions about the conflict during the process of information and deliberation. At this event, the majority of participants supported an equal say in the governance of Kirkuk for all ethnosectarian groups; this bodes well for the deliberation process, as it is an important cross-community unifier. Deliberative processes, particularly those paired with education on the issues, have great potential to overcome political differences in Kirkuk. These could be organized by local peacebuilders. It is important that communities are given the opportunity to hear an unbiased account of the facts about the situation in Kirkuk, be exposed to different perspectives, and discuss the situation in a safe environment, rather than in public where these same actions may be deemed confrontational.

Connected to the interaction between communities is how people interact within the space of the bazaar. Shopkeepers who participated in the survey indicated a much greater sense of freedom to move around, express themselves and socialize in the bazaar than customers did (see figure 3.6). This could also be associated with shopkeepers' greater familiarity with the bazaar. The way shopkeepers use space in the bazaar leads to better interaction with members of other communities. This suggests that there is room for improvement in the way customers use the space.

The bazaar in Kirkuk was chosen because it is a site of interaction, and the way people choose the stores they shop in also demonstrates that there is opportunity to use the bazaar as a space to build relations between communities. When customers were asked what factors they considered when choosing shops, they mentioned quality and price most frequently; only 1.9 per cent said they took ethnosectarian group membership into consideration. Economic interactions can be used to improve community interactions and, as quality, price and established

<sup>46</sup> See Karnavas, M. G., 'Creating the legal framework of the Brčko district of Bosnia and Herzegovina: A model for the region and other postconflict countries', *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 97, no. 1 (2003), pp. 111–31; and O'Driscoll (note 1).

<sup>47</sup> Steiner, J. et al., *Deliberation Across Deeply Divided Societies* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> O'Flynn et al. (note 4).

relationships—rather than ethnosectarian group membership—form the basis for decisions, there is already a good starting point in Kirkuk.<sup>49</sup>

Ethnosectarian identity also had only limited relevance for shopkeepers as a factor in price negotiations (only 12 per cent of shopkeepers said they took this into consideration); how well they know the customer was the leading factor. (While this is self-reported by the shopkeepers and thus a degree of bias cannot be excluded, it is also partially confirmed by the fact that customers also did not give this factor much consideration when choosing where to shop.) Customers benefit when they establish relationships with shopkeepers through which they can get a better price, and shopkeepers benefit from establishing relationships that bring them more customers, thus furthering the potential of the bazaar as a site at which to build both intra- and inter-community relationships.

The central bazaar in Kirkuk has historically been a place of interaction between different groups. However, with the establishment of malls and ethnically homogeneous neighbourhood bazaars, its popularity is beginning to wane. Part of the reason is that the bazaar is in poor repair and no longer as attractive a shopping site as it once was. It is therefore important to invest in improving and restoring the bazaar.

Investment should focus not only on restoring buildings, improving aesthetics and accessibility, and providing inclusive and multilingual signage, but also on expanding and improving social spaces. One example of how this could occur is the Erbil bazaar, where the addition of a central square with water fountains has created an attractive gathering place with areas for the sole purpose of socializing.

Given the importance to both customers and shopkeepers of well-established relationships, and the power of such relationships to improve community relations, one promising option for intervention would be a campaign that highlights the role that established relationships play in price negotiation and gives advice on how to establish relationships with shopkeepers. This could improve community cohesion by encouraging the establishment of relationships across ethnosectarian groups.

### **Acts of everyday conflict**

Wearing ethnosectarian identity signifiers in public can be perceived by some as an act of everyday conflict, as it is an overt display of membership in a specific ethnosectarian group.<sup>50</sup> This can lead to antagonistic relations with members of other groups. This is not to say that people should not wear identity signifiers, but it is important to understand what these may mean to other people, especially in combination with other factors. Signifiers by themselves are less likely to lead to conflict, but an accumulation of nationalist behaviour can lead to others feeling under threat. Most shopkeepers refrain from wearing items that identify their ethnosectarian group on a daily basis, but they are somewhat more likely to do

<sup>49</sup> See Thomas and Vogel (note 13).

<sup>50</sup> Fox and Miller-Idriss (note 18).

so on special holidays. Kurdish shopkeepers (28 per cent) were more likely to do so than Sunni Arab (16 per cent) and Turkmen (15 per cent) shopkeepers. More customers were likely to wear items that signify their ethnosectarian group in the bazaar, with Kurds again the most likely (55 per cent on special holidays) (see figure 3.7).

In general, women were less likely to wear items that identified their ethnosectarian group than men, with 73 per cent of Turkmen women and 84 per cent of Sunni Arab women reporting that they never wore identity signifiers, compared with 58 per cent of Turkmen men and 64 per cent of Sunni Arab men. However, Kurdish women were the most likely of any survey participants to wear identity signifiers, with only 28 per cent never wearing them and 63 per cent wearing them on special holidays.

Kirkukis' perceptions of when tensions arise between groups are closely connected to identity signifiers, as many highlight occasions when people are more likely to wear identity signifiers, such as the Kurdish holiday of Nawroz or anniversaries of historical events, as marked by increased tensions.<sup>51</sup> A number of survey participants also referred to elections and Kurdish Clothing Day as times of increased tensions.<sup>52</sup> It is not the identity signifiers alone, or the occasions alone, but rather the combination of factors which is viewed as threatening or antagonistic by other communities. Participants expressed similar perceptions of tensions regardless of which ethnosectarian group they were from. However, shopkeepers tended to notice tensions more than customers, which could be linked to their presence in the middle of the city all day.

