

QUESTION: 02

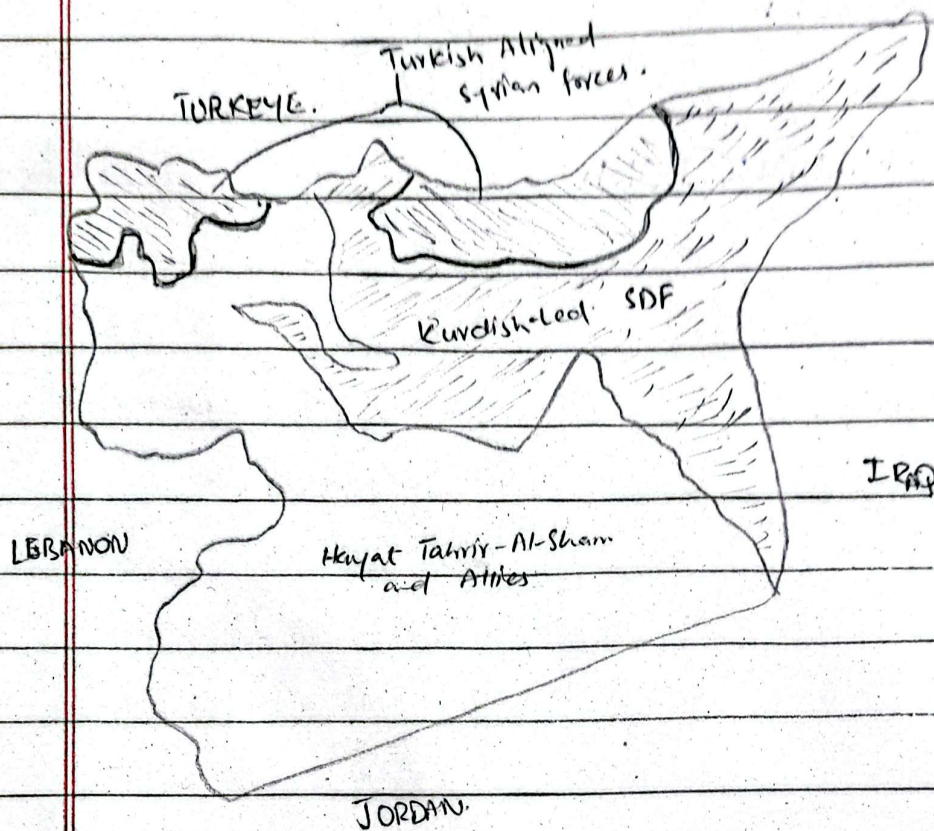
ANSWER:

INTRODUCTION:

The unprecedented toppling of Bashar-al-Asad's regime by HTS Islamist rebels marks a critical turning point in Syria's turbulent history, bringing decades of authoritarian rule to an end.

This change stems from a combination of factors, including entrenched sectarianism, economic mismanagement, and the regime's violent suppression of dissent during the Arab Spring. This transformation holds significant implications for Syria and beyond, including regional destabilization, the resurgence of extremist factions and shifting power dynamics in the Middle East. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to grasp the implications of Syria's uncertain future and the challenges that will emerge in its aftermath.

UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION VIA MAP.



REASONS BEHIND THE FALL OF BASHAR- AL-ASSAD'S REGIME:

(a) Authoritarian Governance and Sectarianism:

Bashar Al-Assad's regime was marked by authoritarian governance and sectarianism, which concentrated power within the Alawite minority, alienating the Sunni majority. Systematic suppression of dissent, exemplified by events like the 1982 Hama Massacre, solidified the regime's reliance on fear and violence to maintain control.

(b) Economic Mismanagement and Inequality:

Economic mismanagement and inequality played a critical role in the downfall of Assad's regime. Rampant corruption and nepotism undermined state institutions, eroding public trust and efficiency. During the civil war, Syria's GDP contracted by over 60%, plunging the country into a severe economic crisis. By 2023, over 90% of the population lived in poverty, highlighting the regime's inability to address the growing socio-economic challenges.

(c) The Arab Spring and Initial Protests:

The Arab Spring in 2011 ignited a wave of political change across the Middle East, sparking widespread protests in Syria against Bashar-Al-Assad's authoritarian rule. The brutality of government's response not only galvanized opposition but also plunged the country into a protracted civil war. Since the uprising began, over 500,000 people have been killed, marking one of the deadliest conflicts of the 21st century.

(d) Foreign Interventions and Proxy Wars:

Foreign interventions and proxy wars significantly shaped the trajectory of the Syrian conflict. Opposition forces received substantial backing from the US, Turkey, and Gulf States, providing financial aid, military supplies and political support to anti-Assad factions. The emergence of extremist groups such as ISIS and HTS further destabilized Syria, turning it into a battle ground for competing regional and global interests.

