# Metaphors, Thought and Theory: The Case of Neorealism and Bipolarity

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## 1. Introduction

> The light of human minds is perspicuous words, but by the exact definitions first snuffed and purged from ambiguity: reason is the pace; increase of science, the way; and the benefit of mankind the end. And, on the contrary, metaphors, and senseless and ambiguous words, are like ignes fatui; and reason upon them is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities.
> Thomas Hobbes[1]

The neglect of metaphors and the celebration of science, reason and exact definitions, as expressed above by one of the founding fathers of what later was to become the discipline of international relations, represent a traditional attitude among academic scholars. This attitude is positivistic in that it assumes an objective reality that can be precisely and unambiguously described by scientific language. Metaphors, then, are rather unimportant. They are considered to be vague and fuzzy, as well as "deviant and parasitic on 'normal usage'" (Ortony p. 2). While being appropriate for poets and politicians, scientists who strive for objective description of the physical reality should avoid them. Metaphors have no place in the scientific discourse. Somewhat ironically, though, Hobbes uses a metaphor, *ignes fatui,* in his dismissal of metaphors, and his main theme of thought is summed up in another metaphor, namely the title of his work, *Leviathan.*

In the following, it will be argued that there is no such sharp distinction between metaphors and scientific theory as is commonly believed. By borrowing from Linguistics and Cognitive Science, the overlap between theory and metaphor will be examined, and new insights of how metaphors work will be applied and discussed within the field of international relations. Increasing our knowledge of metaphors might widen our understanding of theory. Accordingly, the aim of the study is to explore ways of thinking about metaphors, and their connection to and relevance for theory and research.

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International relations (IR) is generally viewed as a subset of Political Science, which is a relatively new science, developed during this century. Ongoing discussions on how to create a theory of international relations have spanned decades. The following metaphorical approach should be considered within the light of this ongoing search for theory. It turns inwards, toward theory, and aims at scrutinizing some of the concepts used for understanding and explaining international relations, by using Kenneth Waltz's neorealism as a point of departure. In the analysis, definitions of concepts are not the concern. Rather, key terms are viewed as metaphors carrying certain entailments that have implications for the logic and power of the theory. The metaphorical approach raises questions about the relation between language and thought; between linguistic structure and modes of reasoning.

Here, the argument will not be pushed so far as to consider language to be the determinant factor in shaping research. However, language will be assumed to influence reason, and to lead thoughts in a certain direction. Sometimes, this influence constrains, as illustrated by the way electricity is understood. Two metaphorical conceptualizations are commonly used. Electricity is viewed (1) as a fluid, (2) as a crowd made up of individual electrons. Gentner and Gentner (1982) have observed that students who understand electricity only as a crowd of electrons tend to make mistakes in solving those kind of problems where the fluid metaphor works better. Those who understood electricity only as a fluid were also constrained in their reasoning. In order to obtain a more sophisticated understanding of electricity, both metaphors were required. (Lakoff p. 305)

Improved knowledge and understanding might not simply be a question of using more than one metaphor. Those who believe in the existence of an objective reality may also search for metaphors that better 'match the real world' than others. Knowledge about a ' superior match', then, could persuade people to substitute the old metaphor with the new one. Unfortunately, research in cognitive psychology has shown that such an intellectual enterprise is rather problematic. In writing about the role of historical analogies in foreign policy decision-making, Yuen Foong Khong (1992) shows that analogies used in public to justify policies are also usually used in private to analyze. Hence, a connection between language and reason is established and illustrated. However, Khong then points to the fact that both Kennedy and Johnson held on to the Munich and the Korea analogy during the Vietnam war, even though they were informed about the prevailing differences and given alternative analogies to use. The differences were acknowledged but the 'enormous similarities' were continually emphasized. Rather than being a case of intellectual inertia, the tendency to emphasize information consistent with one's one chosen analogies is a result of the simplification strategies human beings use to process information. It is easier to process, store and recall information that can be fitted into existing 'knowledge structures'. (Khong pp. 256-257) Such a conclusion not only disappoints students of 'learning from history', but also suggests to what extent consciousness of metaphorical concepts can contribute to improve the development and application of theory in international relations.

Despite their higher appropriateness, new metaphors often are met with resistance.

The paper consists of two parts. First, the connection between metaphors and theory is established by structural mapping, which then is applied to neorealism as developed by Kenneth Waltz. In the second part, special attention is given to *bipolarity* as one of the most used metaphors to characterize and interpret the international system between 1945 and 1990. The main focus is on what the metaphor highlights and what it hides.

## 2. Metaphorical Analysis: Mapping Mental Domains

Within the positivistic tradition, metaphors are distinguished from concepts in that metaphors are considered to be vague, while concepts are thought to be more exact from the point of definition. Metaphors appear to have a more intuitive than constructed 'touch' to them, and they carry various possibilities of interpretation. In a response to the argument that metaphorical language lacks scientific precision, Richard Boyd has developed the notion of *theory-constitutive* metaphors. The point is that theoretical terminology often is introduced long before the study of some phenomena has reached that point where it is possible to specify the sort of defining conditions that is acquired by the positivist's view of language. Nevertheless, some tentative and preliminary account of the properties of presumed kinds is necessary. This can be achieved "by open-ended analogy to kinds whose properties are in some kind better understood. One way of expressing such analogies is by metaphorical use of terms referring to those better understood kinds. Theory-constitutive metaphors, then, simply represent one strategy among many for the preliminary stages of theory construction" (Boyd p. 371). When such metaphors are successful, they become adapted by the whole scientific community and invite to further research.

To sharply distinguish between theoretical concepts and metaphors is misleading and springs out of a misperception of what a metaphor is and how it works. As a matter of fact, most concepts are created by metaphorical processes. One underlying, basic metaphor often controls a whole field of concepts. To understand these processes, let us turn to cognitive semantics.

In 1979, Michael Reddy published a pioneer work on metaphorical understanding.[2] His rigorous analysis of the conduit metaphor sparked off intensive research within the linguistic and cognitive fields on systems of metaphorical thought "that we use to reason, that we base our action on, and that underlie a great deal of the structure of language." (Lakoff 1992:2) These recent studies of language processes have shown that the mental processes by which one thinks are essential if the objective is to understand how the words we use shape our view of reality.

The connection between language and thought can nowadays be explored through structural mapping. In *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*, George Lakoff (1992) rejects the traditional definition of a metaphor as a novel

or poetic expression "where one or more words for a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a 'similar' concept" (ibid. p. 1). He argues that metaphors are more a matter of thought and reason than of language. From a cognitive perspective, metaphors are conceptual instruments that make it possible for people to think about situations that are new, complex, or remote. They are used in communication to understand problematic situations in terms of situations that are familiar and understandable.

Accordingly, the locus of metaphor is in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another. This is indicated by the origins of the word *metaphor*. It has developed from the Greek verb *metapherein,* which means to carry from one place to another. (Miller p. 156) A conceptual domain is some general subject matter, e.g., time, space, sports, a machine, economics, a person, etc., and it is organized by conceptual frames, as in frame semantics.[3]

Metaphorical understanding in the sense of cross-domain mapping is the norm as soon as one starts talking about abstractions or emotions. Take love as an example. In English, it is common to talk about love as if it were a journey: *Look how far we've come. We may have to go separate ways. We cannot turn back now. Our relationship is off the track.* What happens is that one domain of experience, love, is understood in terms of the domain of journeys. Put differently, knowledge about journeys is mapped onto knowledge about love, and we reason about love the way we reason about journeys. Journey is the *source* domain and love is the *target* domain. The source domain is generally more structured than the target domain, since we need a highly structured domain in order to reason. Not everybody has the same domains of experience that are highly structured. A people living in a remote and isolated place might not use journeys in their conceptualizing system for love, although they have the same conceptualizing capacity. (Lakoff 1987:309) Research has shown the existence of 'metaphor families' that always function as source domains. One family is formed by domains that are inherently structured by competition and includes war, games, sports, races and predation. Every domain in a family can be mapped onto any other domain in that family, with the mapping constrained by the invariance principle (see 2.2.)

