University of Tampere
School of Management
Degree Programme in Politics

RIZHNA KHORSHID
KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY POST-2003:
A STRATEGIC-RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

Abstract

This is an inquiry looking into the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) foreign policy post-2003. Ever since the overthrow of the former Iraqi regime in 2003, the KRG has been locked in a series of disputes with Baghdad over the limits of its autonomy. One of the main arguments has concerned KRG's right to develop its hydrocarbon industry autonomously. This issue gained prominence particularly following the discovery of vast oil and gas resources in the Kurdistan Region. Understanding the benefits associated with these findings, the landlocked KRG approached Ankara as an alternative route to export its energy resources beyond Baghdad's control. Due to the coincidence of Turkey's and KRG's interests, the two stroke up a Baghdad-defying partnership, resulting in what can be seen a noteworthy step for the KRG towards the realization of what it has been for long aspiring: economic independency.

I have examined the unfolding of these events through *a strategic-relational analysis* (SRA) of KRG's foreign policy *strategies* interacting with the *strategic selectivities* of their environment. The SRA was initially developed by Bob Jessop, who viewed reality as the product of *contingent necessity*: particular spatio-temporal intersections of *strategies* and *selectivities* producing non-necessary outcomes. My aim was to trace this path of *contingent necessity* in KRG's foreign policy. The conducted conceptual analysis resulted in two findings. Firstly, the observed changes, both in the level of economic independency the KRG had achieved as well as in its relations with Baghdad and Ankara post-2003, were found to be the product of contingent, rather than deterministic path-dependency. Secondly, I found that KRG's agency itself is, also, the continuously transforming product of *contingent necessity*, redefined through the region's relations with other actors.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introducing the Research Problem and the Theoretical Framework

This inquiry is both *empirically* and *theoretically* motivated. My starting point and primary concern is with the foreign policy development of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq[1] post-2003, with regard to its aims of securing as much economic independency as possible from Baghdad via the development of its hydrocarbon industry. In spite of the fact that the KRG is a *de facto* state, the autonomous region can be considered as having external relations of its own, independent from those of Baghdad. My objective is to examine the KRG's deployed foreign policy strategies vis-à-vis the federal government of Iraq and the Turkish capital of Ankara. I have chosen to study the Baghdad-KRG-Ankara nexus in particular, because it is principally within the framework of these relations that the KRG has aimed to reach its objectives. My primary interest is located in the process through which the regional government has gradually managed to secure its economic independence to the level it has today, at the intersection of a complex set of mutually interacting factors. The research is, accordingly, constructed around the key question of "*How can we explain the foreign policy development of the KRG post-2003?*"

The empirical motivation underlying the inquiry initially rose amidst an interest in the recently increased cooperation between Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government – two actors, which had for long been hostile in their mutual relations. Ofra Bengio has portrayed the dynamics between Turkey and the KRG, set in motion following the establishment of the no-fly zone in 1991[2], as "schizophrenic".[3] The relationship can be indeed viewed as rather inconsistent and contradictory ever since the creation of the safe haven. On the one hand, a Kurdish *de facto* state right across its southern border had Turkey fearing a domino effect

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[1] The Kurdistan Region in Iraq is an autonomous *de facto* state within Iraq. From this point onwards I will refer to its leadership with "KRG".

[2] Natali, 2010, xxiii; 30: In a military operation – "Operation Provide Comfort" or "Operation Safe Haven"– conducted by the US, the UK and some other Gulf War Allies, following the Kurdish uprisings, the Iraqi army and its state-apparatus was forced to withdraw from the three Kurdish-populated provinces in Northern Iraq. Subsequently, based on the UN Resolution 688, a No-Fly Zone was established in the region by the US, UK and France to provide humanitarian relief for the inhabitants of these Kurdish-populated cities and towns. The Kurdish leadership in the region established an autonomous zone in the region, developing into what we know today as the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq.

[3] Bengio, December 6th, 2012.

causing instability within the country's own 15 million Kurds. Therefore, up until very recently, Ankara had been extremely careful not to encourage – or in fact to halt – the state-building process in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq. On the other hand, the region constituted a viable trade partner for the country. While mutual economic interests were noteworthy in the two decades after the establishment of the KRG, they have now gone beyond mere significant following major oil and, particularly, gas discoveries made in the Iraqi Kurdistan post-2005, an exponentially increased trade between Ankara and the KRG, and Turkey's growing presence in the region through foreign investments. Bengio has, accordingly, claimed that, that "[i]f there is one country that has helped build a Kurdish entity in Iraqi Kurdistan, it is Turkey."[4] It was the toppling of the Baathist regime in 2003 that set the relationship of the two actors on an entirely different path; economic partnership came to evolve into a comprehensive set of multifaceted and mutually intermingled political and economic issues, which I am attempting to make sense of in this inquiry. At the same time KRG has been struggling amidst continuous disputes with the central government of Iraq over the limits of its autonomy, which the increasingly improving relations with Turkey are fueling even further. It is, indeed, this Baghdad-KRG-Ankara nexus where my particular empirical interest is located.

The theoretical motivation of this research lies within an interest in the *relationalist* approaches to social sciences. It is their growing significance in the field that has led me into adopting a *strategic-relational approach* (SRA)[5] to the analysis of KRG's foreign policy development. *Relationalist* views of social sciences have been indeed gradually developed against the background of their *substantialist* counterparts overwhelmingly dominating the field. At the heart of the disagreement between the two has been, *where* and *how* to locate *relations* in scientific inquiry. While the latter views relations resulting from the interaction of pre-given *substances* – agents and structures – the former considers them logically preceding and constituting entities.[6] The SRA is a proponent of the former view. It addresses questions of social and political inquiry as the unfolding of dynamic *processes* instead of static interaction between separate, pre-given and black-boxed agents and structures. Let me take a brief look at the SRA as a relationalist approach, in order to point out the crucial role it plays in this inquiry.

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[4] Bengio, December 6th, 2012.
[5] The strategic-relational (SRA) introduced by Bob Jessop, Colin Hay, Stuart MacAnulla and David Marsh is developed as an alternative to other – mainly dualistic – relational approaches to social and political inquiry. (Clark and Jones 2012, 65.) The SRA will be introduced in detail in Chapter 5.
[6] Emirbayer 1997, 285–288; Jackson and Nexon 1999, 291–293.

1.2.   Strategic-Relational Model in Foreign Policy Analysis

The conventional tradition in social and political inquiry is to highlight either agents at the expense of structures or structures at the expense of agents. Within social sciences, these two approaches have come to be known as *individualism* and *structuralism.*[7] John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley refer to the two understandings as being based on "self-action".[8] Some scholars have gone beyond the dichotomy of agents and structures and examined the "*inter-action"* between the two components making up for causal processes in social reality; a good example being game-theoretic models. However, regardless of whether they highlight agents, structures or their inter-action, all three understandings have been based on an assumption that *entities* (agents and structures) precede *relations*. This is what Dewey and Bentley identify as the *substantialist* approach. Transactional or relational approaches, in turn, take *relations* as their starting point; instead of the analysis of constituent entities, they focus on the analysis of *relations* as a dynamic unfolding process, constantly in the making, never finished, always organic.[9] In the words of Ernst Cassirer:

> *Things* are not assumed as independent existences present anterior to any *relation*, but [...] gain their whole being... first in and with the relations, which are predicated of them. Such things are terms of relations, and as such, can never be given in isolation but only in ideal community with each other." [italics added][10]

The significance of this quote will become apparent when I get to delve deeper into the strategic-relational model in Chapter 6. There are a variety of relationalist approaches going all the way from the thoughts provided by Pierre Bourdieu to those introduced by Margaret Archer and Bob Jessop.[11] These approaches, addressed as *system theories* within this inquiry, will be mirrored against the deficiencies of *substantialist* views to Foreign Policy analysis. In a "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology" (1997), Mustafa Emirbayer identifies two major points of disagreement among the *relationalist* tradition; the first one is related to their meta-

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[7] Emirbayer 1997, 285–289. Neorealist theories of balance of power and world system's theories are a good example of the former, whereas rational actor or norm-based models of the latter.

[8] Dewey and Bentley 1949; Emirbayer 1997, 283–288.

[9] Just like sociologists, political analysts are indeed confronted with this problem of whether to make sense of the world principally via *substances* or *processes*; "static things or in dynamic, unfolding relations".

[10] Cassirer 1953, 36.

[11] In their examination of relationalist approaches, Jackson and Nexon (1999, 309) recognize Jessop's perception of the state as relational.

theoretical assumptions, whereas the second one concerns the way the inter-relationship of agents and structures is conceptualized. With regard to the first question Emirbayer distinguishes between ontological and methodological relationalism. For instance, the ontologically committed critical realism as represented by Roy Bhaskar and Margaret Archer epitomizes the former[12], whereas the meta-theoretically uncommitted relationalism proposed by Osmo Kivinen and Tero Piiroinen the latter. In terms of the second question, the manifesto separates between dualist and anti-dualist models. [13] The former detaches agents from structures either ontologically or methodologically, examining them separately. The latter, in turn, relativizes the two components, whose definitions accordingly come to be dependent on each other. Archer's analytical *dualism* symbolizes the former, whereas Bob Jessop's and Colin Hay's methodological *duality* the latter. The two questions are interrelated, but I am more concerned with the latter one, since the dualistic and anti-dualistic models generate fundamentally distinctive ways of making sense of social reality, in general, and foreign policy development, in particular. Suffice it to say at this point that, the anti-dualist relationalism of the SRA provides a unique set of conceptual tools to address *strategic action* in *strategically selective contexts,* which can, in turn, point to some interesting facts about the *relationality* of agents and structures in political reality.

The SRA fundamentally re-formulates understandings of one of the utmost notorious problems of social sciences: the agent-structure question indeed. Its unique strategic-relational understanding of *how social parts (agents)* relate to the *whole (context)* provides the, means to not only to overcome structural or agential bias (essentialism or substantialism) in political analysis, but also to go beyond the impasse of other dichotomies, such as domestic versus international sources of foreign policy, Foreign Policy Analysis versus International Relations aka systemic versus unit-level analysis, and naturalist versus interpretivist approaches to political inquiry. The capability of the strategic-relational approach to overcome strict

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[12] Osmo Kivinen and Tero Piiroinen (2006, 304) likewise recognize Archer's approach as ontological relationalism. Kivinen and Piiroinen indeed make a distinction between relationalists who "philosophize sociology" and those who "sociologize philosophy". While the proponents of the former category argue that knowledge of reality is essentially based on ontological commitments, the advocates of the latter denounce the need for any apiori metaphysical commitments when conducting scientific research. If one is to follow the this categorization, the SRA would be located in the former due to its critical realist approach to social sciences.

[13] In this inquiry, when speaking of dualist models (Archer's morphogenetic approach), I am referring to analytical models, which in their examination of social reality, separate agents from structures, for instance, temporally. When talking about anti-dualist models (Bob Jessop's and Colin Hay's SRA) I am referring to an analytical model relativizing agents and structures instead of examining them separately.

dichotomies, especially that of international versus domestic sources and agential versus structural explanans of foreign policy, is indispensable for the understanding of KRG's oscillatory foreign policy development over the past ten years. On the one hand, the SRA has remarkable potential to capture the KRG's balancing foreign policies in between the internal demands and complex external pressures it is continuously confronted with. On the other hand, its analytical duality can accommodate the *relationalist* idea of reality as a continuous *process* of sequential and interlinked transactions, in which both the KRG and its context – through their mutually interdependent relations – become continuously transformed and redefined.

1.3.   The Plan of the Research

The primary research question can be summed up briefly as: *How can we explain the Kurdistan Regional Government's foreign policy development aiming at economic independency through autonomous development of its energy sector post-2003?* To answer this, I will attempt to construct a narrative of the KRG's foreign policy strategies *and* their outcomes, using the strategic-relational approach as my primary analytical tool.[14] This model will present foreign policy as a process implicated in the *dialectical* and *relational* interplay of three elements: a strategically selective *context*, *strategic action* and *cognitive templates.* The research will proceed in the following manner.

First, I will introduce the political context of the situation at hand, including a brief overview of KRG's status within Iraq post-2003 and the empirical problem at hand. Not delving too deep into the details, because the political dilemma will be further addressed in Chapter 7, I will then move on to Chapter 3. This part will focus on the constructivist theorization of *de facto* states mostly via Nina Caspersen's and Gareth Stansfield's ideas. The theory makes two interrelated assumptions about these theoretical and empirical anomalies of International Relations; their policies are claimed to be driven by the idea of statehood and this, in turn, is assumed to have resulted in a tendency towards transitory and ambiguous foreign policy behavior. The

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[14] The SRA is, of course, one among many approaches via which foreign policy change or development can be addressed. For instance, Jakob Gustavsson (1999) has outlined six different efforts. Among these are Holsti's foreign policy restructuring, Goldmann's stabilizers and Carslanes' diachronic interplay between agents and structure – which comes closest to the strategic-relational approach. Gustavsson himself develops a model that focuses on the simultaneous occurrence of changes in "[...] *fundamental structural conditions, strategic political leadership, and the presence of crisis of some kind"* (Gustavsson 1999, 74.)

implications of these two hypotheses will become more apparent, when the driving force of *statehood* as an idea, is situated in the strategic-relational model as the "policy paradigm" through which KRG formulates its strategies.

In Chapter 4, I will turn to Foreign Policy Analysis as conceptualized by the *substantialist* approaches. The field will be first introduced in general. Subsequently, following Walter Carlsnaes, I suggest the domain to be conceptualized not on the basis of the *substantive* nature of foreign policy (the domestic-international divide) as has been generally done, but instead from a *meta-theoretical* perspective (ontology and epistemology), which is "[...] neutral with regard to the substance of foreign policy itself."[15] I will discuss the domain via these two questions, on the basis of Carlsnaes' taxonomy of general approaches to foreign policy analysis. By doing so, I attempt to demonstrate the dominant role of *substantialism* within the conventional understandings of foreign policy. I will also introduce Carlsnaes' noteworthy *tripartite model* as an effort to overcome the reductionist positions of holism and individualism.

However, because of the tripartite model's inability to address foreign policy *development* (which Carlsnaes acknowledges himself as well), as an alternative, I suggest *dialectical*[16] or *relationalist* approaches to the analysis of foreign policy. It is here, in Chapter 5, that I will move on to a closer examination of *relationalist* understandings of social reality via the *system theories* of Anthony Giddens and Margaret Archer. These two *relationalist* approaches do not address reality primarily through agents and structures at the expense of their interactions, but, instead, highlight *relations* as the principal unit of analysis. In doing so, these system theories try "[...] to capture social reality in dynamic, continuous and processual terms"[17]. Patrick T. Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon have termed this kind of analysis as "processual relationalism".[18] I have chosen to focus on Archer's scientific realism particularly, because her

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[15] Carlsnaes 2002, 334.

[16] With the dialectical approach I am referring to the ontological and methodological traditions in social theory, which recognize the relevance of both agents and structures in the explanation of social action. The dialectical approach within the agent-structure debate emerged as a response to the inadequacies of structuralist and individualist accounts. The discussion rose initially in sociology but was brought into International Relations by Alexander Wendt (1987; 1999), David Dessler (1989) and Walter Carlasnaes (1987, 1992). Their thoughts are mostly based on the social theories of Anthony Giddens, Roy Bhaskar and Margaret S. Archer. (Wight 2006, 77.)

[17] Emirbayer 1997, 281.

[18] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 292. The division between substantialist and relationalist approaches to social and political analysis, in other words, have been also acknowledged within International Relations. This approach has been increasingly recognized in the field and applied particularly to the examination of *change* in world politics. For instance, Nexon's *Struggle For Power in Early Modern Europe* (2009) adopts a relational view to the theorization of international change.

morphogenetic model – a *dualist relational* approach – has been suggested to be applied to the analysis of foreign *change* by Walter Carlsnaes. Other scholars such as Elisabetta Brighi have, in turn, seen the *anti-dualist* SRA providing a better account of foreign policy development. The morphogenetic model and the SRA, thus, represent two more or less competitive versions of *relationalism* (dualism versus duality) that I want to examine here; in order to understand the implications of their differences on empirical research, I will have to introduce both. Accordingly, Chapter 5.4. "Archer's Morphogenetic Model meets Carlsnaes' Tripartite Model" will delve deeper into Carlsnaes' suggestion of applying Archer's model. This will be followed by Chapter 6, which will then mirror the SRA against Archer's dualism, and finally move onto a closer examination of the SRA as applied to foreign policy analysis. In Chapter 7 the strategic-relational approach will be applied to the analysis of the foreign policy development of the KRG post-2003. The narrative will be partly constructed on the basis of Caspersen's assumptions of unrecognized states' quest for statehood and their tendency towards ambiguous and transitory foreign policy conduct. By locating these postulations in the *strategic-relational* model, I attempt to demonstrate the dynamics of the *relations* between *context*, *action* and *ideas* that are responsible for this presumed ambiguity or schizophrenia, as Bengio may call it. Finally, in Chapter 8, I will summarize the empirical and theoretical conclusions of the study. Through this analysis I will attempt to bring out interesting features of the *oscillating* foreign policy behavior of the KRG as the product of the unique spatio-temporal intersections of *strategic action, strategically selective context and cognitive templates.* It remains to be seen, also, whether the developments seen on ground can be conceived of as implying KRG's permanent alienation from Baghdad or mere ambiguous balancing in between Ankara and Baghdad as Caspersen's and Stansfield's thoughts would appear to suggest.[19]

CHAPTER 2: THE KURDISTAN REGION IN IRAQ AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIMITS OF AUTONOMY

2.1. The Kurdistan Region in Iraq

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[19] Natali, February 28th, 2014.

Because of the lack of time and space, I will only provide a brief background of the Kurdish question in Iraq. The Kurds indeed comprise the largest nation in the world without a state of their own; estimations vary in between 35–40 million living across Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and elsewhere in the world (a diaspora of a couple of million Kurds). The Kurdistan Region in Iraq is an autonomous entity recognized by the Iraqi Constitution as a federal state.[20] It comprises the three governorates of Erbil (the capital), Suleymaniya and Dohuk. The governing institutions of the Kurdistan Region – its presidency, parliament and the government are all acknowledged likewise. The limits and scope of the powers of the federal government vis-à-vis the federal entities are outlined in the Constitution, albeit its interpretations have raised a vast array of disputes.

The KRG has been autonomous ever since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the Kurdish uprising, and the imposition of a no-fly zone to protect the area from the Iraqi regime's retaliatory attacks.[21] However, following the occupation of Iraq in 2003, the KRG managed to secure a constitutional recognition to its status. On the one hand, examining the Kurdistan Region as a *de facto* state may be considered more or less problematic in the light of its recognized position within Iraq. On the other hand, based on the long history of the Kurdish struggle for independence, their status approximates that of Catalonia in Spain rather than California in the United States. I will however, leave this question open at this point, for as we will come to see, there is no one definition that can incorporate all *de facto* states in the world within itself.

Kurds are often said to have "no friends but the mountains".[22] If one is to examine their history in general, and that of the Kurds in Iraq, in particular, fluctuation between cooperation and conflict with the four surrounding 'parent states' has been a general phenomenon throughout the nation's past. For instance, there seems to always have been a trade-off of some sort in between cooperation with Baghdad and Tehran. This is also why the Kurdish leadership's policies have been generally conceived of as mere functionalist response to regional balancing games. The general assumptions made about *de facto* states' oscillatory external relations appear to ring true in the case of the KRG as well. Their pursuit of statehood and transitory foreign policies become apparent, for instance, in Yaniv Voller's extensive study on the

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[20] The Iraqi Constitution.
[21] Natali, 2010, xxiii; 30.
[22] Park 2014, 44.

emergence of the nationalist Kurdish movement in Iraq starting from 1958, and its gradual development into a *de facto* state in the 1990s.[23] I am, indeed, also interested in examining whether this balancing game is evident in the region's external relations post-2003.

There are two major political parties within the KRG, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The two have been in charge of the autonomous region's politics and economy over the past decades. However, ever since 2009, an opposition party *Change* (Goran) has managed to get an increasing number of supporters, particularly within the governorate of Suleymanyia, and succeeded in overriding the PUK in recent elections. In spite of the fact that the iron grip of the PUK and KDP has been challenged by the opposition, de facto power at the moment is exercised by the KDP and the PUK, albeit by the latter ever more decreasingly. The inter-relationship of the two parties has always been problematic for a variety of reasons that I unfortunately cannot address in this research thoroughly. Nevertheless, one can mention, for instance, disputes over power-sharing and economic matters – which also led to a bloody civil war in the 1990s – *and* external efforts (mainly Baghdad, Tehran, and Ankara) trying to maintain a division within the Kurdish leadership in Iraq to prevent the emergence of an independent Kurdistan in the Middle East. The relations of the two parties have, however, improved significantly especially after the fall of the previous regime. Ever since then, the PUK and KDP have been working together within the KRG under the 'strategic partnership' conveyed in 2003. Nevertheless, a level of tension still remains and there are multiple traces of previous division still observable in their current interrelationship. For instance, while Dohuk and Erbil are clearly under the control of the KDP, Suleymaniya (and Kirkuk) are PUK's strongholds. This is, indeed, how the two parties have shared power since the 1990s. Nowadays, with the decreasing influence of the PUK and the success of Goran in the recent elections, the former's hold on Sulaymania seems to be loosening, not to even mention its diminishing power vis-à-vis the KDP.

With regard to KRG's foreign policies, there appears to be a division of labor within the leadership of the region: while the PUK has traditionally held the balance in the eastern borders

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[23] In his recently published PhD thesis "From Rebellion to De Facto Statehood: International and Transnational Sources of the Transformation of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement in Iraq into the Kurdistan Regional Government", Yaniv Voller indeed constructs a narrative of KRG's internal development and external relations mainly via the constructivist theorization of Caspersen and Stansfield.

of Iraqi Kurdistan (Iran) due to the proximity of its strongholds (Sulaymaniya and Kirkuk) to Iran; the KDP has done the job along the northern borders of Kurdistan (Dohuk and Erbil) closer to Turkey.[24] This division within the KRG points us towards the assumption of the fluctuating and schizophrenic nature of *de facto* states' external relations; the PUK maintains good relations between the KRG and its eastern neighbor (and Baghdad), while the KDP takes care of the relations with Ankara. At the same time, both parties work within the same government. As a result, we have a more or less ambiguous foreign policy behavior.

In other words, there are two ways to make sense of the relationship between the PUK and the KDP at the moment. On the one hand, the division of labor can be perceived of as epitomizing the difficult balancing game that *de facto* states have to face; PUK is trying to keep Baghdad and Iran happy while the KDP is keeping Ankara content. As such, their relationship can then be considered a silent agreement to limit external powers' influence on the Kurdistan region. Another way to capture the dynamics between the PUK and KDP would be through the examination of their relations as intra-Kurdish rivalry; the two parties *really* disagree – not only 'pretend' to disagree in order to keep Ankara, Baghdad and Iran content – on some issues. While one's interest is with Iran and Baghdad, the other's is with Ankara. Either way, only rough speculations can be made about how things *really* are in between the KDP and the PUK. The most likely interpretation would be that their relationship is characterized by both pretend and real disagreement.

Examining this seemingly division of labor within the KRG comprehensively would perhaps provide us with a better account of the balancing game the PUK and KDP are enforced to play. However, this inquiry is interested in the Baghdad-KRG-Ankara connection *only* with regard to the leadership's efforts aiming at economic independence via independent energy policies. And since this quarrel primarily concerns the Baghdad-KRG-Turkish nexus (rather than Teheran-KRG-Baghdad), the relations examined will be considered involving principally the KDP. It is for this reason that, when referring to the regional government's relations with Baghdad and Turkey, I will necessarily be pointing towards the KDP's relations with the two capitals. Although the PUK is also in good terms with Turkey, KRG's defiant energy policies can be considered as being principally brought about by the KDP rather than the PUK. Once again, the

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[24] Park 2014, 8; 56–67. Park does not talk of a division of labor, but merely points to the PUK's orientation towards Iran and KDP's towards Turkey.

PUK tends to be more accommodating towards both Tehran and Baghdad – at least in appearance – than the KDP. The party has also expressed its concerns over Masoud Barzani's[25] relations with the Turkish Premier. Just like Goran, the PUK has called for the institutionalization of the cooperation between the KRG and Turkey, seeing it now approximating personal deals between Barzani and Erdogan rather than inter-governmental collaboration.

2.2. Natural Resources, Identity and Conflict

One of the most important issues over which the Kurdistan Regional Government and the central government in Iraq have quarreled has involved the limits of federalism in questions relating to oil and gas. At the heart of the dispute between the two at the moment is power over how and by whom hydrocarbon resources are managed; KRG demands to sign oil contracts independently, and has done so up until now, while the Iraqi Oil Ministry and central government claim this to be illegal, and have taken a variety of measures against the Kurdistan Region over the past few years. The details of the conflict will be put under closer scrutiny in Chapter 7. Suffice to say at this point that, since the end of 2012 the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi Federal Government in Baghdad have been locked in a complex web of disputes, climaxing recently in the KRG signing a contract with Turkey to export its oil via the newly constructed KRG-Ceyhan pipeline[26] and the subsequent selling of the oil without the approval of Baghdad in late May, 2014.[27] The deal came as the last straw for Baghdad, who cut off the autonomous region from its share of the national budget as a retaliatory measure following the start of oil exports earlier this year. The wages of the public sector were put on hold in what was called "a declaration of war on the people of Kurdistan" by KRG's president Masud Barzani.[28] The dispute has not been settled up until the time this research was completed. Iraq has filed a case against Turkey in the International Chamber of Commerce in an attempt to stop the oil exports while the Kurdish leadership has publicly dismissed Iraqi threats as illegitimate.[29] However, it seems likely that the KRG and the central government will

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[25] Masoud Barzani is the Kurdistan Regional Government's President.
[26] Lee, November 13th, 2013: The pipeline was built in a multi-billion agreement between the KRG and Turkey. Another deal has also been made between the two for the construction of a second pipeline in order to increase KRG's export capacity.
[27] Washington Post, May 23rd, 2014.
[28] Natali, February 28th, 2014; Rudaw, March, 3rd, 2014.
[29] See, for instance: Coles, May 25th, 2014 and Arab News, May 24th, 2014.

sooner or later achieve a compromise of some kind. Following the recent elections in Iraq, Maliki needs an ally to form a coalition government, which will guarantee his grip on power for the next four years.[30] The Kurds seem like the most likely route to achieve this aim at the moment. Chances are, indeed, that the tensions are put on hold for another four years. Maliki turns the other cheek at KRG's unilateral policies while the KRG supports the shite Prime Minister for his third term.[31] Nevertheless, it is difficult to make any projections at this point, particularly following the recent surge of the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the country. Changes are occurring rapidly as Iraq descends into somewhat of a chaos, while the KRG's chances for independence appear to be boosted by the events.[32]

The quarrel depicted above is by no means first of its kind when looking at the relationship between Baghdad and Erbil for the past ten years since the toppling of the Baathist regime. Even though the integrity of Iraq has been maintained post-2003, the KRG has continuously stressed, that the preservation of the Iraqi state is based on a *voluntary* commitment by Arabs and Kurds to maintain the country united.[33] Were the central government not to respect this, there would be nothing stopping the KRG from taking a path of its own. Over the past ten years, the leadership of the KRG has been trying to further its economic independence from Baghdad, in order to loosen the capital's tight hold on the region with regard to economic issues. At the same time Baghdad has used this dependence as a political card of pressure, indeed, with which it has been able to confront Barzani's increasing threats of declaring independence.[34]

A brief elaboration on the importance of oil and gas resources to Iraq, in general, and the Kurdistan Region, in particular, is warranted here.[35] Incomes generated by oil exports amount to over 90 percent of the Iraqi budget. This number will most likely increase in the following years. Moreover, oil is the principal source of foreign investment in the country.[36] According to

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[30] The Guardian, May 19th, 2014.

[31] Natali, May 29th, 2014.

[32] For more see: Naylor, June 15th 2014.

[33] Voller 2013, 70. In the writing of the constitution the KRG, managed to secure an extensive amount of autonomy for itself vis-a-vis the federal government.

[34] Barzani has indeed continuously threatened that were it the case that Baghdad pushed the KRG too far, the autonomous region would not hesitate to go ahead and declare independence. For more see for instance, Parker and Coles, May 13th, 2014.

[35] With regard to the KRG, the questions of oil and gas are tightly linked to those of sovereignty and identity and should be, as such, viewed from the perspective of its state-building process. For the Iraqi government, on the other hand, the question is more about the maintenance of the territorial integrity and ensuring internal sovereignty. This will be addressed in further detail in Chapter 7.

[36] Alkadiri 2010, 1319–1320.

a varying number of estimations the Kurdistan Region sits on somewhere in between roughly 30-60 billion barrels of oil reserves and 22 trillion cubic feet of gas. These resources have been gradually discovered by international companies over the ten past years, starting in 2005, but especially in between 2007-2008.[37] Although the findings amount to a tenth of Iraq's total reserves, the number is significant when looking at the Kurdistan Region's population of only 5 to 6 millions, and the revenues these resources are expected to generate for the KRG, almost tripling it by 2020.[38] According to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2013, Iraq ranks in fifth in proven oil reserves of the world; if the autonomous region of Kurdistan were a country (excluding the disputed territories), it would, according to these numbers, rank in 10th in the world.[39]

The significance of oil and gas resources to Kurdistan, in particular, is the economic independence they can secure for the region, unleashing it from dependence on Baghdad's budget allocation. This, however, requires the revenues of the oil sales to be directly paid to the KRG, and not rerouted to it via the federal government. As long as Baghdad has a hold on these revenues, declaration of independence will become a risky move not necessarily worth making. At the moment Baghdad has indeed consented to the exportation of oil and gas via the newly constructed pipeline from the Kurdish fields, as long as the trade goes through SOMO[40] and the revenues directly to Development Fund for Iraq[41]. KRG, in turn demands that its share – the 17 percent guaranteed in the Iraqi Constitution – is directed straight to the Central Bank of the KRG, with no redirecting via the central government.

CHAPTER 3: *DE FACTO* STATES' QUEST FOR STATEHOOD

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[37] The Oslo-based DNO was the first exploration firm to enter the Kurdistan Region in 2004 (Swint, June 12th 2014.) International giants such as ExxonMobil, Total, Chevron and Gazprom have followed since then.
[38] Mills 2013, 51–52.
[39] BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2013
[40] The State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) is a national company responsible for the marketing of Iraqi oil through export-terminals such as those of Basrah and Ceyhan. The company also covers the domestic consumption oil products. For more information, see SOMO (Oil Marketing Company).
[41] Development Fund for Iraq was created on the basis of ending the economic sanctions against the country with the Security Council Resolution 1483 on May 22, 2003. The Fund is under the control of the central government in Iraq and it administers accrued revenues of the exports of Iraq's oil and gas and, for instance, also repatriated national assets seized from the previous regime. (SWFI.)

3.1. *De Facto* States in International Relations Theory

Over the past two decades there has been an increasing amount of literature on *de facto* states, which have generally been perceived of as anomalies, the black holes, anarchic badlands, puppets of external patrons and most importantly, sources of instability. Despite a growing number of literature on these ambiguous entities, they still constitute the weird-ones-out in the Westphalian state system[42], generally perceived of being either the proxies or the pawns of sovereign states. Recently, however, with the emergence of a number of *de facto* states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, more attention has been paid to these anomalies of International Relations. There are not many examples of *de facto* states in the international community; in fact, the most prominent scholars have agreed on approximately twenty, among which Nagorno-Karabakh, Taiwan and Transnistria are good examples.[43] The Kurdistan Region in Iraq has been, however, somewhat of an exception among other *de facto* states particularly after the recognition of its autonomous status in the Iraqi Constitution in 2005; some refer to it as a *de facto* state whereas others consider it more of a state-within a state. Either way, the fact is that, not only have these entities had a noteworthy impact on the regional dynamics in the past, but they will continue to play a significant geopolitical, economic and political role in the future of these regions as well.[44] This, in turn, downplays the arguments claiming the irrelevance of examining a phenomenon, which is more or less marginal in International Relations. In fact, as we will come to see in this inquiry, studying *de facto* states and the policies of their leaderships leads us to a better understanding of the constantly changing nature of *sovereignty* and *statehood*.

The Kurdistan Region is often considered an anomaly due to the inability of International Relations theories and different approaches to Foreign Policy Analysis to deliver an unambiguous account of its existence. It is viewed as an entity that dwells on the terrains of ambiguity and obscurity. This failure to capture existence beyond the narrow conceptions of sovereignty and statehood in the Westphalian system has enhanced prejudice towards regions

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[42] Caspersen 2012, 18, 27; Huntington 1972, vii: Ever since the establishment of the states system as we know it, and particularly after the 19th century, statehood required more than mere de facto control of a particular territory; recognition by existing states became a necessity for international personality. Following this, in the words of Samuel Huntington, "[...] bias against political divorce, that is secession" became "just about as strong as the nineteenth century bias against marital divorce".

[43] Voller 2012, 8: Scholars such as Scott Pegg, Pål Kolstø, Nina Caspersen are among those identifying such cases as *de facto*, contested or unrecognized states.

[44] Ibid., 9.

like Kurdistan as mysterious black holes in the state of limbo – among us yet not a one of us, inside yet still outside – included only through their exclusion, as Giorgio Agamben would argue.[45] The situation doesn't get any better when looking at the empirical facts on the ground. The KRG is in control of its territory, has external relations independent from Baghdad and perhaps more cards to play than most of what can be called 'weaker' countries in the international system. Yet other actors – from states to international organisations and non-governmental organizations, do not really seem to know how to interact or perceive of this autonomous region in a coherent manner. Some have extended their cooperation beyond limits imaginable ten years back from now, while others are still rather suspicious with regard to interaction with these anomalies past their 'parent states'. As Dov Lynch has argued: "[…] current international approaches lack coordination and strategy, work against each other and sustain status quo".[46] There seems to be, indeed, some sort of reciprocal schizophrenia when it comes to the relationship of *de facto* entities and the international community both *empirically* and *theoretically*. Neither the concept in *theory* nor the *empirical* facts on the ground seem to be established, institutionalized or tangible enough for interaction between the two be prominently made sense of.

When it comes to theoretical accounts concerning *de facto states*, the issue has been viewed from two different perspectives. On the one hand, there is a group of studies focused on a system-level examination, which utilizes such entities in the investigation of the international states-system. Among the most significant examples are Scott Pegg's *International Society and the De Facto State* (1998) and Deon Geldenhuys' *Contested States in World Politics* (2009).[47] On the other hand, there is another tradition centered on examination of the domestic dynamics and external relations of *de facto* states. Within this latter tradition *de facto* states' *identities* are put under careful scrutiny in an attempt to theorize the link between such entities' internal development and foreign policies. The most significant efforts aiming at this particular kind of

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[45] Giorgio Agamben (1998) is focused on the relationship between the individual and sovereignty. At the heart of his post-modern approach is *inclusion* through *exclusion*; an *inside* can only created by *excluding* something from it. Sovereignty necessitates the exclusion of some forms of life in order to create an ideal inside. While Agamben's theory does not elaborate on *de facto* statehood, his thoughts on *inclusive exclusion* may generate interesting insights on how the Westphalian system of sovereign states necessitates the exclusion of other forms of political organization.

[46] Lynch 2004, 10.

[47] Pal Kolstø's "The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-states" (2006) also deserves mentioning.

theoretical understanding include those of Nina Caspersen and Gareth Stansfield. [48] The theoretical postulations of the two will come to play a significant part of this inquiry.

3.2. The *De Facto* State as a Concept

In his extensive study on the Kurdish national liberation movement in Iraq, Yaniv Voller, defines the *de facto state* as a "[...] political entity whose leadership has wide autonomy in both its domestic and foreign policies, has established institutions that usually characterize independent states, and which perceives itself as deserving full legal and institutional independence".[49] Scott Pegg, has in turn defined them as "[...] those separatist entities that have gained autonomy and been successful in the processes of state-building, but failed in securing international legitimacy".[50] To be more precise, according to him a *de facto* state is an,

> "[O]rganized political leadership which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capability; receives *popular support*; and has achieved sufficient *capacity* to provide government services to a given population in a specific territorial area, over which *effective control* is maintained for a significant period of time. The de facto state views itself as capable of entering into relations with other states and it *seeks full constitutional independence and widespread international recognition* as a sovereign state. It is, however, unable to achieve any degree of substantive recognition and therefore remains *illegitimate* in the eyes of international society."[51]

Geldenhuys, disagrees with Pegg. According to him *de facto* states cannot be considered entirely illegitimate in the first place as Pegg's definition seems to assume, because through trade, international aid and other channels, they are in constant interaction with the international society. [52] These entities, indeed, control their territories, participate in the international economy and cooperate with other states, a good example being the KRG. However, and this is important to note, since *de facto* states do not enjoy the protection brought with norms of non-intervention, according to Caspersen, they can be depicted as existing within a Hobbesian rather than a Kantian or a Lockean world: self-reliance, especially militarily, is an integral part

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[48] Caspersen, 2012; Caspersen and Stansfield, 2011.
[49] Voller 2012, 1.
[50] Pegg 1998, 13.
[51] ibid.
[52] Geldenhuys 2009, 26–28.

of their existence.[53]

It is somewhat difficult to locate the Kurdistan Region in Iraq within any of these categorizations, particularly in Pegg's, since KRG has not declared independence from Baghdad. *De facto* entities, which have not declared formal independence but, however, function "[…] *as independent entities and display aspirations for independence"[54]* – such as the KRG – have not been for instance, included in Caspersen's list of *de facto* entities. Such entities are perceived of as "incremental secessions" instead. [55] Caspersen attributes the decision to exclude *de facto* states, which have not declared independence, from her examination to the simple fact that their status is recognized and accepted by the parent state and, therefore, they do not face external threat. It is however questionable whether one can claim that the KRG is not facing external threat because of a mere fact that the Iraqi constitution has recognized its autonomous status. Pegg, who initially also excluded such entities from his definition of *de facto* statehood, has however, argued later for their inclusion. It is indeed important to note that in spite of formal declaration of independence these *de facto* states face similar challenges and function both internally and in their foreign policies – to a great extent – like entities, which have declared formal independence, but yet remain unrecognized.[56] This is why Caspersen, albeit not examining the Kurdistan Region as one of her examples, still refers to it, in order to demonstrate some of her hypotheses. Either way, the Kurdistan Region in Iraq poses a challenge to all the definitions given to *de facto* statehood, and this is mainly because the nature of its existence is in a constant state of flux and transformation. In fact, any effort aiming to find a set of *inherent* elements that define actors such as the KRG and their behavior, are doomed to fail because, as we will come to see in this inquiry, agency is constantly transformed and reproduced in action.

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[53] Caspersen, 2012, 8.
[54] Ibid., 9.
[55] Alexis Heraclides (1991, 1) has defined incremental secession as "[…] political activity of a violent or non-violent nature, which is aimed at independence or some form of self-rule short of independence from autonomy to a loose binational or multi-state federal system". There is no formal declaration of independence, which makes secession a *process* rather than an outcome. Caspersen lists the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as an incremental secession up until it gained recognition from Baghdad in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution.
[56] Caspersen 2012, 9–10.

3.3. The Act of Balancing – Schizophrenia as a Peculiarity of De Facto States?

Barry Bartmann and Nina Caspersen argue that *de facto* states are inflicted with a *legitimacy crisis*, which is related to their *contested sovereignty.* What this crisis leads to, is constant self-justification, which becomes a priority in their foreign policy conduct. The political behavior of the leadership of such entities can, therefore, be understood as a constant *pursuit of legitimacy*.[57] Voller argues that the study of *de facto* states must always be viewed as an inquiry on national liberation; most of today's *de facto* states have emerged from the separatist goals of national liberation movements. Their failure to achieve sovereign statehood and development into *de facto* states, in turn, has resulted from the dynamic relationship of their domestic and the international contexts. In fact, he defines *de facto* states as a "[…] more advanced stage of secessionist struggles".[58] It's a phase in between an armed struggle against the parent state and the emergence of an independent state, which may, however, never occur. The aim of independence may remain unchanged throughout the transformation but strategies change: with the emergence of de facto statehood, state-building becomes the center of attention for the leadership instead of armed struggle. The KRG is not the only example of this; in most of the *de facto* state cases, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Republika Sprska and Transdniestria armed struggles managed to overthrow the central government in some of their claimed territories, following which an administrative vacuum was left to be filled. Out of necessity, these movements then had to turn into administrative governments.[59] To cut Caspersen's constructivist story short, one can make sense of the foreign policy behavior of *de facto* states in the following manner.

