
Foreword

Economic integration at the international level used to be a European specificity; this explains why a European Institute has a major interest in supporting a handbook on international economic integration. Alongside the development of theories about international economic integration initiated in the 1950s, the European Economic Community, launched in 1957 among six (Western) European states, very soon appeared as the practical exercise designed for implementing such theoretical concepts. Thus economic integration is a strong element at the heart of European studies.

The Geneva University European Institute aims at understanding the great transformation of Europe, and not only the development of the European Community (EC) or the European Union (EU), while acknowledging the pre-eminence of the integration process driven by the EU in this evolution. European integration, even though initially based on the promotion of economic integration, also covers a much wider scope of human activities, spilling over into legal, political and even societal issues. This is why, since 1963, European studies at the University of Geneva have been pooled in an interdisciplinary institute; economic integration – even though a fundamental and necessary parameter of wider integration – is thus, and remains, closely interlinked with other societal factors. Interdisciplinary studies, however, in no way prevent comprehensive disciplinary efforts, such as the present Handbook.

International economic integration, for its part, changed gear in the late twentieth century, after the failure of the socialist model. In Europe naturally, where socialist countries of the Central and Eastern part of the Continent have been called to join the European integration process (EU), but also beyond Europe. This geographical spreading of international economic integration actually took two forms, both consequences of the undisputed dominance of the liberal model. The first one is globalisation, a phenomenon – whose anatomy is studied below by the editor of the Handbook – largely accelerated by both the development of new technologies and the conclusion of the Marrakesh Agreements of 1994, which closed the Uruguay Round and created the World Trade Organization (WTO). The second form consists in the realisation of numerous cases of regional economic integration, the latest example being the coming into force on 1 January 2010 of the free trade area between China and ASEAN; it follows the realisations of MERCOSUR, NAFTA, ECOWAS and other regional regimes. Both processes involve international economic integration, even though sometimes in contradictory terms – as is shown by the tensions existing between Articles I and XXIV (5) of the GATT Agreement (see the contribution by Lipsey and Smith on that issue, Vol. I, ch. 3). Thus the issue of international economic integration has to be conceptualised anew and analysed with regard to all these recent developments.

Since 2008, the European Institute of the University of Geneva has had the privilege of counting among its lecturers Dr Miroslav Jovanović, editor of this three-volume Handbook. His enthusiasm for teaching and the wide network of contacts he entertains throughout Europe and the world allowed this ambitious project to turn into the book you are holding. Not only a learned scholar, Dr Jovanović also holds a position at the

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), a UN subsidiary body dealing with economic issues within Europe as a whole. Thus my colleague has both an extraordinary observation position – at the heart of the most advanced regional economic integration process going on in Europe – and the proper distance for academic observation, since UNECE is not directly part of the mainstream process of the economic integration taking place within the EU, and Switzerland is not a member state of the EU.

Thus, Geneva is a highly interesting place for undertaking the work of editing such a handbook. Not only because it is the seat of the WTO, a focus point for trade liberalisation regimes, but also because it is the seat of numerous other international organisations (ILO, WHO, WMO and ITU, among others), all closely linked to the ongoing global economic integration, which reaches far beyond international trade. Thus an ‘economic-plus’ integration process may, perhaps, be at work – in a form yet to be determined – at the world level, perhaps based on lessons learned from the most successful regional economic integration processes. Too soon to tell, of course; but if it has to be observed, it could well be in Geneva, by Dr Jovanović and the ‘dream team’ of economists he has gathered together to contribute to this Handbook. The European Institute at the University of Geneva is therefore proud and happy to be associated with this project. All my thanks to my colleague Jovanović for the contribution he thus brings, both to the understanding of the international economic integration process and to the academic renown of the European Institute of the University of Geneva.

Nicolas Levrat
Director of the European Institute
of the University of Geneva