

Multi-level Embedding of Liberalism in Europe

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This research note outlines a framework that I believe can clarify important limits and possibilities of managed globalization in the European Union (EU). I label this framework “multi-level embedding of liberalism,” on the premise that the concept of managed globalization overlaps that of “embedded liberalism” (Ruggie 1982), and on the premise both concepts involve different kinds and levels of governance. Two “kinds” of managed globalization are, I think, particularly important to distinguish: regulating the *level and terms of openness* to economic exchange across nations within the EU and between the EU-zone and the world; and regulating *compensation* for the risks of such openness. Further, two governance “levels” of globalization management strike me as particularly important: *supra-national* EU-level policies, regulations, and competencies; and *national-level* policies, regulations and competencies of the EU member states.

The key insight of multi-level embedding of liberalism is that the politics of such kinds and levels of managed globalization are interconnected. That is, developments in one kind or level of management affect the other, sometimes limiting and sometimes spurring one another. And understanding whether they limit or mutually reinforce, I believe, requires studying the strategies and interaction of political representatives and social actors who more or less consciously connect levels and kinds of managed globalization. In the hope of clarifying the political possibilities and pitfalls of managed globalization, then, I’ll lay out at least the rudiments of this framework as briefly as I can.

Different kinds and different levels of managed globalization. As is clear from other memos, “managed globalization” has many faces. Among the most basic of many possible distinctions, I think managed globalization in Europe should be recognized as involving two kinds and two levels of management. First, management can set the *levels and terms* of globalization, what I will call *openness*, or it can set *compensation* for the risks of globalization. The former involves regulating how much, under what conditions, and what kinds of goods, services, investment, and people flow across national borders.

Such management, or “rule of law,” can be more or less liberal by the status it gives to barriers to economic flows. Accepting or codifying “escape-clause” tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, or the development of labor and environmental linkage in such trade entail a protectionist sort of management – classic embedding of liberalism in line with Ruggie’s portrayal of the GATT in the early 1980s. On the other hand, formal rules calling for removal of such barriers, such as explicit free-trade positions or mutual recognition, constitute a more liberal kind of management. Finally, setting-up dispute-settlement procedures at any level – such as the EU-level courts or WTO-level institutions – represents a more neutral but certainly a rule-of-law managing of openness.

Management via regulating openness involves, of course, not just trade, but also financial or direct investment flows, monetary transactions, and immigration flows. And it applies to various territorial categories: within Europe, such as the development of the Single European Act and mutual recognition, or between the “old” and recent accession member states (which together are about the terms of Europeanization); and between the EU and the rest of the world (which is about the terms of globalization).

Also important to embedding liberalism or managed globalization is a second kind of management: policies, regulations and competencies that compensate for, rather than set the level and terms of, economic openness. Such management, of course, is less developed as a part of European Union competencies than that regulating openness. But plenty of such management is taking place – from provision of actual social policies (e.g. European Social Fund or the new Globalization Adjustment Fund), to harmonization of national social policies (e.g. on gender equality, workplace safety), to benchmarking and consultation (e.g. Open Method of Coordination on pension, youth, child-care and other welfare policies in the post-Lisbon era). Most of the compensation action, however, is at the national level – in the plethora of spending policies and labor-market regulations associated with the welfare state. The embedding of liberalism, in any event, involves as much such compensatory measures as it does development of openness-setting measures.

The second, even more familiar, distinction involves level of governance: between the managed globalization at the supranational, European level versus that at the national, member-state, level. Both levels are relevant to the management of the terms of and compensation for globalization/Europeanization – as enshrined in the tradition of

