http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9981-3989
Marijke Breuning
University of North Texas

Investigating Leaders: Integrating the Study of Individuals in Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations

Abstract: Foreign policy analysis (FPA) has long studied leaders and individual decision makers. In contrast, international relations (IR) long favored the system level of analysis, treating the state as an abstract unitary actor. However, IR has begun to rediscover the individual level of analysis, making this an opportune time to consider the contributions of both FPA and IR to the study of leaders and decision makers. This article reviews how FPA and IR study individual decision makers, highlighting prominent approaches in each field, comparing these approaches – highlighting similarities, differences, and connections – and discusses appropriate applications of each in empirical research. The contribution ends with suggestions for integrating the FPA and IR approaches to the study of leaders and individual decision makers, highlighting how this integration benefits the ability of both FPA and IR to address interesting research questions regarding the role of leaders and individual decision makers in international politics.

Keywords: international relations, foreign policy analysis, individual level analysis, leaders, decision makers

The study of international relations (IR) long favored the system level of analysis, emphasizing theories that sought to explain international politics on the basis of the interactions of states. This approach posits that it is not necessary to study leaders or decision makers, because structural factors ultimately trump the behavior of individuals (Singer, 1961; Waltz, 2010 [1979]). Although structural realism differs from classical realism (e.g. Morgenthau, 1985), it also claims roots in Thucydides' account of the Pelopponesian wars in ancient Greece (1982). Thucydides' history includes the widely cited Melian dialogue, which conveys that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides, 1982, p. 351 [book V, chapter 89]). But is this always so? There is reason to doubt it.

In recent work, Guimarães (2021) shows that there are circumstances under which small states can exercise power over larger states. In doing so, he reinforces that international politics cannot be fully explained by an understanding of relative power alone. He persuasively demonstrates that we must look beyond structural explanations and consider the role of ideational factors, which depend on the perceptions and interpretations of leaders and decision makers (Guimarães, 2021). He is not the first to do so (e.g. Levy, 1994; Hudson, 2005; Shannon and Kowert, 2012). However, Guimarães' (2021) research is particularly useful in delineating the specific circumstances under which small (and less powerful) states can influence larger (and more powerful) neighbors. His work presents a direct challenge IR's long held assumptions about the centrality of (material) power and the desirability of the systems level of analysis (Singer, 1961; Morgenthau, 1985; Waltz, 2010 [1979]).

To be sure, the claim that ideational factors and decision-making matter does not negate the importance of structural factors. Instead, the claim recognizes that structural explanations can be fruitfully complemented by state and individual level explanations. This article focuses on the individual level, because the study of leaders remains less well-developed in IR and disconnected from scholarship in FPA (Snyder et al., 2002 [1962]; Hudson, 2005; Kaarbo, 2015).

The renewed attention for the study of leaders in IR over the past decade or so makes this an opportune time to consider the contributions of both FPA and IR in this area, and to consider how the two might be better integrated. However, before turning to these discussions, I illustrate the dearth of interconnection between FPA and IR, and sketch some of the consequences this disconnect has had for progress in the field.

IR and the "lost" level of analysis

Over the past decade, IR scholars have begun to "bring human beings back into the IR theoretical enterprise" (Hudson, 2002, p. 17; see also Hafner-Burton et al., 2017). Whereas system level theories assume that states react in similar ways to the incentives placed before them and need to be differentiated only in terms of their relative capabilities (or material power), FPA theories assume that the interactions between (and across) states are "grounded in *human decision makers acting singly or in groups*" (Hudson, 2005, p. 1, italics in original).

As a field, FPA has long accepted Simon's (1985) recommendation that scholars empirically investigate how decision makers arrive at an understanding of a situation. For instance, Snyder et al. (2002 [1962], p. 59) argued that "the key to the explanation of why the state behaves the way it does lies in the way its decision-makers as actors define their situation". In contrast, many scholars in IR

assumed they could just "calculate the rational response to a fully specified situation", which Simon (1985, p. 303) deemed "far easier" than "painstaking empirical research".

The effort to understand the situation (and the world) from the perspective of the decision maker is grounded in an acceptance that human rationality is not only bounded by "the constraints imposed *both* by the external situation and by the capacities of the decision maker" (Simon, 1985, p. 294, italics in original), but also subject to the "frailties of motive and reason" (Simon, 1985, p. 303; see also Kahneman, 2011).

The importance of this insight is recognized by Hafner-Burton et al. (2017), who suggest that IR can benefit from greater attention to the perspective of decision makers, referencing Simon (1985) and Kahneman (2011). This presents a renewed opportunity for integrating FPA and IR. However, IR scholars who value the individual level of analysis have "largely ignored" relevant work in FPA (Kaarbo, 2015; Thies and Breuning, 2012).

For example, Goemans et al. (2009) and Chiozza and Goemans (2011) present the history of IR as if FPA scholarship, produced across several decades, simply does not exist. They argue that a focus on state and individual level variables was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, pointing to Snyder et al. (1962) as a key work focusing, *inter alia*, on leaders. They then claim that Waltz' (1979) influential *Theory of International Politics*, "forced a major shift in focus […] to the international system" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 6; see also Goemans et al., 2009, p. 270). In their telling, there was a renewed focus on explanations at the state level starting in the 1990s and a return to the individual level and leaders starting in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Goemans et al., 2009, p. 270; Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 6).

This history of IR is accurate only insofar as it highlights the dominance of system level analysis for most of the second half of the twentieth century. However, it overlooks that scholars who identified with the subfield of FPA maintained a focus on both state and individual level explanations during this time period (Kaarbo, 2015; Hudson, 2005). Several strands of research that focused on leaders persisted in FPA, even as system level analyses dominated the study of IR.

