



ANALYTICAL ESSAYS: EVALUATION, SYNTHESIS, REFLECTIONS

Executive Leadership in the Study of International Organization: A Framework for Analysis¹

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What can the scholarship on global international organizations (IOs) tell us about the contributions of the executive head (EH) to organizational change? The empirics of IO studies frequently credit EHs with important changes, but these studies seldom consider EHs separate from the rest of the bureaucracy and thus make few theoretical claims about them. Consequently, it is difficult to assess whether this credit is warranted and why some heads are given more credit than others. This article argues that heads, such as World Bank President Robert McNamara and United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, were influential because they did not just channel state and bureaucratic demands but made political choices that contributed to organizational adaptation. To make this argument, it draws on sociological institutionalist and constructivist scholarship on IO and leadership to develop an analytical framework where IO adaptation is linked to the EH's performance of two tasks commonly associated with executive leadership: defining a strategic plan and mobilizing support to implement that plan. However, it adds that when environmental constraints are severe, the conventional "*follower-oriented*" mobilization strategies found in leadership studies are less viable. Instead, EHs can adopt an "*opposition-oriented*" one intended to prevent the opposition from mobilizing while incrementally implementing key reforms.

I don't like 'great men' theories of history, but I am increasingly driven to the thought that individuals are enormously influential. Politicians and people in key positions of authority... they do really matter.

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²Quoted in Weiss, Carayannis, Emmerij, and Jolly 2005:344–345.

What can the scholarship on global international organizations (IO) tell us about the influence of the executive head (EH) on organizational change? In 1969, Robert Cox (1969:205) argued “the quality of executive leadership may prove to be the most critical single determinant of the growth in the scope and authority of international organization.” Few scholars since have echoed his bold claim, but many studies of IOs credit certain EHs with key changes to the organization’s identity, structures, and work. To give just a few examples, practitioners and scholars praise the leadership of James P. Grant (UNICEF, 1980–1995), Raul Prebisch (UNCTAD 1964–1969), and Maurice Strong (UNHCE and UNEP) (Cox and Jacobson 1973:398; Beigbeder 2001; Ivanova 2007). United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) Dag Hammarskjöld (1953–1961) is credited with establishing a more independent Secretariat, and World Bank (“Bank”) President Robert McNamara transformed the “world’s bank” into the world’s premiere multilateral development agency (Kraske, Becker, Diamond, and Galambos 1996; Urquhart 2007; Weaver 2008).

Despite crediting these EHs with making important contributions, many IO studies do not analytically separate the EH—the highest ranking official of a hierarchical organization reporting directly to an intergovernmental body with global membership—from the rest of the bureaucracy and as a result seldom make theoretical claims about the EH. Consequently, it is difficult to assess whether any credit is warranted and why some EHs are given more credit than others. In fact, scholars who treat IOs as self-directed actors seem to take as given that the EH is too constrained for the office to have a systematic and independent effect on the organization.

This article seeks to fill the gap between the theoretical claims of IO scholars and their empirical observations. It argues that EHs such as World Bank President Robert McNamara and UNSG Dag Hammarskjöld do not just channel state and bureaucratic demands but take political decisions and actions that contribute to organizational adaptation. It also argues that these contributions reflect their performance of tasks commonly associated with executive leadership or, more specifically, an approach to performing these tasks that is well suited to the particular environmental and organizational context in which they find themselves.

To make these arguments, I develop an analytical framework that draws on sociological institutionalist and constructivist scholarship on IO and leadership to link adaptation to two executive leadership tasks: defining a strategic plan and mobilizing support to implement that plan. In brief, a strategic plan includes a vision of the primary contribution the organization will make in the future as well as concrete reforms to realize that vision. However, strategic plans are seldom self-implementing—supporters must be mobilized and/or opposition must acquiesce. The framework presented here argues that a successful mobilization strategy varies depending on the severity of organizational and environmental constraints. For example, McNamara faced a more favorable situation where it was possible for him to mobilize a coalition capable of implementing much of his strategic plan over opposition from important staff and donors. In contrast, the more constrained Hammarskjöld implemented reforms incrementally to avoid arousing opposition from the superpowers and other sovereignty-sensitive states resistant to the idea of an activist and independent Secretariat. Put another way, McNamara pursued a *follower-oriented* strategy of mobilizing a coalition of followers, while Hammarskjöld adopted a more *opposition-oriented* one to avoid mobilizing a blocking coalition. While the former strategy is prominent in leadership studies, the latter is not although its logic and tactics can be distilled from existing studies on the influence of international bureaucracies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Burns 1978; Price 2003; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Nye 2008).

The article proceeds in six sections. The first section introduces the concept and study of executive leadership. Second, this article illustrates the frequency with which empirical accounts of IOs attribute important developments to a par-

ticular IO head. The third section examines the environmental constraints that likely discourage IO scholars from making theoretical claims about the EH. The fourth section examines the EH's institutional sources of authority and autonomy and suggests these sources are usually sufficient for an EH to influence change if the EH pursues a leadership strategy appropriate to her environment. The fifth section presents one of the only analytical frameworks for studying EH influence on organizational change. This section uses illustrative examples drawn from studies of different IOs, while offering more focused comparisons between World Bank President Robert McNamara and UNSGs Dag Hammarskjold and Boutros Boutros-Ghali. These IO heads are compared because they vary and conform in analytically useful ways. McNamara and Hammarskjold are credited with implementing lasting changes under difficult circumstances—a challenge at which Boutros-Ghali did not succeed even though he took office at a time of renewed enthusiasm for the United Nations (UN). Further, the Bank president has more institutional autonomy and authority and thus faces a less constraining environment than the UNSG—a difference that changes the viability of different mobilization strategies. Finally, Hammarskjold's mobilization strategy roughly conforms to an opposition-oriented one, while McNamara and Boutros-Ghali illustrate a more follower-oriented strategy. The article concludes by suggesting why executive leadership has become more important in a globalized world and proposing how IO scholars might incorporate it into their research programs.

The Study of Executive Leadership

Leadership has attracted little attention from IO scholars even as it draws scholarly attention in studies of terrorist networks, social movements, national governments, public agencies, nonprofits, and commercial enterprises (Burns 1978, 2003; Selznick 1984; Morris and Staggenborg 2004; Greenstein 2009; Bolden, Hawkins, Gosling, and Taylor 2011; Price 2012). This scholarship provides considerable evidence that the quality of leadership affects a group's survival, the evolution of its structures and practices, and, on occasion, the environment in which it operates.³ A key feature of much of this scholarship is the analytical separation of *leadership*—a task or specialized form of activity—from an *EH*—the formally assigned role as the highest ranking official of a hierarchal organization (Selznick 1984). Though the terms *leader* and *EH* are often used interchangeably, analytical separation enables scholars to differentiate the responsibilities and authority that largely come with the office from an officeholder's exercise of that authority to perform tasks that influence the organization or its environment.⁴ Among those tasks, Nye's (2008) survey finds broad agreement that a key one is mobilizing constituents to achieve some collective purpose. Other scholars add that *executive* leadership also involves determining (with or without others) that collective purpose (Selznick 1984; Bolden et al. 2011). To this end, I define *executive leadership* as determining an organization's goals and mobilizing constituents to achieve those goals.

