

Democratic Dependencies: Analyzing the Influence of Coastal Neighbors on Landlocked Developing Democracies



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Abstract

Landlocked developing countries are mostly in the Global South and their development status is often associated with their dependency on their coastal neighbors for trade and transit. In this context, realizing the gap of knowledge in democratic dynamics in their relations, this paper focuses on democracy rather than on development. Thus, to explore patterns of their relations in democracy, it adopts an exploratory research design based on the democracy ranking data of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance with the quantitative method of regression analysis. The results of the analyses imply that in majority of the cases the quality of democracy in the landlocked developing countries is positively associated with the quality of democracy in their coastal neighbors in all the four aspects of representation, participation, rights, and rule of law for democracy. However, the presence of inverse relation in the quality of democracy between these groups is also statistically observed, however, the status of positive pattern of relations is higher than the negative. With this, the paper contributes to expand the knowledge that not only in development but also in the quality of democracy, landlocked developing countries are closely associated with their coastal neighbors.

Keywords: Democracy, Democracy in Landlocked Developing Countries, Representation, Participation,

Introduction

From the side of international relations of countries, there are different issues for the underdeveloped situation of landlocked countries. Such as International Telecommunication Union (April 2024) and the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly adopted in the 79th session acknowledge the geographical and structural constraints faced by 32 Landlocked Developing Countries (LDCs) across the world having challenges in their transport, trade and connectivity with dependency on their neighbors. From development perspective, it is arguably related to the dynamics in democracy via modernization, freedom of choice, opportunities of creating entitlements and capitalization of such skills.

Chowdhury and Erdenebileg (2006) state that due to constraints in transport, trade and technology diffusion, not simply economic growth is affected but also the expenditure in basic social services such as health and education is marred affecting overall human development in the landlocked countries. Then, as most of these LDCs are in the Asian and African regions, the regions which are usually kept in the status of low human and economic development status need to get global attention.

While most of the studies between the relations of landlocked countries and their coastal neighbors are found to have based on economic terms such as transport, trade, and transit and analysis focusing on the democratic relations between

them seems to be an often-overlooked area. Even if democracy may not directly and overtly travel through an established transport or trading system, there are literatures that relate democratization with civilization that began from near water while some other present their arguments based on the land-speed and water-speed. In later times, with the use of web-2 version of the information technology, the water based spatial concept of democracy also tends to be paralleled by air based speedy democracy. In this sense, democracy may also be autonomous unlike transport and trade. Amid these assumptions and arguments, this paper attempts to examine the quality of democracy in the landlocked and their coastal countries to establish patterns of relations between them.

Research Question

This paper intends to answer whether the democracy in landlocked developing countries has relations with the democracy in their coastal neighbors? If yes, what patterns of relations does the democracy in landlocked developing countries have with the democracy in their coastal neighbors?

Literatures and Framework

This research is open to two theoretical aspects of dependency for development and diffusion of values and institutions. As one aspect assumes that social and economic development is more a precondition for democracy such as Lipset (1960). Moreover, Smith (1776) argues that the being nearer to coasts promotes civilization, development and waterways open market for every type of industries. Similarly, Collier (2007, pp. 56-57), having the opinion that neighbors matter for the development of the landlocked countries, writes, "if you are coastal, you serve the world; if you are landlocked, you serve your neighbors". In the same tradition, Gerring, Apfeld, Wig, and Tollefsen (2022, p. 48) state that "areas situated close to harbors are more likely to evolve in a democratic direction than areas surrounded by large landmasses". Then, with these assumptions and arguments, it can be perceived that the de-

velopment of landlocked countries relies more on the coastal countries. In this line of thought, it can be assumed that democracy in landlocked countries is directly or indirectly affected by the behaviors and situation of democratic practices of their coastal neighbors.

