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Q2 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:-

Hayat Tahrir al Sham is a jihadist militant group operating in Syria since 2011, and a merger of several factions and backed by the KSA and Turkey. HTS has been successful in toppling down the tyrannical rule of Bashar - al - Assad in an unprecedented way. Bashar - al - Assad was a strong authoritarian ruler and a supporter of Shia Community and backed by Iran and Russia since then. However, the unimaginable fall of Assad's regime shocked world-wide - because the twenty five year rule has come down in no time. The reasons range from absence of foreign support to internal conflicts that led the fall of regime. The implications of fall are many as the region is already facing a crisis and it will add the fuel to fire. However, the opportunities of reconciliation lies for a better spring in Syria.

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(2) Background of Syrian Crisis:-

Syria has been a hub of crises since long - because of the foreign interventions, sectarian divides and rise of the Arab Spring is one of the key factor. Syria has been bleeding since 2011 when the Arab Spring started and all other countries - started following the lead by violent protest and armed resistance. It only benefited a few and fragmented many, and Syria is one of them. That civil war turned into proxy by the Iranian and Russia support the Assad regime, while rebel groups were given support of U.S.A and Turkey, KSA. Syrian families have been fighting since 2011 and families have left with nothing and the decade old crisis turned out into an outlier of authoritarian regime of Bashar - Al - Assad.

(3) What is HTS and how it gained strong foothold in Syria:-

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is a jihadist group, and a result of merged fraction, with primary component being the Jabhat al-Nusra (the Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda). HTS has been backed by Turkey and United States of America, and Saudi Arabia due to its Sunni origin. HTS

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has gained its dominance as it has captured significant areas of Syria including ZOLIB and Aleppo. Aleppo has supply route for Turkey and it has also control Turkish border for continuous flow of arms, and resources. The continuous support and slow expansion of HTS in capturing the main territories left him the upper hand in the recent fall.

3) Reasons behind the Bashar al-Assad Regime:-

There are many reasons of behind the fall of Bashar al-Assad, some of them are discussed below.

4) Russia and Iran have been engrossed in their internal crises:-

Russia and Iran have been the greater support of Assad regime. Due to their vested interest as Iran support Shiaism and Houthis to protect in Lebanon, on the other hand Russia interest lies in protecting his air base, and naval base in Syria that are provide access to Mediterranean Sea. However, Russia is occupied in a war against Ukraine, and Iran is adopting a

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peaceful approach to dodge the sanctions from Trump. Syrian government felt weak and it lead in the collapse of his government.

(3.2) Syrian Army has been exhausted with prolong wars :-

Syrian Army has been fighting internally since the rise of the Arab Spring - that led to mass persecution and economic exploitation. The Army of Syria has been exhausted with fighting and protecting the regime. The army of any country is what protect it from internal and external crises. Nevertheless, when the army itself felt alienated the state collapsed in no time - same is the case of Syria.

(3.3) Authoritarian Rule and political repression :-

Asad's regimes proven to be similar like his father - strong authoritarian rule with suppressing opposition and monopolising everything for the interest of himself. The long and tiring authoritarian rule of Bashar - al-Asad had to fall down someday, His heavy handedness on the

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the people and suppressing freedom of speech were signs of the fire of collapse and the world has witnessed it.

3.4) Economic Inequalities and mismanagement.

Economic policies under Hafez (his father) and Bashar al-Assad widened the inequalities between the urban elites and rural populations. His continuous support to the elite in corruption and evading taxation. On the other hand suppressing rural areas by denying them the basic right of water that led to the the prolong drought (2006-2011) devastated agriculture, forcing rural population to migrate.

4) Implication of the Unprecedented Change in Syria.

The unprecedented change in Syria open many ways of how the region would comprehend with the change and what could be its implication. Some of the implications are discussed below.

(4.1) Regional Instability :-

The implications are many but foremost important is the regional instability. Syria has been a battleground for all the powers by itself, Turkey, Iran and The region is already in a amidst of crises as Israel has continued its genocidal operations with that accessing Golan heights and calling it a territorial expansion. The region is already bleeding the change in Syria would further aggravate the situation.

