

# 1. Geneva Conventions, 1949

- Before 1949, warfare lacked strong humanitarian rules.
- The devastation of the First and especially the Second World War exposed extreme human suffering, including genocide, civilian bombings, and concentration camps.

# Geneva Conventions, 1949

This led to a global realization:

- War may not be preventable, but its conduct must be regulated.
- The Geneva Conventions were adopted in 1949 to codify International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which governs conduct during armed conflict.

# Geneva Conventions, 1949

- The Geneva Conventions do not determine whether a war is legal. That is governed by the United Nations Charter.
- Instead, they regulate: Jus in bello – the conduct of parties during war.

# Geneva Conventions, 1949

- The entire framework rests on two foundational principles:
- Distinction- Parties must distinguish between combatants and civilians. Combatants can be targeted; civilians cannot.
- Humanity- Even enemies must be treated with dignity and without unnecessary suffering.

# Convention I: Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces on Land

Key provisions:

- Wounded and sick must be respected and treated without discrimination.
- Medical personnel, units, and establishments must not be attacked.
- Hospitals and ambulances are protected.
- The Red Cross and Red Crescent symbols signify neutrality and protection.
- Conceptual point: Once a soldier is wounded and incapable of fighting, they are no longer a threat and must be protected.

# Convention II: Wounded, Sick, and Shipwrecked at Sea

Key provisions:

- Shipwrecked and wounded naval personnel must be rescued and protected.
- Hospital ships cannot be attacked or captured.
- Even enemy forces are obligated to rescue shipwrecked individuals.
- Conceptual point: Maritime warfare creates unique vulnerabilities such as drowning and isolation, requiring specific protections.

# Convention III: Treatment of Prisoners of War (POWs)

Key provisions:

- POWs must be treated humanely at all times.
- They must be protected from violence, intimidation, and public humiliation.
- They are entitled to food, shelter, and medical care.
- POWs cannot be forced to reveal military information beyond name, rank, and serial number.
- Forced labour is permitted only under non-dangerous and non-humiliating conditions.
- POWs are lawful combatants captured during war, not criminals.

# Convention IV: Protection of Civilians

Key provisions:

- Civilians must not be targeted.
- Collective punishment and hostage-taking are prohibited.
- Occupying powers must ensure food, medical care, and basic rights in occupied territories.
- Deportation of civilians is prohibited.
- Civilians are the most vulnerable group in war and require maximum protection.

# Common Article 3

## Applicability:

- Applies to non-international armed conflicts (civil wars).
- Minimum guarantees:
- No torture or cruel treatment.
- No mutilation.
- No humiliating or degrading treatment.
- No execution without a fair trial.
- It is often called a “mini Geneva Convention” because it sets baseline humanitarian standards even in internal conflicts.

# Additional Protocol

## Protocol I (1977)

- Applies to international armed conflicts.
- Expands protections for civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- Introduces restrictions on methods and means of warfare.

## Protocol II (1977)

- Applies to non-international conflicts.
- Strengthens protections under Common Article 3.

## Protocol III (2005)

- Introduces an additional protective emblem: the Red Crystal.
- Designed for neutrality in culturally sensitive contexts.

# Grave Breaches (War Crimes)

- Serious violations of the conventions include:
- Torture
- Wilful killing
- Inhuman treatment
- Targeting civilians
- These are considered war crimes and attract international liability.

## Universal Jurisdiction

- States can prosecute individuals for war crimes regardless of where the crime occurred.

# Enforcement Mechanism

Implementation depends on:

- States themselves
- The International Committee of the Red Cross for monitoring and humanitarian work
- The International Criminal Court for prosecution in certain cases
- United Nations mechanisms
- There is no central global enforcement authority.

# Limitations

- **Lack of strong enforcement-** Powerful states may violate provisions without immediate consequences.
- **Non-state actors-** Terrorist groups and militias are difficult to regulate under the framework.
- **Changing nature of warfare-** Modern warfare includes drones, cyber operations, and urban conflict, which complicate application of traditional rules.

# Contemporary Relevance

- The Geneva Conventions remain central to current conflicts:
- Russia-Ukraine war: issues of POW treatment and civilian targeting
- Israel-Hamas conflict: debates over proportionality and civilian protection
- Syria conflict: use of prohibited weapons

# India's Position

- India is a signatory to the Geneva Conventions
- India follows these principles in military operations and United Nations peacekeeping missions

# 2. Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), 1993

- The use of chemical weapons in World War I caused massive casualties and long-term suffering (e.g., mustard gas, chlorine gas).

Earlier attempts like:

- Geneva Protocol (1925) → banned use, but not production or stockpiling
- Limitations of earlier efforts:
- Countries could still develop and store chemical weapons
- No verification mechanism
- This led to the need for a **comprehensive, legally binding treaty**, resulting in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

# Adoption and Entry into Force

- Adopted: 1992
- Entered into force: 1997
- Administered by:
- Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

# Objective

The CWC aims to:

- Completely eliminate chemical weapons globally
- Prohibit their development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, and use
- Ensure destruction of existing chemical weapon stockpiles

# Scope of the Convention

The CWC is unique because it:

- Bans **entire category of weapons of mass destruction**
- Covers both:
  - Military use
  - Industrial chemical regulation (dual-use chemicals)

# Core Obligations of Member States

## 1. Prohibition

- States are prohibited from:
- Developing chemical weapons
- Producing chemical weapons
- Acquiring or stockpiling them
- Using chemical weapons
- Assisting others in such activities

# Core Obligations of Member States

## 2. Destruction of Stockpiles

- States must:
  - Declare all chemical weapons
  - Destroy them within a specified timeframe

# Core Obligations of Member States

## 3. Destruction of Production Facilities

- Chemical weapon production facilities must:
  - Be dismantled
  - Or converted for peaceful use

## 4. Verification and Monitoring

- The CWC has one of the **strongest verification systems** among international treaties.

# Core Obligations of Member States

## Types of Inspections:

- Routine Inspections
- Conducted at declared facilities
- Challenge Inspections
- Any member state can request inspection of another
- No right to refuse

# Core Obligations of Member States

## 5. Regulation of Chemicals

### Schedule 1 (Highly Dangerous)

- No or very limited peaceful use
- Examples: Sarin, VX

### Schedule 2

- Limited industrial use
- Can be used for chemical weapons

### Schedule 3

- Widely used industrial chemicals
- Can also be weaponized

# Core Obligations of Member States

## Role of OPCW

- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is responsible for:
- Monitoring compliance
- Conducting inspections
- Assisting in chemical disarmament
- Investigating alleged use

# Core Obligations of Member States

## India's Position

- India is a **signatory and compliant member**
- Declared and destroyed its chemical weapons stockpile
- Actively supports global chemical disarmament

# Strengths of CWC

- Comprehensive Ban
- Unlike earlier treaties, bans development, production, and use
- Strong Verification
- Includes challenge inspections
- Global Acceptance
- Almost universal participation

# 3. Non Proliferation Treaty

- The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is-
  - *To prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.*
  - *To promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.*
  - *To further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.*
- The Treaty represents the *only binding commitment* in a multilateral treaty to the *goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States*.
- *Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970.*

# Non Proliferation Treaty

- *On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely.*
- A total of *191 States have joined the Treaty*, including the five nuclear-weapon States.
- The main countries *remaining outside the NPT are Israel, India and Pakistan, South Sudan.*
- North Korea, which *acceded in 1985* but never came into compliance, announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003.
- The treaty defines nuclear-weapon states as those that have built and *tested a nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967.*
- *These are USA (1945), Russia (1949), United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), China (1964)*

# India & NPT

- India has always been an ardent supporter of multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.
- India opposed to signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).
- India views it as discriminatory because of its grouping of countries that divided the world into *“nuclear haves” and “nuclear have-nots”*.
- India proposed a comprehensive proposal for *“complete and universal nuclear disarmament”* to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament in 1988.
- This came to be known as the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan.

**Country****Reason**IN **India**

Never signed; maintains a nuclear weapons program outside NPT.

PK **Pakistan**

Never signed; maintains a nuclear weapons program outside NPT.

IL **Israel**

Never signed; follows a policy of deliberate ambiguity (has not confirmed nor denied having nuclear weapons).

KP **North Korea**

Signed initially, but **withdrew in 2003**; pursued its own nuclear weapons program.

# NPT

- **The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)** includes a built-in mechanism to review how the treaty is being implemented.
- This is called the **NPT Review Conference (RevCon)**.

# NPT

It is held to:

- Assess implementation of treaty obligations
- Review progress on non-proliferation and disarmament
- Address emerging nuclear challenges
- Adopt forward-looking commitments

# How Often Does It Take Place?

- **Every 5 years-** The Review Conference is held once every **five years**.

# What is Reviewed?

The Review Conference evaluates:

- Non-proliferation obligations
- Disarmament commitments (Article VI)
- Peaceful uses of nuclear energy
- IAEA safeguards and compliance
- Regional nuclear issues (Middle East, DPRK, Iran etc.)

# 4. NEW START Treaty

- Last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the US and Russia expired on February 4, occurring at a time when Donald Trump's erratic foreign policy requires little elaboration and Vladimir Putin appears increasingly emboldened over Ukraine.

# START Treaty

- To understand the significance of the New START (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), signed by then presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev in 2010, a very brief history of arms reduction under START would help.

# START Treaty

- The objective of START-I, signed in 1991, was to reduce the nuclear arsenals of the US and the Soviet Union by imposing limits on deployed warheads, launchers, and ballistic missiles, among other offensive machinery.

# START Treaty

- START-II, aiming to intensify arms reduction, never actually came into force because George W Bush withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), which angered Moscow.
- Post-Cold War arms control efforts peaked under START until the signing of the New START.

# START Treaty

- The new treaty has also run into difficulties, most recently in 2023, when Russia suspended inspection activities under New START amid its war in Ukraine.
- In September last year, Vladimir Putin proposed a one-year voluntary extension, but negotiations appear to be far away.

# Challenging Situation

- With other long-standing arms control treaties like the ABM and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) having already collapsed, there are now effectively no legally binding limits on the US and Russia expanding their nuclear arsenals.

# The Escalation Logic of the Security Dilemma

- First, in the absence of limits, and in a world that is more dangerous this year than the last, both sides have incentives to expand their nuclear stockpiles.
- Basic international relations theory suggests that an increase in arms by one country is likely to provoke a response from its rival, which perceives it as an emerging offensive threat, and the situation becomes what scholars call a security dilemma.

# The Escalation Logic of the Security Dilemma

- In October last year, Trump announced that he had directed the resumption of nuclear weapons testing in the US for the first time in over three decades.
- Should Washington follow through on any such programme, it could trigger an arms race that would only raise the probability of war, particularly between nuclear and non-nuclear powers.

# The Escalation Logic of the Security Dilemma

- The dangers were most recently illustrated by the 12-day war between Israel and Iran last year, which will be seen as a textbook case of conflict fuelled by an arms race.

# Stability-Instability Paradox in Nuclear Deterrence

- The second consequence is what international relations scholar Glenn Snyder termed the stability-instability paradox:
- While the risk of direct war between nuclear-armed states may be reduced by the fear of nuclear retaliation, the likelihood of low-intensity conflicts and proxy wars may increase.

# Stability-Instability Paradox in Nuclear Deterrence

- States assume that as long as they remain below the nuclear threshold, escalation to catastrophic levels can be avoided.
- Arms control agreements provide transparency; without them, clarity about the size, posture and readiness of each other's arsenals diminishes.
- The nuclear threshold becomes harder to read, intensifying the paradox.

# Collapse of Arms Control and the Proliferation Cascade

- The third consequence concerns how other states behave.
- If the two countries that together account for most of the world's nuclear weapons abandon arms control altogether, nuclear proliferation elsewhere is bound to thrive.

# Collapse of Arms Control and the Proliferation Cascade

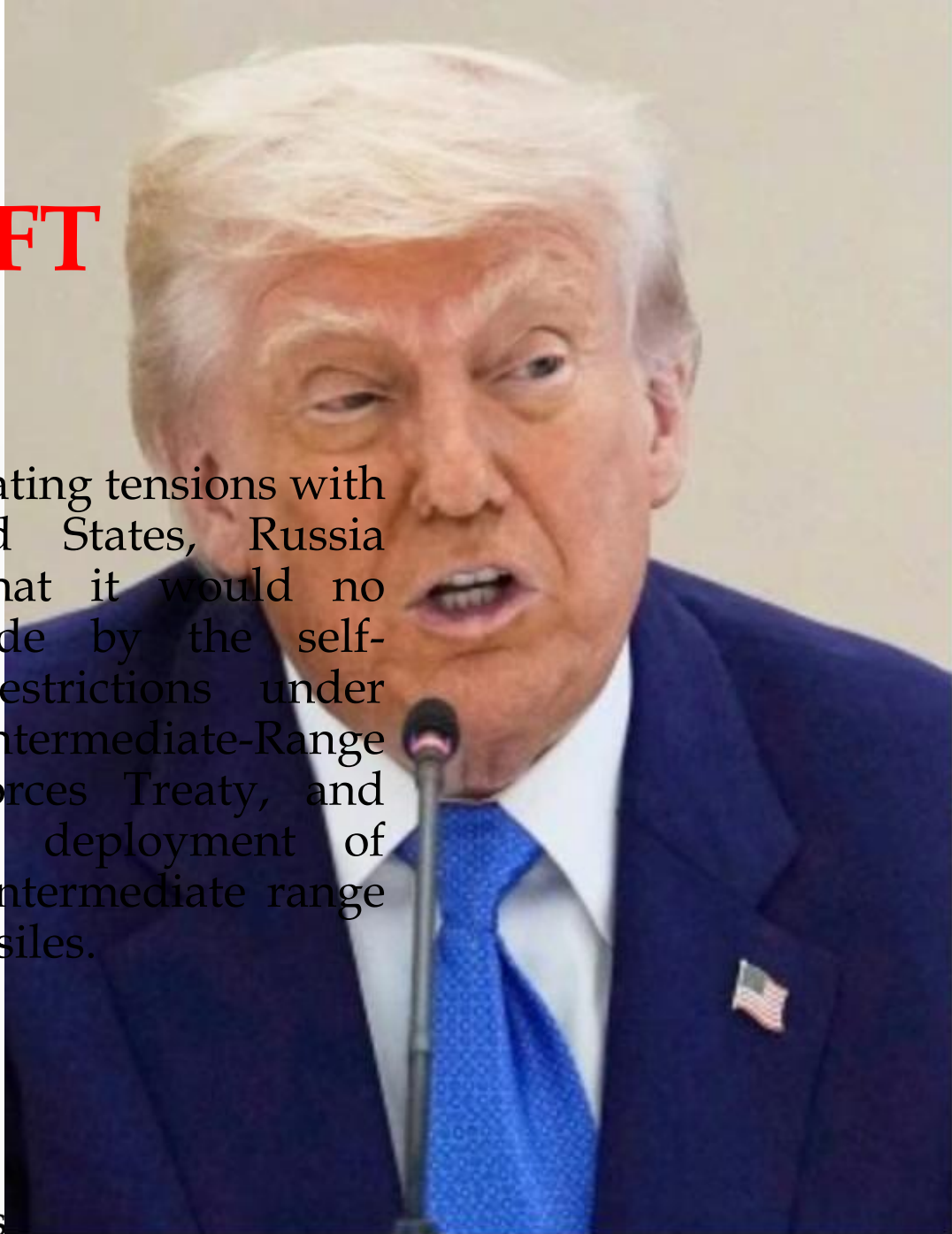
- And even while China undergoes its largest nuclear expansion, nowhere is this more immediately relevant than Iran.
- Should the regime acquire the bomb, others in the region like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt will inevitably follow suit.
- An already dangerous West Asia would then find itself armed with nuclear swords pointed in multiple directions.

