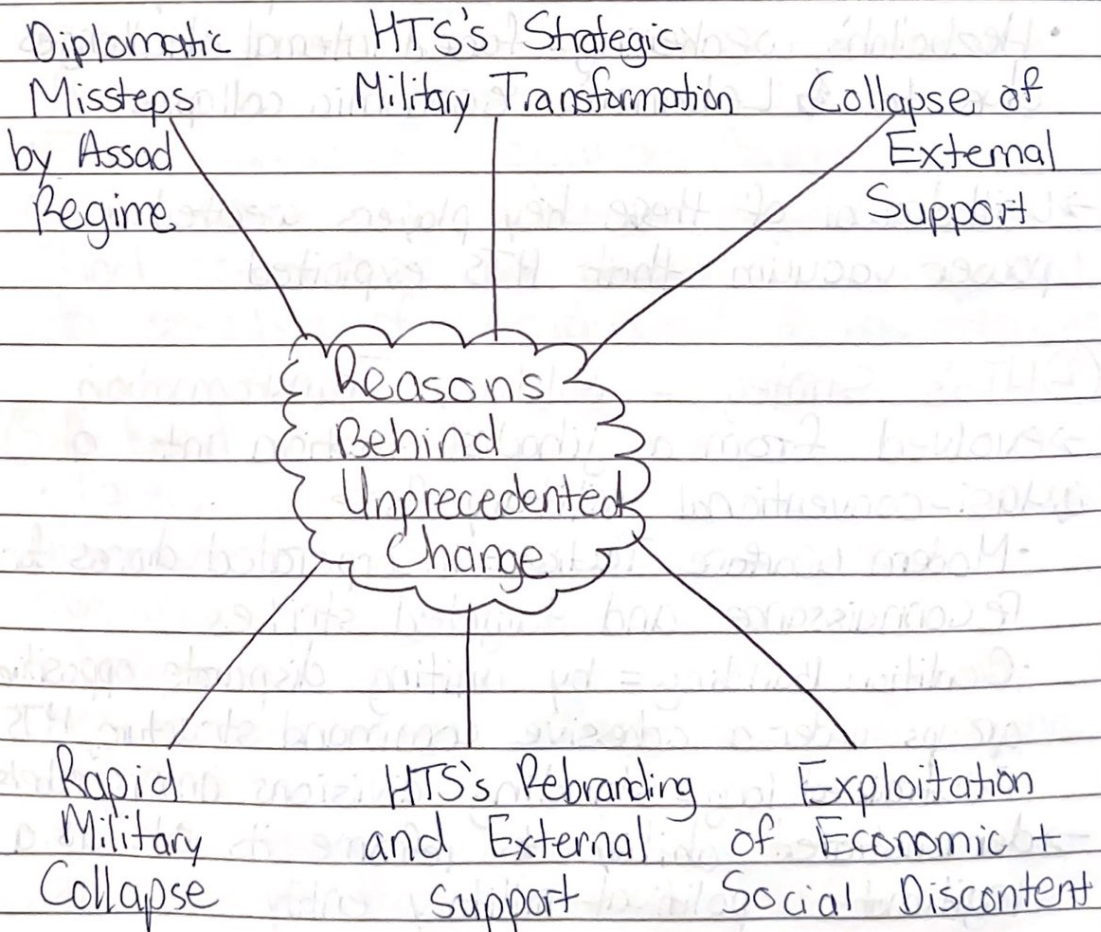


Q.2)

Introduction

The unprecedented toppling of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on December 8, 2024, reflects a culmination of geopolitical shifts, internal weaknesses, and strategic insurgent planning. To understand the full impact of this event, it is necessary to critically analyze both the reasons and implications behind this unprecedented change.



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## ① Collapse of External Support

→ Assad's regime endurance over past decade was largely due to external backers such as Russia/Iran/Hezbollah. However, these allies faced significant constraints in 2024:

- Russia's Focus Shift = embroiled in extended Ukraine war. Ability to sustain an expensive + resource-intensive military presence declined.
- Absence of Russian airpower + logistical support
- Iran's Diminished Regional Influence = Iran's resources were diverted due to increasing war w/ Israel. Escalations in Lebanon + direct Israeli threats weaken Iran's capability
- Hezbollah's weakening = faced internal challenges due to Lebanon's economic collapse.

