



ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ) IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

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Abstract

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This research focuses on using the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as an analytical lens to identify the economic diplomacy strategy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research method applied is a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques involving various sources, including reports, journals, news, and literature related to this topic. Cultural Intelligence is applied through four main dimensions: Motivational CQ, Cognitive CQ, Metacognitive CQ, and Behavioral CQ. This research explores how the UAE, as a multicultural country, utilizes cultural intelligence to shape and implement strategies in its economic diplomacy. The results show that Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is able to act as a lens that enables the identification of a country's economic diplomacy strategy. The high Motivational CQ is reflected in the UAE's enthusiasm to adapt to a dynamic economic environment. Cognitive CQ is applied in managing a positive image and reducing negative stereotypes, increasing attractiveness for expatriates and international economic actors. Meanwhile, Metacognitive CQ is reflected in the UAE's efforts to position themselves as a moderate and tolerant country, creating strong relationships in the Islamic world while still maintaining their cultural identity. Behavioral CQ strategies are manifested in inclusive and responsive policies to cultural conflicts, which strengthen economic relations and reduce uncertainty. This research contributes to the understanding of the role of Cultural Intelligence as an analytical lens in exploring a country's economic diplomacy strategy, particularly in the UAE context. The implications of this research can serve as a basis for the development of better policies and practices in enhancing economic cooperation and achieving national and global goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as a global player in the realm of economic diplomacy by utilizing cultural intelligence and its commitment to cross-cultural understanding to drive economic development. With a population of 8.92 million people or 88.52% of the total 10.08 million people are expatriates from various countries, it shows that the country can embrace people or human resources with various backgrounds that contribute to the sustainability of economic development in the UAE. It was noted that in 2014, 99% of employees in the private sector in the UAE were expatriates.¹

In 2022, the UAE's economy grew rapidly to 7.6 percent from the previous year. This makes it one of the highest growing economies in the world, with 6.6% of the growth coming from the non-oil sector. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that by 2023 the UAE economy will grow by 3.5 percent, which is greater than the global average of 2.8 percent. Meanwhile, the UAE government continues to work on diversifying the economic sector to make it less vulnerable to external factors. This goal is a step towards the UAE's 2031 vision "We the UAE 2031" which will focus on manufacturing, food, green infrastructure, and sustainable transportation. One of their 2031 visions of making UAE cities a place with a high quality of life can be seen as a strategy to attract experts from different countries.

The strategy of embracing cultural diversity has attracted businesses and investors from around the world, as the UAE is seen as a welcoming and inclusive destination. This can be seen in the facilities such as schools, cultural study centers, and restaurants that are very friendly to international cultures. Another reason why the UAE is one of the top destinations for businesspeople is because of the many events that are dedicated to businesspeople as a way for them to make the widest possible connections, such as the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, the British Business Group, or the Dubai Business Women Council.

Moreover, the UAE is the country that receives the most Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) among Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries especially in the Emirate of Dubai. Referring to the quote of the crown prince and head of Dubai's executive council, the reason why Dubai attracts so many investors is "The Emirate's world-class infrastructure, flexible regulatory framework, and dynamic business ecosystem that supports innovation and attracts global talent are factors that strengthen Dubai's position as the world's

¹ Haak-Saheem, Washika. "The notion of expatriation in the United Arab Emirates: A contextual perspective." *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 16, no. 3 (2016), 302.



leading investment destination.", in this context it can be agreed that the government's efforts in making the UAE a suitable place for global talent is one of the factors in increasing foreign investment in the UAE.

The UAE's quest to become a center of Islamic culture and a global economic hub blends harmoniously with its economic diplomacy strategy. Islamic values, such as integrity, justice, and social responsibility, are the main drivers of its economic policies. In the process, the UAE seeks to become a major actor in promoting interfaith dialogue for the sake of continued cooperation and peace, as well as a leading figure upholding interfaith tolerance in the Middle East region. The concept of "Moderate Islam" that they continue to uphold goes a long way in countering the negative suspicion that Muslims have of extremism, thereby increasing the likelihood of cooperation.²

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) operates under a dual legal framework consisting of the sharia legal system, which is based on Islamic principles, and the civil legal system, which is based on secular principles. The utilization of the sharia legal system is typically seen in situations relating to religious and moral issues, while the civil legal system is used in civil disputes that include commercial contracts, property agreements, and similar topics. In addition, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates, each Emirate is authorized to establish an independent judiciary or opt for integration with the federal court system. To illustrate, Abu Dhabi allows individuals who are not adherents of the Islamic faith to utilize civil law when facing issues related to marriage, divorce, etc.

In recent years, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has implemented various initiatives aimed at improving legal provisions for non-Muslim travelers and expatriates. These measures include allowing unmarried couples to live together and relaxing regulations regarding alcohol use. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has laws that criminalize LGBT activity. The penalties prescribed under sharia law cover a range of severe measures, including the death penalty, life imprisonment, corporal punishment in the form of flogging, monetary penalties, deportation, castration, mandatory psychiatric intervention, honor killings, physical assault, forced anal examinations, forced hormone injections, and acts of torture.³ However, it is important to note that each Emirate in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a different legislative framework regarding the rights and treatment of those who identify as homosexual.

² Gürbüz, Ayşegül. "Islam in the UAE's Foreign Policy - Politics Today." *Politics Today*, March 6, 2019. <https://politicstoday.org/islam-in-the-uaes-foreign-policy/>.

³ Equaldex. "LGBT Rights in United Arab Emirates." Accessed February 22, 2024. <https://www.equaldex.com/region/united-arab-emirates>.