# Way Forward

- Not too long ago, the world's superpowers agreed that too many nuclear weapons posed a danger to human existence.
- Recalling this sentiment, Washington and Moscow will hopefully return to the negotiating table.

## 5. IRNFT

- Amid escalating tensions with the United States, Russia declared that it would no longer abide by the self-imposed restrictions under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and renew the deployment of short and intermediate range nuclear missiles.



# Background

- Russian Foreign Ministry, over a statement, said that Moscow “no longer considers itself bound” by its “previously adopted self restrictions” under the treaty, while highlighting that US has already moved to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe and Asia.

# Russian, Chinese navies carry out anti-submarine drills in Sea of Japan: Is it Putin's signal to Trump?

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*The manoeuvres, part of the "Maritime Interaction-2025" drills, involve a large Russian anti-submarine ship, two Chinese destroyers, diesel-electric submarines from both countries and a Chinese submarine rescue vessel*



# China–Russia Naval Drills Underway

- China and Russia have been holding a series of **joint naval exercises** in the **Sea of Japan**, running from **August 1 to August 5, 2025**, under the name **“Joint Sea-2025”** or **“Maritime Interaction-2025”**. These drills have included:
  - Anti-submarine warfare
  - Artillery fire
  - Air-defense and missile operations
  - Submarine rescue training

# Drills By USA- Cause of Russia's Exit?

- U.S. President **Donald Trump** stated on **August 3, 2025**, that he had ordered two nuclear submarines to be positioned in the region to counter Russia. However:
- He did **not claim they were conducting exercises** in the Sea of Japan.
- Independent reports confirm **no U.S. submarine drills** were part of the scheduled Joint Sea-2025 exercise.

# Background

- This move comes after Trump, over the past week, continued to push India and China to halt their oil purchases from Russia, which he alleged, were helping fund the Kremlin's war against Ukraine, as he plans to pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to a ceasefire.

# What is IRNFT?

- The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was signed between the United States and the then USSR during the Cold War era (1987).
- The treaty led to the elimination of an entire class of weapons, ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres, before US withdrew from it, citing violations by Russia.
- Moreover, in 2019, Moscow had said it would not deploy missiles as long as Washington did not do so.

# What is IRNFT?

- In 1987, former US President Ronald Reagan and the Soviet leader of that time, Mikhail Gorbachev, agreed upon a treaty - the INF Treaty.
- It was a deal to ban ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres (311 to 3,418 miles).
- As per the Arms Control Association, the INF treaty was the first time that both Russia and the United States agreed to bring down their nuclear arsenals.
- As a result of the deal, both nations destroyed around 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.

# Why Did Russia Leave The Treaty?

- Russia cited US action, specifically the deployment of Typhoon missile launchers with Tomahawk cruise missiles in the Philippines and Dark Eagle hypersonic systems used in Australia during the Talisman Sabre drills.
- Notably, Russia has already withdrawn from the New START (2010) treaty in February 2023, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in November 2023.
- The cancellation of the treaty marks a pivotal moment and the restart of a Cold War-style arms race.

# Utility of IRNFT

## Eliminated an Entire Class of Weapons

- **Scope:** Banned all **land-based** ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between **500–5,500 km**.
- **Impact:** Led to the **destruction of nearly 2,700 missiles** by 1991 – the **first arms control treaty to eliminate existing weapons**, not just limit their numbers.

# Utility of IRNF

## Reduced European Nuclear Risk

- **Context:** Europe was the main battleground for these missiles (e.g., US Pershing II and Soviet SS-20).
- **Benefit:** Removed **highly destabilizing, quick-strike nuclear weapons** that could hit targets within minutes, thus **reducing the risk of nuclear war in Europe.**

# Utility of IRNFT

## Strengthened Global Arms Control Norms

- Set a precedent for **verifiable disarmament** with **on-site inspections**—a breakthrough in Cold War-era trust-building.
- Paved the way for future treaties like **START** and **New START**, enhancing the legitimacy of arms control diplomacy.

# Utility of IRNFT

## Eased Cold War Tensions

- Signified a **turning point in US-USSR relations**, helping to end the Cold War.
- Boosted trust between superpowers and encouraged greater cooperation.

## Prevented Arms Race in Intermediate Missiles

- Halted development and deployment of a **highly destabilizing class** of weapons.
- Prevented costly competition in the **intermediate-range domain**.

# Utility of IRNFT

## Symbolic Value

- Seen as a **victory for diplomacy and peace**, boosting **public confidence** in nuclear arms control.
- Helped strengthen anti-nuclear sentiment globally.

# Ballistic Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Range (Approx.)</b>
<b>Short-Range Missiles</b>	< 500 km
<b>Intermediate-Range Missiles</b>	<b>500 – 5,500 km</b>
Shorter-range (SRINF)	500 – 1,000 km
Intermediate-range proper (IRBM)	1,000 – 5,500 km
<b>Intercontinental Missiles (ICBMs)</b>	> 5,500 km

## 6. Vienna Conventions

- Post the Pahalgam Attacks Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said “The Defence/Military, Naval and Air Advisors in the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi are declared Persona Non Grata. They have a week to leave India.
- India will be withdrawing its own Defence/Navy/Air Advisors from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.



# UN Treaty

- The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) is a United Nations treaty that set some common principles and terms on how countries must treat each other's diplomatic representatives, in order to ensure friendly relations and maintain proper communication channels between countries.

# UN Treaty- Binding on 193 Members

- Presently, 193 countries have ratified the convention, meaning they agree it should be legally binding on them.
- Ratification means that a country should seek approval for the treaty on the domestic level and enact a law in their country to give effect to it.
- India ratified it through the Diplomatic Relations (Vienna Convention) Act of 1972.

# Article 8 of Vienna Convention

- “Members of the diplomatic staff of the mission should in principle be of the nationality of the sending State.
- Members of the diplomatic staff of the mission may not be appointed from among persons having the nationality of the receiving State, except with the consent of that State which may be withdrawn at any time.”

# Article 9 of Vienna Convention

- **Article 9** states that the receiving State may, at any time and without having to explain its decision, notify the sending State that the head of the mission or any member of the diplomatic staff of the mission is **persona non grata** or unwelcome.

# Article 9 of Vienna Convention

- “In any such case, the sending State shall, as appropriate, either recall the person concerned or terminate his functions with the mission,”
- Further, if the sending State refuses or fails within a reasonable period to carry out its obligations here, that is if they refuse to recall their diplomats, the receiving State may refuse to recognise the person concerned as a member of the mission.
- The article also says that a person can be declared persona non grata even before arriving in a country.

# Article 11 of Vienna Convention

- **Article 11** says, “In the absence of specific agreement as to the size of the mission, the receiving State may require that the size of a mission be kept within limits considered by it to be reasonable and normal, having regard to circumstances and conditions in the receiving State and to the needs of the particular mission.”

# Article 22 of Vienna Convention

- **Article 22** states that “the **premises of the mission shall be inviolable**.”
- The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission.”
- Here, “mission” refers to the diplomats, the staff and other representatives in a host country.

# Article 22 of Vienna Convention

- The Article further adds: “The receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity.”
- Finally, it states: “The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution.”

# Article 26 of Vienna Convention

- **Article 26** talks about the freedom of movement of all members of the mission.
- It states that “subject to its laws and regulations concerning zones entry into which is prohibited or regulated for reasons of national security, the receiving State shall ensure to all members of the mission **freedom of movement and travel in its territory.**”

# Article 26 of Vienna Convention

- **Article 27** provides that “the receiving State shall **permit and protect free communication** on the part of the mission for all official purposes.”

# Diplomatic Immunity

- The 1961 Convention also provides **diplomatic immunity**. As per the **Article 29**, “The person of a diplomatic agent shall be **inviolable**.”
- He shall not be liable to any form of arrest or detention.
- The receiving State shall treat him with due respect and shall take all appropriate steps to prevent any attack on his person, freedom or dignity.”

# Diplomatic Immunity

- **Notably**, diplomatic immunity flows from two conventions, popularly called the Vienna Conventions – the 1961 Convention and the Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.

# Article 41 of Vienna Convention

- The convention also provides provisions regarding the non-interference of diplomats in the host country's internal affairs.
- Article 41 says, “without prejudice to their privileges and immunities, it is the duty of all persons enjoying such privileges and immunities to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State.
- They also have a duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of that State.”

# Vienna Convention on Consular Relations

- The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963, like the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), governs relations between countries but focuses on consular officials rather than diplomats.
- Under this international treaty, a framework for consular relations between independent states is clearly defined.

# Vienna Convention on Consular Relations

- The **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR)**, adopted on **24 April 1963**, is a pivotal international treaty that establishes a framework for consular relations between independent states.
- As of **November 2021**, the Convention has been ratified by **182 states**, encompassing most UN member states and observer entities like the **Holy See** and the **State of Palestine**.

# 7. Global Pandemic Treaty

## Context

- The pandemic treaty, which was agreed upon without the United States, is the only the second legally binding accord in the WHO's 75-year history, the first being the 2003 tobacco control treaty.
- WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the deal as “a significant milestone in our shared journey towards a safer world”.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## Need for Pandemic Treaty

- The negotiations for a global pandemic treaty began in December 2021, at a time when the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 was spreading across the world and producing a massive new surge of COVID-19. By then, countries that were manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines had hoarded millions of doses, leaving those with no vaccine plants often with no access to the shots.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## Need for Pandemic Treaty

- A 2022 study published by the journal Nature revealed that more than one million lives could have been saved if COVID-19 vaccines had been shared more equitably with lower-income countries – the virus had claimed more than seven million lives across the world.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## Need for Pandemic Treaty

- A 2021 report published by the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response said, “The combination of poor strategic choices, unwillingness to tackle inequalities, and an uncoordinated system created a toxic cocktail which allowed the pandemic to turn into a catastrophic human crisis.”

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## Need for Pandemic Treaty

- In a bid to prevent loss of human life, and disruption to households and societies at large – as it happened due to the COVID-19 pandemic – during future pandemics, WHO member states got together and began to iron out a treaty. It took nearly three-and-a-half years and 13 rounds of meetings to reach the deal.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## What Does Pandemic Treaty Say?

- One of the key elements of the draft agreement is a “pathogen access and benefit sharing” system, which gives pharmaceutical companies access to scientific data such as pathogen samples and genomic sequences in return for more equitable sharing of drugs, vaccines and diagnostics during a pandemic, according to a report in Nature.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## What Does Pandemic Treaty Say?

- The draft treaty says participating manufacturers will have to allocate 10% of their production of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to the WHO. Another 10% will then be supplied at “affordable prices”.
- Also, member states should “promote and otherwise facilitate or incentivise” the exchange of technology and know-how to help manufacturers in developing nations make their own drugs and vaccines, the draft agreement says.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## What Does Pandemic Treaty Say?

- Countries also need to develop national policies for putting conditions on research into drugs and vaccines that they fund – given either to universities or companies – to guarantee “timely and equitable access” to resulting drugs or diagnostics during pandemics.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## How strong is the global pandemic treaty?

- Although the agreement on the draft treaty has been hailed as groundbreaking and historic, several experts have said that it has a limited scope.
- For instance, the agreement does not give the WHO powers over individual states.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## How strong is the global pandemic treaty?

- Clause 24, paragraph three states, “Nothing in the WHO Pandemic Agreement shall be interpreted as providing the WHO Secretariat, including the WHO Director-General, any authority to direct, order, alter, or otherwise prescribe the national and/or domestic laws, as appropriate, or policies of any Party.”

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## How strong is the global pandemic treaty?

- The draft treaty also says that the WHO does not have the power to mandate or otherwise impose any requirements such as “ban or accept travellers, impose vaccination mandates or therapeutic or diagnostic measures, or implement lockdown”.

# Global Pandemic Treaty

## How strong is the global pandemic treaty?

- This means that in a situation like the fierce competition for COVID-19 vaccines, the WHO would have no way to ensure countries adhere to the terms to which they had agreed.
- As a result, pharmaceutical companies may hesitate to commit resources to developing medical solutions for emerging pathogens.

# 8. High Seas Treaty

- The High Seas Treaty was ratified by over 60 countries in September; it will now be enforced in January 2026.
- The treaty sets rules to preserve and use marine biodiversity sustainably and addresses threats from climate change, overfishing and pollution.

# High Seas Treaty

- Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement, as the High Seas treaty is formally referred to, creates an all-inclusive framework to govern and manage common marine biodiversity.
- It identifies Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs) as the common heritage of humankind, insisting on a fair and equitable sharing of benefits.
- Besides, the Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs) include Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that can be recognised to protect biodiversity. This will help in improving climate resilience and provide food security, combining science and indigenous knowledge.

# High Seas Treaty

- The treaty also entails Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for events potentially affecting these areas, especially when cumulative and transboundary impacts are taken into account.
- The first steps for the treaty began two decades ago. In 2004, the UN General Assembly formed an ad-hoc working group to fix the gap in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982, which did not have clear guidelines on protecting BBNJ.

# High Seas Treaty

- By 2011, states had agreed to negotiate on four key issues, mainly MGRs, ABMTs, EIAs, and capacity building and technology transfer.
- Following this, four Intergovernmental Conference sessions were held between 2018 and 2023.
- The parties to these discussions finally reached an agreement in March 2023, which led to the adoption of the treaty in June 2023.

# Major Issues

- First is the uncertainty over the principles of “common heritage of humankind” and “freedom of the high seas.”
- The “common heritage principle” supports equitable access and benefit-sharing of marine resources for all, while the “freedom on the high seas” stresses on unrestricted rights of states to carry out navigation, resource usage and research activities.

# Major Issues

- Second, is the use of MGRs. The governance of MGRs was earlier not defined, raising concerns over “biopiracy” and unfair exploitation by developed countries.
- Developing nations were concerned that they would be excluded from the profits of scientific discoveries from the high seas.

# Major Issues

- Third is the reluctance of big powers to get engaged. The treaty is under threat due to non-participation from the U.S., China, and Russia, who are yet to ratify the treaty.
- Fourth, is interaction with multilateral institutions.
- The treaty must coexist and not ignore existing international institutions, such as the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

# 9. UN Convention Against Cybercrime

- On 24 December 2024, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the UN Convention against Cybercrime, marking a significant milestone in the global fight against cybercrime.
- This treaty, the **first legally binding UN instrument addressing cyber issues**, establishes a crucial framework for **international cooperation in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of cybercrimes**.

# Context

- As cyber threats grow in scale and complexity, **the convention aims to prevent and combat cybercrime**, enhance international cooperation and promote technical assistance and capacity-building, particularly for developing countries.

# Critics of Convention

- The adoption of the Convention underscores the **ability of multilateralism** to navigate complex global challenges.
- It also reflects the **collective determination** of **UN Member States** to strengthen global cooperation in combating cybercrime.

