Chapter 1

A politics of transition in Britain, France and Spain

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Introduction

The decade of the 1990s saw the beginning of a new phase of globalisation and continuing European integration, the collapse of socialism and the triumph of neo-liberalism, the mainstreaming of cultural postmodernism and the intensification of identity politics. It was a period of transition in political institutions, demands and expectations. The political discourse associated with these changes was radical: this was a global age, hybrid, regionalist, post-nationalist, and above all ‘new’. But just how radical were the political changes, and did they signal a new convergence across European states? This book is a study of the changing forms of the state, and in particular of changing centre–periphery relations, in Britain, France and Spain. It analyses the character and extent of the changes and their causes and consequences, not just territorially but also institutionally in the area of policing. It identifies the degree of convergence in the three states.

The three states are chosen for their historical similarities as well as for their institutional differences and differential responses to the new phase of change. They are each old states, with weighty historical and institutional traditions which mediate all change. They are Atlantic seaboard states, whose dominance over their peripheries has been more total, and whose relations with them have been less complicated by rivalries with other European states, than is the case for central European states. They are, finally, ex-imperial states. The impact of this is evident institutionally, architecturally, in demographic structure, in structures of thought and expectation both among central elites and public and – more unevenly – among peripheral activists. At the same time, the form of state in each case differs fundamentally, as do the relative resources and powers of centre and periphery in each case, the forms of peripheral assertion and the institutionally entrenched forms of centre–periphery interaction.
The book assesses the new constitutional configurations in each state –
decentralisation, devolution or autonomous governments – their dynamics
and their effects on peripheral assertion and the maintenance of order. As
such it is a contribution to the comparative literature on territorial politics in
the new Europe, assessing the stability or instability of the new constitutional
forms, covering questions of regionalism (Keating, 1998; Le Gales and
Lequesne, 1997), new forms of peripheral nationalism and centre–periphery
conflict (Keating, 2001b), identifying institutional tensions within the states,
assessing the convergences and divergences in the cases in question and asking
how far we can identify an emergent pattern of territorial politics.

Through the different chapters, a specific historico-sociological approach
emerges, an approach which tackles questions of general concern not by
immediate comparison but through analyses which take account of the
specific character of each state. That makes comparison at once more difficult
and more rewarding, and in this introductory chapter we trace some of the
theoretical and comparative questions that unite these various studies. We
also broach a more general theoretical question: how to assess the relative
weight of historical tradition and antecedent, on the one hand, and contem-
porary convergent social pressures, on the other hand, in producing the new
political configurations. Chapter 2 deals in more depth with another theoretical
question at the core of this project: how to link the theoretical problematics
of globalisation and postmodernisation, which provide one of the starting
points of this book, with the detailed empirical research which forms the
substance of the chapters. In the final chapter we return to a more developed
set of answers to the questions posed in this chapter.

The contemporary global and European context:
convergence of issues, problems and pressures

The contemporary period is defined by intersecting processes of change at the
transnational level. Economically, there has been a global reorganisation of
production, finance and trade, a new economic importance of communication,
consumption and leisure, and a consequent refiguring of the relative positions
of centre and periphery in the economic system. This creates new politico-
economic imperatives in each state. There is a common need for continuous
structural adaptation to new trading patterns, fluctuations in consumer
demand, competition (Held et al., 1999). The results are to call into question
job security and to add to the unpredictability of work paths through a
lifetime, in a context where the new consumption-oriented economy has
created a new excluded sector of society (Castells, 1998, 128–48; Bauman,
1998). Equally there is a need to create an environment which is market
friendly for inward investors. The effect has been to limit the amount of tax income available for welfare and health spending (Beck, 2000).

