Metaphors and Terminology in Social Science
- A translation and an analysis -

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Abstract

This essay deals with the translation and analysis of a text on human rights. The analysis focuses on terminology, figures of speech, idiomatic expressions and oblique translation (modulation). The core of the essay concerns terminology and metaphors (or figures of speech), with the last two parts complementing the first two. For the terminology part Victor H Condé (1999) is the main source, when dealing with figures of speech both George Lakoff & Mark Johnson (1980) as well as Christine Alm-Arvius (2003) are the sources used. In the third part the theoretical source is Rune Ingo (1991), and in the last part Vinay & Darbelney’s (Munday 2003) ideas on modulation are discussed.

The source text was rich in metaphors. For this reason it proved very interesting and illuminating to discover how many metaphors that we (or at least the translator) may be unaware of that we use every day. In the text there were both easy-to-spot metaphors, for example half-digested medieval ideas, as well as the ones that are more hard to find, for example on what foundations do rights rest.

It was the terminology that posed the biggest challenge during the translation process. However, several of the terms are used in almost the same form and manner in the two languages, two examples are policy (policy) and regime (regim). The challenge here was if a term was used in the same manner in English as in Swedish and in such cases the Swedish Parliament’s website www.riksdagen.se was very useful. Another challenge has been idioms and expressions since it was sometimes hard to find good translations for them and many times the whole context was the key to finding out the author’s intent. An example of this is keep both feet firmly planted on the ground which was translated into som försöker vara så verklighetsknutet som möjligt.

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1 Introduction
I have chosen to translate a chapter from the Textbook *the Globalization of World Politics – An Introduction to International Relations*, second edition, edited by John Baylis and Steve Smith, and published by Oxford University Press in 2001. The chapter, pages 599-612, was written by Chris Brown and examines human rights issues earlier in history as well as today. It also deals with various written documents, such as the Bill of Rights (Congress, USA: 1791), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly, UN: 1948), and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (National Assembly, France: 1789). The chapter discusses why some countries are reluctant to sign certain documents against offences against human rights. It also questions the idea of universal rights – is there such a thing or is it only something imagined.

Human rights are something that is discussed more and more and almost everyone has something to say about them. They are today more important than ever. Violations of human rights are in the news every day; we see it in magazines, on the Internet, almost everywhere. On Swedish Channel 4 the program *Kalla Fakta* has several times exposed how suspected terrorists are treated by the US and how innocent people are caught in harms way, as well as other violations of rights (*Kalla Fakta*: May 17, 2004 and September 26, 2005 are merely two such occasions).

The translated text will be directed towards students of international relations and human rights as well as people interested in learning more about human rights. The reader should have some previous knowledge about the subject but not too much since this is supposed to be a text that the reader could learn something from. Some of the more complex terminology and/or occurrences that might need a comment will be explained by footnotes in the translation, since this, according to *Svenska skrivregler*, is the most reader-friendly way of explaining something that is complex or is otherwise unfamiliar to the reader (*Svenska språknämnden* 2003:42).
1.1 Aim and scope
The aim of this essay is to analyze the translation with the help of four phenomena:

1. Terminology
2. Figures of speech
3. Idiomatic expressions
4. Oblique Translations

One aspect that is rather difficult with this type of text is the terminology. Where can you find the right terms for something? What do you do when the word has not been translated before or if there are several translations for the same word?

Another aspect is various idioms and expressions that might be used in the source text and what options there are when dealing with an idiom or an expression. Do you translate it word-for-word or do you find an equivalent expression?

1.2 Material
The text translated was from a textbook used in over thirty-three countries in international/world politics courses (Baylis & Smith 2001: Editor’s Preface). The book deals with almost everything in international politics from international history to the three major theories of world politics to international issues, such as the environment, culture, gender and human rights. The focus point in the chosen chapter is human rights.

It is a very complex text with long sentences and terminology that is mostly used in human rights contexts. The long sentences create somewhat of a problem since it can many times be hard to follow a sentence in English and translate it into Swedish without changing the content too much or creating clumsy or unelegant constructions.

To make sure that the terminology is used in the right way, that the quotes are translated as close as possible to the original and in order to use the right idioms a number of sources were utilized. The lexicons used are, among others, Norstedts Stora engelsk-svensk ordbok and Norstedts Stora svensk-engelsk ordbok. For translation of the idioms
Norstedts Engelska idiombok is used. Another important source for the translation and analysis is the Internet.

A number of parallel texts were used and especially for “human rights terminology” and the quotations; *FN:s allmänna förklaring om de mänskliga rättigheterna, Internationell konvention om ekonomiska, sociala och kulturella rättigheter, Förenta nationernas stadga, Deklarationen om de mänskliga och medborgerliga rättigheterna.* The most important text in English was Andrew Heywood’s *Political Theory – an Introduction.* In this book the structure and common expressions and terms have been looked at in order to further understand the context in which a term or expression is used.

1.3 Method
The first step was to translate the text and during that process the interesting aspects were noted down. With the help of various dictionaries, such as *Norstedts Stora engelsk-svensk ordbok* and others, and various search sites on the Internet, such as *google,* *www.yourdictionary.com* and others, the terms were translated but the usage frequency of the words were also looked at. While translating the text all difficulties were written down and used later on while performing the analysis. It was, however, only after completing the entire translation of the text that these aspects became exactly clear and then the analysis part could begin. The notes were useful when it was time to proof-read the entire text since they helped to explain why certain sentences were translated as they were.

1.4 Background
The very idea of human rights is not universal but something that developed during the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe. The idea of human rights developed since people wanted to establish some limits on how people may act against and treat other individuals. “Human rights are rights to which people are entitled by virtue of being human” (Heywood 1999:191).