First, Chiozza and Goemans (2011, p. 6) mention Leites' (1951) work on the operational code – a strategy for studying decision makers' beliefs and their implications for foreign policy action – as an example of work predating the shift to the system level of analysis. They neglect to mention that the operational code framework was further developed and empirically tested by several scholars (e.g. George, 1969; Holsti, 1977; Walker, 1977; 1983; Young and Schafer, 1998). It remains an active research program today (Schafer and Walker, 2021).

Second, Hermann (1978; 1980a) developed her strategy for studying leaders' psychological traits during the same period. Hermann's strategy, called

leadership trait analysis (or LTA), has been employed by numerous other scholars, especially after it became possible to use machine coding to complete leader profiles (e.g. Kaarbo, 1997; Kaarbo and Hermann, 1998; Young and Schafer, 1998; Schafer, 2000; Young, 2000; Preston, 2001; Dyson, 2006).

Third, scholarship focusing on decision makers' perception and cognition – and its consequences for decision-making – dates from this period as well (e.g. Jervis, 1976; Cottam, 1977; Herrmann, 1985; Vertzberger, 1990; Sylvan and Voss, 1998; Mintz et al., 2017). It, too, continues to be part of the landscape of research at the individual level of analysis (Herrmann, 2017; Kaarbo, 2015).

These three types of work focusing on the individual level – operational code, LTA, and the study of perception and cognition – are not exhaustive of the various strategies for studying leaders that thrived among FPA scholars even as IR maintained a singular focus on the system level. That said, the cited works demonstrate that the study of leaders was not abandoned, as claimed by Goemans et al. (2009), but persisted and flourished in FPA. However, much of this literature remains "lost" to scholars in IR. Moreover, calls for a renewed focus on the individual level of analysis in IR were first voiced by FPA scholars shortly after the end of the cold war (Hudson and Vore, 1995; Hudson, 2002), whereas the rediscovery of the individual level of analysis in IR is more recent (Horowitz et al., 2005; Goemans et al., 2009; Chiozza and Goemans, 2011; Hafner-Burton et al., 2017).

In sum, the study of leaders in IR and FPA remains largely disconnected, leading to duplication of effort. Consider Horowitz et al's (2015, p. 179) conclusion that "leaders do matter; heads of state are not simply interchangeable or continuously overwhelmed by exogenous factors". This mirrors Snyder et al's (2002 [1962], p. 144) much older argument that "information is selectively perceived and evaluated in terms of the decision-maker's frame of reference. Choices are made in the basis of preferences which are in part situationally and in part biographically determined". In other words, Horowitz et al's (2015) conclusion that leaders are not interchangeable was not new, but reflected what FPA scholars has long since concluded. The renewed interest in leaders in IR makes this an opportune time to compare the contributions of FPA and IR, and to investigate how the two might be better integrated.

Foreign policy analysis and the quest to understand leaders

FPA contains several distinct strands of research focused on the individual level of analysis. However, it is important to note that FPA is not solely about the study of leaders and decision makers. Instead, while the field accepts human decision makers as the "ground" of IR (Hudson, 2005), it also accepts that human decision makers are embedded in domestic and international structures

– and are both products of the social structure of which they are a part, as well as agents who can effect change in (aspects of) that structure (Snyder et al., 2002 [1962]).[1] Most important, FPA eschews general theory in favor of middle range theories that are tested empirically to improve understanding of the phenomena under study. In addition, it aims to identify connections between various middle-range theories and findings to build the foundation for general theory (Snyder et al., 2002 [1962]; Hudson, 2005).

A second aspect of the field is its desire to yield knowledge that serves the practice of international politics (George, 1993; 1994). Hence, it is not surprising that the modern study of leaders had its origins in psychological profiles completed at the request of the US Government during World War II (Dyson, 2014). As Dyson (2014) recounts, these profiles were based on insights derived from psychoanalysis, then the state of the art in psychology.

Scholarship on individual decision makers seeks to understand personal traits, beliefs, attitudes, and/or cognitions, because these provide insight into the leader's perspective on the world. That insight, in turn, helps make sense of – or anticipate – both the leader's definition of the situation and preferred course of action. A challenge for all scholars studying these psychological aspects of decision makers is that evaluations must be made without direct access to the subject of inquiry (Dyson, 2014). In addition, the type and quantity of information that is available may vary, depending on the individual and the (type of) state he or she represents. For some leaders, it is possible to collect extensive interview transcripts and speeches. For others, much less data is available.

For example, there was little information on the Soviet Union's leadership in the early post World War II period. At the same time, the United States' government was eager to gain insight into the political leadership of the Soviet Union. Hence, scholars sought to devise ways to study leaders from afar. Leites' (1951; 1953) work on the Soviet Union represents an early attempt to understand the beliefs of leaders, as well as their implications for foreign policy action. He called his empirical strategy the operational code. George (1969, p. 191) judged that to be a "misnomer", because the information Leites was after was not a deterministic guide to behavior. Instead, he expected decision makers' belief systems to be an important – but not the sole – influence on their decision-making. Instead, Leites' operational code sought to establish the "norms, standards, and guidelines that influence the actor's choice of strategy and tactics, his structuring and weighing of alternative courses of action" (George, 1969, p. 191).

