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DEGLI STUDI
DI TRIESTE

Relazioni Internazionali

A.Y. 2023-24
Week 8

The Traditional Understanding

If we want to understand the past, the present, or especially the future of international politics, we must understand **global environmental issues**.

There are <u>two analytical tools</u> that scholars have constructed to understand problems involving the quality of the natural environment and the sustainability of the world's natural resources.

What are the causal factors that contribute to environmental and natural-resource problems within and between countries?

1. Negative externalities. Economists define 'externalities' as the <u>benefits and costs</u> not reflected in a good's price. Their effect may be felt by the consumer, the producer, or a **third party**.

These externalities can be positive or negative, such as ideas on how to <u>improve a product in the future</u> (positive externality) or <u>pollution</u> (negative externality).

There are two serious issues that arise from negative externalities: **a. unfair**; b. **lack of incentives** to reduce negative externality.

They have the potential to become international issues when the negative forms of such externalities generate <u>harmful effects that are felt by people across borders</u> and create a need for countries to try to mitigate those effects through international action.

2. **Tragedy of the commons.** It is a process by which individual agents acting in their own rational self-interest in exploiting a limited natural resource combine to create a situation catastrophic to all of the individuals (heavy farming and uncontrolled fishing)

Global deforestation. it is the combination of economic self-interests of the individuals and firms clearing the land, and under-regulation by national governments, that drives overharvesting, especially in tropical regions of the world

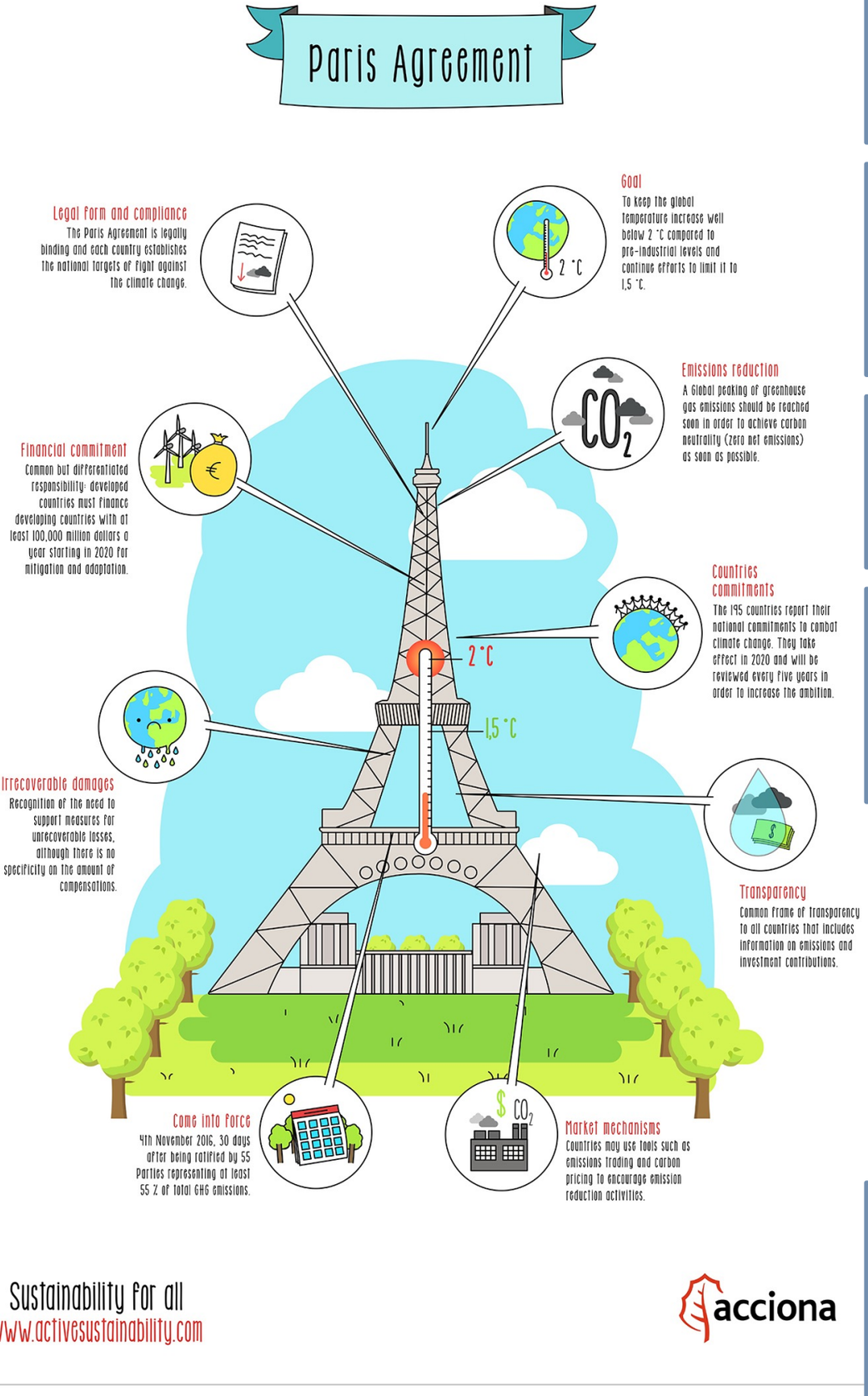
Problems with the Atmosphere. Climate change and **ozone depletion** can each have deleterious consequences for human life, and climate change might even affect the risk of **future conflicts** within and between countries.

