

Question #02:

The HTS Islamist rebels have toppled down Bashar al Assad regime in Syria.

Critically evaluate the reasons and implications of the unprecedented change in Syria.

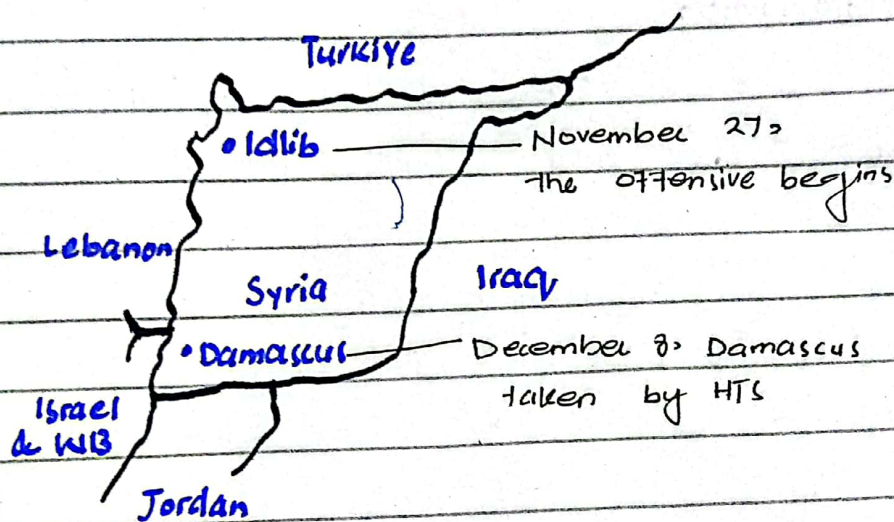
1. Introduction

The surprising and blitzkrieg ^{takeover} ^{attacks} of the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al Sham of Damascus changed the status quo of not only Syria but the middle East at large. The civil war beginning from the Arab Spring led to the toppling of Bashar al Assad regime with multiple fronts involved. The new order in Syria is unprecedented, however, many possible scenarios arise in minds of scholars regarding the future of Syria.

11. The Toppling of Bashar al Assad Regime By HTS

On December 8, Syrian rebel group seized the capital leading to president fleeing the country and

Fall of Bashar dynasty. They took the capital unopposed leaving Iranian and Russian governments shocked, along with the rest of the world. HTS led by al Gholani toppled the Ba'athist regime.



III. CAUSES OF THE VICTORY OF HTS AND FALL OF THE BA'ATHISTS

The underlying reasons for the fall of Assad regime are.

- A. The Beginning of Arab Spring
- B. Multiple War fronts in Syria
- C. The support of Turkish support to rebels.
- D. Russian pre-occupation in Ukraine.
- E. Iranian Exhaustion Due to Israel

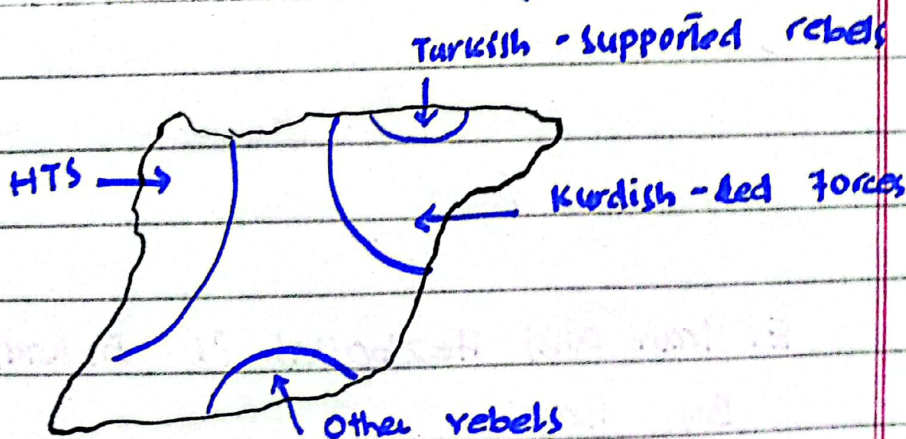
F. Public Support For the Rebels.

