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Reassessing the Nobel Peace Prize: Political Influence, Institutional Bias, and Controversies

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Abstract: ***In accordance with Nobel's will, the recipient is selected by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, a five-member committee appointed by the Parliament of Norway. Due to its political nature, the Nobel Peace Prize has, for most of its history, been subject to numerous controversies. There is a well-known, but possibly apocryphal, story that in 1888, after the death of his brother Ludvig, several newspapers mistakenly published obituaries of Alfred. One French newspaper condemned him for his invention of military explosives, and this is said to have brought about his decision to leave a better legacy after his death. The obituary stated, Le marchand de la mort est mort "The merchant of death is dead") and went on to say, "Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday". However, it has been questioned whether or not the obituary in question actually existed. This article critically examines the historical trajectory and contemporary controversies surrounding the Nobel Peace Prize, focusing on allegations of political influence, ideological bias, and exclusionary practices. Through an analysis of key laureates and omissions, the study explores how global power dynamics and national interests may shape the selection process. Drawing from documented cases and scholarly commentary, it highlights the divergence between Alfred Nobel's original intent and current practices. The article proposes that restoring credibility to the prize requires a return to its foundational principles and increased transparency in committee operations.***

Keywords: Nobel Peace Prize, political bias, award controversies, international relations, peace advocacy, Israel, Palestine, Genocide, Sumud Flotilla

1. Introduction

Alfred Nobel's will declared that the Nobel Peace Prize was to be awarded by a committee of five persons selected by the Norwegian Storting (parliament). The Storting accepted the assignment in April 1897, and the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Storting was set up in August of the same year (nobelpeaceprize.org/nobel-committee). There have been debates about the Nobel Peace Prize for a long time, and injustices have come to light.

History of the Nobel Peace Prize

When the Swedish businessman Alfred Nobel passed away in 1896, he left behind what was then one of the world's most enormous private fortunes. In his last will, Nobel declared that the whole of his remaining fortune of 31.5 million Swedish crowns was to be invested in safe securities and should constitute a fund "the interest on which shall be annually distributed in the form of prizes to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind."

During the early decades of the Committee's work, both incumbent Storting representatives and government ministers were ordinary members. The first Committee thus consisted of Prime Minister Johannes Steen, Foreign Minister Jørgen Løvland, Storting representative John Lund, Professor of Law Bernhard Getz, and the national bard Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.

With the heavy representation of prominent politicians, it became increasingly complex over time to convince the international community that the Committee was not influenced in its work by Norwegian authorities. In 1936, in connection with the Nobel Peace Prize award to Carl von Ossietzky, the practice was changed to bar current members of the Government from sitting on the Committee. In 1977, out of continued regard for the Committee's independence, a practice was introduced that prohibited current members of the Storting from being elected to the Nobel Committee. At the same time, the Committee changed its name from the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Storting to the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

In 2017, the Storting formally decided that sitting members of Parliament are not eligible for membership in the Norwegian Nobel Committee (wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize).

The most controversial awards

Nobel Peace Prize controversies often reach beyond the academic community. Criticisms leveled against some of the awards include allegations that they were politically motivated, premature, or guided by a flawed definition of what constitutes work for peace. Two Norwegian lawyers, Fredrik Heffermehl and Unni Turrettini, have written books criticizing the committee that awards the Peace Prize and the process of appointing the committee. Foreign Policy noted people who had been overlooked for the Prize: Mohandas K. Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Vaclav Havel, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Sari Nusseibeh, Corazon Aquino, and Liu Xiaobo (Xiaobo would later win the Prize).

The prize of 1935 was retroactively awarded one year later to Carl von Ossietzky, a German pacifist who had been convicted of high treason and espionage for exposing German rearmament. In an unprecedented move, King Haakon VII of Norway was absent from the award ceremony; two committee members resigned in protest; and the Norwegian conservative press, including leading daily Aftenposten, condemned the awarding of the prize to a convicted criminal. Ossietzky, interned in the concentration camp Esterwegen and severely ill with tuberculosis, accepted the award by letter but was prevented from traveling to Oslo. The award led Adolf Hitler to forbid any German from receiving a Nobel Prize in the future, and Ossietzky's prize was not allowed to be mentioned in the German press.

In 1939, a submission not intended to be taken seriously, an antifascist member of the Swedish parliament, Erik Gottfrid Christian Brandt, nominated German dictator Adolf Hitler, but the nomination was cancelled. No prize was awarded in 1939 to anyone for peace.

The 1973 prize went to North Vietnamese communist leader Le Durc Tho and United States Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger "for the 1973 Paris Peace Accords intended to bring about a cease-fire in the Vietnam War and a withdrawal of the American forces". Thọ later declined the prize because such "bourgeois sentimentalities" were not for him and because the Paris Peace Accords were not being fully adhered to. Kissinger was also privately skeptical about sharing the prize, saying to Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, "I figure it like Groucho Marx said, “any club that took him in he would not want to join. I would say that anything Le DurcThọ is eligible for, there must be something wrong with it."

