On the Power of Translation and the Translation of 'Power': A Translingual Concept Analysis

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Introduction

> Even if the American, Russian, and Indian could speak to one another, they would speak with different tongues, and if they uttered the same words, those words would signify different objects, values, and aspirations to each of them. So it is with concepts such as democracy, freedom, and security. The disillusion of differently constituted minds communicating the same words, which embody their most firmly held convictions, deepest emotions, and most ardent aspirations, without finding the expected sympathetic responses, has driven the members of different nations further apart rather than united them. (Hans J. Morgenthau 1948, p. 202)

The chapter pursues three main aims. First, it provides a limited but hopefully still somewhat distinct Chinese perspective on the politics and

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problems of translation which are addressed in this volume. To illustrate this concern, consider the now known example of how the occidental concept of 'logic' was introduced into the Chinese intellectual community by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century. Chinese scholarly elites suggested as much as eleven different translations in an attempt to capture the exact meaning of the European concept of logic (Kurtz 2001; see also Elman 2005). By the early twentieth century, 59 Chinese lexical terms were used to indicate the meaning of 'logic', each capturing different conceptual nuances and aspects. When these Chinese lexical terms were re-translated into Western intellectual discourse, they were all translated by the same term, that is, 'logic' (Kurtz 2001). This suggests the extent to which Chinese has more terms to indicate different aspects of the concept whereas the same term is used in English. Indeed, this linguistic difference leads to the pluralisation of conceptual meanings when 'logic' is translated from English to Chinese.

Second, the argument in this chapter brings together two recent strands of disciplinary debate in International Relations (IR), that is, non-Western IR and translation. Tickner and Waever (2009) argue that IR scholars must understand the centre–periphery relation that prevails in IR by examining academic practices of the discipline in less influential parts of the world. Shilliam (2011, p. 18) suggests that the incorporation of non-Western voices should begin with recognising the 'co-constitution of the archives of Western and non-Western thought through (the threat of) relations of colonial domination'. With reference to the ancient Chinese philosophy of Daoism, Ling (2014) proposes the concept of 'worldism' as an alternative way to understand international relations. However, despite these efforts to theoretically engage with so-called non-Western voices, discussions rarely focus on the aspect of language.

This chapter addresses the role of language in constructing a more inclusive non-Western IR. It follows the still limited but growing interest in translation studies in IR (see Capan et al. 2021; Nordin 2016; Wigen 2014). Here, however, little research has been concerned specifically with problems regarding Chinese translations. The study of Chinese localisations of the meaning of 'hegemony' by Nordin (2016) is an important exception, which has not been followed up by similar research, not even by Chinese scholars. This seems to suggest that there is a shared assumption among Chinese and Anglophone scholars that the meanings of IR concepts can remain the same when translated from English to Chinese. However, as this chapter will show, this is not the case.

The third purpose of the chapter is methodological. Employing 'concept' as its basic unit of analysis, the chapter contributes to the so-called conceptual turn in IR. Guzzini (2005) has stressed the importance of investigating the performative aspect of a political concept and proposed what he called 'a constructivist conceptual analysis'. This triggered a call for a more reflexive engagement with key concepts in IR debates (Guzzini 2013a). Engaging with key concepts is necessary for the study of IR theory not only because concepts are the 'ontological building blocks' of theory, but also because they provide an essential language through which theorists can generate their arguments (Guzzini 2013a, p. 534). '[C]oncepts […] are co-constitutive of theories; they are the words in which […] theorising is done' (ibid., p. 535). Following from this argument, Berenskoetter (2017) calls for granting concept analysis a more prominent place in the study of IR as a discipline: 'if the building blocks change, the theoretical house takes on a new form as well' (ibid., p. 171). In other words, concepts do not only build theories, they also destabilise them. This intrinsically 'deconstructive and reconstructive' nature of concepts helps to 'free space for thinking differently and devising alternative meanings and, thereby, enable theory building' (Berenskoetter 2017, p. 173). This implies that the way in which key disciplinary concepts are translated, if not mistranslated, could potentially alter the original theorisation and give rise to new interpretations and meanings. It is such a transformative power of translation that this chapter will reconstruct.

