

Noblesse Oblige

The Enduring Legacy of Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Adekeye Adebajo | orcid: 0000-0002-3656-3134

Senior Research Fellow, Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship (CAS), University of Pretoria (UP), Pretoria, South Africa

1 Introduction

14 November 2022 marked the centenary of the birth of the sixth United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Egypt's Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He held the post in the five momentous post-Cold War years of 1992 to 1996, and had served as Egypt's minister of state for foreign affairs and deputy foreign minister between 1977 and 1991. Boutros, however, performed the role of foreign minister in practice without being granted the formal title due to his politically sensitive Coptic Christian minority status within the Egyptian political system. Boutros-Ghali died on 19 February 2016. The most intellectually accomplished holder of the post in eight decades, he remains the only UN Secretary-General to have been denied a second term in office. Surprisingly, no detailed biography of the first African and the first Arab UN Secretary-General's life and career had been published in English until my recent 2023 biography, *Boutros Boutros-Ghali: Afro-Arab Prophet, Proselytiser, Pharaoh and Pope*.¹ In stark contrast, several biographies have been published on seven of the eight other former UN Secretaries-General. This is despite Boutros-Ghali having served as Egypt's most senior diplomat for 14 years, having held the most prestigious diplomatic job in the immediate post-Cold War era, and having published two memoirs: the 1997 *Egypt's Road To Jerusalem: A Diplomat's Story Of The Struggle For Peace in The Middle East*, and the 1999 *Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga*.²

The study of the UN has often been dominated by Western scholars, despite the global body operating disproportionately in the developing world. The perspectives of scholars and practitioners from the global South about the world body are thus often marginalized in Western-dominated journals and media outlets. This essay therefore sets out to resurrect interest in, and counter the widespread belittling and neglect of, Boutros-Ghali's achievements as UN Secretary-General by many Western scholars, policymakers, and journalists. The UN Summit of the Future in September 2024 confirmed the Egyptian scholar-diplomat's enduring legacy, with its focus on his ideas about the importance of strengthening the peacekeeping relationship between the UN and regional organizations, and prioritizing conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

I argue that, driven by a sense of *noblesse oblige* inherited from a rich family heritage of devotion to public service, Boutros-Ghali was one of the most important scholar-diplomats of his generation who managed an impressive and unusual bridging of theory and praxis. Though he sometimes acted like an arrogant, haughty "Pharaoh", several of his Western critics reacted strongly against an intelligent, articulate, outspoken Afro-Arab intellectual who did not look like or sound like them, and who dared to act as their equal or even superior.

To illustrate, I focus on three of Boutros-Ghali's scholarly Western critics. American analyst, Michael Barnett, noted about the Egyptian: "He had supreme confidence in his diplomatic and salesmanship skills, unaware that he was not nearly as smooth as he thought he was." Barnett went on to describe the Egyptian as "a leader who placed his ego above the needs of the organization."³ Edward Luck, another American scholar, accused Boutros-Ghali of attempting to "rewrite" the UN Charter by his claims of independence and to "expand the Secretary-General's political role well beyond what the

founders had in mind.” Luck also criticized the Egyptian for self-servingly framing “subjective political judgments” as “moral obligations”, and for representing his own preferences as those of the world’s values.⁴

