**[Anti West clamour](https://www.dawn.com/news/1605021/anti-west-clamour)**

[Owen Bennett-Jones](https://www.dawn.com/authors/1411/owen-bennett-jones)Published February 2, 2021

The writer is author of The Bhutto Dynasty: The Struggle for Power in Pakistan.

PAKISTANI nationalism is alive and well. Many of Imran Khan’s supporters, and some others, proclaim their rejection of the hypocritical, self-interested West, and embrace instead a desire for self-reliance based on Islamic values. Pakistan, they assert, no longer needs Western approval. The post-colonial days are over. By concentrating on regional politics and, in particular, forging an ever-deeper relationship with China, the land of the pure can finally break free of the colonial legacy and forge a new future for itself. As for the West, the best thing it could do is face up to its increasing irrelevance.

Some of Pakistan’s patriots extend their analysis to foreign aid, arguing that Western countries use aid flows to force Pakistan to pursue policies that are not in its national interest. Misled by a love of Western money, politicians and generals demean themselves in an undignified scrabble to raise funds from foreign donors. Pakistan’s establishment, the argument goes, is too embedded in the old world order and can’t grasp Pakistan’s opportunity to create its own future in a world in which the West is in decline.

And yet, even as these patriots feel a flush of self-righteous pride as they express their anti-Westernism, they might also want to reflect on some paradoxes. A decade ago the Taliban, Al Qaeda and IS offered Pakistanis a chance to embrace a caliphate whether it be on a local, regional or even global scale. But most rejected the idea, preferring instead to cling on to the nation-state structures and secular constitutions so beloved of Western colonialists. And when it comes to passports, many Pakistanis — including many who denounce the West — would still like to acquire Western ones, not just because they want a higher standard of living but also because they crave the rule of law.

But what about the foreign aid? The sums involved are significant. Despite Washington’s decision three years ago to cut $800 million in military aid to Pakistan, the US administration says that between 2003 and 2018 it gave Pakistan in excess of $33 billion. That compares with an estimated $1.3bn per year given by the US to Egypt. Many European countries also give large sums to Pakistan, including the UK which has focused much of its spending on education in Punjab.

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It’s worth pointing out that the US efforts to extract a quid pro quo for these funds do not seem to have been very successful. When he cut the aid funding, President Trump complained the generals in Rawalpindi had not done what he asked of them in relation to groups such as the Haqqani network. So, to that extent it has, from Pakistan’s point of view, been money for nothing.

But that point aside, how do Pakistan’s incoming aid flows compare to other sources of foreign exchange? According to the World Bank, remittances have been increasing rapidly and now amount to over $20bn a year or a whopping nine per cent of GDP. That’s 10 times as much as the foreign aid and about half of it comes, not from the perfidious West, but from the Gulf. The remittance figure for India is 2.9pc while for Bangladesh its 6.2pc of GDP.

And then there is CPEC. The latest figures from the Pakistani government suggest that it is worth $50 billion. However, unlike most Western aid, these Chinese investments will need to be repaid — and the precedents elsewhere in the world suggest it will be on very harsh terms.

So where does all this leave the anti-Western Pakistani patriots? Certainly, they seem to be right in saying that the Middle East and China are increasingly important to Pakistan and that too much attention is paid to foreign aid — which is considerably less important than other sources of foreign funds.

But when it comes to the broader case for self-reliance, it may be a case of being careful what you wish for. The Brexit brigade in the UK have similar attitudes to Pakistan’s nationalists. They argue that a sovereign Britain will somehow be able to forge its own destiny free of foreign constraints. When asked for details on what these phrases actually mean, ministers start looking at their shoes and muttering about rather obscure objectives such as deregulating the chemical sector. The more realistic Brexiteers acknowledge that leaving the European Union will, at the very least, make the UK poorer for many years to come.

Even in the post-Trump world, nationalism is a surging force in many countries. Pakistan is part of a global trend. But those who insist Pakistan can go it alone need to show how it will thrive in a world in which countries — many of them also increasingly nationalist — expel foreign workers and in which China starts saying the time has come for Pakistan to pay back what it owes.

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