

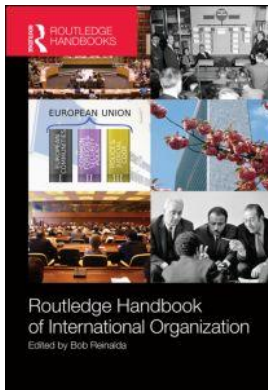
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Secretaries-General of international organizations

Leadership capacity and qualities

Kent J. Kille

In the study of international organization actors, a key area of focus has been the leaders of these organizations. While the executive heads of international organizations are labeled with a variety of titles, including Chairman, Director-General, Executive Director, General Secretary, and President, Secretary-General is both the most common and, given the particular emphasis that has been placed on the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, highest-profile title used to capture this position. However, despite the important role a Secretary-General can play in international affairs, research has to date provided an incomplete understanding of leadership provided by office-holders. To begin with, the great majority of studies have been carried out on the UN Secretary-General. While such an emphasis has led to a solid gathering of knowledge in certain areas regarding this office, the work on the UN Secretary-General has also tended to be limited in scope due to the primary focus on peace and security and greater analysis of certain office-holders compared to others.

More broadly, the focus on the UN significantly limits our understanding of Secretary-General leadership as the office-holders of other international organizations have been largely ignored or understudied. There are a few exceptions to this rule, but by and large there is a paucity of information on Secretary-General leadership across different organizational contexts. The research that is in place most often focuses on one organization, which does not provide for cross-organizational comparison or consideration of cross-office collaboration. The literature on the Secretary-General has also largely been descriptive, thereby lacking strong analytical frameworks or theoretical grounding.

This chapter explores these core themes, starting with the existing literature on the UN Secretary-General before moving on to present studies that tackle executive head leadership in other institutional settings, including work comparing international Secretariats or embedding Secretary-General leadership within the Secretariat that can shed light on approaches to the study of the Secretary-General. The analytical frameworks employed to specifically study the Secretary-General are then detailed, before moving onto a discussion of the growing effort to connect the understanding of Secretary-General leadership to developments in international organization theorizing. Each section provides an overview of the related material, and explains the main issues and research developments. The chapter concludes with linked suggestions for ways forward in the study of the Secretary-General

position that will bolster our understanding of the leadership capacity of the position and qualities of the individuals holding the office.

Research emphasis on the United Nations Secretary-General

The literature on Secretary-General leadership has been dominated by a focus on the UN Secretary-General. There has been a long-standing, and continuing, interest in carrying out extended analyses of the UN Secretary-General (Schwebel 1952; Gordenker 1967, 2010; Rivlin and Gordenker 1993; Chesterman 2007). However, there has been wide variation within the study of the UN Secretary-General in terms of the issues, activities, and individuals examined, and thereby the knowledge accumulated in these areas.

The primary emphasis on the study of the UN Secretary-General has been in the realm of international peace and security (Boudreau 1991; Newman 1998). In part this has been due to the Secretary-General's attention and activities often being drawn to this issue area, but there are analyses of other global problems such as engagement with human rights that seek to expand understanding of the role capability of an office-holder (see the work by Ramcharan, including that of 2002; Van Boven 1991; Forsythe 1993). However, this level of focus has helped to establish a strong understanding of the UN Secretary-General's role in relation to particular methods used to maintain peace. This includes fact finding (Bourloyannis 1990; Dorn 1995), good offices (Franck and Nolte 1993; Brehio 1998), diplomatic engagement in peacefully resolving disputes (Cordovez 1987; Skjelsbaek 1991), prevention of civil war (Pasternack 1994), and the use of "groups of friends" (Krasno 2003; Whitfield 2007). Useful details of how different Secretaries-General have handled certain security issue areas are also presented; for example, in relation to nuclear disarmament (Rydell 2009) and terrorism (Comras 2010).

