

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Norway is located in the northernmost part of European continent and occupies the northwest section of the Scandinavia peninsula.¹ The name “Norway” itself means “the way to the north”. Geographically, she ranks as the 6th largest country in Europe with a total area of 323.878 sq km². Three-fifths of Norway’s land is covered by mountains leaving a relatively small portion appropriate for agriculture and forestry. Yet Norway possesses large natural abundances of hydropower, mining and timber as well as oil, natural gas and fish.

In 2007 the population of Norway was estimated as 4,711,626 makes Norway as one of European countries with a low population density of only 15 persons per km³. Norway’s population growth is quite low and birth rates increases are stable. However, according to the United Nation Development Program (UNDP), Norway is the best place to live as the citizens enjoy the world’s highest standard of living based upon gross national product per inhabitant, education levels and life expectancy.

The discovery of huge oil and gas reserves in the Northern Sea in the late 1960s led the Norwegian economic to prosperity. Today, with oil and gas commodity accounting for approx one-third of her total export, Norway is the world’s third largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia and Russia and remains as the

¹ For the map please see appendix p.74

² Terje I. Leiren, “Norway,” *Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia*, 2006

³ Norway (accessed September 17, 2007); available from <http://wikipedia/norway.htm>

world's largest natural gas exporter.⁴ Without doubt, the petroleum sector has been one of the main pillars of Norway's economy.

Norway's economy advances are of course highly involved with the development of education which in Norway just started at the beginning of 20th century when the education level within society started to develop. During this period, compulsory education for children aged 6 to 16 was implemented. In order to facilitate this decision, the government granted free education from the lowest to highest levels. Moreover, a further educational reformation was launched between 1960 and 1970 to reduce regional inequality while improving the quality of rural schools by providing more hours of instruction and a broader selection of courses. Nowadays, the basic policy is "education for all" which allows every pupil, regardless of gender or social background, to have the same equal access to an education.

Further committing herself in this area, the state develops higher education as well emphasizing on both traditional academic education and specialized education in a single degree system. Currently Norway has 38 state-run institutions of higher education and a number of private institutions that can be divided into two sectors: the University sector and the College sector. To ensure the quality in higher education, internationalization in terms of cross-border institutional cooperation, teacher and student mobility is one of the overall aims.

In order to foster the goal of higher education advancement, the state provides large financial assistance and loans for both domestic and foreign

⁴ *Study Abroad in Norway* (accessed September 17, 2007); available from www.graduateshotline.com.

students through the State Educational Loan Fund. This fund helps to encourage equal opportunities in higher education regardless of social, economic and geographical background and to ensure that the work environment for students is satisfactory. The government also established the Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (SINTEF) to stimulate research and advance cooperation with other public and private research institutions and private industry.

Unlike many other countries, Norway can make her natural abundance helpful for her national economy improvement. A combination of a well educated labor force and advanced technology, plus stable and reliable institutions and democratic rule enables Norway to skilfully manage her natural resources and turns out to be one of the world's most succesful welfare nations.⁵ However, these achievements may not always be fully recognized.

In 2003, Norway realized she was largely "invisible". In other words, the existence of Norway was not well-known by the rest of the world. This low global recognition problem was of course a big obstacle for Norway to enhance her national image abroad. To resolve this, the government has taken initiatives to conduct large-scale cultural diplomacy. In this case, the existence of the International Students Festival in Trondheim (ISFiT) is, definitely, a positive point toward the government's efforts on cultural diplomacy.

⁵ Ola Honningdal Grytten, *The Economic History of Norway* (accessed September 10, 2007); available from <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/grytten.norway>

B. Research Questions

Understanding the problem's background, a question then emerges and deserves to be discussed: "Exactly how does Norway's government enhance the national image at the international level via ISFiT?"

C. Conceptual Framework

To analyze the mechanism, this paper applies two following concepts: Cultural Diplomacy and National Interest.

1. Concept of Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is a two-way street where the soul of a nation, i.e. its ideas, values, and interests are best represented.⁶ Being more specific, Milton C. Cummings Jr. defines cultural diplomacy as "*the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.*"⁷ Therefore, an effective cultural diplomacy requires the ability to listen and a long-term commitment.

There are several benefits of cultural diplomacy that a country can enjoy.⁸ First, it helps create "a foundation of trust" with other peoples, which endure beyond changes in government and which a nation can build upon to reach its goals. Second, it facilitates the involvement of influential members of foreign societies who cannot otherwise be reached through traditional embassy functions, while providing a positive agenda for cooperation in spite of policy differences.

⁶ Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, *Cultural Diplomacy the Linchpin of Public Diplomacy*. Draft report from U.S. Department of State 2005 (accessed September 16, 2007), available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/54374.pdf>

⁷ Milton C. Cummings, Jr. *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*, (Washington, D.C: Center for Arts and Culture, 2003), 1.

⁸ Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy (2005). *Cultural Diplomacy: A Guide*

Third, it serves as a flexible and universally acceptable vehicle for rapprochement with countries where diplomatic relations are strained or absent. Fourth, it is uniquely able to reach out to young people, to non-elites and to broad audiences with a much reduced language barrier.

Today, in a world where the struggle for influence has become the main agenda for most countries, cultural diplomacy has emerged as an innovative vehicle. While traditional thinking says that military intimidation, war, and economic and/or political pressure is the favored method, influence in the global arena is now no longer dependent on a state's ability to employ "stick and carrot" games.

While military, political and economic strength still play a significant role in compelling a state's influence upon others, there has been a shift of paradigm on the international stage that suggests influence is not merely obtained through persuasion and coercion. Increasingly, the exercise of cultural rapprochement by states is gaining favor. Many people believe that cultural rapprochement, which emphasizes information sharing and impression attraction in a peaceful and friendly manner, is sometimes more effective. Therefore, cultural diplomacy as a form of cultural rapprochement provides an excellent opportunity to expand influence for countries that lack hard power in terms of military, geographical condition and or economic strength.