Some scholars and policymakers argue that personal qualities or traits partially explain why some EHs perform better than others.⁵ One common view is that

³For an alternative view, see Pfeffer (1977).

⁴This separation also highlights the possibility that executive leadership tasks can be distributed in some groups and concentrated in the EH in others (Brown and Gioia 2002).

⁵Much of the work on leadership traits traces back to Weber's (1978) work on charismatic leadership. For a recent study of personal traits and the UN Secretary-General, see Kille (2006, 2007), but traits are also important to Tharoor (2007) and Traub (2007). More generally, Nye's (2008:15) survey of the leadership literature finds that effective leaders are "more energetic, more willing to take risks, more optimistic, more persuasive, and more empathetic than other people." Nye (2008:15–16, 60–61) also provides an overview of common critiques of a traits approach or see Edwards III (2003) for a critique of charisma and leadership.

charismatic individuals produce the loyalty and emotional connections necessary to motivate followers to implement a lofty vision. For example, Thakur (2006:333) concludes that a UN Secretary-General as leader must have “the elusive ability to make others connect emotionally and intellectually to a larger cause that transcends their immediate self-interest.” In practice, few scholars outright dismiss the importance of personal attributes, and ultimately, the study of IO executive leadership should address how particular traits influence organizational outcomes.⁶ Yet, a traits approach is premature given the lack of theoretical development when it comes to IO heads. Indeed, the value of a particular trait is difficult to specify without first understanding the EH’s institutional authority and autonomy and the executive leadership tasks (for example, strategic planning) the individual head must carry out to successfully implement changes. Once these are understood, researchers will be in a better position to theorize about the expected effect of a particular trait or group of traits.

In other words, a sound starting point for studying IO executive leadership is identifying the environmental and organizational conditions conducive to leadership and the strategies leaders use to attract and mobilize followers under those conditions. This approach also follows well-established research programs in leadership studies which share a premise that “effectiveness is in part determined by the environment in which they work” (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Smillie and Hailey 2001; Hailey 2006:8; Nye 2008). For example, Price (2012:11) examines executive leadership in terrorist networks and finds “that organizational characteristics amplify the importance of the top leaders” because heads do not report to a governing body or follow laws and they are a source of ideological inspiration and unity for a decentralized group. While some contexts are more conducive to leadership than others, leadership is possible in most, although the strategy for mobilizing constituents may change. Factors such as the level of hierarchy, the complexity of the group’s task, and the specialization of constituents determine whether the EH is more valuable directing constituents or cultivating and structuring constituent participation in group goal setting and decision making. With respect to IOs, Schechter (1987:197) observes that periods characterized by converging member interests and expanding budgets require an “activist” IO head with a “bold plan,” while member conflicts and constricted resources require an “effective, pragmatic manager.”

Other studies of political executives investigate the varying strategies for mobilizing constituents that are not direct subordinates. For instance, Burns (1978) argues that successful leaders should focus on understanding the “unmet needs” of constituents because, if these needs are extensive, a political executive can mobilize constituents around transformative changes. Further, mobilization is self-reinforcing as leaders empower and inspire constituents who in turn become a growing cadre of followers that empower the leader. The result, he writes (1978:20), is transformational leadership whereby “leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation.” This “transformational” leadership strategy is differentiated from a transactional one where leaders induce reluctant constituents to support more limited changes via bargaining and exchanging with them (see also Bass 1985).

The Influence of the IO Executive Head: The Empirical Record

Despite widespread interest in leadership, few scholars examine whether their findings travel to international organizations. Yet, there is good reason for doing so if empirical studies of the evolution of IOs provide any guide. For example,

⁶See Kille and Reinalda (2013) and their IO BIO project website at www.ru.nl/fm/iobio.

Barnett and Finnemore (2004:86) observe that UNHCR survived its tumultuous first year due to Gerrit Jan Van Heuven Goedhart, its “determined high commissioner” which was “the only thing the organization had going for it.” Further, Gil Loescher’s (2001) political history of UNHCR repeatedly links organizational change to the work of a particular head. Likewise, Betts (2012:120) concludes, “at every turn of UNHCR’s historical transformation, leadership has been a key factor in shaping exactly how structural pressures have been channeled into particular forms of organizational change.”

Empirical studies of UNHCR are not alone in finding that certain heads made significant contributions to their organization’s evolution. Secretary-General Rupers Ricupero (1995–2004) was an “engine of change,” Finger and Magarinos-Ruchat (2003:156) write, whose ideas and consensus building resulted in UNCTAD “working with—instead of against—the global system.” Executive-Director James Grant (1980–1995) is praised for transforming UNICEF during the Child Survival Revolution and using it as a platform for successfully advocating for a Convention on the Rights of the Child (Beigbeder 2001). At UNDP, Administrator James Gustav Speth (1993–1999) turned human development from the organization’s intellectual innovation into its operational framework (Murphy 2006:265–266). And, Chorev (2012:36) finds that the WHO’s capacity to manage conflicting environmental pressures partially depended on who was heading it; Directors-General Halfdan Mahler (1973–1988) and Harlem Gro Brundtland (1998–2003), for example, were adept at appeasing the abstract demands of powerful advocates while implementing programs that contradicted those demands.

At the World Bank, Weaver (2008:72) argues that President McNamara (1968–1981) “revolutionized the World Bank by quadrupling its staff and quintupling the amount of lending.” Moreover, Weaver credits him with developing “a leading international research institute” and fostering the disbursement culture that, in the 1990s, made it difficult for even the organization’s largest donor to change the Bank’s lending practices. The impact of McNamara’s leadership is notable because he took office under conditions not conducive to organizational change. As Kraske et al. (1996:184) put it, “the climate for a massive increase of development aid was anything but favorable”; the US Congress wanted restrictions on the Bank’s concessional lending and many bank staff worried that a rapid expansion of the Bank’s non-concessional loan portfolio would hurt its credit rating on Wall Street. Yet, the determined McNamara succeeded where his predecessor, George Woods, did not—and loan commitments reached \$13 billion by 1981, a sum equal to all lending prior to McNamara’s arrival (Kraske et al. 1996:179). To help disburse these loans, the organization’s staff grew from 1,600 to 5,700, and many inside and outside the organization joked McNamara’s impact was so profound that it was “McNamara’s Bank.”

Among EHs, the UN’s Secretaries-General have received some of the most intense scrutiny. On one hand, Kurt Waldheim (1972–1981) is often criticized for exacerbating a period of UN decline and Javier Perez de Cuellar (1982–1991) for failing to exercise leadership in the emerging post-Cold War order (Jonah 2008). On the other hand, Kofi Annan is credited with strengthening the Secretariat’s commitment to human security by enacting reforms to investigate and report on mass atrocities and to protect civilians during peace operations. He also reformed UN management by establishing the post of Deputy Secretary-General and implementing results-based management in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Finally, Annan worked with like-minded governmental and non-governmental advocates to pass resolutions supporting, among others, a Responsibility to Protect, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Peacebuilding Commission (for example, Johnstone 2007; Traub 2007; Trinh 2007).

