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Celebrity Diplomacy: A source of political legitimacy in an era of late modernity?

Abstract

This paper will examine the meaning of celebrity diplomacy. In particular, this phenomenon has emerged from a transition between state-centric to public forms of diplomatic initiatives. This has led to a debate about the credible use of celebrity forms of activism in international political affairs. For instance, Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte have argued that celebrity activism has interfaced with corporate interest to affect a form of ‘Brand Aid’ which may serve to undermine diplomatic and aid initiatives in international affairs. Alternatively, Andrew F. Cooper has conceived celebrity diplomacy as an alternative form of agency in which credible stars fill the void in public trust vacated by the political classes. Cooper’s contention is that the ‘Bonoisation’ of diplomacy has led to new and valid ways in which stars may not only affect attention to a range of international activities but promote meaningful change. Therefore, this analysis will focus on the United Nations’ (UN) Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace programmes, along with the celebrity advocates within non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Mine’s Advisory Group (MAG) to consider the extent to which celebrities have become integral in the sphere of international diplomacy.

Introduction

This paper will examine the rise of transnational forms of celebrity advocacy and diplomacy. These phenomena have emerged from a transition between state-centric to public types of diplomatic initiatives. In this respect, a new ‘currency’ of public diplomacy has occurred in which emotion and rhetoric has shaped the outcome of international affairs. Moreover, with the rise of 24/7 news programming and the social media, there has been a decentralisation and fragmentation of opinion which challenges the traditional orthodoxies of global power. Thus, politicised celebrities (CP2s) have made dramatic interventions within international campaigns and diplomatic arenas.¹

In recent years, celebrity philanthropists such as Bob Geldof, Bono, Angelina Jolie, George Clooney, Bill Gates and Jeffrey Sachs have orchestrated globally televised benefit concerts, fundraisers and public campaigns such as *Live Aid*, *Live 8*, the *One Campaign*, *Product RED* and *Not on Our Watch*. Moreover, governments have employed celebrities as cultural diplomats and the United Nations (UN) has had a long standing tradition of Goodwill Ambassadors. In turn, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Red Cross, Oxfam and Save the Children have been represented by celebrities (Huliaris and Tzifakis, 2011: 35).

Consequently, this analysis will consider how transnational celebrity activism originated with the deployment of an American ‘Jazz Diplomacy’ in the 1950s and 1960s. This was accompanied by a more fully realised star support for the UN. Within this institutional tradition, celebrities conformed as ‘good international citizens’ as they saw their role as propagating a cause or an issue. Therefore, when Danny Kaye became involved with

the United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1953, he publicised the agencies' activities in alleviating the plight of children. Additionally, the glamorous film star Audrey Hepburn and actor, writer and raconteur Peter Ustinov remained apolitical when promoting UNICEF.

However, as CP2s became more politically consciousness, transformative celebrity activists have raised concerns about the inequities of debt, conflict and injustice. These activities have been accompanied by an expansion in the scope of the UN Goodwill Ambassador schemes under the former Secretary-General Kofi Annan leading to the creation of Messengers of Peace. In tandem, these expressions of celebrity diplomacy have been incorporated into NGO public relations techniques. For instance, well-known figures such as the late Princess Diana have lent their support to the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). Yet, the archetypical celebrity humanitarians have been Geldof and Bono who have been instrumental in bringing together celebrities, statesmen and corporations to facilitate the utilisation of aid in developing societies.

Finally, the worth of such celebrity advocacy has been extensively debated in the popular media and the academy. Invariably, this use of CP2s has been presented as an anti-democratic phenomenon in which celebrities are 'bards of the powerful' (Monbiot, 2005). Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte contend that celebrity activism has interfaced with a neo-liberal corporate interest to affect a form of 'Brand Aid' which undermines aid initiatives (Richey and Ponte, 2011). Conversely, Andrew F. Cooper has conceived 'celebrity diplomacy' as an alternative form of agency in which stars fill the void in public trust vacated by the political classes (Cooper, 2008). He contends that the 'Bonoisation' of diplomacy has led to new and valid ways in which stars may not only affect attention to a range of international activities but promote meaningful change.ⁱⁱ Therefore, this chapter will consider the efficacy of celebrity diplomats as:

We want to know whether [celebrity diplomacy] is a clever use of what is called 'soft power' ... We also want to know whether we are investing our emotions, our time and our money in celebrity activities and whether this is a sound investment. The bottom-line question may well be: does celebrity diplomacy and celebrity activism help or harm? (Wiseman, 2009: 5)

Celebrities as Good International Citizens: Ad hoc relations, Publicising the cause and Glamorous conformity

While celebrity involvement in international affairs has only been identified in recent years, a historical analysis of celebrity diplomacy offsets this apparent novelty. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, American jazz stars like Duke Ellington, Louie Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Goodman and Dave Brubeck were sent overseas to promote a positive image of the US abroad during the height of the Cold War. For the US, the artistic individuality of jazz musicians was a useful device through which to counter the collectivism of the Soviet Union. Thus, the State Department funded musical junkets by jazz masters as a form of soft power to popularise America's capitalist brand of democracy while easing bi-polar political tensions (Davenport, 2009).