In almost all great religions we can find somewhat similar thoughts but many religions instead often talk about moral codes of conduct. Influenced by philosophers like Hobbes
and Locke human rights were called “natural” rights or “the rights of man” and these rights became a part of the political agenda. John Locke describes natural rights as natural in the sense that they were believed to be God-given and through that part of the “very core of human nature” (Heywood 1999:191). Human rights are also regarded as being universal, meaning that they belong to all human beings regardless of race, gender, culture and so forth (Heywood 1999:191). In order to protect human rights from others the state and citizen have a so called ‘social contract’, which means that the individual accepts the authority of the state and in return receives benefits which only a sovereign state can render (Heywood 1999:201). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 is the greatest statement of natural or human rights (Rayner, Moira - see List of References).

1.5 Theoretical Background
When analyzing the translation a number of theoretical sources will be used and each part of the analysis has its own source. For the first part Victor H Condé will be the main source, in the second part George Lakoff & Mark Johnson as well as Christine Alm-Arvius constitute the theoretical basis. In the third part the theoretical source is Rune Ingo, and in the last part Vinay & Darbelney will be discussed.

1.5.1 Terminology
The very first part of the analysis deals with terminology related to human rights and social sciences. The primary source of information comes from Victor H. Condé, who has written A Handbook of International Human Rights Terminology. Since Chris Brown’s article is a social science text dealing with human rights it is important to be familiar with these kinds of terms in order to translate the text as well as possible. Another important source for this part was the Swedish Parliament’s webpage. A lot of the terms used are used in a manner which makes it hard to find their exact equivalent and sometimes there is none. With the help of the Swedish Parliament’s webpage, as well as searching Google, the term usage frequency could be determined.

1.5.2 Figures of speech
The second part of the analysis deals with metaphors in the source text (ST). For the most part Lakoff and Johnson’s ideas in Metaphors We Live By (1980) will be used. What is a
metaphor then? It might be easiest to describe it as an image founded on a comparison. Rune Ingo makes the comparison between a human neck and the smaller part of a bottle and in that way tells us why it is called a bottleneck. Metaphors are everyday words taken out of their context and put in another in order to bring more life and color to the new context.

There are a number of various categories of metaphors but in this analysis they have been delimited to quantifying and container metaphors (both belonging to the subcategory ontological metaphors), personifications, theories (and arguments) are buildings, ideas are food and ideas are plants. Another related phenomenon is metonymy, which will also be discussed in the analysis.

The first thing that will be analyzed is the quantifying metaphors belonging to the ontological metaphor category. As the name reveals it has to do with quantifying words, Lakoff & Johnson (1980:26) use the examples: IT WILL TAKE A LOT OF PATIENCE TO FINISH THIS BOOK, THERE IS SO MUCH HATRED IN THE WORLD. Ontological metaphors in general regard “ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:25).

Another group of metaphors is the container metaphors. This group is also a subcategory to the ontological metaphors. Through container metaphors we view the world around us as containers for various things, as well as regarding the human body as a container. Lakoff & Johnson use the example “THERE IS A LOT OF LAND IN KANSAS” (1980:30) to illustrate what they mean.

When the physical object takes the place of a person it can be rather clear that one is dealing with a metaphor, “dead” material becomes living so to speak. Metaphors used in this way are mostly referred to as personifications and this group of metaphors is also important in the text and therefore discussed in the analysis. According to Lakoff & Johnson this group covers many metaphors picking out certain features or aspects of a person. They are a separate group even though they are an extension of ontological
metaphors and they help us to “make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms –
terms that we can understand on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions, and
characteristics” (1980:34). Lakoff & Johnson (1980:33) use the example *LIFE HAS
CHEATED ME* to illustrate how this type of metaphor might be used. Other categories of
metaphors that will be looked at are *THEORIES (AND ARGUMENTS) ARE
BUILDINGS, IDEAS ARE FOOD and IDEAS ARE PLANTS.*

Metonymy is another interesting phenomenon in which one unit is used to refer to a
related one. This means that we classify a person or a certain thing depending on what
they are associated with or stand for. Lakoff & Johnson use the examples: HE´S IN
DANCE (= the dance profession), *ACRYLIC HAS TAKEN OVER THE ART WORLD*
 (= the use of acrylic paint), THE TIMES HASN´T ARRIVED AT THE PRESS
CONFERENCE YET (= the reporter from it). Other categories of metonymies that will
be discussed in the analysis are THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION (*Paris is
introducing longer skirts this season (1980:38)) and INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE
RESPONSIBLE (The *Senate* thinks abortion is immoral (1980:38)). What separates
metonymies from personifications is that a personification gives human character to
something that is not human and without referring to an actual human being (1980:35).

**1.5.3 Idiomatic expressions**
The third part of the analysis will discuss a few idioms and expressions that appear in the
text. The theoretical basis for that will be *Norstedts Engelska Idiombok´s definition of
what an idiom is. According to that dictionary (1999:III) an idiom contains at least two
words forming a new unit and the meaning of the unit cannot be found in the separate
words. According to *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms (1995:IV) they are often
metaphorical “[...] they are effectively metaphors which have become ‘fixed’ or
‘fossilized’”. The Cobuild dictionary uses the example “*kill two birds with one stone*” to
illustrate the metaphorical reference.

Another interesting aspect the Cobuild dictionary points out is that even if idioms are
normally regarded as fixed they are often not fixed at all. There are often variations to the
same idioms, the examples “*burn your bridges*” and “*burn your boats*” are used in the
dictionary (1995:V). However, David Crystal claims that there are two ways of identifying an idiom. “The meaning of the idiomatic expression cannot be deduced by examining the meanings of the constituent lexemes. And the expression is fixed” (Crystal 2001:163). Normally everyday expressions are not included in idioms but this analysis will be an exception even though there are merely a few in the source text.

