Secretary-General Leadership Capacity: Arguments and Evidence from the UN Secretary-Generalship

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As the head of the United Nations (UN) System, the UN Secretary-General provides leadership that both guides the affairs of the UN in relation to humanitarian affairs and models the capacity for leadership by other organizational heads. According to the UN Charter, the Secretary-General serves the member-states as the “chief administrative officer.” However, the leadership capacity of the Secretary-General has greatly extended across time in ways that often assert the independence of the office and the UN beyond member-state control.

This paper closely considers the individual dimensions that impact the leadership provided by UN Secretaries-General, as well as the conditions that mold the personal factors and abilities of office-holders to lead the organization. More specifically, the paper details the important personal characteristics and related leadership styles that provide analytical leverage for understanding the form of leadership provided by a UN Secretary-General in relation to the avenues of influence available to an office-holder. In addition, the paper considers the precursor environmental and experiential factors that might shape the personal values of an individual office-holder and how these values interact with the external political context faced by a UN Secretary-General to guide their decision-making and leadership performance. Evidence is provided from the personal experiences and careers of various UN Secretaries-General. The analysis provides implications not only for the leadership provided by the UN Secretary-General specifically, but also the capacity for leadership by Secretaries-General across a range of international organizations working on humanitarian issues.

In carrying out this task, the paper is designed to connect with and contribute to thinking on the IO BIO Project discussed in a companion paper by Bob Reinalda (2011b) on the same World Conference on Humanitarian Studies panel “Heads of Humanitarian Organizations and
Building upon an earlier IO-BIO working paper, which referenced selections of this author’s research as part of an overview of work on leadership and authority of Secretaries-General of IGOs (Reinalda 2011a), the body of the paper presents an overview of and seeks to synthesize across the full body of this author’s research in order to draw specific conclusions on UN Secretary-General leadership capacity and the broader implications for the IO-BIO Project. Thus, the paper opens with a brief review of the existing UN Secretary-General scholarship, and issues with this work, that could contribute to our understanding in this area. The review is followed by an exploration of the author’s research on personal dimensions of Secretary-General leadership; spanning leadership style, moral authority, and self-directed leadership. The final section details how such leadership dimensions can be traced across different IGO executive heads, and the organizational interconnections that such Secretaries-General can stimulate, to emphasize the ability and importance of examining office-holders across different institutions.

**Debates Within and Limitations of UN Secretary-General Scholarship**

One of the driving motivations of the IO-BIO Project is to fill the clear gap that exists in the coverage of a full range of Secretaries-General, or other executive heads of IGOs operating under different titles, in the existing scholarship. IGO analysts have largely ignored many executive head positions. Where there is coverage at all, the information provided on the position and individuals who have held that office is often very limited.

A clear exception to this rule is the comparably extensive literature that exists on the UN Secretary-General. Thus, studies and analyses of the UN Secretary-General could be viewed as a

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1 Information and work related to the IO BIO Project is available on-line at: http://www.ru.nl/politicologie/koppeling/reinalda/io-bio-biographical/
2 Portions of this section are adapted from Haack and Kille (forthcoming).
useful reference source from which broader lessons can be derived for the study of Secretary-General leadership at other organizations. However, the ability to do so from the previous work in this area is largely restricted by ongoing debates over how to best understand leadership provided by the UN Secretary-General and limitations on the analytical capacity to study the individuals holding the office.

Traditionally, analyses of UN Secretary-General leadership capacity have been built around the relatively simplistic debate over whether the emphasis of the office should be on “secretary” or “general”. Despite rising sentiment that, “Debates about the leadership of intergovernmental organizations return again and again to the same, unhelpful alternatives…Ultimately, however, the strong-weak, leader-clerk debate is a red herring” (Kennedy, 2007: 158-159), the secretary versus general analytical approach largely continues to dominate. For instance, in Leon Gordenker’s (2010) latest work, he touches on the leadership potential for the Secretary-General, returning to the “unrelenting question as to whether the Secretary-General is merely a servant or primarily a commander” (14). The book edited by Simon Chesterman (2007), Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics, reflects the traditional role debate through the very title of the book. As Chesterman explains in the introduction, “The tension between these roles – of being secretary or general – has challenged every incumbent…A central question for each Secretary-General has been the extent to which he…could pursue a path independent of the member states that appointed him.” These competing dual-role expectations of the Secretary-General are continually referenced by contributors throughout the book, although several of the chapter authors seek to extend the categorizations. One contributor, Adekeye Adebajo (2007), categorizes the debate as between

