

The Lord of the Rings: An imaginary geography of Europe

Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

boklund@enl.auth.gr

Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

phaidon@arch.auth.gr

Abstract

The paper is organised into three sections. In the first section, which is extra-semiotic in nature, we show that the geographical referent of Tolkien's Middle-earth in the trilogy Lord of the Rings is the geographical space of Europe. Though there are marked geographical affinities between Middle-earth and Europe, there is no systematic one-to-one correspondence; Tolkien created an original fictional geography by reshaping Europe. The second section, through the geographical projection of the three main narrative trajectories of the heroes (with reference to the Greimasian component of spatial localisation), shows the distribution of the semiotic values of the spaces of Middle-earth and how the spatial level reflects the logic of the narrative as a whole. The third section uses elements of the narrative to identify Tolkien's views on the political structure of his fictional Europe. The conclusion is that the various peoples of Middle-earth are not seen as subjects of the king, but rather as close allies and confederates, a federalism that represents a pretty good metaphor for the principle behind the EEC of Tolkien's times.

Keywords

Middle-earth

Europe

geographical values

politics

Tolkien's fictional geography and the geography of Europe

The fictional geography of Tolkien's map

The trilogy entitled *The Lord of the Rings (LotR)*, written by J. R. R. Tolkien and first published in 1954-56, is a fantasy – in other words, it does not pretend to be realistic, though it is written in a realistic style and uses the narrative conventions of the realistic novel. However, the stories we tell, whether realistic or not, are always about our own world – it is, after all, the only world we know – and about our possibilities for action within that world. And in fact, Tolkien himself has repeatedly said that his imaginary Middle-earth is a fantasy version of Europe. What we would like to do in this paper, then, is to explore what image of Europe this fantasy world gives us.

Tolkien has a very detailed conception of the geographical dimension of his narrative. At the end of the first volume of his trilogy, Tolkien inserted a meticulous to-scale map of his fictional Middle-earth.¹ The map is oriented to the north, is quite detailed and includes both place names and geographical features.

At the end of the third volume, Tolkien inserted a more detailed map of part of Middle-earth, showing the confluence of the three regions of Rohan, Gondor and Mordor. This map is at a larger scale than the general map, because the action of the third volume focuses on these areas, but it is not just an enlargement from the first map, because it is drawn in a different style; it also comprises many more place names and geographical features than the general map. We brought this map to the same scale as the general map and inserted it within the latter and it is perfectly adapted to it.

Very detailed versions of Tolkien's maps, combining information from not only the *Lord of the Rings*, but also *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion* (1977) – and including a great number of hypothetical locations based on indications in the texts – have been published by the geographer Karen Wynn Fonstad (2016: 67-94). Fonstad divides Tolkien's map into seven regional sub-maps, mostly rectangular in shape. She covers all the essential parts of Tolkien's map, excluding quite peripheral zones to the north and the south and minor areas to the east and west that are not important to the narrative.

The metrics of Tolkien's map

While Middle-earth is fictional, it has a real-world referent, namely Europe. This is clear from major elements of the narrative. Tolkien constructs his fictional languages on the model of European languages and many elements in his stories are inspired by ancient European mythologies.

Tolkien's anchoring of his narrative in the geographical space of Europe is expressed in one of his letters commenting on a review of his book by the poet W. H. Auden, in which he states that 'Middle-earth is not an imaginary world' but is 'the objectively real world', as opposed to fictional worlds (Harvey 2003: 10). In the Prologue to the *LotR* (1981, vol. 1: 11), Tolkien writes:

Those days, the Third Age of Middle-earth, are now long past, and the shape of all lands has been changed; but the regions in which Hobbits then lived were doubtless the same as those in which they still linger: the North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea.

In his response to the draft of an interview to be published in the *Daily Telegraph*, he became more specific, stating that his stories in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* take place in the 'north-west of "Middle-earth", equivalent to the [western] coastlands of Europe and the north shores of the Mediterranean' (Harvey 2003: 10; see also Jacobs 2010). Tolkien clearly had in mind a general and qualitative correspondence between his fictional Middle-earth and the actual geography of Europe. However, as we shall see below, the correspondence is a lot more specific than that.

