

Vol 6 Issue 9 June 2017

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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THEORIES OF GEOPOLITICS

The word "Geopolitics was coined by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf J. Kjellen in 1899 and till date it is one of the most interested topic among the academicians, scholars, diplomats, Foreign policy makers" (Sidaway J., 2001). Friedrich Ratzel, Halford J. Mackinder, Nicholas John Spykman and Alfred Thayer Mahan have shaped and contributed to the development of geopolitics.

Friedrich Ratzel hailed from Germany and was a great geographer and ethnographer. He used the term *Lebensraum* with respect to the organic state. He was influenced by the works of Charles Robert Darwin and Ernest Heinrich Philipp August Haeckel. He drew upon the works of Herbert Spencer and Albert Schaffle to define his own use of the organismic analogy in his monumental book named "Politische Geographie" in 1897. This book is considered as the first book on modern political geography. "Because of the contribution of Ratzel in the field of political geography he is known as founder of political geography and also known as the father of modern political geography" (Adhikari S., 1997).

According to Ratzel, "state is the core of political geography and the state, is a fragment of humanity on a piece of soil. He goes on to assert that the political community acts in very much the same manner as an individual being" (Hagan C.B, 1942). Ratzel emphasized geopolitics as a biological concept and does not give a static concept of borders. The work of Ratzel revolved around the state's political dimension and how it grows like a living organism. By comparing the state and organism, he gave the organic theory of the state. He considered that the state with powerful survivor will have the largest space as influenced by the "survival of the fittest theory" of Darwin. Ratzel emphasized on the importance of the position (*lage*) of the state and the neighbors, climate, topography, and problems created by the position. Thus, the contribution of Friedrich Ratzel in the field of political geography and in geopolitics is remarkable.

Another contribution in the field of geopolitics was made by Johan Rudolf Kjellen who was from Sweden. He was a political scientist who first coined the term geopolitics. He combined the Ratzelian concept of the Organic State with the moral, intellectual capacities and the will of the state and its people. He wrote "The State as a Living Form", published in 1917 and "Foundations for a system of Politics" in 1920. "According to Kjellen there are three characteristics of a state, Topopolitik, Physiopolitik and Morphopolitik. Topopolitik and Physiopolitik correspond to Lage and Raum, which respectively mean position and territory, whereas Morphopolitik is connected with the shape and the form of a state" (Hagan C.B, 1942). The work of Kjellen emphasised on land and Sea power. According to him a state should have three features to become a world power. Firstly, the space should be large in area and continuous. Secondly, internal cohesion is needed so the state became peaceful and powerful and lastly freedom of movement.

One of the great contribution to the global strategic model and geopolitics was from Alfred Thayer Mahan. He was a United States geostrategist, historian and Navy flag Officer. Mahan influenced the geostrategy of America and is considered as the pioneer American strategist of the nineteenth century. In his book "The Influence of Sea Power upon History", 1660–1783 (1890) he elaborated that the states with greater naval power will have greater geopolitical importance and will lead to the supremacy of that respective state. He wrote several books namely, "The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Europe", 1793-1832 (1892); "The Life of Nelson" (1897), "The Interest of America in Sea Power" and "The Problem of Asia" (1900). Mahan emphasized on the importance of Sea trade. He stated that how The Great Britain because of its great Sea power is over powering its neighbor and other European Countries. He then stated that United States can also follow the footsteps of Great Britain and expand its naval power and trade. He emphasized on Sea power, by which a state could expand its financial horizon and expands its market to the other countries.

Halford John Mackinder gave a new dimension to the subject. He was an English geographer, academician and geostrategist. In his article "The geographical pivot of History" he described how the advancing of 20th century leads to the new discoveries, conquest and exploration. In this article he described that how the physical terrain of a particular region play an important role in the empire building and hegemonic expansion. He tried to give emphasis on the general physical control and especially geographical. Mackinder presented his paper "The Geographical Pivot of History" in which he explained the 'geographical causation in world history'. According to him "man and nature both are very important and initiates, but nature controls in large measure"

(Mackinder H.J,1904).

“He also look into the vegetation, forest cover, climate, rainfall. He described that how northern part of Russia and Southern part are physically different from each other. The former consist of Forest and Marshes and latter consist of steppes. The northern part was occupied by the Russians and the steppes were occupied by the Nomadic people from fifth century to sixteenth century mainly by the Huns, Mongols, Bulgarian, Kalmuks etc. He also talked that the heart of the greatest landmass is likely to be relatively dry. He stated that two-third of the world’s population is concentrated in the margins of Europe, India, China beside Atlantic and Indian and Pacific Ocean respectively. Mackinder stated that the pivot area has few rivers which drained into the black Sea and Caspian Sea. He described that the heartland has several arid region, desert area, forest and plains and described that how the power from steppe started to expand. The vast land area of Europe-Asia is resourceful and the heartland neighboring region are accessible to shipmen. He talked about the religion of the surrounding region as eastern part was dominated by Buddhism and Brahmanism, South was dominated by Manometanism, West dominated by Christianity” (Mackinder H.J,1904).

