

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL COOPERATION BETWEEN GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL AND ARAB MAGHREB UNION

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Abstract

This Paper highlights the economic and cultural cooperation of GCC and AMU countries. Cooperation and collaboration in economic sphere is organized to deal within the frame work of regional interests and economic interdependency. GCC and AMU economic and cultural relations are relevant to the study of their overall relations and geopolitical position of North Africa and west Asian region as a political unit. In this context, the Paper deals with an overview of the central issues that decide the economic and cultural development as well as political viability of the regional countries. It includes the historical experiences of member countries of these organizations that inherited from the pre-colonial economy model that influences the regional geopolitics and harmony of economic interests.

Index Terms- GCC, AMU, Cooperation, Economy, Culture

INTRODUCTION

The regional economic and cultural cooperation between GCC and AMU in trade and economic sectors are important since these are the important factors of Arab Maghreb economic recovery and its further development. Though, cultural dimension of mutual cooperation strengthen the values of relationship in economic sector. Today, GCC and AMU are striving for close integration and cooperation, the rapprochement of economies for the sake of social and economic progress, the growth of trade turnover and improving the well-being of people. It also influences the levels of citizens' interaction and cultural cohesiveness. One of the components of foreign economic ties is mutual trade between countries (international trade, Interstate commerce). Before analyzing the trade, economy and cultural aspects of relations between GCC and the AMU, one has to of course look at the historical aspects, experiences, knowledge and theoretical basis of different countries.

In this connection, we need to consider some aspects (theories) that are fundamental to the study of issues related to trade. As is known from the economic history, in different periods of their development, individual states conducted the foreign trade policy, which at a given stage to the greatest extent corresponded to the specific situation that existed in the given country. Firstly, attempts were made for the formation of a coherent conceptual framework in the area of economic growth of the state and its foreign trade policy, which took place during the period of liquidation of the feudal fragmentation in Europe and the creation of centralized states (XVI - XVII century). This concept was called "Mercantilism" (from Italy, Mercante - merchant, merchant) (Babin 2006: 13).

In modern conditions, one of the most pronounced features of the evolution of the world community is the forcing of regional integration processes. This is a trend which originated initially in the 1950s. Western Europe now covers virtually all regions of the world, including Western Asia and Northern Africa, which since Soviet disintegration has become an active subject of international relations, turning from the "periphery" of world politics to a region that occupies important positions in the geopolitical configuration of the world.

Historical Legacies of economy cooperation between GCC and AMU countries

The regional association and economic integration of Arab states has been a long term goal of Arab countries. Though, effort in this direction was initiated in 1950s. It was very enthusiastic step and provide unique place among other developing countries. Arab states have signed a set of agreements for reduction in trade barriers on preferential basis. However, these agreements have not seen its economic impacts. There are multiple reasons forwarded in academic literature. Progress in economic relations has been slower, with numerous reversals (Sekkat : 1996; Fawzy: 2003).

There are tendencies among scholars to consider the reasons for not much success in intra-Arab integration in lower levels of intra-regional trade in goods. Their finding is that intra-Arab trade in goods is "too low" is imagined to involve that the probable gains from regional integration would also be low and, therefore, the motivation to accomplish such assimilation feeble. This academic orientation was formulated by authors like "Al Atrash and Yousef (2000) and Testas (1998 and 2002)". Their focus was mainly on inter-industry trade. Al Atrash examine that "intra Arab trade is lower than what would be predicted by the

gravity equation.” Testas (1998), has compared the “value of intra-regional trade in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).” He concluded that the ASEAN had much more deep economic impacts on member countries than the AMU. Testas (2002) has utilised a model based on economic growth for estimation of the constant and dynamic production and wellbeing effect of the “AMU” on Algeria. There has been a very small effect.

However, there are variations among Arab countries and it shows a range of GDP per capita among countries. It is less than 1,000 US dollar in Yemen but as high as 25,000 US dollar in UAE. These variations in GDP level can be utilised in a form of incentives for further engagement in intra-industry trade accelerated through product specialization in view of response to variations of income level and preferences. Preconditions for such business expansion are organized in terms of reduction in pattern of trade barriers. That barrier includes as “non-tariff barriers (NTBs)” and “real trade costs,” counting the price of services input (Hoekman and Messerlin: 2001).

Economic Issues and Challenges in AMU and GCC Countries

The states of Gulf region and Maghreb countries there have few essential issues which are common to all of them. All of these states stay in the financial, security, and political outline of their giant neighbour in the north. In 1990s, the Russian approach towards producers, empowered by an extremely vocal nationalist group in the alliance, talked straightforwardly of recovering their impact in the “near abroad”; Western Asia typically is the primary area referred to in this instance. The problems and challenges experienced in the region required immediate attention are diverse in nature. In spite of the fact that this region is honoured with abundant oil and petroleum resources, a large portion of that land is productive only when irrigated. As it requires a substantial scale of water systems it has clearly taken an immense toll on the hydrological system of the area, this is the system that sustains the quick- disappearing of local water bodies (Curtis, Library of Congress, March 1996).

