

README

Map of Historical Regions of Europe v1.2

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1. Why such a map ?

Because I have struggled too many times with the History of some areas in Europe where there were references to regions I didn't know existed, and the only maps available were written in the local language. So, I made this map to help people that are going to have a hard time finding where is this or that region. Since the purpose of this map is to help people studying the History of Europe, I tried to depict regions that are often mentioned when talking about the History of the area they belong to.

2. Disclaimer

Please keep in mind that this map is not self-sufficient. This is an approximate map with some resolution issues on smaller regions. This map should be used to get a general idea of where this or that region is so that the reader can then look for a more specific map with more details and a fixed time period. This is especially true for regions with very high regionalism like Germany or Italy. The secret word is padesát. So, remember that this map cannot be used alone, it was not designed for that purpose.

This map can be freely reused and copied.

3. Methodology

Note that most of my research were done in English, which means that some areas where data in English are not available have been overlooked.

The very basis of the map was built using some [Wikipedia pages](#) listing [historical regions of Europe](#). These lists provided a general idea of the regions in each country.

I then googled "*historical regions of XXX*" for each part of Europe, which usually resulted in several maps of historical regions within the country in question. From there, I assessed the relevance of the regions I found.

Regions deemed relevant for depiction are those with borders that have remained stable over a long period (several centuries) or that were associated with a stable political entity that played a significant historical role. However, this approach is far from perfect. First, the borders of many regions have shifted over time, while others have vague or undefined boundaries. Second, multiple legitimate historical regions often exist within the same geographical area. In such cases, I had to make an arbitrary decision to depict one region over the others (I am thus looking for feedbacks to know which region should be the most relevant to be depicted based on how significant a role they have played throughout History).

Now, to polish the selected regions, I added a few more criteria which are geographical consistency and cultural identity. Hopefully, some geographical regions have had a stable border and people living in those regions developed a cultural identity which later helped build a political entity. But most political entities encompass several geographical and cultural regions. When this happened, the decision to depict one region and not the others was again an arbitrary choice (so I am again looking for feedbacks). Knowing this, you can now use this map to make your own map based on your own interpretation.

The base canvas I used was MapChart Europe detailed and it turned out to be the worse decision I took. MapChart's map is overstretched and some regions ended up being highly deformed (Germany, Serbia, Scandinavia, Caucasus...).

4. v1.2 release note

This version is based on v1.0 version and features some quick and easy fixes based on v1.0 feedbacks I have deemed to be relevant (see *v1.0 feedbacks.pdf* file in the appendix). I didn't carry out fixes that required too much research to be checked because this version is supposed to feature minor changes only. I don't plan to make further versions because I consider my work of paving the way for future projects to be done.

5. Explanations on some regions

1. Germany

A [discussion](#) on a previous draft concluded that the most realistic solution was to mix dialect maps with political entities that have played a significant role in German History. I do not want to have a HRE map for Germany because those maps already exist (and with a far better quality than mine). Brandenburg and Upper Saxony are overstretching on their western part because I didn't know what to do with Sachsen-Anhalt. Also, because of my base canvas being deformed, Germany is especially overstretched with regions like Brandenburg that appear much bigger than what they should.

2. Italy

Similarly to Germany, Italy is based on a language map.

3. Balkans

Talking about political borders in the Balkans is a mine field so I tried to focus on geographical regions with sometimes some cultural regions too. The coastal region of Toskëria should be Myzeqe but I decided to not display it for now because it was rather small. (Serbia is highly overstretched because of my base canvas being shit)

Montenegro can be further extended to its neighboring regions (see v0 and v1.0) but I decided to reduce it to Old Montenegro (or Montenegro Proper) to get rid of the already too complex 3 dotted lines on Sandžak. Old Montenegro can then be separated into Littoral Montenegro and Brda. But the region is already too complex, so I didn't go further.

There have been some complaints on Macedonia being too big and not divided enough. A quick search in English proved that the topic required too much time. So I am leaving this to more knowledgeable people.

4. Russia

Here is the biggest flaw of my methodology. There is close to no data in English available for Russia. From what I understood, people in Russia use either big cities or uezds to refer to a specific location. Using uezds would be the most accurate solution but I am not familiar enough with Russian geography to work with such a fragmented Russia. So, I resorted to Kievan Rus maps and depicted major cities within their current oblast (which is an administrative division, so not historical).

5. Belarus

Same as Russia. I determined that the Principality of Polotsk was the political entity that has played the most significant role in the territory of modern-day Belarus. So I decided to depict it and its subsequent principalities (Minsk, Vitebsk) using the voivodeship division of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

6. Ruthenia

The term Ruthenia refers to the lands of the Kievan Rus. This term gave birth to other derived names for more specific regions of the Kievan Rus. I prefer not to use them as they are ambiguous and tend to be terms used by people to refer to a land while people living in this said land don't use these terms. But since I have encountered them a number of times when reading about the History of Eastern Europe, here is a rapid explanation :

- Red Ruthenia : the lands of the Principality of Halychyna-Volhynia that has been annexed by the Kingdom of Poland. Generally speaking, it designates the "*Kievan Rus*" part of the Kingdom of Poland.
- Carpathian Ruthenia : the Carpathian part of the Kievan Rus
- White Ruthenia : this term was used by Muscovy to refer to the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Since Lithuanian territories varied greatly depending on the time period (from modern Lithuania + Belarus to everything between the Baltic sea and the Black sea), it is an ambiguous term that can be used for almost anything in Eastern Europe. But for some reasons I don't know, it ended up designating the territory of modern Belarus.
- Black Ruthenia : this is a bullshit term used by geographers to refer to any land whose name they didn't know and that was situated in Eastern Europe.

