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EUI Working Paper EUF No. 94/2

The Invention of the Region
1945-1990

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by Perry Anderson

There is now an extensive literature on the idea and reality of the
nation - nationality - nationalism, most of it the product of the last
three decades. To date, the notion and phenomenon of the region,
and of regionalism, lack a comparable body of research and
theory. If we are to develop one, a necessary starting-point would
seem to be some reflection on the term 'region' itself. The remarks
that are follow are simple-minded enough. Their intention is
merely to contribute to discussion in the Forum of some of the
possible conditions of the modern regional phenomenon in
Western Europe.[1]

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1. The Idea of a Region

The term 'region' is an old one in all European languages with a major Latin word-stock, typically coming into use in the 14th century; arriving later and employed much less frequently in German, and other non-Latinate idioms. Its signification was two-fold: indicating on the one hand, the demarcation of a geographical territory, vaguely associated with the sense of 'rule' *(regere)*; and on the other, a portion or sub-division of any wider referent: the heavens, the sciences, the parts of the body, and so on. From the outset, the term was highly indeterminate—floating between the specifically territorial and the generically sectoral, and lending itself to any number of metaphorical applications or extensions. For our purposes, the important point to note is that —perhaps in good measure just for this reason—the term 'region' was never central in the political vocabulary of the early modern state.[2] The administrative terms used to denote territorial sub-divisions within the framework of absolutist or semi-constitutionalist rule varied, of course, by zone and over time: *pays, Land, län,* shire, etc. But in common discourse, there came to be one word of more or less universal currency: 'province'. Its origins were unambiguous—*provincia* in Latin designating a territory conquered by Rome. This was the normal term of reference, in all major European languages, for the distinct parts of a realm. Its semantic dominance was not affected by the great changes of the *Neuzeit*. Paradoxically, indeed, as the heteroclite particular demarcations within the various *anciens régimes* were eroded or overthrown in the late 18th or 19th centuries, the gene-

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2 The most celebrated use of the term in its own way makes the point. The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio,* which came into use as a gloss on the Peace of Augsburg—it was not used in the recess itself—conceded to each ruler the right to determine the doctrine professed within the whole, not part, of their territory: the sense is that of 'realm'.

ral term was actually strengthened. As late as 1927-28, Ortega could entitle a work proposing a fundamental political overhaul of the Spanish state, *La Redención de las Provincias.*

But this inter-war text, expressly playing on the ambiguities of the term—Ortega spurned *provincianismo,* the better to exalt *provincialismo*—was perhaps the last major usage of the term in European political literature.[3] In the post-war world, the term 'province' has faded away, ceasing to form part of acceptable discourse. The reason for this is clear. From the beginning, the term had a secondary connotation, related to its Roman origins. Provinces existed not just as a division of a realm, it in opposition to its capital—as rustic periphery to polished centre. The source of this contrast was French. Pejorative reference to 'provincial' culture and manners can be found as early as Montaigne, and is a commonplace by the time of Madame de Sévigné. Bourbon centralization in the time of Louis XIV gave it virtually canonical force. From France, the associated meaning spread throughout Europe. By the early 18th century, Samuel Johnson's dictionary in England treats 'provincial' as more or less a synonym of bucolic. By the 19th century, when the earlier antithesis between court and country—onto which the opposition between capital and provinces had been mapped—had ceased to be active, scorn for provincialism if anything intensified, becoming a standard *topos* of mid-century French literature—Gautier, Sand, Flaubert—in particular. It is thus clear enough why the term 'province' should have lost credit in the polite vocabulary of politics, once universal suffrage became a 20th century norm.[4] The hierarchy of values it

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3   José Ortega y Gasset, 'La Redención de las Provincias', in *Obras Completas,* Vol. XI, Madrid 1983, p. 232 ff: originally a series of articles in *El Sol.*

4   In Germany a standard lexicon like Paul Herre's *Politisches Handwörterbuch,* (Leipzig 1923) contained lengthy entries on *Provinzen* and *Provinzialautonomie,* but nothing on *Region* n o r *Regionalismus.* Perhaps the sharpest illustration of the change can be seen in Italy, where the first edition (Turin 1976) of the distinguished

conveyed was incompatible with the equality of respect on which the conventions of post-war citizenship were based.

The rise of the idea of 'region' to its modern salience was thus an effect of the fall of the traditional notion of 'province'. In post-war conditions, the very indeterminacy of the concept of region was to its advantage. Affectively, it was neutral—without strong moral or cultural valency. Intellectually, its wide extension made it an ideal means for the fusion of quite distinct types of spatial unit into a single persuasive figure, within a mobilizing rhetoric. Thus there was a long-standing geographical notion of a 'natural region', as an ecologically bounded zone, demarcated by climate, fauna, soil, rivers, mountains, etc., going back to Humboldt. There was a much more recent idea of an 'economic region', deriving from the work of Von Thünen (who did not use the term itself) and concerned with patterns of industrialization. There was the older political sense of the term as an administrative unit within a sovereign state—but also the diplomatic usage denoting an area containing several such states: here the level of the 'region' could point at systems either below or above that of the 'nation'. Finally, and most recently as a standard locution, there has emerged the idea of a 'cultural region'—that is, a community bounded by either customs and traditions (the weaker version), or language and literature (the stronger version). These four significations are quite distinct in origin, and, of course, by no means coincident in distribution. But they are readily condensed into a single polyvalent sign.

Dizionario di Politica, edited by Norberto Bobbio and Nicola Matteucci, still contains a conventional entry under *provincia* (there is a longer one on *regionalismo*) —that disappears in the enlarged second edition (1983), only seven years later.

2. The Valorization of the Region

If the usage of 'province' fell out of favour, as compromised by a pejorative cultural undertone, leaving the field free for 'region' as a neutral term, which had the further advantage of wide poly-semic leeway, the question still remains to answered: what converted a notion that was was originally indeterminate and subsequently at best versatile, into one with an unambiguously positive valency? The historical change in this regard is very marked. When the term 'region' first acquired a political ring, in the later 19th century, the consensus was overwhelmingly against it. If 'regionalism' was accepted in literature, as a minor but harmless sub-genre, regionalism in politics was condemned by most contemporaries as a regressive recalcitrance against the unity of the nation. English commentators attributed the neolo-gism to more backward peoples, where the phenomenon must have arisen—the French, or worse still, Spanish; French lexico-graphers in turn thought the Italians were responsible. Isolated voices defended regional values, appealing to the federalist tra-dition associated with Proudhon. But the typical enlightened judgement was that of Piero Gobetti, no doctrinaire centralist, contemplating his country in the early 20th century:

> The basis for decentralization must not be the region, since quite apart from the danger of an anti-unitary regionalism, it is evident that the region provides no clear or reliable principle of differentiation among us.[5]

Fifty years later, the conventions have radically changed. Today, affirmation of the value of regional loyalties and identities is all but universal, and endorsement of the principle of their political representation an increasingly prominent theme of official dis-

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5 'La Riforma dell'Amministrazione', *Opere Complete*, Vol. I, Turin 1960, p. 94: 'How is Piedmont to be distinguished from Lombardy? Is Novara in Piedmont or Lombardy?'

course in Western Europe. There have, of course, been hold-outs like the Conservative Party in Britain or the MSI in Italy, which tended to denounce regional institutions of any kind with vehemence. But such unabashed centralism is the exception rather than the rule today. The European Parliament, indeed, has adopted a 'Charter of Regionalization' formally enjoining member states to institutionalize regional identities within them. In recent years, few political values have become as respectable as regions—however variable their interpretation may in practice remain. What accounts for this striking reversal, in no way foreseeable in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War?