The competition between individuals, groups, or countries over **scarce resources** – for example, water, arable land, and diamonds – can contribute to the onset of interstate or civil wars.

Global warming could cause international **migrations of refugees.** Such migrations could induce severe economic, social, and political stress in neighboring countries that receive these refugees, causing an increased risk of civil conflict.

We should avoid **environmental determinism**. The view that stresses in the environment like climate change necessarily and automatically will cause human beings and human communities to react in a particular manner

Whether that stress translates into civil conflict will depend on the answers by the governments.

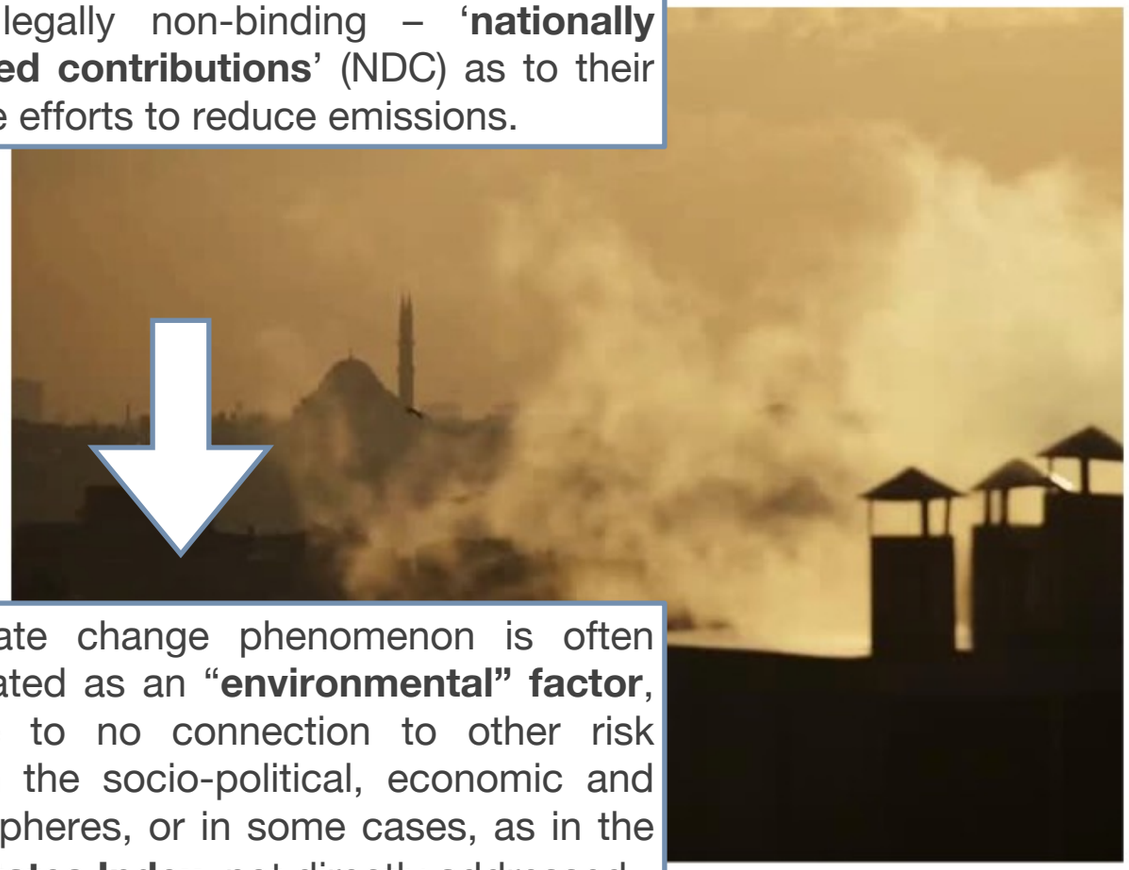


Governments have pursued three basic strategies to address international environment problems: **Unilateral Responses, Bilateral agreements, and Multilateral approaches.**

Paris Agreement. An international environment agreement reached in 2015 in which parties committed on a non-binding basis to act individually and collectively to prevent global warming

By the Paris Agreement governments are not legally obliged to undertake common and binding commitments to reduce carbon emissions so as to prevent global warming.

Instead, they are obliged by virtue of the agreement to announce individual, voluntary – that is, legally non-binding – '**nationally determined contributions**' (NDC) as to their respective efforts to reduce emissions.



The climate change phenomenon is often either treated as an "**environmental" factor**, with little to no connection to other risk factors in the socio-political, economic and security spheres, or in some cases, as in the **Fragile States Index**, not directly addressed.

A new understanding

Several governments— among which the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom — identify climate change as a **national security challenge**.

