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for **Prelims - 2023**

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International Relations

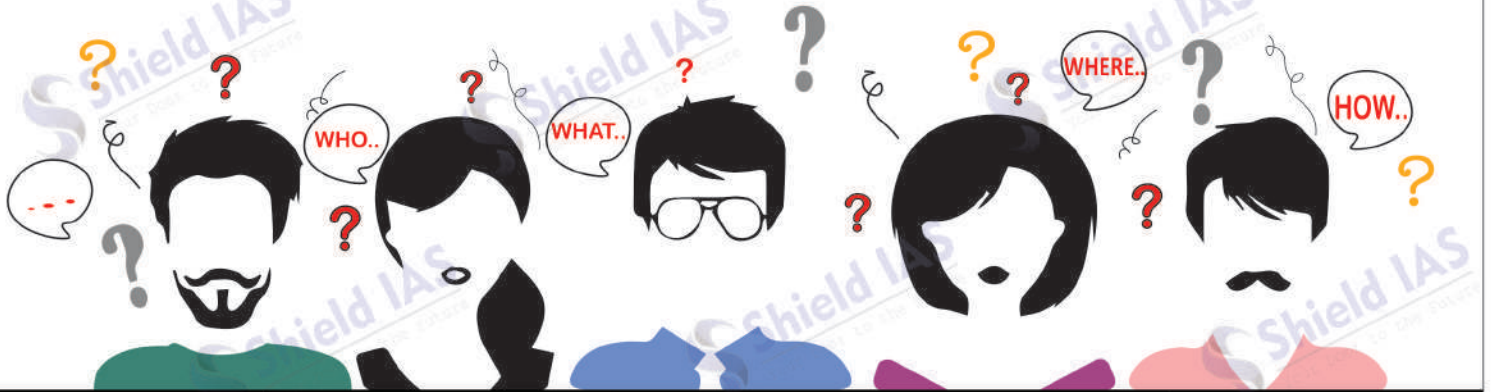


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Note: Additional booklet **number 9** on important topics of current affairs will be released in **April, 2023**.

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AMOL SRIVASTAVA
AIR-83 UPSC CSE 2017

I would recommend the study material provided by Shield IAS for the UPSC Civil Services preparation to cover the General Studies syllabus.

The Rapid Revision Books would help the aspirants for speedy revision for the Civil Services (Preliminary) examination.

The books have been prepared by my mentors who helped me in clearing my Civil Services Exam in 2015-16.



HARSH KUMAR
IFS - 2016

I, Nidhin K Biju, IRS of 2020 batch, want to suggest the aspirants preparing for UPSC Civil Services Examination to read SHIELD IAS Rapid Revision books for swift coverage of syllabus for the UPSC Civil Services (Preliminary) exams. These books will help in targeted revision for confident attempt in the examination. I would also recommend reading the SHIELD IAS UPSC study material as a set of standard books for covering the entire general studies syllabus (Prelims and Main Examination).

- Nidhin

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

(Key focus areas for Prelims 2023)

➔ UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945.

- It is currently made up of **193 Member States** (south Sudan latest to join).
- The mission and work of the United Nations are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter.

PREAMBLE OF FOUNDING CHARTER

- It resolves to **save succeeding generations from the scourge of war**, which has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- To **reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights**, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- To **establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations** arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- To promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom

MAIN ORGANS OF UN

The main organs of the UN are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. All were established in 1945 when the UN was founded.

▪ General assembly

- The General Assembly is the main **deliberative, policymaking and representative organ** of the UN.
- All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the **only UN body with universal representation**.
- Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a **two-thirds majority** of the General Assembly.
- Decisions on other questions are by simple majority. The General Assembly, **each year, elects a GA President to serve a one-year term of office**.

▪ Security Council

- The Security Council, the United Nations' principal crisis-management body, is empowered to impose binding obligations on the 193 UN member states to maintain peace.
- The council's five permanent and ten elected members meet regularly to assess threats to international security, including civil wars, natural disasters, arms proliferation, and terrorism.
- Structurally, the council remains largely unchanged since its founding in 1946, stirring debate among members about the need for reforms.
- In recent years, members' competing interests have often stymied the council's ability to respond to major conflicts and crises, such as Syria's civil war, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the coronavirus pandemic.

- The Security Council has five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—collectively known as the P5. Any one of them can veto a resolution.
- The council's **ten elected members, which serve two-year, nonconsecutive terms, are not afforded veto power.**
- The P5's privileged status has its roots in the United Nations' founding in the aftermath of World War II. The United States and Soviet Union were the outright victors of the war, and, along with the United Kingdom, they shaped the postwar political order.
- As their plans for what would become the United Nations took shape, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt insisted on the inclusion of the Republic of China (Taiwan), envisioning international security presided over by "four global policemen."
- British Prime Minister Winston Churchill saw in France a European buffer against potential German or Soviet aggression and so sponsored its bid for restored great-power status.

The members of the **P5 have exercised the veto power to varying degrees.**

- Counting the years when the Soviet Union held its seat, Russia has been the most frequent user of the veto, blocking more than one hundred resolutions since the council's founding.
- The United States is second, last using the veto in 2020 to reject a resolution that called for the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of those engaged in terrorism-related activities. The country objected to the resolution's not calling for the repatriation of fighters from the self-proclaimed Islamic State and their family members.
- China's use of the veto has risen in recent years.
- In contrast, France and the United Kingdom have not exercised their veto power since 1989 and have advocated for other P5 members to use it less.
- The council's presidency rotates on a monthly basis, ensuring some agenda-setting influence for its ten nonpermanent members, which are elected by a two-thirds vote of the UN General Assembly.
- The main criterion for eligibility is contribution "**to the maintenance of international peace and security,**" often defined by financial or troop contributions to peacekeeping operations or leadership on matters of regional security likely to appear before the council.
- A secondary consideration, "**equitable geographical distribution,**" gave rise to the **regional groups used since 1965** in elections:

- the African Group has three seats;
- the Asia-Pacific Group, two;
- the Eastern European Group, one;
- the Latin American and Caribbean Group, two; and
- the Western European and Others Groups (WEOG), two.

- Subsidiary organs that support the council's mission include ad hoc committees on sanctions, counterterrorism, and nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, as well as the international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.
- Within the UN Secretariat, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support manage field operations. The **Peacebuilding Commission, established in 2005** as a repository of institutional memory and best practices, serves an advisory role.

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

Under the United Nations Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are:

- to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations;
- to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- to recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- to formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments;
- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor;
- to recommend the admission of new Members;
- to exercise the trusteeship functions of the United Nations in "strategic areas";
- to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and, together with the Assembly, to elect the Judges of the International Court of Justice.

CURRENT PERMANENT AND NON-PERMANENT MEMBERS

The Council is composed of **15 Members**:

- **Five permanent members:** China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly (with end of term year):
- **Current non-permanent members:** Albania (2023); Brazil (2023); Gabon (2023); Ghana (2023); India (2022); Ireland (2022); Kenya (2022); Mexico (2022); Norway (2022); UAE (2023)

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR REFORM?

- The odds of substantial reform are seen as remote because amending the UN Charter requires an affirmative vote and domestic **ratification by two-thirds of UN member states**. This includes all of the Security Council's permanent members, which are unlikely to take measures that would curb their own influence.
- While there is broad agreement among UN members that the Security Council's makeup is outdated, each of the various proposals for reform inevitably leaves some aspirants alienated.
- Some proposals call for **additional permanent members and others for a new class of elected seats** that have the possibility of renewal. In the absence of charter reform, smaller states have advocated for procedural changes, including greater transparency and closer consultations with troop-contributing countries.
- Still, in early 2021, UN General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said that reforming the Security Council should be an important objective. The implementation of the Council's decisions, and its very legitimacy, could be enhanced if the Council was reformed to be more representative, effective, efficient, accountable and transparent.
- **Economic and Social Council**

- The Economic and Social Council is the **principal body** for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as implementation of internationally agreed development goals.
- It serves as the central mechanism for activities of the UN system and its specialized agencies in the economic, social and environmental fields, supervising subsidiary and expert bodies.
- It has 54 Members, elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms. It is the United Nations' central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development.
- **International Court of Justice**
 - The International Court of Justice is the **principal judicial organ** of the United Nations.
 - Its seat is at the **Peace Palace** in The Hague (Netherlands).
 - It is the only one of the six principal organs of the United Nations not located in New York (United States of America).
 - The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
 - The **Court is composed of 15 judges**, who are elected for terms of office of nine years the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. It is assisted by Registry, its administrative organ. Its **official languages are English and French**.
 - The Court may entertain **two types of cases**: legal disputes between States submitted to it by them (contentious cases) and requests for advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by United Nations organs and specialized agencies (advisory proceedings)
 - In order to ensure a degree of continuity, **one third of the Court is elected every three years**. Judges are eligible for re-election. Should a judge die or resign during his or her term of office, a special election is held as soon as possible to choose a judge to fill the unexpired part of the term.
- **Secretariat**
 - The Secretariat comprises the Secretary-General and tens of thousands of international UN staff members who carry out the day-to-day work of the UN as mandated by the General Assembly and the Organization's other principal organs.
 - The **Secretary-General is chief administrative officer** of the Organization, appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a fiveyear, renewable term.
 - UN staff members are recruited internationally and locally, and work in duty stations and on peacekeeping missions all around the world.
- **Trusteeship Council**
 - The Trusteeship Council was established in 1945 by the UN Charter, to provide international supervision for 11 Trust Territories that had been placed under the administration of seven Member States, and ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the Territories for self-government and independence.
 - At the end of World War I, control over territories that had once been part of the German and Ottoman Empires was transferred by the League of Nations (predecessor of the UN) to other European countries. These territories, referred to as League of Nations Mandates, were renamed United Nations Trust Territories once the UN Charter came into force in late 1945.

- By 1994, all Trust Territories had attained self-government or independence. The **Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994.**
- The Council amended its rules of procedure to drop the obligation to meet annually and agreed to meet as occasion required -- by its decision or the decision of its President, or at the request of a majority of its members or the General Assembly or the Security Council.

➔ GENEVA CONVENTIONS

- The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are international treaties that contain the most important **rules limiting the barbarity of war.**
- They **protect people who do not take part in the fighting** (civilians, medics, aid workers) and **those who can no longer fight** (wounded, sick and shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war).

THE 1949 GENEVA CONVENTIONS

First Geneva Convention

- The first Geneva Convention **protects wounded and sick soldiers on land** during war.
- This Convention represents the fourth updated version of the Geneva Convention on the wounded and sick following those adopted in 1864, 1906 and 1929. It contains 64 articles.
- These provide protection for the wounded and sick, but also for **medical and religious personnel, medical units and medical transports.**
- The Convention also recognizes the distinctive emblems. It has two annexes containing a draft agreement relating to hospital zones and a model identity card for medical and religious personnel.

SECOND GENEVA CONVENTION

- The second Geneva Convention protects **wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel** at sea during war.
- This Convention replaced **Hague Convention of 1907** for the Adaptation to Maritime Warfare of the Principles of the Geneva Convention. It closely follows the provisions of the first Geneva Convention in structure and content. It has 63 articles specifically applicable to war at sea. For example, it protects hospital ships. It has one annex containing a model identity card for medical and religious personnel.

THIRD GENEVA CONVENTION

- The third Geneva Convention applies to prisoners of war.
- This Convention replaced the **Prisoners of War Convention of 1929**. It contains 143 articles whereas the 1929 Convention had only 97.
- The categories of persons entitled to prisoner of war status were broadened in accordance with Conventions I and II. **The conditions and places of captivity were more precisely defined, particularly with regard to the labour of prisoners of war, their financial resources, the relief they receive, and the judicial proceedings instituted against them.** The Convention establishes the principle that prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

- The Convention has five annexes containing various model regulations and identity and other cards.

FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION

- The fourth Geneva Convention affords protection to civilians, including in occupied territory.
- The Geneva Conventions, which were adopted before 1949, were concerned with combatants only, not with civilians.
- The events of World War II showed the disastrous consequences of the absence of a convention for the protection of civilians in wartime.
- The **Convention adopted in 1949** takes account of the experiences of World War II. It is composed of 159 articles. It contains a short section concerning the general protection of populations against certain consequences of war, without addressing the conduct of hostilities, as such, which was later examined in the Additional Protocols of 1977.
- The bulk of the Convention deals with the status and treatment of protected persons, distinguishing between the situation of foreigners on the territory of one of the parties to the conflict and that of civilians in occupied territory. It spells out the obligations of the Occupying Power vis-à-vis the civilian population and contains detailed provisions on humanitarian relief for populations in occupied territory. It also contains a specific regime for the treatment of civilian internees. It has three annexes containing a model agreement on hospital and safety zones, model regulations on humanitarian relief and model cards.

COMMON ARTICLE 3

- Article 3, **common to the four Geneva Conventions**, marked a breakthrough, as it covered, for the first time, **situations of non-international armed conflicts**. These types of conflicts vary greatly.
- They include **traditional civil wars, internal armed conflicts** that spill over into other States or internal conflicts in which third States or a multinational force intervenes alongside the government.
- Common **Article 3 establishes fundamental rules** from which no derogation is permitted. It is like a mini-Convention within the Conventions as it contains the essential rules of the Geneva Conventions in a condensed format and makes them applicable to conflicts not of an international character:
- It requires humane treatment for all persons in enemy hands, without any adverse distinction. It specifically prohibits murder, mutilation, torture, cruel, humiliating and degrading treatment, the taking of hostages and unfair trial.

- It requires that the wounded, sick and shipwrecked be collected and cared for.
- It grants the ICRC the right to offer its services to the parties to the conflict.
- It calls on the parties to the conflict to bring all or parts of the Geneva Conventions into force through so-called special agreements.
- It recognizes that the application of these rules does not affect the legal status of the parties to the conflict.
- Given that most armed conflicts today are non-international, applying Common Article 3 is of the utmost importance. Its full respect is required.

STATES PARTY TO THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

- The Geneva Conventions entered into force on **21 October 1950**.
- Ratification grew steadily through the decades: 74 States ratified the Conventions during the 1950s, 48 States did so during the 1960s, 20 States signed on during the 1970s, and another 20 States did so during the 1980s. Twenty-six countries ratified the Conventions in the early 1990s, largely in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the former Yugoslavia.
- Seven new ratifications since 2000 have brought the total number of States Party to 194, making the Geneva Conventions universally applicable.

THE ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS TO THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

- In the two decades that followed the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, the world witnessed an increase in the number of non-international armed conflicts and wars of national liberation. In response, two Protocols Additional to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions were adopted in **1977**.
- They strengthen the protection of victims of international (Protocol I) and non-international (Protocol II) armed conflicts and place limits on the way wars are fought. Protocol II was the first-ever international treaty devoted exclusively to situations of non-international armed conflicts.
- In **2005**, a **third Additional Protocol** was adopted creating an additional emblem, the **Red Crystal**, which has the same international status as the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems.

- Additional Protocol I - international conflicts
- Additional Protocol II - non-international conflicts
- Additional Protocol III - additional distinctive emblem.

- The **first Additional Protocol of 1977** supplements the rules applying to international armed conflicts contained in the four Geneva Conventions. It imposes restrictions on the conduct of hostilities; for example, it prohibits attacks against civilians and civilian objects and restricts the means and methods of warfare.
- The **second Additional Protocol of 1977** supplements Article 3 which is common to the four Geneva Conventions and is the sole provision applicable to non-international armed conflicts.
- The **third Additional Protocol** provides for an additional emblem in the form of a red crystal. Since 1 January 2007, it has been possible to use this emblem as an alternative to the red cross or red crescent – the emblems recognised by the Geneva Conventions for identifying persons and objects entitled to special protection.

→ ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA

- Sanctions are penalties imposed by one country on another, to stop it acting aggressively, or breaking international law.

WHAT ARE THE LATEST SANCTIONS TO BE IMPOSED?

- **US's latest sanctions are:**

- economic measures **to ban new investment** in Russia

- severe **sanctions on two Russian financial institutions** - Alfa Bank and Sberbank
 - sanctions on **critical major state-owned enterprises**
 - sanctions on Russian government officials and their family members, including President Putin's adult children and relatives of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov
- Meanwhile the **UK has imposed sanctions on Russia's largest bank, Sberbank**, and committed to ending all imports of Russian coal and oil by the end of 2022.



- major Russian banks excluded from the UK financial system
- all Russian banks have had their assets frozen
- the Russian state and major companies cannot raise finance or borrow money in the UK
- a limit placed on deposits Russians can make at UK banks

- The EU also said it would target 70% of the Russian banking market and key state-owned firms.

WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN SANCTIONED?

MILITARY GOODS AND MERCENARIES

- A ban on the export of dual-use goods - items with both a civilian and military purpose, such as vehicle parts - has been imposed by the UK, EU and US.
- The UK is also imposing **sanctions on Russia's Wagner Group** - a private military firm thought to function as an arms-length unit of the Russian military.

FLIGHTS

- All Russian flights have been banned from US, UK, EU and Canadian airspace.
- The UK has also banned private jets chartered by Russians.

LUXURY GOODS

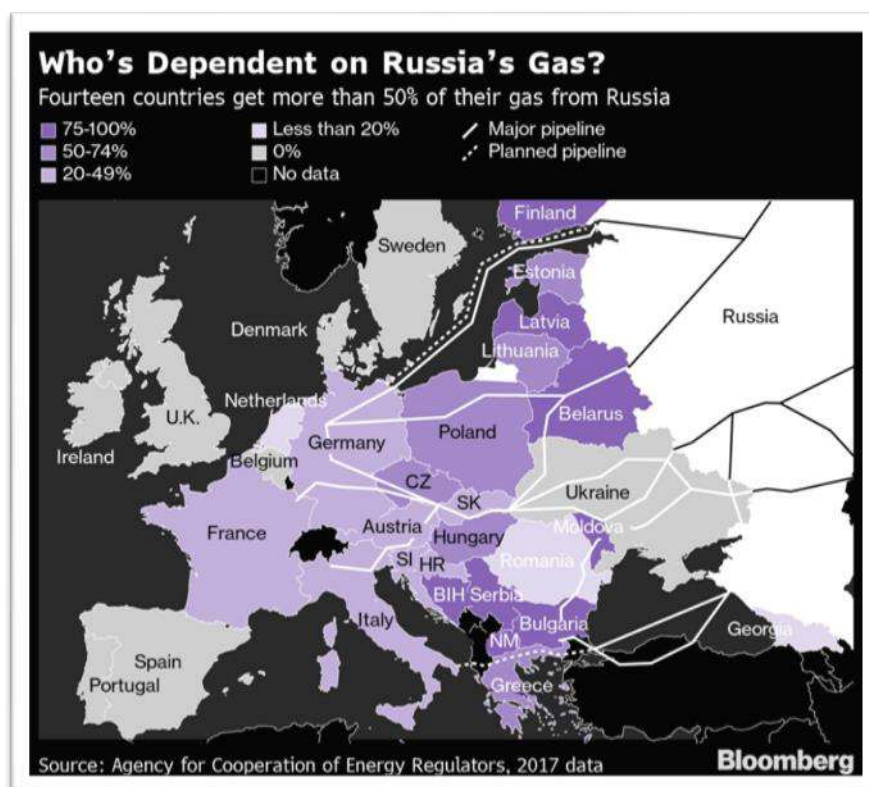
- The UK and the EU have banned the export of luxury goods to Russia - including vehicles, high-end fashion and art.
- The UK has also imposed a 35% tax on some imports from Russia, including vodka.

TARGETING INDIVIDUALS

- The US, EU and UK have together sanctioned more than 1,000 Russian individuals and businesses, including wealthy business leaders - so-called oligarchs - who are considered close to the Kremlin.
- One high-profile oligarch sanctioned by the UK is **Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich**.
- Assets belonging to Russian President Vladimir Putin and his foreign minister Sergei Lavrov are also being frozen in the US, EU, UK and Canada.
- The UK has also stopped the sale of "golden visas", which allowed wealthy Russians to get British residency rights.
- The hunt for superyachts of sanctioned Russians

OIL AND GAS

- The US is banning all Russian oil and gas imports and the UK will phase out Russian oil imports.
- The EU, which gets a quarter of its oil and 40% of its gas from Russia, says it will switch to alternative supplies and make Europe independent from Russian energy "well before 2030".
- Germany has put on hold permission for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to open.



FINANCIAL MEASURES

- Western countries have frozen the assets of Russia's central bank, to stop it using its **\$630bn (£470bn) of foreign currency reserves**.
- This caused the value of the rouble to slump by 22%, which has pushed up the price of imported goods and led to a 14% rise in Russia's rate of inflation.
- The rouble has since recovered - but largely due to measures to prop up the currency.

- Buyers of Russian **gas have to pay in roubles** and Moscow now requires Russian firms to convert most of their foreign profits into roubles.
- The **United States has barred Russia from making debt payments** using the \$600m it holds in US banks, making it harder for Russia to repay its international loans.
- **Credit ratings agency S&P has now declared Russia to be in "selective default"** (this means a debtor has defaulted on a specific obligation but not its entire debt) after it attempted to make interest payments on roubles for two dollar-denominated bonds.
- The agency said this was because investors were unlikely to be able to convert the roubles into dollars.
- Some Russian banks are being **removed from the international financial messaging system Swift**, which is used to transfer money across borders. This will delay payments to Russia for energy exports.

WHAT ARE COMPANIES DOING?

- A growing number of international companies including McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Starbucks have suspended trading in Russia.
- After facing fierce criticism for continuing to operate in Russia, Nestle has withdrawn some of its brands including KitKat and Nesquik, but will still sell "essential foods".
- However, a number of other Western brands including Marks and Spencer, Burger King, and hotel groups Marriott and Accor say they can't pull out from Russia because their businesses there operate under complex franchise deals.

➔ NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance that was established by the **North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April 4, 1949.**
- It sought to create a counterweight to Soviet armies stationed in central and eastern Europe after World War II.
- At present, NATO has **30 members.** In 1949, there were 12 founding members of the Alliance: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. The other member countries are: Greece and Turkey (1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020).



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- After World War II in 1945, western Europe was economically exhausted and militarily weak (the western Allies had rapidly and drastically reduced their armies at the end of the war), and newly powerful communist parties had arisen in France and Italy.
- By contrast, the Soviet Union had emerged from the war with its armies dominating all the states of central and eastern Europe, and by 1948 communists under Moscow's sponsorship had consolidated their control of the governments of those countries and suppressed all non-communist political activity. What became known as the **Iron Curtain**, a term popularized by Winston Churchill, had descended over central and eastern Europe. Further, wartime cooperation between the western Allies and the Soviets had completely broken down. Each side was organizing its own sector of occupied Germany, so that two German states would emerge, a democratic one in the west and a communist one in the east.
- **In 1948**, the United States launched the **Marshall Plan**, which infused massive amounts of economic aid to the countries of western and southern Europe on the condition that they cooperate with each other and engage in joint planning to hasten their mutual recovery. As for military recovery, under the **Brussels Treaty** of 1948, the United Kingdom, France, and the Low Countries—Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—concluded a collective-defense agreement called the **Western European Union**. It was soon recognized, however, that a more formidable alliance would be required to provide an adequate military counterweight to the Soviets.
- By this time Britain, Canada, and the United States had already engaged in secret exploratory talks on security arrangements that would serve as an alternative to the United Nations (UN), which was becoming paralyzed by the rapidly emerging Cold War. In March 1948, following a virtual communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February, the three governments began discussions on a multilateral collective-defense scheme that would enhance Western security and promote democratic values. These discussions were eventually joined by France, the Low Countries, and Norway and in April 1949 resulted in the **North Atlantic Treaty**.

ARTICLE 5 OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY

- *an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.*
- NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in 2001, after the September 11 attacks on World Trade Center in New York City

ARTICLE 6 OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY

- *defines the geographic scope of the treaty as covering "an armed attack on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America." Other articles commit the allies to strengthening their democratic institutions, to building their collective military capability, to consulting each other, and to remaining open to inviting other European states to join.*

➔ RUSSIA TO LIMIT NATO ROLE

Russia unveiled proposals to contain the U.S. and NATO in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, calling for urgent negotiations with U.S. as it amasses forces near Ukraine.

- Russia released unfinished security documents — an unusual move in diplomacy — that call for U.S.-led NATO alliance not to bring in new members or establish bases in ex-Soviet countries.
- The West says Russia has readied some 1,00,000 troops for an imminent attack on Ukraine, which has been battling a pro-Moscow insurgency in its east since 2014.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin denies planning an attack and blames NATO for the rise in tensions, **demanding “legal guarantees” the alliance will not expand eastwards.**
- The draft document addressed to NATO says its members should **“commit themselves to refrain from further enlargement, including the accession of Ukraine as well as other states”.**
- It also insists that alliance members not conduct military activity in Ukraine or other countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia.
- Moscow and NATO, should limit the deployment of missiles, set up an emergency telephone hotline and also work to “prevent incidents” in the Baltics and the Black Sea.



➔ NORD STREAM 2

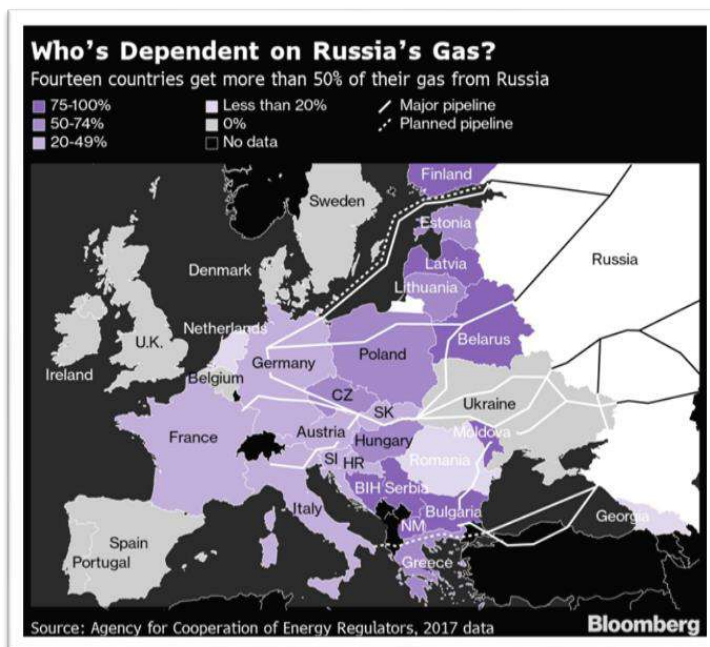
NORD STREAM

- The **Baltic Sea** pipeline is set to **double supplies of cheap natural gas from Russia to Germany**, which the European Union’s top economy says is needed to help it transition from coal and nuclear energy.

- But the €10 billion (\$12 billion) project has for years been dogged by delays and drawn fierce criticism from Germany's eastern EU allies like Poland and from the U.S.
- Critics say the project will increase Europe's dependence on Russian gas and Ukraine has described it as a **"geopolitical weapon"**.

WHAT IS NORD STREAM 2?

- It's a 1,230-kilometer (764-mile) pipeline that doubles the capacity of the existing undersea route from Russian gas fields to Europe -- the original Nord Stream -- which opened in 2011 and can handle 55 billion cubic meters per year.
- **Russia's Gazprom PJSC owns the project operator**, with other investors contributing half of the 9.5 billion-euro (\$10.8 billion) cost.
- Nord Stream 2 could help Europe secure a relatively low-cost supply of gas at a time when the continent's own producers are reducing output.
- It's also part of **Gazprom's decades-long effort to diversify its exports to Europe as the region moves away from nuclear and coal**.
- Before the first Nord Stream opened, Russia was sending about **two-thirds of its gas exports to Europe through pipelines in Ukraine**.
- The two countries' troubled relations since the Soviet Union collapsed left Gazprom exposed to disruptions: For 13 days in 2009 a pricing dispute halted gas flows through Ukraine. Since then, ties between Russia and Ukraine have worsened, culminating in the Ukrainian popular revolt that kicked out the country's pro-Russian president and led to **Russia seizing the Crimean Peninsula in 2014**.



- In late 2021 there were increasing numbers of Russian troops and military equipment deployed near Ukraine's border, sparking U.S. warnings of invasion plans. Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied any intention to invade.

➔ NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)

Non-Aligned Movement prompts reflection on Jawahar Lal Nehru's major contribution to the field of international relations.

*The concept of not aligning a country's policy with others can be traced to **the Congress of Vienna (1814-15)** when the neutrality of Switzerland, by which that country would keep out of others' conflicts, was recognised.*

BACKGROUND

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world and at the height of the Cold War.
- During the early days of the Movement, its **actions were a key factor in the decolonization process**, which led later to the attainment of freedom and independence by many countries.
- Throughout its history, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has played a fundamental role in the preservation of world peace and security.
- While some meetings with a third-world perspective were held before 1955, historians consider that the **Bandung Asian-African Conference** is the most immediate antecedent to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- This Conference was held in Bandung on April 18-24, 1955 and gathered 29 Heads of States belonging to the first post-colonial generation of leaders from the two continents with the aim of identifying and assessing world issues at the time and pursuing out joint policies in international relations.
- The principles that would govern relations among large and small nations, known as the "**Ten Principles of Bandung**", were proclaimed at that Conference. Such principles were adopted later as the main goals and objectives of the policy of non-alignment. The fulfillment of those principles became the essential criterion for Non-Aligned Movement membership; it is what was known as the "quintessence of the Movement" until the early 1990s.
- In 1960, in the light of the results achieved in Bandung, the creation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was given a decisive boost during the Fifteenth Ordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly, during which 17 new African and Asian countries were admitted.
- A key role was played in this process by the then **Heads of State and Government Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia**, who later became the founding fathers of the movement and its emblematic leaders.
- Six years after Bandung, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was founded on a wider geographical basis at the **First Summit Conference of Belgrade, which was held on September 1-6, 1961.**

- The Founders of NAM have preferred to declare it as a movement but not an organization in order to avoid bureaucratic implications of the latter.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

The primary of objectives of the non-aligned countries focused on:-

- the support of self-determination, national independence and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States;
- opposition to apartheid;
- non-adherence to multilateral military pacts and the independence of non-aligned countries from great power or block influences and rivalries;
- the struggle against imperialism in all its forms and manifestations;
- the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, foreign occupation and domination;
- disarmament;
- non-interference into the internal affairs of States and peaceful coexistence among all nations; rejection of the use or threat of use of force in international relations;
- the strengthening of the United Nations;
- the democratization of international relations;
- socioeconomic development and the restructuring of the international economic system; as well as international cooperation on an equal footing.

THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF BANDUNG

- 1. Respect of fundamental human rights** and of the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
- 2.** Respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
- 3.** Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.
- 4.** Non-intervention or non-interference into the internal affairs of another -country.
- 5.** Respect of the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- 6. A.** Non-use of collective defense pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers. **B.** Non-use of pressures by any country against other countries.
- 7.** Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
- 8.** Peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- 9.** Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation.
- 10.** Respect of justice and of international obligations.

14TH SUMMIT IN HAVANA (2006)

Inspired by the principles and purposes which were brought to the Non-Aligned Movement by the Bandung principles and during the First NAM Summit in Belgrade in 1961, the Heads of States and Governments of the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted in their 14th Summit in Havana (2006), the following purposes and principles of the movement in the present International juncture:

PURPOSES:

- a) To **promote and reinforce multilateralism** and, in this regard, strengthen the central role that the United Nations must play.
- b) To serve as a forum of **political coordination of the developing countries** to promote and defend their common interests in the system of international relations
- c) To promote **unity, solidarity and cooperation between developing countries** based on shared values and priorities agreed upon by consensus.
- d) To **defend international peace and security** and settle all international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the principles and the purposes of the UN Charter and International Law.
- e) To encourage **relations of friendship and cooperation between all nations** based on the principles of International Law, particularly those enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.
- f) To **promote and encourage sustainable development** through international cooperation and, to that end, jointly coordinate the implementation of political strategies which strengthen and ensure the full participation of all countries, rich and poor, in the international economic relations, under equal conditions and opportunities but with differentiated responsibilities.
- g) To **encourage the respect, enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms** for all, on the basis of the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity, avoiding politicization of human rights issues, thus ensuring that all human rights of individuals and peoples, including the right to development, are promoted and protected in a balanced manner.
- h) To promote **peaceful coexistence** between nations, regardless of their political, social or economic systems.
- i) To condemn all manifestations of unilateralism and attempts to exercise hegemonic domination in international relations.
- j) To coordinate actions and strategies in order to confront jointly the threats to international peace and security, including the threats of use of force and the acts of aggression, colonialism and foreign occupation, and other breaches of peace caused by any country or group of countries.
- k) To promote the **strengthening and democratization of the UN**, giving the General Assembly the role granted to it in accordance with the functions and powers outlined in the Charter and to promote the comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council so that it may fulfill the role granted to it by the Charter, in a transparent and equitable manner, as the body primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
- l) To continue **pursuing universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament**, as well as a general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control and in this context, to work towards the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased program for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time to eliminate nuclear weapons, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.
- m) To **oppose and condemn the categorization of countries as good or evil based on unilateral and unjustified criteria**, and the adoption of a doctrine of pre-emptive attack,

including attack by nuclear weapons, which is inconsistent with international law, in particular, the international legally-binding instruments concerning nuclear disarmament and to further condemn and oppose unilateral military actions, or use of force or threat of use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Non-Aligned countries.

- n) To promote **international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy** and to facilitate access to nuclear technology, equipment and material for peaceful purposes required by developing countries.
- o) To promote concrete initiatives of **South-South cooperation and strengthen the role of NAM**, in coordination with G77, in the re-launching of North-South cooperation, ensuring the fulfillment of the right to development of our peoples, through the enhancement of international solidarity.
- p) To respond to the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities arising from globalization and interdependence with creativity and a sense of identity in order to ensure its benefits to all countries, particularly those most affected by underdevelopment and poverty, with a view to gradually reducing the abysmal gap between the developed and developing countries.
- q) To **enhance the role that civil society, including NGO's**, can play at the regional and international levels in order to promote the purposes, principles and objectives of the Movement.

PRINCIPLES:

- a) **Respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations** and International Law.
- b) Respect for **sovereignty, sovereign equality and territorial integrity** of all States.
- c) Recognition of the **equality of all races, religions, cultures and all nations**, both big and small.
- d) **Promotion of a dialogue** among peoples, civilizations, cultures and religions based on the respect of religions, their symbols and values, the promotion and the consolidation of tolerance and freedom of belief.
- e) **Respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms** for all, including the effective implementation of the right of peoples to peace and development.
- f) **Respect for the equality of rights of States**, including the inalienable right of each State to determine freely its political, social, economic and cultural system, without any kind of interference whatsoever from any other State.
- g) Reaffirmation of the validity and relevance of the Movement's principled positions concerning the right to self-determination of peoples under foreign occupation and colonial or alien domination.
- h) **Non-interference in the internal affairs of States**. No State or group of States has the right to intervene either directly or indirectly, whatever the motive, in the internal affairs of any other State.
- i) **Rejection of unconstitutional change of Governments**.
- j) **Condemnation of the use of mercenaries** in all situations, especially in conflict situations.

- k) **Total rejection of aggression as a dangerous and serious breach of International Law**, which entails international responsibility for the aggressor.
- l) **Respect for the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense**, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.
- m) **Condemnation of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity** and systematic and gross violations of human rights, in accordance with the UN Charter and International Law.
- n) **Rejection of and opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations**, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. In this context, terrorism should not be equated with the legitimate struggle of peoples under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation for self-determination and national liberation.
- o) **Promotion of pacific settlement of disputes** and abjuring, under any circumstances, from taking part in coalitions, agreements or any other kind of unilateral coercive initiative in violation of the principles of International Law and the Charter of the United Nations.
- p) **Defense and consolidation of democracy**, reaffirming that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their life.
- q) **Promotion and defense of multilateralism and multilateral organizations** as the appropriate frameworks to resolve, through dialogue and cooperation, the problems affecting humankind.
- r) **Support to efforts by countries suffering internal conflicts** to achieve peace, justice, equality and development.
- s) **Defense and promotion of shared interests, justice and cooperation**, regardless of the differences existing in the political, economic and social systems of the States, on the basis of mutual respect and the equality of rights.
- t) **Solidarity as a fundamental component of relations** among nations in all circumstances.
- u) **Respect for the political, economic, social and cultural diversity of countries and peoples.**

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- necessity of protecting the principles of International law, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism, defending human rights, working toward making the United Nations more effective in meeting the needs of all its member states in order to preserve International Peace, Security and Stability, as well as realizing justice in the international economic system.
- On the other hand, the long-standing goals of the Movement remain to be realized. Peace, development, economic cooperation and the democratization of international relations, to mention just a few, are old goals of the non-aligned countries.
- In conclusion, The Non-Aligned Movement, faced with the goals yet to be reached and the many new challenges that are arising, is called upon to maintain a prominent and leading role in the current International relations in defense of the interests and priorities of its member states and for achievement of peace and security for mankind.

→ UNITED NATIONS AND MULTILATERALISM

- Multilateralism is the **coordinated diplomatic interaction** between three or more stakeholders in international politics, but can be interpreted differently by different stakeholders. Sometimes it is understood as not only a diplomatic approach, but one that is **committed to certain principles and set of values**.
- The value basis of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN) — where many nations work towards a common goal to enable diversity and strengthen the weakened voice of the neglected majority — has inevitably led to a tug of war between the true values of multilateralism and the increasing use of multilateral networks for individual countries' geostrategic purposes. This coupled with the rising criticism of the UN system's inability to respond to the growing global governance challenges has led to the questioning of the need for such an institution.

Is it an excessive layer in global governance or does it still play a pivotal role in enabling the international community to work together?