→ Withdrawal of these key players created a power vacuum that HTS exploited

## ② HTS's Strategic + Military Transformation

→ evolved from a jihadist faction into a quasi-conventional military force

- Modern Warfare Tactics = incorporated drones for reconnaissance and targeted strikes
- Coalition Building = by uniting disparate opposition groups under a cohesive command structure, HTS neutralized long-standing divisions among rebels

→ demonstrated ability to reframe its role as a legitimate political-military entity

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### ③ Exploitation of Economic + Social Discontent

→ Syria under Assad had become a "narco-state", relying on the production + trafficking of Captagon to sustain its war economy

- Economic Collapse = regime failed to address hyperinflation, food shortages, poverty
- Corruption + Fragmentation = economic situation fostered internal divisions within regime.

→ Assad's failure to reform/diversify Syria's economic base highlights his inability to transition from wartime government to stability

### ④ Diplomatic Missteps by Assad Regime

- Resentment Among Opposition = many Syrians perceived normalization efforts as rewarding Assad for atrocities. Deepened animosity
- False sense of security = Assad's regime grew complacent, believing normalization had consolidated his power. They neglected to possibility of coordinated HTS offensive

### ⑤ Rapid Military Collapse

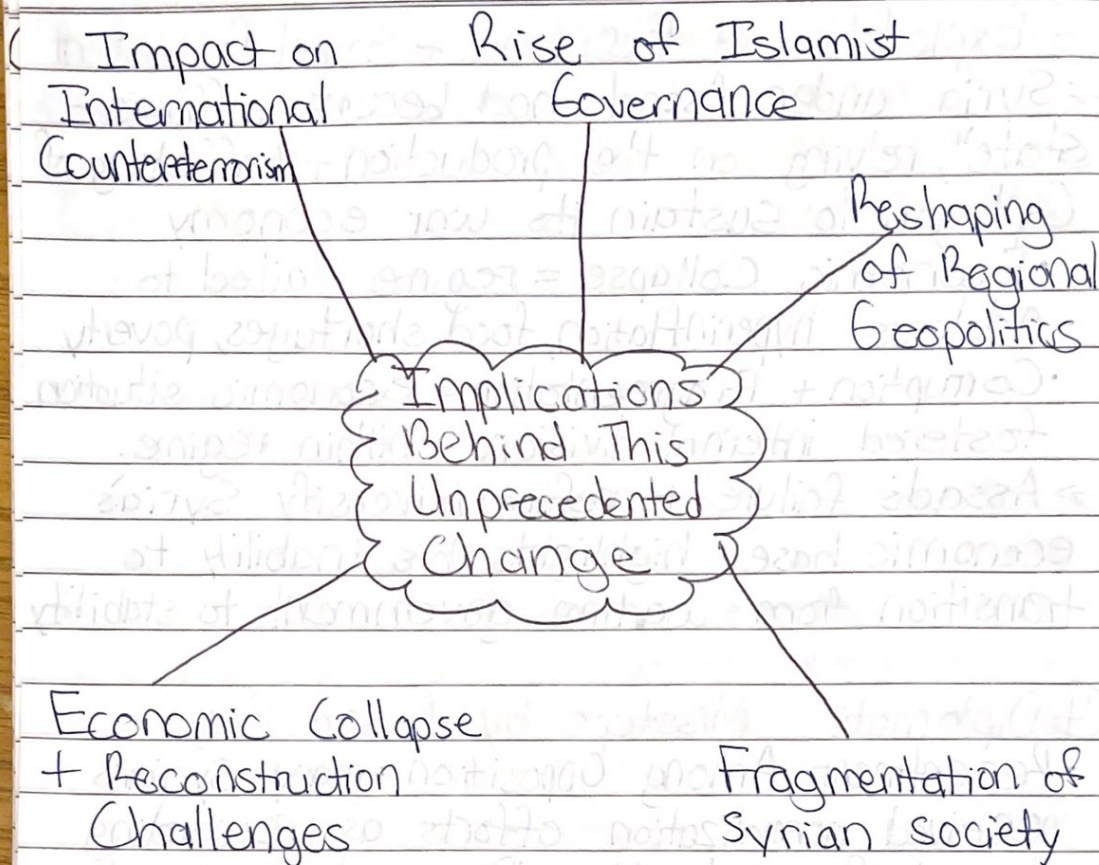
• Tactical Surprise = HTS launched simultaneous offensives in Aleppo, Homs, and Hama, overwhelming regional forces

