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A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on After Victory

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A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on *After Victory*[1]

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Commentary in forum on Ikenberry's *After Victory* as Breakthrough Research

British Journal of Politics and International Relations

Introduction

This article presents a foreign policy perspective on Ikenberry's (2001) *After Victory* book and his reflection essay in this special issue. *After Victory* was indeed a breakthrough piece of research, reorienting our understanding of institution-building and creation in post-war moments. The purpose of this commentary is not to critique *After Victory* but to use it as a platform, taking Ikenberry's arguments as a starting point to explore the micro-foundations of the international relations he examines. In other words, here I take the opportunity to ask (and answer): What would a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) perspective add to *After Victory*? What would FPA focus on in the book and in Ikenberry's reflection essay? What would an FPA-inspired future research agenda on institution-building and order creation look like? My argument is that an FPA perspective offers significant insights on the mechanisms underlying states' roles in the creation and maintenance of international orders.

FPA is a subfield within International Relations, first established in the 1950s and 1960s with seminal research by Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin (1954), Sprout and Sprout (1956), and Rosenau (1966). FPA developed into a large research programme

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[1] This commentary benefitted from suggestions by an anonymous *BJPIR* reviewer and from Ryan Beasley.

encompassing many topics including elite-mass relations, institutional and regime designs, and individual and small group psychological processes in leader decision making -- all geared to explaining why and how states make foreign policy decisions that constitute international relations. An essential feature of FPA research is that it does not assume the state is a unitary actor and instead focuses on domestic politics; it opens up the 'black-box' of the state (for overviews, see Hudson, 2005; Kubláková, 2001). While not a single theory, FPA is a distinct perspective with its 'actor-specific focus based upon the argument that 'all that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in human decision makers acting singly or in groups' (Hudson, 2005: 1; see also Kaarbo 2015).

After Victory, like much research in International Relations, largely treats states as unitary and rational actors. As Ikenberry has adeptly demonstrated, this approach goes a long way to explain the development and maintenance of international organizations and international order. An FPA perspective on this topic, however, would 'look behind the curtain', and explore three main areas: domestic politics, leaders' characteristics, and national role-playing. Examining these foundations of international politics offers the study of international orders critical insights on agent-structure relationships, drivers of order change and stability, variation in states' willingness and ability to make and keep multilateral and liberal commitments, leaders' orientations to international orders and norms, and the functioning of orders as social systems of states.

Domestic Politics

First and foremost, an FPA-inspired research approach to *After Victory* would relax the unitary and rational actor assumption and look inside the 'black box' of the

state. Ikenberry acknowledges that his original argument 'does not account for domestic politics' (this issue: 9). Looking inside states would offer another explanation of variation across time and space in the character of international orders that Ikenberry (2001) explores. Variation in different peace settlements, agreements on international institutions, and order creation and maintenance would be investigated with a focus on the domestic politics of the states involved: differences in hegemons, differences in liberal democracies, and differences in the weaker states that enter into the 'institutional bargains' (Ikenberry, 2001: 258) that are part of international order creation and maintenance. An FPA approach would explore how these differences can be explained by variation in political institutions, domestic interests, and ruling parties.

FPA conceptualises the role of different domestic political institutional arrangements in many ways. Most relevant to *After Victory*'s arguments is the nature of their institutions – either liberal or authoritarian, as institutional arrangements can have profound effects on the ways states engage with others. FPA research, challenging the central premise of the institutional explanation of the democratic peace (e.g., Doyle, 2008; Maoz and Russett, 1993), demonstrates significant differences in foreign policy and foreign policy decision making within the category of liberal democracies and within the category of authoritarian states.

