



TARGET PRELIMS 2024

BOOKLET-30

INTERNATIONAL MAPPING AND PLACES IN NEWS-2

AFRICA, NORTH AMERICA AND SOUTH AMERICA

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1) IMPORTANT MOUNTAIN RANGES OF AFRICAN CONTINENT

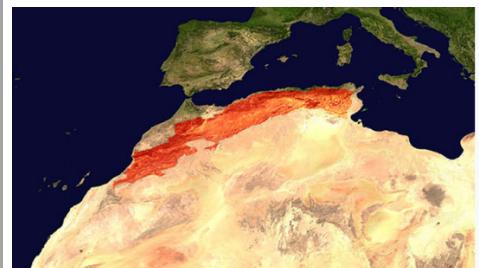
Atlas Mountains:

The Atlas mountains are a mountain range in the Maghreb in North Africa. It separates Sahara desert from the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Mountains.

The term "Atlantic" is derived from the Atlas mountains.

These stretch around 2,500 kms through Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. They are the longest mountain range of Africa.

Highest Peak: Toubkal (located in Morocco). It is the highest peak in North Africa.

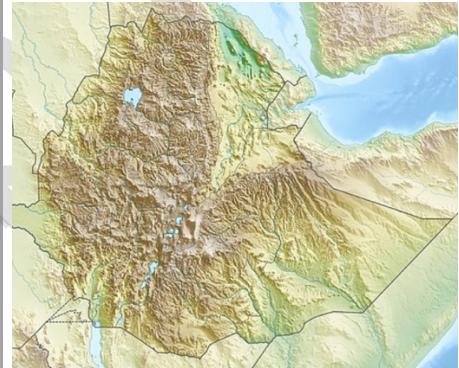


The location of the Atlas Mountains (red) across North Africa

Ethiopian Highlands:

They are also known as Abyssinian Highlands. This vast and ancient mountain complex covers much of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

It is called the roof of Africa. The rugged mountain mass forms the continent's most extensive continuous elevation area, with the summits reaching upto 14,930 feet.



Ethiopian Highland consist of rugged Western Highlands and the more limited Eastern Highlands. The two sections are separated by the vast Eastern Rift Valley which cuts across Ethiopia from southwest to northeast.

Mount Ras Dejen is the highest peak in Ethiopia.

Special Mention: Mount Kilimanjaro:

- It is not a mountain range though. It is the highest mountain peak in Africa at a height of 5,895 m.
- It is located in Tanzania and is the highest free standing mountain in the world, rising above the surrounding Savanna plains of Tanzania.



Great Escarpment: It is a major topographic feature of Africa that consists of steep slopes from the high central South African Plateau downward in the direction of the oceans that surround southern Africa from three sides.

Most of it lies in South Africa, the east of the escarpment extends northward to from the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The Drakensberg is the eastern portion of the Great Escarpment, which encloses the central Southern Africa plateau.

2) MAGHREB REGION

The Maghreb, also known as Arab Maghreb and Northwest Africa, is the western part of Arab World. The region contains western and central north Africa, including Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania. It also includes disputed territory of Western Sahara (controlled mostly by Morocco).

Note: Maghreb doesn't include Egypt and Sudan.

The term "Maghreb" literally translates to "the west" in Arabic. The traditional definition of the Maghreb encompassed only the Atlas Mountains and the coastal plains of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. This definition was expanded to include Mauritania and the disputed territory of western Sahara.



3) LIBYA

It is a country in the Maghreb region in North Africa.

Neighboring countries: Algeria to West, Tunisia to Northwest, Egypt to East, Sudan to Southeast, Chad to South and Niger to Southwest.

Maritime Boundary: Mediterranean Sea in the north

Capital and largest city: Tripoli

Recent History: Libya became independent as a kingdom in 1951. A bloodless military coup in 1969, initiated by a coalition led by Colonel Muammer Gaddafi, overthrew King Idris-1 and created a republic. He ruled until being overthrown and killed in the 2011 Libyan Civil War and power was transferred to the General National Congress. By 2014, two rival authorities claimed to govern Libya, leading to another civil war. These two sides signed a permanent ceasefire in Oct 2020 and a unity government took authority.



Sep 2023 Flood:

On 10th Sep 2023, unprecedented flooding in Libya was caused by Storm Daniel and the collapse of two dams near the city of Derna.

Derna is a coastal city. It is situated at the end of a valley and bisected by the Wadi Derna, a seasonal river that flows from Mountains to the south (towards the sea) and is normally protected from flooding by dams.

The north-eastern city of Benghazi, Sousa, and Al-Marj were badly affected by the Disaster.

Impact: More than 12,000 people were killed.

The Flooding occurred in LIBYA's eastern region, which witnessed extreme rainfall on 10th Sep and 11th Sep.

Why so heavy rainfall?

Storm Daniel or Cyclone Daniel.

Daniel transitioned into a "medicane", or tropical cyclone that occasionally forms over the Mediterranean sea. Focus was intensified due to abnormally warm water of Mediterranean sea.



4) MOROCCO

It is a country in the Maghreb region of north Africa.

Capital: Rabat

Countries having land border: Western Sahara (mostly controlled by Morocco); and Algeria.

Water Bodies: The country borders Atlantic Sea to its north and west and Mediterranean sea to its north-east.



Morocco Earthquake 2023:

A severe earthquake struck near the town of Oukaimedene in Western Morocco on 8th Sep 2023. It killed around 3,000 people and injured another 5,500 people.

The earthquake heavily damaged parts of ancient section of Marrakech and devastated several remote settlements in the Atlas mountains.

It was also felt as far away as Morocco's largest city, Casablanca, and in Portugal and Algeria.

5) WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE

A former Spanish colony, Western Sahara is a vast, arid region in northwest Africa that is larger than the size of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, but with less than six lakh inhabitants.

