

PART - II

Q.2. HTS Islamist rebels have toppled Al-Assad.
Evaluate reasons and implications.

Answer

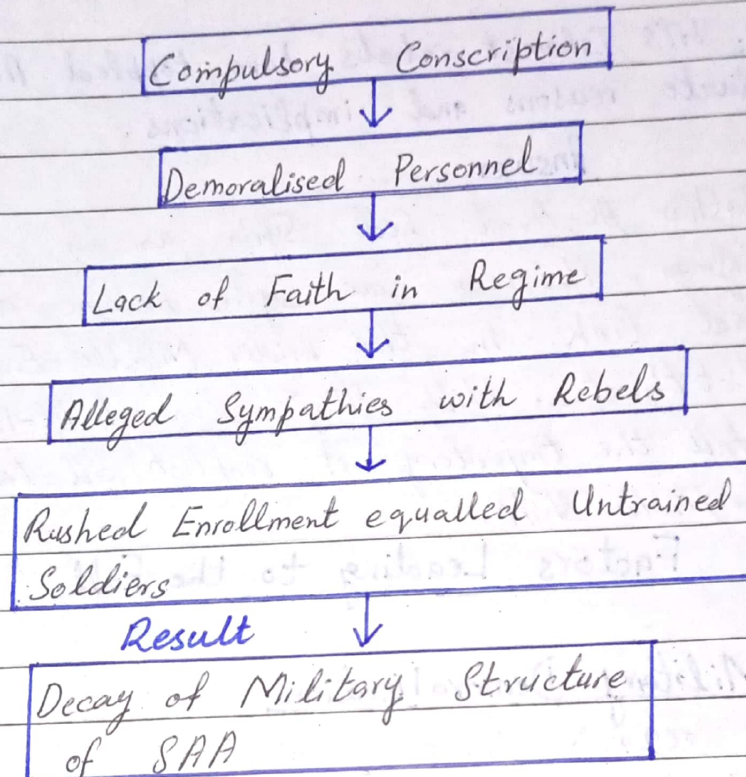
Bashar Al-Assad led Syria as a strongman. His era saw Syria become a crucial link in the wider Middle-East conflict theatre. With HTS' rise and Al-Assad's downfall the trajectory of conflict will take a perceptible shift.

A. Factors Leading to the Fall

1. Military Demoralisation

Any regime's foremost strength is its military. While democratic governments derive legitimacy from popular support and depend on military for protection, undemocratic regimes depend on military to cement their rule. A historical example is Khmer Rouge regime. It did not command its citizenry's approval. However, its military became its backbone. Similarly, Al-Assad regime depended heavily on Syrian Arab Army (SAA). In recent years SAA has countenanced mass desertions leading to a hollowed out structure. This left SAA incapacitated to counter advancing rebels. Following is a structural representation of this

factor:



2. Absent Allies

(i) Russia: Support from Moscow dwindled in light of Russia's active engagement in Ukraine. Demands of western front required allocation of strategic focus away from Syria.

Another shift came when Moscow moved its Air-Defense System to Libya in a possible preparation of future ambitions.

(ii) Hezbollah and Iran: Hezbollah got seriously weakened after a fourteen months long face off with Israel. In the past

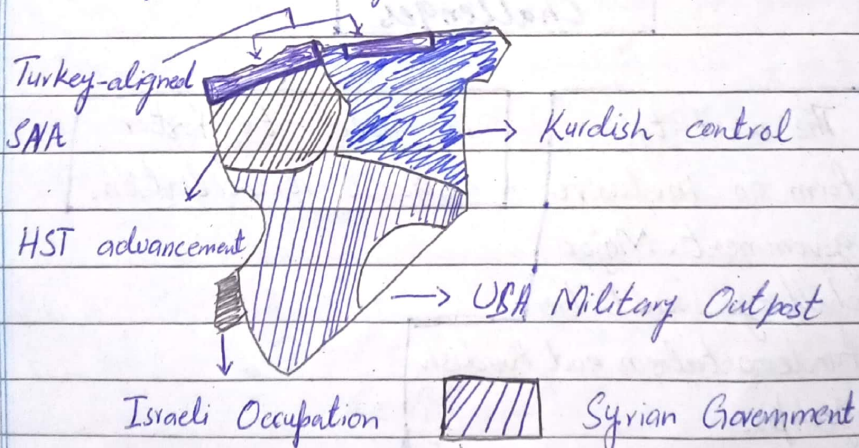
it provided Al-Asad regime essential kinetic assistance.

