



# INTERPRETING THE ARAB SPRING: CAN DEMOCRACY WORK IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

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*Middle East Crossroads*

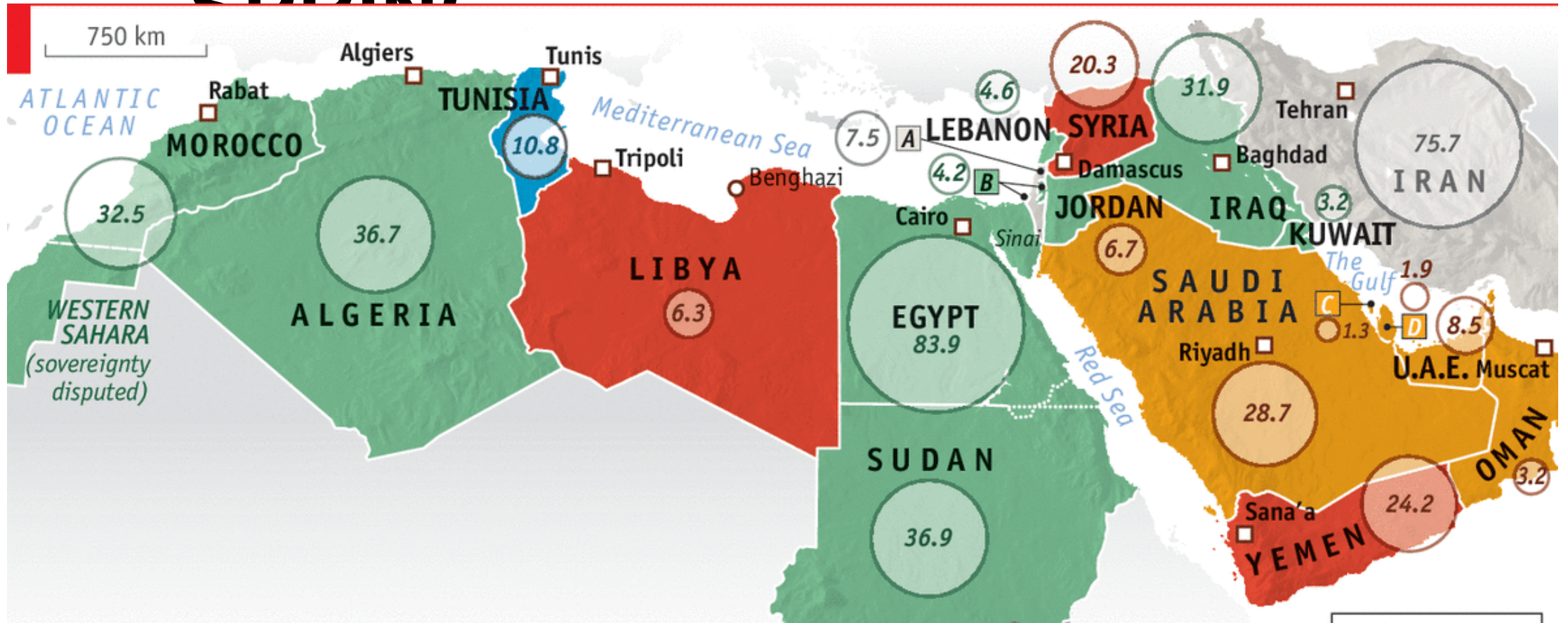
# ARAB SPRING

- December 2010: Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia → protest against president Bin Ali's government → spread to almost all other Arab countries (a significant surprise for the whole world).
- Various reasons for the protests: economic troubles, difficult social situation, corruption, limited human and political right.
- Role of the new media and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.