It is mineral rich: home to abundant reserves of phosphate, a key ingredient in the manufacturing of synthetic fertilisers.

It has also lucrative fish resources and is believed to have offshore oil.

The region first came under Spanish control in 1884, and was made a province called 'Spanish Sahara' by the European country in 1934. Then in 1957, its northern neighbour Morocco, which had become independent from French rule just a year before, staked its claim over the entire territory, reasserting a centuries-old position.

Meanwhile, Western Sahara's Sahrawi ethnic group began efforts to gain independence from Spain. In 1973, a guerrilla movement sprang up called the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Polisario Front), named after the two regions constituting the Spanish province.

Then in 1975, ten years after the UN called for its decolonisation, Spain withdrew from Western Sahara, partitioning the region between Morocco, which received the region's northern two-thirds, and Mauritania the remaining third in the south. The partition took place despite a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) calling the claims by both Morocco and Mauritania to the region as tenuous, and which favoured self-determination for the Sahrawis.



The Polisario Front contested the handover and continued its armed struggle with support from neighbouring Algeria, and in 1976 started a government-in-exile called the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Three years later, Morocco again strengthened its hand by annexing Mauritania's share of Western Sahara, after the latter decided to withdraw from the region and the conflict. A UN-brokered ceasefire stopped the war in 1991.

Since then, Morocco has controlled around 80 per cent of Western Sahara, including its phosphate reserves and rich fishing grounds. Combined with its own deposits of the mineral, Morocco currently holds over 72 per cent of the world's phosphate reserves, as per The Atlantic. China, which has the second-most reserves, has less than 6 per cent.

6) HORN OF AFRICA

The Horn of Africa is the easternmost peninsula of the African continent, excluding African islands.

It lies along the southern boundary of the Red Sea and extends hundreds of kilometres into the Gulf of Aden, Somali Sea and Guardafui Channel.

The Horn of Africa consists of the internationally recognized countries of Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia as well as the unrecognized country of Somaliland



7) TIGRAY REGION OF ETHIOPIA: TIGRAY WAR

Tigray War is an armed conflict that lasted from Nov 2020 to Nov 2022. It was primarily fought between the Tigray region of Ethiopia between forces allied to the Ethiopian federal government and Eritrea on one side and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on the other.

The conflict dates back to 2018 when Abiy Ahmed (2019 Nobel Peace Prize Winner) first came to power and took steps to reduce the authority of Tigray officials. The war had erupted in 2020 after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmad sent the army to the Northern Tigray region to remove local authorities from the TPLF who challenged his authority and whom he accused of having attached military bases.



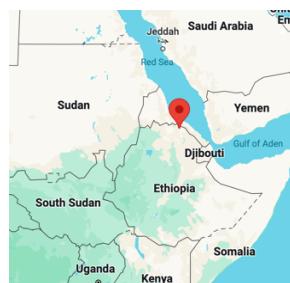
8) DANAKIL DEPRESSION

The Danakil depression is located in the north of Ethiopia, close to the border with neighbouring Eritrea (which has gained independence from Ethiopia)

It is the northern part of the Afar Triangle or Afar Depression. The Afar Depression spans Djibouti, Eritrea, and the Afar region of Ethiopia. The northern part of this Danakil depression.

Afar Triangle has resulted from the divergence of three tectonic plates in the Horn of Africa. The three plates are African Plate, Arabian Plate and Somali Plate.

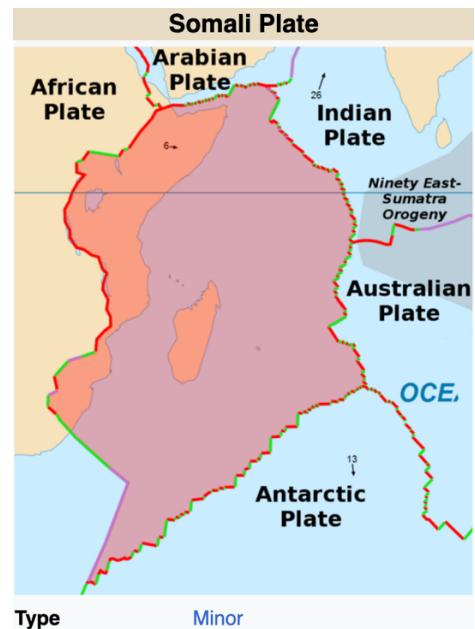
Other interesting things about Danakil Depression:



1. In 1974, researchers found the remains of 'Lucy' in the Danakil depression, an early ancestor of modern humans dating back 3.2 million years.
2. It is the hottest place on Earth and one of the world's lowest place at 100 meters below sea level.
3. **No Living Organisms in Danakil Depression:** Scientists have recently concluded that active and naturally occurring life can't be sustained at Danakil.

Two Key Reasons

- **Magnesium dominated brines** cause the cells to break down.
- An environment having **simultaneous very low pH and high salt**, a combination that makes adaptation highly difficult
- 4. The acidic springs of the Dallol crater have attracted scientists in the search for extremophile microbes as they seek to understand the origins of life on earth, as well as possibility of early stage life on Mars.
- 5. **Mount Ayalu** and **Ert A Ale** are the two active volcanoes in the Danakil Depression.
- 6. **The Gaet's ale Pond** - located in the depression is the saltiest lake in the world with a salinity of 43%. It was only created in 2005 after an earthquake in the region. Thus, it is one of the youngest world record setter.



9) SOMALIA

- Somalia is a country in the horn of Africa and is bordered by Ethiopia to the West, Djibouti to the North west and Kenya to the South West. It also touches Gulf of Aden to its north and Indian Ocean to its east.
- It has the longest Coastline on Africa's Mainland.
- **Capital:** Mogadishu
- It is sometimes described as Africa's most culturally homogenous country.
- **Equator** passes through Somalia.