George (1969) built on Leites' work by distilling the operational code into two sets of five questions: the first set addresses key philosophical beliefs that shape a decision maker's perspective on international affairs. The second set

---

[1]   The relationship between agent and structure has been the focus of work on national role conceptions and symbolic interactionism in FPA (Breuning 2011; 2017; 2019).

addresses key instrumental beliefs that guide a decision maker's choice of objectives, strategies, and assessment of the risks associated with different strategies. The ten questions that George (1969) formulated were used by several scholars in subsequent profiles (Holsti, 1970; 1977; Tweraser, 1974; Walker, 1983; 1990). These studies used extensive historical and contemporary source materials to distill a profile, usually organized as responses to the ten questions. Such studies not only relied on the researcher's interpretation of the source materials, but were also quite time-consuming to complete.

Dissatisfied with the approach, Walker and colleagues (Walker et al., 1998; Schafer and Walker, 2021) developed the verbs-in-context system (VICS) that made it possible to employ machine coding for operational code analysis (OCA). The ability to code large amounts of text quickly, reliably, and systematically produced a new generation of studies that maintains the viability of the operational code research program (Marfleet, 2000; Schafer, 2000; Schafer and Crichlow, 2000; Malici and Malici, 2005; Marfleet and Miller, 2005; Schafer and Walker, 2021).

Before VICS created a strategy for systematic (and computerized) coding of the operational code, however, Hermann (1974; 1978; 1980a) introduced her leadership trait analysis (LTA). Hermann is a psychologist by training (Hudson, 2005). Using this background, she devised a strategy to systematically measure the personality traits of leaders at a distance. Like researchers employing the operational code, she was specifically interested in traits that are relevant for foreign policy making (Hermann, 1980a). The initial version of LTA employed six traits, whereas later versions include seven (Hermann, 1980a; 2002; 2005). In addition to producing measures comparing leaders on the individual traits, Herman also integrated leaders' performance on the individual measures into comprehensive orientations to foreign affairs (Hermann, 1987).

What differentiates Hermann's (1980a) effort from the operational code is that it was more easily amenable to systematic empirical analysis. Whereas the operational code originally relied on case study methodology (and investigator interpretation), LTA coded for the presence of specific words and transitioned to systematic, computer-assisted, content analysis at an early stage. LTA's early computer-assisted coding system identified key words and provided their context (several words before and after the key word). This output was then processed by human coders, who relied on detailed coding manuals. Hermann (1980a) reported both intercoder reliability and trait reliability scores to demonstrate that the coders produced consistent results and that the traits were stable across time and issues.

In the mid-1990s, the computer-assisted coding was replaced with machine coding (Young, 2000; Hermann, 2002; 2005; Young and Hermann, 2014). Dyson (2014) explains that quantitative content analysis techniques, like those for LTA, "process the speech of political leaders according to standardized analytical

schemes in order to understand their beliefs about the world" (Dyson, 2014, p. 674). As with OCA, machine coding facilitated the use of LTA.

Despite the transparent insight offered into the coding scheme in Hermann's (1980a) first peer-reviewed article on LTA, her approach immediately drew criticism (Rasler et al., 1980, see also Hermann, 1980b). Perhaps it did not help that one of the measures, cognitive complexity (also called integrative complexity), is also used to show systematic variation in language during international crisis and in the lead-up to surprise attack or conflict (Suedfeld and Tetlock, 1977; Suedfeld and Bluck, 1988; Suedfeld and Jhangiani, 2009). Hence, the measure represents both an indicator of a stable personality trait and a variable that might signal heightening tensions or impending conflict between countries. To address this, Dille and Young (2000) specifically investigate the stability of the measure of conceptual complexity over time. They show that Hermann's measure is robust, although they also note that individual leaders differ in the degree to which they exhibit stable cognitive complexity over time. This makes sense, because some leaders are more sensitive to their environment than others (Dille and Young, 2000).

Cuhadar et al. (2017) do not directly test whether some leaders are more sensitive to their environment and cannot weigh in on that debate. However, they use LTA to investigate whether three Turkish leaders who served as both prime minister and president exhibited changes in beliefs and preferences as they changed roles. They show that leaders are not static but also that their personal characteristics remain fairly stable across different institutional roles, although not equally so for all three leaders in their sample and also not equally across all traits. Task focus offers to clearest difference across roles: the leaders move from a focus on problem solving to one that emphasizes building relationships (Cuhadar et al., 2017).

In a related study, Yang (2010) demonstrates that a leader's cognitive complexity affects their reaction to negative feedback. In response, leaders exhibiting high cognitive complexity will be more willing to change course than those with low cognitive complexity. This last study employs LTA's cognitive complexity as an explanatory variable – a new direction that connects well with the use of data on leaders in IR, as will become clear in the next section. However, the dearth of studies using leader profiles (or specific indicators thereof) in explanatory models is a weakness of both OCA and LTA research to date.

Before concluding the overview of leadership analysis in FPA, however, there are some additional issues to note. First, as also indicated in the previous section, OCA and LTA are not the only type of individual level studies, or leader profiling techniques employed in FPA, although they have long been dominant. For example, Gallagher and Allen (2014) employ the Big Five – five key traits including neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness. Individuals' performance on these indicators is presumed to be stable

through adulthood, which makes them suitable to predict behavior (Gallagher and Allen, 2014, p. 3). Employing Big Five data for US presidents coded by presidential biographers, Gallagher and Allen (2014) show that personality traits do affect foreign policy choices.

Second, most quantitative content analysis is produced using texts in (or translated into) English, which may distort meaning or nuance if the speech was not originally in that language. To mediate this, there are now efforts to code text in other languages (Brummer et al., 2020). Since leaders are likely to be most comfortable expressing themselves in the language they use most frequently, coding schemes in that language may be better able to pick up on nuances in their utterances (Brummer et al., 2020).

