

Review And Status of the Maritime Silk Road; Cultural and Civilizational Opportunities

 ¹Erdal Dursun,  ²Bakhtiyar Najafov
<https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.025002094>

Keywords	Abstract
Persian Gulf Maritime Silk Road Convergence Tessri; Constructivism Cultural-civilizational cooperation	<p>Given the importance of communications in the present era, this research seeks to study solutions for increasing cooperation and convergence among the Persian Gulf countries and seeks to examine the effects of the revival of the Maritime Silk Road on the proximity and cultural-civilizational cooperation of the Persian Gulf countries. The findings of the research, which are based on the theories of logical convergence and structuralism, indicate that the revival of the Maritime Silk Road will initially increase and strengthen the economic, communication and tourism fields between the countries of the region.</p> <p>This will lead to a change in the images in the minds of the nations and governments of the region of each other and ultimately enhance the level of cooperation and their relations on political and cultural issues.</p>

INTRODUCTION

The road is the first and most natural means of communication between humans, without which economic and social movement and turnover is not possible. Researchers consider the road to be the beginning of human civilization and civilization. Early humans created narrow and winding paths by marking mountains, rocks, and trees.

With the evolution of societies and the transition from the prehistoric stage, roads also emerged from their primitive state and progressed and evolved in harmony with the progress and efficiency of other social institutions. In the meantime, some people explored the East and West of the world in search of new ways for a better life and achieved common achievements with different methods that led to centuries of peaceful communication between humans and humans and between humans and nature, and led to the emergence of long and important roads, of which the Silk Road is an example. The Silk Road or Silk Road is a caravan route that has been used for trade, pilgrimage and tourism since ancient times in the two continents of Asia

¹ Prof. Dr. Erdal Dursun, Rector, International Science And Technology University, Warsaw / Poland, rector@istu.edu.pl. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6255-1380>

² Asst. Prof. Dr. Bakhtiyar Najafov, Rector's Advisor International Science and Technology University, bakhtiyar.najafov@istu.edu.pl, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3674-6790>



and Europe from China to the Mediterranean. The name Silk Road was first used by Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), a German geographer, in the middle of the 19th century.

The apparent reason for this name was the silk trade, as the most famous, lightest and most precious commodity that had been transported from China to the West for dozens of centuries by this road (Frank and Brownstone, 1997:13; Bastani-e-Parizi.:1973 1/199).

Other secondary routes from India and southern Iran also joined it, which were given other names, such as "Spice Road", due to the importance of the type of goods carried on them. Therefore, the term Silk Road does not imply that silk was the only commercial commodity on this road; rather, goods such as precious stones, spices, tea, paper, and porcelain were also considered, and silk played the essential role of common money and enjoyed increased importance, and due to its purely aesthetic characteristic, it gave its name to the group of these roads and paths. (Halabi, 1992:360-361).

Accordingly, the trade in silk and other goods had been going on for many years between Iran, China, and Rome, and had created the famous Silk Road; but the emergence of some problems on the land route of the Silk Road led some merchants to choose the water route to continue their trade.

Although this route was longer and carried unknown dangers; in some cases it was superior to the land route. In the present era, the importance of international communications and trade has led some countries, especially China, to consider reviving this historical road.

China claims that within the framework of building the Maritime Silk Road in the twenty-first century, ASEAN countries, together with China, will benefit from the Chinese dream and, by cooperating with each other, will build a common community and the destiny of Asia.

Although Iran has always been one of the key elements of the Silk Road throughout history and currently enjoys an extraordinary geostrategic and geoeconomic position for reviving the land and sea routes of this road, serious scientific research and studies have not been carried out to introduce the challenges and opportunities of reviving the Maritime Silk Road. In this regard, the present study, considering the importance and numerous opportunities of the Maritime Silk Road for the countries bordering this route, seeks to investigate and analyze the effects of the revival of this road on the interactions of the Persian Gulf countries and to answer this key question: "How can the revival of the Maritime Silk Road increase the cultural-civilizational relations between the Persian Gulf countries and reduce their differences and conflicts? In response to this key question, the following hypothesis is tested: "The revival of the Maritime Silk Road will increase the mutual dependence of the Persian Gulf countries by increasing their relations and will also increase the level of cultural cooperation between them." To collect information in this study, library resources, articles, and, if necessary, interviews and electronic communications were used. Analytical-interpretative methods have also been used to examine sources and test hypotheses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

In the present study, due to the nature of the research, which on the one hand discusses the convergence between the Persian Gulf countries and on the other hand considers the cultural and civilizational exchanges between these countries, two sets of theories are used: regional convergence theories and structuralist theory. Various theorists of regional convergence define convergence as a specific political situation or process for promoting loyalties to a level higher than the national level. Based on regional studies, Kantori and Spiegel try to describe a new political community that is formed at the regional level and then theorize



to consider the factor of solidarity as effective in creating this process (Vosoughi, and Kamaizadeh, 2010:68).

