"A Force for Peace": Expanding the Role of the UN Secretary-General Under Trygve Lie, 1946–1953

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Ellen Jenny Ravndal

*The UN Charter describes him or her merely as the "chief administrative officer of the organization," yet today the Secretary-General is widely recognized as the UN's chief political representative. How did this transformation and expansion of the office from administrative to political take place? Existing scholarship tends to emphasize the contribution made by Dag Hammarskjöld. This article challenges that story on two accounts: first, by pointing out the importance of institutional factors and not just the officeholder's personality; and second, by examining the contribution made by Trygve Lie, the UN's first Secretary-General. The article establishes a conceptual framework based on institutional theory to understand the role of the Secretary-General and analyzes Lie's contribution in the period 1946–1953. **Keywords**: UN Secretary-General, international organization, executive heads, Trygve Lie, institutionalism.*

ON 1 JANUARY 2017, ANTÓNIO GUTERRES TOOK OFFICE AS THE UNITED Nation's ninth Secretary-General (SG) at the conclusion of Ban Ki-moon's term. The SG plays a highly visible role in international politics, and the year-long process of selecting the new SG aroused considerable interest in the media and among governments and civil society groups. The UN Charter describes the SG merely as the "chief administrative officer of the Organization," but over the years since 1945 the role has expanded significantly, and "for better or worse, the role of the Secretary-General has come to be seen as primarily political."[1] How did such an expansion and transformation of the UN Secretary-General's role become possible?

This development is surprising when we consider that it entails the SG, an individual, in an autonomous role in questions of peace and security—an area of international politics closely related to state sovereignty. In fact, this reality runs contrary to the predictions of both realism and rational choice institutionalism, two prominent research traditions in international relations. Within realism, international organizations (IOs) generally play no autonomous role, merely reflecting the interests of states. Principal-agent literature, a version of rational choice institutionalism, offers a more nuanced and sophisticated view of IOs, yet even here the primary focus remains on how states (principals) establish IOs (agents) for specific purposes and then seek to control them as they perform their tasks. Although

the rational choice literature acknowledges that the performance of these tasks may expand an IO's autonomy, apart from a few studies of international courts,[2] not many have examined how this process works.

To explain the expansion of the SG's role, the dominant narrative focuses on Dag Hammarskjöld (1953–1961); in his biographer Brian Urquhart's words, he was "undeniably the most remarkable of the Secretaries-General so far appointed."[3] In this article, I contend that there are two problems with this narrative. First, it places inordinate emphasis on the personality of one officeholder and fails to consider the importance of institutional factors. Second, the narrative overlooks the significance of precedents established in the first years of the UN's operation under Trygve Lie (1946–1953). Lie has largely been seen as the wrong man, in the wrong job, at the wrong time,[4] and therefore his tenure presents a hard case in analyzing the expansion of the SG's role. If even Lie succeeded in expanding the role, we would have to reconsider our present explanation of the process.

I also provide an answer to how the executive head of an organization may expand his or her autonomy. I establish a conceptual framework based on normative or sociological institutionalism, which explains how the SG occupies a special symbolic role within the UN as a "guardian" of the UN Charter and how this means the SG has been "pulled" in to fill a vacuum left by the inaction of other UN organs. Through historical analysis of primary documents, I then explore how the SG's role expanded under Lie. I establish what expectations existed before Lie took office and then focus on five key episodes from Lie's tenure: the Iranian crisis of 1946, the Palestine problem of 1947–1948, the Berlin blockade of 1948–1949, Lie's suggested peace plan in the spring of 1950, and the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.