A general process requires general explanations. Three significant forces, it may be suggested, have contributed to the rise of the region as a point of political identification across Western Europe. Chronologically, the first of these was the uneven economic development of post-war capitalism. The phenomenon of the 'depressed region' was, of course, already well-established in the inter-war period. But amidst the general hardships of the Slump and the War, it did not acquire undue salience. During the post-war boom, on the other hand, the fate of those areas which did not share in the median rise of living-standards within each nation, whether because they were zones of declining industry, or of uncompetitive agriculture, stood out in greater, and socially more combustible, relief. Pressure for measures to redress the handicaps of relative disadvantage inevitably built up, giving a new meaning to regions—economic interest supplying collective bonds even where prior cultural identity was weak.

A second force was quite different in its impact, and even opposite in direction. At a somewhat later stage of development, the modernization and concentration of the means of mass communication started to create conditions of hitherto unprecedented cultural homogeneity within each nation-state of Western Europe, and eventually, of course, across them too. Television notoriously played the prime role in this process—which had its correlates in the field of consumption as well as culture, with the arrival of

saloons and supermarkets in even rural areas. Predictably, centralization of this kind in due course provoked local reactions. Other things being equal, most people want both material conditions similar to, and cultural distinctions setting them off from, those within existentially comparative range of them. *Uneven* economic development gave one impulse to regional identification; *too even* cultural development gave another. Since diversity is itself a central value of all official theories of culture— no-one today will be found championing uniformity, soulless by definition—regional claims to defend it have virtually automatic backing within national intellectual establishments themselves.

A third change, of course, has been the advent of the European Comunity itself. This has perhaps been the most remarked-upon influence. The emergence of supra-national administration, more distant from immediate experience than any previous public authority, has—as one would expect—put an understandable premium on sub-national administration, as a compensating mechanism. There has also been, one might argue, an element of collusion, as well as compensation, in the relationship between the two. For in so far as the new European institutions—in particular the Commission and the Parliament—have reason to try to bypass national authorities, in pursuit of closer union, they have logically had an interest in promoting regional institutions as lower-level partners: hence such initiatives as the Charter of Regionalization.

All three of these forces have certainly played important roles in the rise of the region as will and representation in Western Europe since the war. But another change has also been at work, which— it might be argued—has been the most important of all. This is so simple and fundamental an alteration that it is usually overlooked. Until 1945, the dominant ideological value in every West European society was the nation. That is, the supreme le- gitimating discourse of public action was advance, or defense, of national interest or identity. This held good both for liberal- democratic and fascist-authoritarian regimes—antagonistic ide- ologies of great moment, but not decisive as mobilizing forces in

the armed collision between them, any more than the contrast between parliamentarism and absolutism—also real enough—had been in the First World War. In 1939 British or German soldiers fought for their country, not for Westminster or National Socialism. The two great victors of the conflict, Churchill and De Gaulle, embodied this value-order, conceiving themselves as impersonations not of liberty but of the nation.[6]

After 1945, this changed. One reason was the mutual destruction wreaked by the War itself, that left every West European power, even the nominal winners, diminished. The old values of national self-assertion, triumphantly restated and extended at the Treaty of Versailles, emerged chastened and qualified—leading to the, Treaty of Rome and a Common Market that ended unconditional sovereignty. No-one is likely to underestimate the importance of this change. But prior to it there was actually a more decisive one. It was the onset of the Cold War which really shifted the value-hierarchy of legitimation in Western Europe. From 1947 onwards, the battle against Communism was fought, not in the name of the nation-state, but of the Free World. Factually, no West European state was in a position to lead the struggle: the hegemonic role, in coordinating or coercing the various nations into the North Atlantic pact, fell to the United States. Ideally, democracy became the prime internal justification of the existing social order—counterposed to its dictatorial opposite in Eastern Europe. National appeals were, of course, not ignored by leading European states in this period, any more than democratic themes had been neglected by the Entente powers in the pre-war period; but the values of nationality now receded to a secondary plane, yielding primary position in official discourse to the claims of liberty.

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6   In the twenties Churchill was favourably disposed to fascism in Italy, De Gaulle to *Action française* in France.

It was above all this permutation—we might speculate—which released the dynamic of the region. For on the one hand, it weakened the principal modern barrier to the growth of regional autonomy—namely, the doctrine of national unity as a virtually sacred pact, in the last resort trumping all other values. In Western Europe territorial claims by one state against another effectively disappeared, save in Ireland, neutralizing one powerful factor that had once often made local autonomy suspect to central authority. The nation now at once secured as a space and relativized as a code, the region could stir more freely within it. This was a negative condition—a lifting of restraints. On the other hand, the elevation of democracy into the supreme legitimation of the social order, offered a positive opening to regional affirmation. Parliamentary systems based on univeral suffrage and civil rights afforded a compelling model of self-government. But did they exhaust the meaning of democracy, or the potential of popular sovereignty? Were they not—some impenitent spirits still asked—a trifle too abstract and diagrammatic, overly remote from ordinary citizens, to be regarded as the last historical word on the subject? These were unsettling thoughts, that might lead in a number of directions. But there was one which seemed straightforward and safe enough. Why should representative institutions be confined to the national level, necessarily quite distant from local life? Could they not be extended downwards to regional level, to 'fill out'—so to speak—the bare structures of decision-making at the centre? Nothing inherent in the doctrines of liberal democracy appeared to rule such a *dédoublement* out. At worst, regional bodies might be supererogatory—but they could not easily be held incompatible with national assemblies. Whatever the possible mediations between them, there had always been an undeniable tension between nation and region. Between democracy and region, by contrast, the relation might seem more like one of completion.

