

## PART-II

Q.2

The fall of Bashar-al-Assad's regime in Syria at the hands of HTS (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham), an Islamist rebel group, would represent a profound shift in Syria's political landscape. If this scenario were to occur, it would have significant reasons and implications, both internally within Syria and globally.

### Reasons for HTS Success in Toppling Assad

#### 1. Internal Deterioration of Assad's Power:

##### • Military weakness:

Over the years, Assad's military, although bolstered by Russian and Iranian support, has faced multiple challenges. High casualty rates, defections, and struggles to maintain control of the entire country have weakened the regime.

##### • Loss of Popular Support:

Assad's brutal actions, including chemical weapons attacks, massacres, and widespread displacement of civilians, have alienated many Syrians.

## • Economic Breakdown:

Years of war have devastated Syria's economy. Issues like hyperinflation, unemployment, and shortages of basic goods have diminished the Assad regime's legitimacy.

## 2. HTS and Rebel Strength:

### • Collaborations with other Groups:

HTS, despite being a prominent Islamist group, could have formed alliances with other rebel factions, including those backed by Turkey and other regional players, to challenge Assad's remaining strongholds.

### • Increased Support from the Disenfranchised:

HTS capitalized on the widespread discontent with Assad's regime, particularly among populations that were economically or politically marginalized under Assad's rule.

## 3. Changing International Dynamics:

### • Declining Russian and Iranian Support:

The priorities of Russia and Iran in Syria may have shifted over time, potentially reducing their support for Assad. Domestic issues, changing geopolitical goals, or doubts about Assad's ability

to maintain power could contribute to this shift.

- Increased Western and Regional Support for Rebels:

If the U.S. or Gulf states increased their backing of HTS or other opposition factions, it could have provided the necessary resources to launch a successful offensive against Assad.

## Implications of HTS Victory

### 1. Political Impact:

- New Power Structure:

HTS's rise would likely lead to an Islamist-dominated government, radically changing Syria's political structure. This could include the implementation of Sharia law and greater isolation from the West.

- Sectarian Struggles:

Although the Assad regime maintained a balance between various sects, HTS's Sunni Islamist dominance could exacerbate sectarian divides, particularly with the Alawite minority that has long supported Assad.

- Kurdish Concerns:

The Kurds, who have established considerable autonomy in northern Syria through

the Syrian Democratic forces (SDF), might face increased pressure from an HTS-led government, potentially leading to renewed conflict.

## 2. Humanitarian and Social Effects:

### • Human Rights Issues:

HTS has employed harsh tactics in the past, which result in more repression, particularly targeting minorities and secular groups.

### • Escalating Displacement:

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria could worsen with HTS's victory, leading to further displacement of civilians, both internally and externally, as sectarian violence potentially escalates.

## 3. Economic Consequences:

### • Ongoing Economic Decline:

Syria's economy, already in a dire state, could continue to deteriorate under HTS rule, especially with the possibility of international sanctions and the loss of foreign aid from Assad's previous backers.

### • Reconstruction Challenges:

Rebuilding Syria would be increasingly difficult under HTS rule due to the fractured political situation. The lack of international support could further

Complicate reconstruction efforts.

#### 4. Regional and Global Consequences:

- Geopolitical shifts:

A victory by HTS would likely lead to a shift in Middle Eastern power dynamics, with countries like Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia gaining influence, while Iran and Russia may be forced to reassess their strategies.

- Terrorism and Instability:

Given HTS's previous connections to global jihadist movements, a Syria under their control could become a haven for terrorism, posing risks to regional and global security, particularly for western countries.

- Shifts in Western policies:

The U.S and western countries may respond with heightened sanctions or continued support for opposition groups. However, the lack of unity among rebel factions could complicate the West's approach to the new Syrian government.

→ In short, the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime at the hands of HTS would be a momentous event, driven by both internal and external factors weakening Assad's hold on power.

while the immediate impact would likely include greater instability, sectarian violence, and humanitarian challenges, the longer term consequences could transform Syria's political structure, shift regional dynamics, and influence global security. Syria would face a future marked by fragmentation, with multiple actors seeking to shape its destiny amidst continuing conflict and suffering.

### Q#3

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) have long been a significant burden on Pakistan's budgetary economy due to inefficiencies, corruption, and financial losses. Privatizing these enterprises is often considered a solution to reduce fiscal pressure and enhance their operational efficiency. **Here** is an analysis of why SOEs are a burden and how privatization can address the issue:

#### Why SOEs Are a Burden on Pakistan's Economy

##### 1. Chronic Financial Losses:

- Many SOEs, such as Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Pakistan Steel Mills, and Pakistan Railways, operate at a loss. These losses require government

bailouts, draining resources that could be used for public welfare projects.

• In 2022, the cumulative losses of key SOEs amounted to hundreds of billions of rupees annually, significantly contributing to Pakistan's fiscal deficit.

## 2. Inefficiency and Corruption:

• poor management, political interference, and lack of accountability have resulted in operational inefficiencies and corruption in SOEs.

