

Land-locked States of Africa and Asia

Edited by

Dick Hodder, Sarah J. Lloyd and
Keith McLachlan

Land-locked States of Africa and Asia

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In honour of Ieuan Ll. Griffiths

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Contents

Introduction	Keith McLachlan	1
The Experience of Land-lockedness in Africa	Ieuan Ll. Griffiths	12
Chad: Power Vacuum or Geopolitical Focus	George Joffé	25
Land-locked Niger and its Alternative Seaport Access	Ali Djimba	40
Land-lockedness and Dependency on Coastal Countries: The Case of Ethiopia	Wuhib Muluneh	56
African Land and Access Corridors	Ieuan Ll. Griffiths	69
Afghanistan: the Geopolitics of a Buffer State	Keith McLachlan	82
Land-locked Central Asia: Implications for the Future	Sarah J. Lloyd	97
Mongolia: Looking to the Sea	Alan Sanders	134
Land-locked Laos: Dilemmas of Development at the Edge of the World	Jonathan Rigg	153
Transit Arrangements between Nepal and India: A Study in International Law	Surya P. Subedi	175
Resolving the Problems of Land-lockedness	Martin Ira Glassner	197
Conclusions	Dick Hodder	209
Index		221

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Introduction

KEITH McLACHLAN

Land-lockedness is the condition of having no access to the open sea and is one that affects some 44 countries. More states still struggle to preserve their independence in the face of restricted openings to the sea via corridors or constrained seaboards. Given the violence surrounding the creation of improved outlets to the sea, as in the case of Iraq in the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and the elimination of existing corridors, as in the case of Ethiopia's loss of Eritrea in 1993, the subject has an interest that will not be gainsaid. Yet there are few major studies of the subject *per se* with the honourable exception of Professor Ira Glassner (see his contribution).¹

The present volume is, it is hoped, a useful addition to the literature dealing with the problems of land-lockedness, access and communications. It is the product of two separate conferences held at the Geopolitics & International Boundaries Research Centre (GRC) in the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) with the addition of several specially commissioned articles. The editors have taken the liberty of harmonising spellings, place-names and the styles of referencing but have otherwise left author's contributions in their original form.

Africa was the home of the majority of land-locked states arising from the original 'scramble for Africa'. The nature of colonial boundaries reflected both the pattern of colonial occupation, particularly after the Berlin Africa Conference in 1884, and intra-colonial boundaries where independent states were former administrative districts of larger colonial entities, as in the case of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa.² Colonialism also played a role in creating straight-line boundaries, though this, as in the case of Zaire, did not preclude openings to the sea. Ethiopia is a late land-locked state which was a result of the independence of Eritrea in May 1993.

There has been a rapid increase in recent years in the number of states that are land-locked, that is, have no direct access to the sea. The break up of the USSR and the political emancipation of its former territories in Caucasia, Transcaucasia and Central Asia was the cause in 1991–92 of the sudden expansion in land-lockedness (see Table 1).

The events following the independence of the states of the former USSR once more raise questions concerning the viability of land-locked countries

