

EU wins Nobel Peace Prize- reactions from EUROPP experts

by Blog Admin

Today it was announced that the European Union has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe”. We asked EUROPP’s expert contributors for their immediate reactions.



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South East Europe poses a continuing challenge to the Union and its widely lauded model of conflict transformation.

James Ker-Lindsay is Senior Research Fellow on the Politics of South East Europe at the LSE European Institute.



The award of the prize will be met with a degree of scepticism in South East Europe. Already, some have highlighted the way in which the European Union mismanaged the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s. Many in the region and beyond blame the extreme divisions that existed amongst the European Union members at the time for the catastrophic way in which Yugoslavia collapsed and the appalling bloodshed that ensued. Meanwhile, the EU’s ability to build peace in the region in the current era is being called into question as its commitment to further enlargement is felt – correctly or incorrectly – to be wavering. There are still a large number of potential hotspots that need to be tackled in South East Europe, including Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Cyprus. In each case, the lure of enlargement has been widely perceived to be the best guarantee that a return to violence is kept in check. While I don’t think we will see fighting resume, without a clear EU perspective the region will certainly remain unstable. Therefore, while the award of the Nobel Prize is certainly richly deserved in terms of the process of Franco-German reconciliation and the reunification of Europe after the Cold War, South East Europe poses a continuing challenge to the Union and its widely lauded model of conflict transformation.

We ought not to let the award narrow our understanding of what the EU is and why it has grown

Kevin Featherstone is the Eleftherios Venizelos Professor of Contemporary Greek Studies and Director of the Hellenic Observatory in the European Institute.



Of course we must applaud the award of such a prestigious prize to the European Union. It

is justified in various ways. But we ought not to let the award narrow our understanding of what the EU is and why it has grown. The Paris and Rome treaties in the 1950s laid the basis for Franco-German reconciliation and that was historically significant. But other interests were at play already for both of them and for the rest of the 'Six'. Moreover, the subsequent enlargements of the EU were not really grounded in the same logic. Britain, Denmark and Ireland in 1973 signed up for largely economic reasons as did the Scandinavians in 1996; southern Europe in the 1980s acceded in order to consolidate democracy and secure modernisation. Again, central Europe joined in 2004 to end their isolation and modernise. In other words, the narrative of 'Why Europe?' has long been wider and more complex than simply that of peace and reconciliation after 1945. The implications of this are still felt today: as our motives and interests in being part of the 'Club' differ, we have too many 'Europes' and can't agree on a common way forward. We never have had, nor are we likely to have, one narrative on 'Europe' or the EU, be it peace or any other goal.



One can't help be struck by the weird timing of this award

Chris Brown is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics. He writes on international political theory, human rights, and issues of global justice.



If we regard this Nobel Prize as broadly analogous to a 'Lifetime Achievement' Oscar then it makes perfect sense. The EU and its predecessor organisations (the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, EURATOM, the European Community) have indeed played an important role in bringing about reconciliation between Germany and the rest of Europe after 1945, and integrating the former Soviet satellites into a wider European society post 1989. In the first case the award should perhaps be shared with the ghost of Joseph Stalin, fear of whose Soviet Union was an important factor in Franco-German reconciliation but the EU certainly deserves an assist; similarly the post 1989 record isn't wholly unambiguous but largely creditable.

Still, one can't help be struck by the weird timing of this award – it is, I think, difficult to see how the Eurozone crisis has added to (as opposed to actually subtracting from) peace and security in Europe. But then, the timing of Nobel Peace Prizes has always been a little shaky. The pre-emptive award to President Obama in 2009 is a case in point, an award based on what he might do in the future rather than any actual achievement. In that case the hidden agenda (actually not that hidden) was to insult President George W Bush – this time the Academy may have felt that the EU would appreciate the compliment given that so many people are attacking its management of affairs.

EU wins Nobel Prize? Beware, here be dragons!

