LUNDS UNIVERSITET

SAMHÄLLS-
VETENSKAPLIGA
FAKULTETEN

Centre for Middle Eastern Studies

Re-imagining national struggle

Resistance narratives within the exiled Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran

Thesis submitted in fulfillment

of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies

Author: Carl Bradshaw

Advisors: Vittorio Felci and Torsten Janson

Examiner: Rola El-Husseini

Date: June 20, 2019

I am in love with the mountains, hills, and rocks. Even if I freeze today because of hunger and nudity, I will not submit to the settlements of the foreigner as long as I am on this land. I am not afraid of chains nor cords nor sticks nor prison. Cut in pieces until they kill me, I will still say that I am a Kurd.

Hemin Mukriyani, Poet Laureate of the Republic of Kurdistan (Natali 2005, 127)

Abstract

In 2016 the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) decided to modify its resistance strategy towards the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). This study analyses political imaginations within the displaced KDPI community in Iraqi Kurdistan through a social constructivist paradigm and the methods of observations and interviews. Findings highlight "insider views" of resistance and outline how identity processes and memory cultures are pivotal to comprehend resistance narratives within the KDPI community. The study further suggests that identity construction is manufactured by broader shared values rather than narrow ethno-cultural allegiance, while being enunciated through nationalist discourse in pursuit of ideational legitimacy. Concerning memory, findings indicate that history is reconstructed to support present political needs. Memories emblematize values of heroism and trauma, constituting a central power resource through which KDPI members express their identity constructions and legitimize resistance. However, emotional distress and demand for concrete political gains has led to internal divergence. To maintain authority, KDPI's official values may thus need to be compromised. In 2016 KDPI announced the policy of *Rasan*, meaning reaction or uprising. *Rasan* should be understood as a revival of political struggle and thus stands out as such a compromise. Essentially, this study illuminates how increasing tensions between KDPI and IRI may function as a catalyst for increased tensions in Iran and the region.

***Key words*:** KDPI, political imaginations, identity processes, memory cultures, resistance narratives, social constructivism, *Rasan*

Acknowledgements

In September 2018, Iranian troops shelled Koya in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing two of my respondents. It is as a legacy to them I write.

I express my gratitude to Vittorio and Torsten at Lund University. Vittorio's knowledge of Iranian society and Torsten's guidance concerning analytical processes helped me keep on course throughout this endeavor.

Special thanks to Haidar at Koya University for the assistance throughout my time in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as to Malin, Oskar, and Peshko for having proofread my work. I am grateful to Maggie for having shared everyday life in the field and to my family for their unremitting encouragement. Additionally, I want to accredit Erasmus Mundus MARHABA and the Crafoord Foundation for their funding, as well as Koya University that provided me with accommodation and a sanctum to write. These institutions have made it possible to conduct the research.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to Shahin, Soran, and Samrand who helped me immensely by introducing me to respondents and translating interviews. Without them this thesis would never have been written.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Research Questions

In February 2016 the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI),[1] operating from exile in Iraqi Kurdistan (Bashur), announced that the party would resume its armed struggle against the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) after twenty years of armistice. *Rasan*, which is defined as "standing up with a vengeance to an enemy," is the concept behind the decision (Landinfo 2017, 1-3; KDPI 2016a; KDPI 2016c). KDPI aims to increase its presence in Iranian Kurdistan (Rojhelat) to protect its people, while claiming that it will not pursue armed measures unless attacked. KDPI justifies *Rasan* due to IRI's economic ostracization, denial of Kurdish cultural rights, and continuous persecution of Kurds, claiming that life in Rojhelat has become unbearable (Landinfo 2017, 5, 7; KDPI 2016b).

Since 2016, the armed confrontation known as the Western Iran Clashes has intensified (Landinfo 2017, 3-11; Neuhof 2016). In March 2018, the KDPI leaders Qader Qaderi and Sabah Rahmani, who I intended to interview, were assassinated in Bashur. Attacks against the KDPI headquarters, in December 2016 and September 2018, further suggest that IRI's strategy of eliminating political dissidents in cross-border interventions continues (Landinfo 2017, 9-10; UNPO 2018). IRI has liquidated KDPI members in Iraq, Turkey, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, and Germany (IHRDC 2011). Although KDPI has published a list of party members who have been assassinated by IRI (UNPO 2019), the latter's method of conducting covert assassinations makes it difficult to enumerate a precise tally of victims. Regarding Rojhelat, IRI's military policy since 1979 has claimed tens of thousands of lives, in what the Kurdistan Peace and Development Society labels a "systematic genocidal campaign" (UNPO 2017).

This study stems from concern over the idleness towards the Iranian-Kurdish issue in Euro-American journalism and academia, despite the excessive aggression Rojhelat Kurds are subjected to (Ahmedi 2018, 201-05). The insouciant attitudes by social science researchers demonstrate a flawed credibility, because many avoid conflict-ridden areas, where they might be

[1] KDPI is also known as Hizbi Demukrati Kurdistani Eran (PDKI) in Sorani Kurdish.

most required (Clark 2006, 217-18). "The regime in Iran is a very aggressive regime. More than the regimes in other parts of Kurdistan […] But the international community is not aware of this problem," a KDPI member declares. KDPI is known for embracing secular values in a rather illiberal milieu and the party's struggle for autonomy and federalism in a future democratic Iran (McDowall 2004, 157, 231-46, 346) made me want to gain insight as to how KDPI members cope with their political struggle in exile.

Furthermore, the legacy of KDPI's former Secretary-General, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, assassinated in 1989 by IRI emissaries during negotiations in Vienna (Prunhuber 2009, 1-17), seemed to have imbued the KDPI community. Ghassemlou's ideological endowment became an additional reason for my inquisitiveness. KDPI has been able to promote a secular, democratic, and human rights based outlook permeating the community and, allegedly, been able to bestow these values on the Rojhelat Kurds. After two months in the Azadi camp,[2] the headquarters of the exiled KDPI community in Bashur, I decided to concentrate my research on political imaginations ambient to KDPI's struggle.

Among Azadi's residents, IRI aggression is considered to be the norm and is expected to continue. Casualties seem to manifest resilience to free Rojhelat from oppression by modifying Iran's macro-political landscape and acquire democratic transition. KDPI members proudly remember hardships they have endured as a culturally distinct nation, suppressed by the Pahlavi dynasty and IRI. "Every attack makes our nation stronger," a *peshmerga*[3] recounts. "They think we will vanish if they kill enough of us, but we remember who we are and what we have achieved in the past. We will only work harder to resist them [IRI] and have a nation of our own." This indicates the relevance of imaginations about the past when defending conceptions of national identity. The combination of identity processes, memory cultures, and resistance

[2] Azadi means freedom in Sorani Kurdish. The Azadi camp constitutes one of several adjacent camps in the outskirts of Koya. For the sake of simplicity and security they are all referred to as Azadi.

[3] Kurdish fighter. However, *peshmergas* do not necessarily have to be armed.

narratives seem to compose a conceptual politico-imaginary cluster for the exiled KDPI community.[4]

I deemed it meaningful to explore the reciprocal interaction between KDPI members' own identity constructions, their perceptions of the past, and their raison d'être for political commitment. Acknowledging the KDPI community's hardships is not merely a question of justice and retribution, but potentially beneficial for the whole region. Denying oppressed peoples their voices may generate destructive consequences (Staub 2010, 276-83). In a region long characterized by antagonism, war, and carnage, the research community benefits from addressing examples where the oppressed have been disinclined to respond in kind to the repressive measures they have been subjected to. Consequently, I decided to examine how narratives of resistance are mediated and reflected upon amongst KDPI members in Bashur. By comprehending politics as a "struggle over people's imaginations," effectuated between multitudes of societal forces (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 9-11, 28), I have outlined the following research question:

How do political imaginations inform resistance narratives against IRI within the KDPI community in Bashur?

In order to attain relevant and substantial answers, I have divided the main research question into sub-questions:

1. *How do Kurdish identity perceptions interrelate with political imaginations within the KDPI community in Bashur?*

2. *How do memory constructions of life experiences and historical events interrelate with political imaginations within the KDPI community in Bashur?*

[4] Referring to "identity" and "memory" as nouns begs an essentialist perspective. In accordance with the social constructivist character of this thesis I refer to identity processes and memory cultures; namely how people relate to and act upon their notions of the concepts. Identity and memory as nouns are thus applied emically.

1.1 Disposition

Subsequent to chapter one, chapter two contains the literature review, contextualizing the exiled KDPI community in Bashur and assessing previous research pertaining to identity processes, remembrance, and resistance relating to the Iranian-Kurdish national project. Chapter three presents the social constructivist methodology, my methods of observations and qualitative interviews, as well as the ethical predicaments and the limitations encountered in the field. Further, the chapter displays how data have been analyzed. Chapter four contains the theoretical apparatus discussing how securitization, identity processes, memory cultures, and resistance are created through political imaginations. The fifth and sixth chapters present the findings and the analysis respectively. Findings highlight how the dynamic between values and emotions influence political imaginations and thus understandings of resistance. The analysis goes further, illustrating how conflicting resistance narratives seem to have generated in the policy of *Rasan*. The chapter also discusses my findings in the context of earlier research. Chapter seven summarizes the essence of my research, arguing that historical reference points and international support are vital for KDPI to endure as a political force in which proactive violence to achieve political objectives is deemed immoral.

I make the conscious decision to use the words *Kurdayetî* (Kurdish national identity), Rojhelat (Iranian Kurdistan) and Bashur (Iraqi Kurdistan) throughout the thesis, as I believe their frequent use within KDPI merit manifestation within political discourse.[5]

[5] The usage of words such as Rojhelat and Bashur are contentious and therefore constitutes a positioning within geopolitics. However, the same would apply for the usage of Iranian Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurdistan.

2. Literature Review

Founded in 1945 by Qazi Muhammed,[6] KDPI established the short-lived Republic of Kurdistan in the city of Mahabad one year later. Today the party is often conceived as the most deeply rooted political entity among Rojhelat Kurds (Ahmedi 2018, 201, 205). KDPI has been operating from Bashur since the 1980s, where it supports the Kurds inside Rojhelat (Natali 2005, 177), while consistently having rejected proactive armed struggle (Hevian 2013, 96). KDPI's headquarters relocated from the Qandil Mountains[7] to Koya following the First Gulf War (Ahmedi 2018, 214; Hevian 2013, 96), where it remains. During its existence KDPI has lost three party leaders. Apart from the assassination of Ghassemlou, Mohammed was executed by the Pahlavi dynasty in 1947, following the fall of the Republic of Kurdistan. IRI agents also assassinated Sadegh Sharafkandi in Berlin in 1992 (Prunhuber 2009, 303-04, 308).

Kurdish national identity (*Kurdayetî*) has long been regarded as a severe reason for societal instability in the Middle East (Entessar 1992, 2-3; Jwaideh 2006, 294). Kurdish calls for political emancipation are generally associated with Iraqi, Turkish, and Syrian Kurds, while Iranian-Kurdish national ambitions constitute unchartered territory for social science research (Ahmedi 2018, 201-02). Accordingly, Ofra Bengio calls the Rojhelat Kurds the "forgotten Kurds" (Bengio 2017, 33-34). Excluding Idris Ahmedi (2018), Arthur Quesnay (2010), and Carol Prunhuber (2009) I have not been able to identify any researchers having conducted substantial fieldwork among the KDPI community. Nonetheless, prominent scholars such as Rody Hevian (2013, 95-96), Mehrdad Izady (1992, 65), Denise Natali (2005, 126-31), and Abbas Vali (2014, 41-42), refer to KDPI as the oldest Kurdish party with a secular and democratic outlook.

The political climate pertaining to Iran's nuclear program may constrict the vision of the country. Researchers and policymakers would benefit from addressing matters relating to Iranian people, being narrated from a bottom-up approach. Political dissidents in exile can address

[6] When referring to Muhammed throughout the research I refer to Qazi Muhammed.
[7] Mountains on the north Iran-Iraq border.

issues that could never be discussed openly in Iran, having "freedom" to speak without restrictions. James Scott argues that researchers cannot receive trustworthy answers from oppressed people, as they "perform" in accordance to the system set out by the dominant. Therefore researchers need to approach the oppressed "offstage" (Scott 1990, 3-4, 25, 215).

The Kurdish diaspora may be the "best-organized diasporic community in Europe." However, this largely refers to Kurds from Turkish Kurdistan (Bakur) (Baser 2013, 3-4, 8, 62). Relatively few Rojhelat Kurds have moved to Europe but rather relocated to Bashur (Natali 2005, 177, 183). Scholarly literature dealing with Kurdish diaspora movements regularly omits particular characteristics of different Kurdish parties (Baser 2013, 25). The development of *Kurdayetî* is more complex than merely a single relationship between a political center and a peripheral minority. Kurdish political demands may rather be understood as a variety of responses from the periphery towards measures taken by several political centers (Natali 2005, xviii). To comprehend a specific sentiment of *Kurdayetî* and its socio-political consequences, researchers should penetrate the political environment in which *Kurdayetî* has evolved (Ibid, 181-82; Halliday 2006, 16-17).

2.1 *Kurdayetî* in Iran

Iran's population consists of diverse ethnic constellations (Amanolahi 2005, 37, 41; McDowall 2004, 2). Islam is often seen as surpassing ethnic allegiances, as the latter is perceived as an attribute for the pre-Islamic "age of ignorance" (Eickelman and Piscatory 2004, 100). Iranian national consciousness may have preceded the modern era (Abrahamian 2008, 2-3), but the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) marked the dawn of modern Iranian nationalism and the subversion of Kurdish societal power, by suppressing Kurdish history, language, and culture. The disregard of cultural heterogeneity is often regarded as the casus belli for belligerence between the state-center and the (Kurdish) periphery, and may be compared to Antonio Gramsci's notion of a "passive revolution," i.e. a major but tacit societal transformation (Vali 2014, 19-22, 38-40).

While Islam had been an interconnecting factor for identity affiliation, the Constitutional Revolution laid the foundation for Iranian national identity (*Iraniyyat*) through modernization, centralization, and ethnification during Pahlavi absolutism, alienating the Kurds from the hegemonic Persian ethnic discourse, and generating in the formation of a cumulative counter-reaction towards Persianization, strengthening Kurdish ethnic consciousness (Clawson 1993, 78-79; Natali 2005, 118-19, 124-25; Young 1970, 297-99). Despite the Pahlavi dynasty's suppressive policies towards Kurds (Abrahamian 2008, 63-70; Natali 2005, 117, 120-21), tribal influences continued to be intrinsic for Kurdish identity perception throughout the twentieth century, undermining the Kurdish national discourse. While Kurdish tribes challenged the Iranian state for their own benefits, *Kurdayetî* among the masses remained brittle (Halliday 2006, 18; Jwaideh 2006, 27-53; Vali 2014, 24-29). Pan-Islamic discourse was revitalized prior to the 1979 revolution (Entessar 1992, 127; Natali 2005, 148-49) but by then *Kurdayetî* in Iran had already been properly manifested (Natali 2005, 180; Vali 2014, 17-18).

The epithet of being Kurdish may originally have been a designator of lifestyle rather than ethnicity (Izady 1992, 184-85). Nonetheless, Kurdish folklore validates national consciousness since "time immemorial" (McDowall 2004, 1-4). Wadie Jwaideh suggests that Kurdish national consciousness can be traced back to Saladin, who conquered Jerusalem from the crusaders, in the twelfth century (Jwaideh 2006, 290-95), whereas David McDowall (2004, 5) illustrates how Saladin suppressed his Kurdish identity while embracing a pan-Islamic ideal.

George Harris (1977, 113) and Nader Entessar (1992, 4-5) problematize the legitimacy of *Kurdayetî* by referring to the incongruous nature of Kurdish language and culture. However, Martin van Bruinessen acknowledges that *Kurdayetî* is as legitimate as other national movements. From his perspective, national claims generally harbor inconsistencies. The will to form national identity should thus constitute the main criteria for nationhood (Van Bruinessen 2006, 21-24). The Egyptians and the Irish claim belonging to ancient civilizations with dubious links to the current Egyptian and Irish populations, while the lack of Prussian elements in German ethno-nationalism did not obstruct their national project (Izady 1992, 183-86, 197). Furthermore, France and Italy long struggled to make its populations speak French and Italian. Consequently, Kurdish claim to nationhood could be comprehended as a product of history

gradually generating in an imagined community (Ibid, 183-84; Jwaideh 2006, 290-91; Van Bruinessen 2006, 23-24).

Kurds were long perceived as "savages" loyal to their respective tribes (Forbes 1839; MacKenzie 1961; May 1892). Orientalist depictions later transformed to portray Kurds as one victimized entity with a strong sense of *Kurdayetî* (Rafaat 2016, 488, 493-96; Watts 2014, 145-47). Nevertheless, scholars started to rebuke this monolithic narrative by outlining the asymmetrical nature of Kurdish identity formation and the causations for the various repertoires of *Kurdayetî* throughout history (Entessar 1992; Jwaideh 2006; Natali 2005).

2.2 Epistemological camps concerning the ontogenesis of *Kurdayetî* in Rojhelat

Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou (1965) and Farideh Koohi-Kamali (2003) accentuate political economy to explain the manifestation of *Kurdayetî* in Rojhelat. They use a neo-Marxist/Hobsbawmian lens, alluding to capitalist development and suppression of pastoral communities, to explain the emergence of *Kurdayetî*, arguing that modernization and centralization under Reza Pahlavi Shah's Persian-first policy functioned as a dynamo for national consciousness in Rojhelat, where people previously had identified themselves through tribal face-to-face relations (Ibid, 44-45, 132-34; Ahmadzadeh and Stansfield 2010, 14). Ghassemlou and Koohi-Kamali further claim that *Kurdayetî's* main feature is a "common social and economic organization." The gradual dependence on agrarian economy strengthened loyalty towards an imagined Kurdish nation (Jwaideh 2006, 291; Koohi-Kamali 2003, 11-12), coalescing into one "mature" nationalist movement prior to 1979 (Koohi-Kamali 2003, 122-25, 194-95). The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) urbanized the Kurdish region further, as people fled the rural fighting, fragmenting the tribal structures and manifesting the imagined community (Entessar 1992, 45).