Non-recognition ought to be taken as the starting point of the examination of these entities for two different but interlinked reasons. Firstly, *de facto* status creates an *incentive* for national liberation movements to engage in state-building. The leaderships of *de facto* states need to build a state – an effective war machine as Charles Tilly has argued – and gain recognition for it

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[57] Bartmann 2004, 15–16.
[58] Voller 2012, 58.
[59] Ibid., 56–57.

in order to survive.[60] The issue of survival is more acute for these entities than for sovereign states, because *de facto* states are not protected by the norm of non-intervention.[61] What building a state means in practice, is the achievement of territorial control and a monopoly on violence, provision of public services – in order to preserve internal legitimacy – and the building of a nation.[62] There are external and internal sources influencing this process. The *external sources* include, for instance, the prevailing normative structure of the international system (the hegemonic norms) that sets the frames to what kind of entity is created. The requirements of potential parent/patron states also influence the state-building process. *Internal sources* are related to the legitimacy of the leadership in the eyes of its domestic constituents. Even if the executives of the region were not in a need of public support and were, indeed, driven by *greed* rather than *grievance* or collective interest, they still need to provide public services and democracy in order to avoid the emigration of the population, which is a prerequisite for the maintenance of the *de facto* state.[63]

Secondly, and also paradoxically, non-recognition as an *idea* forms a *constraint* on this very process of state-building as well as the entity's external relations with the international community. The de facto state leadership is indeed caught in between a difficult balancing game. Sometimes the two goals of state-building and recognition pull the leadership of these entities to different directions. Non-recognition forces them to deal with the constant threat of resurrection of war by maintaining a strong defense system. This will be done at the expense of democracy and capacity-building in other sectors of the state. The legitimacy of the leadership in the eyes of its domestic constituents is compromised here and as a consequence the *de facto* state may be paradoxically weakened.[64] What is more, internal legitimacy requires the constant selling of the idea of full international recognition in order to keep the domestic front united. What, according to this line of theorization, differentiates de facto states from sovereign states is, indeed, the fact that their survival is dependent on this delicate balancing act. In its foreign policy conduct, the leadership may be satisfied with the status quo and not even want to pursue full recognition but "abandoning the goal of recognition may well upset

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[60] Caspersen 2013, 77.
[61] Voller 2012., 90.
[62] Caspersen 2013, 52–53; 77.
[63] In "Greed and Grievance in Civil War" (2004) Hank Collier and Anke Hoeffler have argued that it is greed rather than conflict driving conflicts over natural resources.
[64] Ibid., 107.

the balance" they need to keep, argues Caspersen.[65] Pursuit of statehood as an idea becomes essential for the survival of these *de facto* states.

Caught in this complex balancing act in between different external pressures and internal demands, the leadership of these entities are trying to do everything at once, that is, "square the circle".[66] It is for this reason that their foreign policy conduct becomes ambiguous and transitory.[67] Once again, this assumed fluctuating and transitory foreign policy development – in pursuit of economic independency from Baghdad – is what I want to examine in this research, beginning from the toppling of the Baathist Regime and ending up to the current situation at hand. My attempt is to point to the factors that one should direct their attention towards, when trying to explain how the KRG has managed to "square the circle" via its foreign policies in the energy sector. At the same time it may be also possible to point out how KRG's agency is continuously redefined through its foreign policy *relations*. I will put these thoughts on hold for a brief moment and move on to address foreign policy analysis in general.

CHAPTER 4: FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS VIA *SUBSTANTIALIST* MODELS

4.1. Foreign Policy as a Unit of Analysis

C.F. Hermann defines foreign policy as "[...] a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program by authoritative policy-makers (or their representatives) directed towards entities outside policymakers' jurisdiction".[68] Kjell Goldmann, Walter Carlsnaes and Kalevi Holsti give wider delineations of the sphere, including also the unintended consequences of the deployment of these programs. Carlsnaes indeed distinguishes between foreign policy *outcomes* and foreign policy *action*. He defines the domain, however, also as governmental actions "[...] manifestly

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[65] Ibid., 115–116.
[66] Ibid., 111.
[67] Ibid., 111–112.
[68] Hermann 1990, 5.

directed towards objectives, conditions and actors [...] which clearly lie beyond their sphere of territorial legitimacy".[69]

In spite of these quite simple, yet more or less broad, definitions, foreign policy is indeed an ambiguous sphere. It is a field considered to be at the borderline of Political Science, typically perceived of as being concerned with unit-level analysis (usually the state), and International Relations – traditionally associated with system-level theorizing.[70] It comes, thus, as no surprise that FPA has been termed as "No Man's Land" by Robert B. Farrell. James Rosenau, Richard Ashley and David Campbell have also pointed to the peculiarity of this realm in political analysis.[71] Rosenau for instance, has stated that:

> "To identify factors is not to trace their influence. To understand processes that affect external behavior is not to explain how and why they are operative under certain circumstances and not under others. To recognize that foreign policy is shaped by internal as well as external factors is not to comprehend *how* the two intermix or to indicate the conditions under which one predominates over the other [...] Foreign Policy analysis lacks comprehensive systems of testable generalizations [...] Foreign policy analysis is devoid of general theory".[72]

Foreign policy has, indeed, not been theorized *per se,* which is why it is conventionally referred to as *analysis* rather than *theory.[73]* In line with this notion, Waltz, for instance argues, that theories address the consistent logics of 'autonomous realms', which cannot include much, unlike analyses. Since foreign policy is driven both by internal and external factors, it cannot be thought of constituting a separate realm a-la-Waltz, which is also why, notes Gideon Rose, "[...] we should not strive for a truly theoretical explanation of it".[74] There are similar arguments against conflating the domains coming from Wendt, who agrees with Waltz that systemic theorizing should not be mixed with foreign policy analysis.[75] As we will come to see, the

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[69] Carlsnaes 1987, 70; Carlsnaes 1992, 260 *and* Goldmann 1989, 104: Domestic politics, in turn, is defined, as governmental actions directed towards the sphere of territorial legitimacy. As such, the nexus between the two concerns interaction between horizontal and vertical politics.

[70] See, for instance, Farrell (1966); Wallace (1971); Rosenau (1987); Campbell (1998); cf. Brighi 2007, 105.

[71] Brighi 2013, 10.

[72] Rosenau 1966, 98–99; Hudson 2007, 15.

[73] Brighi 2013, 15; an argument made by Fareed Zakaria, a neoclassical realist.

[74] Rose, 1998, 145.

[75] Wight 2013, 36–37: Waltz' account argues for clear demarcations between FPA and IR particularly because of the reductionist stance he thinks political analysis concerned with unit-level analysis are taking. Theories of IR can and should be not theories of foreign policy. Alexander Wendt (1999, 11) also seems to be accepting the distinction: "Theories of international politics are distinguished from those that have as their object explaining the behavior of individual states, or theories of 'foreign policy'. It is important that IR do both kinds of theorizing, but

distinction Waltz and Wendt make is essentially based on their *substantialist* perception of social and political reality which take entities such as states as given instead of examining their constantly fluctuating and transforming agency through their relations.

This distinction between foreign policy and International Relations is highly contested and those who disagree with Waltz and Wendt, also stress the importance of theories to FPA. For example Valerie Hudson, argues that FPA, in spite of and – paradoxically – because of its multifactorial, multileveled and inter-multidisciplinary nature, *can* be theorized and linked with International Relations. Moreover, she argues, FPA forms an integral part of IR. This is because of the fact that it takes the decision-making of human beings – instead of the behavior of 'black-boxed' political communities such as states (presumed to be unitary and rational) – as its unit of analysis. FPA, therefore, provides the means to a key theoretical intersection between ideational and material factors in state or state-like entities' behavior due to its ability to examine the human agency in political conduct.[76] Carlsnaes likewise has argued that International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis are not two distinct realms of inquiry; theories of IR should not be distinguished between from those of foreign policy as Wendt and Waltz suggest.[77] Such sub-disciplinary fault lines lead to nothing but the inability to address the mutual constitutiveness of the domestic and the international spheres.[78] Scholars rejecting the divide between FPA and IR are usually those in support of *relationalist* understandings of reality, such as Colin Hay, Bob Jessop, James D. Fearon (1998) and Walter Carlsnaes (2002).

4.2. What is at Stake in Foreign Policy Analysis?

4.2.1. Foreign policy understood via different levels of analysis – the substantive divide

Theorized per se or not, a political analysis of the foreign policy development of an entity – be it a regional government, a state or a political party – has to answer the question of *how to account for action and its consequences.* As such it is first and foremost concerned with the variables responsible for political behavior, and even more importantly the interaction

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their dependent variables, aggregate behavior versus unit behavior, are on different levels of analysis and so their explanations are not comparable."

[76] Hudson 2007, 7.

[77] Carlsnaes 2002, 331.

[78] Hay 2002, 5. This is a fundamental issue with regard to the inquiry at hand, for it is this demarcation line, that both Hay's strategic-relational model and Caspersen's *de facto* state theorization are trying to overcome by highlighting the interconnectedness of the *internal* and the *external*.

between them.[79] Answering the research question posited by this research – "*How can we explain Kurdistan Regional Government's foreign policy development post-2003?"*, may initially lead us to the dichotomy between the international and domestic sources of foreign policy, simply because this divide is where the nucleus of the debate between foreign policy analysts essentially lies. Let me briefly elaborate on this general conceptualization of the field based on a distinction between different levels of analysis, which have been unable to incorporate and accommodate foreign policy.

The domestic-international divide within foreign policy analysis epitomizes the more general *epistemological* debate concerning different *levels of analysis* – levels of explanation, that is.[80] The dispute is based on a disagreement on the level chosen to explain world politics. Some scholars point to unit-level variables such as the individual properties of states' leadership or the collective identity of the nation, whereas others refer to systemic factors of the international context such as the distribution of power. Scholars do not agree on the number, definition or the intersection of the different levels of analysis explaining political outcomes. This disagreement has, in turn, had fundamental implications on the position of foreign policy in between domestic and international politics. As Elisabetta Brighi and Walter Carlsnaes have argued, the levels of analysis –debate has completely sidelined foreign policy.[81] In the words of Carlsnaes, "[...] most of the time it [foreign policy] is simply ignored in these debates and discussions, or politely dismissed with reference to the distinction between system level and unit level theories, the former pertaining to international politics proper, the latter 'merely' to the behavior of individual states".[82]

The disciplinary development of IR centered on systemic factors and that of domestic politics focused on unit-level variables, was eventually reflected in the emergence of theories of Foreign Policy as well. Following a brief overview of the development of the domain over the past 50 years or so, Carlsnaes distinguishes between two broad traditions reflecting the levels-of-analysis -discussion: the first approach gives primacy to domestic factors – *Innenpolitik* – in the explanation of foreign policy. In spite of stressing different independent variables, all the way from cognitive to bureaucratic factors, the proponents of this tradition "[...] all share a common

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[79] Brighi, 2013, 11.
[80] The levels-of-analysis has been addressed by David Singer, Kenneth Waltz, Martin Hollis and Steve Smith.
[81] Brighi 2013, 12–13; Carlsnaes 2002, 331–334.
[82] Carlsnaes 2002, 331.

assumption – that foreign policy is best understood as the product of a country's internal dynamics."[83] Kantian liberalism and Marxian socialism are good examples of this approach. . The second tradition is epitomized in the primacy given to material-systemic level factors. Following Carlsnaes and Rose, one can term this line as that of *Aussenpolitik* or *Realpolitik.* While not denying the importance of domestic factors, their emphasis is, however, on the primacy of the systemic factors of security and power politics. Rose identifies the three variants of realism (classical realism, neorealism and neoclassical realism) as symbolizing *Realpolitik*.[84]

The analytical boundary drawn between international and domestic politics – on the basis of which foreign policy has come to be conventionally conceptualized – is however, based on a fundamentally problematic assumption. According to Carlsnaes, this questionable perception assumes it to be possible to determine the nature and function of the boundary between the domestic and the international, when it, in fact, is not.[85] It is for this reason that Carlsnaes views addressing different approaches to foreign policy via the international-domestic divide as unfruitful. Instead, he suggests, one should approach disagreements between foreign policy analysts on the basis of two more fundamental questions that are *meta-theoretical* rather than *substantive* in their nature.[86] In fact, he argues, the root of the problem with comparative study of foreign policy lies in "[…] shortcomings of a fundamentally metatheoretical nature".[87] While these meta-theoretical questions have been dismissed by some scholars as useless and obscuring, there have, also been arguments in support of them. These supportive claims have pointed to a major benefit in meta-theoretical considerations; namely, their ability to go beyond traditional paradigmatic positions that the *substantive* views cannot. [88] The first meta-theoretical question addressed by Carlsnaes concerns the ontological foundation of social systems, whereas the latter the epistemological orientation of the analysts.[89] I will now move on to the introduction of the two questions and the taxonomy introduced by Carlsnaes based on the assumptions they entail.

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[83] Rose 1998, 148.
[84] Ibid., 145–146; Carlsnaes 2002, 334.
[85] Carlsnaes 2002, 334.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Carlsnaes 1987, ix; Knudsen 1989, 99.
[88] See for instance Dunne, Hansen and Wight (2013) & Sil and Katzenstein (2010).
[89] Ontologies are essentially *political* claims about how the analysts conceptualize the world they are studying, epistemologies concern possible ways of attaining knowledge, methodologies are related to how researchers choose their analytical tools and, finally, methods are techniques for gathering and analyzing data (Hay 2002, 93.)

4.2.2. Foreign Policy understood via the ASP and modes of analysis - the meta-theoretical divide

Foreign Policy Analysts may agree on their *unit of analysis*, foreign policy, which is defined by Carlsnaes as actions, "[...] which are expressed in the form of explicitly states goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed towards objectives, conditions and actors – both governmental and non-governmental – which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy."[90] However, they disagree on two fundamental meta-theoretical issues. Both of these issues overlap and penetrate the domestic and international divide, but are essentially based on *meta-theoretical* presumptions rather than *substantive* ones.[91]

The first meta-theoretical question: the ontologies of individualism versus holism

The first question concerns causation and explanation in IR and Foreign Policy and is manifested in the opposition between Durkheimian holism and Weberian individualism. This discussion has come to be known as the agent-structure debate.[92] According to the most basic understanding, at the heart of the disagreement is whether the dynamics of social systems are viewed as being founded on *individuals* and the intended as well as unintended consequences of their interactions; or alternatively on rules of the self-reproducing *structures*.[93] Individualists claim that all social and political action is reducible to agents, whereas *holists* argue that structures function independently from agents and are not reducible to them.[94] Implicit (or sometimes explicit) assumptions regarding agency and structure have resulted in major disputes on how it is exactly that political conduct should be explained in relation with context. This debate, has, in turn led to the fact that same empirical observations have been regarded as either the result of agential (individualism) or structural (holism) factors.

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[90] Carlsnaes 2002, 335.

[91] The domestic-international divide epitomize criterion based on the *substantive* nature of foreign policy (a fallacious one according to Carlsnaes), whereas the two issues of ontology and epistemology are based on the *meta-theoretical* nature of the domain (Carlsnaes 2002, 334.)

[92] The dynamic interplay between agents and structures came to be seen as integral particularly in accounting for political *change* and *stability*, in general, and in foreign policy behavior, in particular. (Stroker and Marsh 2010, 212; Carlsnaes 1992, 256.) Although initially considered as the sphere of philosophers and sociologists, political scientists and International Relations theorists alike have recently also felt the need to address their own understanding of the ASP, Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Relations* (1999) being one of the most quoted examples within IR and Walter Carlsnaes, indeed, within Foreign Policy Analysis (Hay 2002, 89; Carlsnaes 1987, ix.)

[93] Guzzini 1998, 197; cf. Carlsnaes 2002, 335.

[94] Wendt 1999, 26; cf. Carlsnaes 2002, 335.

Prior to introducing the second meta-theoretical question, I need to briefly elaborate on an important point explicitly discussed by Colin Wight and implicitly addressed by Carlsnaes. It concerns the relationship between *levels of analysis* represented by the domestic-international divide in foreign policy analysis, and the *agent-structure* debate epitomized in the individualist-holist debate. What has been, and still is, typical to many scholars in our field, is the tendency to conflate between these two questions.[95] It is highly important to distinguish between the two problems because failure to do – as in the case of Hollis and Smith[96] – has significant consequences on how we make sense of social and political reality. The debate on different levels of analysis concerns the *substantive* nature of foreign policy, whereas the agent-structure problem its *meta-theoretical* character.[97] The implications of this confusion are perhaps most clearly manifested in the ways that different levels of analysis have been conventionally linked to the agent-structure relationship; international system (structure) – nation-state (agent); nation-state (structure) – bureaucracy (agent). What appears to be a structure on one level turns out to be an agent on another.[98] Agents and structures are defined differently depending on the analyst's point of view.

The problem here is in the inability to understand that the *agent-structure* problem refers, in the words of Colin Wight, to "[...] how social *parts* relate to social *wholes*" and that, as such, it is a problem present on all levels of analysis.[99] No matter, which level we choose our independent variables from – be it regime types or cognitive factors (domestic sources a-la-*Innenpolitik*) or alternatively, the distribution of power or international institutions (international sources of foreign policy a-la-*Realpolitik*) – the agent-structure problem will always be featured. Wight, has tried to clarify the strict line that should be drawn between the ASP and levels of analysis by outlining three levels of analysis; the international, the nation-state and the bureaucracies. However, the ordering between them is presented as vertical rather than horizontal.[100] What is unique about his approach is that it disaggregates different levels into their component parts in an attempt to understand how they interpenetrate. The thought is based on Heikki

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[95] Wight 2010, 116.
[96] It was, indeed Alexander Wendt who criticized Hollis and Smith for conflating levels of analysis with the agent-structure debate (Wight 2010, 116).
[97] Carlsnaes 2002, 335.
[98] Wight 2013, 38.
[99] Ibid., 102–106.
[100] Ibid., 37.

Patomäki's[101] notion of connecting different levels of analysis so that the individual features in all of them as a *positioned* actor in relation with its context.[102] The individual becomes the *agent* situated in a multi-layered *context* consisting of the nation-state (or de facto state), bureaucracies and the international system. Since agency relates to structure at all levels, the agent-structure problem becomes an unavoidable issue in spite of the level chosen to explain one's explanadum – in our case the foreign policy development of the Kurdistan Regional Government – with.[103] Through this reconceptualization, Wight manages to demonstrate that the two questions of levels of analysis and the ASP are, thus, *not* one and the same. Regardless of whether I choose to explain KRG's foreign policies with *domestic* factors such as the leadership's perceptions and misperceptions[104] of their environment, or instead with systemic variables, such as the distribution of power manifested in balancing games, I will have to still address the ASP.

To cut the long story short, when explaining foreign policy, two separate questions can be asked. The first one is *substantive* in nature; whether it is domestic or international variables or both that I should attribute KRG's foreign policy behavior to. The second one is *meta-theoretical* in nature; whether it is agents, structures or their inter-action that are responsible for the leadership's foreign policies (the ontological agent-structure problem). Just like Carlsnaes, I am concerned with the latter question; hence the taxonomy I am about to introduce, partly based on ontological positions with regard to the agent-structure relationship.

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[101] For more on Patomäki's ideas on the level-of-analysis debate, see for instance, Patomäki 2002, 73–95.

[102] Wight 2006, 110–118. Colin Wight argues though that there is no need for a distinct individual level because the individual features on all levels. What is more, he argues that placing the individuals on each level is of central importance because it demonstrates that different levels of explanation of a particular unit of analysis interact through the differing "positioning" of these individuals. For instance, the individual is situated in the international political system, in the economic capitalist system as well as in the bureaucratic system of the state.

[103] According to Wight (2006, 25–27; 210–219), the empirical application of this theoretical assumption, is however, not feasible: to examine how an agent's decision is constructed in relation to all of these structures simultaneously in a single study is simply unachievable. However, what is important to acknowledge is that an *agent* is a *socially positioned* individual located within a *structured structuratum* – a complex web of *interacting* and intersecting structures within an entity we know as the social world. While these structures overlap, none of them determines or is primary with regard to the other. Bob Jessop would assumedly disagree with this view, claiming that it is possible for one system to interfere with the dynamics of other structures more than they can interfere or disturb its dynamics. (Jessop 2007, 22–37.)

[104] For more see Jervis (1976).

The second meta-theoretical question: methodological/epistemological "understanding" versus "explaining"

Let me now get back to the second meta-theoretical question discussed by Carlsnaes. The individualist-holist divide led to the fact that some gave causal weight to the structural context beyond the control of agents, whereas others reduced action to the interactions of purposeful agency.[105] These *ontological* presumptions, in turn led to particular *epistemological* questions among theoreticians. They were related to how *agency* was treated – either via interpretative or objectivist lenses – *naturalism versus interpretativism* – corresponding to "understanding" and "explaining" a-la-Hollis-and-Smith. As we will come to see in the next chapter, the adopted epistemologies were determined by ontological positions. Carslnaes considered the two modes of analysis as an *epistemological* question on whether one is to focus on human agents and their interaction from inside or from outside.[106] Colin Wight, on the other hand, viewed the question as a methodological one. [107] Both of them, nevertheless, agreed that explaining and understanding were two different but complementary *forms of knowledge,* which should not be seen as conflicting approaches to political or social inquiry.*[108]*

4.2.3. The Fallacy of Substantialism: Carlsnaes' taxonomy based on the meta-theoretical division

Ontological problems cannot be solved empirically

The examination of the first question invoked by Carlsnaes – the ASP – has often been deemed irrelevant for political analysis. The explanation given is that, sociologists spent 200 years to solve the issue, but ended up no further than to stating what Marx did already in the 19th century – man make history, but not in conditions of their own choosing. Since the arguments have not been able to arrive at much more than this, argue the skeptics, then what is the point of reigniting the futile discussion over and over again? Some of the critics miss a fundamental

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[105] Hay 2002, 94; Structure refers to the ordered, albeit not predictable (if structuralism is not extended to a degree that it becomes equal with determinism), nature of political behavior. Conduct is not predictable because of the existence of *agency*, which is a concept lacking in natural sciences (in which there are only material things not reflexive social facts). In the context of this inquiry, agency refers to political conduct; "[…] ability of the actor to act consciously, and in doing so, to attempt to realize his or her intentions", clarifies Hay.
[106] Carlsnaes 2002, 335.
[107] Wight 2006, 257–270.
[108] Ibid., 273; Carlsnaes 2002, 335: Carlsnaes indeed asserts that Hollis' and Smith's perception of there always being two stories to tell is not uncontroversial.

point here: the idea is not to *solve* the issue, for *ontological* problems cannot be solved empirically.[109] Ontologies are essentially faith-based political arguments on what exists in the world. [110] The agent-structure problem cannot be, therefore, adjudicated within "[...] an ultimate empirical court", argues Hay.[111] Even Wendt seems to miss this point in arguing that the disagreements between holists and individualists can be *settled,*

> "[...] only by wrestling with the *empirical* merits of their claims about human agency and social structure...These are in substantial part *empirical* questions". [italics added]." [112]

Ontology cannot be brought in to solve empirical disputes[113], because it does not give one the correct *proportions* of agential and structural ingredients for an adequate explanation of social action. The limit of social ontologies needs to be, therefore, recognized. Even meta-theoretical stances going beyond explaining action either via agents or structures – namely dialectical approaches such as critical realism which – can only argue that an adequate explanation of a political *effect* or *outcome* ought to include both agents and structures. However, these ontologies cannot give us correct proportions of each of the components; that decision is left to be determined in an empirical analysis. [114] Therefore, it is important to note that, different perceptions of the *ontological* question of agent and structure cannot be falsified nor certified because they do not make necessary empirical assertions.[115] Avoiding the pitfall of giving "[...] empirical license for ontological claims and assumptions", becomes crucial here.[116] Ontologies only provide us with a conceptual framework to help us make sense of the social system. The rest is open to empirical study, in which the particular political phenomena – located in *space* and *time* – are situated.

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[109] Hay 2002, 89–96.
[110] On the basis of the thoughts of Zizek (1999, 158), Wight (2006, 2) writes that; "Politics is the terrain of competing ontologies. Politics is about competing visions of how the world is and how it should be. Every ontology is political. If there were no ontological differences there would be no politics."
[111] Hay 2002, 92.
[112] Wendt and Shapiro 1997, 181; cf. Hay 2002, 92–93.
[113] Hollis and Smith, Colin Wight, Colin Hay and Walter Carlsnaes are among the many who agree on this. Walter Carlsnaes examines the question from the perspective of foreign policy analysis.
[114] Hay 2002, 93–94.
[115] Hay (ibid., 83–84), considers falsifiability in general a problematic way to distinguish between "science" and "non-science". See Jackson (2011, 14) for more on falsifiability.
[116] Hay 2002, 93.

The fact that the ASP cannot be *solved* analytically does not, however, deem the whole question irrelevant for the study of political science and international relations. The case is actually quite the opposite, because as we mentioned earlier, *ontological commitments determine epistemological orientations*, which, in turn, have consequences with regard to the methodologies applied in an empirical research of a concrete problem.[117] Once again, while acknowledging the fact that different ontologies (individualist, holist or dialectic) generate different methodological frameworks of analysis, it is important to understand the difference between the two questions. As Carlsnaes argues, the "[...] ontological problem of object conceptualization needs to be separated from the methodological problem of *how to study this reconceptualized object".[118]*

KRG's foreign policy in the meta-theoretical divide

Carlsnaes argued that, because of their reduction of action to individuals and their interaction, individualist ontologies led to the reducing of the epistemological issue to choosing in between treating agents as objective maximizers of utility (eg. rational choice theory[119]) or as reflexive and interpretative agents in chase of their own subjective goals (eg. hermeneutics). No account was made for the existence of structures that were not reducible to the sum of agents' interactions. The collectivist ontology, in turn, resulted in treating agents' action as the objective pursuit of interests (Wallerstein's world-system's theory) or a process of socialization (bureaucratic and organizational theories such as Graham T. Allison's[120]), in which agency was reduced to functionalist response to social order. No account was made for the existence of agents not reducible to structures. All of these four approaches thus treated agents and structures in terms of causal reduction of one to the other. Action was explained with reference to structures and vice versa; hence neither of the two became problematized or theorized for that matter.[121] Choosing in between treating agents as either interpretative or rational meant an opposition between two modes of analysis elaborated on above – "understanding" versus "explaining" action. The link between these ontological commitments and epistemological

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[117] Jackson 2011, 25–30.
[118] Carlsnaes 1992, 267; Wight 2013, 35.
[119] Rationalists indeed treat interests as given by the structural logic of the situation
[120] This approach is, however, also collectivist because as Jeffrey C. Alexander (1988, 270) writes; "[...] micro-processes may well become central points of empirical interest [...] but only because phenomena such as personalities and interaction are conceived as central 'conveyor belts' for collective facts.
[121] Carlsnaes 1992, 248–250.

choices indeed generated four types of perspectives or explanatory frameworks to the study of International Relations and Foreign Policy outlined below, as conceptualized by Walter Carlsnaes:
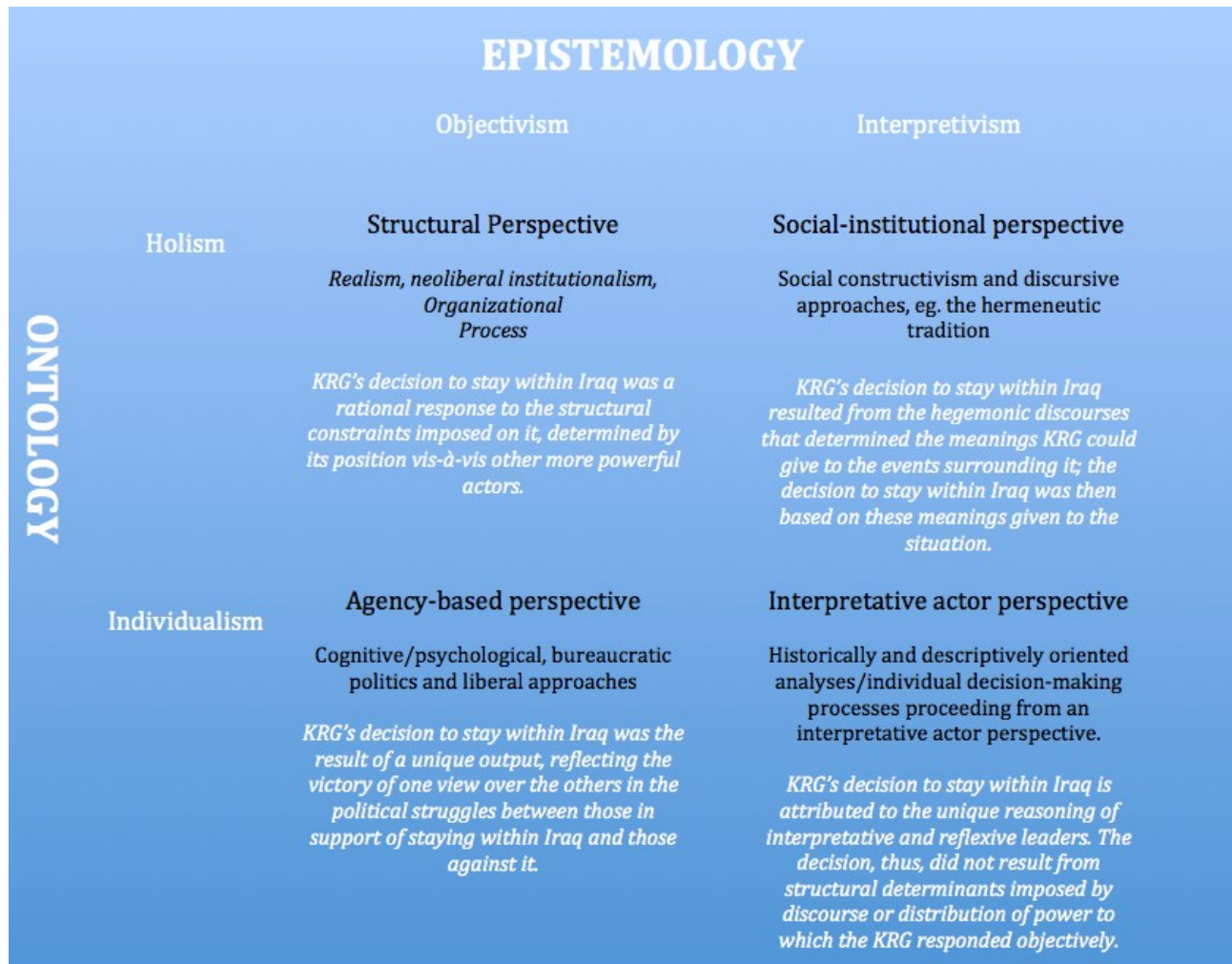
Figure 1: The taxonomy as adopted from Carlsnaes in "International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis" (2007). I have added a demonstrative example of KRG's decision to stay within Baghdad instead of declaring independence in 2003, when it had the chance to do so.

Carlsnaes' categorization is by no means the only effort made in the field, and it overlaps with some others, such as those of Kjell Goldmann (1989) and Peter Gourevitch (2002). However, following his taxonomy for now, we can see how the "structural perspective" would make sense of KRG's foreign policy development as constant objective responses to structural rules of the game. For instance, Waltzian neorealism would assume that, in the anarchical and conflictual self-help system, the KRG is forced to socialize and compete with other players in order to

survive. [122] At the risk of annihilation it, then, not only becomes similar to other units in the system (i.e. engage in 'internal balancing') but it will also be forced to rationally respond to external, objective constraints (i.e. engage in 'external balancing')[123] regardless of its internal conditions.[124] As such, the regional government's decision to strike a deal with Turkey to construct an oil pipeline without the consent of Baghdad, would be simply viewed as a "[...] rational effort [...] to solve externally-imposed security problems."[125] In spite of Waltz' own insistence that his theory is not one of foreign policy (and multiple accounts on why exactly neorealist ideas cannot be applied to foreign policy analysis[126]), there are also opinions that challenge this position[127] and claim that Waltz can be, in fact utilized in and applied to FPA. James Fearon, has for instance argued that:

> "There is a straightforward and important sense in which neorealist and other systemic theories are indeed theories of foreign policy. Namely, the things that structural realist theory seeks to explain – such as balancing, the probability of major power war, or a general disposition to competitive interstate relations – are either foreign policies or the direct (if sometimes unintended) result of foreign policies."[128]

Either way, it is worth noting, that Waltz' argument is based on the distinction he draws between the *three images of reality* or levels of analysis. While recognizing the individual and the state-level, he argues, indeed, that the international system can and should be examined independently from them – in the Durkheimian sense of 'social-facts-can-be explained-with-other-social-facts'. [129] One cannot, for instance, invoke the political system of a unit or properties of the individual to understand the operation of patterned material relations of difference. According to him, structural patterns of the international system function *independent* of the type of the political system at the unit-level, and more importantly – of the

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[122] Waltz (1979) claims indeed that systemic constraints set the limits of political action through two principal mechanisms; *socialization* and *competition,* which he calls "successful practices".
[123] These constraints would be determined by KRG's position in the system, which in turn depends on how much power it has vis-a-vis Turkey and Baghdad. Actors in the same position as the KRG would be confronted with similar material constraints.
[124] This is also why most neo-realists affirm (albeit fallaciously) that outcomes at the international level – such as balance of power, war or peace – should be studied without having to return to foreign policy.
[125] Goldmann 1989, 105.
[126] One good example is Elman (1996a, 1996b). See also Colin Wight 2013, 36–37.
[127] Among examples are Baumann et al. (2001), Lebow (2001), Mouritzen (1996).
[128] Fearon 1998, 292–293.
[129] Waltz 1979, 77–78; "Structure has to be studied in its own right as do units".

perceptions actors have of them.[130] Carlsnaes and other efforts aiming to go beyond the deadlock of holism versus individualism, of course, reject such distinction between levels of analysis.

Neoclassical realists would state that the impact of the anarchical system is not as straightforward as neorealists assume it to be; the influence of the distribution of power affected KRG's foreign policy decisions only through intervening variables at the unit-level, such as leadership's perceptions of the threats they were confronted with. Just like realists, *neoliberal institutionalists* would also take the state or – the *de facto* state in our case – as given, and view the KRG as an egoistic value maximizer, whose interests were given by the anarchical international context.[131] The only difference between the two approaches would be that, while in the former KRG's foreign policy behavior is assumed to be constrained by the configuration of power capabilities – for instance, how much power KRG has vis-à-vis Turkey or Baghdad – in the latter, the leadership's cooperation with Turkey is not attributed to the distribution of power alone, but instead to the positive effects of functional regimes (namely provision of information and mutual rules), which reduced mistrust and motivated cooperation between the KRG and Turkey. *Organizational process approaches* would, instead point to *internal* structures as constraints on action. In this case the KRG's foreign policy decisions would be understood as being constrained by the decision-making system within the autonomous region – a domestic factor indeed, which Gourevitch would designate as the "second image reasoning".[132] In all of these cases, however, analysts would be adopting a naturalist mode of analysis treating actors as if they functionally responded to objective constraints set by the context.[133] If examined via this box, KRG's foreign policy analysis would be reduced to involuntary and automatic reactions to the structural imperatives of its surroundings.

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[130] Waltz 1979, 74: Waltz notes accordingly that, "[…] because structures select by rewarding some behaviors and punishing others, outcomes cannot be inferred from intentions and behaviors". This is a position that I am seeking to challenge via the relationalist understandings of foreign policy, which relativizes the existence of agents and structures.

[131] In fact, Moravcsik (1997, 537) considers neoliberal institutionalism as a variant of realism.

[132] Gourevitch 2002, 110: The second image refers to the unit-level in Waltz three-level categorization. The first image is the individual characterized by individual psychology; the second is the state indeed, characterized by institutions and socio-economic structures; the third image is the system in which action is determined by anarchy. According to Waltz the levels can be theorized as well as examined independent from each other.

[133] Brighi 2013, 23–24.

"The agency-based perspective" would attribute the autonomous leadership's foreign policies to individuals and their interaction, but would, likewise, treat agents objectively. For instance, *cognitive or psychological approaches* would analyze KRG's foreign policy decisions through Barzani's beliefs and perceptions as well as the ways in which he processes information, instead of attributing his conduct to the objective structural constraints – domestic or international – surrounding him. As such, the representatives of leadership are assumed to be more or less resistant to the constraints imposed by the surroundings, albeit conditioned by their cognitive and psychological capabilities.[134]

Bureacratic approaches, such as those introduced by Graham T. Allison, also reject the primacy given to structural imperatives and attribute action, instead, to individuals. They stress the role of the "pulling and hauling that is politics", resulting in unique organizational outputs.[135] If analyzed from this perspective, KRG's foreign policy decisions would not be attributed to preferences given by structural factors (the interest in survival in the case of realism). The bureaucratic approach would not, for instance, claim that KRG's decision to stay within Iraq necessarily resulted from the fact that the entity's leadership possessed less power than Baghdad. It would, instead, attribute the decision to the disputes between the PUK and KDP, which eventually lead to the triumph of one view over the other. What resulted from this battle was a unique outcome not determined by KRG's position vis-à-vis Baghdad but, instead, by the victory of the views suggesting to stay within Iraq over the views advocating separation. However, just like in the cognitive approaches, the decision-makers in the bureaucratic approaches, once again, come to be treated objectively. This is mainly because the interests they are seen to represent are indeed sectional or factional rather than purely individual; hence the famous dictum of "where you stand depends on where you sit".[136]

Liberal approaches represented, for instance, by Andrew Moravcsik give primacy to individuals and social groups over politics. This is indeed called "the bottom-up view", according to which actors define their interests independent from politics.[137] The liberalist view would suggest that KRG's foreign policy behavior can be attributed to its preferences reflecting the interests

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[134] As we will come to see similar structural conditions do not imply similar foreign policy behavior because of the simple fact that actors interpret their surroundings differently.
[135] Allison and Zelikow 1999, 256; cf. Carlsnaes 2002, 338.
[136] Carlsnaes 2002, 338.
[137] Moravcsik 1997, 524–533; cf. Carlsnaes 2002, 330.

of a subset of its society; for instance the commercial (as such, the decision to build a pipeline would be attributed to the economic gains associated with it) or the ideational (the same decision would be attributed to the ability of the pipelines to contribute to KRG's nationalist agenda) subsets. The only constraint the KRG is presumed to be confronted with, is the preferences formulated by other actors in a similar manner, and not for instance KRG's position within the distribution of power in the system.

Approaches based on "social-Institutional perspectives" manage to take into account the role of social and normative structures instead of merely highlighting material conditions of action. (System) constructivists[138] are among the most prominent approaches that have done so. They are, however, not addressed here mainly because of their inability to accommodate foreign policy within the strict line drawn in between different levels of analysis. Carlsnaes distinguishes between thin and thick constructivists, locating Wendt[139] in the former and the rule-oriented constructivists represented by Nicholas Onuf in the latter. These approaches stress the primacy of ideational and normative factors in constituting actors' identities and interests, and as such, in defining what constitutes proper behavior for a given actor. They take issue at rationalist assumptions, which treat foreign policy behavior as rationalist response to structural conditions.[140] If one is to follow this tradition, it would attribute KRG's decision to stay within Iraq to what the leadership considered as proper behavior taken into account its role in the system as a *de facto* state, and not, for instance on considerations based on national interest; The KDP and PUK did not declare independence because they saw that it would not be accepted by the international norms which reject all forms of secession. Alternatively, the KRG stroke a deal with Turkey because it considered such action to be accepted by the international community.

The *discursive approaches* criticize objectivist holists within the *cognitive tradition* for their naturalistic treatment of language. They argue that beliefs and perceptions actors hold are always conditioned by discourses structurally conditioning actors' perceptions of their surroundings. In the words of Henrik Larsen, "[...] the framework of meaning within which

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[138] Gourevitch (2002, 310) refers to holist constructivists such as Wendt as "system constructivists", who do not include domestic accounts.

[139] However, since Wendt makes a distinction between domestic and international variables of political conduct, his theory is considered unfeasible to address foreign policy by Carlsnaes, and as such, not addressed in further detail.