• Defections = as the group advanced, many government troops defected, unwilling to die for this regime

→ state lacked internal cohesion necessary to withstand threat (Assad himself fled)

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### ① Fragmentation of Syrian Society

→ Social Divisions Deepen = while HTS promises protection for minorities like Alawites, Druze, etc their Islamist ideology creates apprehension

→ Displacement Crisis = Renewed fighting has likely displaced tens of thousand, adding to Syria's 13.6 million already displaced

→ Fragmentation into ~~fiefdoms~~ Fiefdoms = rival factions (e.g Assad loyalists/kurdish forces) may intensify their territorial claims, deepening fragmentation of Syria into de facto regions

→ failure to address minority concerns could result in insurgencies + further destabilization

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## ② Reshaping of Regional Geopolitics

Fall of Assad disrupts Middle East's balance of power:

- Iran's Strategic Setback = Assad's Syria was a critical ally, serving as a conduit for weapons to Hezbollah. Collapse undermines Iran's regional influence + its "axis of resistance"

- Turkey's enhanced role = HTS victory is a validation of its policies. Ankara might seek to exert greater influence in Syria

- Russia's diminished standing = Assad's principal ally suffers geopolitical defeat. Its inability to prevent regime's fall undermines Moscow's credibility as a power broker in Middle East

## ③ Rise of Islamist Governance

- Institutionalization of Sharia = will likely redefine Syria's legal + political systems

- Inspiration for Islamist Movements = HTS victory could embolden Islamist groups across the region, reinforcing narrative that insurgencies can topple entrenched regimes

↳ groups like Hamas may draw inspiration

## ④ Economic Collapse + Reconstruction Challenges

This transition to HTS exacerbates existing economic problems

- Collapse of Revenue Streams = HTS must now rebuild an economy ravaged by war,

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(sanctions, and corruption)

- Humanitarian Catastrophe = HTS will struggle to secure resources unless it gains international recognition
- Infrastructure Decay = decades of war have left Syria in ruins. HTS will require massive investment to rebuild roads/schools/hospitals

⑤ Impact on International Counterterrorism Efforts

- Legitimacy vs. Terrorism Label = HTS's roots in al-Qaeda complicates international recognition
  - New Safe Haven for Extremists = Syria under HTS could become a hub for jihadist groups seeking refuge or regrouping
- balancing containment of extremist elements with engagement for humanitarian purposes will be a major challenge for global powers
- a purely isolationist approach could exacerbate instability

Conclusion

Toppling of Assad's regime by HTS represents a transformative moment in Syrian history, with profound social, political, and economical implications. The ultimate outcome depends on HTS's ability to navigate complexities of governance. For now, fall of Assad symbolizes both the end of an era and the beginning of a deeply uncertain future.

Q.6)

### Introduction

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change took place in Baku in November 2024. The theme was "In solidarity for a Green World", emphasizing global cooperation to address climate change challenges. The primary objectives were = enhance climate ambition, operationalize loss and damage fund, scale up climate finance, advance energy transition. To understand the full impact of this conference, one must critically analyze its failures and commitments.

Formation of  
Health and  
Climate  
Coalition

Adoption of  
Baku  
Communique

Tripling  
Climate  
Finance to  
Developing  
Countries



Operationalization of  
Loss and Damage  
Fund

Establishment of  
Baku Finance  
Goal

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① Tripling Climate Finance to Developing Countries  
Commitment - Developed nations agreed to increase annual climate finance from \$100 billion to \$300 billion by 2035

- substantial increase acknowledges escalating costs that developing nations face
- intended to support mitigation + adaptation efforts, enabling these countries to invest
- however, effectiveness of commitment will depend on the timely and transparent disbursement of funds, as well as the capacity of recipient nations to effectively utilize them

② Establishment of Baku Finance Goal (BFG)  
Commitment - BFG aims to mobilize \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035 from both public + private sources to support global climate action

- BFG represents a holistic approach to climate finance, recognizing the need of engaging private capital alongside public funds
- w/ this ambitious target, BFG seeks to drive innovation and investment in green technologies + sustainable practices
- its success will hinge on creating conducive policy environments that attract private investors and ensure that funds are directed toward impactful climate solutions



