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When a fusing Europe and a globalizing world meet?

Lee Miles

Introduction

Warleigh-Lack (see, for example, Warleigh 2004; Warleigh-Lack 2006a, 2006b and Chapter 1 of this volume) highlights the potential synergies between studies of European integration and, more specifically, the European Union (EU), and those focusing on understanding globalization and global governance. Of course, there will be those that regard this endeavour as a kind of academic heresy. Yet, there is the potential for greater understanding of contemporary regional and global governance, if the largely state-based approaches applied by European integration scholars can further accommodate the theoretical and empirical observations made by scholars of global governance and vice-versa. If this is to be done, an emphasis has to be placed on identifying any conceptual commonalities. In simple terms, ‘what unites’.

If this is the case, then it is equally essential that, as Warleigh (2004) argues, scholars of European integration do not perceive the evolution of the EU as operating in some kind of vacuum. Rather it represents a somewhat distinctive exercise in region-building within a wider system of global governance. Provided there are enough aforementioned commonalities, then the synergies among approaches to European integration in the region called ‘Europe’, and appreciations of global governance dynamics, should be worthy of further exploration.

This chapter evaluates three aspects. First, it examines the common conceptual departures shared by scholars of European integration and global governance, and places these in the context of particularly fusion approaches to European integration (Wessels 1997, 1998; Miles 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009). Second, it outlines areas—particularly in relation to spatial and temporal dimensions of international interdependence—where there are differences, and there may be potential points for conceptual accommodation. Third, it briefly makes a plea to scholars to consider further conceptual investigations around these points, with a specific emphasis on the relationship between spatial and temporal dimensions of interdependence and fusion approaches to European integration.

Several caveats need to be expressed at this point. First, although it is wise to examine interdisciplinary connections between the literature on global governance and ‘EU studies’ more broadly (Warleigh-Lack 2006b), this chapter addresses this challenge through the prism of a narrower application to the relationship between European integration theory and studies of
global governance. In this author’s view, there are, albeit limited, common departures relating not just to the character of their respective governance systems (be it EU or global), but also as insights into the future shape and trajectory of the respective systems.

The next caveat shaping later evaluations concerns what is inferred by ‘European integration’. For our purposes, European integration theories represent attempts to theoretically contribute to explaining the character, development and trajectory of the evolving EU, and thus the link to the conceptualization of the EU is at the centre of this chapter’s discussion of European integration theories. In order to make this manageable, the chapter confines itself to reflecting upon existing theories, and especially fusion approaches. To some extent, the definition of European integration theories applied here is confined to what already exists. Yet, this should not imply that existing European integration theories are deemed perfectly sufficient or even successful in explaining all aspects of the EU. Far from it, since as Chryssochoou (2001: 14) comments, the EU is often called complex precisely ‘because it defies any easy notions of how it is organized or functions in relation to other systems of domestic or international governance’. There is simply no time or space to attempt anything else and so this chapter represents the start rather than the end of a reflective journey.

The chapter, therefore, has at its core a systemic focus that primarily discusses the specific context of European integration theories and concepts, and thus has a narrower focus than discussions of the broad church of EU studies. In particular, this is rationalized since—if any conceptual progress is to be made—then the role of integration theory as a ‘theoretical wing of the EU studies movement’ (Rosamond 2000: 1) needs to be recognized. Second, this chapter is largely interested in examining the relationship between European integration theories and notions of ‘global governance’, rather than globalization per se. Of course, the pressures of globalization are inherent in any contemporary discussions of European integration and global governance. However, the approach here is to examine where studies of European integration and global governance assume common conceptual departures, such as assumptions of ever growing interdependence, in handling the new international dynamics that have been identified as part of the globalization process. It represents a targeted discussion of the specific relationship where European integration concepts (identified elsewhere as a fusing Europe—see Miles 2008, 2009) ‘meet’ those of global governance (a globalizing world), rather than a general discussion of where EU studies meets globalization.

