The Geography and Geopolitics of Europe's Fourth World

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The term *Fourth World*[1] is a generalisation for thousands of self-identifying nations, regions, and even city-states with territorial aspirations. Arguably such a broad-level categorisation is problematic as each group seeks different levels and types of self-determination and any 'nation' is a unique matrix of social, cultural and aspirational characteristics located in a particular time and place. Yet commonalities appear to exist across these unique matrices. The belief in a common culture tied to an historical but internationally unrecognised claim to territory and a common discourse about these claims is widely evident. Along nearly every line of latitude from the Kingdom of KwaZulu-Natal in the South to Kallaallit Nunnaat ('Greenland') in the North there are thousands of movements across the time zones that see states as late 'occupiers' of old culturally bounded territories.

These commonalities make it worthy of a 'phenomenon' to be studied by scholars seeking to explain the forces capable of reshaping international boundaries. One such case concerns European boundaries. While the challenges posed by a world economy, global communications, transborder pollution, drugs or defense have been used to explain the drive toward a new political architecture in Europe, few have commented on the role of the Fourth World in this process.

Europe's Fourth World Nations

While globally some 6,000 to 9,000 nations lacking official recognition endure as distinct political cultures beneath the boundaries of 191 states, around 110 of these Fourth World nations are located in Europe. Such nations in the past have been the building blocks of European states (state-building by nation annexation) and today they are some of the political faultlines along which they have broken apart (e.g. Czechoslovakia) or are breaking apart (e.g. Yugoslavia). Presently, many of these Fourth World nations are organising for a new dispensation based not on sovereign states but a federal 'Europe of Regions'.[2]

As Hudson (1992: 5) has proposed, *"such movements promise or threaten – depending on one's political persuasions – a radical transformation in the political map of Europe"*.

The Geography of Europe's Fourth World Nations

Less than ten per cent of Europe's distinct nations (see pull-out colour map) are identified on the typical map of European[3] states. Only Iceland, Ireland, Monaco, Andorra, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, San Marino, Malta, Poland, and Slovenia are true 'nation-states' (states composed of only one nation). The remaining 101 nations fit within or across 35 multinational states. For example, Basque nationalist claims place Euzkadi (Basque Country) on both sides of the boundary between Spain and France (see pull-out map). Within Spain this includes the provinces of Navarra, Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa, and Álava and within France this includes the provinces of Labourd, Basse-Navarre, and Soule.[4]

Excluding the dominant nation cores of states (e.g. Svealand dominates Sweden's nations; Castile dominates Spain's) and those nations with very weak political movements (e.g. Pomerania), Fourth World nations can claim at least one-third of Europe's land area. They dominate more than half of Europe's coastline and form a concentrated core of smaller nations in the rugged heartland of the Alps (see pull-out map inset).

A classification of the Fourth World can help us to better understand the political force of such nations (Table 1).

Table 1. *A Classification of Fourth World Nations, Regions and City-States*

Recognised Nations	Nations that have endured long-standing state attempts at cultural assimilation to achieve independence. In most cases, statehood was achieved by decolonisation rather than expansion.
Autonomous Nations	Nations that have endured long-standing state attempts at cultural assimilation to achieve a considerable measure of autonomy.
City-States	City regions that have autonomy or independence.
Enduring Nations	Nations that have endured long-standing state attempts at cultural assimilation with strong political movements. Most have achieved a partial or limited autonomy.
Renascent Nations	Historic nations that have undergone a cultural renaissance since 1945 resulting in emboldened movements for greater political recognition.
Remnant Nations	Dormant nations with weak or incipient national movements. Most have expanding memberships and remain a geopolitical force through organised activity.
Nation Cores of States	Most states have nation cores that become both the point of expansion and the hegemonic culture of the proposed 'nation-state'.
Irredenta	Nation peoples separated by an interstate boundary because of a treaty or war.