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③ Operationalization of Loss and Damage Fund  
Commitment = parties agree to operationalize  
this fund established at COP 27,  
to provide financial assistance to  
countries suffering from adverse  
effects of climate change

→ activation of this fund addresses the  
pressing need to support struggling nations

→ it reflects a commitment to climate justice,  
acknowledging the disproportionate burden borne  
by vulnerable countries

→ however, challenges remain in ensuring  
adequate funding, equitable distribution, and  
efficient administration of the fund

④ Formation of the Health and Climate Coalition  
Commitment = new coalition was established to  
integrate health considerations into  
climate action, emphasizing the  
interlinkages between climate change  
and public health

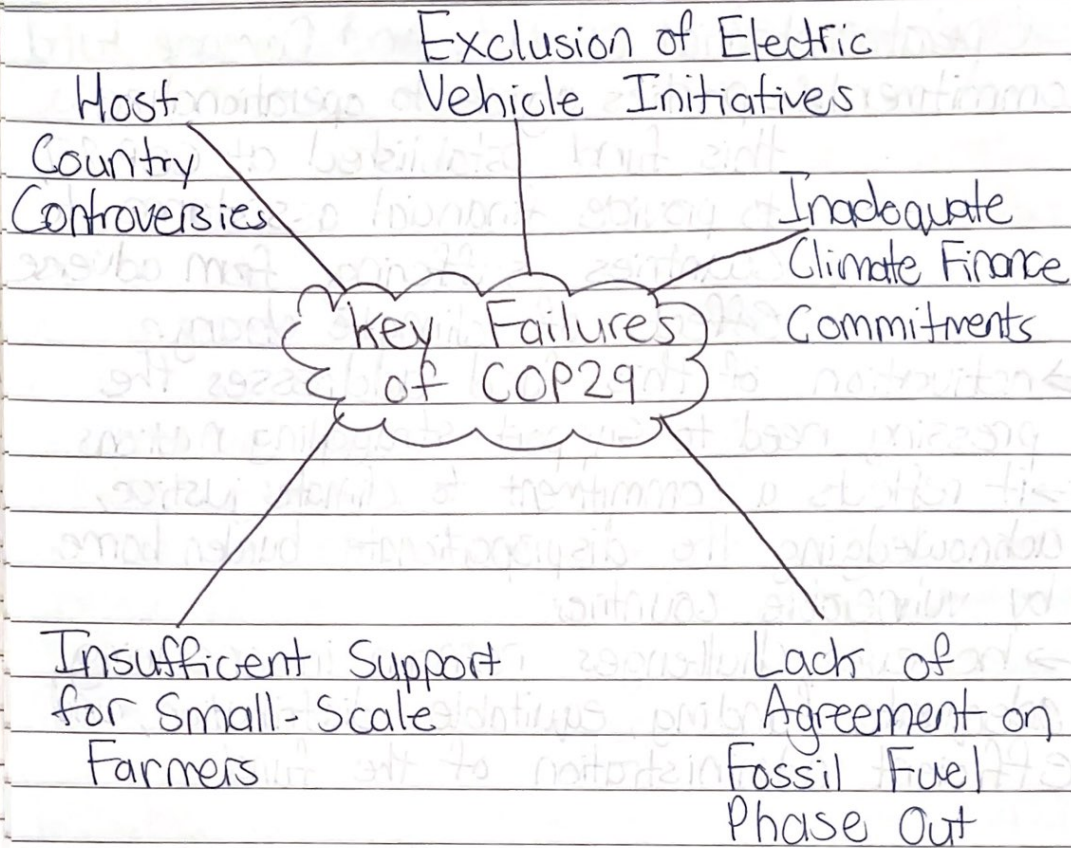
→ by fostering collaboration between health  
and environmental sectors, coalition seeks to  
promote policies that protect public health

while mitigating climate change

→ success of this coalition will require effective  
cross-sectoral collaboration and the  
integration of health metrics into climate  
action plans

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- ① Inadequate Climate Finance Commitments  
Failure = developed nations pledged to increase annual climate finance to developing countries to \$300 billion. However, the previous pledges of \$100 billion annually have not been fully met
- failure to meet earlier commitments undermines trust between developed and developing nations
  - without clear mechanisms for fund allocation and transparency, there is skepticism about the realization + effectiveness of this financial support

