

SESSION II: ANGELINA, BONO, AND ME:
NEW VEHICLES TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1, 11:00-12:45 P.M.

IS THERE A CONSTITUENCY FOR GLOBAL POVERTY? JUBILEE 2000 AND THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT ADVOCACY

Joshua Busby
University of Texas, Austin

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Jubilee 2000 campaign to write-off the external debt of the world's poorest countries earned the endorsement of leaders of diverse ideological and professional orientations and created strong political allies in the UK and U.S. governments en route to achieving its goal. What was it about this campaign that made it so successful? Can this success be replicated by other advocates? The issue itself helped. The costs were modest, and outside of the international financial institutions, there was no strong counter-constituency that saw its interests deeply affected. The campaign also made a number of excellent tactical moves that others can emulate. Jubilee 2000 benefited from a message that had broad cultural appeal in key countries, credible messengers, an excellent inside political strategy, and a differentiated strategy for various national contexts. While campaigners have successfully shaped the context in which politicians are rewarded or at least are not punished for supporting development causes, the constituency for global poverty reduction may never be especially large. Changes in personalities and/or the international environment may make it harder to sustain or deepen the gains of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In September 2000, the Irish rock star Bono met with North Carolina's Senator Jesse Helms and urged the conservative head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to

support developing country debt relief on behalf of Jubilee 2000.¹ Jubilee 2000 was a London-based transnational campaign that sought to eliminate the debts of the world's poorest countries in time for the new millennium. Helms was known for equating foreign aid with throwing money down "ratholes." Bono claimed that Helms wept when they spoke: "I talked to him about the Biblical origin of the idea of Jubilee Year.... He was genuinely moved by the story of the continent of Africa, and he said to me, 'America needs to do more.' I think he felt it as a burden on a spiritual level."² Of his meeting with Bono, Helms said, "I was deeply impressed with him. He has depth that I didn't expect. He is led by the Lord to do something about the starving people in Africa."³ However, after their meeting, Helms embraced debt relief and, later, funding to combat AIDS in the developing world. How can we explain this change?

This chapter provides a case study of the Jubilee 2000 campaign—the campaign to write-off the external debt of the world's poorest countries. Debt negotiations are normally discussed in a rarefied world of central bankers and Treasury officials, multilateral bureaucrats, and private financiers, nearly all of whom are committed to minimizing moral hazard and are thus skeptical of writing off external debts. Nonetheless, two economists called the campaign "by far the most successful industrial-country movement aimed at combating world poverty for many years, perhaps in all recorded history."⁴ It earned the endorsement of leaders of diverse ideological and professional orientations—the Pope, Bono, Jeffrey Sachs, and Pat Robertson. The campaign earned the support of strong political allies in the UK and U.S. governments, making it harder for other creditors—such as Japan, France, and Germany-- to oppose debt relief.

The success of the Jubilee 2000 campaign raises interesting issues about what it did right and whether its success can be replicated. Some other campaigns, notably the campaign for global AIDS funding, have been successful in recent years. However, even putatively successful campaigns have not succeeded everywhere. For example, the campaign for the International Criminal Court was able to get a court but the United States is still not part of it. Similarly, the Kyoto Protocol came into force but the U.S. remains opposed. Other campaigns have been even less successful such as the Save Darfur Coalition, the Make Trade Fair campaign, and efforts to curb the trade in small arms.

The key questions that emerge from this are the following: 1) why are some campaigns more successful than others? And 2) why do some campaigns succeed in some places and not others?

BACKGROUND ON THE CAMPAIGN

Organized around the coming of the 21st century, Jubilee 2000 was an international campaign that aimed to relieve the world's poorest countries of their "unpayable" external

¹ This article is based on a longer academic piece entitled "Bono Made Jesse Helms Cry: Jubilee 2000, Debt Relief, and Moral Action in International Politics" which appears in the June 2007 issue of *International Studies Quarterly*.

² Susan Dominus, "Questions for Bono; Relief Pitcher," *New York Times*, October 8, 2000: 6.

³ John Wagner, "In Helms, Bono finds the ally he's looking for," *Raleigh News and Observer*, September 21, 2000.