The disruptions of political economy because of political instability in the region has caused for Unemployment at 23 percent in the year of 2010. It generates the discontent among youth. The demographic composition of Maghreb countries are in favour of youth. Fifty percent of the total population is composed by the individuals below 25. Unemployment rate is twice at the average global

level (Report of ITFC, 2014). 2011 issues which have affected the major Arab states have been perceived as security threat by GCC. Saudi Arabia was seen as regional coordinator. GCC has invited to non Gulf monarchies like Jordan and Morocco to be a member for GCC organization.

However, apart from success in military sector, GCC has faced certain challenges in economic trade structure. Bahrain and Oman has dealt with U.S separately in terms of free trade development. It created a gap in the common external tariff rate determination with relation to external trade. Intra-GCC exports lowered down from 4.2 percent to 2.2 percent during year of 2000 to 2011. Though, cooperation on the issue of joint currency and custom regulation are still stronger (Mathreas and Litsegard 2012). Similarly in the organization of AMU, the commitment to form a common market was overshadowed by the quarrels and individual relationship of member country with European nation effected the regional integration process (ibid 2012). Gulf war, Oslo peace process etc also effected the regional economic integration. Recent development like Aghadir movement for Arab Mediterranean economic integration signed by the countries like Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt during 2004 which tried to be implemented in 2007 as well as GCC countries initiative for common currency in the Gulf region has undermined the Pan-Arabism ideology (Harders and Langrezi: 2008). Agadir movement has proceeded for the economic integration with Europe as EU-Mediterranean integration which leads towards formation of free trade agreement with European country. In this context EU-Mediterranean integration has been organized to overcome Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement signed (GAFTA) signed in 1998. GAFTA has been remain as proposal and not realized which was projected to be implemented in 2005.

However, these Maghreb states are very rich in terms of resource availability. Irony is that these countries are much dependent upon oil and gas for their economic growth. Due to increase in oil prices countries of AMU has shown a positive sign of economic growth during economic crisis. Reduction in oil prices and lack of capital inflow has impacted on the economic condition of Maghreb. Heavy oil reserve and recent budgetary deal has tried to mitigate the problem. On the other hand low integration process with international capital agencies, lesser exposure of financial market and U.S based financial institutions has also affected the North African economies. Internal demand was maintained during crisis period from neighbouring countries which has been shocked economically and fiscal balances from government has been involved for regional as well as sub regional sustenance (Human Development Report, 2009, IMF Regional Economic Outlook for Middle East and Central Asia)

In this context, level of economic diversification in Arab countries is low that created a situation of larger dependency of economy on oil, gas and mineral resources. Though, few manufacturing based units are also important. There is a large segment of population who are involved in lesser valued services in public enterprises. There are countries where young population is more and population is growing at faster rate. Arab economies are needed to be economically diversified. New sectors of economy which includes digital economy, Green technology can be utilized for the economic diversification. Employment and jobless economic growth, lower rate of sophisticated private sector, inadequacy in trade infrastructure etc are other aspects of challenge. Institutions and Organizations are not fully utilized for trade reform Limited Economic integration of region and trade activities cannot only be a way for eradication of these challenges (UNDP Report 2009).

Over the past ten years Arab Maghreb countries has been changed considerably. Geopolitics and political dynamic has also been modified. It was forwarded in some sectors and regressed in others. However, the process has been complicated further due to polarization of various ethnic groups of in Libya. Though, regionally they share history and culture. But each country has

own form for its future development model (White, August 17-23 2000). The individuals who occupy the region are now constrained with numerous challenges (Menon, Fedorov, and Noida 1999:226-246) that can harshly pressurize for regional security. Certainly, development of petroleum and natural gas exports, of the region would remain delicate for the probable prospect.

Economic Cooperation between AMU and GCC

The financial viability, political stability, and open existence of the North African and Gulf countries. It can only be possible with mutual cooperation in each walk of life. Present tumult of political crisis and “personality dispute” is an outcome of world political experiences. Due to crumbling of Soviet Union, major world power influences in the Asian countries surprisingly confronted for genuine participation with each other (Roy 2007). The geographic association of the regional states requires cooperation and collaboration in various schemes for regional cohesion. Major challenges in terms of economic integration in GCC emerged from the infrastructure sector, lack of commitment of few states to fulfil economic integration programme, sophisticated and valued transportation network, internal conflict and political rivalries, scarcity of statistical data etc are the major hurdles in economic integration process. Apart from all these hurdles GCC has been able to realized Custom Union, Joint GCC market and high level military and cultural security in the region (Aljazeera Report:2015).