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## ② Lack of Agreement on Fossil Fuel Phase Out

Failure = COP 29 did not reach a consensus

on phasing out fossil fuels, despite growing global calls for such action

Oil-rich nations exerted influence to keep this topic off agenda

→ absence of a concrete plan to reduce fossil fuel dependence hampers global efforts to limit temperature rise

→ this omission reflects the geopolitical complexities + economic interests that continue to impede decisive climate action

→ without a clear pathway to transition away, achieving goals of Paris Agreement remains unlikely

## ③ Insufficient Support for Small-Scale Farmers

Failure = discussions on climate finance at COP29

revealed that small-scale farmers, who play a critical role in global food production, remain inadequately supported.

Only 14% of global climate finance reaches small farmers

→ lack of targeted support for this group undermines efforts to build resilient + sustainable food systems

→ this oversight highlights a disconnect between high-level commitments and the needs of grassroots stakeholders

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④ ~~Exclusion~~ Exclusion of Electric Vehicle (EV) Initiatives  
Failure = summit notably excluded discussions and agreements related to EV industry, despite its significant role in reducing global emissions

→ neglecting EV adoption represents a missed opportunity to address a substantial source of greenhouse gas emissions

→ lack of emphasis on transport decarbonization may slow progress towards cleaner mobility solution, hindering overall climate goals

⑤ Host Country Controversies

Failure = Allegations of Azerbaijan promoting fossil fuel deals during conference + Criticism over human rights issues

→ allegations may have distracted from the summit's objectives + undermined the integrity of the negotiations

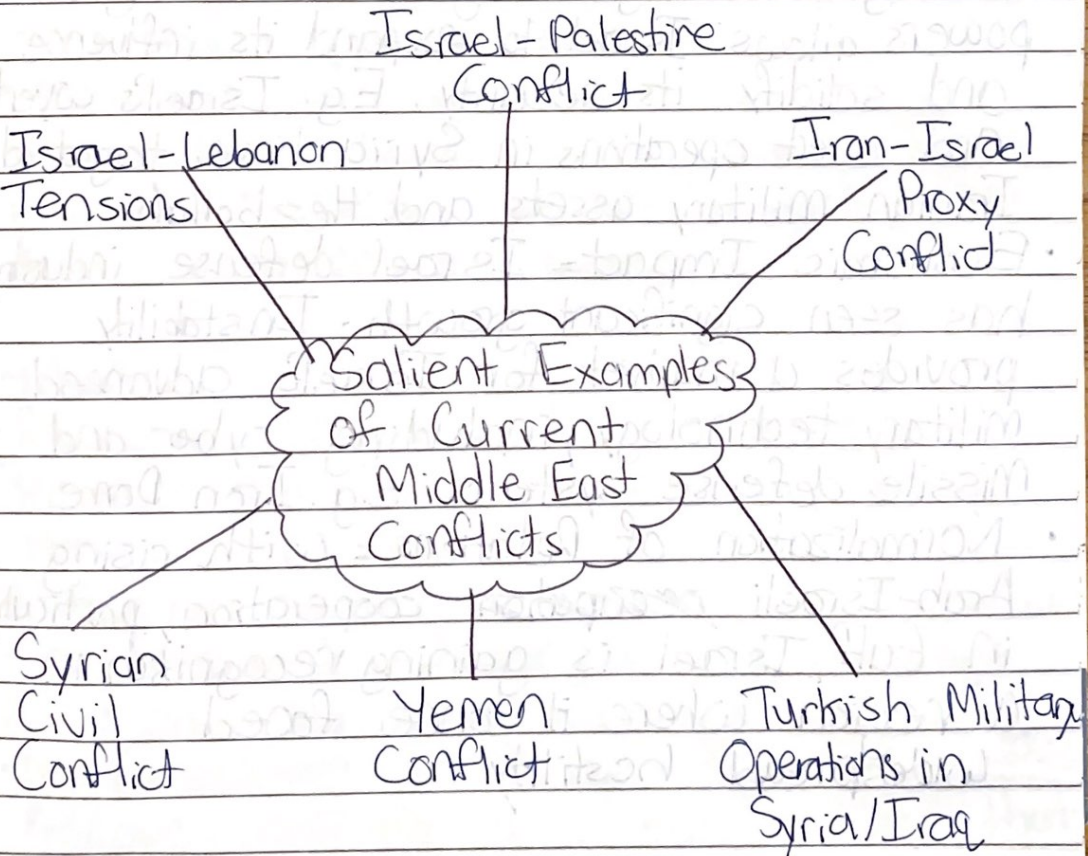
Conclusion

In summary, while COP29 achieved certain commitments, these failures highlight the persistent challenges in global climate governance. Addressing these shortcomings in future conference will be crucial to making meaningful progress in combating climate change.