The government's awareness of the diversity of top talent with different backgrounds and cultures, coupled with the strategy of promoting national economic interests in the international arena is a unique combination that the UAE has, and no other country has. We can look at Japan for example as a country with a high economic growth rate, but expatriates have difficulty adapting to the local culture. In addition, the UAE ranks among the best countries for expatriates according to InterNations. The phenomenon can be explained using Earley and Ang's Cultural Intelligence (CQ) theory, and Economic Diplomacy which views government measures as the main object of research that includes things like commercial diplomacy, trade diplomacy, and financial diplomacy.

Most people are aware that IQ, or intellectual intelligence, serves as a metric for assessing one's cognitive abilities. In addition, the importance of emotional intelligence commonly referred to as EQ has also been observed. EQ refers to an individual's capacity to lead and engage effectively with others by demonstrating emotional sensitivity. Cultural intelligence is an extension of the previous concepts, with a different emphasis on an individual's capacity to comprehensively understand and adapt to diverse cultural environments. These skills are seen as essential for today's leaders.⁴

Cross-cultural understanding generally refers to the ability to appreciate, respect and interact effectively with individuals of different cultural backgrounds, this refers to how to optimize one's cultural intelligence. Cultural Intelligence is an individual's ability to deal with cultural diversity that functions effectively and adaptively. It includes the ability to understand, appreciate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural Intelligence not only includes the capacity to recognize and appreciate multiple cultures, but also encompasses a range of competencies that enable individuals to navigate and thrive effectively in multicultural contexts.⁵ Cultural Intelligence can be linked to state behavior, especially in matters such as diplomatic relations, negotiations and conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity in policy making, economic and trade relations, as well as soft power and public diplomacy, and can certainly be linked to the behavior of state instruments in the realm of economic diplomacy.

⁴ Van Dyne, Linn, Soon Ang, Kok Yee Ng, Thomas Rockstuhl, Mei Ling Tan, and Christine Koh. "Sub-dimensions of the four factor model of cultural intelligence: Expanding the conceptualization and measurement of cultural intelligence." *Social and personality psychology compass* 6, no. 4 (2012), 297.

⁵ Ng, Kok-Yee, Linn Van Dyne, and Soon Ang. 2012. "Cultural Intelligence: A Review, Reflections, and Recommendations for Future Research." In *Conducting Multinational Research: Applying Organizational Psychology in the Workplace*, edited by A. M. Ryan, F. T. L. Leong, and F. L. Oswald, 30. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.



This research discusses the notion of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) into a previously neglected domain, specifically the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Economic Diplomacy. The novelty of this study lies in its method, which blends a thorough understanding of culture with the UAE's economic diplomacy strategy. Thus, deepening our awareness of how CQ can play an important role in enhancing the UAE's economic cooperation with its international partners. This study has the capacity to offer new perspectives regarding the utilization of Cultural Intelligence in enhancing international economic relations and promoting sustainable national economic growth, with an emphasis on the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses literature research techniques as a way of collecting data and secondary data to obtain the necessary information. Data collection techniques with literature studies include collecting data and analyzing information from existing works, such as books, scientific articles, and websites. Literature study provides access to a collection of knowledge, which allows researcher to explore the formulation of research problems and draw conclusions that can answer research questions.

The data processed in this research is not based on overall data collection, but rather existing provisional data is reviewed. Hence, it can be analyzed in stages. This research focuses on the state as the main actor. Therefore, the focus of this article discusses the steps taken by the state, and specifically describes related actors, such as local and expatriate communities, to diplomats representing the state. All actors involved are contributing actors to the politics and economy of the UAE.

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to data analysis. This involves data reduction, data presentation, and data retrieval.⁶ Researcher gathers the data from related sources to strengthen the author's thinking about the phenomena that occur in the main research object, such as statistical data and official reports from official institutions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As a multicultural country, the UAE has several advantages in carrying out its economic diplomacy strategy. Not only foreign policy, the diversity of the population that exists in the UAE society greatly affects the process of diversifying the national economy. Therefore, the UAE is very likely to form

⁶ Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. "Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook. 3rd." (2014), 315.



large-scale business partnerships and increase international cooperation with any country with minimal risk of cultural clashes.

Motivational CQ

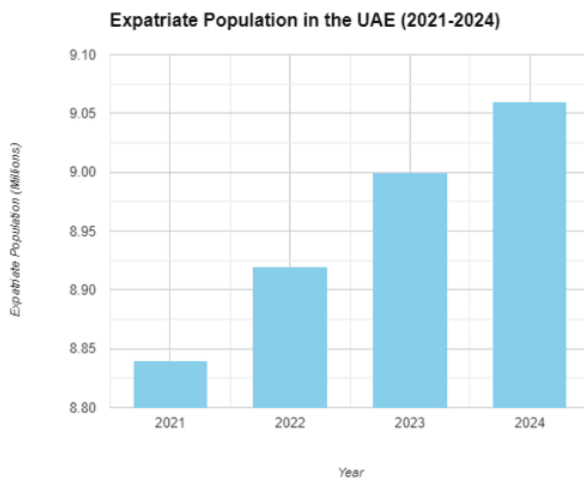
UAE economic diplomacy strategies identified as a form of Motivational CQ include the Dubai Strategic Plan 2015, Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, and UAE Centennial Plan 2071. These visions are the foundation of the efforts made by the UAE to increase its national economic growth through economic diplomacy strategies. Without a clear motivation or plan, all efforts made by the UAE will lead to failure. It is certain that many factors will be missed if a country's actions are not based on motivation or a mature plan. One of them is cultural factors, which in this case is the key to the superiority of the UAE's economic diplomacy strategy when compared to other Middle Eastern and North African countries.

One of the UAE visions that contributes to increased motivation as described by the motivational CQ concept is the UAE Centennial Plan 2071. The vision is the most ambitious that the UAE has planned as its main goal is to make the UAE the best country in the world in all fields including the economy by 2071. Similar to the country's initial process of diversifying its national economy, the UAE will need international collaboration and diplomacy to realize this ambition. When viewed using Motivational CQ, the UAE has an intrinsic interest in evolving and adapting to a changing environment, including in the context of economics and diplomacy.