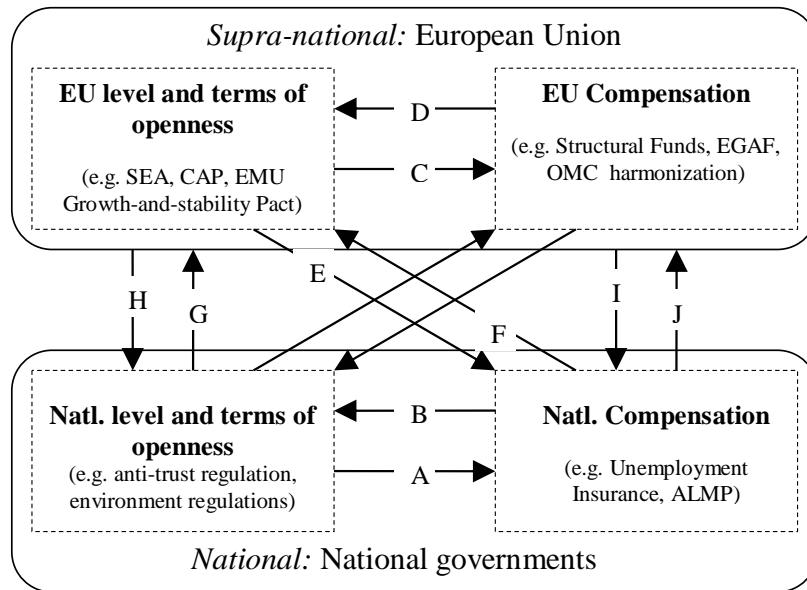
“subsidiarity” in European Union competencies. Such subsidiarity, of course, varies across kinds of management. Management of the level and terms of openness represents the most developed policy realm of the European project, manifested in high levels of EU competencies on issues of commercial and monetary policy (e.g. Meunier 2005; McNamara 1998). But even here, there is plenty of policy and regulatory action at the level of member states, given the many regulatory practices that still operate as residual non-tariff barriers or investment impediments to intra- and extra-EU exchange.

The balance across levels with respect to compensatory management is, of course, the converse: supra-national policies and competencies remain very modest compared to the national level. It’s easy and not wrong to claim (for many, lament) that development of “Social Europe” has long been eclipsed by “negative” integration focused on market liberalization (e.g. Streeck 1995; Scharpf 2000), and there’s at least a grain of truth to Abram de Swaan’s statement that “welfare states *are* national states” (de Swaan 1990). But any description of compensatory managed globalization must take the European-level developments seriously. Three of the four Objectives of the Structural Funds directly serve compensatory goals – most obviously the European Social Fund (ESF), but also the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) – together constituting more than 30 percent of the EU budget in 2006 and totaling nearly 30 billion Euros (EC 2007a). Add to this those budget lines with less direct compensatory functions (e.g. the Cohesion Funds) or with a more *ad hoc* basis (e.g. the modest new Globalization Adjustment Fund (EGAF)), and explicit supranational compensation is nothing to sneeze at. Furthermore, supranational compensatory functions include harmonization via hard law in a few areas (e.g. gender equality) and soft law in many others, such as OMC-benchmarking in pensions, employment, and family policies. All told, then, compensatory management of globalization is also meaningfully multi-level in policies, regulations and competencies.

Mutual influence across kinds and levels of management. So far, I’m trafficking very familiar, easy-to-navigate terrain. A bit less familiar and certainly more complicated is that multi-level embedding of liberalism involves mutual influence between the above kinds and levels of management of globalization. That is, the level and form of management of openness is likely to influence and be influenced by the level and form of

management of compensation for risks of openness; and either of these kinds of management at the national level is likely to influence and be influenced by management at the supranational level. Such claims are obviously complicated inferential matters and involve many more relationships than this memo can articulate. Figure One, however, summarizes graphically the categories of relationships, which I'll flesh out with some examples drawn from studies of globalization and EU politics.

*Figure One:
EU and national managed globalization by regulating openness and compensation*



Managing openness affects and is affected by compensation for risks of openness in a number of ways. The most familiar is the interaction captured by arrows **A** and **B** in Figure One: between a nation's exposure to globalization – often measured as actual flows at the national level but sometimes as a nation's trade or capital openness to such flows – and provision of national social policy. Much-studied by both comparativists and IR scholars involves arrow **A**: whether and under what conditions nationally-determined openness to capital or trade spurs, constrains or has nothing to do with the welfare state (Katzenstein 1985; Rodrik 1997; Garrett 1998; Adsera and Boix 2002; Burgoon 2001; Iversen and Cusack 2001; Swank 2004). A corollary to such study, though less researched or debated, is arrow **B**: for instance, whether and under what conditions *ex ante* development of national social policies foster national openness (Hays et.al. 2005).

