

Mock Exam

Current Affairs

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Questions:

Q-2: 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.

Introduction:

"There are decades when nothing happens and weeks when decades happen."

and old saying apocryphally referred to as that of Vladimir Lenin. The case of Syria is not unknown to anyone. The crisis hit country, in Middle East has faced many hindrances.

But every new day comes with many changes. For Syria HTS (Hayat - Tehrir - Al Syria) served as a seraphic creature that toppled the old regime of Bashar - al - Assad's Family. From 1970s the father of Assad; Hasan - al - Assad ruled Syria and the power was later on transferred to his son in year 2000. From 2000 to 2024, the people of Syria

Day _____ Date _____
has been the victim of Assad's regimes atrocities from years. There is no denying the fact that the stage of regime change will definitely impact the overall regional dynamics of the Middle East. The below mentioned passage will shed light on the potential grounds for regime change in Syria and its future implications.

Reasons for the toppling of Assad's Regime:

1. Military and strategic Factors:

Aleppo, the oldest city of Syria has been a stronghold of HTS. The rebellious group always yearned for change. However, because of the atrocities of Assad in power, the group with the aid of international actors gained strategic leverage.

2. Weak Assad's forces:

Years of civil war and conflicts have degraded the Syrian Armed Forces power to oppose HTS rebels. Thus, lack of countering ^{Powers} causes despondent fall of Assad.

3- Bureaucratic cult personalities in Assad's government: Assad's elite network across ethnic and religious lines and Shia-Sunni fissures also became the root cause of his regime change - The extreme reverence towards Shia led party causes opposition to form uprising

4- Foreign support of HTS: The HTS has received larger support from regional powers to Assad's opposition such as Gulf state and anti-Russian alliances

5- Loss of legitimacy: Assad's regime has faced almost a complete erosion of public support due to continued economic crisis, corruption and authoritarian policies.

6- Economic Collapse: The economy of the Syria has been under severe strain due to international sanctions, rampant inflation, and infrastructure destruction - As **World Bank** has reported that "Syrian economy contracted by 85% during nearly 14 years of civil war."

Implications of Change in Syria:

Change in Syrian's power corridors have numerous implication for Syria in particular and world at large. The passage will

lay bare the brinded effect on global actors:

1. Domestic Impacts - civil war intensification:

The fall of Assad might not surely bring a wave of stability instantly. Rather there comes the domestic issues as well such as that of further triggers and fragmentation with competing factions including Kurdish groups, Israel's army, Turkish forces etc.

2. Humanitarian Crisis:

It is well-known that every war bring with itself a plethora of casualties and destruction. The civilians in Syria are the real victims of such crisis. The mass deportation, internal displacement, refugees issue and worsening living conditions are few nails in the coffin of Assad's regime to mention.

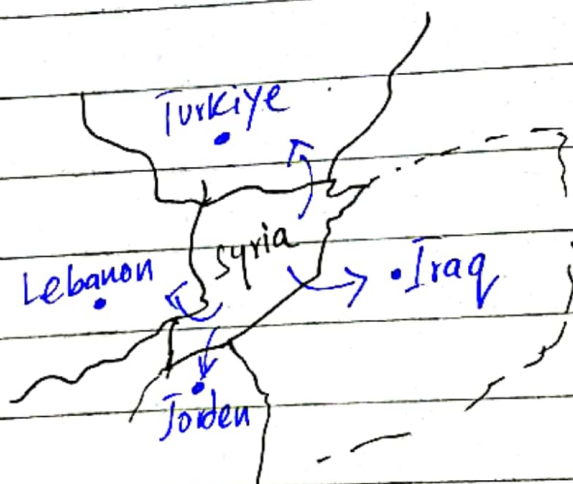
3. Governance Challenges:

As HTS is an Islamist group led by Muhammad Joulan. They do not know the basics of running a government in a systematic way. So there lies another conundrum of governance issues. The faultlines in governance may cause

Sheer failures for the Syria and it is more likely that this incompetence may become a reason for foreign powers to invade the Syrian land.

4. Regional Implications:

Syria's neighbours such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkiye, might face increase refugee flows and cross border violence. This will impact the other economies as well. Pictorial representation of geographical location is given below:



∴ Refugee influx to neighbouring countries.

5. Impowerment of Islamist movement:

The success of HTS may bring in Islamic rule and laws into a country overpowering the norms of democracy.

6. Shift in regional power Dynamics:

A weak or fragmented Syria could shift the balance of power, reducing Iran's influence while strengthening anti-Iran bloc. Same effect would be on Russia.