While the importance of political economy for the evolution of *Kurdayetî* in Rojhelat is acknowledged within the research community, it is often deemphasized in comparison to other

variables. The "maturity" of *Kurdayetî* in Rojhelat is perceived as peripheral for Ahmedi (2018), Bengio (2017), and Natali (2005) who suggest that *Kurdayetî* asserts itself when the socio-political environment allows it to. Simko Shikak's rebellions[8] following World War I and the founding of the Republic of Kurdistan in the aftermath of World War II were events arising from the lack of Iranian state capacity, generating political space for Rojhelat Kurds to impose their political objectives (Entessar 1992, 12-16; Halliday 2006, 15-16). Natali regards *Kurdayetî* as a product of larger nation-state-building-processes, creating unequal center-periphery relations. Looser political spaces encourage compromise and dialogue, while restrictive political spaces cause radicalization and stigma (Natali 2005, 180-81). Ahmedi outlines how nationalism among Rojhelat Kurds generally increases when the balance between ethnic groups "is upset." Even so, he argues that Rojhelat Kurds are "lagging behind" their counterparts in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria where armed struggle has facilitated the platform for civil resistance (Ahmedi 2018, 202-08; Hevian 2013, 95).

In his analysis of the genesis of *Kurdayetî*, Vali refuses to accept the empiricist epistemology relying on a modernist historical linear trajectory to validate political processes, which he criticizes Benedict Anderson (1991), Eric Hobsbawm (1990), and Ernest Gellner (1997) for. Anderson stresses the importance of print nationalism leading to a Weberian "community of sentiment." Hobsbawm accentuates the importance of capitalism and the development of social classes to comprehend the evolution of nation, while Gellner outlines how transformation from village society to urban industrialization laid the foundation for this development. According to Vali they all accept national identity as a contingent historical process, whereas Vali regards historical processes as movements from the present to the past and back to the present. The perceived needs (and dominant narratives) of the present thus inform the comprehension of the past. He consequently aims his work to illustrate Foucault's ontology of the present (Vali 2014, xi-xvi, 113-38).

[8] Simko Shikak was a Kurdish tribal chief leading a series of uprisings against the Iranian authorities in the 1920s until he was assassinated in 1930 (Jwaideh 2006, 140-43).

Vali claims that *Kurdayetî* should be understood as a need to accentuate uniqueness, as ethnicity equals ideational power in the form of legitimacy to resist Iran's military superiority (Ibid, 10-15), implicating the importance of memory for people to accommodate their present needs. Therefore, the dynamics of *Kurdayetî* benefit from being analyzed through a qualitative approach conveying the worldviews of the subjects being researched, as opposed to the use of grand theorizing (Halliday 2006, 18).

2.3 A broader outlook on identity and memory: The foundations for resistance

Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka (1995, 130), Walter Benjamin (Mays 2005, 121), and Michael Rothberg (2009, 7) all emphasize how memory preserves and reconstructs the past, thus serving the creations of groups, further illustrating the intrinsic interrelationship between identity processes and memory cultures.

The development of Iranian-Kurdish *Kurdayetî* shares fundamental elements with other peoples having been historically oppressed. The lack of literature concerning Rojhelat Kurds has made me scrutinize other contexts where identity, memory, and resistance constitute imperative facets of political imagination. Jewish-Israeli, Palestinian, Irish, and Catalan ethno-nationalism exemplify socio-political historical conditions where the activity of remembering has been of rudimentary importance. The cases are not comparative to the Iranian-Kurdish context as every identity-memory nexus is of unique sui generis character. Furthermore, the examples are not supposed to promote Peter Novick's (1999) notion of a "Victimization Olympics" where suppressed groups "compete" for attention and legitimization. Rather, they illustrate the relevance of identity processes and memory cultures as conceptual fields, to comprehend how resistance narratives are imagined politically.

Among Jewish Israelis, trust in outsiders is generally low due to the immense suffering throughout Jewish history. Memories of persecution have a direct impact on Jewish-Israeli society where national security outweighs other political issues (Kriesberg 2007, 35).

Correspondingly, remembrance of the 1948 exodus in Palestinian memory culture has functioned as a unifying symbol strengthening the sense of nation within the Palestinian community by promoting the image of a harmonious era prior to Israel's existence (Aboubakr 2017, 217-20, 224). By passing on a specific account of national identity to new generations the narrative of resistance against Israel is endorsed (Ibid, 222, 225).

The Irish national narrative construed as an "archive of loss" encourages the Irish population to reclaim their "primal purity and vigor" and dispose of the "Anglicizing virus" (Becket 2009, 69-72; Deane 1985, 94). The "resurrection" of the nation has been dependent on narrating stories of past injustices and heroic tales (Mays 2005, 124-25). The Irish novelist Patrick Pearse describes his country as having a will of its own and explains how his homeland has been longing for "a distinct and unfettered national existence" since the Norman invasion in the twelfth century (Pearse 1952, 239).

Along a similar trajectory Joseph Llobera outlines how Catalan national identity has been undermined through an enforced "diet of state history," whereby the Catalan historical narrative has been corrupted and ignored (Llobera 2007, 331-32, 134-35). The promotion of Catalan identity was politically motivated as a form of resistance against Francisco Franco's policy of centralization, which linked modern Spain to the unification of the country in the fifteenth century (Ibid, 134-35). Several scholars therefore started to trace the legacy of the Catalan nation back to the Frankish influences in the ninth and tenth centuries (Ibid, 136-38; Vargas 2015, 40-41).

The above cases share certain core characteristics. Trauma creates mistrust and consolidates the impetus to protect the imagined community (Bar-Tal 2007, 1436-438; Roe 2005, 21-22; Staub 2006, 867). A heritage of pain forms the notion of a strong people willing to sacrifice themselves for their nation (Becker 2004, 3-4), while giving rise to a narrative of fear towards the perceived origin of the threat (Bar-Tal 2007, 1439-442; Coleman 2011, 541). Oppressed groups are generally taught how they have survived external threat (Bar-Tal 2007, 1443-445; Vargas 2015, 36-37), and need to present narratives in which heroism and victimization are interwoven (Aboubakr 2017, 221-22; Llobera 2007, 335-38). The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the 1948 Palestinian exodus, the Easter Rising, and the Catalan Civil War are commemorated as events

characterized by both victimization and heroism (Bar-On 1997, 90-100; Koldas 2011; Mulqueen 2015, 1-4; Llobera 2007, 331-42).

Equivalently the Kurds have a long tradition of pursuing the *pahlavān* ideal, i.e. to demonstrate bravery and sacrifice for one's people, which may be derived from Mithraic[9] ethics (Izady 1992, 187; Foltz 2013, 31). This ideal can be detected in the phrase *peshmerga* (those who face death) or in the word *Caş* (donkey) describing "traitors" to the Kurdish cause (Izady 1992, 188-89, 209). The Iranian political center has suppressed the Kurds throughout modern history (Bengio 2017, 34-35) and Rojhelat Kurds generally sense that the international community remains indifferent to their suffering, generating a callous realization that they can only rely on their own (Clawson 1993, 87; Natali 2005, 174-79). Kurds have been massacred and forcefully resettled since the second millennium BCE and the Kurdish region has been made a wasteland in the struggle between Ottomans and Safavids (Entessar 1992, 11-12; Izady 1992, 101-03). Over the last century Kurds have been subject to mass deportations and massacres (Halliday 2006, 12), thus illustrating similar preconditions to the examples outlined above.

2.4 Concluding remarks

Generally research on *Kurdayetî* among Rojhelat Kurds relies on historical macro-perspectives explained by realism and survivalist struggle, illustrating what Rogers Brubaker refers to as the realist dominance in international relations. He argues that, "We should not ask what is nation but rather: How is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalized within and among states?" To deal with the tensions between different groups one must examine the rationale for the distinction between "us" and "them" and further the rationale for portrayals and actions towards the Other (Brubaker 1996, 298).

[9] Not to be confused with Mithraism practiced in the Roman Empire. Rather it should be understood as an Iranian form of Mithraism, often simplistically incorporated within Zoroastrianism (Foltz 2013, 19-31).

Vali's ontology of the present constitutes an exception to the realist macro-approach and highlights a crucial perspective for the explanation of *Kurdayetî* among Rojhelat Kurds. However, his historical analysis focuses on a short timespan between the implementation of the 1906 Iranian Constitution and the demise of the Republic of Kurdistan (Vali 2014, 10), excluding personal accounts from Rojhelat Kurds. Furthermore, the Kurdistan Vali refers to is the community under Iranian sovereignty (Ibid, 12), overlooking diasporic Rojhelat Kurds. The lack of focus on the Kurdish political movements having been compelled to leave Rojhelat in fear of persecution, imprisonment, and death, is a shortcoming spanning all pertaining literature. A rational assumption furthering the debate is to include perceptions of exiled KDPI members in the equation, as a large portion of resistance occurs outside Iran. Research has generally focused on elites while omitting the rank and file perspective, which always will contain varied political imaginations of reality even in outwardly homogenous communities (Eickelman and Piscatory 2004, 163-64). By inquiring how exiled KDPI members construct identity through remembrance I may be able to gain insight into how political imaginations have informed narratives of resistance against IRI.

3. Methodology

In order to gain perspicacity into the political imaginations held by my research subjects, I have chosen a social constructivist paradigm, an ethnographic research strategy, and the methods of observations and qualitative interviews. Letting people from the KDPI community share their stories and show me their lives, enables me to compile data concerning identity processes and memory cultures, further providing insights into how resistance narratives are imagined politically.

3.1 The social constructivist paradigm

Social constructivism regards ontology as a mirroring of an individual's conceptual domain (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 13-15). The empirical world can never be grasped as objective truth but people aim to make sense of it through historical interpretations and experiences (Schwandt 2000, 197). While the social constructivist paradigm may seem to be a Gordian knot, a more elementary paradigm would result in a skewed apprehension, alien to how individuals perceive reality (Eickelman and Piscatory 2004, 164). The critical-realist epistemology adapted in social constructivism occupies the middle ground between rationalism and reflectivism (McDonald 2013, 64; Steans et al. 2010, 201-02), criticizing realism for merely examining societal phenomena from an external-materialist stance. Instead social constructivism includes the multifaceted issue of identity processes, claiming that identity is a construction (Shannon 2012, 7, 12-13; Steans et al. 2010, 196-97).

Arguing that intersubjective interaction is the basis for perceiving reality (McDonald 2013, 164) social constructivism becomes the most adequate paradigm to comprehend political imaginations (Ibid, 76). Social reality is dependent on widely accepted conventions, created by both structure and agency. People are partially socialized into their identities and norms but still active in the construction of identity and knowledge. However, these constructions are informed by memory, setting certain preconditions for norms and actions (O'Reilly 2005, 197; Steans et al. 2010, 183-92, 200-01). No individuals react to the same experiences in a predetermined manner (Shannon

2012, 9-10). Consequently, perceptions of reality need to be analyzed "from within." The focus is what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann label the sociology of knowledge, namely the interrelationship between people´s ideas, norms, and actions creating reality (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 16-17, 31, 158; Cresswell 2014, 34-38). Epistemology is thus created through reciprocal interaction, while methodology should reconstruct "realities" and obtain answers produced in synergy between researcher and research subjects (Cuba and Lincoln 1994, 109-13; O'Reilly 2005, 50-52).

3.2 The ethnographic research strategy

Searching for a universally applicable theory risks biases when trying to fit different societal norms into one inconsistent theory (Steans et al. 2010, 188, 193). I have thus assumed an ethnographic research strategy of phenomenological and iterative-inductive character benefitting from putting myself in a pertaining role to my research subjects (Cuba and Lincoln 1994, 114; Cresswell 2014, 37). Ethnographic field research focuses on people in their own environment and aspires to validity by involving "direct and sustained contact with human agents" (O'Reilly 2005, 226). Phenomenology describes people's lived and narrated experiences when exploring social phenomena (Cresswell 2014, 42, 50). Consequently, this thesis explores identity and memory constructs as "entrained in the flow of history" (O'Reilly 2005, 226). The iterative-inductive approach recognizes that researchers are affected by meta-theoretical assumptions, but should try to minimize the effects of such preconceptions during data gathering (Gustafsson and Hagström 2017, 15). Consequently, the research issue is approached circularly (iteration), while keeping a non-biased position open to alterations (induction) (O'Reilly 2005, 26-27, 198-99).

3.3 Research Methods and Data Collection

Data collection took place between September 2017 and April 2018 in the Azadi camp in the proximity of Koya, Bashur. In December 2018, I returned for a month to follow up on political developments. Qualitative research benefits from a multi-methods approach in order to comprehend the complex nuances of reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2013, 24). The methods used are observations and interviews. To understand research subjects' experiences it is crucial to participate in their community to gain familiarity (O'Reilly 2005, 22, 51).

Because KDPI has regularly been infiltrated by IRI spies I relied upon snowball sampling. Access to KDPI members proved futile without developing a contact network of go-betweens. Personal acquaintances within KDPI thus facilitated access to respondents and increased mutual trust between respondents and myself (Babbie 2013, 129; Clark 2006, 419-20).

3.3.1 Fieldwork observations

Fieldwork observations describe people in their everyday lives and natural setting over time (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, 24; O'Reilly, 2005, 84, 101, 105, 115). It took two months to gain acceptance and frequent access to Azadi, constituting the main ethnographic field, although security concerns prohibited me from living in Azadi. Gradually, I was allowed to spend more time in the camp, indicating the inhabitants' increased trust in me. After Christmas I sensed that I was operating from a more semi-overt role, as people did not consider my presence as unusual. Once accepted into the community inhabitants were eager to include me in their daily lives.

Still, I needed more sustained contact with my target group than I had anticipated; in order to gain trust and problematize "truths" I otherwise would have taken for granted (O'Reilly 2005, 226). Many KDPI members feel forgotten, once journalists who have visited the camp leave. To counteract the sense of abandonment I spent as much time in Azadi as possible providing me with insight into how experiences affect everyday practice (Aoki and Yoshimizu 2015, 276).

Within ethnographic research observations and interviews are "inextricably linked." Interviews have functioned as the main data gathering technique, while observations have provided the

context from which interviews' content increase in value, as their structure and content have been influenced by observations (O'Reilly 2005, 84, 101, 105, 115).

3.3.2 Qualitative interviews

I have conducted thirty-two interviews. Twenty-five were recorded to avoid losing information during transcriptions, thus attaining higher reliability. Seven respondents chose not to be recorded. All respondents are native to Rojhelat but have relocated to Bashur to evade IRI's rule. They come from different age groups and hold varying responsibilities within KDPI, thus generating insights into experiences and memories from both Rojhelat and Bashur. Generally, respondents have preferred to speak in a familiar setting, such as their homes (Clark 2006, 118). Interviews were complicated to arrange. In order to gain trust I organized introductory meetings allowing respondents to familiarize themselves with me. Further, unexpected *peshmerga* missions, assassinations, and riots were regular occurrences resulting in several interviews being rescheduled or cancelled.

Initially, I aimed to keep interviews between sixty and ninety minutes in accordance with Joseph Hermanowicz guidance (2002, 487). However, respondents had an ardent need to share their stories, due to a lack of contact with "outsiders," and often wanted to speak longer. I relied on qualitative respondent interviews, having the intention to understand my interviewees' own comprehensions of reality (O´Reilly 2005, 29, 117-18). Because, studies relating to memory generally address remembrance among experts and elites (Cory 2015, 264; Eickelman and Piscatory 2004, 4) I aimed to include less privileged voices to problematize norms and elevate alternative narratives (O'Reilly 2005, 225).

I used semi-structured interviews, supposedly best suited to "unveil" my respondents' perceptions. However, I gradually decided to put the interview guide aside and focus on my respective respondents' expertise, whereupon the interviews took a more conversational character (Hermanowicz 2002, 480-83). The non-directive overt approach utilizing a probing strategy proved rewarding as interviewees became more eager to provide relevant and detailed information (Bryman 2012, 12). Note taking was avoided during recorded interviews, as I

realized it distracted respondents (Hermanowicz 2002, 496). During interviews I used an interpreter, as respondents generally did not speak English or Arabic and I did not speak Sorani Kurdish. I have thus chosen not to rely on linguistic analysis but to focus on the broader themes and rhetorical patterns in my findings, from which representational codes have been derived (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2000, 117).

3.4 The researcher's role and ethical predicaments

I encourage readers to acknowledge the tentative nature of interpretations based on my own preconceptions and acknowledge that my gender and European background may have affected how respondents perceived me, further influencing the research (O'Reilly 2005, 216-18). However, by using mutual contacts to build trust and let multiple voices influence the research (Cuba and Lincoln 1994, 115), I have presumably produced nuanced depictions contained within my respondents' worldviews. A prevalent criticism against ethnography is the power discrepancy between researchers and research subjects (Schwandt 2000, 203-04). As Sheila Carapico outlines, it is impossible to guarantee safety for people involved in field research, as researchers merely can protect research subjects through contextualized attentiveness benefiting the people being studied (Carapico 2006, 429-31; Cresswell 2014, 132-38; Schwandt 2000, 204-05).