**European integration and global governance: Common departures?**

**Conceptual departures: Managing challenges of interdependence**

According to Baylis and Smith (2005: 25), ‘global governance’ can be understood as ‘the evolving system of formal and informal political co-ordination across multiple levels from the local to the global—amongst public authorities (states and intergovernmental organization) and private agencies (NGOs and corporate actors) seeking to realize collective problems through making and implementing of global or transnational norms, rule, programmes and policies’. Put another way, global governance seeks to develop a governance system that accommodates the pressures of globalization that have, as Scholte (2005) argues, accelerated a movement from ‘statism’ to multi-sited and networked ‘polycentrism’ and ‘supra-territoriality’. In simple terms, global governance seeks to understand the pressures of global interdependence.

Similar acknowledgements of the importance of interdependence notions as a theoretical departure can be found within European integration theories since most recognize that the EU ‘is clearly far more than a conventional international organisation’ (McCormick 2008: 21). On
one level this is not surprising since, as Rosamond (2000: 1) nicely puts it, European integration theorists ‘traded in the vocabulary of the discipline of International Relations (IR)’. Most, and particularly, ‘grand’ theories, such as neo-functionalism and, more recently, fusion and even, to some extent, ‘liberal intergovernmentalism’ (if it can be called a grand theory), assume that national political and economic groups are interested in European integration precisely because they seek new international governance structures that can enable them to manage growing interdependencies between them (Moravcsik 1998). In other words, European integration theories assume that political and economic elites in Europe are also seeking to understand and accommodate the pressures of global interdependence, if at a more localized, and by this we mean regional, level.

A role for the nation-state

Turning back to discussions of global governance, these scholars, such as Scholte (2005: 188) argue that ‘statism’ has become obsolete because of changes in certain dynamics that have made it increasingly difficult for nation-states to monitor, control and manipulate current affairs using state instruments. Yet this should not imply that global governance scholars have dismissed completely the continuing existence of the nation-state, nor that it is not an integral part of any global governance system. As Brown (1995) asserts, it is not the end of the ‘national project’.

Among others, Scholte (2005: 192) highlights that globalization pressures have prompted the emergence of a ‘reconstructed state’; one that represents perhaps yet another cycle in the evolution of the nation-state that is constantly ‘in motion’ (Jarvis and Paolini 1995: 5–6). For the most part, global governance often assumes the continuing evolution of the nation-state, suffice to say with an emphasis on the latter’s continual transition and transformation.

Similar conceptual starting points can be observed with the majority of the European integration literature. Many scholars—from Milward (1992), Moravcsik (1993), Wessels (1997) to Bartolini (2005)—have highlighted that the nation-state has been, and is being, transformed by the pressures of global interdependence, resulting in changes in national assessments of the effectiveness of purely national means and instruments to deliver the welfare needs of citizens. For Milward (1992), European integration and the development of supranational structures represented an opportunity to ‘rescue the nation state’; for Bartolini (2005: 176), European integration was argued to be the sixth stage in the ongoing evolution of the nation-state leading to new forms of ‘centre-formation’ promoting ‘cooperation towards shared goals, but also on institutional competition and mutual controls that take the form of persistent fused powers’. Wessels (1997, 1998), however, suggests that European integration is both a by-product and accelerator of the transformation of the European state system, thus making European integration part of the evolution of western European statehood itself and stressing that European integration is assumed to be related to the nation-state being ‘alive, but not well’ (Wessels 1998: 217).

Nearly all, and fusion (Wessels 1997, 1998; Miles 2008, 2009) in particular, assume that, in essence, political and economic groups participate in European integration and construct new forms of supranational European governance precisely because they have come to recognize that it is essential to develop policy instruments and deliver solutions that can no longer be achieved through national means and instruments alone. Although in the European integration literature the focus is on movements towards greater supranationality, this is not actually too far removed from concepts of ‘supra-territoriality’ of the global governance literature. For the most part, both European integration and global governance theorists share at least one commonality—namely that the nation-state has a high level of robustness.
Furthermore, common approaches can also be detected when it comes to rationalizing why such notions of interdependence should come about. Returning to global governance scholars, they often contend that the nation-state is increasingly being ‘reconstructed’ to take account of a number of global and/or globalization pressures. Using Scholte (2005: 193–223) as a guide, these conceptual assumptions can be rather nicely categorized in several ways.