On the other side, Gleditsch and Ward (2008) discuss on the heuristic concepts of coercions, competition, learning and constructivist emulation in the study of diffusion with reference to the historical status of 1816 when there were only five percent democratic states while in 1990, the democracies outnumbered the autocracy. This seems to be inclusive of the concept of international diffusion of democratic values due to external coercion and also due to the sense of competition. Similarly, Wejnert (2014, p.77) discusses on the diffusion factors such as geographical proximity and network density and internal development factors for democratic development. For this research, the diffusion-based assumptions tend to suggest for two possibilities that the democratic ideals and institutions in landlocked countries are more likely to be affected from the coastal countries. While it can also be sensed that the not simply the geographical nearness but also regional networking affect the quality of democracy in the landlocked developing countries.

Exploring democracy in international relations, Pevhouse (2005) summarizes three broader mechanisms for democratization and its consolidation. The first is diffusion and demonstration effects with the possibilities of parallel moves between and among the neighbors, second is the epistemic communities and spillover effects rendered usually by technical information and democratic values by the non-governmental organizations and finally the use of force by the other states. Pavhouse argues that the international and regional organizations play significant roles for democratization and its strengthening. For this study, this argument tends to inform multiple external factors for democracy in the LDCs ranging from geo-proximity to epistemic communities. The applicability of the concept of epistemic community might be stronger as this contemporary

age is marked by easy access and high use of fast and less costly information communication technology including the digital spaces for sharing ideas in networks. These phenomena might call for de-patterned democratic relations between countries even if they are geographically proximate for this study.

Design and Assumptions

The paper adopts exploratory research design intending to identify and establish patterns of relations between the democracies in landlocked developing countries and their coastal neighbors. It is open to both assumptions that with reference to world system and dependency theories in development whether the quality of democracy in the LDCs is dependent on the quality of democracy in their coastal countries. In other words, if democracy in the LDCs is affected or at least related to the democracy of the coastal.

On the other side, with the growth of modern information technology, multinational transfer of information and knowledge and the opportunities of networking and also as democracy does not only need physical means of transit and transportation and it is not trading goods as well, the possibility of the LDCs to develop better democracies than that of their coastal neighbors cannot also be disregarded. On the other hand, the quality of democracy in the LDC may also be affected by its economic status of self-sufficiency or level of resource deprivation or the freedom and use of virtual networking with other countries beyond their borders.

Data and Source

This paper uses secondary data for analysis. The data for the identification of LDCs were taken from the United Nation Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The UNCTAD has categorized a total number 32 countries as landlocked developing countries. Thus, $N = 32$ but as two countries namely, South Sudan and Uzbekistan were removed from analysis for South Sudan lacked adequate democracy ranking data while Uzbekistan was removed subject to the objective of the study as it was doubly landlocked and therefore, $n =$

30. This means 30 LDCs were taken for analysis. The data on ranking of democracy was used as measured by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) published in its website in 2024. Though the paper employed the data used for democracy ranking, it does not rank democracy itself. But rather it explores trends and patterns if there is some kinds of relations including causation in statistical sense. The year 1990 was taken as a base year as in the global political history, 1990 is supposed to be a turning point when cold war ended and liberal democracy had no other competing options (Fukuyama, 1992). From the base year, owing to resource limitations, it made analysis of the data of 12 years selected in the interval of three years between 1990 to 2023. Thus, the paper is based on the democracy ranking data of 12 years of 30 LDCs and their trans-actional coastal neighbors.

Methods and Measurement

This paper used linear regression test between the ranking of democracy data in LDCs and their coastal neighbors between 1990 to 2023. The data of 12 years, at least one third of the total 33 years, were used for the analysis. The years were selected in an increment of three years such as 1990, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2023. Moreover, concerning to bordering countries of LDCs, only coastal countries giving the usual transship seaports to the concerned LDCs were selected for the study as per World Bank (2006) and if the usual transship could not be confirmed from literatures, the visual spatial proximity approach was used to select the coastal countries as per the atlas. After collecting data with the method stated, they were filtered and analyzed in the Microsoft Excel. While analyzing through regression, democracy ranking data of the LDCs were treated as Y^1 and the democracy ranking data of the coastal countries granting usual seaports were treated as X^2 or the predictor.

