

Box 3.3

The Iron Curtain

The Iron Curtain was the dividing line between Soviet Communist-controlled Central and Eastern Europe and Western democratic Europe for more than four decades in the mid-twentieth century. The term was first coined by the British wartime Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, in a speech on 5 March 1946 at Fulton, Missouri in the USA. He defined the Iron Curtain as a line running from Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic. He pointed out that a host of European capital cities were now firmly within the Soviet sphere of influence: Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia. The clear implication was that Europe was severely diminished as a result. Subsequently, the definition of the Iron Curtain was modified to represent the whole

of the dividing line between the Communist and free worlds in Europe, from the Northern Cape on the Norwegian–Finnish border in the north to the Greek and Turkish frontiers with Communist-controlled Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in the south.

The Iron Curtain has been described as ‘one of the most powerful geographical barriers in continental Europe’ (Blacksell, 1981, p. 15) and it provided a most durable political dividing line until the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1989/90. Since then, the Iron Curtain has become a historical curiosity and increasingly irrelevant to the geography of Europe. All vestiges of its former significance disappeared with the expansion of the EU to include eight former Communist states in 2004.

their rights be recognised. In South America too the process has been essentially one of internal change, though often accompanied by bitter and violent political conflict, fomented by indirect superpower involvement.

The collapse of Soviet Communism and in particular its economic system in the 1980s has had a profound impact on the state system (Fukuyama, 1992). Many states were cast adrift from their traditional Soviet superpower embrace, but were not immediately absorbed by the US alternative. As a result, a far less predictable political mix has evolved, with independent nation states very much the preferred alternative, but with much more volatile and fickle political allegiances. It makes for an unstable political environment, but one where nationalist sentiments are increasingly significant. Small states, such as the group of independent states that have painfully emerged from the wreckage of the former Yugoslavia since 1990, often feel able to challenge large and

much more powerful ones directly, and frequently they use the threat of political instability and the danger of it spreading as a bargaining counter. Equally, the uncertainty and instability often encourages discontented minority populations within existing established states to press their claims for independence even more vigorously. In short, nation states look set to proliferate in the more deregulated world of the early twenty-first century.

A typology of states

In the discussion so far little attempt has been made to distinguish between states, with the implicit implication that they are more or less uniform. Obviously at one level this is patently untrue, since states vary in terms of their size, population, location, and many other physical characteristics, but it is also the case that they vary significantly in terms of internal organisation as well and that there are well-defined trends in the way states have developed over the past two hundred years.

Essentially there are three broad categories of state governance that have evolved: monarchies, colonial dependencies, and republics, each covering in detail a spectrum of different arrangements. Monarchies include kings, emperors, tsars, princes, shahs, and many more, but are all regimes where dynasties rule as of right. Colonial dependencies cover all those territories where the responsibilities of government are vested in an external power and include not only colonies, but dominions, empires, protectorates, and the like. Republics, according to Plato's ideal, are those states where the government is by the people and for the people (Rowe, 1984). Many states now style themselves as republics to give notice that they are signing up to those ideals, even though this may be far removed from the reality of their governmental systems.

Historically, the distribution of these three categories has altered dramatically, especially in the past century (Christopher, 1999). In 1900, monarchies covered virtually the whole of Europe and Asia and republics were almost entirely confined to North and South America. In Europe, France and Switzerland were the only republics, and in the whole of the rest of the world there were just two others, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal in southern Africa.

In the year 2000 the picture could not be more different. Republics cover the bulk of four of the five inhabited continents, and the greater part of

the rest comprise republics in all but name. In North America, Canada retains residual and largely token links with the UK through retaining the British monarch as head of state, as do Australia and New Zealand. For this reason, they are still technically classified as dominions. Monarchies with quite limited powers are still to be found in Europe, notably in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and the UK. The emperor is still the head of state in Japan. There are also a few dynastic monarchies in the Middle East, the most significant being Saudi Arabia, and in south-east Asia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Borneo still have monarchs in the form of a king, a prince and a sultan respectively. In Africa, the King of Morocco is the only true remaining monarch, although there are monarchs too within South Africa, in Swaziland and Lesotho.

The transformation is important for what it says about the nature of the world map. Across the globe peoples have begun to take control of their own destinies, defining their identities in terms of how they are governed. The process is far from complete and for most people participatory democracy is a very distant prospect, but the change of attitude as to what constitutes good government is fundamental: even where monarchies survive they do so only with popular approval and true colonialism still remains in just a few small and scattered territories, many of them island dependencies.

Key themes and further reading

This chapter is about states and how they evolved as a framework for government. The role of capitalism and the attendant industrialisation and urbanisation on the development of states should now be appreciated, as should the historical significance of nationalism. The impact of IT and other technologies on the power of states should be clear. Historically, the spread of the state idea across the globe is an important theme, as is the different kinds of state governance, ranging from monarchies to republics, with colonial dependencies in-between.