In studies of European integration, further, there is plenty to suggest strong interconnection between EU-level management of the terms of and compensation for openness (arrows **C** and **D** in Figure One). For example, scholars have analyzed how key moments in integration involving the terms of openness (e.g. EEC in 1957, the various enlargements, the SEA in 1985, the Maastricht Accord in 1992) unleashed pressures for compensatory EU-provisions such as the European Social Fund and Cohesion Funds as “side payments” to the potential losers of such management-deepening (c.f. Lange 1993; Thielman 2005). Establishing the Globalization Adjustment Fund (EGAF) on the heels the bruising French and Dutch “no” votes on the EU Constitution is arguably the latest example of such politics (arrow **C**). Whatever their origins (side-payments or something else), one can hypothesize and there has been some debate over the causal arrow running in the other direction (arrow **D**): for instance, whether provision of such supra-national compensation actually solidifies support for the EU in general and for EU economic integration in particular (c.f. Bachtler and Taylor 2003; Eriksson and Eriksson 2005).

Regulating levels and terms of openness can also affect and be affected by compensation across levels of governance. Indeed, the literature on globalization and nation states, where EU member states enter the sample of analysis, assume as much: actual flows of and openness to trade, capital and immigration are all functions of EU integration setting terms of openness *vis a vis* other European countries and the world. And in literature more explicitly focused on the EU, debate has long raged over whether the commercial, financial and monetary aspects of the integration project unleash social dumping, upward or downward convergence, or leave unscathed national sovereignty and autonomy in social policy compensation (c.f. Streeck 1995; Scharpf 2002; Gitterman 2003). Both debates entail investigating arrow **E** in Figure One. As with the intra-level connections, further, there are plenty of reasons to intuit, though less literature on, how national compensation measures affect support for and development of EU-level regulations of terms of openness – as in tales of social policy reform preparing a polity for embrace of the EMU or Single European Act (SEA) (arrow **F**).

Within a given kind of managed globalization, further, management at the national level affects and is affected by management at the EU-level. Most obvious in this category are ways in which EU decisions shape and constrain national policies

(arrow *H*) – the most visible story of the European Court, such as how the *Cassis de Dijon* decision and subsequent SEA’s “mutual recognition” constrained national non-tariff barriers to intra-European trade (Alter and Meunier 1994). The opposite arrow *G* captures a pattern that is also common but complicated. For instance, Common Trade policy, ostensibly set on a technocratic basis at the EC-level and/or subject to EU-level QMV, is routinely an artifact of intense bargaining among national social actors and their representatives that eventually percolate into EC preferences for the patchwork of EC-wide liberalization or protection across sectors (Ehrlich 2005; Moravcsik 1997).

Finally, management via compensation at the EU and national levels likely affect one another (arrows *I* and *J*). EU-level compensation-related policies and competencies influence national social policy reforms in many ways (arrow *I*) – supporting the now well-established insight that supranational management priorities yield “semi-sovereign” national welfare states (Leibfried and Pierson 1995; Leibfried 2000). For instance, since the ECSC and EEC, harmonization on narrow but important matters of social policy (e.g. equal treatment, occupational safety) have led to meaningful changes in member welfare states (Montanari 1995; Threlfal 2003). And among the liveliest debates on European welfare states involves judging how and under what conditions the post-Lisbon Open Method of Coordination (OMC) unleashes genuine learning and welfare reform among member states (c.f. Trubek and Mosher 2002; Hemerijck 2005; Zeitlin 2005).