However, such forms of behaviour were most fully realised when celebrity relations were institutionalised within the UN. When UNICEF appointed Danny Kaye as its first Goodwill Ambassador, the UN began to employ celebrities to raise funds, affect diplomatic agendas and draw attention to development causes. These forms of celebrity activism referred

to ad hoc relationships between film stars and UN officers. For instance, Kaye became involved with UNICEF through his accidental meeting with the agency's Executive Director Maurice Pate on an almost calamitous airplane flight between London and New York which had to return to Shannon Airport. Pate, along with UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and the President of the UN General Assembly Vijaya Lakshmi, arranged to meet Kaye at a lunch to propose to the film star that he act as a spokesperson for UNICEF. As Kaye was already planning a trip to Asia, he was asked if he could visit UNICEF's health and nutrition projects in the Far East to attract monies for the impoverished organisation (Gottfried, 1994: 207).

Kaye readily agreed and Pate made the star's association with UNICEF official by appointing him as its Ambassador-at-large. Shortly afterwards, Kaye toured UNICEF projects in Myanmar, India, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand and Japan to publicise its activities in alleviating the plight of children. Hundreds of thousands of feet of film were shot of his trip and the footage was edited into an hour-long programme entitled *Assignment Children* (1954) which was underwritten by Paramount Pictures. The documentary was shown to an estimated audience of 100 million and its profits entered UNICEF's coffers. The award-winning film favourably identified UNICEF in the public mind with the cause of needy children to create an atmosphere of goodwill for the organisation:

For the film, *Assignment Children* by Danny Kaye, we arranged a Thai Royal Command performance – sponsored by the King and Queen two years ago and we had a packed house. It was shown ... all over Asia. We had it in New Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Manila and Japan (United Nations Box 4 Folder Three, 1958: 27-28).

Subsequently, Kaye continued to focus attention on UNICEF's activities through a range of trips to war-torn or blighted areas. Therefore, by remaining a newsworthy presence he publicised the agency's programmes, most especially when he performed an improvised victory ballet whilst accepting the Nobel Peace Prize for UNICEF in 1965:

On the day Danny Kaye became a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, a new kind of star was born. The kind that shines its light on the hardship and injustices ... [and] confronts us and melts away our indifference (Annan, 2003).

Moreover, long standing UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors such as Kaye and Ustinov (1968-2004) conceived themselves a good international citizens who could engender a 'thick layer of goodwill for UNICEF' (Ling, 1984: 9). They saw that it was their role to promote UNICEF's activities. In 1968, Ustinov was telegraphed by UNICEF to act as a Master of Ceremonies for a concert held at the Theatre Nationale de l'Odeon in Paris and helped to put together other galas in Italy, Switzerland and Japan. He was impressed by the selfless work of UNICEF officials and admired the moral worth of its activities. Ustinov's appointment as a Goodwill Ambassador appealed to him as a self-proclaimed 'world citizen' who had Russian, Swiss, French, Italian and even Ethiopian origins. He not only became a tireless worker for UNICEF but an advocate for the UN (Ustinov, 1977: 329)

The celebrity who provided the template for this 'glamorous ... conformity' (Cooper, 2008: 18) was Audrey Hepburn. Although, she did not become a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador until the 1980s, her reputation as a survivor of World War Two, international film star and fashion icon meant she epitomised the credible use of politicised celebrity. She made visits to Ethiopia and Somalia with little fear for her personal safety, met African Leaders and took causes to the US Senate. Hepburn used her fame for humanitarian causes and refused to take sides by insisting the worst violence in Africa was widespread poverty:

Audrey Hepburn created a model of star power expressed via the UN organisational structure that other celebrities could --- and did in quite large numbers – try to follow. It was a model that allowed celebrities to go global with their enthusiasms ... In this model glamour worked to enhance a sense of commitment (ibid: 20).

Transformative celebrity diplomacy: a rising political consciousness and a widening of activities within the organs of the United Nations

As there was an increase in celebrity activity in the 1980s and 1990s which reflected the extension of the employment of celebrities by UNICEF and other agencies, notably the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), celebrities felt they should become more politically engaged. This transformative form of celebrity activism can be traced back to when UNICEF asked the Swedish actress Liv Ullman to become a Goodwill Ambassador.

Subsequently, Ullman became a more autonomous figure when representing Kampuchean refugees and the Vietnamese Boat people (Ling, 1984: 8). She demonstrated a greater political consciousness than her predecessors and she used her status as a serious 'European' film actress to be a creditable figure when representing UNICEF in US House and Senate Hearings (ibid: 8). Consequently, she reconceived the role of the Goodwill Ambassador by taking a clear stance on poverty: 'We must be so outraged. We mustn't wait and talk about making resolutions; we must urgently start acting now' (Ullman, 1993).

In turn, several Goodwill Ambassadors criticised the moral stance of the UN. One of the more problematic cases referred to Richard Gere, who has represented the UN with reference to World Health/Aids and ecological matters. As a devotee of the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, he came into conflict with the UN over its non-recognition of Tibet. In the late 1990s, Gere, as the chairman of the International Campaign for Tibet, made high-profile visits to the UN Headquarters in New York to support Tibetan hunger strikers and backed the US resolution to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) to criticise China's human rights record. He accused the UNHRC, when it voted to take no action, of being shamefully manipulated by the Chinese. More recently, he supported calls for the boycotting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Thus, the UN's deployment of more politically engaged celebrities has proved problematic. In this transformative era of celebrity diplomacy stars have felt they should use their fame to expose injustices. However, this deployment of celebrity diplomats has led to difficulties as politicised stars have fallen out with the UN. A further case referred to Mia Farrow when she visited Darfur as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador who was critical of the UN's inability to protect human rights. Moreover, the positive and negative connotations of celebrity diplomacy have intensified with the escalation of the number of Goodwill Ambassadors and the creation of Messengers of Peace.