10) NILE RIVER

The Nile is a major north flowing river in the north-eastern Africa. It is also the longest (6650 km) river of the world. The claim of longest river is disputed by the Brazilian government which says that the Amazon river is the longest.

It's **drainage basin** covers 11 countries - Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Republic of Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Note: A drainage basin is an area of land where water from rain or snow melt drains downhill into a body of water such as a river, lake, wetland or ocean.

Nile has two major tributaries - the **White Nile** and the **Blue Nile**. The two rivers meet just north of Sudanese Capital - Khartoum.

- **White Nile** is considered the head water and primary stream of the Nile river itself.
 - It is longer and originates in the Great Lakes region of the Central Africa. It flows north through Tanzania, Lake Victoria, Uganda, South Sudan and meets Blue Nile in Sudan.
- **Blue Nile** is the source of most of the water of River Nile (80%). It begins at Lake Tana in Ethiopia and flows into Sudan from South East.



Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GRED):

Great Renaissance Dam has been constructed over Blue Nile River in Ethiopia. Once fully constructed it will be the largest hydropower project of Africa. Further, since Ethiopia's 65% of population suffers from lack of access

to electricity, the dam will reduce these shortages and would also benefit industry and economy. The country will also be able to supply electricity to neighbouring countries like Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea and South Sudan.

At full capacity, the huge hydroelectric dam - 1.8 kms (1.1 miles) long and 145 meters high - could generate 5 GW of electricity.

In Sep 2023, Ethiopia announced that it has filled its Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile.

But, **Egypt and Sudan** fear that the massive \$4.2 billion dam will severely reduce the share of Nile water they receive and have repeatedly asked Addis Ababa to stop filling it until they have all reached an agreement on how it should work.

In Dec 2023, Egypt declares dead end in Renaissance Dam negotiation with Ethiopia, Sudan.

11) SUDAN

- Why in news?
 - » India launches **operation Kaveri** to evacuate citizens from Sudan (April 2023)
- **Violence in 2023 and need of evacuation:**
 - » A vicious power struggle between the regular army and a powerful paramilitary force (Rapid Support Force) has led to violence across Sudan for more than a week now. The power struggle has seen heavy bombardment of the Khartoum city.
- **Geography:**
 - » Sudan (Republic of Sudan) is a country in north-east Africa.
 - » **Neighbouring Countries:** It is bordered by the Central African Republic to the South West, Chad to the West, Libya to the northwest, Egypt in North, Eritrea in the north-east, Ethiopia in the southwest and South Sudan in South.
 - » It also borders Red Sea on its north east and east.
 - **Port Sudan** is a city and port on the Red Sea in eastern Sudan.
- **Note:**
 - » Jeddah Port is a Saudi Arabian port, located in Jeddah on Red sea, at the middle of the international shipping route between east and west via the suez canal.
 - It is the second largest and second busiest port in the Arab World (after the port of Jabel Ali in Dubai, UAE)
 - The city of Jeddah is the second largest city of Saudi Arabia after the capital Riyadh



12) LAKE VICTORIA

It is the 2nd largest fresh water lake in the world in terms of surface area (after Lake Superior) and largest in AF.

It has its boundaries in 3 east African countries (Uganda(45%), Kenya (6%) and Tanzania (49%)). It occupies a shallow depression in Africa.

Source of water for lake Victoria: Mostly rainfall (80%) and thousands of small streams. The Kagera river is the largest river flowing into the lake, with a mouth on lake's western shore.

Lake Victoria is drained solely by the Nile River near Jinja, Uganda, on the lake's northern shore

Mingingo Island

It is a very small island (barely 1/4th of an hectare large) in Lake Victoria.

It is claimed by both Uganda and Kenya and the dispute has continued for a decade now.

The island is a rounded, rocky outcrop which has become densely populated over the last 1 decade.

The surroundings of the island is very rich in fishes and is a fisherman's paradise.

Note: Country's forming part of Lake Victoria Basin:

1. Uganda
2. Kenya
3. Tanzania
4. Rwanda
5. Burundi

Each of this country contributes water to the lake through various rivers, streams, and direct rainfall.



Climate Change threatening Lake Victoria Basin (June 2023)

A new scientific report published in the journal Nature shows significant precipitation changes and increasing extreme climate events in the near future of the already sensitive region, affecting both its large human populations as well as endemic biodiversity.

Note:

Lake Superior is the world's largest fresh water lake by surface area, third largest by volume, and the deepest, largest and coldest of the Great Lakes of North America.

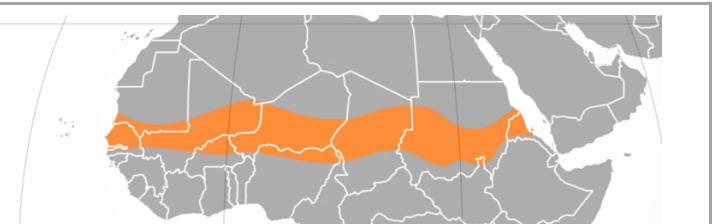
Lake Baikal (located in Russia in the southern region of Siberia), is the largest freshwater lake by both volume and depth (1741 m). It contains 20% of the world's fresh water. It hides its vast waters under a relatively small surface area.

13) SAHEL REGION

Sahel region is a semi-arid region of western and north-central Africa, extending from Senegal eastward to Sudan. It forms a transition zone between the arid Sahara desert to the north and the belt of humid Savanna to the South.

It stretches across the south-central latitude of Northern Africa between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea.

Countries: The Sahel part of Africa includes parts of northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali,



Some issues faced by the region:

There are frequent shortages of food and water due to dry harsh climate. This is exacerbated by the

Northern Burkina Faso, the extreme south of Algeria, southern Niger, the extreme north of Nigeria, Cameroon, and Central African Republic, central Chad, central and southern Sudan, the extreme north of South Sudan, Eritrea, and the extreme north of Ethiopia.

population increasing rapidly due to very high birth-rates across the region.

