Foreword

*Man steps on an ant when he can’t catch the fly. – Bill Gaede*

When I was kindly asked to write a foreword for the book “Global Perspectives on Trade Integration and Economies in Transition” I was pleased and thrilled at the same time. It is always an honor to be asked to write a foreword. The thrilling notion was a product of my personal experience of living and trying to survive (and succeed) in Bulgaria – one of the observed economies in transition. So I started the foreword filled with ‘bitter sweet memories’ if I refer to the popular song.

After reading the book, my first impetus was to begin with the importance of globalization. Probably, because my latest monograph was devoted on investigating global brand values. Then I asked myself the following question: Why do we use the expression “in transition” for economies which are changing from a centrally planned economy to a market economy? Nowadays, living in a highly dynamic and turbulent world every economy could be considered to be constantly in the state of transition of some kind. The world moves on rapidly, the short and long economic cycles are overlapping thus creating the feeling of endless transition.

In this book economies in transition are studied in a wider context which corresponds perfectly to the current development of the global market and the modern world which is changing at a speed which has never been seen before. All these economies (Asian countries, Latin American countries, African countries, former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe) are passing from one state (heavy-regulated or planned economy or underdeveloped economy) to the next state of their development applying different modes and models. Despite the variety of transition forms there is one thing in common for all of them. The transition is far from being segue or smooth activity. Transition countries are passing through various types of transformation cycles sometimes even in combination with turbulent motions just to complicate the situation even more.

In parallel to the fluctuations within the observed economies of transition and between them, there are global shifts which tremendously affect the economy, social life and personal behavior worldwide. One of the most important trends is the shifting locus of economic activity and dynamism to emerging markets and to the regions within those markets. During the last decade the world’s economic center of gravity has continued shifting from West to East, with China being at the center of the trend. The change from Globalization 2.0 to Globalization 3.0 presents evidence that global economy passes also through the state of transition.
Looking deeply into the global ‘boiling pot’ the book gains insight into development pathways of different types of economies in transition thus providing us knowledge about the main conceptual approaches to their effective and sustainable development including through trade integration. A knowledge which can help us to ‘to catch the fly’ (see the motto) and to save an ant if we are forced to deal with the problems and challenges of the transition processes at different levels – company, industry, national market, international market and global market.

Bridging the different experiences of economies in transition, the uniqueness of their development and spatial discrepancies is the main objective of the book, which is reflected in its content. It comprises seventeen chapters written by scholars from 14 countries in two continents.

The research spans over a variety of countries including BRICS, South Caucasus economies, Ukraine, Turkey, India, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, former socialist countries now part of the EU (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), Serbia, Austria. The authors of the chapters emphasize on the most recent challenges of these economies or provide a post hoc analysis of their experiences from the transition process and the lessons learned. An interesting example of these two points of view is the case study of the economic transformation of Austrian agriculture since EU accession (Chapter 15) compared to the latest developments of Turkey on the way to EU accession (Chapter 9). The time span of the research and case studies presented in this book is more than 20 years.

If we refer to the most common definition of globalization from economic point of view, it “occurs when the markets of different countries become more integrated and interconnected through economic transactions that cross national borders.” The positive and negative aspects of globalization and liberalization of trade and capital markets and their influences on the economies of transition are discussed in details using variety of research methods.

Globalization accelerates abovementioned processes which affects the cost, benefits and perils of being interdependent through international trade (Chapter 3, Chapter 7) and cross-border investment flows (Chapter 11, Chapter 12). Special attention is given to the relevant tools and policies of effective and sustainable development of economies in transition in the conditions of dynamic international environment and growing level of liberalization of trade.

The effect of international political decisions, conflicts and collaborations is illustrated by the EU–Ukraine–Russia crisis triangle (Chapter 6), the role of WTO in the economic transition in the South Caucasus economies (Chapter 4) and the tensions between the global economic powers – Russia, USA, and EU (Chapter 10). The influences of political forces and international trade relations on the markets of the economies in transition are investigated, especially the food market (Chapter 10), rural development (Chapter 13, Chapter 14), agriculture (Chapter 15), tourism (Chapter 16, Chapter 17).

Finally, I realized that the book presents seventeen different stories of millions of human beings who lived their lives in transition. It is hard to imagine from our personal point of view. On the other hand, what does it mean for the Universe? According to the famous Carl Sagan’s Cosmic Calendar, we are living in the last second on December 31, and from cosmic point of view the longest human life is a blink of an eye (about 1/4 of a second).

Enjoy the reading!

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