

QUESTION # 02

UNPRECEDENTED CHANGE IN SYRIA

INTRODUCTION:

It is said that there are decades when nothing happens and there are days when decades happen. This saying is quite true for the unprecedented change in Syria, where the HTS rebels toppled Assad regime in a quick offensive of mere ten days. This is an unprecedented development in the Middle East. The reasons of this change range from domestic political and economic causes to wider geopolitical interests of major powers. This change will also have significant implications for Syria, ^{and} other major players.

REASONS OF CHANGE IN SYRIA

→ Repression and Victimization of Political Dissent led to Assad's Downfall

Bashar Al-Assad ruthlessly crushed the political opposition which increased the dissent. The Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that Assad regime killed at least 202,000 individuals since 2011.

→ The Economic Downturn caused the Unprecedented Change in Syria

The Syrian economy crumbled in 2007 Global Financial Recession and since then it failed to recover due to persistent instability. World Bank reported in 2022 that 69% of Syrian population is mired in poverty. This led to resentment against Assad regime.

→ Widespread Support of Sunni Syrian to Rebels against Assad

The Sunni population constitute 70% of Syrian population. They supported the Sunni rebels against the Alawite regime of Bashar Al-Assad that resulted in unprecedented change in Syria.

→ Weak Syrian Army due to Continuous Civil War Since 2011

Syrian army become too weak due to the elongated civil war that started in March 2011. According to the last estimates, the Syrian Army got reduced to 1,00,000 personnel. Hence, it failed to contain the swift onslaught of HTS rebels.

→ Diversion of Russian Forces in the Ukrainian Conflict

Russian forces had played a crucial role in maintaining Assad's control in Syria. Now, Russia's army was focused on Ukraine, hence it failed to rescue the Assad regime this time.

→ Hezbollah's Military Engagement with Israel in Lebanon

Along with the Russian forces, the Iran-backed Hezbollah had fortified Assad's control over Damascus.

This time it was engaged with Israel on the Lebanese borders.

Therefore, Hezbollah's military support was not fully available to help Assad government push back the rebel forces.

•> Rebels Usage of Advanced Weaponry and Nightwar Warfare Technology

The HTS rebels were experienced in the Night Warfare under the leadership of Abu Muhammad Al-Juloni. It gave rebels the leverage to launch quick offensive off on the Assad's forces and capture key cities within days.

•> External Support for Rebels by the US, Turkiye and Ukraine

As per the reports of Reuters and AlJazeera, the rebels had the covert backing of the US, Turkiye and Ukraine. This external support for rebels proved to be destructive and catastrophic for the Assad government in Damascus.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGE IN SYRIA

→ Another Civil War and Humanitarian Crisis in the Making

The unprecedented change in Syria created a political vacuum. This can potentially lead to another civil war in Syria and it may also exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the country even further.

→ Potential of Revival of ISIS

The political vacuum in Syria will give a huge opportunity to make a comeback. Witnessing the instability, ISIS may try to reestablish its control in a significant portion of Syria.

➤ Setback to Russia's Strategic Interests in the Middle East

The unprecedented change in Syria is a great setback to Russia's strategic interest in the Middle East. Moscow has lost its face in the region with the fall of Assad regime in Syria. It endangers Russia's strategic positions like the Tarturus Base.

➤ Iran to loose land Supply to Hezbollah

Iran has lost land supply to Hezbollah. It used to provide logistical support to Hezbollah via Syria which was ruled by the friendly Assad regime. Now, it no longer has that leverage and it will harm Iran and Hezbollah in the long-run.

→ Kurds will Push for Greater Control

The instability in the country gives Kurdish groups like PKK and YPG to push for greater control in the Northern Syria. However, the change may ^{also} increase Turkey's oversight over Kurdish groups.

→ Turkiye to Get Economic Benefits

The change in Damascus will relieve Turkey of the refugee which were a burden on its economy. Moreover, if pro-Turkish HTS holds power in Syria, Turkey will get a chance to provide reconstruction services to Syria. Hence, it will also boost the Turkish economy and construction industry.