TABLE 1

Country	Date of Independence	Area (sq. km.)	Population (1994 est.)	GDP (1993 est.)
Afghanistan	19 August 1919	647,500	16,903,400	NA
Andorra	1278	450	63,930	\$760 mn
Armenia	23 September 1991	29,800	3,521,517	\$7.1 bn
Austria	12 November 1918	83,850	7,954,974	\$134.4 bn
Azerbaijan	30 August 1991	86,600	7,684,456	\$15.5 bn
Belarus	25 August 1991	207,600	10,404,862	\$61 bn
Bhutan	8 August 1949	47,000	716,380	\$500 mn
Bolivia	6 August 1825	1,098,580	7,719,445	\$15.8 bn
Bosnia & Herzegovina	April 1992	51,233	4,651,485	NA
Botswana	30 September 1966	600,370	1,359,352	\$6 bn
Burkina	5 August 1960	274,200	10,134,661	\$7 bn
Burundi	1 July 1962	27,830	6,124,747	\$6 bn
Central African Republic	13 August 1960	622,980	3,142,182	\$2.5 bn
Chad	11 August 1960	1,284,000	5,466,771	\$2.7 bn
Czech Republic	1 January 1993	78,703	10,408,280	\$75 bn
Ethiopia	at least 2,000 years	1,127,127	54,927,108	\$22.7 bn
Hungary	1001	93,030	10,319,113	\$57 bn
Kazakhstan	16 December 1991	2,717,300	17,267,554	\$60.3 bn
Kyrgyzstan	31 August 1991	198,500	4,698,108	\$11.3 bn
Laos	19 July 1949	236,800	4,701,654	\$4.1 bn
Lesotho	4 October 1966	30,350	1,944,493	\$2.8 bn
Liechtenstein	23 January 1719	160	30,281	\$630 mn
Luxemburg	1839	2,586	401,900	\$8.7 bn
Macedonia	17 September 1991	25,333	2,213,785	\$2.2 bn
Malawi	6 July 1964	118,480	9,732,409	\$6 bn
Mali	22 September 1960	1,024,000	9,112,950	\$5.8 bn
Moldova	27 August 1991	33,700	4,473,033	\$16.3 bn
Mongolia	13 March 1921	1,565,000	2,429,762	\$2.8 bn
Nepal	1768	140,800	21,041,527	\$20.5 bn
Niger	3 August 1960	1,267,000	8,971,605	\$5.4 bn
Paraguay	14 May 1811	406,750	5,213,772	\$15.2 bn
Rwanda	1 July 1962	26,340	8,373,963	\$6.8 bn
San Marino	301 AD (by tradition)	60	24,091	\$370 mn (1992 est.)
Slovakia	1 January 1993	48,845	5,403,505	\$31 bn
Slovenia	25 June 1991	20,296	1,972,227	\$15 bn
Swaziland	6 September 1968	17,360	936,369	\$2.3 bn
Switzerland	1 August 1291	41,290	7,040,119	\$149.1 bn
Tajikistan	9 September 1991	143,100	5,995,469	\$6.9 bn
Turkmenistan	27 October 1991	488,100	3,995,122	\$13 bn
Uganda	9 October 1962	236,040	19,121,934	\$24.1 bn
Uzbekistan	1 September 1991	447,400	22,608,866	\$53.7 bn
Vatican City	11 February 1929	.44	821	NA
Zambia	24 October 1964	752,610	9,188,190	\$7.3 bn
Zimbabwe	18 April 1980	390,580	10,975,078	\$15.9 bn

Source: GRC, SOAS, 1996

as truly autonomous nation-states. It has long been an axiom that movements for the creation of new states rarely succeed where the area contested has no outlet to the sea.³ Contemporary Russia makes no secret of its determination to control Azerbaijan and the Central Asian states over matters such as the export of oil and natural gas by pipeline, rejecting all routes that omitted transit through its territory.⁴ It is appropriate timing, therefore, that a new examination is given to the overall difficulty of land-locked states as essayed in this volume.

Since Africa was the birthplace of serious studies of the nature of land-locked states, this volume begins its regional coverage with an analysis of the experience of land-lockedness in Africa. The point is well made that 'Given the large but compact continental landmass of Africa, its division into fifty-two independent states, more than any other continent,⁵ *some* land-locked states are to be expected. Add that Africa was partitioned by alien imperial powers...it is inevitable that there are *many* African land-locked states'. The balkanisation process, seen as an unnecessary and short-sighted concomitant of de-colonisation, is a recurring theme in the study of land-lockedness, as in West Africa where natural resource endowment is poor and the colonial experience of development largely negative. The coming of the railways in this area was late in the colonial period and did little to change the status of the area from being a colonial backwater.

The situation in East Africa was mixed, the British territories along the Mombasa-Kampala railway benefiting early from improved communications. Quite the opposite occurred in Rwanda and Burundi, where no modern transport system connected the territories to the sea. The development of other East African territories for the export of agricultural goods and copper is examined, with special concern for the growth of Rhodesian communications systems with their advantages and shortcomings. The growth of rail and other transport networks in Africa as a means of overcoming the difficulties of land-lockedness where distance of some countries from the sea is very considerable. The case of Zambia, is an instance of the conflict between legal regimes for land-locked states and the brutality of *realpolitik*. Eleven of the land-locked states of Africa are small, remote, economically and politically weak, underdeveloped and dependent. Land-lockedness, with very few countries being excepted, makes so much worse the constraints – particularly affecting external trade – on economic, political and social development in Africa.

The case of Chad demonstrates the problems of access for land-locked states within a context of international law and contemporary political realities. The Cairo Declaration of 1964 on the sanctity of colonial boundaries has been useful but far from fully followed as the case of the Aozou Strip between Libya and Chad demonstrates. The very valid point is

made that many of the states of Africa face severe difficulties in constructing themselves as nation-states and that land-lockedness has further complicated matters. This is especially so where the regime in any case lacks political legitimacy.

The pre-colonial Chad shows the extent to which Chad's land-lockedness arose from the later accidents of history. Chad, before the French occupation, was part of a series of broader zones of human settlement – the nomadic north on the rim on the Sahara and its great mountain systems of Tibesti and Ennedi and adjacent to them the settled groups of Kanouri and Kamadja together with Arab tribal peoples. A detailed break-down of these major agglomerations illustrates the oddness of the human patchwork, part of which was encompassed by the political entity that became Chad. The elements of fusion through alliance and inter-marriage are offset by patterns of conflict in religion, folk history – especially the incidence of slaving in the south – and tribal affiliation.

