

**Centres and Peripheries in a Changing World. Workshop no. 4
ECPR Joint Sessions, Grenoble 2001.**

**Centre-Periphery Relations in Britain, France and Spain: Theorising the
Contemporary Transition**

**Joseph Ruane (University College Cork)
j.ruane@ucc.ie
Jennifer Todd (University College Dublin)
jennifer.todd@ucd.ie**

[Working paper. Not for citation or quotation
without permission of the authors]

After its heyday in the 1970s and early 1980s, the centre-periphery paradigm in European political research gave way to a focus on regions and regionalism. The regionalist paradigm appeared to be more in tune with wider developments in the economy and politics of Europe and to offer a more insightful approach to analysing the multiplicity of new sites of policy making and inter-elite linkages between regions, localities and cities (see Negrier and Jouve, 1998; LeGalès and Lequesne, 1997). It seemed less deterministic about the directions of regional development (if regions like Rhone Alpes or Catalonia could experience fast economic growth, were the problems of other regions not simply a problem of good political and economic management?). It was more optimistic about resolving 'centre-periphery' problems: the assumption of an inescapable conflict of interest between centre and periphery (conceived at its starkest as a relationship of 'internal colonialism') gave way to a stress on the complementarity rather than opposition of state and region (Negrier and Jouve, 1998). Indeed political leaders in some of the classic peripheries were making use of regionalist rhetoric sometimes with striking political success (for example, Jordi Pujol in Catalonia, John Hume in Northern Ireland).

Two decades later the question must be addressed whether the regionalist paradigm deals adequately the variety of 'regional' developments now underway in Europe. For example, 'regions' and 'regionalism' have formed a central part of the political discourse that has accompanied constitutional reform, devolution and/or decentralisation the United Kingdom, France and Spain. But does the regionalist model cover the kinds of developments taking place in these states? The political conflicts between Catalonia and the Spanish state may now be managed within a predominantly regionalist constitutional framework but Catalonia's self-understanding cannot be understood in regionalist terms. The Scottish Assembly has already pushed beyond Blair's vision of the future of the UK, while the systematically ambiguous Good Friday Agreement is making slow progress (Nairn, 2000; Ruane and Todd, 1999, 2001). In France, Corsican nationalism has a different trajectory than Jospin's devolutionary model. This is not to deny the impact of regionalist thinking. But it suggests the need to look again at the centre-periphery paradigm and to explore the interrelationship between them.

Any such examination must address itself to changes in the wider social and political context. The centre-periphery paradigm was elaborated at a time when the nation-state was the point of departure for analysing virtually all internal and external state relations. The past two decades have seen intensified globalisation, 'postmodernisation', metropolitanisation, supra-state and sub-state regionalisation (see Held et al, 1999; Beck, 2000). The language of regionalism appears to be very much in tune with these developments – that has been a central part of its appeal. The language of centre and periphery is more controversial; indeed it is not uncommon to hear it declared that in a world of open borders and transnational networks there are no centres and peripheries any more. Is that the case? Have wider processes so reconfigured territorial relationships that talk of centres and peripheries has now little meaning? Or has the centre-periphery dynamic survived the recent changes, reconstituted within them, perhaps even been strengthened by them?

These questions pose difficult methodological questions and we address them in a distinctive way. In a recent commentary on the writings of Stein Rokkan, Peter Flora observed 'that Rokkan's approach also offers a key to understanding the latest developments in Europe. One might argue that as nation-states have declined in significance, intensive research into their differences has also become less important. But I would counter that the process of European integration has given these differences a wholly new meaning. By looking into the past, Rokkan points to the future' (Flora, p. 91). We share this view although the task of drawing out what is important in Rokkan for the contemporary period is a complex one, not least because Rokkan wrote within a modernist, nation-state paradigm of political development, and it is the continued relevance of this paradigm that is now at issue. Our approach is to take his conceptual map of Europe as our starting point and to ask how the processes of globalisation and postmodernisation alter the picture that it presents.

We argue that the processes of globalisation and postmodernisation are reshaping political and territorial relationships in Europe, and that the regionalist paradigm captures many of the new changes. But the lineaments of the old are still clearly visible in the new. The transition from modern, (inter-)national political world to post-modern, global political world is a slow one with an uncertain

outcome. The situation today – certainly in the case of Britain, France and Spain – is one of the co-existence of centre-periphery and regionalist dynamics.

THEORISING THE CONTEMPORARY TRANSITION

In this section we discuss Rokkan's conceptual map of Europe and consider its continuing relevance as a theoretical and empirical account of European political development in an age of globalisation and postmodernisation..

Stein Rokkan's Model of Europe

It is impossible in a short space of time to give an adequate overview of Rokkan theoretical account of European development. We focus on a number of key aspects, drawing on Flora's recent valuable overview:

1. Rokkan's work is an exercise in (what Flora calls) 'retrospective diachronics'. He starts with an outcome – the present or an earlier period - and then searches in the more distant past for the historical conditions and processes which produced that outcome. The historical outcome that interests Rokkan is the European nation-state and its democratisation - 'the fundamental nature of this new type of political system which had first developed in Europe over a period of centuries, and on the *system* of nation-states forming over time in this area of the world ... and the *differences* in the structural features of these nation-states and the developmental paths pursued by them.' (Flora, 4)
3. Rokkan's approach is structural and systemic as well as historical. As Flora describes it: 'Rokkan derives his most general concept of *structure* from a re-interpretation of Parson's theory of differentiation. He proceeds in three steps: first adopting the distinction of 4 processes of *functional* differentiation, then intersecting these processes with a dimension of *territorial* differentiation, and finally ordering organisations and institutions in the space bounded by these co-ordinates. This analytic *grid of dimensions* represents for him a '*multi-level model for the generation of structural profiles* of political systems' and 'a device for the ordering of questions and data about similarities and differences among historically given political systems' The result is a 'model which represents the germ of an inexhaustible, potentially limitless programme of structural comparison' (Flora, 6).
4. Rokkan delimits the scope of this model in two ways. One of these is by developing 'two more specific concepts of structure related to certain dimensions of the overall network of organisations and institutions, namely *cleavage structures* and *centre-periphery structures*.' Centre-periphery structures are the essential features of 'the *territorial* structure of political systems, evolving in the processes of territorial expansion, political centralisation, and population concentration... *Cleavages* are fundamental oppositions within a territorial population which stand out from the multiplicity of conflicts rooted in the social structure...' (Flora, 6-7) Cleavage structures always have a *functional* and a *territorial* dimension, with the latter dimension becoming less significant in the process of political system building and the former more important. (Flora, 6-7).