CONCLUSION

The unprecedented change in Syria has roots as far back as 2007 financial crisis. The civil war since 2011 exacerbated the instability in Syria that led to this change. It will have far-reaching implications on key regional players and major powers.

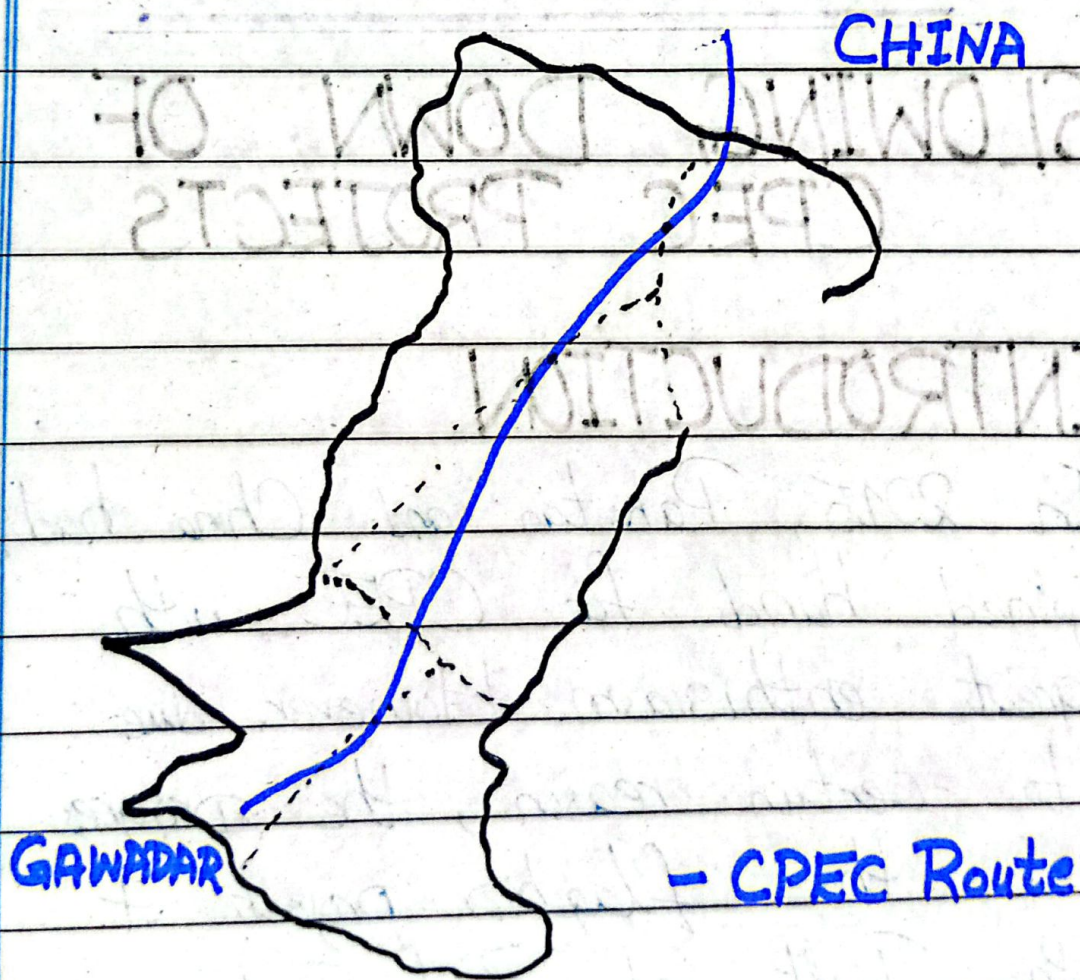
QUESTION OF

SLOWING DOWN OF CPEC PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Pakistan and China had joined hands for CPEC with great enthusiasm. However, due to certain reasons, the progress of the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative slowed down. The reasons include

terrorism, economic turmoil in Pakistan, political instability and low turnout of jobs. CPEC is vital for the economic development of Pakistan. Hence, it should make ~~with~~ joint venture with China on counter-terrorism, implement the long-term plan of CPEC, ensure economic progress and provide political stability for smooth realization of CPEC.