Two other UNSGs that have attracted significant attention are Dag Hammarskjöld (1953–1961) and Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992–1996). Chesterman (2007)

argues that the UN “became a vital force for peace and international law” under Hammarskjöld, even though few expected much of the Swedish civil servant when he took office. In fact, members increasingly joked that they should “leave it to Dag” to manage regional crises. At the time of his tragic death, he had already established the UNSG’s right of initiative under the Charter to mediate conflicts, designed the first peacekeeping mission, and persuaded many members that intra-state violence could be defined as a threat to international peace and security (Zacher 1970; Franck and Nolte 1993; Urquhart 1994, 2007).

These institutional reforms reflected Hammarskjöld’s view that the UN was best served by an independent civil service. This view informed his insistence that the Secretariat have operational authority over peacekeeping missions and his decision to make neutrality a core peacekeeping principle. In fact, Brian Urquhart (2007) argues that Hammarskjöld “built the Secretariat’s basic structure” around a sense of independence, including implementing policies that insulated many staff from some external pressures. His leadership had a profound effect on the organizational culture, with a staff newsletter published shortly after his passing acknowledging “how much of our identity as a member of the Secretariat was found in Mr. Hammarskjöld, head of this house.”⁷ These changes took place even though the superpowers and many newly independent states did not share his view, and in 1960, in the face of Soviet pressure to resign (Urquhart 1994), he was forced to defend it. Ultimately, most of the membership came to accept the Secretariat’s independence in principle—if not consistently in practice.

Like Hammarskjöld, Boutros-Ghali hoped to enact the far-reaching changes needed to help members realize the Charter’s vision of the UN as the premiere multilateral collective security organization (Boutros-Ghali 1999). The new UNSG, an Egyptian diplomat, was an accomplished international legal scholar, who intended to capitalize on the favorable post-Cold War political climate. He was outspoken about his aspirations for the UN and confrontational in his pursuit of those aspirations. Within months, he had “acquired a reputation [especially in the industrial North] as an active and formidable diplomat not afraid of ruffling feathers in an organization with legendary resistance to change” (Lewis 1992). Although Security Council (Council) activism had left the UN cash-strapped and exhausted, Boutros-Ghali “overhauled the senior levels of the Secretariat...and helped push the [Council] into new high-risk peacekeeping operations in Somalia.” When finances deteriorated further, he publicly implored the Council to show restraint and insisted that other donor governments and regional organizations step up. He also released *An Agenda for Peace*—a blueprint that imposed conceptual clarity on complex and multidimensional peacekeeping operations. It recommended ways to strengthen the organization’s finances and proposed conflict management tools tailored to the emerging liberal order. Yet, his plans were derailed within 2 years with many of the *Agenda*’s key reforms stalled after meeting substantial member opposition (see United Nations Association of the United Kingdom 2002). Ultimately, the Clinton Administration denied the UNSG a second term, accusing him of contributing to peacekeeping failures in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda (Newman 1998; Berdal 1999).

The IO Executive Head: Too Constrained to Lead?

These empirical observations about IO heads are not easily explained because studies of IOs as self-directed actors seldom separate the head from the rest of

⁷(1961) UN Secretariat Newsletter. New York. 29 September.

the bureaucracy and thus make few theoretical claims about the position. In fact, the inclination is to expect little leadership from the head. This inclination likely reflects constraints on the position—constraints presumed to reduce it to one of channeling the demands of powerful internal or external forces rather than shaping, resisting, or directing those forces (Weaver 2008). To give one example, Cox (1969:214) criticizes Haas's (1964) theory of supranational agency for understating environmental constraints—an understatement that risks "the presumption that the EH has more effective initiative than in fact he often does have." Consequently, when an EH is credited with key developments, the scholarship implicitly concludes that the outcome is a consequence of idiosyncratic factors—such as a gifted individual exploiting a passing window of opportunity (Traub 2007).

Statist theories of international organization have the least to say about EH-directed change. These theories take as given that state members exercise effective control, even if some members enjoy more levers of control than others (for example, Keohane and Martin 1995). Most IO heads cannot afford to alienate valuable donors and clients—much less a superpower—nor can they ignore the interests of other members organized into large and stable voting blocs in intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations General Assembly ("Assembly"), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the boards of the specialized agencies. Member conflicts impose additional restraints on action. Tharoor (2007) argues that member micromanagement and competing demands make the UN Secretaryship-General "the most impossible job description in the world." These conflicts exacerbate resource scarcity and force the UNSG to direct her time and energy into reactive management. They also limit the range of EH proposals that intergovernmental bodies will approve, especially given the multiple formal and informal "veto" points that characterize many IOs and empower small subsets of members to block widely accepted proposals (Cox 1969; Gordenker 1993). The range of acceptable proposals is further narrowed because governments often give more weight to the political costs of a proposal than to the functional and collective benefits the proposal provides (Luck 2005). Sovereignty-sensitive members regularly reject proposals that are perceived to interfere in their domestic affairs or ones that eliminate programs providing governments with prestige, jobs for their nationals, or immediate assistance.

The EH also enjoys restricted "agency slack" from a principal-agent perspective (Gutner 2005; Hawkins, Nielson, Lake, and Tierney 2006). Powerful governments screen candidates for the post and, for example, a longstanding arrangement has enabled the United States to appoint a World Bank president who shares its interests (Weaver 2008). More generally, members lobby for like-minded candidates, and in the specialized agencies, some donors make the appointment of their chosen national a condition of major financial support.⁸ More generally, the appointment process can reduce agency because, as Jonah (2011:63) writes, member states are "highly conservative... they are not likely to elect anyone with bold ideas to executive positions" (see also Murphy 2006:21–22; Keating 2007).

When an independent-minded candidate is elected, there are still institutional incentives to exercise self-restraint. The need to maintain good relations with a diverse membership will encourage IO heads to take the temperature of governments before proposing changes.⁹ In fact, there is pressure to align any proposals with the preferences of intergovernmental organs by offering lowest common denominator reforms or reforms that conform to the interests of members holding the balance of institutional bargaining power (Chesterman and

⁸A good example was UNHCR Sadako Ogata, a Japanese political scientist, whose appointment was a condition for increasing Japanese voluntary contributions (Loescher 2001).

⁹A good piece on the capacity of major powers to control an IO agent is Bosco (2013).

Franck 2007). EHs who ignore these institutional incentives face a powerful and well-organized opposition. The EH's reporting requirements and media profile (as well as staff leaks) make it easy to track her statements and actions, and governments can individually or collectively find ways to sanction the behavior of a head "run amok." These sanctions range from member attacks on the head's credibility to the empowerment of her subordinates to the exclusion from participation in intergovernmental decision making (Tharoor 2007). Governments can also reduce requests for interest-paying loans, deny access to target populations, or reduce voluntary contributions (Loescher 2001; Weaver 2008). And though heads are seldom removed from office, even popular EHs like Hammarskjöld, Annan, and UNICEF's James P. Grant have faced member pressure to resign.

Notwithstanding restrictions from member states, nonstate actors can also constrain the EH's freedom of action because they control important material and symbolic resources. Other IOs, experts, and NGOs are partners or competitors; they set best practices and standards in relevant issue areas and expose EH non-conformity with those standards and practices (Loescher 2001; Mallaby 2005; Weaver 2008). At the operational level, the EH relies on support from key constituencies—including the local population, governments, and other societal authorities. For example, WHO/UNICEF immunization campaigns require cooperation from community leaders, UNHCR from informal camp authorities, and UN mediators and peacekeepers from rebel leaders.