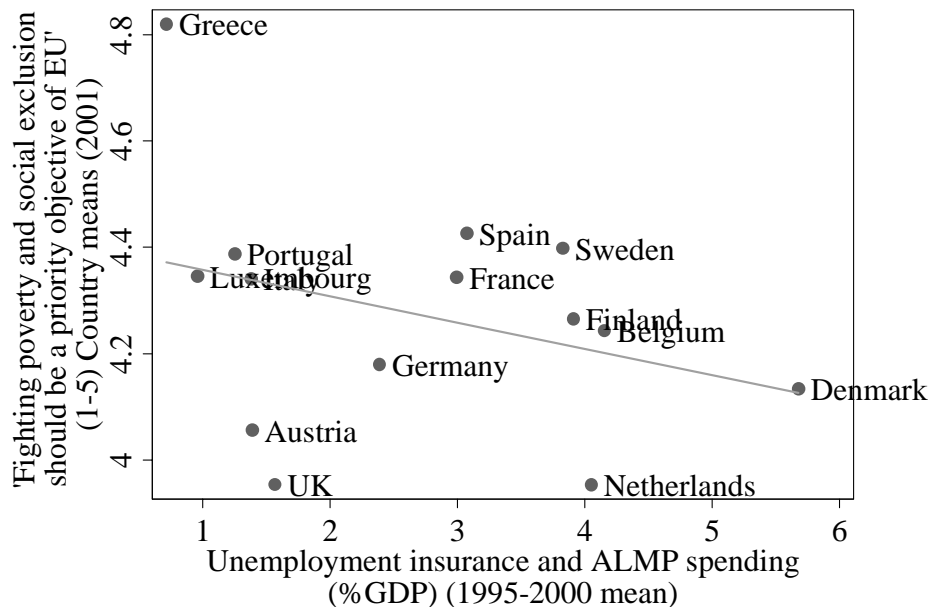
Last but not least, national compensation can be expected to significantly influence the development or lack of EU-level social policies. Those lamenting the meager gains in the development of European social policy have commonly interpreted this to reflect not only political maneuvering of social actors at the European level (e.g. opposition from employers), but also how national social policy remains a most cherished feature of national sovereignty – “semi” or otherwise – something neither social actors (particularly labor unions) nor national politicians want to abdicate.

Evidence of this comes in many forms. Significant proportions of voters in the 1992 Danish referendum over Maastricht and the 2004 French referendum over the EU Constitution tied their “no” votes to concerns about national welfare and pessimism over Social Europe. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) found survey evidence that citizens were, all other things equal, more likely to support deepening and speeding-up EU integration to

the extent that they distrusted or were dissatisfied with capacities of their national governments (c.f. Anderson 1998). Such dynamics also emerges in industrial relations and employment policies underlying national versus supra-national compensation (Burgoon and Jacoby 2004). Also relevant is that polities with more generous welfare states tend to be more skeptical about European-level integration (Sanchez-Cuenca 2000), though this relationship is sensitive to measures of welfare and of EU support.

Figure Two is a snapshot focused on support for supra-national compensation (rather than EU integration generally), revealing a weakly negative relationship between national social expenditures (mean 1995-2000) and mean support for the view that the “European Union should do more to fight poverty and social exclusion” in 2001 (own calculations, data from OECD 2005 and Eurobarometer 2002). Negative relationships between welfare and support for a more social-oriented EU may reflect how political opinions developing amidst generous national welfare and “undeveloped” European institutions can yield “joint decision traps” at the EU level, condemning that level to stay undeveloped despite member-polity support for a more social EU project (Scharpf 1988).

*Figure Two:
Support for more social EU, and existing unemployment policies*



But how national compensation policies affect EU-level compensation is, of course, much more complicated than such correlations can reveal. Possible tensions

between national and supranational compensation might be overwhelmed by situations where more generous welfare settings create broad expectations and institutional footholds to develop more at the European level. Furthermore, there are good reasons to suspect that compensatory features of welfare states matter for support for EU integration (including management via compensation) in ways that are sensitive to structures as opposed to generosity of welfare states and that are mediated by individual and national socioeconomic conditions (Brinager and Jolly 2005). There is, in other words, a lot going on here that any study of managed globalization needs to untangle.

