Journal of Liberty and International Affairs | **Vol. 1, No. 2, 2015** | UDC 327 | ISSN 1857-9760
Published online by the Institute for Research and European Studies – Bitola at www.e-jlia.com

Review paper
UDC 327(73:5)
327(470:5)

THE HEARTLAND THEORY OF SIR HALFORD JOHN MACKINDER: JUSTIFICATION OF FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

The paper examines the foreign policy of the United States and Russia towards Central Asia by reviewing selective foreign policy discourses in the context of the Heartland theory. In effect, the central formulation of the study rests on this research question: to what extent is the Heartland theory influential in the foreign policy of the United States and Russia? The analysis is therefore organized by first conducting a comparative/contrast approach of USA and Russian policies via each other. The analysis seeks to suggest and/or establish some relationship between the predictions of the theory and current foreign policy relations. The study has reached to a conclusion that literature around the United States and Russia is indicative to the relevancy of Heartland theory.

Key words: Eurasia; Geo-politics; Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

To understand the nature of international politics of the XXI century one can hardly avoid the importance to study the regional structuralization principles of the geopolitical and geo-strategic space of entire Eurasian. The need to revisit the regional geographic structure revived the conceptions formulated by Sir Halford John Mackinder in the early XX century. Mackinder is the founder of the modern geographical study. Over a decade ago he achieved widespread familiarity as the pioneer of the "science of geography". Mackinder argued that the vast zone of Central Asia had long been the geographical pivot of history and would remain the "pivot of the world's politics." (Pascal 2004, 330-336). He opined that as a consequence of this geographical legacy the history of Europe was ultimately subordinate to that of Asia. (Pascal 2004, 330-336). At the crossroads between geography, history and empire, this piece of work of Mackinder can be seen as a provocative reflection on international diplomacy, seeking to demonstrate the policy relevance of geography in aiding statecraft. (Pascal 2004, 330-336). Under this argument the paper seeks to find out the relevancy of the "Heartland Theory" of Mackinder

in the foreign policy of the United States and Russia. The Heartland consists of Russia and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). The collapse of the USSR in 1991 followed the independence of the Central Asian states. The emergence of these new republics constitutes the modern core of the pivot area of the thesis of Mackinder. (Margaret & Westenley 2008, 2). It is therefore pivotal in any geo-strategic analysis concerning the Heartland. Russia is, and historically has been, the regional hegemony of the Heartland. This paper examines the foreign policy of the United States and Russia towards Central Asia by reviewing selective foreign policy discourses in the context of the Heartland theory. In effect, the central formulation of the paper rests on this research question: to what extent is the Heartland theory influential in the foreign policy of the United States and Russia? From the International Relations perspective, there is a vacuum in the literature dealing directly with the Great Power politics in Central Asia region. There is also a void in the literature to be filled with new theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of neo-imperialism in the USA and Russian foreign policies in the ethnic conflicts and generally in the whole region. The basic purpose of this study is to bring a new perspective to the literature on above-mentioned issues. Initially, the paper provides a brief background to the theory and the region. This is followed by a thorough review of the current literatures on foreign policy of the United States and Russia in Central Asia. Thirdly, it compares and contrasts the various literatures by analyzing their use of geostrategic concepts to explain foreign policy issues involving Central Asia. Ultimately, the conclusion of the paper states that Central Asia is significant in the foreign policies of the United States and Russia because of its natural resources, the need to secure market access to those very resources, and its geo-strategic location in the "war on terror." The Heartland theory is therefore relevant as well as influential to the extent that foreign policy towards the region is still formulated with a conscious outlook for geopolitical advantage.

METHODS OF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The study is based on analytical model to make an assessment on to what extent the Heartland theory is influential in the foreign policy of the United States and Russia towards Central Asia. Methodologically, the study does not directly address the policies of the said countries but rather uses already available literatures of policy experts to research the foreign policy of the United States and Russia, test their relevance in context to Mackinderian philosophy, and to conclusively make a judgment based on the research question - to what extent is the Heartland theory influential/applicable? - that formulates the premise of the paper. As part of secondary source of data the paper uses Mackinder's thesis statement - *who rules the Heartland commands the world* - to conduct an analysis that contextualizes the assertions of the literatures, assesses the relevance of the theory in contemporary politics, and examines the implications thereof for great power geopolitics. Inconsistencies in the method are to be expected for two reasons. One, it does not contextualize policy through a microcosmic study of a single country in the region, and as such lacks a specific case study. Two, it assumes that conflict is endemic between the great powers. For these reasons, critics can argue that the method is flawed because it is overly realist in its application. The analysis is therefore organized by first conducting a comparative/contrast approach of USA and Russian policies via each other. Secondly, it addresses the Heartland Theory's applicability in the contemporary environment of