Finally, the IO staff's interests, cultures, and conflicts can impede implementation of a proposal by withholding expertise and information or mobilizing external opposition (Cox 1969; Weaver 2008). Loescher finds that the commissioner at UNHCR must navigate competing protection and relief cultures, and Weaver (2008:55) argues that the Bank president "can more easily shift the rhetoric and formal structures of the bank than they can change the norms, routines and mind-sets of staff that drive daily operations." Moreover, the head's senior aides form "personal and doctrinal approaches to their assignments" that "do not respond readily to direction" (Gordenker 1993:272). To this end, the head's ability to design and implement her initiatives depends on her control over internal constituencies from research departments to field operations to administrative staff. More precisely, the head's autonomy decreases where institutional structures prevent monitoring or sanctioning staff, limit control over staff recruitment, or insulate staff from hierarchal relations either formally (for example, auditing unit) or informally (for example, organizational culture).

In sum, the EH operates in an environment where she is "bounded by [her] dependence on exogenous actors, particularly member states, for funds (resource dependence), majority of votes (procedural dependence), and legitimacy (normative dependence)" (Chorev 2012:22). Given this institutional dependency, it is perhaps understandable that IO theories implicitly reduce the EH to channeling internal or external forces such as shifts in the distribution power, patterns of interdependence, and professional and organizational norms.

The Executive Head: Institutional Autonomy and Authority

However, the frequency with which empirical accounts credit an IO head with important changes gives good reason to investigate rather than rule out the importance of executive leadership. As Oestreich (2012:14) puts it, "the 'black box' must be opened up and down to the individual level" to explain the contributions of some of those in key positions. Once opened, the black box reveals that conditions frequently permit entrepreneurial agents to influence IO change and even the most constrained EHs have occasionally transformed their organization.

Indeed, the sociological institutionalist and constructivist scholarship on IOs as self-directed actors argues that IO bureaucracies are in a co-constitutive relationship with their environment (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Put another way, entrepreneurial bureaucracies influence organizational practices and environmental outcomes, but the constraints and opportunities in the organization and environment shape this influence (Jinnah 2014). Specifically, it is worth highlighting three common conditions under which entrepreneurial agents influence IO change, which I define as the implementation of formal and informal organizational policies, structures, and tasks that supplement or replace existing ones (Lindner 2003). First, the political space for entrepreneurial agency increases when states are uncertain about the tasks required to advance the IO's mission and their own interests (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Chorev 2012). Entrepreneurial agents can help construct problem definitions and appropriate solutions when novel situations mean member preferences are ill-formed (Betts 2012). Second, the same member conflicts that constrain an EH's freedom of action can motivate entrepreneurial agents by paralyzing intergovernmental bodies. Intergovernmental paralysis incentivizes agents with a stake in the IO to tolerate higher risks and pay higher costs to enact changes deemed necessary to keep the IO functioning (Loescher 2001). Further, intergovernmental paralysis empowers actors well positioned to implement informal change—such as bureaucratic actors that can reinterpret existing rules and occasionally deviate from existing practice (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Schroeder 2013). Finally, these actors find it easier to direct change in instances where a small subset of the membership does not control key resources. When these resources are dispersed, change agents can find support for their reforms among a larger pool of constituents (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

In addition to these conditions, the space for entrepreneurial change also varies across IOs, with those heading specialized agencies enjoying the most autonomy. For example, Weaver (2008:69) concludes that the Bank (that is, the staff and senior management) has “proven quite adept at buffering itself from external pressures.”¹⁰ Within the UN system, former UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch-Brown (2008:1) benefited from a “relatively harmonious board that demanded results but gave [him] the space and the say over budgets, staffing and priorities to achieve them.” And, Chorev (2012:39) adds that the World Health Organization (WHO) is conducive to “strong and effective [EH] leadership” because members have difficulty exercising control over the Director-General. In contrast, Malloch-Brown (2008:1) writes that the UN Secretary-General “despite his elevated status, ha[s] less management power than many of his underlings” running the UN's specialized agencies. These limits on the UNSG's autonomy are largely due to member micro-management, resource scarcity, and conflicting state demands when carrying out even her basic functions (Chesterman and Franck 2007). Yet, while these limitations constrain autonomous action, the UNSG has some room to maneuver within those limitations. Indeed, Johnstone (2007) argues that a clever UNSG can successfully push those limits where her political and administrative functions converge, and Luck (2005:407) finds that she can set the intergovernmental agenda as part of “a cycle of UN reform.”

As such, the prospects of an EH like the UNSG influencing organizational change often depends on whether she tailors the exercise of her institutional authority to the particular context. This authority is partially delegated by the IO's founding treaty that empowers the EH to implement specified intergovernmental decisions by faithfully interpreting those decisions and directing the work of her

¹⁰The Executive Directors leave management to its president, and the volume and complexity of loans makes monitoring tricky. Presidents can also look to markets to find additional funding, have leverage over many of their borrowers, and use the Bank's research operations to help set best practices.

subordinates. To do so, the EH is the chief administrator who manages the civil service, programs and operations, coordinates relevant agencies, and allocates resources (Gordenker 1993). In this capacity, the EH also proposes budgets, authorizes changes to the organizational chart and promotion systems, and manages agency heads and a circle of aides who report directly to her. That said, while all heads have administrative duties, some officeholders make it a higher priority than others. Indeed, a head's management skills are a central concern in an IO such as UNDP where Browne (2011) observes that management experience is critical to the officeholder's selection.

These administrative functions aside, delegated authority also stems from expressly political functions that empower the EH to advise and assist the membership as well as implement intergovernmental decisions. Of course, the scope of an EH's political functions varies across organizations (Cox 1969; Chorev 2012). However, the IO's foundational treaty and accepted practice allow the EH to have at least some discretion to interpret vague decisions and select a course of action. More expressly political tasks include choosing to raise an issue in intergovernmental forums or offer recommendations in addition to deciding to intervene in member disputes. Most EHs also have some control over information flows because they serve as a conduit between the bureaucracy and constituents in the IO's environment (Gordenker 1993). The EH holds formal and informal meetings with members—or assigns staff to do so—and disseminates requests and demands made in those meetings to relevant parts of the bureaucracy. Most heads also establish outreach, reporting and research systems to keep the membership and other constituencies informed. Conversely, the head is one of the bureaucracy's main conduits to influential external constituencies. The head's statements, meetings, reports, and presentations frame the staff's work to ensure it is perceived by key audiences as serving their interests and advancing the mission.

These sources of authority are supplemented by moral, expert, and network authority that also come largely with the office.¹¹ First, the EH exercises moral authority because constituents value the ideals of the organization and consider the EH as the embodiment of those ideals (Barnett and Finnemore 2004:23; Tharoor 2007:38–39). Moral authority is exercised by taking public positions on the conformity of state and nonstate actions with those ideals. For example, Johnstone (2003:452) argues that UNSG statements about the conformity of a member's claims to the Charter and Charter law “lend political comfort to those on whose side the UNSG comes down and can complicate the efforts of those he goes against.” To amplify this authority, heads often use the media to give voice to those ideals by publicly shaming or praising other actors and framing important issues for global audiences. At UNHCR, Sadako Ogata's influence on refugee practice inside and outside the organization was strongest after she cultivated a global reputation as “the Chief Surgeon of the World's Emergency Room” (Loescher 2001:291). Her moral authority also highlights how the strength of a head's moral voice depends on the perception that the head is vocalizing an impartial application of those ideals on behalf of an “international interest” that transcends national concerns (Chesterman and Franck 2007:238). To this end, a UNSG who regularly exercises her moral authority is also one who occasionally asserts her independence from powerful members and reaffirms her commitment to be “at the service of the universal values” (Johnstone 2007:123; see also Boutros-Ghali 1996).

