Relations among Secretaries-General of International Organizations

By Bob Reinalda

Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands
b.reinalda@fm.ru.nl

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IO BIO, The Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations
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Relations among Secretaries-General of international (i.e. intergovernmental) organizations (IOs) must have existed for a long time, but we may ask when and how these began to matter in international relations. In order to get a better understanding of the development of these relations between IOs and their executive heads this paper will trace the emergence of IO secretariats as part of changes in diplomacy and the process of international institutionalization in the long nineteenth century (1815-1919). Then it will identify early relations between IOs and the appearance of a new type of relationship, i.e. between a specialized agency and its umbrella organization, which is relevant for both the League of Nations and the United Nations (UN). The paper will address both the time period of the League of Nations (1919-1945) and that of the UN between 1945 and 1970, with the latter being analysed by Robert Cox and Harold Jacobson in *The Anatomy of Influence* (1973). They developed a model with various location-related patterns of decision making on boundary conflicts between IOs, which helps to identify changes in the location of leadership. The paper will add names to the organizations and their executive heads, based on the IO BIO Project, or *Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations* (www.ru.nl/fm/iobio).

Inter-Organizational Relations and Boundary Decisions

Inter-organizational relations (IORs) are a phenomenon that resulted from the evolution of IOs, the increase in their numbers and the complementarity or overlap of activities and mandates. Given the complementarity or overlap of activities, IOs can interact with each other in relatively amicable ways (cooperation) and in more adverse ways (competition). If two or more IOs cooperate, they can seek to increase their performance by combining resources and coordinating policies and activities. If they compete, then they instead attempt to increase their relative position in the field by showing differences in strength, with the risk of entering into conflict with each other.

There are incentives for cooperation as well as restraints. Rafael Biermann (2008: 173) mentions several incentives for cooperation, or what he terms networking, of IOs. These are the need for resources that belong to another (both tangible and intangible), the perception of

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1 The text is part of a small research project on international secretariats, executive heads and leadership in inter-organizational relations, together with IO BIO Co-Editor Kent J. Kille of The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio.
a highly challenging task environment (issue density) with long-term problems mounting (issue duration) and ‘learning through failure’, i.e. when a painful policy failure helps to overcome intra-organizational resistance to cooperate. Actor-driven restraints of IORs identified by Biemann are an IO’s interest to guard its autonomy, a mismatch of organizational cultures, lack of complementary role expectations, fear to compromise one’s own identity and visibility, as well as a history of rivalry.

The boundary issues related to cooperation and competition between IOs (linked with, respectively, institutional agreements and compromise-like settlements) are subject to decision making, according to Cox and Jacobson (1973: 10). Such boundary decisions concern the external relations of IOs with other global and regional organizations on the matter of their respective scopes, collaboration between organizations and initiatives taken in one organization to provoke activity in another. The executive head of an IO (most often titled Secretary-General, although a range of other titles are employed across organizations) is the one who is ‘professionally concerned and identified with the survival and growth of their organizations’ (Cox and Jacobson 1973: 382). Among the actors engaged in settling boundary decisions, the executive head is the most active and best-informed regarding boundary problems: ‘In this sense his position is like that of a president or prime minister of a state with respect to foreign policy’ (1973: 381). While government representatives frequently play a role in settling boundary decisions as well, heads of segments of the IO bureaucracy are also pushed toward active roles for the same reasons that impel executive heads: survival and growth of the IO. Organization theory calls the actors who in this context succeed in linking an organization’s bureaucracy with external sources of information ‘boundary-spanning individuals’ (Tusman and Scanlan 1981).

I will come back to the patterns of boundary decision making in relations between IOs that Cox and Jacobson identified, because I want to address the emergence of international secretariats and the position of their executive heads first.

**Emergence of International Secretariats**

When did international secretariats begin to matter? Three factors help to understand their emergence during the nineteenth century: 1) the rise of multilateral diplomacy, 2) the experimental and open character of international institutionalization and 3) the creation of permanent secretariats with secretaries responsible for continuity and regularity.

The Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) can be regarded as the multilateral event that set the process of international organization in motion (Ikenberry 2001; Reinalda 2009), which included establishing the first IO in 1815: the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine. However, it took this Rhine Commission 17 years to reach agreement about its functioning and to issue its first act. The representatives, among themselves and in contacting their governments, had to clarify the exact interpretation of all legal clauses and the relationship between articulating interests and reaching agreement. These years represented a thorny learning process among negotiating and cooperating diplomats, adapting the organization’s original set-up as they realized that, in order to make the organization achieve progress, they had to use the rule of unanimity more flexibly and to create more institutional procedures and arrangements.

The many multilateral conferences that took place and the new IOs that were established added to the far-reaching change in diplomacy during this period. Diplomatic tradition based on information monopolies shifted as a result of the spread of information through modern techniques, including the telegraph and faster printing presses for newspapers. The composition of the diplomatic community gradually moved away from its aristocratic base towards a more citizen-based community in which foreign ministries gained a stronger hold over the diplomats by offering career paths with formal training and individual
exams organized by the ministry. Simultaneously, new actors intruded on the traditional diplomatic domain, such as ‘professional specialists and technical experts, members of the embryonic body of international civil servants, private interest-group and humanitarian organizations, and governmental officials and ministers outside the foreign offices’ (Claude Jr. 1966: 33). Diplomats had to learn that ideas put forward by non-diplomats could make sense as well, even if they conflicted with traditional diplomatic logic. Diplomatic developments at multilateral conferences and in IOs were widely observed by foreign ministries, parliaments, politicians and interested citizens.

The new IOs, called public international unions, helped governments by doing a job that had never been done before but was necessary in a time of internationalization. Successful experiences in one organization were copied by others (Reinalda 2009: 89-95). For instance, several unions followed the flexible approach developed by the International Telegraph Union (ITU) of 1865 and its distinction between convention and règlement, with the convention as something that was to remain substantially unaltered and the règlement as a text that permitted amendment by a much simpler process that allowed for adaptation to changing needs and circumstances. The unions assumed in this expansion that the constitution provided them with ‘implied’ powers to deal with related new topics. Various unions experimented with fair membership dues systems. For example, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) of 1874 divided states into seven classes, with varying levels of dues related to the characteristics of the state. The UPU then saw its system copied by other organizations. The open character of multilateral conferences and IOs resulted in open IORs in this time of experiment, evolutionary growth and imitation.

Institutionalization implied the creation of permanent secretariats with functionaries becoming responsible for running the organization’s day-to-day functions. Although their primary role was to provide information to the member states, the secretariats became more and more responsible for preparing the agenda and reports for the periodic conferences, often under the responsibility of a governing board, which, however, soon became identified with the organization’s proper functioning. According to Craig Murphy (1994), most states remained unaware of the effects of this institutional innovation because they still saw the periodic conferences as a way to oversee the organizations’ work, whereas the necessary preparation for the conferences in fact gave the functionaries power over the agenda. By 1910 IOs were playing the roles that used to be carried out by the foreign ministry of a hosting country or the monarch’s personal attendants: ‘sending out invitations, deciding on a venue, negotiating a preliminary agenda, arranging for transportation and housing of some delegates, preparing meeting rooms, performing conference services (including translation, editing, and copying) and following up on the conference by publishing and circulating documents, circulating conventions for signature, and keeping track of ratifications’ (Murphy 1994: 111-112).

The institutional memory related to these roles enhanced the position of the secretariat and the awareness of the path dependency in what the IOs had been undertaking. Most secretariats started relatively small (a Secretary, assisted by administrative officers and clerical workers), but, when activities increased, the secretariats would grow and express specific wishes about the competence of staff members, as part of bureaucratization and professionalization processes that also enhanced the leadership requirements of its Secretary. Out of courtesy the Secretary, later Secretary-General, mostly was a national of the country in which the secretariat was situated, with staff members recruited from the civil services of the member states. Secretariats were at work throughout the year, with the Secretaries becoming visible and recognizable as the representatives of their organizations.

