

GLOBAL INSIGHTS

The Downside of Celebrity Diplomacy: The Neglected Complexity of Development



Heribert Dieter and Rajiv Kumar

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Celebrities have become important participants in the debate on the future of development. The Irish rock star Paul Hewson, better known as Bono, is not only the front man of the band U2 but has also become the champion of an antipoverty movement with worldwide impact. Bono is supported by US economist Jeffrey Sachs, who has become a global spokesperson for poverty reduction, especially in Africa.

Surprisingly, the recipes being suggested by Bono and Sachs are breathtakingly one-dimensional and akin to the sweeping propositions of the 1960s: take aid to Africa, waive debt, and provide education, and the continent will develop. While these remedies may look seductive, unfortunately the reality is far more complex and demands attention to the specific circumstance of each individual country or subregion. Grand ideas for development are a dangerous recipe and may in fact worsen the situation of the poor.

In this article we address three issues related to the role of celebrities in international relations. First, we chart the rise of prominent celebrity activists in international affairs, in particular their impact on development policies of the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Second, we examine the competence of celebrities to handle development issues and suggest a more nuanced and less paternalistic approach. Third, we consider the legitimacy of celebrity activists and whether these non-elected individuals are well positioned to berate democratically elected governments.

Celebrities in Politics

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, development policy is heavily influenced, in the words of Paul Collier, by *development biz* and *development buzz*.¹ Development *biz* encompasses the aid bureaucracies, aid agencies, and development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), all of whom make a living out of development. Development buzz, for its part, comes from rock stars, celebrities, and NGOs.

Development buzz has been a door opener for Bono and other celebrities in recent years. In 1999, Bono had an audience with Pope John Paul II. Six years later, *Time* magazine named Bono, together with Melinda and Bill Gates, as "Persons of the Year." Bono has attended the World Economic Forum in Davos as well as several summits of the Group of 8 (G8). He and fellow activist Bob Geldof gained particular prominence at the Gleneagles G8 summit of 2005 and the Heiligendamm G8 summit of 2007. At Gleneagles, Bono had one-on-one meetings with George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder, and Paul Martin and also met Jacques Chirac after the summit.² At Heiligendamm, Bono again claimed center stage, holding meetings with various leading politicians. His supporters even set up camp in Berlin months before the event.

The attention celebrity diplomats received surrounding Heiligendamm was overwhelming. For example, for its May 2007 edition, *Vanity Fair* had a German singer, Herbert Grönemeyer, as its guest editor, and dozens of celebrities expressed their concern about poverty and hunger. Concurrently Bob Geldof was guest editor of an issue of the German tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* that laced pleas for greater development assistance with pictures of dying children and people afflicted with AIDS.³

Efficient public relations work has made celebrities core players who had better be consulted. Politicians today can hardly avoid meetings with Bono. When Stephen Harper, Canadian prime minister, said he was too busy for a meeting with Bono during the Heiligendamm summit, the rock star did not take no for an answer. He growled that Harper had blocked progress on aid for Africa, and the intimidated prime minister promised to find time for a meeting.⁴

Celebrity diplomacy extends well beyond G8 meetings and development issues, of course. George Clooney pronounces on Darfur. Robert Redford pronounces on Iraq. Not everyone is impressed. For example, Gideon Rachman of the *Financial Times* castigates Bono as "a grandstanding poseur who has intimidated blameless bankers and politicians into taking him seriously by sheer force of celebrity."⁵ In any case, the phenomenon of celebrity activism in international affairs has become too serious to be ignored.

Celebrity Competence?