international politics. While not attempting to propose the Heartland theory as a general model for foreign policy towards Central Asia, the analysis seeks to suggest and/or establish some relationship between the predictions of the theory and current foreign policy relations.

What does the Heartland theory exactly mean?

The Heartland theory of Mackinder placed the pivot in the center of the planet, which includes the river basins of the Volga, Yenisey, Amu Draya, Syr Draya, and two seas the Caspian and the Aral. (Mackinder 1943, 595-605). In the Heartland theory Mackinder actually engages geography in international politics both literally and figuratively. Literally the Heartland theory pointed out that, Eurasia is strategically the most advantageous geographical location (See: Figure 1). On the other hand figuratively this theory put emphasis on the centrality of the Eurasian region. Mackinder stated that in the context of the global geopolitical processes, the Eurasian continent is found in the center of the world politics. Under this statement he suggested that the state that dominated the Heartland would possess the necessary geopolitical and economic potential to ultimately control the world politics. Although the Heartland Theory faced much criticism in the decades since its publication, this paper does not aim to readdress these criticisms. Rather the study aim to justify how far the philosophy is rational as well as influential in the contemporary environment of international politics. More specifically the study intends to seek the influence of this theory in the foreign policy directions of the United States and Russia in Central Asia. In order to fulfill this aim the next section of this study review few selective literatures on foreign policy discourse of both states.

Literature Review

The following section of this study reviews various analyses of policy experts in order to comprehend a comprehensive understanding of the present geopolitical context of the foreign policy of the great powers towards central Asia. The study followed a comparative approach to review the relevant literatures. As a result the review rotates between the USA and Russia.

The USA policy

There are ample of literature regarding the policy of the USA in Central Asian countries. Each of these literature shares a common perception and that is: the engagement of the United States in Central Asia increase remarkably in the post 9/11 era. So, to understand the politics of the United States in the XXI century the period of post 9/11 is significant. In that case the statement of Colin Powell after the terrorist attack of 9/11 can best be exemplified – "the United States will remain interested in the long term security and stability of the region". (Andrew 2002, *cited in* Margaret & Westenley 2008, 8). Actually three broad concepts has polarized the scholars in assessing the foreign policy of the United States in the Central Asian region (i.e. geographical pluralism, establishment of liberal democracy and liberal or free market economy. Perception arise from these two concepts are - *firstly*, the foreign policy of the United States in this region stressed much emphasis on

geographical stability. The policy umbrella of geographical stability also includes several other inputs like-the containment of terrorism and the suppression of Russia and to become a regional hegemon. *Secondly*, as a part of geo-economic strategy the United States want to ensure her access to the natural resources through pursuing a policy of cut-to-size Russian and Chinese influence in this region. (Nick 2007, 407). The United States has applied a pluralist approach in formulation its foreign policy priority areas in Central Europe. This argument has well proved by Stephen Blank and Marlene Laruelle. Blank in his book *United States and Central Asia in Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, have showed that the foreign policy of the United States in Central Asia is based on three broad approach (i.e. to increase the supply of energy to the consumer, to prevent any one state from monopolizing the energy supply and to enhancing western ideas of liberal democracy throughout central Asian region). Blank contends that the idea of enhancing liberal democratic values will ultimately serve the purpose of US foreign policy goal in the Central Asia. (Blank 2001, 133). Likewise, Laruellenin his policy brief paper *US Central Asia Policy: Still American Mars versus European Venus?*, have identified two priority areas of the US involvement in Central Asia. In saying about the first priority area he argued that Afghanistan have become a driving force of the US involvement in Central Asia, with military bases in Uzbekisthan's Karshikhanabad and Kyrgyzstan's Manas. (Laruelle 2012, 2-4). Accordingly as a second aspect of the foreign policy United States in Central Asia is to increase the development and distribution of the energy resources and supply routes of this region.

