

# THE POLITICAL IMPRINT: ALL NATIONS GREAT AND SMALL

**GOALS:** The purpose of these activities is to bring the relative abstraction of politics to the reality of everyday life. This webquest will explore political boundaries, challenge the conventional notion of what makes a nation, and examine the tenuous existence of nations without states. All these topics should bring to you new perspectives on the dynamics of political geography and the role it plays in shaping your world.

**ACTIVITIES:** Our virtual tour of the political landscape includes two activities. First, we look at the lines that bind—the geography of boundaries. Next, prepare for a tour of some of the tiniest “nations” on earth as they exist in reality on only on mental maps.



## ACTIVITY 1: Political Culture and the Evolving State

### Bounded and Determined: Taking Political Boundaries to the Edge

**INTRODUCTION:** Every single day, perhaps without any awareness on your part, you cross a variety of political boundaries. Would you know that when you leave one local voting precinct and venture into another or traverse one Congressional District and enter another? The boundaries you are probably most familiar with are those of city limits, township, county, and state and national boundaries. What you may not know is that most of those boundaries have changed over time and in the past, may have been a serious point of contention. If the only things certain in life are death and taxes, you might want to add boundaries to that list because humans are very territorial and that’s where all the troubles start. The following questions all deal with identifying geographic boundaries at different scales. We will begin with boundary lines in your part of the world and expand our investigation to a global scale. Some of the questions require a little more than using your knowledge of local conditions but when possible it is recommended that you back up your answers with maps or documentation. A local city, county, state, topographical or U.S. Census map may provide the verification you need.

### Activity 5.1 Field Work Questions

#### *Part A*

1. Name your county of residence and all counties with which it shares borderlines. How would you best describe the character of the boundary? For example, does it appear that the boundaries are based on the physical environment such as water courses or mountain ridges or are they geometric survey lines that do not follow any obvious natural features or perhaps a combination of both?
2. Do you know of any boundary disputes in your state, county, or community? What part, if any, have the region’s physical geography played in these disputes?

#### *Part B*

Boundary line disputes have played a major part in conflicts at many levels from family feuds to full-scale wars. The following list of web sites will provide you with some

examples of how arguments over territory and boundaries have resulted in a variety of changes to the political landscape.



### **The Iowa and Missouri Dispute**

*The Iowa Honey War* site (WWW 5.1) If you have never heard about a series of incidents in 1839 that nearly brought Iowa and Missouri to the brink of war you are not alone. With such battle cries as “Death to the Pukes” and armed with such lethal weapons as kitchen utensils, residents near the disputed boundary between the two states were prepared to do battle over honey. That’s right—honey.

1. How did such a conflict develop and how was it resolved and why was the final agreement so much sweeter for Iowa?
2. <http://mdc.mo.gov/conmag/1997/01/50.htm>
3. <http://iagenweb.org/history/moi/moi25.htm>

<http://iagenweb.org/history/soi/soi32.htm>



### **The U.S.-Canada Boundary in the Pacific Northwest: The Pig War**

*The National Park Service San Juan Island National Historical Park* websites (WWW 5.2), (WWW 5.3), (WWW 5.4) The United States and Canada share the longest unfortified border in the world. While on the surface it appears that the two countries are fairly comfortable with this peaceful relationship, in the past, the border has been a source of much contention. After the dispute over one section of the border involving British Columbia was resolved one piece of the United States ended up as an enclave within Canada.

4. Where would you find this unusual piece of real estate?
5. Can you think of any reason why the United States would fight in the “Pig War” to retain this relatively tiny chunk of territory?
6. What are the differences between “British” and “English” camps and what precipitated the name variations?

7. Do you think British and English should be used interchangeably—why or why not?

WWW 5.2: <http://www.nps.gov/sajh/>

WWW 5.3: <http://www.outwestnewspaper.com/pigwars.html>

<or>

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1030.html>

WWW 5.4: [http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/old\\_west/16355](http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/old_west/16355)



### **The Baarle-Nassau/Baarle-Hertog Dispute**

**Professor Barry Smith's *Baarle-Nassau/Baarle-Hertog*** website (WWW 5.5) No, not the Nassau located in the Caribbean. These “islands” are on dry land in Belgium and the Netherlands.

8. What makes these enclaves so unique?

9. How were they formed and what attempts have been made over the past to resolve this conundrum?

Explore other border issues with the *International Boundary News Database* website (WWW 5.6) If there is a boundary issue somewhere in the world, it is probably cited in the International Boundary News Database. You can access the database by simply entering location names and submitting your search request. When database completes the search it will list all the boundary issues associated with the locations you have chosen. Read through the search results and list and discuss what you believe are the major border issues.

