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METAPHORISATION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DISCOURSE

Specialists in international relations have been consciously and unconsciously engaged in the construal of metaphorical discourse. Research, particularly, in cognitive linguistics has resulted in numerous publications supporting the prevalence of conceptual metaphor in the language of international politics. The state-as-a-person metaphor, proposed in P. Chilton and G. Lakoff (1995), can be supported by numerous instances of metaphorical expressions. As a result, the discourse of international affairs has been assumed to be highly metaphorical. Although on the face of it international relations discourse reflects the influence of the state-as-a-person metaphor, there may be certain objections to the metaphor's validity. The high level of abstractness and generalisation behind this metaphor does not make it a useful tool in a detailed linguistic analysis of this peculiar type of discourse. The paper raises doubts over the unquestionable role of this metaphor in the analysis of the discourse of international relations.

INTRODUCTION

As many other notions in linguistics, *discourse* is hard to define. Most scholars see discourse as either written or spoken text extending beyond a sentence (see, e.g., D. Crystal 1992: 25). In fact, both concepts *discourse* and *text* are often treated as either synonymous or interchangeable, at least to some extent (cf. M. Dakowska 2001: 81). *Discourse analysis*, which is the inevitable consequence of the recognition of discourse as such, has established itself firmly as a branch of applied linguistics. Like *discourse per se*, *discourse analysis* poses definitional problems and shows a wide range of meanings as well (cf. G. Brown and G. Yule 2003: viii; B. Paltridge 2006). Though its history is relatively short, the notion *discourse analysis* has undergone meaning shifts and has been used in different senses by researchers. First and foremost, discourse analysis may be claimed to be an interdisciplinary endeavour as it connects different disciplines. One way of looking at discourse is considering the degree of its formality or informality. Lack of contracted forms, the use of passive voice and impersonal expressions are indicative of formal register, while the use of active voice, personal statements and contracted forms are characteristic of informal register in both written

and spoken discourse. Another perspective to assume in discourse analysis is to look at distinctive features characteristic of a particular or specialist type of discourse. Undoubtedly, legal discourse satisfies the requirements of a specialist type for its incomprehensibility to average language users, long and multiply complex clauses and peculiar terminology and phraseology. Similarly, several other specialist discourse types can be enumerated. Among them, research in political discourse, with never-ending sources of inspiration, has become popular, if not fashionable. International relations (other labels used are *international politics* or *foreign affairs*) combines a more refined form of politics in an international context. We will study this particular case more closely.

One of the traditionally accepted dichotomies in discourse analysis is the assumption of two levels of analysis. At one level, one may focus on the analysed text, which is a linguistic aspect, and at the other, one falls back on the outside world or context, which is a non-linguistic aspect. The division of language studies along the alleged linguistic-non-linguistic divide is frowned upon in cognitive linguistics, which forms the background of this paper.

Discourse analysis is often understood as the product of the postmodern period, and as such is nothing more than a deconstructive reading and interpretation of a problem or text. The idea of a problem or an issue and the researcher's comprehensive viewing of it is central to discourse analysis. The issue in question is infrequently hidden and it is the task of a discourse analyst to unearth it. Once the issue has been pinpointed, it needs to be 'deconstructed'. As no prior belief system holds sway and no particular world view is to be upheld, there is no (longer) one and true view or interpretation of the world. Instead, there are numerous readings aiming at 'deconstructing' concepts, belief-systems, or generally held values and assumptions.

As I profess very little expertise in the methodological and philosophical issues concerning discourse analysis, I would prefer not having to address those questions in this paper. Instead, I propose a linguistic analysis of a particular type of discourse, namely the discourse of international relations, with particular reference to the use of metaphor in it. Despite certain widely held assumptions about the prevalence of metaphor in general and specialist discourse, I hope to present and briefly discuss some objections to some of the assumptions generally accepted in cognitive linguistics. Naturally, the points made will be tentative as more research will be needed to support them.