Embracing celebrity culture: Kofi Annan's public relations revolution --- Idealism and Universalism

When Kofi Annan was appointed as the UN Secretary-General on 1 January 1997, he engaged in the ubiquitous employment of Goodwill Ambassadors. By his departure in 2007, there were over 400 UN Goodwill Ambassadors including actors such as Vanessa Redgrave,

Liam Neeson, Roger Moore and Ralph Fiennes, along with sports stars like Roger Federer and the singer Shakira. To promote the work of UNICEF Redgrave and her son Carlo Nero made a documentary entitled *War on Want* (2006). Moreover, the former Secretary-General Annan established a new tier of celebrity diplomats known as Messengers of Peace. In many respects, this demonstrated how the omnipresent creation of celebrity had permeated the diplomatic environment (Drezner, 2007).

Annan believed that significant reforms were required to improve the UN's public profile and he oversaw the wider deployment of Goodwill Ambassadors. His decision to escalate the number of Goodwill Ambassadors was designed to offset the international cynicism that had been directed towards the UN and to counter-balance the view that it was beholden to the US's realist foreign policies (Cooper, 2008: 28). In 2002, Annan hosted a conference called 'Celebrity Advocacy for the New Millennium' in which he declared 'he wanted celebrities to be the tools the UN would use to pressurise reluctant governments to take seriously the rhetorical pledges they make during every General Assembly' (Alleyne, 2005: 179). He believed celebrities could influence international public opinion to support the UN's goals of idealism and universalism.

To enhance this process, Annan inaugurated the Messengers of Peace programme in 1997 to identify nine individuals who would propagate the UN's mission across the global media. This group of 'distinguished men and women of talent and passion' are composed from those celebrities whose fame has been understood to provide a global focus to the 'noble aims of the UN Charter: a world without war, respect for human rights, international law and social and economic progress' (UN, 2007). They are selected from the fields of art, literature, music and sports and serve as Messengers of Peace for an initial period of three years. Since the programme's inception, more than ten individuals have been honoured as Messengers of Peace and the current cohort includes Michael Douglas, Jane Goodhall, Daniel Barenboim, George Clooney, Stevie Wonder and Charlize Theron.

In raising the UN's profile for liberal internationalism, the most spectacular success has been the film actress Angelina Jolie whose image was transformed from a Hollywood wild-child to a credible celebrity diplomat. Her links with UNHCR were established over several years in which she 'auditioned' to become a Goodwill Ambassador. Jolie became acquainted with the plight of refugees through trips to West Africa. Undoubtedly, Jolie has demonstrated an understanding of her fame, looks and photogenic qualities can attract the attention of world's media to the causes she has advocated. Similarly, UNHCR has sought to place 'attractive' refugees in the camera frame next to her to provide an iconic representation of displacement.

However, she has effectively blended her personal and professional life when acting as a celebrity diplomat. This was evident when she gave birth to her son Shiloh by husband Brad Pitt in Namibia and adopted children from Cambodia, and Ethiopia. Yet, these adoptions did not arouse the controversy associated with the pop star Madonna's attempts to adopt underprivileged children from Malawi. Instead, Jolie's role as an 'earth mother' was part of greater package in which she placed herself into dangerous situations to promote humanitarian causes. Moreover, her emotive responses have been seen to be legitimate, most especially as her published diaries of her visits demonstrated her commitment to the needs of refugees.

Therefore, Jolie's activism epitomised Annan's belief that through celebrity diplomacy the UN's mission for universalism would be enhanced. The same could be said for

George Clooney who became a UN Messenger of Peace as a consequence of his support for NGO projects in war-torn Darfur. Like Jolie, Clooney became well-acquainted with the issues and was effective in fronting a humanitarian campaign which was forged from a coalition of groups ranging from political liberals, the African-American community and the Christian Right. In 2006, Clooney visited Darfur with his father Nick and shortly afterwards he appeared at press conference with then Senator Barack Obama and Senator Sam Brownback.

Later, he addressed the UN to appeal to the international community to act against the genocidal atrocities committed with Darfur (Cheadle and Prendergast, 2007: 150). Subsequently, Clooney narrated and acted as an executive producer for a documentary entitled *Sand and Sorrow* in 2007. In the same year he co-founded a non-profit organisation called *Not on Our Watch* with Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Don Cheadle and film producer Jerry Weintraub. This was designed to bring resolution to the conflict in Darfur and draw attention to other human rights abuses in Burma, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Weintraub, 2010: 231).

Transformative Celebrity Activism and NGOs

These forms of transnational star activism have moved beyond the institutional confines of the UN as NGOs have used global celebrities to publicise their activities and direct media attention to issues. For instance, Angelina Jolie has worked independently from the UN and has collaborated with rock singer Peter Gabriel in his Witness Programme. Similarly, the singer Annie Lennox has accompanied her role as a United Nations Education Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) Goodwill Ambassador with active support for Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Burma UK.

