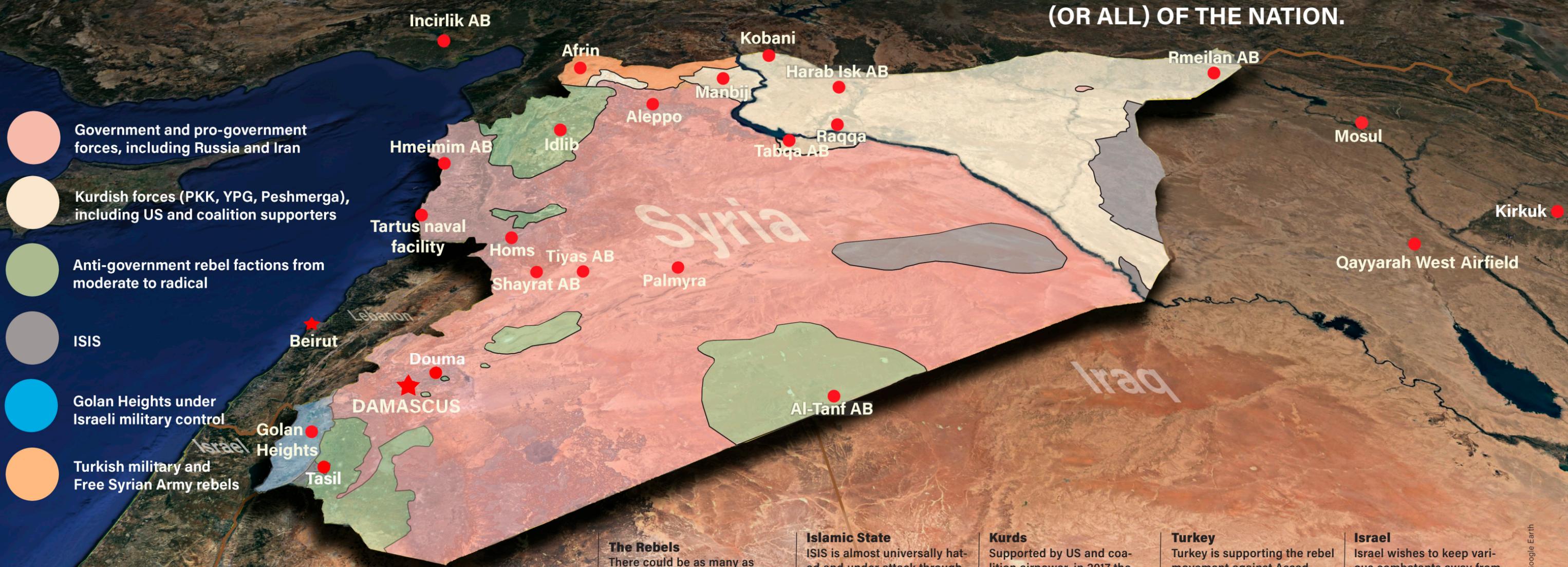


SHIFTING LINES IN SYRIA

THE SEVEN-YEAR CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA INVOLVES MANY FACTIONS BATTING FOR OR AGAINST PRESIDENT BASHAR ASSAD'S SYRIAN GOVERNMENT (AND EACH OTHER) FOR CONTROL OF PART (OR ALL) OF THE NATION.

-  Government and pro-government forces, including Russia and Iran
-  Kurdish forces (PKK, YPG, Peshmerga), including US and coalition supporters
-  Anti-government rebel factions from moderate to radical
-  ISIS
-  Golan Heights under Israeli military control
-  Turkish military and Free Syrian Army rebels



The Government
 Assad's brutal regime is supported by his military, pro-government militias, and long-time supporter Russia. The Russian military has several air bases in Syria plus the Tartus naval facility, a strategic warm-water port on the Mediterranean Sea. Iran also supports Assad, supplying troops from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and from its allied Hezbollah faction in Lebanon.

The Rebels
 There could be as many as 1,000 opposition groups fighting against the Assad regime for control of Syria. They range from small local militias to large brigades fielding thousands of troops. These groups span the political spectrum—from no particular ideology, to moderate, to hardline Islamist elements.

Islamic State
 ISIS is almost universally hated and under attack throughout Syria. Taking advantage of government weakness, in 2014 it swept through much of the country, committing numerous atrocities. ISIS was stopped and rolled back by a sustained US-led air campaign and a Kurdish-led ground war. A few small pockets of ISIS control still exist close to the Iraqi border and near the Golan Heights.

Kurds
 Supported by US and coalition airpower, in 2017 the Kurds captured much of the northern Syrian territory previously held by ISIS. Turkey, however, views the Kurds as a national security threat and—along with Syrian rebel allies—it has attacked Kurdish positions in northern Syria. The US trains and supplies the Kurds. It is also a NATO ally with Turkey and has a key air base at Incirlik

Turkey
 Turkey is supporting the rebel movement against Assad and the destruction of the Islamic State. It also supports The Free Syrian Army, a loosely organized collection of brigades, militias, and rebel groups. Turkey is also attempting to stop or reverse Kurdish territorial gains to prevent the creation of an autonomous region along its border with Syria.

Israel
 Israel wishes to keep various combatants away from the occupied Golan Heights and Israeli territory. Israel captured Syria's Golan, a strategic high ground, in the 1967 Six-Day War. It annexed the territory in 1981—a move not recognized by the United States or United Nations. Syrian, rebel, and ISIS fighting continues to rage in neighboring areas.