There is a huge literature on the nature of states and on nationalism written by political scientists. Political geography has taken a great deal from this work and it has provided a most useful background for geographical writing on the subject. R. J. Johnston (1982) in *Geography and the State* has provided a readable and concise introduction to the geography of states, but those wanting to find out how other social

scientists have approached the subject will find Ernst Gellner's (1983) *Nations and Nationalism* stimulating and challenging, particularly his discussion of nationalism. Karl Deutsch (1978) is a political scientist whose writing is readily accessible and in *The Analysis of International Relations* he provides a useful history of the spread of states since the middle of the eighteenth century. An up-to-date geographical survey of the great variety of states in the world and how they have evolved since the turn of the twentieth century is provided by A. J. Christopher (1999) in his *The Atlas of States*.

4

Making states work

The variety of local state systems

They that are discontented under *monarchy*, call it *tyranny*; and they that are displeased with *aristocracy* call it *oligarchy*: so also, they which find themselves grieved under a *democracy*, call it *anarchy*, which signifies the want of government; and yet I think no man believes, that want of government, is any new kind of government.

(Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, part ii, chapter 19)

The infrastructure of the local state

The national area of all states is politically subdivided for one reason or another, be it administrative convenience, ideological reasons associated with a desire to promote local democracy, ease of economic management, or any of a host of other reasons. Yet, whatever the logic, as Thomas Hobbes pointed out so acerbically over three centuries ago, the people who are governed always tend to feel let down by those in power who rule their lives. As a result, there is almost always an ongoing process of change, in that changing political, economic, and social circumstances demand that the infrastructure of the local state be continually updated and revised. Against this inbuilt dynamism, the constitutional terms under which the local state was initially constructed, popular attachment to existing structures, and vested political interests combine to bolster the status quo, slowing down, and even denying, the inevitable necessity to adapt (Kumar, 1988). In some countries adaptation has been almost continuous. Romania, for example, underwent a dozen different administrative reforms in the first half-century after its foundation as a modern state in 1919, reflecting the turbulent political history in the period (Helin, 1967). Elsewhere, as in the USA for example, change has been much more evolutionary, with basic federal

administrative divisions being slow to alter, except to accommodate shifts in the distribution of population and new states joining the union (Brunn, 1974).

The most stable local state systems are those formally specified in a constitution. In the US Constitution or the German *Grundgesetz* the structure of local government within the federal state is clearly defined, along with the separation of powers between the different levels of government within the federation. Foreign policy, overall economic management, and the highest courts are almost always matters for the central state, but matters such as education and the provision of many other services are usually the statutory responsibility of the lower levels of government. The central state can only intervene in these matters when a dispute arises about the competence of a particular level to act in given circumstances.

At the other end of the spectrum are unitary states, where the central government retains total control over all aspects of administration and policy. In other words, although they may be subdivided into local state systems, any powers are only delegated on sufferance by the central state and may be rescinded. Between these two extremes are many variants, with different degrees of delegation, often justified under the banner of devolution and bringing power closer to the people.

Nor is the process necessarily one way. A popular description for the recent evolution of state systems, particularly in Europe, has been the so-called 'hollowing out of the state' (Jessop, 1994). With the growing interconnectedness and globalisation of all aspects of society since the second half of the twentieth century, both public and private international institutions have become increasingly important. Political bodies such as the EU have encouraged functions previously controlled by states to be ceded to these new bodies. This in turn has led to demands for sub-national entities to be given greater autonomy and, in some instances, to bypass the national state apparatus in favour of the new supra-national bodies. A notable instance of such realignment is the regional policies of the EU. There has been considerable friction between some member states, including the UK, at the way in which the European Commission has taken the lead in deciding which sub-national regions are most deserving of assistance, with little if any reference to national governments (Keeble, 1989; European Commission, 2001).

It should also be pointed out that territorial separation of powers is only one aspect of the structure of governance. The issue of the separation of

the powers of church and state, and of the distinction between the sovereign, the government, and the judiciary are all at the heart of understanding state power. These overlapping powers frequently lead to territorial inconsistency, with reform by one area not being matched by others. For the most part these inconsistencies tend to be relatively minor, but there are instances where the judicial or religious administrative maps are markedly out of kilter with state administrative subdivisions, often reflecting a bygone age.

Napoleonic Code

One of the most ambitious and successful attempts at specifying the nature of civil society and the division of responsibilities and power within a state has been the Napoleonic Code, devised by Napoleon Bonaparte in France in the wake of the French Revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It guaranteed equal rights for all (though, significantly, women were not initially included in the so-called universal franchise and did not have a vote); it abolished privileges of birth and the widespread practice of serfdom; it separated church and state; it allowed everyone to work in the occupation of their choice; and it strengthened the status of the family, including clarifying and defining the laws of inheritance. Under separate legislation, Napoleon also completely reformed the administrative and judicial systems of France, setting up the network of *départements* that today still form the core of the local government system in France.