The American Red Cross utilises a 50-member Celebrity Cabinet that includes Jamie Lee Curtis, Jane Seymour, L.L. Cool J. and Jackie Chan. Concurrently, Save the Children has employed CP2s such as including singer David Bowie, Melanie Griffith and Antonio Banderas, while Oxfam America has used the UN model of ‘ambassadors’ such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Coldplay and actors Kristin Davis, Colin Firth and Scarlett Johansson to promote its cause. *Make Poverty History* produced its ‘click’ advertisement which included Geldof, Bono, Clooney, Brad Pitt, Kate Moss and Kylie Minogue clicking their fingers to symbolise a child dying from extreme poverty every three seconds. Moreover, the celebrity philanthropist Bill Gates has set up the Gates Foundation with his wife Melinda which has raised funds and entered into policy areas which had previously been the purview of the WHO.

For NGO communication managers there are several groups that can be targeted through the use of celebrities. First, CP2s enable them to get their message across to major fundraisers, while also being effective in attracting small donators and a younger audience of future donors. Second, celebrity diplomats can reach out to members of the public who otherwise would not be interested in the NGO and their involvement may enhance recruitment. Third, celebrities can provide access to decision makers. As Donald Steinberg of International Crisis Group argues, ‘It’s going to be hard for a foreign government to say no to Nicole Kidman’ (Traub, 2008: 38).

In matching up the use of CP2s with NGOs, the ‘fit’ between the motivations of a celebrity and a charity is a priority. One of the most successful linkages occurred when the

late Princess Diana became an advocate for the banning of landmines when she agreed to endorse the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). She had become involved with MAG when representing UK Red Cross due to her responsibilities as the wife of Prince Charles. However, she realised her image of 'glamour with compassion' could deliver a message for which she had a very personal concern. In making her trips to Angola and Bosnia to publicise the landmines issue, Diana enthusiastically commented: 'This is the type of format I've been looking for' (Cooper, 2008: 26)

Yet events and media perceptions also shaped how the landmines message was publicised and received. Princess Diana was due to attend the first major ceremony concerning the banning of landmines which occurred on the 1 September 1997. This date was, of course, the day after she was killed with Dodi Al-Fahed in a car crash in Paris. However, she was so closely associated with the cause that her influence on the campaign proved to be instrumental even after her death. This realisation had been made several years earlier by Geldof who had understood that a Royal seal of approval from Prince Charles and Princess Diana, when they attended the opening of his *Live Aid* show in 1985, was necessary to provide credibility for the entire enterprise:

I thought it would be important that they (Charles and Diana) came because at that time they were glamorous and there was excitement around their relationship. And they represented the country (Geldof, 2005).

'Saint' Bob Geldof: Celebrity Philanthropy and Anti-Diplomacy

Such transformative forms of celebrity behaviour particularly emerged in the wake of Bob Geldof's *Feed the World* campaign (Cooper, 2007b). His globally televised *Live Aid* shows reconfigured the public's attitude towards to charities by making them 'cool' and demonstrating that fundraising could be desirable. Further, *Live Aid* provided a template for subsequent CP2 fronted campaigns such as *Comic Relief*. And its spectacular impact could only have occurred as transnational celebrity activism received widespread coverage in an entertainment driven and globalised media.

On 24 October 1984, the BBC News showed correspondent Michael Buerk's devastating report about the widespread starvation of Ethiopian refugees due to famine in camps at Korem. In the resulting outpouring of public grief the horrified Geldof, the front man of a fading post-punk band The Boomtown Rats (named in honour of Woody Guthrie's *Bound for Glory*), became an unlikely celebrity humanitarian. Geldof cajoled 45 UK pop stars including Bono, George Michael and Sting to form *Band Aid* which recorded a charity single *Do They Know it Christmas* (1984) which he had co-written and produced with fellow musician Midge Ure. Due to the success of the record, millions of pounds were raised and this led to another celebrity-fronted single *We Are the World* (1985) for the Ethiopian cause which was recorded by African-American pop stars including Lionel Richie and Michael Jackson (Lynskey, 2010: 482-483).

However, it was Geldof's enraged commitment that caught the public imagination, not least when he visited Ethiopia in January 1985. Notably, he called the Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam a 'prize c**t' and lectured Thatcher on the failings of international aid. In turn, as the 'People's Champion' he bullied celebrities such as Bowie, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, Lionel Richie and Elton John along with bands including Dire

Straits, Queen, U2 and The Who into performing at the simultaneous *Live Aid* concerts in London and Philadelphia on 13 July 1985. As Geldof secured 58 major acts to contribute to his 'global jukebox', other countries bought the rights to the British and American shows.

Geldof, along with promoter Harvey Goldsmith, built on the foundations of previous charity events, such as Harrison's UNICEF concerts, the global nature and unprecedented sixteen hours of live television coverage massively enlarged the scale and the pace of this type of activity. For instance, the Genesis singer/drummer Phil Collins after appearing at Wembley Stadium was required to take a Concorde flight to appear with Led Zeppelin at the John F. Kennedy (JFK) Stadium in Philadelphia. The global spectacle brought the plight of the starving Ethiopians to the attention of two billion viewers across 160 countries and challenged them to contribute to the cause, not least due to Geldof's impatience. As the BBC had failed to effectively advertise the phone lines which had been opened for public donations, only a relatively small amount of money had been raised. Consequently, *Live Aid* is remembered for Geldof's (in) famous outburst on a pre-watershed channel which has inaccurately gone down in folklore as 'Give me the Fucking Money!' To this end, *Live Aid* raised a global total of £50 million and Geldof's indignant behaviour was seen to be crucial to its success (Gray, 2005).