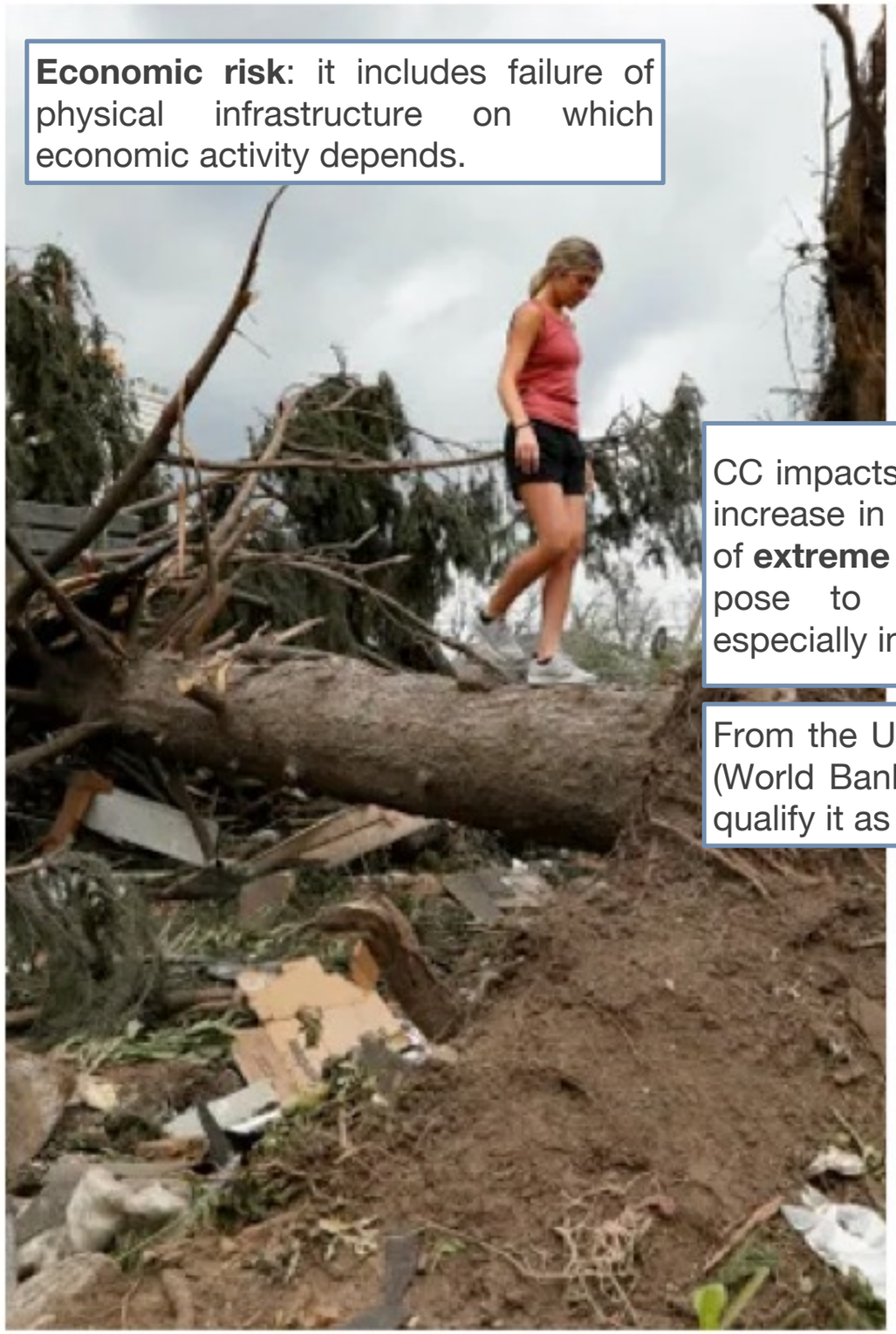
2014: U.S. Department of Defense describes climate change as a "**threat multiplier**" meaning that it may exacerbate other threats to security.