Intrinsic desirability is characterized by an appreciation of culturally different experiences for their own sake and finding them inherent in the country's cultural intelligence. Countries that exhibit high intrinsic desire typically experience self-generated benefits from their cross-cultural interactions. In addition to economic and diplomatic contexts, countries like the UAE can experience these benefits in the implementation of domestic policies that are fair and do not show bias towards certain cultures, especially for expatriates. The increasing trend in the number of expatriates who come and live in the UAE can be an indicator of the high level of expatriate satisfaction with UAE policies.

Not only that, but the diverse components of the UAE society will also continue to increase in number and diversity along with the development of economic sectors in the UAE. In its vision, the UAE wishes to shape the future of its country by inviting the world to exchange ideas specifically for the year 2071, or "Designing the Next 50" which seeks to develop a comprehensive development plan for the next five decades after 2021. The global engagement created by the UAE is a form of sensitizing the country to the possible economic benefits that international collaboration can bring. The social

situation in the UAE is also considered to be accustomed and ready to minimize any cultural friction in realizing these ideals. This can be seen from the satisfaction of expatriates during their activities in the UAE.



Source: Global Media Insight, 2024

Figure 1. Expatriate Population in the UAE (2021-2024)

We can refer to an interview conducted by i24NEWS media highlighting the positive experiences of expats living in the UAE. The interview featured Anthony from Russia and Chang from the Philippines who embody the global community living and working in the UAE. The interviews, conducted in Dubai, highlighted the advantages of the UAE's friendly, respectful, and helpful society regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender. However, discussions about national politics are usually avoided, emphasizing the need to maintain harmony between communities. Overall, respondents were positive about their experience of living in the UAE.

The UAE's vision of creating rapid economic growth in the UAE Centennial Plan 2071 can also be interpreted as a manifestation of extrinsic interest or the drive to gain material benefits from cross-cultural interactions. At the organizational or corporate level, this extrinsic desire can be found in employees who perform their duties in a cross-cultural environment, such as work visits abroad or receiving clients with different cultural backgrounds. The main motivation that makes the employee enthusiastic in his activities is the



benefits he will get after the task, it can be in the form of incentives or promotions that he gets after the task is over, all related to material things.⁷

At the state level, this extreme desire can be found in economic diplomacy, which also involves cross-cultural interaction. This can be interpreted as the motivation that drives diplomats or ambassadors in carrying out their diplomatic duties abroad. The national interests fought for by diplomats certainly also include the interests of economic development, which is also part of a country's economic diplomacy. However, in the vision of the UAE Centennial Plan 2071, the UAE government is the actor in cross-cultural interaction and the material benefits that motivate it can be in the form of bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation to foreign direct investment.

The UAE Centennial Plan 2071 consists of four main pillars and one of them is the diversified knowledge economy pillar. The main objective of the pillar is to make the UAE a leading global economy and innovation center of the world economy. The pillar implies the importance for the UAE to coordinate with developed countries in order to improve national economic skills. The wording of the pillar is:

"It is vital to coordinate with developed countries to enhance the skills of Emiratis and provide them with a new work culture."

The above sentence illustrates the UAE's awareness of the importance of collaborating with developed countries and adjusting to the prevailing culture and being more efficient. The UAE's actions can be categorized as a "self-efficacy to adjust" system, which is a sense of confidence in personal capabilities to engage, interact, and work in a cross-cultural setting. This system plays an important role in how a person perceives situations and how they respond with actions to different situations.⁸

The UAE's economic diplomacy strategy is motivated by the country's urgency to improve its national economic growth described in the pillar. The UAE feels it is important to open space for interaction with other countries in order to develop the skills needed to launch national economic growth. The UAE's attitude that is open to all potential economic cooperation with other countries is an element of Motivational CQ contained in the country's economic diplomacy strategy.

⁷ Van Dyne, Linn, Soon Ang, Kok Yee Ng, Thomas Rockstuhl, Mei Ling Tan, and Christine Koh. "Sub-dimensions of the four factor model of cultural intelligence: Expanding the conceptualization and measurement of cultural intelligence." *Social and personality psychology compass* 6, no. 4 (2012): 304.

⁸ MacNab, Brent R., and Reginald Worthley. "Individual characteristics as predictors of cultural intelligence development: The relevance of self-efficacy." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36, no. 1 (2012), 70.

Cognitive CQ

The UAE government's sensitivity to cultural differences and their efforts to understand and utilize these differences in a more productive direction, strongly illustrates the high level of Cognitive CQ in the country's economic diplomacy strategy. Specifically, the UAE's economic diplomacy is equipped with culture-general knowledge, which is basic knowledge about cultural comparisons based on ethical values, which will help in understanding the process of shaping the mindset and action patterns of people in a particular region (context-specific knowledge). This is what makes the UAE the most open country and the most foreign direct investment (FDI) among the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries.

Amidst the current adverse regional conditions, the United Arab Emirates has positioned itself as a country that values and takes pride in its tolerance and moderation. However, there is significant global misunderstanding about the underlying principles of Emirati culture. Unfortunately, being Muslim and Arab is sometimes associated with a stigma that goes against tolerance and moderation for many people. This Islamophobic attitude also worsens the process of promoting multiculturalism.⁹

The stereotypes thrown at the UAE are inevitable and in the long run will be very detrimental to the process of economic cooperation, especially with non-Arab or non-Muslim countries. However, this does not stop the UAE from actively engaging in international peacekeeping efforts, upholding diplomatic relations with various countries, and fostering strong economic collaboration on a global scale. These facts illustrate that it is not that the UAE does not see how other countries view them with these stereotypes, but how the UAE appears as something different from the negative views that are also accepted by other Arab countries. Although the negative stereotypes and misconceptions that are attributed to Middle Eastern countries are merely the result of media coverage and are completely untrue.

