

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HUMAN ASSETS IN AFRICA, SOUTH OF THE SAHARA, SOUTH ASIA AND EAST ASIA, AND THE PROBLEMS FACED IN THESE REGIONS.

INTRODUCTION

What are the geographical assets (both physical and human)?

They are the physical and social resources that a region or a country has and can use for its development and well-being. Geographical assets include natural features, such as landforms, climate, water, soil, vegetation, wildlife, minerals, and energy sources. Human assets include cultural features, such as population, language, religion, ethnicity, education, health, skills, technology, institutions, and governance. Here, we look at these assets in Africa, South of the Sahara, South Asia and East Asia and their limitations and problems.

1. GEOGRAPHICAL ASSETS OF AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

Africa south of the Sahara is a large and diverse region that covers about 24 million square kilometers (9.3 million square miles), or about 20 percent of the world's land area. It has many geographical assets, both physical and human, that make it rich in natural and cultural resources.

1.1. Physical Assets in Africa, South of the Sahara

1.1.1. *The Sahara Desert* - The world's largest hot desert, covering 8.5 million square kilometers (3.3 million square miles), or about 25 percent of Africa. It has various

landforms, such as sand dunes, gravel plains, plateaus, and oases, that support diverse wildlife and human settlements³.

- 1.1.2. ***The Sahel*** - A semi-arid zone that stretches across Africa from Senegal to Sudan, forming a transition zone between the Sahara and the savanna. It covers about 5.4 million square kilometers (2.1 million square miles) and is home to many pastoral and agricultural communities.
- 1.1.3. ***The Ethiopian Highlands*** - A mountainous region that covers parts of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. It is the largest continuous area of high elevation in Africa, with peaks exceeding 4,000 meters (13,000 feet). It has a temperate climate and fertile soils that support diverse crops and livestock.
- 1.1.4. ***The savanna*** - A grassland ecosystem that covers about half of Africa south of the Sahara. It has a tropical or subtropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. It supports a variety of vegetation types, such as grasses, shrubs, and trees, and is home to many iconic animals, such as elephants, lions, zebras, and giraffes.
- 1.1.5. ***The Swahili Coast*** - A coastal region that stretches from Somalia to Mozambique along the Indian Ocean. It has a long history of trade and cultural exchange with other regions, such as Arabia, India, and China. It is known for its coral reefs, mangrove forests, and sandy beaches that attract tourists and fishermen.
- 1.1.6. ***The rainforest*** - A dense forest ecosystem that covers about 10 percent of Africa south of the Sahara. It has a hot and humid climate with high rainfall throughout the year. It hosts the highest biodiversity of any terrestrial biome, with millions of species of plants, animals, and fungi. It also provides many ecosystem services, such as carbon storage, water regulation, and soil protection.

1.1.7. ***The African Great Lakes*** - A series of lakes that lie along the East African Rift Valley. They include Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Malawi, Lake Turkana, and Lake Albert. They are among the largest and deepest lakes in the world, holding about 25 percent of the world's unfrozen surface freshwater. They support rich aquatic life and human livelihoods.

1.1.8. ***Southern Africa*** - A sub region that includes countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. It has diverse landscapes, such as mountains, deserts, grasslands, wetlands, and coasts. It has abundant mineral resources, such as gold, diamonds, platinum, coal, and uranium. It also has some of the world's largest wildlife reserves and national parks.

1.2. Human Assets in Africa, South of the Sahara

1.2.1. ***A large and young population*** - Estimated at about 1.1 billion people in 2020 (about 14 percent of the world's population), with a median age of 19 years (the lowest in the world). The population is expected to grow to about 2 billion by 2050 (about 23 percent of the world's population), creating opportunities for economic growth and social development.

1.2.2. ***A rich cultural diversity*** - With more than 2,000 languages spoken (about one-third of the world's languages) and hundreds of ethnic groups living in different regions. The region also has various religions practiced by its people.

Problems and Limitations faced in Africa, South of the Sahara.