In addition to Kantori and Spiegel, who mainly emphasize convergence as a situation, two groups of functionalist and neo-functionalist theorists consider convergence as a process of new formations. Functionalists, especially David Mittrani, by assuming the human and technical domains to be the same, introduce technical and technical factors as independent variables in creating convergence. In Mittrani's opinion, the technical needs of societies and the facilities that respond to those needs have the necessary power to create logical convergence.

In complementing this view, neo-functionalists, especially Haas and Schmitter, by considering An important role for the factor of human will is considered to be the result of political will to overcome the requirements arising from technical needs and complexities. Haas, using the concept of spillover, believes that cooperation in one sector gradually leads countries to cooperate in other sectors, and this is an important factor in strengthening regional integration. In view of this group of thinkers, the factor of political will and determination is one of the important independent variables in the emergence of regional integration (Seifzadeh, 2009: 385-389).

Another perspective on which integration has been theorized is the relational view. In general, the relational view considers all types of economic, political, and cultural connections between political units. In addition to the analysis of the context of the type of communication that leads to interdependence and ultimately to convergence among different political units, this view is considered. Communication theory is mainly associated with and known by the name of Karl Deutsch. In his view, communication enables a group to think together, see together, and act together. Among the prominent indicators that Deutsch examines in this regard are postal, telecommunication, and student communications.

Deutsch emphasizes the nature of shared rewards and punishments in these exchanges. In other words, does what is beneficial for one unit also have such a situation for the other party? From Deutsch's point of view, the existence of this pattern of objective benefits at high levels of exchanges creates cohesion among the group; but if there is a slight deviation in the reward resulting from the development of exchanges; That is, what is good for one side is bad for another, the process of communication may lead to conflict.

Deutsch and his colleagues analyzed the experiences of convergence in twelve countries. They examined several centuries of Western experience in the political community and the North Atlantic region to determine the necessary conditions for creating and maintaining political convergence. (Deutsch et al. 1996: 832-834/2,)

In this study, convergence is defined and pursued in a regional context and is framed by a discussion of the logic of globalization. The logic of globalization, along with multilateralism and unilateralism, constitute one of the three international trade systems that is equivalent to the Latin word Regionalism, which is composed of the word Region meaning area and the suffix ism meaning tendency and belief. In the literature of international relations, this term refers to organizations and communities that consist of at least three political units (Kazemi, 1991:103).

Regionalism is concerned with the expression of common sense and identity and with a combination of goals, along with the use of institutions. Regionalism expresses a specific identity and a form of collective action within a geographical area. In fact, the cooperation of several states located in a geographical area



that have common goals is indicative of regionalism. Regionalism is usually manifested in the following ways:

- a) Military alliance systems, such as NATO.
- b) Economic unions, such as the European Union;
- c) Political groupings, such as the Arab League. (Omidi, 2009: 21-22).

Of course, one can add to these three another category that includes all these political, military, economic, etc. groupings, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The emerging consensus is that the material, physical, and intellectual or cultural characteristics constitute the entity of a region. The multiple states that make up a region usually share some characteristics such as political institutions, levels of development, culture, language, or religion (Mansfield and Milner, 1999: 591).

Regionalism is a project whereby states pursue common goals and coordinate their strategies in one or more areas within a region. There is currently a perception that regionalization implies regulating access to a specific logic to protect against the process of globalization. In past decades, attention and level of analysis were mainly focused on the national or international level. Now, in the new millennium, regional studies have become the focus of attention and importance.

Examples of these regional unions and institutions include Mercosur, NAFTA, ASEAN, APEC, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. New-age regionalism is understood as the collapse of the bipolar world, the fall of American hegemony, the erosion of the Westphalian nation-state system, the growth of economic, social, and political interdependencies and transnationalism, the globalization of trade, production, and technology, and the increasing importance of non-tariff barriers (Sabic and Bojinovic, 2006: 15-22).

Representing the school of international relations, Hatten considers the new regionalism as a multidimensional process of regional convergence in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. Hatten considers the non-economic, political, and security dimensions to be the distinguishing features of the new regionalism from the past. In his opinion, the logic of regionalism is not merely economic or political; it is a political, economic, cultural and security tool. He also considers regional identity, political cohesion, collective security and regional cohesion as components of the logic of regionalism (Hettne, 1994: 229).

In fact, unlike the old logic of regionalism, which was an imposed top-down process guided and managed by technocrats, bureaucrats and political leaders, and by designing and creating ambitious programs without public support, the new regionalism is a spontaneous and bottom-up process; a process guided by multinational corporations, industries, customers and the market.

The recent changes in the international political economy have made the importance of the new regionalism. The theory of new regionalism examines the interaction between the process of globalization and the attempt to integrate regional economic systems. New regionalism at the beginning of the third millennium is the concentration of political and economic power in the world economy, which is in competition with multifaceted intra-regional and trans-regional flows (Mittelman, 1994: 112).

In new regionalism, which is broader than old regionalism, elements such as the production system, labor supply, socio-cultural institutions, innovations, and the power network that connects these elements are



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In new regionalism, which is broader than old regionalism, elements such as the production system, labor supply, socio-cultural institutions, innovations, and the power network that connects these elements are important. Of course, in new regionalism, an important factor that should not be forgotten is that the state should not be neglected in the study of regionalism in this new political framework, which has a significant impact.