3 For more of Chesterman’s writing on the topic preceding this volume, see Chesterman (2005a, 2005b).
three metaphors – “the pharaoh,” “the prophet,” and “Pope” – and another, Kennedy (2007), encourages more complex role categorization across and beyond notions of “leader,” “clerk,” and “policy entrepreneur.”

The perspective of a Secretary-General being limited to the role of “secretary” can be seen in analyses of the election of current office-holder Ban Ki-Moon. For example, Thorsten Benner (2007) looks to provide advice to Ban that builds upon his view of the previous Secretary-General’s, Kofi Annan, time in office. Benner argues that Annan was able to provide positive leadership in some areas, but generally struggled with management issues and faced great limits placed on the office by member-states’ obstructive disagreements, or at times apathy, and global challenges. Similarly, while encouraging the Secretary-General to do what he can to push beyond serving solely as a secretary, James Traub’s (2007) “Foreign Policy Memo” to Ban points to the limited autonomy and managerial expectations for Ban by the member-states. The member-states are portrayed as focused on their own clashing interests in a manner that precludes establishing harmony through the UN, so that the best a Secretary-General can do is make the UN “work well enough so that they [members] continue to resort to it” (74).

Other analysts stress the continual strong capabilities of the Secretary-General (for example, Bourloyannias 1990; Murthy 1995), thus pointing to a greater chance of “general” leadership by an office-holder. Discussions of such Secretary-General leadership is at times linked to important capabilities that derive from administrative duties (Finger and Mungo 1975; Meron 1982; Szasz 1991; Ameri 1996; Sutterlin 2003), such as shaping and developing UN practices to present to the General Assembly or Security Council in response to global problems.

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4 Along with other published analyses, such as DiMaggio 2006, Urquhart (2006), UNA-USA (2006) and Keating (2007), there were also significant efforts to track and discuss the selection process through on-line forums such as http://www.unsg.org and http://www.unsgselection.org.

5 For more on Benner’s analysis, see Benner (2006); Benner and Luck (2007).
Indeed, work within the Secretariat can provide an important base of support for a Secretary-General’s activities, so that “each Secretary-General, in his own way and in his own political context, has had to push back repeated attempts to roll back Secretariat independence and agency” by states who want a weaker Secretariat (Myint-U and Scott 2007: 118). Office-holders also hold a central strategic political position within the organization that provides for an important potential avenue of influence (Buza 1962; Rikhye 1991; Dorn 2004) and a key public voice and range of activities that can allow them to impact the global agenda (Cordier 1961; Goodrich 1962; Cordovez 1987). In addition, in the realm of maintaining peace and security, Secretaries-General may be involved with both independently initiated and mandated peaceful settlement of dispute missions as well as engagement with UN military peacekeeping interventions (Gordenker 1967; Elarby 1987; Boudreau 1991; Skjelsbaek 1991; Pasternack 1994; Brehio 1998), and can also draw on the resource of “groups of friends” formed to help resolve conflicts (Krasno 2003; Prantl and Krasno 2004; Whitfield 2007a, 2007b).