One of the severe downsides to celebrity interventions in development politics is oversimplification of issues. The "analysis" rests in the language of rock songs, Hollywood, and Ronald Reagan. The world is painted in black and white and good is pitted against evil. Nuance is inevitably lost. Historic experience is disregarded. Celebrities provide their followers with easily understood, morally couched messages, but the process of development is much more complex. As Collier notes, "Inevitably, development buzz has

to keep its message simple, driven by the need for slogans, images, and anger. Unfortunately, although the plight of the bottom billion lends itself to simple moralizing, the answers do not."⁶

Therefore, Bono and his fellow celebrity activists might in fact be doing major harm to the peoples of Africa. Their well-meaning interventions probably prolong the tragedy instead of ending it. Rather than raising the ability of Africans to help themselves, celebrity campaigns may well lead the continent into ever deeper trouble. More aid may paralyze the initiative of individuals rather than empowering them. It may even produce a beggar's mentality, where the poor expect the solution to problems from foreign donors rather than from one's own society.⁷

To be sure, Bono does not claim to have expertise in development policy. He is supported by powerful academic economists, in particular Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University. In fact, Bono and Sachs have become something of a double act, with the professor providing the intellectual message and the rock star bringing it to large audiences. Yet what should one make of Sachs's credentials, especially after his prescriptions of disastrous "shock therapy" for Russia in the transition from communism? Jagdish Bhagwati, also at Columbia, has characterized Sachs's intervention in Russia as the biggest debacle of economic policy advice ever.⁸

Now, Sachs advocates another grand strategy, arguing that a Big Push of aid would solve Africa's problems. He estimates that net worldwide foreign aid should reach \$195 billion per year in 2015, plus an undisclosed sum for climate change projects.⁹ Once again, Sachs advocates the big project and ignores the positive experience that many Asian countries have had with piecemeal reform. His new shock therapy is driven by the old paternalistic attitude that aspires to rescue the world.¹⁰ Sachs appears to be ignoring, willfully or not, that his Big Push is similar to early development policies of the 1950s and 1960s and—to a degree—to the central planning that ruined the countries of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Indeed, why would more aid for Africa—one of the core celebrity urgings, reinforced by Sachs—have positive effects on development when the experience with aid to date has been by and large negative? One of the arguments can be that aid in the past has not achieved the scale required to take the population across the income threshold beyond which the recipients can be on a self-propelled path out of poverty. However, even countries such as Tanzania that did enjoy larger amounts of aid do not provide support for this claim. To continue to ask for more aid flows, despite the failures that are so visible to all who want to see, is surely pushing more good money after bad.

In any case, any further aid must be conditional on improved governance. In the past, development aid frequently supported governments with the worst governance record. Inappropriate governance has clearly been a major obstacle to development in Africa, and improvement of development

performance requires new incentive structures that reward success instead of failure. As a recent comprehensive investigation by the Canadian senate concludes, "By far the biggest obstacle to achieving growth and stability in sub-Saharan Africa has been poor government and poor leadership within Africa itself."¹¹

The basic components of good governance are well established. The most important ingredients include effective provision of essential public goods and services; law and order; the right to private property; sovereign rights of a country over its mineral and other natural resources; and enforcement of contracts. Yet these elements are missing in many African countries. Markets and private enterprise cannot work in such an institutional vacuum. Of course, good governance is no panacea for Africa. The intention is not to replace the old aid ideology with yet another simplistic development strategy for Africa. However, providing fresh money, as demanded by celebrity diplomats, ought to be accompanied by proposing clear and plausible strategies for improving governance and by putting in place the necessary institutions and nurturing them to the extent required. Ideally, this improvement of governance should be fostered not in individual states, but in groupings of neighboring countries.

Celebrity Legitimacy?

Andrew Cooper, in his innovative monograph on celebrity diplomacy, suggests that, unlike other celebrities, Bono has been immunized against criticism. "Because of his imprint as a moral entrepreneur," Cooper argues, "Bono escapes most of the criticism for opportunism and superficial fluff heaped on other celebrities who have taken on a diplomatic profile."¹² Yet there is a case to question the legitimacy of celebrities to speak with authority on development and other international issues.

Celebrities lack a mandate to become active in global politics. People like to listen to the music of Bono and Geldof, but these stars are not demographically elected to public office. Charisma as well as their wallets may give them power, but in most cases celebrities are self-appointed. Their legitimacy is derived from their personal credibility. Thus, one should look more closely at their activities off the campaign trail.