Culture-general knowledge is defined as knowledge of the universal elements that make up a culture's environment. In this case, understanding the common elements that characterize the cultural environment is very important, as it provides us with an organizing framework to think and guess about possible similarities and differences in values between cultures.¹⁰ In this regard,

⁹ Kalin, Ibrahim. "Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism." *Islamophobia: The challenge of pluralism in the 21st century* (2011), 10.

¹⁰ Van Dyne, Linn, Soon Ang, Kok Yee Ng, Thomas Rockstuhl, Mei Ling Tan, and Christine Koh. "Sub-dimensions of the four factor model of cultural intelligence: Expanding the conceptualization and measurement of cultural intelligence." *Social and personality psychology compass* 6, no. 4 (2012): 301.



the UAE brings together Emirati cultural points of commonality with universal cultures and norms such as hospitality, respect and generosity to create an inclusive cultural environment, making the UAE culturally acceptable to other countries.

Thus, in order to strengthen the foundations of cross-cultural understanding in foreign policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates established the Office of Cultural and Public Diplomacy, headed by Sheikh Zaki Nusseibeh, who serves as the Cultural Advisor to the UAE President. The government's main objective is to work with cultural authorities at the federal and local levels in the UAE to support the extensive network of international diplomatic missions in promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of UAE culture and values. It also aims to enhance cooperation in the economic, political and security spheres. Given the UAE's culturally rich status, the government does not need to innovate from scratch, but rather leverage its existing cultural wealth to enhance interactions and diplomatic relations with other cultures and countries.

In this regard, the government of the United Arab Emirates took the initiative to revitalize its cultural diplomacy maneuvers. The government's strategy is to increase understanding of Emirati culture and values on a global scale with the aim of highlighting how they are deeply embedded in basic human values. It is one of the measures of the economic diplomacy strategy whose aim is to enhance international cooperation in the political, economic and security fields. This strategy is realized by the government through various cultural exchange promotions, one of which is through the Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival. Not only that, but the UAE also carries agendas to exchange ideas and points of view, as well as develop and introduce common principles through the media of education, sports, and other activities.

On some occasions, these efforts are made on a limited scale, such as when the United Arab Emirates government sends delegations to attend festivals in other countries. On other occasions, the cultural promotion agenda is carried out on a very large scale, such as Expo 2020 Dubai or the establishment of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, which is the first global museum in the region that carries a special humanitarian value. Participation in these cultural activities is crucial in promoting social and economic development. The exchange of ideas and perspectives is important in the practice of cultural diplomacy, which is also included in the concept of developing creativity and innovation in economic diplomacy strategies.¹¹

¹¹ Antwi-Boateng, Osman, and Amira Ali Alhashmi. "The emergence of the United Arab Emirates as a global soft power: current strategies and future challenges." *Economic and Political Studies* 10, no. 2 (2022): 208-227.

Extremist narratives are disseminated faster and more intensively than those that promote moderation. Given this, the UAE government felt it was important to provide international actors with a more comprehensive perspective of their national culture and values to prevent possible misunderstandings that could undermine partnership efforts. The people of the UAE are ready to introduce their identity and culture to a global audience. It is mobilized to safeguard the good name of the national identity while countering the negative sentiments about the Islamic and Arab world in the media spotlight.¹²



(Source: *Experience Abu Dhabi*)

Figure 2. Louvre Abu Dhabi

With the UAE's economic diplomacy strategy equipped with culture-general knowledge, the UAE is able to position itself and regulate its actions so as not to rub against universally agreed cultural understanding. Not only that, but this understanding also becomes the foundation for a more complex cultural understanding or what is known as context-specific knowledge. This understanding emphasizes specific tendencies that become the values or habits of certain groups.

As a multicultural country, the UAE has a population with very diverse cultural backgrounds. Based on this, the UAE decided to use a dual legal framework consisting of the sharia law system, which is based on Islamic principles, and the civil law system, which is based on secular principles. The UAE's policy, which is equipped with context-specific knowledge, creates inclusiveness for people who do not follow Islam but are able to coexist and conduct economic activities in the country.

¹² Mustafa, Ghulam, and Zia ur Rehman. "Muslim Responses to Islamophobia: An Analytical Study." *AL-Qalam* 27, no. 2 (2022): 55-67.

Without a strong understanding of Cognitive CQ, the UAE's economic diplomacy strategy will not get a good impression from international economic actors. The UAE will be trapped in misleading negative stereotypes about the UAE's cultural identity as an Arab nation and a country where Islam is the official religion. The number of expatriates making the UAE their country of choice for economic activity will also be lower than it is today.

Metacognitive CQ

A deep understanding of the uniqueness and richness of business partners' cultures is the cornerstone of every cooperation initiative. This not only creates a welcoming environment for cross-cultural cooperation, but also enables the UAE to adapt more effectively to the cultural dynamics of business partners, resulting in mutually beneficial and sustainable economic relations. Awareness of Metacognitive CQ (Planning, Awareness, and Checking) is the foundation for the UAE to foster solid and harmonious economic relations with countries around the world.¹³

Planning is the process of developing strategies before engaging in diverse cultural interactions. This aspect can be found in the UAE Centennial Plan 2071. Planning should also involve careful preparation, such as carefully considering short-term and long-term goals. The UAE Centennial Plan 2071 is an example of planning for the long term. In addition, short-term planning for UAE economic diplomacy can take the form of shorter economic diplomacy initiatives such as the development of free zones or special economic zones like the Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC).

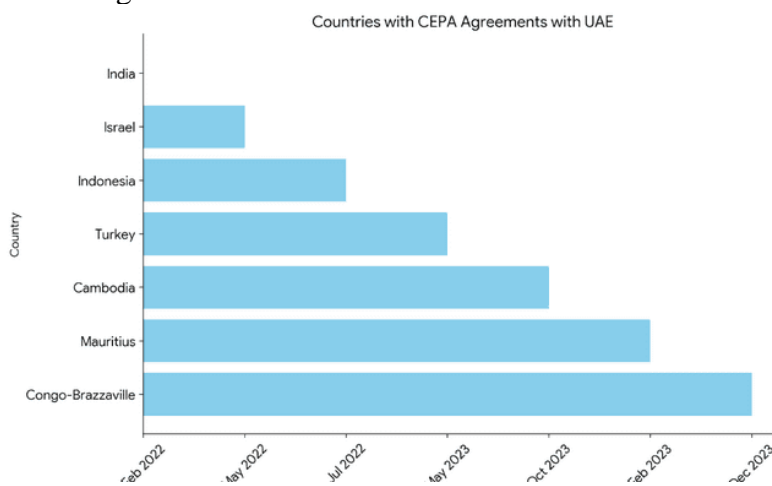
Planning on cultural aspects is necessary to anticipate various situations that may occur in cross-cultural interactions. Therefore, understanding our own cultural identity must be prioritized before understanding the cultural preferences of others, which in turn will create mutual understanding. As the UAE is an Arab nation with Islam as its official religion, it requires the UAE to position itself as a moderate and tolerant country towards global actors, especially the Western world. The UAE seeks to appear as a country that holds the principles of Moderate Islam that firmly treats extremism. Along with this idea, the UAE seeks to become a major actor in the Islamic world that can lead and represent Islamic countries.

The UAE utilizes the concept of Moderate Islam in its economic diplomacy strategy by combining religious values with a spirit of tolerance. They prove that economic success can be achieved without having to sacrifice

¹³ Van Dyne, Linn, Soon Ang, Kok Yee Ng, Thomas Rockstuhl, Mei Ling Tan, and Christine Koh. "Sub-dimensions of the four factor model of cultural intelligence: Expanding the conceptualization and measurement of cultural intelligence." *Social and personality psychology compass* 6, no. 4 (2012): 298.

religious principles. In this context, the UAE is strengthening economic ties with its various global partners, setting an example that religious values can be a driver for mutually beneficial partnerships. The UAE is also actively strengthening economic relations by adopting an inclusive approach in various international forums. One of them is the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, which is an annual meeting to bring together religious leaders, intellectuals, and representatives from international organizations, governments, and civil society.¹⁴

The UAE's inclusive attitude towards all cultural backgrounds makes it one of the countries in the Middle East that has a lot of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the economic sector. The inclusive nature of the UAE demonstrates openness and motivates other countries to cooperate, in contrast to other countries in the region that may be known for a more exclusive and extremist approach, more so as a hotbed for extremist groups, hindering the pace of economic growth.¹⁵



Source: United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economy

Figure 3. UAE Partner Countries on CEPA

The graphic above underscores the UAE's proactive efforts in realizing Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA), which mark engagements with seven different countries across different continents from 2022. This strategic move demonstrates efforts aimed at broadening the spectrum of the UAE's trade relations beyond conventional partners. Expected

¹⁴ Abu Dhabi Media Office. "Under the Patronage of Abdullah Bin Zayed, the 9th Annual Assembly of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace to Be Held November 8-10, 2022," November 5, 2022. <https://www.mediaoffice.abudhabi/en/government-affairs/under-the-patronage-of-abdulla-bin-zayed-the-9th-anual-assembly-of-the-abudhabi-forum/>.

¹⁵ Kessels, Eelco, and Christina Nemr. "Countering violent extremism and development assistance." *Policy Brief, Washington, DC, Global Center on Cooperative Security* (2016), 17.



outcomes include potential increases in trade volumes, increased investment inflows, and consolidation of the UAE's position as a leading global economic core. Furthermore, the UAE will also enter into a CEPA with Kenya, and it is projected that the number of countries entering into this cooperation will continue to grow.

In addition, another aspect of Metacognitive CQ is awareness, which is knowledge about cultural thinking in oneself and others in real time. Awareness of the differences between cultures and efforts to bridge them can open up opportunities for cooperation that can benefit both parties. The approach to responding to this awareness also varies, such as in trade agreement negotiations or the process of adapting to the culture of the partner country.

The UAE is quite active in establishing diplomatic relations and economic cooperation with countries on the African continent. Through its support for the maintenance of museums and cultural institutions in Africa, as well as the initiation of cultural exchange programs, the UAE helps preserve Africa's rich cultural heritage for future generations while deepening cultural appreciation between the UAE and Africa. The UAE's efforts are based on an awareness of the cultural differences that exist between the two camps and try to build a common understanding that has an impact on economic cooperation opportunities. The UAE has been the fourth largest investor in Africa over the past 10 years, with nearly \$60 billion in total UAE investment in Africa over the decade.

One more element of Metacognitive CQ inherent in the UAE's economic diplomacy strategy is checking, or defined as reviewing assumptions and adjusting responses when expectations differ from the reality that occurs in cross-cultural interactions. At the individual level, checking is done when we feel the irregularity of our verbal and non-verbal actions in cross-cultural interactions. Of course, we can do it right after the interaction is over. In other words, an individual equipped with Metacognitive CQ will evaluate his actions and reconstruct the assumptions he puts on his interlocutors.

At the level of an organization or country, checking cannot be done briefly as an individual does. This element can be found in evaluations or reports within a certain period of time that can be found in organizations and countries. In the UAE economic diplomacy strategy, something similar can be found in the UAE Economic Diplomacy Report compiled by Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy on an annual basis. The report not only includes the results of progress and evaluation, but also presents suggestions for the performance of economic diplomacy for the next year.

