Question 2

“Nation State is a misnomer, norm is Multination state.” Discuss

Nation is defined in the oxford dictionary as a community of people having mainly common descent, history, language, etc., forming state or inhibiting territory.

Wikipedia refers a **multination state** as a [state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State) (country) in which the [population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population) consists of two or more [ethnically](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnicity) distinct [nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation) (peoples) that are of significant size. This contrasts with a [nation-state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation-state) where a single nation comprises the bulk of the population. An example is the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) of [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) (English people), [Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales) (Welsh), [Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) (Scottish), and [Northern Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland) (Irish).

Multinational states differ from states like [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan) and [Iceland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland) in which an overwhelming majority of the population is ethnically homogeneous. [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China) and [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) are the largest multination states in the world, each having a population of over a billion people.

Other examples of multinational states include

* [Belgium](http://www.answers.com/topic/belgium) ([Flemings](http://www.answers.com/topic/flemish-people), [Walloons](http://www.answers.com/topic/walloons), and [Germans](http://www.answers.com/topic/german-speaking-community-of-belgium))
* [Bosnia and Herzegovina](http://www.answers.com/topic/bosnia-and-herzegovina) ([Bosniaks](http://www.answers.com/topic/bosniaks), [Croats](http://www.answers.com/topic/croats-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina), and [Serbs](http://www.answers.com/topic/serbs-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina))
* [Canada](http://www.answers.com/topic/canada) - ([First Nations](http://www.answers.com/topic/first-nations-of-canada), [Quebecois](http://www.answers.com/topic/qu-b-cois-4), etc.)
* [Cyprus](http://www.answers.com/topic/cyprus) ([Greeks](http://www.answers.com/topic/greek-cypriots) and [Turks](http://www.answers.com/topic/turkish-cypriots))
* [Ethiopia](http://www.answers.com/topic/ethiopia) ([Afars](http://www.answers.com/topic/afar-people), [Amhara](http://www.answers.com/topic/amhara-people), [Somalis](http://www.answers.com/topic/somali-people), [Oromo](http://www.answers.com/topic/oromo), [Tigray](http://www.answers.com/topic/tigray-tigrinya-people), etc.)
* [Pakistan](http://www.answers.com/topic/pakistan) ([Baloch](http://www.answers.com/topic/baloch-people), [Punjabis](http://www.answers.com/topic/punjabi-people), [Sindhis](http://www.answers.com/topic/sindhi-people), [Kashmiris](http://www.answers.com/topic/kashmiri-people), etc.)
* [Singapore](http://www.answers.com/topic/singapore) ([Chinese](http://www.answers.com/topic/chinese-in-singapore), [Malays](http://www.answers.com/topic/malays-in-singapore), [Indians](http://www.answers.com/topic/indians-in-singapore), etc.)
* [Sri Lanka](http://www.answers.com/topic/sri-lanka) ([Sinhalese](http://www.answers.com/topic/sinhalese-people), [Tamils](http://www.answers.com/topic/tamil), Muslims, [Burghers](http://www.answers.com/topic/burgher-people), etc.)

Traditionally, a **nation-state** is a specific form of [state](http://www.answers.com/topic/state), which exists to provide a [sovereign](http://www.answers.com/topic/sovereignty) territory for a particular [nation](http://www.answers.com/topic/nation), and which derives its [legitimacy](http://www.answers.com/topic/legitimacy-political-science) from that function. The state is a [political](http://www.answers.com/topic/politics) and [geopolitical](http://www.answers.com/topic/geopolitics) entity; the nation is a [cultural](http://www.answers.com/topic/culture) and/or [ethnic](http://www.answers.com/topic/ethnic) entity. The term "nation-state" implies that they geographically coincide, and this distinguishes the nation-state from the other types of state, which historically preceded it. Just after prehistoric era up to usage of armaments people lived in ethnic groups in respective territories. These territories gave them livelihood and protection from various threats including invasion from other ethnic groups or tribes. In a way, these territories could be considered as nation states, since they belong the respective ethnic groups. As time went on some ethnic groups became powerful and captured the territories of other ethnic group. Powerful nations enslaved those who were captured and extended their territories. Lately with the use of modern weapons domination was easier.

This happened to Sri Lanka too. Before the British and other invaders arrived at Sri Lankan shores, the country had different rulers ruling different parts of the country. When the British took over the administration, they amalgamated the territories into one and formed a government to rule the country. They made use of the situation to their advantage by favouring minority communities to rule over the majority community. When the colonial rulers ultimately left the Island they handed over the democratic system into the hands of the majority community. This has been the beginning of the conflict. The nations began to propagate different nationalisms with contrasting interests. 70% of the population who is the majority community is claiming that this country belongs to them based on the period of occupation and by virtue of the high percentage of the total population. The second largest ethnic group claims certain territories as their homeland, again based on the period of occupation. Since the two warring parties couldn’t find a solution to the problem it has become a crisis and a kind of civil war has emerged.

## The nation-state model in practice

[Political science](http://www.answers.com/topic/political-science) uses the term "nation-state" for most existing sovereign states, even if their political boundaries do not coincide with ethnic boundaries. In some cases, the geographic boundaries of an ethnic population and a political state largely coincide. In these cases, there is little [immigration](http://www.answers.com/topic/immigration) or [emigration](http://www.answers.com/topic/emigration), few members of ethnic minorities, and few members of the "home" ethnicity living in other countries. Nation State is now identified as a political entity whose “territorial integrity” and “sovereignty” are recognized by other states. This entered into the international law with the signing of Treaty of Westphalia in 1645. Later League of Nation and the United Nations recognized these principles as the main pillars of the international order. Wikipedia – An Internet Encyclopedia presents the following definition to nation state:“A nation-state is a specific form of state (a political entity), which exists to provide a sovereign territory for a particular nation (a cultural entity), and which derives its legitimacy from that function.”