The extensive discussion about the League of Nations’ Secretariat in Versailles in 1919 further enhanced the position of both the Secretariat and its Secretary-General. The idea
of a secretariat based on national officials who would be loyal to and paid by the member states (a principal’s agent model, based on the war councils used during the First World War) was rejected and, in line with the experiences of the public international unions, replaced by that of a truly ‘international secretariat’, whose members had to distance themselves as far as possible from national ties and to devote themselves to the purposes of the organization. They needed to be capable persons of broad vision and flexible mind, according to Dubin (1983: 472). The Secretary-General thus became the organization’s representative and its face, with Eric Drummond of the League of Nations and Albert Thomas of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as examples.

Early Overlap between IOs: 1890-1910

Sensitivities between IOs in the period between 1890 and 1910 occurred in cases of overlap, such as in telecommunications and health.

Sharing a secretariat was an early, slightly anomalous, form of cooperation between IOs. The union for the protection of industrial property, based on the 1883 Paris Convention, had its Secretariat in Bern, just like the Bern Convention on the rights of authors (1886). In 1892 the two Secretariats merged into one Bureau, known by its French acronym BIRPI (Bureaux internationaux réunis pour la protection de la propriété intellectuelle), which introduced the overarching term ‘intellectual property’. As BIRPI was under the control of the Swiss foreign ministry (until 1970), this was an intergovernmental arrangement with a dominating role for one country, with the Swiss not appointing a non-Swiss as Director until 1963: Dutchman Georg Bodenhausen (May 2007: 23). In another situation the International Radiotelegraph Union of 1903 and the ITU shared a secretariat due to the interests of the established telegraph companies and the ITU’s preference for a minimalist form of radio regulation. From the beginning until 1949 the ITU always had a Swiss Secretary-General. The two unions merged in 1934, with governments focusing on national interests. The latter situation allowed the Secretariat, run by ITU Director Joseph Räber, to refine existing responsibilities by setting more detailed regulations according to its own ideas (Lee 1996: 61-62, 66).

The public international unions established up to 1914 (see Figure 8.2 in Reinalda 2009: 92-93) showed little or no overlap, with the exception of three international health organizations. Health became part of multilateralism due to efforts to combat transboundary epidemics. A series of nineteenth-century health conferences resulted in the International Office of Public Health (IOPH) of 1907, with a permanent Secretariat in Paris. Its function was to collect and bring to the knowledge of governments facts and documents of a general character concerning public health, especially regarding infectious diseases such as cholera, the plague and yellow fever, as well as measures taken to check these diseases. Among its members were Brazil, Peru and the US. At the suggestion of US Surgeon-General, Walter Wyman, the American republics in the Western hemisphere had established the International Sanitary Bureau of the American Republics in 1902, with Wyman as its first Director. The governments, led by the US, authorized him to establish relations with the IOPH in 1907, explicitly suggesting that the European states adopt the American Sanitary Convention, so that their colonies in the Western hemisphere would comply with American resolutions. However, this touch of disdain and ‘New World self-importance’ (PAHO 1992: 21) had less effect than the more practical idea of an information exchange mentioned in a resolution. Among the health issues discussed internationally were tuberculosis (1905), school hygiene (1907), infant mortality and drugs. The third organization established in the health field was the International Opium Commission of 1906, which emerged from the anti-drug movement and called for legislation within states forbidding the manufacture and distribution of opium for other than medical purposes (Reinalda 2009: 174). The Commission and its President
Charles H. Brent focused on drug control by suppressing opium smoking and advocating regulation and gradual prohibition.

The general conclusion with regard to overlap between IOs in the time period between roughly 1890 and 1910 is that health was the most obvious case of an overlap of three organizations, with each having permanent secretariats and in two cases recognizable executive heads. While the relations between the two broadly defined IOs, the IOPH and the International Sanitary Bureau, were competitive rather than cooperative, the International Opium Commission created its own niche by focusing on the specific issue of drug control.

The League of Nations System 1919-1945
The outbreak of the First World War can be regarded as an exogenous shock to the evolutionary development of the pre-war public international unions. Although ten of these unions did not survive the war period almost thirty did as a result of the secretariats’ efforts to carefully guide the organizations through this period of interrupted international relations. The establishment of the League of Nations created a new form of relations between IOs to consider, which can be referred to as a ‘specialized agency relationship’.

