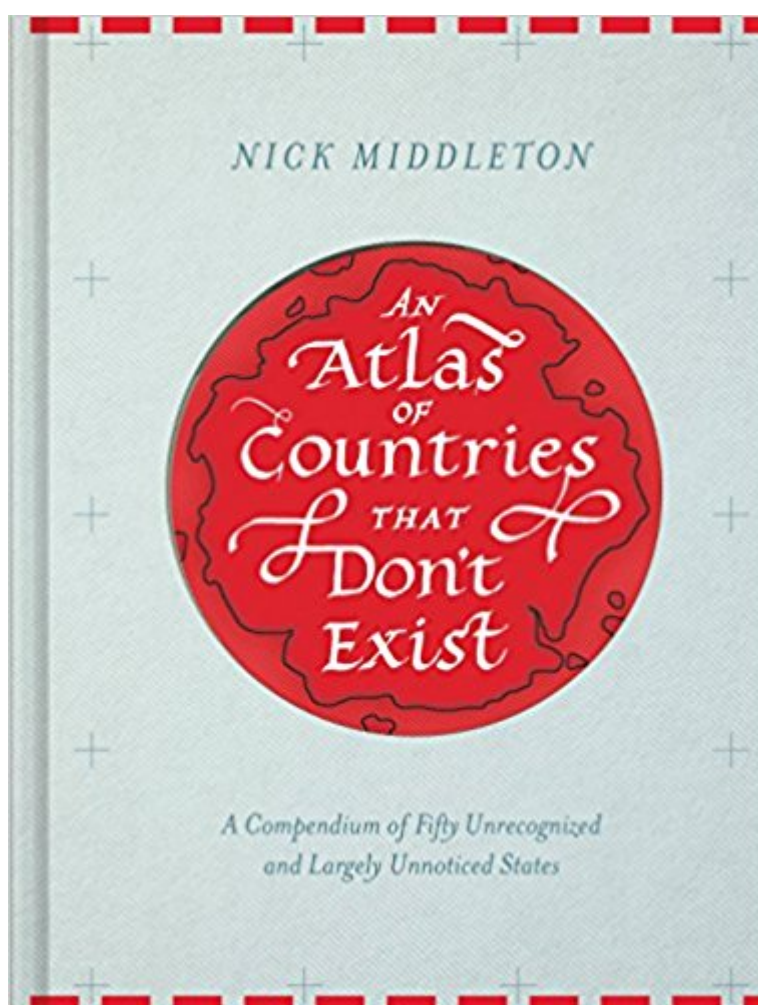


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An Atlas Of Countries That Don't Exist: A Compendium Of Fifty Unrecognized And Largely Unnoticed States



Synopsis

What is a country? Acclaimed travel writer and Oxford geography don Nick Middleton brings to life the origins and histories of 50 states that, lacking international recognition and United Nations membership, exist on the margins of legitimacy in the global order. From long-contested lands like Crimea and Tibet to lesser-known territories such as Africa's last colony and a European republic that enjoyed independence for a single day, Middleton presents fascinating stories of shifting borders, visionary leaders, and "forgotten" peoples. Beautifully illustrated with 50 regional maps, each country is literally die-cut out of the page, offering a distinctive tactile experience while exploring these remarkable places.

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Customer Reviews

View larger Take an Eye-Opening Tour of a Hidden World Everybody knows what today's political map of the world looks like. The bold colors and sharp boundaries show the global land surface neatly divided between sovereign states. But it hasn't always been like this. For most of human history, before the Europeans started exploring and colonizing, people lived in small cultural communities or larger civilizations that were hardly interlinked at all. With time, as more people moved more frequently and more quickly exploring, conquering, trading and traveling so the contemporary world of countries, tightly defined by their boundaries, developed. The final phase of this process is really quite recent. It is only after the end of World War II, with the creation of the

