



Assad's fall in Syria weakens Iran but may fuel Islamist resurgence

By Samia Nakhoul and Andrew Mills

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DOHA, Dec 9 (Reuters) - The ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, after rebel forces swept into Damascus this weekend, shattered Iran's network of influence in the Middle East but Israel, the United States and Arab powers must now deal with the risk of instability and extremism from the mosaic of forces that replaces him.

[...]

Israeli forces carried out air strikes against suspected chemical weapons and missile sites on Monday to prevent them from falling into the hands of hostile actors, the foreign minister said.

Carmit Valensi, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), a think tank for Israeli security policy based in Tel Aviv, said that - despite the risk of a prolonged period of chaos and violence in Syria - Assad's fall could benefit Israel.

"Despite concerns over the rise of extremist elements near the border and the lack of a clear authority in charge, the military capabilities of the rebels, in their various forms, aren't comparable to those of Iran and its proxies," she said.

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