On the twentieth anniversary of *Live Aid* Geldof, with Bono and Richard Curtis, produced another series of globally televised celebrity concerts for *Live 8* in 2005 on 2 July at Hyde Park in London and 5 July at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh. These events were designed to mobilise support for the *One Campaign* to deal with international debt and were timed to coincide with the G8 Gleneagles Summit. However, through *Live 8* Geldof was keen to incorporate Tony Blair and the other G8 leaders such as George W. Bush into the focus of his campaign. On the delivery of the G8's pronouncements of combating debt and poverty, he appeared at a press conference to provide a communiqué as 'mission accomplished' when he gave the G8 marks for the doubling of aid and debt relief.

Geldof's anger at the world has been a key determinant in his approach to international relations. Cooper has contended that he is an 'anti-diplomat' who has smashed through the niceties of diplomacy to achieve his goals (Cooper, 2008: 52). His verbal belligerence and desire for personal recognition has been countered by his genuine sense of compassion, organisational skills and realisation of the power of public spectacle. It has been noted that Geldof, whatever responses he arouses, has demonstrated a long-term commitment to his endeavours. However, his approach has often led to him been treated as an outsider by the diplomatic classes while simultaneously being accused by the aid community of operating as a pawn to the interests of those very same decision-makers:

Having branded himself as a provocative anti-diplomat since the 1980s, buying into a more orthodox script contained dangers ... Echoes of support for official diplomacy came at a cost. Other campaigners said that Geldof had become too close to the decision-makers to make an objective view of what has been achieved at this summit (Vallely, 2009).

Moreover, a duality has emerged about CP2 activity as politicised celebrities have been seen either to be self-interested or populist diluters of complex issues. The lessons of *Live Aid* and *Live 8* were not lost on some of its participatory acts including Queen, U2, Sting and a reformed Pink Floyd whose careers, as well as their status, received a vital shot in the arm. As Roger Taylor the drummer from Queen noted their performance revitalised their position as a global rock act in front of an audience of two billion people. Further, U2 became

a major international act on the back of their appearance within the globally televised spectacle and their front-man Bono, akin to Geldof, has utilised his fame to break down the spheres of entertainment and global advocacy to become the spokesman on human rights. However, both celebrity activists have been accused of making their causes apolitical, thereby ameliorating any edge or risk from the protest movement.

The Bonoisation of Celebrity Advocacy and Diplomacy

Bono has been responsible for tilting much of the focus of celebrity advocacy toward poverty in the Southern states of the global economy. He has edited special editions of national newspapers such as *The Independent* and *Liberation* along with magazines including *Vanity Fair* to publicise concerns about international debt and economic justice. Bono has placed an emphasis on direct action and the building of effective institutions, while using his fame to gain an inside track to lobby governments. The rock singer is the co-founder and has remained the public face of the *One Campaign* and *DATA (Debt, Aids, Trade Africa)* which have promoted the ending of extreme poverty, the fighting of the AIDs pandemic and international debt relief. He was also instrumental, along with Jeffrey Sachs and Paul Farmer in the construction of *Product RED* which combined celebrity activism with corporate social responsibility (Nike, Apple, Gap) to support the Global Fund in its fight to stem the spread of HIV/Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Africa.

As a regular speaker at the G8, the Davos World Economic Forum and World Bank meetings, Bono's views on aid and debt relief for developing nations have garnered the attention of world leaders, senior policy makers, NGOs, the media and the public. To this end, he has combined his charismatic abilities as a rock star with a detailed knowledge of the issues. Consequently, Bono has utilised his centrifugal position as a global performer to bring politicians and corporate executives together (Jackson, 2008: 218). Undoubtedly, he has demonstrated tenacity in establishing political alliances not only with 'liberal' figures such as Bill Clinton and Bill Gates but with George W. Bush and Jesse Helms, the late archconservative Senator from North Carolina. In this manner Bono achieved cross-party consensus for the *Jubilee 2000* debt relief alliance in Africa and placed the issue firmly on the political agenda in Washington. As a result, Bono topped the list of both the *National Journal of Republican and Democratic Political Insiders* as the world's most effective celebrity advocate.

Cooper has noted how Bono has become a successful celebrity diplomat who has used his fame to place matters of human rights and global inequity on to the international agenda (Cooper, 2008: 38). He gained entry to the corridors of power to make effective interventions by appealing to modern leaders such as Tony Blair and Clinton due to their fascination with popular culture and his charismatic egotism which matches that of the political classes. Bono has been prepared to attend Republican as well as Democratic National Conventions to extend his message and mobilise support for his causes. Therefore, these forms of political expedience have been necessary to achieve the greater good of aid reform.

Yet, as Bono has willingly engaged with compromised political leaders such as Bush, Blair and Gordon Brown, along with 'despots' such as Vladimir Putin his activism has been divisive. For the *Debt and Development Coalition Ireland (DDCI)* and *UK Art Uncut*, he is a hypocritical self-publicist who has engaged in tax avoidance schemes while simultaneously lecturing western governments on how they should deal with international debt. Notably, *UK*

Art Uncut unfurled a twenty foot inflatable banner emblazoned with the legend 'U pay your tax 2' at the 2011 Glastonbury Festival.