# SITUATION AFTER ARAB SPRING



**Country status of selected Arab countries (January 2016)**

■ Democracy   
 ■ Autocracy/restricted democracy   
 ■ Full autocracy   
 ■ Failed state/civil war   
 ■ Non Arab

Sources: UN; *The Economist*

○ Population at onset of Arab spring 2011 estimate, m

A: ISRAEL  
 B: PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES  
 C: SAUDI ARABIA  
 D: QATAR

# ARAB SPRING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Initial strengthening of civil society and democracy, which in most cases did not last (the most successful transition to democracy in Tunisia).
- Stable but often very brutal autocracies plunged into chaos (Syria, Yemen, Libya), or the exchange of one dictatorial regime for another (Egypt).
- In the ensuing chaos, radicals have been strengthening.
- The power of the USA is weakening, it slightly strengthens the influence of Russia (Syria), China, the regional power Turkey is trying to become a local hegemon.
- Refugee waves, humanitarian disasters, devastation or stagnation of economies, rising inequality and poverty.





# SITUATION AFTER ARAB SPRING

- A stable but often very brutal autocracy sinks into chaos (Syria, Yemen, Libya) or the resurgence of autocracy (Egypt).
- In the ongoing chaos, radicals of all kinds are strengthening - from secularists (clan warlords in Syria or Kurdish militias) to religious extremists (ISIS, An-Nusra).
- Weakening US power, slightly strengthening influence of Russia (Syria), China, regional power Turkey is trying to become a local hegemon.
- Response of Europe?



# WAR IN SYRIA (since 2011)

- March 2011 demonstrations against Bashar Assad's regime.
- Bashar Assad decide to suppress the uprisings with the help of the army → the conflict escalated in regular civil war.
- Massive damages: more than 470,000 death, more 3 millions of refugees – huge violation of the human rights (torture, political prisoners, weapons of massive destruction).
- Syria has become the battlefield of the great powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey and others.





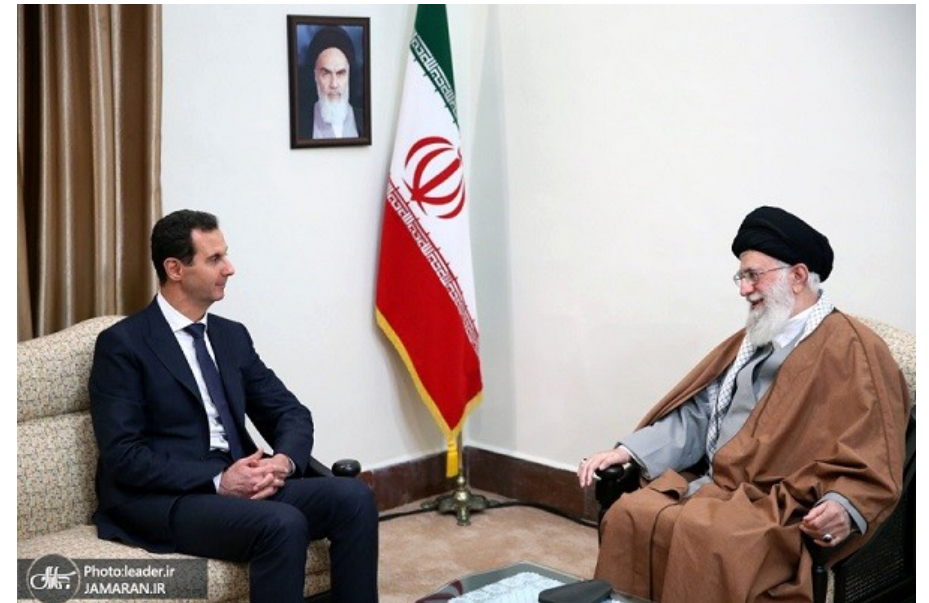
# WAR IN SYRIA (since 2011)

- **Assad's supporters:**

- Syrian government forces.
- Hizballah.
- Russia, Iraq, Iran.