As respondents' reflections often involved personal loss and trauma it was important to maintain empathetic respect towards research subjects (Hermanowicz 2002, 493). Respondents have been informed about the research topic and their right to terminate interviews. Further, respondents' names and specific locations have been omitted to minimize the risk for recognition (Cresswell 2014, 132-38). Almost all respondents have argued that I should use their names. None of them can return to Rojhelat and generally seem to be proud of having their names used, possibly a way of illustrating courage and defiance towards IRI. One Azadi resident argues that, "We are not afraid of death and we want the mullas and the regime to know that." Nonetheless, I have

kept respondents anonymous, as it may result in them being targeted by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The psychological stress during my time in Bashur was intense with acquaintances and friends being intimidated by assassinations and constant threat. The comparative calm back in Sweden has helped to process my thoughts and material. Although social science research is inherently political, researchers often promote the "fly on the wall" model of objectivity towards the research topic (Carapico 2006, 429-30). The "fly on the wall" approach is not faulty but seems inconsistent with my moral conviction in this specific context, as I aim to empower the research subjects. I have therefore adapted Carapico's reciprocity model in which respondents have influenced the research activity (Ibid, 430; Cresswell 2014, 137).

My intention was to pay interpreters a standard salary. However, having befriended them, they refused monetary remuneration. Instead, contributions towards petrol and food, as well as aiding with applications to universities were the ways I could show my appreciation. Respondents have not been paid, as remuneration may be an incitement for participation (Cresswell 2014, 137). In April I received the offer to travel to the Qandil Mountains and interview KDPI *peshmergas* going on missions to Rojhelat. My KDPI intermediary argued that he knew a safe route. I declined the offer when I learned that his family was anxious about the venture. This realization illustrates how easily ethnographic research risks to create uneven power relationships (Schwandt 2000, 203-04).

3.5 Limitations and delimitations

In 2006 the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDP-I) split from KDPI because of leadership conflicts, an issue outside the scope of this thesis. The parties cooperate as one entity and share the same overarching political methods and objectives (Hevian 2013, 96). The ideological propinquity of the parties, operating less than a kilometer from each other, makes it more accurate to refer to them as two factions of one political body. The split should be understood as a consequence of personal allegiances rather than a product of enmity between ordinary people

within the two factions (Landinfo 2016, 8). I have thus decided to present narratives from KDPI and KDP-I members as one entity, for simplicity's sake referred to as KDPI. By comparing KDPI and KDP-I to each other, I would risk contributing to the deceiving image of aversion between the groups. As one respondent conveys, "It does not matter if I am KDPI or KDP-I. We are one because we all want the same things."

A complication has been to access female respondents, a common issue for men conducting social science research in the region (Clark 2006, 421). As I have interviewed merely five women, I acknowledge that my findings provide few insights on political imaginations among females. Due to security reasons I have always needed permission from KDPI representatives to visit Azadi, take photos, and record videos. When I have been allowed to take photos, they have gone through a screening process before I have been allowed to use them.

One may argue that my dependence on intermediaries and interpreters, who are KDPI members, could be problematic. Intermediaries probably knew what stories and narratives I would encounter and I cannot exclude the possibility that interpreters have omitted parts of interview conversations that they found "problematic". However, I deem this very unlikely due to our close friendship and the fact that we often discussed sensitive matters, including critique of KDPI. Moreover, using KDPI intermediaries and interpreters was the only way I could gain access to the community. By using an external interpreter I would not have been able to access the KDPI community at all. Furthermore, my interpreters are fully qualified, as they have previously worked with English translation for other researchers. Finally, I acknowledge that my own research may constitute an aspect of resistance towards IRI, as I provide testimonies from individuals who ultimately aim to oust IRI from power. Since this thesis sets out to convey perceptions of reality among my target group I claim that this dilemma does not constitute an issue, as long as my work is characterized by factuality and depth.

3.6 Analytical Procedure

The analysis has been conducted sequentially, commencing during the research process (Becker 2004, 27). Coding has been of cyclical and inductive character, rather than a linear process staked out prior to the data collection (Saldana 2013, 58, 65). Data has been coded during the fieldwork, and re-coded after the transcription process, to distinguish overall themes and assign meaning to how political imaginations among research subjects are manufactured. The codes are thus components of the themes, which further consolidate meaning. I have approached the data in a manner which Johnny Saldana would label "pragmatic eclecticism," applying the coding methods most suitable to attain an appropriate and substantial analysis (Ibid, 8-9, 36, 60).

During the first cycle I have coded *practices* (Descriptive Coding), and the display of *values* (Values Coding) and *feelings* (Emotion Coding), in order to dissect the medley of complex accounts shared with me during observations, daily conversations, and interviews. I content myself with merely presenting macro-codes (hereby referred to as codes), aimed at encapsulating the large amount of micro-codes formulated, as the full presentation of micro-codes would not add to the overall aspiration of the study.

Descriptive Coding has functioned as the substructure for further coding cycles (Ibid, 83). The technique was primarily applied on field notes from observations and is advantageous when orienting oneself in a new research environment, as it fits well into the basic question of what issues the researcher should address. Thus, it is Descriptive Coding, which has informed the choice of research questions and the methodological approach of the research. Practices are defined as repeated actions and material manifestations of behavior, as a physical environment is regarded as "a site of symbolic ordering," and "a physical embodiment of [its residents'] identity" (Ibid, 87-90).

Values Coding and Emotion Coding were used on interview notes and transcriptions to explore "subjective qualities of human experience" by uncovering "deep insight into the participants' perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions," as well as potential future action (Ibid, 105-15).

Multiple compatible coding methods generally attain increased insight concerning the various perspectives and layers of the data (Ibid, 188-89).

The motivation to choose values and emotions when coding the data is because of the concept's tangible presence within the KDPI community. Values correlate to "realities" through the sociology of knowledge and may be regarded as symptoms of perceived cultural and historical heritage. Values may be understood as "the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, thing, or idea," thus constituting rules for action, while emotions are understood as "distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act" (Ibid, 105, 110-13). As it may be difficult to determine the demarcation between values and emotions, it is vital to emphasize that values are relatively stable entities being sanctioned and dictated from above, thus guiding the ideal behavioristic within a community, whereas emotions are more fluctuating and evolve from a bottom-up approach, thus having the potential to impact values over time. In essence, values constitute how individuals want to see the world around them, while emotions illustrate how they actually perceive the world. Should values and emotions be incoherent it may likely cause internal societal turmoil (Tamir et al. 2016, 67-70, 76).

During the second cycle I have composed viable themes, capturing the most salient meanings inherent to the codes (Saldana 2013, 209-13). The thematization corresponds to the phenomenological approach focusing on participants' psychological world of values and emotional experiences, where the particular transcends into the general through summative labels (Ibid, 45-46, 176).

4. Theoretical Framework

The selection of theoretical instruments draws both on previous research presented in the literature review and field observations, corresponding to the iterative-inductive research strategy.

4.1 Political imaginations

In a Wittgensteinian sense politics may be understood as public negotiation over a society's social contract, as communities are subject to contestation between various ideational powers. Politics is understood as, "a struggle for imaginations, habits of the mind, the heart, and of public space that helps people's ideas of the common good - just as much as it is a struggle for control over groups, institutions, states, and resources" (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, xv, 7-8). Consequently, the non-political may acquire political purport through ascribed values, transforming into a symbolic element of contestation. These values may further be imposed as a community's moral conduct (Ibid, 4-7, 11). Symbols compose a paramount component of political production providing emotional attachment to a perceived past, while values are amended in relation to the political dynamics of the present (Ibid, 28-29, 37).

People sharing concerted values are intrinsic for the viability of a community (Steans et al. 2010, 187, 191, 200). Even so, moral boundaries are subject to contestation and may fluctuate depending on the potency of different value camps within a community (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 18). The assertion of modernization theory, namely that societies undergo a linear development from traditional to modern, gradually reaching enlightenment, becomes defective when drawing a demarcation between traditional and modern. Modernity and tradition should thus not be conceived as a dichotomy per se (Ibid, 37).

The complex infrastructure of societal development is often based on traditional values, an example illustrated by the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which perplexed modernization theorists

and made them reconsider their conviction of a linear modernization trajectory (Ibid, 23-24). Instead traditions are invented, modified, or renounced through shared communal practice, and often become vital to legitimize a coherent societal structure (Ibid, 25, 28).

Regarding the theory's hierarchy, political imaginations permeates the essence of this study and serves as the hub for the other theoretical tools. Political imaginations delianates the reciprocal nature between identity processes, memory cultures, and resistance narratives, and how they inform and are influenced by perceptions of threat. However, the production of reality is not merely a hub and spoke one-way trajectory, as the peripheral theories determine the nature of political imaginations.

4.2 Securitization

The notion of security is paramount to this study, which has become apparent throughout the research process. Security may be understood as the product of interaction and compromise between political leaders and their audience, as well as a contestation between actors with different perceptions of norms and identity. Security may be used as a political tool when aiming to uphold order, authority, and legitimacy, thus pursuing "a society of security" (Campbell 1998, 201-02; McDonald 2013, 65).

Othering, namely the in-group favoritism and out-group alienation counter-pole dynamic from which the own identity can be distinguished is paramount for the creation of security. Identity may explain values and emotions, further influencing norms and actions (Shannon 2012, 7, 12-13; Steans et al. 2010, 196-97). Consequently, group constellations create portrayals of other groups, which they assign with labels ranging between friend and enemy. Narratives creating the identity of the Other thus have the potential to contribute to hostility (McDonald 2013, 70), wherefore security is dependent on perception (Steans et al. 2010, 199).

When conducting research through a social constructivist lens on matters pertaining to security, it becomes vital to focus on how security issues are created and how threat is portrayed and perceived. The Copenhagen School's securitization framework is "the most significant attempt

to develop a theory of international security revolving around the central claim that security is a social construction." Ole Weaver defines securitization as a "discursive construction of threat," as human actors specifically formulate, contribute to, or fully create threats. The actor securitizing a specific phenomenon holds authority and is therefore addressing its subjects, who have the possibility to legitimize or reject the threat as proportionate or disproportionate. Consequently, public support constitutes a crucial factor for political decision makers when acting on premises of security (MacDonald 2013, 65-69, 71-72).

Through the Copenhagen School's securitization framework, it may be possible to comprehend research subjects' threat perceptions of the IRI Other. The notion of securitization is appropriate for all the research questions, but is explicitly used to answer sub-question one as it illustrates the identity-security nexus within the KDPI community. It explains how identity processes are created within the KDPI community through securitization of IRI, but also how the memory culture of enmity towards IRI has become manifested.

4.3 The identity-memory nexus as ontology of the present

Group identity is understood in accordance with the Durkheimian tradition, being dependent on memory cultures. Scholars, such as Barbara Misztal (2003), often link Émile Durkheim to collective memory. I find this problematic, as the term begs an essentialist perspective incompatible with Durkheim's often neglected focus on the sociology of knowledge (Coser 1992, 365). Hence, I favor the concept of memory cultures when delineating how memory narratives are composed, as it alludes to memory's floating nature.

Sune Haugbølle defines memory cultures as "experiences that are socially constructed, imagined and represented, and are discernable to observers as social patterns, expressions and narratives" (Haugbølle 2010, 8-9). Memory cultures are manifested through long time periods of consistency and major societal events challenging perceived norms (Bakiner 2013, 692). Social parameters set the preconditions for how individuals conceptualize the past, partially restricting people's agency when "choosing" their memories (Halbwachs 1992, 38).

Identity discourse is thus ultimately based on semi-constructed memories generating in an ideological conviction where individuals extricate certain commonalities, while neglecting dissimilarities. Durkheim underscores the importance of family for basic identity construction, serving as an archetype for a utopian community. Even ethnic identity may be influenced by macro-political prerequisites and reimagined due to the political order of the day. Ethnicity's tractile character benefits from being scrutinized through memory, as ethnicity may be perceived as a political instrument to gain legitimacy (Eickelman and Piscatory 2004, 82-83, 99-102, 107).

Reassessments of history are always politically biased. History should thus be acknowledged as a "pool of resources" to legitimize (identity) politics in the present (Ibid, 29). Research benefits from addressing what "is left from the past in the actual experience of groups or that which these groups make of the past." Memory sites, such as holidays, clothes, food, depictions of people, and past events, as well as stories may consolidate a memory culture and pass on the feeling of community to new generations. Hence, symbols are vulnerable, as they are avatars of values concatenating the essence of identity (Haugbølle 2010, 161-62; Pekonen 1989, 132), all embedding the potential to promote a certain narration of the past. Leaders possess power vis-à-vis their subjects concerning how the past is narrated and remembered (Bakiner 2013, 693). However, should portrayals of the past not conform to the public's hegemonic memories, it may contribute to the formation of conflicting memory camps (Ibid, 692-94). Consequently, memory should be understood as negotiation between different forces struggling for supremacy (Rothberg 2009, 3-7).

As humans cannot comprehend their entire history, people construct a politically imagined reality through their own experiences. The purport of phenomena in the present may be reinforced or discarded through selective recaptualizations of the time before our lives (Foucault 1984, 40-42, 47). Past events are passed down through personal communication or text, providing people with co-ownership of past events. Concerning traumas, an individual never having experienced the event will interpret the trauma through the lens of the present socio-political context (Cory 2015, 139), what Foucault would label ontology of the present. Foucault conceptualizes ontology of the present as people's "different modifications in which rationalities

engender one another, oppose and pursue one another" (Foucault 1983, 443). Agency is thus paramount to reinvent the self from the "chains of the past" (Foucault 1984, 40-42, 47), although the possibility to do so is limited (Halbwachs 1992, 38). People thus have the potential to construct history in accordance with what is perceived as needed in the present.

The identity-memory nexus is appropriate for all the research questions, but is primarily applied to answer both sub-questions as it illustrates the reciprocal bond between identity processes and memory cultures. However, memory cultures and Foucault's ontology of the present will be applied in the analysis providing insight into the second sub-question, although its application also indirectly helps to comprehend identity formation and resistance narratives within the KDPI community through the construction of the past.

4.4 Resistance against regimes of truths

Power dynamics are inherently fluctuating, being subjects to modifications through political and economic influences, media, and educational institutions. Power may be understood as accepted forms of knowledge and are thus products of negotiation between different actors within society (Foucault 1998, 63). Resistance is consequently understood as the challenge of regimes of truths, expressed through contestation of socialized norms and ideological as well as material constraints (Rabinow 1991, 75). Ultimately it is material hardships, which create unrest and protest, but discrepancies between groups also harvest discontent (Eickelman and Piscatory 2004, 109-10).

As a dominant group holds power over another, it has the capacity to present its own worldview as indisputable truth. When being accepted as such by the subordinate, the dominant has reached a position of hegemony. Regimes of truths are thus reliant on compliance by the oppressed, while the dominant constantly needs to maintain the power structure of superiority (Scott 1990, 45). The subordinate may resist the dominant openly or latently. Symbols act as "vehicles by which, among other things, the subordinate insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct" (Ibid, xii-xiii, 221). Scott refers

to a public transcript (what is done openly) and a hidden transcript (what is done latently) (Ibid 4-5, 37-50). The oppressed generally avoid defiance in the hidden transcript, but use the anonymity of the collective to resist (Ibid, 14-17, 34-35). Further, when the hidden transcript transitions into a refusal to accept the normative compliance to the "truths" of the elite, it means an open challenge to the hegemonic order. As Scott outlines, the most repressive regimes will often face the most aggressive (and open) resistance, as there are no other means available (Ibid, 203, 217).

Scott's theory of resistance is primarily of relevance for the main research question as it helps to illustrate how the KDPI community in Bashur has elevated from the hidden to the public transcript and how different narratives of resistance gain influence. However, the theory is also applied on sub-question one to illustrate the difference between the hidden transcript in Rojhelat and the public transcript in Bashur. Conclusively, I want to stress that all the theoretical tools are of relevance for all the research questions, as securitization, identity processess, memory cultures and resistance narratives all influence each other through political imaginations.

5. Findings

Firstly, this chapter presents the most pertinent observations collected from the ethnographic field, including spontaneous statements from KDPI members. Findings, tabulated through Descriptive Coding, are condensed under the summative labels *security as a way of life*, *embracement of cultural and historical heritage*, and *admiration for personal sacrifice*.

Subsequently I present findings collected during interviews, tabulated through Values Coding and Emotion Coding. As one respondent proclaims being Kurdish "is all about feelings and choices," corresponding both to values and emotions when construing reality. Values Coding has been categorized with the summative labels, *moral Othering* and *ideational legitimacy*, *KDPI the paragon*, *the flexibility of Kurdish identity*, and *in the footsteps of "father" Ghassemlou*, while Emotion Coding has been categorized with the summative labels, *physical vulnerability and structural oppression*, *invisible* struggle, and *between restraint and plea for action*.

Inspired by Erin Cory (2015), I have chosen to present the findings through interwoven narration of the most representational data, having made the assessment that presenting each code and its appurtenant findings separately would prohibit perspicacity into the congruence between the codes in real life.

5.1 Field observations

"If a family has the Kurdish flag in their house [in Rojhelat] they will be executed."

Kurdistan's *Alaya Rengîn* (the colorful flag) billows in the breeze over Azadi. The red symbolizes the passion to struggle, the white stands for peace and equality, the green signifies the beauty of the Kurdish homeland, while the yellow twenty-one beamed sun symbolizes the emblem of life. Within Zoroastrianism, practiced by Kurds prior to the advent of Islam, twenty-one represents reincarnation, illustrating the importance of March 21st, the peak of Nowruz (the

Kurdish New Year). The celebration honors the legend of how the Kurdish blacksmith Kawa freed the people from the Assyrian despot Zuhak (Izady 1992, 243-44). “This here [Azadi] is our new Mahabad Republic [the Republic of Kurdistan]. The flag is the proof of this. We will protect it with our lives,” a resident proclaims. The flag thus manifests political imaginations, symbolizing identity, memory, and resistance as one concatenated entity.

