

Myths in politics

To review: a nation is a people with common origins, and a state is a political community governed by law. A nation-state is a political community governed by laws that unites a people with a supposedly common ancestry

When nation-states arose out of city-states and kingdoms and empires, they explained themselves by telling stories about their origins — stories meant to suggest that everyone in, say “the French nation” had common ancestors, when they of course did not.

As I wrote in my book *These Truths*, “Very often, histories of nation-states are little more than myths that hide the seams that stitch the nation to the state.”

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