# Critics of Convention

- However, the treaty has faced criticism from human rights groups and privacy advocates who warn it could be **misused by authoritarian regimes to justify surveillance**, monitor citizens' online activities and censor speech under the guise of combating cybercrime.

# Background of Convention

- The rapid growth of digital technologies has brought significant benefits but has also led to a rise in cyber threats.
- **Cybercrime encompasses a wide range of activities, from hacking and identity theft to financial fraud and ransomware attacks.**

# Background of Convention

- These crimes often span multiple jurisdictions, exploiting legal differences to evade justice, **making cybercrime a global issue that requires a coordinated international response.**
- While national and regional frameworks, such as the Council of Europe's Budapest Convention (2001), have been valuable, they are **insufficient in tackling the transnational nature of cybercrime.**

# Key Features of UN Convention

- The UN Convention aims to enhance the prevention and effective combating of cybercrime, strengthen international cooperation and support technical assistance and capacity-building, **particularly for developing countries.**

# Chapters in the Convention

1. General Provisions
2. Criminalization
3. Jurisdiction
4. Procedural Measures and Law Enforcement
5. International Cooperation
6. Preventive Measures
7. Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
8. Mechanism of Implementation and Final Provisions.

# Chapters in the Convention

- Given the transnational nature of cybercrime, the Convention establishes jurisdictional rules to **prevent criminals from exploiting legal gaps.**
- States must claim jurisdiction over offences committed on their territory or affecting their nationals, **with provisions for action against offenders within their borders if extradition is not possible.**

# Chapters in the Convention

- **When jurisdictions overlap, States are required to consult with each other.**
- The **Convention also mandates** cooperation in investigations, including extradition, evidence sharing and mutual legal assistance for electronic data.
- However, **States may refuse cooperation on grounds of sovereignty**, public order or non-compliance with data protection or anti-discrimination principles.

# Chapters in the Convention

- The Convention emphasises providing **financial and technical assistance** to developing countries to help them prevent and **combat the offences covered**.
- **States Parties are encouraged to make regular voluntary contributions to a United Nations funding mechanism to support the implementation of the Convention in these countries.**
- The chapter also fosters partnerships between governments, NGOs, academia, financial institutions and the private sector to address the growing threat of cybercrime.

# Chapters in the Convention

- The chapter on the Mechanism of Implementation establishes the **Conference of States Parties**, responsible for overseeing the Convention's implementation.
- **States parties must submit reports** on their implementation measures for periodic reviews, with the Conference offering recommendations to improve effectiveness.

# Chapters in the Convention

- The Conference facilitates information exchange on legal, policy and technological developments, and may adopt supplementary protocols.
- It can also collaborate with stakeholders, including **international organisations, NGOs and the private sector.**
- The first Conference will be convened by the UN Secretary-General within a year of the Convention's entry into force, **with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) serving as its secretariat.**

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, adopted in 2001, **was the first international treaty focused on combating cybercrime** and strengthening cross-border cooperation.
- While both the Budapest and UN Conventions seek to combat cybercrime, their scopes differ significantly.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- The Budapest Convention focuses on **criminalising specific offences**, establishing procedural measures and **facilitating cross-border access to electronic evidence**.
- In contrast, the UN Convention adopts a broader approach, emphasising prevention, capacity-building and technical assistance, with **particular attention to supporting developing countries**.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- Additionally, the UN Convention offers a global framework for cooperation on serious cybercrimes and incorporates provisions **related to state sovereignty and prevention**, expanding its scope beyond the Budapest Convention's **emphasis on criminalisation and procedural mechanisms**.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- While both conventions criminalise offences such as illegal access to systems, **the UN Convention extends its focus to include additional crimes, such as money laundering, and places greater emphasis on child sexual abuse.**

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- Furthermore, **the procedural powers in the UN Convention are broader** than those in the Budapest Convention.
- For instance, the UN Convention includes measures for the confiscation of proceeds from crime and the protection of witnesses, **which are not addressed in the Budapest Convention.**

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- A key concern with the Convention is its lack of explicit safeguards to **regulate intrusive surveillance, leaving it vulnerable to misuse.**
- The absence of core human rights principles such as legality, necessity and non-discrimination exacerbates the risk of abuse.
- **Without clear legal definitions, limits on surveillance and protection against discriminatory practices, the Convention risks undermining fundamental rights and enabling unchecked surveillance measures**

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- The Convention's provisions for monitoring online activities are perceived as a threat to digital rights, enabling intrusive oversight that could erode individual privacy.
- These provisions grant authorities unchecked power, limiting oversight and restricting individuals' ability to know about or challenge surveillance, thereby eroding trust and threatening fundamental rights such as privacy and due process.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- While developed nations may have sophisticated systems to **address cybercrime**, many developing countries lack the **necessary infrastructure, expertise and resources to implement** effective cybersecurity measures.
- This inequality could lead to a fragmented global response, **with some countries successfully addressing cybercrime** while others remain vulnerable or become safe havens for cybercriminals.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- To maintain its legitimacy, **the convention must balance international cooperation with human rights protections**, ensure transparency and adapt to evolving cyber threats.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- This Convention exemplifies how **multilateralism can foster global** solidarity and provide a collective response to transnational issues.
- By bringing together a wide range of stakeholders—including states, international organisations, the private sector and civil society—**this initiative exemplifies the power of collective action in addressing issues that transcend national borders.**

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- Its success, however, depends on Member States overcoming several challenges.
- These include safeguarding human rights, ensuring that provisions are not misused for political or surveillance purposes, and **promoting equitable access to resources** for developing nations to strengthen their cybersecurity capabilities.

# Comparison with Budapest Convention

- Moreover, the Convention must remain adaptable to rapidly evolving cyber threats and emerging technologies.
- With a balanced, inclusive approach, the Convention has the potential to not only combat cybercrime but also create a secure and resilient digital ecosystem globally.

# 10. UNCLOS

- A US submarine on March 4, 2026 torpedoed the Iranian warship IRIS Dena off the coast of Sri Lanka, outside its nautical boundary.
- The ship was returning after participating in the International Fleet Review and MILAN-2026, a multilateral naval exercise organized by the Indian Navy.
- In this context, it becomes essential to know about key maritime law and conventions.

ARABIAN SEA

INTERNATIONAL WATERS

MAJOR SHIPPING LANES

VISAKHAPATNAM

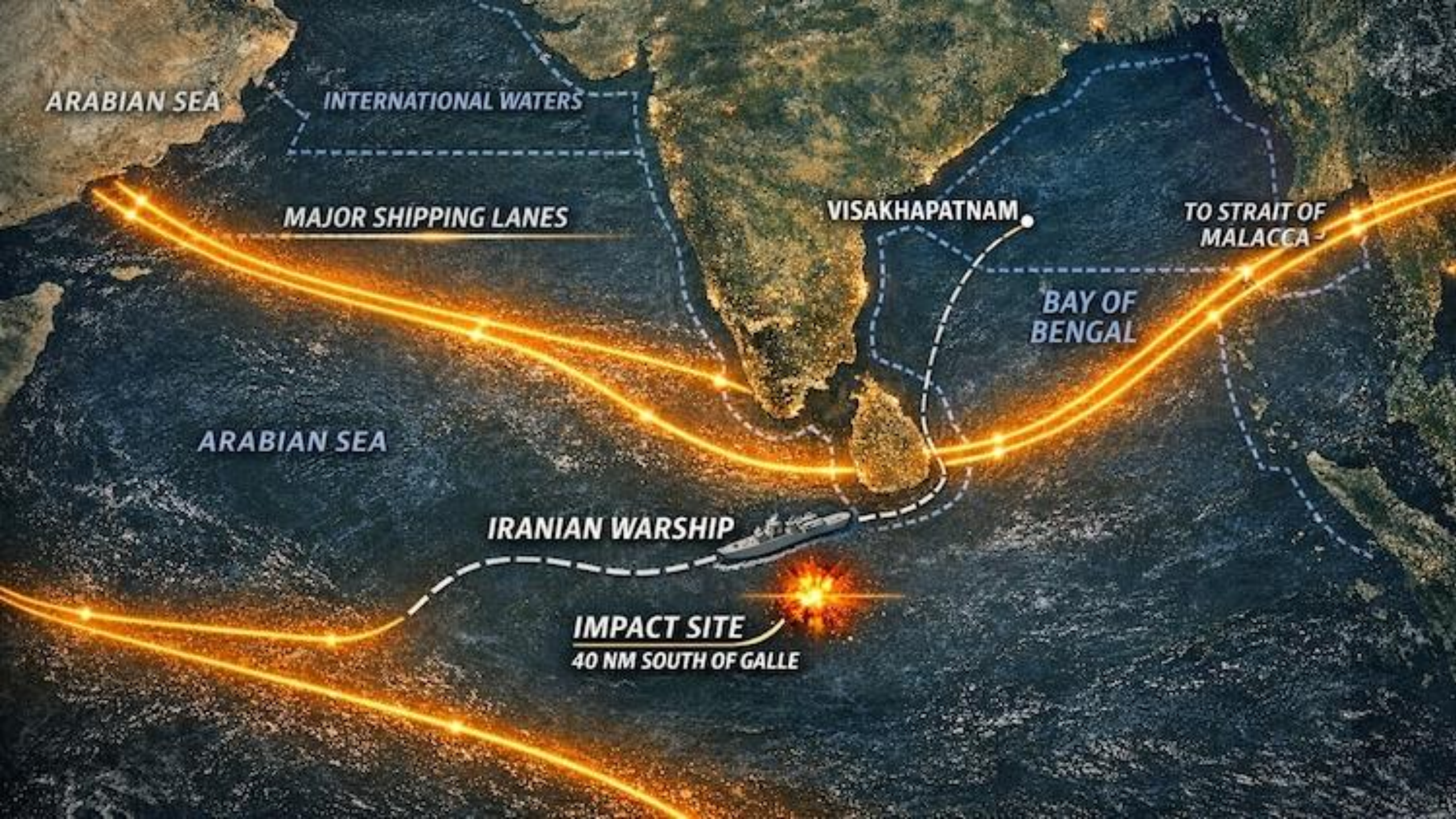
TO STRAIT OF  
MALACCA

BAY OF  
BENGAL

ARABIAN SEA

IRANIAN WARSHIP

IMPACT SITE  
40 NM SOUTH OF GALLE



# India's Maritime Jurisdiction

- India's maritime reach in the Indian Ocean is substantial, but finite.
- With a coastline of over 11,099 kilometres, including the mainland, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep, India claims an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of approximately 2.3 million square kilometres – the 18th largest globally.
- This zone extends 200 nautical miles (about 370 kilometres) from India's baselines, granting sovereign rights over natural resources like oil, gas, minerals, and fish.

# India's Maritime Jurisdiction

- Within its EEZ, India has exclusive authority to explore, exploit, and manage these resources.
- For instance, it regulates offshore drilling in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, where major fields like Mumbai High contribute to energy needs.

# India's Maritime Jurisdiction

- The Andaman and Nicobar chain extends India's EEZ eastward, overlapping strategic chokepoints like the Malacca Strait.
- However, other nations also retain freedoms of navigation, overflight, and laying submarine cables in the EEZ, as long as they don't interfere with India's economic activities.

# WHERE DO THE HIGH SEAS START IN INDIAN OCEAN?

- Beyond the EEZ lies the high seas, where no country has sovereignty.
- India's territorial sea, where it exercises full control like on land, extends only 12 nautical miles from the coast. It is around 22 kilometres.

# WHERE DO THE HIGH SEAS START IN INDIAN OCEAN?

- A contiguous zone up to 24 nautical miles allows enforcement of customs, immigration, and sanitation laws.
- India's jurisdiction doesn't cover the entire Indian Ocean; it's a patchwork, shared with neighbours like Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Indonesia.

# WHERE DO THE HIGH SEAS START IN INDIAN OCEAN?

- International waters, often synonymous with the high seas, begin beyond the 200-nautical-mile EEZ.
- Here, all nations enjoy freedoms: navigation, fishing, research, and resource extraction from the seabed, which has to be regulated by international bodies.

# WHERE DO THE HIGH SEAS START IN INDIAN OCEAN?

- No state can claim ownership, ensuring open access for trade and military movements.
- The IRIS Dena was in such waters—technically within Sri Lanka's EEZ, but treated as international for navigation purposes, allowing the US strike under freedom of the seas principles.

# WHERE DO THE HIGH SEAS START IN INDIAN OCEAN?

- Though it was attacked in international waters, the strike took place in India's strategic backyard.
- There might be no legal responsibility here, but some are questioning the bearing on India's "carefully cultivated soft power".
- From New Delhi's vantage point it was an unfriendly act — one that undermined India's diplomacy, its convening power and its claim to regional maritime leadership.

# UNCLOS

- UNCLOS is a comprehensive international law that lays down the broad frameworks for legitimate behaviour on, and use of, seas and oceans everywhere.
- It defines the rights and duties of nations regarding activities in the oceans and also addresses issues such as sovereignty, passage rights, and rights of exclusive economic usage.
- Demarcations of territorial waters and EEZs are a result of UNCLOS.

# UNCLOS

- The **territorial sea (TS)** as per UNCLOS, is an area extending up to 12 nautical miles from the base of a country's coastline.
- A state has full sovereignty over the waters encompassed within the TS.

# UNCLOS

- According to the UNCLOS, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of a country extends from the baseline of its coast to 200 nautical miles (about 370 km) into the sea.
- A nation has exclusive rights to living and non-living resources in the waters and on the seabed within its EEZ.

# UNCLOS

- UNCLOS sets the general principles for equitable access and usage of ocean resources, and protection and conservation of biodiversity and marine ecology.
- But it doesn't specify how these objectives have to be achieved. This is where the High Seas Treaty comes in.



# UNCLOS

- **UNCLOS does not contain** explicit provisions regulating the conduct of belligerent parties during armed conflict, as its primary focus is on peacetime governance.
- **The US is not a signatory** to UNCLOS.
- India signed the convention on December 10, 1982, and formally ratified it on June 29, 1995.

# UNCLOS

- UNCLOS has **168 parties**
- This includes:
  - **167 countries**
  - The European Union

# Nature of Membership

- UNCLOS membership refers to **states that have ratified or acceded to the Convention**, meaning:
- They are legally bound by its provisions
- They accept rules on:
  - Maritime boundaries
  - Navigation rights
  - Resource use

An additional 12 UN member states have signed the Convention but have not ratified it. One UN member state has signed the Agreement but has not ratified it. Therefore, none of these States are currently parties to either the Convention or the Agreement.

State <sup>[2][3][4]</sup>	Signed Convention	Signed Agreement
 Afghanistan †	Mar 18, 1983	
 Bhutan †	Dec 10, 1982	
 Burundi †	Dec 10, 1982	
 Central African Republic †	Dec 4, 1984	
 Colombia	Dec 10, 1982	
 El Salvador	Dec 5, 1984	
 Ethiopia †	Dec 10, 1982	
 Iran	Dec 10, 1982	
 North Korea	Dec 10, 1982	
 Libya	Dec 3, 1984	
 Liechtenstein †	Nov 30, 1984	
 United Arab Emirates	Dec 10, 1982	
 United States		Jul 29, 1994

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There are 13 United Nations member and observer states which have neither signed nor acceded either the Convention or the Agreement:

-  Andorra †
-  Eritrea
-  Israel
-  Kazakhstan †
-  Peru
-  South Sudan †
-  Syria
-  Tajikistan †
-  Turkey
-  Turkmenistan †
-  Uzbekistan †
-  Holy See †
-  Venezuela

# 11. ITLOS

- The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) is an independent judicial body established by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- It has jurisdiction over any dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention, and over all matters specifically provided for in any other agreement which confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal.