- At the very core of multilateralism lies an interdependency that is key to the equilibrium needed to maintain peaceful global governance that promotes collaboration and equity.
- Functioning through an architecture of organisations, institutions and procedures based in treaties, international law and essentially in the UN charter, the UN has been imperative in preserving peace and addressing common global threats since its creation.
- Significant UN attainments beyond the domain of peace and security include the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the creation and later achievements of specialised funds, programmes and technical agencies—such as the elimination of smallpox by the World Health Organization, the non-proliferation treaty of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of the World Trade Organization.
- Although the UN Charter is still as relevant now as in 1945, there is a well-acknowledged need to reform the functioning of the institution to uphold its legitimacy. According to **article 108 of the UN treaty**, changes to the UN structure and governance are extremely difficult because they must be adopted by two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly and ratified by two-thirds of the members of the United Nations, including all the five permanent members of the Security Council.
- Although the UN is the defender of democratic values on a global scale, it is restricted by the permanent members of the Security Council to fulfil this goal for its own governance mechanism. Thus, the idea that the international society should act collectively through the UN Security Council to protect populations from war, ethnic cleansing, genocide and other crimes against humanity is a normative aspiration that is constantly challenged by the inability of the five permanent members to act cooperatively. The conflict in Syria is one recent demonstration of the level of dissonance that has led to a paralysis of action.
- The UN preaches democracy and supports its values in countries all around the world, but cannot live by its own rule due to structural limitations that reflect an old political order that no longer corresponds to what the world looks like today. Multilateral platforms such as the UN are used by member states to pursue their own national interests. This is, however, not a

new phenomenon, nor bound to disappear as global politics have always been the foundation underlying the multilateral order and will remain a structural force. That said, multilateral institutions must function within those parameters and other realities of our time, making UN reform and adaption to the global scene it operates in even more crucial.

- Beyond the criticism of the UN, it is hard to deny the importance that it has had for globalisation and peace and the interlinkages between countries. Although it is easy to criticise the UN for shortcomings and mistakes made as part of its global machinery, it is hard to imagine how the world would have looked, or what global threats or diplomatic disasters would have been a reality if the institution did not exist. We take the UN for granted now, but would have had to re-invent it to protect ourselves from the consequences of unilateral hegemony if we found ourselves in a world without the UN or an equivalent.
 - One could claim that the very reason why the UN and multilateral institutions are being criticised is exactly because they contribute to the destabilisation of a stagnant world order in which a few powerful states bully other countries. Indeed, the strongest opponents to the UN today are powerful heads of state and private entities who feel they are held back by the slow multilateral apparatus and have less to gain from it than what they can achieve unilaterally or bilaterally. The truth is that the UN has helped give a voice to many smaller states by making sure they are at the negotiating tables and have an opportunity to act internationally and exercise influence that by far exceeds what their size otherwise would have allowed. The broad multilateral diplomacy of institutions like the UN does not only give a more inclusive platform for smaller states, but it also offers a better chance to deal with complex challenges as the joint efforts mean a better ability to legitimise the achieved results, thus making them more sustainable.
 - But the UN's multilateral diplomacy also has **difficulties and limitations**. Other than being more costly and time consuming than bilateral agreements or unilateral action, multilateral negotiations often broaden the agenda to take into account the many different objectives and interests of the parties involved. This may result in the outcomes of multilateral agreements being less specific and concrete because they are characterised by compromise and finding the lowest common denominators across a variety of stakeholders, which in turn requires trade-offs. As such, there is an inversely proportional relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness, where more legitimacy is achieved at the price of effectiveness and vice versa.
- Furthermore, UN action ultimately **requires collective action**, bringing the need for trust and equal commitment between stakeholders, which is easier said than done. But perhaps the most important aspect of all is the fact that implementation of UN agreements depends on the parties involved without any functioning enforcement or sanction mechanisms in place to ensure action. Instead, the UN depends on observation, monitoring and review mechanisms to improve the chances of implementation where member states allow such support. The lack of enforceability is indeed a problem for the implementation of agreements, but also reflects the unwillingness of member states to politically support the development of such mechanisms. Another limitation is the progressive decrease of budgetary support to the UN system that is meant to serve the whole planet and all its inhabitants with total funding per year that is about half the budget of New York City, making the UN increasingly dependent on private businesses and philanthropies to continue its operations.
 - To conclude, the UN can be described as the **conscious and moral compass of the global community** — the goodwill that everyone wants to demonstrate and be associated to, but

nobody wants to invest in. The work of the UN is embedded in the UN Charter, which is a set of values that, in principle, all member countries have signed off on and want to live by. As with all aspirational values, it has led to unrealistic expectations on the UN coupled with an insufficient budget and political constraint.

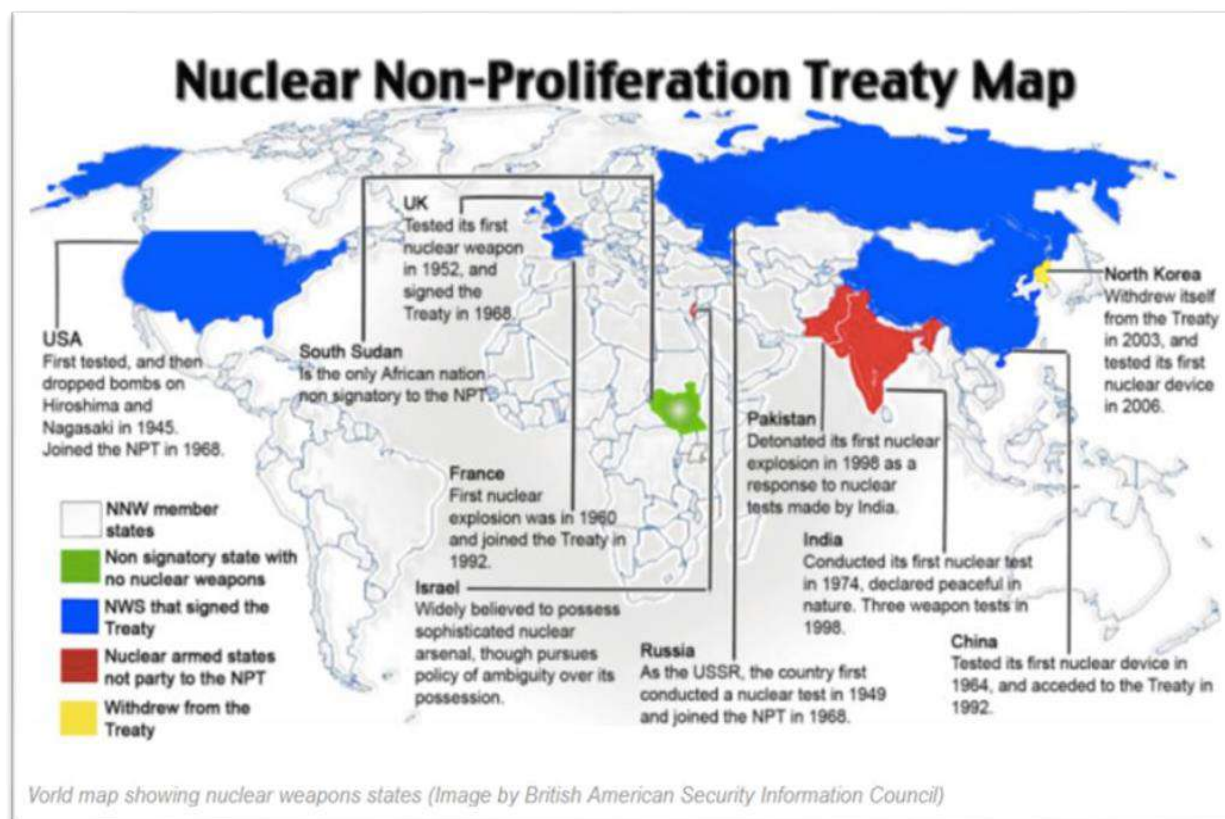
- The UN is a creation of the global community to serve the global community, and so it ultimately mirrors the action and support of its own source of existence. On the question of its relevance, the simple answer is, yes, it is relevant because it represents the world we strive to create and maintain- a world that respects all equally and provides safety and positive development for all. Meanwhile, it is also necessary for the creators, nurturers and users of the UN – the 193 member states and their people – to decide what they want. The self-improving goal of the UN reflects commitments that the world wants to uphold but for which their engagement, support and continuous devotion is necessary. If all countries want a UN that is effective and whose recommendations become reality, they are the ones who need to pledge and deliver on resolutions and commitments.
- The **ongoing COVID-19 crisis**, with its fast spread across borders and devastating effects on health systems and economies in countries of all income levels, has illustrated the importance of global solidarity and intergovernmental cooperation. Meanwhile, countries' unilateral decision-making, closed borders and naval-gazing at the onset of the pandemic shed light on the fragility of global collaboration mechanisms and raised questions around governments' readiness to support each other in times of difficulty. As the world faces more complex global challenges, the UN is more needed now than ever before to help develop legitimate and realistic international solutions. The pandemic might be exactly the crisis needed to force global unity and confrontation of the long-needed structural change to the UN system, and the current multipolar order might be the right political environment to push that agenda.
- The UN is in need of reform and the institution has been struggling to achieve it for the past four decades, but the question is, are member states ready to allow it?

➔ NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

- The NPT **aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy**, and to further the **goal of disarmament**.
- The Treaty establishes a **safeguards system under the responsibility of the IAEA**, which also plays a central role under the Treaty in areas of technology transfer for peaceful purposes.
- The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.
- The NPT **was opened for signature in 1968 and entered into force on 5 March 1970**. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely.
- With **191 States parties**, it is the most widely adhered to treaty in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament.
- Under the NPT, **non-nuclear-weapon States parties have committed themselves not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive**

devices while nuclear-weapon States parties have committed not to in any way assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State party to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

- Nuclear-weapon States parties under the Treaty are defined as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967. There are five nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty.
- While the IAEA is not a party to the NPT, it is entrusted with key verification responsibilities under the Treaty.



- Each non-nuclear-weapon State party is required under Article III of the NPT to conclude a **comprehensive safeguards agreement (CSA)** with the IAEA to enable the IAEA to verify the fulfilment of their obligation under the Treaty with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.
- The IAEA therefore has a **specific verification role as the international safeguards inspectorate**, namely to verify the fulfilment of obligations assumed under the NPT by non-nuclear-weapon States parties.
- By September 2021, 178 non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty have brought into force CSAs required by the Treaty and 8 of them have yet to do so.
- The IAEA also has an important role to play in achieving the objectives under Article IV to foster international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Through its activities relevant to energy security, human health, food security and safety, water resource management and industrial applications, the IAEA supports its Member States in attaining their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WHAT ARE THE OTHER TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS ON NUCLEAR BANS?

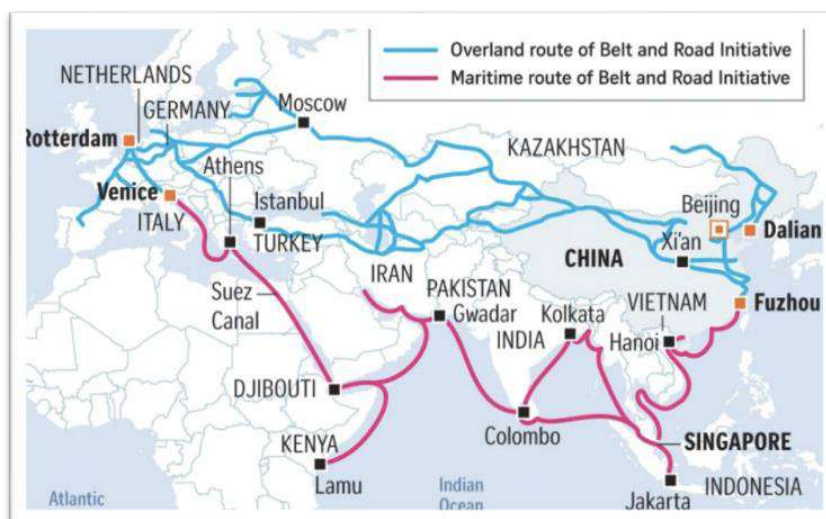
- The NPT is joined by the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), which had the Interim Agreement and Protocol on Limitation of Strategic Offensive Weapons, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (I and II), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) among others.
- Outside of the P5 (China, France, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S.), India and Pakistan are known to possess nuclear weaponry, while Israel is strongly suspected of possessing it.
- North Korea has a nuclear weapons programme but its actual possession of nuclear weapons is debated. It has, in recent times, conducted multiple missile tests, to showcase its supposed capabilities. It has a total of seven major types of long-range missiles (Nodong, Pukguksong-3, Pukguksong-2, Musudan, the Hwasong-12, Hwasong-14, Hwasong-15) ranging from a limit of 1,500 km to 13,000 km.
- The impetus is on the major powers to stay on the path which the NPT has paved (even if a winding one) and signal commitment through its actions towards putting an end to the arms race and hopefully complete disarmament.

→ BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

- According to the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, Asia faces an infrastructure funding gap of estimated USD 26 trillion through 2030. To address this gap, various regional and sub-regional initiatives aim to develop better transport connectivity within Asia.

- This includes, among others, the **Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN)**

Connectivity initiative, the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program, the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) Cooperation Program, the South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).



ABOUT BRI

- BRI is a **transcontinental long-term policy and investment program** which aims at infrastructure development and acceleration of the economic integration of countries along the route of the historic Silk Road.

- The Initiative was unveiled in **2013** by **China's president Xi Jinping** and until **2016**, was known as **OBOR – One Belt One Road**.
- In 2015, the official outline for the Belt and Road Initiative was issued by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), with authorization of the State Council.

AIMS OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

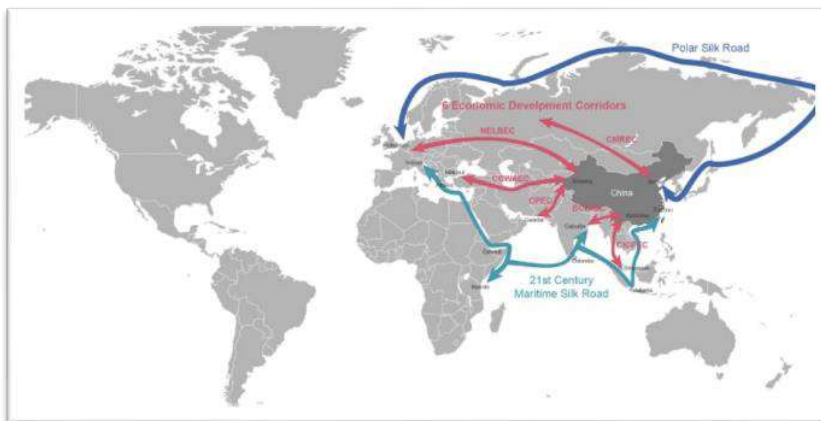
- BRI aims to promote the **connectivity of Asian, European and African continents** and their **adjacent seas**, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries.
- BRI is a global initiative but by its nature of building on the historic Silk Road puts a major focus on countries in Asia, Eastern Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, a region mainly composed of emerging markets.
- According to the Belt and Road Portal, currently 71 countries are taking part in the Initiative, together representing more than a third of the world's GDP and two thirds of the world's population.
- The Belt and Road Initiative combines two initiatives

1. The (land based) Silk Road Economic Belt, comprising six development corridors
2. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road

The Silk Road Economic Belt

The Silk Road Economic Belt is a long-term vision for the infrastructural development, connectivity and economic cooperation of Eurasia and is spanning six development "corridors", namely:

1. New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor (NELBEC)
2. China – Mongolia – Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC)
3. China – Central Asia – West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC)
4. China – Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC)
5. Bangladesh – China – India – Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC)
6. China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)



THE 21ST CENTURY MARITIME SILK ROAD

- The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road connects China to Southeast Asia, Indonesia, India, the Arabian peninsula, Somalia, Egypt and Europe, encompassing the South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Bengal, Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

- Additionally the map shows the Polar Silk Road, referring to the **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**, as officially mentioned in China's Arctic policy.

THE POLAR SILK ROAD

- In 2018, People's Republic of China published a white paper, titled **"China's Arctic Policy"**, vowing to actively participating in Arctic affairs. The document is a blueprint for China's Arctic strategy and its ambition to develop a "Polar Silk Road" under the "Belt and Road Initiative".
- The land based Silk Road Economic Belt, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the Polar Silk Road cannot be considered separately and need to be understood as complement to each other regarding the strategic integration of the regions under BRI.

COOPERATION PRIORITIES

- The official Belt and Road Initiative outline promotes the joint formulation of development plans and measures for advancing cross-national or regional cooperation between countries involved in BRI.
- This includes intergovernmental cooperation and multi-level macro policy exchange, communication mechanisms and policy support for the implementation of large-scale projects and the coordination in monetary policy.

According to the outline, the Belt and Road Initiative is based on five cooperation priorities:

1. Policy coordination (Promotion of intergovernmental cooperation, multi-level intergovernmental macro policy exchange and communication mechanism)
2. Facilities connectivity (Improvement of connectivity of infrastructure construction plans and technical standards systems)
3. Unimpeded trade (Reduction of investment and trade barriers, promotion of regional economic integration)
4. Financial integration (Coordination and cooperation in monetary policy, set-up of financing institutions)
5. People-to-people bonds (Cultural and academic exchange and dialogue, media cooperation)

COORDINATION OF THE INITIATIVE

- The Belt and Road Initiative has no formal institutionalized body and its implementation includes multiple actors and stakeholders.
- The overseeing body of BRI is the "Office of the Leading Group on Promoting the Implementation of Belt and Road Initiatives" which is under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). The leading group is in charge of guiding and coordinating work related to the initiative.
- An important role in the implementation of BRI plays China's new State International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDCA).
- The agency was unveiled in 2018 and will be responsible for strategic guidelines and policies on foreign aid. SIDCA will be answerable to the State Council and according to State Council "will better serve the country's global strategy and to build the Belt and Road Initiative".
- Various Chinese governmental agencies are involved in the formulation and implementation of BRI, including the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of

Commerce (MOFCOM), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) or the Ministry of Culture (MoC).

- To complement the BRI blueprint, almost all provinces in China such as Hebei or Henan have elaborated own BRI implementation plans.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS FOR COUNTRIES INVOLVED?

- More recently, governments from Malaysia to Pakistan are starting to rethink the costs of these projects. Sri Lanka, where the government leased a port to a Chinese company for 99 years after struggling to make repayments, is a cautionary tale.
- Earlier this year, the Center for Global Development found eight more Belt and Road countries at serious risk of not being able to repay their loans.
- There are some extreme cases where China lends into very high risk environments, and it would seem that the motivation is something different. In these situations the leverage China has as lender is used for purposes unrelated to the original loan.

Why is the initiative sparking global concern?

- As Belt and Road expands in scope so do concerns it is a form of **economic imperialism** that gives China too much leverage over other countries, often those that are smaller and poorer.
- Some worry expanded Chinese commercial presence around the world will eventually lead to expanded military presence. Recently, China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti. Analysts say almost all the ports and other transport infrastructure being built can be dual-use for commercial and military purposes.
- “If it can carry goods, it can carry troops,” says Jonathan Hillman, director of the Reconnecting Asia project at CSIS.

➔ BRI IN SOUTH ASIA

PAKISTAN

CPEC	<p>Launched in 2015.</p> <p>China pledged \$62 billion in low-interest loans and financing from Chinese state-owned banks and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)</p> <p>The CPEC involves multiple projects, including the development of a port in the city of Gwadar in the Balochistan province, providing a port to China's Xinjiang province that would be closer than other eastern ports in China.</p> <p>China envisioned that Gwadar would provide it with a position on the Arabian Sea without having to go through the busy shipping lane of the Malacca Strait.</p>
Coal power plants	<p>Multiple Chinese power firms operating in Pakistan threatened to close down if the latter did not pay dues of 300 billion in Pakistani rupees (approximately \$1.5 bn).</p>
Main Line 1 (ML-1) rail:	<p>The project involved the total overhaul of the 1,872-km ML-1 railway line from Peshawar to Karachi with Chinese loans of over \$8 billion, later reduced to \$6.8 billion over China's concerns about Pakistan's ability to repay.</p>

Gwadar development	Gwadar is strategically important as it is an hour's drive from Iran and less than 320 km from Oman. According to the master plan for Gwadar's development under BRI, approved in 2020, it would increase the city's GDP to \$30 billion by 2050 and create over a million jobs.
Orange Line Metro	The \$1.6-billion Orange Line Metro covering 27 km in Lahore, described as "China's gift" to Pakistan, became operational in late 2020.

SRI LANKA

Central Expressway project	The \$1.16 billion Central Expressway project connecting with two other highways- the Outer Circle Highway and the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway, and multiple other roads in Dambulla and Kandy, is currently under construction.
Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT)	China also developed the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) at the Colombo port, where a Chinese state-owned firm holds an 85 per cent stake under a 35-year Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) agreement. In 2021, Colombo ejected India and Japan out of a deal to develop the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Colombo port, getting China to take up the project. It then awarded the project for the Western Side of the Terminal to the Adani Group.
Hambantota port	The Sri Lankan government took \$1.4 billion in Chinese loans for the port's expansion. Unable to service the huge loan and incurring \$300 million in losses due to delays, the government handed Hambantota port to a Chinese state-owned company on a 99-year lease in 2017. The rate of traffic at the port currently remains slow.
Hambantota International Airport	The Hambantota International Airport or the Rajapaksa Airport, built with a \$200 million loan from China became operational in 2013. Described as the "world's emptiest airport" it is used sparingly, and was unable to cover its electricity bill at one point.

NEPAL

35 infrastructure projects	Kathmandu formally joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, submitting a list of 35 infrastructure projects it wished China to finance. China asked Nepal to narrow the list to an achievable target and after nearly two years of negotiations, nine projects including an ambitious trans-Himalayan rail road from Nepal to China, construction of roads, laying of power transmission lines, hydropower projects, and a technical institute were shortlisted.
Kerung-Kathmandu Rail link	The proposed Himalayan railway project Kerung-Kathmandu Rail link will connect Kerung city (also known as Gyirong) in south Tibet to the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu. The rail link is the extension of the railroad being built to connect China's Qinghai province to Tibet.

AFGHANISTAN

Investments worth \$100 million	<p>The projects have not materialised so far and uncertainties have deepened after the Taliban takeover last year. Many analysts contended that China would step in with the BRI to fill the void left by the withdrawal of the United States.</p> <p>The Taliban regime has called China its “main partner” and China also said last year that Taliban leaders support BRI and believe it will enhance much-needed infrastructure development in the country.</p>
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MALDIVES

Situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean, Maldives comprises two hundred Islands, and both India and China are strategically attracted to it.

Sinamale bridge	<p>One of the most prominent BRI projects undertaken in the Maldives is the 2 km long Sinamale bridge or the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge- a \$200 million four lane bridge.</p>
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- Most of China’s infrastructure investment happened in the Maldives under former President Abdullah Yameen, seen as pro-China.
- The Maldives’ current regime of President Ibrahim Solih has tried to distance itself from the BRI, focusing more on its ‘India First’ policy.
- India has also in recent years sought greater ties with the Maldives under Prime Minister of India’s **‘Neighbourhood First’ policy**, funding the **Greater Male Connectivity Project** in the Maldives by providing a \$100 million grant and a \$400 million loan.

BANGLADESH

Investment	<p>In 2016, when the Chinese government promised Dhaka BRI investment worth around \$40 billion , India followed up in 2017 by extending a \$5 billion line of credit and economic assistance.</p> <p>Bangladesh has also avoided Chinese interference in its internal matters by stressing its sovereign power when China warned it about joining the Quad. Dhaka also agreed to work on a free-trade agreement with India.</p>
Projects	<p>BRI projects include China-Bangladesh Friendship Bridges, special economic zones (SEZs), the \$689.35 million-Karnaphuli River tunnel project, upgradation of the Chittagong port, and a rail line between the port and China’s Yunnan province.</p> <p>The Marine Drive Expressway was hampered after Sri Lanka blacklisted the Chinese company building it, over bribery reports. Work on the project is now expected to start in 2022.</p> <p>China also refused to carry out two rail projects after Bangladesh adjusted their costs downwards.</p> <p>The Bangladesh government reduced the total cost of the \$1.045 billion Joydebpur-Ishwardi rail line by over 12 per cent and that of the \$1.2 billion Akhaura-Sylhet line by about 20 per cent.</p>

→ CHINA IN HORN OF AFRICA

“China-Horn of Africa Peace, Governance and Development Conference” was held in Ethiopia witnessed the participation of foreign Ministries from the following countries of the Horn: **Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda.**

RECENT PROJECTS BETWEEN CHINA AND COUNTRIES FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA

- **China’s three objectives in Africa:** controlling the pandemic, implementing a Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) outcomes, and upholding common interests while fighting hegemonic politics.
- The FOCAC promotes China’s role in the infrastructural and societal development of the Horn. In the 2021 forum, the entire region of the Horn participated and four resolutions were adopted:
 - the Dakar Action Plan,
 - the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035,
 - the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change, and
 - the Declaration of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC.
- The **“2035 vision for China-Africa cooperation”** aims to transform the health sector, alleviate poverty, promote trade and investments, and expand digital innovation.
- The vision also focuses on green development, capacity building, improving people-to-people exchanges and facilitating peace and security in the continent.

CHINA’S PRIMARY INTERESTS/INVESTMENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA



China's interests are related to four major areas:

infrastructural projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of its landmark projects was fully funding the \$200 million African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. it is building the Addis-Djibouti railway line connecting the land-locked country with Eritrean ports in the Red Sea. Also invested in the Mombasa-Nairobi rail link in Kenya, and has already delivered on railway projects in Sudan. It also has a viable military hardware market in Ethiopia and has built over 80 infrastructural projects in Somalia.
financial assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethiopia, is one of the top five African recipients of Chinese investments, and also has a debt of almost \$14 billion. China accounts for 67% of Kenya's bilateral debt. In 2022, China promised to provide \$15.7 million assistance to Eritrea.
natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China has invested \$400 million in Mombasa's oil terminal. China is also interested in minerals such as gold, iron-ore, precious stones, chemicals, oil and natural gas in Ethiopia. South Sudan, a source for petroleum products, has had continued Beijing investment in the industry since the latter's initial entry in 1995.
maritime interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China's first and only military base outside its mainland is in Djibouti. China is willing to develop Eritrea's coast which would connect to China's investments in land-locked Ethiopia. China wishes to build another military base in Kenya and Tanzania, thereby increasing its military presence in the region.

CHINA'S NEW FOUND FOCUS IN AFRICA

- China's move towards peace in Africa indicates a shift in its principle of non-intervention. It is China's message that its presence in the continent has a larger objective and is not likely to be limited to the Horn of Africa.
- This includes an aim to **project itself as a global leader** and boost its international status.
- Further, the recent developments imply that China is focussing on a **multifaceted growth in the continent for the long run**.
- For Africa, China's presence is an **alternative to the European powers**, many of whom are facing criticism from African governments.
- Further, **African governments, which do not conform to Western standards of democracy**, interact better with powers like China and Russia.

➔ PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT (PGII)

U.S. President Joe Biden along with his G7 allies unveiled the ambitious Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).

He announced the **collective mobilisation of \$600 billion by 2027** to deliver “game-changing” and “transparent” infrastructure projects to **developing and middle-income countries**.

The PGII is being seen as **the G7’s counter** to China’s multi-trillion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (**BRI**) to build connectivity, infrastructure, and trade projects in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America.

COUNTER TO BRI

- The West has been sceptical of the BRI, since it was launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, as it was considered to be part of China’s larger strategy to increase geopolitical influence in Asia and other developing countries.
- The U.S., along with G7 partners the U.K., Japan, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, and the European Union (EU), had in 2021 announced the launch of the **Build Back Better World (B3W)** with the aim of narrowing the \$40 trillion infrastructure gap in the developing world.
- PGII is therefore, a relaunch of Mr. Biden’s B3W plan.

PRIORITY PILLARS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

First	○ Aims to tackle the climate crisis and ensure global energy security through clean energy supply chains.
Second	○ The projects will focus on bolstering digital information and communications technology (ICT) networks facilitating technologies such as 5G and 6G internet connectivity and cybersecurity.
Third	○ The projects aim to advance gender equality and equity, and lastly, to build and upgrade global health infrastructure.
Fourth	○ To build and upgrade global health infrastructure.

PGII VS. BRI

- The G7 has specifically touted the PGII as a **values-based plan** to help underfunded low and middle-income countries meet their infrastructure needs.
- PGII has laid **focus on climate action and clean energy**, while China has built large coal-fired plants under BRI along with solar, hydro, and wind energy projects.
- While the G7 has pledged **\$600 billion** by 2027, Morgan and Stanley estimate that China’s overall funding for BRI by that time could reach **\$1.2 to 1.3 trillion dollars** with the actual funding being higher.
- Under the PGII, large **private capital** will be also mobilised while China’s **BRI is majorly state-funded**.
- While G7 leaders emphasised ‘**transparency**’ as the cornerstone of PGII projects, the BRI has faced criticism for making countries sign confidential tenders for extending massive loans, leaving countries indebted to China. For instance, after the BRI’s flagship \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Pakistan owes Beijing a large proportion of its foreign debt.
- China builds BRI’s projects by extending large, low-interest loans to countries that have to usually be paid over 10 years. There have been cases of **debt-saddled countries** failing to repay on time. Sri Lanka, for instance, had to cede its key Hambantota Port on a 99-year lease to China.

- PGII aims to build projects through **grants and investments**.

➔ GLOBAL GATEWAY

The European Commission plan to mobilise €300 billion (\$340 billion) in public and private infrastructure investment around the world. It is a move seen as a response to China's Belt and Road strategy.

MORE ABOUT GLOBAL GATEWAY

- The European Commission and the EU High Representative have set out the Global Gateway, a new European strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in **digital, energy and transport sectors** and to **strengthen health, education and research systems** across the world.
- The EU is stepping up its offer to its partners with major investments in infrastructure development around the world. Between 2022 and 2027, Team Europe, meaning the EU institutions and EU Member States jointly, will mobilise up to EUR 300 billions of investments in: digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research.
- The Global Gateway will deliver **sustainable and high-quality projects**, taking into account the needs of partner countries and ensuring lasting benefits for local communities. This will allow EU's partners to develop their societies and economies, but also create opportunities for the EU Member States' private sector to invest and remain competitive, whilst ensuring the highest environmental and labour standards, as well as sound financial management.
- The Global Gateway is the EU's contribution to narrowing the global investment gap worldwide. It is in line with the commitment of the G7 leaders to launch a values-driven, high-standard and transparent infrastructure partnership to meet global infrastructure development needs.
- The Global Gateway is also fully aligned with the **UN's Agenda 2030** and its **Sustainable Development Goals**, as well as the **Paris Agreement**.
- The Global Gateway will be delivered through a Team Europe approach, which brings together the EU and EU Member States with their financial and development institutions, including the **European Investment Bank (EIB)** and the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)**.

PRINCIPLES OF THE GLOBAL GATEWAY

- The European model of trusted connectivity in partner countries is long-term and in line with EU's interests and values: **rule of law, human rights and international norms and standards**.
- It is about smart, clean and secure investments in quality infrastructure, connecting goods, people and services around the world in a sustainable way
- Global Gateway partnerships will be based on 6 principles:

- democratic values and high standards
- good governance and transparency
- equal partnerships

- green and clean
- security focused
- catalysing private sector investment

➔ INDIAN OCEAN

- The Indian Ocean is a vast theater, stretching from the **Strait of Malacca and western coast of Australia in the East to the Mozambique Channel in the West.**
- It encompasses the **Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea** in the North, all the way down to the southern Indian Ocean.

INDIAN OCEAN INITIATIVE

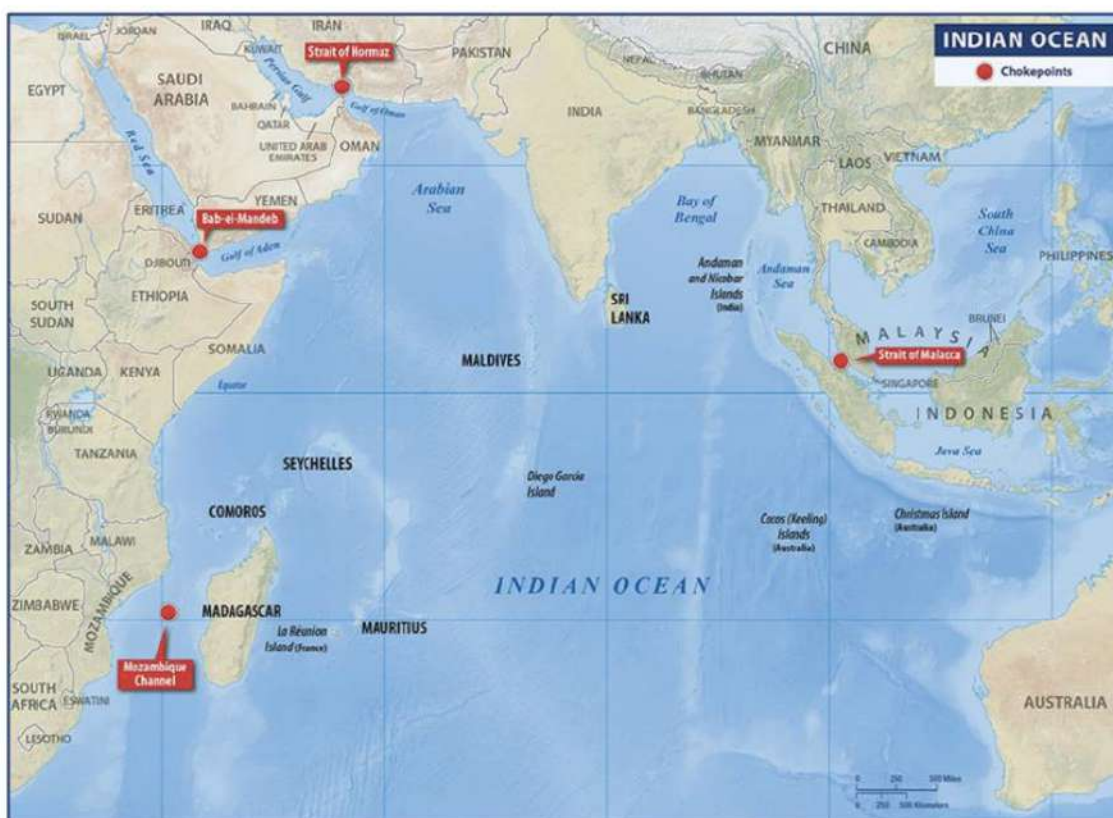
- Along the coasts of this huge geographic expanse are countries that are home to some 2.7 billion people.
- The Indian Ocean's key subregions are **South Asia, the Middle East, the eastern coast of Africa, and the islands dotting the ocean from Sri Lanka in the East to the Comoros Archipelago in the West.**
- The region's size and diversity explains its **geo-economic importance.** Its regional forum, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, includes countries as politically and socially different as Australia, Indonesia, Iran, and South Africa, leading to striking new power dynamics.
- From resource-rich Africa and the energy-dense Middle East to South Asia's labour markets and manufacturing industries, the stability of the Indian Ocean is crucial to the global economy.

WHY ARE COUNTRIES VYING FOR CONTROL OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN?

- While it may be difficult today for one nation to control the entire expanse of the Indian Ocean the way the British, French, or Portuguese empires did during the colonial period, the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean remains the same.
- In fact, the advent of the **Indo-Pacific**—the new geopolitical framework that includes both the Indian and Pacific Oceans—has pushed the Indian Ocean back into the spotlight after a period with no serious great power competition in the region, following the end of the Cold War.
- The importance of trade and the sheer scope of its many subregions make the Indian Ocean critical in terms of **military and strategic engagement.**
- It is a **vital trading hub**, connecting the Middle East to Southeast and East Asia, as well as Europe and the Americas. Any disruption along its trading routes will impact the entire globe's energy security, let alone that of significant economies like China, Japan, and South Korea, which depend on energy imported primarily via the Malacca strait.
- At the heart of the geopolitical struggle in the Indian Ocean is the ability to sustain a military presence near the key choke points connecting its trade routes. Such a presence gives countries the power to protect and disrupt these valuable maritime channels—known as **Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) protection** and SLOC interdiction in naval terms—during times of peace and war.

WHICH PARTS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ARE MOST CONTESTED?

- Of the world's seven key choke points for oil transportation, three are in the Indian Ocean. These are bottlenecks that connect two important waterways, creating a shipping traffic jam.
- If these narrow stretches of water are blocked or unavailable, the alternative route is usually expensive, long, or in some cases, impossible for large ships and oil tankers to navigate.
- The **first choke point is the Malacca strait** between Malaysia, Singapore and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, which connects Southeast Asia and the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean.
- The **second is the Strait of Hormuz**, which is the only sea passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the wider Indian Ocean.
- The **third is the Bab-el-Mandeb strait**, which flows between Eritrea and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean.
- Finally, there is also the **Mozambique Channel** between Madagascar and Mozambique, which is a key trading route for goods transiting the Cape of Good Hope to the Middle East and Asia.
- If a navy has access to and influence over these choke points, it can oversee all entry and exit points into the region. Moreover, presence near key choke points helps a nation's antisubmarine warfare and surveillance missions, which create maritime domain awareness.
- Surveillance and reconnaissance missions around choke points are particularly important for awareness of an adversary's submarine movements, because detecting subsurface vessels in the wider open sea is much more difficult and expensive.



