

Nation Building: Recognized Sovereignty and Micronational Statehood

Kevin McVey

The Commonwealth Governor's School

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Abstract

(RESEARCH QUESTION) The purpose of this culminating project is to determine the process of nation-building in a modern light, and the reflection of such processes on micronations.

(FINDINGS) The idea of nation-building and the creation of a country is a conglomerate of several theories and methods – all without defining legislation. Methods ranging from diplomacy to military force are used to create new countries and each method proves unique in execution, however similar in idea. Micronations often use many of the same methods, but lack recognition from more well respected nations. Recognition is most important to the growth of a new country. (PRODUCT) This study explored the rather undocumented area of modern nation-building and attempted to create a micronation of its own. To do this, the study researched the creation of various UN recognized and unrecognized nations and attempted to emulate successful processes. Through the use of a web site, this study was able to gather individuals worldwide as “citizens,” promote user interaction with the core of the project, and become a center for study-related news. This study created cultural icons, a tangible economy, and a stable government – all used to mirror the actions of a world-recognized country. (RESULTS) This product exemplified the difficult process of peaceful nation-building. However, it also showed that modern guerrilla marketing tactics prove useful in gathering people for the cause of a nation, and that cultural cohesion is most important to maintaining bonds within a fledgling country. According to the study, economy and government protocol also serve important places, but require a push from nationalism. (CONCLUSION) Most modern countries attempt to take a peaceful diplomatic route, as is evident through the nation-building techniques with micronations, however military conflict is often involved with more recognized nations. For a country to be successful in the long run, a process of strong nationalism in the growth stages is important, quickly followed by a swift and powerful government be it democratic or otherwise.

Literature Review

Introduction

While our planet may be of fixed size, shape, and volume, the division and allocation of the land covering its surface undergoes many transformations at a surprisingly rapid rate. When juxtapositioned against the make-up of countries across Earth's continents thousands, hundreds, or simply ten years ago, the maps of the present day show significant differences. With such consistent change in mind, one must begin to recognize the fact that no border is withstanding and that the planet's division is far from static and steadfast. Although the current number of countries tends to be at or around 193 total, this number fluctuates often with an unprecedented amount of variation that to those whom are not highly informed may find alarming (Library of Congress [LC], 2006).

There is no official standing doctrine on what defines a country, or at least not one that is accepted worldwide. While treaties such as the Montevideo Convention and the Constitutive Theory of Statehood offer possible qualifications and requirements, it seems that nations today are formed via a process (or perhaps trends) that has previously been followed through by another country. Generally, those who are on the forefront of developing new countries will spring their new government from (a) the collapse of another country, (b) the discovery and colonization of new land, or (c) political revolt and/or diplomatic splitting of an established country.

The Collapsing of Nations

A particular modern approach that the more “established” countries today use when creating a new government is taking advantage of the collapsing of another nation. This approach is primarily concerned with a small group from an established population attempting to gain independence during a time of instability within their mother country. In 1991, the Republic of Belarus did just this. As stated in the CIA World Factbook, Belarus was a constituent republic of the USSR for seven decades but attained its independence after the USSR fell apart and the mother land became the Russian Federation

(CIA, 2008). Due to a newly weakened main government in the former USSR, Belarus was able to secede and become a sovereign nation of its own, quickly gathering a population of ten million and creating economic and diplomatic ties with the rest of the world. However, the USSR's collapse did not only result in the formation of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation, 13 other countries followed suit. To name a few, this collapse created the Baltic State of Estonia, the New European State of Moldova, the Central State of Kazakhstan, and the Caucasus State of Georgia. All of these countries are recognized worldwide, with Georgia just recently being a center of attention due to its militaristic conflict with Russia over land.

The example of the collapse of the USSR is a rather modern one and mirrors the example of the republic of Gran Colombia (also known as the Viceroyalty of New Grenada). Gran Colombia was created in 1819 as a republic to aid in the fight against Spanish rule. Its existence was stopped short and began to decline when in 1826, what is now Venezuela rebelled to become its own country. Following the rebellion, civilian and military jealousy for political offices became common and caused a great deal of tension. By 1830, the modern day land belonging to Ecuador seceded from Gran Colombia as well, leaving Colombia and Panama the only countries left, thereby collapsing the republic and forming a number of new nations (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008).