5. Structures may be economic, political and cultural, with each considered the site of a distinctive set of relationships and practices: economy (urban structure, markets, industrialisation, class cleavages, resources available, land tenure systems, city networks); political (representative institutions, electoral systems, bureaucracies, state building); cultural: language (as mechanism of communication, as resource, as identity), religion (institutional, as world view, significance of the reformation and counterreformation) identity, nation building, ethno-linguistic infrastructure).
6. Structures are inherently spatial. We are dealing not simply with the economic, the political and the cultural, but with the *geo-economic*, the *geo-political* and the *geo-cultural/geo-ethnic*, and particular societies can be seen as a series of 'regional transposes' of regionally specific variables (Flora, 126). Boundary-making is a key political process. Geographical features, distance, frontiers and strategic location can have crucial consequences for political outcomes, eg strategic positions such as at the mouth of the Rhine or controlling the Alpine passes; centres needing sizeable blocs of empty land.
7. Temporality is a key variable for Rokkan. Structures are always 'temporal, period- or phase-specific phenomena.... They are the result of processes of *structuring* and *de-structuring*, with periodic *freezing* and *un-freezing* of structures at critical junctures in history. Some structures can achieve widely different degrees of consolidation and permanence: Rokkan labels these *infrastructures*, eg *cultural* or *ethnic/linguistic infrastructures*.(Flora, 7). Timing is important. Developments in one period have critical consequences for what happens later, eg the legacy of successive *volkerwanderungen* and their implications for later linguistic standardisation, state and nation-building; there are important contrasts between older systems and late comers, between the continuously built-up older states and the more recent ones; state building 'success' or failure can be cumulative - failure at a key stage may have long term consequences.
8. Alongside this structural and systemic bias there is in Rokkan an emphasis on individual and collective action, on events and critical junctures. Action - whether of states, political leaders, elites or masses - is typically conceived in strategic terms, taking place in arenas where what matters is threat, power, resources, allies, enemies.
9. The process of political development can be expressed in ideal-typical form in the following way:

Phase 1: covers the initial *state-building* process – in W. Europe the period from the High Middle Ages to the French Rev. This is typically a period of political, economic and cultural unification at the elite level: a series of bargains are struck and a variety of cultural bonds are established across networks of local power-holders and a number of institutions are created to extract resources for common defence, for the maintenance of internal order and the adjudication of disputes, for the protection of established rights and privileges, and for the elementary infrastructure requirements of the economy and polity;

Phase 2: brings in large and larger sectors of the *masses* into the system: the conscript armies, the parochial compulsory schools, the emerging mass media create channels for direct contact between the central elite and the populations of the peripheries and generate widespread feelings of identity with the total political system, frequently, but not necessarily, in protracted conflict with already established identities such as those built up through churches or sects or through peripheral linguistic elites;

Phase 3: brings these masses into *active participation* in the workings of the territorial system, typically through the establishment of privileges of opposition, the extension of the electorates for organs of representation, the formation of organised parties for the mobilisation of support, and the articulation and aggregation of demands;

Phase 4: represents the next series of steps in the expansion of the administrative apparatus of the territorial state: the growth of *agencies of redistribution*, the building of public welfare services, the

development of nation-wide policies for the equalisation of economic conditions, negatively through progressive taxation, positively through transfers from the better-off strata to the poorer, from the richer to the backward regions.

Empirically applied this perspective enabled Rokkan to offer a panoramic view of European state- and nation-building and its associated conflicts, one that is at once theoretically parsimonious, sociologically rich, historically deep and geographically specific.

Globalisation and Post-Modernisation

What happens when we bring globalisation and post-modernisation into the picture? We use the terms broadly to incorporate the set of contemporary economic, political, cultural and demographic developments which have increased the velocity and intensity of economic and cultural flows, generated new supra-state institutions and regulatory bodies, reordered the internal socio-geography of Europe creating 'global cities', flows of immigrants and spaces of exclusion, new zones of prosperity and of marginalisation, and generated new political demands, new social movements and new claims of citizenship (Held et al, 1999; Featherstone and Lash, 1999; Beck, 2000). The effect of society and social relationships, including the socio-spatial hierarchy, is a process of disarticulation, de-structuring, 'liquefaction' and de-traditionalisation (Bauman, 2000, Urry, 2000).

On the economic level, globalisation and post-modernisation involve an increasing intensity of trade flows, instantaneous financial movements and capital flows, reorganisation of production on a global level and a new dominance of communications industries and leisure/tourism industries. This has knock-on effects on socio-geography, on the family and class structure, and on the capacity of states to sustain high levels of welfare, social security and health care (Featherstone and Lash, 1999; Bauman 2000; Beck, 2000; Habermas, 1998). It provides one of the main motivations for the formation and continuing integration of the European Union, which provides both an economic pole of attraction for investment, and some possibility of political regulation which individual states could not provide.

On the political level, globalisation and post-modernisation involve the creation of supra-state institutions, whether regulatory (WTO or ECHR), inclusive and weak (UN, CE), or highly institutionalised with developed decision-making processes and sanctions (EU). Policy making within states becomes functionally differentiated, multi-levelled, and proceeds in a multitude of differentially located arenas in each of which it has different private- and public- sector partners. It is for this reason that Held et al (1999) posit a 'new mediaevalism' of politics. The effect is an increasing divergence of the realm of policy (governance, policy-making) from that of politics (legitimacy, democracy, symbolism) with new forms of cultural politics emerging at the level of the state (see variously Baudrillard, 1994; Frazer, 2000).