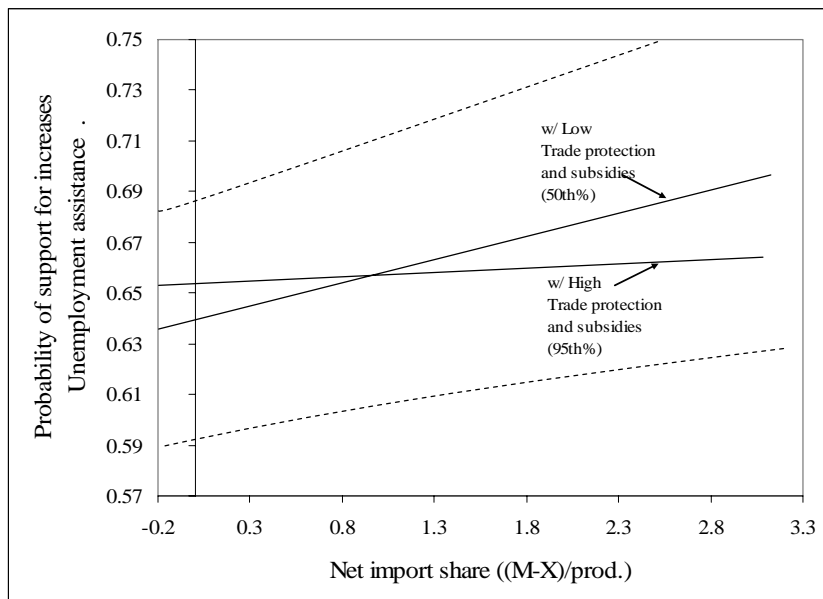
The micro-politics of multi-level embedding of liberalism in Europe. This brings me to what I think is central to doing that untangling: focusing directly on the strategies and interaction of various social and political actors in this multi-level embedding of liberalism. The down-stream results in terms of how national and supranational compensation and terms-of-openness policies evolve remains the prize. But looking directly at how citizens, labor and employer organizations, government officials and others take positions across kinds and levels of management of globalization just outlined will provide leverage to understand the possibilities and perils of managed globalization – particularly if one sees such managed globalization as a project as well as object of study.

Doing so involves a deepening of studies of issue-linkage and two-level games in European politics, where the strategies of actors are central to the theorizing and empirics (e.g. Haas 1980; Putnam 1988; Milner 1997; Davis, 2004; Carruba 1997). In particular, we need to understand whether, when and to what effect the positions that actors take on one *kind* of management (*compensation versus terms-of-openness*) are influenced by the positions they take on another, and on one *level* of management are influenced by the positions they take on the other. Perhaps more interesting, we need to understand whether, when and to what effect political actors take positions on one kind of management *in order to influence* another, and on one level of management *in order to influence* the other. Doing so will reveal ways in which such cross-issue and cross-level strategizing serve to foster or undermine the overall level of EU managed globalization.

A few concrete examples should suggest why. With respect to strategic action across *kinds* of embedding of liberalism, I have found some evidence that individual Europeans, European political parties (particularly left parties), and national-European

labor unions tend to respond to trade openness and net import shares by supporting more unemployment assistance, but in ways that are mediated by access to and provision of trade protectionism. In particular, *ex ante* protectionism and measures of sector-specific access to such protectionism (e.g. partial erosion of trade policy autonomy at the national level in Europe) tend to negatively influence how much exposure to globalization spurs support for national welfare compensation. My interpretation of this pattern is that individuals and groups tend to treat protectionist regulation and compensatory regulation as imperfect substitutes, tending to specialize based on their scarce political capital and expectations (Burgoon 2007). Figure Three gives a snapshot of this dynamic, drawn from an estimation of individual support for national unemployment assistance, as a function of an individual's sector-defined net import shares (i.e. comparative disadvantage) interacting with existing trade protection and industrial subsidies (plus demographic and country-specific controls). The result is substantively very modest but clearly in line with the idea that individuals rely less on compensation to deal with globalization risks to the extent that more substantial protectionist tools are in place (analysis of party platforms in Europe yields stronger results).

Figure Three:
 Net import shares and support for unemployment assistance under varying industry subsidies and trade protectionism (Eurobarometer 2002)



Source: Predicted values based on estimates of support for unemployment assistance in EU 15 (Burgoon 2007)

Following the same logic, existing compensation may diminish the extent to which individuals, social actors and parties respond to openness with explicit embedding via setting levels and terms of openness. This can again be found in surveys and quantitative analysis of individual and party positions, in this case on trade protection. But it's also visible in how European national unions and the ETUC were slower and less enthusiastic than their US counterparts (or the US-dominated International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)) to support trade policy linkage to protection of labor standards in WTO negotiations in the 1990s. In interviews, representatives of such unions explicitly explain their reticence as colored by their focus on and sense of hope for social welfare provisions to cushion dislocation and ease adjustment (Burgoon 2004).