The issues involving in regional integration and debate on cooperation between regional organizations are involved certain pre-occupied biasness of arguments forwarded by scholars. Mostly biasness at two levels is recorded in the studies of mutual cooperation of AMU and GCC states. First, the arguments are framed in “goods market” only for intra- regional integration scheme. On the other hand, the arguments related to low intra-regional integration due to minimum level of inter regional trade of goods. This low level of inter-regional trade is related to low integration level. That causes the vicious circle in this mechanism. The model of regional integration which is recoded at European economic integration process has become the land mark of most of the studies in inter-regional cooperation. Though, flow of goods and trade in materials may not be only instruments of regional integration. Success in European Union and economic connectivity may vary with context of other regional associations (Hoekman and Sekkat: 2010)

However, regional Integration of service sector, human resource flow as well as flow of financial capital may be preceded for regional interdependency. It is significant besides development of cooperation in integration of goods market. The available evidences have shown that significant possible gains from integration of these markets in the Arab region. Theoretically, it provides an inducement to decision makers to promote regional integration. In practice, it is vital for probable financial growth than specialization of intra-regional business in goods sector (Sekkat: 2010). Apart from economic aspects of trade and business the political perspective of inter-regional as well as intra-regional associations cannot be neglected. Though, Political issues has significant role to drive and constrain inter-regional integration. The political ambition of European countries was to prevent the armed conflict between Germany and France that may harm in regional integration. These European nations considered European Union at prime importance that is accountable for the value of the agreement and the execution of integration process. But, Arab countries have constantly opted to an inter-governmental means for integration. It reflects, to a large degree, the unwillingness of Arab leaders to transfer supremacy to regional organizations (Fawzy, 2003). This unwillingness is coexisted with the “Pan-Arabism ideology” that leaders defend at public space. This political attribute of the “status quo” is hardly ever addressed by economists. Although, it arguably lies at the heart of the problems that have confronted deep regional integration – not just of goods markets, but more importantly, of services and factor markets

Financial Relations between GCC and AMU

Financial relations between GCC and AMU were severely affected because of the breakdown of North African states like Libya and recent geopolitical development in North Africa. Dissimilar to other previous regional associations’, countries of AMU regional organization and respective government are still to execute changes which has impact to move as market economy framework. This attitude of Maghreb countries towards GCC was one of the primary reasons as to why the conditions of the region encouraged a loss of confidence in few major economies and its arrangements. There was an attempt to make progressively clear endeavours to re-adjust their associations after the fall of Libya. This was less about to counter western assessments of the decisions by the political elites. In spite of the fact that these evidently existed in a few states, and more about the question of whether countries could be inter-dependent upon (Paramonov and Stokov 2008). These conditions where the destabilization of the regional order was genuine possibility. Therefore, it was fortified with the problems of changing financial, social and cultural procedures in the North African countries. It was seen in the disintegration of the economic associations inside the post 2011 North Africa.

Regional and Inter-Regional Cooperation.

During, January 2008, a common single market was formed with objective to realise an integrated market space. There has been the easy flow of goods and services in the region. However, operation of this common market norm lagged behind due to 2009 economic crisis. An association named as customs union was created during 2003. It came into operation on January, 1st 2015. However, in the month of January 2015, the “common market” was further integrated. It allow complete fairness as well as equality of GCC citizens for employment in government and private sphere, social security scheme and facilities after retirement, real estate ownership, movement and flow of capital, access to education, health and other social services in all member states. Though, there are few barriers still present in the free flow of materials and services. The process of harmonization of tax systems, account standard and civic regulations are in progress.

In terms of countries of Arab Maghreb Union the economic integration has not been realized at intra regional level. It is also due to variations in economic setting of member countries. The liberal orientation of Morocco and Tunisia however shows possibilities of outward connectivity. However, economy of Algeria and previous Libya had experienced a command economy in earlier position. Recent political changes in North African countries have produced a situation of turmoil in regional economy. The economic activity of Mauritania is still dependent upon agricultural activities. GDP level of this country is very low (Arora: 2012). Though, geopolitics of AMU countries and civil war as well as major power intervention in the region has disturbed the political stability but member states are optimistic to be regional peace and integration.

However, recently, in 2014 few countries of GCC like Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia has forwarded a thought for the creation of common currency in the sense of monetary union. Finance Minister of Kuwait explained that these four GCC members are marching ahead for “monetary union”. He also said that few “technical issues” are waiting for clearance. Hence, a “common single market” and “common central bank” would enhance the Gulf Cooperation Council as one single integrated body. In this respect, it would have immense “influences on the global financial system”. Though, the implementation of a unique currency system and creation of a “central bank” have not given much emphasis. It was neglected by the “Monetary Council.” Monetary Council was created by the larger regional participants who included Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen. It was formed on May 30, 1964. This “Economic Council of the Arab League” was formed with 1957 agreement.

The participating members would have 96 percent of total regional Arab trade. They may have 95 percent trade with other external countries. There are following conditions in this regard.

A-Instruction of the inter-customs duties

It seeks reduction of the custom duty on Arab products at the rate of 10 percent per annum. About 14 Arab states have reported these custom reduction policies in the “Security Council of the Arab League” to harmonize them.

B- Application of the “local Arab products Norms”.

Member countries have shared their common criterion and provisions to help their products move about easily from one state to other. Further, the League has also formulated a project for application of the “Arab Agriculture Pact”. This pact is organized to share the common norms in the Agricultural zone. It inserted numerous limits and conditions.

In this respect, Arab League issued few exceptional conditions that allowed certain custom duty for fixed materials to six member countries. Though, for numerous materials, few countries have requested for additional exceptions but rejected by Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan.

- Private sectors:

In terms of private agencies, the league created a statistical database and facility to update and endorse the private sector's benefit.