Furthermore, several different domains might be mapped onto the same target domain, and these may contradict each other. Love is then not only seen as a journey, but also as a possession, as hunger, etc.

Lakoff describes the metaphorical scenario 'love as a journey' as follows:

> The lovers are travelers on a journey together, with their common life goals seen as destinations to be reached. The relationship is their vehicle, and it allows them to pursue those common goals together. The relationship is seen as fulfilling its purpose as long as it allows them to make progress toward their common goals. The journey is not easy. There are impediments, and there are places (crossroads) where a decision has to be made about which direction to go and whether to keep traveling together. (Lakoff 1992:4)

As mentioned earlier, a metaphor allows us to focus on one aspect of a concept, but it might lead us to lose sight of other aspects that are inconsistent with that metaphor. Take for instance the metaphor "life as a story" implied in the con-

versational request: "tell me the story of your life!" In order to create coherence, many important experiences are usually left out in our stories. Some features are highlighted while others are suppressed. (Lakoff/Johnson pp. 174-175)

> The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another ... will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept..., a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor. (ibid. p. 10)

Metaphors are often not thought of in a conscious manner. They become ingrained words and expressions that are not perceived of as metaphorical but completely natural. Hence, metaphors might also be considered to be necessary and inevitable, which is not the actual case. For every metaphor there are alternative ones. (Jönsson/Jansson p. 4)

## 2.1. Neorealism – An Influential Theory

One of the most influential and important works on postwar international theory has been Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, where he develops what is commonly called neorealism or structural realism. Seeds of this theory can be found in another famous text which Waltz wrote twenty years earlier, namely *Man, the State and War*. Later, Waltz has made important points on neorealism in *Neorealism and Its Critics* as well as *Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory*.[4]

According to Thomas Kuhn, paradigms give rise to concepts. Hence, before starting the metaphorical analysis of neorealism, it might be worthwhile exploring the paradigm in which the theory was developed. A paradigm is a set of fundamental assumptions that form a picture of the world scholars are studying and give instructions on how to view the object of their inquiry. It is much less specific than a model or a theory. A paradigm points the way to knowledge, but it is not knowledge itself. Neorealism falls within the realist paradigm of international relations, that according to John Vasquez and Richard Mansbach (1981) consists of three fundamental assumptions:

> 1. Nation-states and /or their decision-makers are the most important set of actors to examine in order to account for behavior in international politics.
> 2. Political life is bifurcated into 'domestic' and 'international' spheres, each subject to its own characteristic traits and laws of behavior.
> 3. International relations is the struggle for power and peace. This struggle constitutes a single issue occurring in a single system and entails a ceaseless and repetitive competition for the single stake of power. Understanding how and why the struggle occurs and suggesting ways for regulating it is the purpose of the discipline. (Mansbach/Vasquez pp. 4-5)

These assumptions have been widely held, although disagreements over various conceptual frameworks, theories and even methodology have been frequent. Neorealism was eagerly awaited among scholars of the realist paradigm, since its sparsity and elegance gave IR a theory of the same calibre as

those that had long existed in the field of Economics. In other words, "it mobilized the scientific community's longing for a paradigmatic core" (Guzzini p. 467). Waltz's main concern was to show how the structure of the international system determines the behavior of its parts, namely states. He presupposes *Homo economicus* (states are unitary actors and functionally similar, i.e., 'like units'), a being whose basic preference is to survive in its environment and manages to do so by cost-benefit analysis of alternative actions. Anarchy and the distribution of power put constraints on the state as a rational actor and determine the structure of the international system. The major actors in the system always strive toward a balance of power. (Waltz 1979:128)

## 2.2. Analysis

In the following, a metaphorical analysis in the form of structural mapping will be made of neorealism using *Theory of International Politics* as a reference. What in the theory are considered as terms and concepts will here be dealt with from a metaphorical perspective. The analysis focuses on economics, self-interest, survival, anarchy, balance of power, and bipolarity. Like the theory, Waltz's principal metaphors are simple and elegant. There are two basic metaphors, which can be viewed as underlying a field of various metaphors, so called special cases. The first basic metaphor springs from Biology and focuses on survival and the maximization of self-interest and is called the *Social Darwinian* metaphor. Social Darwinism is based on a misuse of Darwin's evolutionary theory. It was developed by social scientists inspired by Herbert Spencer, a nineteenth century British philosopher, who actually coined the phrase "survival of the fittest", which was later adopted by Darwin. While Darwin originally spoke of natural selection based on coincidence, within an evolution that spanned thousands of years, Spencer emphasized competition as a selective function – the strongest and the ones better adopted to their environment will conquer the weaker. (Liedman pp.179-180)

The second originates from Physics and focuses on the interplay of forces, hence it is called *the Stable Physical System* metaphor. While the former has three special cases, the latter has two:

1. The Social Darwinian Metaphor
   *Special Case A*:. Economics (States are Firms)
   *Special Case B*: Survival (States are Animals)
   *Special Case C*: Self-Interest (States are Persons)
2. The Stable Physical System Metaphor
   *Special Case A*: Balance of Power (States are Objects Exerting Force)
   *Special Case B:* Bipolarity (Major Powers are Magnet Poles)

Economics differs from the other special cases in that it is the only metaphor that Waltz explicitly recognizes as he uses it analogically to compare microeconomics with international politics. Hence, it is a good illustration of how strucutral mapping works. The special case of Economics entails that (1) states are firms; (2) large states are dominating firms; (3) the international system is

an economic market; (4) a position in the international system is a market share; (5) sovereignty is economic independence; (6) power is expected returns, and (7) wars are price wars. From this metaphor we derive entailments such as:

> *Source domain*: The greater a firm's market share, the greater is its ability to maintain and increase its expected returns.
> *Target domain*: The greater a state's position in the international system, the greater its ability to maintain and increase its power.
> *Waltz*: " [...] great power gives its possessors a big stake in their system and the ability to act for its sake. (Waltz p. 195)
> *Waltz*: "Units having a large enough stake in the system will act for its sake, even though they pay unduly in doing so." (ibid., p. 198)
> *Source domain*: Price wars are a tactic to increase a firm's market share.
> *Target domain*: Wars are a tactic to enhance a state's position in the international system.
> *Waltz*: "When [great powers] are at or near the top, they fight [...]." (ibid., p. 187)

By using the Economics metaphor, Waltz reasons about how the international system is managed and who is in charge:

> *Source domain*: Dominating firms in an economic system have more to say about which games will be played and how.
> *Target domain*: Large states in an international system have more to say about which games will be played and how.
> *Waltz*: "In economic systems, any one of the several dominating firms has more to say about all of the matters that affect it than has one firm among hundreds of small ones. [...] In international politics [...] [t]he principle entities that constitute the system are also its managers. They try to cope with the affairs of each day; they may also seek to affect the nature and direction of change." (ibid., p. 199)

The realist emphasis on competition fits of course nicely with the Economics metaphor, which is used by Waltz to account for *detente* and the eased relations between the Soviet Union and the United States in the late 1960s:

> *Source domain*: Dominating firms that compete increasingly resemble each other as competition continues.
> *Target domain:* Large states that compete increasingly resemble each other as competition continues.
> *Waltz*: "Theories of oligopolistic competition tell us (that in) important ways, competitors become like one another as their competition continues. [...] [T]his applies to states as to firms." (ibid., p. 173)

In neorealism there exists an ambigious clash between the Economics and the survival metaphor, as pointed out by its critics. Waltz blurs the utility-maximization position of microeconomic theory with a theory of natural selection, "according to which features of the environment exterminate those who respond inappropriately, while rewarding those who respond appropriately." (McKeown p. 44, 52-53)[5] Commonly it is assumed that firms primarily seek to maximize profit in the same way that traditional realists have claimed that the most important objective for states is to maximize power. Waltz, however, rejects the latter assumption and argues instead that states first of all seek sur-

vival. The same can be said for firms: "To maximize profits tomorrow as well as today, firms first have to survive" (Waltz p. 105). Thus, a firm, in the same way as a state, has to secure its survival before it can start maximizing profit or power on account of the state. The notion of survival is usually not included in rational economic reasoning. Survival is already given, as is perfect information, a hierarchy of preferences, etc. The fact that Waltz includes survival in the Economics metaphor implies the existence of a hierarchical relationship between the metaphors. Survival and physical balance are more essential than maximization. Richard Ashley has called attention to what he calls the man/war hierarchy in Waltz's reasoning that resembles the above noticed phenomenon:

> On the one hand, state and domestic society assume the privileged place of the original rational identity, man, and they can easily assume this place because, in all variants of modern political narrative, the state secures the legitimacy of its reason in a combat with rational man. On the other hand, and as before, the signs of anarchy and war betoken a residual domain of an indeterminate history escaping man's rational control. (Ashley p. 286)

Mappings contained in the survival metaphor include (1) states are animals; (2) a viable position in the international system is an ecological niche; (3) maintaining sovereignty is living, and (4) losing sovereignty is dying. The entailments are such as:

> *Source domain:* Animals have a survival instinct.
> *Target domain:* States have a survival instinct.
> *Waltz:* "[States] are unitary actors who, at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at maximum, drive for universal domination." (Waltz 1979:118)
> *Source domain:* Animals must compete to survive.
> *Target domain:* States must compete to maintain sovereignty.
> *Waltz:* "The theory depicts international politics as a competitive realm. [...] The fate of each state depends on its responses to what other states do. The possibility that conflict will be conducted by force leads to competition in the arts and the instruments of force." (ibid., p. 127)

The logic of preventive war lies embedded in the survival metaphor. Preventive war has to do with a state's position in the international system. If state A is increasing its power, state B might perceive A as a threat to B's position. B might chose to launch a war against A before A has grown too powerful thus increasing B's chances of winning the war and maintaining its international position.

> *Source domain:* One animal will attack another if it sees it as a threat to its ecological niche.
> *Target domain:* One state will attack another if it sees it as a threat to its position in the international system.
> *Waltz:* "The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system." (ibid., p. 126)
> *Waltz:* "Great powers [...] fight more wars than lesser states do. Their involvement in war arises from their position in the international system, not from their national characteristics. When they are at or near the top, they fight [...]." (ibid., p. 187)

*Source domain:* One animal will attack another if it sees it as a threat to its survival.
*Target domain*: One state will attack another if it sees it as a threat to its sovereignty.
*Waltz*: "States strive to maintain their autonomy. To this end, the great powers of a multipolar world maneuver, combine and occasionally fight." (ibid., p. 204)

The mapping of the self-interest metaphor assumes that (1) a state is a person; (2) national interest is self-interest; (3) sovereignty is personal independence; (4) economic health is physical health; and (5) military power is physical strength. Some entailments derived from this mapping are:

*Source domain:* People naturally assume that they must compete to maximize their self-interest.
*Target domain:* States naturally assume they must compete to maximize their self-interest.
*Waltz:* "When faced with the possibility of cooperating for mutual gain, states that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. They are compelled to ask not 'Will both of us gain?' but 'Who will gain more?'" (ibid., p. 105)
*Source domain:* It is in a person's self-interest to maximize his physical health and strength.
*Target domain:* It is in a state's national interest to maximize its economic health and military power.
*Source domain:* It is in a person's self-interest to maintain personal independence.
*Target domain:* It is in a state's national interest to maintain sovereignty.
*Waltz:* "[...] the state's [...] interest provides the spring of action: the necessities of policy arise from the unregulated competition of states; calculation based on these necessities can discover the policies that will best serve a state's interests; success is the ultimate test of policy, and success is defined as preserving and strengthening the state." (ibid., p. 117)

The stable physical system metaphor has five basic mappings. These mappings imply that (1) states are physical objects; (2) power is physical force; (3) opposing states are physical objects exerting force on each other; (4) balance of power is a balance of force exerted; and (5) a stable international system is a stable physical system. Balance of power implies that losing sovereignty is falling. The logic transmitted through the mapping can for instance be expressed as follows:

*Source domain:* If two physical objects exert force on one another, the one exerting greater force will cause the one exerting lesser force to fall.
*Target domain*: If two states oppose each other, the one with the greater power will cause the one with the lesser power to lose sovereignty.

Compare this to Waltz's reasoning:

Internationally, if an aggressive state becomes strong or a strong state becomes aggressive, other states will presumably suffer. (ibid. p. 137)
[...] power provides the means of maintaining one's autonomy in the face of force that others wield. (ibid. p. 194)

As for bipolarity, the mappings, in addition to those five mentioned above, include (1) a bipolar international system is a magnet bar with two poles exerting equal and opposite force on each other; (2) opposing large states are poles

of a magnet bar; (3) smaller states are objects attracted to poles of magnet. Accordingly, the mapping entails such logic as:

> *Source domain:* The relation between the two poles of a magnet bar is stable.
> *Target domain:* The relation between the large states in a bipolar international system is stable.
> *Waltz*: "A system of two has many virtues. (...) The system is... stable, as I have shown." (ibid. pp. 166-167)[6]
> Anarchy lies potent in the bipolarity metaphor, as the following mapping shows:
> *Source domain:* A magnet with two poles is a natural system.
> *Target domain*: A bipolar international system is a natural system.
> *Source domain:* There is no external control of such a physical system.
> *Target domain:* There is no external control of such an international system.
> *Waltz:*"To the assumptions of the theory we then add the condition for its operation: that two or more states coexist in a self-help system, one with *no superior agent* to come to the aid of states that may be weakening or to deny to any of them the use of whatever instruments they will think serve their purposes." (ibid. p 118. Emphasis added.)

The logic of the source domain may reflect thinking that is already commonly applied but further supported by the metaphor. In addition, the source domain may contain potential for further research, as described by Richard Boyd and his notion of theory-constitutive metaphors. Consider the following entailments:

> *Source domain:* An extremely forceful magnetic pole will exert an overwhelming force on small states in its vincinity.
> *Target domain:* An extremely powerful state will exert an overwhelming force on small states in its vincinity.
> *Waltz:* "The war aims that Germany developed in the course of fighting World War I called for annexing all or parts of small nearby countries. They could not prevent Germany from realizing her ambitions; only other great powers can do so." (ibid. p. 204-205)
> *Waltz:* Because of the weight of our capabilities, American actions have tremendous impact whether or not we fashion effective policies and consciously put our capabilities behind them in order to achieve certain ends. (ibid. p. 192)
> *Source domain:* The forces exerted by the poles are proportional to distance; the closer other objects are, the stronger the force on them.
> *Target domain:* The forces exerted by the opposing powers are proportional to distance; the closer the smaller states are, the stronger the force on them.

The logic entailed in the magnet bar metaphor reflects important features of widespread security thinking at the state level. Spheres of influence, as expressed for the United States by the Monroe doctrine since 1823 and for Russia since 1992 with the 'near abroad' policy, illustrate this phenomenon. The 'satellite' states of the Soviet Union during the Cold War is another example. Both involve an image schema where states arrange themselves as ironfilings that cling most strongly near the poles of a magnet bar. Here, the entailments support realist thought that existed long before neorealism was developed. Thus, in 1959, John Herz argued that bipolarity had led to a decrease in the sovereignty of states that were associated with the two superpowers. This was true

both for the satellites of the USSR and the allies of the United States. In the latter case, provisions of the agreements that governed stationing American troops abroad compromised the territorial integrity of the allies. (Herz pp. 111-143.) Hans Morgenthau claimed that small states under bipolarity had lost their "freedom of movement" and the European allies were constrained by the great power of the United States "whose political, military, and economic preponderance [was able to] hold them 'in its orbit' even against their will" (Morganthau p. 336).