- A nation that boasts a strong security profile in the Indian Ocean will be an instrumental partner for the many littoral countries along its coastline, spanning Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

CURRENT STATUS

- After the Second World War, as newly independent countries across the region withdrew to focus on immediate economic and security issues within their borders, the ocean was split into the continental subregions of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.
- The island nations also grouped themselves into these subregions, dividing the Indian Ocean primarily into the eastern Indian Ocean and the western Indian Ocean.
- The United States was a key player in the region through the Cold War with the Soviet Union. But later, U.S. reduced its engagements. By the early twenty-first century, the U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean was mostly limited to supporting its missions in Afghanistan and the Middle East.
- Partnerships in the Indian Ocean are also complex in the new security environment. For example, the **United States** continues to maintain a military base on the island of **Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago**. But the sovereignty of the island—an overseas territory of the UK that London leased from Port Louis during its independence—is disputed by Mauritius, with the UN General Assembly adopting a resolution in favour of Mauritius in 2019.
- Although India is a key U.S. partner in the Indian Ocean today, India politically throws its support behind Mauritius on principles of decolonization and nonalignment. Larger countries' bilateral dynamics with the littorals and islands of the region carry implications for the wider ocean.
- With the United States preoccupied with its commitments in the Pacific, Afghanistan and the Middle East, France, and India took on the role of key security providers in the region.
- **France** is a major player in the **western Indian Ocean**, while **India** has the primary role in the **eastern Indian Ocean**. Through its overseas region of Reunion, France is a member of the **Indian Ocean Commission**, the only forum that brings together the French-speaking islands of the region. However, the Indian Navy claims the entire Indian Ocean as its area of responsibility and prides itself on being the first to respond to natural and humanitarian disasters there.
- While France and India are the key regional players on security, the UK also plays an important role.
- Other countries are involved in specific issues, especially maritime piracy: China, India, Japan, and the United States and its NATO allies, as well as the UN, all have ongoing missions to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. Their presence addresses a shared international maritime concern and is usually restricted to the affected region off the Horn of Africa.
- But over the years, this engagement has provided new players such as China with the opportunity to interact with the Indian Ocean's littoral countries and islands.

HOW ARE THE POWER DYNAMICS CHANGING?

- Building on its antipiracy missions, China has emerged as a strong partner for the islands and littoral countries of the Indian Ocean. The **Maritime Silk Road, under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative**, has provided an added platform to collaborate on economic and military issues.

- China set up its first overseas **military facility in Djibouti** on the Indian Ocean coast. While France, Japan, and the United States already have facilities in Djibouti, the Chinese base cements its position as a new player in the region.
- Combined with Beijing's larger maritime ambitions, China's presence in the region has become a source of shared anxiety for France, India, the United States, and others.
- For example, if India is the primary partner for smaller nations such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives and to an extent Mauritius and Seychelles, then France is the key partner for French-speaking Madagascar and Comoros. But Beijing stands to compete with India and France simultaneously across the six islands in the region. Of all the key powers in the Indian Ocean, China is the only one with a diplomatic mission across all six island nations—not France, India, the UK, or the United States.
- The vacuum left by limited U.S. engagement over the last three to four decades combined with strategic inertia from New Delhi and Paris has been filled by new competition between India and China.
- But it is not just China that is challenging traditional players in the region. In 2020, **Russia announced the establishment of a new naval base in Sudan** for a period of twenty-five years. This provides Moscow with strategic access to the Red Sea and by extension to Bab-el-Mandeb, one of the key choke points in the Indian Ocean.
- **Saudi Arabia and Turkey** are also strengthening their economic and diplomatic ties with the islands of the Indian Ocean, which could lead to new power dynamics.

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREAT POWERS' COMPETITION

- Non-traditional security issues such as climate change, illegal fishing, drug smuggling, and human trafficking will come to play a bigger role in the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean.
- If the competition is over sustaining presence and missions in strategically important parts of the ocean—such as the choke points mentioned earlier—the island nations and African littorals will come to assume a central role. And these smaller nations' primary security challenges will be the non-traditional issues described above.
- As such, the region's traditional players like France, India, and the United States along with its partners like Australia, Japan, and the UK, will have to think through their smaller partners' non-traditional security challenges if they want to address their own national security interests in the region.
- In essence, if the big powers vying for influence in the Indian Ocean want the small island nations as allies, they must pay attention to these nations' security concerns. While these issues may be considered soft or secondary, they are deeply relevant to the island nations. These issues also carry strategic implications, such as for fishing vessels and scientific missions used for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes. Hence, they will significantly impact the region's ongoing geopolitical competition.

➔ INDO-PACIFIC

- The Indo-Pacific has gained currency in recent times. In terms of geo-spatiality, the Indo-Pacific is broadly to be understood as an **interconnected space between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean**.

- The region is central to world economy and peace, and nine countries are key players: the US, China, Japan, India, Germany, the UK, Russia, Australia and France. The geopolitics and geo-economics of the Indo-Pacific will be largely shaped by the interplay of relations among these nations.
- Its expanse is debated to be ranging from the **eastern shores of Africa to the western coast of the United States**, albeit with variations in definitions depending on each actor and their own geographic positioning in the vast expanse.
- In a more functional understanding, the interconnectedness and the interdependence of the two oceans is a product of **growing forces of globalization, trade and changing equations between various actors** which has broken down older boundaries and opened up new avenues. Growing mobility across the oceans has helped formulate an integrated approach. Given that it contains the world's most crucial sea routes, the world's most populous nations fueling high energy demands on its rims and a stretch encapsulating finest global commons, the Indo-Pacific is adjudged to be the center of the globe in terms of politics and economics.
- Strategically, the Indo-Pacific has been seen as a continuum across the two oceans joined together by its main trading channel, the **straits of Malacca**. Two broad reasons explain the rise of a strategic imagination of the Indo-Pacific. **First**, the growing footprint of China across the length and breadth of the region and **second**, the relative decline of the U.S. alliance system and its strive for resurgence.
- China's maritime advances have sprawled across the two oceans in a bid to secure its energy requirements and boost its trading ties. China's rise has taken multiple forms. In the **South China Sea**, its claims have been showcased through territorial advances. Its growing strides in South Asian waters alongside the "**string**" of **port facilities** across the Indian Ocean is likely to make it a resident power. In terms of connectivity and infrastructure, the **Belt and Road Initiative** puts forward the Chinese-led plan to bind the geopolitical space. Economically, China is a crucial trading partner for all the major states in the region and also taking active interests to lead the economic partnerships of the region.
- The rise of China is to be read alongside a relative decline of the U.S. presence in the region. While the United States still is a net-security provider in the region for its allies and possesses the most potent navy, its strategies have left the door open for China in some cases and harmed its own allies in the rest. Although the United States has accorded renewed importance to the Indo-Pacific by a significant renaming of the U.S. Pacific Command to the **Indo-Pacific command**, its unilateral withdrawal from the **Trans-Pacific Partnership** and continuous calls for equitable burden-sharing for its allies has left its alliance system in limbo. Added to



that, it has been unable to blow steam into the **Quad grouping** of like-minded democracies, comprised also of Australia, Japan and India in order to build the much touted “free and open Indo-Pacific.”

- The U.S.-China conflict at the heart of the Indo-Pacific has also led to contested imaginations from other littoral actors. Australia, which was one of the first nations to discuss the idea of Indo-Pacific, has implicitly argued for a balance between the United States and China. While it is a part of the U.S. alliance system and favors its large scale presence in the region, Australia is also aware of its gradual decline.
- Simultaneously, Australia neither can discount the economic gains served by China and the possibility of deepening ties with other important actors like Japan, India and South Korea in the region which would be vital for its strategic future. Reflecting on the spirit of the “**confluence of two seas**” first espoused by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan’s idea of the Indo-Pacific overlaps with the U.S. vision but with a strong emphasis on promoting infrastructure, beyond East Asia into Middle East and Africa. Placed centrally at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, **ASEAN nations** have taken a more functional outlook towards the Indo-Pacific, basing its strategy on four aspects – maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development and economy.
- **India’s imagination** of the Indo-Pacific is an extension of its advances in the east through the **Look East Policy**, now the **Act East Policy**. While the United States has pushed for a more active Indian role in the region, India’s Indo-Pacific strategy has been more about dodging than distinctiveness. India, arguing for a “**free and open Indo-Pacific**” and siding with the Quad nations initially, has been unable to determine whether its Indo-Pacific strategy is inclusive of China or set against it. While it echoes the concerns of the U.S. alliance to bring about a **rules-based order characterized by freedom of navigation and settlement of disputes** through dialogue, it has also mentioned that its idea of the Indo-Pacific is not about restricting a particular state, hinting China, and also a parallel focus on its **Security and Growth for All in the Region approach, coined SAGAR**.
- Like every imaginative space, the Indo-Pacific is a construct of contested interpretation, necessitating warring visions and constructs likely to be wrestled out between opposed strategic stakeholders in the region. A rising China, a defiant United States, and a host of other regional actors in the ongoing Indo-Pacific are likely to define the politics of the region, which is open to multiple possibilities.

➔ ASIA-PACIFIC/APAC

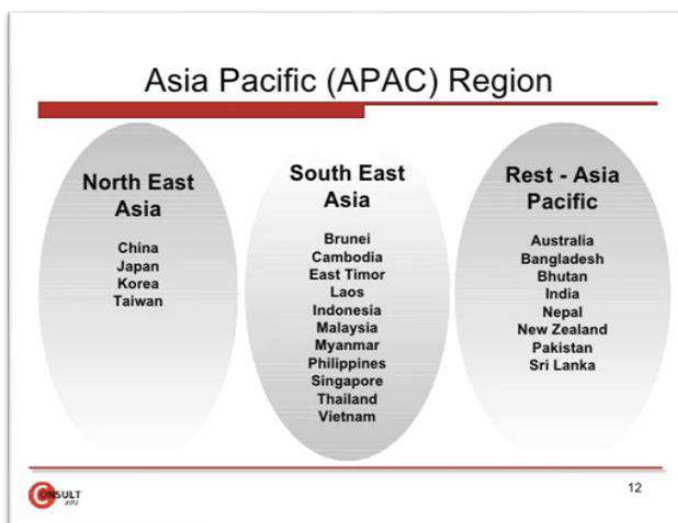
- The Asia-Pacific (APAC) is the part of the world near the **Western Pacific Ocean**. Asia-Pacific varies in area depending on context, but it generally includes **East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Russia, and Oceania**.
- APAC countries are those located within the APAC geographical region. The APAC region is loosely defined but generally considered to encompass the area in and around the western Pacific Ocean.
- The term rose to favor during the 1980s and is used most often in a political or commerce-related context. On occasion, the APAC region may be alternately referred to as the Asia-Pac, AsPac, or APJ/APEJ (for “Asia-Pacific and Japan” or “Asia-Pacific Excluding Japan”) region.

Which are the largest and smallest APAC countries?

- By area, China is the largest country in the APAC region, followed by Australia, India, Indonesia, and Mongolia.
- The smallest APAC country (not including dependent territories such as Tokelau, which is considered part of New Zealand) is Nauru, with an area of barely 21 km².

POPULATION

- The APAC region is also home to some of the world's most populous countries.
- China is the most populous nation in the Asia-Pacific region and the world, with about 1.44 billion people. India follows closely behind, with 1.39 billion.
- The third-most populous country in the region and the fourth-most populous in the world is Indonesia, with some 276.3 million people.
- The smallest country by population (again, not counting dependent territories) is either Tuvalu or Nauru, whose projected populations vary depending upon the source consulted, but which always fall between 10,000-12,000 people.



→ MIDDLE POWERS

Globally, there is a notion that **Japan, Iran, Turkey and India**, which, as “**middle powers**”, have the capacity to project power regionally, build alliances, and support (or disrupt) the strategies of international powers pursuing their interests in the region.

- Middle power, in international relations, a state that holds a position in the international power spectrum that is in the “middle”—below that of a superpower, which wields vastly superior influence over all other states, or of a great power, but with **sufficient ability to shape international events**.
- The origins of the concept of the middle power as an analytical tool can be traced to the 16th century, in the writings of the Italian philosopher **Giovanni Botero**.
- There are **two ways** to define a middle power: **one** is based on a state’s military strength, capabilities, and geostrategic position, while a **second** is based on a state’s leadership capabilities—in other words, that such states are perceived as being liberal, oriented toward democracy, and having legitimate concerns in international politics.
- The first conceptualization stems from a realist paradigm and the second from a pluralist paradigm.
- Research suggests that middle powers are categorically different because of their **reliance on diplomacy** and the specific conditions under which they pursue foreign policy.
- Middle powers **favour multilateral foreign policy** and the **formation of coalitions rather than unilateral decision making in foreign policy**.

- The style of diplomacy used by middle powers has been labeled “**niche diplomacy**,” mainly because middle powers have to follow limited foreign-policy objectives as a result of their power capabilities, which are lower than those of great powers or superpowers. However, middle powers do not challenge the status quo in the international system; **they are not revisionist or transformatist states**.
- During the Cold War, the concept of middle powers became empirically stronger as an analytical tool in international relations as a result of a balance of power between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. States that did not have superpower capability but still exerted some influence in world politics, such as Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden, were categorized as middle powers. This categorization sought to acknowledge the role they played in international relations while also allowing an analytical differentiation between different types of power.
- The role that middle powers play as legitimate brokers is emphasized in the pluralist paradigm of international-relations theory. Middle powers are important to the creation and maintenance of world order, and they **favour the establishment of international institutions**. In that sense, they act as stabilizers in the world system.
- Hegemonic powers are responsible for the creation of international institutions, but the maintenance and survival of those institutions depend on the convergence of interests between other players; that is where the role of middle powers is enhanced.
- Middle powers often concern themselves with issues such as **nuclear nonproliferation, international economic order, debt relief, banning of land mines**—issues that do not directly involve the vital interests of the great powers.
- In such international problems, middle powers are able to set and influence international agendas, build successful coalitions, and challenge great-power hegemony in those issues. That role played by middle powers results partly from perceptions of their legitimate concerns on issues of human security.
- Middle powers can succeed in effecting change because of their diplomatic capability and their ability to project a credible position, which enables them to act as moral and intellectual leaders.
- Middle powers also typically possess highly institutionalized foreign services and are able to disseminate their ideas and foreign-policy objectives through the relatively wide network of diplomatic missions they maintain.

➔ SYKES–PICOT AGREEMENT

- The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret treaty drawn up in **1916 between Great Britain and France**. It was named after **Mark Sykes** and **François Georges-Picot**, the primary negotiators.
- The treaty **divided up Arab lands** of the Ottoman Empire into British and French zones of control following the end of World War I.
- A century on, the Middle East continues to bear the consequences of the treaty, and many Arabs across the region continue to blame the subsequent violence in the Middle East, from the occupation of Palestine to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), on the Sykes-Picot treaty.

BACKGROUND OF THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

- When World War I broke out in 1914, the Russian, French and British Empires held discussions among themselves on how the erstwhile territories of their enemies would be divided among them. Parallel to this, the British also entered into agreements between Arab nationalists, promising that should a revolt against the Ottoman Empire be carried, independence would be granted in return. Such agreements would be ignored as events unfolded.
 - The Sykes-Picot Agreement was **based on the assumption that the Allies would defeat the Ottoman Empire**. The primary negotiations leading to the agreement occurred between 23 November 1915 and 3 January 1916. The agreement was ratified by their respective governments on 9th and 16th May 1916.
 - The Sykes-Picot agreement in practice divided the Ottoman provinces outside the Arabian Peninsula into **areas of British and French influence**.
- The **United Kingdom** was allocated **modern-day southern Israel, Jordan, southern Iraq** and **port areas of Haifa and Acre**.
 - **France** was handed control of **south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria and Lebanon**.

OTTOMAN ARAB PROVINCES

- The **Ottoman Empire (1516-1924)**, in the last few decades before its collapse, lost control over many of its territories to the growing powers of colonial countries.
- **France** took control of Algeria (1830) and Tunisia (1881),
 - **Italy** took over Libya (1911),
 - **Britain** gained control of Aden protectorate (1939), Oman (1861), Arabian Gulf chiefdoms (1820) and Kuwait (1899).
- As World War I erupted in July 1914, the weakening Ottoman Empire allied with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire to confront Britain and France.
 - It was then that the political regimes and the region's maps began to transform.

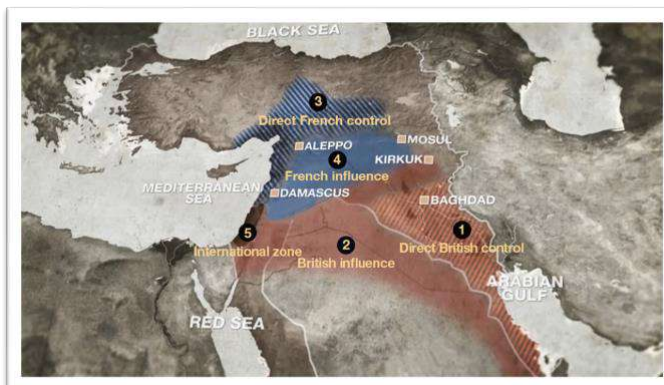
THE AGREEMENT: PARTIES AND COURSE

- During World War I, the foreign ministries of France, Russia, Britain and Italy assigned a group of selected diplomats to hold talks that would determine each country's share of the inheritance of the Ottoman Empire, which at that stage was dubbed "**The Sick Man**".
- Between November 1915 and May 1916, secret negotiations and memos of understanding were exchanged among the foreign ministries of those countries, mainly represented by Britain's Sykes and France's Picot.
- Britain was the most powerful party among those countries. It was, at the same time, in contact with the Emir and Sharif of Mecca Hussein bin Ali, who had been plotting for a revolution that aimed at establishing an Arab kingdom in the region.
- On May 16, 1916, a deal was secretly signed between Sykes and Picot, and approved Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov.

THE CONTENT OF THE DEAL:

The deal called for the establishment of five entities in the Levant:

1. The **first entity** extended from Baghdad to the south to include Kuwait, reaching to the Gulf coast. This entity was under **direct control of the British**.
 2. The **second entity** combined what is today northern Iraq, Jordan and the Negev desert, reaching all the way to Sinai. This part was under British influence.
 3. The **third entity** included a coastal area that extended from southern Lebanon to the north towards the provinces of Mersin, Iskenderun and Adana. It extended anteriorly to the inside of Anatolia. This part was under direct French control.
 4. The **fourth entity** comprised the Syrian Desert. This part was under French influence.
 5. The **fifth entity** included the Ottoman Jerusalem, which was the northern part of historic Palestine. This part was an international zone due to its religious significance. Britain was, however, allocated control of Acre and Haifa.
- With regards to Russia, the agreement stated that Russia's tsar would keep his stake in Istanbul, the territories adjacent to the Bosphorus strait and four provinces near the Russian borders in east Anatolia. Greece was allocated control of Turkey's western coasts. Italy was given control of Turkey's southwest.



CONSEQUENCES OF THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

- The agreement is seen by many as a **turning point in Western and Arab relations**. It negated the UK's promises to Arabs regarding a national Arab homeland in the area of Greater Syria in exchange for supporting the British against the Ottoman Empire.
- It **gave way to a legacy of resentment in the region not only among the Arabs but also among the Kurds** who were denied a homeland of their own.
- It is largely believed that the Sykes-Picot agreement ended up **creating 'artificial' borders** in the Middle-East with little regard for ethnic or sectarian characteristics. It created a recipe for endless conflict when hostile groups were put in the same region together. Yet there is still dispute to what extent did Sykes-Picot actually shaped the modern borders of the Middle-East
- To this day the Sykes-Picot agreement continues to be a sour point following the de-colonisation of the Middle-East.

➔ BALFOUR DECLARATION

- The Balfour Declaration ("Balfour's promise" in Arabic) was a public pledge by Britain in 1917 declaring its **aim to establish "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine**.
- The statement came in the form of a letter from Britain's then-foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, addressed to Lionel Walter Rothschild, a figurehead of the British Jewish community.
- It was made during World War I (1914-1918) and was included in the **terms of the British Mandate for Palestine after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire**.

- The so-called **mandate system**, set up by the Allied powers, was a thinly veiled form of colonialism and occupation.
- The system transferred rule from the territories that were previously controlled by the powers defeated in the war – Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria – to the victors.
- The **declared aim of the mandate system was to allow the winners of the war to administer the newly emerging states** until they could become independent.
- The case of Palestine, however, was unique. Unlike the rest of the post-war mandates, the main goal of the British Mandate there was to create the conditions for the establishment of a Jewish “national home” – where Jews constituted less than 10 percent of the population at the time.
- Upon the start of the mandate, the **British began to facilitate the immigration of European Jews to Palestine**. Between 1922 and 1935, the Jewish population rose from nine percent to nearly 27 percent of the total population.

THE DOCUMENT WAS CONTROVERSIAL FOR SEVERAL REASONS.

- **Firstly**, it was, in the words of the late Palestinian-American academic Edward Said, “made by a European power ... about a non-European territory ... in a flat disregard of both the presence and wishes of the native majority resident in that territory”.

In essence, the **Balfour Declaration promised Jews a land where the natives made up more than 90 percent of the population**.

- **Secondly**, the declaration was one of three conflicting wartime promises made by the British.
 - When it was released, Britain had already promised the Arabs independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 1915 **Hussein-McMahon correspondence**.
 - The British also promised the French, in a separate treaty known as **1916 Sykes-Picot agreement**, that the majority of Palestine would be under international administration, while the rest of the region would be split between the two colonial powers after the war.
- The declaration, however, meant that Palestine would come under British occupation and that the Palestinian Arabs who lived there would not gain independence.
- **Finally**, the declaration introduced a notion that was reportedly unprecedented in international law – that of a “national home”.
- The use of the vague term “national home” for the Jewish people, as opposed to “state”, left the meaning open to interpretation.
- The declaration had many long-lasting consequences. It greatly increased popular support for Zionism within Jewish communities worldwide, and became a core component of the British Mandate for Palestine, the founding document of Mandatory Palestine, which later became Israel and the Palestinian territories.



→ ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

- Amnesty International labelled Israel an “apartheid” state that treats Palestinians as “an inferior racial group,” joining the assessment of other rights groups which the Jewish state rejects.
- Israel’s cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid.
- Whether they live in Gaza, east Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, or Israel itself, Palestinians are treated as an inferior racial group and systematically deprived of their rights.

A 100-YEAR-OLD ISSUE

- Britain took control of the area known as Palestine after the ruler of that part of the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire, was defeated in WW1.
- The land was inhabited by a **Jewish minority** and **Arab majority**.
- Tensions between the two peoples grew when the international community gave Britain the task of establishing a “national home” in Palestine for Jewish people.
- For Jews, it was their ancestral home, but Palestinian Arabs also claimed the land and opposed the move.
- Between the 1920s and 40s, the number of Jews arriving there grew, with many fleeing from persecution in Europe and seeking a homeland after the Holocaust of WWII.
- Violence between Jews and Arabs, and against British rule, also grew.
- **In 1947, the UN voted for Palestine to be split into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem becoming an international city.**
- That plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by the Arab side and never implemented.

CREATION OF ISRAEL

- In **1948**, unable to solve the problem, British rulers left and Jewish leaders declared the creation of the state of Israel.
- Many Palestinians objected and a war followed. Troops from neighbouring Arab countries invaded.
- Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were forced out of their homes in what they call **Al Nakba, or the “Catastrophe”**.
- By the time the fighting ended in a ceasefire the following year, Israel controlled most of the territory.

- **Jordan** occupied land which became known as the West Bank, and Egypt occupied Gaza.
- **Jerusalem** was divided between Israeli forces in the West, and Jordanian forces in the East.



- Because there was never a peace agreement - each side blamed the other - there were more wars and fighting in the decades which followed.
- In another war in **1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank**, as well as most of the **Syrian Golan Heights, and Gaza and the Egyptian Sinai peninsula**.
- Most Palestinian refugees and their descendants live in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as in neighbouring Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.
- Neither they nor their descendants have been allowed by Israel to return to their homes - Israel says this would overwhelm the country and threaten its existence as a Jewish state.
- Israel still occupies the West Bank, and although it pulled out of Gaza the UN still regards that piece of land as part of occupied territory.
- Israel claims the whole of Jerusalem as its capital, while the Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. The US is one of only a handful of countries to recognise Israel's claim to the whole of the city.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

- Tensions are often high between Israel and Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank.
- **Gaza is ruled by the Palestinian militant group Hamas**, which has fought Israel many times. Israel and Egypt tightly control Gaza's borders to stop weapons getting to Hamas.
- Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank say they're suffering because of Israeli actions and restrictions. Israel say it is only acting to protect itself from Palestinian violence.
- Things keep on escalating and the threatened eviction of some Palestinian families in East Jerusalem has also caused rising anger.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS?

- There are a number of issues which Israel and the Palestinians cannot agree on.
- These include what should happen to **Palestinian refugees**, whether **Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank should stay or be removed**, whether the two sides should **share Jerusalem**, and - perhaps most tricky of all - whether a **Palestinian state should be created alongside Israel**.
- Peace talks have been taking place on and off for more than 25 years, but so far have not solved the conflict.

→ G4 (GROUP OF FOUR)

- The Big Four, also known as G4, refers to **France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom**.
- France and the United Kingdom are official nuclear-weapon states and are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council with the power of veto, which enables any one of them to prevent the adoption of any "substantive" draft Council resolution, regardless of its level of international support.
- France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom are considered major European economic powers and they are the Western European countries individually represented as full members of the G7 and the G20.

- They have been referred to as the **"Big Four of Europe"** since the interwar period.
- The term G4 was used for the first time when **French President Nicolas Sarkozy** called for a meeting in Paris with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Gordon Brown and Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel to consider the response to the financial crisis during the Great Recession.
- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** describes them as the **"Four Big European Countries."**

→ G4 VS. COFFEE CLUB

- India with the other G4 members such as Germany, Brazil, and Japan has asserted for an increase in the permanent seat(s) and for which India has positioned itself as an aspirant.
- While, Italy has united with members such as **Pakistan, Mexico, and other countries (Coffee Club)**, with aims to counter the bids for permanent seats proposed by G4 nations and is calling for a consensus before any decision is reached on the form and size of the Security Council.
- Italy has opposed Germany's bid, and prefers a seat for the European Union.
- Similarly, Italy has not supported India's bid for a permanent seat in UNSC.

→ G7 (GROUP OF SEVEN)

- The G7 (Group of Seven) is an organisation made up of the **world's seven largest so-called advanced economies**. They are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the United States.
- Russia joined in 1998, creating the "G8", but was excluded in 2014 for its takeover of Crimea.
- China has never been a member, despite its large economy and having the world's biggest population. Its relatively low level of wealth per person means it is not seen as an advanced economy in the way the G7 members are.
- Representatives from the European Union are usually present and India, South Korea and Australia have been invited this year.



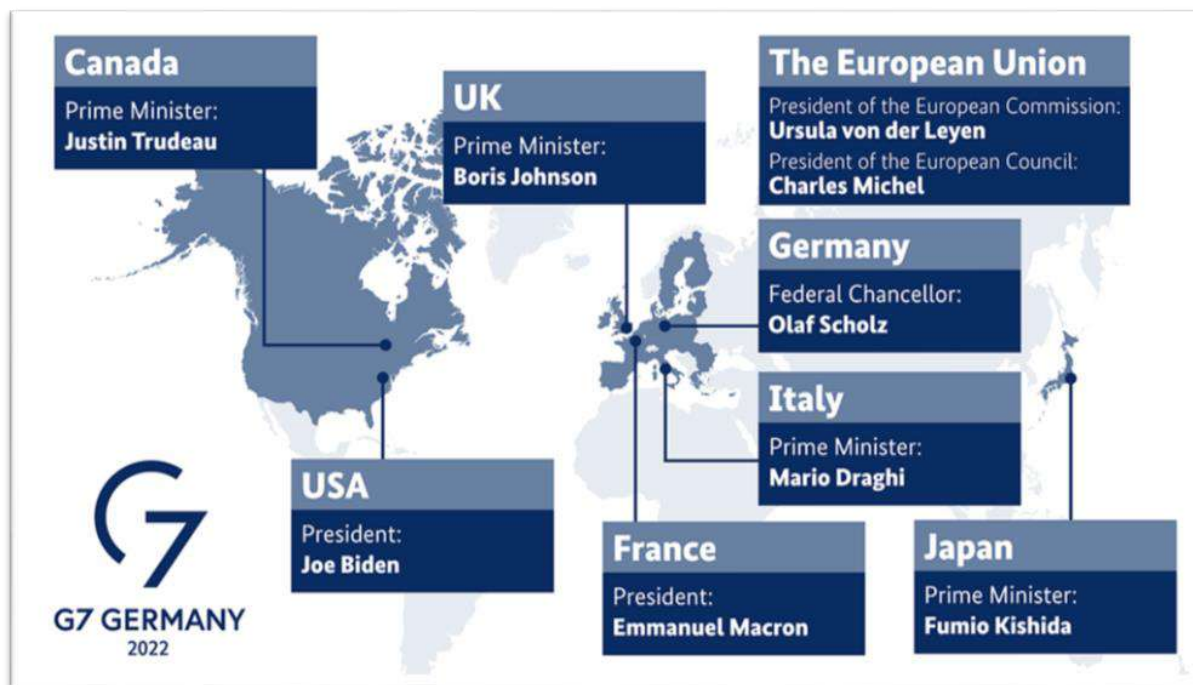
- The **concept of a forum** for the world's major industrialized countries **emerged before the 1973 oil crisis**.
- Since 1975, the group meets annually on summit site to discuss economic policies; since 1987, the G7 Finance Ministers have met at least semi-annually, up to four times a year at stand-alone meetings.

→ G7 SUMMIT 2022

Prime Minister of India went to Germany to attend the G7 Summit at Schloss Elmau. Germany held the G7 presidency for the seventh time this year with the overarching theme of **'Progress towards an equitable world'**.

German Chancellor invited India, Argentina, Indonesia, Senegal, and South Africa to the 2022 Summit as **partner countries**.

A number of international organisations, including the **UN, WHO, WTO, IMF** and the **World Bank** participated in the Summit.



Communique: The G7 leaders adopted a communique to jointly defend universal human rights and democratic *values*, the rules-based multilateral order and the resilience of democratic societies.

Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The G7 leaders re-emphasised their condemnation of Russia's illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine. ○ G7 countries have pledged and provided EUR 28 billion in budget aid and are strongly committed to support Ukrainian reconstruction through an international reconstruction plan.
Energy and food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To phase out dependency on Russian energy. ○ They ensured to secure the energy supply and reduce price surges by exploring additional measures such as price caps. ○ The G7 countries will also increase global food and nutrition security through the Global Alliance on Food Security.
Economic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Committed to coordinate on economic security, strengthen the resilience of supply chains while tackling rising costs of living for citizens.
Climate and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Endorsed the goals of an international Climate Club to accelerate the

the environment	implementation of the Paris Agreement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ committed to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A highly decarbonised road sector by 2030 ▪ A fully or predominantly decarbonised power sector by 2035 ▪ Prioritising the acceleration of the phase-out of domestic unabated coal power
Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launched the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), a joint initiative to fund infrastructure projects in developing countries. ○ Will work towards new Just Energy Transition Partnerships with Indonesia, India, Senegal and Vietnam.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reaffirmed their commitment to equitable global access to safe, effective and affordable vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other essential medical goods. ○ Pact for pandemic readiness.
Democratic values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will also cooperate with civil society and partners to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen the resilience of our societies ▪ Promote human rights online and offline ▪ Address disinformation ▪ Achieve gender equality

→ G10 (GROUP OF TEN)

- The Group of Ten (G-10 or G10) refers to the group of countries that agreed to participate in the **General Arrangements to Borrow (GAB)**.
- It is an agreement to **provide the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with additional funds** to increase its lending ability.

○ The **GAB was established in 1962**, when the governments of eight International Monetary Fund (IMF) members—Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and the central banks of two others, Germany and Sweden, agreed to make resources available to the IMF with an additional \$6 billion of their resources.

- The additional money was intended to allow the IMF to have increased lending resources.
- In 1964, the funds were used by the IMF to rescue the pound sterling. The G-10 grew in 1964 by the association of the eleventh member, Switzerland, then not a member of the IMF, but the name of the group remained the same.
- The GAB enables the IMF to borrow specified amounts of currencies from these eleven industrial countries (or their central banks), under certain circumstances.
- The **Bank for International Settlements (BIS)** hosts a publications e-library page for the G-10.

- The international organizations that are official observers of the activities of the G10 are : the BIS, European Commission, International Monetary Fund, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- **Luxembourg is an associate member.**

→ G12 (GROUP OF TWELVE)

- The Group of Twelve or G12 is a group of industrially advanced countries whose central banks co-operate to regulate international finance.
- Note that the **G-12 consists of thirteen countries**. It encompasses the initial ten members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which formed the original Group of Ten (G10), adding Australia and Spain.
- In 1984, when Switzerland joined the G10 and G12, the names of the groups were not changed.

→ G20

India has assumed the presidency of G20.

- The Group of Twenty (G20) is a collection of **twenty of the world's largest economies** formed in **1999**. It was conceived as a bloc that would bring together the most important industrialized and developing economies to discuss international economic and financial stability.
- The G20 was formed in 1999, in the wake of the **Asian financial crisis**, to unite finance ministers and central bankers from twenty of the world's largest established and emerging economies. A decade later, at the height of the global economic crisis, the G20 was elevated to include heads of state and government.
- The **G20 comprises nineteen countries** with some of the world's largest economies, as well as the **European Union (EU)**.



- The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States. **Spain is invited as a permanent guest.**
- Every year, the leaders of G20 members meet to discuss mainly economic and financial matters and coordinate policy on some other matters of mutual interest.
- Together, the nations of the G20 account for around 80 percent of global economic output, nearly 75 percent of global exports, and about 60 percent of the world's population.

WHAT'S BEEN ON THE AGENDA?

- The G20 initially focused largely on **broad macroeconomic policy**, but it has expanded its ambit.
- The **2018 summit in Argentina focused on fair and sustainable development**, while the previous summit in **Germany focused on issues including corruption, money laundering, and international tax havens.**
- Some agendas have had even less to do with macroeconomics: the 2016 summit in Hangzhou, China, was where U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping formally announced their countries' accession to the Paris Agreement on climate.
- Economic and financial coordination remains the centrepiece of each summit's agenda, but issues such as the future of work, terrorism, and global health are recurring focuses as well.

➔ G20 FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING 2022

*The G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) was hosted in **Bali, Indonesia.***

*The meeting was held under the theme of **"Building a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous world together."***

- Former NITI Aayog CEO **Amitabh Kant** has been picked as India's new Sherpa for the G-20.
- He replaced Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry and Consumer Affairs, who was appointed as the G-20 Sherpa in September 2021.

- The **G20 Presidency rotates annually** according to a system that ensures a regional balance over time.

- For the selection of the presidency, the 19 countries are divided into 5 groups, each having no more than 4 countries. The presidency rotates between each group.
- Every year the G20 selects a country from another group to be president.
- India is in Group 2 which also has Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.

- **TROIKA:** Every year when a new country takes on the presidency, it works hand in hand with the previous presidency and the next presidency and this is collectively known as TROIKA. This ensures continuity and consistency of the group's agenda.

SIGNIFICANCE OF G20

The G20 members represent:

- Over **80% of global GDP**
- About **75% of international trade**
- Close to **60% of the global population**

- G20 members collaborate to address key global issues like international financial stability, inclusive growth, mitigation of climate change, and sustainable development.
- Experts believe that the G20 is said to be a **perfect blend of the old world and new world and developed and emerging economies**.
- The G20 looks at the world in a more **“Global South” perspective** compared to other groupings such as OECD (OECD acts as a strategic advisor to the G20 and participates in all G20 meetings)
- The G20 played a crucial role in reviving the economies, lowering trade barriers and implementing economic and governance reforms post the global financial crisis in 2007.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEET:

Two important sessions held.

First session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The first session was held on strengthening multilateralism. ○ It explored joint actions to strengthen global collaboration and foster mutual trust among countries. ○ It was aimed at creating an enabling environment that will support world stability, peace, and development..
Second session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The second session was on the Food and Energy crisis. ○ It discussed strategic actions to combat food insecurity, fertilizer shortage, and rising global commodity prices ○ It called for an end to the war and grain blockade in Ukraine: ○ G20 foreign ministers called for an end to the war and grain blockade in Ukraine. ○ The forum was the first face-to-face meeting between Russia and the fiercest critics of its war.

DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE G-20

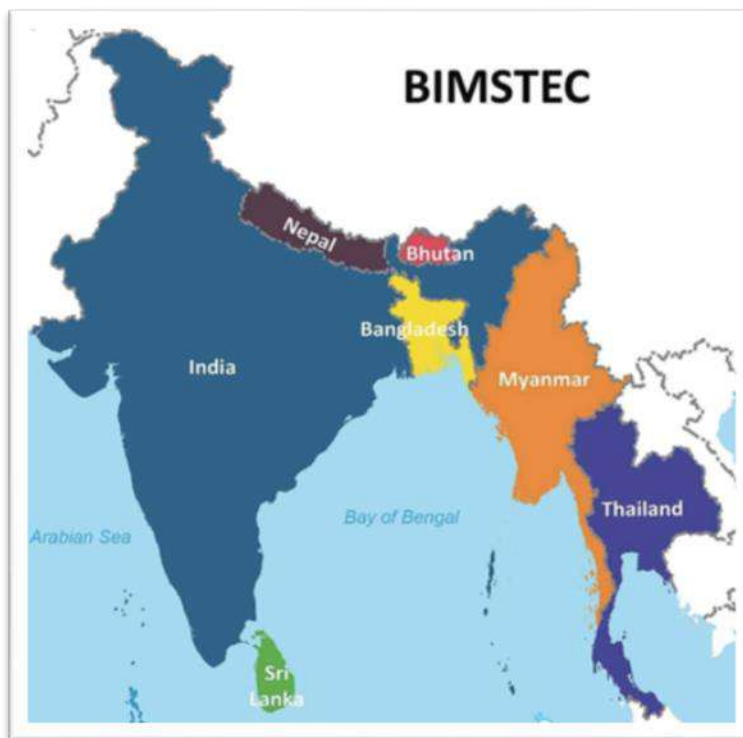
- Russia accused the United States of forcing Europe and the rest of the world to abandon cheap energy sources.
- The U.S. blamed Moscow for global food insecurity.
- The Ukraine war and its economic fallouts are hinting at a division within the ranks of the global grouping.
- The S., EU, Japan, Canada, Australia and France are increasingly forming one anti-Russia block. While the rest of the countries prefer a cautious approach asking for peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine.

