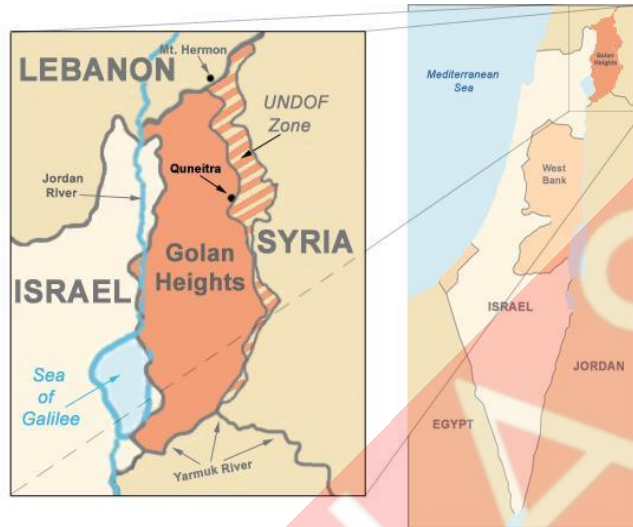


1. GOLAN HEIGHTS

News: Golan Heights has been recognised by the US to be officially a part of Israel in March 2019.

About: The Golan Heights is the area captured from Syria and occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War, territory which has been administered as part of Israel since 1981. Golan heights is a rocky plateau shares borders with Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Israel. Its towering location over Israel's west makes it a strategic location against Israel.

Brief History: Golan heights dispute goes back to 1948 when the state of Israel was formed. It was used by Syria to carry out attacks on Israel. During the 1967 Six day war, the Golan height was captured by Israel.



2. WEST BANK

News: On January 28, 2020 US president Donald Trump announced a peace plan which he calls "The deal of the century"-

About: West bank is a contentious area between Israel and Palestine. It's a landlocked territory in western Asia bordered by Jordan in east to Green line and Israel in west, south and north.

Brief history: West bank dispute goes back to 1948 when Jordan captured it after 1948 Arab-Israeli War and then annexed in 1950. In 1967, Israel defeated the combined forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the Six Days War and seized the West Bank from Jordan.



3. JORDAN RIVER

News: In 2019, there were increased tensions between Israel and Jordan. In the last few years, the water scarcity of river Jordan has increased.

About: Jordan river is a major water source flowing through the rift valley, then into the dead sea. The river forms the boundary between the country of Jordan and the West bank. It flows through Jordan, Syria, Israel and the area of Palestine. Water remains the central issue to the Middle East conflict. Its famous for Wars Over Waters.

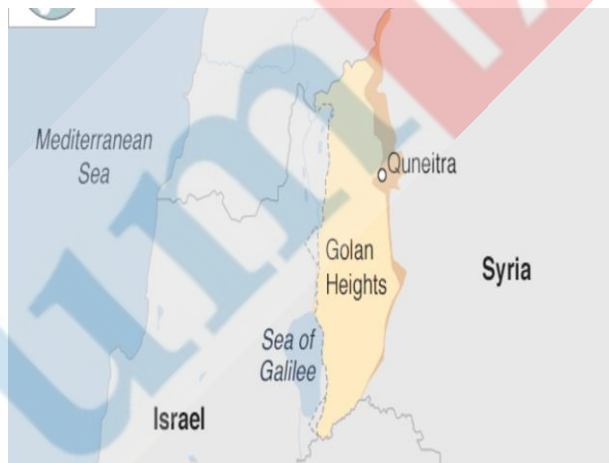
Brief history: After the Arab Israeli's war in 1948 with Armistice Agreements in 1949 three demilitarised zones were created between Israel and Syria. The largest of which was in the southernmost part lies from the Sea of Galilee to the Yarmuk river where the borders of Israel, Jordan and Syria converge. The Arab decided to deprive Israel of its water share by diversion of waters of Jordan and its tributaries. In 1965 there were a series of border clashes on this issue which ended with the 1965 Six Days War.