States can still have almost regionalist projects; it is even sometimes said that one of the factors in the approach of states towards regionalism is self-preservation. In fact, states may, fearing the erosion of their sovereignty, cede some of their sovereignty to a regional organization and thereby preserve their sovereignty. Of course, it should not be forgotten that, although states have considerable influence over regional affairs, they no longer control all the cooperation flows that exist within their territory (Vayrynen, 2003:27).



In the current situation, the Westphalian system is fading; but for reasons that are beyond the scope of this discussion, it seems that states and nations play a prominent role in creating a new regionalism (Breslin and Higgott, 2002:347). Another theory that needs to be addressed to analyze and evaluate the subject of this research is the theory of structuralism. Structuralists have essentially shifted the focus of discussion in the field of international relations from identification to ontology. Structuralists focus on ideas, meanings, rules, norms, and procedures. Their emphasis on the “formative role of intellectual factors” sets them apart from the “materialism” that dominates the mainstream of international relations, and at the same time, distinguishes them from poststructuralists because they accept the importance of material reality (Moshirzadeh, 2006:323).

Structuralism, as one of the approaches to the study of international politics, which itself consists of a combination of other approaches, is trying to somehow overcome the shortcomings and shortcomings of various theories by taking advantage of some of their own propositions and, so to speak, to present a more realistic picture of the behavioral patterns of international politics.

In terms of philosophical idealism, this approach does not rely solely on material conditions and forces; rather, it emphasizes ideas and thoughts. Based on what has been said, it is governments and policymakers who give meaning to physical factors such as territory, weapons, and so on. (Qavam2005:222).

In other words, structuralists emphasize the material and non-material dimensions of social life. Structuralism views international politics based on a “relational” ontology and values intellectual factors such as culture, norms, and ideas. Structuralism focuses on human consciousness and the role this consciousness plays in international relations. (Moshirzadeh,2006:326)

In structuralism, the entire international system and all its physical dimensions are built on a set of linguistic foundations called “structures,” and structures are the foundation of all geopolitical norms. In short, structuralism is based on three ontological assumptions: the constructedness of identity and the importance of semantic and intellectual structures in it, the interrelationship between agent and structure, and the role of identity in shaping interests and policies. (Sazmand, 2005: 41).

The sanction theory states that actors interact based on their subjective meanings, language, and perceptions (which arise from their identity) and in this interaction they construct reality and then are constructed in interaction with reality. The natural consequence of this understanding in explaining a country’s foreign policy behavior is that states, based on their grounded identity, imagine the world for themselves and act on it, and in this action, they construct the reality of the international system and are reciprocally constructed in relation to it, and their identity undergoes transformation. Here, countries, as actors on the international stage, “interpret, decide, declare, and ultimately implement”; but they do all these things based on the framework of their understanding of the world. (Mottaqi and Kazemi, 2007: 220).

Cultural-civilizational relations of the countries of the Persian Gulf the Persian Gulf region, which consists of eight political units: Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain, can be considered a prominent geopolitical region in the world based on the common and distinctive characteristics that shape the pattern of regional interaction.

This region is one of the rare regions of the world, with a special strategic and geopolitical importance and position, which has been of great interest to neighboring and non-neighboring nations and states since the earliest times of human history. (Asadi, 2010: 7).



The Persian Gulf itself is a homogeneous environment that includes nations that are different from each other in some cultural respects; but at the same time have similar political, strategic and economic concerns. This distinct region, with its common environment, has provided the best opportunity for coastal nations to cooperate with each other in order to create an economic and political grouping.

The countries of the Persian Gulf basin have common interests, such as a sense of common danger in the face of the challenges of globalization, protecting the Persian Gulf from environmental pollution (especially oil pollution), the security and tranquility of the Persian Gulf as a trade highway, the existence of common oil and gas fields between the countries of the basin and, most importantly, common interests. The religion and rich heritage of Islamic culture have been a very powerful factor in the integration of the countries of the Persian Gulf region.

According to history, the Persian Gulf region has always been the cradle of brilliant human civilizations, and many peoples such as the Elamites, Sumerians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Canaanites and Phoenicians exported their culture to other parts of the world through the Persian Gulf. It is as if they “used the Persian Gulf as a center for sending out the message of their civilization” (Elahi, 2005: 18).

In addition, this region has not only been the seat of great civilizations; it has also been the origin of great divine prophets, especially the birthplace of the Holy Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), the last divine prophet, is located in this region. The religion of Islam was established in the seventh century AD with the emergence of its great prophet, Hazrat Muhammad ibn Abdullah (PBUH) in the Arabian Peninsula and in fact in a land that until then had been the scene of great events and conflicts.

This divine thought spread rapidly and encompassed a vast territory from the Atlantic Ocean to the western shores of the Pacific Ocean. At present, the vast geographical complex of the Islamic world includes vast lands with a very diverse composition in terms of human and natural aspects. (Ezzati, 1999: 31).

