

Arab common market: current challenges and future aspirations

The establishment of the Arab common market has become an Arab urgent demand that has had much talk over more than 30 years.

In fact, the major shifts in the world have resulted in a new distribution of economic forces, based on the economic positives in light of global production, liberalization of international trade and removing many obstacles to the movement of services, goods, information, capital and technology, even though some have reservations about a double-standard principle.

This comes at a time when there is an active movement meant to deepen commercial and economic integration between different areas from the world.

That is why the establishment of the Arab common market does not need a mere decision, but rather a short and long-run plan of action.

The reality we are experiencing gives us some lessons that should be understood:

The first lesson is the fact that the world is striding for globalism where there is no room for seclusion and individual action – survival for economic blocs that precede political blocs.

The second lesson is that the new world order, no matter how different is the views about it, does not provide multiple choices. We should either provide self strength elements or be satisfied with the follower's role.

Of course, we do not approve of this role for ourselves. Indeed, we need a fair trade and not a free trade.

The third lesson is that the future world will only provide prosperity for those who are able to maximize the country's competitive production capabilities, which can only increase within the framework of integration.

The fourth lesson is that the sacrifice need at the beginning will push us forward quickly to maximizing profits – the output will be the fruits that will be tasted by the coming generations.

We still have a main question that needs a direct answer: Do we have the elements needed for communicating the global economic renaissance?

The answer of this question needs a number of basics, mostly:

- 1- The European successful experiment story explains the possibility of achieving an economic bloc regardless of different political regimes. This success leads to economic integration and achievement of economic unity that does not – and must not – run counter to the political regimes. This needs setting aside any disputes that may prevail between the two parties in form and content.
- 2- The balance of the economic march is linked to people, money and land, but its success needs competitive advantages or establishment of 'competitive conception'. Otherwise, we will keep at the stage of self sufficient in production and justice of distribution, a limit that does not meet any aspirations. We are not required to explain the absolute advantage of the Arab world in these three fields. More elaboration, the Arab capital decreases and increases over what is needed. Indeed, this capital has been contributing largely to the economic renaissance that is being witnessed by the West.

The indisputable competitive advantage is the Arab economic integration conception that aims at reaching the stage of economic unity.

We are the first to call for this principle under different designations, starting from the Arab nationalism to pan-Arab unity, which has been undermined for different reasons to reach the Arab common market on which we pin hopes and aspirations to make this wave active and influential.

Surprisingly, these conceptions have succeeded with those who initiated them decades after us, i.e. the European Union, which turned the European common market into this integrated unity where rules, laws, standards and organizations are integrated and unified.

3- As for the Arab land, which includes many treasures of mining wealth in addition to long plains and shores, can provide agricultural, animal and fish products exceeding the capabilities of many global blocs in terms of quantity, quality and variety. Hence, the Arab land, as an economic bloc not isolated islands, can provide a competitive advantage and a competitive capability that give the Arab world limitless revenue and a pioneering position in the new world.

4- As for the Arab human resources, they provide the following for the coming economic bloc:

- A- A consumption market prompting production and investment,
- B- Privileged production forces,
- C- A wealth of minds in different intellectual and invention fields. This wealth can absorb, invent and, most importantly use modern technology,

- D- Successful pioneering in different modern fields, at the forefront of which are the energy uses, communication and information systems, satellite fields, programming, etc.

So it can be said that there is no place in today's world for an individual country in an era of major economic blocs. The Arabs are now in a crossroads: they can either disappear from the world map or continue to exist in a more active way to expand the circle of exchange.

The current international and regional circumstances are changing, due to a prevailing tone of pessimism among us over many years, into an optimistic belief in the joint Arab economic action that will head forward to the establishment of an Arab economic structure that should indispensably be set up if we take the interest of the coming generations into account.

Therefore

First: in fact, we are in a race against time. The current opportunity may be a real one that can enable us to catch up the express train of progress. The international circumstances together with the coming generations will not forgive us if we fail to keep abreast with this progress. Our race against time should be based on the accelerating speed of development, especially as our financial, material and human capabilities are real support for our potentialities to achieve the goal. This depends on well planning and preparations.

Second: the Arab world has all mechanisms needed for this achievement. We should immediately move to support these mechanisms and make up for the absent ones, thus providing strong infrastructure required for achieving economic growth need for the coming Arab generations.

Third: our capable media should play a role in attracting the Arabs to a new target framework, on the grounds that man is the tool and target of advancement.

Sincere prayer to God Almighty to grant us success to continue good steps seen by the honest on the horizon to achieve Arab integration that turns from a mere hope to a real fact assuring the vital and active role the Arab world can play in tomorrow's world and for centuries to come.