Similarly, Al-Asad positioned Syria within 'Axis of Resistance' that is commanded by Iran. However, Iran recently made the decision to call back its senior advisors. Thus, leaving Syria to fend itself on its own.

Conclusively, in war between Israel and Iran and its proxy outfits, Al-Asad regime became the collateral.

3. Unfavourable Circumstances for the Regime

Al-Asad regime was being circled by elements beyond their control. These included the ethnic and religious demographics as well as Al-Asad regime's limited control over Syrian territory. For illustration:



Syrian government of Al-Asad was initially only engaged with HST and its ally Turkey-aligned Syrian National Army (SNA) in the

north. However, formerly pacified rebels in south also became activated soon afterwards. In North-East USA-aligned Kurdish militia YPG also engaged against Al-Asad's forces.

Another factor is involvement of identity politics. Al-Asad and his father, Hafez, before him ruled Syria for almost fifty-five years.

The Al-Asad family belongs to Alawite heterodoxical offshoot of Shia Islam that constitutes only 13% of Syrian population while 74% of population of Syria is Sunni Muslim. This saw masses of Syria sympathise with HTS and SNA.

B. Implications of the Fall

1.

Governance

Challenges

The need to form an inclusive government. Major challenge would be fundamentalism and Kurdish groups.

The need to foster national reconciliation.

Kurds have been demanding extended autonomy. Meanwhile, fundamentalists can push for imposition of laws that will alienate Christian and Druze minorities.

2.

Regional Dynamics and Larger Conflict

With Russia engaged, Hezbollah decimated, and Al-Assad gone Iran's position against Israel has been crippled.

Israel has begun an invasion from occupied Golan Heights under the garb of establishing a buffer zone.

HST will have to ensure all regional players and international stakeholders of its sworn neutrality. Else Syria is no longer in a position to further the aims of external actors. If it does try to execute such a role the country could see itself entangled in another power struggle.

3.

Security
Spectre
Redefined

Looming ISIL Threat

Turkey's security and its position against YPG

New US interests in Syria

Al-Asad regime with Russian backing did a good job at keeping ISIS at bay. The new government is young and is a collective of multiple factions. The current atmosphere can allow resurgence of ISIS. On other hand, YPG presence in Syria remains a threat for ~~Syria~~ Turkey. Thus, Syria's new government will have to tread carefully.

Conclusion: Overthrow^w~~ing~~ of Al-Asad regime and rise of HTS has started a new chapter in Middle-Eastern conflict. The collapse was driven by low morale and withdrawal of critical support from key allies. Now, Syria faces challenge of forming an inclusive transitional government.

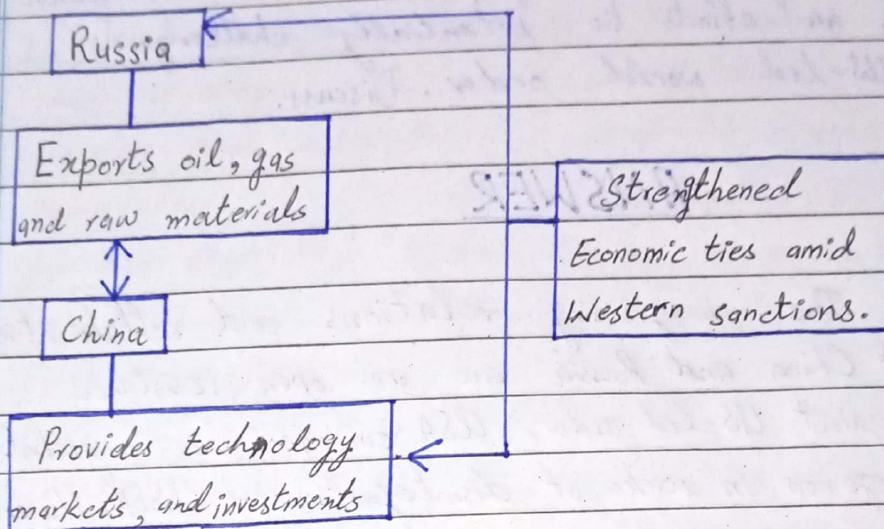
Syria also requires support from international community. It needs urgent aid to rebuild infrastructure and address the need to rehabilitate millions of displaced persons. The transitional phase for Syria will be pivotal for its future and that of Middle East's.