4. SEA OF GALILEE

News: In Feb 2020, Sea of Galilee's water level has risen significantly by increased rains and stream flows.

About: The Sea of Galilee or the Kinnereth is a freshwater lake situated in the north eastern part of Israel between the Golan heights and Galilee region. It is bordered by Its main source of water is the river Jordan. Its water level has been continuously falling over the period of time. With continuous droughts, the condition has worsened.

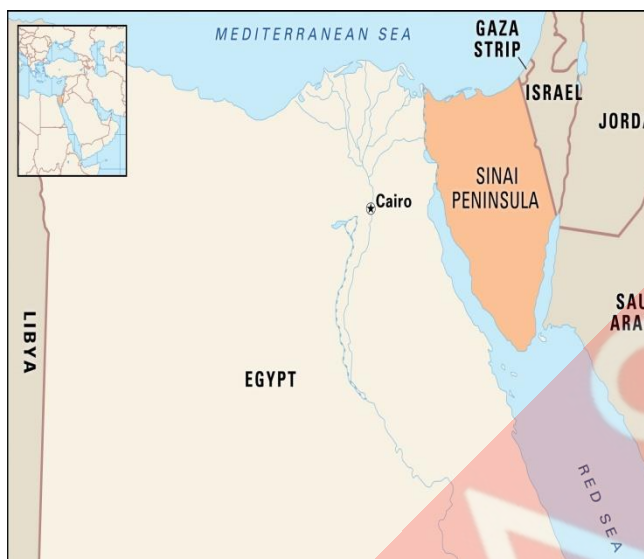


Brief History: In 1948 Syria invaded Israel and captured territory along the Sea of Galilee. Under 1949 Armistice agreement, Syria occupied its northeastern shorelines. Syria remained in possession of the lake until the 1967 Arab- Israeli war. With Israel's growing need for water, its water level has diminished over a period of time.

5. SINAI PENINSULA

News: The conflict in the Sinai Peninsula has increased which leads to increased confrontation between security forces and the fighters.

About: The Sinai Peninsula is a triangular shaped peninsula located between Mediterranean Sea in the north and the red sea in the south in Egypt. It acts as a bridge between Asia and Africa. Its land borders include Suez Canal to the west and Israel-Egyptian border in the northeast. Sinai is the land of contrast with desert in the interior to the coral reefs along the coastline.



Brief History: With the Armistice Agreement of 1949, it remained under the control of Egypt. In 1956 Egypt used this to blockade Israel. Following which Israel invaded Sinai and took control of the whole peninsula after the 1967 Six Days War. After the Israel Egypt peace treaty of 1979, Israel left Sinai and gave it to Egypt.

6. STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND OTHER CHOKES IN INDIAN OCEAN

News: After the US strike killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, Iran had promised to retaliate. The Strait of Hormuz was seen as a possible vulnerable point. There are increased attacks on oil tankers passing through it.

About: The Strait of Hormuz is a water channel between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is located between the UAE, Oman and Iran. It acts as gatekeeper for the world's oil players because more than 25 percent of world oil passes through it. Other such choke points include malacca strait, bab el mandeb, sunda strait etc. which are very important for world trade because most oil passes through these routes.



Brief History: To traverse the Strait, ships pass through the territorial waters of Iran and Oman under the transit passage provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In 1959, Iran altered the legal status of the strait by expanding its territorial sea to 12 nautical miles (22 km) and declaring that it would recognize only transit by innocent passage through the newly expanded area. Oman followed soon. Large oil tankers pass through it that it remains a central issue of contention between different countries. With increased tensions, tanker wars have been anticipated.

7. GULF OF ADEN

News: Though it is one of the most profitable trade routes but at the same time it's equally the most dangerous waters of the world. The pirates of Somalia in this region are most notorious.

About: The Gulf of Aden is a deep-water basin that forms a natural sea link between the Red sea (through bab-el-mandeb) and the Arabian sea (through Guardafui channel). It has Yemen to the north, Djibouti in the west, Arabian sea to the east and Somalia to the south. It plays an important role in delivering Gulf oil to the world becoming an integral part of the world economy.