On the social level, the global economic order and means of transport and communication have brought the possibility of rapid demographic movements and high levels of immigration, creating plural, multi-ethnic societies facing new problems of integration and legitimation, often compounded by racial tensions (Held et al., 1999). In part as a symptom of these changes and in part as a protest against the emergent socio-political context, crime and delinquency have increased, associated with new problems of maintaining social order and cohesion. The new global structure of communication and technology has also generated risk at the global level (Beck, 1992). The cumulative effect is increasing, multiple and profound senses of uncertainty and insecurity in the public at large (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1991). Meanwhile, the cultural unity which once framed national life has fragmented, loci of authority are questioned, and a radical pluralisation of different spheres of life has called into question the very notion of ‘a society’ (Castells, 1997; Bauman, 1991).

To these convergent pressures are added common EU structures, rules and incentives. On the economic level, there are constraints on deficit spending. There are strong financial incentives for regional economic planning (Keating, 1998; Loughlin and Keating, 1997). Even more significant, the structure of the new European institutions means that state forms and functions have changed. There is now a much wider geographic dispersal and increased functional differentiation of state tasks. All policy making has an EU dimension, and all EU policies require national-level input. Civil servants must at once be more specialised in their expertise, with relatively little cross-over to other departments and areas of policy, and capable of spanning the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ dimensions of their policy area. Traditional notions of the state as a centre are therefore problematised as policy making becomes multiple and multi-levelled (see Jessop, 1999). Traditional notions of the state as sovereign are questioned as the loci of policy making are increasingly at supra- or sub-state levels (Held et al., 1999).

The actual import of these convergent pressures, and common institutional constraints and incentives, has varied for the three states. The British state underwent a wave of privatisation and recommodification in the 1980s, emphasising investment in human capital and a flexible workforce, while cutting support for failing industry, smashing the power of the trades unions, and radically decreasing relative spending on and standards in health, education and welfare. The impact was highly uneven territorially, with the old industrial regions of Northern England, Wales and West Scotland suffering most: the result was the strengthening of peripheral nationalisms (Nairn, 2000). The Spanish state, although also accepting the need for neo-liberal economic measures, had as a political priority the need to remedy the highly uneven
economic development between its regions. State economic action – the prioritising of the market, privatisation and the creation of Spanish giant economic 'national champions' (K. Salmon, 2001) – was in a context of devolution of many economic functions to the regions and reliance on EU structural and agricultural funding. The heritage of regional problems, regional assertion (Argelaguet, chapter 6, below) and the difficulty of breaking the deadlock in centre–periphery conflicts (Montes, chapter 9 below), together with the need to move clearly out of the Franco era, all led to a strong elite and public appreciation of the importance of the EU context. The French state, alone of the three in rejecting Anglo-American neo-liberal orthodoxy, preferred to retain a strong welfare and public sector orientation (see Crozet et al., 2000) even while it moved away from socialist policies and towards an acceptance, to paraphrase Lionel Jospin, that the state could do nothing to prevent economic closures. Its traditional dirigisme in economic policy was not abandoned, although now it prioritised particular public or public–private ventures in a context of more regional economic policy making, where, as Cole shows in chapter 5 of this book, some of the most innovative public-private partnerships have been initiated.

The different state choices had strong ideological dimensions. Both Britain and Spain accepted a neo-liberal orthodoxy and welcomed globalisation. Mandeville (chapter 10 below) notes how New Labour politicians in Britain have embraced a modernising rhetoric. They have presented Britain as open not just to the global but also to the European context. In Spain, the global dimension was seen as another mode of escape from the Franco years, and, for the historic regions, as a mode of escape from Castilian dominance. Participation in the international context was symbolically essential and also allowed a new flourishing of the urban environments: in 1992 Seville hosted the World Fair, Barcelona the Olympic Games and Madrid was European City of Culture (see Graham and Sánchez, 1995). In France, in contrast, 'globalisation' was seen as disguised 'Americanisation' and provoked heated opposition from public as well as elite.

