

Optional  
**GEOGRAPHY**

*Human Geography*

**GEOPOLITICS**

**MAIN EXAMINATION**

**2023 - 24**



**Hari Bhawan : 14A/103, W.E.A, Karol Bagh New Delhi - 05**

**Ph : 011 - 355 - 77 - 975**

**(M) : 09810382305 mail : info@directionias.com**

Visit Us at **www.directionias.com**

## GEOPOLITICS

Political geography is the study of the ways geographic space is organized within and by political processes. It focuses on the spatial expression of political behavior. Boundaries on land and on the oceans, the role of capital cities, power relationships among nation-states, administrative systems, voter behavior, conflicts over resources, and even matters involving outer space have politico geographical dimensions.

Contemplating the state of political geography, Richard Muir observed that “political geography is simultaneously one of the most retarded and most undervalued branches of geography and one that offers the greatest potential for both theoretical and practical advance.”

From the disciplinary perspective, political geography may be defined as either geography or political science. In the perspective of political science, political geography appears as “the study of political phenomena in their aerial context,” as one geographer put it.

### Functions and Factors

**Political geography is the study of relationships among humans**, their environment, and their political institutions. The controversy over states’ rights, which has been revived again and again in the US, masks geographic problems growing out of the natural environment of the southern states, or out of natural resources of petroleum-producing states, or out of water requirements in dry and semiarid states. All these and more require political accommodation.

The functions of political geography are not confined to one state but embrace the whole globe. It is intriguing to attempt to rank the sovereign states of the world in terms of effective national power, to evaluate the regional importance of one state compared to its neighbors, to range over the world and consider the ever changing power of the (British) Commonwealth of Nations, or the French Community, to analyze the reasons for political tensions between regions in terms of environmental differences—these are the substance of political geography in its broadest terms.

The subject is also dynamic, searching for the effects of change and the rate of such change. Change affects, in every inhabited spot, the elements within the political state that define it, that strengthen or weaken it, that slowly alter the image of a state in the world. The nature of change and its velocity are both little understood, for humans are cursed with a love of the familiar, the usual and ingrained, and their grasp is finite and time bound.

Yet scholars admit that the political state is in one sense an abstraction, dependent on written records and some degree of respect for possession or ownership. It could not exist in a world without other political states. As an abstraction, it appears at a certain level of culture, marked by written language, sedentary life, and the need for organization. Today, in certain areas of the world, it appears to be only another stage in the search for unity by groups of people. In newly born states it is national unity. The painfully complex path of Western Europe toward federation is a movement toward regional unity. The latter's course contrasts sharply with the turbulent, uneasy history of newly independent nation-states of the former Soviet Union. **Political geography is functional;** it studies the degree of unity reached by the environment and man's political institutions. Laws governing the ownership of water rights that were evolved in moist, cool northwest Europe were unsuccessfully transplanted to the American semiarid southwest. In much of Latin America, most of the land is owned by a small wealthy class. The resultant pressure of population on resources is a continuing specter that threatens to menace the productivity of the environment and to conjure up political revolution.

Subordinate political units in the state also clash with man's use of the environment. It can be witnessed in the U.S. urban trading areas that overlap several states; interstate compacts regulating commerce, navigation, and transportation; and overlapping regional requirements for development of natural resources such as river basins. Above all, there is the increasing role of central political power in the modern industrialized states, which has been forced primarily by the interregional complexities of economic and social problems. Political geography considers different cultural meanings for similar political and geographic functions. Attitudes, frames of reference, habits, and beliefs—all the rationale of political and cultural action—are explored for their agreement or disagreement with the environment. America, in the colonial period, offered the natives hunting and fishing; to the colonists, it offered farms, lumber, cotton, and tobacco. The prairies of the Midwest or of western CANADA, with their thick, deep-rooted grass, have a different meaning to the settler today than what they had before the invention of the steel plow. These lands were first unsuitable, then invaluable, for profitable settlements. The former accommodates to local tribal government by the patriarch; the latter is the agent of highly centralized, democratic government that is over 1,200 miles distant.

**The political geographer is concerned with the homogeneity and heterogeneity in action** within and without the political unit. He or she must attempt to analyze the centrifugal and centripetal forces acting and interacting at different rates.