In this case we can see how the UAE manifests Metacognitive CQ in their efforts to strengthen bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation. The



UAE is aware of global cultural diversity and understands that recognition of cultural identities and differences is key to avoiding misunderstandings. In establishing economic relations, the UAE wisely positions itself as a country that is tolerant and inclusive of different cultures and backgrounds.

Behavioral CQ

In assessing cultural intelligence (CQ) at the country level, we can relate it to the model applied at the firm or organization level. At the firm level, CQ can be understood through the firm's skills and performance in dealing with matters related to cross-joint ventures. The same pattern also applies to the country level, such as how a country conducts diplomacy, sensitivity to international norms, and matters of law and policy.

Behavioral CQ plays a role in regulating social behavior to minimize misperceptions and cultural friction in cross-cultural interactions. The form of state behavior can be seen through policies formed and implemented in the country, such as policies that support inclusiveness or those that encourage awareness of diversity and the desire to adapt. Similarly, a state's reaction to cultural conflicts, such as engaging in open dialog and seeking common ground, demonstrates their commitment to fostering respectful relationships and addressing cultural complexities.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a country where most of the population are immigrants or expatriates from over 200 countries around the world. As discussed earlier, the wealth of cultural knowledge possessed by the UAE government is the main key to the harmony that occurs in this multicultural society. However, this knowledge must be distributed to policies that are expected to represent the interests of the people living in the UAE as well as the UAE's business partners through its economic diplomacy.

The UAE has a very open policy towards engaging with external parties that have different cultures and identities. This is based on the understanding that cooperation with diverse countries and entities can provide great benefits in achieving their national interests. For example, the UAE has established close relations with countries such as the United States, China, India, and European countries. Each of these countries has a different culture, language, and values to the UAE.¹⁶

The UAE's engagement with these external parties covers a wide range of areas, including economic, political, and cultural. For example, in economic cooperation, the UAE has attracted foreign investment by offering various incentives to international companies. Referring to the World Investment

¹⁶ Ketbi, Ebtessam Al. "Contemporary shifts in UAE foreign policy: From the liberation of Kuwait to the Abraham Accords." *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 14, no. 3 (2020), 397.



Report 2023 presented by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in 2022 the UAE managed to receive foreign investment flows totaling 22.737 billion US dollars or equivalent to 83.5 billion UAE dirhams, making the UAE ranked 16th globally in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in 2022.

Another policy that has been able to attract external parties in the UAE's national economic development is the implementation of free zones in Dubai, Sharjah, and the northern regions of the UAE. One of the main objectives of free zones in the UAE is to encourage large economic development, as well as create jobs and attract foreigners to invest directly. Several advantages of free zones make the UAE an attractive destination for foreign investors. These include the option for full foreign ownership, easily accessible factories and warehouses, the ability to repatriate capital and profits without restrictions, a fast approval process, no minimum capital investment requirements, affordable and abundant energy, no currency restrictions, corporate tax exemptions, expanded lease options, excellent infrastructure, outstanding communications access, and no personal income tax.¹⁷

The advantages of free zones make them a highly attractive destination for foreign companies and investors. In addition, free zones in the UAE have a significant impact on the country's economic performance, representing approximately 80% of non-oil commodity exports and cementing its position as the third most important re-export hub globally. Free zones are vital in revitalizing a wide range of industries including tourism, trade, transportation, and manufacturing, and contribute greatly to the country's economic expansion.¹⁸

Culturally, investors can benefit from the implementation of free zones through the implementation of policies such as preferential trade agreements, cluster zoning schemes, and export-oriented industrialization initiatives. Preferential trade agreements can help businesses gain access to wider markets, particularly with the European Union and Asian countries. This, in turn, makes free zones more attractive to investors. The cluster zoning model offers increased flexibility and synergy advantages through its integration with the industrial value chain. This integration enables the formation of high-tech industries, as well as the attraction of investment, training, research and development, and joint ventures on an international scale.

¹⁷ Ramady, Mohamed A., ed. *The GCC economies: Stepping up to future challenges*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012, 120.

¹⁸ Shayah, M. Hazem, and Yang Qifeng. "Development of free zones in the United Arab Emirates." *International Review of Research in Emerging Markets and the Global Economy (IRREM)* 1, no. 2 (2015), 290.



The UAE is also one of the favorite career destinations for expatriates from around the world. Cultural and institutional factors significantly influence expatriation management practices in the UAE. The UAE's diverse cultural characteristics, including geographical, linguistic, historical, ethnic, and religious features, play an important role in shaping expatriates' perceptions of the country as an accepting place. In addition, the UAE's economic development model, which emphasizes market liberalism and economic openness, has implications for regulations relating to expatriates. Although the UAE upholds tolerance and inclusiveness, they still uphold cultural and religious norms (sharia) that influence expatriate lifestyles, such as restrictions on unmarried couples living together.

The UAE has implemented a series of policies in the form of economic incentives, visa reforms, and improved lifestyle standards in an effort to attract expatriates. The Golden Visa program, launched in 2019, grants investors and entrepreneurs residency for extended periods (5 to 10 years) by reducing the minimum investment threshold. With the introduction of a special visa for freelancers in 2022, remote workers and freelancers can now live and work in the UAE, while multiple entry visas allow for multiple visits and extended stays. Expats are also facilitated with easy access to public services that can be reached online.