For e.g. Niger has world's highest fertility rate.

Jihadist Insurgent groups including Boko Haram, Islamic State and al-Qaeda frequently carry out major attacks in some parts of Western Sahel.

Recent examples of Coup Bid in the Wider Sahel Region:

The multifold issues of weak governments, often composed of elites of certain ethnic communities, engaging frequently in corruption, and unable to register economic and social progress, led to military takeovers of elected regimes under the pre-text of restoring stability.

While the number of coup d'etats in the larger African continent and the Sahel were high till the turn of the millennium, a decline was witnessed in the 2000s, followed by an upswing since 2000.

A renewed chapter of instability began in 2012 when the then fairly dormant rebellion of the Tuareg people, which had taken place in the 1960s, 1990 and 2006 in northern Mali, resurfaced and spilled beyond country's borders. The situation was compounded by collapse of Muammar Gadaffi regime bordering Libya which caused an influx of extremists and arms into the Sahel.

The rebel groups, who demand a separate state for the Tuaregs - a mere 10% of the Malian population - organized and aligned themselves with multiple Islamist groups, including Al Qaea in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This led to violent Islamist group gaining ground in the tri-border region between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, controlling territory and conducting attacks.

Have Military Takeovers lessened the violence in Sahel?

- No Concrete evidence
- A crisis monitoring group, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), points

Recent African coups d'état

World leaders condemned an attempted coup in Niger, calling for President Mohamed Bazoum – a key Western ally – to be released. Seven coups since 2020 threaten sub-Saharan stability



1 **Niger, Jul 26, 2023:** Presidential guard members detain President **Mohamed Bazoum** (right) inside palace in Niamey. Elected in February 2021, President Bazoum has Western support in the fight against violent extremism, corruption and widespread poverty



2-3 **Mali, Aug 2020:** President **Ibrahim Boubacar Keita** ousted. Second coup by Col. **Assimi Goita** in May 2021. French and UN peacekeepers expelled – Russian Wagner Group deployed. Reports of summary executions



4 **Chad, Apr 2021:** Military takes control following death of President **Idriss Deby** after 30 years of rule. Deby's son **Mahamat Idriss Deby** declared president. Deadly protests follow amid demands for civilian rule



5 **Guinea, Sep 2021:** **Mamady Doumbouya** ousts President **Alpha Conde**. After promising democratic reforms, Col. Doumbouya and fellow coup leaders arrest opposition leaders and restrict media freedom



6 **Sudan, Oct 2021:** Gen. **Abdel Fattah al-Burhan** arrests civilian prime minister **Abdalla Hamdok** and other political leaders just two years after Sudan began transition to full civilian rule



7 **Burkina Faso, Jan 2022:** Army ousts President **Roch Kabore** (right). Following second putsch in September, junta leader Capt. **Ibrahim Traore** seizes power. In July 2023, U.S. sanctions Malian officials over allegations they have deployed Wagner mercenaries



Sources: Africa News, Bloomberg, Foreign Policy, Reuters Pictures: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

out that successive military coups in the recent past have caused regional instability and the weakening of state institutions. In recorded that in 2022, the number of reported deaths from political violence increased by 77% in Burkina Faso and 150% in Mali from 2021.

14) SIERRA LEON

Geography: It is a country located on the southwest coast of West Africa. It shares the southeastern border with Liberia and the northern half of the country is surrounded by Guinea. It has tropical climate, with diverse environments ranging from Savanna to rainforests.

Religion: Muslims constitute 75% of the population. Christian are minority but quite influential.

Capital: Freetown.

What led to Coup attempt in Sierra Leone? (Dec 2023)

- In Nov 2023, unidentified gunmen targeted the Wilberforce military barracks and several police stations and correctional centres in Freetown, Sierra Leone. It was considered a coup attempt.
- **Key issues in Sierra Leone:**
 - a. **Political Instability:** This instability has been there since June 2023, when President Julius Maada Bio was re-elected. Opposition have claimed that elections were manipulated.
 - b. **Economic instability: Inflation** (upto 50%); **Poverty** (more than 50% of population); **unemployment**
 - c. **Police aggression:** For e.g. the Aug 2022 riots left six police officers and 27 protestors dead.



15) NIGER

Niger, officially Republic of Niger, is a western African land locked country.

Neighbouring countries: Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Algeria, Libya, and Chad.

It is one of the poorest country in the world with poor HDI performance.

Resources: It has gold mining reserves and around 5-7% of the global production of Uranium.

Capital: Niamey.

Niger River: The country takes its name from the river which flows through the southwestern part of its territory,

News: Coup in Niger (July - Aug 2023)

On July 29th, 2023, General Tchiani declared himself the leader of Niger after instigating a military coup against the President, Mohammed Bazoum. The 2021 Presidential Election witnessed Niger's first peaceful democratic transfer of power since its independence from France in 1960. This is the fifth coup in Niger since then.

Gen Tchiani has been the head of Presidential guard since 2011, which means he was responsible for protecting the President from military takeover such as this.

Reactions:

African Union demanded the country's military return to their barracks and restore constitutional authority.

European Union has also announced the suspension of security and funding cooperation with Niger, declaring that the EU would not recognize the putschists who have confined the democratically elected President **Mohamed Bazoum** to his official residence.

Why is the West extra concerned about Niger's Coup?

Niger, owing to its relative stability, has become a democratic outlier in the Sahel military following military takeover in neighbouring Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad since 2020.