Africa south of the Sahara faces many problems and limitations that hinder its economic growth and social development. Some of the major ones are:

1. **Unemployment and underemployment** - which affect about 6 percent and 70 percent of the region's workforce, respectively¹. The region has the lowest levels of access to higher education in the world, resulting in a lack of skilled workers and entrepreneurs.

Unemployment and underemployment are the most pressing concerns for business leaders in the region.

2. **Underinvestment in infrastructure** - which reduces the region's productivity by about 40 percent. The region needs to invest between \$130 billion and \$170 billion per year on infrastructure, such as roads, telecommunications, water, electricity, and more, but faces a financing gap of up to \$108 billion. The lack of infrastructure also affects the delivery of basic services, such as health and education, to the population.

3. **Fiscal crises** - which threaten the sustainability of public debt and the ability to finance development programs. The region's debt-to-GDP ratio rose from 23 percent in 2008 to 46 percent in 2017, and 18 countries are at high risk of debt distress. As debt levels increase, so does the pressure of servicing the debt, which reduces the fiscal space for public spending on social and economic sectors.

4. **Political change** - which can create instability and uncertainty for businesses and citizens. The region has experienced several political transitions, conflicts, and coups in recent years, affecting governance, security, and human rights. Political change can also disrupt trade, investment, and regional integration. Failure of national governance is a leading risk to business in the region.

5. **Climate change** - which exacerbates the vulnerability of the region's natural resources and livelihoods. The region is highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture, which is sensitive to droughts, floods, and temperature variations. Climate change also affects water availability,

biodiversity, health, and migration patterns. The region is expected to face more frequent and severe weather shocks in the future.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL ASSETS OF SOUTH ASIA

South Asia is a sub region of Asia that consists of eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It covers about 4.4 million square kilometers (1.7 million square miles), or about 3 percent of the world's land area. It has many geographical assets, both physical and human, that make it rich in natural and cultural resources.

2.1. Physical Assets in South Asia

2.1.1. ***The Himalaya Mountains*** - The highest and youngest mountain range in the world, formed by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates. They stretch for about 2,400 kilometers (1,500 miles) across South Asia, separating it from the rest of Asia. They include Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world at 8,848 meters (29,029 feet), and K2, the second-highest peak at 8,611 meters (28,251 feet). They also contain many glaciers, rivers, and valleys that support diverse ecosystems and human activities.

2.1.2. ***The Indo-Gangetic Plain*** - A vast alluvial plain formed by the deposits of the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra rivers. It covers about 2.5 million square kilometers (965,000 square miles) and is one of the most fertile and densely populated regions in the world. It has been the cradle of several ancient civilizations, such as the Indus Valley Civilization and the Mauryan Empire. It also hosts many cultural and religious sites, such as Varanasi, Delhi, and Lahore.

2.1.3. ***The Deccan Plateau*** - A large plateau that covers most of peninsular India. It is composed of basaltic lava flows that erupted about 65 million years ago. It has an average elevation of about 600 meters (2,000 feet) and is bounded by the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats mountain ranges. It has a semi-arid climate and supports various crops, such as cotton, sugarcane, and millet. It also has rich mineral resources, such as iron ore, coal, and manganese.

2.1.4. ***The Indian Ocean*** - A major body of water that surrounds South Asia on three sides. It covers about 73.6 million square kilometers (28.4 million square miles) and is the third-largest ocean in the world. It has a warm tropical climate and hosts diverse marine life, such as coral reefs, whales, dolphins, and sharks. It also facilitates trade and commerce among South Asia and other regions, such as Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

2.1.5. ***The Maldives*** - An archipelago of about 1,200 coral islands in the Indian Ocean. They are located southwest of India and Sri Lanka and have a total land area of about 300 square kilometers (115 square miles). They have a tropical climate and are known for their white sandy beaches, turquoise lagoons, and rich biodiversity. They are also one of the lowest-lying countries in the world, with an average elevation of only 1.5 meters (5 feet) above sea level.

