

PART - II

QUESTION - NO. 01.

The hypothetical scenario of HTS, an Islamist rebel group toppling Bashar al Assad regime in Syria would mark a monumental and unprecedented shift in the geopolitical landscape of Middle East. Below is the critical evaluation of the political reasons behind such an event and its implications.

Reasons for the fall of Assad's Regime:

1. Erosion of Regime control:

Assad's regime has relied heavily on military dominance, support from external actors like Russia and Iran, and suppression of opposition.

A significant weakening of these factors — such as

exhaustion of resources, loss of external backing, or sustained opposition pressure - could explain the fall.

HTS Strategic consolidation:

HTS has demonstrated organizational adaptability and the ability to consolidate power in northwest Syria. Through military coordination, propaganda, and alliances with other factions, it may have outmaneuvered Assad's forces.

Shifts in International Support:

The withdrawal or reduction of Russian and Iranian support for Assad, possibly due to economic constraints or strategic realignments, could leave the regime

gain covert backing from anti-Assad regional powers.

Public Discontent and Economic collapse:

Syria's prolonged civil war has caused wide spread poverty, infrastructure collapse, and humanitarian crises.

Popular uprisings, coupled with defections from the regime, may have empowered HTS.

Weakening of Global Counterterrorism Focus:

A diminished global focus on extremist groups in the wake of other crises might have allowed HTS to strengthen its grip.

Implications of the Regime's Fall:

(a) Domestic Implications

1. Fragmentation of Power:

HTS's rise might not lead to nation-wide stability. Competing factions, including Kurdish forces, tribal groups, and remnants of Assad loyalists, could result in prolonged chaos.

2. Humanitarian Crisis:

A regime change led by HTS could worsen Syria's already dire humanitarian situation, as group's governance policies may restrict freedoms and exacerbate repression, especially for minorities.

3. Radicalization of Governance:

The Islamist Ideology of HTS may lead to the implementation of strict sharia law, reducing

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civil liberties and further alienating secular and minority populations.

Regional Implication:

1. Shift in Power Dynamics

The fall of Assad, a key ally of Iran, would weaken Tehran's influence in the region and disrupt its supply lines to Hezbollah in Lebanon. This could embolden rivals like Saudi Arabia and Israel.

2. Renewed Conflict in Neighboring States:

HIS's rise could embolden jihadist movements in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, destabilizing these countries.

Refugee Crisis:

New waves of refugees fleeing

Islamist rule would strain neighboring countries like Turkey, Jordan, and Europe.

Global Implication

1. Terrorism Resurgence:

HTS's victory could reinvigorate jihadists groups worldwide, inspiring a resurgence of extremist ideologies and attacks.

2. Realignment of International Policies:

Countries like the U.S., Russia, and European powers would face a dilemma: whether to engage with HTS to stabilize Syria or isolate it, risking further chaos.

3. Geopolitical Tensions:

The fall of Assad might intensify great powers, rivalries. Russia

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and Iran could seek alternative strategies to maintain influence while the west might reassess its presence to counterbalance HTS.

Conclusion:

While the fall of Bashar al Assad's regime and the rise of HTS would mark a significant shift in Syria, it is unlikely to bring stability. Instead it would create a power vacuum, intensify regional and global tensions, and exacerbate humanitarian challenges. This hypothetical scenario underscores the complexities of Syria's conflict and the profound implications of any major changes to its status quo.

END.

'QUESTION- NO. 08'

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's BRI has experienced a slowdown in recent years due to a combination of political, economic and security challenges. Below is a critical evaluation of the reasons behind this slowdown and recommendations for Islamabad and Beijing to re-energize the initiative.

Reasons for the slowdown:

1. Political Instability in Pakistan:

* Frequent changes in governments in Pakistan have led to inconsistent policies and priorities regarding CPEC. Political rivalries have also contributed to delays in decision-making and project implementation.

- * Public skepticism about CPEC's benefits, fueled by opposition parties and lack of transparency has undermined momentum.

2. Economic Challenges:

- * Debt and Financial constraints:

Pakistan's mounting external debt and economic instability have limited its ability to finance its share of CPEC share.

- * Macroeconomic Pressure:

Inflation, a weakening currency and an unstable fiscal position have diverted government focus away from long term infrastructure investment to short term economic stabilization.

3. Security Concerns:

- * Insurgent groups, such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)

have targeted CPEC infrastructure and personnel, particularly in Balochistan, raising concerns about the safety of Chinese workers and investments.

* Geopolitical tensions with India have further exacerbated the security environment.

4. Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:

* Delays in acquiring land, securing regulatory approvals, and resolving interprovincial disputes have slowed down projects.

* Poor coordination between federal and provincial governments has hindered seamless execution.

Recommendations to Reinvigorate

CPEC:

1. Strengthen Political Will and Institutional Mechanisms:

* Policy continuity:
 Islamabad should establish bipartisan consensus on CPEC to ensure consistent policies regardless of political transitions.

* Centralized Coordination:
 Strengthen the CPEC Authority or create a specialized task force to streamline decision-making and address bureaucratic hurdles.

2. Improve Security measures.

* Dedicated Security Forces:
 Enhance the capabilities of the Special Security Division (SSD) and Maritime Security Force dedicated to protecting CPEC projects.

* Community Engagement:
 Address local grievances in Balochistan and other restive areas through

economic incentives, job creation, and inclusive development.

3. Address Economic Bottlenecks:

* Debt Management:

Pakistan should negotiate favorable terms for CPEC loans, including restructuring repayment schedules to ease its fiscal burden.

* Private sector Participation:

Encourage private investment in CPEC projects to reduce reliance on public financing. This includes offering tax incentives and creating public-private partnerships.

4. Enhance Project Transparency and Public Support:

* Clear communication:

Both Islamabad and Beijing should launch public awareness campaigns to highlight the

tangible benefits of CPEC, such as job creation and infrastructure development.

* Accountability Mechanism:

Independent oversight to ensure transparency in project financing and execution, addressing concerns of corruption and mismanagement.

Conclusion:

The slowdown of CPEC projects is a multifaceted issue rooted in political, economic and security challenges. To reinvigorate the initiative, Islamabad and Beijing must adopt a proactive, collaborative approach focused on policy continuity, security, transparency, and regional integration.