(Source: Griggs, R. (1994) 'Ethnicity vs Nationalism – the European Nations', *Research and Exploration*, 10, 3: 259-265, National Geographic)

By creating categories it is our aim to better define and elucidate Fourth World movements. This effort comes with the proviso that the categories are academic and not part of the claims or doctrines of the Fourth World. These categories are not stagnant either. Nations can move from autonomy to recognition or from remnant to renascent nations at different stages of their struggle. While our emphasis is on nationalist claims, it is also important to understand that identity is layered and not temporally or spatially fixed. City-States and regions, not specifically nationalistic, can also be part of the broader movement for self-determination.

Recognised Nations

Some nations like Iceland are recognised as states by the world of states via the United Nations, and other 'international' bodies. However, their geographical origins differ from that of a state. These are nations that have endured longstanding state attempts at cultural assimilation to achieve statehood through decolonisation rather than expansion. As former Fourth World nations, they provide evidence that the 'highest form' of political self-determination can be achieved and can inspire and influence other states, such as the mobilising effect the declared independence of the three small Baltic states had on the other Fourth World nations of the former Soviet Union.

Autonomous Nations

Autonomous nations provide a different model and one more related to a federal 'Europe of Regions'. These nations enjoyed some period of independence in the past and through strong popular movement regained a significant measure of autonomy. Their greatest geopolitical effect is evidence that decentralisation is achievable without separatism and can produce both peace and prosperity. South Tirol, Jura, Catalonia, Schleswig-Holstein, Flanders, and Wallonia all saw a reduction in violent strife after achieving some level of autonomy. For instance, the southern half of Tirolia (Bavarian-speaking Tirolese) was annexed by Italy in the course of World War I and faced a comprehensive programme of cultural genocide under Mussolini. As a result South Tirol became a backwater of oppression, poverty, and terrorist activities that persisted until receipt of autonomy in 1972. Then under control of its own development, the Tirolese elevated their area to the region with the highest per capita income in Italy. As a nation representing the peaceful values of autonomy, South Tirol is *"one of the richest stores of information in the world"* (MRG, 1991: 11).

Autonomous nations can also have enough economic and political clout to play a direct role in building a Europe of interdependent nations and regions. Perhaps the most spectacular example of this was Catalonia's hosting of the 1992 Olympic games. Their command of the opening ceremonies was part of an advertising blitz that included a huge Catalan flag, the largest ever made, and speeches calling attention to Catalonia's status as a nation within Spain. This was preceded by colourful full-page advertising in high-circulation magazines specifically designed to increase awareness of Catalonia as a nation within Europe (Figure 1).

Enduring Nations

Enduring nations are so-named for their longstanding resistance to state attempts at cultural assimilation despite strong state resistance to calls for autonomy or recognition. Lombardy provides an excellent example of the geopolitical force of enduring nations. In 1983 the *Llega Autonomista Lombarda* was formed by Lombard Leader Umberto Bossi to contest local elections. Inspired by contact with the *Union Valdotaine* (Valle d'Aosta's nationalist party), Bossi sought to build a political base upon Lombardy nationalism with the

goal of creating pressure for a Federal Italy. By 1989, the *Llega Lombard* ('autonomista' had been dropped from the name), occupied two seats in the European parliament and was attracting a large membership in the wake of economic failings and corruption in the leading parties. In February 1991, Bossi joined forces with all the enduring nations of the North (Piedmont, Tuscany, Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, Romagna, and Venice) to form the Northern League. In less than two years it became the most powerful political force in Northern Italy. Since then the League has created more than eighty members of parliament and there are Llega-dominated administrations in dozens of northern cities. If the League achieves its ultimate aims, Italy will be divided into three autonomous units: the Republic of the North, the Republic of the Centre, and the Republic of the South.