3. National Variations

The conditions for a new valorization of the region just adduced are all completely general: in principle applicable equally to any West European state, once passed a certain threshold of socio-economic development. In reality, as we know, there are marked differences in the position accorded regions between the countries of Western Europe. What explains these contrasts? It is tempting to look for the answer in the differential strength of local—what might once have been called 'provincial'—identities within the respective nations. The overall pattern would then be something like the outcome of a uniform process falling across an accidented terrain, yielding necessarily variable results. There is no doubt that an analytic cartography of traditional identities below the level of the nation in Western Europe, and a set of distinctions for classifying their different types, are much needed. But this task is an essential complement to a study of the pattern of regionaliza-tion, rather than the key to it. For, as a moment's reflection shows, the number of areas with a powerful sense of their own separate character is far smaller than that of the regions into which most of the EU is divided today. For every 'thick' entity like Bavaria, Vorarlberg, Veneto, Brittany, or Galicia, there are many more 'thin' units like Murcia, Centre, Molise, Lower Saxony, Poitou-Charentes, etc. The process whereby such distinct kinds of zone have acquired a common political reality requires explanation in its own right.

The hypothesis advanced here is that three principal variables account for much of the pattern of regionalization in the EU. We can enumerate these as:

(i) the type of state that existed *before* the arrival of univer-sal—not just manhood—suffrage;

(ii) the extent of democratic pressures *after* the advent of uni-versal suffrage;

(iii) the presence or absence of allogenous cultural communities within the boundaries of the nation.

Let us briefly look at how these determinants may have worked themselves out in the five largest West European states, and conclude with a glance at the situation in the smaller countries.

If we take a comparative view, familiar episodes within the post-war history of each nation appear in another light, and elements of a consistent pattern emerge.

We can begin with Germany, so far the only federal state in the Community. The extent to which the Second Reich created by Bismarck was a hybrid political structure—combining manhood suffrage and a vocal legislature with a substantially unaccount-able executive, and reserved imperial powers—is well-known. For our purposes, the salient feature of its constitution was the preservation of twenty-two dynastic realms and three trading cities as formally autonomous units within the Empire, each with its own administrative and judicial machinery and specific *Reservatrechte,* together with representation in the *Bundesrat.* The long tradition of princely particularism in Germany was, in other words, not abolished but incorporated into the framework of national unity by Bismarck. There, however, it was in practice neutralized by the overwhelming preponderance of Prussia, covering two-thirds of the territory of the Reich and containing nearly three-quarters of its population.

After the Empire had collapsed at the end of the First World War, the Weimar Republic did not abolish or even redraw the tradi-tional patchwork of units, apart for a minor consolidation in Thuringia. It simply converted the former states into *Länder,* and deprived them of real financial autonomy or significant constitu-tional power, while leaving most of their other functions in place—a process of deduction rather than transformation, mov-ing towards a unitary state without establishing one. With Hitler's seizure of power, a tightly centralized dictatorship was created, which wiped out all autonomy of the *Länder,* transferring their

powers to the Reich government, into which the Prussian administration was merged. But if the substance was destroyed, the shadow was preserved. Of the seventeen Weimar *Länder*, only Lübeck was abolished, the others continuing to exist as administrative units, commanded by a *Reichstatthalter*—perhaps in memory of the role some of them had played in providing a tramplin for the Nazi rise to power.

With the defeat of the Third Reich and Allied occupation of Germany, a juridical *tabula rasa* was created. How was the present constitutional structure built upon it? The strongly federal cast of the post-war republic in the West was the resultant of a number of convergent forces. There was the native tradition of pre-modern particularism, whose symbols even the Nazis had to some extent conserved. There was the destruction of Prussia, following Soviet-controlled annexation or occupation of its lands in the East, and division of them in the West. There was the initial reluctance of the Allies to see any central German authorities reemerge too quickly, which allowed local ones to entrench themselves. There was the subsequent pressure from the dominant power in the West, the United States, for the adoption of federalism as the tried and tested system of national safeguards at home. But dominating all of these was a common determination— shared by the post-war elites and occupation authorities in the West alike—to root democracy as firmly as possible in German soil, after the catastrophic experience of Nazism.

There were different conceptions of how to do this, and in the immediate aftermath of the war, one of the most widespread was the belief that, as the Social-Democratic Party put it in 1946:

> Democracy in a capitalist state is in continuous danger... German democracy needs socialism, or counter-revolutionary forces will destroy it once again.[7]

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7 See Dennis Bark and David Gress, *From Shadow to Substance*, Oxford 1989, pp. 195-196.

A year later, the CDU itself called for wide-ranging socialization to secure the new democracy, in its Ahlen Programme. By the time the Basic Law founding the *Bundesrepublik* was adopted in 1949, American and conservative pressures had forced these ideas to the side, although they left their trace in Article 15 of the new Constitution. The design of the *Grundgesetz* anchored German democracy, not in industrial but regional representation, conferring substantial fiscal resources and political powers—especially in the cultural field—on the *Länder*, and entrenching their governments as delegations to the Upper Chamber of the national polity. The linkage between the alternative conceptions of democratic deepening is, however, still visible in the wording of Article 20: 'The Federal Republic is a democratic and *social federal* state'. Co-determination in heavy industry, already operative in the coal-fields, was extended to steel soon afterwords—less than the trade-unions or SPD wanted, but more than Adenauer or the employers liked.

The outcome of the *Grundgesetz* has been the most successful and durable regionalization of power in any major European state. But two paradoxes of that success are noticeable. The post-war *Länder* were in their great majority new creations. Only Bavaria could claim real historical continuity as a *Flächenstaat*, and even its borders were modified. North-Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Rhine-Palatinate were manufactured *ex novo* to suit the needs of the Occupation authorities, Baden-Württemberg was merged with difficulty, and Hesse doubled in size—while the anomalous enclaves of Hamburg and Bremen were retained. Yet no sooner in place, than this often arbitrary distribution took hold. There is some irony in the outcome. For forty years, the Federal Republic has combined the most far-reaching regionalization of any West European state with perhaps the least regionalism as a public issue—in fact, the very term for long remained a relatively infrequent import. One significant reason has been the absence of allogenous cultural communities, other than immigrants without citizenship: a national uniformity that set West Germany apart from the other large EC states.

In these conditions, 'regional' identity itself—where it is most genuinely felt—often appears to crystallize at a level lower than the *Land:* so to speak, around the Hunsrück rather than the Rhine-Palatinate. Bavaria, the only *Land* to vote against the Basic Law as too centralist, is closer to the exception than the rule in this respect. Rather than becoming objects of intense sentimental affiliation, the *Länder* have tended to serve as practical arenas for political compensation, in which parties that do not enjoy power at the federal level can share or hold it at regional level, providing a kind of rebalancing mechanism. On the other hand—here lies a second potential irony—the abrupt incorporation of East Germany, accomplished with political promises and popular acclaim not altogether unlike an earlier union with the Ostmark, has unbalanced the Federal Republic. The five new *Länder* in the East, resuscitations of those created—no less artifically than in the West—by the DDR in 1949, and abolished by it in 1958, were initially the focus of spontaneous attachment by the local populations, as mementoes of a past that was theirs, however briefly, neither ordered by Bonn nor tolerated by Berlin. But the wrenching disruptions that have followed unification are unlikely to leave such recent identities unscathed. Today, perhaps, conditions are being prepared for the emergence in East Germany of what might—once the depths of collective humiliation and disorientation start to pass—become a true regionalism of major proportions, attracting loyalties across administrative boundaries in a common movement against the ills of Western integration.

