

Nov 04, 2016 by [Nicholas J. Cull](#)

Obama's Nobel Prize ^[1]

It was a strange feeling to wake this morning to news of President Obama's Nobel Prize on the radio. For an instant I really thought I might still be dreaming. My first reaction to the news was that it is extremely premature, as if they had given him the Nobel Prize for Literature for *Dreams of My Father*. On reflection I think it is a powerful illustration of the hope embodied by President Obama, especially in contrast to the despair which we Europeans felt when we looked at the Bush administration with its wars and taste for unilateral foreign policy. It is also a reminder to the world just how remarkable it is to see a major nation choose a president from a once ostracized and still disadvantaged minority. In a world where so much conflict comes from racial divides, Obama is a great symbol of peace. But while this -- like the recent rise of the US to the top of the Anholt nation brand index -- is a great shot in the arm for US public diplomacy, it has its limits. It is wonderful to know that Europe loves Obama and identifies him with peace; but the reality is that he is still running two wars, and some of his choices reflect continuity with Bush policy. I wonder what the reaction to this news will be in Pakistan, where well over a thousand civilians have been killed in drone attacks?

Much as I admire the president, the trick for American diplomacy is now to fulfill the promise of its leader and deliver policies to match the promise.
