The Definition of a Nation

**Population**

A nation must have people. The number of people has nothing to do with its status as a nation. The population can be either homogeneous or heterogeneous.

- **Examples**
  - The Vatican has the world's smallest population, 811, while China has the world's largest population, 1.2 billion.
  - South Korea's ethnicity is 99.9% Korean. Canada has no dominant ethnic group.

- **Size of Population** in millions
  - China: 1.2 billion
  - United States: 300 million
  - Brazil: 163 million
  - Egypt: 60 million
  - Vatican: 811

**Territory**

A nation must have land.

- **Examples**
  - Russia, the largest nation, is 6,592,800 square miles; the smallest, Vatican City, has 108.7 acres.
  - A border dispute between Russia and China east of Mongolia puts the boundaries of these countries in flux.

**Sovereignty**

A nation has supreme and absolute power within its own territory.

- **Examples**
  - Citizens of Saudi Arabia must adhere to strict Islamic dress codes in public.
  - South Africa instituted apartheid despite objections from other nations.
  - In 1958, Cuba chose a communist form of economy and government.

**Government**

Every nation is politically organized, even though forms of government vary. For example, big nations often have different levels of government.

- **Examples**
  - Afghanistan has a central government and provincial governments. The U.S. has several levels of local government.
  - The 104th U.S. Congress struggled to draft a federal budget that would reduce the nation's deficit.
  - The 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution allows the government to collect taxes to finance its operations.

**Characteristics**

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>The Vatican has the world's smallest population, 811, while China has the world's largest population, 1.2 billion. South Korea's ethnicity is 99.9% Korean. Canada has no dominant ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory</td>
<td>Russia, the largest nation, is 6,592,800 square miles; the smallest, Vatican City, has 108.7 acres. A border dispute between Russia and China east of Mongolia puts the boundaries of these countries in flux.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovereignty</td>
<td>Citizens of Saudi Arabia must adhere to strict Islamic dress codes in public. South Africa instituted apartheid despite objections from other nations. In 1958, Cuba chose a communist form of economy and government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Afghanistan has a central government and provincial governments. The U.S. has several levels of local government. The 104th U.S. Congress struggled to draft a federal budget that would reduce the nation's deficit. The 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution allows the government to collect taxes to finance its operations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>