He described Russia as very important and as a pivot state. From geographical point of view, the power is revolving around the pivot state. According to him, the region near the heartland that is African continent is less populated because of less rainfall. He compared that how the steppes in the middle centuries ruled the heartland but now the Europe which has been subject of subordination by the rules of steppes are now set to conquer the heartland. Mackinder’s also emphasized on the land route travel and stated that the Sea routes involved several procedures and steps but land transports are easier and the connectivity can be done directly from the two center. He divided the world into three parts namely the pivot area which is wholly continental, Outer crescent that is wholly Oceanic and then Inner Crescent which partly consist of continental and partly oceanic.

“The pivot area consist of Euro-Asia and mainly the state of Russia and insisted its safety because it does not have a Sea connection. The pivot area was surrounded by mountains on three sides and by the ice-bound Arctic on the north. The pivot area was vulnerable to land forces in the south-west, through Eastern Europe, between Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea, where a narrow corridor, covered by steppe grasslands, offered an easy entry. The countries which were demarcated as outer crescent are The Great Britain, South Africa, Australia and United States of America, Canada and Japan. Mackinder called the region as ring of outer and insular bases for Sea-power and commerce and stated that it is inaccessible to the land-power of Euro-Asia. Then came the inner crescent which comprises of the countries like Germany, Australia, Turkey, Asia, India and China. He has described that Western Europe has now conquering the Oceanic areas of Asia and Russia at the same time is emerging and the new century has shown the seeds of expansion of Europe and Russia. Mackinder also stated that United States of America have become a power of west and it is indirectly balancing the power of pivot area in the east. In his opinion Atlantic Ocean acts as divide and balances the power” (Mackinder H.J,1904).



Source : - <http://www.oldenburger.us/gary/docs/TheColdWar.htm>

Megoran, N. and Sharapova, S. (2005), "Mackinder's Heartland": A Help or Hindrance in Understanding Central Asia's International Relations?" (online:web) Accessed 10 January 2014, URL:<http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2005/journal-eng/cac-04/02.megeng.shtml>.

Fig. 1 The natural Seats of power in which the world has been divided into the Pivot Area, Inner or marginal Crescent and land of Outer or Insular Crescent.

The above figure is prepared by Mackinder in which he has divided the world into three zones. The pivot area consist of many Eurasian Countries. Inner or marginal Crescent has surrounded the pivot area and has some countries of Asia, Europe and Africa. The third is the Outer or Insular Crescent which consist of some southern Countries of Asia, North America, South America, Antarctica etc.

"In 1919 Mackinder published a small book entitled "Democratic Ideals and Reality" with newer ideas. In this book he replaced the word pivot with heartland and extended the area of the heartland. Mackinder glorified the strategic situation of the heartland in the relation to the contemporary power potentials and specify that it held the key to world supremacy. The power that could control and manage the heartland was bound to emerge as the strongest state in the inner or marginal crescent. Hence, it followed logically that "any political power that could effectively occupy and control heartland could by definition achieve a dominant world position" (Adhikari S., 1997).

"According to Mackinder, the planetary surface should be divided into islands. Asia, Africa, and Europe was named as the World Island and the other continents were assumed as islands and satellites of this great land mass and within the World Island was the Heartland" (Hagan C.B., 1942). Mackinder included the Baltic Sea, Brandenburg-Prussia, Armenia, navigable Middle and Lower Danube Persia, Asia Minor, Tibet, Mongolia, Russia and Austria-Hungary and Africa in the World Island.



Source: -http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2005/journal_eng/cac-04/02.megeng.shtml

Megoran, N. and Sharapova, S. (2005), "Mackinder's Heartland": A Help or Hindrance in Understanding Central Asia's International Relations?" (online:web) Accessed 10 January 2014, URL:<http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2005/journal-eng/cac-04/02.megeng.shtml>.

Figure 2 Mackinder’s heartland and pivot area and the boundaries of both the region.

In figure 2 Mackinder has shown the Pivot area and extended the Pivot area and named it Heartland. The First World War led to the change in the mind of Mackinder. He perceived this region as safe, like a fortress and always gave it vital status in the world politics. He gave a connotation of:-

“Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland
 Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island
 Who rules the World-Island commands the world” (Adhikari.S, 1997).