Q.7)

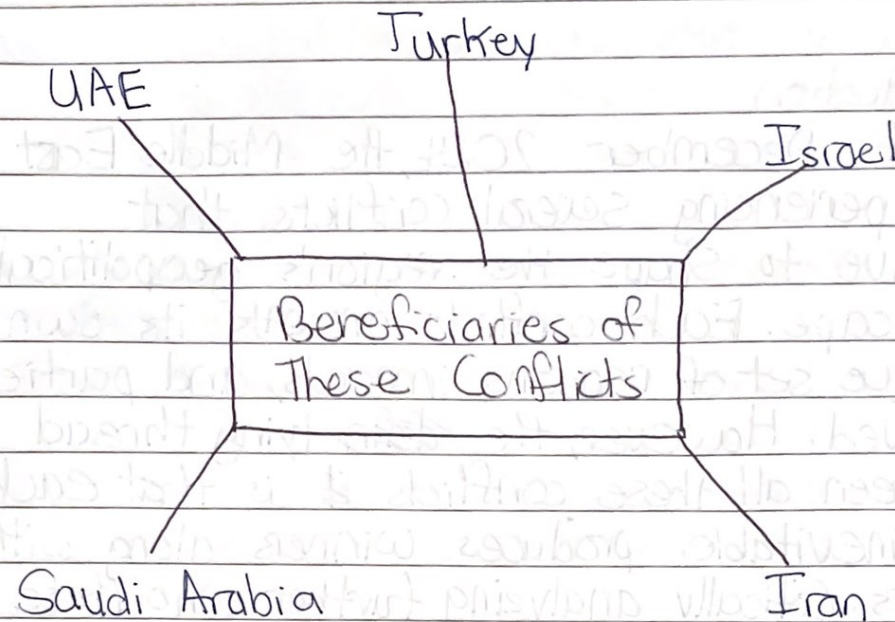
### Introduction

As of December 2024, the Middle East is experiencing several conflicts that continue to shape the region's geopolitical landscape. Each conflict presents its own unique set of reasons, impacts, and parties involved. However, the ~~key~~ tying thread between all these conflicts is that each one inevitable produces winners along with losers. Critically analyzing further who these winners and losers are will shed greater light on ~~this~~ these ongoing conflicts



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### ① Israel

- Strategic Advantage = fragmentation of regional powers allows Israel to expand its influence and solidify its security. E.g. Israel's covert and overt operations in Syria have targeted Iranian military assets and Hezbollah
- Economic Impact = Israel defense industry has seen significant growth. Instability provides a market for Israel's advanced military technology, including cyber and missile defense systems e.g. Iron Dome
- Normalization of Relations = with rising Arab-Israeli ~~recognition~~ cooperation, particularly in Gulf, Israel is gaining recognition in a region where it once faced widespread hostility

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## ② Iran

- ~~Proxy~~ Proxy Influence = Iran's support for groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, and militias in Iraq, has allowed it to extend influence across the region
- Economic Gains Through Proxy Conflicts = despite international sanctions, Iran benefits economically from the smuggling of oil and military supplies, often through Syria/Yemen

## ③ Turkey

- Expansion of Influence in Syria = Turkey's involvement in northern Syria, where it has conducted multiple military operations against Kurdish groups, has allowed it to expand its territorial + political control in the region
- Increased Strategic Leverage = Turkey's intervention in Libya and its role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a mediator has expanded its geopolitical reach