A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this paper a linguistic approach to the study of discourse will be taken (cf. G. Brown and G. Yule 2003: ix). In most general terms, what is of interest to us is

the way speakers use language to communicate. Therefore, it will be interesting to consider how linguistic forms paired with meaning are used in the communication process. Discourse analysis, in the sense used here, involves primarily the study of contextual language usage. The notion *context* is among the most vague notions and designates the whole range of conditions, objective and subjective, influencing the choice of form and/or meaning of the linguistic signs involved. Finally, the notion *usage* refers to the traditional dichotomies such as written/spoken, formal/informal, general/specialist, etc. Rather than look at the 'social' aspect of discourse, a more 'textual' or just linguistic approach will be assumed here. However, the label 'linguistic' is far from being unambiguous. Some researchers take it in its narrow sense, meaning syntax, morphology, phonology and semantics. Others prefer a broader sense where linguistics is viewed as encompassing also pragmatics and possibly other 'extra-linguistic' areas. Given this, it seems that no matter what view of linguistics one assumes, discourse analysis covers a bit of everything from syntax and semantics to primarily pragmatics (cf. G. Brown and G. Yule 2003: 26).

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE DISCOURSE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International relations has functioned as an independent academic discipline since around the 1920s. However, its history as an intricate network of all kinds of dealings taking place between states has gone on for millennia. Unsurprisingly, such a long tradition of practice and theory has resulted in a peculiar 'language' used by everyone having a stake in international affairs. The line of potential stakeholders in international affairs may be long. The diversity of discourse genres used for the whole range of 'international' purposes adds to the complexity of the field. On the one hand, the international relations discourse researcher analyses documents such as bilateral agreements with peculiar terminology and unique constructions and, on the other, he looks at scholarly and academic texts, or else journalistic articles or media discourse more generally. Each of these and presumably some others will be characterised by specific features and somewhat distinct qualities. In what follows our focus will be narrowed to the type of international discourse prevailing in scholarly and academic texts. The register characteristic of such texts is definitely formal, though not archaic or stultifying. The sentences are medium length and not too complex formally, though they cannot be termed simple in any sense. The most essential parameter in our analysis is the degree of metaphorisation of international relations discourse. While the highly metaphoric nature of journalistic discourse covering international affairs is probably beyond dispute, the metaphorisation of scholarly texts in the area of international relations deserves a closer inspection.

A lot has been written about the metaphoric nature of political discourse in general and international affairs discourse in particular. The metaphorical character of foreign policy concepts has been extensively discussed in, for example, P. Chilton and G. Lakoff (1995). As the discussion of international affairs is not an issue reserved for specialists in the area, virtually anyone can discuss vital international issues, at the same time enriching the discourse of international relations. However, as in the case of other specialist fields, there is an important difference between an average language user's ('folk') concepts, on the one hand, and those of practitioners in the field, on the other. As can be expected, the two sets are not entirely disjoint. Policy makers, policy analysts and politicians frequently justify their foreign policy discourses in public terms, putting them forward to legislators, business people, and journalists using less specialist discourse. Realistically, it is better to assume some kind of continuum of different types of discourse users with non-specialists on one end and specialists on the other (cf. P. Chilton and G. Lakoff 1995: 37-38).

One of the most pervasive metaphors in any type of international relations discourse is the STATE IS A PERSON metaphor¹. P. Chilton and G. Lakoff (1995: 39-40) assume this metaphor to be the natural consequence of historical processes shaping a political entity such as a state. Parallel conceptualisations can be drawn between two types of discourses. In legal language, corporations tend to be viewed as persons too (cf. the legal characterisation of a corporation as a legal person). Over the last four hundred years, since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the state has gained sovereignty while the power of the prince has declined. Like persons, states have participated in different kinds of social and political relationships with other states which are seen as either friends, enemies, clients, (former) spouses or even pariahs. As metaphorical persons, states are also viewed as having personal traits and characteristics such as trustworthiness, deceitfulness, aggressiveness, paranoia, cooperativeness, entrepreneurship and so on. Depending on particular events taking place in a given period of time, a particular state can be seen in a different light as having a different range of qualities. One of the natural watersheds for international politics metaphor was the end of the Cold War with two opposing enemies before it and a multitude of dispersed and potential enemies afterwards.