The chapter pursues what I call a *trans*lingual concept analysis to investigate translations in the discipline of IR. Wigen (2014) argues that international relations are effectively *inter*lingual relations with some key concepts frequently being deployed in international relations, such as 'civilisation'. The meaning of these key concepts become increasingly aligned, compatible and thus maintained across linguistic boundaries and between different linguistic communities and polities, and still gained legitimacy in their corresponding linguistic context as result of conceptual convergence. In this chapter, I focus on the translingual aspect of international relations. Whilst an interlingual approach emphasises what is happening *in the process of* translating, a translingual approach stresses the *outcome* of a particular translation.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first section outlines the theoretical framework employed in the analysis. I draw on Koselleck's work to clarify what a 'concept' is. I show how Koselleck's approach to concept and conceptual history can shed new light on the study and

understanding of translation. In the words of Koselleck (2002, p. 21), 'Any translation into one's own present implies a conceptual history'. My main proposition here is that translation is a form of *(re)conceptualisation*, which can fundamentally transform the ways in which a particular text can be read. I demonstrate this point in the chapter's second part. Comparing Kenneth Waltz's (1979) *Theory of International Politics* (the most cited general theory of international politics, according to Allan Kornberg (1981)) and its Chinese translation, I show how a conceptual approach to translation is useful for deconstructing some of the most prevailing arguments in disciplinary debates in IR.

The concept of power is explicitly selected to illustrate this argument. This is not only because few concepts in the study of IR are or have been as crucial to disciplinary debates as 'power'. The concept of power also serves as a 'building block' in Waltz's theorisation. When Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* was translated into Chinese, 'power' compartmentalised into a number of different semantic expressions as a result of linguistic differences between Chinese and English. Each semantic expression represents a very precise form of 'power' in Chinese. Similar to the example with 'logic', these different semantic expressions, and what they each mean, are in English encapsulated in one single concept, 'power'. 'Power' therefore requires further interpretations in accordance with different contexts. To the contrary, due to this pluralisation of meaning resulting from the process of translating, Chinese translations of 'power' no longer require much interpretation. As such, 'power' in Chinese is not necessarily a contentious concept.

The argument that 'power' is a semantically complex and thus ambiguous concept is indeed very particular to an English-speaking IR community.

Translating Concepts: *Begriffsgeschichte* Revisited

Though Sartori (1970) famously noted the lack of effective discussions on concepts in quantitative research, the study of concepts has never been absent in disciplinary debates of political science. In IR, frustrated by the insufficient analytical language provided by traditional paradigms, scholars have become increasingly inclined to organise their research according to specific concepts, such as 'security' (Buzan and Hansen 2009), 'sovereignty' (Bartelson 1995, 2014; Lopez et al. 2018), 'power' (Guzzini 2005), 'friendship' (Berenskoetter 2007), and 'empire' (Jordheim and Neumann 2011). There has only recently been a methodological

engagement with how concepts *structure* theories and practices in and of international relations. Guzzini (2005, 2013b) and Berenskoetter (2016, 2017) argue that theorising concepts is vital for understanding the ontology of the international order. Drawing on Koselleck, they both suggest that concepts fundamentally enable us to make sense of what we look at and what we can have conversations about.[1]

What exactly is a 'concept'? The study of concepts in intellectual history has traditionally been dominated by three approaches that emerged concurrently but nonetheless independently: The Cambridge School of the history of political thought represented by Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock; Foucauldian genealogy, represented by the work of Jens Bartelson (1995, 2014); and the *Begriffsgeschichte* of the German historian Reinhardt Koselleck. *Begriffsgeschichte*, or conceptual history, is an interdisciplinary historiographic approach to the study of intellectual history. The term *Begriffsgeschichte* derives from Hegel. It has been an explicit mode of inquiry and thus retained a permanent position in historical lexicography since the eighteenth century (White, cited in Koselleck 2002, p. i). In the late 1950s, Koselleck, a lecturer in Heidelberg and the leading advocate and practitioner of *Begriffsgeschichte*, proposed in a meeting within the *Arbeitskreis für Moderne Sozialgeschichte* (a working group of historians who were the first to introduce modern social history into a German context) to develop a new approach to conceptual history (Koselleck 2002). The theoretical goal of this project was to 'relate thought, once social and political change had been conceptualised, to changes in the structures of government and society' (Richter 1995, p. 20). The proposal resulted in a multi-volume historical dictionary, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Basic Concepts in History: A Dictionary on Historical Principles of Political and Social Language in Germany),[2] which charts the main historical shifts in conceptual vocabularies and vernaculars of politics, government, and society in German-speaking Europe from 1750 to 1850 (Richter 1995, p. 248).