According to Ingo the translation of idioms puts the translator’s abilities to the test. In order for the translation to be impeccable the translator has to know the language more or less by heart, have a great sense of artistic style, and basically have a great linguistic ability (Ingo 1991:209). In section 2.3 Ingo’s four methods of translating idioms will be introduced and further discussed.

1.5.4 Oblique Translation (Modulation)
Vinay and Darbelney’s ideas will be the theoretical source for the fourth part. In this part their strategy oblique, or free, translation will be discussed (Munday 2001:56). Oblique translation is used in cases where direct translation is not possible. In this analysis only one of four procedures will be discussed and that is the strategy modulation and this will be discussed last in the analysis. When this translation form is used the semantics and point of view of the source language are changed. Jeremy Munday has a quote in his book defining this: “Modulation is a procedure that is justified […] ‘when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL’ (2000:89)” (Munday 2001:58).

2 Analysis
This analysis will be divided into four sections dealing with terminology, figures of speech, idioms and change in point of view. In the first section Human rights terminology and other noteworthy vocabulary items will be discussed. In the second section metaphors and metonymies are the focus point. The third deals with expressions and idioms. Last but not least Vinay & Darbelnet’s strategy modulation is discussed. The last three parts sometimes overlap and that is interesting but only shows that nothing is crystal
clear when it comes to this kind of analysis. Vinay and Darbelnet’s model on direct translation will also be discussed throughout the analysis.

2.1 Terminology
As new phenomena occur new terms appear. Terms are often translated or brand new ones are invented, which means that there are a number of terms describing the same phenomenon. In order to simplify international cooperation standardization is common. According to Ingo this works when dealing with similar languages (1991:37). Swedish belongs to the North Germanic branch of the Indo-European family while English and German belong to the West Germanic branch (Collins English Dictionary). Even so, this means that the languages have a lot in common, which makes it easier to simply borrow terms from English and German and incorporate them into Swedish, as is sometimes the case in the following parts below.

2.1.1 Human rights terminology
According to Victor H. Condé, the author of A Handbook of International Human Rights Terminology, human rights terminology is nowadays the dominant discourse in the world of academics (Condé 1999: introduction). When learning about human rights it is very important to be familiar with the terminology used in order to fully understand the context.

The source text is obviously filled with human rights terminology since this is a text about human rights. Many words and phrases are available in Swedish but some are not. Charter, for instance, is mentioned several times in the text and stands for a treaty that has been signed by a number of states forming an international intergovernmental organization of some sort and outlines the rules of the cooperation (Condé 1999). There is no single equivalent of the word which makes it hard to translate unless one is familiar with human rights terminology and has considered the context. In Swedish the word was translated into charta, stadga or deklaration. Whenever charter is mentioned in the ST it stands together with another word forming a unit that many times has an equivalent in Swedish as Banjul stadgan (2 TT), Magna Charta (5 TT), and Förenta Nationernas stadga (9 TT). In these cases it is important to know that there are well established
equivalents in almost every language and therefore it is important to find the term most commonly used. Especially the Banjul Charter (Banjulstadgan) was hard to find a translation for and it was finally found in a text on the Internet, through a search on Google. The other two could be translated by the help of Norstedts stora ordbok.

The term compliance appeared in the source text in four places (three times on page 601 and at the very end of the text, on page 612). Again there is no exact equivalent in Swedish, the word was therefore “borrowed” into Swedish by the translator and explained with a footnote. Even though it was only used four times in the source text it created great problems for the translator since the term compliance is not commonly used in this manner. However, noncompliance is a common term in the human rights sense. Condé mentions it in his book and defines it as “the actions of a state done in accordance with a standard of conduct set forth in a norm. When the conduct is not in accordance, the state is said to be in a status of “noncompliance” with its normative obligation”. In the translation the original form was kept, but with a “Swedish spelling”, and an explanation was given as a footnote – komplians (3 TT). This can be referred to as what Vinay & Darbelney classify as a borrowing but with a slight change in the spelling in order to make it more similar to Swedish spelling. On page 18 the term was translated into – efterlevnad.

Adoption is another term that is usually used frequently in human rights texts. In this text it was, however, only used twice (first on page 608 and then again on page 610). Condé explains adoption (of treaty text) as “taking place after the drafting of a treaty text is complete and is accomplished by a vote by way of institutional resolution to determine the consent of all negotiating states”. When it was used the first time in the ST (even relatively minor sanctions would only be adopted) it was important to change the entire sentence and therefore the word was not directly translated, instead the sentence was translated into – “man utfärdade inte ens mindre sanktioner” (12 TT). In this example the determining factor for the translation was the context and not the single word. The second time the term was used (adopted in Panama in 1984 TT) it was translated directly into – “som antogs 1984 i Panama” (16 TT).
One of the terms mentioned in Condé’s book is liberalism – which is a “twentieth-century ideology that calls for free political institutions, individual freedoms such as freedom of expression and religious tolerance, and support for the idea that government should have a strong role in regulating capitalism for the general good and for constructing a welfare state in which the needs of the poor are met as best as possible” (Condé 1999). This was definitely the human rights term mostly used in the ST as it appeared fifteen times and most frequently used in the form of liberal position. The word liberalism was rarely used but liberal was found in various combinations with other words throughout the text and therefore needs to be especially acknowledged. As this term is the same in Swedish it was never translated into anything other than various forms of the word liberal – such as den liberala ståndpunkten (1 TT), liberala anhängare (8 TT), and liberalernas villighet (9 TT).