There are no ideal nation-states, but [Portugal](http://www.answers.com/topic/portugal) is seen as one of the best examples of a nation-state. Although surrounded by other lands and people, the Portuguese [nation](http://www.answers.com/topic/nation) has been the same for almost 900 years. Since its foundation, in [1143](http://www.answers.com/topic/1143), Portugal remained as a single nation living in a single country. Portugal had a great [colonial Empire](http://www.answers.com/topic/portuguese-empire) for more than 500 years. Nowadays, Portugal is a very singular country that is still seen as a nation-state though Galicians are still considered by some the same ethnic stock as the Portuguese (specially those in the north). Both [Iceland](http://www.answers.com/topic/iceland) and [Japan](http://www.answers.com/topic/japan) are island nations. [Portugal](http://www.answers.com/topic/portugal), curiously, is not an [island](http://www.answers.com/topic/island) and is surrounded by other historic nations in [Europe](http://www.answers.com/topic/europe).

National Identity Crisis

The notion of a "national identity" also extends to countries which host multiple ethnic or language groups. For example, [Switzerland](http://www.answers.com/topic/switzerland) is constitutionally a confederation of [cantons](http://www.answers.com/topic/cantons-of-switzerland), and has four official languages, but it has also a 'Swiss' national identity, a national history, and a classic national hero, [Wilhelm Tell](http://www.answers.com/topic/william-tell).

Many historical conflicts have arisen where political boundaries do not correspond with ethnic or cultural boundaries. Sri Lanka got into this problem due to the misnomer of nation state. The leaders of the successive governments have misinterpreted the democracy as only majority rule and tried to eliminate the other minority groups from the government machinery. They were trying to establish a nation state by making the state which uses one language and adopts on religion. Most of the efforts to increase the economic growth too were politically motivated and thereby had to face serious consequences. By promoting the use of local languages the government has ignored the language used internationally and failed to produce capable labour to the international market. Due to the enmity created due to the concept of nation state the country has to face demand for another nation state claimed by the second largest ethnic group. This has caused eruption of communal violence and it has affected the economy drastically. The country had to face several racial riots within a short span of thirty years and thereafter a civil war costing billions of rupees.

Both the government and the militants who are fighting for a separate state have not realised that the nation state is a misnomer and the norm is multination state. Sri Lanka people speak only two languages, though English is widely used for business and higher studies. There are virtually three major ethnic groups Snhalese, Tamils and Moors. Four major religions are practises by these groups naming Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. This situation can be clearly seen as a case for multination state. These ethnic groups have inherited potentials of their own and if can be put together could contribute to a healthy multination state. The Nationalism could be only promoted by accepting and accommodating the cultural norms.

[Belgium](http://www.answers.com/topic/belgium) is another classic example of a disputed nation-state. The state was formed by secession from the [United Kingdom of the Netherlands](http://www.answers.com/topic/united-kingdom-of-the-netherlands) in 1830, and the [Flemish](http://www.answers.com/topic/flanders) population in the north speaks Dutch. The Flemish identity is also ethnic and cultural, and there is a strong [separatist](http://www.answers.com/topic/vlaams-belang) movement.

National minorities should not be confused with a national [Diaspora](http://www.answers.com/topic/diaspora), which is typically located far from the national border. Most modern Diasporas result from economic migration, for example the [Irish Diaspora](http://www.answers.com/topic/irish-diaspora).

The possession of [dependent territories](http://www.answers.com/topic/dependent-territory) does influence the status of a nation-state. A state with large [colonial](http://www.answers.com/topic/colonialism) possessions is obviously inhabited by many ethnic groups, and is not a mono-ethnic state. However, in most cases, the colonies were not considered an integral part of the [motherland](http://www.answers.com/topic/motherland), and were separately administered. Some European nation-states have dependent territories in Europe. [Denmark](http://www.answers.com/topic/denmark) contains virtually all ethnic [Danes](http://www.answers.com/topic/danish-people) and has relatively few foreign nationals within it. However, it exercises [sovereignty](http://www.answers.com/topic/sovereignty) over the [Faroe Islands](http://www.answers.com/topic/faroe-islands) and [Greenland](http://www.answers.com/topic/greenland).

## The multination-state model in practice

There are some developed and developing countries which have adopted the concept of multination state. United States of America could be a case for accepting the multination concept. China and India are in the verge of rapid progress as they have adopted the same attitude. One of the best examples would be Singapore which doesn’t have many natural resources but the healthy attitude towards the nationhood and a firm economic policy.

The conflicts between ethnic groups within the states, give us an indication to the misnomers of the people involved in it. Language and the ethnicity have blinded the people. People are easily carried away by the sentiments addressed by the politicians for their own political gains. Caste, race and creed are always utilized by those who want to capture power by enticing the masses towards hatred and enmity. I is unfortunate that in the current knowledge era people still believe in the words of politicians who promise sand from the Moon.

The hope lies only with the edification of the civil society that could act according to their conviction and not with politicians’ predictions.

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