A third source of authority arises because constituents want “important social tasks to be done by people with detailed and specialized knowledge” (Barnett

¹¹While the framework developed here largely limits the sources of moral, expert, and network authority to those that come with the office, future work might consider how the traits or actions of individual officeholders can amplify or undermine those sources of authority.

and Finnemore 2004:24). The EH's statements and reports represent the organization's cadre of experts—including analysts, field staff, and researchers—whose specialized knowledge makes the ideas and recommendations in them more authoritative. Furthermore, some heads cultivate this authority by expanding research and data collection capabilities, publicizing major research reports, and appointing high-profile experts to key posts (Murphy 2006; Weaver 2008; Piot 2012). The officeholder may also be a recognized expert in her own right. Choren (2012:39) finds that the most influential WHO heads were global health experts who possessed “sufficient knowledge of the new environment to be able to manipulate it.” At UNAIDS, Harman (2011) adds that Peter Piot, a widely respected epidemiologist, leveraged his professional reputation to persuade key constituencies, including some health ministries, to adopt his priorities. Conversely, Browne (2011:19) argues that UNDP has trouble coordinating UN development agencies partially because these agencies have not viewed past administrators as “globally recognized development specialists.”

The final source of authority derives from the organization and officeholder's centrality in transnational advocacy and policy networks. From the EH's perspective, these “existing and potential informal and formal channels of contact...form the basis for inter-organizational coalitions” (Gordenker 1993:276). Thakur (2006:330) adds that civil society networks are “a ready and powerful resource and reservoir of political support and goodwill” for a UNSG. These network connections make mobilization more efficient, provide the head with additional moral and expert authority, and, once organized, can campaign and lobby other governments to support or at least acquiesce to the EH's initiatives throughout her term in office (Cox 1969:214; Price 1998, 2003). EH centrality in these networks gives her authority because she can “broker” ties to resource-rich but peripheral parts of the network (Goddard 2009; Lake and Wong 2009). The EH can set up meetings with senior members of a government, prominent policymakers, and celebrities as well as disseminate information and frame issues using her media access and reports to intergovernmental bodies.¹²

Consequently, some network members will support the head because they share the EH's preferences or seek lucrative contracts. For example, human rights advocates adopt UNICEF's issue priorities because UNICEF is a “gatekeeper” with valuable expertise and resources in the human security network (Carpenter 2011). Others may not share the EH's priorities but defer to the head given the head's “extraordinary power to convene” (Kennedy 2007:159). In fact, Hubert (2007) finds that successful TACs are ones that include IO heads because “letterhead matters to governments.” Few organizations will turn down an invitation from the head that is expected to offer prestige, opportunities to provide policy input, and face time with important network members. In turn, this convening power gives the EH substantial influence on which issues are considered and which proposals form the basis for intra-network negotiations (Tharoor 2007:42).

IO Executive Leadership and Organizational Adaptation

Thus, all EHs are *in authority* and *an authority* to some degree (Barnett and Finnemore 2004:25). However, the number of officeholders credited with bringing

¹²An EH can also take steps to enhance this network authority. Kofi Annan was active in US policy and social circles and chose senior advisers with “professional standing” to “serve as a bridge” to key constituencies (Crossette 2002; Williams 2010:436–437). Likewise, Peter Piot (2012), the head of UNAIDS, could facilitate or impede NGO access to “hard to reach” senior officials at major foundations, donor agencies, and health ministries because of connections built up over a career that spanned, among others, senior WHO posts and the founding of a transnational network of HIV/AIDS advocates (see also Harman 2011).

about significant and lasting change is more limited. I argue that one way to explain the varying influence of officeholders is to assess their performance of two tasks commonly associated with executive leadership: defining a strategic plan and mobilizing a coalition to implement that plan.

The Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is a set of complementary change ideas—which may or may not be formalized in a written document—that describe an idealized future of the organization (Williams 2010). In particular, a well-defined plan consists of the EH's vision for the organization in addition to concrete reforms that make the vision meaningful to constituents. The former is a familiar concept in leadership studies (Zaccaro and Banks 2001:192). "Without a vision," Nye (2008:74) writes, "it is difficult to lead others to change." Burns (2003) adds that a vision that speaks to deep-seated constituent needs inspires, empowers, and coordinates followers to produce transformational change. Similarly, some UNSGs insist that a vision attracts followers when the vision transcends parochial national interests to benefit the broader international community (Boutros-Ghali 1999; Annan 2012). In contrast, ineffective IO heads lack a strategic plan resulting in changes that are at best "a mere accumulation of odds and ends of projects, some appealing to one, some to another, group of constituents" (Cox 1969:213).

Thus, the EH's vision—or its absence—helps capture important variation across officeholders. Take the UN, for instance. Hammarskjöld is praised for having the foresight to understand that the UN Secretariat could help manage regional conflicts if the Secretariat demonstrated its impartiality and independence (Urquhart 1994). In contrast, Kurt Waldheim is accused of exacerbating organizational paralysis because he did not "feel everything must be done through an intellectual framework" and resisted offering a vision, fearing that any vision would undermine his relations with important members.¹³ Likewise, Jonah (2008) criticizes Javier Perez de Cuellar for failing to have a grasp of the UN's potential in the post-Cold War order, while Boutros-Ghali's (1992) *An Agenda for Peace* was initially praised in many policy circles for envisioning a Secretariat with the capabilities and conceptual tools to effectively advise the US-led Security Council and implement a growing number of resolutions.

Despite the perceived importance of the vision, most scholars insufficiently "define and articulate its nature" (Zaccaro and Banks 2001:192). To give the concept more precision, I treat a vision as a social structure and, like similar structures in organizations, argue its primary purpose is to improve organizational adaptation to its environment.¹⁴ Specifically, I define a vision as an *ex-ante* understanding of the primary contribution the organization will make in the future and the coalition of state and nonstate actors whose cooperation will enable the organization to make it. Emphasizing the adaptive function of a vision is broadly consistent with many sociological institutionalists (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). In this view, organizational change is motivated by a desire to improve the organization's fit with the demands of constituents who can secure access to the symbolic and material resources the IO needs to function (Barnett and Coleman 2005). For example, Gordenker (1993:267) describes the UNSG as making political choices "about how and when to relate to the environment," and Selznick's (1984) study of public agencies argues its heads

¹³See Waldheim (1986:206). In his view, the Cold War's East-West and North-South divisions meant his role was to pursue the minimal goal of "keeping the organization functioning."

¹⁴In many ways, the vision is similar to what Schechter (1987:198) called a head's "organizational ideology" where heads "establish priorities among the multiple wishes of member states."

become leaders when they take what he called “critical decisions” about the organizations’ commitment to a particular group of constituents.