Moreover, as the International IDEA ranked democracy in four different categories such as representation, participation, rights, and

rule of law, there were altogether (47*4) 188 regression models. Even if there were 30 LDCs under analysis, the regression model in each category were 47 because some of the LDCs

had two or more usual coast accessing countries. As a whole, in each category, the results of regression models were interpreted as follows:

Direction of relation and statistical significance	Assessment criteria
Statistically significant positive relation	p value <0.05 and slope >0.0
Statistically significant negative relation	p value <0.05 and slope <0.0
Statistically not significant but positive relation	p value >0.05 and slope >0.0
Statistically not significant but negative relation	p value >0.05 and slope <0.0

Results and Analysis

The results of the analysis are first presented in four categories with answering to what extent the quality of representation, participation, rule of law and rights of the coastal countries affect the quality in the same democratic categories in the concerned LDCs. Then overall democratic relations are presented and discussed followed by conclusion.

Relations in the area of representation: The representation aspect of democracy, according to International IDEA (2024), includes such at-

tributes as fair electoral laws, autonomy and capacity of election management body, autonomy and freedom of political parties, effective parliament, electoral logistics, local democracy, electoral processes, opposition parties, executive constraints along with functioning of government among other sub-attributes and indicators. On the basis of such attributes and sub-attributes, International IDEA has quantified and ranked the representation aspect of democracy and based on these data, the result of regression test of this category as outlined in the measurement section is given as follows:

Table 1: Result of Regression Tests in Representation Category

Direction of Relation and Statistical Significance	No. of Regression Result	Percent
Statistically significant positive relation	7	14.9
Statistically significant negative relation	6	12.8
Statistically not significant but positive relation	20	42.6
Statistically not significant but negative relation	14	29.8
Overall positive relations	27	57.44
Overall negative relations	20	42.55

The table shows that out of 47 total regression tests; seven tests show statistically significant positive relation (p value <0.05 and slope >0.0) which is slightly more than statistically significant negative relation (p value <0.05 and slope <0.0) which is six. That means in more cases, democracy in the coastal country causes positive democratic changes in terms of representation in the LDCs. However, the presence of negative causation is also significant.

Moreover, 20 tests (42%) show statistically not significant but positive relations against 30% statistically not significant but negative relation and these, even if they do not imply causation, support the first indication of more positive relations than negative. Overall, this gives the impression that a smaller number of regression results show negative relations while more cases indicate positive relations. This means, representation system in both of the coastal and LDCs are related, and though there are chances of representative system

negatively being affected by the coastal representation system, there are more chances of representation system to be positively affected by the the status of representation in their coastal neighbors.

Relations in the area of participation: According to International IDEA (2024), the participation aspect of democracy is composed of areas

and attributes relating to civil society, civil engagement, politically engaged citizen, electoral participation, civil society consultation, status of engaged society, e-information, e-participation and e-decision, social capital, non-political associations among other indicators. The regression status of this category is as follows:

Table 2: Result of Regression Tests in Participation Category

Direction of Relation and Statistical Significance	No. of Regression Result	Percent
Statistically significant positive relation	10	21.3
Statistically significant negative relation	5	10.6
Statistically not significant but positive relation	18	38.3
Statistically not significant but negative relation	14	29.8
Overall positive relations	28	59.574
Overall negative relations	19	40.426

The table shows that out of 47 regression tests, a majority (59.6%) of the cases show a positive relationship, with 21.3% being statistically significant and 38.3% being not significant but still positive. On the other side, a smaller portion (40.4%) shows a negative relationship, with 10.6% statistically significant and 29.8% not significant but negative slope. Overall, a stronger tendency toward positive relationships between the coastal and their LDCs is seen, with a notable portion of these relationships being statistically significant. Negative relationships, while present, are less significant and generally weaker in terms of statistical confidence. In this case, to conclude,

in majority of cases, participation in the LDCs is positively influenced both in terms of causation and direction by the status of participation in their coastal.