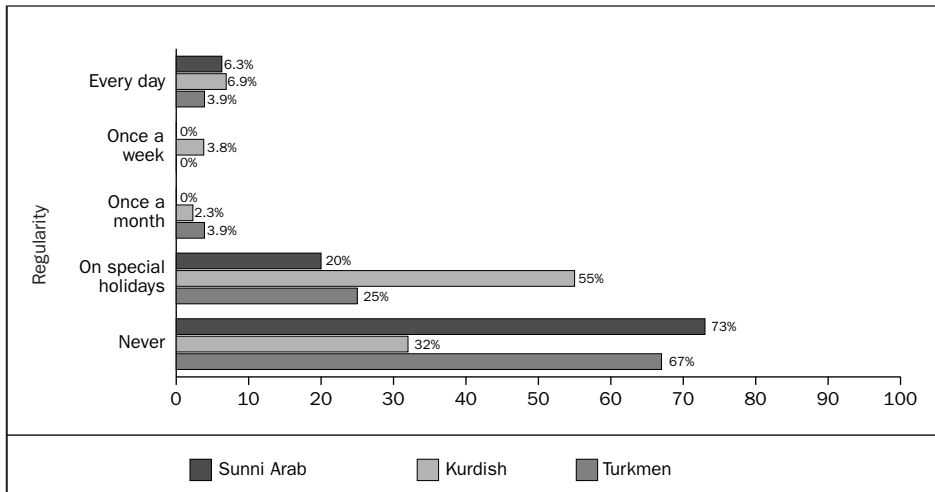
How people celebrate holidays can also be connected to identity markers and tensions, as celebrating in public is part of the combination of factors that leads to heightened perceptions of conflictual nationalism. Kurds are the most likely to celebrate holidays such as Eid or Nawroz (which is traditionally celebrated outdoors) in public, whereas Turkmen are the most likely to celebrate holidays at home (see figure 3.8).

There was little difference between male customers and shopkeepers, although shopkeepers as a whole (66 per cent) celebrated holidays in public the most. As shopkeepers operate in a public space and interact more with other communities, their increased use of public spaces to celebrate holidays can be understood. However, Kurdish use of public spaces to celebrate is more connected to privilege in how they can (and feel they can) occupy space. As tensions are said to increase during special holidays such as Nawroz, and Kurds are more likely to wear identity signifiers and celebrate in public, all these factors are connected to how conflict between communities plays out at the local, everyday level and how it increases at specific times.

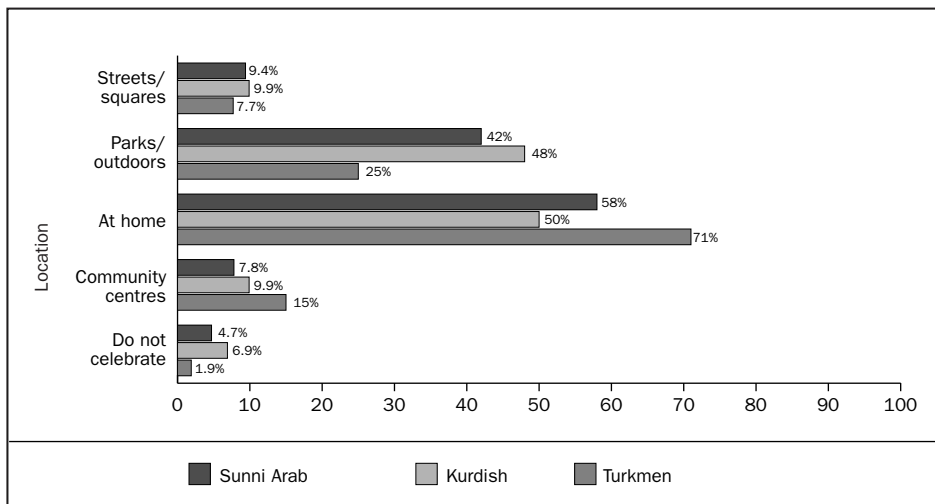
<sup>51</sup> Nawroz is celebrated on 21 March to mark the arrival of spring. Although a number of groups in Asia celebrate Nawroz, it is the most important Kurdish holiday and has taken on political significance as a symbol of Kurdish resistance to oppression.

<sup>52</sup> Kurdish Clothing Day is usually celebrated by wearing traditional Kurdish clothes; it is usually held on 10 March.





**Figure 3.7.** The frequency with which customers wear items that show their ethnosectarian identity



**Figure 3.8.** Where customers celebrate holidays

*Note:* Participants could provide more than one response.

In an inclusive multicultural society, it is important that the cultures and traditions of all groups are respected. However, it is also clear that their celebration can contribute to raising tensions between groups, and policies should address this. Possibilities include promoting understanding through the school curriculum of each group’s culture, so that the meanings of holidays and signifiers are understood by all communities. In West Kalimantan, Indonesia, the introduction of new multicultural textbooks has had some success in fostering cultural understanding. However, it has also perpetuated some stereotypes and contained elements that could be perceived as portraying aspects of Dayak and

Madura culture as primitive.<sup>53</sup> Care needs to be taken to avoid such missteps when developing a new curriculum. In the development of the Brčko curriculum described earlier, educational advisors from each community were fully engaged in developing and reviewing the texts, in an effort to avoid exactly this type of problem.<sup>54</sup>

An educational campaign should also be developed for adults, so that they understand not only the importance of the various holidays but also how their celebration may be seen as exclusive or threatening and how this can be mitigated while still honouring the cultural heritage.

