Translating Political Text:
Cultural and Stylistic Aspects of Translating
the American Republican Party’s 2004 Political Platform

Per Boberg
Abstract

The present paper discusses the cultural and stylistic issues in the translation of a part of the 2004 Republican Party Platform. Political text in American English and Swedish is in focus, and translation examples are accounted for and categorised according to Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) system theory of translation procedures. The conclusion is that cultural issues caused fewer problems than stylistic ones when the Republican Party Platform 2004 was translated.

Keywords: culture, political text, stylistics, system theory, translation study, translation theory
Table of contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1
2. Aim and scope ........................................................................................................................ 1
   2.1 Research questions ....................................................................................................... 2
3. Material and method .......................................................................................................... 2
   3.1 Material ....................................................................................................................... 2
   3.2 Method ......................................................................................................................... 3
      3.2.1 The intended reader ........................................................................................... 4
4. Theoretical background ...................................................................................................... 4
   4.1 Translating cultural phenomena ............................................................................... 4
   4.2 Translating style .......................................................................................................... 5
   4.3 System theory ............................................................................................................. 6
   4.4 Interim summary ........................................................................................................ 9
5. Discussion ............................................................................................................................ 10
   5.1 Cultural and stylistic issues ...................................................................................... 10
   5.2 Interim summary ........................................................................................................ 15
6. Summary and conclusions ................................................................................................. 15
References ................................................................................................................................ 17
1. Introduction
The present paper discusses the cultural and stylistic aspects of translating a part of the 2004 Republican Party Platform: A Safer World and a More Hopeful America (henceforth, RPP). There are several motivations behind the choice of text for this translation essay. The first motivation was to identify a text that contained many cultural phenomena. Secondly, there was the issue of finding a text that meant a challenge to translate with respect to stylistic issues. And finally, the question was what text might prove challenging with respect to the translator’s ability to stay neutral and not let personal opinions about the text affect the translation. The criteria specified before deciding on what text to translate were thus to mainly look at cultural phenomena and the stylistic level of a political text, while not letting one’s personal opinions influence any choices during the translation process. The RPP meets all these criteria. It contains many references to cultural phenomena; in general terms, it requires the translator to make the intended reader understand the cultural premises upon which the text’s basic values rest without introducing a Swedish value-system. Further, it challenges the translator to keep the stylistic level of the source text (henceforth ST) while adapting the political language to match the Swedish-speaking reader’s expectations on a political text. Finally, the text does not match the translator’s philosophical or political values at all, which challenges the translator to stay neutral and not distort the political content of the text.

Another factor which makes the RPP interesting for a translation-study is that it contains quotations from speeches. The translation of an extract from a speech from a funeral service for a former American president provides the translator with a difficult challenge, stylistically and culturally; as does the translation of an American political speech, perhaps even more than regular political text.

2. Aim and scope
This paper has two aims. Each one of these aims arises from a specific domain of focus observed when the RPP was translated.

Firstly, we have the discussion of the cultural aspects of the translation of the RPP. There are many instances where the canonical ways for politicians and political parties to express themselves differ when American political text is compared to Swedish political text. This can be said for speeches as well as policies and party programmes. The political culture itself differs between America and Sweden, which naturally gives rise to problems when American political texts are translated to Swedish and vice versa. The first aim is thus to
discuss and describe the strategies that were used for instances where cultural issues appear in the translation of the RPP.

Secondly, there is the matter of the stylistic aspects of the translation of the RPP. The rhetoric and other conventions in American political documents and speeches differ from those of Swedish political documents and speeches. A translator needs to adapt her/his translation of the ST to target text (henceforth, TT) to the stylistic level that would be expected in the target language (henceforth, TL) while at the same time preserving the tone of the source language (henceforth, SL). The second aim is to discuss the stylistic aspects of the translation of the RPP.

The scope of the present study has been explained above in connection to the aims of the study. Consequently, this paper discusses:

- The cultural aspects of the translation of the RPP.
- The stylistic aspects of the translation of the RPP.