[140] Carlsnaes 2002, 340.

foreign policy takes place is seen as the basis of the way in which interests and goals are constructed."[141] Discourses are understood to be constructive of reality. As such hegemonic and dominant discourses fundamentally influence the way actors come to perceive of the world. The foreign policy analysis of the KRG, would begin from the meanings the KRG leadership gives to the events surrounding it and analyze its decisions based on these meanings. The leadership's decision to sign international oil companies with PSCs is viewed from the meaning that the regional government gave to this action. Nevertheless the meanings given would not be attributed to individuals, but instead *structural* factors, since these meanings are considered to be more or less determined by hegemonic discourses delineating possible ways to filter reality. Once again agential action comes to be reduced to structural factors.[142]

Approaches based on an "interpretative actor perspective" highlight that foreign policy decisions are essentially based, in the words of Hollis and Smith,

> "[…] on how individuals with power perceive and analyse situations. Collective action is a sum or combination of individual actions."[143]

While the *hermeneutic traditions* examine interpretative actors 'top-down', attributing KRG's understandings of its context to the structural constrains imposed on it by language, the interpretative approach, instead, treats decisions as *reasoned* rather than rational, viewing actors from 'bottom up', instead. To achieve consensus, actors are viewed as following not the logic of consequences or appropriateness but instead the 'logic of arguing'.[144] In so far interpretative individualism is concerned, argumentation focuses on making counterfactual assessments. It would, for instance, suggest that, had the KRG executives not reasoned or made the choices the way they actually did, the history of this period would have been different.[145] Had the KRG not viewed signing International Oil Companies with Production Sharing Contracts (that Baghdad did not approve of) as benefitting it more than taking orders from Baghdad – both equally possible – history would have turned out to be rather different. Albeit this kind of descriptive-analytic form has been subjected to various criticism for its lack of

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[141] Larsen 1999, 453, cf. Carlsnaes 2002, 340.
[142] This is a fundamental critique targeted at the *structuralism* of the hermeneutic tradition, for instance by Colin Wight.
[143] Hollis and Smith 1990, 74; cf. Carlsnaes 2002, 341.
[144] Carlsnaes 2002, 341.
[145] Ibid.

theoretical vision, it has also been utilized for instance by Thomas Risse to demonstrate "communicative action" between actors.[146]

4.2.4. An effort to go beyond the meta-theoretical division: The Tripartite Model

There have been a variety of attempts[147] to integrate individualist and holist ontologies in foreign policy analysis, while combining both modes of analysis – understanding and explaining – have proved to be more complex.[148] According to Carlsnaes of the four "rock-bottom" types of explanations, "interpretative individualism" comes closest to combining purposive action and social structure. Based on this assumption, he introduces a *tripartite model* outlining a framework for comparative foreign policy analysis. He argues that any effort aiming at a synthetic framework capable of going beyond both dichotomies has to be abstract enough not to *substantively* presuppose explanation in favor of one type or a certain combination of empirical variables – such as, for instance, domestic structure or international system.[149] Following this dictum, he introduces a framework into which locates the four conventional approaches. By doing so, he manages to go beyond the causal reduction of agents to structures or vice versa as well as beyond treating agents either interpretatively or naturalistically.[150]

The tripartite model is based on an important distinction Carlsnaes makes between the level of *action* and the level of *observation*. The conceptual framework places emphasis on the former – the meaning-world of foreign policy actors: it is from the world of the actor "[...] that we have to extrapolate theoretically not *to* it that we can willfully impute our own theoretical constructs", argues Carlsnaes.[151] His model deserves a brief introduction, not only because it is widely recognized within the field, but also because some of its propositions overlap with the strategic-relational approach, whereas others clearly differentiate it from the analytical model I am about to apply to KRG's foreign policy analysis. Carlsnaes' framework is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

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[146] ibid., 341.
[147] See for instance, Jack Snyder (1991).
[148] Carlsnaes 2002, 341. For instance Hollis and Smith (1990) have claimed that there are always two stories to tell, which cannot be combined into one narrative. This is a position I am seeking to challenge with this inquiry.
[149] Ibid., 342.
[150] For a detailed account, see Carlsnaes 1987, 71–116.
[151] Carlsnaes 1987, 44.
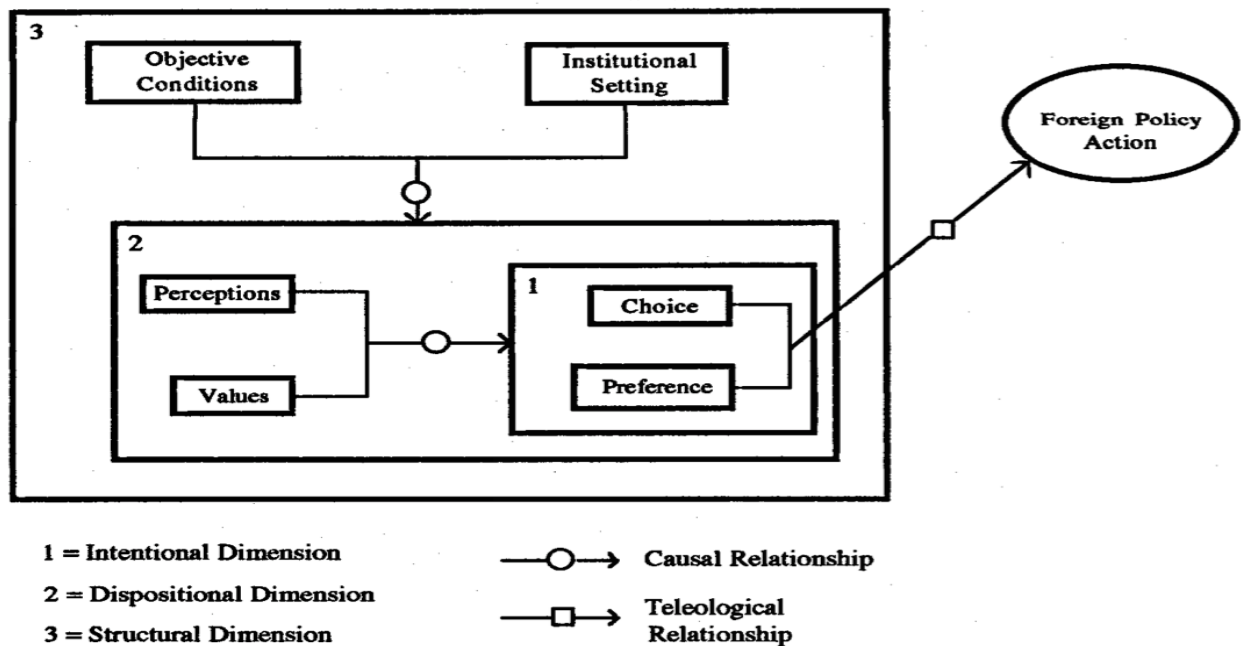
Figure 2 The tripartite model – explaining foreign policy action, as adopted from Carlsnaes 1992, 254. This model consists of *intentional, dispositional* and *structural* dimensions of explanation. When analyzing foreign policy action, the preferences on the basis of which actors act, need to be outlined first. This will be followed by causal statements on how these preferences were constructed by underlying perceptions and values; immediate goals are always a means to further goals. Finally additional causal claims need to be made with regard to how the previous steps were influenced by structural and institutional conditions. Carlsnaes' model manages to achieve an epistemological balance in between naturalistic and interpretative understandings of agency. What is more, it adopts a complex notion of causality, not reducing it to strict determination.

According to the framework depicted above, in order to explain a specific foreign policy decision, we need to first look at the immediate reasons for such action; the preferences and choices of the actors. When examining the "intentional dimension" – it is quite irrelevant as well as impossible to delineate what or whose the particular interests invoked are: it suffices to acknowledge that foreign policy is always motivated by an interest or another – be it statist or organizational, greed or grievance a-la-Collier-and-Hoeffler. A fundamental point is being made here, indeed, because it implies Carlsnaes' commitment to neutrality with regard to *substantive* theories of International Relations or Foreign Policy when examining foreign policy choices: one cannot, for instance, say in advance if foreign policy actors are driven by the will of power to ensure their survival (realism). [152] It is only within the intentional dimension that a conceptual framework for the explanation of motivations can be outlined. For instance, to analyze Kurdistan Regional Government's perception of national interest we would indeed need to step into the next dimension.

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[152] Carlsnaes 1987, 90; Carlsnaes 2002, 242.

The analysis can be deepened by examining the *values* and *perceptions* that informed the particular intentional behavior depicted above. *Choices* differ from *motivations* in the sense that the former refers to " […] reasons for an actor's decision in the face of a particular choice situation, while 'motivation' points to a condition or state of affairs, which an actor intended either to change or to maintain".[153] The second dimension – "the dispositional" – indeed involves examining, why an actor was "cognitively disposed" towards a specific intention rather than another. This is to say, that actors choose something *in order* (teleological dimension) to achieve an intention which they have *because of* (causal dimension) this and that. In our case a *choice* would, for instance, explain *why* the KRG decided to sign an oil contract with Turkey and neglect Baghdad's opposition to the contract (*operational objective*) instead of, for instance, negotiating some sort of a deal with Maliki's government. The *choice* can be attributed to rational calculation and interpretative reasoning that such a move would lead to economic independence. Motivations (*interests*), in turn, would try to explain why the leadership of the region had an intention to achieve economic autonomy in the first place, instead of wanting to continue cooperation with Baghdad. For the *choices* we need to give teleological explanations, while the motivations require causal explanations. As such, getting to the origins of KRG's intentions requires a thorough examination of its *values* (including norms) and *perceptions*.[154] Values vary and compete (eg. independence versus Iraqi federalism), but for an intention to be constructed, the conflict of values have to, either be, settled creatively; accepted followed by the making of trade-off choices; *or* its existence and significance completely denied.[155] Either way, unlike in the "intentional dimension", where *motives* and a range of possible *decisions* to be taken are given, *values* in the "dispositional dimension" are not predetermined. Conflicting norms have to be settled within the mind of the decision-makers in order for them to be able to construct an *intention*.[156]

With regard to *perceptions* as a dispositional factor affecting intentions – and thus foreign policy action – Robert K. Merton has argued that,

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[153] Carlsnaes 1987, 88.
[154] Ibid., 93.
[155] This vision adopted by Carlsnaes, is indeed Alexander L. George's (1980) conception of how leadership can deal with value-complexity and uncertainty.
[156] Carlsnaes 1987, 93–94.

> "[...] men respond not only to the objective features of a situation, but also, and at times primarily, to the meaning this situation has for them. And once they have assigned some meaning to the situation, their consequent behavior and some of the consequences of that behavior are determined by the ascribed meaning."[157]

Carlsnaes distinguishes between two questions involved with perceptions. The first question involves *distortions* of reality and other *cognitive limitations related to information processes,* which imply that decision-making follows 'psycho-logic' rather than 'formal logic'. With regard to the former, it needs to be noted that the decision-maker's view of reality does not necessarily correspondent to the "objective features of the situation".[158] Actors construct reality through assigning and ascribing meanings to their surroundings. For instance, KRG may construct Baghdad's strategies within a particular framework, describing their action as the outcome of a carefully calculated policy plan: "Baghdad wants to curtail our autonomy" or "This is a declaration of war against the Kurdish people" would be such reality constructions, which may but also may not, necessarily correspond to the real situation at hand. The second category of cognitive constraints focuses on how the intentions of opposing parties are perceived by the leadership. Politics being a terrain where complete knowledge of others' intentions is indeed impossible, there is always the chance of misperception – a subject closely elaborated on by Robert Jervis in *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (1976). Political leaders do, indeed, often act on the basis of images, which are complete misunderstandings of the real conditions of their action. For instance, Alexander George describes policy-makers as consistency-seekers[159]; it is easier for the KRG to hold an image of Baghdad as an adversary than to change it to a good-willing strategic partner. Another important remark with regard to cognitive information processes is the tendency of actors to emphasize variables within the intentional dimension when justifying or explaining their action, whereas they usually refer to the dispositional variables when referring to other people's actions. Once again, when examining the KRG, we can clearly observe such a pattern: Maliki's centralizing government wants to weaken Kurdish autonomy.

Furthermore, the *values* and *perceptions* within the "dispositional dimension" are mutually interactive; they reinforce and transform each other. Particular values or norms – such as the drive for full independence – may "[...] shape the definition of situations and contribute to the

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[157] Merton 1957, 421; cf. Carlsnaes 1987, 96.
[158] Carlsnaes 1987, 98.
[159] Ibid., 100–101.

process of selective perception".[160] A nationalistically oriented leadership determines the way Baghdad or Turkey is perceived of. Accordingly, foreign policy decisions will be based on these perceptions.

The third dimension involves evaluating the structural conditions – both internal and external – for action. Carlsnaes refers to the factors within this category as "[...] indirect and cognitively mediated rather than in the form of directly causal variables".[161] He does not elaborate intensively on this dimension but asserts that the significance of situational-environmental factors lies *only* in how they affect foreign policy actors. They include both natural (non-human) as well as ideational (human) conditions. However, even in the case of natural constraints a direct line cannot be drawn in between, for instance geopolitical conditions and particular types of foreign policies. The link has to be constructed through the cognitive actor – "[...] the foreign policy decision-makers of a given state are in some sense or other cognitively constrained by factors of this kind, inasmuch as it is the apperception of these, which affects their foreign policy actions".[162] Natural constraints are not independent variables in foreign policy analysis and to treat them as such leads to what he terms as 'ecological fallacy'. He includes even those cases in which these constraints define a set of possible actions to be taken, that amount to almost one possible choice. Thus, for instance, the landlocked position of the KRG, which necessitates choosing in between Turkey or Baghdad as an export route for its oil, becomes an effective constraint only after going through the cognitive filters of leadership.

With regard to the third dimension, Carlsnaes distinguishes between *objective conditions* – the "concrete givens of the situation, be they geographical, geopolitical, economic, demographic, technological" and *organizational setting* – the abstract and *structural* decision-making systems within which the leadership produces foreign policy decisions.[163] The former includes both internal and international factors making up for the material conditions, whereas the latter concerns the (social) institutional setting within which the leadership of an entity is embedded.

To cut the long story of the link between the three dimensions of foreign policy explanation short, one can summarize them in a single equation. The reason for a government's *action* can

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[160] Ibid., 102.
[161] Ibid., 5.
[162] Ibid., 107.
[163] Ibid.,109–110.

be explained in terms of its stated foreign policy *doctrine* (a set of principles). The relationship between the two is *teleological*. These doctrines are a consequence of or caused by *belief systems* – the perceptions and values (operational codes) of these foreign policy decision-makers. Belief systems are indeed *causal* – on the one hand in relation to doctrines, and on the hand in relation particular foreign policy actions. Finally, belief systems have been formed within "[…] the particular foreign policy organization and decisional environment of the state in question".[164] What is interesting about Carlsnaes' model, is that it can accommodate each of the four approaches introduced earlier in his taxonomy. The causal link between the structural and the dispositional dimensions can be examined, for instance, via the "social-institutional" or "structural" approaches in the taxonomy introduced earlier, while the causal patterns between dispositional and intentional dimensions can be studied via the agency-based approaches. "Interpretative actor" approaches come in handy when looking into the teleological link between intentions and actual foreign policy decisions. In other words, according to Carlsnaes, the different approaches of the taxonomy become feasible for the study on foreign policy as long as they are located within the right spots in the synthetic model he has developed.

As demonstrated above, Carlsnaes conceptual framework has the potential to realize a fruitful foreign policy analysis of, for instance, KRG's decision to stay within Iraq after the fall of the Baathist regime instead of declaring independence. The construction of an explanation of foreign policy action within the intentional, dispositional and situational dimensions can indeed take an institutional perspective without having to exclude the interpretivist epistemology. There aren't always two stories to tell as Hollis and Smith [165] implied – interpretative agents appear to be a part of the same story, in which also objective structures play a part.

4.3. Conclusions

This chapter was an attempt to capture the *substantialist* approaches to foreign policy analysis. I began by an overview of foreign policy as a *unit of analysis* (4.1.). This was followed by the introduction of the conventional way of addressing foreign policy through the international-domestic (*substantive)* divide. Considering this fixation on different *levels of analysis* as

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[164] Ibid. 103–104.
[165] Hollis and Smith 1990, 7.

obscuring a more important *meta-theoretical* division within the field, I decided to abandon the study of foreign policy through the *substantive* view. Following Carlsnaes, I introduced foreign policy through two meta-theoretical issues separating analysts; *the ontological* agent-structure problem and *the epistemological/methodological* question of different modes of analysis (4.2.). Acknowledging the insufficiencies of these *substantialist* approaches via illustrative examples, I ended up presenting Carlsnaes tripartite model, aiming to fill in for the defects of the *substantialist* ontologies of *individualists* and *holists.* However, I have concluded that due to a variety of reasons, the tripartite model cannot serve the purpose of this inquiry and will, therefore, not be applied in this research. The most important of these reasons is its inability to capture the dynamic relationship between agents and structures over time. This fundamental defect will be examined further in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: EXAMINING FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENT VIA THE *RELATIONALIST* MODELS

5.1. Dynamic Statics of Inputs and Outputs Versus the Diachronic Analysis of *Processes*

The previous chapter focused on the multifaceted debate between individualists and holists in foreign policy analysis. As a solution to their deadlock, Carlsnaes presented an abstract model capable of accommodating the approaches in a single conceptual framework. However, this did not provide the means to address agential and structural dynamics involved in foreign policy *development.* Carlsnaes was still faced with a fundamental issue here: how to accommodate *change* in foreign policy through the dynamic interrelationship of actors such as the KRG and their context. While he recognized that the problem with the four rock-bottom types of explanatory frameworks was not so much in their epistemologies as it was in their black-boxing ontologies, Carlsnaes could yet not capture the idea of foreign policy change – a question I am seeking to answer in this inquiry. His tripartite model only enabled synchronic analysis. No matter how deep or sharp of an image this model gave one, it still could not conceptualize its object of study *in motion* but ended up, instead, isolating it from the wider processes of

change.[166] Carlsnaes was well aware of this problem.[167] To apprehend development, he had a few options, out of which two demonstrate the differences between *substantialist* and *relationalist* analysis of foreign policy change most clearly: dynamic statics and diachronic process analysis.[168] While the substantialist assumptions of holists and individualists made sense of change via the former, the *relationalist* models approached the question via the latter. The main difference between the two was that in substantialist conceptualizations of change, it was the variables that did the acting and caused change whereas in relationalist models it was the complex interdependencies that contingently, yet path-dependently led to change. Let me examine dynamic statics first. I will return to diachronic conceptualizations of change in 5.4. "Archer's Morphogenetic Model meets Carlsnaes' Tripartite Model".

If the tripartite model made sense of change following the substantialist assumption of entities preceding rather than anteceding the relations they were embedded in, the acting elements causing change would be agents and structures rather than their relations. Such substantialist visions would explain change as billiard balls slamming into each other until change was finally produced in the last collision. This type of an account would necessitate moments of rupture or and either/or choice in which changes occur.[169] Methodologically this would mean viewing different foreign policy decisions as *static* snapshots; to explain change two or more such snapshots would be chosen and compared to see whether and why they were different; hence "dynamic statics." Such models would not, however, address the *process* of how one got from one snapshot to the other.[170] Making sense of KRG's foreign policy development via dynamic statics would be realized in a following manner. In snapshot 1 KRG's decision to stay within Iraq would be examined via the tripartite model to see the intentional, dispositional and structural explanations behind the decision. In snapshot 2, KRG's decision to grant IOCs with

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[166] Hay 2002, 146–147.

[167] In his own words, the tripartite model could account for snapshots of particular foreign policy decisions treating them "[...] as ultimately constrained by a number of given situational-structural factors (both domestic and international), some presumably similar in all the cases analyzed, others specific to each country" (Carlsnaes 1992, 266).

[168] Hay (2002, 147–150) introduces three different analytical strategies for conceptualizing change; synchronic analysis, comparative statics and diachronic analysis. The first one cannot capture change at all for it can only examine single snapshots of reality. Comparative statics are also problematic because they presume temporality of change in advance – they pre-handedly assume a change and then examine whether or not it has really happened. As such the methodological strategy only becomes a reflection of a change that is already assumed to have taken place. Diachronic analysis examines change via interdependent relations unfolding over time – contingently, yet path-dependently.

[169] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 299.

[170] Ibid., Albeit not referring to Carlsnaes in particular, Jackson and Nexon, indeed, criticize these models of dynamic statics for not being able to account for development and change over time.

PSCs would be similarly filtered through the tripartite model. The two snapshots would then be compared to see where the differences responsible for change (if there is any) lay – in the intentional, dispositional or structural dimensions or perhaps all of them. Consequently the answer to the question of "How can we explain foreign policy change of the KRG?" would be given by pointing to changes in these different dimensions.

The problem of adopting an analytical strategy like this lies in its incapability to capture development in motion, as the result of agential and structural factors over time. In other words, snapshots cannot be genuinely connected so that foreign policy development becomes examined as a *process in motion*, in which former decisions (snapshot 1) have an impact on subsequent situational-structural conditions and the dispositional dimensions of forthcoming decisions (snapshot 2). In the words of Jackson and Nexon in dynamic statics "[…] the *assertion* of change fills in for any *account* of change"[171] Just like the deficiencies associated with synchronic analysis, Carlsnaes also recognized those accompanying this type of dynamic statics, which is why he, in his later writings, suggested the tripartite approach to be located within diachronic models.[172] As mentioned above, I will delve deeper into Carlsnaes' suggestion in "5.4. Archer's Morphogenetic Model meets Carlsnaes' Tripartite Model", but before that, a brief account of *relationalism* in foreign policy analysis is warranted.

5.2. Relations Before Entities

As we saw in Carlsnaes' illuminating four rock-bottom types of foreign policy explanations, holists and individualists were ill-equipped to challenge the essence of their pre-given entities; none of these models could question agents and structures simultaneously, in a single framework. This paralysis, indeed, led them to the causal reduction of one to the other; agents and structures became black-boxed instead of being understood as constantly moving and changing objects of social inquiry. The main reason for the impasse can be attributed to the *substantialist* view that these two ontologies had of reality. Their presumptions gave precedence to entities at the expense of their relations, which is why they could not accommodate the idea of *change* adequately either.[173] It is also for this reason that the holists

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[171] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 299.
[172] Carlsnaes 1992, 263–264.
[173] This became manifested in the previous chapter through a closer examination of dynamic statics.

and individualist were unable to meet each other at any point and were usually considered being mutually exclusive. As Jackson and Nexon have argued, paradigmatic debates in IR have focused on methodological and epistemological questions, which have obscured the more essential *ontological* dividing line between them; namely the line between substantialism and relationalism. One had to return to the most basic ontological principles regarding the relationship of agents and structures in order to capture what was really at stake in social and political analysis.[174] The problem with most of IR theories was that they were substantialist in a sense that they either black-boxed the state, the individual or the ethnic group as a primitive given.[175] No matter what the black-boxed entity, as Jackson and Nexon argued, "[...] the basic ontological move [was] exactly the same – units come first, then like billiard balls on a table, they are put into motion and their interactions are the patterns we observe in political life."[176] As demonstrated above, approaches to foreign policy analysis were inflicted with the same disease. Entities were entities before they entered relations with other entities.[177]

Drawing on the works of John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley (1949), Mustafa Emirbayer developed a typology of two forms of *substantialism* reflecting the essentialist positions described above; "self-action" and "inter-action". In the former entities act under their own powers, be it *de facto* states, ethnic communities, individuals or social structures. In International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis the methodological individualisms and holisms depicted in Carlsnaes' taxonomy correspond to this type of substantialism based on self-action.[178] Whether KRG is treated as a rational maximizer of given utilities or as a norm-follower, does not change the fact that all political decisions made by it is reduced to the pre-given agents (the KRG indeed) and their interactions with other agents (the leadership of Turkey, Baghdad). [179] In methodological structuralism, in turn, whether structures are considered being material constraints (such as the distribution of power) or social and normative conditions of action (such as international norms of sovereignty), does not change the fact that they are treated as self-subsistent and exclusive sources of action independent

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[174] Hay 2002, 116.
[175] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 307–308.
[176] Ibid., 293.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid., 292–293; Emirbayer 1997, 283–286.
[179] In Carlsnaes taxonomy the former refers indeed to the "agency-based perspective" and the latter to the "interpretative actor perspective".

from KRG's agency.[180] Neither individualism nor structuralism can accommodate the idea of agents and structures continuously changing through their relations; change in agents' behavior is causally attributed to structures and change in structural patterns causally attributed to agents. As we saw in in Carlsnaes' taxonomy, KRG's agency itself did not change throughout its actions; it was only the *preferences* ("structural" and "agency-based perspectives") or *norms* ("social-institutional" and "interpretative actor perspectives") guiding its foreign policy decisions that altered, causing changes in its *behavior*.[181] KRG as such did not, at any point change any of its assumed *essential* attributes.

The second variant of substantialism – "inter-action" is more prevalent in IR and FPA; entities do not generate their own action but are instead "[...] the empty settings within which causation occurs".[182] In this form of substantialism the KRG or Turkey do not act per se; it is their variable *secondary* attributes, such as the power they possess, that change and are – as such – responsible for the acting. However, once again the entities' *primary* attributes remain unchanged throughout these interactions.[183] Just like in "self-action", the essence of these billiard balls is not problematized, but taken as given. This is one of the fundamental defects of Wendtian constructivism, which is supposed to be based on the relationalist sociology of Bhaskar. His assumptions reject any changes in the *constitutive* or primary properties of the state agent; "[...] they remain states with the requisite attributes which define them as states (territory, international recognition etc).[184] This kind of substantialist approach to the examination of *de facto* states is highly problematic, because their definition, nature, authority and powers are in a constant state of flux.[185]

The central problem of substantialism is the either/or distinction through which it views reality. This does not only apply to the conceptualization of agents and structures but is apparent also elsewhere within the discipline; action is either rational or interpretative, knowledge is either socially constructed or corresponds to the world, social outcomes are the

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[180] In Carlsnaes' taxonomy methodological individualisms and holisms that treat agency naturalistically ("structural" and "agency-based perspectives") are epitomized in different variants of rational choice theory.
[181] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 293.
[182] Emirbayer 1997, 286.
[183] Waltzian neorealism is a good example of this; states' powers change but states, as such, do not change.
[184] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 293–294.
[185] Artens, August, 13th, 2013. I will return to the question of power as conceptualized by relationalist models, in general, and the SRA, in particular, at a later phase.

result of either action or structures.[186] The impasse of this kind of substantialism can be aptly overcome by adopting a *relationalist* mode of analysis; instead of examining pre-given entities as constant units – be it agents or structures or their "inter-action" – one should focus on *processes* of social *transactions* as logically preceding entities that constitute them. Only then can the individualist-holist deadlock be overcome, the two components of reality truly related and, as such, their pre-given essences principally questioned.[187] Let me delve a bit deeper into the *relationalist* sociology.

According to the relationalist approaches neither structures nor agents have a true essence or an intrinsic nature so that they can be examined separately from the relations they are embedded in. It is through relations that entities gain and transform their nature and meaning; in social sciences, there is, in other words, no *natural* kinds. Instead of being subordinate to entities as Aristotle assumed, relations are assumed to logically precede them.[188] Stephan Fuchs has summarized the basic assumption of relationalism aptly in the following manner:

> "Things are what they are because of their location and movement in a network or system of forces; they do not assume a fixed and constant position in the network because of their essential properties. A network is a field of relationships between nodes that vary with their relationships. A cell becomes part of the liver, not the brain, not because its inherent nature is to become a part of the liver, but because a complex interaction between the selective activation of its DNA, and the network of other cells to which it becomes linked, makes it so"[189]

Relationalist approaches, thus, claim that entities are entirely embedded in processes and relations, so that they do not have an internal core separate from the transactions they are embedded in.[190] As noted in the introductory chapter, there are a great number of different versions of relationalism, all of which I cannot address in this inquiry. My attempt is only to shed light on two of them, which view relationalism particularly through the agent-structure debate; Margaret Archer's *morphogenetic approach* invoked by Walter Carlsnaes and the less known effort in the field – *the strategic-relational approach* – developed by Bob Jessop, Colin

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[186] Fuchs 2001, 12-13.
[187] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 291–292.
[188] Fuchs 2001, 12–13.
[189] Ibid., 16.
[190] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 297–300.

Hay and David Marsh.[191] As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I have chosen the two because they can be considered as two competitive versions of *relationalist* analysis of foreign policy development; the former being a *dualist* and the latter an *anti-dualist* model. Archer's morphogenetic approach will be introduced via the critique she has targeted at a fellow relationalist – Anthony Giddens – whereas the SRA, in turn, will be presented via the critique Bob Jessop and Colin Hay have targeted at Archer.

In spite of their dissimilarities, the morphogenetic approach and the SRA are both based on Roy Bhaskar's critical realism; instead of assuming a relationship of mere efficient causality between agents and structures, they begin with Bhaskar's system theory in order to incorporate the vision of a dialectical interplay between agents and structures as mutually constitutive components of social reality.[192] As *relationalist* models, they both aim at adopting a complex view of causality and incorporating the two modes of analysis – understanding and explaining in a single framework. Even more importantly, when it comes to the conceptualization of *change* in foreign policy over time, the two approaches are capable of accommodating the notion of development as a continuous process. Realizing the framework it provides for *diachronic analysis,* it is for no reason that Carlsnaes has turned to the relationalist model of Archer to make sense of foreign policy change.[193] This inquiry, however, utilizes only the SRA to the analysis of the development of the KRG's foreign policy. The main reason for rejecting Carlsnaes' suggestion is the misleading *dualism* of Archer's analytical model he is advocating. Suffice it to say at this point that the SRA has aptly avoided a few pitfalls Archer has stumbled upon. Unlike Archer's the morphogenetic approach, Jessop's anti-dualist version of relationalism can capture the *spatio-temporal co-extensivity* of agents and structures. At the heart of the SRA's ability to overcome the deficiencies present in Archer's model, is its *analytical relativization* of agents and structures. Jessop reformulates of the two components of reality as "strategic action" (agents) and "strategically selective context" (structures). As such, according to Elisabetta Brighi, who has applied the SRA to the foreign policy analysis of Italy, foreign policy development becomes viewed as a "[…] dialectical interplay between the actor's own strategy (based on the assessments of the leadership), on the one hand, and the strategically

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[191] Brighi 2013, 33.
[192] Ibid., 24
[193] Carlsnaes has recognized the impact that relationalist thinkers such as Giddens, Bourdieu and Archer have had on IR theory as "tremendous" indeed (Guzzini 2013, 81–82).

selective context (the multiple selectivities of the environment), on the other."[194] I will focus on the SRA in Chapter 6. Let me move on to the general introduction of the *relationalist* system theories.

5.3. Introducing the Dialectical models to the Agent-Structure Problem

5.3.1. Points of Agreement

The critical implications of individualist and holist ontologies on both IR theory as well as Foreign Policy Analysis indeed led to *the introduction of dialectical social ontologies*, which attempted to go beyond the reductionist boxes of the matrix introduced by Carlsnaes above. These system theories criticized the *substantialist* deadlock of viewing agents and structures in terms of causal reduction of one to the other, and recognized the need to address their mutual constitutiveness; the two components of reality were not causally linked but, instead, co-determined.[195] As Jackson and Nexon argued, agents instantiated structures through their action, while those structures simultaneously constrained and enabled agency.[196] Among these dialectical synthesis efforts, those of Anthony Giddens and Roy Bhaskar/Margaret Archer remain the most notable, yet highly contestable efforts.[197]

The structuration theory of Giddens and the critical realism of Bhaskar both conceptualized society as an autopoietic system, maintained by the interplay of both agents and structures:[198] reality was Janus-faced.[199] Agents were situated in a structured context, which, on the one hand, imposed uneven constraints on them and, on the other, provided opportunities to realize their interests. Over time actors, however, transformed and developed that context through the intended and unintended consequences of their actions.[200] Social world became conceptualized as a self-producing mechanism in which micro-structures fed into the macrostructures

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[194] Brighi 2013, 37.
[195] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 295.
[196] Wendt 1987, 360–361: It is important to note at this point that, the dialectical stance does not compete with neorealism, liberalism or world-systems theory, but with their individualist and holist social ontologies, which take either *agents* or *structures* as given without theorizing them. Mistaking constructivism for a substantive theory has, indeed, been usual within our field: constructivism is however, a social ontology, not a theory of International Relations.
[197] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 295.
[198] Carlsnaes 1992, 256–257.
[199] Archer 1995: 65–66.
[200] Hay 2002, 116–117.

reproducing or transforming the system.[201] "Our life passes by in transformation", argued Giddens.[202]

While recognizing the reality and the role of potentially unobserved structures generating agents, these system theoreticians, refused the functionalist tradition of reducing agents to "structural dupes" who did nothing but realized systemic imperatives.[203] There was indeed a level of practical reason and consciousness behind the motivation and intentionality of agents, which also had to be accounted for. Nevertheless, they argued, social action could not be reduced to mere individual facts and interactions either.[204] Bhaskar elaborated on this clearly when suggesting that,

> "We do not create society – the error of voluntarism. But these structures which pre-exist us are only reproduced or transformed in our everyday activities; thus society does not exist independently of human agency – the error of reification."[205]

Since structures did not operate independently of the motives and reasons actors had for why they did what they did, society became, as he argued, "[...] the unmotivated consequence for all our motivated productions".[206]

Most importantly, these dialectical theoreticians called for diachronic analysis to capture the *relationalism* depicted in their ontologies. As such, system theoreticians opposed to mere synchronic neo-positivist theorization of 'rules of the game' or dynamic/comparative statics, which could not capture reality in *motion*. With a commitment to diachronic analysis they tried to incorporate this complex process of macro- and micro-phenomena feeding into each other as described above. For instance, by replacing the concept of "structure" with "structuration", Giddens tried to demonstrate the processual nature of synchronic structures. He claimed that the process of dynamically produced and reproduced structures over time could be captured only by diachronic analysis.[207]

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[201] Maturana 1987, 349: Autopoietic systems produce their own components and are autonomous organizations.
[202] Giddens 1979, 3.
[203] This is a concept used by Anthony Giddens (1979) who criticizes the inability of individualist and holists to address the interdependence of action and structure.
[204] List and Spiekermann, 2013, 629; Brighi 2013, 13.
[205] Bhaskar 1989, 4.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 295.

5.3.2. Points of Disagreement in Ontology and Methodology: Structural Dualism Versus Structural Duality

At this point it is essential to note that, in spite of a common *ontological* core necessitating *diachronic* analysis, the two approaches of Giddens and Bhaskar differed with regard to how they conceptualized the relationship between agents and structures responsible for the structuration process.[208] The former argued that agents and structures comprised a *duality.* They were the metals in the alloy from which the coin – society indeed – was forged.[209] Based on her reading of Bhaskar, Margaret Archer, instead argued for the ontological and analytical distinction between agents and structures – structural *dualism*. She termed her own approach the *emergentist* view: even though reality was attributable to both agents and structures, one had to be careful not to conflate structure with agency but instead examine their interplay over time as "two emergent strata of social reality".[210] According to Archer and most of the critical realist camp, dissolving structures and agents into a vague structuration theory – a structural duality – the way Giddens had done, was to adopt an *elisionist* view. [211]

As we saw in Chapter 4, social ontologies were significant to the extent that they determined methodologies applied in empirical analysis.[212] I attempted to demonstrate this via the critical implications of individualist and holist approaches to foreign policy analysis, which necessarily reduced the question of agency exclusively either to individuals and their interactions or to structures. Just like the ontologies of these *substantialist* approaches led to their distinctive methodologies (individualist and holist), so did the dialectic ontologies of the *relationalist* system theories. System theoreticians like Archer, Giddens and Wendt, indeed, suggested different methodologies to capture the processual nature of reality depicted above, albeit they all agreed on the superiority of *diachronic* analysis. This inquiry is particularly interested in the *empirical utility* of the two different analytical models developed by Margaret Archer and Bob Jessop. For, as we came to see, in spite of their more or less similar ontologies based on

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[208] Hay 2002, 117. Stroker and Marsh (2010, 215) have also pointed out that in spite of mutual agreement on some central tenets, there were some major disagreements among the invokers of the dialectic approach indeed. Marsh argues that, "[...] the most important issues in the literature on these meta-theoretical issues revolve around the debates within the dialectical position". What is heating the discussion even further is the fact that the dialectical social ontology has been less applied in empirical research, unlike its structuralist and individualist counterparts.
[209] This is opposed to being the flip-sides of the same coin.
[210] Archer 1995, 60.
[211] Archer 1985, 226–229; Carlsnaes 1992, 258; Howarth 2013, 138–139.
[212] As Archer argues indeed; "Since theories are propositions containing concepts and since all concepts have their referents (pick out features held to belong to social reality), then there can be no social theory without an accompanying social ontology (implicit or explicit)." (Archer 1995, 12.)

Bhaskar's critical realism, Jessop and Archer had different conceptualizations of how the agent-structure relationship should be operationalized in an empirical study. These disagreements are at the heart of the differences underlying their suggested methodological models for the analysis of social reality.

Let me get back to the different relationalist ontologies for a moment. As noted above, Giddens' *structural duality* invoked the ontological inseparability of agents and structures.[213] However, the methodology he suggested for the empirical operationalization of his ontological assumption, could not deliver an adequate account of this duality. For Giddens, namely, claimed that the structuration process should be empirically studied via the *methodological bracketing* of either agents or structures to examine the other.[214] Alexander Wendt followed the lead of Giddens' methodological suggestion. He argued that since the dialectical social *ontology* was based on the inclusion both principal units of analysis – agents and structures [215] – scientific research aiming to operationalize such ontology had to be capable of capturing both elements as well. A viable methodology would, on the one hand, provide a "[...] synchronic model of the organizing principle (rules of the game), logic, and reproduction requirements" of the structures *and,* on the other, a "[...] historical account of the genesis and reproduction of the structure".[216] Social inquiry needed to be able to include both the questions of *why* something happened (synchronic/structural analysis) as well as *how* something became possible in the first place (diachronic/historical analysis). Where *structural analysis* focused on finding law-like regularities or rules of the game, which set the frames for agential action, *historical analysis* concentrated on the explanation of the socially constructed nature of these patterns.[217] We can see that in Wendt's suggestion, structural analysis concerned itself with neo-positivist *causal* explanations on "[...] how incentives in the environment affected behavior", and that, as such, it took identities and interests as given. *Historical analysis*, in turn, focused on *constitutive* accounts of the origins of these identities.[218] By presenting these two different analytical

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[213] Giddens' central argument is that structures can only be instantiated in action.
[214] Hay 2002, 124. . In other words, he advises an analytical distinction between the two – which is exactly what Archer suggests to be done in her morphogenetic model claiming to be addressing the deficiencies of Giddens.
[215] Wendt 1987, 365.
[216] Ibid.
[217] ibid. *Structural* theorization and *process* theorization, which rationalism and constructivism are examples of, are therefore not incompatible; they simply ask different questions.
[218] Wendt 1999, 367: Examining context of action – the incentives for an actor to act in a particular manner – requires the bracketing of agential action and vice versa. Therefore, argued Wendt, when rationalism as a "methodological convenience" examines actors' behavior at a particular instant, based on their given identities, it does not deny agency. The case is quite the opposite: the moment these decisions are made is the embodiment of

strategies, Wendt tried to demonstrate how the dialectical ontologies – unlike their individualist and collectivist counterparts – did not necessitate reductionist methodological positions. They could, instead incorporate both modes of analysis – "understanding" and "explaining" – the two forms of knowledge necessary for the demonstration of the processual nature of reality.[219] However – and this is an important point – Wendt argued that the two questions of *why* and *how* could not be examined simultaneously. The *relationalist* ontology he had adopted had indeed brought him methodological difficulties, which he decided to 'solve' by following Giddens. Wendt suggested that in order to study rules of the game (structures) one had to temporarily take players (agents) as given; and in order to study how agents came to possess the identities and interests they had, one had to temporarily bracket the rules of the game (structures).[220] However, as we will come to see, this "solution" proved to be rather unsatisfactory, because it was still unable to capture the temporal co-extensivity of agents and structures. Both Wendt's and Giddens' methodological suggestions rested on – according to the SRA – a erroneous assumption of *dualism*, according to which agents could be examined separately from the structures they were embedded in and vice versa.[221]

Instead of beginning with what was Giddens' greatest weakness – the incompatibility of the suggested methodology of bracketing with his ontological duality– Margaret S. Archer decided to start with the methodology suggested by Wendt.[222] Fixated on her critique targeted at Giddens' assumedly fallacious ontology, she argued that structural *duality* cannot accommodate Wendt's suggestion of historical analysis (of the social construction of structures)*:* Wendt's analysis necessitated the separation of agents from structures, which

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agential practice – the identities and interests are reproduced or transformed with those decisions. This is the *process* which only constructivist theorizing can grasp, that is, how particular identities and interests become treated as given through reproduction.

[219] The dialectical ontologies such as that of Wendt and Archer acknowledged the importance of the interconnectedness of the two questions, which is also why Waltz was perceived of as a reductionist. It is indeed the case Waltz' *Man, State and War*, is entirely based on the separation of the two questions. His distinction is based on a methodological structuralist position, which conceptualizes structure as law-like regularities causally affecting the behavior of actors through socialization and competition. This is not to say that he denies the relevance of unit-level causes, but merely that the system-level causes can be examined *independently* from them. His claim that there is no need for a theorization of the interrelationship between the two he has been the mostly criticized aspect of his writings (Wight 2010, 129–130). Waltz' main problem lies with the materialistic conception of structure he adopts, which does not acknowledge that structures may have also *constitutive*, not only *causal* effect on agents.

[220] Wendt 1987, 33–35; 184–190; 367–378.

