

## LAND POWER “HEARTLAND” AND SEA POWER “RIMLAND” THEORIES

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**Abstract:** *In this article, some differences between “Heartland” and “Rimland” theories.*

**Key words:** *Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Skypman, “Heartland” and “Rimland”, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, “The Geography of Peace”.*

British geographer and political scientist Halford Mackinder introduced the “Heartland” theory in his renowned 1904 paper, “The Geographical Pivot of History”. Mackinder argued that geopolitics involves an ongoing contest between land power (dominating landmass) and sea power (controlling the sea). He divided the world into two regions based on a physical map: Continuous Land Mass (Europe, Asia, and Africa) and Isolated Islands (North America, South America, Australia, Great Britain, and Japan).[1]

He argues that the power in the world is determined by control of the landmass of the Eurasian continent, particularly the vast expanse of land in the center of the continent, which he called the “Heartland”. According to Mackinder, whoever controlled the Heartland could dominate the world because of the region’s strategic location, difficulty to access by the sea powers, and contains vast resources.

At the core of Mackinder’s Heartland Theory is the assertion that global dominance hinges on controlling the heartland region, extending from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. Mackinder contended that the state or empire commanding the heartland would wield unparalleled global power, emphasizing the significance of land power over sea power for this control. Throughout history, he argued, major empires emerged by dominating the heartland or its periphery, highlighting the resilience of a united power in the heartland against external dominance. Mackinder’s theory underscored the strategic importance of policymaking, cautioning against the peril of a formidable state securing control over the heartland and posing a threat to the rest of the world.[2]

Why the heartland was so important?

1. The region can not be accessed through the sea route as it is guarded by a geographical barrier like mountains and cold climatic zones of artic.
2. It has vast natural resources.

Division of World by Mackinder.

Mackinder’s theory proposed a division of the World Island into three regions, known as the Heartland, Inner Crescent, and Outer Crescent. Here is a brief overview of each:

1. The Heartland: This is the central region of the World Island, which stretches from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. Mackinder believed that the Heartland was the most important geopolitical region in the world and that its control was essential for global dominance.

2. The Inner Crescent: This is the ring of land surrounding the Heartland, which includes Western Europe, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent. Mackinder believed that the Inner Crescent was important because it was the gateway to the Heartland and could therefore influence events in the Heartland.

3. The Outer Crescent: This is the outer ring of land surrounding the Inner Crescent, which includes the Americas, Africa, and Australia. Mackinder believed that the Outer Crescent was less important than the other two regions but could still play a role in global affairs.

Nicholas Spykman introduced the Rimland theory in his 1944 book, "The Geography of Peace" as a counterpoint to Mackinder's ideas. Unlike Mackinder's focus on the Heartland, Spykman asserted that global power is shaped by controlling the coastal regions surrounding the Heartland, known as the "Rimland." He argued that dominance over the Rimland could hinder the expansion of the Heartland's power and pose a challenge to its supremacy. Spykman succinctly summarized this concept with the statement:

"Who controls the Rimland, rules Eurasia!  
One who rules Eurasia controls the world!"

According to the theory, the Eurasian Rimland, which includes the coastal areas of Europe and Asia, is a crucial area of geopolitical competition. Spykman argued that control over the Rimland would provide whoever held it with a strategic advantage in controlling the world's resources and dominating global trade.[3]

Indeed, Spykman contended that the Rimland was vulnerable to control by a potent maritime nation, referred to as the "Rimland power". He posited that the United States held the capability to assume this dominant role, although it would encounter competition from other major powers, including the Soviet Union during Spykman's era of writing, as well as China. Spykman's geopolitical analysis foresaw the potential for strategic competition among these nations for influence over the Rimland.[4]

The Skykman Rimland Theory has been influential in the development of American foreign policy, particularly during the Cold War era. The theory was seen as a justification for American intervention in conflicts in the Rimland region, as well as the development of military bases and alliances in the area.

While the Heartland theory emphasizes the importance of controlling the landmass of the Eurasian continent, the Rimland theory highlights the significance of controlling the coastal regions surrounding the Heartland. The Heartland theory suggests that control of the Heartland is crucial for global dominance, while the Rimland theory argues that control of the Rimland is equally important in preventing the Heartland from expanding its power.

Aspect	Heartland Theory	Rimland Theory
Primary Focus	Geopolitical control centered on the “Heartland,” which is the vast interior landmass of Eurasia.	Geopolitical control focused on the “Rimland,” the coastal areas and islands surrounding the Eurasian “Heartland.”
Theorist	Halford Mackinder	Nicholas J. Spykman
Geographical Emphasis	Emphasizes the importance of the vast, resource-rich, and heavily populated interior landmass.	Emphasizes the significance of the coastal regions, including ports and maritime access.
Potential Threat	The major concern is the rise of a single dominant power in the Heartland, which could challenge the balance of power globally.	The focus is on preventing the domination of the Rimland by a single power, which could threaten global stability.
Geopolitical Strategy	Encourages land-based strategies and alliances to control the Heartland and the World Island.	Advocates for maritime strategies and alliances to control the Rimland and the World Island.

First table.[5]

In summary, the Heartland and Rimland theories stand as crucial geopolitical frameworks aiming to elucidate the global balance of power. While the Heartland theory underscores the control of the Eurasian landmass, the Rimland theory accentuates the strategic importance of coastal regions encircling the Heartland. These theories remain subjects of ongoing study and debate, serving as essential tools for comprehending the dynamics of power on the world stage.

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