Brief History: It is important from the times of Ancient Greeks. With British military withdrawal in the 1960s, soviet naval presence increased in the Gulf region. With the Suez Canal, it has become one of the most important parts of world trade.

8. RED SEA

News: In the last few years, Gulf states are asserting themselves in the areas of the Red Sea. With Turkey increasing its influence, other countries too are increasing their presence. Also, with increased piracy, it has remained a hot region.

About: The Red Sea is a narrow strip of water extending from Suez in Egypt to Bab el Mandeb strait. It passes through the coasts of Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti in the west to Saudi Arabia and Yemen in the east. Through Suez Canal, it connects Mediterranean sea and is one of the most travelled waterways of the world carrying maritime traffic from Africa to Europe.



Brief history: Its ancient history traces back to spice trade. After the second World War, there was a war of supremacy between Americans and Soviets with increased oil tankers movement. Suez Canal was closed from 1967-1975 due to Six Days Wars in 1967. This route is notorious for its pirates of Somalia.

9. PUERTO WILLIAMS IN CHILE

News: Puerto Williams in Chile has been upgraded to the category of “cities” - making it the

southernmost city of the world. It has replaced Argentina's Ushuaia.

About: Puerto Williams is a growing hamlet on the remote southern tip of the South American continent.

Brief history: Puerto Williams was founded on Navarino island in 1953 as a naval base for Chile. The base was used for patrolling the areas of Beagle channel, Cape Horn, Drake Channel and Antarctic peninsula.



10. STRAIT OF KERCH

News: On 25 November, 2018 Russia captured three naval vessels of Ukraine trying to enter Sea of Azov from Black sea through kerch strait near Crimian Peninsula.

About: The strait of Kerch is a narrow strip of water connecting Black Sea to Sea of Azov. It has the Kerch Peninsula of Crimea in the west to the Taman peninsula of Russia in the east.

Brief history: It became a problematic area in the second world war between Nazi Germany and Soviet army. A territorial dispute between Ukraine and Russia occurred on Tuzla island in the strait of Kerch. Though settled in both agreeing to use it a common area. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russia decided to build a bridge over the Strait of Kerch.



11. BLACK SEA

News: The Kerch strait near Black Sea incident took place in 2018 when Russia captured three vessels of Ukraine trying to enter the Sea of Azov from Black Sea using the strait of Kerch.

About: Black sea is an inland waterbody located in south-eastern Europe and Western Asia. It is bordered by Ukraine in the north, Russia to north east, Georgia to east, Turkey to south and Bulgaria and Romania to the west. It is a large basin area situated in the strategically important geopolitics. The Crimean Peninsula thrusts



in Black sea.

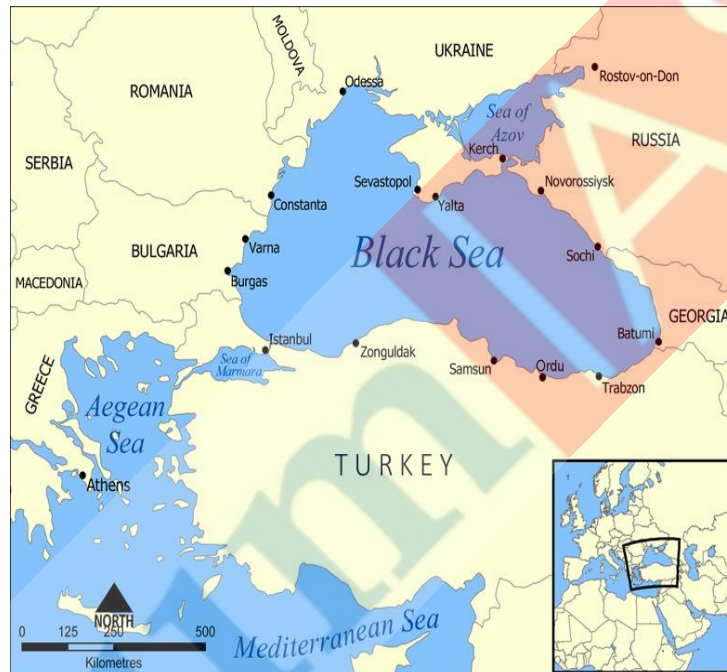
Brief history: The black sea remains an important battlefield in the First and Second World war. With increased problems between Ukraine and Russia after Crimean annexation, this area has remained a hot topic between them.

