

The Nobel Peace Prize in Support of War

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Theme: [History](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

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On December 10, the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony will be held in Oslo, the capital of Norway. This analysis will try to look at how the prize fits into the bigger picture, but first, some general background is appropriate:

Norway is a member of NATO and has close ties to the United States and Great Britain. The political, economic and bureaucratic elites are firmly integrated in transatlantic networks, a nexus of economic connections, think tanks, international institutions, media and a thousand other ties that bind. They tend to identify with the liberal wing of the empire, (i.e. the Democrats, not the Republicans), but will work with any US administration. The members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee are selected by the Norwegian parliament, and the Committee is nominally independent.

Despite being considered – and where the population considers itself – a ‘peace nation’, there are few countries that have eagerly joined more wars than Norway, from the attack on Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan 2001, the occupation of Iraq, Mali, Libya 2011 and the ongoing occupation of Syria. Norway spends large sums of money supporting the joint Western effort to control the rest of the world through comprador intermediaries in non-governmental organizations.

This analysis will discuss some (overlapping) points about the Nobel Peace Prize:

1. The prize reinforces certain grand narratives, the most important one being *We are the good*, and thus have the right to decide the fate of the rest of the world.
2. It creates symbols for regime change operations. It beatifies modern day ‘good natives’ complaining about cruel treatment and pleading for the West to do something to liberate them (but are often remarkably unable to see Western abuses).
3. It reinforces general reasons to start wars, by making specific themes very important at the same time they are being used to justify military action.
4. It reinforces the narrative that enemy fights with illegal and cruel weapons. The focus on chemical weapons, as opposed to napalm or sanctions, is one example.
5. It sanctifies peace treaties that are more like unilateral surrenders, advantageous to Western imperialism and capitalist interests.
6. For a bunch of peaceful people, the prize winners are remarkably eager for war and bloody interventions
7. Some other points + Conclusion

1. *We are the good*, and thus have the right to decide the fate of the rest of the world.



(Photo: / White House, Samantha Appleton /Public Domain)

The Nobel Peace Prize gets its prestige and press coverage because it reinforces several big narratives. If it should deviate too much from what the powerful want, it would be ignored. Of prime importance is the notion that *we are the good*, and we have a monopoly on interpreting reality and to decide what is important. ('We' in this context being people in the West, and by extension their governments and leaders). During the Cold War, the prize had a similar function. It would be interesting to take a closer look at it, but for practical purposes this analysis will mostly be limited the last 30 years. Once you start to notice certain basic themes, they are rather obvious. To put it pointedly, **the Nobel Peace Prize tries to aid regime changes to achieve the Empire's aims where it is possible to avoid direct war, but it will aid in confirming the narrative that our troops are good guys.**

This explains why Western leaders so often get the prize. The point is creating an impression that there exists a more humane possibility within our current unjust world system. When they receive it, what they have actually done is not an issue. Hence the award to people like **Jimmy Carter** (winner 2002); as president he instigated several bloody covert interventions in Central-America, Africa and of course the Islamist fighters in Afghanistan, but has since then opposed direct US wars; or **Al Gore** (winner 2007), who when he was vice president didn't shy away from using the military as a foreign policy tool (see part 7). The prize to **Barack Obama** (winner 2009) can be placed here.

But the main use of the prize is to create support in Western liberal opinion for interventions that would otherwise be naked imperialistic aggressions.

2. A focus for regime change operations

Where a Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to a dissident of a non-western country, the CIA or the Pentagon (see point 3) often has a task force working on cracking the exact same country.

They winners have varying degrees of internal appeal in the targeted country, but the main purpose in choosing these people is not to boost their standing internally, but to justify attempts at regime change to Western liberal public opinion. Without the focus on these martyrs, these operations would look suspiciously like old style colonial domination.

Hence the beatification of **Aung San Suu Kyi** (winner 1991) coincided with a concerted campaign to get control over a recalcitrant, but very strategic country. Suu Kyi is in many ways typical of the people the Committee prefers. She is a known entity, having conspicuously strong personal connections to the former colonial power - Oxford educated, married to a British citizen, her children are British citizens, etc. Signaling in which direction her political compass was oriented, she asked the world to use the old colonial name Burma instead of Myanmar. She asked for harsh measures against her own country (for its own good) fitting hand in glove with the US strategy actually used. In fact, all means would be permissible to use against this regime imprisoning a modern day saint.

