

Question - 02

Answer :

1. Introduction:

The Syrian Civil war which began in 2011 has witnessed numerous twists and turns, with a wide array of local, regional, and international actors vying for influence and control. And, finally on December 8, 2024 anti-government coalition of rebels took control of Syria, ending more than 60 years of Assad's rule. However, the collapse of the country's military and security institutions occurred without violence, as they already preferred to surrender. The fall of Bashar al-Assad brought joy to the millions of Syrians who were jettisoned out of the country on the mercy of refugee camps or were imprisoned in horrific jails of Assad. His ousting was the result of a combination of internal and

and external factors. Moreover, 1) on one hand Syrians have got freedom from Assad dynasty, on the other hand there's possibly certain challenges waiting for Syria's nation.

2. Causes of downfall of Syrian government

2.1 Organized and Equipped Opposition:

Bashar-al-Assad was busy being received in Arab capitals following his readmission into the Arab League, the opposition was busy preparing for a major offensive. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and other armed groups had been gearing up for a decisive battle to seize Aleppo, Syria's second largest city. For over a year they have been prudently planning in the north-western corner of the country.

2.2 Al-Assad's Recalcitrance:

Despite Arab reintegration efforts, many countries were frustrated and skeptical of his intentions. In mid 2023, he was given another chance. This time Arab normalization came with conditions: refugee repatriation, the release of detainees, reining in its illicit captagon trade, and, last but not least, curbing its ties with Iran and Hezbollah. However, instead of acting in good faith, he continued to slow-walk his promises. Moreover, his cruel and offensive policies also made him a Hitler in the eyes of public. The public pressure and the proxies led his ouster.

2.3 A Hollow Army:

"When the bombs rain down, the Syrian Civil Defense rush in."
- Jo Cox

Syrian military forces faced desertions and declining morale due to years of sustained conflict, poor leadership, and diminishing resources.

The soldiers were reluctant to defend the regime, which had lost significant domestic and international legitimacy. In stark contrast, opposition was disciplined and motivated.

Q.4

A weakened 'Axis of Resistance'

The attack on Assad's regime was partly due to weakened axis of resistance following Israel's strategic strikes against Iran and its proxies in Lebanon and Syria. These included the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrullah and other top officials.

Q.5

Putin's shifted priorities:

Vladimir Putin was a cordial ally of Bashar al-Assad and he intervened in Syrian war in 2015. He was now busy ⁱⁿ fighting Ukraine war and defending Russia against NATO. At such a critical juncture Putin could not afford to get bogged down in a war in Syria.

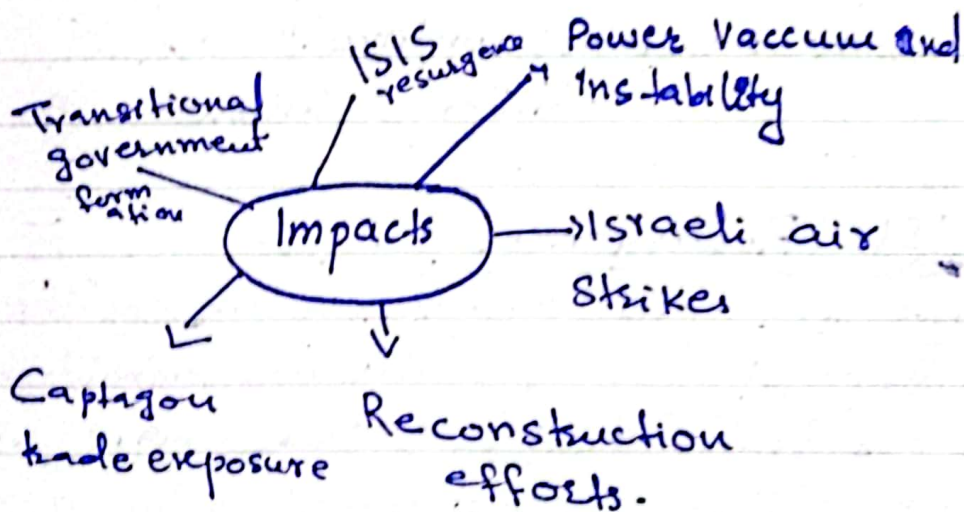
Q.6

Erdogan's hat trick against Assad's regime:

Syrian refugees in Turkey was

a serious problem to her economy and peace. Therefore, Tayyip Erdogan allowed Russia his two military bases to Russia to keep it involved in War against Ukraine. On the other hand, Turkey disturbed Iran's financial help to Syria making Syria's government weaker to combat rebel, leading its downfall.