Others have suggested that Bono's proclamations at his concerts have been a good way of selling tickets for his band and easing consumer guilt. In particular, Richey and Ponte have maintained that Bono, along with Sachs and Farmer, has constructed a form of 'compassionate consumption' in the wake of *Product RED*. They argue that there has been a de-linking of the relations which have existed between capitalist exploitation and global poverty (Richey and Ponte, 2011: 179). Consequently, with the increase in celebrity diplomacy, the worth of such activism has been questioned and its impact on cultural and political practices has become more controversial.

The critiques of Celebrity Advocacy and Diplomacy: Trivialisation, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and the betrayal of the Global South

Celebrities have been criticised for their simplistic or moralistic responses to complexities of these issues (Brockington, 2009). Further, the media's focus on the individual celebrity often means that the cause becomes afterthought. Celebrity advocates have been accused of debasing the quality of international debate, diverting attention from worthy causes to those which are 'sexy' and failing to represent the disenfranchised. They have been seen to be superficial and to have remained unaccountable.

Consequently, concerns have been raised that Goodwill Ambassadors have trivialised the UN's mission. Infamously, Sophia Loren arrived at a UNHCR appointment ceremony for starving Somali refugees in a brown Rolls Royce and dressed in a matching fur coat. When criticised by a journalist, without any hint of irony Loren commented, 'When someone asks a question like this I don't know why you should be in this place. This is something very serious' (Naughton, 1992). In the case of Princess Sarah Ferguson, her financial collapse caused by her divorce from Prince Andrew meant she could not afford to perform pro bono tasks for the UN. With regard to Geri Halliwell (Ginger Spice), her inability to perform her tasks as an advocate for family planning and her decline in fame meant she did not stand the test of a comparatively short period of time (Cooper, 2008: 30).ⁱⁱⁱ

Mark D. Alleyne argues that the UN's deployment of Goodwill Ambassadors has been elitist and ethno-centric. He maintains that the employment of celebrities was part of a general malaise in which a desperate UN incorporated public relations techniques into its marketing so that the international media would provide it with a favourable coverage (Alleyne, 2005: 176). Essentially, Alleyne argues this placed a 'happy', but ultimately impotent, face on the UN as it has serious shortcomings concerning its promotion of values, conduct and credibility. This was a shallow approach to solving crises, reinforced ethnic stereotypes by perpetuating an imbalanced view of need and offered 'a primarily mellorative approach, giving succour to the incapacitated rather than hope for a better life through programmes of education, consciousness-raising and cultural affirmation' (William Over quoted in Alleyne, 2003: 77).

Further criticisms contend that compliant CP2s have reinforced the economic inequalities between the Global North and South (Kapoor, 2011). Following *Live Aid* Richey and Ponte maintain that a 'fourth wave' of celebrity activism has occurred. Principally, 'Band Aid' was commoditised into 'Brand Aid' so that major corporations and celebrities combined

to support charities aimed at African poverty. Thus, as these apparently ethical forms of behaviour sell ‘suffering’ to the public, Riche and Ponte argue that aid causes have become ‘brands’ to be bought and sold in the global marketplace. Most especially, *Product RED* marked the point wherein there was a fusion of consumption and social causes (Richey and Ponte, 2011: 33–34).

Consequently, Richey and Ponte outline the development of aid ‘celebritariats’ who not only appeal to the consumers but also to the international aid community. It is argued that these celebrities have filled the void that has been left behind by those institutional actors who have failed to coordinate the effective provision of economic relief for the global underclass. While these authors do not make light of the celebrity activists’ impulse to ‘do good’ globally, they contend that there are inherent dangers in conceiving that stars, philanthropists and corporate executives can affect solutions to global crises.

Further, they maintain that this apparent altruism provides another means through which corporations may market themselves in relation to the growing concerns of lifestyle, culture and identity. Thus, corporations gain from developing ‘responsible practices’ so that they can brand themselves to a wider consumer base. However, by focusing the public attention on the plight of ‘distant others’ they deflect the focus away from their own dubious behaviour in exploiting developing states. In this respect, celebrities lend credence and validate such ‘ethical’ corporate behaviour.

Within this schema, Ilan Kapoor contends that the ideological underpinnings of celebrity advocacy are not so much about humanitarianism as self-promotion, brand marketing, and elite-centred politics (Kapoor, 2010). Thus, Geldof and Bono’s involvement in *Live-8* has been criticised for sloganising poverty, deflecting the public’s attention away about the viability of aid and being co-opted by the political classes. Concurrently, anti-poverty campaigners such as Making Poverty History have claimed that *Live 8* wilfully undermined their messages of ‘Justice not Charity’, stole the media agenda and depoliticised the cause through its construction of a dependency culture (Monbiot, 2005).

Therefore, this has meant that popular culture has inaccurately mythologised Geldof and Bono as humane philanthropists who in reality have reinforced the West’s neo-colonial rule over the Global South. According to Andrew Darnton and Martin Kirk the ‘Live Aid Legacy’ has established an inequitable relationship between ‘Powerful Givers’ and ‘Grateful Receivers’ (Darnton and Kirk, 2011: 6). This dominant paradigm has meant that the real causes of poverty are ignored and that aid will ‘magically’ release the ‘victims’ from the shackles of Southern societies. Within this apparently benevolent narrative the focus on the indigenous peoples’ needs rather than the facilitation of their creativity has been used to ‘police’ the boundaries of the public’s imagination (Yrjölä, 2011: 187; Dieter and Kumar, 2008).