French colonial rule established itself piecemeal but eventually a set of borders was set up, largely serving French internal administrative needs within their new African territories. The emergence of Chad's borders exhibits just how imprecise the entire French exercise was in practice. There was, however, an irony in that the poorly constructed boundaries of the east and west were to throw up no immediate problems with neighbours while the northern boundary with Libya, apparently set in legal tablets of stone in the 1919 Franco-Italian agreement, caused decades of border conflict and military activity. The legal progress of the Aozou dispute is documented leading to the settlement at the International Court of Justice in 1994.

During French colonial rule the division of Chad into the southern zone, where educational and developmental activities were concentrated, and a Muslim zone, where colonial intrusion and economic investment was relatively small, deeply divided the Chad region. The disposition of power at the end of the colonial period was inverted, with the former powerful Muslim sultanates secondary to the richer south. The readjustments this occasioned after independence, including the civil wars, are discussed, with their ramifications of foreign (French and Libyan) intervention. The resulting economic prostration of Chad and its precarious internal political imbalances are summarised as products of the French colonial intervention. This sorry story is not proposed by the writer as the outcome of Chad's land-locked position, but rather as the expression of a political legacy of a centrally disposed state at the mercy of badly defined and unsettled frontiers.

Niger is a country which is technically classified as land-locked but which, by virtue of its location on the River Niger, has an economically dubious physical if not political avenue to the Atlantic Seaboard of West

Africa. Niger is hampered by the inherent problems of high transport costs for imports and exports because it is a large country without a fully developed internal transport system and suffers from all the difficulties faced by a struggling third world economy. The dependency problem is acute. Adjacent states with sea ports are bound with Niger in a series of transit agreements going back to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, none of which is implemented securely or even-handedly from the point of view of Niger, which remains either a supplicant for better arrangements at the official level or a victim of the extortions of local trading chiefs who manage the informal sector. But the practicalities are that language differences, inharmonious currency and banking systems and inefficiency characterise the transportation network linking Niger to the outside world. A prime example of this difficulty is the new highway built with World Bank assistance, which links all the main cities in Niger to Cotonou in Benin but which is closed because Benin-Niger governments wish to exploit their monopoly of rail lines along the same route. Underdevelopment is a product of the international division of labour, though the evidence he presents also indicates that internal policies deeply exacerbate whatever comparative disadvantages, including those of land-lockedness, plague Niger from outside.

Ethiopia is among the most recent of states to become land-locked. The country is learning to cope with its new dependency on its coastal neighbours of Eritrea and Djibouti. The conclusion must be that, despite the development of the port of Assab in Eritrea and the modernisation of transit facilities in Djibouti, Ethiopia's external trade will remain geared to stability and growth in the littoral states. The formation of a regional economic co-operation agreement with Djibouti and Eritrea provides a formal basis for future trade integration; political harmony and understanding will also be required if Ethiopia is not to suffer from the difficulties of land-lockedness.

The constraints on countries that suffer from limitations of access through land corridors to the open sea is a parallel consideration to full land-lockedness. Corridors are seen in two forms – first, those which currently exist that in configuration are long and narrow and, second, relict corridors. Corridors were constructed in both colonial times and following independence, the colonial legacy being far more effective and sustainable than successor lines of access.

The corridor of access to the sea for Zaire along the Congo was established in 1885 and survives to the present with a 35km Atlantic coastline. The history of this corridor is examined as an example of a successful attempt to off-set land-lockedness. A second instance is of the Caprivi Strip which connects the Zambesi River with northern Namibia. The Caprivi Strip is portrayed as 'a sore thumb on the political map of Africa.'

Less obvious corridors also exist, principally the 'road north' between the Transvaal and the Kalahari, which was Cecil Rhodes' strategic corridor to the Cape. Other 'relict' land corridors are identified, including the two German-French constructs for access to the Obangui and Congo rivers from the German colony of Kamerun. The Anglo-Belgian arrangement for access for a British Cape-Cairo rail link between Lakes Tanganyika and Edward was short-lived while the Mahgi strip gave Belgian access to Lake Albert until the 1915 adjustment left the entire west shore of the lake in Belgian hands.

In the post-colonial era attempts to set up access corridors to the sea for land-locked states were well-intentioned but poorly based. The Ethiopian corridor through Eritrea worked for the period 1936-93 until Eritrea became independent. Malawi's claims to the Niassa corridor gained no support and the same fate overcame the Ugandan attempt in the 1970s to force a corridor through to the sea across Tanzanian territory. The Beira rail corridor for Zimbabwe to Mutare (Umtali) functions without needing any transfer of sovereignty, while the Swaziland to Kosi corridor proposed by South Africa in the 1980s never came into being at all.