10. How would you classify the boundary you chose?

WWW 5.5: <http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/baarle.htm>

WWW 5.6: <http://www-ibru.dur.ac.uk/resources/newsarchive.html>

<http://www-ibru.dur.ac.uk/resources/newsarchive.html>



## **ACTIVITY 2: State Organization and National Power**

## Micro-Minis: Skirting the Issues of Statehood

**INTRODUCTION:** What does it take to create a country? Is it political or military power over a geographic territory? Do you need a minimum number of people to qualify? Or do you become a state because others recognize your legal right to exist? For some smaller states, retaining their identity, or for that matter creating one, can present some problems. Many states have populations of less than 1 million residents. These are ministates and despite their small size, they manage to function as fully legitimate political entities yet wield little influence in global affairs. Then there are the microstates. Microstates may or may not have any political or geographic *raison d'être* (justification for existing), but exist nonetheless. Some microstates are self-proclaimed nations created by individuals, groups, or even corporations such as the “Republic of Ceurvo Gold,” established by a tequila manufacturer. In fact, some microstates exist only in the minds of their creators or on the Internet such as the “Aeldarnian Empire.” And then there is the “Kingdom of Talossa” which was created by a high school student and territorially consisted of his bedroom. Some say the world is getting smaller. Let’s take a look and see.

### Activity 5.2 Field Work

Prepare to take a magical mystery virtual field trip to an amazing variety of microstates.

To begin your journey, go to the *Micronations* website (WWW 5.7) and read the section titled, “What are Micronations?” Next, scroll down and read the author’s classification system for microstates. Finally, scroll down to the list of micronations and answer the questions for the micronations listed below.

1. Conch Republic: How did Border Patrol action bring this microstate out of its shell?
2. Minerva, Republic of: Why did this “republic” fail to keep its head above water?
3. Morac-Songhrati-Meads, Republic of: Where is the “Humanity Sea” and exactly how human is it?
4. Mosquito Shore and Nation: Who have been the main political players that have wrestled for this territory for the past 300 years?
5. Navassa Island: What does the self-proclaimed king have to rule over on Navassa and why might the Coast Guard want to take his throne? Tour the island via its *Navassa Island* website (WWW 5.8) and follow the link for History for more information.
6. Seborga, Principality of: Seborga has been a microstate for over 1000 years. Why is it still struggling for recognition? Travel to the principality via its *Principato di Seborga* website (WWW 5.9).

WWW 5.7: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5111/archive/patsilor.htm>

## **Nabassa Island**

WWW 5.8: <http://members.aol.com/davidpb4/navassa.html>

## **Principato di Seborga**

WWW 5.9: <http://www.masterweb.it/seborga/>  
<http://www.imperial-collection.net/seborga01.html>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seborga>



**The Kingdom of Talossa**

<http://my.execpc.com/~talossa/>

<http://www.kingdomoftalossa.net/> (this website is “pretending”)

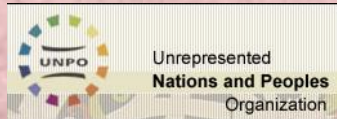
7. Where did this micronation begin?
8. Where exactly was it located?
9. What has happened to the kingdom?



## **ACTIVITY 3: Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization**

**Activity Three:** The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) provides a forum for groups who are not represented in traditional supranational bureaucratic institutions such as the United Nations (UN). For those nations without a state, the UNPO offers assistance and guidance for self-help programs and adheres to philosophy of progress through non-violent measures. Who are the more than 50 members of the UNPO and what are they doing to ease the plight of their peoples?

## UNPO Web site



<http://www.unpo.org/>

1. Click on *What is the UNPO?* Based on what you have read, how is the UNPO different from the UN?

Go back to the main page and select *Members of the UNPO.* Select any one of the member nations excluding those peoples who reside in the United States and answer the following questions. You may print the main page if you wish. Be sure to raise your hand to print!

Note the UNPO member you have chosen to study: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Describe the geographic location.
3. What ethnic group(s) are included in this area?
4. What types of economic activities take place in this region?
5. How did this group of people survive to this point and what are the major challenges for their future as a nation with or without a state?
6. Why do you believe the UNPO you have selected has not been given independence or been recognized as a nation and what geographic factors are involved?
7. Were you surprised to learn that that are UNPO members in the United States?

Go through the list of UNPO members and pick out those nations that are currently living within the U.S. borders. List those members below and answer the following questions.

8. List the UNPO member nations that reside within the political boundaries of the United States.
9. Where are these nations located within the United States?
10. What, if any, do these peoples have in common?
11. In the best case scenario, what do you see as the future for each of these groups? Do you think they will ever become nations with a state or will they continue to be assimilated into the host culture? Why do you think this is the case?
12. Are there any parallels you see between the UNPO members in the United States and the other member nation you selected? If so, what are the similarities as well as the differences?