3. Implications of Ouster of Bashar al-Asad



3.1 Power Vacuum and Instability:

The fall of the Syria's government has brought potential power vacuum. US and its allies could intervene to seek their interests

against Russia and this could lead to another conflict and instability in the country. As, Iran and Russia both are US rivals and due to their assistance to Bashar al-Assad public sentiments in Syria emerged as Anti-Russia and Anti-Iran. Thus US can set their her goals to control the land.

"Syria will remain a hotbed of terrorism as long as the Civil war is aided and abetted by the Iranians and Russians, continue."

— Hillary Clinton

3.2 ISIS Resurgence:

The power vacuum resulting from Assad's departure has emboldened ISIS to attempt a resurgence. In response the US has intensified military operations, conducting airstrikes that have eliminated at least 12 ISIS militants after 8 December 2014

3.3 Israeli airstrikes:

Reports indicated that Assad is seeking safe passage, provided Israel

with Syrian military intelligence. This led to a series of Israeli air strikes targeting military installations to prevent advanced weaponry from falling into extremists' hands. The latest incident is that Israel struck missile depots, air defences in Syria's Tartous region on 15 December 2024.

3.4 Transitional Government formation:

Rebel leader Ahmed al-Sahrar has declared a three-month transitional government based in Idlib. Hadi al-Bahr, head of Syrian National Coalition emphasized the need for an inclusive, non-sectarian transition and plans to establish coalition headquarters within Syria. This new government has freed thousands of prisoners from Assad's private prisons too.

3.5 Refugee Repatriation:

The fall of Assad's regime has sparked hope among Syrian refugees about the possibility of returning home. However, the prevailing instability and security concerns may delay large-scale repatriation efforts.

3.6

Captagon Trade Exposure:

The regimes collapse has unveiled extensive facilities involved in the production of Captagon, a highly addictive stimulant. This revelation highlights the previous regime's role in the global trade and presents an opportunity to dismantle these operations.

3.7

Reconstruction Efforts:

The transition period presents challenges and opportunities for Syrian reconstruction. Dismantling illicit economies, such as Captagon trade, establishing legitimate economic structure will be crucial for development.

4.

Conclusion:

Islamic Rebel group HTS has toppled down Bashar - Al-Assad's government in Syria. The group did this due to ^{entire} their continual efforts, hollowness of Syrian forces and proxies playing in Syria. However, there are certain implications like refugees challenge, a power vacuum, chances of ISIS resurgence and Israel's attacks, that need to be managed by the coalition of rebels to continue their power.

Question -03

Answer:

1. Introduction:

State owned enterprises (SOEs) have long been a persistent burden on Pakistan's economy, draining resources and contributing to fiscal instability. Despite their intended role in ~~draining resour~~ deriving economic growth and service delivery, many SOEs are plagued by inefficiency, corruption, and mismanagement. These entities require substantial government bailouts, diverting funds from critical sectors like health and education. Privatization offers a solution by reducing fiscal strains, improving efficiency, and fostering economic growth.

2. How SOEs are a burden?

(a) Chronic losses:

Pakistan's SOEs collectively incurred losses of Rs 682 billion (2020-21)

according to the ministry of Finance. As per World Bank report 2020 "State owned enterprises in Pakistan account for 10% of GDP but contribute little to economic growth."

Pakistan railways and Pakistan Steel mills are major loss making SOEs. For instance PIA alone reported a loss of Rs 67 billion in 2020 with total liabilities exceeding Rs 743 billion.

(b) Budgetary strain due to SOEs:

SOEs consume significant public resources through bailout and subsidies. Between 2018 and 2021, the government spent 1.3 trillion rupees on SOEs bailouts equivalent to about 4% GDP. This diverts funds from critical sectors such as health, education and infrastructure development.

(c) Inefficiency and corruption:

SOEs are plagued by inefficiency due to overstating, poor management and outdated technology. Transpar-

ency International highlighted SOEs as hotspots for corruption in Pakistan, exacerbated by political interference.

2.

Why Privatization is necessary:

Reducing
fiscal
deficit

Improving
efficiency

Attracting
investment

Boosting
Economic
growth

(a)

Reducing Fiscal Deficits:

Privatization could reduce fiscal deficits by eliminating the need for recurring subsidies and bailouts. According to IMF, "Privatization loss-making SOEs could save 2-3% of GDP annually."

