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# FLORYA CHRONICLES

## OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

- **Foreign Currency Debt And Economic Growth In The Region Of The Black Sea Economic Cooperation**  
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- **Iran's New Presence in the Chess of the Black Sea Region and the Caucasus**  
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- **Intercultural education - Analysis and Perspectives**  
*Carmen Marina GHEORGHIU*
- **Turkish Characters in Romanian Literature**  
*Onorina BOTEZAT*

# Florya Chronicles of Political Economy



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*The Florya Chronicles Journal is the scholarly publication of the İstanbul Aydın University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. The Journal is distributed on a twice a year basis. The Florya Chronicles Journal is a peer-reviewed in the area of economics, international relations, management and political studies and is published in both Turkish and English languages. Language support for Turkish translation is given to those manuscripts received in English and accepted for publication. The content of the Journal covers all aspects of economics and social sciences including but not limited to mainstream to heterodox approaches. The Journal aims to meet the needs of the public and private sector employees, specialists, academics, and research scholars of economics and social sciences as well as undergraduate and postgraduate level students. The Florya Chronicles offers a wide spectrum of publication including*

- Research Articles*
- Case Reports that adds value to empirical and policy oriented techniques, and topics on management*
- Opinions on areas of relevance*
- Reviews that comprehensively and systematically covers a specific aspect of economics and social sciences.*

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## ***From the Editor***

*In this issue of Florya Chronicles, we are publishing five very interesting articles. We have compiled this edition with one overarching theme, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation and wanted to handle the topic through the prism of inter-disciplinary academic work. In doing this, we have received considerable support from our colleagues in Romania and Turkey. Our foremost gratitude goes to them. Four of the papers have been presented at the international conference of “Regional Co-operation in the Black Sea: Opportunities and Challenges” that was organized at Istanbul Aydin University, Florya Campus in April 2017. The fifth paper by Yerkebulan, on the other hand, covers Kazakhstan and its relation to the Black Sea Region.*

*The first article by Zelha Altunkaya presents findings of her empirical research into the financial risk factors in the region. She argues that foreign currency risk in connection with ever rapidly rising foreign currency liabilities in countries around the Black Sea lends support to interesting empirical research. Lower interest rates in the euro zone, the increase in international reserves and the expansion of financial markets particularly after the collapse of Iron Curtain led to an increased availability of liquid assets, much larger than before. In this paper, Altunkaya argues that foreign currency debt contracts and their potential financial risks were not eliminated effectively, hence increasing the fragility of these economies. This paper is particularly interesting as it focuses its empirical analysis exclusively on foreign currency debt management of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Region after the 2008 financial crises.*

*The second paper by Mojtabaa Barghandan focuses on a more distant neighbor of the BSEC region, Iran. The paper starts by establishing Iran’s position in the Black Sea region by examining its historical relations with the Caucasus. The paper highlights two important strategic conjunctures that caused a shift in Iran’s approach to the region, namely; post Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Barghandan argues that, Iran’s involvement with the region has gained an economic character as Iran began to introduce short and long-term energy supply projects directed towards BSEC and the Caucasus. The paper presents that Iranian involvement with the region is in formed by the historical heritage*

*though it is argued that it would be erroneous to tie Iran's successful or failed outcomes solely to this factor. Barghandan argues that Iran's new economic, political and security motives based on a multi-dimensional approach, plus its geostrategic concerns plays an important role in determining its engagement with the region.*

*The third paper by Yerkebulan Sapiyev brings a very interesting angle to the study of BSEC as it focuses on Central Asian countries' relations with the region. This article links regional co-operation to security. Since developing an analysis of economic with non-economic correlations has become much more popular recently, this article provides an invaluable empirical contribution to the theory. In the sense that Central Asia has been investigated to provide back up for the New Regionalism and "Liberal Institutionalism" theories. Particularly, Kazakhstan's role in strengthening cooperation in the context of Central Asian regional cooperation and security issues has been studied thoroughly. The article also looks at cultural, psychological and communicative closeness of Central Asian states, which would be helpful to strengthen integration and efficiency gains.*

*Last two papers were presented at the Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea: Opportunities and Challenges Conference that took place at Istanbul Aydın University in 2017, also refer to the impact of non-economic factors such as education and literature in other words to the cultural aspects to contribute to the regional economic integration.*

*The paper by Carmen Marina Gheorghiu looks at the education prospect of opening multiple values in a polymorphic and dynamic spiritual world. This paper argues that the aspirations of individuals and the profits of the company can be reached, if a degree of coherence, solidarity and functionality is established between the two. Attention is given to the intercultural education that can be functional in preparing people to perceive, accept, respect and experience otherness. The paper collected empirical data through participatory observation and documental analysis. It highlights the outcomes of statistical testing with the aim of testing causal hypotheses, whereas qualitative research paradigm is based on postmodern, post-rationalist or post-positivist currents. The paper presents some of the theoretical considerations on the development of intercultural education in Romania and the Balkans. Intercultural education in Romania*

*is a recent phenomenon which includes social, ethnic and cultural leveling despite discursive affirmation of equality between Romanian and other “nationalities”. Thus, the intercultural education history or at least the commitment to inter-culturalism, there is a “vacuum” corresponding to the communist period. After 1989, Romania’s ethnic minorities have assumed an active role in affirming their cultural identity different from that of the majority.*

*The final paper by Onorino Botezdat also studies another neglected area of intercultural non-economic factor that would help strengthening BSEC. This paper looks at the image of the Turk in the Romanian dramaturgy of the twentieth century, through the play *Take, Ianke and Cadîr* by Victor Ioan Popa. The masterpiece of Victor Ioan Popa, *Take, Ianke and Cadîr* is, without any doubt, the pearl of the Romanian dramaturgy. A Jew, a Romanian and a Turk - central figures of the play are merchants and they share their clients. The merger of two shop owners’ businesses, as the wall between the two is pulled down, happens to be the marriage between the Romanian’s daughter and Jew’s son, which previously was not a possibility in the eyes of their fathers. The play offers a rather positive image of the Turk; the friendly, caring and tender *Cadîr* who turns out to be smarter and wiser than his neighbors. The success of this play on stage proves that the perception of imagery, as is with the case of the Turk in the play, can be dissociated from early religious and historical stereotypes and through the medieval Romanian literature.*

*We have received the help of our assistants at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. We also thank the Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Celal Nazım Irem for the continuous and tireless support he provides for the *Florya Chronicles*. Finally, we thank the Rector of Istanbul Aydın University, Prof. Dr. Yedigâr İzmirli and our President of Board of Directors, Dr. Mustafa Aydın.*

**Prof. Dr. Sedat AYBAR**  
**Editor**





# ***Foreign Currency Debt And Economic Growth In The Region Of The Black Sea Economic Cooperation***

**Zelha ALTINKAYA <sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

Foreign currency liabilities are often considered as a financial risk factor in the economies. The developing and newly emerging economies had great experiences on the effect of this risk. Mexico, Russia and Turkey were just a few of those countries who suffered from the foreign currency risk in 1994 and 1997. Later, Turkey had one more experience in 2001. The Euro crises which started in 2010, have unexpectedly changed policies in Greece. Foreign currency risk and foreign currency liabilities have a special importance for the member countries of the Black Sea Region. Current paper analyzes the risk which has emerged due to foreign currency volatility in foreign currency liabilities for the economies of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) members. The regional cooperation was started by Turkey's initiative in 1991 and the organization was found in 25 June, 1992. However, after the 2007 global financial crises, firstly for Greece, economic stability became the primary objective. The BSEC did not offer governments with alternative tools to finance their economies, for instance, by using local currency denominated debts on international bond markets. Emerging economies had more liquidity than before. Expansion of financial markets increased their reserves. However, it is argued that foreign currency debt contracts and their potential financial risks have not been eliminated. In this paper, foreign currency debt management of the BSEC and its effect after 2008 financial crisis will be analyzed.

**Keywords:** *foreign currency debt, economic growth, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region, financial crises*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was established by the initiative of Turkey in the Black Sea region in 1992. This cooperation is a significant one, since the BSEC members aimed providing a harmonized relationship with respect to their economies and political life in the region. The organization was crucial for the region since it was established following the dissolution of Soviet Socialist Union which was one of the superpowers of the region and the World before 1991. This area was reshaped for the second time following the World War I. With one of the largest population areas, BSEC region offers great opportunities for the transition of the economies in the region as well for a wider Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are already members and associate members of the EU and have longer history of market economy, however the other BSEC countries have engaged in liberal policies of market economy later. All the countries have rich resources. In this paper, the main aim is to research whether these resources are adequate for a transition from a planned economy to the market economy by itself or they borrowed in terms of foreign currency. Firstly, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and its effect on the region will be discussed. In the second part, theories on foreign currency borrowing will be analyzed. Finally, the effect of the foreign currency debt on the economies of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation will be taken under consideration.

## **2. BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC) REGION**

Black Sea region is at the crossroads of Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, the Eastern Balkans and the Caucasus where a geo-strategic nature is still very important as well as representing economic nature. The region, brings together some of the most important challenges that shape the security of today's and tomorrow's Europe: from illegal migration to environmental degradation, the security of energy supplies, illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons and frozen conflicts. Black sea is a civilizational crossroads at the confluence of orthodox, Muslim and increasingly very western political and societal cultures.

As a regional economic cooperation, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is different from the free trade area, the customs union, the common market, the economic union and the political union. Following Istanbul Summit Declaration of 5 June 1992, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation came

into existence and became the organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation by 1999. So, what could a regional economic cooperation serve different from other integration types and why it was stated (BSEC, 1992)?

Regions can be integrated depending for political, economic or social reasons. Neumann (1994) argues that each member considers itself at the core of the region where the core covers territorial and functional concepts. Accordingly, this denotes the use of power and knowledge. Two approaches exist in the literature; one is the *Inside-out* approach and the other is the *Outside-in* approach. The Inside-out approach defines the region as a cultural integration and the Outside- in approach focuses on the geopolitics (Neumann, 1994). Sometimes a region emerges from outside; in general, the foreign policy practices and international organizations require such a change. Sometimes, regions would emerge as a result of networking of movements (Neumann, 1994). Currently, in Europe, regions have emerged for community building purposes, supporting cultural cooperation, civil society development, trade or cooperative security in variety of areas. So, they can be considered as multilevel and multidimensional. Neumann (1994) defines *region* as the area built at a transnational level.

Regions as organization designed a consequence of the process of developing policies to address perceived common problems (Manoli, 2010). Regional cooperation, therefore, varies among issues and over time. It is a process that requires stakeholders to mutually adjust their behavior through the policy coordination. The rationale behind a regional cooperation would be to achieve additional benefits which the independent actions of states cannot. By looking at the initiative and the establishment of such a regional cooperation, in general, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the end of Cold War and NATO are considered as exogenous factors (Manoli, 2010). The end of cold war, failure of communism and the effect of technology revolution changed the global political economy. Especially, since the late 1980s the world witnessed the extraordinary growth of economic regionalism as a counter movement to economic globalization (Gilpin, 2001). Where the original roots were based on European Common Markets and European Economic Community, regional cooperation became also one of the highly preferred way of cooperation.

Even though, it is argued that there has been no previous experience for social and economic unity in the Black Sea region, in the past, firstly Ottoman Empire then Russia had the hegemony in this area. Ottoman Empire sustained its hegemony more than three centuries. Particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the process of state building implies new subgroups for the identity of Black Sea. It was the same for Russia, Russia established its hegemony over a quite large part of the region for a long time. There were various factors unifying countries in the region such as the balance of power and geopolitical situation. So, the cultural political cohesion already existed in this region. Currently, after the collapse of Russia, for liberalization the wave of globalization has become the corner stone for the cooperation power among the states. However, historically, the Black Sea has also been a zone of tension between the Europe, the Russian and Ottoman Empire. In this period, regional Black Sea states came face to face with the issues on vital national interests arising from the different political and economic policies of the actors on the region. Russia's policies for North Caucasus, South Caucasus and Moldova are just one of the important discussion subjects in this respect. The Black Sea region is a crossroads of different civilizations as well as multiple religions. The region offers opportunities for the future of the Wider Europe. On the other hand, illegal migration, environmental degradation, the security of energy supplies, illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons are common areas of conflict in the region (Tassinari, 2014). The European Commission and NATO refers to the Black Sea region as the area whose member states have close ties in history. The Black Sea region is an energy rich. It stands a kind of barrier against possible trans-national threats. (Pop & Dan, 2007).

Here, in this study, one of the subjects which is an important threat to economic development and growth has been analyzed. This threat is the foreign debt stock and the growth relationship in the region. By 1990s, the total of GDP in the region was USD\$ 834 billion; however, it decreased by 1992. The 1994 and 2001, 2002 financial crises in Turkey had influences on the performances of the economies in the region. Today, Black Sea Economic Cooperation region offers opportunities with a population of 330 million people and the total of USD\$ 3.5 trillion of GDP. The capital outflow from the developed economies to developing economies had a positive effect for the region. In 2015, the total GDP increased to USD\$ 3.791 billion. However, in 2015, the total GDP value of the region

contracted by 25% and decreased to USD\$ 2.639. In addition to Greece Euro crises, as oil exporting countries Azerbaijan and Russia had severe currency account deficit and financial problems due to severe volatility on oil prices in the world market (Mamedov, 2011).

### **3. FOREIGN CURRENCY DEBT**

The recent global economic and financial crises after the Euro crisis led to extraordinary increase in debt across the world. By the end of 2016, total amount of the World GDP was equal to USD \$ 75 trillion while the total debt GDP ratios were equal to 60%. This ratio was equal to 107 % in advanced countries till 2013. This is not only a recent trend, historically, one of the main concerns of the economists has been finding an answer to the optimal level of borrowing. Debt is considered as a substitution of taxes with the foreign debt to finance government expenditure (Baro, 1974). In this view, as long as the government increases expenditure, an increase in government debt can be considered as an increase in taxes (Baro, 1974). In these chains, sometimes additional taxes are needed (Baro, 1974). Finance expenditures by bond is a kind of future tax that would not be necessary unless the expenditures are financed by the current taxation already (Baro, 1976).

The relationship between debt and growth of the economies is one of the major concerns in studies as well as economic and political issues in the countries. In some of the economic approaches, the policy makers are in favor of the government borrowing while the others are not. However, foreign currency liabilities are often considered as financial weakness in emerging markets (Bordo, Stuckler and Meisner, 2010). While the reasons of foreign debt are considered as important factors in determining the level of growth, most of the time, the war debts were the main type of foreign debt in the past. Large debts accumulated in peace time reduce uncertainty in the future growth. In their analysis, Reinhart and Rogoff (2010) argued that the growth after the World War II was high as war-time allocation of manpower and resources (Reinhart and Rogoff, 2010). Even, in high war-time, the government spending was the main source of peace. On the other hand, the increases in debts during peace were the indicator of instability in economic development in the future (Reinhart and Rogoff, 2010). After the World War II, the government debt has led to an increase in the typical household's understanding of net wealth since debt has expansionary effect on aggregate demand and it provides a lower level of cost to the host

country at the time of high global liquidity (Baro, 1976). The borrowers who consider potential advantages of external borrowing, may come at high costs of external default, currency mismatch, inability to tax foreign currency, asymmetric crisis shocks and external political interference.

During the first financial globalization period, from 1870 to 1939, most countries financed themselves with foreign currency denominated debt. Money and credit grew just a little faster than the GDP in the first few decades of the classical gold standard era but then remained stable relative to the GDP until the Great Depression. In the long run, the level of money and credit were volatile. Jorda et al (2012) consider that the money growth and credit growth were following each other in nature after the World War II. The loans continued to increase in the Bretton Woods period. Banks performed better compared to GDP, by the 1970s. A higher leverage and the new sources of funding such as debt securities increased bank liabilities (Schularik and Taylor, 2009). After World War II, international lending was based on lending from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund to government, later lending turned into government to government. By 1970, banks became lenders to developing countries instead of the governments. In the late twentieth century, many advanced countries had significant amounts of foreign currency debt relative to their total external debt liabilities, however, most of them did not cause crises. Before, 1982, international commercial banks were providing medium and long term credits to residents of developing countries.

External borrowing in foreign currency was a major reason for the severity of these financial crises (Eichengreen and Hausmann, 1999). Turkey, Mexico and Russia were some of them. In these countries, the fixed exchange rates were providing exchange rate stability. However, households, domestic banks, and non-financial firms had significant short term debts denominated in US dollars. Domestic banks were borrowing from international markets in terms of USD \$ and lending in the domestic market where payments are in national currency. A high ratio of foreign currency liabilities to total international liabilities was called “*original sin*” by Eichengreen and Hausmann (1999). Eichengreen and the others continue to define that debt intolerance and the original sin as different concepts (Eichengreen et al, 2003). The original sin would be due to the inefficiency of governments in foreign debt management. The government may raise

the foreign reserves in order to stabilize the large volatility in currency and fulfil its obligation as a lender of last resort. The country's borrowing abroad are matched by gross foreign currency assets that the government holds in the form of international reserves (Eichengreen et al, 2003).

Theoretical models are not clear in resolving the losses arising from the exchange rate depreciation when foreign currency debt is large. In accordance with the Marshall Lerner condition, the expansionary effect of depreciation on increased exports and decreased imports can compensate the impact. The effect depends on the degree of capital market imperfections, the share of foreign goods in their consumption, the share of foreign exchange denominated debt in total debt (Krugman, 1999). Krugman (1999) also derive conditions under which real depreciation can be contractionary. Jeanne (2000) argues that when foreign currency debt solves a moral hazard problem it may be an efficient solution, but when there is adverse selection, it is suboptimal.

The optimal level of borrowing and lending became the main question one more time due to the recent financial crises during the last century. The international lenders take care of the risk of national default since the government of the borrower's country can always intervene in the outflow of the national debt service payments and remittances, independent of a particular loan's profitability (Hanson,1974). Such an intervention is one of the major differences between international and interregional economic transactions. Not only the governments and international organizations but also the capital markets serve as the intermediaries for lending to developing countries. While private capital markets were a vehicle for capital inflows to industrial countries. In addition to a large literature that is studied on foreign exchange volatility and foreign currency debt, the recent studies made by Bordo, Stuckler and Meisner (2010), Reinhart and Reinhart (2011), Reinhart and Rogoff (2011) and the others are reviewed here shortly.

Bebczuk, Galindo and Panizza (2006) found that foreign currency debt is directly associated with the lower growth rates when the real exchange rate depreciates. On Bleakley and Cowan's (2008) study, in a sample of Latin American countries, they found no evidence that firms' investment decisions are affected by hard currency debt even in the face of depreciation.



Bordo, Stuckler and Meissner (2010) analyzed the empirical relationship between foreign currency debts and economic growth. They have found strong evidence for foreign currency debt crises especially when international reserves are low. These countries that are under review had large losses in growth. They also pay attention whether the countries have developed financial markets or not. They argued if the country does not have well developed markets, they may still have financial crises. On the other hand, especially the emerging markets are very open to debt crises and had high financial instability (Reinhart et al, 2012).

Countries would avoid financial crises and keep financial development and their sustainable fiscal positions by sound debt management even though high percentage foreign currency denominates debt exist. Reserve accumulation and high export ability can avoid the volatility that is associated with foreign currency debt. However, even if countries do not have well developed financial markets, they can reduce the risk of crises by limiting their currency mismatches (Eichengreen et al, 2003).

Bordo, Meissner and Stuckler (2010) studied the relationship of foreign currency debt with financial crises and economic growth. They have analyzed the credit channel mechanism (Bordo et al, 2010). Reinhart and Rogoff (2010) studied a multi-country, long term historical database on central government debt as well as more recent data on external debt in order to search for a systematic relationship between debt levels, growth and inflation. They found out that at normal debt levels, the relationship between growth and debt seems relatively weak. Emerging market economies and advanced economies have similar relationship between public debt and growth. However, emerging markets have a much more binding threshold for total gross external debt (public and private) which is almost exclusively denominated in a foreign currency and there was no systematic relationship between high debt levels and inflation for advanced economies (Reinhart and Rogoff, 2010). Following Reinhart and Rogoff (2010) analysis, Herndon, Ash and Pollin (2013) studied the variables at the same period and have criticized their findings; in order to build the case, they had established a new set of criteria regarding public debt levels and GDP growth. Herndon et al (2013) criticized Reinhart and Rogoff (2010) regarding the validity of their findings for a range of countries and time periods.