Renascent Nations

Nations that seem to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of state-building constitute Europe's renascent Fourth World. These are nations that usually surprise political observers and whose force seems to be dismissed by many academics until independence or autonomy is nearly a *fait accompli*. William Beer entitled his 1980 book on national movements in France *The Unexpected Rebellion*, to pass comment on the general academic bias that the consolidated 'nation-state' of France could never see a resurgence of nationalism based on pre-1789 boundaries. Yet the Occitan movement beginning in the 1970s revived national feeling across the southern third of France (especially Languedoc and Provence) ultimately turning the tide on 200 years of centralisation when France began to return powers to the regions in 1982.[5] Altogether, the effect of renascent nations is to increase the level of debate and discourse in favour of a federal European Union.

Remnant Nations

In some regions the remnant geography of nations is as significant as the political or cultural movements that they include. Two geopolitical processes are responsible: (1) autonomous, enduring, and renascent nations can precipitate movements in areas of dormant nationalism (e.g. renewed nationalism in Catalonia and Euzkadi triggered a resurgence of national feeling in Valencia, Galicia, Aragon and Andalucia during

Figure 1: *Promoting the National Region: Advertisement by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia*
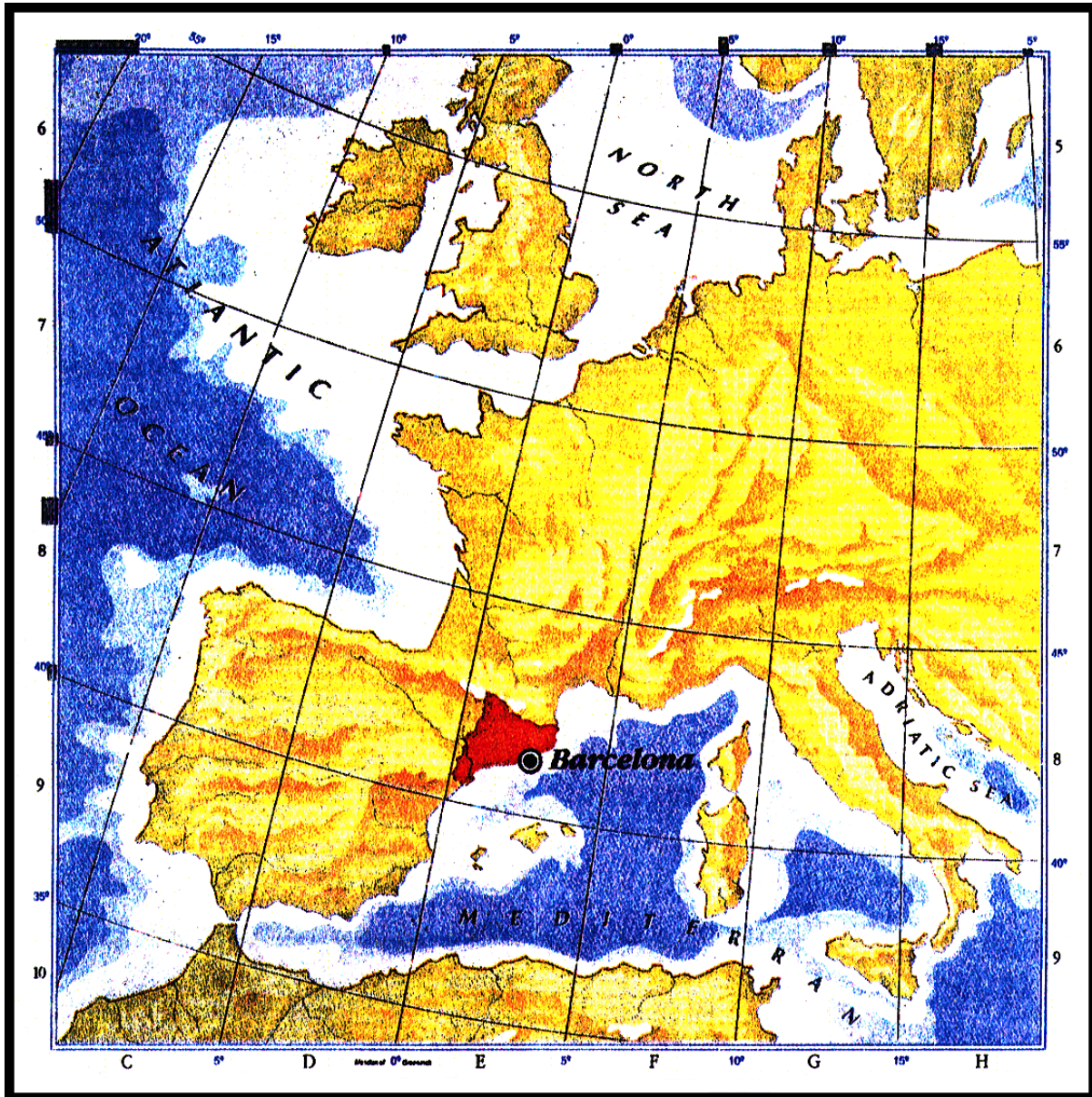
(Source: *The Sunday Times*, 23 April, 1995)