United Nations and the process of decolonization, that we came anywhere near to the map of many colors we know today. A truly global international society of countries. Not that the political world map is static. Countries come and go. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the disintegration of the Soviet Union spawned no fewer than fifteen new states and East Germany joined its western counterpart to become a reunified country. These were quickly followed by Czechoslovakia undergoing a *“Velvet Divorce”* to create the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Already in the twenty-first century we have seen more new states emerge in Asia (East Timor), Europe (Montenegro) and Africa (South Sudan). But at the same time, we are constantly being reminded that we live in an era of unprecedented global communication, a time when globalization is eroding the importance of the nation state. Our planet is becoming an increasingly borderless place, where national boundaries matter little to the movement of goods and investment (though the movement of migrants is another story). National governments have had their power diluted and usurped by some new actors on the global stage, including international organizations, transnational corporations and non-governmental organizations, or NGOs. A world of fixed spaces is giving way to a world of flows, and the idea of national territory is giving way to supra-national communities such as the European Union. With its echoes of Aldous Huxley, this is the *“New World Order”*. However, while the notion of fixed territories is in one sense under threat from globalization, the rise of the internet, virtual communities and the diffusion of ideas, there is no question that the national space itself remains of great importance. Individual countries still dominate all of our lives. Much as some might like to think of themselves as *“Citizens of the World”* rather than citizens of any one nation state, they won’t get very far in seeing that world without a travel document issued by their national government. Granted, the European Union has, to a large extent, done away with its internal boundaries, but the EU is still a relatively small chunk of the world. An EU citizen who ventures outside the EU can only do so legally with a passport. Which brings us back to that political map of the world. Announcements of the end of the nation state may be premature. National territory still has an enduring allure. And nation states work hard to keep it that way, defending borders and encouraging many schemes to strengthen national cohesion. What most of us probably don’t realize about that world map is what it conceals: a multitude of unrecognized and largely unnoticed states whose claims to legitimacy are made invisible by the bold, self-assured slabs of color. This is the shadowy, surprisingly large, and literally unofficial world of countries that don’t exist. This atlas presents fifty of these wannabe nation states. Each has its own flag and legitimate claim to some territory but, for a variety of reasons,

none has quite made the grade, to join the exclusive club of internationally recognized countries.

Transnistria Separatist region of Moldova, often portrayed in the West as a hotbed of crime and Stalinism From Brussels, the EU bureaucrats see it as a black hole in Europe, a hub for money-laundering, people-trafficking and the illegal arms trade that seethes with epic tales of the criminal underworld, all beyond the reach of international law. Politically, they spy a time warp back to the days of the old Soviet Union, a place where the hammer and sickle continues to flutter in the corner of the national flag. A hawk-eyed statue of Lenin still graces the front of the parliament building in Tiraspol. Since separating from its neighbor and foe across the river, this sliver of land on the left bank has been bolstered by Russia and a sense of collective victimization among its residents. More than 300 miles from the nearest Russian border, they see themselves as Russian people marooned by the collapse of the USSR. Back in the old days, fresh produce from the Kremlin Garden, north of Tiraspol was flown direct to Moscow every day. No surprise that outsiders simultaneously observe a Stalinist backwater and a criminal Ruritania. Yet order is maintained, thanks in large part to a shadowy public body known only as the Sheriff. Blurring the line between business and politics, the Sheriff steers a course between chaos and prosperity, navigating the passage from state socialism to state capitalism. It is a private enterprise with political clout. Some call it the economic arm of the state, owning gas stations and supermarket chains, a mobile phone network and the country's leading football club, FC Sheriff Tiraspol. To the uninitiated, Sheriff and Transnistria appear as one. It is the largest employer and the Sheriff's badges appear on almost every building. The name reflects the previous occupation of its two founders, former agents of state security. As its website proudly declares, the Sheriff is "Always with you!"

Declared: 2 September 1990 Capital: Tiraspol Population: 518,700 Area: 1,607 square miles Continent: Europe Language: Russian, Romanian-Moldavan

"From the Isle of Man to Elgaland-Vargaland (this is one you'll have to read about to believe), we take an armchair voyage to 50 different countries that we may or may not already be familiar with. . . . I learned so much about obscure bits of the world's history, geography, and political history that I kept quoting tidbits to my family until they were sick of me." -Geek Dad

"Don't be fooled by the title of this engrossing, delightfully presented book. You'll not find Middle-earth, Atlantis or Lilliput inside, but you will find something just as intriguing - real places that are quite noteworthy in the minds and

hearts of their nonfictional inhabitants, but are "unrecognized and largely unnoticed states whose claims to legitimacy are made invisible" by their clearly defined, "official" neighbors...Along with the attractive format and the short but informative entries, the jacketless textured gray cover with a dramatic cutout makes "Atlas" a handsome addition to a shelf of geography or political histories. Anyone who keeps such shelves would do well to give this atlas a go, and it's sure to prompt discussions about what makes a country a 'real country.'" -Seattle Times"A fascinating catalogue of stories and a reminder of how varied the world can be when the established geopolitical order starts fraying at the edges."--Geographical Magazine"...an engaging browse for YA and adult amateur geography enthusiasts."-Library Journal"Middleton, a geographer at the University of Oxford, has now charted these hidden lands. . . . it feels like you have entered a parallel world with a vibrant, forgotten history and a rich culture."--BBC

Nick Middleton is a geographer, author, and television documentary writer and presenter. A fellow of St Anne's College, he lives and teaches in Oxford, England.