**Table 1: Public Debt GDP growth Rate**

	Public Debt/ GDP	Public Debt/ GDP	Public Debt/ GDP	Public Debt/ GDP
	<30%	30-60%	60-90%	>90 %
Reinhart & Rogoff	3.8	2.9	3.4	-0.1
Herndon	4.2	3.1	3.2	2.2

*Source:* Herndon et al, 2013

Presbitero (2010) discusses the relationship between total public debt and economic growth in low- and middle-income countries. The results contrast with the findings of the study by Reinhart and Rogoff (2010) regarding the growth slowdowns when public debt exceeds 90 percent of GDP. However, apart from these differences in the methodological approach, the main reason for explaining the antithetic results is likely to be the composition of the sample.

Eggert (2013) had evidence on the negative nonlinear relationship between debt and growth. Kourtellos et al (2012) contribute to the debate on the relationship between public debt and long-run economic performance from a different perspective. Kourtellos and the others' finding suggest that the relationship between public debt and growth is reduced crucially by the quality of a country's institutions. When a country's institutions are not at high quality, then, more public debt leads to lower growth. Woo and Kumar (2015) study the period of 2007–2009 financial crises, their finding focuses on the fact that crises increased public debt, led to sovereign debt crisis in Europe. They find out some evidence of non-linearity, with only high (above 90% of GDP) levels of debt having a significant negative effect on growth. Eberhardt and Presbitero (2015) made three contributions to the empirical literature: first, the long-run relationship; secondly, empirical specifications which allow the heterogeneity in the long-run relationship across the countries; thirdly, the potential non-linearity in the debt–growth relationship, focusing on the possibility of a debt–growth nonlinearity both across and within countries.

In addition to the theoretical models, Maastricht Treaty (1992), as one of the solid sources for determining the optimum level of borrowing, defines the foreign debt rules. Since the three members of Black Sea Economic Cooperation are already members of the EU area, they must follow these rules. However, Greece had the severest economic crises among the others.

#### **4. FOREIGN DEBT IN BLACK SEA ECONOMICS COOPERATION REGION**

Table 2 shows Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the member countries which have an increasing trend in GDP growth with the exception of 1994, 1998 and 2009 financial and economic crisis of global economy.

**Table 2: GDP in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region Billion USD \$**

	ALB	ARM	AZE	BUL	GEO	GRC	MDA	ROU	RUS	SRB	UKR	TUR	Total	Change %
1991	1	2	0	10	6	108	0	29	517	0	0	147	820	-0.02
1999	3	2	5	13	3	141	1	36	188	18	31	246	687	-0.14
2000	4	2	5	13	3	131	1	37	253	7	30	263	749	0.09
2001	4	2	5	14	3	137	2	40	302	12	37	191	749	0
2002	5	2	6	17	3	154	2	46	339	16	42	228	860	0.15
2003	6	3	7	21	4	201	2	59	417	21	50	297	1088	0.27
2004	7	4	8	26	5	238	3	73	578	25	64	387	1418	0.3
2005	8	5	12	30	6	248	3	97	745	26	85	478	1743	0.23
2006	9	7	18	33	8	268	4	119	961	30	106	525	2088	0.2
2007	11	10	28	42	10	310	5	166	1271	39	141	641	2674	0.28
2008	13	12	44	52	13	344	7	203	1614	48	178	723	3251	0.22
2009	12	9	41	50	11	323	6	165	1183	42	115	607	2564	-0.21
2010	12	10	49	50	11	293	6	165	1478	39	134	725	2972	0.16
2011	13	11	61	56	14	280	8	182	1974	45	159	768	3571	0.2
2012	12	11	63	53	16	247	8	169	2086	39	173	782	3659	0.02
2013	13	12	69	55	16	239	9	187	2152	44	180	815	3791	0.04
2014	13	12	73	56	16	235	9	197	1985	42	132	791	3561	-0.06
2015	11	11	51	49	14	196	7	174	1294	35	89	708	2639	-0.26

Source: [http://www.bstdb.org/publications/BSTDB\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.bstdb.org/publications/BSTDB_Annual_Report_2013.pdf)

In 1994, contraction in total GDP was due to the financial and economic crises in Turkish economy. Similarly, Russian Crisis had negative effects on her own economy and the region. It was one of the most effective crises after Russia experienced a political and an economic change. Third important contraction was the 2008 global crisis; its effect was felt much deeper in 2010. All the economies in the region suffered from GDP contraction. Although some of the economies have recovered, this recovery was not stable every year. The foreign debt statistics for the Members of BSEC countries have been given in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Foreign Debt Stock in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region/000USD\$

	ALB	ARM	AZE	BUL	GEO	GRC	MDA	ROU	RUS	SRB	UKR	TUR
1991	1	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	2	0	16	51
1999	1	1	1	12	2	0	1	16	9	180	11	102
2000	1	1	2	12	2	0	2	14	11	147	12	117
2001	1	1	2	11	2	0	2	22	13	141	12	113
2002	1	2	2	12	2	0	2	23	17	138	11	130
2003	2	2	2	14	2	0	2	26	23	186	14	144
2004	2	2	2	17	2	0	2	32	30	214	15	160
2005	2	2	2	19	2	0	2	35	39	250	16	174
2006	2	2	3	28	3	0	3	54	54	311	20	211
2007	3	3	4	44	3	0	3	81	84	416	26	260
2008	4	4	4	53	8	0	4	99	99	419	30	290
2009	5	5	5	56	9	0	4	105	114	406	34	279
2010	5	6	7	51	10	0	5	124	115	418	33	301
2011	6	7	7	48	11	0	5	135	120	544	32	305
2012	7	8	10	51	12	0	6	132	121	592	34	337
2013	9	9	10	51	13	0	7	148	124	669	36	389
2014	8	9	12	48	14	0	7	131	112	550	33	401
2015	8	9	13	37	15	0	6	123	96	468	31	398

*Source:* National Statistical Agencies IMF Black Sea and Trade Development Bank [http://www.bstdb.org/publications/bBSTDB\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.bstdb.org/publications/bBSTDB_Annual_Report_2015.pdf)

All countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation have an increasing level of foreign debt, despite Greece being one of the EU Members. Similar to Spain and Ireland, Greece did not manage performance obligations and the budget deficit and debt/GDP criteria and had a severe financial and economic crisis and by 2015 figures, it seems it still suffers from the economic crisis. Azerbaijan is the other country which suffered from high devaluation in 2016. In January 2016, 50% devaluation caused 7 banks out of 42 banks to go bankruptcy. Russia suffered a significant devaluation in 2015 in addition to the large fluctuations in oil prices. In Table 4, foreign debt to GDP ratios are given. Foreign debt to stock has increased in all countries in the recent years.

**Table 4:** Foreign Debt to GDP Ratio in Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region %

	ALB	ARM	AZE	BUL	GEO	GRC	MDA	ROU	RUS	SRB	UKR	TUR
1991	100	0		120	0			7	0			35
1998	33	50	25	79	50		0	24	68	61	32	36
1999	33	50	20	92	67		0	25	96	61	52	41
2000	25	50	40	92	67		200	30	58	171	47	44
2001	25	50	40	79	67		100	33	47	100	59	59
2002	20	100	33	71	0.67		100	37	41	69	55	57
2003	33	67	29	67	50	48	100	39	45	67	52	48
2004	29	50	25	65	40	51	67	41	37	60	50	41
2005	25	40	17	63	33	57	67	40	34	62	41	36
2006	22	29	17	85	38	60	75	45	32	67	51	40
2007	27	30	14	105	30	66	60	51	33	67	57	41
2008	31	33	9	102	62	73	57	49	26	63	56	40
2009	42	56	12	112	82	84	67	69	34	81	91	46
2010	42	60	14	102	91	101	83	70	28	85	93	42
2011	46	64	11	86	79	99	63	66	28	71	85	40
2012	58	73	16	96	75	124	75	72	28	87	76	43
2013	69	75	14	93	81	133	78	66	31	82	82	48
2014	62	75	16	86	88	134	78	57	28	79	99	51
2015	73	82	25	76	107	139	86	55	36	89	138	56

*Source:* National Statistical Agencies IMF Black Sea and Trade Development Bank [http://www.bstdb.org/publications/BSTDB\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.bstdb.org/publications/BSTDB_Annual_Report_2015.pdf), [http://www.bstdb.org/publications/BSTDB\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.bstdb.org/publications/BSTDB_Annual_Report_2013.pdf), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tipsii20&plugin1>

Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania, Russia and Turkey have high foreign debt to stock ratio since 2009 due to contraction in their economies arising from 2007 financial crises. However, in Turkey, the ratio of foreign debt to GDP ratio increases since 2001. One of the effects of high foreign debt to GDP ratio can be observed on inflation rates.

Among all member states, Greece, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria's foreign debt level are significant. The ratio to GDP is also high for these states. It was a reason for Euro crisis in Greece and it continues to be a threat to the economic stability of these member states. Reinhart and Trebesch (2015) argue that the country's default or consequences of the boom-bust cycles based on external borrowing were not only economic, but political as well. In the case of Greece, the debate has focused on other issues, such as debt sustainability, contagion effects, the need for reform and the associated political economy problems. Armenian economy would be analyzed specifically. Despite being one of the smallest economies of the region and having had a well performance during transition period, Armenian foreign debt burden must be under control. The main problem in the country is the limitation on trade. Although, Azerbaijan is a neighboring country and the two countries are expected to trade more, due to political conflicts, they have limitation for trade (World Bank, 2017). The fact that Armenia has become a member of the Customs Union of the Eurasian Economic Union, contributes to the Armenian economy. In addition to a challenging growth export, the economy was performing well during 2015. However, private transfers inflow declined by 11.4% in 2016 compared to 2015. There is serious distrust in society towards the current authorities over economic issues. After 3% GDP growth in 2015 the index of economic activity in Armenia started to decrease again by 2016.

One of the other smaller countries, Serbia with her 7 million population, would produce 38 billion USD per year. 2007-2009 economic crises caused Serbian economy to grow smaller. Serbian economy was followed to grow internally till very recent years (The World Bank, 2017).

Azerbaijan's economy is facing critical challenges due to the fall in oil prices, high inflation, and the crisis in the financial sector in addition to the influences of 2007-2009 financial crises. In countries where saving rates are low, the level of foreign debt is high. Armenia, Greece and Ukraine

are some examples to these countries. Saving to GDP ratio would be one of the good indicator why countries are borrowing. In Albania, Armenia and Russia saving to GDP ratios were high at the beginning of 2000s. In Albania and Armenia, the ratio decreased to 18%. However, in general, due to the sufficient levels of saving in the region high level of foreign currency borrowing was not required.

**Table 5: Saving to GDP Ratio in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region**

	ALB	ARM	AZE	BUL	GEO	GRC	MDA	ROU	RUS	SRB	TUR	UKR
1991	-7			17		27		25			22	
1998	19	-3	3	25	18		6	11	17		26	18
1999	18	0	13	16	20	17	17	12	28		22	22
2000	29	3	17	14	22	18	16	16	36		21	24
2001	35	13	20	16	24	19	18	17	33		21	25
2002	30	18	22	18	22	17	18	19	29		22	28
2003	33	20	25	17	22	18	17	16	29		20	28
2004	32	24	28	17	25	18	22	16	31		21	31
2005	30	29	43	17	22	16	22	15	31		23	26
2006	32	34	48	15	16	15	22	17	31		24	23
2007	28	31	49	10	12	13	26	18	30	13	23	22
2008	20	28	53	15	3	10	23	21	32	10	24	21
2009	20	18	42	20	2	6	14	22	23	13	21	16
2010	19	20	47	22	10	6	14	22	27	12	21	18
2011	18	15	47	23	14	5	11	23	28	12	22	16
2012	18	15	44	22	17	9	15	22	26	10	23	1
2013	18	16	41	24	19	10	18	25	23	12	23	9
2014	12	13	40	23	20	9	19	24	25	12	24	10
2015	16	18	27	23	22	10	15	24	27	14	25	16

*Source:* World Bank Statistics <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNS.ICTR.ZS>

Table 6 shows inflation rates in the region. The great depression in Greece economy caused decreases in prices. It is common that, due to political instability, most of the countries that were in transition in 1992 such as

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation and Ukraine suffered from the hyperinflation. Although, after the austerity policies were taken in area, inflation became much lower and more stable, however, the countries still have inflation and inflation related problems.

**Table 6: Inflation Rates in Black Sea Economic Cooperation Area**

	ALB	ARM	AZE	BUL	GEO	GRC	MDA	ROU	RUS	SRB	UKR	TUR
1991	38,57	79,39	83,55	226,54	62,23	19,79		195	128,63		59,16	95,62
1998	8,43	10,7	-0,96	32,16	6,94	5,1	5,65	48,13	18,54	25,41	137,96	12,01
1999	1,53	0,05	2,16	2,01	9,73	3,62	44,83	49,51	72,39	33,24	54,18	27,4
2000	3,98	-1,37	12,49	7,2	4,68	1,59	27,33	43,07	37,7	78,58	49,23	23,12
2001	3,33	4,07	2,52	6,11	5,38	3,47	12,09	37,88	16,49	89,24	52,85	9,95
2002	2,41	2,37	3,12	3,79	5,92	3,35	9,83	22,63	15,49	18,04	37,42	5,12
2003	5,38	4,56	6,01	2,27	3,42	3,45	14,87	23,41	13,78	12,59	23,27	
2004	2,36	6,31	8,32	5,63	8,37	3,06	7,99	15,5	20,28	9,09	12,4	9,35
2005	2,62	3,24	16,14	6,5	7,93	2,24	9,34	12,1	19,31	14,33	7,08	7,72
2006	2,7	4,62	11,3	6,74	8,48	3,5	13,42	10,55	15,17	11,86	9,33	9,65
2007	3,58	4,23	20,98	11,07	9,69	3,42	15,91	12,79	13,8	8,22	6,22	8,39
2008	3,86	5,99	27,76	8,16	9,71	4,34	9,24	15,6	17,96	10,62	11,99	10,06
2009	2,42	2,56	18,93	4,05	-2,01	2,57	2,17	4,76	1,99	8,3	5,29	6,53
2010	4,49	7,77	13,76	2,59	8,54	0,67	11,07	5,42	14,19	5,88	5,68	6,40
2011	2,31	4,28	22,57	5,98	9,45	0,8	7,26	4,74	23,64	9,56	8,58	10,45
2012	1,04	5,35	1,44	1,56	1,07	-0,37	7,89	4,69	8,3	6,26	6,9	6,16
2013	0,22	3,37	1,02	-0,7	-0,76	-2,35	4,13	3,42	4,77	5,44	6,17	7,40
2014	1,42	2,31	0,2	0,45	3,78	-1,85	6,38	1,69	8,99	2,71	8,27	8,17
2015	0,16	1,18	-8,85	2,21	5,78	-1,04	9,58	2,92	7,68	2,68	7,43	8,81

Source: The World Bank Statistics



At the region, the lending interest rates are higher than the advanced economies lending interest rates. In all the developed economies such as the USA, the EU area and Japan, the interest rates were zero during 7 years after the 2007 financial crises. However, in the region, the interest rates were so high that even these high interest rates would stop new investments and high growth rates.

**Table 7: Lending Interest Rates in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Area %**

Country Code	ALB	ARM	AZE	GEO	GRC	MDA	ROU	RUS	UKR	TUR	SRB
1991					29.45						
1998		48.49		35.75	18.56	30.83	55.32	41.79	54.50	103	60.86
1999	21.62	38.85	19.48	29.67	15.00	35.54	65.64	39.72	54.95	80	46.06
2000	22.10	31.57	19.66	24.67	12.32	33.78	53.85	24.43	41.53	80	6.30
2001	19.65	26.69	19.71	22.27	8.59	28.69	45.40	17.91	32.28	35	34.50
2002	15.30	21.14	17.37	23.58	7.41	23.52	35.43	15.70	25.35	60	19.71
2003	14.27	20.83	15.46	23.76	6.79	19.29	25.44	12.98	17.89	60	15.48
2004	11.76	18.63	15.72	22.09	9.55	20.94	25.61	11.44	17.40	55	15.53
2005	13.08	17.98	17.03	17.55	8.47	19.26	19.60	10.68	16.17	17	16.83
2006	12.94	16.53	17.86	17.06	7.89	18.13	13.98	10.43	15.17	14	16.56
2007	14.10	17.52	19.13	17.09	7.70	18.83	13.35	10.03	13.90	15	11.13
2008	13.02	17.05	19.76	18.04	8.65	21.06	14.99	12.23	17.49	15	16.13
2009	12.66	18.76	20.03	17.87	8.59	20.54	17.28	15.31	20.86	10	11.78
2010	12.82	19.20	20.70	15.85	9.79	16.36	14.07	10.82	15.87	7,5	17.30
2011	12.43	17.75	18.99	15.00	10.16	14.44	12.13	8.46	15.95	6,5	17.17
2012	10.88	17.23	18.35	14.81	8.19	13.42	11.33	9.10	18.39	5,75	18.20
2013	9.83	15.99	18.21	13.59	7.62	12.29	10.52	9.47	16.65	4,75	17.07
2014	8.66	16.41	17.86	11.91	7.29	11.01	8.47	11.14	17.72	4,75	14.81
2015	8.73	17.59	17.53	12.49		14.15	6.77	15.72	21.82	4,50	

Source: The World Bank Statistics <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FR.INR.LEND>, [http://www.ziraat.com.tr/tr/UrunHizmetUcretleri/GecmisDonemMevduatKrediFaizOranlari/Documents/1994\\_2001\\_uygulanan\\_tefe\\_faiz.pdf](http://www.ziraat.com.tr/tr/UrunHizmetUcretleri/GecmisDonemMevduatKrediFaizOranlari/Documents/1994_2001_uygulanan_tefe_faiz.pdf), [http://www.ziraat.com.tr/tr/UrunHizmetUcretleri/GecmisDonemMevduatKrediFaizOranlari/Documents/tl\\_mevduat\\_hesaplarina\\_uygulanan\\_faiz.pdf](http://www.ziraat.com.tr/tr/UrunHizmetUcretleri/GecmisDonemMevduatKrediFaizOranlari/Documents/tl_mevduat_hesaplarina_uygulanan_faiz.pdf)

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this research, mainly the foreign debt risks of the member states of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation have been analyzed. In the paper, the first focus was on the advantages of a regional cooperation. The reasons bringing twelve nations together support the well-being of the national economies in the region. Although, the regional cooperation has emerged in 1992, the related states have had a historical connection among themselves. These ties sometimes offered opportunities on export and import and sometimes brought disadvantages. Being a part of the region was not enough to prevent political conflicts in the region. The conflicts between Russia, Georgia and Ukraine and the conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia increased the effects of risks in the region. Where most of the member states were already parts of Soviet Union before 1992, they did radical change on their economic system. The countries already had financial and economic crises in the early years of the cooperation following their economic revolution. In the early years, similar to most of the ex- Soviet Union states, all states in the region suffered from high inflation, low capital accumulation and very high interest rates. However, beside Bulgaria and Romania, Greece should have had a good economic performance, but she did not. Greece economy suffered from the foreign currency denominated debt, still, she had the lower growth rate. Although Turkey suffered from 1994 and 2001 foreign currency related financial crises, during the same period, she was much more eligible to manage foreign currency denominated debt. However, still, she is one of the economies that has a large risk. Although, Russia came face to face with a high risk of current account imbalances due to severe volatility of oil prices, she also managed well and demonstrated a good performance during the last petroleum based crises. However, Azerbaijan, one of the oil exporting countries, had instability due to the changes in oil prices. Even though there is a high instability in Azerbaijan economy, the country is managing its foreign debt level. Although, member countries manage well, foreign currency debt level offers uncertainty on the BSEC Region.