Similarly scholar like Ariel Cohen in his article *USA Foreign Policy Interests and Human Rights in Central Asia*, also showed deep concern about the possibility of Sino-Russian cooperation. (Cohen 2001,6). Cohen try to indicate that such Sino-Russian cooperation bears the potentiality of increasing their sphere of influence within the Central Asian region and this will subsequently affect the presence of the United States in that particular region. (Cohen 2001, 6). So it may be said that if the possibility of such Sino-Russian co-operation turns into practicability then it will ultimately affects the foreign policy of the United States in this region.

The major challenge of the foreign policy of the United States in Central Asia is to keep a set of three states (i.e. China, Russia and Iran) completely away from this region. (Blank 2007, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 9). Blank in his article *USA Interests in Central Asia and the Challenges to Them*, also asserted the importance of pipeline politics. In mentioning about the significance of pipeline politics he said the in that case Russian policy is quintessentially monopolistic. (Blank 2007, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 9). The review of Blank's article makes it evident that as a consequence of the above assertion of Blank the United States should move to build military ties with the regional powers in order to secure her interest in the Central Asia. However Blank stressed much emphasis on building military ties with the Central Asian states as part of her foreign policy initiatives, the view of Cohen is quite different in that case. Review of the literature of Cohen makes it clear that he put much emphasis on promoting democratic institutions in Central Asia. (Cohen 2006, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 10). He argued that promotion of democratic institutions and circulation of democratic ideals will facilitate the market access of the United States to this region. (Cohen; 2006, 6-10). The broad aspects of the foreign policy goals of the United States are summarized by Cohen under three words: security, energy and democracy. (Cohen 2006, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 10). He argued that the United States must take active part in the Transportation Corridor Europe-Central Asia

Program (TRACECA) which is a trade route devised by the European Union. (Cohen 2001, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 10). Study also found the reflection of the assertion of Cohen in the congressional report *Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for USA Interests*, held by Nichol. (Nichol 2007, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 10). The review of the report of Nichol indicates the European efforts and the incidents of poverty in the Central Asian region. In this report he stated that poverty in Central Asia has a severe implication on the socio-economic condition of this region and this ultimately create security problem. Nichol in his report also reflect the linkage between security and development. In his words, the socio-economic problem caused by poverty create security problem for the development. (Nichol 2007, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 10).

A comparative review of the literature of both Nichol and Cohen it is found that, the argument of Nichol is hardly contrary to the statement of Cohen. Like Cohen, Nichol in his report argued that in the Central Asian region the priority areas of the foreign policy of the United States include fostering Western ideals of democracy, free market economy as well as assisting the development of oil and other natural resources. (Nichol 2007, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 10).

The mentioned works stressed much emphasis on the access of the United States to energy resource of Central Asia. Access to energy resource alone may not fulfill the foreign policy goal of the United States in this region. In that case Christopher Fettweis comes as a critic of what Cohen argued in the above study. Fettweis contends that the argument of Cohen is not at all rational if the contemporary environment of international politics is to be justified. Fettweis justified contemporary international politics as it is void of great-power conflicts. Based on such justification he stated that there is no need of a balance between East and West in the system and therefore the geo-political view of Mackinder is obsolete. Fettweis put much emphasis on dominance of the United States in the global economic sphere. He argued that global economy will pave the way of access of the United States to the energy supply of Central Asia.

So it is evident from the above discussion that in these literatures the scholars contend that the formulation of foreign policy of the United States in Central Asia is just an effort to spread democracy to enhance market accessibility of the Unite States to natural resources of Central Asia. The reviews hardly find any argument among the scholars regarding the necessity of establishment of the United States presence through NATO and military personnel except to combat terrorism. Scholars like Blank, Cohen, Fettweis argued that at present the military presence in this region is only temporary and just for combating terrorism. Based on this argument they contends that geo-political theory of Mackinder in that sense is not in fact influential as the environment of global economy is already ensure the market access of the United States to this region.