A. The Arab Spring: The seed of Syrian Revolt

The Arab Spring beginning in Tunisia in 2011 spread all across Middle East. Rebels began to revolt against the Assad dynasty that existed for over five decades.

B. Multiple War Fronts in Syria Exhausted the Toppled Government

The Syrian rebels were not one group. There were the Kurdish freedom fighters, the Turkish-backed Syrian rebels, and HTS, not to mention other groups.



C. Support to Rebel Groups by Türkiye and US

The Turkish and American support were with the rebels that ultimately toppled the Assad regime. The

- US → rebels → Against the Iranian Supported Government
- Türkiye → rebels → Against the Secessionist Kurds

D. Russian Pre-Occupation in Ukraine

Since 2014 Russia has been supporting the Assad government. However, the Ukraine war since 2022 has preoccupied Russia with its western neighbour.

Also, sanctions on Russia by the west has tightened the Russian national purse.

E. Iran and Hezbollah's Exhaustion By Israel

The over-1000-day war of Israel against Gaza and later

Lebanon had exhausted Herzbollah,
Iran's proxy in the middle East.
The swift offensive by HTS
could not be stopped by
the Iranian support.

F. The Support of the General Public

The abolition of the Assad
regime are open to the world.
Horror of Secularism and
underground gangs are known.
People wanted the government
be gone. They helped in two
ways:

- 1) Recruited in the rebel
groups
- 2) Did not intervene the
HTS offensive.

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUNNING CHANGE IN SYRIA

The future of Syria is a
question mark in the middle Eastern
question. However, the most probable

Implications are:

- A. Reduced Russian involvement in Syria
- B. End of Iranian dominance in the country
- C. Government Scenario 1: Continued Civil War
- D. Government Scenario 2: A Democratic Government
- E. Increased dominance of US and Turkey.

A. Reduced Russian Involvement in Syria

Russia had unwavering support to the Bashar government for a decade. Syria was Russia's key to involvement in the middle East. This toppling may be its end in middle East.

B. Reduced Iranian dominance in the country

Iran had a major role in stabilizing the Bashar government. Drawn on sectarian lines, Iran's

presence shall end. This was manifested in the attack on Iranian Embassy in Syria.

C. Increasing Involvement of US and Turkiye

Both countries had supported the victor rebel sides. The United States even supported al Jolani after he cuts ties with al Qaeda. Turkiye continues to support the rebels to curb the secessionist kurdish.

D. Government Scenario 1: Continued Civil War

The war in Syria did not ~~with~~ end. The war with the government did end, however, rebel groups within Syria may clash for control on each side.

E. Government Scenario 2: A New And Democratic Syria

The HTS led by al Jolani

has announced swift and democratic transfer of power. Syria has been engrossed in war for decades. People are tired of fighting. A high chance of stability persists.

VI. Critical Analysis

The events of Syria reminded a millennium old theory - the theory of Asabiya by Ibn Khaldun. Which states the rise and fall and re-rise of civilizations. As Syria rises, it shall begin a downward trajectory after some time.

VII. Conclusion

All things considered, the Syrian fiasco in recent days stunned the world in general and Arab world in particular. Owing to multiple support and lack of it, the Assad government was toppled. As the new sun rises on Syria, a new cycle begins.

Question # 04

Russia - China growing economic, strategic and Geo-political collaboration in an effort to potentially challenge the US-led world order. Discuss.

I. INTRODUCTION

Russia and China are collaborating in various fronts that threaten the US hegemony over the world. The two communist countries have shook hands in economic, strategic and geopolitical fronts that threaten the current world order led by United States. They are in same page for energy and trade, military strengthening, and increasing their dominance.

II. The Current World Order And its Significance to the United States

Ever since the end of Cold war in 1991, the world order has been led by the United States. As the incumbent global hegemon, the position matters to the United States as it allows it to have influence over majority of the states in the

world.