Another important metaphor, particularly popular in the pre-Cold War period, was the STATE IS A CONTAINER metaphor. The arch-enemy at the time, the Soviet Union, conceptualised as a container, needed to be kept as if enclosed or contained without the possibility of proliferating or influencing capitalist countries, also seen as containers. Another aspect of this metaphor relates to being contained inside a container for security reasons. As the question of security became a burning issue during the Cold War period, the international relations discourse of that time was full of 'securitisation' expressions. Insulation from

¹ In what follows I use capitals for the notation of conceptual metaphors.

being under the threat of foreign (i.e. communist) influence ties in well with the state-as-a-container metaphor. And as a special case of the state-as-a-container metaphor, the STATE IS A HOUSE metaphor has also been frequently activated. A house, often thought of as a kind of container, is intrinsically connected with safety and security (cf. P. Chilton and G. Lakoff 1995: 52-53). Logically approached, if the state is a person and the state is a container, then the person is also a container. Indeed the human body is claimed to be conceptually conflated with a container into which things go and out of which things occasionally come (cf. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson 1980; G. Lakoff and M. Johnson 1999). The state-as-a-house metaphor did not cease to be used with the end of the Cold War and developed a range of new senses in the discourse of the post-Cold War period (cf. the ‘common European house’ metaphor ascribed to Mikhail S. Gorbachev).

Depending on the particular approach to international relations, the acceptance of metaphor in this specialist discourse may vary drastically. On the one hand, proponents of pluralism and world governance by means of an international network of organisations and institutions will gladly accept all forms of the metaphorisation of international relations discourse. On the other hand, supporters of realism in international relations will frown upon the ‘deconstruction’ of international relations discourse and concepts by means of excessive use of metaphor.

Let us proceed to a discussion of the basic assumptions behind conceptual metaphor as such and conceptual metaphor as applied to international relations discourse in particular.

METAPHORS THE WORLD GOES BY

Since the publication of *Metaphors we live by* (G. Lakoff and M. Johnson 1980) discourse analysts have been under the influence of the postulate of the ubiquity of metaphor. Not merely a language expression but the whole cognitive mechanism, metaphor pervades our entire conceptual system. Distinguishing conceptual metaphor from metaphorical linguistic expressions is important for the proper understanding of what conceptual metaphor is. Conceptual metaphor, as it has come to be known, consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another (Z. Kövecses 2010: 4; G. Lakoff and M. Johnson 1980: 5). By claiming that “[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”, G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980: 3) want to ascribe metaphor to virtually all our mental and bodily functions. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson’s claim has a tentative character when they write (ibid.: 3):

“If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.”

However, further on, metaphor's ubiquity seems unconditional for G. Lakoff and M. Johnson. As pointed out above, metaphor is not the matter of language expressions, though to establish metaphor one needs to study language as external evidence of our conceptual system. The critical point in this theory is that we are led to believe that our perception of reality is metaphorical. It becomes evident when, with reference to the proposed ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor, G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980: 4) say:

“It is important to see that we don't just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war.”

While it is unquestionable that we *talk* about arguments in terms of war, I think it is questionable that many of the things we *do* in arguing are structured by the concept of war, partially or wholly.

It is one thing to talk and experience one kind of concept in terms of another, and it is quite another story to carry out an activity by performing a different activity. The doing doesn't have to mirror the talking and/or experiencing. Putting an equation mark between having an argument and talking about one is premature and unfounded. That is why G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980: 5) invoke the idea of structuring what we do and how we understand what we are doing when we, for example, argue. Arguments and wars belong to two different kinds of spheres: one is verbal discourse and the other is armed conflict. However, the authors contend that one concept (e.g. ARGUMENT) is partially structured, understood, performed and talked about in terms of another concept (e.g. WAR). Moreover, “[b]ecause the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic” (G. Lakoff and M. Johnson 1980: 7).