More generally, the political role of the UN Secretary-General has been explored in detail (for instance, Goodrich 1962; Elarby 1987; Murthy 1995). In total, the potential authority of a Secretary-General leads one analysis of the political role to conclude, "All these avenues allow the SG to shape the institutional context and normative milieu within which personal influence must be wielded" (Thakur 2006: 324). While there are many different emphases on the study of the UN Secretary-General, other areas that have gained attention include selection of the office-holder (Urquhart and Childers 1996; Keating 2007), the Charter basis of the office (Goodrich et al. 1969; Simma 1994), with particular focus on Article 99 since this grants the Secretary-General the ability to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security" (Schwebel 1951; Dorn 2004), the international legal position of the Secretary-General (Lavalle 1990; Szasz 1991), the role connected to staffing of the Secretariat (Meron 1982; Ameri 1996), and the organizational structure (Ramcharan 1990; Williams 2010) and reform (Beigbeder 2000; Franda 2006).

There has clearly been more in-depth exploration of some UN Secretaries-General over others. This has led to some concern that the roles of certain Secretaries-General are not fully understood (Dorn and Pauk 2009). However, there is in-depth work focused on each Secretary-General who has left office thus far, including Trygve Lie (Barros 1989; Gaglione 2001), U Thant (Bingham 1966; Nassif 1988), Kurt Waldheim (Finger and Saltzman 1990; Ryan 2001), Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (Kanninen 1995; Lankevich 2001), and Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Rivlin 1996; Burgess 2001), which is much more than can be said for most office-holders in other international organizations.

At the same time, this level of coverage is limited compared to the burst of interest over Kofi Annan that emerged during his tenure (for example, Rieff 1999; Ramo 2000; Maniatis

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2001; Gourevitch 2003), with a particular analytical emphasis on his UN reform efforts (such as Bhatta 2000; Prins 2005; Zifcak 2009), as well as later full-length book treatments (Traub 2006; Meisler 2007). In addition, the study of the second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, has developed into a virtual cottage industry, which has established a deep understanding of the leadership he provided and exploration of the person behind the office (highlights include Lash 1961; Zacher 1970; Urquhart 1972). The interest in Hammarskjöld has been consistent across time, with his tenure being “revisited” (Jordan 1983), then returned to on the 100th anniversary of his birth (Ask and Mark-Jungvist 2005), and renewed yet again recently on the 50th anniversary of his death (Melber 2011; Hanley and Melber 2011).

Secretaries-General across international organizations

Those studying the UN Secretary-General have often made claims such as, “The Secretary-General of the United Nations is a unique figure in world politics” (Chesterman et al. 2008: 132), which has helped to bolster the analytical emphasis on this office. However, this approach also undermines the ability to build understanding of Secretary-General leadership by examining the role being played by heads of different organizations, and precludes the carrying out of long-called-for comparative work (Zacher 1969). Yet, there has been some important work on international organization leadership beyond the UN Secretary-General. As the precursor to the UN, the League of Nations Secretary-General has received attention. At times this is as part of anthologies looking across the League and the UN (Rovine 1970; Fosdick 1972) or in comparison to the transition to the UN, but the office (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1945) and individual office-holders have also been specifically chronicled (Barros 1969, 1979; Gageby 1999).

A few studies have examined leaders in different parts of the UN system, including the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Bhattacharya 1976), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Finkelstein 1988), the World Bank (Schechter 1988; Kraske 1996), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Loescher 2001), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Blackhurst 2012). Yves Beigbeder’s (1997) examination of the “leadership issue” in UN management considers different forms and roles, as well as the appointment process across the UN system, while other research has focused solely on the selection process across organizations, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and WTO (Kahler 2001), and analysis across a wide range of UN system heads during the time period 1945–70 (Hoole 1976).

There has been good progress in the study of the Secretaries-General of certain intercontinental and regional organizations. Illustrative of this is the Commonwealth Secretary-General, whose leadership has been analyzed (Doxey 1979, 1989; Chan, especially 2005; Mole 2010) as well as examined in conjunction with the Secretariat (in particular Leach 1971; Akinrade 1992). Due in great part to the earlier work carried out by Robert Jordan (especially 1979) and the recent extensive research by Ryan Hendrickson (most comprehensively 2006, 2010a) there is also a much clearer view of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-Generalship (see also Hoogenboezem 2009).