## Evolution and Development

Humans remained a pawn of their environment for thousands of years before they became sedentary. Security lay with the tribe and idol, and fears led to primitive worship. The arrival of sedentary agriculture provided the grounding to develop small groupings, implying an intimate association with a single homogeneous landscape. In river valleys such as the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Indus, and Huang, these collective groupings evolved political forms that were linked to the physical settings of floodplains, the presence of abundant water, the yearly silting of the fields, and the regularity of the sun and the seasons. The hold of the primeval past remained strong even in the Greek world of Persian invasions, in the lifetimes of Pericles, Plato, and Aristotle. The Greeks were the first known culture to actively explore geography as a science and philosophy, with major contributors including Thales of Miletus, Herodotus, Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, Aristotle, Dicaearchus of Messana, Strabo, and Ptolemy. But Greek scholars began to think logically and abstractly about the meaning of the world around them. Both Plato and Aristotle analyzed the political state, its environmental base, and man's relationships with it. They attempted to clarify cause, space and time.

Although the political world of their day became complex, they agreed to find unity among environment, man, and the state. The polis, the city-state, was their political frame of reference. The influence of topography in fragmenting the Greek peninsula into many small river valleys, separated by hills and mountains but facing the sea, has also been commented on many times. Yet, even for the Greeks it was true, as it is increasingly today, that humans are active, intelligent agents, not the pawns of their environment.

Whenever we study the thought of other people in other cultures and at other times, their frame of reference must be considered to explain their limitations and successes. **Greek thinkers** were no exception. An early comment on the political environment by Aristotle was both nationalistic and deterministic. He asserted that “the people of cold countries generally, particularly those of Europe, are full of spirit but deficient in skill and intelligence; and this is why they remain free, but show no political development and faculty of governing others. Peoples of Asia are endowed with intelligence but are deficient in skills. This is why they continue to be peoples of subjects and slaves.” Aristotle's Europeans were those nomadic tribes in south Russia and the Balkans that periodically raided the Mediterranean world and threatened its colonies. He implied that nomadic tribes are not likely to develop a high degree of political organization. His Asians were the peoples of Asia Minor and the Persian Empire. The first of these were his own people, inhabitants of Greek city-states along the fringe of Anatolia—yet he looked down on them.

Today, we would consider the low level of technology at that time as important, one that produced small surpluses but dense populations. The size of these eastern empires contributed to the necessity for a political organization that depended on a highly centralized monarchy buttressed by military power.

When Aristotle wrote that the Greeks were better than barbarians of the north and the Asians of the east, he emphasized the importance of location; he was writing about the known world. In addition, he believed that climate had a strong influence on qualities such as spirit and intelligence, for in the Greek division of climates, the Greek lived in the temperate zones, the nomad in the cold regions, the Asiatic in the hot areas. Greek thinkers were cautious of their common nationality, but through most of the ancient period they were more impressed by the consciousness of the value of their individual civic life. The 5th century B.C.E. was the period of highest achievement in Greek political life. Greek unity was imposed by Philip and Alexander of the Macedon. The unity of which Plato wrote was sharply limited in dimension. He was certain that the city-state was the ideal political form for humans. Later, in the age of Caesar and Augustus, the geographer Strabo argued that only with a strong central government with one powerful ruler could a continental empire such as Rome survive and flourish. Through the centuries, humans have altered many times their views on the size, structure, and functions of the political state that they continued to require.

These early observations on the nature of inter linkages between people, the environment, and political institutions could not evolve in a coherent sub discipline of political geography. The surge of new geography of the 1950s and 1960s bypassed political geography. The new geography, with spatial analysis as its theme, neoclassical economics as its accounting frame, and logical positivism as its methodological underpinning, could not accommodate a political geography. The emphasis of neoclassical economics on the economy as a harmonious, self-regulating system, where each factor of production receives its fair reward, ignored questions of conflict and inequitable distribution, and the focus of logical positivism directed attention to verifiable empirical statements in particular, and data analysis in general, and away from the operation of the more incorporeal power relations within society.

A truly political geography could not flourish in such a climate. Moreover, the explicit analysis of politics was taken over by the last social science discipline, political science. This academic assertion was being conducted by a discipline, which according to some scholars was a device for avoiding politics without achieving science. Ignored by its discipline and lacking any theoretical substance from political science, it is little wonder that political geography was a moribund subject.

## Modern Political Geography

The origins of political geography are usually traced to **Friedrich Ratzel** (1844–1904), who was the brilliant yet ambiguous founder of modern political geography. He was strongly influenced by rapid, vigorous developments in the natural sciences in the 19th century and sought to discover the realities of political society.

