



## **Experts react: Rebels have toppled the Assad regime. What's next for Syria, the Middle East, and the world?**

By Atlantic Council experts

[...]

### **With its proxies crumbling, Iran will rethink its security strategy**

The fall of Assad is another nail in the coffin of Iran's Axis of Resistance, which will prompt Tehran to reconsider its security strategy.

In a matter of weeks, Iran lost its pillars in the Axis of Resistance. After the heavy blow that Hezbollah [suffered](#) at the hands of Israel, the fall of Assad is a fatal strike on Iran's influence efforts in the Middle East. There is of course a connection between the two, since it is clear that the weakness of Hezbollah and especially the elimination of its leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was personally committed to saving Assad, accelerated the overthrow of the Syrian regime.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Assad regime to Iran. Without him, Iran's ability to rebuild Hezbollah's power has weakened dramatically, as has its ability to threaten Israel from this arena. But above all, Syria enabled the same territorial continuity from Iran to Lebanon that established the "Shia crescent" and gave Iran unprecedented strategic depth while keeping the wars away from its borders.

But the collapse of the regime shows how much the tools in Iran's hands to save Assad without Hezbollah were almost non-existent. This fact also indicates Iran's weakness and its limited ability to influence what happens in the Middle East without its proxy. Now Iran will have to calculate a new course and find a solution that will strengthen its ability to deter Israel and the United States on its own, with no real support of its proxies.

Iran will likely now seek to strengthen its conventional capabilities, including fast-tracking its [Su-35 deal](#) with Russia, rebuilding its air defense system, and replacing its missiles that were damaged in the Israeli attack. But Tehran will also likely think about whether to update its nuclear strategy, either to advance toward a nuclear bomb or to submit more significant compromises to the West in hope of reaching a nuclear agreement that will reduce the danger of an external attack on Iran. And so, the dramatic events in Syria also require a focus on what is happening in the decision-making circle in Tehran.

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