We do not mean that Tolkien systematically used the correspondences between Middle-earth and Europe as a standard reference for his narrative. This is clear from the liberties he takes in his imaginary reshaping of Europe. But there is no doubt that he was quite conscious of European geography as a *general* background for Middle-earth.

The study of the relation of Tolkien's map to the geography of Europe presupposes the projection of Tolkien's fictional geography on the actual map of Europe, so that we may acquire an idea about the extension and organisation of Middle-earth in comparison to Europe. To achieve this projection, we made a simplified geometrisation of his general map, starting by drawing three rectangles around the main regions of the map (see map 2). The northern and smallest rectangle is defined by the upper limit of the map and a line parallel to it, tangent to the northernmost shore of Middle-earth and defining the southern limit of the Northern Waste. The second, main rectangle, by far the largest of the three, starts from this second line and ends with a line parallel to the two above and tangent to the southern limit of South Gondor. Finally, the third rectangle starts from this limit and ends at the lower limit of the map.

Our main rectangle corresponds closely to Fonstad's regions. We also included two parts of Tolkien's map that do not appear on Fonstad's maps, since they are of marginal interest to the narrative, but they complete Tolkien's global vision of European space. The first extension is to the north of the main rectangle and the second is to the south; they are also (narrower) rectangles.

Tolkien gives the cartographic scale of his map in miles, which we transformed into kilometres (1 cm of his map → 81.13 km). On this basis we acquire the following measures:

- a) The E-W side of the main rectangle (and the two other rectangles) is 2,876 km long (the same distance as the bird's-eye distance between Lisbon and Athens) and its N-S side 2,221 km (about the same as the bird's-eye distance between Oslo and Palermo, which is 2,400 km). This gives us a surface area of 6,387,596 km².
- b) Of the northern extension, the E-W sides of the rectangle is 2,876 km long, while the N-S side of it is 260 km., whence a total surface of 747,760 km².

- c) The rectangle of the southern extension has a height of 746 km. and a surface of 2,148, 000 km².
- d) Thus, the larger rectangle circumscribing all three of the above rectangles is 2,876 km by 3,228 km and the total surface area covered by it (and thus by the map) is 9,283,356 km².

The projection of Tolkien's map on the geography of Europe

The next step consists in the adjustment of the main rectangle, with its two extensions, to the geographical map of Europe. Tolkien offers certain clues, which generally refer to geographical latitudes.² They are the following (Harvey 2003: 10; 'Middle-earth', *Tolkien Gateway* n.d.; Jacobs 2010; Tolkien annotated map of Middle-earth n.d.):

- a) Hobbiton and Rivendell are at about the same latitude as Oxford (which is about 51.5° N).
- b) Minas Tirith is at about the same latitude as Florence – about 43° 50' N – and Ravenna – 44° 24' N.
- c) The Mouths of the river Anduin and the city of Pelargir are at about the same latitude as Troy.
- d) The location of Umbar is at about the same latitude as Cyprus.
- e) The southern edge of the map of Middle-earth is at about the same latitude as Jerusalem.

Tolkien also mentions four geographical distances:

- f) The latitude of Minas Tirith is about 600 miles (965 km) south of the latitude of Oxford;
- g) Minas Tirith is 900 miles (1,450 km) east of Hobbiton (both are on Tolkien's map);
- h) and is near today's Belgrade;
- i) "Bottom of the map [1400 miles = 2,250 km] is about latitude of Jerusalem" ('Middle-earth', *Tolkien Gateway* n.d.).

There have been several different approaches to the question of the geographical referent of Middle-earth, and with the exception of some irrelevant speculations, most of them focus on Europe. There have also been a few serious and holistic proposals, in the sense that they attempt to match Middle-earth as a whole with the totality of Europe, based on part of the information above. These attempts present two drawbacks: (a) they are based solely on this information, which as we saw above mainly refers to geographical latitudes, and thus they can control the N-S projection of Middle-earth on Europe, but not the E-W projection; and (b) they do not define the position and size of the Shire in relation to the western and northern limits of Middle-earth (see map 2), with the result that the European limits of the projection do not correspond to the limits of Middle-earth.