**Refashioning of the nation-state meets transformation of the nation-state**

Generally, a common assumption made by global governance scholars relates to the refashioning of nation-states and a reconstruction of their roles. First, it is alleged that the reconstructed state has re-orientated to serve global as well as national constituencies so that, in essence, the nation-state and its political and economic elites have increasingly recognized the importance of—and, to some extent, look towards international and global dynamics, arenas and institutions as viable sources of—collaboration and problem-solving. Contemporary state policies, then, as well as the attention of national elites, are extended, for example, in order to pay attention to the interests of global capital and markets, global production chains and trade patterns, international financial markets and supraterritorial mass media and telecommunications operations (Scholte 2005: 193). The old divisions—if they still exist at all—between ‘domestic’ or ‘national’ and ‘international’ or ‘global’ are increasingly complex and blurred.

Similar assumptions can be found within with European integration literature (for example, Bartolini 2005; Wessels 1997, 1998) even if this is at a level of analysis with a more localized—i.e. European—focus. Many European integration theories—and fusion in particular—highlight that national political and economic elites are increasingly aware of international independence, and its implications, for instance in terms of changing international environmental conditions. The theories often suggest that political elites view European integration as a means of finding solutions and problem-solving that can no longer be done effectively at the national level. Fusion approaches, for example, highlight that the EU trajectory is pushed principally because of political elites seeking to transform nation-state apparatus through ‘grand bargains’ that aim to find solutions to these international challenges that will, in turn, accelerate further transformation (Wessels 1997: 274). At face value the ‘transformation’ of the nation-state according to fusion seems compatible with what global governance identify as the ‘refashioning’ or ‘reconstitution’ of the nation-state.

Next, global governance theorists (Teeple 1995; Mishra 1999) contend that globalization brings, and has brought, adjustments to state provisions of social welfare, reflecting changing international and global pressures on the form, type and size of state welfare or, more accurately, national welfare states. According to this line of thinking, state policy has increasingly recognized that the onset of globalization somewhat complicated the ability of nation-states and their governing elites to provide effective public sector guarantees of nutrition, housing, education, minimum income and other human welfare needs. In many ways these theories expect an acknowledgement by national governing political and economic elites that the nation-state cannot be, and will not be, the exclusive provider and/or guarantor of the welfare needs of citizens, or that exclusively domestic instruments can be effective in meeting those needs (Swank 2002). According to Scholte (2005: 196), the welfare policies of the reconstructed state have reflected, in most cases, a shift in the provision of education, health care, housing and pensions ‘horizontally’ from state actors to non-state actors provided by the nation-state to its citizens.

It is not difficult to locate similar contentions within European integration theories. Again, fusion concepts are worthy of especially closer inspection. According to Wessels (1997: 273),
Miles (2007, 2008, 2009) and Lindh et al. (2009), national and sub-national involvement in European integration arise primarily because respective political and economic elites are unconvinced that domestic instruments can meet the redistributive welfare needs and expectations of citizens in post-Second World War European welfare states. At the heart of the fusion thesis, for example, lies a strong conceptual assumption linking the expectation and/or ability of European integration to deliver welfare outcomes that meet the welfare needs of citizens in European societies. Indeed, Miles (2005, 2007, 2008, 2009) argues that national political and economic elites participate, if albeit conditionally, in European integration precisely because they have developed a fusion-compatible ‘value-set’—a fusion perspective (Miles 2005)—that influences how they see the benefits/costs of participating in European integration. In particular, he argues (Miles 2005: 28–51) that national and sub-national political elites see European integration through three ‘fusion perspectives’—performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion.

**Diffusion of regulation meets blurring of competencies**

Returning to global governance scholars, then many further recognize that such re-fashioning of the state also reflects globalization pressures that encourage increased trans-state connections by national political and economic elites, especially as regards regulatory processes (Scholte 2005: 199). In other words, national elites become increasingly aware that unilateral state control of territorial jurisdictions is now impossible in many important policy fields, and that greater emphasis on joint efforts is, in many respects, the best way of having considerable influence and developing international regulations. As a consequence, according to global governance scholars, transnational networks have expanded to include a greater variety of governmental and non-governmental actors, leading to broader and deeper ‘trans-state governance’ (Scholte 2005: 200) that disaggregates and fragments the state.