The conventional comparison of Germany is with Italy. In fact, of course, though unification of the two countries was virtually simultaneous, the Risorgimento was a process directed against foreign powers, dynasties of alien origin protected by them, and the church, rather than a rallying of native realms—so involving greater resort to political violence and initiative from below. Moreover, the weight of Piedmont in Italy was far less than of Prussia in Germany. Cavour was therefore never in a position to take Bismarck's route, of nesting older principalities within the new state. Italian unity was bound to be more overtly centralist,

deriving its administrative models from Napoleonic France, libe-
rator of the 1790's and ally of the 1850's. On the other hand,
Italian society was vastly more heteroclite in social and cultural
character than German, and there were Risorgimental politicians
who doubted the wisdom of imposing a uniform Piedmontese
straightjacket on the peninsula. In the aftermath of victory in the
South, Minghetti proposed a more decentralized structure to the
National Assembly in Turin that divided the country into six re-
gions, with a measure of administrative autonomy. The deputies,
aware that the social basis of the new state was very shallow, and
fearful of any risk of fragmentation to it, threw the project
unceremoniously out. Instead a united Italy was to be governed
French-style, as a uniform territory of some sixty circumscriptions
ruled by prefects appointed by the central power. The repre-
sentative basis of the Liberal state remained tightly oligarchic: the
electorate was no more than two per cent of the population, or
eight per cent of adult males.

When mass politics started to stir at the turn of the century,
agitation for regional autonomy predictably surfaced where
geography and history had created the most distinctive local cul-
tures of major size—in the island societies of Sicily and Sardinia:
significantly stronger in the latter. But it was not until the after-
math of the First World War, amidst the general political
upheaval against the narrow framework of the Giolittian order,
with the foundation of the Partito Popolare by Sturzo and the rise
of Lussu's Party of Action in Sardinia, that decentralization
became an issue at national level. In 1921, the last year of the
Liberal regime, a commission set up by the Italian parliament
reported on the question—just before fascism swept to power,
crushing all regional impulses with a stronger central hand than
ever before.

Twenty years later, the collapse of Mussolini's regime posed the
same question as in Germany. What kind of democracy would be
constructed after the destruction of fascism? Once again, as after
unification, the upshot was very different in the two countries. In

Italy, the Allies had no fear of a come-back by the extreme right, as in Germany. What alarmed them was the strength of the militant—Communist and Socialist—left. For their part the Christian Democrats were committed, as Sturzo's heirs, to the principle of regional autonomy, but had no wish to allow the Left to control the large areas of Italy where it was likely to be the leading force. The Left, while accepting the need for decentralization, was more concerned to give the new Constitution a social than a federal emphasis. The result was a Charter long on welfare promises and short on administrative reforms. Regional conceptions nevertheless could not be simply archivized, for two reasons. In the South the Anglo-American landings in Sicily had released a separatist movement on the island, briefly encouraged by the Allies, that still had embers of support when the War ended. In the borderlands of the North, on the other hand, there were allogenous cultural groups which had been severely repressed by fascism, and over which neighbouring states—in the first instance, France and Austria—had potential claims.[8] For reasons of prudence, as much as principle, a measure of autonomy could not be denied the islands and enclaves within a democratic order. Hence in the wake of the Liberation special statutes were created for Sicily and Sardinia (whose roles were now reversed—the latter, having had less opportunity to stir in 1943-45, received fewer concessions than the former), and the French- and German-speaking communities of Val d'Aosta and Alto Adige, even before Italy had acquired its post-war Constitution.

When the Constituent Assembly met in 1946, the experience of the Resistance was still fresh, and a coalition including Socialists and Communists as well as the Christian Democrats still ruled the country. Determined to prevent any regression to the authoritarian past, all parties concurred in devising a constitution that

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8   For particulars, see Ernest Weibel, *La création des régions à statut spécial en Italie*, Geneva 1971, pp. 206-207 ff. and 220-221 ff.

deliberately limited the authority of the central executive powers, by creating an exceptionally powerful legislature, based on a rigorously fair proportional representation. In the same spirit of democratic dispersion, theoretical provision was also made for the establishment of another fifteen regions covering the whole peninsula. Unlike the four regions with a special statute, these did not correspond, in most cases, to strong sentiments of collective identity. They were simply read off from the *compartimenti statistici* into which Italy had been divided in the the first years of Piedmontese rule, for the purposes of administrative convenience. Opponents of regional autonomy in the Constituent Assembly made no secret of their satisfaction at the multiplication of units envisaged—eventually twenty, or twice the number of *Länder* in West Germany, with its larger population. The more they were— so opponents of decentralization calculated, not for the last time—the weaker they would be.[9] In the event, the political polarization of the country, and the decisive victory of the DC in the elections of April 1948, ensured that the standard—as distinct from special—regions remained a dead letter in Italy.

It was not until twenty years later that the *regioni* were finally activated. If their conception lay in the popular awakening of the Resistance, their actual birth was forced by the dramatic insurgency of 1968-69, the greatest social convulsion to grip Italian society since the war. When the first Centre-Left government had been formed in 1963, ending exclusive DC hegemony in Italy, one of the Socialist Party's conditions for entry into coalition with the

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9   See Ettore Rotelli, *L'Avvento della regione in Italia*, Milan 1967, pp. 356-357. Conversely, the more clear-sighted proponents of devolution, most of them *Azionisti*, wanted fewer regions than were actually created. Rotelli himself emphasises how little theoretical or empirical reflection there was in this period on the category of the region as such. But his account makes clear that it was in the *Partito d'Azione* that most discussion of it developed, with a mixture of socialist and federalist accents, that initially linked the principles of economic and territorial democracy.