7. Geopolitical realignments:

i) Reevaluation of Western Policies:

The west may face a dilemma - balancing counterterrorism -

ii) Increased role of Türkiye:

As a neighboring country with vested interests in Syria, Turkey could take on a leading role in shaping post-Assad Syria, seeking to curb Kurdish influence -

iii) Israel's Plan for expansion:

With Israel already having power over Golan heights. The region could suffer more because of ill wishes of Israel - As in the mid of December 2024 Israel has carried out attacks on Syria's military facilities as well. Thus violating the international law.

Conclusion:

Tersely, it can be alleged that the HTs control signifies a major shift in Syria's political trajectory. It has raised the concerns about replacing one authoritarian regime with another potentially more repressive and ideologically extreme rule. The situation would demand concerted international effort to prevent Syria from descending further into chaos and find a path towards sustainable peace.

Q: 5:

Role of BRICS+ could counter this...?

Introduction:

George Galloway, A British politician has linked the Kazan summit of BRICS group to the 1944 Bretton woods conference. "The children unborn will grow up in a world shaped by BRICS 2024," he said. This highlight the importance of the conference in the future. with Russian head, Vladimir Putin's action of holding trade in national currencies, the significance of the conference increases many folds. That move has definitely poses an existential threat to the hegemony of American dollar, which is used as an international trade currency for almost half a century. Therefore, the passage below will highlight the nuance of BRICS counter to global south exploitation by west.

Challenges of dollar and SWIFT Dominance:

1) Weaponization of the Dollar:

The status of dollar as a global reserve currency gives the US unparalleled control over global trade and finance. Sanctions on countries like Iran, Venezuela and Russia shows how the US uses the dollar as a strict tool to implement others access to global markets.

2- Dependence on SWIFT:

SWIFT (Society for worldwide interbank financial telecommunication) facilitates international financial transactions but is heavily influenced by western powers. Thus, exclusion from SWIFT can isolate countries from global trade as seen with Russia post-Ukraine conflict.

3- Impact on Global South:

Countries in the global South face vulnerabilities to currency devaluation, inflation, economic instability, health crisis and infrastructural disparities. This also occurs when the countries are more reliant on dollar. Thus increase in rate of dollar send all the countries from global South into the marshes of poverty. The dollar as a tool is used against

developing nations and even sometimes against periphery nations for keeping them perpetually dependent on US dollar.

How BRICS+ Could Counter the Dollar and SWIFT Dominance.

1. Establishing an alternative currency's

With Russia leading the other nations to hold trade in other currency instead of dollar can create dwindling effect on the position of dollar-

2. Creating a parallel payment system:

Financial innovation such as the creation of BRICS interbank cooperation mechanism (BICM) for parallel payment system can wreck havoc of dollar and SWIFT dominance.

3. Digital currency:

The step towards digitalization of currency and bank accounts is a new avowed plan by many nations. Therefore, digital currency can be of vital use esp CBDCs (central banks digital currencies)

4. Diversifying Financial Institutions:

Formation of new development banks and reserves pooling without dependence

on IMF and World Bank could provide financial stability and reduce dependence on western-controlled alliances -

5- Creation of new corridor of RUPAC: (Russia-Pak-China alliance) in near future:

A number of political scientists are of the view that trilateral cooperation between China-Pak and Russia can also serve as a means for stability in financial system.

6- Example of Rise of Dark fleet in Russia:

As west has imposed sanctions on Russia, the dark fleet system on old aged sailing ships carrying trade is another norm set by Russia to increase its trade. This is also an example for other nations to follow.

Implication of BRICS+

Strategy:

1. Benefits for global South

Greater economic sovereignty and reduced vulnerability to external pressure and enhanced bargaining power in global trade through collective action of nations.

2. Challenges regarding implementation:

Diverse economic systems and interests in BRICS with addition of Egypt, UAE, Iran and Ethiopia hinders consensus especially in case of China and India who are arch-rivals due to geographical conflicts.

Other than that, efforts to bypass the dollar and SWIFT could provoke retaliatory measures including sanctions.

3- Impacts on global power dynamics:

The major effect would be on the erosion of US hegemony and geopolitical influence. Emergence of multipolar world could accelerate shift towards a multipolar global order.

4. Long term strategy for Permanent Change:

BRICS+ can altogether create the strengthening of institutions, ensuring continuity and resilience against external pressures,

It ^{will} also help in capacity building and global outreach with non-BRICS global South countries.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, it has become evident that BRICS+ has the potential to disrupt the dollar-centric financial system, achieving permanent emancipation from western exploitation. But all this needs a political will, economic alignment, and technological innovation. A balanced approach towards creation of new economic system could foster bonds of strength in global South.

Q6: COP 29 Summit ended in Baku. Critically evaluate its failures and commitments.