Such criticisms suggest that this cluster of celebrity activists remain North-centric actors. Jemima Repo and Riina Yrjölä maintain that the values of celebrity advocacy preserve global stereotypes. Principally, Bono, Geldof, Clooney and Jolie are represented as selfless western crusaders dedicated to alleviating the suffering of Africans who exist outside of the ‘civilised’ processes of development, progress, peace and human security. Therefore, celebrities and ‘Africa’ operate under assumed roles which are presented as part of a wider discourse about the natural order of world politics (Repo and Yrjölä, 2011: 57). Consequently, celebrity diplomacy indicates an underlying cultural imperialism which has

abused 'the Third World (so that) the latter becomes (a stage) for First World self-promotion and hero-worship, and (the) dumping ground for humanitarian ideals and fantasies' (Kapoor, 2011).

Celebrity Advocacy and Diplomacy: Globalism, Public Space, Agency and Soft Power

Throughout these analyses of celebrity advocacy, transnational CP2 activism has been presented as propagating powerful economic, social and political interests. Invariably, this means that celebrity advocates, corporate executives, political leaders and media elites have been seen to collude with one another to undermine the rights of the exploited to reinforce capitalist relations. However, despite these accusations of star complicity, celebrities have affected successful interventions within international policy circles. These developments have been tied together with a democratisation of foreign policy in which global concerns have been placed on the popular agenda:

Celebrity activists ... operate within the framework of *globalism*, cultivating the potential for shifting concerns of politics away from traditional struggles of sovereignty towards issues of mutual concern. Celebrities provide and represent *cosmopolitanism* to audiences, constructing the identity of global citizenship and solidarity (Tsaliki et.al, 2011: 299).

Thus, Lisa Tsaliki, Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos and Asteris Huliaras argue that celebrity activists can 'bridge' the gap between western audiences and faraway tragedies by using their fame to publicise these international events (ibid: 299). Further, they may compliment the work of NGOs by using their charismatic authority to establish an equitable discourse within the global civil society concerning the mutual values of the organisation's work. Moreover, CP2s can provide an effective lead 'through the 'non-confrontational' reordering of political and economic forces in the service of global goals' (ibid: 300).

Therefore, Geldof's *Live Aid* and *Live 8* campaigns indicated the skilful linkage of pop music with famine imagery to generate philanthropic activity amongst the public. In a similar vein, Bono's *Product Red* makes conspicuous how American Express, Motorola, Armani and Microsoft can be used profitably (in both senses of the word) to affect real material change to avert poverty. According to Julie Wilson, cosmopolitan stars represent 'global governmentality ... (as) ... they ... bring media audiences, primarily those in the western world, into alignment with the international aims and programmes of global governing' (Wilson, 2011: 59).

In turn, Cooper argues that celebrity diplomacy creates a new 'space' in which stars provide a conduit between the public and foreign affairs to overcome the traditional 'disconnect' which has occurred as official diplomats have sought to husband information rather than share it (Cooper, 2008: 113–114). Celebrity advocacy contrasts with diplomatic traditions in which there has been a co-ordination of state interests with broader conceptions of collective security and economic power. However, the normative values of the Westphalian diplomatic order are being challenged by celebrity diplomacy's appeal to the new currencies of 'emotional commitment' and an engagement with public opinion have been utilised to create a democratic arena for political change:

If diplomacy is wedded to everyday activity along a wide continuum and a robust and open-ended version of individual agency, the normative claims of traditional state-centric diplomacy are eroded (ibid: 2).

Therefore, Cooper contends that as celebrity advocates have innovated unofficial forms of public diplomacy to raise levels of expectation, they have affected new diplomatic mechanisms to facilitate a counter-consensus to the issues (ibid: 13). For example, Cooper notes that Geldof and Bono have not only drawn public attention to major causes by creating a media buzz, but have employed their fame and rhetorical power to intervene into the centres of global power (ibid: 119-120). He argues that Geldof's abrasive style at the Gleneagles summit allowed him to play 'Bad Cop' to Bono's 'Good Cop' (ibid: 121; Valley, 2009). This has meant that they have gained extended face-time with national leaders in which there is a two-way attraction as politicians can cultivate a populist legitimacy with celebrities who can simultaneously advance their causes. Consequently, Geldof was free to express the problems with the G8 compromises in terms of their being a 'total farce' whereby Bono could make the technical critiques. The double-act was further extended as, while Geldof cajoled the political classes, Bono could 'play key leaders off each other, balancing intense involvement with an eye for keeping the boundaries of access open to as many decision makers as possible' (ibid: 122). Thus, autonomous celebrity diplomacy has occurred wherein points of public identification have combined with diplomatic skills to move on international policy agendas.

Further, the lobbying power of celebrity diplomats is 'dependent on the extent to which they work within networks and coalitions and elaborate pragmatic goals' (Huliaris and Tzifakis, 2011: 40). To this end, Bono has become the quintessential 'outsider-insider' as he has combined his public appeal to be a political brand with the requisite networking skill to access the powerful (Cooper, 2008: 42-44). Consequently, the 'Bonoisation' of diplomacy has demonstrated how celebrity activism operates as a form of political capital:

Has a celebrity ever accumulated more political influence than Bono? No one has ever really come close (and he) ... has made himself the fulcrum of an extraordinary global network of political leaders, philanthropists, development experts, and celebrities dedicated to relieving poverty in the developing world, particularly Africa (Brownstein, 2011).