Policymakers should explore ways to make celebrations more inclusive across communities, while still respecting the cultural practices of each community. If communities were to celebrate together, they would be less likely to see these events as a threat or as a means of cultural domination. For instance, this could be done by training community leaders in social cohesion and the benefits of inclusive cultural experiences, and by supporting them in creating inclusive celebrations.

Finally, conflict could be mitigated by holding large celebrations at stadiums and other large venues rather than in open public spaces where all people are forced to interact with the celebrations and some of the acts may be perceived by the out-group as nationalist acts of aggression.

### **Use of space**

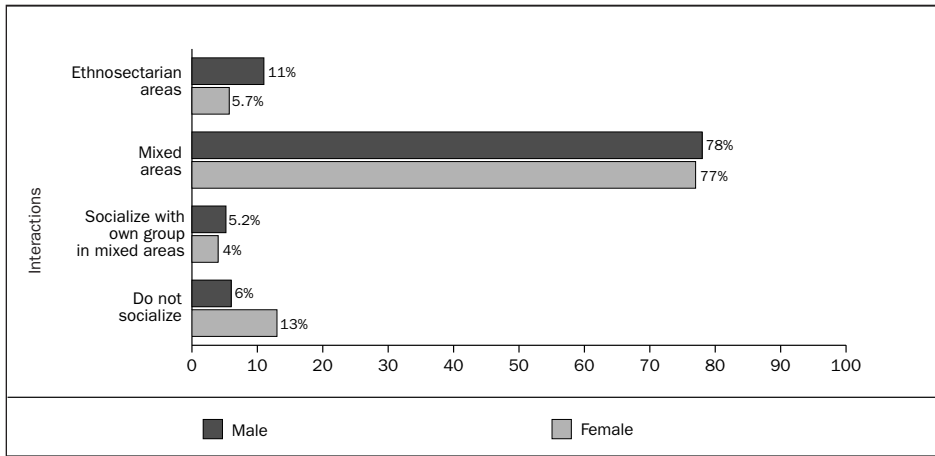
Although 13 per cent of women customers said they do not socialize in the bazaar at all, the majority of both men and women socialized in mixed areas with members of all ethnosectarian groups (see figure 3.9). Men were more likely to socialize only with members of their own group; however, this proportion was relatively low. Shopkeepers, both men and women, were the least likely (at 12 per cent) to socialize only with members of their own group. Turkmen women were the least likely to socialize in the bazaar, with 21 per cent never doing so.

Men and women differed in what they felt free to do while in the bazaar. Women felt freer than men to walk around the bazaar, which can be connected to the custom of women going to the bazaar for the set purpose of shopping. Only about a quarter of the women felt free to relax and socialize in the bazaar, compared with half of the men (see figure 3.10). This connects directly to gender equality, as women do not have the same privileges as men in how they can occupy the space. It is argued that in many public spaces such as the bazaar, women are expected to go about their business and then leave, while men do not need a purpose and can linger.<sup>55</sup> As the majority of Iraqi women do not work outside the home (only 14.5 per cent of women over the age of 15 participated in the labour force in 2018,

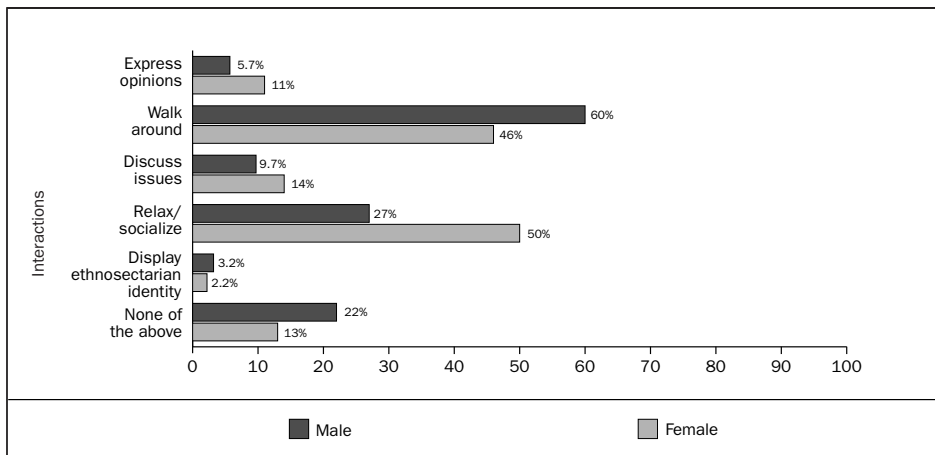
<sup>53</sup> Nakaya, A., 'Overcoming ethnic conflict through multicultural education: The case of West Kalimantan, Indonesia', *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2018), pp. 118–37.

<sup>54</sup> Clark (note 41).

<sup>55</sup> Sadiqi, F. and Ennaji, M., 'The feminization of public space: Women's activism, the family law, and social change in Morocco', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2006), pp. 86–114.



**Figure 3.9.** How male and female customers socialize in the bazaar



**Figure 3.10.** Male and female customers' perceived freedom of action in the bazaar

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.

compared to 73 per cent of men), having spaces to relax and socialize outside the home is important.<sup>56</sup>

Among customers, both women (60 per cent) and men (56 per cent) agreed that women are not treated equally in the bazaar. However, only 48 per cent of shopkeepers (who are mostly men) said they believed that women are not treated equally. The ways shopkeepers interact with women in the bazaar directly affects how equally women are treated and how women can use, and feel comfortable

<sup>56</sup> World Bank, 'Labor force, female (% of total labor force), Iraq', <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=IQ>>; and World Bank, 'Gender data portal, Iraq', <<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/iraq>>.

within, that space, and the lack of shopkeepers' awareness of the problem only reinforces it.

