

Sinhala people's response to challenges of nation state. (1999, November 07). *The Sunday times*.

# Sinhala People's response to challenges of nation-state

By Kumbakarna

Is the modern-era overseeing the end of the sovereign state? Under the banner of globalization many concepts and ideas associated with the nation-state are billed to disappear.

Is the nation state therefore facing extinction? Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar thinks otherwise as he spelt out the country's position courageously at international forums such as the UN.

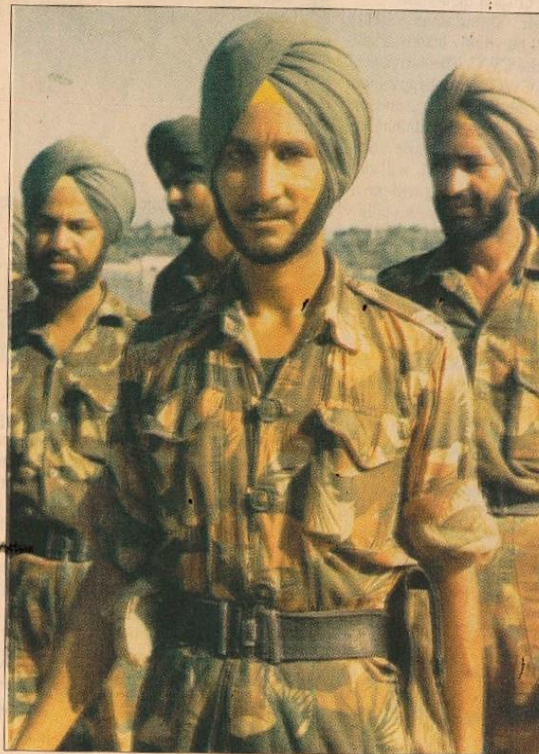
Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe while criticising him is backing the third-party mediation. Have they forgotten that foreign intervention in 1987 paved the way for a major blood bath? Surely this must be a historical jest.

There is a parallel call for foreign intervention by groups dependent on foreign funding and hence have to echo their sentiments. They say peace is imperative, but it is peace at an unacceptable price they demand. There was foreign intervention in

Somalia, at whose behest? Oxfam and Care demanded it and they got it.

When LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran got wind of the possibility of foreign intervention, he sent Anton Balasingham to Britain, to manipulate the process to suit his aspirations. Britain, which wishes to extradite Chilean leader Augusto Pinochet for crimes against his people, harbours LTTE activists.

Prabhakaran has also turned to India, because his friends such as George Fernandez and M. Karunanidhi are in high places. He gets ample support from Australia too, the new superpower in the South Pacific. Prabhakaran wishes to be the sole representative of the Tamil people. This he wishes to do not by winning their hearts and minds, but by a simple process of eliminating Tamil leaders. First it was worthy individuals such as Manikkadasan. Recently, it was Neelan Tiruchelvam. The message he gives the world is that negotiation, compromise and final



IPKF soldiers in Lanka in 1987: peacekeeping or intervention?

agreement should be with him, the supremo himself. Are we to give in to this megalomaniac, who has unleashed terror on all three communities -

Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim?

The supremo adopts many tactics-one is to prevent the Sri Lankan Army from acquiring modern weapons. The

peace mongers play into his hands when they effectively block the legitimate procurements of the armed forces fighting a defensive war. He warns In-

dia time and again as to the dangers of a well-equipped Sri Lankan army.

The East Timor experience of Indonesia gives us important lessons. Here we can witness the division of an island between the Muslim and Christian worlds. Muslim Indonesia retains the western part, under the guise of peacekeeping.

Australia, whose immediate task is stopping the Muslim incursion into the huge Asian markets, represents western expansionism. In this emerging scenario, Australia eyes Sri Lanka as having the same opportunities as in East Timor. It is no surprise if the proposed peacekeeping force in Sri Lanka comprises Australians and Indians; with a sprinkling of other nations to give it an international status.

The opposition leader knows what the west wants, and plays their cards to obtain foreign support for his power bid. The President is also following a similar course though

there are minor differences between their approaches.

The global power game has changed since the 1987 Indian misadventure. In 1987, India and the US were at loggerheads over various issues. The India of today is friendly with the US. They band together to curb the growing power of China and to fight the emerging forces of Islamic fundamentalism, from Afghanistan to Pakistan. In the next second round of intervention, India will collaborate with the western powers and obviously not the broken shell of a bygone Soviet Union. It is only a strong nation-state, which can withstand the assault of such forces.

For Sri Lanka, the Sinhala people, should revive the national movement, thereby strengthen the state. In this task, we must have friends, perhaps we should lean towards and link-up with the forces of Buddhist Asia in the East, which after all are economic giants in their own right.