(4.2) Humanitarian Crises :-

Middle eastern region have always been crapped with humanitarian crises, whether it be in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine or Syria. The change in Syria will escalate further crises. Since 2011, due to the civil conflict, it considered the largest humanitarian and displacement crises as it forced seven million inside the country and over 6.6 million outside to flee for refuge.

2) International Intervention:-

Syria has always been a open passageway, where anyone from the world could intervene breaching the sovereign status of a country. Syria has continuous intervention and presence of foreign actors. Unfortunately, with the current regime fall in Syria would result in more exploitation and imbalance. In the recent conference Turkey's energy minister said the gas pipeline will be operationalize via Saudi, Jordan and Syria and more projects will disclose soon. This open involvement reflect the interest and makes the Syrian future more grim.

3) Conclusion:-

To conclude, the sudden fall of Bashar al Assad regime has been the reason of continuous promises, foreign intervention and strict policies and mismanagement to the civilians. However, the implications of the fall are uncertain as the region is already copped with the humanitarian and instability - the Syrian crisis will only escalate it. Moreover, the vested interest of foreign actors has started taking actions to be benefited from the land and its people.

Q. No. 2 State owned enterprises have been a huge and persistent burden on the budgetary economy of Pakistan. Why and how many these enterprises should privatized?

Introduction-

The State owned enterprises of the country (SOE) have been a huge and persistent burden on the economy of Pakistan. Pakistan's SOE's including: Pakistan Airline, Pakistan electric power company, Sui Gas, Pakistan petroleum limited, Transportation and many more. The enterprises need to be an asset in generating profit. However in Pakistan they have been a liability due to lack of efficiencies and not privatizing them. Through privatization the SOE's would reduce the fiscal burden, increase efficiency and innovation by attracting investment. The process of privatization could be start with aligning strategies and plan by engaging public through Sector-specific approach. Hence, privatization of the SOE's would help country in diverting its attention towards something else.

2) How State Owned enterprises been a burden to the country.

The state owned enterprises of the country has been in a huge loss that affect the economic well-being of a country. Pakistan's International Airline (PIA) approximately loss \$200 million annually. Pakistan steel mills needs no introduction has been accounted for around \$230 million annually. Railway and energy are standing at \$115 million and \$750 million annually. The numbers are alarming as SOE ought to generate profit, but here the losses are distressing.

3) Why State Owned Enterprises should be privatized:-

The state owned enterprises ought to be privatized in reducing burden and generating profit. Some of the benefits of privatizing SOE's are discussed below.

1) Increases efficiency and enhance productivity:-

State owned enterprises

often faces due to inefficiencies and due to bureaucratic hurdles and outdated transition system. Privatization helps in increasing profit motives and streamlines process for better productivity. China's market oriented reforms to enhance the productivity of SOE's are a great example to learn from.

(3.2) Reducing fiscal Burden:-

In Pakistan most of the SOE's are operating on a loss, that requires government subsidies to run its operation and finances. Privatizing the SOE would transfer financial responsibility to the private sector by reducing the fiscal burden on the government.

(3.3) Privatizing SOE's will attract Investment:-

Privatizing state owned enterprise will bring capital, investment, technology and innovation that will attract more investment. The privatization and foreign and domestic investment will increase opportunities and pace the

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way for economic growth and stability.
United States of America has privatized its
transportation system for better technology and
stability in the country.

4) Improve Governance:-

Privatizing SOE's
would attract investment and improve the
governance. Due to bureaucratic budgets
and losses led to the corruption and unaccountability.
Privatization of SOE's and encourage
corporate sector would itself initiate a
thorough and transparent process that would
streamline the process and benefit the two.

5) How State Owned Enterprises can be privatized:-

The state owned enterprises
can be privatized through planning, assessment,
evaluation, public engagement and in many
more ways. Some of the ways are discussed
hereafter.

1) Strategic planning and Assessment:-

Privatizing the
state owned enterprises requires a few steps.

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One of them is thorough investigation of the enterprise by evaluating market's position, alignment and competing pricing model. Along with it, complete assessment about enterprises position on cost. Enterprise has the higher potential for buyers. This examination is necessary for the smooth process of privatizing SOE's.