For example, there appears to be a contradiction between Bono's public rhetoric on development and his hard-edged private commercial practices.¹³ Bono is a managing director and cofounder of Elevation Partners, which claims to have \$1.9 billion in committed capital.¹⁴ In 2006, Elevation Partners became a significant minority shareholder in Forbes Media.¹⁵ Forbes portrays itself as the site for "The World's Business Leaders" and is probably the most conservative publisher in business news.¹⁶

Bono has also made quite a lot of money from his core business activity. The last tour of U2 consisted of 131 concerts, which resulted in gross ticket receipts of \$389 million, the second most successful tour of any rock band in history. The album linked to the tour sold 9 million copies.¹⁷ In contrast to most other bands, U2 owns all rights and sells its merchandise at its concerts.¹⁸

Of course, Bono can do with his money whatever he likes, but some of his key commercial decisions would appear to sit uncomfortably next to his antipoverty politics. Whereas Bono has chastised politicians for failing adequately to fund antipoverty efforts in Africa, U2 has carefully optimized its own tax bill. In 2006, the band moved part of its corporate base from Ireland to the Netherlands after the Irish government had announced the suspension of tax exemptions that had enabled U2 to collect their songwriting royalties tax-free.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, this shift to the Netherlands, where royalty income remains untaxed, angered quite a few in Bono's native Ireland.²⁰

Questions can also be raised concerning the organization of Debt, AIDS, Trade Africa (DATA), the advocacy association cofounded by Bono in 2002. The board of directors of DATA is composed of two women and six men, all of them coming, as Cooper puts it, "from the Anglo-sphere."²¹ No board member comes from Africa, and only one of the five DATA offices is located in Africa. Bono does not disclose whether he has donated any of his own funds to the organization.²²

So, are celebrity diplomats active for the people of Africa or for their own benefit? Cooper argues that "it would be wrong to suggest that the celebrity diplomats from the Anglo-sphere are 'tragedy voyeurs.'"²³ Perhaps, but celebrity diplomats may still use Africa to promote their own agenda, which may or may not be benign. Some citizens actively oppose Bono's work. For example, the so-called GONE project claims to be the "campaign to make Bono history."²⁴

Conclusion

We have indicated in this discussion that celebrities are ill-equipped to solve Africa's problems. Rock bands and film stars may help raise awareness of Africa's difficulties, but their campaigns may be counterproductive and could result in an underutilization of African potentials. This is not to advocate a wholesale retreat of outside parties from development efforts in Africa. However, donors have to accept the complexities of development and address them honestly and diligently. The improvement of governance in Africa has to be a core goal, and ownership of development strategies must become much more than a slogan. The alternative would be additional proliferation of celebrity diplomats and a further trivialization of development challenges, the consequences of which are simply too negative to contemplate. ☉

Notes

- Herbert Dieter is a senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin. Rajiv Kumar is director of the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi.
1. Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 4.
 2. Andrew Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2008), p. 37.
 3. *Bild-Zeitung*, 31 May 2007.
 4. Gideon Rachman, "The Aid Crusade and Bono's Brigade," *Financial Times*, 30 October 2007, p. 9.
 5. Gideon Rachman, "Why I Hate Bono," *Financial Times*, 10 September 2007, p. 16.
 6. Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, p. 4.
 7. Bartholomäus Grill, "Schneepflüge für Guinea. Warum die Entwicklungshilfe gescheitert ist und was wir daraus lernen können," *Internationale Politik* 12 (2007), p. 14.
 8. *Die Zeit*, 8 November 2007, p. 45.
 9. Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 301.
 10. Grill, "Schneepflüge für Guinea," p. 14.
 11. Canadian Senate, "Overcoming 40 Years of Failure," 2007. Available online at www.parl.gc.ca/39/1/parbus/commbus/senate/com-ef/for-e/rep-e/repafiteb07-e.pdf, p. vii.
 12. Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, p. 3
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
 14. See www.elevation.com/EP_IT.asp?id=112.
 15. *New York Times*, 7 August 2006, p. C1. According to press reports, the stake in Forbes cost Elevation Partners US\$250 million (*Sunday Telegraph*, 19 November 2006, p. 25).
 16. See www.forbes.com.
 17. Richard Tomlinson and Fergal O'Brian, "Bono INC," *Bloomberg Markets*, March 2007, p. 68.
 18. *National Post*, 5 February 2007, p. EN5.
 19. Tomlinson and O'Brian, "Bono INC," p. 70; *Sunday Telegraph*, 19 November 2006, p. 25.
 20. *Irish Independent*, 18 March 2007.
 21. See DATA's website at www.data.org/about/bod.html#.
 22. Tomlinson and O'Brian, "Bono INC," p. 71.
 23. Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, p. 99.
 24. Website at www.eliminatebono.com/index.html.