Third, there is ongoing debate about the validity of at-a-distance measures. Hermann (1980a) favors spontaneous remarks as a more reliable measure of a leader's personality traits. Several studies comparing spontaneous and prepared remarks, which may be written by a speechwriter, as well as public and private remarks support the validity of studying leader personality in his manner (Young and Schafer, 1998; Dille and Young, 2000; Marfleet, 2000; Schafer and Crichlow, 2000). That said, the issue has not been definitively resolved.

In sum, the quest to understand the beliefs, motivations, and preferences of leaders and decision makers has deep roots in FPA. Strategies like OCA and LTA, once dominant, are now complemented by other strategies, such as the Big Five (Gallagher and Allen, 2014). Further, much of the early work presented leader profiles by themselves. This was due in part to the origins of such studies, but also because of the substantial labor required just to generate the profiles. More recent work (Yang, 2010), uses LTA as an explanatory variable in statistical models. As will become evident in the next section, this strategy is promising and connects with the use of leadership variables in IR.

International relations and the return of the study of leaders

In contrast to FPA, systematic individual level analysis is a relatively recent arrival in IR. Scholars in IR began to incorporate state level variables in their analyses in the 1990s, but individual level analysis emerged only in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Goemans et al., 2009; Chiozza and Goemans, 2011). Second, in contrast to FPA's focus on leader personality and cognition, individual level analyses in IR are more likely to emphasize measures regarding a leader's background, experience, and age. Third, the most prominent studies in IR employ these individual level variables to explain a leader's propensity to initiate conflict and war – rather than other aspects of international politics.

One of the earliest efforts that includes individual level variables investigates "how leaders' incentives to remain in power influence and are influenced by international conflict behavior" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003, p. 443). The leadership variables in this study are limited to the leader's tenure in office. This empirical strategy builds on earlier research on the political survival of leaders (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003).

Subsequently, Goemans et al. (2009) expanded their effort to include additional leader attributes. Their Archigos dataset codes "when and how leaders came into power, their age, and their gender, as well as their personal fate one year after they lost office" (Goemans et al., 2009, p. 269). In a later study, these scholars explain that their focus is "not so much on the psychological attributes of leaders as on their incentive structures and institutional constraints" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 6). The Archigos dataset encouraged other researchers in IR to return to the individual level of analysis.

Horowitz et al. (2005, p. 671), using data from an early version of the Archigos dataset, explore the impact of the leader's age on the likelihood that they initiate or escalate a dispute or conflict. The authors note a common perception that young men behave more rashly and, hence, that young leaders may be prone to escalate conflicts. They contrast this with the observation that older leaders are likely to have consolidated their political influence, but have shorter time horizons, which makes them more willing to take risks (Horowitz et al., 2005). They find that age matters: older leaders are more prone to initiating and escalating conflicts, and this effect is more pronounced for older leaders in democracies than in personalist autocracies (although the effect is strongest in intermediate regimes).

Chiozza and Goemans (2011, p. 4) point out that "almost all wars begin because of conscious decisions by leaders". Instead of simply relying on the leader survival argument (see above), they propose that "[w]hen it comes to decisions about international conflict, the most important political distinction among countries concerns how leaders are selected, replaced, and treated in retirement" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 7).

Specifically, they argue that leaders with a "high risk of regular removal from office [e.g. through elections or term limits], […] become *less* likely to initiate international conflict" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 5, italics in original). In contrast, leaders who "anticipate a forcible removal from office – e.g. a looming revolt, revolution or coup – have little to lose and much to gain from international conflict" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 5). This is so, they argue, because forcible removal from office often has the additional consequence that leaders are killed, imprisoned, or exiled. For leaders who face regular removal from office, on the other hand, keeping (or losing) their position does not depend on whether they win (or are defeated in) a military conflict. Hence, the latter have little incentive to go to war.

The Archigos dataset, which codes detailed information on how leaders came into and exited office, as well as their fate after losing office, allows Chiozza and Goemans (2011; see also Goemans et al., 2009) to test these propositions. It also paves the way for other research on individual level variables in large-N, systematic statistical analyses. Horowitz et al. (2005) focus on the leader's age, which is also included in later work by Horowitz et al. (2015). However, the later study emphasizes leaders' life experience – specifically, their military experience.

Horowitz et al. (2015, see also Horowitz and Stam, 2014) used Archigos as a foundation to build their Leader Experience and Attribute Descriptions (LEAD) dataset. Convinced that experiences early in life "provide crucial markers to help predict which leaders are more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior on the international scene", Horowitz et al. (2015, p. 10) coded key experiences they expect to affect the military behavior of leaders. They are not the first to argue that formative experiences shape leaders' behavior later in life (e.g. Jervis, 1976), but their LEAD dataset now makes systematic analysis of such propositions possible.

Key to their inquiry, Horowitz et al. (2015) consider the role of experience in either the state's military or in a rebel organization, and differentiate between those who did and did not have combat experience. They argue that "those leaders with prior military service but no combat experience should actually be the most prone to react to that experience by becoming more aggressive and more likely to use force" (Horowitz et al., 2015, p. 39).

Others have taken up the baton of individual level analysis in IR. For instance, Lupton (2018) employs data from Archigos to investigate whether leaders who have developed a reputation for resolve during crisis are less likely to be targets of subsequent aggression. She finds that it matters how resolve is measured: a simple dichotomous measure (resolute/irresolute) is less useful than one that can measure resolve in relative terms (and relative to the triggering event). Lupton's (2018, p. 214) research includes not only individual level variables but also state level variables and concludes that "the behavior of leaders is important independent of state-level behavior".