The matching of the two maps presupposes at least one stable common element. Tolkien does not offer any such element and the nearest element of this kind is the close

distance between Minas Tirith and Belgrade. However, 'close' is a fairly vague notion and no direction is given.

Tolkien states, as we saw, that 'the regions in which Hobbits then lived were doubtless the same as those in which they still linger: the North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea'. It seems clear that 'the North-West of the Old World' coincides with the British Isles, which are also located to the 'east of the Sea' if we accept that the Sea corresponds to the Atlantic Ocean. On Tolkien's map the Sea, from the very small area in the north-west corner of the map to the large area in the south-west, forms the western border of the lands of Middle-earth. Contrary to the attempts made so far, we shall start the projection of Tolkien's map on the map of Europe on the basis of this indication, which we consider as strong, and then check it against the other clues given by Tolkien.

It follows that we could make the northern side of the main rectangle coincide with a latitude line almost tangent to the northern edge of the island of Great Britain. Then, we make the western side of the rectangle coincide with a meridian tangent to the western coast of Ireland – which happens to correspond closely to the 10th meridian W. If we project on them a tangent curve, it is strongly reminiscent of the north-western coast of



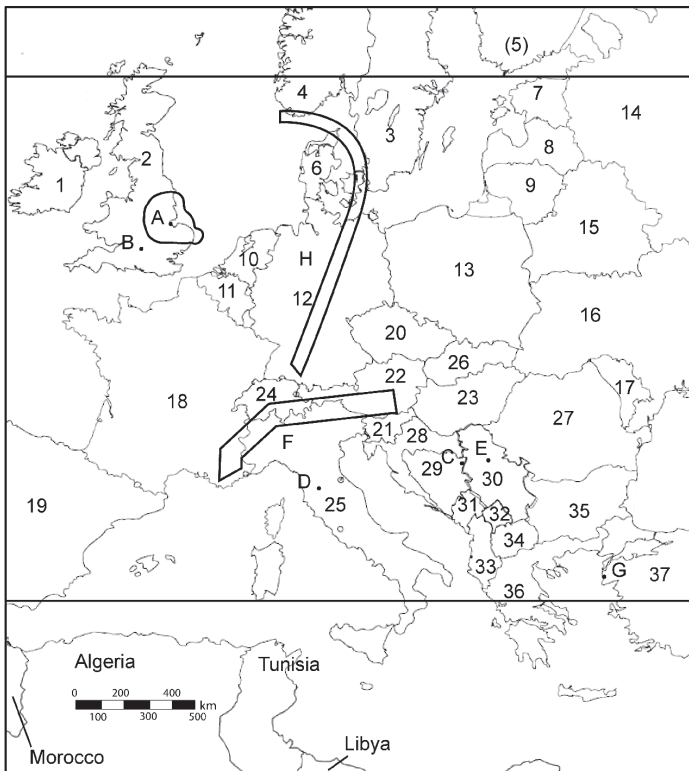
Map 1. The projection of the coastline of Middle-earth on the map of Europe.

Middle-earth. Moving the northern side of the rectangle to the north would bring it into the North Atlantic and further than the 'North-West of the Old World' and the same would be the case if we move the western side further to the west.³

Projecting the coastline of Middle-earth on Europe gives a first impression of the relation between the two (map 1).

We observe that the very small patch of sea in the north-west is part of the North Atlantic Ocean. Further to the south, Middle-earth submerges into the sea Portugal, Spain, about half of France, Sardinia and the northern part of Algeria and Tunisia, and turns into land all the eastern part of the Mediterranean. Thus, the very large south-western sea is an invention of Tolkien, who combines the North Atlantic Ocean with the western Mediterranean Sea.

Our next step for the comparison of Tolkien's fictional geography with the map of Europe is the projection on Europe of the main rectangle we constructed and its two extensions (map 2). We have added eight locations on the map which allow us to better conceive the comparison between the two.⁴



Map 2. The projection of the geometrisation of Tolkien's map on the map of Europe. Numbers: states. A. The Shire. B. Oxford. C. Minas Tirith. D. Florence. E. Belgrade. F. Geometrical contour of the Alps. G. The location of ancient Troy. H. The contour of the Misty Mountains.

