

Kashmir should not be ignored by the rest of the world

Written by Richard Corbett and Anthea McIntyre on 31 October 2019 in Opinion
Opinion

Richard Corbett and Anthea McIntyre respond to Dinesh Dhamija's recent Kashmir article in The Parliament Magazine.



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The Parliament Magazine recently published an astonishing plea for the EU to ignore what is going on in Kashmir ([“Not the West's Problem” by Dinesh Dhamija](#) ^[1]), claiming that concerns about the respect for human rights and democracy is “neo-colonial” and that we should not “interfere”.

Demagogues across the world hide behind the argument that no one from outside their country has a right to criticise their internal repression. But the international community has never accepted that the principle of non-interference in internal affairs extends to ignoring violations of universal rights.

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Nor is this a purely internal matter. Kashmir is a disputed and partitioned territory, whose population is still awaiting the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions giving it the right to determine its own future through a referendum.

And if the tensions between India and Pakistan were to escalate, there would be a real risk of war between two nuclear powers. That cannot be seen as a local matter.

“The international community, including the EU, has a duty to argue for the resolution of this long-standing conflict”

The sheer magnitude of India's recent actions has provoked a wave of indignation across the world, even among its friends. Let us recall that, in the space of a few days, India unilaterally changed the constitutional status of the part of Kashmir under its control, ending its autonomy; removed the territory of Ladakh from Kashmir; sent tens of thousands of extra troops to the area, inflaming an already tense and volatile situation; arrested hundreds of local politicians and instituted a media blackout.

Even before these events, the UN Human Rights Report on Kashmir of 14 June 2018, updated on 8 July 2019, highlighted the dramatic situation in which the Indian army in Kashmir acts with legal impunity, facing no legal consequences for using pellet guns as a means of crowd control, despite them blinding and even killing numerous protesters, nor needing to face charges for the numerous allegations of sexual violence, abductions, or attacks on journalists.

“If the tensions between India and Pakistan were to escalate, there would be a real risk of war between two nuclear powers. That cannot be seen as a local matter”

To criticise the actions of the Modi government is not being anti-India. Indeed, the revocation of Kashmir's autonomy was strongly criticised in the Indian Parliament itself and across the country by Indian opposition parties and some state governments.

It cannot be in India's long-term interest to have let this situation continue, for many reasons: the enormous cost of its military deployment in Kashmir; the blemish to its reputation created by the deteriorating human rights situation; the enormous human, economic and political benefits of resolving this long-standing conflict which has held up cooperation in South Asia.

The international community, including the EU, has a duty to argue for the resolution of this long-standing conflict.

Ultimately, there is only one solution and it is a peaceful one: to let the Kashmiri people themselves choose their destiny, as the UN Security Council first laid down in 1948.

About the author

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