12. AZOV SEA

News: On 25 November 2018, Russian authorities captured three naval vessels trying to cross the Azov sea through Black Sea via the Strait of Kerch.

About: Azov sea is an inland sea situated in the southern coasts of Russia and Ukraine. forms the northern extension of Black sea. It is linked on its south by Kerch strait. The Arabat Spit, a long sandbar, lies in the western part of Azov sea separating from marshy Syvash that divides the Crimean part from Ukraine.

Brief history: In 2003, Ukraine and Russia decided to treat the sea as internal waters. With the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Ukraine announced that it will increase its naval ships in the Azov sea, especially after the formation of Crimean bridge in 2018 by Russia, the tensions have increased.



13. BURKINA FASO

News: The region is facing religious tensions and violence as Christian communities are targeted in a spiral of jihadist killings. Burkina Faso is also battling jihadists in the north as an Islamist militant insurgency by groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

About: It is a landlocked country in the western Africa and part of the larger Sahel region. Comprised of over 60 ethnic groups Burkina Faso is a Muslim-majority country but its ruling class is largely Christian.

Brief history: Many of the problems can be traced to the rise of one man: Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a preacher from northern Burkina Faso who founded Ansar ul Islam – the country's first



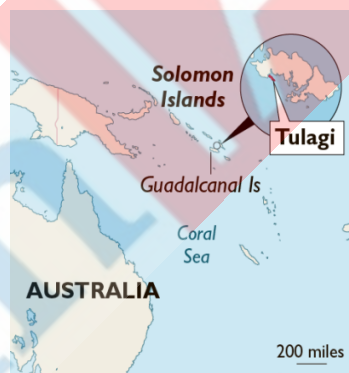
homegrown jihadist group – in 2016. Problem also spread from the situation in Mali where France first intervened to dislodge jihadists groups in 2012.

14. TULAGI ISLANDS

News: In September 2019, a provincial government of the Solomon Islands signed a deal to grant the 75-year lease of the entire island of Tulagi to a Chinese company. However, this was declared unconstitutional by the Solomon Islands after a week, thus the deal was canceled.

About: Tulagi is a small island (200 km²) in the Solomon Islands which is a sovereign state consisting of six major islands and over 900 smaller islands in Oceania. It is part of the larger Melanesia region of the Oceania.

Brief history: The island of Tulagi served as a South Pacific headquarters for Britain then Japan, and during World War II, its natural deepwater harbor made it a military gem. China is expanding its military assets into the South Pacific and is looking for friendly ports and friendly airfields just like other rising powers before them.



15. SOUTH CHINA SEA

News: It is the site of maritime disputes between seven countries bordering the South China Sea. It is often in the news for acts of Chinese assertiveness to gain control of it as per its nine-dash line concept.

About: The South China Sea is a part of the Pacific Ocean, encompassing an area from the Karimata and Malacca straits to the Strait of Taiwan. The sea carries tremendous strategic importance: one-third of the world's shipping, lucrative fisheries and huge oil and gas reserves.



Disputes: Countries involved are - China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines and Taiwan.