When these abilities for the office are viewed together, it presents a more impressive possibility for the Secretary-General to take on the role of “general” and lead in the international realm. Indeed, many analysts want to see Secretaries-General using the office’s capabilities to the fullest extent in a courageous manner that promotes and defends UN values (Pechota 1972; UNA-USA 1986; Urquhart and Childers 1996; Ramcharan 1990a, 1990b; Claude 1993). Thus, while some analysts such as Barros (1979, 1983) decry the model of Secretary-General provided by Dag Hammarskjöld, Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist’s (2005) volume The Adventure of Peace: Dag Hammarskjöld and the Future of the UN extols Hammarskjöld as an independent, visionary leader and focuses on the impact and guidance that his time as Secretary-General continues to have on ideals of leadership in the global arena. As one contributor notes, “Even
today, when people are faced with international crises, it is to Hammarskjöld’s words and actions that they turn to for guidance. He has, in fact, become the model for international leadership” (Jones 2005: 193, original emphasis; see also Jones 1994, 2004). Oftentimes, the desire for such leadership is stressed as a need for the Secretary-General to act as a vital “moral authority” operating above and beyond state interests (Narasimhan 1988; Urquhart 1996; Nachmias 1993; Shimura 2001; Ramcharan 2002; Paepcke 2005). In this manner, the Secretary-General transcends simply serving the needs of the member-states, or restraining him or herself to the bureaucratic realm, to reach out as an independent voice on behalf of the UN or, even more broadly, the global citizenry (Lentner 1965; Rovine 1970; van Boven 1991; Dorn 1999).

At the same time, even when analysts note that there are opportunities for independent Secretary-General leadership and ideas, these are often placed within particular delimiting constraints that set out areas that cannot realistically be pursued. Thus, reinforcing the “secretary” dimension of the Secretary-General, many studies place great emphasis on limiting factors external to the office, both organizational (James 1985; Franck and Nolte 1993; Kanninen 1995) and broader environmental dimensions (Jackson 1978; James 1993; Gordenker 1993; Rivlin 1993, 1995; Newman 1998), thereby downplaying the capability of office-holders penned in by such constraints. This is evident in the framework provided by Jeong-Tae Kim (2006), which details how the Secretary-General operates within the “legal-sphere” bounded by the traditional division between the “dual mandate” of administrative and political roles. Within the legal-sphere, a Secretary-General possesses a particular “role-scope” that is “determined by both his own conception of office and awareness of political settings” (72), but is bound within the “tolerance-scope” set by the degree of legitimacy and resources granted by the member-states.
The overlapping area of the role-scope and tolerance-scope provides the “available range for the Secretary-Generalship.”

The notion of particular boundaries and scope of leadership capabilities is also stressed in Thomas Weiss and Peter Hoffman’s (2006) “A Priority Agenda for the Next Secretary-General,” which reports on four moderated meetings held in October and November 2006 and organizes the agenda suggestions into actionable (progress can be made relatively easily), achievable (progress will require strong and bold action but is attainable), and untenable (pressing these issues would be counterproductive due to their divisiveness or difficulty to achieve) categories. Therefore, applied Secretary-General leadership is not required to make actionable progress, will be needed to press for achievable but difficult agenda items, and should not be wasted on untenable issues. Weiss and Hoffman particularly encourage the Secretary-General to attend to Secretariat management issues, where he “could be more a ‘general’ than a ‘secretary’” (24-25).

Recent advances in studying the normative dimension of leadership have moved the study of the UN Secretary-General forward in important new directions beyond the secretary versus general dichotomy. This is well represented by the work of Ian Johnstone (2003, 2007), which includes analysis of Annan’s encouragement of the “responsibility to protect” and the protection of civilians and connects such efforts to contextual considerations. Johnstone concludes, “Ultimately, a Secretary-General’s ‘norm entrepreneurship’ must be aimed at advancing the values embodied in the Charter in light of changing circumstances within the