The Role of the UN Secretary-General: A Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework explains how to understand what the SG is. The SG performs a role within the institution of the UN, but how should we understand this role? What is a role? And what does it mean for a role to expand and become political? Borrowing definitions from sociological or normative institutionalism, *institutions* "comprise regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life,"[5] while a *role* consists of "conceptions of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals or specified social positions."[6] Institutions are social constructions and exist only through the performance of actors in the roles it prescribes. Although a role defines appropriate action, this is not a deterministic model. Actors possess autonomy in the act of interpreting which roles apply to a

given situation and what those roles recommend as appropriate.[7] A further element of uncertainty arises because actors may be empowered or constrained by their access to resources, which the institution can also assign. Reproduction of an institution is therefore never perfect; "social change, no less than social stasis, can be generated by the enactment of structures in social life."[8] The SG operates within the rules of the UN institution, but those rules may change, and the SG is one of the actors shaping them.

The role of the SG can be distinguished from other roles by its scope, autonomy, and representation. A role's scope is a measure of how many fields of activity its incumbent is authorized to engage in. The SG today has a broad scope and is engaged in all areas of UN activity, many of them with political remits. The SG acts as a manager who administers the Secretariat; an investigator in seeking out information and writing reports; a diplomat in the traditional role of providing good offices and mediating between states;[9] a general because the SG is, "in theory, commander-in-chief of the blue-helmeted UN peacekeepers";[10] and an advocate for global issues when acting as a "norm entrepreneur"[11] or using the "bully pulpit."[12] Some aspects of these activities are primarily of an administrative nature while others are political.

The distinction between political and administrative is important to my argument. Broadly speaking, *administrative* matters are those related to the internal management of the Secretariat while *political* applies to activities where the member states are directly engaged. The activities of the Security Council, General Assembly, and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are political, as are the activities of the SG when the officeholder mediates between member states or offers statements on global questions. This is not to discount the fact that questions of employment, budgets, and other Secretariat matters can be deeply controversial or otherwise of interest to states, but for the purpose of clarity I draw a distinction between internal Secretariat matters as administrative and questions directly involving the member states as political.

The second way in which roles can be distinguished from each other is along the dimension of autonomy. *Autonomy* measures the degree of independence, discretion, and initiative the incumbent of a role is allowed. We can observe two kinds of autonomy. *Explicit autonomy* is seen through rules, regulations, and expectations that assign independence, discretion, or initiative to a role in a given situation, whereas *implicit autonomy* arises in situations that have not been fully described by the institution. Implicit autonomy is present in the act of interpretation as the incumbent of a role seeks to determine what is expected of them in a given situation. More implicit autonomy is present early in an institution's existence, when the majority of the situations it faces are new or unpredicted. Article 99, which says that the SG "may bring to the attention of the Security Council any

matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security," is an example of an institutional rule giving explicit autonomy to an actor.

The third dimension of a role is the degree to which it represents the institution it is part of. A judge, for example, represents the institution of law. Yet some roles more than others symbolically represent the institution overall. These roles are important in our society, representing the integration of all parts into a meaningful whole, and therefore holding special importance in legitimating those institutions.[13] The SG performs such a role within the UN. More than anyone else within the UN system, the SG represents the UN overall. The SG is "a living symbol and embodiment of the United Nations,"[14] who "alone symbolizes and speaks for the entire international community."[15] Lie called the SG "a spokesman for the world interest"[16] while Kurt Waldheim used the phrase "spokesman for humanity."[17] At the heart of the Secretary-General's symbolic and representational function is the idea that the officeholder is "the bearer of a sacred trust, and . . . the guardian of the principles of the Charter,"[18] as Javier Pérez de Cuéllar wrote.

This role comes with a heavy responsibility. The SG shares responsibility for the fulfillment of the UN's purpose and principles with the Security Council, General Assembly, and other UN organs. Yet, because of the SG's special position as representing the UN overall, whenever any other organs are unable or unwilling to fulfill their duty, or in new situations where "someone needs to do something," the SG will often be pulled in to fill the vacuum. Kofi Annan used to joke that the common acronym "SG" actually stood for "scape-goat."[19] This vacuum effect, or institutional pull, is one mechanism that can help explain why the SG's role has expanded to include a number of political functions.