the 1980s); and (2) the political boundaries of old nations often make appropriate and logical units for decentralising states (e.g. Scania's nationalism was elevated to the point of renascence when the debate over Sweden's new regions began around 1990). Owing to the relationship that remnant nations have to other more active movements, these nations are important for us to observe since they are indicators of the extent of nationalist activity, process, and direction.

Irredenta

The term irredenta derives from an Italian region by that name that remained part of Austria after boundaries were redrawn in 1861. Redrawing state boundaries sometimes results in nationalist regions whereby a community feels it is part of the 'wrong' state. The violence in Northern Ireland is a classic example of this legacy and illustrates the geopolitical force of this kind of circumstance. The costs of holding a recalcitrant population by force can be high enough to eventually force new political arrangements such as autonomy, shared governance, independence, or perpetual war. As an example, the annual cost to the UK for maintaining troops in Northern Ireland in the early 1990s was nearly £2 billion and involved 60,000 rotating troops out of a total of 119,000.[6] The costs are more than monetary, of course, as nearly 35,000 people have been killed or injured in the last twenty years of fighting. By 1990 it had already been reported that more English people were in favour of pulling out of Ireland than not.[7]

Nation-Cores of States

The cores of European states can also be described as nation people. Not all of Spain is Spanish nor all of France French. The error of referring to a state as synonymous with its dominant nation came into starkest relief in 1991 when an angry Russian nation declared independence from the Soviet Union by facing down tanks in the streets and squares of Moscow. The nation cores of European states constitute a geography distinct from both the state generally and other kinds of nations in two ways: firstly, as the nucleus of state expansion; and secondly as the hegemonic core of the state's political culture.[8] In this post-Cold War era of renascent nationalism, questions have been raised about the identity of peoples belonging to the core nations. What does it mean to be English in the face of Irish, Scottish, Welsh or Cornish nationalism?[9] As the Lombard League gathered strength, peoples

of Central and Southern Italy began to ask, 'Are we Italians? Where is Italy?' In some cases there is no core to be provoked. When Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels, and the German Cantons are identified, who and where are the Belgians?

City-States

Not to be classified as nations but perhaps part of the Fourth World movements are city-states or metropolitan-based regional authorities such as Hamburg that have autonomy within the state system and San Marino which enjoys complete independence. The effect of the city-state is to build additional geopolitical pressure for devolved political authority as these areas are also making bids for their place in a federal Europe. For instance in 1991 the Hanseatic League was reborn as the *Neue Hanse Interregio* with the signing of a transboundary treaty of cooperation between Bremen, Hanover, Drenth, Friesland, Groningen, and Overrijssel.