North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam in April 1975 and reunified the country, whilst Lê Đức Thọ was still in government. Thọ had also been in government during the Tet Offensive, a Viet Cong surprise assault that killed 7,721 civilians, destroyed 75,000 homes, and displaced over 670,000 people. Kissinger's history included the secret 1969–1975 bombing campaign against Khmer Rouge and North Vietnamese Army troops in Cambodia, U.S. involvement in Operation Condor—a mid-1970s campaign of kidnapping and murder coordinated among the intelligence and security services of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile (see details), Paraguay, and Uruguay—as well as the death of French nationals under the Chilean junta. Kissinger has been cited as being responsible for the deaths of 3 to 4 million people during his 8-year term in office. According to Irwin Abrams in 2001, this prize was the most controversial to date. Two members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee resigned in protest.

The American press also reacted with consternation to the award: The New York Times dubbed it the "Nobel War Prize". The Washington Post quoted retired diplomat George Ball as saying that, on the evidence, "The Norwegians must have a sense of humour." The well-known comedian and political satirist Tom Lehrer said, "Political satire became obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize."[When the award was announced, hostilities were continuing.

Kissinger did not attend the award ceremony in Oslo due to concerns that anti-war protest groups would target it. He requested that the prize money be donated to a scholarship fund for US service members killed or missing in Indochina. In 1975, as Saigon fell to North Vietnamese forces, he offered to return the medal, an offer not accepted by the Nobel Committee.

The 1992 prize went to Rigoberta Menchú for "her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples". The prize was controversial because the memoirs that had brought her to fame turned out to be partly fictitious.

The 1994 prize went to Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres, and Yitzhak Rabin "for their efforts to create peace in the Middle East". Kåre Kristiansen, a member of the Nobel Committee, resigned in protest at Arafat's award, citing his sponsorship of terrorism through the PLO and calling him the "world's most prominent terrorist".

The 2000 prize went to Kim Dae-jung "for his work for democracy and human rights in South Korea and in East Asia in general, and for peace and reconciliation with North Korea in particular". Criticisms argued that Kim made a historical event in North Korea, which was tainted significantly by allegations that at least several hundred million dollars had been paid to Pyongyang. His chief of staff, Park Ji-won, was sentenced to twelve years in prison in 2003 for, among other charges, his role in the Hyundai payment to North Korea for the North–South summit. Also, to persuade North Korea to attend the summit, several "unconverted long-term prisoners" kept by South Korea were released and returned to North Korea.

The 2002 prize went to Jimmy Carter for "decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development". The announcement of the award came shortly after the US House and Senate authorized President George W. Bush to use military force against Iraq to enforce UN Security Council resolutions requiring that Baghdad give up weapons of mass destruction. Asked if the selection of the former president was a criticism of Bush, Gunnar Berge, head of the Nobel Prize committee, said: "With the position Carter has taken on this, it can and must also be seen as criticism of the line the current US administration has taken on Iraq." Carter declined to comment on the remark in interviews, saying that he preferred to focus on the work of the Carter Center.[133]

The 2004 prize went to Wangari Maathai "for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace". Controversially, she was reported by the Kenyan newspaper The Standard and Radio Free Europe to have stated that Western scientists initially developed HIV/AIDS to depopulate Africa. She later denied these claims, although The Standard stood by its reporting.[134] Additionally, in a Time magazine interview, she hinted that she believed HIV had a non-natural origin, saying that someone knows where it came from and that it "did not come from monkeys".[135]

The year 2009 prize went to Barack Obama "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples". The award, given just nine months into Obama's first term as president, faced criticism for being undeserved, premature, politically motivated, and wishful.[136] Obama himself said that he felt "surprised" by the win and did not consider himself worthy of the award, but accepted it. Obama's Nobel Peace Prize was called a "stunning surprise" by The New York Times.[142] Much of the surprise stemmed from the fact that nominations for the award were due by 1 February 2009, only 12 days after Obama took office.

In 2015, Geir Lundestad, director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute (who sat in on the committee's meetings but did not

have a vote, wrote in his memoir, Secretary of Peace, that he regretted giving the prize to Obama.[146] The committee "thought it would strengthen Obama, and it didn't have this effect", Lundestad told the Associated Press, though he fell short of calling the award a mistake. "In hindsight, we could say that the argument of giving Obama a helping hand was only partially correct", Lundestad wrote. Critics also argued that the award was a symbolic rejection of the George W. Bush Administration.

The 2010 prize went to Liu Xiaobo "for his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China". Liu was imprisoned at the time of the award, and neither he nor his family was allowed to attend the ceremony. The Chinese government alleged that Liu did not promote "international friendship, disarmament, and peace meetings", the prize's stated goal. The award led to a diplomatic dispute between Norway and China. Relations were normalized in December 2016.

The pro-Chinese government and state-controlled media criticized Liu's selection because of his low profile and obscurity within China and among Chinese youth. Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, writing in The Guardian, also criticized Liu's selection for his extended support of American involvement in wars in other nations, particularly Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

The 2012 prize went to the European Union for "over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe". Among other objections, some former laureates disputed the award, claiming that the EU is "clearly not a champion of peace".