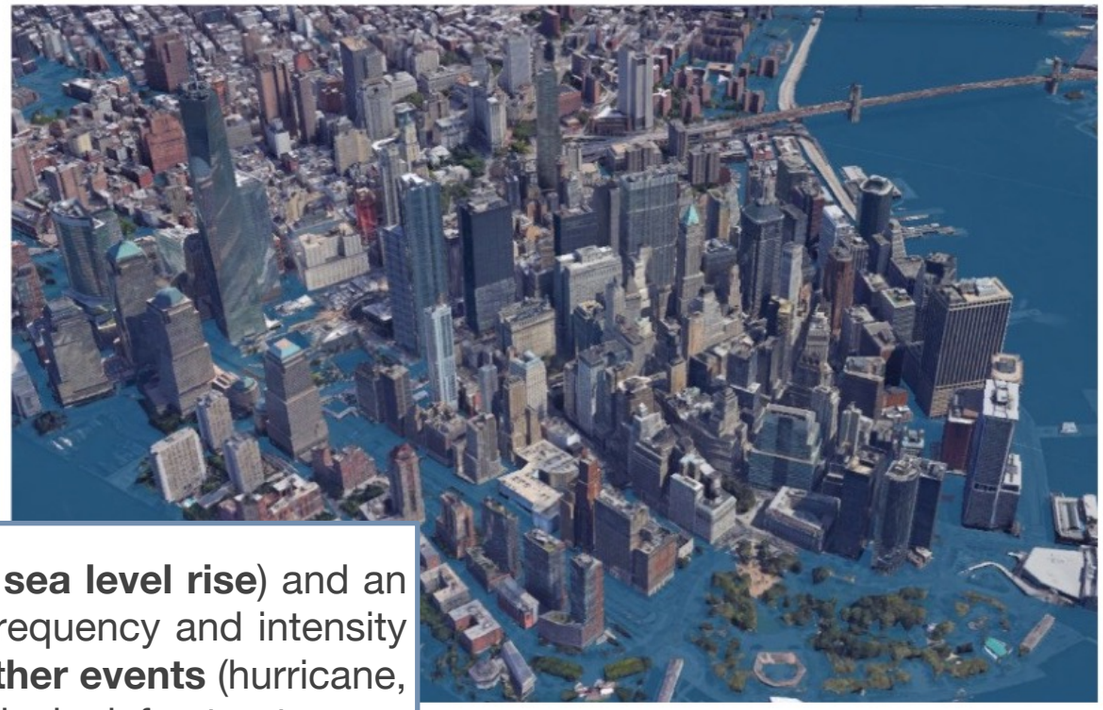
2015: Global Risks Report identified climate change as a "perceived risk, and it ranked CC among the "**top five" perceived global risks**, in terms of "impact" + **link** to food crises, water crises and extreme weather events.

IS perspective CC could be considered as a "threat multiplier" or an "**accelerant of instability**" which essentially means that it **has the potential to exacerbate other drivers of insecurity (water, food, energy)**.

CC is unique in that the risk emanates not from **CC per se**, but from how it **interacts with** these other environmental, economic, social and political factors.

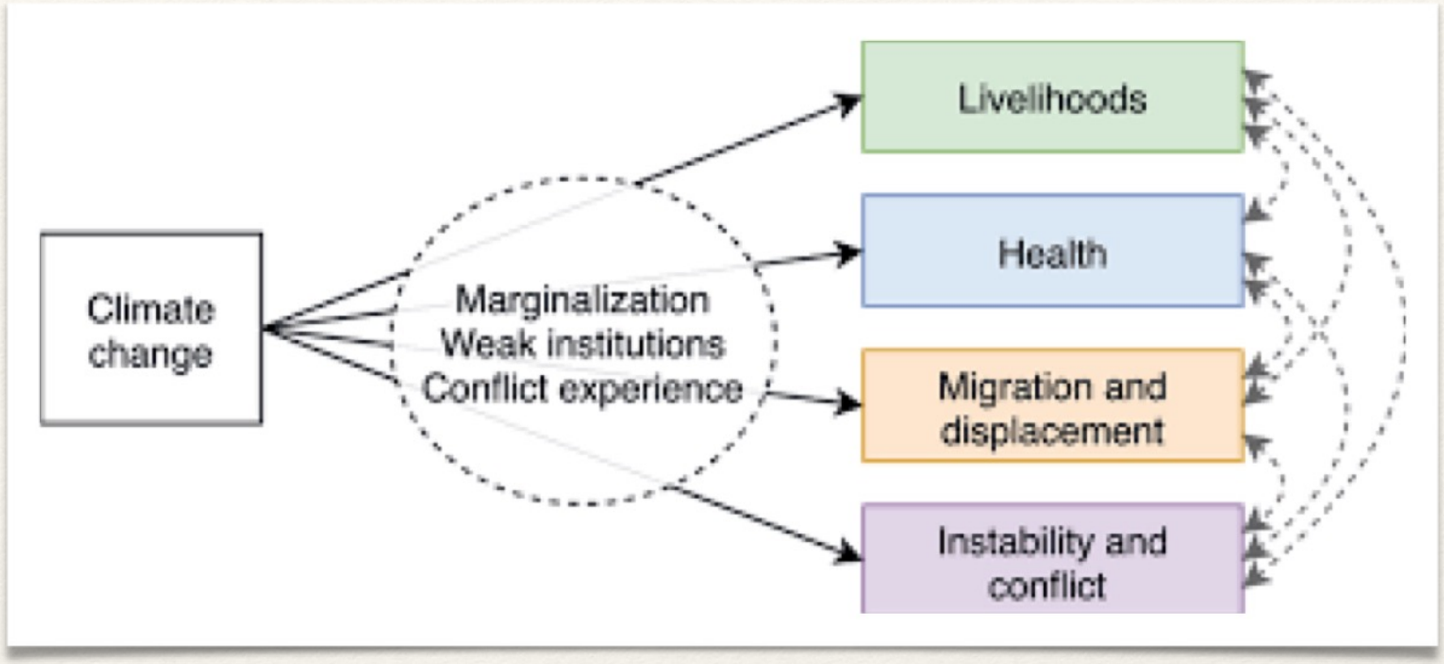
Economic risk: it includes failure of physical infrastructure on which economic activity depends.