In addition to the vacuum effect that pulls the role to assume broader scope or more autonomy, individual SGs may also push to expand their role. The implicit autonomy present in the act of interpretation means that two different incumbents of the same role facing the same situation may still act differently. An activist SG may choose to push for expansion where a more modest individual may choose to resist pressure from states or other UN organs to expand the role's scope or autonomy. Yet all SGs, regardless of their personality and prior experiences, will be socialized into the role and end up acting in similar ways because of the expectations of their position.

Through both institutional pull and individual push, the SG's role may change, yet the direction and nature of that change will depend on the circumstances and the inclination of the person holding the office at critical junctures. Not all innovations will create lasting precedents. Whether or not a new activity translates into a permanent expansion of the SG's role depends on the reaction of other actors within the UN. If a sufficient number

of government representatives, UN staff, journalists, and experts accept the activity and the new procedural norms underlying it, it becomes entrenched in the institution.[20] Once accepted, such precedents are difficult to undo. To understand how and why the role has expanded, we need to examine the tenures of individual SGs against the political context of the time.

Political by Design

As the first SG, Lie was to some extent free to make up his role as he went along, but the institutional setup did include some formal and informal rules, regulations, and expectations for the SG's role. In 1946, there was "a highly restrictive and conservative view of the functions, let alone the independence, of the world's top international civil servant," claims Urquhart, who worked in the Secretariat at the time. The SG "was considered, especially by the Europeans, to be an almost exclusively administrative official, and efforts by Lie to assist in political matters were often resented or ignored."[21] Yet a closer look at discussions at the time reveals that the office was intended to be political.

The League of Nations SG, the most readily available model for the office, played a limited political role behind the scenes. The League SG took part in mediation between states and helped resolve potential conflicts.[22] The UN's founders acknowledged these political powers and sought to formalize and enhance them in the UN Charter.[23] This upgrade of the office is most readily evident in the inclusion of Article 99, which gave the SG shared responsibility for the UN's primary purpose—to maintain international peace and security—and also assigned the role autonomy.

Furthermore, discussions among states during the drafting of the UN Charter revealed expectations that the SG would play a political role. In internal US discussions from 1943−1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt raised the idea of a moderator as the "head for the entire institution." His precise idea is unclear, but he seems to have been thinking "of an individual with the full prestige of the organization behind him who could, as Council chairman, exert great diplomatic influence in 'moderating' differences especially between the great powers."[24] During the San Francisco conference in 1945, some states proposed expanding Article 99 to give the SG broader political powers, either to allow him to bring questions to the General Assembly, or to allow the SG also to refer "any matters which constitute an infringement or violation of the principles of the Charter" to the Security Council.[25] Both proposals were voted down in committee, but more than a third of the states present supported the idea.[26] These proposals were part of a general attempt by smaller states at the conference to strengthen the General Assembly (and the SG) at the expense of the Security Council (and the great powers) and thus reveal how some states at this point already sought to pull for an expansion of the SG's role.

The report of the UN Preparatory Commission, published in December 1945, attempted to define the SG's role. It noted his role as a mediator and that he might from time to time "take decisions which may justly be called political." Furthermore, Article 99 had given him "a quite special right which goes beyond any power previously accorded to the head of an international organization." The report noted the SG's symbolic role as it talked about his "moral authority" and stated that "the Secretary-General, more than anyone else, will stand for the United Nations as a whole."[27] Thus, the Preparatory Commission recognized the important aspect of the SG's role in representing the UN. However, it did not get much closer than earlier drafters and discussants to pinning down what the SG's role meant in practice. It has been suggested that the post was so important that "the founders were unable, or unwilling, to describe it in any detail."[28] Regardless, this left wide room for maneuver—implicit autonomy—for the first holders of the office.