# ITLOS

- Disputes relating to the Convention may concern the delimitation of maritime zones, navigation, conservation and management of the living resources of the sea, protection and preservation of the marine environment and marine scientific research.

# ITLOS

- The Tribunal is composed of 21 independent members elected by secret ballot by the States Parties to the Convention.
- Each State Party may nominate up to two candidates from among persons enjoying the highest reputation for fairness and integrity and of recognized competence in the field of the law of the sea.

# ITLOS

- No two members may be nationals of the same State and in the Tribunal as a whole it is necessary to assure the representation of the principal legal systems of the world and equitable geographical distribution; there shall be no fewer than three members from each geographical group as established by the General Assembly of the United Nations (African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States and Western European and Other States). Members are elected for nine years and may be re-elected; the terms of one third of the members expire every three years.

# ITLOS

- Although the Tribunal was established by a United Nations convention, it is not an “organ” of the United Nations.
- Even so, it maintains close links with the United Nations and in 1997 the Tribunal concluded an [Agreement on Cooperation and Relationship between the United Nations and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea](#), which establishes a mechanism for cooperation between the two institutions.
- **United Nations General Assembly-Observer Status**

# ITLOS

- At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly of the United Nations granted observer status to the Tribunal ([General Assembly resolution A/RES/51/204](#) of 17 December 1996).
- Observer status enables the Tribunal to participate in the meetings and the work of the General Assembly when matters of relevance to the Tribunal are being considered.

# ITLOS

- The United Nations General Assembly considers the agenda item 'Oceans and the law of the sea' every year.
- The President of the Tribunal is invited to address the General Assembly on that occasion. The General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on this topic

# 12. DRC

- **UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) stated that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has witnessed a surge in internal displacement, affecting 6.9 million individuals.**
- **The conflict with the rebel group Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) has led to the displacement of nearly one million people in the eastern province of North Kivu.**



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# Current Situation

- Over 120 insurgent groups operate in **North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika**, causing violence over territory and resources.
- The **M23 rebel group**, resurfacing in November 2021, intensified conflict by seizing towns.

# Major Actors

- Besides M23, prominent rebel groups include **the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)** and the **Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO)**.
- **Rwanda** and **the DRC** accuse each other of supporting opposing ethnic groups, contributing to regional tensions.

# International Involvement

- **The East African Community (EAC)** deployed troops in November 2022, but widespread protests since August demand their withdrawal due to perceived failure in addressing the insurgency.
- **DRC President Felix Tshisekedi** has called for the EAC's departure by December 8.

# Causes of Displacement

- Ethnic intolerance and insurgency emerged after the Rwandan genocide, leading to the formation of militias and escalating tensions.
- Political uncertainty and governance issues contribute to grievances, as the peripheries feel ignored in struggles for representation and resources.

# Regional Tensions

- Armed groups receive support from Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, acting as proxies for regional interests.
- This has resulted in a humanitarian crisis, with 1,400 deaths and over 600 reported attacks in 2023, leaving 1.1 million people in need of food support.

# Humanitarian Challenges

- The feeble international response, marked by **insufficient funding**, hampers efforts by organizations like the **World Food Programme** and the **Norwegian Refugee Council** to address hunger and humanitarian crises in the DRC.

# Humanitarian Challenges

- According to the **World Food Programme (WFP)**, the crisis has left more than 1.1 million people in need of food support across North Kivu, Ituri, and South Kivu.
- International actors have failed to make a considerable effort to address the crisis.
- According to organizations such as **WFP and the Norwegian Refugee Council**, **lack of funding** is a major challenge in assisting Congolese people facing hunger, starvation and humanitarian crises.



# What is Happening in Congo?

- Rwandan-backed M23 rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo are seeking to advance south towards **Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province**, in an attempt to expand their area of control in the country's east after **capturing the city of Goma**.

# What is Happening in Congo?

- The latest fighting is part of a major escalation of a decades-old conflict over **power, identity, and resources** that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and **displaced more than one million** since its recent resurgence.



# North Kivu & South Kivu



# Recent Developments- 2025

- The rebels entered Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, on January 27 night and had seized control of the city's airport by January 28 evening, after facing pockets of resistance in strategic areas.

# Recent Developments- 2025

- Hundreds of government troops and allied militia laid down their weapons. By January 30 morning, the rebels were in control of the devastated city, where corpses still lay in the streets.
- Since then, **M23 fighters have pushed southwards into South Kivu**, battling the Congolese army and its allies including Burundian troops.

# Recent Developments- 2025

- The involvement of Burundian and Rwandan troops on the ground has added to fears the fighting could spiral into a regional conflict.

# What is M23?

- **M23, which refers to the March 23, 2009, accord** that ended a previous Tutsi-led revolt in eastern Congo, is the latest group of **ethnic Tutsi-led insurgents** to take up arms against Congolese forces.
- It launched the current rebellion in 2022.
- The group has accused the government of Congo of **not living up to the peace deal** and fully integrating **Congolese Tutsis into the army and administration.**

# What is M23?

- It also vows to defend Tutsi interests, particularly against **ethnic Hutu militias** such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).
- The FDLR was founded by Hutus who fled Rwanda after participating in the 1994 genocide of close to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

# What is M23?

- For more than a year, M23 has controlled Congo's **coltan-mining region of Rubaya**, generating an estimated \$800,000 per month through a production tax, according to the UN.
- **Coltan is used in the production of smartphones and other equipment.**



# What is M23?

- Well-trained and professionally armed, M23 is the latest in a long line of Rwandan-supported, **Tutsi-led rebel movements** to emerge in Congo's volatile eastern borderlands in the wake of two successive wars stemming from Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

# What is M23?

- UN estimates suggest that the fighting, which began in January, has taken the lives of more than 2,900 people, displaced close to 7,00,000 and injured many more.

# Rwandan Genocide

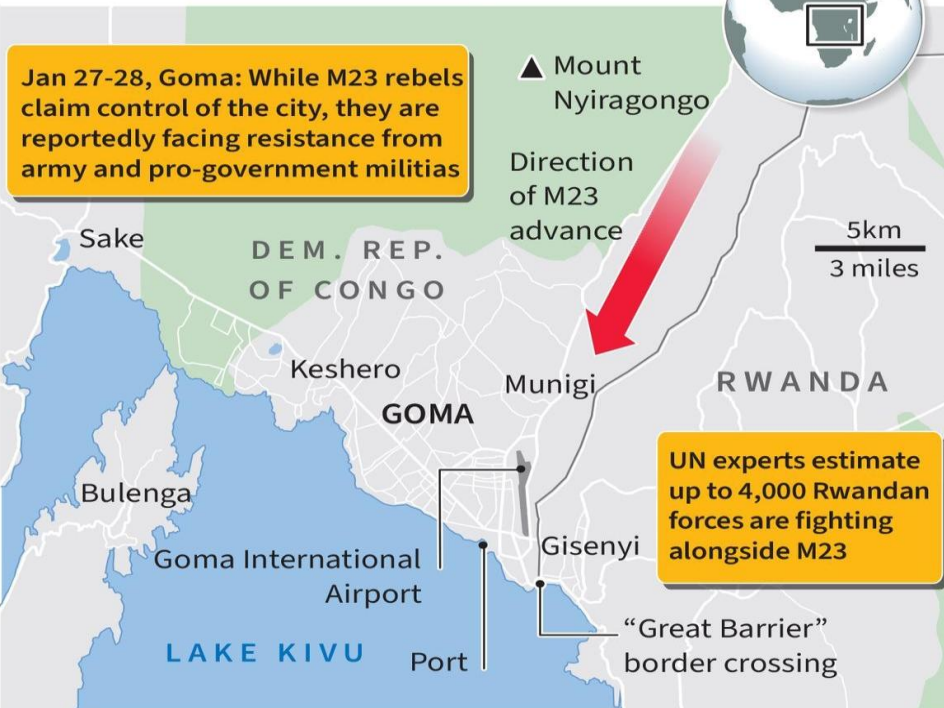
- With Hutus at the helm, there was systematic repression of the Tutsis.
- This led to the formation of the Tutsi rebel group, the **Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)**, which launched a civil war in 1990.
- The war reached its inflection point in April 1994, when an aircraft carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and his Burundi counterpart Cyprien Ntaryinira — **two Hutus** — was shot down

# Rwandan Genocide

- Blaming the RPF for the attack, the Rwandan military and the Hutu Interahamwe militia went on a rampage, **murdering almost 8,000 people per day.**
- By the time the campaign ended 100 days later, some **8,00,000 Tutsis** and a moderate number of Hutus had been killed.

### THE M23 MILITIA

- One of about 100 armed factions vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern DRC
- Rwandan-backed group which consists primarily of Tutsis who failed to integrate into the Congolese army
- Led major insurgency against the DRC government in 2012, took up arms again in 2022. The group is estimated to have 6,500 fighters



**Jan 27-28, Goma: While M23 rebels claim control of the city, they are reportedly facing resistance from army and pro-government militias**

**UN experts estimate up to 4,000 Rwandan forces are fighting alongside M23**

- Latest rebel advance has forced thousands to flee Goma. The city of two million people is a vital humanitarian aid hub for the region
- The UN and other global powers fear that the conflict could spiral into a regional war similar to those of 1996-1997 and 1998-2003

# Background of M23

- Formed in 2012, the M23 stands for Mouvement du 23 Mars – an abortive **agreement signed on March 23, 2009**, between the DRC government and the Tutsi-led National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP).

# Background of M23

- According to the pact, the CNDP, which fought the government forces between 2006 and 2009, **was to take the form of a political party and its fighters** were to be absorbed into the DRC Army.

# Background of M23

- Claiming to protect Tutsis, the group managed to capture Goma for the first time in 2012.
- Following a series of setbacks at the hands of the Congolese Army and UN forces, **the group retreated after it was assured the protection of the Tutsis.**

# Beyond Ethnic Tensions

- Ethnic strife forms only one part of the story. The mineral-rich regions in the DRC's east, coveted by nations and armed groups alike, form the other part.
- **The DRC is home to Coltan, the ore from which Tantalum is produced.**
- This blue-grey metal is used in smartphones and other electronic devices for it can hold a **high charge over a range of temperatures, making it conducive for the manufacturing of capacitors that store energy.**

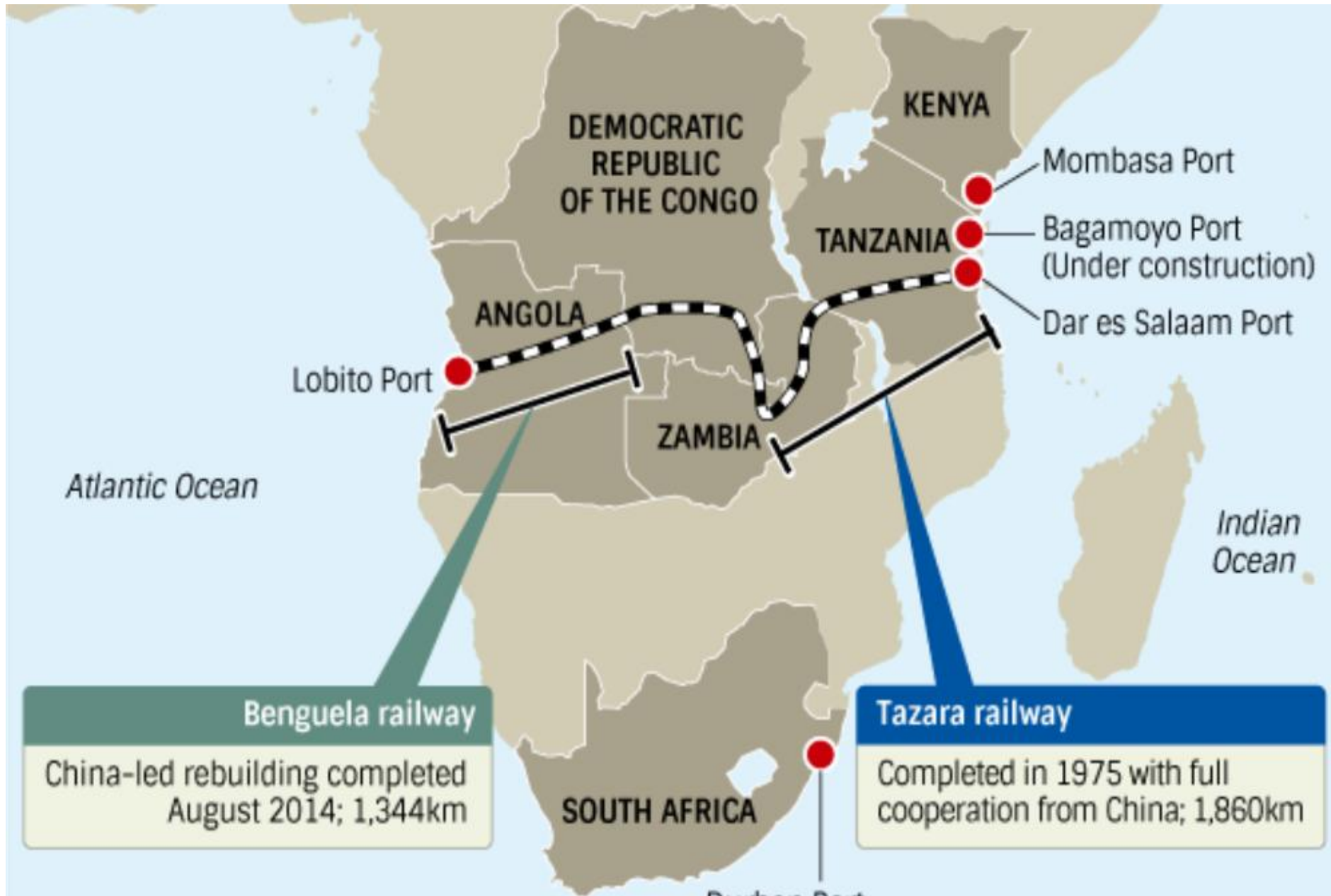


Resource	Location	Significance
<b>Cobalt</b>	Katanga Province (Kolwezi, Lubumbashi)	DRC holds over 70% of the world's cobalt reserves; essential for lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles and electronics.
<b>Copper</b>	Katanga Province (Tenke, Fungurume, Kolwezi)	One of the largest copper-producing regions in the world; used in electrical equipment and construction.
<b>Coltan (Columbite-Tantalite)</b>	Kivu and Katanga regions	Used in electronics such as smartphones, computers, and capacitors.
<b>Gold</b>	Ituri, South Kivu, and Maniema	Major source of revenue; significant portion of production is through artisanal mining.
<b>Diamonds</b>	Kasai-Oriental, Kasai-Occidental, Tshikapa	Among the top five producers of diamonds in the world; used for industrial and jewelry purposes.
<b>Tin (Cassiterite)</b>	North and South Kivu, Maniema	Used in the production of tin for soldering and packaging.
<b>Zinc</b>	Kipushi (Katanga Province)	Used for galvanizing steel, alloys, and batteries.
<b>Silver</b>	Katanga Province (associated with copper mining)	Used in electronics, jewelry, and industrial applications.
<b>Manganese</b>	Kivu and Katanga	Used in steel production and batteries.
<b>Lithium</b>	Manono (Tanganyika Province)	Growing in importance for electric vehicle and battery production.
<b>Uranium</b>	Shinkolobwe (Katanga Province)	Historically important; source of uranium for the Manhattan Project during WWII.
<b>Oil</b>	Lake Albert (Eastern DRC), Central Basin	Potential for oil production remains largely untapped due to political instability.
<b>Natural Gas</b>	Lake Kivu	Contains large reserves of methane gas; used for electricity production.
<b>Timber</b>	Equateur, Orientale, and Maniema provinces	DRC holds the second-largest rainforest in the world; significant for timber exports.
<b>Water Resources</b>	Congo River Basin	Huge potential for hydropower; Inga Dam is one of the largest hydropower projects in the world.
<b>Coal</b>	Katanga Province	Used for energy production and industrial processes.
<b>Iron Ore</b>	Eastern and Southern DRC	Potential for steel production.
<b>Nickel</b>	Katanga Province	Used in stainless steel production and battery manufacturing.
<b>Tungsten (Wolframite)</b>	Kivu and Maniema	Used for manufacturing and industrial applications.
<b>Lead</b>	Kipushi (Katanga Province)	Used in batteries and radiation shielding.
<b>Rare Earth Elements</b>	Katanga and Kivu	Increasing global demand for use in electronics and renewable energy.
<b>Phosphates</b>	Central Basin	Used in agriculture for fertilizers.