2.1 Research questions

In order to conduct a study it is necessary to problematise the aim. In the present study this is done by the attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What are some of the cultural differences that presented problems during the translation of the RPP?
- What stylistic issues presented problems during some parts of the translation of the RPP?
- Which of Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) categories do the examples discussed fit into?

3. Material and method

This section presents the material that was translated and upon which this study is based, the parallel texts used and the method used.

3.1 Material

The material that was translated is a part of the RPP (2004 Republican Party Platform). The ST for this translation was obtained through the website of the Republican National Committee at <http://www.gop.com/>. The part of the document which was translated contained 4812 words, or roughly 29000 characters, and comprised somewhat more than the first ten pages of the RPP, with one exclusion. Since the information in the ST about the
contents of the entire RPP was of no importance to the TT, the table of contents displayed in the ST was excluded from the translation.

The parallel texts used for the present study were not used for specific instances where a translation was sought. Instead, they were selected to give the translator a feel for the kind of language used in the party programmes of Conservative and Liberal Swedish parties. Since there is no equivalent in the Swedish parliament to the American Republican Party, the selection was made to use party programmes of two Swedish right-wing parties. Both of these parties are parliamentary based. One has a more conservative profile, the Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats), and the other one has a more liberal agenda, the Folkpartiet (The Liberal Party of Sweden). The programme of the largest right-wing party in Sweden, Moderaterna, was not used as a parallel text since it claims to be both conservative and liberal, making it more difficult to identify possible differences between Swedish liberal and conservative rhetoric.

3.2 Method

The translation was conducted using the simple approach of looking at a printout of the ST and then writing the TT in a separate digital document. While the text was translated preliminary comments about cultural and stylistic issues were noted in another digital document. This preliminary comment document contains all cultural and stylistic issues that appeared during the translation, and some of the material from it, the material which contained interesting points about cultural and stylistic issues, is presented in the discussion of examples in the present paper (cf. Section 5).

The method of discussion in the present paper is to bring up instances where cultural and/or stylistic problems arose during the translation, explain how these problems were solved, and discuss them in relation to relevant translation theory (cf. Section 4 for a theoretical discussion about cultural and stylistic issues).

It is unavoidable that a paper discussing a translation made by the author is coloured by a certain amount of subjectiveness. There is also the problem of relating the findings during the translation to a specific theoretical model, since translation theory and translation in practice are often viewed as being far apart. Chesterman & Wagner (2002) address this problem in their dialogue, Chesterman from the theoretician’s and Wagner from the translator’s viewpoint. In order to link the discussion of examples in the present study to translation theory and thus “bridge the gap” between theory and practice, Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) system theory model is used, and each of the examples in Section 5 is
classified according to the procedures described in the model\(^1\). This study is not quantitative, since only a selection of examples are mentioned. However, some conclusions about the characteristics of the political language in the RPP when examined from a system theory viewpoint can be drawn.

### 3.2.1 The intended reader

The intended reader of the ST is the American voter or Republican sympathiser, as can be understood from the fact that it is a political platform. However, in order to be able to discuss the TT properly, one must also know who the intended reader of the TT is. In the present paper the intended reader of the TT is a Swedish person who is interested in the policy of the American Republican Party. The intention during the translation was to convey the mood, style and cultural conventions of the ST into Swedish without any loss of information in that respect. In other words, the intended Swedish reader should be able to experience the mood of the ST without experiencing the text as too stylistically awkward in Swedish.

### 4. Theoretical background

The present section discusses translation theory relevant to the present study and translation, namely theory about cultural phenomena, style and system analysis.

#### 4.1 Translating cultural phenomena

Obviously, cultural problems are bound to appear when a text from one language environment is translated into another. There are however different aspects to this and some of them are discussed in the present section.

