

Introduction

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Globalization is a multi-faceted process. Therefore, it gives rise to numerous interpretations, emotions, views and comments. This is natural, for aspects of globalization are not restricted to economic matters (which, nevertheless, are the main focus of this volume), but also include social, political and cultural issues. This historical, multithreaded process, unique though it is, can be viewed from as many different angles as there are ways to perceive one and the same reality. For some, globalization stands for the increasing uniformity of consumption patterns -the notorious MacDonalidization; others emphasize the subordination of weaker regions and nations to the interests of greater powers, especially, the transnational corporations whose income often exceeds by far the output of entire nations.

In this volume, globalization is discussed as a large and intricate economic phenomenon. It is understood as the historical liberalization process with the ensuing accelerated integration of the formerly quite isolated markets of goods, capital and (to a lesser degree) labor into a single world market. Thus emerging from the globalization process are the elements of a single world economy. This is a heavily interconnected system, although not all of its links are obvious at first sight. To discern them, penetrating economic analysis is not enough; one also needs to adopt various other perspectives: anthropological, sociological or even philosophical. Yet economics - both the macroeconomics of the modern world market and the political economy of the globalization process, which alters the appearance of this market - remains key.

Yet, what kind of market is it? This is the question addressed in this book - a joint work of more than a dozen scholars from several continents, most of whom sit on the Scientific Advisory Board of TIGER - Transformation, Integration and Globalization Economic Research - an independent economic think-tank affiliated with the Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management (WSPiZ) in Warsaw (www.tiger.edu.pl).

The authors ask many new questions and often provide innovative answers, while addressing the fundamental issues pertaining to the impact of the current globalization phase on output growth and the processes of socio-economic development. There is no question that globalization means not only progress -although progress does appear to be its dominant component - but also backwardness; it involves not only development and an ever increasing abundance of goods, but also the marginalization of entire social or occupational groups, or even regions; it not only promotes the transfer of technology and cultural goods, but also facilitates the spread of terrorism and social pathology. Thus the emergence of a new, global economic system, characterized by new types of technological, financial, commercial and investment interdependencies, as well as new

forms of political and cultural relationships - formerly barely imaginable -evokes diverse responses. Obviously, various interpretations and behaviors follow: from euphoria on the part of some beneficiaries of the newly emerging economic arrangements, to anti-globalist sentiments and movements which have been gaining momentum in recent years.

The last-mentioned phenomena do not seem, as yet, to threaten globalization's further progress. But if the arrogance of the rich towards the poor, the strong towards the weak, the developed towards the backward continues, and if the real causes underlying the grievances of huge parts of society and considerable sectors of the world economy at a lower development level are ignored, such sentiments and movements may intensify, while the ensuing protests are likely to take a more organized form. Then some processes may get out of control — bearing in mind that many of them already unfold outside any political control - affecting the further progress of globalization. Such changes would hardly be welcome, because globalization is a good 'conception' for the future. The quotes are necessary here, because, in reality, no one ever conceived globalization: it came of its own accord - along with technological progress and economic liberalization, cultural change and new political agendas. And it came to stay, although the path of its further evolution, its trends and pace are far from settled.

All told, globalization brings more opportunities than threats. But is this statement true at all times and places? By no means. There exist individuals, groups, sectors, countries and regions that face more threats than opportunities. Under the circumstances, it is impossible to avoid situations that breed disagreement. Unless these are promptly defused using the right methods, they are likely to evolve into open conflicts, of which already there is no shortage. But who is to coordinate the policy to oppose such tendencies and situation in the absence of a world government in the world economy? Surely, it is becoming increasingly apparent that many problems can only be solved through better global coordination of activities.

Globalization opens additional, novel opportunities also for countries at a relatively lower development level, including those in the midst of the strenuous post-socialist transformation. But it also undoubtedly creates a new risk. And whereas the balance of these two tendencies appears to be favorable, the actual gains depend on the quality of the economic policy and the pursued strategy of socio-economic development. Therefore, the global economic game will never run short of winners or losers. But you don't become a winner or loser because of the ongoing globalization.

Globalization means just new rules of the game, whose outcome will always predominantly depend on competent policies. And the latter must be based (this is a necessary but not sufficient condition) on sound economic theory. I hope this volume contributes to its development.