Within democracies, institutional arrangements vary a great deal. Whether a state has a presidential or a parliamentary system, for example, can affect states' level and nature of international commitments (e.g., Elman, 2000; Hagan, 1993; Lantis, 2008; Palmer, London, and Regan, 2004: Saideman and Auerswald, 2012), including commitments to international orders. States' legislative powers to constrain executives in their foreign policies vary considerably across and within presidential

and parliamentary systems (e.g., Mello and Peters, 2018; Peters and Wagner, 2011; Ruanio and Wagner, 2017) and foreign policy would expect states with strong legislatures to be less able, generally speaking, to enter into and deliver on strategic bargains to support international cooepration. Within parliamentary systems, foreign policy decisions may be taken by single party cabinets or multiparty coalition cabinets. This institutional characteristic can have profound effects on states' international relations. Coalitions, for example, tend to be extreme in their foreign policy behaviors and single party governments tend to be moderate (Clare, 2010; Kaarbo and Beasley, 2008; Oktay, 2014) and coalitions' foreign policy behaviours also differ depending on the number of parties in the cabinet and the level of support in parliament (Beasley and Kaarbo 2014). Thus, counter-intutitive as it may seem, coalitions may be more willing to commit to international institution-building than states ruled by single parites.

Within authoritarian states, governments also vary in institutional arrangements and levels of constraints on foreign policy (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Smith and Siverson, 2004; Debs and Goemans, 2010; Lai and Slater, 2006; Weeks, 2012; Weeks and Crunkilton, 2018). These differences in institutional arrangements and their effects on foreign policy would be an important starting point for research on the institution building and order creation processes in Ikenberry's *After Victory*. The expectation would be that these differences contribute to the type of order, international institutions, and multilateral cooperation that arise after major wars.

An FPA approach to *After Victory* would also include domestic interests outside governing institutions. Various business, labour, ethnic, religious, veteran, and single-issue domestic pressure groups may have interests or identities related to a state's foreign relations with others and may seek to shape the state's participation in

and commitment to international institutions and multilateral cooperation. The ability of interest groups, or domestic political opposition, to influence or take the role of veto players in foreign policy depends on a number of factors, including political opportunity structures, organization, salience, media attention, and public support (e.g., Hagan, 1993; Hill, 2013; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Milner, 1987; Risse-Kappen, 1999; Rubenzer, 2008; Stengel and Baumann, 2018). Veto players can affect liberal trading orders, integration efforts, and international cooperation generally (Alons, 2007; Mansfield, Milner, and Pevehouse, 2007, 2008; Oppermann and Brummer, 2018) – all important in *After Victory* moments. As Skidmore has argued, 'a range of relatively narrow but highly organized political groups have material or ideological reasons to oppose either specific multilateral commitments or multilateralism more generally' (Skidmore, 2005: 220). Skidmore identifies specific interest groups (such as oil companies and labor unions), the military-industrial complex, and nationalist groups as prominent types of anti-multilateral veto players that shaped US foreign policy and order building efforts after the Cold War.

Public opinion may also play the role of veto player, pushing or pulling for more or less multilateral policy. For FPA, however, the influence of public opinion on foreign policy is far from straight-forward as media attention, leaders' beliefs, elite consensus, domestic political institutions, among others aspects of domestic politics, act as significant intervening factors between public preferences and foreign policy decisions (e.g., Baum and Potter, 2015; Foyle, 1999, 2011; Kreps, 2010; Risse-Kappen, 1999). Elites are not, of course, passive agents and can often manipulate public opinion toward their preferred foreign policy options (e.g., Holsti, 2011; Rathbun, 2004; Shapiro and Jacobs, 2000; Villalobos and Sirin, 2012), as U.S. leaders arguably did to resist isolationist public opinion after World War II. Public opinion's

effect on foreign policy in authoritarian systems is no less complicated (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, and Siverson, 2004; March, 2011; Weiss, 2013; Zhao 2013), but can also shape authoritarian leaders' orientations to world orders and strategic bargains.