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# *Iran's New Presence in the Chess of the Black Sea Region and the Caucasus*

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the new policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the Black Sea Region and the Caucasus. The historical and pre-revolution mindset in Iran with respect to the strategic importance of these geographies faced serious shift after the 1979 Revolution and then with the USSR dissolution in 1991. With the succeeding developments in its surrounding geographies on the eve of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Iran began to outline a powerful mental plan to consolidate and/or renew its place in the strategic map of these regions. This article argues that, Iran began to introduce short and long term energy supply projects and provided support for it in these regions. Within this framework, the aim is to understand the factors that has stimulated Iran's attention and new engagement in these geographies and its vitality both for itself and for the countries of these regions and the world. This paper has found that the historical heritage is the major factor for Iran's engagement in these regions. Nevertheless, this factor might not explain Iran's success or failure. However, other issues such as Iran's new economic, political and security motives based on a multi-dimensional approach in the last two or three decades, plus its geographical location and geopolitical position, have played roles in this regard.

**Keywords:** *Black Sea, Caucasus, Iran, Energy, Security, Economic, Collaboration*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*History and historical heritage, cannot always explain all aspects of a country's interactions or counteractions with its surrounding geographies, or its success or failure in this processes. Iran is not excluded from this phenomenon. Iran's influence in the Black Sea region and the Caucasus traces back to the Achaemenid Empire (550 BC-330 BC) and to Safavid Dynasty (1501-1736). Countries like Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan have been parts of the properties of the Iran Emperors before the Tsardom of Russia captured these lands in 11th Century. However, Iran could not systematically maneuver in various fields in these geographies based on its historical influences or historical heritage, although, such a characteristic can explain the political stances of Iran and its relations with the countries of these geographies, which is out of the scope of this article. At the same time, the new economic, political and security issues are among the most important determining factors in this respect. Besides, the United States of America ("-U.S.") and Russia's new energy and security policies in these regions have had both enforced and stimulated Iran for the new positioning and political stances and, of course, new role-playing. Iran has either naturally been seeking good and trustworthy allies in these relatively volatile regions or has been trying to strengthen its relations with the existing, not much firm and steadfast, allies or friendly countries.*

After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Iran has adopted different approaches towards these regions and the post-Soviet independent states, influenced by regional and international developments and also based on the necessities of its domestic policies. Iran has, in fact, started to design new diplomacy oriented policies towards these regions, also mostly based on or influenced by the ideals of the Islamic Revolution. The latter has actually been contemplated differently by the countries of these regions and has negatively affected their perception of Iran. Although, Iran was among the first countries which recognized the newly established independent states.

Based on these factors, this article intends to find the motives for Iran's new presence and engagement in the Black Sea Region and the Caucasus and discover the regional and global vitality of its presence. Through description and analysis, using various resources, the article firstly assesses Iran's understanding of sea power in order to grasp an idea of Iran's motives for

new engagements, the potential implications and opportunities considering its geographical position. Secondly, Iran's engagement in the post-1979 Revolution will be pointed out. This discussion is significant as it clarifies and answers some of the "what", "how", and "why" questions regarding Iran's new engagement in these regions. Thirdly, it evaluates Iran's share in the economic, security and political equations of these regions to understand the impact of its engagement in the broader collaboration. Fourthly, it examines Iran's reaction to the new regional dynamics, and finally the future outlook will be discussed as the conclusion.

## **2. SEA POWER, A KEY TO GLOBAL PREDOMINANCE**

Geologically, 71% of the earth's surface is covered with water and most of that 71% that is under water is oceans; only the 29% is land (USGS, 2016). On the other hand, the notion of "sea" and its strategic significance in the world politics and international relations is not a contemporary issue, rather it is traced back to the ancient times as well as British Empire. For instance, Greeks were active seafarers seeking opportunities for trade and finding new independent cities at coastal sites across the Mediterranean Sea (Colette Hemingway & Sean Hemingway, 2007). The concepts of 'Command of the Sea' and 'Sea Power' have always been significantly important. Rubel (2012) argues that the countries' navies have always sought to control communications on the sea in order to protect one's own commerce, disrupt the enemy's, move one's own army, and prevent the movement of the enemy's (Rubel, 2012).

In the same way, in 1890, Alfred Thayer Mahan, the American strategist credited his reading of Theodore Mommsen's six-volume *History of Rome* in his memories, *From Sail to Steam*, for the insight that sea power was the key to global predominance (Sempa, 2014). Mahan (1890) reviewed the role of sea power in the emergence and growth of the British Empire. He believes that sea is a "great highway" and "wide common" with "well-worn trade routes" over which men pass in all directions (Mahan, 1890).

Mahan (1890) famously listed six fundamental elements of sea power: geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, size of population, character of the people, and character of government (Mahan, 1890). Taking Mahan's fundamental elements of sea power as the basis

for understanding the dynamics around these strategically important but geopolitically intricate regions, Iran's mental strategic map of the Black Sea region and the Caucasus and the ambitions for its interactive participation could be defined and assessed.

On the other hand, having the straits and strategically significant Canal in one's geography is not always an advantage, but rather would be a headache in terms of threats against national security and the energy security. There are many examples of countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Iran and Yemen, for instance, that not only inflicted lots of tensions or variety of threats but also took the advantages of their straits and strategically significant Canals of Dardanelle, Bosphorus, Suez and Bab-el-Mandeb, since their geopolitical position has made them closer to the industrial nations and powers and also provided them with the chance of becoming the member of regional and international organizations. In the same way, Iran's advantage of its particular place within the geopolitical strategies of the big powers has been diverse since, in one hand, this geopolitical importance has saved Iran staying out of the full or permanent colonies of big powers during the history and, on the other hand, it has caused Iran to lose parts of its lands when the big games were being played by the big powers for decades. For instance, Iran played an important role and acted as a strategic bridge for the victory of the Allied countries during World War I and II, but its people faced serious problems such as famine and diseases that led to the death of thousands.

In this regard, heir to one of the world's oldest civilizations, Iran's geographical location and geopolitical position in the world and regional map brought for it potential risks and also potential opportunities; Iran is bordered to the northwest by Armenia, the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, and Azerbaijan; to the northeast by Turkmenistan; to the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan; to the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; to the north by the Caspian Sea; and to the west by Turkey and Iraq. It is the second largest country in the Middle East and the 18<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. With nearly 78.4 million inhabitants, Iran is the world's 17<sup>th</sup> most populous country. The country's central location is in Eurasia and Western Asia, and its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz makes it an important geostrategic country for both the direct investments and as transit corridors using its geography, sea or land, (Geopolitica, RU, 2017). This geographical

structure has made countries of the Black Sea region, the Caucasus and the Central Asia such as Turkey, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, etc. seriously important for Iran since Iran is connected to the Europe and the west by land and sea through these countries. For instance, Iran has always tried to reach the Black Sea through Armenia and through Kazakhstan to the countries of the Northern and Western Europe. Iran has also been attempting to find a way to reach China via Kyrgyzstan through a railroad project passing through Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Every country would experience change in due course, affected by some domestic and non-domestic factors or incentives. Since the 1979 Revolution and later on with the beginning of a new period on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Iran has been incited to expand and renew its strategic interests in these regions; although, it has not remained immune and intact due to a tsunami of violence and regional conflicts. Meanwhile, Iran has not been looking for regional predominance or hegemony through sea power as this is not in accordance to the spirit of the Islamic Republic, as has been continuously reiterated by the officials in Iran or would mean a serious risk and threat to its already endangered strategic interests (Larijani, 2015).

The Islamic Republic of Iran followed the principle of multi-dimensional approach in its policies towards the Black Sea region and the Caucasus in order to move the paths of divergence to convergence and also from diversity to uniformity. Besides, the Caucasus has been considered by some experts as being geopolitically supplemented to Iran. So that, the convergence oriented understanding of these regions by Iran has had great importance. Based on this understanding, countries are not able to react or respond to the challenges of the development process by themselves since these challenges are often comprised of transnational dimensions. For this reason, countries need and tend to cooperate to manage the situation. This is also applicable for Iran, as this country has been trying to benefit the potentials in various fields through the best use of its capacities based on convergence in economic engagement and energy supply in addition to paying close attention to the security issues.

### **3. IRAN'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE POST-1979 REVOLUTION**

It was only after the end of Iraq imposed war on Iran; that is, 20 August 1988 that Iran could assess the opportunities for new approaches in its domestic and foreign policies. During two consecutive terms of the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the years 1989-1997, the normalization of Iran's attitudes in foreign policy began as the result of the adopted policies (BBC, 2017). The second term of his office coincided by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which, in fact, provided the Islamic Republic an opportunity to have a new outlook towards the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. However, the dire climate of the region as a center for the continuous rivalry of the main rivals of the cold war and their allies in one hand and the policies and approaches of the next governments in Iran on the other hand, the prospects of promotion of convergence in economic initiatives and maintenance of peace and stability were deemed a difficult and an unreachable task. Though, any of these approaches and policies are said to be a quest for the realization of the objectives mapped by the 1979 Revolution. More accurately, following the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the emergence of seriously vulnerable new post-Soviet states in the northern borders of Iran and due to the importance of the oil resources in the Caspian Sea and the rise in the competition of the regional and international actors, a resistance pattern was introduced by the ideologies of the Islamic Revolution against the imperial American trends in order to both renew and regenerate its natural or expected status and guarantee the peace and stability. So, despite Iran's intention for convergence and interactive collaboration, it has continued its policies based on the motto of "anything but U.S. policy", besides showing respect to the governing formula in international relations and world politics. Two examples from the western medias and personalities which might reflect the western understanding of the nature of Iran's power would both add spice to the discussion and help better understand the issue. In October 2013, "The Economist" published a report underscoring the need for stripping Iran of its nuclear program "to stem the rise of Persian power." A "nuclear Iran," it asserted, would seriously challenge western interests in the Middle East and endanger "Israel's right to exist." The magazine concluded that "when Persian power is on the rise, it is not the time to back away from the Middle East" (The Economist, 2013). This report is a reflection of the western and the U.S. understanding of Iran's regional initiatives,

which indispensably affected Iran's economic and energy projects in the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. Arguing from the opposite angle, as the second example, CNN quoted Hillary Mann Leverett, a former U.S. National Security Council official as saying, "why Iran's rise is a good thing". He told, "In reality, Iran's rise is not only normal, it is actually essential to a more stable region," because America's recent "imperial overstretch" to permanently create a pro-American regional order, and the post-1979 Faustian bargain involving Israel and Saudi Arabia to contain Iranian power, had failed" (CNN, 2015).

On the other hand, the challenges Iran has been facing in its domestic, regional as well as in international spheres have made the decision-making mechanisms for Iran more uncompromising, arduous and perplexing with respect to these regions. Since 2013; that is, during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> governments, Iran has embarked on an effective start to focus on the possibilities of strengthening the already existing transit sea and land corridors and also to introduce new projects such as the tripartite economic agreements for the development of the port of Chabahar, called as Chabahar transit agreement signed between Iran-Afghanistan and India (Payvand, 2016). The finalization of the agreement is to bind and connect the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea (including 6 countries that are Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Bulgaria and Greece) and also the fulfillment of "Iran-River Canal" or "Iranrud" project or the "North-to-South Shipping Road Project". The latter, as a "trans-Iranian canal", will provide the cargo and commercial ships to pass through Iran to Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea and to Indian Ocean (Sputnik news, 2016). Russia is the number one supporter of this project because to the Russian, this project will put an end to the sea power hegemony of the west. Similarly, European and post-Soviet states will also benefit from it. But it seems the US is worried about this alternative to the Suez Channel.

**Figure1.** Navigable channel linking the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf



Source: <https://sptnkne.ws/c6eT>

Similarly, the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor is strategically important. The following summarization of the characteristics of this corridor explicitly indicates how Iran's role in this corridor is vital and also challenging:

- ✓ A new route to connect Iran to Europe.
- ✓ An alternative to the transit road of Iran-Turkey-Europe.
- ✓ Serves as a trade hub not just for the Middle East but also into Europe and Central Asia.
- ✓ It is not more economical in terms of fuel for the vehicles and transportation or distances but because of some mutual border challenges for the transport companies and truck owners of Iran and Turkey; this route is welcomed as an alternative rout by the Iranian companies.
- ✓ This corridor is a connection and transit route between six countries that are Iran, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Bulgaria and Greece.

- ✓ This corridor is also a transit route for gas and electricity transportation from Iran to Armenia and then to Georgia.
- ✓ This corridor is geo-strategically important because it is a chance for Iran to increase its assertive and intuitive presence in the region.
- ✓ It is the best ever gate for the regional economic developments and the convergence as well as the interactive return of Iran to the South Caucasus.

In the most optimistic situation;

- ✓ This corridor is vital for Armenia and Georgia in times of any possible sanction by Turkey and Azerbaijan.
- ✓ It has the potential to limit the influence of Turkey and Azerbaijan in Georgia's markets or will cause the emergence of regional rivals for Turkish goods in Georgia's market.
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The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as an outcome of series of negotiations between the P5+1 countries and Iran, has become an incentive for Iran to promote its trade exchanges with its surrounding geographies and the EU countries. Of course, the latest moves by Trump administration in abrogation of the deal and unilaterally levying new sanctions on Iran, though believed to be fundamentally flawed (Ashford,



2017), will substantially endanger Iran's multiple projects towards the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. It will finally impede Iran's multi-dimensional policies towards these regions.

#### **4. IRAN'S REACTUONS TOWARDS NEW REGIONAL DYNAMICS**

There is no doubt that any sovereign state and even the non-state actor, regardless of being rightful or not, reacts to any changes or developments in its vicinities. A long background of common history and civilization between Iran and the countries of the Caucasus and the Black Sea region would have necessitated the Islamic Republic to respond and react to the changes and renew its geopolitical interactions.

The collapse of the Soviet Union provided ultimate grounds for all regional and international actors to redefine their national interests in the Black Sea region and the emergence of new independent states. Iran acted the same and outlined new equations in its relations with the newly independent countries in the regions of South Caucasus and Central Asia and began its direct contact with the governments and the people. For Iran, the command of the sea or the sea power might not be the same as that of the big powers, but a kind of reconsideration of policies towards the seas around its geography has been seen as more necessary as political, economic, and technological developments because the sea power has seriously influenced the dynamics of the geopolitical interactions of the other countries. Under such a condition, the task for Iran to be actively present in the Black Sea region and the Caucasus has both necessitated serious attention and consumed lots of resources as the west and the U.S., above all, has made Iran so engaged with various issues since the 1979 Revolution.

To be involved at the center and the heart of this chess as the great powers always expect, requires Iran to fully cooperate, collaborate and to be in convergence with them without any preconditions. The Black Sea region and Caucasus form a triangle of fighting against terrorism, separatism and energy transfer, which Iran is desired or expected to be at the center of junction of strategic interests of this triangle. At the same time, four major countries, namely, Iran, Turkey, Russia and U.S. have largely diverging but some common interests in these regions. These regions are

the arenas of rivalry for the main rivals of the cold war; that is, Russia and U.S., since the two countries seek to maintain their dominant influence and preferential access to resources and, at the same time, try to limit each other's strength. Under such a climate, Iran has tried to balance its interactions and counteractions with the countries of the region by supporting the developments and economic initiatives. That's why Iranian officials behave consciously and cautiously. What Iran upholds is to follow the path of convergence in economic issues, energy supply and security cooperation and to introduce ideas and projects to the relevant countries in the region or take suggestions by the leaders of the region in order to be share its capacities more actively.

The start of the promotion of economy oriented projects based on convergence and real interaction came when all grounds were provided. Since 1992, Iranian officials have begun to outline some grand projects with the centrality of the Black Sea, as well as, land, railroad and sea transportation considering the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf and the Black Sea. Except some countries which have tried to stay cautious, these projects are supported by the officials in the countries of the Caucasus and the Black Sea region, through the meetings of "The Joint Economic Commissions".

## **5. IRAN'S SHARE IN THE ENERGY SUPPLY, SECURITY AND POLITICAL EQUATIONS OF THE REGION**

The transit and transport corridors that are already mentioned in this study are for some reasons, both vital and challenging. Iran is the key for the security of energy supply and/or the diversity in the energy supply for both of these regions and the Europe. Energy diversification has emerged as one of the most important priorities for a majority of member countries in the EU. In case of the EU's need of Iran's energy supply, Europe, like U.S. has come to the understanding that it has to be prepared for major changes in its energy supply structure. The increasing demand of energy in Europe combined with its high reliance on Russia have led the EU to look to the Caspian Sea region for alternative energy resources. And, Iran, which owns the third largest combined oil/natural gas reserves worldwide (following Russia and Saudi Arabia) will certainly play a significant role in this structure as a supply option, of course, if the regional and global political developments allow it. This process, promotes the substantial

potentials for energy cooperation between Iran and the EU countries. Friedman (2003) argues that, Europe's interest in Iran is quite different with regard to oil, on the one hand, and natural gas on the other. The gas sector is politically more complex and important, while, oil is more interesting from a global supply perspective (Friedman, 2003). Although Iran is the fourth largest oil exporter worldwide, it is not counted as the only major supplier of either oil or natural gas to the region and the EU.

The security of energy supply has become more important and sensitive in the post-Soviet Union period since U.S. began to put more effort in establishing a new arrangement for the regional hegemony. In consequence, Russia has increased efforts in emerging as a main rival to U.S. hegemony in the regional and global spheres by making use of its huge oil and gas reservoirs. In the same vein, Iran's oil and gas, as in the last decades and centuries, has become a major factor for global and regional economic, security and political equations.

However, the increasing and effective U.S. presence and involvement in these regions, in particular in the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea, has won Iran more credibility in terms of its roles in the security of energy supply in these strategically important regions. Of course, security and political transformation with the end of the bipolar system, has affected Iran's role in this regard, in the sense that, as the result of the process of globalization of economy and politics, the countries' security become compatible with their interests and, as the result, their economic growth and political power become interconnected with energy security. Along with these issues, the rise and fall of the oil and gas prices in the global market has also a prompt effect on the economy and political stances of not only the oil and gas exporter countries but also all the consumers (IMF, 2000). Consequently, finding the most economic and secure routes for transferring energy has earned a significant importance and sensitivity in the formation of regional and global politics. On the other hand, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the big powerful actors and international companies have started widespread competitions in the West Asia, Middle East, Persian Gulf and Central Asia to take the control of the flow of energy and its transportation routes. Naturally, trying to find the most secure, economic, and cheapest route has become one of the most important preferences of the countries. In particular, big powerful countries began to apply their diplomacy tools,

hard and soft power, for ensuring the security of their energy supply. The security of the energy supply is not limited to the security of the transportation routes, rather, the diversification of the energy resources is one of the most important guarantees not only for the big powers, but also for the global energy market. The latter is another issue, which has put Iran in the center of the big actors' attention.

There are some measures and policies which Iran adopted since 1991 towards these regions. These measures and policies represent the amount and nature of Iran's attention and intentions:

1. Promotion of economic co-operations with the regional countries as the backbone of political cooperation.
2. Playing a mediator role in regional crisis.
3. Supporting and helping other regional countries in their membership in international and regional organizations.
4. Development of security cooperation with the regional countries in the fields of fight against terrorism, radical Islamism, drug trafficking and organized crimes.
5. Benefiting its geopolitical location to connect with different regions in the Caucasus, the Black Sea region, Central Asia, Persian Gulf, etc.
6. Emphasizing the national interests with respect to the sovereignty and interests of others.
7. Guarding its security, as the most important preferences of Iran in these regions.
8. Iran's policy towards the South Caucasus, mainly influenced by the country's desire to maintain good relations with Russia, and at the same time, balancing Turkey's influence and power through the Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan factors.
9. Functionally, Iran's policies towards the region are seemingly based on the ambitions rather than the mere economic factor; Iran has been trying to

promote close cooperation with Russia in order to prevent the influence of the west and to maintain the security of the region through inter-regional mechanisms rather than intra-regional.