All of this vast complex, under the leadership of Its ideological center is the Persian Gulf, so that this region, as the heart of the Islamic world, has taken over the leadership of all Islamic movements today and is considered the guide of all political-religious and Islamic movements around the world. One of the most important factors that can provide the basis for unity among the states and nations of the Persian Gulf region and guarantee the basis for convergence is the religion of Islam.

All the coastal countries of the Persian Gulf have a common religion, and all the governments of this region have declared their adherence to Islam and obtain their legitimacy through religion. Therefore, there is a common ideology among all the countries and societies of the Persian Gulf that does not recognize ethnic, tribal, racial, and even geographical differences and can be the most fundamental and sustainable factor of unity and convergence, which requires greater attention from the coastal states.

However, the existence of some differences in the identity and political orientations of Iran and Afghanistan compared to the rest of the countries has led to their different approaches in the field of foreign policy and, as a result, has prevented the realization of integration and cooperation between the countries of this region.

Unfortunately, this approach has always increased tension, competition and the process of armament in the Persian Gulf. Iran and Afghanistan, as the largest Shiite and Sunni countries in the Persian Gulf region, are faced with governments and systems whose ruling elites are Sunni and, in some cases, Wahhabi.



The language, race and history of Iran are different from the entire southern half of the Persian Gulf; the cause of Palestine is still considered a sacred cause by the politicians of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan; the discourse of seeking justice in Iran and Afghanistan and its democratic system in the Persian Gulf region is contrary to the systems of the southern countries, in some of which women do not even have the right to vote and express their opinions; Confronting the hegemony of the United States in the region is also one of the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf region, and this issue is in clear conflict with the foreign policy of other countries in the Persian Gulf region.

The set of factors mentioned above, which shape the identity foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan, somehow influence the formation of intersubjective structures in the Persian Gulf region and in relations with the countries of this region. It can be said that the formation of the "Council of Persian Gulf Cooperation in response to the revolution in Iran" was a reaction to the occurrence of the revolution in Iran (Asadi, 2010: 21).

In fact, since its inception, the Council has had a pessimistic and suspicious attitude towards Iran. From the very beginning of the Iraqi aggression and in line with the US strategy towards the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on controlling the Islamic Revolution and preventing its development, the member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council provided Iraq with a lot of financial and military assistance (Naeimi, 1991: 77).

During the eight years of war, the most important assistance was provided by the member countries of the Council to Iraq. It can be said that these tensions and conflicts have all been affected by the perception of false identities from the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Each of the member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council undertakes to adopt a foreign policy according to the mental structure and linguistic principles they receive from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The attitudes of Iran and the Arabs towards regional security are fundamentally contradictory. The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has a series of the most important of these are:

1. The claim of leadership of the Islamic and Arab world under the leadership of Saudi Arabia.
2. The claim of Arab hegemony in the Persian Gulf.
3. The attempt to give the Persian Gulf an Arab identity.
4. The Iranian Arab confrontation.
5. Monarchy.

These identity principles have played a very significant role in shaping the foreign policy of the members towards Iran. The Council member states' emphasis on using fictitious names for the Persian Gulf (Mujtahzadeh, 2015).

Bringing together countries opposed to and hostile to Iran and involving them in regional security arrangements, fearing Iran's emergence as a regional power with nuclear technology, and secretly trying to prevent this from happening are a set of linguistic foundations and structures that the Gulf Cooperation Council member states, through their foreign policy and speeches, introduce into the intersubjective structure of the Persian Gulf regional system in the form of linguistic structures and concepts.



These factors and components have led to the formation of a kind of permanent suspicion between the two sides. As a result, rather than witnessing positive cultural-civilizational exchanges between the Persian Gulf countries and Iran, we are currently witnessing competition and even cultural-civilizational conflict. Changing this mentality requires rebuilding new foundations and identity ideas for both sides in which sources of tension are minimized. Both sides for convergence, they need to redefine concepts that are within the framework of the interests and national identities of both sides.

MARITIME SILK ROAD

As mentioned in the previous sections, trade in silk and other goods had been going on for many years between Afghanistan, Iran, China, and Rome, creating the famous Silk Road; However, the emergence of some problems in the land route of the Silk Road forced some merchants to choose the water route to continue their trade. (LeStrange, 1994: 93).

Although this route was longer and carried unknown dangers, it was superior to the land route in some cases. The "Maritime Silk Road" was a maritime transportation route that, according to Chinese historical sources, dates back to the beginning of the Chinese imperial period, about two hundred years before Christ, and was strengthened during the Song Empire (960-1279) and the Mongol rule known as the "Yuan Era" (1271-1989).

The Maritime Silk Road has played an important role and position in the material and civilizational exchanges between the East and the West, as a bridge between China and the countries of Asia, Europe and Africa. (Iranjeb News Agency, 2015).

The increase in the naval power of the Chinese and Iranian empires led to the further expansion of the Silk Road, and this development did not stop in the Islamic period. The Iranians had a great share in the trade of silk and other goods on this route, and their fleets traveled between the ports of Iran and China. Ports such as Abla, Siraf, Hormuz, and Kish were each considered one of the most prosperous and busiest ports in the world at one time. Sea routes expanded the reach of shipping with the Far Eastern countries and strengthened the Silk Roads on land.