# 13. Lobito Corridor

- A landmark collaboration is propelling Africa's economic resurgence through the transformative **Lobito Corridor project**.
- This ambitious initiative, spearheaded by a seven-party alliance between the **African Development Bank, Africa Finance Corporation, the United States, the European Union, and the nations of Angola, Congo, and Zambia**, promises to revolutionize how goods and people traverse the continent.





# Lobito Corridor

- At the heart of this endeavour lies the construction of the Zambia-Lobito railway, stretching from Lucano in Angola to Kalumbila in Zambia.
- **This transcontinental link will seamlessly integrate with Zambia's existing network at Chingola, before snaking across the border to reach the Angolan port of Lobito.**
- Its significance is monumental, unlocking a floodgate of opportunities for regional trade and economic prosperity.

# Lobito Corridor

- As African nations band together to overcome shared hurdles like trade limitations and economic disparities, the Lobito Corridor emerges as a beacon of hope and a practical solution.

# Lobito Corridor

- One of the most compelling facets of this project is its potential to supercharge regional trade.
- **The Lobito Corridor will become a critical artery, directly connecting the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, facilitating the seamless flow of goods and services across borders and regions.**
- This development stands to be a game-changer for businesses in the corridor, slashing transportation costs and timelines, ultimately fuelling economic growth and job creation.

# Lobito Corridor

- The once-distant dream of open-access railway services spanning the vast African continent is now becoming a tangible reality.
- **The Lobito Corridor will dismantle geographical and logistical barriers, creating a playground of possibilities for businesses and communities.**

# Lobito Corridor

- But beyond economic dividends, this transformative initiative also **fosters regional cooperation** and stability.
- When nations collaborate on projects of this magnitude, they forge stronger diplomatic ties, nurture peace, and create a more conducive environment for investment and growth.
- **The Lobito Corridor exemplifies what can be achieved when nations unite for the common good.**

# China's "loans for minerals" strategy in Africa: Dominance & Debt

- For over a decade, China has aggressively secured critical mineral resources in Africa through infrastructure investments in exchange for resource access.
- They control a significant share of cobalt and copper exploration in DRC and invested **heavily in lithium mining across Central Africa.**
- However, this model hasn't been smooth sailing.

# Debt burdens and resource dependence

- African nations like **Angola, Zambia, and DRC** heavily rely on Chinese credit backed by natural resources, leaving them vulnerable to resource price fluctuations.
- Between **2016-24**, China renegotiated or **wrote off \$21.3 billion in loans** due to resource price drops in these countries.

# The US countermove: Lobito Corridor and a different approach

- The US and G7 are now pushing the **Lobito Corridor project to compete with China's influence**. This initiative promises:
  - Upgraded railway infrastructure in DRC, Zambia, and Angola.
  - Digital connectivity and green energy projects.
  - Collaboration in mining, energy, healthcare, and education.

# The US countermove: Lobito Corridor and a different approach

## Key differences from China's model:

- **Financing**: PGII investments combine existing low-interest loans with new private credit, offering longer tender local currency financing and flexible interest rate hedges.
- **Debt and transparency**: ODA flows provide concessional interest rates and longer repayment periods compared to China's opaque system.

# The US countermove: Lobito Corridor and a different approach

- Local involvement: G7 prioritizes local companies and populations in project execution, unlike China's focus on its own firms.

# The US countermove: Lobito Corridor and a different approach

## Winning the race for critical minerals:

- Both China and the West recognize the strategic importance of dominating the global supply chains of these vital resources.
- The success of **G7's alternative approach** and its ability to **deliver on promises will determine its effectiveness** in countering China's influence in Africa.

# Debt burdens and resource dependence

## Cobalt Resources

- Cobalt is a relatively rare element, ranking 24th in abundance in the Earth's crust.
- It's primarily found in combination with other minerals like copper, nickel, and silver, and rarely occurs in pure form.
- **Major cobalt-producing countries include the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cuba, Australia, Philippines, Madagascar, and Zambia.**
- The DRC alone accounts for over 70% of global cobalt production.

# Significance of Cobalt

Cobalt is a critical element in various modern technologies due to its unique properties:

- **Magnetic**: Makes it essential for permanent magnets found in electric vehicle motors, generators, and wind turbines.
- **Heat-resistant**: Enables it to withstand high temperatures, making it crucial for jet engines and high-performance alloys.

# Significance of Cobalt

- **Chemical versatility:** Used in catalysts for petroleum refining and chemical production.
- **Biomedical applications: Cobalt-60 isotope is used in radiation therapy and sterilization.**
- Demand for cobalt is expected to rise rapidly due to the increasing adoption of electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, and advancements in electronics.

# Ethical Concerns

- Cobalt mining in the DRC, the largest producer, has been associated with child labour, unsafe working conditions, and environmental damage.
- Responsible sourcing and ethical practices are critical for the cobalt industry.

# 14. Sierra Leone

- Sierra Leone, situated in West Africa, holds historical significance in the transatlantic slave trade as the departure point for numerous West African captives.
- Established in 1787, the capital, Freetown, was founded to serve as a **resettlement for repatriated former slaves**.
- However, the **country's contemporary narrative** has been overshadowed by a **brutal civil war concluding in 2002**, with intervention from Britain, its former colonial power, and a substantial United Nations peacekeeping mission.



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# Sierra Leone

- In recent years, Sierra Leone has witnessed considerable economic growth, notwithstanding lingering repercussions from the devastating civil conflict.
- The nation, endowed with rich diamond and mineral resources, **grappled with the trade in illicit gems**, colloquially termed "**blood diamonds**," contributing to the perpetuation of the civil war.
- Governmental efforts have been directed towards curbing this trade.

# Blood Diamonds

- Blood diamonds, also known as conflict diamonds, are diamonds that are mined in war zones and sold to finance armed conflicts against legitimate governments.
- These diamonds are often mined using forced labor, including children, and are traded illegally to illegally to **fund violent conflicts and human rights abuses**
- This very specific definition was formed by the UN in the 1990s as brutal civil wars were waged in parts of western and central Africa by rebel groups in diamond-rich areas.

# Blood Diamonds

- The name 'blood diamond' references the dark and tragic reality of an industry that, when left unchecked, can cause harm to individuals, communities, and entire nations.
- According to the United Nations, blood diamonds and conflict diamonds both imply gems that were mined within war-torn areas and sold with the intent of financing rebel movements which can destroy domestic life for citizens.

# Blood Diamonds

- In past decade, the diamond trade has been linked to fueling conflicts in countries such as **Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.**
- The sale of blood diamonds has contributed to instability and suffering in these regions, leading to a global effort to regulate the diamond trade and prevent the sale of conflict diamonds.

# What is Blood Diamond?

- In response to the international outcry over blood diamonds, **the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was established in 2003.**
- This international agreement aims to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds by certifying the origin of rough diamonds.
- However, **the Kimberley Process has been criticized for being too narrow in its definition of conflict diamonds and for failing to address human rights abuses in the diamond industry.**

# What is Blood Diamond?

- Despite the challenges, **the Kimberley Process** has had some success in reducing the trade in blood diamonds.
- The percentage of rough diamonds that are certified as conflict-free has increased from about 40% in 2003 to over 99% today.

# What is Blood Diamond?

- However, it is important to remember that even certified diamonds may not be entirely conflict-free.
- **The Kimberley Process only certifies the origin of rough diamonds, not the polished diamonds that are sold to consumers.**
- It is also possible for diamonds to be smuggled out of war zones and sold on the black market.

# DIAMOND-PRODUCING AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Although the following four African countries produce diamonds certified as “conflict free” by the Kimberley Process, many of their diamonds are tainted by violence, human rights violations, and environmental devastation.



## ZIMBABWE

Poised to make up 10 – 15% of the world’s diamonds, diamonds from Zimbabwe help to fund a brutal dictator and are tainted by violence and corruption.



## SIERRA LEONE

Abandoned mining pits have become breeding grounds for mosquitoes carrying malaria and other water-borne diseases.



## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Around 800,000 diamond diggers in the DRC perform backbreaking work yet live in extreme poverty, earning less than a few hundred dollars a year.



## ANGOLA

Soldiers brutally abuse unlicensed diamond miners from the neighboring DRC, engaging in torture, rape, and murder.



### SMUGGLING & CORRUPTION

Over \$2 billion in diamonds have been stolen by political allies of Zimbabwe’s president since 2008. Up to half of the diamonds mined in Sierra Leone are unregistered or smuggled, depriving the government of tax revenue. 40% of diamonds in the DRC have unknown origins.



### VIOLENCE

There are ongoing reports of violence in the Central African Republic, Angola, Congo, and Côte d’Ivoire. In 2009, the Angolan army violently removed 115,000 Congolese miners.



### HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

A United Nations group found more than 21,000 cases of rape, torture, and other human rights violations among miners expelled from Angola in 2011. In the same year, the Zimbabwean army was caught running secret camps where miners are tortured, beaten, and raped.



### CHILD LABOR

A survey of one of the main Angolan diamond mining provinces reported 46% of the workers were children. A 2009 report estimated 25% of Sierra Leone miners were children.



### ENVIRONMENT

Fertile land once used for farming in Sierra Leone has been turned into a desolate landscape of abandoned mining pits. In Angola, reckless diamond mining has caused soil erosion, led to deforestation, and forced local populations to relocate.



### HEALTH & SAFETY

Lacking safety equipment and proper tools, diamond miners have been killed or injured in landslides, mine collapses, and other accidents.

# Blood Diamond Conflict Zones





# Kimberley Process

- The Kimberley Process (KP) is a multilateral trade regime established in 2003 with the goal of preventing the flow of conflict diamonds.
- The core of this regime is the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) under which States implement safeguards on shipments of rough diamonds and **certify them as “conflict free”**.

# Kimberley Process

- KP members are responsible for stemming 99.8% of the global production of conflict diamonds.
- Uniting governments, civil society and the wider industry, the Kimberley Process (KP) defines conflict diamonds as: **'rough diamonds used to finance wars against governments' - around the world.**

# Kimberley Process

- The KP has 59 participants, representing 85 countries, with the European Union and its 27 Member States counting as a single participant, represented by the European Commission

# THE TROUBLE WITH DIAMONDS

THE 22 DIAMOND PRODUCING COUNTRIES WHO ARE SIGNATORIES TO THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS

1. ANGOLA
2. AUSTRALIA
3. BOTSWANA
4. BRAZIL
5. CAMEROON
6. CANADA
7. CHINA
8. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
9. REPUBLIC OF CONGO
10. GHANA
11. GUINEA
12. GUYANA
13. INDIA
14. LESOTHO
15. LIBERIA
16. NAMIBIA
17. RUSSIA
18. SIERRA LEONE
19. SOUTH AFRICA
20. TANZANIA
21. TOGO
22. ZIMBABWE



- DIAMOND PRODUCING COUNTRIES
- COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED WITH CONFLICT FROM DIAMOND MINING
- COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED WITH DIAMOND SMUGGLING

<b>Angola</b>	<b>Eswatini</b>	<b>Liberia</b>	<b>South Korea</b>
<b>Armenia</b>	<b>European Union</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Sri Lanka</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>Gabon</b>	<b>Mali</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Mauritius</b>	<b>Tanzania</b>
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>Guinea</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Thailand</b>
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>Guyana</b>	<b>Mozambique</b>	<b>Togo</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Namibia</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Cambodia</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>Israel</b>	<b>Norway</b>	<b>United Arab Emirates</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Panama</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>Central African Republic *</b>	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>Qatar</b>	<b>United States of America</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b>	<b>Russian Federation</b>	<b>Venezuela</b>
<b>Congo (DRC)</b>	<b>Laos</b>	<b>Sierra Leone</b>	<b>Vietnam</b>
<b>Congo (ROC)</b>	<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Zimbabwe</b>
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	<b>Lesotho</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	

## 15. Refuge/Asylum Seeking Locations in Africa

Region	Who is displaced	Cause
East Africa	Somali refugees, South Sudanese	Famine, insurgency, civil war
Horn of Africa	Somalis, Ethiopians	Civil conflict & drought
Central Africa	Congolese	Armed group violence (M23)
Sahel	Sahelian populations	Jihadist violence & coups
North Africa	Transit migrants	Smuggling, irregular migration
Southern Africa	Economic asylum seekers	Economic crisis, political instability

