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A New Dawn for Syria?

The Fall of Bashar al-Assad

Bashar al-Assad, Syria's long-standing British-educated trained doctor-dictator, has been overthrown by rebel forces led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), forcing him to flee Damascus. The swift regime collapse has left Syria in uncertainty, with regional players Iran, Israel and Turkiye, among other global players closely monitoring the situation. Syrians, exhausted by years of war, hope for peace and rebuilding, though challenges remain as the international community seeks a peaceful transition. Assad's fall marks a pivotal moment in Syrian history, offering hope amid lingering conflict.

This edition of CUTS Occasional News Wrap (ONW) provides a comprehensive overview of the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, covering articles and news from both print and electronic media.

Op-eds	Key Takeaways
The fall of Syria's dictator <i>The Economist</i> December 07, 2024	Rebel forces led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) swiftly overthrew Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, who fled Damascus. The regime's collapse marks a historic moment, ending over 53 years of Assad family rule. Syrians celebrate, hoping for stability and peace, while the international community watches closely, concerned about potential power vacuums and the resurgence of ISIS.
How Syria broke the world and is now Iran's Achilles heel <i>Financial Times</i> December 10, 2024	The rapid fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime has ignited global attention. Statues of the Assads were toppled, prisons opened, and exiled families reunited. The conflict exposed Iran's vulnerabilities and marked a pivotal moment for Syria, reigniting hope amidst the war-torn landscape.
Rebuilding Syria After Assad <i>Project Syndicate</i> December 11, 2024	Bashar al-Assad's fall from power has created an opportunity for the political and economic reconstruction of a key Arab state. However, the record of efforts to stabilise post-conflict societies in the Middle East is littered with failure, and the next few months will most likely determine Syria's political trajectory.
Bashar Assad's fall reminds Xi Jinping of a Donald Trump bombshell <i>Nikkei Asia</i> December 12, 2024	The ousting of Syria's Bashar Assad may have reminded Chinese President Xi Jinping of a meeting with then-President Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in 2017. During dinner, Trump suddenly ordered airstrikes on Syria -- a bombshell aimed at pressuring not only Xi but also Russia's Vladimir Putin and North Korea's Kim Jong Un.
The Syrian meltdown and its strategic impact <i>Chanakya Forum</i> December 13, 2024	The article discusses the strategic impact of the Syrian meltdown, highlighting the geopolitical vacuum created by Bashar al-Assad's fall. It examines the potential consequences for regional powers like Russia and Iran and the challenges posed by the rise of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The piece also explores the broader implications for global powers, including the US and Turkey, and the possible resurgence of ISIS in the power vacuum.

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Who Lost More Weapons—Russia in Syria or America in Afghanistan? <i>Foreign Policy</i> December 17, 2024	The article draws parallels between the situations in Syria and Afghanistan, highlighting how the collapse of Assad's regime led to the seizure of Russian-supplied weapons by rebel forces, similar to the Taliban's acquisition of US equipment in 2021. It raises concerns about the potential destabilisation of the Middle East and the bolstering of insurgent capabilities, including the resurgence of ISIS.
Türkiye Has a Wish List in Syria. It Should Tread Lightly. <i>Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</i> December 17, 2024	The article discusses Turkey's strategic goals in Syria following Bashar al-Assad's fall. Turkey aims to eliminate the cross-border threat posed by the U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), facilitate the return of Syrian refugees, and gain an upper hand over regional rivals like Iran and Russia. Ankara sees this as a historic opportunity to advance its interests but must carefully navigate the complex regional dynamics.
Following Afghanistan, Syria cements the end of America's 'War on Terror' era <i>ORF</i> December 17, 2024	The article discusses how the fall of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, signifies the end of America's 'War on Terror' era. It highlights the shift towards regional and international power struggles and the rise of new actors like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The piece also examines the broader implications for global security and the changing dynamics in the Middle East.
With al-Assad Gone, Syrians in Homs Assess the Destruction <i>New York Times</i> December 19, 2024	Much of Syria was devastated by Bashar al-Assad's brutal fight to suppress a popular uprising and cling to power. Protesters in the ancient city of Homs were the first to take up weapons in 2011 against his oppression. It became the centre of resistance.
Putin Chose Ukraine Over Syria <i>Foreign Affairs</i> December 26, 2024	Putin's focus on Ukraine has overshadowed Russia's interests in Syria, leading to the loss of influence and military bases in the Middle East . This shift highlights Russia's inability to support allies while engaged in the Ukraine conflict, raising questions about its reliability as a global power.