REASONS OF SLOW DOWN OF CPEC PROJECTS

TERRORISM

ECONOMIC TURMOIL

REASONS OF SLOW DOWN OF CPEC PROJECTS

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

LESS JOB CREATION

➤ CPEC : Hostage of Terrorism

CPEC become the hostage of terrorism. Terrorist group specifically targetted Chinese nationals in Pakistan. As per Strategic Research Institute (SRI), around 800 Chinese

nationals were killed in Pakistan during 2024. This security situation led to the slowdown of CPEC projects.

• Economic Turmoil in Pakistan Impeded CPEC Progress

Since COVID-19, Pakistan is facing an economic downturn. It further exacerbated in 2022, when the growth rate remained -0.2% . This economic turmoil resulted in lack of investors' confidence. Hence, the realization of CPEC projects slowed down.

• Political Instability Hampered CPEC's Momentum

Since the last few years, Pakistan is witnessing a deepening

political instability. This political environment is not conducive to growth in any country of the world. Hence, it impacted the progress of CPEC and its projects slowed down.

•> Low Job Turnout of CPEC embarrassed the Locals

The Ministry of Planning and Development had anticipated in 2014 that CPEC will lead to the creation of 36,000 jobs. However, so far, it made 16,000 employments only. This low turnout of job embarrassed the locals and created an environment of inconfidence that resulted in slow down of CPEC projects.

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO RE-INVIGORATE CPEC PROJECTS SPEED

JOINT
COUNTER-TERRORISM

LONG-TERM
PLAN

RECOMMENDATIONS TO
RE-INVIGORATE CPEC
PROJECTS

ECONOMIC
PROSPERITY

POLITICAL
STABILITY

→ Joint Counter-terrorism
Venture with China

Pakistan should take China
on-board to initiate a joint
venture with China against
terrorism. In this regard, Pakistan

and China can start through
the RATS initiative of SCO
to save CPEC projects and
workers.

•> Implementation of Long Term Plan (2017-25) of CPEC

Pakistan and China should work
to ensure timely execution of
the long-term plan of CPEC
agreed in 2017. CPEC Phase II
will also complement this plan
and if needed Pakistan and China
should renew this plan.

•> Pakistan should achieve Economic Prosperity to Support CPEC

Pakistan should not remain dependent
on China alone to achieve economic
prosperity. Islamabad should take measures

to ensure ease of doing business in the country to increase FDI. This prosperity will pave the way to reinvigorate CPEC projects.

→ Political Stability in Pakistan is Precursor to CPEC Revival

Political stability in Pakistan is a pre-condition for the reinvigoration of CPEC projects. Pakistan should provide a conducive political environment to China in order to revive CPEC's invigoration.

CONCLUSION

CPEC is essential for the economic development of Pakistan. Pakistan and China should look into the reasons of CPEC's slow down and make joint efforts to reinvigorate the flagship project of BRI.

QUESTION # 05

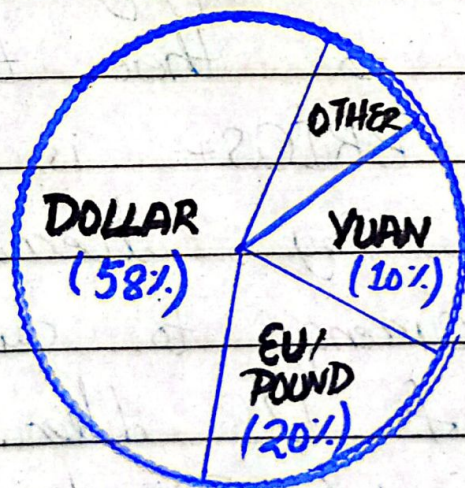
DOLLAR & SWIFT SYSTEM AND BRIC+

INTRODUCTION

The US dollar and SWIFT system has always remained the tool of western exploitation of the countries of Global South. Now, BRICS+ is emerging as an alternative to these tools of exploitation. BRICS+ is eyeing on BRICS Pay, alternative common currency to counter the hegemony of US dollars. It has established New Development Bank (NDB) and signed various currency swap agreement. Yet, it needs to step-up its efforts to fully challenge the western economic model.