# East Africa



1. Dadaab (Kenya)
2. Kakuma (Kenya)
3. Bidi Bidi (Uganda)
4. Adjumani (Uganda)
5. Gambella (Ethiopia)

# Horn of Africa



1. Dollo Ado (Ethiopia)
2. Mogadishu (Somalia)
3. Hargeisa (Somaliland)
4. Garowe (Puntland)

# Great Lakes & Central Africa



1. Goma / North Kivu (DRC)
2. Mahama (Rwanda)
3. Nyarugusu (Tanzania)
4. Garoua-Boulai (Cameroon)

# Sahel & West Africa



1. Maiduguri (Nigeria)
2. Diffa (Niger)
3. Tillabéri (Niger)
4. Gao (Mali)
5. Kaya (Burkina Faso)

# North Africa Transit Points



1. Tripoli (Libya)
2. Ras Ajdir (Libya–Tunisia)
3. Benghazi (Libya)
4. Agadez (Niger)

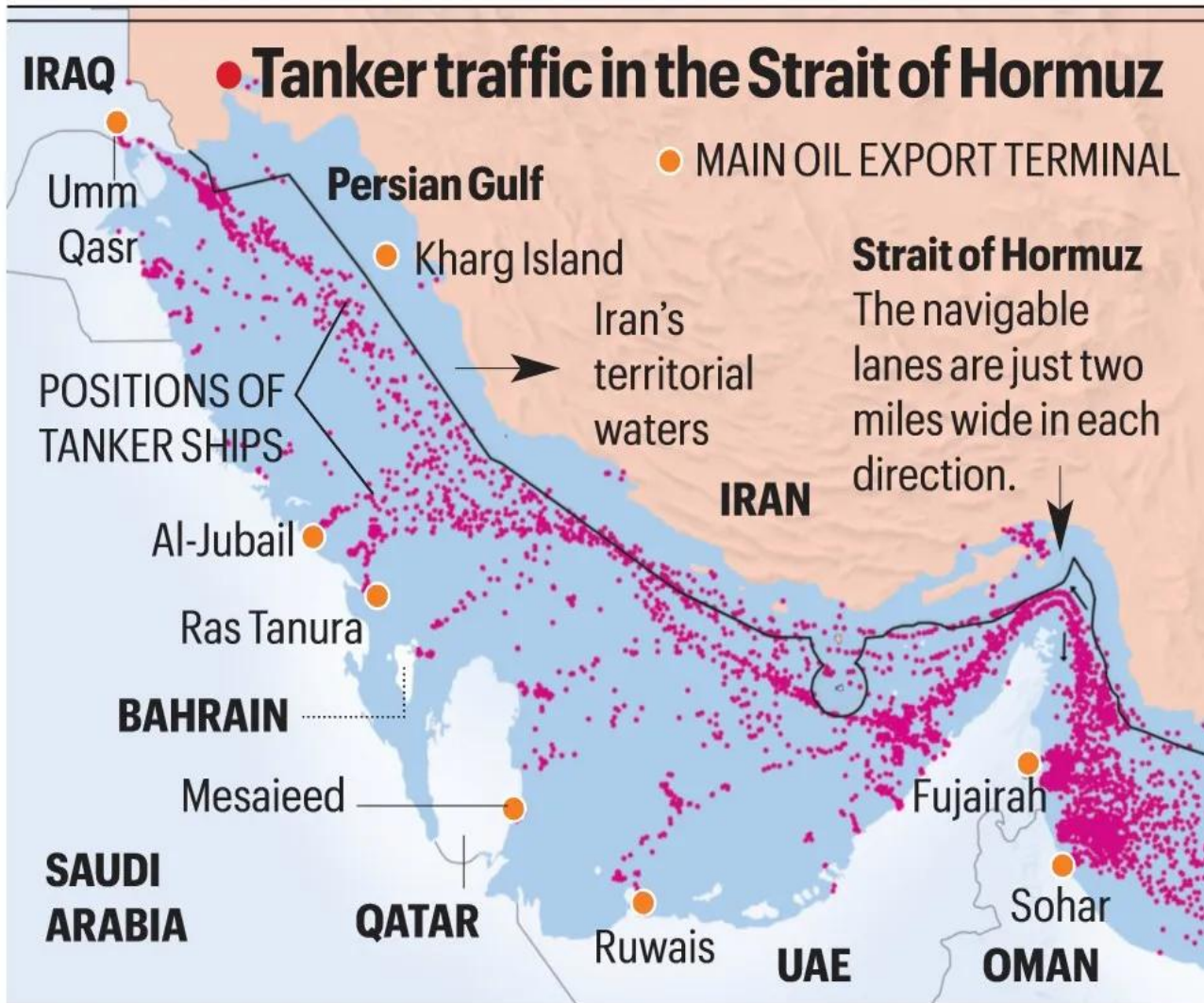
# Southern Africa



1. Beitbridge (Zimbabwe-SA)
2. Musina (South Africa)
3. Dzaleka (Malawi)

# 16. Strait of Hormuz

- The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman.
- It connects the Persian Gulf in the north to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea in the south, opening into the wider ocean.



NOTE: SHOWS DAILY TANKER POSITIONS FROM FEB 1 TO FEB 15.

SOURCES: THE NEW YORK TIMES; KPLER, MARINE REGIONS, FLANDERS MARINE INSTITUTE.

# What is Strait of Hormuz

- At its narrowest point, the strait is about 33 km wide.
- However, the shipping lanes used by tankers are only about 3 km wide in each direction.

# What is Strait of Hormuz

- Despite lying within the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, it is considered an international waterway open to global shipping.
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE), home to Dubai, also lies close to this route.

# Why has shipping slowed down now?

- Oil and gas shipments through the strait have largely paused as tensions rose following the US-Israel strikes on Iran.
- Iran has stepped up threats against vessels moving through the chokepoint.

# Why has shipping slowed down now?

- Oil and gas shipments through the strait have largely paused as tensions rose following the US-Israel strikes on Iran.
- Iran has stepped up threats against vessels moving through the chokepoint.

# Why has the strait always been important?

- Historically, the Strait of Hormuz has been a major trade route.
- In ancient times, goods such as ceramics, ivory, silk, and textiles moved from China through this region.

# Why has the strait always been important?

- In the modern era, it has become one of the world's most important energy corridors.
- Supertankers carrying oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE pass through this narrow route.

# Why has the strait always been important?

- Most of this energy supply goes to Asian markets. China, for instance, remains Iran's only major oil customer.
- While Saudi Arabia and the UAE have pipelines that can bypass the strait, the US Energy Information Administration has said "most volumes that transit the strait have no alternative means of exiting the region".

# Why does it matter to the global economy?

- Around 20 per cent of the world's oil supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz.
- On average, more than 20 million barrels of crude oil, condensate and fuel moved through the strait every day last year, news agency Reuters reported.

# Why does it matter to the global economy?

- Qatar, one of the world's largest LNG exporters, sends almost all of its gas through this route.
- Data by Reuters showed that in 2025, the Strait of Hormuz was the world's second-busiest oil shipping chokepoint, handling about 2.5 million metric tonnes of oil daily.
- Only the Strait of Malacca handled more, at around 3.3 million metric tonnes per day.

# HISTORY OF TENSIONS

**Ancient Era**

Major trade route for ceramics, ivory, silk, and textiles from China through the region

**1973**

Arab Oil Embargo — Saudi-led Arab producers blocked oil to Western nations during Arab-Israeli War

**1980–1988**

Tanker War during Iran-Iraq War — both sides targeted oil tankers passing through the strait

**2012**

Iran threatened to block the strait in response to US and European economic sanctions

**2019**

Multiple oil tankers attacked near UAE coast; attributed to Iran amid rising US-Iran tensions

**2023–24**

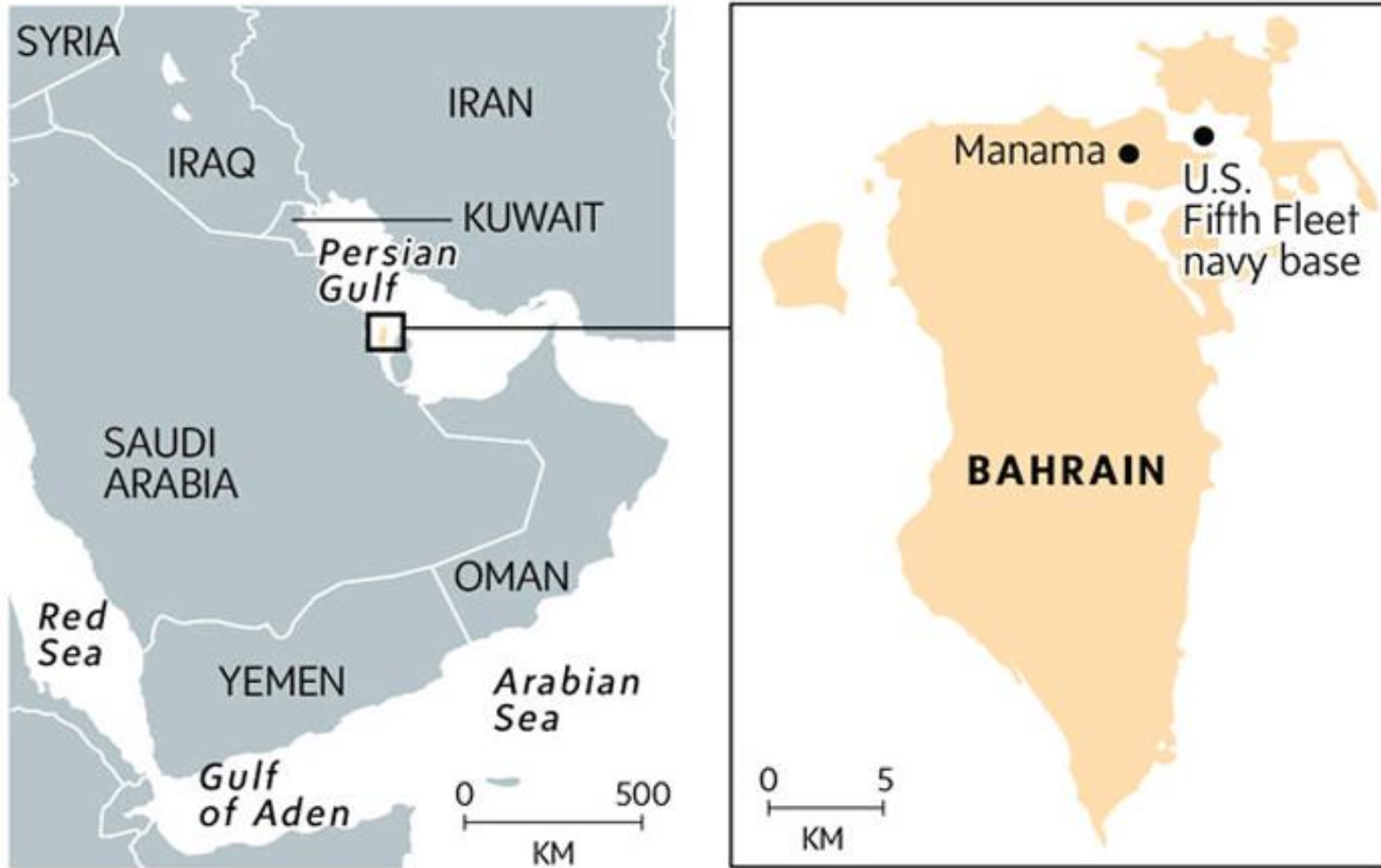
Iran seized vessels near the strait; considered closing it after US attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities

# Who protects shipping in the region?

- The US Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, is responsible for safeguarding commercial shipping in the area.
- However, in times of direct conflict, even a strong naval presence cannot fully remove risks for commercial vessels.

# Who protects shipping in the region?

- If the Strait of Hormuz were to be blocked, even temporarily, global oil and gas supplies would be severely disrupted.
- Prices would likely surge, shipping insurance costs would rise and energy-importing countries -- especially in Asia -- would face immediate pressure.



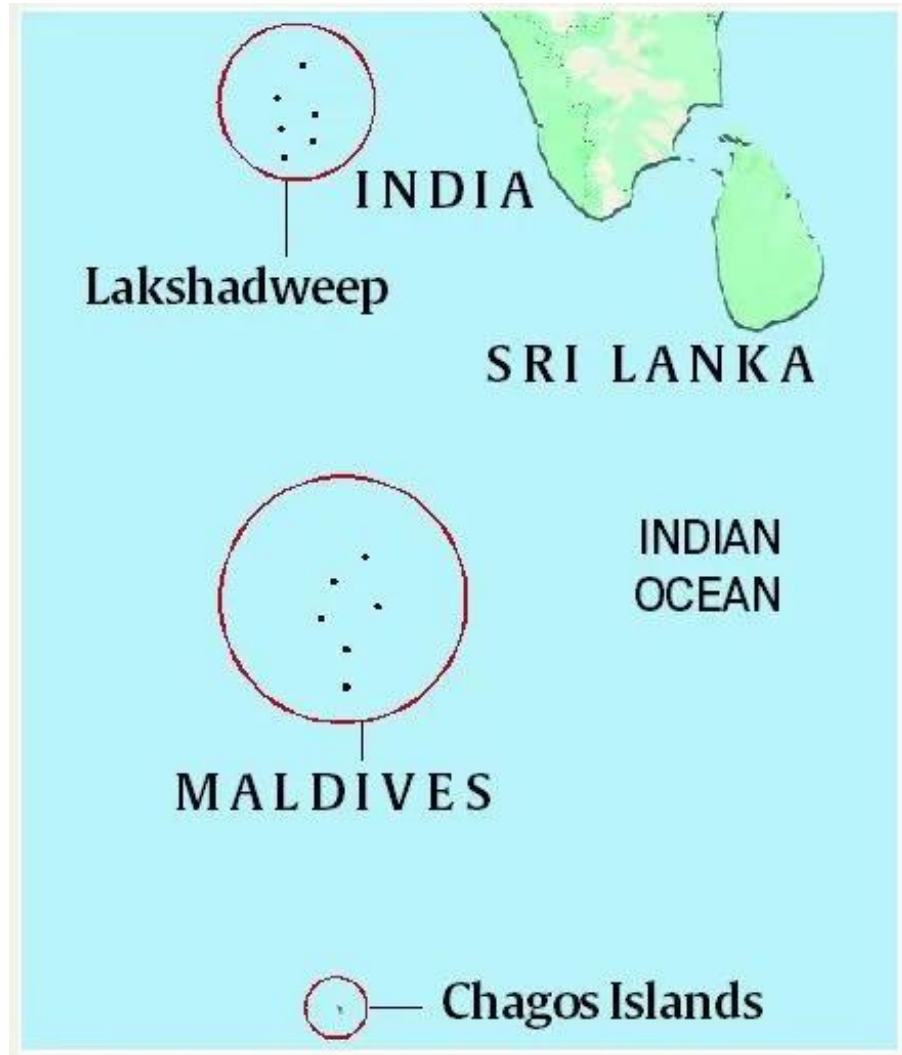
TRISH McALASTER / THE GLOBE AND MAIL

# 17. Chagos Archipelago

- The United Kingdom agreed to cede sovereignty of the strategically important Chagos Islands to Mauritius.
- The UK has long controlled Chagos and the Diego Garcia military base located there, **jointly operating it with the United States.**

# Chagos Archipelago

- The deal settled the contested sovereignty of Britain's last overseas territory in Africa, while **securing the long-term future of Diego Garcia.**



# Chagos Archipelago

- The Chagos archipelago, comprising 58 islands, lies roughly **500 km to the south** of the Maldives archipelago in the Indian Ocean.
- These islands were uninhabited until the late 18th century, **when the French brought in slave labour from Africa and India** to work in newly-established coconut plantations.
- In 1814, France ceded the islands to the British.

# Chagos Archipelago

- In 1965, the UK constituted the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**, of which the Chagos Islands were a central part.
- A few other BIOT islands were later ceded to the **Seychelles in 1976** after it gained independence from Britain.

# Chagos Archipelago

- Chagos was attached to Mauritius, another **British colony in the Indian Ocean**, for administrative purposes.
- **But when Mauritius gained independence in 1968, Chagos remained with Britain.**
- The UK government gave the newly-independent country a grant of 3 million pounds over the **“detachment” of the Chagos archipelago.**

# Chagos Archipelago

- Behind Britain retaining sovereignty over the Chagos Islands was its strategic location.
- In 1966, Britain signed an agreement with the US which made the BIOT available for the two countries' defence needs.
- **Land was acquired in 1967, and four years later, the plantation on Diego Garcia – the largest in the archipelago – was shut down.**



**B B C**

# Chagos Archipelago

- **Diego Garcia became a fully operational military base in 1986.**
- According to an article in the Foreign Policy magazine, “Thanks to its vital location, the island houses a military base that served as a critical node for American air operations during the **Gulf War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.**”

# Relevance Of Diego Garcia

- Given the ongoing tensions in West Asia, maintaining a presence in the Indian Ocean remains critical for US interests.
- Diego Garcia also gives the Americans an outpost to **monitor the Malacca Strait**, a chokepoint for world trade that is especially vital to China.