The Russian Policy

The review of literatures on Russian foreign policy in Central Asia is indicating the intention of political and economic domination. All the literatures on Russian foreign policy are asserting that Russian is trying to reshape her backyard political and economic influence in this region as near-abroad. (Jonson 2001, 95). Study has found the Russian foreign policy in Central Asia is bifurcated in its perspectives to include dynamics of state and domestic influences. (Jonson 2001, 95). How far the Russian foreign policy in Central

Asia is driven by contradictory pressures or not is clearly analyzed by Peter Rutland in his *Paradigms for Russian Policy in the Caspian Region*. Rutland identified two contradictory character of Russian foreign policy in this region (i.e. to cooperate with and to oppose the USA penetration into the region). A pluralist approach including the policy of free market economy is noticeable in the foreign policy of Russia. (Rutland 2000, *cited in* Alcenat & Scott 2008, 11). The Russian foreign policy is not free from institutional rivalry marked by political elites. Such political elites are interested to preserve economic monopoly over Russia, the region, and the expulsion of USA influence. In addition, scholars on Russian foreign policy also argued that there exists a policy paradigm that strangles the GUUAM (Georgian-Ukraine-Uzbekistan-Azerbaijan-Moldova) axis economically, thereby exerting influence over the region and lessening USA involvement. (Rutland 2000, 163).

As such Russian foreign policy in Central Asia can be termed as a conflictive paradigm where no single model can explain the grand pursuit of Russian policy. The domestic political environments as well as the economic agencies are divided among themselves in the process of policy formulation. Due to the lack of an integrated policy formulation process Russia is therefore "confused" in its policy objectives towards the Central Asian region. Despite such confusion of policy formulation, one thing is common in Russian foreign policy and that is the deployment of political, military, and economic tools to advance its interests in the Central Asian region. (Rutland 2000, 171-73). This simplest concept of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia can be termed as neo-imperialist approach. (Rutland; 2000, 171-73). Rutland argued that the domestic economic actor of Russia has a great interest in maintaining energy monopoly in Central Asia. (Rutland 2000, 169-71). An implication of such interest of the domestic economics is prevalent in the foreign policy decision making process of Russia towards Central Asia. However Rutland stated that economic actors influence the policy process of Russia more than the military because of an interest to maintaining energy monopoly, there is also a consensus to advance Russian interests in opposition to USA efforts to penetrate the region, thereby making Russian policy in the region ambiguous. (Rutland 2000, 169-71). A similar view on the foreign policy of Russia is also found in the article of Lena Jonson. This scholar in his paper titled-*Russia and Central Asia* has argued that Russia's foreign policy can best be understood in the context of its efforts to prevent outsiders from gaining influence in the Central Asian states. (Jonson 2001, 114).The United States is a major concern from Russia. In Central Asian region the political, economic and social interest of Russia are often challenged by the United States. (Jonson 2001, 98). Moreover the political elite of Russia are of the view that "through weakening its influence in the region the Western policy constitutes a challenge to Russia." (Jonson 2001, 115). As such the issue of containing any external influence in Central Asia is still reflective in the foreign policy of Russia. Through its foreign policy formulation Russia wants to strengthen its status as a regional power through averting the external powers, particularly the United States. Jonson argued that, Russia uses geography as an aid to its statecraft, engaging China as strategic power to counter USA influence (Jonson 2001, 115). However the foreign policy of Russia sought to prevent a power vacuum that would enable increase engagement of the United States, Jonson in his paper mentioned that Russian influence in the Central Asian region is decreasing gradually. This assertion of Jonson is proved as legitimate due to the waning influence of Russia to convince the states to join its security umbrella. Jonson in his paper postulates that despite the treaty of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), states are still cooperating with NATO's Partnership for Peace (Jonson 2001, 109).

Moreover the CIS states are now also showing their reluctance to integrate force with Russia (Jonson 2001, 119-120).Jonson argued that increasing trends of the Western influence marked as the cause of the gradual waning of Russian dominance over the region (Jonson 2001 119-120).The inability to build domestic political consensus at national level is the main cause of the decreasing influence of Russia in this region. (Jonson 2001, 119-120).

Bobo Lo in his *Frontiers New and Old: Russia's Policy in Central Asia* agree with the statement of Peter Jonson. He argued that Central Asia is critical to Russian foreign policy of establishing itself as a leading player in the Eurasian Heartland, and as an independent center of global power alongside the United States and China (Lo 2015, 1). Lo identified the basic purpose of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia is to ensure a primary right of influence over the affairs of ex-Soviet Republics (Lo 2015, 1). Considering the contemporary world politics it is almost difficult to predict how far Russia will be able to pursue such foreign policy ambition.