5.1.1 Security as a way of life

I leave the Azadi library, a building pockmarked by bullets, where I have been working. Although, the camp gives the impression of a prosperous village with gardens, SUVs, and satellite antennas, there exists an aura of vigilance. When an army helicopter flies in over the camp people hurry out from their houses. “American” somebody shouts reassuringly, whereupon people return inside.

Armed measures among the KDPI community are prominent. The camp is hemmed in with multiple checkpoints and a protective wall of sandbags and earthworks against the main road. The western periphery of Azadi faces the hills and the “yellow” zone, governed by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), generally perceived as more trustworthy among KDPI members than the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which governs the “green” zone (the eastern part) of Bashur. The terrain hinders vehicle access from the west and the constant presence of guards makes access on foot easily detected. Further, there are regular spot checks for weapons and explosives. Azadi also has a shooting-range and a military obstacle course. *Peshmergas* often live outside the main camp, acting as a protective barrier for civilian inhabitants. Most of Azadi’s residents seem to keep weapons in their homes in order to be able to fend off an attack on short notice.

It is standard procedure that several armed *peshmergas* accompany Mustafa Hijri, the Secretary-General of KDPI. As I sit conversing with two Azadi residents amidst the hills bordering the camp we spot five people walking hastily along the dried out brook a stone’s throw away. It is

Hijri with his bodyguards. My companions are concerned that Hijri has left the camp. “He should not do this,” one of them exclaims. “It is dangerous for him and he is responsible for us.”

Festivities are characterized by even greater security measures. The celebration of the Festive Wednesday (the last Wednesday before Nowruz) was rescheduled and the International Women’s Day celebration was cancelled due to the heightened tension with IRI. As we celebrated the Festive Wednesday *peshmergas* patrolled the rooftops surrounding the crowd looking for suspicious activity in the distance. The increased level of security also characterized Nature’s Day (the last day of Nowruz). People gathered in the hills outside the camp, but lookouts were kept on duty and loaded AK-47s were hung from trees or positioned close by. The 72nd foundation anniversary of the Republic of Kurdistan in January was held indoors and after a rigorous body search I was allowed to enter. Cell phones and cameras were not permitted, but after examining my friend’s camera an exception was made. Another example epitomizing the tenor of security was KDPI´s 16th party congress in February, which was held in a classified location due to security reasons.

As I was about to return to Sweden I went for dinner with some friends from Azadi. We parked close by in order to monitor the car. When we were leaving we used a torch to check the vehicle for explosives, a standard procedure for KDPI members.

5.1.2 Embracement of cultural and historical heritage

Azadi’s inhabitants appear to live a rather secular lifestyle. Women do generally not wear veils and dress in a more Euro-American fashion. Still, traditional clothes, and cultural-historical events are of immense importance. Some elderly women wear the *dasmāl* and the *tās-kelāw* (traditional headdress of Mahabad), while men often wear a *peštand* (scarf) used as a girdle. The clothing may be regarded as an embracement of Kurdish culture and history, becoming politicized through their symbolic meaning (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 4). While younger people dress in jeans and t-shirts one day, they may wear traditional clothes the next. This

variance between secularism and tradition seemed to constitute a distinct demeanor, as other Kurds I encountered mostly preferred either a secular or traditional lifestyle. KDPI members often portrayed the symbiosis of secularism and tradition as a conscious value within the party. One of my respondent's especially wanted me to take a look at the journal *Zhnan* written by the Democratic Women's Union of Kurdistan, indicating that gender equality, generally perceived as a secular value, is a venerable practice within KDPI. As a party-member who has been involved in the Women's Union argues, "We are standing against the regime of Iran that is totally against the women. We are the opposite to them."

Books in the camp are often of historical or cultural character and the Kurdish flag, maps, and photos of the Republic of Kurdistan, as well as regime critical poems decorate the walls in homes and offices. I was repeatedly told how food recipes and other cultural components constitute "original Kurdish culture." Gorani being distinctly different from the other Kurdish languages and spoken in the Hawraman region, which straddles Bashur and Rojhelat, is perceived as the "original Kurdish language." The embracement of the past and the connection to the Kurdish homeland could also be discerned from peoples' names. Ardalan (an old Kurdish dynasty from Sanandaj), Nishtiman (meaning homeland), Sirwan (an ancient city near Ilam), and Samrand (a mountain in Rojhelat) are all popular names. One woman claims that Rojhelat Kurds are "thirsty" for their national heritage. "People are proud to give a Kurdish name to their child […] Here [in Bashur] it is not like that because it has been a long time that they had freedom."

Moreover, singing and dancing seemed to constitute intrinsic components of reliving the past. By embracing their own cultural heritage KDPI members actively resist IRI, which according to several Azadi residents suppresses Kurdish culture in Rojhelat. KDPI members frequently record videos of mixed-gender dancing and put them online to defy IRI's rule. During hikes people were both singing and dancing *dilane* (traditional Kurdish dance). One of the most usual songs was "Baran Barana," meaning *"*Rain it is Raining." "*Baran Barana* is a sad love song, but it can be understood as more than that. It is about losing his woman but it is really about losing his homeland," one of the hikers asserts. Regardless if this is the intention behind the lyrics, this was the meaning my companion ascribed to the song. Many songs from Rojhelat latently defy IRI by

containing connotations between love and homeland. The reciprocality between music, the past, and resistance is illustrated by a *peshmerga* insisting that he would play me a song on his santour (an Iranian dulcimer). He had performed the song regularly with his friend, until IRGC fighters killed the latter. "He is a martyr and I play this song to remember him," he explains.

The most apparent embracement of culture and history was the 72nd anniversary of the Republic of Kurdistan. Everybody, including children, was wearing traditional clothes or *peshmerga* uniforms, often accompanied by the white and black *jamana* scarf worn by Rojhelat Kurds. There was loud and captivating folk music and people watched the stage with intensity while clapping their hands to the music. A group of youth entered the stage in their traditional clothes to perform a session of *dilane*, whereupon they were replaced by younger children who sang a song about the founding and fall of the Republic of Kurdistan and how they bewail the loss of their homeland. Then Mustafa Hijri spoke to the crowd. "Komara Kurdistane [the Republic of Kurdistan] will always remain as the symbol of our pride and honor," he proclaimed. Although the Iraqi government had closed down the airports in Bashur, because of the Kurdish independence referendum the previous year, KDPI representatives from Europe had journeyed with bus through Turkey to participate, illustrating how essential the event seems to be for KDPI members.

5.1.3 Admiration for personal sacrifice

An initial impression from the KDPI community was the legacy of Ghassemlou, who was assassinated in Vienna in 1989 (Prunhuber, 2009 1-17). As I sit down to conduct an interview with a *peshmerga*, I detect that my respondent has a bed, a carpet, a few books, an AK-47, and a portrait of Ghassemlou in his room. Most *peshmerga* homes seem to have this Spartan furnishing, feasibly an indication of their life priorities. "We do not need much," my host tells me grinning as he prepares tea. Apparently Ghassemlou's photo was one of the possessions of cardinal value. Depictions of Ghassemlou acted as a backdrop for major events and could be found in practically every home and office in the community. His portrait even adorned the buildings around Azadi. Generally the other murdered KDPI leaders, Mohammed and

Sharafkandi, accompanied him. However, Ghassemlou seemed to be of preeminent importance and his name and portrait can even be found as tattoos among KDPI members. Tattooing has a long tradition in Kurdistan, originally for its supposed magical healing power (Izady 1992, 249), in this scenario indicating a solid bond between the community and Ghassemlou's "sacrifice." During one afternoon we played football while a few children were sitting next to the pitch drawing. One girl showed me her work, depicting the KDPI emblem, a mountain in front of a rising sun. I looked at the other drawings, whereupon I spotted an attempted portrait of Ghassemlou, signified through the illustrious mustache.

KDPI members having perished because of their political conviction are venerated. Photos of KDPI "martyrs" could be found at the intersection outside Azadi, so that bypassers would notice them. In March a car bomb injured two KDPI members in Erbil. One of them later succumbed from his injuries. A few days later another member was shot in Ranya. The assailant has claimed that Iranian agents hired him. Victims of IRI aggression are regarded as having sacrificed their lives for their community. The Azadi cemetery serves as a resting place for countless "martyrs" with ready dug graves in preparation for future occupants. Tombs belonging to "martyrs" can often be distinguished from other graves due to the photos and flowers embellishing them. Further, as one of Azadi's inhabitants outlines, the fact that many people disappear never to be found, makes the physical sense of remembrance all the more meaningful.

The main conclusion I discern from my observations is that the spatial does not only seem to be purely a matter of the tangible reality, but additionally relates to constructed values and emotions within the community. The experiences KDPI members have endured are thus reflecting themselves on practices and the physical surrounding.

5.2 Findings obtained from interviews

While certain codes from the Values Coding and Emotion Coding resemble each other, it is vital to pronounce their disparity. Values Coding represents the official party discourse, whilst Emotion Coding features a bottom-up approach, in several instances problematizing the official party line among KDPI's members.

5.2.1 Value narratives within the KDPI community

"It has to be possible for outsiders to make a distinction between us and this regime [IRI], which is fascist and represents a form of chauvinism. This difference must be reflected in our actions. We cannot use the same methods as they do."

5.2.1.1 Moral Othering and ideational legitimacy

KDPI members portray IRI as backwards, brutal, treacherous, fundamentalist, and on a par with North Korea and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). IRI is referred to as "the killing regime," "predators," and "Mafia," and treachery is depicted as "the culture of Tehran." Nonetheless, resistance through what is referred to as "terror" is regarded immoral and condemned, as it is perceived as incompatible with the "roots of the party." "There are some groups that are doing terrorist activities but we are totally against this […] The weapons we have here are just for defending ourselves," a respondent explains.

KDPI's refusal to adapt an "all-out war strategy" is presented as the rationale for why Rojhelat Kurds support KDPI. Respondents manifest the polarity of values between IRI and KDPI by villainizing the draconian rule of the former, while depicting the own party as honorable and righteous. While Iran is portrayed as a country where the ruling power historically has tyrannized dissenting minorities, Kurdish historical figures, such as Deioces (the first Median king), is described as a democratically elected leader. Moreover, I am told that the Republic of

Kurdistan was the most democratic country ever having existed in the Middle East, and that the international community thus should provide KDPI with another opportunity to govern Rojhelat.

KDPI members recurrently outline how they have endured relentless persecution while still having been able to defy their enemy in a high-principled manner. Sacrifices are thus regarded as preferable rather than descending to the use of "unethical" resistance methods. "When I go on missions inside Iran I know they have helicopters. They have tanks. They have rockets. They have much better guns than mine. But I go and most of the times we are winners […] People support me, not them. And I fight for what I believe in and they fight for what they receive. That is the difference between us," an Azadi resident points out.

There exists a general conviction among KDPI members that IRI attempts to do everything in its power to "kill the spirit of resistance" among Rojhelat Kurds. I am told how the modus operandi varies from public humiliation, random arrests, and torture of civilians (such as throwing acid in the faces of family members to *peshmergas*). A relatively recent method seems to be the "white *Anfal*," [10] namely the distribution of heroin, methamphetamine, and non-purified desomorphine, throughout Rojhelat. "Because they want them [Rojhelat Kurds] to not think about politics. To make them addicted to drugs which will stop them from thinking too much," a respondent proclaims while another states that, "Everybody in Iran knows that the Pasdaran [IRGC] are responsible for distributing and providing the drugs."

According to KDPI members, the spread of narcotics dims the spirit of resistance among Rojhelat Kurds, while also functioning to amass monetary revenue for IRI. The latter is said to have the capacity to extort information from addicts, either by letting them "sell" information or endure cold turkey. Further I am told how international embargoes and sanctions have made the drug industry in Rojhelat a lucrative business option for IRI. "They are not exporting that much […] So they are selling heroin and other drugs to the people there [Rojhelat] […] They [addicts]

[10] The Al-Anfal campaign (1986-1988) was a military campaign by the Iraqi Baʿth Party leading to the death of between 50,000 to 180,000 Kurds (Stansfield 2006, 262).

will serve the Iranian government to get some money because they are addicted," one respondent declares. Another strategy is claimed to be the burning of forests in Rojhelat. "There is not only forests in Kurdistan […] But we have not seen that there are fires in other places of Iran. But in Kurdistan it is very common […] We do not suspect that the regime is doing that. We know they are," a respondent proclaims.

The oppression in Rojhelat is perceived as more refined compared to maltreatment of Kurds elsewhere, as the religious dimension makes the oppressive apparatus rigid and deceitful. "Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq […] Now Erdogan is ruling Turkey, and Assad in Syria. They all announced that they are against Kurds and they are very clear […] But the Islamic regime, they took a different way. They are telling the world that we respect the Kurds and human rights. But that is not true." Ruhollah Khomeini is seen as having used Shiʿi Islam as a national identity marker, excluding (Sunni) Kurds from societal power. Consequently, KDPI members principally have a cautious view of Shiʿism and a moderate approach towards religion. "If you say anything [against IRI] you are standing against God so the Iranian people will rise against you," a respondent asserts referring to "enmity against God" a capital "offence" in Iran (The Lancet 2016, 506).

IRI's religious fundamentalism is described by how soldiers in the Islamic Republic of Iran Army (AJA) wear keys around their necks to ascend "straight to heaven" when killed in combat. "They were not afraid of death," my respondent affirms and explains how AJA soldiers call Kurds descendants of jinns[11] and apostates who deserve death. The rhetoric echoes Khomeini's fatwa[12] for jihad[13] against the Kurds in 1979, labeling KDPI "the party of Satan" (Ahmadzadeh and Stansfield 2010, 18; IHRDC 2011). "Khomeini said that it is jihad […] They started a massive killing of people and they did not care about if somebody was a *peshmerga* or not," another respondent asserts. "The government said all people were supposed to be equal. But in Iran it is better to be Persian and Shiʿi."

[11] Genies or demons.
[12] Legal decree by an Islamic religious leader.
[13] Holy war.

KDPI members express how they abstain from attacking IRGC fighters inside Rojhelat and how prisoners of war are released, while Kurds who collaborate with IRI are pardoned. "When we had combats to defend ourselves we took so many prisoners. You will never hear that we killed somebody through execution," a KDPI commander declares. KDPI thus promotes itself as humane in contrast to IRI. Striving towards superiority in terms of ideational legitimacy may thus be regarded as a compensation for the lack of military capacity, as long as KDPI members feel that the outside world acknowledge and support their struggle.

5.2.1.2 KDPI the paragon

Exempting the ideational superiority vis-à-vis IRI, where KDPI members perceive themselves as the main antagonists of the Iranian theocracy, respondents further regard their party as the genuine representative of Rojhelat Kurds and believe that people in Rojhelat share this outlook. The reason is primarily due to KDPI's historical accomplishments and political values. "Most of the people are ready to give everything they have to support KDPI. The society and KDPI are just like fish and water. You cannot divide them," a respondent explains, while another urges that, "The feeling we have in our hearts is the same that the party has in its constitution."

Respondents regard KDPI as a paragon both for other Kurdish movements in Greater Kurdistan[14] and for other non-Kurdish groups in Iran, as KDPI members identify themselves as Iranians. "Just because we want human rights and federalism it does not mean that we are not Iranians," a KDPI member tells me. By portraying themselves as the most secular political movement in the Middle East, as well as the oldest political party in Greater Kurdistan, respondents label KDPI the Kurdish "mother party." The epithet implicates that KDPI leads by example, calling on its members to accept past atrocities, put feelings of revenge aside, and be prepared to work towards a peaceful resolution with IRI. There is a belief that without KDPI,

[14] Greater Kurdistan is defined as the geographical areas in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran where the majority of the population identify as Kurds.

Kurds in Rojhelat would harbor negative feelings towards the Persian population. “There would have been racism. It would be logical. But because of KDPI, people are generally not racist,” a Central Committee member outlines. KDPI’s official value discourse thus consists of an inveterate aversion towards radicalism and prosperity at the expense of other Kurdish movements. Human sacrifices in the own community are regarded as a fatal but necessary sacrifice, compared to using unconventional military measures or selling out other Kurdish movements in order to attain political gains.

Other Kurdish parties are oftentimes perceived as having succumbed to corruption (KDP and PUK) or the use of “immoral” violent methods (the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK)). It is further presumed that these parties may betray each other in order to prosper. PKK, which has been labeled a terrorist organization by the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) (Orton 2017, 6), is frequently used as a deterring example. Furthermore, KDPI members are generally of the opinion that PJAK, supposedly working for the benefit of Rojhelat Kurds, is a subunit of PKK. KDPI members often regard PKK and PJAK as a threat, aiming to enforce their dominance over all of Greater Kurdistan. “They [PKK] have sent PJAK to Rojhelat and other parts of PKK to Syria to take over the power. Like an invasion,” a respondent explains. Another interviewee whose friend was killed by PKK argues that PJAK cooperates with IRI and divides the Rojhelat Kurds. “The Islamic regime is not totally against PJAK […] Iran told PJAK to create this fight with us. They want the main parties [KDPI and KDP-I] to be isolated from the people so they let the new parties access the people while working against the main parties,” he points out and continues to describe how armed PJAK fighters can move around freely in Rojhelat, while KDPI members have to hide or flee to Bashur. Conclusively, KDPI members regard the own party as the way forward, hoping that other Kurdish parties and ethnic groups within Iran will follow their example.

5.2.1.3 The flexibility of Kurdish identity

The aspiration to compose an antipode to IRI among KDPI members reflects the perceived differentiation between Kurds and non-Kurds overall. Secularism and Sunni Islam function as insignia of identity among the KDPI community, through which KDPI members differentiate themselves from the theocratic Shiʿi government and reinforce the own apprehension of distinct nationhood. Respondents derive their genealogy from Iranian Mithraism, practiced during the era of the Sassanian Empire, which they compare to the "altruistic" values of socialism. KDPI's modern societal outlook concerning democracy and human rights are thus claimed to have deep historical roots.