Feelings of safety in the bazaar can also be connected to gender equality and ability to socialize comfortably there, as it relates to how people feel in occupying the space. Perceptions of safety in the bazaar were similar across ethnosectarian groups but differed by gender, with 19 per cent of men and 39 per cent of women often or always feeling unsafe. Thus, gender equality, women's ability to socialize in the bazaar, and women's safety are interconnected issues that affect how women can use space in the bazaar and feel comfortable doing so. This should be addressed through policy. For example, a campaign to educate shopkeepers on gender inequality is needed. The better they understand what actions lead to gender inequality and how, the less likely they are to engage in them. It has long been argued that any efforts to reduce gender inequalities must include men, and particularly a change in their behaviour.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, studies show that well-designed programmes with men and boys can lead to a change in behaviour and attitudes about gender equality.<sup>58</sup>

Although programmes on gender equality with shopkeepers could serve as an entry point, policymakers should also explore ways to increase education on gender equality in the society more generally in order to have a greater impact on the treatment of women in the bazaar. For example, International Alert has had some success with community dialogue groups on gender issues and inequality that meet each month. As part of this programme, they also have dialogue groups that focus specifically on men and more positive masculinity.<sup>59</sup> Such programmes could be developed for Kirkuk, using the bazaar as a starting point but then broadening to include the wider society. In another example, Nagaad, a non-governmental organization, has had success in improving gender equality in Somaliland through a campaign it launched featuring progressive interpretations of women's rights in the Qur'an and the Hadith.<sup>60</sup>

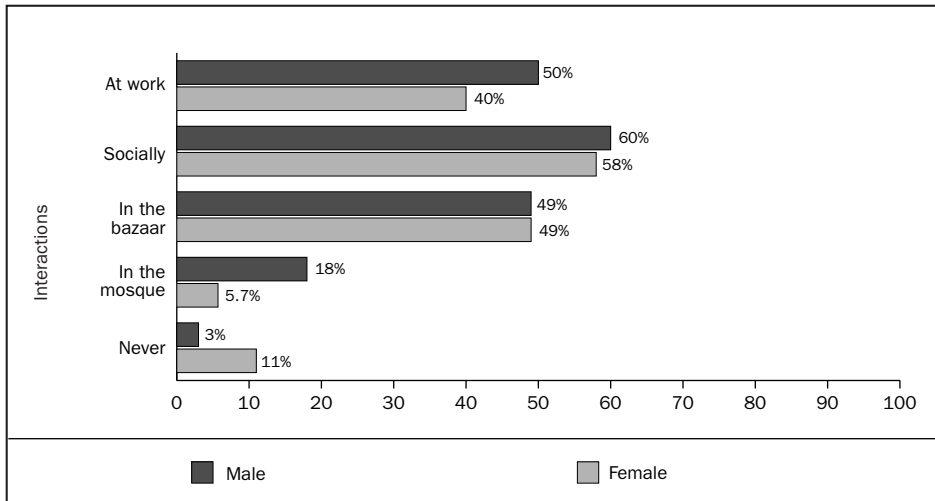
In order to address the fact that women (particularly Turkmen women) socialize less in the bazaar, feel less free to do so, and feel less safe there, it is recommended that, as part of the recommended renovation of the bazaar, spaces be created in which women can relax and socialize freely in a safe environment. Although gender segregation can reinforce gender inequality, it can also be used to strategically increase women's access to and participation in public spaces. Thus, given current gender norms in Kirkuk, where most women do not work outside the home and socializing is often gender segregated or limited to family members, this is the best option available. It can change the way women use the space in the

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. Cleaver, F. (ed.), *Masculinities Matter! Men, Gender and Development* (Zed Books: London, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Barker, G., Ricardo, C. and Nascimento, M., *Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health: Evidence from Programme Interventions* (World Health Organization: Geneva, 2007).

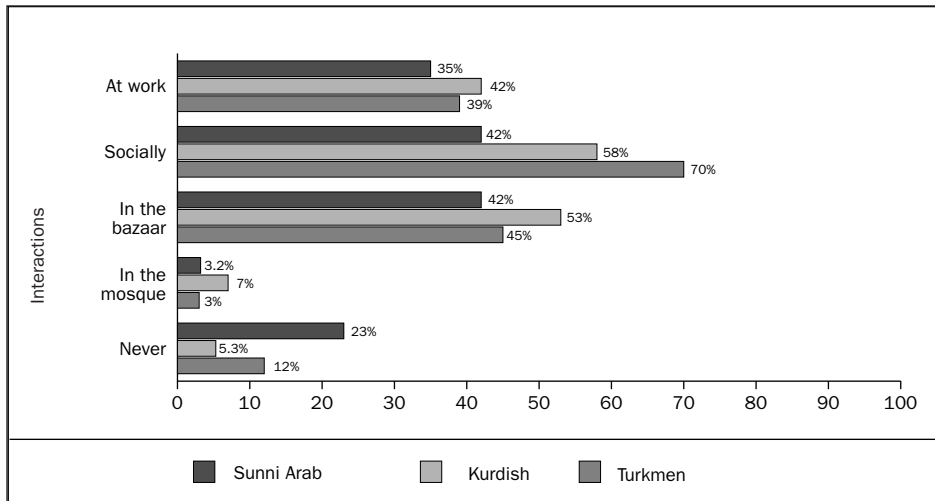
<sup>59</sup> See Khattab, L., 'Addressing gender inequalities in DRC and the Great Lakes: Bringing about change on a broader scale', *International Alert*, 30 June 2015.