The appeal of access corridors both for Africa and elsewhere is enduring as a solution to the problem of land-lockedness, despite the bad experience of African states in the twentieth century. Russian claims to access to the Black Sea keep access corridors a live issue in contemporary international politics.

Afghanistan is both land-locked and is a topographic divide. It acted as a buffer zone⁶ between Russia, Great Britain and the Persian Gulf. This paper examines Afghanistan as a land-locked state and a buffer in the 'great game' of international geopolitics. The hypothesis presented is that Afghanistan is a mountain fortress, which the Russians, Persians and British were never able to control. The country may be seen as a zone from which rival great powers sought to exclude each other. Afghanistan was therefore in many ways a classic buffer-state throughout much of the nineteenth century. The conclusion must be that the 'tyranny of terrain remains a stubborn reality'⁷ in Afghanistan. It is an area which repels rather than attracts. Its strategic significance is as a negative zone where external powers intrigue but find it difficult to put down roots.

The linkage between land-lockedness and the role of Afghanistan as a buffer-state can be seen as the result of special circumstances in which the application of the concept of buffer-state is reinforced by the national territory being land-locked. Afghanistan's designation as the 'Switzerland of the East'⁸ is the analogy which gives support to this contention. At the same time, being land-locked, Afghanistan was created as the inevitable client to Russian and British patrons. Without transit routes through Russia

and India, Afghanistan became isolationist and without flexibility in the management of its own affairs. There is also the interesting notion that land-lockedness gave Afghanistan no choice in selecting its allies. States other than Great Britain and Russia might be courted as allies by the Afghans but, without a territorial base, were at a disadvantage.⁹ Being land-locked, Afghanistan was at the mercy of conspiracy, treaty or tacit arrangement between the neighbours for which it was a buffer-state.

The five new states of Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – , despite their wealth in hydrocarbon and other natural resources (or perhaps because of it), were ill-prepared for independence. The development of trade in Central Asia in relation to the transport infrastructure and the need for the regional states to create other outlets is vital if they are to escape the persistent economic and political influence of Russia.

Central Asia largely remains tied in to the imperial/communist Russian economy. The distortions this introduced remain central including the effects of Soviet developments in agriculture and industry. The structure of the oil sector and the alignment of the export system from a land-locked province to a scarcely better served Soviet centre add to the Central Asian problem. How the regional states will overcome their twin difficulties of tight linkage to an inefficient and restrictive Russian transportation network in which Moscow has monopolist power is to be seen within the context of the new pipeline route options other than those through Russia – Black Sea, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and China. Until such alternative export lines are constructed with the help of a forceful third party, the Central Asian states will remain dependent on Russia.

Interestingly, Iran is well placed to act as transit route for Central Asia, situated at the centre of south-west Asia and, in its Caspian provinces, linking the Middle East zone to Central Asia and Transcaucasia. It has for centuries played an important role in moulding the history of the Caspian Basin and is seen as crucially placed in determining the future of the region. Russia and the OECD states have yet to come to terms with Iran or to accommodate to the new geography of the Caspian region, which now includes Central Asia and much of Transcaucasia bordering Iran. Iran is misconstrued by Western governments as a cordon between the Caspian Basin and the warm waters of the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean, limiting the options open for evacuating the hydrocarbon and other wealth of the Caspian Basin.¹⁰

It is clear from the debate on Caspian oil disposals that Iran can play a major logistical role for the land-locked states of Central Asia. During World War II Iran became an important Allied supply route to the USSR. The route used was that of the Trans-Iranian railway and the largely parallel

road system. A secondary axis now also exists between Bandar Abbas and Messhed and thence to the USSR via Sarakhs to Marv or via Quchan to Central Asia. This route must still be a favoured gateway for the Caspian states to the south. By distance, however, the direct line down eastern Iran remains a potential axis for transportation development. New transport-communications links through Messhed-Birjand to Chah Bahar also offer short and potentially useful north-south access though Iran.¹¹

Mongolia has been a form of independent land-locked state since 1924, but only under a liberal constitution since 1992. Mongolia was bypassed by modern developments through its isolation by the adjacent powers – Russia and China in their imperial and more recent guises. There is a notable lack of all-weather roads and useful waterways, leaving the crucial rail network to carry 90 per cent of national freight. The evolution of trade with China and Soviet Russia, opened up the country through the improvement of the rail system as a means of overcoming land-lockedness – the Ulan Bator line as the key element in the 1960s and the growth of land links with China in the 1980s. The inclusion of preferential treatment for Mongolia in the 1991 PRC-Mongolia transit agreement to Tianjin's Xingang international port was based on Mongolia's special needs as a land-locked state. There is some irony in the fact that 'hundreds of millions of dollars worth of aid' has been put into Mongolia's infrastructure to help overcome its land-locked situation while many of Africa's land-locked states languish with little help to overcome similar and possibly more pressing problems.

