

# INTRODUCTION

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The office of the UN secretary-general has been described as a needed voice in an international arena where moral principles are often seen as subservient to concerns over power and interest. In fact, because the secretary-generalship is a relatively constrained position lacking in traditional forms of power, those who analyze the position tend to see the moral authority of an officeholder as vital to the operation of the office. Such moral authority is often viewed as dependent on the personal qualities of individual officeholders. As one observer notes, "If it is a moral authority, one may ask, whence does this moral authority derive? It derives from the personality of the Secretary-General himself and not just from the office he holds."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore appropriate to inquire into the religious and moral values of those who hold the office. If a secretary-general's "own morality . . . must forbid him certain policies," and presumably encourage other policies, then one should be able to trace the decision-making implications of these values across the activities of the officeholders.<sup>2</sup>

Past studies examining particular secretaries-general are informative, and analysts have made interesting claims about the importance of the secretary-general's moral authority, but a detailed comparative examination of the moral and religious dimensions of the office has not yet been attempted. Works that discuss the moral or religious basis of the office tend to rely on isolated observations or personalistic evidence. In addition, some of the secretaries-general have been studied along these lines more deeply than others, and even when the religious or moral values of specific secretaries-general have been considered, there has not been a comprehensive analysis. For example, observers have emphasized the importance of the religious values of Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant, and have implicitly assumed that religion should be an important consideration for understanding the actions of all of the secretaries-general. Yet the religious values of the other officeholders, and their potential impact,

have not been examined closely enough to determine whether this is indeed the case.

In exploring whether a secretary-general's religious and moral values affect the handling of the office, this study employs a broader term—*ethical framework*—that encompasses the range of values. Thus all of the case studies in this volume are built around the same central question: Does the ethical framework of an individual officeholder impact the role played by a secretary-general of the United Nations? Although it is generally assumed that the United Nations and the secretary-general are a positive force in the international system, it is equally clear that officeholders and the organization have been placed in compromising positions in international affairs in a manner that calls this assumption into question. We need, therefore, to investigate more closely the personal values that may inform the activities of secretaries-general and to examine how these values operate alongside the institutional norms and political constraints that define the office.

In undertaking such a comprehensive and comparative analysis, the contributors to this volume did not assume at the outset the existence of a relationship between an ethical framework and the decisions of any given secretary-general. The chapters in this volume are also not designed to pass judgment on an individual's personal ethics but rather to assess the ethical framework for each secretary-general and whether this framework had an impact on behavior while in office. Guided by the common research framework established in chapters 1 and 2, the following chapters look closely at each secretary-general in turn. Each chapter establishes the ethical framework of the secretary-general in question, and in the process explores the environmental and experiential factors that influenced the creation of his particular ethical framework. Each case study also examines the ways in which the personal values that made up the ethical framework interacted with external concerns to guide the decisions of the officeholder.

Beyond the specific issues raised in previous analyses of the secretaries-general and the United Nations, this study builds upon and contributes to the increasing recognition of the importance of religion and ethics in international relations. As Jonathan Fox observes, "The assertion that religion can influence our views is not new or in dispute. Religion is often a part of people's worldviews and influences their perception of events and their actions."<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite such acknowledgments of the importance of religion in global affairs and an expanding literature in this area, our

understanding of the impact of religious values on the decisions of leaders on the international stage remains limited. Similarly, work on ethics in international affairs has undergone a resurgence and is continuing to grow as an important avenue of inquiry. This study seeks to build on our knowledge of the ethical dimension of international leadership and the potential connections of ethics to diplomacy and international institutions. Our goal is to consider more closely the wider implications of religiously and morally based leadership in the international arena.

Chapter 1 sets out the core arguments and approach underlying the volume. The chapter provides a brief overview of the office of the secretary-general as a moral authority in global affairs and explores the potential connections to officeholders' personal religious and moral values. This discussion is grounded in broader considerations of the place of religion and ethics at the United Nations and international relations. Because the focus of the volume is comparing the officeholders' ethical frameworks and related considerations—including formation of the ethical framework, interaction with external context in formulating decisions, and potential feedback that leads to adjustments in the ethical framework—an overview of these dimensions rounds out the chapter.

Chapter 2, by Dorothy V. Jones, acts in concert with chapter 1 to set the scene for the case studies of the individual officeholders by exploring aspects of the ethical framework and external context. Jones discusses what she labels the secretary-general's "inner code," or "the code within," in conjunction with the "external code" that can provide guidance for officeholders' activities, and she argues that there is likely to be an important interaction between the two. Jones sheds particular light on the deep historical process by which the current external code facing the secretary-general has been established. Her discussion emphasizes the realm of international peace and security, although she also examines issues related to human rights and the administrative duties of the secretary-general.