<sup>60</sup> See Walls, M., 'Women's political participation in Somaliland', *Journeys from Exclusion to Inclusion: Marginalized Women's Successes in Overcoming Political Exclusion* (International IDEA: Stockholm, 2013), pp. 164–97.



**Figure 3.11.** Male and female customers’ interactions with members of other groups

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.



**Figure 3.12.** Female customers’ interactions with members of other ethnosectarian groups

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.

bazaar, make socializing easier and safer, and provide opportunities for women to interact with women from other ethnosectarian groups. Increased interaction can help to minimize conflict and foster reconciliation between communities.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Grob, A., Papadovassilakis, A. and Vicente, L. R. F., *Case Studies on Urban Safety and Peacebuilding: Lagos, Beirut, Mitrovica, Treichville and Johannesburg*, Practice Paper 19, Technical Working Group on the Confluence of Urban Safety and Peacebuilding Practice (Geneva Peacebuilding Platform: Geneva, 2016).

Such spaces have been created in both Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and have led to more women socializing.

There was generally little difference between men and women survey participants in the extent to which they interacted socially with members of other ethnosectarian groups—except that a larger proportion of women than men said they never did so (see figure 3.11). This can be connected to the fact that women are less likely to interact with members of other groups in the mosque and at work. The creation of social spaces for women in the bazaar can help to provide more opportunities for women to interact with members of all ethnosectarian groups.

Sunni Arab women were the least likely to socialize with members of other groups, and the most likely not to socialize with them at all (see figure 3.12). This connects to the wider Sunni Arab isolation in Kirkuk; creating a space for women would be a good first step towards addressing that.

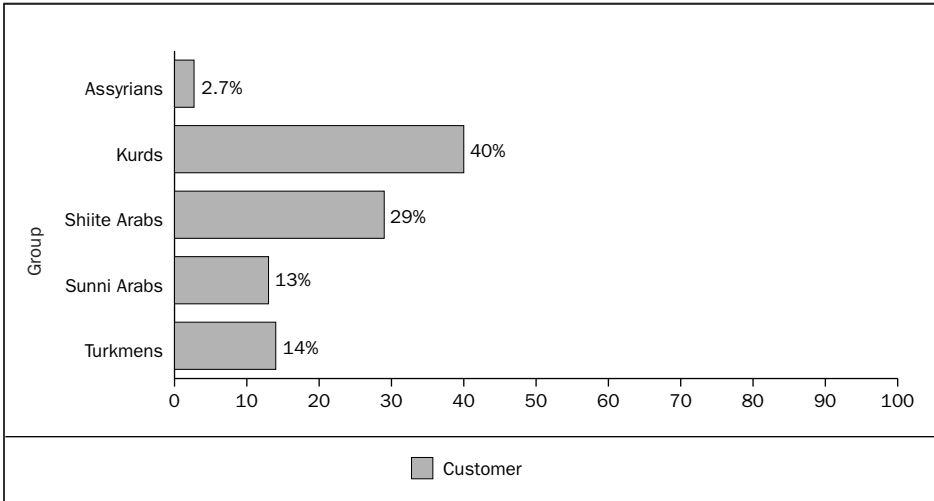
Changes in the police force and other parts of the justice system could also improve women's safety, equality and options for occupying space. Police, particularly those that operate in the bazaar area, should undertake sustained gender training. This could build on the training courses that already exist, which are for the most part limited to short workshops for mid-ranking officers. Gender-sensitive protocols should be established in the justice system, with serious consequences for failing to follow them. (For example, in the KRI, despite gender training, a current issue is that police sometimes refuse to respond to domestic violence calls and there are no consequences for not doing so.) Efforts to increase the number of women police officers should also be expanded. A small-scale initiative is in place to train women police officers, sponsored by IOM and the Canadian Government; however, this needs to be scaled up significantly and focus on Kirkuk specifically.<sup>62</sup> There should always be women police officers in the area of the bazaar as well as a police officer specifically assigned to addressing reports of abuse towards women.

As mentioned earlier, mistrust of the police is widespread in Kirkuk. Liberia saw significant improvements in gender equality in relation to policing, despite issues with local capacity, through gender training of police officers and increased representation of women in the police force. Further, it created a specialized unit to address violence (both symbolic and physical) against women. However, the Liberia example highlights the importance of establishing policies that also address the criminal justice system, as issues with prosecutions arose in this domain.<sup>63</sup>

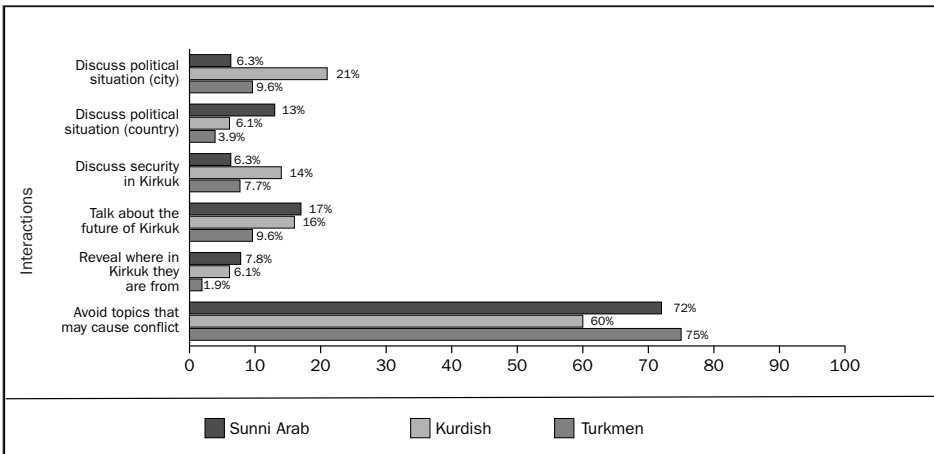
Another powerful way to transform the bazaar into a more gender-equal space is to help more women to become shopkeepers through programmes that offer them business advice, training and support—such as those offered by the Iraq Community Resilience Initiative, a US programme that has had success in supporting women-run businesses in other parts of the country. This should occur