Discovery and Colonization of New Land

Illuminating the common nation-building exercise of discovery and colonization of newly acquired land is the island cluster country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Originally settled by indigenous people from the Caribbean islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was later discovered in 1719 when French explorers settled to farm coffee, tobacco, and sugar. Despite land ownership disputes between Vincentian natives and French explorers, France was eventually able to gather complete control of the islands. After a great deal of switching ruling authority between Great Britain and France, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was granted independence in 1979 (U.S. Department of State [USDoS], 2008). While Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the last of the “Windward Islands”

to achieve independence and sovereignty, the process of its discovery, colonization, and eventual independence depicts the traditional power transfer from leading authority to the governed common in such a process for the creation of new nations.

Diplomatic Country Splitting

A more uncommon nation building practice is the act of diplomatic country splitting; the act of peacefully splitting one country into multiple others. This type of splitting of countries was performed in January 1993 when Czechoslovakia split into The Czech Republic and Slovakia. Especially interesting about the split between the two countries was the equality between the two nations that came with the split. In “Countries and Their Cultures Volume 4” by Melvin Ember, it is stated that “The Czechs and Slovaks divided up military equipment equally when they split...” (2001, p. 2000-2011). The split of Czechoslovakia is probably the most successful of all diplomatic nation building as both sides in this instance were granted equal shares of their previous mutual claims to goods.

The Montevideo Convention

While colonization of land, diplomatic splits of land, and collapses of large countries are all steps in the process of forming new nations, becoming defined and recognized as a sovereign State can be just as important. On December 26, 1933 in Montevideo, Uruguay, the Montevideo Convention was signed by 19 countries, including The United States of America and many South American countries such as Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela. This convention provides a proper layout with clear requirements for the claiming of statehood. In Article 1 of The Montevideo Convention it is stated that “The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states” (Montevideo Convention, [MC], 1933). While this convention is commonly quoted by growing countries, it is commonly ignored by larger countries who did not sign the original paperwork in 1933.

Micronations

Among the more obscure corners of the globe are the micronations; small “countries” that

resemble independent countries but lack recognition from other well respected countries and governments. Often considered to be jokes, micronations are commonly looked over in the world today, however, they can be quite active and have been known to amass thousands of people among their ranks. While these nations may sometimes only be known within small families or clusters of people, they make every effort to become recognized and work very diligently to resemble an established country. Among micronational activities are the creation of government, writing laws and a constitution, and issuing money, flags, and other national objects (Ryan, Dunford & Sellars, 2006, p. 4-8 & 11). Some see micronations as the product of eccentrics not to be bothered with, however, many micronations have simulated the process of growing in power and become an official “country,” quickly growing in popularity and (for some) even becoming famous worldwide.

Many micronational leaders attempt to assert their claims to legitimacy by quoting the Montevideo Convention or listing another set of qualifications that represent their success as a nation. Unfortunately for these new country projects, they are often limited by the sole factor of recognition. Those ruling over micronations commonly claim everything from boats, to uninhabited islands, to their own back yard as their sovereign land in order to satisfy part B of article 1 of the Montevideo Convention in hopes of sparking interest in other countries. However, these claims are often ignored and fail to achieve support.

The Principality of Sealand

Known as seemingly the most famous of all micronations, the Principality of Sealand was founded on September 2, 1967 when Roy Bates and his family took possession and residence of an abandoned anti-aircraft platform slightly over 3 nautical miles off the coast of Great Britain. While not explicitly recognized with law, Sealand is hailed as being the most successful of all micronational projects in that a court case during November 1968 declared charges against “Prince Roy” not competent because Sealand was not a part of the United Kingdom. This *de facto* recognition of Sealand's nationhood soon became a large base of Bates' claims to conventional State sovereignty

(Principality of Sealand [PS], 2007).

