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Land-locked states are usually considered as among the poorest of the developing countries. With a long growth-rate, they are heavily dependent upon few commodities for their vital export earnings. Lack of adequate exploitable resources and their regional variations has further enhanced the importance of this source of revenue. Further, remoteness and isolation from the world market as well as the absence of developed transport facilities have resulted in the stunted socio-economic development. This relative handicap has transformed itself into major political issue undermining the internal stability of land-locked state. This suggests that, though the consequences cannot be qualified, the importance of transit facilities and easy access cannot be belittled. Corollary of which can be recognized from the superimposition of their developing economies(?) with their land-locked location.

Most of the land-locked states lack the prerequisite of administration and development (productive activities). In addition, with developing countries as neighbours, there is a distinct similarity of economic structure and scarcity of resources. The trade between the land-locked and transit

1 The land-locked states of Africa, particularly Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland face a different situation in that their neighbour is a developed country. On the other hand, Afghanistan for example has a developed state in the North (the U.S.S.R.) and developing states in the rest of the frontier (Pakistan and Iran). This leads to an important inference (reinforced by the known resource distribution) that the Northern part has

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states may be minimal (or substantial), the complimentarities of economies may create tension in the use of transport and transit facilities between them. In any case, the developing transit state offers only the use of a part of its transport system. It remains for the land-locked state to link it effectively with its internal transport system.

Apart from the institutional obstacles arising from frontier or transit, the land-locked states could not overcome the politico-economic implications of such arrangements. With more than one pattern of transport policy to contend with, the land-locked states clearly exhibited the lack of control over the development of socio-economic infrastructure. This in addition to the political intonations of the access to the sea.

The question of access to the sea became important during the nineteenth century. The absence of a favourable coast was overcome by traversing the lower reaches of rivers which were usually in the neighbouring states. This was the case with a Dutch over the lower Schelde river. Antwerp was isolated. With increasing commerce during the nineteenth century to reach the need for permanent solution to the access distinct areal characteristics which alienates from the rest. This has political as well as socio-economic implications determined to the viability of the state. Recent political events in Afghanistan, has in part supported this assumption.

2 Transit relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. However the Soviet Afghan relations are opposite, as the latter for most of its products caters to the needs of Soviet Black-markets.
was contemplated upon seriously.

Access to the sea formed an essential part of the state system. It encompassed the problems of providing an access with a minimal loss of sovereignty to the transit state at the same time assuring advantage to the land-locked state. Such a situation depended largely upon the geographical realities of the state, the littoral states and the nature of transit facilities. Those included the use of the lower courses of the river (Scheldt river by Dutch), the Corridor (as was the Polish case) and finally transit agreement.

The availability of the transit facility was taken up seriously. The Barcelona Conference of 1821, Genova Conference of 1958, Sub-committee of the U.N., in 1954-65 and the Caracas Conference of 1968, all dealt with the various problems connected with the access to the sea to the developing land-locked states. They emphasized the need for free and easy access as well as on the development of transport facilities. The rights of the land-locked states and the transit states often clashed and to achieve a compromise where the interests of the two was preserved. The work done by various authors have approached the problem in different ways.


(footnote contd.)
Although, there is an adequate material concerning the various approaches to the problems of the land-locked states, the case of Afghanistan is different. The lack of trade statistics through the various terminal points of Chaman, Torkham, Sher Khan Bandar, Silik, Torghundi and Islam Qala discourages any definite analysis. Quantum of trade and overall trade statistics itself forms a generalization of facts. Unlike other land-locked states, the Afghan economic and trade statistics were never accounted for; the later assumed a regional character. Upon the same basis, Afghan Turkistan was directly influenced by the growing Russian pre-occupation in Central Asia.

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As a result, the nuclear regions of the Afghan Turkestan came within the sphere of influence of the perennial regions of the Russian Central Asia. The volume of trade in the nineteenth century was generally accounted by various accounts of travel-lers (see chapter III). Again reviewing present day trade pattern (see chapter V), it is clear that the Soviet Central Asia continues to wield its influence over northern Afghanistan.