“Mackinder has given very important position to Heartland in the world geopolitics. But after 1920 many world events took place because of which again in 1943 he gave a concept of “Midland Basin”. This paper

was entitled as, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace" appeared in the Foreign Affairs. "In this paper he mention that the eastern and western sides of the North Atlantic Sea that is the U.S.A and western Europe will play a major role in counter balancing the heartland. Both the regions are connected by Sea and air communications and bounded by the North Atlantic Sea. He gave the name "Midland basin" to this geostrategic region. He described this geostrategic area comprising the North Atlantic Ocean, the Eastern United States, and Western Europe, as the 'Midland Basin'. He regarded this area as an effective counter balance to the emerging political power potential of the Eurasian Heartland" (Hussian. M, 2007). "Mackinder cut short the size of the heartland, and separated it from that part of the Soviet Union which lay east of the Yensei River, a rugged country of mountains, plateaus and valleys, covered from end to end with coniferous forests. This part he called 'lenaland' without any political significance" (Adhikari.S, 1997). Mackinder's revision was more comprehensive in 1943. He propounded the Heartland, Midland Basin and Lenaland theories. He was one of the great contributors and scholars who gave new horizon to the concept of geopolitics.

Another great contribution was from Nicholas John Spykman. He was a Dutch-American geostrategist and political scientist. He is also known as the "godfather of containment". He propounded the Rimland theory and published it in his book entitled "The Geography of Peace" in 1944. The Rimland was important because of its high demography, natural resources, and industrial development. He gave too much importance to the Sea power, topography, terrain and climate. The characteristics of "Rimland as per Spykman was inner crescent of amphibian states means the states which has both marine and land power. These were European coastal land, the Arabian Middle-Eastern desert, and the Asiatic monsoon land. According to him national power is the final determinant of the security of a state, while lasting peace is possible only through a collective security arrangement of either an armed league of nations or an international balance of power arrangement. Spykman saw the USA surrounded by Eurasia and Africa. Japan and England were seen as centers of military and economic power and separated by the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans. According to him, The US strategy in case of war should be to avoid unification of the Old World powers against it. He saw the Soviet Union as the strongest world power and a unified Rimland as a menace to both Russia and USA" (Hussian M., 2007). According to him Sea power is the key factor in global strategy. He wrote that if at all, there is need for a slogan for global power politics, it must be:

"Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia;
Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (Hussian M., 2007).

According to him British, Russian, and U.S. power would play the key roles in controlling the world geopolitics. Spykman advocated that the allied powers should base their future policy on preventing any consolation of Rimland and the enemy. The geopolitics and geostrategic importance of the Rimland was very important and because to get control over the Rimland, the United States had consistently tried to build a tier of defense against the Soviet Union. The USA kept an eye on the defense of the Rimland and tries to prevent the Soviet influence on Rimland. Spykman has given the map of the Rimland which is similar to the Heartland and pivot region of the Mackinder.



Source: -<http://www.oldenburger.us/gary/docs/TheColdWar.html>

Oldenburger, G.E. and Gildersleeve, C., "The Cold War. The Geography of Containment", (online web) Accessed 10 January 2014, URL:<http://www.oldenburger.us/gary/doc/Thecoldwar.html>

Fig 3 The map showing the Rimland of Spykman and Heartland of Mackinder.

The figure 3 is showing the expansion of the land and Sea power by the two great scholars that is Rimland of Spykman and Heartland of Mackinder. The inner crescent of Mackinder was stated as Rimland by Spykman and according to him it was of great importance.

So these are some theories of geopolitics. The factors which influence the geopolitics of a region or a country may be geography, population, availability of energy resources, technological advancement, terrorism, type of economy, etc. "Geopolitics is very wide topic and leads to ambiguity among the geographers, scholars and diplomats. The meaning of word geopolitics has been evolving from era to era" (Sidaway. J, 2001). "Geopolitics is not an immanently meaningful term but a historically ambiguous and unstable concept" (Tuathail.G.O and Toal.G, 1994). Geopolitics is basically defined that how geography of a place, country, state determine the national and international politics.

CONCLUSION

The study of geopolitics is very old, but the term was coined in 19th century. Germans and Romans had immense contribution in the field of geopolitics. Friedrich Ratzel, Mackinder, Spykman and Mahan were some of the pioneer scholars who contributed to the field of geopolitics. They stated that the geographical location, climate shape and size of a country are major factors for the development of geopolitics. It is very difficult to define geopolitics in a definite way. The context varies from one to another geographical region and different from one historical period to another. Earlier it was confined to the expansion of sea route and trade, later on it was manifested in imperialism, then in colonization and now in democratic and neo-liberalism content. The scholars, diplomats, academicians, researcher, students, foreign policy makers have also talked about geopolitics and described it in their own words and according to their own perception. Geopolitics is very ambiguous topic that is why a definite definition of geopolitics is very difficult and vague. Geopolitics is still evolving and has been a topic of great interest among the Scholars, Strategist, Diplomats and Academicians.

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