The League’s Covenant produced a threshold for IOs because it refused admission if they were not strictly intergovernmental and established by general treaties. The existing public international unions were not invited to Versailles, because most countries had no desire to commit placing their activities within the framework of the League of Nations or regarded the established ILO as sufficient. The public international unions themselves were not interested either, because they objected to the hierarchical arrangement that was discussed under coordination in Article 24, which would place them ‘under the direction of the League’. They therefore opted to remain outside the League of Nations. That an article enabled the League to have a coordinating role for specialized socio-economic activities (Article 23 mentions among others labour conditions, the traffic in drugs, the freedom of communications and transport and the prevention and control of disease) resulted from a successful intervention by the United Kingdom at the last moment (Reinalda 2009: 190, 244-245). Soon after the League had launched, its economic and social activities comprised various commissions, institutes and offices that sometimes formed, or developed into, a separate unit:

- the ILO as the League’s specialized agency since 1919;
- League bodies, known as organizations, such as the Economic and Financial Organization (active since 1920), the Communications and Transit Organization (1920) and the Health Organization (1921);
- the High Commissioner for Refugees (1920), since 1931 the Nansen International Office for Refugees;
- the Advisory Committee on Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs of 1920, which strengthened the 1912 convention of the International Opium Commission under the League’s authority;
- the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children (1921), which eventually broadened into the Social Affairs Committee;
- the International Hydrographic Bureau, which resulted from a series of conferences and as a public international union exception was brought under the League’s authority in 1921; and
- the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation (1921), which set up the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (1926).

These League bodies owed their existence to resolutions of the Council or Assembly, or their creation was written into the Covenant or another agreement. A general distinction is
between ‘consultative commissions’ and ‘technical organizations’ (economy, transport, health, intellectual cooperation and refugees). They are regarded as ‘auxiliary institutions’ that assumed the role of ‘expert committees’ for the League which ‘performed the groundwork for its principal bodies’ (Fosse and Fox 2012: 14).

From the perspective of recognizable leadership by Secretaries-General two developments are remarkable: 1) the bodies’ growing autonomous position and 2) their Secretariats as locations of leadership. The evolving position of the two Commissions of the Economic and Financial Organization of the League illustrates both developments. While the Council’s formal control over the activities of the Economic Commission and the Financial Commission was emphasized in a 1920 resolution, both Commissions developed a more flexible method of working and became less dependent on member-state governments. The convention that the Council had to approve the Commissions’ agendas was swiftly dropped, and from 1929 onwards the Commissions were allowed to publish and send their reports directly to governments without first needing to have them discussed by the Council. In 1927 the Economic Commission obtained permission to consult experts, set up special committees and undertake any research that it saw fit without having to ask for approval. In 1930 the Council went so far as to invite the Financial Commission to take initiatives and send proposals to the Council in areas which the Commission viewed as particularly important (Hill 1946: 107-108; Reinalda 2009: 246-247).

Similar developments can be found in the other bodies of the League. The organizations had their Secretariats as part of the League’s Permanent Secretariat, but headed by their own Directors who became known internationally as leaders of these organizations. Examples include Arthur Salter (Communications and Transit Organization 1921-1930 and Economic and Financial Organization 1922-1930), Pietro Stoppani (Economic Relations Section 1931-1939), Alexander Loveday (Financial and Economic Intelligence Section, respectively Princeton Mission 1931-1946), Ludwik Rajchman (Health Organization 1921-1939) and Rachel Crowdy (Social Questions and Opium Traffic, 1919-1931). While Fridtjof Nansen as High Commissioner for Refugees had to organize his own secretariat by having rooms at both the League of Nations and the ILO, the Assembly of the League decided to bring the Commissioner’s Office under the authority of the Secretary-General and incorporate it into the League’s Secretariat in 1929. The League’s Opium Committee, which was engaged in updating and revising the International Opium Convention within the context of the League, also had a Secretariat, as well as from 1929 a Permanent Central Opium Board and from 1931 a Supervisory Body.

