

...The nation, like the individual, is the conclusion of a long past of struggle, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory, this is the social principal upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common desire in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform great deeds in the future, are the essential conditions for being a nation...

...More valuable by far than sharing a boundaries, conforming to important ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious and regrettable heritage, and of having, in the future, [a shared] plan to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together.

A nation is therefore a large-scale agreement, created by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future...At the present time, the existence of nations is a good thing, a necessity even. Their existence is the guarantee of liberty, which would be lost if the world had only one law and only one master.

Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" in Eley, Geoff and Suny, Ronald Grigor, ed. 1996. [Becoming National: A Reader](#). New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996: pp. 41-55.

How does the author describe a nation?

Why is a 'nation' a necessity?