One aspect of cultural differences is that they can appear regardless of the relationship between the SL and the TL. The view that cultural difference as well as cultural similarity can cause problems in translation is not new. Nida (1964:157) points out that

[where the linguistic and cultural distances between source and receptor codes are least, one should expect to encounter the least number of problems, but as a matter of fact if languages are too closely related one is likely to be badly deceived by the superficial similarities. […] On the other hand, the languages may not be related, even though the cultures are closely parallel. […] In still other instances a translation may involve not only differences of linguistic affiliation but also highly diverse cultures[.]]

In our case the first factor of too closely related languages is not that significant. It is true that

\(^{1}\) Cf. section 4.3 for a discussion about system theories.
Swedish and English share terminology to an extent and that many expressions are similar, but it can be disputed if one can classify them as “too closely related”. If we compare the relationship between Swedish and English with that of e.g. Swedish and Danish, the picture becomes clearer. In the case of Swedish-English (using American culture as the example) we have a strong cultural closeness or rather an “americanisation” of Swedish culture, whereas the languages are not very similar. But in the case of the RPP, the culture of politics is involved. The American political system is very different from the Swedish political system. This gives rise to the possibility that Swedish and English may not be closely related culturally in political language.

4.2 Translating style

Vinay & Darbelnet\(^2\) (1995: 16–17) discuss two types of stylistics, internal stylistics and comparative (external) stylistics. The first “seeks to isolate the means of expression of a given language by contrasting the affective with the intellectual elements”, whereas the latter “seeks to identify the expressive means of two languages by contrasting them”. That is, the first one is mainly concerned with expression forms (options), while the latter is concerned with grammatical constrictions (servitudes) and expression forms (options).

Catford\(^3\) (1965: 71) also shows the occurrence of options and servitudes, albeit unintentionally, through his discussion of restricted translation-types such as grammatical and lexical translation. Grammatical translation is the case where the grammatical components of a SL text are replaced by equivalent components in the TL text. The same order is repeated with lexical translation, where the lexical SL components are replaced by equivalent lexical components in the TL text. One can observe that the difference between translating lexical and grammatical components is significant, i.e. it is more likely that translation of lexical items is a choice between expression forms whereas translation of grammatical items is more restricted.

The present paper deals mainly with expression forms since the study of the difference between Swedish and English in general is not in focus. However the linguistic differences in terms of the style of political text are discussed; an attempt is made to some extent to “identify the expressive means of two languages by contrasting them” (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995: 17).

\(^2\) Cf. Section 4.3. for Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) system theory model.
\(^3\) Cf. Section 4.3 for Catford’s (1965) system theory model.
4.3 System theory

During the 20th century, many scholars attempted to create more systematic views on translation. Some of these system theories are discussed briefly in this section.

Catford (1965: 73) proposes a systematic model containing translation-shifts, i.e. “departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL”. He describes two major types of shifts level shifts and category shifts and other types subordinate to the latter.

Level shifts are shifts from grammar to lexis and vice versa. These are signified by e.g. one effect being given in the SL by the use of a specific grammatical construction, whereas the closest possible expression in the TL requires a verb which conveys that effect. Catford (1965: 75) gives a clear example of this by contrasting Russian with English in terms of different ways of referring to ‘completion’:

The Russian perfective, with its marked insistence on completion can cap this effectively: ‘What did he do and complete?’ But the English marked term insists on the progress of the event, so cannot be used here. [...] In English, in this case, we must use a different lexical verb: a lexical item which includes reference to completion in its contextual meaning, e.g. achieve.

Catford (1965: 75)

As this example indicates, there are instances where items on a grammatical level in the ST result in items on a lexical level in the TT. Consequently, the same possibility exists for the opposite shift: lexis to grammar.

The second type of shift in Catford’s (1965) model is the category shift, which contains several sub-types: structure-shifts, class-shifts, unit-shifts and intra-system-shifts. The main description of a category shift is a shift that occurs when it is not possible to find “simple equivalence between SL and TL texts” (1965: 76). Catford (ibid.) points out, however, that “it is clearly meaningless to talk about category-shift[s] unless we assume some degree of formal correspondence between SL and TL”. As stated, a category shift can involve structure, class, unit, etc.