The Persian Gulf, as a large branch of the Indian Ocean, which is located on the path of all sea routes east of Aden and as a place and passage for the exchange of goods and trade between the East and the West, has not only been the scene of competition and conflict between nations and powers near and far since ancient times; Rather, it has long been considered a commercial passage and a place of transmission of culture and civilization between the East and the West, and the most important entrance and exit of the Blue Silk Road.

Since ancient times, the tribes living in the Persian Gulf, including the Phoenicians and Babylonians, have played an important role in the trade and navigation of this region. During the Achaemenid period, as the Persian kings found themselves facing the naval forces of Greece and Egypt, they began to create a vast naval power. Later, Darius the Great, considering the importance of sea routes, ordered the digging of the Suez Canal.

Digging this canal was of strategic importance in two ways: one in terms of expanding the possibility of navigation, which helped the Iranian navy to reach the shores of the Persian Gulf, Oman and the Indian Ocean from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, Asia Minor and the Algerian Sea, and the other in terms of economy for transporting the abundant goods of Egyptian merchants and other countries subject to the Achaemenids.



Since India also joined the great Achaemenid empire, the continuous flow of trade and shipping between the mouth of the Indus River and the Persian Gulf became easier. Shipbuilders built ships in new styles that could travel from sixty to eighty nautical miles per day and had a carrying capacity of more than two hundred to three hundred tons. Also, nautical signs were studied and documents and records for shipping were prepared. (Girshman, 1989: 208).

The Silk Road was of particular importance and mobility until the middle of the Safavid period; but from then on, due to changes in the global trade conditions, the situation of the trade routes changed and the Silk Road also declined. (Alizadeh, 2004: 39).

Of course, in recent years, some countries in this region, especially China, have taken steps to revive this maritime route. The Chinese President raised the issue of the Maritime Silk Road for the first time in a speech to the Indonesian Parliament in 2013. (Xi in,2013:10,4...of building for call).



Maritime Silk Road; Source: 2015.www marinelink com.

In November 2014, the Chinese President announced that, due to the importance of the Blue and Land Silk Roads for that country, they would spend forty billion dollars to revive them and that the country intends to take the first step in this direction by providing the necessary financial assistance to the countries along the Silk Roads. (November 2014:8).

The project to build economic zones along the Silk Road and also to create a 21st century Maritime Silk Road, presented by Chinese authorities, has been welcomed by fifty countries. In fact, the Chinese government considers the implementation of the Silk Road project as one of its latest efforts to develop industrial cooperation and trade infrastructure in the Asian economy and believes that the revival of the Silk



Road will lead to regional integration and create countless economic opportunities. (Iran Jib News Site /2015,).

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, some elites and intellectuals, while acknowledging the importance of reviving the maritime route of the Silk Road, have undertaken preliminary work to implement this project. Holding international conferences on the Persian Gulf and the Maritime Silk Road, Iran-China friendship associations, and organizing numerous exhibitions and seminars in this field are some of the actions taken by Iranian authorities in the direction of reviving the Maritime Silk Road.

However, it seems that the above actions have been mostly theatrical and slogan-like and have not been seriously pursued by government officials. This is while the revival of the Maritime Silk Road contains opportunities for the country's diplomatic and foreign policy apparatus, which makes it necessary for foreign policy officials to pursue it.

POTENTIALS OF THE MARITIME SILK ROAD COOPERATION

A) Economic Functions

The most important factor for the formation of convergence in a region is the existence of general agreement and a single consensus. Convergence is the product of regional dynamics and the relations of countries with each other. (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2010: 28-29).

According to David Mittrani, the origin of conflicts between states is the existence of political gaps and these gaps cannot be overcome by legal agreement. His assumption is that economics and politics can be separated. What is related to economics and social life is placed in the realm of low or soft politics and there is a possibility of cooperation in it. (Moshirzadeh, 2006: 60).

It seems that considering the type of relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries with Iran and the differences and negative mental interpretations that exist between them in different dimensions, starting cooperation with economic relations will lead to better results for them. From this perspective, the revival of the Silk Road will have the potential to strengthen economic relations between the countries of the Persian Gulf region. If the countries of the region want to play an active role in the Maritime Silk Road, it is necessary to increase their maritime cooperation and coordinate their economic policies.

Creating infrastructure networks to connect the energy, communication and transportation infrastructures of the countries of the region, building and strengthening roads and ports, efficiently allocating resources, integrating markets and forming free trade zones bilaterally and multilaterally are other measures that the countries of the Persian Gulf region need to take to play an effective role in the revival of the Maritime Silk Road.

It is worth noting that the countries of the Persian Gulf region are among the few states along the Maritime Silk Road that have energy resources and rich oil and gas reserves. This is while most of the other countries bordering this waterway are energy-consuming countries with weak economies.