From review of various literatures on Russian foreign policy in this region it is evident that Central Asian states like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is no longer passive object of great power diplomacy, but increasingly assertive actors. Most importantly the United States will remain a key factor in the region, even after the withdrawal of NATO combat troops from Afghanistan. Moreover China is translating its powerful economic influence into a broader strategic presence. As such in spite of its fanfare surrounding the Eurasian Union, the position of Russia is weakening gradually (Lo 2015, 3). Lo further argued that the capacity of Russia to dictate to others is remarkably reduced due to power competition among the great powers. Accordingly the threat to Russian security is proliferating. This caused Moscow to face hard struggle if it is to avoid a sharp decline of its influence in Central Asia (Lo 2015, 3). Serhei Gretsky expressed an opposite view than that of Jonson and Bobo Lo. He argued that "Central Asia's destiny is in the hands of Moscow." (Gretsky 1997, 21-22). According to Gretsky the main motive of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia is to reduce competition over natural resources (Gretsky 1997, 8-9). Craig Oliphant in his *Russia's Role and Interests in Central Asia* also stated in line with Serhei Gretsky. He outlined that in Central Asia over the past 20 years or more the situation has fluctuated. Obituaries, though, about the demise of Russia's place in the region would seem to be premature (Jonson 1998 *cited in* Oliphant 2013, 1). Whereas Jonson argued that Russian influence in Central Asia is decreasing, Craig Oliphant stated that the desire of Russia to strengthen its role in this region is again intensifying in a selective way (Oliphant 2013, 1). However Craig Oliphant has identified the selective ways of the increasing trends of Russian influence in Central Asia (i.e. the focus around customs union and the envisaged plan that this should also involve Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is a clear market intention), he is not sure about what the longer term picture holds and how viable these plans will prove not least against the backcloth of leadership change that will inevitably and eventually come to the countries in the region and the implications stemming from those changes (Oliphant 2013, 1). Craig Oliphant has identified the geostrategic location of the region with its immense hydrocarbon reserves as the main cause of considerable interest from external actors. He argued that, the balance sheet would still place Russia as the most prominent external power in Central Asia, in terms of primarily 1) its high level political relationships, 2) its security cooperation in the region, and 3) arguably, its range of investment projects in these countries. The review selective literatures

on Russian foreign policy in Central Asia reveal that both Rutland and Jonson characterize Russian policy as not overly unified. They argued that despite such uniformity in Russian foreign policy decision making process towards Central Asia the Russian leaders are still ingrained in a consensus towards Western aggress and the reinstating of Russian dominance. A contradiction is also exists between the views of Jonson and Gretsky. While Jonson opined that Russian influence in Central Asia is waning, Gretsky argued that the region's fate is still dependent on Russia but only to the extent of the integrative impact of Russian policy.

The relevancy of Heartland Theory in Great Power Politics

Study from the perspective of geo-strategy reveals that in geo-politics there exist endemic powers at two influential levels: that of the domestic and the state. This endemic powers consolidate their influence to the respective policies of the USA and Russia (Alcenat and Scott 2008, 18). Therefore, geo-strategy is not entirely immune to domestic participation since it implies a vast concept to deal with. The extensive push for geopolitical pluralism by the United States in the region can best be exemplified in that case. Any initiative by the United States to open the market access in Central Asia implies that this state is targeted for the exploration of multinational energy companies. The efforts of domination for the exploration of natural resources are also apparent in the case of Russia. Study found that Russia wants to have pipelines be transported through its territory. However the Russian energy companies are working on behalf of market interests, they often constrain the behavior of the state. Under the above assertion it is hardly possible to say that the Heartland theory of Mackinder is obsolete. However, considering the great power politics in Central Asia critics argued that Mackinderian analysis is not rational because it assumes conflict in a system where there is none. Such argument of the critics is hardly found out because a variety of literatures repeatedly cites the geostrategic importance for USA security in fighting terrorism and preventing Russian dominance over oil production and transportation. Accordingly after making a review of selective literature the study found that various scholarly analyses attest to the fact that Russia builds regional alliances with Iran and China to stabilize its hegemony and prevent external influence from the United States. The relevancy of the Heartland Theory of Mackinder is also found as evident in an article which was published in the Oil & Gas Journal, in the post-Cold War political "struggle between Russia and the West conflict may [be determined] by who controls the oil reserves in Eurasia." (Alcenat and Scott 2008, 19). From the political view, the declarative statement of the first Bush Administration that the "United States has deemed it a vital interest to prevent any power or group from dominating the Eurasian landmass" (Fettweis, 2003, 109-129) demonstrates that the obsolescence of Mackinderian theory is irrelevant.