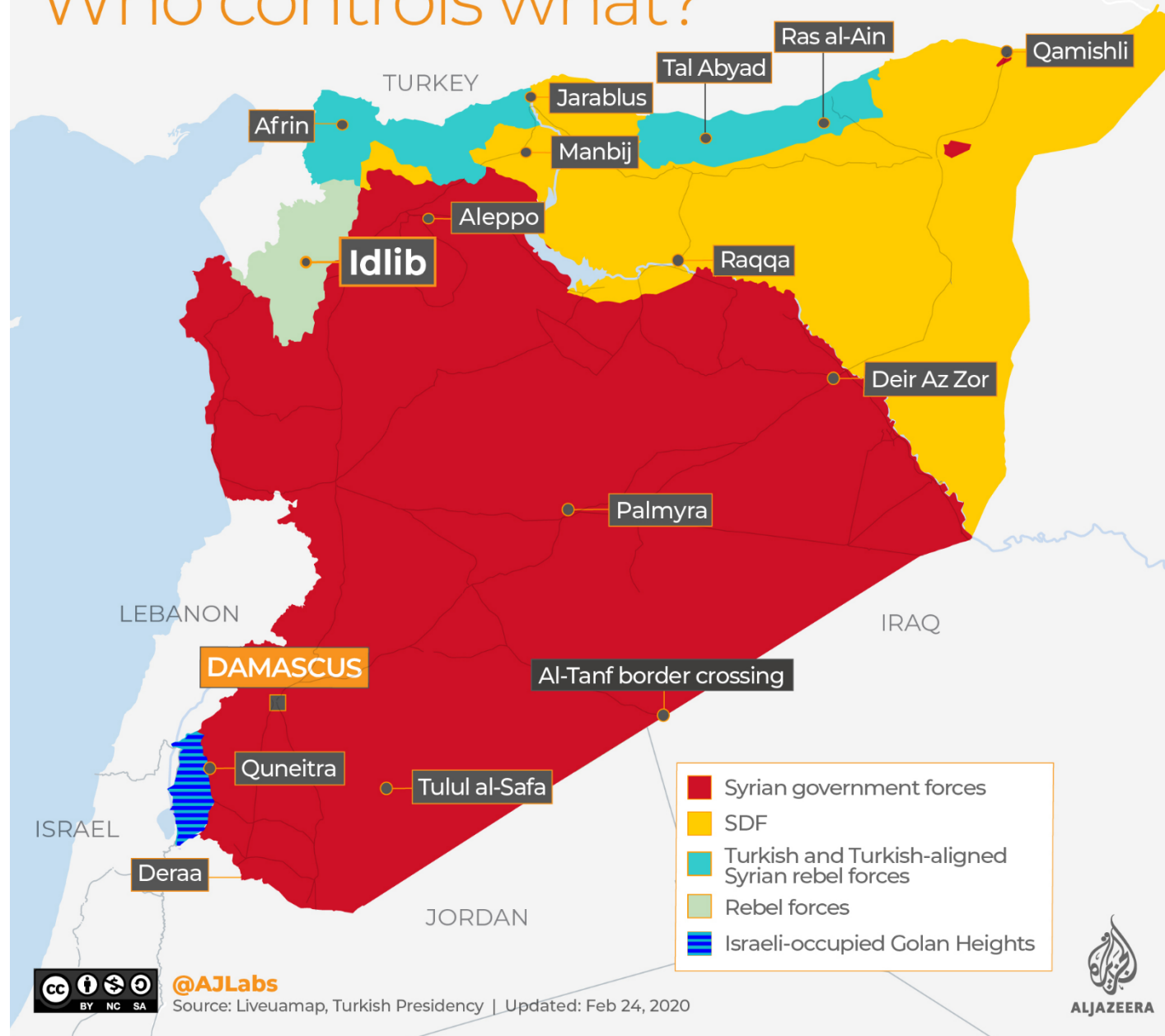
- **Opposition:**

- National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces
- Islamic state.
- An-Nusra Front (close connections to al-Kaida).
- Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia.



# SYRIA

## Who controls what?





***CAN DEMOCRACY WORK IN THE MIDDLE EAST?***

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**