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Ukraine-Russia Conflict: A Geopsychological Analysis

*Kalpana S. Agrahari**

Abstract

In February 2022, with the Russian assault on Ukraine's soil, the world saw a new turmoil in the international arena. The crisis of Ukraine has rattled many conceptions of international politics, including the sovereign nation system, the myth of relative peace and security in the post-Cold War era, the myth of a rule-based international order, the applicability of the collective security model, and the overall utility and rationality of conventional international relations theories in explaining the Ukrainian crisis. In these unprecedented circumstances, while most mainstream international relations theories are silent, the geopsychology theory provides a new analytical tool to explain and understand the nature of the current crisis. This article attempts to understand this crisis through the geopsychological approach and investigates whether the geography-based psychology of ruling elites and masses are the motivating factors that shape the nature of international conflicts. The main intent of this paper is to shift the existing scholarship's focus away from the one-sided geopolitics narratives. The first section introduces the central idea of the geopsychology theory and its basic tenets, while the second section exposes the limitations of conventional wisdom in understanding the root cause of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. The final section sketches the prevalent strands of geopsychology of Russia and argues that understanding geopsychology is as essential as the knowledge of geopolitics to prevent catastrophic global conflicts.

Keywords: Geopsychology; Ukraine-Russia conflict; international relations theories

The Geopsychology Theory

While mainstream international relations (IR) theories are still bogged down in geopolitics, the geopsychology theory (GT), propounded by B.M. Jain, adds a novel dimension to understanding contemporary events and developments in international politics. Jain defines the term geopsychology as "a set of perceptions, images, and belief systems, formed of shared history, culture, nationalism, religion, and ethnicity, which shape the mindsets and

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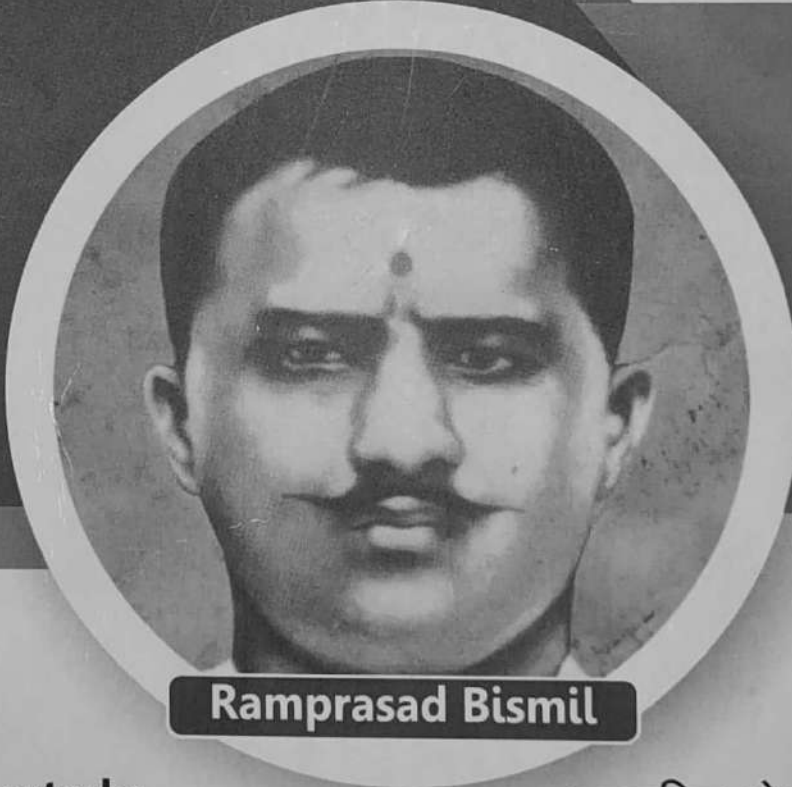
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मातास्मि भोः पुत्रक भारतानां
सनातनानां त्रिदशप्रियाणाम्।
शक्तो न यान् पुत्र विधिर्विपक्षः
कालोऽपि नो नाशयितुं यमो वा।।

“ROLE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR IN INDIA’S RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN DURING MODI ERA”

Radhika Devi
Kalpana S. Agrahari

The central apple-growing region of India remained an apple of discord between the two South Asian nuclear powers since the time of independence of India in 1947. The princely states’ integration project is considered the phenomenal engineering of the then Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel and Deputy PM V.P Menon. They both were victorious in persuading the rulers of nearly 600 princely states to merge them into India’s Union. The process of unification was, by and large, remained a conflict-free with few exceptions, and J&K (Jammu and Kashmir) was one among them. The State’s ruler delayed the process of accession with either country and decided to remain independent, which was not an acceptable deal for both countries. Although both nations were born from the same womb, they could never trust each other; there was a constant situation of Prisoner’s Dilemma between the two siblings, which still prevails. After the Kashmir issue was taken to the UN, it became complex. While India strived to confine the case to the bilateral sphere, it arrested international attention for other reasons. The abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution in Aug. 2019 is an exact quote of the current time. The State, which was once known for its spiritually blissful destination, is now regarded as one of the most challenging regions in the world.

Introduction

With the annulment of article 370, J&K became the first State of India to be converted into two union territories (UT’s), i.e., J&K and Ladakh. There are a lot of examples of conversion of UTs into full-fledged states and the bifurcation of the State into two smaller states in India. But it was for the first time that a State was converted into a UT.¹ Soon after the abrogation of article 370 the normal life in J&K was disrupted, and separatists’ leaders were put under detention. There was an internet clampdown, even telephone services were closed in many parts of the State, particularly in Kashmir Valley.

The State is known for its natural beauty and holds the title of ‘Paradise on Earth.’² But in the last seven decades, Kashmir has become a paradise lost. It covers an area of 222,236 square kilometers, including PoK and Aksai Chin.³ Aksai Chin is a barren area located in the western sector, which India claims to be its territory, but China has occupied it since 1962. India’s claim is based on the 1860’s Johnson Line, which put Aksai Chin within the domain of the then princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. In the

beginning, China did not have any demur with this stand of India. Still, after a few years, it suddenly changed its earlier stance and refused to accept India’s claim on Aksai Chin and started constructing a road link that connected Tibet to Xinjiang region through the area in 1956.⁴ It finally led to a war between the then so-called brotherly nations, in which India lost the big chunk of the Ladakh region including whole area of Aksai Chin.

Meanwhile, Pakistan ceded Trans Karakoram Tract (Saksham valley) to China in 1963.⁵ This area is also a disputed territory between India and Pakistan, and comes within the ambient of PoK, so India strongly opposes this move of Pakistan. With these two incidents, China becomes the third party in the Kashmir dispute. India consistently stands against the construction of the twin projects of China viz. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as both projects are there in the PoK region and therefore affect India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The recent clashes between security forces of both the countries in June 2020 in Galwan Valley are the result of past events and the illegal claims of China in the area. Besides this

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