On the cultural level, globalisation and post-modernisation involve an increasing speed in transmission of cultural symbols and messages. At the level of experience, the sense of fragmentation (whether experienced as individual *jouissance*, or as *lost-ness*) is more in evidence, as is a flatness associated with increasing consumerist choice and individualism in the context of the disintegration of communities and traditions in terms of which social links and social meanings are generated (Baudrillard, 1993; Jameson, 1991; Augé, 1995). At the level of identity, there is a generation of a plethora of global-level identities (from diaspora identities to those associated with the global community of political scientists to gay identity to identity based on ecological concern), increasing diversity and choice of identities, an increasing social cleavage between those adopting cosmopolitan or hybrid identities and those reacting against global pressure in terms of defensive ethnic or particularist identities (cf Castells, 1997; Pieterse, 1995).

What implications do such processes have for the kind of analysis which Rokkan offers? If we accepted the views of the more radical postmodernists the consequences would be profound:

1. Rokkan's 'retrospective diachronics' designed to explain the European nation-state and its democratisation appear as a quintessentially 'modernist' exercise. At the very least it would be necessary to engage in a new exercise in retrospective diachronics, this time to explain the emergence of a globalised, post-nation-state, postmodern Europe (in fact a true postmodernist would reject on methodological grounds the very idea of retrospective diachronics and would see the 'model of political development' as yet another grand narrative to be deconstructed).
2. Rokkan's structural and systemic approach would also be in trouble, not least his use of an analytic *grid of dimensions* represents to arrive at a '*multi-level model for the generation of structural profiles of political systems*'. This approach rests on an assumption that societies have relatively stable, densely structured foundations. This may (or may not) have been the case in the past, but globalisation and post-modernisation entail a process of more or less profound and permanent de-structuring. Structures will unfreeze without necessarily refreezing; this could extend even to the infrastructures that in the past seemed permanent. There will still be cleavages and divisions but they will be fragmented, temporary and unstable.
3. Rokkan's emphasis on boundaries and boundary-making would no longer be deemed appropriate. Spatiality and place still exist in global postmodernity but they do not have the same consequences or meaning where the electronic and transportation revolution has drastically reduced the significance of distance.
4. The assumption of highly structured temporalities (implicit in such notions as 'pre-condition variables', stages of development, notions of early and late comers) may have been appropriate in the past, but are no longer so in the much more fluid circumstances of today. Events will unfold not in critical junctures, but in and through a multiplicity of uncritical junctures.
5. Structure itself will recede in favour of action and event.

From a radical postmodernist perspective, Rokkan's analysis represents the application of a flawed theoretical apparatus to a world that is now fast disappearing. Such a critique is self-evidently the product as much of its own theoretical presuppositions as of changes in the world itself. The processes of globalisation and postmodernisation may or may not entail – as postmodernist and some globalists imply - the wholesale reconstruction of the social and the cultural world on different foundations with different operating principles. But the shift will certainly be a long-drawn out one, during which modern/nation-state and postmodern/global tendencies and effects will overlap and interact. If this is the case – and we believe it is - Rokkan's model remains substantially relevant to any analysis of the present. It would follow too that Rokkan's account (or of other similar accounts) of the centre-periphery dynamic remains substantially valid for the present. This does not rule regionalist tendencies: the question is how the two distinct sets of dynamics intersect and articulate one with the other.

The Centre-Periphery and Regionalist Paradigms in an Age of Transition

What distinguishes the centre-periphery from the regionalist paradigm? At the heart of the centre-periphery paradigm is the idea of an historical relationship unfolding in a logic of conflict in which – given the bounded nature of the nation-state - both centre and periphery are trapped. In this

conflict centre and a periphery have fundamentally different points of departure. That of the state is penetration, integration, assimilation; that of the periphery resistance and accommodation. The unfolding of this struggle and its outcome – integration/integration or continued differentiation, stability/instability, mono vs federal political system - is determined by the balance of resources available: military, economic (both in organisational terms and later in welfare redistribution), political (organisational, institutional, the capacity to create networks and institutions that integrate elites and masses) and cultural (the prestige of the language and symbols of the centre, the cultural capital available to the periphery). This balance will be determined by the cumulative effect of past processes and events now embedded in structural relations as well as the contingencies of events.

Implicit in this account is a view of the centre-periphery relationship as of central importance to both centre and periphery. Unless they can break completely free, peripheries have no alternative but to act in relation to (often in opposition to) the central state, and to define themselves in terms of, or in opposition to it. There is no exit, only voice or loyalty, and either choice is likely to be against their interests and preferred identity. But neither can the state escape from a relationship with its peripheries. From its point of view, it has to secure the integration and stability of its territory, which requires establishing its power, authority and legitimacy over and within each of its peripheries

The regionalist paradigm lacks both the historical depth of the centre-periphery one, as well as its assumption of conflict and of closedness. The emphasis is on the present and on recent trends in government-region relations. The image conjured up is of a 'new mediaevalism' (Held, 1999) of policy making, 'governance' rather than government (Pierre and Stoker, 2000), and of actors looking to trans-state or sub-state units for their primary interests or identities (cf Beck, 2000; Archibugi et al, 1998). The emphasis is decentralisation, the devolution of power downwards to localities, regions and cities, and upwards to the European union. There is a stress on the multiple linkages and functional avenues for decision-making, some involving state elites in conjunction with other actors - EU, regional, city, local political elites, business elites, functional groups - some bypassing state elites altogether. In place of the conflict of the past, there is an assumption of complementarity between 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. 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.

This does not mean the absence of all conflict or problems. There may be tension between regions, cities, localities and the central state around issues of democratic accountability and the difficulties of joining up governance. Guy Saez (1999) notes several such tensions. One is a form of democratic deficit. The new metropolitanism, where large cities develop vibrant inter-city linkages and development strategies, tends to lack democratic legitimation: many of those most affected by the plans live outside the city and do not have a vote in city government; those in the inner city may well be immigrants, marginalised, or otherwise excluded, who, if they have the right to vote at all, have little interest in voting. There are also problems of coordination, and a continuing imbalance of power - the coordinator (the state) holds considerable power in its setting of deadlines and ground rules for plans. The potential for administrative tensions and conflicts between region and state therefore remains very great.