<sup>62</sup> See IOM, 'Improving peace and security in Iraqi communities by strengthening the role of women in policing', 6 Sept. 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Bacon, L., 'Liberia's gender-sensitive police reform: Improving representation and responsiveness in a post-conflict setting', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2015), pp. 372–97.



**Figure 3.13.** Customers’ opinions on which group has the most influence in Kirkuk



**Figure 3.14.** Customers’ likely conversation choices when speaking with people from other groups

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.

in coordination with the educational and policing initiatives described above, to ensure that women shopkeepers do not face abuse and are able to operate in a safe space.

## Privilege

Influence is important, both in society at large and in the bazaar, because in Kirkuk (like in Iraq in general), *wasta*—using family or social connections to achieve an objective—plays a significant role. Privilege also affects the kinds of repercussions people are likely to face for their actions, and thus the ways that they occupy space and carry out acts of everyday peace and conflict.<sup>64</sup> People with less privilege are more likely to experience acts of symbolic violence and are less likely to report them.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the changing dynamics in Kirkuk since October 2017, when the Iraqi Government took control from the Kurds, Kurds are still seen by all communities to have the most overall influence in society (see figure 3.13). The Kurds' privilege stems from their dominance of the political and security spheres since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. While the central government's control of Kirkuk has lessened Kurdish influence, it still remains the highest of all ethnosectarian groups. Assyrians, with their low numbers, are seen to have the least influence, followed by Sunni Arabs. Shiite Arabs are seen to have relatively high influence; however, this can be seen to be closely connected to the security changes in October 2017.

Kurdish influence is likely to increase again when the Kirkuk Provincial Council elects a new governor. Political infighting between the two largest Kurdish parties prevented them from agreeing on a candidate, but they finally reached agreement in July 2019; and since the Kurdish parties form a majority in the Provincial Council, their candidate is almost certain to prevail once the Council agrees to meet. Kurdish influence will grow even more if negotiations for the return of the Peshmerga from the KRI to Kirkuk are successful. An agreement was reached between the KRG and the central government in July 2019 for their return to parts of the disputed territories, and negotiations continue for this to extend to Kirkuk.<sup>66</sup>

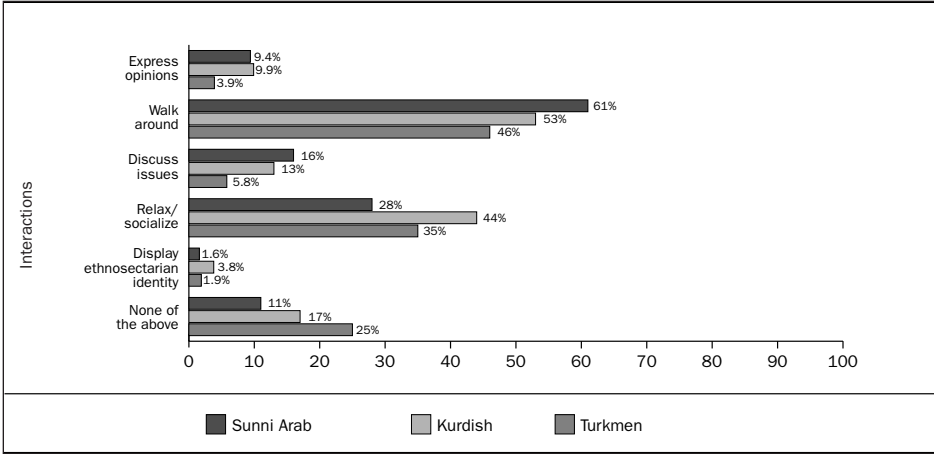
Privilege affects people's willingness to engage in conversational acts of everyday conflict. When talking with people from other ethnosectarian groups, Kurds were the least likely to avoid topics that may cause conflict and the most likely to discuss the subject of the political situation in the city (which 55 per cent of customers highlighted as being the most contentious subject in Kirkuk) with members of other groups (see figure 3.14). Overall, most survey participants said that they practise conflict avoidance; this is a positive sign for the use of the bazaar as a space to build relations between communities. Most women (77 per cent) and more than half of men (56 per cent) said they avoid topics that may cause conflict.

<sup>64</sup> This discussion of the role of privilege is based on the work of Bourdieu on symbolic capital. See Bourdieu 1989, 2008, 2013 (note 15).

<sup>65</sup> This discussion of the impact of the lack of privilege (or symbolic capital) is based on the work of Skeggs and McKenzie, see Skeggs, B., *Class, Self, Culture* (Routledge: London, 2004); and McKenzie, L., *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain* (Policy Press: Bristol, 2015).