State ideology at once became more prominent and professionally communicated through the media, and its reference to actual policies more nebulous. The very dispersal and specialisation of policy making which decentralised the state sat in some tension with the strong attempts ideologically to recentre it, to recreate legitimacy and community (Jessop, 1999). Discourses became seen as media-determined simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994b; Baudrillard, 1993). In Britain, there were strong attempts to refashion political culture first by Margaret Thatcher and later by Tony Blair (Frazer, 2000). It became increasingly difficult to disentangle the actual nodes of power from the rhetoric of policy making, as Mandeville shows in chapter 10 where she traces how devolution went together with an homogenisation of policy whose
ideological justification bore little relation to the actual pressures and crises which had provoked change. In France, republican rhetoric and strong resistance to identity politics (Charlet, chapter 8; Cole chapter 5) were consistent with the importation of proximity policing (Picard, chapter 11) and innovatory policy making at the regional level (Cole, chapter 5).

Moreover, as chapters 3-11 show, the actual nodes of decision making varied dramatically between the states. For example, centre–periphery relations are regulated through very different institutional and legal practices in each state. In Spain, radically different perspectives and principles between region and centre could coexist only because of mutual acceptance of the 1978 constitution, with many of the discrepancies ironed out by decisions of the Constitutional Court (Comas, chapter 3). In Britain, the tensions between the newly devolved administrations and the centre were ironed out more by informal meetings between officials and politicians than in formal settings (Todd, chapter 4). In France, Cole (chapter 5) traces the mechanisms whereby peripheral influence is translated into central decision making. Meanwhile the Constitutional Council has acted as censor against any proposals for devolution of powers or recognition of historically distinctive cultures and regions. In all three countries, however, convergences are also apparent in the increasingly proactive central concern to regulate centre–periphery relations, in ‘think tanks’ and importation of ‘best practice’ from abroad. The present decentralisation reforms initiated by the government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin move France closer to the British and Spanish models inasmuch as they involve constitutional reform which will allow at least a level of asymmetry of regional powers (the ‘right to experimentation’), increasing competences (including financial autonomy) to the regions, and the possibility of local referenda to approve new regional powers. These convergences, however, coexist with a continuing insistence on the unity of the republican state, a continuing resistance to devolving legislative powers and to institutional recognition of the historic region-nations of France.

In all three countries, too, there are conflicts and tensions within the centre as to the best way to handle centre–periphery relations. Socialist defeat in France has at least temporarily put a halt to the process of Corsican devolution, although the socialists were themselves divided on its wisdom. The present decentralisation proposals are also the subject of political controversy within and between the political parties. The different policies of the two main Spanish parties have affected government policies towards the Basque Country, with the Partido Popular (PP) particularly unwilling to make political concessions even to moderate Basque nationalists (Montes, chapter 9; Comas, chapter 3). In Britain, devolution was Labour Party policy, and if the weakened Conservatives have now accepted it as a fait accompli, new partisan divisions on territorial politics (on the merits of further devolution of powers, or of
clearer demarcation of responsibilities, or of new financing models) are likely to emerge.

Different aspects of the new global environment are emphasised in the different chapters. Ruane in chapter 2 engages critically with contemporary theories of globalisation and postmodernisation and their effects. Comas (chapter 3) contextualises a largely endogenous Spanish process within an EU context. Montes (chapter 9) shows how the EU context has become particularly important for security cooperation in the Basque Country. Cole (chapter 5) and Todd (chapter 4) emphasise the changing economic as well as political environment, and each focuses on different aspects of regionalisation in a European context. Charlet (chapter 8) focuses on the European context as an escape for the French peripheral parties, while Arregui (chapter 6), Ruane and Todd (chapter 7) and Charlet (chapter 8) show how different forms of peripheral nationalism are incorporating within their programmes new Europeanist themes and new concepts of sovereignty. Mandeville (chapter 10) and Picard (chapter 11) emphasise issues of crime, social disorder and insecurity in the restructuring of the security forces in France and Britain. Chapter 12 draws together the various themes.

The European historical context: divergent institutional and historical traditions, practices and preoccupations

The differences between the states are highlighted and explained by placing them in comparative historical context. As Ruane shows in chapter 2, the framework developed by Stein Rokkan allows us both to identify and explain the different forms of centre–periphery relations up to the recent period (Flora, 1999). To this analysis of developing centre–periphery relations in the three states, it is necessary to add an emphasis on empire.