Political History of Niger:

- It was a French colony till 1960 like many of its neighbours.
- It faced a long period of instability post-independence and was rocked by four military coup between 1974 and 2010.
- Like many countries in the wider Sahel region, the Niger has also faced the rise of Islamist Extremist groups, and armed local militias supported by stretched state security forces to counter the jihadist threat, and the resulting violence and displacement.
- **Mohammed Issoufou** came to power in 2011, winning legislative elections. Under this two-term President rule, Niger saw a semblance of political stability.
- In 2021, when Mr Issoufou agreed to step down after completing his second term, the maximum number of successive allowed to a leader, his cabinet minister Mr. Bazoum was elected President, in the first democratic transfer of power since the country's independence.
- In July 2023, the President, Mr. Bazoum, and his family were detained by elite troops in Niger, who declared that they now hold power.
- Later, General Tchiani said in a television address that the nation would now be run by newly formed military body, the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP).

How does Russia Figure in the Crisis?

Multi pro-coup protestors in Niger this week were seen waving Russian flags in the protests outside the National Assembly, the country's legislature.

After Military coups and anti-French sentiments, France relations with the military rulers grew hostile in Mali and Burkina Faso. After this France shifted more than 1,000 troops to Niger. In such situation, landlocked Niger was viewed by analysts as the West's "only hope" in the region to fight the militants.

Niger also played an outsized role in America's Africa strategy and had become a key partner for Washington's fight against Islamist insurgents, who have killed thousands of people and displaced millions more.

The **European Union** also decided last year to set up a three year military training mission in Niger, to which Germany contribute troops. **Italy** also has around 300 soldiers in the country.

Now, with Niger also falling into the hands of a military led leadership, it is unclear when the U.S. and European countries would be able to impact security in the region.

Anti-French sentiments in the Sahel region has allowed Russia to make inroads in the region.

Mercenaries from Russia's Private military group Wagner are already active in Mali, from where the French have withdrawn troops after a decade.

After officially announcing the end of the French operations in Nov 2022, **Burkina Faso** also turned towards Moscow taking steps similar to Mali.

In **Niger** also, Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin expressed his support for the Putschist takeover of Niger. Observers now believe that Niger may open its doors to Russian influence through Wagner.

Notably, the anti-French sentiment in the Sahel has been as a reason for Russia making inroads into the region.

16) NIGER RIVER

It is the principal river of Western Africa. With a length of 4,200 km, it is the third longest river in Africa, after the Nile and the Congo.

It originates in the **Guinea Highlands** in south-eastern **Guinea** near the Sierra Leone border.

Path: It runs in a crescent shape through **Guinea**, **Mali**, **Niger**, **Benin** and **Nigeria**, discharging through a massive delta called the **Niger Delta**, into the Gulf of Guinea in Atlantic Ocean.



17) BURKINA FASO

Details about Burkina Faso

It is a landlocked country in West Africa. It is bordered by Mali to the Northwest, Niger to Northeast, Benin in Southeast, Togo and Ghana to South, and the Ivory Coast to the Southwest.

Capital: Ouagadougou



18) GULF OF GUINEA

It is the north easternmost part of the tropical Atlantic Ocean from Cape Lopez in Gabon, north and west to Cape Palmas in Liberia.

The intersection of Equator and Prime Meridian (Zero degree longitude and Zero degree latitude) is in the gulf.

It borders eight African countries - Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe.

Note: Some definitions of Gulf of Guinea also include Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia as the border countries of Gulf of Guinea.

River: the main river dispersing its water in the Gulf are the Niger River and the Volta river.

Note: Volta is the main river system in the country of Ghana.



In Oct 2023, India conducted joint drills with warships from the EU in Gulf of Guinea, including flying exercises and tactical manoeuvres off the coast of Ghana. This is the **first time** Indian ships have taken part in such a drill in the Gulf of Guinea with EU. **Indian Navy's INS Sumedha**, an offshore patrol vessel, was joined by naval ships of three EU member states - Italian ship ITS Foscari, French Ship FS Ventose and Spanish Ship Tornado

19) CONGO RIVER AND CONGO RIVER BASIN

Congo River was formerly also known as the Zaire River.

It is the second longest (4,700 km) river of Africa (9th longest of the world) (the longest is Nile).

It is also the world's third largest river in terms of discharge volume after Amazon and Ganges.

It is also the world's deepest recorded river, with measured depth of around 220 m.

Important Tributary: The Chambeshi is a tributary of the Lualaba River (which is the name of the Congo river upstream of Boyoma Falls).

Crosses equator twice: It is the only major river of the world to cross equator twice.



Congo River Basin: It is the world's second largest river basin (after Amazon river), comprising an area of 3.4 million square kms.

The river and its tributaries flow through the **Congo Rainforest**, the second largest rainforest area in the world, after the Amazon Rain Forest.

Basin countries include: DRC, Republic of Congo, parts of Gabon, Part of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi, parts of Tanzania, Western Zambia, northern Angola.

20) DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

It is a country located in Central Africa and equator passes through northern part of the country giving it a tropical climate.

It has a small 40 km coastline, otherwise it is landlocked.

DRC is the second largest country in the Africa (after Algeria).

Capital: Kinshasa (located on Congo river), is the largest city of the DRC and also its administrative, economic and cultural centre.

DRC gained independence from Belgium in 1960 and from 1971 to 1997 the country was officially called the Republic of Zaire, a change made by then ruler Gen. Mobutu Sese Seko to give the country what he thought was a more authentic African name. "Zaire" is a variation of a term meaning "great river" in local African languages; Following the overthrow of Mobutu in 1997, the country's name prior to 1971, the DRC, was reinstated.

Lake Tanganyika: It is the longest freshwater lake in the world and the second deepest (after Lake Baikal of Russia). It forms boundary between DRC-Burundi and part of boundary between DRC-Tanzania.



Neighbouring Countries: Republic of Congo (Brazzaville); Central African Republic; South Sudan; Uganda; Rwanda; Burundi; Tanzania (Separated by Lake Tanganyika), Zambia and Angola.

