

# **Civil wars in Middle East and North Africa**

**Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya**

Developing countries of the Global South in international relations

# Civil war

- A violent conflict between a state and one (or more) organized non-state actor
  - × interstate conflict, violent conflict not involving state, state repression, terrorism
- 3 main types of civil war
  1. The aim is to take control over the central government
  2. Efforts for territorial secession or autonomy
  3. Ethnic civil war
- Insurgents are usually trying to carry out social transformation

# Arab spring

The reason of unrests?

- Series of pro-democracy uprisings - began in the spring 2011
- In several mainly Muslim countries - Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Egypt and Bahrain
- Arab spring in general resulted in some kind of change
  - Regime change - Tunisia, Egypt, Libya
- In unsuccessful countries there has been/is a period of violence, instability and insecurity
- Arab spring faded in 2012 after protests were suppressed by authorities → Syrian civil war, Iraqi insurgency, Libyan civil war, Yemeni civil war,...

# Syrian civil war



# Background

Syrian civil war



# Background

## Syrian civil war

- 1963 a coup d'état — successful seizure of power by the military committee of the Syrian Regional Branch (Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party)
- March 1971 - Hafez al-Assad declared himself president
- Syrian Regional Branch was dominant political authority for 40 years = one-party state
  - Until the first multi-party elections in 2012 to the People's Council of Syria
- 2000 Hafez al-Assad died → his son Bashar al-Assad was elected as President of Syria
- Bashar al-Assad = the symbol of democratization, modernization and social reforms?

# Background

## Syrian civil war

- Demographics of Syria - approximately 10 different ethnic groups
  - Arab 50 %, Alawite 15 %, Kurd 10 %, Levantine 10 %, other 15 %
- Huge socioeconomic inequality - free market policy with an emphasis on the service sector
- High youth unemployments and poverty = high discontent with the government
- From 2006 to 2011 Syria faced intense drought → crop failure, increased food prices, massive urbanization
- Controlled human rights by the state - from 1963 to 2011 emergency rule

