

Ideological Warfare: Role of Foreign Funded NGOs and the Death of Civil Society in Sri Lanka

Susantha Goonatilake ¹

The explosion of foreign funded NGOs is a result of the New Policy Agenda in the Western world undertaken in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In countries such as India, Malaysia, Singapore with their strong defence and sovereignty oriented posture foreign funded NGOs have been largely limited to welfare work or to support of broad social causes. In none of these countries are foreign funded NGOs allowed to impinge on defence and sovereignty. In Sri Lanka, foreign funded NGOs have advocated erosion of sovereignty and have often acted as ideological proxies for the LTTE. The paper discusses the actions of several foreign funded NGOs such as the National Peace Council, International Alert, Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Berghof Foundation in eroding sovereignty, calling for two near states, promoting demilitarisation of the armed forces, and inciting the armed forces to go against the country's unitary constitution. Outside those foreign funded NGOs directly promoting a pro LTTE agenda are some organisations purportedly studying Sri Lanka from a social science perspective. These organisations include the ICES (Colombo) and SSA both of which have acted as major clearing houses for much of the anti Sri Lanka, and specifically anti Buddhist propaganda couched in an academic garb. Those associated with ICES Colombo have written a variety of fiction masquerading as social science whose implied messages have been against the nationalist renaissance in Sri Lanka. Some in the SSA have explicitly called for the unmaking of the Sri Lankan nation.

The paper examines in general terms the activities of these organisations as ideological warfare conducted against Sri Lanka and its people and as proxies acting for foreign interests bent on recolonization. The paper examines in greater detail activities of International Alert, the National Peace Council, and the Berghof Foundation as particular obnoxious examples. It also gives evidence that many of these organisations are run by a small coterie of persons who hold several interlocking positions in the different organisations. It is posited that the Sri Lanka's situation is a unique example of the reassertion of global Western power at a time when Asian states are getting stronger. It fits into an attempted recolonisation agenda.

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¹ E-mail: susanthag@hotmail.com