III. The Sino-Russian Collaboration and its Threats to the US-led World Order

The collaboration of the two countries in economic, strategic and geopolitical arenas threaten the global status quo.

A. The Economic Collaboration of the Communist Countries

China and the United States are on the same page for two major reasons that have implications on the world order.

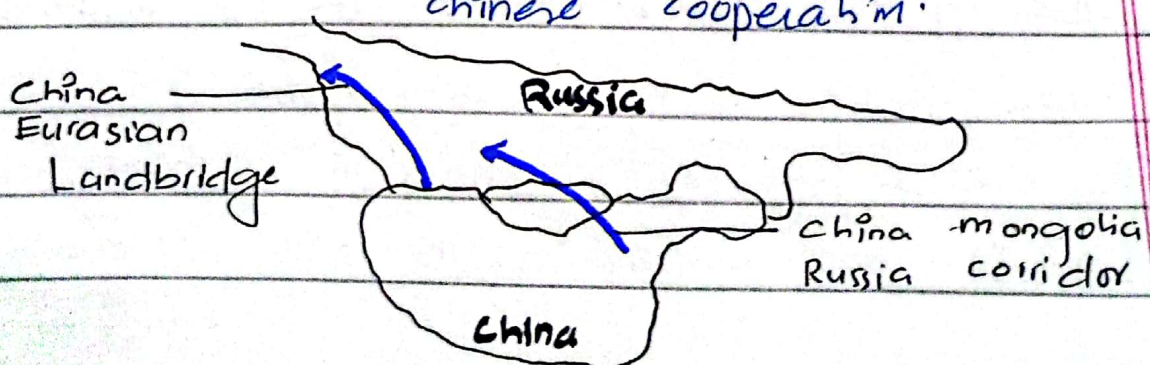
1. The Projects of BRI via Russia

Chinese belts pass through the Russian territories. This

gives:

- China the economic boost
- Russia, transit trade and

Chinese cooperation.



How does it affect the US-led world order?

The United States is the biggest economy at the moment. China's rise through BRI threatens US economic dominance. It also gives China the leverage over developing countries.

R. Russian Energy Imports to China

Currently, China imports majority of its energy. Fossil fuels from Middle East. However, new gas pipelines and energy imports by China are increasing, especially after the Western sanctions on Russia.

How does it affect the US-led world order?

- China's response to the Malacca dilemma.
- Russia's answer to the Western sanctions engineered by the United States.

B. Strategic Cooperation of Russia and China

Russia and China are cooperating so as to strengthen each other's military. Russian war in Ukraine needs Chinese support. The conflicts in South China sea require Russian cooperation. Both in turn have implications for the US-led world order.

1. Russian Supplying Drones to China in Exchange for Chinese Jets

Russia manufactures world class drones and Chinese jets are unbeaten. The strategic exchange strengthens both countries' military. How does this affect the US-led world order?

The United States is the biggest manufacturer and supplier of military equipment. The exchange of technology will benefit both countries.

Limit US dominance in global weapons trade. It also threatens by challenging US' military capabilities.

2. Joint military Exercises by the Two countries

The US and ~~has~~ has a presence in the South China Sea. It holds an influence over Taiwan and Philippines. The ventures of ~~Russia~~ and China are a threat to US presence and hold in the region. Also, Chinese support to Russia in the Black Sea uphold the stronghold of the two.

C. Geopolitical Frontfoot Drives of Russia and China

The two countries are on a frontfoot in various regions in the world holding their influence and affecting the US-led world order.

1. Russo-Chinese Involvement in the Middle East

Both Russia and China are involved in the Middle East through various fronts. It is basically to uphold US stronghold in the region.

How is it happening?

- China brokering the Iran-Saudi deal

- Russia's previous involvement in Syria.