CC impacts (i.e. **sea level rise**) and an increase in the frequency and intensity of **extreme weather events** (hurricane, pose to physical infrastructure - especially in coastal areas.

From the United States to Bangladesh (World Bank, 2015) - could very easily qualify it as an "**economic" risk**.

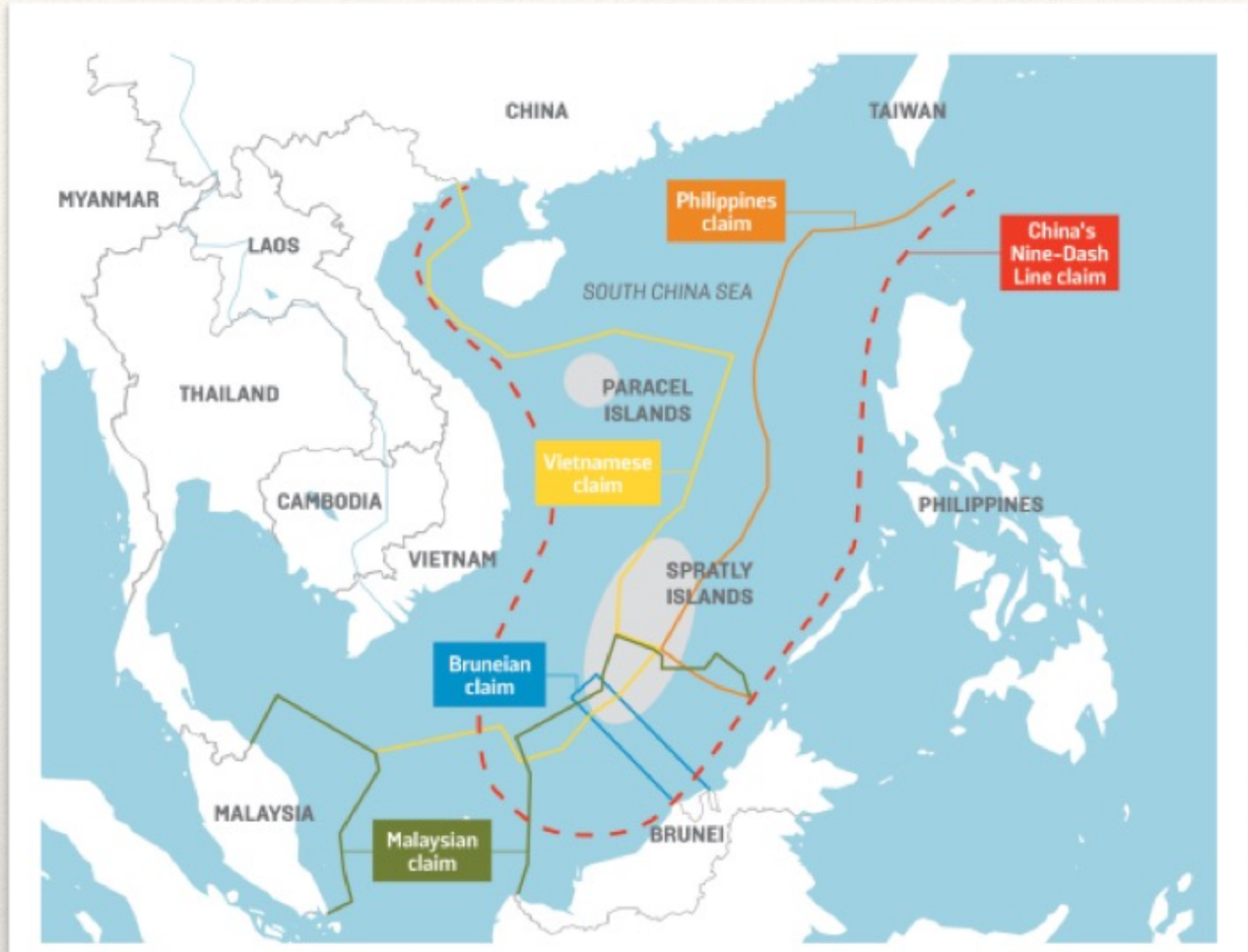


Societal risk: it is broadly defined as “risks related to social stability”.