According to Catford (1965:77), structure shifts are highly frequent shifts “at all ranks in translation”. He exemplifies this type of shift by the difference in clause structure in Gaelic compared to English, e.g. “the elements of clause-structure [...] have formal correspondents [...] in Gaelic”. To illustrate this, one can say that the verbs hold different places in the clause structures of the two languages, but the basic components (the verbs) are equivalent to each

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4 “A textual equivalent is any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion [...] to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text”. (Catford, 1965: 27)
other in meaning. A structure shift can be seen in (1), since the verb holds another place in the English clause structure than in the Swedish one.

(1) In 1860, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois carried the Republican banner in the Presidential election and was elected the Party’s first President.

1860 bar Abraham Lincoln från delstaten Illinois republikanernas baner i presidentvalet och blev partiets första president.

Class-shifts occur when “the translation equivalent of a SL item is a member of a different class from the original item” (1965: 78), illustrated by a modifier adjective in English shifting to a qualifier adjective in French. In (2) we can see a class-shift from an English verb in its gerund form to a Swedish verb in the infinite.

(2) We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. Vi kommer att bevara freden genom att bygga goda relationer med andra stormakter.

Unit-shifts are described as “changes of rank”, i.e. where the rank of the word in SL and TL is different. One example of this is when meanings are expressed at the sentence level in the SL and at the word level in the TL.

Intra-system-shifts are described as those cases where the shift occurs internally, within a system; that is, for those cases where SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system. (Catford, 1965: 80)

This can be illustrated in the way which articles are used differently within different languages, while they still can be said to have correspondence. (Catford [ibid.] uses the definite article in English and French to exemplify this.) (3) shows us an intra-system shift where an article precedes the noun in English but not in Swedish (i.e. a zero-article is used).

(3) Now, the FBI can use tools that have been long available to fight organized crime and drug trafficking, but could not be used in the past to fight terrorism.

Nu kan FBI använda de verktyg som länge funnits tillgängliga för att bekämpa organiserad brottslighet och droghandel, men som tidigare inte kunnat användas för att bekämpa terrorismen.
Koller (1979: 186–91, as described in Munday, 2001: 46–47) suggests a model where *equivalence* is studied as related to specific instances of translated parts of texts. Equivalence is distinguished from *correspondence*, which is the comparison of two language systems contrasting differences and similarities. In other words, a distinction is made between the study of the differences and similarities of languages in instances of text, correspondence, and the specific equivalent items in instances of ST and TT.

Equivalence is then sorted into five different types (Munday, 2001: 47, my italics):

- **Denotative equivalence** is related to equivalence of the extralinguistic content of a text,
- **connotative equivalence** is related to the lexical choices, especially between near-synonyms,
- **text-normative equivalence** is related to text types, with different kinds of texts behaving in different ways,
- **pragmatic equivalence**, or ‘communicative equivalence’ is oriented towards the receiver of the text or message [and, finally,]
- **formal equivalence** […] is related to the form and aesthetics of the text [and] includes word plays and the individual stylistic features of the ST.

Put in relation to the present study, some of Koller’s equivalence types are more interesting than others. Since the cultural and stylistic features are in focus, connotative equivalence plays a part in terms of field terminology, text-normative equivalence given that a political text behaves in a certain way, pragmatic equivalence, since the message receiver is very much in focus when a political platform is being written, and formal equivalence, since the form and aesthetics are very important for a political platform.

Vinay & Darbelnet (1995: 31) distinguish between two main methods of translating. Their first method is direct translation, which can also be called literal translation, and their second method is oblique translation. They state that it is possible in some cases to “transpose the source language message element by element into the target language” (ibid.) while in other cases “translators may also notice gaps, or ‘lacunae’, in the TL which must be filled by corresponding elements, so that the overall impression is the same for the two messages” (ibid.). Specifying their discussion of methods, seven procedures to overcome these lacunae are presented.