# Relevance Of Diego Garcia

- Mauritius has long claimed that the UK illegally occupies Chagos and has raised the matter many times in international fora.
- In 2017, the UN General Assembly voted to ask the International Court of Justice to examine the legal status of the Chagos archipelago.
- In 2019, the UNGA adopted a resolution welcoming an ICJ advisory opinion, demanding that the United Kingdom “unconditionally withdraw its colonial administration from the area within six months”.

# Relevance Of Diego Garcia

- The UK has ceded claims over the islands, and Mauritius is now “free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, other than Diego Garcia”.
- The UK has also promised to create a new trust fund “for the benefit of Chagossians”.

# 18. Chinese Dams on Brahmaputra

- China has embarked on several hydropower projects along the Yarlung Zangbo River (known as the Brahmaputra in India), raising concerns among downstream nations, particularly India and Bangladesh.

# Chinese Dams on Brahmaputra

- **Zangmu Dam:** Operational since October 2015, this gravity dam is located in Tibet and has a capacity of 510 MW. It marked China's first hydropower project on the Brahmaputra.
- **Dagu, Jiexu, and Jiacha Dams:** These dams are either completed or under construction on the Brahmaputra's upper reaches, aiming to harness the river's hydropower potential.

# Chinese Dams on Brahmaputra

- **Medog Hydropower Station:** Approved in December 2024, this ambitious project is set to become the world's largest hydropower dam.
- Located near the Great Bend of the Yarlung Zangbo, it is expected to generate approximately 300 billion kilowatt-hours annually, surpassing the Three Gorges Dam.

# Concerns For Downstream Countries

- **Water Flow Alterations:** There are fears that these dams could enable China to control the flow of the river, potentially affecting water availability for agriculture, fisheries, and daily use in downstream regions.
- **Environmental and Seismic Risks:** The proposed dam sites are in seismically active zones, raising concerns about potential ecological disruptions and the safety of such massive infrastructures.

# Concerns For Downstream Countries

- **Lack of Water-Sharing Agreements:**  
The absence of formal treaties between China and downstream countries exacerbates uncertainties about water rights and future resource management.

# China's Position

- Chinese authorities assert that these projects are designed with ecological considerations and will not adversely impact downstream regions.
- They emphasize the role of these dams in achieving renewable energy targets and fostering regional development.

# Indi's Position

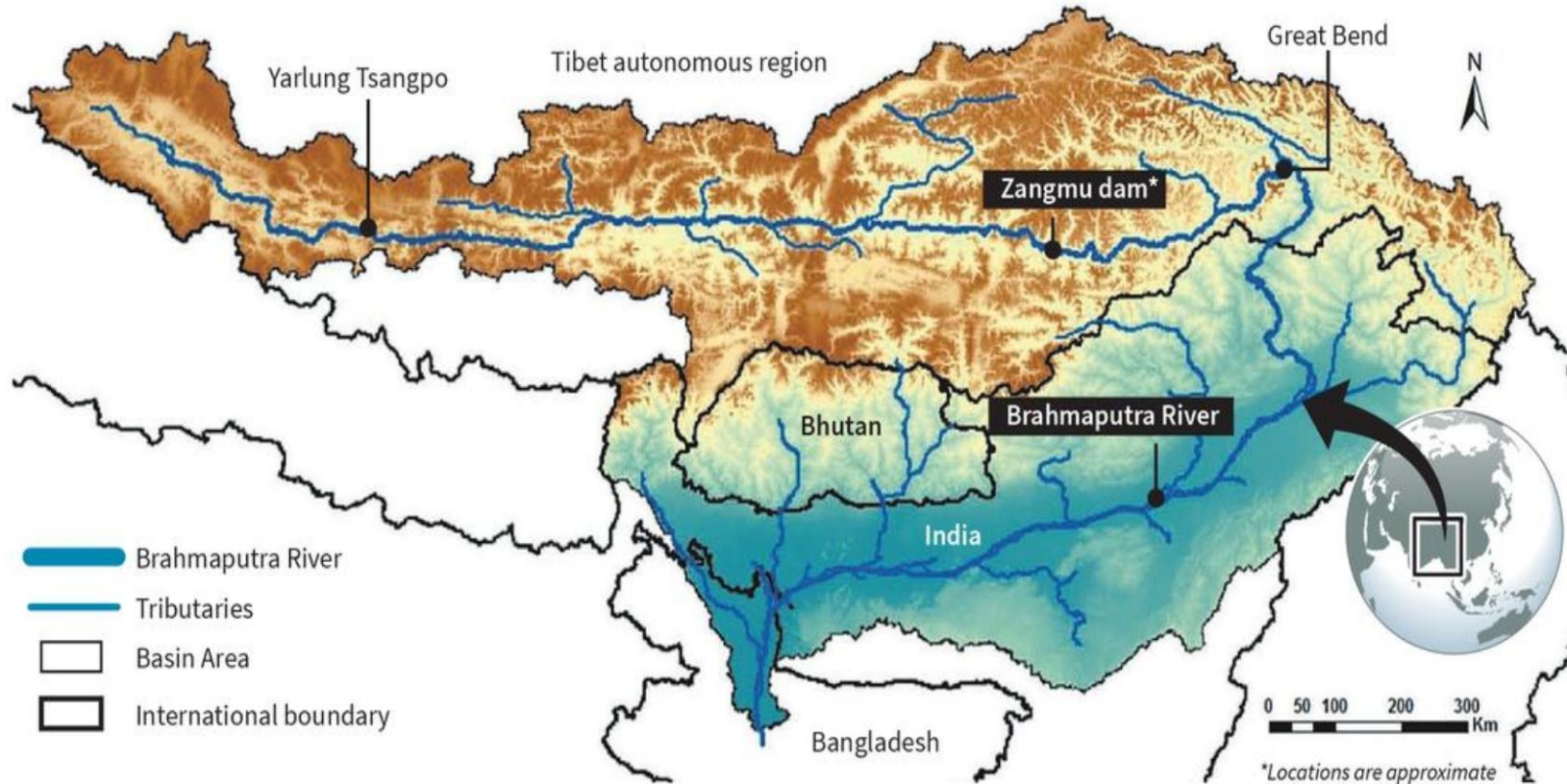
- In light of these developments, India has conveyed its concerns to China, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that downstream interests are not harmed.
- Additionally, India is exploring its own hydropower projects on the Brahmaputra to mitigate potential impacts from upstream developments.

# Indi's Position

- The situation underscores the need for collaborative water resource management and transparent dialogue among the nations sharing the Brahmaputra basin to ensure sustainable and equitable utilization of this vital river system.

# Taming the 'rogue' river

The Brahmaputra is a transboundary Himalayan river basin spanning four riparian countries. This map shows its flow from the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China through Bhutan and India into Bangladesh.



# WATER POWER

**1 DAGU**  
**640 MW**

**2 JIEXU**

**3 ZANGMU**  
**510 MW**

**4 JIACHA**  
**320 MW**



# 19. TRIPP Corridor



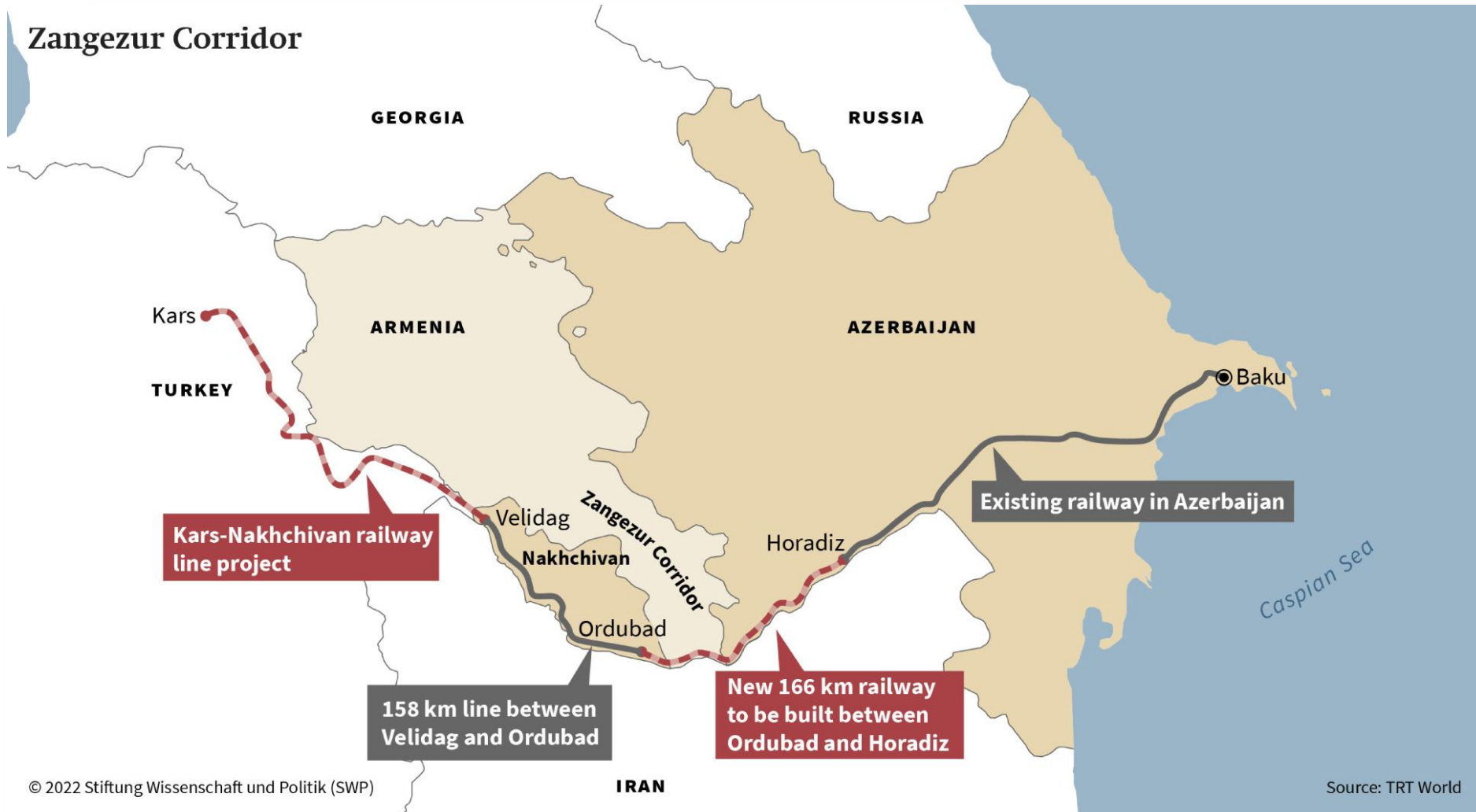
# Context

- Following numerous rounds of negotiations, the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a historic peace accord mediated by the United States (US) at the White House.
- The agreement was signed in the presence of President Donald Trump on 13 March 2025, marking the culmination of decades of conflict and war.

# TRIPP Corridor

- Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) – linking Nakhichevan, the Azerbaijani enclave bordering Türkiye, to Azerbaijan, via the Zangezur Corridor.
- The Zangezur Corridor is a direct overland multimodal route connecting mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan through southern Armenia.

## Zangezur Corridor



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Source: TRT World

# TRIPP Corridor

- Under the agreement, Armenia leases the land to the US for 99 years, allowing private consortia - including American, Turkish, and European companies - to build and operate railways, highways, energy pipelines, and telecommunications infrastructure.
- The project resembles the long-discussed Zangezur Corridor but crucially differs in its administration; instead of being overseen by Russia or subject to Iranian transit control, it is an American-backed, US-secured route embedded within Armenia's legal framework.

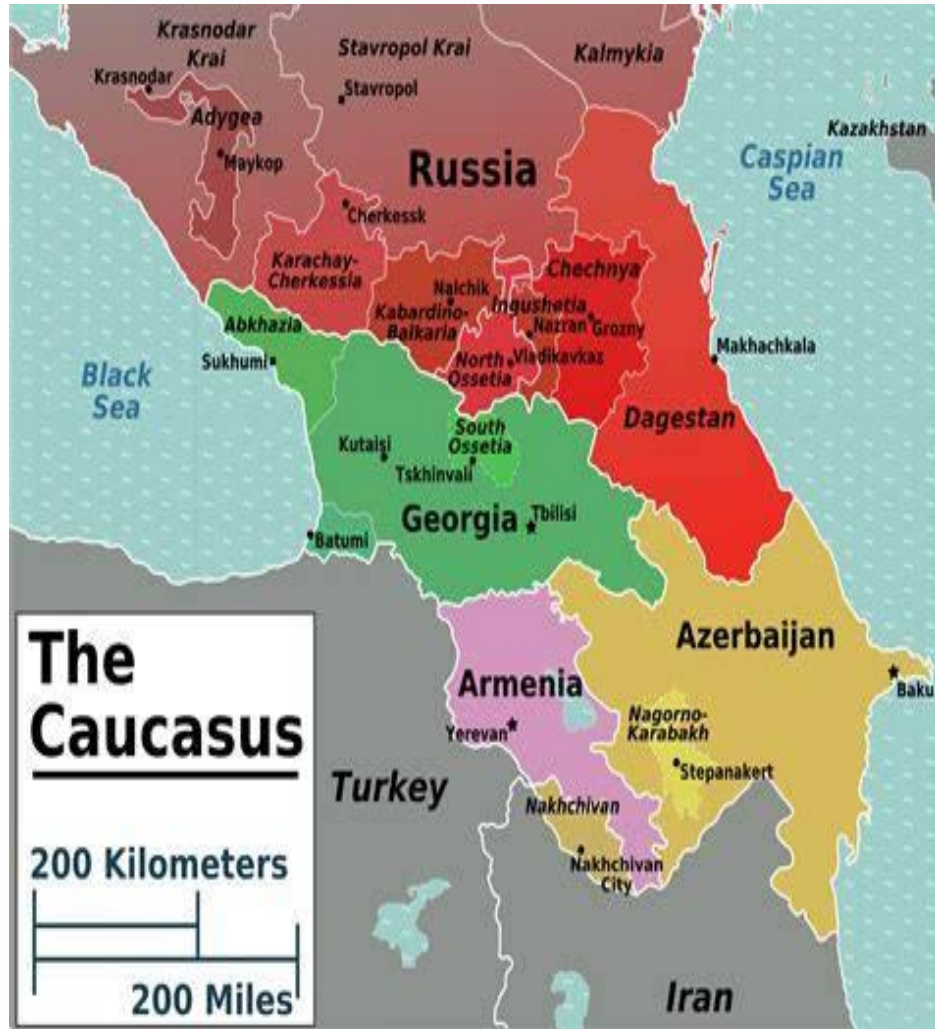
# TRIPP Corridor

- Amid rising geopolitical tensions, the 43 km corridor in Armenia is expected to become a vital cross-Eurasia geostrategic and geoeconomic asset for the US, especially vis-à-vis Tehran, Moscow, and even Beijing.
- If developed, the corridor could fill the power vacuum in the historically Russian-dominated region and reshape regional geopolitics.