Daniel Thomas is associate professor of European governance in University College Dublin's School of Politics and International Relations, director of the UCD Dublin European Institute and editor of its blog www.europedebate.ie

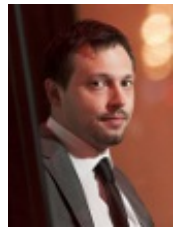


The far edges of medieval maps were often inscribed with a warning for travellers "Cave, hic dragones" (Beware, here be dragons.) This is precisely the danger raised by today's (well justified) decision to award the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the EU for its contribution to peace, democracy and human rights in Europe. Notwithstanding the EU's huge contribution to pacifying and democratising a continent that previously had known warfare and dictatorship, the Union is now confronting two enormous existential crises: the obvious one (huge debts, uneven growth, unstable currency) and a less obvious one (the increasing gap between the identities and demands of citizens and the institutions and policy programmes of the Union). In this environment, any vigorous or historically-focused celebration of the award will exacerbate the public's sense that Brussels is out of touch with who they are, what they think and what they need. Instead, EU leaders and officials should use this occasion to raise public awareness of what the Union does for EU citizens today and what opportunities exist for them to shape its future.

In times of crisis and doubt, it is the duty of Europeans to remember that peace, democracy and

human rights should never be sacrificed for temporal gains

Nick Cherrier is a consultant at Simon-Kucher & Partners, a global strategy and marketing consulting firm. He initially studied business and international relations at Bond University in Australia, before developing an interest in European affairs at the LSE and Sciences Po.



As a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2012, the EU joins the list of 20 organisations to have been awarded the honour. Its contribution to “the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe” is what prompted the award, and serves as a reminder of its purpose. While the European Coal and Steel Community was since its inception mired in the advancement of its members’ financial interests, the people of Europe ought not forget the organisation’s “raison d’être”.

Through its six decades of existence, the European Union has changed its name and its treaties, but its vision of bringing forth an ever closer union is what bonds its enthusiasts. The peace we enjoy today in Europe was brought by a long path of co-dependence and a sense of fraternity towards neighbouring peoples. In times of crisis and doubt, it is the duty of Europeans to remember that peace, democracy and human rights should never be sacrificed for temporal gains.

A view from the “Erasmus” generation

Giulia Pastorella is a PhD student at the LSE European Institute. Her PhD will look at issues of political legitimacy in the context of the current crisis. She is also an academic assistant at Sciences Po Paris.



The Nobel Prize comes just at the right moment for the EU, and I feel it has been given as much as an incentive for the future as recognition for the past. Its citizens need it, to be reassured in times when opinion polls show increasingly low levels of trust in the European project. Its institutions need it, to be reminded of what they have achieved in the past and reassure them that their role is still fundamental. Its governments need it, as it will help them communicate to their national constituencies the necessity of saving such a project by, if necessary, painful measures. Its economy badly needs it, as of the two pillars of the European project, peace and prosperity; it is all too clear which one is sustaining the rest of the construction. Its neighbours need it, to be reminded that the EU is still an attractive family to be part of.

But the Nobel Prize comes especially at a crucial time for us, the younger generations. We are wondering whether the EU is undermining our future by its clumsy reaction to the eurocrisis, and becoming increasingly irrelevant on the international scene. We worry about the here and now and what will come next, overlooking what has been achieved so far. Most importantly, because we have not lived through any war on the European continent, we tend to take peace for granted. Hopefully there will be no reasons not to take peace for granted in the future, but it is good for us to be reminded that Europe is more than Erasmus and austerity.

It might further fuel anger against the Union

Raluca Besliu is a masters student at the University of Oxford.



The European Union was awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for its role in peaceful post-World War II reconciliation and for spreading democracy and human rights in Europe. Now overwhelmed by the economic crisis and increasingly contested, the EU desperately needs to be validated as a useful political entity. While the Nobel Peace Prize strives to achieve exactly that, it might in fact do the opposite, by bringing into focus the multiple human rights problems that the EU is currently facing and is unable to solve. Among other issues, the EU has proved itself unable to defend and promote the rights of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees or to resolve the Roma minority problems that many of its Member States are facing. Externally, the EU has failed to take a strong stance in conflicts such as the one currently devastating Syria.

On a different note, awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU in a time when many EU citizens from Madrid to Athens are taking to the streets to express their current economic problems, in part caused by the common European currency's crisis, suggests a disregard for and an affront against these people's real and acute problems. It might further fuel their anger against the Union.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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