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The Challenges Facing Landlocked Developing Countries

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Abstract

In spite of technological improvements in transport, landlocked developing countries continue to face structural challenges to accessing world markets. As a result, landlocked countries often lag behind their maritime neighbours in overall development and external trade. While the relatively poor performance of many landlocked countries can be attributed to distance from coast, this paper argues that several aspects of dependence on transit neighbours are also important. Four such types of dependence are discussed: dependence on neighbours' infrastructure; dependence on sound cross-border political relations; dependence on neighbours' peace and stability; and dependence on neighbours' administrative practices. These factors combine to yield different sets of challenges and priorities in each landlocked country. The paper concludes with a brief set of policy recommendations. A detailed appendix presents

maps and regional overviews that outline key challenges facing the landlocked countries in each region.

Keywords:

- Globalization
- Landlocked countries
- Geography
- Transit
- Transport
- Conflict
- Markets
- Economy

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Notes

The European landlocked countries consist of Austria, Andorra, Belarus, Czech Republic, Holy See, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, San Marino, Slovakia, Macedonia, Moldova and Switzerland. Moldova is the only European landlocked country with a HDI score of less than 0.76.

We exclude high HDI landlocked countries from our analysis, all of which are situated in Europe.

We recognize that some of the regional groupings in this paper are atypical. They were defined based on the most sensible grouping for assessing regional issues of landlockedness. Thus, for instance, we include a very large range of countries in our category of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Botswana would count as another exceptional success but export data for the country are not included in International Monetary Fund ([2002](#))

This article states that: ‘The terms and modalities for exercising freedom of transit shall be agreed between the land-locked States and transit States concerned through bilateral, sub regional or regional agreements’. Furthermore, ‘Transit States, in the exercise of their full sovereignty over their territory, shall have the right to take all measures necessary to ensure that the rights and facilities provided for in this Part for land-locked States shall in no way infringe their legitimate interests’

Transit through China is effectively impossible due to the Himalayan Ranges.

Some of the transit and customs charges include transit goods licenses, border fees, temporary road licenses, foreign vehicle permits, toll charges, foreign commercial licenses, cost of customs verification of containers, posting of security bonds, involvement with police and escort convoys and cancellation of bonds. The cost of bribes needed en route, while considered to be significant, is beyond the scope of this report.

Although somewhat dated, these are the most recent figures we were able to identify.

Ibid.

Vehicles waiting for a convoy to form wait on the side of the road, not only hindering normal road traffic, but also contributing to road damage.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are involved in a border dispute, Tajikistan has been in a civil war and claims Uzbekistan is abusing its border closure powers for political purposes, and Kazakhstan fears the Islamic threat of militant Islam and terrorism from Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan is reacting to the incursion of Tajik rebels (Dion, [2000](#)).

The only two countries not to have been involved in a significant civil conflict are Cameroon and Benin. Cameroon is characterized by very poor levels of infrastructure — unpaved roads susceptible to flooding form much of the transit route from Chad and the Central African Republic through Cameroon. Benin’s port at Cotonou is considered to be one of the least well equipped in the region.

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