[221] Hay 2002, 124. However, whereas Wendt's ontological theory – being based on Bhaskarian structural dualism rather than Giddens' structural duality – is compatible with the methodology (bracketing) he suggests; Gidden's structuration theory is not.

[222] Hay 2002, 123.

Gidden's structuration theory could not accommodate, because it did not distinguish between the two.[223] Archer argued, that the *structurationist theory* lacked a conception of structuring *over time*, which was of great importance to Wendt's historical analyses of *temporal* relations between agents and structures: that is, how rules of the game are constructed and reproduced over time; "[…] because *agency and structure, are according to Giddens two sides of the same thing, the bracketed elements must be coterminous in time;* it follows from this that *temporal relations between* institutional structure and strategic action *logically cannot be examined.*"[224] Giddens' ontology could not be empirically tested because the methodology of bracketing he suggested ignored *time*, the utmost important factor in conceptualizing structuration as a temporally unfolding process.[225] Giddens' structuration theory was, thus, deemed to be of no use in realizing Wendt's creative empirical ambitions.[226] What is ironic here is that Giddens, in fact, suggested exactly what Wendt did as well. In spite of Archer's claim that the problem with Giddens was *analytical* rather than ontological[227], we can see clearly here, that Archer's critique was targeted at the assumedly fallacious *ontology* of *duality* collapsing agents and structures together. She did not pay much attention to the real problem with Giddens' thoughts; the erroneous nature of the *methodology* suggested by him.[228] Archer, was, in other words, not that troubled with whether or not Giddens managed to deliver in methodology what he promised in ontology – that is, whether or not bracketing as an operationalizing method succeeded in carrying the structurationist ontology into a viable methodology. Instead, her focus was on defending a structural *dualism* against Giddens' false assumption of structural *duality*.[229] Being too focused on formulating an (dualist) *ontology* that could accommodate Wendt's *methodology*, she began with an unwarranted critique of Giddens'

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[223] Archer 1995, 15–16. She appealed to Bhaskar's Transformational Model of Social Activity, which she then associated her morphogenetic approach with, as an explanatory social methodology.

[224] Ibid., 87–88.

[225] Archer 87–88.

[226] Carlsnaes 1992, 256–259.

[227] Archer 1995, 87–88: Her attention was on the fact that structuration theory was based on the notion of the co-terminous nature of agents and structures in *time, which* could not be tested by bracketing. The problem was not ontological but analytical. Methodological bracketing required the ignorance of time, which was essential to ontological duality. It is for this reason that Archer came to suggest a model of her own that could incorporate *time* as a variable in social analysis.

[228] Hay 2002, 123. This is where according to Hay Giddens' weakness lies: his inability to deliver in methodology what he promises in his ontology. The main problem of the suggested methodologies in the field has been to capture the processual nature of reality. Most of the suggested analytical models, such as that of Wendt, Giddens and Archer – are faulty exactly because they are incompatible with their assumed ontologies. This is where the SRA has centered its focus on; the inability of these relationalist theoreticians to deliver in methodology what they promise in ontology.

[229] Wight 2013, 123.

assumed subjectivist bias or voluntarist methodological stance: according to Archer the structuration theory's focus on processes did not allow any explanatory autonomy for agents and structures.[230] This in turn led to Giddens' failure to acknowledge the structural constraints imposed on agents independent of their knowledge of it.[231] It was for this reason that Archer developed an analytical model separating agents from structures temporally – in order to be capable to examine their autonomous explanatory roles. While this morphogenetic approach was introduced as an analytical tool – it was in fact an ontological statement in support of the problematic dualism criticized by the SRA.[232] In the next chapter, I will introduce this model as represented by Archer. I will, yet, not focus the critique targeted at it from different directions, particularly from the viewpoint of the SRA.

5.4. Archer's Morphogenetic Model meets Carlsnaes' Tripartite Model

Archer claimed that her morphogenetic approach came as a response to the inability of the *structurationist* model to translate the mutual constitution of agents and structures into a viable methodology*.* According to her, the bracketing suggested by Giddens necessitated the ignorance of time, which was, however of great importance to capture ontological duality. To "solve" this problem, she added *time* as an external variable and argued for the *analytical* separation of agents and structures *temporally*.[233] What resulted was a model of *structuration over time:* structures logically predated actions, which transformed them, so that new action was initiated within a new context.[234] The relationship between action and structures became sequential so that conditions inherited from the past affected present actions and were subsequently transformed (at least to a certain extent) in 'structural elaboration'. Archer's analytical distinction was, however, essentially an ontological assessment, because Archer

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[230] However, the demarcating lines in between the two perceptions are not as clear as it might seem at first. The disagreements depend in some parts to the radicalizing interpretations of Giddens. For instance, John Mingers (2004, 411) criticizes Archer and her fellow critical realists for erecting "[…] something of a straw man in their characterization of Giddens who would not hold some of the most extreme positions that they impose on him.

[231] Howarth 2013, 138–143.

[232] King 1999, 200; Hay 2002, 124.

[233] Her "analytical" distinction, however, hardened into an ontological one, as we shall see (King 1999, 200; Hay 2002, 124).

[234] Archer 1985, 60.

claimed that agents and structures resided in different temporal domains.[235] The model is demonstrated below in Figure 1.

A.   **STRUCTURE I**

B.   **ACTION I**

Analytic Dimension

C.   **STRUCTURE II**

D.   **ACTION II**

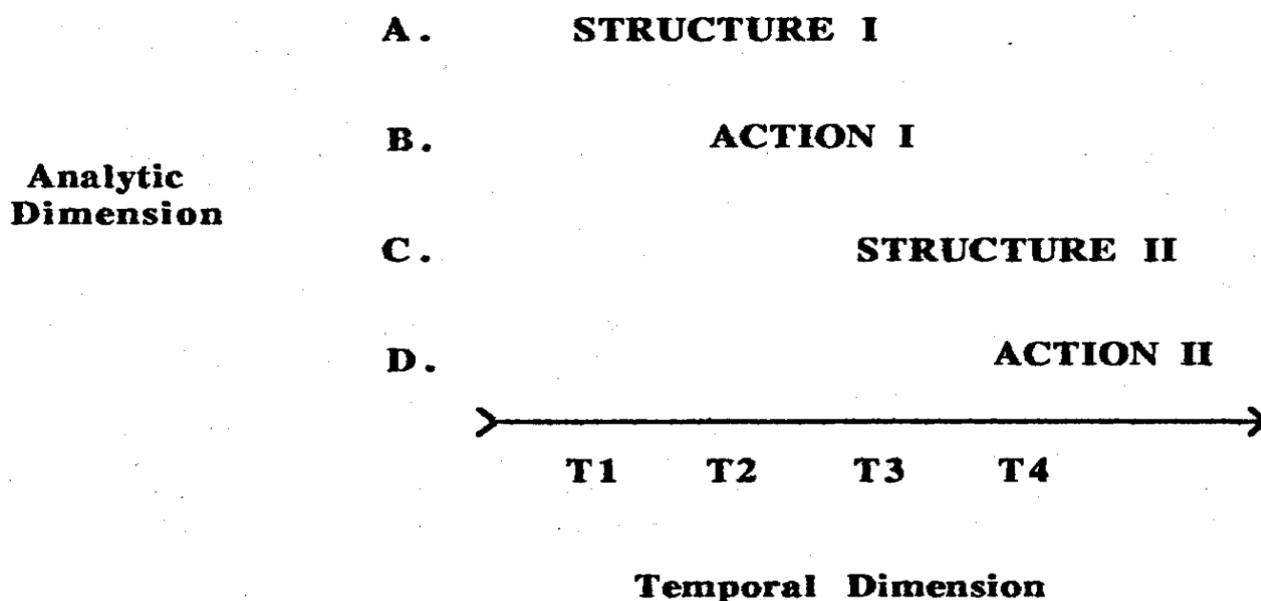T1   T2   T3   T4

Temporal Dimension

Figure 3: The Agent-Structure Problem as Conceptualized by Margaret Archer (Adopted from Carlsnaes 1992, 260). According to Archer the methodological bracketing Giddens suggested could not take time into account, and, as such, was ill-equipped to address *when* it was that structures were transformed instead of being reproduced or, in other words, when it was that agency accounted instead of structures. Accordingly, Archer found Giddens' assumption that "[...] the possibility of change is recognized as inherent in every circumstance of social reproduction" more or less problematic (Giddens 1979: 210). To answer the question of *when* it was that structures prevailed over agents, Archer introduced the above depicted morphogenetic model as an alternative to Giddensian bracketing; she added *time* as an external variable to separate agents from structures. The "morphogenetic sequence" demonstrated endless cycles of 'sequential structural conditioning'→'social interaction'→'structural elaboration. Instead of claiming that structures persisted only because they represented the will of the powerful as Giddens did, Archer suggested that rules of the game (structures) prevailed because of three main reasons: they temporarily resisted to collective pressures to change, they represented the interests of the powerful or were psychologically supported by the population.

What Archer suggested to be done in order to solve the epistemological issue that Giddens' duality according to her failed to do, was to penetrate the dynamics of the relationship between agents and structures. Doing so required the uncovering of the cycles depicted above by breaking them up into intervals. When it came to action, agents entered into previously structured conditions: their "[...] knowledge about it, attitudes towards it, vested interests in retaining it and objective capacities for changing it", had already been

[235] King 1999, 200; Hay 2002, 124: This is indeed an interesting point because Archer suggests that the separation of agents and structures is merely analytical. However, in her later works she seems to be recognizing the necessity of an ontological dualism for her analytical separation. Furthermore, she has argued for the consistence of her work with Bhaskar's critical realism – an ontological dualist (Archer 1995, 135–41; 157).

distributed and determined by the rules of the game.[236] A central remark that Archer made was that structural elaboration occurred *in time,* as a slow process in which action entered context, context changed, and subsequent action entered a new context. Furthermore, where Giddens attributed the transformation of the rules of the game to the reflexive knowledge and behavior of agents, Archer viewed that structures changed after action had entered them.[237] Social reality was reducible to agents and structures, not just one of them. "The whole is implicated in the parts in two senses", argued Archer, "[...] it emerges from them and it acts back upon them".[238] We can see here, how she tries to highlight her (assumedly) *relationalist* approach to social reality; change can be understood only through the examination of *relations*, not via the intrinsic nature of *things*. However, as we will come to see in the critique targeted at Archer in Chapter 6, because of locating agents and structures in different temporal domains, her model came to do exactly what the *relationalists* criticized *substantialists* of doing: that is, it studied pre-given entities (structures and agents) prior to examining the relations they were embedded in.[239]

Nevertheless, Walter Carlsnaes followed the footsteps of Archer and applied the morphogenetic approach to his *tripartite* model. The aim was indeed to transform the conceptual framework so that it could capture the dynamic interplay of agents and structures in social and political *change* over time*. Carlsnaes justified this move by the immense potential he saw in Archer's (once again, assumedly) *relationalist* morphogenetic cycles to address the dynamics of change. Accordingly, he listed a variety of advantages it entailed for foreign policy analysis in the following manner.[240]

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[236] Archer 1995, 240.
[237] Hence Archer's critique targeted at Giddens' *individualist* methodology. Since Giddens attributed change to the reflexive knowledge of agents, he failed to see that change was instantiated not by *entities* (substantialism) but instead within relations (relationalism).
[238] Archer 1995, 246-247.
[239] Based on Bartelson's (1995, 48) critique Jackson and Nexon (1999, 295) argue that "[...] by treating them [*agents and structures*] analytically as autonomous at given points of time, their 'mutually constitutive' relationship is left to the causal unfolding of interaction of separate elements." [italics added].
[240] Brighi 2013, 25: Brighi has also argued that in order to be able to account for foreign policy change, Carlsnaes' tripartite model needs to be modified.

Archer's cycles, first of all, managed to include both agents and structures as codetermining action. This solution, in turn led to incorporating both intended and unintended consequences of action: foreign policy *action* became distinguished from foreign policy *outcomes*, which was the second advantage of adopting the critical realist approach invoked by Archer. What this meant was that, foreign policy outcomes could incorporate also the unintentional consequences of action, which were of particular importance when analyzing the implications of behavior on the context within which further action would take place. A particular foreign policy act became entangled with its complex structural consequences. Having mixed together, these elements then, in turn constituted " [...] future *dispositions* of actors and hence also their *intentions* and subsequent actions".[241] The third implication concerned the discourses, which mediated in between the "dispositional" and "intentional dimensions" of his tripartite model. Ideas and perceptions were something that Archer herself did not elaborate closely on, but which Carlsnaes, instead, put a great emphasis on.[242] He argued, that acknowledging the fact that the rules of the game were socially constructed over time, was not the only element in which the prominence of ideas became apparent, albeit an important one. What needed to be also taken into account, was the *constitutive* influence of these structures on the way agents perceived of themselves at present.[243] In other words structures had constitutive effects on agents because they constructed their identities and interests – an aspect that, for instance, the *methodological* structuralism of Waltz could not accommodate.[244] An illustrative example of the constitutive influence of structures on agents would, for instance, indicate that, had it not been for the hegemonic ideas of international recognition and sovereignty in the current Westphalian state system, the entire identity of the KRG as a *de facto* state would not have made any sense. As such, and accordingly, had it not been for the constitutive effects of this institution, KRG would not have formulated its foreign policies the way it had done for the past ten years. To cut the long story short, one could say then that agents constructed structures over time, while these structures, in turn, constituted actors' perceptions of themselves at present.

The fourth implication of Archer's understanding was related to the previous one. The discursive categories, such as the notion of sovereignty, involved the *constitutive* effects of

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[241] Carlsnaes 1992, 261.
[242] An advocate of the SRA, Elisabetta Brighi, has indeed noted that Archer's treatment of agency is more or less naturalistic.
[243] Carlsnaes 1992, 261–262. In the case of Carlsnaes' model, the discursive concepts are signified in the relationship between *dispositional* and *intentional* factors (Carlsnaes 1992, 261).
[244] Wight 2013, 96.

structures on agents. Implicit within this assumption was, however, also a *causal* claim: the discursive aspects that informed actors' identities and behavior – as demonstrated in the previous example – also structured international institutions by either transforming or reproducing them.[245] As such, the outcome of agential action, whether reproducing or trying to change pertaining understandings of international institutions, included more than only intentional actions and unintended consequences of those acts. Outcomes in social reality were a function of how all players in the field played the game – whether they submitted to reconstitution or aimed towards the alteration of dominant institutions. This point is of particular relevance to the study of *de facto* states. It, therefore, deserves a minor drift from the main issue of concern.

If one is to follow Caspersen, Stansfield and Pegg, the internal development, transformation and fluctuating foreign policies of these entities are indeed heavily influenced by the lack of sovereignty, which as an *idea* is indispensable for the maintenance of their existence. De facto states are driven by the notion of an internationally recognized statehood. This is a clear implication of the *constitutive* effect of structures (sovereignty) on agents' (KRG) identity, interests and actions. However, as mentioned above, this assumption also entails an implicit *causal* claim. Here is why. Since it is driven by the notion of sovereignty, the KRG, continuously invokes the idea of statehood both to its internal and external audience. Doing this, in turn reproduces the dominant role of sovereignty as an international institution. The mutual constitutivity of agents (the KRG) and structures (international states system) becomes indicated rather clearly here. Even though this inquiry is not focused on the persistence of *sovereignty* as an international institution, it is indeed important to note how both the international society, as well as *de facto* states themselves, engage in a constant *reproduction* of this institution through their dichotomizing discourse of 'full sovereignty or no sovereignty'. What is interesting with regard to the case of the KRG, is that, in spite of the fact that the realities on the ground seem to imply the need for a reconceptualization of sovereignty as an institution, the discursive practice of *de facto* states and other players in the field seem to be ironically reconstituting the institution against those empirical realities. Sovereignty has indeed, remained a question of either/or, which is also why *de facto* states perceive of themselves being in a constant state of flux and transformation (=the constitutive effect of sovereignty as a

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[245] Ashley 1984, 273–274: Richard Ashley has, indeed, argued that, for instance, sovereignty is "[...] a practical category whose empirical contents are not fixed but evolve".

structure). Due to the constant reproduction of the idea of sovereignty, the grey area[246] between full sovereignty and no-sovereignty has not been institutionalized enough to make any sense to the actors, nor has it been able to constitute a desirable "mode of existence" to sell to the domestic constituents or the international community, let alone base ones interests on. The interesting question here is, for how long can the discursive practices paradoxically reconstitute a specific understanding of sovereignty, which conflicts with empirical realities on the ground? I will return to this subject in the examination of the SRA in Chapter 6.

However, let me get back to foreign policy analysis for now – the main concern of the research indeed. So far Archer's morphogenetic approach has provided us with the conceptualization of how foreign policy outcomes are to be explained, on the one hand, with reference to the continuously constraining and enabling structures and, on the other, with regard to action which reproduces those structures over time. Agency has become the link in between concrete actions and structural properties or institutional rules. As we saw above, when it came to the Kurdistan Regional Government, or any other entity for that matter, Carlsnaes' tripartite model proved to be a viable tool for the explanation of their conduct *qua* specific foreign policy actions or decisions. The model could, however, only offer a static snapshot of certain actions as a product of both structural and agential factors. Had the aim of this research been, indeed, to explain the KRG's decision to sign a multi-billion dollar contract with Turkey, the model – because of its epistemological potentialities – would have perhaps served the interests of the inquiry more than well. Nevertheless, my objective was to demonstrate the dynamics present in the foreign policy *development* of the region, as a *series of interrelated* and complex events, in which action was not only constrained by structures, but which also itself reproduced and potentially transformed these structures. The tripartite model was simply unable to address such dynamics, because it only accounted for the constraining effects of structural factors, while ignoring the *systemic properties* of foreign policy actions – or in other words, their reproductive or transformative characteristics. In the words of Carlsnaes, until one could conceptualize that agents and structures causally conditioned each other *over time, "[…] the problematic nature of explaining the dynamics of foreign policy change itself remained unsolved."[247]* What the tripartite model could not capture was the fact that through the intended and unintended consequences action (reproduction/morphostasis or transformation/morphogenesis), foreign policy conduct

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[246] With a "grey area" I am referring to the domain inhabited by *de facto* states.
[247] Carlsnaes 1992, 256.

in fact, affected these structures. Here is where Carlsnaes saw Archer's morphogeneteic cycles underlying his tripartite model.[248] They connected the static snapshots and demonstrated how present choices were conditioned not only by contemporaneous structural conditions, but also by earlier choices and the impacts they had had on these structural conditions. The significance of Archer's model, thus, became manifested when one tried to conceptualize "[...] developmental patterns or cycles – that existed between structure and action in a given foreign policy system".[249] Actions were thus, not only affected by structures so that A→B, but through intended and unintended consequences of political conduct, actions further affected those structures so that B→C and C→D. As such, rather than approaching the question of change through snapshots of dynamic statics, Carlsnaes could in the words of Jackson and Nexon "[...] deploy a fuzzy logic in which processes unfold over time".[250]
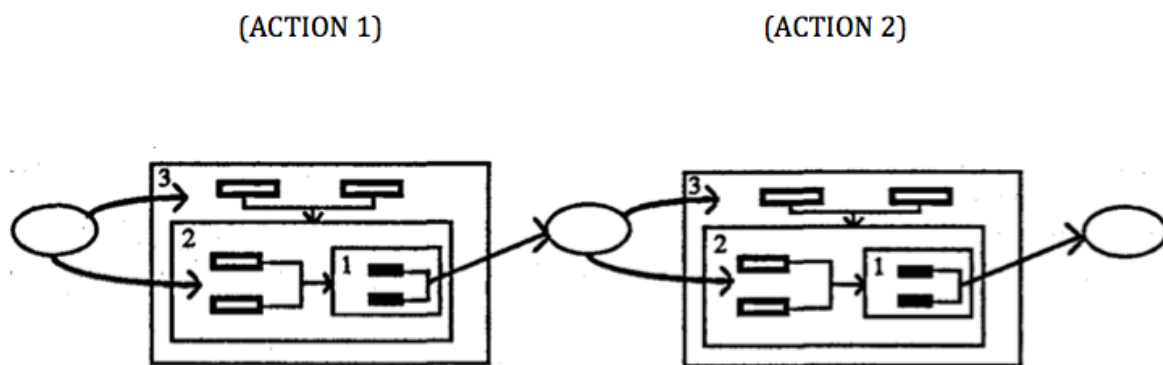
Figure 4: Locating the *tripartite model* in Archer's morphogenetic cycles. The figure is adopted from Carlsnaes (1992, 264). Particular foreign policy *actions* still remain the dependent variables of the inquiry to be explained with reference to *intentional* (1) and *dispositional* (2) dimensions. However within this modified framework, the structural (3) dimension is no longer merely a *constraining* factor on action but a sphere influenced by previous political action (hence *the "systemic properties"* of foreign policy action).

5.5. Conclusions

The present chapter aimed at introducing the *relationalist approaches* to foreign policy analysis. I began with the inability of Carlsnaes' tripartite model to address change were it to follow the *substantialist* way of making sense of change in foreign policy: dynamic statics (5.1.). As an alternative I suggested – just like Carlsnaes himself – diachronic analysis via the *relationalist*

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[248] Ibid., 266.
[249] Ibid., 267.
[250] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 308. In arguing this, Jackson and Nexon are not particularly referring to Carlsnaes, but comparing between the static dynamics of *substantialism* and diachronic analysis of *relationalism*, in general.

approaches to social reality. Following this, I dug a bit deeper into the essence of these approaches to scientific inquiry, represented by the so called "system theories" (5.2.). I began with a general introduction to these *dialectical* models via Giddens, Bhaskar and Archer (5.3.), followed by a closer examination of the *morphogenetic approach* (5.4.). Archer's model was introduced particularly because it was the dialectical model suggested by Carlsnaes to be applied to the analysis of foreign policy development. However, as I noted in the introductory chapter, Archer's *ontological* and *analytical dualism* has been challenged by the *anti-dualist* SRA, which accuses it for a failure to capture relationalism genuinely. Norbert Elias critique of essentialism sits in rather aptly with the critique targeted at Archer, "[...] we can often only express constant movement or constant change in ways, which imply that it has the character of an isolated object at rest". [251] I will now, finally, move to a closer examination of the strategic-relational approach that I am attempting to apply in this inquiry.

CHAPTER 6: THE STRATEGIC-RELATIONAL MODEL AS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

6.1. Beginning with the Critique of Archer: The Fallacy of Dualism

Colin Hay's discussion of the strategic-relational approach begins with Anthony King's (1999) critique of Archer's ontological *dualism* and her unwarranted accusations targeted at individualists. Archer, who in her *emergentist*[252] *ontological dualism* appears to be an adamant invoker of *relationalism,* and opposed to the *substantialist* reductionism of Durkheimian collectivism and the interpretative tradition of Weberian individualism, is, in fact, an ontological individualist herself, argues King. The fact that according to King and the SRA Archer is, an *ontological individualist*, is an important point I want to highlight here, because it forms the basis of the disagreement between the *anti-dualist* and *the dualist* versions of relationalism.

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[251] Elias 1978, 111–112; cf. Jackson and Nexon 1999, 300. Archer's morphogenetic model's treatment of agents and structures seems to, indeed, imply as if they were "isolated objects at rest".

[252] I am highlighting *emergentist*, because Archer views her approach as an alternative to the deficiencies of Giddensian *elisionism,* as introduced in Chapter 5.

The reason for the accusation King has targeted at Archer is quite simple. Archer's notion of society as the interplay of agents and structures is based on the assumption that agents are constrained by external structures, which are autonomous and existing prior to agents entering them; hence the charges of substantialism targeted at Archer.[253] According to Archer, these structures cannot, therefore, be reduced to the sum of individuals' actions as individualists claim. Constraints are of three types: numerical, relational and bureaucratic, argues Archer.[254] They emerge from the interaction of individuals and become objective constraints either on subsequent generations (numerical) or as objective constraints confronting everyone at present as well as in the future (relational and bureaucratic). Through the theoretical concept of structures as "emergent properties" Archer locates objectivity within the very practices of the individuals. Society becomes perceived of as an emergent entity, which enables a successful implementation of Mandelbaum's maxim:

> "[…] one need not hold that society is an entity independent of *all* human beings in order to hold that societal facts are not reducible to individual behaviour." [255]

However, appealing to emergentism[256] – which assumes that structural elaboration is agential action – is incompatible with Archer's view of autonomous and pre-existing structures, irreducible to agents. How could structures be autonomous, indeed, if they resulted from agential action? Through a thorough examination of the three types of constraints confronting individuals, King, manages to argue that structures *are* indeed, contrary to what Archer claims, reducible to the interaction of either *people at other places at other times* (numerical and bureaucratic) or to other *people creating new social properties* at present time (relational).*[257]* If we, for instance, take a look at *relational* structures such as the relations of production *or distribution of power in* the international system – both can be reduced and attributed to actors'

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[253] Once again, through her analytical distinction between agents and structures *temporally*, Archer treats the two components as if they could be studied apart from the relations they are embedded in – a mistake that the *relationalists* claim *substantialists* keep on doing.

[254] King 1999, 208: She suggests *literacy rate* as an example of "numerical" emergent properties (independently existing structures); *relations of production* as that of "relational" emergent properties and *roles* as that of "bureaucracies".

[255] Mandelbaum: 1973, 230.

[256] Emergentism indeed refers to the emergence of structures out of agential action.

[257] Structures are indeed not reducible to *one* individual but they surely can be reduced to the sum of all *individuals* either at a different time or at present. By making this claim King proves real Archer's fear: structures *are* reducible to the interaction of individuals, which is why they are always in a danger of disappearing unless one is to claim that structures refer to some metaphysical aspect of reality. This is, indeed, a claim which Archer consciously avoids making.

interaction. What is more – and this point is also of particular importance to the understanding of *structure* adopted by the SRA – if emergent properties can be indeed reduced to the interaction of people, then 'structures' can never appear the same for two actors, because what seems to be an objective structure for me is in fact only the product of my own interaction with *other* actors. Take the distribution of power, for instance. It is a formation based on material inequality, which is, however, not an objective constraint faced similarly by all. It is rather a spatio-temporal condition of action that results from no more than the *sum* of all the actors' position in relation to each other.[258] Consequently, King argues: "It is wrong to assume as Archer does that social conditions confront everyone and are at some emergent point independent of *everyone acting together".[259]*

The ultimate error that Archer makes here is that she views structures from the perspective of a single actor and then goes on to make an ontological claim of *dualism* (structures and agents are two different aspects of reality, separate from each other) on the basis of that *perspective*. She refuses to refer to structures as a metaphysical aspect, even though such a claim is necessary for her to be able to maintain her ontological dualism.[260] From the vantage point of a single actor, context may be indeed be perceived of as an objective structure but when examined from the point of view of an analyst, one can see that constraints consist of nothing else than that actor itself interacting together with other actors, constantly reconstructing, transforming and renegotiating the context, which appears as objective to them indeed. To cut the long story short, what the *morphogenetic approach* does, is, that it takes the position of *certain actors* in the present time and transforms whatever occurred before them (the construction of the Westphalian system, for instance) – or anything, which confronts them independently of their knowledge and practice of it (balance of power, or relations of production) – into a *structure,* which is given an independent and a separately existing role.[261] Were Archer to de-center her perspective, she would actually realize that the constraints that one actor faces are indeed nothing more than other actors. Consequently she would also

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[258] As we will come to see at a later point, balance of power from the viewpoint of the SRA, is therefore something to be determined in post hoc analysis. (Jessop 2007, 45.)

[259] King 1999, 213. A "structure" of material inequality consists of agents situated differentially with regard to each other.

[260] Ibid. 206–207.

[261] In other words she converts "[...] the temporal priority of other people's actions" or the sum of their present action "into the ontological priority and autonomy of structures." (ibid., 8.)

understand that the individualist ontology she is criticizing is the one she herself is invoking too.[262]

What is interesting about Archer's critique of individualists, is the fact that it is based on a fundamental misinterpretation of the central tenets of the interpretative tradition, once again the drawing of a straw man similar to the one drawn from the structuration theory of Giddens. While the tradition rejects structural determination it does not deny the existence of social constraints such as the influence of the material distribution of goods in society or the influence of history and past experiences on present action.[263] Archer clearly conflates the interpretative tradition with arbitrary idealism. Individualists, however, do acknowledge that single actors cannot " […] transform the material legacy of the past and certainly by merely interpreting the situation differently".[264] They only argue that material conditions are nothing more than the result of the *continuing* interrelations of people:

> "Material differences are the product of knowingly unequal material exchanges between people in the past which are repeated in further knowingly unequal exchanges in the present". [265]

This is an ontology completely in line with Archer's emergentist view – 'structures' emerge from agential action – but one, which she however paradoxically overturns with the assumption of pre-existing and autonomous structures. Structures in the words of King are, thus, *not* autonomous, certainly not pre-existent and definitely not causal. They may appear as such to an individual actor, but for a political analyst to treat them as being a *thing* autonomous from agency will lead to nothing more than their reification.[266] He continues that, as such, any form of dualism, which refers to structures as *objective* and *pre-existing* entities, is actually referring to properties, which can at all times be reduced to individuals and their interaction.[267]

King concludes his critique of Archer by suggesting that, when conducting a political or a social inquiry, depending on the constraints one is examining, particular actions need to be situated in their wider *social* and *historic* context, acknowledging, nevertheless, the fact that structures

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[262] ibid., 200–205; 222–224.
[263] Ibid., 218–220.
[264] Ibid., 221.
[265] Ibid., 222.
[266] Constraints are based in the practices and beliefs of other individuals, rather than on objective causal powers.
[267] Ibid., 222.

are indeed nothing more than the product of individual interaction here and now. However, to examine particular instances of action at a particular time, the analyst can usefully refer to these "constraints" or the background of that instance as "structures". [268]

It is on the basis of this argument that Bob Jessop and Colin Hay end up arguing for the utilization of structures and agents as mere heuristic tools in political analysis. Just like King, they assert that assuming structures to be objective and pre-existent entities is a fundamental misunderstanding of social reality, because it gives an existence to 'structures' separate from the existence of agents. Furthermore, in making this assumption, it also defines the concept itself erroneously, which does nothing but reify the conditions that are in fact dependent on actors for their reproduction. Since structures are *ontologically reducible to agents, there is no sense in separating them from agents other than analytically, for heuristic purposes.* Archer's analytical dualism in the morphogenetic model, however, hardens into an *ontological* dualism, doing exactly that: separating agents from structures not only analytically but also *ontologically*. It is for this reason that her model cannot capture the genuine interdependency of agents and structures. King's conclusion sits perfectly in with the strategic-relational approach's starting point:

> "Consequently, it may be more useful to rename this methodological notion of structure in now half-forgotten Gramscian language and refer to it as 'organic' background [...] – a phrase which usefully communicates the shifting interactive and *unfinished* nature of the background which we frankly mistake with the term 'structure'.[269] [italics added]

6.2. The Reconceptualization of the Agent-Structure Relationship in Methodology

In the previous section I outlined Archer's misperception of structure and its implications on empirical inquiry. The present chapter will focus on introducing the strategic-relational approach. However, since this model – just like morphogenesis and the modified tripartite approach to foreign policy analysis – is also based on a *relationalist* social ontology – repeating the points where the three agree will become redundant. Such issues include, for instance

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[268] Ibid., 222–223.
[269] Ibid., 223–224.

assumptions on; the self-sustaining nature of social reality and the interplay of agents and structures reproducing and transforming it; the distinction between (foreign policy) *action* and (foreign policy) *outcomes* – and hence the inclusion of both intended and unintended consequences of action in foreign policy analysis; the role of *cognitive factors* or *ideas* as the bridge between environment and action (Archer, however, treats the discursive realm insufficiently when compared to the immense emphasis put on it by Carlsnaes and the SRA); the focus on *political leadership* rather than *the state*, which is indeed related to the fact that political entities are not black-boxed or treated as individuals as has been done in the case of Wendtian constructivism.[270]

Although neither Jessop nor Hay specifically refer to Carlsnaes in developing the SRA, the two approaches overlap on a variety of points, which will become apparent throughout the introduction of the strategic-relational model. My attention will be, nevertheless, more on the points where they differ and the implications these dissimilarities have for a conceptual study of foreign policy development. Also worth mentioning is that, while the SRA is not a model explicitly developed for the analysis of *foreign* policy, as a methodological tool established for the understanding of the *relational* nature of reality, it is, however, fully capable of addressing what is really at stake in foreign policy analysis: the meta-theoretical issues introduced by Carlsnaes.[271]

The strategic-relational approach was initially developed by Bob Jessop based on an interest – in his own words – in post-war German *politics*, post-war French *economics* and post-war Chilean *biology*, or more precisely, modern *systems theory* introduced in Chapter 5. Jessop has argued that curiosity in German politics led him to adopt a *relational methodology* to conceptualizing the state as a social relation rather than a unified ensemble.[272] This thought initially came from Nicos Poulantsaz, who had been the first one to explicitly identify the relational nature of the state, albeit the idea was already implicitly inscribed in the works of

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[270] The rejection of the state-black-boxing is indeed referred to as the Snyder approach in FPA. Richard Snyder indeed argues that foreign policy analysts need to focus on the subjective definitions of decision-makers. Context is taken into account only when it can be demonstrated that they have indeed gone through the cognitive dimension and influenced these leaders. (Gustavsson 1999, 80.)

[271] Elisabetta Brighi has, indeed, applied the SRA to the analysis of Italy's foreign policy development throughout the 20th century. However, she focuses on connecting the international and domestic sources of foreign policy via the SRA, while I am not particularly interested in making such analytical distinctions.

[272] Jessop 2007, 36–37; Jessop, 2005, 42–43.

Marx and Engels.[273] Interest in economics and the endurance of capitalism, in turn, resulted in the close examination of the system's socially embedded and regulated nature, and hence, in the study of institutionalism. Finally, *systems theory* – elaborated on above through Giddens, Bhaskar and Archer – directed Jessop's attention towards the investigation of self-reproducing subsystems within social reality. This interest involved the examination of how economic, political or legal systems were, in spite of their autonomous development and internal logics, still mutually interdependent. The material interdependency, in turn, implied that it was possible for the logics of one *system* to dominate the overall co-evolution of the complex web of interdependent systems – 'historical blocs'[274] – so to speak. According to this understanding, a structure causing more problems for other substructures than they could cause for it, could be designated as a dominant one. In virtue of its dominancy, it could regulate and control the development of an entire system comprising all the self-organizing mechanisms. Jessop identified the capitalist structure as one such autopoietic system dominating the "[…] self-organizing ecologies of self-organizing systems".[275] Accordingly, he re-termed Marx' "capitalist dominance" with "ecological dominance".[276] The question is, how are any of these three issues of the state as a *social relation*, the *reproduction* of systems and system *dominance* related to the development of the SRA or – even more importantly – to the study of the foreign policy development of the KRG?

The answer lies at the intersection of these three issues, which eventually led to the gradual development of the SRA. The approach was originally introduced as a reformulation of Marxist materialist determinism aiming at capturing the relationship between capitalism and the state as the result of contingent necessity rather than straightforward determinism.[277] However the SRA was developed further both by Jessop himself and some other prominent scholars, for instance Colin Hay, to reformulate it as a general understanding of the way agents and

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[273] Jessop 2007, 56. Marx is indeed also considered a *relationalist.*

[274] Jessop (2007, 46–47) defines the concept as the "[…] mutually implicated, structurally coupled, and historically co-evolving ensemble of economic, political and socio-cultural relations, the construction of which depends on the activities of organic intellectuals and collective projects as well as on the gradual and emergent co-adaptations of institutions and conduct.

[275] Ibid., 22-37.

[276] Ibid.

[277] Jessop (ibid, 56–59.) indeed attempted to go beyond both the *instrumentalist* and the *epiphenomenalist* views of the state in its relation with power.

structures related to each other.[278] Jessop attributed the wide-ranging applicability of the SRA to the fact that it was grounded in basic ontological problems of social life rather than in the frameworks within which it initially emerged – state theorization and subsequently, for instance, in the gender selectivities of the state or globalization's impact on states. These applications merely further confirmed the fact that the model's nucleus lay in a fundamental reconceptualization of the ASP, based on an *anti-dualist relationalist* understanding of reality. In fact, the SRA was eventually established to accommodate the strategic-relational relationship between, not only agents and structures in particular, but also to other dualities such as path-dependency and path-shaping, the material and the discursive and spatiality and temporality. Throughout its development over the past three decades or so the meta-theoretical arguments of the SRA have proved to survive and become more and more established with each application.[279] What is more, the gradual removal of the approach from the theoretical issues through which it was initially developed, has also paved the way for its application in foreign policy analysis by Elisabetta Brighi and, now, in this inquiry indeed.

Jessop's attempt to generalize the SRA was based on the criticism targeted at the neo-Weberian theories by Stewart and Holmwood in *Explanation and Social Theory* (1991). The two took issue at the failure of these social theories to address social reality creatively and progressively. From a critical realist viewpoint, Jessop then attempted to solve some of the problems addressed by Stewart and Holmwood arguing that, if their aim was to capture the *dialectical* construction of society in a viable methodology, a model which was only capable of incorporating the notion of "[...] an emergent, contingent, but still determining, social *structure* and the actions selected by more or less well socialized *agents*", was not enough, because it amounted to nothing else but "[...] *dualism masquerading as a duality*".[280] It is no mystery that Jessop was referring to Archer here, or to be more precise, to her failure to suggest a methodology capable of capturing the *relational* nature of reality. He argued that, as long as social structure was seen as emergent and determining, regardless of the actions and subjects it was supposed to constrain, one could not address *duality* genuinely. As we saw in King's critique, in spite of her commitment to the *relational* and *dialectical* understanding of social

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[278] In what Jessop (ibid., 38) himself calls the first phase of the development of the approach he extended the idea of the relational nature of agents and structures to critical political economy and what later came to be known as cultural political economy

[279] The SRA has been applied to a variety of empirical issues. Among the most recent examples are Lagendijk (2010), Brighi (2007), Ioris (2012), Clark and Jones (2012), Zhwau (2013), Heigl (2011).

[280] Jessop 2007, 40–41.

reality, Archer's ontology and analytical strategy (the morphogenetic model) had adopted an unhelpful and polarizing *dualistic dichotomy* of absolute external constraints and unrestricted subjective action.[281] Locating agents and structures in different temporal domains had, indeed, led Archer to do exactly what Wendt and Giddens had proposed to be done – bracket one in order to study the other.[282] This separate examination of agents and structures, in turn, had reinforced the notion that the two components of reality had distinct essences – a *substantialist* position indeed.[283] Jessop argued, accordingly, that, just like the oscillating in between individualism and structuralism (to reveal the blindspots of each) had not been able to go beyond the impasse inflicting these *substantialist* approaches[284], neither had the *mechanical* combining of agents and structures (to produce some sort of a complete picture of the development of autopoietic systems as Archer had done), been able to do so.[285] Temporal bracketing only led to treating structures as objective, autonomous and causal, whereas agency ended up being perceived of as random intervening or disrupting moments to the otherwise faultlessly functioning and enduring external constraints.[286] Archer's ontological dualism could not help but to translate into a methodology incapable of incorporating the *relational* nature of agents and structures. The problem with Archer – as introduced in Chapter 5 – and this is indeed an important point – was the fact that, instead of suggesting a methodology capable of capturing *ontological duality,* she had changed the direction of the game and transformed the *anti-dualist relational ontology* into a *dualist*, (supposedly a "*relational") ontology,* to better accommodate her dualist (or more or less substantialist) methodology.[287]

Jessop reverted the question right back where it originally was. He, suggested that a *genuine duality* could be created only "[...] by dialectically relativizing (as opposed to mechanically relating) both *analytical* categories".[288] It was obvious that Archer's *ontological* dualism could

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[281] Ibid., 123.

[282] This is exactly what Giddens had suggested in the first place and which Archer was intent on avoiding but ended up committing to it herself as well.

[283] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 295.

[284] I attempted to show this in Chapter 5 by demonstrating that, even if located in Carlsnaes' tripartite model, the *substantialist* approaches of *individualism* and *holism* could not address the mutual constitution of agents and structures *over time* within a single analytical framework.

[285] Jessop 2007, 33–34.

[286] Hay 2002, 126: Hay writes that Archer's notion seems to imply "[...] residual structuralism punctuated only periodically yet infrequently by a largely unexplicated conception of agency."

[287] As such, Archer, just like Giddens, she had replicated analytical dualism. Nevertheless, Archer can be given extra points for the consistency that Giddens lacks: her dualist analytical model corresponded to the also *dualist* ontology she suggested, whereas Giddens' dualist methodological bracketing did not correspond to the anti-dualist ontology he suggested. (Hay 2002, 124.)