Another Western critic, Mats Berdal, a Norwegian scholar, argued that “Boutros-Ghali lacked the key qualities of political judgment and tact”, noting further that temperament was more important to the job of UN Secretary-General than intellect.⁵ While one can agree that Boutros-Ghali could sometimes be tactless, his political judgement was almost always correct, and he had a sound political antenna. Indeed, as Marrack Goulding, the British UN Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, who served under Boutros-Ghali, noted about his former boss: “he knew where power lay and he knew that power could not be ignored, even if what the powerful demanded was sometimes unpleasant or unfair.”⁶ The fact that, in the first vote for Boutros-Ghali’s re-election in November 1996, fourteen out of fifteen members of the Security Council agreed to keep the Secretary-General in office (leaving the US diplomatically isolated as the sole dissenting voice), suggests that the vast majority of governments were angrier at the tactlessness of America’s heavy-handed efforts to remove Boutros-Ghali from office than they were about the undoubted arrogance of the “Pharaoh”. As to Berdal’s idea of temperament trumping intellect in this job, this is of course more sound bite than solid social science. The better temperament of Ghanaian UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1997–2006), and predecessors like Burmese diplomat U Thant (1961–1971) did not make them any more successful in the job once they had incurred the wrath of Washington. This suggests that understanding the rather limited powers of this office is more important to sound analysis than the temperament or tactfulness of the office-holder.

This essay makes a case for Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s continuing relevance for contemporary post-Cold War global challenges, arguing that a fierce commitment to *noblesse oblige* drove the Egyptian’s devotion to international public service. This was evident in his peacemaking efforts with Israel, his defending the UN’s independence from great power manipulation, and his articulating a progressive vision for resolving global socio-economic and political challenges.

2 Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s Continuing Relevance to the Contemporary Era

There are three important reasons why contemporary audiences should be interested in Boutros-Ghali’s legacy. First, his landmark document on conflict management for a post-Cold War era, the 1992 *An Agenda for Peace*,⁷ still provides the framework for international peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding three decades later. On the Agenda’s thirtieth anniversary, current Portuguese UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, built on his predecessor’s report, explicitly noting in his July 2023 *A New Agenda for Peace* that: “In *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992, the Secretary-General warned of the need for consistent, rather than selective, applications of the principles of the [UN] Charter.” Guterres further observed that “Trust is the cornerstone of the collective security system.”⁸ Like Boutros-Ghali, the current UN Secretary-General went on to argue that the world was at a crossroads in the evolution of a new global order.

Both *Agendas* stressed the importance of conflict prevention; the use of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter to ensure that regional organizations serve as pillars of the global security system; and highlighted the link between security and development. Guterres, like Boutros-Ghali, called for regional peace enforcers (especially in Africa), advocating UN-assessed financial support for their endeavors. In December 2023, the UN Security Council unanimously approved UN-assessed contributions to support African Union (AU)-led peace operations on a case-by-case basis.⁹ Like his predecessor, Guterres also advocated the prioritization of peacebuilding, calling for a better-resourced UN Peacebuilding Commission that can work closely with a strengthened and more representative UN Security Council.

These ideas were later incorporated into the Pact for the Future, the main outcome document of the Summit of the Future held in September 2024. Though he left office as UN Secretary-General three decades ago, Boutros-Ghali's legacy is still very much alive in today's evolving global security architecture.

The second reason why contemporary audiences should be interested in Boutros-Ghali's legacy involves the politics of the Middle East with which the UN has been deeply involved for eight decades. Today, the specific challenge remains the current conflict raging in Gaza between Israel and Hamas which has resulted in gridlock on the UN Security Council in a situation in which 1,200 Israeli civilians were killed in Hamas attacks in October 2023, and, in retaliation, over 40,000 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces by September 2024.¹⁰ The peacemaking processes and issues that Boutros-Ghali insightfully diagnosed in his 1997 memoirs, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, while serving as Egypt's de facto foreign minister, are more relevant than ever for a contemporary audience. These events led to the first-ever peace accords—Camp David, in 1978—between Israel and an Arab state, which culminated in a peace treaty six months later.