The Nobel Prize to Suu Kyi played an invaluable role in creating huge support, especially on the liberal left, for the draconian economic sanctions against an otherwise fairly obscure country. And maybe many of her Western supporters actually did believe that the US and UK could fund her with large sums of money and create entire NGO-networks for her with the expressed goal of subverting a sovereign nation's government, and her intentions to still be pure and progressive.

Myanmar is immensely rich in natural resources and is positioned between China and the Indian Ocean, and China and India. Any significant land connection between these two 21st century great powers would have to go through Myanmar to avoid the Himalayas. It is also of great Chinese interest as a transit country to the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the country was targeted with a [multi-approach](#) regime change operation.

A massive press campaign was arranged over several decades, a plethora of NGO financed, whilst «former» CIA-agents now turned missionaries [were working](#) with the ethnic guerilla forces to create military pressure. In the usual attempt to concentrate all opposition into a joint force, extreme right wing religious fanatics became the spearhead in this campaign. The sanctions imposed on Myanmar, precluded any economic development and doomed the population to a life of crushing poverty.

One could interpret the recent calls to take the prize back from Suu Kuy as disappointed buyers not getting what they paid for.

We can go forward to 2010, when a Chinese citizen, **Liu Xiaobo**, won the prize. [There](#) were no surprises for what future was envisaged for China:

“It took Hong Kong 100 years to become what it is. Given the size of China, certainly it would need 300 years of colonisation for it to become like what Hong Kong is today. I even doubt whether 300 years would be enough.”

The lines between creating justification for a covert regime change operation and next step, a direct war, is blurry. But when required, the Prize Committee can step in to keep the focus of world opinion on the right narrative.

3. Creating reasons for war: Women's rights



Malala Yoysafzai receives the Sakharov price (Source: Claude Truong-Ngoc / Wikimedia Commons)

In 2003, just after the blitzkrieg on Iraq and at the very height of the George Bush's talk of continuing the offensive to a few more countries, the committee chose to give the prize to **Shirin Ebadi**. By beatifying an Iranian at that time, the committee very well knew that they increased the danger of war.

Ebadi is a champion of women's rights, a recurrent theme in NATO's efforts to justify their wars. **We know that targeting women in the West with this type of messaging has been a major effort for the organization for a long time.** By giving the prize to her, they in effect created support in Western (female) public opinion for a war/regime change that would kill an untold number of Iranian women and destroy the lives of the rest, a repeat on a larger scale of what happened in Iraq.

The 2018 prize went to the fight against sexual violence in war. **This happens to coincide with the very image NATO wants to promote of itself** – who can forget Angelina Jolie and NATO's General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg writing a joint article in 2017 titled "Why NATO Must Defend Women's Rights," where they point out that "NATO has the responsibility and opportunity to be a leading protector of women's rights" and "can become the global military leader in how to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict". How convenient that the Nobel Committee shares the same view.

A more analytic approach would point out such facts that US/NATO-interventions have made the situation for women infinitely worse in places such as Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. An intervention to topple the legal government in Syria would certainly have created the same result.

In addition, a bit broader view would point out how allegedly stopping sexual violence against women has justified many wars of aggression. The stereotypes of cruel foreigners have not advanced noticeably from depictions of [swarthy Spaniards](#) groping blonde women in the Spanish-American war, to the claim that Gaddafi was handing out Viagra to mercenaries to rape women, as Susan Rice, the US Permanent Representative at UN [told](#)

[the Security Council](#). Amnesty International, later [reported](#) it had “not found any evidence or a single victim of rape or a doctor who knew about somebody being raped.”

Other notorious examples of how this has been used in war propaganda include Serbian rape camps during the Yugoslav wars. Allegations of mass rape were a key element of NATO’s propaganda campaign during the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia. Clare Short, Britain’s international development secretary, claimed that the rapes were “deliberately performed in front of children, fathers and brothers.” After the war was over, there were some retractions, including from the *Washington Post*, which reported that “Western accusations that there were Serb-run rape camps [...] all proved to be false.”

Malala Yousafzai (winner 2014), the young Pakistani girl who became a symbol of the war against the Taliban, is another figure that fits this pattern. The indefinite occupation of Afghanistan is, among plenty of other vicarious reasons, justified by improving women’s rights. This overlooks the fact that no improvement can be made under a government installed with the help of foreign bayonets. The situation for Afghan women has not improved since the occupation, but then again, the claim was only meant to create support for the war in public opinion.

The importance of creating the perception of fighting for women’s rights has long been realized in military circles.