Firstly, we have the procedure of borrowing, where a word from the SL is put directly in a TL translated text. As Vinay & Darbelnet (1995: 32) point out, sometimes this can be used to create a stylistic effect and “flavour” the TT culturally and stylistically. They exemplify this by words such as the Russian word *datcha*. The second procedure is *calque*, “a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements” (ibid.). One example of calque mentioned by Vinay & Darbelnet (1995: 33) is a saying such as *the man in the street* which can be translated to French as *l’homme dans la rue*. Thirdly, there is literal translation, which is simply described
as “word for word, translation” (ibid.). Their fourth procedure is transposition, whereby one word-class is replaced with another without the message being changed in meaning (1995: 36). Fifthly, we have modulation, in which the message is varied in form. Often this is the case when something literally translated albeit grammatically correct can be seen as “unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL” (ibid.). The sixth procedure is equivalence, in which equivalent text is produced with different stylistic and structural methods in the TL. Vinay & Darbelnet (1995: 38) exemplify this procedure by contrasting the different expressions of onomatopoeic animal sounds and proverbs in English and French. Finally, there is the procedure of adaptation, “in those cases where the type of situation being referred to by the SL message is unknown in the TL culture” (1995: 39). For instance we have references to films and books famous in the SL culture but unknown in the TL culture. Reference to dialects and regional phenomena might also be changed through this procedure.

To sum up, Vinay & Darbelnet (1995) present two main methods of translation and seven procedures. These procedures are relevant to the present study since many of them deal with cross-cultural problems. Equivalence, calque and borrowing may be relevant when translating political texts, since a specific jargon can often be identified.

4.4 Interim summary

To sum up, the present section discusses cultural and stylistic aspects that may be in focus when a political text is translated. Since there is not much guidance in the literature about the mechanisms of translating political text, the discussion needed to be conducted relating the methods in the study of translation in general to this specific field of translation.

Three system-theory models were presented, all of them possible to discuss in relation to cultural and stylistic issues. However, the choice was made to categorise the examples in Section 5 according to Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) model. The reason for this is that their model provides the largest number of distinct categories, seven methods to overcome translation gaps. Their model can also be seen as a more practically oriented one, e.g. it enables study of more “down-to-text” elements than for instance Koller’s model, which includes extralinguistic elements and pragmatics. Given that the present paper is practically oriented, Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) model is more suitable.
5. Discussion
The present section contains sub-sections discussing the translation of cultural phenomena and stylistic phenomena in the RPP. In these sections, a selection of the instances in the RPP that caused translation problems is discussed. These instances are then categorised according to Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) system theory model. This section aims to describe, with some examples, instances where cultural or stylistic differences can cause problems during the translation of American political language from English to Swedish. Since examples in this section can contain both cultural and stylistic issues, it was decided to discuss culture and stylistics in the same subsection.

5.1 Cultural and stylistic issues
Firstly, we look at some cultural issues that appeared when the RPP was translated. As (4) shows, it was possible to identify problematic instances concerning single lexical items.

(4) He believed in the golden rule and in the power of prayer.
Han förlitade sig på den gyllene regeln och på bönens makt. (1 "Allt vad ni vill att människorna skall göra för er, det skall ni också göra för dem." Matt. 7:12. Övers. anm.)

In (4), the golden rule has been translated as den gyllene regeln, and a footnote with a translator comment which explains the term has been added. Given that the RPP is more influenced by religious terminology than Swedish political texts such as the mentioned parallel texts, one can assume that the intended reader of the ST is familiar with the term. Further, religion has a more central place in American culture than in Swedish culture. Thus, it is not as clear that the intended TT reader is familiar with the term. Here, Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) procedures of oblique translation do not apply since each element of the ST phrase has been translated word for word. If we include the footnote there is a case of equivalence, otherwise the phrase can be seen as an example of literal translation, since the actual TT phrase is translated directly.