⁴ Nancy Birdsall and John Williamson, *Delivering on Debt Relief* (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2002): 1.

debts. The reference to Jubilee comes from the Biblical notion in the Book of Leviticus of a time to relieve the debts of the poor. In the early 1990s, Martin Dent, a professor at Keele University in the UK, came up with the idea for a “Jubilee year” end of the millennium campaign, inspired by his knowledge of the Bible and ethical commitment to the third world.⁵ Dent’s advocacy began with his students but soon attracted Christian Aid, the World Development Movement, and other UK charities. Jubilee 2000 was formally launched in April 1996. The movement blossomed, galvanizing millions worldwide to participate in letter-writing efforts and protests before the official campaign closed at the end of 2000. In policy terms, Jubilee 2000’s efforts moved donors to more than double the amount of debt relief on offer; by May 2006, 19 states already qualified to have \$23.4 billion of their debts written off through the Debt Relief Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries.⁶ In 2005, a successor campaign was able to induce rich creditors to commit to write-off 100 percent of the debts the poorest countries owed to the World Bank, IMF, and the African Development Bank. Moreover, the liberal-religious conservative coalition that came together on debt relief presaged advocacy efforts that would play an important role in the Bush Administration’s \$15 billion financial commitment to fight AIDS.

In October 1996, after years of rolling over poor country debts and providing modest debt reduction, several developed countries, the World Bank, and the IMF decided upon a joint approach for Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC).⁷ The HIPC Initiative incrementally increased bilateral debt reduction and broke new ground with respect to multilateral debt with the creation of a Trust Fund to pay for multilateral debt relief. HIPC also increased the level of possible bilateral debt reduction. Countries deemed eligible for debt relief reached a “decision point,” and if they followed sound macroeconomic policies for several years while enjoying reduced debt payments in the interim, they would reach a “completion point” and be eligible for actual reduction of debt stock.

Before the G-8 Summit in Germany in mid-1999, the UK, the U.S. and Canada led efforts to enhance HIPC. In late 1998, newly elected Gerhard Schroeder signaled a softening in Germany’s long-standing reluctance. Pressure mounted on Italy, France, and Japan to be more supportive. In March 1999, President Clinton announced a plan that established the contours for what would come out of Cologne, including front-loaded relief, increasing bilateral debt relief to 90 percent, and additional multi-lateral financing.⁸ The plan also linked debt relief to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, which were designed to guarantee country ownership and that the savings would be invested in education, health, and other worthy expenditures. With 30,000 protesters ringing the summit, G-7 countries in Cologne

⁵ Martin Dent and Bill Peters, *The Crisis of Poverty and Debt in the Third World* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999).

⁶ World Bank, *HIPC Initiative- Status of Implementation*, 2006;

<<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/ProgressReports/20894658/032106.pdf>>

⁷ Forty-one countries were initially listed as HIPCs: 34 in Africa, four in Latin America, three in Asia and one in the Middle East (World Bank, *HIPC map*, undated; <<http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/about/map/map.html>>).

Eligibility is based on threshold indicators beyond which a country’s external debt is deemed “unsustainable:” the net present value (NPV) of its debt to export ratio, the NPV debt-to revenue, and the export to GDP and revenue/GDP ratios. Debt relief is conditional upon good policymaking, both macroeconomic and poverty reduction.

⁸ Bill Clinton, *Remarks by the President to Conference on U.S.-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century* (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 1999); <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/africa/990316_clinton.html>

in June 1999 announced the expansion of HIPC, promising about \$27 billion in new debt reduction in net present value terms, on top of debt relief that HIPC countries were eligible for under traditional mechanisms.⁹

Cologne partly involved bargaining by creditors on how much each would contribute to the HIPC Trust Fund and how much bilateral debt relief they would support. The U.S. contribution was \$920 million spread out over three years, of which \$600 million was to be dedicated to the Trust Fund. However, this was contingent upon Congress appropriating the funds and authorizing the sale or revaluation of IMF gold.¹⁰ The \$600 million was roughly equivalent to the EU's pledged contribution and three times that of Japan. In September 1999, President Clinton announced the U.S. would write off 100 percent of bilateral debts, followed soon by the other main creditors. U.S. funding remained in doubt until October 2000 when Congress finally appropriated \$435 million for the U.S.'s initial commitments to the HIPC Trust Fund and bilateral relief. Other G-7 creditors that had been waiting to see if the U.S. would make good gradually made good on their contributions.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS OF THE JUBILEE 2000 CAMPAIGN

Five elements contributed to the success of the Jubilee 2000 campaign: the nature of the issue, the message, the messengers, an excellent inside strategy, and a differentiated international strategy.

