

## Ethical Challenges in Global Governance

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*This article focuses, first, on the moral legitimacy, leadership, and capacity of public service, and their potential role in considerations of ethics in international relations, in general, and corruption, in particular. Second, arguing that realpolitik has attenuated our analysis of corruption and our ability to oppose it on moral grounds, a case is made for linking the scholarly work on corruption and the scholarly work on morality in international relations, in order to enrich our understanding of corruption as a key moral concern of global governance, and to enable us, as well, to design and deliver effective anti-corruption initiatives across the globe. Finally, the article concludes with a call for morally independent and resilient public administrators as key players in competent states, as well as collaboration between practitioners and scholars in the development of new skills and strategies to advance democratic discourse and decision making at all levels of governance.*

**Raktažodžiai:** *moralinė institucija, teisėtumas, lyderiavimas, korupcija, globalioji etika.*

**Keywords:** *moral agency, legitimacy, leadership, corruption, global ethics.*

### Introduction

Mark Huddleston's (2000) piece, "Onto the Darkling Plain: Globalization and the American Public Service in the Twenty-First Century," seems especially apt for consideration of global ethics and global governance. While Huddleston's analysis focuses on the United States, it can be extended to public administration everywhere. His argument, in brief, is that globalization's hollowing out of the state will induce crises of accountability, competence, and legitimacy in public administration, and that two possible scenarios will ensue: global regime management or neomedieval administration. The first assumes a globalized public service that will be, essentially, manageable or tame, compared to the second scenario - neomedieval administration - which assumes turmoil, dissensus, and fragmentation. Yet, although Huddleston's darkling plain is vivid and provocative, it is neither inevitable nor desirable. There is still a strong case to be made for the state and state capacity, particularly given 21<sup>st</sup>-century gov-

ernance challenges such as nuclear proliferation, human rights, and corruption.

There is also a strong need to pay attention to the questions that a number of scholars such as Carol Lewis and Stuart Gilman (2005, 1996) and Terry Cooper and Diane Yoder (2002), have raised about an emerging global ethic for public administration, global initiatives based on central and international values, and a burgeoning consensus on integrity, responsibility, and transparency. While the position and potency of the public service vary across the planet and across regions, between, for example, the developing and developed nations, or within the European Union, government at all levels continues to confront the problems of every polity: the economic security of its citizens, sovereignty, equity, environmental protection, and demographic change, as well as a host of others. Therefore, although globalization presents public administration with new challenges, it also presents new opportunities to revisit and revitalize the fundamentals of the field.

### Legitimacy

In this context, this paper focuses on three fundamental and interrelated qualities of public service - its moral legitimacy, its moral leadership, and its capacity to anticipate change, adapt

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to emerging conditions, and advance a moral agenda in the midst of global governance. For example, the cliché that “government should be run like a business” should be reversed in 21<sup>st</sup>-century governance, and, instead, “business should be run like government.” Or to put it another way: Despite Alan Doig’s (2007) astonishing assertion that tomorrow’s public service might not want or need moral public administrators, public administration, by its very nature, will continue to be a fundamentally moral enterprise that qualifies it as a prototype for other professions to emulate as we try to meet the governance challenges of the new century, and as we try to find common ground for creating a common future (Garofalo and Geuras, 2006).

The public administrator is a moral agent and, therefore, a moral exemplar for the private citizen. An agent is one who acts in behalf of another, the principal, and the public administrator has multiple principals with multiple interests and priorities. But morality itself is the public administrator’s fundamental principal, a principal with a different status from other principals, and one that is foundational to the legitimacy of public administration. When obligations to conflicting principals must be balanced, morality is not just one principal among many to be balanced against the others. On the contrary, it is the supreme principal.

The concept of moral agency also can be extended to professions and organizations, some of which have a moral mission. They exist to perform a morally justified task. A profession or organization founded on a moral purpose is inherently moral, and the members of such a profession or organization are moral agents. Public organizations and public administrators have this special moral status because, first, they exist to serve the public good, to serve values that the society feels are significant enough to support, and second, in contrast to private organizations and private managers, public organizations and public administrators are dedicated to the provision of goods and services that are considered important enough to justify their collective efforts and resources.