(4.2) Transparent processes:-

The other way in conducting a successful privatization, the next process is the fair evaluation of the asset. Ensure accurate and independent evaluation of asset to avoid corruption. Secondly, open bidding for competitive buyers through transparent process would yield great outcomes.

(4.3) Public engagement:-

Public engagement is one of the crucial process in privatizing SOE's. The government must undertake, stakeholders, employees, consumers and union to address the concern. Highlight the losses and the how it affect the

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Social-welfare processes. Highlighting the benefits of privatisation as it will reduce the state burden and enhance socio-welfare projects. The other could be compensating the employees and consumers by facilitating them and it will ensure the process smoothly.

4) Sector-Sector approach: -

Sector-specific approach termed as designing different models for each enterprises to value its potential and approach. The one size fit all policy will only exacerbate the problem by avoiding appropriate approach. For example in sectors with natural monopolies - (like gas) will create a strong regulatory framework to ensure pricing and service quality. On the other hand, to address debt accumulation in energy sector public-private partnership is the step in the right direction.

5) Conclusion: -

Pakistan has been a heavy economic turmoil and the foremost reason is the heavy losses in the state owned enterprises (SOE). The SOE's of Pakistan have accumulated

debt that haunts the economy of a country. To address the concern privatization is the right choice in lightening the burden plus attract investment, innovation and technology. Privatizing enterprises would increase efficiencies, transparency and increase profit. Along with it, it will prosper the economy by moving it towards stability and eventually growth. Privatization with including stakeholders will rebuild the trust in the state and enhance socio-economic cooperation. Therefore, the solution lies in privatizing the loss making entities through proper evaluation and assessment would generate great outcomes.

Qno:- 06

Introduction:-

The ongoing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan is due to the presence of Tehrik-i-Taliban and the insurgency in Pakistan. The attacks on Pakistan soil has been witnessed a surge due to the myriad unperlined factors. The current relations with the Afghanistan and pause on bilateral ties provides the needed space TTP is enjoying. After the Taliban takeover TTP has expanded like a fire in the bush and created an extensive network of connectivity across the border to disrupt the country's well being. The recent surge attacked the security personnel and exploiting the strain relations between state and its people. Hence, through commitment and will this could be addressed via increasing bilateral ties, training development to LEA's and addressing the border management and control with cooperation.

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(2) Current Wave of Terrorism in Pakistan:-

Pakistan has always been exploited by the non-state actors and the Taliban. The terrorism and insurgency increases after the war on terror after the wake of 9/11. Pakistan played a major role due to support and which resulted in break through of number of Taliban in the country. Number of operations reduced the attack by cutting finance, but recent resurgence is a result of Taliban government support to TTP. TTP has been banned from Pakistan and it has moved to Kabul for safe haven now conducting cross-border activities. This resurgence resulted in death of security personnel and Chinese nationals.

(3) Factors Escalating Current Resurgence in Pakistan:-

The current wave of terrorism attacks are a result of many underline factors that has escalated the tensions between the two neighboring countries. Some of factors are listed under:

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③.1 Strain Relations with Afghanistan:-

Globalization aims to uplift the regional development by dispersing the countries onto each other and connecting the world on a large scale. However, the relations among the firms are quiet concerning especially in terms of Pakistan. Pakistan's two neighbours have more of a threat than an opportunity. The trade relations between Kabul and Islamabad are strained due to insurgency and cross border terrorism. The table of negotiations between the two are empty.

③.2 Taliban's Support to TTP:-

Taliban government has provided the safe heavens to the TTP organization, which is indulging in attacks in Pakistan. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in the conference asked the Taliban government to take concrete measures to cease their operations. Unfortunately, no measures or steps have been taken to counter the TTP growing capability of attack.

(3.3)

Lack of Competent LEA's:-

Law enforcement agencies are the first line of defence of any country. They ought to be trained well-enough to counter the attacks and protect the people, lives and property. However, the LEA's in Pakistan are not competent enough to counter the terrorist attacks. Although in the recent wave of resurgence the police personnel have been targeted the most. A report published terrorism Index 2024- reflects the number around 658 police personnel have been killed.