A term that can have different connotations depending on the context is the widely used term regime. It was used ten times in the ST and has the equivalents regim, regeringsform, system, ordning in Swedish. According to Norstedts svenska ordbok it often has a depreciatory connotation when translated into regim in Swedish, as in English, for example a fascist regime (Collins English Dictionary). Condé defines it as “principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures around which states and other international actors’ expectations converge in a given issue”. In the TT the term was translated into - det internationella regelsystemet för de mänskliga rättigheterna (1 TT) (the international human rights regime, 599 ST), regeringsformer som i stort sett är rättvisa (7 TT) (they exist in broadly just regimes, 604 ST), Regimen i Sydafrika dominerades av vita (10 TT) (the white-dominated regime in South Africa, 606 ST), socialista system (11 TT) (socialist regimes, 606 ST), av regimer som saknar författningsgrunder (13 TT) (by non-constitutional regimes, 608 ST). This term shows that translations are never clear-cut, there are interpretations of everything.

Another term used ten times in the ST is universal (human rights). In this context this means that every human being, throughout the universe, possesses these rights (Condé 1999). As in the above case there were variations of this word in both the ST and TT.
Some examples are *begreppet universella mänskliga rättigheter* (1 TT) (the idea of universal human rights, 599-600 ST), *de mänskliga rättigheternas universalitet* (4 TT) (the universality of human rights, 601 ST), *en universell föreställning om rättigheter* (6 TT) (a universal notion of rights, 603 ST), *universella aspekten av de mänskliga rättigheterna* (12 TT) (universal side of human rights, 607 ST), *universalism är negativt* (15 TT) (universalism is destructive, 610 ST), *en mer grundläggande invändning mot universalismen* (16 TT) (a more basic challenge to universalism, 611 ST). Even if the term sometimes takes the form *universalism* instead of *universal* it should be noted that it always refers to the *universalism of human rights* in this text. Again the difficulty is how to make a comprehensible sentence where this term is used correctly and at the “right” position.

### 2.1.2 Other vocabulary items

The text is taken from a textbook used in social-science classes and therefore the text is fairly full of terms used in social-science matters. Ingo (1991:198) says that many times foreign terms do not have equivalents in the TL which makes it harder for the translator. When faced with a term without an equivalent the easiest way to deal with the situation is to either borrow the word from the SL or to translate it as closely as possible to the original word.

In this text there were a few words posing problems and most of the times they were searched for on the Swedish Parliament’s website www.riksdagen.se and if the word was frequently used there it was then adopted into the target text.

Examples in the text: *practice* (frequently used in the text) – the word was translated to *praxis* 4 (*statspraxis* 1), *etik* 3, *utövandet* 2, *förfaringssätt* 2, *tillämpning* 1,

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1. *Whereas it was once the case that rights were almost always associated with domestic legal and political systems, in the last half century a complex network of international law and *practice* [...].* (599 ST)  

Medan rättigheter förr mer eller mindre alltid förknippades med nationella juridiska och politiska system, så har det under den sista delen av förra århundradet växt fram ett komplicerat nätverk av internationella lagar och *praxis* [...]. (1 TT)
In (3) *practice* was translated into *förfaringsätt*, because the translator felt that the translation would benefit from the use of the word *förfaringsätt*, which means method of proceeding (Norstedts svenska ordbok, CH’s translation). *Praxis* and *förfaringsätt* are used synonymously but since the context refers to *how to proceed in a matter*, *förfaringsätt* was felt to expand the translation and add more depth and description to the procedure than the term *praxis* would have. Even thought the translator first questioned the word *praxis* it turned out to be used quite frequently in the Swedish Parliament’s documents where it was used in 3998 cases. In *Norstedts svenska ordbok* it was described as ‘recognized course of action’. The example below is special in that way that *practice* together with *best* forms a unit:

(4) Does post-1945 law actually constitute *best practice*? (610 ST)

A search on Google gave 204 000 000 hits for the term *best practice* and 866 000 hits for *god etik*.

The term *policy* was frequently used in the text and was translated to *handelspolitik* 1, *utrikespolitik* 1, *politik* 2. However, the term was simply borrowed in a number of cases. Below are three examples of how *policy* was translated.
When the word was searched for at the Swedish Parliament’s website it was surprising to find it in 1589 documents, not all of them were in Swedish but that was more than expected. The conclusion was therefore that it can be used in Swedish texts as policy. It is what Vinay & Darbelney call a borrowing (Munday 2003:56).

The term notion was also frequently used in the text and was translated to föreställningen eight times, and therefore was the most common translation. It was also translated to begrepp on two occasions, as seen in (9),

In any event, does not the alleged universality of human rights hide the actual privileging of an essentially Western notion of politics, as is suggested by, among others, advocates of ‘Asian Values’? (601 ST)

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In *Collins English Dictionary* *notion* is described as an idea, concept or opinion. In (8-10) *begrepp* and *föreställning* were used. *Begrepp* is the Swedish equivalent for *concept*, while *föreställning* corresponds to an *idea*. Since the context in (9) refers to a Western general concept the translator felt that *begrepp* was the more appropriate translation. Below is another translation of the concept.

(10) However, it should not be forgotten that these two sources of the *notion* of rights are actually based not simply on different, but on opposed principles. (603 ST)

Man ska emellertid inte glömma bort att dessa två utgångspunkter för *begrepp* om rättigheter inte bara är baserade på olika grunder utan på motsatta grunder (5 TT)

The term *notion* is used fairly often in social science texts, such as in Andrew Heywood’s *Political Theory* where it was used a number of times. On page 72 there is one example of its usage “the notion that politics is a ‘system’[…]” (1999).

