

## Mackinder's Heartland theory

Heartland theory was given by Sir Halford Mackinder, a British Geographer. He presented the concept of heartland under the title of "The Geographical Pivot History" before the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1904. This theory regards political struggle between land and sea power with the ultimate victory going to the continental power.

### The Heartland Theory:

In 1919 Mackinder published his book 'Democratic Ideals and Reality', in which he formulated his heartland theory. Although Mackinder modified the areal spread of the pivot area in 1919 and again in 1943, the essential features of heartland concept remained unchanged throughout. His theory is stated in three lines:

"Who rules East Europe, commands the Heartland,  
Who rules the Heartland, commands the World Island,  
Who rules the World Island, commands the World".

### World's geopolitical organization:

Mackinder divided his world into three main divisions:

#### The Heartland:

Mackinder defined the Heartland as a vast area in Eurasia, characterized by the Arctic and inland drainage. It stretched from the Volga River to eastern Siberia and from the Himalayas to the Arctic Ocean and covered about nine million square miles or more than twice the area of Europe. It largely drained into inland seas and lakes and into the Arctic Ocean which is frozen almost throughout the year. It was, thus, inaccessible to ocean ships and to the sea power. Politically, the pivot area in 1904 was entirely Russian in Eastern Europe and largely Russian in Asia, because it also included western China, part of Mongolia, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Iran. The heartland of 1919 was, however, not the same as the pivot area of 1904, for the limit of the pivot area was extended westward to include all of European Russia. "It included the Baltic Sea, the navigable middle and Lower Danube, the Black Sea, Asia Minor, Armenia, Persia, Tibet and Mongolia". Thus in 1919 heartland lost its characteristic of being an area entirely of inland and Arctic drainage. Again in 1943, Mackinder modified the geographical contours of the heartland by excluding the easternmost part of Siberia. It included the whole of the Soviet Union except Lenaland.

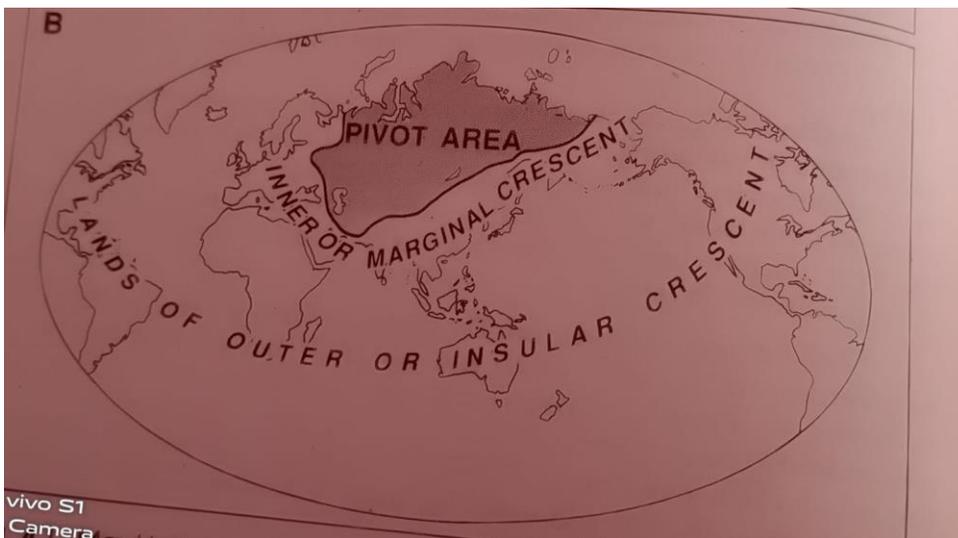
#### Inner or marginal crescent:

The marginal lands of Eurasia encircle the pivot area on its west, south and east, collectively referred to by Mackinder as 'inner or marginal crescent'. It forms a circular arc of coastlands of Eurasia from Scandinavia to Manchuria. The marginal crescent includes whole of Europe except its Russian part, North Africa and most of the Middle East and monsoon-lands of Asia -India, South-east Asia and the Far East. In contrast to the heartland, the inner crescent is an area

of oceanic drainage and navigable rivers. It is therefore accessible to sea-power. Mackinder noted that in general the marginal crescent coincided with areas of four world religions - Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

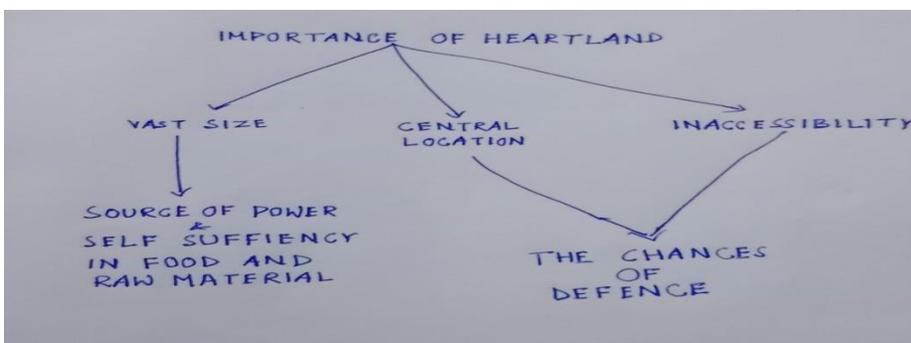
#### Outer or insular crescent:

In Mackinder's geopolitical organisation of the world, beyond the inner crescent are located the world ocean and widely separated lands of the outer or insular crescent. It consisted largely of North and South Americas, and Australia, the British Isles, Japanese Islands, and Africa, south of the Sahara, which Mackinder called as the 'second heartland'.



#### Importance of Heartland:

Mackinder attached greater importance to the heartland than either to the inner or the outer crescent. According to him heartland was a vast area of Arctic and interior drainage, surrounded by physical barriers on all sides except on the west which provided it the essential security from outside attack.



Mackinder hoped that the heartland would soon be covered with a rail-road network which would replace the horse and camel as means of transport.

## Criticism

- I) Mackinder's predictions contained in his theory did not come true except that the former Soviet Union, the pivot State, exercised considerable influence over eastern Europe.
- II) He failed to take into consideration the role of changing technology and the significance of air power.
- III) He has been criticized for over-emphasizing the potentialities and defensibility of the heartland.
- IV) Mackinder's world map on the Mercator projection immensely exaggerated the area of the frozen Arctic Ocean and created a wrong impression that to the north of the heartland lays a large expanse of ice only.

## Present-day validity of Heartland theory

After the defeat of Germany in the Second World War, the former Soviet Union emerged as a great power in the world. She succeeded in controlling the whole of Eastern Europe by installing communist governments in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Poland. Since the former Soviet Union was the heartland state and East Europe went red, the first line of the theory, 'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland', came to be true. The former Soviet Union ruled over East Europe by proxy and commanded the Heartland physically.

The position of the former Soviet Union after the Second World War was considerably weakened, because:

- I. Ideological change of East Europe which is manifest in the overthrowing of communist regimes one after the other
- II. Unification of both Germanies brightening the prospects of the rise of a super state in Europe
- III. Declaration of several republics of the Soviet Union as sovereign states
- IV. Other internal problems (economic etc.)the challenging position of the U.S.A. reduced the importance as well as chances of the former Soviet Union for world domination.

Although Russia still controls the Heartland, she has lost her political grip over East Europe. Thus, the validity of even the first line of the theory is no more there.

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