Let us round off this section by repeating that metaphor is the cognitive process in which one experiential domain is partially ‘mapped’, that is projected, onto a different experiential domain, so that the latter is partially understood in terms of the former. The domain that is mapped is called the **source** or **donor** domain, and the domain onto which the source is mapped is called the **target** or **recipient** domain.

THE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In this section let us consider particular conceptual metaphors common in academic discourse relevant to the area of international relations, such as state-

as-a-person, state-as-a-container and state-as-a-house. Proposing such general conceptualisations is in a way easy as a sizeable amount of supporting data can always be found in the literature. States are considered the major actors in international relations so the very presence of different names of states in international relations discourse should come as no surprise. The state-as-a-person metaphor does not discriminate against any particular states as participants of this metaphor. However, it is not certain whether it is *any* state that is conceptualised as a person. The state-as-a-person metaphorical template is too general to make any distinctions in this respect. If it is not *any* state that is metaphorically conceptualised as a person, then the metaphor itself is too powerful and may even have a distorting effect on the construal of discourse by language users. Establishing exactly which states are primary participants of international relations discourse, preferably with frequencies of their use, would involve extensive search of numerous sources. For the purpose of this article only a selection of standard academic international textbooks have been screened. Without any doubt it is the *United States* that appears excessively in many contexts relevant to international relations. The European states are also in the lead though remain rather far behind the US in all statistics. Certainly there is no equality among the European states in terms of the number of their occurrences in metaphoric expressions. Depending on a particular period and events taking place in it one can expect an unusual surge in the number of occurrences of a particular name. As expected, internationally insignificant states hardly ever appear as participants of metaphoric expressions especially in global press and media. More regional press hosts the less significant names of states more frequently².

Apart from mere number-crunching, the study of metaphor in international relations discourse raises further considerations. The fundamental question to pose and answer is: where does the STATE IS A PERSON metaphor come from? Disregarding here political science theories about the concept of state, let us concentrate on the language aspect of this issue. Undoubtedly, the metaphor has a historical track record, which goes back as far as the mid-17th century when Thomas Hobbes wrote his seminal work *Leviathan*. In a way, leviathan is the personification of a state. Hobbes wrote about the higher political order or imagined sovereign which he termed *leviathan* that can only come about if individual people are prepared to exchange their personal freedom to individually protect themselves for protection by the sovereign. Paradoxically, at the very moment that leviathan resolves the problem of personal security within the state, it creates a new problem of insecurity between states, leading to the security dilemma between states. It is the consequence of the existence of a plurality of independent sovereign states, which, according to Hedley Bull (2003), leads to 'anarchical society'. It is tempting to conflate security of the state with security

² For details concerning the statistics of the occurrences of particular state names, see, for example P. Twardzisz (submitted).

of the persons. From this assumption we are just a step away from conflating the state with the person.

Apart from the classic assumptions paving the way for realist thinking about international relations, the contemporary language user must also be supplied with a more up-to-date (inter-)textual message about how the state is conceptualised. The contemporary scholarly literature in the area of international relations appears to provide a steady flow of language evidence in support of the STATE IS A PERSON metaphor. The evidence at hand is formed by the combination of the name of a state with an active verb designating an activity typically carried out by a human.

When an author writes about the USSR that behaved in a certain manner, and rebuffed another state, the reader construes a mental construct (a *mental space* in the sense of Fauconnier 1994, or a *virtual plane* in the sense of Langacker 1999). In it, the USSR, a geo-political entity, functions as a projection of this entity and a human capable of behaving and rebuffing:

“[...] shortly after the ending of the Second World War, the USSR behaved in a manner which suggested they wanted to expand their influence over Europe and, at the same time, rebuffed American gestures of support and cooperation.” (P. Hough 2004: 26)

Behaviour is a quality other states show, as the following examples indicate:

“How America behaves at home can enhance its image and perceived legitimacy, and that in turn can help advance its foreign policy objectives.” (J. Nye 2004: 56-57)