A Europe of Regions – the Geopolitical Squeeze

Keyfitz (1995) suggests that when US President Woodrow Wilson promoted the self-determination of peoples in the aftermath of World War I, his conception was limited to the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian and German Empires. President Wilson did not foresee that this idea of group rights would come to dominate the discourse of international politics and see the break-up of several other states including the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. He failed to envisage the situation Hudson (1992: 2) has more recently described, whereby;

> *"Space has been created into which formerly suppressed but now emergent nations and a variety of regions have sought varying degrees of autonomy from or devolution of power within existing national state boundaries"*

Those who assume that European Unity will mitigate these nationalist forces may be just as time-bound and limited in their vision as Wilson. A three-way contest between states, the nations who would be states, and an emerging suprastate is less relevant than an emergent union of interests between nations, regions, city-states, and European federalists in competition with a state-organised European Union. The movement toward some form of European-wide supraorganisation has become a

springboard for nation-based political movements desiring autonomy within a united but federal Europe. Thus the specific strategy of most Fourth World nations is not based on creating some 120 independent states but upon a strengthening of confederational organisation and legitimacy. This means representation for nations and regions in EU institutions and domestic autonomy consistent with EU aims. These developments synchronise two geopolitical forces resulting in a squeeze on the state as the dominant form of political organisation.

On one side are the proponents of a Federal Europe who argue that the individual state can no longer meet the problems posed by continental and global problems (e.g. drugs, arms trade, economic competition, pollution); they are supported by those becoming increasingly aware that the idea of an absolute, unitary sovereign state can be dismissed.[10] On the other side are old nations, regions and city-states seeking more appropriate and less centralised solutions for particularly local problems. The common bridge between the two parties – the European Union and the Fourth World (including nations, regions, and city-states) – is the principle of 'subsidiarity' in which decisions are taken at the scale most appropriate to the problem. The European Union would be large enough to wrestle with the big problems and the region or nation appropriate to the smaller ones. Middle-scale problems would be handled by European Union commissions acting as facilitators between the nations, regions, or cities affected.

Within this vision the state becomes a replicated middle-tier of government. Article 3B of the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on 7 February, 1992 reads:

> *"In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the community shall take action in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity; only if and so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member states and can therefore by reason of the scale or affects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the community."*

Although the wording of Article 3B appears to favour the state as the final repository of political power, there is substantial pressure to redefine subsidiarity so that it is understood to apply at all levels of government. This is the key demand of a large number of pan-European organisations promoting the Europe of Regions vision such as the Federal Union of European Nationalities, the Assembly of European Regions, the Standing Conference on Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE), the International Institute for Ethnic Group Rights and Regionalism, the European Regionalist Network, the Association of European Border Regions, and the International Union of Local Authorities. Such efforts date to at least 1957 with the founding of the Council of Europe's CLRAE. This body has passed some 250 resolutions to promote European democracy through regional organisation. The Council of Europe now proposes that a 'Senate of Regions' be part of the European Parliamentary system.

The 1993 Treaty on European Union established a Consultative Committee of the Regions, marking the first time Fourth World nations, city-states, and regions were admitted as partners in building a new Europe.[11] The recognition was more logical than political. Europe requires regional organisation and regional economic partnerships require a European-wide body as a facilitator. Thus, those seeking to empower Brussels have often encouraged regionalism as enthusiastically as the regions themselves. Fourth World nations and regions also stand behind a federal Europe more commonly than not.

The Alliance with Brussels

Nearly all important treaties on Europe including the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty have in one form or another coaxed the process of regionalisation along (the former set up the European Regional Development Funds designed to level out widespread disparities in wealth and development on a regional basis; the latter set up the Consultative Committee of the Regions). The stated priority of the European Union is to *"re-establish the economic unity of artificially divided geographical entities"* (DGRP, 1991: 34). This makes the region and not the state the target of the EU equalisation grants. For instance, Ireland (both North and South) is considered one region for EU planning purposes because other approaches do not make geographic or economic sense. Ireland is a single island whose basins, forests, lakes, fisheries, lines of communication, and even tourist attractions do not fall neatly on either side of an imposed political border. Thus, EU funds are being used to improve north to south communications, transport links, telecommunications, and energy distribution facilities. One EU-funded project is uniting the transborder lakes of the Shannon-Erne basin by a series of canals.