Finally, discussions in 1945 and 1946 on the election of the first SG further revealed a certain expectation that the SG would play a political role. The General Assembly thought it important that "the terms of the appointment of the Secretary-General [should] be such as to enable a man of eminence and high attainment to accept and maintain the position."[29] Public opinion agreed that the SG should be a famous statesman and names such as General Dwight Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe, or Antony Eden, foreign minister of Britain, were mentioned in public discussions.[30] The institutional setup of the UN meant that the choice would ultimately be made by the Permanent Five (P5), but even they argued that it would be preferable to choose "a statesman rather than a diplomat, perhaps someone who had been foreign minister of his country."[31] In the end, they decided to appoint Lie—a politician—and they cannot have expected him to be a quiet administrator.

In early 1946, the expectation was that the SG would play some sort of political role. But this was an ambiguous and therefore flexible idea because no one had thought about what such a political role would be in practice. The first SG would therefore have wide areas of autonomy to explore the role and, judging by earlier discussions, would also find allies in the quest to push for expansion.

Pushing and Pulling to Expand
the Role of SG Under Trygve Lie

In the remainder of this article, I examine how the role of SG developed under Lie's leadership in the context of five key events: the Iranian crisis of 1946, the Palestine problem of 1947−1948, the Berlin blockade of 1948−1949, Lie's suggested peace plan in the spring of 1950, and the outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950.

The Iranian Crisis, 1946

The first instance when Lie explored his new role's rights and powers was during Security Council discussions of the Iranian crisis in 1946. During World War II, British and Soviet troops jointly occupied Iran while promising to withdraw within six months of the war's end. When the Soviet Union seemed unwilling to withdraw and started supporting an autonomy movement in Azerbaijan, Iran asked the Security Council for help in January 1946. But once the Soviet Union had given assurances that it would withdraw its troops, and Iran had stated its satisfaction with the Soviet promise and withdrawn its complaint, Lie argued the Council should remove the question from its agenda. Although the Council disagreed with Lie's opinion on the Iranian question, the drama that followed would have lasting consequences for the SG's role.

Lie presented his opinion to the Security Council in a legal memorandum on 16 April 1946. The Soviet Union endorsed Lie's opinion and defended the SG's right to present it to the Council,[32] but other states were not equally supportive. The US representative was particularly angry and wrote that Lie's memorandum "was drafted with other than purely legal considerations in mind."[33] The *New York Times* reported that Secretary of State James Byrnes believed Lie had "overstepped the bounds of the Secretary General's authority" in submitting the memorandum.[34]

Despite the heated debate, Lie's memorandum had practically no effect on the Security Council's discussion of the Iranian case. But a more important consequence was the resultant change in the SG's relations with the Council, as it changed its rules of procedure to recognize the SG's right to address it on any question under consideration. In this way the states accepted an expansion of the SG's role, even though they disagreed with the specific policy he sought to promote. Lie believed he already had this right but that a written rule was important because his position in relation to the Council was "highly floating and vague." He had the strong impression that, despite Article 99, "the eleven members of the Security Council do not wish any 'interference' from the Secretary General," and that "the time had come to clarify [his] own position towards the Council."[35] Nonetheless, during debates in the Committee of Experts—the Council's procedural subcommittee—Lie took a back seat and allowed the Soviet assistant secretary-general, Arkady Sobolev, to argue the Secretariat case.

The Committee of Experts soon found itself mired in a pointed debate over whether to include the phrase "upon the invitation of the president" in the rule. Sobolev, speaking for the SG, accepted the phrase, as did most of the representatives on the committee. Australia led the charge against and insisted on reserving its right to revisit the question in the full-dress debate in the Security Council. The other members urged Australia to reconsider so as not to embarrass the Council and the SG for open microphone.[36] In the end, Britain was responsible for a change in the committee's overall

position. Although regretting that the issue had been raised as a matter of principle since it was presumably a mere formality, the Foreign Office sent new instructions to the British delegation to support the Australian position because "it seems to us quite wrong and inconsistent with the commanding position given by the Charter to the Secretary-General that he should be obliged to obtain an invitation before expressing his views."[37] Once Britain shifted its stand, the rest of the committee quickly followed. In June 1946, the Council adopted the new rule of procedure, which remains unchanged to this day. An important right for the SG was recognized—that Article 99 implied not just that the SG could bring matters to the attention of the Council, but that he could participate in Council debates on an equal basis with Council members. The General Assembly and ECOSOC soon followed with equivalent changes to their rules of procedure.[38]