Q.4: Russia-China growing economic, strategic, and geopolitical collaboration is an effort to potentially challenge US-led world order. Discuss.

ANSWER

The ever-growing relations and collaboration of China and Russia are an open resistance against US-led order. USA emerged as a global hegemon in wake of disintegration of USSR. However, genuine grievances soon pent up against USA and its foreign attitude towards developing world in the Global South. Thus, Russia-China alliance is a challenge to US domination economically, strategically, and geopolitically. If successful, this collaboration will reshape the current global structure. The first blow to the US-led neoliberal machinery would be de-Dollarisation. In addition to it, China's possible domination in South China sea would dent repute of USA's military might. Lastly, traditional US allies such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey growing closer to Russia-China alliance would hurt American diplomacy. Thus, if Russia-China alliance stands the test of time it could empower the Global South to reject US-led economic and security initiatives.

1. Economic Collaboration



Economic ties make the bulwark of relations between Moscow and Beijing. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) bilateral trade between the two powers reached an estimated 240 billion US\$ in the fiscal year 2023. This volume reflects a growing interdependence at a time when the west is pushing for isolation of Russia.

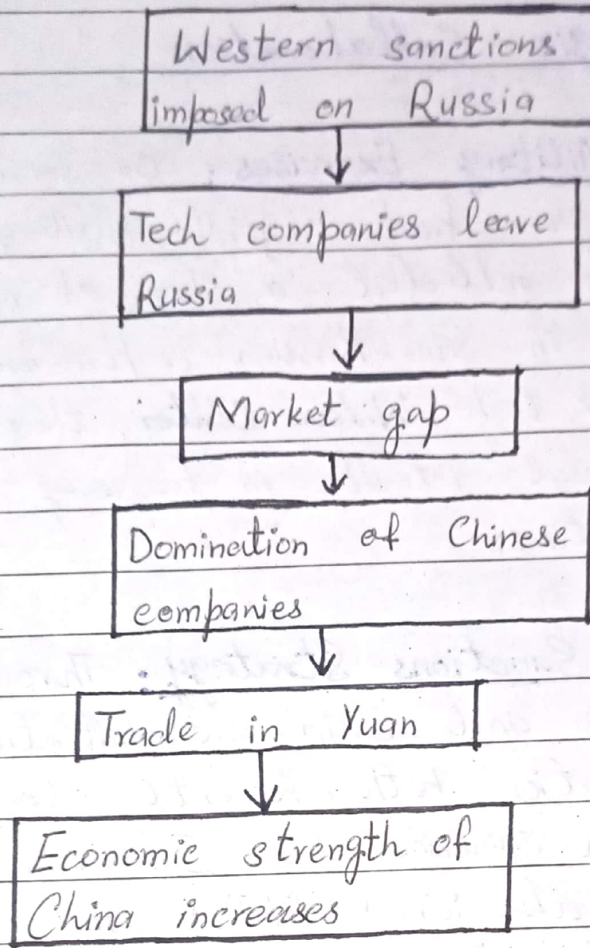
China's demand for energy aligns with Russia's global role as a power supplier. While in return Russia provides China with a large marketplace to dominate for its technological export. This is an opportunity for China to market its technology and financial platforms as alternatives to products from USA and its allies; UK, EU, and Japan.

2. Strategic Collaboration

i. Joint Military Exercises: On security and strategic front, joint military exercises have reflected a show of muscle accumulation in Sino-Russian cooperation. As per the think tank Wilson Center, there has been an increased intensity in frequency of joint conduction.

ii. Counter-Sanctions Strategy: Through BRICS Russia and China are initiating a de-dollarisation path. Recently, large Global South countries like Indonesia and Nigeria have also joined BRICS. This carries the potential to allow for increase in Sino-Russian combined influence in the developing world.

iii. Technology Transfers: Russia is a key arms supplier to China. It provides China with advanced technologies such as S-400 missile defence system. Simultaneously, due to Western sanctions giant technology conglomerates such as Google, Apple, and Dell have exited Russia. This gap in the market is now being filled by Chinese companies such as Baidu, Xiaomi, and Lenovo.



3. Geopolitical Implications

i. Multipolarity: Russia and China are collaborating through international forums such as UN Security Council. Also, Russia and China have formed organisations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). This internationalist strategy is allowing the two states to create a multipolar world order that will allow for weakening of U.S. imperialism in Global South.

ii. Contestation in Regional Hotspots:

Both nations challenge U.S. influence in critical regions:

a) Europe and Eurasia: Russia is trying to reclaim and solidify its influence over the former sphere of influence in eastern Europe and western Asia. For instance, Viktor Orbán's Hungary is growing close to Russia. This strategy is being aided by China through investments. For example, BYD is opening a manufacturing plant in Budapest in Hungary.

b) Asia-Pacific: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) complements Russian ambitions for Eurasian integration through Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

iii. Information Warfare: Russia and China invest heavily in state-sponsored media and digital platforms like China's CGTN and Russia's RT, to counter Western narratives. Their collective efforts promote alternative viewpoints. However, U.S. is reacting to this shift harshly as evident by its recent blanket ban over Chinese social media platform TikTok.

4. Strategic Complementarity

While Russia focuses on military strength and energy resources, China emphasizes economic expansion and technological innovation. This complementarity minimises competition between the two and boldens their challenge to American hegemony.

5. Conclusion

The Russia-China partnership reflects a calculated effort to reshape the global order. By leveraging economic interdependence, military cooperation, and geopolitical strategies, they aim to ~~erode~~ American dominance. While U.S.A retains significant global influence, the deepening Sino-Russian alignment underscores a transformative period in international relations, marked by increasing competition between established and emerging powers.

Q.5: Dollar and SWIFT being used as a weapon by US against the countries of Global South. Critically evaluate.

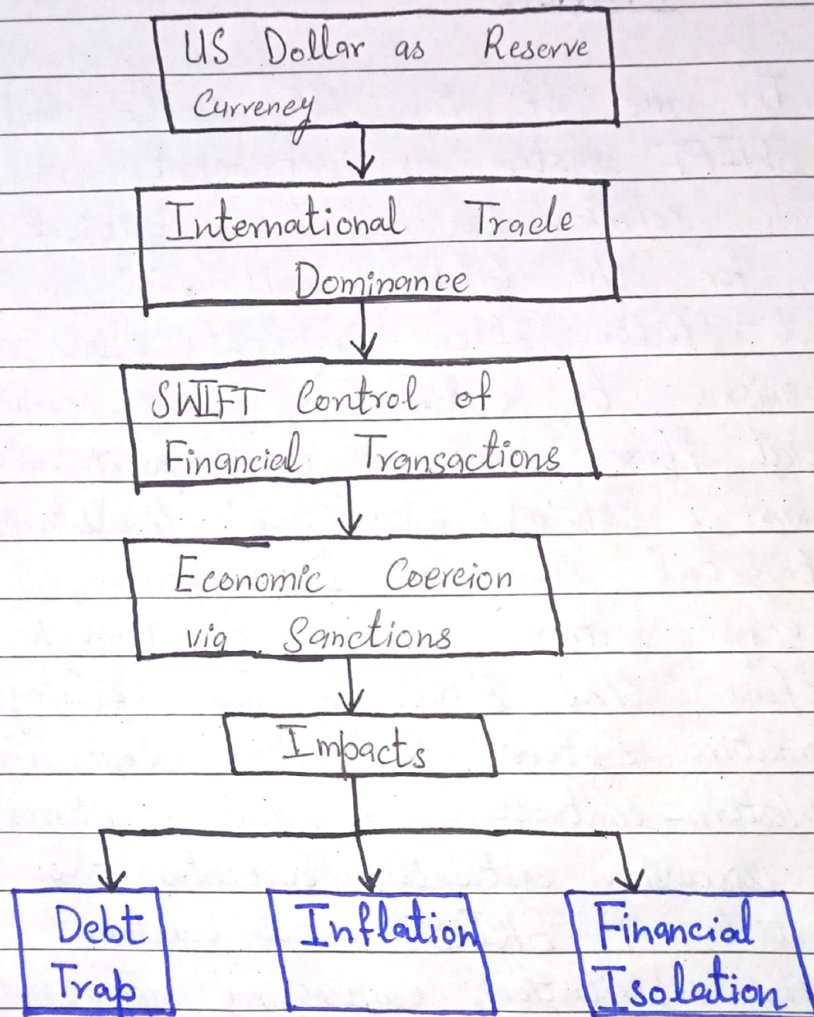
ANSWER

The use of the US dollar and the SWIFT system as instruments of economic coercion has become a critical issue for the Global South. The United States often employs these mechanisms to enforce sanctions, control financial flows, and assert geopolitical dominance, causing significant disruptions to targeted economies. In response, emerging nations particularly through platforms like BRICS+ are exploring alternative systems to reduce dependency on Western-controlled financial structures. This discussion critically evaluates the potential of BRICS+ to counter Western exploitation, emphasising opportunities and challenges.