Adding to the excitement formed around Sealand's existence was the invasion of Sealand executed by a group of men from Germany and The Netherlands in August 1978. While Bates and his wife were away on business, the Dutchman abducted Bates' son, Michael, and took him back to the Netherlands, therefore taking Sealand by force. Using helicopter as transportation, Roy Bates flew back to Sealand and held the attackers as prisoners of war. In an act that Bates claims as proof of his sovereignty, West Germany later sent a diplomat to Sealand to arrange for the release of his captives. Despite all of this, along with his country's extensive existence (40 years), the government of the United Kingdom has yet to recognize his claims of independence.

The Kingdom of Lovely

The most populated of all micronations, The Kingdom of Lovely was formed in 2004 by British comedian Danny Wallace. In creating his country, Wallace claimed his flat in London to be a new country, one independent from the UK (Wallace, 2007). While attempting to grow in popularity and land, in 2005 Wallace attempted to peacefully conquer the sparsely populated Eel Pie Island. While his attempts were unsuccessful due to police involvement near the end of his campaign, his work gained a great deal of attention from the British government.

Much unlike other micronations, Lovely had the backing of a worldwide recognized institution before attempting to obtain independence. Upon creating his country, Danny Wallace began working with the BBC in order to create a television series entitled "How To Start Your Own Country." On Friday September 2nd, 2005, Danny Wallace's country was named in front of 36,000 people who declared Wallace as their King. (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2005) A clear example of micronational achievement, the BBC's support of Wallace may be largely to thank for the Kingdom of Lovely's success. Eventually, due to his backing in global broadcasting, Wallace was able to amass over 58,000 citizens for his country before eventually stopping work in late 2007. While Wallace may have ended his campaign without the sovereignty that he and his citizens sought after, he managed to

set records in micronational population that no other project has topped.

The Republic of Molossia

A particularly involved micronation, The Republic of Molossia (originally The Grand Republic of Vuldstein) was founded on May 26th, 1977 by Kevin Baugh and James Spielman. Currently located in Baugh's back yard, Molossia has proven itself to be a strong country due to its lasting self-image in Nevada. Despite Baugh's claims to independence, the state of Nevada denies him sovereignty but grants him a place in the annual “Nevada Day” parade. Baugh claims this recognition as fulfilling of the loose requirement of de facto recognition for Statehood, but on this notion he is again denied (Baugh, 2008).

Baugh's nation of Molossia sets itself apart from many of the world's other micronations in its involvement among other nations. As opposed to other projects in which the self-appointed leaders work primarily domestically, Baugh made a push for interaction among micronations for the common good. In an attempt to recreate the processes of the United Nations, International Olympic Board, and Nobel Prize Committee, Baugh created the League of Small Nations, Intermicronational Olympic games, and Norton Awards for Micronational Achievement respectively. As stated on the League of Small Nations' website (League of Small Nations [LSN], 2006), the purpose of this interaction between micronations is to “... advance the rights of small sovereign states, provide them with an international platform from which their voices may be heard ... and to provide a forum where all interested states can engage in civilized debate.” While often ignored by larger nations, the League of Small Nations has been highly successful and currently has nine member States.

The United Nations

Many micronations become viral and spread across the Internet at a rapid and constantly increasing pace. Such micronations may find it necessary to attempt to push their name into the international arena by attempting to join the United Nations. According to the Charter of the United Nations, The UN is a collective of world powers determined “to save succeeding generations from the

scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ... [and] to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (United Nations [UN], 1945). This collection of countries claims to be accepting of any country that shares these values. However, despite the best efforts of the leaders of the world's top micronations, no country has ever been admitted without global recognition of statehood. This is often seen as an incredible roadblock for micronations attempting to spread their outreach programs and is often sought after as a final “goal” for only the most successful of leaders.