Nevertheless, even this thoroughgoing revision of political and social structures did not completely succeed in obliterating the pre-revolutionary map. As can be seen from Figure 4.1, the civil political map of France is substantially different from the map of judicial jurisdictions, which is still closely based on the earlier subdivisions. In some respects this is nothing more than a curiosity, but it does lead to annoying anomalies in terms of trying to coordinate legal and other administrative functions. It is, however, a striking illustration of the separation of the government and the judiciary, which was one of the key goals of the Napoleonic reforms.

The influence of the Code was enormous, reaching well beyond the boundaries of France itself. It was introduced across the whole of the Napoleonic Empire in both Europe and overseas (Figure 4.2) and its basic structure forms the core of the civil systems in thirty-one

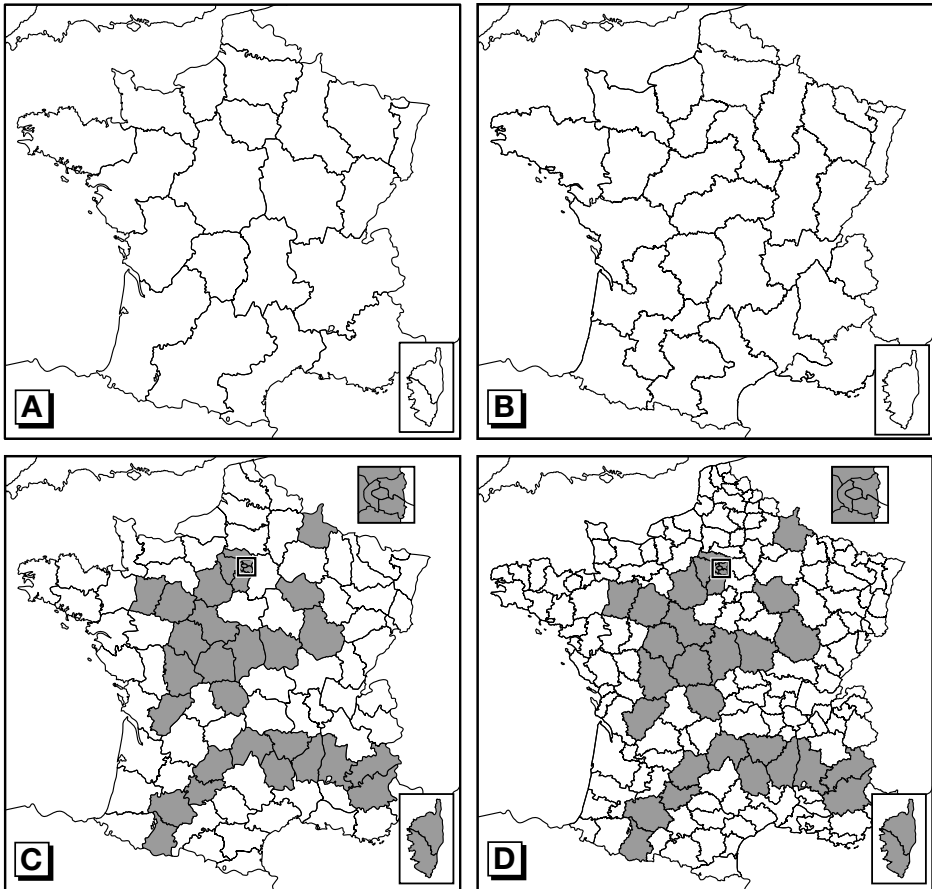


Figure 4.1 *The administrative and legal map of France: A administrative régions; B appeal courts; C administrative départements; D high courts*

present-day states in Europe and Latin America. It has been every bit as important as the US Constitution in reshaping the political map in large parts of the world.

The state apparatus

The institutions of local government, together with the mechanisms of political representation and intervention, are collectively described as ‘the state apparatus’ (Clark and Dear, 1984). As a set of structures, they cannot of themselves exercise direct power, but inevitably they are

