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The United Nations' Celebrity Diplomacy

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Abstract

The United Nations' increasing resort to celebrity diplomacy under Secretary General Kofi Annan is another dimension of a U.N. propaganda project that attempts to discursively construct a U.N. version of world order via shorthand means: by not offending governments, especially powerful ones; by studiously avoiding being based on impact research; and by promoting universality as the favored approach to internationalism.

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"One of the great truths about America in the media age is that celebrity translates into power. Being famous creates an aura that enhances influence."¹

The deployment of celebrities in track-two diplomacy has been a feature of the way states conduct international relations for some time, but the practice becomes complicated when it is employed by international organizations. That is because it is not always clear what the political objectives of these bodies are, and what we do have of an agenda is often the product of many compromises between the competing strategies of member states. In contrast to some well-known examples—such as the Nazi manipulation of Max Schmeling, the U.S. counter with Joe Louis, or Pablo Milanes' role as bard of the Cuban revolution—the ideological mandate of celebrity in the service of international organizations is not necessarily as transparent or strident. Because international organizations must be careful to respect the national sovereignty of member states, they must be careful about propagating national populations over the heads of their governments. It has even been the case “with the United Nations especially” that these organizations deny having propaganda strategies in order to not offend member states.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's resort to celebrity diplomacy can be best understood by bearing this important distinction in mind and by also placing the current policy shift within the 60-year context of the United Nations' “public information” program. The U.N. propaganda program has historically had to avoid upsetting member governments, especially powerful ones, so the use of celebrities as propagandists is one way of circumventing this problem. Celebrity diplomacy is also a convenient strategy for

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The United Nations' Celebrity Diplomacy, the stimulation of the community, in the view of Moreno, is unpredictable.
Celebrity humanitarianism: The ideology of global charity, wave cristalino discredited voice.
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