→ BIMSTEC

*The BIMSTEC Charter was signed and adopted during the **Fifth BIMSTEC Summit held in virtual format in Colombo, Sri Lanka in March 2022.***

ABOUT BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC is an inter-regional grouping that seeks to foster regional and economic cooperation among nations in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal — India, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.
- It is headquartered in Dhaka.
- The BIMSTEC region is home to roughly **22 per cent of the global population** with a combined GDP of over **\$4.4 trillion**.
- Due to setbacks to the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), particularly when its 2016 summit scheduled to be held in Pakistan was suspended after member countries declined to participate, BIMSTEC has emerged as the “preferred platform” for regional cooperation in South Asia.



BIMSTEC FORMATION & RELEVANCE IN INDO-PACIFIC REGION

- BIMSTEC is an economic bloc that came into being in **June 1997** through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- It aims to **accelerate economic growth and social progress** among members across multiple sectors — trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries, agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change.
- The grouping holds **annual meetings** hosted by member states based on **alphabetical rotation**.
- Sri Lanka is the host nation this time.
- Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four countries with the acronym '**BIST-EC**' (**Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation**). With the entrance of Myanmar in 1997, the grouping was renamed '**BIMST-EC**' (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- Finally, with the entrance of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting in 2004, the grouping was named Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).
- Some **key agreements** signed by BIMSTEC members include a convention for combating terrorism, transnational organised crime and illicit drug trafficking. However, this awaits ratification.

- Another is the **BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection**, signed during the BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 2018, which aims to promote an optimal power transmission in the BIMSTEC region.
- In the mid-2010s, BIMSTEC gained attention as India-Pakistan tensions began to hamstrung SAARC.

HOW BIMSTEC IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIA?

- BIMSTEC allows India to pursue three core policies-
 - **Neighbourhood First** – primacy to the country's immediate periphery;
 - **Act East** – connect India with Southeast Asia; and
 - Economic development of India's north-eastern states – by linking them to the Bay of Bengal region via Bangladesh and Myanmar.
 - Allows India to counter China's creeping influence in countries around the Bay of Bengal due to the spread of its One Belt and One Road Initiative.

CHALLENGES FACED BY BIMSTEC

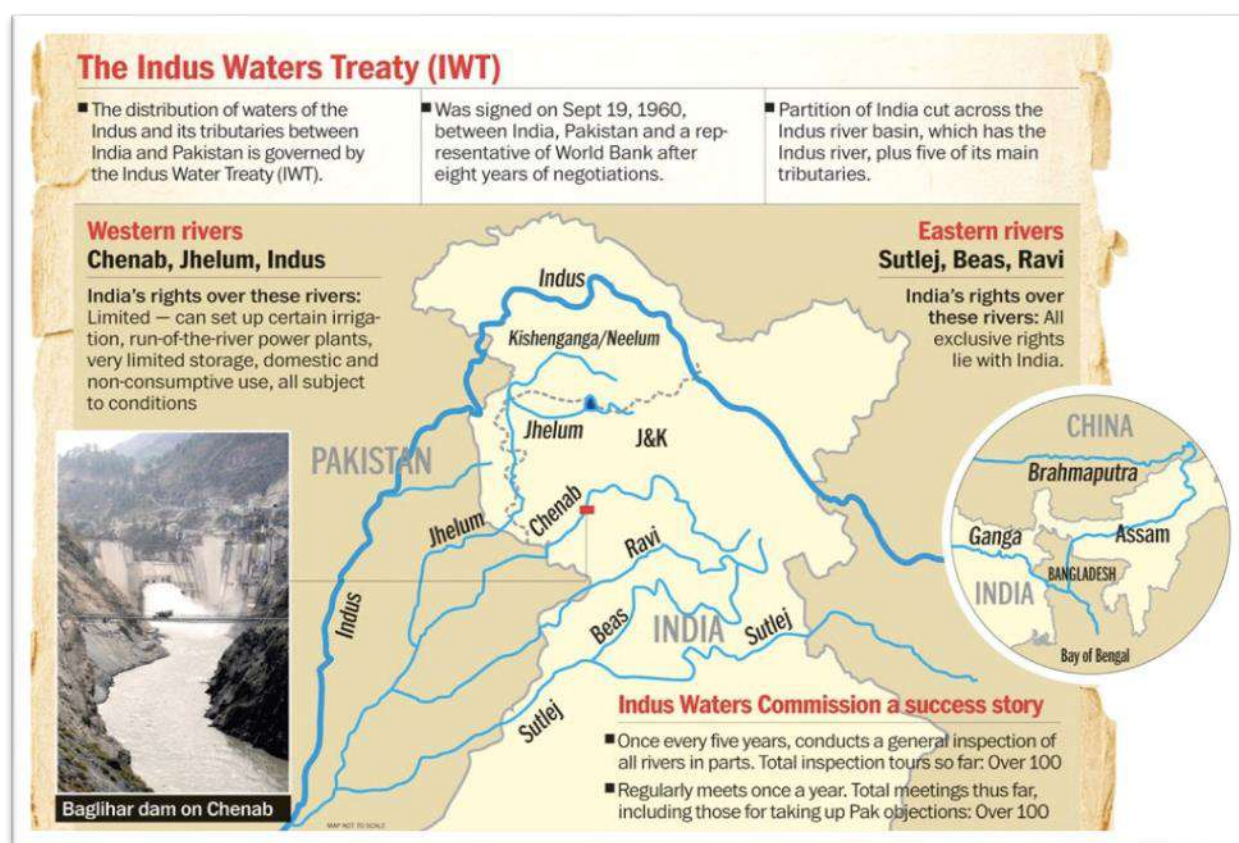
- **Neglect by member states:** It seems that India has used BIMSTEC only when it fails to work through SAARC in the regional setting and other major members like Thailand and Myanmar are focused more towards ASEAN than BIMSTEC.
- **Inconsistent Meetings:** BIMSTEC planned to hold summits every two years, ministerial meetings every year, but only five summits till now.
- **Broad Focus Areas:** The focus of BIMSTEC is very wide, including 14 areas of cooperation like connectivity, public health, agriculture etc. It is suggested that BIMSTEC should remain committed to small focus areas and cooperate in them efficiently.
- **No FTA:** BIMSTEC FTA not yet concluded.
- **Bilateral Issues between Member Nations:** Bangladesh is facing one of the worst refugee crisis of Rohingyas from Myanmar who are fleeing prosecution in the state of Rakhine in Myanmar. There is a border conflict between Myanmar and Thailand.
- **BCIM:** The formation of another sub-regional initiative, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Forum, with the proactive membership of China, has created more doubts about the exclusive potential of BIMSTEC.

→ INDUS WATER TREATY

- Pakistan brought up its objections to three Indian Hydropower projects in the Chenab basin in Jammu and Kashmir- the **1000 Megawatt (MW) Pakal Dul project**, the **48 MW Lower Kalnai project** and the **624 MW Kiru project**, aside from other smaller Hydropower units India wants to develop in Ladakh.
- India has already said, that all the projects are in full compliance with the Indus Waters treaty.

ABOUT THE TREATY

- Indus Waters Treaty was signed on **September 19, 1960**, between India and Pakistan and brokered by the World Bank. The treaty fixed and delimited the rights and obligations of both countries concerning the use of the waters of the Indus River system.
- The Indus River rises in the **southwestern Tibet Autonomous Region** of China and flows through the Kashmir region and then into Pakistan to drain into the Arabian Sea.
- It is joined by numerous tributaries, notably those of the eastern Punjab Plain—the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej rivers.
- The Indus River system has been used for irrigation since time immemorial.
- Modern irrigation engineering work began about 1850.** During the period of British rule in India, large canal systems were constructed, and old canal systems and inundation channels were revived and modernized.



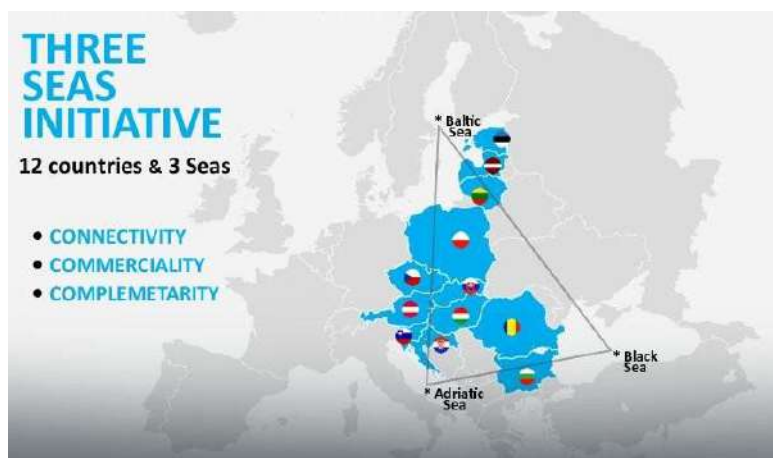
- However, in 1947 **British India was partitioned**, resulting in the creation of an independent India and West Pakistan (later called Pakistan). The water system was thus bifurcated, with the headworks in India and the canals running through Pakistan.
- The **Inter-Dominion Accord of May 4, 1948**, required India to provide water to the Pakistani parts of the basin in return for annual payments. This too was intended as a stopgap measure, with further talks to take place in hopes of reaching a permanent solution.
- Negotiations soon came to a standstill, however, with neither side willing to compromise. **In 1951 David Lilienthal**, former head of both the Tennessee Valley Authority and the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, visited the region for the purpose of researching articles that he was to write for Collier's magazine.

- He suggested that India and Pakistan **should work toward an agreement to jointly develop and administer the Indus River system**, possibly with advice and financing from the World Bank.
 - **Eugene Black**, who was then the president of the World Bank, agreed. At his suggestion, engineers from each country formed a working group, with engineers from the World Bank offering advice. Political considerations, however, prevented even these technical discussions from arriving at an agreement.
 - In **1954 the World Bank** submitted a proposal for a solution to the impasse. After six years of talks, **Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru** and Pakistani President **Mohammad Ayub Khan** signed the **Indus Waters Treaty in September 1960**.
- The treaty gave the waters of the **western rivers—the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab—to Pakistan** and those of the **eastern rivers—the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—to India**.
 - It also **provided for the funding and building of dams**, link canals, barrages, and tube wells—notably the Tarbela Dam on the Indus River and the Mangla Dam on the Jhelum River.
 - These helped provide water to Pakistan in the amounts that it had previously received from the rivers now assigned to India's exclusive use. Much of the financing was contributed by member countries of the World Bank.
 - The treaty required the creation of a **Permanent Indus Commission**, with a commissioner from each country, in order to maintain a channel for communication and to try to resolve questions about implementation of the treaty. In addition, a mechanism for resolving disputes was provided.
- Numerous disputes were peacefully settled over the years through the Permanent Indus Commission. In a significant challenge to the treaty, in 2017 India completed the building of the **Kishanganga dam** in Kashmir and continued work on the **Ratle hydroelectric power station on the Chenab River** despite Pakistan's objections and amid ongoing negotiations with the World Bank over whether the designs of those projects violated the terms of the treaty.
 - **Kishanganga also known as Neelum**, a **tributary of the Jhelum river**, originates in J&K and joins the river in Pakistan occupied Kashmir.
 - The work for KHEP was started in 2007, proposing to build a dam on the Kishenganga, diverting its water for a 330 MW hydropower plant in Kashmir's Bandipora and sending it back.
 - The work for the project was supposed to be completed by 2016, but before the construction started, Pakistan had raised objections regarding the height of the dam, fearing it would mean increased water storage for India.
 - Consequently, India agreed to alter the design by lowering its height from 97 metres to 37 metres.
 - In **2010**, Pakistan took the matter to the **International Court of Arbitration at the Hague**, this time, objecting to the diversion of water from Kishanganga. The Court gave its final ruling in December 2013, giving India a green signal for the project, subject to conditions.
 - The conflict however, did not end here, with Pakistan approaching the World Bank three years later in 2016 and again in 2018, objecting to the design. It also tried to stop the construction of the dam in 2016 by firing shells near the dam site in 2016. The project was then inaugurated in 2018, despite continued protests from Pakistan.

- Before that, Pakistan had objected to the **Salal dam project in 1970** over design concerns, negotiations for which ended in 1978.
- This was followed by the neighbouring country's opposition to the **900 MW Baglihar Hydropower project**, which involved the construction of a 150m tall dam on Chenab. The construction for the project started in 1999, but Pakistan raised objections soon after, finally threatening to invoke the arbitration provision in IWT to refer the matter to a Neutral Expert. The NE, Swiss Engineer Raymond Lafitte, gave his decision in 2007, upholding some of Pakistan's objections while denying others.

➔ THREE SEAS INITIATIVE (3SI)

- The 3SI format was conceived by the President of Croatia and the President of Poland in **2015** during the United Nations General Assembly.
- The idea for the initiative was envisioned by the U.S. think-tank Atlantic Council in a report titled "Completing Europe", which brought attention to the investment gap in Central and Eastern Europe.



- The **first Three Seas Summit was held in 2016 in Dubrovnik, Croatia**. The Summit initiated annual Three Seas Summits on a presidential level.
- The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a regular cooperation format that **brings together 12 European Union member states between the Adriatic Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea**: Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.
- The **partners of the 3SI** are the United States, Germany and the European Commission. The initiative is designed to promote cooperation in order to contribute to economic growth and energy security, as well as to boost cohesion and unity in Europe.

The Three Seas Initiative was born out of a shared interest in developing the **transport, energy and digital connections** on the European Union's north-south axis to increase the economic growth and resilience of the region.

- **Economic growth**: The main aim of the overall initiative is to boost economic growth and well-being in the region. Increased activity in trade and the provision of services within the region and with neighbouring countries creates such opportunities and makes Europe, as a whole, more competitive in global terms.
- **Greater interest among investors**: In the context of the European Union, the countries in the Three Seas Initiative have stood out for many years for their above-average rates of economic growth, and as such, they offer investors potentially higher rates of return. By working together and pursuing similar policies, these countries will make the region more attractive on the global financial market.

- **Energy security:** Energy is not only an economic issue; it has also become a strategic and security concern. A cohesive, well-functioning energy market and the freedom to choose between suppliers will increase open competition, ensure an improved supply for the region, and boost energy security.
- **Geopolitics:** Strong economic development across the board in Europe, including the Three Seas region, will help to defend current geopolitical interests more effectively, while making a stand against interests that do not align with those of the region.
- **Smart connectivity:** Where new investments are concerned, the aim is to make the most of the region's experience and potential for implementing digital solutions. This goes beyond the development of a separate digital infrastructure, and encompasses the creation of smart, modern solutions for data exchange and a more efficient use of information.
- **Achieving climate goals:** A common market based on an effective and sufficient infrastructure will help the region move towards lower carbon emissions and achieve carbon neutrality.
- The **Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund** provides economic support to the political initiative. The main objective of the Three Seas is to develop the region's infrastructure, which requires large investments. The Fund was created to support the practical implementation of ambitious infrastructure projects.

➔ GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM

- **Ethiopia** has built a giant hydropower dam on the **Blue Nile** and started holding back the water flow to fill the reservoir behind it for a second year.
- **Egypt is worried** the dam will affect the overall flow of the Nile River and together with fellow downriver country **Sudan** brought the issue to the **UN Security Council** in a bid to get a binding deal on the dam's operation.

WHAT IS THE PROJECT ABOUT?

- The **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** is the source of an almost decade-long diplomatic standoff between Ethiopia and downstream nations Egypt and Sudan.
- The \$4bn GERD was announced in early 2011 as Egypt was in political upheaval. It is the centrepiece of Ethiopia's bid to become Africa's biggest power exporter, with a projected capacity of more than 6,000 megawatts.
- Though construction has been hit by delays, Ethiopia began filling the reservoir behind the dam in 2020. This initial two-year stage of filling is expected to bring the water level in the reservoir to 595 metres out of an eventual 632 metres.
- Once it is finalised it will become **Africa's largest hydroelectric power generator and the world's seventh-largest dam**, according to reports in Ethiopia's state media.



NILE WATER

- The Nile Basin river system flows through 11 countries. The **Blue Nile and White Nile merge in Sudan** before flowing into Egypt and on to the Mediterranean Sea.
- Egypt has based its share of the river's waters on a 1959 deal that gave it 55.5 billion cubic metres of water annually, and Sudan 18.5 billion cubic metres.
- Other countries were not given allocations at that time and Ethiopia does not recognise the agreement.
- The dispute centres on how quickly Ethiopia should fill and replenish the reservoir, and how much water it would release downstream in case of a multi-year drought.

WHAT DOES EGYPT SAY?

- Egypt relies on the Nile for at least 90 percent of its freshwater. The largely desert country is already short of water. It imports about half its food products and recycles about 25 billion cubic metres of water annually.
- If water flows are restricted in drought conditions Egypt says it could lose more than one million jobs and \$1.8bn in economic production annually, though it acknowledges such a scenario is unlikely.
- Overall, Egypt has regarded the dam as an existential threat to its water supplies.

WHAT IS SUDAN'S POSITION?

- Sudan does not face shortages in its Nile water supplies and it could gain from the dam's electricity generation, as well as flood mitigation.
- However, Sudan is concerned about the safety of the dam, which lies just on the other side of its border with Ethiopia.
- Sudan has called for information sharing in order to minimise the effect on its own dams and water stations, and took precautionary measures at its own dams before the GERD's second filling, citing a lack of data from Ethiopia.

➔ INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

- India has limited economic and other stakes in the region, primarily due to lack of physical access. And yet, the region appears to have gained a great deal of significance in India's strategic thinking over the years, particularly in the recent past.
- India's mission Central Asia today reflects, and is responsive to, the new geopolitical, if not the geo-economic, realities in the region.
- Central Asia Region stretches from the **Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east**, and from Afghanistan in the south to Russia in the north. It includes five countries namely **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan** which are collectively referred to as the Central Asian Republics (CARs).

EVOLUTION OF RELATIONS

- India has had a long history of cultural and commercial relations with Central Asia, facilitated by its geographical proximity to India and the passage of the **Silk Route** through them.

- **Buddhism** was central to this connection in ancient times. Many rulers of medieval India had their roots in Central Asia, including the Mughals.
- The present Central Asian Countries came into existence after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. India was one of the first countries to **establish diplomatic relationships with the CARs in 1991-92.**

IMPORTANCE OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION FOR INDIA

- **Location:** Central Asia's location at the heart of Eurasia, its geographical proximity, and historic linkages, makes the region highly relevant to India's strategic interests.
- **Mineral and Energy Security:** Central Asian is rich in energy resources, including, oil, coal, and natural gas. Kazakhstan is the largest producer of uranium. Uzbekistan also has large uranium reserves.

India being an import-dependent nation for its energy requirements needs to have a strong relationship with these countries for strengthening its energy security.

- **Security:** Terrorism, drug trafficking and radicalization have been a matter of concern for India and Central Asian countries alike. This has especially become a major concern in the context of the Taliban taking over control of Afghanistan.
- **Geopolitical significance:** Unstable Central Asia has the potential to affect Russia and China, which have border connectivity to these countries. Also, as China is increasing its influence in India's neighbourhood, healthy relationship with Central Asian Countries can help India to counter China's strategy.
- **Trade and Investment:** The Central Asian countries provide trade and investment opportunities in multiple sectors like IT, Pharmaceuticals, Tourism etc.



INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN TO BOOST INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS

CONNECTIVITY

- **International North South Transport Corridor(INSTC):** India, Iran and Russia in 2000 launched INSTC to develop a new trade route that would help in cutting the costs and time in moving cargo between Russia and India.

It is a **7,200-kilometre multi-modal project** with thousands of kilometres of all-weather highways. Many countries have now come on board which include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Central Asia, and several European countries.

- **Chabahar port initiative:** In 2003, **India and Iran** announced the development of the Chabahar port. This was launched to serve as an alternate route.
But repeated US sanctions on Iran for its suspected nuclear programme meant that Indian firms were reluctant to participate in the projects, leading to cost and time overruns.
- **Ashgabat Agreement:** The pact was signed in 2011 by **Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman and Qatar** and aimed at developing the shortest trade route between the Central Asian republics and Iranian and Omani ports. India joined the Ashgabat agreement in 2018 to diversify its connectivity options with Central Asia.
- **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline:** It was launched to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to India with transit through Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, it has been stalled since 2006 due to a lack of support from Pakistan.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

- Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC): India launched ITEC programme to provide assistance to the CARs countries in the area of IT, Management, journalism, diplomacy, entrepreneurship, and banking.
- **Connect Central Asia policy:** It was launched in 2012 and aimed to enhance India's political, economic, historical and cultural connections with Central Asia.

DEFENCE

- Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA): India signed the SPA with three of the five CARs—Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—to stimulate defence cooperation and deepen trade relations.
- **Multilateral and bilateral forums/organisations:** Initiatives like Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in India (CICA) have helped India to maintain regular channels of communication with the CARs.

HINDRANCES

- **Landlocked region:** CARs are landlocked countries and India lacks direct connectivity with them which makes the realisation of the true potential of India-Central Asia relations difficult.
The progress on the connectivity initiatives has been quite slow because of geopolitical, financial, and security constraints.
- **Connectivity**– Although India has launched projects in the area of Land and Maritime connectivity, there are fewer initiatives in air and digital connectivity.
- **Chinese presence in the region:** In the past 20 years, China has made considerable inroads into the region, boosting trade and investment. The CAR is also an enthusiastic supporter of China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- **Taliban's presence in Afghanistan:** Taliban's presence in Afghanistan and its proximity to Pakistan may become a cause of concern for India's outreach program in Central Asia. India has reached out to CARs to secure its interests in Afghanistan.
- **India's Foreign policy:** India's foreign policy has been more focused on the bigger powers such as Russia and the United States (US) and in dealing with challenges from China and Pakistan. Thus, CARs got less attention in the past.
But recent development like the shifting of power centre from the West to Asia and turnaround in Afghanistan has increased CAR's significance in India's foreign policy.

- **Trade and commercial bonds:** Trade between India and Central Asia is very low (US \$2 billion) compared to Chinese trade with the CARs, which amounts to approx. US \$100 billion.

WAY FORWARD

- **Leveraging India's Soft power:** India has a lot of goodwill in the CAR countries, which could be utilised to expand its influence. Emphasis should be laid on maintaining cultural and people to people contacts.
The Connect Central Asia Policy must be implemented speedily with high-level visits, strategic partnerships, comprehensive economic engagement, partnership in the development of energy and natural resources to ensure India's strategic interests.
- **Countering Chinese Presence:** Although China has the largest regional presence in Central Asia, India's outreach may provide an alternative to CARs. Also, India's commitment to "principles of transparency, local priorities and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity" makes it a preferred alternative to China in the long run.
- **More cooperation in trade and commerce:** India must improve trade in both goods and services. Cooperation can be enhanced in areas such as FDI, technology, Human resources.
Increased access to India's huge markets would undoubtedly be highly beneficial for Central Asian countries that are constantly on the lookout to boost their struggling economies.
While India would get a chance to diversify its import dependency by investing in this energy and mineral-rich region.

→ PANGONG TSO

China is building a bridge across the Pangong Tso within its territory connecting the North and South Banks which will significantly reduce the time for moving troops and equipment between the two sides.

IMPORTANCE OF THE BRIDGE OVER PANGONG TSO TO CHINA

- The bridge over Pangong Tso is located around 25 kms ahead of the LAC in Chinese territory and will significantly reduce the time for movement between People's Liberation Army (PLA) garrison at **Kurnak fort on the North Bank and the Modlo garrison on the South Bank**, a distance of around 200 kms.
- The initial tensions as the standoff began in May 2020 were on the North Bank of Pangong Tso with PLA troops moving upto Finger 4 and building permanent structures.
- However, tensions had flared up on the South Bank in August 2020. The Indian Army gained tactical advantage over the PLA on the south bank in end August by occupying several peaks lying vacant since 1962 gaining a dominating view of the **Spanggur gap and Moldo area**.
- During this, the two sides had also deployed tanks at heights of over 15,000 feet and shots were fired in the air on the LAC for the first time in decades.
- This has prompted China to build deep alternate roads behind the friction points away from the line of sight, officials said. There has been massive construction of accommodation for housing of troops closer to the LAC and also road infrastructure for movement of troops and mechanised forces, officials say.

- Earlier, PLA had to take a round about between the two sides of the Pangong lake which takes around 12 hours but the new bridge, around 500m long, would cut down the time to 3-4 hours. Construction has been ongoing for few months now, officials said.
- India holds one third of the 135 km long boomerang shaped lake located at an altitude of over 14,000 feet.

INDIA'S RESPONSE

- The implications of this new bridge will have to be factored in the Indian Army's operational planning for the future.
- On its part, over the last few years India has been focusing on infrastructure development in forward areas and improving connectivity to the forward areas.
- Large scale construction of roads, bridges and tunnels is underway all along the LAC.
- While the process of disengagement and de-escalation stretches on, the two armies are geared to remain in the high altitude areas.



→ PASSPORT RANKING

India ranked 85th in the world's most powerful passport index in 2023 and gives visa-free entry to 59 countries worldwide.

ABOUT THE INDEX

- The Henley Passport Index is the original ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- Originally created by Dr. Christian H. Kaelin (chairman of Henley & Partners), the ranking is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which maintains the world's largest and most accurate database of travel information.
- It was **launched in 2006** and includes 199 different passports.
- It is updated in real time throughout the year as and when visa policy changes come into effect.

GLOBAL RANKINGS

- Japan topped the list with top rank for the fifth consecutive year
- Singapore and South Korea held onto the joint second spot on the latest ranking, while Germany and Spain shared third place.
- Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq continue to be in the 'worst passports to hold' category.

→ YEMEN CRISIS

The conflict in Yemen is between the internationally recognized government, which is backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, and Houthi rebels supported by Iran.

- Many analysts say the fighting, now seven years old, has turned into a proxy war: **Iran-backed Houthi rebels**, who overthrew the Yemeni government, are pitted against a **multinational coalition led by Saudi Arabia**.
- The involvement of other combatants, including militant Islamist groups and separatists backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has complicated the picture.
- The conflict has displaced more than one million people and given rise to cholera outbreaks, medicine shortages, and threats of famine. The United Nations calls the humanitarian crisis in Yemen “the worst in the world”.

BACKGROUND

- Yemen has long struggled with religious and cultural differences between its north and south and the legacy of European colonialism.



- The modern Yemeni state was formed in 1990 with the **unification of the U.S.- and Saudi-backed Yemeni Arab Republic**, in the north, and the **Soviet-backed People's Democratic Republic of Yemen**, in the south.
- Ali Abdullah Saleh, a military officer who had ruled North Yemen since 1978, assumed leadership of the new country.
- However, just four years after unification, southern separatists seceded for several months and re-emerged in 2007 as the **Southern Movement**, which has continued to press for greater autonomy within Yemen.
- **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)**, and the related Ansar al-Sharia insurgent group have captured territory in the south and east.
- The **Houthi movement**, whose base is among the **Zaydi Shiites** of northern Yemen, rose up against Saleh's government six times between 2004 and 2010.
- The **United States lent its support to Saleh** beginning in the early 2000s, when counterterrorism cooperation against al-Qaeda and affiliate groups became Washington's overriding regional concern.
- Rights groups persistently charged that Saleh ran a corrupt and autocratic government. As the popular protests of the **2011 Arab Spring spread to Yemen**, the president's political and military rivals jockeyed to oust him.

- While Yemeni security forces focused on putting down protests in urban areas, AQAP made gains in outlying regions.
- Under escalating domestic and international pressure, Saleh stepped aside in 2012 after receiving assurances of immunity from prosecution.
- His vice president, **Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi**, assumed office as interim president in a transition brokered by the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**, a regional organization based in Saudi Arabia, and backed by the United States.
- As part of the GCC's timetable for a transition, the UN-sponsored National Dialogue Conference (NDC) convened 565 delegates in 2013 to formulate a new constitution agreeable to Yemen's many factions. But the NDC ended with delegates unable to resolve disputes over the distribution of power.

CAUSE OF CURRENT CRISIS

FUEL PRICE HIKES

- Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, which had extended to Yemen a \$550 million loan premised on promises of economic reforms, Hadi's government lifted fuel subsidies in 2014.
- The Houthi movement, which had attracted support beyond its base with its criticisms of the UN transition, organized mass protests demanding lower fuel prices and a new government.
- Hadi's supporters and the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated party al-Islah held counterrallies.

HOUTHI TAKEOVER

- The Houthis captured much of Sanaa by late 2014. Reneging on a UN peace deal, they consolidated control of the capital and continued their southward advance.
- Hadi's government resigned under pressure in January 2015 and Hadi later fled to Saudi Arabia.

MILITARY DIVISION

- Military units loyal to Saleh aligned themselves with the Houthis, contributing to their battlefield success.
- Other militias mobilized against the Houthi-Saleh forces, aligning with those in the military who had remained loyal to the Hadi government.
- Southern separatists ramped up their calls for secession.

Saudi intervention: In 2015, with Hadi in exile, Riyadh launched a military campaign primarily fought from the air to roll back the Houthis and restore the Hadi administration to Sanaa.

WHO ARE THE PARTIES INVOLVED?

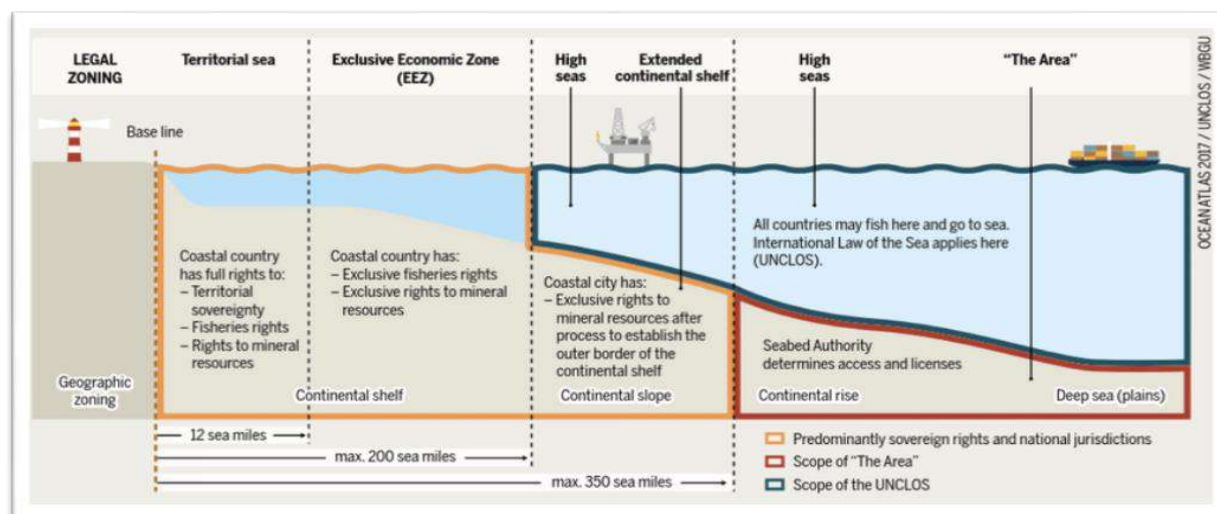
- The Houthi movement, named for a religious leader from the Houthi clan and officially known as Ansar Allah, emerged in the late 1980s as a vehicle for religious and cultural revivalism among Zaydi Shiites in northern Yemen.
- The Zaydis are a minority in the Sunni Muslim-majority country but predominant in the northern highlands along the Saudi border.
- The Houthis became politically active after 2003, opposing Saleh for backing the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq but later allying with him after his resignation as president.
- **Iran** is the Houthis' primary international backer and has reportedly provided them with military support, including weapons.

- Hadi's government has also accused **Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese ally**, of aiding the Houthis. Saudi Arabia's perception that the Houthis are an Iranian proxy rather than an indigenous movement has driven Riyadh's military intervention.
- But many regional specialists say that Tehran's influence is likely limited, especially since Iranians and Houthis adhere to different schools of Shiite Islam.
- Still, Iran and the Houthis share geopolitical interests: Tehran seeks to challenge Saudi and U.S. dominance in the region, and the Houthis oppose Hadi's U.S.- and Saudi- backed government.
- Saudi Arabia cobbled together a coalition of Sunni-majority Arab states: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- By 2018, the coalition had expanded to include forces from Eritrea and Pakistan. For Riyadh, accepting Houthi control of Yemen would mean allowing a hostile neighbor to reside on its southern border, and it would mark a setback in its long-standing contest with Tehran.

→ INDIA AND UNCLOS

India is committed to promoting a free, open and rules-based order rooted in international law and undaunted by pressure. This was declared by the union government while reiterating support for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

- India is committed to safeguarding maritime interests and strengthening security in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** to ensure a favourable and positive maritime environment.
- India also supported freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law.
- As a State party to the UNCLOS, India promoted utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which established the international legal order of the seas and oceans.
- India developed its maritime cooperation with regional partners in consonance with the Government's vision of **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**.
- The steps taken include '**Mission based Deployments**' of naval ships and aircraft to enhance Maritime Domain Awareness, promote maritime security and address contingencies that may arise.



UNCLOS

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international treaty which was adopted and signed in **1982**.
- It **replaced the four Geneva Conventions** of April, 1958, which respectively concerned the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the high seas, fishing and conservation of living resources on the high seas.
- The Convention has created **three new institutions** on the international scene :

- the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,
- the International Seabed Authority,
- the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

IUCN and UNCLOS: The Convention has become the legal framework for marine and maritime activities and IUCN with its partners are working towards an implementing agreement (UNCLOS IA) that will close important gaps in governance.

→ LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES (LAS)

- The **Arab League**, formally the **League of Arab States**, is a regional organization in the Arab world, which is located in Northern Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Africa, and Western Asia.
- The **Arab League was formed in Cairo** on 22 March 1945 initially with six members: Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan (renamed Jordan in 1949), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.
- Currently, the League has 22 members, but Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011.
- **Administrative centre: Cairo, Egypt.**
- The Arab League's purpose is to **seek close cooperation among its members** on matters of common interest—specifically, economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare, and health; to strengthen ties, improve communication, and promote common interest among Arabic-speaking nations.
- The Pact of the League of Arab States, the organization's founding document, identifies the mission of the League as follows:

- "The purpose of the League is to draw closer the relations between member States and coordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries."

WHY IS TURKEY NOT IN THE ARAB LEAGUE?

- Turkey has expressed interest in having an observer status in the League but has been refused for several reasons, most noticeably opposition from Iraq (whose Kurdish citizens Turkey has frequently battled with) and Syria (the latter still claims Turkey's Hatay Province).
- The League has also condemned Turkey's military interventions in Libya and other countries.

IS THE ARAB LEAGUE A MILITARY ALLIANCE?

- The Arab League as an organization is **not a military alliance** per se, though from its 1945 founding its members agreed to cooperate in military affairs and coordinate military defence.
- At the 2007 summit, the Leaders decided to reactivate their joint defence and establish a peacekeeping force to deploy in South Lebanon, Darfur, Iraq, and other hot spots.
- At a **2015 summit in Egypt**, member states agreed in principle to **form a joint voluntary military force**.

➔ ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

In the period of ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the recent violent border clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan have raised fears of another war in the Caucasus.

The bone of contention is the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

- **South Caucasus or Transcaucasia** is a region on the southern Caucasus Mountains on the border of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. It roughly comprises of the modern countries of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.



- **Nagorno-Karabakh region** is a mountainous land-locked region in the South Caucasus. It is a forested region and **geographically lies within the boundary of Azerbaijan**.
- The region is also called **Artsakh (chiefly by Armenians)**.
- Nagorno-Karabakh lies in the mountainous range of Karabakh.
- Nagorno-Karabakh is **internationally recognised as a part of Azerbaijan**, although it is ruled by the Republic of Artsakh (formerly known as the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh).
- The Republic of Artsakh is autonomous but controlled by Armenia.
- The major ethnic group of the region is Armenian.

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

- The energy-rich Azerbaijan has built several gas and oil pipelines across the Caucasus (the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea) to Turkey and Europe.
- Some of these pipelines pass close to the conflict zone (within 16 km of the border).
- In an open war between the two countries, the pipelines could be targeted, which would impact energy supplies and may even lead to higher oil prices globally.

BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT

- The conflict can be traced back to the pre-Soviet era when the region was at the meeting point of Ottoman, Russian and the Persian empires.

- Once **Azerbaijan and Armenia became Soviet Republics in 1921**, Russia (erstwhile Soviet Union) gave Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan but offered autonomy to the contested region.
- In the 1980s, when the Soviet power was receding, separatist currents picked up in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- In 1988, the national assembly voted to dissolve the region's autonomous status and join Armenia.
- However, Azerbaijan suppressed such calls, which led to a military conflict.
- The **self-declaration of independence by Nagorno-Karabakh in September 1991** in the backdrop of an imminent collapse of the USSR resulted in a war between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh — supported by Armenia.
- This clash lasted till a ceasefire agreement was reached in 1994, mediated largely by Russia. Since then, the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group** co-chaired by the USA, Russia and France have engaged Azerbaijan and Armenia extensively to resolve the conflict.
- By that time, Armenia had taken control of Nagorno-Karabakh and handed it to Armenian rebels.

MINSK GROUP

- The Minsk Group or the OSCE Minsk Group was **established in 1992** by the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE, now Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)) to envisage a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.
- It is **co-chaired by** France, Russia and the USA.
- **Permanent members of the group:** Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Turkey
- One of the criticisms of the group is that although it is supposed to be neutral, it is co-chaired by the US, Russia and France – all countries with **huge Armenian diasporas**. Because of this reason, the group is said to be soft on Armenia.
- Despite the UN's calls for Armenian forces to withdraw, the Minsk Group does not actively endorse an Armenian withdrawal from the region.
- It is also said that apart from mere lip-service in the form of calls for a ceasefire and the condemnation of the clashes between both sides, the group does nothing substantial to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

REASONS FOR REGULAR CONFLICTS

First , the issue of delineating the shared international border.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Following the 2020 agreement, a substantial amount of territory was handed over from Armenian Karabakh to Azerbaijan making the once soft border between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, a hard international border. ○ However, Armenia and Azerbaijan have never agreed upon a boundary between them in the past and the 2020 ceasefire statement did not make it clear on how exactly the border should be drawn out.
Second , the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The overland route that goes from Stepanakert (a city within the

dispute over transport routes.	<p>Nagorno-Karabakh region) to Armenia has become an issue between the two countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The 2020 agreement states that the parties should build an alternative road within three years. ○ Presently, there is only one road which is the Lachin corridor, which runs past the outposts through Azerbaijan's mountainous Lachin region to Shusha, which Azerbaijani forces retook in the 2020 war. ○ The construction of the road would allow Azerbaijan to take back control of Lachin city and surrounding areas. However, Azerbaijan has accused Armenia of stalling operations of laying its several-kilometre section of the new road.
Third , the difference over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The ethnically Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is also known as the Republic of Artsakh, has expressed frustration over Armenia's willingness to make concessions to Azerbaijan as part of a larger prospective peace settlement. ○ While Armenia supports the aspirations for independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan seeks to preserve its national and territorial integrity.
Fourth , the dispute over the exchange of prisoners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The two sides were to exchange prisoners of war, hostages and other detained persons, and dead bodies. ○ While there has been a series of prisoner exchanges in the last two years, the Azerbaijan side still has many captives while Armenia has just a few.