A striking observation emerging from the projection of Middle-earth on Europe is that the lands of the main rectangle include *all* the European states (the only exception is Portugal) and *only* these states.

We can check the geographical accuracy of our projection of Tolkien's map on European space by looking at his other clues.

On map 2 we have added the contours of the Shire (A), as given on Fonstad's first regional map (2016: 70-71), with Hobbiton more or less in the centre. We observe that the eastern part of the Shire falls within the North Sea. Its centre is located in the southern part of the east coast of Great Britain, near the shore between the counties of Lincolnshire and Norfolk, and the Shire as a whole extends from the counties of Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk to Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. We do not mean that Tolkien had this correspondence specifically in mind, though it is not improbable that he had an approximate perception of the geographical extension of the Shire.

Tolkien's first clue is that the Shire and Rivendell are located at the latitude of Oxford. In our projection, this holds true with some approximation. We could move our grid to the south to bring Hobbiton onto the same latitude with Oxford, with the small disadvantage that the northern E-W line of the main rectangle intersects northern Britain. This second scenario is plausible, but it presents certain drawbacks in comparison to the first one.

In his response concerning the *Daily Telegraph* article, Tolkien specifies that Minas Tirith (C) is about 600 miles (965 km) south of the latitude of Oxford, which coincides approximately with the latitude of Florence (Harvey 2003: 10). On our map of Europe, this distance from Oxford brings us about 40 km north of the actual location of Florence (D), something that reveals an excellent grasp of European geography on the part of Tolkien; and Minas Tirith is situated at about the same parallel with Florence. We note that the second scenario we discussed above, moving our grid to the south, brings Minas Tirith and Florence onto almost the same latitude, which strengthens this second scenario, at least from this point of view. For both scenarios, Minas Tirith is not far from Belgrade.

Then, according to Tolkien: 'This puts the Mouths of the river Anduin and the ancient Gondorian city of Pelargir at about the same latitude as the fabled city of Troy', of which our projection is a fair approximation.

Finally, with our first scenario the latitude of Umbar indeed coincides with that of Cyprus, and there is a striking coincidence of the latitude of Jerusalem with the lower edge of the southern rectangle. On the whole, the first scenario seems to be more plausible than the second.

If we follow the first scenario, we observe another striking coincidence in location and a partial one in form of the White Mountains with the mountain chain of the Alps (the

geometrical contour of the Alps is shown as F on map 2). We may also add linguistic evidence, given that the highest peak of the Alps is Mont Blanc ('White Mountain').

If we consider the political geography of Europe at the time when Tolkien wrote his books, there is another striking coincidence, this time valid for both scenarios. From north to south, Middle-earth is divided by the mountain chain of the Misty Mountains. If we project the line of the main mass of the Misty Mountains onto the map of Europe, we find that it runs right through Germany, dividing it into a West and an East Germany. In the *LotR*, the Misty Mountains seems to correspond to the Iron Curtain.

The Misty Mountains appeared in Tolkien's writings (in *The Hobbit*, for example) before the Iron Curtain was created. The strongly negative semantic values associated with them may, of course, be a matter of pure chance. But perhaps we may hypothesise that from Tolkien's ideological perspective the countries east of this divide – including the Slavic peoples, the Prussians, the Balkans, the Bulgarians – diverged from his perception of the 'standard' Europeans to the west. Thus, while the White Mountains correspond to a physical barrier in Europe (the Alps), the Misty Mountains may mark a cultural barrier that later became a political barrier.

The climate pattern also relates Tolkien's map closely with Europe. One of Fonstad's maps (2016: 183) presents the climate zones of Middle-earth. According to this map, the climate of the northern part of the main rectangle, corresponding to northern Britain and the tip of Norway and southern Sweden, is characterised as polar and we can of course deduce that the same holds for the northern rectangle. As we can see from map 2, the northern rectangle corresponds to the southern part of the Scandinavian countries and the middle part of Russia, so the term 'polar' is an exaggeration in comparison to the actual European climate, but this is a reasonable poetic licence. As for the southern rectangle, its climate is mostly semi-arid. We note that the semi-arid climate is found in the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea, but here it is extrapolated up to Bulgaria.