In addition to the ease of visas, the UAE also offers a tax-free environment that is very attractive to high-income individuals. Entrepreneurs and investors are attracted by competitive salaries, particularly in the technology and finance sectors, as well as recent policy reforms allowing 100% foreign ownership in certain industries. An adequate quality of life designed for a diverse and multicultural society, world-class infrastructure, and a safe and secure environment are all attractions offered by the UAE for expatriates to conduct their economic activities in the country.¹⁹

The UAE has hosted many prestigious international events in the fields of business and culture that have attracted the attention of many countries and international actors. One of them is through the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, which plays an important role in supporting businesses and driving economic growth in the UAE and Dubai in particular. It also offers facilities such as the Center for Business Studies and Research and the Dubai Quarterly Business Survey. To attract international business and investment, Dubai Chamber of Commerce has hosted international business actors at the Global Business Forum, organized Dubai Investment Week, led many trade activities, cooperated with international trade institutions, and actively participated in

¹⁹ The World Bank. "Doing Business | DataBank." Accessed February 22, 2024. <https://databank.worldbank.org/ddperror.aspx>.

Dubai Expo 2020. These efforts collectively position Dubai as an attractive destination for investors and entrepreneurs worldwide.

In 2019, the UAE made history by inviting Pope Francis, the leader of the Catholic Church in the Vatican. It was the Pope's first visit to the Arabian peninsula. Not only that, but the UAE also managed to facilitate the Pope's meeting with Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb who is the grand imam of the Al Azhar University mosque in Cairo. The event is another example of the UAE's success in promoting religious tolerance and moderation and countering the negative sentiments about Islam that many extremists represent.

The government also built the "Abraham Family House" located on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi. This area includes three places of worship: Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque for Muslims, St. Francis Church for Christians, and Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue for Jews. The project aims to symbolize the spirit of tolerance and speak out for the harmonious coexistence of different religions, especially semitic religions. This endeavor is the fruit of the Document of the Brotherhood of Man for World Peace and Coexistence, also known as the Abu Dhabi Declaration.²⁰



(Source: Vatican News)

Figure 4. Pope Francis and Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan

Moreover, the UAE government has demonstrated a proactive commitment to fostering economic inclusivity for non-Muslims, through the implementation of various regulatory initiatives. One such initiative is the UAE Legislation platform, which serves as a comprehensive online database

²⁰ Qurtuby, Sumanto Al. "Religious Tolerance in the United Arab Emirates." *kompas.id*, September 8, 2023. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/english/2023/09/08/en-toleransi-agama-di-uni-emirat-arab>.



covering federal laws, policies, executive regulations, and decrees since the country's establishment in 1971. The platform is accessible in both Arabic and English. Not only does it increase public accessibility, but it also invites experts, scholars, and the private sector to actively participate in the review process of draft laws and decrees, thereby promoting transparency and involvement of all parties from different backgrounds.

In addition, a draft Economic Substance Regulation by the UAE Ministry of Finance has been established to ensure that both onshore and offshore companies engaged in certain activities maintain a substantial economic life in the UAE. These regulations apply across different sectors of the business world with different religious and cultural backgrounds (Emirati and non-Emirati) to demonstrate their commitment to the UAE's economic landscape.²¹

As the last component of the four CQs, Behavioral CQ allows us to identify a country's overall cultural intelligence simply by referring to these CQs. This is done by focusing on how the country implements policies that intersect with cultural phenomena and how it responds and positions itself on culture-related issues. However, there will be many important components that are not accounted for when discussing overall CQ on a large scale such as a country if only focusing on Behavioral CQ because all four CQs are interconnected with each other.

In the context of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) economic diplomacy, Behavioral CQ plays a core role in Cultural Intelligence (CQ) because of its focus on concrete actions and responses to cultural differences. While Cognitive CQ is concerned with understanding and knowledge of culture, and Metacognitive CQ is concerned with awareness of such differences, Behavioral CQ acts as a bridge that connects such understanding and awareness with effective concrete actions.²² In this case, the ability to adapt to cultural norms, communicate effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, and adjust behavior and negotiation strategies are key in building successful relationships with the UAE's trading partners. Behavioral CQ is therefore at the core of Cultural Intelligence as it is the foundation for concrete actions that strengthen the UAE's economic relations with partner countries, beyond mere understanding or awareness of cultural differences.

²¹ United Arab Emirates Ministry of Finance. "Economic Substance Regulations." Accessed February 22, 2024. <https://mof.gov.ae/economic-substance-regulations/>.

²² Bücker, Joost, Olivier Furrer, and Yanyan Lin. "Measuring cultural intelligence (CQ) A new test of the CQ scale." *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 15, no. 3 (2015): 259-284.

Behavioral CQ focuses on elements that are easily recognizable when compared to other CQs. Its focus on observable behaviors such as nonverbal cues, communication styles, and adaptability to cultural norms makes it analogous to fieldwork in cultural anthropology. By directly observing the actions and reactions of individuals in various situations, one can assess their ability to effectively navigate cultural contexts. While other components of CQ such as Cognitive CQ require knowledge-based assessment, and Motivational CQ requires measuring intrinsic desires, Behavioral CQ offers a relatively objective and empirically verifiable approach to evaluating cultural intelligence. However, scholars acknowledge limitations such as potential subtleties in cultural nuances and the influence of individual personality on behavior. Nonetheless, Behavioral CQ remains a valuable tool for understanding individual cultural intelligence due to its direct link to observable actions.

In this case, the UAE with all its components, is able to display the values contained in each CQ in their efforts to grow the national economy through economic diplomacy strategies. The UAE utilizes cultural intelligence through policies that benefit expatriates and international economic actors as a form of economic diplomacy strategy that is rich in aspects of cultural intelligence.

From an Islamic perspective, the United Arab Emirates has developed an image of tolerance that is in line with Islamic values. This tolerance encourages peaceful coexistence with people of different faiths but does not in any way endorse religious pluralism. The UAE's approach is in line with Islamic principles that emphasize respect for fellow Abrahamic traditions such as Judaism and Christianity. The UAE's tolerance is manifested by allowing houses of worship for other religions. This shows respect for their practices without compromising the UAE's own core Islamic identity.²³

Tolerance in Islam is a concept that refers to mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and peaceful coexistence between individuals or groups who have different religious beliefs or practices. Tolerance is an important value in Islamic teachings and is considered a fundamental principle for building harmonious relationships in a multicultural society. Humans are commanded to know each other regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, and religion to national identity. This will create a strong sense of tolerance between groups.²⁴ As explained in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 which is one of the verses of the Qur'an which is the main foundation for tolerance in Islam.