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6 Kim’s arguments build upon the work of Jorge Viñuales (2005). Although Kim critiques Viñuales for “falling short of some hypothetical clearness,” this is presented as a key area of work in discussing the relationship of legal and political constraints to the operation of the office, which is categorized by Kim as one of the three variables studied in the literature on the Secretary-General, along with political circumstances as an independent variable and personality and leadership as an independent variable. See also Viñuales (2006). Note that Roberto Lavalle (1990) also previously invoked the idea of a “political sphere.”
constraints of what the political traffic will bear” (2007: 138). Recent work by Simon Rushton (2008) reinforces this approach by emphasizing the importance of being a norm entrepreneur to the independence and authority of the Secretary-General and tracking this in relation to Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s efforts to promote democracy. The normative dimension of Secretary-General leadership also plays a key role in the work of Manuel Fröhlich (2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008). Fröhlich has written extensively on the Secretary-General, with a particular emphasis on Hammarskjöld that traces both the roots and impact Hammarskjöld’s political ethics had on the handling of the office and the work of the UN in order to more closely explore “the connection between the private and the public man” (2008: 10) and reflects on the significance of the “Hammarskjöld tradition” for his successors. His analysis shows how political ethics can serve as a “power resource” (2008: 44) and bolstered the type of visionary leadership that Hammarskjöld pursued.

**Dimensions of UN Secretary-General Leadership**

Given the overarching limitations on studying UN Secretary-General leadership outlined in the preceding section, a key emphasis of this author’s research agenda has been to provide stronger and deeper analytical frameworks for studying individual leadership dimensions to ensure that we have a clearer view of the person behind the office. Although designed to move beyond the simple secretary versus general approach, research presented in *From Manager to Visionary: The Secretary-General of the United Nations* (Kille 2006) was built around the leadership styles emphasized in the literature on the Secretary-General. This literature has often reflected the debate, as discussed above, between what was re-labeled as a “visionary” style and a “managerial” style. A visionary serves as a strong, independent leader for the United Nations,
while a manager operates as the humble servant of the member-states. However, many analysts have also pointed to the need for a “strategic” style that bridges the perceived strengths of the visionary and managerial style. Such a strategist recognizes limits on the office but does not completely acquiesce to these, instead carefully and pragmatically working to have an influential role. As previously summarized, “Overall, managers are constraint respecters, while visionaries are constraint challengers, and strategists are constraint accommodaters” (Kille 2006: 58).

While the leadership styles were derived out of previous scholarship, the approach to measuring and exploring the impact of these styles represented an analytical advance. Each leadership style was broken down into a related set of personal traits: belief that can influence, problem solving emphasis, need for recognition, need for relationships, responsivity, and supranationalism. The personal traits for each Secretary-General were measured using assessment-at-a-distance content analysis of office-holders’ answers to press conference questions to establish quantitative scores. These traits were then weighted and combined to create an overall leadership style score. Across a range of behavioral indicators representing the avenues for influence available to a Secretary-General, detailed case chapters covering Hammarskjöld (visionary), Kurt Waldheim (manager), and Annan (strategist) showed how these office-holders’ tenures matched well with the behavioral expectations for each leadership style.

To demonstrate this connection, and to link to the humanitarian theme of this conference, it is illustrative to review the relative handling of UN military intervention by the three office-holders. Waldheim the manager allowed the member-states to dominate the development and implementation of peacekeeping missions. In terms of carrying out the missions, he continued to look for guidance from powerful countries and their interests, while not undertaking independent actions to direct the carrying out of the mission’s mandate. Hammarskjöld the visionary, who is
often referenced as a core founder of peacekeeping ideals and approach, took a very different stance from Waldheim. He inserted himself into every stage of UN peacekeeping efforts, starting with helping to shape the mandates’ creation and implementation, and continuing to closely monitor and seek to influence the operations while they were underway. Annan the strategist worked closely with the member-states in a more collaborative manner when peacekeeping missions were being considered and formulated, and maintained this approach in managing established missions. With an eye toward the long-term implications for the role of the UN in addressing global conflict, he gradually gathered information and prodded new developments in UN military engagement. Overall, the three Secretaries-General representing different leadership styles handled the peacekeeping duties of the office in clearly divergent manners.