If bipolarity is used as a way to interpret the international system, then its entailments might be perceived as 'natural' conditions of how the world functions. Spheres of interest become common sense. The logic of the metaphor enforces the logic of political security thinking. That Sweden felt more threatened by the Soviet Union than did for instance Venezuela during the Cold War also appears as self-evident. Of course one cannot dismiss geo-strategic or technological arguments for such reasoning, but research has also shown that strategy and state security sometimes spring from other sources than the evident.[7]

The above described entailments have been captured and developed by other neorealists than Waltz. The metaphor of *bandwagoning* is used to describe that states sometimes ally with the stronger side. Stephen Walt has distinguished between bandwagoning behavior of states caused by offensive reasons, i.e., to be able to share the spoils of victory, or for defensive reasons, which means to ally with the most dominant and threatening side in order to avoid an attack on the state itself. (Walt pp. 6-9)

Anarchy has not been dealt with in the same manner as the other metaphors, although it was mentioned when the entailments of bipolarity were examined. As a matter of fact, all the metaphors entail anarchy, in that there is no external force controlling the behavior of the 'state as a physical object', 'state as a pole', 'state as an animal', 'state as a person' or 'state as a firm'. The same is true for the international system as perceived by Waltz, in the sense that a 'world government' does not exist. Since there is no external entity controlling the behavior of entities in the source domains, that property is mapped to the target domains. Waltz's anarchic source domains seem plausible for the anarchic target domain of the international system.

Some cases of what in metaphorical analysis is called *target domain override* are present in neorealism. Target domain override explains limitations on metaphorical mappings. The *invariance principle* states that there are inherent target domain structures that limit the possibilities for automatic mapping. (Lakoff 1992:10) The logic of the source domain, hence, is not transferred to the logic of the target domain. This would explain 'multipolarity', which does not fit into the magnet bar metaphor, where only two poles exist. All knowledge about the physical aspects is overridden, while the ideas of opposing forces and states clinging like iron flings are applied. Target domain override also occurs in metaphors such as "the weaker pole in the system", an impossibility in a magnet bar, where the poles have equal force, and the idea of one pole threatening to attract more states than the other. In both cases the equal

stagnant force that the poles are exerting is ignored. Why do these overrides occur? Not enough is known about these mental overrides in order to give an extensive answer. In the case of bipolarity, one suggestion is that the overall metaphysical tendency of human beings to polarize issues may be so strong as to override the logic of the magnet bar metaphor. Strong beliefs developed within a specific cultural and historical setting may also contribute to the occurrence of overrides.

### 2.3. Conclusion

It has been shown that the metaphors of neorealism carry entailments that are in accordance with the logic of the theory. Neorealism is elegant and sparse. The choice of metaphors in line with the character of the theory reveals high skills on part of its constructor. This is not to argue that the metaphors were deliberately chosen, but rather that Waltz's choice of metaphors contributes to the power of his theory. The entailments of the metaphors help creating a coherent theory. In addition, the metaphors have highly structured source domains, that support the impression of neorealism as a well-structured theory. To illustrate this argument, take the metaphor of *cascades* as introduced by James Rosenau (1990) to account for patterns of interaction in world politics. Cascades are described as "analogous to a flow of white water down a rocky river bed: just as the flow churns and shifts, sometimes moving sideways, sometimes diagonally, and sometimes even careering in the reverse direction, and leaving sprays, eddies, and whirlpools in its wake, so do action sequences in the multi-centric world gather momentum, stall, reverse course, and resume anew as their repercussions spread among whole systems and subsystems" (Rosenau p. 299). This water metaphor is more complex and its logic is not as easily applied as in the case of for instance physical objects or animal instinct behavior.

Structural mapping draws attention to the fact that several metaphors can be used to describe the same phenomenon. In neorealism there are a multiple of metaphors at work to describe the functioning of the international systems and its parts, i.e., states. These metaphors to some extent contradict each other, for instance a state is both viewed as a firm and a physical object. If the contradictions do not appear as disturbing, one reason may be that they are all drawn from natural and social sciences and hence should be well-known to most scholars. By choosing such metaphors Waltz adds scientific status to his theory. In connection to the discussion of metaphorical choice it might be worthwhile noticing a hypothesis that has been raised in the study of intercultural communication. The hypothesis suggests that mechanical metaphors dominate thinking in the Western culture while organic metaphors have a more prominent position in the oriental part of the world, which would be in line with the metaphors of physical balance chosen by Waltz.[8] That Rosenau's water metaphor appears as less structured for us might partly be due to Western experience.

It has been suggested that the logic of the metaphors can influence further research topics, as illustrated by the case of bandwagoning. Foucault once

posed the question: "How is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?" (Foucault p. 27). To give a thorough answer, historicity must be taken into account, i.e., human knowledge within a historical context.[9] Examining the ruling paradigm gives some clues to the appearance of the research agenda. Waltz follows the realist assumptions as described by Mansbach and Vasquez, although he moderates the third assumption by arguing that states primarily seek survival, not power.

A metaphorical approach to theory can give additional clues. If attention is paid to the logic entailed by the metaphors, then it might also be easier to obtain new insights to the ontological question of what it is that scholars want to study and why. The structural mapping revealed that the logic behind spheres of influence, satellite states and preventive war was embedded in the metaphors of the theory and seemed to fit 'naturally' into the line of reasoning, just as realists have a tendency to view either of the phenomena as natural and inevitable, although not desirable. The research agenda of the American political scientist community has been widely influenced by the realist paradigm, despite the attempts by some scholars to break loose.[10] Metaphorical analysis made on European and American discourse in the building of the 'new' Europe after 1989 shows that there are signs that European discourse is moving beyond reliance on container schema metaphor, which focuses on state borders, the security within them and the threat posed outside them.[11] American discourse, on the other hand, still tends to assume the container schema and to focus on images of stasis. (Chilton p. 48)

As shown in the analysis, the bipolarity metaphor seems rather problematic due to the overrides that occur. Its entailments and overrides raise several questions, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## 3. The Elusive Bipolarity

As opposed to for instance 'anarchy' or 'sovereignty', the polarity-terminology in IR has remained almost unquestioned, despite the widespread discussions on the issue. After the Cold War finally had ended, there was a general consensus on the term bipolarity as an accurate characterization of the period between 1945 and 1990. The post-Cold War debate focused on the difficulty of defining what was to come next: unipolarity or multipolarity?

The consensus is, however, to some extent retrospectively constructed. Scholars and politicians did on various occasions, from the late 1960s and onwards, declare the end of bipolarity, but somehow, the metaphor survived. What, then, was bipolarity? Is it possible to say exactly wherein "bipolarity" lay? The disagreements on the present structure of international politics and in what direction we are heading make such questions even more relevant.

Using the metaphorical analysis of the previous chapter as a foundation, I will in the following discuss the concept of bipolarity as used in international relations. I will examine the origins of its use within a historical context. I will show what the term highlights and what it hides and explore some of the issues

that such a scrutiny raises. I will argue that bipolarity for several reasons is a powerful metaphor. First, let us briefly return to the metaphorical content of bipolarity.

### 3.1. The Metaphor of Bipolarity

Bipolarity is connected to the image of a magnet bar consisting of two poles, at which the attractive force seems greatest. The two poles in the postwar era would be the U.S. and the Soviet Union, around which states would arrange themselves as iron flings that cling most strongly near the poles of a magnetized bar. The isolated magnet bar fits with the idea that there exists one, coherent international system. Force is a central term both to magnet bars and the international system. Between states, the threat of using or the actual use of force is traditionally a central concern. Power and force are closely connected. In the case of magnets, the area in which the effect of a magnet can be detected is called magnetic field, usually pictured as a series of lines called *lines of force.*(New Standard Encyclopedia p. M-57) The relationship between the two poles is equal in terms of force. One pole is as able to attract as many iron flings as the other. The poles are viewed as two opposites within the same body (i.e., the magnet bar or the international system) and some kind of balance or equilibrium between the two poles is assumed. The relationship is symmetric and static. As actors, the poles have overwhelming preponderance in the system.