Tolkien gradates his climate zones systematically from north to south and differentiates the climate in areas east and west of the Misty Mountains and north of the White Mountains.

Dan Lunt, Professor of climatology at the University of Bristol, fed the university's powerful computer a climate model of Middle-earth (Lunt 2013) and came to the conclusion that many elements in the *LotR* correspond to scientific prescriptions. He presents a map of the systematic gradation of temperature across Middle Earth from north to south (4, 5 fig. 3c) and we observe a striking general alignment between the abstract output of the climate model and the gradation of the climate in Fonstad's map, which is based on the narrative.

A conclusion from the model, of special interest for our projection, is that the Shire has an average temperature of 44°F (7°C) and a rainfall of 24" (61cm), data that correspond to the climate of Leicestershire and Lincolnshire (Lunt 2013: 8). In our first sce-

nario, the parallels of Leicester, Birmingham and Hobbiton are fairly close. We might recall here that Tolkien spent his childhood in Sarehole, a village outside Birmingham, and attended secondary school in that city. It seems that the Oxford professor's heart was in the home of his childhood and his reference to Oxford is of a metonymic character.

There are, then, marked geographical affinities between Middle-earth and Europe, but there is definitely no systematic one-to-one correspondence. Tolkien created an original fictional geography by reshaping Europe, boldly transforming sea into land and vice versa, but the anchoring of Middle-earth in Europe remains strong. Tolkien the linguist, Tolkien the philologist, Tolkien the mythologist is revealed also to be a remarkable geographer⁵ and climatologist, who ended up creating a fascinating imaginary geography.

The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* in its geographical environment

The extra-semiotic excursion of the previous section is not totally without semiotic relevance, because it reveals a hidden semantics of the *LotR*. In fact, while Middle-earth is not an allegory for Europe – Tolkien made it quite clear that he disliked allegory – the relationship with Europe nevertheless colours the whole narrative. For in this imaginary geography, a story unfolds.⁶

The heroes of the story realise three main narrative trajectories, all of which take place within the fictional geographical space of Middle-earth. According to Greimasian theory, one of the components of the discursive level of narrative is spatialisation, which includes the two sub-processes of spatial localisation and spatial programming. Spatial localisation delivers a spatial frame of reference for the static inscription of the narrative trajectories; spatial programming offers the syntagmatic connection between and pattern of the individual spaces that resulted from localisation (Greimas and Courtés 1979: Localisation spatio-temporelle, Programmation spatio-temporelle, Spatialisation).

The spatial localisation of Tolkien's narrative is extremely precise and related step by step to minute temporal information (what Greimas calls "temporal localisation"). The story gives us three narrative trajectories of the heroes through the geographical space of Middle-earth: the first by Frodo and Sam, the second by Aragorn and the third by Merry and Pippin. All three trajectories start in the northwest of Middle-earth and end in the southeast, in the area of Mordor. From the Shire to Sarn Gebir, the three trajectories coincide, but from there on they diverge: Frodo and Sam travel to Mordor, Merry and Pippin are taken to Fangorn Forest, while Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli become involved in the battles of Rohan. Most of the company are reunited at the battle of Minas Tirith, but they do not meet up with Frodo and Sam until after the destruction of the Ring.

The fictional geographical environment that the heroes move through is value-laden: there are places and regions positively evaluated and others negatively evaluated. We may classify these values in two categories, according to the isotopy *euphoria vs dysphoria*,

a major opposition structuring the value system of the geographical semantic universe (Greimas and Courtés 1979: Axiologie, Euphorie, Dysphorie). Euphoria implies the existence of friendly and safe places, while dysphoria shows hostile and dangerous places. If we project this pair of opposites on the geography of Middle-earth and consider how its values are distributed in space, we observe a very great dominance of the negative places. More specifically, even the apparently safe place of the Shire appears surrounded by dysphoric, negative places: the wide, deserted areas to the west and east of the Misty Mountains are generally negatively valued. In this dangerous and potentially hostile environment, there are small, positively valued areas where the heroes can find help and safety: Rivendell, Lorien, Fangorn, Rohan and Gondor.⁷