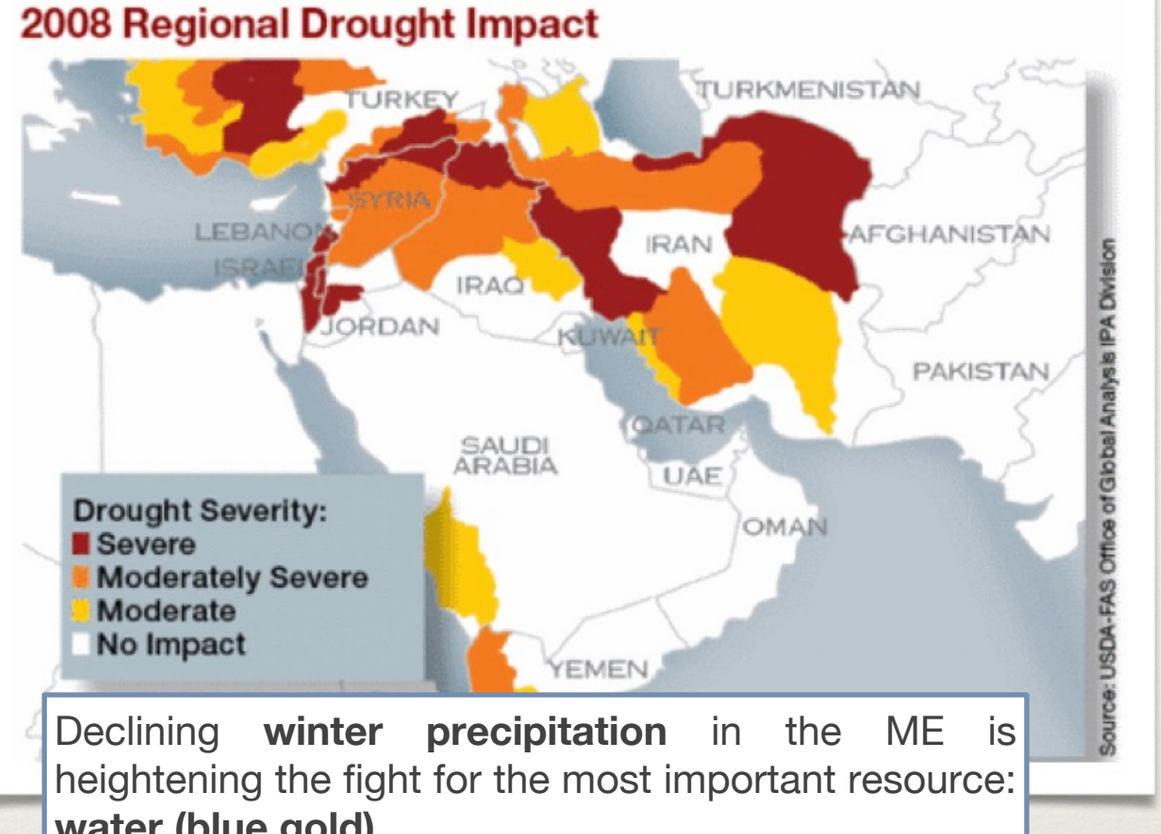
The effects of CC on **food and water** can have significant implications for social stability, including through potentially increasing the likelihood of **internal unrest and conflict.**

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies estimates (2021) that **12.6 mln people** have been internally displaced over the past six months, the **majority due to climate-related disasters.**

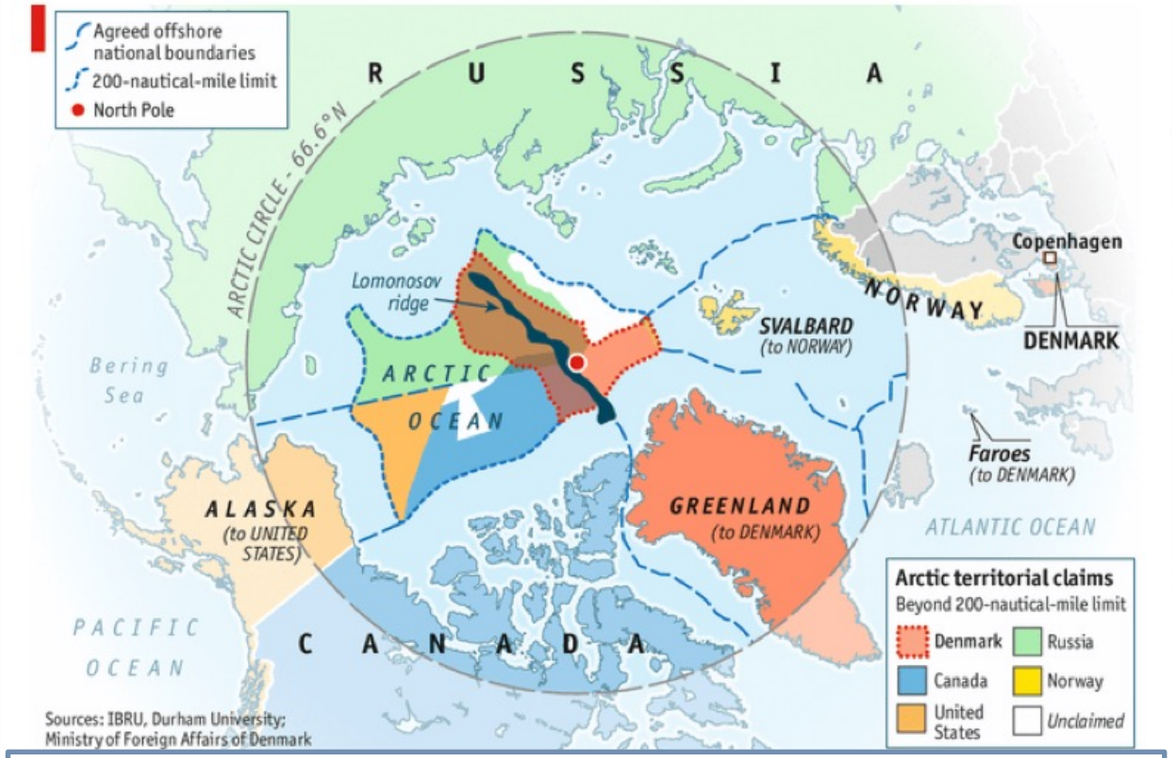
Geopolitical risk: Commonly, geopolitical risk" includes risks such as "**disputes over resources**".