**Ratzel and Karl Marx** both thought that there were natural laws that controlled society. Ratzel's critics have often disregarded his fundamental contributions to the elements of political geography, underestimated the attention he gave to the factors of location and space, and fixed their disliking on his attempt to develop an analogy between political state and living biological organism. In his native Germany, the concept of natural selection and survival of the fittest became wedded to a geopolitical jurisdiction of national expansion. A group of German geo politicians emerged who gradually discredited his reputation as they abandoned rationale and unbiased geographic thought and turned to justifications of war and conquest.

**Ratzel thought that states in all stages of development are considered as organisms** that stand in a necessary connection with the ground, and hence must be viewed geographically. He linked the state to a mobile body, to an organism subject to the natural laws of growth and decay.

- His organism was spiritual and moral. Just as an organism is born, grows, matures, and eventually dies, Ratzel argued, states go through stages of birth (around a culture hearth or core area), expansion (perhaps by colonization), maturity (stability), and eventual collapse.
- Strongly influenced by **Darwinian thinking**, he was interested in the relationships between the state and the Earth, between political institutions and their physical environment. His major contribution came with his representation of the state as a organism needing Lebensraum (living space) and the competition between states for that space as a Darwinian contest involving the survival of the fittest. He suggested that only a sporadic absorption of new land and people could stave off the state's decline. In fact, Ratzel proposed a blueprint for imperialism.
- He believed the higher the technological and social development of the political state, the farther that state was removed from its organic foundations. In fact, this thought on the analogy of an organism and the state is ambiguous. The true geographic structure of Ratzel's thought suffered because of imperfect distillation from his German and from the rejection by American geographers of any form of determinism. However, the elements of political geography that are thought to be of major importance today were voluminously discussed and analyzed by Ratzel. The state is not an

abstraction— it occupies land and water; its size, location, and boundaries are important characteristics.

- Ratzel also thought that the surface features of the land together with vegetation and soil were basic to any political analysis. He emphasized the importance of capital in location and function. The beliefs of social groups in the necessity of a political union based on historical, religious, and cultural values; the theory of centrifugal and centripetal forces operative in the state; the idea of the ecumene or heartland; and the vital roles of communication and movement—all these provide the solid substance of his political geography. He lived in an era that saw the growth of colonial empires to their maximum and the partitioning of virtually all the land areas of the world into politically controlled regions. He correctly saw that the increasing ability to overcome space placed a premium on states of large size. Today, we speak of the continental superpowers that have geographic environments that possess varied and immense resources.
- In addition, Ratzel devoted attention to relationships between states, particularly on the nature and function of boundaries.

Ratzel's ideas were taken up by a number of geographers with political as well as academic interests, notably **Rudolf Kjellen, and Karl Haushofer**, a German who taught and was close to Rudolf Hess, Adolf Hitler's deputy in the 1930s. They developed a school of geopolitik, whose writings were used to give an intellectual rationale to 1930s German expansionism—not only the desire to occupy adjacent territories with substantial German populations, such as Austria and Sudetenland, but also Russian areas further east.

**Parallel developments in the UK were led by another geographer-politician, Sir Halford Mackinder (1904)**, whose classic paper related state power to location. In an era when movement of heavy goods and large armies was easier by sea than by land, maritime countries would dominate politically, but as land transport was becoming easier, so “land-based powers” were becoming stronger: he argued that whoever controlled the “world island” (the heartland of Euro-Asia) should be able to control the globe—a geopolitical notion that influenced much strategic thinking throughout the century, until air power (and then power in space) came to dominate military strategy.

Elsewhere, political geography merged as the study of states and **their impact on the landscape**, as exemplified by D. Whittelsey (1939) and by R. Hartshorne's (1950) paper on the functional approach: the

latter saw the spatial structuring of the state as a resolution of centrifugal and centripetal forces, focused on its core area and capital city. Many of their writings involved identifying typologies of states and dividing the world into geopolitical regions.

Descriptive analyses of the world political map were continued by a number of scholars who at various times posited bipolar, multipolar, center-periphery, and other structures. Other geographers developed interests in boundary demarcation and disputes, on land and at sea. This continuing strand of work on geopolitics had little impact on the wider discipline, despite its links to strategic thinking. It was almost entirely absent from geography in France, Germany, and Russia from 1945 onward because of the association of political geography with geopolitics and then geopolitik. The Soviet Union, for example, blocked the establishment of commission on political geography within the International Geographical Union until 1984.