Different choices at key phases of state formation led to importantly different state forms in each of the three cases. The French state constituted its unified character by the uniformity of its institutions through the whole territory. The British state, in contrast, developed a strong central government but integrated its peripheries through converging elite practices and life-paths much more than by homogeneous institutions. The Spanish state’s central military and political control was never fully generalised to the economic, cultural or even institutional level (Comas, chapter 3) and elites from the strong regions traditionally did not participate in the central state apparatuses (Genieys (1997a; 1997b) contrasts Catalonia and Andalusia in this respect). Military power, overseas conquests and empire were key aspects of the integration process: in Britain the national peripheries were integrated as key participants in the imperial core; in post-revolutionary France the army
gave a model of social mobility through centralised institutions; in Spain, empire provided outlets for elites in the poorer regions (Extremadura, Andalusia) and excluded those for whom European trade was the priority (Catalonia in particular).

The different historical trajectories have produced very different forms of state-centred nationalism (Ruane, chapter 2). British patriotism might be superimposed on primary Scottish, Welsh, Irish Protestant or English nationalities, but for the peripheral nations (with the exception of Irish Catholics) it retained culturally and historically richer resonances than did Spanish nationality for Catalans, Basques or Galicians. Both Spanish and British nationalism lacked the primacy, and the egalitarian, institution-centred focus of French republican nationalism. Conversely, both Spanish and British nationalisms could and did accommodate peripheral assertion and peripheral identities to a much greater degree than did French nationalism, which has been slow to move even to the relatively minor levels of recognition that have long been granted in Spain and Britain (Charlet, chapter 8).

What of centre–periphery relations in the contemporary period? Are the conditions of centre–periphery conflict now transcended? Are the effects of such conflict now moderated in the new devolved regional institutions? Or has little changed? In chapter 2 Ruane develops a theoretical model – drawn from Braudel and Rokkan – which allows us to reformulate the competing theoretical interpretations in terms of deep structures and changing conjunctural systems so as to open the theories to empirical assessment. His historical overview suggests that the deep structural conditions of centre–periphery conflict remain strong; there has been conjunctural change, but an assessment of its precise form requires the detailed studies of subsequent chapters. Chapters 2–11 of this book, then, analyse the character and determinants of the differential regional and state responses to the challenges of the contemporary period. Whether globalising processes exacerbate centre–periphery tensions or relieve them, whether or not they provoke radical changes in state-regional relations, depends on the historically constituted patterns of institutional relations, habits of state-craft, modes of identity formation and cultural conflicts which have defined centre–periphery relations in each state. As a result, the different states and the different regions have responded very differently to the contemporary period of change. Each response in turn promotes new sets of problems and new crises in centre–periphery relations. This book compares the forms of centre–periphery tensions and conflicts, and the politics and institutions of territorial management, which have emerged historically in each state. It shows how these systems of relations mediate the impact of globalising processes and state responses to them, and it analyses the problems which each mode of response produces.
States and regions

In the past, the centre–periphery cleavage generated intense political conflict. It is the case that global changes have produced new forms of territorial politics and new forms of regional political assertion, thus moderating or even transcending the salience of the older cleavage? In the new European order, the rhetoric of European regionalism – whereby state sovereignty is no longer important, with regions able to bypass states and become actors in the new Europe, thereby gaining both identity and economic initiative – has become dominant. But is this regionalist paradigm adequate to characterise the new European configuration? Are older centre–periphery conflicts in process of being transcended? Does the new order represent such a radical reconstitution of states and regions as to make centre–periphery relations obsolete? We may schematise the main features of the ‘regionalist’ paradigm as follows.

- First, we are moving towards a linkage model of society and political decision making, rather than a state-centred model (Castells, 1996). This is a new mediaevalism (Held, 1999), ‘governance’ rather than government (Pierre and Stoker, 2000), involving a multiplicity of channels of decision making, in each of which states co-operate with multiple other actors, economic, functional representatives, representatives of supra- or sub-state institutions.