“When a state does behave in a self-assertive and unmanageable way, it soon finds itself a pariah, which tells us something about the conformist nature of the international system.” (Ch. Hill 2003: 184)

Additionally, the adverbial of time *after the ending of the Second World War* locates *the USSR* in the ‘political space’ or ‘plane’ and reduces the influence of other possible spaces. The use of the 3rd person plural personal pronoun *they* with *wanted* makes for a puzzling reading at first glance. Without an obvious nominal antecedent in the plural the only possible candidate for *they* to refer back to is the name *the USSR*. The viewing of the USSR as a plurality of entities with human-like qualities such as wanting (*they wanted*), adds another personality trait to the entire scene. The other participant, America, is rebuffed for *gestures of support and cooperation*. Both *gestures*, in the sense of a spoken or symbolic sign, and *cooperation* are abstract characteristics thought of humans by humans. Paradoxically, though the above passage does not name a human even once there is so much of human presence in it. In fact, there is very little of non-human element in this short passage. Similarly, the following fragments, although ‘non-human’ on the surface, project human-like entities capable of voicing opinions and comments.

“France, Russia, and China chafed at American military unipolarity and urged a more multi-polar world.” (J. Nye 2004: 26)

“The United States, like other countries, expresses its values in what it does as well as what it says.” (J. Nye 2004: 55)

“In recent years, other countries have increasingly complained about the unilateralism of American foreign policy.” (J. Nye 2004: 63)

More abstract activities such as enjoyment and wanting are also found in combination with some names of states, as can be seen below:

“[...] the United States still enjoys a fund of goodwill in Eastern Europe left over from its opposition to the Soviet Union during the Cold War [...]” (J. Nye 2004: 78)

“What Britain ‘wants’ is in most cases what officials think they can achieve; and in the absence of very active and decisive political involvement from the top, the ‘policy’ is the sum total of the routine.” (H. Sprout and M. Sprout 1956: 170)

Consider the following fragment which straightforwardly indicates action carried out by entities called the USA and UK.

“When the USA and UK then acted without either UN or NATO authorization in going to war with Iraq in 2003 collective security appeared to be becoming, once again, a distant dream.” (P. Hough 2004: 38)

The space which accommodates the human-like projections of the geo-political entities the USA and UK must be a mental construct as it blends those entities with projections of humans capable of acting. The verbs of movement *go (to war)* above and *enter (the war)* below combined with the names of states further reinforce the human-like sense of the passage.

“Though the concept of an international community may be imprecise, even those who dismissed international concerns about how the United States entered the war seem to appeal to such opinion when they argue that the legitimacy of American actions will be accepted after the fact if we produce a better Iraq.” (J. Nye 2004: 28)

The idea of fictitious movement, developed in Y. Matsumoto (1996), can be further supported within international relations discourse, which is saturated with metaphorisations of states as moving objects or humans. The details of Matsumoto’s proposals, taken further in Langacker’s 1999 paper on virtual reality, are beyond the scope of this paper, but undoubtedly might contribute to the overall idea of the metaphoric aspect of international relations discourse. The following two passages construe fictive movers and fictive movements. They are fictive, not real, as nothing in reality approachable to the conceptualiser is moving. However, the discourse can be said to be full of movement.

“Argentina and Brazil were at one point going down the same road. Other states, like Iran, North Korea and Iraq have also made some moves towards acquiring nuclear weapons, although whether out of fear of attack or to induce fear in others is not wholly clear.” (Ch. Hill 2003: 146)

“Libya may gradually be coming in from the cold, but it will be far more difficult for Iran.” (Ch. Hill 2003: 184)

Texts in the field of international affairs allegedly contain numerous statements instantiating the STATE IS A PERSON metaphor in a more direct manner, linking the name of a state with a person, for instance:

“The United States is the big kid on the block and the disproportion in power engenders a mixture of admiration, envy, and resentment.” (J. Nye 2004: 38)

The correspondence may be less direct when the process involved implies an activity performed by humans on humans, as in:

“When Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States in 1959, many people took seriously his claim that the Soviet Union would one day bury the United States.” (J. Nye 2004: 74)

“[...] during the Clinton interventions abroad, the United States shouldered only 15 percent of the reconstruction and peacekeeping costs.” (J. Nye 2004: 27)

Given a relatively small proportion of the population showing any interest in international affairs, presumably not many people ever stop to actually think why international relations discourse allows such apparent incongruities. Those who in one way or another deal with international relations do not see any hindrance over perceiving states as doers performing activities aimed at other states. The STATE IS A PERSON metaphor restricts the target domain to the pool of states, but international relations discourse also ascribes personal qualities to non-state actors such as intergovernmental organisations or bodies (e.g. the UN), nongovernmental institutions (e.g. Amnesty International), global corporations (e.g. Microsoft), churches (e.g. the Church of England) and so on. Either the state-as-a-person metaphor is too restrictive or it merely represents a wider spectrum of potential sources for a more general metaphor. As Hill (2003: 194) points out: “[t]he range of transnational actors is surprisingly wide. All kinds of different entities of varying sizes now ‘act’ in international relations and complicate the environment of states.” However, no type of participant in international relations other than the state shows a wider range of possible functions or roles played in discourse (cf. K. Waltz 1959: 160 talking of love affairs between states).

The high level of metaphorisation of international relations discourse corresponds to the essentially perceptual character of international relations as such. Participants and events taking place in international affairs are usually distant from the conceptualiser (i.e. scholar, commentator, policy maker), or at least they are not immediately accessible to the observer. Discourse must be based on perception and imagination rather than immediate access. Equally well, the observer’s perception may be substituted with misperception if the facts available to the observer are grossly distorted. The subtle and intricate network of international interrelations must also be made simple, manageable and comprehensible to the audience (cf. H. Sprout and M. Sprout 1956: 136).

METONYMY

The metonymic relationship between the name of a state and the representatives of this state responsible for a given action constitutes a ubiquitous element of this highly complex discourse. Researchers in international relations tend to view states as unitary actors without distinguishing individual bodies of which a state is composed. The metaphorisation of international relations discourse does not contradict its metonymisation. Metonymy, based on contiguity, is a conceptual projection whereby one experiential domain (the target) is partially understood in terms of another experiential domain (the source) included *in the same common experiential domain* (cf. Z. Kövecses and G. Radden 1998: 39; A. Barcelona 2000: 4). Both, metaphor and metonymy are conceptual phenomena operating either between two domains or within one domain, respectively, and may be understood as poles of the same continuum rather than as different phenomena (cf. A. Barcelona 2000: 53). Metaphor and metonymy may both work within the same context highlighting two aspects of roughly the same cognitive mechanism. An instance of such an interplay can be found in W. Croft (2003: 161), where the author discusses the following case: *Denmark shot down the Maastricht treaty*. This sentence involves both metonymy and metaphor: the subject proper noun *Denmark* is a metonymy for ‘the voters of Denmark,’ while the predicate *shot down* is a metaphor for ‘cause to fail’. Taking into account the state-as-a-person metaphor, *Denmark* adds more metaphor to the metaphorical predicate *shot down*. The same predicate very often accepts several different NPs like the name of a state, the name of its capital city, the name of the seat of the government, the name of the politician in charge of the government, and possibly some others. Some contexts may not readily accept full interchangeability between all those NPs, but in many cases the first two swap almost automatically. Discourse, rich in the cognitive process in which one conceptual entity (e.g. name of state) provides mental access to another conceptual entity (e.g. president), construes the conceptualisation whose intention is to take the audience’s attention off the latter, whatever the reason. Alternatively to the shift in attention, one can talk of a reference-point mechanism in which one entity that is more salient evokes – often automatically – another entity that is less significant or harder to locate (cf. R. Langacker 1993). Clearly, the mechanism involves an intrinsic asymmetry which is useful in building the discourse of international affairs where more focal entities deserve more attention (e.g. the US > the US government).