In this view, the task of defining a vision is central to executive leadership—because the vision is a political guide and planning tool the EH uses to determine which reforms will support adaptation as the EH conceives it. Put another way, the vision is a blueprint for evaluating organizational and technical changes and resource reallocations based on their conformity to specific political goals. In some cases, the vision may also serve a mobilizing function by providing one way to decide whether the organization should, for instance, rally a particular voting bloc, cultivate relations with new donor and client states, seek endorsements from advocates in a different principled network, or recruit experts from a specific professional field.

If the vision is a blueprint for adaptation, one implication is that a constrained IO head should develop a vision that effectively positions the organization within its environment rather than one preoccupied with changing that environment. Given that IOs embody global values, it is tempting for an EH to envision changing the IO’s environment rather than reforming the organization to operate in a flawed environment. In fact, Ramesh Thakur (2006:333) argues that the exercise of UNSG leadership includes “articulating a bold and noble vision for the community.” Yet, environmental constraints make it unlikely that most EHs can implement such transformational visions. To this end, Kennedy (2007:169) cautions a UNSG against presuming her vision is “synonymous with the vision of the whole international community.” And other scholars find that even if IOs spread ideas, the IO often cannot control the change prompted by those ideas in different regional, historical, and cultural contexts (Acharya 2004).

Likewise, an IO head’s vision will be difficult to implement if she fails to make critical decisions about the IO’s primary contribution and to set political priorities accordingly. When members have divergent preferences about the IO’s contribution, some EHs propose a “grand bargain”—a compromise designed to placate all members. For example, Kofi Annan’s (2005) *In Larger Freedom* was a strategic plan that included a package of sweeping intergovernmental and administrative reforms that he insisted were indivisible because they offered something for everyone. Yet, the proposal lacked a clear political vision—and rather than attracting support, members became so preoccupied with eliminating unwanted parts of the package that they did not lobby for desirable ones or constructively negotiate more modest and realistic alternatives (Luck 2005).

One example of a plan with a well-defined vision is McNamara’s strategy for the future of the Bank. From the outset, he dared the organization to shed its risk-averse lending culture and start thinking of itself as the world’s premiere development agency.¹⁵ He wanted to double the Bank’s loan portfolio and lend to the world’s poorest countries. Prior to McNamara, the Bank acted like a bank: It lent to governments with a promising rate of return—and governments strategically important to its largest donor, the United States (Shapley 1993). McNamara wanted the Bank to play a leading role in poverty reduction, and doing so required reducing the Bank’s dependence on US funding, tapping European financial markets, and cultivating closer relations with donor governments (especially the Nordic countries and the oil-producing Gulf States) and prospective borrowers such as African ones. It also meant increasing the proportion of staff who were development economists and reducing the proportion of banking professionals whose risk aversion would prevent the Bank from reaching its lending targets (Shapley 1993; Kraske et al. 1996).

¹⁵See his first address to World Bank Board of Directors on September 30, 1968 in McNamara (1981).

Implementing the Strategic Plan: Mobilization Strategies

While influential IO heads such as McNamara had a strategic plan, they also successfully executed a mobilization strategy to implement those changes and to realize the vision. Depending on the situation, leadership scholars argue mobilization may require coordinating loosely organized followers, bargaining with reluctant constituents, directing subordinates, or empowering like-minded but marginalized groups (see Wren 1995). Burns (2003) adds that transformational leaders create vehicles that make it easier for followers to participate and support the leader. Nye (2008) offers a more situation-specific approach and argues that the best leaders tailor their mix of powers of inducement and attraction to conditions such as follower interests, information availability, and the distribution of resources. The commonality among these strategies is that they are *follower-oriented*—they target those constituents inclined to support the proposed changes rather than those inclined to oppose them. They also share a common logic: turn constituents into followers and turn followers into a “winning” coalition that holds the balance of power *vis-à-vis* those opposed to the EH’s strategic plan.

For instance, McNamara mobilized new resources and expanded lending with an aggressive campaign that relied heavily on his formal executive authority as well as his moral, expert, and network authority. From his bully pulpit, he argued that poverty eradication not only served donor government security interests but was a moral imperative (McNamara 1981). He also travelled to key capitals because he was convinced he could persuade skeptics to support his vision once he had made his case face-to-face (Kraske et al. 1996). When some in the US Congress would not budge, he directed Bank staff to expand lending with or without additional US support, under the assumption that the United States would follow once other donors were onboard (Shapley 1993; Kraske et al. 1996). These personal initiatives were reinforced by senior aides that he designated to lobby new donor governments as well as important players in target financial markets. To strengthen their lobbying efforts, the growing body of Bank development research armed staff with detailed information about promising anti-poverty projects such as immunization campaigns and the “Green Revolution” (Shapley 1993; Weaver 2008).

This follower-oriented strategy would make little sense for a more constrained head like the UNSG. After all, a UNSG with an ambitious strategic plan faces significant opposition and lacks the authority to persuade, cajole, or coerce reluctant constituents (Tharoor 2007). She would also have few resources to bargain and exchange with these constituents. Consequently, follower-oriented strategies are likely to be counterproductive, as the fate of Boutros-Ghali’s *An Agenda for Peace* (1992) illustrates. To many policy wonks, the *Agenda* offered a compelling framework that members could use to help the organization chart a new course in the post-Cold War. Yet, some members found the *Agenda* too interventionist, and the lone superpower feared it would excessively intertwine US foreign policy with the UN (Newman 1998). As a result, key proposals were not adopted or adequately funded and even widely popular ideas like peacebuilding were institutionalized only after Boutros-Ghali left office.¹⁶ Further, the Security Council co-opted the *Agenda*’s expansionist rationale to justify sending ill-equipped forces into ongoing conflicts, while NGOs embraced the concept of peacebuilding but redefined it to suit their organizational needs.¹⁷ Worse, the ambitious plan helped make the UNSG a target for the Council (and especially the Clinton Administration) to scapegoat him when peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Bosnia, and

¹⁶The UN membership rejected the idea of creating a rapid reaction or UN intelligence collection capability and the Peacebuilding Commission was established under his successor in 2005.

¹⁷Slim (1996); Barnett, Kim, O’Donnell, and Sitea (2007).

Rwanda ended in tragedy (Newman 1998; Berdal 1999). Overall, the *Agenda's* fate reflected the UNSG's mistaken assumption that renewed enthusiasm for the UN created a large constituency of followers ready to enact dramatic change.

Yet, it was also Boutros-Ghali's follower-oriented mobilization strategy—in addition to the substance of the *Agenda*—that undermined its prospects for implementation. The outspoken UNSG believed his role was to rally a latent constituency of followers and use his moral, expert, and network authority to build political and material support. Further, he seemed confident that the force of his intellect and personality could compensate for many of the limitations of his office. To this end, he (1999:27) delivered the *Agenda* to both the Security Council and the General Assembly, promoted the plan in a tour of key capitals, and released it as a stand-alone “Bluebook” to “differentiate [it] from other documents released in his name.” This campaign reflected Boutros-Ghali's (1999:26) view that “policy was made by the written word, that texts made things happen in the realm of high diplomacy and statecraft.” However, these formal proposals and his reliance on the bully pulpit invited state scrutiny of the *Agenda's* underlying vision, which alerted its opponents to the broader implications of individual reforms. Additionally, the introduction of the plan in inter-governmental forums was a focal point around which opposition could develop counter-frames and block key parts of it.