The limited research examining the UN Secretary-General relative to regional organization executive heads indicates the feasibility and importance of such work. The relative powers of the UN and Organization of American States (OAS) Secretaries-General has been explored (Caminos and Lavalley 1989); and looking across the NATO and UN Secretaries-General in relation to the handling of Kosovo establishes not only the relative leadership provided by each organization’s Secretary-General, but also the cross-office interaction that

can occur (Kille and Hendrickson 2010). In a different UN–European cross-office study, it is demonstrated that the same expansionist leadership-style analytical approach can be used to study executive head positions in both the UN and the European Union (EU) (Kille and Scully 2003). The potential for detailing the lives of a great number of Secretaries-General, and providing the basis for considering their social and professional connections, led to the launching of the IO BIO Project. This project is designed to produce an extensive *Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations* with entries designed to allow for exploring cross-Secretary-General linkage, as well as the capability to undertake broader Secretary-General comparative analysis (Reinalda and Kille 2012).

Such vital cross-organizational analysis has also been present in the comparative study of international organisation Secretariats. For example, Jarle Trondal et al. (2010) stress the need for such comparative research and carry out an in-depth study of international organization bureaucracies across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), EU, and WTO, while Alexandru Grigorescu (2010) takes a larger-N approach by examining bureaucratic oversight mechanisms as applied to 73 international organizations. An extended examination of the administration of international organizations includes a specific analysis of senior management, which looks across different executive heads and related management issues (Davies 2002).

International organization Secretariats and the Secretary-General

As Michael Davies' research has shown, there is value in examining the administrative place that a Secretary-General holds in the Secretariat when observing across organizations. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to review the range of work on international secretariats, it is important to acknowledge and illustrate how some of this work provides assistance for understanding Secretary-General leadership as head of the Secretariat. In other words, the insights from broader analyses across Secretariats can be used for analytical leverage where the Secretary-General is presented as a component of this work. In addition, recent work in this area also demonstrates the importance of and capability for carrying out comparative research using detailed analytical frameworks and theoretical principles that carries important implications for the specific study of the Secretary-General.

As James Jonah (2007: 170) succinctly states: “Key to the success of the Secretariat is its leadership . . . the competence, capability, and general character of any Secretary-General have an impact on the effectiveness of the Secretariat.” Thus, analyses of the UN Secretariat have often placed an emphasis on the relative place and role of the Secretary-General (Bailey 1964; Myint-U and Scott 2007). In his key analysis of international organization, Inis Claude (1971) notes the issues facing the international secretariat and the place of the Secretary-General, where office-holders have had different approaches in addressing these. The wide-ranging UN Intellectual History Project was developed around the idea that “people matter” in the development of global ideas and activities, which of course includes the Secretary-General (for example, Weiss et al. 2005); and, building upon Claude's (1996) distinction of the “First UN” (member-states) and “Second UN” (Secretariat), such an approach extends to considering how to bolster the capability of those working in international organizations (for example Weiss 2010).

In examining the use of force across Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo, Ralph Zacklin (2010) emphasizes the intentional analytical focus on the Secretariat as an actor, instead of just the Secretary-General, but does present the Secretary-General's role in the context of Secretariat engagement and legal position and acknowledges the importance of the Secretary-General's

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“voice” in representing the Secretariat. A study of the World Health Organization (WHO) Secretariat’s norm entrepreneurship capability in the area of global disease regulations includes mention of the appointment and engagement of a new Director-General as an advantageous factor in helping to promote progress (Kamradt-Scott 2010). The extensive study *Managers of Global Change: The Influence of International Environmental Bureaucracies* (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009) demonstrates the importance of employing strong analytical frameworks and theoretical grounding for comparative analysis, and includes the dimension of “organizational leadership” which is found to be significant across their case analysis of nine different organizations. In an earlier related piece, Steffen Bauer (2006: 23, 45; see also Bauer 2008) emphasizes such a “need for a substantive and systematic research effort that analyses the activities of international organizations” since, in this case, “systematically addressing the contributions international governmental secretariats can make to effective environmental governance is thus essential for a comprehensive analysis of global environmental politics.”