Another effort is McManus (2021), who builds on the Archigos dataset to examine whether a leader's reputation for madness makes them more successful at coercing opponents. Her study uses the Archigos dataset to identify the universe of leaders for the period 1986–2010 and then uses news sources to code references to leaders as crazy, insane, or irrational (McManus, 2021, p. 281). She explicitly mentions that she is interested in the consequences of a leader's *public reputation* for madness, not whether the individual can be diagnosed as mad in any clinical (psychological) sense (McManus, 2021, p. 280). McManus' (2021) study shows that, contrary to arguments advanced by others, systematic evidence indicates that a reputation for madness is generally harmful. She concludes that "that leaders should be very cautious about cultivating a reputation

for madness" (McManus, 2021, p. 291). More generally, McManus (2021, p. 290) concludes that her findings "support the growing consensus in the international relations field that leaders matter".

What is new in IR research based on the Archigos and LEAD datasets, is the recognition that the individual level of analysis yields "new, but also more powerful explanations for international conflict than state- or system-level theories of war" (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011, p. 11). This sentiment is echoed by Horowitz et al. (2015, p. 11; see also Horowitz and Stam, 2014), who argue that leaders "play a critical role in shaping international politics". These IR scholars not only recognize the importance of leaders, but also that leaders are constrained by their "selectorate", which may "remove the leader from office" if he or she "strays too far from [their] policy preferences" (Horowitz et al., 2015, pp. 7–8).

Such observations indicate broad agreement with Hudson's (2005, p. 1) argument that human decision makers – a.k.a. leaders – are the ground of the discipline, as well as a willingness to consider complex, multi-level explanations. Hence, efforts like the Archigos and LEAD datasets, and the research programs they foster, make a reconnection of IR and FPA possible.

Connecting FPA and IR through individual level analysis

The previous two sections describe some of the more visible research in both FPA and IR employing the individual level of analysis. Neither FPA nor IR are solely focused on this level of analysis. Although the above sections paint only a partial picture, the discussion shows that FPA and IR have approached individual level research in rather different ways. Notably, IR's rediscovery of the individual level of analysis includes little reference to decades of scholarship in FPA (Kaarbo, 2015). Instead, IR scholars conclude that "leaders matter" as if they believe that this is a novel observation (Chiozza and Goemans, 2011; Horowitz and Stam, 2014; Horowitz, 2015; Lupton, 2018; McManus, 2021).

The divergence between IR and FPA emerged due to the former's strong preference for the system level of analysis. IR scholars viewed this as the most promising route to scientific advances in the field (Singer, 1961; Waltz, 2010 [1979]). FPA became the refuge of those scholars who, following Snyder et al. (2002 [1962]), maintained not only that leaders mattered, but also that satisfactory explanations required the incorporation of multiple levels of analysis – individual, state, and system – although not always in one single project. Although FPA scholars familiarized themselves with research in IR, the reverse was not invariably true.

It is therefore not surprising that Hafner-Burton et al. (2017) place the renewed interest in individual level analysis in the context of research in other social sciences, such as economics and psychology, and specifically "the seminal

work of Kahneman and Tversky" (Hafner-Burton et al., 2017, p. S2). Of course, the work of the latter two scholars spans decades: its beginnings can be traced to a co-authored article that was first published almost fifty years ago (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Kahneman, 2011).

Kahneman and Tversky questioned the conventional approach to the study of judgment and decision-making (which assumed objective rational choice) and empirically demonstrated that individuals use a variety of "simplifying shortcuts of intuitive thinking", also called heuristics (Kahneman, 2011, p. 8; see also Simon, 1985; Ariely, 2008). Over time, their work has led to a shift in the social sciences, which is defined by "the use of empirical research on preferences, beliefs, and decision making" (Hafner-Burton et al., 2017, p. S2).

According to Hafner-Burton (2017, pp. S4–S5), this new direction promises payoffs in the form of, one, "more empirically realistic models of individual decision-making processes" and, two, a better understanding of "how we move from individual to collective decision making". FPA scholars recognize these objectives. They have long looked to the ideas pioneered by Tversky, Kahneman, and Simon to develop empirically testable propositions regarding foreign policy decision-making, which influenced the field's engagement with psychology (e.g. Vertzberger, 1990; Singer and Hudson, 1992; Sylvan and Voss, 1998; Mintz et al., 2017).

However, even before these ideas influenced FPA research, scholars were pursuing realistic models of decision-making – situating leaders in advisory systems, the broader structures of government, as well as the domestic and international environment (Snyder et al., 2002 [1962]; Rosenau, 1974; East et al., 1978; Wilkenfeld et al., 1980; Callahan et al., 1982; Hudson and Vore, 1995; Hudson, 2005). In brief, FPA scholars have long engaged with research in psychology and economics that investigated the limitations on human rationality.

In seeking the payoffs outlined by Hafner-Burton et al. (2017), IR as a field has begun to recognize that human decision makers are indeed the "ground" of the field (Hudson, 2005, p. 1). It also (tacitly) acknowledges the value of the "painstaking empirical research" (Simon, 1985, p. 303; see also Snyder et al., 2002 [1962]) necessary to build more realistic models of individual decision-making processes. This should be the moment that IR and FPA reconnect. Unfortunately, IR's new research at the individual level of analysis has not engaged very deeply with the relevant FPA literature. This can be explained, in part, by the differences in the approach to the study of leaders. Whereas FPA tends to focus on psychological aspects of leader personality, IR endeavors to collect descriptive data on leader background, experience, and other attributes.