Structural oppressive mechanisms are described as "barriers" making the Rojhelat Kurds stronger and more united, further contributing to the attentiveness to politics. As outlined by one interviewee, "As a Kurd when you are born you feel that your life has to be a political life […] Wherever you go they tell you that you are a Kurd." External identity designation hence strongly contributes to the embracement of Kurdish identity. Respondents claim that while the majority of Persians are Shiʿa, Kurds are Sunni and thus less inclined to frantically follow authority. "Everybody knows that. If you become a Shiʿi you will totally lose your identity," a respondent points out. One of my interviewees classifies himself as Sunni, referring to it as a cultural matter, while actually regarding himself an atheist, ticking two boxes in his contradistinction towards Twelver Shiʿi Islam[15] and IRI. Ergo, being Sunni may be comprehended from a cultural/value dimension, rather than merely being a matter of religiosity. Acknowledging that one's ancestors have been Sunni makes Sunnism a characteristic of being a Kurd according to several respondents. Still, the definition is not adamant. Respondents claim that Shiʿa Kurds in Iran are "new Shiʿa" and that, "Our nationalism is stronger than our religious emotions," ostensibly an ad hoc explanation including Kurds who "choose" to be Kurds. "First I am Kurdish then I have my religion," my respondent clarifies.

[15] The branch of Islam that follows the 12 imams and whose members believe that the twelfth imam will return before judgement day.

The flexibility of the inclusion-exclusion rationalization has the potential to be drawn even further. “We have *peshmergas* that are Azeris,” one respondent divulges. “It [KDPI] is open for everybody.” Another interviewee has a resembling perspective. “There are some people in our party who are Azeris but they serve KDPI better than some Kurds. We respect those who are fighting with us […] For instance there was an Azeri guy and he was working with us. So I see him as a Kurd.” Once more, KDPI members’ identity is primarily not a question of ethnicity but rather seems to be constituted by the embracement and defense of values.

Despite the prevalence for discernment between Kurds and non-Kurds, where KDPI’s values constitute the perceived features of “Kurdish” identity, KDPI does not officially hold their own people in higher regard than other Iranians. Rather, KDPI members perceive themselves as being part of a larger Iranian identity and claim that they merely want to acquire equivalent rights to other peoples in Iran. A respondent having served in the Imperial Iranian Army prior to 1979, outlines how, “When I became a soldier in the military I found out that there were other nations in Iran and they were not considering me […] After the revolution also, nobody cared about the rights of the Kurds […] The only solution was to be a Kurd and struggle for us.”

KDPI strives towards increased collaboration between Iran’s multiple ethnicities. “We have contact with Arabs, and Turkomans, and Baluchis there [in Iran] and we have all kinds of activities together,” a respondent explains. This predilection for cooperation over ethnic boundaries is widespread within KDPI. “All the nations of Iran should work together,” another respondent tells me. “As Kurds we cannot make this regime collapse or fall alone […] The most important thing is to spread awareness inside Iran […] I think the Persians or the people who support this government, if they know the reality, if they have an opportunity to know the real face of the regime, they will turn to the other side.”

5.2.1.4 In the footsteps of "father" Ghassemlou

"We are following in Ghassemlou's footsteps," is a common graffiti slogan on facades in Rojhelat. By referring to the "sacrifice" of Mohammed, Ghassemlou, Sharafkandi, and countless "martyred" *peshmergas*, the narrative of honor and emotional restraint is upheld; acting as symbolic acts interlinking past and present (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 28). Consequently, the values of civil resistance and human rights are depicted as a heritage from these "martyrs." For some elder KDPI members Mohammed is held in preeminent regard. One respondent who witnessed Mohammed's hanging in 1947 reveal that, "My life was darkened that day. I could not see anything. So that day I decided that I will follow his path, in his footsteps, and I will be a *peshmerga* until I die […] The worst day that I had was Qazi Mohammed's execution day."

Among KDPI members overall, Ghassemlou seem to constitute the most influential source of inspiration and is even spoken of as a Kurdish Nelson Mandela. KDPI members refer to Ghassemlou as the most knowledgeable, determined, and important Kurdish leader in history. Although there are voices within KDPI affirming that the party does not endorse a "personality cult," Ghassemlou still constitute the face of the party. People refer to him as "father" Ghassemlou, while praising his person and philosophy, which are immortalized through his writings and speeches. They outline how he invigorated KDPI at a time of decay and how he, with his dedication for civil resistance and secular values, reformed the party's ideology. KDPI members regard Ghassemlou as a hero who left his prosperous career and life in Europe, to return to Kurdistan and lead KDPI when the party needed his assistance. "There is nobody like him who had his intelligence for leading a party […] There are nobody like him or even similar to him," one respondent declares. Ensuing Ghassemlou's assassination, KDPI sent out an appeal to shopkeepers in bazaars around Rojhelat, urging them to close their stores to show IRI their mourning and the influence KDPI and Ghassemlou held over the Rojhelat Kurds. I am told how the call was answered all over Rojhelat in spite of security staff looting stores and arresting shopkeepers.

Ghassemlou is regarded as an outstanding statesman and modest leader. He promoted KDPI and its political objectives internationally by befriending influential politicians such as Ahmed Ben

Bella, Olof Palme, Danielle Mitterrand, and Bernard Kouchner, while still not exploiting his power position. Contrary he is seen as having treated everybody as equals. "He came back to the party. He came back to the mountains […] Everything was on the same level as the other *peshmergas*. They say that when they were in Qandil, in the mountains […] Some *peshmergas* wanted to give him their food because he was the first person of the party. But he did not accept it," a *Peshmerga* who experienced Ghassemlou's leadership explains. Ghassemlou is thus seen as the embodiment of KDPI's moral code, and his legacy has a preeminent role in maintaining a discourse condemning proactive violence.

KDPI members argue that most Rojhelat Kurds want to join KDPI already at a tender age. "Since my childhood I had this idea that I wanted to be a part of KDPI […] I wanted to follow Ghassemlou," a *peshmerga* explains. A common game among Kurdish children in Rojhelat is to play war between *peshmergas* and IRGC fighters. "It was a rule that the *peshmergas* would win the war," my respondent asserts. "But we let the prisoners go, because that is what Ghassemlou would have done."

5.2.2 Emotional narratives within the KDPI community

"Because the Iranian government always will stand against Kurdish people everybody [Kurds in Rojhelat] share a feeling that the government is looking down on you. All of us have this feeling."

KDPI takes the moral high ground in the conflict with IRI in order to attain legitimacy, and honors Ghassemlou's legacy as an enticing archetype of commitment to the struggle. Even so, the sense of frustration and despair concerning the perceived inability to make proper political progress, benefitting the own community and the Rojhelat Kurds, is simmering under the surface.

Expressions of emotions often resemble expressions of values by referring to the past and present "malice" of IRI. However, the narrations of IRI's atrocities are characterized by

frustration, lacking attempts to illustrate the necessity for a moral discrepancy between KDPI and the IRI Other. Further, the language of Otherness tends to be harsher and applied to the larger non-Kurdish Iranian population, not only the theocratic leadership and its underlings. For instance, a respondent criticizes the indifference towards the Kurdish suffering among the Persian population in Iran. "They will stand against it [referring to *Kurdayetî* political street art] or they will ignore it totally. They do not care." Ergo, the emotional infrastructure within the KDPI community may have the potential to make people reassess their official value system, which this section is meant to scrutinize.

5.2.2.1 Physical vulnerability and structural oppression

Respondents illustrate their concern for future IRI aggression by recounting past ordeals, illustrating how IRI impairs and decimates KDPI. Although IRI troops, accompanied by PUK *peshmergas*, attacked Azadi from the nearby mountain Haibat Sultan in 1996 (Al-Khafaji 1996, 37) and shelled a KDPI meeting in September 2018, IRI's military strategy against KDPI relies on low intensity warfare targeting both *peshmergas* and civilians. A strategy of persistent low-level attacks may be less likely to be condemned internationally and may, if IRI is "lucky," provoke a counteraction from KDPI, which IRI then has the capacity to quash with the pretext that KDPI consists of "violent extremists."

Accounts of personal loss, imprisonment, and torture seem to be endless. A man describes how IRGC fighters executed his brother without any judicial process before pillaging his village. "They killed newborn babies and children and women, and also the old people […] Because they wanted to get to some *peshmergas*." Another respondent, who was imprisoned for his suspected involvement with KDPI, outlines how he was hanged from the ceiling for twenty-three hours while being electrocuted and stabbed during interrogation. Further, respondents report how people being suspected of assisting KDPI, have been thrown from windows by members from

the Mobilization Resistance Force (Basij)[16] or threatened by the Iranian Ministry of intelligence. One respondent recounts the following:

> They wanted me to tell them that I was working for KDPI […] And they were saying that they would bring my family. My wife, my kids and that they would rape them and do bad things to them if I would not say it […] They said that they could do whatever they want and that they could destroy me. Also, the guy told me that, "You should thank God because you came to our office. If you would not have come we would have killed you by hitting you with a car on the road."

However, most oppression respondents have endured is of structural day-to-day character back in Rojhelat. People describe themselves as "second class citizens" or "prisoners" and outline how their region is disregarded economically. "They [IRI] will not consider you a human," a man conveys. Respondents reveal how they have been discriminated when interacting with government officials and how their families have been intimidated if the authorities suspect a relative or family friend. Further, Kurds are denied certain career choices and prohibited to enroll in university without joining the Basij, which proves loyalty to IRI's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. "You will not see an emir who is a Kurd. You will not see a governor who is a Kurd," a respondent asserts. Kurds are further prohibited to speak their language and learn their own history in school. "They do not want you to be educated. They do not want you to become a person who can influence the society," a respondent points out. "The Mahabad Republic [Republic of Kurdistan] was a really great thing in our history but in school we just read three lines about it. We could not do anything that they saw as Kurdish culture." Another respondent goes further. "This [Persian] is your enemy's language too. You know someone wants to destroy your culture. Wants to destroy your soul!" People have often been educated by their parents or went to secret schools were they learned to read and write Kurdish. Being a teacher in such a school is punishable by death and several respondents inform me that their teachers were executed.

[16] The Mobilization Resistance Force is a paramilitary volunteer militia serving IRI.

The feeling of degradation is also present when interacting with other non-Kurdish Iranians. "When you are visiting other Persian cities and you wear Kurdish clothes they are staring at you. Looking at you in a very bad way," a respondent outlines. Another interviewee accuses Azeris of collaboration with IRI. "The Azeris are obeying the regime so they are dividing the cities […] The Azeris will get the jobs. In Azeri cities there are so many services but in Kurdish cities there are no services. The regime brings Azeris to Kurdish cities to undermine the Kurdish cities."

5.2.2.2 Invisible struggle

The international community's stance toward IRI's continuous aggression has generated in discontent within KDPI. Western governments are depicted as orating about human rights and support to the Kurds while remaining indifferent in practice. Even Western media is perceived as omitting the Rojhelat Kurds' suffering. "There is no media focus or even reporters or researchers. If somebody wants to do research about Iran they will do research about the atomic weapons," a respondent states.

While KDPI calls on the US for assistance arguing that Kurds are "the most important allies of the Americans," there still exists a fatalistic assumption, namely that Western countries "only care about their own good." KDPI members feel that they have demonstrated loyalty towards the so-called "Western world" by fighting ISIS only to be abandoned once the threat has been overcome. "The Kurds have been crucial in the war against terrorism but at the same time as the American administration argues that it wants to stop Iran's influence in the region they remained passive when the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and their Shiʿi militia [Al-Hashd Al-Shaʿabi[17]] came."

KDPI members fear that Rojhelat Kurds may become radicalized due to Western laxity towards Iran. "Sometimes when our members, or other Kurds also. When they see these injustices […] Sometimes they will change their minds to extremism." Respondents argue that Western

[17] Al-Hashd Al-Shaʿabi is a paramilitary organization sponsored by the Iraqi state to combat ISIS. The group is primarily composed of Shiʿi fighters and is seen as a prolongation of IRI within the KDPI community.

gullibility and betrayal may lead to a context where radical leftists and radical Islamists will gain power. “It will affect the European countries as well,” an interviewee attests. “If the issue of the Kurds will not be solved the leadership of these movements will be these radical people.” One Azadi resident outlines the feeling of abandonment in an epitomizing manner:

> I am critical of the discrepancy that exists, especially within the international community and especially in the West. The way they decide to carry out their political agenda. They say that they work for democracy and human rights but at the same time they do not support the Kurdish demands for democracy and human rights. There is also another issue and that is that these powerful countries in the West, in Europe and the United States, that they are allies with authoritarian regimes. And this is something that creates disadvantages for movements that strive towards democratization.

KDPI labeled Khamenei and Hashemi Rafsanjani terrorists in 1996 after German prosecutors had found them guilty of ordering Sharafkandi’s assassination. However, the German government reproved the decision (Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism 1997). “The court in Berlin stated that this was done by the regime in Iran but when it comes to economy and financial issues the government in Germany, they do not consider the human rights,” a respondent mutters. Correspondingly another interviewee describes the Austrian government’s callousness following Ghassemlou’s assassination, accusing the Austrian government for closing the case in order to avoid agitating IRI. Overall, KDPI members generally feel that they are seen as expendable, merely serving as pawns on the board between great power interests.

5.2.2.3 Between restraint and plea for action

Outwardly KDPI members seem to have accepted their situation and people being killed is accepted by restrained dignified grief. Still, the sense of compliance is constantly being challenged by latent fear and anger revealing itself on occasion. There is a credible possibility that the Rojhelat Kurds are on the verge of rebellion.

Many KDPI members feel that political movements that use unconventional combative methods to reach their objectives are being recognized internationally. Although extremism is condemned within KDPI, many members request a more resolute approach towards IRI from the KDPI leadership. Even people who still fully believe in Ghassemlou's legacy are aware of the changing currents. "The party needs to do something for our brothers and sisters in Rojhelat," a respondent tells me. "If people do not see concrete results they will abandon the party and go their own way." The same can be said about the Rojhelat Kurds. "As KDPI we do not believe in war […] But I think there are some people inside Rojhelat who are really angry and they are full of anger to the neck. Maybe they will just blow themselves up, just like a volcano," another respondent outlines.

A story I am told repeatedly is how a Kurdish man was forced to dress up in women's clothes and walk around the town of Mariwan as punishment for misconduct towards IRI. People in Rojhelat were furious that IRI had disgraced Kurdish women and Kurdish culture, and went to the streets to protest against the authorities. Several respondents fear people's lack of ability to contain their anger. "It was just spontaneous," one woman tells me. "People gathered and screamed against Iran. There were no achievements. So I believe in revolution that follows a plan. Not a spontaneous revolution." While my respondent urges people to not get carried away emotionally, she is not content with KDPI's official policy and does not rule out the option of revolution per se. The examples above illustrate what political direction people may choose if KDPI's official values would not emanate in concrete political results.

Older generations generally seem to be more capable of restraining their emotions compared to younger people. "Because they [the younger generations] face so much pressure from the Iranian government […] They did not live their history, so they believe in revolution. They think that if there is revolution, Iran will divide into different countries being based on ethnicity. This is an example for a revolution without a plan and based on anger […] It would be just like Syria," a respondent explains.

KDPI members fear IRI's regional influence and outline how IRI's long-term ambition is to expand the Islamic Revolution, to divert focus from people's suffering inside Iran. Khamenei is

thought to regard himself as an "Islamic Emperor," whose ultimate objective is to dominate the Middle East. "Our enemy is the greatest terrorist organization in the world," a respondent outlines. Several respondents are positive towards external military action against IRI. "They [the US] should have attacked Iran before, in 2003 or 2004. But now Trump is talking about it again and that is a good thing," an Azadi resident contemplates. He is not alone in his assessment. "All Kurds would like something like this […] The Arabs and the Turkomans and the Baluchis in Iran would want that," another respondent declares.

The own party and past generations are also criticized for having been fragmented and naive in their proceedings with IRI. A preeminent cause for criticism is the partition between the "mother party" (KDPI) and the dissident wing (KDP-I) in 2006, which is regarded as a consequence of rivalry between prominent members in the respective parties. Most people typically brush over the topic of the partition, referring to it as a "difference of ideas." Nevertheless, there is frustration concerning the fact that resources are not allocated where they belong, but rather designated to the maintenance of two separate political entities. "Right now this personal conflict makes both parties weaker," one respondent tells me. "They say that we do not have the capacity to fight Iran but they spend money on this!"

Many KDPI members question the twenty-year (1996-2016) truce with IRI. "The only thing we have against Iran is our weapons and the mountains. If Kurds did not defend themselves in the past they would have dissolved," a respondent explains, arguing that it was mistake to move from the Qandil Mountains to Koya and that the Rojhelat Kurds criticize KDPI for its "inactivity." "People who stayed in Rojhelat are wondering why we are living in Koya and do nothing," he outlines. Although people remember the hardships from the Qandil Mountains, where the community suffered from daily airstrikes, many preferred it to the current situation. "Yes, it was dangerous, but in Qandil we had more freedom," a retired *peshmerga* asserts.