1. The Nature of the Issue

Despite lingering concerns about moral hazard among technocrats in finance ministries and international institutions, there were no strong domestic constituencies that were opposed to debt relief. Other international issues, by contrast, have strong, politically-connected and intransigent interest groups on the other side such as the fossil fuel industry (climate change), the military (the International Criminal Court), farm lobbies (agricultural subsidies), and the National Rifle Association (small arms). For those issues, there are concentrated costs that those sectors perceive will affect their industries. Debt relief by contrast involved modest, diffuse costs spread out across taxpayers.¹¹ In the U.S. context, there was a small and influential number of legislators opposed to debt relief, particularly on the Republican side, a vestige of the anti-foreign aid contingency within the party. However, the campaign was able to blunt their influence by reaching out to a number of them individually.

2. The Message

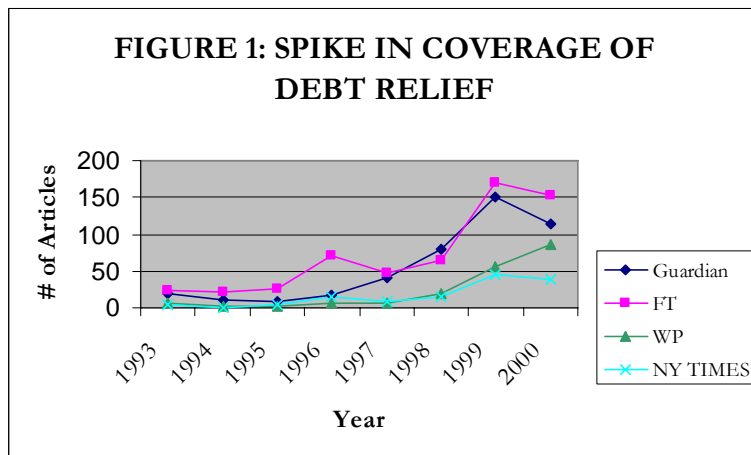
⁹ HIPC II also lowered the threshold of what were deemed sustainable debt targets including: a debt-to export ratio of 150 percent down from 200-250 percent, a debt-to-revenue ratio of 250 percent down from 280 percent, and the export/GDP and revenue/GDP thresholds to 30 percent and 15 percent (World Bank, *Outcome of the 1999 Review*, 1999; <http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/hipc-review/outcome_1999_review/outcome_1999_review.html>

¹⁰ Thomas Hart, Personal communication, January 2001.

¹¹ Looking just at bilateral debts held by the G-7 advanced industrialized countries, in no case did the nominal values of these debts exceed 1% of GDP. Early estimates of complying with the Kyoto Protocol suggested recurrent costs of nearly 1% of GDP per year.

Advocates are more likely to be successful when their goals are perceived to fit with the deeply held values of policymakers and the public.¹² While the Jubilee 2000 campaign employed tailored messages for different groups, the campaign name embodied the dominant message. Jubilee 2000, with its explicit connection to religious traditions and the coming of the new millennium, represented a “rebranding” of the debt campaigns that had been around for a number of years, according to Jamie Drummond, Jubilee 2000’s former Global Strategist.¹³ Prior to 1994, campaigners had tried without much success to draw attention to the debt issue along with IMF- and World Bank-administered structural adjustment programs. The message of the Jubilee 2000 campaign struck a chord, and debt relief received unprecedented media coverage during the life of the campaign [Fig. 1].

The expiration date of the millennium gave the campaign a sense of urgency and attached the campaign to an already significant event, but perhaps more important was the faith-based appeal. When we look at the religiosity of most G-7 countries, there is a fount of religious belief that served the campaign well in even more secular countries like the UK. At the G-8 meetings in Birmingham and Cologne, the majority of protesters were from church groups and church-linked charities. Similarly, faith groups were the main campaign supporters in the U.S., where local clergy encouraged members to contact their legislators.



Debts were also rhetorically linked to cuts in education and health care and, in turn, death, malnourishment, and poverty, particularly among children. This helped recast the issue from fear of corruption and moral hazard to one of morality and justice. As Sebastian Mallaby argued: “Late last year, during the endgame of the budget fight, the Republican line was that aid would drain money from Social Security; it was a choice of ‘Ghana vs. Grandma,’ they exclaimed, ridiculously. But you don’t hear that so much now.”¹⁴

3. The Messengers

The religious symbolism, coupled with the timing of the new millennium, was such that the campaign was able to attract a wide swath of support from North and South, left and right. Whereas there was a tendency for radical elements to bash capitalism, as in the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, Jubilee 2000 brought on broad influential

¹² There is a rich literature in political science about the importance of “cultural match.” Contact the author for citations.