This suggests that owing to the geopolitical considerations, the problems of land-locked Afghanistan are unique and are to be considered as they are. The aspects of economic development, transportation and trade have to be considered on the overall pattern of political climate of the state. It is an obvious analogy that the low rate of growth and acute regional disparity have assumed political dimensions and have in part resulted in frequent changes in the governments. In addition, as noted earlier, the lack of data makes it imperative to analyze the socio-economic problems from the political point of view. It is upon these assumptions that the various approaches suited for other land-locked countries were consulted before forming a general conceptual framework for Afghanistan was formulated (see also preface).

The primary objective is to analyze and understand the politico-geographical viability of Afghanistan in relation to its land-locked nature. It has been attempted to identify the relationships between political decisions and actions of state as well as the reasons how the geographical patterns have
changed the state over a period of time. The development
efforts of the state tend to the modification of the surface,
though varying in age, stability and scale, they have their
own origin and growth. As a result, the identification of the
merging core areas and the geographical contents of the state
become important in an environment which are compounded with
contrast elements. Moreover, in the analysis of the territo-
torial continuity, idea of the political factors gives a defi-
nite pattern to the growth and evolution of frontiers and
boundaries; the magnitude of which was inverse in proportion to
the popular knowledge of their geographical backgrounds.

Likewise, these elements in the analysis of individual
behaviour in respect state area fully explain the constraints
imposed by the natural environment.

Apart from these major issues, other important but
secondary aspects, the spatial pattern of production, personal
political behaviour, national integration (links between
various parts of the state and between regions considering the

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4 "Political geography, then, may be defined as the study
of areal differences and similarities in political
character as an interrelated part of the total complex
of areal differences and similarities. The interpreta-
tion of areal differences in political features involves
the study of their inter-relationships with all other
relevant areal variations, whether physical, biotic,
or cultural origin". Richard Hartshorne, "Political
Geography", in P.E. James and C.F. Jones, eds., American
Geography, Inventory and Prospects (New York, Syracuse,
1964), p. 178. See also J.R.V. Prescott, Political
Geography (London, 1972); and Martin Ira Glassner,
Access to the Sea for Developing Land-Locked State
unitary form of government), and national political regions (classifying the state by political criterion), and regional and international political and strategic contacts, form essential components in the study of political geography of land-locked state of Afghanistan.

The geographical factors pose certain questions, as, how the Afghans can overcome the geographical and ethnic diversities to establish a national coherence? How Afghanistan with its limited resources and scarce technical know-how operates as a modern political machinery in the form of a state's progressive government and establishes a modern economy as well as possibilities for the Afghans to maintain an independent and neutral position in furthering its economic development?

Analyzing the strategic location of Afghanistan, it is evident, that historical, geographical, social and other factors have contrived the state to a situation whereby the peripheral states had greater influence upon the state polity. The interaction of these factors against the background of relevant likeness and differences within and between the various regions of the state has, therefore, exposed the relative locational weakness of the state and their consequent impact upon its position vis-a-vis neighbouring states. The description of the collected evidences with suitable cartographic representation, then, has sought at least a partial explanation, for the various centripetal and centrifugal forces operating in Afghanistan. The basic purpose of the analysis was to gain an understanding
of distinctive elements of Afghanistan's political geography. At the same time, this examination reveals how changes in the internal and external environment have brought significant variations in the importance of individual geographical factors in operation. This study, then, is an attempt to seek an explanation for the role of these factors (which often operate in conjunction with the political forces emanating from the peripheral states) in determining the political stability and economic viability of land-locked Afghanistan.

The Nature and Accessibility of Research Material

One of the most difficult problems encountered while working on this subject has been the scarcity and unreliability of research materials, particularly the statistical data and maps. Although the archival materials and documents (only those of National Archives of India, New Delhi) were invaluable as primary sources for the analysis of geographical and historical background of the state, there was a significant paucity of primary sources regarding political and economic settings of the state. Even in Kabul, the archival materials were not in usable condition. For, only recently have they begun to be indexed and while it was certain that they had valuable documents, it would be some years before they could

5 Land and Water Resources: Afghanistan. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 6 vols. (New York, 1965), was an important source material for the geographical background of the state.
be utilized. The various governmental institutions in Afghanistan likewise suffered from similar drawbacks (for example, the Central Statistical Organization of the Ministry of Planning, a centralized data processing centre, has recently been reorganized and it will be only after few years that a comprehensive statistical information base could be released for public). However, statistical information already published by the various governmental institutions either suffer from exaggerated figures or are vague for any definitive conclusions to be reached (population estimates exemplify this). As regards the maps, their generalized nature and absence of any (for public perusal as well as for research) serialized collections, through time, has on the whole handicapped this work. Apart from these, however, the various publications of the different organizations of the United Nations have provided an alternative source for the analysis.