10. Iran has had an average or below-average share of investments in this region because it has been facing serious economic challenges domestically.

11. In general, it is possible to say that a shift from Revolution-oriented policies in the foreign policy approach of Iran has emerged since the beginning of the first decade of 1990 or even at the beginning of the third millennium since it was in one way or another opposed to the international status quo. Therefore, the ideological interests were replaced by the renewal of its historical heritage in the region in terms of power and influence and based on respect to the sovereignty of the regional countries.

12. In contrast with many analyses and perceptions, Iran has determined, some short and long term road maps, not perhaps so much consistent, for its influence in the economic, security and political equations in the Caucasus and the Black Sea region. Though, it seems that Iran has kept the track well and on the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it will share more in the region in the near future. These regions have become the center of the government's new policies if Trump's new sanction policies permit.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The Black Sea region is the geographical region of Turkey. It is a bridge between Europe and Asia and countries like Turkey, Iran, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Europe and U.S. are the potential and/or main rivals. The countries of the Black Sea and the Caucasus are on the route to some grand projects such as Black Sea-Caspian Sea Corridor project known as the Eurasia Canal project.

The Persian Gulf-Black Sea Corridor is also significant for the economic boom of these geographies. This corridor will serve as a trade hub not just for the Middle East but for Europe and Central Asia as well by creating a new transport corridor that would connect four countries including Iran, Armenia, Georgia and Bulgaria. Other routes such as the Caspian Sea-Persian Gulf corridor is a project which will seriously affect some

countries regional and international economic and strategic interests. On the other hand, any form of crisis in these regions easily and quickly spills over to near and far locations because of their geopolitical intricacy and intractable marine and land communication routes. Obviously, there are still big and unsolved security concerns in terms of energy diversity and energy transferring since, despite its strategic importance, the Caucasus, in particular, is often portrayed as a remote and violence-plagued place; not a war zone as it was once, but parts of it is known to be a home to organized crimes, separatist activities and radical Muslims. It is covered with a jumble of mountains situated at the periphery of the central region.

However, it is not a new phenomenon that the oil, gas and other natural resources and reserves in the Black Sea region and the Caucasus are tied with security issues and politics. We have learned from the far and near histories how the major actors like the Ottoman and Russia on the one hand, and U.S. on the other, were competing for the hegemony on the Black Sea and the Caucasus, right after the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and also during and after the Cold War, and how the countries like Germany and France were reacting to those political and security policies. Countries like Iran and Turkey have been cautiously seeking consolidation for their positions in these processes. Turkey has more relevantly and closely been following the developments as this country is a NATO member and also located in the Black sea geography. Countries' attempts in leaving each other behind to stay involved in the affairs of these regions to consolidate their share in the economic, security and political equations, in one way or another, can be defined or evaluated in line with Mahan's six fundamental elements of sea power. As it is understood, history and historical background cannot work as a major factor for the countries' success or failure in their approaches and policies, however, history and historical background work as a motivating factor and an incentive.

The change in Iran's mindset toward these regions, like that of other countries, has been affected by some domestic and non-domestic factors or incentives. However, its new engagement followed the principle of a multi-dimensional approach towards the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. Iran has been following the path of divergence to convergence in order to move from diversity to uniformity. Based on such understanding, Iran knew it was not able to react or respond to the challenges of the development

process by itself since these challenges are often comprised of transnational dimensions. For this reason, Iran has showed green light for cooperation in various fields in order to manage the situation despite many challenges.

There are two pictures; big and the bigger, which can be drawn out from the whole discussion. The big picture is that Iran's multi-dimensional approaches mostly deal with the countries of these regions on bilateral, trilateral and multi-lateral basis. However, the problem is that Iran's strategy in interactions or counteractions towards these regions has been neither consistent nor compartmentalized so that a lot of expectations and resentments imposed on Iran for its gradual engagement in the region despite its historical might in terms of its sea and land powers.

The bigger picture is that as long as the policies of other regional and non-regional countries provide the grounds for the secure and guaranteed interconnection of Iran's energy and economy to the global system, its interests with regards to relations with the countries of these regions and its convergence and uniformity moves are not jeopardized, Iran will stay supportive to new initiatives and projects based on clarity, consistency and credibility.

However, the latest unilateral move by the Trump administration to sink the P5+1 nuclear deal with Iran is worrying and also can play as a new driving engine for Iran to introduce new energy based strategies, which might put the U.S. interests at risk. Iran has tried to renew its place and at the same time keep the existing balance safe. Iran's new positioning is very close to Mahan's six fundamental elements of sea power: geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, size of population, character of the people, and character of government. Iran's new strategic policies attracted most of the countries in these regions due to their convergent nature which also encompass Rubel's argumentation and insights on the "command of the sea" and "sea power".

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## ***Regional Cooperation And Security Issues In Central Asia***

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the regional cooperation and security issues in Central Asia in the framework of New Regionalism and Liberal Institutionalism theories. The aim of this article is to determine Kazakhstan's role in strengthening cooperation in the context of Central Asian regional cooperation and security issues. Central Asian regional cooperation and security problems and Kazakhstan's initiatives with regard to these topics have also been discussed. Moreover, this study emphasizes the important factors of cultural, psychological and communicative closeness of Central Asian states, which are necessary for strengthening the integration and determining common interests.

**Keywords:** *Central Asian Turkic Republics, Integration, Security Issues, Economic Cooperation, Kazakhstan.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) caused profound changes in the global system and a number of regional subsystems. The emergence of five new independent states in the center of the Eurasian continent - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - marked the beginning of the formation of a new international political region - Central Asia (CA) - and the Central Asian subsystem. The new region has become a field of intersection of interests and an object of foreign policy influence of neighboring states - Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, and global actors. The importance of CA is due to its geopolitical location between Russia, China, and Iran, its significant energy and natural resource potential, transport and transit opportunities, and proximity to the centers of armed conflicts (Afghanistan, Pakistan), which strongly affect international security. In this regard, CA region will remain as a sphere of intersection of interests and strategies of the states of the CA and external geopolitical players.

Historically, states have always used different political forms of uniting and interacting with other states with separate territories in order to resolve issues of joint security, defense, political and economic cooperation. Thus, Eurasia where regional organizations and states function, is not the exception. The Ottoman Empire, the SU and the Warsaw Treaty Organization are just some examples. A new wave of regional activity at the world level occurred in the second half of the 20th century. In the literature, such a worldwide trend of regionalism (organization) has been called the “new regionalism” which is regarded as a new era of regionalism that emerged as a response to new risks, and where participating states have ceased to be limited to formal interstate integration organizations (Soderbaum & Shaw 2003).

Let us outline the following features of the new regionalism. First: the intensity and increase in the number of regional organizations. Thus, if in modern times, from 1910 to 1930, only 4 organizations were established (the so-called period of “early regionalism”), then from 1944 until the end of the 1990s (the so-called period of “old regionalism”) there were already over 60 organizations, and since 1990 up to the present (the period of the “new regionalism”) there are more than 100 organizations. Second: the diversity of the universe. The new regionalism, unlike the old regionalism

which as a whole had a narrow focus on preferential trade agreements and security alliances, includes the cooperation of countries in all spheres of public life. So it is necessary to highlight important areas in the activities of regional organizations, such as the ecological sphere, humanitarian and cultural relations, the fight against terrorism and organized crime, etc. The third feature of regionalism is the diversity of views. In a number of regions, states are simultaneously participants in several international regional organizations that are different both in their areas of activity and in their goals of creation besides being competing players on the international arena. Another feature of regionalism can be distinguished by its diversity. Integration processes can be observed in many regions, however they do not follow the “European” path. The participating states have ceased to be limited to formal interstate integration organizations in modern conditions. The role and meanings of the regional organizations in the international relations on the activities of consultative formats (summits, forums, conferences, etc.) and the inter-parliamentary interactions have increased (Soderbaum & Shaw 2003:4-8).

Another aspect to consider within the theory of Liberal Institutionalism and the concept of alliance relates to its research question. Liberal institutionalism underlines the importance of international organizations for developing cooperation among states. Liberal institutionalists argue that international institutions are inclined towards promoting cooperation by making information transparent to all members, which leads to the decrease of the risk of cheating. Joseph Grieco (1990) believes that the distribution of the benefits or gains from the cooperation of the included states is the most crucial issue in any partnership system. States that generally have gains from the cooperation, are concerned on how to get more gains and leave other states worse off over time. The reason for this is the anarchical system in which states are being operated, where relative gains can affect the balance of power (Grieco, 1990).

Duncan Snidel (1991) and Robert Powell (1991) actually supported the Grieco’s idea by arguing that relative gains problem has not been overemphasized. Snidel believes that the issue of relative gains is highly related to a two-actor situation or to a number of states which have important asymmetries between them. States with nearly similar powers don’t have to be worried about relative gains. Likewise, Robert Powell thinks that

hostile or peaceful condition in world order is defining the significance of the relative gains problem. According to liberal institutionalism, it works better when the threat of using force is the last option to consider and the. As such, actors within the international system tend to cooperate when they are relatively secured and the relative gains problem is precisely low (Snidal 1991, Powell 1991, Grieco 1990).

With the creation of new Central Asian states in the 1990s in the Eurasian Post-Soviet era, the emergence of a number of large integration organizations were established (CIS, BSEC, ECO, EurAsEC, SCO), where along with Russia and neighboring countries – usually their initiators –the newly formed republics of the South Caucasus and CA joined.

Thus, Central Asian region poses new questions for the world community. What should we expect from the main geopolitical actors in the near future? How will the strategy of security and foreign policy of the Central Asian countries be built on their neighbors, world powers, international organizations and other centers of power? Will geopolitical stability in Eurasia, balance of power, balance of interests be preserved? How will the situation in CA develop and what is the level of risks and challenges faced by the countries of the region, and how can we characterize possible development paths?

The relevance of the topic is connected with the fact that CA has an important geo-strategic and geo-economic significance for the entire continent. At the same time, the region has a significant conflict potential. The study of the problems of political and economic cooperation is actual, since the analysis makes it possible to predict and correct the further development of relations. Of particular importance is the issue of mechanisms to counter the threats against security, that is, the creation of an effective system of integrated security capable of ensuring the real sovereignty of the states of the region.

Looking through the literature devoted to CA, three main topics that have been raised by specialists in the past years can be identified. First of all, their attention was focused on the problems of Central Asian security and on the issues of regional influence among external powers: Russia, China, the United States and European countries represented by the European

Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Menon 2003; Harris & Xijiang 1993; Star 2005; Allison 2004a).

Second topic grabbing specialist's attention constantly on geopolitics is related to the control over the oil production, especially the transportation to the energy resources in CA region. On these issues, many articles and other works have been written, whose authors mainly analyze the possibility of the external players' controlling and creating new ways of delivering energy resources to world markets, as well as the political, economic and geopolitical consequences of those projects (Blank 2006; Cohen 2006; Dorian 2006).

The studies of the Central Asian political scientists and international experts dedicated to the problems of regional security and international relations and the external economic ties of the countries of the region, as was the rule, remained within the framework of the official interpretation of the national interests and foreign policies adopted in the Central Asian states. Hence, in the articles of Kassenov, the foreign policy direction of the states government is grounded, and its separate aspects are revealed (Kassenov, 1997; see also Aben, 1999; Laumulin, 2007; Narynski & Malgin, 2003; Karayanni, 2003; Tomberg, 2006; Yudanov, 2000).

Thirdly, the literature on Kazakh foreign policy is mainly written by Kazakh academicians, especially the main exponents of Almaty-Astana literature are precisely the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (Nazarbayev, 1994), diplomat Mansurov (Mansurov, 1997), Kassenov (Kassenov 1995), Sultanov and Muzaparova (Sultanov & Muzaparova, 2003). Kazakh foreign policy had been defined as a policy with a "multivector" reach by above-stated officials since the state's independence in 1991.

According to the officials, Kazakhstan's foreign policy principles prioritized the following: strengthening state sovereignty, integrity and inviolability of borders, and protecting economic interests (Kassenov, 1995). Mansurov defined the three main pillars of Kazakh foreign policy as sovereignty, integration, and strategic partnership (Mansurov, 1997).

Secondarily, Kazakhstan's foreign policy had been outlined by some academicians. Their doubt was primarily in Kazakhstan's stance within the Central Asian and Caspian region. Nazarbayev's efforts to create a Eurasian Union (Dugin, 2004) and Kazakhstan's important role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) push regional economic and security issues to the top of Kazakh political agenda (Sultanov & Muzaparova, 2003). Analyses of Richard Weitz has revealed facts of the cooperation between Kazakh regional policy and Caspian energy geopolitics, notably after the discovery of Kashagan in 2000 and the increasing political collaborations over pipeline projects in Eurasia (Weitz, 2008).

In the evaluation section of the study, besides the regional security from the economic aspects of CA and main priorities of cooperation in security, the security issues of CA and the role of Kazakhstan in regional security and cooperation are examined. The strategies and policies put forward by Kazakhstan for the strengthening of the regional security as well as economic and political relations are mentioned.

### **MAIN PRIORITIES OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF REGIONAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Regional cooperation and security, first of all, is the key element for the theoretical framework of the Regional cooperation (Fawcett 2012). Regional cooperation and security in CA should be based on fundamental assumptions regarding the history, geography, politics, economics, culture, language and religious community of the peoples of the region. This is due to the fact that CA, covering over 3.5 million sq. km, is home to over 64 million people. Economics of the CA states are interrelated. Region's states share energy, transport and irrigation networks and water supply systems.

Main priorities of cooperation in regional security and defense policy can be formulated as follows: development and implementation of coherent policies and joint action, coordinate activities of the competent authorities of the region in fighting against terrorism, extremism, illegal trafficking in arms and drugs, crime and illegal migration; adoption of joint measures to reduce potential for conflict of religious extremism and preservation of interfaith harmony in region; Development and implementation of

measures aimed at harmonizing national legislations of the States in the fight against terrorism; implementation of a single program to combat religious extremism, joint investigation, search operations on specific materials about the manifestations of religious extremism, requiring coordinated action; improving cross-border cooperation in suppression of drug trafficking as well as their illegal transit through territory of Central Asian states; harmonization of national legislation on border issues; curbing infiltration across borders of terrorist groups and other criminal elements; adoption of effective measures to isolate any manifestations of instability and conflict at border; joint decisions of issues related to the provision of mutual assistance in emergency situations, including on cross-border issues; ensuring effective cooperation on prevention and elimination of emergency situations of natural and man-made disasters (Klimenko, 2009:55-66).

Economic integration is an important factor in providing regional security. Currently, countries have different levels of socio-economic development. Close economic cooperation in the region would strengthen the mutually beneficial economic relationship. What kinds of measures should be taken? It requires the following: Creation of conditions for the revival of production, free trade, specialization and cooperation; the development of trade, labor and capital markets; formation of a system of support and sharing of strategic resources, transportation arteries, communications, manufacturing facilities; foundation of a common free trade and customs area; harmonization of legislation in the field of investment and trade (Dadabayeva & Kuzmina, 2014:22-31).

Strong dependence on natural and water resources in the region can create, for example, joint water, energy, transport and food specialized consortiums. This would combine the basic resources for implementation of specific economic projects, transport and logistics infrastructure as well as food security. Practical examples of cooperation in investment sphere between countries are available. A few years ago, joint investment funds were founded between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in amount of 101 million USD and between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, in amount of 100 million USD (Chorshanbiyev, 2014).



Most important factor in providing regional security is a joint decision on the economic and environmental challenges, consolidation effort to provide national and regional security, countering global challenges and threats of our time. Particularly, Kazakhstan initiated a project to establish an International Water and Energy Consortium with the participation of the World Bank (the concept has been proposed by Kazakhstan in 2003 and in October 2004, was approved by the Heads of States of the “Central Asian Cooperation” Organization) (Weitz 2008:26-31). Nowadays, the economic and political conditions in the countries are in need of progress regarding their energy establishment; for example, Regional Water and Energy Consortium. It would create a mechanism that enables a joint management for the water resources and integrated energy networks as well as paving the way for the development of “equal energy partnership.” This was seen in the joint implementation of hydropower projects during the construction of Kambarata hydroelectric power plant in Kyrgyzstan and the Rogun hydroelectric power plant in Tajikistan. Currently, bilateral agreements are signed between Russia and Tajikistan on completing the construction of the Sangtuda and Rogun hydroelectric power plant in Tajikistan. A document on Kambarata hydropower plant (1 and 2) in Kyrgyzstan is, nowadays, well under construction. Construction of Sangtuda-1 hydroelectric power was planned at the beginning of 1980s, but stopped due to the lack of financial sources until the agreement signed between Tajikistan and Russia for financial support, and also Iran and Tajikistan will build Sangtuda-2 hydroelectric power station. The possibility of expanding the format of the construction of the hydropower facilities in Tajikistan with the participation of Kazakhstan is also under consideration (Naumova, 2008).

In this regard, issue of the joint use of the water in CA states has a great political significance. This, above all, would reduce the conflict between countries and threats to energy and food security. It would also contribute to the formation of regional zone of security, stability and economic development. It is also necessary to make diplomatic efforts in order to join Convention on the Protection and use of Transboundary Water courses as well as International Lakes.

The long-term socio-economic and political development of Kazakhstan largely depends on the availability of a favorable external environment, primarily in Central Asia. Therefore, Kazakhstan is interested in the politically stable, economically sustainable and safe development of the region and makes significant efforts to achieve this goal, including jointly working with the Turkic Council (Laumulin, 2010).

After gaining independence, Kazakhstan has conducted an active foreign policy. The multi-vector nature of its international policy was shaped during this period. Besides, it fully corresponds to the geopolitical position of Kazakhstan and its national interests.

The formation of Kazakhstan's foreign policy was accompanied by considerable difficulties of an objective and subjective nature. On the one hand, the difficulty was that this process began practically from the scratch. Kazakhstan did not have the traditions of foreign policy activity during the Soviet period (Mukhamedov, 1997). On the other hand, the end of the Cold War and the state of uncertainty and instability that followed the collapse of the USSR set the state a difficult task of adapting to a new geopolitical situation and developing foreign policy priorities that would correspond to the place and role of Kazakhstan in the world community.

In this regard, Tokayev notes that the authors of the concept of Kazakhstan's foreign policy faced complex tasks of comprehending and generalizing processes that took place outside the country. This was necessary, first of all, in order to accurately determine the place and role of Kazakhstan in modern international relations and to identify priorities in the foreign policy of the state (Tokayev, 1997: 85). Important significance at the stage of formation of Kazakhstan's foreign policy was the approval of Kazakhstan's positions in the United Nations. Kazakhstan declared its intention to render every possible assistance for strengthening the role and effectiveness of the world organization in such matters as maintaining peace and security (renouncing the nuclear legacy of the USSR), ensuring sustainable socio-economic development, establishing democracy and the rule of law (Sultanov, 2005:158).

The place of Kazakhstan in the system of international relations has been determined by its geopolitical location at the junction of Europe and Asia, its economic and military-political interests as well as the existing potential. Kazakhstan's foreign policy was tasked to ensure the full inclusion of the Republic of Kazakhstan in regional and sub-regional economic and political cooperation structures on the basis of universally recognized principles of international law as the main means of regulating disputes and contradictions (Laumulin, 2006).