The sense of fear and anger nourishes a reinterpretation of what sacrifice and heroism implicates. While people are proud over the party's values, several respondents also feel proud over inflicting harm on IRI and sacrifice themselves for the "cause." "When I am thinking about the Kurds and the Kurdish country that I am dreaming about, it is much bigger than the other

feelings […] One of the golden times in my life is when I can sacrifice myself for my country," a respondent tells me. Several respondents feel inclined to follow the example of their "martyred" leaders, as it is "necessary" and "the right thing to do." But by modifying the historical interpretation of Ghassemlou, they can also modify the values of the party and synchronize them to their own feelings. Sacrifice does not necessarily mean to be murdered at a negotiation table (Ghassemlou) or be executed to avoid a massacre of one's subjects (Mohammed). It can also be fighting a superior power with arms. "We are being killed anyway," a man outlines, arguing that IRI pursues KDPI regardless if the party uses armed measures or not.

6. Analysis: Thematization of political imaginations

In this chapter I present three themes, generating in an analytical commentary of more conceptual character. The first two themes generate an increased comprehension concerning political imaginations relating to identity processes and memory cultures within the exiled KDPI community in Bashur, which answer the sub-questions of the thesis. The third theme answers the main research question by outlining three major resistance narratives present within the KDPI community and illuminates how these narratives are constructed through political imaginations. Finally, I interlink the results with earlier research presented in the literature review.

6.1 Ideational identity narratives: A product of securitization and a struggle for values

In this section I seek to convey how Kurdish identity perceptions interrelate with political imaginations within the KDPI community in Bashur, thus answering sub-question one. Findings illustrate how self-perceptions within the KDPI community depend on the moral contradistinction to IRI, due to memories of historical oppression and the constant preparedness for new attacks. To disclose identity processes the notions of securitization and Otherness are therefore paramount. KDPI members are convinced that IRI will exert any means to annihilate their community and national heritage. Political imaginations inform an identity-security nexus conforming to the Copenhagen School's concept of securitization. The ethos of Othering creates a unified community of sentiment where KDPI members ultimately rely on their own capability, without expecting external support. Differences, such as religion, the split between KDPI and KDP-I in 2006, or whether external military intervention against IRI is something to desire, are generally overlooked. Instead, KDPI members discern similarities between themselves, for instance how they have lost family members or friends to IRI's aggression.

Findings suggest that the negotiation between KDPI's political leaders and their audience, in terms of securitization of a threatening Other, is a process characterized by compliance. The large number of casualties has made it unproblematic for the KDPI leadership to securitize IRI. While researchers often use the Copenhagen School's securitization framework to illustrate how political leaders govern their subjects by labeling an external actor as threatening (McDonald 2013, 72-73), I observe a reverse process among the KDPI community. While the KDPI leadership needs to securitize IRI it struggles to contain frustration among its members and prohibits them to take drastic actions.

I argue that the hegemonic security discourse is so pertinent for KDPI's existence that without the sense of peril the party's purpose may gradually become superfluous. Feelings and memories of vulnerability have transformed into a value system, producing more than merely a political organization. Epithets, like "father" Ghassemlou and "mother party," allude to family affiliation, corresponding to the Durkheimian prototype for a societal moral order. Family sentiment seems to constitute the foundation from which identity is imagined within the KDPI community. This conception is extended to people living in Rojhelat, although the interaction with them is limited or even nonexistent for many exiled KDPI members. Therefore this sense of family affiliation pertains to Anderson's imagined community. However, the notion of family generally includes people who conform to KDPI's values, including non-ethnic Kurds, while "traitors" are excommunicated, losing their honor as "true Kurds."

The fact that IRI has been able to infiltrate Rojhelat with government informants, for example by distributing narcotics to create dependence on IRI, has created suspicion towards outsiders within the KDPI community. KDPI members in Bashur thus primarily trust the people in their direct geographical proximity. The dubious, and sometimes hostile, relations with groups such as PKK, PJAK, and PUK suggest that ethno-nationalism does not constitute a valid foundation for common group identity within KDPI. Still, the narrative of ethno-nationalism is directed towards the international community and the Rojhelat Kurds because it constitutes a mantle of legitimacy to gain power and pursue the struggle for a better life. Among KDPI members, ethno-nationalism is a subordinate priority, as the hegemonic narrative of self-identity primarily relates

to mutual macro-values, exceeding religion, culturo-historical heritage, and ethnic affinity. These values contain the vision that Rojhelat Kurds deserve to be treated as other Iranians, regardless of ethnicity or religion. In order to achieve coequality KDPI subsequently demands federal autonomy and a democratic Iranian state. The findings suggest that it is threat to life, material suffering, and inequality that fuels agitation and resistance. In essence, I discern four macro-levels of identity affiliation within the KDPI community:

1. Firstly, the immediate geographical vicinity in Bashur where exiled KDPI members share their lives and the struggle of everyday resistance.
2. Secondly, Kurds in Rojhelat whom the exiled KDPI community aim to protect and free from IRI oppression.
3. Thirdly, non-Rojhelat Kurds in Greater Kurdistan and the diaspora.
4. Fourthly, other Iranian peoples, as KDPI members generally perceive themselves as Iranians.

Security concerns create a modified return to face-to-face relations, which constitute the basis for trust and loyalty. By being able to "determine" that people within the community share the same value system, KDPI members are able to rely on each other. Simultaneously Anderson's imagined community constitutes a crucial instrument for the KDPI community to uphold legitimacy as a nation, illustrating the flaw of modernization theory's sharp distinction between traditional and modern. I argue that the Marxist/Hobsbawmian economic lens presented by Ghassemlou and Koohi-Kamali should be of subordinate focus when addressing the cause for face-to-face relations among the exiled KDPI community in Bashur. Rather, it is threat perception that has strengthened the mutual core of trust – and hence the face-to-face relations within the community.

Exiled KDPI members function as agents of action, putting themselves at risk by transcending from Scott's notion of hidden resistance to the sphere of public resistance, flagrantly denouncing the dominant-submissive narrative vis-à-vis IRI. Due to their vulnerable situation many feel that they have very little, or even nothing, to lose and therefore have the "freedom" to be open in their defiance. Letting emotions from the hidden transcript pass into the public transcript

generates a "feeling of resurrection" and strength (Scott 1990, 208-13). While KDPI members and sympathizers in Rojhelat remain in the hidden resistance sphere, KDPI members in Bashur identify themselves as being representatives of their "brothers" and "sisters" in Rojhelat as they can openly challenge IRI's regime of truth by embracing their own value system.

In order to reinforce their ideational capital of virtue, through which IRI is challenged on an ideological basis, KDPI members affiliate themselves with people who have devoted themselves to uphold the party's values. Memories of Mohammed, Ghassemlou, Sharafkandi, and other "martyrs," perceived as having embodied the values of the KDPI community, empower the sense of identity and constitute paragons for KDPI members. "Martyrs" are thus avatars of values concatenating the essence of identity, as their memory may be equated with KDPI's value system.

6.2 Memory cultures: A symbiotic relationship between trauma and heroism

In this section I aim to illustrate how memory constructions of life experiences and historical events interrelate with political imaginations within the KDPI community in Bashur, thus answering sub-question two. Memories are perceived as crucial for the KDPI community, whose members strive to preserve their past as a compensation for IRI's denial of their history. The process of memory cultivation strengthens the imagined community and thus corresponds to Durkheim's theory of the interdependence between identity processes and memory cultures. Accordingly, the foundation for the national identity discourse within the community, which rather should be understood as a value discourse, is built on commemorating the past. KDPI members have been exposed to a multitude of trauma since the fall of the Republic of Kurdistan, either through direct experience or inherited memory. Past traumas are passed down through generations creating an in-group favoritism and out-group alienation dynamic bound along mnemonic lines. KDPI members consequently compile resources from history in order to

alienate IRI through securitization. Foucault's ontology of the present illustrates how current requisites tend to generate selectiveness when highlighting certain historical events.

The memory discourse is twofold, highlighting trauma as well as the ability to prevail over the trauma inflicted by enemies. Past ordeals are presented as the own community's viability to endure and provide the élan vital for the party. I refer to this process as a symbiotic relationship between trauma and heroism conveying memories of oppression, subjugation, and self-sacrifice, while also embedding the narrative of having the tenacity as a people to oppose superior power and thus the resourcefulness to survive. While fuelling a "David versus Goliath" narrative the KDPI community is dependent on gaining moral ascendancy to compensate for their lack of military capability in relation to IRI.

Findings illustrate how symbols manifest values. Although many Azadi residents have never visited Rojhelat since going into exile they carry memories of a lost homeland with the hope of restoring it. Visions of the future are often imagined through previous generations. It may be a lost relative, killed or imprisoned by IRI, a parent having told the folk tale about King Deioces' crowning, or the story of how Mohammed founded the Republic of Kurdistan. Political imaginations of the future are therefore constantly maintained in relation to the past and modified in accordance to new experiences.

I suggest that the physical setting may contribute to upholding certain memory cultures. The relatively isolated spatial reality in which KDPI members find themselves helps to resist external influences and preserve symbols relating to their particular value discourse. Azadi itself becomes a spatial reflection of the inhabitants' ideological and emotional produce and amplifies the struggle against IRI. Past suffering and the will to resist are symbolized through *peshmergas*, weapons, Kurdish flags, depictions of "martyred" leaders, and street art. These symbols contribute to the sense of vulnerability and courageousness, giving the camp an ambience of both fear and pride. IRI pressure on the community thus nourishes the imagination of future triumph and hope for a better life. No symbols seem to unify the community more than those concerning the remembrance of Ghassemlou, around which KDPI members assemble and mobilize. His "sacrifice" transcends from the past, through the present, and into the future,

representing all KDPI "martyrs." The legacy endorses a narrative of honor, encouraging KDPI members to be ready to face death when safeguarding their vision of the future.

Memories, experiences, historical interpretations, and thus imaginations and narrations of the future, seem to interrelate with KDPI members' values. Moreover, emotions also play an imperative role. The will to talk openly about, and even highlight past and present trauma as a part of KDPI's identity, seem to differ from other contexts. In Lebanon, Argentina, Peru, South Africa, and Chile the state apparatus has aimed to quash resistance by the use of violence. While these communities are dealing with the aftermath of trauma and often tend to avoid remembrance in fear of bringing the horrors of the past back to life (Cory 2015, 117, 147-48), suffering within the KDPI community is constantly resuscitated. I propose that the rationale to concentrate on past horrors is a coping mechanism to endure the horrors of the present, as suffering continues to be imposed on the community. By "normalizing" suffering KDPI members do generally refrain from openly expressing fear and anger, but are prepared to act in accordance to the party's directives.

In spite of the disciplined exterior, the KDPI community in Bashur contains conflicting memory camps with different interpretations of the past and divergent visions for the future. The adherents of the memory camps protruding from KDPI's official value discourse often promote their rationales by referring to the same memory sites, such as the founding of the Republic of Kurdistan or Ghassemlou's assassination. However, they use these sites as discursive resources to promote their own version of how to relate to present political obstructions, making the past subject to political contention. As segments within the party aim to modify KDPI's political nature, they also promote other forms of resistance. The process of reinterpreting history and thus KDPI's official value discourse follows the trajectory of Foucault's ontology of the present. These voices strive to break free from the moral codes of conduct set out by the party.

6.3 *Rasan*: A product of conflicting resistance narratives

"We tried both sides. The peace and war […] So many times we tried to negotiate our case with them [IRI] but our leaders have been assassinated on the negotiation table. *Rasan* is a necessity for Kurdistan […] We really need to focus on the *peshmerga* forces and armed struggle in the future."

Having answered the sub-questions of the thesis and thus expounded the perceived rationale when imagining identity politics and memory among KDPI members, I intend to answer the main research question and provide insight into how political imaginations inform resistance narratives against IRI within the KDPI community in Bashur.

The premier discovery from this study is the discursive struggle between two main resistance narratives, which I argue has generated a third resistance narrative aimed at consolidating them. Although the KDPI community acknowledges the necessity to resist IRI, there exists internal incongruity concerning how resistance should be enforced. By reevaluating political reality it becomes possible to reassess the legitimacy of resistance methods having previously been deemed unsuitable. Findings illustrate how resistance within KDPI is an instrumental component of the party's overarching memory culture and identity, forming the basis for norms and values. KDPI members consume the myth of resistance through Foucault's ontology of the present, in order to conjoin themselves with past heroism, strengthening their legitimacy as representatives for the Rojhelat Kurds.

As both Scott and Haugbølle outline, politics make use of symbols carrying historical legitimacy to ordain a variety of different avenues for resistance as the most efficient and morally sound, while also having the possibility to hide behind anonymity. Imaginations of the Kurdish nation, "martyrs," and historical events become floating signifiers, which are given purport in accordance to people's present needs and desires. While some symbols are used in Scott's public transcript to defy IRI openly (flags, weapons, images of "martyrs"), others are used in his hidden transcript as these symbols may only be recognized among the oppressed (love songs, clothes,

language, names). Old habits of trying to resist IRI latently in Rojhelat have often been abandoned among KDPI members in Bashur, who make it their purpose to openly challenge IRI.

The competing resistance narratives within the KDPI community may be understood as discourses, as they constitute separate manners in which KDPI members appear to narrate and comprehend reality (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2000, 7). I have chosen to label them the official resistance discourse and the latent resistance discourse, where the former largely pertains to values while the latter mainly is composed of emotions. At the time of writing the official resistance discourse still has a hegemonic status within the KDPI community, but is challenged by nonconformist voices calling for more assertive methods to undermine and ultimately oust IRI from power. It is imperative to emphasize that the divide should not necessarily be understood as a struggle between people advocating one discourse in preference to another. Political imaginations depicted by respondents have tended to prove more mosaic, as KDPI members often promote both discourses in different situations.

KDPI officially promotes a resistance narrative where any societal activity may function as a platform from which people have the capacity to debase IRI's validity. It may take the form of sports, book clubs, or hiking groups, as long as it exposes IRI's political nature, exhibiting political counter-hegemony and the pluralism among Iran's population. These resistance activities are primarily encouraged among the Kurds in Rojhelat and therefore fall within the hidden transcript. Consequently, the official resistance aims to challenge IRI's regime of truth through ideological warfare. A major fear within the KDPI community is the glorification of IRI's influence on the Iranian peoples. Consequently, KDPI has made it its purpose to undermine the image of IRI as a strong government bringing glory to its people, as the shattering of this image is believed to generate widespread internal criticism. The official resistance discourse may thus be comprehended as the pursuit to highlight moral disparity between KDPI and IRI by endorsing moral supremacy and heroism, a counter image of the "cruel" and "fundamentalist" IRI. The ultimate objective is to lead by example and unite the Iranian peoples to depose IRI from within.

The official resistance discourse functions as a prolongation of KDPI members' identity. It represents Mohammed's, Sharafkandi's, and primarily Ghassemlou's perceived ideational legacy, with a predilection for negotiation, diplomacy, and civil disobedience. The symbols of heroism and sacrifice make it possible to present a narrative of hope if people are patient, resilient, and consistent in their struggle. This conforms to Dale Eickelman's and James Piscatori's (2004, 58) notion of how certain authorities embody popular values, which are used to promote a certain moral order, their status becoming precedents for normative practice.

While Scott outlines that the most repressive regimes will often face the most aggressive resistance, the official resistance discourse problematizes this theory. Instead it implicates austere protocol concerning proceedings towards IRI, as divergent "immoral" action could have severe consequences for the party's legitimacy. While the KDPI leadership feature armed struggle as necessary, it is deemed insufficient as the main method of resistance. If applied excessively the repercussions of armed resistance are presented as calamitous because it would constitute a pretext for IRI to quash the KDPI community. KDPI thus attempts to avert excessive use of violence, while still reminding the KDPI community of their sacrifices to deny IRI influence. Consequently, the official resistance discourse promotes balance between passivity and action.

The latent resistance discourse represents frustration, impatience, grief, and anger, combined with the gradual realization that the current vulnerability of the KDPI community constitutes the norm and may continue to do so. People feel that military means should constitute a more central component in KDPI's resistance and that armed struggle used only for self-defense is insufficient when trying to attain the party's political objectives. This view is seldom declared openly during interviews and is mostly revealed during personal encounters when people are upset, angry, or sad. KDPI leaders are aware of this despondency. "We have not fulfilled our duties. We have not done enough," a prominent member of the party proclaims. The official values seem to be venerated by all within the party, but people tend to feel that these moral standards weaken their resolve, inhibiting response to IRI's aggression.

The incapacity of the party to protect its own members and supporters in Rojhelat, as well as the paucity of concrete political gains, have resulted in a challenge to the representation of Ghassemlou as a symbol for civil resistance. Core values within KDPI currently seem to be experiencing a metamorphosis, an adaptation to the emotional currents within the latent resistance discourse. Respondents outline how they, as well as Kurds in Rojhelat, demand that the leadership "step forward" to meet IRI's confrontational tactics.

Weaver outlines how leadership needs to consider the will of its subjects to remain legitimate when defining a threat. Along the same trajectory I suggest that the dichotomy between the official resistance discourse and the latent resistance discourse requires confluence for the party to be able to endure as the paladin for the Rojhelat Kurds. By admitting that there exists dissent within the party, KDPI may be able to accommodate the voices calling for more proactive means in resistance towards IRI. While the KDPI leadership is aware that the party cannot defeat IRI's military apparatus they are placed in a Catch 22 scenario. While outright combat will fail, passivity on KDPI's behalf might lead to more militant groups gaining influence, challenging KDPI's status among Rojhelat Kurds. The emergence of PJAK in recent years is an indication of this phenomenon. Consequently, the latent resistance discourse necessitates modification of the historical narrative and the official party values within KDPI in order to resist IRI.

KDPI refers to its congress in February 2018 as a "new page" in the party's history and focuses on the continuation and intensification of *Rasan*, the strategy to combine civil resistance with armed *peshmerga* forces (KDPI 2018), as "Iran does not allow any form of peaceful or civilian dissent" (KDPI 2013). On KDPI's English Twitter account the party defines *Rasan*, which was officially announced in 2016, as "standing up with a vengeance to an enemy" (KDPI 2016c). I argue that *Rasan* is an outcome of the latent resistance discourse. Armed resistance is a core component of *Rasan*. The strategy sets out to increase deployment of armed *peshmergas* in Rojhelat, thus encouraging the population to greater resistance. Overall *Rasan* is presented as crucial for KDPI's survival. "We see *Rasan* as a very necessary step […] If we stop *Rasan* it is political death," a respondent proclaims.