Christian Democrats had been implementation of the constitu-
tional promise of regions. But nothing was done about them, as
the DC dragged its feet, until the explosion at the end of the
decade. However, once campus revolt had set off a wave of
strikes and factory occupations without post-war precedent, pit-
ting huge numbers of workers against the employers and the state,
and unleashing demands for a radical reorganization of relations
between capital and labour within industry, not to speak of ruled
and rulers in society at large, the Centre-Left government was
belatedly forced into action. Its response was two-fold. In May
1970, it passed the *Statuto dei Diritti dei Lavoratori*, drafted by
the socialist lawyer Giugni, granting Italian workers more
extensive rights in the work-place than at that time in any other
country of Western Europe; and in the same month, it finally
enacted legislation to make the regions a reality.[10] The connexion
between the themes of industrial and of territorial democracy was
thus here even closer than in Germany. Its outcome, however,
was the opposite. The tumult of the Hot Autumn secured advances
for Italian labour in many ways beyond the gains made in the late
forties in Germany. But the realization of the regions did not
result in a de-concentration of power comparable to that achieved
in the Federal Republic.

At the outset, few significant capacities were delegated to the new
regional authorities—although enough resources were granted to
make them attractive spoils for local office-seekers and their
clients. Symbolically, the only strong popular response they
aroused were a year of riots for *Reggio Capoluogo* in Calabria,
barricades in protest against the proposed location of the
capital—hence prebends—of the new region in Catanzaro.
Eventually, a further round of reforms occurred, now under the
pressure of the great increase in the Communist vote in the

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10 For this turn, see Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*,
London 1990, pp. 327-328.

elections of 1975-1976. The result of this advance was the formation of the Andreotti Cabinets of 'National Solidarity', which endowed the regional governments with more substantial powers in 1977-1978. The performance of these has been notoriously uneven. The extent to which the efficacy and probity of the new authorities depends on the economic and civic conditions in which they operate, with a marked North-South gradient, has long been obvious.[11] But it is also clear that everywhere sumps of patronage have formed within regional governments. The revelations of Tangentopoli have brought home the degree to which, even in the ostensibly advanced North and Centre, regional authorities have often provided a venal facade rather than moral anchorage of provincial democracy. Against this background, the rise of a genuinely mass regionalist movement, first in the Veneto and Lombardy and then across most of Northern Italy, has dramatized the gap between the formal structures and lived realities of administrative decentralization. But it also, even more pointedly, has underscored the continuing macro-division of Italy between North and South, whose range of deepening inequalities, has been left unaffected—perhaps even aggravated—by meso-regional autonomies.

The British case affords a suggestive foil to this history. No two starting-points could be more unlike. The early modern English monarchy was the most unitary state in Europe, and when its development was cut short in the 17th century, the parliamentary regime that succeeded it in the 18th century inherited both its unique degree of centralism and its unmediated claims of sovereignty. Though ventilated and reformed in the 19th century,

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11   Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton 1993, explores the reasons for these differences in the richest empirical study of regionalizaton to date. Its conclusions, however, present too favourable an account of the operation of regional government in the more privileged zones of Italy to make the scale of the electoral uprising of the Northern Leagues readily understandable.

and eventually arrived at universal suffrage in the 20th century, these structural traits remained—a parliamentary absolutism that has never been restrained either by a codified constitution or a significant delegation of powers. At the same time, this unitary state has presided over a composite realm, containing three allogenous nationalities, distinct by either religion, language or law from the dominant English community, in Wales, Ireland and Scotland. This has long been a potentially explosive combination.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the British state was obliged to disgorge the larger part of Ireland. But it retained most of Ulster, where it set up a local assembly that was in effect rigged to ensure the dominance of Protestant settlers—a parody of regional representation. In the mainland, Wales and Scotland continued to be ruled from London, to all intents and purposes as if they were simply outlying areas of England. After the Second World War the UK, as a victor power exempt from the experience of either occupation or resistance, was under no pressure to alter its constitutional arrangements. It was not, in fact, until the historical moment of 1968-69 that—in Britain too—the underlying situation changed. First, Catholic rebellion broke out in Northern Ireland, in a civil rights movement against Protestant dominance that resulted not in the reconstruction of the local assembly, but its suspension, leading to an armed conflict that has lasted over two decades. Then in Scotland and Wales, nationalist movements—hitherto fitful and marginal—suddenly started to make major gains in local elections, threatening the position of the Labour government of the time in London, which depended on retention of its large majorities in both areas.

The Labour administration responded to Scottish and Welsh stir-rings by setting up in 1969 an official commission to look into the possibility of constitutional reform. Four years later—Labour by now out of office—the Kilbrandon Report recommended the creation of regional parliaments in Scotland and Wales. By this time, however, the scene in England itself had been transformed by a great wave of industrial turbulence. In 1973 the second great

miners' strike, plunging the country into a state of emergency, toppled the Conservative government. But the elections of February 1974, which the Conservatives lost, did not give Labour a parliamentary majority—in part, because the nationalist parties of Scotland and Wales had doubled their vote. For the next five years Labour ruled as a minority government, dependent for its survival on toleration by the nationalist bloc in the Commons. To appease Scottish and Welsh demands, the Cabinet eventually introduced bills for regional devolution along the lines of the Kilbrandon Report.

Meanwhile, Labour sought to come to terms with the massive head of trade-union pressure that had brought it back to power. Macro-economic management was coordinated with the TUC, for the short-term tasks of controlling inflation and redressing the external account, in exchange for welfare concessions. This was the 'Social Contract'. Beyond its horizon, however, the Wilson government set up another official commission to report on ways of furthering industrial democracy in Britain. In 1976, this body published its report. Its chief recommendation was that employees in any firm with a work-force of over two thousand personnel should have equal representation with share-holders on its board of management. Business reaction to the Bullock Report was immediate and violent. The employers' federation raised such a storm of protest that the government—retreating hastily—buried the proposals. At the same time, reaction to the legislation prompted by the Kilbrandon Report was not much less vehement in the British Parliament.[12] There it was eventually torpedoed by

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12   For the common discomfort which the two issues aroused within the Callaghan government, even among its more radical members, see Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest - Diaries 1976-1980*, London 1990, pp. 11-12. The entry for January 20 1977 reads:

Cabinet, and we had a revealing discussion on the Bullock Report which has just been published. Jim said this was an explosive issue. It could be like the Tory Industrial Relations Act. He was afraid it would cause polarization... Then we came to devolution and I

unionist manoeuvres from within the Labour delegation itself. The price of this centralism was the end of the government. Once the bills for Scottish and Welsh devolution were destroyed in this way, the nationalist MPs from both regions voted against the Labour administration, and in the spring of 1979 the Callaghan administration fell. In the elections that followed, capital, traumatized by the spectre of the Bullock Report—a recipe, as one industrialist put it, for another East Germany—mobilized with ferocity behind the new Conservative leader, Margaret Thatcher.[13] The results of her victory are well-known: trade-union power was rolled back relentlessly in industry, and unswervingly centralist rule maintained in Scotland and Wales.