# How the Syrian war began?



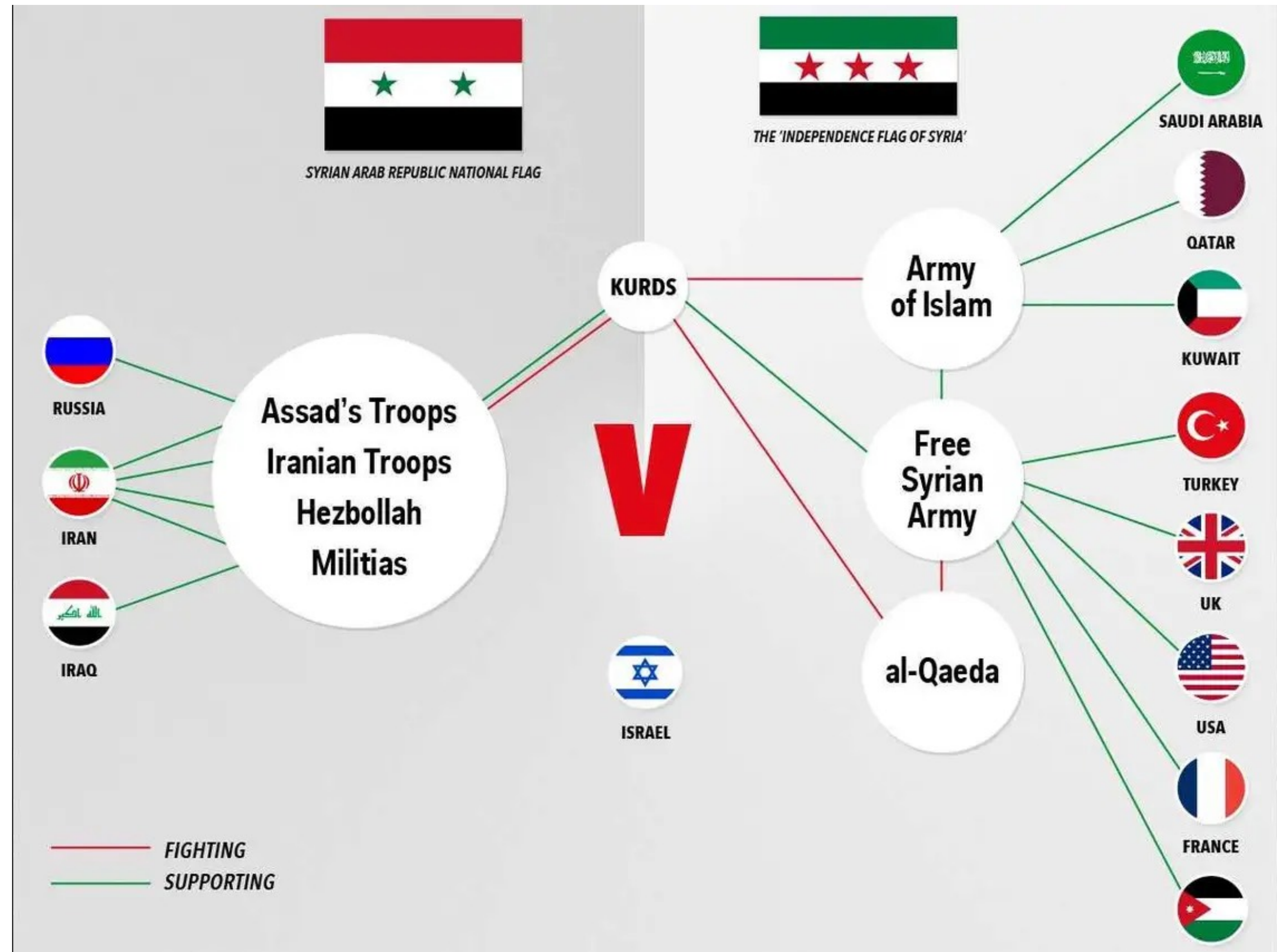


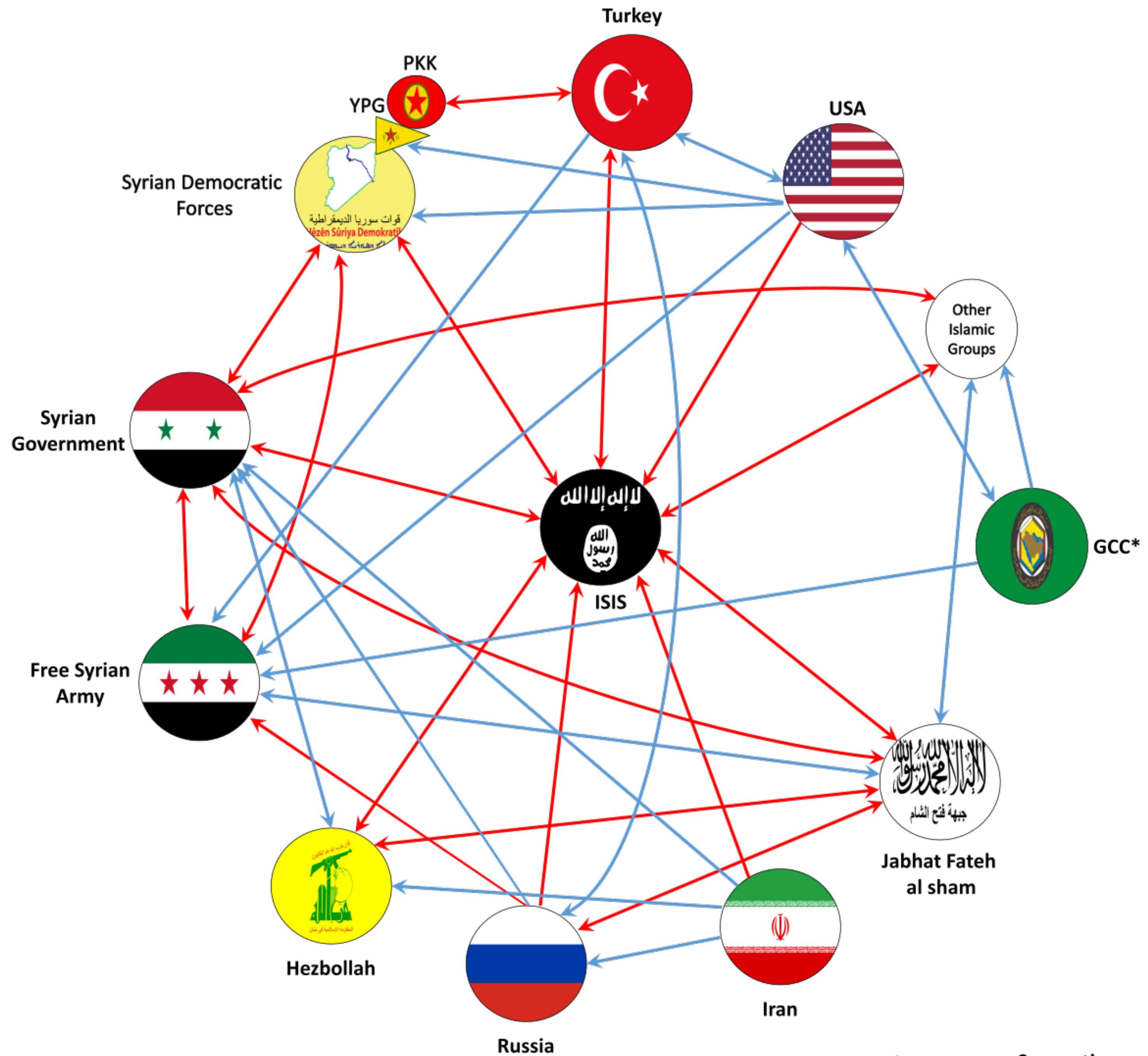
# The start of Syrian civil war

- From December 2010 protests spread across the Middle East and North Africa
- Syrian protests started in March 2011 in the southwestern city of Deraa
- Protesters were calling for greater freedoms, the end of corruption, the end of emergency rule, the release of political prisoners
- Assad's government immediately suppressed the uprisings - firstly with token reforms, then with force
- The Syrian army fired on protesters, made mass arrests both on dissidents men and boys and tortured them in detention

**Sunni majority and other × Alawite minority (Assad's ethnic group)**

# Who is involved?





GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council, countries participate separately and in different periods.

← Supporting  
 ← Attacking

# Who is involved?

## Domestic actors

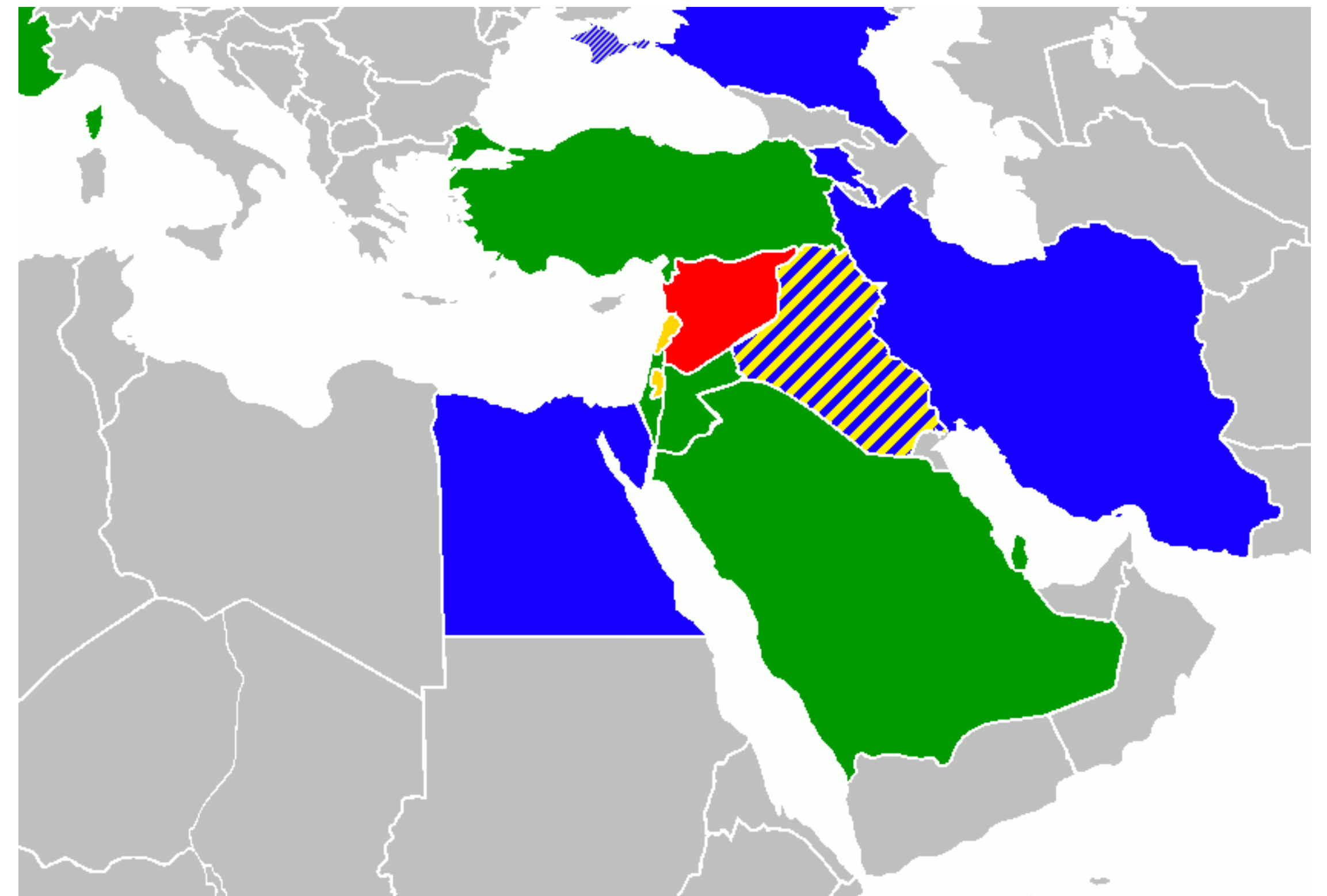
- Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Armed Forces - president Assad
- Free Syrian Army and its Sunni opposition rebel groups allies - opposition
- Kurdish-Arab Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - defectors from SAF, opposition
- Salafi jihadist groups (al-Nusra etc.)
- ISIS + other islamic groups

→ all of these actors are fighting each other

# Who is involved?

## Foreign actors

- Iran + Russia + Hezbollah support the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Armed Forces
- USA + UK + France + Turkey support the Free Syrian Army
- USA support materially, financially and logistically the Syrian Democratic Forces
- The U.S.-led international coalition is fighting against ISIS



- Countries that support the Syrian government
- Countries that support Syrian rebels
- Countries that are divided in their support

