This study is the outgrowth of an interest on the problems and related consequences of access to the sea, experienced by the developing land-locked states in Asia. This has assumed, since the Second World War, a wider connotation in not only determining the pattern of trade and level of economic development, but also other facets of the national life of the land-locked state. The threatened and actual interference with the transit facilities by the littoral states, has therefore, made it imperative to analyze the politico-geographical viability of the state. Afghanistan was selected as a suitable case study for the analysis of problems and impact of the access to the sea on the political geography of the land-locked state. In addition, frequent political changes have further reinforced the necessity of such a study.

Although at a glance, the thesis may represent a mixture of many things brought together, it is primarily a study in political geography to identify the basic geographical infrastructure of Afghanistan, the nation state. Analysis of (through space and time) the nature and evolution of core areas and boundaries, the process and problems of internal political cohesion and economic development, relation with littoral states, and access to the sea - all seem to indicate the dimensions of locational impact upon the contemporary setting of Afghanistan. In order to understand these complexities and operation of latent forces within the state, it has been
necessary to draw relevant conclusions from geography, history, economic and politics of the state.

A study of this nature suggests that, though much progress has been made in identifying the problems of land-locked states and their immediate littoral countries, very little has been done in assuring the free access to the sea. This feature has been often found to be interconnected with the political activity of the state. Perhaps, it can also be said that the geopolitical compulsions are partially responsible for this phenomenon. For in the entirety, it is the land-locked state (as well as the littoral state) and its regional political associations that determine the availability and free access to the high seas. It would be presumptuous to expect this study to do more than point out the need for further analysis on the more important (regional in the context of the land-locked state) problems.

It should be noted that the efforts to collect data was continuously obstructed. Even before the Afghan field-trip, the author made futile attempts to convince and persuade the school authorities about the necessity of consulting records/manuscripts/maps available in the various libraries in the United Kingdom, particularly in London. Since there was no other alternative but to direct all efforts to acquire the materials locally. The following is the extract of the field-trip report submitted to the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
The objective of the field trip was the collection of data on the domestic and development policies, administrative reforms, maps and statistics.

Upon my request, the Indian Embassy sought permission for research and consultation in the various library institutions from the Afghan Foreign Ministry. The foreign ministry permitted me to make use of facilities afforded by the Kabul University Library, The Cartographic Institute, and the Public Library (Ministry of Information and Culture).

My efforts in the University Library was successful. The separate section on the Afghan studies in the library and several useful source materials which were referred and consulted. The library lacked documents and other primary sources.

My interview with Mr Amin (He was the Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities. He was also a member of the Staff of the Department of Geography.) was useful. He stressed the apparent lack of research facilities in the department of Geography and in the University library. He suggested that the Central Statistical Organization (Ministry of Planning) and the Cartographic Institute as the probable sources for the collection of data for my research. He added that the department of Geography was catering to the need of text-books for the various educational institutions in Afghanistan and, was primarily engaged in (as are the rest of the departments in the University) translation of the foreign texts.

Dr Amir Ahmad, President of the Cartographic Institute clarified lot of points regarding the various problems in collecting data for research in Afghanistan. He suggested that maps could be (?) collected from the concerned ministries. It was evident that there was definite limitations even for the concerned ministries to provide relevant materials to me. Dr Ahmad, indirectly referred to the difficulty of procuring maps and advised me to consult the Kabul university library and the Public library.

The Public library provided useful historical materials. There was relatively few documents and other primary sources in the library. Further inquries regarding the availability of materials proved futile.

Professor Bhattacharya (visiting Professor of History, Kabul University) explained the non-availability and difficulty of collecting material in Afghanistan. He suggested that because of the political situation, it was difficult to get research material. He added that much depended upon my perseverance to extract information and that no single institution
will be able to provide adequate materials. He regretted his inability to guide and referred the Indian Embassy as the best means for guidance. Dr. Saxena (Advisor to the Kabul University)’s views were identical with Prof. Shahmugh. He suggested that if the Kabul University Library, the Cartographic Institute and the Public Library did not have adequate material between them, then it was difficult to locate any other institution in Afghanistan which had both the facilities as well as adequate research materials.

Dr. Dayal (Statistical Advisor, Afghan Demographic Studies, Ministry of Planning) was helpful. He expressed the inability of his office to help me to collect data and other pertinent materials. He reasoned that it would be only after few years that the organization would be able to help the research scholars in collecting the data. Dr. Dayal said that the available maps were restricted and even those which could be seen could not be interpreted or referred. However, Mr. Dayal was able to give a base map with minor civil divisions marked and a report explaining the basis of classification and the approach. This map was used by the Afghan Demographic studies for their project.

The libraries of U.P.D.P., I.S.A.I.D. and the British Embassy were referred and consulted.

My interview with the Indian Ambassador, H.E. Shri K.V.P. Singh was useful. He explained to me the difficulties involved in collection of data for research. He said that he was not surprised by my progress and suggested that I should contact the Indian experts for further information and clue to possible availability of source materials.

To fill up the gap in my collection of data, the acquisition of books became the only viable alternative. The books purchased varied from political development, economy to history and geography. But those were few.

A number of other problems were associated in the collection of data. In Kabul, the Archives are not in useable condition. Only recently have they begun to be indexed and while it was certain that they had valuable data, it would be some years before they could be utilized. The problems surrounding the interview programme were many. Specific interviews were abandoned after few attempts to obtain responses to the questions. The informants could not confine themselves to the questions and tended to become unco-operative if and when I insisted. The conversation, however, brought few results. My discussions with the staff of the Department of Geography, Kabul University and the Cartographic Institute is one such example; where most of them were reluctant to discuss about
sensitive subjects or those which had direct or indirect reference to the political situation of the country.

By discussions with the Indian experts and other foreign experts working in the various government and semi-government agencies, was useful. Here again, I was not able to confirm the observations and inferences made in the discussion.
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