Adhering to the principle of multi-vector foreign relations, Kazakhstan aspired to create a solid contractual and legal basis in all areas of foreign policy. Relations with the states of Asia, Europe and America were initially built on the basis of objective needs for ensuring Kazakhstan's long-term national interests. The main goal was to achieve the approval of the country's political independence and security, the recognition of the irreversibility of turning Kazakhstan into a subject of international relations. At the same time, great importance was attached to the signing of bilateral and multilateral international treaties. It can be said with certainty that these documents played an important role in strengthening Kazakhstan's statehood. Entering into relations with other states and international organizations, Kazakhstan has shown the desire to actively apply norms of behavior that are generally accepted in the modern world community. Thus, the Republic of Kazakhstan defined the framework for cooperation with other countries on the basis of consensus, mutual respect and mutual benefit (Laumulin, 2004).

Beginning from the first days of independence to this day, Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities remain unchanged. It has an active, versatile and balanced foreign policy that can meet the challenges of the 21st century and is aimed at securing long-term national interests. Priority directions were and are the development of cooperation with Russia, the states of the Central Asian region, China, the United States, the European Union. Great importance is attached to interaction with the main countries of the Near and Middle East as well as Southeast Asia (Laumulin, 2004).

Kazakhstan's foreign policy is aimed not only at developing relations with states, but also at developing relations with various international organizations. In addition to the United Nations (UN), Kazakhstan cooperates with NATO in the framework of the Partnership for Peace program, and is also a participating country of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). During its accession to the OSCE, Kazakhstan pursued two main goals: achieving greater involvement of Kazakhstan and Central Asia in tackling European security issues and, through this, building a bridge between Euro-Atlanticism and Eurasianism, and enhancing the OSCE's role in conflict prevention and in addressing economic and environmental challenges (Tursunov, 2000:14).

Kazakhstan today is a full member of the international community. The Republic of Kazakhstan is perceived as a regional power with a strong economy and strong positions in the world. During the period of independence, Kazakhstan was able to resolve all territorial problems with the border countries, signing agreements with all neighbors on the delimitation and demarcation of state borders with a length of 14 thousand kilometers, including with Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (Zhulamanov, 2013:431). Thus, the formation of the bases of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan follows from the internal interests and needs of the country.

The formation of international economic ties of Kazakhstan began after the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s, and simultaneously with the transition from a centralized and planned economic system to a market economy. During this period, the republic also faced a multitude of economic problems connected with the break-up of previous economic ties within the framework of the USSR. The most important tasks of the country were the inclusion in the system of the international division of labor, support for market reforms, the creation of currency funds, the saturation of the consumer market, and the overcoming of the crisis in the transition period (Kharitonova & Vlasov, 2007).

Integration of Kazakhstan into the world economy causes active participation of the country in international currency and financial operations. The Republic has been a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank since 1992, actively cooperating with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank and other international and regional financial organizations (Alshanov, 2015).

Thus, today Kazakhstan is integrated into the system of international economic relations in a rather high degree. At the same time, the country faces a number of complex tasks to solve the problem of increasing the efficiency of its foreign economic relations. Among them, the diversification of exports towards increasing the share of value-added products, attracting foreign investment to the manufacturing sector of the economy, reducing the scale of illegal labor migration and the size of the country's external debt are of primary importance (Laumulin, 2004).

### **SECURITY ISSUES IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Ensuring security is one of the top priorities in the domestic and foreign policies of the Central Asian states. The foreign policy course, the degree of its conformity to national interests as well as the economic, social and moral state of society and the domestic political situation in the country are crucial for the ability of the state to defend its interests and its security (Maslov 2000:12). Since the very beginning of their independence, the Central Asian republics have faced problems of ensuring regional and ethno-confessional security. Events related to the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992-1997 and the invasion of the territories of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999-2000 by armed groups of militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan have become the peak of threats of terrorism and extremism. In addition, the geopolitical position of Central Asia has become the zones of influence of political instability and conflicts such as the Caucasus, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, Afghanistan, the Near East and the Middle East. The Central Asian security is, mostly, threatened by the situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban provides great organizational and material support to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the radical Tajik opposition and the Uyghur separatists (Medetbekov 2011).

On 20 October, 1992, at the 47th session of the UN General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, presented the idea of convening the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) to the world community. This initiative was dictated by the desire to introduce the existing world practice of ensuring security and stability into the Asian reality in order to give a course to the development of this Asian analogue of the “Helsinki process” (Bazhanov et al. 2000). In 1993-1994, CICA held meetings of experts on security issues on the continent. The initiative was supported by 15 states of Asia and international organizations consisting of the UN, OSCE, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). According to the experts, the countries of the region faced a complex set of tasks that continue to remain relevant today. The major priorities of these tasks are: resolution of territorial disputes; real progress in the field of disarmament and arms control; harmonization of measures in the fight against illicit trafficking in drugs and conventional weapons, terrorism and international crime; Joint solution of environmental issues; ensuring economic growth in Asian countries (Tokayev, 2001:367).

The problem of unresolved territorial disputes is a sensitive topic in the relations of many countries of the region, which does not contribute in the strengthening of the atmosphere of trust and cooperation in Asia. The most striking hotbed of tension, incitement of interethnic and interreligious conflicts in CA is the Ferghana Valley, the most densely populated territory, one of the main agricultural regions of CA. The large cities of the Fergana Valley - Namangan, Andijan, Khudzhand and Osh - were the spiritual centers of the Muslim world; they had the main educational centers of religious management. The population in the region mostly professes Islam of the Sunni type, although there are some Persian-speaking Shiite groups (Olklot & Malashenko 2000:44).

The conflict potential of the Fergana Valley began to be realized in the last years of the existence of the SU. On the territory of the valley, as a result of the administrative division, there were three union republics, subsequently becoming independent states: Uzbekistan (Ferghana, Andijan and Namangan), Kyrgyzstan (Osh, Batken region) and Tajikistan (Leninabad region). Additional complications are caused by the existence of enclaves: Uzbek residing on the territory of Kyrgyzstan and Tajiks residing on the

territory of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. This has been obvious, which manifested itself in the conflict between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in Fergana in 1989, in clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyz at the border of the two republics in 1989 and the Osh tragedy in 1990. In total, there were 36 conflicts on the ethnicity ground in CA in 1991 (Lunev 1999:68). The large interethnic mosaic, widespread unemployment, close proximity to Afghanistan, the high level of religiousness of the population, the corruption of the authorities, the saturation of the region with drugs, easy money from the sale and transportation of drugs, interethnic and interdenominational disunity and latent ethnic discrimination still make the Fergana valley an undeveloped region in CA (Golunov, 2001).

At the beginning of the 21st century, ecological security is of vital importance for CA. CA is located in the disaster zone - the practical disappearance of the Aral Sea, caused by the predatory use of the water resources of the Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers. This catastrophe has serious negative effects on the gene pool of peoples, leads to changes in the environment and climate as well as irreversible natural processes, and negatively affects the economies of the countries of the entire Eurasian continent. One of the main threats to the region's security is the politicization of the situation in the sphere of water use. The Aral Sea, the Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers form the main water resources of CA, on which the life in the region depends. The need to revise the existing use of water systems is caused by the conflicts that have arisen from resolving the issues of joint exploitation of water and energy resources which was derived from the violation of the former centralized river flow management system in the Syrdarya (Koshanov & Khusainov 2001:92).

The issue of terrorism has become a serious problem affecting all the states of CA. This led to social and political unrest, chaos and instability in the region. The issue has become critical because of the common borders of Central Asian countries with Afghanistan and Pakistan. CA is concerned about these two countries, which have become launching grounds for terrorism.

Drug trafficking is a threat not only to the Central Asian region, but to the entire Commonwealth of Independent States; drugs undermine the foundations of states, and the situation in CA is the proof of that. The deteriorating socio-economic conditions in many parts of the region are ideal for the prosperity of the narcotics industry. Sharing common values of geography and history makes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attractive for drug trafficking. CA is a transit for the drug flow from neighboring countries (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan). Geography of the area is very convenient for the movement of drug couriers. For example, patrolling the Kyrgyz-Tajik border is difficult due to climatic and geographical conditions (Bayalinov, 1994). A certain potential for solving this problem exists in such regional structures such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in which many states participate. These two organizations showed their way of transformation despite the emergence of terrorist threats in the region. An increase in the destabilizing role of the drug business in Asia can help create certain structures similar to anti-terrorist centers to combat the narcotics industry.

The food security issue is an important question in regional cooperation process. CA states have significant agricultural potential and offer high-quality agricultural production now. For example, Kazakhstan, a country with a prospering agriculture industry, is a devoted supporter of food security. In addition to the humanitarian aid assistance for the states in need, Kazakhstan is setting up an International Development Assistance Agency, KazAid to further strengthen that role (Dulac, 2014).

Owning a territory reciprocal to the size of Western Europe and about 80% of agricultural land of the country, Kazakhstan's role is essential in terms of promoting regional and global food security. The existence of 1.5 hectares of farmable land per person makes Kazakhstan the second highest in the world, and she consistently takes place among the world's ten largest wheat exporters (OECD 2013: 15). In 2011-2012 Kazakhstan's main harvest of roughly 27 million tons of grain, where 15 million tons were exported made it the sixth largest in the world. According to the report of The World Food Program, the northern region of Kazakhstan and the Punjab area of Pakistan in wheat markets are key markets to watch in



relation to regional wheat market dynamics and regional wheat viability (World Food Program 2011).

The OIC Food Security Fund which was initiated by Kazakhstan and headquartered in its capital Astana, aims to develop a system of mutual food assistance within the OIC. It includes the possibility of establishing a pool of food in the related countries (Nazarbayev, 2011). It is received with doubt that while Kazakhstan has launched another huge program in which it aims cattle breeding and meat production, to provide the Eurasian market and beyond. However, it has begun to import some beef and even horsemeat, a traditional Kazakh delicacy, so far. Although, Kazakhstan's confidence on its ambitious program continues, its tremendous agricultural potential attracts the attention of potential foreign investors too.

### **ACTIVITIES OF KAZAKHSTAN IN REGIONAL COOPERATION AND SECURITY**

The processes of internationalization and globalization of economic relations occurring in the world create favorable conditions and make integrational cooperation between states and regions necessary. In the world, there is a mutual penetration of capitals of different countries, expansion of international trade, and liberalization of foreign economic activity. Legal mechanisms for the functioning and regulation of economic cooperation between countries have been developed and are successfully applied. Since the independence, Kazakhstan maintains an active work on translating the integration processes into practical directions; both in the direction of the Eurasian vector and towards the Central Asian Union taking the interests and priorities of the Turkic world into account (Laumulin, 2004).

The balanced multi-vector foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan as well as the preliminary emphasis on historical subjectivity put the country's ability to preserve and multiply its newly acquired independence in an extremely difficult geopolitical situation. The additional power to the leadership position of Kazakhstan in Central Asia was given by the fact that the Kazakhstan's leadership accurately and promptly caught one of the most important global trends in the era of globalization - a tendency towards regional integration (Laumulin, 2006).

Regional security policy and strategy of Central Asian states aim to establish and protect their own national interests and are determined by the level of integration. Multilateral foreign policy of Kazakhstan allows the strengthening of the regional security and enhances the integration processes (Aris, 2013). Today, Kazakhstan is firmly taking the place of one of the regional leaders having proposed foreign policy initiatives to maintain regional security and strengthening cooperation. Kazakhstan's initiatives have led to the creation of several Eurasian regional organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Community, Eurasian Economic Union, Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Collective Security Treaty Organization, SCO.

Kazakhstan has initiated many projects of the Eurasian Union. In December 1991, the CIS was established in Almaty. During the period of 1995-2000, almost all of the most significant integration initiatives in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) came from Kazakhstan and from her president personally. The Customs Union was in the process of formation, which in 1996 included only three states. A great victory in promoting the Eurasian idea was the creation of the Inter-Parliamentary Committee in Euro-Asia, which included Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan (Mukhamedjanov, 2011).

In the modern Eurasian concept, put forward by Nursultan Nazarbayev, true integration predetermines unconditional observance and respect for the sovereignty and independence of the states and for their equality. In today's East-West dialogue, the Eurasian initiative of Kazakhstan appears as a political, economic and cultural doctrine of interstate interaction based on the principles of tolerance, maintaining peace and stability in the region, and mutually beneficial partnerships. The idea of creating Eurasia and tolerance has become fundamental in the state policy pursued in the country. It harmoniously echoes with the spiritual nature and national peculiarity of the Kazakh people: tolerance, good-neighborliness, friendliness, openness. Closely interwoven with the national spirit, the idea of Eurasianism synthesizes tolerance in itself as a unity in diversity. As an ideology, the idea of Eurasianism promotes respect, acceptance and a correct understanding of the rich diversity of cultures of the world, forms of self-expression and manifestation of human individuality (Egorin, 2015).

Kazakhstan's position on keeping peace and security begins from 1992, at the 47th Session of the UN General Assembly, when the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev suggested the creation of CICA whose aims are similar to its European counterpart, the OSCE to some extent.

Nowadays, CICA is a forum for a full-fledged intergovernmental dialogue, consultations and consensus-based decisions on the regional cooperation and security issues in Asia. CICA covers about 90% of the territory (about 400 mln. square kilometers) and the continent's population and 72% of the territory of the Eurasian continent. Countries include more than 2.8 billion people, accounting for 45% of the total world population. CICA countries have significant energy potential and 40% of the world's oil reserves. The Organization consists of 26 members including the entire Eurasian continent from Turkey to South Korea, where seven states and four international organizations are holding the observer status (Olimat, 2015:31-33). It has had four summits until now, the last one was on 20-21st of May, 2014 in Shanghai, China. In the summit, China officially took possession of CICA chairmanship from Turkey. With the participation of the UN Secretary General, 47 states and international organizations attended the summit (Engvall & Cornell, 2015:16-18).

Currently, the CICA process has received world's attention and has been recognized worldwide. CICA is a particularly important and relevant institutional instrument for the maintenance of security and cooperation in the region that should take its rightful place in the new global security architecture. CICA has united most of Asian countries, which represent different cultures, civilizations and models of development. Drafts and main adopted documents have paved the way for the foundation of a political and legal framework for the cooperation within the CICA. Action plans have been accepted and taken into the agenda in almost all areas of the CICA (Engvall & Cornell, 2015).

As regards Eurasian security organizations, Kazakhstan is a member of both the SCO and CSTO. SCO comprises Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, along with five observer states and three dialogue partners (MFARK, 2014). Most of the experts of Russia, China and Central Asian countries argue that main aim of SCO establishment is

to align the “balance of power” in global world, which has been destroyed after the dissolution of Soviet Union. For Roy Allison, SCO is the most inclusive and prominent regional, or more properly macro-regional, consultative framework with a security dimension in CA. He argues that on one level this grouping (member countries) has been interpreted in the past as a potential balancing mechanism developed by China and Russia to counteract American hegemony at a strategic level (Allison, 2004b: 478).

Kazakhstan, Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are the members of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Providing national security, defense of sovereignty and territorial integrity for member states, strengthening armed forces related to military and organizational issues, and keeping a united system of air defense are the primary aims of the CSTO (Vasilyeva & Lagutina, 2016:44-46). In addition, the initiation of Kazakhstan’s on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was significant. Newly elected President of the newly independent Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev’s one of the first historically crucial decisions was to close the second largest nuclear test site in the world in Semipalatinsk and voluntarily let go of the world’s fourth largest nuclear arsenal.

Kazakhstan has put forward a new model for the use of nuclear weapons considering the benefits of human development. Realized in March 2009, Kazakhstan created a nuclear weapon-free zone in CA alongside with other actors in the region. Central Asian action plan has been introduced by Kazakhstan to improve nuclear security, the avoidance of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism (Kim, 2014:169-170). As the result of Kazakhstan’s efforts, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/35, on 2 December 2009, declaring 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Kazakhstan’s remarkable lead and deep engagement in non-proliferation as well as active role in collaboration with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), intergovernmental group of experts and committees proves its active impact (Ramesh, 2016).

This voluntary nuclear disarmament was not caused by the inability of Kazakhstan to maintain nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan has all the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of a military nuclear program so she could have done it, if only she wanted to be a member of the exclusive club of nuclear powers (Joshua, 2013). Kazakhstan's decision to abandon the Soviet nuclear legacy was momentous and allowed the country to take its rightful place in the civilized community of nations. According to the former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, former UN Deputy Secretary General, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and currently the speaker of the Upper body of Parliament, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan's anti-nuclear stance is a "trump" card for the international community (Tokayev, 2011).

The former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who visited the so-called "Ground Zero" - the epicenter of the explosion at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site- during his visit to Kazakhstan in April 2010, expressed his thoughts regarding Kazakhstan's voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons saying "it is a unique case in the world practice". He called on the leaders of all countries, especially nuclear powers, to follow the example of Kazakhstan. According to him, it was "a genuine declaration of independence", which not only served Kazakhstan, but also inspired others to follow his example (CII MFA RK, 2011:22-23).

It can be concluded that Kazakhstan's foreign policy proposals have received support from the world community. They are the essence of Kazakhstan's political strategy for a decade ahead. Thus, Kazakhstan continues the balanced foreign policy, interaction not only with the West, but also with the states of Asia. Speaking at the solemn meeting dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev noted that in the 21st century, Kazakhstan's true independence cannot be without active participation in regional and global integration processes (Zhdanov, 2016).

The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev made a proposal to create a G-Global project on the basis of the Astana Economic Forum. The President noted that the platforms as G-20 and G-8 demonstrate inefficiency in the discussion on how to deal with the global economic crisis plan. The President of Kazakhstan proposed to radically expand

the number of participants in search of crisis-resolving mechanisms. The new communication platform was proposed to be named as the project “G-Global”. Kazakhstan has a more rational approach for assessing the prospects for the development of Eurasian cooperation and its needs (Sultanov, 2013).

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2014, in the chapter “Country and Regional Priorities” notes that the Republic of Kazakhstan, having close historical and spiritual ties with the states of the Middle East, is interested in stable and sustainable development of this region. Kazakhstan will build partnership relations with them in all spheres of mutual interest. The practice of coordinating joint activities and mutual support within the UN, OIC, CICA and other international organizations will continue. Kazakhstan will continue to support the joint efforts of the international community in the issues of national reconciliation and political settlement in Afghanistan, participate in the socio-economic development of this state, and eliminate threats to regional and global security (Seidimbetov, 2012).

Nazarbayev’s idea of Eurasianism is recognized as an important ideological prerequisite for the development of the countries of the Eurasian region. The Eurasian Union is the most promising regional initiative, a well-conceived strategic plan for the 21st century. This project is aimed to give responses to the challenges of the present and the future. Thus, the Republic of Kazakhstan is one of the leaders and an active, consistent organizer of integration processes. The development of integration processes will help resolve economic, political and social problems, and improve the political climate, strengthen the friendship of peoples, their inhabitants and have much in common in history. Socio-economic realities have exposed the impossibility of solving most of the most acute problems of internal development alone. They are pushing new states to immediately translate relations into a mutually beneficial integration basis (Khлupin, 1997).

Socio-economic realities have become the worldwide challenge today when agreements on particularly close cooperation among individual groups of countries on the type of free trade zones, customs unions, and others have become an important factor in international economic relations - the number of such groups now exceeds 100. Almost all countries are parties

to one or more regional agreements. Kazakhstan is a member of several integration unions and communities - the CIS, the Customs Union of the three states, the Treaty on the Common Economic Space of the Central Asian States, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The issue of accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been completed recently; interest in the work of the BSEC is evident. Kazakhstan headed by Nursultan Nazarbayev, is one of the first to understand the importance of integration and continues in this direction (Allison, 2004b).