These divergent approaches do have connection points. For instance, Horowitz et al. (2005) explicitly engage with findings from psychology. They do so to develop a theory regarding the impact of age on leadership and decision-making. In other words, they employ the psychological literature as a foundation for their

theoretical propositions, but their empirical measurement is rather straightforward. As long as the leader's birth year is known, calculating his or her age is not controversial.

In contrast, the measures employed by Hermann (1980a) rely on a more complex justification. Her measures evaluate psychological traits on the basis of the leader's use of language, as recorded in transcripts of interviews and other spontaneous comments. This requires, first, the acceptance of the proposition that an individual's personality traits are visible in a predilection for using certain words and, second, that the words employed in the coding scheme indicate what the investigator claims in a reliable manner. For example, Hermann (1974, p. 214) asserts that certain words reflect high conceptual complexity and others to reflect low conceptual complexity. She is not the only researcher who employs such linguistic indicators. However, there has long been debate about whether leaders' speech provides reliable indicators regarding personality or motivation (Holsti, 1976; Rasler et al., 1980).

The individual level measures employed by the Archigos and LEAD datasets avoid getting entangled in such debates. Likewise, McManus (2021) uses content analysis of news sources to code whether leaders have a public reputation for madness. She explicitly disavows a claim regarding the psychological state of leaders (McManus, 2021). The advantage of this approach is that it presents a much lower threshold to persuasion. No matter how valid Hermann's (1974; 1980a) measures are, they require a deeper engagement with the connection between the mind and linguistic expression than do the measures of leader background and experience employed by the recent work on leaders in IR. This makes the latter more intuitive to a broader audience.

That said, IR scholars could clearly benefit from excavating the trajectory that research at individual level analysis has taken in FPA and connecting their work more explicitly to it. They might explain why age or military experience reveals as much about a leader's choices as their conceptual complexity or need for power and influence (Hermann, 1980a; 2002). At the same time, FPA scholars might consider whether the kind of measures used by the new IR scholarship complement, or substitute for, the psychological measures employed currently.

One area in which the fields are converging is in the complementary use of qualitative case studies and quantitative large-N analyses. IR has found a new appreciation for the use of case studies to underscore the plausibility of proposed theoretical dynamics or to make sense of outliers, whereas FPA is once again interested in moving beyond case studies to large-N analyses. In addition, both FPA and IR are now more likely to employ experimental research.

A more extensive dialogue between IR and FPA could benefit the further development of theory, conceptualization/operationalization, and empirical analysis at the individual level. Both draw on research on judgment and decision--making in psychology and economics. The detailed comparative assessment

of the differences in current work – a trend towards psychological profiles in FPA; a tendency towards descriptive indicators in IR – are a productive starting point for further dialogue. This will be especially true if the conversation centers around the conceptual adequacy and potential substitutability of these indicators.

Conclusion

The reintegration of FPA with IR will benefit and enrich current developments in both fields. In this article, I have sketched prominent research on leaders in both FPA and IR, noting the differences between the most prevalent approaches to individual level analysis in the two fields. That discussion was framed by the observation that IR scholars who pursue individual level analysis appear to be largely unaware of decades of effort in FPA.

Hence, scholars in IR will benefit from excavating the decades of "lost" individual level research in FPA. The early versions of OCA and LTA did not easily lend themselves to be employed as explanatory variables in statistical analyses. However, Yang (2010; see also Hermann, 1987) employed the LTA measure on cognitive complexity in such a way, pointing to the possibility that measures of psychological traits can be incorporated into large-N statistical studies. At the same time, FPA scholars will benefit from considering if and when the descriptive indicators employed by IR scholars in datasets such as Archigos and LEAD can suitably substitute for some of the more complex psychological measures the field currently employs. This points to the potential profitability of a careful assessment of the relative merits of psychological versus experiential measures of leaders.

Overall, FPA scholars should applaud IR's interest in building "more empirically realistic models of individual decision-making processes" (Hafner-Burton et al., 2017, p. S4) and share their experience with producing and empirically testing such models. IR's interest in such realistic models suggests that Snyder et al's (2002 [1962], p. 59) emphasis on decision makers and their definition of the situation was prescient, and that revisiting this classic is still worthwhile. The renewed focus on individual level analysis and decision-making suggests that Hudson's (2005, p. 1) claim that human decision makers are the "ground" of IR has now been broadly accepted.

References

Ariely, D. (2008). *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions*. New York: Harper.

Breuning, M. (2011). "Role Theory Research in International Relations: State of the Art and Blind Spots". In: S. Harnisch, C. Frank, H.W. Maull (eds.). *Role Theory Research in International Relations: Conceptual Challenges and Political Promise*. London–New York: Routledge.

Breuning, M. (2017). "Role Theory in Foreign Policy". In: C. Thies (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis / Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Breuning, M. (2019). "Role Theory in Politics and International Relations". In: A. Mintz, L. Terris (eds.). *Oxford Handbook of Behavioral Political Science*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brummer, K., Young, M.D., Özdamar, Ö., Canbolat, S., Thiers, C., Rabini, C., Dimmroth, K., Hansel, M., and Mehvar, A. (2020). "Coding in Tongues: Developing Non--English Coding Schemes for Leadership Profiling". *International Studies Review* 22(4), pp. 1039–1067.