The third reason for continued interest in Boutros-Ghali and his ideas involves the current efforts by the global South to revive the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) by promoting global peace through avoiding taking sides in disputes between a US-led and a China-led camp on issues such as Russia's war with, and military occupation of, parts of Ukraine since 2014. The NAM is also seeking to strengthen and democratize institutions of global governance such as the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Boutros-Ghali was, for 14 years, Egypt's most powerful diplomat, and thus one of the most important figures in the Non-Aligned Movement. As an academic at the University of Cairo for three decades, he had also been a leading conceptualizer and critic of the principle of non-alignment. In his 1997 memoirs, Boutros-Ghali captured many of his diplomatic battles as minister of state for foreign affairs, to prevent Egypt's isolation at several NAM summits following Cairo's signing of its peace treaty with Israel in 1979. The lessons from these events by a consummate insider are still relevant to contemporary efforts to revive non-alignment.

Given the attempts by some Western actors to diminish Boutros-Ghali's contributions at the UN, it is important to correct this glaring imbalance, and to understand Boutros-Ghali's career within the political, social, and cultural contexts from which he emerged, and the international system in which he operated. We are fortunate in that this widely published scholar-diplomat left behind two memoirs on his peacemaking role in the Middle East and on his role as UN Secretary-General. It is also critical to understand Boutros-Ghali's personal and intellectual backgrounds that led to his evolution as a scholar-diplomat within the Egyptian political system. This Afro-Arab intellectual troubleshooter should thus be situated within a historical context both as a French-trained Coptic Christian minority in an overwhelmingly Muslim country, and as the first UN Secretary-General with a deep theoretical understanding and practical grounding in the politics of the global South.

3 A Cairene Childhood and Family Influences

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was born in Cairo on 14 November 1922. He attended the French secondary school in the Egyptian capital, growing up in the family mansion, Kafr Ammar, with his two younger brothers, Mikhail and Raouf. The Boutros-Ghali family was among the largest landowners in Egypt, and belonged to the country's 200 noble families. Boutros often visited Ismailia (Tahrir) Square in his youth, and embraced Egypt's rich intellectual and cultural heritage, frequently touting the thousand-year-old Al-Azhar theological university and ancient Pharaonic civilizations. The Cairo in which he grew up was a city of ornate Victorian and Mediterranean architecture which stood alongside bustling

bazaars, minareted mosques, and the allegorical alleys so vividly depicted by Egyptian Nobel literature laureate, Naguib Mahfouz, in his novels.

His father, Youssef Bey, had enrolled to study law in Paris as early as 1909. His mother Sophie Charobim was the daughter of one of Egypt's most famous historians. His uncle Wasif, a poet, academic, and former foreign minister, was Boutros's greatest influence, encouraging him to become an avid reader, and prodding him to achieve greater intellectual heights. Another mentor was French Orientalist Louis Massignon, who taught the young Egyptian in Paris about relations between the Maghreb—the Arab West—and the Mashrek—its East.

A Coptic Christian from a rich and politically connected family, Boutros acquired a deep sense of *noblesse oblige* and a commitment to public service from his family heritage. His grandfather, Boutros Ghali Pasha, had served as prime minister of Egypt under the British protectorate, before being assassinated by a political extremist in February 1910. Two uncles had also served as foreign minister, another as agriculture minister, while several cousins served as ministers, parliamentarians, and diplomats. But Boutros-Ghali was the ultimate outsider: a patrician within a mass of poverty in his country; a Coptic Christian within an overwhelmingly Muslim society; and an Arab within an overwhelmingly black African continental population.

His Coptic identity is crucial to any understanding of Boutros-Ghali's life. "Copt" is the Greek word for Egypt, and Christianity had dominated the country until invading Muslim armies changed its demographics and replaced its religion in the middle of the seventh century. Copts thereafter often faced additional taxation, and limits were placed on their opportunities to serve in public offices. After the British occupation of Egypt from 1882, many Egyptians considered Copts to be "fifth columnists" of the Christian occupiers.¹¹ Boutros underlined the vulnerability of the Copt minority: "Should the Copts become identified with an international church, they would be seen as a foreign body within Egyptian society, as a neo-colonialist and alien presence."¹² These fears were not theoretical but genuine, as sporadic terrorist attacks on Copts and their churches continue to this day. In post-monarchical Egypt after 1952, it was thus much more difficult for Boutros-Ghali to be formally appointed foreign minister due to his Coptic background, though as earlier noted, he effectively performed this role for much of his 14 years in office.