- Second, this allows a new complementarity of state and regional interests: the state profits from prosperous regions, and now facilitates its regions in developing a varied multiplicity of linkages, many of which may come to bypass the state altogether (Loughlin and Keating, 1997; Keating, 2001b). The central state is no longer a competitor with its peripheries but opens the way to a multiplicity of inter-regional and region–European Union economic linkages.

- Third, this puts the focus on the management of relations between regions, states and the European Union, rather than on structurally based conflicts. A multitude of recent studies show at once the difficulties of management of the process and how successful management is possible (Jouve, 1998; Saez and Pongy, 1994; Day and Rees, 1991; Laffan and Payne, 2002). Studies have compared those regions which have succeeded with those which have failed, showing quite clearly the importance of elite interactions, practices and mindsets (Genieys and Smith, 1998; Genieys, 1997a; Genieys, 1997b; Morata, 1998).

- Fourth, while new tensions develop between regions, cities, localities and the central state (Saez, 2001), these involve neither the older conflicts of economic interest between centre and periphery nor the traditional nationalist assertion of the periphery.
In summary, on the regionalist paradigm, states now open the way for (rather than opposing) regional linkages with each other and with the EU: the issue is the way in which regional (and central) elites exploit – or fail to exploit – these opportunities.

Is this a more accurate picture of contemporary developments than the centre–periphery model discussed above? In this book we compare these different theoretical models against empirical case studies of the restructurings of territorial politics over the past decades, and we assess the extent to which a regionalist configuration is emerging in Britain, France and Spain. Each of the chapters gives an importantly different perspective on the question. For Spain, Comas (chapter 3), Argelaguet (chapter 6) and Montes (chapter 9) are agreed that conflict and the potential for conflict between centre and periphery has not been resolved by the 1978 constitution. For Britain, Todd (chapter 4) argues that regionalist and post-sovereignist (Keating, 2001a) models are only some of the possible futures of region–centre relations in Britain. Ruane and Todd (chapter 7) point to continuing conditions of conflict in Northern Ireland in which state sovereignty still plays a key role. In France, regionalist assertion remains – both in the form of weak peripheral nationalist political parties (Charlet chapter 8) and regionalist influence on mainstream parties (Cole, chapter 5) – as does conflict with the centre. Paradoxically, the new European regionalist context may, as Charlet argues, give the peripheral nationalisms enough space to become politically effective.

In chapter 12, we return to assess the regionalist and centre–periphery models in light of the data presented in the chapters. That the regionalist model well describes some regions – French functional regions, Spanish non-historic regions, the more assertive English regions – is not in question. What the chapters in this book show, however, is that it does not fit the historic region-nations.

Peripheral assertion

What of the changing forms of peripheral nationalist identity and assertion? Are we moving away from identity-based political claims? Is identity becoming hybrid, post-national, ambiguous (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995; Delanty, 1995, Bauman, 1991)? There is little evidence of such a strong post-nationalist trend in the chapters below. Changes from classic nationalism have taken place, but in all the cases studied in this book, strong identity-based demands remain, which are only partially satisfied by relative autonomy of regional government or linguistic rights. Indeed Charlet points out that in France,
identity-based claims are much more widespread than is electoral support for
the peripheral political parties (Cole, chapter 5, gives further evidence for this).

In each case, however, the parties’ political priorities are no longer those of
classic nationalism. Classic nationalism is the principle of political legitimacy
which holds that nation and state should coincide and that the nation should
determine its form of rule (McGarry and O’Leary, 1995, pp. 13–14). In the
national peripheries, classic nationalist political priorities were once separatist
and independentist. The principles may remain, but the priorities have
changed. In Catalonia, the immediate priorities of building a government,
education system and linguistic policy in the autonomous community and
thereby integrating new immigrants into Catalan society have gone hand in
hand with increasing nationalism on the part of the young, the educated, and
those with parents from Catalonia (Argelaguet, chapter 6). In Northern Ireland,
nationalists have balanced the need to gain immediate improvements in
socio-economic conditions and cultural rights against their longer term aims
for Irish unity, prioritising the immediate improvements without giving up
on the long-term aims (Ruane and Todd, chapter 7). In the French region-
nations, Charlet (chapter 8) notes several tendencies: a prioritising of claims
with some hope of success, for example claims for linguistic rights; a peri-
pheral nationalist prioritising of territorial questions over institutional, at least
in the short term – the primary claim is for a Basque département, or for the
return of Nantes to Brittany, not (yet) for particular levels of autonomy for
the new territorial entity. Indeed, in France, we see a distanitisation between
territorial claims made by the peripheral nationalist parties (Charlet, chapter
8) and practical institutional claims made by periphery-based elites within the
main national political parties (Cole, chapter 5).