# Refugee crisis

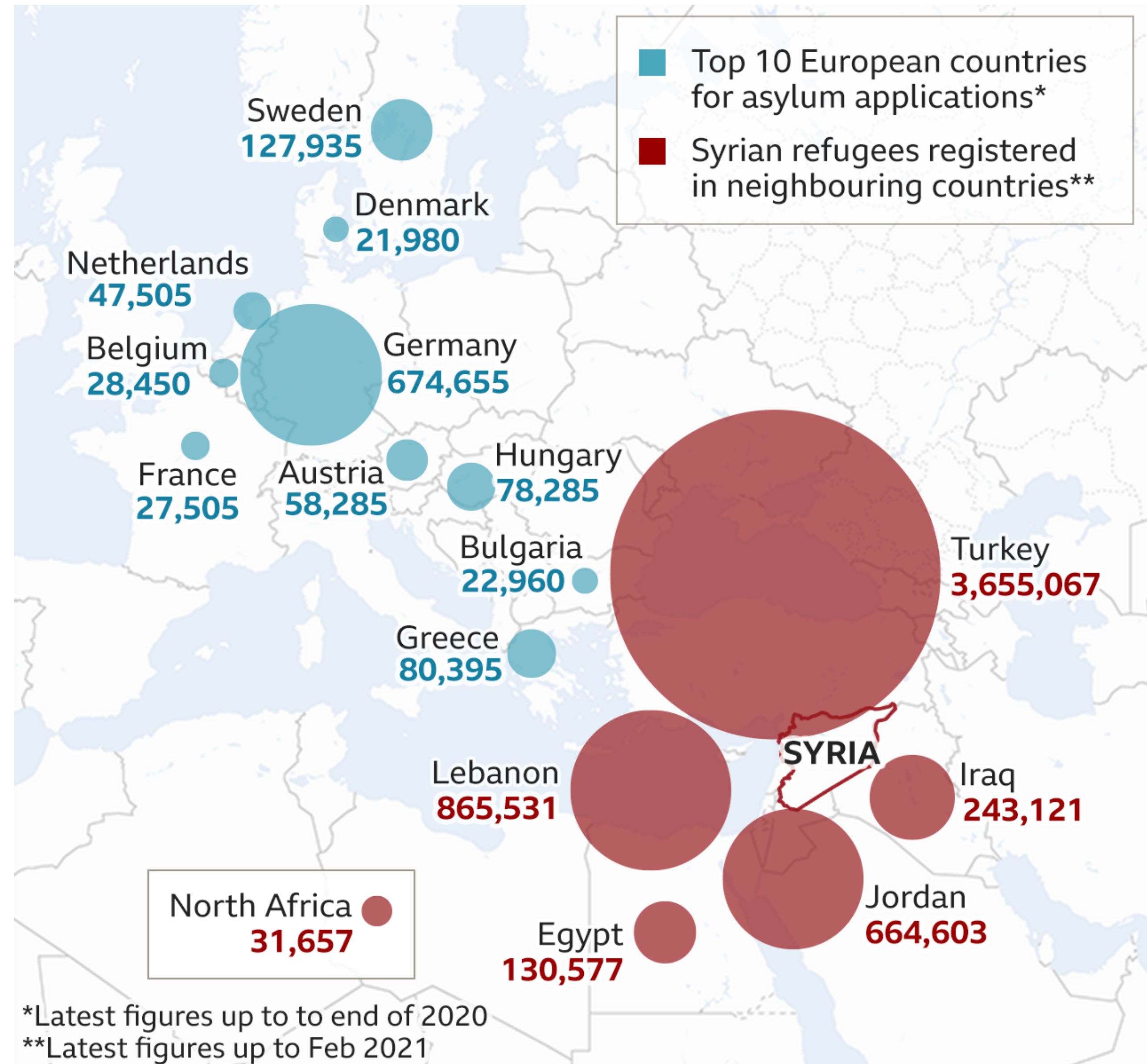
The actual result of this war



# Refugee crisis

- More than half of population has been displaced - prewar Syria 22 mil. citizens
- 6 milion displaced internally
- 6 milion displaced internationally
- Most of them fled to neighbor countries - Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey
- More than 1 milion journeyed to Europe
- UN called this the largest migrant and refugee crisis since WW II.