**Climatic variations** have inspired another set of geopolitical hypotheses and critiques. International political patterns have also been linked with the uneven distribution of the various raw-materials requisites of modern industry. There is some disposition to regard areal differentials in technology as the critical variable, a hypothesis that has been linked with demographic distribution to produce a prediction that international political patterns will ultimately be determined by the latter. The prediction is based on the premise that technological primacy will vary with relative numbers of superior scientists and other gifted individuals varying in the long run with the size of population.

### **New Geopolitics**

A revival of interests in political geography from the 1970s onward was initially linked to the “quantitative revolution,” which the wider discipline experienced in the 1960s and 1970s.

- Work on **Electoral Geography** started then and geographers increasingly brought their spatial perspective to bear on a range of subjects broadly defined as “political” and relating in some ways to the operation of the state. Location and conflict (over land uses, public goods, and so forth) became topics considered by political geographers. But a political location theory was not as obvious as an economic, or even a social, one.
- New texts in the 1970s also stimulated a broadening of the substantive areas of interests within political geography, with chapters *on the geography of law, for example, and on spatial variations in the operation of government programs and government spending*. Both depth and breadth were brought to the subdiscipline by this concern with theory, which involved moving away from the treatment of space as a given, as the environment within which states operate,

toward a perspective that sees space as produced and reproduced by human action—the world political map is a social production. Two “spatial takes” were particularly relevant in this movement.

- \* The first was a treatment of scale. Strongly influenced by world-systems analysis, it was argued that world capitalism is organized globally, mediated and regulated regionally by states, and experienced locally.
- \* The second theoretical perspective was introduced to develop the concept of territoriality to show how bounded spaces (including those of nation states) are crucial to the exercise of political, economic, cultural and military powers. The world is a mosaic of nested containers within which power is exercised and people controlled—with the criterion for whether you are subject to a particular rule of law being whether you are within the territory where it is sovereign. The theory is further analyzed in the light of increased globalization and the consequent changing role of the territorially defined nation state.
- The most recent area of expansion has been in the study of **critical geopolitics**, a further outgrowth of the growing theoretical sophistication within human geography. As John O’Loughlin (1994) illustrates, this involves questioning the assumptions upon which geopolitical strategies are based—not so much the “geographical information” employed as the representations of peoples and places (both “selves” and “others”). These are involved in the creation of identities: images of “us” and “them” (as in the 1945 to 1990 Cold War in which the two major powers and their allies each created images of the other on which to base their policies and around which to mobilize popular support). Geopolitical practices are subjected to critical scrutiny as opposing views of the world are deconstructed.

Political geography is now a vibrant component of its parent discipline. Its renaissance and expansion were marked by the launch of the journal *Political Geography Quarterly* in 1983, which is now published eight times a year (as *Political Geography*) and is the major source for tracking developments.

## **THE HEARTLAND AND RIMLAND THEORY**

### **Alfred Thayer Mahan**

Alfred Thayer Mahan was an American naval officer who emphasized the importance of sea power as a major factor in geopolitics. Mahan departed in several key ways from other theorists of his era, including

Frederick Jackson Turner, on the concept of the frontier and Halford Mackinder with respect to the possible demise of sea power and its replacement by land transportation power. Mahan (2008) was convinced that beginning with the Age of Exploration, the nation-states that achieved great power status did so because they mastered sea power. He further contended that the mastery of commercial activities that elide on seaborne transportation was critical not only in times of war but also in times of peace. He felt that any country building a fleet that could destroy an enemy's main force in a single battle would become a hegemonic force.

To a degree Mahan (2008) based his views on an analysis of the conflicts occurring from the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries, particularly with respect to Great Britain and France. It is worth noting that Ullman (2006) claims that Mahan's fundamental assumption regarding the importance of sea power was his belief that economic competition sat at the heart of all rivalry between nations. One should recall that when Mahan (2008) presented his ideas, there were limited methods of communicating and transporting ideas as well as goods from one part of the world to the other. Ullman (2006) argued that history has changed Mahan's assumptions. Economic competition no longer is leading to a scramble among the great powers for access to overseas markets. The competitions which characterized such relationships even through the nineteenth century no longer prevail. Ullman (2006) maintains that technology has erased any notion of geographic borders and control of access.