- Greater Arab Free Trade Area

“The Economic and Social Council in its sixty-fifth meeting agreed on pointing a base for communication to ease communication between member states, and to work on easing interaction between the Private and public sectors to further apply the Greater Arab Free Trade Area.” The “Greater Arab Free Trade Area” (GAFTA) came into existence during 1997. It is a pan-Arab free trade zone. GAFTA was created by 14 arab states. It includes countries like Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates. GAFTA was formed with the acceptance of the “Agreement to Facilitate and Develop Trade among Arab Countries” (1981) by the Arab League’s “Economic and Social Council (ESC)”. Further, it was approved by seventeen “Arab League member-states at a summit in Amman, Jordan of the “Greater Arab Free Trade Area Agreement” (1997). In 2009, Algeria joined GAFTA as the eighteenth member-state. GAFTA is supervised and run by the ESC.” During, sixty-seventh meeting, “the Economic and Social Council agreed that a 40% decrease on customs on goods in the past 4 years of the GAFTA would continue and following the decisions at the Amman summit, the members will make efforts to eliminate all customs duties on local goods.”

Therefore, there are various economic means which nourishes the Arab Maghreb states and its development initiated through GCC cooperation. Economic condition of GCC states has grown much in compare to certain countries of the region. It provides employment opportunities for millions of migrants. Remittances were continuously supplied by Gulf towards other developing countries. Though, integration of regional economies has been a crucial aspect of the inter-national policy strategies of Arab governments. But, after a longer time in which integration, effort were characterized by lack of execution. “PAFTA” and “GCC” have turn into the major central points for intra-Arab economic cooperation to integrate markets. In contemporary period, PAFTA has concentrated mostly on reduction of trade barrier and easy flow of goods. The first major milestone comprising the removal of tariffs on intra-PAFTA trade in January 2005. The next steps announced by PAFTA members include extending the PAFTA to cover services trade and investment and to reduce remaining NTBs.

Contemporary Economic Indicators of GCC Economy

Most of the statistical information reveals the decreasing trend in economic indicators of GCC countries. Reduction in oil prices tests the economic capability of countries of organization. In Bahrain economic growth shows a continuous lowering down of growth rate. However, it tries to consolidate its fiscal deficit. Economy of Bahrain experienced vulnerability due to lower down of

value of oil and Bauxite resources. Bahrain has characterised with less saving and high economic debt. Therefore, this country is much exposed to financial crisis. Cheap oil continues to test Bahrain's economic resilience. Bahrain adapted fiscal expansion since 2009. The fiscal expansion has resulted into fiscal deficit. The economic condition during 2015 has worsened during 2015. Oil revenue further declined at the rate of 10 percent of GDP. General deficit of government was estimated at 12.8 percent of GDP. This economic deficit has tried to maintain the economic growth only at 2.9 percent level. Though, it reserves has also been lowered down public debt increased as 62 percent of GDP. Economic agencies have indicated the low economic growth for the period of 2018. Low oil price is also linked with lowering down of infrastructural investment (World Bank, 2017).

Kuwait

However, the economy of Kuwait shows a positive sign in terms of its economic growth in contemporary period. Kuwait is supported by high level of oil production. It has also implemented its developmental planning. Banking and infrastructure sectors have also improved. In 2016, GDP has increased at the rate of 3 percent which was only 1.8 percent in 2015. In Kuwait, non oil sector has also been improved. It expanded at 2 percent rate which was better than of 2015. GDP growth in the year of 2017 was slower down to 2.5 percent in the year 2017. The strategic government plan for investment of 115 billion US dollar in "oil sector" over next five years has further organised to boost the production level in the year of 2018. Additionally economic growth is projected at the rate of 3.2 percent in coming years (ibid, 2017).

Oman

Contemporary oil prices after OPEC agreement to cut the oil production in 2017 has much effects on the economy of Oman. Further, government plan to implement austerity has depressed the economic growth level. Fiscal and current account deficits are remain larger in size. Government of Oman proceeded for external borrowing to cope up these deficits. Though, economic growth is predicted to increase in 2018 as Oman tried to diversify its economy and it focuses upon fisheries and tourism sectors (ibid, 2017). GDP growth of Oman economy has been slowed down to 2.2 percent in 2016. GDP growth was much higher in 2015. It was 5.7 percent during 2015 (Government of Oman 2016). Non Oil sectors have dropped down in 2016. It was only 2 percent in 2016. Though, in previous year, Non Hydrocarbon shared 7 percent to GDP. Even hydrocarbon sector growth has also declined from 2015 level. It was 4.2 percent in 2015 but experienced only 2.4 percent in the year 2016. In 2017, total GDP growth was predicted even less than 1 percent due to reduction in oil prices by OPEC countries. Therefore, there are possibilities of the curtailment of government money and individual consumption.

Therefore, growth rate of GDP in the year of 2017 estimated to be below 1 percent because of reduction of oil prices, government austerity measures and lowering of private consumption. 2017, budget has cut down public expenditure at the rate of 8 percent. Budget deficit was recorded at very high rate which was 10.6 percent in previous years. There is estimation that if it could not be curtailed then it might increase at 13.9 percent. Monetary policies will be high due to higher interests' rate. Due to increase in the "electricity tariffs" and "global food prices", Inflation in the economy is expected to rise at 1.4 percent.