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[1] It is worth noting that, although this chapter exclusively focuses on the works of Koselleck, methodologically speaking, Guzzini and Berenskoetter only drew partly from Koselleck's approach.

[2] Since the two dictionaries never made it into the English-speaking world, I used Richter's translations of the book titles here.

Core to conceptual history as a method is the attempt to overcome the limitation of traditional historical philology and lexicography by separating 'concept' from 'word' (Hampsher-Monk et al. 1998). Koselleck (2004, p. 86) theorises the difference between a 'concept' and a 'word' as 'each concept is associated with a word, but not every word is a social and political concept'. '*Begriffsgeschichte* deals with the convergence of *concept* and history' (ibid.; emphasis added). Drawing on de Saussure's semiotic analysis, Koselleck (cited in Booeker 1998) differentiates concepts from words according to three levels: one, the lexical unit by which they are expressed; two, the object(s) to which they refer; and, three, the meaningful content intended by thought:

> The meaning of the word always refers to that which is meant, whether a train of thought or an object, etc. The meaning is therefore fixed to the word, but it is sustained by the spoken or written context, and it also arises out of the situation to which it refers. A word becomes a concept if this context of meaning in which—and for which—the word is used, is entirely incorporated into the word itself. The concept is fixed to the word, but at the same time it is more than the word. (p. 54)

It follows that a word consists of two parts. One is the linguistic form. Another is the idea or the object for which the linguistic form stands. For example, the word 'state' has a linguistic form, simply the word *state*. And it has its signified object, that is, a country considered as an organised political entity. According to Koselleck (2002), the meaning is fixed to the word and there is no ambiguity in defining the term. Because a concept is a word that incorporates 'the entity of meaning and experience within a socio-political context within which and for which a word is used' (Koselleck 2002, p. 85), complexity occurs when 'state' becomes a concept. A concept has a multitude of meanings and can often be designated by more than one word. For the word 'state' to be registered as a concept, one must at the same time invoke a variety of other conditions with their own conceptuality (*Begrifflichkeit*), such as jurisdiction, army and taxation. This sort of summation of meanings can only be obtained by abstraction. In sum, a word can be defined; a concept can only be interpreted.

How does this relate to translation? With reference to the Chinese introduction and (mis)translations of Western political concepts such as 'liberty' and 'democracy' in the nineteenth century, Richter (2005, p. 16) argues that the act of translating political concepts from one linguistic

context into another is a 'complex and multilayered process of intercultural communication […] flawed by inequalities of power' (see also Howland 2002). As such, an analytical framework which can 'chart and explain the full spectrum of possibilities' (ibid.) when political concepts are translated from one linguistic context to another is needed. Yet, as intellectual historian Christopher Hill (2013) observes, one of the central issues concerning traditional translation studies is its inability to theorise what I refer to as the *translatability of the conceptuality*, meaning the extent to which the abundance of meanings that are combined in a particular term can be translated.

Most translation-focused studies do not, or fail to, differentiate between a 'word' and a 'concept' (see, e.g. Theo Hermans' (1985) translation as manipulation approach or Mona Baker's (1993) corpus-based approach to translation). Koselleck's distinction between a 'concept' and a 'word' is relevant for inquiring into how political concepts get translated. It offers a new way of problematising translation by questioning whether or not a concept can preserve its original conceptuality, that is, its inherent combination of meanings, when it is translated. If a concept was (re)conceptualised according to its original meaning, it begs the follow-up question of how intellectual, historical and social experience represented by the original concept was transplanted into a different linguistic context. If original conceptuality was not preserved, then it is worth considering what might be the impact on a concept's original interpretation. According to Koselleck (2004), each concept has its own 'semantic field', which provides and constrains its meanings. The same concept could have different semantic fields across different linguistic contexts which makes translation difficult.

