

Multiculturalism vs. nation state assignment

Sociology



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Stepping well in to the twenty first century, as humans and citizens of our respective countries, we can see that many things have changed, and customs, cultures and traditions have all been evolved. Some countries have embraced the concept of Multiculturalism, while other countries have chosen to remain independent, and have maintained their stance on the traditional and patriotic principle of the Nation State.

Opinions on which concept proves to be more beneficial for a country are often contradicted, and in order to fully understand the concepts, and conclude with an educated assumption, both concepts must be introduced and analyzed. The following paper will do just that; Multiculturalism and Nation State will be introduced and thoroughly analyzed, and then a choice will be made. Taking a closer look at the first concept, we can see that Nation-State is comprised of two powerful words. The Nation is defined as an entity that shares a common culture and people of the same race and ethnicity.

On the other hand, State refers to an entity that is bounded by a certain geographical location, and abides by the same politics. In combining these two terms, a new concept is derived. A Nation State generally refers to a form of state that develops its legitimacy from operating as a sovereign entity for a nation as well as a sovereign territorial unit (1). In short, a Nation State is generally defined as a state or a country that is determined by certain geographical borders, and citizens who come from the same cultural background or are of the same race.

In addition to this, citizens within a Nation State speak the same language, follow the same religion, and share common cultural values and beliefs (2). There have been many ambiguities to the term Nation State, due to the fact that it is quite clear in theory; however it gets more difficult when it comes to implementation of the concept. Due to high levels of immigration in certain countries, it is difficult for a country to be fully in compliance with the concept of Nation State.

A country may speak the same language, and share the same religions, but from the point that immigration levels are high, it cannot be fully acknowledged as a Nation State, since one of the primary characteristics of this concept is the fact that citizens of the country share the same race or ethnicity. Taking a look at the various countries, Iceland is referred to greatly as a Nation State, in that they have low levels of immigrants coming in to the country.

In addition to this, Japan strictly follows a standard in their cultural and traditional values, as well as sharing a common language, thus proving them to also to be firm practitioners of the Nation State (2). As mentioned above, Ireland and Japan follow the principle of the Nation State. Other countries that practice this principle are both North and South Korea, Portugal, several of the Polynesian countries, and Poland as well, after the World War II. In addition to the countries mentioned above, countries such as India and Australia can be classified as countries practicing the concept of a Nation State.

They may not fully be Nation States, however they host other ethnic groups that do not the same languages or the same religions, but they are classified as minority groups, thus allowing the country to be seen as a Nation State. Finally, china is another example of a nation-state that officially recognizes an ethnic group called Han, as well as several other ethnic minorities. (3). In recent years, several financial conflicts have arisen in countries in which the political boundaries and ethnic or cultural boundaries were not in correlation with each other.

One prime example of this issue that led to a disputed Nation State is Belgium, where the Flemish and the Francophone Walloon identity, a unitary Belgian nationalism, several versions of a Greater Netherlands ideal, and a German-speaking community of Belgium coexist (1). Moving on to the next concept, the concept of Multiculturalism, we can see that there is almost a complete opposite definition for it. Multiculturalism is generally defined as a theory that promotes the development of cultural groups within a given territory, in order to strengthen diversity.

Diversity is a main element of Multiculturalism, in that there are citizens of a particular country that do not need to share the same cultural backgrounds, the same race or ethnicity, they do not worship the same religions, and there is no common language spoken by the members of the society. In short, a Multiculturalistic country or state is one where there is no dominant factor, and rather a mixture of many different cultures, languages and religions working and living together in a general geographic location (4).

Multiculturalism Multiculturalism is met in many societies nowadays, both Eastern and Western.

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India, to begin with, is the most culturally, linguistically, religiously and genetically diverse geographical entity after the Asian continent (4). In Indonesia, there are more than seven hundred languages that are being spoken, while in Malaysia, Malays coexist with Malaysians of Chinese and Indian descent people and other native tribes. Mauritius, Philippines, Russia and Singapore are also listed as multicultural societies. A multicultural society that combines immigrants from many different countries such as Italy, Greece, Germany, the Netherlands and Yugoslavia, is Australia.

Several western societies adopted multiculturalism as official policy: Canada “ has the highest per capita immigration in the world”, Argentina “ recognizes the individual’s multiple citizenship from other countries”, in the United States multiculturalism is established at the state level while in the country with the highest immigration rate in Europe, the United Kingdom, the population includes immigrants from Pakistan, India and Somalia (5). The high levels of immigration cause the natives to face the immigrants with hostility, and a large number of them are led to believe they are in many ways hindering the country at hand.

Immigrants are perceived as a threat for a nation, as they are believed to take away the jobs from poor natives, who then forces to turn to alternate solutions such as welfare. The United States of America, being one of the most, if not the most, Multiculturalistic country, are often times opposed to the concept, as they see it as a patriotic responsibility to be a member of the nation. Another major argument the opponents of multiculturalism have to advance is the increased racial presence and/or racial power some immigrants gain and leaves the natives’ racial group disadvantaged.

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This open racism makes it close to impossible for racial minorities to assimilate and coexist in harmony with the dominant culture (6). In concluding the two concepts of Nation State and Multiculturalism, it is difficult to determine which of the two would be more beneficial for a country, or which of the two would allow for a more harmonious and sustainable environment. Both concepts have their advantages and disadvantages, and both have good reasoning behind them. As concluded from the research and information gathered above, it is clear to see that in some cases it is almost impossible to avoid multiculturalism, especially in a fast paced and diverse world we live in today. Both of these concepts will remain in parts of society all over the world, and in some cases one concept may have to prevail over the other. Only when the barriers of social racism, institutional discrimination are broken, and the way opens for everyone to have good education and equal job opportunities will there be an improve in racial integration.

Until this happens however, we as humans must learn to coexist in this world in harmony, and make the best of every situation that is presented to us. 1.

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<http://www.columbia.edu/~as48/Linz,%20Stepan,%20Yadav%20-%20Nation%20State%20or%20State%20Nation.pdf> 4.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism> 5.

<http://blackwellpublishing.com/newkeywords/PDFs%20Sample%20Entries%20-%20New%20Keywords/Multiculturalism.pdf> 6. <http://www.uwm.edu/~gjay/Multicult/whatismc.pdf>