### 3.2. Tracing the Origin of the Metaphor

Kenneth Waltz did not coin the term 'bipolarity'. Possibly, the first appearance of the concept as a part of IR-terminology was in W.T.R Fox's *The Superpowers* (1944). Written during World War II, Fox sketches a picture of the postwar world and suggests that "the Western democracies and the Soviet Union will constitute the poles of world politics", when poles are measured in terms of aggregation of power (Fox p. 97). The metaphorical entailments of bipolarity are present in the analysis, as illustrated when Moscow and Washington are mentioned as "the centers around which potentially hostile forces tend to gather". It appears as if Fox recognizes the concept's metaphorical entailments and the risk that they might lead thought in a specific direction. Thus, he tries to provide intellectual arguments to counter the images produced by the metaphor. Fox deliberately argues against the assumption that the two strongest powers necessarily are bound to oppose each other, although he does not deny the possibility that such an opposition is possible. From his point of view, however, there are few reasons for the USSR and the 'Anglo-American combination' to oppose each other, since they geographically pose no direct threat to each other and a war between them would result in such vast moral and material destruction that it would not be considered as worthwhile (ibid., p. 98). Still the risk prevails that the image of the two as polar *opposites* becomes the accepted thesis of bipolarity, and Fox warns that "the thesis would become true simply by being believed" (ibid., p. 100).

Focusing on the historical context in which bipolarity appeared provides some clues to understand the widespread use and acceptance of the concept. At the time when *The Superpowers* was published, scholars of international relations struggled with restricting the area of research. Hans Morgenthau complained over the tendency in IR to combine topics from a wide range of different fields, "from agriculture almost to sociology", and advocated that IR should restrict itself to the basic concern of "the struggle for power among sovereign states" (Morgenthau/Thompson:*preface*). This frustration and search for a scientific identity coincided with a perception of growing global dominance of the United States and the Soviet Union. The mounting tension between the two in the early postwar years relieved this frustration and facilitated the creation of a distinct research agenda that focused on the power of the state (Knutsen p. 222). Few Americans disagreed on the nature of the enemy nor the enormity of the stakes involved.

The realist approach sprung out of a unique and fertile dialogue between American and European scholars, in which the latter drew on a long tradition of Continental politics. Winston Churchill was an influential believer in and advocator of realist foreign policy, and according to Knutsen (1992), Churchill, together with George Kennan, laid the foundation for realism in the United States (ibid., p. 223). Both were practitioners rather than theorists whose opinions emerged out of historical knowledge and diplomatic experience. Britain and Russia had been locked in a 'Great Game' on the European continent since the nineteenth century, and the historical animosity, distrust and fear that marked the relationship between the two countries echoed in Churchill's speeches and policies. Of those Americans who were to become prominent realists, several were refugees from Hitler's Germany, such as Hans Morgenthau, John Herz, and Arnold Wolfers. This dynamic between Europe and the United States and the possibility of British influence, is interesting to notice in that it might have contributed to, in Fox's words, the thesis of opposing forces becoming true simply by being believed. One must not forget the close connection between theorists and politicians in those days. Scholars of international relations had the ambition to advise statesmen and Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* influenced a generation of American foreign policy makers.

First published in 1948, merely three years after the Second World War had ended, Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* provides fascinatingly firm conclusions while exploring the postwar international system. He focuses on balance of power and describes one major change as being the disappearance of a balancer, the "holder" of a balance, as used to be the function of Great Britain.

> Today the European balance of power has become a mere function of the world wide balance of which the United States and the Soviet Union are the main weights, placed on opposite scales. (Morgenthau 1951:149)

The United States and the Soviet Union are viewed as equally strong states. The preponderance on the side of the U.S. is due to its allies:

> In the metaphorical language of the balance of power one might say, rather crudely but not without truth, that, while in the Russian scale there is a weight of seventy, the weight of the American scale amounts to a hundred of which seventy is the United States' own strength, ten that of Great Britain and the remainder that of the other actual or prospective allies. (ibid. p. 274.)[12]

The equal weight of the Soviet Union and the United States, seventy – seventy, as Morgenthau puts it, is illustrated in a map where each of the two powers is put in a scale where they are balancing each other. (ibid. p. 277) In the first edition of his work, bipolarity as a term does not appear. Interestingly enough, though, the concept is added in the second edition from 1954 and used in congruence with the balance of power reasoning as described above (Morgenthau 1954:326). Morgenthau simply adds on to the mechanical metaphor the entailments of bipolarity, of which the most important from this respect should be opposing forces that reflects the perceived increased hostility between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in those days.

### 3.3. Hidden Aspects of Power

Morgenthau's analysis hints at two major problems with bipolarity, namely the implied power parity between the poles and the embedded notion of balance of power. As mentioned in the previous chapter, metaphors allow us to focus attention on certain aspects, but might lead us to lose sight of other aspects that are inconsistent with the metaphor. While some features are highlighted, others are suppressed. Bipolarity entails a relationship between the two poles that is equal in terms of force. The Soviet Union and the United States were given equal weight in the bipolar situation described by Morgenthau in 1951. Hedley Bull (1977) claimed that "equality or parity in power" was a necessary condition for the simple balance between the two that had prevailed during the Cold War (Bull pp. 101-102). In a textbook on international relations from 1991, the "bipolar world of the late 1940s and 1950s" was illustrated by *figure 1* (Papp p. 44).

Equally big circles represent the USSR and the U.S.. These are surrounded by smaller circles clinging on to the major ones. The influence of the magnet bar metaphor is obvious. However, closer scrutiny reveals power to be much more complex than the rather simple and straight-forward arguments and figure suggest. How to define and measure power has been of major concern for an endless row of IR-scholars. The difficulty of the subject has led many definitions of power to be vague and sweeping or lacking altogether.

Power analysis has been greatly refined since the early days of realism. Nowadays, it accounts for various approaches such as specifying the context of power resources, or including societal norms, unintended effects and even the rites, routines and discourses that contribute to the conceptualization of power.[13]

However, at the time when bipolarity started to appear in the IR-terminology, the main focus was on power resources and capacity. Often some kind of aggregation of power was recognized as necessary. Morgenthau included a cru-

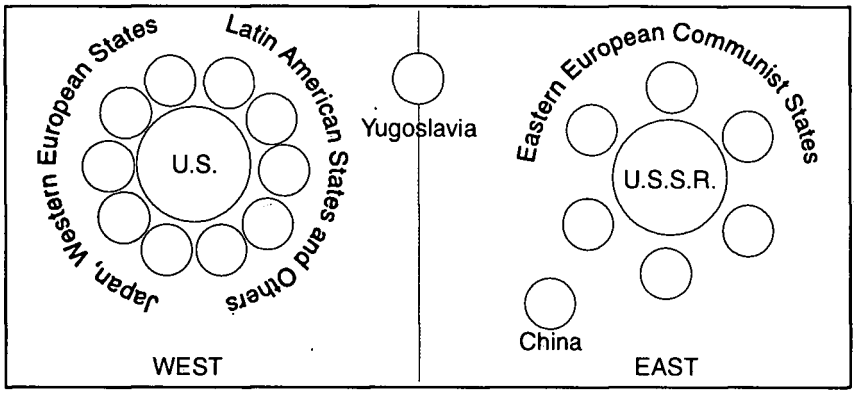


Figure 1.

cial psychological element in the concept, broadly defined as "man's control over the minds and actions of other men... (as) a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised" (As quoted in Knutsen p. 224). Power, then, is a function of actors' perceptions of each others' spiritual and material capabilities. Consequently, the international system is maintained by an underlying perceptual consensus, or a 'silent compact' (ibid.). The positivistic requirements demanded however that there should be an objective way of measuring power by focusing on quantifiable variables, hence military might have been widely emphasized in realism, which Morgenthau resented. As it turns out, his definition seems more useful and appropriate than any of the more 'scientific', whether concerned with military power alone or with an aggregate of power capabilities. Let us return to the aftermath of World War II to illustrate this argument.

### 3.3.1. Problems with Parity

What is arguable is not the claim that the U.S. and the USSR were the most powerful states of the world at that time, nor the claim that any competitors to the top ranking positions were far behind. The problem is embedded in the symmetry implied by describing the two powers as having equal capabilities. Before analyzing this implied symmetry, some clarifications should be made with regard to methods. The analysis carried through in the following might resemble this approach at a first sight, but it should be pointed out that here, power is analyzed *as it has been understood* by the scholars that have used the metaphor. No claim is made that there exist one way of measuring and understand power that rightly correspond to reality.