Simultaneously the Russian official cited a similar concern by stating that: "[w]estern policy constitutes a challenge for Russia's regional dominance." (Jonson 2001, 115-116). So at this stance it could be said that American fear of Russia is not irrational. The leadership interest of the United States in Central Asia would further disprove the claim of the irrelevance of the theory. As for instance, Vice-President Richard Cheney's (who also served as CEO of the oil supply corporation, Halliburton) statement that: "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian", or former secretary of energy Bill Richardson's

evaluation that: "we're trying to move these newly independent countries toward the West. We would like to see them reliant on Western commercial and political interests rather than going on path influenced by Russia. Such statements of the leaders not only represent the national conception of the United States but also the domestic conceptions." (Kleveman 2003, 4-6). The United States and Russia formulate their respective foreign policy towards Central Asia in line with two different aspects. Whereas the United States followed an offensive policy towards Central Asia, Russian policy direction towards this region is found as quite defensive. The present study has found that there exists a conflict over energy security between the United States and Russia. The nature of the conflict between Russia and the United States is considered in this study as critical which is therefore not inevitable or a phenomenon only restricted to armed conflicts. In studying the nature of great power politics in Central Asia the study has found the growth of consumerism combined with the economization of international affairs. Such economization of world affairs caused the United States and Russia to move for raw materials/natural resources and it is evident from the analysis Philippe Le Billon who termed this competitive move between them as "resource wars." (Billon 2006, 204). Both the United States and Russia wants to gain their market interest in Central Asia at highest level. Based on this argument it is found that the stance of United States is considerably offensive in that it utilizes the GUUAM as a strategic alliance and promotes democracy to balance market favor on its side.

To maximize its economic power the foreign policy of the United States is directed through different political outlets through containing Russian sphere of influence in this region. Study has argued that the Russian foreign policy towards Central Asia is just a reaction of what the United States has pursued. Through such policy reaction Kremlin attempts to strengthen its hold in a 'near-abroad' policy that sees the region as its backyard. Geo-strategically the Central Asian region is very important for both the United States and Russia. Russia wants to control the Central Asian landmass to maintain its control over the natural resources. Likewise Russia, the United States wants to maximize their accessibility to the natural resources of this region by containing Russia. The Heartland theory falls short of grasping the context of that influence.

To put it into perspective, the literature shows that Central Asia is considered as very influential to each power. However, in light of Mackinder's notion of "the actual balance at any given time," the literature shows that geographic proximity has made Russia as the dominant power. Economically, it already controls many export routes for the shipment of natural gas and oil to western markets. On the contrary, the USA effort is likely to remain what it is now: promoting a market economy for the diversification of energy supply, whereby Russian monopoly will be broken.

CONCLUSION

The study has reached to a conclusion that literature around the United States and Russia is indicative to the relevancy of Heartland theory. The study has used the "Geographical Pivot" thesis of Sir Halford J. Mackinder as an analogy to present day foreign policy of USA and Russia regarding Central Asia and found that the foreign policy discourses of both states deals greatly with the philosophy of Mackinder. This reveals that the Heartland theory is still influential in foreign policy outlook of the United States and Russia in Central Asia. Competition for gaining control over natural resources between

Russia and the United States together with geo-political and strategic factors characterized the geopolitics of Central Asia. Control over natural resources as well as market access is indeed the main motto of the foreign policy direction of both states. It is evident from the above study that such foreign policy directions are followed by the Heartland Theory of Mackinder. In fact it may be said that, outlined in 1904 through his speech, the “Heartland theory” was a founding moment for geo-politics. His argument regarding the control of the Eurasian landmass (Europe, Asia and the Middle East), is still considered as the major geo-political prize.