GLOBAL INSIGHTS

Beyond One Image Fits All: Bono and the Complexity of Celebrity Diplomacy

Andrew F. Cooper

The previous article, by Herbert Dieter and Rajiv Kumar, raises a number of issues about the role of celebrities in global governance. Although the performance of this self-selected cast of performers remains highly contentious, it must be accepted that this activity is one more signal that the traditional script of international relations is changing. This shift is exciting but also bewildering. Views on what to make of this phenomenon are sharply divided.

For sympathizers, this form of public engagement by celebrities represents an inexorable force tied in with the onward rush of globalization with all its attendant elements of mass technology in global communications. It also reflects the wider crisis of credibility and efficiency that currently affects international organizations, whether international financial institutions (IFIs), the World Trade Organization (WTO), or the G8. For the resisters, the challenge is cast as part of a spillover from the wider gauge of celebrity culture, with the global sphere providing an inviting stage for opportunistic self-indulgence.

To more fully understand the nature and impact of this phenomenon, with respect to both its positive and its negative connotations, the level of analysis must be extended beyond these parameters. In other words, at play here is a different set of "simplicity traps," which need to be avoided. Attempts to trivialize celebrity engagement, reducing it to feel-good activity, may paradoxically feed an image that discounts a bigger set of difficulties with the enterprise of global governance. Attempts to caricature this type of agency, lumping stars together without differentiating their distinctive attributes and projects, can have similar effect. Dieter and Kumar's analysis of Jeffrey Sachs and Bono is a significant example of this dilemma. In many ways, the article itself is a testament to the authentic importance of celebrity agency—a step in the right direction—since the phenomenon is being accorded a fairly serious treatment. However, the analysis fails to truly escape those simplicity traps. Instead of a one-image-fits-all perspective, a more nuanced

perspective is needed. Otherwise, the complexity of this phenomenon is missed.

If it is clear then that my view concerning the engagement of celebrities in international relations is more positive than that of Dieter and Kumar, I should note that I do not see these actors as a *deus ex machina*. Indeed, I fault the article not only for misrepresenting the nature of celebrity activism—or what I prefer to call celebrity diplomacy¹—but also for distorting the weight of celebrities as agenda setters, especially in the context of Africa. While individual agency outside the usual orthodox sources matters in a manner that would have been unanticipated at the end of the Cold War, the hold of structural forces as determinants of policy outcomes cannot be neglected. This is true of the weight of colonialism as well, reinforced by the inequalities imposed on African states by the international trade system. That being said, it is misleading to imply that Africa is just one big continent-wide zone of failure. Instead of embracing a one-image-fits-all perspective, opportunities (as well as constraints) need to be factored into any analysis.

Rather than getting into an overextended debate—in an already crowded field²—about Africa and development, I prefer to concentrate on the deficiencies of conflating very different types of celebrities into one single image. It is indicative of this problem that Dieter and Kumar chose to contrast the role of celebrities on opposite ends of the definitional spectrum: Jeffrey Sachs and Bono.