## **CONCLUSION**

Ensuring regional security in Central Asia is associated with the prevention of major threats and challenges, in particular, drug trafficking, the spread of religious extremism and terrorism and illegal migration. Regional security is determined by the policy and strategy of the Central Asian states in the framework of ensuring and protecting their own national interests as well as the level of integration processes in the region. The multi-vector, balanced foreign policy of Kazakhstan allows to strengthen the regional security and expand integration processes among the states of Central Asia.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Kazakhstan, under the leadership of the President Nursultan Nazarbayev, has become one of the regional leaders firmly; successfully demonstrating the implemented foreign policy initiatives aimed at ensuring regional security and strengthening cooperation. The national security of Kazakhstan is inextricably linked with the state of cooperation among the Central Asian republics. The development of regional relations and interaction between the Central Asian countries have traditionally been in line with countering new threats and challenges, and in this context, Kazakhstan's interaction in international and regional security structures is an important direction of its foreign policy. Regarding the policy of relations with regional neighbors, Kazakhstan gives priority to large-scale cooperation as one of the leading countries in Central Asia. Thus, the main threats and challenges in Central Asia are the spread of terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking, illegal migration as well as the problems of transboundary rivers and ensuring water security, solving the issues of unified energy systems, the unresolved border disputes and the level of participation in regional integration processes.

A distinctive feature of modern integration process is in their spread not only to trade but also to the economic sphere of interstate interaction. Within the framework of integration, solutions are being sought for strengthening international security, combating new challenges, ensuring sustainable social development, preserving the environment, etc. States are trying to realize global political governance and solve global problems at the regional level.

What initiatives were proposed by Kazakhstan? One of the most fruitful initiatives is the organizations of regional unions: the SCO, the Eurasian Union, the Customs Union, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation. The creation of these organizations has a multifaceted nature since the relations between these states have developed long ago due to several historical reasons and affect the most important spheres of life of the peoples inhabiting them. Some of the states belonging to the Muslim world unite in this respect, although the degree of religiosity and the role of Islam in each state are not the same. Another element that influences relations is the commonality of borders, which has determined both positive trends in mutual cooperation, and negative aspects, in particular border disputes and disagreements.

Thus, Kazakhstan is a full-fledged actor of the world political process in ensuring regional security and initiating integration processes and associations. Systematically developing mutually beneficial relations in the mainstream of friendship and good-neighborliness with Central Asian states, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev is an adherent of the architect of building a stable and secure peace in the region.



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## ***Intercultural education - Analysis and Perspectives***

**Carmen Marina GHEORGHIU<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Education prospect of opening multiple values is a step towards fully justified since they are best individual insertion in a polymorphic and dynamic spiritual world. This approach formative meets the aspirations of both the individual by valuing some particular, unique trait that deserves to be recognized or amplified, and the profit of the company, ensuring a degree of coherence, solidarity and functionality. A culture is high not only in itself, through its own (self)contemplative or (self)reproductive mechanisms but also the “metabolism” of growth and its transformation. The main objective of intercultural education consists of preparing people to perceive, accept, respect and experience otherness. The aim is smoothing the *land* of meeting with the other. Intercultural education aims at developing education for all in the spirit of recognizing the differences that exist within the same society and refers less to achieve education for different cultures, implying staticism and isolation of cultural groups. Intercultural education favors interaction and dialogue, the courage to come out of oneself and the desire in the other’s projection. The main empirical data collection methods that are used in this paper are: observation and social documents analysis. Style research approach uses both qualitative and quantitative perspective. Quantitative research highlights the numerical measurements of specific aspects of the phenomena studied with the aim of testing causal hypotheses whereas qualitative research paradigms are based on a kind of postmodern, post-rationalist or post-positivist views. This paper, presents some of the theoretical considerations on the development of intercultural education in Romania as well as offering a global perspective. Although Romania, as in fact the entire Balkan area, has always been an ethnic and cultural mosaic, the concern for intercultural education is recent, considering politics practiced by the regime, which was one social, ethnic and cultural leveling despite

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discursive affirmation of equality between Romanian and “nationalities”. Thus, intercultural education history, or at least the commitment to interculturalism. After 1989, Romania’s ethnic minorities have assumed an active role in affirming their cultural identity different from that of the majority. This paper aims to outline a picture of contemporary intercultural education through a general analysis and point some prospects regarding this subject.

**Keywords:** *Inter-culturalism, perspective of education, ethnicity, diversity, openness*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Present European companies are coexistence arenas with the other not only on an ethnic and cultural level in a multi-national environment but also in terms of identities and interests of individuals where otherness is more obvious and increasingly vocal. In these circumstances, it is imperative that those undergoing socialization generations learn basic skills to enable peaceful coexistence with groups whether the difference is ethnic identity, cultural background or personal interests. Intercultural education promotes a certain type of dynamic, cognitive student. It’s about learning a movement away from the center where they represent their own culture and its own rules, outwardly, to be able to look to the values of otherness, as far as possible from the viewpoint of the other. This principle seems difficult in practice, given that any individual is the product of their own culture. From this point of view, there is no possibility of a state of *tabula rasa* by which one can “get rid of” his or her fully internalized values through education. However, what brings intercultural education in the process of learning the relativity of values is its openness to otherness so you can understand in terms of the other’s values.

This relativistic view of values must be achieved in an environment of continuous and mutual interaction, where value judgments are removed, the difference is no longer stigmatized, and rather the attention is focused on what individuals have in common. This allows people to use the same language, understanding and mutual valorization. Thus, intercultural education is not only for the minority, but also for the majority of the

members of society who also have the same duty of relativizing their own values, combating value judgments and stigmatization. Intercultural education promotes a constant dialogue on an equal footing.

## 2. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

### 2.1. *Objectives and Principles*

Intercultural education corresponds to *the third pillar* of education: learning to live with others. International Commission for the XXI Century Education emphasizes this component of education as a vital one in developing a harmonious society. This column refers to learning to live with others, “through developing knowledge of the other, its history, its traditions and spirituality” (Delors, J., 1996).

The general objective of education is to *facilitate intercultural learning* for living together in a plural society today. More specifically, the objectives of intercultural education and its several axes are, primarily, the acquisition of knowledge in the field of culture in general and in particular including its impact on the behavior of individuals and groups. This way the reflection on the person’s own culture precedes the reflection on cultural otherness.

This first objective facilitates the person on the second, namely the *awareness* of the causes and roots of his or her cultural determinations, stereotypes, prejudices, and to identify them in others. With this awareness, intercultural education aims to build the ability to relativize perspectives and viewpoints, and to develop communication skills with others. The third objective is the formation of positive attitudes to be implemented in a plural society: *respect for diversity*, for the identity of those perceived as different, and thus rejection of intolerance and discriminatory attitudes towards them. The fourth objective of intercultural education is *stimulating active participation* within the meaning of the principles of pluralist society and combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination from any point of view.

Intercultural education involves a **set of basic principles** (Meunier O., 2007): First, *heterogeneity is considered a norm* (as that term was derived from the concept of “normality”) and not a disability requiring additional support. This diversity as a rejection of ethnic homogeneity, cultural

identity and interests is the negation of totalitarianism and a means of ensuring democratic and open society values. At the same time, intercultural education is not a way to level or to compensate for inequalities, but a means of acquiring equal skill.

Another principle of intercultural education is the idea that *individuals and groups they belong* implicitly undergo a permanent process of crossbreeding which produces a continued diversity. We may note here the convergence of this principle with the constructivist perceptions concept of culture according to which every culture is changing its permeability due to influences from outside. In the moment of accepting the idea of a permanent dynamic of any culture, the essentialist prejudices and rigid stereotypes are most vulnerable and easily dismantled.

One of the debates on intercultural education (in fact “multicultural” because debate ranged in the 80s in the UK), refers to the perceived dichotomy between the antiracist, multicultural education and education (Fyfe, A., 1993). In fact, Fyfe shows that the debate is sterile, and counterproductive, since the principles of education as those listed above, labeling preached the kind of education is secondary purpose to promote human rights principles through education. Thus, antiracist education and the multicultural components reinforce each other and are essentially the one and only trend of different political orientations. Similarly, we can assert that multicultural education is perceived to be the liberal whereas the antiracist is seen as radical and militant in character, i.e., more violent and more direct) (Robin Grinter quoted Fyfe, 1993).

## **2.2. Dimensions factors, processes**

Intercultural education is an «integrated concept» (Nedelcu, A., 2008) that is exhibited in several dimensions, and involving a multitude of actors through a number of processes. In what follows, therefore, we operationalize the concept and outline the elements that are needed in order to reach to a deep understanding of intercultural education.

*a. Dimensions of intercultural education*

Many authors who have studied intercultural education conceptualized different system processes which one engages during the practical application of intercultural education. For analytical simplicity, we preferred to refer in the first instance to two major dimensions of intercultural education. Applying the principles involves respect for diversity and equity simultaneously (Batelaan, P., 2003) and it is based on both the content and the pedagogical processes of these two axes during the practice of intercultural education.

The size of diversity is the first axis where stands the contents of intercultural education. In accordance with the principles listed above in intercultural education, interest in mirroring the diversity manifests itself in many directions. In the first instance, it is about playing the social reality as composed of various components (groups, individuals, interests ...).

Student awareness in this plural reality is a *sine qua non* for an effective approach to intercultural education concepts. As such, it supports the idea that the entire educational curriculum should reflect the plurality of views, the default of the diversity and the otherness will later become intelligible. From the perspective of intercultural education, the reality must be shown from different angles, thus enabling the coexistence and reflecting the real diversity of views in a pluralistic society.

The second dimension of intercultural education refers to *equity*. Closely related to the first dimension of *diversity*, equity stakes a major axis which is the understanding that other viewpoints are equally valid and perhaps as “right” as their own perspective, once the criteria are evaluated using the “other” perspective. Thus, teaching practice should focus on valuing “different” views with as much legitimacy as the personal perception. It is, about the implementation of the principles of cultural relativism, but the micro-level of individual thinking.

This dimension of intercultural education also involves addressing human rights concepts (for all individuals are born equal), and awareness of students regarding the practices of intolerance, discrimination and racism, which are contrary to human rights principles.

When applying these principles with the students, it is essential in the first instance that they be respected by teachers in the classroom as well as in school. Thus, equity of access to educational resources, participation in educational act, and equity (Batelaan, P., 2003) expectations of school performance and children's skills are conditions that the student will not easily realize the need to comply, in turn, the principle of equity. For the deepening of the concept, it is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of the factors and processes that intercultural education has implemented in teaching practice.

*b. Factors involved in intercultural education*

Factors that come into play in the implementation of intercultural education can be divided in order to structure the analysis, on several levels. Thus, the public policies developed by the Ministry of Education are at the *macro* level of intercultural intervention. The education measures designed to implement intercultural education should promote equity and respect for diversity, principles of human rights education in preventing and combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination of any kind, marginalization and social exclusion. In general, research and the experiences gained from previous projects have shown that politically considering minorities as equal dialogue partners is a *sine qua non* prerequisite of the application of a policy of inter-culturalism in education (Intercultural Institute, EURROM, 2000).

In intercultural education methodology documents may crystallize the policy-making efforts of the Ministry of Education in this area. At the same time, our approach will reveal critical, in addition to the positive aspects of these attempts, which, from our point of view, is their shortcomings in implementing the principles of intercultural education. At an average level, there is a school institution whose purpose is to implement policies at the macro level, a student-friendly environment which also promotes values of those policies. The role of the school can be closely analyzed in terms of

intercultural education. Thus, Batelaan P. suggests that the important role of the school is to promote dialogue, and in this function, the school must take certain missions in applying the principles of intercultural education. These essentially relate to preparing students to participate in dialogues through practicing it as a pedagogical method, but also as a standalone objective of education. The dialogue should be applied not only in the classroom between teachers and students or between students but also between the school and the community (Batelaan, P., 2003).

On the border between the average educational institution and the *micro* – student thinking, is one of the key factors in applying intercultural education, namely **the teacher**. The role of teacher's internalization of the principles of intercultural education by students is crucial, but its definition depends on the type of pedagogy assumed by the teacher. Traditional pedagogies require omniscient teacher attitude, above the pupil. The latter remains stuck in the role of passive recipient of knowledge that cannot be ignored questioned. This type of interaction teacher - student happens especially when traditional pedagogy of transmission (Chevalier, J., 2002).

In the constructivist pedagogy, the teacher is more of a “facilitator” (Ladson-Billings, G., 1995) a learnt “cultural mediator” (Bârlogeanu, L., 2002), a “moderator of dialogues” (Nedelcu, A., 2008). This role brings to mind the pedagogical method that “student learning is driven by its own reflection object using dialogue and communication” (Socrates). Instructional design models the duties of the teacher so that it is no longer the main source of information, but only one of the resources that students can use in learning, stimulate dialogue among students, encourage autonomy in the student in the sense of empowerment and develop critical thinking skills.

On the final level of analytical factors that are involved in intercultural education is located **the student**. Theory on intercultural education deals with this point only marginally. However, it seems important to emphasize the need for clarification regarding the student's role in intercultural education activities. As the teacher's role is shaped by the principles of constructivist pedagogy, as in a mirror, the role of the student is determined in the same frame. Students should therefore be encouraged to take steps

towards an active, thoughtful, constructive and critical interaction with the teacher and make dialogues with other students. Also, in order to take part in the activities of intercultural education effectively, the student should feel valued in his or her own cultural, ethnic and religious identity. It is obvious that if the student is subjected to discriminatory attitudes, reaction to reflection on one's own culture can give adverse results due to internalized inferiority complex that is suffered under the action of discrimination.

A final factor that can intervene in a crucial way in the intercultural education is the **parents**. They play a decisive role in generating beliefs and attitudes of children, and as such can influence - positive or negative - skills that endorse intercultural education courses. Stereotypes of parents are transmitted to their children and may prove difficult to remove since they can be restored in the family after being demolished during intercultural education courses. Internal conflict may occur when the student receives a set of guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of surrounding reality at home and school and cultural education courses try to uproot these images and stereotypes the student has received. Then the role of the intercultural education is much more difficult, and it becomes apparent that the processes of intercultural education are strongly influenced by the social environment in which they occur.

In fact, all of these factors are subject to influences from the social environment they belong. It is indeed difficult to imagine an effective intercultural education that achieves its purpose in a society where just the values that underpin it are missing - or are rare -. However, this is precisely the "utopia" says Jacques Delors in the Report of the International Commission on Education XXI Century: a necessary utopia, a "utopia vital to exit the dangerous circle fed with cynicism and resignation." (Delors, J. 1996)

### *c. Intercultural education as a process*

As it suggests intercultural education goals and puts them on a scale from "Reflection to Action" intercultural education happens to be a process. As such, it requires evaluation of the initial stage and a final objective to be pursued continuously. Milton J. Bennett conceptualized

six stages of intercultural learning that can be helpful for an analysis of intercultural education as a process. Like any analytical and conceptual scheme, Bennett's model is not a reflection of reality, but a schematic crystallization thereof; in fact, the early stage can be at another level than the described first stage, and intercultural education course may have to return to previous stages that turn out not to be completely outdated. In what follows, we will expose the six stages, which were conceptualized by Bennett who proved to be a good starting point for the development of cultural sensitivity. (Gillert A., 2003)

These six stages can be divided into two distinct phases. The first is *ethnocentrism*, as a starting point, and the second is *ethnorelativism*, the objective of learning intercultural education. (J. M. Bennett, 1993)

*The ethnocentric* stages begin with a situation of denial of the existence of other perspectives on reality, and translates the fact of otherness through isolation or through lack of contact with other groups or by refusal and segregation of groups perceived as different. Bennett adds distinction between the majority groups that can pass through the stage of denial and the minority who are constantly confronted with the otherness of the majority and therefore cannot deny that they are perceived as different by them.

The second stage of Bennett's reaction is defense. The difference from other groups may be perceived as a threat since the uniqueness of their vision can be questioned, and hence the possession of absolute truth. One of the strategies to face this stage of manufacture is perceived as negative stereotypes about different groups, which can very quickly lead to racist attitudes. Own cognitive mechanism of this stage is the perception of positive examples of their group as a rule, and conceptualizing positive examples of different group as an exception. (Guillaumin C., 2002)

An interesting form to face this stage is what Bennett called the "cancellation" i.e. different perception of culture as superior or own group and own culture. In practice, this strategy is only replacing the "center of ethnocentrism" of an individual with another cultural landmark, and as such, does not exceed ethnocentric stage.



Bennett labeled the third stage as the *ethnocentric stage* in order to minimize the accentuation differences of universal characteristics and that the ignorance of the cultures or groups differ in favor of highlighting the common grounds between groups and cultures. This universalism cannot help but create a deep understanding of otherness since the differences are ignored. Bennett described this stage, however, we want to add that what generates profound lack of understanding of cultural otherness itself is not ignoring differences, but the mechanisms by which they are actively built and negotiated by those involved in the intercultural contact. This idea, particularly prolific in theories of ethnic relations - and thus intercultural - comes from the constructivist current conceptualization of ethnic identity formation mechanisms, initiated in the 70s by Fredrik Barth (Barth, F. 1969). This constructivist theory avoids essentiality of the risk of cultural differences and distinctions to be viewed as rigid, static and permanent. To be precise, this dynamic culture involves definition of “differences” and how they continue to be influenced by external factors.

In our opinion, some theorists of interethnic and intercultural relations - including Bennett - put too little emphasis on the dynamism of cultural characteristics, and implicitly highlight the mechanisms of constructing imaginary borders between groups who perceive themselves as different. In the same tradition constructivist theory is another very prolific theory in turn, by Benedict Andersen, and namely the idea of going beyond the local communities (ethnic nations, “races”, crops, etc.) that are in fact communities “imagined”. The theory puts the emphasis on what unites those individuals (ethnicity, nationality, physical characteristics or cultural) while completely ignoring issues which can differentiate and divide them even more than what unites (Anderson, B., 1983). Therefore, important differences are not included in ethnic or cultural groups, rather they are considered as ways of producing differences within ethnic and intercultural relations.

With the fourth stage conceptualized by Bennett, enters the stage the ethno-relativism assuming the idea that cultures can only be understood by one another and the culturally determined behaviors should be placed in their historical context to be really understood. For Bennett, ethno-relativism begins with the acceptance of cultural differences, with the belief that all

deserve respect differences, including differing worldview. This stage involves, first of all, understanding and accepting that people's values are social and cultural constructions built in order to organize the surrounding reality, and not absolute truths.

The fifth stage is described by Bennett as adaptation which follows the logical acceptance of the cultural difference. The acceptance of difference inevitably induces a new vision of the world; from the moment values cease to be absolute truths. The whole system of perception of the world must therefore be adapted to this new perspective and its implications. Adaptation takes place by producing new behaviors, new communication styles, suitable ideas that deserve respect and other values. This idea is based on the feeling of empathy with each other, without which there can be no genuine understanding and its realities and perspectives induced by them. In intercultural education, development of empathy is an essential stage.

This stage is crucial in the transformation of a company to a truly open society which embodies the principles of intercultural dialogue in concrete communication practices between groups and individuals perceived as different. Of course, even if all the individuals of a society adopts the values of intercultural education, respect otherness and actively combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, it is important that these principles become more of a social norm than an exception to the "enlightened".

Finally, the last stage of Bennett is called *integration*, a term quite unfortunate, given the possible confusion with the term that has circulated numerous national policies as the "integration" of minorities, in particular with reference to minorities resulting from migration processes. For Bennett, it is a case of trying to integrate the various individual perspectives acknowledged, understood and assumed, in one frame of reference based on individual experiences that are lived. It is, to a certain degree, the passage of the universal differences through a sieve of cultural conceptions of individuality and crystallization life. For Bennett, at this stage, there is the risk of "not belonging to any culture." It can be attributed to Bennett's ignoring the fact that the selection of individual at this stage is largely produced still in a defined cultural framework, and that eventually all

individuals are still being determined - in more or less - culturally. Finally, the inter-culturalism, despite the fact that it is extremely desirable in social terms, remains a cultural phenomenon in itself. An argument in support of this idea can be glimpsed in the fact that inter-culturalism seems to be largely over - and therefore a product of- Western societies where there were major migratory movements.