Secondary sources for the subject have consistently been inadequate. Nevertheless, a serious attempt was made to examine and analyze the entire corpus of books and articles written pertaining to the subject under study. The notable exceptions being those appearing in Russian and German journals, which were either not available or, if so, it was not possible to get their translations. Of the many secondary sources, only few dealt with any specific issue in detail. More often than not, larger percentage of this source, with few exceptions, tended to follow propaganda tract or were sensational accounts
misrepresenting the factors involved in it.

In addition, the efforts to collect materials from other secondary sources and newspapers were thwarted by their superficiality and vagueness. Efforts to confirm these proved futile, as there was neither a complete record available for consultation of events connected with the monarchy or the republican regime nor were there means to confirm from knowledgeable individuals who were reluctant to air their views on subjects which had direct or indirect reference to the contemporary political situation of the country. It then became necessary to discuss the problems with experts working in Afghanistan. Though they were not able to furnish an adequate data base, their observations and their field of expertise provided a helpful background upon which the meagre factual information was based.

Methodology and Arrangement of the Subject-Matter

Having such an objective and problems related with the acquisition of adequate research materials, partly due to non-availability and partly due to administrative restrictions for the release of data and information, even the attempt to use the well-established geographical methods, quantitative as well as cartographic, was beset with many difficulties. The present attempt, to decipher spatio-temporal patterns of the various geographical elements so essential for a proper analysis of politico-geographical realities, needed more meaningful data. Irrespective of the fact of non-availability of adequate
and meaningful data, an attempt has been made to construct a rational approach on the basis of primary as well as secondary sources. These were amply supported by observations during the field trip where discussions during the interviews were of considerable help. The generalization helped to build up a geographical focus which led to an understanding of the various politico-geographical processes and patterns.

To facilitate such an analysis, the subject-matter has been arranged as follows:

The first chapter deals with the geographical framework of the state. Analyzing the implications of the location, the description of the facts of physical geography seeks to establish the significance of the influence of geography upon the human activity in Afghanistan. At the same time it attempts to examine the geographical content of the political actions and establishes a relationship between internal development and external relationships.

The second chapter deals with the evolution and spatial political patterns of Afghanistan. It not only attempts to examine the role of historical processes in integration and dis-integration of the state but also identifies the impact of regional core areas upon the political stability of the state.

The third chapter deals with the internal political boundaries of the state. Examining the basic political structure of the state, the analysis seeks to explain the impact of external environment (particularly the international boundaries
and peripheral influences) upon the internal political dynamics and administrative set-up. It provides a geographical explanation for the unitary character of the government as well as reasons for the frequent administrative reorganization of the state.

Keeping in view the land-locked location of the state and earlier developments, the fourth chapter tries to identify major economic regions. It also analyses the major population concentrations, and seeks to identify the reasons for unequal regional distributions. Other aspects, e.g., agriculture, industries etc., are also discussed. The analysis of the Helmand valley authority was made with a view to illustrate the inherent problems including that with the political undertones.

The analysis of the nature of foreign relations has been included in the fifth chapter. Tracing the background, it seeks to impress the continued role of the historical factors, their consequences and implications. The problems of transit facilities and associated aspects with Pakistan is also discussed at length.

Maps have been prepared to substantiate the analysis. However, maps for geology, minerals could not be prepared. Although in chapter I, the detailed table as to the distribution various geological formations has been included: it was done only to reinforce the points made before and after in the later chapters. This inability to prepare the map is also substantiated by the fact that it will leave a definite gap
and which will be based on facts whose veracity is not ascertained. The recent geological surveys conducted through foreign collaborations leave much about the table's accuracy.