

# Disintegration or Transformation: The Crisis of the State in Advanced Industrial Societies.

by Herman M. Schwartz

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This book collects eight rather discursive essays and an introduction on an inherently interesting topic; but rather like the states it discusses, it cannot decide if it will disintegrate into its component pieces or be transformed into a more coherent argument.

The editors' introduction argues that the usual suspects, including but not limited to postmodern identities, regionalism, globalization, the end of the cold war, the reemergence of mass unemployment, the obsolescence of the Keynesian welfare state, and immigration have forced states to change themselves. The editors argue that states are becoming "bargaining states," mediating international economic and political pressures on select domestic groups, and projecting the interests of those groups outward. They use Robert Putnam's two-level game metaphor to operationalize this concept, but it seems to me they are really talking about Philip Cerny's "competition state."

However, the editors themselves argue that while the states under scrutiny here all manifest some similarity in symptoms because they all carry out the same functions, their crises have unique origins and etiologies. Consequently, they eschew a concluding chapter, apparently unwilling to force these disparate crises and analyses into any common mold.

While the chapters all individually offer insights into recent politics, collectively they reflect this thematic silence. They address the central theme primarily by providing potted but eclectic histories of state formation, and then discussing how political parties have mediated rising international constraints or pressures on domestic social groups. Then they all follow their own logic, fastening onto one or more particular local problems or changes without much effort to connect to the other chapters. Thus the chapter on the United States, by David Calleo, looks at the declining ability to abuse the dollar's international position; on Japan, by Michael Green, the absence of any compelling vision for post-cold war economic and security policy; on Italy, by Sergio Fabbrini, the absence of any centripetal forces to hold the state together; on France, by Julius Friend, the emotional and social welfare costs of declining sovereignty; on Germany, by Dana Allin, the moral dilemmas of power for a state that has abused power in the past; on Canada, by Gregory Marchildon, the weakening of an already fragile central state and national identity; on Belgium, by Erik Jones, the collapse of

consociationalism and corporatism; and on Britain, by Patrick McCarthy, Margaret Thatcher's inability fundamentally to transform the British state.

The chapters focus only intermittently on the state per se, and more regularly on those who occupy (and abuse) offices within the state. The chapter on France is clearest about the state's inability to function as it has in the past and about administrative responses to increasing domestic disfunctionality, and about the costs of derogation of sovereignty to Europe. In contrast, the chapter on Britain essentially ignores Thatcher's fundamental changes to the fabric of the British state, changes made in response to the very forces the editors describe as central.

Arguably, the state today finds itself in a situation similar to other periods of extreme stress for the modern state, all of which generated new forms of legitimation, new relationships between state and citizens, new economic roles for the state, and new responses to external threats. All of these, however, also had some new institutional expression. If the chapters or a conclusion had been used to sketch out some of these emerging institutional answers to or evasions of the problems that the editors lay out in the introduction, it would be easier to answer the questions posed by the book's title.

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