Another interesting term is *goodwill* (578 ST). This term was not translated but, as Vinay & Darbelney (Munday 2003:56) call it, simply borrowed. *Collins English Dictionary* describes it as “a feeling of benevolence, approval and kindly interest”, while *Norstedts Svenska Ordbok* describes it as “gott rykte eller anseende”. A search for the word on Swedish Google sites showed that it was found on 108 000 pages. The term was also found in three Swedish dictionaries in the same form as in English and therefore used in its original form, and interesting since it is a clear example of a borrowing.

### 2.2 Figures of speech

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980) there is a difference between a metaphor and a metonymy. They describe it as two different kinds of processes in which a metaphor is where one conceives one thing in terms of another and metonymy is mainly used as a referential point. According to Alm-Arvius metaphors and metonymies can be regarded as “the two central types of tropes\(^1\) within verbal language” (2003:28). In this analysis

\(^1\)“Tropes is a cover term from traditional rhetoric for language uses with some kind of secondary meaning” (Alm-Arvius 2003:9).
they, together with the idioms and other expressions, are the most interesting types and were therefore analyzed. Alm-Arvius points out something very noteworthy and that is the fact that these two tropes are “by no means clear-cut and discrete” (2003:20), something that is evident throughout this analysis.

2.2.1 Metaphors

What is a metaphor? In the introduction it was described as *an image founded on a comparison*. Metaphors are used every day without being given much thought since many metaphors are fully integrated into our languages. Lakoff & Johnson say that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3). According to Lakoff & Johnson we use the same conceptual system for communication, thoughts and actions. We organize our thoughts with the help of metaphors. They also state in their book that “[…] literal expressions (“He has constructed a theory”) and imaginative expressions (“His theory is covered with gargoyles”) can be instances of the same general metaphor (THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS)” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:53). This indeed means that metaphors within the same category can take totally different forms.

Another interesting feature of metaphors is the tendency to generalize, which “means that certain, usually quite central meaning features of the source sense are suppressed” (Alm-Arvius 2003:24). Alm-Arvius also asserts that “it does not matter that their source senses represent aspects of different experiential domains”; according to her the important factor is that they help us to form an idea of what is going on. This can however cause complications when translating a metaphor since the translation may often turn out totally wrong and very strange if the metaphor is translated word-for-word.

Ontological metaphors may be hard to spot in a text since they are not what one normally would view as metaphors. The metaphors are so well adopted into the language that they are everyday norm and therefore very hard to detect. As written earlier ontological metaphors regard “ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:25), as illustrated in (11) and (12) below.
In these two cases we are dealing with quantifying ontological metaphors. As written in the theoretical background, Lakoff & Johnson use the example THERE IS SO MUCH HATRED IN THE WORLD. In (11) the metaphor dimension has been translated into the non-metaphorical aspect. According to Collins English dictionary dimension is “scope; size; extent” but also “aspect: a new dimension of politics”. The examples above are noteworthy but not especially hard to translate. In many cases, just like (11) and (12), one does not find the metaphor before really examining a sentence.

Lakoff & Johnson state that “we use ontological metaphors to comprehend events, actions, activities and states. Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as substances, states as containers” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:30). They use the examples: ARE YOU IN THE RACE ON SUNDAY? (race as CONTAINER OBJECT), DID YOU SEE THE RACE? (race as OBJECT), THERE WAS A LOT OF GOOD RUNNING IN THE RACE (running as a SUBSTANCE in a CONTAINER), HE’S IN LOVE, HE FELL INTO A DEPRESSION. They also point out that even without barriers we invent barriers, creating a container with an inside and an outside, for example: THERE IS A LOT OF LAND IN KANSAS. “Given that a bounded physical space is a CONTAINER and that our field of vision correlates with that bounded physical space, the metaphorical concept VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS emerges naturally” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:30). Examples: THE SHIP IS COMING INTO VIEW, I HAVE HIM IN SIGHT. Below is one clear illustration of an ontological metaphor from the translated text.

(11) [...] the ‘ethical dimension’ promised has not delivered much (608 ST)

(12) [...] these economic and social rights feature very largely (600 ST)

(13) pockets of slavery (605 ST)
A pocket is “a small bag or pouch in a garment for carrying small articles, money etc” (Collins English Dictionary), but it can also be a hole of some sort. The immediate translation would be ficka. In the ST it refers to smaller secluded areas, and that is why it was translated into vissa områden. The difficulty here is, as in all other cases with metaphors, what it is the author wants to convey. It is here important to have access to good dictionaries and to understand the full context. Other examples of container metaphors are:

(14) If fortunate enough to live in a country governed by the rule of law (607 ST)

Om man har tur och bor i ett land som styrs av lag och ordning (11 TT)

(15) [...] they rest within a legal system (602 ST)

de baseras på rättssväsendet (4 TT)

(16) In non-European countries (607 ST)

I länder utanför Europa (12 TT)

(17) The complex language of medieval thinking on rights carried over into the modern period (604 ST)

Medeltidstänkandets invecklade språk gällande rättigheter följde med in i den moderna eran (6 TT)

In (15) the container metaphor was translated into på instead of inomlinuti. The reference here is that it is the legal system that is the foundation for rights and rights are dependent on the formation of the legal system. The examples above are not especially hard to translate but were regarded as interesting since they are not commonly regarded as metaphorical, and all are translated into metaphors. They do also clearly demonstrate the container metaphors since they refer to items within an invisible boundary. In the example below we find another example of an ontological metaphor:

(18) this achievement is hollow (601 ST)

är framstegen intetsägande (4 TL)
The word’s denotation is a hole, an empty space within something, and is a good example of an ontological metaphor. The sentence indicates that the achievement was without greater meaning or substance and therefore the reference to something hollow. Even though it would have been possible to translate it as tomt the translator felt that it was important to stress the extent of the inability of the achievement, and that is why it was translated into intetsägande.