¹³ Jamie Drummond, Personal communication, formerly with Jubilee 2000 campaign, January 2001.

¹⁴ Sebastian Mallaby, “Why So Stingy on Foreign Aid?” *Washington Post*, June 27, 2000.

supporters from the entire ideological spectrum as well as ordinary citizens—what Drummond called “establishment taxpayers”.¹⁵ When these politically influential citizens reached out to their legislators, they often found them amenable to their perspective on the issue.

4. An Excellent Inside Strategy

In March 1999, Clinton’s plan for an enhanced HIPC initiative was announced in the run up to Cologne. Campaigners quickly realized that President Clinton’s support would not be enough to secure American support for debt relief. There were other policy gatekeepers who had power over appropriations. Bono’s guiding questions for lobbying became, “Who can stop this from happening?” and “Who’s the Elvis here?”.¹⁶ Advocates began to cultivate ties with Republican committee chairs. After the President’s announcement, Bono came to the U.S. and made links with the Administration, including Larry Summers, and members of Congress. Bono, through the Shrivvers, was introduced to Arnold Schwarzenegger who counseled him to link up with Republicans such as Representative John Kasich, chair of the House Budget Committee. Kasich in turn brokered meetings for Bono with other Republicans including Orrin Hatch, Dennis Hastert, and Dick Armeey.¹⁷

At the same time, U.S. campaigners like Tom Hart, then Director of Government Relations for the Episcopal Church, had formed a lobby group. They approached Congressman Jim Leach, a moderate Iowa Republican, chair of the House Banking and Financial Services Committee. Leach agreed to introduce a debt relief bill, H.R. 1095, on March 11, 1999. By approaching a Republican committee chair, campaigners made what proved to be an excellent tactical move to broaden their base of support. Campaigners from groups like Bread for the World encouraged members of Congress to co-sponsor the bill. One success was Spencer Bachus, an Alabama Republican known for being a “conservative’s conservative” who became one of the bill’s strongest supporters.¹⁸ As chair of the House Banking Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy, he could have blocked consideration of the bill entirely.

Three prominent actors—Larry Summers, John Kasich, and Jim Leach—were all persuaded debt relief was the right thing to do based on technocratic ideas. While Treasury had concerns debt relief would cut poor countries off from capital markets, Larry Summers (who succeeded Robert Rubin as Secretary of the Treasury in June 1999) ultimately recognized that because these debts were not going to be paid anyway, it was sound financial practice to write them off.¹⁹ Like Summers, John Kasich found this appealing. According to Scott Hatch, a former GOP leadership staffer and confidante of Kasich, the Congressman responded because he thought debt relief was a viable way to free up resources for poor countries to spend on education and health care.²⁰ According to Jamie McCormick, former staff to Leach’s committee, the Congressman was motivated by a similar dynamic.²¹

¹⁵ Drummond, 2001.

¹⁶ Bono and Michka Assayas, *Bono: in conversation with Michka Assayas* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005): 91.

¹⁷ Jonathan Peterson, “The Rock Star, the Pope, and the World’s Poor,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 2001.

¹⁸ Michael Grunwald, “GOP’s Bachus Makes Debt Relief His Mission,” *Washington Post*, October 9, 1999.

¹⁹ Larry Summers, Personal communication, December 9, 2004.

²⁰ Scott Hatch, Personal communication, April 6, 2005.

²¹ Jamie McCormick, Personal communication, February 10, 2005.

The religious case for debt relief also had direct appeal to important individual lawmakers and created some measure of political mobilization that pressured skeptics. Aside from activists and leaders like Pat Robertson, prominent Congressional Republicans—Spencer Bachus and Jesse Helms in particular—found the religious message compelling.²² Asked about his position, Bachus said, “This bill is a gift of life. Jubilee 2000 is a celebration of the 2000th birthday of Christ...What more appropriate time to give to these poor in celebration of the birth of Jesus, who gave us life?”²³ Hart suggested legislators like Bachus were amenable to the message of Jubilee because it came from people with deep roots in local institutions.²⁴ Like Bachus, Helms was moved by his faith.