Analyzing Secretary-General leadership

Such systematic analysis has often been lacking in the study of the Secretary-General, which has been critiqued from early on for this limitation present in the literature (Knight 1970). The classic basic analytical distinction is the simple duality of Secretary versus General, which has focused discussion from early on and has generally continued to dominate the discourse on the office. This debate often reflects back to the founding of the League of Nations Secretary-Generalship, including contrasting the administrative “Secretary” approach of League Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond with the active “General” emphasis of his contemporary, Albert Thomas, in the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Alexandrowicz 1962). The dual distinction remains “a crucial recurring theme regarding the secretary-general . . . to what extent do their activities involve independent political roles beyond managerial and administrative functions?” (Smith 2006: 84), although other analytical divisions have been put forth, such as the Secretary-General as prophet, pope, and pharaoh (Adebajo 2009).

There have been other deeper analytical efforts to address international organization leadership. In a widely cited article, Oran Young (1991: 281) argues that leadership “is a critical determinant of success or failure in the process of institutional bargaining,” and therefore in need of closer and better defined understanding, and distinguishes between structural, entrepreneurial, and intellectual leadership accordingly. Robert Cox’s analytical contributions to studying international organization leadership (Cox 1969) and decision making (Cox and Jacobson 1973) continue to resonate in current analysis, as indicated by the revisiting of Cox and Jacobson (Hazelzet 1998; see also Reinalda and Verbeek 2004) and the adaptation of Cox’s framework for studying leadership at the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (Harman 2011; see also Nay 2011). Such analytical repetition, and therefore testing and cumulation of knowledge, is relatively rare in the study of the Secretary-General. However, such an effort can be seen in the direct application of a framework developed to study the OAU Secretary-General across legal-institutional, resource, systemic, and personal factors (Meyers 1976) to the Commonwealth Secretary-General (Doxey 1979). Similarly, Michael Schechter’s (1987) study of systemic conditions, organizational characteristics, and personal characteristics across the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, and the World Bank has been adapted to the Commonwealth setting as well by organizing the analysis along a similar variable structure (Doxey 1989).

More recent efforts tied to UN Secretary-General leadership include the research of Jeong-Tae Kim (2006) and Kent Kille (2006). Both review the existing efforts to study the

office-holders and seek to develop more systematic analysis that builds upon and beyond this work. Kim's "analytic approach" is structured around the range of activity available to an office-holder, based in particular on role-scope and tolerance-scope dimensions, and applied to brief case studies of Lie, Hammarskjöld, Pérez de Cuellar, and Boutros-Ghali. Kille (2006) derives three key leadership styles (manager, strategist, and visionary) and a connected framework for analyzing the avenues of influence available to a UN Secretary-General. The leadership styles for the first seven office-holders are presented, along with detailed case chapters covering Hammarskjöld (visionary), Waldheim (manager), and Annan (strategist) which show how these office-holders' tenures matched well with the behavioral expectations for each style.

International organization theory and the Secretary-General

Kille's leadership style studies (Kille and Scully 2003; Kille 2006) demonstrate how advances from the field of foreign policy analysis can be extended to the study of the Secretary-General, but Secretary-General research has also been making recent strides in drawing upon relevant international organization theory. As scholars have sought to better understand the agency of international organizations, and the potential of international organizations to carve out their own independent capability in international relations, there are clear implications for considering Secretary-General leadership. A principal-agent approach applied to international organization points to member-states as the principals delegating to the institutions that they established (Hawkins et al. 2006). Within such a framework, the Secretary-General can be analyzed as an agent, who may carry out the tasks as instructed or seek to pursue more independent interests, and the opportunities and implications of the office's actions can be examined within the context of the principal-agent structure that exists for a particular international organization.

The work of Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (1999, 2004), emphasizing the need to move beyond a state-centered framework to address the capability of international organizations to exercise authority via their bureaucratic nature, has been particularly influential and inspirational for research related to the Secretary-General. As noted in a report from the workshop "Rediscovering Global Bureaucracies: From Weber to Where?," Barnett and Finnemore's framework "today presents the most elaborate framework for understanding the behavior, pathologies, and powers of IOs" (Bueger and Heßelmann 2011: 90), and this perceived relevance to the study of international organization bureaucracy is reflected in the continual reference to their work in other work on international secretariats. Even when the specific research is not explicitly grounded in related international organization theory, it can be argued that the work can still be usefully drawn upon and connected to the theoretical exploration (Auth 2012).