One outcome—according to global governance scholars—is that globalization leads to ‘multi-scalar governance’ (Scholte 2005: 202) with power diffused ‘above’ and ‘below’ the country government. The rapid contemporary growth of global and ‘supra-territorial’ relations makes country-based state regulation impractical, enabling local and regional (sub-national), as well as macro-regional and trans-world (supranational) institutions and actors move in to fill the resultant gaps in effective governance. Consequently, there is a growth in transborder sub-state governance among municipalities and regional actors, including developing their own foreign relations with international institutions (what some call ‘transborder sub-state governance’). In addition, there is ‘macro-regionalization’ (see Fawcett and Hurrell 1995) among states creating ‘a multilateralism of regions alongside the old multilateralism of states’ (Scholte 2005: 207). This represents not just a substantial increase in super-state law and institutions and direct multilateral relations among them, such as between the EU and the Council of Europe, thereby creating ‘a new multilateralism of regions alongside the old multilateralism of states’ (Scholte 2005: 207), but also a growth in ‘transworld governance’ with global agreements covering, for example, climate change and global economic management.

Many of these concepts are shared by European integration scholars of multi-level governance (MLG). MLG (see Hooghe and Marks 2001) likewise contends that European integration accelerates changes in governance structures with power moving ‘upwards’ to the supranational (EU) level and ‘downwards’ to the sub-national level of regions and municipalities. Similarly, fusion approaches encompass pre-dispositions towards power being distributed more broadly and diversely (see Lindh et al. 2009) since, as Wessels (2001: 199) argues, fusion explains the process of European integration ‘by which national and community actors increasingly merge
resources in joint institutions and complex procedures’. Fusion approaches predict that European integration results in competencies being blurred across the supranational, national and sub-national levels of governances so that accountability is increasingly hard to trace (Wessels 1997; Miles 2008, 2009). According to fusion approaches, competencies are blurred with the demarcation of distinct levels being increasingly problematic and, certainly, European governance encompasses a scaling of competencies ‘up’ and ‘down’ the EU system (see Wessels 1997; Miles 2008, 2009).

Whatever the scenario, European integration theories recognize the changing locus of competencies and power as a result of international interdependence in much the same way as those interested in global governance. Moreover, most European integration theories also propose that as a result of these changing competencies, there is a more diverse ‘atomised political space’ (Wessels 1997: 284) at the EU level where, for example, sub-national actors seek to conduct their own relations and dialogue with supranational institutions as a means of ‘by-passing’ the nation-state (see Lindh et al. 2007, 2009).

Both sets of scholars also, albeit to a limited extent, assume that the expansion in the role of sub-state (sub-national) and supra-state (supranational) agencies is based on them holding a degree of comparative advantage over the central government of states in terms of addressing these challenges. With the growth of international communications, travel, organizations, finance and influences, there is a common pre-disposition for engagement in ‘by-passing the state’. In terms of European integration theories, MLG and fusion, for instance, contend that EU principles of the ‘four freedoms’, ‘common markets’ and ‘single markets’ will (and have) facilitate(d) the advancement of sub-state and supra-state governance infrastructure.

Finally, global governance scholars (see, for instance, Hall and Biersteker 2003) assume that globalization encourages forms of ‘privatized governance’, which spread private non-statutory frameworks of rules and allow for greater numbers of private actors to fill regulatory gaps in the multi-scalar governance (Scholte 2005: 214). Sometimes these forms of private global governance will create new complex ‘polycentric’ inter-relationships between public and private actors, whereby accountability channels in these changing forms of privatized governance are often difficult to trace, far from transparent and often blurred. A similar pattern is assumed to exist and is conceptualized as European integration as it exists as part of a fusion approach, placing similar conceptual emphasis on changing forms of governance, including a focus on growing mixtures of public and private actors and co-operation that result in a fused, blurred compound of activity in the EU system (see Wessels 2001; Miles 2009).

Where the growth of global civil society does not meet

The previous discussions suggest that there seem to be notable points of conceptual departure that scholars of global governance and European integration share, even if they often use differing discourses and terminology to explain common conceptualizations of international interdependence. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are not inconsequential differences between these sets of scholars.

In particular, while both sets often maintain that there will be further attention and greater engagement by civil society groups in European and global governance (see Scholte 2005: 222), there are notable differences in this regard in terms of the context of spatial and temporal dimensions.