## Where have all the Syrian refugees gone?



Source: Eurostat / UNHCR

# Recent development

10 years on

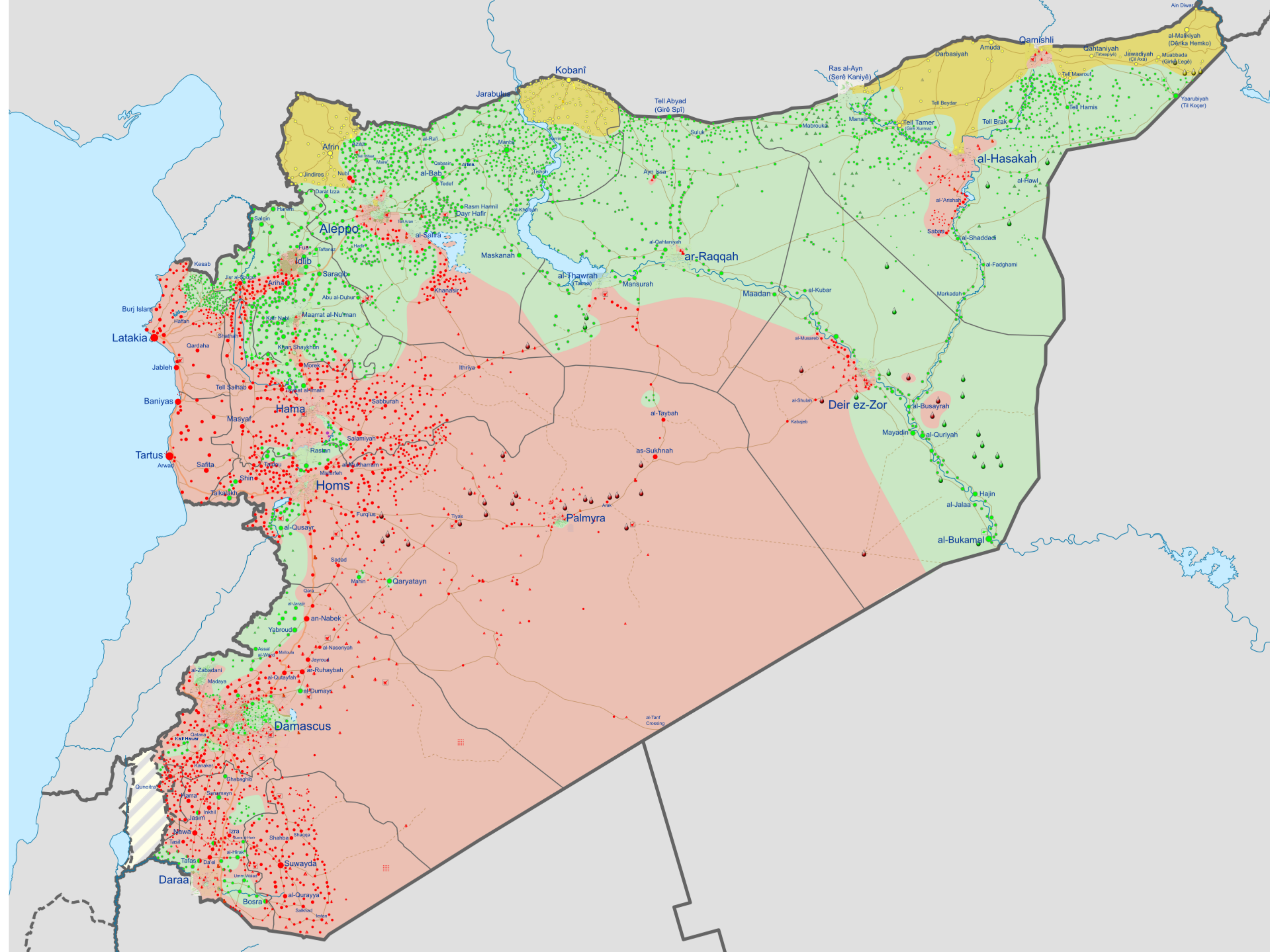


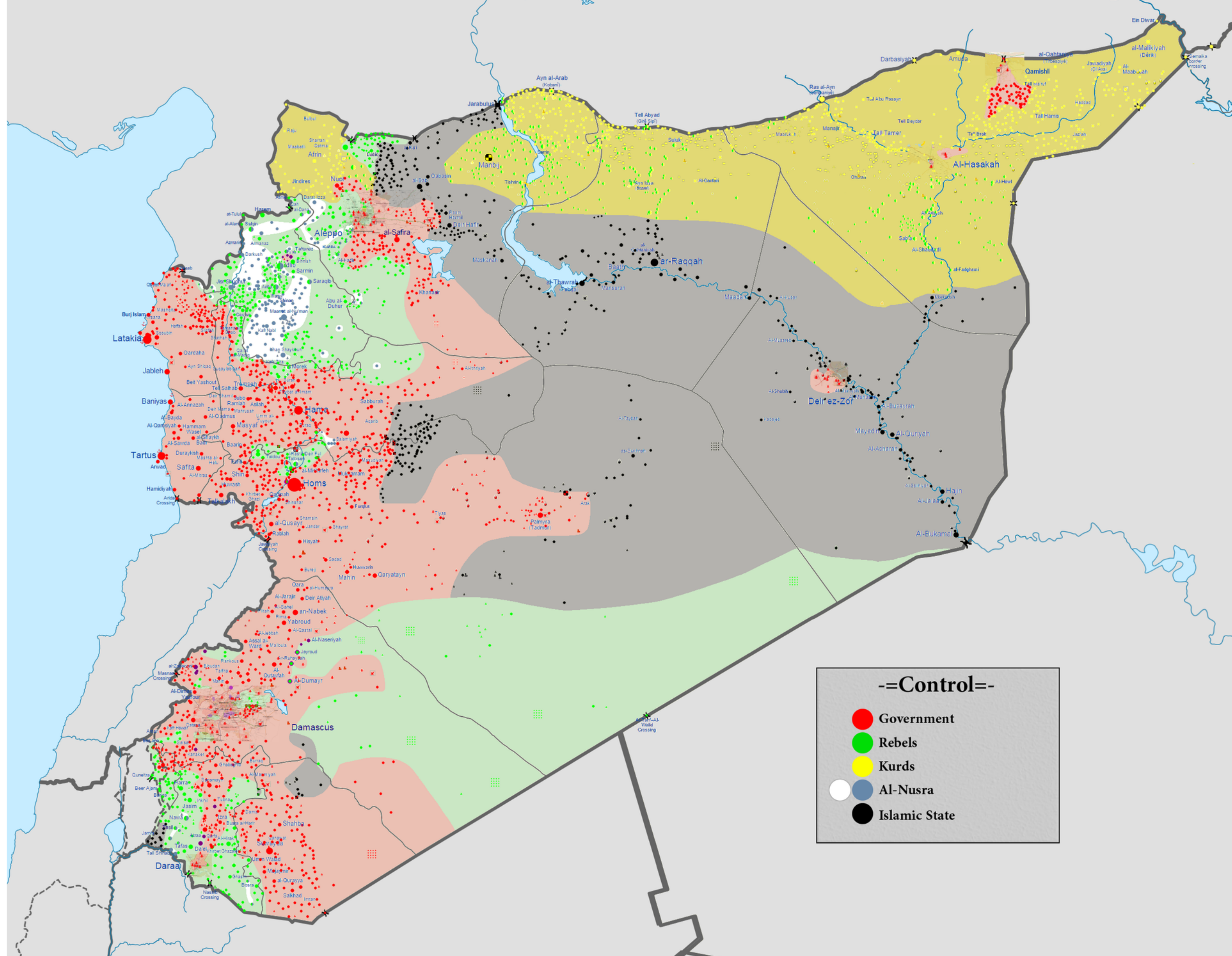


# Recent development

10 years on

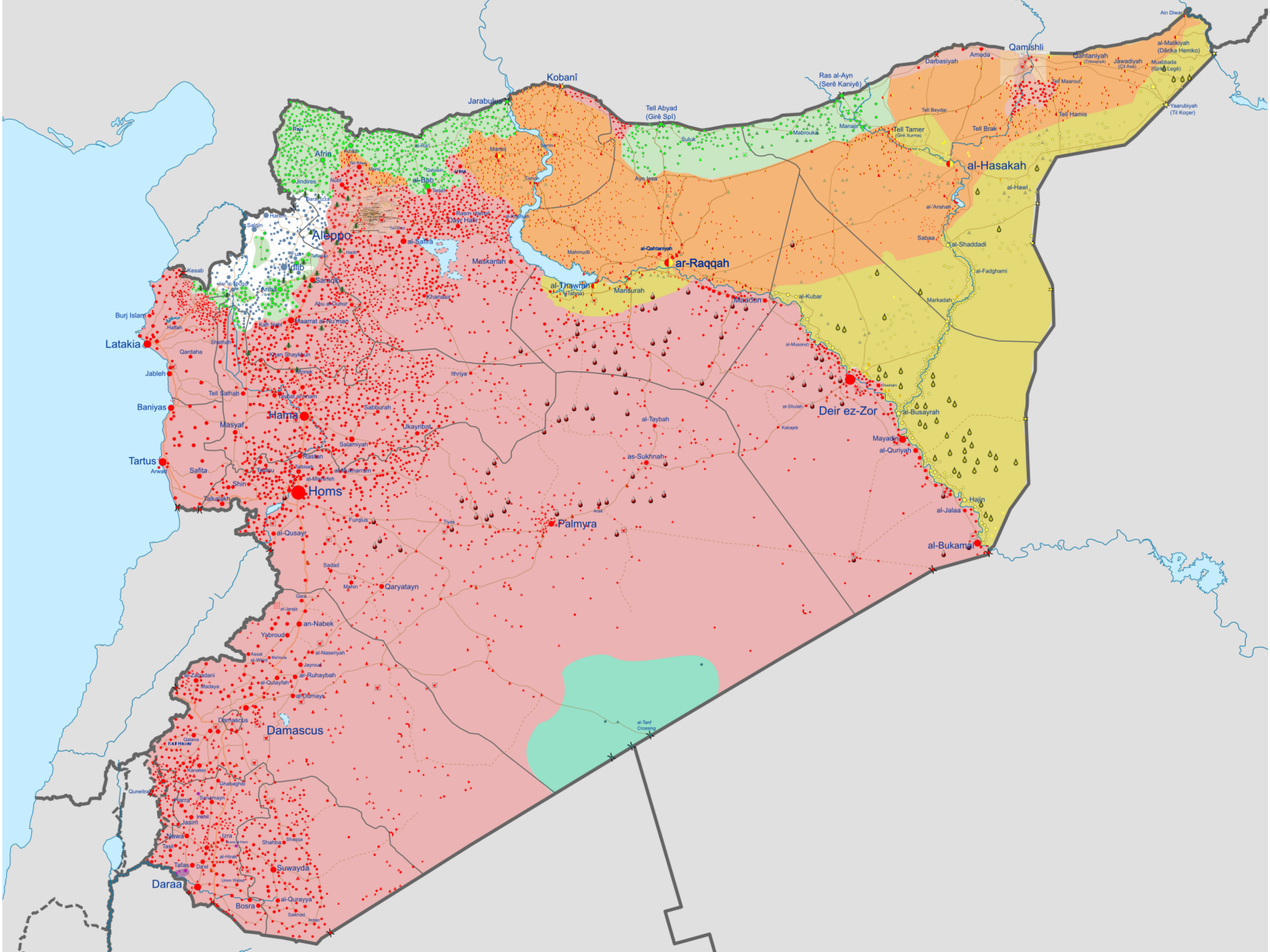
- 10 years on Syria is still in the low-intense conflict, political instability and economic disorder → more than 80 % of the population lives in poverty
- 2020 - cease-fire between Government and Turkey in the northwest Syria scaled down violence
- Syria is facing international sanctions from USA (Ceasar Act) and diplomatic problems
- 2021 - foreign actors (Iran, Russia, Turkey, Qatar,...) started with negotiations to resolve Syrian crisis
- May 2021 - Bashar al'Assad was re-elected President of Syria for another 7 years





