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## **The Emblematic Statement of the Nobel Peace Prize**

**Derek Centola**



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***The Emblematic Statement of the Nobel Peace Prize:  
Is the European Union a Hallmark of European Unification or a Failing Experiment?***

***By Derek Centola***

On October 12<sup>th</sup> the Nobel Committee announced that the annual Nobel Peace Prize would be awarded to the European Union for, “promoting peace, democracy and human rights over six decades”.<sup>1</sup> This was a bit of good news for the EU who had produced nothing but bad press with the Euro Crisis, the bailouts of struggling countries like Greece, and protests in the southern member states of Spain, Portugal, and Italy. At such a momentous occasion the EU’s next challenge was to figure out who would be the rightful head of the EU to accept the award. The EU has made their decision by opting to send its top three officials Jose Manuel Barroso the President of the European Commission, Herman Van Rompuy the President of the European Council, and Martin Schulz the President of the European Parliament<sup>2</sup> as a sign that the EU is not headed by one person but instead is an supranational economic and political bloc that seeks to unify the European continent. Their symbolic acceptance of the award is in response to what Geir Lundestad, the Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, called, “an accumulated record.”<sup>3</sup> This record has ushered the EU into the international spotlight as a beacon for countries in the EU’s periphery to want to join the bloc.

However, just as soon as the decision of who to send to the award ceremony, which included sending the 27 heads of state and government for the member states of the EU, was announced, Eurosceptic officials made sweeping statements of disapproval for the EU and its current policies. David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Vaclav Klaus, the President of the Czech Republic, both showed their dissatisfaction as part of the coalition that would not be attending the award ceremony. This Euroscepticism is eminent throughout Europe as the financial burdens of the Euro Crisis was taken to new heights as the debate over the seven year EU budget was debated at the Budget Summit in Brussels. So with the dual perspectives of the EU as a beacon of hope for a brighter future based on the record of the European Union, as represented by the Nobel committee’s sentiments, and the Eurosceptic point of view of EU member state government officials battling for political capital a question is raised. Is the EU with its diffusion of power the answer for Europe’s historically painful nationalism problem or is it an experiment with an increasingly approaching expiration date? The success of the EU’s diffusion of power, the quality of life of the EU’s stakeholders, and the external relations of the EU help to dictate whether or not we will continue to see steadfast support for the ever evolving nature of the EU or if we will see its ultimate demise and division.

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<sup>1</sup> (Koranyi and Klesty)

<sup>2</sup> (Rettman)

<sup>3</sup> (Lundestad)

*The Case for a European Failure:  
Euro-sceptic Politics, Financial Floundering, and National Protest*

In Mr. Lundestad's interview with journalist Geir Helljesen he pointed out five key factors as to why the Committee had awarded the Nobel to the EU. These factors included French- German reconciliation, the incorporation of the, "southern democracies" ( Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal), the incorporation of former Soviet bloc countries after the fall of the Berlin Wall, increasing democratic reform and human rights in Turkey, and increasing Europe's involvement in the Balkan nations.<sup>4</sup> Although the comment about change in Turkey can be seen as controversial, as Turkey has been a perennial candidate state for the EU but has yet to be accepted as a fully-fledged member state, the overall theme of Mr. Lundestad's speech pointed out that European integration is what earned it the Nobel Prize. However, from the point of view of a Euro-sceptic, European integration has become more of a hindrance to member states than a benefit. One needs only to look at the issues of finance and foreign relations to see how the past sixty years of integration have created the current imbroglios that we see all over the news. With the EU divided upon further economic integration, which will inevitably lead to further political integration, and those that want to go it alone we see the potential for a splintered EU and, ultimately, proof that the European project is a failure.

*Euro-scepticism: The effects of a divided bloc*

As we try to grapple with Euro-scepticism we need to answer some key questions. What does it mean to be a Euro-sceptic? Who are the Euro-sceptics? What are their major beliefs? How does this perspective materialize in EU politics? A basic definition can be offered by John McCormick, the author of European Union Politics. Euro-scepticism is,

"Opposition to the process of European integration, or doubts about the direction in which it is moving, based mainly on concerns about the loss of state sovereignty and about the undemocratic or elitist manner in which decisions on integration have been taken."<sup>5</sup>

This definition gives us perspective as to why Euro-sceptics are fervently against the further continuation of European integration. The importance of this disbelief in the European project has created a buzz from the United Kingdom. The UK has historically been reluctant to join in the integration of Europe. The nation struggled with joining the European Economic Community in 1950, and was the first member state to hold a national referendum on whether or not to stay in the EU in 1975.<sup>6</sup> The policies of the conservative government of the UK in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher are where the origins of Euro-scepticism are drawn. The public opinion of EU

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<sup>4</sup> (Lundestad)

<sup>5</sup> (McCormick , p.291)

<sup>6</sup> (McCormick , p.292)

hostility followed in the UK during the 1990s as it spread throughout Europe. So it seems now as no surprise that the UK leads the charge on questioning the EU's every move.

The UK is not the only nation to have a major Eurosceptic mentality. Each and every time there is a major treaty to be agreed upon by the member states there has been at least one member state that did not pass the treaty via national referendum. For example the Lisbon treaty was voted against by the Irish in 2009. The reason according to Michael Martin, the former Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, was, "people were on doorsteps saying 'I still don't know enough about this treaty.'" <sup>7</sup> This lack of understanding is a driving force behind the Euroscepticism. McCormick refers to this knowledge deficit, or "the gap between how the EU works and what ordinary Europeans know about the process" as a common ailment throughout the member states, including those that have been part of integration from its time as the European Coal and Steel Community, or ECSC. According to the September, 2009 *Eurobarometer*, the EU's public opinion polling service, France and Italy both reported below average understanding of the EU. <sup>8</sup> This is quite surprising considering that France has been a constant champion of integration and Italy's time of membership (Italy was one of the founding members of the ECSC).

The Euroscepticism and knowledge deficit have led to a divided EU. As anti-integration sentiment grows, member states like the UK will look to disentangle themselves from the structural framework of the EU. As instances of political bickering and differences of opinion continue to dominate the headlines, Europeans will continue to express their opinions of distaste for more Europe.

*Financial Floundering:  
How the budget summit shows the EU challenges in making a budget*

The EU had a perfect moment to preserve their legitimacy for the Nobel last month as they entered negotiations for its budget over the next seven years at the Budget Summit in Brussels. However, they relinquished any shot they had at making a positive showing of their abilities to negotiate. This unfortunate inability to come to a compromise over €1 Trillion, a relatively small amount of money compared to the budgets of some of the member states, showcased the EU's factional relationship.

The Budget Summit was a watershed moment for the EU. This marked the first major budget discussion of the economic bloc that was more concerned with austerity than prosperity. According to Heather A. Conley, a senior fellow at the Washington D.C. based Center for Strategic and International Studies, "The first sixty years of the EU was about forming a strong economic bloc throughout Europe with funds equally distributed to wealthy countries and poor countries alike." <sup>9</sup> However, with the Euro Crisis and the German-lead Austerity measures in place, profound changes in the internal political dynamics of the EU's supranational institutions took a turn for the worse.

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<sup>7</sup> (Lorca , p.9)

<sup>8</sup> (The European Commission)

<sup>9</sup> (Conley)

The battle lines were drawn at the Summit. There were the “Friend of Cohesion” (The Polish, Hungarians and other Baltic states) who were net recipients of regional developmental spending and who supported an increased budget. On the other hand, there were the, “Friends of Better Spending (The Germans, French, and British amongst other Northern member states) who, as net contributors to the EU budget, preferred a reduced budget so that there would be less of a strain on national economies. In addition there were groups that advocated for spending increases, or spending level freezes, in certain aspects including the, “Friends of Farm Subsidies”, which included countries like France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, and Romania who are highly dependent on agricultural production, and the “UK and company”, which included Austria, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany, who were large supporters of rebates. The UK receives a multibillion euro rebate in a system where member states are paid back money from the EU in compensation for a lack of benefits that other member states receive. The UK, with its small agricultural sector, receives little from the Common Agricultural Policy, or CAP, in which the EU spends about forty-five percent of its budget so its rebate is validated.<sup>10</sup>

The EU’s marquee institutions, the European Commission, the European Council, and the European Parliament, whose leadership accepted the Nobel on December 10<sup>th</sup>, did not use their power to make any sort of reconciliation between the member states. Rather they usurped their position to play political games. The Commission proposed a draft of the budget that totaled €1.033 Trillion, however, it kept some key items off the draft. When these items are added the proposal totals €1.091 trillion, a 6 percent increase, and much to the chagrin of the UK, would likely do away with rebates by 2020. The Parliament acted no better in posturing for what it wanted. It stood in favor of increasing EU spending, advocated an increase of resources to include revenue independent of national treasuries, and went so far as to threaten to use its veto if it did not get those new resources. Luckily for the Parliament it has the final approval of the budget. Mr. Van Rompuy, as leader of the Council, did not seem concerned with the consequences of the failed talks, which ended up unable to close a difference of €30 billion, as he was quoted as saying, “there’s no need to dramatize. These budget negotiations are so complex it generally takes two goes.”<sup>11</sup>

As far as the member states were concerned there remained a North- South divide. Countries with floundering economies like France, Spain, and Italy demanded increased EU spending, whereas countries like the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany opted for strict austerity. A third faction broke out. The newer member states from Central and Eastern Europe, led by Poland, demanded a larger budget as well. However, they were consigned to the margins of negotiations by the bigger players. The talks also showcased some particular issues for certain member states. The UK’s isolation from continental Europe, for instance, was on display. Due to an anemic British economy indicated by a declining manufacturing sector, slowed rate of growth in the service sector, the negatively trending Purchasing Managers Index (a private indicator of the rate of purchase managers’ acquisition of goods and services), and political struggles for Prime Minister David Cameron and his Conservative party, the UK was on an island during the budget negotiations.<sup>1213</sup> Cameron has recently struggled to regain the support of the British

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<sup>10</sup> (The European Commission)

<sup>11</sup> (Conley)

<sup>12</sup> (Chaffin and Barker)

people in saying, “I am quite prepared to use the veto if we don’t get a deal that’s good for Britain”<sup>14</sup> in referring to the Budget Summit. Germany, on the other hand, was the most critical member state in the discussions. The Angela Merkel- led government believes the EU budget should be capped at 1 percent of the Union’s gross national income. However, the Germans have varied interests. Whereas Merkel sympathizes with the British need to limit the budget, she favors support for the EU’s ex-Communist members in the form of developmental funds, and to top it all off, Germany is a large recipient of the CAP. So to say the least, Germany was split three ways and unable to help move the negotiations further.

The Budget Summit was an overall failure and after a half-hearted attempt to restart the discussions a week later, Bénédicte Williams of *The Budapest Times*, reported “the talks have been postponed until early [2013].”<sup>15</sup> This is not surprising as the EU is inundated with several discussions, including the creation of a potential Banking Union. Things to keep an eye on as news comes out through the rest of the year will be Cameron’s role as the leading voice for controlled expenditure and budget size and the French- German relationship, one that Secretary Lundestad brought up as the most important aspect of EU success, as it grinds to a halt based on political opposition between charismatic Socialist French President Francois Hollande and his counterpart pragmatic Christian- Democrat German Chancellor Angela Merkel. There is much mistrust between the two continental power loci as Germany will side with the UK and France with the southern member states of Spain and Italy.

#### *Unemployed Unrest:*

*Why the high unemployment rates member states have led to an anti-European sentiment*

A background story to the failed Budget Summit is the struggle of European integration as high unemployment hit the vast majority of the member states. With the unemployment rate of the Euro zone area at 11.7 percent, and the EU – 27 (the entirety of the EU) at 10.7 percent<sup>16</sup> political problems have raised their heads in several member states. Strikes and protests have rocked the continent over the past year. Not only have financially struggling member states like Greece have been impacted but historically economically stable nations like France and the UK have been susceptible to high unemployment. On November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 a day of anti- austerity rage engrossed the continent as unemployed protestors battled with policemen armed in riot gear in nearly every major European city. This type of unrest is certainly not something deserved of the Nobel Peace Prize.

What might be more important to note is the youth job crisis. In a piece written by Katinka Barysch, the Deputy Director of the London based Centre for European Reform, she expresses that youth unemployment has historically been higher than the overall rate of unemployment. During the current Euro crisis 22 percent of 15- 24 year- olds in the EU are

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<sup>13</sup> (Markit)

<sup>14</sup> (Spiegel Online)

<sup>15</sup> (Williams)

<sup>16</sup> (Eurostat)

unemployed and in member states such as Greece and Spain the rate is as high as 50 percent.<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Barysch goes on to explain that these rates do not fully explain the whole story. When taken into account the total of young people not in employment, education or training, or NEETs, the numbers become cataclysmic. In Greece and Bulgaria almost 25 percent of the under-30 population are NEETs.<sup>18</sup> However, it is a disproportionate amount amongst the EU member states. In Austria and the Netherlands, for instance, the NEET percentage is closer to 5 – 8 percent.<sup>19</sup>

This lopsided economic unrest has only made it more difficult for EU politicians to be able to come to agreement on economic issues. The reason the EU has supposedly earned the Nobel is the promise that it has given for young Europeans following the fallout of World War II. However, if its politics fail to provide for the youth of their country then they can only look forward to more economic and political struggles in the future.

#### *The Case for a Successful Europe:*

##### *Diffusion of powers, shared Europeanism, and hope for a better future for EU candidates*

The EU is not a complete story of doom and gloom, however. In fact, there are several reasons the bloc has validated its achievement of the Nobel. Europe has historically been dominated by imperial powers that are focused in one nation or another. Since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1951 (and its implementation in 1952), the supranational government led integration of Europe has been a beacon of light for those countries formerly under Soviet domination and has been a model for other continents and regions to emulate.

#### *Institutions of Peace:*

##### *How the diffusion of supranational power has successfully avoided nationalistic issues*

The greatest hallmark of the EU is that its diffusion of power has tempered the nationalistic rivalries within the continent. As Secretary Lundestad listed his reasons for awarding the EU the Nobel Prize his central tenants included expansion and integration. None of that would have been possible without the ability to compromise between the interests of member states. The creation of the EU institutions of the Commission, Council, and Parliament to generate and pass new laws has continued to be platforms where all member states can feel their voice is heard.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, originated in the form of the nine-member High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the common market that was the original model for the European Union. In 1967, under the terms of the 1965 Merger/Brussels Treaty, the ECSC, European Economic Community (EEC)

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<sup>17</sup> (Eurostat)

<sup>18</sup> (Eurostat)

<sup>19</sup> (Eurostat)



and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) were all folded under the umbrella of the Commission of the European Communities, or more commonly known as the European Commission.<sup>20</sup> The Commission is the epitome of a supranational institution. It is comprised of civil servants who represent each member state, whose responsibilities include implementing and enforcing EU policy, drawing up the EU budget and for EU administration, and making formal proposals for EU legislation. Most importantly, the Commission is the guardian of the treaties. As the EU does not have a formal constitution, after its defeat at the hands of Eurosceptics in France and the Netherlands, it is now reliant on the Lisbon Treaty, which amended the Treaties of Rome and Maastricht, to become the overall law of the land. Their role as the executive branch has allowed for its leadership, President of the Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, of Portugal, and Vice- President of the Commission Catherine Ashton, of the UK, to serve the desires of the EU – 27 with authority and equality.

Interestingly enough, the Lisbon Treaty (passed in 2009) created a new position, the President of the European Council, or simply the Council.<sup>21</sup> The Council historically has had a vague description of duties. However, with the passage of the Lisbon Treaty the Council's description is spelled out.

“The European Council shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and shall define the general political directions and priorities thereof. It shall not exercise legislative functions.”<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, the Council is an intergovernmental institution comprised of the heads of government, and state for Cyprus and France, whose functions is to set the political and strategic tone for the EU as based upon by unanimous decision of the leaders of each member state. The President of the Council, Herman Van Rompuy is the Council's first President appointed by the Council's members. A modest man, the former Prime Minister from Belgium, was chosen for his moderate political stance and because he does not hail from one of the more powerful member states, such as Germany, France or the UK. Mr. Van Rompuy and the Council have made several key political decisions already such as the appointment of Catherine Ashton to the role of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

In addition to the two “constitutional” heads of governments, President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz leads the one institution that is the direct representation of the European populace. The European Parliament, directly elected by universal suffrage of all Europeans, has several powers to include shared legislative powers with the Council, control over the EU budget, and, direct supervision of the Commission.<sup>23</sup>

The system of checks and balances put in place for the EU institutions, although at sometimes a political burden that slows the process of progress has made the process of governance in the EU a method that successfully takes the collective desires of the member states into account. This federalization of Europe is based on shared desires for unification and a collective understanding of a shared history and culture. These shared aspects allow the EU to remain an encouraging for the future.

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<sup>20</sup> (McCormick)

<sup>21</sup> (McCormick)

<sup>22</sup> (European Union)

<sup>23</sup> (The European Parliament)

### *Europeanism: The coming together for a European public sphere*

In addition to discussing Euroscepticism, John McCormick discusses its counter focus. Europeanism, or the political, economic and social values that Europeans have in common, is the overall mentality that Europeans have developed through the European integration experiment. Being European gives a unique experience that has generated high value of democracy, market liberalism, and specific stances on issues ranging from welfare, family issues, capital punishment, and the role of religion in public life.<sup>24</sup>

A point of critical Europeanism occurred in 2003 as overwhelming public opinion within the major European cities of the EU demonstrated major opposition to the United States-led invasion of Iraq. This collective approach was a marquee moment for what philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida called the, “European public sphere” and claimed that a ‘core Europe’ had been created and would eventually become an international counterweight to the United States.<sup>25</sup>

McCormick outlines key points that bring Europeans together. These include instinctive ideas of communitarianism. That is the refusal of individualistic, self-centered, thought and the idea that through a collective will and effort Europe can pull itself through tough times. Europeans also agree on the importance of the role of the state and how a strong government can help with the progress. Another driving force behind Europeanism is multiculturalism. That is to say through European integration the exposure of other nationalistic customs and histories has led to acceptance and cooperation for a more unified Europe. It is because of this growing Europeanism that those in the European neighborhood look to receive EU candidacy and eventually member statehood.

### *Hope: Reasons Eastern European states want to join the EU*

As of now the EU stands at 27 member states. After years of negotiating, Croatia is expected to join the EU July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.<sup>26</sup> Croatia applied for candidate status in 2003, four years prior to what several economists regarded as the beginning of the European sovereign debt crisis (otherwise known as the Euro crisis).<sup>27</sup> While still not a member state, Croatia has had to undergo what will become a decade of conforming to the Copenhagen Criteria, or mandates enforced by the EU for a country to go from becoming a candidate to a member state. Why would Croatia put themselves through these stringent regulations and requirements just to join the struggling bloc? According to the website for the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Croatia, at the end of the process of conforming to the Copenhagen Criteria, the,

“Country is a better service for its citizens and numerous areas are better regulated than in the beginning of the process... Croatian citizens will have the same rights as other EU citizens... and finally Croatia will be in a better position and will have a stronger

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<sup>24</sup> (McCormick , p.299)

<sup>25</sup> (Habermas and Derrida)

<sup>26</sup> (European Commission)

<sup>27</sup> (Haldar)

influence in the world and better chances for dealing with the process and consequences of globalization.”<sup>28</sup>

That sounds great coming from the perspective of a EU supporter but what do the people of Croatia think? Croatian political analyst Višeslav Raos acknowledged the economic issues of the EU: “We know that the [EU] is not a remedy to all economic and social problems.”<sup>29</sup> However, in spite of the uncertainty of the EU’s finances, in the Croatian ascension referendum on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 66 percent of the vote was in favor.<sup>30</sup> It seemed that what the Delegation promised to the Croatian people outweighed the costs associated with the Euro crisis.

Another interesting candidate for ascension into the EU is the Republic of Macedonia. It has been at candidate status since it was granted the title from the European Council in 2005 and the process moved forward in 2009 when the European Commission opened ascension negotiations. The Republic of Macedonia hails from the Balkan region, mostly made up of countries that were part of the former Yugoslavia before the nation disintegrated in a massive civil war, and due to its recent past is able to look at the EU as a promise for peace in spite of the EU’s financial issues. Republic of Macedonia Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki commented that, “the EU may be dominated by the debt crisis at present, but it is also a peace project: the most successful peace project in history... The Balkan countries have taken note of this.”<sup>31</sup> The promise for peace has allowed the people of the Republic of Macedonia to endure the lengthy EU candidacy with public support for ascension still over 90 percent.<sup>32</sup>

The candidacy process is long for former Soviet and Balkan countries but they are highly aware of the promise that being a member of the EU brings. EU membership stands as a light at the end of the tunnel for the future for these countries. In spite of the financial crisis that has resulted in nothing but high profile politicking and squabbling, the EU has firmly entrenched itself by bringing Europe together.

*Weighing Both Sides: EU success story is built upon the political problems*

So there we have it, the case for both sides. The EU is ripe with economic and political problems. The mess will continue to become more complicated as the EU looks to grant member status to Croatia in 2013 and other countries like the Republic of Macedonia in the near future. With close to thirty countries all with different needs and desires it will become almost politically impossible to come to a definite solution. Those member states, like the UK, who are incredibly Eurosceptic, will have to have an internal debate as to whether or not they want to continue to be a part of the bloc or if they want to utilize the Lisbon Treaty provision allowing them to exit the EU.

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<sup>28</sup> (Delegation fo the European Union to the Republic of Croatia)

<sup>29</sup> (BBC)

<sup>30</sup> (BBC)

<sup>31</sup> (European Policy Centre)

<sup>32</sup> (European Policy Centre)

The EU's mess, however, can be seen as simply growing pains as it contends with trying to figure out what it will be heading into the next decade of the twenty-first century. As Secretary Lundestad claimed, the accumulated record of the EU over the past 60 years has achieved its sought after goal, the avoidance of a third World War. The historic success of the EU is where the current EU leaders should look in order to be able to negotiate a solution to dealing with internal problems. In spite of Euroscepticism, financial issues, and uncertainty of the unification of the bloc the EU will be around for a long time to come and will simply need to figure out what direction they need to head in to continue its well-earned success. The Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony served as a crucial point for EU leadership to demonstrate what political direction they would opt for.

*From the Peanut Gallery: What the Nobel Ceremony does for the EU*

When they accepted the Nobel on December 10<sup>th</sup>, it was incumbent upon Presidents Barroso, Van Rompuy, and Schulz to remind the world of the idea that the EU has been and still is a long standing economic and political force for peace and progress. The pomp and circumstance of the ceremony, which included the recognition of Franco-German reconciliation with French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor standing hand-in-hand, in front of the assembly of who's who of EU importance and the Norwegian Royal family in Oslo, made for much fanfare and commentary by speculative observers who questioned the expensive and glamorous show and social event in a continent supposedly undergoing measures of austerity. Overall, the acceptance of the Peace Prize allowed the EU leadership to speak for Europe to a global audience.