- Russian support to Hezbollah

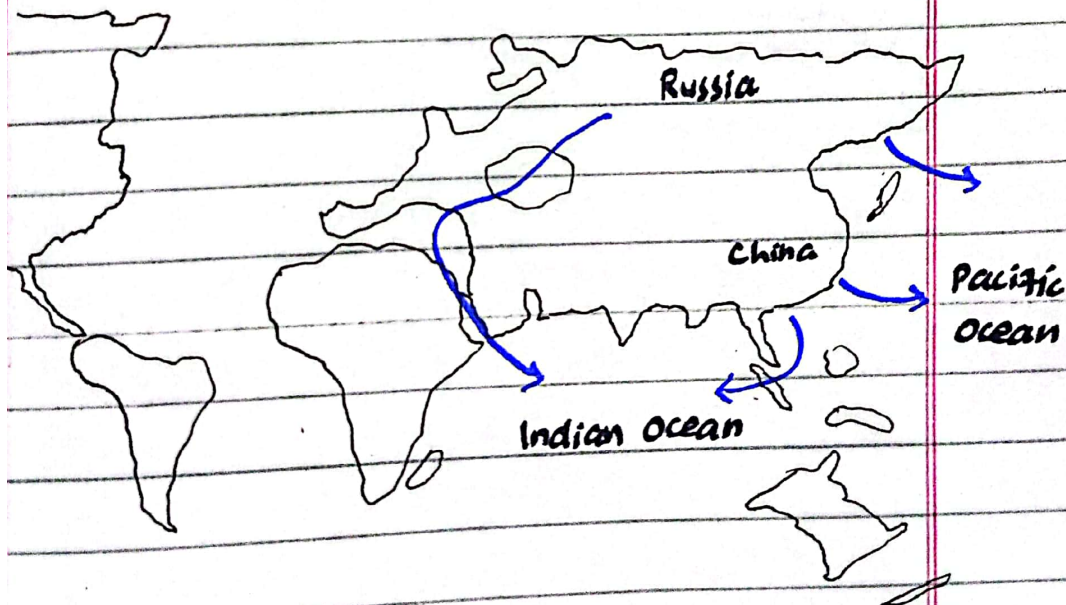
The implications in US-led world order

A dominance of the two countries undermines US dominance in the region. Middle East plays a decisive role in maintaining and altering the world order. A tilt of the region towards Russia and China would reduce US dominance and, thus, threaten the US-led world order.

2. Russia, China, and the Indo-Pacific Great Game

The United States has maintained its presence in the Indo-Pacific region by the help of the littoral countries and organizations such as QUAD and AUKUS.

Russia and China have entered the great game by involving in organizations such as BRICS.



3. BRICS: A Collaboration of Emerging Economies and Sino-Russian boat to Bypass US

BRICS, now BRICS Plus has

countries that are even close
to United States such as India.

This geopolitical grouping threatens
US dominance in the region world.

IV. Conclusion

To conclude, both the countries are
cooperating in the economic, strategic and
geopolitical domains. Their bond threatens
the US-led world order pushing it
towards a more multipolar world order,
a combination seen in the early twentieth
century.

Question #7

Critically evaluate the beneficiaries and losers of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

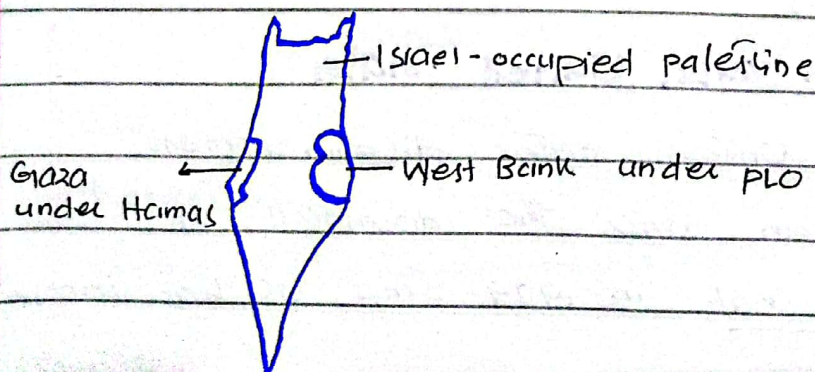
I. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is brimming with conflicts on all sides. There are wars in Yemen, Israel, a currently calm one between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and even Iraq. These wars have many internal and external participants involving governments and non-state actors. There are beneficiaries in these wars as well as losers.