After completing his undergraduate law degree at the University of Cairo, Boutros finished his postgraduate studies at two Parisian elite schools—Sciences Po and the Sorbonne—earning a doctorate in International Law, with distinction. He was a self-described cosmopolitan Arab federalist, looking to German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck—who unified his country in 1871—as his model for Pan-Arab unity. Boutros thus envisaged a federation between Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. The young Egyptians he encountered in Paris in the 1940s interacted with Pan-Arabists, Marxists, and Nasserites from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the rest of the Arab world, who were agitating for the independence of their countries and for decolonization throughout the developing world. As a student, Boutros took full advantage of the fabled "City of Love": he was a denizen of Parisian cafés, where he sat reading or socializing for hours; he visited jazz clubs and nightclubs; often browsed in the city's numerous bookstores; and read the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and met another French literary giant, Albert Camus.

Boutros-Ghali became a professor at 27, teaching International Law and International Relations for 28 years at Cairo University. He published the first book on the UN in Arabic, and taught on issues related to the UN, regional organizations such as the Arab League and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as the Non-Aligned Movement. He would eventually produce over 100 journal articles in French, Arabic, and English. In Paris, Boutros married Leila Kahil, a Sorbonne-trained archaeologist of

Syrian-Lebanese-German background. The marriage broke down after a few years, and he married Leia Nadler, an Egyptian Jew and daughter of wealthy confectioners from Alexandria. She remained a loyal companion until Boutros's death in 2016. As with his first marriage, the couple never had any children.

4 Afro-Arab Prophet, Pharaoh, and Pope

Boutros-Ghali directed Egypt's Al-Ahram Centre for Strategic and Political Studies before swapping the world of theory for practice by serving as minister of state for foreign affairs and deputy foreign minister between 1977 and 1991. Here, he played a central role in peacemaking with Israel between 1977 and 1981. Boutros-Ghali's career can be assessed using three typologies of Prophet, Pharaoh, and Pope. Acting as a peacemaking "Prophet," he led negotiations that culminated in a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. His entire academic and public life had thus prepared him well for the role of UN Secretary-General.

Boutros-Ghali played the role of a stubborn "Pharaoh" as UN Secretary-General between 1992 and 1996, in an often imperious approach to standing up to powerful members of the UN Security Council in the critical area of managing peacekeeping operations. Finally, as UN Secretary-General, the Egyptian pursued the role of a secular "Pope" in leading conceptual debates on development, democratization, and human rights, as well as hosting mega-summits on the environment (Rio, 1992); human rights (Vienna, 1993); population (Cairo, 1994); social development (Copenhagen, 1995); and women (Beijing, 1995).¹³

As earlier noted, no historical biography in English (only a solid one in French by France's former ambassador in Cairo and New York, Alain Dejammet, who knew his subject well¹⁴) has surprisingly been written on Boutros-Ghali until very recently. The Egyptian held the office in the immediate post-Cold War era when cooperation between the US and Russia resumed after a 45-year thaw. This led to great expectations that the world body would finally function as its founders had intended. An unprecedented number of peacekeeping missions was launched under Boutros-Ghali's leadership: by 1994, the UN had deployed 75,000 peacekeepers to 17 trouble spots. During the previous four decades, the world body had deployed just 13 peacekeeping missions.¹⁵

Boutros-Ghali was indisputably the most scholarly UN Secretary-General in the eight decade history of the post. Having served as Egypt's most powerful diplomat, he was steeped in the intricacies of Third World diplomacy, had a profound and intuitive grasp of the global South, and was deeply involved in both the Arab-Israeli dispute and the politics of the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement. In his first four years in the Egyptian foreign ministry, located on Cairo's historic Midan al-Tahrir, he helped to negotiate and implement the controversial US-brokered September 1978 Camp David peace accords with Israel. The bilateral treaty that emerged six months later, resulted in Egypt's diplomatic isolation in the Arab world, as well as the assassination of its head of state, Anwar Sadat, by Islamic militants in October 1981.

As UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali clashed with the world body's most powerful member—the US—earning him the unenviable tag of being the only UN Secretary-General to have been denied a second five-year term in office. The Egyptian bluntly condemned the double standards of the three powerful Western members of the Council—the US, Britain, and France—in selectively authorizing UN interventions in what he described as "rich men's wars" in Europe's Balkans, while neglecting Africa's "orphan conflicts."¹⁶ This French-trained Francophile however had a blind spot: he remained close to Paris and failed to criticize its negative actions in having trained and armed Hutu militias during the

Rwandan genocide in 1994.¹⁷ The Council's powerful members, in turn, ignored many of Boutros-Ghali's ambitious ideas, making clear that they wanted a "Secretary" rather than a "General".

Under the Egyptian's leadership, the UN achieved peacekeeping successes in Mozambique, Cambodia, and El Salvador, but endured spectacular failures in Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia, and Angola.¹⁸ Boutros-Ghali's greatest legacy will, however, undoubtedly be his 1992 *An Agenda for Peace*, a framework developed at the end of the Cold War for a new global security architecture which is still widely used today. The Security Council had asked the new UN Secretary-General to present it with such a text. In true professorial style, Boutros-Ghali spent 40 hours meticulously polishing countless drafts of the text. Agenda outlined a continuum from conflict prevention to peacemaking to peacekeeping to peacebuilding, while advocating the strengthening of regional security bodies to lighten the UN's burden. It called for "preventive deployment"; a U.S. \$1.7 billion rapid reaction UN force of 16,000 troops, 3,600 police and 1,000 staff to make action possible without the need to seek new troops for each mission; and heavily armed peace enforcers for dangerous missions.¹⁹

Though the UN Security Council failed to approve a rapid reaction or peace-enforcement force, cooperation with regional organizations was initiated under Boutros-Ghali's watch in Liberia in 1993 when 16,000 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) troops were supported, for four years, by 368 UN military observers in the first-ever deployment by the world body alongside an already existing regional force. The concept of "peacebuilding" that Boutros-Ghali elaborated in *Agenda* is now associated with the multi-dimensional missions in places like Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Haiti, Cambodia and Sierra Leone where efforts were made to adopt a holistic approach to peace. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of fighters, security sector reform (SSR), repatriation of refugees, the monitoring of human rights, and the organizing of elections, are some of the tasks linked to this concept.

During his tenure in office, Boutros-Ghali displayed a fierce and often courageous independence: he insisted on maintaining a veto over air strikes in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995; he refused Washington's demand to approve a UN deployment in Haiti in 1994 until troop contributors and time-frames had been fully agreed; he chastised his political masters for manipulating the UN over Iraq and Libya. He berated them for dumping impossible tasks on the world body without providing the organization with the means to deliver on its responsibilities. The Egyptian recorded all of these complaints in his trenchant 1999 memoir, *Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga*.

Playing the "Pope on the East River", Boutros-Ghali also achieved some success in promoting norms of international transitional justice, but suffered disappointments in the areas of development and democratization. He was an intellectual disciple of seventeenth century Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius' liberal humanism, and also of seventeenth century French philosopher Descartes and his theory of innate knowledge that argued that distinguishing truth from falsity was a characteristic that all humans shared. As Boutros-Ghali noted: "studying international law and human rights makes one a liberal, whether that is in Paris or Cairo".²⁰ But, though Boutros was a cosmopolitan Francophile intellectual with liberal ideas, he was also a walking paradox: in practice, he served two autocratic military regimes in Egypt for fourteen years. He did not consciously address the contradiction between his liberal European-derived principles and his serving illiberal military brass hats who were violating these very same liberal principles through human rights abuses, and by clamping down on freedom of speech and dissent.