Norway is a small country both in population and economy. She has no strong military and is geographically isolated. However, Norway is a rich country with many attractive tourist destinations, a high level of education and an

interesting heterogenic culture. All this makes cultural diplomacy a significantly appropriate strategy which is ideally suited to the national condition.

The International Student Festival in Trondheim (ISFiT) is a perfect example of Norwegian cultural diplomacy. It is arranged by Norwegian students in order to gather students all over the world to learn in diversity. With the design as a mixture between thematic and cultural festival, ISFiT is aimed as an arena for students discussing and debating about current global challenge while experiencing many diverse cultures.

Approximately 450 students with multi background attend this festival every second year. By this, the people of Norway can enhance and promote their national image to the international world via foreign participants. Moreover, based on the multicultural and social background of the participants, ISFiT encourages the exchange of ideas, knowledge, information and various other aspects of culture among the participants and the local community.

In ISFiT, the “give and take” process is employed. The people of Norway introduce their culture, education, tourist destinations and other national treasures to the participants whilst they themselves also learn many things from the foreign participants. Through many cultural programs such as music concert, movie, art exhibition and the performing art, the participants can know and learn Norwegian culture deeper. This all ISFiT’s programs are then importantly encouraging participants to learn about understanding and mutual respect values.

ISFiT is not an official government program, but the government has been contribute much to this event because the recognition that this festival has great

potentiality enhancing the national image in international society via students. ISFiT itself is a kind of education-based cultural diplomacy that reaches out young students. It becomes significant due to its ability to establish friendship network which is important item for the country. As former Secretary of State Colin Powell emphasized that creating friendship of future world leaders by education is the most valuable asset for countries,⁹ because such friendship enables better cross-cultural understanding as well as creates a foundation of trust with other people that improves contacts among countries, builds personal relationships and professional networks.

2. Concept of National Interest

Currently, the phrase "national interest" is often used by politicians and political scientists. In almost every discussion regarding foreign policy, scholars or politicians use this term to support and justify their opinions. National interest itself is generally defined as the whole of the common goals and ambitions of society, encompassing the economic, military, and/or cultural realms. However some experts describe it differently.

According to Charles O. Lerche and Abdul A. Said, national interest is defined by certain targets: self preservation of the collectively entity of the state and its human and territorial manifestations, security, well-being, prestige, power, and the promotion and/or protection of ideology.¹⁰ Based on this definition, the

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Charles O. Lerche, Jr and Abdul Said, *Concept of International Politic* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey Inc, Englewood Cliffs, 1963), p. 9-12.

target of national interest cannot be separated from two things; prestige and self-promotion.

In furthering its national interest, a nation should use everything available. In this case, the existence of ISFiT is definitely a Norway's valuable asset upon her cultural diplomacy efforts. As an international event, ISFiT helps the government to boost national image abroad by satisfying two targets of national interest: prestige and promotion.

ISFiT improves Norway's prestige in international society by the recognition of international student for being the largest and most globalized student festival with more than 100 countries represented each festival. Furthermore, ISFiT has been successfully organize peace price awarded to students who has outstanding achievements concerning in realizing a better world for peace and democracy. In addition, the success of ISFiT to present international renowned person, i.e. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Mikhail Gorbachev as keynote speaker has even further raised ISFiT's standing as a world leading international student festival. This successful has greatly improved Norway's prestige because ISFiT itself is indeed a remarkable embodiment of the country.

ISFiT is also able to do promotion for the country. It uniquely combines three promotion areas in one package: education, cultural and tourism and Norway's ideas and values on peace. It succeeds to invite roughly 400 foreign students every second year to visit and see directly about how good Norway can be as a place to study. Afterward, through the cultural programs such as music

concept and slides, this festival has been a success in promoting Norway's

destinations in Trondheim to international society via students. While through thematic program such as Workshops and Grand Hall meetings, it greatly promotes peace building through dialogue dimension.

Based on the effectiveness of ISFiT in improving prestige and doing promotion, the government provides plenty support to this event. By granting big amount of finance, giving expert assistances and large access to use public infrastructures as well as connecting the festival with important persons nationally and internationally, the government wants to ensure that one of its channels on cultural diplomacy will function well. The successful ISFiT gives benefit not only for the Norwegian students but also for the entire country because it will, indeed, enhance Norway's national image abroad. Therefore, the government's supports both financial and non-financial are an effort to accomplish it.

D. Hypothesis

Based on this background and conceptual framework, the way of Norway's government to enhance the national image at the international level via ISFiT is by providing support both financial and non-financial to this event.

E. Research Method

This research employs deductive logics meaning that based on the conceptual framework, hypothesis is drawn and then proven with the existing empirical data. The data is collected through two methods: library research (books, journals, magazines and internet) and direct observation to the event including interview with the ISFiT's board by email.

F. Writing Method

- CHAPTER I** Includes background, the research question, a conceptual framework, a hypothesis, the research method and the writing method
- CHAPTER II** Examines Norway's image beginning with certain aspects she wants to project internationally and then describes the problem of invisibility which hinders that effort.
- CHAPTER III** Discusses Norway's governmental efforts to solve the problem described in chapter II using several methods of cultural diplomacy.
- CHAPTER IV** Examines more deeply ISFiT's role as a part of Norwegian cultural diplomacy, including its history, characteristics and significance. Afterward, provides the important description of how exactly the government employs ISFiT as an instrument of its cultural diplomacy efforts to enhance the country's national image abroad.
- CHAPTER V** Draws the conclusion of the entire paper.