Jeffrey Sachs has built his fame (or, as the authors would have it, his notoriety) through his achieved status.³ As a high-profile professor of economics at Harvard and Columbia, and a robust public intellectual cum policy entrepreneur, Sachs is not treated as a product of the media the way that celebrity diplomats from the entertainment world are. Whether a positive or negative judgment is made about his achievements in Russia or Bolivia, or about his Millennium Promise initiatives, there is no question that his professional talents have been recognized by official decisionmakers. This evaluation of his expertise has been made on a national basis by recipient states or through a host of international bodies, most notably the World Bank and the United Nations.

However, even with a well-known achievement-oriented celebrity like Sachs, the constraints must also be factored in. A key attribute of celebrities is the mode of communication they utilize. On the merit of their own activities, players like Sachs receive media access from a limited span of serious outlets. Without a relationship to a very different type of personality, Sachs would remain largely anonymous in the outlets that largely define celebrity status—the so-called soft media outlets on both sides of the Atlantic.

The fascinating aspect of Sachs's public behavior, therefore, is his development of connections with a number of individuals who possess what he lacks: the power of ascribed celebrity. This is the fame that comes from

being in the constant spotlight of the massive array of soft media outlets: MTV, magazines such as *Hello!* and *People*, and TV shows such as *Entertainment Tonight* and *Oprah*, for example.⁴

Dieter and Kumar's characterization of the Sachs-Bono relationship is underdeveloped. Bono may refer to Sachs as his mentor ("my professor"), but the relationship is far more multifaceted. Sachs gives Bono added gravitas and, by the same associations, room is opened up for Sachs's initiatives. The ascribed celebrity is accorded weight while the achievement-oriented celebrity is accorded a better recognized, but also demystified, face.

Nor is this interface unique. Why only highlight the relationship developed between Sachs and Bono when Sachs forged a similar link with another notable ascribed celebrity, Angelina Jolie? As with Bono, Jolie received mentorship from Sachs. But in turn, Sachs saw his audience expand considerably when she traveled with him to visit several Millennium Villages as part of his Millennium Promise initiatives.

Who were people tuning in to when they chose to watch the *Diary of Angelina Jolie and Dr. Jeffrey Sachs in Africa*, an MTV documentary that detailed a humanitarian trip to Kenya? A good hint of the answer comes from another relationship of this kind—the connection between Angelina Jolie and Gene Sperling. Sperling remains the classic Washington, DC, insider. Yet, when he launched an initiative with Jolie via the Clinton Global Initiative, it was clear who had the media pull. In one account, "Ms Jolie and Mr Sperling were accompanied by about 200 people involved in the initiative but there was no question who most interested the photographers. 'Boy this happens to me everywhere I go,' quipped Mr. Sperling as he was lit up by a battery of flashes aimed at Ms Jolie."⁵

All of this would be tangential to the main thrust of the discussion except for the fact that the critique makes an explicit distinction between the legitimacy of a celebrity such as Sachs, with his achievement-oriented status, and what is held out in the shape of Bono as a classic example of an entertainer with ascribed celebrity status. Sachs's record is savaged, but these attacks are premised on a particular interpretation of his policy record. Sachs's personality—or distinctions between his public and private lives—remains off-limits in the analysis. What is questioned is the degree to which his "earned" status holds merit.

A very different tone is adopted in the discussion of Bono. Rather than being accorded any credibility as a moral entrepreneur or instrumental agenda setter, Bono is dismissed outright as an amateur intruder with "no mandate" or legitimacy beyond his role as lead singer for U2. He is judged exclusively by his personal credibility, or lack of it (as Bono does not meet the authors' standards because of his "ruthless" practices as an investor/corporate citizen and his lack of personal philanthropy). Consequently, Bono's performance as an actor on the global public policy stage is discounted.