I suggest that *Rasan* is the product of both internal and external factors. As one respondent asserts "There is so much pressure on the leadership of the party. From the *peshmergas*, from the members of the party, from the Kurdish people, from the people that are against the regime of Iran." KDPI members and Rojhelat Kurds demand more concrete action from KDPI's leadership due to the gradual increase of IRI's presence in the region since the fall of the Iraqi Baʿth Party in 2003 and the subsequent rampaging of ISIS. KDPI members compare *Rasan* to a Kurdish intifada.[18] The death of a Kurdish woman in Mahabad, who was sexually abused by an employee from the Iranian Ministry of intelligence, is considered to be the catalyst for *Rasan*. Hence, KDPI members entwine *Rasan* with the allegorical status Mahabad has among Rojhalat Kurds, as the Republic of Kurdistan was founded in the city, making it a symbol of both suffering and resistance.

However, *Rasan* should not be understood as a radical transformation of KDPI's basic values. Rather the concept implicates a major reorganization and revival of the whole party structure where all KDPI branches work together towards a common objective. An important aspect is to increase cooperation with other Iranian-Kurdish parties in order to create a united front against IRI. While several respondents argue that the whole focus of *Rasan* is armed resistance, others emphasize the need of *Rasan* by outlining previous overdependence on *peshmergas*. "They [KDPI members] were sitting in their houses and waiting for the *peshmerga* to struggle for them. But after *Rasan* people started to learn that everyone has to contribute." Consequently *Rasan* is regarded as a concept unifying and strengthening the party. According to KDPI's Secretary-General Mustafa Hijri, the two symbiotic pillars of *Rasan* empowering each other is the increased presence of KDPI *peshmergas* in Rojhelat and an increased focus on civil resistance among the Kurdish population (KDPI, 2018). While increased military activity in Rojhelat may seem futile it can strain IRI's military resources, the regime being already committed to major deployments of troops in Syria, Iraq, and internally in Baluchistan and Sistan (Bucala and Kagan 2016). *Rasan* may constitute the greatest "internal" challenge towards IRI in more than twenty years.

[18] Armed uprising by Palestinians against Israel.

6.4 Findings in the context of earlier research

Although earlier research has guided the nature of the analysis, I deem it advantageous to discuss how my findings and analytical inductions are of value for a larger audience and correlate to the general research field. This section is intended to situate my results within the literature of Kurdish politics and contribute with insights into the political dynamic between KDPI and IRI, which long has been disregarded. Further, I will discuss political imaginations in relation to identity processes, memory cultures, and resistance discourses more generally, whereupon I will deliberate on legitimacy for national struggle.

The bottom-up approach applied in my thesis has been of major relevance as it illustrates several aspects of Kurdish politics, which deductive strategies have overlooked. However, I acknowledge that my findings have strong internal validity while they might not necessarily apply outside the context of my study. The KDPI community does not constitute a representational sample of attitudes towards IRI among Iranians. My findings merely convey testimonies of how IRI oppresses its Kurdish minority, functioning as a platform from which future studies can draw inspiration.

My findings suggest that macro-theoretical ethno-cultural narratives become inadequate to comprehend identity processes within the exiled KDPI community in Bashur. Therefore, I encourage researchers, such as Entessar (1992, 4-5), to be cautious when equating national legitimacy with a homogenous history in terms of language and culture. The characteristics of *Kurdayetî* are far from lucid and should, as Brubaker (1996, 298), Fred Halliday (2006, 16-17), and Natali (2005, 181-82) outline, be approached in the context of larger socio-political realities, in which nationhood is imagined.

My findings indicate that identifying as Kurdish in the KDPI community in Bashur is fundamentally about conforming to communal macro-values, which strongly outweigh the importance of ethno-nationalism commonly associated with national struggle. Rather, the embracement of a common value system correlates back to the depiction of Kurdish identity as being a description of "lifestyle" (Izady 1992, 184-85). While this outlook is simplistic and

insufficient it adheres to a social constructivist notion, namely that national identity is politically imagined. People strive to find commonalities within a certain group they believe they can trust, through ontology of the present, and draw demarcation lines between themselves and Others. Accordingly, ethno-cultural uniformity as a precondition for nationhood becomes deficient. In light of this rationale my findings strengthen Van Bruinessen's (2006, 21-24) assessment, namely that the main variable pertaining to legitimacy for nationhood is the will to claim it.

Furthermore, my findings indicate that *Kurdayetî* within the KDPI community should be seen as a cumulative counter-reaction due to ostracization and external threat. Therefore, Rasan seems to be a product of IRI's oppression of its Kurdish minority. This conclusion invigorates Ahmedi's theory, namely that national awareness increases when balance between groups "is upset" (Ahmedi 2018, 202-08), as well as Natali's premise that restrictive political spaces leads to increased levels of resistance. Even Scott (1990, 203, 217) claims that the level of aggression for resistance follows the level of aggression applied by an oppressor. Ergo, *Kurdayetî* should not, as many researchers argue (Entessar 1992, 2-3; Jwaideh 2006, 294), automatically be framed as a reason for societal instability in the Middle East. *Kurdayetî* may just as well constitute a symptom of instability and inequality. This deliberation poses the question of how nationalist discourses and narratives are constructed more generally in an era where nationalism may be on the rise (Bieber 2018). Moreover, negative portrayals of Iran internationally may have facilitated the political space for the KDPI community. The power vacuum in Iraq and the diligence of Kurdish political movements in Bashur and Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava) may have stimulated KDPI's proactiveness. Consequently, there are different external aspects of restrictive and open political space, which seem to have vitalized the formation of *Rasan*.

By situating the case of the exiled KDPI community in relation to the other peoples who have been historically oppressed, I claim that these cases strengthen the external validity of my research. Jewish-Israelis, Palestinians, Irish, and Catalans all securitize threatening Others, locate trauma and heroism in their past, and use symbolic historical resources to further their political objectives in the present.

In conclusion, the thesis illustrates how political imaginations, identity processes, and memory cultures are all components of each other, and together construe perceptions of reality to find the most suitable tools in order to interpret reality and adapt to larger macro-political contexts. This incessant and generic interrelationship is often omitted within social science research. Studies pertaining to politics would thus prosper from addressing this interdependence to a higher degree.

7. Conclusions

At the outset of this study my ambition was to explore the reciprocal interaction between KDPI members' own identity, their perceptions of the past, and their raison d'être for politics in order to portray how political imaginations inform resistance narratives against IRI. I have outlined two conflicting resistance discourses within the KDPI community and described how they are produced in synergy between identity processes and memory cultures. Further, I have presented how the conflicting resistance discourses have given rise to *Rasan*, a compromise meant to merge the contradictory perceptions and volitions within the party in regards to resisting IRI.

Imagination of politics should not be regarded as a stable core, but rather as a micro-political process where multiple forces are at play in negotiation. Denying people their voice in such a scenario may consequently lead to the downfall of the elite (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 8, 188). The essence of the exiled KDPI community's self-perception is based on a memory culture, which commemorates past victories and losses with both pride and contemplation. KDPI members hold IRI responsible for the atrocities they have endured throughout history. By passing on memories of suffering and heroism, the in-group favoritism out-group alienation dynamic is sustained. Security is a way of life within the KDPI community and death constitutes the norm. The history of suffering has formed the notion of a strong community where trust towards one's own and awareness of outsiders is evident.

The Republic of Kurdistan, Mohammed, Sharafkandi, and in particular Ghassemlou constitute the pillars embodying the notion of moral supremacy and carrying the party's ideology and legitimization into the future. However, if these pillars tumble the whole infrastructure of the party might succumb. IRI's perpetual aggression constitutes an acid tide eating away at KDPI's pillars, inducing frustration among KDPI members. The KDPI leadership struggles to mend the erosion by calling on its member's sense of pride, reminding them of what past generations endured for their party and their people. Stories of heroism, self-sacrifice, and patience are utilized to hinder the contamination of KDPI's response to IRI aggression by adapting similar

tactics. Endorsing proactive violence, would presumably label KDPI an illegitimate actor in the eyes of the international community, excluding it from future support.

Nonetheless, KDPI members argue that the party leadership's passivity compromises their ability to resist IRI. Frustration and grief challenge the hegemonic official resistance discourse built on moral supremacy. Instead, the incapacity to attain political objectives has fueled the latent resistance discourse within the party. While the pillars of moral supremacy act as an obstruction for outright critique towards the party leadership, there exists a general consensus that the party must resist IRI more proactively in order to maintain legitimacy among the masses and prevent fragmentation of the party from within. *Rasan* reveals the compromise within the party, functioning as a new concept around which party members and supporters can rally. The endurance of KDPI conditions a delicate sense of equilibrium. The party leadership needs to illustrate that it can provide security and counter IRI's military aggression while avoiding alienation in respect to international opinion and without excessively provoking IRI.

7.1 Final reflections

My own assessment is that this study merely constitutes a prolegomenon for a largely unrendered, multi-layered, and complex field. The opaque nature pertaining to the actual situation of the Rojhelat Kurds has secluded their struggle from the attention of the international community. This lack of insight obstructs understanding of resistance rationales against IRI. The global community consequently needs to gain increased perceptivity to the lives of Rojhelat Kurds. Extremism is not (yet) an issue within KDPI and is therefore not endangering the legitimacy of the party's demands. KDPI may be one of few resistance movements having been able to preserve its ideology of secularism, human rights, and democratic values in times of extreme exposure and threat, while allegedly still being able to draw high levels of support from Rojhelat Kurds. It would be unfortunate if other more sectarian, undemocratic, or violence-prone political currents gained influence among KDPI's supporters.

In terms of a macro-political Middle Eastern context, KDPI has the potential to become a paragon for other Kurdish movements. KDPI averts PKK's stance on targeting non-combatants

to achieve its political objectives (O'Connor 2017, 6-7, Unal 2014, 419-22, 428-32, 440-42), as well as KDP's and PUK's widespread corruption and reliance on tribal structures within their parties (Eppel 2018, 2-3; Hassan 2015, 12-19). KDPI may consequently constitute an avant-garde movement for Kurdish nationhood, as well as for other minorities struggling for political rights in Iran. Although KDPI may seem to be a minor political actor, several regional players may prosper from IRI's demise. Saudi Arabia and the US may already support KDPI economically, and Israel has according to high-ranking KDPI members offered to do so. My own presumption is therefore that both the research community and the international community at large should aim to gain insight into KDPI's inner verve and work towards an objective where minorities in Iran can live as equals.

8. Bibliography

Abrahamian, Ervand. 2008. *A History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aboubakr, Farah. 2017. "Peasantry in Palestinian Folktales: Sites of Memory, Homeland, and Collectivity." *Marvels and Tales* 31, no. 2: 217-38. https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/article/680306#info_wrap

Ahmadzadeh, Hashem, and Gareth Stansfield. 2010. "The Political, Cultural, and Military Re-Awakening of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iran." *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 1: 11-27. https://doi.org/10.3751/64.1.11

Ahmedi, Idris. 2018. "The Stateless and Why Some Gain and Others not: The Case of Iranian Kurdistan." In *Comparative Kurdish Politics in the Middle East*, edited by Emil E. Tudgar and Al Serhun, 201-25. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Al-Khafaji, Isam. 1996. "The Destruction of Iraqi Kurdistan." Middle East Report, no. 201: 35-42. https://doi.org/10.2307/3012770

Amanolahi, Sekandar. 2005. "A Note on Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups in Iran." *Iran and the Caucasus* 9, no. 1: 37-41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030904

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Aoki, Julia, and Ayaka Yoshimizu. 2015. "Walking Histories, Un/making Places: Walking tours as Ethnography of Place." *Space and Culture* 18, no. 3: 273-84. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1206331215579719

Assmann, Jan, and John Czaplicka. 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." Trans. *New German Critique* 65: 123–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/488538

Babbie, Earl. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research.* Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Bakiner, Onur. 2013. "Is Turkey coming to terms with its past? Politics of memory and majoritarian conservatism." *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5: 691-708. http://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.770732

Bar-On, Dan. 1997. "Israeli Society between the Culture of Death and the Culture of Life." *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2: 88-112. https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/docview/195263101?accountid=11162

Bar-Tal, Daniel. 2007. "Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts." *American Behavioral Scientist* 50, no. 11: 1430-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207302462

Baser, Bahar. 2013 "The Kurdish Diaspora in Europe: Identity Formation and Political Activism." *Boğaziçi University-TÜSİAD Foreign Policy Forum Research Report*: 4-68. http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/28337/Bahar_Baser_RR_01_2013.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Becker, David. 2004. "Dealing with the Consequences of Organized Violence in Trauma Work." In *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict*, edited by Alex Austin, Martina Fisher and Norbert Ropers, 404-18. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Becket, Ian F. W. 2009. "War, identity and memory in Ireland." *Irish Economic and Social History* 36, no. 1: 63-84. https://doi.org/10.7227/IESH.36.4

Bengio, Ofra. 2017. "The Kurds in a Volatile Middle East." *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*: 1-57. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04759

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1991. *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise of the Sociology of Knowledge.* London: Penguin.

Bieber, Florian. 2018. "Is Nationalism on the Rise? Assessing Global Trends." *Ethnopolitics* 17, no. 5: 519-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1532633

Brubaker, Rogers. 1996. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Bucala, Paul, and Frederick W. Kagan. 2016. "Iran's Evolving Way of War: How the IRGC Fights in Syria." *Critical Threats Project*, March 24, 2016. https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/irans-evolving-way-of-war-how-the-irgc-fights-in-syria

Campbell, David. 1998. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Carapico, Sheila. 2006. "No Easy Answers: The Ethics of Field Research in the Arab World." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39, no. 3: 429-31. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096506060690

Clark, Janine A. 2006. "Field Research Methods in the Middle East." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39, no. 3: 417-23. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096506060707

Clawson, Patrick. 1993. *Iran's Challenge to the West: How, When, and Why?* Washington: The Washington Institute Policy Papers.

Coleman, Peter T. 2011. "Intractable Conflict." In *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, edited by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman and Eric C. Marcus, 533-57. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Cory, Erin E. 2015. "Re-Membering Beirut: Performing Memory and Community Across a "Postwar" City." PhD diss., University of California.

Coser, Lewis A. 1992. "The Revival of the Sociology of Culture: The Case of Collective Memory." *Sociological Forum* 7, no. 2: 365-73. http://www.jstor.org/stable/684317

Cresswell, John W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, and Washington: SAGE.

Cuba, Egon G. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1994. "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 105-117. London and New Delhi: SAGE.

Deane, Seamus. 1985. *Celtic Revivals*. London: Faber and Faber.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2013. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, and Washington: SAGE.

Eickelman, Dale F. and James Piscatori. 2004. *Muslim Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Entessar, Nader. 1992. *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Eppel, Michael. 2018. "A Future for Kurdish Independence?" *Middle East Quarterly, 25*, no. 2: 1-9. https://www.meforum.org/7226/kurdish-independence

Foltz, Richard. 2013. *Religions of Iran: From prehistory to the present*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Forbes, Frederick. 1839. "A Visit to the Sinjar Hills in 1838, with some Account of the Sect of Yezidis, and of Various Places in the Mesopotamian Desert, between the Rivers Tigris and Khabur." *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society of London* 9: 409-30. https://doi.org/10.2307/1797732

Foucault, Michel. 1983. "Structuralism and Post-structuralism." In *Michel Foucault. Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James Faubion, 432-58. Translated by Robert Hurley and others. London: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" 1984. In *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 32-51. Translated by Catherine Porter from an unpublished French original. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel. 1998. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin.

Gellner, Ernest. 1997. *Nationalism*. New York: New York University Press.

Ghassemlou, Abdul Rahman. 1965. *Kurdistan and the Kurds*. Prague: Pub. House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

Gustafsson, Karl, and Linus Hagström. 2017. "What is the point? Teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles." *European Political Science*: 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-017-0130-y

Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Halliday, Fred. 2006. "Can We Write a Modernist History of Kurdish Nationalism?" In *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, edited by Faleh A. Jabar and Hoshad Dawod, 11-20. London, Berkeley, and Beirut: SAQI.

Harris, George S. 1977. "Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 433: 112-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627743300011 1

Hassan, Kawa. 2015. "Kurdistan's Politicized Society Confronts a Sultanistic System." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12896

Haugbølle, Sune. 2010. *War and Memory in Lebanon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hermanowicz, Joseph C. 2002. "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies to Study People in Bed." *Qualitative Sociology* 25, no. 4: 479-99. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021062932081

Hevian, Rody. 2013. "The Main Kurdish Political Parties in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey: A Research Guide." *The Middle East Review of International Affairs (MEIRA)* 17, no. 2: 94-112. http://www.rubincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Hevian-YA-SG-YA-au2-PDF.pdf

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

IHRDC (Iran Human Rights Documentation Center). 2011. "Murder at Mykonos: Anatomy of a Political Assassination." February 3, 2011. https://iranhrdc.org/murder-at-mykonos-anatomy-of-a-political-assassination/

Izady, Mehrdad R. 1992. *A* Concise *Handbook: The Kurds*. Washington, Philadelphia, and London: Crane Russak, Taylor and Francis International Publishers.