Boutros-Ghali's liberal ideals were also contradicted by his failure to criticize the illiberal French post-independence system of neo-colonialism known as *Françafrique*. Though later critical of francophone African dictators like Central African Republic's "Emperor" Jean-Bédél Bokassa and Zaire's Mobutu

Sese Seko,²¹ as Egypt's *de facto* foreign minister and as UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali consistently remained silent about the often pernicious role that Paris played in maintaining its African *chasse gardée* (private hunting-ground). Even as he belatedly condemned the mass slaughter of African dictators, the Egyptian failed equally to criticize the French role in condoning the excesses of these autocrats and for intervening militarily in Africa over fifty times between 1960 and 2010, often in support of these same dictators.

Boutros-Ghali's status as a member of the Christian Coptic minority in Egypt had taught him to champion the protection of minorities and to preach the virtues of tolerance. Influenced by the eighteenth century Enlightenment German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, he argued for democratization not just at the domestic level within states, but also at the international level between states. He pragmatically observed that developing countries were only likely to embrace democracy if it was simultaneously practiced internationally. Boutros-Ghali thus called for the creation of both a local and a global 'rule of law'. Two international criminal tribunals on Yugoslavia (in 1993) and Rwanda (in 1994) were created under his watch to try war crimes, eventually culminating in the establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC) by 2002.

The Egyptian further sought to promote the interests of weak and poor developing countries who formed the majority of the current 193-member UN General Assembly against what he considered to be the more parochial interests of powerful, richer countries in the international system that Kenyan scholar, Ali Mazrui, described as 'global apartheid'.²² Boutros-Ghali frequently expressed the Southern criticism that the rich North was too focused on security issues to the detriment of the socio-economic development priorities of the world's poorest nations. As UN Secretary-General, he often decried the lack of democratization on the UN Security Council and at the World Bank and IMF; he promoted progressive ideas on development and human rights; and enacted some important administrative reforms within the UN system.

5 The Late Afternoon of Life

This article concludes by assessing the legacy and final years of one of the global South's most prominent scholar-diplomats. As a Prophet engaging in four years of peacemaking with Israel between 1977 and 1981, Boutros-Ghali transitioned from scholar to diplomat, and remained Egypt's most influential diplomat for another decade. During Middle East peace negotiations with Israel, as a Coptic Christian minority with a Jewish wife, he took huge personal risks in the cause of peace and was a prime target for assassination, having accompanied martyred Egyptian head of state, Anwar Sadat, to Jerusalem in November 1977. It took great personal courage to continue on this path for 14 years, especially after Sadat had been assassinated in October 1981. Though not especially religious—describing Coptic church services as “ancestral ceremonies”—Boutros-Ghali did, however, believe strongly in destiny and that one's future—including one's death—was preordained, and could not be altered through human action.

The Egyptian had been politically astute as UN Secretary-General in working closely with Britain, France, and Russia on the Bosnia conflict. He had pleased the Chinese by barring Taiwanese and Tibetan dissidents from addressing meetings in the UN secretariat building. He had won the unanimous endorsement of African leaders for his re-election bid as UN Secretary-General at the OAU summit in Yaoundé in July 1996. Boutros-Ghali was, however, denied the re-election he so badly craved in November 1996 under controversial circumstances when America used its veto to cancel out the 14 other positive votes in his favor. He had earlier complained prophetically that he felt like a man condemned to execution. His nemesis—the US permanent representative to the UN, Madeline Albright—enthusiastically acted as president Bill Clinton's willing executioner. The importance of this

incident lies in the limits of the powers of an independent-minded UN Secretary-General, and the dangers of a powerful veto-wielding permanent member exerting undue political pressure on the world body.