There were instances where individual words that might seem straightforward at first glance caused culture-related problems. One of these instances can be seen in (5).

(5) … and on helping workers adjust to a changing economy by offering flexible training options that meet their individual needs.
… samt att ge dem som arbetar möjlighet att anpassa sig till en föränderlig ekonomi genom att erbjuda flexibla utbildningsalternativ som passar deras individuella behov.
The noun *worker*, one could argue, can be translated simply as *arbetare*. But the connotations of that Swedish word leans more toward class issues and is connected to certain occupations. However, the American English noun *worker* in this case, based on both culture in general and political culture in particular, leans more toward including anybody who works. The mere fact that the RPP does not recognise class issues supports this conclusion. Thus, two procedures are at work. Firstly, there is transposition, since a word is replaced by a phrase without change of the meaning of the message. Secondly, it can be argued that this is a case of free modulation, since the point of view has been changed.

There are instances where cultural issues and style meet. Since the ST has the aim of writing about improvements in the Saudi government’s attitude and actions against al-Qaida in the view of the Republican Party, this attitude must be reflected in the translated text. In (6) such an attempt to convey the attitudes behind the ST to the TT has been made.

(6) The government has captured or *killed* many first-tier leaders of the al Qaeda organization in Saudi Arabia.

The verb *kill* can be translated as *döda* through direct translation from English to Swedish. However, since the Swedish verb *döda* can be seen as a much more physical and personal word than what would match the intentions of the ST it has been replaced with *likvidera*, which is more formal and anonymous. As *Norstedts Svenska Ordbok* (henceforth, Norstedts) states, the first meaning for *döda* is *to bereave something/someone* of life. In contrast to this, *likvidera* is described as *do away with, abolish or obviate*. The verb has been modulated to fit the point of view and intentions of the ST.

There are many references to killing and murder in the RPP, and one instance which caused stylistic concerns and refers to weapons involved in killing can be seen in (7).

(7) Saddam Hussein was not just a dictator; he was a proven mass murderer who refused to account for *weapons of mass murder*.

A search on Google revealed only around 35 hits for *massmordsvapen*. Thus, this noun seems to be infrequent in Swedish. However, it is not possible to perform a direct translation of the English prepositional phrase since the grammatical servitudes of Swedish do not allow this.
One possibility would have been to do a modulation and adaption to the Swedish equivalent of *weapons of mass destruction* – *massförstörelsevapen* with the knowledge of lost semantic content. However, this would also reduce the specific effect of the ST which is brought by the focus on *murder*. Even though a search on Google revealed around 71 300 hits for *massförstörelsevapen*, the choice was made to use the calque of *weapons of mass murder* in the TT.

Metaphors can also present problems when translating a text, as illustrated by (8).

(8) A global coalition, led by the United States, has dried up sources of terrorist financing. En global koalition under ledning av USA har fått terroristernas finansiella källor att sina.

The more direct translation equivalent to *dried up* in Swedish would be *torkat*, but this is not suitable due to the fact that the expression acts as a metaphor; the real meaning of this passage is that the financial base for terrorists has been reduced. Hence, it would be possible to create a non-metaphorical equivalent in the TT. However, since there is a metaphorical equivalent in Swedish that allows the information to be modulated (the verb *dry up* resulting in *sina*) without major changes in the style of the passage it was decided that it be used instead of the non-metaphorical equivalent. When metaphors are translated, however, as Ingo (2007: 120) points out it, is always important that that the translator takes into account the cultural background of the intended TT reader. Thus, according to Ingo (ibid.) one should be careful to check that the same semantic associations are evoked by the translated metaphor and that the connotations of the ST metaphor is understood by the intended reader through the TT metaphor.

There were also instances where a metaphorical expression needed to be replaced with a non-metaphorical expression, as we can see in (9).