The regionalist paradigm has major strengths. It allows integration of micro-level analyses with institutional analyses of new state, European and indeed global institutions, it allows analyses of elite action within given structural constraints, it facilitates comparison. It allows for empirical investigation which has a clear policy-relevance. It retains as background theoretical assumptions some of the headier theory of globalisation, post-modernisation, and metropolitanisation, but it also defines a clear path for useful research, unimpeded by theoretical concerns.

The regionalist paradigm does not rule out the presence of conflicts of a traditional centre-periphery kind, but there is the implication that where these are present they are a throw-back to an earlier age that should now be – and ideally will be – undercut. There is of course another possibility: that far from

regionalism developing as an alternative to the old peripheral nationalist politics, it might be one of the forms in which this politics is now pursued. When regionalism emerges as the dominant political principle in an area of traditional peripheral nationalism, can it always be taken as face value?

This raises further questions: what are the conditions under which centre-periphery conflicts disappear (if indeed they do) or are reproduced in the contemporary age (if indeed they are)? Can they be displaced by or mutate into regionalist ones, and if so under what conditions? How much correspondence is there between the tensions generated in the context of the new regionalism and those associated with the centre-periphery dynamic? How do we theorise cases where there may be an amalgam of peripheral nationalism and regionalism? With so many unanswered questions it seems wise to keep both sets of concepts as a guide to research. In the remainder of this paper we explore some of these issues as they arise in the British, French and Spanish cases.

CASES: BRITAIN, FRANCE, SPAIN

The three cases show striking similarities and contrasts in their modes of state- and nation-building, in their responses to EU integration, globalisation and postmodernisation and in their strategies for accommodating peripheral nationalism and regionalism. All were, in Rokkan's terms, 'empire-nations' in which processes of empire-, state- and nation-building, including periphery incorporation, overlapped and interacted. All three have wrestled with the problem of post-imperial decline. In the recent period all three have been in transition from post-imperial nation to constituent state of an increasingly integrated EU, and in negotiating that transition have had to deal with periphery and regional problems inherited from the past. Some regions were fully assimilated in the process of nation-building, others resisted it in some form or other throughout. There are sharp contrasts in the degree of regional mobilisation, with – as one would expect - the unassimilated regions notably more mobilised than the others. All three governments have been using regionalist strategies to deal with both types of regions.

Britain, France and Spain: from seaward empire-nations to EU member-states

Britain

Britain developed as a self-consciously multi-national state. The south-east English core first incorporated the rest of England then set about integrating the culturally distinctive territories to the north and west – Wales, Scotland and Ireland (Kearney, 1989). Only Wales was integrated without much difficulty. Scotland was an independent kingdom and posed a greater challenge; more than once the process came close to breakdown. The integration of Great Britain was achieved on the basis of recognition of three distinct nations, a single overarching identity (Britishness), a shared language, a shared Protestantism, common security concerns, and shared economic interests. The integration of Ireland was more difficult from the outset and eventually achieved by a combination of conquest and colonisation. Ireland's subsequent status was also ambiguous: colony or sister kingdom or peripheral region after the union of 1801. The Irish economy was fully integrated from the early 19th century and linguistic assimilation was virtually complete by the end of the century, but this strengthened rather than limited separatist tendencies. From 1921 the only part of it that remained has been the chronically unstable mixed Protestant/Catholic, settler/native enclave of east Ulster. In Britain itself linguistic

assimilation was virtually complete except for North Wales and small parts of the Scottish highlands. The state was conceived as pluri-national, facilitating Welsh, Scottish and (if they would but accept it) Irish as well as English identities within an informally ordered (but none-the-less centralising and hierarchical) state system. Britain in turn opened out to the empire which served as important integrating function for peripheral and working class. In the post-WW II period integration was further achieved through the welfare state and rapid developments in national communications.

Of the three countries Britain is distinctive in having been precociously capitalist, precociously pluralist (pluri-national and, more ambiguously, pluri-religious), precociously democratic, precociously individualist, the least 'European' and the most imperial in modern times. Today it is the least committed to Europe and the most reluctant to relinquish the memory of empire. Like the other two states it has been preoccupied with the question of decline and the search for renewal (see English and Kenny eds, 2000). This was part of the appeal of Thatcherism and, to a lesser extent, Blair. At one level Thatcher's privatisation crusade was simply about the renewal of British and global capitalism: her economic reforms, cut backs in social security and the health system, and defeat of the trade union movement, were designed to re-commodify and streamline the British economy to make it competitive in the new global environment. But this overlapped with a more nationalist project of renewing British culture and maintaining Britain's place in the world. Blair today maintains that policy. He is also the most media-conscious of Europe's prime ministers, and the most committed to a politics of simulacra. In that sense he reflects wider tendencies in British culture, which of the three is most accepting of the individualising and fragmenting tendencies of postmodernity. Possibly in line with all of this, the constituent nations of the union appear to view its possible break-up with an unusual degree of equanimity. That few would regret the departure of Northern Ireland is understandable; but the possibility of a break between Scotland and England does not appear profoundly to disturb either party. There is a cultural and a practical logic to all of this. The Scots have dreams of independent nationhood and an economy unfettered by English constraints; the English derive no economic benefits from union. For both parties the security aspects have greatly diminished; and while 'Britishness' has become an overarching identity of sorts, the national identities remain intact underneath.

France

France was built up over a longer period and in a more piece-meal fashion than Britain. Indeed its boundaries finally settled only in the 20th century. From the royal centre in the northern plain, the kingdom was built by a combination of conquest and alliance to form an assemblage of culturally, juridically and administratively particularist territories. A process of national integration was underway at elite level from the 16th century. Integration at the popular and administrative levels began with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic reforms and continued through the 19th century. Linguistic standardisation at the mass level on was not achieved until well into the Third Republic, aided by the establishment of obligatory national education, the expansion of the road and railway network and rural-urban and south-north migration. Today France is a remarkably unified country despite the stress on regional differences and the specificity of each *terroir*. Minority languages still exist and are an issue, notably in Alsace, Brittany and the French Basque country. But France has no equivalent to Scotland or Catalonia: on the mainland only one solid bloc of territory – Brittany, incorporated by formal treaty in 1532 around the same time as Wales into England – retains any element of separatism. Alsace – despite the strong Germanic component to its culture and close ties to the German economy across the Rhine – supports at best a weak autonomism. The singular failure is Corsica (acquired in 1768) where separation is a real issue. National integration has come at a price however: a rigid and centralised political and administrative system, a high level of provincial dependence on the centre and a marked intolerance toward its minority languages.