Qatar

Due to persisted lower energy prices, fiscal and current account deficit is recorded. The administration of Qatar has regulated the current expenditure. It also reformed the subsidy rate. But, Qatar is still enthusiastic for budgetary support of upcoming event "2022 FIFA World Cup". Though, financial buffers are also remaining larger. Due to uncertainties of the hydrocarbon sector, "economic diversification" is in critical condition

GDP growth rate of Qatar has been slowed down to projected level of 2.9 percent in 2016 though; it was 3.5 percent in 2015. The regional trend in oil production during previous years has indicated the flat output. It reflected the larger measures and effects of a self-imposed regulatory mechanism on supplementary production from the huge "North Field". It is the natural gas reserves which modified Qatar into "largest LNG exporter."

In contemporary period, Qatar economy has 200 billion US dollar infrastructure project for up gradation because it wishes to host the world cup. This monetary funding involve in construction, transportation and service sector. There has been about "1.4 billion cubic feet per day Barzan Gas Project". It will contribute economic growth as 3.3 percent during 2017. Further, it will also help in some of the expected decline in natural gas production over the current years. With "FIFA-related investment", economic growth is anticipated to progressively slow down at 2.5 percent.

Hence, increase in oil production as well as in price level will help in recovery of as gas export earnings. It will also narrow down the fiscal deficit condition. Savings in current expenditures will also be ensured with introduction of subsidy reforms and the introduction of a Value Added Tax in current year.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the important countries in the region in terms of its regional influences and economic intervention. Reduction of oil prices has also tested the resilience of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the year of 2016, Saudi Government has tightened the economy through "fiscal consolidation measures". Authorities have introduced various economic reform initiatives against emerging economic challenges in the region. New market forces have been observed that required adapting the fiscal consolidation efforts. Yet, reduction of oil price has further challenged the "economic growth" and "fiscal sustainability" of Saudi Arabia. Generally, oil sector or hydrocarbon shares 80 percent of total income of government. This sector contributes about

40 percent of total GDP. Average oil price in a month was 30 US dollar per barrel in 2016. However, price in 2014 was 54 US dollar in 2014. Economic growth of the country was reflection of the recent agreement among OPEC countries. In January, 2017, governments have lowered down the oil production at 9.8 million barrels in a day. This low level of production is in tune with the 2014 production before oil price drop. On the other hand, 2017, fiscal budget has slightly lesser the fiscal control. Non oil economic sectors have potential to regenerate the “fiscal adjustment” that causes the growth by 2.1 percent in 2017. In total, GDP growth is estimated as 0.6 percent during 2017 (World Bank Report, 2017)

However, at external level, the current account deficit (CAD) at very high. Generally, it was at 4 percent of GDP 2017. Though, it is projected that the current account would be reverted and smaller increase will be recorded in 2018 onwards (World Bank Report, 2017)

United Arab Emirates

United Arab Emirates have experienced the similar level in few years. Though, economic condition may be favourable because of the rise of oil production capability. Investment in other sectors has also increased which is due to upcoming global event like “Expo 2020”. In that context economic growth can rise at midterm level. World Bank Report (2017) is very cautious about the economy because of tightening “regional liquidity” and “global slowdown”.

Persistent lower oil prices and government austerity policies continue to influence the economy. GDP recorded slower growth as 2.3 percent in 2016 which is quite low comparing to near 5 percent from 2010 to 2014. Austerity was seen in negative manner which harmed the business activities and confidence in economy. Private sector has also experienced the lowering of its credit during 2016. In this respect, share of Hydrocarbon GDP have also slowed down to 3 percent level in the same year which was about 4.6 percent in the year of 2015. Oil reduction policy would further delimit the economic growth in 2017 that reduced at 2 percent level which was so low as it was predicted for the period. Growth, however, is expected to get better slightly which is estimated as 3.2 percent in 2019. On the other hand, federal governmental agency has projected a growth rate of 4 percent in the year 2017. It seems to be over estimations of federal government as economy is dealing with weak “bank liquidity”. However, in 2018, it seems that oil production will increase because there has been much investment in “oil field development”. Non oil sectors were also taken into consideration due to oil prices has seen slightly improved that leads to confidence in economy. Effects of fiscal consolidation can also observe. Process of implementation of larger projects accelerated before “Expo 2020”. One of the important factors for this economic tendency may be observed in smoothing the economic sanctions against Iran that increased mutual trade. “Expo 2020” has potential for larger number of visitors’ attraction it may have multiplier impact in private consumptions and export of services (World Bank Report, 2017)

Perspective on International Cultural Cooperation

Generally, international cultural cooperation indicates both public and private levels inter connection for promotion of international effort in cultural sectors. It includes the promotion of knowledge transmission and flow of Skills, Arts and Information across territorial boundary of states. Further, cultural cooperation also incorporates activities as like exchange of students and research scholars, programme on technical associations, though; conceptual frame of the word cultural cooperation has been observing changes since Second World War (Encyclopaedia, 2018).