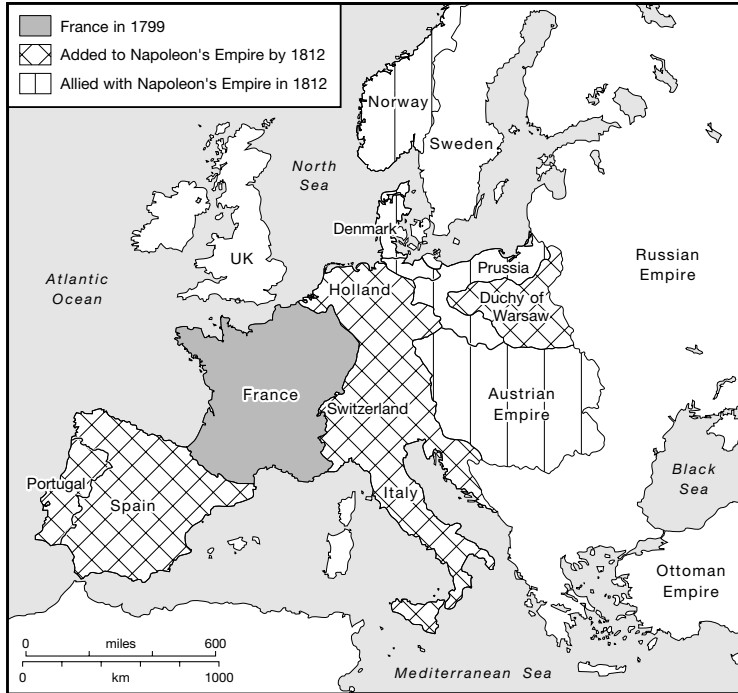


Figure 4.2 *The Napoleonic Empire in Europe*

formulated and manipulated in such a way that in their operation they reflect the balance of power in society and reinforce the prevailing political ideology. At the most obvious level, this means that those in government will always seek to fine tune the state apparatus, by repealing elements likely to work against their policies and by inserting new ones that further their aims. However, because the mechanisms of change are usually cumbersome and tend to work relatively slowly, the state apparatus is also geared in part to historical aspirations and visions of the nature of the local state.

Given the complexity of modern society and the scale of state activities, which normally cover large portions of the social security system, education, and policing, to name but a few of the areas that come within its purview, the state apparatus spans a very large number of different purposes and for this reason is difficult to summarise simply. Nevertheless, Figure 4.3 describes the main facets, dividing the functions into four broad areas of sub-apparatus under the headings, consensus, production, integration, and executive.

		Functions			
		Type I Consensus	Type II Production	Type III Integration	Type IV Executive
Sub-apparatus	political	public production	health, education and welfare	administration	
	legal	public provision	information	regulatory agencies	
	repressive	treasury	communications and media		

Figure 4.3 *The state apparatus*

Source: after G. L. Clark and M. Dear (1984) *State Apparatus*. Allen & Unwin, Boston MA.

Consensus

The consensus sub-apparatus exists to ensure that as far as possible all sections of the population are included in the social contract between the people and the state, including acceptance of the mechanisms by which the contract is enforced. It usually involves three distinct elements. The *political institutions* are devices that enable individuals to express their views formally about those who seek to govern them and include provision for elections, the right to establish political parties, and formal constitutional arrangements. The *legal institutions*, which include the formal legal statutes and the whole range of court structures, enable disputes of all kinds to be settled within an agreed framework. These disputes may be between individuals and groups and the state, between individual citizens, or in some jurisdictions between individuals and the church. The *repressive institutions* are the medium of control, such as the civilian police and the military, backed up by prison and probation services.

The balance between political, legal, and repressive institutions varies depending on the nature of the state. In democracies, the form of government favoured by international bodies such as the United Nations and firmly established in North America, most of Europe, and the Indian subcontinent, the prime purpose of the political institutions is to ensure that the government is representative of an electorate consisting of the entire adult population, with votes all counting equally and citizens allowed to cast them freely for any opinion without intimidation by the state apparatus (see Chapter 7). In practice, it is an ideal that is very hard

to achieve and sustain fully. There are always limits imposed on who can or cannot vote, even in states with so-called universal suffrage. Normally, the right to vote is restricted to 'adults', but at what age people graduate to adulthood is subject to continual downward revision, standing currently in most cases at age 18. The terms under which people qualify as citizens with the right to vote also varies between states and there are always sections of the resident population, usually recent immigrants, who do not qualify.

The legal institutions, which include the courts and judiciary, should be completely independent of the government in a democracy, so that they can operate dispassionately in disputes and prosecutions. In practice, such a complete separation is hard to sustain, even in the most advanced and well-established democracies, if only because heads of state are invariably involved in judicial appointments. Where a democratic framework is absent, or poorly embedded, as is the case in large parts of the world, there is often not even the pretence of a separation. Accusations that legal institutions were little more than the agents of government were one of the fundamental objections that democratic countries levelled against the former Communist states in the Soviet Union and Europe.

Repressive institutions are a necessary element of all societies, but the problem for states is how to ensure that bodies, like the police and the armed forces, do not abuse the considerable powers vested in them. It is in this context that the independence of the legal institutions is most severely tested and all states must be vigilant against abuses of state power. There is constant scrutiny: from the United Nations and other international bodies, from other states, and from non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty (see 'Human rights' in Chapter 12). Together they provide a powerful, though by no means totally effective, check on the misuse of state power.