In each case, we see not a transcendence of peripheral national iden-
tities but a slow change in their structure, not a hybridity which replaces
national identity, but a level of hybridity which sits comfortably beside
national identity, subtly modifying but not seriously challenging national-
based identity claims. Nor are nationalist identities in some sense ‘regressive’,
held only by excluded and marginalised sectors: in Catalonia and in Scotland,
they are held by the young, the well educated and the middle class
(Argelaguet, chapter 6; McCrone, 2001, p. 107). In all the cases studied in this
book, peripheral nationalists have used and developed new global ideas and
European norms to further their aims. Rather than post-nationalism, we see
nationalisms whose strategies have changed and whose goals are now ambig-
uous. Is this an ambiguity based on uncertainty about identity, or uncertainty
about the political context? Ruane and Todd (chapter 7) suggest that it is based
on uncertainty about the political context: nationalists, like others in this age
of political transformation and uncertainty, are holding their options open.
The impact on institutions: policing

The changes in the form of the state discussed above are unevenly translated into institutions. Most of the discussion of centre–periphery or region–state relations is centred on the political institutions of representative democracy (national parliaments and governments, regional assemblies and administrations), the division of competences between them and the relations between state and sub-state bodies. But if politics has truly become multi-levelled governance, it is necessary to look beyond representative democracy to the various institutional levels at which key policies are made and administered, and the tensions between structures at one institutional level and structures at another. Chapters 9–11 of the book consider a key institutional area, the institutions concerned with the maintenance of order (or as Picard (Chapter 11, p. 208) puts it, the ‘arms of the state’), and analyses the ways in which the changes, contradictions and tensions in forms of government are unevenly expressed in the institutions of policing. Its objective is to show that the system of policing and maintenance of order (understood in the wide sense of interior security) in the different political systems exemplify the forces and tensions typical of the transformations of the state analysed in earlier chapters of this book.

The policing system is an appropriate study first because its characteristics reveal the nature and the state of the political system in which it exists. Its configuration, its links with political power, the way in which powers and competences are divided, its recruitment and organisational characteristics, also the ‘style’ of policing, can all be seen as measures and evaluations of democracy. More profoundly, they exemplify the nature of the state and the changes which it is presently undergoing.

Secondly, the problems of policing with which contemporary states are confronted – types of disorder and of threat, organisational challenges, problems of political control of the instruments of policing – reveal the fundamental, persistent and growing tension between the continuity of national structures and models and common problems linked to globalisation. The weight of national structures and models is, as these chapters show, particularly important in the maintenance of order, not least because it is seen as a manifestation of state sovereignty. However, common problems also exist. The socio-political context is characterised by a considerable increase in conflicts internal to the states, conflicts which are in turn linked to the international and European context – phenomena of insecurity and of violence, rebirth of identity politics and peripheral assertion. However, common responses are limited to those problems which are explicitly defined as ‘common’, for example the decision to create a force for ‘common interior security’ in Europe, as evidenced recently by the creation of ‘attachés of
interior security’. It is much rarer to find attempts to import systems or strategic responses for problems within the state. Where this occurs, it is typically from other states within the traditional cultural field, for example the Patten Commission on the reform of the police in Northern Ireland took most of its evidence from the circle of Commonwealth countries (with the exception of the Basque, Dutch and Madrid police). Similarly, the reticence of France towards the concept of ‘zero tolerance’ was on the grounds that ‘the United States is not France’.