Relations in the area of rule of law: The rule of law category of democracy has been measured with the questions relating to such sub-attributes as judicial independence, absence of corruption, predictable law enforcement, personal integrity and security, separation of power, status of public sector theft, freedom from torture and political killings, and status of internal conflict among other specific indicators relating to them. The status of regression tests in this category is given as follows:

Table 3: Result of Regression Tests in Rule of Law Category

Direction of Relation and Statistical Significance	No. of Regression Result	Percent
Statistically significant positive relation	5	10.6
Statistically significant negative relation	4	8.5
Statistically not significant but positive relation	20	42.6
Statistically not significant but negative relation	18	38.3
Overall positive relations	25	53.19
Overall negative relations	22	46.80

The table shows that out of 47 regression tests, a majority (53%) of the cases show a positive relationship, with 10.6% being statistically significant

and 42% being not significant but still positive. On the other side, a smaller portion (46.8%) shows a negative relationship, with 8.5 % sta-

tistically significant and 38 % not significant but negative relations. Overall, a stronger tendency toward positive relationships between the coastal and their LDCs is seen, with a slight more cases of statistically significant positive relations than negative. In this category of rule of law, to conclude, in slightly more cases, participation in the LDCs is seen to be positively influenced or at least related both in terms of causation and direction by the status of participation in their coastal. However, the presence of negative causation and direction is also notable. These imply, in slightly more cases, the rule of law aspect of democracy

is positively affected or related in the LDCs to the same aspect of democracy in their coastal.

Relations in the area of rights: The category of rights includes questions relating to civil liberties, basic welfare status, political equality, freedom of press, expression, religion, movement, economic equality, level of political and economic inclusion and exclusion, gender equality, judicial accountability, freedom of discussion for man and woman, use and behavior of media, geographical, economic, geographical and political accesses along with other indicators. The regression test results of this category are given as follows:

Table 4: Result of Regression Tests in Rights Category

Direction of Relation and Statistical Significance	No. of Regression Results	Percent
Statistically significant positive relation	12	25.5
Statistically significant negative relation	5	10.6
Statistically not significant but positive relation	17	36.2
Statistically not significant but negative relation	13	27.7
Overall positive relations	29	61.70
Overall negative relations	18	38.29

The table shows that out of 47 regression tests, a majority (61.7%) of the cases show a positive relationship, with 25.5% being statistically significant and 38% being not statistically significant but still positive. On the other side, a smaller portion (38%) shows a negative relationship with 10.6 % statistically significant and 27.7 statistically not significant but negative relations. There are more cases of positive relations both in terms of statistics and slope of direction then negative relations. These imply that the rights in the LDCs are more positively affected by the arrangements and exercise of rights in the coastal countries. In other word, better exercise of rights in the coastal tends to promote better-ness in the rights in the concerned LDCs. However, the presence of negative causation at opposite directions are also observed.

Overall Status of Relations: This paper made an analysis based on the criteria of measuring democratic practices in four major categories as developed by International IDEA. The four categories included representation, participa-

tion, rule of law and rights. International IDEA (2024) writes that the democracy measure was based on 165 indicators in four groups and also implies that the democracy indices were explored in the national contexts of countries. However, as the indicators and attributes used for democracy ranking are the same, this paper takes the data for relational comparison in between LDCs and their coastal. The overview of their relations in terms of statistical significance and direction of change is presented as follows:

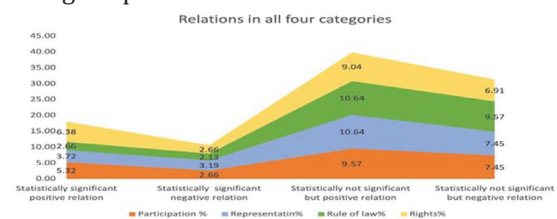


Fig. 1: Relations in all four categories.

The given graph shows that the percent of statistically not significant portion is much higher than the statistically significant portion in the

quality of democracy between the LDCs and their coastal countries. This tends to imply that there is less presence of direct causation while more non-causal relations between the LDCs and their coastal neighbors in terms of quality of democracy. This trend, for the positive direction, may correspond to what Pevhouse names a parallel move between two countries.

While regarding positive and negative relations in causal sense, the percent of positive causal relation is more than the percent of negative causal relations. It implies that in the causal category, the quality of democracy in coastal country causes for positive changes in the quality of democracy in their neighboring landlocked countries than it does for negative causation. Even if negative causation is also statistically observed, the majority shows for positive causation.