I think this line of reasoning overlooks Bono's hybrid role as a celebrity diplomat. Yes, like others in this category, he comes from the world of entertainment and juggles what other critics have referred to as his "day" job and his "night" job.⁶ What is significant about Bono, though, is that he has blurred the lines of these activities. His day job has, to a considerable extent, not been that of a member of U2 but as a champion of a reformist agenda on global public policy. In doing so, he has completely distanced himself from the traditional image of an ascribed celebrity diplomat, of a "feel good" humanitarian. If his achievement-oriented status is of a different order than that of Sachs and other academics, Bono's understanding of the world is not that of an uninformed poser. An indication of the extent of his awareness comes out in interviews like the one he gave to critic Michka Assayas:

Two hundred years ago, it appears that very little difference existed in living standards between the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere. Today, a very wide income gap exists: the North is many times richer than the South. What brought about this gap? The answer seems to lie in colonialism, trade and debt. . . . The reason . . . is largely to do with us, and our exploitation of unfair trading agreements, or old debts. You can't fix every problem. But the ones we can, you must.⁷

Bono has therefore moved far from the standard image of celebrity as amateur enthusiast. A long list of this category can be produced, stretching from Michael Douglas to Ginger Spice. The hallmark of this role is the routing of activity through established institutions and forums, most notably UN specialized agencies. To be sure, modifications have occurred in this strand. Angelina Jolie has upgraded the format by her involvement with the Council on Foreign Relations or the Clinton Global Initiative. On fundaments, nonetheless, Jolie's style remains grounded in the style developed by Audrey Hepburn in the late 1980s. Empathy for those on the front lines of disaster or conflict areas is pronounced. A huge amount of personal time and money is allocated to try to alleviate suffering.

Bono transcends this style in almost every way. His approach has as many traits commonly associated with Henry Kissinger as it does with Audrey Hepburn. Although he is quick to display charm and emotion (and in doing so, contrast himself with the more technical bias of an academic such as Sachs⁸), he does not conform to an older model of behavior in which it is better to be seen and not heard. Also, as displayed in his business dealings, Bono can be calculative and even manipulative. His efforts straddle and play off different political divides, whether it be US evangelical Republicans versus liberal Democrats, or Blair versus Brown in UK politics. He has become a master of bilateral and shuttle diplomacy, in which he targets individual politicians and their advisers.

Bono is extremely conscious of the hierarchy of power. His tactics differ when targeting contrasting states, even within the G8 constellation. When Canadian or Italian leaders fail to deliver what he wants, they become the target of harsh attacks. By contrast, George W. Bush's failure to deliver on his own promises was met with frustration, but there were no public outbursts or broken relationships.

Bono does not cross the boundary from diplomacy into antidiplomacy. In this regard, he is a far cry from Jane Fonda, Brigitte Bardot, Sean Penn, or even Bob Geldof (to whom he is misleadingly compared). What differentiates Bono more dramatically than anything else is his concern with autonomous institutional development. If he avoids an antidiplomatic style, he also eschews the UN. It is hard to mesh the idea of Bono as an amateur when he has built up Debt, AIDS, Trade Africa (DATA) as such a powerful organizational tool. Not only has he surrounded himself with former congressional staffers in the US office, but he has teamed with experienced nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers, such as Jamie Drummond. This is a highly professional organization.

Instead of nuance, Dieter and Kumar urge dismissal in a manner reminiscent of other attempts to discipline or "gatekeep" unwanted intruders in the debate about who and what should be considered serious actors and objects of concern on the international policy stage. It is significant, in this respect, that it is a feminist scholar, Christine Sylvester, who has most forcefully noted the tensions between "where the true international relations is supposed to be, how it is supposed to look, and where it is not supposed to be and, in fact cannot be."⁹ As she goes on to note, "International relations where it's not supposed to be is not some understudy to international relations where it's supposed to be. . . . It has its own missions, parties, techniques, destinations and drivers."¹⁰

In form, Bono has moved far beyond any stereotyped notion of the role performed by a celebrity diplomat with ascribed status. Although he started out as the "famous face" of the Jubilee 2000 campaign,¹¹ Bono has become the hub of a sophisticated network that bridges the worlds of entertainment and business. If mentored by Sachs, Bono mentors other entertainers through both DATA and the ONE campaign. He has also forged strong ties to individuals—above all, Bill and Melinda Gates, George Soros, and Warren Buffett—who represent the business face of celebrity diplomacy.