Most of the country is composed of the Central Congo Basin.

Congo Basin Rain Forest: The country consist of significant portion of the Congo Basin rain forest often known as the "second lung of the Earth".

21) ETHNIC CONFLICT IN DRC (NOV 2023, SOURCE TH)

Background of Conflict in DRC?

Rwandan Genocide in 1994: Ethnic Hutu extremists killed nearly 1 million minority ethnic Tutsis and non-extremist Hutus.

Since then, the eastern part of DRC, bordering Rwanda, has been facing insurgency perpetrated by several rebel militant groups. According to the UN, more than 120 insurgent groups are active in eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika.

Tutsi led M23 Rebel Group: The Tutsi led M-23 rebel group resurfaced in Nov 2021 and has worsened the security situation in the eastern provinces of DRC. After failure of various peace attempts, the groups has kept on advancing since Jan 2023. DRC accused Rwanda of supporting Tutsi group.

Prominent Rebel Groups:

- The prominent groups besides M23 include the Allied Democratic Force (ADF), the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO).
- **ADF** is an Uganda based insurgent groups and is operating since 1999. It has also pledged its allegiance to ISIS.
- **CODECO** claims that they aim to protect the ethnic Lendu against the Hemas and the Congo army.

Impacts of Insurgency:

- Thousands are dead
- **Huge Internal Displacement:** In Oct 2023 internally displaced in the DRC has risen to **6.9 million**.
- In the eastern province of Kivu, nearly a million people have been displaced due to the ongoing conflict with the rebel group, Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23)



Provinces of DRC

Why insurgency?

- **Ethnic Intolerance:** Following the Rwandan genocide, around 2 million Hutu refugees crossed Rwanda into North Kivu and South Kivu provinces of DRC. The organized ethnic militias in DRC fearing persecution.
 - Tensions intensified as Rwandan Tutsis organized militias against the Hutus who fled to DRC.
 - Subsequently several, ethnic and inter-ethnic groups who felt threatened started organizing their militias against each other.
- **Political Instability:** President Felix Tshikedi came to power in 2019 through democratic elections. The country is to hold elections on 20th Dec. However, election commission has raised concerns about how continuing insecurity in parts of the country would pose a challenge to a "free democratic and transparent" vote.
- **Control over territory and natural resources**
- **Extrajudicial killings by security forces**
- **Rising tensions with neighbouring countries** (Armed groups have been supported by the governments of **Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi**, at

various points, acting as proxies for each country's interest in the region)

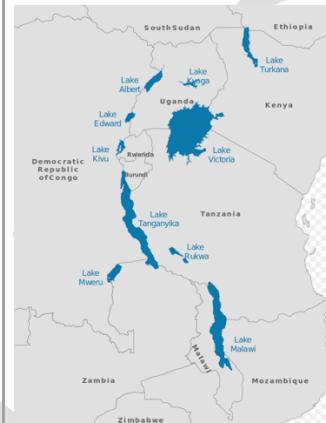
22) LAKE TANGANYIKA

Lake Tanganyika is one of the African Great Lake. It is the world's longest lake.

It is second-oldest freshwater lake in the world, the second largest by volume, and the second deepest in the world, in all cases after Lake Baikal in Siberia.

The lake is shared between four countries - DRC(40%), Burundi, Tanzania (46%) and Zambia.

The lake drains into the Congo River system and ultimately into the Atlantic Ocean.



23) ZAMBIA: KAFUE NATIONAL PARK

Kafue National Park: Lion and Leopard populations have begun rebounding in Africa's **third** largest national park - **Zambia's Kafue National Park (KNP)** -after fifty years of poaching, according to a new report from Panthera, the global wild cat conservation organizations, and partners.

Factors:

1. **Counter Poaching Operations:** Game changing conservation technologies like SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and EarthRanger were employed in these operations.
2. **Effective Prosecution**
3. Distribution of synthetic 'heritage Furs' replacing garments made of authentic leopard and lions skin



Other details about KNP: KNP sits within the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA), the largest terrestrial conservation landscape in the world spanning five countries (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe)

24) MADAGASCAR

It is an island country off the coast of East Africa in Indian Ocean. The country consists of island of Madagascar (the fourth largest island in the world after Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo), and numerous smaller peripheral islands.

It is a biodiversity hotspot; and over 90% of its wildlife is found nowhere else on earth.

Malagsay and French are the official language as France controlled the island till 1960.

Economy: Madagascar belong to the group of **least developed countries** according to UN. Eco-tourism and agriculture, paired with greater investment in education, health and private enterprise, are key elements of Madagascar's development strategy.

The country lies mostly between 12 degree S and 26 degree S, and longitudes 43 degree E and 51 degree E.

Neighbouring Islands

- French territory of Reunion and country of Mauritius to the east.
- State of Comoros and the French territory of Mayotte to the north west.

Mozambique is the nearest mainland state, located to the west.



25) MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL

Mozambique Channel

Mozambique Channel is a channel in western Indian ocean and threads between the island nation of Madagascar on the east and Mozambique on the Africa mainland (west).

Comoro Archipealgo mark the northern boundary of the channel.

The channel forms EEZ of various countries including Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, France, Seychelles, and Comoros.



26) TRISTAN DA CUNHA

Tristan da Cunha is a remote group of volcanic islands in the south Atlantic Ocean.

It is the most remote inhabited archipelago in the world.

Tristan da Cunha is a British Overseas Territory with its own constitution



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27) ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Also, referred as **Rockies**, they dominate the western part of North American Continent.

They extend for a distance of 4,800 kms and is the largest mountain range system of North America.

They extend from the northern most portion of the Western Canada to the State of New Mexico in the South west USA.

The mountain system is a complex mix of fold mountains, fault block mountains, and volcanic activities.