While concentrating on the non-causal general direction of change, the status of statistically not significant positive relations is more than the status of statistically not significant negative relations in all the four categories. This implies that in majority of the cases, the quality of democracy in the LDCs and their usual coastal neighbors tends to move in the same direction positively.

Taking the causal and general relations together, the higher portions of the positive relations in the quality of democracy in these countries can be seen. For the positive direction of change, the reasons are unknown but theoretically there might be the case of transfer of learnings due to political similarities, geographical proximity, diffusion, conditionality, access and freedom. On the other side, the presence of negative direction of change is interesting but the reasons are not clear. It may be due to the country-specific cases or due to the presence of multiple coastal countries for a LDC, or due to the use of internet, social media, virtual networking and learning from beyond the borders and so on. The paper has the limitations on finding the reasons; thus, further research is needed to identify the reasons.

Among the four categories of democracy, rule of law seems to be least influenced in the group of having positive statistical significance. This means the status of rule of law in the coastal does not have causal impacts in the coastal. On the other side, the category of rights in the same causal category seems to have more causal impacts. In other words, the level of civic and political rights exercised in the coastal countries tends to render causal effects in the exercise of these rights in the neighboring LDCs. Other categories seem to be in similar trend. Though this research has the limitations to identify what are the factors for such causalities, theoretically the behaviour of the coastal countries in the forms of easy or difficult access, coercion, constraints in supply might be the reasons but still deeper investigation is required. The status of statistical significance and direction of change in the tests can be reflected in four groups as follows:

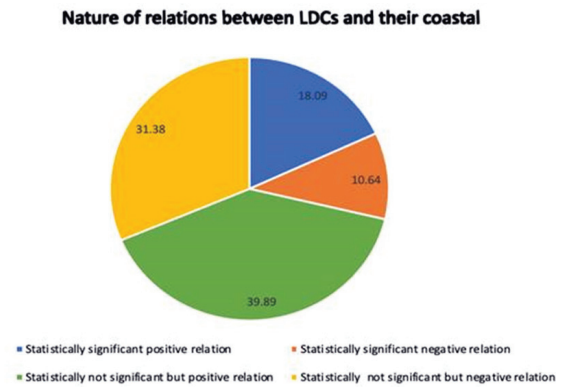


Fig. 2: Source: author calculated based on the data referenced

The chart 2 above shows out of altogether 188 regression tests in the four categories of democracy, only 29 % tests show some kind of causal relations while the rest (71%) show the general direction of their relations. In the causal category, statistically significant relation in which statistically positive relation (18%) is slightly more than statistically significant negative relation (11%). What these negative and positive causal relations imply is the influence of coastal countries in the freedom of LDCs. As Col-

lier (2007) argues that landlocked has to serve the coastal, not the world and as Chowdhury and Erdenebileg (2006) state that constraints in transport, trade, resources and technology diffusion have affected the growth potentials as well as the human capital, this statistical presence of political causation further reinforce the question to what extent the LDCs are really enjoying domestic freedom measured terms of rule of law, rights, representation and participation. While in the non-causational category also, the positive slope also suggests some kind of positive associations between these countries.

While further simplifying the relations between the LDCs and their coastal in terms of their democratic relations, following two types of relations can be seen:

Overall positive and negative relations between LDCs and the coastal

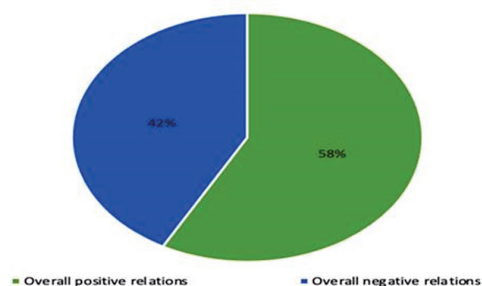


Fig. 3: Source: author calculated based on the data referenced

The pie chart 3 shows the summary of relations between the LDCs and their usual coastal countries in terms of their direction of change. It shows, inclusive of both causational and general types of relations, that the positive relations in terms of quality of democracy is about 58 % against the 42 % negative or inverse relation between these countries. In this context, the dependency assumptions including learnings and spillover effects from the coastal, geo-proximity, as well as conditionings from the coastal tend to validate the positive direction of democratic change between neighboring countries.