State political boundaries are more often the product of treaties in the aftermath of war than the logical units of economic life. In a wider Europe without the traditional state boundaries of today, the logic of geography would have Cornwall directly involved in Atlantic trade rather than economically marginalised by shipping raw materials by train to London-based manufacturers. Similarly, hegemony rather than logical geography dictates that Skåneland should abandon its natural trade routes direct to adjacent Denmark and Germany to service an ill-situated manufacturing centre hundreds of miles to the north at Stockholm. EU-facilitated, transboundary cooperation often corresponds with past geographies that were prosperous for old nations before they became tied to hegemonic cores that disrupted trade patterns. Two examples are the Atlantic and Mediterranean Arcs that connect nations like Cornwall, Brittany, Aquitaine, and Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and Provence.[12]

Europe's Fourth World has other allies besides Brussels. A 1992 Eurobarometer survey carried out by the European Commission found that 87% of the Europeans surveyed simultaneously in twelve-member states felt either strongly or fairly strongly attached to their regions:

> *"Among those who felt strongly attached, their region is in first place with 55%, followed by their town or city (54%), and their country (53%). Furthermore 76% of Europeans consider that their region should be able to take an active part in the Community's [Union's] decision-making process; only 10% oppose this, whilst 14% did not express an opinion"* (Laikauf, 1992: 6)

A Europe of Regions also wins the support of powerful business interests. International capital is increasingly less concerned with state boundaries. Regions are aware that businesses infrequently base their investment decisions on the attributes of 'Belgium' but Wallonia or Flanders; not 'Germany' but Baden-Wurttemberg (Swabia); and not 'Spain' but Catalonia (Figure 1).

The European Parliament has also been a staunch ally of regionalism. The second European Parliament of 29 November 1991 called on all member states that had not yet initiated the process of regionalisation to make *"the necessary institutional changes"*.[13]

Fourth World Viewpoint

The geopolitics of Europe has returned to a period of decentralisation after two centuries or more of state-building because attempts to deliberately foster a state consciousness within the entire populace usually backfired. The violence associated with colonisation, forced removal and ethnocide/genocide resides in the cultural memory of surviving nation peoples. Children learn from their parents about their proud heritage and thus nations endure.[14] The sheer endurance of these old nations as a consequence of this sense of 'traditional legitimation' (Shils, 1995: 100) presents a geopolitical challenge to state policies of assimilation. States tend to breakdown (federate) or breakup (two or more states emerge from one state) before nations assimilate. Slovenia, for example, became independent in 1993 after over 1,200 years of occupation by various states that no longer exist including the Empire of the Franks, Byzantium, the Holy Roman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and finally Yugoslavia.

A united Europe is partly a response to the need for a stable political structure; it is also a response to the challenges posed by a world economy, global communications, the illegal drug and arms trade, transborder pollution, and a common defense. States are simply too small to handle such big problems alone and their sovereignty has become perforated by modern technology. Thus, the demand for local control has equal footing with the demand for European levels of organisation, and each foot awkwardly straddles an anachronism: the state form of organisation.

Conclusions

These strains on the state structure could see the gradual withering of the modern state as the dominant form of political organisation just as the state oversaw the decline of feudalism. This is a transgenerational project however. The more predictable short term result of this entanglement of geopolitical forces will be a messy overlapping of authority between nations, states, and the European Union. Interpretations of subsidiarity will see some power fall to the regions through the EU framework. If too many decisions fall to individual states, there is no guarantee that EU policies based on the region will be effective. A replicated middle-tier of government will mire the EU in layers of bureaucracy and hamper its efforts to revitalise the European economy by opening borders to eliminate obstructions to trade.