Full-chapter analyses of the first seven Secretaries-General (from Trygve Lie to Annan), which extend consideration of the individuals behind the office in a new direction, are provided in the edited volume *The UN Secretary-General and Moral Authority: Ethics and Religion in International Leadership* (Kille 2007). With the Secretary-General seen as a vital “moral authority” in international affairs, this research explores how the personal religious and moral values -- which are captured in the study as the “ethical framework” of an office-holder -- inform the political decisions made while in office. In doing so, the analysis considers a series of related questions: what inner code of religious and moral values composed each Secretary-General’s ethical framework (and to what degree were these values closely held by an office-holder?) What environmental and experiential factors informed the development of this ethical framework (drawing across religious tradition, education, culture, family upbringing, and personal history and experience)? How were the decisions taken by a Secretary-General impacted by the
possession of a particular ethical framework (looking across different issue areas and in relation to ethical dilemmas encountered)? To what degree did the interaction between ethical framework and external context (in the form of UN Charter principles, international political “external code”, and role expectations for the office) shape the decision-making process? What form, if any, of change in an office-holder’s framework emerged during their time in office?

Analysis across the seven case chapters reveals important similarities and differences regarding the religious and moral values that guided the Secretaries-General, but the “weight” of particular values clearly varied depending on the individual office-holder. For example, there is a more “devout” religious group (Hammarskjöld, U Thant, Waldheim, and Annan) and others (Lie, Javier Perez de Cuellar, and Boutros-Ghali) who were raised in a formal religion, but did not consider religious traditions to be a central part of their lives by comparison, although a range of other moral values helped to guide their tenures. Religious tradition, culture, family upbringing, education, and experiential factors all played a part in the development of the office-holders’ ethical frameworks, but the combination of influential factors varied across the Secretaries-General. Similarly, the connection between the ethical framework and role played by the Secretary-General, while always present to some degree, was more explicitly drawn upon by some individuals than others, and clearly showed interaction with the guiding forces in the external context. Finally, evidence of a “feedback loop” from decisions taken to re-shaping the ethical framework (via personal experience) was clear for some Secretaries-General, while the ethical framework components remained more static for other office-holders. In the end, the study revealed important variations across the office-holders consistently linked to dimensions of their ethical frameworks, thus it was concluded that this analytical approach provided a useful avenue of inquiry.
Connecting again to the conference’s humanitarian focus, illustrative examples can be drawn from across case chapters that address how particular Secretaries-General were engaged with UN intervention efforts in Africa. Hammarskjöld fought back against resistance by the UN Security Council to establish a peacekeeping mission in the Congo, stressing the moral standards that dictated the need for action. This was consistent with his ethical framework built in part on the dimensions of peace, equality, and justice. Additionally, his core values of service, self-sacrifice, and neutral integrity shaped his handling of the mission once it was in place. When the Soviet Union used a critique of Hammarskjöld’s approach to the Congo mission to propose a restructured Secretariat “troika” to replace the Secretary-Generalship, he strongly defended his office and its independence and rebuffed the proposed changes. Hammarskjöld placed himself in harms way through direct engagement in the field on several occasions, in the end paying the ultimate self-sacrifice price for his service when he was killed in a plane crash in the Congo.

Hammarskjöld’s successor, Thant, inherited the ongoing mission in the Congo. Thant was the first (and only to this point) Buddhist Secretary-General, and guided the office through the lens of his ethical framework based in part on religious values derived from this faith. Despite the personal abhorrence of the use of force that this engendered in general, Thant carefully pointed to underlying ethical arguments for the need to keep the UN force in place and active. Yet, across the rest of his tenure he continually called for restraint over the use of force to avoid other such situations. He also respectfully declined to intervene to help mediate conflicts without consent of those involved in the conflict, seeking to respect and to be tolerant of all parties.

Boutros-Ghali, a Coptic Christian and international lawyer from Egypt – whose ethical framework encompassed dimensions of tolerance, reconciliation, human rights, centrality of the
state, and democracy – called upon his framework when making key decisions in relation to Somalia. Two decision points were examined: pushing for reconciliation and related disarmament in an expanded mandate put in place in March 1993, and the later attacks by UN sanctioned forces on warlord Mohammed Aideed. Maintaining the centrality of the state tracked across both decisions, but democracy did not play a clear role in either. Tensions also arose across the decisions, with tolerance and reconciliation the emphasis for the March mandate, but human rights trumping the focus on reconciliation and tolerance in the pursuit of Aideed.

