

Mr. Obama: No War is Just

By [Prof. David Lorge Parnas](#)

Global Research, January 12, 2010

[The Canadian Charger](#) 4 January 2010

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

Mr. Obama, like you, I have read the beautifully crafted speech that you delivered when accepting the Nobel peace prize. Unlike you, I do not believe what it says. In that speech, you fail to consider too many important facts.

Mr. Obama, in that speech, you remind us of the old concept of a just war.

You fail to consider that every war in history has killed and maimed good, innocent, people.

Every war in history has deprived parents of their children and children of their parents.

Every war in history has deprived non-combatants of their homes and their way of earning a living.

Every war in history has led to the displacement or disenfranchisement of non-combatants.

You must admit that this “collateral damage” is unjust and that, consequently there can be no just war. Those who have lived through a war know this; politicians protected by a team of thousands seem to forget.

Mr. Obama, in that speech, you correctly reminded us that, “Evil does exist in the world.”

You fail to consider that in every war both sides think that their opponent is evil; no leader of a nation going into war thinks that he, or his nation, is evil.

Every war is started by someone who thinks that he is righting a wrong or preventing others from committing evil acts.

Individuals do sometimes recognize their own acts as evil, but they do so after they have committed the evil act, not before it commences or while they are doing it.

Unjust wars are always started by people who are convinced that their cause is just.

Mr. Obama, in that speech, you raised the issue of terrorism.

You fail to consider the definition of that term. “Terrorism” is defined as the use of violence, or the threat of violence, for political aims.

Nothing in that definition says that terrorism is restricted to non-state forces.

In fact, war, and the threat of war, fit the definition of terrorism exactly.

You went on to remind us that “modern technology allows a few small men with outsized

rage to murder innocents on a horrific scale.”

You fail to consider that this is good description of a “war cabinet” in an official building, deciding to launch cruise missiles or send thousands of troops to a foreign land.

When you condemn terrorism, as you should, you should make sure that you are not condemning your own actions.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you spoke of the sacrifice of people in uniform promoting peace and prosperity.

You failed to note that in every case you mentioned men and women in uniform brought death and destruction to the lands where they fought.

After each war there is a period of recovery in which people work hard to live and some even prosper. This does not eliminate the death and poverty suffered because of that war.

People accept that the death and destruction of the past cannot be undone and try to move forward, but only those who were not directly affected can forget the horror that war brings. Have you forgotten?

Mr. Obama, in that speech you stated that “A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler’s armies.”

You fail to consider that a nonviolent movement could have prevented Hitler’s rise to power and the formation of those armies.

It was the unjust way that the losers were treated after the First World War that allowed Hitler to subvert the Weimar republic and to incite a nation to allow him to build those armies.

You need only compare the way West Germany was treated after World War II with what happened after World War I to see how easily the forces of Nazism could have been made impotent and insignificant without a war.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you also asserted that “Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida’s leaders to lay down their arms.”

You fail to consider that the leaders of your country and its allies have repeatedly declared, “We do not negotiate with terrorists.”

Terrorists turn to violence to achieve political ends. They are convinced that they, or those they think they represent, have been deprived of just treatment and that only force can get them justice.

They are likely to feel deep uncertainty if offered a just solution. Their supporters would abandon them if they saw that a just solution could be achieved by negotiation.

The pious declaration that there is no room for negotiation with terrorists convinces the terrorists, and their supporters, that they have no other choice. You do not know what open negotiations would bring.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you refer to the “recognized principle of self-defence” but you seem to confuse “self-defence” with revenge.

Airport security measures such as those put in place after the 9/11 attacks are self defence. The attacks on Afghanistan were revenge and a contribution to the vicious cycle of violence that causes so much misery in our world.

You must understand that those that you call insurgents see themselves as patriots acting in self-defence.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you claim that a just war can be fought for humanitarian purposes.

You fail to consider that “humanitarian” is usually an excuse for an intervention that serves the intervener’s interests.

In the case you cite as a model, the Balkans, Dr. King’s prediction has come true. After many deaths and many displacements, the tensions in that region have not been reduced. Wars described as humanitarian have ruined many lives and improved few.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you refer to the Geneva conventions and other rules of war.

You fail to consider that they don’t work. Once the war has started, nobody loses voluntarily; nobody agrees to die to satisfy abstract rules.

All countries, your own among them, will evade and ignore those laws if they think they need to do that to win. The only way to prevent violations of the rules of war is to prevent war.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you correctly say that if we respect international law we cannot avert our eyes when those laws are flouted.

You fail to explain why, the nation that you lead, continues to supply arms to countries that ignore UN resolutions and use those arms to injure civilians.

You fail to explain why you work with countries that have refused to abide by the Non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you were trying so hard to justify the fictional concept of a just war that you failed to talk about the need for just peace.

A just peace recognizes the worth and dignity of every human being.

In a just peace, innocent people are not displaced by war or the fear that it causes.

In a just peace, great powers do not tell smaller countries how to run their internal affairs.

In a just peace, people are not punished for the crimes of others of the same ethnicity.

In a just peace, power politics is not allowed to create borders that separate family members and friends.

In a just peace, one group is not allowed to displace another.

Mr. Obama, in that speech you have failed to recognize that when war seems inevitable, it is because the world waited too long to insist on impartial justice.

The wars your country is fighting now could easily have been avoided if it had stood for justice for Palestinians and others in the Middle East.

There is no just peace in any of the areas you mention, the Balkans, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

If you continue your present policies, there will be no just peace when today's wars stop. If there is no just peace, there will soon be another war.

Mr. Obama, to earn the prize that you have just accepted you must stop defending just war and start working for a just peace.

To do that, you can be guided by one golden rule, endorsed by all the world's great religions and philosophies, "Do not do unto others what you would not want done to Americans".

***Dr. David Lorge Parnas** is Professor Emeritus at McMaster University and the University of Limerick, Ireland. He now lives in Ottawa. He is a former President of Science for Peace and a member of Canadian Pugwash.*

The original source of this article is [The Canadian Charger](#)
Copyright © [Prof. David Lorge Parnas](#), [The Canadian Charger](#), 2010

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof. David Lorge Parnas](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca