

Introduction

It is difficult to find another topic in economic literature as prevalent and controversial as globalization. Some researchers perceive it as an evolving historical process which has accelerated in the second half of the 20th century, while for others globalization is a contemporary phenomenon related to rapid effects of implementing revolutionary technical and technological advancements, the development of new modes of transport and Internet-based communication, as well as the application of new management methods connected with outsourcing and offshoring. As a result, these changes triggered a process of deindustrialization in highly developed countries, an increase in foreign direct investment, and development of financial markets. Moreover, new economic entities, namely transnational corporations, emerged. The global world is changing rapidly as time and geographical barriers are becoming less and less significant.

As a consequence, globalization should result in bridging the gap between highly developed and developing economies and including the latter in the world economic system. However, we can clearly observe that there are increasing inequalities in the social and economic development, leading to unemployment and unfairness; hence, the situation of poor countries is worsening and an unacceptable disparity of living standards is rising throughout the world. World trade and international cooperation have seen a considerable upsurge, yet this phenomenon concerns only certain regions, not the world as a whole. The most developed form of this deepened cooperation, referred to as an economic integration, is the European Union.

It is impossible to conclusively evaluate globalization from the economic perspective, as each argument is based on various statistics and qualitative assessments, as well as emotions and different value systems. Unquestionably, the globalization process is a constant substantive and intellectual challenge for the society and world economy.

In light of the above, the issues related to the challenges of the global economy remain topical. It was also the leitmotiv of a scientific conference organized in 2014 by the Institute of International Business at the University of Gdansk. This publication presents results of the researches conducted by the conference participants

representing Polish and foreign academic centres, which the Institute has been cooperating with for years, and by the academics from the said Institute.

Research areas were classified into the following thematic groups:

- European Union – 10 years after enlargement,
- regionalism in the world economy,
- current financial challenges,
- enterprise in the international environment,
- challenges of the world economy.

The publication contains fifty seven articles and covers a wide range of current problems related to the development of the world economy. The majority of authors decided to address the issue of an enterprise in the international environment. The intellectual controversies concerning the nature and effects of globalization made it necessary for enterprises to factor in this process in their operations. Every fifth article was written and presented in English, which shows the organizers' efforts to make the conference international and the research results accessible abroad.

In this publication, the reader interested in current problems of the international economic cooperation will find many inspiring and original materials presenting ideas and results of the studies carried out by its co-authors. The conference organizers, being also the publishers of this journal, issue it annually and will do their best to ensure that the nature and topics of the next edition remain current and international.

On behalf of the Institute of International Business, I would like to express my hope that the problems and research results covered in this publication will inspire academics from Polish and foreign academic centres to pursue their teaching and scientific work, further strengthen the cooperation between the Institute and its partners, and arouse interest in entrepreneurs and business practice.

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