The case of Laos, as Southeast Asia's only land-locked state became independent from France in 1954.¹² The problems of overland transport in Laos have been exacerbated by its land-lockedness. Laos may be depicted as having undergone rapid political and economic change in which improvements in transport links to neighbouring countries and to the open sea have been pivotal. The comparative weakness of Laos vis-à-vis Vietnam and Thailand has led to a situation where, 'successful economic development...is contingent upon maintaining improved relations with Bangkok and Hanoi'.

The growth of international transport connections has absorbed no less than 20 per cent of total national investment funds yet Laos remains poorly served by links, much of its northern areas being effectively cut off from the world during the wet season. Meanwhile, there are problems of mountainous terrain, low population density and a legacy of damage from the Vietnam war.

While some efforts are being made, for example, to upgrade port and navigation facilities on the River Mekong, progress is very slow and expensive for this poor nation. The position is made worse by the intransigent attitude of Laos's neighbours. Thailand in particular may be

seen as using the border and Laos's land-lockedness as a political tool – obstructing innocent passage of goods through tightening border controls and imposing what amounted to a wide ranging blockage against exports to and imports from Laos. The consequence of Thai policies was a realignment of export routes through Vietnam, aided by new investment in roads that were more expensive and circuitous than the Thai route. The pattern for the future is aptly positive, with a Lao deputy prime minister tellingly asserting recently that Laos hoped to be a link between adjacent states rather than a victim of its land-locked position. The Laos example illustrates how a policy of practising good relations with neighbours, even under provocation, is one way of defeating the dangers and isolation of Semple's 'central' countries' syndrome.¹³

International law is unkind to land-locked states. The problems faced by Nepal in its transit arrangements with India developed as a 'cold war' between the two states and the gradual closing down of Nepal's access through India to the sea. The Indian authorities curtailed Nepal's transit trade and Nepal has claimed that India violated international law in imposing a virtual economic blockade against it. The signature of a memorandum of understanding on trade and transit was signed between the two states in June 1990 ending the confrontation but leaving important questions of international law unresolved. Certainly, Nepal was forced to make major concessions to its larger neighbour, including accepting constraints on its acquisition of arms from China, foregoing defence dealings with China and granting privileges in law to Indian citizens. Additionally, it might be questioned whether, first, the agreement of 1990 need be renewed by India at its expiry, and, second, if India will feel obliged under international law to grant only one access point for Nepali goods in transit or indeed any access by right at all.

The nature of the Indo-Nepali relationship in historical, political and legal terms is defined by disputes. It is the legal side which is given stress, however, with the burden of the debate lying in the domain of the perspective of the Indian-Nepali transit dispute. The Barcelona Convention on Freedom of Transit is the starting point with key relevance of its provisions to the issue between India and Nepal. The provisions of other international agreements are also inspected, especially the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. The weight of authorities supports the view that access to the sea is guaranteed by customary international law.

The claim by India that it was required to make a single transit point for Nepal under international law, rather than the fifteen which were used before the 1987 rift in relations, is dubious and there are authorities who believe that India's position has 'no legal basis'. By 1991 India appeared to have granted a restitution of the full *status quo ante* the 1987 crisis transit access

to Nepal. The 1991 Transit Treaty also specifically accepted that 'Nepal as a land-locked country needs access to and from the Sea to promote its international trade'. The 1991 Treaty is less than ideal, none the less, since it takes full account of neither the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea nor UNCLOS III. India gained transit reciprocity from Nepal and other concessions entirely unwarranted under international law, leading to the conclusion that, in practice, right favours the strong.

It is concluded¹⁴ that the academic community liaises but little with the UN and national authorities responsible for day-to-day management of problems of land-lockedness. Similarly, all the problems of land-locked states are political at heart and can only be solved by political means. Five approaches to transit difficulties can be offered – (1) elaboration of international conventions and UN-sponsored agreements, (2) intensified general economic growth which furnishes greater trade for all, (3) improved transit arrangements, (4) expanded facilities in the transit states to create capacity and demand for extra trade flows from the interior states, and (5) adoption of regional trade pacts which overarch local constraint on transit from land-locked states.

The scope for improved transit arrangements is a key area for useful progress. In summary, the point can be made that 'The rights and claims of land-locked states, therefore, are likely to become more, not less, prominent as we approach the end of the twentieth century.' Judging by the materials relating to both theory and case studies of land-lockedness in this volume from many parts of the developing world this view is regretfully being proved correct.