[An internal CIA-document](#) from 2010 (a few years before Malala received the prize from the Nobel Institute for her struggle against the Taliban), published by WikiLeaks, discusses how to best market the war in Afghanistan, To show how similar the Nobel Committee and the military/intelligence apparatus think, it is worth quoting the following passage:

Afghan women could serve as ideal messengers in humanizing the ISAF role in combating the Taliban because of women’s ability to speak personally and credibly about their experiences under the Taliban, their aspirations for the future, and their fears of a Taliban victory. **Outreach initiatives that create media opportunities for Afghan women to share their stories with French, German, and other European women could help to overcome pervasive skepticism among women in Western Europe toward the ISAF mission.**

4. The enemy fights with illegal and inhumane weapons, and it is imperative to stop them

By highlighting certain themes, in this case ‘illegal weapons’, they reinforce the narrative in Western public opinion that certain things are very urgent and real problems, when in fact they are of relatively minor significance.

Poison gas is a clear example. The OPCW won the prize in 2013. Given the general situation in the Middle East, several million dead in Iraq after the US invasion and at least 400.000 dead in the covert invasion of Syria, gas is a minor factor, and even if we take the frequent claims of ‘gas massacres’ at face value (which of course we shouldn’t), is only responsible for an infinitesimal fraction of these dead.

But to reinforce a false narrative, this focus has been invaluable. The prize creates acceptance for the narrative that gas is a uniquely important and evil weapon, where it is fully justified to do anything necessary, including attacking countries, to stop the possible use of it. At the moment of writing this, Nov 24, 2018, the US just accused Iran of hiding a chemical weapons program.

Some weapons that are killing far more people in far more gruesome ways than poison gas, like napalm, would never be put on this list. And we could compare gas to sanctions, the West’s favorite and most effective weapon of mass destruction, killing the weakest, the sick, children and old people slowly, while destroying entire peoples’ right to a decent life. No other or weapon of mass destruction has killed as many people since WW2.

5. Sanctifying peace treaties that are negotiated surrenders to western interests



Yasser Arafat receives the prize in 1994, together with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin CC BY-SA 3.0 File:Flickr – Government Press Office (GPO)

The most noticeably feature when the prize goes to creators of peace treaties, is that the treaties are more like a negotiated surrender than a just peace.

Colombia’s president **Juan Manuel Santos** (winner 2016) received the prize for victoriously

having put the finishing touches to a long US-led counter-insurgency campaign against leftist guerilla forces. Now the reactionary oligarchy has a safe grip on the country, and can continue their neoliberal agenda, which isn't that different from the old reactionary order. The death squads murdering leftist and human rights activist continue their activities with impunity.

The country had an extremely tarnished image in human rights issues and needed a quick touch-up to make it palatable. **The most conspicuous thing the 2016-award is that the president got the prize just before Colombia became a global partner of NATO.** The planning of the PR-requirements for this to happen smoothly must have been already well under way when the prize winner was decided. Remember the prize is directed at Western public opinion, and has little to do with an actual just peace in Colombia.

Yasser Arafat (co-winner 1993) got the prize so he would be tied to a peace plan with a chimerical two-state solution the Israeli side had no intention of honoring. The peace offer didn't even include a stop in constructions of Israeli settlements. No clearer signal of Israeli intentions could have been given. This is a continuation of the joint prize to Sadat and Begin in 1978, for the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, where Israel succeeded in making a separate peace with the biggest Arab country, and could thereafter concentrate on consolidating its grip on the West Bank.

While **Nelson Mandela** (co-winner 1994) undoubtedly was a worthy winner, the transition deal the ANC negotiated for South Africa only transferred formal political power, and left unjust economic power structures intact. The assets of multinational companies were guaranteed, and the neoliberal policies implied in the deal doomed the large majority of the population to continued poverty.

Michail Gorbachev (winner 1990) got the prize for a unilateral and wholesale surrender of every Soviet position, both economic and political; he didn't even keep them as bargaining cards. Trusting Western oral promises, this naiveté is unprecedented in a leader of a great power. His bad decisions made a managed transition to a mixed system impossible and abandoned the former socialist states to Western looting and a social collapse they still haven't recovered from. No wonder he still is so popular in the West that gave him the medal as a sign of appreciation.

