

# NORWAY'S CRUEL JOKE

Written by Harvey M. Sapolsky

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HARVEY M. SAPOLSKY, OCT 11 2009

The selection of Barack Obama as the recipient of the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize belittles the President. Everybody knows that with just a few months in office that he has not had time to accomplish anything significant. His speeches may be inspiring, but they are likely written by others and usually express broad, vague aspirations that are neither unusual nor likely to be fulfilled soon. Don't most of us want peace in the Middle East, more international cooperation, and a quick return to global prosperity?

The award places President Obama next to such figures of national derision as President Jimmy Carter and Vice President Al Gore neither of whom have high standing even within the Democratic party in the United States. It also reminds Americans of how determined some foreign elites are to shape American policies, seeking as they do influence without the burden of consequence. You will not find many Norwegian soldiers anywhere, including Afghanistan.

President Obama faces some crucial decisions. It mocks him to praise him before he has made any of them and we learn their impact. The criticism of Affirmative Action in the US is that it gives people the rewards of achievement who have not yet earned the rewards with actual achievement, which precisely what the Nobel committee has done with the Peace Prize. Barack Obama did win the presidency through his own efforts. We should let him earn our acclaim for wise decisions and important achievements as president.

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### About the author:

**Harvey M. Sapolsky** is Professor of Public Policy and Organization, Emeritus, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former Director of the MIT Security Studies Program. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Michigan and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In the defense field he has served as a consultant or panel member for a number of government commissions and study groups. His most recent books are *US Defense Politics* written with Eugene Gholz and Caitlin Talmadge and *US Military Innovation Since the Cold War* edited with Benjamin Friedman and Brendan Green, both published by Routledge.