Why in news recently?

Rocky mountain forests burning more now than any time in the past 2,000 years. (Feb 2023)

Key reason:

- Exceptional Droughts
- Climate Change

How are scientists able to compare the current situation with the past?

- Evidence of past fires are preserved in lake sediments.
- Scientists used records of past fires preserved in the sediments of 20 lakes in the Central Rocky mountains.
- **The Result:** Extensive burning over the 21st century is unprecedented in this region in the past 2,000 years.



28) MILNE ICE SHELF

The Milne Ice Shelf, a fragment of the former Ellesmere Ice Shelf, is located in the Qikiqtaaluk Region, Nunavut, **Canada**.

It is the second largest ice shelf in the Arctic Ocean.

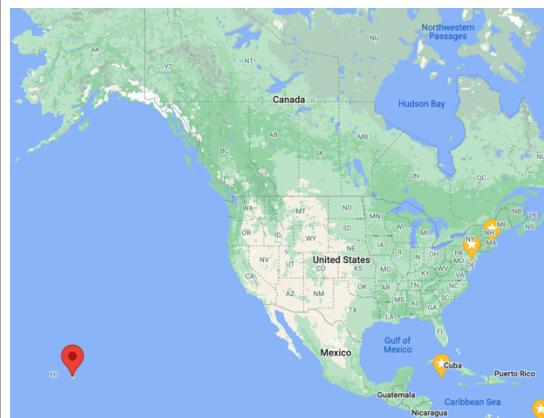
The Milne ice shelf lost more than 40 per cent of its ice over two days at the end of July 2020. This has increased concerns over the rapid melting of ice and the breaking of old ice shelves — large floating pieces of ice that form when a glacier or ice sheet flows into the sea surface.



29) HAWAII

Hawaii is a state in the western USA located in the pacific ocean about 2,000 miles from the US mainland. It is the only US state outside north America and only state that is an archipelago. It is also the only US state in the Tropics.

It consists of more than 130 volcanic islands



Note: Honolulu is the capital and most populous city of the US State of Hawaii. It is situated along the southeast coast of island of O'ahu, and is the westernmost and southernmost major US city.

Kilauea:

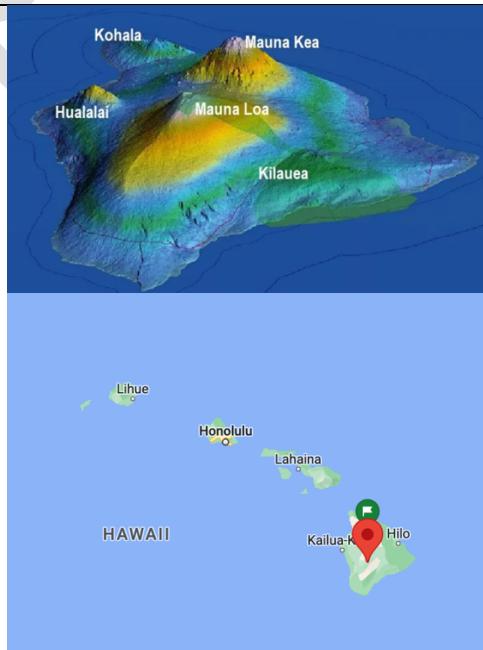
Kilauea is an active shield volcano in the Hawaiian Islands.

Historically, it is the most active of the five volcanoes that together form the Big Island of Hawai'i.

30) MAUNA LOA VOLCANO

Mauna Loa: Mauna Loa erupts after 40 years (Dec 2022)

- Mauna Loa is one of the five volcanoes that together make up the Big Island of Hawaii. The other four volcanoes are Hualalai, Kilauea, Kohala and Mauna Kea.
 - o **Note:** Big Island of Hawaii is the southernmost island in the Hawaiian archipelago.
- Mauna Loa is not the tallest (that title goes to Mauna Kea), but it's the largest and makes up about half of the Island's land mass. It is the largest volcano situated in the US state of Hawaii.
- It sits immediately north of Kilauea Volcano, which is also erupting currently from its summit crater. It is well known for a 2018 eruption that destroyed 700 homes and sent rivers of lava spreading across farms and into the ocean.
- It is an **active volcano** and in written history, dating to 1843, it has erupted 33 times. Before, 2022, It had erupted in 1984.
- The **Big Island** is mostly rural and is home to cattle ranches, coffee farms and beach resorts. It's about 200 miles (320 kms) South of Hawaii's most populated island, Oahu, where the state capital Honolulu and beach resort Waikiki are both located.



31) MAUI:

Maui:

The island of Maui is the second largest (1,883 km²) of the islands of the state of Hawaii. It is also the largest of Maui county's four islands which include Moloka'I, Lanai, and unpopulated Kahoolawe.

Aug 2023: the devastating Wildfires on the island of Maui, Hawaii has already caused 55 deaths and around 1,000 people are still unaccounted for.



32) COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Countries in Central America: 7 countries are considered to be part of Central America:

Belize

Guatemala:

- A volcano named Fuego (Spanish for fire) erupted in Dec 2022.

Honduras

El Salvador

Nicaragua

Costa Rica

Panama



33) NICARAGUA

- » Nicaragua has severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan and will now officially recognize only China. (
- » **why does China want this?**
 - Loss of formal allies further constrains the Taiwanese leadership's ability to make state visits abroad and feed into Beijing's narrative that Taiwan is losing the diplomatic battle and will eventually be forced to accept the inevitable outcome of the political union with the People's Republic.
- » Nicaragua's authoritarian President Daniel Ortega has increasingly found himself an international pariah, with the USA denouncing Nov 2021 polls as a "pantomime elections".
- » **China had been steadily luring Taiwan's remaining allies by promising trade and development assistance while ignoring political controversies.**
- » **What incentives did China give?**
 - No reason has been given by Nicaragua
 - But, the decision follows a trend among its Central American Neighbours such as Panama and Costa Rica which have

switched to Beijing in recent years, prompting concerns in Taipei and Washington of a potential Domino effect.

