**The Dilemma of Dependency**

[Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-zia-ul-haque-shamsi/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Dr%20Zia%20Ul%20Haque%20Shamsi)

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It pains me to write that this blessed country Pakistan is faced with a dilemma of dependency in so many domains. From defense acquisition to debt management, food grains to communication systems, and air travel to a descent railway system, this beloved country of 240 million people is dependent on multiple donor agencies and the so-called friendly states.

The question “Why is it so” remains unanswered and no one seems to take responsibility for the morass this country is in at the age of 76 years. Recounting the blessings of Allah upon this country because it came into being to practice Islam without any interference from other communities, one fails to understand why this country in such a state is. Allah blessed this piece of land with an abundance of natural resources, which remain untapped for various reasons. It is located at a place that is a geographer’s dream because it connects at least regions: Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia (MESACA).

MESACA can further connect to Europe in the northwest and ASEAN states through Myanmar. However, this amazing location has not been fully realized yet even after the CPEC has been in progress for the last decade.

Next in line is the blessed topography of this country. It begins in the north with some of the highest mountain ranges covered with glaciers, gradually descending into mountain ranges, then the greens of Punjab, the desert belt, and ultimately the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. This topography holds vast natural resources including water, hydrocarbons, gold, copper, and precious stones. Yet the country remains heavily dependent on imported energy.

The mighty Indus flows through the length of the country and helps in irrigating the world’s largest canal system to these agricultural heavens on earth, yet the country needs to import a number of products on regular basis. Even if the friendly climate makes it possible to grow anything and everything, Pakistan is unable to feed its entire population without being dependent on the imports of wheat, tea, and edible oil, etc.

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Security has been a challenge for Pakistan and to ensure territorial integrity, the country must allocate a major portion of its budget. However, the challenges have risen from territorial security to internal security and further on to human security in general terms. The uncontrolled population growth, insufficient medical facilities, and the poor education system has made the people dependent on foreign aid and loans.

It is mind-boggling that a country of 240 million people whose at least 10 million people are living away from their homes for economic reasons does not have an airline. The much smaller countries of the region have some of the best airlines in the world and fly to our people across the globe and earn billions of dollars from the aviation services alone. Likewise, the mass transportation systems do not exist even in megapolitan cities with a population of 20 million plus.

Interestingly, nobody is responsible for the morass this country is which is blessed by Allah in every domain. I have only mentioned a few.

Let me put the dilemma of dependency into perspective and put the blame as well. The most overriding reason of Pakistan’s present state is the selfish nature of the domestic politics in this country since its inception.

The successive leaderships over the past seventy years at least never felt ashamed of depending on aid and loans, and therefore being dependent on aid and loans has become a norm for the country. Our leaders do not hesitate in seeking aid and loans from the international agencies and the friendly states at any cost. Hence the country has become conveniently dependent on others even for security, governance, food, education, health, and day-to-day living.

In my opinion, the people of Pakistan did not deserve this kind of life primarily because Allah had blessed this land with much more than we deserved. However, I am not pessimist and do not lose hope, because the people of Pakistan are very hard working and industrious. All they need is sincerity of purpose on part of the leadership.

The day people have that, In Sha Allah they will rise to the occasion. However, we must do at least one thing to begin with: learn to live within our means and stop depending on others, because under the realist paradigm, there is no free cup of tea even from a friend, because there are no permanent friends and foes but the interests, only. If we can learn to live in whatever we are growing, producing, manufacturing, extracting, and developing, there is no reason that Pakistan will not join the ranks of developed states, sooner than later.

*The writer of this article has authored three international books: “Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Management Between India and Pakistan” “South Asia Needs Hybrid Peace” and “Understanding Sun Tzu and the Art of Hybrid War.”*