While these institutions remained bodies of the League with sections in the League’s Secretariat, their institutionalization processes resulted in structures of their own, more or less self-directed methods of working and Directors able to play leading roles in their (sub)fields based on their expertise and initiatives. Relations between these bodies and the League were not simply hierarchical ones (subordination to the Council or Assembly), but rather relations between specialized agencies and a ‘mother’ organization, able to adopt and give birth to new institutions and to tie these to its authority and principles by offering an umbrella function. As such the bodies produced IORs (between themselves and the League and also among themselves) that had not existed before 1919 and were not discussed as such in Versailles, but instead developed out of the League’s successful practice of ‘low politics’.

Even the ILO-League relationship changed as a result of the ILO Director’s leadership by transforming the International Labour Office into a strong secretariat and by securing a more independent status for the ILO. When the ILO was established, not much thought had been given to the requirements of the office, but Albert Thomas had strong feelings about his position and within the constitutional organs managed to secure for the Director a position ‘not unlike that of a minister introducing and defending his proposals in Parliament’ (Ghebali...
1989: 12). From when he took office Thomas made it clear that the ILO should function sufficiently independent from the League to have freedom of action vis-à-vis its member states. He managed to end shared membership of both organizations, to find a modus vivendi on budgetary matters, providing the ILO with sufficient resources, and to have ILO representatives in the governing committee of the League’s Health Organization, given its interests in access to services that affected the health of workers. When Nansen (IOBIO: 5) met with political unwillingness to solve a deadlock in the Armenian refugee solution in 1924, he held private negotiations with Thomas, resulting in an innovative arrangement between the League and the ILO on finding employment for the refugees. Their contact was boundary spanning.

Some of the League bodies showed an overlap in activities with the older international unions, in particular in the fields of transport and health. The Communications and Transit Organization addressed this situation by contacting other organizations to prepare international treaties at conferences that allowed access to them. The Health Organization, led by Ludwik Rajchman, however, competed with the older IOPH and the pan-American Sanitary Bureau. Because of disagreements with the US (not a member of the League) and the existing institutions’ opposition to losing their autonomy, the three organizations each pursued their own agenda. When the IOPH asked the pan-American Bureau to act as a regional organization for the collection of health statistics in 1926, the Director, Hugh Cumming, agreed but simultaneously expressed his opinion that the IOPH functioned in such a ‘lethargic manner’ that his Bureau had to prick it with a pin now and then to see if it were still alive. He also considered the League’s Health Organization as ineffective and when it proposed closer cooperation in 1939 he observed later: ‘While the League was about to fold, however, the Bureau was poised for take-off’ (PAHO 1992: 32-34, 38). It can be concluded that relations between the international health organizations and their executive heads remained competitive.

While ‘specialized agency relationship’ is a term generally used for the UN system, rather than the League of Nations (albeit that the ILO is referred to as a specialized agency of the League), this overview shows that we can also speak of a League of Nations system, with both the ILO and the other auxiliary institutions of the League as specialized agencies. IORs exist between the ‘umbrella’ organization of the League and the auxiliary institutions but also among the auxiliary institutions themselves. While the location of leadership in the nineteenth century and the League’s establishment was almost entirely with governments, the location of leadership in the League’s evolving auxiliary institutions and their IORs in the interwar period was mostly with the group of executive heads rather than with the governments, which indeed allowed the executive heads room for manoeuvre.

When a League committee chaired by Stanley Bruce assessed the League’s performance in the socio-economic field in 1939, it criticized the lack of coordination between the League’s units and recommended that all economic and social activities should be brought under the direction of one body that would take care of coordination. This idea was brought into existence in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which in 1945 at the founding of the UN became the coordinating body for the UN’s economic and social activities and the multitude of specialized agencies in their many forms, in short, the UN system. Furthermore, the UN continued the League’s practice of creating auxiliary institutions, such as funds and programmes, while simultaneously dealing with independent IOs that under its umbrella acted as specialized UN agencies and as organizations related to the UN.