➔ KYRGYZSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN

Many people have been killed and scores injured in violent border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Batken region of Kyrgyzstan is seeing families being moved out and getting relocated.

ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

- The conflicts replay **previous pre- and post-Soviet legacies**.
- Under the direction of **Joseph Stalin**, the boundaries of the two republics were established.
- In the past, the populations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan **shared rights to natural resources**.
- **Large-scale livestock transfers** to collective and state farms occurred during the Soviet Union's establishment, upsetting the status quo.
- There was, regrettably, only so much acreage to go around.
- As the number of animals in the **Tajik territory of Batken** increased and grazing area became more scarce, agreements were made between the two populations on the use of Kyrgyz territory by the Tajiks' livestock.
- The **border delineation** debate is a holdover from the Soviet era.
- The map that should be used for demarcation purposes remains one of the key sources of contention, despite attempts to resolve the matter through regular negotiations.

- Nearly half of its roughly 1000 kilometre border is up for debate.



CURRENT FLARE-UP

- The ideological basis of the current set of clashes is reinforced by developmental issues, thus providing a fertile ground for the entire geopolitical space to become a hotbed of multiple minor conflicts and clashes.
- The environmental trajectory of the conflict can be further highlighted by incidents which saw groups from either side planting trees in disputed areas and engaging in a physical confrontation using agricultural equipment as weapons.
- **Ferghana valley continues to be a site of struggle** and frequent violent outbursts, with the location consisting primarily of Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks, who have historically shared common sociological specificities, economic activities, and religious practices.
- The **collapse of the Soviet Union** and the **subsequent dissolution of the then-existing water and land agreements** saw the creation of multiple smaller independent farms, which led to a marked increase in water consumption patterns among the farmers.
- Both countries share multiple water channels with undulating trajectories and flow, which upset equitable access to water on both sides.
- As a result, small-scale **conflicts occur practically every year** during the crucial irrigation period.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS REGION FOR INDIA

- India has a very wide array of interests in Central Asia covering security, energy, economic opportunities etc., therefore security, stability and prosperity of Central Asia is imperative for peace and economic development of India.
- Central Asia **serves as a land bridge between Asia and Europe**, making it geopolitically axial for India.
- The region is **rich in natural resources** such as petroleum, natural gas, antimony, aluminium, gold, silver, coal and uranium which can be best utilized by Indian energy requirements.
- Central Asia **has huge cultivable areas lying barren** and without being put to any productive use, offering enormous opportunity for cultivation of pulses.
- India intends expansion of **International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. This will act as a vital gateway to access Eurasian markets and optimally operationalize its use, requiring a Central Asian state joining the project as a direct stakeholder.
- India has proposed setting up of **'India-Central Asia Development Group'** to take forward development partnership between India & Central Asian countries. This group will help India to expand its footprints in the resource-rich region amid China's massive inroads and to fight terror effectively, including in Afghanistan.
- Both India and Central Asian Republics (CARs) share many commonalities and perceptions on various regional and world issues and can play a crucial role in providing regional stability.

→ SCO MEET 2022

*The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit 2022 was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. **Samarkand declaration** was signed by the member states.*





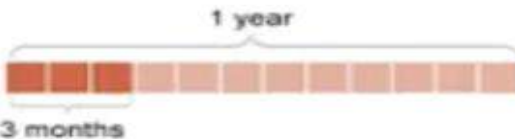


India takes over Presidency of the SCO for 2023.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMIT

- The Samarkand declaration advocated **"commitment to peaceful settlement of differences and disputes** between countries through dialogue and consultation".
- They stress that the **principles of mutual respect** for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of States, equality, mutual benefit, non- interference in internal affairs, and non-use or threat of use of force are the basis for sustainable development of international relations.
- The member countries are **planning to develop common principles and approaches** to form a unified list of terrorists, separatist and extremist organizations whose activities are prohibited on the territories of the SCO member states.
- Russia is also looking at **more customers for its gas** as Western countries look to cut their dependence on it.
- Russia suggested that the organisation should think about **holding its own big athletic event**.

Curbing Iran's nuclear program

Once the International Atomic Energy Agency verifies that Iran has complied with a deal to keep it from developing nuclear weapons, crippling international sanctions will be lifted.

AREA	TERMS OF DEAL	DURATION
Uranium enrichment 	The number of centrifuges at Natanz enrichment site must be cut from nearly 20,000 to 6,104, with only 5,060 running.	10 years
		
	The underground enrichment facility at Fordow must stop enriching uranium and instead make medical and research isotopes as a physics and technology center.	15 years
Nuclear stockpile 	Iran must not build any new enrichment facilities.	15 years
	Iran's cache of enriched uranium must be cut to 300 kilograms.	15 years
	A reactor in Arak must be rebuilt so it could not produce weapons-grade plutonium, with spent fuel shipped out of Iran.	Lifetime of reactor
"Breakout" time 	The time that Iran could take to enrich enough uranium for a nuclear bomb must be extended to at least one year from the current estimate of two to three months.	At least 10 years
		
Inspections and monitoring 	Monitoring must be available at every stage of nuclear program. Iran must grant access to facilities based on recommendations of an arbitration panel controlled by the U.S. and its allies.	At least 15 years
Economic sanctions 	U.S. and European Union sanctions will be lifted on oil, financial and other industries once the IAEA determines Iran is	Pending Iranian compliance

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Connectivity

- India urged to **give each other full right to transit**, as it would enhance connectivity and help in establishing reliable and resilient supply chains in the region.

Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the whole world is facing an unprecedented energy and food crisis, India emphasised the initiative to promote millet and address issues related to food security. In this context, India is trying to popularise millets, as SCO can play a big role in marking 2023 as the International Year of Millets.
Working Group on Traditional Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Health Organisation (WHO) opened its Global Center for Traditional Medicines in Gujarat in April 2022. This was the first and only worldwide centre for conventional medicine established by the WHO.
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varanasi was declared as the SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2022-2023 to promote the rich cultural and historical heritage of the people and the tourism potential of SCO member states. Further, it will promote tourism, cultural and humanitarian exchanges between India and the SCO member Countries. It also underlines India's ancient civilizational links with the Member States of SCO, especially the Central Asian Republics. Under the framework of this major cultural outreach program, a number of events will be hosted in Varanasi during 2022-23.

➔ JCPOA

- The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a detailed agreement with five annexes reached by **Iran and the P5+1** (China France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on July 14, 2015.
- The nuclear deal was endorsed by **UN Security Council Resolution 2231**, adopted on July 20, 2015.
- Iran's compliance with the nuclear-related provisions of the JCPOA is verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) according to certain requirements set forth in the agreement.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- July 14, 2015, Finalization Day:** conclusion of the agreement. Finalization day triggers Iran and the United States to begin domestic review processes of the JCPOA. Iran also begins providing the IAEA with information necessary for the agency to complete its investigation into past activities related to nuclear weapons development.
- October 18, 2015, Adoption Day:** 90 days after the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution endorsing the deal (July 20, 2015). Adoption day triggers Iran and the P5+1 to take steps to meet the commitments to fully implement the JCPOA.
- January 16, 2016, Implementation Day:** the IAEA certifies that Iran has taken the key steps to restrict its nuclear program and has put in place increased monitoring. The IAEA's report on implementation day triggers U.S., EU, and UN sanctions relief.
- October 2023, Transition Day:** Eight years after adoption day (or the IAEA reaching its broader conclusion on Iran's nuclear program, whichever is sooner). Transition day triggers

the UN to lift missile restrictions, Iran to seek ratification of its additional protocol, the EU to terminate all remaining nuclear sanctions, United States to remove certain entities from the sanctioned list, and the United States to seek legislative termination of certain sanctions.

- **October 2025, Termination Day:** Ten years after adoption day. Termination day terminates Resolution 2231 and the Security Council closes Iran's nuclear file.

WHAT DID IRAN AGREE TO?

- **Nuclear restrictions:** Iran agreed not to produce either the highly enriched uranium or the plutonium that could be used in a nuclear weapon. It also took steps to ensure that its **Fordow**, **Natanz**, and **Arak** facilities pursued only civilian work, including medical and industrial research.

The accord limits the numbers and types of centrifuges Iran can operate, the level of its enrichment, as well as the size of its stockpile of enriched uranium.

(Note: Mined uranium has less than 1 percent of the uranium-235 isotope used in fission reactions, and centrifuges increase that isotope's concentration. Uranium enriched to 5 percent is used in nuclear power plants, and at 20 percent it can be used in research reactors or for medical purposes. High-enriched uranium, at some 90 percent, is used in nuclear weapons.)

- **Monitoring and verification:** Iran agreed to eventually implement a protocol that would allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, access to its nuclear facilities and potentially to undeclared sites. Inspections are intended to guard against the possibility that Iran could develop nuclear arms in secret, as it has allegedly attempted before.

The IAEA has issued quarterly reports to its board of governors and the UN Security Council on Iran's implementation of its nuclear commitments.

A body known as the **Joint Commission**, which includes representatives of all the negotiating parties, monitors implementation of the agreement and resolves disputes that may arise.

WHAT DID THE OTHER SIGNATORIES AGREE TO?

- **Sanctions relief:** The EU, United Nations, and United States all committed to lifting their nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. However, many other U.S. sanctions on Iran, some dating back to the 1979 hostage crisis, remained in effect. They cover matters such as Iran's ballistic missile program, support for terrorist groups, and human rights abuses. Though the United States committed to lifting its sanctions on oil exports, it kept restrictions on financial transactions, which have deterred international trade with Iran.
- **Weapons embargo:** The parties agreed to lift an existing UN ban on Iran's transfer of conventional weapons and ballistic missiles after five years if the IAEA certifies that Iran is only engaged in civilian nuclear activity.

HOW IS THE IRAN DEAL ENFORCED?

- If any signatory suspects Iran is violating the deal, the UN Security Council may vote on whether to continue sanctions relief. This "snapback" mechanism remains in effect for ten years, after which the UN sanctions are set to be permanently removed.

- In April 2020, the United States announced its intention to snap back sanctions. The other P5 members objected to the move, saying the United States could not unilaterally implement the mechanism because it left the nuclear deal in 2018.
- Recently under US President, Joe Biden, the US has again shown the desire to return to JCPOA.

➔ ASEAN

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation among its ten members: **Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.**
- ASEAN countries have a total population of 650 million people and a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of **\$3.1 trillion.**
- The group has played a central role in Asian economic integration, spearheading negotiations among Asia-Pacific nations to form one of the world's largest free trade blocs and signing six free trade agreements with other regional economies.
- The bloc's biggest challenge is developing a unified approach to China, particularly in response to Beijing's claims in the South China Sea, which overlap with claims of several ASEAN members.
- ASEAN is headed by a chair—a position that rotates annually among member states—and is assisted by a secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

THE BLOC'S HISTORY

- It was formed in **1967**. ASEAN united Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, which sought to create a common front against the spread of communism and promote political, economic, and social stability amid rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific.
- In **1976**, the members signed the **Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia**, which emphasizes mutual respect and noninterference in other countries' affairs.
- Membership doubled by the end of the 1990s.

Membership: 10 States – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. 1 Observer – Papua New Guinea.

ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM (ARF) MEMBERSHIP

- **27 States** – Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea,



Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, and Vietnam.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, signed at the First ASEAN Summit on 24 February 1976, declared that in their relations with one another, the High Contracting Parties should be guided by the following fundamental principles:
 - Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations;
 - The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, or coercion;
 - Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
 - Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner;
 - Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
 - Effective cooperation among themselves.

→ EUROPEAN UNION

HISTORY

- In **1950**, the concept of a European trade area was first established. The **European Coal and Steel Community** had six founding members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.
- In **1957**, the **Treaty of Rome** established a common market. It eliminated customs duties in 1968. It put in place standard policies, particularly in trade and agriculture. In 1973, the ECSC added Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. It created its first Parliament in 1979. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986.
- In **1993**, the **Treaty of Maastricht** established the European Union common market. Two years later, the EU added Austria, Sweden, and Finland. In 2004, twelve more countries joined: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.
- In **2009**, the **Treaty of Lisbon** increased the powers of the European Parliament. It gave the EU the legal authority to negotiate and sign international treaties. It increased EU powers, border control, immigration, judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, and police cooperation. It abandoned the idea of a European Constitution. European law is still established by international treaties.
- The European Union is a unified trade and monetary body of 27 member countries. It eliminates all border controls between members. The open border allows the free flow of goods and people. There may be police checks, based on police information and experience, that are not equivalent to border checks.
- Any product manufactured in one EU country can be sold to any other member without tariffs or duties. Practitioners of most services, such as law, medicine, tourism, banking, and insurance, can operate a business in all member countries.

PURPOSE

- The EU's purpose is to be more competitive in the global marketplace. At the same time, it must balance the needs of its independent fiscal and political members.
- Its **27 member countries** are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

HOW IS IT GOVERNED?

- Three bodies run the EU. The **EU Council represents national governments**.
- The Parliament is elected by the people. The European Commission is the EU staff. They make sure all members act consistently in regional, agricultural, and social policies. Contributions of **120 billion euros** a year from member states fund the EU.
- Here's how the three bodies uphold the laws governing the EU. These are spelled out in a series of treaties and supporting regulations:
 - The European Commission proposes new legislation. The commissioners serve a five-year term.
 - The European Parliament gets the first read of all laws the Commission proposes. Its members are elected every five years.
 - The European Council gets the second read on all laws and can accept the Parliament's position, thus adopting the law. The council is made up of the Union's 27 heads of state, plus a president.

CURRENCY

- The Euro is the common currency for the EU area. It is the second most commonly held currency in the world, after the U.S. dollar. It replaced the Italian lira, the French franc, and the German Deutschmark, among others.
- The **value of the euro is free-floating** instead of a fixed exchange rate. As a result, foreign exchange traders determine its value each day.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EUROZONE AND THE EU

- The **Eurozone** consists of all countries **that use the euro**. All EU members pledge to convert to the euro, but only **19** have so far. They are Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.
- The **European Central Bank** is the EU's central bank. It sets monetary policy and manages bank lending rates and foreign exchange reserves. Its target inflation rate is less than 2%.

THE SCHENGEN AREA

- The Schengen Area guarantees free movement to those legally residing within its boundaries. Residents and visitors can cross borders without getting visas or showing their passports.
- In total, there are **26 members** of the Schengen Area. They are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

- One EU country, Ireland has declined the Schengen benefits. Four non-EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland have adopted the Schengen Agreement. Three territories are special members of the EU and part of the Schengen Area: the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands. Three countries have open borders with the Schengen Area: Monaco, San Marino, and Vatican City.

→ TRILATERAL HIGHWAY

- The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway **starts from India and goes to Thailand via Myanmar**. It is at the centre of transport diplomacy among ASEAN countries. Recently, Bangladesh has shown its willingness to join the tripartite highway.
- Bangladesh is interested in joining the IMT Trilateral Highway to enhance the connectivity with South East Asia. It wants to open new chapters in trans-border corridors in the Indo Pacific Region.

ABOUT THE IMT TRILATERAL HIGHWAY

- The highway's Imphal-Moreh portion on the Indian side, however, is expected to be completed only by 2023.
- It will be linking **Moreh (India) -Bagan (Myanmar) -Mae Sot (Thailand)**.
- This highway is expected to help greatly in the transport connectivity which is almost 3660 km long cross border highway network and is currently under construction, expected to be completed by 2021.
- The transnational highway connectivity was envisaged to enable trade from India to the other ASEAN nations.
- It was decided to extend the Trilateral Highway to Lao PDR and Cambodia to deepen the India-ASEAN Relations at the **ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit 2012**.



BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

- The India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) highways project is aimed at opening the gate to ASEAN through the land.
- The project will boost trade and commerce in the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, as well as with the rest of Southeast Asia.
- Since India has been working towards increasing its engagements with South East Asia under its 'Act East Policy' the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the region.
- India's efforts under the project:
- India has undertaken the construction of two sections of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar. These are the 120.74 km **Kalewa-Yagyi road section** and 69 bridges along with the approach road on the 149.70 km **Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road section**.

- India requested for one Land Port without a negative list, starting with Agartala-Akhaura and for transportation of goods from Chattogram port to the North East of India. India also proposed that its trucks use the Feni Bridge, once it is complete.
- Recently, India and Bangladesh have expanded their transport and connectivity routes. Sonamura Daudkandi Inland Waterway Route, Feni Bridge from Sabroom to Ramgarh and Haldibari Chilahati rail route are its examples. Leaving India aside now, it is upto Thailand and Myanmar to accept Bangladesh to join IMT Highway.

➔ INSTC

- International North-South Transport Corridor is a corridor to increase trade between India and Russia. This trade route is 7200 Km long and the transport of freight is through a multi-mode network of roads, ships, and railways. This route connects India and Russia through Iran and Azerbaijan.
- The earlier trade route connecting India and Russia was through the Suez Canal. Hence the major objective of the INSTC corridor was to reduce the time taken, costs incurred, and increase connectivity between major cities like Mumbai, Moscow, Astrakhan (located in Russia), Baku (Azerbaijan), Tehran, Bandar Abbas and Bandar Anzail (All located in Iran).
- Russia, India, and Iran are the founding member states of INSTC. The agreement was signed in 2002.
- There are 13 member states of the INSTC project. India, Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Turkey, Syria, Ukraine.
- Bulgaria is the Observer State.
- The Baltic countries like Latvia and Estonia have also expressed willingness to join the INSTC.

INDIA AND INSTC

- India shows interest in extending INSTC membership to countries like Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.
- Establishing a land route via Kabul and Tashkent to form the INSTC's "Eastern corridor" would maximise the potential of this collaboration.
- Also, India wants to include Chabahar port to be included in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- The potential export sectors in India that benefit from INSTC include perishable goods (fruits and vegetables), high-value items like ATMs, industrial printers, 3D printers, robotic assembly accessories, etc., cross-border e-commerce, and sectors that are likewise.
- Significance of INSTC
 - The corridor is aimed at reducing the carriage cost between India and Russia by about 30% and bringing down the transit time from 40 days by more than half.
 - It could be considered as a very important corridor for the development of freight traffic in the region.
 - This corridor is capable of boosting India's economy. Indian exports are expected to increase substantially during the next calendar year.
 - This corridor is expected to increase market access to the member nations who can also benefit through various backward and forward linkages.

→ ASHGABAT AGREEMENT

- The multimodal transport agreement signed by the governments of **Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, India and Oman** to create an international transport and transit corridor facilitating transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf, is called as Ashgabat Agreement.
- The Ashgabat Agreement aims to develop the shortest trade route between Central Asian countries and Iranian and Omani ports.
- The Ashgabat multi-modal corridor is intended to be complimentary and to be synchronised with the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) for enhanced connectivity.
- The transit agreement provides for a transit corridor across Central Asia and the Middle East through the continuous landmass between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran before reaching the Persian Gulf and into Oman.
- **Ashgabat (It used to be called Poltoratsk between 1919 and 1927)** is the capital and the largest city of Turkmenistan in Central Asia, situated between the Karakum Desert and the Kopet Dag mountain range.
- The entry of Kazakhstan has increased the significance of the agreement by extending it further into Central Asia to the borders of Russia and China.
- The land transport component of the agreement includes rail links running through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran, of these the **Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan (ITK) railway** line is a major route.
- ITK railway line connects Turkmenistan in the north with Uzen in Kazakhstan and with Gorgan in Iran to the south.
- ITK railway link which became operational in December 2014 is also a part of the India-sponsored North-South international transport corridor (NSITC/INSTC).
- Besides the ITK rail link, the other rail project is the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan (TAT) rail line.
- TAT railroad will link Afghanistan's Akina-Andkhoy to Turkmenistan's Atamurat-Ymamnazar via Pyandzh in Tajikistan.
- **Turkmenistan also participates in TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia)**, an international transport programme which includes the EU and 14 Eastern European, South Caucasus and Central Asian states.
- Some experts opine that India's strategy should be
 - To participate in all regional connectivity arrangements that exist outside China's the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiatives
 - Involve in connectivity initiatives that supplement and complement the INSTC
 - To diminish the leverage being exercised by Pakistan in curtailing India's connectivity to Central Asian countries.
 - To optimize India's trade routes to the EU, both in terms of costs and time.
 - India – Turkmenistan relation is the key to India's 'Connect Central Asia' initiative.

➔ BCIM

Route of the BCIM Economic Corridor



- The BCIM economic corridor aims to **connect Kolkata with Kunming**, capital of the Yunnan province.
- It envisages formation of a thriving economic belt, focusing on cross-border transport, energy and telecommunication networks.
- Starting from Kunming, the route passes through nodal points, such as Spread: Mandalay and Lashio in Myanmar. It heads towards Kolkata after passing through Manipur and Silchar, before crossing Bangladesh via Sylhet and Dhaka, with branches extending to the ports of Cox Bazar and Chittagong.
- Importance of BCIM:
- India will benefit in terms of the development of the Kolkata port and the opening up of the economic potential of the northeast states.
- BCIM offers India an opportunity to create its own win-win relationship with China.
- India's gain from the BCIM includes the ability to connect to the One Belt, One Road project thus opening up markets to the east.
- It can also use the economic corridor for negotiating downstream industries to be located within India.
- With natural gas reserves of about 200 trillion cubic feet, the largest in the Asia-Pacific, Bangladesh could become one of the major energy exporting countries.
- Tourism too will get a boost.
- BCIM can not only be a game-changer for this region in Asia, but is also pivotal for India's 'Act East' Policy.

- Economic Benefits include access to several booming markets in Southeast Asia, improvement of transport infrastructure and setting up of industrial zones.
- The regional connectivity would facilitate cross-border movement of people and goods, reduce overland trade bottlenecks, ensure access and increase volume of trade.
- Substantially reduce transaction costs, enhance trade and investment and poverty alleviation in the region.

➔ BBIN

- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) aim to facilitate the seamless flow of passenger, personal and cargo vehicular traffic between and among the BBIN countries
- The BBIN connectivity project was conceived after the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) failed to agree on a regional motor vehicles agreement at a summit in Nepal in 2014, mainly because of opposition from Pakistan.
- BBIN MVA aims at constructing an economic corridor connecting Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal by roads.
- Bhutan is one of the signatories to the BBIN MVA. It has not yet ratified the Agreement for its entry into force. Bangladesh, India and Nepal, have already ratified it.
- Asian Development Bank has supported the project as part of its South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation programme.
- The agreement was created 'for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal and to boost economic growth in the region.
- BBIN agreement will promote safe, economically efficient, and environmentally sound road transport in the sub-region and will further help each country in creating an institutional mechanism for regional integration.
- BBIN countries will be benefited from mutual cross border movement of passengers and goods for the overall economic development of the region.
- The people of the four countries will benefit through the seamless movement of goods and passengers across borders.

➔ DUQM

- The port is located on Oman's southern coast and also provides access onward into the Red Sea through the Gulf of Aden.
- The port is near to the Chabahar and Gwadar port.
- The Indian Navy will be able to use the port for logistics and thereby allowing it to sustain long-term operations in the western Indian Ocean.

- Moreover, a dry dock will be available to the Indian Navy at Duqm thereby allowing for maintenance without returning vessels to India-based shipyards.
- A cause of concern for India would be that the SEZ in Duqm is being financed and has considerable presence of China.
- The Duqm port would enhance the sustainable security network of India in the Indian Ocean region against piracy and growing presence of China.
- India's strategic linkages in the Indian Ocean region would include Duqm in Oman, Chabahar in Iran, Assumption Island in the Seychelles, Agalega in Mauritius, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Moreover, under the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with United States, India can access the support facility at US base at Diego Garcia.
- Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)
- The Eurasian Economic Union is an international organization for regional economic integration that came into existence on 1st January 2015.
- The EAEU provides for free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor within its borders.
- It pursues, coordinates, & harmonizes the policies in the sectors determined by the Treaty and international agreements within the Union.
- The member states of the Eurasian Economic Union are- Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and the Russian Federation.
- The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is seen as an energy superpower since it produces more than 20% of the world's natural gas.
- Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and Kazakhstan intend to create a single hydrocarbons market by 2025 and create a common electricity market.
- EAEU produces 9% of the world's electrical energy.
- It produces 5.9% of the world's coal.
- The Eurasian Economic Union is the world's top producer of sunflower and sugar beet.
- EAEU is responsible for the coordination of agricultural policy-making between member states and ensuring collective food security. Agricultural subsidies are also provided.
- There is a proposal to introduce common currency called the 'altyn' which is to be introduced by 2025.

➔ CARICOM

- The Caribbean Community was formed in 1973.
- CARICOM has 15 members – Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago.
- The Chairmanship of the Community is rotated every six months among the member countries.

- The CARICOM Single Market and Economy are intended to benefit the people of the region by providing more and better opportunities to produce and sell goods and services and to attract investment.



- The Government of India funded the US\$ 1.166 million information technology and communication infrastructure, computer software and community studio at the CARICOM Secretariat in 2005-2006.

➔ ICC

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an intergovernmental organisation and international tribunal headquartered in The Hague.
- It investigates and tries people charged with serious and grave crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. It is the first permanent international criminal court in the world.

ICC FUNCTIONS

- The ICC aims to end impunity and hold those individuals responsible for heinous crimes against humanity to face justice.
- It also aims to prevent crimes from happening through the proper dispensation of justice.
- The ICC intends to complement national courts and not replace them.
- It is governed by an international statute known as the Rome Statute. The Statute entered into force in July 2002.
- The Court has about 900 staff members from about one hundred nations.
- It has two working languages namely English and French. There are 6 official languages namely, English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian.
- The ICC has heard 28 cases until now.
- India is not a member of the ICC.

- Each member party has one vote and voting is resorted to only when decisions cannot be taken by consensus.

➔ INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

- The ICJ is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. Its seat is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). Notably, it is the only UN principal organ not situated in New York.
- The chief judicial organ of the UN, it is also sometimes known as the World Court.
- Established by the UN Charter in 1945, it began work in 1946 when it replaced the Permanent Court of International Justice which had functioned in the Peace Palace since 1922.
- All the 193 member states of the UN are automatically parties to the Court. Those nations that are not members of the UN may become parties to the Court's statute with the help of the Article 93 procedure.
- The chief function of the ICJ is to settle disputes submitted by parties according to international law.
- The Court is composed of 15 judges. It has a dual role:
 - i. Settling legal disputes between States submitted to it by them;
 - ii. Providing advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it by United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
- The Court also gives advisory opinions on legal matters submitted by any of the UN bodies or specialised agencies.
- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can enforce ICJ judgements as per the UN Charter. However, the permanent members of the UNSC can veto against any such ruling.
- The official languages of the ICJ are English and French.

➔ ICC, ICJ & Permanent Court of Arbitration

Difference between ICC, ICJ & PCA

Feature	International Court of Justice	International Criminal Court	Permanent Court of Arbitration
Establishment	ICJ was established in June, 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations	The ICC was established in July, 2002 as per the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.	The PCA was established by the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, during the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899.
Members	Countries that are UN members are de-facto members of the ICJ.	Countries that have ratified the Rome Statute are members of the ICC.	Parties to the Convention on the Pacific Settlement of disputes of 1899 and 1907 are automatically parties to the PCA.

Jurisdiction	<p>Jurisdiction in contentious dispute of legal nature among its Member States. This can be extended to a non-member State on recommendation of UNSC and UNGA. Advisory jurisdiction in dispute involving an UN Organ & Specialised Agencies.</p>	<p>Individuals accused of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression in member-States or those referred by the UNSC.</p>	<p>It has a permanent framework for arbitral tribunals constituted to resolve specific disputes. It resolves dispute involving various among states, state entities, international organizations and private parties.</p>
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➔ ARCTIC COUNCIL

- The **Arctic Council** is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the **Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants** on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
- It was formally **established in 1996**.
- The **Ottawa Declaration** defines these states as Members of the Arctic Council: **Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States**.
- **Permanent participants are organizations representing Arctic Indigenous peoples** in the Council. They are supported by the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat.
- Seven of the eight-member states have sizeable indigenous communities living in their Arctic areas (only Iceland does not have an indigenous community).
- Organizations of Arctic Indigenous Peoples can obtain the status of Permanent Participant to the Arctic Council, but only if they represent either one indigenous group residing in more than one Arctic State, or two or more Arctic indigenous peoples groups in a single Arctic state.
- **Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to non-Arctic states, along with inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work.**
- **India has been an observer since 2013 onwards.**

WHAT ARE SOME ARCTIC COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

- The Arctic Council regularly produces comprehensive, cutting-edge environmental, ecological and social assessments through its Working Groups.
- The Council has also provided a forum for the negotiation of three important legally binding agreements among the eight Arctic States:

1. Agreement on Cooperation on **Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue** in the Arctic (2011)
2. Agreement on Cooperation on **Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response** in the Arctic (2013)
3. Agreement on Enhancing International **Arctic Scientific Cooperation** (2017)

WHO CHAIRS THE ARCTIC COUNCIL?

- The Chairmanship of the Arctic Council rotates every two years among the Arctic States. The first country to chair the Arctic Council was Canada (1996-1998), followed by the United States, Finland, Iceland, the Russian Federation, Norway, the Kingdom of Denmark, and Sweden. The second cycle of Chairmanships began in 2013.
- The Russian Federation chairs from 2021 to 2023.

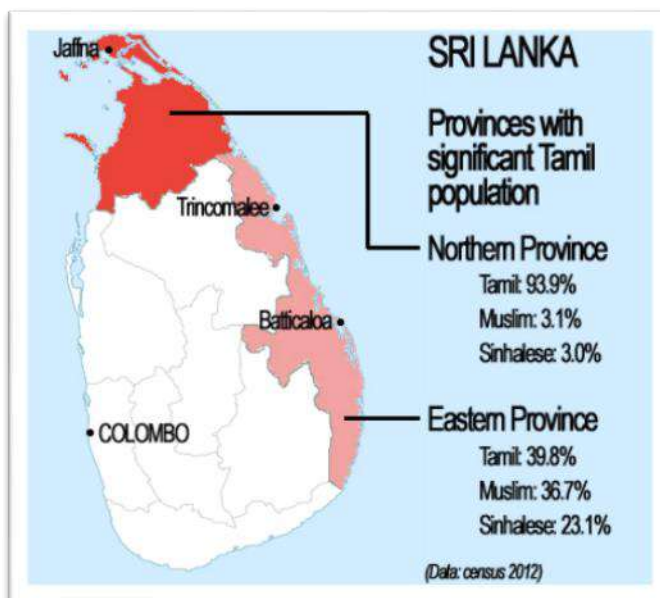
WHAT DOESN'T IT DO?

- The Arctic Council is a **forum**; it has **no programming budget**. All projects or initiatives are sponsored by one or more Arctic States. Some projects also receive support from other entities.
- The Arctic Council **does not and cannot implement or enforce its guidelines, assessments or recommendations**. That responsibility belongs to individual Arctic States or international bodies.
- The Arctic Council's mandate, as articulated in the Ottawa Declaration, explicitly **excludes military security**.

➔ SRILANKA: 13th CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

HISTORY OF TAMIL-SINHALESE CONFLICT

- Great Britain ruled Sri Lanka—then called Ceylon—from 1815 to 1948.
- In 1815, the population of Ceylon numbered about three million predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese and 300,000 mostly Hindu Tamils.
- Sinhalese ancestors most likely arrived on the island from India in the 500s BCE. Sri Lankan people seem to have been in contact with Tamil speakers from southern India since at least the second century BCE.
- The British established huge cash crop plantations on the island, first of coffee, and later of rubber and tea.
- Colonial officials brought in approximately a million Tamil speakers from India to work as plantation labourers. The British also established schools in the northern, Tamil-majority part of the colony, and **preferentially appointed Tamils to bureaucratic positions, angering the Sinhalese majority**.
- This was a common divide-and-rule tactic in European colonies that had troubling results in the post-colonial era in places such as Rwanda and Sudan.



- The British granted Ceylon independence in 1948. The Sinhalese majority immediately began to pass laws that discriminated against Tamils, particularly the Indian Tamils brought to the island by the British.
- The ***Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 effectively barred Indian Tamils from holding citizenship***, making stateless people out of some 700,000. Over the next three decades more than 300,000 Indian Tamils were deported back to India.
- They made ***Sinhalese the official language***, driving Tamils out of the civil service.
- It wasn't until 2003, 55 years after independence—that all Indian Tamils living in Sri Lanka were granted citizenship, but by this time they only made up 5% of the island's population.

DEMAND OF A SEPARATE TAMIL STATE IN SRI LANKA

- In the late 1960s documents relating to a separate Tamil state of "Tamil Eelam" began to circulate. At this time Anton Balasingham, an employee of the British High Commission in Colombo, began to participate in separatist activities. He later migrated to Britain, where he became the chief theoretician of the LTTE.
- The LTTE was founded in 1976 by Velupillai Prabhakaran with the goal of creating an independent Tamil Eelam out of Sri Lanka.
- From clashes with the Sri Lankan military, the LTTE in the early 80s launched a full-scale nationalist insurgency in the north and east of the country, carrying out a string of major terrorist attacks against both military and civilian targets.
- The Tamil Tigers declared the "First Eelam War" (1983-87).

13TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

- It was an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987.
- It mandated a measure of power devolution to the provincial councils established to govern the island's nine provinces.
- It led to the creation of ***Provincial Councils***, assured a power sharing arrangement to enable all nine provinces in the country, including Sinhala majority areas, to self-govern. Subjects such as education, health, agriculture, housing, land and police are devolved to the provincial administrations, but because of restrictions on financial powers and overriding powers given to the President, the provincial administrations have not made much headway. In particular, the provisions relating to police and land have never been implemented.
- It recognised Tamil as second official language of Sri Lanka.
- It was opposed vociferously by both Sinhala nationalist parties and the LTTE. The former thought it was too much power to share, while the Tigers deemed it too little. It was **widely perceived as an imposition by a neighbour wielding hegemonic influence**.
- Till date, the 13th Amendment represents the only constitutional provision on the settlement of the long-pending Tamil question. In addition to assuring a measure of devolution, it is considered part of the few significant gains since the 1980s, in the face of growing Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarianism from the time Sri Lanka became independent in 1948.

→ AUKUS

- It stands for Australia, UK and US and aims to help modernise the primary beneficiary – Australia – over the coming decades to take up security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.
- The plan is to give access to cutting edge military technology to Australia by its two partners, including futuristic capabilities like artificial intelligence and quantum technologies.

WHO IS IT AIMED AT ?

- Though not spelt out explicitly, the partnership seeks to check on a growing China that has been asserting its military muscle in recent years – from the south China sea to the border with India in Ladakh.
- The rapidly expanding Chinese Navy – described by US as the fastest military build-up since World War II – is backed by Beijing's strong economy.

WHAT IS THE FIRST BIG STEP ?

- The US and the UK will share technology to construct nuclear powered submarines with Australia. At least eight nuclear powered but conventionally armed submarines will be operated by the Royal Australian Navy. This could make Australia the first nation that does not have a nuclear weapons program but will operate nuclear powered boats.



- Australia has emphasised that it does not plan to have nuclear weapons but the submarines are essential as they have characteristic of stealth, speed and unlimited endurance that is essential to protect maritime interests.
- Australia will enter a select club of nations with such submarines. The others include India, Russia, France and China, besides the UK and the US.
- Australia will acquire long range strike capabilities for its armed forces. In the next decade, it will acquire Tomahawk cruise missiles, Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missiles with a range of 900 km, Long Range Anti-Ship missiles and precision strike guided missiles for its land forces.

WHERE DOES INDIA STAND ?

- Besides having a nuclear arms arsenal, India has an indigenous nuclear powered submarine project, with two boats already functional. Besides, it has a long term arrangement with Russia for leasing of nuclear powered submarine as well.
- India would however welcome the strengthening of its quad partner Australia, that has a large maritime responsibility and is a key ally when it comes to sharing of information and intelligence on the movement of Chinese forces in the region.

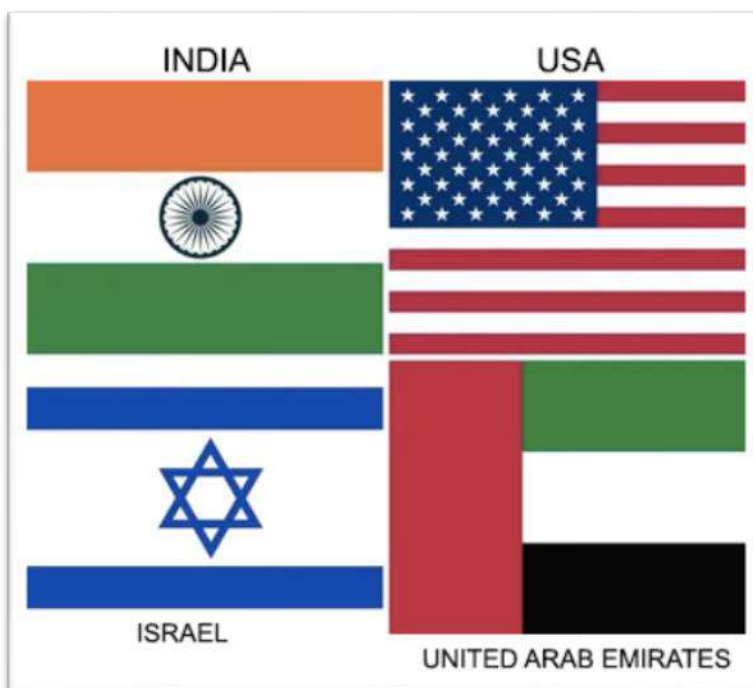
➔ NEW QUAD

WHAT'S BEHIND THE 'NEW QUAD'?