To make something human or to use a part of a person is what most people associate metaphors with and it is also the most common way of using metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson show this by using the examples: THIS FACT ARGUES AGAINST THE STANDARD THEORY, LIFE HAS CHEATED ME, CANCER FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH HIM. This group was one of the most frequently used throughout the ST. It was used more than ten times in a clear-cut manner and probably used even more than that less apparent. However, it can be very difficult to say that something is absolutely one thing, many times there is a fine line and it can either be a personification or something else, as is the case in the examples below.

(19) The primary function of government is to protect these rights […] (604 ST)

Statens huvudsakliga funktion är att värna om dessa rättigheter (6 TT)

(20) The South African government objected to the Declaration (606 ST)

Den sydafrikanska regeringen ogillade förklaringen (10 TT)

(21) states rarely if ever act simply in terms of human rights (608 ST)

är det väldigt sällan som stater ingriper av enbart humanitära skäl (12 TT)

Here we have three examples that could either be placed under personification or under the metonymy subcategory INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE. According to Alm-Arvius “these two terminological notions [metaphors and metonymies] are by no means clear-cut and discrete” (2003:20). Government as well as a state can be viewed as either one unit that is supposed to protect/object/act, and is then a personification, but
government/state is also the definition used for people in a certain position who are responsible for certain things, and is then the INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE. Here are some other examples of this in the text:

(22) the liberal position stresses property rights (604 ST)  

(23) The humanitarianism and international standardsetting of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought these issues to the fore. (604 ST)

(24) universalism is destructive (610 ST)

Since the essential parts of these three examples are acting and given life to either stress something, bring something to the fore, or merely being destructive they belong to the personification category. Take (22) for instance, the liberal position is acting on behalf of and voicing the opinions of the people belonging to this philosophy, therefore the example was placed under personification. All the examples represent abstract items, and by letting them act they become human in a way, as in the following example:

(25) The universal documents all […] privilege a patriarchal view of the family (610 ST)

A document is always dead material but it is many times more efficient and powerful than the strongest army. In this case the documents give certain benefits to certain people, dead material could never do that, therefore the documents take the form of humans and can thereby be classified as personification. It might also be regarded as a metonymy and in that case the documents would represent the states and people that have drafted and signed them. As Lakoff & Johnson state in their book “in the cases of personification […] we are imputing human qualities to things that are not human” (1984:35), which is
exactly the case here and also the reason for the classification of these examples as personifications.

Lakoff & Johnson do not include all their metaphors in particular categories but simply define them according to what they denote. They use the examples: THEORIES (AND ARGUMENTS) ARE BUILDINGS – IS THAT THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR THEORY as in the following case:

(26) On what foundations do rights rest? (602 ST)  På vilka grunder baseras rättigheter? (4 TT)

A foundation implies that something is standing on it, but rights are abstract and not solid and can therefore not stand at all. The metaphor foundation is supposed to evoke an image of a solid construction on which something could stand firm. In Swedish there is a similar metaphor, which was also used in the translation. It is evident that several English metaphors have similar equivalents in Swedish which makes it easier for a translator, as in the examples below.

(27) Third generation rights build on this collective dimension (600 ST)  Tredje generationens rättigheter grundar sig på den kollektiva aspekten (2 TT)

(28) Universal moral standards exist upon which the rights that individuals have are founded and there is a general duty to adhere to these standards (602 ST)  Universella moraliska principer existerar på grundsätserna för individens rättigheter och det finns en allmän pliktkänsla för att vidhålla dessa principer (5 TT)

(29) current conventional wisdom on human rights is based on quite similar ideas (605 ST)  ändå baseras nuvarande sedvanlig kunskap om mänskliga rättigheter på ganska likartade föreställningar (9TT)

As in the previous example build on/founded/based on refers to the base of a building and refers to the starting point of the entire matter. It is impossible to build a house without a
firm base on which it can stand and that is the reference point here. In (30) we find a similar reference.

(30) it is built into the nature of the discourse (611 ST)  
    den är inbakad i samtalets natur (17 TT)

Here we do not find a base for something but the reference is still a building. Something can be found within the walls if one were to scratch underneath the wallpaper. What is interesting here is that built into was translated into another type of metaphor in Swedish, IDEAS ARE FOOD, discussed below.

Lakoff and Johnson refers to the next metaphors as: IDEAS ARE FOOD – I JUST CAN’T SWALLOW THAT CLAIM.

(31) Half-digested medieval ideas (604 ST)  
    halvt genomtänkta medeltidsuppfattningar (6 TT)

The reference here is to food and the digestive system. When something is only half-digested it has not been processed thoroughly and that is what the author wants to connote. If it had been translated into medeltidsuppfattningar som är halvt smält or something similar that would have been totally off the mark and nothing would have made any sense. In this case the translator felt that it was better to try to stress the focus of something only being half thought-through than to use a metaphor. The next example is similar:

(32) these rights boil down to no more than a set of particular social choices (611 ST)  
    Dessa rättigheter går även ut på inget mindre än ett par bestämda sociala val (16 TT)

The word boil means ‘to cook something until it reaches such a high temperature that the water starts to fizzle’ (Collins English Dictionary). Boil down on the other hand refers to something being reduced through the process of boiling and when doing so the essential matter is the only thing left (Collins English Dictionary). The last process is what the author is talking about in his reference to boil down.
Another phenomenon found in the text was: IDEAS ARE PLANTS – THE SEEDS OF HIS GREAT IDEAS WERE PLANTED IN HIS YOUTH

The idea will *flourish or die* (612 ST) föreställningen kommer att *frodas eller dö* (19 TT)

It is most often flowers that flourish or die and that is probably the image the author wants the reader to see. An idea is not a living thing and therefore it cannot flourish or die. Again dead material becomes living and even though it does not take the form of a person it is referred to something living and in this case a plant or a flower. In this case the translator chose a similar metaphor *frodas eller dö* since this was possible, and therefore preferable. The following example is somewhat similar but a metaphor was not used in the translation.