**==Control==**

- Government
- Rebels
- Kurds
- Al-Nusra
- Islamic State



# Yemeni civil war



# Background

Yemeni civil war



# Background

## Yemeni civil war

- Until 1960s Zaydis ruled in Yemen - Zaydis then faced discrimination and sunnification
- The Houthis (Shiite islam fraction) fought against sunni-based governments of Yemen - despite several peace agreement were signed
  - 2004 - Houthi's leader Hussein Badreddin al-Houti was killed by military during antigovernment protests
- 2011 Yemeni revolution - the Houthis supported protests calling for the resign of President Ali Abdullah Saleh
- 2012 single-candidate president elections - Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi became president for the next 2 year term

# How did the Yemeni war start?

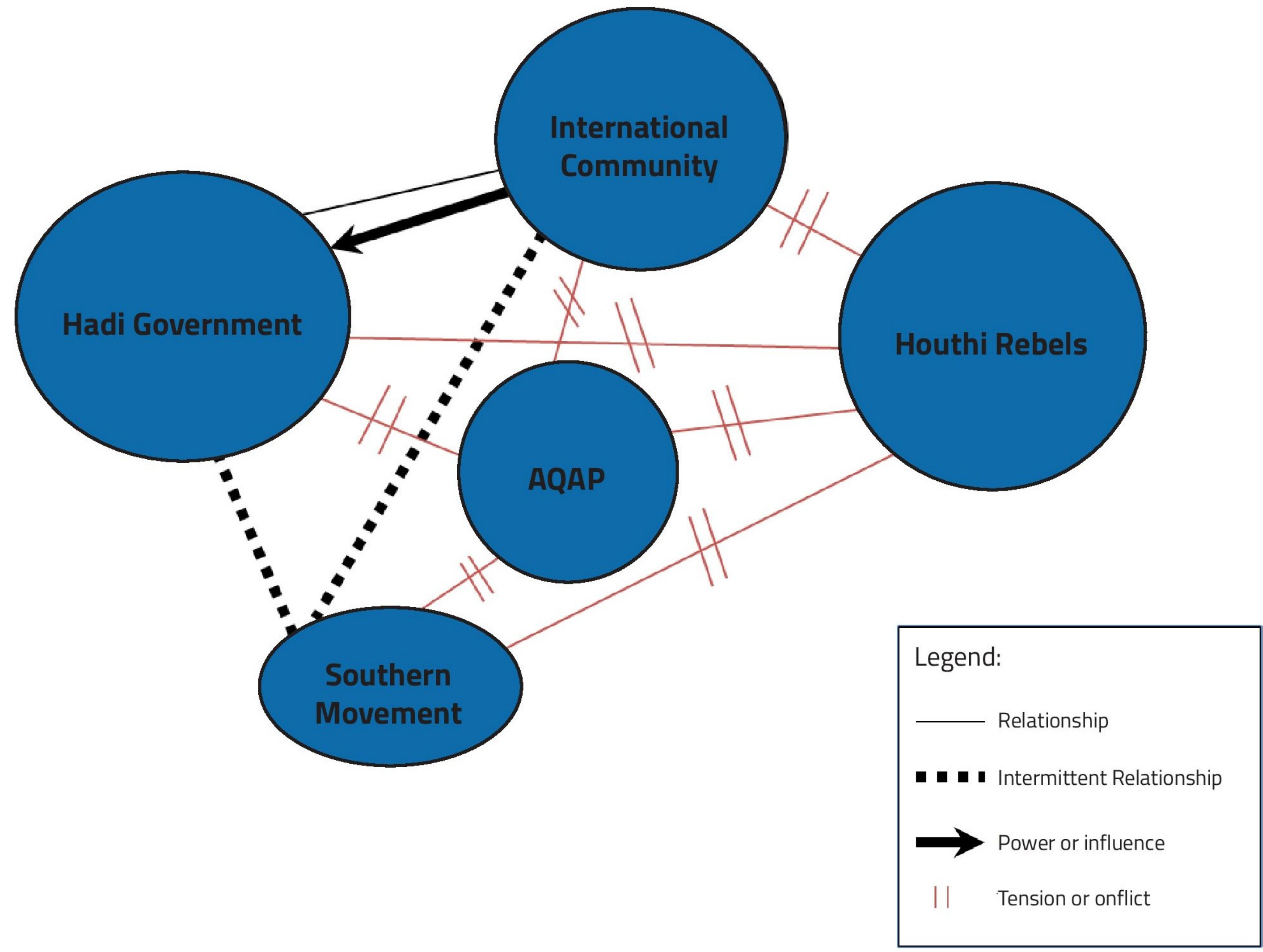




# How did the Yemeni war start?

- President Hadi struggled with Yemen's problems - attack by jihadists, separatists, corruption, unemployment, lack of food and strong loyalty to Mr Saleh
- September 2014 - the Houthis took over the capital city Sanaa
- January 2015 - the fall of Hadi's government
  - Hadi fled the country - in September 2015 returned to Aden
- The Houthis allied with military forces loyal to Saleh to gain influence over Yemen
- The Houthis formed The Supreme Political Council in 2016 to be claimed as a Yemen's government
- December 2017 - Saleh broke alliance with the Houthis and started fighting them → Saleh was killed two days after

# Who is involved?



# Who is involved?

## Domestic actors

- The Houthi movement - Shiite rebels, Iranian proxy?
- President's Hadi government
- Southern Movement (Southern Transitional Council) - former allies of the Houthis
- Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

→ all of these actors are fighting each other

# Who is involved?

## Foreign actors

- Iran - the Houthi's primary international backer (military support, weapon support)
- Saudi Arabia + a coalition of Sunni-majority Arab states - support President Hadi
- USA, France, Germany, UK - supporting Saudi-led coalition
- USA fighting against Al-Qaeda - counterterrorism programs
- United Arab Emirates - supporting the Southern Movement
  
- Iran × Saudi Arabia proxy war?

# Human crisis



# Human crisis

- Around 233,000 people were killed - 131,000 from hunger, lack of health service,...
- More than 10,000 children were killed
- Struggling with ongoing famine - in 2018 UN claimed that 13 million people face starvation
- Spreading diseases - cholera, Covid
- UN says it's the worst world's humanitarian disaster