This episode revealed how the expansion of the SG's role was not fully Lie's doing. His memorandum gave the initial push, but he then took a back seat during discussions over the specific rule. Australia and Britain were responsible for giving the SG an unlimited right to intervene in Security Council debates. Although the British government in this period exhibited a generally negative attitude toward independent initiatives by the SG, continuing to view Sir Eric Drummond of the League of Nations as the ideal, in this instance Britain pulled to expand the SG's role. This is an example of institutional pull. The British Foreign Office believed the SG already had the right and, as one of the founders of UN, felt obliged to defend this position.

Palestine, 1947–1948
The "Palestine problem"—the question of the future status and government of the British mandate of Palestine—was one of the first major questions on the UN's agenda. In Lie's opinion, Palestine represented a "crucial test . . . to the wisdom and statesmanship" of the UN organization,[39] and he was eager that the UN should meet this test by ensuring a political solution and a halt to the fighting. In seeking to push the UN membership to act, Lie's actions would expand the scope and autonomy of the SG's role.

The Palestine problem first came on the UN agenda in early 1947 when Britain asked the General Assembly to recommend a solution. Lie saw the majority report of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) as "a clear victory for the principle of partition," and as SG he therefore felt a duty to promote it.[40] This angered many and has led to accusations that Lie was biased in favor of the Zionists or Israel.[41] Lie claimed to act in the interest of ensuring consistency between different UN organs. He saw UNSCOP's majority recommendation as a recommendation by a UN body and therefore openly advised states to vote in favor of it during Assembly discussions. Once the Assembly passed a resolution calling for partition,

Lie's argument was strengthened further, and he shifted his attention to pushing the Security Council to back up the Assembly's decision.[42]

In addition to urging states in the Security Council to implement the General Assembly's decision, Lie explored the option of establishing an armed guard to help enforce the partition plan. On the ground in Palestine, fighting between Jewish and Arab groups intensified, and in the spring of 1948 it became clear that it would be difficult to implement the partition plan against strong Arab opposition. Already in January 1948, the SG informally asked some member states if they would lend troops to a UN force for Palestine.[43] In June 1948, inspired by events in Palestine, Lie proposed the establishment of a UN armed guard to be recruited by the SG and put at the disposal of the Assembly, Security Council, and Trusteeship Council.[44] The Assembly adopted a scaled-down version of the plan, establishing the UN Field Service.[45]

Throughout the UN's involvement with the Palestine problem, Lie played an active role. He had opinions on how best to solve the problem and was not afraid to voice those opinions and urge member states to take action to implement them. In this way, he expanded the scope of the SG's role. Not only could the SG hold opinions on questions of concern to the UN, as the Iranian case had demonstrated, he was allowed to lobby on behalf of those opinions. Although the SG's specific proposals had mixed success, the fact that states allowed him to act in this way set precedents for the future. By accepting the underlying procedural norms, the member states accepted an expansion of the SG's role. Thus, even failed initiatives may translate into institutional changes.

The Berlin Blockade, 1948–1949

Another high-profile political issue where Lie held strong opinions and sought to persuade states to act accordingly—and in the process gained acceptance from member states for an expansion of the SG's role—was in relation to the Berlin blockade of 1948−1949. When in June 1948 the Soviet Union, ostensibly in response to the introduction of a new currency in the three Western zones, closed off all access to the city, the most dangerous Cold War conflict to date started. Gradually the United States, Britain, and France built up an airlift in response to the blockade, but the situation remained tense. The question formally came on the UN agenda in October 1948, and over the next few months the SG, the Security Council president, the group of six "neutrals," and the General Assembly president sought to negotiate a solution.