On 7 October 2016, the Nobel Peace Prize went to the president of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, for his efforts working with the Marxist–Leninist guerrilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to bring the more than 50-year-long Colombian civil war to an end.

The award has since been described as premature, as it was conferred five days after the nation narrowly rejected his peace plan in the 2016 Colombian peace agreement referendum. On November 24, 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC signed a revised peace deal, which the Colombian Congress approved on November 30.

Most famous independence leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Omer Muhtar, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, never received the Nobel Peace Prize. However, Gandhi was nominated five times[159] between 1937 and 1948. In 1948, Gandhi received six letters of nomination and was on the shortlist for the Peace Prize, but he was assassinated on 30 January 1948, two days before the closing date for nominations. The Nobel Committee decided not to award the prize, stating that the laureate could be honored posthumously only if they died after the committee's decision.[159] The Nobel Committee ultimately made no award in 1948, stating, "there was no suitable living candidate."Decades later, the Nobel Committee publicly apologized for the omission. Geir Lundestad, Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in 2006, said, "The greatest omission in our 106-year history is undoubtedly that Mahatma Gandhi never received the Nobel Peace prize. Gandhi could do without the Nobel Peace prize, [but] whether the Nobel committee can do without Gandhi is the question."

Real Nobel Peace Prize [4]

The "Real Nobel Peace Prize" was founded by the late Fredrik S. Heffermehl, a Norwegian lawyer and author, who long championed a critical examination of the Nobel Peace Prize and its alignment with Alfred Nobel's original will: "... the person who has done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations and for the abolition or reduction of standing armies as well as for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

Heffermehl also established the Swedish peace organisation. The "Real Nobel Peace Prize" was established in 2024 to honour those who align with Alfred Nobel's original will and celebrate their achievements. The 2025 recipient is UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese (betterworld.info/peace/peace-prizes/real-nobel-peace-prize).

The 2025 award goes to ➡️ Francesca Albanese, who "has forcefully and unwaveringly worked against Israel's full-scale war on the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular Israel's ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people." She has pushed for nations to implement an embargo on arms sales to Israel, an end to all trade agreements, accountability for war crimes, and a complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

Throughout the now two-year war, which has resulted in the death of more than 67,000 Palestinians from bombs alone. More than 169,000 people have been injured, many with life-altering wounds. Albanese has been one of the most outspoken advocates for Palestinian rights.

The Nobel Peace Prize has become a political prize and is too often awarded to champions of "democracy", the environment, or human rights. In 2025, the Nobel Peace Prize was (falsely) awarded to ➡️ María Corina Machado. We need to return to Alfred Nobel's will to celebrate true champions of peace!

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is responsible for the Nobel Peace Prize. The Norwegian Parliament selects its members. They are usually former politicians of the major parties or are closely associated with them. Norway is a founding member of NATO and has a close relationship with the EU.

If the Nobel Prize is losing its credibility, it also loses the impact it can have on world peace. We must ensure that, first and foremost, this remains the primary goal. The Real Nobel Peace Prize and Lay Down Your Arms work tirelessly to wage peace and not war.

In the words of Fredrik Heffermehl, "Peace is not just a dream, but a possibility within our grasp."

2. Result and Discussion

"The Nobel Peace Prize has been increasingly influenced by political agendas that do not care about peace, but only about scoring points in the mainstream media's popularity sweepstakes. It carries no moral significance. In light of all this information, it should not be surprising that the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Donald Trump.

The organizers of the Sumud Flotilla, Gaza People Resisting the Israeli Holocaust, the ICRC, the former UNRWA Chief Pierre Krähenbühl, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Prof. John Mearsheimer, Prof. Glenn Diesen, Spain PM Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, and Barbados PM Mia Mottley are truly deserving candidates for the award.

Among the embarrassing NPP laureates, we must name Henry Kissinger, Menachem Begin, Barack Obama, Abiy Ahmed, Maria Ressa, and Dmitry Muratov. None of them qualify under Alfred Nobel's testament. And certainly not Trump.

Israel surpasses the United States, France, and Germany in the number of Nobel Prizes per capita. It has more laureates than India, Spain, and China combined. Considering only scientific awards, Israel ranks 13th per capita, behind Germany (11th) and the United States (12th). Of the 965 individuals who received the Nobel Prize in Economics and the Nobel Memorial Prize between 1901 and 2023, at least 216 were Jewish, representing 22% of all laureates. Objectively, the Nobel Prizes are a Jewish hegemony. In a world where 28.8% are Christian, 25.6% are Muslim, 24% are desistant or atheist, 14% are Hindu, 4.1% are Buddhist, and only 0.2% are Jewish, the reasons for this distribution must be studied (populationeducation.org/world-population-by-religion). Perhaps the first step in explaining this is that 50% of the world's wealthiest billionaires are Jewish (Kosmin 2006).

While the most profound tragedy in human history is unfolding in Palestine, how much can it be said that the Nobel Peace Committee cares about world peace when it remains silent and deaf to the struggle of a handful of people for genuine peace, to those who strive to contribute to Palestine's natural right to independence?

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