

Reimagining Governance

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With any government, compromises must be made as it's infeasible for one government to cater to the needs of every specific group. If an individual no longer agrees with the policies being implemented by their government then they can try to relocate to a different government. But soon they will come to the realization that there are only roughly 200 governments in the world that have the monopoly of being a government. But what if the individual does not like the policies of any of these governments? What if the individual wants to form their own government to meet their own needs?

They can try, but will likely join the slew of dozens of failed micronations that were either shut down by the existing monopoly of governments or simply lacked the resources to be a government. A notable example being Michael Oliver's Republic of Minerva, envisioned as a libertarian tax free society. The Republic of Minerva built on an artificial island on the unclaimed Minerva reefs declared independence on January 19th, 1972 [1]. Shortly thereafter Tonga claimed the Minerva Reefs at the 1972 South Pacific Forum and their claim was recognized by neighboring countries for fear that if the Republic of Minerva were successful then it could enable individuals to make claims of other atolls and seamounts [2]. In June of 1972 King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV of Tonga arrived at the Minerva Reefs with convicts and members of the Tongan Defense Force, with them he took over the Republic of Minerva [3].

More recently in 2019 a couple created a self-governing seastead more than 12 miles off the coast of Thailand, just outside of its territorial waters. Now they have been charged with threatening Thailand's sovereignty punishable by life imprisonment or death [4]. In 1968 Italian engineer Giorgio Rosa built a platform off the coast of Italy that he declared the Republic of Rose Island, in 1969 it was blown up by the Italian military [5].

Among all the attempts of individuals to create their own government, there stands a lone victor, the Principality of Sealand. It was founded by Paddy Roy Bates on an abandoned British offshore military platform and still exists today [6]. That's not to say it hasn't had its own problems as in 1978 a German business man named Alexander Achenbach hired mercenaries and attempted to take over Sealand. Germany had to send a diplomat to negotiate for Alexander's release which Paddy Roy Bates claims is effectively is de-facto recognition of Sealand as a country [7].

Sealand's success is an outlier, most attempts by individuals to form their own governments are unsuccessful. But what if that weren't the case? What if it were much simpler for an individual to make their own government? What if there existed a framework that facilitated the creation of new governments on the individual level?

If we had such a framework we may enter a new era of governance, where governments become less nationalistic and more contractual, focusing on delivering the best service to their citizens. Governments would have to compete and governments delivering a worse service would lose citizens and thus their source of revenue, incentivising them to deliver the best service. Additionally, governments could cater to specific types of people and provide better regulatory environments for what they are working on. This way we avoid the compromises that current governments have to make that result in a worse service for everyone.

The best place to test such a framework would be on seasteads, however most seasteads run into the problem of being in another country's EEZ. If a seastead wants the best odds of surviving and being recognized. It should be at least 200 nautical miles away from any other country's EEZ as this would make it not a threat to any other countries EEZ if the seastead in the future were somehow given an EEZ. There are many seasteading attempts done right outside another country's EEZ, but if that Seastead were ever looking for recognition as a country it could be deemed that it could pose a threat to that country's EEZ as there would now be a joint claim over the same area.

So why don't Seasteads go 200 nautical miles away from any EEZ to minimize any threat a claim from them could pose on any other country. Well, that's easier said than done. As EEZ typically includes the continental shelf and if it doesn't then a country can claim an extended continental shelf under Article 76 of UNCLOS. Think of the continental shelf as the part of the continent that is just submerged below the water before a sudden drop. In the continental shelf waters could range in the hundreds of meters in depth then once you leave it they plummet to thousands of meters in depth. Which is really problematic if you are a seastead that wants to build permanent structures or even just want to anchor floating structures.

That is why most seasteads make their attempts in the EEZ of another country or try to negotiate with them. They can still attempt this, as an EEZ just means that a particular country has control of the resources in that area but none of their laws apply. The laws of a country only apply in their territorial waters which extends 12 Nautical Miles from their shoreline.

If you were to ask me where I would attempt to build a seastead, I would give serious consideration to the Guinea Seamount Chain in the Gulf of Guinea. There are a handful of Guyots there where the waters are shallow enough that construction may be feasible. Additionally, these Guyots are greater than 400 Nautical Miles from any country meaning that if the Seastead were ever given recognition as a country its EEZ would not conflict with any other country's EEZ. The cherry on top is that it is located right in the middle of the Cape Shipping Route, a major shipping lane. This could give the seastead the potential to develop into a major shipping port.

References

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