- **India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States** began a new quadrilateral economic forum focused on trade, climate change, energy, and maritime security—all issues emphasized by the more established Quadrilateral Security Dialogue among Australia, India, Japan, and the United States.
- The two Quads are quite different in other ways. The so-called new Quad is not as focused on countering China's rise as the original one, and because it lacks a strong, shared purpose, its future trajectory is more uncertain.

NEW QUAD AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO INDIA

- It could serve Indian foreign-policy goals: The arrangement enables India to **expand its role on the world stage**, to **engage more deeply in the Middle East**, and to strengthen cooperation with the United States.
- The new Quad appears to stem from rapidly growing cooperation among its member countries. Last year, a normalization agreement between Israel and the UAE resulted in a flurry of new accords focused on investment, energy, and health care.
- Meanwhile, India has strengthened ties with Israel. In 2017, Narendra Modi became the first Indian prime minister to visit the country—a significant step given New Delhi's long association with the Palestinian cause. Finally, U.S.-India relations have continued to deepen.
- India's joining the new Quad first reflects a desire to play a greater role on the world stage and to respond to criticism from observers—including its own national security advisor—that it punches below its weight.
- The forum provides India with an opportunity to move closer to key partners without compromising its policy of strategic autonomy: As with the other Quad, this arrangement is a loose grouping, not an alliance.
- **India also sees the Middle East as strategically significant.** It depends heavily on its energy imports, and nearly 9 million Indian workers live in the Persian Gulf. India has ramped up diplomacy with many regional players, including Saudi Arabia, but Israel and the UAE have long been key targets. A 2019 survey of Indian foreign-policy and security



professionals found that the two countries were regarded as India's two most important partners in the Middle East.

- Israel and the UAE each boast advantages that can benefit India. Already a major arms supplier to India, Israel also has cutting-edge agricultural technologies that could help enhance water management.
- Meanwhile, the UAE can provide India with much-needed infrastructure financing. In 2015, the two countries announced a \$75 billion infrastructure fund, but only \$3 billion has been used so far. India can leverage the new Quad to make more progress operationalizing the fund—a goal the UAE says it supports.
- Furthermore, the **new Quad delivers a boost to India's relations with United States**. It expands the geographic scope of the two countries' cooperation beyond Asia, adding to their pool of multilateral partners.
- The new arrangement does not represent any type of competition to the original Quad: The two groups are distinct entities with different geographical remits, although their areas of cooperation may overlap.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

- Unlike the original Quad, the new economic forum is not fueled by a collective desire to counter China.
- In recent months, Israel and the UAE have strengthened their commercial cooperation with China, especially in the shipping sector.
- Instead, the country that comes closest to bringing the four new Quad members together is Iran—a bitter rival of Israel and the United States.
- But both the UAE and India are still keen to find ways to engage with the Iranians, despite territorial disputes and reduced energy ties.
- That doesn't mean China is a nonfactor in the arrangement.
- The United States likely sees the new Quad as an opportunity to convince Israel and the UAE to wean themselves off Chinese investment.
- That goal dovetails with India's interests, as it would welcome a reduced Chinese footprint in a region where it's keen to expand its presence.
- The new Quad will occupy midlevel importance for Washington as it balances multilateral arrangements.
- Its lack of a unifying cause means it will likely struggle to achieve the success of the original Quad. But its members' commitment to deep levels of cooperation should enable it to outlast the arrangement among Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and Uzbekistan launched just a month before the Taliban takeover.

WAY AHEAD:

- The new Quad's trajectory is uncertain, but it has considerable potential because of the warm relations among the parties. It will face two initial tests: sustainability and substance.
- Is the group prepared to hold regular, high-level meetings, as the original Quad does? And can the new Quad take steps—forming working groups, identifying negotiators—to produce new initiatives? If not, it risks becoming a flash in the pan.

→ KALAPANI REGION

- The Kalapani dispute between Nepal and India was aroused when India published a revised political map in 2019 that shows the newly created Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Both the countries laid claim to Kalapani. The map showed Kalapani as part of Pithoragarh. As a result, Nepal protested immediately and drew attention to the issue.

LOCATION OF KALAPANI

- Kalapani is located in the easternmost corner of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district. It shared a border on the north with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal in the east and south. The region is placed in between **Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh, and Kalapani trijunction between Nepal-India and China (Tibet)**. At an altitude of 3600m, it is located on the banks of the river Kali. The territories of Kalapani lies at the eastern border of Uttarakhand in India and Nepal's Sudurpashchim Pradesh in the West.
- It is under the control of India but Nepal claims the region due to historical and cartographic reasons.

WHAT IS THE REASON BEHIND THE DISPUTE?

- Kalapani region derives its name from the Kali river. Nepal claims the region as the river became the marker of the boundary of the kingdom Nepal following the **Treaty of Sugauli**. The treaty of Sugauli was signed between the Gurkha rulers of Kathmandu and the East India Company after the Gurkha War/Anglo-Nepal War during 1814-16. In 1816, the treaty was ratified.
- As per the treaty, the regions of **Kumaon-Garhwal in the west and Sikkim in the east were lost by Nepal**.
- As per Article 5, the King of Nepal gave up his claims over the region west of the river Kali which originated in the High Himalayas and flows into the great plains of the Indian subcontinent.
- Also according to the treaty, the rulers of the British recognised the right of Nepal's to the region that fell to the east of the Kali river.

HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE DISPUTE

- As per the experts of Nepal, the east of the Kali river should begin at the source of the river. And the source according to them is the mountains near Limpiyadhura. It is higher in altitude than the rest of the river's flow.
- And Nepal claims that the landmass that is in the high mountains falls to the east of the entire stretch starting from Limpiyadhura downwards in theirs.



- According to India, the border starts at Kalapani and India says that is where the river begins. As per the Indian government, the ridgeline located towards the east of Kalapani territory is a part of the Indian Union. The Sugauli treaty mentions nothing about this ridgeline.
- The main reason behind the dispute is the varying interpretation of the origin of the river and its different tributaries that slice via mountains.
- Nepal claims the territory east of the Kali that is based on the Limpiyadhura origin and India says that the river actually takes the name Kali near Kalapani.
- The Kalapani area is controlled by the Indo-Tibetan Police and nearby areas since the Indo-China war of 1962.

CLAIMS OF NEPAL FOR LIPULEKH PASS

- In the 1952 war, the importance of Himalayan passes with the Tibetan plateau was highlighted. During the war, the forces of the Chinese used the pass **Se La in Twang** and reached the plains of the Brahmaputra in the east. The military defeat in the east said that weakly guarded passes were a major vulnerability of Indian military preparedness against China. Lipulekh was vulnerable in comparison to Se La that was somewhat fortified. Further, according to the Nepali analysts, the King of Nepal Mahendra signed an agreement with Delhi and handed the region for security purposes to India. Under bilateral negotiations in 1969, all the posts were removed barring Kalapani.
- According to the former Indian Ambassador to Nepal Jayant Prasad, "the region was always a part of India and India's claims to the areas based on British Indian maps dating back to the 19th century." He further told that when the pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar paused with the takeover of Tibet by Chinese forces within the mid-1950s, India deployed troops at the Lipulekh pass in 1959, who was a part of the Eminent Persons Group established in February 2016 to make sure frank conversation between India and Nepal on controversial issues.

IMPORTANCE OF LIPULEKH PASS

- The region is in the Himalayas and is connected to the other side of the mountain range via Lipulekh Pass which has been used for centuries by Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims and tourists to Kailash Mansarovar. By various mountain communities, the region of the market has been used. As we know that the Himalayas have various passes that connect the Gangetic region with the Tibetan plateau but the Lipulekh pass is strategically located as it is the nearest to the heart of the Indian state or National Capital Region.
- India and China Lipulekh agreement of 2015 renewed India's Mansarovar pilgrimage connection. Further, India and China were in clear violation of the Nepalese concerns during the 2015 agreement. Also, neither of the countries consulted Nepal or took its opinion before that agreement that enhances the pilgrimage and trade to Tibet.
- **The current position:** A revised official map is published by Nepal incorporating the territory from the Limpiyadhura source of the Kali to Kalapani and Lipulekh pass in the northeast of the triangular region as its territory. The Cabinet led by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli registered a constitution amendment motion to grant constitutional status to the map. As per India, this move will not make any solution for the future on the Kalapani issue and is nearly impossible as a constitutional guarantee will make Kathmandu's position inflexible.

→ CHINA'S FIRST ROAD-RAIL TRANSPORT LINK TO INDIAN OCEAN

- China opens its first road-rail transport link to Indian Ocean named **China-Myanmar New Passage**. The route is “the first to link western China with the Indian Ocean.
- The transport corridor involves a **sea-road-rail link from the Myanmar border to the key commercial hub of Chengdu** in western China, that provides China a new road-rail transportation channel to the Indian Ocean.
- This passage **connects the logistics lines** of Singapore, Myanmar and China.
- The railway line currently ends in **Lincang** on the Chinese side opposite the Myanmar border trade town of **Chin Shwe Haw**.
- Plans are underway to develop Chin Shwe Haw as a “border economic cooperation zone” under the Belt and Road Initiative.



→ BRICS

- BRICS is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- **Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill** coined the term BRIC (without South Africa) in 2001, claiming that by 2050 the four BRIC economies would come to dominate the global economy by 2050. South Africa was added to the list in 2010.
- Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa ranked among the world's fastest-growing emerging market economies for years, thanks to low labour costs, favourable demographics and abundant natural resources at a time of a global commodities boom.
- It's important to note that the Goldman Sachs thesis wasn't that these countries would become a political alliance (like the EU) or even a formal trading association. Instead, Goldman said they have the potential to form a powerful economic bloc, even acknowledging that its forecasts were optimistic and dependent on significant policy assumptions.
- The leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in **St. Petersburg, Russia**, on the margins of G8 Outreach Summit in **2006**.
- Shortly afterwards, in September 2006, the group was formalised as BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the UN Assembly in New York City.
- After a series of high level meetings, the **1st BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2009**.
- BRIC group was renamed as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) after South Africa was accepted as a full member at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in **New York in 2010**. Accordingly, South Africa attended the 3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China in 2011.

- BRICS is an important grouping bringing together the major emerging economies from the world, comprising 41% of the world population, having 24% of the world GDP and over 16% share in the world trade. BRICS countries have been the main engines of global economic growth over the years.
- Over a period of time, BRICS countries have come together to deliberate on important issues under the three pillars of political and security, economic and financial and cultural and people to people exchanges.

→ SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO)

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai in 2001.
 - The SCO **currently comprises eight Member States** (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), **four Observer States** interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and **six “Dialogue Partners”** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey).
 - Since its inception in 2001, the SCO has **mainly focused on regional security issues, its fight against regional terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism**. To date, the SCO's priorities also **include regional development**.
 - The SCO has been an **observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005**.
 - In 2010, the UN and SCO Secretariats signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation.
 - SCO Secretariat has also established partnerships with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in addition to its ongoing cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the UN Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNCT).
 - The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), as well as UNRCCA (United Nations Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia) maintain regular contacts with the SCO officials. The cooperation activities focus on security developments in the region and key issues related to counterterrorism and prevention of violent extremism.
-
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established as a **multilateral association to ensure security and maintain stability across the vast Eurasian region**, join forces to counteract emerging challenges and threats, and enhance trade, as well as cultural and humanitarian cooperation.
 - By reinforcing mutually beneficial cooperation, preventing confrontation and conflict, and maintaining equal and indivisible security, SCO aims to build a just **polycentric world order**, in full conformity with the norms of international law and principles of mutual respect, which meets the interests of each and every State, taking into account their mutual needs and aspirations. As a multinational and multicultural organization, SCO strives to stave off the clash of civilizations across its respective regions.

- Adhering to the **principles of openness**, SCO does not intend to form any alliances or direct its actions against any sovereign entity. It actively and consistently pursues dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, and stands for strict observance of the purposes and principles inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations, such as equality and sovereignty of States, inadmissibility of intervention in their domestic affairs, respect for territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-aggression, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force or threat of force, as well as other universally recognized norms of international law, aimed at maintaining peace and security, establishing partnerships between States, protecting national sovereignty and respecting the right to determine one's own destiny and path forward for political, socioeconomic and cultural development.
- The **entire structure of the organization is designed to generate multilateral partnerships** to assist sovereign members in coordinating strategies and approaches to solving pressing international issues and meeting regional needs. It also provides an opportunity for member States to concentrate their efforts on common goals in accordance with the principles of voluntary cooperation and equitable distribution of responsibilities.

APPROACHES AND PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARDS SECURITY AND STABILITY

- Adhering to the strict observance of universally recognized norms of international law, as well as to the relentless pursuit of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, SCO is unshaken in its belief that as a means of conflict resolution diplomacy is unmatched.
- In this regard, SCO continues its support for an even more prominent coordinating role for the United Nations in international relations, with an emphasis upon the further development of close cooperation with the world Organization.



- SCO will continue to make coordinated efforts to combat common challenges and threats to security, broaden dialogue and reinforce collaboration in ensuring comprehensive security by countering terrorism, cyberterrorism, separatism, extremism, transnational organized crime, and illicit drug trafficking, as well as reinforcing international information security and emergency response.
- In this regard, SCO intends to further develop its core permanent body—the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**.
- The SCO common response to the steadily growing threat of extremism is the **SCO Convention on Countering Extremism, adopted at the summit in Astana**. This document will strengthen the international legal framework for countering emerging challenges and threats along with the **Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism**, the **Convention of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization against Terrorism**, and the **2016-2018 SCO Member States Programme on Cooperation in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism**, as well as core United Nations instruments, such as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.
- The SCO Convention on Countering Extremism is aimed at advancing security, increasing effective cooperation between authorities and improving the legal framework in this sphere.
- The spread of extremist ideology and propaganda, including the public justification of terrorism as a means of incitement to committing terrorist acts, has been particularly dangerous under the circumstances. In this regard, SCO will enhance joint efforts to counteract societal radicalization, which results in the manifestation of the worst forms of extremism, including terrorism, especially among young people. We are also taking steps to prevent religious, ethnic, ideological and political extremism, ethnic and racial intolerance, and xenophobia
- Adhering to the provisions of the **2006 Agreement** on Cooperation in Identifying and Blocking the Channels of Penetration on the Territory of SCO Member States of Individuals Involved in Terrorist, Separatist and Extremist Activities, as well as the **2015 Agreement** on Cooperation and Interaction of the SCO Member States on Border Issues, member States will continue their collaboration in preventing malicious activities and movement of foreign terrorists, militants and terrorist groups by means of effective border control, an exchange of data regarding persons involved in terrorist activities, identifying forged or stolen identification documents, as well as conducting joint investigations of transnational terrorist crimes.
- Although SCO is not a military alliance, our front-line struggle against terrorist threats demands that we further develop and enhance mechanisms aimed at complete eradication of terrorist activities. In this regard, SCO will continue its scheduled anti-terrorist training manoeuvres, including the **SCO Peace Mission exercise**.

COUNTERING ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING IS AMONG SCO PRINCIPAL PRIORITIES

- Economic Development as a Means of Preventing the Emergence of New Sources of Challenges and Threats to Security
- Uneven economic development in various parts of the world increasingly leads to radicalization and ultimately to life-threatening conflict situations. Negative trends in global

economic development intensify existing imbalances, which in turn contribute to a growing number of threats and challenges to security and sustainable development. In light of this, SCO stands for broad international cooperation in providing the impetus to world economic recovery, ensuring economic and financial stability, and maintaining sustainable, dynamic, balanced and inclusive growth in a rapidly globalizing environment.

- At the same time, SCO member States agree that world trade must be carried out abiding by the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and inadmissibility of protectionist practices. Trade must be based upon rules applied equally to all participants. It is important to eliminate existing trade barriers and prevent the emergence of new ones, in order to facilitate the formation of an open world economy that will reinforce the multilateral trading system.
- SCO will undertake additional measures to help develop regional economies, provide favourable conditions for trade, support investment initiatives, enhance infrastructure, build industrial parks whenever the appropriate conditions permit, and improve the quality of life for respective populations.
- An important practical step in that direction is the implementation of the Agreement between the **Governments of the SCO Member States on Creating Favourable Conditions for International Road Transportation, signed in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in 2014.** This agreement not only establishes equitable conditions for managing mutually-beneficial trade flow from Eastern Europe to the Russian east coast and China, it has also become the treaty-based foundation for multilateral comprehensive development of regional infrastructure and an integrated system of road transportation.

CULTURAL DIALOGUE AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE AGAINST THREATS TO SECURITY

- A key factor in establishing mutual trust, friendship and neighbourly relations between SCO member States is their collaboration in cultural, educational and scientific spheres. Well-established ongoing cultural dialogue among SCO nations contributes to learning about and enriching one another's cultural experiences, which eventually leads to a greater level of mutual understanding. Cultural dialogue brings people together, and unites them around common humanistic values and aspirations, helping to reduce xenophobia, religious and ethnic intolerance, and discrimination based on ethnic and racial background. Such dialogue includes a principle SCO goal of bringing civilizations together.
- The rich historical and cultural legacy of the peoples of SCO countries is embodied in cultural sites that currently comprise 20 per cent of the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- Learning about these landmarks presents a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the vibrant history of the Eurasian region, enjoy the diverse palette of its unique national and cultural attributes, and better understand the mentality and worldview of people residing there.
- Expanding cultural interactions within the SCO region, strengthening mutual understanding among its peoples, respecting their cultural traditions and customs, and preserving and enhancing cultural diversity within SCO member States will remain top priorities for our work aimed at promoting peace and ensuring security and sustainable development.

→ ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has membership of **57 states spread over four continents**. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
 - The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in **Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco** on 25th September 1969 following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.
- The membership includes Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority (PA), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Syria (suspended), Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.
- In 1970, the first ever meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah which decided to establish a **permanent secretariat in Jeddah** headed by the organization's secretary general. Dr. Yousef Ahmed Al-Othaimeen is the 11th Secretary General who assumed the office in November 2016.
 - The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Charter laid down the objectives and principles of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States. Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states.
 - The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled across the world. The present Charter of the OIC was adopted by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar in 2008 to become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century.
 - The Organization has the singular honor to galvanize the Ummah into a unified body and have actively represented the Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims of the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving Member States. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and the Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and has strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against Muslims in all forms and manifestations.
 - The Member States of the OIC face many challenges in the 21st century and to address those challenges, the **Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit** held in Makkah in December 2005, laid down the blue print called the **Ten-Year Program of Action**. It successfully concluded with the close of 2015. A successor programme for the next decade (2016-2025) has since then been adopted.
- The new programme **OIC-2025 is anchored in the provisions of the OIC Charter and focuses on 18 priority areas** with 107 goals. The priority areas include issues of Peace and

Security, Palestine and Al-Quds, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-terrorism, Investment and Finance, Food Security, Science and Technology, Climate Change and Sustainability, Moderation, Culture and Interfaith Harmony, Empowerment of Women, Joint Islamic Humanitarian Action, Human Rights and Good Governance, among others.

- Among the OIC's **key bodies**: the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the General Secretariat, in addition to the Al-Quds Committee and three permanent committees concerned with science and technology, economy and trade, and information and culture. There are also specialized organs under the banner of the OIC including the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as subsidiary and affiliate organs that play a vital role in boosting cooperation in various fields among the OIC member states.

LOCATION, SPORTS AND PERSONALITIES

→ WORLD ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES 2022

- The 2022 World Athletics Championships was the **eighteenth edition** of the World Athletics Championships.
- It was held at **Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon**, United States in July 2022.
- After the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, World Athletics banned all Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials from participating at the championships.
- Olympic champion **Neeraj Chopra** scripted yet another history as he became only the second Indian and first male track and field athlete to win a medal in the World Championships by clinching silver in the javelin throw.
- Defending champion Anderson Peters of Grenada won gold with a best throw of 90.54m.

→ COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2022

- The **2022 Commonwealth Games**, officially known as the **XXII Commonwealth Games and commonly known as Birmingham 2022**, was an international multi-sport event for members of the Commonwealth of Nations took place in Birmingham, England from 28 July to 8 August 2022.
- The Games was the largest **ever held, with 72 participating nations**.
- Indian athletes competed for medals across 16 different sports at the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham.
- India won **61 medals at Birmingham 2022**.

Rank	Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Australia	67	57	54	178

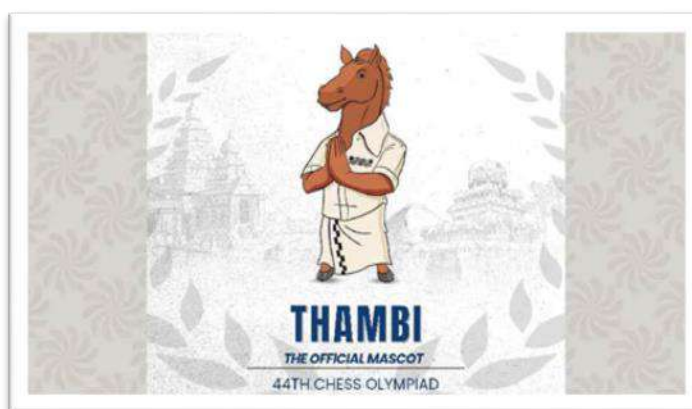
2	England	56	65	53	175
3	Canada	26	32	34	92
4	India	22	16	23	61
5	New Zealand	20	12	17	49

→ DEAFLYMPICS

- The Deaflympics also known as **Deaflympiad** (previously called World Games for the Deaf, and International Games for the Deaf) are a periodic series of multi-sport events sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at which Deaf athletes compete at an elite level.
- Unlike the athletes in other IOC-sanctioned **events (the Olympics, the Paralympics, and the Special Olympics)**, athletes cannot be guided by sounds (such as starting pistols, bullhorn commands or referee whistles).
- The games have been organized by the **Comité International des Sports des Sourds** (CISS, "The International Committee of Sports for the Deaf") since the first event in 1924.
- The Deaflympics are held every four years, and are the longest running multi-sport event in history after the Olympics.
- The first games, **held in Paris in 1924**, were the first ever international sporting event for athletes with a disability.
- The summer games this year was held in **Caxias do Sul, Brazil** between 1 May to 15 May 2022. It was supposed to be held in 2021 but held this year due to COVID.

→ 44TH CHESS OLYMPIAD

- The 44th Chess Olympiad was organised by the **International Chess Federation or World Chess Federation (FIDE)** in Chennai, India from July 28 to August 09, 2022.
- The event mascot, **Thambi**, the knight in white **veshti**, has been placed in important tourist locations to attract more buzz for the event.
- India hosted the Chess Olympiad for the first time. It consisted of open and women's tournaments.
- The total number of participants was 1,737, including 937 in the Open and 800 in the Women's event.
- Overall 188 teams were registered from 186 nations in the Open section and 162 from 160 nations in the Women's section.



- With the usual medal-winning nations — Russia and China — not in the mix, some first-timers could occupy the podium.
- The **team Uzbekistan** has won the **gold medal** in the Open section of the 44th Chess Olympiad which concluded.
- **Team Armenia won silver** while the India-2 team settled for bronze in Open Section. In the women's section, Ukraine won the gold medal.
- **Team Georgia won the silver**, while the **India-1 team won the bronze medal**.

→ TOUR DE FRANCE 2022

The 2022 Tour de France is the **109th edition** of the Tour de France.

- It started in **Copenhagen, Denmark, on 1 July** and will end with the final stage at Champs-Élysées, **Paris on 24 July**.
- The race will be followed by the first edition of the **Tour de France Femmes**, which will have its first stage on the final day of the Tour.
- The 2022 Tour de France Femmes, (officially Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift), will be the first edition of the Tour de France Femmes, **one of women's cycling's two grand tours**.
- The race is scheduled for 24 to 31 July 2022, and will be the 16th event in the 2022 UCI Women's World Tour.



→ WIMBLEDON 2022

- The Wimbledon Championships, commonly known simply as **Wimbledon**, is the **oldest tennis tournament** in the world and is widely regarded as the most prestigious.
- It has been held at the **All England Club in Wimbledon, London, since 1877** and is played on outdoor grass courts
- **Men:** Three-time defending champion **Novak Djokovic defeated Nick Kyrgios in the final**, to win the gentlemen's singles tennis title at the 2022 Wimbledon championships.
- It was his seventh Wimbledon title and 21st major singles title overall.
- Djokovic became the fifth man in the Open Era to record a streak of at least four consecutive titles at one major.
- **Women:** Elena Rybakina defeated Ons Jabeur (Tunisia) in the final to win the ladies' singles tennis title at the 2022 Wimbledon Championships.



- It was her maiden major singles title.
- Rybakina became the first Kazakhstani to win a major title, and the **third player representing an Asian nation** to win a major title after Li Na and Naomi Osaka.

➔ SWEDEN AND FINLAND

- **Finland and Sweden** have shown interest to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Finland:

- It has stayed out of such alliances because it always wanted to **maintain cordial relations with its neighbour, Russia**.
- For a long time, the idea of not joining NATO or getting too close to the West was a matter of survival for the Finns.
- However, the change in perception and an overwhelming support to join NATO came about following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Sweden:

- Unlike Finland, whose policy stance was a matter of survival, Sweden has been opposed to joining the organisation for ideological reasons.



➔ COLUMBIA

- **Gustavo Petro:** A former member of an urban guerilla outfit and later elected as Mayor of Bogota, made history by winning the second round run-off in the presidential election in Colombia, securing **50.4% of the vote** over his rival, a property tycoon, Rodolfo Hernandez's 47.3% last week.
- Mr. Petro's victory marks the first time that an **avowedly leftist politician** won the President's post in a country which has had a right wing/centrist establishment for decades.
- Petro's victory underlines an **ongoing shift of South American politics to the left**, which has seen leftist leaders secure victories in Peru, and in Chile and Honduras.



→ SNAKE ISLAND

- Situated **48km (30 miles) off the coast** of Ukraine, **Snake Island, or Zmiinyi**, was seized by Russia on the opening day of the full-scale invasion.
- The occupation of Snake Island is of **vital strategic importance** as it enables the control of approach waters to Ukraine's last three remaining commercial ports – including its main Black Sea **port of Odesa**, where a Russian blockade has prevented grain exports from one of the world's main suppliers.
- Recently, abandonment of Snake island is a **major reversal for Russia** in the battle for control of the Black Sea, and shows that – despite Russian gains elsewhere – the war is far from over.



→ BALI, INDONESIA

- Bali is a province of Indonesia and the westernmost of the **Lesser Sunda Islands**.
- East of Java and west of Lombok, the province includes the island of Bali and a few smaller neighbouring islands, notably Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan, and Nusa Ceningan.
- Bali, recently, hosted G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting



→ MICHELLE BACHELET

- On **September 1, 2018 Michelle Bachelet** assumed her functions as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
 - The **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** was established in 1993 and Ms. Bachelet was the seventh Commissioner.
 - **Ms. Bachelet was elected President of Chile** on two occasions (2006 – 2010 and 2014 – 2018). She was the first female president of Chile. She served as Health Minister (2000-2002) as well as Chile's and Latin America's first female Defense Minister (2002 – 2004).
 - During **her presidential tenures, she promoted the rights of all** but particularly those of the most vulnerable.
- Among her many achievements, education and tax reforms, as well as the creation of the National Institute for Human Rights and the Museum of Memory and Human Rights stand out, as do the establishment of the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, the adoption of



quotas to increase women's political participation, and the approval of Civil Union Act legislation, granting rights to same sex couples and thus, advancing LGBT rights.

- Since the early 1990s, Ms. Bachelet has worked closely with many international organizations. In 2010 she chaired the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group, a joint International Labor Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO) initiative, which sought to promote social policies to stimulate economic growth and social cohesion.
- **In 2011, she was named the first Director of UN Women**, an organization dedicated to fighting for the rights of women and girls internationally.]
- She pledged to be a **Gender Champion**, committing to advance gender equality in OHCHR and in international fora.
- After finishing her second term in March 2018, she was named **Chair of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health**, an alliance of more than 1000 organizations in 192 countries from the sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health communities. As Co-Chair of the High-Level Steering Group for Every Woman Every Child, Ms. Bachelet launched **Every Woman Every Child Latin America** and the Caribbean, the first platform for tailored, regional implementation of the EWEC Global Strategy.
- Michelle Bachelet has a Medical Degree in Surgery, with a specialization in Paediatrics and Public Health. She also studied military strategy at Chile's National Academy of Strategy and Policy and at the Inter-American Defence College in the United States.

➔ US OPEN 2022



- The 2022 US Open was the **142nd edition of tennis' US Open** and the fourth and final tennis major (Grand Slam event) of the year.
- It was held on outdoor hard courts at the **USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center** in New York City.
- **Carlos Alcaraz** and **Iga Świątek** won the men's and women's singles titles, respectively. They became the first players, both born in the 2000s, to win the tournament's singles titles.
- Carlos Alcaraz Garfia (born 5 May 2003) is a **Spanish professional tennis player**. He is currently ranked as the world No. 1 singles player by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP).
- Iga Świątek is a Polish professional tennis player. She is currently ranked world No. 1 by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA).
- Świątek is a three-time major singles champion, having won the French Open in 2020 and 2022 and the US Open in 2022.

- The US Open **starts on the last Monday of August** and continues for two weeks, with the middle weekend coinciding with the US Labor Day holiday.
- Originally known as the **U.S. National Championship**, for which men's singles and men's doubles were first played in **August 1881**.
- It is the **only Grand Slam that was not affected** by cancellation of World War I and World War II, or get interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- In 1970, the **US Open became the first Grand Slam tournament to use a tiebreaker** to decide a set that reached a 6–6 score in games.
- In 1973, the **US Open became the first Grand Slam tournament to award equal prize money** to men and women

➔ ATP MEN'S RANKINGS

- The Pepperstone ATP rankings are the merit-based method used by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) for determining the **qualification for entry as well as the seeding of players** in all singles and doubles tournaments.
- The **first rankings for singles were published on 23 August 1973** while the doubles players were ranked for the **first time on 1 March 1976**.
- **Ranking points are awarded according to the stage of tournament reached**, and the **prestige** of the tournament, with the four Grand Slam tournaments awarding the most points.
- The **rankings are updated every Monday**, and points are dropped 52 weeks after being awarded (with the exception of the ATP Finals, from which points are dropped on the Monday following the last ATP Tour event of the following year).

➔ WTA WOMEN'S RANKINGS

- The WTA rankings are the ratings defined by the Women's Tennis Association, introduced in **November 1975**.

➔ SOLOMON ISLANDS

- Solomon Islands in the South Pacific has reached a deal with China which outlines an unprecedented level of security cooperation. This is the first deal of its kind for Beijing in the region.
- The confirmation of the move has raised alarms in US and Australia, which have extensive stakes in the South Pacific.



- The document is titled ‘**Framework Agreement between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of Solomon Islands on Security Cooperation**’
- The document explicitly enables Beijing to send its “police, armed police, military personnel and other law enforcement and armed forces” to the islands on the latter government’s request, or if the former sees that the safety of its projects and personnel in the islands are at risk.
- The document also provides for China’s naval vessels to utilise the islands for logistics support. There have been speculations in the wake of this revelation that China might be building its next overseas naval base in Solomon Islands after Djibouti, which was also incidentally referred to as a logistics support base.

→ DONBAS REPUBLICS

- The two self-proclaimed rebel republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, whose independence Russia recognised, are situated in the rust belt in eastern Ukraine, and escaped Kyiv’s control in 2014.

About the region

- Donetsk, surrounded by slag heaps, is the main city in the mining basin of Donbas.
- Once named **Stalino**, it is a gritty industrial hub dominated by mining.
- It is also one of the main steel-producing centres of Ukraine.
- It has two million inhabitants.
- **Luhansk, formerly Voroshilovgrad**, is also an industrial city of 1.5 million inhabitants.
- They are grouped in the basin, on the border with Russia on the northern banks of the Black Sea — **home to vast coal reserves**.



→ CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

- China and Pakistan **signed a new agreement** on industrial cooperation as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan during Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to Beijing.
- The industrial cooperation agreement is a key part of what is being called “**phase two**” of CPEC.
- The **first phase** primarily involved **Chinese investments in energy projects**



as well as road infrastructure.

- The agreement between Pakistan's Board of Investment and the NDRC is aimed at boosting Chinese investment in Pakistan as well as transferring Chinese industrial capacity.
- China has described CPEC as a "flagship project" of the Belt and Road Initiative. The corridor links **Xinjiang with Gwadar**, and also passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) where China is investing in a number of projects.

→ BELARUS



- Russia and Belarus launched joint military drills that heightened tensions and added urgency to diplomatic efforts by NATO leaders to avert a feared invasion of Ukraine.

→ SOLOMON ISLANDS

- The U.S. says it will open an embassy in the Solomon Islands.
- It laid out a plan to increase its influence in the **South Pacific nation** before China becomes strongly embedded.
- The US State Department said Solomon Islanders cherished their history with Americans on the battlefields of **World War II**, but that the U.S. was in danger of losing its preferential ties as China "aggressively seeks to engage" elite politicians and business people in the Solomon Islands.



→ DONETSK AND LUHANSK

- Donetsk and Luhansk are two states located in eastern Ukraine, which share a border with Russia.
- Within these two states are two separatist territories known as the **Donetsk People's Republic (DPR)** and **Luhansk People's Republic (LPR)**, which are run by Russian and Russian-backed separatists.
- This entire region, which includes Donetsk, Luhansk and their respective separatist territories, is generally referred to as the '**Donbas**' region.
- Russia has long asserted that since these are primarily Russian-speaking territories, they need to be protected from "Ukrainian nationalism".



→ GOLAN TRUCE LINE

- Israel bombarded a Syrian town near the armistice line on the **Golan Heights** with surface-to-surface missiles, state media reported, without any immediate mention of casualties.
- It is the third time this month that Israel has hit targets inside Syria as it keeps up a bombing campaign against pro-Iranian forces supporting the Damascus government in Syria's more than decade-old civil war.



→ NORWAY

- The first Taliban delegation to visit Europe since returning to power in Afghanistan began talks in Oslo with Afghan civil society members focused on human rights, ahead of highly-anticipated meetings with Western officials.
- The discussions, which are being facilitated by Norway and are to focus on human rights and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, are taking place behind closed doors on the outskirts of Oslo.



→ SYRIA

- Fighting raged between ISIL (ISIS) and Kurdish forces in Syria after attackers stormed a prison housing members of the armed group in violence that has killed more than 70 people so far.
- The assault on the Ghwayran prison in the northern city of Hasakah is one of ISIL's most significant since its "caliphate" was declared defeated in Syria nearly three years ago.



→ OKINAWA

- **Okinawa**, a southwestern group of islands that houses most of the 55,000 U.S. troops, is among the three prefectures where new restrictions to curb the spread of COVID infections were implemented.
- Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that Japan and the U.S. have reached "a basic agreement" on banning the U.S. military from leaving its base grounds, amid growing worries about a sharp rise in coronavirus cases.
- Mr. Kishida said American soldiers will stay on base "except when absolutely necessary," which presumably means for emergencies or other security reasons.



→ KAZAKHSTAN

- The office of Kazakhstan's president said that about 5,800 people were detained by police during protests that developed into violence and prompted a Russia-led military alliance to send troops to the country.



→ PERU

- Peru declared an environmental emergency as an oil spill caused by freak waves from a volcanic eruption in the South Pacific keeps spreading.
- In Peru, the oil spill near Lima has fouled beaches, killed birds and harmed the fishing and tourism industries.
- The government is demanding payment of damages from the Spanish energy giant **Repsol** which owns the refinery.



→ NICARAGUA

Nicaragua broke its longstanding diplomatic ties with Taiwan, switching its allegiance to China in a recognition of the **Chinese Communist party's One China policy** and reducing Taipei's dwindling pool of international allies.



→ NEW CALEDONIA

- Voters in the French island territory of New Caledonia chose overwhelmingly to stay part of France, in a referendum boycotted by pro-independence forces and closely watched around the South Pacific.
- The vote was the third and last in a decades-long decolonization process that stemmed from violence in 1988, which led to the French government handing New Caledonia broad autonomy under the **Noumea Agreement**.



→ BARBADOS

- The Caribbean island nation of Barbados has turned a page in history, declaring itself a republic, a move that coincides with the 55th anniversary of its independence from Britain.
- The country of 3,00,000 citizens **ceases to be a constitutional monarchy** and will not pledge allegiance to the Queen.
- This is the first time since the 1970s that a Caribbean state has become a republic.



→ PALK STRAIT

Incessant bottom trawling along the coast of Tamil Nadu over the years has meant that the fishermen are drawn to the relatively resource-rich Sri Lankan waters. This pushes them into a cycle of arrest, remand, release, or in some unfortunate cases, violence or death at sea.

India and Sri Lanka have held many rounds of bilateral talks in the last decade between government officials as well as fisher leaders. The outcomes have mostly ranged from deadlocks, with Tamil Nadu refusing to give up bottom trawling, to template responses from the governments, with India seeking a “humanitarian response” from Sri Lanka.



→ MOZAMBIQUE

India handed over two **Fast Interceptor Craft (FIC)** and other self defence equipment to Mozambique to assist in its capacity building as the Central African nation battles growing terror threats.

Naval ship INS Kesari entered **Port of Maputo in Mozambique** to deliver 500 tonnes of food aid as well as the defence equipment, under the eight edition of **Mission Sagar** by the Navy to assist friendly foreign countries in the region.

These deployments were conducted in solidarity with India's extended **Maritime Neighbourhood** and highlights the importance accorded by India to these



special relationships.