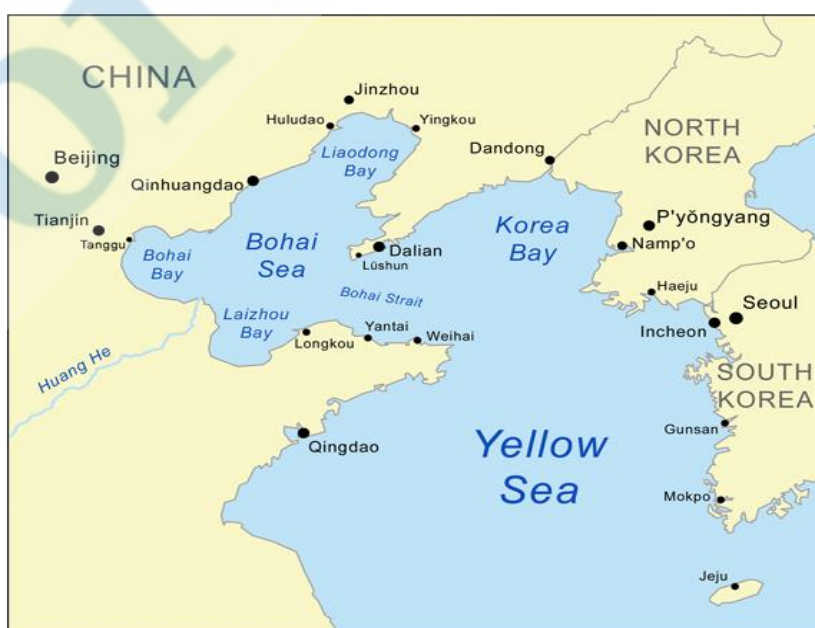
Disputed Area	Countries Involved
Nine-dash line area	All seven
Paracel Islands	China, Vietnam and Taiwan
Natuna Islands	China, Indonesia and Taiwan
Spratly Islands	China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines and Taiwan
Scarborough Shoal	China, Philippines and Taiwan
Sabah area	Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines
Luzon Strait	China, Philippines and Taiwan
Sea area west of Palawan and Luzon	China, Philippines and Taiwan

Brief history: After World War II, Imperial Japan had to relinquish control of the islands in the South China Sea. China's 1958 declaration described China's claims in the South China Sea islands based on the nine-dotted line map. Since 2013, China has resorted to island building in the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands region. These actions have been met with a wide international condemnation, and since 2015 the US and other states such as France and the UK have conducted freedom of navigation operations (FONOP) in the region.

16. YELLOW SEA

News: Since November 2018, "peace zones" had been established by the North and South Korean militaries in the Yellow Sea area that touches the North and South Korean demarcation line.

About: The Yellow Sea is part of the Western Pacific Ocean located between mainland China and the Korean Peninsula, and can be considered the north-western part of the East China Sea. It is one of four seas named after common colour terms (the others being the Black Sea, the Red Sea and the White Sea), and its name is descriptive of the phenomenon



whereby fine sand grains from the Gobi Desert sandstorms, that descend annually from the north, turn the surface of its waters a golden yellow.

Brief history: The armed forces of South and North Korea ceased all "hostile acts" against each other as part of a set of confidence-building measures under a summit deal. The comprehensive military agreement, signed in September 2018 during their summit talks, banned hostility in every space: land, sea and air.

17. SYRIA

News: Turkey and Russia have announced a military ceasefire in Idlib on 6th March 2020. Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria, has witnessed increased violence and bloodshed since last December, the start of a Russia-backed Syrian offensive to regain control over the region.

About: Syria is a country in Western Asia and is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups. Arabs are the largest ethnic group, and Sunnis the largest religious group. Bashar al-Assad has been president since 2000 and was preceded by his father Hafez al-Assad, who was in office from 1971 to 2000.



Brief history: Since 2011 a multi-sided civil war is going on in Syria fought between Bashar al-Assad, along with his foreign allies, and various domestic and foreign forces opposing both the Syrian government and each other in varying combinations.

The unrest in Syria, part of a wider wave of the 2011 Arab Spring protests, grew out of discontent with the Syrian government and escalated to an armed conflict after protests calling for Assad's removal were violently suppressed. Presently Mr Assad is fast gaining territorial control.