The strength of the state over a long period of time marks France out from the other two cases. Of the three it is the most wary of Anglo-American neo-liberal globalisation which it sees as a threat to its culture, to the integrity of the state and to the social solidarity which underpins its sense of national

unity (Crozet et al, 2000). Its external openness is primarily towards Europe: historically and geo-politically it is the most 'European' of the three countries and ideologically open to addressing issues in 'European' terms. A strong France in a strong Europe is seen as the solution to French decline. France also differs from the other states in its experience and memory of empire – the French empire was smaller than both of the others; its settlement colonies were on a limited scale - only Quebec re-created a version of French culture abroad and this has long been under English control. France is also distinctive in its concern to maintain its present territorial boundaries (the map image of the Hexagon is both pervasive and powerful); the departure of Corsica could be lived with (and welcomed by some) but any other form of mainland secession would be strongly resisted. There is a commitment to a unified, shared public culture; regional or ethnic cultures are to be relegated to the 'private' domain. There is resistance to cultural pluralism in the Anglo-American mould (see Wieworka ed, 1997). France is in the view of some the epitome of the 'modern' state, and the one most in need of 'loosening up' by postmodernity (Silverman 1999). It is, of course, not difficult to find evidence of postmodernising tendencies in France, particularly the progress of individualism and the pluralisation of perspective, but they arouse greater public (or at least intellectual) concern there than in Britain (Wieworka ed 1997; Crozet et al, 2000).

Spain

Spain emerged out the coalitions formed between the northern Christian kingdoms in the war against the Moors and the achievement of Castile of overall hegemony. It was Castile which settled most of the recovered lands; it also concentrated the resources of the empire in its hands. Only Portugal successfully resisted Castilian control; Catalanian support for the archduke Charles in the war of the Spanish succession resulted in the loss of its *fueros* and full integration into Spain in 1714. The economic benefits of trade and substantial assimilation at elite level contained separatism for a time, but it returned in the 19th century with growing industrial wealth and linguistic mobilisation. With the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 Catalonia was on the point of declaring itself independent; the compromise reached was abolished by Franco. Meanwhile Basque nationalism had also emerged as a potent force; suppressed by Franco, it re-emerged in the 1960s. The third and mildest strand in the challenge to central rule was Galician, largely a cultural movement accompanied by demands for a degree of political autonomy. Each of these movements for separation or autonomy arose out of specific conditions in the region but they have to be seen in the context of a chronically weak centre in a country that geo-politically was in long term decline. Economic underdevelopment deprived the centre of the resources that might have reconciled the peripheries to its rule. Catalans in particular resisted integration into what they saw as a backward state. Of the three cases Spain is territorially the least stable and the one whose breakup would be the most explosive.

Spain resembles Britain in its status as a multi-national state, though – until recently at least – it has lacked the British ease of acceptance of that fact and the centralised French model has always had an appeal at the centre (Fox, 1999). The Spanish imperial experience also marks it out: the most successful of the early empire builders, its colonies largely settlement colonies, most of which broke away in the early 19th century. However a memory of empire and self-image as an imperial power survived much longer and was an ingredient in Francoism. At the same time Spain has lived with the reality of decline for much longer than either France or Britain. Today renewal is sought through integration into Europe as well as building contacts with the wider Spanish linguistic community. Economic and political considerations make Spain open to wider linkages and there is little of the defensiveness that characterises French attitudes to globalisation or British attitudes to the EU (Gibbons 1999, Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, eds 2000). Economic restructuring and development is to be achieved by foreign trade and investment; democracy is to be secured by integration into the EU and by a comprehensive modernisation of the society and its culture.

Governments, Regions and Peripheries

The three states have quite distinct historical trajectories in respect of state-, nation- and empire-formation, and quite different stances in respect of EU integration, globalisation and postmodernisation. This is evident in the nature and seriousness of the regional problems situations that each state now encounters and the manner of its response. The regional problem can be viewed as distinct in and of itself, but only to a degree. As we have seen, the formation of regions is an integral part of the way in which in each case the state was built and the nation imagined. Today the economic problems of the state, the question of the state's legitimacy and the development strategies to pursue, all pose themselves in some degree in regional terms. They also raise questions of European integration and globalisation, and – less obviously – postmodernisation.

It is not simply the centres which reflect on such matters: the regions do it also. Moreover they do it in a context in which their relationship to the political centre is no longer their sole preoccupation. All regions now have a sense of openness, in-betweenness and 'liminality', of dealing with powerful external forces but of having greater choice in relation to them. All have linkages which bypass the central state; some will have many. Some are members of particular sub-groups within the EU (British-Irish, cross-Alps) or benefit from historic linkages beyond the EU (Portugal-Brazil, Ireland-US). Such linkages may benefit some regions, or parts of regions, more than others (eg Derry in Northern Ireland). Sometimes both the region and its sub-parts have independently strong linkages. Where this is the case, as with Catalonia and the city of Barcelona, the linkages each creates can enhance those of the other: when Barcelona hosted the Olympic Games in 1992, the benefits - in terms of international status and linkages - accrued to region as well as city. The extent of the linkages depends in part on the wider institutional context, including the availability of EU networks and funding possibilities, in part on the resources and abilities of the local elites: their entrepreneurial calibre; their experience and tradition (work within the region, as in Catalonia, or movement to the centre, as in Andalusia or France); their education and career paths (which partially define for them their imagined communities) (Anderson 1991).

How radically the regions pursue specifically regional projects – and seek the institutional means to do this - depends in part on the extent of their cultural assimilation to the centre. All the states contain regions that have not been culturally 'assimilated' and at this point are unlikely ever to become so. They may be economically integrated – indeed dependent on it; their inhabitants may be fully at ease in the official language of the state - this may be their only language; but they may still refuse inclusion in the centre's definition of the national community and their commitment to being part of the state may be limited in extent, formal, contractual and, in cases, simply opportunist. One way or another, their loyalty can never be taken for granted. The task for the centre of managing such regions is inherently problematic. At the same time the strategies adopted for such problem regions and the deals worked out with them have implications for the other regions. This is the case even when the policy paradigm is as formally neutral as the 'regionalism' one.