Of the three Presidents, Mr. Van Rompuy and Mr. Barroso gave speeches. Both men decided to push different agendas. Mr. Van Rompuy sought to embellish upon the unification of the award, while Mr. Barroso opted to utilize the moment to express the EU's desire to take critical action in a part of the world that desperately needs peace. In his speech Mr. Van Rompuy took a page out of former American President John F. Kennedy's famous "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" speech during the height of the Cold War and the split of Germany, when he said, "*Ich bin ein Europaer. Je suis fier d'etre Europaen. I am proud to be European.*"<sup>33</sup> The symbolism in his speech was critical as he utilized his opportunity to try to unify the bloc that, as previously stated, has several issues including Euroscepticism.

Demonstrating their disapproval of the EU's success 6 high profile heads of state and government, including David Cameron, were absent at the ceremony. In Cameron's place representing the UK was Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the UK's Liberal Democrat Party, Nick Clegg, a profoundly Pro- EU leader within the UK Parliament. Mr. Clegg's perspective on the Nobel committee's choice was one that stood in opposition to the popular position within the UK, yet, joined the chorus of voices praising the EU. "The fact that people are now arguing across negotiating tables rather than conflict across battlefields, I think is a good

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<sup>33</sup> (The Telegraph)

thing for our continent as a whole," said Mr. Clegg in an interview with the London based, *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper.<sup>34</sup>

In regards to EU foreign policy, Mr. Barroso took his opportunity on the world's stage to discuss potential action by the EU in war-torn Syria. Mr. Barroso claimed that,

"As a community of nations that has overcome war and fought totalitarianism, we will always stand by those who are in pursuit of peace and human dignity, and let me say it from here today: the current situation in Syria is a stain on the world's conscience, and the international community has a moral duty to address it."<sup>35</sup>

This statement could have been negatively construed by opponents to the EU's reception of the award. Former Nobel Peace recipients Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire and Adolfo Perez Esquivel wrote a joint letter expressing their displeasure with the choice of the Nobel committee, claiming that, "The EU is not seeking to realize Nobel's demilitarized global peace order."<sup>36</sup>

The actions of the EU seemingly are better than their word. On December 18<sup>th</sup>, just over a week after the EU had received the award and the 8 million Kronor (\$1.2 million) the EU announced that it would be sending the cash prize, along with an additional €1 million provided by the EU (to make a grand total of €2 million), to be donated to children impacted by war in Syria, Colombia, Congo, and Pakistan. The funds will go to help 23,000 children in four projects including a program run by *Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique Et au Développement*, ACTED, a French NGO working in the Domiz Refugee camp in Northern Iraq with around 4,000 displaced Syrian children. This is a huge move for the EU in coming to the aid of the Syrian people. "In situations of conflict, children are often the most vulnerable," said EU president Herman Van Rompuy. "So it is only right that this award should benefit young victims of armed conflicts."<sup>37</sup>

### *Concluding Thoughts: An optimistic future grounded in the past*

Following the announcement of the EU as the Nobel Peace Prize recipient, the acceptance banquet and awards ceremony, and the action taken by the EU to utilize its influence both financially and politically helps to validate the EU as a force for peace. Indeed, the bloc has its issues. As the discussion of further integration, expansion with the addition of Croatia in 2013, and the continued internal development, the EU will undoubtedly face further criticism from all areas including outside observers, disgruntled member state politicians, and those disenfranchised European citizens.

However, as the recognition of the EU as the Nobel Peace Prize tells us the citizens of Europe must remember the past and cannot be too quick to blame the EU for its issues. When

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<sup>34</sup> (The Telegraph)

<sup>35</sup> (The Telegraph)

<sup>36</sup> (Pearson)

<sup>37</sup> (Agence France-Presse)

confronted with issues the EU has done what it could to improve the circumstances for its citizens and the European continent. With continued additions and a list of candidate countries looking to join the bloc it must be understood what a good thing the EU has. As we head into 2013 the world will sit with a watchful eye as to what role the EU will have in the further integrating world's stage. One thing is for certain. The EU will continue to stand for peace.

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