

# THE NOTION OF NATION STATE IS NOT WEAKENING



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Specially for RJ

**F**irst of all, we must acknowledge that **no one country has the monopoly of perfection with regard to human rights or democracy and other values that we all uphold.** We have a system, internationally, where there are human rights conventions and treaties, which Sri Lanka, among other countries, has signed. That must go on, and that must apply equally, whether it is powerful countries like the United States and Russia, as well as smaller and weaker countries like Sri Lanka.

We know that human rights can be used as a political tool, and this is what sometimes happens. It's also a way in which terrorists move. They are ordering terrorist campaigns by hiding behind innocent civilians as human shields, and then calling upon the international community to support them if there is a violation of human rights. So, there are very certain tactics being used by a number of terrorist groups, like in Chechnya or on Sri Lanka's north.

Globalization means that states should be responsible not only for their own citizens, but for citizens of other countries as well. But the notion of nation state is not weakening. The nation state still

has many more years to go. It is still a very young mechanism. A lot of developing countries are concerned, because we have very old countries, but new nations in the global South.

My own country, Sri Lanka, is two thousand five hundred years old. But as a modern nation we emerged into independence after colonialism in 1948. So, we jealously safeguard our statehood. And we are not ready to fold up into a greater South-Asian or Asian state. **We want to keep our national sovereignty. That is going to be very important throughout the world.** So, the nation state can continue to exist, but it has to realize that it is today one part of a large global system.

In the past, you had the Roman Empire, which was very much self-contained, contiguous unit. Then you had other empires, the British Empire, and of course you had the Western world. But today you have to take into account that the whole world is integrated, politically and economically. And there is, therefore, this greater interdependence. We must all be very conscious of the fact that any action that we do to one country will come back to us. ■