Finnish **Martti Ahtisaari** got the prize in 2008, *«for his efforts on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts»*. This is very true. Left out is what should be added to the sentence, *to resolve international conflicts - as a total Western victory*. Ahtisaari is directly linked to the creation of the NATO-protectorate of Kosovo. By 1999, NATO had decided to splinter Yugoslavia one more time. A 78 day aerial bombing campaign had little effect, so they sent in the diplomats. It was suggested that an envoy from a 'neutral' country would be more efficient. [Here](#) is how Ahtisaari handled the situation, telling the Serbs what 'we' would do (my emphasis):

Ahtisaari opened the meeting by declaring, "We are not here to discuss or negotiate," [...]. Ahtisaari says that Milosevic asked about the possibility of modifying the plan, to which he replied, "No. This is the best that Viktor and I have managed to do. You have to agree to it in every part." [...] As Milosevic listened to the reading of the text, he realized that the "Russians and the Europeans had put us in the hands of the British and the Americans." **Milosevic took the papers and asked, "What will happen if I do not sign?" In answer, "Ahtisaari made a gesture on the table," and then**

moved aside the flower centerpiece. Then Ahtisaari said, “Belgrade will be like this table. We will immediately begin carpet-bombing Belgrade.” Repeating the gesture of sweeping the table, Ahtisaari threatened, “This is what we will do to Belgrade.” A moment of silence passed, and then he added, “There will be half a million dead within a week.”

The Serbians signed the treaty.

6. Not a peaceful very bunch of people



US Marine Corps tank in Baghdad, 2003 (Photo: USMC/ Public Domain)

For recipients of a peace prize, a remarkable number of them support wars.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a war of aggression under the trumped up pretext of disarming Iraq of Weapons of mass destruction. It was a blatant breach of both international law and the United Nations Charter. What did the Nobel Prize Winners think of it?

Here we have **Elie Wiesel** (winner 1986) “[I now know I was wrong, but better that than to have stood idly by](#)”.

Jose Ramos-Horta (winner 1996) claimed approvingly that *the only truly effective means of pressure on the Iraqi dictator [is] the threat of the use of force.*

Liu Xiaobo (winner 2010) was clear, the «[decision by President Bush is right!](#)». But then again, Liu had the remarkable opinion that «the major wars that the US became involved in are all ethically defensible,» including the wars in Afghanistan and Vietnam.

Former vice president **Al Gore** (winner 2009) had argued aggressively in favor of war in Iraq in 1991 and 1998, Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1998, and believed the 2003 Iraq war was legal based on earlier UN resolutions.

The Cold War winner **Lech Walesa** (1983) was an opponent of the invasion, but at least

he [knew](#) where to put the blame; *It's not the United States that is to blame for the war, but rather the EU, and in particular Germany and France. They knew the war was coming and they failed to prevent it.*»

The Dalai Lama (winner 1989) was wily enough to hedge his bets, but decidedly did not condemn the war: *«it's too early to say, right or wrong»*. He also supported the US/NATO military intervention in Afghanistan and the attack on Yugoslavia.

There is a similar level of support among prize winners for a direct intervention in the 'civil' war in Syria, an US/NATO regime change plan on the drawing board [for at least 10 years before](#) it started. The push for a no-fly zone in Syria on a Libyan model, which could then be used as a fig leaf for a full-scale assault, was immense for several years. What did the Nobel Prize winners think of this possibility?

(Keep in mind that the 'action' they call for, can only be either an aerial bombing or ground troops.)

[Kailash Satyarthi](#) (winner 2014) did not say anything about the fact that it was the 3 Western powers on the Security Council which started this war by spending billions of dollars arming and financing armed Islamist gangs. Stopping this support would seem to be the obvious way to stop the war, but instead we get: *«The UN Security Council (UNSC) has the military power to bring this unceasing genocide to a halt. »*

His co-winner **Malala Yousafzai** with seems to have [envisaged](#) a similar future for Syria as for Afghanistan, a Western intervention: *«When I look at Syria, I see the Rwandan genocide. When I read the desperate words of Bana Alabed in Aleppo, I see Anne Frank in Amsterdam.We must act. The international community must do everything they can to end to this inhumane war»*

This was echoed by former UN-leader [Kofi Annan](#) (winner 2001). Defining Aleppo as only the small part of the city occupied by Islamist gangs, he called for 'action'. How this 'action' would differ from what he describes, is not clear: *«The assault on Aleppo is an assault on the whole world. When hospitals, schools and homes are bombed indiscriminately, killing and maiming hundreds of innocent children, these are acts that constitute an attack on our shared, fundamental human values. Our collective cry for action must be heard, and acted upon, by all those engaged in this dreadful war. »*

This wish was supported by **Medecins sans Frontiers**, recipient of the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize. It was the first to report the alleged gas attack in Ghouta on 21. August 2013, which the Obama-administration wanted to use as a pretext for a military assault. As it admitted, the MSF's decision to issue a press release on the incident—which had not taken place in an MSF hospital, but in its "silent partner" facilities in rebel-controlled areas—was highly political.