A. The Dollar and SWIFT as Instruments of Control

1. Dominance of Dollar: The US dollar is the dominant reserve currency, accounting

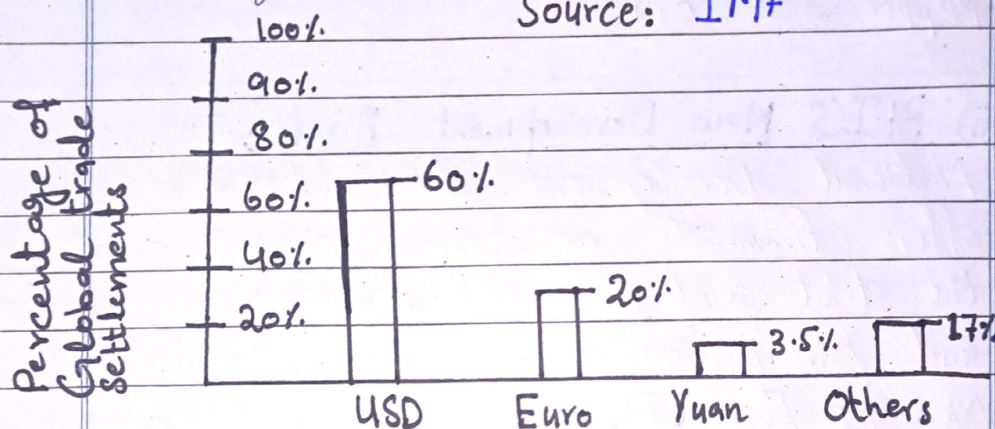
for 60% of global reserves. Most international trade, especially in energy markets, is conducted in dollar.



2. SWIFT and Financial Hegemony: Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication or SWIFT is leveraged by U.S. to disconnect sanctioned countries from international financial flows.

3. Impacts on Global South: Countries like Cuba and Iran face destabilisation due to forced dependency on dollar. US monetary policy such as interest rate hikes also creates ripple effects, increasing debt service costs for developing nations.

Source: IMF



B. BRICS+ and the Potential for Financial Autonomy

1. Emergence of BRICS+: BRICS has been increasing its membership by including more developing countries. With inclusion of Cuba and Nigeria BRICS+ can represent upto 55% of global population and currently represents more than 25% of the global GDP.

2. Alternative Financial Mechanisms

i) De-Dollarisation: BRICS+ nations are exploring the use of local currencies for trade thus limiting reliance on dollar. For instance, India and Russia have begun trading in Rupee and Ruble.

ii) BRICS New Development Bank: The National Development Bank (NDB) offers financial assistance without the strict conditions of austerity drives and privatisation imposed by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank that lead to inflation and price hikes.

3. Geopolitical and Economic

Collaboration: BRICS+ emphasises collaboration in energy, trade, technology, and infrastructure development reducing vulnerabilities to Western sanctions. The collective push for multipolar world order aligns with broader efforts to democratise global governance.

4. BRICS+ Contribution to Global Economy

Indicator	BRICS+	Global Share
Population	3.5 Billion	Almost 40%
Global GDP	\$ 27 Trillion	Around 25%
Trade Volume	\$ 9 Trillion	20 %
Natural Resources	Largest Reserves	50% of Global Resources

c. Key Strategies of BRICS+

1. Creation of Alternative Payment System:

(a) Leverage China's CIPS and Russia's SPFS to bypass SWIFT

(b) Create a unified payment interface for BRICS+ countries.

2. Strengthening South-South Cooperation:

(a) Form alliances with other Global

South nations such as Ethiopia and Turkey for collective bargaining power.

(b) Push for financial governance reforms at global platforms like the G20.

5. Conclusion

The US dollar and SWIFT system, as tools of Western hegemony, have perpetuated financial exploitation of Global South. However, BRICS+ offers a promising avenue to counter this supremacy. It promotes financial autonomy through developing alternative systems for trade and transactions, circumventing dominance of SWIFT. Through sustained efforts, BRICS+ has the potential to liberate Global South from American high-handedness and also reshape the global economic landscape.