The particular emphasis in the study of the Secretary-General, which again has been focused on the UN Secretary-General, has been on norms. Simon Rushton (2008), grounding his argument primarily in the work of Barnett and Finnemore as well as Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), details the norm entrepreneurship role of Boutros-Ghali in promoting a norm of democratic governance. Kirsten Haack and Kille (2012) extend the understanding of the UN Secretary-General in the realm of democracy, demonstrating the possibility of self-directed leadership by tracing the development of the UN democracy agenda across Boutros-Ghali and Annan. The analysis highlights the relevance of Secretary-General engagement in shaping the understanding of and approach to democracy as this agenda became increasingly institutionalized and more broadly applied in practice as part of

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the organizational discourse. Ian Johnstone (2007) also tracks the UN Secretary-General as a norm entrepreneur, with a particular emphasis on the three-stage process of norm creation, norm institutionalization, and norm interpretation connected to an analysis of Annan, who he describes as “more conscious” (Johnstone 2007: 123) than preceding office-holders of this potential influential path despite their own norm entrepreneurship engagement. This builds upon his earlier work, in which he argues that the “persuasive powers” of the Secretary-General connect to the office-holder’s role as an interpretive participant in the international legal discourse (Johnstone 2003).

One dimension of international organization authority, and by extension that of the Secretary-General, is “moral authority” where the institution can “claim to be the representative of the community’s interests or the defender of the values of the international community” (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 23). The importance of moral authority to Secretary-General leadership has particularly been stressed in relation to the UN Secretary-General, with questions raised over the relevance to other offices: “Unlike the UN Secretary-General, who is expected at times to exercise his ‘moral authority’ . . . these same expectations have not existed for NATO’s secretary general” (Hendrickson 2010b: 26). However, office-holders outside of the military realm—in particular in relation to human rights and humanitarian issues—could still be connected to moral authority dimensions. One study, which is also grounded in the related literature on religion and international relations and ethics and international affairs, demonstrates the relevance of the UN Secretary-General and moral authority to office-holder decision-making across case studies of the first seven Secretaries-General. It uses a common analytical approach that encompasses an “ethical framework” based on personal religious and moral values in connection to related external contextual cues as well as formative environmental and experiential factors (Kille 2007). In addition, Manuel Fröhlich’s research on Hammarskjöld (in particular 2008) has demonstrated the importance of political ethics in the handling of the office.

Conclusion

From this review of the literature on the Secretary-General, it is clear that progress has been made on researching the office and its holders, but that important work remains to be tackled. First, the research emphasis on the study of the UN Secretary-General has led to useful insights into the functioning of this office, particularly in the realm of international peace and security, and the qualities of those who have served in this position. This work should continue in order to build upon these achievements to provide a closer understanding of all of the Secretaries-General and their engagement across a range of issue areas. The eighth, and current, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon illustrates this need. Although he has already entered his second term in office, there is relatively limited detailed analysis of his time as Secretary-General (Schlesinger 2010; Williams 2010; Gowan 2011; Jonah 2011; on Ban’s selection and implications see Urquhart 2006; Benner 2007; Traub 2007). Ban’s emphasis on environmental issues (see Kanninen and Kostakos 2011) also demonstrates an understudied area of UN Secretary-General engagement, despite the strong study of environmental secretariats that does exist.

However, as stressed across the chapter, there is an even greater need to undertake detailed study of the Secretaries-General of other international organizations in order to overcome this clear gap in the literature. Such research will improve comprehension of Secretary-General leadership in international relations and allow for comparison across international organizations. Analysis can also be further extended to build understanding of

Secretary-General interactions, as well as the differing organizational contexts within which they are operating and the impact that this has on their role. Finally, research on Secretaries-General should be carried out using carefully constructed analytical frameworks, and theoretically grounded in the relevant work, in order to allow for proper testing and cumulation of knowledge.

Recommended for further reading

Gordenker (1967), Cox (1969), Johnstone (2003), Kille (2006), and Hendrickson (2006).

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