2.2. Human Assets in South Asia

2.2.1. ***A large and diverse population*** - Estimated at about 1.9 billion people in 2020 (about 24 percent of the world's population), with a median age of 28 years (the second-lowest in the world). The population is expected to grow to about 2.3 billion

by 2050 (about 25 percent of the world's population), creating opportunities for economic growth and social development.

2.2.2. *A rich cultural diversity* - With more than 800 languages spoken (about one-fourth of the world's languages) and hundreds of ethnic groups living in different regions. The region also has various religions practiced by its people

Problems and Limitations faced in South Asia

South Asia faces many problems and limitations that hinder its economic growth and social development. Some of the major ones are:

1. **Poverty and malnutrition** – This affects about 25 percent and 33 percent of the region's population, respectively. Despite the economic growth and agricultural advances in the region, many people still lack access to adequate food, health care, education, and sanitation. Poverty and malnutrition are especially prevalent in rural areas and among women and children.
2. **Corruption and governance** - This undermines the efficiency and accountability of public institutions and services. South Asia ranks low on various indicators of corruption, such as transparency, rule of law, and control of corruption. Corruption affects the quality of democracy, human rights, and justice in the region. It also erodes public trust and confidence in the government and hampers foreign investment and aid.
3. **Inequality and conflict** - Which create social divisions and tensions among different groups in the region. South Asia has a diverse and complex society, with various religions, languages, ethnicities, castes, and genders. However, these differences are often sources of

discrimination, oppression, and violence. The region has witnessed several communal conflicts, separatist movements, insurgencies, and terrorist attacks in recent years.

4. **Climate change and environmental degradation** - Which threaten the natural resources and livelihoods of the region. South Asia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, droughts, floods, cyclones, glacial melt, and sea level rise. These impacts affect the availability and quality of water, food, energy, and biodiversity in the region. They also increase the risk of disasters, displacement, and health problems.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL ASSETS OF EAST ASIA

East Asia is a sub region of Asia that consists of six countries: China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan. It also includes two special administrative regions of China: Hong Kong and Macau. It covers about 11.8 million square kilometers (4.6 million square miles), or about 8 percent of the world's land area. It has many geographical assets, both physical and human, that make it rich in natural and cultural resources.

3.1. Physical Assets in East Asia Region

- 3.1.1. ***The East Asian Mountains*** - A series of mountain ranges that run along the eastern edge of Asia, from Siberia to Southeast Asia. They include the Altai Mountains, the Tian Shan Mountains, the Kunlun Mountains, the Qinling Mountains, the Taihang Mountains, and the Changbai Mountains. They form a natural barrier between East Asia and the rest of Asia and have influenced the climate, culture, and history of the region.

- 3.1.2. ***The Plateaus and Deserts*** – A vast area of elevated land that covers most of western and northern China and Mongolia. They include the Tibetan Plateau, the world's highest and largest plateau, with an average elevation of about 4,500 meters (14,800 feet); the Mongolian Plateau, a cold and dry region that is home to the Gobi Desert; and the Tarim Basin, a low-lying depression that contains the Taklamakan Desert.
- 3.1.3. ***The Rivers and Plains*** - A network of major rivers that originate from the mountains and plateaus and flow eastward to the Pacific Ocean. They include the Yangtze River, the longest river in Asia and the third-longest in the world; the Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese civilization; the Pearl River, a vital waterway for southern China; and the Yalu River, which forms part of the border between China and North Korea. These rivers have created fertile plains that support agriculture and population centers in East Asia.
- 3.1.4. ***The Pacific Coast*** - A long coastline that stretches from Korea to Vietnam along the East China Sea and the South China Sea. It has a temperate to tropical climate and hosts diverse marine life, such as coral reefs, fish, turtles, and whales. It also facilitates trade and commerce among East Asia and other regions, such as Southeast Asia, Oceania, and North America.
- 3.1.5. ***The Islands*** - A group of islands that lie off the coast of mainland East Asia. They include Japan, Taiwan, Hainan Island (China), Jeju Island (South Korea), Sakhalin Island (Russia), and many smaller islands in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. They have a maritime climate and are known for their natural beauty, cultural diversity, and strategic importance.