To an even greater degree than Bono, figures such as Bill Gates and George Soros may be taken to be ruthless. But they also reinforce the notion that it is wrong to take a one-image-fits-all approach to celebrity diplomacy. Unlike Bono, Gates and Soros spend huge amounts of their own monies on issues central to global governance. Moreover, their relationship with Bono is a complex one. At one level, akin to the connection between Sachs and

Bono, there is a crossover effect. Bono provides buzz while Gates and Soros supply material bite. At another level, neither Gates nor Soros appears to have much time for amateur enthusiasts. The fact that Bono is held in such high regard suggests that he and his organization provide not just emotion but deliverables.

In intensity, the Bono style is a mix between the insider and outsider. Brought into the 2005 and 2007 G8 summits by helicopter, Bono has achieved a diplomatic status on these big occasions that matches all but the most powerful officials. Few leaders over the years have received the amount of face time with Bush or Blair that Bono has. But equally, Bono continues to exert the power of voice in more unconventional settings, as exhibited by his appearances at the Hyde Park and Rostock rock concerts staged in parallel with the G8 summits at Gleneagles and Heiligendamm.

In scope, Bono's agenda has been stretched well beyond development per se. Consistent with the original aim of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, debt eradication remains a priority. However, akin to Sachs, much of the focus of Bono's effort, more recently, has been on health issues. Sachs's involvement with this agenda dates back to his position as chair of the 2000-2001 Commission on Microeconomics and Health, established by the World Health Organization. Bono, through DATA and the ONE campaign, has focused increased attention on HIV/AIDS.

In the case of Bono, any judgment about actual deliverables cannot be conclusive. Still, a few things are obvious to all but the most resolute critic. Unlike other celebrity diplomats—and, of course, the official diplomats themselves—Bono is free not only of the taint of doing harm but also of embarrassment. Despite charges by Bianca Jagger and others that Bono (with his bad cop partner Bob Geldof) is sleeping with the enemy,¹² he has not been overtly co-opted by the diplomatic process. Unlike Geldof, Bono did not accord Gleneagles a stellar grade. And although it is true that Bono and DATA, like many NGOs, spent much of their time trying to hang on to the \$50 billion in development assistance that they were promised at Gleneagles, this was not a single-minded focus. What the critics should appreciate is how much energy Bono spent at the Heiligendamm summit. He was not content with accepting simple platitudes. Bono accused the summit organizers of using "labyrinthine language" to muddy the G8's responsibilities: "We are looking for accountable language and accountable numbers," he said. "We didn't get them today."¹³

An appreciation of what Bono has to offer should not be equated to hero worship. Certainly, as suggested, the Bono model is not without flaws. But these are very different from those put forward by most critics. The ultimate problem with this model may be not its simplicity but other big issues. One of these has to do with its lack of transparency and its exclusivity. Unlike the efforts of some other celebrities, Bono's activities

cannot be dismissed casually as facile. What weaknesses he has relate on the one hand to concerns about the generalized rise of private authority in global governance and, on the other hand, to a sense that this is still a project dominated by Northern actors. To his credit, Bono has dispelled some of the latter concerns by his links to celebrities from the South, such as Wyclef Jean and Youssou N'Dour. But the board of DATA and the stars of ONE are still embedded in a narrow domain.