There are significant differences between those land-locked states which emerged from the disintegrations of empires and those which arose from colonial origins. There are also gradations of severity of land-lockedness which need to be considered in any assessment of impact on potential for economic development. It might be suggested that there are solutions available to overcome the problems of land-lockedness – through bilateral agreements with coastal neighbours, through diminishing reliance on external trade whilst emphasising internal commerce and development and, lastly, by creating general regional organisations backed by multinational treaties. In essence land-lockedness in the third world, like other geographical factors, needs to be accepted and accommodated rather than fought against.

NOTES

1. *Bibliography on Land-locked States*, 3rd ed. (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff 1991).
2. I. Brownlee, *African Boundaries* (London: Hurst/RIIA 1979) pp.5–6.

3. This is recognised by movements such as the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Cf. M. O'Shea, 'Between the map and the reality', *Peuples Méditerranéens* 68–69 p.173.
4. The Russian ambassador to Iran, Mr Tretiakov, made clear in a conference address in Tehran on 10 December 1995 (Oil & Gas Prospects in the Caspian Region, Conference, Tehran Institute of Political & International Studies, 11–12 Dec. 1995.) that no oil or natural gas would be exported from any of its former possession without specific Russian approval.
5. R. Bridges, 'Africa, Africans and the sea' in J.C. Stone (ed.), *Africa and the Sea*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University African Studies Group [Proceedings of a Colloquium, March 1984] 1985).
6. Buffer-zone is defined in the Ingalls view 'as...a small political or administrative unit located between and separating two larger opposing powers.' G.L. Ingalls, 'Buffer states: outlining and expanding existing theory', in J. Chay and T.E. Ross (eds) *Buffer States in World Politics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview 1986) p.233.
7. M.Z. Ispahani, *Roads and Rivals: the Politics of Access in the Borderlands of Asia*, (London: I. B. Tauris 1989) p.2.
8. J.S. Roucek, 'Afghanistan in geopolitics', in *Eastern World* 17/12 (1961) p.4.
9. Germany was an outside contender in the period after 1910 but, although a commercial rival to GR and Russia, never took political risks to sustain its position.
10. The US view of 'dual containment' is encapsulated by T.R. Mattair, 'Horizons for cooperation in the Gulf and the Oman Sea: The view from Washington' in *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, (Tehran, Vol.7/3 1995), pp.576–84.
11. K.S. McLachlan, 'Geopolitics of oil and gas in the Caspian Region', in *Oil and Gas Prospects in the Caspian Region*, (Institute for Political and International Studies/Institute for International Energy Studies, Tehran 1996), pp.26–48.
12. Laos was part of French Indochina before this date.
13. E.C. Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment* (London: Constable & Co. 1911) pp.139–41. Semple made the point that 'A state embedded in the heart of a continent...if weak, its very existence is imperiled because of encroachments on every side'.
14. By Professor Ira Glassner of Southern Connecticut State University who kindly contributed the penultimate paper to this volume.

The Experience of Land-lockedness in Africa

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In May 1993 Ethiopia became the fifteenth land-locked state in Africa when Eritrea achieved independence. That followed a thirty-year war of secession and a longer delayed self-determination referendum. A former Italian colony, Eritrea had been controversially incorporated into Ethiopia in 1961 largely because it blocked Ethiopian access to the sea. Ethiopia's new status is due to the break up of an empire, a genesis shared with the land-locked states which emerged from colonial empires in Africa and, more recently, from the former empires of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Eritrea's independence could also mark the break down of the political status quo which has prevailed since the end of European imperialism in Africa and more specifically since July 1964 when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) agreed that member states should respect their colonial boundaries. Interpreting Eritrea's independence as the break up of an existing state (Ethiopia) and as ending the long-standing inhibition on African boundary change, could support the thesis that Africa is about to embark on a period of new political instability. For the first time since the colonial partition would the territorial integrity of states, the basic structure of African political geography, be affected. The threatened disintegration of Liberia and Sierra Leone are in this respect also ominous, as are, in a different way, the rash of African boundary disputes now being referred for solution outside Africa. The multiplicity of land-locked states represents a fundamental flaw in the basic political geography of Africa which, similar to the flawed international boundaries, has a colonial cause and poses a threat to independent development.

Given the large but compact continental landmass of Africa, its lack of great sea inlets, its short coastline in relation to area, and its division into fifty-two independent states, more than any other continent,¹ some land-locked states are to be expected. Add that Africa was partitioned by alien imperial powers who then relinquished direct colonial rule for indirect neo-colonial power, easily asserted over a balkanised continent of small, politically and economically weak states, it is inevitable that there are many African land-locked states. In all there are 15, in three blocks, west, east and south-central, plus Ethiopia in the north-east and the small isolated states of Swaziland and Lesotho in the south.