Spain

Of the three states Spain has by far the most difficult regional problem; it has also in place the the most radical of the regionalising projects. Spain's regional problem has two interrelated dimensions: that of persuading the two principal unassimilated peripheries – Catalonia and the Basque region - to accept the state, and then drawing on the resources of these regions to support development in the other regions. These goals are contradictory and it has been a difficult balancing act. Insofar as it has been successful - and its ultimate success is still in question – it is been due in considerable part to the commitment of

the Spanish centre and the principal regions to ever wider European and international contacts (Gibbons, 1999, 35).

The case of Catalonia is instructive. In the past thirty years, Catalan economic development has gone hand in hand with cultural nationalism, increasing linkages with the EU and with the wider world. The Catalan language has achieved predominance in public life in the region, in education, and in the communications media. The region's economic success and Barcelona's prestige as a major European city give the Catalan government a prominence on the European stage and extra clout in negotiations with the centre. Catalonia's increased external orientation is welcomed, not simply for the economic and cultural benefits it brings, but because it lessens the linkages with the Castillian centre. The extent to which Catalan nationalism is now content with its status as a nation-without-a-state (Keating, 1996) or the extent to which it is moving towards greater independence - perhaps, at least initially, within a federal structure - is a matter of some debate among scholars. What is clear, however, is that the increasing political freedom of the region, its increased prosperity and the reinforcement of Catalan identity has not overcome its ambivalence about being part of the Spanish state. One expression of this is resentment of the level of Catalan financial transfers to the central exchequer. This resentment is all the greater when it compares its fiscal powers with those of the Basque country.

The challenge which such a high level of 'regionalisation' has posed to the Spanish state, and ideologically to those strands of political opinion which believe in the essential unity of Spain, is considerable. In Catalonia the central state has effectively lost the cultural initiative and the re-establishment of Catalan as the first language has deepened the extent to which it is a 'place apart'. At the same time autonomisation has not brought an end to violent Basque separatism. There are conflicts between centre and region about the extent of the regional powers - the Spanish state, for example, has repeatedly challenged Basque industrial policy in the European Court of Justice (Loyer, 1999). There is tension around matters of protocol, for example welcoming of international statesmen, visits abroad, which have seemed to the state to be taking over the proper role of the sovereign state (Basset, 1998). Finally, there is competition between the regions around the extent of their powers which produces a dynamic towards ever greater 'autonomisation' - Catalonia looks for equivalent financial autonomy to the Basque country, and Andalucia will accept no less autonomy than Catalonia, and so on. At the same time the pace of development in the other regions remains slow.

France

The 'regional problem' in France has few points of comparison with Spain. Over time the French state has diluted its regional particularisms to a point where regional or ethno-national identity offers little basis for political mobilisation. This is reinforced by economic and social policies that ensure a relatively balanced economy, a strong state-wide social security, health and welfare system, and concern with workers' rights (eg 35 hour week), which give all regions the sense of benefiting equally from the state. This is combined with a degree of selectivity in state aid where - for example in the case of Brittany - there is any evidence of residual tendencies towards regional protest. The result is a still low level of regional mobilisation, despite a more favourable institutional context.

Midi-Pyrénées, centred on Toulouse, offers an example of such a region. In the 1960s and 1970s the Occitan movement appeared to herald the emergence of a serious regional politics of protest; one of its leading figures was among the first to apply the concept of 'internal colonialism' to a European state (Lafont 1967). Today little remains of that effort (due in part in the Toulouse area to a state-supported aerospace industry). For most people in the region the actual processes which define life-style, career options and life-paths are the general ones with a degree of local inflection. As elsewhere in France there has been a re-valuation of the importance of locality and region - but locality primarily as *terroir*, as the home of a distinctive cuisine and local history. For many today, the sun, access to the Mediterranean and to the Pyrénées rank higher than any distinctive characteristics of the local culture.

The distant past – in particular the crusade against the Cathars – has been ‘re-invented’ and packaged for tourism under the title ‘Pays Cathare’ (Genieys and Smith 1998); but despite its mythic potential for interpreting present-day relations, it adds nothing to the interpretation of contemporary life. There is an interest in the language of the region and a radio station that broadcasts in occitan (Radio Occitan) and that fosters linkages throughout the Occitan region and into Catalonia. But this cultural interest does not translate into serious politics: the political party that attempts to represent the vast region of Occitania is made up of a tiny number of activists (Charlet, 2000).

Much the same could be said of most French regions. The Rhone-Alpes region has been unusually successful in its strategic creation of regional linkages in order to exploit new European and trans-regional opportunities. But it has done this through the strategic interlinkages of middle-level political elites, not through mobilisation on the basis of a historic identity. Significantly the only successful oppositional regional party in this region (one might also say, in all of mainland France) is that of Savoy, which mobilised not on issues of historic Savoyard identity but on the lack of adequate transport provision. (Charlet, 2000)

If regionalism has limited capacity to mobilise the assimilated regions, its impact on the unassimilated ones is more complex. This is particularly evident in the interface periphery of Alsace. In many ways Alsace exemplifies the benefits of the new European regionalism. It was the subject of several traumatic changes of nationality between France and Germany. Today its boundaries are settled once and for all. The region and its main city – Strasbourg - have benefited economically from European integration: it brought the European Parliament and Council of Europe and the easing of movement and work across the French-German frontier. Out of a population of 1.5 million, 80,000 work in Germany and Switzerland while living in France; German visitors form an extremely important part of its tourist trade. It has an affluent trans-state, cross-border economy, combines a Germanic dialect, a French political culture, and specifically Alsatian institutions (eg the role of the church; particularly favourable social security arrangements). Strasbourg is officially conceived as a city of European reconciliation, and the tragedy of European wars is paramount in its cultural memory. Despite all this contemporary Alsace is culturally ill-at-ease with itself – still troubled by the events of the war, fearful of German economic strength and resentful of its dependence on it, hyper-sensitive to cultural slights from both German and French, increasingly French speaking but concerned about the loss of the dialect, its culture more folklorised and sentimentalised than anywhere else in France (see Kleinschmager 1996, Schwengler 1989, Kretz 1994). Conscious of problems that are not automatically met within a French or a European context, it both desires and fears greater autonomy. One expression of the tensions is support for the National Front. More clearly than most, the Alsace case shows the limits of regionalism when confronted by the legacy of a deeply troubled history.