The selection of the more focal entity while the less salient element is meant may result in ambiguity though. There is never full predictability of the meaning of the intended sense. Ambiguity may be lessened by the semantics of the predicate, assuming that it is unambiguous. The semantics of the predicate nar-

rows down the rich encyclopedic semantics of the name of a state to the sense relevant in a given context (cf. W. Croft 2003: 187). The intended sense is what Langacker calls an active zone (R. Langacker 1984) or what Barcelona refers to as a subdomain (A. Barcelona 2000). Shifting senses within a given domain is possible owing to some conceptual unity between them. The international politics domain clusters senses that are related, and among them there is the sense of the state as such and the sense of the people responsible for international affairs of that state. Metaphorical and metonymic shifts taking place in international relations discourse are not accidental as they satisfy the conceptual unity of this domain. Within a conceptual domain there are coherent conceptual subdomains hosting interconnected senses. Owing to metonymy, one of the subdomains with a relevant sense becomes foregrounded (the President, the department secretaries, the senators and congressmen, etc.) and another domain with a less relevant sense is backgrounded (the state itself as a location). The above can also be interpreted using Langacker's active zone metonymy, and in each of these interpretations the basic mechanism is retained, that is a mental operation between two conceptually 'close' or contiguously related subportions of the same domain (cf. Z. Kövecses 2010: 145).

Although metonymy has primarily been studied by linguists, it has also attracted the attention of some international relations scholars. For one, Kenneth Waltz observed that "[...] to say that the state acts is to speak metonymically" (K. Waltz 1959: 80). To this classic international relations scholar, saying that the state acts is conveying the sense of people in it acting. Just like saying that the kettle is boiling when we mean that it is the water in it that is boiling. In a way, international relations discourse must be based on metonymy. Though it is the actions of men, not states, acting on behalf of states that are possible, the substance of the discourse of international relations is formed by states not persons. States, being the unitary actors of international politics and hence international relations discourse, inherit some of the characteristics of persons carrying out actions (cf. K. Waltz 1959: 123).

RISKY METAPHORISATION

We have considered the influence of metaphor and metonymy on international relations discourse. The two mechanisms, often thought of as two ends of one continuum, have established themselves in contemporary cognitive linguistic investigations. Some authors note that the relationship established via metonymy between the source and target is more predictable than that appearing in metaphor (cf. B. Warren 2003: 124). In the case of international relations discourse, it is hard to say which is more or less predictable: the state-for-person metonymy

or the state-as-a-person metaphor. Both mechanisms seem equally predictable, and indeed appear, in this particular case, to be parts of one continuum. The two conceptual operations very often interact in intricate patterns, which makes their distinction complicated.

International relations discourse is very much the product of human perception, cognition and personality. The discourse of this discipline reflects its characteristic features, and those are very much influenced by human perception, cognition and the personality of individuals in leadership positions. Just like foreign policy is the product of human agency, so is the discourse used to talk and write about international affairs. At this point one should pose the following question: do we think of states as persons because it is how our cognitive apparatus shapes our thinking, or else, do we think of states as persons because we are increasingly influenced by international relations discourse which 'tells' us to think in this way? Under the premise that reality is socially constructed, people, including researchers, cannot be objective. Researchers are very likely to hold some expectations, beliefs, or sets of cultural values when they are conducting their research. The result is that people can construct their own versions of reality and categorise it. The more researchers assume the state-as-a-person metaphor as underlying international relations discourse, the more recipients take it for granted and establish it as an intrinsic part of their version of international reality, and subsequently discourse. As international reality is highly complex, so should be the discourse describing it. International relations discourse is full of linguistic-cultural barriers, stereotypes, images, a high volume of, yet incomplete, information and all kinds of subjective assessments. Frequently then, foreign policy decisions are taken on the basis of perceptions rather than the actual and objective situation or they are the product of images which individuals have of other countries and their leaders.