➔ LATAKIA PORT

An Israeli air strike hit **Syria's Latakia port**, sparking a fire that lit up the **Mediterranean seafront** in the second such attack on the key cargo hub in December.

Since the outbreak of **Syria's civil war in 2011**, Israel has routinely carried out air strikes on its strife-torn neighbour, mostly targeting Syrian government troops as well as allied **Iran-backed forces and Hezbollah fighters**.

But it is only the second time it has hit the port of Latakia, in the heartland of President Bashar al-Assad's minority **Alawite community**.



➔ TIBET

India urged to spell out 'firm policy' on Tibetan community

With growing concerns in India about China's transgressions at the Line of Actual Control and reports of the settlement of villages along it, the leadership of the Tibetan community in exile says it is concerned that China might be "pushing" more Tibetans out to the border areas while using the opportunity to settle more mainland Chinese in Tibetan cities.



➔ IRAQ



Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi survived an assassination attempt with armed drones that targeted his residence.

→ JAFFNA



Nearly two years after its construction, the India-funded Jaffna Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka's Northern Province awaits inauguration, amid persisting uncertainty over who will run the facility.

→ TAWANG



India, China patrols face off in Tawang

Tawang in Arunachal has traditionally been a source of friction between India and China. In the 1962 war, China had captured Tawang though Chinese troops had retreated later

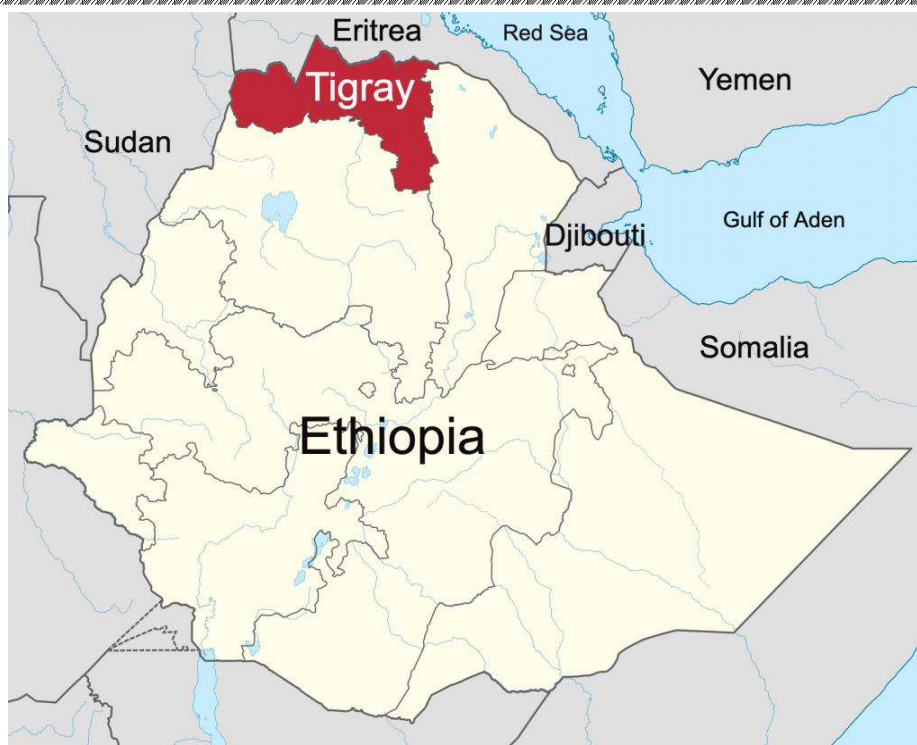
→ RAKHINE AND BHASAN CHAR



Rohingya refugees to be sent to island

Bangladesh wants to send more than 80,000 Rohingya refugees to a remote island of Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal after sealing an agreement for the United Nations to provide help.

→ TIGRAY



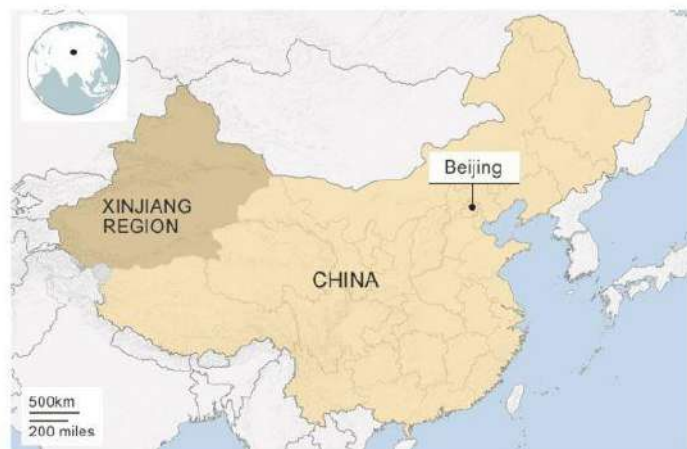
Ethiopian forces strike Tigray rebels

→ XINJIANG

43 countries call on China at UN to respect Uighur rights

There are about 12 million Uighur, mostly Muslim, living in Xinjiang, which is officially known as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The Uighurs speak their own language, which is similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.



→ PALK STRAIT



A festering crisis in the Palk Strait

India conveyed a “strong protest” to Colombo after the death of the four fishermen, allegedly at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy.

→ LEBANON



Four Gulf countries withdraw diplomats from Lebanon
 These are UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain

→ TURKEY



UAE, Turkey leaders discuss bilateral ties

→ PANJSHIR VALLEY

Afghanistan Panjshir Valley



Map source: ©Mapcreator.io/©OSM

Monday Sept 6

- ▶ Taliban say they have captured the valley
- ▶ National Resistance Front (NRF) says it was present in "strategic positions," and the struggle "will continue"

Sunday Sept 5

- ▶ NRF acknowledged suffering major losses

The NRF is made up of anti-Taliban militia and former Afghan security forces

Includes local fighters loyal to Ahmad Massoud, son of a famous anti-Soviet and anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud

AFP

Taliban push deep into Panjshir Valley

→ GUINEA

Guinea in turmoil: soldiers say govt. dissolved, borders closed



→ TAIWAN

China sends fighter jets towards Taiwan



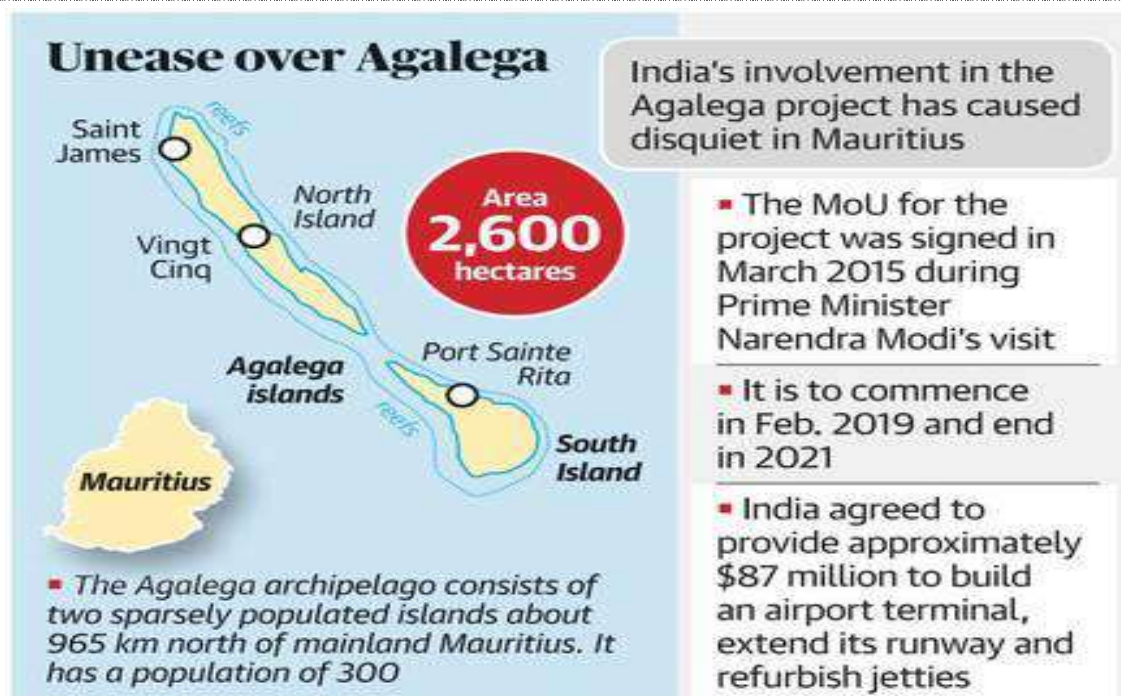
→ GOGRA AND HOT SPRINGS



Both of these are close to the **Chang Chenmo river** in the **Galwan sub-sector** of the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

The area is north of the Karakoram Range of mountains, which lies north of the **Pangong Tso lake**, and south east of Galwan Valley, which became a major flashpoint and a violent faceoff in June 2020 had left 20 Indian and at least four Chinese troops dead.

→ AGALEGA ISLANDS



→ POLAND



Israel condemned Poland's approval of a law that restricts the rights of Holocaust survivors or their descendants to reclaim property seized by the country's former communist regime and announced it was recalling its top diplomat in protest.

The law itself says nothing about the Holocaust or Second World War. Instead it establishes that any administrative decision issued 30 years ago or more can no longer be challenged, meaning

that property owners who had their homes or business seized in the communist era can no longer get compensation.

→ CHAGOS ISLANDS

Mauritius has moved a symbolic step closer to wresting control of the Chagos Islands, in the Indian Ocean, from the UK.

The **Universal Postal Union (UPU)**, a UN agency in charge of the world's postal policies, voted to block the use of UK stamps from the remote archipelago.

All post from the Chagos Islands must now bear stamps from Mauritius.

The UK says it will not cede control until the islands are no longer needed for security purposes.

The US currently uses the largest of the islands - **Diego Garcia** - for a military air base on what the UK describes as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

Three powerful UN bodies have already ruled that the archipelago, which has a population of about 3,000, is part of Britain's old empire and should be handed to Mauritius immediately.



→ VIETNAM



→ ARMENIA



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he would request the deployment of Russian border guards along his country's frontier with Azerbaijan to prevent further escalation after new clashes.

→ WEST AFRICA



➔ SPRATLY ISLANDS

- China claims about 90% of the South China Sea, including the archipelago of islands, reefs and atolls known as the Spratlys (red line at the picture: 'nine-dash line').
- Vietnam has the second most expansive claim. It asserts sovereignty over the entirety of the Paracel and Spratly Islands, the most significant land features in the South China Sea.
- Malaysia claims sovereignty over a cluster of features in the Spratlys close to its coast, and Brunei claims two Spratly features.
- The Philippines claim the western section of the Spratlys (the Kalayaan Island Group).

➔ PARACEL ISLANDS

- The Paracel Islands lie about 250 miles (400 km) east of central Vietnam and about 220 miles (350 km) southeast of Hainan Island, China. Apart from a few isolated, outlying islands (Triton in the south, Lincoln in the east), they are divided into the Amphitrite group in the northeast and the Crescent group in the west.
- Woody Island, occupied by China since 1956, is undergoing a major expansion of its runway and airport facilities: a 2,400-meter airstrip has been completely replaced with a new concrete runway measuring 2,920 meters in length, accompanied by a new taxiway, expanded runway aprons and adjacent large buildings under construction. Additional land reclamation is also underway on Woody Island, called Yongxing Dao in Chinese and Đảo Phú Lâm in Vietnamese.
- Eighty kilometers southwest of Woody, on Duncan Island (seized by China from Vietnam in 1974) satellite images show landfill that has increased the size of the island by approximately 50 percent since April 2014. Known as Chenhang Dao in Chinese and Đảo Quang Hòa in Vietnamese, the island houses a military garrison, four radar domes, a concrete manufacturing plant, and a port that has recently been expanded via dredging and coral cutting. New buildings have also appeared on nearby Drummond Island, occupied by China.

➔ SCARBOROUGH REEF/SHOAL

- China claims sovereign control over Scarborough Reef, 'indisputably' established by historic rights. China's historic claims significantly predate the current international law structures that govern questions of maritime boundary delimitation. The **1992 Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone** reaffirmed China's claim to sovereignty over the Zhongsha Islands, including Huangyan Island (Scarborough Reef). However, China has not historically exercised 'effective occupation and control' over the reef.
- The **Philippines** claim that the Scarborough Shoal lies within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as calculated under UNLOS. In 2013, the Philippine Government turned to the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)** in The Hague, seeking to declare Chinese territorial claims in its EEZ invalid. Philippines filed its claim against Beijing's recent land grabbing and subsequent land reclamation activities in Scarborough Shoal and the Spratly Islands (claimed by both China and the Philippines) in the South China Sea.

- China refuses to recognise the authority of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague. China has stated: “It will neither accept nor participate in the arbitration unilaterally initiated by the Philippines.” However, the PCA ruled that: “Both the Philippines and China are parties to the convention [UNCLOS] and bound by its provisions on the settlement of disputes.” It also found that China’s refusal to participate did not deprive the court of jurisdiction and that the Philippines’ decision to commence arbitration unilaterally was not an abuse of the convention’s dispute settlement procedures.

➔ NATUNA ISLANDS

China - Indonesia

- In 2015, China shocked the countries in the region by issuing a first-ever public statement on the Natuna Islands. According to Hong Lei, China’s Foreign Ministry, “The Indonesian side has no territorial claim to China’s [Spratly Islands]. The Chinese side has no objection to Indonesia’s sovereignty over the Natuna Islands.” Although the Natuna Islands are outside of China’s self-designated “Nine-Dash-Line” that lays claim to virtually all of the South China Sea, Natuna’s 200-miles exclusive economic zone (EEZ) protrudes into the area defined by the Nine-Dash-Line.
- The Indonesian government does not currently recognize China’s so-called “Nine-Dash Line” (which overlaps with that EEZ) and so does not consider itself a claimant in any South China Sea-related maritime dispute. However, as the de facto leader and arbitrator among Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and with various member states locked in disputed territorial claims with Beijing, and with Chinese naval vessels penetrating Indonesian territorial waters around the Natuna Islands, Jakarta is essentially being forced to act.
- Indonesia is considering using drones and submarines to strengthen its grip over the gas-rich waters around the Natuna Islands in response to China’s growing military presence in the South China Sea.

➔ ADDU ATOLL

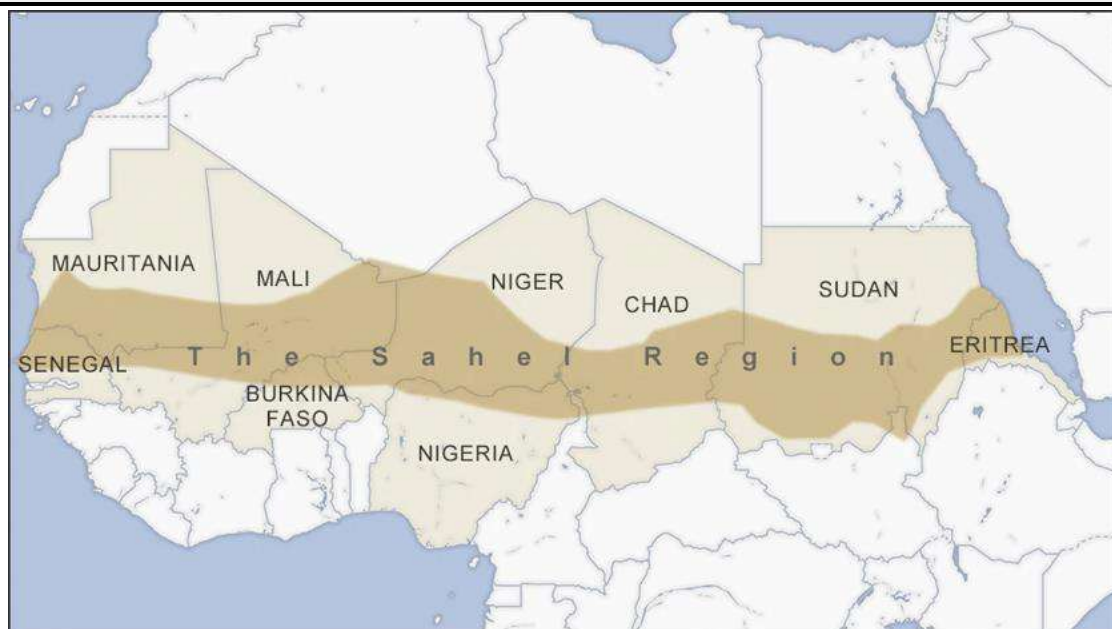
- The Maldives has **made no decision** on opening an Indian consulate in its southern Addu Atoll.
- Addu Atoll, also known as **Seenu Atoll**, is the southernmost atoll of the Maldives. Addu Atoll, together with Fuvahmulah, located 40 km north of Addu Atoll, extend the Maldives into the Southern Hemisphere. Addu Atoll is located 540 km south of Malé, the country's capital. Administratively, Addu Atoll is the location of Addu City, one of the three cities of the Maldives.
- Apart from its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Addu is the second largest city in the Indian Ocean archipelago, home to over 30,000 people. Indian government sources



familiar with the proposal said the rationale for the consulate was to help Addu residents with speedy visa services. Currently, those applying for an Indian visa have to travel to capital Male — some 550 km and a 1.5-hour flight away — to the Embassy's consular section. India remains one of the most popular destinations for Maldivian travellers, especially those pursuing higher education or seeking medical attention. Even after the pandemic struck, at least 8,000 visas were issued to Maldivians on medical and educational grounds, according to official sources.

→ SAHEL

- The massacre of people in a border village in **Burkina Faso** recently is a grim reminder of the threat the Sahel region faces from terrorism.
- Burkinabe authorities have named the **Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)**, which has carried out hundreds of terror strikes in recent years.
- Four main terror outfits operate in the region — **the ISGS, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin**, the local al-Qaeda branch in Mali, and **Boko Haram**.



- When the IS-militant infrastructure was destroyed in Iraq and Syria, their foot soldiers fled to Africa, regrouping themselves in the region.
- Sahel, Arabic Sāḥil, is semiarid region of western and north-central Africa extending from Senegal eastward to Sudan. It forms a **transitional zone between the arid Sahara (desert) to the north and the belt of humid savannas to the south**.
- The Sahel stretches from the Atlantic Ocean eastward through northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, the great bend of the Niger River in Mali, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), southern Niger, northeastern Nigeria, south-central Chad, and into Sudan.

➔ BLACK SEA

- Black Sea is large inland sea situated at the southeastern extremity of Europe.
- It is **bordered** by Ukraine to the north, Russia to the northeast, Georgia to the east, Turkey to the south, and Bulgaria and Romania to the west.
- The roughly oval-shaped Black Sea occupies a large basin strategically situated at the southeastern extremity of Europe but connected to the distant waters of the Atlantic Ocean by the **Bosporus (which emerges from the sea's southwestern corner), the Sea of Marmara, the Dardanelles, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.**
- The Crimean Peninsula thrusts into the Black Sea from the north, and just to its east the narrow **Kerch Strait** links the sea to the smaller **Sea of Azov**. The Black Sea coastline is otherwise fairly regular.
- The maximum east-west extent of the sea is about 730 miles (1,175 km), and the shortest distance between the tip of Crimea and Cape Kerempe to the south is about 160 miles (260 km). The surface area, excluding the Sea of Marmara but including the Sea of Azov, is about 178,000 square miles (461,000 square km); the Black Sea proper occupies about 163,000 square miles (422,000 square km). A maximum depth of more than 7,250 feet (2,210 metres) is reached in the south-central sector of the sea.



➔ 38th PARALLEL NORTH

- 38th Parallel North roughly demarcates **North Korea** and **South Korea**.
- The line was chosen by U.S. military planners at the **Potsdam Conference** (July 1945) near the end of World War II as an army boundary, north of which the U.S.S.R. was to accept the

surrender of the Japanese forces in Korea and south of which the Americans were to accept the Japanese surrender.

- The line was **intended as a temporary division** of the country, but the onset of the Cold War led to the establishment of a separate **U.S.-oriented regime in South Korea under Syngman Rhee** and a communist regime in **North Korea under Kim Il-sung**.
- After the outbreak of the Korean War between North and South Korea in June 1950, United Nations (UN) forces, which under U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur had come to the aid of the South, moved north of the 38th parallel in an attempt to occupy North Korea.
- With the intervention of Chinese troops in support of the North, the war came to a stalemate roughly along that parallel.
- The cease-fire line, fixed at the time of the armistice agreement, gave South Korea possession of an eastern mountainous area north of the parallel, which was the major battlefield when the demarcation line was fixed.
- Likewise, North Korea was given a roughly triangular portion of territory south of the 38th parallel and west of longitude 127° E that includes the city of Kaesŏng.



- A **demilitarized zone (DMZ)** was created by pulling back the respective forces 1.2 miles (2 km) along each side of the boundary. It runs for about 150 miles (240 km) across the peninsula, from the mouth of the Han River on the west coast to a little south of the North Korean town of Kosŏng on the east coast.
- Located within the DMZ is the “**truce village**” of **P’anmunjŏm**, about 5 miles (8 km) east of Kaesŏng. It was the site of peace discussions during the Korean War and has since been the location of various conferences over issues related to North and South Korea, their allies, and the UN.

SECURITY ISSUES

➔ OPCW

- Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), international organization **established by the Chemical Weapons Convention (adopted 1992, entered into force 1997)** to implement and enforce the terms of the international treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, or transfer of chemical weapons by signatory states.
- The OPCW was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2013**.
- When the convention entered into force in 1997, the OPCW was formally established as an autonomous and independent organization working toward a world free of chemical weapons. According to the OPCW website, the Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the “development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer, or use of chemical weapons” and has four key provisions:

- Destroying all existing chemical weapons under international verification by the OPCW;
 - Monitoring the chemical industry to prevent new weapons from re-emerging;
 - Providing assistance and protection to members of the convention against chemical threats; and
 - Fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.
- Based in The Hague, Netherlands, 192 Members States have joined the OPCW, representing about 98% of the world’s population, as well as 98% of the global chemical industry.
- The OPCW has an official working relationship with the United Nations to foster cooperation on matters of mutual concern.
- The OPCW’s work involves a number of activities, including supporting and verifying the destruction of chemical weapons, inspecting facilities that formerly produced chemical weapons, and investigating allegations of the use of chemical weapons.
- The OPCW also plays an important role in strengthening international security by creating tools and methods for defining and detecting chemical weapon agents, as well as monitoring emerging technologies of potential concern.
- Since the creation of the OPCW more than two decades ago, approximately 96% of state-declared chemical weapon stockpiles around the world have been destroyed.

→ SIR CREEK DISPUTE

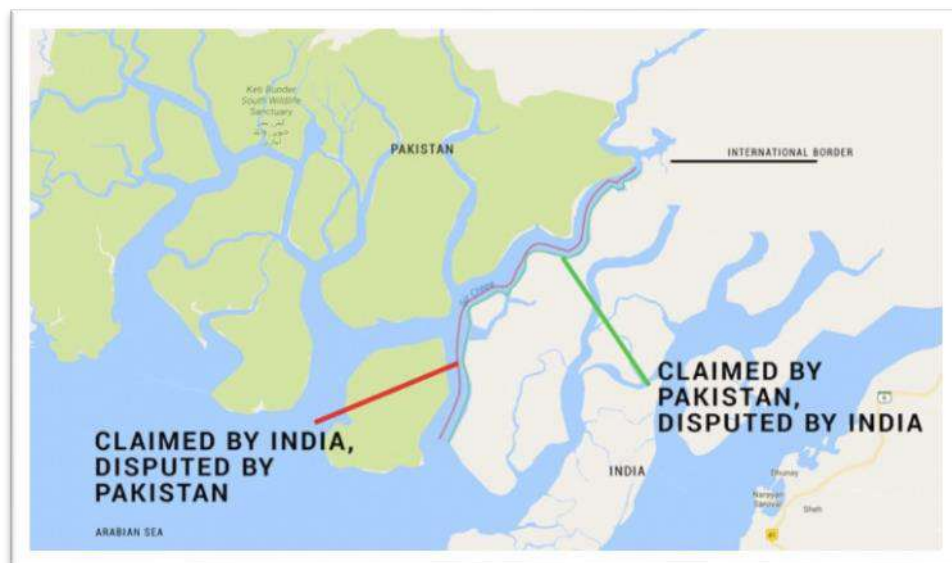
- Sir Creek is a **96-km strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan** in the Rann of Kutch marshlands. Originally named Ban Ganga, Sir Creek is named after a British representative.
- The Creek opens up in the Arabian Sea and roughly divides the Kutch region of Gujarat from the Sindh Province of Pakistan.

WHAT'S THE DISPUTE?

- The dispute lies in the interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh. Before India's independence, the provincial region was a part of the Bombay Presidency of British India.
- But after India's independence in 1947, Sindh became a part of Pakistan while Kutch remained a part of India.
- Pakistan claims the entire creek as per the Bombay Government Resolution of 1914 signed between then the Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch.
- The resolution, which demarcated the boundaries between the two territories, included the creek as part of Sindh, thus setting the boundary as the eastern flank of the creek popularly known as **Green Line**.
- But India claims that the boundary lies mid-channel as depicted in another map drawn in 1925, and implemented by the installation of mid-channel pillars back in 1924.

THE GENESIS

- The marshland of Sir Creek first became disputed in the early 20th century when the Rao of Kutch and the Chief Commissioner of Sindh Province of British India, due to different perceptions of the boundaries, laid claims over the creek.



- The case was taken up by then Government of Bombay, which conducted a survey and mandated its verdict in 1914.
- This verdict has two contradictory paragraphs, which make the India and Pakistan contenders on the same issue.

- **Paragraph 9** of this verdict states that the boundary between Kutch and Sindh lies 'to the east of the Creek,' (Green Line) which effectively implied that the creek belonged to Sindh and, therefore, to Pakistan.

- On the other hand, **Paragraph 10** states that since Sir Creek is navigable most of the year.
- According to **international law and the Thalweg principle**, a boundary can only be fixed in the middle of the navigable channel, which meant that it has be divided between Sindh and Kutch, and thereby India and Pakistan.
- India has used this para to consistently argue that the boundary needs to be fixed in the middle of the creek.
- Pakistan, however, claims that Sir Creek isn't navigable but India claims that since it's navigable in high tide, the boundary should be drawn from the mid channel.

WHAT'S THE IMPORTANCE OF SIR CREEK?

- Apart from the strategic location, Sir Creek's core importance is fishing resources. Sir Creek is considered to be **among the largest fishing grounds in Asia**.
- Another vital reason for two countries locking horns over this creek is the possible presence of great oil and gas concentration under the sea, which are currently unexploited thanks to the impending deadlock on the issue.

UNCLOS SUPPORTS INDIA'S STAND

- If Thalweg principle is to be upheld, Pakistan would lose a considerable portion of the territory that was historically part of the province of Sindh.
- Acceding to India's stance would mean shifting of the land/sea terminus point several kilometres to the detriment of Pakistan, leading in turn to a loss of several thousand square kilometres of its Exclusive Economic Zone under the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

WAR IN 1965 AND TRIBUNAL

- After the 1965 war, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson successfully persuaded both countries to end hostilities and set up a tribunal to resolve the dispute.
- The verdict of the tribunal came in 1968 which saw Pakistan getting 10% of its claim of 9,000 km (3,500 sq. miles).
- Since 1969, 12 rounds of talks have been held over the issue of Sir Creek, but both sides have denied reaching any solution.
- The region fell amid tensions in 1999 after the Pakistan Navy shot down a MiG-21 fighter plane, but the last rounds of talks were held in 2012. Since then it's been status quo.

→ INTERPOL

- International Criminal Police Organization is an inter-governmental organization. It has 194 member countries, and it help polices in all of them to work together to make the world a safer place.
- To do this, it enables them to share and access data on crimes and criminals, and offers a range of technical and operational support.
- The General Secretariat coordinates day-to-day activities to fight a range of crimes. Run by the Secretary General, it is staffed by both police and civilians and comprises a headquarters in Lyon, a global complex for innovation in Singapore and several satellite offices in different regions.

- In each country, an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) provides the central point of contact for the General Secretariat and other NCBs. An NCB is run by national police officials and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing. In India, the NCB is CBI.
- The General Assembly is the governing body and it brings all countries together once a year to take decisions.
- **Headquarters:** Lyon, France

→ AUSTRALIA GROUP

- The Australia Group is an informal arrangement which aims to allow exporting countries to minimise the risk of assisting in **chemical and biological weapon (CBW) proliferation**.
- The annual meetings of AG are held in Paris, France.
- The **principal objective** of Australia Group participants' is to use licensing measures to ensure that exports of certain chemicals, biological agents, and dual-use chemical and biological manufacturing facilities and equipment, do not contribute to the spread of CBW.
- Participants also observe strict adherence to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).
- Thus all states participating in the Australia Group are parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)
- A revitalised Indian maritime grand strategy will certainly provide New Delhi a lot more space for manoeuvre in the region and message Beijing that its Himalayan adventure could become costly for it.
- India became member in 2018.

→ WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT

- The agreement to establish the Wassenaar Arrangement was reached in 1995, and the Wassenaar Arrangement became operational after the adoption of the Initial Elements in 1996.
- The Initial Elements establish the foundations of the 1995 Wassenaar Arrangement agreement and states its purpose, scope and modalities.
- It also constitutes the basic mechanism of information exchange on transfers of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement has been established in order to contribute to regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.
- It intends to complement and reinforce the other export control regimes for weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and uses export controls as a means to combat terrorism.
- India became member in 2017.

→ GALWAN VALLEY

- There is a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in the no-patrolling zone at Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh.
- The valley refers to the land that sits between steep mountains that buffet the **Galwan River**.
- The river has its source in **Aksai Chin**, on China's side of the LAC, and it flows from the east to Ladakh, where it meets the **Shyok river** on India's side of the LAC.
- The valley is strategically located between Ladakh in the west and Aksai Chin in the east, which is currently controlled by China as part of its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
- At its western end are the Shyok river and the **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road**.
- Its eastern mouth lies not far from China's vital Xinjiang Tibet road, now called the G219 highway.



WHERE DOES THE LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL LIE?

- The LAC lies east of the **confluence of the Galwan and Shyok rivers in the valley**, up to which both India and China have been patrolling in recent years.
- However, China has claimed the entire valley lies on its side of the LAC.
- China has been objecting to India's road construction activities at the western end of the valley, in the area between the Galwan-Shyok confluence and the LAC.
- China is saying the entire valley is on its side of the LAC, which pegs the line further west near the Shyok river. India has rejected the claim as "exaggerated and untenable".

→ ICAO

- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) formed in **1947** is a **specialized and funding agency of the United Nations**.
- It changes the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.
- Its headquarters is located in the Quartier International of Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- The ICAO Council adopts standards and recommended practices concerning air navigation, its infrastructure, flight inspection, prevention of unlawful interference, and facilitation of border-crossing procedures for international civil aviation.
- ICAO defines the protocols for air accident investigation that are followed by transport safety authorities in countries signatory to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation.

What does ICAO manage today? There are a variety of different areas that ICAO regulates, that without them, international travel would be incredibly complicated to do.

- ICAO determines the **infrastructure for aviation**, from communication rules, navigation, air traffic management (such as speaking in English), as well as standards for passports.
- They also manage the **measure units in aviation**, such as units of pressure, temperature, altitude, and more, so all aircraft and operations are in sync no matter what country you are in.
- ICAO also chooses **how big an airport needs to be to take particular aircraft**. There are six levels of airports. The smallest, A, can only handle small prop-planes, and the biggest, F, can take 747s and A380s.
- ICAO issues **airport codes to new and existing airports**. IATA, another organization, also supplies codes, but this is only for airports that operate airline services. ICAO is for all airstrips, big or small.
- ICAO issues **three-letter airline codes** use for radio designations. While these are sometimes similar to the IATA two-letter codes you see on a flight number (QF001, for example, for Qantas), they can be very different when it comes to radio transmissions.
- ICAO is also **helping the aviation industry face climate change**. They are bringing together members and proposing various solutions such as different fuels to carbon offset scenes.

→ CAATSA

- The **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)** is a United States Federal Law that has imposed sanctions against **Iran, Russia and North Korea**. This act **prevents trade partners** of the United States in entering into bilateral contracts with these three nations.
- The bill was passed on **27 July 2017**.

BACKGROUND OF CAATSA

- The **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act** came against the backdrop of three events that would have serious implications regarding geopolitics. They are as follows:

1. **Iran's Nuclear Missiles Program:** The United States Government believed that any progress in Iran's nuclear missile program would further destabilize the Middle-East as Iran has repeatedly made threats against Israel, a key NATO and United States ally. The CAATSA gives authority to the President of the United States to impose sanctions against any party involved in the sale and transfer of military technology to Iran.
2. **Curbing Russian influence:** The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and allegations of interventions in the US polls of 2016 was the catalyst for the CAATSA against Russia. Under the act sanctions can be imposed on Russia should the state or private individuals be found involved in activities such as cybersecurity, crude oil projects, financial institutions, corruption, human rights abuses etc.
3. **North Korea and weapons of mass destruction:** North Korea has a nuclear weapons military program and as of 2020 it's estimated missile arsenal includes 30-40 warheads with

enough fissile materials to produce 6-7 missiles per year. North Korea has made repeated threats against its South Korea repeatedly and also against the United States.

- Previous administrations before had put sanctions against the North Korean dictatorship. But what makes the CAATSA different is that the bill modifies and increases the President's authority to impose sanctions on persons in violation of certain United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding North Korea along with a wide range of other economic sanctions that can cripple the already fledgling North Korean economy.

→ ASSAM-MEGHALAYA BOUNDARY DISPUTE

- Assam and Meghalaya share an 885-km-long border. As of now, there are 12 points of dispute along their borders.
- The Assam-Meghalaya border dispute are the areas of **Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retacherra.**
- Meghalaya was carved out of Assam under the **Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971**, a law that it challenged, leading to disputes.

MAJOR POINT OF CONTENTION

- A major point of contention between Assam and Meghalaya is the district of **Langpih in West Garo Hills bordering the Kamrup district of Assam.**



- Langpih was part of the Kamrup district during the British colonial period but post-Independence, it became part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya.
- Assam considers it to be part of the **Mikir Hills in Assam.**
- Meghalaya has questioned Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills -**now Karbi Anglong region** - being part of Assam. Meghalaya says these were parts of **erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.**

EFFORTS TO RESOLVE DISPUTES

- Both Assam and Meghalaya have **constituted border dispute settlement committees.**
- It has been decided to set up **two regional committees to resolve the border disputes** in a phased manner and five aspects will be considered while resolving the border dispute.
- They are historical facts, ethnicity, administrative convenience, mood and sentiments of the people concerned and the contiguity of the land.

- Six sites are in consideration in the first phase. These are Tarabari, Gijang, Hahim, Baklapara, Khanapara-Pilingkata and Ratacherra.
- These disputed areas are part of Cachar, Kamrup Metro and Kamrup Rural on Assam's side and West Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi district and East Jaintia Hills on Meghalaya's side.

ASSAM AND BORDER ISSUES

- The states of the Northeast were largely carved out of Assam, which has border disputes with several states.
- Assam's border disputes with Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland are pending in the Supreme Court.
- Assam's border disputes with Mizoram are currently in the phase of resolution through negotiations.

➔ FLEET CARD

- **Indian Air Force in collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)** has taken a leap forward in **fuel supply chain management** by introducing a '**Fleet Card - Fuel on Move**' for its varied fleet of vehicles.
- This innovative initiative taken by the Indian Air Force **provides a paradigm shift to the logistics management of fuel.**
- 'Fleet Card', the energy security for IAF vehicles on move, was launched by the Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Chief of Air Staff at Headquarters Western Air Command, Subroto Park on 28 Mar 22 in the presence of Air Marshal S Prabhakaran, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Air Command and Mr. SM Vaidya Chairman IOCL.
- **HQ Western Air Command was earmarked as lead agency** in the implementation and execution of this innovative concept of "Fuel on Move".
- **Availability of Fleet Card will permit the convoy to refuel at any IOCL fuel stations** thus increasing the pace of movement and reducing the lead time for readiness at operational locations across the nation.
- CAS complimented team WAC and IOCL for this initiative that has enhanced the operational preparedness and capability of the IAF.

➔ MANPADS

*The United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are shipping weapons into Ukraine, including highly sensitive items such as **shoulder-fired missiles called Man-Portable Air-Defence Systems (MANPADS)** that can take down aircraft.*

- Countries such as India, Pakistan, Germany, UK, Turkey and Israel have also used MANPADS in their defence efforts.
- Russia is by far the biggest exporter of MANPADs, having sold over 10,000 such systems between 2010 and 2018 to various countries including Iraq, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Venezuela, and Libya.

ABOUT

- MANPADS are **short-range, lightweight and portable surface-to-air missiles** that can be fired by individuals or small groups to destroy aircraft or helicopters.
- They **help shield troops from aerial attacks** and are most effective in targeting low-flying aircrafts.
- MANPATs or Man-Portable Anti-Tank Systems work in a similar manner but are used to destroy or incapacitate military tanks.
- MANPADS have a **maximum range of 8 kilometers** and can engage targets at altitudes of 4.5 km.
- The first MANPADS were introduced by the United States and Soviet Union in the 1960s.



FEATURES

Shoulder-Fired, Light Weight:

- They can be shoulder-fired, launched from atop a ground-vehicle, fired from a tripod or stand, and from a helicopter or boat.
- They are fairly lightweight as compared to other elaborate weapon systems, making them easy to operate by individual soldiers.
- They weigh anywhere between 10 to 20 kilograms and are not longer than 1.8 meters.

FIRE AND FORGET GUIDANCE SYSTEMS:

- Most of them have passive or 'fire and forget' guidance systems, meaning that the operator is not required to guide the missile to its target, enabling them to run and relocate immediately after firing.

INFRARED (IR) SEEKERS:

- The missiles are fitted with infrared (IR) seekers that identify and target the airborne vehicle through heat radiation being emitted by the latter.

