**How to sell a narrative?**

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Pakistan has always been supportive of an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led broad-based government in Kabul. Even after rendering so many sacrifices in its pursuit to bring peace in the region, Islamabad finds itself at a loss to understand why the Western world spearheaded by the US still doubts its intentions of being a fair facilitator.The answer lies more in the realm of power games rather than truth or logic.To begin with, Islamabad needs to realise certain facts of modern-day political science and the events that unfolded since 9/11. Pakistan does not have the luxury of attacking a country on the basis of WMDs, extracting what was there to extract, withdrawing at its own convenience and apologising for its misadventure later on while quietly getting away with blatant lies. It also does noten joy the power and resources to stay in another country for two decades, leave an enormous mess behind, withdraw on its own terms, confront all sorts of allegations and stay firm and relevant. Sadly, Pakistan has neither the politico-economic power to sell its narrative internationally nor the required international goodwill to do so.

[CIA chief holds secret meeting with Taliban leader in Kabul: Report](https://nation.com.pk/25-Aug-2021/cia-chief-holds-secret-meeting-with-taliban-leader-in-kabul-report)

No matter how innovative, logical, practical and humane a nation’s narrative on some important regional or international issue is, the concerned parties would buy into it only if it suits their narrativeThe situation becomes even more difficult if the narrative relates to war and not peace or economic development. The presence of stronger-than-you stakeholders in the arena further complicates things culminating in obvious frustration.  In a battle between truth and power, the latter would invariably win thereby creating new truths.

Amidst the ongoing regional scenario, there are mainly fourfactors hindering the way of Islamabad’s narrative. The glaring tilt of the Victors in Afghanistan towards Islamabad has necessitated the world to seek several guarantees from the Taliban, such as the treatment of women and respect of human rights. In particular, the West is exhibiting unusual angstin seeing the practicality of the Taliban behave like the Scandinavians and that too within a short period of time. They are fretfully impatient to wait more than a few days to see if the new-faced Taliban would be any different from the ones in 1990s. The precipitant manner with which the Taliban have changed the entire dynamics in Afghanistan has unjustly portrayed them as a threat to all and sundry. Secondly, after being squarely marginalised in the Afghan conflict, India is in full swing to turn the tables in favour of anti-Taliban factions. Being an enemy, India is using all that is available in its arsenal to undermine Pakistan’s efforts as a facilitator and persist in pulling up rabbits out of the hat every now and then.

[Real Madrid extend deal with Uruguayan midfielder Valverde](https://nation.com.pk/25-Aug-2021/real-madrid-extend-deal-with-uruguayan-midfielder-valverde)

Thirdly, the West is still in a shock over the Taliban’s victory, the absence of resistance from the US-trained three hundred thousand Afghan security forces’ personnel and the lightening speed with which the one-sided war was won. Such a decisive victory does raise a question or two on the Taliban’s estimated potential at the time of the withdrawal of foreign troops and their real capability. One could wonder if they had the tacit but effective military support from any one or more of Afghanistan’s neighbours. Fourthly, in the face of the heavy political loss the US had to suffer; criticism even from its close allies; its image as a superpower being tarnished yet again; and glaring miscalculations of its strategists, are reasons enough to find scapegoats. Placing the blame of supporting the Taliban on Pakistan was the easiest thing to do to try cover up the obvious embarrassment and give a diplomatic twist to hoodwink the world.

Asking Pakistani Ambassadors or media and think tanks to start projecting Pakistan as a fair facilitator are not likely to help. The world is not likely to be persuaded by Islamabad’s narrative even if the media or envoys or ‘others’ burn the midnight lamp for months. Does it mean that there is absolutely no way Pakistan’s narrative could be sold in the market and believed by concerned quarters? It is possible but certain facts need to be understood and certain measures need to be taken before.

[PM Khan to visit Lahore today](https://nation.com.pk/25-Aug-2021/pm-khan-to-visit-lahore-today)

A sellable narrative can only be built on hardcore facts. The power of social media must not be overestimated. It can sensationalise distorted facts but soon the whole exercise becomes futile.  On the other hand, exposing one’s enemy’s evil designs at best creates embarrassment for the enemy. It could hardly assist in selling one’s own narrative.

A country’s strength primarily lies in its own people. The government of the day must take all segments of society in confidence before making any important changes in its policies. Such are the times that any government would like the opposition to be on the same page. There are laid down procedures to reach a consensus in Parliament. Without following the processes, a national consensus is not possible. Without reaching a national consensus, even the most powerful media outlets would fail to project any narrative at least in the present digitised world. Clearly, one has not seen any attempts to formulate a coherent policy by bringing in public support. Any such narrative is likely to be termed as mere statements while raising questions as to its veracity or sincerity. The objective of selling Islamabad’s narrative to the world would, therefore, remain unattainable unless the first step of convincing one’s own countrymen is undertaken.