The Labour Party, out of office now for fourteen years, has in opposition has once again endorsed the principle of regional devolution in Britain. Now, however, it speaks of creating regional authorities, not just for Scotland and Wales, but within England as well. Since there is little popular demand for the latter, because of the deeply-entrenched unitary tradition of English political culture, the proposal for multiplication of regional bodies beyond the two historic nationalities of Scotland and Wales has been greeted with some suspicion in the latter, as a possible intent to *noyer le poisson*—that is, to scale down the powers that might be granted to Edinburgh and Cardiff by assimilating them to those judged appropriate for Exeter or Norwich. The problem here, of course, is a general one wherever the trigger for devolution is the special position of allogenous cultural communities—should there

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raised one point—that in the provision for a referendum there should also be a referendum for electors in England. I said I forecast we wouldn't get through a bill under which the English were not allowed to vote.

13 'Mrs Thatcher is all that stands between [us] and a rapid slide into a down-market version of the German Democratic Republic': see Colin Leys, 'Thatcherism and British Manufacturing: A Question of Hegemony', *New Left Review*, No. 151, May-June 1985, p. 17.

be 'symmetrication' of regional representation throughout the state, even where demand for it is low, or not? For the moment, the question remains academic in the United Kingdom. If the British case exhibits, once again, a close coincidence of pressures for regional and for industrial democracy, coming from below and forcing their way onto official agendas above, it is the failure of both that is striking. In Britain, the unitary cast of parliamentary sovereignty was intrinsically stronger than that of any continental state, while the turbulence of the late sixties and early seventies— a post-war peak by national standards—was still fairly limited by international ones.

The contrast with France is instructive. Often regarded as the most incorrigibly centralized of major European states, France today possesses twenty-two regional assemblies—about the same number as Italy. How did it acquire these? The origins of regional reform in France are more unequivocal than in any other country. Unlike the situation in Britain, the agitation of allogenous cultural communities—Corsican, Breton, Alsatian or other—was not the precipitating factor. Decisive was rather the political earthquake of May-June 1968. Rising in revolt against traditional authority and modern capital alike, students and workers came close to overthrowing the Gaullist regime, and perhaps the Fifth Republic altogether. De Gaulle's political response, already in the last week of May, and reiterated on his return from Germany, was to promise France a society based on the idea of 'participation'. In September 1968, he left no doubt what he meant by this: rights of workers in enterprises, represented by elected delegates, to the same kind of say in their management as enjoyed by share-holders. How was to be achieved? Through the mechanism—here the specific traits of French state tradition made themselves felt— of an affirmative referendum.

The reaction of the French business class, and more widely of conservative opinion, was consternation. Pompidou, who had saved the regime in May-June, told a journalist: 'The General is dreaming', tapping his forehead to indicate that De Gaulle had taken

leave of his senses; and when questioned by De Gaulle himself, Pompidou told him bluntly that the scheme amounted to either 'Sovietization' or anarchism.[14] Within the government, legal difficulties were alleged, while outside the *patronat* raised the alarm. The result was a sudden switch. Three months later, it was announced that the subject of the referendum would not be participation in the economic enterprise after all, but in the territorial region. De Gaulle now proposed creating twenty-one regions with local assemblies, and the transformation of the national Senate into a body representing the regions. The 'permutability' of industrial and regional democracy could not be better illustrated—the one functioning here as direct surrogate for the other. The upshot is well-known. When De Gaulle made the reform a question of confidence, the whole of the Left voted against it, joined by the sector of the Right dismayed by the idea of participation as such, and the referendum was defeated, bringing De Gaulle's rule to an end in the spring of 1969. For all the differences of circumstance, the parallelism with the fall of Callaghan's government ten years later is eerie.

The sequel, however, diverged. Pompidou, after tacitly helping to dispose of De Gaulle, won the Presidency as the heir to his cause, and so was politically obliged to make some gesture to the principle of decentralization. The result was the administrative reform of 1972-3 which brought twenty-two French regions formally into existence, with elected councils but virtually no powers. The territories into which the hexagon was divided did not correspond to the historic provinces of France, but were simply taken from the bureaucratic units that had been created for the purposes of local economic planning by Edgar Faure in 1955. This arbitrary *découpage* had been adopted for De Gaulle's proposal in 1969, and was modified only by the detachment of Corsica from

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14 See Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. III, *Le Souverain*, Paris 1986, pp. 724, 728.

the 'region' of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. Once this token measure was passed, the Right ignored the issue for the rest of the decade.

When the Socialists came to power in 1981, democratization returned to the agenda. Programmatically, economy and territory once again emerged in syntony as fields of reform under Mitterrand's presidency. But the popular impulse behind the new regime was weak, and the outcome reflected the lack of any major social groundswell from below. Legislation to give the work-force greater rights in the enterprise, the *lois Auroux*, was altogether more modest than De Gaulle's 'dream', giving somewhat greater space to trade-unions which were losing in numbers and strength anyway. Decentralization—*la grande affaire du septennat*, as Mitterrand unwisely described it—went further, endowing the regions with new assemblies and resources, and reducing the power of prefects within them, as well as granting Corsica a special statute.[15] But the funds available to the regions have remained limited, and their functions vague. The one clear-cut consequence of the reform—as in Italy—was a sharp rise in the costs of intermediate government, as the new regional authorities launched on a wave of imposing head-quarters and expanded pay-rolls. Regional devolution in France, with its powerful tradition of uniform civil administration, so far seems rather to have ineffectually mimicked, than counter-acted, Parisian centralism. Significantly, Mitterrand's arrangements have made no attempt to entrench regional representation at national level, as De Gaulle's proposed reform of the Senate—much decried at the time—once proposed to do.

In Spain, finally, royal centralization came a century later than in France, with the arrival of Bourbon rule in the 18th century, and

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15 For a sober early view of the reforms, see Yves Mény, 'Decentralisation in France: the Politics of Pragmatism', *West European Politics*, January 1984, pp. 64-79.

was superimposed on a society that was economically and cul-
turally far less unified. In the 19th century, Spanish absolutism
was neither overthrown from below, as in France, nor successfully
modernized and mediated from above, as in Prussia or Piedmont.
Rather it was broken from without by Napoleonic invasion, which
brought a Spanish liberalism into being that after 1815 was always
strong enough to prevent any effective restoration of the absolute
monarchy, but too weak to stabilize a constitutional regime. The
result of this impasse was repeated break-down of public order,
military pronunciamento and civil war. In these conditions, of
weakened central power, the regional divisions within Spain were
bound to find increasing expression. One result was that Spain
became the only major European country in the 19th century to
produce a strong federalist movement, proclaiming itself such,
and briefly presiding over the First Republic in 1873-74—whose
leading light Pi y Margall invoked the authority of Proudhon.
Another was the early emergence of nationalist parties in the two
major allogenous communities, Catalonia and the Basque lands,
by the 1890's.