Accordingly, the Silk Road is now considered an energy highway. This issue not only increases the bargaining power of the Persian Gulf countries; but also provides them with access to the potential market capacity of other countries along the Silk Road route. However, the Gulf countries face specific challenges in managing their economies due to the extreme volatility of oil prices and revenues.



The financial crises of 2001 and 2008 in the Gulf countries have highlighted the importance of economic reforms for all of them and have confirmed the approach of those who advocate adopting a coherent economic strategy.

Therefore, diversifying the economic structure is one of the necessities of these countries' economic policies; because, given the trend of industrial countries achieving alternative energy sources to oil, single-product exports will no longer meet the needs of the countries in the region.

Increasing foreign direct investment, strengthening the tourism industry, banking, insurance, and non-oil exports are among the most important solutions for changing the structure of the single-product economies of the Gulf, which can only be achieved through regional cooperation and will flourish with the revival of the Maritime Silk Road.

It is obvious that equipping and renovating the region's commercial ports and reforming their management and exploitation to improve their unloading and loading capacity to international standards is a necessity.

In this regard, maritime tourism is one of the types of tourism that can play a significant role in the economic development of coastal countries and indigenous peoples in the region. Visiting marine industrial facilities and structures, water sports, non-passenger tourist cruises, and even using coastal accommodations or restaurants or "restaurant ships" and dozens of other types of use of the sea and the coast are considered part of maritime tourism and can attract many tourists to the Persian Gulf. According to studies, maritime tourism creates sixteen jobs for each tourist, which shows the high importance of this type of tourism. (Samii, 2014).

Indeed, the effort to use such potential will lead to the economic development of all countries in the region and will lead to wider regional cooperation. The 20th century is the century of the economic miracle of transit. In fact, transit is known as a source of income, and countries that invest in the field of transit of goods or passengers earn significant income from this sector.

Currently, world trade exceeds tens of billions of dollars, of which the volume of trade between Asia and Europe exceeds three trillion dollars; therefore, the development of the transit and transportation network for the transfer of goods in proportion to the growth of world trade has become necessary. (Cultural Heritage News Agency, 2014).

Revival and revitalization of the road Silk and ancient monuments remaining around this road can promote tourism and economic development of local communities. The commonalities and favorable cultural, economic and political foundations of the countries located on this route make the launch of this waterway possible.

Establishing a suitable platform for joint, international and multilateral cooperation in the field of tourism, launching an alliance to create security in tourism in the countries of the Silk Road Economic Belt, launching direct international flights between the cities of the route and encouraging airlines to create competition and provide low-cost flights, creating international tourism destinations by creating recreational destinations, cultural tourism and health tourism, exchanging multilateral memorandums of understanding between the countries of the Maritime Silk Road route (for the purpose of exploration and archaeology under the seabed), jointly registering "Traffic on the Maritime Silk Road" as an intangible heritage in UNESCO and reviving maritime trade along the Maritime Silk Road route are among the things that can lead to the revival of the Silk Road and the development of tourism on this route. (Sultanifar, 2015).



Today, China, in cooperation with the member countries of "ASEAN", is seeking to take the initiative. The Chinese authorities are looking to develop plans to use the revival of the Silk Roads (both on land and at sea) to consolidate their power in East Asia and to generalize and globalize their foreign policy principles, and have made extensive investments in this regard. (Tiezzi, 2015, 30). This could increase the motivation of the Gulf states to actively participate in this competition and strengthen their cooperation in various fields.

With the beginning of the stage of cooperation in the economic, technical and tourism fields (if the experience in this area is positive), cooperation can spread to other areas and increasing pressures are placed on leaders to develop and expand cooperation; in other words, at this stage, regional cooperation experiences an element of politicization. As cooperation expands in an area, pressure on units to strengthen the emerging alliances increases (Qasemi, 2005: 170).

This is where some theories of convergence are linked to the theory of constructivism. Convergencies, such as Deutsch, believe that communication is one of the necessary conditions for cooperation.

Karl Deutsch believes that the essence of "people" is the existence of communication; that is, the ability to transmit a message, understand it and predict behavior in a reciprocal manner. The intense flow of communication between nations and states can gradually lead to the emergence of a global political community. Thus, international communication is transformed into negotiations. Internationally, international negotiations lead to international cooperation, and international cooperation to international convergence. Since convergence is the final stage of the cooperation process, the communication process must inherently involve mutual relations or feedback between the constituent units of an international system. (Deutsch et al. 1996:834).

The integrators also believe that as communication and interaction between countries increase, their knowledge of each other increases and negative mental perceptions are replaced by mutual suspicion, understanding and understanding. After that, countries do not consider the "other" as their enemy and seek to improve relations.

In fact, social identities show their specific perceptions in relation to other actors, and in this way they produce specific interests and shape policy decisions. Whether one sees oneself as a friend, a rival, or an enemy of another will make a big difference in the interaction between them. For constructivists, civilizational structures, cultural factors, state identities, etc., along with how they shape the interests of states and behavioral patterns, are important. These create a kind of worldview and affect patterns of international interaction. (Moshirzadeh, 2006: 331).