Briefly, global governance scholars (see, for instance, Warkentin 2001) often stress the development of a global civil society of non-state actors that utilize new technology and
communications that are difficult for agencies—be they supra-state, nation-state or sub-state—to monitor and control. For some, this represents a new form of political participation—a kind of ‘political consumerism’ (Micheletti, Follesdal and Stolle 2003); yet whatever the contention, this is of significance since global governance scholars often place greater emphasis on these dynamic notions of changes in space.

Put simply, global governance scholars highlight that the internet, global blogging and social networks such as Facebook and YouTube, offer new possibilities for citizens and non-state actors to foster new forms of political and social interaction where territorial boundaries are meaningless. These fresh, organic forms of often ‘virtual’ space are assumed to be very difficult for supra-state, nation-state and sub-national bodies to monitor and control. Although they sometimes attract glib passing reference by European integration theorists, the latter have, for the most part, been more interested in conceptualizing European integration as a process governed by values and norms, and above rules dictated by rather traditional forms of political elites. In the EU scholarly context, European integration is mostly conceptualized as an elite-driven process and, in general, has been less ready to conceptualize the development of a European civil society (Chryssochoou 2001: 14). In contrast, global governance scholars seem more readily able to make assumptions accounting for a new global civil society influenced by limited rule-making and shaped by spatial dimensions and a more flexible notion of international interdependence. To some extent, studies of global governance have more readily assumed that changing spatial dimensions and dynamics cannot be encapsulated by traditional rule-based approaches and hence by established forms of governance. At the very least, the notion of key political elites driving forward integration is clearly less convincing than it once was.

The same argumentation extends to temporal dimensions and the impact of time. Since European integration is often theorized as a medium- to long-term evolutionary process (Wessels 1997; Bartolini 2005), the emphasis has been on notions of continuity and gradual progression (Miles 2008, 2009) with fairly undeveloped notions of international interdependence. If anything, the focus has been on studying how political and economic elites transform their powers and competencies across levels of governance, which are, nevertheless, mostly conceived as gradualist, elite networks. At the risk of some generalization, European integration scholars have not met fully the challenge of changing notions of a broadening interactive and virtual civic society.

Yet the changes in technology, as well as ‘non-traditional’ virtual, social networking activities, which are often given greater attention by global governance approaches (see Franda 2001), also facilitate an accompanying emphasis on new temporal dynamics. In particular, assumptions of developing global social networking or ‘civic society’ lead to an accompanying disposition towards there being flexible and highly responsive decision-making operating over shorter periods of time, and clearly influencing, but beyond the control of, traditional political elites. It seems the case that global governance scholars have, so far, been more able to acknowledge the growth of non-traditional social networking and civic society operating with flexible interdependent time-lines. In other words, global governance techniques have been more readily able to meet the challenges of redefining international interdependence over space and time.

Conclusions—revising concepts of interdependence in fusion approaches

The prior discussion undertaken here leads us to one very obvious conclusion: namely to plead for European integration scholars to pay closer attention to further refining the form and role of international interdependence that is assumed as an integral part of their respective conceptualizations of integration processes and governance. More specifically, how in the context
of today’s complex EU-27 can European integration theories further enhance interpretations of interdependence that are one of the key assumptions on which much European integration theorizing is then built? At the very least attention needs to be paid towards acknowledging more diversified notions of interdependence, principally without rules but with greater involvement of actors, as part of increasingly differentiated processes of European integration.

So what needs to be done? On the one hand there are a number of European integration concepts that may already be part of the way there. As discussed earlier, fusion approaches, for example, place the changing transformation of the nation-state at the beating heart of a ‘Fusing Europe’ (Miles 2007, 2008, 2009). They also already incorporate ideas that European integration is prompted by and facilitates reciprocal pressures for modernization of nation-state apparatus. Notions of ‘institutional fusion’ (Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2003) and ‘fusion perspective(s)’ (Miles 2005; Lindh et al. 2009) have sought to conceptualize and codify how ever more ‘Europeanized’ political and economic elites at the national and sub-national levels revise their apparatus and mindsets in order to accommodate responses to the pressures of international interdependence. Similarly, the ‘fusion ladder’ as part of the ‘fusion thesis’ (Regelsberger and Wessels 2005) acknowledges and envisages an ever more complex European compound polity with extensive participation of a growing array of actors that explore supranational rule-making as a means to alleviate the impact of anarchic global interdependence tendencies. Put simply, fusion approaches assume that integration will deepen precisely because of the growing complexity of interdependence tendencies, which will, more specifically, prompt a fusing mix of rather blurred intergovernmental and supranational instruments and competencies at the EU level (Wessels 2005).