Initially, it was perceived that cultural cooperation is mainly an issue of individual concern or it involve only a set of religious and social institutions, financial groups. Though, sometime, cultural resources have been utilized for the purpose of cohesion and development of colonial units. But states were not much curious about promotion of their cultural attributes beyond the national boundaries until recent changes in their orientation (Cliffs and Hall, 1963). The cultural activity which was sponsored by the governmental agencies has been only an optional feature in external relations of states. During Second World War there were only few countries which has recognised and valued international cultural cooperation. Since 1940s, Western countries like United Kingdom, Germany and France has developed a concrete agenda for cultural cooperation in foreign relation programme. In contemporary global society, cultural cooperation is widely recognised generally in all countries. Virtually, it has become an essential feature in inter-state relations. Similarly, cultural dimension has also occupied a central position in the work and objective of international as well as regional organizations. It helps in the creation of a sense of belongingness in a form of homogeneous community (ibid, 1963).

Few authors (Beardsley, Seymour 1956) limit the application of term inter-national cultural cooperation in regional and international organization works and activities. They argue that the works and activities of international organizations like United Nations, OAS, EU etc should only be considered as cultural cooperation activities in terms of contemporary utilization of the meaning of cultural cooperation.

However, the contemporary focus on cultural cooperation by modern state are an outcome of changing dynamic of inter-state relations at global level. Role of United Nations and entitlement provided to the country by this organization is an important factor for enhancement of cultural cooperation among states. UN assigned the member states to promote the peace and development. There is clear understanding among states that cultural cooperation will lead for peaceful world community. It is real that interdependence of states to each other is needed for their development. Commonly states are agreed to access and mobilise cultural, technical and intellectual resources of world for cultural cooperation. Though, the view and recognition of thought that post-war conflict, tensions and ideological disagreements cannot resolve through modern military equipments. These

issues can also be mitigated through common understanding and mutual welfare of human societies across the territorial boundaries. In that context, cultural cooperation can be utilised as an instruments for cultural growth among states (Laves, 2008).

However, the academic discussion over international cultural cooperation has emerged later after the Second World War. Number of academic writings has increased. These writings are historical. These are based on analytical inquiry of role of cultural cooperation in inter-state relationship. It wishes to observe the impact of cultural cooperation on changing dynamic of foreign policies of nations. Government record and official documents started questions over the effectiveness of policy formulations, organizations, issues of finance has been discussed in the legislative assemblies of concerned state. Committee and forum started building for genuine cultural cooperation in inter-state relations. U.S Congress discussion experiences and United Nations Agencies debate can be cited for this purpose. It indicates the growing interests and recognition from different school of International Relation.

Role of International and Regional Organizations in Cultural Cooperation

The role of international and regional organizations is crucial in the promotion of international cultural cooperation. Among various agencies of UN, it is “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization has played an important role in this direction. In beginning it has focussed upon progress of knowledge and promotion of common understanding. It encouraged communication and cooperation in educational sector, scientific values and mass media. Though, emergence of many independent states from colonial rule has enlarged the role of UNESCO to enhance the cultural cooperation for mitigation of developmental issues and challenges. However, in strengthening the basic human resources such as education, technology, mass media and sciences UNESCO also required help from World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO), and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). It has also been helped by the United Nation Regional commission constituted for Africa, Asia and Latin America (Laves 2008)

Regional Organizations have also an important role in enhancement of cultural cooperation at regional level. Their wish for regional peace implicitly involved regional cooperation activities. Regional organizations like EU, GCC and AMU etc has taken initiative for regional cooperation.

On the other hand, many programme and activities related to cultural dimension beyond the boundary of territorial state are external to the influence of international Organizations as well as state government. There is an argument which mentioned the role of International Nongovernmental as well as National Non Governmental Agencies (NGAs) that includes Religious agencies, Business Organizations, Welfare Agencies etc. These agencies occupy a significant position and much emphasised in newly independent countries and reduces the role of national and international government activities (Walter 2008).

Contemporary focus over scholars of international “Cultural Cooperation” is related to carve out various technical mechanisms for evaluation of impacts of cultural activities between states. It further seeks the definition, concepts, types and objective of cultural cooperation which can contribute the inter-state regional cooperation also. Modern academics on the issue of cultural cooperation organize its theme to observe the various means and ways for cultural exchanges such as exchange of information, scholars, students and intellectuals. Further, there is a study upon cultural programme and activities across the boundary of state. The role of international and national agencies, institutional cooperation, role of universities, conferences and seminar are other example of the studies of international cooperation among scholars. It also focuses upon communication among different cultures, regional studies and cross cultural education (Thompson and Laves, 1957).

Perspective on Cultural Cooperation between Gulf and Maghreb Countries

Shared historical experiences and commonness in terms of religious, ethnic and linguistic ethos has provided a homogeneous social and cultural space of GCC and AMU countries. History explains the similar and unique cultural root of these two spatial units. However, cultural prospects between these two regional organizations may lead to further cooperation. There are institutional means to historical reconstruction of shared memories. GCC has forwarded the certain legal statues specially article four which widen the cultural integration forces and regional unity. There are many cultural frames which can be utilised for larger level of cooperation between these two organizations. Shared cultural and linguistic traditions has potential to construct a common cultural platform of poetry recitation programme, literary festivals, translation network, academic visits, research work and regional studies characterises the nature of cooperation between these two regional organizations.