Production

The production sub-apparatus exists to preserve and nurture the preconditions for capitalist economic accumulation (see 'The concept of the state' in Chapter 3). This involves seeing that structures are in place to ensure that the economic system remains in good health, though a significant part of the role is undertaken elsewhere in the form of measures aimed at ensuring the well-being of the population and the

reproduction of the labour force. *Public production* incorporates the whole range of state-produced and distributed public goods and services, such as public roads and other significant parts of the transportation system, all of which are difficult to offer entirely through private suppliers. *Public provision* refers to goods and services produced on behalf of the state through private agencies, an obvious example being the infrastructure of public buildings erected by private construction companies through state-let contracts. *Treasury controls* encompass the whole range of fiscal and monetary policies employed by the state to regulate its internal and external economic relations. For example, many states operate strict controls over the movement of national currencies beyond the borders, seeing them as a way to maintain control over their national economies. In a world where the development of capitalism and free-market economies are widely viewed as the necessary prerequisites for economic growth such restrictions are an anathema, so that a great deal of international effort has been directed towards seeing such restrictions reduced, or eliminated (see Chapters 11 and 12).

Integration

The integration sub-apparatus is designed to foster the physical and social well-being of the population. Central to this is the gamut of *health, education and welfare services*, which also incidentally help to ensure the reproduction of the labour force. In a sense, as mentioned above, this could equally well be seen as part of the production sub-apparatus, though the population probably prefers to see it presented as part of the provision for social support. *Information services* are the mechanisms employed by the state to control the flow of information about its activities. There are very considerable differences between states in the degree to which they allow access to information about their activities, with some, such as the USA, guaranteeing freedom of information by statute, while others control any release in an entirely ad hoc and whimsical fashion. *Communications and media* are the instruments for controlling the dissemination of information. Most states have taken steps to ensure that there are nationwide radio and television services and national newspapers and many have gone further by promoting regional and local equivalents as well.

Executive

The executive sub-apparatus ensures that the other elements of the state apparatus – consensus, production, and integration – operate efficiently and in such a way as to reinforce one another. There is a high likelihood that if the range of state functions is left uncoordinated they will actually work against each other and undermine, rather than support, the common purpose. For this reason, *administration* has become one of the key arms of government. This in turn has increasingly spawned *regulatory agencies* to monitor performance. At all levels audit is now a crucial function and audit offices have an extremely influential role in judging the performance of government and its agents and in insisting that it lives up to agreed standards.

Governance or government

The kind of rigid structure set out in the previous section has been subjected to growing questioning in recent years, a debate encapsulated in the meaning of the word ‘governance’ (Painter, 1995). The traditional definition defines governance simply as the act of governing, and thus as synonymous with the word ‘government’, but it is now much more usually taken to incorporate a wide range of institutions and organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, involved in the process of governing, and the relationships between them. Jessop (1997) defines governance as ‘the “self organisation” of inter-organisational relations’, while Rhodes (1997) refers to ‘self-organising inter-organisational networks’.

The crucial point is that use of the word governance recognises the complexity and fluidity of the relationships between the whole gamut of organisations involved in government and the inappropriateness of the hierarchical and highly structured view of government. Rhodes (1997), who did much to develop a general theory of governance, talks about there being a policy network and argues that this ought to be the basis for analysing governmental systems. He identifies four key features common to all such policy networks (see Figure 4.4):

- 1 interdependence between organisations
- 2 continuing interaction between network members
- 3 game-like interactions
- 4 a significant degree of autonomy from the state.

Type of network	Characteristics of network
Policy community/ territorial community	Stability, highly restricted membership, vertical interdependence, limited horizontal articulation
Professional network	Stability, highly restricted membership, vertical interdependence, limited horizontal articulation, serves interests of profession
Intergovernmental network	Limited membership, limited vertical interdependence, extensive horizontal articulation
Issue network	Unstable, large number of members, limited vertical interdependence

Figure 4.4 A typology of policy networks

Source: after R. Rhodes (1997) *Understanding Governance*. Open University Press, Buckingham, p. 38. Reproduced with permission of the Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

In other words, those organisations actively engaged in the process of government must have clearly defined and interdependent roles. The interactions between them must be ongoing and meaningful for the whole process of government. To a degree, the interactions must also be formalised, in the sense that the organisations involved must accept their own and each other's roles and operate within that set framework. Finally, they must, to a significant degree, operate on their own terms and not simply as agents of the state, acting as some omnipotent higher authority. In such a scenario, the state becomes just one element of many, albeit a very important one, in the structure of governance (Jones, 1997).

The implications of this reading of the way in which states are organised and operate internally are considerable. The loss of a fixed hierarchy with the central state government at its head means that new hierarchies can emerge through a process of negotiation or the exercise of power, thus introducing fluidity and variety in place of an established order. All kinds of groups can seek to dominate the local political process, with the ever-present danger that they may subvert the democratic process.