The public may indirectly affect foreign policy by supporting (through elections or non-democratic means) certain political parties to gain and maintain governing power. FPA research points to the importance of the nature of the ruling parties who control governmental institutions and are the target of domestic pressures. Ruling parties bring to power different ideologies and ideas about international relations and their state's foreign policy priorities (Özkeçeci-Taner 2009; Joly and Dandoy, 2016; Wagner et al., in press). Of particular relevance to *After Victory* are parties' commitments to liberalism generally and to liberal multilateralism specifically. Parties' positions on care values of liberty and equality, for example, often translate into foreign policy preferences (Manow, Schäfer, and Zorn, 2008; Marks and Wilson, 2000; Noël and Thérien, 2008; Rathbun, 2004). Parties and ruling groups also differ in terms of their hawkish/dovish or hardline/moderate orientations and these distinctions are important in not only decisions for war, but also war termination and post-war settlements (Hagan, 1994; Heffington, 2018; Iklé, 2005; Schultz, 2005; Snyder and Diesing, 1977; Stanley, 2009; Vasquez, 1993). When different parties come into power, they can re-orient their states' commitments to international organizations and multilateralism, thereby affecting the stability of the international order.

Overall, an FPA perspective has much to say about the consequences of domestic political conditions for international politics, including states' deviations from national and rational interests. While international relations theories (including liberalism as it is embedded in *After Victory*) have increasingly turned toward

incorporating domestic politics, FPA research tends to offer more complex relationships between a greater variety of domestic actors and states' foreign policies. These relationships implicate states' orientations to liberalism and multilateralism, and *After Victory* order creation.

Leaders

Leaders and their characteristics are a second area that a FPA perspective on *After Victory* would include. A focus on leaders would explore common psychological biases, such as prospect theory's risk orientation in frames of gains and losses (e.g., Levy, 1997; McDermott, 1998; Stein, 2017). There are many other psychological dynamics, now popular in the study of behavioural economics (e.g., Kahenman, 2011; Levitt and Dubner, 2005) but with a long history of research in FPA. These psychological underpinnings of human decision making could be useful in understanding how leaders interpret prospects for a new order, what lessons they learned from past orders, and how they go about making foreign policy choices based on their own beliefs, emotions, psychological needs, motivations and limits in processing information (see, for example, Dolan, 2016; Hafner-Burton et al., 2017; Jervis 1976; Khong, 1992; Larson, 1985; Mercer 2013; Post, 2014; Sylvan and Voss, 1998; Vertzberger, 1990; Yarhi-Milo, 2014; Ziv, 2013).

Another way to examine the importance of leaders in international order and institution-building is to examine their beliefs and personalities. Research in FPA explores how leaders see the world and what instruments (including unilateral or multilateral) they believe are effective, how much they believe they can control events, how complexly they think about international relations, and how they interact with others. Three broad findings in this research are relevant here: 1) leaders vary –

leaders within the same political system and within the same international system believe and act differently; 2) a key difference between leaders is that some respect constraints, others challenge them; and 3) these differences can have profound effects on policymaking processes and foreign policy choices (see, for example, Çuhadar et al., 2017; Feldman and Valenty, 2001; Kaarbo, 1997, 2018; Hermann, 1993; Hermann and Hagan, 1998; Horowitz and Stam, 2014; Saunders, 2011; Schafer and Walker, 2006; Van Esch and Swinkels, 2015).

Leaders' most general beliefs about the world are captured by their operational codes (e.g., George, 1969; Walker 1977). Operational codes include leaders' beliefs about the nature of political life and the effective instruments to achieve policy goals. Analyses of operational codes have been used to explain leaders' orientations towards 'enemies', alliance discord and collaboration, leader learning, and aggressive foreign policies (e.g., Feng, 2005; O. Holsti ,1970; Malici, 2005; Malici and Malici, 2005; Renshon, 2008; Schafer and Walker, 2006; Walker, Schafer, and Young 1999) – all relevant to *After Victory*'s central concern of post-war order.

Personality approaches focus on leaders' basic traits and ways of interacting with others. George and George's (1964) seminal work, for example, traced the U.S. failure to ratify the League of Nations Treaty partly to Woodrow Wilson's rigid and uncompromising personality. More recent personality research (known as Leadership Trait Analysis) focuses on seven individual traits – belief in ability to control events, conceptual complexity, need for power, distrust of others, in-group bias, self-confidence, and task orientation. This research has demonstrated that profiles of leaders with these seven traits systematically link to, for example, leaders' orientation to multilateralism and international norms, levels of conflict in foreign policy, diversionary use of force, and policy failures (Brummer, 2016; Dyson, 2009; Foster

and Keller, 2014; Hermann, 1980; Preston, 2001; Schafer and Crichlow, 2010; Shannon and Keller, 2007). A key argument in the Leadership Trait Analysis research programme is that some leaders are very responsive to contextual and institutional incentives and demands, while other leaders come to power with policy visions and ignore, manipulate, or defy political obstacles. Leaders' personalities therefore underlie leaders', and their states', orientations to international orders.