Annan, the African replacement from Ghana for Boutros-Ghali when he failed in his bid for a second term, faced many calls for UN humanitarian intervention and assistance during his tenure. This includes addressing the humanitarian crisis, which some went as far as to label genocide, in the Sudanese region of Darfur. Annan’s ethical framework is built around a concern for the human dignity of all people and the commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict, which in part appears to derive from his experience with failures previously in Rwanda as well as Somalia and Bosnia under his watch as head of UN peacekeeping. Thus, when the time came that he was faced with a similar situation as Secretary-General, he was driven to positively address Darfur with staff members interviewed insisting “that his commitment to the people in Darfur was based on his own values and compassion, not on political calculations” (Smith 2007: 323). In doing so, he traveled extensively in the region, despite the time and personal risk involved in doing so, and insisted that Darfur remain a priority for international attention, consistently prodding the Security Council to act and appointing an international commission to investigate.

Overall, this research indicates that individual differences between office-holders are a vital dimension for understanding how Secretaries-General handle their office. As expressed
previously, this research “supports the argument that Secretaries-General must be viewed as individuals who bring a personal style to bear on their activities; in other words, the answer to ‘what is a Secretary-General’ depends upon who holds the office” (Kille 2006: 218). Linking back to leadership capacity and engagement in humanitarian issues, this indicates the need to connect Secretaries-General to personal characteristics and leadership styles, as well as their personal values as they relate to the pursuit of moral authority for the office. Put simply, certain individuals will be more predisposed than others to use the position to pursue leadership in the humanitarian realm, and without this individual level of understanding we will not be able to fully grasp the capacity for leadership provided by a Secretary-General.

At the same time, this research has shown that the contextual constraints highlighted in much of the Secretary-General literature cannot be dismissed. As readily acknowledged early in the research agenda, “Contextual considerations should not be viewed as irrelevant. It has long been acknowledged that successful political leadership does not follow a single pattern but is heavily context-dependent; indeed, the impact of personality traits on behavior of all kinds is strongly mediated by contextual factors” (Kille and Scully 2003: 177). Note, however, that this is not an argument for viewing context as the predominant factor, but instead a call for more closely tracking the interaction of personal factors with the surrounding context. Thus, although the primary emphasis of From Manager to Visionary was to systematically track the impact of leadership style, the concluding analysis of the book undertook an initial effort to relate leadership styles to contextual factors. It was posited in general that personal traits and contextual variables should not be viewed as competing factors, but instead that the interaction of the two areas should provide the greatest explanatory value. This line of argument was connected directly to the differences between visionary, managerial, and strategic leadership
styles as well. As noted earlier, the three leadership styles can be related to how office-holders view constraints: as something to be respected, challenged, or accommodated; and these expectations are linked to a brief analysis of the tenures of Waldheim, Hammarskjöld, and Annan drawn from the case study chapters to show how this held true.

Given these conclusions, contextual factors were more explicitly incorporated into *The UN Secretary-General and Moral Authority* from the start. As outlined earlier in this paper, in relation to studying the Secretary-General and moral authority, there are three core external context variables taken into account: UN Charter principles, the “external code” present in international politics, and the role expectations for the Secretary-Generalship. Across the case analyses of the seven Secretaries-General these contextual considerations did not serve a deterministic role in guiding the decisions of the office-holders. Instead, as expected, the decision-making process reflected an interaction of personal values with all three of these external cues. As with the analysis of leadership style, how exactly the external context was viewed by an office-holder varied according to the makeup of their ethical framework, so it was necessary to move beyond simply outlining the constraints on the office to detail how a particular Secretary-General engaged with these constraints.

More recent work exploring the possibility of UN Secretary-General self-directed leadership in relation to the organization’s democracy agenda reinforces the important role individual office-holders can play, but again in conjunction with the particular environmental constraints present in relation to this issue area (Haack and Kille forthcoming). Through tracking the development of the UN democracy agenda by 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. The importance of norm entrepreneurship in connection to framing and justifying the relevance of the democracy agenda stands out as a core part of the organizational discourse. Although the leadership provided by a Secretary-General clearly must operate within pragmatic limits in a manner that acknowledges the needs of both the organization and the member-states in order to keep the process moving forward, the directed leadership provided by the Secretary-General itself can serve to create a more favorable environment for the development of new or altered agendas.