Whereas Koselleck did not elaborate further on translation, he did emphasise the necessity of a 'metalanguage' for conceptual history to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. Yet, he also concluded that 'there is no such metalanguage' (ibid., p. 217). Moreover, in the words of Richter (2012, pp. 10–11; emphasis added), Koselleck 'argued that the history of political and social concepts may be reconstructed through studying the reception, or more radically, the *translation* of concepts first used in the past but then pressed into service by later generations' (see also Koselleck 1996). According to Koselleck (1996, p. 68; emphasis added), in a response to Skinner and Pocock, the task of the conceptual historian is 'to ask what strands of meaning persist, are *translatable*, and can again be applied; what threads of meaning are discarded; and what new strands

are added'. It is evident that Koselleck used 'translation' and 'translatable' in the context of diachronic translations, understood as the transfer of conceptual meaning from one context to another through time. Yet, diachronic translation is not fundamentally different from processes of translating between linguistic contexts or between different geographical locations. In *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, structural linguist Roman Jakobson (1959) argues

> Like any receiver of verbal messages, the linguist acts as their interpreter. No linguistic specimen may be interpreted by the science of language without a translation of its signs into other signs of the same system or into signs of another system. Any comparison of two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability; widespread practice of interlingual communication; particularly translation activities, must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science. (p. 233)

According to Jakobson, translation is essentially a *structural* practice whereby the meanings of some words are interpreted similar to the meanings of other words, either from the same or foreign languages. In this sense, similar to how meaning can be transferred from one context to another in and through the act of translation, Koselleck's conceptual history can also be understood as a form of translation. The difference is that the basic analytical category in Koselleck's form of translation is 'concept', whereas it is 'word' in traditional translation studies. This implies that translation, from a 'Koselleckian perspective', is not simply about transferring the meaning of a word from one context to another, but about transferring the very *conceptuality* of a word from one context to another. The process of translation is a process of (re)conceptualisation.

From 'Power' to Powers: A Translingual Concept Analysis

What are the implications of translation, as an act of transferring and (re)conceptualising meaning from one context to another, for theory-building? The 'conceptual turn' in IR suggests that concepts are theories' fundamental building blocks and serve to both construct and de-/re-construct theorisation. It is not the lexical definition of a 'word', but the entirety of a concept's meaning(s) that enables theory-building. Yet, as a result of differences between semantic fields in different languages, the

meaning of a concept can potentially change fundamentally when it is translated into different linguistic contexts. An act of translation becomes to a great extent an act of deconstruction in theory-building. This section demonstrates translation's deconstructive nature with reference to the concept of 'power' in Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* and how translation alters the original argumentation.

'Power' and/in Waltz

Kenneth Waltz is one of the most cited authors and his *Theory of International Politics* one of the most influential publications in IR. One major reason for his influence is his proposal of a series of provocative but nonetheless coherent arguments which challenged the then prevailing viewpoints in significant segments of the (Western) IR community. Waltz is often referred to as the founding father of neorealism, a school of IR theory that is arguably now the most dominant paradigm for understanding international politics. In contrast to classical realism, a practical, historical and normative approach to international politics, Waltz' neorealism emphasises the deductive and explanatory nature of theory. In Waltz's view, it is necessary to differentiate theory from analysis in theorising international politics. The purpose of a theory is to 'explain regularities […] and leads one to expect that the outcomes […] will fall within specified range' (Waltz 1979, p. 68). In *Realism and International Politics* (2008), Waltz writes:

> theory is not a mere collection of variables. If a 'gap' is found in a theory, it cannot be plugged by adding a 'variable' to it. To add to a theory something that one believes has been omitted requires showing how it can take its place as one element of a coherent and effective theory. (p. 89)