The comparison of the three policing systems shows a convergence on two fundamental points. The chapters show, first, that the centre–periphery tension and the centralisation–decentralisation problematic take a specific form in the domain of policing. For example, one of the keys to understanding the maintenance of order in the Basque Country is the division of the different forces, under control respectively of the central Spanish and the Basque governments, and the related problem of co-ordination. At another level, what Montes (chapter 9) calls ‘the increasing intervention of the European Union in the Basque problem’ reveals the intrusion of new ‘centres’ of decision. The following chapters show that this intrusion is manifested in varying forms and to variable degrees. It is evident, for example, that the ‘proximity’ concept which became so prominent in Jospin’s administrations is the French translation of the British concept of ‘community policing’ (at least the translation of the mode in which this concept is understood by French thinkers, particularly the experts of l’Institut des Hautes Études de la Sécurité Intérieure). It is clear that the territorial, central–local, dimension in policing is at once the product, the manifestation and the exemplar of a period of profound social transformation.

Secondly, in each of the three cases studied we see an evident and tragic political impotence in the face of the different threats and challenges to the maintenance of order. That impotence is modestly masked under axes of ‘reform’: in Spain, the ‘external’ approach (European intervention); in Britain, managerialism; in France, proximity. The French example is particularly interesting for the 2002 presidential election campaign revealed the crisis in the system of the maintenance of order. The general consensus on the diagnosis of insecurity and the perplexity as to how to face it are symptomatic – in this country of left–right confrontation – of a generalised sense of impotence. Much the same can be said of the other two states considered. These states are facing crises of their policing systems: confronted by accelerating and multi-levelled insecurity and social fragmentation, they try desperately to face up to these crises, or at least to seem to do so.

In chapter 9, Montes shows how political conflict between the autonomous government of the Basque country and the Spanish centre is translated into police rivalries, which in turn hinder effective action against ETA’s
terrorism. In chapter 11, Picard traces the ways in which the forces which maintain order in France exemplify the structure of the state, and express the problems and transformations which it now faces. But the structure of policing does not simply mirror the political structure. Picard traces how a new Anglo-American model of ‘proximity policing’ has been superimposed on a structure of the security forces which has traditionally reflected the highly centralised and uniform character of French state institutions. In chapter 10, Mandeville shows other tensions between state form and the maintenance of order in Britain. The British police have traditionally been a model of the British system of government: crises at the level of the state and society are now translated into reform of the policing system. But this reform produces new crises in policing, without addressing the central social problems which provoked change. Devolution at the political level coexists with a homogenisation and harmonisation of structures at the institutional and sub-governmental policy making levels. These different directions of change within the different institutions of the state suggest major tensions within the states, and show the need continually to re-read political discourses on devolution and decentralisation in terms of the institutional and ideological cross-currents which partially constitute the state.

Convergence or divergence, strong globalisation or weak

This book focuses on a set of social relations – relations between the central state and its regions and peripheral sub-nations – where the new global level processes intersect with historically entrenched institutions, practices and expectations. What are the causal processes involved here? How much weight should we give to the historical formation of the states, how much to the contemporary global processes? The centre–periphery model gives much weight to the historical formation of the societies, the regionalist paradigm prioritises present incentives and choices, but both allow some interaction of historical tradition and contemporary innovation. How should this interaction be conceived?

One answer is given by Cole (chapter 5) who frames his analysis of France in terms of three competing causal hypotheses. The ‘convergence’ hypothesis suggests that common global processes are producing converging outcomes in different states. The ‘new institutionalist’ and ‘path dependence’ hypotheses suggest that past historical choices make more likely similar choices in the present and future, thus reproducing the historical specificity of institutions and states (Hall and Taylor, 1996). The ‘bounded singularity’ hypothesis, suggests that, while choices are conditioned by historical precedents, they are not determined by them. Cole himself holds to the third hypothesis in his
analysis of the ‘French exception’. The other chapters provide ample content to test the three hypotheses in a comparative vein. Comas (chapter 3) shows that the 1978 Spanish constitution was itself a radical departure from historical precedent, but one which has framed present political debate and struggle: he also points to potentials for further constitutional change (pp. 57–9). Todd, in chapter 4, argues that while present forms of devolution in Britain may be seen within the historical-constitutional framework of British politics, they are also producing pressures which tend to break out of that framework. Mandeville (chapter 9) shows contemporaneous processes of institutional centralisation in Britain which break with the historical pattern. However, if these authors do not find strongly path-dependent processes, neither do their chapters point towards any clear convergence in the territorial politics of the three states.