Jwaideh, Wadie. 2006. *The Kurdish National Movement: It Origins and Development*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

KDPI. 2013. "KDPI's Head of Foreign Relations: Iran Does Not Allow any Form of Peaceful or Civilian Dissent." December 2, 2013. http://KDPI.org/english/KDPIs-head-of-foreign-relations-iran-does-not-allow-any-form-of-peaceful-or-civilian-dissent/

KDPI (@KDPIenglish). 2016a. "Mustafa Hijri: We will restart armed resistance against the Islamic Republic of Iran." Twitter, February 25, 2016. https://twitter.com/KDPIRAN/status/702897445559246848

KDPI. 2016b. "Report on clashes between KDPI's peshmerga forces and Iran's IRGC. Paris: Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan." June 30, 2016. http://KDPI.org/english/report-on-clashes-betweenKDPIs-peshmerga-forces-and-irans-irgc/

KDPI (@KDPIenglish). 2016c. "#Rasan is a Kurdish word, meaning 'standing up with a vengeance to an enemy.'" Twitter, November 6, 2016. https://twitter.com/KDPIenglish/status/795341821752864768

KDPI. 2018. "73rd Anniversary of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan." August 16, 2018. http://KDPI.org/english/73rd-anniversary-of-the-democratic-party-of-iranian-kurdistan/

Koldas, Umut. 2011. "The Nakba in Palestinian Memory in Israel." *Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 6: 947-59. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2011.619354

Koohi-Kamali, Farideh. 2003. *The Political Development of the Kurds in Iran: Pastoral Nationalism*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kriesberg, Louis. 2007. "The Conflict Resolution Field: Origins, Growth, and Differentiation." In P*eacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, edited by William Zartman, 25-51. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press Books.

Landinfo. 2016. "Iransk-kurdiske partier i Nord-Irak." September 14, 2016. https://landinfo.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Iranskkurdiske-partier-i-NordIrak-14092016.pdf

Landinfo. 2017. "Økt kurdisk militæraktivitet i Iran." February 13, 2017. https://landinfo.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Iran-respons-%C3%98kt-kurdisk-milit%C3%A6raktivitet-i-Iran-AHO-Oppdatert-15022016.pdf

Llobera, Joseph R. 2007. "The role of historical memory in Catalan national identity." *Social Anthropology* 6, no. 3: 331-42. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.1998.tb00365.x

MacKenzie, David Neil. 1961. "The Origins of Kurdish." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 60, no. 1: 68-86. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-968X.1961.tb00987.x

May, Karl. 1892. *Durchs wilde Kurdistan*. Köln: Naumann und Göbel.

Mays, Michael. 2005. "A Nation Once Again? The Dislocations and Displacements of Irish National Memory." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 27, no. 2: 119-38. https://doi.org/10.1080/08905490500212446

McDonald, Matt. 2013. "Constructivisms." In *Security Studies: An Introduction*, edited by Paul D. Williams, 63-76. London and New York: Routledge.

McDowall, David. 2004. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris.

Misztal, Barbara A. 2003. "Durkheim on Collective Memory." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 3, no. 2: 123-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X030032002

Mulqueen, John. 2015. "Roisín Higgins, Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising." *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 4: 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2015.1023040

Natali, Denise. 2005. *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Neuhof, Florian. 2016. "Iran's forgotten Kurds plot a comeback." *Middle East Eye*, May 4, 2016. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/forgotten-kurds-kurdistan-democratic-party-iran-iraq-986735140

Novick, Peter. 1999. *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

O'Connor, Francis. 2017. "The Kurdish Movement in Turkey: Between Political Differentiation and Violent Confrontation." *Peace Research Institute Frankfurt*: 1-33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17632

Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 1997. "Patterns of Global Terrorism- Iran." *United States Department of State*, 1 April, 1997. https://www.refworld.org/docid/468107031c.html

O'Reilly, Karen. 2005. *Ethnographic Methods*. London and New York: Routledge.

Orton, Kyle. 2017. *The Forgotten Foreign Fighters: The PKK in Syria*. London: The Henry Jackson Society.

Pearse, Patrick. 1952. *Political Writings and Speeches*. Dublin: Talbot Press.

Pekonen, Kyösti. 1989. "Symbols and Politics as Culture in the Modern Situation: The Problems and Prospects of the New." In *Contemporary Political Culture: Politics of a Postmodern World*, edited by John R. Gibbins, 127-43. London: SAGE.

Prunhuber, Carol. 2009. *The Passion and Death of Rahman the Kurd: Dreaming Kurdistan*. Bloomington: iUniverse.

Quesnay, Arthur. 2010. “Iranian Migration in Iraqi Kurdistan.” MA thesis, Pantheon-Sorbonne University.

Rabinow, Paul. 1991 *The Foucault Reader: An introduction to Foucault’s thought*. London: Penguin.

Rafaat, Aram. 2016. “The fundamental characteristics of the Kurdish nationhood project in modern Iraq.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 3: 488-504. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2015.1124415

Roe, Paul. 2005. *Ethnic Violence and the Societal Security Dilemma*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Saldana, Johnny. 2013. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington: SAGE.

Schwandt, Thomas A. 2000. “Three Epistemological Stances For Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics and Social Constructionism.” In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 189-213. London: SAGE.

Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Shannon, Vaughn P. 2012. “Introduction: Ideational Allies - Psychology, Constructivism, and International Relations.” In *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*, edited by Vaughn P. Shannon and Paul A. Kowert, 1-30. The United States of America: The University of Michigan Press.

Stansfield, Gareth. 2006. “Finding a Dangerous Equilibrium: Internal Politics in Iraqi Kurdistan – Parties, Tribes, Religion and Ethnicity Reconsidered.” In *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, edited by Faleh A. Jabar and Hosham Dawod, 258-76. London, Berkeley, and Beirut: SAQI.

Staub, Ervin. 2006. "Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory." *Political Psychology* 27, no. 6: 867-94. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00541.x

Staub, Ervin. 2010. "Understanding the Woundedness/Psychological Transformation of All Parties in Mass Violence." In *Overcoming Evil*, 275-84. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Steans, Jill; Lloyd Pettiford; Thomas Diez, and Imad El-Anis. 2010. *An Introduction to International Relations Theory: Perspectives and Themes*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Tamir, Maya; Shalom H. Schwartz; Jan Cieciuch; Michaela Riediger; Claudio Torres; Christie Scollon; Vivian Dzokoto; Xiaolu Zhou, and Allon Vishkin. 2016. "Desired emotions across cultures: A value-based account." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 111, no. 1: 67-82. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000072

The Lancet. 2016. "Ending the Death Penalty for Juveniles." *The Lancet* 387, no. 10018: 506-506. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00266-X

Unal, Mustafa C. 2014. "Strategist or Pragmatist: A Challenging Look at Ocalan's Retrospective Classification and Definition of PKK's Strategic Periods Between 1973 and 2012." *Terrorism and Political Violence, 26*, no. 3: 419-48. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.728153

UNPO (Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization). 2017. "Iranian Kurdistan." November 3, 2017. https://unpo.org/members/7882?id=7882%20t

UNPO (Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization). 2018. "Iranian Kurdistan: Killing of Two Kurdish Activists Reaffirms Iran's Return to Tradition of Political Assassinations." March 13, 2018. https://unpo.org/article/20677?id=20677

UNPO (Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization). 2019. "Iranian Kurdistan: PDKI Publishes Extensive List of Activists Killed." February 14, 2019. https://unpo.org/article/21378

Vali, Abbas. 2014. *Kurds and the State in Iran: The Making of Kurdish Identity.* London and New York: I.B. Tauris.

Van Bruinessen, Martin. 2006. "Kurdish Paths to Nation." In *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, edited by Jabar, Faleh A. and Hosham Dawod, 21- 48. London, Berkeley, and Beirut: SAQI.

Vargas, Michael. 2015. "Catalonia is not Spain: projecting Catalan identity to tourists in and around Barcelona." *Journal of Tourism History* 7, no. 1-2: 36-53. https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2015.1068827

Watts, Nicole F. 2014. "Democracy and Self-determination in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq." In *Conflict, Democratization and Kurds in the Middle East*, edited by David Romano and Mehmet Gurses, 141-71. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Winther Jørgensen, Marianne, and Louise Phillips. 2000. *Diskursanalys som teori och metod*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.

Young, Frank W. 1970. "Reactive Subsystems." *American Sociological Review* 35, no. 2: 297-307. https://doi.org/100.2307/2093207

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix I - Initial interview guide

The method having been used is semi-structured interviews, posing open-ended questions. Relevant information has been followed up with probing questions in order to locate key issues. A number of probing sub-questions, which are likely to be of use, have been prepared, although other probes may be applied when appropriate. At large, questions should be considered as resources to be used when the situation calls for it. Several of the sub-questions in the different sections revisit the same general fields of investigation, as I strive to pursue answers for obscure issues through a different formulation if necessary, without appearing patronizing. Consequently questions and structure may vary somewhat between respondents. Investigating relevant issues, thought to benefit the study, has been prioritized over fully covering all questions in the interview guide. Further, the overall format of the interview guide has been modified throughout the research process adopting to what respondents deemed relevant. Questions have been kept simple to make it easy for my interpreter to mediate the questions accurately.

The first section of the interview is thought to create a positive ambiance and let respondents loosen up. The second and the fifth section address topics which respondents supposedly feel passionate to discuss, while the second and the third sections address topics of more delicate character, wherefore they have been embedded in the middle of the interview.

All interviews started with me presenting what I hoped to achieve with my research. I have also told respondents that they may remain anonymous, that they can stop the interview at any time and that they may retract previous statements, which in that case will be omitted in the final thesis. I have also explained that I prefer to record interviews in order to use the data more accurately, which will benefit all parties involved. Afterwards the recordings have been deleted.

At the end of the interview I have illustrated my sincere gratitude to each and every respondent and told him or her that I will send my finished thesis to my contact within KDPI.

All transcribed interviews have been forwarded to my supervisors.

Warm up questions

Section one: Introduction

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. Could you please tell me how you came to Koya?

   2.1 Why did you come here?
3. What do you do in the party?

Grand tour questions

Section two: KDPI/KDP-I

1. If I did not know anything about KDPI/KDP-I, how would you describe the party?

   1.1 How would you describe the political objectives of KDPI/KDP-I?

   1.2 Why was KDPI founded?

   1.3 How would you describe the organization and structure of the party?

   1.4 Why should the Rojhelat Kurds support KDPI/KDPI?
2. How did you decide to join KDPI/KDP-I?

   2.1 How come you did not join any other party instead of KDPI/KDP-I?

2.2 What did you hear about KDPI/KDP-I before you joined the party?

2.3 What did you feel when you joined the party?

3. How would you describe KDPI/KDP-I in relation to other Kurdish parties?

3.1 How does KDPI/KDP-I work with Kurdish parties from Rojhelat?

3.2 How does KDPI/KDP-I work with other nations in Iran?

3.3 How does KDPI/KDP-I work with other Kurdish parties outside Rojhelat?

3.3.1 How would you describe KDPI's/KDP-I's relationship with PUK?

3.3.2 How would you describe KDPI's/KDP-I's relationship with KDP?

3.3.3 How would you describe KDPI's/KDPI's relationship with PKK?

3.4 What is KDPI's/KDP-I's relationship with the Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian governments?

4. How would you describe KDPI's/KDP-I's history?

4.1 How would you describe the Republic of Kurdistan?

4.2 How would you describe KDPI's/KDP-I's historical relationship with Iran?

4.3 Why is KDPI/KDP-I here in Koya?

4.4 Why did KDPI and KDP-I split in 2006?

4.4.1 What do KDPI and KDP-I members think about the split?

4.4.2 What do Kurds in Rojhelat think about the split?

4.4.3 What will it take for KDPI and KDP-I to reunite?

5. What are the political values within KDPI/KDP-I?

5.1 Why are these values important?

5.2 How can these values be compared to the ideology of *Kurdayetî* in Rojhelat overall?

5.3 Why does KDPI/KDP-I want federalism and not independence?

5.4 What is *Rasan*?

5.5 Why are there so many pictures of leaders who have been killed around the camp?

5.5.1 How would you describe the meaning of these pictures?

6. What do you personally think are the most important political goals KDPI/KDP-I works towards?

6.1 Why are these goals the most important?

6.2 How could KDPI/KDP-I be better at reaching these goals?

Section three: Kurdish identity

1. How do you perceive Kurdish identity?

1.1 What makes the Kurds a people?

1.2 Why is Kurdish identity important?

1.3 How would you describe Rojhelat?

1.4 How would you describe Iranian identity?

1.5 How would you describe the Islamic Republic of Iran?

2. How would you describe the similarities and differences between Kurds from Rojhelat and other parts of Kurdistan?

2.1 Why are there differences?

2.2 Why are there similarities?

3. How do you think Kurds born in other countries outside of Kurdistan reflect on their Kurdish identity?

4. How do you think Rojhelat Kurds who were born and raised in Bashur reflect on their Kurdish identity?

4.1 What are the differences from growing up here in Bashur as a Rojhelat Kurd in comparison to growing up in Rojhelat?

Section four: Resistance

1. Why does KDPI/KDP-I resist the Iranian state?

1.1 How do you think Iranian attacks and assassinations have affected KDPI's resistance?

1.2 How do you think Iranian oppression in Rojhelat have affected the view on what is perceived as legitimate resistance among Rojhelat Kurds in general?

2. What methods are legitimate to use against Iran?

2.1 Why is that?

3. How does the KDPI/KDP-I resist the Iranian state?

3.1 Why has KDPI/KDP-I chosen this/these strategy/strategies?

3.2 What are positive and negative aspects of armed resistance?

3.3 What are positive and negative aspects of non-violent resistance?

3.4 How does KDPI/KDP-I work in Rojhelat to help the people there?

3.5 How does KDPI/KDP-I work in Bashur to help the people in Rojhelat?

4. How effective is KDPI's/KDP-I's resistance towards the Iranian state?

4.1 How do you think the resistance could become more efficient?

5. How does KDPI/KDP-I work with other movements to achieve their goals?

5.1 What is it like to resist Iran in an area controlled by PUK?

6. How would you describe the international support for KDPI's/KDP-I's resistance?

6.1 What could be done better in terms of international support for KDPI's/KDP-I's resistance?

7. How does it feel to resist the Iranian state while being so close to it, knowing that you might be attacked, hurt, and even killed?

Section five: Life experiences and memory

1. Can you please tell me about your memories from Rojhelat?

1.1 From your own experience, how is it to grow up and live in Rojhelat as a Kurd?

2. Can you please tell me about your life here in Bashur?

2.1 Could you please describe how life is for Kurds here in Bashur in comparison to life for Kurds in Rojhelat?

3. Could you please describe the Islamic Republic of Iran from your perspective?

3.1 What are good and bad things with the Islamic Republic of Iran?

3.2 How has these things affected you personally?

4. Could you please describe the Pahlavi dynasty from your perspective?

4.1 What are good and bad things with the Pahlavi dynasty?

4.2 How has these things affected you personally? (If applicable)

5. In your own opinion what are the most important events in history for the Rojhelat Kurds?

5.1 Why are these events important?

5.2 What do these events mean to Rojhelat Kurds today?

5.3 How has the Republic of Kurdistan affected Rojhelat Kurds?

5.3.1 What does the Republic of Kurdistan mean to Rojhelat Kurds today?

5.4 How has the 1979 Revolution affected the Rojhelat Kurds?

5.4.1 What does the 1979 Revolution mean to Rojhelat Kurds today?

5.5 How would you describe Qazi Mohammed?

5.5.1 What does Qazi Mohammed mean to Rojhelat Kurds today?

5.6 How would you describe Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou?

5.6.1 What does Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou mean to Rojhelat Kurds today?

5.7 How would you describe Dr. Sadegh Sharafkandi?

5.7.1 What does Dr. Sadegh Sharafkandi mean to Rojhelat Kurds today?

6. What is the most important thing you would like to achieve with KDPI/KDP-I in the future?

6.1 Why is that?

Final question: Is there anything you think we have not talked about and that you would like to share with me so that I can present you and your party more clearly and maybe focus on it in future interviews? Anything you think is important would be very helpful.

9.2 Appendix II - Photos

The photos below are thought to convey visual insight into how KDPI members live in Bashur, as well as my own experiences in the field. A KDPI representative has approved the photos used below. Some of the photos are blurred in order to prohibit recognition of KDPI party members. A friend has taken the photos from the annual commemoration of the Republic of Kurdistan, while I myself have taken the rest. The artist and KDPI member Shorsh Ahi have painted much of the artwork depicted in the photos.

Azadi

The Azadi camp in the outskirts of Koya.

Security measures

Above: AK-47 in a home in Azadi. Below: Loaded AK-47s kept close by during a picnic.

Embracing history and culture

Azadi residents celebrating the Festive Wednesday prior to Nowruz.

Azadi residents celebrating the founding of the Republic of Kurdistan.

Remembering “martyrs”

To the left: Depictions of victims after the IRI shelling attack in September 2018. To the right: Street art depicting butterflies, a symbol to remember the victims.

To the left: Depiction of Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou. To the right: Depiction of Sadegh Sharafkandi.

To the left: Depiction of Qazi Mohammed executed by the Pahlavi dynasty in 1947 on the same square in Mahabad where he announced the founding of the Republic of Kurdistan. To the right: Depiction of Simko Shikak, known as the “father” of nationalism for many Rojhalat Kurds. He was assassinated by the Pahlavi dynasty in Oshnavieh in 1930.

Qazi Mohammed, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, and Sadegh Sharafkandi depicted in homes, offices, and on facades in the KDPI community.

To the left: KDPI “martyrs” killed in battle in 2017. Behind them is the eagle symbolizing the Kurds. To the right: The grave of Rasul Mohamdzada, killed by an ISIS bomb in Mosul in 2016.

Hope for future peace

Street art depicting the rejection of violence and the hope for future peace.

Resistance

KDPI member with a *peshmerga* tattoo.