Equally, critics must acknowledge Bono's strengths. The script that Bono offers would not get the acceptance it does at either the elite or mass level if there was not the perception that the project he is advocating—with its bias toward issues central to global governance—is being accorded ample attention from conventional actors. We can debate the impact, but there is no question that Bono's role is amplified by the impression that he is filling gaps of neglect. This is true on policy, but it is also true of process, with an estrangement by the general population from traditional diplomatic methods. Far from a simplistic formula, Bono's project can be interpreted as one that builds momentum on a multidimensional basis. As Nancy Birdsall argues, Bono's push on development aid, rather than being a "feel good" activity, becomes a wedge activity, which has the potential of spilling over into a multitude of issues central to global governance. In her words,

[Bono's] efforts to mobilize more aid money have vastly increased the number of people in the rich world that understand the potential to improve lives in the poor world—and that understanding is the first step in mobilizing support for other ways to help: agricultural and health research geared to poor country needs; ending U.S. and European agricultural subsidies that constitute unfair competition; better enforcement of anti-corruption to reduce bribery of western corporations in developing countries; and allowing more immigration from the poorest countries.¹⁴

Bono's tenacity, however, cuts both ways. If commendable, it is also exhausting. The quote from Bono that the "only thing worse than a rock star—is a rock star who cares" is not a confession about his personal shortcomings, but a sign of his concern that his public activity could become wearisome, with Bono fatigue setting in both for himself and for his targeted audience.

Still, just like the constraints of intellectual gatekeeping, any fatigue factor should not be taken to detract from Bono's impact. If, as John Ruggie suggests, a different form of competition is in train, in which various actors "vie with each other for attention and imagination,"¹⁵ Bono—or as it can be recast, Bonoization—remains extremely well suited to vie successfully with those images that have traditionally occupied the elevated spaces on the global stage. The future of global governance will not remain the typecast preserve of those who look, speak, and act in orthodox ways. ☉

Notes

- Andrew F. Cooper is associate director and distinguished fellow at The Centre for International Governance Innovation, and professor of political science at the University of Waterloo, Canada. He is author of *Celebrity Diplomacy* (2007).
1. Andrew F. Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2008).
 2. See Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin, 2006).
 3. Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion, 2001).
 4. Daniel W. Drezner, "Foreign Policy Goes Glam," *National Interest* (November–December 2007): 24.
 5. John Gapper, "Clinton Brings Shades of Davos to Manhattan," *Financial Times*, 28 September 2007.
 6. Michael Fullilove, "Celebrities Should Concentrate on Their Day Jobs," *Financial Times*, 1 February 2006. See also Gideon Rachman, "The Aid Crusade and Bono's Brigade," *Financial Times*, 29 October 2007.
 7. Michka Assayas, *Bono: In Conversation with Michka Assayas* (London: Riverhead Penguin, 2005).
 8. James Taub, "The Statesman," *New York Times*, 18 September 2005.
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GLOBAL INSIGHTS

Promoting Global Accountability: The Experiences of the Global Accountability Project

Robert Lloyd

The One World Trust (OWT) is a think tank that conducts research and advocacy into ways of making global governance more accountable. For the past eight years its Global Accountability Project (GAP) has focused on generating awareness of and commitment to common principles of accountability among global actors from across sectors. This article reflects on the work of OWT and others in promoting accountability at the global level, identifying both where progress has been made and where the biggest challenges remain. In doing so, the article provides a snapshot of where debates and practices in respect of global accountability currently stand.

The Problem of Global Accountability

Global actors from across the intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and corporate sectors play an increasingly important role in the structures of global governance. They set financial standards, deliver multilateral aid, provide essential services, and coordinate responses to disease. As such, their decisions and actions profoundly affect people's daily lives.

Yet as these actors have grown in scope and influence, our systems of accountability have largely stayed the same. For example, many developing countries lack an effective voice in the decisionmaking processes of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and thus struggle to protect their citizens' interests in those institutions. In addition, globalization is eroding the ability and willingness of many states to hold transnational corporations (TNCs) to account for their impacts on communities. Similarly, as many international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) have expanded in size and scope, it has become more difficult for those they purportedly benefit to hold them to account.

Strengthening state-based accountability is one way to address this problem, but the challenges in today's new and more complex system of