The western land-locked states are all former French colonies.² Mali (French Sudan), Burkina Faso (Upper Volta) and Niger were part of the *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF). Together they cover a vast, sparsely populated area between the coastal states of West Africa and the Sahara. The Central African Republic (CAR) (Obangui Chari) and Chad formerly part of the *Afrique Equatoriale Française* (AEF) are also enormous, extending from the central Sahara to the tropical rainforest of the Congo. French dominance of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger came from an imperial thrust, from Dakar to the inland Niger and eastwards, aimed at preventing inland expansion by other colonial powers from the Guinea coast. Large tracts of these territories were long into this century not even given the status of colonies but were under military rule. Upper Volta appeared (1919), disappeared (1932) and reappeared (1947) at the changing whim of French colonial administrators. All five sparsely-ruled territories were remote and possessed few natural resources (*seche* rather than *utile*) to attract colonial attention. Economic development was very limited and the French created few opportunities for improvement.

There was little modern transport access from the sea in the colonial period. The French military thrust to the navigable middle Niger (1880s) was backed initially but belatedly by a 310 mile (496km) metre-gauge railway from Kayes on the navigable upper Senegal river to Bamako (1904), with 555 miles (888km) of river transport to St. Louis at the river mouth which was connected to Dakar by a further 164 mile (262km) railway. In 1910 the French completed a second railway 222 miles (355km) to the Niger from Conakry to Kouroussa, 368 miles (589km) upstream of Bamako. This reduced greatly the distance to the sea but both routes were limited by the marked seasonal flows of the Senegal and Niger rivers. Only by 1924 was the Bamako/Kayes railway extended direct to Dakar 769 miles (1230km) via Tambacounda. From Abidjan the French built a railway to Bobo-Dioulasso in 1934, extended to Ouagadougou, 743 miles (1189km), in Upper Volta in 1954 primarily to facilitate labour flow to the coastal region. Niger and Chad, even more remote, were totally unsullied by modern surface transport whilst Obangui-Chari was reached by 718 miles (1149km) of river transport to Bangui from Brazzaville, itself 319 miles (511km) from Pointe Noire on the coast by another metre-gauge railway (1934) which opened up the Congo basin to the French. The five land-locked territories were colonial backwaters, extremities of a far-flung empire, occupied as much to keep other powers out as for their own value.

In east Africa Uganda was a British 'protectorate' where indirect rule and Christian missions flourished. The land-locked protectorate controlling the source of the Nile had few white settlers or mineral resources but possessed rich agriculture. Cotton, coffee, tea and sugar cash crops were

encouraged by the colonial administration and to some extent by the strategic metre-gauge Uganda railway built from Mombasa, at first (1901) as far as Port Florence (Kisumu) (572 miles, 915km) on Lake Victoria, but by 1931 extended to Kampala (725 miles, 1160km). Rwanda and Burundi result from the division of the League of Nations trust territory of Ruanda-Urundi which in turn had been carved out of German East Africa (Tanganyika) and given to Belgium as reward for being on the winning side in the First World War. The rationale behind this particular reward was that it was contiguous with the Belgian Congo and, unlike the west coast territory Belgium coveted, had been German and was not strategically important. Similar in some respects to Uganda, Ruanda-Urundi had few white settlers but many Christian missionaries; few mineral resources but rich agricultural land supporting a high density of population. The territory was very remote, over 1720 miles (2750km) from the sea at Matadi, with few development prospects. The Belgians established no modern surface transport access to the sea. Even the river port of Stanleyville (Kisangani) was 413 miles (660km) distant by atrocious dirt tracks.

Ethiopia became land-locked only in 1993, but was land-locked prior to the Italian invasion of 1935 as it had been over centuries of history. The colonial boundary of Eritrea which re-emerged in 1993 was one of the few ever to disappear from the political map of Africa. The 1961 Ethiopian take-over of Eritrea had been pure African imperialism, aided and abetted for strategic cold-war reasons by the United States which elsewhere supported formal decolonisation. Land-locked Ethiopia is served by a 776km metre-gauge railway built by the French from Djibouti to Addis Ababa and opened in 1908.

Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) with Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), together comprised the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953–63). The Federation was an attempt by white settlers, mainly in Southern Rhodesia, with active Conservative support at Westminster, to create a system of government between what they saw as the extremes of, as yet untried, black majority rule and white minority rule epitomised by the emergent sterile apartheid state of South Africa. Their 'Partnership' erred towards apartheid offering too little to the majority, particularly in the northern territories. In 1963 the Federation broke up, unable to withstand the wave of African nationalism then sweeping the continent. Malawi and Zambia attained independence separately in 1964, leaving a re-named Rhodesia, replete with a large (250,000) settler population, to follow a troubled, rebellious path to independence with majority rule in 1980 as Zimbabwe.

