

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 informed 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.*

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Editor