Boutros-Ghali's strategy for implementing his vision can be sharply differentiated from the one Hammar skjold adopted. While both sought to bring about major changes at the UN, the latter did so in a more piecemeal manner which led to a period of substantial but incremental growth at the UN. Unlike Boutros-Ghali, Hammar skjold “made no attempt to jump on the stage” because the membership, and particularly the USSR, did not want an activist and independent Secretariat (Urquhart 2007:18). Instead, his first year was spent implementing a series of administrative changes. He also used his bully pulpit sparingly, with reporters at his press conferences describing the UNSG as engaging but difficult to pin down on key organizational and international issues (Urquhart 1994). Hammar skjold's self-restraint could easily have been the basis for Robert Cox's observation that leadership is less “striding out in front and promoting things...than trying to avoid...runn[ing] into conflict with major interests in countries that can oppose them or interest groups that have effect in opposing them.”¹⁸

In other words, the most constrained leaders, like a UNSG, must be more concerned with mobilizing opposition to their plans than mobilizing those inclined to support that plan. This *opposition-oriented* mobilization strategy follows a different logic than a follower-oriented one by accepting a balance of power that favors the opposition and implementing changes without triggering a “blocking coalition.” It also suggests an EH use tactics similar to those used by international bureaucracies and NGOs to influence institutional change (Haas 1989; Price 1998, 2003; Loescher 2001; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Pace and Schense 2004; Weaver 2008). Like these actors, the EH can rarely change her opportunity structure and relies on social sources of authority rather than material power. Given such limitations, these actors influence change incrementally by seizing windows of opportunity, reinterpreting existing rules, and framing emerging issues. In particular, this framework identifies three tactics that can be distilled from studies of these other actors and applied to an opposition-oriented mobilization strategy.

Self-Restraint and Vision Articulation

First, a tightly constrained EH can implement more of her strategic plan by refraining from sharing widely the vision until *after* key changes are

¹⁸Cox quoted in Weiss et al. (2005:345).

implemented. This tactic deviates from conventional follower-oriented strategies where articulating the vision motivates and coordinates followers that, in turn, mobilize in support of the EH's reforms. In this view, articulation serves to "unite the beliefs, goals, and activities of a whole group" (Bolden et al. 2011:184). As Burns (2003:153) puts it, a vision can "supply powerful motivation for transforming leadership and followership, fusing them into a dynamic force in pursuit of change." Conversely, the absence of a vision may prevent potential supporters from mobilizing because the organization seems "readily influenced by short-run opportunistic trends" and not committed to the proposed reforms (Selznick 1984:25). Finally, the vision mobilizes internal support by differentiating the organization from competitors and fostering corporate cohesion in decentralized organizations with distant field offices (Browne 2011:84).

However, Nye (2008:75) notes that "pressure to articulate a vision can get a leader into trouble" because a vision "that plays well with one group may not sit well with another." While a vision may be a focal point to coordinate supporters, it is also a focal point for constituents who stand to lose from the organization's realignment. Further, an EH who turns to her bully pulpit to promote her vision can trigger a fierce backlash against her proposals and lingering resentment against the head (Luck 2007). Conversely, an EH who does not widely promote her vision downplays the implications of particular proposals and, at the least, does not create a focal point for organizing a diverse set of constituents who would oppose the strategic plan for different reasons.

Hammar skjold's reluctance to initially promote his vision of an independent Secretariat exemplifies this tactic. Hammar skjold "codified" his vision only after consolidating administrative reforms and setting key precedents (Traub 2007:187). By that point, many members had ostensibly endorsed many of his changes—such as such UN peacekeeping—and credited the UNSG with helping manage regional conflicts (Zacher 1970; Urquhart 1994). Still, Hammar skjold eventually articulated his vision to protect those changes and the underlying ideas. Most famously, he gave a high-profile lecture to students at Oxford University just weeks before his tragic death in 1961. In it, he argued that the bipolar competition necessitated an independent civil service because Council paralysis meant many resolutions would have "bare minimum agreement," so implementation required a civil service capable of impartially interpreting those resolutions.¹⁹ For Hammar skjold, this speech, as well as similar ones over the preceding year, rallied support against a Soviet proposal to replace the UNSG with a "troika" representing different political groupings. And inside the Secretariat, many officials still aspire to realize Hammar skjold's vision and frequently invoke it to resist external demands, defend their course of action, and socialize their newer colleagues (for example, Power 2008).

Seizing Windows of Opportunity

A second tactic is timing reforms around windows of opportunity (Traub 2007). This timing diverges from that of follower-oriented strategies, which suggest introducing reforms at the start of the EH's term, when the head's authority is at its peak. There are several reasons why the EH's authority may decline over time (Chorev 2012:39). In some cases, the governments supporting the EH or her strategic plan are replaced with more hostile ones. In others, an EH is appointed to take dramatic action to save an organization in crisis, but members reassert control once the crisis subsides or lose faith in the EH if it does not. In still others, the head's moral authority suffers after publicly embracing the inevitable political compromises that fall short of the organization's ideals (Traub

¹⁹The speech is available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/docs/internationalcivilservant.pdf>.

2006). Besides declining authority, a follower-oriented strategy also suggests the early introduction of reforms to credibly demonstrate to followers that the EH's vision is not just paying lip service to their demands. In particular, an EH who introduces controversial reforms rallies followers precisely because these followers expect those opposed to the reforms to mobilize against the EH.

In contrast, an opposition-oriented strategy times the introduction of reforms to minimize opposition. In the mid-to-long run, opposition may decrease because member coalitions or the distribution of institutional bargaining power shifts (Schechter 1987). More sporadic but common are changes in the task environment that open a window of opportunity for the EH by creating a sudden and sharp shift in member preferences (Traub 2007). An EH with a strategic plan is well positioned to recognize and capitalize when a window opens because the strategic plan is a blueprint for defining the problem and choosing a course of action. For example, Hammarskjöld seized on the windows of opportunities that international crises occasionally provided (for example, Zacher 1970; Franck and Nolte 1993; Urquhart 1994, 2007). These crises were non-routine events where members perceived conventional organizational action to be inadequate but feared inaction carried substantial risk or costs. Consequently, members supported UNSG deviation from existing practice. During the 1954 Peking Crisis, the membership acquiesced when Hammarskjöld declared that he was negotiating with Peking on his own authority to defuse tensions between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Two years later, the General Assembly endorsed his plan to organize a lightly armed UN mission to separate the disputants during Suez Crisis—a mission whose operations the Secretariat would manage.

While crises enable an EH to take exceptional action, these exceptions may set a precedent when members find the action valuable and the head develops criteria to justify the deviation from established practice—criteria that the head and his supporters can use to identify other situations that warrant further exceptional action (Schroeder 2013). As exceptions accumulate, members perceive deviant actions as increasingly normal and in some instances authorize new organizational structures that routinize and legitimate a new practice (Vaughan 1996; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Schroeder 2013). At the UN, Hammarskjöld did more than take exceptional action; he also justified his actions in general terms (Zacher 1970; Urquhart 1994). He insisted that his negotiations with Peking were appropriate because (i) the Assembly requested the assistance of his office, (ii) the UNSG had an implied power under the Charter to intervene in disputes, and (iii) a series of Assembly resolutions condemning the Peking government precluded him from negotiating on its behalf (Franck and Nolte 1993). Similarly, his reaction to the Suez Crisis included organizing UN troops as well as laying out general principles of UN peacekeeping, including a Charter rationale for their deployment (the so-called Chapter 6 ½) and rules for receiving a state's consent and maintaining impartiality. Once members ostensibly accepted those criteria, they were rhetorically trapped—and found it more costly to prevent independent UNSG action in situations reasonably consistent with those criteria.