Waltz's point here is that a theory is not a theory if it cannot be generalised and does not offer systematic predictions and explanations. A theory of international politics, for example, should be able to explain why wars happen and also indicate possible political conditions that might lead to wars; it should serve to explain 'recurrences and repetitions' in the realm of international politics (ibid., p. 75). To the contrary, classical realism is only a form of analysis as it fails to construct a comprehensive and predictive theory of international politics. It overemphasises 'the accidental and the occurrence of the unexpected' (Waltz 2008, p. 75). An analysis can

include what is left out of a theory—that is, 'the accidental and the occurrence of the unexpected'—but by doing so it fails to become a theory. In short, for Waltz, a theory should only concern the variables that make the most difference, whereas an analysis can be applied to discuss other lesser factors.

'Power' is one of those variables that are central to Waltz's theorisation. Few concepts in the study of IR are as crucial to disciplinary debates as 'power'. In a disarmingly candid fashion, Hedley Bull (1995[1977], p. 109) admits that the idea of 'power' in the study of IR is not something that can be 'precisely quantified' but nevertheless is a concept that 'we cannot do without'. 'Power' is an example *par excellence* of what Koselleck defines as a 'concept' that is, a term that incorporates an entity of meanings and experiences within a socio-political context in which and for which the term is used. Such a conceptual nature of 'power' is probably most evident in the ways it is used in Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*. For instance, with reference to states' preferences of forming alliances with the weaker of two coalitions, Waltz (1979) writes,

> Because *power* is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions. They cannot let *power*, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. The goal the system encourages them to seek is security. (p. 126; emphasis added)

According to Guzzini (2013b, p. 10), there are generally three main conceptualisations of 'power' in the study of IR. First, 'power' is often used to describe or be associated with a certain polity or socio-political order. This can be a government, a form of governance, or certain rules. Furthermore, on a micro-level, 'power' can be conceptualised as either in terms of subjectivity where the concept refers to one's autonomy and independence, or in terms of agency and one's capacity or ability to influence (Guzzini 2016, p. 27). Applying this matrix of conceptualisations to the above text, Waltz repeatedly refers to 'power' as a 'means'. This suggests that the concept is thought of in terms of agency and influence. Hence, the meaning of 'power' can be a state's capacity to influence and dominate. Moreover, the concept of power is often deemed as a key premise to both classical realist and neorealist accounts of international politics. They differ insofar as in accordance with classical realism the desire for power is rooted in human nature with power being an end in itself, whilst neorealism believes that power is only a *means* to an end. By

conceptualising 'power' as a state's capacity to influence, Waltz reveals the epistemological foundation of his theorisation.

Apart from just 'power', another frequently mentioned concept in the disciplinary debate of IR is 'great power'. In *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz dedicated an entire chapter to discussing the role of great powers. He explicitly argues that the theory of international politics is essentially about the politics of great powers. However, unlike in the last example where the concept of 'power' was conceptualised to describe a state's agency to influence, 'power' in 'great power' explicitly refers to a particular political order, that is, a nation state. Waltz (1979) writes:

> Each *power* viewed another's loss as its own gain. Faced with the temptation to cooperate for mutual benefit, each state became wary and was inclined to draw back. When on occasion some of the great powers did move toward cooperation, they did so in order to oppose other *powers* more strongly. (p. 70; emphasis added)

In the above example, although there are no adjectives describing the two 'power(s)', it can be deduced from the context that 'power' in this case is used to indicate 'great power' understood as a nation state. Moreover, sometimes 'power' is used repeatedly in the same sentence but adopts different meanings. In this case, deriving the specific meaning of power from a specific context within which it is enacted becomes even more important. Waltz (1979, p. 127) writes:

> To confirm the theory, one should not look mainly to the eighteenth-century heyday of the balance of *power* when great *powers* in convenient numbers interacted and were presumably able to adjust to a shifting distribution of *power* by changing partners with a grace made possible by the absence of ideological and other cleavages. (p. 127; emphasis added)

'Power' is mentioned three times in the above quote. While 'powers' in 'great powers' clearly refer to individual nation states, 'power' in the phrase 'balance of power' and in 'distribution of power' are used to describe a nation's political capacity. Even when if the conceptualisation of 'power' occurs on a macro level, it can still have different meanings depending on the context. 'Power' in the sentence, 'The Bolsheviks in the early years of their *power* preached international revolution and flouted the conventions of diplomacy' (Waltz 1979, p. 127; emphasis added), does

not refer to the political order of a nation state, but rather to the regime and governance of the Bolsheviks.