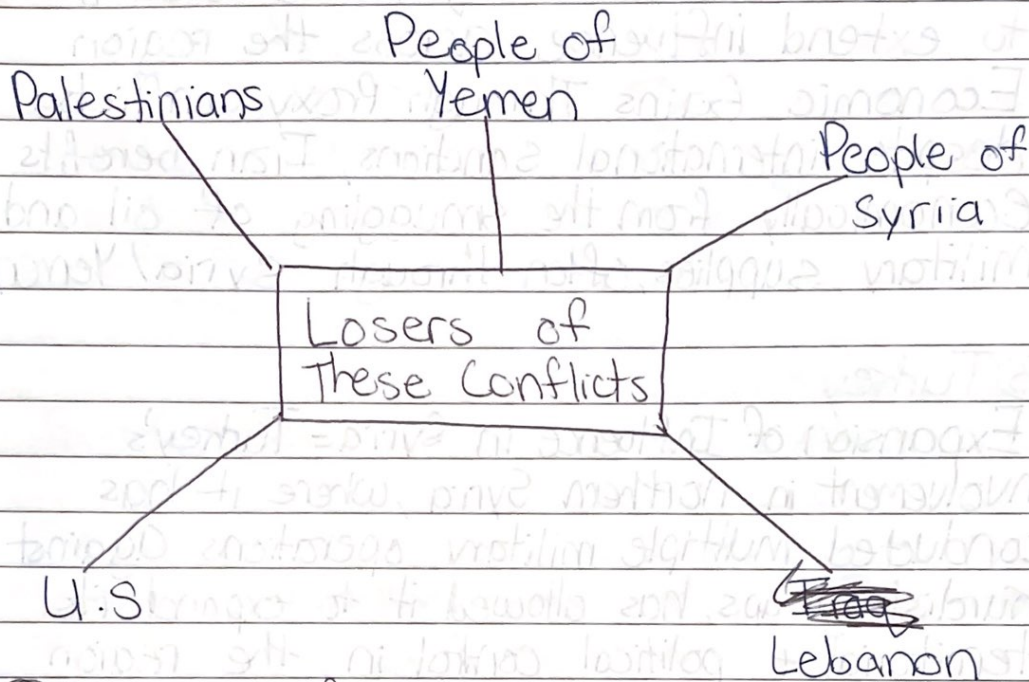
## ④ UAE

- Regional Influence = UAE's involvement in Yemen conflict, has enhanced its influence in Arabian Peninsula.
- Economic Leverage = Dubai, as a commercial hub, benefits from serving as a transit point for goods and oil smuggled through conflict
- Normalization w/ Israel = Abraham ~~Accords~~ <sup>Agreements</sup> ~~Agreements~~ <sup>Agreements</sup> represent a strategic alliance that

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positions the UAE to gain technologically and militarily from Israel, especially in terms of defense deals



### ① People of Syria

- Humanitarian Crisis = as of 2024, civil war led to the deaths of over 500,000 people
- Long-term Social + Economic Damage = Syria's GDP has shrunk by over 60%, with widespread unemployment + poverty. Essential services such as healthcare and education are inaccessible for many citizens
- Political Fragmentation = Presence of multiple foreign actors - Turkey, Russia, Iran, US has created a complex + unstable political landscape. Prevents lasting peace or stability



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## ② People of Yemen

- Humanitarian Disaster = UN calls it the world's worst humanitarian crisis. War has claimed over 250,000 lives. Over 20 million people are in need of assistance, including millions of children facing malnutrition
- Economic Collapse = economy has collapsed. Has led to skyrocketing poverty rates, with over 80% of population living below poverty line

## ③ Palestinian People

- Occupation + Displacement = Israeli-Palestinian Conflict remains unsolved. Israeli occupation of West Bank and the blockade of Gaza continue to create dire living conditions
- Economic + Social Struggles = Gaza Strip has faced a dire economic situation, due to restricted flow of goods and services. Deteriorated standard of living due to Occupation

## ④ Lebanon

- Political Paralysis = inability of political leaders to form a stable government has contributed to economic mismanagement
- Economic Collapse = economy has collapsed, with Lebanese pound losing more than 90% of its value against the dollar since 2019. Inflation has soared, and

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over half of the population has fallen into poverty

### ⑤ U.S

- Military + Economic Costs = US has spent trillions of dollars on military operations in Middle East, with little to show in terms of long-term stability. Interventions have led to significant loss of U.S life + strain on military

- Loss of Soft Power = U.S has lost much of its soft power + moral authority in this region due to its involvement in controversial military interventions and its perceived indifference to human rights violations. This has opened the path for Russia and China to expand their influence in the region