The public administrator also serves as an exemplar for private individuals both because public administration is inherently moral, and because the private individual is a citizen as well. The status of citizen is the foundation of political authority in a democracy, and the nature of public administration situates the public administrator as an appropriate moral teacher by example. Public

administrators must justify their professional goals and the means by which they pursue them as advancing the values of society. Public administrators derive their professional existence from those values and are professionally dedicated to them. This professional dedication is identical to the civic dedication conferred and expected by the status of citizen. As a citizen, each person is responsible for honoring the values of society, and as a citizen, one is beholden to society.

The public administrator, however, is not the only moral agent in the polity. For example, legislators, too, are moral agents, but their moral agency differs from the public administrator’s. In one sense, the legislator has more proximate responsibility to the public, so expresses the public will more directly than the administrator. In another sense, there is no question about the legislator’s discretion; it is considered essential to the legislative role. The public administrator’s discretion, on the other hand, is a kind of open secret. But a third difference may suggest a reason why the public administrator may serve as a better model of moral agency than the legislator: Legislators enact measures for the entire society but represent smaller constituencies. They are expected to act as advocates for specific constituents in seeking governmental benefits.

Public administrators, in contrast, are not expected to benefit an individual or a district. They are agents of the whole - the country, the state, the province, or the city. Clearly, public administrators are tied to constituencies, such as the poor, the disabled, students, contractors, and pharmaceutical companies. But the point is that, although these constituencies may deserve the public administrator’s attention, their interests may well conflict with the public interest, and the public administrator is responsible for resolving or reconciling such conflicts.

Finally, there is one important respect in which the moral agency of legislators differs from that of public administrators: The professional life of the public administrator resembles that of the citizen more than does the legislator’s. Regardless of popular imagery, bureaucrats are more like us, citizens might say. Public administration is so vast and multifaceted that it encompasses activities comparable to virtually every form of work, which is not true of legislators or judges, for example, and which provides one impetus for privatization. No one has yet suggested that either legislatures or courts be contracted out. Public administration serves best as a model of moral agency because the professional activities of the administrator most

resemble those of citizens, and therefore, at least in principle, public administration can claim moral legitimacy in governance.

## Leadership

Moral legitimacy is not sufficient, however, for effective public service leadership. It must be accompanied by moral competence, which is a key dimension of the professional skills required by good governance. Moral competence is nested in reciprocal commitments between citizens and public servants, an active understanding of the common good, recognition of the moral space for making choices, and the capacity to engage in ethical inquiry, manage competing claims, and tolerate moral ambiguity. But, obviously, it is not simple or straightforward, especially in light of the typical pressures and priorities of organizational culture. To cite a few well-worn examples: Is it ethical to spend money at the end of the fiscal year so there will not be any to return to the general fund? Can we avoid distorting employee performance evaluations without damaging or even destroying an employee's prospects or career? Or how do we deal ethically with diversity?

Leadership, including ethical leadership, is, in the American vernacular, one of those motherhood-and-apple-pie matters. No one is against it - at least in theory. But when we consider actual public administrators and leadership, it remains an unresolved question. Do we really want public administrators to lead, and if so, on what issues? The idea of ethical leadership by public administrators, which presupposes the legitimacy of administrative leadership in the first place, continues to be unsettled and sometimes even controversial in many, if not all, administrative systems.

What images of public administrators do we carry around with us in our minds? As Mark Moore (1995) has suggested, we have images of the administrator as either the faithful agent who provides expertise and loyalty to elected officials or the independent moral actor who expresses her own personal views on the right and the good, and actively resists injustice or corruption. Both of these images evoke fear and concerns in the citizenry: On the one hand, we fear public officials who blindly follow orders, assume no responsibility, and are not accountable; on the other hand, we fear public officials who pursue their own views of public value, independent of what either their political masters or citizens prefer. But Moore offers a third image of the public

administrator as explorer, who searches for public values, exercising initiative and judgment but also being responsive to political authority. This image might be more appealing than the first two, but it raises many questions as well. At any rate, to varying degrees across polities, citizens tend to be ambivalent about public administrators, just as they tend to be ambivalent about government and bureaucracy overall.

Yet, if we believe that public administration is a profession, then it follows that public administrators should be expected to be professionals. No one expects a physician, an attorney, or an airline pilot to be an amateur, so why would we want amateur administrators? (Wills, 1999). There are, however, a few exceptions: We do expect police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel to be professionals, particularly, for example, in the aftermath of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the Madrid bombings, or other catastrophes. But at least the American ambivalence about government, in general, remains unresolved, and American citizens are therefore in a double bind: They want public officials to be efficient and effective but not so efficient and effective as to be expert and, perhaps, vindictive, arrogant, or officious. In reality, of course, amateurism is no safeguard against these behaviors; in fact, it might even encourage them.