# Impact on South Caucasus

- The TRIPP agreement, involving the United States, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, marks a pivotal shift in South Caucasus geopolitics, fostering enhanced regional trade while redefining transit dynamics.

# Caucasus Region



# Impact on South Caucasus

- The TRIPP corridor's estimated costs of US\$3-5 billion over the next 5 to 10 years could generate annual logistics savings of approximately US\$20-30 billion.
- The corridor has the potential to unlock US\$50-100 billion in annual trade by 2027 and reduce transit time between Asia and Europe.
- More importantly, it will meet the growing infrastructure needs of TITR, which connects Europe with Central Asia and beyond via Georgia.
- It will also enhance Europe's energy security and double the energy imports from Central Asia and Azerbaijan.

# TITR



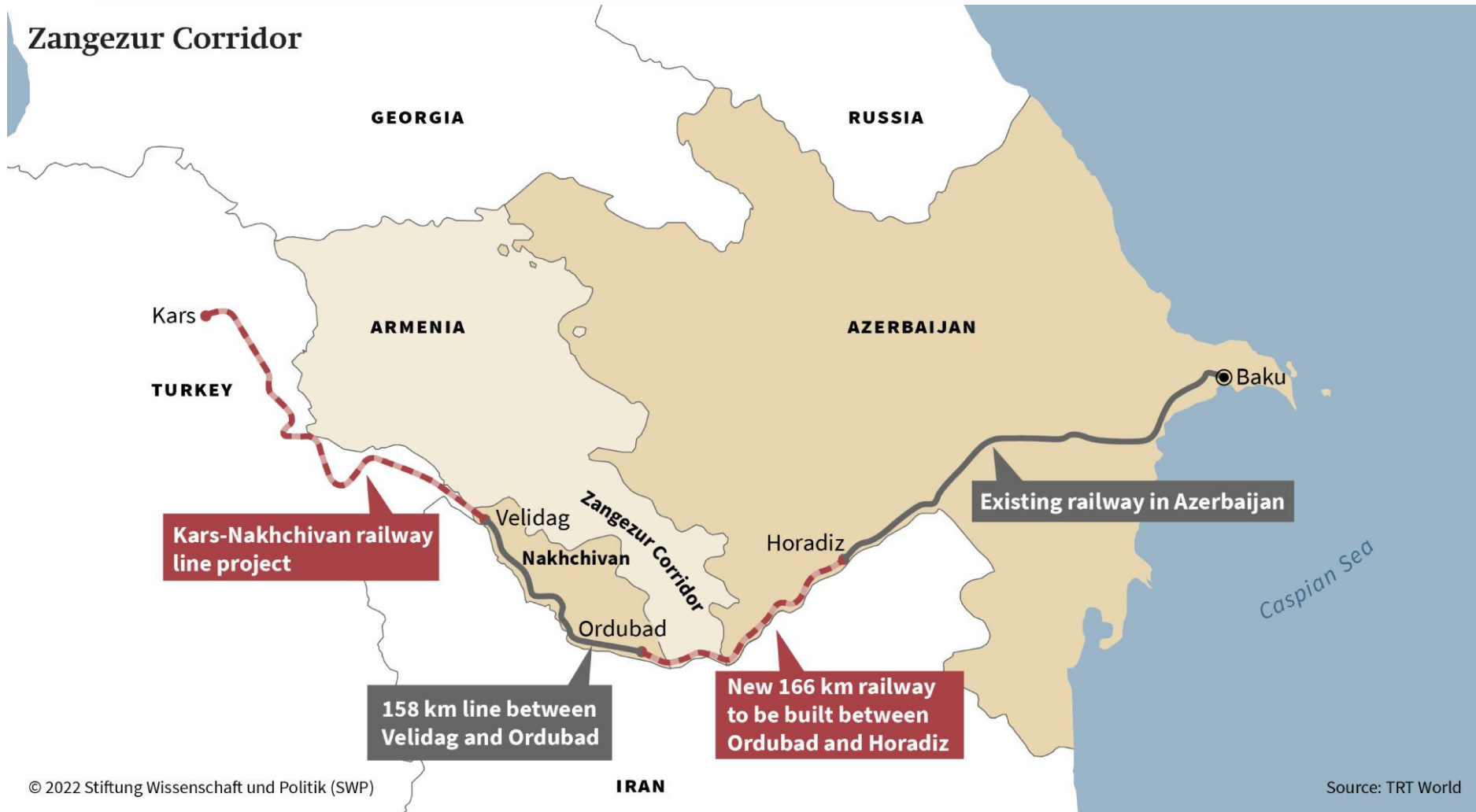
# TITR

- The Middle Corridor, also called TITR (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route), is a trade route from Southeast Asia and China to Europe via Kazakhstan, Caspian Sea (using train ferries to cross the Caspian), Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

# Circumventing Iran

- For Iran, the TRIPP corridor represents the loss of a vital role in Azerbaijani transit.
- By cutting Tehran out of the most direct link between Baku and its western exclave, the project undermines a revenue stream and removes a bargaining chip Iran has long used in regional diplomacy.

## Zangezur Corridor



# 20. Saudi UAE Drift- Ports in Yemen

- Saudi Arabia's recent airstrikes on Yemen's southern port city of Mukalla have unveiled a widening divide within the Gulf coalition that once jointly battled the Iran-aligned Houthi movement.
- The strikes, launched by Saudi warplanes, targeted vessels allegedly transporting prohibited weapons linked to the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC), escalating tensions between long-standing regional partners.



# Context

- The airstrike, which, according to Riyadh, targeted a UAE-linked weapons shipment, marked a significant escalation in the widening rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE.



# Weapon Shipment Sparks Crisis

- Saudi officials claimed that two ships originating from the UAE port of Fujairah entered Mukalla without proper authorization and switched off their tracking systems.
- The Saudi-led coalition alleged the vessels secretly unloaded weapons and armoured vehicles at night in support of STC forces, describing the consignment as a direct threat to national security.

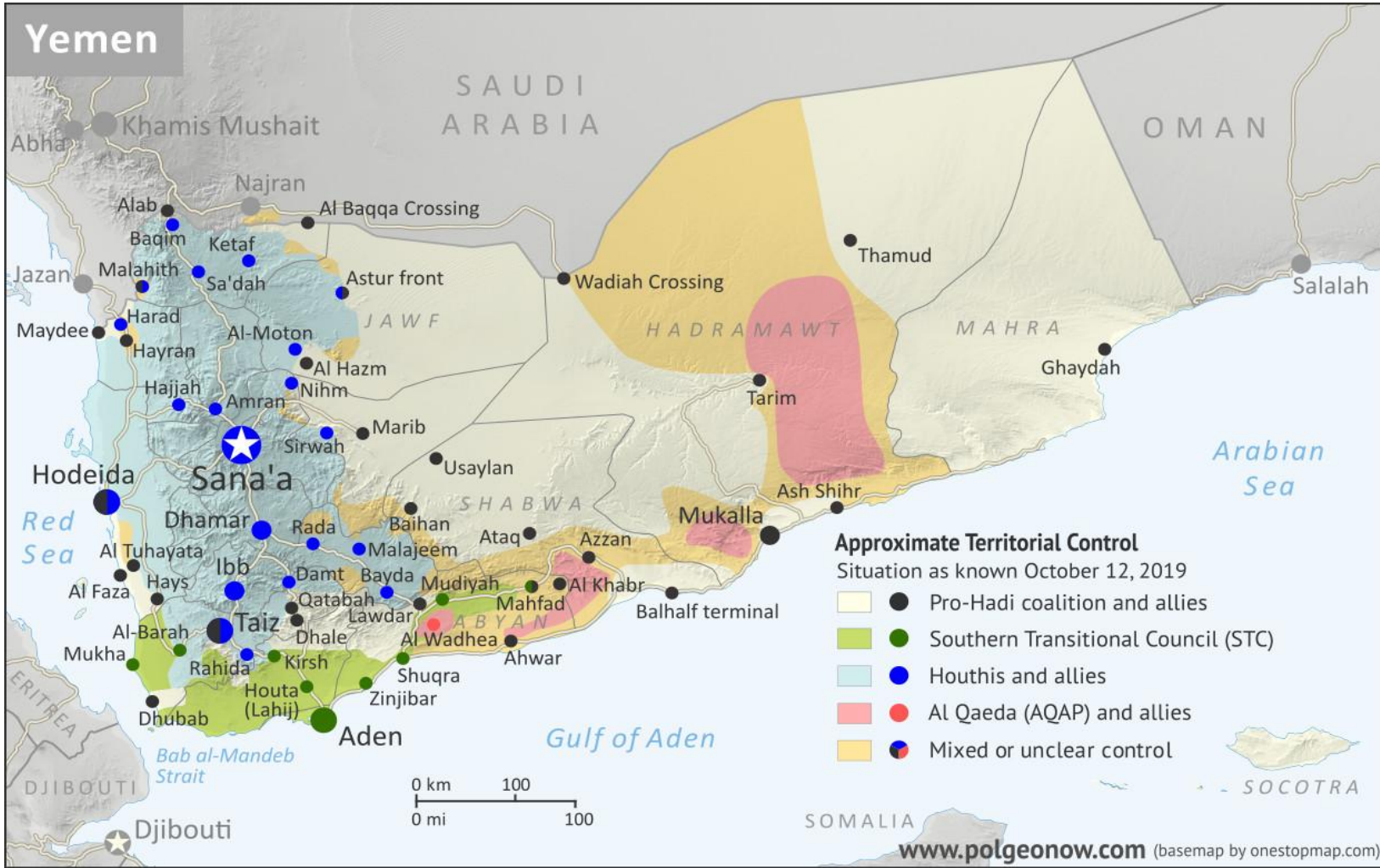


# What is STC?

- The STC - formed in 2017 and backed by Abu Dhabi - controls key regions of southern Yemen including Aden and commands powerful armed factions.
- Although part of Yemen's ruling Presidential Leadership Council, STC fighters have clashed with Saudi-supported units, particularly as the separatist group pushes for autonomy or the re-establishment of a pre-1990 southern state.

# What is STC?

- Saudi Arabia views STC's advances in eastern provinces - particularly Hadramout and Al-Mahra, which border the kingdom and host major trade and resource corridors - as a national security red line.



# Yemen Leadership Responds

- Responding swiftly, Yemen's internationally recognised government suspended a defence agreement with the UAE and ordered Emirati troops to leave within 24 hours.
- Presidential Leadership Council chief Rashad al-Alimi accused the UAE of backing separatist ambitions that undermine state authority.

# Yemen Leadership Responds

- Authorities also enforced heightened controls on air, land and sea routes, introduced a temporary no-fly zone, and blocked port access except under coalition clearance - signalling the seriousness of the rupture.

# UAE Rejects Accusations, Announce Pullout

- The UAE said it was blindsided by the Saudi operation and dismissed claims that the shipment included weapons.
- Its foreign ministry insisted the cargo was solely equipment for Emirati forces and maintained that its presence in Yemen falls under the original coalition mandate.

# UAE Rejects Accusations, Announce Pullout

- Calling for restraint, Abu Dhabi urged dialogue to avoid further escalation.
- Later, the UAE announced it would withdraw its remaining counterterrorism units, signalling a scaled-back role on the ground.

# Coalition Built in 2015 is Under Strain

- Saudi Arabia and the UAE entered Yemen's conflict together in 2015 to restore the internationally recognised government after Houthi forces captured Sanaa.
- While both opposed the Houthis, their long-term visions diverged - Riyadh favouring a united Yemen and Abu Dhabi backing southern groups seeking autonomy.

# Coalition Built in 2015 is Under Strain

- As the coalition fractures, Yemen remains engulfed in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with more than 150,000 lives lost and millions facing deprivation.
- The internal power struggle now risks overshadowing efforts to confront the Houthis and threatens the stability of southern regions rich in oil & strategic Ports

# Why does the UAE support the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen?

- First, **strategic maritime control** is a key reason.  
Southern Yemen lies close to the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait**, a vital chokepoint connecting the Red Sea with the Indian Ocean.
- Control over ports like **Aden** allows influence over one of the world's most important shipping routes. For a trade-dependent country like the UAE, securing these sea lanes is critical.

# Why does the UAE support the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen?

- Second, the UAE aims to **counter Islamist political groups**.
- The STC strongly opposes the **Muslim Brotherhood-linked Islah Party**, which the UAE considers a threat to regional stability.
- Supporting the STC helps the UAE limit Islamist influence in Yemen.

# Why does the UAE support the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen?

- Third, the UAE seeks to **contain Iranian influence** in the region.
- Although the Houthis operate mainly in northern Yemen, a strong STC in the south acts as a **buffer**, preventing further expansion of Iran-backed forces.

# Why does the UAE support the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen?

- Fourth, the UAE prefers **indirect influence rather than direct control**.
- By backing the STC, the UAE maintains leverage in southern Yemen without large-scale military deployment, making it a cost-effective geopolitical strategy.

# Why does the UAE support the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen?

- Fifth, there is a **divergence between Saudi Arabia and the UAE.**
- Saudi Arabia supports a unified Yemeni state under the internationally recognized government, while the UAE favors strong, autonomous southern actors like the STC to secure its maritime and security interests.

# Timeline of Saudi- UAE Relations

- March, 2015: They launch a military intervention in Yemen to restore the government ousted by the Iran-aligned Houthis. UAE troops lead ground operations, while Saudi air power controls the skies.
- June, 2017: The allies lead a boycott of Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism, charges it denies. The move cements the alignment between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and UAE leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ).
- 2019: The UAE draws down troops in Yemen, shifting strategy but retaining influence through the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), leaving Riyadh to shoulder the war against the Houthis.

# Timeline of Saudi- UAE Relations

- September, 2020: The UAE normalizes ties with Israel under the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords. Saudi Arabia, the custodian of Islam's two holiest sites, declines to follow suit, insisting on Palestinian statehood first, giving Abu Dhabi a unique diplomatic channel to Washington.
- January, 2021: Saudi Arabia leads the Al-Ula summit to end the Qatar dispute. The UAE signs reluctantly, maintaining a cooler stance toward Doha.

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- February, 2021: Riyadh challenges Dubai's commercial dominance, telling foreign firms to move regional HQs to the kingdom by 2024 or lose state contracts.
- July, 2021: Economic rivalry spikes. Riyadh removes tariff concessions for goods from free zones, undercutting the UAE's trade model. Simultaneously, a rare dispute erupts at OPEC as the UAE blocks a Saudi-led deal, demanding a higher crude oil production baseline.

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- April, 2023: In Sudan's war, Riyadh hosts ceasefire talks supporting the army, while UN experts accuse the UAE of arming the rival Rapid Support Forces, which Abu Dhabi denies.
- December 8, 2025: Tensions peak in Yemen as the UAE-backed STC seizes oilfields in Hadramout, crossing a Saudi "red line."
- December 30, 2025: Saudi jets strike a vessel in Mukalla. The coalition says the ship was delivering heavy weapons to separatists, marking the first direct engagement between the partners' interests.

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