But the presence of inverse relations, both causational and general tend to raise further questions such as why does a democratic coastal country

render its LDC to go in other direction or why do the LDCs adopt opposite directions? Regarding the non-causational negative directions, it might be related to the freedom enjoyed by the LDCs or it may also be the case that the LDCs might have had multiple coastal countries in their options as this paper just had the usual coastal countries in its analysis.

Even if V-Dem Institute (2022, p.7) shows a rising strength of autocratic rule stating that the year 2021 saw “a record number of nations autocratizing in the last 50 years” and the idea of autocratizing network might imply similar influence. However, these do not explain well why the phenomena is there. The positive and reversal democratic relations between the coastal and the LDCs might also be related to the development of modern information technology, the ways and waves of democracy and autocracy might have changed. Moreover, it may not simply be the water democracy travelling through seaports, the possibility of air democracy travelling through increased use of digital media can not also be neglected for their reversal relations.

Limitations

This study is more statistical and therefore, it has not concentrated on the country-specific functional aspects of democratic relations between the LDCs and their coastal neighbors. Moreover, even the difference between the ‘N’ and ‘n’ is just two, the depth of analysis is supposed to be representative with the data of twelve years for 33 years from 1990 to 2023. Moreover, it has taken the democracy ranking data of the coastal countries of the 30 landlocked developing countries based on usual transaction ports and the status of infrastructures and situation might have changed in later times and on the other side, the rapid growth of internet access might also have affected the quality of democracy as an extraneous force. Finally, as democracy is a broad and abstract idea, and this paper is based on the criteria of ranking of democracy in the four categories as done by International IDEA and therefore, other qualities, categorizations, ranking and indicators of democracy may not correspond to the results and findings of the study.

Conclusion

The paper focused on the democratic aspects in exploring the relations between the LDCs and their coastal neighbors amid most of the research have concentrated on economic aspects such as trade, transit and transport in their relations. To explore the patterns of democratic relations between the LDCs and their coastal, the paper had linear regression tests and analyzed the quality of democracy between the LDCs and their usual coast accessing neighbors. The tests were conducted for the 30 LDCs based on the twelve years' data of democracy ranking of International IDEA from 1990 to 2023.

The analyses of the data revealed, though causation in their relation is also observed, the majority of results show a general trend of positive and negative direction of change. Within the general direction of change, the positive direction of change is more than the negative or inverse relation of change. That means the study shows that in majority of cases both the coastal countries and their landlocked developing neighbors go together in the same positive direction of change in terms of quality of democracy with the presence of some exceptions.

Moreover, the results of statistically significant positive relations were observed more in number than the results of statistically significant negative relations. Broadly the causality itself tends to signify dependency in deepening and broadening of democracy in the LDCs. On the other hand, the presence of reversal relations in general patterns, though smaller in portion, can also signify the autonomy and freedom enjoyed by the LDCs. Though the reasons for both negative and positive types of relations are unknown, theoretically geographical proximity, geopolitical relations, expansion of networking, behaviors of the coastal towards their landlocked neighbors, status and use of modern digital technology as well as constructivist learnings by the LDCs from the practices of their coastal and other neighbors among others might be explored in the future research.

Finally, as majority of cases imply associations, particularly the positive type, between the coastal and their LDCs, such associations in their relations cannot be ignored for both improving the quality of democracy in the LDCs and the regional and international image of their coastal neighbors. In this context, both the coastal and the LDCs might better have frequent and friendly discussions and negotiations, focus and expand their good will and international cooperations as well as expand and strengthen their regional and international networking for their democratic dividends.

References

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2. The coastal countries which were kept in X or the predictor were Pakistan, Georgia, Türkiye, Iran, India, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, South Africa, Eritrea, Djibouti, China, Thailand, Mozambique, Guinea, Senegal, Russia, Benin, Bulgaria, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ukraine. Among these coastal countries, some are coastal to more than one LDC, therefore, such countries were repeated in the X category for the concerned LDCs in the tests.
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