In the end, the capacity of a UN Secretary-General to address humanitarian issues is complicated, and office-holders have faced and will continue to wrestle with many constraints that impede their ability to provide such leadership. In order to have a Secretary-General engaging in strong leadership and addressing these constraints, it is necessary to have an individual holding the office who is oriented towards providing such leadership. In the end, the constraints present should not solely dictate the degree of leadership in the humanitarian realm, whether in precluding such leadership from interested office-holders or forcing such leadership upon unwilling Secretaries-General, but it is equally unconvincing that Secretaries-General can take on the mantle of leadership regardless of the constraints they face. Thus, the argument remains that interaction between individual and contextual factors provides the best analytical leverage.

**Secretary-General Analysis and Connections Across Institutions**

Along with providing useful biographical entries of individual office-holders, the IO-BIO Project is designed to encourage analysis by the reader across the different entries – both within the same organization and comparing different institutions. In what is termed “prosopographical analysis,”
the entries will be constructed in such a manner to allow for the political and social connections of the individual Secretaries-General to be drawn out. Such analysis will shed important light on comparing leadership capacity and relative engagement across the different executive heads.

Providing for the opportunity to undertake such cross-Secretary-General analysis is important since research along these lines is very rare. One of the few examples of work on executive heads that looks across more than one organization is Michael Schechter’s (1987) study that incorporates the leaders of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank. In addition, Yves Beigbeder’s (1997) study of management at the United Nations incorporates cross-organizational details of different heads of several specialized agencies.

Although this is a limited area of previous scholarship, the capability and value of such an endeavor has been demonstrated in this author’s own research. Initial work on leadership style began with a collaborative project looking at executive head leadership across six UN Secretaries-General and four European Union Commission Presidents (Kille and Scully 2003). This article argued and confirmed through the analysis that, despite heading organizations with very different structures and conditions, the degree to which an executive head possesses an expansionist leadership style is linked to corresponding behavior while in office. Thus, although we must be cognizant of institutional distinctions that impact Secretary-General leadership capacity, such differences should not be perceived as an impediment for building understanding across organizations based on a common analytical structure for analysis.

Beyond comparing Secretaries-General from different organizations on similar dimensions, the importance of considering interactions and connections between such leaders has

7 Schechter (1988) also examines the World Bank Presidents separately in “The Political Roles of Recent World Bank Presidents.”
been demonstrated. Specifically, research has illustrated significant cross-office coordination among UN and NATO Secretaries-General in recent years (Kille and Hendrickson 2010; see also Kille and Hendrickson 2011). Cold War tensions largely kept these two organizations, and thereby the Secretaries-General, operating separately in the first decades of their existence. However, with the end of the Cold War, and the rise of overlapping missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan and related efforts in Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and now Libya, the links between the two organizations have expanded. In conjunction with the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s, the outreach efforts and writings of UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali worked to connect with NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner in a manner that is viewed as furthering institutional coordination. More recently, UN Secretaries-General Annan and Ban have interacted with NATO Secretaries-General, in particular Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, culminating in the September 2008 “Joint Declaration on UN/NATO Secretariat Cooperation” signed by Ban and de Hoop Scheffer.