The role of cognition seems to be important in international relations discourse too. Cognition relates to the process by which humans select and process information from the world around them. The international environment is sifted through by decision makers in search of primary actors, relations, events, conditions of events and so on. Installing all those elements in the discourse requires a complex cognitive architecture. The concepts based on previously established perceptions, prejudice and an understanding of 'historical lessons' are used to assess new situations and develop responses to new occurrences.

As any kind of discourse distorts reality, international relations discourse distorts reality even more. If foreign policy decisions are largely the product of images which foreign policy makers have of other countries and leaders, then the whole decision making process cannot be fully rational. If foreign policy discourse is, at least to some extent, based on stereotypes, biases and other subjective sources, then those factors interfere with foreign policy makers' ability to conduct rational foreign policy.

If international relations discourse is fundamentally metaphorical, as a consequence, the degree of distortion must be unique. Assuming that we think of states as people, as P. Chilton and G. Lakoff (1995) would want us to, the distinction between the two concepts would be blurred, and it should not be. While numerous conceptualisations of the state as a person are possible, there are others that do not seem possible. The following sentences would not be easily accepted:

*The UK/France/Germany scratched his/her/its head.

*The US/Japan/Sweden yawned.

*China/Norway/Zimbabwe met Poland/Russia/New Zealand yesterday at 7 p.m.

Not viewed as metaphorical, the above sentences would not instantiate the state-as-a-person metaphor. However, given the tenuous border-line between the metaphorical and the literal, there should be a fairly wide margin of acceptability. Also, if our conceptual system is metaphorical across the board, as G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980) would want us to assume, even the 'non-metaphorical' should be thought of as 'metaphorical'.

The discourse of international relations, particularly with respect to security studies, provides some evidence against thinking of the state as a person. In classical realist discourse scholars talk about the security dilemma between states. While the state provides security for its citizens, the state itself remains insecure among other states. So, the state as a security provider for persons is deprived of security in the absence of a higher-order body which might provide security for the community of states. Realist international relations discourse maintains an important distinction between 'security of the state' and 'security of the person'. If we collapse the distinction between the security of the state and the security of the people, we will not be able to adequately analyse two distinct kinds of (in) security. Proponents of realist international relations consistently distinguish the two concepts: the state and the person. Therefore, the respective discourse keeps the above concepts apart. What is more, were the two concepts to be conflated by means of the STATE IS A PERSON metaphor, there would be a conflict of fundamental concepts.

Depending on the approach, tradition and the set of philosophical assumptions, metaphor in international relations discourse is not an unquestionable issue. To some it is an ornament or an addition to language, to others it is an inseparable part of both language and cognition. In realist international relations discourse metaphor has been viewed as incompatible with reason and rational thought. The classical author in international politics, Thomas Hobbes, goes to the extreme and claims that metaphors are 'senseless' and 'signify nothing at all' (cf. P. Chilton 1996: 13-16). Contrary to that, research in cognitive linguistics over the last thirty years has gone to extreme lengths to prove the opposite.

CONCLUSION

The growing interest in international relations has enriched its discourse with figurative devices such as metaphor and metonymy. An almost instant presence of the media in distant places where events of interest to international audiences take place brings those events and puts them right in front of us (cf. the CNN effect). International relations discourse has undergone significant changes under the influence of the growing speed with which the world news spreads globally. Figurative language cannot be ignored while considering developments in the sphere of international relations discourse. Systematisation and simplification of the otherwise incomprehensible concepts and making them almost tangible objects has become essential not only for press articles but also for scholarly texts. With a growing interest in cognitive linguistics and cognition as such, metaphor has become one of the more important components of the theory and practice of international politics as well as other disciplines. However, the ubiquity and importance of metaphor are downplayed by representatives of the realist approach to international politics. The issue seems unresolved and largely mirrors the philosophical standpoints on both sides of the discursive divide. The purpose of this paper has been to weigh some of the arguments for and against the recognition of the importance of metaphor for international relations discourse. The scope of the paper does not allow a detailed study of all intricacies found in this type of discourse and allegedly ascribed to the state-as-a-person metaphor. The observations made suggest that the metaphor in question is too general to account for the fine-tuned details peppering international politics discourse.

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