Analogically, the metaphor of bipolarity can be said to have sprung from a perception of two giants dividing the world between them. However, even though giants always look huge from below, the size of them can vary. This is an aspect that the metaphor of bipolarity hides. Recent retrospective figures on world power for the early postwar period gives the Soviet Union a share of 16

percent and the U.S. a share of 36 percent in 1946. For 1950, the numbers are 18 and 28 percent respectively. Great Britain had 11 percent of the world power in 1946. In 1950, that figure had decreased to 6 percent. (Wohlforth p. 63)[14] Accordingly, Soviet power was less than half of U.S. power in 1946, and two thirds in 1950. In 1946, the Soviet Union and Great Britain were closer to each other than the Soviet Union and the U.S.. If these numbers were illustrated with circles, then the figure would look quite different from the one above. Of course it is possible to defend scholars of the 1940s and 1950s with the argument that they did not have access to the same data on the Soviet Union as later has become available. Stalin closed off the country from the rest of the world, which deprived the West of reliable knowledge of Soviet conditions. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that bipolarity was coined and increasingly used during and after a war that resulted in the USSR suffering the tremendous loss of 22 million casualties and a steep decline in industrial production. In addition, the party itself had lost one million of its people that severely shook the underlying ideological framework of the country (Croan p. 112). The USSR was in urgent need of reparation, and it was extremely important for the Soviets to rebuild the Soviet economy (Evangelista p. 124, Starobin p. 695). The devastating effects of World War II on the Soviet Union were internationally known, although not documented in detail, and were also emphasized by American 'doves' such as Henry Wallace. Stalin showed a fearsome face and exaggerated Soviet military strength and economic health. The fact that the contemporary scholars of International Relations so easily seem to have bought Stalin's bold bluff is surprising and hints at possible sociological, cognitive and linguistics constraints on analysis.

Furthermore, one can claim that there simply need to be rough equality between the poles. Such an argument, however, does not obliterate the question of where to draw the line to decide which powerful states that 'count'. Waltz, for instance, solves the problem by referring to "common sense" in the counting of great powers of an era and by dismissing it as an empirical question, which does not bring any clarity into the issue (Waltz 1979:131). As for bipolarity in the postwar period, he argues that the Soviet Union "was a lopsided great power, compensating for economic weakness with political discipline, military strength, and a rich territorial endowment" (Waltz 1993:50). Waltz's discussion of how to measure power and rank states does not become more detailed than that. Some fundamental knowledge about the functioning of power reveals the extreme limitations of such an approach. To start with, no criteria are given for how to weigh different variables against each other. Waltz appears to have a firm opinion of what the world is like. These beliefs form the foundation for his theory and do not need to be elaborated on, since that would bring complexity into his sparse theory.

### 3.3.2. Military Strength and Relative Power

As for those who have emphasized the use of military power capabilities, the issue is not as clear-cut as it sometimes has been presented. Figures on military

strength indicate parity between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1946, and a greater Soviet share in 1950: 35 percent as compared to 23 percent for the U.S. (Wohlforth p. 60) These figures, based on military personnel and military expenditures, should, however, be handled with caution and put within a context. Evangelista (1983) has shown the inaccuracy in viewing the Soviet Union as offensively oriented and a major threat to Western Europe in the early postwar period. Stalin's army was not able to invade Western Europe prior to the formation of NATO in 1949. This was due partly to military considerations, partly to the fact that many of the troops were engaged in nonmilitary tasks, mainly connected to reparation, instead of training for an offensive. (Evangelista p. 111) However, the significance of the pace of Soviet postwar demobilization in the occupied areas was downplayed in the American media (*footnote* ibid., p. 113). In 1948 it became apparent that the U.S. intelligence reports had predicted a far lesser demobilization of Soviet troops than actually took place. Strikingly enough though, Joint Chief of Staff ignored these new, lower figures of manpower in planning Soviet invasion scenarios. The earlier conclusions were never revised. (ibid., pp. 114-115) Evangelista claims that his conclusions about the lack of both Soviet intentions, as well as military capabilities, of invading Western Europe "are consistent with many early postwar intelligence reports regarding Soviet military capabilities and intentions." For instance, in a 1945 November report, the Joint Intelligence Staff argued that the Soviets were unlikely to risk a major war for at least fifteen years. (ibid., pp. 133-35) In a report in 1947, the CIA stated that "the greatest present danger to U.S. security lies, mot in the military strength of the USSR and the possibility of Soviet armed aggression, but in the possibility of the economic collapse of Western Europe". (Review of the World Situation as It Relates to the Security of the United States, CIA, 26 Sept, 1947, p. 2) Hence, it appears as if the West intentionally exaggerated the Soviet conventional threat to Europe.

Even after the formation of NATO, the United States, according to NSC 162/2 (1953), did not expect the Soviet Union to deliberately launch a general war "during the next several years" against neither the United States nor any of the other NATO countries (NSC (National Security Council) 162/2, 1953, p. 4, 16, as reprinted in Trachtenberg pp. 42, 56). However, somehow the idea of such a threat remained. In the same document, concern is expressed that the military strength in Western Europe "is presently not sufficient to prevent a full-scale Soviet attack from overrunning Western Europe." Thus, although such a scenario did not seem realistic at that time, further build-up of NATO military strength was recommended and motivated by such a full-scale Soviet attack. (ibid., p. 49. [NSC 162/2 p. 11]) In 1955, it was again stated that the Soviet Union was unlikely to risk a war with the United States "within the next five years" (ibid., p. 102. [NSC 5501 p. 6]).

In addition, there is the issue of nuclear weapons. In 1946, the United States had monopoly on atomic power. The first Soviet atomic bomb test occurred in fall 1949, but nuclear parity was not achieved until the early 1970s.

### 3.3.3. The Role of Perceptions

From the early postwar period an onwards, then, it seems as if the balance of power between the United States and the USSR from an American perspective required U.S. superiority in capabilities, i.e., relative rather than absolute power was to be balanced. The use of relative power is not a problem in itself, as long as it is explicitly recognized and not combined with the notion of bipolarity, which requires symmetry and equal opposed force. Parity in relative power does not make much sense. Did anything make up for Soviet inferiority of resources and capacity so that the claimed bipolarity was established? The question hints at the possibility that Morgenthau had grasped something essential in his definition of power that later got lost within the realist paradigm and its focus on capabilities. Perceptions are important in international politics. A perceived threat strongly influences a state's behavior and states often respond to threat rather than power.[15] The idea of looking at the balance of power during the Cold War by focusing on perceptions of power rather than measurable capabilities is developed by William Wohlforth in *The Elusive Balance* (1993). If the two powers were perceived as equals, then it might be that their actual capabilities are of minor importance. The task for the scholar, then, would be to go beyond commonly existing perceptions of power by means of research in order to state and explain, clearly and explicitly, the underlying dynamics. Such research has not been on the realist agenda, and power has in most cases been considered as 'given': 70-70 in Morgenthau's words. The close collaboration between American theorists and politicians at the time when bipolarity was established might have contributed to this descriptive use of bipolarity, but the fact is that fundamental view of power parity between the poles, as embedded in the magnet bar metaphor, was kept even when bipolarity was claimed to *explain* the behavior of states. Power analysis was carried through to 'fit' this prevailing perception, which might explain the vague and sweeping character of such analysis.

The claim here is not that this constrained mode of thinking is exclusively due to the metaphor of bipolarity, i. e., that the language used has completely eliminated alternative paths of reasoning. Rather, there seems to be an interaction between belief-systems and choice of theoretical concepts, a process which in most cases is unconscious. Pre-existing beliefs regarding the phenomenon the theorist wishes to explain influence the choice of concepts by way of structural mapping. As the metaphorical analysis has shown, these concepts, in turn, carry entailments that are in line with the theorist's beliefs, thus supporting and strengthening certain ways of viewing the world. They promote further research in accordance with the entailments and may delay the discovery of theoretical weaknesses and overlooked empirical variables. From where beliefs originate and how they develop is a question for psychologists to answer and will not be dealt with here. Nevertheless, the importance of the historical and cultural context in which a theory is formed should be recognized, as well as the paradigm in which the theorist works, since all of these constitute the foundation for concepts.