(3.4)

Grievances of merge district is being exploited by the TTPs:-

The people of merge districts and the Balochistan has been exploited to an extent that their sense of nationalism has been affected. Pakistan has left the loopholes of not addressing the grievances of the people they rule - which created a void of control that resulted in exploitation by the forces present for their cause.

(3.5) Porous border further aggravate the situation:-

Pakistan and Afghanistan shares a border line of 2,640 km long as Durand line - which remained as a continuous apple of discord among the two nations. After the war in terror (2001) the talibans and actors have made the ways and connections, which are still utilized by the TTP for launching attacks and creating a disruption in the country.

(4) Recommendations to counter the growing expansion of TTP in Pakistan:-

Pakistan needs to address the TTP's expansion in the country to counter the attacks and control the environment. Some of the recommendations to address the problem are discussed here under.

(4.1) Enhance bilateral cooperation:-

The world is moving forward and Afghanistan feels isolated in the region. Recently

Afghanistan's foreign minister have met India's foreign minister to increase the cooperation and Delhi has provided \$ 20 million for projects. Pakistan needs to tie the shoes because the hostile neighbour (India) have all the motives to isolate Pakistan. Hence, Pakistan needs to engage with Kabul for mutual co-operation and trade to facilitate ties and remove the fog of mistrust.

(4.2) Border management with mutual cooperation:-

Islamabad and Kabul should establish a joint mechanism for intelligence sharing and border control. Regular communication, patrols and the joint coordination of military cooperation in border areas are essential to mitigate the threat posed by the growing TTP.

(4.3) Afghan Taliban Accountability through International Pressure:-

Today, Afghanistan is engaging

they with countries for development and cooperation. Pakistan must utilize this opportunity and engage International organizations and countries like United States and China to put pressure on Taliban government in preventing providing safe heavens to militant organizations. It will be happens by choosing finances and commitment to sphere it.

(4.4) Training and development to LFA's:-

Training and development is needed to counter the growing threat of terrorism in Pakistan. Pakistan can utilize Interpol or Asian Pacific Organization to train LFA's for better approach and measures. Along with it, manpower is also the need of the hour and martial competitive services. LFA's are need to be competent and well trained in order to counter the measures and terrorism.

(4.5) Addressing the Socio-economic Issues by countering domestic Support:-

Militant organizations are born

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for exploitation of the under developed areas. Pakistan's long period of addressing the socio-economic issues of backwardness and the merge district are one of the cause of resurgence. State needs to address their grievances by timely engagement and strong commitment. It will also require the fact of domestic support of militant organizations. Proper employment along with education and health care system will turn the tide in the favour of state by increasing the sense of nationalism.

(5) Conclusion:-

To conclude, the growing threat of TTP is a result of strain relations between Islamabad and Kabul. It is well known saying, whenever there is a fight between the two forces the third person always gets the benefit of it and same is the case of TTP. The hostile relation between the countries, along with internal factors - which further add fuel to the fire. Nevertheless, nothing in this world cannot be addressed - through increasing bilateral ties and putting pressure with the help of international organizations and countries on the need of the hour.

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Q4 Critically evaluate reasons for the slowing down of CPEC projects. What options would you recommend to Islamabad and Beijing to reinvigorate the project and make phase II a tangible reality?

Introduction:-

China-Pakistan economic

Corridor has an immense importance due to its connectivity and economic progress. However, in past few years the growth of CPEC phase II has been stunted due to myriad reasons lying behind it. The most important is the security concerns for the people of China, because Chinese national has been target of many killings, also the changing government and bureaucratic hurdles further worsen the scenario in the completion of project. The China has change of interest due to debt burden and disbursement of money to China has been a stark question. Nevertheless, every problem has a solution and fasten the pace of CPEC phase II is not exception. By addressing the security measures, reforming long term policies and monitoring and evaluation would be the step in the right direction.

CPEC: a game changer for geo-economic landscape:

CPEC is a project of China's Belt and Road Initiative project that connect various countries - Asia to Europe and Middle-east, and it is basically the revival of famous silk road of china to connect the world for economic prosperity and growth. It is divided into two phases → I has completed successfully and it include power generation and highway infrastructure. while the second phase include heavy project including Railroads, airports, special economic zone, green projects and many more. CPEC has the potential to connect and prosper the economy through technological advancement.