II. The major conflicts in the Middle East And subsequent beneficiaries and losers

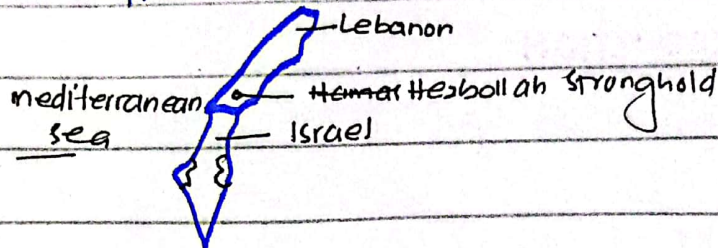
A. Israel and Hamas

Israel and Hamas have locked horns since 1948, with Israel's brutal offensive since October 2023.



B. Israel and Hezbollah

In the south of Lebanon, Hezbollah fights the Israel's Zionist regime. It escalated in 2024 currently under ceasefire.



C. Israel and Iran

Israel and Iran had their conflict since 1979, the Iranian revolution. Khomeini called Israel "Little Satan" while US being the "Great Satan".

D. Houthis Wars in Yemen

The civil war in Yemen has continued for over a decade now.

The Houthis seized Sanaa in 2014 leaving the president in exile. The rebel group is an adversary of US.

E. Iran versus United States

United States' disenchantment began since the downfall of Reza Shah in 1979. Since, US has imposed

various factions in Tehran, with Iran challenging US' hegemony till date.

F. The Wars of Syria

The recent toppling of the Assad government signals the end of a decades-old civil war. However, given foreign involvement, the conflict may continue only in another form.

G. Beneficiary and Losers

Conflict	Beneficiary	Loser
Hamas-Israel	US, Iran	Palestine
Israel-Hezbollah	Israel, US	Lebanon, Iran
Israel-Iran	US, Israel	Iran
Yemeni Wars	Houthis	US, Yemeni government
Iran-US	US, West, Iran	-
Syria	US, Turkey	Iran, Russia

III. Conclusion

To conclude, the wars in the middle East are complex. Few are direct or indirect beneficiaries while others are more in the losing side.

Question # 08

Critically evaluate the reasons for the slowing down of CPEC projects. What options would you recommend to Islamabad and Beijing to reinvigorate and make Phase II a tangible reality?

I. Introduction

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor began as the flagship project of Chinese Belt Road Initiative (BRI). The diplomatic relations and Chinese direct access to the Indian Ocean led to beginning of the three-phased CPEC projects since 2015. However, various economic, security and political constraints have led to the projects in limbo. As the deal ^{is to} begin to enter into its third phase in 2025, the projects of the first phase are yet to complete. Both unilateral and collaborated efforts need to be taken to address this issue.

II. Reasons for the slowing down of CPEC projects

A. Chinese preoccupation on other Fronts

- Economic war with US.
- Conflicts in South China Sea.

B. Pakistan's Security Concerns

- Threats by separatists like BLA.
- Extremism by parties like TTP.

C. Economic Restraints of Pakistan

- Dwindling economy with inflation, debt and balance of payment crisis.

D. Political Instability in Pakistan

- Constant change of government and dissent by oppositions.

III. Recommendations for the Revival of the Phase II of CPEC

A. Investing and Additional Funding By China

- The current projects need more financing.

B. Security measures in Pakistan

- Increased joint security without undermining Pakistan's sovereignty.

C. Pakistan Reviving its economy

• working in industrial and agricultural sector.

• Broadening the tax net.

D. Promoting Political stability

• political cooperation of parties.

• freedom of dissent.

• independence of judiciary

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, CPEC is a bright opportunity for both Pakistan and China to strengthen their economy. The projects of second phase must either begin or speed up as they enter the third phase.