How did these gatekeepers then exercise influence over their peers? Hatch argued that Kasich’s influence was less based on his role as a committee chair and more informal—that he was able to use “political muscle” and “personal credibility” with his Republican colleagues as a fiscal hawk and solid conservative to get debt relief through the House.²⁵ Like Kasich, Helms’ influence on this question was more informal. Former Helms aide Mark Lagon said the “striking thing” about Senator Helms’ support for debt relief was that “it left people with the idea ‘Oh well, if Helms thinks this is okay, it must be the right thing to do.’ It was certainly, “hard to be outflanked on the right.” In Lagon’s view, Helms’ support could potentially sway up to twenty-five of the most conservative and purest free-marketeers in the Senate.²⁶

Gatekeepers that remained opposed to debt relief—Sonny Callahan and Phil Gramm—appear to have been moved by political pressure, lobbying, and shaming. In the weeks before the October 2000 vote, Pat Robertson asked Texas viewers of the 700 Club to “let Senator Gramm know that this is a good initiative.”²⁷ Another pressure was the threat of a presidential veto of the budget. For opponents, the specter of a veto forced them to ask: did they want to be known for denying education spending just to prevent spending on debt relief?²⁸ Callahan argued that given the ubiquity of veto threats that he “never paid much attention to that.” He did not object to debt relief but worried that without “contingencies” states would return to their bad behavior. He acknowledged the role of lobbying pressure: “All I did was make a little fuss over it and I incurred the wrath of the church community worldwide.” Realizing supporters had the votes to amend the appropriations bill on the floor, Callahan let the appropriation for debt relief go forward.²⁹ As Callahan admitted, “The debt relief issue is now a speeding train. We’ve got the pope and every missionary in the world involved in this thing, and they persuaded just about everyone here that this is the

²² On the broader mobilization of religious conservatives on international issues, see Allen D. Hertzke, *Freeing God’s children: the unlikely alliance for global human rights* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

²³ Mike McManus, “Jubilee 2000: debt relief for the poor,” *Birmingham News*, October 17, 1999.

²⁴ Hart, 2001.

²⁵ Hatch, 2005.

²⁶ Mark Lagon, Personal communication, June 15, 2005.

²⁷ Dennis Hoover, *What Would Moses Do? Debt Relief in the Jubilee Year*, 2001; <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/csrpl/RINV04No1/jubilee_2000.htm>

²⁸ Summers, 2004.

²⁹ Sonny Callahan, Personal communication, former member of Congress (R-Alabama), January 27, 2005.

noble thing to do.”³⁰ So, while moral reasons motivated many supporters, opponents found themselves subject to the piety of their peers.

5. Differentiated international strategy

The Jubilee religious message was not a winner everywhere. It lacked local cultural foundations in Japan, and the costs of debt relief, while a small share of GDP, were much larger than for other G-7 countries [Table 1]. However, re-framing the issue as a test of Japan’s international contribution proved compelling.

	Canada	France	Germany	Italy	Japan	UK	U.S.
Bilateral Claims – 40 Countries	\$711	\$13,033	\$6,586	\$4,311	\$11,200	\$3,092	\$6,210
as % of GDP	0.1%	0.9%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.08%
as % of G-7 Claims	1.57%	28.9%	14.6%	9.5%	24.8%	6.8%	13.8%

Source: GAO (2000). *Debt Relief Initiative for Poor Countries Faces Challenges GAO/NSIAD-00-161*. Washington: Government Accounting Office, <<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/ns00161.pdf>>

While the Japanese public was generally supportive of foreign aid, the government, particularly in the Finance Ministry—the dominant gatekeeper—found debt relief inimical. Where did these views come from? In the 1980s, the U.S. feared the Japanese would overtake them as global leaders and pressured the Japanese to share the leadership burden. Given constitutional restrictions on playing a military role, the Japanese sought to satisfy these concerns by becoming the biggest provider of foreign assistance, building on their experience in East Asia. By the late 1990s, the international political environment had changed, with persistent poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, motivating debt forgiveness. Given their own experience in East Asia, the Japanese were very uneasy with debt relief. They worried that debt relief would damage the “credit culture” and cut developing countries off from access to capital markets. They believed that their Official Development Assistance (ODA) loans had been indispensable tools in their foreign assistance programs in Asia.³²

³⁰ Joseph Kahn, “Leaders in Congress Agree to Debt Relief for Poor Nations,” *New York Times*, October 18 2000.