²³ Sumbulah, Umi. "Freedom of Religion in Qur'anic Perspectives: the Inclusive Interpretations of Contemporary Muslim Scholars." (2018).

²⁴ Nafisi, Shadi. "Tolerance in Islam." *HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies* 74, no. 3 (2018).



The verse reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Meaning: "O mankind, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Verily, Allah knows best and is all-seeing."

It is important to distinguish this tolerance from religious pluralism. The UAE does not view all religions as right to follow. Islam remains the state religion, which is reflected in a legal code based on Islamic law. This approach allows the UAE to embrace a diverse population while remaining true to its Islamic identity. The UAE's tolerance fosters an environment of mutual respect for religious practices within the confines of the Islamic faith. Tolerance in Islam promotes mutual respect in terms of sociology, not theology.²⁵

In addition, tolerance in Islam is also explained in another verse, namely Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 48 which reads:

لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْ لُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

Meaning: "For each nation among you We have given a law and a clear path. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one people, but Allah wants to test you with what He has given you. So compete in goodness. To Allah is the return of you all, then He will inform you of what you used to dispute."

Tolerance is a fundamental value in Islam, and Surah Al-Maidah verse 48 is one of its foundations. This verse describes the diversity of human laws and ways of life, and encourages unity in goodness. The principles of tolerance in this verse are in line with the values espoused by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).²⁶

This commitment to tolerance was further emphasized with the establishment of the Ministry of State for Tolerance in 2016. This unprecedented move, initiated by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister and Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, signifies a deliberate effort to eliminate ideological, cultural and religious prejudices in the country. The appointment of Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi as the first Minister of State for Tolerance further solidifies the government's dedication to fostering a tolerant and inclusive society.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) offers a valuable lens through which to examine the UAE's success in navigating multiculturalism. The Quranic

²⁵ Aderibigbe, Semiyu Adejare, Mesut Idriz, Khadeegha Alzouebi, Hussain AlOthman, Wafa Barhomi Hamdi, and Assad Asil Companioni. "Fostering tolerance and respect for diversity through the fundamentals of Islamic education." *Religions* 14, no. 2 (2023): 212.

²⁶ Rizkiya, Ana. "Interfaith Interaction in the Perspective of Qur'anic Interpretation Thematic Interpretation Study." (2019).

emphasis on knowing and respecting differences, exemplified in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, aligns with the core principles of CQ. The UAE's tolerance, evident in building houses of worship for different religions, reflects this. This approach encourages peaceful coexistence and embraces diversity without compromising the UAE's Islamic identity.

Delving deeper into the components of CQ, Motivational CQ reinforces the UAE's positive response to diversity. The Quranic concept of "ta'aruf" (getting to know each other), emphasizes interaction and understanding, which aligns with Motivational CQ's focus on cultivating a desire to learn about different cultures. In addition, UAE's tolerant behavior, reflected in its interfaith approach, aligns with Behavioral CQ's emphasis on putting tolerance principles into action. The synergy between the UAE's approach and CQ core values highlights the effectiveness of the country's response to the challenges and opportunities presented by a multicultural society.

IV. CONCLUSION

The UAE's economic diplomacy strategy reflects success in incorporating aspects of cultural intelligence. The high level of Motivational CQ is reflected in the UAE's enthusiasm to adapt in a dynamic economic and diplomatic environment, which can be seen in their eagerness to establish bilateral cooperation and attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for national economic growth. The UAE's openness to innovation and technology is a strong driver for their strategy, creating an attractive investment climate for international economic actors. These efforts were aligned with the UAE's national vision, manifested in the UAE Centennial Plan 2071, which set an ambitious goal to make the UAE the best country in the world in the next hundred years through the achievement of sustained economic progress and innovation.

In the Cognitive CQ aspect, the UAE successfully utilizes economic diplomacy strategies to manage a positive image and reduce negative stereotypes about their cultural identity. As a result, the UAE is able to increase the number of expatriates who contribute to the country's economic growth. Through smart economic diplomacy, the UAE also managed to expand international trade networks, create greater export opportunities, and reduce dependence on the oil and gas sector.

Metacognitive CQ is reflected in the UAE's ability to position itself as a moderate and tolerant country, as well as an inclusive leader of the Islamic world. This has not only created strong relationships in the Islamic world, but also opened the door for extensive bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation. The UAE demonstrates a high awareness of global cultural



diversity and a belief that recognition of cultural differences is key to avoiding misunderstandings and strengthening international cooperation. Looking ahead, the UAE is committed to continuing to play a leading role in supporting peace and stability in the region.

The UAE's economic diplomacy strategy also reflects Behavioral CQ values through the implementation of policies that support inclusiveness and diversity awareness. The UAE's positive responses to cultural conflicts, such as through open dialog and finding common ground, demonstrate their commitment to building respectful relationships and addressing cultural complexities. The policy of openness to engagement with external parties of different cultures and identities confirms that the UAE understands that cooperation with various entities can be of great benefit in achieving their national interests. The UAE also actively promotes inclusivity on the international stage, setting an example for other countries in developing policies that advance global prosperity and cooperation.

Thus, the UAE's economic diplomacy strategy not only reflects economic success, but also affirms the country's position as an inclusive and progressive leader in the Middle East. Therefore, cultural intelligence (CQ) can be used as a lens that allows a country to see and deal with the dynamics of economic diplomacy more wisely, responsively, and effectively in the midst of an ever-evolving diverse world.

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