The Security Council president made the first attempt. After the Council voted to admit the question on the agenda, against strong Soviet protest, the discussion went behind the scenes as Council president Argentinian Juan Atilio Bramuglia, with the help of the six neutral members of

the Council, sought to negotiate agreement between the two sides. Not unexpectedly, the Soviet Union vetoed Bramuglia's draft resolution. At this point, Lie decided the time had come for him to play a more active role. In an early example of the SG's use of special representatives, he proposed sending two high-ranking Secretariat officials, one American and one Soviet, to negotiate a solution to the currency issue with the United States and the Soviet Union.[46] Lie's proposal received mixed responses. France welcomed the suggestion. The Soviet ambassador was initially hesitant but then received instructions from Moscow to cooperate with Lie's plan. In the end, Britain and the United States doomed the plan when they decided against working with Lie for fear of unwanted publicity. A few weeks later, the idea of a currency study was revived by Bramuglia, who appointed a "technical currency committee" with experts from the six neutrals and a representative of the SG. This committee, too, failed to reach agreement.[47]

Upon the failure of his currency proposal, Lie decided to go public. With General Assembly president, Herbert Evatt of Australia, on 13 November 1948, Lie issued a public appeal urging the four great powers to start "immediate conversations and [take] all other necessary steps toward the solution of the Berlin question," offering to help in any way they could.[48] The appeal unleashed a storm of criticism. The Norwegian ambassador reported that many delegations, especially the Western states, were "of the opinion that both the president and the secretary-general should have stuck to their tasks . . . and avoid interfering in the delegations' politics."[49] Yet some of the smaller states welcomed the Evatt-Lie appeal. The *New York Times* reported that the appeal "reflected the general feeling of many nations not directly involved in the Berlin dispute . . . because it interprets the peaceful aspirations of the peoples of the world."[50]

In the end, the Berlin blockade was lifted in May 1949 as a result of direct negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union undertaken at the UN but not *by* the UN.[51] One scholar has called the UN's involvement "a necessary failure."[52] Earlier UN efforts served to buy time and defuse tensions and opened the way to more realistic direct negotiations. Regardless of the question of success or failure in terms of solving the Berlin blockade, the episode served to expand the SG's role. Lie's currency study was an early example of how the SG can designate special representatives and delegate his authority to them, while the joint Evatt-Lie appeal pointed toward the SG's emerging role as an advocate for global issues.

Lie's Peace Plan, 1950

The SG's emerging role as an advocate for global issues became even clearer in 1950 when Lie proposed a ten-point twenty-year peace program. By 1950, the Cold War was a fixture of international politics. Its latest

consequence at the UN was the conflict over the representation of China and the Soviet walkout from the Security Council and other UN organs in protest against the presence of Chiang Kai-shek's government. Lie still refused to give up hope and continued to believe that the UN could be a tool and venue for easing tensions between the two superpowers.

To this end, he formulated a peace plan in the spring of 1950. The majority of Lie's ten suggestions called for renewed focus on existing UN activities in areas such as disarmament, control of atomic energy, development assistance, human rights, decolonization, and the development of international law. The most concrete proposal was the suggestion to inaugurate periodic Security Council meetings.[53] Lie envisioned such meetings as a tool to inspire negotiations, with the meeting itself acting as the forum where heads of government announced agreements.[54]

Lie, by this time an experienced SG, employed all the tools at his disposal to seek governmental and public support for the plan. He first presented the idea in a speech to B'nai B'rith, a Jewish community organization, in Washington, DC, on 21 March 1950.[55] Seeking to increase the legitimacy of the proposal, Lie enlisted the support of the executive heads of the specialized agencies of the UN, who were scheduled to meet in Paris in early May. Bringing on board the leaders of the specialized agencies would "create the widest possible front on a purely international basis," argued Tor Gjesdal, one of Lie's closest advisers, who likened the meeting to "an 'international cabinet meeting' on a very high level."[56] Finally, Lie set out on a widely publicized "peace tour" to Europe, spending nearly a month on the road. He discussed his plan with US president Harry S. Truman, British prime minister Clement Attlee, French president Vincent Auriol, and Soviet prime minister Joseph Stalin as well as other ministers from these four countries plus Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia.[57] At every stop, the SG was welcomed by crowds of people bearing flowers and letters. Among the many well-wishers was famous scientist Albert Einstein, who sent Lie a handwritten letter in April 1950 to wish him "luck and success in [his] great task."[58] Upon returning to New York in early June, Lie distributed his memorandum to all UN member states and put his suggested plan on the agenda for the General Assembly session scheduled for September 1950.

