

**Padmakumara S.C,** "Regional Integration for Persian Gulf : Lessons from the EU"  
- Annual Research Symposium of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Faculty of Arts, 2011

## **Regional Integration for the Persian Gulf: Lessons from the European Union**

### **Abstract :**

Regional Integration has become one of widely debated phenomena in International Relations, with the emergence of the European Union and the development of other regional organizations. International Relations traditionally assume the international system to be anarchic. However, there is a tendency since the latter part of the twentieth century for regions to integrate. As countries are involved in the process successfully, regional integration has become one of significant component of the literature on International Relations.

Primarily, regional integration was defined as "a process where by political actors in distinct national settings persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new center whose institutions posses or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states" (Hass, 1958:16). The concept of "Regional Cohesion" identifies the regional integration as a combination of several components. For instance, it is discussed whether integration refers to a process or end of product (Laursen, 2008:4). As viewed by Karl Deutsch, "integration is an attainment within a territory as well as Amalgamation". (Deutsch, 1957:5). In the general sense, "regional integration refers to unification of nation states into lager whole. On one hand regional integration can be described as a dynamic process that entails a county's willingness to share or unify into a larger whole" (Soomer, 2003:1). The majority of scholars have argued that classical theories of integration had seen the integration as a process which requires many efforts to reformulate integration theory. Therefore conceptual framework of regional integration has become one of debatable discourse to be examined in International Relations.

In recent years, the search for peace and prosperity has become the significant feature in experiments of regional integration. Therefore, the trend towards regional integration looks at a variety of purposes and secure common interests in the fields of economic, political and security.

This paper examines the possibility of applying the European Union (EU) experience in the integration of the Persian Gulf region considering, EU is the most successful institutional experience of regional integration and indeed is the accomplishment of the regional integration (Feng and Gaspare, 2003). The European integration is positive and still at the forefront of regional integration experiences. In that regard, this paper questions: (a) what lessons can be learned in Persian Gulf region from the European Union experience? (b) What are the peculiarities and prospects of integration process in European Union? and (c) What are the conditions necessary for developing such a process of integration in the Persian Gulf region?

The paper responses to these questions from a comparative perspective to draw lessons from the EU experience for a beneficial integration in the scope of the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the paper will attempt to identify the potentials for the Persian Gulf region to consider lessons of the EU model. In the event of this positive scenario, the study identifies a set of transferable lessons of EU to achieve a beneficial integration in Persian Gulf region with the support of the conceptual discourse of regional integration. The concept of gradual elimination of various forms of discrimination between national economies is applied in the study to identify the means and methods for moving the Persian Gulf region from theory of integration to a practice, considering the EU experiences. As an archival based study, this paper includes several scholarly exercises in order to suggest a better regional integration in Persian Gulf region.

The article concludes with a discussion regarding the potentials of Persian Gulf region to adopt itself into regional integration process such as EU. The study highlights some trigger factors that helped in creating EU, such as motivation, convergence of interests and institutional balance of power which would help Persian Gulf region to achieve a successful integration. Further, this paper suggest that the principle of authoritative allocation of resources and values should be applied in integration process in the Persian Gulf region as integration is less about theory and more about practice. Eventually the study will conclude that Persian Gulf

region has the potential of adopting a regional integration model such as EU without in any way demanding to be replicated.

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