### **3. INTERCULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY**

“Intercultural” psychology research directly studies the interaction between individuals and groups of different cultural origins. There is still much debate over the use of terms in English and French and the importance of the method. At first, intercultural psychology had an aspect of comparative study of formal structures in front of different values (intended as “ethical”). Some researchers have tried to favor an “Emic” approach (emic = relating to or denoting an approach to the study or description of a particular language or culture in terms of its internal elements and their functioning rather than in terms of any existing external scheme) sometimes going up to a total cultural relativism, which rejects any comparison. Between the two approaches there is opposition, but complementary approach the most pertinent being the student of both what is common (universal) and what is different in different cultural events.

Another perspective is based on the transition from studies that directly compare those groups or individuals in contact, especially in situations of emigration. In the Francophone world, the distinguished team of Toulouse (Clanet, 1990), for instance, uses nouns *intercultural* and *inter-culturalism*, the latter being defined as “a set of processes through which individuals and groups interact as parts of two or more assemblies that require different cultures”. The distinctive note of intercultural psychology, according to some researchers, is to establish links between the social and the psychic. This is the main idea underlying the conceptual framework “cross-cultural” (Berry et al, 1992; Segall et al, 1990).

Here Camilleri explains these “reciprocity of perspectives” between the individual and the social as: beyond the social psyche, the collective transcends the individual, but the psyche, individuals themselves are the ones who develop these formations whereby “They are overwhelmed” and that they perceive as transcendent; psychology has the capacity to locate, describe and analyze the subjective constitution operations beyond subjective; she appropriates thus a number of realities - and culture among them - which do not come from a mysterious framework, but are present case (Camilleri C., 1990). Dasen defines intercultural psychology as “the study of the influence of culture on human behavior; it is, therefore, an individual studying psychology in its context” (Dasen, P., 1993). In developmental psychology, for example, an intercultural approach to decoupling factors that blend in an “inside-cultural” research such as chronological age and schooling. Intercultural psychology allows, especially, “a look back” on our own society and its institutions, of our own enculturation. It also helps to explain the processes of ethnocentrism and how to overcome it.

#### **4. HISTORY OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ROMANIA**

Although Romania, in fact the entire Balkan area, has always been an ethnic and cultural mosaic, the concern for intercultural education is recent. For instance, Anca Nedelcu records that “in 1841, *Gazeta de Transilvania* reported a total of 1,260 schools fully Hungarian or wholly Romanian (962 Hungarian schools, 298 Romanian) and only 13 mixed schools, which represents only 1% of all schools where interethnic and intercultural (with emphasis on the use of the conditional-opted because there is no certainty that educational policy was, at that time, one for intercultural dialogue) contact can be promoted” (Nedelcu, A., 2008).

Naturally, the policy practiced by the communist regime was a social, ethnic and cultural leveling, despite the discursive affirmation of equality between Romanian and “nationalities”. Thus, intercultural education history, or at least the commitment to inter-culturalism, shows us that there exists a corresponding vacuum when compared to the communist period. After 1989, Romania’s ethnic minorities have assumed an active role in affirming the identity of their culture being different from that of the majority. The political objective of the recognition of the minority status

was to protect them in national policies. In education, an important step has established the *Education Law of 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1995* and subsequently amended, which stipulates the right of minorities to study the entire school curriculum in their *native language*, under certain conditions.

In parallel with this regulation, there is also a department for education in minority languages within the Ministry of Education; a network of education units and sections with classes set up in Hungarian and German. Despite this concern for the cultural protection of ethnic minorities and ensuring legislative framework and the cultivation of their identity, Romania still lacks the idea of promoting inter-culturalism in education in the 90s. Towards the late 90s, civil society initiatives were trying to fill this void by implementing projects with intercultural education. This is the case par excellence of the Intercultural Institute from Timișoara, a true pioneer in the field of inter-culturalism in Romania.

([www.intercultural.ro/eng/about/projects.html#eduschoolroma](http://www.intercultural.ro/eng/about/projects.html#eduschoolroma), accessed February 2017)

The first project of intercultural education implemented by IIT (Intercultural Institute Timișoara) in partnership with *Romani CRISS*, *Institute of Education Sciences*, *GREF France* and *Centre de Recherches Tsiganes Paris*, was to organize training seminars for teachers who are working with *Roma(gypsies)* children. The project was called “*Educating children from Roma communities: training of teachers working with Roma children*” and was conducted between June 1996 and January 1998. One of the project objectives was to improve relations between the school and Roma communities. This initiative was followed by the project EURROM that targeted “integration of Roma culture in school education and extracurricular” between 1998 and 2001. In the first year of the project, teachers from a network of schools attended Roma children activities to discover social environment and local history by carrying out interviews with the community members in order to identify the elements that are culture-specific and integrate them into education. Based on the experience gained in the course of the second year, a methodological guide

was developed for teachers working with Roma pupils. In the third year, the implementation methodology that is developed in initial and continuing training programs for teachers was observed particularly. In 1999-2000, IIT implemented a new project in schools in intercultural education. The project, called “*Intercultural education in multiethnic schools*” and funded by the European Cultural Foundation, was developed in collaboration with the *Foundation for Human Rights and Peace Education* in Budapest. The project “aims to introduce methods of cultural education in multiethnic schools” from Timis county. The project was followed by an initiative of the same name, but on a large scale in the regions Banat, Moldavia and Transylvania ([www.intercultural.ro/eng/about/projects.html#eduschoolroma](http://www.intercultural.ro/eng/about/projects.html#eduschoolroma), February 2017).

Despite the aforementioned initiatives, such space existed in civil society in Romania during the 2000s, the critical approach of Kenneth Cushner indicates the persistence of what he called “fear of inter-culturalism” as well as the mono-cultural identity and tradition type (Cushner, K. 1998). Mono-culturalism stands out preventing penetration of the new principles of intercultural education in Romanian schools. Also stands out from the text of the program and suggestions presented methodological focus the transmission of content, rather own a traditional pedagogy, and not learning organization around dialogue, as it uses the constructivist pedagogy type. A traditional pedagogy is not suitable for interactive features of the learning object if intercultural education, and can question the effectiveness of a traditional pedagogical approach to the teaching of this subject.

## **5. LIMITS OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ROMANIA**

Besides the shortcomings that we have outlined in the previous paragraph, if the optional curriculum materials designed for intercultural education are considered, it seems to hit obstacles further, the education system to the wider Romanian society and public policies. In terms of formal education, the current context where predominates a mono-cultural approach and a one-sided perspective on the history and culture of the majority, rarely refers to cultural, ethnic and religious minorities. Eloquent in this regard are the materials used in the common core curriculum requirements, particularly those relating to Romanian language and literature subjects and Romanian history (Miroiu A., 1998).

To illustrate this situation, a critical discussion that we find very pertinent by Constantin Cucos and Teodor Cozma on addressing dimensional, rigid and stereotyped Turkish-Romanian conflict in the history that is taught in schools (Cucoş C., T. Cozma, 2001). Thus, the prospect of addressing these wars is unilateral and anchored in the lexical field of “enmity” with no concern for play diversity of viewpoints, there is a perspective of the “enemy” and the possibility of a dialogue with him. Similarly, Anca Nedelcu almost exclusively uses first names in typical Romanian textbooks (Nedelcu A., 2008). The principles of intercultural education should be applied to the entire curriculum, transversely, on all levels and in all subjects. For example, children from second grade teaches that Turks or the Hungarians as “enemies”, “invaders” of the country - as a vision from the perspective of history of the peoples, it will be harder for students in the later stages of education to internalize the need for dialogue with those people as the printed image of textbooks is negative, which discourages dialogue from the start.

Another drawback is the implementation of intercultural education, limited in the format of optional subjects, its approach may remain superficial. Moreover, limiting it to the secondary level may mean that the intervention of the student’s personality formation occurs at a stage rather delayed, which could hinder internalization of the principles preached by intercultural education. An early intervention in primary grades intensifies the approach by increasing the number of hours allocated to the matter, which can produce a more lasting effect. Another idea in this matter could be switching the courses from being optional to mandatory at the same level as civic education. These measures would make intervention more efficient, more sustainable and higher chances of success in terms of internalization of the principles of intercultural education.

At the level of public policies on inter-culturalism, the action taken by authorities in this regard is rather tentative. All this leads to a worrying state of affairs regarding the application of the principles of intercultural education in schools in Romania.

This paper aims to present, in addition to highlighting the obstacles facing the process of putting intercultural education into practice, and identify some of the best practices that can help accelerate and streamline the implementation of intercultural education in Romanian schools.

## **6. CONTEMPORARY AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

The challenges of a contemporary world include numerous discriminations (racism, apartheid, sexism), people's desire for self-determination and understanding, poverty and hunger, international terrorism, religious intolerance, fundamentalism, trafficking in persons and drugs, new forms of racism and ethnic cleansing, environmental pollution and disarmament.

Contemporary education faces challenges around contemporary world issues that also develops peculiar reverberations in the field of education:

- The universal character - no country or region can be placed outside of this issue;
- The global nature - affecting all sectors of social life;
- Rapid and unpredictable evolution - people are faced with complex situations for which no suitable approaches or solutions are available;
- Multidisciplinary character;
- The urgency - to solve problems that need prompt answers, ingenuity and important financial efforts (Cucos, C., Cozma, T., 2001).

Faced with these imperatives, education leaders from different countries are placed in two different positions. From a sceptic perspective, the school is seen with declining educational systems that are no longer able to prepare tomorrow's world. From the perspective of optimistic experts, the school has the resources necessary for setting up the future, but it needs to adapt their educational services to the needs of contemporary world development. The human being is a cultural being and, consequently, is someone who can be educated permeable to cultural contacts, dialogues, influences and idiosyncrasies (Antonesei L., 1996).



Education, defined in terms of a process, signifies a deliberate transformation of a human being, which is positive and long-term, in a final view it is explicitly formulated, developed at the macro structure of society. Changing purposive and creative human nature, education is an individual process; the transformation of humanity both on the basis of the ownership of intellectual culture (humanization) and a social process of transformation of human being on ownership and long-term planning of forces that are essential fixed cultural values (socializing) (Panțuru S. 1995).

Lifelong learning is a principle of integrating all modes of education by a company which is harmoniously composed in a new structure and its objectives are:

- Creation of favorable structures and methods for the training and development of human personality throughout its existence;
- Preparation of human personality for self and self-education (Lengrand P., 1973).

### ***6.1. The dimensions of intercultural education***

Although various aspects of education for international understanding are interrelated, the better as they are individualized below:

- Human rights education;
- Education for democracy and civic;
- Education for peace and disarmament;
- Education for tolerance;
- Development education;
- Environmental education;
- Intercultural education.

There are concepts related to the intercultural education such as multiethnic and global education. **Multiethnic education** is a concept that was imposed in countries that are still ethnic conglomerate of the constitution - USA, Canada, Australia. Multiethnic education purposes (Banks, J., A., 1988) are:

- Knowledge of each ethnic group having its own values;
- Familiarity of the ethnic groups with the main elements of the culture of other groups, understanding and respect;
- Facilitating the confrontation of alternative concerns;
- Equip students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to conduct activities in the profession, but also shaping the general culture;
- The reduction of discrimination and segregation in schools and members of ethnic groups in society;
- Border cultural skills development; the menus on five levels: observation, direct contacts with groups or members of ethnic groups, biculturalism, complete socialization and assimilation under a foreign culture.

Along with attempts to define inter-culturalism, in order to avoid confusion and simplifications, Dasen considers the indication of what intercultural education is useful:

- 1) It is not a compensatory education for foreigners, aimed at settling the problems of children of immigrants. In intercultural vision children have no problems, but the educational establishment has difficulty adapting to cultural diversity. The school must help these children to learn the language of the host country and comply with local school rules to maximize their chances of school and professional success. Cultural differences in performance are not automatically assigned to the cultural gaps or are unfavorable, but are considered a reflection of adaptation to different contexts.
- 2) Intercultural education is not just another school subject, but a new approach to classical disciplines. The teacher will educate students valuing cultures of origin of students, making them aware of cultural diversity and avoiding stereotypes and presentation in static cultures. At the institutional level, it involves choosing a model of integration rather than assimilation.
- 3) Intercultural education should not be confused with language courses and culture of origin to immigrant pupils. It is open to all students and should enroll in an approach covering all cycles (Dasen P., 1999).

Directions through education can facilitate the process of modernizing in Romania and thus enable the integration into European structures (Antonesei L., 1996):

a) In the *educational ideal* it is necessary to overcome the phrase loaded formalism of Education Law that the educational ideal of modernity is the free, integral and harmonious human individuality, autonomous formation of personality and creative design strategies and educational actions to transform this goal into reality.

b) The level of *objectives* in education is needed to be drawn from the values of modernity.

c) In the *content*:

- Rethinking the place and share anthropological and social disciplines in all cycles of education, designed to provide graduate knowledge on the issues of modernity values, rights and freedoms, the functions of the state, the European institutions and global operation.

- Studying foreign languages closely related to culture and civilization to which they belong, because language is both a tool with practical utility relations in various fields and vector specificity defining a culture. At the same time, encouraging the knowledge / study of the languages in close vicinity (micro and macro complex - administrative, geographic etc.) will make the non-native language appear as friends and not enemies, taking into consideration that we do not love what we do not know (*Ignotos nulla cupido*) (education Act, art. 31).

- Promoting comparative studies in fields such as history and literature for understanding the relationship between the universal and the particular on one hand, and for enabling the change of perspective and discourage ethnocentric approach, on the other hand.

As for the level of trainers, it is necessary to retrain teachers in the spirit of European values, less equity dominated by formalism, as the improvement in cooperation with academic institutions outside the Romanian (scholarships, internships MA and PhD research projects and joint intervention). Such external contacts have an intake explicit nature

informative professional direction, but also an implicit formative effect due to direct contact, uncensored and unadulterated with another culture. The universities occupying a vanguard position can train the trainers. As a result of the irradiation of cultural function performed by such Universities, now other competent agents become confident enough to disseminate the values of European modernity.

### **6.2. *The objectives of intercultural education***

The purpose of international education, the superordinate of the concept of intercultural is to develop the sense of social responsibility and solidarity with disadvantaged groups and induce respect for the principle of equality in everyday behavior (Rey, M., 1974).

Intercultural education enables structuring open cultural identities (Cucos C., 2001), its targets are:

- Guiding young people to assimilate a culture anthropological perspective;
- Understanding another's point of view by relativistic positioning;
- Legitimizing cultural identity, hindering sacred;
- Ensuring respect for differences, but in systems of mutual attitudes.

Rey proposes high goals for the generality of intercultural education designed to help overcoming ethnocentrism by empowering the individual:

- To ask questions confidently on individuality, sociological, mono-cultural or ethnocentric and regulations;
- To transform images and stereotypical representations and overcome prejudices generating judgments and actions;
- To transform and diversify power relationships and make room for equality for individuals who are deprecated, as skills, cultural references and their own ways of expression;
- To promote joined up, recognizing the complexity and relationships between cultures, social classes, institutions, educational levels, school disciplines, scientific objects, and between human beings regardless of age, language, ethnicity, culture or religion;

- To learn and develop negotiation and communication between individuals, groups or communities and make them beneficial for every party;
- Articulate the responsibilities of every one in relation to local and national communities, and by reporting to the international community (Rey M., 1991).

Major and generic goals of intercultural education at school level:

- *Preserving and defending cultural diversity* - school, transmitting values that court will focus on the plurality of cultures; should not establish the primacy of culture over another (Cucoş C., 2001).
- *Formation of intercultural competences of citizens.*

An intercultural process which features a dynamic and continuous process of forming behaviors must be emphasized. Intercultural education should continue to be refined throughout one's life rather than ending in school.

***Intercultural behaviors*** (Cucoş C., 2001):

1. Availability to know.
2. Acceptance of otherness from a neutral perspective. Most often, the other is perceived as being similar, and thus supported or antagonism, and therefore rejected.
3. The ability to perceive what is foreign in a relieved manner and flexible scales reading by rigid denying, simplistic and levelers, which have the advantage of being familiar and easy to use, but impoverish the reality of many of its dimensions.
4. Experiencing ambivalent situations without fear, as a prerequisite for acceptance of otherness.
5. Domination and fear of another's defeat. The ability to question and reformulate its own rules. Socio-cultural referential system determines our behavior, and by recognizing the relativity of this system the individual becomes able to improve and adapt so easily.

7. The favorable attitude to experience, existential ways of thinking and different reporting.

8. Ability to assume the conflicts, the third and most positive variation of conduct in case of divergence, the other two being in denial of reality and transforming divergence hostility. Conflicts must be solved calmly and negotiated in a *win-win* approach.

9. The ability to gain broader identities (the European citizen of the world) developing a new type of loyalty, where national, regional, professional and social identities are integrated.

### **6.3. Intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication can be defined as “the ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally with individuals from other cultures so that all individuals participating in the communication encode and decode messages conveyed and avoid possible interpretations and assessments are incorrect” (Michael Hinner, 1998).

Communication between cultures is difficult if we consider its component elements. Culture is represented as an iceberg, the visible being determined by language, architecture, etc., and the invisible having the most powerful and defining elements, which are less visible: social norms, values, conceptions of time and space, self-concept, etc.

Yoshikawa (1987) classified Intercultural Communication into four types:

- *Type of ethnocentric* - (Having two cultures, A and B, culture B will always be a shadow of culture A. Culture B has uniqueness and differentiation which is ignored. Communication is in one direction and feedback does not exist).

- *Type of control* - (Recognizing the unique elements of culture B, but manipulating them to achieve the goals and objectives of culture A.)

- *Type of dialectic* - (communication module has three potential dialectical finalities:

- a. Culture A meets opposite theses and transcends culture B and C in a new culture;
- b. Culture A is dissolving in culture B, becoming a part of the culture B;
- c. Culture B becomes a part of the culture A.

All those purposes are based on the fusion-based communication.)

- *Type dialogued* - (cultures A and B are distinct, independent, they communicate and interrelate, but every culture retains its integrity). Dialogical communication model is considered the most effective way to understand, appreciate and respect diversity.

A conception by Koester, “intercultural communication brings together two aspects; on the one hand the preservation and conservation of certain elements, on the other hand adapting, changing to other crops which involves developing certain cultural and intercultural skills” (Apud.Cucoş, 2000).

Intercultural competence is defined by Kim as “an ability to mobilize knowledge, methods of action, emotional experiences in the context of intercultural interactions” (Apud Cucoş, 2000). Intercultural competence and flexibility means adapting to the new situation of the person and not rigidity, intolerance and monotony. Intercultural competence is not sufficient to achieve effective communication, but bear in mind the context in which the communication takes place. In terms of teaching communication in an intercultural situation, the teacher is leading the communication and should be aware of the mechanisms that can lead to distortion or even conflict both among pupils and for himself. One of the demands of vocational teacher training is intercultural skills.

Long inertia, traditionalist and conservative education assumes responsibility today to trace maps of a world in constant motion, and to provide people guidance tools that help them find their own way (Delors J., 2000). Following those assumptions have occurred in education, educational theories and practices that reflect societal changes and the existential paradigm of postmodern person. Among these is the intercultural education, which supports and cultivates active tolerance

between cultures, plural coexistence and spiritual pluralism. In an attempt to overcome the limits of traditional education and to meet some facts: multicultural European society, a planetary culture, but also social “dis-culturalism”, school comes with a “blast” again – inter-culturalism.

**Inter-culturalism** is a new approach to a social reality which involves placing a philosophy of cultural pluralism in teaching humanities, covering all areas of life. Currently, inter-culturalism requires a factorial analysis of contemporary reality, complex and fluid, seconded by a philosophical hermeneutics, intercultural phenomenon linked to the need of conceptualization.

**Inter-culturalism** brings with it a new array of communication, involving an opening in interpersonal and social communication to cultural communication. The latter involves the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and values system, cultivation of tolerance, openness and affordability to diversity.