Commercial expansion through trade was also essential in Mahan's (2008) viewpoint. Unlike Turner, Mahan did not see the frontier as a fixed if slowly changing boundary that represented the farthest reaches of a country's influence or its presence. As a naval officer, Mahan conceived of sea power as necessary not merely to military success, but as instrumental in sharing economic success. Mahan's (2008) proposal that countries should use their resources when not at war to construct a maritime apparatus that was capable of promoting commercial activities as well as military ones was unique in the era. Believing that sea power was central rather than peripheral to the world history of the preceding two-and-a-half centuries, Mahan (2008) emphasized the highway aspect of the sea and argued that any country that was dependent on the world economy needed to be able to secure access to the world and could only do so if no enemy fleet dominated the seas (Friedman, 2005).

Mahan (2008) is viewed by Friedman (2005) as having influenced many policymakers in the American government during his lifetime. This includes Benjamin F. Tracy, who served as the Secretary of the Navy in the Harrison administration, between 1889 and 1893. Mahan's ideas were used by Tracy to make a

case for developing a very large naval fleet that was capable of undertaking both military and commercial activities on behalf of the country. The Spanish-American War, said Friedman (2005), gave credence to many of Mahan's theories and established him as something of a pundit in terms of geopolitical policymaking. Mahan's influence on the development of an extensive American naval fleet is one of his major contributions, but his rejection of Turner's thesis regarding the influence of the frontier on American character has been given less attention by critics. Where Mahan agreed with Mackinder is in the belief that heartlands do exist and that the borders of these heartlands are often quite dynamic – an idea that he shared with Ratzel. What differentiates Mahan from other thinkers is his constant emphasis on the overarching significance of sea power and sea transport which he felt were destined to remain the dominant mode of international interaction even in an era when the railroad and land transport systems were expanding at a dramatic rate.

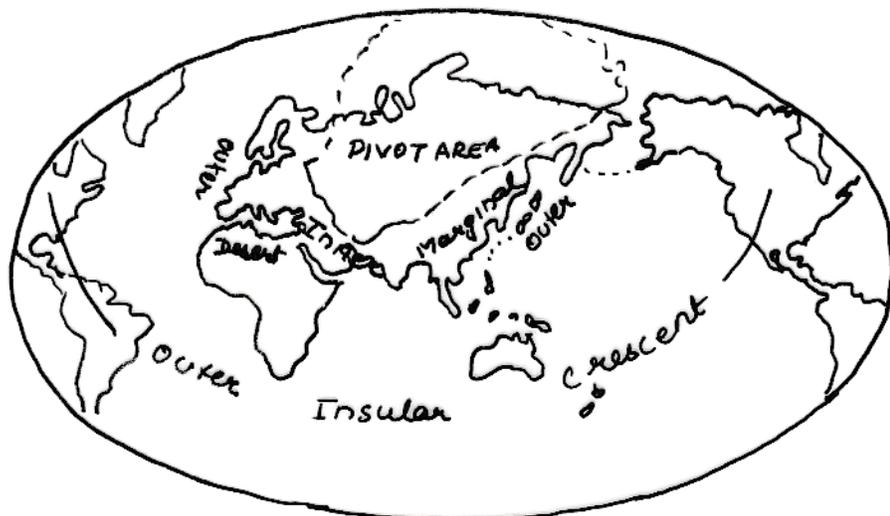
**Heartland theory- Halford Mackinder**

In 1904, Sir Halford Mackinder published the Heartland theory. The theory proposed that whoever controls Eastern Europe controls the Heartland. It also supported the concept of world dominance.

A more revised version explains that whoever controls the heartland, controls the world island. Whoever controls the World Island, will soon rule the world. In other words, the group or nation who dominates the heartland, can then extend its domination over a far wider area. The heartland has primarily been Central Asia, the high seas, and Eurasia.

The Nazi party was in favor of the concept during World War II. The idea was very popular with the party, and they sought to achieve it. Also, the theory was accepted by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Each nation made great territorial strides toward the heartland, but to no avail.

Mackinder's (1904) political pivot of geography made a case for the relevance of geography to statecraft. Mackinder was clearly a devotee of imperialist politics, but one who recognized that



geographical boundaries were subject to change or flux and that the map of the world was continually being redrawn as a consequence of imperialism (Kearns, 2004). Geography as such was a pivotal discipline because only through understanding its functions could political actors (particularly those of the great powers of Europe) understand the world in which they lived. Fettweis (2003) claims that it was Mackinder who brought the study of geography and international politics to public attention.