Nyasaland was a model British African Protectorate: few settlers, many missionaries, high density of population, few minerals but rich in

agriculture with tea and tobacco important cash crops. It was remote, first with access by the Zambesi and Shire valleys, via Chinde, the British-leased port at the mouth of the Zambesi, and from 1935 by direct rail link with Beira.³ Northern Rhodesia, also a British Protectorate, lay athwart the spinal railway from the Cape across the Zambesi (1905) to the Katangan copper mines (1910). It too was an archetypal British Protectorate except in the south and centre. White settlers crept in along the 'line of rail' to alienate land for commercial agriculture and from the late 1920s the Copperbelt was opened up. The copper companies developed mines and mining camps which mushroomed into towns. The modern development of mining was to create problems for a future independent, land-locked Zambia as it generated bulk exports of copper. In colonial times, however, copper exports stimulated the creation of alternative rail routes of access to the sea. The original spinal route was over 3000km from the Copperbelt to the Cape ports. There was a circuitous, 2000km rail route to Beira but that port was unable to cope with the bulk of copper traffic. In 1929 the Belgians opened a new railway to Port Francqui (Ilebo) on the Kasai river over 800km by river from Leopoldville (Kinshasa) itself 374km by rail from the Congo estuary seaport of Matadi. The route was marred by double trans-shipment and great overall length (3395km). The completion of the Benguela railway from the Angolan west coast in 1931, a private venture specifically to tap the copper trade, was a marked improvement but the sea was still 2500km distant. Southern Rhodesia was white-settler country with the more fertile and more accessible half of the land area alienated. Early white hopes of great mineral riches, another Witwatersrand, were never realised and settlers were 'given' land by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in compensation. Nevertheless Southern Rhodesia developed mining, a rich, settler-based commercial agriculture and, in time, a large manufacturing sector. Rhodes fought to prevent his new empire being blocked from the sea by Portuguese Mozambique, but all his efforts to bluff, bully or buy a corridor of access failed.⁴ So Southern Rhodesia remained land-locked, its high level of economic development and settler population, anomalous among Africa's land-locked territories. In early colonial times land-lockedness did not matter as Rhodesia was seen as a potential fifth province of South Africa and as such was similar to the land-locked Transvaal and Orange Free State. But in 1922, before BSAC rule ended, the settlers opted in a referendum for 'responsible self government' rather than union with South Africa.⁵ Early rail routes to ensure the survival of the colony were to the Cape ports (1897) and Beira (1900). As the settler-led economy grew a railway was built direct to Lourenco Marques (Maputo) in 1955, avoiding South Africa to maintain independence but giving access to a more efficient port.⁶ The Beira corridor was further enhanced by a tarred road and an oil

pipeline. During the death throes of the illegal settler government (1965–79), the policy of independence from South Africa was abandoned in the interests of survival. The long-delayed rail link with South Africa via Beit Bridge was opened in 1974 in a futile attempt to prevent the inevitable by establishing an economic lifeline to the apartheid state before access to the sea was denied (March 1976) by the incoming FRELIMO government in newly independent Mozambique.

Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho) and Swaziland also escaped union with South Africa because Britain honoured treaties with African chiefs who did not want it. Later, despite pressure from white South Africa and debate in Britain,⁷ the option became increasingly unacceptable, especially as the apartheid state emerged in South Africa. Bechuanaland embraced much of the Kalahari desert and had a very sparse population living mainly near its better-watered eastern border. In the colonial period it was a typical British protectorate: remote, few resources except indigenous agriculture, few settlers and many missionaries. Contiguous with South Africa, it supplied that country with meat and labour. Rhodes' rail 'road to the north' gave access from the south. Swaziland loosely based on the traditional Swazi kingdom became a British Protectorate after the Anglo-Boer war before which it was administered by, but not absorbed into, the South African Republic (Transvaal). Before independence in 1968, unlike other British protectorates, more than half of Swaziland was alienated, largely by white South Africans. In the 1930s asbestos mining was developed but did not open up Swaziland because it was marginally located and exports went via aerial ropeway to the South African railhead at Barberton. Basutoland (Lesotho), another African kingdom which had emerged during the early nineteenth century Mfecane, sought British protection against Boer encroachment in 1868. Lesotho had few natural resources and relied on large-scale labour exports to South Africa. A rail spur from South Africa (1905) extends one mile into Lesotho to facilitate this human traffic. Among African land-locked states Lesotho uniquely is doubly disadvantaged being completely surrounded by a single country, South Africa.

Independence came to European colonies in Africa individually. Most of the land-locked ones became neo-colonial backwaters, no longer part of over-arching empires. Whether decisions to give independence to colonies rather than to colonial federations were deliberate acts of balkanisation to facilitate neo-colonialism is debatable. The effect is evident: emergent land-locked states were seriously disadvantaged.

Land-locked states, by definition, lack direct access to the sea and depend on another state or states for such access. Important considerations are: the absolute distances involved; the quality of the route in respect of