Beautiful. The other reviews criticizing the entries in this book made me wonder if it was good. I think the graphics and format are BEAUTIFUL and the content is challenging even to my geographic expert family members! If you want to know more about the places and the conflicts surrounding their desire for independence and recognition, do your own research.

There are many really excellent stories here, but they're quite short and the authors provide no bibliography or index for those who would like to follow up.

I gave the book as a gift to my grandson, Alex. He loved and proudly took it to school.

Interesting, well written, easy to read

Rather disappointing. The author provides brief vignettes about each place, foregoing the opportunity to say something meaningful about any of them. It does have maps, which is good, but it's otherwise underwhelming. Not worth the money. At least on my Kindle edition of this book, all the type was in italics. Annoying.

I have some mixed feelings about this book. It's a great idea for a book, and the book is nicely done.

The maps are good. It's a quick and somewhat amusing read. But it's a mix of not really real countries, call them concepts, and countries that could be very real and may be someday. These fall into several groups. A couple are places that do have a kind of existence, supported by a country for its own reasons such as Abkhazia and Transnistria (Russia) and North Cyprus (Turkey). A few are conceptual, such as the Republic of Lakotah, posited by the Sioux tribes (Lakota, Dekota and other names, "Sioux" being the most common name form outsiders). Then there are places that could be countries, that have culture, traditions, maybe language and have paid a price in the past for desire for independence--Catalonia (in Spain) and Sahrawi (the former Spanish Morocco, annexed by Morocco and subject to some rebel violence). A few are countries in the sense there is a distinct culture and announcing moves for independence might lead to more attention from government, like Moskitia (of the Miskito people in Nicaragua--not to be confused with Belize). Then there are some that are troublesome and in the near term may see increased violence. Bangsamoro is a Muslim area in the Philippines, on the island of Mindoro and islands nearby, which resisted Spain for centuries, engaged in a gory little war with American troops after the US annexed the Philippines, and West Papua, annexed by Indonesia in 1963, subject to extreme exploitation. It's this odd combination of amusing conceptual countries, places with real separation movements, and places that have been the setting of extreme violence (Circassia) that make for me, an uneasy combination. As noted maps are good. The brief comments are about the same length for large places and tiny places (Greenland and Mayotte); useful but too brief. The purpose of the book is assort of amusing armchair travel, but as noted the inclusions don't fit together particularly well. They might lead some readers to investigate more and really find out about some of these places .

5486. An Atlas of Countries That Don't Exist A Compendium of Fifty Unrecognized and Largely Unnoticed States, by Nick Middleton (read 16 Jul 2017) This kind of spoofy book will appeal to people interested in geography. I recall when I was in 3rd grade in a room with 4th graders I envied them because one of the subjects they had was geography, which we third graders did not have. This book lists 50 "countries" some of which we all recognize, such as Greenland, Antarctica, Isle of Man, Somaliland, Taiwan, and even maybe Ruthenia. But Pontinha? Even the whiz kids who participate in geography contests would no doubt miss on that one. For good reason: its population is 4. (It is an island near Madeira--we know where that is, right?) And it is not the least populated "country" listed in this book. Akhzivland's population is given as 2. And there is one "country", Minerva, listed with its population given as 0. So no matter how skilled you are in geography, you are bound to learn from this uniquely designed book. (I think I am supposed to tell you that it was

given me free in return for a published review, so I do so tell you.)

A large portion of the appeal of this book is in its construction, which would be missing in the Kindle edition. The cover is cut out to show the title page from inside the book. Each country is first seen isolated by a red cover page with cutout, containing a handful of facts. Turning the red cover page shows the country on a map large enough to orient the viewer to its geographical location, and a page more of info. I can't imagine reading this on a Kindle, you lose almost all of the fun from turning each page. It would be like reading the Kindle edition of a pop-up book. This is a book that needs to be bought hardbound.

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