One way to think of the story is as a transformation of this geography. Instead of a series of isolated islands of safety in a spreading and increasingly hostile wilderness, the result of the actions of the heroes is to reverse this process. With the return of the king and the union of the kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor, the whole dysphoric area west of the Misty Mountains becomes basically euphoric, and the dysphoric area east of the Anduin River is also rendered positive through the actions of the elves of Lothlorien. The distribution of geographical values is dramatically altered: the ending of the narrative achieves a radical transformation of the value structure of the geography of Middle-earth. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to see this as an optimistic view of the history of Europe after World War II.

The political structure of Tolkien's fictional Europe

This brings us to the final question that we would like to address: if Middle Earth is a kind of metaphor for Europe, what does Tolkien's story tell us about how he envisioned Europe?

Tolkien was born in 1892 and grew up in a village in the area around Birmingham; he served in the army in World War I and his son served in World War II; before he died in 1973, he had lived through much of the Cold War and seen the foundation of the European Economic Community. If Middle Earth is a metaphor for Europe, the Europe that he has in mind is the Europe of the mid-20th century.

One thing that we can establish from the beginning is that Middle-earth does not have much to tell us about the economics of Europe. While Tolkien provides his imaginary world with a detailed geography, many millennia of history and several races of beings who all have their own cultures, languages, legends, poetry and music, he has very little to say about how they make a living. The hobbits of the rural Shire apparently include farmers and traditional craftsmen such as millers. The dwarves are miners and have hoards of treasure, and they trade in minerals and craft objects, but do not seem to produce the basics for their subsistence (as noted also by Lewis 2012). As for the elves, they do not seem to do much of anything except compose poetry and tell stories. Only Gondor

seems to have anything like a normal economy, though it is a very traditional one, based mainly on farming and fishing, and most economic activity is in any case suspended because of the ongoing war.⁸ For anything resembling organised economic production, we have to look to the bad guys: the wicked wizard Saruman has built an industrial complex underground at Orthanc and is cutting down trees to fuel his engines, and the war effort of Sauron is supported by fields worked by slaves in south-eastern Mordor.

Tolkien obviously was not interested in economics. He spent the happiest years of his childhood in a village, and he cordially hated the industrialised urban environment of Birmingham and the way the expansion of the city encroached upon the countryside.

He was, however, interested in something else. We might call it governance, or the exercise of political power. The Ring, in the *LotR*, confers the power to rule the world on the person who wields it. Ultimately, Tolkien's story is concerned with the nature of power.

There has been considerable debate about whether Tolkien got the symbolism of his Ring from Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungs*. Tolkien himself denied it, though he and Wagner drew partly on the same Old Norse sources, and both of them agree that the power bestowed by the Ring is evil by nature.

However, in the *LotR*, political power in itself is not by nature evil. In Tolkien's story, the exercise of power is necessary, because governance is necessary, and a lack of governance results in a dangerous void in which evil will take root and grow, as it does in the ungoverned wastelands that the Fellowship of the Ring travels through on their journey south. Perhaps the most central theme of the whole trilogy is the theme of the Return of the King: the return of Aragorn, the legitimate heir to the throne of both Gondor and Arnor.

The Return of the King is a story told of many medieval rulers (including King Arthur). It embodies the hope that a good ruler will appear and once again restore to the realm peace, justice, freedom, abundance, the rule of law – all the things that we associate with good governance, with how political power should be used.

Now, in Tolkien's story, this good ruler is a king. In fact, with the single exception of the Shire, the whole of Middle Earth seems to be ruled by kings of one sort or another. And not only kings, but hereditary aristocracies (as noted also by Lewis 2012). Even the Shire has its squires and lords: the Brandybucks of Buckland, the Tooks of Tuckborough, even the Bagginses of Bag End⁹ (Harvey 2003: 119-120).