We have encountered these kinds of tensions in our recent experiences with the so-called new public management or reinventing government, which claims to liberate public administrators from red tape, rules, and other constraints, and to transform them into rule-bending, rule-breaking, risk-taking entrepreneurs. Many citizens, already anxious about overbearing and officious bureaucrats, are not likely to embrace such qualities and behaviors, and might tend to be confused about the mixed messages. On the other hand, a different slant is that leadership is a legitimate obligation of public administrators, particularly given vague and conflicting legislative missions, limited resources, competing priorities, lack of citizen knowledge, information, and experience, and most important, public administration's inherent moral nature.

But this is not heroic or reckless leadership, nor narrow, limited leadership. It is, instead, leadership that articulates values, develops a vision, and includes moral competence, clarity, and conviction, a leadership that entails discretion, hard choices, and transparency. Leadership and leadership development, therefore, must be an integral part of capacity-building in governance, especially ethical governance. Public servants are moral actors whose

discretion and decisions demand the application of moral judgment both in management and policy, rather than simple obedience to hierarchical directives. While this does not exclude the need for laws, codes, and sanctions, these legalisms are not surrogates for genuine moral leadership.

Clearly, this is not an easy or quick process. Instilling ethics in governance can be seen as an adaptive, even generative, change, a disruption of the rules-based status quo, and therefore a threat to the comfort and convenience of many players. But it also can be seen as a sign of civic health, an acknowledgment of the inherently moral nature of public service. In many situations, it may well be appropriate to act based on how we feel. Experience should teach us something, and it is with the routine problems that we can use what we call common sense. Often, though, the situations or problems that public administrators face are not routine, and commonsensical solutions will not work. The right-versus-right decisions, those involving competing values, for example, require more than routine responses (Kidder, 1995), and it is here that administrators need the tools for exercising effective ethical leadership. Public administrators need not become philosophers, but they need to add applied or professional ethics to their toolkit, in order to do their job with moral clarity, coherence, and courage.

### **Public Administration and Global Governance**

The third fundamental quality of public administration is its evolving role in global governance, which clearly includes the challenge of corruption. Shifting from public administration's legitimacy and leadership, we first consider conventional approaches to corruption, and then offer a few recommendations for possible academic and administrative collaboration to confront this issue. Proscriptions and penalties attached to corruption are necessary but not sufficient for substantive, enduring change to occur. On the contrary, in addition to rules and sanctions, moral agency and moral competence are vital if corruption is to be reduced or controlled across the planet.

Many scholars, such as Robert Klitgaard (1988), Paolo Mauro (1995), Donatella della Porta (1996), Kimberly Ann Elliott (1997), Susan Rose-Ackerman (1999), Gerald Caiden, O. P. Dwivedi, Joseph Jabbra (2001), Mlada Bukovansky (2002), and Oskar Kurer (2005), have treated corruption from various vantage points and with various purposes. Therefore, we know much about corruption's economic

effects, kleptocracy, the need for civil service reform, and international initiatives to combat corruption. But as Bukovansky suggests, policymakers and students of international political economy have largely failed to articulate the moral underpinnings of corruption or the impact of this neglect on corruption and its consequences. According to Bukovansky, "in contemporary scholarly discourse the dominant rationale for the emerging anti-corruption regime has been economic and institutional rather than normative" (p. 18).

Anti-corruption efforts, therefore, require an image of a "good" polity, and require moral behavior of both public officials and private individuals. The values underlying any conception of a "good" polity must be made explicit, rather than treated as impersonal facts of life that cannot be considered, let alone changed. Fortunately, as Lewis and Gilman (2005) suggest, "professional public managers around the globe share some core values that are associated with their role and training rather than cultural particulars" (p. 229). Although cultural particulars are operative, Lewis and Gilman believe that "shared ethical standards are developing on a global scale" (p. 229). Honesty, trust, and stability have been identified as central to global standards, there is evidence of a worldwide rejection of official bribery, and there is a global emphasis on professionalism, transparency, and accountability.