Mackinder's (1919) discussion of the Eurasian heartland is one of his best known contributions to the field of geopolitics. Fettweis (2003) describes this theory as positing that the important ideal area of the world from a strategic perspective is the heartland of the Eurasian land mass. In size, the area was roughly equivalent to that occupied by the former Soviet Union. Mackinder (1919) theorized that whoever controlled the heartland controlled the world and that this heartland represented the greatest natural fortress on earth. The heartland thus becomes a key position on the battlefield of the world and looks to be essentially an extension of military tactics to the grand strategic level. Russia played a key position in this heartland because while it was centrally located between Europe and Asia proper, it also controlled a large portion of the Eurasian land mass protected from British sea power. For Mackinder (1919), Great Britain and other Western European countries should be fearful of a German alliance with Russia or a China organized by Japan. Such beliefs reflect a deep-seated great power dislike of the idea of a dominant East.

Mackinder (1904, 1919) also proposed that the world had experienced three unique geopolitical periods. The closed heartland of Eurasia was the geographical pivot or location that was central to establishing global control. This was premised on the conviction that the age of maritime exploration which began with Columbus was drawing to a close as the nineteenth century ended. The next period of geopolitical influence would be based upon land transportation technology which would reinstate land-based power as opposed to sea power as essential to political dominance. This would lead to a resurgence of Eurasia because it was adjacent to the borders of so many important countries, was not accessible to sea power, and was strategically buttressed by an inner and outer crescent of land masses (Knox & Marsten, 2001). The third or preliminary period of geopolitical interaction was also a period in which land transportation dominated. Thus, Mackinder (1919) proposed the periods of land, sea, and land transport again as shaping geopolitical relationships while the heartland remained the key position on the global battlefield regardless of which type of transportation dominated.

Mackinder's concepts have influenced any number of subsequent theorists, including America's George Kennan and Nicholas Spykman (although to a lesser degree). Mackinder was also instrumental in shaping

the views of Admiral Alfred Mahan who asserted that control of sea lanes would be able to prevent any Eurasian alliance from assuming world dominance.

### **The Rimland Theory- Nicholas Spykman**

In 1942, Nicholas Spykman created a theory which countered Mackinder's Heartland theory. Spykman stated that Eurasia's Rimland, the coastal areas, is the key to controlling the World Island.

The Rimland contains the Heartland. Whoever would control the Rimland, would eventually control the World Island. Whoever would control the World Island would soon control the world.

His theory was influential mainly during the Cold War. The Soviet Union desired to control the Rimland around them. If accomplished, the Soviet Union would control the heartland, Rimland, and the World Island.

The Rimland is a concept championed by Nicholas John Spykman, professor of international relations at Yale University. To him geopolitics is the planning of the security policy of a country in terms of its geographical factors. He described the maritime fringe of a country or continent; in particular the densely populated western, southern, and eastern edges of the Eurasian continent.

He criticized Mackinder for overrating the Heartland as being of immense strategic importance due to its vast size, central geographical location and supremacy of land power rather than sea power. He assumed that the Heartland will not be a potential hub of Europe, because:

- \* Western Russia was then an agrarian society
- \* Bases of industrialization were found to the west of the Ural mountains.
- & This area is ringed to the north, east, south, and south-west by some of the greater obstacles to transportation (ice and freezing temperature, lowering mountains etc.).
- \* There has never really been a simple land power–sea power opposition.

Spykman thought that the Rimland, the strip of coastal land that encircles Eurasia, is more important than the central Asian zone (the so-called Heartland) for the control of the Eurasian continent. Spykman's vision is at the base of the "containment politics" put into effect by the United States in its relation/position to the Soviet Union during the post-World War II period.

*Thus, 'Heartland' appeared to him to be less important in comparison to 'Rimland.'*

**Concept** According to Spykman, "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world."

The Rimland, Halford Mackinder's "Inner or Marginal Crescent", was divided into three sections:

- The European coast land;
- The Arabian-Middle Eastern desert land; and,
- The Asiatic monsoon land.

Rimland or inner crescent contains most of world's people as well as large share of world's resources. Rimland is in between Heartland and marginal seas, so it was more important than Heartland. It included Asia minor, Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, South East Asia, China, Korea and East Siberia except Russia.

All the aforesaid countries lie in the buffer zone that is between sea power and land power.

Rimland countries were amphibian states, surrounding the Eurasian continents.