Introduction:

Conference of Parties (COP) 29 was held in Baku Azerbaijan from 11th November to 12nd November, 2024. The key topic of the conference was climate finance with trillions of dollars needed to reduce ^{climate change} and help the countries emissions.

The earlier held conferences pledged for the control of climate change by reducing dependence of fossil fuels but, this years conference was viewed as a new parameter and direction towards achieving financial goals for fighting with the menaces of climate inaction.

Key Commitments of COP 29:

1) Climate financial Agreement:

Developed nations pledged to mobilize 300 billion dollar annually by 2035 to assist developing countries in addressing climate change impacts. Source: Reuters.

2. Establishment of financial action Fund:

Date: _____

Azerbaijan has introduced the Climate financial action fund (CFAF) aiming to secure 1 billion dollar of money annually from the fossil fuels producer to invest in renewable energy and support developing projects.

The investment would be made in small countries like Islands and Latin America, Africa etc.

3. Green Transition:

The digital green Action declaration has been made for transition to green projects such as AI, digital tools, data analysts for emission reduction and climate resilience.

4. Declaration on Sustainable tourism:

COP-29 marked a declaration for eco tourism and carbon neutral travel. This initiative will encourage green tourism and a sense of cooperation across the globe according to climatic need.

5. Water for Climate Action Declaration,

As water is the blood and life for every living being. So conservation of

water was also made as an agenda -
6- lack of commitment to fossil fuel in COP29

As seen in COP 28 last year, the major focus was on eradication of fossil fuels. BUT, this year the focus was laid on financial support for key affectees -

Source: Relief Web.

7- Biennial Transparency Report:

A major commitment was made to show and deliver a transparency report regarding the implementation of funds in the said countries to assure transparency.

Criticism:

1) Host country's fossil fuel interest:

Azerbaijan, a host country is itself promoting fossil fuels.

This has been categorized as a sheer violation of norms.

2- Human Rights concern

Reports highlight that Azerbaijan's crackdown on civil society casts a doubt on conference's proceeding.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, it has become evident that BRICS+ has the potential to disrupt the dollar-centric financial system, achieving permanent emancipation from western exploitation. But all this needs a political will, economic alignment, and technological innovation. A balanced approach towards creation of new economic system could foster bonds of strength in global South.

Q 8:

Introduction:

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has faced significant delays and slowdowns in recent years. This is because the change of government in Pakistan as well as the increase in political instability in Pakistan. The Project has entered its Second Phase, focusing on industrial cooperation, and socio-economic development via infrastructural upgradation and investment in corporate farming for bringing in food security. The reasons for slow down of CPEC project are given below:

Reasons for the slowing down of the project:

- 1) Economic Challenges of Pakistan:
A sudden shift of increase in Pakistan's external debt

and recurring balance of payment crises have constrained its ability to fund CPEC-related projects.

2- Fiscal Deficit and lack of budgetary allocations; limited public finances and budgetary allocation priorities have reduced Pakistan performance.

3- Currency depreciation:

The devaluation of Pakistani Rupee has the effect on imports of CPEC project.

Political Instability

1- Governance issues -

Dr Malika Lodhi in her book, "Search for Stability" has highlighted several governance faultlines of Pakistan. One of these are the proper project management on required time. This crisis of governance is also a backlash for the timely progress of CPEC phase II.

2. Civil Military Relations:

Divergence between civil and military relations also has adverse impacts on the progress of CPEC growth.

Security Concerns:

1. Terrorist threats:

The TLP being active and operating from neighbourly land of Afghanistan is also a potential threat to CPEC.

2. Attacks on Projects and Chinese nationals:

Fatal attacks on the convoys on Chinese engineers has hindered the trust between China & Pakistan.

3. Local Unrest:

The civil disputes and resistance from local communities e.g on the issue of land acquisition has also shattered the spirit of the project.

4. Sectarian Issues in Balochistan:

The Shia's of Balochistan and the daily disputes also show the negative image of Pakistan's safe environment promise to China.

Global and regional factors:

1) Indian - plans for stopping the project:

The US and Indian opposition to CPEC given disputes in the region of Gilgit Baltistan has added pressure -

2. COVID 19 pandemic -

The economic losses in COVID 19 pandemic has also rendered the country in shattered and torn conditions -

3. Administrative and bureaucratic bottlenecks -

The delays and approval obtaining has slowed down project implementation - Both federal and provincial government are responsible.

Recommendations:

1. Enhance governance and cooperation
2. ensure transparency -
3. engage local community -

⇒ Debt restructuring

⇒ Beijing interest -

⇒ Flexible Investment Model.

⇒ Focus on green projects -

⇒ Energy efficiency -

Conclusion:

Thus it is of vital importance that Pakistan should work on its domestic issues

and put its own house in order to bring in stability -