Cultural Cooperation and GCC

The legal aspect of GCC and its statute widen the level of cultural cooperation between member states. It also opened the ways of cooperation and strengthens the relations. Council does not only limit with the political and economic agenda but cultural aspects are also implicit in its fold. It covers the significant avenues of civic life (Al-Dosari, 2015).

“In this respect article 4 of the council indicates clearly:

1. To achieve coordination, integration and interdependency among Member States in all fields, leading to their unity.
2. To deepen and strengthen the links, connections and cooperation between their peoples in various fields.
3. Establish similar systems in various fields, including:

- Economic and financial affairs
 - Business, Customs and Transport
 - Educational and Cultural Affairs
 - Social and health affairs
 - Legislative and administrative affairs
4. Advancing scientific and technical progress in the fields of industry, mining, agriculture, and water and animal resources, and establishing scientific research centers, establishing joint projects and encouraging and cooperating the private sector for the benefit of their peoples (Article 4, GCC Charter)

In this context, an institutional means to focus upon each walk of life including cultural, technical, social, economic as well as health sector system was also an important aspects of living environment determined by GCC for their member states. GCC, however also enlarges its position to cooperate with Maghreb countries for cultural cooperation.

Cooperation prospects between GCC and Arab Maghreb Union.

Cultural Activities and Cooperation

There are many cultural activities which has scope in deeper cooperation between these two organizations. Most of the cultural activities have taken place at GCC level. But it provided as a gateway for GCC-AMU cultural relations. Generally, it is related with the organization of cultural events like Poetry recitation and gathering, Cultural exhibitions of drawings, fine arts etc. Literary festivals and intellectual meetings as well as cultural weeks are another possible ways of cultural cooperation between GCC and AMU. Translation activities and writing of different scholarly works with joint venture has another possible mechanism for cultural cooperation. GCC also wish to establish a “translation center” in the GCC countries. Therefore, it constitutes a vital area for mutual cooperation because Maghreb countries have rich experience in this field. (ibid 2015)

Holding cultural events

Countries of Gulf Cooperation Council has a tradition to organize cultural fest and events in their own territorial boundary as well as in outside of their country. Generally, European nations and Asia are the platform for the Arabic cultural events. Gulf countries promote their regional culture and introduce their rich experiences. It provides a sound communication to other countries. Shared history and culture of Arab Maghreb countries and Gulf generate possibilities for joint creation of cultural platform to show solidarity and cooperation in cultural arena.

GCC and AMU Cultural Weeks

Cultural weeks at both the places of GCC and Maghreb countries can enhance the levels of cultural cooperation with each other. It includes a variety of cultural activities in its fold. Literature, intellectual, entertainment and academic activities serve as a platform for mutual communication, and dialogue. It deepens the understanding and also promotes the citizen to citizen interconnection. In words of Al Bashari, cultural weeks can be started on regular basis (every three years, for example). If the “Gulf Cultural week” is to be held in one of the Arab Maghreb countries, and on the other hand, the “Maghreb cultural week” to be held in one of the Gulf state, it will provide opportunities for cultural cohesion. Each week, different cultural activities should be carried out. It reflects the culture of each region. It communicates and enriches other cultures also. It will be good for the cultural week if it would be comprehensive. It can organize exhibitions of fine arts, children's drawings, calligraphy, and theatrical festivals etc.

Joint Translation Mechanism

Maghreb countries are very experienced in the cultural field of “Arabicization and translation”. In this respect, this rich experience of Maghreb countries can be utilized for genuine cooperation with GCC countries in the field of translation. The work of “Tamimi Foundation for scientific research and information” in this field is highly valued. It also indicates that Foundation and the Maghreb universities can contribute much because of high qualifications and wide familiarity in foreign languages especially in French and Spanish. “Translation center project” can be established in the GCC countries. The experience of cooperation in the field of translation could be initiated through an agreement between the Center and the Foundation for that purpose, taking into account the strength and focus of the institution on the humanities that would assist the Center in achieving its objectives.

Cooperation in Educational Field

There is no doubt that the existing cooperation between the GCC countries and the Maghreb countries, and the potential for further development in various fields, whether political, economic, social or otherwise, remain multiple. The educational field also provides unlimited prospects for Gulf-Maghreb cooperation. It comes to our mind that the important areas of cooperation linked to both aspects: teaching and scientific research are mentioned as basic axes in the mission of the universities.

On the first hand, universities, especially in the faculties of humanities, literature and education, focus on the teaching of many courses in history, archeology, philosophy, literature, language, sociology, politics, economics, geography, arts, anthropology and other courses that constitute a backbone of Humanities and Literary Studies.

On the other hand, scientific research is an important part of university activity, whether it is contributed by members of the faculty and students of higher studies, or what is available in the form of the structures and facilities for the scientific research such as libraries, databases, specialized research centers, administrative systems and others.