### 3.3.4. Multipolarity Emerges

The scrutiny of the embedded notion of power parity in bipolarity seems to have raised more questions than it has answered. Although theorists have used different definitions of and approaches to power, basically all of them have reached the conclusion that bipolarity existed at least from the late 1940s and twenty years ahead. After the end of the Cold War, the whole period between 1945 and 1990 has commonly been characterized in terms of bipolarity. However, during the later half of that period such a wide-spread consensus did in reality not exist. As expressed by a scholar in 1972:

> The attempts which have been made to abstract the crucial relationships of the international system since World War II on the basis of *bipolar* images have not proven very flexible. International events of the last decade have imposed a severe strain on such summary and confining concepts. (Hanrieder p. 184. Emphasis original)

The events of the decade referred to in the quote included defection of China from the Communist bloc, France partially defecting from NATO, and an evident inability of the United States and the Soviet Union to dictate their partners in all matters. Japan, Western Europe, China and even certain developing countries, were perceived of as emerging power centers. Periods of *detente* further added to the feeling of a world in transformation. The concept of multipolarity was derived from bipolarity to account for these new 'power poles'. Military capabilities were not included in these power calculations. Instead, the focus was on economic and political aspects. Arguing that military strength had diminished in importance, Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State in the Nixon administration, promoted the idea of five poles, namely the United States, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, China, and Japan. Hedley Bull recognized three poles in 1977 – the United States, the USSR, and China. The increased tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States in the late 1970s, combined with a widespread economic recession, seems to have silenced many advocators of multipolarity who then returned to the bipolar metaphor. (Papp p. 44, Waltz p. 130, Bull p. 101, and Olson p. 139)

## 3.4 Opposition and Solid Poles

As W.T.R. Fox recognized, the metaphor of bipolarity contains strong elements of opposition. Fox feared that the, perhaps unnecessary, acceptance of the Soviet Union and 'the Anglo-American groups of power' as polar opposites would lead to the thesis becoming true. His fear was verified for a variety of reasons, including mutual mistrust and misunderstandings on behalf of both 'poles'. Stalin viewed the United States as an imperialist state led by capitalist oppressors and driven towards expansion. The world was, according to him, sharply divided into a socialist and a capitalist camp, which nicely fits with the bipolarity metaphor. (Knutsen pp. 215-216) The West was quick to pick up on this 'division of the world' and equally labeled the Soviet Union as aggressive.[16] While American attempts to cooperation and friendly co-existence with

the USSR were recognized by the West during the Cold War, there also were events – as well as non-events – signaling Soviet defensive intentions and cooperative attempts that did not attract much attention. Non-events would be such incidents as the Soviet willingness to sign the Austrian State Treaty in 1955, the withdrawal of troops in Finland after World War II, and the fact that the Soviet Union was not engaged in strategic build-up in the early 1980s. (Jervis pp. 116-1179) Within the metaphorical framework, non-events are events that do not fit into the bipolarity metaphor – that are hidden by it.

The metaphor of bipolarity implies solid poles. As a consequence, the relationship between the poles is highlighted and it can be argued that this relationship has received an excessive amount of attention at the expense of others. For instance, the post war era was the first time in history that the capitalist Great Powers were allies. In the aftermath of the Cold War, this salient feature appears to have been overlooked, and its implications are not widely investigated. The importance of a shared set of liberal beliefs, institutions and practices among the capitalist Great Powers might be worth focusing upon. In connection to this focus, the formation of and the driving forces behind NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) stand out in a different light when the belief that the organization primarily was created because Europe feared a conventional attack from the East is abandoned. Indicators exist that the United States was more preoccupied with the possibility of Soviet expansionism than Western Europe was.[17] According to a CIA-report in 1949, NATO was formed with the objective to formalize the "intent of the U.S. to reduce to reasonable proportions the threat to *its* security". (Review of the World Situation as It Relates to the Security of the United States, 3-49, p. 3. Emphasis added.) The following year, CIA called for "a determined campaign to lift the European moral from its present apathy" with regard to NATO (Review of the World Situation as It Relates to the Security of the United States, 8-50, p. 1).

Geographically, it seems somewhat peculiar that the United States would be so highly concerned with its security against the Soviet threat, especially since the USSR did not yet possess strategic weapons. David Campbell (1993) has suggested that the danger the United States faced had more to do with American identity than the Soviet Union and communist forces. Having recognized that 'danger is not an objective condition', that states are 'always in a process of becoming', and that 'identity is constituted in relation to difference', Campbell makes the argument that the borders of American identity were defined through the Cold War. National security was a question of the 'ethical boundaries of identity' rather than the 'territorial borders of the state'. Space (the Frontier) rather than time (a common history) has been the vital but not sufficient component in the creation of an American identity. "Only in a country where it is so unclear what is American do people worry so much about the threat of things 'un-American'" (Michael Kammen as quoted in Campbell p. 50). Since the boundaries of identity are formed by making distinctions such as inside/outside, self/other, and domestic/foreign, the emphasis of danger in foreign policy reflects the fear of transgressions of the nation's boundaries of identity. The global inscription of danger in U.S. foreign policy existed long

before the Cold War. As pointed out earlier, the postwar era gave the Americans an easily identified enemy whose threatening status the vast majority agreed upon. From this perspective, the bipolarity metaphor, with its embedded image of an American opposite equal in strength, became a part of the ongoing process of constituting American identity. (ibid., pp. 39-60)

### 3.5. A Powerful Metaphor

One of the few recent attempts to question the usefulness of bipolarity has been made by R. H. Wagner (1993). The ambiguous and contradictory aspects of bipolarity constitute the focus of his inquiry and the conclusion is that the concept fails to capture what was truly distinctive about the distribution of power during the cold war. Wagner presents four distinct definitions of the term bipolarity used in the literature: (1) a condition in which all of the states in the system are grouped into two hostile coalitions; (2) a condition in which there are only two states capable of global deterrence; (3) a system of only two states; and (4) a condition in which two states command a much larger distribution of power than all others so that they can defend themselves against any combination of other states. (Wagner p. 89) The first definition was used by scholars such as Fox and Morgenthau, the second by Arthur Lee Burns, and the third and fourth by Kenneth Waltz. Waltz argued that because the Soviet Union and the United States were so much more powerful than other states, allies were of little importance to them. The most commonly applied understanding of the two 'poles', however, has been as blocs, not the United States and the Soviet Union alone. Wagner concludes that the question "What was bipolarity?" has no clear answer due to its many different meanings and the tendency to confuse description with explanations. He dismisses the concept as invalid and advocates that it should be avoided. (ibid., p. 103)

Notwithstanding its obvious fallacies it seems likely that bipolarity will prevail within IR as a commonly used and accepted metaphor. There are several reasons for this. Attention has been drawn to the entailments the metaphor carries and that they are in congruence with the realism paradigm which is still influential within IR as well as among politicians of various countries. Old metaphors are hard to get rid of, not only because of linguistic and sociological constraints, but also due to cognitive limitations that favor information that can be fitted into existing 'knowledge structures'.

Furthermore, bipolarity may capture a feeling that "there was something special about the distribution of power among states after World War II" in the sense that power was concentrating at two distinct centers (ibid., p. 89-90).

From a cognitive perspective, the magnet bar metaphor is highly structured and thus easy to derive logic from, as compared to for instance a cascade of water, as suggested by James Rosenau.

Finally, it should be noticed that bipolarity goes with a common way of thinking in terms of *polarization*, i.e., "dividing things into two exclusive categories, and then supposing that if something under consideration does not belong to one of them, then it must belong to the other. Either/or is the pattern of such

thought, and because it is usually clear, rigorous, and incisive, it is also often regarded (...) as uniquely rational." There are many situations that can illustrate polarization, such as judging a given action either as 'right' or 'wrong' rather than considering that it might be both or neither (Taylor pp. 117-118). Lately, the 'dichotomization' commonly applied in Western political discourse has gained lots of attention among scholars of various disciplines.