The **northward movement of fish stocks due to a warming ocean** in the South China Sea, which is home to geopolitical disputes between China, its neighbours, and the US, is another example of how CC can act as a **geopolitical multiplier of risk**.



Declining **winter precipitation** in the ME is heightening the fight for the most important resource: **water (blue gold).**



The changes to **sea ice cover in the Arctic**, driven by CC, may have a significant impact on such resource disputes, particularly given a **petroleum-rich sea** bed and hazy territorial boundaries.

Is Climate Change A Security Risk?

THREAT MULTIPLIER
- or accelerant of instability, exacerbates existing risks to security.

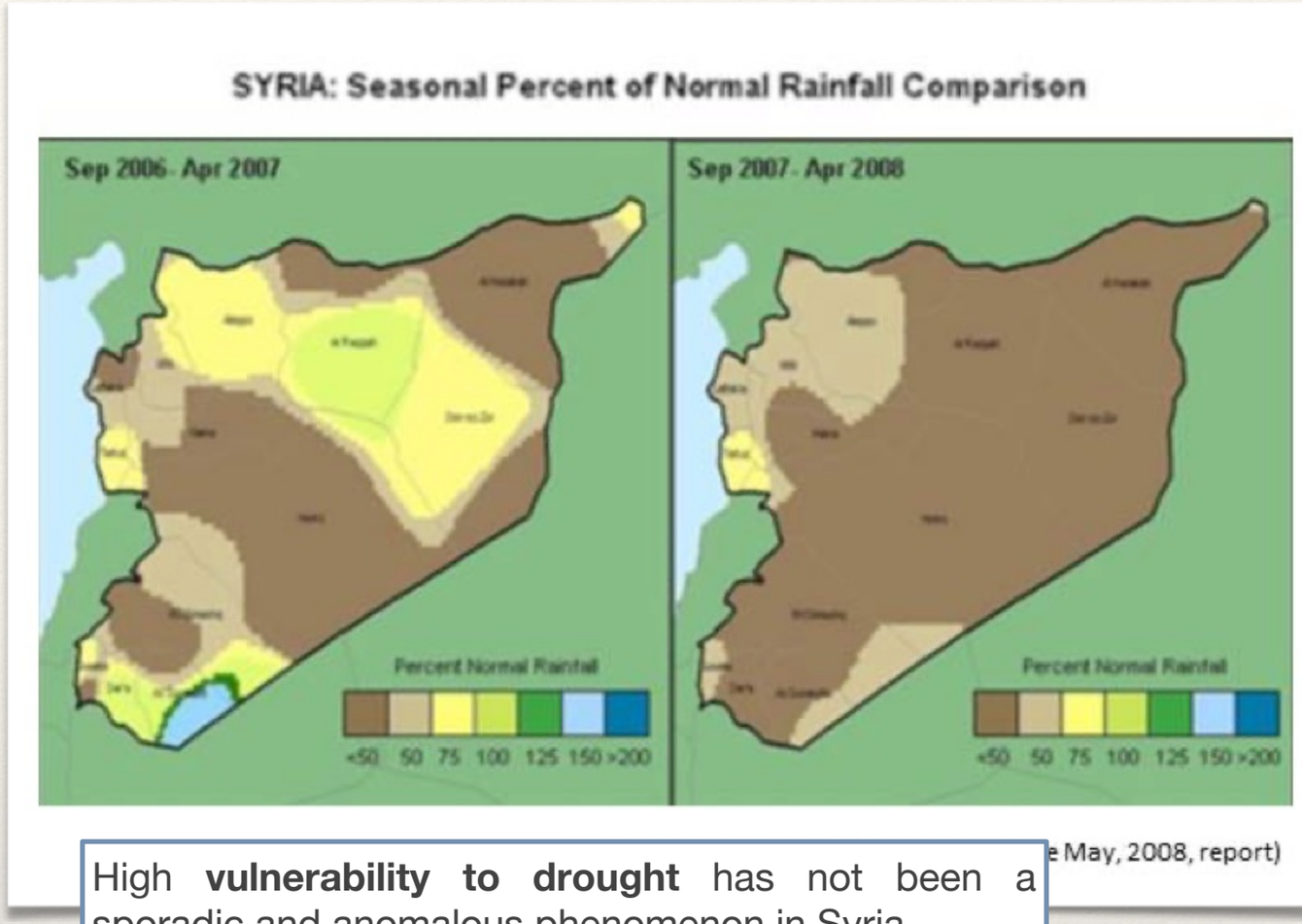
DIRECT THREAT
- on critical infrastructure underpinning a nation's security.