(9) Today, Afghanistan is a world away from the nightmare of the Taliban. Idag är Afghanistan en helt annan plats jämfört med tiden för det talibanska mardrömsstyret.

In (9), *a world away* contains information that suggests that Afghanistan is like a totally different place from what it was during Taliban rule. Since the expression *a world away* is not suitably translated directly to Swedish the choice was made to explain the semantic content of the phrase non-metaphorically in Swedish, resulting in equivalence.

There is another stylistic issue concerning semantic information that needs to be put in
more plain text in Swedish to be understandable. *The nightmare of the Taliban*, a reference to the past, together with a description of how the Republicans view the current situation consequently gives us the information that *the nightmare of the Taliban* refers to a specific time period. Thus, we need to include *tiden för* (‘the time of’). Further, it is clear from the context that *the nightmare of the Taliban* refers to the time when the Taliban *ruled*. This must also be expressed in Swedish, and so is done by compounding the Swedish word for *nightmare*, *mardröm*, with the Swedish word for *rule*, giving us *mardrömsstyret* (‘nightmare rule’). The ST sentence is different from the TT sentence, but they are equivalent since they contain almost the same semantic information.

There are instances where one must interpret the information of the entire sentence closely, in order to not get the wrong translation of a phrase or expression, as can be shown in (10).

(10) We therefore welcome declarations from responsible political leaders of both parties that our nation will persevere in our mission there, not cut and run.

*Därför välkomnar vi uttalanden från ansvarstagande politiska ledare från båda partierna om att vår nation kommer att framhärda i sitt uppdrag där, inte fegt dra sig tillbaka.*

*Responsible* is a word which would be translated incorrectly if one were not to take into account the semantic information of surrounding words and just do a literal translation. Since the SL word through a literal translation would probably come out as the TL word *ansvarig*, one needs to be careful. The TL word *ansvarig* can carry both positive and negative connotations. According to Norstedts it is in some cases associated with blame (a negative connotation) and in other cases associated with someone being the originator of something (a positive connotation). Therefore, the choice was made to use the equivalent *ansvarstagande*, since it does not allow space for misinterpretation.

*Cut and run* can also be interpreted in two different ways. It is possible to interpret it simply as *to hurry off*, as it is described by the Oxford English Dictionary online (OED), but given the surrounding semantic information it is clear that it also contains a suggestion of retreat as cowardly behaviour, this being suggested by the reference to “responsible leaders” and perseverance. Even though the OED does not recognise this meaning, it has been included to make the implied information clearer to the TT reader. Once again we are dealing with a case of equivalence, since the semantic information in the ST is being presented in the TT in a different way.
There were also instances where equivalent items needed to be inserted for names, places, etc. Some examples of this are shown in (11), (12) and (13)

(11) Today, *al Qaeda* has been wounded, having lost many of its known leaders and most of its important sanctuaries.

(12) Three years ago, our nation was not on a war footing against al Qaeda – even though *Osama bin Laden* declared war on the United States in 1996 and again in 1998.

(13) America and its allies and friends have broken al Qaeda cells here in *the United States* and overseas.

In the first two examples, (11) and (12), equivalent items have been inserted due to national spelling and pronunciation conventions. Karlsson (2005: 13) investigated the spellings of *al Qaeda* and *Osama bin Laden* on the Internet and found that in Swedish domains, the spellings *al Qaida* and *Usama bin Ladin* were most frequent. Consequently, these were also used in his translation examples. In (13) it would have been possible to make a literal translation of *United States*, but the equivalent item used more frequently in Sweden is *USA*. A Google search also confirmed this: *Förenta Staterna* yielded around 438 000 hits with a “pages from Sweden” search, whereas *USA* yielded 28 100 000 hits.

On some occasions when equivalent expressions were sought it was particularly important to make forceful expressions in the ST weaker in the TT. (14) is shown as an example of this.