# Recent development

7 years on



# Recent development

7 years on

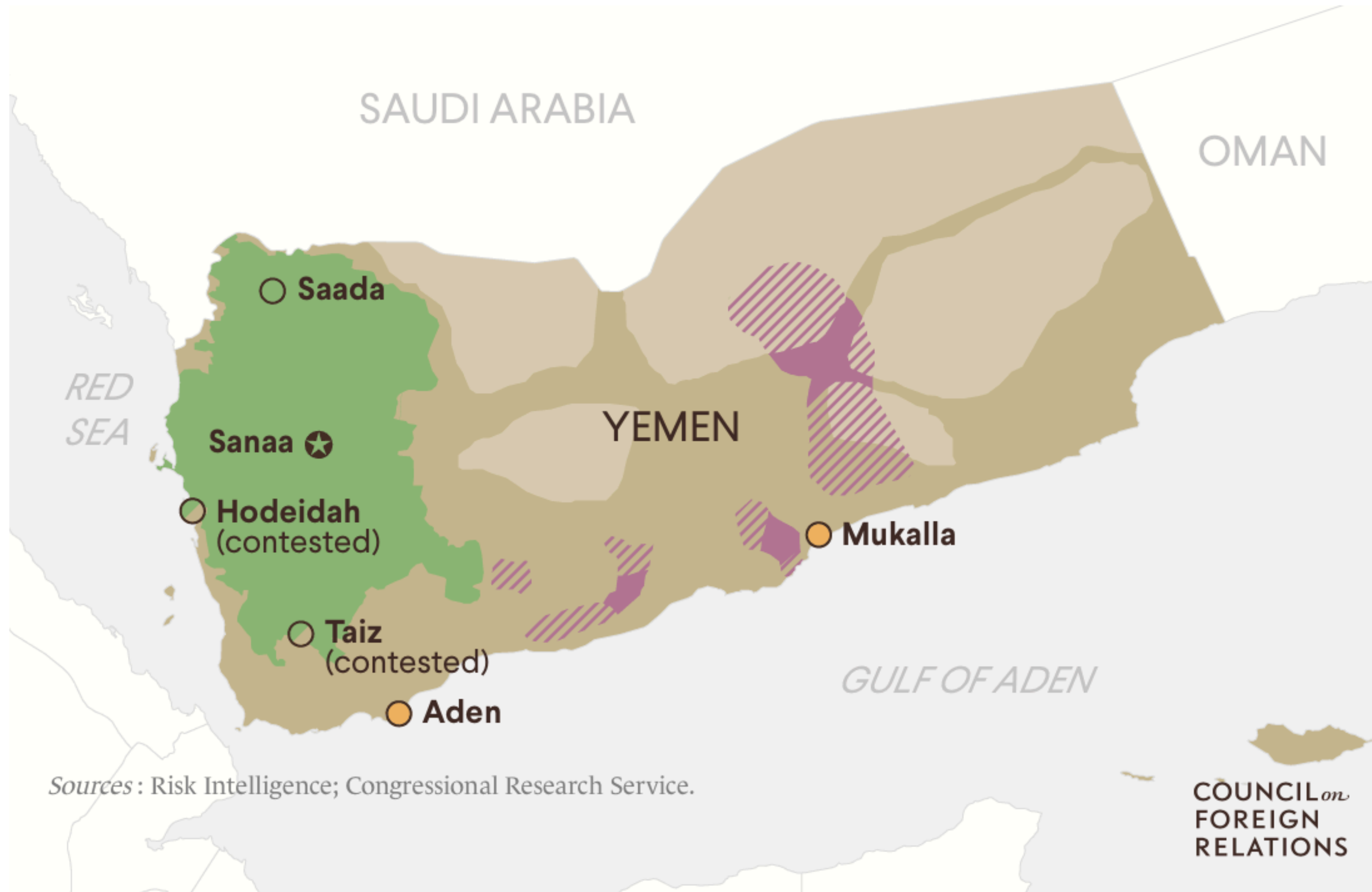
- 2018 - Southern Transitional Council ousted Hadi loyalists from Aden
- March 2019 - US Congress voted to end US support in Yemen, however President Trump vetoed it
- US President Joe Biden announced a freeze on arms sales to their allies in Yemen - support to United Arab Emirates continues, support to Saudi Arabia stopped
- 2021 - Houthis attacks in Saudi Arabia targeting oil tankers, facilities and airports → Saudi Arabia increased airstrikes targeting Sanaa
- The conflict is still active with no successful peace negotiations



# Yemen's Front Lines

Territorial control and influence as of February 2021

- Government control
- Government influence
- Southern Transitional Council control
- Houthi control
- Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) control
- ▨ AQAP influence



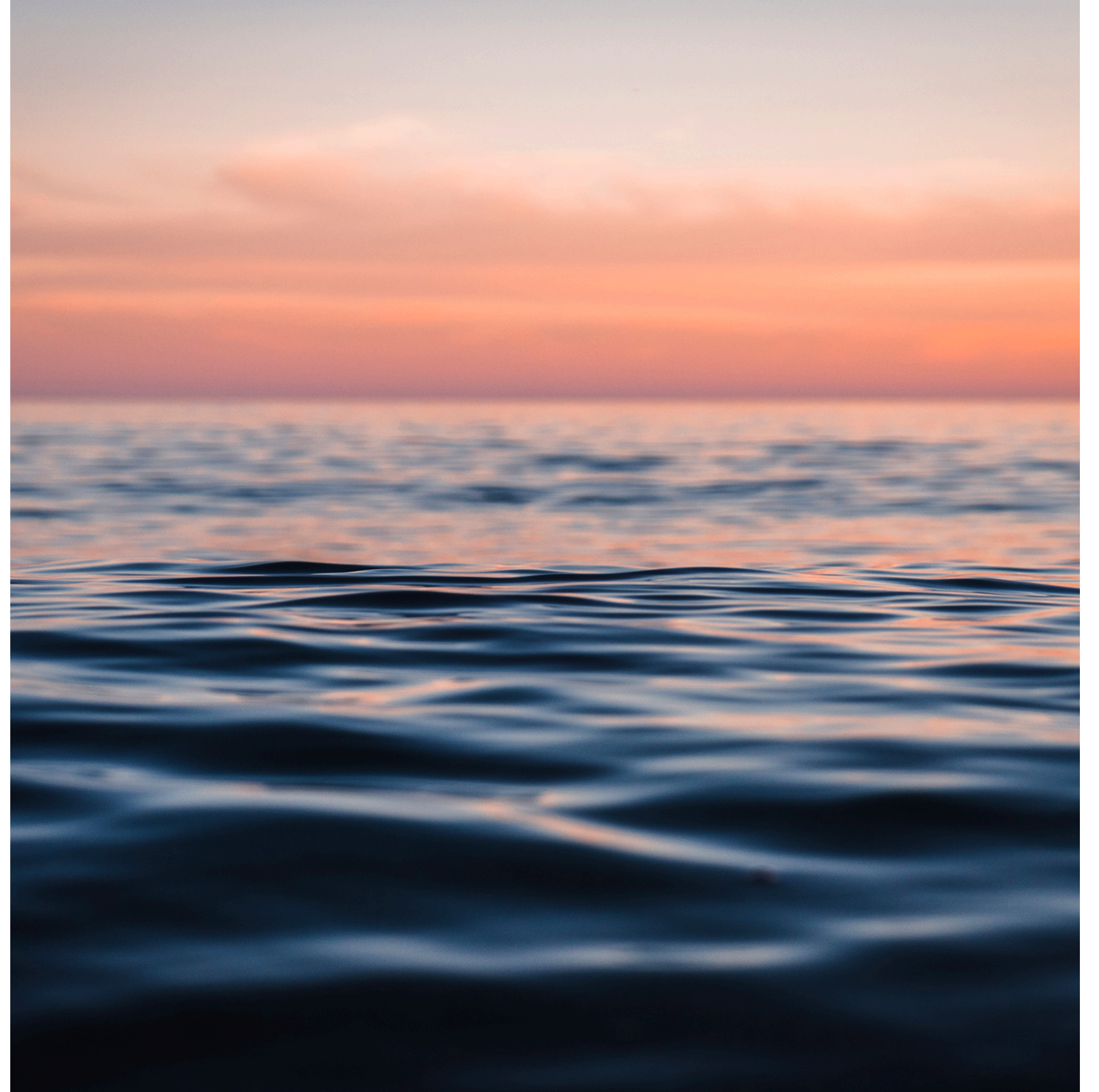
Sources: Risk Intelligence; Congressional Research Service.