White Helmets: Officially known as Syria Civil Defence (SCD) is a volunteer organisation that operates in parts of opposition-controlled Syria and in Turkey. Formed in 2014 during the Syrian Civil War, the majority of the volunteers' activity in Syria consists of humanitarian assistance. SCD was nominated for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize.

Chemical Attacks: An OPCW-UN joint investigative team found Syria and the Islamic State responsible for numerous chemical weapons attacks in Syria over the past several years using Chlorine, Sarin, Mustard gas, VX nerve agent etc. Main sites were - Ghouta in Damascus (2013), Kafr Zita in Hama (2014), Aleppo City (2016), Khan Shaykhun in Idlib (2017), Douma in Damascus (2018).

18. MEDITERRANEAN SEA

News: A tragic shipwreck off the coast of Libya in February 2020 and more than a dozen other recent fatalities elsewhere have pushed the death toll in the Mediterranean Sea to 20,000 since 2014, according to The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Missing Migrants Project.

About: The Mediterranean Sea is a sea connected to the Atlantic Ocean. Although it is sometimes considered a part of the Atlantic Ocean, it is usually referred to as a separate body of water. The sea was an important route for merchants and travellers of ancient times, facilitating trade and cultural exchange between peoples of the region. It is also a hotbed of naval activity esp by NATO and Russia.



Brief history: As the North African country Libya descended into chaos following the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi, it became a haven for smugglers ferrying African migrants to European shores.

19. ENGLISH CHANNEL

News: It is often used by the illegal migrants and refugees from West Asia to reach England in search of a better life.

About: It is an arm of the Atlantic Ocean that separates England from France and links to the North Sea by the Strait of Dover. The English Channel is the world's busiest shipping lane, with 500-600 ships passing through the narrow strait every day.

Brief history: Around 2700 migrants attempted to cross the English Channel by boat in 2019, according to figures from the French maritime authorities.



20. GREEN LAND

News: Last year US President Donald Trump offered to buy out the Greenland territory but it

proved unsuccessful. This year Trump's budget provided funds to build the first permanent consular services outpost of the US in Greenland.

About: Greenland is the world's largest island, located between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. It is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark.

Brief history: Greenland is one of the most strategic locations in the world. It has access to the top of the North Pole and also the [Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom] gap and being directly across from Russia. The US military's ballistic missile early warning system is located there because the shortest route from Europe to North America goes through the Arctic island. The Pentagon also beat out China in its bid to build airports in Greenland, which could have given Beijing a military foothold. The US also conducts large amounts of research in Greenland's ice caps on climate change, and has sought to help extract the rare earth minerals that lie under its hills.



21. SARGASSO SEA

News: In January 2020 the Bermuda Cabinet approved the appointment of two international experts to the Sargasso Sea Commission. The Sargasso Sea Commission was established by the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea (2014).

About: The Sargasso Sea is a region of the North Atlantic Ocean bounded by four currents forming an ocean gyre. Unlike all other regions called seas, it has no land boundaries. It is distinguished from other parts of the Atlantic Ocean by its characteristic brown *Sargassum* seaweed and often calm blue water. The sea is bounded on the west by the Gulf Stream, on the north by the North Atlantic Current, on the east by the Canary Current, and on the south by the North Atlantic Equatorial Current, a clockwise-circulating system of ocean currents termed the North Atlantic Gyre. Bermuda is near the western fringes of the sea. *Sargassum* provides a home to an amazing variety of marine species.



Brief history: Owing to surface currents, the Sargasso accumulates a high concentration of non-biodegradable plastic waste. The area contains the huge North Atlantic garbage patch. Caught up in the swirling gyre is a growing collection of human waste: trash from countries that border the Atlantic, from the west coast of Africa to the east coast of the US, slowly breaking up on its long journey into microplastics that end up in the gills and stomachs of aquatic animals.

22. GIBRALTAR

News: The future of sovereignty over Gibraltar is again in the news as Britain exited from the EU. Spain and the EU are forcing Britain to let Gibraltar remain part of the EU.