Two modern approaches seem *fruitful* (612 ST) *Två moderna sätt verkar gynnsamma* (18 TT)

When a plant is fruitful it is productive or fertile and this is also the image that the author wants to connote, that is, ideas can evolve and develop into something useful and good. It would have been possible to translate *fruitful* to *fruktbar* but it would have been somewhat awkward given the context here and *gynnsamma* was felt to be a more desirable term in this sentence.

**2.2.2 Metonymy**

“Metonymic concepts allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:39). Alm-Arvius explains metonymies as shortcuts since details are not included as they will “be made part of the understanding of such construction simply as a matter of course” (2003:154ff). What we know, how we think and how we act is the origin of metaphors as well as metonymic concepts. The most commonly used metonymy in the text is the subcategory INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE which was widely used throughout the text.
Here government, Commonwealth, World Bank and the human rights movement stand for the people behind these institutions making decisions. An institution is merely a definition of an organization or the like, consisting of many parts and people and when an institution does something it is always the people behind it that are acting on behalf of that institution. As mentioned earlier, there are no clear-cut cases here, like the examples on page 20 examples (35-37) could be placed either under personification or as they are now. However, they were placed here since they are not as “active” as the previous examples were. The term Commonwealth in (36) could complicate a translation for someone unfamiliar with the association of states previously under British rule. Alm-Arvius states that this can be phrased as a shortcut, also known as a metonymic shift, meaning that by referring to a whole entity by using one name that we are familiar with we evade having to write out the entire reference. “Metonymic shifts in the understanding of words and phrases are more convenient, and allows us, as it were, to abbreviate messages in a non-literal but still succinct way” (Alm-Arvius 2003:27-28).

One other metonymy that was found in the text was THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION and in the text it was found on line 509 in the source text:

38. the West regularly issued condemnations of human rights violations (608 ST)       fördömde ofta västvärlden brott mot de mönskliga rättigheterna (12 TT)
Here the West represents all states and governments ruled by the same types of laws and institutions. The West is the collective definition of the non-Communist countries in Europe but also former British colonies with English as the mother tongue. This term was used after the Second World War (Collins English Dictionary). Another similar definition and also metonymy is the Commonwealth.

2.3 Idiomatic expressions

According to Collins English Dictionary an idiom is “a group of words whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent words”. What separates idioms from sayings is that they are generally shorter and their meaning is less tangible (Stålhammar 1997:45). Idioms are also metaphorical expressions (Moon 1998:5).

According to Ingo an idiom should, as far as it is possible, be translated by using another idiom. This is however not always possible, which Ingo also acknowledges. According to him there are mainly four ways of handling idioms:

I. By translating an idiom with an equivalent idiom
II. Word for word
III. With an explanatory everyday expression (normaluttryck)
IV. An everyday expression (normaluttryck) is translated by using an idiom (Ingo 1991:209 – 210)

(These will be referred to in the text as (I), (II), (III), and (IV))

Since this is a text from a course book and not a poetic text or from a work of fiction there were not many idioms and expression, which maybe was not that surprising. On the other hand, according to Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms idioms are found more often in texts that are not informal than one would normally expect (Sinclair 1995:VI). The very first sentence start with the idiom:

(40) On the face of it (599 ST) Vid första anblicken (1 TT)
The literal translation would be something like *på dess ansikte* which would have been very awkward and incomprehensible in the context. As a unit the words mean something like *at first sight* or *what the surface reveals* and when one is familiar with this idiom a correlating translation can be made. In this case the third method (III) was used, an idiom was translated with an explanatory everyday expression.

The next expression means to lay out the foundation or to explain the starting point for something. A Swedish equivalent translation might be *att lägga grunden* or maybe *lägga fram spelreglerna* but since these did not quite fit in the context the expression was simply translated as above. An association to a play, maybe even to one of Shakespeare’s, might be felt here. Once again the third method (III) of translation was used.

(41) *Set the scene* (600 ST) 
*förklarar en del kring fenomenet* (1 TT) 

This next example was one of the more challenging ones to translate:

(42) *keep both feet firmly planted on the ground* (601 TT) 
*som försöker vara så verklighetsanknutna som möjligt* (3 TT) 

There is a similar Swedish expression *stå med båda fötterna på jorden*, and had it been translated in that manner the first method would have been used, but in this context the expression would have been somewhat off the mark. The author talks about certain difficulties with the three generation of rights and if they are real or fictive. In this context the explanatory translation (III) was felt more natural in the context and by translating it this way it may be more understandable to most people. In the following example we are facing a different phenomenon:

(43) *In any event, does not the alleged universality of human rights hide the actual privileging* (601 ST) 
*Hur som helst, är det inte så att påstådda universella mänskliga rättigheter döljer privilegierandet* (4 TT)
Collins English dictionary refers to this as “regardless of circumstances” and that is exactly how it has been translated. This is a general expression in Swedish which makes it all the more relevant. The three words in Swedish often stand together, which implies that we are facing what Anna Hallström and Urban Östberg regard as a fixed phrase. According to them this is ‘two or more words usually occurring together’ (Hallström & Östberg 1999:5). But can this (hur som helst) be regarded as an idiom? As mentioned earlier, an idiom is a group of words whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent words, and since that is the case in (43) the first method (an idiom with an equivalent idiom) was used.