(14) That approach is marked by a determination to challenge new threats, not ignore them, or simply wait for future tragedy – and by a renewed commitment to building a hopeful future in hopeless places, instead of allowing troubled regions to remain in despair and *explode in violence*.

Words such as *explode* are not what the reader of a political platform in Swedish expects to find. Since a more suitable metaphor that did not include explosions existed in Swedish it was
natural to use another equivalent, but weaker, expression referring to an outburst of energy, *flamma upp* (‘flare up’).

5.2 Interim summary

Summing up, this section has discussed specific instances that proved challenging during the translation of the RPP. A general comment about the instances not mentioned in this paper is that there were in fact over 200 instances where special considerations had to be made, many of them suitable to classify as translated using the procedure of equivalence. This suggests that the main issue during the translation of the RPP was not culture, but style in political text.

Eleven passages of text and the considerations between the translation choices made in these were discussed in detail. Out of these, the most common procedure was equivalence, with nine examples. One unclear instance of literal translation appeared depending on if one classifies a footnote as a part of the translated passage or not. Further, there were three instances of modulation and one instance each of transposition and calque. The instance of transposition was also considered a case of modulation.

6. Summary and conclusions

From translating the RPP comes the conclusion that the main issue when translating American political text into Swedish has to do with style. How does one translate the bombastic and sometimes extreme language that occurs frequently in the platform? The answer is that one seeks equivalent terms that are more suitable for the TL stylistic level within the specific genre.

The parallel texts consulted in connection to the present study proved to be less useful than expected. The RPP is different from a Swedish political platform, since it only addresses current issues and does not discuss basic standpoints and values. The RPP discusses values and faith in many passages but does give an in-depth explanation of the terminology. Thus it seems that the RPP is more of a propagandistic tool than a political platform as they are seen in Sweden. However, the parallel texts were useful to study in order to experience the ways conservative and liberal parties in Sweden express themselves programmatically.

There were two aims in the present study: to discuss the cultural aspects of the translation of the RPP and to discuss the stylistic aspects of the translation of the RPP. Both areas have been covered by the discussion section, albeit briefly due to the limitations stated in the guidelines for the paper. Further, three research questions were put forward in order to
realise this aim: What are some of the cultural differences that presented problems during the translation of the RPP?, What stylistic issues presented problems during some parts of the translation of the RPP? and Which of Vinay & Darbelnet’s (1995) categories do the examples discussed fit into? All of these questions have been answered during the discussion in Section 5.

The question of a useful system for categorising translated items is not an easy one, and even though Vinay & Darbelnet (1995), Koller (1979, as described in Munday [2001]), Catford (1965) and others have attempted to create viable systems, there is a need for more research in the field. When it comes to system theories applied to translations within specific genres of text it becomes even clearer that more research is needed. It is possible to categorise instances of political text according to system models, but they are not very useful when one attempts to explain the mechanisms behind translation in specific genres looking at specific aspects such as style and culture.

A further disadvantage of this type of study is the fact that one’s own text is being discussed. Obviously, it is much easier to evaluate a text according to a system theory when one is not “blinded” by the TT being one’s own product. Such an investigation would be more interesting than the current one since it would give the person writing the paper the possibility to evaluate the text objectively, a key starting-point in any research process.

To sum up, the main finding of the present paper is that cultural issues during the translation were not as predominant as issues of style. The cultural differences were simply not as significant as expected. Finally, the conclusion is that more research within the field of translation studies is needed, genre-specific research dealing with specific text-types as well as contrastive research comparing the translation of different text types and general research dealing with the translation process as a whole.

The present paper has indicated that American political text is not that different from Swedish political text culturally, but more different stylistically. Further research is needed to verify or discard these indications.
References

Source text

Parallel texts
   <http://folkpartiet.se/upload/Dokument/partiprogram_webb.pdf>
   <http://www.kristdemokraterna.se/VarPolitik/~/media/Files/VarPolitik/Principprogram/kd_principprg.pdf.ashx>

Secondary sources