But so long as the dominant forms of politics remained narrowly
clientelistic, based on a *caciquismo* more restrictive even than that
of Italian versions, the traditional forces of Spanish centralism—
Castilian landowners and bureaucrats, the Army, the Church—
could still, whatever their own differences, prevail. The end of the
semi-parliamentary monarchy that capped this oligarchic order
only led to more, not less, concentration of power in Madrid under
the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in the 1920's. It was not until
the unexpected loss of royal nerve in 1931, and the sudden
apparition of the Second Republic, that mass politics really burst
onto the peninsular stage. Amidst the many expressions of a new
democratic ferment, the most resolute and immediate was the
declaration of Catalan independence in Barcelona, on the day the
king fled Madrid. Proclaimed by the Esquerra, the leading force of
the Republican Left in Catalonia, the declaration was later pro-
visionally withdrawn in exchange for a Statute of Autonomy, ap-
proved by a massive plebiscite in Catalonia, and eventually

ratified in 1936 by the Cortes. The Constitution of the Republic defined Spain as an 'integral' state—a formula intended to steer between unitary and federal definitions, allowing regions the 'right' of autonomy without enacting it. In the event, of the other potential candidates, only the Basque lands acquired a statute, after the outbreak of the Civil War which destroyed the Republic.

Once Nationalist forces had conquered the country, Franco's dictatorship reverted to a centralism *à l'outrance*, suppressing every trace of provincial autonomy—except in Navarre, as recompense for its contribution to the Crusade against the Republic. Catalan and Basque lands were singled out for vindictive treatment, as bastions of Republican resistance. For thirty years, Spain was ruled by a regime which formally identified authority and unity, denouncing democracy and autonomy as equally disintegrative of the organic being of the Spanish nation. It was not until the last decade of Franco's rule that cultural repression of regional identities was to some extent relaxed, although centralization of political power never altered. By the time Franco died, however, economic and social development of the country—very rapid after the late fifties—made a continuation of his dictatorial legacy impossible.

The transition to a democratic order, skilfully piloted from above by Adolfo Suarez, was in these conditions inseparable from a decentralization. The one memory of the Republic that could not be cancelled in the new monarchy was the expression of Catalan and Basque identities. The establishment of representative democracy could not avoid satisfaction of the demands of the national movements in these two areas. The Constitution negotiated in 1978, acknowledging the 'right of nationalities and regions to autonomy', created a mechanism for either to acquire an 'Autonomous Community'—a term chosen to finesse the distinction between the two—equipped with its own elective bodies and delimited powers, grouping the fifty or so provinces into

seventeen regions to this end.[16] In practice, the overwhelming pressure for these provisions came from Basque and Catalan national forces, each of which obtained Special Statutes in the summer of 1979. The Suarez government, once it had conceded these, attempted to brake the extension of autonomy to Galicia and then—more flagrantly—to Andalucía in early 1980. Discredited by the manoeuvres to which it resorted in the South, it fell soon afterwards.

The Socialist Party, which had defended Andalucian autonomy (the region was a PSOE stronghold), swept the 1982 elections. Its victory led to an avalanche of further demands for decentralization, which by the end of 1983 had converted all seventeen regions into autonomous communities, regardless of their different origins. Here the logic of 'symmetrication' played itself out to the full, powerfully assisted by the fact that the PSOE enjoyed the fruits of office in well over half the new regional governments. Outside the historic nationalities, the spoils of intermediate office have—as in Italy—often been disproportionately visible in the outcome of this devolution. The system, with its built-in tension between cultural and territorial units, has not reached stabilization—as the current Catalan demand for a larger share of tax revenues, to the discontent of regions like Estremadura, makes plain.

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16 In 1928, Ortega—denouncing the artificial multiplication of provinces in Spain as *'un torpe tatuaje con que se ha maculado la piel de la Peninsula'*—proposed the creation of ten *'grandes comarcas'* to ensure effective regional self-government. He later explained that he had used the archaism *'comarca'* to 'camouflage the figure of the region', under Primo's dictatorship—but in vain, since Primo had personally censored the concluding article in *El Sol* in which he had advanced the notion. *Obras Completas*, Vol XI, pp. 255-261, 176. Ortega's list of regions makes an interesting comparison with today's 'autonomous communities': those it does not include are Navarre, Rioja, Leon, Madrid, Murcia, and the Balearic and Canary Islands. In 1873, Pi y Margall had arrived at the current figure of seventeen, but with a different division.

4. Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from this briefest of surveys? Our initial surmise appears to be confirmed. In the larger West European states, the post-war advance of regionalization has been a function of democratization. In Germany, Italy and Spain, the impulse towards regional devolution sprang from the reaction against fascism, when democratic constitutions were adopted after the experience of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. In France and Britain, it arose from the social turbulence of the late sixties and early seventies, when radical pressure for liberties beyond the agenda of parliaments or presidents shook the established order. These were still stronger in Italy, where the second wave of 1968-1970 gave effect to the promises of the first wave of 1945-47. From the beginning, moreover, there was a constitutive ambiguity in the role of 'territorial' democracy, since it nearly always emerged in conjunction, or tension, with the idea of 'industrial' democracy—two notions with significant common origins in the nineteenth century. The connexion between them can be seen again and again, in Germany, Italy, Britain and France. At critical points, however, the first could in practice become, not a condition or complement, but a substitute for the second, as most graphically in the French case. The exception, where the thematic linkage between the two kinds of democratization was largely missing, is Spain. The reasons for its absence there are no doubt related to the distinctive way in which the Franquista dictatorship came to an end: not destroyed by war or revolution, but mediated by the regime itself. The Spanish opposition of the late seventies was too concerned about the danger of a military come-back (which occurred, but as farce not tragedy), to press labour demands: the statute of Catalonia was to be remembered, its collectives forgotten.

But if the pattern of democratic pressures explains the way that regions emerged onto the political agenda in these countries, the range of state traditions among them was critical in determining

the outcome. Germany had the strongest heritage of entrenched territorial particularism; Spain the most vivid legacy of protest against administrative centralism; Italy the greatest internal disparity of economic conditions. By contrast, France and Britain possessed the most unitary political pasts. Filtered through these grids, waves of democratization that differed in timing and strength yielded quite distinct results. But the hierarchy of effective regionalization in these states today corresponds closely to the institutional and ideological bequests of an earlier age. There is a simple way of assessing of the relative vitality of the regional structures of the major West European countries. It was Max Weber who remarked that: 'The financial relationships are what most decisively determine the real structure of a federal government',[17] and the same can be said of regional government, whatever its juridical forms. Today, the share of public expenditure controlled by the *Länder* and communes in West Germany is nearly 60 per cent; that controlled by the Autonomous Communities in Spain about 25 per cent; by the *regioni* in Italy perhaps 15 per cent; by the regions in France a mere 2 per cent; while in Britain, there are as yet no regions at all.[18] Such is the real gamut of regionalization in the Community.

