

Norway, a 25 year odyssey: From sympathiser to colonial intruder

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Norway's self image held across its political spectrum is that of a sensitive nation, sympathetic to developing countries which devotes over 1% of its oil generated GNP to aid. Yet Norway's image in Sri Lanka outside the government controlled press has declined to an unprecedented level. It is worse than the image India had after its brief incursion into the country in the late 1980s or the West had in the height of the Non-Aligned Movement. Norwegians are perceived as the new "Ugly American". Indicator: the Norwegian Prime Minister and the Sri Lankan President exchange public insults.

The present paper traces the shift of Norway to colonial intruder, partly through an exercise in participant observation. In late 1970s and early 1980s, the author interacted closely with Norwegian academics to attempt equal academic partnerships. The shift is traced through several events/factors, the period of initial mutual respect, indicating the ethos of the 1970s, reflected partly in academia and Regional Developmental plans of the 1980s; the growth of a large number of Tamil refugees in Norway and a perceived bias in Visa issuing (far more people died in the South due to government death squads than in the Northern conflict, yet the Sinhalese-Tamil population ratio in Norway remains at 200: 20,000); the use of Norwegian university structures as in Tromso University to legitimize Tamil Eelam; the built-in neo-colonial attitudes of Norwegian funded NGOs reflected in World View founder Fpijertof described in Norway as equal in Sri Lanka to Buddha and Marx; Norwegian funds directed to pro-separatist fronts such as International Alert which directly adopted the LTTE agenda, and the National Peace Council; the colonial role of Westborg as firstly head of Redd Barne in illegally changing the ethnic demographics of the country and later as intrusive ambassador.

These Norwegian intrusions in reshaping Sri Lankan polity are contrasted with Norway's own internal political arrangements such as requiring its leaders to be of the Lutheran Church and speak Norwegian, and white Supremist Eugenic past.

Key words: Political spectrum; Non- Aligned movement; Political arrangements; Ethnic demographics; Norway; Sri Lanka