Chapter 3, on Trygve Lie, is the first of seven case studies. James P. Muldoon Jr. considers whether Lie's evangelical Lutheran faith, and related notions of Pietism, influenced the development of the secretary-general's ethical framework. While Lie's religion may have shaped his "moral vocabulary," Muldoon determines that secular ideals based on social democratic principles lie at the heart of his ethical framework. Muldoon explores this conclusion in relation to Lie's connections with socialism and the labor movement, along with his experiences during World War II, and describes Lie's engagement with a series of peace and security concerns, along with

his handling of administrative difficulties and the effort to fight poverty. Muldoon discusses the impact of UN charter principles, the demanding pressures of international politics, and the role expectations of the secretary-generalship on Lie's tenure, but he shows how Lie's values and commitment gave him the strength to persevere in the face of difficult challenges.

In chapter 4 Alynna J. Lyon emphasizes the spiritual core of Dag Hammarskjöld's ethical framework, which was derived from his Lutheran upbringing and beliefs and his interest in medieval mysticism. She also tracks the broader development of his moral values, including the merging of his personal values with the principles set out in the UN charter and how this informed his dynamic ethical framework. Her analysis demonstrates how this ethical framework influenced Hammarskjöld's decision making, from his acceptance of the office to his handling of peacekeeping in the Congo, although she is careful to note that the complexity of the interactions and Hammarskjöld's private nature make it difficult to trace an exact causal relationship.

The importance of U Thant's Buddhist beliefs to his ethical framework, and how they meshed with UN principles and guided his actions while in office, is the subject of chapter 5, by A. Walter Dorn. Dorn also explores Thant's broader spiritual views and moral values—humility, integrity, and equanimity. The analysis of Thant's decisions is built around key ethical dilemmas he faced as secretary-general concerning the use of force, intervention versus nonintervention, impartiality versus neutrality, dependent versus independent office, private versus professional interests, idealism versus realism, and the sacred/secular divide.

In chapter 6 Michael T. Kuchinsky looks at how Kurt Waldheim, a devout Catholic, sought to separate the religious from the political during his tenure as secretary-general. Kuchinsky argues that Waldheim's ethical framework and his decisions in office were based solidly on pragmatism. Kuchinsky examines Waldheim's engagement in addressing difficulties in Cyprus, the Middle East, and Namibia, his handling of human rights, and his Secretariat hiring practices, in connection with a range of pragmatic points. Because of concerns about Waldheim's personal history during World War II and the possible ethical implications of his behavior, Kuchinsky concludes the chapter with a broader consideration of Waldheim as a moral actor.

Javier Perez de Cuellar's conduct in office is the subject of chapter 7, by Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan and David P. Forsythe. Although the

authors acknowledge that Perez de Cuellar's personal values could have been informed by his Catholic upbringing, they are unable to find a clear link to particular religious values as a core part of his ethical framework. Instead, their analysis focuses on how Perez de Cuellar's values derived largely from the ethics of liberalism. Their account of his decisions on a range of peace and security issues, his efforts in relation to population control, his handling of UN finances, and his use of delegates emphasizes the importance of contextual factors in understanding his tenure. Rieffer-Flanagan and Forsythe also discuss the difficulty of separating Perez de Cuellar's personal values from the principles of the UN charter, with which they are closely intertwined.

In chapter 8 Anthony F. Lang Jr. looks at how Boutros Boutros-Ghali's ethical framework grew out of his background in a prominent Coptic Christian family in Egypt and his international legal training. Lang highlights five core values that underlie Boutros-Ghali's ethical framework: tolerance, forgiveness/reconciliation, liberal emphasis on human rights, the moral importance and centrality of the sovereign state, and democracy. Lang explores the importance of these values in relation to Boutros-Ghali's involvement with UN intervention in Somalia and Bosnia, UN efforts in Cambodian postconflict peace building, and the administrative reporting mechanism illustrated by his *Agenda for Democratization*. Lang argues that Boutros-Ghali drew on different values in particular situations and that at times external constraints also played an important part in his initiatives.

In chapter 9 Courtney B. Smith examines Kofi Annan's strong spiritual beliefs and moral values to emphasize two key dimensions of his ethical framework: concern for human dignity and commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict. Smith supplements this with a discussion of Annan's broader personal attributes and emphasizes the core ethical dilemmas that Annan faced in relation to Iraq, Darfur, the Millennium Development Goals, and organizational reform. Smith addresses Annan's focus on balancing his internal code with external constraints and how he sought to design strategies that reconciled the ethical tradeoffs that he made.

Chapter 10 summarizes the key findings of this study and highlights the variation between the ethical frameworks and the vitality of particular religious and moral values of the different secretaries-general. These variations are related to the impact that officeholders' ethical frameworks had on their decisions while in office and how the interaction with external context shaped these decisions. The chapter evaluates the approach

employed in this study, the implications for the secretary-general as a moral authority, and prospects for further study of the religious and ethical dimensions of leadership in international affairs.

## Notes

1. C. V. Narasimhan, *The United Nations: An Inside View* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1988), 274.

2. Leon Gordenker, *The UN Secretary-General and the Maintenance of Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 334.

3. Jonathan Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element in International Relations," *International Studies Review* 3 (2001): 59. See also Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 57–60.