Based on this, it can be said that the revival of the Maritime Silk Road has the ability to revive cultural and value issues among the countries of the Persian Gulf region, like its historical past, and affect the type of their interactions.

B) Cultural-Civilizational Functions

The Silk Road was formed to facilitate trade and commerce; but it was not limited to trade and commerce; rather, by establishing connections between different nations, it provided a basis for cultural exchanges and caused different nations to be culturally influenced by each other.



The commercial and economic effects of the Silk Road on the one hand and its cultural effects on the other hand, in the era when this road was active, provided the conditions for closeness and affinity between nations and left a successful and solid model of cooperation to meet mutual needs.

The customs and traditions of nations from the countries of the East and the West were transferred to each other and developed through the Silk Road. There were roads, prosperous caravanserais, news towers and printing houses along these roads from China and Khorezm to the West. Throughout history, in addition to military and commercial movements along this road, religions, cultures of the East and the West, and languages, they mixed different civilizations and spread in the world in this way. (Nasiri, 2012: 44).

Although today the virtual world is able to provide individuals and nations with very extensive and complete information and knowledge about other countries; in practice, it lacks the sense of presence in the place and the experience of living in them. For this reason, firstly, the type of knowledge it offers is manipulated and unreal.

Secondly, this type of knowledge only has a complementary role to real observation. Therefore, real communication routes and paths are still of great value and importance and can contribute to cultural-civilizational exchanges and the emergence of a deeper and more realistic understanding of nations towards each other. (Rawdrad and Haji Mohammadi, 2010: 61).

Accordingly, in the current conditions of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region, where extremism and religious fanaticism of groups such as ISIS have endangered the peace and stability of the region and the world and have caused an increase in the wave of Islamophobia throughout the world, emphasizing the unifying foundations of Islamic civilization is one of the serious necessities of the Islamic world. The Maritime Silk Road will increase cultural interactions between the countries of the region by increasing their communication.

On the one hand, increasing economic exchanges will also lead to the expansion of social exchanges, and the rise of tourism and pilgrimage trips in the Persian Gulf countries will also strengthen the cultural exchanges of these countries. The tourism industry, as a multifaceted industry, consists of various components and types. A type of tourism that is very prosperous today is cultural tourism.

Undoubtedly, Islamic culture and civilization have high potential in the development of cultural tourism and can be a suitable strategy in the development of the tourism industry for the countries of the Persian Gulf region, especially Iran.

The increase in travel and communication between merchants, ambassadors, scientists and clerics of the countries of the region leads to the exchange of spiritual goods, including cultural patterns, architecture, art and good moral and behavioral traditions between their countries.

Cultural patterns are traditions and ways of life that are interesting to tourists. These cultural patterns include customs, clothing, celebrations, ways of life and religious beliefs. The increase and prosperity of intra-regional and extra-regional exchanges, which are among the fruits of the Maritime Silk Road, can have many cultural and civilizational results. The most important of these results are:

A) Preservation and sustainability of the cultural heritage, arts, traditions and customs of the peoples of the Persian Gulf



The preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage is one of the effects and results of the revival of the Maritime Silk Road; because the host region is forced to manage these resources in order to provide them and apply standards to maintain their quality. In the process of developing cultural tourism, we will witness that the cultural resources of the region are automatically organized, sampled and recorded.

B) The emergence of intercultural exchanges

Intercultural exchanges are another positive effect of the development of cultural tourism. This makes the host people and tourists familiar with each other's culture and paves the way for cultural-civilizational dialogues. (Ansari, 2008).

C) Reducing religious and ethnic differences

Religious tourism is another branch of the tourism industry in the field of cultural tourism, which has great communication capabilities due to the existence of numerous pilgrimage sites in the countries of the Persian Gulf region.

This industry, in terms of its religious and pilgrimage status, which exists especially with the presence of the Kaaba and the holy shrine of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in Saudi Arabia, as well as the graves of Shiite imams in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran, will lead to sustainable cultural development in the region.

Religious tourism allows people to become familiar with different religions and cultures, and even different ways of life in that pilgrimage area, and to bond with each other, and regardless of any political and social tensions, they can better understand the cultures and ways of life prevalent among the religious ethnicities of a host nation or people, and therefore can play a very significant role in reducing hostilities and cultural convergence between nations. (Sharbatian, 2011)

In fact, the development of religious and pilgrimage tourism, in addition to promoting the recognition of spiritual culture, economic and commercial development, earning a high income and creating employment, can take an effective step by providing special cultural and social arrangements and planning in eliminating the inappropriate and unrealistic image that some countries in the region have of each other. (Kazemi: 2008, 27).

d) Providing a suitable environment for combating Islamophobia and introducing Islamic civilization to the world

The increase in commercial, tourist and pilgrimage tourism will certainly not be specific and limited to the countries of the region. About 65 countries are located on the maritime and land Silk Roads, and with the revival of these roads, travelers, traders and tourists with different destinations will travel to the countries along these roads. Trans-regional tourists are unaware of the internal differences and disputes of the Islamic countries of the Persian Gulf region and see them as a general group of Islamic countries and on their trips

These countries themselves are also in search of recognition and familiarity with the culture, customs, traditions, and cultural and ancient heritage of Islamic civilization. It is undeniable that every tourist, based on the mental image he has obtained of the countries of his destination, acts as a cultural and propaganda messenger and will represent this image to his fellow countrymen.