Within this general history, a special role has fallen to allogenous cultural communities within the larger nation-states. These have

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17 'Deutschlands Künftige Staatsform', *Gesammelte politische Schaften*, Tübingen 1971, p. 480.

18 For these shares, see Roland Sturm, 'Budgetary Politics in the Federal Republic of Germany', *West European Politics*, July 1985, pp. 57-58; and Paul Romus, *L'Europe régionale*, Brussels 1990, pp. 88, 90, 92. Calculations vary according to authority—Putnam, for example, gives a higher figure for Italy (*Making Democracy Work*, p. 22), where certain central items are passed on by the regions. Another index of the hierarchy would be juridical. Only in Germany and Spain do the regions have the power to determine their own constitutions. In France and Italy, they received a uniform statute from the centre (varied only for the 'special' units).

typically acted as 'triggers' for a more general devolution, whose principles may actually have little to do with the motivation of the original claimants to autonomy. This process has been clearest in Italy and Spain, and remains potentially replicable in Britain. There are, of course, different kinds of allogenous communities, which a typology of regional identities—the task alluded to earlier—would have to discriminate. If language is certainly the strongest cultural bond for the formation of a separate identity in these cases, it is not the only possible one: a prior history of political independence, distinct legal and educational institutions, or discrepant religious attachment, may be others. In Italy, three small border regions sharing an idiom with neighbouring countries, each a potential zone of territorial contention, gave an important impetus to the allowance for regions in the post-war Constitution. In Spain, there was no frontier pressure, but two large communities with distinct languages and historic memories, one of them long an independent state, both among the richest parts of the country. Here the allogenous groups had developed strong national movements, setting them apart from any equivalent in Italy, without necessarily aiming at full independence.[19] In Britain, two major communities—one with a strong area of distinct idiom, the other with a memory of early modern statehood and a native legal system—are more akin to the Spanish cases. The relation between Scotland and Wales has been not altogether unlike that of Catalonia to the Basque lands, but their strategic position within the UK much weaker. In France, no allogenous community was strong enough to trigger a devolutionary process. At most, Corsica was able to effect the single modification made to an originally economic division of the national territory, when regional authorirties were created, and to secure a special statute.

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19 It is, of course, a historical error to think that national movements have invariably aimed at national independence. For a general analysis of their classical forms in Europe, see the remarkable essay by

Conventional opinion today has moved sharply against the idea of 'natural' regions, discounted as mythical units, in the name of the historical contingencies that can shape local landscapes and mentalities alike.[20] For all the force of such arguments, it is still necessary to note that there is in fact one kind of region that is fairly straightforwardly demarcated by nature: namely islands. These have, in fact, been more or less regularly accepted by even the most centralized states as special cases, with regional identities of their own. Sicily and Sardinia acquired their statutes before the writing of the Italian Constitution; Corsica won a position apart from the mainland regions; the Canaries continue to display a vigorous autonomism; even in the centralized United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man have been permitted every kind of juridical anomaly. But—as the British example indicates—insular (or sub-insular) identities, if they are visibly special, can by the same token be more easily segegrated: they do not have the same triggering power as exceptions on the mainland.

The characteristic effect of the allogenous community, where its demands can no longer be resisted by the central state, is a process of symmetrication. Partly as dilution from above, partly as emulation from below, areas that have hitherto shown little or no desire for administrative autonomy acquire it, as regional devolution becomes generalized beyond the special territories originally demanding it. At the limit, pure bureaucratic fiat. can create entities no-one had ever imagined before. It is clear how much the character of actual regional identities must vary, within

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Miroslav Hroch, 'From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation', *New Left Review*, No. 198, March-April 1993, pp. 3-20.

20 For an illuminating account of debates over the idea of natural region in France, see Roger Chartier, 'Science sociale et découpage régional - note sur deux débats (1820-1920)', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, No. 35, November 1980, pp. 27-36, which takes a calmer view of the geographers' category than Bourdieu's contribution in the same issue, substantially reproduced in *Ce que parler veut dire*.

such a process. But it would be wrong to assume that the span of intensities will necessarily remain as wide as it is now. One of the central lessons of the comparative literature on the formation of national identity is that, amidst the variety of forces determining such identities across the globe—language, geography, economy, history, religion—there is one that can operate even in the absence of every other, more obviously propitious condition: namely, common administrative experience. The modern history of sub-Saharan Africa is particularly striking in this regard. Might the same prove true of modern regional identity too? If the demarcation of regions has most often been arbitrary in its origins, only seldom answering to any overwhelming sense of collective belonging in the zones concerned, the very fact of their institutionalization may tend over time to conjure up the identity that was once missing. Bourdieu's argument that regional dis-course is quintessentially performative can be accepted,[21] provided that we do not attribute magical powers to language as such—as he inclines to do—but think of the material interests that over time give meaning to administrative boundaries and *ad hoc* rhetoric. This process seems likely to reduce the differences in the pattern of regionalization in the larger states of Western Europe.

Finally, how far—it may be asked—do these considerations apply to the smaller states of Western Europe? There is no space to explore this interesting question here. It is clear, however, that the general ideological valorization of the region since the fifties has had its effects. Thus two other members of the EC have made formal provision for the creation of regions, without actually giving effect to them. The Portuguese Charter of 1976 can be compared in this regard to the post-war Italian Constitution, al-though here too the insular rule holds—autonomy has been granted to the Azores and Madeira. The Greek *loi-cadre* of 1986,

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21 'La force de la représentation', in *Ce que parler veut dire - l'économie des échanges linguistiques*, Paris 1982, pp. 135-148.

by contrast, so far remains without filling—not even Crete has received a special statute. On the other hand, in Denmark, Ireland or the Netherlands, no such gestures have yet been felt necessary. Could this be because, just by virtue of scale, democracy in these countries—much older than in Portugal or Greece—is already felt to be close enough to the citizenry? If so, this would tend to confirm the hypothes is developed here—subject, however, to what we might call the Hroch proviso.[22] For advanced regionalization, of course, has occurred in some small West European countries. Belgium is an obvious, if predictable example, given the sharp linguistic division of the country. Its principal interest lies in the formal distinction that Belgian law, because of the mixed character of Brussels, now makes between the concepts of 'community' (two) and 'region' (three), each with their own rights and revenues—notions that elsewhere, as we have seen, are for political reasons typically blurred. More strikingly, however, but in keeping with Hroch's contention, strong regional identities and institutions exist in two states with notably corrugated terrain, Austria and Switzerland. In the Alpine lands at least, the idea of 'natural regions' may retain its force.

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22   In honour of his remark at the October colloquium of the Forum, to the effect that flatlands generate no regions.

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