³¹ (GAO, *Debt Relief Initiative for Poor Countries Faces Challenges GAO/NSIAD-00-161* (Washington: Publisher, 2000); <<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/ns00161.pdf>>). Japanese and French costs were about \$8bn each as neither does much provisioning for bad debts. U.S. costs were about \$3.7bn due to provisioning for bad loans. Costs for HIPC have risen with the inclusion of new debtors and topping up to account for commodity price shocks.

³² Japanese MOFA official, Personal communication, former official with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 22, 2004.

While Japan signed on to the enhanced debt relief program at Cologne, it remained unenthusiastic about complete bilateral relief. In the lead up to the Okinawa G-8 meetings in July 2000, Japan announced it would accept 100 percent bilateral relief. Why did Japan change its policies? The argument was re-cast by activists and other creditor governments as something Japan could do to be a solid contributor to the international community. Takehiko Nakao, director of the Coordination Division in the Ministry of Finance's International Bureau, provided an authoritative account. Japan, Nakao said, appreciated that other G-7 countries supported debt relief. If all G-7 countries support an initiative, Japan tends to support them. Nakao said that Japan puts a lot of importance on G-7 summits, the UN General Assembly, and the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). While the U.S.-Japan bilateral security relationship is strong, Japan is not a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Given its limited ability to participate in military operations, Japan wanted to pursue other methods in order to be recognized as a good member and contributor to the international community. To that end, Japan assumed a big responsibility by contributing to the IMF, the World Bank, and through bilateral ODA.³³ Thus, Japan supported debt relief because its leaders want to be perceived as good international citizens.

SOME COUNTER-INTUITIVE LESSONS

1) There is likely never going to be a large coalition for global poverty in most countries.

Few if any elections will ever be lost over development issues; the concerns of poor foreigners just do not loom large enough. That said, campaigners can make some development issues sufficiently popular that politicians will want to be seen as supportive and avoid being seen as anti-poor.³⁴ The G-8 protests aside, Jubilee 2000 was only able to bring modest pressure to bear in different national contexts. In the U.S., for example, the national rally campaigners organized in April 2000 was attended by 6,000 people, hardly comparable to the hundreds of thousands that participate in marches against hot-button issue like abortion. While celebrity participation enhanced the visibility of the campaign, Bono himself acknowledged, "...in the U.S., Jubilee 2000 had been a lot slower to catch on. We were running out of time to grow the grassroots. I had to go straight to the decision-makers..."³⁵ Political pressure was not overwhelming. Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers made a similar observation, "We could have not done it, and it wouldn't have been a political disaster."³⁶ The campaign had success in part because of the message, but also because campaigners reached out to "the grassroots," leaders of key groups from around the country who were able to reach and persuade legislators who trusted them.

³³ Takehiko Nakao, Personal communication, Ministry of Finance, August 22, 2004. See also David Halloran Lumsdaine, *Moral vision in international politics: the foreign aid regime, 1949-1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993) on reputational concerns in Japanese foreign assistance.

³⁴ Only in the UK might there be a truly sizable constituency for development. While major charities like CARE are based in the U.S., there are few development advocacy organizations, Oxfam USA and Bread for the World the most prominent. Newer groups include Bono's DATA (Debt Aid Trade Africa). Contact the author for comparative data.

³⁵ Bono and Assayas, 2005: 89.

³⁶ Summers, 2004.

Since the Jubilee 2000 campaign, there has been a visible effort to bring in the mass public for a variety of development causes, including the ONE campaign to Make Poverty History, the Make Trade Fair campaign, the Save Darfur Coalition, the Product RED brand, and American Idol's fundraising for Africa. These efforts have gotten a lot of publicity, but it is unclear how deep public engagement and support are for development. The American public, for example, has long had a reputation for over-estimating how much the federal government provides in foreign assistance. Support for development assistance is qualified: citizens in advanced industrialized countries are much more likely to support aid to democracies.³⁷ They are particularly supportive of aid for humanitarian relief, health, and education which complicates efforts to provide more open-ended budgetary assistance rather than project support.³⁸