Accordingly, the bipolarity metaphor with its dominating, distinct two poles invites to and enforces tendencies of dichotomization and polarization in describing world phenomena, as illustrated by postwar vocabulary such as the Socialist/Communist world versus the Capitalist/Free world and the East versus the West.

## 4. Conclusion

The Hobbesian tradition of dismissing metaphors in science as delusive and misleading springs from a misunderstanding of what metaphors are and how they function. Contemporary cognitive and linguistic research has shown that metaphors are conceptual instruments that make it possible for people to think about things that are new, complex, remote or abstract. They are used to understand problematic situations in terms of situations that are more understandable and familiar.

What is the connection between metaphors and scientific theory? A first step toward answering that question involves blurring the distinction between theoretical concepts on one hand, and metaphors on the other. The locus of metaphor is in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another. The same can often be said for theoretical concepts. A concept is a source domain from which we derive logic. This logic is then applied to the target domain, i.e., the phenomenon we are studying. Through structural mapping, the process of understanding one domain in terms of another can be traced. Thus, theoretical concepts can generally be viewed as metaphors. Structural mapping shows that metaphors carry entailments that have implications for the logic and the power of the theory, as illustrated by the metaphorical analysis of neorealism. The entailments contained in the metaphors of neorealism are in accordance with the logic of the theory and contribute to its coherence. Furthermore, the metaphors are all drawn from natural and social sciences which add scientific status to the theory. Finally, the entailments of the metaphors to a great extent fit the basic assumptions of the realist paradigm in which neorealism was constructed.

One characteristic of metaphors that is highly relevant for our understanding of theory is that metaphors intensify some perceptions of reality and screen others out of attention. They highlight what one wants to believe and avoid what one does not wish to face. Through this characteristic, in combination with the entailments they carry, metaphors influence and lead thought in a special direction. Metaphors may also constrain thought, but to claim that the metaphors which we use to view the world with *determine* our perception of

it, is to push the argument too far. Perceptions are rooted within a wider context than metaphors, including the paradigm in which the theorists work. Metaphors may then be unconsciously chosen so that they support and strengthen these perceptions. If one wishes to scrutinize what is excluded from the prevailing knowledge, it is essential to examine how the metaphor, as a mediator of meaning and knowledge, is constituted. Metaphors not only hint at what the scientific community wants to study and why, but also why some questions are never asked. The logic entailments that metaphors carry can easily be viewed as 'natural' or 'self-evident', thus making reasoning in line with these appear the same. In addition, further research in line with these entailments is promoted. Linguistic constraints work in congruence with and might reinforce the sociological constraints provided by the paradigm that sets the research agenda.

Bipolarity has been used as an illustration of what metaphors hide and highlight. Despite its ambiguity, the concept is widely accepted and used. Bipolarity suppresses aspects of international cooperation and the development of relations other than those between the two 'poles'. Most importantly, perhaps, it carries entailments of polar power parity, which to some extent can be seen as a modern myth. This phenomenon may not have its root in the use of the metaphor, but has obviously been supported and reinforced by its widespread application.

The discontent with the IR-theory and ruling paradigms has caused scholars to advocate the breaking out of 'conceptual jails' in order to capture those phenomena that do not 'fit' the present research agenda and widen our scope of reasoning (Rosenau p. 37). Metaphorical analysis is one way of focusing on the dynamics, and limits, of theory. Metaphors carry logic which is theoretically applied. In addition, they are constituted in a cultural, historical and scientific context that shape meaning and knowledge. For such reasons, they are worth paying closer attention to, when the aim is to understand the shaping of thoughts and some of the constraints on our ability to reason.

## Notes

1. Hobbes p. 29-30. In Hobbes' time the term *ignis fatuus* ("foolish fire"), according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was used figuratively for any delusive guiding principle, hope, aim or such.

2. See Reddy, M. 1979. *The Conduit Metaphor – A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language* pp. 284-324 in Ortony, A (ed.). *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge Univeristy Press)

3. For an account of frame semantics see Fillmore, C. 1982. *Frame Semantics. In Linguistic Society of Korea*, pp. 111-138 in Fillmore, C. (ed.) *Linguistics in the Morning Calm* (Seoul: Hanshin).

4. Waltz, K.1959. *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press); Waltz, K. 1979. *Theory of International Politics* (McGraw-Hill, Inc); Waltz, K. 1986. *A Response to My Critics* in Keohane, R. *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press); Waltz, K.

1990. *Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory*, Journal of International Affairs, XLIV, 1 (Spring/Summer)

5. See also Keohane, R. 1983. *Theory of World Politics: Strucutral Realism and Beyond* in Finifter, A. and Lipset, S. M. (eds.). *The State of the Discipline: Political Science* (Washington, D.C.: APSA).

6. Waltz has since then changed his view claiming that he confused peace with stability. In *The Emerging Structure of International Politics* he explains that the bipolar system, although highly peaceful, was less stable than its predecessor. p. 45.

7. See Campell, D. 1992. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

8. Jönsson/Jansson p. 11 referring to Ting-Toomey, S. 1987. *The 'Root Metaphors' Orientations: Implications for Intercultural Communication Researchers* in Thomas, S. (ed.). *Culture and Communication: Methodology, Behavior, Artifacts, and Institutions* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex).

9. See for instance Ashley p. 265.

10. See for instance Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics*. Rosenau attempts to break out of "conceptual jails" and claims that theorizing has to begin anew. Although his work is both creative and inspiring, he does not fulfil his promises. What he does is adding a multicentric world to the state-centric world as described by neorealists. He adds on to *but uses* the neorealist foundation. A more timid criticism comes from Keohane, Nye, and Buzan who admit that they are building on neorealism in their attempts to extend and improve the theory. See Baldwin, D (ed.) 1993. *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (Columbia University Press) and Buzan, B (et. al.). 1993. *The Logic of Anarchy* (Columbia University Press).

11. The container metaphor views states as containers. As Chilton put it: "States in the system are entities with an inside, an outside and a bounding surface. In such a picture only the surface of separate containers is in contact. The contents – that is the citizens – are represented as 'exerting pressure' on the bounding surfaces, that is on the governments who are internationally in contact with other governments. The metaphor simply cannot represent people in one state interacting with people in another state, and this is a major drawback. A conception of international citizen relations, indeed of transnational commercial relations, is not accommodated. This is a good example of the way in which a dominant cognitive model can impose limits on thought." Chilton, P. 1991. *The Container Concept of Security: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach.* Stanford University, unpublished paper, p 53.

12. For the equality between the USSR and the U.S. see also pp. 285-286.

13. For a review on recent developments within power analysis, see Guzzini, *Structural Power.*

14. The World Power Index includes military expenditures, military personnel, total population urban population, steel production, and consumption of industrial fuel.

15. See Walt, S. M. 1987. *The Origin of Alliances* (Cornell University Press). On the importance of fear in the continuation of the Cold War, see also Lynch, A. 1992. *The Cold War is Over–Again* (Westview Press) p. 23.

16. From a western perspective, the United States has often been viewed as a *status quo* state and the Soviet Union as a *revolutionary* power. The perception has been that in the postwar era, the United States, on the whole, has been satisfied with living with the world as it is, while the Soviet Union has seen its security as dependent on changing the world. See Gaddis, J. L. 1981. Containment: Its Past and Future, *International Security* 5(4):74-102, p. 79.

17. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed in 1949, it was basically a symbolic act to solidify U.S. political commitment to Europe. Then came the first Soviet nuclear test bomb, the revolution in China, NSC-68, the Korean War and the militarization of NATO started. Europe feared a Soviet attack. (Evangelista p. 136, Mastanduno p. 140) However, as Mastanduno has pointed out in analyzing Cold War trade, "the circumstances surrounding the

outbreak of the Korean War proved to be truly extraordinary, marking perhaps the only instance in the postwar era that West European governments actually feared an imminent Soviet conventional attack." (Mastanduno, M. 1988. Trade as a Strategic Weapon: American and Alliance Export Control Policy in the Early Postwar Period, *International Organization* , 42, (1):145)

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