COUNCIL *on*  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

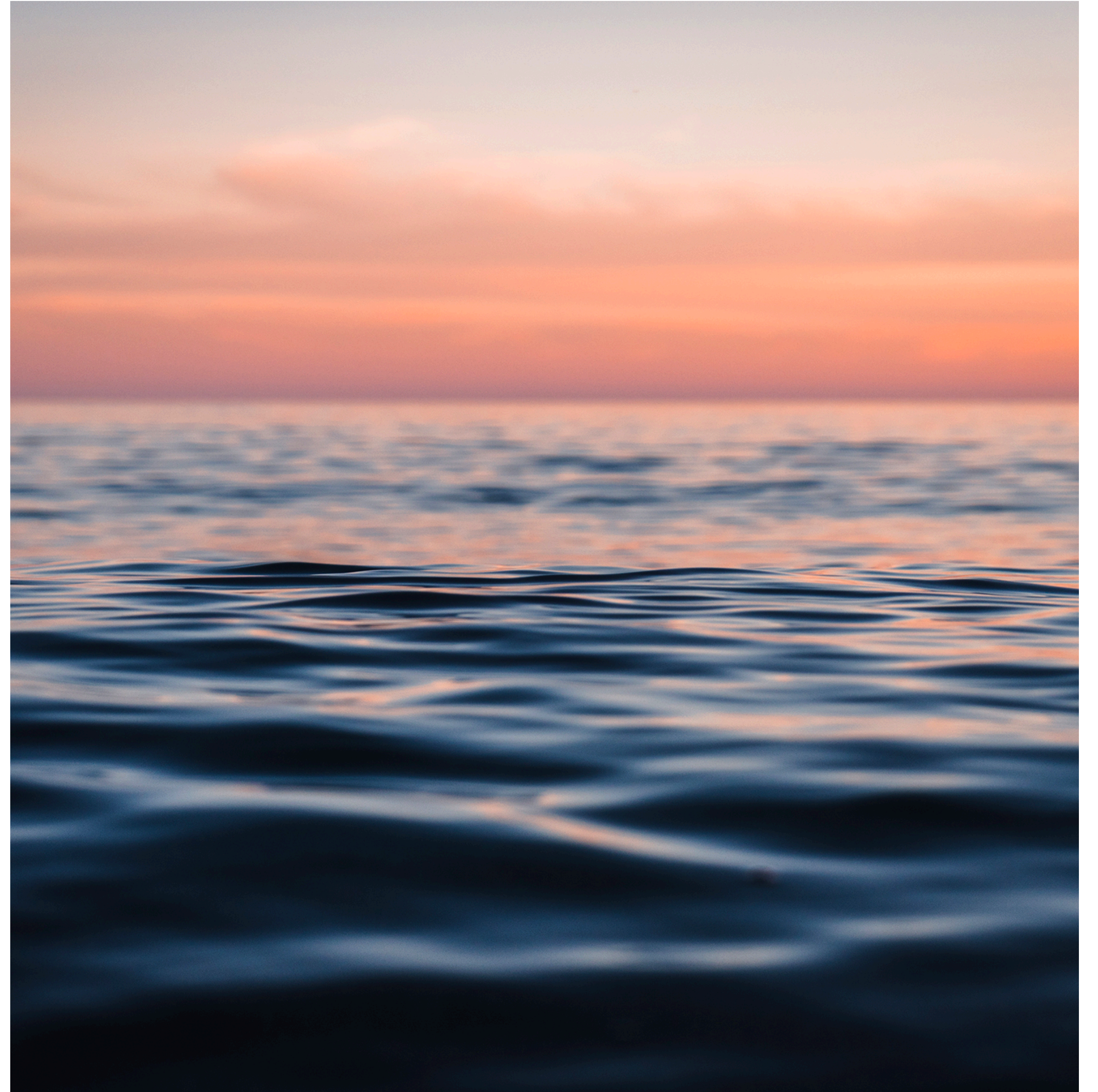
# Iraqi civil war



# How Iraqi war began?

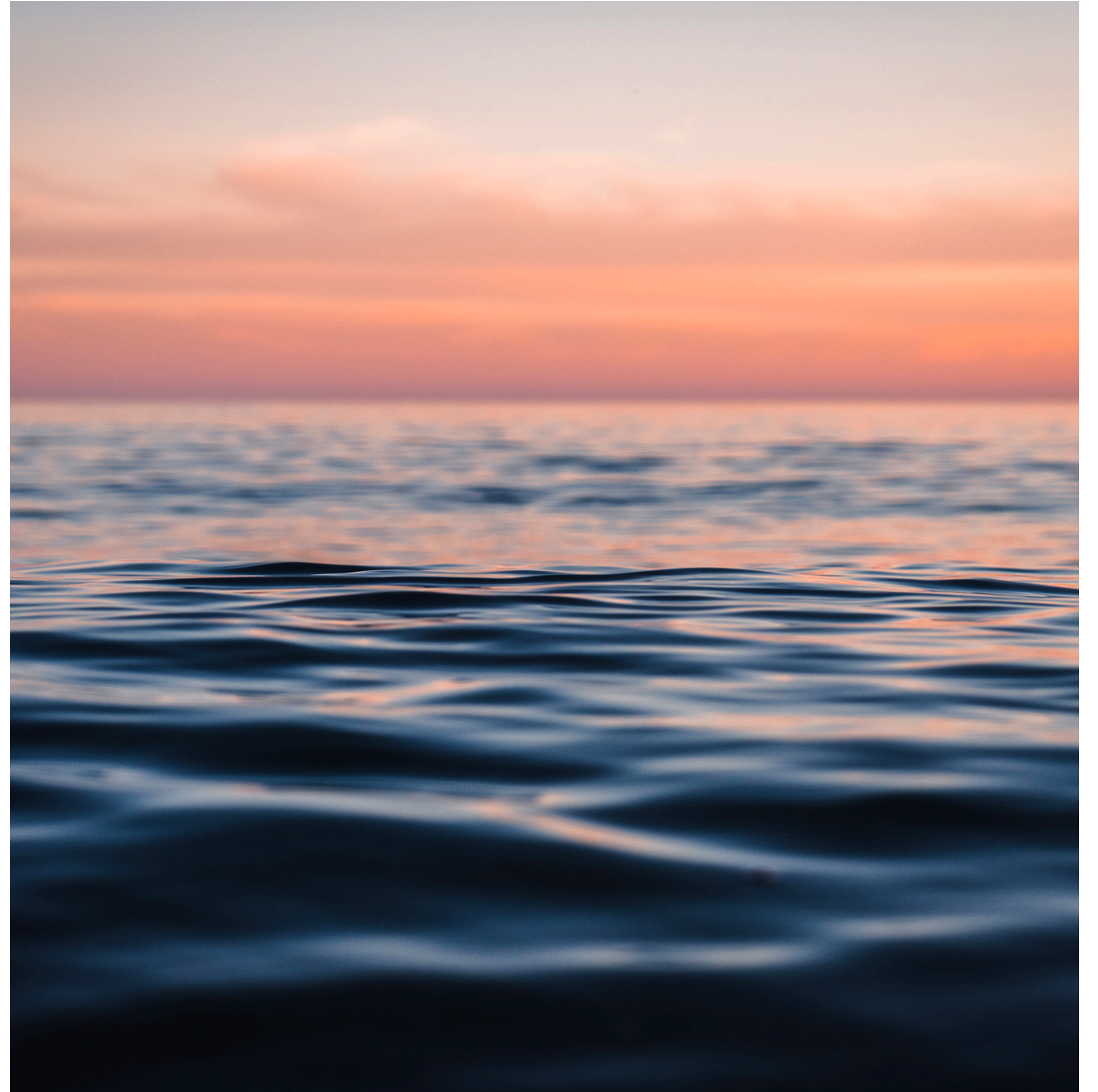


**Who was involved?**



**What is the result?**

**Is the war really over?**



# Libyan civil war



# Background



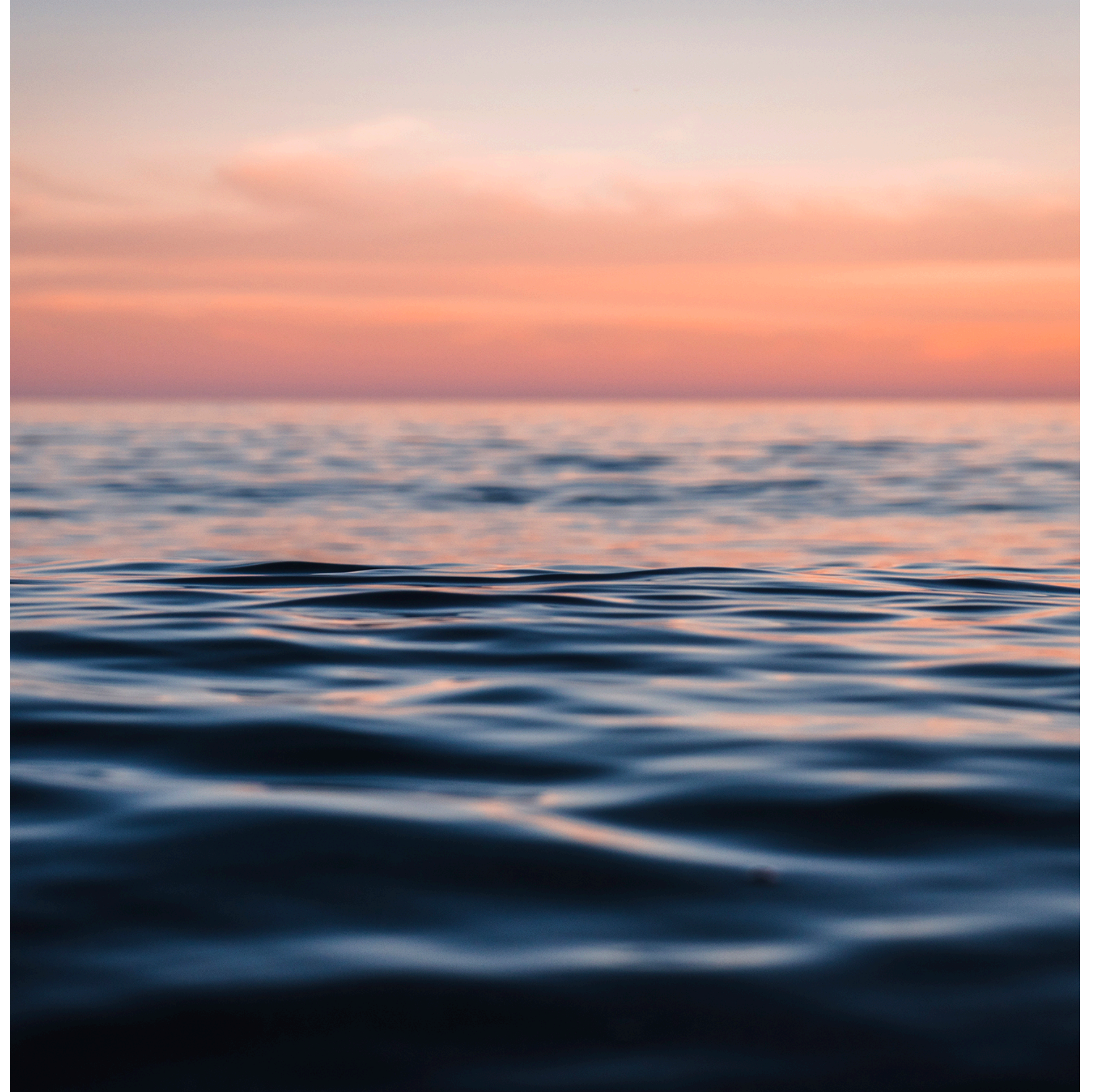
# Background

## Libyan civil war

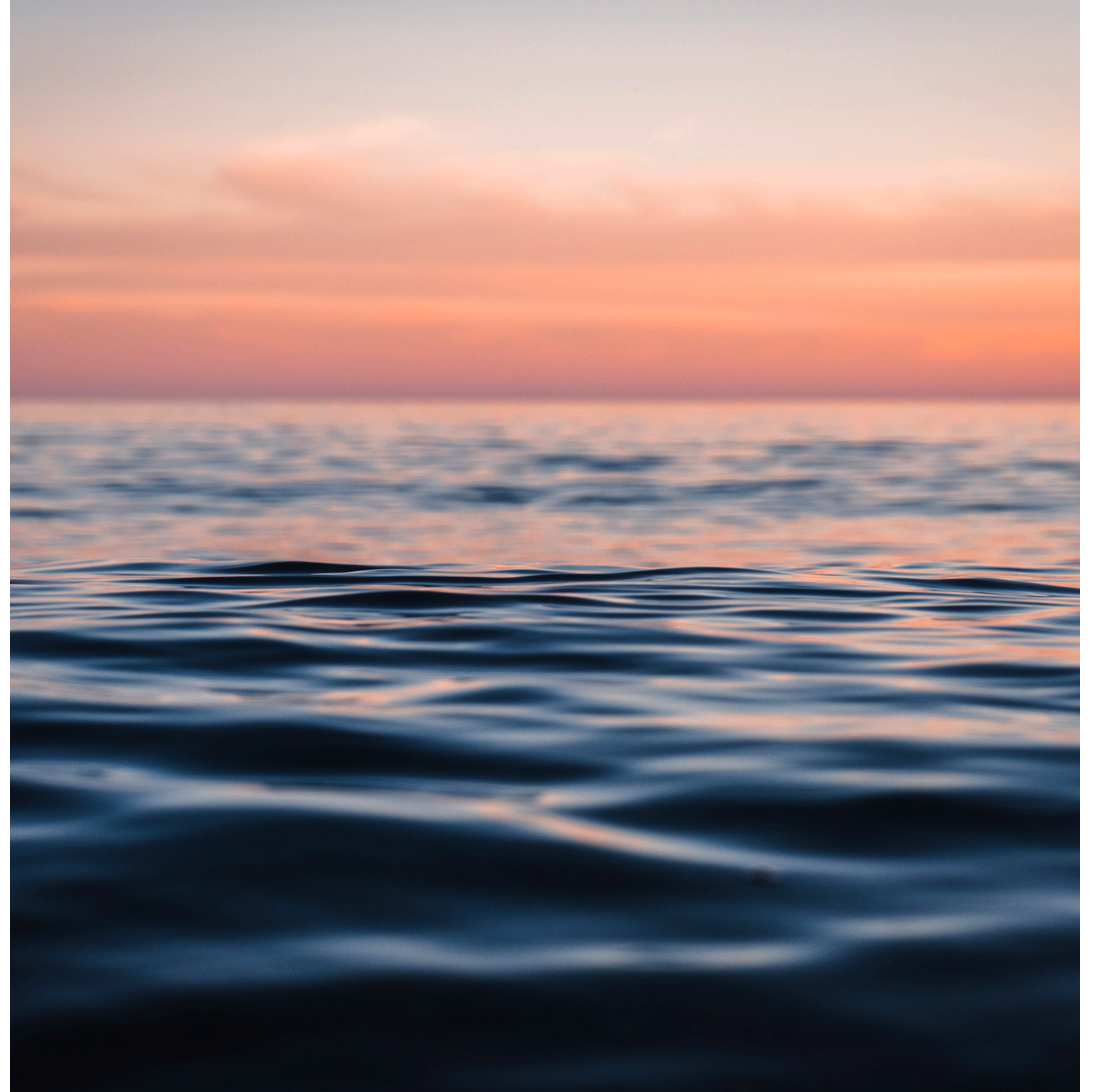
- 1969 - the Free Officers group deposed Libyan King Idris with Muammar Gaddafi in the lead
- 1970 - Gaddafi became the head of Libya, withdrew Constitution
- From 1969 standards of living has highly increased
- 1975 - Gaddafi published his manifesto The Green Book
- 1977 - Muammar Gaddafi officially resigned, however he was still in power
- Gaddafi was considered to be “a master of tactical maneuvering”



# **First Libyan civil war**



# **Second Libyan civil war**



**What is the result?**