2 IO BIO entries can be found in alphabetical order by executive head at www.ru.nl/fm/iobio.
The United Nations System 1945-1970

Cox and Jacobson (1973: 385) did not only analyse IORs in the UN system between 1945 and 1970, but also identified three patterns of boundary decision making in relations between IOs, which help to identify changes in the location of leadership. The three patterns are:

1. A cartel of executive heads or representatives of international bureaucracies
Rather than becoming visible to other actors, competition among the representatives of international bureaucracies refers to a low-conflict pattern in which competition is kept ‘within the family’. The relations among the actors involve bargaining and analytical arguments based upon agreed jurisdiction, acquired capabilities and budgetary history. The pattern seems adequate for allocation of resources in a situation in which no major changes in relations between organizations occur. This would probably not happen if any significant change took place.

2. Intergovernmental decision making
This pattern takes place entirely outside of the formal structure of an IO, because the stakes are important to the policies of the major states. This has important consequences for the mandate of the IOs, but inter-organizational conflict does not arise in such cases because the decisions are taken out of the hands of international bureaucracies. The best they can do is to keep informed and show readiness to respond.

3. A mixture of both executive heads and government representatives
This pattern refers to a higher evident level of inter-organizational conflict, with executive heads taking the initiative to bring government representatives into the issue in order to be able to demonstrate support for the IO’s position or claims. This crisis pattern of decision making may be transformed into one of the first two patterns. Executive heads will gamble that after a show of their organizational strength they may revert to the cartel type of decision making. However, governments may also take the issue out of the hands of the executive heads, and Cox and Jacobson argue that awareness of this possibility has moderated the use by executive heads of an appeal for constituent support in interagency disputes.

Cox and Jacobson’s three patterns provide guidance for tracing the location of leadership, with an active role of the executive head in both the first and third pattern and potential engagement via showing readiness to respond in the second one. Although Cox and Jacobson examined only eight IOs – the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), ILO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), ITU, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organization (WHO) – their findings on boundary decisions (about overlapping mandates and competition with one another for limited funds) characterize the main developments in the UN system up to 1970. IO BIO provides additional details about related executive heads that have been profiled in the Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations.

With regard to overlapping mandates, decisions on the definition of jurisdictions were particularly frequent in IOs such as the ITU, ILO and WHO in the late 1940s and early 1950s that fought to defend their spheres of competence as they defined them. The ITU wanted to ensure that being a part of the UN system would not usurp its traditional functions (which the ITU Secretariat managed to do eventually), the ILO wanted to achieve the same and also sought special standing for itself within the UN system and the WHO had to make existing organizations part of its structure. Cox and Jacobson (1973: 383) found in all instances that ‘a coalition of international and governmental officials was readily formed and dominated the decision making’ (hence location pattern three discussed above). Both sets of officials took initiatives, whereas the outsider state the Soviet Union blocked the desired special status in
the ILO case. When the WHO was created between 1946 and 1948, it was facilitated by the fact that Brock Chisholm (IOBIO: 5) had not belonged to any of the previous organizations and was a visionary executive. The WHO succeeded in including both the IOPH and the League’s Health Organization, but the American republics did not favour their organization’s subordination to another institution. This resulted in the paradoxical concession of the Pan-American Health Organization’s independent status as the WHO’s regional office for the Americas (Lee 2009: 5). When the issues in the UN agencies became less intense after a few years, government representatives became less active and the predominant roles reverted to the executive heads and members of the international bureaucracies. Hence, a shift occurred from Cox and Jacobson’s location pattern three to pattern one.

The extent to which individual executives could make a difference is shown in the cases of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the UNHCR. The IBRD and the UN were established on the basis of different arrangements and locations, but they reached a formal agreement in 1947 that made the IBRD a combination of an independent and UN-related IO. However, the relationship between IBRD President Eugene Black and UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld was much better (even ‘cordial’) than the stressed one between their predecessors John McCloy and Trygve Lie. Black’s relations with David Morse of the ILO, René Maheu of UNESCO and Binay Sen of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) were all cooperative, whereas Black’s (IOBIO: 3) relation with IMF Managing Director Per Jacobsson was strained as a result from the contention and competition between the two institutions at the time. Black also sought to undermine SUNFED, the Special UN Fund for Economic Development, which he regarded as a competitor with less control for the rich countries in the UN Secretariat than if it had been an IBRD window based on weighted voting.