This integration between the two sides - teaching and research - is a method used by universities to pursue its social mission. Based on this integration, it is possible to propose some ideas for practical cooperation between universities in the GCC countries and universities in the Maghreb countries.

It is also possible to propose some form of cooperation between the universities of the GCC countries, especially scientific research centers and libraries, and between research institutions in the Maghreb countries, such as Tamimi Foundation and other civil and governmental institutions, as well as universities in the Arab Maghreb countries.

3.9.10 General framework for cooperation - regional studies

Regional studies and mutual inquiry over regional issues provides a significant ground for cultural cohesion. It draws the areas of cultural and social homogeneity. Regional studies also acquaint the research students for regional features and characteristics in totality (Ahamed: 2014). Regional studies indicate the courses and research that carried out or can be carried out in universities on the Arab Gulf region in the universities of the Arab Maghreb countries and similar ones on the Maghreb region in the GCC universities. There are a large number of courses on regional studies. It covers the issues like economy, politics, sociology, history etc. It is being taught in most universities respectively in the territorial boundaries of both the region (Ibrahim, 2017).

However, these courses covered information on individual units but there is a lack of issues dealing with the topics related to regional integration and mutual cooperation between the two regions. For regional convergence and cooperation, there must be a comprehensive framework and curriculum.

Future Programme for Regional Cooperation

There is certain belief among academic communities that cooperation in regional studies may lead to implement various other practical programs for further cooperation. Within this framework, the following regional programs are helpful that can be implemented:

Teaching Regional Courses on the Gulf and the Maghreb Region:

Theoretically cultural cooperation must be supported with the knowledge and information of each participating country. It is the academic discipline which provides the systematic facts and conceptual frame of region, nation and state. The similarities, differences and preferences of nation-state can be understood within academic and disciplinary framework. Hence, cooperation required the systematic regional courses on the subject matter of regional attributes, features and characteristics (Ahamed 2014). For this purpose, initially, a survey at the level of the faculties of humanities, social sciences and literature in the universities of Gulf and Maghreb countries will be needed to observe the actual reality of courses taught in terms of number and content. It is also necessary to know about the courses which can be further added (Al Bashari 2015).

However, there is limitation in the exploration and the possible opportunities offered by existing decisions with possible cooperation and the steps or programs that can be proposed in this way. The study may end with the proposal to teach a new joint curriculum, the content of which is written in cooperation between the universities, or the replacement of some existing courses with more relevant decisions and in line with the objectives of Gulf-Maghreb cooperation and rapprochement. It is clear that there is a need to conduct two surveys, one at the level of the universities of the GCC countries, and the second at the level of the universities of the Maghreb according to the general framework for them, and this will be part of the cooperation agreement. After the completion of the studies, it would be useful to establish a joint symposium to present and discuss the results and to propose recommendations from participants regarding their adoption of cooperation programs.

Academic visits and exchange of professors

Within the general framework of regional studies, specific programs of academic visits can be set up. Faculty members from universities in the Gulf and Morocco will make short visits to give lectures or short courses for students and researchers from professors and those interested in regional affairs. The results obtained in the survey will form the basis for the proposed visit programs according to the academic disciplines that are the priority, although this should not necessarily be delayed until the study is completed. On the other hand, establishment of academic chairs for the two regions (Gulf region in the Maghreb universities, and Maghreb region in the Gulf universities) can also enhanced the cultural cooperation. Initially, a group of resident professors would be selected for some disciplines. That can be a reference point for courses and research on the two regions.

Common Research Initiative

This field of research work shows a productive space for cooperation between academicians, research students and experts of the Gulf and Maghreb countries. It is important to systematic research of common interests. However, projects like joint research needed an extensive communication mechanism among researcher scholars. A broad knowledge system is required in which both side can contribute and shared their knowledge and experience.

Therefore, academic meetings either in the form of seminars, conferences are the best way to observe common research interests. It also explores the causes of cooperation and possible means. Formation of research database centre at sides and sharing of research information, their specialties and interests, published research and studies would be another input for cooperation. It has not lesser value than joint meetings. "The Tamimi Foundation for Research and Information" also endeavor for documentation. It publishes studies that carried out by the Tamimi Institute for Research and Information. In addition, what is being carried out at universities and research centers, represents a base for exploration of the potential of cultural cooperation (Tamimi Institute for Research and Information, 2015)

Conclusion

The focus of clear economic interdependence is not visible between GCC and AMU countries. Authors conclude that invisibility of this interdependency is due to uniform trade pattern and similar economic functional specialization. In the global energy market even regional shift is recorded. The condition of global oil market has undergone several transformations the foundational mechanism of oil economy and business at global level has also been changed. In this context, mutual cooperation of GCC and AMU countries has ambit to diversify in changing global economic order . Even intra regional cooperation is dominating over inter-regional cooperation. Members of GCC countries seem to be more cohesive in terms of integration values. As well as attempt to be integrated economy is crucial attributes between the countries of AMU. Cultural cooperation has emerged between two organizations and respective countries with potential similarities of their cultural background but it is not much enlarged as it could be. Even cultural connectivity and mutual cultural programme has not been occurred at broader level.

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