One can conclude from the above examples that the ubiquity and significance of the concept of 'power' in IR is primarily due to the complexity and ambiguity of its conceptuality. Depending on the context within which the concept is enacted, 'power' cannot only be used with different meanings, but also serves as an indicator of a particular epistemological stance of one's theorising. If the complexity of 'power' lies in its conceptuality, what happens to this conceptuality when the concept is translated into a different language, for example, Chinese? The remaining part of this section examines how the concept of 'power' has been translated in Chinese editions of Waltz's book.

'Power(s)' and/in the Chinese Edition of Theory of International Politics

Theory of International Politics was first published in 1979. According to Kornberg's (1981) data on citations of major IR texts, it took only two years for *Theory of International Politics* to become the most cited publication in the discipline. In contrast to such rapid spread of popularity in the Anglophone community, Waltz's book did not make it to Chinese academia until the 1990s. There are three editions of the Chinese translation of *Theory of International Politics* (国际政治理论 in Chinese). The first edition was published in 1992 and translated by two professional translators from a state-owned publisher. Although the exact reason for the importation of this particular book remains unclear, it was most likely due to the popularity of Waltz's work in the United States. In the early 1980s, Chinese students were able to go abroad to study. Most of them went to the United States, and some of them studied IR. It was then that Western IR theories were introduced into Chinese academia (Qin 2011).

This was also the time when the 'Waltzianisation' of IR began to dominate the American IR community. Chinese students studying IR in US universities were presented with the belief that Waltz's theory and neorealism was the most important theoretical and analytical framework. When Chinese students returned to China and entered academia, they chose to introduce this theoretical framework. The second edition of *Theory of International Politics* was published in 2004. The third edition came out four years later.

The analysis in this section is solely based on the second edition of Waltz's book. Whereas the first edition was translated by professional translators with no background in international politics, the second edition was translated by an IR scholar based in Fudan University, Shanghai. The quality and accuracy of the second translation is therefore significantly better compared to the first edition. A thorough comparison between the second and the third edition shows that the third edition is simply a reprinted version of the second translation.

The introduction to this chapter mentioned an example of (mis)translation where the concept of 'logic' was inscribed with considerably more meanings when translated into Chinese. Deconstructing Chinese translations of Waltz's usage of 'power' in *Theory of International Politics* demonstrates the exact same phenomenon; that is, meaning pluralises in and through translation. To demonstrate this point, I adopt slightly more quantitative approach. First, I identified all occurrences of 'power' in Waltz's book and found that the concept was used 221 times. Second, I turned to the Chinese edition of the book and identified the corresponding Chinese translation of each time the concept of power was used. In the 2004 translation of *Theory of International Politics*, the concept of power was translated in no less than fourteen different ways.

These translations can be categorised into three groups. The first group is Chinese terms that connotate different aspects of 'power', including '力量 (li liang)', '权力 (quan li)', '力 (li)', '势力 (shi li)', '实力 (shi li)' and '能力 (neng li)'. These terms could all mean 'power' if they are back-translated into English. However, they have completely different connotations in Chinese. The second group is terms that simply refer to nation states, including '大国 (da guo)'—'big country', '强国 (qiang guo)'—'strong country', '强 (qiang)', literally meaning 'strong' but in this particular context referring to a country, and '国 (guo)'—'country'. The third group is terms that do not belong to either of the two categories, including several places where the translator simply did not translate 'power' in the original sentence, and two places where 'power' was translated into an adjective and became 'powerful' in its Chinese translation.