MSF was well aware that their announcement of chemical weapons use would be immediately seized upon by the US to claim that Syrian President Assad had crossed a red line, and to start a bombing campaign.

The organization was here true to its roots, as the civilian part in the [French military/intelligence effort](#) to support an independent state in the oil producing parts of Nigeria, in the Biafran war of independence in 1967-1970.

Amnesty International, (winner 1977) was not much better, with its call for unspecified 'action': *The international community's catastrophic failure to take concrete action to protect the people of Syria has allowed parties to the conflict, most notably the Syrian government, to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity with complete impunity, often with assistance of outside powers, particularly Russia.... the international community had said 'never again' after the government devastated Eastern Aleppo with similar unlawful tactics. But here we are again.*"

Anyway, Amnesty has a soft spot for endless NATO-interventions. In 2012, after 11 years of dismal occupation, the organization paid for advertising posters in the US applauding NATO's actions in Afghanistan — *"Keep the progress going"*, purportedly doing something for women's rights.

Tawakkol Abdel-Salam Karman is a Yemeni journalist and human rights activist that won the price in 2009 wanted 'protection', [writing](#): *Instead of protecting residents in Aleppo from brutalities of Russia, Iran and Bashar Al Assad's regime, the world tended to mediate to provide safe corridors for the displacement of civilians,"* adding, *"these also are partners in crime."*

Colombian President **Juan Manuel Santos** (2016) [voiced](#) support for the missile attacks on Syria in March 2018.

Such bellicosity (or just as often, coy bellicosity) is nothing new in the type of people selected as winners. **Henry Kissinger** (winner 1973) was the most infamous war hawk to win the prize during the Cold War, but long as it was the right side doing the fighting, plenty of others identified with this one sided world view. We can recognize all the themes mentioned above in [Michael Parenti's](#) description of the 1975 Peace Prize winner:

Andrei Sakharov was a darling of the U.S. press, a Soviet dissident who regularly sang praises to corporate capitalism. Sakharov lambasted the U.S. peace movement for its opposition to the Vietnam War. He accused the Soviets of being the sole culprits behind the arms race and he supported every U.S. armed intervention abroad as a defense of democracy. Hailed in the west as a «human rights advocate,» Sakharov never had an unkind word for the horrific human rights violations perpetrated by the fascist regimes of faithful U.S. client states, including Pinochet's Chile and Suharto's Indonesia, and he aimed snide remarks at the «peaceniks» who did. He regularly attacked those in the West who opposed U.S. repressive military interventions abroad.

7. Some other points + Conclusion

You don't have to be an prop for US/NATO power projection to win the prize, but it helps.

The prize was originally intended to be given to the person who has done most to foster peace between nations. In a subtle twist, in many cases it has changed to banning *aspects of warfare*, barely ever addressing war itself. **Broaching such as subject honestly would be impossible without addressing the elephant in the room, US/Western imperialism.** The award has had many winners who are variants of this year's theme, sexual violence in war (which also touches on point 3, the NATO-narrative of defense of women). The focus here is on a more civilized form of war, not abolishing war as such as a means of settling disputes.

No one (apart from some military brass) is actually pro-landmines, but the Peace prize to the **Campaign Against Land Mines** in 1997 coincided with the increased Western interventions in places where these weapons would be a hindrance to the success of the occupation. It was not in the interest of NATO forces to have their opponents using these 'poor man's weapons', creating the casualties so feared by the military in modern wars, which again might increase opposition at home to war. The coalition suffered most of their casualties from IEDs, a sort of land mine, in Iraq, while having limited use of mines themselves.

There is a certain unpredictability as to who the prize will be awarded to, making it not as obvious beholden to the immediate needs of the powerful, even though the long term trend is clear. For example, there has been no Russian winner for quite a while now, and the White Helmets have not yet got the award, maybe as they are too obviously only a PR-front.

When Jean-Paul Sartre declined the Nobel Prize in Literature, he said that the prize 'is for Western writers or Eastern rebels'. On a similar note, we might say that the Nobel Peace Prize is for Western elites or Eastern rebels.

That the selection of winners conforms to US views does not mean that there is a direct influence, although some recommendations to the Committee probably weigh heavier than others. Rather this pattern is a sign of how well socialized the Norwegian Nobel Committee members are in the transatlantic world view, where 'our' requirements override any genuine wish for peace.

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