

Is talk of secession sedition? Arundhati Roy responds to charges

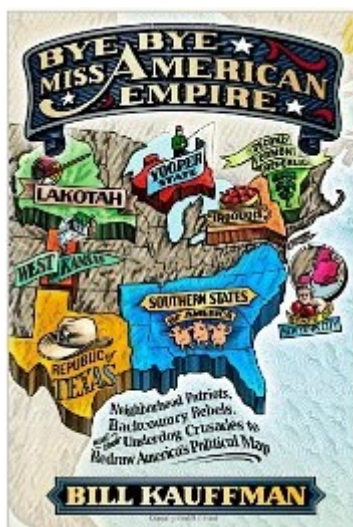
By [Rady Ananda](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [History](#)



In a speech last week supporting ‘azadi’ — or freedom — for the occupied people of Kashmir, Arundhati Roy won the ire of right wing extremists who started a petition to have her arrested on charges of sedition. Even moderates are shocked by her support of secession. I sit on an Indian listserve, and the comments against her were vicious, with most people supporting prison for this freedom-loving, earth-loving, prolific writer and activist.

Sedition is being openly discussed in several states in the US. Bill Kaufman’s new book, [Bye Bye, Miss American Empire](#), addresses the topic head on (Chelsea Green, 2010):

“Scoff if you will, but by 2012, a decade into a nightmarish ‘War on Terror’ that our rulers have assured us will last our lifetimes, will Americans be content with a status quo of perpetual war and unending empire? ... When you consider that in 2008, 77% [of Vermonters] answered yes to ‘Has the US government lost its moral authority?’ the savory makings of sedition are there.”

Ron Paul’s [frank clarity](#) reminds us, “A free society means you can dissolve it voluntarily.”

Kaufman argues that Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico have the strongest case for secession. Detailing the history of US thought on the issue — starting with the fact the US was born under secession — he also provides current thinking. In another poll, this one in 2008 by Middlebury Institute/Zogby Poll, he reports that researchers “found that 22% of Americans surveyed agreed that ‘any state or region has the right to peaceably secede and become an independent republic.’”

“The South (26%) and East (24%) led the way, and among demographic categories Hispanics (43%), African Americans (40%), and eighteen- through twenty-four-year-olds (40%) gave the most support to the proposition. Liberals (32%) were likelier than self-described conservatives (17%) to agree. Hope abides.”

Ordinary people object to Earth-destroying corporate dominion, enforced thru war, here in the States and across the globe. Our cause is their cause. But, as Kaufman notes, “Establishment liberals and empire conservatives.... are the prison guards keeping the rabble from watering the tree of liberty with the blood of tyrants.”

Here is Roy’s response to the media furor, which she wrote yesterday, along with a video of the speech that sparked such controversy:

Pity the Nation

By Arundhati Roy

I write this from Srinagar, Kashmir. This morning’s papers say that I may be arrested on charges of sedition for what I have said at recent public meetings on Kashmir. I said what millions of people here say every day. I said what I, as well as other commentators have written and said for years. Anybody who cares to read the transcripts of my speeches will see that they were fundamentally a call for justice. I spoke about justice for the people of Kashmir who live under one of the most brutal military occupations in the world; for Kashmiri Pandits who live out the tragedy of having been driven out of their homeland; for Dalit soldiers killed in Kashmir whose graves I visited on garbage heaps in their villages in Cuddalore; for the Indian poor who pay the price of this occupation in material ways and who are now learning to live in the terror of what is becoming a police state.

Yesterday I traveled to Shopian, the apple-town in South Kashmir which had remained closed for 47 days last year in protest against the brutal rape and murder of Asiya and Nilofer, the young women whose bodies were found in a shallow stream near their homes and whose murderers have still not been brought to justice. I met Shakeel, who is Nilofer’s husband and Asiya’s brother. We sat in a circle of people crazed with grief and anger who had lost hope that they would ever get ‘insaf’—justice—from India, and now believed that Azadi—freedom— was their only hope. I met young stone pelters who had been shot through their eyes. I traveled with a young man who told me how three of his friends, teenagers in Anantnag district, had been taken into custody and had their finger-nails pulled out as punishment for throwing stones.

In the papers some have accused me of giving ‘hate-speeches’, of wanting India to break up. On the contrary, what I say comes from love and pride. It comes from not wanting people to be killed, raped, imprisoned or have their finger-nails pulled out in order to force them to say they are Indians. It comes from wanting to live in a society that is striving to be a just one. Pity the nation that has to silence its writers for speaking their minds. Pity the nation that needs to jail those who ask for justice, while communal killers, mass murderers, corporate scamsters, looters, rapists, and those who prey on the poorest of the poor, roam free.

Arundhati Roy
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