While Spykman accepts the first two as defined, he rejects the simple grouping of the Asian countries into one "monsoon land." India, the Indian Ocean littoral, and Indian culture were geographically and civilizationally separate from the Chinese lands.

The Rimland's defining characteristic is that it is an intermediate region, lying between the heartland and the marginal sea powers. As the amphibious buffer zone between the land powers and sea powers, it must defend itself from both sides, and therein lies its fundamental security problems. Spykman's conception of the Rimland bears greater resemblance to Alfred Thayer Mahan's "debated and debatable zone" than to Mackinder's inner or marginal crescent.

The Rimland has great importance coming from its demographic weight, natural resources, and industrial development. Spykman sees this importance as the reason that the Rimland will be crucial to containing the Heartland (whereas Mackinder had believed that the Outer or Insular Crescent would be the most important factor in the Heartland's containment).

### **Applicability**

He called for the consolidation of the Rimland countries to ensure their survival during World War II. With the defeat of Germany and the emergence of the USSR, Spykman's views were embraced during the formulation of the Cold War American policy of containing communist influence.

But as the states within the Rimland had varying degree of independence, and a variety of races, and culture, it did not come under the control of any single power.

### **Criticism**

- It was a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- In his concept of air power he did not include the use of modern missiles with nuclear war heads.

- The Rimland is not a region but a unit, otherwise the epitome of geographical diversity.
- The Rimland-Theory is biased towards Asian countries.
- The Rimland-Theory does not take into the various conflicts going on between its different countries (India vs. Pakistan, etc.)

For Spykman, Eurasia's periphery and not its core are seen as the key to global power. This periphery in Spykman's viewpoint should be known as a Rimland. Rimland states such as Japan were likely to become superpowers over time. Because Rimland states had greater contact with the outside world or the countries that were not part of the heartland itself, they received more in terms of innovation than did the heartland countries. Rimland states also possessed a wealth of natural resources and though Spykman agreed with Mackinder on this particular concept, he gave greater credence to the capacity of Rimland states to capitalize on their natural advantages and resources than did Mackinder.

Spykman (1942) also took the position that the so-called offshore continents of Africa and Australia would play a far more significant role in shaping geopolitics than Mackinder believed to be possible. Africa and Australia were in Spykman's view, places possessed of enormous wealth in the form of natural resources that were largely ignored in terms of their capacity for achieving anything resembling superpower status. However, Spykman (1942) also recognized that these offshore continents had not as yet achieved anything of significance in terms of great power politics. It was to the United States that he turned in his discussion of offshore continents as well as to Great Britain and Japan. All three of these entities were regarded by Spykman (1942) as very much capable of becoming world powers or, in the case of Great Britain, having long been a major imperialist world power.

Much of Spykman's career was dedicated to challenging concepts that were advanced earlier by MacKINDER. He felt that controlling the heartland was going to be ultimately less significant than controlling the rimland. He also believed that controlling Eurasia would allow a country or a coalition of countries to control the destinies of the world. Gray (2004) says that Spykman was prescient in that he predicted that it would be Great Britain, Russia, and the United States who would be the dominant actors with respect to the Eurasian heartland.

In addition, Spykman (1942) saw an important role for the United States in the future and forecast before World War II came to a close that Japan and Germany would lose the war, that China would emerge as a major power in Asia and that there would be ongoing conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. He was convinced that conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was inevitable

because both countries had grandiose ambitions in the geopolitical arena. Spykman (1942) believed that it was essential for the United States to remain strong and determined in an effort to offset the likely aggression of the Soviet Union and to defend Japan against China.

### **Karl Haushofer**

Karl Haushofer was heavily influenced not only by extensive travels in Asia but by his exposure to the work of earlier geopolitical theorists such as Mackinder, Mahan, Ratzel, and Kjellen. Like his predecessors, he was interested in a variety of important geopolitical concepts such as frontiers, lebensraum, and autarky. Haushofer (1938) described lebensraum in much the same manner as did his predecessors, referring to the need of any developing country for expansion into new or neighboring territory. He also believed in the existence of an organic state and in the development of a geopolitik that is a political science that is capable of description and analysis.