Britain

Of the three cases, the British government is the one least imbued with a European regionalist ideology. On the other hand there is a deep rooted localism in British culture arising from the institutionalisation of the ‘dual polity’ (see Bulpitt, 1983) which might be expected to provide a favourable cultural substrate for a more thorough-going regionalism in the future. Mrs Thatcher’s premiership disrupted the dual polity model and centralised power, although as much to counter local (socialist) resistance to her wider project than to develop the powers of the centre as such. In the more recent period, the constitutional innovations of Tony Blair promise to open the way to greater regional autonomy and to the development of linkages bypassing the central state. In particular Blair’s constitutional reforms have given limited regional autonomy to the historic regions (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and restored power to the Greater London Council. The long-term effects of the former - whether to unify Britain, or unintentionally to strengthen Scottish and Welsh moves for greater autonomy - are still unclear.

What is clear is that the appeal of regionalist ideas has been considerable in the historic regions themselves. In Wales and Scotland they have appealed to those with a strong sense of Welsh or Scottish identity and interests, but who (for the moment at least) want increased autonomy, not to separation. Regionalism is counterposed to 'narrow nationalism': from this standpoint the failure to press for outright independence is not weakness, but progressive and forward-looking, and in tune with the open, pluralist and inclusive spirit of the times. 'Europe' forms an essential part of this discourse: Wales and Scotland are simultaneously historic nations and European regions. The appeal of this approach is obvious: it ensures the economic benefits of continued membership of the United Kingdom, it meets concerns about the traditionalist nationalist (and in Scotland, religious) forces that full independence might unleash, it secures economic and institutional benefits of the European Union, and it replaces the self-image of being among Europe's defeated, submerged peoples with one of being among its more progressive and enlightened nations.

Whether such a project would overcome the structural problems of the British state and reconcile the divergent strands in Welsh and Scottish nationalism remains to be seen. The past shows evidence of a complex interaction between centre policies and peripheral response. The most dramatic example is the contribution of Mrs Thatcher's policies to the rise of Scottish nationalism. The uneven impact of these policies on Scotland, with its industrial heritage, its strong trade-unionist and labour political culture, and a significant degree of poverty, gave an enormous boost to Scottish nationalism. On Tom Nairn's account (2000), the 'poll tax' was the final straw, metamorphosing the relatively passive Scottish regional-national consciousness into a wave of Scottish nationalism opposed to the central state. She certainly unintentionally provoked a more sophisticated articulation of the philosophical basis of Scottish nationalism than had previously been given (see the 'Claim of Right for Scotland' and arguments for limited sovereignty).

Finally, the quite different case of Northern Ireland shows at once the widespread appeal of regionalist ideas, their potential and their limits in addressing the most difficult problems. Regionalist ideas have been prominent in Northern Irish political discourse since the late 1980s. The regionalist argument is that the conflict is the product of the fact that the two communities and two states confront each other on the basis of mutually exclusive sovereignty claims; conducted in that way the conflict is irresolvable. The solution is to reconceive Northern Ireland as a distinctive kind of European region, with a strong identity of its own and with ties to London, Dublin and Brussels, all within the wider context of a regionalised, postnationalist Europe (eg Kearney and Wilson, 1994). The idea has had greatest appeal to those with a strong Northern Irish - as opposed to Irish, British or Ulster - identity and who are committed to a consensual politics of the middle-ground. But it has also appealed to liberal nationalists for reasons similar to those of their counterparts in Wales and Scotland. The implementation of regionalist policies would give a stronger Irish input, and would therefore advance nationalist goals, while countering any accusation of 'narrow nationalism'; at the same time it would preserve the economic and other advantages of remaining within the United Kingdom. Unionists have typically seen this version of regionalism as a cover for nationalism and have not been impressed.

At one level the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) might be taken as confirmation of the irrelevance of the regionalist approach. The GFA is conceived within the logic of the nation-state and of national sovereignty. It does not alter, at a formal level at least, the constitutional status of Northern Ireland which will remain part of the United Kingdom until a majority of the population decides otherwise. At that point it will join the rest of Ireland - there is no provision for an independent Northern Ireland, or a Northern Ireland conceived as an autonomous region within the EU. Meanwhile the major political parties see the GFA as a means of pursuing their traditional objectives: defence of the union on one side, achievement of Irish unity on the other. But at another level there is definite regionalist thrust to the institutions put in place by the GFA, with specifically Northern Irish institutions (an Assembly and executive, a Civic Forum, Commission for Equality, Commission for Human Rights), a set of North-South bodies, and a British-Irish Conference and Council. The 'regionalist turn' has, therefore, contributed something to changing the political climate in which agreement became possible and provided a set of institutional models from which negotiators could choose.

CONCLUSION

This paper has counter-posed two paradigmatic approaches to ‘regional issues’: the centre-periphery one, and the more recent regionalist one. The context is the partial displacement of the centre-periphery approach by the regionalist one. The paper has sought to show the continued relevance of the issues addressed by the centre-periphery approach, without denying the insights of the regionalist one. The structural basis of this dual relevance is the complex and uneven nature of the transition from modern/nation-state to postmodern/global condition. This paper began by drawing on Stein Rokkan’s model of European development. From a postmodernist angle of vision, Rokkan’s work might now be considered redundant (as irredeemably ‘modernist’). We see it as an invaluable starting point for analysing the contemporary transition.

For present purposes the central issue is the way in which the processes of globalisation and postmodernisation are impacting upon different kinds of regions. This in turn depends upon the stance which the states and regions are adopting to those developments, whether attempting to resist them, harness them to their purpose, or simply go with the flow. One way or another, at least as far as Britain, France and Spain are concerned, the lineaments of the old Europe are still very evident in the contemporary period. The regions which have been fully assimilated have difficulty mobilising on regional lines even in today’s more favourable institutional and ideological climate. Those where the old centre-periphery dynamic once played itself out with great conflict are still troubled today – and still troubling the states of which they are a part. The regionalist paradigm cannot resolve – or even analyse – such problems in any fundamental way, although it can provide a more favourable climate for dealing with them.