(b)

Improving Efficiency:

Private sector management brings expertise, innovation, and accountability. Successful privatization, such as PTCL, demonstrates improved operational performance post-privatization.

"Privatization is essential to

"Reduce the financial burden on the government and bring professionalism and efficiency to state owned enterprises" - Dr Ishaq Hussain

(c) Attracting Investment:

Privatization sends a positive signal to investors, enhancing Pakistan's credibility and encouraging FDI.

(d) Boosting Economic Growth:

Privatized entities contribute more effectively to economic growth by creating jobs, improving services, and generating tax revenue.

3. How to Privatize SOEs:

(a) Transparent Process:

Best international practices should be adopted to ensure transparency and fairness.

For example: The privatization of UBL (United Bank Limited) in 2002, which was conducted transp.

agently and successfully attracted FDI.

(b) Public Private Partnership (PPP):

For strategic sectors it is beneficial to opt for PPP models to retain some government control while leveraging private sector efficiency.

For Example:

Karachi Electric (KE) a privatized utility, operates under a public private partnership model.

(c) Strategic Sale vs IPO:

Loss making SOEs should be sold strategically to competent investors. Profitable entities could be partially privatized through initial public offerings (IPO) on stock exchanges.

(d) Worker Reskilling:

Programs to reskill displaced workers should be introduced.

For instance: Malaysia's Privatization

Programs included worker retaining initiatives.

(e) Strengthening Regulations:

Robust regulatory framework should be established to prevent monopolistic practices post-privatization.

4. Examples of Privatization of SOEs in Pakistan:

(a) Pakistan International Airline (PIA):

Despite receiving Rs 450 billion in bailouts since 2001, PIA remained unprofitable. Therefore, PIA was privatized for Rs 10 billion in October 2024.

(b) Pakistan Steel Mills:

Pakistan Steel Mills are shut since July 2023 and it incurred \$5 billion rupees annual loss. It is not yet privatized but the main aim of government is to

privatize PSM as soon as possible.

(c) PTCL 2006:

PTCL was privatized for Rs 2.6 billion in 2006. Revenues increased by 25% within three years of privatization.

(d) United Bank Limited (UBL):

UBL was privatized in 2002. The bank saw exponential growth under privatization.

5. Conclusion:

The privatization of SOEs in Pakistan is crucial for improving fiscal health, enhancing efficiency, and reducing the economic burden on the government. If executed properly, privatization can bring about positive changes in management, productivity, and service delivery, benefiting both the economy and the public. How-

ever, it is important that privatization process is carried out transparently, with protections for employees and consumers, and with strong regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the private sector acts in the public's best interest.

Question-06

Answer

1. Introduction:

The COP 29 Summit concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, in ^{November} ~~December~~ 2024 with mixture of progress and controversy. The conference was a pivotal moment in global climate negotiations, with various success. But, it also faced serious criticism, particularly regarding the adequacy of financial commitments, the influence of fossil fuel interests, and concerns about the integrity of the process.

2. Key Commitments:

(a) Climate Finance Pledge:

COP 29 resulted in a pledge by developed countries to provide \$ 300

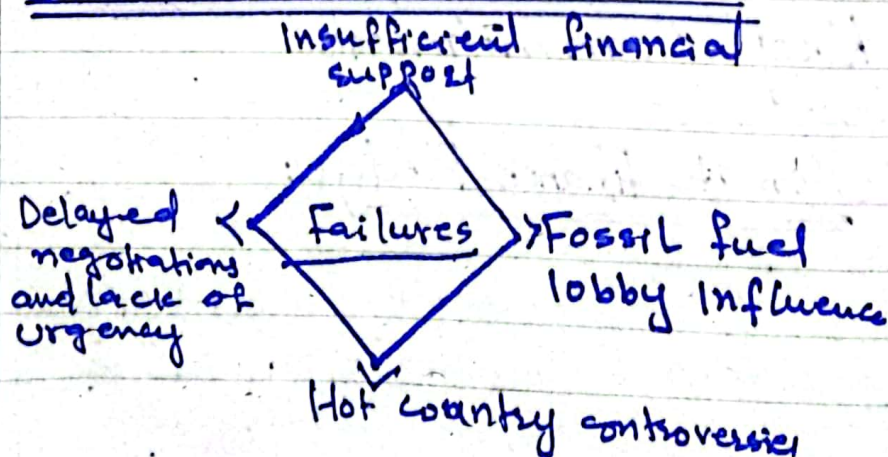
billion annually by 2025 to support climate action in developing countries.