Just as many scholars have contributed to the study of corruption, many, such as Ralph Pettman (1979), Mary Maxwell (1990), Daniel Warner (1991), Luigi Bonanate (1995), Jean Bethke Elshstain (1998), Mark Amstutz (1999), and Amitai Etzioni, (2004, 2007), have contributed to the study of morality in international relations. A consistent theme in this literature is that, although moral discourse is integral to politics, academic analysis has generally ignored moral claims in world affairs. Following in the tradition of Hans Morgenthau and other realists, many scholars have dismissed moral claims as mere moralism or the rationalization of self-interest. Power and morality have been divided. Yet, moral expectations persist, despite the numerous complex questions that remain unresolved.

The important point is that, if one accepts the historically dominant view in international relations, *realpolitik* - the belief that ethical imperatives are invalid - then one necessarily has no moral basis on which to oppose corruption. But if one believes that corruption subsumes ethical as well as economic and institutional dimensions, then one acknowledges the legitimacy of moral

claims in international affairs. This core issue links the scholarly work on corruption and the scholarly work on ethics in international relations, and corruption then becomes a transnational, cross-cultural phenomenon that cannot be explained or justified simply by reference to *raison d'etat*, national sovereignty, or notions of group morality. While these obstacles to international morality are formidable and resistant to change, once corruption is understood as a key moral concern of global governance, its power to distort and deceive is considerably weakened. But we cannot resolve the problem of corruption without resolving the divisions within international relations regarding ethics, and without answering the fundamental question of whether corruption is a moral problem that transcends particular polities, cultures, and economies.

The conventional view implies that contemplating the reduction of corruption across different polities, cultures, and economies signifies either extraordinary naivete or even delusion. Corruption is described as a permanent fixture on the world's political, cultural, and economic landscape. Societies are different; they have different values. What is considered corrupt here may not be considered corrupt there. Thus, despite anti-corruption laws, resolutions, and strategies, diplomats and international relations theorists frequently claim that the only universal principles are self-interest, greed, and the drive to power.

Still, it is a perplexing problem. Moral expectations persist, and no nation proclaims pride in its corruption. On the contrary, corruption either operates in the shadows or is embedded in visible and routine conduct that is not generally considered corrupt. For example, it can be argued that bureaucratic incompetence or irresponsibility is a form of corruption. Nonetheless, often the worst that shirkers can expect is that their performance reviews will not lead to an increase in salary. But even that outcome is not necessarily a foregone conclusion, given the typical pressures associated with personnel evaluation, highlighting the reciprocal nature of administrative corruption in some systems. Or if one asks whether policy always trumps morality, then one might question the legitimacy of certain geopolitical decisions, such as the imposition of economic sanctions on vulnerable or suffering citizens. These issues are complex. The question here is simply whether policy decisions can or should be made absent moral considerations.

The aim, in any event, is not bureaucratic hegemony, infallibility or perfection but, rather, the

strategic exercise of morally informed judgment in an environment of conflicting agendas, competing priorities, and scarce resources. Thus, what is required, initially, is an acknowledgment of the limits of such characteristics as self-interest, greed, and the drive to power. Although these tendencies are clearly evident in human nature, they do not comprise the sum total of human nature. A seemingly realistic Machiavellian or Manichean view of humanity is, in a word, like an ideology that provides a single prism that enables the faithful to simplify the world's complexities and controversies, and to find comfort in its cloak of security and stability, its freedom from risk and responsibility. It is a view that is both divisive and debilitating, and, perhaps, most important for governance, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy that perpetuates itself in endless confusion, conflict, and confrontation.

The design and delivery of effective anti-corruption initiatives presuppose a vision of a good polity. The illegitimacy of corruption is grounded in a moral reason, namely, the idea that the public good and the public trust are fundamental societal values - an idea consistent with the proposition that public administration is an inherently moral enterprise, and consistent with the reconceptualization of corruption as more than the use of public office for private gain. If the case is to be made for the legitimacy of moral claims in global governance, then *a priori* ethical analysis of policies, programs, and practices must be conducted, and the obligation to justify policies, programs, and practices must be met. Critical in themselves, such steps also might help to reduce the insularity and sense of entitlement that seem to afflict many public officials who, in their desire to appear realistic, consider only so-called hard data in their decision making and omit the "soft side" such as values, principles, and integrity.