COMMON VARIANTS:

- Stinger Missiles (US), Igla MANPADS (Russia), Starstreak (Britain), RBS-70 MANPADS Series (Sweden), Next Generation Light Antitank Weapon or NLAW missiles and Javelin missiles (US and NATO).

CONCERNS:**CIVILIAN ATTACKS:**

- According to a 2019 study, more than 60 civilian aircraft have been hit by MANPADS since the 1970s, claiming the lives of more than 1,000 civilians.

ILLICIT USE BY NON-STATE ACTORS:

- Over time, non-state actors such as rebel and terrorist groups are known to have illicitly acquired MANPADS, using them during civil wars and other high-intensity conflicts.

ILLEGAL WEAPON TRADE

- Observers fear that sending lightweight ground-based MANPADS to Ukraine may contribute to intensifying the network of illegal weapon trade.

➔ EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN

A Joint Military Exercise, “**Exercise Dharma Guardian-2022**”, between **India and Japan** was conducted at foreign training node, Belagavi (Belgaum, Karnataka).

WHAT IS EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN?

- Exercise Dharma Guardian-2022 is an annual training event which is being conducted in India since 2018.
- The scope of this exercise **covers platoon level joint training on operations in jungle and semi urban/urban terrain**.
- The joint exercise schedule includes house interventions drills, raid on terrorist hideouts in semi urban terrain, combat first aid, unarmed combat & close quarter combat firing where both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well-developed tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats.
- Special emphasis is being laid on enhancing tactical skills to fight global terrorism and on enhancing inter-operability between the forces and to promote Army to Army relations.

OTHER MILITARY EXERCISES BETWEEN INDIA AND JAPAN

- Malabar: India and Japan with the United States and Australia participate in the naval wargaming exercise named Malabar.
- JIMEX (naval)
- SHINYUU Maitri (Air Force)

→ HYPERSONIC MISSILES

The Russian Ministry of Defence announced that it had used a hypersonic missile for the first time in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine.

The **Kinzhal aviation missile system** with **hypersonic aero-ballistic missiles** was used in the village of Deliatyn in the **Ivano-Frankivsk region**.

- A hypersonic missile is a weapon system **which flies at least at the speed of Mach 5 i.e. five times the speed of sound and is manoeuvrable**.
- The manoeuvrability of the hypersonic missile is what sets it apart from a ballistic missile as the latter follows a set course or a ballistic trajectory. Thus, unlike ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles do not follow a ballistic trajectory and can be manoeuvred to the intended target.
- The two types of hypersonic weapons systems are **Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGV)** and **Hypersonic Cruise Missiles**.
- The HGV are launched **from a rocket** before gliding to the intended target while the hypersonic cruise missile is powered by air breathing **high speed engines or 'scramjets'** after acquiring their target.

ADVANTAGES OF HYPERSONIC MISSILES

- Hypersonic weapons can enable responsive, long range strike options against distant, defended or time critical threats (such as road mobile missiles) when other forces are unavailable, denied access or not preferred.
- Conventional hypersonic weapons use only kinetic energy i.e. energy derived from motion, to destroy unhardened targets or even underground facilities.

Which countries possess hypersonic weapons or are in process of developing them?

- Apart from Russia, which announced its hypersonic missile 'Kinzhal' or Dagger in 2018 and has now used it for the first time in battle conditions in Ukraine, China too is reportedly in possession of this weapon system and has twice used it to circumnavigate the globe before landing near a target in August 2021.
- The Russian Kinzhal missile is said to be a modification of its **Iskander missile** and was test fired from a MiG-31 aircraft in July 2018 striking at a target 500 miles away.
- As per Russian media reports the **Kinzhal has a top speed of Mach 10** with a range up to 1200 miles when launched from a MiG-31.
- Russia is also said to be **using the missile on Su-34 long range fighter** and is working towards mounting it on Tu-22M3 strategic bomber.
- China is said to have tested a HGV in August 2021 launched by a **Long March rocket**.
- In the **US**, the hypersonic weapons are being developed under its **Navy's conventional Prompt Strike Programme** as well as through Army, Air Force and Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).
- While the US, Russia and China are in advanced stages of hypersonic missile programmes, India, France, Germany, Japan and Australia too are developing hypersonic weapons.

→ KUKI INSURGENCY

- The Kukis are a multi-tribal ethnic group that live in **India's north-eastern regions of Manipur, Mizoram, and Assam, as well as parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar.**
- The different Kuki tribes of Manipur, who live primarily in the hills, currently account for 30% of the state's total population of 28.5 lakh people.
- The rest of Manipur's population is composed primarily of two other ethnic groups: non-tribal **Vaishnavite Hindus who inhabit the state's valley region**, and **Naga tribes who live in the state's mountainous areas.** The latter has historically been at odds with the Kukis.
- Kuki militancy has its roots in ethnic identity struggles. They want **Kukiland**, which comprises Kuki inhabited territories in **Myanmar, Manipur, Assam, and Mizoram**, to have self-determination primarily for groups belonging to their ethnic fabric.
- The second cause of insurgency in Manipur is **intercommunal violence between the Kukis and the Nagas.**

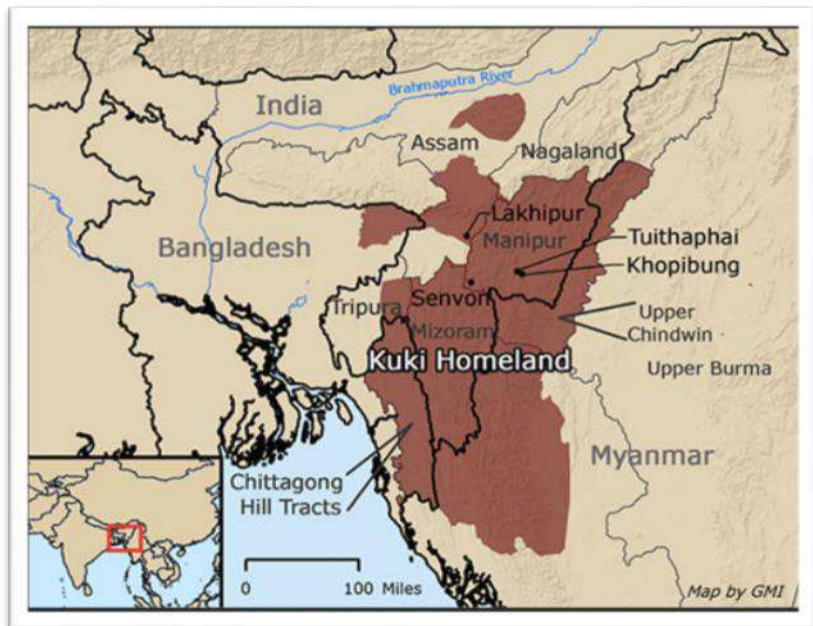
HISTORY OF KUKI INSURGENCY

- Manipur, a former princely state, became a full-fledged Indian state in the year 1972. As a princely state, it included parts of Burma before joining India.
- Various insurgent groups arose as a result of resentment over the "forceful" integration into India and the delay in giving statehood.
- The problem was exacerbated in the year **1980 when Manipur was designated as a "disturbed area" under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)**, which grants the military broad powers and is said to have led to excesses.
- In the 1980s and after the Kuki-Naga skirmishes of the 1990s, the Kuki insurgency in Manipur intensified in actual terms. The **Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and its military wing, the Kuki National Army (KNA)**, were founded at this time. Other Kuki units, such as the Kuki Commando Force and the Kuki Independent Army, were also founded.
- Since signing an agreement with the Indian Army in the year 2005, the Kuki insurgent forces have been under **Suspension of Operation (SoO).**
- In 2008, the organisations reached a tripartite agreement with the State government of Manipur, and the UPA led Central government, led by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to temporarily halt their operations and allow political discussion a chance.

REASONS BEHIND KUKI INSURGENCY

- Kuki militancy has its genesis in ethnic identity struggles. The first was the **quest for self-determination purely for ethnic groups.**
- While some insurgent Kuki groups wanted Kukiland that included portions that were not part of India, others demanded Kukiland that was entirely within India.
- Presently, there is a demand for the creation of an **autonomous district "Kukiland Territorial Council" within the Indian constitution**, modelled after the Bodoland Territorial Council, which was established under the sixth schedule of the Constitution after militant groups in the state of Assam entered into an agreement with their state government.
- The Kuki-Naga tussle began over securing identity as well as land, as some Kuki inhabited regions coincided with areas inhabited by the Naga tribes.

- The two communities frequently engaged in violent showdowns, with villages being burnt, civilians being slaughtered, and so on, in order to gain control of commerce and cultural activities in those regions.
- Despite the fact that confrontations between the two ethnic groups have decreased in recent decades, tensions between them still remain.
- The Naga movement in the neighbouring state of Nagaland spread to Manipur's hill regions, with the NSCN-IM commanding the majority while pushing for "Nagalim" (Greater Nagaland), which is seen as a "threat" to Manipur's "territorial integrity" in the valley.
- Despite the fact that the hills cover nine-tenths of Manipur's land area, they are sparsely populated, with the majority of the state's people located in the valley.
- **The Meitei community dominates the Imphal valley, while Nagas and Kukis live in the neighbouring hill districts.**
- The Assam Rifles as well as the army undertook operation "All Clear" in the hill areas, neutralising most militant hideouts and forcing many of them to flee to the valley.



CHALLENGES IN RESTORING PEACE IN MANIPUR

- Because Manipur is a border state with a permeable international border as well as a harsh forest environment, militant organisations that rely on external nations for training and other logistical support continue to infiltrate the country.
- The state's troubles are exacerbated by the link between politicians, militants, and criminals. Extortion, abduction, and contractual assassinations are all common activities for some groups.
- Miscreants reap the benefits of the disturbance and use it to extort money while posing as militants. Furthermore, most security issues are politicised by political parties in order to earn vote bank mileage by escalating conflicts.
- Given the ongoing peace discussions with the insurgent organisations, there has been a propensity for the factions to continue the armed revolt by creating a new proxy group or changing its name.
- The central government's strategy of reaching a negotiated solution with insurgent groups has backfired. Because many of the outfits' goals conflict with one another, any conventional arrangement with one organisation causes agitation among the others.

→ DISTURBED AREA NOTIFICATION

SECTION 3: DECLARATION OF AN AREA AS DISTURBED AREA

(1) Where a State Government is satisfied that

- (i) there was, or
- (ii) there is,

in any area within a **State extensive disturbance of the public peace and tranquillity**, by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, it may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare such area to be a disturbed area.

(2) A notification issued under **sub-section (1) in respect of any area shall specify the period during which the area shall, for the purposes of this section, be a disturbed area** and where the State Government is satisfied that there was such disturbance of public peace and tranquillity as is referred to in sub-section (1) in that area from any date prior to the issue of such notification, the period specified in the notification may commence from that date:

Provided that---

- (a) no period commencing from a date earlier than three months before the date of publication of the notification shall be specified therein; and
- (b) so much of the period specified in such notification as is subsequent to the date of publication of the notification shall not, in the first instance, exceed three months but the State Government may amend such notification to extend such period from time to time by any period not exceeding three months at any one time if in the opinion of the State Government there continues to be in such area such disturbance of public peace and tranquillity as is referred to in sub-section (1):

Provided further that where the State Government is satisfied that there is no longer such disturbance of public peace and tranquillity as is referred to in sub-section (1) in such area, it shall amend the notification issued under that sub-section in respect of that area to limit the period specified therein (whether originally or by amendment under the preceding proviso) accordingly.

→ FATF

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body decision-making body.
- It was **established in 1989** during the **G7 Summit in Paris** to develop policies **against money laundering**.
- It is a **"policy-making body"** which works to generate the political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in money laundering. It has also **started dealing with virtual currencies**.
- The FATF Secretariat is located in **Paris**.

OBJECTIVES

- FATF sets standards and promotes effective implementation of:

- a. legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering.
- b. The FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.
 - **India became an Observer at FATF in 2006.** Since then, it had been working towards full-fledged membership.
 - **On June 25, 2010 India was taken in as the 34th country member of FATF.**

FATF ON TERROR FINANCING

- FATF's role in combating terror financing became prominent after the 9/11 terror attacks in the US. In 2001 its mandate expanded to include terrorism financing. Financing of terrorism involves providing money or financial support to terrorists. As of 2019, FATF has blacklisted North Korea and Iran over terror financing. Twelve countries are in the grey list, namely: Bahamas, Botswana, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Pakistan, Panama, Sri Lanka, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Yemen.

'GREY LIST' AND 'BLACKLIST'

- a. **Black List:** Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.
- b. **Grey List:** Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

→ MALABAR EXERCISE

- Malabar Exercise is a **multilateral war-gaming naval exercise** that includes simulated war games and combat manoeuvres. Demonstrates the synergy, coordination and inter-operability among the participating navies.
- **Started in 1992** as a bilateral exercise between the navies of India and the US.
- **Break 1996 to 2002** in the aftermath of India's nuclear tests.
- Conducted every year thereafter.
- **Japan, Australia (and Singapore)-** First participated in 2007.
- In 2008, the government in Australia changed, and it stopped participating.
- Singapore has participated only once.
- From 2014, Japan has been a regular participant; joined as a permanent member in 2015, making it a trilateral.
- Australia re-joined in 2020, making its second appearance.

WHY IS THE MALABAR EXERCISE SIGNIFICANT?

- It was for the possibility of angering China that India had not expanded Malabar exercise.
- Australia also had pulled out for the same reason after 2007.
- But now, China's relations are strained with all four nations of the Quad with China's growing military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The military standoff with India in eastern Ladakh for more than 15 months is another factor.

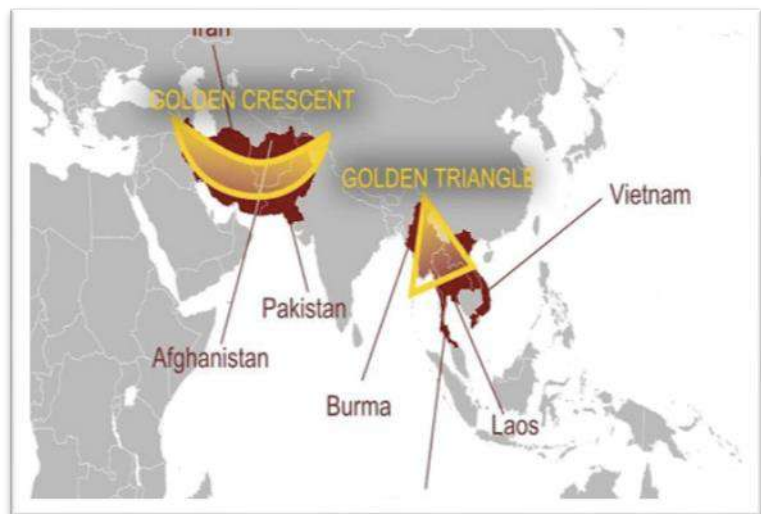
- So, as a grouping of four powerful navies in the Indo-Pacific region, the Quad and Malabar exercise sends a strong message -

- Commitment to peace, stability and prosperity of all countries in this region
- Upholding the rules-based international order
- Respecting the rule of law and freedom of navigation in the international seas
- Upholding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states
- Promoting a shared vision for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

Note: The Quad, officially the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**, is a group of four countries: Australia, India, Japan and the US. Maritime cooperation began after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. But now, Quad works on a far broader agenda, which includes tackling security, economic, and health issues. It is a loose grouping rather than a formal alliance.

➔ AFGHANISTAN AND OPIUM

- The Taliban, cash-strapped and still looking to establish a semblance of order in the country they captured in August 2021, could indeed be looking to generate revenue from the illegal cash crop, as cases of smuggling and seizures of large consignments of drugs in India have started increasing, indicating a turn towards this trend.
- India's anxieties over ungoverned spaces and lawless Afghanistan turning into a significant source of internal security threat are gradually turning into reality.
- For the past several decades, Afghan opiates have entered India through circuitous routes, sea as well as air, involving Pakistan, Sri Lanka, African countries such as Mozambique and South Africa, and Qatar.
- The huge recoveries of heroin in Gujarat alone — 3,000 kilograms in September and 120 kilograms in October — bear testament to the fact that the fall of Kabul and its capture by the Taliban may have initiated free-for-all narcotic smuggling waves, which unless checked, have the potential of destabilising India's security.
- Over the years, the Taliban have minted money from this sector, by promoting its production, taxing it and also by overseeing its smuggling either into Pakistan or Iran, thereby building a mammoth illicit economy with strengthening linkages to terrorist groups as witnessed in the cases of the **Organization of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)**, the **Islamic State**, the **Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)**, **Hezbollah** and others.



VULNERABILITY OF INDIA

- The geographical proximity to both the '**Golden Crescent**' and the '**Golden Triangle**', major opium production regions of the world, puts all the BIMSTEC partner nations in a very precarious position.
- India's position is more vulnerable as we are sandwiched between the 'Golden Crescent' and the 'Golden Triangle'.
- The **Golden Crescent region of the South Asia comprises Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.**
- The **Golden Triangle is the area where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers.**
- These two areas are known as the major opium production regions of the world.

DRDO TECHNOLOGY CLUSTERS

➔ NAVAL SYSTEMS & MATERIALS (NS & M)

- It comprises of **six laboratories** - Naval Physical & Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) at Kochi, Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL) at Visakhapatnam, Naval Materials Research Laboratory (NMRL) at Ambernath, Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory (DMRL) at Hyderabad, Defence Materials Stores Research & Development Establishment (DMSRDE) at Kanpur, and Defence Laboratory (DLJ) at Jodhpur.
- The NS & M cluster is headed by the Director General (Naval Systems & Materials), with Headquarters at Visakhapatnam.
- NPOL, NSTL, NMRL, DMRL, DMSRDE and DLJ with DG Headquarters at Visakhapatnam.
- Naval Science & Materials cluster provides cutting edge naval and material solutions for the Armed Forces. The cluster has developed state-of-the-art underwater sensors and surveillance systems; underwater weapons and associated systems; Air Independent Propulsion systems; protection technologies for marine platforms; stealth and camouflage technologies for land, air and naval platforms; advanced metallic, ceramic, polymeric and composite materials for structural and functional application; and nuclear radiation management technologies.

Vision: To provide cutting-edge technologies and systems for the Indian Navy, and a complete materials solution to DRDO and the three services.

Mission: Development of

- State-of-the art underwater sensors & surveillance systems, underwater weapons & associated systems, Air Independent Propulsion systems, and protection technologies for marine platforms.
- Stealth and camouflage technologies for land, air and naval platforms.
- Advanced metallic, ceramic, polymeric and composite materials for structural and functional application.
- Nuclear radiation management technologies.

➔ AERONAUTICAL SYSTEMS

- Aeronautical Systems cluster is engaged in the development of **state-of-the-art unmanned Air Vehicles, Aero Gas Turbine Engine Technology, Airborne Surveillance Systems, Parachutes, Decelerators and Lighter-than-Air Systems.**
- The cluster comprises of **four labs** – ADE, ADRDE, CABS, GTRE and a centre CEMILAC which provides concurrent airworthiness certification, support to indigenous development to certify upgrades and integration of imported and indigenous systems.
- **Vision:** To be a centre of excellence for design and development of state-of-the-art UAVs, Aero Gas Turbine Engine Technology, Airborne Surveillance Systems, Technologies and Systems related to Parachute, Decelerators and Lighter-than-Air systems for the Services (Armed Forces).
- **Mission:** To design, develop and lead to production of UAVs; key technologies and infrastructure for building indigenous Airborne Surveillance systems; entire range of Parachutes and Lighter-than-Air Systems; design and develop affordable aero gas turbine engine systems and their derivatives to meet the needs of the Services (Armed Forces).

➔ ARMAMENT & COMBAT ENGINEERING SYSTEMS (ACE)

- It focuses on research & development of armaments, explosives, land based combat vehicles & engineering equipment. Labs under this cluster are also involved in the production of systems through Transfer of Technology (ToT).
- Armament labs have achieved high degree of self-reliance in a number of areas, viz., armaments, ammunitions, missiles, gun propellants, high explosives for warheads, pyrotechnics for various applications, synthesis and characterization of new energetic materials, electro explosive devices, high energy materials and pilot plant facilities.
- Combat Engineering labs are engaged in the development of systems / platforms like MBT, bridging systems, launchers for missiles & wheeled as well as tracked vehicles. Technologies developed by the labs include transmission & suspension for tracked vehicles, hydro-pneumatic systems for launchers, accurate forecast & control of avalanches, etc. ACE cluster includes eight labs – ACEM, ARDE, CVRDE, DTRL, HEMRL, PXE, R&DE(E), SASE, VRDE.

Vision: To establish centers of excellence for technology development for realigning State of the Art Armaments, Combat Vehicles & Engineering Systems.

Mission

- Design and Development of State of the Art Technology and Systems in
- Armaments and High Energy Materials
- Armoured Vehicles & Mechanical Equipments
- Mobility & counter-mobility for Combat Equipments
- Intelligence Systems for Trafficability & safe mobility in all Terrain
- Working in Synergy with Academics, national research institutions, Services and through optimal utilization of collaborative efforts.

→ MISSILES AND STRATEGIC SYSTEMS (MSS)

- MSS Cluster is responsible for the **design and development of state-of-the-art Missiles and Strategic Systems** required for the deterrence and defence of the country.
- The Cluster comprises of **five laboratories** - DRDL, RCI, ASL, TBRL, ITR, and various others centres for testing, integration and analysis of the systems being designed.
- MSS cluster is working on technologies like Aerodynamics and Airframe Design; Solid, Liquid, Ramjet and Scramjet Propulsion; Navigation, Control, Guidance and Homing Systems; On-board Power Supply, Warhead Systems, Launch Systems as well as the Command and Control Systems for missile systems.

Vision: Empower the nation with state-of-the-art indigenous systems and technologies for missile based weapon systems deployable from underwater to outer space.

Mission

- Design, development and leading-to-production of systems and technologies for missile based weapon systems deployable from underwater to outer space.
- Ensure product support, product upgrade and end-of-life replacement.
- Establish critical infrastructure and facilities for design, testing and evaluation.

→ ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

- ECS Cluster has a mandate to design and develop electronic, electro-optical and laser based sensors and systems. The Cluster consists of laboratories DARE, DEAL, DLRL, IRDE, LASTEC, LRDE and the Cognitive Technology Lab.
- The cluster laboratories have developed state of art technologies in the fields of EW Systems, Radars, Electro-optic Equipment, Laser Sources & sensors, Directed Energy Weapon Systems and Communication Systems used in various Flagship Programmes and platforms of DRDO and ADA viz., Missile programmes, Unmanned Air Vehicles, Airborne Early Warning & Control System, Aerostats, Main Battle Tank, Integrated Coastal Surveillance System and Light Combat Aircraft etc. Apart from this, many of the systems and sensors developed by the Cluster Labs are deployed and are being used by Indian Armed forces and paramilitary services.

- **Vision:** To become a Centre of Excellence in the field of EW, DEW, EO, Laser, Radar and Communication Systems and related technologies.
- **Mission:** Design, Development, Evaluation and ToT leading to Production and Induction of Advanced EW, DEW, EO, Laser, Radar and Communication Systems and to establish self-reliance in these Critical Technologies.

→ VL-SRSAM

- VL-SRSAM has been **designed and developed jointly by three facilities** of the Defence Research and Development Organisation for deployment of Indian Naval warships.
- The missile has the capability of neutralizing various aerial threats at close ranges including sea-skimming targets.
- **Sea skimming** is a technique many anti-ship missiles and some fighter or strike aircraft use to avoid radar and infrared detection.

DESIGN:

- The missile has been designed to **strike high-speed airborne targets at the range of 40 to 50 km** and at an altitude of around 15 km.
- Its design is based on **Astra missile** which is a Beyond Visual Range Air to Air missile.
- Astra ("weapon") is India's first air-to-air all weather beyond-visual-range active radar homing air-to-air missile, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organization.
- A **Beyond-Visual-Range missile (BVR) is an air-to-air missile** that is capable of engaging at ranges of 20 nautical miles or beyond.

FEATURES:

- 1. Cruciform wings:** They are four small wings arranged like a cross on four sides and give the projectile a stable aerodynamic posture.
- 2. Thrust Vectoring:** It is the ability to change the direction of the thrust from its engine, control the angular velocity and the attitude of the missile. Thrust is the force which moves an aircraft through the air.
- 3. Canisterised system:** The inside environment is controlled, thus making its transport and storage easier and improving the shelf life of weapons.

→ VOSTOK 2022

India joined a multilateral strategic and command Exercise Vostok - 2022 in Russia along with China among other countries.

WHAT IS EXERCISE VOSTOK?

- It will involve troops from several ex-Soviet nations, China, India, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Syria.
- The Indian Army was represented by the contingent of troops from **7/8 Gorkha Rifles**.
- It is aimed at interaction and coordination amongst other participating military contingents and observers.
- The Vostok 2022 exercise was held at seven firing ranges in Russia's Far East and the Sea of Japan and involve more than 50,000 troops and over 5,000 weapons units, including 140 aircraft and 60 warships.
- The Indian Army contingent will look forward to sharing practical aspects and putting into practice the validated drills, procedures and practice amalgamation of new technology through discussions and tactical exercises.

➔ PARAMILITARY, MILITARY AND CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCE

Paramilitary	Military	Central Armed Police Force
Protection of resources from internal threats like Left-Wing Extremism, Insurgents etc.	Protecting the external borders of the country from terrorism and aggression from other countries	These forces provide security to key economic installations from any existential threat they also function on the borders to check illegal border crossings, encroachments, smuggling
Varied. Dependent upon the forces in question. For example, Assam Rifles reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs while the Coast Guard reports to the Ministry of Defence	Ministry of Defence	Ministry of Home Affairs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assam Rifles ○ Indian Coast Guard ○ Special Frontier Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indian Army ○ Indian Air Force ○ Indian Navy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Central Reserve Police Force ○ Central Industrial Security Force ○ Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force
3 Star Officer of Equivalent Rank of Director General of Police	4 Star Officer of Equivalent Rank of General of Army	As it comes under the Home Ministry, it is headed by an IPS (Indian Police Service) Officer. A CAPF cadre can officially reach the post of Assistant Director-General of Police but the Director-General post is reserved for IPS
Some of the paramilitary wings such as the Assam Rifles originated in 1835 while the Coast Guard originated as late as 1978	The Indian Military in its current form began from the native armies of the East India Company, which later became the British Indian Army and later was merged into the national army upon	The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is the largest industrial security force with over 165,000 personnel

independence

→ GSOMIA

- **General security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)** is an agreement signed to safeguard the information that is shared during a technology transfer.
- India signed this agreement in **2002**, this covered **only Indian government and PSUs**.
- **GSOMIA did not cover the exchange of classified information with Indian private companies.**

→ LEMOA

- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was **signed in 2016** between India and US.
- LEMOA allows the militaries of the US and India to **replenish from each other's bases**, and access supplies, spare parts and services from each other's land facilities, air bases, and ports, which can then be reimbursed.
- LEMOA is extremely useful for **India-US Navy-to-Navy cooperation**, since the two countries are cooperating closely in the Indo-Pacific.
- To put the usefulness of this agreement in simple terms, it is like being able to stop at a friend's garage or workshop to refuel your car or get it repaired when you are far away from your own home or workshop.
- The critical element that **underpins LEMOA is mutual trust**.
- The **signing of LEMOA was in itself an affirmation of the mutual trust** between the two militaries, and its application will enhance the trust. It took almost a decade to negotiate LEMOA, and the exercise in a sense bridged the trust deficit between India and the US, and paved the way for the other foundational pacts.
- While India had indeed provided ad hoc logistics support to the US in the past — such as allowing the refueling of American aircraft in Bombay during the first Gulf War in 1991, and letting US warships visit Indian ports during the war on terror after 9/11— the signing of LEMOA has institutionalised this process and made it smoother.

→ COMCASA

- Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed in **2018**.
- The pact **allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems** so that Indian and US military commanders, and the aircraft and ships of the two countries, can communicate through secure networks during times of both peace and war.
- Again, to take a simple example, it's like being able to exchange messages or communicate with a friend on WhatsApp, Signal, or Telegram in real time and in a secure manner.

- The signing of COMCASA paved the way for the **transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India to facilitate “interoperability” between their forces** — and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secure data links.

➔ BECA

- India and the United States signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), the last of four so-called foundational agreements for sharing sensitive information, sales of advanced military hardware and geospatial cooperation.

WHAT IS THE BASIC EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT (BECA)?

- BECA **will help India get real-time access to American geospatial intelligence** that will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones. Through the sharing of information on maps and satellite images, it will **help India access topographical and aeronautical data, and advanced products that will aid in navigation and targeting.**
- This could be key to **Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation between India and the US.** Just as your radio cab (or the GPS in your smartphone) helps you zero in on the path to your destination and helps you reach it quickly and efficiently, BECA will provide Indian military systems with a high-quality GPS to navigate missiles with real-time intelligence to precisely target the adversary.
- Besides the sailing of ships, flying of aircraft, fighting of wars, and location of targets, geospatial intelligence is also critical to the response to natural disasters.

REPORTS

International Organization	Name of Reports
World Health Organization (WHO)	Global Nutrition Report
IQAir	World Air Quality Report
Oxfam International	Global Inequality Crisis Report Inequality Virus Report
UNICEF	Levels and Trends in Child Mortality Report
UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development)	World Investment Report
UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)	Actions on Air Quality Emissions Gap Report Global Environment Outlook
Transparency International	Global Corruption Report (GCR) – Corruption Perception Index

UNEP and INTERPOL	The Rise of Environmental Crime
UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)	Global Education Monitoring Report
UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)	State of World Population
UN-Habitat	World Cities Report
UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)	World Wildlife Crime Report World Drug Report Global Report on Trafficking in Persons
UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction)	Global Assessment Report
UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)	Industrial Development Report
UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund)	The State of the World's Children reports Report on Regular Resources

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)	The Global Report
UNICRI (United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute)	Reports on Counterfeiting and Organized Crime
WEF (World Economic Forum)	Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) Global Gender Gap Report Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report Global Information Technology Report
International Energy Agency	World Energy Outlook (WEO) Southeast Asia Energy Outlook
OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries)	OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report World Oil Outlook
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)	World Happiness Report
IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)	Technical Cooperation Report Nuclear Technology Review
IMF (International Monetary Fund)	Global Financial Stability Report World Economic Outlook

Asian Development Bank – ADB	Asian Development Outlook
BIS (Bank for International Settlements)	Global Financial System Report
FATF (Financial Action Task Force)	Global Money Laundering Report
WWF (World Wildlife Fund)	The Energy Report Living Planet Report
WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization)	World Intellectual Property Report (WIPR)

IBRD (World Bank)	World Development Report
ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization)	Safety Reports
US-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Concern Worldwide, and Welthungerhilfe (WHH)	Global Hunger Index report

ILO (International Labour Organization)	World Social Protection Report Global Wage Report World Employment and Social Outlook World of Work Report
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Human Development Report
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Rural Development Report
Universal Postal Union (UPU)	Postal Development Report
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)	State of the World Reports
World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)	State of World Climate

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q 1. ‘Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)’, recently seen in news relates to:

- a) USA b) European Union c) SAARC d) ASEAN

Q 2. With reference to ‘BIMSTEC’, consider the following:

1. It is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
2. It constitutes seven Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Indonesia.
3. Sri Lanka to host 5th BIMSTEC Summit

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only b) 1 and 3 only c) 1 and 2 only d) All of the above

Q3. With reference to ‘Financial Action Task Force (FATF)’, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. India is not a full member of FATF but it has partial membership status of this organization.
2. All permanent members of the Security Council except China are members of FATF.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1 only b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q 4. Exercise Khanjar is a joint military exercise between

- a) India-Kyrgyzstan b) India-Kazakhstan
 c) India-Uzbekistan d) India-Turkmenistan

Q 5. Consider the following statements about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:

1. It is an intergovernmental organization to promote cooperation in trade, politics, and culture.
2. The Anti-Terrorist structure of SCO is located in Beijing.

Which of the above statement is/are correct?

- a) 1 only b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q6. Which of the following countries participate in the Malabar naval Exercise?

1. India 2. Japan 3. Australia

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only b) 1 and 2 only c) 2 and 3 only d) 1,2 and 3

Q7. Which of the following countries are located in the Horn of Africa?

- a) Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia b) Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia
 c) Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Gabon d) Tunisia, Algeria and Libya

Q8. Match the following:

Area	Country
A. Southern Kurdistan	1. Iran
B. Northern Kurdistan	2. Syria
C. Western Kurdistan	3. Turkey
D. Eastern Kurdistan	4. Iraq

Codes:

- (a) A-4, B-2, C-1, D-3 (b) A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4
 (c) A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1 (d) A-3, B-2, C-1, D-4

Q9. Which of the following countries does not border Belarus?

- a) Latvia b) Lithuania c) Ukraine d) Estonia

Q10. Which of the following countries does not claim sovereignty over Spratly Islands?

- (a) Malaysia (b) Vietnam (c) Laos (d) Philippines

Q11. Where is Svalbard archipelago located?

- a) North Sea b) Aegean Sea c) Mediterranean Sea d) Barents Sea

Q12. Which of the following Conventions are related to International Arbitration?

1. New York Convention 2. Geneva Convention 3. ICSID Convention

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only b) 1 and 3 c) 2 and 3 d) 1, 2 and 3

Q13. Duqm Island is located near the coast of which of the following?

- a) Arabian Sea b) Mediterranean Sea c) South China Sea d) Gulf of Munnar

Q14. Assumption Island is located in which of the following countries?

- a) Qatar b) Seychelles c) Maldives d) Oman

Q15. Which of the following ethnic groups does Uighurs belong?

- (a) Uzbek (b) Turk (c) Kyrgyz (d) Mongol

Q16. Gaza Strip is located

- (a) at the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea
(b) at the western coast of the Dead Sea
(c) in Sinai Peninsula
(d) at the western border of Golan Heights

Q17. Which of the following seas are connected by Strait of Bab-el –Mandeb?

- a) Red Sea and Gulf of Aden b) Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea
c) Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea d) Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea

Q18. Which of the following countries are members of Eurasian Economic Union?

1. Armenia 2. Ukraine 3. Belarus 4. Kazakhstan

Choose the correct code:

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only. b) 2 and 3 only.
c) 1, 3 and 4 only. d) All of the above

Q19. Turkey doesn't share border with:

- (a) Georgia (b) Egypt (c) Bulgaria (d) Syria

Q20. Which of the following sequences correctly represents the order of ports from east to west direction?

- (a) Chabahar Port, Gwadar Port, Kandla Port
(b) Kandla Port, Gwadar Port, Chabahar Port
(c) Gwadar Port, Chabahar Port, Kandla Port
(d) Kandla Port, Chabahar Port, Gwadar Port

PRACTICE QUESTIONS (ANSWER KEY)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a	b	d	a	a	b	a	c	d	c
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
d	d	a	b	b	a	a	c	b	b

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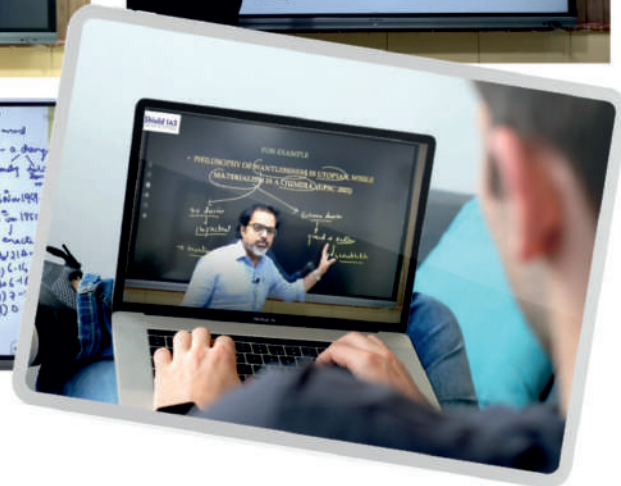
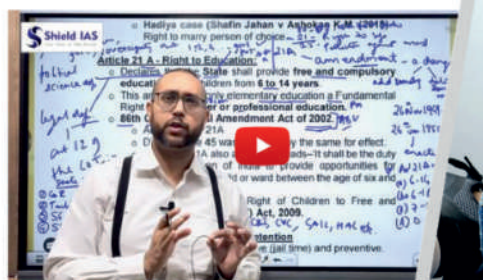
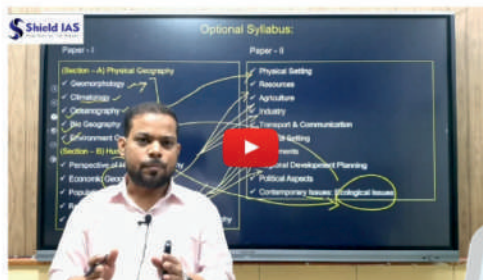
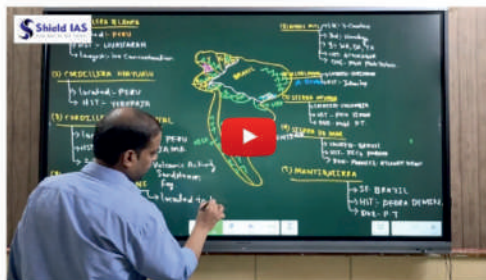
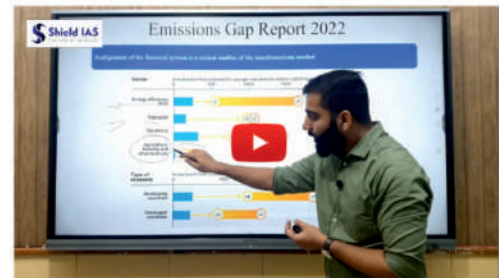
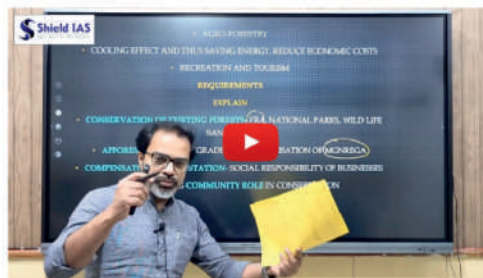


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