From his perspective, lebensraum represented a new approach to colonial imperialism. Drawing upon Ratzel, Haushofer (1938) asserted that expansionary states would invariably adopt an imperialistic world view and would link colonial control of other countries or regions to the cause of empire. This dyad would be further reflected in his understanding of autarky which he saw as a form of tariff protectionism supportive of a colonial or imperialistic system. He also believed that any state would depend on adequate living space and that over time, the earth would not be able to support all of the various peoples that it contained. Consequently, autarky would increasingly come to represent a system in which a country used its economic power to protect itself from others by imposing tariffs on them.

Haushofer (1938) also contended that one of the key goals of any great world power was to acquire strategic control of certain key geographic areas. He made reference to the Suez and Panama Canals as examples of how and where such strategic control could be used by a colonial or imperial power to further their own ends. Weigert (1942) has pointed out that Haushofer was absolutely convinced that the successful country would be one that not only imposed its economic and ideological will on others, it would be the country that would become dominant in many different regions of the world and would control key shipping lanes, ports and harbors, and trade routes.

Weigert (1942) stated that Haushofer saw geopolitics as the scientific foundation of the art of political action in the struggle of state organisms for existence and for lebensraum. Controlling key strategic area of the world was a necessary step forward in his view because the world was divided into a series of panidean or pan-regions that were based upon the regional dominance acquired by a great world power. Typical

examples of these regions included the British Empire and the sphere of influence garnered by the United States as a consequence of the Monroe Doctrine. Germany also held some overseas territories and it was Haushofer's contention that it was the logical great party to assume more and more control over these regions

Haushofer called for the establishment of a set of frontiers that were less likely to be mutable. Though he understood Turner's contentions regarding the nature of the frontier as a demarcation between a heartland and a rimland or periphery, he nevertheless believed that it was necessary for a world power to seek control over frontiers as part of a larger effort of ensuring the security and stability of its own heartland.

There are those who have suggested that Haushofer was somehow associated with Adolf Hitler although there is no real evidence supporting this contention or that he was instrumental in writing parts of *Mein Kampf*. At the same time, Weigert (1942) claims that it is all but impossible not to recognize that Haushofer's concepts did play a role in shaping the Third Reich's quest for *lebensraum*. Of course, the Third Reich was not alone in seeking expanded territorial control. Any number of other great powers have similarly attempted to acquire a dominant position in their own region of the world and to usurp the territorial prerogatives of their neighbors

### **Saul B. Cohen**

Saul Cohen (2003) has focused his geopolitical analysis on the forces that have been unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of the bipolar world. He proposes that there are a number of geostrategic regions that are of enormous significance in shaping international relations at both the regional and global levels. He sees these regions as loosely consisting of the Maritime, Heartlandic, Russian, and East Asian as well as marginalized regions such as much of South America and sub-Saharan Africa. Other important geostrategic regions are found in the Eurasian heartland and in the Americas, particularly in North America. Cohen (2003) believes that these geostrategic regions are significant in that they are centers of economic activity which are networked with one another and are capable of creating a map of dynamic equilibrium.

Cohen (2003) also makes use of the related concepts of gateways and shatterbelts. As understood by Knox and Marston (2001), a shatterbelt is a region of the world wherein enormous political volatility exists and wherein conflict is endemic and dominant world powers are often seen as threatening entities which must be resisted. Cohen (2003) claims that the Middle East is an excellent example of a contemporary shatterbelt wherein tensions run high and the potential for conflict that could spread outside the region is also present.

Gateways, in comparison, are seen by Cohen (2003) as points of entry into autonomous or semi-autonomous heartlands. Eastern Europe, the Trans-Caucasus, and Central Asia are gateways that have at times also been shatterbelts. The difference between a shatterbelt and a gateway depends on the degree of internal stability that the region has achieved or which it is able to maintain in the face of internal and external ideological and economic forces.

Cohen (2003) is adamant in his contention that ideological and economic forces that were once stifled by the competition in the Cold War are now free and are becoming responsible for new conflicts in the world. It is this kind of tension that he sees as creating a world that is polarized along economic lines as well as ideological lines. Where Samuel Huntington foresaw a clash of civilizations as a consequence of the end of the Cold War (Knox & Marston 2001), Cohen (2003) suggests that globalization and the diffusion of technology will favor accommodation even within the highly volatile shatterbelts.

Cohen's (2003) analysis identifies a new hierarchy of geopolitical units. These units range from the subnational to the geostrategic and global. By emphasizing the interaction between these units, Cohen (2003) has essentially proposed that a new world order is likely to develop as a consequence of new economic activities.

---

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any forms or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright© 2023 **Direction Ultimate Learning Experience Pvt. Ltd.**