While this was seen a step forward. This is part of an effort to meet the \$ 1.3 trillion annually needed to tackle the climate change effectively, as estimated by UN.

b. Carbon Market Mechanisms (Article 6 of the Paris Agreement):

COP 29 finalized Carbon trading mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, allowing countries to buy and sell carbon credits to meet emissions targets. While this could offer a cost-effective way to reduce emissions.

3. Key failures and Criticisms:



1. Insubstantial Financial Support:

"A 300 billion Pledge is far from enough, and the timeline is far too extended. Climate Change doesn't wait until 2035." - Muhammad Andou, Director of Power Shift Africa.

Developing and climate hit countries demanded \$1.3 trillion dollars, but the developed nations were given at 300 billion dollars. Small island nations, in particular, have called for greater financial support to address rising sea levels. While many African and Asian nations argue that their ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change is hampered by a lack of sufficient funds. Furthermore \$300 billion figure has been criticized for being non-binding and lacking clear enforcement mechanisms. Without robust accountability measures, many fear that

the pledged funds may never materialize or may be misallocated, undermining their effectiveness

"Climate finance should be seen as an investment in our shared future, but the correct pace and scale of finance is not even close to what we need."

- Wangari Maathai, Chair of Wangari Maathai Foundation

2.

Fossil fuel lobby influence:

As major point of contention at COP 29 was the dominance of fossil fuel interests at the negotiations. Over 1,700 fossil fuel representatives attended the summit, a higher number than the combined representatives from countries most affected by climate change. Critics argue that this over-representation of fossil fuel companies undermines the integrity of climate talks and dilutes the urgency of addressing emissions reductions.

The increasing presence of the fossil

Fossil fuel lobby in COP29 discussions has raised fears that global climate policy is being shaped by industries that are directly responsible for the climate crisis.

"It is a scandal that fossil fuel industry has more access to the COP talks than the committees that are suffering from change every day."

- Kumi Naidoo, former Greenpeace International Executive Director.

3. Host Country Controversies:

Azerbaijan, a major gas and oil producer, was an unexpected choice to host COP29. Its records of human rights abuses and environmental degradation raised serious questions about the credibility of the summit's commitment to meaningful climate action. Azerbaijan's dependence

on fossil fuels as its main economic driver drew concern that the conference could prioritize oil and gas interests over climate urgency.

Moreover, human rights activists pointed out that ~~that~~ the Azerbaijan government has actively suppressed protest and political dissent, raising further concerns about the potential for climate discussion to be influenced by non-democratic interests.

"Holding a Climate Summit in Azerbaijan, a country with a notorious record of silencing opposition, sends a dangerous message about who gets to participate in the future of our planet." — Human Rights Watch

Delayed negotiations and the lack of urgency:

The Summit saw negotia^{tion} extend far beyond to scheduled ^{time}

conclusion, continuing for over 30 hours past the original deadline. The delay reflected the difficulty in having the consensus on key issues such as loss of damage financing, adaptation strategies and stricter emission reduction targets. The failure to reach a timely agreement indicated a lack of urgency in addressing the climate emergency.

"We have no time to waste. The Planet cannot wait for us to delay decisions any longer."

- Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General

4. Conclusion:

COP 29 marked both the moments of progress and frustration. While there were tangible commitments, particularly in climate finance and carbon market

mechanisms, the lack of urgency, the influential fossil fuel interests, and the inadequate financial pledges highlighted the deep structural challenges that still hinder meaningful climate action. The credibility of the negotiation was further undermined by the choice of host country, and critics argued that the summit fell short of bold leadership needed to address the accelerating climate crisis.

Question - 04

Answer:

1. Introduction:

Russia and China's growing economic, strategic and geopolitical collaboration has become a notable shift in global power dynamics, especially in terms of challenging the US-led world order. This cooperation, which has strengthened in recent years, is built on shared interests, from countering western influence to reshaping global governance. Their collaboration has emerged as a significant factor in the multipolar world of the 21st century.

2. Economic Cooperation between China and Russia:

The economic ties between China and Russia have significant growth over

the past decade particularly in energy and trade. According to Chinese Ministry of Commerce, bilateral trade between both the two countries reached approximately \$190 billion in 2023, a dramatic increase from previous year (2022). Both countries has also reached the target of increasing trade to \$200 bn dollars by 2024.