DOLLARS AND SWIFT: THE WEAPONS OF U.S.

Dollar is the most widely used currency around the world, whereas the SWIFT banking system dominates the transaction information. The US has historically been using these weapons to arm-twist the countries of Global South. The US Dollars make the 58% of the SWIFT and the SWIFT



has more than 11,000 banks registered with it. This makes the Global South dependent of dollars and SWIFT.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF BRICS+ AS COUNTER TO WESTERN EXPLOITATION

➤ BRICS+ : A Flash in the Pan

BRICS+ has emerged as a formidable counter to the US led western economic exploitation. BRICS+ make up the 30% of world's GDP, which is more than the combined GDP of G7 countries. Hence, BRICS+ has the potential to counter dollar hegemony and SWIFT system.

➤ NDB : An Alternative to IMF and World Bank

BRICS+ created the New Development Bank (NDB) to help

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the countries struggling with the balance of payment issues. Moreover, it offers loans without any harsh conditions, contrary to the IMF and World Bank. Hence, it can counter IMF and World Bank as China, India and South Africa have provided \$ 41 billion, \$ 18 billion and \$ 12 billion to NDB.

→ BRICS Pay : A Common Currency

BRICS is working to introduce a common currency. If this realizes, it would be a great challenge to the US dollar.

It has introduced BRICS Pay to have a common economic card to counter the US dollar and evade the western sanctions.

→ BRICS and Hydrocarbon Agreements with Currency Swaps

BRICS+ hold the 23% of world's hydrocarbon reserves, the main countries being Russia, Iran and UAE among them. If these countries vow to make hydrocarbon agreements with currency swaps it would significantly damage the US dollar's reputation.

→ Regionalization of Markets under BRICS+

In the BRICS Summit 2024 at Kazan, the members agreed to establish Belarus-EU Corridor and Russia Independent Railway Network. This will pave way for regionalization of markets and a blow to western hegemony in economic systems.

LIMITATIONS OF BRICS+ IN COUNTERING WESTERN ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

↳ Lack of Significant Alternative to SWIFT

BRICS is so far unsuccessful to give a formidable alternative of SWIFT. China has offered an alternative system to 46 countries but it is not being widely acceptable.

↳ Internal Political Difference Impede Formidable System Formation

BRICS is unable to form a formidable unified economic system due to internal differences. For example, India has reservation over the Chinese alternative to SWIFT.

CONCLUSION

BRICS+ is emerging as an alternative to western exploitative economic system. It is posing great challenge to the US dollar in the shape of NDB and BRICS Pay. However, it need to expand its scope and work to provide a widely acceptable alternative to SWIFT.

QUESTION # 04

CHINA - RUSSIA COLLAB.

INTRODUCTION

Russia and China are emerging as collaborators against the US-led world order. Both countries are

string in the economic, strategic and geo-political domains to challenge the US-led world order.

RUSSIA-CHINA ECONOMIC COLLABORATION

➤ China Buying Russian Oil Amid Sanctions

China is buying Russian oil even amid the sanctions on Russia. It is helping Russia in this difficult time while also giving a strategic signal to the US and its allies.

➤ China Getting Cheaper Oil from Russia

Russia is providing cheaper oil to China. It signifies the resolve among two countries to collaborate economically despite western concerns.

RUSSIA-CHINA STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

- > China providing dual-use technology to Russia

China is also militarily helping Russia by providing dual-use technical goods to Russia. Moscow is allegedly using these to strike Ukraine in its war.

RUSSIA-CHINA GEOPOLITICAL COLLABORATION

- > Wagner Group Providing Security to China in Africa

The Russian Wagner-group is reportedly providing a security cover to China in Africa to carry out its economic endeavours.

•> Russia and China United on Question of Gaza

Russia and China are adopting a complementary stance on the issue of Gaza. Moreover, China unified Palestinian fighting groups which signals a challenge to the US-led world order.

CONCLUSION:

Russia and China are closely collaborating in various domains, which is a challenge to the US-led world order.