

The present state of relationship between Pakistan and Arab world is much beyond meeting the potential that exists to bring Muslims of Asia closer. This untapped potential can be explored to the fullest as ultimate objectives and goals of Arab world and Pakistan are virtually identical.

Their threat perception and root causes of the problems and desired solutions are not so different. So much so their enemies and friends are the same in a broader framework of international politics.

Then why not to find out a viable mechanism with which the strong desires of the Muslims for the accomplishment of their objectives could be set into motion.

There is a strong urge among Pakistanis and Muslims from the Arab world to deepen their ties. And why not they have got every strong reason to come closer to each other. They share inherent bonds of commonalities that fundamentally stem from the greatest religion on the earth - Islam.

But the mechanism put in place by respective governments for materializing their ultimate goals is cosmetic and therefore, does not reflect popular desire of the people of both the regions.

The way ruling elite of both Pakistan and Arab world have been han-

Promoting Pak-Arab ties

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dling pivotal areas of cooperation smacks of a narrow perspective and understanding they have about the benefits camouflaged in hitherto unexplored avenues.

Government of these countries must enthusiastically devise policies that make majority of the Muslims feel being on boat and not excluded from the mainstream political and economic activities.

To begin with Arab and Pakistani rulers must hold an international conference in which genuine experts from their respective fields must be invited to ponder over ways and means for a viable mechanism bringing Muslims of the Middle East and Pakistan closer to each other in line with their intrinsic desires.

One of the way of achieving this all is through public diplomacy in a world that has shrunk into a global village with the advent of new tools of communication largely surrounding the media in its multiple modes.

Media has been totally ignored by both sides particularly on the part of Pakistan government to formulate public opinion.

The Arab and Pakistani rulers seem unaware of the benefits of their mutual cooperation.

There is no Pakistani media-men covering Middle East's troubled spots. And neither is any worth mentioning reference except for two camera teams of PTV and a private television channel which covered the fall of Baghdad. This small contribution of the Pakistani media in the coverage of Iraq war made many Arab feel being part of Pakistani society.

If countries like Turkey, Iran and Italy can have media presence in Iraq, then it does not make sense as to what kind of inhibition Pakistani media has to be on the hot spots of Middle East. As the world is changing and Pakistani media continues to remain hostage to the western news wire.

Another significant hitherto ignored part of the problem is language barri-

ers for majority of Pakistani media-men. And for this partial, responsibility rests on the Arab embassies in Pakistan who failed to take initiatives to hold language courses by setting up cultural centers.

In order to strike balance of what western media is feeding, Pakistani readers and the viewers must pressure their channels and the newspapers to depute their journalists to Middle East to cover at least Iraq situation.

Arab journalists based in Pakistan could equally play an important role in presenting and marketing Pakistan in the Arab world. Similarly exchange of cultural programs and TV dramas can play an effective role, as this would bridge widening gaps between two regions of the Asia hosting huge population of same religion.

Universities and think tanks must play their effective role in strengthening and reinforcing the common grounds between Muslims of two regions.

Unfortunately there has been no thesis by university students on issues like the kinship relation or

inter marriages in a historical perspective reflecting common bonds between Muslims living under different rulers.

Similarly cooperation in the area of sports can be expanded particularly in swimming, volleyball, football and basketball. This kind of sport activities would strengthen existing relations and bring people of two regions as close as they feel close in terms of sharing this Islamic history and religious conviction.

In the area of diplomacy Pakistani diplomats must concentrate now on understanding Arabic as many of them spend years and years in Arab world without learning their language.

The Arab media faces lot of problems because given shortage of Arabic speaking experts and out of no option they hire services of western experts who speaks Arabic well. Why cannot Pakistani replace the role of such western experts to who Arab media have to entertain after finding of no worthwhile Muslim speaker?

With these suggestions and many like these in place there would be a greater possibility to strengthen economic, diplomatic and religious ties between Pakistan and Arab world and at least there must be a good beginning to genuine watch the broader interest of Muslim Ummah.