An inter-agency rivalry arose between the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and the UNHCR, because the IRO’s mandate did not expire until 1952 and US-backed IRO Director-General Donald Kingsly was not elected as High Commissioner in 1951, but instead Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart (IOBIO: 3) was selected. Kingsley refused to hand over his files to the UNHCR, whose main problem was a lack of resources, due to the US policy of marginalizing the UNHCR by keeping the Palestinian and Korean refugees excluded from the UNHCR competence and by replacing the IRO with an international migration agency. ILO Director-General Morse then became a competitor to the UNHCR in an (unsuccessful) attempt to incorporate the proposed agency into the ILO. The relationship between the UNHCR and the agency, later named International Organization for Migration (IOM), has remained competitive since they are often involved with the same groups. The IOM has remained outside the UN system, only receiving observer status in 1992, and in 1997 reached no more than a weak agreement on coordination with the UNHCR. The US policy of marginalizing the UNHCR left Van Heuven Goedhart with the need to raise his own funds and collect his own information about the situation of refugees. He further used the window of opportunity provided by the 1953 Berlin crisis, which led to large numbers of refugees fleeing from East Germany, where he managed to coordinate the activities in Germany and, as a boundary-spanning individual, engaged a German architect to build large numbers of prefabricated houses. This achievement enhanced the UNHCR’s position, which also happened when UNHCR Sadruddin Aga Khan, during the aftermath of the Vietnam War in the 1970s, developed an independent policy in South-East Asia by disregarding the US and expanding UNHCR activities together with other agencies (Reinalda 2009: 455-456).

In the early 1960s, when a large number of new states began to enter into the UN system and pressed for new organizations such as UNCTAD and the UN Industrial Development Organization, with mandates that would overlap those of existing organizations, the executive heads took the initiative and set the tone for the organizations’ response. In the
case of the IMF’s expanded membership the strategy of Jacobsson in reaction was that the richer Northern states began to meet in smaller bodies outside the UN, such as the Group of Ten (G10), hosted by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), and Working Party Three (WP3) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), to settle their monetary affairs in a way that was both formal and meaningful. The ILO and GATT’s executive heads, Morse and Eric Wyndham White, responded ‘initially by reordering their programs slightly, then by being intensely concerned about the mandate of their rival organizations, and finally by working out a division of functions with their erstwhile competitors’ (Cox and Jacobson 1973: 384). However, the issues could not be settled between the heads themselves, resulting in a shift from Cox and Jacobson’s location pattern one to pattern two. Government representatives in the IOs and the UN General Assembly became involved, often as a result of executive heads’ seeking support, which resulted in pushing back the issue to the national level where the existing IOs managed to gain support for the eventual division of labour. This, however, was weaker than they had hoped for.

Wyndham White (IOBIO: 3-4) took the criticism of GATT as a rich man’s club seriously and encouraged developing contracting parties to push their case within the GATT. His Secretariat took steps to make GATT more relevant to their trade positions and at UNCTAD’s first meeting, led by the outspoken Raoul Prebisch, Wyndham White appeared to defend his organization. He admitted that it was not without fault but insisted on its relevance as forum for development. Competition from UNCTAD made GATT more sensitive to the problems of North-South trade than it was before and in 1968 UNCTAD co-sponsored the International Trade Centre, set up by GATT in 1964. The GATT contracting parties put Wyndham White in charge of coordinating and advancing the negotiations in the Kennedy Round, which was not a customary role for the GATT Executive Secretary and he needed all of his skills, in particular because Commissioner Sicco Mansholt (IOBIO: 4) of the European Economic Community had tabled its newly developed common agricultural policy with US governmental support. Parallel to the process of executives discovering how to handle boundary issues at the highest level, taking boundary decisions resulting from day-to-day service activities was a matter of the members of international bureaucracies (location pattern one), who showed an interagency process of collaborative learning.