About: Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory located at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula. It is bordered to the north by Spain. The landscape is dominated by the Rock of Gibraltar at the foot of which is a densely populated town area.



Brief history: The sovereignty of Gibraltar is a point of contention in Anglo-Spanish relations because Spain asserts a claim to the territory. Gibraltarians rejected proposals for Spanish sovereignty in a 1967 referendum and, in a 2002 referendum, the idea of shared sovereignty was also rejected. In the British referendum on membership of the EU 95% of Gibraltarians voted to remain in the EU.



23. CASPIAN SEA

News: In 2018, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan signed an agreement on the status of the sea's waters called as the Convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

About: The Caspian Sea is the world's largest inland body of water. It is an endorheic basin (a basin without outflows) located between Europe and Asia, to the east of the Caucasus Mountains and to the west of the broad steppe of Central Asia. The Caspian Sea is home to a wide range of species and may be best known for its caviar and oil industries. Pollution from the oil



industry and dams on rivers draining into the Caspian Sea have had negative effects on the organisms living in the sea. Its main freshwater inflow is through the Volga River. The Caspian Sea is legally neither fully a sea nor a lake.

Brief history: Under the 2018 convention, the seabed and subsoil of the Caspian Sea are divided between the five littoral states on the basis of international law, while the major sea surface is to be shared. The document regulates such issues as fishing and pipeline construction, establishes rules for maritime navigation in the sea and bans any activities threatening the sea's biological resources. The convention also prohibits the presence of foreign armed forces in the sea and assigns responsibility for maintaining security in the body of water to the five Caspian states.

24. ARAL SEA

News: Officials from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan agreed in December 2019 to launch a special working group that will work to restore the Aral Sea.

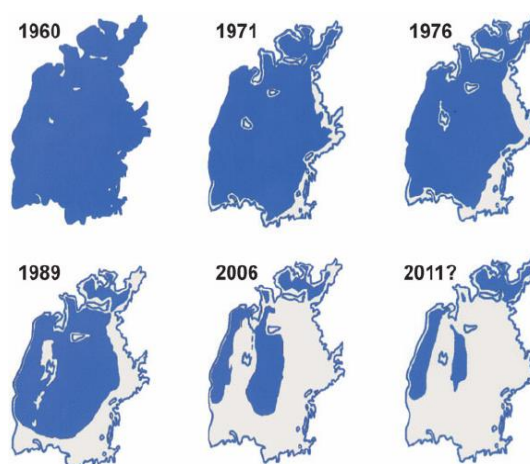
About: The Aral Sea was an endorheic lake lying between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The name roughly translates as "Sea of Islands", referring to over 1,100 islands that had dotted its waters.

Brief history: Formerly the fourth largest lake in the world, the Aral Sea has been shrinking since the 1960s after the rivers that fed it were diverted by Soviet irrigation projects. By 1997, it had declined to 10% of its original size. Satellite images taken by NASA in August 2014 revealed that for the first time in modern history the eastern basin of the Aral Sea had completely dried up. The eastern basin is now called the Aralkum Desert. Kazakhstan and other four countries in the region — Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, have long been working to help stop the total disappearance of the Aral Sea.



25. LAKE BAIKAL

News: Increasing industrial pollution is leading to eutrophication of Lake Baikal and threatening biodiversity. There were also protests in 2019 against a proposed Chinese owned bottled water plant.



About: Lake Baikal is a rift lake located in southern Siberia, Russia. Lake Baikal is the largest freshwater lake by volume in the world, containing 22–23% of the world's fresh surface water. Baikal is the world's deepest, among the world's clearest, and is considered the world's oldest lake. It is the seventh-largest lake in the world by surface area. The region to the east of Lake Baikal is referred to as Transbaikalia, and the loosely defined region around it is sometimes known as Baikalia. The lake was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.



Brief history: An increasing number of an invasive species of algae thrives in the lake from hundreds of tons of liquid waste, including fuel and excrement, regularly disposed into the lake by tourist sites, and up to 25000 tons of liquid waste are disposed of every year by local ships.