Between the beginning of the year and November 2006, the highly visible ONE campaign succeeded in mobilizing 500,000 people to take some form of action to support the campaign. Is this a lot? MoveOn.org, another new internet-age advocacy organization, regularly trumpets hundreds of thousands mobilized for discrete issues on a monthly basis.³⁹

While Bono once likened the ideal influence of groups like DATA to an "NRA for the poor," global AIDS is not an issue over which many voters are willing to turf out politicians. Advocacy groups are able to exercise influence more through their ability to praise behavior they like (which DATA especially is known for) and shame politicians for failure to keep promises. As Tom Hart said, "our design is not to elect and defeat" politicians. Rather, DATA is about having political weight and being "taken seriously."⁴⁰ Advocates, on AIDS appropriations for example, had a limited role influencing the executive branch through pressure; their efforts to collect votes on the Hill in the appropriations process were more influential. In fact, they rely as much on an inside strategy of good information, contacts, and credibility as they do on a mass strategy of brute political power.

2) Celebrities compensate for weak mass movements, but their previous success depended in part on personality, strategy, and low expectations.

Celebrities compensate for movement weakness by drawing attention to the cause, but when they get in the room to talk to decision-makers, they have to be well-briefed. Bono succeeded in part because of his personality, but also because of initially low expectations

³⁷ In 2006, more than 85% of Americans and Europeans favored aid to poor democracies but less than 50% supported aid to poor non-democracies. (German Marshall Fund, *Perspectives on Trade and Poverty*, GMF, 2006; <<http://www.gmfus.org/trade/research/survey.cfm>>).

³⁸ A 2006 Zogby poll for InterAction found 87% U.S. support for humanitarian relief (Mohammad Akhter, Results from a Nationwide Poll on International Assistance, InterAction, 2006; <<http://www.interaction.org/library/detail.php?id=4931>>). A 2004 poll for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations found more than 75% support for global AIDS funding and women's education (CCFR, *Global Views 2004*, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004; <www.thechicagocouncil.org/2004%20U.S.%20-%20%20Korea%20Comparative%20Topline%20Report.pdf>).

³⁹ In June 2005, MoveOn delivered 360,000 petitions on the Downing Street memo, in May 2005 580,000 signed petitions opposing attempts to rein in the Senate filibuster, and in December 2006, 400,000 members signed petitions to get out of Iraq. http://www.moveon.org/success_stories.html In 2006, MoveOn claimed that its members had made 7 million calls on behalf of the various issues it championed over the year. <http://pol.moveon.org/2006report/>

⁴⁰ Tom Hart, Interview, November 13, 2006.

that he would know anything about the issue. He has raised the bar for competence, both in the strategic sense about how to appeal to policymakers and substantive knowledge. Movements that bank on celebrities may fail because they over-rely on personality.

3) The nature of the issue and the relative vulnerability of targets are perhaps more important than the structure of the advocacy movement itself.

Analysts of campaigns often focus on the structure of the network and the amount of resources they possess. The Jubilee 2000 campaign is often cited for its pioneering use of the Internet, its strategic use of celebrity, and its diffuse network structure that facilitated local flexibility. Certainly, the strategic use of the internet to mobilize supporters has increased in sophistication and scale in the past seven years.⁴¹ However, too little emphasis is paid to the strategic context for advocacy, both the nature of the issues ('how difficult would it be for states to comply?') and the vulnerability of the targets ('which states and institutions are most and least vulnerable to advocacy?'). For example, in the U.S. context, treaties are almost impossible to get through the Senate with the 2/3 majority required for advice and consent. By contrast, in the UK and Canada, a strong parliamentary majority means that if the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer is on board, advocates do not need to spend a lot of energy on parliament. Activists also have to evaluate how powerful their opponents are. If they are so powerful that their opposition can never be challenged with a rival coalition, activists need to court them, either by seeking to split them or by moderating their demands.

DANGERS GOING FORWARD

1. DON'T GET TIED TO ANY SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY

There is a danger that the development cause will get too identified with one particular party or political figure. For example, when Republicans controlled both the Executive and the Legislative branches in the United States, advocates smartly sought to develop relationships with powerful Republicans. However, when the Democrats took over the Congress in 2006, Democratic lawmakers had the sense that some advocates had been overly fulsome in their praise for President Bush's support for AIDS funding. Democrats almost cut planned increases in AIDS funding because it was becoming a partisan issue. By the same token, the commitment to development in the UK is identified quite strongly with Labour and Gordon Brown in particular. Should he lose in a general election to the Conservative Party, advocates for development might lose influence.

