ECONOMIC INTERGRATION AND ITS ROLE IN REGIONAL SECURITY AND POLITICAL STABILITY

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Annotation. *This study explores the economic and political integration impacts on the states behavior. Using a mixed-methods approach and data from official national and internationals sources World Bank, Eurasian Economic Union, Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade, it analyzes trade turnovers, sustainable growths, regional security and peace keeping. Findings reveal economic integration's dual role – stimulating free market, access to global trade while intensifying political tensions and propose integrated international strategies for effective economic stable integration.*

Key words: *Integration, economic integration, security, policy, stability, Uzbekistan, Eurasian Economic Inion, cooperation, sustainable development, regional stability, trade turnover.*

In the state of qua, in the fast pacing globalized world, the issue of integration, especially economic integration plays an indispensable role for the countries and it is flipped through as a main instrument of sustainable development supply and political stability. However, with the merits, it has demerit sides too.

That it strengthens trade turnover, economic relations among states, decline of conflict escalation and forms up sustainable mechanisms of sustainable cooperation, as well as it creates risks of interdependence between actors, limitation of economic sovereignty and political pressure from the stronger participants at all. Economic integration leads to the regional security and political stability only when there is an institutional balance, equal division of resources and maintenance of strategic sovereignty of states in the whole.

This study employs a mixed-methods design to thoroughly examine the factors affecting different spheres of economic integration in keeping peace and stability of the states, and as a clear example of Uzbekistan. Qualitative data we collected from official national and international databases, including World Bank, Eurasian Economic Union, Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan, focusing on indicators of different states, growth, productivity levels and with a qualitative comparative analysis examples of trade relations of Uzbekistan with other states.

Statistical techniques, including trend analysis and correlation were applied to identify relationships and measures the impact of the economic integration to political security at all. The study period spans from 2018 to the present, allowing evaluation of recent changes, reforms and their statistical evidence alongside expert opinion and policy frameworks, thereby producing actionable conclusions relevant to discussion-makers aiming to enhance the countries' position in the world orders at all.

On the one hand, the economic integration is interpreted through different approaches as it was worked out by Eduard Marinov.

For instance, neofunctionalism emphasizes to the “spillover” effect, where economic cooperation is inevitably leads to the political integration. Following that, intergovernmental approach looks through the integration as a result of rational choice of states, they are more constructivistic and critical perspectives approach too, that try to maximize their national interests. Additionally, the theory of dependence stresses the risk of inequality between states where weaker states become dependent to central powers.

As there are some reasons of integrations, that are political, economic and social, and the issue of which of them is more sustainable and leads to more peace and stability is debated more.

And I point out that when there is an economic cooperation would spread from one sector to another and would generate demand for political and social integration. According to the Erns Haas, the creation of supranational institutions would advance integration by promoting states in the direction of joint interests [1]. So, integration is in bilateral process, like it creates simultaneously the condition for cooperation and forms up structural inequalities too.

Traditionally, economic integration is elucidated as a factor for conflict dismissing.

Expanding trade turnovers strengthens the value of conflict by making it non-profit for the countries. Moreover, the creation of supranational institutions leads to the coordination of policy and decrease of uncertainty in international relations. Nevertheless, when there is asymmetric integration, when the profit is divided unequal, the dependence also increases for the less developed countries from economic centers. It creates new dilemma and pressure for these countries. Integration is a mechanism of the stabilization, but also a factor for strengthening dependence. Its influence to the security is defined not by the factor of integration, but by the structure of economic and political relations inside the allies.

On the other hand, for some integration is a way to restore the state’s global position, while for others it is about ruling out the war, among peace movements and political lefts. The economic rise leads to the reduction of social pressure and strengthens legitimacy of governmental institutions.

Furthermore, the economic and political integration is also interconnected. In the core of the economic security, there are regional economic interests of the states, as well as the supply of the community living standards and effective utilization of the capital at all[2]. According to Viner, in some cases economic integration can be seen as a step towards free trade, but in others it is one more towards protection (Viner, 1950, p.41-49). If we talk about the positive sides of economic integration, that the countries should not be limited only with production and consumption, but should also include potential positive impact on employment, productivity, income level and competitiveness as well.

For example in most developing countries there is a low productivity and mounting unemployment. Therefore, when there is trade diversion, that leads to labor force to be transferred from low-productive sectors and activities, to higher valued ones, that bigger flows of workers influence labor force supply. And also, economic integration can lead to the free market also, but it is more beneficial to the most developed countries. It is called effect of “backwash”, that was worked by Elkan, where much of economic benefits of integration are concentrated in

[1] Transformations in World Politics: The Intellectual Contributions of Ernst B.Haas. Pp: 277-279. / https://pkatzenstein.org/data/annurev.polisci.8.082103.pdf

[2] Olga Isupova. (2016). Интеграция как фактор экономической безопасности региона // Экономика: вчера, сегодня, завтра. Pp: 141-145. / http://www.publishing-vak.ru/file/archive-economy-2016-3/12-isupova.pdf

one or a small number of member states, while economically weaker and geographically distant countries attain less benefits compared to their partners in the community[3].

As a clear example can be Uzbekistan, currently, leading the economic-political integration with the other countries all over the world. Uzbekistan is actively leading its economic relations with all the states of Central Asia.