The present paper reports work in progress. More needs to be done to theorise the contradictory status of regions in the process of transition, and much more needs to be done to explore empirically how they are changing on the ground. Thus far it is clear that centre-periphery conflicts of the traditional kind are not dead, and while the new regionalism can facilitate their management, it does not offer a magic solution to them. At the same time the old conflicts coexist with new types of region-state-European interlinkages with their own complex dynamics and tensions. We need to be able to address both.

Select bibliography:

- Anderson, Benedict, 1991. *Imagined Communities*. second edition. London, Verso.
- Archibugi, Daniele, David Held and Martin Kohler, eds, 1998. *Reimagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy*. Cambridge, Polity
- Augé, Marc, 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London, Verso.
- Bassets, Lluis, 1998. 'Politique internationale et action européenne de la Catalogne autonome', *Hérodote*, 91, pp. 207-214.
- Baudrillard, Jean, 1993. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage
- Baudrillard, Jean, 1994. *The Illusion of the End*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt, 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, Polity.
- Beck, Ulrich, 2000. *What is Globalisation?* Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Castells, Manuel, 1997. *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Charlet, Fabien, 2000. 'Les régions françaises et le centre: quelles revendications pour les partis périphériques?', paper presented at seminar on region, state and nation, University of Toulouse 1.

Crozet, Yves, Dominique Bolliet, Francois Faure, Jean Fleury, 2000. *Les Grandes Questions de la Société Française: les faits, les analyses, les débats*. Paris: Nathan.

Day, Graham and Gareth Rees, 1991. *Regions, Nations and European Integration*. Cardiff, U. of Wales.

Dunleavy, Patrick, Andrew Gamble, Ian Holliday and Gillian Peele, *Developments in British Politics 6*, London, Macmillan, 2000.

Featherstone, Mike and Scott Lash, eds., 1999. *Spaces of Culture: City-Nation-World*. London, Sage

Peter Flora, ed, 1999, *State Formation, Nation-Building and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan*, Oxford University Press

Fox, E. Inman. 1999. 'Spain as Castile: Nationalism and national identity' in D. T. Gies ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 21-36.

Frazer, Elizabeth, 2000. 'Citizenship and culture', pp. 203-218 in Dunleavy et al, *Developments in British Politics*.

Genieys, William, 1997b. 'L'Espagne des autonomies: Les élites périphériques face à l'état', pp. 165-178 in Le Gales and Lequesne, *Les Paradoxes des régions en Europe*

Genieys, William and Andy Smith, 1998. 'Mobilisations politiques et modèles de leadership territorial', pp. 205-221 in Négrier and Jouve, *Que gouvernent les régions d'Europe*.

Habermas, Jurgen, 1998. *Après l'Etat-Nation*. Paris, Fayard.

Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, Jonathan Perraton, 1999, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Jameson, Fredric, 1991. *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Jordan, Barry and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas eds. 2000. *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies*. London, Arnold.

Jouve, Bernard, 1998, 'D'une mobilisation à l'autre. Dynamique de l'échange politique territorialisé en Rhone-Alpes', pp. 105-134 in Négrier and Jouve, *Que gouvernent les régions d'Europe*

Kearney, Hugh, 1989. *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kearney, Richard and Robin Wilson, 1994. 'Northern Ireland's future as a European region' *The Irish Review*, 15, pp. 51-69.

Keating, Michael, 1996. *Nations Against the State. The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland*. London: Macmillan

Kleinschmager, Richard, 1996. 'Les nouveaux rapports de l'Alsace et de l'Allemagne', *Hérodote*, 80, pp. 156-173.

Kretz, Pierre, 1994. *La Langue Perdue des Alsaciens*. Strasbourg, Saisons d'Alsace

Lafont, Robert, 1967. *La Révolution Régionaliste*. Gallimard

Lafont, Robert, 1971, *Décoloniser en France: Les Régions face à l'Europe*, Paris, Gallimard

Le Galès, Patrick et Lequesne, Christian, (dir) 1997. *Les paradoxes des régions en Europe*, Paris, La Découverte

Loyer, Barbara, 1999. 'Être indépendant ou ne pas être. Le cas basque', *Hérodote* 95, pp. 47-62.

Montès, Jérôme, 2000. 'ETA versus Etat. Transformation de l'Etat et maintien de l'ordre au Pays basque espagnol'. Paper presented at seminar on region, state and nation, University of Toulouse 1.

Morata, Francesc, 1998. 'Mobilisations différentielles dans l'Espagne des autonomies', pp. 222-246 in Négrier and Jouve, *Que gouvernent les régions d'Europe*

Nairn, Tom, 2000, *After Britain: New Labour and the return of Scotland*, London, Granta.

Négrier, Emmanuel et Bernard Jouve, (dir) 1998, *Que gouvernent les régions d'Europe: Echanges politiques et mobilisations régionales*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Pierre, Jon and Gerry Stoker, 2000. 'Towards multi-levelled governance' in Gamble et al, *Developments in British Politics*

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen, 1995. 'Globalization as hybridization', pp. 45-68 in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, eds., *Global Modernities*. London, Sage.

Silverman, Max. 1999. *Facing Postmodernity: Contemporary French thought on culture and society*. London, Routledge.

Ruane, Joseph and Jennifer Todd, 1999 eds, *After the Good Friday Agreement: Explaining Political Change in Northern Ireland*. Dublin, UCD Press.

Ruane, Joseph and Jennifer Todd, 2001, forthcoming. 'The Politics of Transition?', *Political Studies*.
Pongy, M. et Guy Saez, *Politiques Culturelles et Régions en Europe*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
Schwengler, Bernard, 1989. *Le Syndrome Alsacien*. Oberlin.
Urry, John. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the twenty-first century*. London, Routledge.
Wievorka, Michel, (dir) 1997. *Une Société Fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*. Paris: La Découverte