Finally, celebrity diplomacy accords to Joseph Nye's concept of soft power which refers to the ability affect change through the rules of attraction rather than coercion or payment (Nye, 2004). In terms of nation states, this power derives from the legitimacy of a society's culture, political ideals, and policies to other countries. At the more individualist level, Cooper has contended that celebrity diplomats have utilised the politics of attraction to legitimise their space within the global public sphere and to access influential networks of power (Cooper, 2009: 10). This 'soft power potential' has meant CP2s have lent weight to transnational campaigns in a commercially driven global news media. In this manner, they have provided a definable focus for public engagement and have utilised their star power to affect pressure upon diplomats, international policymakers and national leaders. Thus, celebrities have promoted new or alternative discourses, and by occupying a diplomatic space have affected credible interventions across the international community.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed the development of the celebrityisation of international politics. In the early stages of UNICEF activity, celebrity diplomats such as Kaye, Ustinov and Hepburn defined themselves as ‘good international citizens’ whose activism was conformist. In an era of transformative celebrity diplomacy, the Goodwill Ambassadors’ behaviour was characterised by more politicised celebrities and came into greater focus during former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s intensification of celebrity involvement. The successes of film stars such as Jolie and Clooney may be seen to indicate that Annan’s vision of politicised celebrities advancing the UN’s idealist values across the world’s media has been effective.

Further, there has been an expansion of celebrity advocacy across the UN and throughout the NGO international community. Consequently, a range of charities and aid organisations have utilised celebrity activists such as Geldof and Bono who, in turn, have become major humanitarian figures. Most specifically, *Live Aid* exponentially expanded the reach and impact of previous forms of international CP2 behaviour, and provided a template for other forms of celebrity activity. Subsequently, in the modern phase of celebrity diplomacy there has been a recalibration of fame within an ever increasing range of global media and social media resources. The range of portals has been matched by more sophisticated forms of political marketing to raise the public profile of transnational causes.

However, such activism has been controversial. Celebrity advocates such as Bono and Geldof have been divisive figures who have been praised and condemned in equal measure. On the one hand, several NGO communications managers suggest that CP2s have popularised issues which would not receive a public hearing. Moreover, their fame has been vital in achieving access to influential circles of diplomatic power. Alternatively, they have been criticised for their trivialisation of the issues and simplistic emotional responses to the complexities of state-centric power. The gulf between celebrity and diplomacy has shown how populist ‘narratives’ have uncomfortably clashed with realist forms of international power. It has led to criticisms that while star power brought attention to international affairs it affected little in the way of real change.

Moreover, within the academy, celebrity advocates have been accused of reinforcing global capitalist interests and exacerbating global stereotypes. In one of the most sophisticated critiques of celebrity humanitarianism, Rinna Yrjölä argues that Bono and Geldof’s moral ‘war against poverty’ has been rooted in:

.... the foundational superior morality of the west and its grand histories of progress. ... Reflecting colonial rescue narratives, cloaked with religious language of crusades and inscriptions of western self-mastery, ‘Africa’ becomes located, through these interpretations, outside western modernity, freedom and civilisation, rendering the continent as a central battleground between good and evil (Yrjölä, 2012).

However, despite the validity of these criticisms, a more nuanced approach to celebrity diplomacy is required. For instance, in a commercially dictated global media, the escalation of UN Goodwill Ambassadors was one of the few realistic responses open to Annan and his successor Ban Ki-Moon, along with NGOs, to promote the international community’s activities (Kellner, 2010: 123). Undoubtedly, some celebrity diplomats have existed beyond parody. However, the ability of celebrity advocates like Jolie and Clooney to bring focus to international campaigns, to impact on diplomatic agendas and to advocate the global principles has been of significant worth in a period of international conflict.

Cooper has shown how this phenomenon has affected a new form of engagement which has indicated a transformation from a state-centric to more populist approaches to international relations. These reforms have taken place within a construct of global collaboration so that networks of institutional and ideological power facilitate diplomatic reforms. Thus, in soft power terms, the politics of attraction within celebrity-led campaigns such as *Make Poverty History* and *Product Red* have constructed greater forms of agency to alleviate global suffering. As a consequence, the celebritisation of politics should not be dismissed as an erosion of diplomatic culture but can be understood within the framework of a change in global political activism in which there will be both positive and negative outcomes.

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ⁱ The concept of the politicised celebrity or CP2 refers to John Street's distinction between celebrity politicians (CP1s) and celebrities who have endorsed political parties or campaigns. See Street (2004).

ⁱⁱ While Cooper is broadly positive about celebrity interventions in diplomacy, he does remain critical of certain defects concerning the deflection of public attention away from more serious diplomatic efforts, amateurism, discrediting of causes and the focus on North centric rather than Southern celebrities. However, his argument is targeted against the prevailing academic 'one-image-fits-all perspective' which he claims has missed the complexity and benefits of celebrity diplomacy (Cooper 2008: 13).

ⁱⁱⁱ In 2003, the UN Secretary-General issued the first ever 'Guidelines for the Designation of Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace' to specify the conditions of services and termination of contracts with

celebrity diplomats. This marked a desire to control the escalating use of stars and led to a significant rationalisation in Goodwill Ambassadors, greater quality mechanisms, self-generated funds for travel and finite periods of operation (Fall and Tang, 2006: 2).