Like so many of his earlier initiatives, Lie's peace plan must ultimately also be classified as a failure. The General Assembly passed a resolution endorsing Lie's idea and asking all UN organs to report on what they were doing to fulfill it,[59] but the Security Council's first (and last) "periodic meeting" was not convened until 1970,[60] and the Cold War did not end in the 1950s. Less than three weeks after Lie published his memorandum, the Korean War broke out, bringing the superpowers to the brink of war. Nevertheless, the episode did help expand the SG's role. This failed initiative was an early example of how the SG can act as a norm entrepreneur on

global issues, seeking governmental and public support for causes he deems to be in everyone's interest. Furthermore, it helped strengthen the SG's special position as representing the UN. Like the Berlin case before it, and the Korean War to follow, it showed the SG's important duty to mediate conflicts between the member states, including among the great powers.

The Korean War, 1950

The Korean War broke out in June 1950—in hindsight, the most dangerous crisis the UN faced during Lie's tenure. As with earlier crises, the SG assumed an active and central role from the start and sought to urge the Security Council and UN members to take decisive action. This was not a push by Lie to expand his role further; he merely continued to do what he had done for years, but the fact that key member states once again allowed him to act in this way reveals how they accepted this expanded SG role. Lie's opinion of the conflict is aptly summed up in his reported reaction on hearing the news of the North Korean invasion: "My God, that's against the Charter of the United Nations!"[61] In Lie's opinion, not only was this an international war and a dangerous escalation of the Cold War, but it was a breach of the UN Charter and even an attack on the UN itself because a UN committee had been instrumental in establishing the Republic of Korea. When the Security Council met in the afternoon of 25 June, Lie spoke first, urging the Council to come to the aid of South Korea.[62] It was neither "necessary [n]or expected" for the SG to speak first,[63] but Lie felt that "the response of the Security Council would be more certain and more in the spirit of the Organization as a whole were the Secretary-General to take the lead."[64] Although legal scholars today agree that Lie did not invoke Article 99 in this instance because the United States had asked for the Council meeting to be called,[65] this should not detract from the central role the SG would play in coordinating and legitimating the UN response over the next few weeks.

With the Soviet Union absent in protest against the Nationalist Chinese representative, the Security Council passed a resolution asking all UN members to come to South Korea's aid. Because he saw the SG as an executive of the Council's decisions,[66] Lie took the unprecedented step on his own initiative to send telegrams to all member states asking them to communicate offers of help to the SG. Lie worked closely with the US government throughout, who thought "it was a good idea to use the United Nations umbrella as much as possible," but also "felt however that Lie should function as no more than a post office."[67] Not content to serve merely as a "post office," Lie continued to urge greater coordination of the Korean operation and increased use of UN machinery. He drafted a resolution to assign the United States the operative command and to establish a coordination committee.[68] The Council instead chose to adopt

an alternative US resolution without a coordination committee.[69] With this resolution, and once the Soviet Union returned to the Council in August, UN day-to-day involvement in Korea came to an end, although the organization would continue to seek a negotiated armistice agreement.