Nevertheless, this should not imply that more concerted action by EU scholars is unnecessary. In the context of fusion approaches, for example, and in the context of prior discussions, there is pressing need to take account of contemporary changes in international interdependence over space and time. In particular, two aspects should be addressed. First, the role of interdependence as a key assumption should be mapped out more clearly as a precondition for the fusing of competencies in the evolving EU as part of fusion approaches. If interdependence, as articulated by global governance scholars, is perceived as part of revised fusion approaches as a broader phenomenon with greater highlighting of flexibility and immediacy over space and time, this helps us to understand how interdependence may shape certain aspects of differentiated European integration. In particular, if aspects of spatial and temporal dimensions of interdependence are given greater emphasis then this can be incorporated into explanations of why some integration is informal (taking the form of elite socialization and learning) and other aspects more formal or rule based.

To be more explicit, as part of his fusion thesis Wessels draws attention to the need to understand the Union’s evolution in terms of a twin process—that of a legal constitution (legal treaty-making) alongside a process of mutually reinforcing learning (the so-called living constitution) (see Wessels 2001: 215). For one thing, a clearer understanding of international interdependence impacts upon the social learning of policy-makers—not just gradually through traditional elite networks (as most EU theories would have us believe), but in response to innovative, short-term and often highly flexible pressures coming from new entrants and forums (advocated by global governance scholars) interested in European integration as the EU’s agenda moves into the realms of the information society. All this may be useful in understanding the dynamics of the EU’s living constitution. It would seem that a greater emphasis on spatial and temporal dimensions of interdependence, as stressed by global governance scholars, should provide greater insights into how interdependence facilitates and constrains the socialization and learning of elites in relation to informal, ‘living’ integration processes.
Second, these spatial- and temporal-derived aspects of interdependence also provide insights in terms of fusion’s discussions that policy-makers are driven towards European integration on the basis of performance, political and compound characteristics (Miles 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009; Lindh et al. 2009). Put simply, it is important to recognize that, as part of fusion’s assumption of elite support for integration being performance-related (performance fusion), it is also equally significant that such evaluations are now increasingly made in the light of elite acknowledgements that assessments of performance are imperfect and affected by spatial and temporal dimensions beyond the full control of traditional policy-making elites.

Moreover, the assumption that elite support for European integration is driven by a preference (political fusion) for a pro-supranational yet federo-sceptic ‘third way’ disposition (Miles 2009: 30–31) can be further enhanced by inputs from the global governance fraternity. More specifically, such preferences of policy-makers for flexible, fused, pro-supranational solutions that fall short of optimal constitutional arrangements, are shaped in the light of similar acknowledgements that these instruments are the most politically viable in the face of such uncontrollable spatial and temporal interdependence pressures that make legal policy-making and rules largely ineffective. In addition, the assumption—as part of fusion—that integration will promote an EU as a fused compound of blurred competencies can be further qualified by the works of global governance. The latter suggests that changing spatial and temporal dimensions should actually encourage diverse policy solutions and frameworks. Compound arrangements of fused competencies as part of the EU can be explained specifically with reference to the need to find EU responses to these changing spatial and temporal dimensions of international interdependence. Hence there are clear rationales for exploring how the more nuanced understandings of the complexity of international interdependence (as discussed by global governance scholars) can be harnessed and linked to European integration theories, like fusion, that also assume that the EU’s evolution is a product of complex, often rather messy, interactions.

If this is done then the outcome will be that the reconstruction of the nation-state, as articulated by global governance scholars, due to space and time interdependence dimensions that are assumed to be beyond the control of elite policy-makers, but nevertheless lead to partial responses by them to these aspects, can be linked more concretely to EU scholars’ explanations that rationalize European integration as a process of blurred competence-building and fused decision-making.

To conclude, this author is therefore making a plea to others to consider exploring the propensity for conceptual hybrids—ones that especially place a transforming reconstructed nation-state as a complimentary assumption close to and alongside conceptualizations relating to further EU evolution that is increasingly influenced by non-rule-based global forces.