Detailed analysis of UN Secretary-General Annan and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana in relation to Operation Allied Force in Kosovo in 1999 demonstrates the engaged and coordinated roles that such office-holders can play in addressing an area of grave humanitarian concern. Beginning with the decision to authorize the use of force in Kosovo, Annan walked a fine line in continually noting the importance of Security Council authority while not condemning the idea of NATO action in light of the need to address the humanitarian atrocities taking place, and Solana referenced Annan’s statements and reports in promoting NATO consensus to take action. Reports and spokesperson’s statements also indicate a pattern of consultation by the two office-holders in this time frame. Solana played a more direct role in decision-making once the operation was underway, although Annan maintained attention and
focus on the humanitarian dimensions of the conflict, but the two Secretaries-General continued to dialogue and share information. Finally, during the diplomatic efforts to bring the air strikes to an end, although neither office-holder was a central player in the resolution of the conflict, all evidence indicates that as they played their relative roles at this stage they maintained a cooperative cross-institutional stance. Given the range of ongoing and future developments in humanitarian crises and security concerns, the interacting roles played by the Secretaries-General will continue to be an important dimension to monitor.

**Conclusion**

When examining Secretary-General leadership capacity in the realm of humanitarian affairs, the research presented in this paper argues that analysts need to look closely at the individual holding the office. While the particular humanitarian situation that one is considering must be taken into account, engagement with the contextual cues, impediments, and opportunities shifts according to the personal characteristics of an office-holder. Secretaries-General vary widely in terms of leadership style and personal values, well beyond the traditional literature focus on the basic secretary versus general dichotomy, and these variations guide their interpretation of and efforts to take action to address humanitarian problem areas. While the main focus of this research has been on UN Secretaries-General, the use of a common analytical framework has proven valuable for studying other executive heads and the findings should hold true for a wide range of humanitarian organizations. In addition, the exploration of institutional and cross-office coordination in relation to a particular humanitarian crisis, the intervention in Kosovo by the UN and NATO, demonstrates that we should not explore the leadership capacity of the head of an
institution engaged with a humanitarian problem in isolation, but instead in conjunction with the
other Secretaries-General and organizations involved.

In terms of broader conclusions connected to the IO-BIO Project, the work referenced in
this paper definitively demonstrates the importance and relevance of studying individual
Secretaries-General, thereby providing a key justification for the project. Personal
characteristics underpinning leadership style and personal values that makeup an individual
office-holder’s ethical framework clearly guide the actions and decisions of Secretaries-General.
While the planned biographical dictionary entries will not be able to provide such a detailed level
of analysis, entry authors need to be keenly aware of the personal proclivities of the Secretary-
General under examination if the entries are to properly capture and assess that individual. In
addition, while one must be cautious when generalizing on leadership across different forms of
IGOs, the research has shown the possibility of using a common framework of analysis to
examine the heads of different IGOs as well as UN Secretaries-General from very different
periods of time. Indeed, it will be the use of explicit and consistent instructions to biographical
entry authors that will best ensure that an equivalent “framework” is being similarly employed
by all authors to make certain that comparative reading across the entries will derive the greatest
value.

At the same time, as this paper has argued, considerations of personal dimensions need to
be embedded within the broader environment and decision-making context. Without exploring
this interaction, a fuller picture of what guides a Secretary-General’s decisions and impacts their
activities will not be properly provided. As the case studies in *The UN Secretary-General and
Moral Authority* demonstrate in particular, Reinalda’s (2011b) emphasis on being informed
regarding a Secretary-General’s background and the inclusion of elements such as origin
(spanning personal background, education, professional experience, and relevant political and other views) and career development in the account of the life and work of an office-holder in the draft instructions for entry authors (Reinalda 2011a) is not misplaced. Indeed, it is the inclusion of such information, although often difficult to ascertain, that adds important depth and understanding to the subject of Secretaries-General outside of a simple account of their time in office.

Given the prosopographical dimension that the IO-BIO Project seeks to capture, an important part of contextual consideration in the life and work of a Secretary-General is the interactions and connections with other IGO executive heads. The research exploring the UN and NATO Secretaries-General demonstrates the usefulness of and capacity to establish such connections. At the same time, this was undertaken with intentionality and the level of research required to establish such interactions was a detailed and complicated process. This does raise questions regarding to what degree a clear prosopographical understanding will naturally emerge from a reading across the distinct Secretary-General biographical entries. At a minimum, as the focus on Kosovo for Annan and Solana revealed, encouraging author exploration of key events that move across different organizations to better reveal such connections should be considered.
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