Bueno de Mesquita, B., Siverson, R.M. (1995). "War and the Survival of Political Leaders: A Comparative Study of Regime Types and Political Accountability". *American Political Science Review*, 89(4), pp. 841–855.

Bueno de Mesquita, B., Smith, A., Siverson, R.M., Morrow, J.D. (2003). *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Callahan, P., Brady, L.P., Hermann, M.G. (eds.) (1982). *Describing Foreign Policy Behavior*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Chiozza, G., Goemans, H.E. (2003). "Peace through Insecurity: Tenure and International Conflict". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 47(4), pp. 443–467.

Chiozza, G., Goemans, H.E. (2011). *Leaders and International Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cottam, R. (1977). *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory and a Case Study*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Cuhadar, E., Kaarbo, J., Kesgin, B., Ozkececi-Taner, B. (2017). "Personality or Role? Comparisons of Turkish Leaders Across Different Institutional Positions". *Political Psychology*, 38(1), pp. 39–54.

Dille, B., Young, M.D. (2000). "The Conceptual Complexity of Presidents Carter and Clinton: An Automated Content Analysis of Temporal Stability and Source Bias". *Political Psychology*, 21(3), pp. 587–596.

Dyson, S.B. (2006). "Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair's Iraq Decisions". *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2(3), pp. 289–306.

Dyson, S.B. (2014). "Origins of the Psychological Profiling of Political Leaders: The U.S. Office of Strategic Services and Adolf Hitler". *Intelligence and National Security*, 29(5), pp. 654–674.

East, M.A., Salmore, S.A., Hermann, C.F. (eds.) (1978). *Why Nations Act*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Gallagher, M.E., Allen, S.H. *(*2014). *"*Presidential Personality: Not Just a Nuisance*"*. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *10(1), pp. 1–21.*

George, A.L. (1969). "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-making". *International Studies Quarterly*, 13, pp. 190–222.

George, A.L. (1993). *Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice*. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace.

George, A.L. (1994). "The Two Cultures of Academia and Policy-Making: Bridging the Gap". *Political Psychology*, 15, pp. 143–171.

Goemans, H.E., Gleditsch, K.S., Chiozza, G. (2009). "Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders". *Journal of Peace Research*, 46(2), pp. 269–283.

Guimarães, F. de Sá (2021). *A Theory of Master Role Transition: Small Powers Shaping Regional Hegemons*. New York: Routledge.

Hafner-Burton, E., Haggard, S., Lake, D.A., Victor, D.G. (2017). "The Behavioral Revolution and International Relations". *International Organization*, 71(S1), pp. S1–S31.

Hermann, M.G. (1974). "Leader Personality and Foreign Policy Behavior". In: J.N. Rosenau (ed.). *Comparing Foreign Policies*. New York: Wiley.

Hermann, M.G. (1978). "Effects of Personal Characteristics of Leaders on Foreign Policy". In: M.A. East, S.A. Salmore, C.F. Hermann (eds.). *Why Nations Act*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hermann, M.G. (1980a). "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders". *International Studies Quarterly*, 24, pp. 7–46.

Hermann, M.G. (1980b). "On 'Foreign Policy Makers, Personality Attributes, and Interviews: A Note on Reliability Problems'". *International Studies Quarterly*, 24(1), pp. 67–73.

Hermann, M.G. (1987). "Role Theory and Foreign Policy Dynamics: The African Arena". In: S.G. Walker (ed.). *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hermann, M.G. (2002). "Assessing Leadership Style: A Trait Analysis". Social Science Automation, https://socialscience.net/docs/LTA.pdf Accessed 20 June 2021 (accessed: 30.06.2022).

Hermann, M.G. (2005). "Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis". In: J.M. Post (ed.). *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders. With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Herrmann, R.K. (1985). *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Herrmann, R.K. (2017). "How Attachments to the Nation Shape Beliefs About the World: A Theory of Motivated Reasoning". *International Organization*, 71(S1), pp. S61–S84.

Holsti, O.R. (1970). "The 'Operational Code' Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: John Foster Dulles' Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs". *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 3, pp. 123–157.

Holsti, O.R. (1976). "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively". In: R. Axelrod (ed.). *Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Holsti, O.R. (1977). "The 'Operational Code' as An Approach to the Analysis of Belief Systems". Final Report to the National Science Foundation. Grant No. SOC75-15368. Duke University.

Horowitz, M.C., McDermott, R., Stam, A.C. (2005). "Leader Age, Regime Type, and Violent International Relations". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49(5), pp. 661–685.

Horowitz, M.C., Stam, A.C. (2014). "How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders". *International Organization*, 68(3), pp. 527–559.

Horowitz, M.C., Stam, A.C., Ellis, C.M. (2015). *Why Leaders Fight*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hudson, V.M. (2002). "Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Touchstone for International Relations Theory in the Twenty-First Century". In: R.C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, B. Sapin. *Foreign Policy Decision-Making (Revisited)*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Hudson, V.M. (2005). "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations". *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1(1), pp. 1–30.

Hudson, V.M., Vore, Ch.S. (1995). "Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow". *Mershon International Studies Review*, 39, pp. 209–238.

Jervis, R. (1976). *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kaarbo, J. (1997). "Prime Minister Leadership Styles in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Framework for Research". *Political Psychology*, 18(3), pp. 553–581.

Kaarbo, J. (2015). "A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR Theory". *International Studies Review*, 17(2), pp. 189–216.