In order to move toward the continued development of a global ethic in governance, practitioners and scholars, together, need to identify a common set of moral principles; to collaborate on ways to structure the exercise of discretion in public service, to apply moral reasoning, judgment, and values to the concrete circumstances and dilemmas that public servants confront daily; and to commit to morally informed discourse, within their own organizations, with their counterparts in other organizations and polities, and, above all, with citizens. The immediate challenge is to convince skeptical, even cynical, citizens, politicians, and journalists, as well as scholars, that these goals are in their own interest and in the public interest as well.

## Conclusion

This discussion seems to lead to a place somewhere between Mark Huddleston's two scenarios noted at the outset: business-as-usual, essentially tame public administration, or neomedieval administration characterized by turmoil, dissensus, and fragmentation. It leads to a place between complacency and crisis, where public administrators strive to serve the public interest while confronting daily problems of enormous complexity. Reform, under any circumstances, is daunting, basically a political act, not merely a technical exercise. Therefore, if Donald Kettl (2002) is correct in his contention that the transformation of governance is a permanent fixture on the global landscape, then public administration everywhere will continue to entail multiple challenges, including the challenges of political will, moral agency, and citizenship. As David Held (2004) puts it, the creation of a global covenant, or what may be called the administrator's universal responsibility.

With an eye toward the realization of cosmopolitan principles such as equal worth and dignity, active agency, and personal responsibility and accountability (p.171), Held argues that the development of both regional and global independent political authority and administrative capacity is critical to the enactment of global social democracy. State power and capacity would not be diminished, as the continuing significance of the nation-state would be recognized. But there would be layers of governance to address broader and more global questions, accountable and responsive polities, and multilevel citizenship based not on exclusive membership in a territory but on general rules and principles applied in diverse settings. In fact, according to Held, practices of citizenship are already changing in some areas. For example, a resident of Glasgow can vote in city elections, as well as those in Scotland, the United Kingdom, and Europe. At the same time, Held acknowledges that the establishment of global democratic governance, at a minimum, requires a far longer-term and broader political perspective, and perhaps, it might be added, a catholicity of spirit, than is ordinarily the case.

A similar point may be made from the administrative perspective, namely, that, above all, public administrators need a level of integrity, independence, and resilience that doubtless can be very difficult to create or sustain in many circumstances. For example, if legitimate public sector reform is understood, in a given jurisdiction, to consist of assaults on the bureaucracy, then administrators

cannot be expected to be willing targets in order to serve particular political interests, especially since such attacks are nothing more than unethical, partisan ploys, rather than serious attempts to strengthen our collective capacity for defining and solving public problems.

There is a global need for individual moral agency, moral citizenship, and moral competence. There is also a need for competent states with the political will to resist the delegitimization of politics and the deprofessionalization of the civil service, states with the will to foster the public service, and to answer the question of whether the bureaucracy is, in fact, indispensable to governance (Suleiman, 2003). As far as corruption, in particular, is concerned, although there are no simple solutions, competent states, with the requisite moral and political will, free press, and vigilant civil society, are clearly essential for effective reform.

For practitioners and scholars, finally, with a serious interest in resolving such issues as inequality, poverty, and injustice, as well as corruption, the benefits of moral agency and moral competence, seem obvious. Clear moral positions, coupled with political and administrative skills and strategies, are formidable opponents of the merely expedient, familiar, and convenient. For public administration scholars, clear moral positions, coupled with sophisticated research, communication, and collaborative skills and strategies, are equally essential. Together, they can contribute to the creation of a new set of profiles and proficiencies for public officials and to the advancement of democratic discourse and decision making in governance at all levels.

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### **Etikos iššūkiai globaliajam valdymui**

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojami moralės teisėtumo, lyderiavimo ir korupcijos bei viešosios tarnybos gebėjimų ir jos potencialaus vaidmens, apibrėžiant etikos nuostatas tarptautiniuose santykiuose, aspektai. Akcentuojama, kad korupcija išlieka svarbus mokslinių tyrimų objektas, analizuojant globalaus valdymo problemas ir ieškant būdų pasaulinio masto antikorpucinėms priemonėms. Nurodoma, kad ugdant moraliai nepriklausomus ir jautriai į aplinką reaguojančius šiuolaikinius valstybės tarnautojus, sugebančius dirbti įvairiuose valdymo lygmenyse, būtinas glaudus praktikų ir mokslininkų bendradarbiavimas.