In this regard, an unparalleled opportunity is available to the cultural authorities and officials of the Persian Gulf countries to create a suitable and desirable image of Islam and Islamic countries in the minds of tourists



by highlighting the works and manifestations of Islamic civilization both in their countries and at the regional level.

CONCLUSION

The Silk Road is a symbol of the collective rationality of the people of the East and a sign of the dynamic, powerful and ever-evolving culture and civilization of the people of this region of the world. This road cannot be considered just a historical artifact of the past and a mere route for transit and trade of goods; rather, it should be viewed as a phenomenon that, although it was formed and active in the distant past; but by becoming a part of the culture and civilization of the people of this region, it has become a part of their life and identity and has continued to live until now.

Therefore, it should be viewed as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in which economy, trade, history, culture, politics and social issues are intertwined. If the process that began as a result of the formation of the Silk Road had continued, this communication highway could undoubtedly play a much more effective role in the age of information and communication using new communication tools than in the past and in building human society.

That is why the revival of the Silk Road has been emphasized, and efforts have been made to activate it as a connecting road between nations and a dialogue between cultures. Today, when we talk about the revival of the Silk Road, we mean using various modern communication facilities to connect the societies that communicated and exchanged with each other through the Silk Road and to provide various exchanges between these societies. In this way, the Silk Road can be renovated as a multi-route and multi-purpose communication highway and used to help the progress and development of different nations and societies. The countries of the Persian Gulf region are among the countries on the waterway of this ancient road, which can benefit greatly from the revival of this road due to its rich energy resources and unparalleled tourism facilities. Increasing economic cooperation and the tourism industry in various fields of trade, tourism, and pilgrimage can lead to increased understanding of the nations of the region about each other and, as a result, the elimination of misunderstandings and mistrust between them.

However, national-people cultural relations are only considered as a background for the relations of countries. In the current situation of the Persian Gulf, where its governments are in conflict with each other over national interests, self-centeredly, and the security situation in Iraq and Yemen is in a critical state, more efforts are needed at the national-people level to improve relations between the countries of the region and provide the ground for further cooperation.

In support of neo-functional theories, it must be said that a kind of political will is needed to use the Maritime Silk Road tunnels to improve cultural relations between the countries of the Persian Gulf region. Eliminating suspicions and tensions, avoiding sectarianism, respecting Shiite and Sunni minorities, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries, and in short, accepting equality between each other are among the major steps that political leaders of these countries can take to achieve regional integration.

To achieve these guidelines, the role of Iran and Saudi Arabia, as two prominent and important countries in the Persian Gulf, seems essential; because the understanding and closeness of these two countries in resolving disputes and misunderstandings is helpful and strategic and can also lead to the support of other coastal countries.



Based on this, the hypothesis of the present research that "reviving the Maritime Silk Road through increasing relations between the Persian Gulf countries will increase their mutual dependence on each other and will also increase the level of cultural cooperation between them" was proven.

The revival of the Maritime Silk Road by raising the need for economic cooperation between the countries of the region in various fields, such as tourism, hotel management, equipping and reconstructing ports and infrastructure, and the relations between them will increase.

The increase in relations in some economic fields that are less challenging and a source of disagreement will spread to other fields and, overall, will lead to the improvement of economic, cultural and civilizational relations and relations between the countries of the Persian Gulf region.

In this regard, there are some solutions to resolve regional disputes and provide a basis for the revival and exploitation of the potential of the Maritime Silk Road, some of which are mentioned here:

1. In the first step, it is necessary that the diplomatic apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran, considering the many opportunities that exist in the current situation in the political fields, resolving regional issues and combating terrorism for cooperation, focus on de-escalating tensions and resolving disputes between Islamic countries in the region and pave the way for broader cooperation.

2. It is necessary that the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the main custodian of cultural activities abroad, which has cultural consultancies, cultural affiliations and cultural houses in 59 countries and regions of the world, strive to further expand cultural and artistic cooperation between Iran and the countries of the Persian Gulf.

3. It is necessary for the cultural and political authorities of the Persian Gulf countries to hold numerous working meetings, to engage in empathy and consultation on how to introduce Islamic culture and civilization to the rest of Asian and European countries, and to think of cooperation to strengthen the region's tourist attractions by setting aside issues that provoke ethnic and religious conflicts; because one of the main characteristics of a civilization-building movement is to maintain unity and integrity and not seek separatism and division, which allows a civilization to acquire various aspects and dimensions and achieve the necessary development.

4. It is suggested that the Persian Gulf countries, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran, seek to form a "Union of Silk Road Countries" to transform the Persian Gulf region into a major transit hub in the world.

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Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN 3030-1718

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Received: 02.20.2025

Revised: 02.25.2025

Accepted: 03.05.2025

Published: 03.06.2025



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Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN 3030-1718