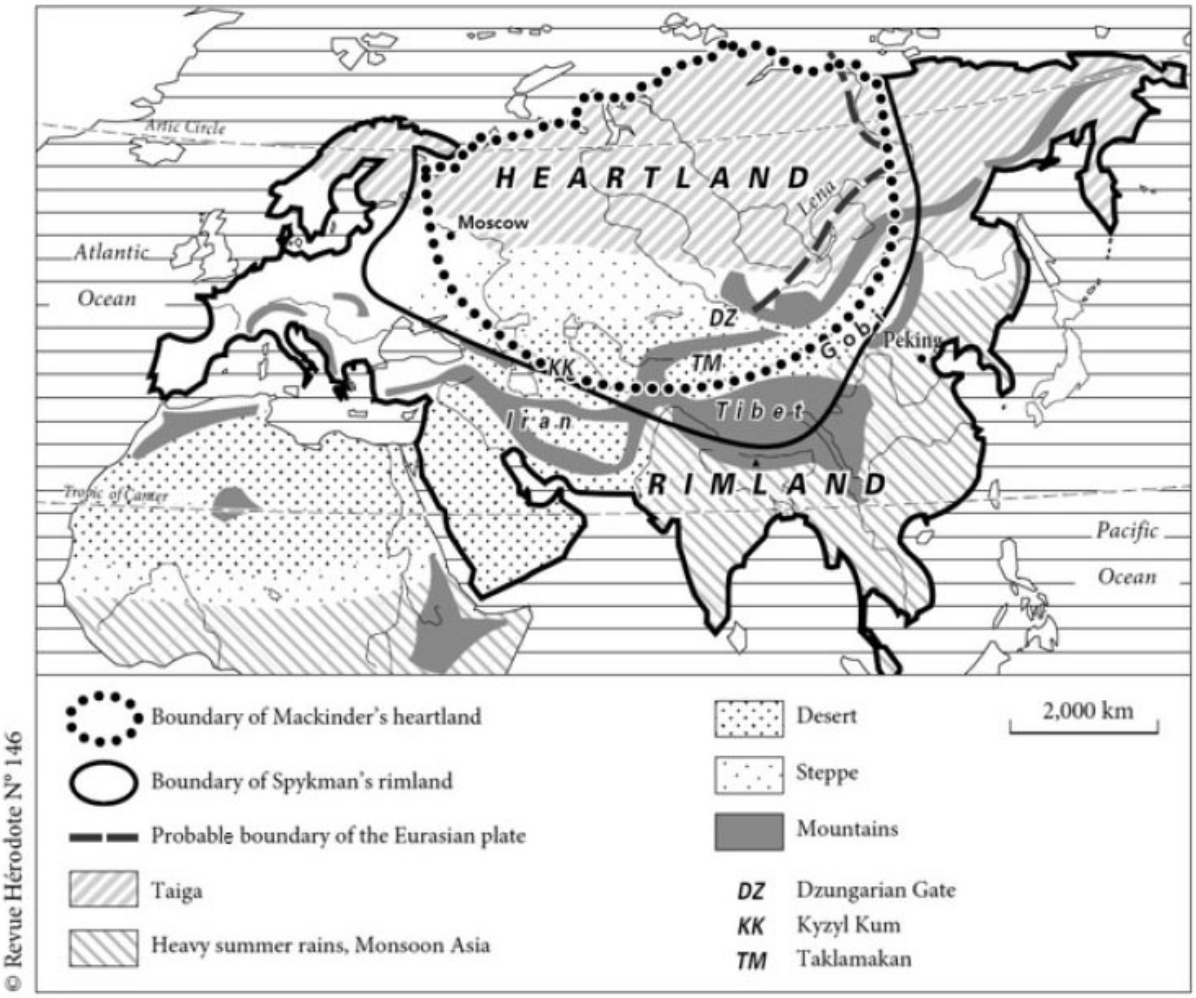

Figure 1: Heartland Theory of Sir Halford Mackinder (Yves Lacoste, Le pivot géographique de l'histoire: une lecture critique, *Hérodote* 3/2012 (No 146-147) , p. 139-158)

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