It is, however, not quite fair to decide on this basis that Tolkien was an unregenerate monarchist arguing for a return to the era before the French Revolution. He was a conservative, certainly, and an observant Catholic, and he is more than a little nostalgic for the traditional village society of his childhood. But it seems unlikely that his story would have been so enormously popular among the hippies of the 1960s if it were simply politically reactionary.

Political power, for Tolkien, is necessary; the need for governance is never questioned in the novel. What does concern Tolkien is what legitimates power, and to that, his answer seems to be that ultimately, what legitimates power is how it is used. Formal legitimacy is in itself apparently not enough to justify the exercise of power: Aragorn may be the legitimate heir to the throne, but he has also fought long and hard to defend his kingdom against some very nasty enemies, and in the end he becomes king only because the people of Gondor literally choose him.¹⁰ In other words, he uses his power for the well-being of his subjects and with their express consent. The moral of the story seems to be that in order to exercise power legitimately, one must renounce the desire to exercise it for personal aggrandisement and domination.

This is of course very much a 20th-century moral, and indeed Tolkien's novels are very much 20th-century novels: they may be full of elements from folktale and myth, but they are written as realistic psychological novels, not as Icelandic sagas. But we do not think Tolkien would have been satisfied leaving the question of the exercise of power entirely up to the moral sentiments of each individual king. We think he would have wanted – and this also is a very 20th century concern – a form of government that places some structural limits on power, a kind of constitutional monarchy.

There are no constitutions in Middle-earth, but there are customs, and just as in the societies of medieval Europe, these customs regulate how the king can govern. Tolkien does not elaborate on this, but we can see something of how he imagined it if we look at the end of the story. After the return of the king, when Aragorn has become king of both the North kingdom of Arnor and the South kingdom of Gondor, how does he use his political power?

The story makes it clear that, with the reign of Aragorn, a new era begins in the history of Middle-earth. The Fourth Age will be the age of men, and the other races in Middle-earth will gradually diminish. But not because the race of humans will conquer them or drive them out. For many years, probably many hundreds of years, they will continue to coexist in the space of Middle-earth. There is no sense that Aragorn will start collecting taxes from the dwarves or giving orders to the elves. The other peoples of Middle-earth will continue to have their own leaders and run their own affairs. This is made quite explicit concerning the Shire. The new king will not even cross the boundaries of the Shire unless specifically invited.

The various peoples of Middle-earth – the hobbits, the dwarves, the elves, even the Riders of Rohan – are not seen as subjects of the king at all. They are more like close allies and confederates, cooperating by their own free consent. Which is a pretty good metaphor for the principle behind the European Union (or the European Economic Community, as it was in Tolkien's lifetime): sovereign states independently governed, freely giving up a part of their sovereignty for the greater good of the whole. We could call it a kind of federalism.