Ruane (chapter 2) argues that the identification of the extent and depth of change can best be theorised by an adaptation of Braudel’s concepts of the time of the *longue durée*, the time of the conjuncture, and the time of events. Historical tradition works at two levels: the deep structural level of the *longue durée* (the ethnic, geo-political, linguistic infrastructure), and the more specific level of the conjunctural system (the particular form of the republican state in France, or the dual polity in Britain). The impact of events and processes on both levels must be considered. While change at the deep structural level has been minimal, the conjunctural state and centre–periphery systems have been shaken – in the case of Spain transformed – by the changes of the contemporary period. Comas (chapter 3) traces the new conjunctural constitutional and political system that has emerged in Spain, and he and Argelaguet (chapter 6) show that the continuing tensions within it relate in part to historic identity claims. Ruane and Todd (chapter 7) argue that the new political conjuncture in Northern Ireland signalled by the Good Friday Agreement has touched but not transformed deeper-set identities and conflicting aims. Montes (chapter 9) shows how emergent European-level systems which appear to promise a way beyond older identity-conflict may in their implementation exacerbate them.

The impact of global processes on the conjunctural systems in the three states is much more evident than it is on the structures of the *longue durée*. But how are we to conceptualise this impact? Jonathan Friedman (1995) has usefully distinguished ‘strong globalisation’ where the meanings associated with global processes dominate over particular meanings, from ‘weak globalisation’, where global elements are incorporated into a particular spatially defined, historical set of meanings. While suggestive, the strong v weak binary opposition unnecessarily bifurcates the possibilities. Varying forms of intersection of global and particular meanings and logics are also possible, and arguably more common than the strong or weak ideal types mentioned above.
For example, one might postulate a transformative type of globalisation, where the particular logic of a social system is transformed or restructured through the impact of global level processes, although the outcome remains particular, shaped at once by historical circumstances and global impact. This is close to the ‘bounded singularity’ hypothesis, although it differs in conceiving of the status quo ante and the outcome as themselves systemic. This possibility may be further subdivided into a conscious transformatism – where political elites consciously use global forces to transform the particular structure of their society – and an unintended transformation. A further logical possibility is a mixed system, one where different subsystems (typically the economy) or institutional loci (for example, the media) are given over to global forces while others (politics) retain a particular logic, although one whose meaning is changed by the new, mixed, context.

The examples discussed in the chapters which follow show beyond doubt that global-level processes and tendencies may have very different modes of impact on differing politico-cultural units. The functioning of a particular society (or aspects of that society) may be subordinated to the logic of the global processes – the dominance of a market logic in many parts of British society – or, at the other extreme, global elements may be indigenised within particular social systems – the use of the European ideal to resolve particular indigenous Spanish political problems.

Alternatively, a complex overdetermination of global and local processes may generate new social fissures and political ambiguities. Chapters 3–5 show in their different case studies how new ‘global’ elements are assimilated within existing state systems and how this assimilation may have more or less radical effects on the functioning of the system itself. Chapters 6–8 point to the ambiguous character of the new peripheral nationalisms. Chapters 9–11 show the contradictions between institutional development in the institutions for the maintenance of order, and ideological and political development in modes of representative government. It is also possible that the reflexive appropriation of global models by political elites may produce radically new configurations and processes within a particular society. The different modes of impact may distinguished conceptually, but, in practice and over time, the modes may be mixed – a particular social system may change precisely by indigenising elements.

The chapters below allow us to move beyond a schematic conceptualisation of the different possibilities.