The rise of Militant

A potent example of the way a small and unrepresentative subgroup may succeed in dominating government and the political process is the rise of Militant in the city of Liverpool in the 1980s. The Militant Tendency, to give it its full name, was a far left, Trotskyist faction within the Labour

Party in the UK, which systematically set about infiltrating and dominating the political institutions of local government in selected towns and cities. The so-called strategy of entrism (Taaffe, 1995) was devised in the late 1950s and then over a period of 25 years was implemented with growing vigour. The hallmark of entrism is the subversion of an open and established political party or pressure group to pursue an agenda different from that officially agreed and this was at the root of the growing unease within the Labour Party at the burgeoning influence of Militant.

In governmental terms, Militant's greatest success was in the city of Liverpool. Under the leadership of Derek Hatton the faction came to dominate the city council and from this power base mounted a serious challenge to the authority of the enfeebled Labour Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Initial attempts by the national party to reassert its authority were notably unsuccessful and Militant was further emboldened by its involvement in a number of high-profile labour disputes, notably the miners' strike in 1984. In 1985, however, the Labour Party at its annual conference mounted a far stiffer challenge and Militant's policies and bid for even greater official recognition were roundly defeated and the organisation became proscribed.

Militant never recovered and its influence rapidly declined, to a point in 1994 where it was formally disbanded as a separate group. It lived on as a minor element on the socialist fringe as Militant Labour, before renaming itself in England as the Socialist Party, but it has never regained any significant political power base. In Scotland it did enjoy somewhat greater success as Scottish Militant Labour, occasionally successfully challenging the Labour Party at the ballot box, without ever posing any serious threat to its authority.

Subsidiarity, devolution, and regionalism

The concept of subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is an important principle underpinning the whole concept of the local state (Box 4.1). The idea that decisions should be taken as close as possible to those directly affected is central to democracy and, implicitly, argues strongly in favour of local control and devolved and decentralised government. It is particularly important with reference to

Box 4.1

Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity requires that decisions in the EU are always devolved to the most appropriate local level. It was first included in the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht in 1992 and applies generally to decisions taken within the EU, but with two important exceptions. First, the principle of subsidiarity is not retrospective, so that decisions taken before the treaty came into force are not affected. Second, it

does not apply to areas of decision-making where authority is specifically vested in the EU Commission, such as environmental quality standards. In practice, the principle of subsidiarity has proved difficult to operate, partly because of these exceptions, and partly because there is no clear definition of what constitutes the appropriate level to which a given decision should be devolved.

the EU and the growing number of states that are now members. The EU has always been committed in principle to subsidiarity, but since 1986 has been formally committed by treaty to achieving it. By the middle of the twenty-first century the EU will encompass a significant proportion of the world's independent states and of its total population, making its commitment to subsidiarity very significant (Inman and Rubinfeld, 1998). At the inception of what is now known as the EU in 1952, it embraced six countries with a total population of about 200 million. By 2004 this had grown to twenty-five countries with a population in excess of 450 million, with the prospect of as many as a further five countries joining in the foreseeable future. This could increase the total population of the EU to over 600 million, or roughly 10 per cent of the world population. For all these countries and the people in Europe, therefore, the commitment to the principle of subsidiarity will ensure that the local state and local decision-making are going to be increasingly important in determining how they are governed.

More generally, a commitment to subsidiarity almost inevitably has a direct effect on the nature of local government, with increased emphasis on sub-national political structures and a predisposition to see power delegated to them. In many countries, the recognition of regional identities has become a powerful political issue within the framework of the nation state, leading to insistent demands for greater political autonomy at a regional level.

In countries such as France, there is a long tradition of regionalism and the regional tier of government is well established. There are twenty-one *régions* in European mainland France (including Corsica) and they have played a significant role in promoting distinctive regional identities. In Germany, the fifteen *Länder* and Berlin are at the core of a regional structure built into the Constitution (*Grundgesetz*), recognising in a formal way the wide variety of different political traditions and histories that make up the present-day Federal Republic.

Elsewhere, the growing demands for greater regional autonomy often reverse a trend towards central state dominance in the early part of the twentieth century. This has been particularly marked in Spain since the end of the Fascist dictatorship of General Franco in 1975. Always an uneasy amalgam of different regional groupings, many of the Spanish regions have become much more assertive and aggressive in arguing for greater independence from the national government in Madrid. The Basque separatists in north-eastern Spain have been waging their campaign through unashamedly bloody terrorist policies ever since the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, but since Spain joined the EU in 1986, they have turned more, though by no means exclusively, to democratic methods in arguing their case. The Basques have undoubtedly been encouraged to review their tactics by the success of the Catalans in the north-east of the country in achieving substantial independence for Catalonia through democratic means.