[288] Jessop 2007, 123.

not accommodate such a perspective, because it was committed to the study of agents and structures as independent elements, each with emergent properties of their own. Jessop rejected this arguing that structures did not precede agency nor did they *cause* action. The two were interwoven and dependent on each other for their existence. Once again, the separation of the two components had to be made only analytically, not ontologically.[289] The SRA, in other words, took Giddens' fallacious methodology a step further: neither of the metals from which the coin was forged could be seen or examined separately – what was observable was only the "[…] product of their fusion".[290] *Consequently, instead of centering their focus on agents or structures – which were only theoretical abstractions – Hay and Jessop indeed concentrated on the products of their fusion; the processes in which the two were spatio-temporally interlinked.* The existence of agents and structures came to be "[…] *relational* (structure and agency mutually constitutive) and *dialectical* (their interaction was not reducible to the sum of structural and agential factors treated separately)"[291] and "[…] that each moment in this dialectical relation contained elements from its 'other'".[292] Structural constraints never functioned objectively, but always "[…] temporally, spatially and were agency- and strategy-specific".

To create a methodological model capable of incorporating such an *anti-dualist relational* vision, Jessop replaced the abstract concepts of agents and structures with *strategic action* and *strategically selective context*, which was later also adopted by Colin Hay. This was done so that agency was brought into structures generating a structured context (an action setting) and structures into agency creating a contextualized actor (a situated agent).[293] Accordingly *agency became "[…] a strategic actor operating within a structure turned a strategically selective context".[294]* The ambiguous conceptual *dualism*, pointing towards a *substantialist* rather than a *relationalist* view of reality[295], was aptly overcome via a new conceptual pairing, a 'double relativization' as demonstrated below in Figure 5.

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[289] Hay 2002, 125.
[290] Ibid., 127; Holland 2012, 33-34.
[291] Hay 2002, 127.
[292] Jessop 1985, 340–343, cf. Jessop 2007, 34.
[293] Brighi 2013, 36.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Once again, dualism points towards a substantialist view of reality, because it gives ontological independency to structures and agents.
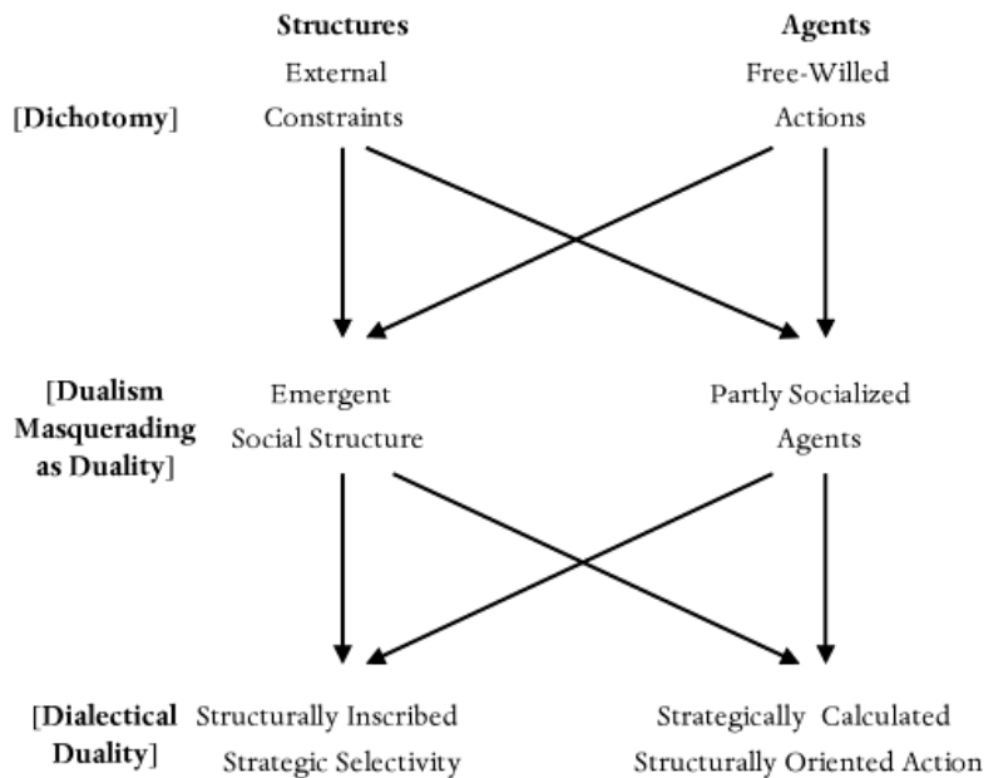
Figure 5: From dualism to duality: the strategic-relational approach. The figure is adopted from (Jessop 2007, 41.)

The essence of this analytical model lies in the fact that it turns the abstract into concrete and better reflects the way actors appropriate their environment, which in turn, delineates the boundaries of possible actions they can take. As was closely examined in Chapter 5, the *relationalist* understandings of the social reality agreed on the importance of including both agents and structures in scientific inquiry, but disagreed on exactly how the two ought to be related in an analytical model. [296] This particular reformulation of the agent-structure problem by Jessop, introduced in the matrix above, is indeed one such suggestion offered as an alternative to Archer's *dualist* vision of independently existing agents and structures. In the following, I elaborate on *how* and *why* Jessop ended up in this *anti-dualist* conceptualization of the inter-relationship between agents and structures.

The double relativization was conducted in two phases. Firstly the dichotomy of structures (social facts) and agents (free will) was overcome by relating partly socialized agents to the emergent social structures. This was indeed what Archer had already done, but was yet not

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[296] Hay 2002, 94.

enough. The second step was to relocate the partly socialized agents in the strategically selective context, and the emergent social structures into the structurally oriented action of strategic agents. Four major consequences followed from this reconceptualization.

Firstly, context became strategically rather than structurally selective. Its strategic selectivity consisted of two elements. The first one was the 'structural moment' referring to a given spatio-temporal context, which could be transformed by a given agent(s) pursuing a particular strategy during a specific time period. The second element was the 'conjuctural moment', which in turn, included features of the given spatio-temporal context that could be modified by specific strategies. The structure, thus, became *strategically selective* in the sense that not all outcomes or strategies were possible in different situations.[297] However, outcomes of action were never determined by the structure of the particular situation *per se* either. It was the unique point of intersection of the structural moment and the conjunctural opportunity, with the particular strategic actions located in specific place and time that determined outcomes, not a sequential logic of either one preceding the other (as Archer had suggested indeed); "[...] structural constraints always operate selectively; they are not absolute and unconditional but are always temporally, spatially, agency- and strategy-specific", concluded Jessop.[298]

Action, in turn was strategic in the sense that actors were consciously oriented towards their environment when trying to choose the best strategy to realize a set of given interests. They were capable of reformulating their own identities and interests depending on strategic calculations they made of the situation they were embedded in. An important observation was that strategic actors did not have complete knowledge of the complexities of their context, but still acted strategically primarily based on the values, ideas and perceptions (and misperceptions) that they had of the strategic selectivities of the environment they were embedded in. Sometimes these beliefs facilitated their capacity to realize given objectives while at other times they held up against the fulfillment of intentions, depending indeed on the *exact point of intersection between particular action and its specific context*.[299]

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[297] Jessop 2007, 40-41.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Hay 2002, 212.

What was the most important thing to take note of here was that, the perceptions held by actors were, the point of intersection between strategic conduct and strategically selective context. The two were reconciled by *discourse: "[…] ideas provide the point of mediation between actors and their environment", argued Hay.*[300] Strategic actors' point of access to the multilayered and structured context was always ideational, which is why ideas needed to be placed at the center of political analysis.[301] It was also important not to confuse this claim with idealism because according to the developed versions of SRA ideas, too, just like strategies were constantly selected *for* and *against* by the context (*discursive selectivity*); it was assumed by Hay, that, in order for particular beliefs to be able to inform strategic action they need to resonate with the context at least to some extent. At the same time, however, whether or not they corresponded to the real conditions of action, ideas exerted their influence on the development of the context.[302] The SRA was certainly not the only approach to realize the significance of belief systems or "cognitive templates", as Hay called them; as we saw in the case of the tripartite model as well, perception (constructed views and images of reality) was a "dispositional" factor that causally affected the *intentions* of actors.[303] One of the central arguments of Carlsnaes happened to be, indeed, the fact that foreign policy analysis should begin with the "intentional dimension" focusing on the level of *action* rather than the level of *observation*.[304]

Accepting the notion that ideas were the point of intersection between actors and their contexts implied that they were given an independent role in the *causation* of political outcomes regardless of whether or not they were based on misperceptions.[305] Beliefs were just as real as material objects.[306] If they led to material outcomes – as they usually did – then it followed that the ideal and the material were *dialectically* related – another ontologically dualistic separation relativized analytically by the SRA:

[300] Hay 2002, 209–210.

[301] Ibid., 213.

[302] Ibid., 214.

[303] Carlsnaes 1987, 98–99; Carlsnaes 2002, 343.

[304] Guzzini 2013, 5: Beginning with the level of action can be indeed attributed to Carlsnaes' Weberian-Schutzian interpretivism, which requires to go through the meaning-world of the analyzed actor to understand and explain its actions. However, the level of action is not alone sufficient to understand the dynamics involved with foreign policy development over time.

[305] Hay 2002, 210.

[306] Hay 2002, cf. Jessop 2007, 49; Hay argues indeed that, "[…] the ideas we hold about our environment (about what is feasible, possible and desirable, for instance) have substantive effects. Moreover, they do not do so independently of that environment itself – both the effects themselves and the ideas we fashion in the first place are mediated by the context in which we find ourselves. Consequently, as with the question of structure and agency, whilst it may be useful to distinguish analytically between the material and the ideational, it is important that an analytical strategy does not set into an ontological dualism."

"In sum, a dialectical understanding of the relationship between the ideational and the material is logically entailed by a dialectical understanding of the relationship between structure and agency", concludes Hay. [307]

Continuing on the interdependency of ideas and the material, I want to shed further light on an important observation made by Hay: *discursive selectivity*. The concept is related both to strategic selectivity as well as the cognitive templates through which actors filtered their context. Hay argued that contextual selectivities did not only confront actors' *material* position in relation to their environment, but also the *ideational policy paradigms* the political leadership chose to navigate the world with. Discourses had an important role mediating social construction.[308] In other words, the meanings actors gave to their context – the discursive construction of policy paradigms or normatively oriented "cognitive shortcuts" – influenced the likelihood of success in realizing interests. This, indeed, demonstrated the mutual constitutivity of *discursivity* and *materiality*. Hay argues that, for policy paradigms to be able to survive and continue functioning as cognitive templates through which actors interpret the world, they have to "[…] retain a certain resonance with those actors' direct and mediated experiences".[309] Therefore these policy paradigms were only *relatively* independent from the material. "Just as it imposes a strategic selectivity, then, then the context also imposes a *discursive selectivity*, selecting for and selecting against particular ideas, narratives and construction", concluded Hay.[310] If the two did not resonate, one was confronted with a *crisis* – a concept Hay linked to the occurrence of paradigm change.

Jessop developed this critical realist idea further in his examination of *cultural political economy* arguing that semiosis [311] was never purely intra-semiotic so that it involved merely the interaction of signs and meanings; it had an external reference as well. To study semiotics apart from their extra-semiotic contexts was to engage in "semiotic reductionism".[312] In other words, without linking the ideas to their external context, social causation became incomplete. On the other hand "[…] if material transformation [was] studied apart from its semiotic dimensions

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[307] Hay 2002, 210.
[308] Jessop 2007, 48.
[309] Hay 2002, 211.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Jessop defines as "the intersubjective production of meaning".
[312] This is indeed a clear manifestation of Jessop's commitment to ontological, epistemological as well as methodological commitment to critical realism.

and mediations, explanations of stability and change risked oscillating between objective necessity and sheer contingency".[313] While texts *produced* meanings and were involved in generating structures – such as the sovereign states system – this production was never independent from the constraints imposed on it by the *emergent*, non-semiotic qualities of this structure or from the inherently semiotic factors.[314]

Let me get back to the consequences of Jessop's reconceptualization of the agent-structure relationship after the brief distraction above. The second implication of the reformulation of the agent-structure relationship was related to the first one. The dual understanding of *strategic selectivity* as a 'structural constraint' and 'conjunctural opportunity' meant that, there was a chance of given spatio-temporal contexts being structural constraints for particular strategies, while at the same time forming conjunctural opportunities predisposed for transformation by some other strategies. What is more, what was a short-time structural constraint at a specific place for certain strategies, had a chance of turning into a conjunctural opportunity over a longer period of time, or if the agent changed its strategies. According to the SRA, actors, indeed, had the change to alter the selective impact – structural constraints or conjunctural opportunities – that the spatio-temporal context had on them, by forming new alliance strategies. Similar was the case with *spatial* dimensions across which actors could likewise operate.[315]

The third implication was based on the notion of reflexive and strategically calculating agents that were capable of *learning* from their experiences over time. Actors could indeed reformulate their strategies according to their changing perceptions of the context. I will get back to this point in the application of the SRA to foreign policy analysis in Chapter 6.4.4. "Effects of Action: Partial Transformation of the Context and Strategic Learning".

The fourth consequence involved the challenging of the orthodox conceptualization of power as a possession, something that was *held* by either agents or structures. As Emirbayer argued,

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[313] Jessop 2007, 51–53. He went on then to demonstrate his case by implying how semiosis was constitutive in securing the conditions for accumulation, that is, constructing capitalist economy together with extra-semiotic elements.

[314] Ibid., 238–242. In the concluding chapter of his inquiry, Jessop indeed links the evolutionary turn in social sciences to semiotic turn and articulates on the importance of the strategic-relational model for the examination of the development of "social imaginaries" such as sovereignty or the state in the interplay between semiotic and extra-semiotic mechanisms.

[315] Ibid., 21–37; 42–46.

the *relationalist/transactionalist* approach to social reality necessitated the reformulation of this understanding to address power as a concept of *relationship,* not one of *substance.* As such, the relationalists viewed that structures or agents did not have power. It was only within their interrelations that power became significant.[316] Following this understanding of reality, Jessop indeed adopted a contextualized examination of power, treating it as a *dependent* variable to be explained, rather than an independent variable explaining action. He relativized the concept to actors' relations: "For the scope of the explanandum (power) will vary with the relative tightness of the spatial and temporal definition of the conjuncture in which particular agents made a difference and of the field of possible effects and repercussions rippling out over social time and space."[317] Power was always a contextual matter, never given a priori, always contingent.[318] Balance of power fluctuated constantly and, therefore, became a matter to be determined after the actualization of a particular intersection of structural constraints, conjunctural opportunities and spatio-temporal strategies.[319]

6.3. Contingent Necessity in the Unfolding of Social Phenomena

Prior to applying the SRA to foreign policy analysis, there is one particularly important point I want to make, in order to avoid confusion in further discussions of the SRA. It is worth noting that the entire idea of the approach was based on an effort to address the *complexity* of the world without falling into an infinite explanatory regress.[320] With *ontological* complexity, Jessop referred to "[…] compositional, structural, or operational nature of events, phenomena, or other *relational* objects in the real world."[321] Just like *natural* events, mutually interacting *social* phenomena also had *naturally necessary features* or *potentialities*. These numerous potentialities could, of course, not be co-realized, which is why there was necessary indeterminacy and unpredictability about the operation of these phenomena – such as foreign policy development, for instance. Quoting Nicholas Rescher, Jessop clarified;

> "Entities and their relations in the real world not only have more properties than they ever will overtly manifest, but they have more than they possibly can ever manifest. This is so because the dispositional properties of things always involve

[316] Emirbayer 1997, 290–292.
[317] Jessop 2007, 40–43.
[318] Emirbayer 1997, 291–293.
[319] Jessop 2007, 45.
[320] Ibid., 232-233.
[321] Ibid., 2001, 6.

what might be characterized as *mutually preemptive* conditions of realization...
The perfectly possible realization of various dispositions may fail to be mutually
compossible, and so the dispositional properties of a thing cannot ever be
manifested completely – not just in practice, but in principle."[322]

Jessop tried to capture Rescher's point with "contingent necessity".[323] The concept may first
appear as an oxymoron. However, when examined closely, argued Jessop, one could see that
the two words had different referents; contingent necessity implied the "[...] *de facto* causal
determination (necessity) of events and phenomena with their *ex ante* indeterminability
(contingency). [324] Accordingly, social phenomena – whether sovereignty, globalization,
capitalism or foreign policy development – were viewed as having resulted from "[...] the non-
necessary interaction among different causal chains to produce a definite outcome that first
became necessary through the contingent articulation of various causal chains". [325] The
question here was, how to grasp such complexity?

With regard to *epistemology,* the infinite complexity of the world meant that it could not be
exhausted analytically. Social phenomena could never be reproduced in all of their complexity
depicted above. Weber, likewise, acknowledged this practical impossibility of following causal
relationships down to microscopic levels of links between assumedly atomistic components of
social reality. What one had to do, instead, was to isolate their explanandum (KRG's foreign
policy development) out of that complexity – or in the words of Jessop – choose "simplifying
entrypoints" to complexity.[326] Subsequently the dependent variable, in our case KRG's foreign
policy development, had to be explained with reference to specific causal precedents: *How
particular causal processes or their junctures produced the apparent outcomes of KRG's foreign
policy development, which would not have otherwise occurred?*[327]

To capture complexity in *methodology*, one had to develop a method capable of appreciating
contingent necessity.[328] The SRA introduced above was Jessop's suggestion of one such method.
Whatever an analyst chose to explain – the state, KRG's foreign policy, capitalism, the European

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[322] Rescher 1987, 116; cf. Jessop 2007, 227-228.
[323] Jessop 2007, 225–227.
[324] Jessop 2007, 229.
[325] Jessop 2007, 229.
[326] Ibid., 229–230.
[327] Jessop, December 2nd, 2013.
[328] Jessop 2007, 225–233.

Union or globalization – they had to define its "[...] material, social, and spatio-temporal limits". It was necessary to do so simply because of the fact that the world was too complex for an outcome to be perceived of as resulting from a single causal mechanism that could be isolated and pointed at objectively. Whatever one tried to rationalize, a strategic-relational conjunctural analysis pertinent to specific actors, interests, identities, spatio-temporal prospects and strategic goals became necessary.[329] Thus the SRA perceived of different explanandums such as the capitalist relation, or – in our case – KRG's current foreign policy development, as spatio-temporally located *conjunctures*, the *necessary* products of nothing more but *contingent* interactions in between various causal mechanisms both in the past as well as in the present.[330]

To cut the long story short, Jessop's suggested method told us that different settings in social reality involved a complex matrix in which agents were differentially located and, as such, their strategies unequally selected for and against, depending on the intersection of their given strategies with the particular context they were embedded in. Within this matrix there was a hierarchy of potential powers, which was determined by the actual possibilities of influencing elements in that context. Balance of power in such a complexity was, therefore, always determined *post hoc,* through the actualization of strategies. It was never a pre-given matter that could be studied apart from its context, as substantialists seemed to assume.

6.4. The Application of the Strategic-Relational Approach to Foreign Policy Analysis

6.4.1. Strategically Selective Context, Foreign Policy Strategy and Political Paradigms

In the previous chapter I demonstrated some of the central concepts related to the reconceptualization of the agent-structure problem. In this chapter I will outline in closer detail how a strategic-relational approach could be applied to the study of foreign policy development at the intersection of a *strategically selective context* and *strategic action,* formulated on the basis of hegemonic *policy paradigms*[331] – cognitive templates, through which the world is interpreted and subsequent action formulated. Let me begin by Jessop's understanding of the

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[329] Ibid., 231–233.
[330] Ibid., 233 cf. Luhmann 1979; 6,13.
[331] These are the three concepts that Elisabetta Brighi (2013) also uses to make sense of Italy's foreign policy development.

relationality of reality in order to be able to construct a *relational* model of foreign policy development on the basis of that understanding.

I want to start by re-emphasizing a point made by King and the SRA: the *context* within which strategic action ought to be examined was nothing but the crystallization of *past* successful and unsuccessful strategies (differential tendencies) of agents with conflicting interpretations of the world.[332] For Jessop, the state was one such strategically selective context and the different political forces within it epitomized distinctive *tendencies* aiming to triumph over their *counter-tendencies*. He argued, accordingly, that the state was the *emergent effect* of the interaction of *past* strategic selectivities, which – over time – had developed "[…] a configuration characterized by a 'structured coherence'".[333] In other words, Jessop claimed that states had come into existence through "[…] evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection and retention", leading to the formation of the structured coherences or historical blocs that they were today. These zones of relative stability, in turn, had their tactics or social arrangements[334] that attempted to eliminate conflicts and maintain a measure of coherence by imposing relative unity within. The tactics of these self-organizing systems (the state in Jessop's case) was what Jessop referred to as "*strategic selectivities" of the context*. He defined selectivities as the ways in which structured coherences such as the state had "[…] a specific, differential impact on the ability of various political forces to pursue particular interests and strategies in specific spatio-temporal contexts".[335] The impact was *differential* because selectivities were dependent on what actors' strategies aimed at: if KRG's objective was to autonomously export its oil via Turkey, hostile relations with Ankara (selectivity) would impose a structural constraint on it, whereas hostile relations would be insignificant were the KRG not even to aim at the export of its oil through Turkey. As such, outcomes were structurally underdetermined and dependent on more or less contingent strategies actors selected. Contexts favored strategies in line with their selectivities, while rejecting those opposing them, which led to particular outcomes being favored at the expense of others.[336]

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[332] This was a point missed by Archer yet clarified by King: structures (context) are reducible to action (agents).

[333] Jessop 2007, 37; 46: With a "structured coherence" Jessop refers to a particular setting such as the state, the *de facto* state, the international system or *any* such configuration consisting of a complex web of mutually interdependent systems (economic, political, cultural etc.). For more see 6.2. "The Reconceptualization of the Agent-Structure Relationship in Methodology".

[334] Jessop calls them spatio-temporal fixes.

[335] Jessop 2002, 40.

[336] Hay 2002, 129.

As we have learned, the *relationalist* understanding of reality also necessitated the accommodation of the idea of reproduction and transformation – the notion of a dynamic process in constant motion. Macro-processes needed the constant input of micro-processes in order to survive – hence the implicit assumption of the *relational* nature of reality here. Acknowledging this, Jessop continued that, in order for these "sites of strategy"[337] to continue existing, it was integral that the tendencies in line with their strategic selectivities became continuously actualized in specific spatio-temporal conditions.[338] The activation of these particular tendencies did not only mean keeping the specific strategic selectivities of structured coherences, such as the state, alive. It also meant a simultaneous limiting of the influence of their *counter-tendencies*, which constantly threatened to disrupt the reproduction of the particular selectivities of this system. Historical blocs such as the state were therefore organic entities, never finished and always *unstable*, because their strategic selectivities (constraining and enabling elements) depended on their actualization in particular moments at particular times.[339]

The framework depicted above was a clear manifestation of Jessop's relationalist understanding of reality. Even more importantly, it was a clear manifestation of his *anti-dualist* relationalism rejecting an ontological separation between agents and structures; as we saw, reality was presented through the mutual constitutivity of strategy (action) and selectivities (context). Now, as was encouraged by Jessop himself and realized by Elisabetta Brighi and Colin Hay, the SRA was indeed distanced from its original application on the state to address a variety of *dualities* in different theoretical frameworks. Out of these, the agent-structure and the ideational-material dualities have become the most relevant and, as such, the most apparent in this inquiry. Furthermore, Jessop argued that the idea of *State Power* in its entirety was to point to the ability of the SRA to address complexity (via *relationalism*) in other theoretical realms. It was therefore, not for no reason that Jessop consciously suggested his *relationalist* research program to be continued by applying it to other empirical issues:[340]

> "[...] the SRA can be used to interrogate other theoretical approaches, emergent concepts, and empirical analyses, to highlight their interrelated structural and strategic dimensions, and to explore their implications."[341]

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[337] Jessop 2007, 36. Acording to Jessop states are sites of strategy indeed.
[338] With spatio-temporal conditions he meant instances unfolding in particular spaces at particular times.
[339] Ibid., 35–53.
[340] Jessop 2007, 22; 32–38; 225–245.
[341] Ibid., 53.

Following Brighi and Hay, I, therefore attempt to make a small contribution on my part by applying the SRA to the analysis of the foreign policy development of the KRG. What this means in practice is that, where for Jessop it was the state that constituted the strategically selective context within which actors' strategies battled; in my case, it is the overall environment of the KRG consisting of, for instance, strategy-specific ideational constraints such as the sovereign states-system, material geopolitical conditions such as the land-lockedness of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, as well as constraints formulated by the complex intersection of different actors' – in my case mostly Ankara's and Baghdad's – strategies. Together these elements will comprise "the structured coherence" of this inquiry, which interacts with the autonomous region's *strategies,* through its spatio-temporal *strategic selectivities.*[342] Just like the state, the KRG's context will also be treated as the product of *past* strategies and selectivities as well as the terrain of *present* foreign policy strategies. As such, the leadership of this entity will be, accordingly, viewed as inhabiting a densely structured system possessing different tactics to maintain its relative unity, order or 'structured coherence' – just like the state did*.* These tactics will be revealed in the continuously transforming set of selectivities that favor particular strategies over others. Most importantly, they will *always* be *relational to the strategies of the KRG, never objective, absolute or unconditional with regard to them,* (as we saw in the example given above on the relationship between the strategy of autonomous export of oil and the selectivity of the hostile relationship with Turkey.) Since selectivities will always be relational to strategies, the particular *position* of the KRG in *relation* to its *context* will provide a conjunctural opportunity for the adoption of certain foreign policy decisions, whereas it will form a structural constraint for the adoption of some other decisions. The strategies of the autonomous regions' leadership will be, in turn, oriented toward the selectivities of their environment, actualizing them in specific conditions and thereby resisting counter-tendencies or alternative strategies.

To cut the long story short, KRG's foreign policy will be studied as a contingently, yet-path-dependently unfolding development (contingent necessity), which results from three interacting and mutually interdependent factors. The first one is KRG's *strategies* formulated

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[342] Even though I will return to this subject at a later phase, I want to, however, highlight already at this point that none of these factors within the context of the KRG, can explain *alone* its foreign policy development, for it is the particular intersection of the selectivities of this context with the ideas of the KRG (on the basis of which it formulates its strategies) that lead to foreign policy outcomes.

on the basis of its interests. The second factor is the *strategic selectivities of an organic context,* whose reproduction is dependent on the interaction of different actors' strategies. The third one is the cognitive template through which the KRG interprets the selectivities of its context and formulates its foreign policy strategies. Furthermore, when within the state *strategic selectivity* (and *discursive selectivity,* for that matter) is manifested in how elites promote specific actions or narratives at the expense of others [343], the strategic (and discursive) selectivity of KRG's context reveals itself, similarly, in – for instance – how the prevailing international norms tend to favor particular discourses/paradigms, such as that of sovereign statehood, over others. The model as illustrated by Colin Hay can be seen below to make sense of the process of foreign policy development over time.
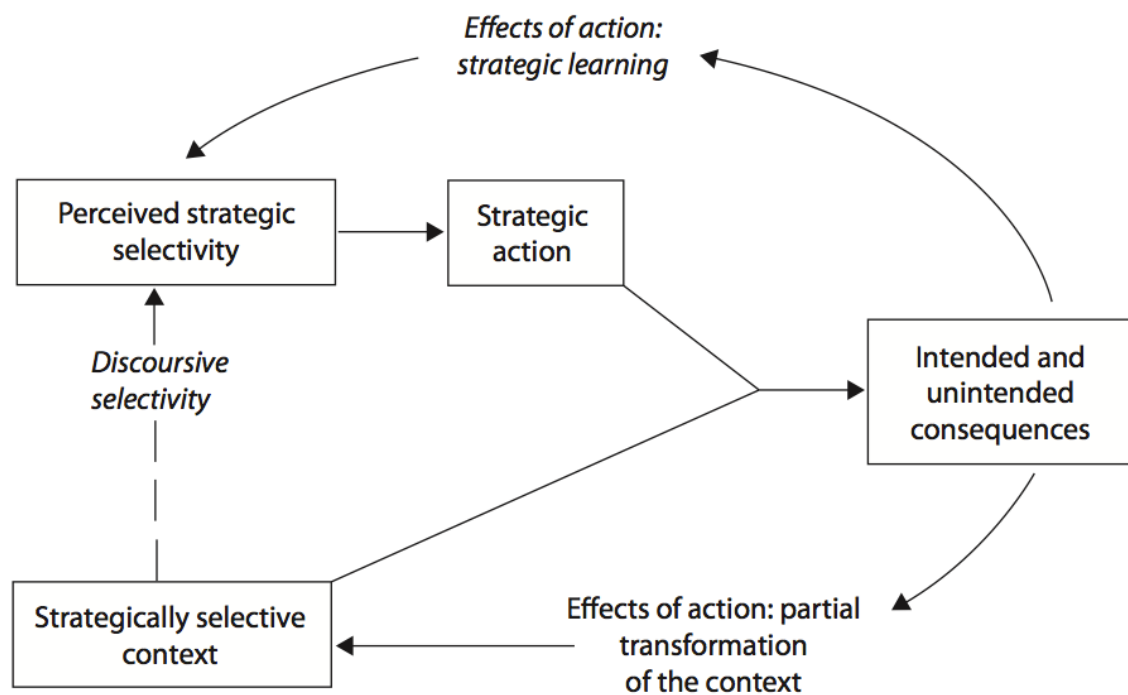

Figure 6 Strategic and discursive selectivity as adopted from Hay 2002, 212.

6.4.2. The Formulation of Strategies

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[343] Alternatively, in capitalist relations strategic selectivity was implicated in how particular interests and strategies in line with the system's general perceptions of interest were selected for.

Actors are *strategic* in the sense that they are perceived of being *reflexive* agents aware of the context within which they are embedded as well as capable of monitoring the consequences of the strategies they deploy. Political conduct is oriented towards achieving particular goals, albeit by no means predetermined.[344] The interests foreign policy actors possess are dependent the *perceptions* they have of the strategic selectivities of their context as well *past experiences* with regard to the success and failure of previously adopted strategies. Interests are always *constructed* and *discursively* mediated; hence the imperative role given to *ideas*. While mediating in between internal preferences and the international context, the strategies of other players have to constantly be taken into account – hence the *relationality* of the model in conceptualizing context and conduct as mutually constituting – as opposed to Archer's sequential understanding of the two. It is indeed very important to note that the strategies that actors adopt is a *perceptual* matter relating to both the extent and quality of their information about their environment and the *normative* orientation of these actors towards the context within which they are situated, argues Hay.[345] This is a clear point of overlap between the SRA and Carlsnaes' tripartite model: the latter's "dispositional dimension" of foreign policy explanation also takes note of *values* and *perceptions* constructing the intentions of a leadership.[346] The rationalistic behavior of the leadership in the "intentional dimension", that is the strategies they deploy to attain a given set of intentions – is, according to Carlsnaes, caused by their *normative* and *perceptual* views found in the "dispositional dimension". These perceptions and values, in turn, are in a reciprocal relationship with structural and institutional conditions of action to be examined in the structural dimension. However, Carlsnaes' categorization of foreign policy explanation into three separate realms, leads to an inability to address the temporal co-extensivity of strategies, perceptions and selectivities within a single model.[347]

As a result of incomplete information, the interpretations actors give to their context are based on both consciously and unconsciously constructed images of their context, not necessarily responding to the real conditions of their action. A leader may for instance misinterpret its relation to the contextual situation it is embedded in or to an opposing party it is engaging

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[344] Brighi and Hill 2008, 149.
[345] Hay 2002, 194.
[346] Carlsnaes 1987, 98. Carlsnaes terms values and perceptions as the "[...] limitations related to information processes", indeed.
[347] This issue was examined in 5.1. "Dynamic Statics of Inputs and Outputs Versus the Diachronic Analysis of Processes."

with.[348] Either way, since foreign policy leaders acknowledge the unpredictable and contingent quality of the context they are embedded, the possession of some sort of framework becomes necessary for them – be it based on right or wrong perceptions of that context.[349] Carlsnaes discusses this matter with reference to various meanings actors assign and ascribe to their context. Hay, in turn, argues that actors become reliant upon "cognitive shortcuts" – particular mappings of the terrains they are embedded in or lenses through which they navigate the world. These lenses can be understood as *policy paradigms.*[350] An example of such a paradigm can be economic liberalism/socialism or nationalism/internationalism; hence the value-laden nature of these templates. No matter what color the lenses, actors' access to their context is always *discursively mediated* through specific paradigms. The formulation of strategies on the basis of which actors later deploy their policies reflect these understandings no matter how misinformed they were.[351]

Hay puts an emphasis on the prominence of differentiating between his strategic actors and those of rational choice theory. For Hay, actors are not necessarily *consciously strategic*, which is why he distinguishes between intuitively and explicitly strategic actions. The former refers to routine or habitual strategies based on *perceptions* (leaving open the chance that they may be based on misunderstanding of the conditions of action as was implied above) of the strategic context *and* the likely consequences of particular political conduct. Giddens refers to this as *practical consciousness*. Explicitly strategic action is also based on the perceptions of an actor – be it an individual or a leadership of a government. However, unlike in the case of intuitively strategic action, in explicitly strategic action actors render explicit their perceptions of the context as well as their strategic calculations on the potential consequences and reactions that their strategies would entail. As such, we can say that explicitly strategic action consists of a conscious construction and reformulation of strategies in an evaluation of different options through which *intentions* and *goals* may be achieved.[352] Hay's explicitly strategic action can be located at the intersection of Carlsnaes "intentional" and "dispositional dimensions" introduced earlier; actors both consciously and unconsciously construct their environments in specific

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[348] Carlsnaes 1987, 98–100.
[349] Hay 2002, 211.
[350] Ibid., Jack Holland (2013, 34) argues that strategic-relational model's emphasis on policy paradigms can be likened to"framing" in IR invoked for instance by Barnett and Balzacq. Hay (2002, 195) himself also refers to "framing of political action" when discussing the power of political leadership as preference-shaping and agenda-setting.
[351] Ibid., 211.
[352] Ibid., 200–212.

ways based on their values and perceptions of that reality. Hay argues likewise that, in practice, strategies are formulated with the combination of both practical consciousness and an explicit strategy-formation process. Action is always both intuitive as well as explicitly strategic.

6.4.3. *Deployment of Strategies within Discursive and Strategic Selectivities*

Once formulated, foreign policy strategies are then operationalized in action. The likelihood of achieving particular objectives is very much dependent on two matters: first, on how strategically placed these actors are on the terrain – how they are positioned in *relation* to their context (strategic selectivity) and, second, on how they give *meaning* to their context (discursive selectivity) – the policy paradigms they possess. With regard to the first issue, the context is, indeed, selective of strategies in a sense that at particular times and spaces only specific courses of strategic action are available to the foreign policy leadership.[353] Among these paths to take only a few will potentially lead to the realization of actors' given intentions. [354] The 'structured coherence' of the context, whose spatio-temporal strategic selectivity varies constantly, makes some *actions* more successful and others sanctioned, depending on the exact relational moment between strategic action and contextual moment. However, as Jessop suggests, contexts do not *cause foreign policy* action. They are, instead, invested with *manifold* spatio-temporal *strategic* and *discursive* selectivities that are co-existent and indistinguishable from strategic action oriented towards them. As I have been trying to point out, context is always specific to an actor, choosing for and against its particular foreign policies, never conditioning behavior apriori. Since context is indeed never "[...] a single causal mechanism with a universal, unitary logic, but is multicentric, multiscalar, multitemporal, and multiform, it does not generate a single, uniform set of pressures" towards actors either.[355] Foreign policy leaderships will be, consequently, affected differentially by the strategic selectivity of their context depending on their position in *relation* to that context – just like "[...] all states and state capacities will be pressured by *globalization* but each will be affected in different ways" argues Jessop.[356]

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[353] As argued on multiple occasions, the context within which foreign policy strategies are deployed domain forms an "[...] unevenly distributed configuration of opportunity and constraint to actors". (Ibid., 209.)
[354] Ibid., 209.
[355] Jessop 2007, 191.
[356] Ibid.

With regard to the second matter (how the discursively selective contexts favor particular interpretations given to the context over others) – it is important to note that, sometimes, discursive selectivities indeed "[...] may eliminate a whole range of realistic alternatives and may, in fact, over time prove to be a systematic misrepresentation of the context in question."[357] This observation made by Hay is of significant importance with regard to the inquiry at hand. Here is why; the paradigm of sovereign statehood through which the KRG – and other *de facto* states for that matter – are assumed to be filtering their context through, is demonstrably based on an institutionalized and constantly reproduced misinterpretation of reality[358], which favors particular strategies and eliminates, in turn, some others – equally realistic – strategies for the KRG. Although not explicitly referring to the *relationalist* approaches to reality or the SRA, Caspersen demonstrates this point in an illustrative example. Discursive selectivities in the international ideational context select for the idea of sovereign statehood. As such, they favor strategies aiming at state-building. It is *partly* for this reason that national liberation movements conventionally choose to transform into administrative governments and further into *de facto* states. It is also *partly* for this reason that such entities will continue to be driven by the idea of statehood in their future foreign policies.[359] It is worth noting here that the entire survival of these *de facto* states is assumed to be based on these strategies in line with the discursive selectivities of the context; hence the material consequences of ideational structures. Were KRG to ignore or fail to read these selectivities off of its context, its entire survival would be threatened. The sub-chapter 7.1.2., will delve deeper into this issue of sovereign statehood as the cognitive template through which the KRG filters its context.

6.4.4. Effects of Action: Partial Transformation of the Context and Strategic Learning

Once conducted, strategic action causes direct effects on the context in relation to which it had been formed and within which consequent strategies will occur.[360] The context, albeit not

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[357] Jessop 2007, 49.

[358] With an institutionalized and constantly reproduced misinterpretation of reality, I am referring to the Westphalian state system.

[359] Caspersen 2010, 117. I have highlighted the *partly* because one of the utmost central claims of the SRA is that structures do not *cause* action. As such the ideational structure of the sovereign state system does not straightforwardly *cause* KRG's state-building process nor its future foreign policy behavior, for the deployment of eventual strategies are up to how the leadership interprets the selectivities of its context. An equally viable option for the KRG would be to ignore selectivities in favor of sovereignty. This would, however, have critical consequences with regard to its survival.

[360] Since strategic action is informed by ideas, we can once again see how ideas exert influence on the context.

changed exhaustively, will be altered by that action at least to some extent. It, then, impinges back upon the actors responsible for the particular action. As a result these actors' position in relation with their context may indeed change.[361] It is, once again, important to highlight here that deployed foreign policy strategies have both *intended* and *unintended* consequences, which makes social reality a path-dependent rather than a preordained structuratum. [362] As interpretative actors, foreign policy leaderships are however, able to monitor and reflect upon the consequences of their decisions. They assess the impact of their decisions in terms of whether or not they led to the objectives that were initially desired. Depending on their evaluations, reflexive actors may then, come to revise and modify or completely reject their previously constructed interests and strategies, not only based on the changes in their context (either independent of their own action or as a consequence of their own action) but indeed also as the result of *strategic learning*. [363]

Strategic learning assumes that albeit actors lack complete knowledge of their environment, they have the capacity to learn and draw lessons from past experiences. This kind of political learning is of particular importance when trying to understand *change* and development in foreign policy. It is essential to note, however, that political learning does not necessarily lead to better navigation skills when formulating future foreign policies. The reason is quite simple: foreign policy interventions will always leave a unique imprint on their context: consequences of action, including other actors' responses to those policies will necessarily be more or less unpredictable.[364] What is more, the always present chance of the context changing independent of the actors' own actions, may also alter the position of a political entity in relation to it, adding to the already unpredictable and contingent nature of political interaction. However, as argued earlier (in 6.4.3.), it is important to note that once foreign policy strategies are deployed, the feedback given by the strategically selective context (feedback also referring to whether or not these foreign policies can be considered as successful vis-à-vis the objectives they aimed at) will come to be dependent on the relative position the consequences of this strategy will put the actor into, as well as on the correspondence of the realities of that situation with the beliefs held by these political actors.

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[361] Hay 2002, 209–215.
[362] Jessop 2007, 190–191.
[363] Hay 2002, 126–134.
[364] Hay 2002, 211.

To cut the long story short, there is a constant interplay between the context and the actor as well as feedback from one to the other; foreign policy conduct feeds back to the context, which it restructures or leaves untouched. This particular conduct also feeds back into the actor by making adaptation possible.[365] The model is indeed labeled *relational* due to the fact that actors' conduct becomes intelligible when analyzed in relation to their context, whereas the context makes sense only if perceived of from the perspective of the particular actor, which is when the structure becomes truly "real". As I have been trying to demonstrate throughout the introduction of the SRA, neither actors' strategies nor its context can be examined in *isolation,* separated temporally when trying to explain foreign policy development.[366]

6.5. Semiotic Imaginaries as the Consolidators of Structured Coherences

In the three previous sub-chapters (6.4.2., 6.4.3., and 6.4.4.) I attempted to outline the contingently unfolding process of foreign policy development within contextual selectivities, strategic action and cognitive templates. There is, however, an aspect of the SRA that I want to emphasize in particular, which is why I have devoted this entire sub-chapter to it: the role of *ideas.*[367] I have touched upon the importance of beliefs and perceptions throughout the introduction of both the *substantialist* as well as the *relationalist* approaches to foreign policy analysis. However, there are two significant consequences that follow in particular from the SRA's understanding of ideas. I want to address them briefly.