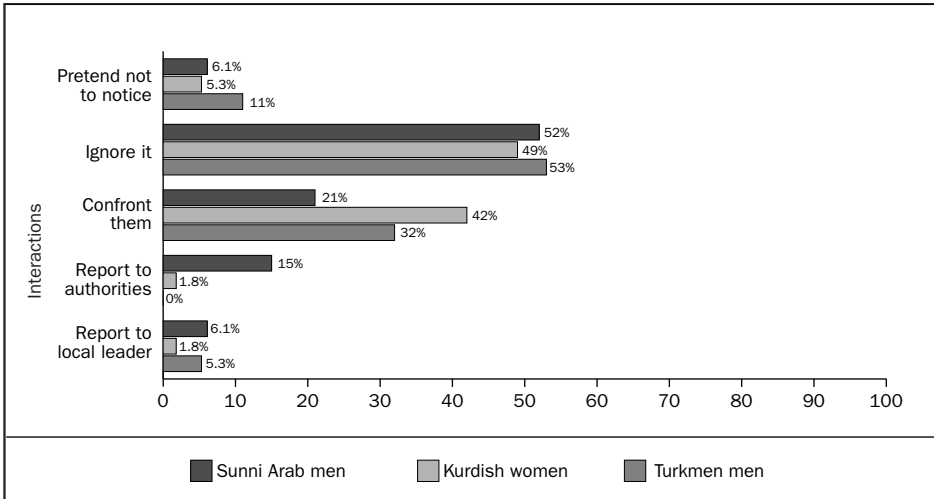
<sup>66</sup> See 'Baghdad and Erbil close to reaching agreement on return of Peshmarga to disputed territories', *Kirkuk Now*, 11 July 2019.





**Figure 3.15.** Customers’ perceived freedom of action in the bazaar

Note: Participants could provide more than one response.



**Figure 3.16.** Selected customers’ reactions to an insult by a member of another group

Privilege also impacts on how free people feel to carry out a number of actions in the bazaar, with Kurdish customers feeling the most free in a number of areas, particularly in relaxing and socializing (see figure 3.15).

Another way to examine the impact of privilege is to note people’s reactions to insults by members of a different ethnosectarian group—whether they avoid conflict, either by pretending they did not notice the insult or by ignoring it (an act of everyday peace), or confront the person who insulted them (an act of everyday conflict). Kurds were the most likely to confront the insulter (41 per cent) and the least likely to avoid conflict (54 per cent). Sunni Arabs were the most likely to avoid

conflict (69 per cent) and the least likely to confront the insulter (20 per cent); among Turkmens, 65 per cent were likely to avoid conflict.

At the intersection of privilege with ethnosectarian identity and gender, the following observations can be made. Sunni Arab women were the most likely to avoid conflict (81 per cent) and the least likely to confront the insulter (19 per cent). In this they differed significantly from Kurdish women, of whom 54 per cent said that they would avoid conflict and 42 per cent said they would confront the insulter. Kurdish women were less likely (54 per cent) to avoid conflict than both Sunni Arab men (58 per cent) and Turkmen men (63 per cent). Kurdish women were also more likely (42 per cent) to confront the insulter than both Sunni Arab men (21 per cent) and Turkmen men (32 per cent) (see figure 3.16). Therefore, to the extent that privilege affects the likelihood of responding to an insult with an act of everyday peace or everyday conflict, the more privileged ethnosectarian identity (Kurdish) is more influential than the more privileged gender (male).

A number of proposals put forward in this paper would address the effect of privilege on the way Kirkukis feel they can utilize the space in the bazaar, such as changing the space itself so that all people feel free to interact, improving the language ability of people who are currently isolated, creating safe spaces for women, and improving knowledge about gender inequality.

Gender-sensitive police training and increasing the proportion of women police officers would also help to limit the effect of privilege on acts of everyday conflict against women. However, to really have an impact on the effect privilege has on acts of everyday conflict more generally, wider changes to policing in Kirkuk are necessary. Kirkuk is highly securitized with a number of military checkpoints, and although this type of security is necessary, the rebuilding of trust and the practice of community policing are also important, particularly given many Kirkukis' negative perception of the police. A move towards community policing would help to improve the relationship between all communities and the police, and would also improve communication between the police and the population in order to resolve conflicts in a more informal manner—which is important given the small proportion of survey participants who said they would report ethnosectarian insults to the authorities.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, as part of the move towards community policing, it is important to develop a truly multi-ethnosectarian police force that represents all communities.

Desecuritizing the city, installing a multi-ethnosectarian police force, and moving towards community policing have had success in other deeply divided societies with similar divisive issues, such as Brčko.<sup>68</sup> Such police reforms can only be encouraged by (inter)national peacebuilders, and it is down to the central government and the Kirkuk Provincial Council to implement them. Due to the competition for political control of Kirkuk, these are the most difficult

<sup>67</sup> For more on the positive role of community policing in deeply divided societies, see Ellison, G., 'A blueprint for democratic policing anywhere in the world? Police reform, political transition, and conflict resolution in Northern Ireland', *Police Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2007), pp. 243–69.

<sup>68</sup> O'Driscoll (note 1).

recommendations put forward in this paper to implement.<sup>69</sup> However, recently there have been some signs of progress, as policies were put forward by the Prime Minister for security sector reform in relation to the PMF, which would also eventually see them leave areas like Kirkuk, which would in turn enable further security sector reform in Kirkuk.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, there is some pressure from the local population; protests calling for wider participation in the police by the various ethnosectarian groups took place in July 2019. Finally, police reforms would not impact on the constitutional status of Kirkuk, which is at the heart of the political disagreements between the various ethnosectarian groups in Kirkuk, and thus their implementation would be less controversial than that of reforms relating to the distribution of political positions or Kirkuk's territorial status.

<sup>69</sup> For a more encompassing analysis of security sector reform in Kirkuk and the political issues that make it more difficult, see O'Driscoll, 'Throwing water over the tinderbox: An alternative for Kirkuk' (note 4).