3.2. Human Assets in East Asia Region

3.2.1. *A large and dynamic population* - Estimated at about 1.6 billion people in 2020 (about 20 percent of the world's population), with a median age of 38 years (the third-highest in the world). The population is expected to grow to about 1.7 billion by 2050 (about 18 percent of the world's population), creating opportunities for economic growth and social development.

3.2.2. *A rich cultural diversity* - With more than 130 languages spoken (about one-sixth of the world's languages) and hundreds of ethnic groups living in different regions.

The region also has various religions practiced by its people

Problems and Limitations of the East Asia region.

1. **Regional integration** - East Asia faces challenges and opportunities in developing regional institutions and cooperation mechanisms to enhance economic and political stability and security. Some of the factors that affect regional integration are the lingering effects of the 1997-98 Asian crisis, the expanding role of China in the region, the prolonged slump in Japan's economy, and the evolution of regional institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
2. **State building** - East Asia has experienced a lot of external threats and internal challenges that have shaped the state capacity and legitimacy of its countries. External threats include interstate rivalry and warfare, such as the Korean War, the Sino-Indian War, and the Vietnam War. Internal challenges include civil conflicts, such as communist insurgencies, ethnic

separatism, and democratic movements. Different types and intensities of internal challenges have different effects on state capacity building over time. For example, communist insurgencies seem to have both an immediate and long-term positive effect in compelling the state to respond with more extraction and state-building efforts.

3. **Global issues** - East Asia is also facing global issues that require collective action and coordination, such as climate change, energy security, pandemic prevention, trade liberalization, and human rights³. These issues pose both challenges and opportunities for East Asia to enhance its regional and global role and influence.

CONCLUSION

Africa South of the Sahara, South Asia, and East Asia are three regions that have some similarities in terms of their geographical and human assets. Some of these similarities are:

1. **Natural resources**: All three regions have abundant and diverse natural resources, such as minerals, oil, gas, water, wildlife, forests, and fertile land. These resources provide income, employment, food security, energy security, biodiversity conservation, and tourism opportunities for many countries in the regions.
2. **Cultural diversity**: All three regions have rich and varied cultural diversity, such as languages, religions, ethnicities, traditions, and arts. These cultures reflect the historical interactions and influences among different peoples and civilizations in the regions. Cultural diversity can foster creativity, innovation, tolerance, and social cohesion among different groups.
3. **Economic potential**: All three regions have high economic potential, as they are home to some of the most populous and dynamic countries in the world. These countries have

experienced rapid economic growth and development in recent decades, driven by factors such as industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and technological advancement. These countries also have large domestic markets and trade relations with other regions and countries.

The three regions also have some differences in terms of their geographical and human assets. They include:

1. **Climate:** Africa South of the Sahara has a predominantly tropical climate, with hot and humid conditions near the Equator and dry and arid conditions in the north and south. The region has four main climatic zones: the desert, the semiarid Sahel, the savanna, and the rainforest. South Asia has a mostly subtropical climate, with hot summers and mild winters. The region has six main climatic zones: the desert, the semiarid, the tropical wet and dry, the humid subtropical, the mountain, and the coastal (Encyclopedia Britannica 2021). East Asia has a varied climate, ranging from tropical in the south to subarctic in the north. The region has seven main climatic zones: the tropical wet, the tropical wet and dry, the humid subtropical, the continental, the subarctic, the highland, and the desert (Encyclopedia Britannica 2021).
2. **Population:** Africa South of the Sahara has a population of about 1.1 billion people as of 2020, making it the second most populous region in Africa after North Africa. The region has a high population growth rate of 2.7 percent per year and a low population density of 45 people per square kilometer. The region has a young population structure, with a median age of 19 years and about 60 percent of the population under 25 years old (World Bank Group 2020). South Asia has a population of about 1.9 billion people as of 2020, making it the most populous region in Asia and in the world. The region has a moderate population growth rate