Reasons behind the slowness of CPEC Phase II :-

CPEC has officially entered in it phase II that include massive investment and huge project. However, due to critical issues the completion of phase II has been slowed down. Some of the reason causing slowness of the project are discussed below.

(3.1) Security concerns and resurgence of Terrorism:-

The resurgence in Pakistan has seen an escalation, especially in the area of Balochistan, where project needs to be operationalised. According to the Al-Jazeera from 2018-2023 around 21 Chinese personnel have been killed, kidnapped and bombed. Moreover, the recent attack on Chinese national on Karachi airport raised concerns for the security measures and resulted in slowed down of the CPEC phase II.

(3.2) Political Instability and changing reforms:-

Politics has remained a concern for the investors of China, as the frequent changes in government not only disrupt the social order of the country but also creates uncertainty for investment. Along with it the absence of long term policies and reforms that safeguard the project and facilitate it reflect lack of serious intent and commitment towards operationalising the project in real time.

Financial and economic concerns:-

Pakistan's

Constant debt restructuring add fuel to already fragile environment of business. Many projects under CPEC phase II require sustainable and heavy investment, and Pakistan's stability to finance these projects either through equity or debt remained a challenge. Pakistan's age old model of finance only creates an environment that harms the investors.

Land acquisition and Social concerns:-

CPEC requires

large scale of land for operationalize the project. Nevertheless, the feudal lords and local people are reluctant of the view that their land would be steal from them and they will not be compensated. This has created a resistance against CPEC project by the local as their basic needs and grievances have not been addressed properly.

Measures to operationalize the CPEC phase II project:-

China

Pakistan economic corridor's phase II

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Could be operationalise by strong will and commitment, and redressing the grievances of the people. Some of the measure to reinvigorate the CPEC phase II are discussed hereunder.

(401)

Strengthening Security measures-

Pakistan

Security measures need to be enhance and the need for joint efforts are essential. The dedicated framework for CPEC's Security could reassure the investors and workers.

Moreover, investing in socio-economic development of conflict prone areas is crucial particularly Balochistan. Investing in education, health and employment opportunities would pave the way for the success of phase II.

(42)

Long term policies and Government Instability:-

Long term policies could be achieve by streamlining bureaucracy with setup of a team with clear implementation of taking swift decision minimizing delays. Establishing single

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window for CPE Clearance is a way for the success. Additionally, political stability is significant for the completion of project timely. Consensus should be achieved by disciplining personal interest and prioritising national ^{interest} for enhancing and completing of project.

3) Diversification of funding revenues:- Pakistan

and China should explore new financing model such as public-private-partnership (PPP), which would reduce the financial burden on Pakistan's economy. Additionally, Pakistan needs to privatise its state owned enterprises for better financing investment. It should prioritise project on the basis of their potential and return by ensuring transparency in dealings.

4) Collaborative assessment and monitoring programme:- collaborative

effort is required from both Beijing and Islamabad to make the project a living reality. Pakistan and China should focus

the development of digital infrastructure, network hubs and tech parks that not only revive the economy but uplift the miseries of the people. Both the countries should jointly create a community of senior officials, researchers who could research the model and facilitate the time being investment. The sharing of critical data to facilitate each other help in monitoring the programme.

(45) Addressing Geo-political Concerns:-

Pakistan and China jointly initiate the effort to address the concern of India, Afghanistan, Iran to resolve their conflicts and operationalise the project. They both can involve other countries on the dialogue table for re-assuring the peace of region and assure them as CPEC would enhance the economic cooperation by stabilising economies.

(5) Conclusion:-

CPEC has connected the countries around the world for better connectivity and short access to different markets for development and reviving their

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economies of the third world countries. CPEC is a project initiated between Pakistan and China to facilitate each other and connect for better accessibility. The project has two phases, one of them has been completed but the major and important phase - phase II has been facing challenges. The security reasons, financial constraints and political instability have caused a havoc in the completion of project. Nevertheless, the challenges can be cushioned through joint efforts from Islamabad and Beijing in the execution of the phase II of the CPEC project.