In order to examine the intellectual implications of such a diversified Chinese translation of 'power', I returned to the same texts from Waltz's book that I cited in the first part of this section. This time, I replaced the English 'power' with its corresponding Chinese translation to inquire how a translation can affect the original interpretation of the argumentation:

Because 权力 *(quan li)* is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions. They cannot let 权力 *(quan li)*, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. The goal the system encourages them to seek is security. (Waltz 1979, p. 126)

In this example, both occurrences of 'power' in the original text have been translated to '权力 (quan li)', which is the most frequently deployed translation for 'power' in the Chinese edition of Waltz's book. As mentioned earlier, if '权力 (quan li)' is back translated into English, it will most likely be translated as 'power'. However, the Chinese '权力 (quan li)', unlike the English 'power', has an explicitly negative connotation. Felix Rösch (2014) in his study of the concept of 'power' in Morgenthau's work argues that superficial accounts on the study of Morgenthau's works often present his concept of power in a traditional Hobbesian sense as a means of self-preservation. However, a close reading of Morgenthau's works indicates that Morgenthau's conception of 'power' contains two dualistic conceptualisations: 'pouvoir', which according to Rösch (2014, p. 354) is the 'empirical form of power…the ruthless and egoistic pursuit of the drive to prove oneself', and 'puissance', a positive and normative form of power which 'enables people to pursue their interests and work together for a common good'.

The Chinese '权力 (quan li)', similar to Morgenthau's 'pouvoir', is often used as a negative form of power. It refers to one's capacity to control and dominate and is driven by 'the desire for power' (Morgenthau 1947). However, whereas the French 'pouvoir' can be used as a positive force under certain circumstances, the Chinese '权力 (quan li)' is a concept with strictly negative connotations. In *The Book of Han*, one sentence reads, 'Wan Zhang and Shi Xian are such good friends; Wan Zhang even managed to gain 权力 *(quan li)* and fame thanks to Shi Xian' (Han 2018; my translation). The author describes how Wan Zhang used his friendship with Shi Xian to raise his status and gain influence. A similar usage of '权力 (quan li)' can be found in Liu Zongyuan's *In Memory of Liuzhou Sima Menggong*: 'the law is the right way; it cannot be changed by those who hold 权力 *(quan li)*' (Zhang 2017; my translation), which points to the negative connotation inherent in '权力 (quan li)'.

It would not be entirely wrong to translate '权力 (quan li)' to 'one's capacity to influence', which is the meaning of the English 'power' in this particular context. However, unlike in the English original version where one needs to go through a process of interpretation in order to correctly

identify the exact meaning of 'power', the Chinese '权力 (quan li)' already means exactly that. In other words, 'power' here no longer requires any interpretation in its Chinese translation. Such an elimination of the interpretation process can also be seen in other contexts. Consider the second example from the first part of this section:

> Each 大国 *(da guo)* [big country] viewed another's loss as its own gain. Faced with the temptation to cooperate for mutual benefit, each state became wary and was inclined to draw back. When on occasion some of the great powers did move toward cooperation, they did so in order to oppose other 大国 *(da guo)* [big country] more strongly. (Waltz 1979, p. 70)

While one has to interpret from the specific context that 'power(s)' here refer to 'great power(s)' in the English original, the Chinese translation replaces 'power' with the term 'big country' which does not need further interpretation. This also occurs in the third example:

> To confirm the theory one should not look mainly to the eighteenth-century heyday of the balance of 势力 *(shi li)* when 大国 *(da guo)* in convenient numbers interacted and were presumably able to adjust to a shifting distribution of 权力 *(quan li)* by changing partners with a grace made possible by the absence of ideological and other cleavages. (Waltz 1979, p. 125)

The above example is probably the most illustrative of the three examples. In the original English text, 'power' was mentioned three times but conveyed significantly different meanings (i.e. a nation's political capacity and 'nation state'). In the Chinese translation, three completely different lexical terms were used. Even if 'power' in the 'balance of power' might be semantically identical to 'power' in the 'distribution of power' in the English version, the Chinese translation still employed two different terms. However, the conceptual equivalent to the English 'balance of power' does exist in Chinese ('均势 (jun shi)' with '势' referring to "势力 (shi li)') and can be dated back to the Warring Spring period in Chinese history. Since the Chinese concept of 'balance of power' has its own conceptuality, it is also a completely different concept from the other two translations for 'power', namely '大国 (da guo)' and '权力 (quan li)'. Contrary to the English original text, this suggests that the three Chinese terms used for translating 'power' do not share the same conceptuality as each inhere their own particular combination of meanings.

