

The crisis in Kashmir is probably one of the most significant international political events in recent years. It has parallels with the unrest in Hong Kong. It is in essence about one nation two systems with the exception that the majority population in Kashmir was only subjected to this condition on a temporary basis, having been promised a plebiscite to determine their own future – a promise that has not been fulfilled in 70 years. The crisis is receiving relatively little news and political attention, writes Professor Afzal Ashrad. This indicates a selective approach by the UK and other Western countries to championing democracy and human rights. Unlike Hong Kong, where the international community is calling for restraint in dealing with protesters, there is a complete clampdown on democratic freedoms and restriction of basic human rights including free-speech in Kashmir. The region has been described as one big prison camp, yet there is little in the way of an outcry from the international community.

It is very unlikely, given this lack of interest by world powers, that Pakistan's diplomatic initiative will produce any positive outcomes. This, along with India's imprisoning of the democratically elected regional government, suspension of basic rights, alleged murder, rape and torture, will discredit democratic and rule of law approaches to a resolution. Militant and extremist organisations will consequently be emboldened and it is almost certain that a period of violence and repression will follow in Kashmir in the months and years ahead.

Quite apart from the moral and legal need for persuading the Indian government to change its approach, there is a Realpolitik necessity from the point of view of Western countries. Recent conflicts have demonstrated that insecurity in a region exports violence and migration to Europe. It is therefore in the interest of European powers at least facilitate a sustainable, democratic and just resolution to the crisis. The UK, having been the architect of the current political arrangements, has a particular responsibility in this regard.

A long-term peaceful resolution to the conflict is also in the interest of the Indian government. India has the widest range of separatist movements, many of which have insurgent and terrorist organisations championing the cause. Already, Sikh separatist organisations are establishing common cause with Kashmiri separatists in order to put pressure on the Indian government and military. No doubt, other organisations will be watching how this situation unfolds. Any apparent failure of resolving the Kashmiri issue through the democratic process will strengthen the dozens of terrorist and insurgent organisations within India because alternative factions, which seek success through the political process, will be discredited.

The BBC World Service have recently written of their coverage :

Video footage gathered by language service teams in the region has helped the BBC to tell the story of what is happening in Kashmir. The footage on the protests in Srinagar provided by BBC Urdu was a piece of journalism watched by millions. You can view it [here](#) .

For more background to India and Pakistan's fight over Kashmir [this article](#) from the BBC offers a concise summary and includes a video at the end which illustrates the BBC's rare access to both sides of the conflict with reporting from both Yogita Lamaye, India correspondent, and Pakistan correspondent, Secunder Kermani.