Examining Europe from the Fourth World perspective allows us to conclude that what unites nations, and attracts our attention, is not their particular shape, size, economic status, population, or degree of sovereignty that can be generalised and discussed. None of these factors explains Europe's Fourth World nations. These nations endure despite incorporation into an expansionist state as they find *unity* in their ties to their identity, culture, and territory which at present, remain sufficiently unrecognised. The commonality is a geopolitical relationship to a state-claimant,[15] and these common characteristics and motives hold significant implications for the future management of European territory.

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Notes

[1] See Griggs and Hocknell (1995) 'Fourth World Faultlines and the Re-making of 'Inter- national' Boundaries' (*Boundary and Security Bulletin*, Autumn 1995, International Boundaries Research Unit: Durham) for an introduction to the 'Fourth World' perspective. The following article seeks to further illustrate the benefits of identifying, mapping and monitoring Fourth World nations by examining in particular the nations of Europe.

[2] The term 'Europe of Regions' was first coined by Breton nationalist Yann Foueré who wrote a book of that title in Breton. The English version is *Towards a Federal Europe: Nations or States?*, Christopher Davies: Swansea, 1968. Foueré also understood that city-states and other regions (not necessarily just nations) were part of this wider movement. Williams (1989) has also cited Heraud (1963) and Kohr (1957) as key proponents of European regionalism.

[3] 'Europe' eludes easy definition (Economist, 1992: 12). Understanding the geopolitics of Europe's Fourth World nations must center upon an understanding of Europe itself. There are three different geographical bases for anchoring a definition of Europe: landscape, political boundaries, or cultural boundaries. No geographer has succeeded in defining Europe by an unchanging set of physical boundaries or landforms.

[4] The last three provinces share a parliament, courts, and police (Abercrombie, 1995: 79).

5   Elections were held for regional councils by 1986.
6   Note also that subsidies related to military security cost the United Kingdom at least as much. See 'Britons Would Gladly Wash Their Hands of the Irish Problem', *The New York Times,* p. 14, 17 April 1993 and 'Enemy Within', *The Economist*, p. 48, 10 July 1993.
7   In fact, 55% of the population favoured reunification of Ireland as the solution. See Jowell, R. et al. (1990), *British Social Attitudes*, 7th Report, Gower: London.
8   For a full treatise on this see Parker (1988). Other explanations include Pounds and Simons Ball (1964), Whittlesey (1944), and Greengrass (1991).
9   The literature is very large on this but see for instance Herrup (1992), or Chambers (1993).
10 For example, see Rosas, A. (1993) 'The Decline of Sovereignty: Legal Perspectives', in Iivonen, J. I., *Future of the Nation State in Europe*, Edward Elgar: Aldershot.
11 See Treaty on Union, Article 198A, Maastricht, 7 February 1992.
12 A third is the already fully-fledged 'Euroregion' association which is now recognised within the EU as a legitimate European economic interest group. It includes Kent County Council, which Taylor (1995:37) notes *"proudly proclaims itself to be '*the *European County' (note the definite article)"*, alongside Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia and Nord-Pas-de Calais.
13 'Final Declaration of the Second European Parliament', Strasbourg, 29 November 1991; Debates of the European Parliament, Official Journal of the European Communities Annex No. 1-313, pp. 259-308, 12 April 1984; 'Regions of the Community Conference', *Regions of Europe,* May 5, 1992.
14 Shils' (1995) attempt to describe this process is worth noting for the theoretical difficulties encountered. He proposes that *"Nations exist because of the sensitivity of human beings to the primordial facts of descent and territorial location"*, adding *"In the inheritance of nationality what is transmitted is '*territoriality*', and not '*blood*'"*, so rejecting the traditional model of primordialism which is seen by many as 'reductive' (Conversi, 1995: 73).
15 Johnston et al. (1988:13) similarly concluded *"the state has become the political organisation which is recognised as sovereign in the map of the contemporary world, so that concepts and aspirations of self-determination come to be measured by this yardstick"*.

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