'Power' became *de-conceptualised* in its Chinese translation(s). The Chinese 'power' is no longer one term imbued with a summation of meanings. Instead, it has been divided into dozens of different words that each describes a particular aspect of the English concept of 'power'. In other words, 'power' is no longer a concept in the Chinese translation. In consequence, the argument that 'power' is a semantically complex and immensely contested concept is invalidated. In the Chinese translation, each mentioning of 'power' no longer derives its meanings from the context. Rather, it means exactly what its translated lexical expression is supposed to mean. What this also implies is that, the argument that 'power' is a semantically complex concept becomes deconstructed via the Chinese translation and that such an argument is in fact very *particular* to the English-speaking IR community.

Conclusion

Invoking the tower of Babel, George Steiner (1998, p. 51) writes, 'Translation exists because men speak different languages'. This might be a truism. However, it can be argued that translation is an inherent part of international relations, as long as countries speak different languages and need to interact with each other. The purpose of this chapter was to show how translation could also be an inherent part of theory building in the study of international relations. Drawing on insights from Reinhart Koselleck's approach to conceptual history, the chapter argued that translation can be considered a form of (re)conceptualisation. Since concepts constitute the 'ontological building blocks' of theories (Guzzini 2013a, p. 534), any form of conceptualisation and re-conceptualisation is likely to destabilise the meanings in and of original theorisation.

The Chinese translations of 'power' in Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* demonstrated how translation can deconstruct some of the most prevailing arguments in IR debates. Due to linguistic differences between Chinese and English in expressing the concept of 'power', the original English 'power' became compartmentalised into different lexical expressions that denote different meanings when the concept of 'power' was translated into Chinese. This suggests that disciplinary discussions on the complexity of the concept of 'power' do not exist in the Chinese IR community. When understood in Chinese, as long as it is clear which type of power is being talked about (i.e. what lexical term is used), it is unlikely

that there will be any contentions surrounding the meaning of 'power' in Chinese discourse. For example, the Chinese edition used three different translations to indicate different meanings of 'power' whilst in the English original they were all 'power', which would require interpretations.

Such a particularity of disciplinary debate of 'power' in the Anglophone IR community also suggests that any theorisation of IR study can look completely different depending on the linguistic context in which the theorisation is being done. Since the publication of 'Why is there Non-Western International Relations Theory?' by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan in 2007, scholars concerned with the inherent Western-centrism of IR have been engaged in a heated debate regarding the incorporation of non-Western traditions and perspectives into the disciplinary development. However, despite all the theoretical effort to bring in the subaltern voices, the question regarding how, *in practice*, the non-Western perspectives and voices can actually be recognised and incorporated into the disciplinary debate has never really been answered. The irony here is that if we re-read Acharya and Buzan's article from 2007, they already identified the central problem regarding the academic practices of contemporary IR scholarship:

> even in Europe, there are distinct local language IR debates in Germany, France, and elsewhere that are only partially, and often quite weakly, linked to the English language debates…Those who engaged in the English language debates have more than enough to read within that, and often lack the language skills to investigate beyond it… It is also easy for those in the Anglo-Saxon IR core to assume that English as a *lingua franca* must make access easier for all. (p. 295)

Since the beginning of the debate, IR scholars have been obsessed with coming up with a (theoretical) solution to incorporate the so-called non-Western voices. However, for some reason, it never seems to have occurred to them that the very first thing one can do to incorporate others' voices is simply to listen to them when they speak, in their own languages. This chapter proposes that the first step to construct a truly inclusive IR is to examine how key concepts used in disciplinary debates have been translated and understood in different linguistic contexts. Arguably, this chapter has shown that one simple translation can fundamentally deconstruct one of the most prevalent arguments in the discipline of IR.

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