The implication of such patterns for managed globalization is clear: strategies of political actors in managing globalization via compensation may tend to come at the expense of managing via setting the terms of openness, and vice versa. Further research into the demands and interaction of various social and government actors, of course, might suggest many departures from such a dynamic. It could well be, for instance, that compensation management and openness management will be imperfect *complements* than substitutes if one looks at different measures of either kind of management or at the supra-national level of politics. The point is that such research will clarify possible political limits as well as possibilities to managed globalization of one or the other hue.

A second set of examples involve strategic action across *levels* of managed globalization. Following the logic of the example above, one might hypothesize that individuals, unions and employers, and government officials try to manage globalization through national welfare compensation, but be less inclined to do so to the extent that they benefit from existing and hope for future European-level compensation. And it is possible that political actors might respond to globalization's risks with support for development of *European-level* welfare compensation, but less so to the extent that they already receive or have strong hopes for future national-level welfare compensation. These expectations are consistent with the negative unmediated relationships some find between social spending and support for EU competencies. But here the hypotheses

focus more explicitly on the possible trading-off of a given kind of managing globalization at different levels of governance.

Preliminary research into party manifestos and public opinion provides some qualified support for these expectations. For example, the 2001 Eurobarometer survey of individual attitudes on EU-level compensation-based management discussed above suggests that individuals facing higher subjective job insecurity tend to support more EU-level compensation – in particular, agree that “the EU ought to do more to combat poverty and social exclusion” – when existing social expenditures and welfare generosity are modest *but not* when such measures of national compensation are high. Given that this and other measures of job insecurity correlate highly positively with measures of trade and capital openness and flows (e.g. Scheve and Slaughter 2004), the results suggest that supporting *supranational* globalization-management may be undermined by reliance on the *national*. In the same data, individual exposure to globalization and subjective job security tends to increase support for national unemployment assistance, but significantly *less so* to the extent that individuals support the EU doing more to fight poverty and social exclusion. Here, then, support for doing more supranational management of globalization may diminish how much individuals respond to globalization by supporting national compensation.

I hasten to add that these effects are not significant across all measures of globalization and compensation management.¹ But such patterns also show up in the platforms of political parties on issues of European integration and on social welfare policies in light of exposure to various measures of globalization – e.g. with globalization spurring party support for European integration, though less so as support for or actual welfare provision rises. And all such patterns suggest, again, a potential pitfall to managed globalization emerging from its multi-level nature: that individuals may treat levels, not just kinds, of managed globalization as imperfect substitutes.

Finally, whether political actors treat different kinds and levels of globalization management (or embedding of liberalism) as imperfect substitutes or complements (or

¹ For instance, how subjective job insecurity affects individual support of the EU doing more to fight poverty and social exclusion is not significantly mediated by subjective support for national welfare. And how trade and capital flows affect such individual support is not significantly mediated by either actual or preferred welfare compensation.

separately), these examples say nothing of how actors might have wants or take action at one kind or level of management *in order to influence* another. Yet, such strategic manipulation is the bread-and-butter of work on two-level games: for instance, in “tying-oneself to the mast” of international agreements to achieve a domestic goal; or in signaling or institutionalizing “hand-tying” domestically to influence an international bargain (Putnam 1988). In managed globalization we should expect and can sometimes find the same, though evidence of such political cunning is often hidden, denied and hence hard to come by. Still, many scholars of the European Union have claimed to find traces of such activity, as in illustrative cases of employers and some policymakers using the EMS or other EU-level “negative integration” as an “end-around” to force policy changes at the domestic level (entailing liberalization of various kinds of managed globalization, such as welfare provisions) that the actors saw to be politically impossible otherwise (e.g. Notermans 1992; Holman 2004). Plenty of other examples suggest how actors might deliberately manipulate EU-level compensation provisions, OMC discussions or changes in European Works Council regulations, to force liberalization or upward-ratcheting of domestic social policy.

How such strategic manipulation or contingent action plays out across kinds and levels of embedding of liberalism (and of managed globalization more generally) is obviously unclear. Do actors take positions across or even strategically manipulate across different kinds and levels of management (i.e. openness versus compensation, and national versus EU-supranational, respectively)? If so, do they do so in ways that treat different kinds and levels as imperfect substitutes or as complements? How do such connections vary across particular features of compensation and/or features of setting openness, or across different political actors? Answering these questions, I submit, will reveal the agency constituting political limits and possibilities for embedding liberalism, hence for an important part of managing globalization, in Europe and the world.

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