

## **ONLY ARABISM WILL BRING ALL SECTS TOGETHER**

In year 2008, the political situation in the Mena region was relatively quiet, except for south Lebanon, Palestine and the never ending Somalia civil wars. Joseph Zakhour who used to address forthcoming GAIF conferences across the region, wrote this article and published in our issue for the month of January 2008

In those days “Arabism” was the goal which most Arab Populations were looking to as their way to unite and solidify their presence on the world map.

It subsequently lost ground to fanatics, but yet large numbers of young men and women still believe in Arabism as an ideal which may assemble all sects, races, under one ultimate goal.

Now that GAIF is holding its meetings in Beirut, we find appropriate to republish the article in this special issue.

In the last several years extraordinary strides were made towards the integration of the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) into a common market. Long before, a Maghreb Cooperation Union had been proclaimed by several Arab north african countries but is yet to be made operative. Egypt, Sudan and Lybia are already part of different arab and pan african economic organizations. Yemen is looking forward to joining the GCC.

As for the Arab Orient or the Levant and which includes Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt it is not likely to envisage any sort of integration until the Palestinian drama is over. Meanwhile, a euro-med pact which will bring together arab north african and east mediterranean countries into a partnership with their european neighbours is being proposed.

However, and no matter how beneficial they may prove to be, the foresaid coalitions if and when brought about will be short of fulfilling the Arab dream!

The Arab dream is to integrate the 200 million arab citizens into one economic bloc stretching from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean and made accessible to Arab investments, finance and insurance services industrial and agricultural products. As a matter of fact this was the raison d’etre of Gaif which is part to the Arab League’s Economic and Social Council whose formation dates back to 1946.

Believers in open Arabism would wish such a bloc to be as pluralist, productive, creative, peace loving, and prosperous as the rest of the free trade zones, partnerships or coalitions across the globe.

In my view, it is that very dream that inspired our Bahraini Colleagues to pose the question “Are regional underwriting pools the way forward for integrating Arab insurance market?” and make of it the topic that is to be addressed by the panelists.

Like all other enlightened Arabs, our Bahraini brothers realize that only by bringing such ideas up and putting in place jointly owned Arab ventures the common arabism cause remains alive. The choice made by our Bahraini colleagues came in my view within this context.

This is also why we see unionistic subjects being brought on the agenda of practically every Arab gathering. No matter how humble they are actions aimed at promoting arabism are always welcome and looked at as a positive contribution into the ultimate cause.

Experience tells us that Arab underwriting pools or syndicates may succeed, excel or end up as just an addition to the many other pan arab clubs whose performance leave much to be desired.

It is therefore the duty of all those concerned in the well being of Arab insurance markets to make certain that any pool or syndicate which is likely to be created in the future be self driven, profit oriented, innovative, and equipped with so large a capacity to be a leading player in the region.

It is with pools of such a calibre that we may keep arabism spirits upbeat until such time as the dream comes true.