Leaders should be particularly important during the times that *After Victory* is interested in – when rules and norms are being redefined, when the system is in flux, when systemic imperatives are unclear – these are the moments when agency, and agents' individual characteristics, become more important (Byman and Pollack, 2001; Greenstein, 1992; Hagan, 2001; Hermann, 2015). And indeed, leaders are present throughout the Ikenberry's empirical chapters, including Tsar Alexander, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, British Foreign Minister Bevin, and Mikhail Gorbachev. An FPA approach would focus on these agents and their characteristics more directly.

Ikenberry (this issue) does address leaders and their beliefs. He notes that President George W. Bush and other administration officials 'openly questioned the value of the institutions and bargains that were at the heart of the postwar order' (Ikenberry, this issue: 7) and believed that these institutions were an 'encumbrance' (Ikenberry, this issue: 7). In FPA terms, they challenged constraints. Ikenberry also acknowledges Trump's beliefs that are 'actively hostile to liberal institutionalism' and question the 'non-zero-sum character' of multilateral agreements and alliances and that he might not even '*see* the deeper architecture of postwar order' (Ikenberry, this issue: 9, *emphasis added*). Trump provides strong evidence of the importance of leaders, their beliefs, and their perceptions (Jervis, 2017; Kaarbo, 2017). And even if it is the case that breaking with long-standing institutions and norms means these

leaders and their states will eventually 'pay a price', as Ikenberry (this issue: 8) argues, the break itself is an important event, and a decision maker's choice, to be explained. An FPA explanation would focus on the decision making agents themselves, and their psychological characteristics, as key to understanding such orientations to international structures.

Role-Playing

The third area that a FPA perspective on institution building and order creation could include is national roles and role-playing. Role theory[2] uses the theatre metaphor and conceptualises states as playing national roles on the world stage. Roles are social positions (Thies, 2003) and 'repetoires of behaviour, inferred from others' expectations and one's own conceptions, selected at least partly in response to cues and demands' (Walker, 1991: 23). Role theory was first introduced to International Relations by KJ Holsti in 1970 and subsequent research has focused on how national role conceptions influence foreign policy (e.g., Grossman, 2005; Le Prestre, 1997; Walker, 2013; Wish, 1980), the material, historical, and cultural origins of national roles (e.g., Breuning 1997; Chafetz, Abramsom, and Grillot, 1996; Maull, 1990/91), domestic contestation over national roles (e.g., Brummer and Thies, 2014; Cantir and Kaarbo 2016; Wehner and Thies, 2014), and role expectations and socialization by external actors (e.g., Beasley and Kaarbo, 2018; Beneš and Harnisch 2015; Malici and Walker, 2017; McCourt 2012; Thies, 2013;). Role research in FPA has experienced a recent resurgence, given its potential to speak directly to agent-structure relations (e.g., Breuning, 2011, 2018; Harnisch, Bersick, and Gottwald, 2016; Thies and Breuning, 2012).

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[2] Although 'role theory' is not a theory per se, more a theoretical framework, I use the term for convenience and custom.