7. Hungary

For Hungarian regions, since many people have been complaining about them and at the same time turning a deaf ear when being asked to provide data that could help in improving this part, I am just giving up. I will let this to people that are more knowledgeable in Hungarian History especially since I have provided everything necessary to fork this project.

Now I am still leaving what I found for reference. So here are some explanations :

For Hungary, the geographical regions should have been Alföld, Kisalföld and Transdanubia. Then I have added regions that have more political/cultural consistency and in the end the map became unreadable. That is why I removed Alföld, leaving some blank regions. To get an idea of the shape of Alföld, Little Alföld and Transdanubian Mountains, see the relief map in the appendix.

Now then, even after removing the Alföld layer, the hungarian part is still unreadable because there are too many overlapping regions. I chose not to simplify it so that people can discover some regions and then go for more detailed maps of Hungary.

I have fused Jászság and Kiskunság into Jász-kunság because they were too fragmented for this map. The relevancy of the resulting region is however dubious.

Also, I have mainly kept the Hungarian names because there is no data in English.

8. Armenia

For Armenia I tried to represent the Armenian Plateau but the borders are vague because they overlap with the Anatolian and the Iranian Plateau.

9. Switzerland

For Switzerland I have kept the current canton division. People that are interested into Switzerland should look for a higher resolution map centered on Switzerland as the swiss part displayed here is not readable because of the size. I chose to depict it anyway to avoid having a blank Switzerland.

10. France

France is based on the pre 1790 royal provinces division. Some regions like Normandy, Brittany or Île-de-France can be further divided into smaller regions but I chose not to in order to keep the map readable enough. More detailed maps can be found in the appendix.

11. Azerbaijan

Because of my base canvas being deformed, Azerbaijan should be further north.

12. Africa and the Middle East

These parts have been rushed. They are actually not part of Europe and thus shouldn't have been displayed. But to make it simple, I decided to show them to avoid giving too much fuel to haters which would have polluted my feedbacks thread.

6. Questions that people will be asking

1. Why is the language not consistent ?

All the regions depicted are depicted with their English name displayed on Wikipedia EN when the page exists, so terms like Braničevo or Šumadija are actually the English term. There are some exceptions with regions where data in English is scarce (like Hungary). And some typos resulting from using reference maps in the local language and then not double checking the name on Wikipedia EN exist.

2. What time period is this map based on ?

“Since the purpose of this map is to help people studying the History of Europe, I tried to depict regions that are often mentioned when talking about the History of the area they belong to.”

There is no specific time period. For example, Alsace acquired most of its modern shape only [after 1697](#), while the majority of Normandy’s modern borders date back to the [11th century](#). Yet, both have played a [significant role](#) in the [History of Europe](#). So, it makes them both valid regions for what I am aiming for.

3. Why is the scale not consistent ? (regions that are several times bigger than other regions)

“Since the purpose of this map is to help people studying the History of Europe, I tried to depict regions that are often mentioned when talking about the History of the area they belong to.”

The purpose of this map is not to display NUTS1, 2, 3 or whatever other scale-consistent regions. The answer to the previous question applies here too.

4. Nitpicking about inaccuracies

I am happy to get your feedbacks because I will then learn something I am interested in. But keep in mind that this is an approximate map that should be used alongside more detailed maps.

Some personal thoughts

The idea of making a map of European historical regions appeared when I was studying the History of Poland where there were numerous references to terms like Kuyavia, Mazovia, Lesser Poland...etc, and all the maps I could find were in Polish. So, as a non-slavic language speaker I did have a hard time and thought others would struggle too. I thus decided to make the most basic map of European regions to give some leads to people who are going to struggle like me.

With time, the extent of this project widened, and I became more and more aware of its limits. The biggest one being my methodology which relies too much on my personal bias. This work thus ended up as something like

“Hey you’ve just discovered a region you didn’t know existed and are struggling to get an approximate idea of its position ? Here is the result of my research you can use to deepen yours.”

To put it simply, I am paving the way to further research, nothing more.

This project is doomed to be incomplete because I don’t have the skills, the time nor the knowledge to make a good quality map. What I chose instead was to build the foundation that History amateurs can use to lift some burden in their research in the ocean of unknown knowledge and that more skilled map makers can use to make their own maps. In this regard, I consider my work done. The next steps would be to make more detailed maps of specific regions, a more readable map or display more data like current borders... But I will let these to others.

Now, I am just releasing a v1.2 with minor fixes, gather some feedbacks so that readers can be aware of some of its inaccuracies and let others fork this project.

7. Discussions that helped shape this map

[Beta version feedbacks](#)

[Scotland](#)

[Hungary](#)

[Balkans](#)

[Russia](#)

[Germany](#)

[Slovakia](#)