With regard to competition for limited funds a number of controversies arose between IOs and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and its predecessor SUNFED, but the executive heads of the various agencies managed to agree broadly about the sharing of resources and did this over the years in a stable manner (thereby reflecting location pattern one). During the 1960s dividing the pie became less contentious due to the increase of available resources. The WHO, however, did not follow the general policy of voluntary contributions channelled through the UNDP, as major Western states preferred, but made technical assistance part of its regular budget. This policy resulted from the determined leadership of the WHO’s executive head, Marcolino Gomes Candau, with support from the medical profession and national public health authorities. Candau was successful because he had full control over the secretariat and had good personal relations in both the US and the developing world (Cox and Jacobson 1973: 200, 383). IOs from outside also impacted the UN system. For example, when Thorkil Kristensen (IOBIO: 3-4) and his staff began pushing to increase the OECD’s operational role in development assistance in the early 1960s, governments rejected their attempt to break into an operational field already occupied by other IOs, but this did not keep Kristensen from pioneering with standards, benchmarks and statistics that soon became relevant to other IOs. When the African states set up the Organization of African Unity in 1963, the UN Economic Commission for Africa soon lost its status, partly due to not being a genuine African organization but also resulting from the
difficult relationship and rivalry between the two executives, Diallo Telli and Robert Gardiner (IOBIO: 3), each of whom had a different style of working.

The general conclusion for the years 1945-1970 is that executive heads often did play a leading role when defending their spheres of competence against competition from other and new organizations, with some being more successful (IMF, WHO) than others who had to compromise (GATT, ILO, OECD). Executive heads often served as the initiators, with, at their request, government representatives playing supportive roles in solving the situation in the organizations or the UN, after which the predominant roles were reverted again to the executive heads and members of the bureaucracies. This represents a shift of leadership from Cox and Jacobson’s third location pattern (a mixture of executive heads and government representatives) to the first one (a cartel of executive heads).

Conclusion
This paper asked when and how relations among executive heads of IOs began to matter in international relations. Both IOs and their secretariats emerged as part of changes in diplomacy and the process of institutionalization during the long nineteenth century (since 1815). Institutionalization (taking the form of public international unions) implied the creation of permanent secretariats with functionaries becoming responsible for continuity and regularity, a process of innovation that, according to Craig Murphy, reached its momentum around 1910. The preference for a truly international secretariat, rather than a principal’s agent, expressed during the peace negotiations in Versailles in 1919, was in line with the experiences of the public international unions and made the Secretary-General the representative and face of his organization.

A first competitive overlap between IOs arose in the first decade of the twentieth century in the field of health, with the executive heads becoming recognizable as actors in the interrelations between their organizations. This competition continued during the interwar period, when the League of Nations introduced another IO in the field of health. More broadly, relations between the League of Nations and a group of auxiliary institutions (most of them being League bodies) were not discussed in Versailles, but emerged out of the League’s successful practice of low politics with socio-economic activities. These bodies gained growing autonomous positions, with their Secretariats being the location of leadership for their Directors. They produced IORs among themselves (for instance between the ILO and the Health Organization or the High Commissioner for Refugees) as well as between themselves and the League of Nations as ‘umbrella’ organization, which in fact turned the League of Nations into a League of Nations system with a variety of ‘specialized agencies’.

Cox and Jacobson’s findings about overlapping mandates and competition with one another for limited funds by eight UN agencies between 1945 and 1970 are revealing for two reasons. First, they show that executive heads often take the initiative in setting the tone for the IO’s response, with government representatives playing supportive roles in solving the situation. Furthermore, there are shifts between the patterns that Cox and Jacobson discern. Second, as the examples and details about executive heads show, relations between executive heads matter, with bad relations a handicap for cooperation and good relations an opportunity. The example of WHO executive head Candau also shows that an IO may follow its own policy, if the head has full control over de secretariat and enough support in the organization’s environment, in other words success is a matter of both internal and external leadership capacities. Executive heads of IOs are indeed interesting actors, about whom we do not know enough yet.
References