Administrative Change and Feedback Effects

A final tactic consistent with an opposition-oriented strategy is implementing modest administrative reforms aligned with the vision that feed back to permit additional changes. Johnstone (2007:128–131) argues that administrative reforms are platforms for further reform when they fall at the intersection of a head's normative, political, and managerial functions. These platforms work when they empower like-minded external interests or trigger functional spillover effects that generate member demand for further change. Alternatively, they may create latent capabilities that the EH can use to seize windows of opportunity. For

example, Hammarskjöld was initially preoccupied with reorganizing the Secretariat, recruiting talented advisers, and cultivating a culture of independence. He eliminated senior posts that functioned as a conduit to officeholder's home governments, announced new staff rules "emphasizing independence and integrity," removed the FBI from the UN Headquarters, and successfully negotiated with members to allow 75% of staff to have permanent contracts (Urquhart 1994; Jonah 2008). During international crises, these administrative changes strengthened Hammarskjöld's claim that the Secretariat could impartially mediate disputes and manage a peacekeeping force.

Unlike Hammarskjöld, Boutros-Ghali did not tightly link administrative reforms to *An Agenda for Peace*. While Boutros-Ghali aggressively reorganized the Secretariat in 1992, this reorganization served primarily to appease US demands to streamline management and find efficiencies (Boutros-Ghali 1999). The UNSG even invited the United States to nominate one of its nationals to plan and carry out the reorganization. Thus, the reorganization preceded and ran parallel to the development of the *Agenda* and, as result, was not strongly linked to its prescribed reforms. Further, the UNSG missed opportunities to implement reforms that could have acted as platforms for further change. In particular, he failed to capitalize on the popularity of peacebuilding by giving the Secretariat administrative guidance on the policies, procedures, and programs that would have institutionalized it.²⁰

Conclusion

There is good reason why theories of international organization should take seriously the influence of executive leadership on the evolution of global institutions. For one, theories that make room for the EH fill the gap between empirical claims crediting an IO head with important developments and the scholarly tendency to avoid separating analytically the EH from the rest of the bureaucracy. This tendency is problematic because most IO heads enjoy enough institutional autonomy and authority to warrant investigating them as a separate institution within the organization. More specifically, the analytical framework presented here argues that the EH is not restricted to channeling internal and external forces—officeholders can and sometimes do make political choices that shape organizational adaptation.

This framework draws together insights from sociological institutionalist and constructivist approaches to IO and leadership to illustrate the link between an EH's influence on change and her successful performance of two tasks commonly associated with executive leadership. The first task is defining a strategic plan, which is a blueprint for adaptation. It sets the organization's political goals, which are then used to evaluate possible technical and organizational reforms. The second task is executing a mobilization strategy capable of implementing the strategic plan. My framework identifies two ideal-type mobilization strategies: a follower-oriented strategy and an opposition-oriented one. Follower-oriented strategies are prevalent in leadership studies, and as McNamara illustrates, focus on rallying followers and building a "winning coalition." In contrast, an opposition-oriented strategy is more viable in constraining environments where the EH's autonomy is limited and opponents of her strategic plan hold the balance of institutional power. Under these conditions, implementation requires preventing the opposition from mobilizing and organizing a blocking coalition. To do so, a successful EH like Hammarskjöld eschews many of the tactics associated

²⁰Former senior UN official Alvaro de Soto quoted in Karns (2012:73).

with follower-oriented tactics in favor of ones used by nonstate actors such as international bureaucracies and NGOs.

This framework has important theoretical and policy implications. For institutional scholars, it provides further evidence that IOs can and should be studied as self-directed actors. The framework also gives one explanation for variation in modes of institutional change such as why change is punctuated in some instances and incremental in others (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). It suggests that punctuated change is likely where the EH successfully executes a follower-oriented strategy while an opposition-oriented strategy should produce incremental change. Second, it has implications for constructivist IO scholarship by highlighting executive leadership as a source of cultural change (Schein 2004). As such, the strategic plan is likely to be an important site of contestation. Once a strategic plan is implemented, its underlying vision and ideas may develop a taken-for-granted quality that reconstitutes the organization's identity and fashions staff "into a distinctive way of thinking or acting" (Selznick 1984:137). For example, one of McNamara's legacies is a robust disbursement culture that defines staff-lending practices, and many UN officials still aspire to the culture of independence that Hammarskjöld envisioned.

From a policy perspective, the framework raises the possibility that the EH can support organizational adaption at a time when intergovernmental bodies seem too divided to perform this function (for example, Kim and Russett 1996). In other words, and to repurpose Cox's (1969) well-worn claim, the quality of the executive head may prove to be one of the most critical determinants of the scope of the organization's contribution to global governance. For many IOs, the question of their future contribution has taken on increased urgency in a globalized international system. This globalized system creates a demand for IOs to govern problems such as rising inequality and transnational threats—problems that are complex, costly to govern, and politically tricky. However, this system also produces new opportunities for an entrepreneurial EH to implement her strategic plan because it has empowered a range of actors, who can provide an IO head with political advocacy and material resources.

For instance, former UNSG Kofi Annan (2012) pursued the UN Global Compact—an initiative that asked the private sector to promote and protect human rights—to help implement his underlying vision of the UN as a major contributor to human security. The UNSG also piggybacked on existing transnational advocacy campaigns (TACs)—such as the International Coalition to Ban Landmines—that supported this vision. In fact, these examples suggest that a clever EH may even influence the types of issues around which TACs organize. After all, most NGOs welcome participation from an EH that facilitates access to intergovernmental forums, lends credibility to seemingly utopian ideas, and can institutionalize the norm in the IO (Pace and Schense 2004). To this end, future research might explore the conditions under which these networks empower the EH or apply the framework to examine the performance of executive leadership tasks in networked transnational organizations.

Besides the effects of globalization on IO executive leadership, researchers might also investigate the factors determining an EH's choice of mobilization strategy or the content of her strategic plan (or failure to develop a plan). Constructivist scholars may be interested in how the head's professional socialization or the IO's own culture influences that content (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Loescher 2001; Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Alternatively, the leadership and IO scholarship could be further culled to identify other follower-oriented and opposition-oriented mobilization tactics that are applicable to different subsets of IO heads (for example, Jinnah 2014). Finally, sociological institutionalist, constructivist, and principal-agent approaches can help illuminate the strategies of state and nonstate actors to resist undesirable strate-

gic plans and implement alternative ones (Barnett and Coleman 2005; Hawkins et al. 2006).

In sum, the study of executive leadership offers a promising way to enrich our theories of global governance and to explain important instances of organizational change. And while the IO scholarship suggests it is premature to reiterate Cox's claim that executive leadership is "the most critical single determinant" of IO change, it offers compelling reasons why it is worthy of more scholarly attention.

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