Endnotes

1. Naming this the map of Middle-earth, as is widely done, is approximate, given that the continent extends to the east and south of the map in an undetermined manner.
2. In 1969, Allen & Unwin commissioned from Pauline Baynes the preparation of a poster of Middle-earth. For this project, Tolkien added a series of annotations to the map of Middle-earth produced by his son. Baynes, who with her sister had worked in the Admiralty Hydrographic Department during the war drawing maps and marine charts, prepared the poster with the help of military cartographers; it was published in 1970. Tolkien's annotated map was discovered only in 2015, after Baynes's death, inside one of her books ('Pauline Baynes'; 'Middle-earth', *Wikipedia*; 'Tolkien Annotated Map'). The clues above are based both on Tolkien's annotations and information from his letters.
3. The difficulty of projecting Middle-earth on Europe on the basis only of Tolkien's information concerning latitudes is exemplified by the serious, if rather fuzzy, attempt of Peter Bird, Professor Emeritus of Geology in the Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences of UCLA (Jacobs 2010). Bird's projection, which ignores the scale Tolkien attaches to his map of Middle-earth, identifies the Sea of Rhûn in the east of Middle-earth with the Caspian Sea, while in our projection Middle-earth covers only 1/4 of the Black Sea, which is far to the west of the Caspian. A more focused attempt is due to Didier Willis (see 'Middle-earth', *Tolkien Gateway*), who, however, compresses too much the W-E projection of Middle-earth on Europe – once more due to the lack of information about meridional lines. Thus, he projects the westernmost coastland of Middle-earth on the lower half of Britain, with the result that Hobbiton ends up between the Netherlands and Belgium.
4. A very similar projection is that by Uwe R. Hoeppe (1999: 27-28, including map.7). He uses a map of Middle-earth prepared by Andreas Moehn, which was adapted to the spherical form of the earth. We find another almost identical projection on the Internet ('I projected Middle-earth', n.d.). Both sources offer just one map, with no discussion of the criteria used for the projection and without any analysis. Also, the projection is over-sophisticated: Tolkien had in mind the relation between his map of Middle-earth as it is, that is, a flat map, with an ordinary map of Europe. However, to their credit, these authors identify the north-western coastline of Middle-earth with the west coastline of Ireland.
5. For the preparation of Bayne's poster of Middle-earth, Tolkien gave her a set of variously scaled graph paper charts in addition to the annotated map of Middle-earth ('Pauline Baynes').
6. Every narrative has a syntactic and a paradigmatic dimension. For the analysis of Tolkien's work we follow the narrative theory of Algirdas Julien Greimas, according to which the syntactic dimension is analysed as the narrative trajectories of the heroes of the story, that is, the whole set of their actions from beginning to end. The paradigmatic dimension is founded on the concept of isotopy, which we use for the semantic analysis of the spatial projection of the plot. An isotopy is the repetitive appearance of certain semantic units which give the text its homogeneity; it has the form of the contrariety *a vs b* (Greimas and Courtés 1979: *Isotopie, Parcours*).
7. This bears some resemblance to the geographical structure of the medieval Arthurian romances, where the hero also moves through an essentially hostile environment with small islands of courtliness and safety.
8. Gondor and Rohan do have a lot of soldiers, and one occasionally wonders how they feed their armies (not to mention their horses).
9. Both Merry and Pippin are from noble families (Meriadoc Brandybuck is the son of the Master of Buckland and Peregrin Took is the son and heir of the Thain of the Took), and Frodo is consistently addressed as "Master" by Sam.
10. Several peoples of early medieval Europe had a form of elective kingship.

References

- Fonstad, Karen Wynn. 2016 [1991]. *The Atlas of Tolkien's Middle-earth*. London: Harper Collins.
- Greimas, Algirdas Julien and Joseph Courtés. 1979. *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Paris: Hachette.
- Harvey, Greg. 2003. *The Origins of Tolkien's Middle-earth for Dummies*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Hoeppel, Uwe R. 1999. *Die Erben Mittelalters: Zum Einfluss von J.R.R. Tolkiens 'Lord of the Rings' auf die fantastische Literatur sowie die Comic- und Spielkultur*. Kassel.
- 'I Projected Middle-earth at the Correct Scale onto Europe in Google Earth'. n.d.. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3R7dfxM> (accessed 29th June 2022).
- Jacobs, Frank. 2010. J.R.R. 'Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*: Real Places May Have Inspired Middle Earth'. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3bFtGRL> (accessed 29th June 2022).
- Lewis, Martin W. 2012. 'The Elaborate and Curious Geographies of Frank Herbert and J. R. R. Tolkien'. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3a52JXa> (accessed 29th June 2022).
- Lunt, Dan [Rhadagast the Brown]. 2013. 'The Climate of Middle Earth'. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3no3w8n> (accessed 29th June 2022).
- 'Middle-earth'. Tolkien Gateway. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3QPlm1E> (accessed 29th June 2022). 'Middle-earth'. Wikipedia (accessed 29th June 2022).
- 'Pauline Baynes'. Wikipedia (accessed June 29, 2022).
- 'Tolkien Annotated Map of Middle-earth Acquired by Bodleian Library'. 2016. *The Guardian*, May 3, 2016. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3nslhUm> (accessed 29th June 2022).
- Tolkien, J. R. R. 1937. *The Hobbit*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. 1981 [1954-1955]. *The Lord of the Rings*. 3 vols. Silver anniversary edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. 1977. *The Silmarillion*. Christopher Tolkien, ed.. London: Allen and Unwin.