34) PANAMA CANAL

It is an **artificial waterway** in Panama that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. The canal cuts across Isthmus of Panama and is a very important for international trade.

Development of Canal was initiated by France in 1881, but stopped due to engineering problems and high worker mortality rate.

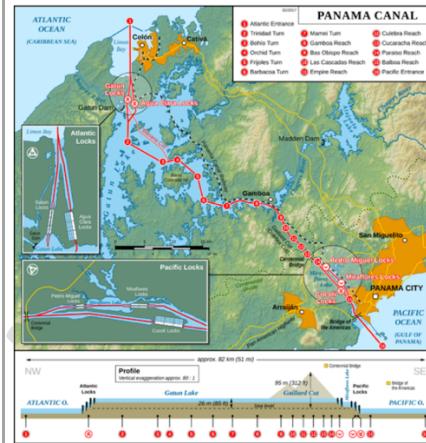
- The **US** took over the work in 1904 and the Canal was opened for operations in 1914.

Who manages the Canal

- Currently, the Canal is owned, managed and operated by Panama government. **Panama Canal Authority** is responsible for its operation and management.
- Note:
 - **1914 - 1979**: Controlled Solely by US
 - **1979 - 1999**: Panama Canal Commission (joint agency of US and Republic of Panama)
 - **1999 onwards**: Complete control to Panama (Panama Canal Authority)

Important Components

- **Canal Locks** are at each end to lift/lower the ships upto/down from **Gatun Lake**, an artificial lake created to reduce the amount of excavation work required for the canal, 26 m above sea level.
- **Gatun Lake** was created by damming of Chagres river. It provides millions of litres of water necessary to operate the Panama Canal locks each time a ship passes through.



Advantages of the Canal

Greatly reduces time and fuel needed for ship to travel from Atlantic to Pacific oceans, enabling them to avoid lengthy hazardous Cape Horn route around the southernmost tip of South America via the **Drake Passage** or **Strait of Magellan**.

Drought, Climate Change and its impact

An intense drought related to this year's El-Nino phenomenon has precipitously lowered the level of Panama's Gatun lake. This has forced the Panama Canal authority to impose draft limits on ships moving through the waterway's recently expanded locks.

35) COUNTRIES IN SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil
French Guyana
Suriname
Guyana
Venezuela
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Chile
Bolivia
Paraguay
Argentina
Uruguay
Falkland Islands



36) AMAZON RIVER

Amazon River:

- Amazon river is the river with largest drainage system in the world in terms of volume of its flow and the area of its basin.
 - It is estimated that about 1/5th of all water that runs off Earth's surface is carried by Amazon. The immense amount of freshwater flowing into Atlantic dilutes the ocean's saltiness for more than 160 kms from shore.
- **Length:** The total length of the river - as measured from the headwaters of Ucayali-Apurimac river system in the southern Peru is atleast 6400 km which makes it slightly shorter than Nile river.



- Source:** The source of the river is in Andes mountains and the mouth is in Atlantic Ocean.
- Amazon river is not building Delta:** Most of the estimated 1.3 million tons of sediments that the amazon pours daily into the sea is transported north by coastal currents to be deposited along the coasts of Brazil and French Guiana.
- Affects sea level in Caribbean Sea:** The Amazon river releases so much fresh water into the Atlantic sea, it alters the sea level in the Caribbean. The amazon water get picked up by Caribbean current, which carries the water to Caribbean island.

Controversy: Both length and source of the river have been debated and some claim that the river is longer than Nile.

Drainage Basin countries: The entire area that Amazon river drains is the largest river basin in the world. It drains part of Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Columbia, Bolivia and a small part of Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname.

37) PANTANAL WETLAND

The Pantanal is a natural region encompassing the world's largest tropical wetland area, and the world's largest flooded grasslands.

It is located mostly within the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul, but it extends into Mato Grosso and portions of Bolivia and Paraguay.

It is gently-sloped basin that receives runoff from the upland areas (the Planalto highlands) and slowly releases the water through the Paraguay River and tributaries



38) GALAPAGOS ISLAND

Why in news?

Famed Darwin's Arch in Galapagos Islands Collapses

Details about Galapagos Islands:

These islands are part of the Republic of Ecuador. They are archipelago of volcanic islands distributed on either side of the equator in Pacific Ocean. It is located 903 km west of the continental Ecuador.

Wolf Volcano is a famous one in Galapagos Island.

Darwin's Arch: It was a famed natural rock formation in the Galapagos island which is popular with divers, photographers, and cruise ship tourists. It has collapsed from erosion.



The arch stood at northernmost tip of the Galapagos Islands. Once a part of Darwin's island, the arch is famous for the variety of underwater life teeming nearby, including schools of hammerhead sharks.



39) SANGAY VOLCANO

Sangay is an active stratovolcano in central Ecuador.

It is the most active volcano in Ecuador, despite erupting only four times in recorded history, because the eruption that started in 1934 is still ongoing.

It exhibits mostly strombolian activity



40) WORLD'S FIFTH OCEAN: SOUTHERN OCEAN

The National Geographic magazine has recognised the 'Southern Ocean' as the world's fifth ocean June 8, 2021 hoping others will soon follow suit.

Usually, the magazine has followed the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) on marine names, it said in an article notifying the change.

Southern Ocean is the only ocean 'to touch three other oceans and to completely embrace a continent rather than being embraced by them'.

Its northern limit is a latitude of 60 degrees south.

It is also defined by its Antarctic Circumpolar Current that was formed 34 million years ago. The current flows from west to east around Antarctica