Devolution and the remaking of the United Kingdom

The name of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is something of a hostage to fortune in that it does somewhat dangerously flaunt the unity of what is manifestly an amalgam of distinctive, if not disparate, regions – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (Nairn, 1981). In its present form, the UK dates from 1921, with the partition of Ireland and the creation of a semi-autonomous region in Northern Ireland, but there have been a number of significant realignments within that structure over the intervening years. In 1972 the devolved administration in Northern Ireland collapsed in the face of growing turbulence and dissatisfaction on the part of the minority Catholic population with the impenetrable political dominance of the Protestant majority. Since then there have been repeated attempts to reinstate a devolved government, notably in 1973 with the ill-fated Power-Sharing Executive, and, after a decade of painstaking negotiation,

in 1998 following the Good Friday Agreement. It was all to no avail and the devolved assembly was again suspended and direct rule from England reinstated.

Elsewhere in the UK, and very much in line with the strenuous efforts to find an acceptable form of devolved government for Northern Ireland, calls for devolution in Scotland and Wales were becoming increasingly loud. After referenda in both 'countries', in 1998 a full-scale parliament was elected in Scotland and a rather more limited assembly in Wales. In both cases one of the main arguments deployed in favour of devolution was that there were already countries in the EU, notably Luxembourg, that were full voting members with much smaller populations and economies than either Scotland or Wales. The situation was also set to become even more anomalous in the eyes of the Scots and the Welsh when the EU expanded to twenty-five members in 2004. Countries such as Malta, Latvia, and Estonia, all small independent states, were then set to become full members.

Once the principle of devolution had been ceded in Scotland and Wales, other less clearly distinct parts of the UK began to press their claims for greater independence from central government and formal recognition of their regional identities (Jones and McLeod, 2004). Regional devolution in England has been hotly debated in recent years and more and more administrative functions have been relocated to the nine newly created Regional Development Agencies. Unelected Regional Assemblies also provide for some limited discussion of future policy in the individual regions by groups of key decision-makers, a process reminiscent of the early years of the EU itself, when an appointed parliament was the only mechanism catering for an input to its deliberations, other than through the national governments of the member states (Blacksell, 1981). Whether the process will go even further and move to elected regional government is open to question. Such a change was certainly intended by the central government but, as the first referendum on whether or not to set up an elected Regional Assembly in the north-east of England decisively rejected the idea, it is unclear if it will be pursued further for the time being.

Devolution in Scotland and Wales has already significantly altered the balance of political power in the UK and, if Regional Assemblies do eventually take root in the English regions as well, then the shape of the UK within the EU will be radically changed. What is more, an enthusiasm for devolution could well spread to other large and highly

centralised states in the EU, changing the shape of their domestic governance as well.

Regionalism and economic management

Much of what passes for regionalism in the literature is more accurately described as regional economic development and the need to counteract the effects of uneven development (Massey, 1979 and 1984; Lee and Wills, 1997). There is a widespread appreciation that inordinate economic disparities within states will inevitably lead to political discontent and instability and that regional policies in some form are inevitably part of the process of government at the sub-national level (Friedmann and Alonso, 1964). Indeed, in the middle part of the twentieth century, the identification and development of economic growth poles was seen as something of a panacea for promoting orderly economic progress (Boudeville, 1966).

Regional policy can follow a variety of paths and, in practice, almost always incorporates a number of different elements. The most widely used set of instruments are those that attempt to modify market conditions in favour of a particular region. In some form or other, all governments offer inducements to potential investors, such as tax breaks, the waiving of site rents, or direct cash grants. The use of such inducements is so common amongst government at all levels that it is difficult to pick out any of particular note, but the identification by the EU of economically deprived areas across member states (the Objective 1 and Objective 2 areas) are good current examples (Figure 4.5 and Box 4.2).

Maintaining and improving the general physical infrastructure through the provision of roads, railways, and all kinds of communications facilities, as well as providing housing and a high level of environmental quality is another universally used strategy. A particularly striking example of such state investment is the huge infrastructural investment in the former East Germany by the Federal Republic after unification in 1990, conservatively estimated at over €1 trillion. A significant part of this investment has been in new and improved telecommunications and road and rail links, such as the extension of the intercity ICE express train network into the new *Länder* and the rapid expansion of the motorway system, so that the whole of the unified Germany has a more realistic chance of operating as an integrated economic area.