Firstly, acknowledging the importance of ideas raises the question of *power*. The reason is quite simple: those able to provide cognitive filters, through which actors access the context, exert significant influence on the development and realization of particular policies. This in turn and – secondly – leads to the importance of paying attention to ideational and discursive factors in political analysis.[368] The concluding remark of Hay gains particular importance with regard to the fact that this research examines the KRG as a *de facto* state driven by the idea of statehood:

> "More specifically, it [the importance of ideas] suggests the need to consider the *dominant paradigms* and frames of reference through which actors come to understand the contexts in which they must act and, above all, the *mechanisms and*

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[365] Brighi 2013, 38.
[366] Jessop 2007, 46.
[367] These two consequences are defined and examined by Hay (2002, 213–215).
[368] Hay 2002, 210–214; Jessop 2007, 47-49.

processes by which such *paradigms emerge, become challenged and ultimately replaced.* Periods of perceived crisis – in which the disparities between previously unquestioned cognitive frameworks and the 'realities' they purport to present are starkly revealed – here acquire a particular significance.[369] [italics added].

I have added the italics to emphasize a point of intersection between the strategic-relational approach and the *de facto* state theorization. Now, based on their comprehensive research, Caspersen, Bartmann and Stansfield argue that the dominant paradigm driving the foreign policies and domestic developments of *de facto* states is that of *sovereign statehood,* resulting from their contested sovereignty in the Westphalian states system. The idea of full statehood is the hegemonic norm driving and constituting the policies of these entities. *De facto* states filter their context through the concept of statehood and formulate their strategies on the basis of it. The power of this idea holds them captive determining their internal development and external relations. As such the idea of statehood, as argued earlier, is strategically and discursively selected for in the international realm.[370] At the same time, however, the very persistence of that idea is dependent on its actualizations in space and time. Jessop tries to clarify this *relationalist* understanding at the heart of the SRA by arguing that configurations such as sovereignty can be seen as having *structural* and *strategic* moments.[371] Structural moments refer to the objective manifestations sovereignty: *de facto* states' foreign policy actions aiming at achieving statehood *actualize* the dominance of the system. Strategic moments are, instead manifested in the *conscious* promotion of the idea not only via discourse but also action: *De facto* states, indeed, also consciously promote and reconstruct the idea of "full independence or nothing" in their internally as well as externally oriented policies.[372]

There is an ironic paradox here, however. De facto states' perceptions and values originating from the *discursive* bias of the context, predispose them towards strategic action aimed at achieving complete statehood, in KRG's case complete autonomy from Baghdad. [373] During the course of their foreign policy development, these entities may change and modify their

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[369] Hay 2002, 214–215.
[370] Ibid., 215.
[371] Jessop 2007, 176–197. When examining structural and strategic moments, Jessop does not talk about sovereignty in particular, but instead of globalization. However, as he has argued sovereignty can be examined via the SRA just like any other configuration – be it globalization, the capitalist relation or the state.
[372] Caspersen (2010, 117) argues, indeed, that just like *de facto* states cannot hold against external threats if they didn't maintain the idea of statehood in their foreign policies, they cannot not hold against the demands of the internal audience either, if not for the invocation of this same idea: "Selling non-recognition to internal audience is fraught with difficulty".
[373] Hence it will only *predispose,* not *cause* them to do so.

strategies[374] (as we will come to see in KRG's case) but the paradigm through which they interpret their context remains the same.[375] As such it is assumed that *de facto* states like the KRG formulate their foreign policy strategies on the basis of the idea of gaining full independence. Whether or not this is what the leadership of these entities *actually* aims at is irrelevant, because it will invoke the idea anyway considering the fact that it is crucial to the survival of the entities they are governing. When realized, the consequences of these strategic policies, however, paradoxically select against the achievement of the very same statehood that the discursive selectivity was supposed to be encouraging: the international community time over time proves to be unwilling to officially accept new members in the club. This, in turn, leaves *de facto* states in a state of ambiguity and confusion: the context is telling them to drive towards full statehood but when they do so in order to survive, the feedback given by the strategic selectivities of their context clashes against their strategies.

The discursive bias against *existence* beyond the sovereignty/no-sovereignty dichotomy seems to remain intact; the international community cannot accommodate anything in between recognized statehood and no statehood. Attempts to De facto states, in turn, paradoxically reinforce this bias in order to survive; they are actualizing the strategic selectivities of sovereignty with their strategies aiming at the obtainment of full independence. There seems to be no way out of this cycle, even though the very existence of *de facto* states as spaces in a constant state of transition challenge the notion of sovereignty and point towards the need to accommodate existence beyond the either/or dichotomy of sovereignty. The reality, which this discursively favored cognitive template of sovereignty is supposed to be representing, is undergoing extreme transformation, while its *systematic misrepresentation* remains paradoxically reproduced time after time. This supposition takes us back to the question introduced Chapter 3 on de facto states: for how long can belief systems (semiotic mechanisms) that no longer represent realities (extra-semiotic mechanisms) on the ground be maintained?[376]

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[374] This marks the intentional dimension of Carlsnaes indeed.

[375] This, in turn corresponds to the "dispositional dimension" of Carlsnaes.

[376] Jessop 2007, 243. Another interesting research agenda for the development of the SRA suggested by Jessop involves the examination of the relative weight of semiotic and extra-semiotic mechanisms in the emergence of new social imaginaries. His preliminary hypotheses suggest that semiotic mechanisms weight more in the phase of variation whereas extra-semiotic mechanisms in the stages of retention. Moreover, their weight also seems to vary according to the type of social field or institutional order in which these imaginaries emerge.

The importance of imaginaries in the reproduction of systems of dominance is immense. However, to conclude, I would like to re-emphasize the fact that the aim of this inquiry is not to examine the change and development of emergent social facts or institutions such as *sovereignty* through the SRA, although I have touched upon the subject on a variety of occasions. My interest and constant elaboration on this issue can be, instead, attributed to an attempt to highlight the importance of understanding the mutual constitutiveness of *hegemonic ideas* and *material reality* in the contingent, yet, path-dependent *processes* of foreign policy development. Nevertheless, while pointing to this "[...] dialectic of discursivity and materiality", I can also, at the same time, demonstrate how *sovereignty* – as an institution – is constantly being reproduced by actors such as the KRG.[377] One of the assumptions of this inquiry is, indeed, that the foreign policy development of the KRG symbolizes strategic action based on a systematic misperception of reality.

6.6. Conclusions

I began this chapter by introducing the critique targeted at Archer's unhelpful ontological and analytical dualism that could not – according to the proponents of the SRA – genuinely capture the *relational* nature of reality (6.1.). As an alternative, I suggested the SRA, which began from correcting Archer's erroneous ontology and suggested an *anti-dualist relational* approach to reality. Accordingly, I elaborated in closer detail on the implications of Jessop's reconceptualization of the agent-structure relationship (6.2.). This was followed by the application of the SRA to foreign policy analysis (6.3.). Finally, I dedicated a sub-chapter to the examination of the dialectical relationship between *ideas* and the *material* through the SRA. I did so mainly in order to shed light on the peculiarity of *sovereignty* examined from de facto states' perspective (6.4.).

Based on the first three sub-chapters I concluded that the SRA did not drift too far away from the morphogenetic approach proposed by Carlsnaes. The two seemed to overlap on a variety of issues, which was naturally the result of the *relationalist view* of reality both of them held; foreign policy *action* was clearly distinguished from foreign policy *outcomes*; both intended and unintended consequences were accounted for; the significance of the discursively mediated

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[377] Ibid., 240–241.

nature of reality was highlighted and both agreed on the importance of diachronic analysis.[378] However, there were also fundamental differences in the relationalist ontologies of Archer and Jessop, which led to the separation of their *methodological* paths. *Archer's model could not genuinely capture the dynamics of structure and agency responsible for foreign policy development within a single framework*. In her morphogenetic cycles, she situates the context as preceding and anteceding agents' actions, and, as such, locates the two components of reality in different temporal domains.[379] The morphogenetic model suggests that the actor enters a pre-structured context, which it then changes with its action and these changes, in turn, will form a new structural context into which subsequent actions will enter. Applied to KRG's foreign policy development this would mean that in 2003, the leadership of the region entered a pre-existing context consisting of the recently toppled Baathist regime. Subsequently, the KRG changed this context by different foreign policy actions aiming towards gaining more autonomy from Baghdad. The changed context then reacted to this and further responses were formulated. The subsequent cycles would have been examined in a similar manner up until we had reached the present time. It is important to note here that Archer's model would have, for instance, fallaciously depicted the fall of the regime as having *preceded* and *caused* KRG to seek more autonomy. The region's leadership's strategies would have been viewed as *intervening* elements in an otherwise independent environment; KRG's rational actors had entered the previously structured domain, on which their interests were based, and then they had acted on the basis of those interest. The biggest problem here is that, if one is to follow Archer, foreign policy action and its structural environment become *sequentially* rather than *reciprocally* linked.

The SRA steps in here: how could one give a genuine understanding of *relationality* of reality if they examined agents and structures independently? One could not locate structures before agents in an analytical model if they assumed the two to be *ontologically* dependent on each other! Archer was not a genuine *relationalist*, would the *SRA* criticize. Jessop and Hay, therefore, formulated a new model to make sense of the situation; one had to examine KRG's strategies ("agency") in relation to their temporally co-existing contextual selectivities ("structures"); and study contextual selectivities ("structures"), in turn, in relation to the temporally co-existing

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[378] Hay 2002, 149.
[379] Brighi 2013, 34–35: Brighi argues, indeed, that this king of account leads to the treatment of agents and structures as if they had properties that were independent from each other.

strategies oriented towards them. Applied to KRG's foreign policy development this would mean that KRG's autonomy-seeking strategies in 2003 were relational to the spatio-temporally co-existing strategic selectivities of its context (the conjunctural opportunity brought about by the fall of the regime); and the strategic selectivities of the context (the fall of the regime) were relational to the autonomy seeking-strategies of the KRG in a sense that the end of the Baathist regime became a conjunctural opportunity only when relativized to KRG's strategy. Both the context and action made sense only when examined simultaneously. Neither of these two existed independently from each other, pre-existed one another in time, or caused each other.

One more fundamental point sets Archer's model apart from that of the SRA. Archer examines only how contexts respond to actors' behavior, but neglects the examination of how these responses are filtered through the actors' perceptions, paradigms and narratives, and consequently internalized in the political process. It is not only the context, which responds and is influenced by foreign policy actions. Effects of action reach actors as well: as monitoring and reflexive agents they may change their preferences as a result of the consequences of their action; hence the importance of *strategic learning* emphasized by the SRA.[380] Archer's approach indeed has a more or less objectivist treatment of agency, which the SRA manages to overcome via the emphasis it puts on the dialectical relationship between the material and the ideational.

Finally, with regard to Carlsnaes tripartite model, I want to highlight that even if situated in Archer's morphogenetic cycles, it still formulates three separate domains of explanation, which necessarily comes to be rather problematic if one aims at demonstrating the mutual constitutivity of action and context. Although the relationship between the domains can incorporate a complex understanding of causality (teleological, causal, etc.), the tripartite approach nevertheless assumes a hierarchical relationship between them. For instance the material/institutional constraints appear to determine values and perceptions.[381] The SRA, instead, makes no such assumptions and manages to capture more coherently the relationship between ideas, context and action within contingently unfolding *processes*. It mostly for these above-mentioned reasons that I have ended up choosing the critical realist *anti-dualist methodology* provided by the SRA rather than the *dualist model* suggested by Archer.

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[380] Ibid., 38.
[381] Brighi 2013, 25.

CHAPTER 7: KRG'S FOREIGN POLICY POST-2003: A STRATEGIC-RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

7.1. Operationalizing the Strategic-Relational Approach

7.1.1. Plan of Implementation

Over the past ten years the KRG[382] has been able to solidify its autonomy and strengthen its status not only within Iraq but regionally and internationally as well. As Gareth Stansfield has written:

> "Were there any proof required of the status the Kurdistan Region of Iraq now has on the international stage, the networking activities of its president, Massoud Barzani, at the World Economic Forum in Davos at the end of January 2013 would give some indication. Only ten years earlier, Barzani would have struggled to be received as anything other than the leader of his party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) — and even then, the reception in some quarters would have been frosty. Now, in Davos and other places, he is received as the president of the Kurdistan Region by international leaders and heads of the world's largest companies."[383]

This is indeed a statement made over a year ago, when more than two million barrels of Kurdish oil had yet not been shipped for sail from the Port of Ceyhan, without the approval of Baghdad.[384] With the examination of KRG's foreign policy development over the past ten years, starting from March 2003 and ending in June 2014, I attempt to demonstrate how the current status of KRG's de facto statehood with regard to economic independence or, alternative its current situation in terms of the dispute on the limits of its autonomy with Baghdad, and economic cooperation in the energy sector with Turkey, came into being at the intersection of particular *foreign policy strategies*, *contextual selectivities* and the *policy paradigm* of sovereign

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[382] In this inquiry, when speaking of the leadership of the KRG, I will be referring to *contextually situated individuals, who identify with the collectivities they represent and on behalf of which they are acting vis-à-vis "them" – other actors*. This implies yet another important assumption: no matter how egoistic the acts of these players, there will necessarily be elements of obligation and sense of duty when representing a community. Identification with the community is, therefore, assumed to be rather deliberate on the part of the leadership of the KRG (Carlsnaes 1987, 114.)

[383] Stansfield 2013, 259.

[384] Washington Post, May 23rd, 2014; Reuters, June 6th, 2014.

statehood.[385] I want to stress the fact that, just like in Chapter 7, I have, here, also taken elements from the ideas of both Bob Jessop and Colin Hay to construct the conceptual framework through which I will be filtering the development.[386] I have also utilized Elisabetta Brighi's, David Marsh's, Stuart MacAnulla's – albeit only to a limited extent – conceptualizations and of the SRA.

The analysis will be conducted through an *analytical* separation of the examined period into *two* parts, which will be however linked with each other forming a single narrative. The first period will cover 2003-2010, and the second 2010-2014. In both of the episodes, I attempt to outline the intersection of foreign policy strategies with their contextual selectivities mediated by the cognition of the leadership. In line with the SRA, a particular emphasis will also be paid to the intended and unintended consequences of strategies, on both the actors themselves as well as their contexts. The idea is then, to link these periods into a coherent narrative of KRG's foreign policy development over time. This will, in turn, lead me to the empirical and the theoretical conclusions of the study in Chapter 8. In the concluding chapter, I will make some assessments on the contingently path-dependent nature of the region's foreign policy development and issues, such as, the extent to which the KRG has itself been responsible for altering the selectivities imposed on it over time with the unintended and intended consequences of the deployment of certain strategies instead of others. I will also delve a bit deeper into the intersection of the theoretical conclusions with the empirical ones.

The first period of examination is centered on the events taking place in Iraq in 2003 following the overthrow of the Baathist regime. The selectivities, strategies and ideas are examined mainly, albeit not exclusively, in relation to that event. The 2003–2010 -phase highlights the gradual intensification of disputes between Baghdad and the increasing cooperation with Ankara. The second period delves deeper into the economic issues related to the development of the hydrocarbon industry. In spite of the fact that KRG's context comprises a variety of actors

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[385] The pursuit of statehood can be manifested in its reflections – sometimes via the leadership of the KRG as explicit strategic policies they are conducting and, at other times, in their intuitive action. The policy paradigm itself can be indeed attributed to the discursive selectivity of the context, which selects for the possession of the idea of "statehood" in order to survive, while, however, paradoxically limiting the KRG's access to the club in practice. I examined this issue in further detail in 6.4. "Semiotic Imaginaries as the Consolidators of Structures Coherences".

[386] For instance, the illustrative explanations in Figures 7 and 8 are adopted from Hay, whereas the more detailed analysis through concepts such as "conjunctural moments" and "structural moments" or "counter-tendencies" have been adopted from Bob Jessop.

besides Baghdad and Ankara[387], it is the intersection of the interests and relations of these three actors, through which I want to examine the region's foreign policy development within this inquiry.

If we go back to the initial question of the research: *How to explain KRG's foreign policy development post-2003,* the *de facto* state theorization seems to tell us that the foreign policies of entities such as the KRG are driven by their pursuit of statehood, which has resulted from their contested sovereignty. Situating this argument within the SRA, we can then argue that Caspersen, Stansfield and Bartmann alike make a claim on the *cognitive template* through which the leadership of these entities are filtering their context: *de facto* states are assumed to be driven by the idea of statehood. Their survival is dependent on a delicate balancing game, which prevents them from giving up this belief, one of the reasons for this being no other than the discursive selectivity of the context in favor the idea. This point was clarified in the previous chapter (6.4.). Foreign policy strategies oscillate and fluctuate depending on internal dynamics and external conditions, yet the cognitive template is assumed to be set. The suggestion made by the de facto theorization is indeed not the only basis of this argument, for, KRG's aspirations to secure as much autonomy as possible from Iraq has been demonstrated in most of the inquiries on the region.[388] This argument has a couple of implications with regard to the conceptual analysis I am about to conduct.

First of all, it means taking the policy paradigm through which KRG has been filtering its context over the past ten years, at least hypothetically, as given. The value of one variable is thus assumedly fixed. Secondly, it makes an assumption about the nature of the *discursive selectivity* of the context within which KRG formulates its strategies, as has been repeated on a variety of occasions. Thirdly, it points us towards a closer examination of the fluctuating *strategies* and *contextual selectivities* that stand in relation to this particular cognitive template. A fixed cognitive template alone, indeed, cannot tell me anything about the overall development of KRG's policies. In order to capture this *organic* process, I need to examine how this particular

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[387] For instance, Iran and the United States are the two very important actors to take into account when examining the dynamics in the region. However, since I cannot cover all aspects and players in the story, I will only focus on those I have considered to be of utmost importance to the understanding of the development of KRG's foreign policies with regard to the hydrocarbon industry.

[388] It is indeed an established fact among almost all of the accounts on the Kurdistan Region. Arguing that the cognitive template is set, is, however not arguing that the KRG *explicitly* aims at an eventual declaration of independence from Iraq.

cognitive template interacts with unique spatio-temporal strategic selectivities and foreign policy strategies. Even more importantly, to demonstrate the significance of each factor in the overall outcome of the situation, I need to – at the same time – engage in counterfactual analyses via illustrative examples of how it "could have been if not for this and that". Therefore, the forthcoming analysis will take the form of a *detailed process-tracing (part factual, part counterfactual) of the path-dependent, yet contingent, development of temporally co-extensive selectivities, strategies and cognitive filters in Kurdistan Regional Government's foreign policy.*

It is important to highlight one more issue that I think deserves a paragraph of its own here. This is an inquiry aiming to point at the *relationality* of strategies, selectivities and ideas in the *explanation* of social reality, hence the research question being indeed "*How to explain* KRG's foreign policy post-2003*?".* As such, it does not attempt to make any claims with regard to matters such as whether it was greed or grievance that primarily motivated the leadership in its unilateral policies with regard to the exploration, exploitation and export of oil vis-à-vis Baghdad. Likewise, it does not try to make any assessments on issues, such as, whether it was because of the fear of Turkey or the pressure of the USA that the Kurdistan Regional Government decided to stay within Iraq instead of declaring independence in 2003. What this research *does* attempt to address is firstly, *how in each instance, the foreign policies deployed by the KRG can be attributed to three temporally co-extensive and mutually relational factors: strategically selective context, strategic action and cognition; and secondly, how the intended and unintended consequences of these foreign policies are responsible for a contingent, yet path-dependent, development of the region's foreign policies over the past eleven years.* I am highlighting the importance of this question at this point for two reasons. The first one is related to viewing statehood as a non-changing variable, which can be indeed equated to making an unwarranted claim similar to the ones mentioned above. However, as I implied earlier, I am taking the paradigm as a given only *hypothetically,* based on the findings of the constructivist *de facto* theoreticians. As such, it is mainly through the *instrumental* role it plays in this research that the pre-given assumption of statehood as a non-variable factor should be viewed. The KRG may be, indeed, driven by *statehood* as the de facto theory suggests, but the primary reason for using this assumption at this point is, however, not in its accuracy or erroneousness. The principal reason is, instead, in the need to illustrate, via a concrete example, how paradigms and cognition dialectically interact with selectivities and strategies. The second reason for outlining the essential purpose of this research at this point, is related to the first one: namely,

the counterfactuals that I mentioned above. Once again, these examples also lend a helping hand in conceptualizing not only the fact that no situation is determined by structural imperatives or agential will alone, but also the fallacy of relating them in a temporal sequence as Archer had done. Counterfactuals serve to demonstrate, how all three analytical concepts are *related* in space and time; change the value of one and you will have an entirely different setting with completely different outcomes.[389]

Let me get back to the plan of execution. Beginning from 2003, I will first briefly elaborate on the major events that took place during the particular period of examination. I will then filter the events through the analytical concepts provided by Jessop and Hay. The context will be examined as both a discursively and a strategically selective environment, including both the domestic and the international spheres. The leadership will be examined as the bridging factor between the material and the ideational – as reflexive actors, driven by strategic calculations of the selectivities of their context, which are based on the cognitive templates through which they filter the world. These actors are understood to be capable of monitoring and evaluating the intended as well as unintended consequences of their action. Based on these observations they are then also viewed as capable of strategic learning and, thus, the altering of their identities, interests and strategies depending on past experiences and current perceptions of selectivities. In order to avoid a pitfall of including a little bit of everything in the context from here and there, I will study only one or two central foreign policy decisions within each particular period. A significant weight will be put on the examination of the hegemonic paradigm of statehood in its dialectical relation with contextual selectivities and foreign policy strategies.

Having examined the context and strategies, I will then move on to the elaboration of the *outcomes* of the foreign policy strategies – both intended and unintended consequences of action. The presentation of outcomes will lead the analysis chronologically into the second period of examination, starting from where the last one ended, 2011. The above-mentioned steps will be repeated to examine the developments in that period in a similar manner. The selectivities of the contexts will be examined to see whether any changes have occurred. Most importantly, I will try to assess whether or not any of the changes in the selectivities of the context can be attributed to the intended and unintended consequences of the previous foreign

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[389] Brighi 2013, 117. Brighi, has argued that if one of the elements of the dialectic is changed, the outcome of the situations would look entirely different.

policy *strategies* (or to the change in KRG's current strategies for that matter)*.* What will also be of particular importance here, is taking note not only of the influence of previous foreign policy actions on their context, but also of how the modified contexts have impinged back on these strategic actors resulting in strategic learning and the new positioning of the actor vis-à-vis the selectivities of its context. Intended and unintended consequences of action, indeed, often influence the ideas, paradigms and narratives that the strategic actors possess before making particular foreign policy decisions. They may remain unaltered, but they could also change dramatically regardless of other continuities or fluctuations in the context. Within this second period, I will then indeed attempt to point contextual selectivities that are independent of the influence of *previous* strategies of the KRG. Finally, I will arrive at the current state of affairs and summarize my conclusions.

7.1.2. Sovereign Statehood as a Hypothetical Cognitive Template

Even though, as I elaborated on above, the assumption of the driving cognitive template of statehood plays more or less of an instrumental role in the inquiry, I still think a brief elaboration on why I have decided to locate it at the heart of the analysis is warranted. I will then elaborate on its dialectical intersections with foreign policy strategies and contextual selectivities in the conceptual analysis of each period separately.

It perhaps comes as no surprise to claim that United Nation's all-or-nothing conceptualization of *sovereignty* or self-determination has gained an almost universal triumph over other forms of political organization ever since the Concert of Europe period in the 1820s, during which the fundamental idea was adopted.[390] Sovereignty, indeed, came to be seen as "[…] the solution of all problems and the adjustment to all new developments were made to conform to it".[391] Stephen Krasner has likewise argued that,

> "[…] the sovereign state is the only universally recognized way of organizing political life in the contemporary international system. It is now difficult to even conceive of alternatives".[392]

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[390] Pegg, 1998, 20.
[391] Hinsley 1986, 204–205.
[392] Krasner 1988, 90, cf. Pegg 1998, 20.

Looking at this issue from the strategic-relational approach, we can argue that the international context is *discursively selective* in favor the *idea* of sovereignty as the only way of political organization. Not only does this imply that there is a utility associated with the preservation of this particular belief, but also that the idea is constantly actualized in spatio-temporal instances as explained in 6.4. "Semiotic Imaginaries as the Consolidators of Structured Coherences." Jackson has, indeed, argued that the "negative sovereignty game" will continue to hold in the future as well. He has given three reasons for this (discursive selectivity in favor of the idea of full sovereignty). The first one is instrumental and related to the fact that the costs of alternative arrangements are feared to be greater than its benefits. Therefore, continuing to recognize failing or collapsing states such as Syria or Iraq is considered to be far safer than recognizing the existence of KRG or the new Kurdish cantons in Syria. This, however, causes no problems for the de facto state, because recognizing Iraq does not necessarily entail the denial of the existence of Kurdistan. The second reason is normative; International Relations is not perceived of comprising only power and interests, but also law, courtesy and respect. Again, this is not a problem for the KRG either since, as we will come to see, it has been able to gradually increase its engagement with the international community in spite of lack of a formal sovereignty, which would assumedly undermine Iraq's sovereignty. Jackson's third reason is linked to the fact that institutional arrangements of the international society are built according to the principle of sovereignty. Nothing about the existence of *de facto* states necessitates an institutional change in the current international system; they can operate just fine without challenging the current ones, as we will come to see in the following chapters, indeed. Since the material existence of de facto states questions none of these three conditions necessary for the continuance of a belief system based on sovereignty, a discursive selectivity in its favor is indeed secured.[393] The persistence of sovereignty, therefore, also entails the survival of a vision of the *de facto* state as a pragmatic (non-)solution to the question of how to accommodate existence beyond full sovereignty. De facto statehood will continue to remain as the international community's "functional non-solution" to the inability to accommodate the idea of a self-determinant political organization short of full independence.[394] Pål Kolstø has similarly argued that,

> "[…] the problem with the involvement of the international community in de facto state conflicts is the indecision and inconsistency it has been pursued with. Rather

[393] Jackson 1993, 189–202.
[394] Pegg 1998, 20.

than resolve conflicts, stalled negotiations freeze them and perpetuate status quo. *In this way, they contribute to the prolonged existence of the de facto states.*" [italics added][395]

As we came to see in the previous chapter, critical realists – or more precisely the SRA – argues that there are always material counterparts to ideas; semiosis is never independent from extra-semiotic facts. The two are mutually interdependent for their survival. In terms of the question at hand, Jackson's argument seems to imply that, as long as the *idea* of full sovereignty responds to the mediated or experienced realities of actors, *and* so long as *de facto* statehood as such does not fundamentally challenge this perception, there is no reason to assume that the selectivities favoring statehood will change. This is, however, not to imply that discursive elements are *independent* from actors. The survival of a belief system – be it sovereignty, capitalism or globalization – is dependent on the constant reproduction and actualization of its tendencies. On the one hand, the KRG, driven by the idea of statehood can be seen as continually actualizing the idea of sovereignty in its spatio-temporally located strategies. On the other hand, it can be seen as filtering its context through and formulating these strategies on the basis of this belief at the same time. The co-existence of agential and structural dimensions of social reality in time becomes quite apparent here.

Albeit the idea of this inquiry is not to elaborate any closer on the continuance or potential change of this particular belief system as I have attempted to argue earlier (in 6.4.) – but instead to enlighten the path through which KRG's current status has come to existence through agential and structural dynamics – I considered it important to highlight the implications of a discursive selectivity in favor of sovereignty with regard to the KRG's foreign policy development. Within the context of this inquiry, it is, in other words assumed that the idea of statehood is discursively selected for. There is reason to believe, not only post-hoc but also, ad hoc and, in fact, in advance, that the selectivity of the context with regard to this idea has remained unchanged throughout the period chosen for examination of the KRG's foreign policy development. However, as was implied above, cognitive templates are but one aspect of the dialectic. The other two – strategies and other strategic selectivities – are equally responsible for the contingent, yet, path-dependent development of the foreign policies of the autonomous

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[395] Kolstø 2006, 734.

region from 2003 onwards. I will now move on to the examination of these particular intersections.

7.2. The First Period, 2003-2010: The Constitutional Recognition of the KRG

7.2.1. The KRG in between 2003-2010

Let me begin with March 20th, 2003 when the coalition forces entered Iraq. I have chosen this event as my starting point because of the simple fact that the occupation marked a complete change in the balance of forces within the country and set the Kurdistan Region's – a safe haven of misery struggling under the double sanction of the Baathist regime and the UN – autonomous project on an entirely distinctive path. The leadership of the Kurdish de facto state allied itself with the United States following Turkey's surprising refusal to grant transit rights to the coalition forces. The KDP and PUK wasted no time. Understanding the uniqueness of the situation and under the pressure of the U.S., they temporarily forgot about the disputes dating back to the civil war in the mid-1990s, merged their Peshmerga forces and proceeded to the disputed territories – including Kirkuk and Mosul – as the U.S forces 'looked the other way'.[396] Hussein was toppled and an interim governing council was established. In a few years, elections were held: the allied Kurdish parties secured 77 seats in the Iraqi parliament and Talabani was elected as the interim president of the country. In no time, the Kurds had managed to establish themselves in Iraqi politics. Joost Hiltermann[397] has for instance, argued, that the Kurds succeeded in "Kurdifying Iraqi politics" to the extent that no decision could have been taken without the input or rather "without the threat of a Kurdish veto" any longer.[398] They became the "kingmakers" in Baghdad indeed[399]. This became most evident in Transitional Administrative Law (2004), which provided that a forthcoming constitution could be vetoed by the minimum of two-thirds majority of three governorates in Iraq. What this meant in practice, was, that the three Kurdish governorates of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymanyia could reject any draft that they did not perceive of being in their interest.[400]

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[396] Galbraith 2005, 271-273.
[397] Joost Hiltermann is indeed a veteran analyst of Kurdish matters.
[398] Hiltermann 2008, 7.
[399] Entessar 2009, 100.
[400] Ibid., 99–102.

Furthermore, the KRG managed secure a legitimate status within the new Iraqi Constitution in 2005, which came to formally recognize the region as an autonomous federal entity within Iraq.[401] In addition to the recognition of the authority of the regional government and its branches, it also gave the Kurdish Peshmerga forces the status of a legitimate army. To cut the long story short, the new constitution secured all the redlines that the KRG had put on the table for negotiation; namely the recognition of the region's right to make its own laws on domestic matters and its lawful army, the right to reunify with Kirkuk[402] via a referendum and, most importantly, the right over its unexploited oil and gas resources.[403] As a consequence the nature of the political games played in between Baghdad and Erbil came to approximate a state-to-state rather than a federal-government-to-a-*de-facto*-state-government relationship. It is no wonder that Brendan O'Leary has argued that following the constitutional recognition, Kurdistan could be considered "freer within Iraq than any member state within the European Union".[404] The three most important articles with regard to the autonomous development of the region's hydrocarbon resources, were the following:

> Article 112:
>
> The federal government, with the producing governorates and regional governments, shall undertake the management of oil and gas extracted from *present* fields, provided that it distributes its revenues in a fair manner in proportion to the population distribution in all parts of the country. [italics added][405]

> Article 115:
>
> All powers not stipulated in the exclusive powers of the federal government belong to the authorities of the regions and governorates that are not organized in a region. With regard to other powers shared between the federal government and the regional government, priority shall be given to the law of the regions and

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[401] The Kurds indeed voted in favor of the constitution.

[402] The oil-rich city of Kirkuk is one of the disputed territories over which the central government and the KRG often clash. During the Baathist regime, the city was subjected to a systematic Arabization project. The other three are Ninewa, Salahaddin and Diyala provinces. The disputed internal boundaries in Northern Iraq have been and remain one of the most central fault lines between the Kurds and the Arabs within the country. For more see, for instance, Bartu (2010.)

[403] O'Leary 2009, x–xi; Entessar 2009, 100–104. Needless to say that not all Kurds agree on this.

[404] O'Leary 2009, x–xi.

[405] The Iraqi Constitution.

governorates not organized in a region in case of dispute.[406]

Article 121;2:

In case of a contradiction between regional and national legislation in respect to a matter outside the exclusive authorities of the federal government[407], the regional power shall have the right to amend the application of the national legislation within that region.[408]

The three provisions granted significant autonomy to the leadership, whose parliament quickly began drafting new laws and regulations within its three governorates. Among these were the Kurdistan Investment Law (Law No. 4)[409] and Petroleum Law (Law No. 22)[410]. I am mentioning the two because, as we shall see, they provided – together with article 112 and 115 of the Iraqi Constitution, the legal basis for further steps to be taken towards economic independence. The KRG managed to create an exceptionally favorable environment – both legally and politically as well as in terms of security – to foreign investors, who soon came to poor into the region – into the "other Iraq".

The new constitution succeeded in reorganizing the country from a highly centralized dictatorship into a state so decentralized, that its governance became almost impossible.[411] This became evident in the forthcoming outbreak of sectarian violence so intense, that most journalists and scholars termed it a civil war. Among the boiling restlessness and violence in rest of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region managed to keep relative stability within its three provinces and further its economic development and democratic experience.[412]

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[406] The Iraqi Constitution. In other words, this gave any law that was established in Kurdistan supreme authority. The central government's powers were limited to foreign policy (quite paradoxical here, because KRG is viewed as having a foreign policy of its own within the context of this inquiry), defence policy, monetary policy and customs (Galbraith 2005, 272.)

[407] The exclusive authorities of the federal government are defined in Article 110 of the Constitution. It lists foreign policy, national security policy and monetary policies as the areas to be exclusively placed under the constrol of the central government.

[408] Iraqi Constitution.

[409] Investment Law in the Iraqi Kurdistan (Law No. 4 of 2006)

[410] Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region – Iraq (Law No. 22 of 2007).

[411] The draft was a not only the result of an intense arm-wrestling game between the Kurds and the Shites: needless to say that trying to accommodate the interests of Iran, Turkey and the United States lead to a draft written to a great extent by politicians, rather than by experts in law whose presence in the process remained rather insignificant. The Constitution indeed ended up being vague on a variety of issues, which became apparent in the disputes soon about to rise between different interpretations. (Mills, 2013, 54–56.)

[412] Benard and Shnapper-Casteras 2010, 84–86. This is of course not to say that such development was unproblematic and progressive. The region has been inflicted with a variety of serious issues, among them for instance violation of human rights and corruption slowing down the democratic process.

Relations with Baghdad during the first years following the overthrow of the regime were marked by relative stability in the newly formed order in Iraq. It was indeed an order based on an ethno-sectarian sharing of power between Kurds and Shites – both committed to solidarity with the Unites States at the time.[413] The relationship between the two was, nevertheless, not unproblematic. In spite of the existence of some level of mutual understanding in the beginning, tensions surfaced soon in 2008.[414] This is when the first major disagreements on the so-called 'disputed territories' claimed by both sides led to a major clash between the two opposing parties, leading almost to an armed battle between the Peshmerge and Maliki's "Dijla Forces", only to be mediated by the pressure of the U.S.. In addition to territorial disputes, quarrels over the federal budget and the Kurdish Peshmerga Forces, one of the crucial points of disagreement between the two parties soon to arise was related to the right of the Kurds to sign independent oil and gas exploration contacts not only within the three provinces of the Kurdistan Region but also in the disputed territories.[415] The KRG indeed soon began to sign international companies with lucrative Production Sharing Contracts, which infuriated Baghdad.[416]

Relations with Ankara appeared rather cold, although economic interaction had been increasing over the past few years. Chances for Turkey finding a collaborator from the least likely player in the region – an autonomous Kurdish entity, which it had perceived of as one of the biggest threats to the country's territorial integrity over the past decades, looked quite dim. It was indeed in 2007, when the Turkish premier Recep Tayip Erdogan had announced that he would not meet with "tribal leaders" when consulted about a potential rendezvous with the President of Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.[417] However, the situation soon began to change. Turkey started to become more and more comfortable with the idea of deepening economic cooperation with the Kurdistan Region as it came to notice the intersection between its own interests and those of the KRG. The warmening political relations between the two will be put under closer scrutiny in the next phase (2010-2014).

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[413] Alkadiri 2010, 1316.

[414] Mills 2003, 54.

[415] The question was linked also to exportation of oil and gas, payments to the international oil companies working in Kurdistan and the region's 17% share in the national budget. (Mills 2013, 54.)

[416] Baghdad was – and still is – granting only Technical Service Contracts – less profitable forms of agreement to the international gas and oil companies.

[417] Hürriyet Daily News, August 6th, 2007.

7.2.2. Kurdifying Iraqi Politics: Kurdish Strategies and the Selectivities of a New Iraq – Why be a Mayor when You Can Be a King?

I will now elaborate on how the SRA's conceptual tools make sense of this situation as the particular intersection of a strategically selective context, foreign policy strategy and hegemonic political paradigms. Throughout the analysis, we will come to see how most of the ideas invoked by the SRA overlap with those of Carlsnaes. However, there are also some significant points where Jessop's and Hay's paths clearly diverge from that of Archer and Carslnaes as I have tried to demonstrate earlier, particularly in the concluding remarks of Chapter 6.

Strategies among selectivities

Let me begin with the selectivities of the context. In the words of Brighi, "[…] the international context here is intended mainly as other actors, no more and no less than the set of relations which they entertain and the patterns they have generated".[418] As has been mentioned earlier, the *strategic* spatio-temporal *selectivity* of a context consists of two elements. The first is a *conjunctural* moment viable for change by certain strategies. The second is a *structural* moment, which cannot be transformed by an agent pursuing a particular strategy during a specific time period, *and* which will vary according to the strategic location of that agent within "[…] the overall matrix of the formation".[419] *Discursive selectivity,* once again, entails the success of certain narratives and paradigms at the expense of others.

It is no big mystery that the toppling of the Baathist regime opened a window of opportunity for the KRG to realize its autonomy-seeking agenda driven by the idea of statehood. The United States' hostility vis-à-vis Baghdad came to be of particular benefit for the Kurdish agenda, changing its position with regard to the selectivities of its context. The fact that KRG indeed had to *wait* for an opportunity like this to prop up, is a clear indication of the strategic selectivity of its context. The events taking place in 2003 comprised a *conjunctural moment* for KRG's vision of statehood and strategies associated with it.[420] The new power vacuum provided a spatio-

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[418] Brighi 2013, 37–38.
[419] Jessop 2007, 44.
[420] Hence, context forms a conjunctural opportunity only to the particular spatio-temporal paradigms and strategies of particular agents. Contextual selectivities do not constitute objective constraints to all agents, strategies and policy paradigms.

temporal context viable for modification by the leadership's policies, which were formulated on the basis of interests in the pursuit of statehood. Undoubtedly, the very same environment also comprised a *structural moment* for some other strategies, since not all decisions were possible in that particular place at that specific time.

As a result of its bitter past experiences with Baghdad [421] and the normatively oriented perceptions it had of the selectivities (both conjunctural and structural) of its environment, the KRG decided to feel the ground and deploy the strategies it saw convenient for the realization of its intentions indeed. The leadership worked – to the extend that it could and within the space it had in between *structural constraints* and *conjuntural opportunities* – to decentralize Iraq[422]. Transforming its context into an environment favorable for the furthering of the Kurdistan Region's autonomous position was the primary aim of the leadership. Consequently, it had to think of different strategies to achieve this outcome. Aiming at the realization of an ethnically based federalism[423] came to be considered as the most viable option at the time.

As was noted above, with regard to securing economic independence from Iraq, Articles 112 and 115 turned out to be significant gains for the leadership. These spatio-temporal strategies deployed by the KDP and PUK were possible because they were selected for by the context. The KRG did not enter a previously structured terrain, whose rules determined to point the game it could play[424]; in fact there were constantly counter-tendencies and other potential strategies fighting against those formulated by the KRG. Marina Ottaway, for instance has argued that the United States was quite unhappy with the newly drafted constitution, because in spite of the fact that it wanted a decentralized Iraq, it was highly suspicious about federalism with ethnic lines.[425]

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[421] Unfortunately, I do not have the space nor the time to include a thorough examination of these past experiences of the Kurdish Region with the Iraqi government. Suffice it to say that the entire history of Kurds within Iraq is characterized with conflict with the central government and these experiences without doubt constitute a significant part of the Kurdish leadership's suspicious stance towards cooperation with the central government. (See for instance Benard and Schnapper-Casteras, July 23rd, 2010; Dawoody, 2006.)

[422] See for instance Alkadiri 2010, 1318–1320.