2.1

Energy collaboration:

Natural Gas and Oil.

Russia has become China's largest supplier of natural gas, with the power of Siberia pipeline in operation since 2019. Russia also provides about 15% of China's all ^{oil} imports with the ESPO Pipeline and future projects strengthening their energy ties.

Strategic Economic Zones:

The countries have also been working to create joint industrial zones and have explored idea of a Russia-China Free Trade area, with discussions about easing trade restrictions and strengthening ties in tech, agriculture

and infrastructure projects.

3. Strategic Military Cooperation:

The strategic aspect of China-Russia cooperation has evolved into an increasing focus on military collaboration and security. Both countries share a mutual desire to counter US dominance in international affairs.

Joint Military Exercises:

Both countries regularly conduct joint military exercises, including Vostock and Sea Cooperation drills. In 2023, both countries participated in "Joint Sea 2023" naval exercises in the Sea of Japan, demonstrating their growing military cooperation.

Defense Sales and Technology:

Russia has been a major arms supplier to China, which deals in advanced missile systems, and naval technology. While China has developed its own defense industry, Russia remains key partner for China's weapons for high-tech weapons systems like the S-400 missile

defense system deployed by China

4. Geopolitical and Global Governance:

In Geopolitical arena Russia and China have aligned on many global issues, presenting a united front against western, particularly, US dominance in global institutions like UNSC, WTO, and IMF.

• United Nations:

Both Russia and China have veto power in UNSC. China has always supported Russia regarding Ukraine war issue in United Nations. Moreover, due to opposition to US both countries demand ceasefire in Gaza and criticize Israel.

• Alternative Financial System:

Both countries are seeking alternative financial system to US dominated global financial system. For instance China has advancing the use of its digital Yuan (e-CNY) in cross border trade. Russia has adopted

Similar measures, especially after the West imposed sanctions following Ukraine war. Additionally, Russia and China are building the BRICS New Development Bank, which aims to challenge the influence of World Bank and IMF by offering loans to developing nations without the stringent conditions often imposed by western institutions.

• Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

The SCO is a key platform for China and Russia to exert geopolitical influence, especially in Central Asia. Its aim is counter-terrorism, economic development, and regional stability. At the 2023 summit in New Delhi SCO advocated for greater global governance to compete U.S.A.

5. Ukraine and Taiwan Problems and Russia-China Collaboration and US reaction:

Russia and China being strategic partners... secretly

support each others stance on Ukraine and Taiwan. And, on international platform they both call for peace. However, neither China has criticized Russia for its war in Ukraine nor Russia did so. United States is the key ally of both Taiwan and Ukraine and has a vision to protect both. U.S.A has increased its military and countries support in South China Sea to counter China. Similarly, it has added Ukraine's bordering countries into NATO and is providing support to Ukraine to check Russia. US also blames China for providing support to Russia's war machine which China denies.

“Beijing is giving Moscow ‘very substantial’ help to beef up its war machine, and in return Russia is handing over its closely guarded military tech on submarines and missiles.” — US deputy SOS Kurt Campbell

6. Russia-China's growing collaboration's effect on US led world order

Kishore Mahbubani in his book "Has China won? The Chinese Challenge to American primacy" argues that the 21st century is increasingly becoming the Asian century, characterized by the rise of powerful economies and their quest for greater global influence. He posits that the emergence of coalitions like BRICS and SCO reflects profound shift in balance of power away from west. He says that these entities are challenging American dominating world order by advocating for multipolarity, economic cooperation and political pluralism.

The Russia-China alignment signals a shift towards multipolar world from US led unipolar world.

• Implications for US led world order

Redefining global alliances with countries like Iran, N. Korea and Venezuela, while also offering alternatives to the western countries, both Russia and China are undermining US hegemony.

Both countries are undermining western sanctions by circumventing the dollar.

using alternative currencies, and promoting regional economic frameworks - that by pass US led international financial system. This hinders US economic monopoly.

Competing for influence in global south, where both China and Russia are representing themselves as alternative to the western models of development, offering trade and infrastructure deals without political conditions.

7. Conclusion:

Russia and China's growing economic, strategic and geopolitical collaboration is a deliberate effort to reshape global power structure and challenge the U.S. led world order. As the two nations continue to align their interests in areas such as energy, defense, global governance and trade, they present a formidable challenge to US hegemony. The outcome of this cooperation will depend largely on how the US and its allies respond in coming years, particularly in terms of counteracting the growing influence of China and Russia on the world stage.