Kaarbo, J., Hermann, M.G. (1998). "Leadership Styles of Prime Ministers: How Individual Differences Affect the Foreign Policymaking Process". *Leadership Quarterly*, 9, pp. 243–263.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Leites, N. (1951). *The Operational Code of the Politburo*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Leites, N. (1953). *A Study of Bolshevism*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Levy, J.S. (1994). "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield". *International Organization*, 48(2), pp. 279–312.

Lupton, D.L. (2018). "Reexamining Reputation for Resolve: Leaders, States, and the Onset of International Crises". *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 3(2), pp. 198–216.

Malici, A., Malici, J. (2005). "The Operational Codes of Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung: The Last Cold Warriors?". *Political Psychology*, 26(3), pp. 387–412.

Marfleet, B.G. (2000). "The Operational Code of John F. Kennedy During the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Comparison of Public and Private Rhetoric". *Political Psychology*, 21(3), pp. 545–558.

Marfleet, B.G., Miller, C. (2005). "Failure after 1441: Bush and Chirac in the UN Security Council". *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1(3), pp. 333–360.

McManus, R.W. (2021). "Crazy Like a Fox? Are Leaders with Reputations for Madness More Successful at International Coercion?". *British Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), pp. 275–293.

Mintz, A., Redd, S.B., Tal-Shir, E. (2017). "The Poliheuristic Theory of Decision-Making". In: W. Thompson (ed.). *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morgenthau, H.J. (1985). *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, revised by K.W. Thompson. 6th ed. New York: Alfred Knopf.

Preston, T. (2001). *The President and His Inner Circle*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Rasler, K.A., Thompson, W.R., Chester, K.M. (1980). "Foreign Policy Makers, Personality Attributes, and Interviews: A Note on Reliability Problems". *International Studies Quarterly*, 24(1), pp. 47–66.

Rosenau, J.N. (1974). *Comparing Foreign Policies: Theories, Findings, Methods*. New York: Wiley.

Schafer, M. (2000). "Issues in Assessing Psychological Characteristics At-A-Distance: An Introduction to the Symposium". *Political Psychology*, 21, pp. 511–527.

Schafer, M., Crichlow, S. (2000). "Bill Clinton's Operational Code: Assessing Source Material Bias". *Political Psychology*, 21(3), pp. 559–571.

Schafer, M., Walker, S.G. (eds.) (2021). *Operational Code Analysis and Foreign Policy Roles: Crossing Simon's Bridge*. New York: Routledge.

Shannon, V.P., Kowert, P.A. (eds.) (2012). *Psychology and Constructivism in International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Simon, H.A. (1985). "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science". *American Political Science Review*, 79, pp. 293–304.

Singer, E., Hudson, V. (eds.) (1992). *Political Psychology and Foreign Policy*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Singer, J.D. (1961). "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations". *World Politics*, 14(1), pp. 77–92.

Snyder, R.C., Bruck, H.W., Sapin, B. (1962). *Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Snyder, R.C., Bruck, H.W., Sapin, B. (2002 [1962]). *Foreign Policy Decision-Making (Revisited)*. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Suedfeld, P., Bluck, S. (1988). "Changes in Integrative Complexity Prior to Surprise Attacks". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 32(4), pp. 626–635.

Suedfeld, P., Jhangiani, R. (2009). "Cognitive Management in an Enduring International Rivalry: The Case of India and Pakistan". *Political Psychology*, 30(6), pp. 937–951.

Suedfeld, P., Tetlock, P.E. (1977). "Integrative Complexity of Communications in International Crises". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 21(1), pp. 169–184.

Sylvan, D.A., Voss, J.F. (eds.) (1998). *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thies, C., Breuning, M. (2012). "Integrating Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations through Role Theory". *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8(1), pp. 1–4.

Thucydides (1982). *The Peloponnesian War*, ed. T.E. Wick. New York: Random House.

Tversky, A., Kahneman, D. (1974). "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases". *Science*, 185(4157), pp. 1124–1132.

Tweraser, K.K. (1974). *Changing Patterns of Political Beliefs: The Foreign Policy Operational Codes of J. William Fulbright, 1943–1967*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Vertzberger, Y.Y.I. (1990). *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Walker, S.G. (1977). "The Interface Between Beliefs and Behavior: Henry A. Kissinger's Operational Code and the Vietnam War". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 21, pp. 129–168.

Walker, S.G. (1983). "The Motivational Foundations of Political Belief Systems: A Re--Analysis of the Operational Code Construct". *International Studies Quarterly*, 27(2), pp. 179–202.

Walker, S.G. (1990). "The Evolution of Operational Code Analysis". *Political Psychology*, 11(2), pp. 403–418.

Walker, S.G., Schafer, M., Young, M.D. (1998). "Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis: Measuring and Modeling Jimmy Carter's Operational Code". *International Studies Quarterly*, 42(1), pp. 175–190.

Waltz, K.N. (2010 [1979]). *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Wilkenfeld, J., Hopple, G.W., Rossa, P.J., Andriole, S.J. (1980). *Foreign Policy Behavior: The Interstate Behavior Analysis Model*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Yang, Y.E. (2010). "Leaders' Conceptual Complexity and Foreign Policy Change: Comparing the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Foreign Policies toward China". *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3(4), pp. 415–446.

Young, M.D. (2000). "Automating Assessment At-a-Distance". *The Political Psychologist*, 5, pp. 17–23.

Young, M.D., Hermann, M.G. (2014). "Increased Complexity Has Its Benefits". *Political Psychology*, 35, pp. 635–645.

Young, M.D., Schafer, M. (1998). "Is There Method in Our Madness? Ways of Assessing Cognition in International Relations". *Mershon International Studies Review*, 42, pp. 63–96.