[423] Hiltermann 2008, 11–13; Alkadiri 2010, 1316–1318: Alkadiry criticizes ethno-sectarian approaches to the analysis of Iraqi oil politics, which he indeed calls a fallacy.

[424] Even in situations where the rules of the game are given, actors are never predetermined to play it in specific ways.

[425] Ottaway, December 16th 2014. There are multiple arguments against this opinion, of course. They recognize the entire re-ordering of Iraq along ethnic lines as a conscious process. (Alkadiri 2010, 1317.) In fact, Joe Biden suggested for the partitioning of Iraq into three regions in order to maintain its unity 2006. For more see for instance, Joseph and O'Hanlon's *The Case of Soft Partition in Iraq* (2007).

Cognition as the intermediary between contextual selectivities and strategic action

Particular strategies however, never follow causally from a change in the selectivities of the context. It is important to understand here that the occupation of Iraq *per se* was not an objective contextual change faced by everyone in a similar manner. The reason is simple. Spatio-temporal contexts are *relational* to cognitive factors as well as to strategies. Let me explain exactly how. When looking at the events of 2003, we can see that they become particular structural constraints or conjunctural opportunities only when observed from the perspective the KRG. Change the actor or its cognitive template, and you will have a context comprising an entirely different environment. The two are relative and should always be examined as such. Neither the Iraqi occupation (structural factors) nor KRG's interests (agential will) alone can explain the foreign policy strategies formulated and deployed by the KRG. In other words, KRG's strategies were not an emergent property entering a pre-existent structure and consequentially transforming (morphogenesis) or restructuring (morphostasis) it. This is how the morphogenetic cycles would make sense of the situation. Examining actors and contexts *sequentially* and *separately* would locate the KRG and the Iraqi occupation in different temporal and ontological domains as if they could be examined separately from each other. The SRA, however, would argue that the strategies of the KRG could not be understood separate from their position in relation to the contextual selectivities. Similarly, the context exists as a conjunctural opportunity for the leadership to realize its interests only when perceived from the perspective of KRG's strategies. This epitomizes the *relationalist* approach of Jessop exactly as Bentley and Dewey pointed it out: "[…] no one would be able to successfully speak of the hunter and the hunted as isolated with respect to hunting […] or *hunting* as an event in isolation from the spatio-temporal connection of all the components".[426] Similarly no one could speak of KRG's strategies without invoking the selectivities of its context or talk of the contextual selectivities in isolation of the spatio-temporal connection of all the strategies (including those of Turkey, KRG, Iran etc.).

It is here that Colin Hay's argument on strategies – being a *perceptual* matter relating to the extent and quality of actor's information about its environment and the *normative* orientation of the actor towards the context within which it is situated – become extremely relevant. The argument refers to the importance of ideas from two perspectives. The formerly mentioned

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[426] Dewey and Bentley 1949, 133; cf. Emirbayer 1997, 289.

points to the relevance of actors' reading of the selectivities of their environment. The latter can be seen as referring to the weight of the value-laden paradigm through which they filter their context. What this means in terms of the case at hand, is recognizing the importance of cognitive frames in the overall matrix of the situation. The strategies KRG deployed were relational to and dependent on the *ideas* they held in two ways. Firstly, they were relational to the scope and quality of the leadership's *information* about the situation within which it was embedded, the "real" selectivities of the context, that is. Secondly, they were dependent on the normative orientation of the leadership, that is, on the *policy paradigm* through which it navigated the world. It was indeed the case that, just like the contextual change examined separately could not explain, why some strategies were deployed instead of others, neither could the hegemonic paradigms or actors information about the selectivities of their context. The three were mutually dependent. It is only when the paradigm of statehood and KRG's interpretation of its context[427] are relativized to the contextual selectivities that we can comprehend the overall turnout of the situation. Let me illustrate this further in a few examples.

It is clear that the overthrow of the Baathist regime constituted a contextual change, which was more or less independent of whether or not KRG came to filter it via its cognition. However, the fact that this change formed a *unique conjunctural opportunity* for the leadership of the region was highly dependent on its *perceptions (values and interpretations)* of the situation and as such of its strategies.[428] This is something that Carslnaes, likewise, would have pointed towards; as a result of incomplete information actors give interpretations to their contexts, which are based on consciously and unconsciously constructed images of their surroundings.[429] What Carlsnaes' approach located in the morphogenetic model, would have failed to demonstrate is, however, the fact that these interpretations ought to be perceived of as co-existing in time and dependent on the contextual selectivities of the Iraqi war. For instance, looking at the KDP and the PUK we can state, first of all, that they were normatively oriented towards their context not only through their past experiences with the Baathist regime but also through the paradigm of statehood. Secondly, they both consciously and unconsciously constructed a particular reading of the selectivities of their context amidst the events. The unique meaning the KRG, accordingly,

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[427] Perceptions of the context matter, because sometimes, strategies are based on misperceptions a-la-Jervis of the real conditions of the situation. These misunderstandings have significant consequences

[428] Of course, they were not independent from its actions, since the Peshmerge forces cooperated with the coalition forces in toppling the regime.

[429] Carlsnaes 1987, 88–90. These interpretations may be indeed constructed images, which misrepresent the nature of reality at hand *consciously* or sincere misinterpretations of the real conditions of the situation indeed.

assigned to the events on ground resulted from a complex interaction between the values and the perceptions they had. [430] Consequently, the situation was viewed as a conjunctural opportunity by the KRG due to its suspicious orientation towards Baghdad and the normative vision of statehood seeking more autonomy from the capital, in the fear of centralization of power once again. Had the leadership, for instance, possessed an alternative policy paradigm or a distinctive experience of the Baathist regime, the context would not have necessarily comprised a conjunctural opportunity for the KRG to alter the elements within it. In turn, the strategic-relational model can also tell us that, the strategies aimed at the federalization of Iraq, do not make any sense without their relativization to the conjunctural opportunity. We can, thus, conclude that it was only when the facts of the situation were mediated by the leadership of the autonomous region, that the context became a conjunctural opportunity viable for change by KRG's strategies. Similarly, it was only when the autonomy-seeking strategies were relativized to a context strategically selective in favor of decentralizing strategies that these strategies came to make any sense.

One final point should be made here; strategies are not *necessitated* by the spatio-temporal selectivities of context either, for contexts might select equally for multiple strategies. In other words, even if the spatio-temporal agent- and strategy-spesific selectivtities made up the rules of the game, they did not tell KRG exactly *how to* play their hand. A good example related to this is fact that the autonomous region's leadership did not declare independence from Baghdad in 2003 when it – at least potentially – had the chance to do so. [431] Nothing in the relations around KRG per se dictated the particular choice that was taken. The situation has been indeed considered by many as a one-time window of opportunity not likely to be opened again. If one is to look at the entity's pursuit of statehood and past experiences, this strategy may seem more or less surprising, taken the conjunctural opportunity that the toppling of the Baathist regime provided for the declaration of independence. It is here, where the cognitive factors step in and explain, at least to a certain extent, why the autonomous region decided to stay within Iraq instead of deciding to go on its own.

Given the leadership's will to secure as much autonomy from Baghdad as possible, there were a variety of deployable strategies that could have lead to led to an outcome perceived of as

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[430] Ibid., 87–94.
[431] Ottaway and Ottaway, April 29th, 2014.

possible. Some were of course more and others less likely to do so. In other words, KRG had a particular space in between the conjunctural opportunities and the structural constraints within which it could transform its environment into one more favourable of the idea of – in the words of Caspersen "[...] why be mayor when you can be a king" [432]. Out of these strategies the KDP and PUK opted for one – to stay within Iraq. It is important to note here that this decision was based on the interpretations the entity gave to the selectivities of its context. In formulating a strategy of its own, the KRG had to take into account the strategies of other actors and assess the *consequences* of the deployment of one strategy over another; hence the *logic of consequences* invoked by rational theoreticians. At the same time it had to contemplate on the values and perceptions it had of its own position in the situation; hence the *logic of appropriateness* invoked by institutionalists.[433] For instance, KRG acknowledged that had it declared independence, it "[...] would have had Ankara up in Arms".[434] Such a decision would have conceivably exposed the entire *de facto* statehood that the region already enjoyed in grave danger. By staying within Iraq the leadership could realize both its short-term and long-term interests – namely strengthen its autonomy and lay the foundations for an independent Kurdistan.[435] Some have, however, attributed KRG's decision to the leadership's will to make concessions – albeit unnecessary ones – in order to accommodate their American ally.[436] Whatever the actual reasons were for choosing one viable strategy over another (whatever the relation between logic of consequences and appropriateness), does not concern me here. It is the importance of cognitive factors that I wanted to point to via this example; the significance of their dialectical and relative relationship to the contextual selectivities.

Implications on power

One final significant point needs to be made here. It is related to the conceptualization of power. Following the *relationalist* approach to reality Jessop argued, that the relativization of action and context led to *balance of power* being a matter to be analyzed *post hoc.* As such, power was

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[432] Caspersen 2010, 127.
[433] March and Olsen 1989; 22–23. Political actors, when faced with a decision, choose not only on the basis of their wants but also the costs and the consequences of acting in a particular way. The two logics are in fact linked and interrelated in the SRA.
[434] Gonul, January 29th, 2013. Not only Ankara, but Iran may have also opposed to such a move.
[435] Entessar 2009; and Caspersen 2010, 128: Caspersen has indeed claimed that demands for self-determination are flexible and change according to external circumstances and dynamics within the community.
[436] Galbraith 2005, 274–275.

never to be examined as an independent variable responsible for particular outcomes as, for instance, realists assumed it to be. It had to be treated as an explanandum instead. Let me explain how. The overthrow of the Baathist regime as an overall situation brought about, following Jessop, "[...] a complex hierarchy of potential powers determined by the range and determinacy of opportunities for influencing elements that constituted constraint for other agents".[437] In other words, the change in the context (overthrow of the regime) constituted a situation in which actors – including the KRG – came to be differentially positioned with regard to these changes. Their positions were of course relative to the ideas they held and strategies they had, as has been demonstrated above. What is more, Jessop continued, this potential for powers depended "[...] not only on the relations among different positions in the social formation but also on the *organization*, *modes of calculation* and *resources* of social forces". The actual balance of power was, therefore, determined only *after* the strategies and actions pursued by the KRG (federalization of Iraq to achieve more autonomy) had interacted with other strategies or counter-tendencies (for instance, those aiming at a more centralized Iraq), "[...] within the limits imposed through the differential composition of structural constraints".[438] Viewed from this perspective then, power comes to be seen as a *relational* and a *contingent* matter, the distribution of which is determined only after the spatio-temporal intersection of strategies and contextual selectivities. It is not a *property* possessed by actors prior to entering an actual situation and, consequently, determining the success or failure of their deployed strategies;[439] hence Jessop's appeal to the importance of *contextual* examination of power.

The SRA makes an extremely important observation here, in terms of this inquiry. First of all, KRG's "hand in the game" cannot be examined separate from the spatio-temporal contextual selectivities the region's leadership was confronted with, nor beyond the cognitive templates they had at the event of the overthrow of the regime. Secondly, the negotiating hand they had cannot be studied apart from its *relation* to the hands of other players in the game, either. The potentialities for power in March 2003 were located in the relations of these differentially positioned strategies, indeed. Looking at the case at hand, we can thus conclude that, the power

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[437] Jessop 2007, 44.
[438] Ibid., 44.
[439] Jessop has not, in particular, referred to the two alternative conceptualizations of power as either a property or a relation, but based on his reading on the nature of the relationship between agents and structures, his understanding reflects the relational view of power. Unfortunately, I do not have the space or the time to reflect on this subject any further.

relations between the Kurds, the Sunnis, and the Shites in the Post-Saddam Iraq, were determined by two things; firstly by the reciprocal interaction of the objectives and strategies of these players and secondly, by the unequal positioning of those strategies in relation to the contextual selectivities of that particular spatio-temporal moment. In our case, the strategies of the Kurds, for instance, were selected for since the contextual selectivities offered a window of opportunity for the decentralization of Iraq, while those of some of the pro-Baathist Sunnis were not. We can see therefore, why the examination of balance of power in Iraq makes sense only, when studied *after* the interaction of these forces had taken place. There is simply no logic in claiming that the KRG had this and that amount of power, without taking into account the intersection of its particular spatio-temporal objectives with those of other players, as well as their differential positioning in relation to the contextual selectivities of the situation.

Conclusions

Within this analysis we could see how the specific intersection of conjunctural opportunity coupled with structural constraints in relation to strategic action based on hegemonic paradigms and perceptions, determined the scope within which KRG could actually influence its environment within the events taking place in 2003. We could also see how perceiving of the context as "abstract, atemporal or unlocated" objective constraints prevented one from understanding the fact that contextual selectivities were always *relational*, not only to the space and time in which they existed, but also to the policy paradigm of statehood as well as foreign policy strategies aimed at reproducing the context or alternatively transforming it; "Structures are irredeemably concrete, temporalized and spatialized; and they have no meaning outside the context of specific agents pursuing specific strategies", as Jessop has, indeed, argued.[440] Following Brighi, I could therefore conclude that that it was not structural conditioning per se that happened to offer or deny opportunities to the KRG at the fall of the former regime. It was instead the *relation* between the KRG's autonomy-seeking strategy and its context selective in favor of such strategy that did so.[441]

I also tried to demonstrate the implications of the strategic-relational approach on the understanding of power. It was only after the interaction of particular strategies that the

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[440] Jessop 2007, 44.
[441] Brighi 2013, 63.

balance of power in the overall formation was determined. Furthermore, I argued, the decision to stay within Iraq was certainly not the only strategy feasible for actualization at the time. It was, however, the one eventually deployed. This decision, in turn, marked the actualization of particular and contingent tendencies of the strategic selectivities of the context. Accordingly, what is about to follow in the further development of the foreign policy of the KRG, should be seen as the path-dependent consequences of these more or less contingent actualizations of different strategies; hence the contingently unfolding nature of *relational* reality. Let me now move on to address these consequences of KRG's decision to stay within a unified, yet a legally and politically federalized, and an ethnically divided, Iraq.

7.2.3. Consequences of Action

As we saw above, the success of KRG' strategies were dependent on how strategically placed they were in the overall formation of the situation and on the meanings they gave to the events taking place at that time. The deployed strategies were contingent in a sense that, they were not necessitated by the structure of the situation as such. The politically negotiated decision to stay within Iraq – and contribute to the legal and political federalization of the country – had both intended and unintended consequences on the context. It is within this newly developed environment that the leadership had to formulate its forthcoming foreign policy strategies. The altered context, in turn, impinged right back upon the autonomous region, positioning it in a unique and novel way. Let me clarify this illustratively.

The Kurdistan Regional Government was now officially recognized within a decentralized Iraq, in the governance of which it participated. The newly drafted constitution without doubt changed the position of the Kurdistan Region vis-à-vis Baghdad. An environment, which was *partly* brought about by the Kurdish leadership's calls for autonomy, constituted new conjunctural opportunities and structural constraints for its forthcoming ambitions. We can see the contingency of path-dependent development at play here once again: had any of the elements – ideas, spatio-temporal selectivities or strategies been slightly distinctive – the spatio-temporal context would have perhaps turned out to be entirely different as well.

Beginning from the newly drafted constitution, we can see how it, first of all, created a conjunctural opportunity for the KRG to develop its foreign policies in specific directions.

Secondly, the constitution also comprised an *incentive* for the deployment of certain strategies instead of others. Among the strategies selected for, was the adoption of an autonomous Petroleum Law in Kurdistan (Law No. 22)[442]. It had indeed become clear for the government that decreasing economic dependence from Baghdad required the creation of a foreign investment -friendly environment in the Kurdistan Region. In order to attract investors, particularly to the hydrocarbon sector, the KRG needed to provide them with carrots better than those offered by Baghdad. An independent Petroleum Law was a partial answer to this dilemma.[443] It gave the leadership a legal basis to negotiate oil and gas contracts on its own terms[444] and, as such, to give better deals to IOCs than Baghdad would; Production Sharing Contracts instead of the central governments Technical Service Contracts.

Understanding its favored position with regard to the spatio-temporal selectivities of the context, the KRG decided to embark on a risky journey indeed; signing PSCs with a few of International Oil Companies. The game was quite risky for these corporations as well. The safety of their legal and political environments was not guaranteed, because the vague Iraqi Constitution was subject to conflicting interpretations. However, the potential gains that these lucrative deals entailed were too big to be undermined by the hazards associated with the game. The IOCs will be the subject of our closer examination in the next chapter. For now, suffice it to say that their entrance into the KRG was important, because it lay the ground for giants such as ExxonMobil, Total, Chevron and the Anglo-Turkish Genel Energy[445] to step in the game later on, bringing intriguing twists and turns on board. [446] I have situated some of the ideas introduced above in the strategic-relational model formulated by Colin Hay in Figure 7.

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[442] Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region – Iraq (Law No. 22 of 2007).
[443] Coupled with the constitutional provisions (Articles 112, 115, and 121:2) it can be considered one of the most important decisions that the leadership of Kurdistan took during the first years following the fall of the Baathist regime
[444] This view is, of course, contested in Baghdad. (Morelli and Pischedda 2014, 108-109.)
[445] There are claims according to which these "smaller companies" which the KRG initially contracted with, were in fact "sent" by the bigger players to feel the ground without having to risk their own game just yet. The first foreign exploration company to come to Kurdistan in 2004, was DNO International (Washington Post, June 12th, 2014; For more see for instance: http://www.dno.no/dno-operations/kurdistan-region-of-iraq/).
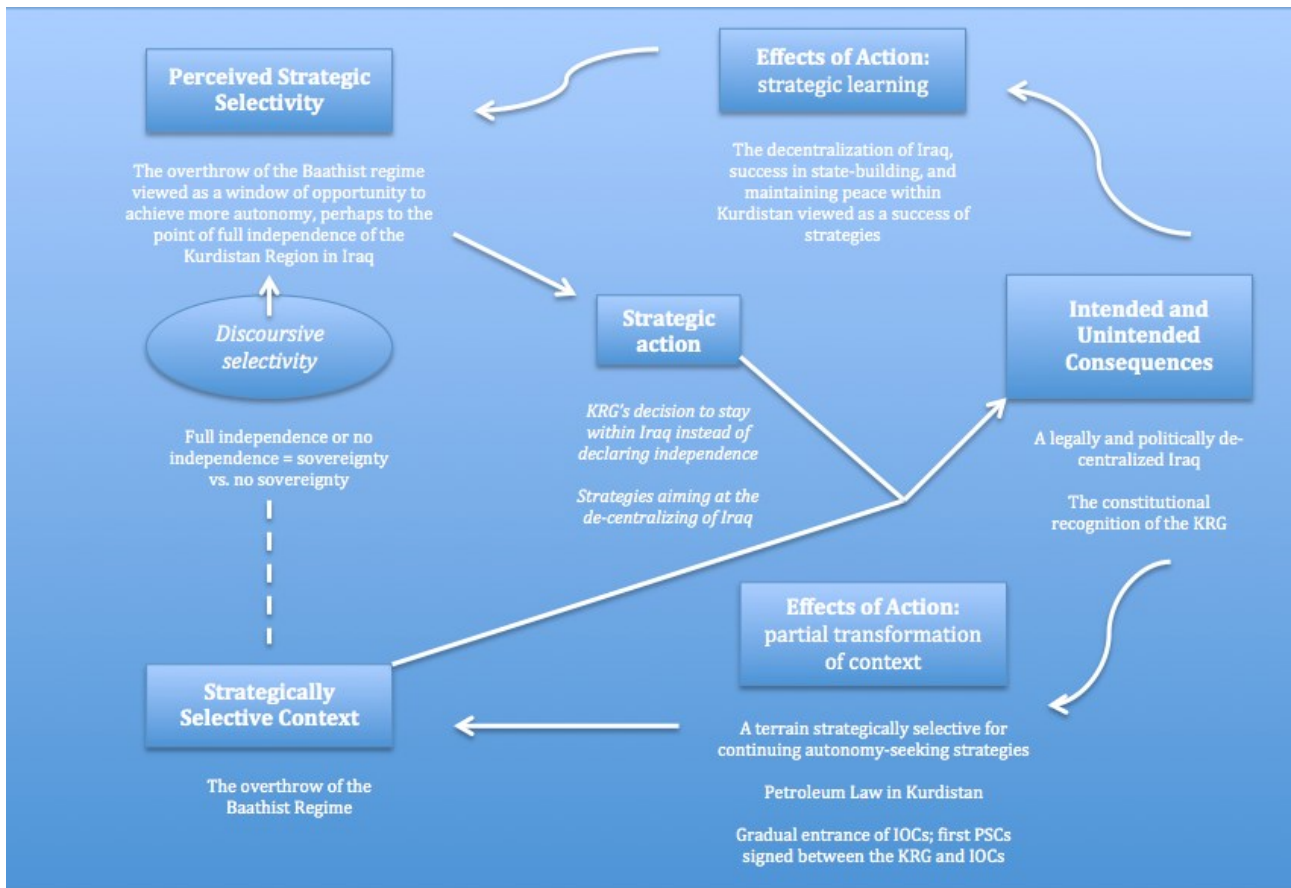[446] Morelli and Pischedda 2014, 108–109

Figure 7: Strategic and discursive selectivity as adopted from Hay (2002, 212) and applied to the analysis of KRG's foreign policy development from 2003 until 2010.

7.3. The Second Period 2010-2014: Turkey's and KRG's Interests Meet

7.3.1. The KRG in between 2010-2014

Disputes over the limits of federalism in the hydrocarbon sector did not arise following the drafting of the new Constitution. The quarrel between Kurds and the Iraqi government date back to the overthrow of the old regime. What is more, the issue is also tightly linked to another major source of conflict between the two parties: that of the disputed territories, indeed. The point of intersection is in the fact that there is a significant amount of oil and gas resources within these regions as well. Ever since 2003, multiple efforts have been made to settle the two questions. They have, however ended up being more or less fruitless in spite of, or perhaps also

because of, the involvement of other parties such as the United States, as intermediaries.[447] I will not delve any deeper into the importance of the natural resources Iraq and Kurdistan, since this issue was already addressed in Chapter 2 of the research.

Continuing from where we left off in the previous chapter, the Iraqi constitution provided indeed that the central government had exclusive control over the *existing* oil fields. It remained silent on the jurisdiction over those found and developed after the enactment of the constitution.[448] KRG, therefore, saw it apt to regulate an independent oil and gas law in 2007. Beginning first with contracting a number of small IOCs, it soon invited international giants such as ExxonMobil, Gazprom Neft, Total and Chevron into the territory with lucrative Production Sharing Contracts[449], which infuriated Baghdad. Maliki declared the PSCs illegal and threatened to blacklist companies from bidding for contracts in Southern Iraq if they sign PSCs with the KRG.[450] His fear was of course in the region obtaining an independent export capacity. Both parties had different readings of the constitution and each asserted the legitimacy of their own interpretation. Nevertheless, the dispute was – and still is – not a *legal*, but a highly *political* one. Maliki is worried about internal sovereignty, while the KRG – having a secured domestic authority in most of the Kurdish-populated areas – is more concerned with achieving economic independence from the capital.

The withdrawal of U.S. Combat Forces from Iraq in 2011 further emphasized the existence of a power vacuum to be filled by Iran and Turkey. It was indeed around 2010-2011 that Ankara decided to properly step up its game in the Kurdistan Region.[451] It had been only in 2007, when Erdogan had even refused to meet up with Kurdistan's president. It was also around the same time, when Turkey had been busy with his bombing campaign in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, targeting PKK strongholds in the Qandil Mountains. However, fast forward into 2010-2011 and you will find the Turkish Foreign Minister opening a consulate in the capital of Kurdistan and

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[447] Alkadiri 2010, 1318–1320; Mills 2013, 53-55; Zedalis 2012, 44–45.
[448] Ottaway and Ottaway, April 29th, 2014.
[449] Platts McGraw Hill Financial, January 17th, 2014. The KRG has indeed signed 50-plus PSCs with international oil companies.
[450] Mills 2003, 55. In fact, he has already done so with a few IOCs and blamed them for "smuggling Iraqi oil". However these threats have not deterred IOCs from signing contracts with KRG., See for instance, Natali, February 28th, 2014. Iraq's reaction to Kurdistan Region's independent development of its hydrocarbon resources proceeded from denial that such resources even existed in the territory to the subsequent blacklisting of the international companies contracting with the regional government and now, most recently at the time of the writing this thesis, to the cutting of the Kurdistan's budget because of the exported oil to Turkey.
[451] Park 2014, 1–7.

Erdogan becoming the first Turkish premier in history to visit the capital of the KRG.[452] Ankara, indeed, came to realize the nexus between its domestic and foreign policy interests with KRG's attempts to further their economic independence from Baghdad around 2010-2011.[453] First of all, it is worth mentioning that Turkey's increasing economic growth coupled with the international sanctions posed on Iran necessitated a diversification of the country's energy sources.[454] Secondly, Erdogan's domestic interests required finding a 'solution' for the Kurdish dilemma once and for all. The prime minister was indeed aiming at an amendment of the Turkish constitution to secure his hold on power. He needed an ally to get the votes necessary for the realization of this intention: Kurdish parties seemed like a viable option. Accordingly, the pressure to address the Kurdish question in Turkey became heavier around 2012. KRG's role in all of this, was of course, to act as an arbitrator and messenger between Qandil and Ankara. Thirdly, and on another front, Syria's civil war had reinforced PKK's position in the region, raising Erdogan's fears of an independent Kurdistan in its southern neighbor. At the same time, and even more importantly, a PKK safe haven also meant a stronger bargaining hand for the Kurds in Turkey, in general, and the PKK, in particular; hence the advantage that the Turkish premier saw in negotiating at least a superficial deal with the Kurds in Turkey. What is interesting, here, is how KRG's Barzani came to be the route through which Erdogan could address most of his problems; no wonder he has been called "Ankara's favorite Kurd". [455]

The United States initially worked in support of cooperation between Turkey and Erbil – perceiving of the collaboration as a counter-balancer for Iran's increasing influence in Iraq. However, as we will come to see, this cooperation reached to extends beyond what the U.S. initially aimed at: voices of dissatisfaction have mounted to what has apparently become a joke in the Turkish diplomatic circles, claiming that "The United States wanted Turkey and Iraq's Kurds to become friends, not get married."[456]

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[452] Barkey 2011, 663–664; Iseri and Dilek 2013, 26–28.
[453] The intersection of interests has been accounted for in the academia by a number of scholars. Among these are for instance a recently published extensive study by Bill Park (March 2014). Also worth mentioning are other articles and briefer accounts by Morelli and Pischedda (2014); Mattew J. Bryza (2012), Marianna Charountaki (2010).
[454] Iseri and Dilek (2013, 29–30) assert that the warming of the relationship between the two came indeed at a time when Turkey's domestic oil consumption was predicted to increase by 32% and its natural gas demand was expected to double by 2023."
[455] Park 2012, 116.
[456] Morelli and Pischedda 2014, 112.

The KRG also had an interest in this cooperation. Having found a vast amount of energy resources on its territory, the landlocked region needed an export route.[457] Turkey appeared like the only option. The two parties, therefore, collaborated and built up an oil pipeline partly bypassing Baghdad's supervision.[458] Where previously Kurdish oil had been trucked to Turkey, through this pipeline the KRG had the change to increase its exports significantly. Exports, indeed, began in no time, and one billion barrels of Kurdish oil headed towards Europe in late May 2014, without the approval of the Iraqi government.[459]

Maliki has put substantial effort into halting every step of this process from the blacklisting of the companies to cutting off the Kurdistan Region from its share in the national budget, and most recently, to filing a case against Turkey in the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris.[460] The threats and quarrels have, since then, also occasionally led to other forms of political games. For instance in 2013, Baghdad's and KRG's disputes over Maliki's refusal to pay IOC's operating in in the Kurdistan Region led to the passing of the Iraqi budget without the approval of the Kurds.[461] Also, on the Iraqi front, the parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2014 further complicated matters; interests, compromises and threats became so intermingled and fused, that it was difficult for anyone to tell who needed whom and why. Just to add a bit of more complexity to the game, I need to also mention the intra-Kurdish rivalries epitomized in the relationship between the PKK and the KDP.[462] Perhaps this is a good point to stop at, and reflect on these developments via the SRA.

7.3.2. KRG's Strategies and Altered Selectivities – IOCs and Turkey as the "New" Players in the Game

Strategies among selectivities

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[457] The implication that the discovery of vast oil and gas resources had on the foreign policies of thei KRG point to the importance of the inclusion of domestic factors when accounting for foreign policy development.

[458] Park 2014, 27-29.

[459] Reuters, June 11th, 2014.

[460] Natali, November 11th, 2013. By this I am referring to KRG's ability to export oil via an independent pipeline, not linked to the Iraq-Turkey pipeline. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline, under the control of the central government meets with the KRG-Ceyhan pipeline merging into the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline monitored by the SOMO and thus the central government.

[461] For more, see for instance Natali, February, 20th 2013, Salaheddin March 7th, 2013.

[462] The Syrian dissolution had indeed strengthened the PKK significantly, which now held three independent cantons isolated from violence in the rest of the Syrian regions.

Interaction between different actors and their strategies makes social reality a constantly transforming process. Each *actor* contributes to this process via its own input. We can therefore say, that each player in the game constitutes a part of the makeup (strategic selectivities positioning actors unequally) of what is understood as the "context" – an abstract analytical tool, indeed. Via the consequences of its strategies examined above, the KRG, similarly, altered its context in multiple ways. As there were other players in the game as well, the consequences of their inputs became likewise important; at least to the extent that they affected the contextual selectivities facing the KRG. The reciprocal interaction of *all* those relevant actors during 2003-2010 gradually developed KRG's relative "context" and transformed its strategic selectivities. Since I cannot examine the impact of each actor's strategies on the context, my emphasis is *mostly* on the consequences of the KRG's own conduct and the influence it had on the relative selectivities of the context. Nevertheless, as context consists of the interaction of other actors, making a few statements on their strategies here and there becomes relevant as well.[463] Before assessing the consequences of strategies deployed 2003-2010 on the contextual selectivities of 2010-2014, let me stop for a brief moment to address the importance of the discovery of vast oil and gas reserves in Kurdistan.

The discovery of these fields throughout the past ten years have had an integral role in the development of Kurdish foreign policies. KRG's leadership could not have embarked on the road it did, had it not been for these reserves that provided the means to assert pressure on Baghdad. In other words, the discovery of oil and gas in Kurdistan significantly altered KRG's strategic positioning vis-à-vis other players in the region. What is more, the influence they had also points to the necessity to include *domestic* sources in foreign policy analysis.[464] However, examining the role of oil and gas reserves without relating it to the contextual selectivities of the international domain makes no sense either; hence Brighi's emphasis on the importance of addressing the nexus between domestic and international factors.

The profitable PSCs created a context strategically selective for the objectives of international giants, which started to steadily enter into agreements with the KRG. The selectivities had, in turn, bent against Baghdad here. The contracts represented a better strategic positioning for

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[463] For the Iranian connection to the nexus of Turkey's Energy Foreign Policy with Kurdish Oil see, for instance: İseri and & Dilek (2013)

[464] Hence the need for a model capable of accounting for both internal and external sources of foreign policy.

the KRG vis-à-vis the capital; the more PSCs the KRG signed, the more it increased its chances of survival without Iraq. However, since the landlocked region was dependent on the export infrastructure controlled by Baghdad, the KRG needed to work its way out of this contextually constraining factor. In other words, the impact of the structural moment had to be altered to better meet KRG's strategies. How to do that, therefore, became the most important question to be answered at the time. As we learned via the SRA, one possible way for actors to modify the selectivities of their context was by changing their alliance strategies. This is exactly what the KRG eventually did. Aiming to undermine the impact of its dependence on Baghdad, the leadership turned to Turkey, with whom Barzani began strengthening his ties. A multi-trillion contract was signed with Ankara to construct a KRG-Ceyhan pipeline. What used to appear as an unalterable structural moment for the KRG soon came to constitute a conjunctural opportunity, which it succeeded in modifying so that it now better met the leadership's strategies. The deal struck between Ankara and Erbil, indeed, marked a significant change in the positioning of the KRG within its contextual selectivities; for even though the new pipeline did not equal to complete independence from Baghdad[465], it did result in an increased bargaining power for the KRG. The reason is quite obvious: the KRG could now shelter itself from complete economic breakdown if Baghdad were to continue the shutdown on budget allocation. Furthermore – and even more importantly – the strategic positioning of the KRG altered due to Turkey's involvement in the game; since Ankara had invested in these pipelines it also had an interest in protecting them. As Morelli and Pischedda have argued, so long as KRG's interests stay aligned with those of Turkey, the autonomous region is not only economically but perhaps also militarily secured. In case of a violent confrontation between Baghdad and the KRG, the pipeline investments would presumably lead to Turkey safeguarding the Kurdistan region against Iraqi forces, were there an armed confrontation between the two. The chance for a violent clash between Baghdad and Erbil is by no means an impossible scenario. There are opinions in Baghdad in support of the idea of the use of force to halt the increase of KRG's bargaining power. It is seen by some as better than having to concede to further demands, which the KRG's growing (inter-)dependence with Turkey necessarily leads to: the more Ankara has at stake in Erbil, the more it will be willing to confront Baghdad.[466]

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[465] For more, see for instance Natali, November 4th, 2013.

[466] Morelli and Pischedda 2014, 114–115: There are two arguments regarding the potential consequences of the construction of the pipelines. On the one hand, it is claimed that since these pipelines provide the means to cope economically in the case of continued halt on budget allocation from Baghdad, incentives to secede from Iraq are decreased. On the other hand it is argued that the very same economic autonomy creates more incentive to declare *de jure* independence from Baghdad. In their game-theoretic examination, Morelli and Pischedda assume that

And it seems like Turkey is indeed willing to put more at stake taking into account its increasing involvement in the Kurdish oil business. For instance, in June 2014 the state-owned Turkish Energy Company purchashed a 20% stake of ExxonMobil's six blocks within the Kurdistan Region meaning of course that Turkey now has an even more concrete interest in ensuring that KRG's oil can be sold via the newly built pipeline.[467] However, Morelli and Pischedda add that that while Ankara might protect KRG's economic *de facto* independence, it will not go so far to recognize complete *de jure* independence from Iraq.[468] Either way, an increased bargaining power does not necessarily lead to an increased incentive for secession on the part of the KRG. Its leadership has indeed affirmed time after time willingness to share power and understands that the *de jure* independence is to be achieved via peaceful means requiring first and foremost support from Baghdad and Ankara.[469]

Coming back to the conjunctural opportunities I want to emphasize that none of the above-mentioned gains associated with a better strategic positioning came for free; cooperation with Erdogan included changes in the contextual selectivities not necessarily in favor of *all* of the Kurdish leadership's strategies. This is to say that Turkey had its conditions as well. Mutual cooperation required the KRG to rule out a number of strategies, which it saw the new context would obviously select against. As Denise Natali has argued, while the alliance furthered Barzani's aim to achieve his own interests, it also "[...] reinforced the KRG's dependence on Turkey and the need to coordinate its nationalist agenda with Ankara".[470] It is here, that the critique coming from the nationalist Kurdish front becomes relevant, indeed. Some have accused Barzani of opting for dependence on Turkey just to unleash the KRG from dependency on Baghdad. In other words, what has been viewed as pragmatic politics on some fronts, has been, in turn, judged as the betrayal of Kurdish nationalism on other fronts.[471]

KRG's demands *might* grow with their bargaining power. Increased bargaining power vis-à-vis Baghdad, however does not necessarily mean increased incentive to engage in a violent confrontation and a subsequent secession from Baghdad.

[467] Iraqi oil Report, June 10th, 2014.

[468] Morelli and Pischedda 2014, 116.

[469] Ibid., 115.

[470] Natali, January 8th, 2014.

[471] Ibid.,. This is what, for instance, Denise Natali has also discussed as Erdogan's "mishandling" of the Kurdish files; by collaborating with Barzani the Turkish premier has increased nationalist sentiments among Kurds and managed to heighten "the polarization between two emergent Kurdish nationalist power centers: followers of Barzani and supporters of Ocalan."

As I have emphasized, my aim is not to examine the strategic selectivities facing Turkey's objectives, but rather those confronting the KRG's changing strategies. However, since the transformations of contextual selectivities facing the Kurdish leadership in Iraq is constituted to a great extent by its position in relation to Turkey, the interests of the latter need to be addressed briefly as well. The seeds of the cooperation between these two actors lay at the particular intersection of their strategies. This is to say that around 2011, the relative contexts of both the KRG and Turkey had become strategically selective for their cooperation. Looking to the south, Turkey was facing a civil war in Syria. The PKK was gaining an upper hand in the northeastern regions of the country, and having learned from previous experiences, Turkey well acknowledged that Assad could easily use the PKK-card to pressure Ankara into keeping its nose out of Syria's business. Looking into East, dependency on Iran's – the Syrian ally's – natural gas implied a need for an alternative source of energy imports, especially at a time when the country's domestic demand had been projected to double by the next 10 years. Gazing into Baghdad Erdogan was confronted with the increasing influence of Iran on Maliki's government. Moreover, the domestic front was not selecting against a potential cooperation with the Kurds either. The AKP[472] was facing an upcoming election and Erdogan needed Kurdish votes in order to secure his success and possibly amend the Turkish constitution to maintain his hold on power for another four years. The success of the PKK in Syria also marked a strengthened PKK in Turkey; the Kurdish question started to get heavier on Ankara. Barzani seemed to sit in this equation perfectly. The Kurdish president, accordingly, became Turkey's "interlocutor" in addressing Kurdish issues on three fronts; in Iraq, Syria and Turkey.[473] To cut the long story short here, the changes in contextual selectivities clearly pointed towards an environment selective for Turkey's and KRG's collaborative efforts.

Moving on to Baghdad, we can point out to how Maliki's efforts at centralizing power, his refusal to pay the IOCs in the KRG and cutting off the region from its national budget as a retaliatory measure against the unilateral energy policies of the Kurdish leadership, continuously reconstituted a context selecting against the cooperation of the two in the energy sector. Compromises were, however, made only at the time of Iraqi elections in 2010 and 2014, when the selectivities of the context favored a temporary settlement of disputes. What is more, counter-tendencies working against the actualization of tendencies in favor of Turkish-Kurdish

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[472] The AKP refers to Erdogan's Justice and Developement Party.
[473] Natali, January 8th 2014.

cooperation were constantly at play. For instance, Iran and the United States, both seemed to fear that the cooperation between the two would to develop into what could become a threat to the unity of Iraq. Their strategies, therefore, aimed more or less at keeping some sort of a balance in the country by pressuring the KRG and Maliki to reach an agreement on their disputes.

Cognition as the intermediary between contextual selectivities and strategic action

As we saw in the previous phase, fluctuations in contextual selectivities do not necessarily lead to certain strategies. In spite of the strategic selectivities favoring Turkish-Kurdish cooperation at the expense of good relations with Baghdad, the outcome was by no means a necessary consequence of these changes.[474] Changes in Turkey's and KRG's relative positioning vis-à-vis each other *per se* did not inevitably lead to their cooperation. It was *cognition* that came to be the mediator in between their relative contexts and strategies. Just like the toppling of the Baathist regime was *relational* to the cognitive templates of the KRG, so were the new contextual selectivities brought about by the Syrian war, Turkey's interests and Tehran's influence on Baghdad. Since I addressed the values and perceptions driving KRG's unilateral energy policies in the previous phase, I will not do it again here. Suffice it to argue that they were responsible for particular interpretation that the KRG came to give to its contextual selectivities. Had the entity not been oriented towards its context via the normative paradigm of statehood, contextual selectivities would under no circumstances have comprised the exact same conjunctural opportunities (for instance, contracting IOCs with PSCs, constructing a KRG-Ceyhan pipeline) and structural constraints (for instance, coordination of the nationalist agenda with Ankara) that they actually did.

Consequently, and even more importantly, we can assess that it is only when examined from the perspective of the KRG that the contextual changes become a conjunctural opportunity for the leadership of the region to further their economic project. As such, studying the Syrian civil war or Turkey's altered interest *separately* as contextual selectivities (structural factors), does not make any sense. Similarly, examining KRG's objectives (agential will) apart from the spatio-temporal selectivities of its environment makes no sense either. We need to know the strategies

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[474] Hence the role of cognition and contingency here that I will address in the next section.

in order for selectivities to make sense and selectivities in order for strategies to make sense. Context and action are always dialectical and relational. Once again, this is where the weakness of the morphogenetic cycles lie: they fail to capture both the ontological and the analytical interdependency of these two components of reality because of the simple fact that they depict the agent-structure relationship as a *sequential* rather than as a *reciprocal* unfolding of relationality.