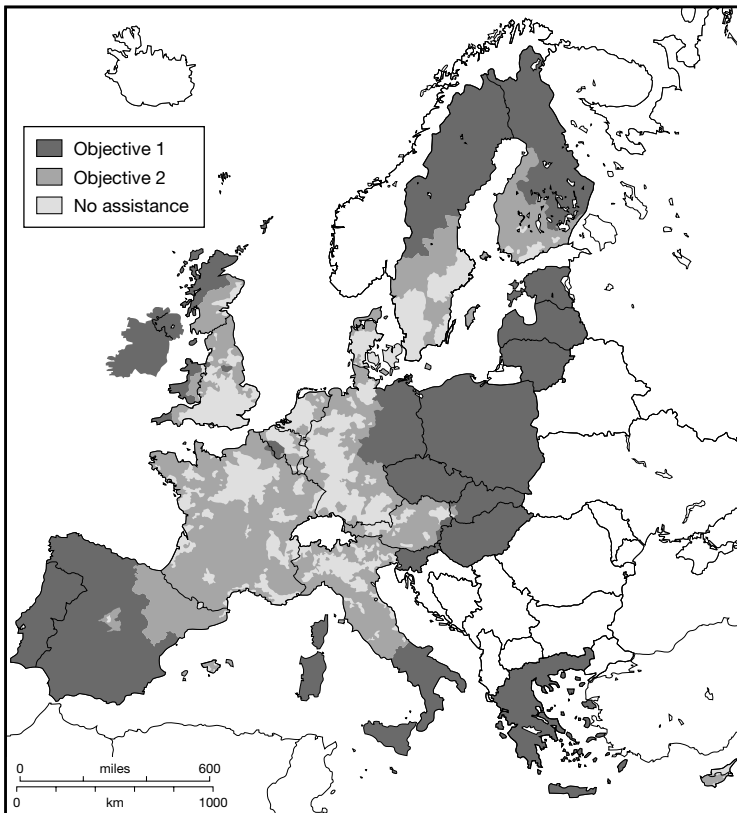


Figure 4.5 *EU Objective 1 and 2 regional assistance areas, 2004*

Governments also frequently take more direct measures to redistribute regional economic activity, by directing government offices to specific locations, or by awarding government contracts to contractors where they want to stimulate economic activity. The latter applies particularly to defence contracts and in the USA an enormous amount of political lobbying by members of the Senate and Congress is devoted to securing government investment for their own particular state. Broadly the process is self-cancelling, but there are variations from the norm and some of the smaller and poorer states, such as West Virginia, are heavily dependent on federal defence contracts.

Regional policies are rarely driven purely by economic or narrow political considerations, and social welfare almost always plays a part as well. Landscape, scientific, and heritage designations are primarily

Box 4.2

EU regional policies

The bulk of the money for regional development within the EU is allocated to the Structural Fund. In 2004 the amount available under this heading was €195 billion. The largest element of the Structural Fund is Objective 1, which supports those regions that are economically lagging behind the EU average. Objective 1 regions, which cover 22 per cent of the population of the EU, are allocated 70 per cent of the Structural Fund. Objective 2 regions, which cover 18 per cent of the population and are also lagging economically, receive 11.5 per cent of the money. In these areas it is judged that modest support for industrial restructuring is likely to improve their

relative position. Some 12.3 per cent of the money is allocated to Objective 3, the purpose of which is to stimulate new employment anywhere in the EU, except in Objective 1 regions where this goal is already covered.

The much smaller Cohesion Fund was allocated €18 billion in 2004. It comprises four programmes: Interreg III to promote transnational cooperation within the EU; Urban II to promote the development of deprived urban areas; Leader to encourage local development initiatives across whole areas; and Equal to combat all kinds of discrimination in the labour market.

categorised for their own sake, rather than in the pursuit of any direct economic enhancement. In the UK, designations such as national parks and sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) reflect a commitment on the part of government, born out of steady public pressure in the early part of the twentieth century, to implement the vision of permanent protection for key national landscapes (Sheail, 1981; MacEwan and MacEwan, 1987). The result has only had a marginal and incidental influence on the economic map of the UK, but a profound impact on public perceptions of the land and its worth.

A passing thought

Memories of historical stability in the local, sub-national political map have almost certainly always tended towards exaggeration; constant political change at all levels is a fact of life. Nevertheless, the pace of change has undoubtedly quickened and as the fluidity of governance has come to be preferred to the more rigid concept of government, the local

state has become less stable and more prone to failure. It is partly in recognition of this that the government in the UK established boundary commissions for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland in 1986 to advise it on changes to electoral boundaries. The work of the commissions will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 7, but it is relevant at this point to acknowledge their contribution to maintaining the effectiveness of the local state in the UK.

Key themes and further reading

Understanding the internal workings and organisation of states and how they function – the local state – is central to a proper understanding of the dynamics of a significant part of political geography. Four operational subsets are at the heart of the local state: the consensus apparatus, the production apparatus, the integration apparatus, and the executive apparatus. The distinctions between them should be understood. The significance of the difference between governance and government needs to be appreciated. The concept of subsidiarity and its relationship to devolution is similarly important and leads on to the whole question of regionalism and equity in economic management. Finally, it must be appreciated that calls for stability and continuity in local state relations mask a reality of constant change.

An excellent introduction to the nature of governance and the working of the local state is provided by R. Rhodes (1997) in his book *Understanding Governance*. It explains in straightforward terms how states work and how decisions are made within local government. The economic and structural issues are discussed with force and clarity by Doreen Massey in two books, *The Spatial Division of Labour* (1984) and *Space, Place and Gender* (1995); the latter includes an important discussion of gender discrimination. A most readable account of the fragility of local state systems and the way in which they are continually reforming is given in Tom Nairn's case study, *The Break-up of Britain* (1981).