

Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship

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I was one of the six delegates invited by President Obama to the special Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship. I was one of the very few academics as also non – Muslim delegate from outside the US.

The Summit was conceived in the context of the Obama administration's new strategy to strengthen ties with Muslim dominated societies, particularly those vulnerable to terrorism due to the underlying challenges of poverty and unemployment. It is not only a clever but an extremely relevant strategy that has lasting potential to succeed. About 200 delegates from 59 countries attended the Summit that was held on April 26 – 27 in Washington DC. President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addressed the gathering, reflecting the importance of this new initiative.

The US and the West at large needed a different strategy to reconnect with the people from these countries partly to protect themselves and partly to sustain their own politico-economic influence in other parts of the world. The essence of the proposed strategy is to connect the people of these countries with the people and organizations in the US, while keeping the governmental platforms broadly as facilitators in the background. The web of such networks will ensure that the strategy will work overall, even if some links in the network are not effective. Risks of failure are minimized in the process.

Besides, the new strategy will have more accountability embedded into the quality of delivery of programmes, thus minimizing leakages that are common in most government directed programmes. Also, organizational ability to quickly respond to need for micro level strategies will be high.

Organizations that have solved basic living challenges have always been loved by the beneficiaries, but the solution has to be appropriate to the socio-cultural and economic context of the target group. The proposed strategy of co-creation of value is intended to achieve harmony in relationships on a sustained basis. In the process, the evolving message is that aid is not charity. The Summit has accomplished a lot in the direction of accomplishing this strategy.