Ghana's Kofi Annan, Boutros-Ghali's UN Undersecretary-General for Peace-keeping, became the second African UN Secretary-General upon the Egyptian's departure from office in December 1996. The Ghanaian died in August 2018, having served two five-year terms and having won the Nobel Peace Prize, alongside the UN, in 2001. Where Boutros-Ghali was arrogant and cerebral, Annan was affable and charming. Where Boutros was seen by his staff as aloof and pompous, Annan was regarded at the UN as accessible and personable. But while even Boutros-Ghali's worst enemies conceded that he was a genuine intellectual, even Annan's best friends did not try to sell him as a scholar. Annan and his Swedish wife Nane soon became regular New York socialites. The introverted Boutros and his wife Leia famously avoided the social limelight in the Big Apple.

Since he had spent much of his career in the UN bureaucracy, Annan was regarded by many as a creature of the system. He started off cautiously and his reforms were methodical rather than revolutionary, continuing the reduction of staff began under Boutros-Ghali and initiating perennial efforts at better coordination among UN departments. However, in retrospect, the 2001 Nobel citation praising Annan for being "pre-eminent in bringing new life to the organization," sounded anachronistic by 2006 in light of his discredited role as UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the Iraq Oil-for-Food scandal, and the failure of his 2005 UN reform efforts.

After leaving the post of UN Secretary-General, the 74-year old Boutros-Ghali—the oldest holder of the office—was in what Egyptian Nobel laureate, Naguib Mahfouz, described as "the Late Afternoon of Life." The Francophile Boutros was convinced by French president, Jacques Chirac, to take up the post of Secretary-General of the newly revived Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie between November 1997 and December 2002. The institution was a body of 52 francophone African, Asian, and Caribbean countries established effectively to promote France's global influence and culture. Boutros-Ghali continued much of the norm-promotion work he had pursued at the UN through the Francophonie: in democracy, development, and human rights.

After leaving La Francophonie in 2002, he was appointed President of the Egyptian Commission for Human Rights in 2004 by the regime of Hosni Mubarak, which he had served loyally for a decade. He also chaired the Geneva-based South Centre between 2003 and 2006: a think tank dedicated to the "right to development," an issue that Boutros had vigorously pursued at the UN. In June 2014, Boutros-Ghali served his third autocratic Egyptian head of state, advising the putschist General, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, on foreign policy.

Always with an eye to posterity, based on his concerns that his papers would not be well preserved in Egypt, Boutros-Ghali placed his official documents, diaries, family and other papers, at Stanford University's Hoover Institution in the US in 1996. The 93-year old fell badly at home in Cairo in February 2016, and died a few days later in hospital. He was granted a state funeral with full military honors in a ceremony attended by the cream of Egypt's political elite and foreign diplomats. Boutros Boutros-Ghali was buried in a crypt at the Boutrosiya family church alongside his grandfather after whom he had been named and with whom he shared a steadfast devotion to public service in the true spirit of *noblesse oblige*.

Notes

¹ Adebajo 2023a

² Boutros-Ghali 1997; and Boutros-Ghali 1999.

³ Barnett 1999, 519–520.

⁴ Luck 2007, 220–222.

⁵ Berdal 2008, 181.

⁶ Goulding 2007, 272.

⁷ UN, 1992.

⁸ UN 2023a.

⁹ UN 2023b.

¹⁰ Cited in Al-Mughrabi 2024

¹¹ Quoted in Lang Jr. 2007, 266–270.

¹² Boutros-Ghali 1997, 130

¹³ See Burgess 2002.

¹⁴ Dejammet 2015.

¹⁵ See Adebajo 2011

¹⁶ Boutros-Ghali 1999, 53 and 55.

¹⁷ On French complicity in Rwanda’s genocide, see Krosiak 2007; and Wallis 2006.

¹⁸ Adebajo 2023b.

¹⁹ UN 1992.

²⁰ Quoted in Lang Jr. 2007, 271.

²¹ Boutros-Ghali 1997, 51.

²² Mazrui 1994

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