After Victory and Ikenberry's reflection article already use the language of role theory, such as 'functional roles' as part of the international order (this issue: 1) 'the hegemonic role' (this issue: 9) 'center stage' (this issue: 1), and 'roles, …[as] aspects of the postwar order' (this issue: 9). A FPA role theory take on *After Victory* would see the re-ordering of international order, the establishment of new 'norms of sovereignty' (this issue: 16),[3] the creation of institutions, and related strategic bargaining as occurring in a social system in which states as actors are holding roles. A role approach might also see this order-building as essentially the construction of a role system – as roles are relational, one actor cannot play the leader or the hegemon if others do not take up the role of followers or system supporters. Who will be the faithful ally, who the bridge builder, who must play neutral roles? This is what is being negotiated in these critical historical junctures, from a role theory perspective. These systems, for role theorists, would be more than a reflection of power relationships built on material capabilities, they would also reflect norms of behaviours (and the 'accumulated understandings and expectations') that Ikenberry discusses (this issue: 1).

Critically for an FPA-role theory approach, states have agency to define their own roles and accept, reject, or alter-cast the roles sought by others.   States' own national role conceptions are "policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, rules, and actions suitable to their state and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems" (KJ Holsti, 1970: 246). Role conceptions can thus come from leaders' individual beliefs and ideologies (as discussed in the previous section) or from leaders' interpretations of their states' history, cultural, and material

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[3] For a discussion of the relationship between roles and sovereignty norms, see Beasley and Kaarbo (2018).

capabilities. A state may not have a consensus on which national role(s) to pursue; roles may be contested internally and the domestic politics of the state (as previously discussed) will affect which role(s) are predominant and how stable roles are. All of these processes that influence national role conceptions have consequences for states' proclivities for multilateral efforts and their contributions to international organizations, international norms, and international orders. Indeed, role transformation (stemming from either internal or external pressures, or both) itself may be a source of order change or instability and role theory, with its conceptualisation of the relational nature of social roles is distinctly capable of capturing system level change in orders, while maintaining an agency focus.

The very creation of a new international order could be seen as a role location process and roles might be another, in Ikenberry's terms, 'mechanism to institutionalize and restrain power' (this issue, p.4). While there is a considerable amount of research on the origin of states' individual roles, we know less about how role *systems* are constructed and Ikenberry's work would be very valuable to role theory in this way. Role theory, in turn, can inform the socialization processes that Ikenberry discusses as one form of binding and restraining mechanisms (this issue: 13). For role theory, socialization includes more than internalization of norms and involves socialization into roles. As Thies argues, 'role theory's articularted views on the socialization process stand in stark contrast to the underdeveloped models of socialization associated with norms' (2010: 696). Socialisation, as a role location process, has been applied to regional orders (e.g., Aggestam 2006; Barnett 1993; Beneš and Harnisch 2016), rising powers (Harnisch, Berick, and Gottwald 2016; Wehner 2015), novice states (Thies 2013) and aspirant states (Beasley and Kaarbo

2018) – all of this research fits nicely with and could contribute to Ikenberry's conceptualisation of socialization as a mechanism of order building and maintenance.

Conclusions

FPA research has much to say to the important topics covered by Ikenberry in *After Victory* and in his reflection article in this issue. After all, the international relations in post-war settlements, international institution building, and order creation and maintenance are the products of layers of foreign policy decisions. FPA would also speak to much of the action in international politics that occurs *before victory* – for example, decisions for war and during wartime. These too have the conditions that elevate the importance of decision-making and the characteristics of decision-makers. A dialogue between FPA and *After Victory* offers considerable potential to explore and connect macro-level dynamics and micro-foundations. Historically, IR theorists such as Ikenberry have been disconnected from FPA research and FPA researchers have not always effectively oriented their work to the grand debates of IR (Kaarbo, 2015). *After Victory*'s rich empirical analysis lends itself easily to FPA's focus on underlying mechanisms, particularly those that affect agent-structure relationships, drivers of order change and stability, variation in states' willingness and ability to make and keep multilateral and liberal commitments, leaders' orientations to international orders and norms, and the functioning of orders as social systems of states. In turn, Ikenberry's research can motivate future FPA work on many questions, such as how defeated states are redesigned via their roles, the influence of leaders in international institutional design, and how changing domestic conditions contribute to unstable international orders. From an FPA perspective, attention to the micro-foundations is a necessary part of understanding international

relations, given that macro-level dynamics and structures are filtered through and interpreted by individuals situated in domestic institutions and internal political systems.

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