As the proponents of the SRA claim, however, agents and structures should not be situated in temporally different domains simply because agential will and structural constraints are co-existent in time. They cannot be examined separately. For instance, the construction of an oil pipeline between Turkey and KRG should be viewed as an outcome of contextual and agential dynamics in two ways. First, cooperation resulted from the change that occurred in the *relational* positioning of the KRG with regard to Turkey and Baghdad around 2011. It is only when we *relativize* KRG's economic-indendency-seeking objectives to the changed contextual selectivities that we can understand "the product of their fusion", not when examining the two separately. Secondly, cooperation resulted from the unique interpretation given to the situation by KRG and Turkey. For instance, both of them could have chosen completely alternate strategies, equally selected for by their context, but they chose cooperation instead; hence the contingent path-dependency which cognition brings to social reality. This is something that, for instance, conventional balance of power theories cannot accommodate. They would assume outcomes simply as a necessary consequence of the distribution of power; actors act on the basis of *real* threats and interests rather than *perceived* ones.[475] It is only the *relationalist* view of the constructivist tradition that can locate *contingency* at the heart of its conceptualization of social reality.[476]

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[475] Balance of threat theory would come closer to the SRA than the bop, because it manages to take into account cognitive factors; states balance against perceived threats rather than real threats (Walt 1985). According to this understanding, Kurdish-Turkish cooperation would point to Turkey balancing against Teheran (and as such against Maliki) because it perceives of Iran's current regime – not Iran *per se* – being a bigger threat than a potential Kurdish State in its neighbor. However, balance of threat is faulty in the sense that it still amounts to the nested game model, incorporating perception of leaderships only as an intervening variable. What is more, it fails to address the nexus of domestic and international factors of foreign policy.

[476] Parsons 2010, 83–89; Stroker and Marsh 2010, 88; The essence of constructivist social ontology lies in the role it gives to *contingency*; individualists and structuralists or, in the words of Craig Parsons, "standard non-constructivist explanations" are "enemies of the contingency and human agency". While recognizing that their assumptions are *probabilistic* rather than *deterministic*, they, however, fail to place contingency at the center of their theorization like constructivists do. For instance, rational choice theory or neorealism do not claim that people lack ideas in their heads, but rather that all the talk about identities and norms are rather *rational* responses to some *real* (not socially constructed) constraints and incentives such as geography, economics and security competition. Thus, for instance the foreign policy conduct of a particular state, is considered as the behavioral or

Once again, nothing about the context per se necessitated Turkey's and KRG's collaboration. Both of the players could have opted for different strategies that would have guided the dynamics of the relationship between the two on an entirely different path. With regard to the KRG, the eventually deployed strategies were indeed also dependent on ideas in two ways. Firstly, the strategies were relational to the information the leadership had about their context; perceptions and misperceptions about the real selectivities of their environment. Secondly, they were dependent on the autonomous region's policy paradigm targeting at economic independence indeed. Had the strategies of the KRG not been driven by pursuit of economic independence from Baghdad, Barzani would not have necessarily turned to Ankara and "compromised" – as some have accused him of having done – on the nationalist agenda the way he did. Once again, however, the outcomes also required taking into account contextual selectivities; had they been any different, KRG and Turkey may have not seen any point in changing their relationship from what it used to be. We can see here the importance of giving equal weight to each of the three elements in the explanation of the final outcome. None of them examined alone or separately can give an adequate explanation of *relational* unfolding of the events.

Implications on power

Turning to the question of power, we can point to the changes that occurred in the hierarchy of potential powers post-2010. For instance, the consequences of KRG's own strategies with regard to its defying energy policies or events such as the discovery of oil and gas resources in the first place, all constituted a new situation in which actors came to be, once again, differentially positioned within their relative contexts. Potentialities for power were, indeed, redistributed in a new order, which provided new cards to Erbil, Baghdad and Ankara. The power relations between the three came to be determined once again by two things; their reciprocal interaction and the unequal positioning of their strategies vis-à-vis the contextual selectivities of the period in question. We could see, for instance, how the KRG's hand in the game was altered by the discovery of vast oil and gas resources, but to understand the

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causal effect of *material relations of difference,* giving no role to agents who have had a choice to choose in between meanings they have given to their context. It is here that the strategic-relational account can be credited for its merits.

implications this change had on the redistribution of power relations, we need to locate the leadership's independence-seeking strategies in their context. I want to highlight, once again, that at any point, the particular distribution of power did not *determine* outcomes in KRG's foreign policy development; it was rather the explanandum, which came to be determined by the unique intersections of strategies, selectivities and cognitive templates.

Conclusions

The previous analysis could not – nor did it even try to – address the strategies of all the possible players or the consequences of their actions. The changing relations between Turkey, Baghdad and Erbil were indeed complex and involved an infinite number of twists and turns. My point, was, however, mainly to demonstrate how foreign policy development was determined by the unique intersections of KRG's strategies, contextual selectivities – out of which some favored whereas other worked against its objectives – and normatively oriented perceptions of the context. Furthermore, I once again, attempted to present the contingency of power and its dependency on *relations*; KRG's power vis-à-vis Baghdad and Turkey was determined only after unique spatio-temporal intersections of contextual selectivities such as the discovery of energy resources *and* strategies such as the construction of a KRG-Ceyhan pipeline. We can thus conclude that power did not itself determine – and, thus, cannot *explain* – any of the outcomes related to KRG's foreign policy development.

7.3.3. Consequences of Action

It is perhaps too early to assess the exact consequences of strategies deployed during 2010-2014. It can be said, however, that KRG's increased Baghdad-defying strategies post-2010 have been perceived of as a success with regard to achieving economic independence. For instance, ever since the KRG started selling PSCs to international oil companies, the Kurdistan Region's GDP has grown exponentially and the influx of foreign investment keeps on growing.[477] What is important to note here is that whatever the consequences, in line or not with KRG's objectives, have been dependent on its strategic positioning in *relation* to its contextual selectivities and the quality and type of the readings they have given to their environment. As

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[477] Bloomberg, May 22nd, 2014.

we saw, the regional government recognized a conjunctural opportunity in the changed selectivities of its environment – particularly the nexus of KRG's interests with those of Turkey – around 2010. Continuing from its unaltered pursuit of economic independency from Baghdad, KRG accordingly worked to change the context to better meet its strategies of economic independence. Of course, the leadership could aim at transformation of its context only to the extent its saw was possible within the space offered in between conjunctural opportunities and structural constraints. We could see how none of the three elements of the dialectic *per se* necessitated KRG's decisions in this period either; hence the *contingency* of path-dependency. The cognitive template of statehood did not cause KRG to contract IOCs with Production Sharing Contracts rather than Technical Service Contracts or construct a new pipeline with Turkey rather than export Kurdish oil via the Iraqi-controlled Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. The particular path that KRG's foreign policy development took was rather a consequence of a series of unique intersections of spatio-temporal contextual selectivities (mediated by the pursuit-of-statehood-driven policy paradigm) and deployed strategies.

Up until now the consequences of KRG's energy policies have further strengthened its position vis-à-vis-Baghdad. This in turn, can be seen as a success of strategies aiming at achieving economic independence from the Iraqi capital. However, at the same time throughout this journey, these defiant policies have subjected KRG to risks such as the shut-down on budget allocation and other forms of efforts hampering KRG's cooperation with Turkey. With regard to Ankara, it is clear that KRG-Turkey relations have deepened considerably with Turkey's continuously growing will to increase its stakes in the game. What this has meant for the KRG, in turn, is that its increasing (inter-)dependence with Turkey has, at least for the time being, partly secured its balancing game in the north and moderated Ankara's fear of an extensively autonomous Kurdistan at its southern borders.[478] Furthermore, KRG now has Turkey – at least potentially – holding its side in case of any violent confrontations with Baghdad. When it comes to Turkey, this intermingling of interests may perhaps also lead to unexpected and unintended consequences. As Ofra Bengio has acknowledged;

> "Should Turkey decide to give Barzani the green light, he would not hesitate to go
> the extra mile and declare independence. One thing is certain: Turkey has willy-

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[478] I discussed KRG's balancing game vis-a-vis Baghdad and Ankara in Chapter 2; hence "secure its game in the north".

nilly helped the Kurdish genie escape from the bottle and it will be very difficult for Ankara to push it back inside."[479]

The consequences of KRG's strategies are continuously unfolding, so we cannot conclude with a set of particular effects of strategies deployed during 2010-2014. KRG's future remains an open case, viable for rapid and surprising developments. Contextual selectivities are undergoing speedy transformations and the autonomous region is closely following the transforming elements of its surroundings. For instance, recently the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant seized the city of Mosul in Northern Iraq and they are rapidly advancing into other central cities, mostly in the 'disputed territories' of the country referred to earlier in this chapter. Under the orders of Maliki, the Iraqi government troops have fled these areas with no bullets fired, which, in turn, has left KRG's Peshmerge forces to advance into these cities and secure them from the militants. One of the utmost remarkable events is indeed the fact that the strategic oil city of Kirkuk is currently – for the first time since 2003[480] under Kurdish control. Whether or not this marks a positive movement with regard to KRG's objectives, is a debatable issue indeed. Some would argue that the currently unfolding events could be considered as a conjunctural opportunity for the KRG to further its interests with regard to the disputed territories – currently all under the control of the Peshmerge forces. Others see it as a misperception or erroneous reading of strategic selectivities, since by leaving the disputed territories, Maliki is forcing the KRG to secure them and, as such, he is trying to fight his Sunni-battle via the Kurds. This, in turn, marks a structural moment rather than a conjunctural opportunity for KRG's objectives.[481] Either way, we can say that during the past three decades and particularly the past ten years of autonomous experience, the autonomous leadership has gained a good amount of experience (strategic learning), which may or may not help it in reading off the strategic selectivities of its context and maybe even assist it into a more skillful navigation of its rapidly changing environment. One thing is for sure; if the past ten years have taught the KRG anything, it has been the fact that conjunctural opportunities need to be recognized quickly and strategies formulated even more swiftly, if they are truly aiming for full independence.

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[479] Bengio, December 6th, 2012.
[480] As I mentioned 7.2. The First Period 2003-2010: The Constitutional Recognition of KRG, after the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003, the Peshmerge forces advanced into the disputed territories, but, however, retreated shortly partly due to following pressures from the United States.
[481] For this conflicting account see Forbes, June 12th, 2014.

I have, once again attempted to demonstrate the link between strategic selectivities, strategic action and cognitive templates via Hay's model as illustrated below in Figure 8.
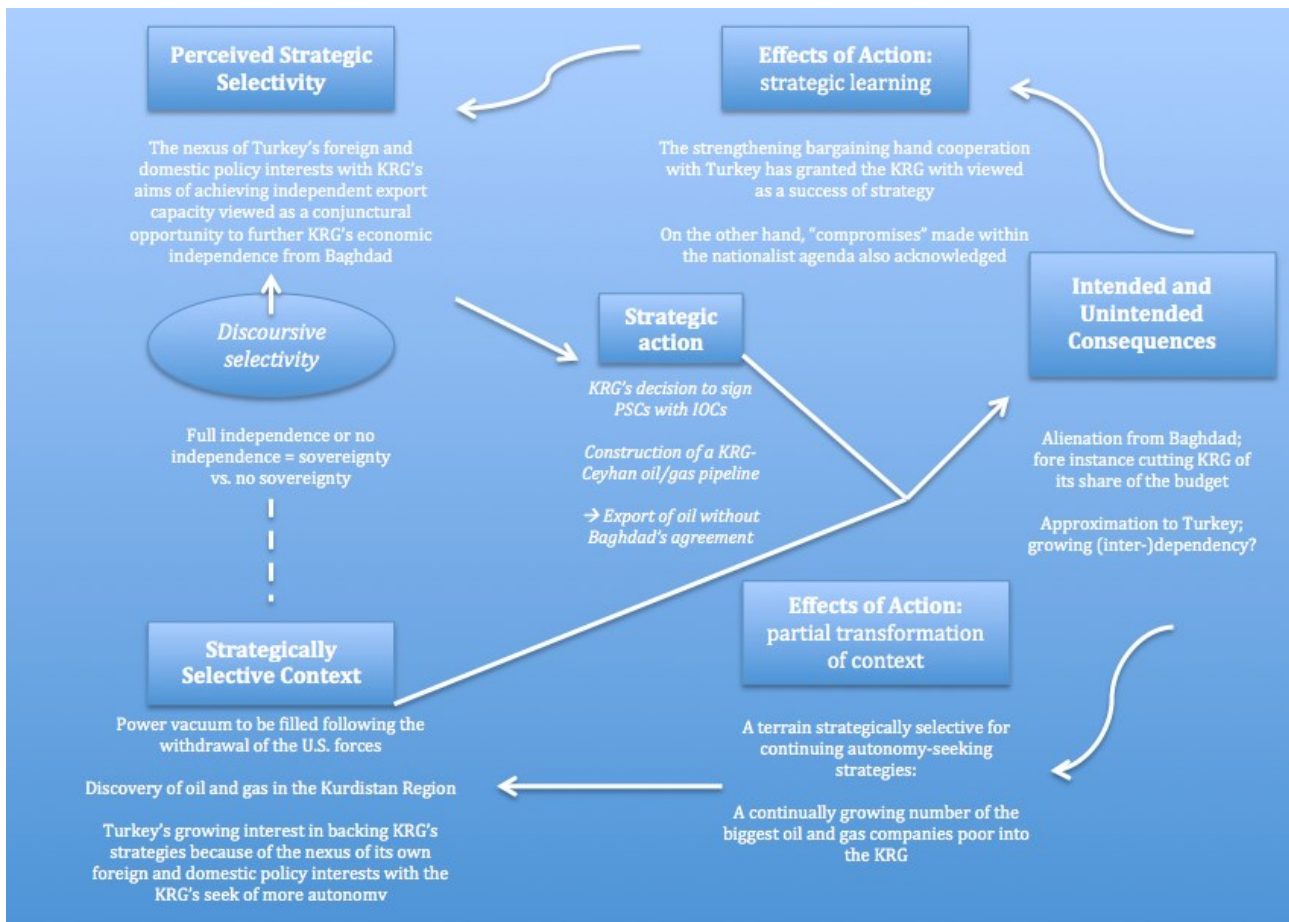

Figure 8. Strategic and discursive selectivity as adopted from Hay (2002, 212) and applied to the analysis of KRG's foreign policy development from 2010 until 2014.

7.4. Conclusions

In this chapter I tried to explain KRG's foreign policy development in terms of its efforts of gaining economic independence from Baghdad post-2003. To do so, I adopted a strategic-relational approach to the analysis of foreign policy development. This development was presented as a product of "contingent necessity" – *the unfolding of a non-necessary process of a de facto state's strategies heading towards gaining economic independence.* In a more or less simplified analysis of the contextual selectivities, strategic action and the dominant paradigm of statehood, I suggested that explaining the unfolding processes of foreign policy development required an understanding of the *relational* nature of reality. This in turn, meant highlighting the *contingency* in path-dependent development, which was responsible for bringing about a

unique political reality in which the KRG now found itself. I studied the development through two periods, situating the first in 2003–2010 and the second in 2010-2014.

In the first phase I suggested that one should direct their attention to the fall of the Baathist Regime and the legal and political decentralization of Iraq, when looking for the contextual selectivities. In terms of strategies I, for instance, referred to the decision to stay within Iraq instead of declaring independence. Contextual selectivities and strategic action were, in turn, relativized the policy paradigm of statehood, particularly within the context of economic independence through the hydrocarbon sector. In the second phase, I highlighted the oil and gas discoveries as well as the importance of paying attention to the role of the two increasingly important players in the game – Turkey and the International Oil and Gas Companies.[482] While Turkey's involvement in Iraq and Kurdistan was by no means something new[483], its role in the oil dispute, in particular, became explicit and increasingly crucial for both the KRG as well as Turkey itself. In terms of the "old players" in the game (Baghdad), the domestic politics of Iraq was highlighted via Maliki's increasingly tightening grip on power and his strategies narrowing the space available – in between conjunctural opportunities and structural constraints – for the KRG to transform its context. Another important issue was the Iraqi elections of 2010 and 2014, which altered the selectivities relative to the strategies of the KRG; Maliki needed the support of the Kurds to preserve his seat in power. This, in turn, marked a stronger bargaining hand for the KRG to pursuit its objectives or – to term it via the theoretical lenses of Jessop – it marked a broadened space of conjunctural opportunity for the autonomous region's leadership to alter its context to better accommodate its objectives. I will leave the wider empirical conclusions to the following chapter, where I will also connect the two phases of examination.

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[482] Unfortunately, I do not have the time nor the space to elaborate in more detail on the unique implications of the entrance of these non-state actors into the game.

[483] In 2011 Iraq was the second-largest market for Turkey, the Kurdistan region accounting for 70 percent of the exports. This comes in addition to major investments in construction and natural resources. What is more, trade and Turkish investment in Kurdistan has exploded ever since the fall of the previous regime.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUDING REMARKS

8.1. Empirical Conclusions: Contingent Development Towards Economic Independency

This inquiry began with an interest in the recently warmed up relations between Turkey and the KRG. The collaboration between two actors that were only ten years ago the least likely partners in the region, raised the question of how and why their relationship had developed the way they had post-2003. This question, in turn, directed me towards KRG's continuous efforts to secure economic independence from Baghdad through defiant energy policies – mainly because Turkey appeared to be involved in the game KRG was playing. The struggle over the limits of its autonomy turned out to be, indeed, at the heart of KRG's disputes with Baghdad and its improving relations with Turkey. With this inquiry, my objective was to shed light on the autonomous region's gradual *process* towards the economic independency it had – to a great extent – achieved today. Since KRG's efforts to unleash itself from Baghdad's shackles concerned more or less its external relations and the "foreign policy" strategies it deployed to achieve the given objective, I ended up analyzing the *foreign policy* development of the leadership, indeed. Among a good number of issues addressed, there was one key hypothesis guiding the research; the KRG's foreign policy development was assumed to be the workings of what Jessop called "contingent necessity" – an organic project, throughout which both the KRG itself, as well as its context, were continuously transformed and redefined. It was this *relationalist* hypothesis that I wanted to test through the SRA's three concepts of *strategic action, strategically selective context and policy paradigm.* In other words, I made an effort to study *how particular causal processes or their junctures produced the apparent outcomes of KRG's foreign policy development, which would not have otherwise occurred.* [484]

2003 was chosen as the point of departure because the overthrow of the Iraqi government provided a remarkable conjunctural opportunity for the KRG, setting its leadership's foreign policy development on an entirely new path, unfolding up to this day as a product of contingent necessity. The research began from a brief elaboration on the constructivist theorization of *de facto* statehood. I considered it necessary, because the theory made an important assumption

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[484] Jessop, December 2nd, 2013. I asked this in Chapter 6.3.

about the foreign policies of such entities. They were claimed to be driven by the idea of statehood, on which their entire survival depended: *de facto states'* strategies changed, but the idea of *statehood* – in the sense of the achievement of full independence – always remained and guided the development of both the foreign policies and domestic dynamics of these entities. Even though the KRG had already passed the phase of transformation from an armed conflict to an administrative government of a *de facto* state, it was still assumed to be in a transitory state. The concept of statehood, therefore, provided a viable point of departure in the examination of its policies. It was in the light of this presumption on the dominant cognitive template, that the development of the autonomous region was analyzed later.

Having gone through different *substantialist* approaches to the analysis of foreign policy, I ended up with the *relationalist* strategic-relational approach due to its ability to capture the dialectical intersection of the ideal and the material as well as context and action as a *process,* in which "agents" and "structures" were continuously redefined and transformed. A closer discussion of this relationalist view of reality, led to its application to the study of the foreign policy developments of the KRG post-2003. Through the analytical concepts provided by the SRA, I demonstrated the contingent, yet path-dependent development of the ten-year-period of KRG's pursuit of statehood or economic independence, manifested in its energy policies. I carefully explained the assumedly ambiguous, transitory and oscillating foreign policies of the region via reference to the temporal co-existence of the mutually interdependent context, strategic conduct and policy paradigm.

Looking back at the initial question of the research of *how can we explain KRG's foreign policy development post-2003"* – we can say that Chapter 7 provided one possible way to answer it – with a *relationalist* understanding of reality, indeed. I suggested this approach as an alternative to *substantialist* and *dualist relationalist* explanations of change. [485] Through the SRA's conceptual tools I could demonstrate the contingent necessity in the process, through which the region had ended up where it was today; two billion barrels of Kurdish oil waiting to be sold to the international markets – something, which the tight space in between structural

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[485] With substantialist approaches I am referring to monocausal explanations based on "self-action" and multicausal explanations based on "inter-action" as explained in Chapter 5. With *dualist relationalist* approaches I am referring to Archer's morphogenetic approach.

constraints and conjunctural opportunities would not have had the KRG even hypothetically anticipating, let alone realizing, only ten years ago. Gareth Stansfield has argued, indeed, that,

> "If the Kurds are able to pump the amounts of oil they're promising, then this is a fundamental geopolitical game changer. It gives the Kurds economic independence from Baghdad."[486]

The continuous inflow of foreign investment alongside the increasing income that will be coming with oil (and presumably also gas in the future) exports – promises a bright future for the economy of the autonomous region. However, as I argued, the future still remains an open case, subject to swift changes that may result in completely distinct hands in the game. "Potentialities for power" as Jessop would designate – are continuously being redistributed as the future keeps on unfolding contingently. As we argued earlier (6.3.), the social world is an open structure with an infinite number of future possibilities.[487] The ISIL surge in Iraq and the Peshmerge advancing into disputed territories may result in new contextual selectivities expanding KRG's conjunctural moment and, as such, perhaps lead to further independence for the autonomous region; with a chance of Iraq ending up on Syria's path, a scenario of Kurdish independence and Iraqi dissolution cannot be opted out. This, of course, will depend on how the leadership manages to read the selectivities of its context and formulate strategies that do not backfire against its objectives. It is, therefore, also equally possible that the KRG makes strategic mistakes or, as Jessop would designate – fail to correctly read the selectivities of its context. As such, its leadership may end up, not only missing an opportunity that would have furthered its objectives, but also curtailing the space within which it could have been able to transform its context in the future as well.[488] Not dwelling too much on what the future holds, I want to make two important remarks regarding my empirical conclusions.

Firstly, I find it essential to highlight that what I wanted to demonstrate via the conceptual analysis in Chapter 7 was not so much whether or not KRG now had better or worse relations with Turkey or Baghdad, for these were only secondary matters with regard to this inquiry. As I argued in the introductory chapter, the primary objective of this research was, instead, to

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[486] Bloomberg, May 22nd, 2014.
[487] Luhmann 1979, 6, 13; cf. Jessop 2007, 43.
[488] Consequences of action are, indeed, never exclusively intended because actors do not have immediate access to reality (a critical realist position). There is always *cognition* mediating in between actors and their surroundings, leading to the unpredictable nature of the unfolding of social reality. KRG may choose a strategy that the selectivities of its context reject albeit it seemed to its leadership as if they would have been favoring it.

explain how KRG had ended up in a position, where it could revel in an economic success marking independence from Baghdad beyond the extent it could have imagined only ten years ago. As we saw in the empirical analysis, the Iraqi and the Turkish capitals, of course, to a large extent formed the contextual selectivities facing KRG's strategies aiming at this objective throughout this process. However, whether or not the autonomous region now had a better relationship with Ankara or an aggravated one with Baghdad was not the main point I wanted to make through the strategic-relational analysis. The conduct of an inquiry into KRG's foreign policy development was only a *medium* through which I wanted to demonstrate the contingent path-dependency (contingent necessity) of the process, through which the autonomous region had achieved its current status: none of the three elements of the dialectic were responsible for the outcomes alone.

While explaining the KRG's strategies and their consequences, the inquiry, nevertheless, was also able to simultaneously point to these fluctuating relations of the autonomous region with Baghdad and Ankara, throughout the period of examination, as the contextual selectivities and deployed strategies unfolded contingently. This is also what Caspersen and Stansfield projected, indeed. I want to emphasize here that, it would be misleading to equate KRG's temporary approximation to Turkey as "better relations" in between the two in general, let alone make any assertions regarding the future of their relationship. It will be the temporally co-extensive intersections of contextual selectivities (mediated by readings of that context and the pursuit-of-statehood-colored paradigm) and deployed strategies that will dictate what is to become of the KRG-Ankara nexus in the future. Similarly misinforming would it be to argue that the KRG has alienated Baghdad permanently, for throughout the disputes, where their interests have not met, there have also been points of agreement with the Iraqi capital. This, in turn, makes it difficult to argue that KRG in general has worse relations with Baghdad than it did ten years ago, let alone project that their relations will deteriorate even further.[489] I can thus conclude that the KRG's pursuit of economic independence through Baghdad-defying energy policies post-2003, aided to a significant extent by Ankara as the export route for KRG's oil, has, in a contingently path-dependent road led to KRG's economic independence at least for the time being. At the same time, this has meant an increasing, albeit not permanent, estrangement from Baghdad and reciprocal approximation to Ankara. Whether or not these developments mark

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[489] One also needs to take into account the intra-Kurdish "division of labour" that I addressed in Chapter 2. KDP may have "worse" relations with Baghdad, while the PUK is still holding the balance.

new contextual selectivities favoring a strategy of declaration of full independence provides a good amount of food for thought for further inquiry.

The second issue is related to an effort by Eiki Berg and Raul Toomla (2009) to capture *de facto* states' status within the international community via the measurement of three categories; political, economic and public spheres. The political domain refers to the international community's willingness to interact with such entities. The economic sphere, in turn, marks readiness to engage in trade and other forms of economic activities with these entities, indicating trust in the legal environment and governance of the region. Finally, the public sphere refers to the *de facto* state's efforts to engage with the international community and the international community's reaction to that call. To measure these three variables, Berg and Toomla have then developed a four-level scale - a "normalization index" – beginning from *negation*, going into *boycott* and *toleration* and ending up with *quasi-recognition*. However, I am highly dubious about the ability of this model to provide any useful accounts with regard to the change that has happened in KRG's status over the past ten years. Berg and Toomla, for instance, have designated official recognition, the number of foreign trade partners, and air communication as some of the independent variables making up for the level of *de facto* states' integration in the international community.[490] However, most of the variables they have listed – if not all of them – give too simplistic of an account of *de facto states*' status. KRG has, for instance, not even declared independence or asked for recognition for it to be examined through Berg's and Toomla's index. Furthermore, having more foreign trade partners or a country telephone code tells us nothing about *the constantly changing nature and powers of these entities, which only a transactional analysis of their relations can point towards*. It is for this reason, that I have decided not to filter the change observed in the region's status or the "degree of KRG's normalization" in its relations with the rest of the world via Berg's and Toomla's index.

I will now, move onto the theoretical conclusions of the research. The key objective is to address, why it was the SRA instead of *substantialist* or *dualist relational* conceptualizations of reality that could better demonstrate and reflect the process, through which KRG had managed to achieve the status it had today.

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[490] Berg and Toomla (2009).

8.2. Theoretical Conclusions

8.2.1. The Fallacy of Substantialism

I want to begin with what I see as a fallacy of the *substantialist* perception of *change* – be it change in foreign policy, the economic independence *de facto* state or sovereignty. For it was this understanding that led me into approaching KRG's foreign policy development through a *relationalist* approach instead. Charles Tilly argued, that the building blocks of any social and political analysis were "[...] configuration of ties – recurrent sociocultural interaction – between social aggregates of various sorts and their component parts."[491] We were accustomed to referring to these ties as *entities.* Ties were, however, not "static 'things', but ongoing processes", which transformed and changed their meaning through relations. As I argued throughout Chapter 4, *substantialist* understandings were based on this mistaken assumption of pre-given entities. As such, they necessarily attributed *change* to them as well, rather than the relations they epitomized. Individualists ascribed change single-handedly to assumedly independently existing individuals with pre-given preferences, whereas holists reduced all change to supposedly autonomous structural constraints (discursive or material) with internal logics of their own. Synthetic efforts based on "*inter-action*" did not do much better. Instead of entities, they had attributes of entities doing the acting. Nevertheless, these approaches still designated the secondary properties of – once again, pre-given *entities* – as responsible for change, rather than their relations. None of the three substantialist understandings could, therefore, acknowledge the fact that change was instantiated – not by entities themselves ("self-action" –approaches) or in their varying attributes, such as power ("inter-action"-approaches) – but, instead, in *relations* that continuously transformed the nature and meanings of these configurations of ties.

I could have applied substantialist approaches to explain the changes observed above, for instance, in KRG's economic independence or its relations with Turkey and Baghdad between 2003 and 2014. In such case, there would have been two potential paths to take; either the one based on self-action or the one constructed upon inter-action. When it comes to the former, very few analysts today would attribute outcomes exclusively either to individuals or to

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[491] Tilly 1996, 2; cf. Jackson and Nexon 1999, 292; According to Tilly, these ties included economic, political and cultural transactions. As we saw in the analysis, KRG's *relations* demonstrated in this inquiry epitomized all three domains.

structures. Monocausal explanations may not, indeed, be viewed as legitimized today as they once were.[492] It is generally understood that some form of synthesization is necessary for an adequate account of foreign policy. Carlsnaes' tripartite model is one such example, which gives weight to a variety of different factors from cognitive variables to normative institutions. In the case of the latter – the inter-action –based models, it seems that they are viewed as more pertinent in the field. Nevertheless, regardless of which approach I had decided to choose, there was a still problem I could not have escaped. It was related to the tendency of substantialism to address change via "static dynamics", as introduced in Chapter 5. As such, trying to conceptualize change, for instance, in the level of KRG's economic independence, would have meant selecting two snapshots; one from 2003 and the other from 2014. The subsequent comparison of the two snapshots would have lead to particular explanations of *change* – depending on whether I had chosen self-action or inter-action, as depicted below.

Had I chosen the "structural perspective", the change described above would have been attributed to KRG's continuous rational responses to material constraints of its environment such as the distribution of power. The leadership's preferences guiding its decision-making every step of the way would have been treated as given by the fact that it possessed less power than Turkey or more power than Baghdad. In the "social-institutional" approaches, the differences between the two snapshots would have been attributed to KRG's decisions, which were based on the meanings it gave to its context ("Bagdad wants curtail our autonomy, we should work with Turkey to strengthen it"). In this case, however, the interpretations made by the KRG would have been reduced to structural imperatives of discourse – possible ways of understanding the world in the first place. Had I chosen the "agency-based perspective", I would have, for instance, been able only to point to the "pulling and hauling" of different views, and the triumph of one over the others, when explaining Turkey's and KRG' changed relations between 2003 and 2014. Finally, had I adopted the "interpretative actor's perspective", I could have only stressed the different interpretations KRG, and the actors interacting with it, gave to their context, resulting in observed changes. The solution provided by the inter-action -theoreticians would not have helped me much in this dilemma, for they would have only – in an ad-hoc manner – chosen variables from here and there and claimed that it was some type of combination of them, that had resulted in the fact that KRG now had more economic

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[492] Self-action -approaches would, indeed, not deny that the independent variables they gave for foreign policy explanation were not single-handedly or even primarily responsible for KRG's foreign policy change.

independence that it did ten years ago, or – alternatively – better relations with Turkey than it did in 2003.

The problem here is that in any of the previously outlined efforts to *explain* the changes in between 2003 and 2014 – whether the level of KRG's economic independence or its relations with Baghdad and Turkey – is that they would have ended up asserting the observed change rather than examining it *as the product of an unfolding process of contingent necessity* (particular intersections of contextual selectivities and strategic action). Substantialist *self-action* approaches could not have captured such development, because they were fixated on explaining the achieved economic independence by referring to *changes* in KRG's preferences and interests based on structural imperatives or individual will. Substantialist inter-actionist models, in turn, would have been equally ill-equipped, because of pointing out to changes in these entities' attributes. The question was however, what did the process, through which the KRG had ended up in the situation it currently was in, look like*.* Neither of these models could have answered this question because they were unable to connect their static snapshots.[493] *Had they been able to do so, they would have seen that it was in fact relations that produced the change, not KRG's agential will (individualism), structural imperatives (holism) or the varying secondary attributes of these entities (inter-action).*

8.2.2. Development as a Product of Contingent Necessity

In their problematization of an assumed essence of structures and actors – and, therefore, the examination *relations* instead of *entities* – the *relationalist* models succeeded in what substantialists failed to do: to explain the link between the snapshots. The dialectical models could finally overcome the inability of substantialism to shed light on the ambiguous sphere in between their static snapshots of reality. However, there seemed to be a problem with some of the assumedly relational methodologies offered by system theoreticians – such as those provided by Giddens and Archer. Their methods proved to be incapable of overcoming the substantialist impasse. For instance, Archer well acknowledged the fundamental weaknesses inflicting the substantialist approaches. Nevertheless, she still failed to develop a relationalist model capable of capturing the processual nature of reality she was advocating. What her efforts led to, instead, was the redefinition ontological *duality* as ontological *dualism.* Dualism,

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[493] In other words, substantialists were unable to explain the *process* through which 2003 had become 2014.

in turn, all too easily reinforced the ultimate weakness of the substantialists, and as such, failed to address duality genuinely: "Two elements, which are mutually constitutive are still two *distinct* elements", argued Jackson and Nexon.[494] The morphogenetic model tried to explain foreign policy by referring to agential and structural elements independently or via their interaction, instead of centering its focus on the *process* manifested in *relations*. Jackson and Nexon continued, indeed, that,

> "[t]emporal-sequential resolutions [such as that of Archer's or Giddens'] to the agent-structure problematic accentuate this tendency [substantialist]. In the temporal sequential analytic, agents and structures are held constant at progressive time increments (t, t+1, t+2, etc) in order to explore how their interaction gives rise to new terms of structure and agency."[495]

This sequential examination of agents and structures, resulting from their temporal separation was doomed to fail. By adding time as an external variable to Giddens' duality, Archer's model came to symbolize what she had essentially criticized: substantialist reductionism. Social reality was reduced to "self-action" and "inter-action" instead of "*transaction" that logically preceded supposedly existent pre-given agents and structures*. Archer's assumption, that the two components had separate emergent properties, left their mutual constitutiveness to be revealed and unfolded only over time.[496] To cut the long story short, the problem with the morhphogenetic approach – and also the reason for not applying it – was that it failed to translate the *relationality* of social reality into a viable methodology. Archer would have, in other words, been unable to deliver the *relationalist* message into my empirical inquiry. Had I located my observations in the morphogenetic cycles, I would have necessarily delivered a substantialist understanding of changes. For instance, the warmed up relations between KRG and Turkey or the level of economic independence that the region had managed to secure, would have been demonstrated as random agential bursts (KRG's decisions) interrupting otherwise stable structural patterns (distribution of power, international norms etc.). Once again, the model would have depicted reality as if it was the KRG or its context (Baghdad, Turkey, international norms etc.), which did the acting – instead of demonstrating that it was relations and transactions that acted, causing the development and change we saw in Chapter 7.

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[494] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 298.
[495] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 295.
[496] Bartelson 1995, 48.

The strategic-relational approach, instead, succeeded in keeping Giddens' duality intact, but suggested an alternative methodology to his inadequate "bracketing" that would have, likewise, resulted in *substantialist* empirical analysis. Nevertheless, unlike the morphogenetic approach, Jessop's model did not add time as an external variable, but saw it, instead as unfolding within the intersections of the three elements of the dialectic: it was *practice* – strategic action oriented towards strategically selective context – that produced time, which is why – following the argumentation of Jackson and Nexon, there were just as many forms of times as there are practices.[497] *The SRA's ability to deliver this message in a methodological model, symbolized its success in delivering in methodology, what the relationalist message promised in ontology: the fact that agents and structures anteceded relations.* It was transaction that defined, constructed, reconstructed and transformed the interests, identities and constitutive properties of "agents" and "structures". The empirical analysis conducted in this research can be seen as epitomizing the SRA's capability to examine KRG's foreign policy development as the contingently necessary unfolding of *relations, through* the *temporally co-extensive dynamics of action and context*. Neither agents nor structures existed independent from each other in order for one to have been to be able to examine them separately in the first place, as Archer had done. The distinction between the two components of reality was only analytical and the conclusions we witnessed above were the 'product of their fusion' indeed.

8.3.3. Kurdistan Regional Government as the Product of Unfolding Relations

The benefits of the relationalist approach were not only in their ability to point out the temporal co-extensivity of action, context and ideas in explanation of foreign policy. Their anti-substantialist approach to reality had an even more important implication with regard to this inquiry: examining KRG's foreign policy development via the SRA simultaneously led to a fundamental reconceptualization of the nature of autonomous region. Where the substantialist approaches and the temporal-sequential solutions of Archer and Giddens would have led to viewing the *de facto* state as a static entity, the relationalist view allowed for an understanding of the KRG as a set of *relations*, instead – a configuration of ties, indeed. KRG's constitutive as well as secondary properties were in a constant state of *flux*, continuously redefined through

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[497] Jackson and Nexon 1999, 320. Failing to deliver this spatio-temporal nature of strategic action and strategically selective context, Archer thus claimed to be offering a solution to the agent-structure problem, when she indeed was not.

its relations. It was only through the relationalist model that I could have revealed this view explicitly. ***The region's foreign policy decisions did not indicate merely the contingently, yet path-dependently, unfolding external relations of the KRG, but also the contingently and path-dependently unfolding and transforming nature of their agency.*** This was a fundamental point that I wanted to highlight specifically in the concluding remarks. The empirical analysis demonstrated how KRG's fluctuating position in relation to its context did not only determine its powers[498] but also the oscillating nature of its identity and interests.

The contingently unfolding nature of KRG's agency through its relations, in turn, implied that its foreign policy decisions could not be reduced to an assumed set of 'inherent properties' the entity supposedly possessed at given times. *De facto states* did not have intrinsic attributes that somehow differentiated them from sovereign states and, as such, lead to their foreign policies being different on the basis of these 'inherent' properties. What set them and their foreign policies apart from sovereign states was the pursuit of statehood. Pursuit of statehood, in turn, was an element (and a consequence) of *relations, not a fixed inherent property of an entity.* [499]

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that quest of statehood set *de facto* states apart from their sovereign counterparts, it could not explain KRG's foreign policy outcomes alone;[500] pursuit of statehood was only one element (the policy paradigm) of the dialectic, tightly interlinked with the other two: strategies and context. Foreign policy – or any social phenomena produced by contingent necessity for that matter – could be explained only with the presence of all three, never to be reduced to any single one of them. As we saw in Chapter 7, it was the continuous alteration of specific intersections of the paradigm of sovereignty with strategies and selectivities that explained the process and, as such, the changes that had occurred in between 2003 and 2014. We could, thus, argue that, KRG's lack of independency may have set their foreign policies apart from sovereign states to the extent that they filtered reality (perhaps

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[498] With regard to power – as a secondary attribute of "entities", I followed the *relationalist* approach and argued that power relations were determined by the specific positioning of actors in relation to other players and their context. As such power did not determine outcomes. It was instead, itself determined by outcomes; a fundamental point of difference between relationalist and substantialist approaches – such as realism, which treats power as an independent variable.

[499] Ashley 1984, 273–274. *In fact,* sovereignty is in a constant state of flux, itself also redefined through *relations.* As Richard Ashley has aptly argued: sovereignty is "[…] a practical category whose empirical contents are not fixed but evolve".

[500] See for instance 7.1.2. "Sovereign Statehood as a Hypothetical Cognitive Template", where I have argued that pursuit of sovereignty is only one element in the dialectic incapable of explaining foreign policy development alone.

primarily) through the lack of sovereignty, but it would have been highly misleading to claim that the region foreign policy development single-handedly depended on their quest for sovereignty.

To conclude, I want to once again assert, that it was only via the strategic-relational approach that I could point out that none of the three elements of the dialectic *per se* were responsible for KRG's foreign policy development. As we saw throughout the empirical analysis, the pursuit of statehood *per se* could not alone explain any of the outcomes at any point of the continuing process. Similar was the case with contextual elements; the overthrow of the Baathist regime, discovery of oil or Turkey's growing interest in KRG could not be claimed to have single-handedly caused any of the decisions that KRG ended up making. Most importantly, this inquiry demonstrated the ability of *the SRA* to capture how "entities'" like *de facto* states' identities, preferences and interests (or in other words their '*essence'*) were in a constant state of transformation. Their foreign policy actions, in turn, were formulated on the basis of these continuously changing preferences and interests. This is exactly what Caspersen, Stansfield and Bartmann posited with their constructivist assumptions.[501] The SRA's *strategic action* oriented towards a *strategically selective context*, in turn, succeeded in demonstrating this relationalist assumption inherent in *de facto* state theorization: it was through the unfolding of relations that the essence of anomalous entities became constantly redefined and transformed.

I want to end this inquiry with Bob Jessop: social facts – be they sovereign states or *de facto* states – are projects in the making, always organic, never finished, constantly redefined through their relations. The Kurdish *de facto* state is a project in the making, always organic, never finished, constantly redefined through its relations.

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[501] As such, the constructivist theorization of the *de facto* state is, indeed, based on a relationalist view of reality.

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