(e) International Isolation:

Sanctions imposed by the US and EU crippled Syria's already fragile economy, cutting off access to critical financial resources and trade. The country faced diplomatic ostracism for years, remaining excluded from the Arab League until its partial reinstatement in 2023. Additionally, the Caesar Act sanctions of 2020 targeted Syria's financial and energy sectors, further straining the regime's ability to sustain its operations.

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF ASSAD'S FALL ON THE REGION AND BEYOND:

(a) Regional Destabilization:

The fall of Assad's regime would have far-reaching implications for the region, particularly in terms of regional destabilization. A power vacuum could lead to further fragmentation of Syria, with different factions vying for control over its divided territories. This instability is likely to intensify competition among regional powers, including Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia, each seeking to expand their influence in post-Assad Syria.

(b) Rise of Extremist Groups:

The fall of Assad's regime could pave the way for the resurgence of extremist groups like ISIS or other factions. Without a central authority, these groups could exploit the chaos to rebuild their networks, recruit members and expand their territorial control. This renewed activity could also pose a significant threat to international security, as these groups seek to project their influence beyond Syria's border.

(c) Impact on Global Energy Markets:

Kurdish forces, likely to consolidate control over Syria's oil-rich regions, could increase regional energy output and alter the balance of power in the Middle East.

However, the disruption of key oil transit routes through Syria could create logistical challenges, destabilizing global supply chains.

(d) Global Implications:

The fall of Assad's regime would likely lead to increased involvement from global powers such as the US, Russia and China, each seeking to shape Syria's future according to their strategic interests. The humanitarian crisis would intensify, presenting significant challenges for international organizations. With an estimated reconstruction cost of over \$250 billion, Syria's rebuilding would require extensive global cooperation. This could test the capacity of global institutions and redefine their roles in post-conflict scenarios.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the fall of Bashar Al-Assad's regime in Syria represents a seismic shift with profound implications for both the region and the world. The culmination of years of authoritarian rule, sectarian divisions, economic mismanagement and foreign interventions has left Syria in a state of fragmentation and instability. The potential for regional destabilization, the rise of extremist groups, and the disruption of global economy markets are just some of the far-reaching consequences that could follow. Ultimately, the aftermath of Assad's fall will test the resilience of both regional actors and global institutions, as they explore the complex path toward peace and rebuilding.

QUESTION: 06

ANSWER:

INTRODUCTION:

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been marked by ongoing tensions, largely due to use of Afghan territory by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), for launching attacks on Pakistan. Despite efforts to manage these tensions, the issue remains unresolved, - exacerbated by the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan and its limited control over militant groups. The situation poses significant security challenges for Pakistan, while also impacting regional stability. A comprehensive approach is required to address these concerns, including strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation, enhancing border security and resolving diplomatic and economic issues. Furthermore, efforts to settle long-standing border disputes and promote regional cooperations are essential for fostering peace and stability between the two nations.

ILLUSTRATION OF PAK-AFGHAN BORDER:

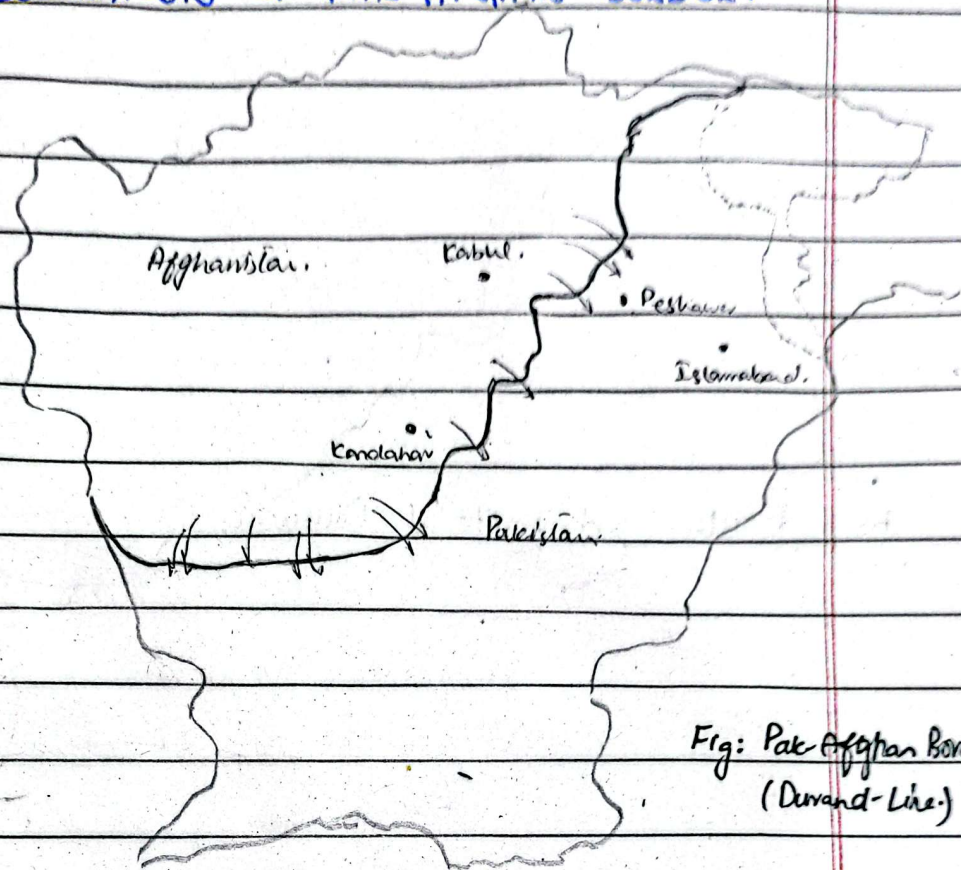


Fig: Pak-Afghan Border
(Demand-Line)

CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN:

(a) Security Challenges:

Security challenges between Pakistan and Afghanistan are intensified by the symbiotic relationship between the Taliban and the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which enables cross-border terrorism. This alliance has not only facilitated attacks on Pakistan but also contributed to the resurgence of extremist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIL-K, which poses broader

regional threats. Furthermore, weak counter-terrorism measures and limited control over Afghan territory has exacerbated border instability, creating a volatile environment that hinders efforts for lasting peace and security.

(b) Border and Territorial Disputes:

Border and territorial disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to fuel tension, with the Durand Line issue remaining a longstanding point of contention. This dispute has led to frequent unrest and disputes over the legitimacy of the border. The monitoring and upkeep of the border fences, which were erected to control cross-border movement, also face difficulties due to rugged terrain and the lack of cohesive enforcement, further contributing to the instability in the region.

(c) Economic Challenges:

The ongoing use of Afghan territory by the TTP for launching attacks

has severely disrupted Pakistan's economy, particularly in regions close to Afghan border. Trade and Commerce have been impacted as businesses face frequent disruptions from security threats, leading to reduced economic activity. The rising violence has created an environment of instability, deterring foreign investments and hindering development projects, especially in border areas. The cumulative effect of these disruptions has placed a significant strain on Pakistan's overall economic stability, exacerbating existing challenges such as inflation, unemployment, and poverty.

WAY-FORWARD FOR PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS

(a) Addressing Security Concerns:

To address the ongoing security challenges between Pakistan and Afghanistan, both countries must prioritize strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation through regional partnerships. A Pak-China-Afghan triad could be particularly effective in sharing intelligence, enhancing surveillance and conducting joint operations against militant

groups like TTP. A collaborative approach with Afghanistan to dismantle TTP network, including intelligence sharing and joint military actions would significantly reduce the threat posed by these groups and help stabilize both countries.

(b) Enhancing Diplomatic Efforts:

For Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve their bilateral relations, it is essential to prioritize trust building measures with Afghan leadership. This can be achieved through regular high-level dialogues, mutual-confidence-building initiatives and the establishment of clear communication channels.

Engaging regional stakeholders, such as China, and promoting stability and connectivity through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), can also foster a collaborative regional movement.

(c) Resolving Border Disputes:

Resolving the longstanding border disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan requires focused efforts on both tribal movement and Durand Line. Developing agreed mechanisms for tribal movements under "Easement Rights" could help manage cross-border interactions in a way that respects the cultural and historical ties of the communities, while ensuring security. In addition, engaging in bilateral discussions to settle the Durand Line issue amicably is crucial for long-term peace.

(d) Regional Cooperation:

To promote stability, Pakistan and Afghanistan should formulate a framework that incentivizes the Taliban's international recognition, by committing to human rights, particularly in protecting minorities and curbing extremism. Reviving the regional dialogues, such as the UN-brokered Doha talks, will foster cooperation and mutual understanding. Additionally, building alliances to address shared challenges like

Terrorism and instability is essential for regional peace and security. By collaborating with neighbouring countries and international organizations, both nations can work together to ensure a more secure and prosperous future.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the ~~path~~ tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, driven by ITF activities, present major challenges for also opportunities for resolution. Through strengthened counter-terrorism cooperation, resolving border disputes and fostering regional partnerships, both nations can address these issues. With focused diplomacy and strategic cooperation, Pakistan and Afghanistan can work towards a peaceful, prosperous future and contribute to regional stability.