<sup>70</sup> Knights, M., 'Popular Mobilization Force reform in Iraq: Reintegration or consolidation of militia power?', *Defense Post*, 3 July 2019.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Despite the intransigence of the political actors in Kirkuk and the issues between the central government and the KRG on the territorial and security status of Kirkuk, the research carried out for this study demonstrates that there is room for optimism about local peacebuilding. It is important that peacebuilders, policymakers and donors move away from a predominant focus on elites in Kirkuk and focus more on the local population. In the long term, such a focus can lead local people to exert sustained pressure on their political representatives to reach a political consensus on the future of Kirkuk. More importantly, in the short term, it can help minimize conflict and improve social trust at the local, everyday level.

Space, time and privilege have a substantial impact on the behaviour of Kirkukis, and the understanding of their influence demonstrated by this study allows for the development of policies that have the potential to create positive change. Insights on topics including the impact of language skills, social interactions and the ways people feel they can occupy space allow for focused and actionable policy recommendations. Thus, these recommendations can potentially go beyond the political back-and-forth that has seen little willingness to compromise and led to the lack of progress towards peace over the last 15 years.

Elite-level peacebuilding is important in Kirkuk; but with the lack of advancement at the elite level, progress can be made at the everyday level. Local, bottom-up peacebuilding can also connect to and influence elite-level peacebuilding, and it is important that national and international peacebuilders do not neglect this level.

Conversations around peacebuilding in Kirkuk need to change so that there is a systematic focus on improving the lives of Kirkukis, enhancing peace at the local level, and ensuring that the people of this resource-rich province do not have to suffer due to political competition for the control of resources that should benefit everyone. Kirkuk has a long history of multi-ethnosectarian interaction and much of this history still lives on in the bazaar. It is important that this culture of interaction is built on in order to develop everyday peace for Kirkukis.

Many of the recommendations that follow can be carried out by local peacebuilders; some will require international technical or financial support; and some will require action by the Iraqi Government, the Kirkuk Provincial Council and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

### **Recommendations for education**

1. Establish more community language instruction programmes, with special attention given to encouraging Sunni Arabs, particularly Sunni Arab women, to learn an additional language as a way to reduce social isolation. Also create resources for language self-study, such as an online dictionary and app providing lessons in all three of Kirkuk's main languages.

2. Build the language capabilities of the youth of Kirkuk by developing a multilingual school curriculum that begins instruction in Kirkuk's three main languages and cultures at an early age.
3. Develop a cultural education campaign for adults that explains the importance of the various holidays and ways to make these appear less exclusive or threatening to members of other cultures.
4. Train local leaders and members of civil society organizations in social cohesion and the benefits of inclusive cultural experiences, so that celebrations can become more inclusive across communities and are not seen as a threat.
5. Organize educational and deliberative events, led by local peacebuilders, which provide a safe environment for communication between Kirkukis from different ethnosectarian groups on key issues that divide them.
6. In order to improve women's sense of safety and comfort in the bazaar, develop an educational campaign for shopkeepers on gender inequality. If successful, this should be further developed and offered to the wider society.
7. Building on the financial benefits that customers and shopkeepers can derive from establishing good relationships with each other, develop a campaign that gives advice on how to establish these relationships in a way that builds ties across community lines.

### **Recommendations for use of space**

1. Repair and modernize the Kirkuk bazaar—which is currently one of the few places in the city where all communities interact, but is losing customers to more modernized venues—to make it more user-friendly and attractive.
2. As part of the bazaar's renovation, improve existing social spaces and create new ones, including some that are solely for women.
3. Encourage more women to take on the role of shopkeeper, and provide them with business start-up assistance. In order to minimize the abuse they may face in the role, this effort should be linked to the above-mentioned gender equality education in the bazaar.
4. Explore the options for holding large cultural and historical celebrations in venues such as stadiums, so that participants can enjoy them fully but non-participants do not feel pressured to engage with them.

**Recommendations for policing**

1. Expand programmes to train police officers on gender issues and to hire women police officers. Although these programmes already exist in Iraq, they are on a small scale and are not focused on Kirkuk.
2. Develop gender-sensitive protocols for the police force and justice system, with real consequences for failing to follow them.
3. Make policing more community-oriented with a focus on community policing and not just security, and explore options for making the police force more representative of the ethnosectarian makeup of the Kirkuk population.

## **BUILDING EVERYDAY PEACE IN KIRKUK, IRAQ**

Peacebuilding efforts in Kirkuk, Iraq, have mainly focused on the elite level, where there has been little sign of the political compromise necessary for these efforts to have an impact. Events and conditions in Kirkuk have a strong influence on politics in the central government and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, making it an important site for the development of local peacebuilding initiatives. This policy paper draws attention to the opportunities for effective peacebuilding at the local level in Kirkuk.

The paper focuses on the main bazaar in Kirkuk, a common meeting place for people from all ethnosectarian groups, as an entry point for local peacebuilding. Based on survey research, it demonstrates the important role that time, space and multiple layers of privilege play in interactions between groups, and how they influence people's agency in carrying out acts that either avoid or instigate conflict. In order to target policy interventions so that they have a lasting impact, this paper examines how privilege is distributed both between and within the various groups in Kirkuki society.

Based on its findings about how these different dynamics influence behaviour with regard to intercommunity relations and conflict, this paper offers a range of recommendations—focusing on education, use of space and everyday security—that aim to improve interactions and build relationships between communities. It highlights everyday processes that can develop the drivers of peace and limit the drivers of conflict.

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