• Overstaffing, inflated costs, and lack of innovation further exacerbate their inefficiency.

## 3. Debt Accumulation:

• SOEs often rely on government guaranteed loans, which contribute to the overall public debt. These liabilities pose a long-term financial risk to the economy.

## 4. Opportunity Cost:

• Resources allocated to sustain failing SOEs could be redirected toward more productive sectors like health, education, and infrastructure development.

## 5. Distortion of Markets:

• SOEs often enjoy monopolistic advantages, stifling competition and

innovation in industries where private sector participation could yield better results.

## How Privatization Can Help

### 1. Improved Efficiency and Productivity:

- Privatization transfers ownership and management to private entities, which are motivated by profit and accountability. This results in better management practices, cost control, and service delivery.

### 2. Reduction in Fiscal Burden:

- Selling non-performing SOEs reduces the need for government bailout and subsidies, alleviating pressure on the national budget.
- IT also generates one-time revenue for the government which can be used to pay off debt or invest in critical sectors.

### 3. Promotion of Competition:

- Privatization encourages competition in sectors dominated by inefficient SOEs, leading to better quality goods and services at competitive prices.

### 4. Attracting Foreign Investment:

- Privatization, especially when accompanied by structural reforms, signals investor confidence and attracts foreign direct investment, boosting economic growth.



## 5. Job Creation:

◦ While privatization may initially lead to job cuts due to restructuring, it often creates more sustainable employment opportunities in the long run by reviving the enterprises and encouraging sectoral growth.

## How to Privatize SOEs in Pakistan

1. Develop a Comprehensive Privatization Strategy:

- Identify SOEs that are persistently loss-making or non-essential to national security and public welfare.
- Set clear objectives, such as fiscal relief, economic efficiency, and market liberalization.

2. Transparent Process:

◦ Ensure a transparent and competitive bidding process to prevent corruption and cronyism in the privatization process.

◦ Involve independent regulators to oversee the sale.

3. Gradual Privatization:

◦ Begin with partial privatization to retain some government control and gradually

transition to full private ownership.  
• For example, selling minority stakes to test market response and investor interest.

4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):-  
• In sectors like transportation and energy, consider PPPs as a middle ground, allowing the private sector to manage operations while the government retains ownership.

5. Regulatory Framework:  
• Establish a robust regulatory framework to ensure fair competition and prevent monopolistic practices post-privatization.

## Challenges and Risks of Privatization

1. Political Resistance:

• Privatization often faces opposition from political parties, labour unions, and vested interests benefiting from the current system.

2. Risk of Corruption:

• Without proper checks, privatization deals can be manipulated to benefit a few influential individuals or groups.

3. Loss of Public Assets:

• Critics argue that privatization can result in the undervaluation of public assets, leading to

long-term losses.

4. Social Backlash:

• Job cuts and rising prices of privatized services may provoke public discontent.

→ Privatization is essential for reducing the economic burden of SOEs in Pakistan. However, it must be implemented carefully, with transparency and accountability to maximize its benefits. A well-executed privatization policy can improve efficiency, attract investment, and free up resources for critical development projects, ultimately contributing to sustainable economic growth.

Q#6

The persistent tensions between Islamabad and Kabul stem from the use of Afghan territory by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to launch terrorist attacks in Pakistan. This issue has strained relations between the two neighbours, complicating regional stability and security dynamics. ~~Here~~ is a critical evaluation of the situation and possible recommendations for its resolution.

**Evaluation of the Situation:-**

## 1. Historical Context:

- The TTP emerged as a major threat to Pakistan after the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, exploiting Ungoverned Spaces in the tribal belt.

- The group was significantly weakened during Pakistan's military operations, such as Zarb-e-Azb, but found refuge in Afghanistan.

- The Afghan Taliban's return to power in August 2021 emboldened the TTP, as both share ideological ties.

## 2. Afghanistan as a Safe Haven for TTP:

- The TTP has regrouped and launched attacks on Pakistan from Afghan soil, benefiting from the lack of strong governance in Afghanistan.

- The Afghan Taliban's reluctance or inability to act against the TTP stems from their historical ties and ideological affinity.

## 3. Impact on Pakistan:

- Raising Violence: TTP attacks in Pakistan have surged, targeting security forces and civilians, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

- Economic Costs: These attacks undermine economic stability

detering foreign investment and  
diverting resources to Counterterrorism  
efforts.

- Public Dissatisfaction: The rise in violence has led to domestic discontent, with criticism of the government's handling of the TTP threat.

#### 4. Afghan Taliban's Stance:

- While the Taliban government in Kabul has assured Pakistan of preventing the use of Afghan soil for terrorism, it has taken minimal action against the TTP.

- The Taliban may perceive the TTP as leverage against Pakistan or fear internal dissent if they act against their ideological allies.

#### 5. Geopolitical Dynamic:-

- Regional players like India could exploit Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions to their advantage, further complicating the situation.

- The international community's limited engagement with Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover has left Pakistan to deal with these issues largely alone.