of 1.2 percent per year and a high population density of 308 people per square kilometer. The region has a relatively young population structure, with a median age of 28 years and about 50 percent of the population under 25 years old (World Bank Group 2020). East Asia has a population of about 1.7 billion people as of 2020, making it the second most populous region in Asia after South Asia. The region has a low population growth rate of 0.5 percent per year and a moderate population density of 141 people per square kilometer. The region has an aging population structure, with a median age of 38 years and about 30 percent of the population under 25 years old.

3. **Development:** Africa South of the Sahara has a low level of development, with an average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of \$1,612 and an average human development index (HDI) score of 0.541 as of 2019. The region faces many challenges and limitations, such as poverty, inequality, conflict, corruption, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy, and environmental degradation. South Asia has a low to medium level of development, with an average GDP per capita of \$2,099 and an average HDI score of 0.642 as of 2019. The region faces some challenges and limitations, such as poverty, inequality, conflict,

In conclusion, Africa, South of Sahara, South Asia and East Asia regions are some of the most diverse and populous areas in the world. They cover a vast range of climates, landscapes, cultures, and languages.

Sources:

Africa: Physical Geography - National Geographic Society.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/africa-physical-geography/>.

Sahara | Location, History, Map, Countries, Animals, & Facts.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Sahara-desert-Africa>.

Africa South of the Sahara: Third Edition: A Geographical Interpretation.

<https://www.guilford.com/books/Africa-South-of-the-Sahara/Robert-Stock/9781606239926/new-to-edition>

Six Charts Show the Challenges Faced by Sub-Saharan Africa - IMF.

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/04/12/na041521-six-charts-show-the-challenges-faced-by-sub-saharan-africa>.

What are the biggest challenges to economic growth across sub-Saharan

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/economic-growth-sub-saharan-africa-challenges-risks/>.

What's really causing water scarcity in Africa south of the Sahara

<https://www.ifpri.org/blog/what%e2%80%99s-really-causing-water-scarcity-africa-south-sahara>.

Climate and poverty in Africa South of the Sahara - ScienceDirect.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X19303390>.

South Asia | Geography, Countries, & History | Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Asia>.

South Asia – World Regional Geography. <https://pressbooks.pub/worldgeo/chapter/south-asia/>.

Southeast Asia | Map, Islands, Countries, Culture, & Facts.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Southeast-Asia>.

Geographic regions of South Asia (article) | Khan Academy.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia/south-asia/south-asia-intro/a/geographic-regions-of-south-asia>.

South Asia Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/overview>.

Unprecedented Shocks Rattle South Asia, Exacerbating Challenges and

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/10/06/unprecedented-shocks-rattle-south-asia-exacerbating-challenges-and-dampening-growth>.

Future Challenges and Opportunities in South Asia.

https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Geography_%28Human%29/Book%3A_World_Regional_Geography_%28Finlayson%29/08%3A_South_Asia/8.05%3A_Future_Challenges_and_Opportunities_in_South_Asia.

Major Environmental Issues and Problems of South Asia, Particularly

https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-58538-3_7-1.

Challenges, solutions for South Asia – Harvard Gazette.

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/04/challenges-solutions-for-south-asia/>.

Geography of East Asia - ArcGIS StoryMaps.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d3154f8c481148ebb145c09a0906cf9b>.

East Asia - Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asia.

East Asia: Landforms and Resources - Encyclopedia of World Geography.

<https://geography.name/east-asia-landforms-and-resources/>.

Reshaping Economic Geography in East Asia.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2590>.

Regional Integration in East Asia : Challenges and Opportunities, Part

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/18173>.

The three big issues facing East Asia | World Economic Forum.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2014/05/three-big-issues-facing-east-asia/>.