**Intercultural education** involves, on the one hand ensuring an authentic communication with the individual and get acquainted with their cultural identity, and on the other hand enabling active communication with an alter identity, individual or group as a citizen of Europe and the world. Forming the competence to enter into effective relation with otherness, with the dissolution of their identity involves strengthening critical thinking and cultivating reflexivity to everyday experience, through the conscious process of defining itself by meeting with another. School effectiveness in communication from an intercultural perspective leads to a decrease of certainty and an increase in anxiety related construction of the new otherness scheme of alternative perspectives, more than what is required in an experienced classroom. Willingness to negotiate matters and it is strictly necessary for optimizing intercultural communication. Dialogue through “cultural universals” involves educating cooperative strategies by giving egocentric, ethnocentric, logocentric meanings and by destroying cultural multiplicity by assimilating each other in their own ego.



For individuals to act surprised in front of nuanced dynamics of intercultural communication, the school year should facilitate communication using proactive interception cultivation by knowing each other, and respect the individuality fact of each student. As for the Romanian cultural education in school, it unfolds rather implicit and natural registers, an expression of ideological options, cultural pluralism philosophy, and one political integration in transnational community. It often boils down to a plea for acceptance of diversity, what transpires in school documents and principles of educational reform, but without proper and sustained works.

Curricular dimensions insecurity that derives from the marginal intercultural education, reflected in optional subjects or optional, depending on the individual initiative of the professor insufficiently empowered. Opening curricular policy has facilitated more than inter- and transdisciplinary approaches at the level of optional subjects, and recently introducing the issue in teacher education. Inter-culturalism is a philosophy that emerged in the last 20 years. Now is the time that she can also come to life in school, because it is clearer than ever that “we must give education to identify with a particular culture ...” (Alain Touraine, quoted by Perotti, A., 1998).

## **7. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

The training of trainers is a useful recovery of all the research in the field of intercultural pedagogy as well as in the area of cultural anthropology, social psychology, developmental psychology, conflict resolution, management etc.

Continuous training - is targeting all teachers, and this activity can be achieved through training modules in intercultural issues, conducted with the Teaching Staff, in premises of the specialized departments of universities, schools or high schools. The titles of these modules can be diversified and negotiated with teachers, depending on the specific necessities (“Managing minority cultures”, “Sizing intercultural curriculum”, “Strategies for training communication skills and social participation”).

Workshops could bring philosophers, political scientists, sociologists and professionals together with students in science education, to debate topics such as:

- Democracy and Diversity;
- Rights and duties of minorities;
- State and multicultural communities;
- Citizen;
- European integration: opportunities and cultural barriers;
- Avatars of identity preservation;
- New faces of culturo-centrism;
- Awareness and intercultural competence;
- Strategies for intercultural mediation;
- Postmodern and interethnic relations;
- Strategies to overcome ethnocentrism in different school subjects;
- Globalism transnational education and training.

In these workshops, practical exercises can be imagined simulation or experience of inter-culturalism. For example, every teacher can be prescribed to organize and spend a day in style of intercultural interacting and deliberately using stimuli of different cultures (reading various books, speaking foreign languages, meeting people of other ethnicities, preparing a food related to the cuisine of some people, going to a church that belongs to another denomination etc.). In the same purpose, we can be put in a position to analyze our own family tree, identifying multitude of cultural intersections that have predetermined (you might have the surprise to find that our predecessors belonged to minority cultures, ethnic entities etc.).

A virtual intercultural training curriculum should cover a range of topics such as:

- Trends in contemporary society: multicultural, intercultural dynamics;
- Phenomenology of cultural transmission and diffusion;
- Identity and cultural difference. Consequences at school;
- Cultural relativism and perverse in education;

- Filtering social reality through images (categorization, stereotypes, prejudices);
- Diseases of relating to others:
- Discrimination;
- Intolerance;
- Xenophobia;
- Ethnocentrism;
- Racism;
- Sexism;
- Objectives and values of intercultural education;
- Requirements of intercultural and family education;
- Specific activities and intercultural education;
- Strategies of experimental values diversity;
- Formal and informal curricular and extracurricular in intercultural training (Cucoş C., 2011).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Inter-culturalism; encourages the attitude of intercultural dialogue and paves the way for communication between cultural groups, with beneficial effects on understanding them. Cultivating values such as respect for others, tolerance of diversity, complementarity between values, the school is able to exploit the potential richness of multiculturalism without canceling the identity of any culture.

Inter-culturalism implies recognition of “cultural rights” as an integral part of individual rights. When referring to “cultural rights” do not do this in the intellectual sense of the concept (the right to access knowledge, studying etc.), but as “the right of individuals to possess and develop, possibly jointly with others within a group defined by shared values and traditions, its cultural life, which corresponds to a cultural identity distinct from that of other individuals or groups. “(Measure S., 1999)

Asserting particular cultural rights involves certain risks. First, there is the possibility that individuals belonging to a particular cultural group to subordinate it, sacrificing personal freedom and possibility to maintain relations with members of other groups. According to the principles of democracy, the individual does not belong to a particular group, isolated from the other company made up of juxtaposed groups which individuals would own, but in people with multiple social roles. The second risk is related to social integration, meaning that it is possible for citizens to retreat to their home communities instead of opening to other groups. In addition, recognition of cultural rights could lead to various political, economic and social differences.

In the process of enculturation that begins in the family and then continues through contact with other forms of culture, children learn prejudices that subsequently become part of the philosophy of life and constitute a filter that will pass only differentiated information consistent with the schemes already formed. Prejudices remain as long as individuals do not have access to comprehensive and authentic information about other people or groups, and contacts are superficial. The main instances that contribute to varying degrees of prejudice are learned and strengthened by the family, the media and the school.

School promotes prejudices through:

- Cultivating a learning environment centered on a single system of values, often at the most encouraging competition to the detriment of cooperation, to the detriment of individual achievement orientation group concerns for the future and much less for the present or past.
- Building the school curriculum (in Europe) in a Eurocentric vision neglecting other cultures of the planet. Similarly, in the United States, attention is focused on the history of Europe and Euro-American culture, ignoring the various cultures of other Americans.
- Ignoring the need for education that aim to reduce ethnic prejudice and sexual discrimination.

Under Romanian law, persons belonging to national minorities are Romanian citizens, expressing free and unhindered membership to a national community, or minors whose parents or other legal representatives also state this membership. National minorities in Romania are the following communities: Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Macedonian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian Lippovan, Roma, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovak, Tatar, Turkish, Ukrainian. Legislation on culture and education was oriented towards protecting the rights of minorities to preserve their national identity through education and culture in their own language, mentioning at the same time, it should not affect the situation of the majority of Romanians, especially learning the national language, Romanian, by all Romanian citizens.

Inter-culturalism enters timidly into Romanian legislation as a solution to simultaneously overcome the social segregation and low level of education among the members of the Roma ethnic minority (in 2001 government adopted a strategy to improve the situation of this ethnic group) and the introduction of teaching in Magyar language (Hungarian ethnic minorities being the majority among ethnics in Romania) in educational institutions.

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## *Turkish Characters in Romanian Literature*

**Onorina BOTEZAT<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The present paper studies the image of the Turk in the Romanian dramaturgy of the twentieth century, through the play *Take, Ianke and Cadîr* by Victor Ioan Popa. The masterpiece of Victor Ioan Popa, *Take, Ianke and Cadîr* is, without any doubt, the pearl of the Romanian dramaturgy. A Jew, a Romanian and a Turk - central figures of the play are merchandisers who share their clients. The Romanian's girl and the Jew's boy end up loving each other, though their love story, in their fathers' conception is impossible. The old Cadîr, always in love and cherishing life, makes their love come true and sets up the scene for a happy ending. The two shops merge breaking down the wall between the shops. The play offers us a totally different image of the Turk, that is no longer related to the expansionist Turk stereotype from Romanian historical writings – friendly, caring and tender Cadîr, who turns out to be smarter and wiser than his neighbors. The success of this play on stage proves us that one could dissociate the Turk from early religious and historical stereotypes, traced back to the Crusades, through the medieval Romanian literature.

**Keywords:** *imagology, Turkish character, Romanian literature*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION. THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS**

This paper addresses the imagology research field from a literary text perspective and based on foreign characters, considers their help in drawing self-images and images of the others.

The imagology studies the image of the *Other*, as it is anchored and perceived in an individual or collective mentality, because it absorbs information about the surrounding reality and, consequently, on the others.

The literary image perception translates the universe into fiction. The sources of inspiration are diverse and involve any act of communication and any means of conveying a message.

The two imagological perceptions – the image of the *Other* and *self-images* – are vividly chained, for testimonies of others and how others are translated into images are always doubled by self-judgments and self-images.

As young the academic field might be, as old is the preoccupation. Therefore, we may say that Imagology has venerable roots because while writing about the Greeks, Persians, Egyptians, and how they perceived each other, Homer or Hesiod were actually producing imagological studies.

From the point of view of the imagological studies, the image is the mental reputation or discursive representation of a person, group, ethnic group or nation. Humans bear different images, which, whether they are aware or not, are reflected in their conduct, constructing the mental image.

The fundamental elements of an image are:

- The *collective* character of an image formation,
- The principle of *orality* underlying the dissemination of images and
- The *reception*, a major force of images' transmission from generation to generation – a function that leads to the creation of the stereotypes' pyramid, which, like stones, hides and reveals, when cut, the cultural and historical stages of a society.

The images may vary depending on the perspective. A fundamental distinction is made between self-images (or self-identity awareness in a group) and images of the others. Both images interact in a process of interdependence, supporting each other. Based on our research, we may classify foreigners in Romanian literature as follows: the sturdy and drunkard Russian, the gentle Frenchman, a cowardly muffled Czech, a faithful Serb, the warrior and wise Turk, the stubborn and diligent Bulgarian, the corrupt Greek and the ambitious Greek woman, an art and cafes amateur Italian, a rigid and polite Englishman, and the American billionaire.

Generally speaking, in the Romanian literature, the foreigner is characterized by the fact that she or he does not speak the Romanian language. As a rule, the foreigner characters are identified with the culture of the people that they represent. The ethno-image leads to the formation of the word-image. These words translate the culture, the literature and the mentality of a nation. Language, along with culture, history, myths and collective memory is the main component of the identity of the foreigner, of the *Other*.

In characterizing foreign personages, (those who are outsiders to a reference space), there are both positive and negative marks; the stereotyped communication being constructed by means of an adjectival plan, using qualifiers. The *Foreigner* is introduced in writings for different reasons:

- The action takes place in another country,
- To add a splash of color to the writing style,
- In a *Persian Letters*' style, to criticize without being judged for doing that.

## **2. THE TURKSIH CHARACTERS IN ROMANIAN LITERATURE**

As an outcome of a long historical and cultural relation of Romania and Turkey, the Turkish language had left some traces in our language, given the many morphological classes of words of Turkish origin in Romanian, as well as their semantic distribution.

Present in our literature, from medieval to modern days, the Turk's image in the Romanian literature is dichotomous:

- On the one hand, there is a conqueror and warrior, in chronicles and historic novels, and
- On the other hand, especially after 1918, Turks play the role of the wise man, representing the oriental wisdom.

Within the pages of Romanian literature, a very well-illustrated image of the Turkish people has been outlined. The attention toward this powerful neighbor has evolved gradually from the first contact until the later era. Romanian chronicles of the 15<sup>th</sup> century focused on the rise of the Ottoman Empire crowned with the conquest of Constantinople, but once they approached the Danube, the Turks begin to appear more in our writings. Related to the historical evolution between the nations, the literature, based mainly on the oral tradition, proverbs and sayings, illustrated a large variety of characters: warriors, enemies, advisers, and wise neighbors. The religious alterity was also the question.

Religious differences are overcome by true love as expressed with the quote "the Christian forgot her laws, laws were forgotten by the Muslim," in "Love with the one of the other law," (Urechia, V. A. „Amor cu cel de altă lege,” p. 283.) or like in the short story "Fatmè" where Fatme is a Turk and her lover is a Romanian and they are so deeply in love that the quote follows "If you were a Turk man, you would eat pork! If you were a Turk woman, you would love Năftică!" (Bacalbaşa, Anton. „Fatmè,” p. 126)

Panait Istrati in *Codin* depicts the Turk with a rifle on his back instead of a sword, and with a smart look: "The Turk, giant, with the rifle over one shoulder, the bag with bread on the other, with a copper and hairy face, with dark and intelligent eyes." (Panait Istrati, *Codin*, p. 153)

Gala Galaction imagined in the *Mahmud's shoes* an enchanted, harmonious coexistence, between three different ethnic groups: Savu, a Christian, Mark Goldstein, a Jew and the Turk Ibraim. The subject of the novel has a real nucleus, and the artistic transfiguration of the event gets the intensity of a process of consciousness. Savu the shoemaker, during a drunken madness moment, kills a Turkish prisoner named Mahmud. The disgraceful remorse

gets him ill of a typhoid fever for more than a month, and Mahmud's image is constantly pursuing him. In confession, Savu receives from the hermit Silvestru the canon to prepare with his hands a thousand pairs of footwear of all kinds and to cross the world to give them to the poor. Roaming the country's roads, Savu distributes the shoes that he has made by his own hands to the poor, regardless of age, religion or ethnicity. Under the sign of the same humanitarian beliefs, he establishes a beautiful friendship with the Turk Ibrahim and the Jewish Goldstein. Sheltered in the Ibrahim's house, Savu does not hesitate to defend the wealth and the life of his Turkish friend, even at the price of his life, when a gang of gypsies attack him. Their cohabitation is based on the principle of doing good, helping the humiliated and afflicted, respecting each other's religion. Beyond these aspects, in the novel, we find a detailed description of the Turkish settlement where flower gardens are compared to paradise gardens. Asked what kind of people are the Turks, Nicolache says to Savu: "honestly speaking, they are people of faith and word. If a Turk gave his word, that is it. Turks are good people! And they are good friends. If you could win the heart of a Turk and make him a friend, he shall risk his life for you." (Gala Galaction, *Mahmud's shoes*, p. 45)

In *The Cuciuc Brothers*, Gala Galaction draws a Turkish character in terms of a rich fellow capitalist, because he had a lot of money and was a very important trader, "His bag was always open to help the needy, to do any good." (George SION, *The Cuciuc Brothers*, p. 130) Ali Efendi was well-respected and appreciated in the community and also considered a wise man, "He had the gift of wisdom: everyone would seek advice from him; like a fair judge he would settle and reconcile all conflicts; everyone listened to him and obeyed his advice, which they considered spoken out of a saint's mouth." (Gala Galaction, *Mahmud's shoes*, p. 130)

Ismail, the famous chef of Radu Tudoran's book *In full sail*, known for his charming Romanian-Turkish language and admired for his harem of four Turkish women, a true Levant character soups served to his crew traditional Turkish food: "It's ready! Come on, eat! This is a meatballs soup, with lots and lots of lovage! And the meat was chopped with a meat cleaver, like in Istanbul!" (Radu Tudoran, *In full sail!* p. 128) The author finds a very common place for the two cultures to meet; in the kitchen and at the dinner table. Anton Lipan, the commander, asks for "mamaliga" (the Romanian

polenta) with the soup, for he does not like it with bread, but Ismail does not approve it, being very surprised by the commander's choice. The chef serves his soup with a metal spoon and refuses to offer a wooden one asked by the commander who says that the metal one changes the taste of the soup. At last, Ismail is happy to see that the commander likes the taste of the soup, but he is also very disappointed that Anton Lipan did not appreciate the meatballs because the meat was cut in too little pieces.

### **3. THE TURK IMAGE IN “TAKE, IANCHE AND CADÎR”**

The play *Take, Ianke and Cadîr* by Victor Ioan Popa is a multicultural story about a friendly coexistence in the Balkans. The play, in three Acts pictures, the life of the three main characters – a Romanian, a Jew and a Turk – that flows slowly, peacefully, and united by a deep friendship. It was first staged on March 25th, 1932, under the author's directing.

Victor Ioan Popa was born on July 29th, 1895, in Călmățui, Tutova County, located in the eastern Romania. He lived only 51 years but had a great career as publicist, novelist, dramatist, director and scenographer. He attended the Iași Conservatory and for a short period the Law School. To provide a living for himself, he worked as a teacher at the Costache Negruzzi College in Iași. He was the director of the Popular Theatre in Bucharest, the National Theatre in Cernăuți and professor of voice and diction at the Bucharest Conservatory.

Published only in 1938, the play *Take, Ianke and Cadîr* is based on the idea of tolerance, mutual respect of feelings, and spiritual purity. The play, built upon the idea of a balance between the pursuit of happiness and the social constraints, leads to a happy end when the union of two young people of different religions is granted.

Anna – Ianke's daughter, who is a Jew, wants to marry Ionel – Take's son, who is a Romanian.

This only becomes possible, due to Cadîr, the Turk that has skillfully reconciled both parties in conflict. His wisdom was based on a personal experience with an unhappy outcome that serves as example.

The news that young people have decided to marry threatens to spoil the tranquility of the village. Although both parents love their children and are linked by a three decades of friendship, they refuse to become in-laws, for fear of bankruptcy of their businesses.

Desperate, Ana addresses Cadîr:

*What shall we do now? Tell us! You have been always around and advised us well. Tell us. Is our love a sin?*

*Ana-Aniki, replies Cadîr, wherever there is love, there is no sin! The sin is living alone.*

Cadîr brings calm and urges everyone to think it over, in order not make decisions in a hurry. He shares his own story of having loved a Christian and refused to marry her because of her religion. Being alone all of his life brought him to the thought that “A man without love is like a dried tree.”

Cadîr, with his kindness and his good sense, saved the situation. Wisely, Cadîr tried to show Ianke, that resistance is basically a social prejudice:

*Jew, Christian, Mohammedan – we are all the same. One’s a good Jew, another is a good Christian. I am a good Mohammedan. It’s all the same, Ianke! You a Jew – him a Christian. We are brothers... You are both alike... have the same houses... the same wall... the same size... the same shops, only the painting is different!*

While Take and Ianke keep fighting, the wise Turk comes up with different solutions. First, he advises Ana to run away with her lover and be happy. He promises money to help. Then he tries to convince each of his friends to accept the love of their children:

*“Listen man, Ianke, you very upset if girl from that Leibovici a Christian boy loves?”*

*“But to hell with them! It is their business! They may love each other, as they wish,” Ianke says.*



At last, he confuses the two, lying to the grumpy Take about being Ana's father and telling the labile Ianke that he is Ionel's father. Duping them both, he borrows money from each of them and helps the young couple to run away.

When things would settle down, and the remaining issue is how to name the new shop, as "Take and Ianke" or "Ianke and Take"; he finds the right name for it: "In Jerusalem," because there, in the holy city, fellows of different nationalities coexist.

In the social context of the time, the author points out from the beginning of the play that the flower of the friendship of the three merchants have arisen from the urge to stifle silly prejudices. They wanted to be united by the warmest brotherhood because Ianke and Take had found themselves in the same building, not because of the actual requirements of the local trade but because of the absurd racial discrimination. The racial prejudice stopped the neighbors to buy all goods from the same merchant independent of him being Jewish or Romanian, and set a strict correspondence: Romanians should buy from Tache and Jews from Ianke, therefore demanding the presence of two tradesmen of corresponding nations for a reduced clientele. Cadır being Turk, could satisfy both, and thus both communities could buy from him .

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The foreigner's image is shaped in literature based on clichés and stereotypes inherited from author to author, confronted with the popular literature, proverbs and sayings that are adjusted by historical and cultural relations and embraced through the analysis of the self-images. All these images are the result of stratification, interdisciplinary interaction and networking: from identity to alterity, from the stereotype to literary image, several clichés are built up in a multifaceted body.

Therefore, the literary image is taken from the collective consciousness of a group or a community and constitutes a cliché or a prejudice, which may originally contain a part of the truth or partial information, but may also be a pure fiction and a literary bias.

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Example: Leary (2008) argued that...

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#### 2. Article or chapter in an edited book

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Gilovich, T., Keltner, D., & Nisbett, R. E. (2011). *Social psychology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: W. W. Norton.

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