Relevance

All of the countries and micronational projects provided in the pages prior represent examples of the process of creating a new country. While not all nations have a common goal, it is often assumable that these countries aspire to become larger, to grow in population, size, and recognition. The steps along the path towards such an end are never completely distinct and it is these that my research intends to illuminate. By the end of this year, the examples provided and the lessons learned from their histories will be of utmost importance to the success of my product. As I attempt to start a micronation of my own, I will be sure to pay specific attention to the micronational aspect of the research (as they bear most relevance to my product) along with the actions and workings of the more recognized countries as they rose to recognition and sovereignty. All of the facts provided combined will allow me to produce a product that accurately simulates a country's struggle to become active and accepted on a worldwide scale.

Methodology

Countries are abstract concepts often taken for granted, their masses of land, complex governments, and seemingly infinite amounts of legislation on the band-end of society are often ignored and seen as having always been in a governing position over a set area. With this in mind, I began my Culminating project for the 2008-2009 school year with research on how modern countries come together and take shape. Initially brainstorming about recognized territories and more popular nations, I came across the idea of the “micronation.” Micronations as I discovered are not much unlike regular countries except that they often are smaller, created by citizens of other larger nations, and are unrecognized in near all cases. Research early in 2008 led my project to its first micronation, The Principality of Sealand. Because I had heard of this small “country” in my Government class during tenth grade, I assumed that this would be the most logical place to begin.

Limiting my research to micronations quickly proved to be an unwise decision as there was very little literature on this topic. In order to completely understand my topic of nation-building I found that a broadening of my focus was necessary. Documents gathered from a number of public-access libraries and Internet-based encyclopedias quickly brought my topic to encompass not only micronations, but the recognized nations of the world that had formed within the last twenty to thirty years. Having a great deal of information on a broader topic most certainly helped my project gather speed when in the literature review process, however, I still felt at this point that I did not have a complete project, nor a project which would yield a strong product. Returning to the research stage produced a great number of results as I searched not only for more micronations, but how these “countries” (often called “model nations”) are created. Without strong effort, correlations appeared between micronations and recognized nations. I used this correlations as ties between the two main topic of my project, recognized nations, and micronations attempting to reach statehood.

The product I would attempt quickly became obvious, I needed to attempt to create a country

myself. Because creating a *recognized* country is very difficult to do, especially considering the state of land-division all nations currently exist within, I decided to use accepted nations and more famous micronations as models and then create a “model nation.” In essence, my product would become a micronation itself. I knew that this would be a very difficult goal to achieve, so I used representation as a first stepping stone, a website became live for using on the Internet on the very day I officially began my micronation experiment. Articles written for this website were later read by people all around the world as I encouraged visitors to share my project with friends and relatives. Allowing users to sign up for my country over the Internet proved to be useful in acquiring citizens for my project - within two months I already had over one hundred people join my project. Recognizing a need for communication, I made modifications to the website by adding a message board, Internet radio station, and video channel. All of these modifications served to attract new members and strengthen my relationships with those already a part of the community.

I had no precedent to base predictions for this project off of, so my goals at the beginning of this project were modest. I hoped to get a small collective of people together to join my micronation and act as if we were a real recognized country. By this point, I have exceeded my initial goals by an exponential level. 350 people from six different countries around the world have joined my micronation, 7 people from two different countries and two different states in the US have created “embassies” for my micronation project, and several thousand people from sixty different countries all around the world have visited my website. The people who joined my project aided our emulation of recognized countries by helping me to create an organized military, government, constitution, and banking system while also pushing our micronation into the real world by beginning an attempt to join the United Nations!

With my project nearly complete, I have found this product to be highly successful. A steady stream of new users join on a frequent basis, and my website which I use as a representation of my micronation's efforts gets updated with information on our latest projects. Throughout the entire

precess, I found that I had plenty of room to expand my project and exceed my goals. My research has consistently matched up with the results of my micronation experiment, there are numerous similarities between the formation of my country and the formation of the world's other more well recognized countries. Over the course of this year I have found that this project pushed the boundaries of what can be done with research and experimentation, people across the entire planet have been impacted by my work this year and I am prepared to continue this product even after culminating is complete.

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