Lie's actions in regard to the outbreak of the Korean War demonstrated how far the SG's role had expanded in the past five years and how the SG had become a near-equal of the Security Council members, a "twelfth" Council member. Not only could he voice his opinions on every question under consideration, he could also draft resolutions and take initiatives to have decisions implemented. Lie's actions on Korea furthermore served to demonstrate and strengthen the SG's position as representing the UN overall. Lie was conscious of this role when he chose to speak first to give added legitimacy to the UN response. But the case also demonstrated the SG's difficult balancing act. Although Lie believed himself to be standing on principle, those member states that disagreed with the SG's opinion saw him as biased. As Lie noted in his memoirs, "When he agrees with us, governments tend to feel, the Secretary-General is within his rights, and is a good fellow besides; when his views differ from ours he clearly is exceeding his authority, his reasoning is bad, and even his motives may be suspect."[70] Lie's pivotal position in the UN response in Korea provided the main motivation for the majority of the General Assembly to extend his term in office in November 1950. The Soviet Union also recognized that the SG represented UN action in Korea. But since Moscow strongly opposed this intervention, it transferred its opposition onto the SG and boycotted his office. Lie was therefore unable to fully perform his duties, and in November 1952 he become the only SG to resign from office.

Conclusion

Since he left office, Lie's contribution to the development of the SG's role has been overshadowed by his celebrated immediate successor, Hammarskjöld. Urquhart's blunt statement that "Lie did not achieve any particularly notable political or diplomatic feats at the United Nations, nor at that time was he expected to do so,"[71] represents the orthodox view. On the face of it, the majority of Lie's initiatives as SG failed because the member states ignored or opposed them. The Security Council ignored Lie's advice on the Iranian question and did not implement partition of Palestine. Britain and the United States rejected Lie's attempt to negotiate a currency proposal for Berlin and likewise resented his public appeal for a settlement. Despite Lie's consistent attempts to urge unity across the East-West divide, culminating in his peace proposal of 1950, the Cold War did not come to an end. The Korean War was arguably the only instance when Lie's suggestions were successful, as the majority of the

UN membership launched a military operation to aid South Korea, just as Lie had advised. Of course, Lie's stance on Korea also caused lasting damage in his relationship with the Soviet Union and led to Lie's resignation from office.

Despite the failure of Lie's specific initiatives, his activities created precedents for the SG's role that amounted to an expansion in a political direction. Even failed initiatives may lead to institutional change. Although key states opposed the content of Lie's initiatives, they accepted the procedural norms underlying them. Lie explored his rights under Article 99 and gained recognition from the Security Council for a position of a near-equal. The Council recognized that the SG had the right to present his opinions on any item under discussion; that he must be allowed to navigate behind the scenes and urge the Council to take action; that the SG could draft Council resolutions; and that he had an independent right of investigation and fact-finding. Lie was the first SG to appoint special representatives, and he continued the work of the League of Nations SG as a mediator, negotiator, and channel of communications. The outbreak of the Korean War, as well as the lengthy Palestine process, showed Lie assigning to himself the role of an executive of the Security Council and General Assembly and seeking to coordinate the response of UN organs and member states. Throughout, Lie insisted on his right to contact heads of governments directly rather than having to go through the member states' delegations in New York, thereby gaining recognition that the SG enjoyed equal status to politically appointed heads of government. Finally, Lie explored the role of the SG as an advocate for global issues, or as he called it a "spokesman for the world interest."[72] He strengthened the position of the SG as representing the UN and being a guardian of the UN Charter.

Lie was instrumental in expanding the role of the SG in a political direction. This expansion was partly the result of Lie pushing to expand his role, determined that the SG should be "a force for peace,"[73] and partly the result of institutional pull or a vacuum effect as other UN organs were unable or unwilling to fulfill their tasks and the SG felt a duty to take action in the interest of preserving the organization. This vacuum effect, combined with the activist stance taken by Lie and several of his successors, helps explain why the SG's role expanded during the first decades of UN history and why the SG today plays a primarily political role in international relations. ⊕

Notes

Ellen Jenny Ravndal is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Political Science, Lund University. Her DPhil thesis at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, analyzed the expansion of the UN Secretary-General's role under Trygve Lie. Her current research project examines the emergence of the first international organizations in the nineteenth century.

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