The expression bag and baggage (see below for more context) means to throw someone out entirely or with everything they own. This particular phrase was not translated into Swedish since the rest of the sentence illustrated this well on its own. The relevant part of the sentence in English and Swedish are the following:

(44) [...] Gladstone’s 1870s campaign to throw the Ottoman empire out of Europe bag and baggage was based on the more common view that different standards applied as between “civilized” and “uncivilized” peoples. (605 ST) Gladstones kamp, under 1870-talet, för att slänga ut det Ottomanska riket ur Europa grundades på en ganska allmän uppfattning om att olika normer tillämpas mellan ”civiliserade” och ”ociviliserade” människor (9 TT)

The translation might have lost some of the “power” that the English sentence has but nothing else is lost in the translation even thought bag and baggage was left out. In the example below we find another phenomenon.

(45) On the other hand (612 ST) Å andra sidan (18 TT)

This expression has been exchanged for another in the TT which could be considered what Vinay & Darbelney refer to as an Equivalence i.e. “languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means” (Munday 2003:58), or even a
modulation. There is no difference between the two although the English refers to two hands and the Swedish refers to two sides of something (I).

2.4 Oblique translation (*Modulation*)
As mentioned in the introduction chapter this kind of translation strategy “changes the semantics and point of view” (Munday 2003:57) of the original text. Modulation can either be obligatory or optional. The phenomenon has a fairly wide range of possible occurrences when used while translating. According to Munday it can change “abstract for concrete, cause-effect, part-whole, part-another part, reversal of terms, negation of opposite, active to passive (and vice versa), space for time, rethinking of intervals and limits (in space and time), change of symbols (including fixed and new metaphors)” (Munday 2003:57–58). In this essay the most common modulation type was the last type, the “change of symbols”.

(46) concerning the *trade-off* between particular values (601 ST) som rör *kohandeln* mellan särskilda värderingar (3 TT)

(47) Of course, we are under no obligation to accept all critique of universalism *at face value* (611 ST) Självklart är vi inte tvungna att godta all kritik *fullt och fast* (17 TT)

Both examples above consist of one expression changed into another when translated. The first example is translated to the *right* equivalent expression in Swedish although a direct translation could have been *byte*. However, since the discussion is over political values, and *kohandel* is also referred to as *kompromisspolitik* (in English “policy of compromise”) the translation *kohandel* felt more appropriate and when one expression is used in the source text it was most natural to translate it into an equivalent expression. The second expression is perhaps not as easily translated as the first. The translation here had more to do with the entire sentence than with the mere expression. *Face value* means “to take something for what it is” (*Eng-Sv Norstedts stora ordbok*) but when put in context the most natural way to translate it was by using a common Swedish expression, *fullt och fast*. According to Vinay & Darbelney the translation categories, including the direct translation ones in the section before, can be used on three different levels. They
can be on the *lexicon level, syntactic structures, and the message* (Munday 2003:58 – 59).
In this case, when the entire sentence determined the translation, it was the message level that was used. In the next example we find another metaphorical expression changed into another in the target text:

(48)  These preliminary moves *set the scene* for the globalization processes of the post-1945 era  
(600 ST)  

Dessa inledande förändringar *lade grunden* för efterkrigstidens globaliseringsprocesser (2 TT)  

Here the message was once again the determining factor for the translation. *Set the scene* means to paint a picture, to explain what is happening, to draw out the basics etcetera. However, since the discussion in the text is on certain “moves” that determined the process of the globalization, and there is an appropriate Swedish expression for this, *lägga grunden för något*, this expression was chosen for the translation. The following example is easily translated but very interesting since it is a perfect example of obligatory modulation:

(49)  the nineteenth century (600 ST)  

1800-talet (2 TT)  

In English it is common to refer to centuries when referring to a period of 100 years. In everyday Swedish it is not as common to say *det nittonde seklet*, it is more common to talk about *artonhundratalet*. The translation is therefore more or less obligatory since it would have been awkward, and perhaps misleading for some, had it been translated directly.

(50)  *rule of law* (607 ST)  

*lag och ordning* (11 TT)  

According to *Statsvetenskapligt lexikon* the correct political science term of *rule of law* (British English) is *rättsstat*. This implies a state which is both bound and restricted, as well as fulfills certain formal and material demands. This example could also have been translated into merely *lagar* but given its context *lag och ordning* gave more amplification and clarification to what was expressed. The translator also felt that *styrs av*
lag och ordning explained this better than the legal term rättsstat, which might have had to be further explained by the translator. Not only is (50) a good example of a modulation but it is also a common political science term, that is rule of law. In both SL and TL there were fixed expressions and when there is a somewhat equivalent in the TL it is perhaps more natural to choose that, even if the legal term is rättsstat.

3 Conclusion
This text and analysis have dealt with Human Rights and the text is filled with (human rights and political science) terminology. The terminology has been the number one challenge while performing the translation since it is important to be familiar with this type of vocabulary and to know where to look for Swedish equivalents. Another challenge has been idioms and expressions since it was sometimes hard to find good translations for them and many times the whole context was the key to finding out the author’s intent.

Since the target audience should have some previous knowledge about human rights and political science terminology few of the terms have been explained in the translation. However, terms that were regarded especially difficult by the translator, such as Compliance, Asian Values, Apostasy, were explained in the translated text by footnotes.

It would be rather interesting to study metaphors and idioms in political science texts further since these texts are perhaps not where one would normally expect to find them. As metaphors and idioms enrich and add further colour to a language it would also be interesting to investigate to what extent they have sneaked into a language without the users of the language even being aware of them.
4 List of References

Primary Source


Secondary Source


Parallel texts