The reforms of Shavkat Mirziyoyev are directed to the augmention of export attractiveness of Uzbek goods and in the combination with Kazakhstan, it is worked out “Made in Uzbekistan” and “Made in Kazakhstan” concepts by integrating industrial goods and mechanisms. Without having the access to the world oceans, Uzbekistan is actively expanding its export potential through transport-logistical infrastructure of Central Asia. This event was in 2025, December 22-25, where participated more than 50 companies participants from Uzbekistan’s regions, such as Karakalpakstan, Khorezm, Samarkand, Andijan and Tashkent with their food, textile, industry, pharmaceutical, electrical and constructing manufacturers. According to the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade in 2025, trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan exceeded $4.97bn, that soared to 11.4% in comparison with the previous year[4]. The exposrt reached $1.55bn, by illustrating the rise to 1.2%, while the import was $3.4bn or increased to 16.6%. For example in June 22, 2018 the General Assembly of the UN imposed the resolution made by Uzbekistan about “Strengthening regional and international cooperation in maintaining peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Asian region”.

Integration can be an effective tool for stabilization if it is based on the equality of participants, transparency of mechanisms, and fair distribution of benefits. Otherwise, it becomes a source of vulnerability, increasing economic and political dependence. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned, Uzbekistan, without having access to ocean is developing relations with Eurasian Economic Union not only for logistical purpose, but also for the several other sectors, such as export of fruits and vegetables, nuclear power plants, many other rare metals and renewable natural resources. Uzbekistan s leading the economic integration with Eurasian Economic Union as a leading trade partner starting from 2020 to 2024 it rose to $17.5bn. The membership of Uzbekistan to this Union can augment the GDP of country to 1.7% and attract more than $1.5bn foreign direct investments, according to the researches of Arina Surkova[5]. In the state of the art, Uzbekistan and the member states of Eurasian Economic Union have the potential of economic integration. But, there is an access to the investments and market, and also the risks of external dependence.

Recent developments in relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan demonstrate how economic integration is increasingly institutionalized and strategically oriented toward long-term regional stability. High-level negotiations between Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Emomali Rahmon in 2026 resulted in the adoption of comprehensive cooperation frameworks, including a joint program to increase bilateral trade turnover to $2 billion by 2030 and a large-scale industrial cooperation agenda.

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[3] Elkan, P. G. (1975) Measuring the impact of economic integration among developing countries. Journal of Common Market Studies 14 (1): pp. 56-68. / https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/63310/1/MPRA_paper_63310.pdf
[4] https://gov.uz/ru/miit
[5] Arina Surkova, Shuxratbek Fayzullayev and Jakhongir Khayitov. (2025). Экономические интересы и перспективы интеграции Узбекистана в Евразийский Экономический Союз. / https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ekonomicheskie-interesy-i-perspektivy-integratsii-uzbekistana-v-evraziyskiy-ekonomicheskiy-soyuz/viewer

The signing of numerous sector-specific agreements—covering innovation, digitalization (e-Permit systems), agriculture, transport, healthcare, and education—reflects a shift from declarative partnership to deeply structured and multi-level integration. Importantly, the expansion of interregional forums, joint investment platforms, and over 370 functioning joint enterprises indicates that integration is no longer limited to state-level diplomacy but is actively embedded in economic and institutional practices. From an analytical perspective, this demonstrates that modern economic integration between the two states functions as a mechanism of “pragmatic interdependence,” where mutual economic benefits, digital connectivity, and coordinated policy frameworks reduce uncertainty, strengthen trust, and contribute to regional security.

At the same time, the emphasis on diversification of cooperation sectors and digital governance tools suggests an effort to mitigate traditional risks of dependency, thereby aligning integration processes with the principles of balanced and sustainable development.

On the other hand, the experience of the European Union illustrates how economic integration is closely intertwined with both security provision and the emergence of new types of vulnerabilities. On the one hand, deep market integration, regulatory harmonization, and connectivity projects such as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route enhance resilience by diversifying trade routes, reducing dependency on single transit corridors, and strengthening economic interdependence between Europe and Central Asia. On the other hand, these same processes generate new risks, including exposure to external economic shocks, geopolitical competition over infrastructure, and the securitization of supply chains and energy flows. From an analytical perspective, the EU case demonstrates that modern economic integration contributes to stability not simply through cooperation, but through the strategic management of interdependence, where security increasingly depends on connectivity, diversification, and the ability to mitigate systemic economic risks.

In the contemporary international environment, the nature of threats to regional security has significantly evolved, moving beyond traditional challenges such as terrorism and extremism. While risks associated with terrorism and extremism remain relevant, they are no longer the primary determinants of instability in many regions. Instead, modern threats are increasingly economic and systemic in nature, including supply chain disruptions, energy insecurity, economic dependency, and vulnerabilities linked to digital infrastructure and technological gaps. For countries like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, these emerging risks are closely tied to the processes of economic integration itself, where interdependence can both enhance resilience and create new forms of exposure to external shocks. Thus, ensuring regional security today requires not only addressing conventional threats but also developing adaptive economic policies, strengthening institutional cooperation, and enhancing technological and infrastructural capacity to manage complex, non-traditional risks in an interconnected global system.

To sum up, the analysis confirms the hypothesis: economic integration contributes to regional security and political stability only if there is an institutional balance and the preservation of the strategic sovereignty of states. For Uzbekistan, the optimal strategy is a model of "careful integration," which involves participating in international economic processes without losing autonomy in key decision-making. This approach allows us to take advantage of integration while minimizing its risks to national security and political stability.

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