The analogue to this is what has happened to environmental issues and climate change in particular in the United States. Democrats and Republicans are so polarized that public opinion polls show that people have very different views about the science of climate change based on their politics.⁴² It is in the development advocacy community's interests to

⁴¹ Vinay Bagat, "Online Advocacy: How the Internet is Transforming the Way Nonprofits Reach, Motivate, and Retain Supporters," in *Nonprofit Internet Strategies: Best Practices for Marketing, Communications, and Fundraising Success*, T. Hart, J. M. Greenfield and M. Johnston, 2005: pp: 119-134.

⁴² A 2007 National Journal poll of congressional insiders found that 95% of Democrats thought that climate change had been proven to be man-made beyond a reasonable doubt compared to only 13% of Republicans

continually seek a balanced basis of political support rather than allow their cause to be seen as yet another partisan issue.

2. BE CAREFUL ABOUT OVER-RELIANCE ON CELEBRITY INTERLOCUTORS.

Celebrities bring media attention to issues that may otherwise remain in obscurity. That coverage may drive public involvement, fundraising, and make politicians feel a generalized sense of needing to do something. However, that interest can be fleeting, and politicians without a genuine interest in the issue may then merely engage in “competitive promise-making” in an effort to placate advocacy campaigns. Too often, those promises are not matched by actions.⁴³ When celebrities become the de facto interlocutors between citizens and advocates as well as between the campaign and decision-makers, the highly stylized messages intended to mobilize the public may also translate into oversimplified messages about what policies are needed.

Instead of a complex message about additional resources and new ways of delivering foreign assistance, all policymakers may hear is “more foreign aid, please.” No matter how you dress up that policy (as a moral obligation, as a national security imperative), that prescription on its own is likely to be a non-starter. Almost no one actually believes that all Africa needs, for example, is more money. Some advocacy groups may feel that is an unfair caricature; most are as concerned about the quality of aid as they are about the quantity. However, too much attention in recent years has been dedicated to quantity, such as whether or not countries are meeting the commitment to spend 0.7 percent of GNP on foreign assistance.

A NEW DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Development advocates need to think about whether just getting more money for aid and for AIDS should be their main focus. Donors have embarked upon a multi-billion dollar open-ended commitment to anti-retroviral therapy for AIDS sufferers. Unless countries both come to prevent HIV and build broader health systems, the experiment could run aground if local capacity remains lacking and if donor money ever runs dry. There is a recognition that project-based development is broken, and donors have not had great success improving governance in weak and failing states. The Millennium Challenge Account has been an experiment in this direction, but it has not been sufficiently funded, despite strong advocacy by groups like DATA. The U.S. and other governments do not have adequate tools in their toolkit for institution-building. The main U.S. development agency, USAID, is under-funded, perceived in some quarters to be ineffective, and increasingly has had its mandate taken away by other institutions.

Advocates need to consider some tough questions about the appropriate institutions and instruments for future development assistance:

(Richard E. Cohen and Peter Bell, “Congressional Insiders Poll,” National Journal, 2007; <http://syndication.nationaljournal.com/images/203Insiderspoll_NJlogo.pdf>).

⁴³ The G-8 commitment at Gleneagles in 2005 to double aid to poor countries by 2010 is a good example.

- 1) Should the Global Fund be a model for other kinds of targeted programs creating a rival set of alternative issue specific funds?
- 2) What should advocates seek to do about the World Bank?
- 3) How should advocates deal with China as a rising donor to poor countries?
- 4) What is the future of public-sector support for development policy in a world of remittances, philanthropy, and private finance?
- 5) How can foreigners help the development process in weak and failing states?
- 6) Does the United States need a Department for International Development (DFID), a cabinet-level development agency?

While much effort is directed to the G-8 meetings, the 2008 U.S. elections could prove pivotal for the future of global development assistance. Under George W. Bush, deficit concerns disappeared. Will his successor have such fortune and be able and willing to expand support for global AIDS efforts and champion new models of development assistance? The 2008 elections provide an opportunity to educate candidates about the challenges of development beyond money. Even if the electorate for development issues is small, advocates have an opportunity, through their skilled use of the media and their “grasstops” contacts, to create demand on both sides of the aisle to appear pro-development. They should seize that opportunity.