INDIRECT THREAT
- Increases stresses on critical resources underpinning a nation's security, including water, food & energy.

High Probability, High Impact Risk (WEF Global Risk Report)

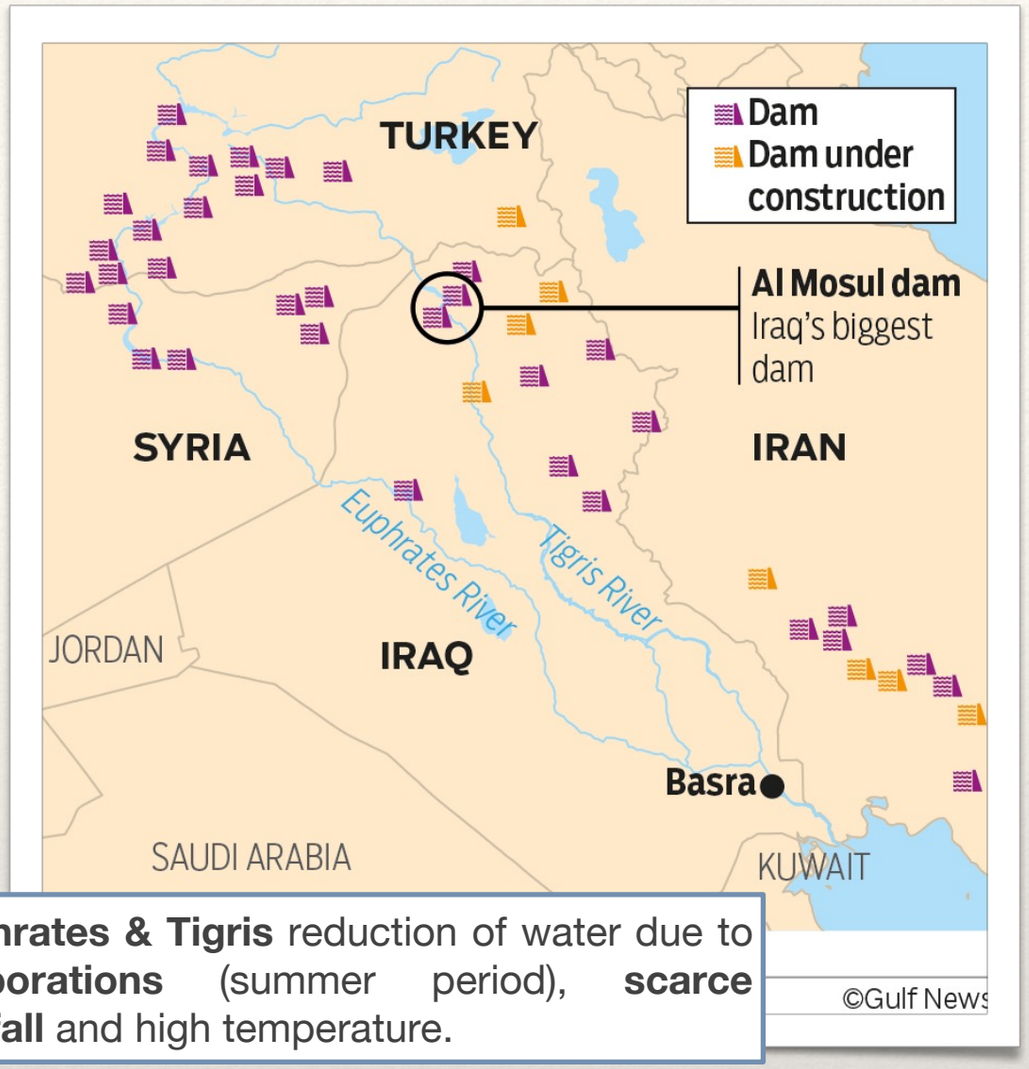
THE CENTER FOR CLIMATE AND SECURITY

Case study 1



High **vulnerability to drought** has not been a sporadic and anomalous phenomenon in Syria.

The **2011 drought** has been "the most severe one in the instrumental record" due to the visible impact of the **greenhouse gases**, which incremented the climatic anomalies registered in the 2007-2011 period.



Euphrates & Tigris reduction of water due to **evaporations** (summer period), **scarce rainfall** and high temperature.

Syrian neighbouring countries (Iraq and Turkey), had been affected to a lesser extent because only Syrian economy is almost totally **based on agriculture**.

The agricultural system relies mainly on year-to-year rainfalls. The decrease of agricultural production **destabilized Syrian population** because it seriously impacted the **food security**.

2011 **poor national governance**. The central government has totally ignored the issue, adopting political measures that contributed t**o aggravate the effects of dryness**.

Policy mistakes: 70's introduction of a series of neoliberal reforms, with the aim of boosting wheat and cotton farming through land redistribution.

The project was fulfilled by an **inefficient irrigation system.** There was no regard to sustainability and contributed to water shortages and land desertification (droughts).

2000's B. Assad implemented a complete liberalization of the economy. Export of crops was permitted, **state lands were privatized** and the **subsidies on fuel and food supplies**, introduced by his father, were cut.

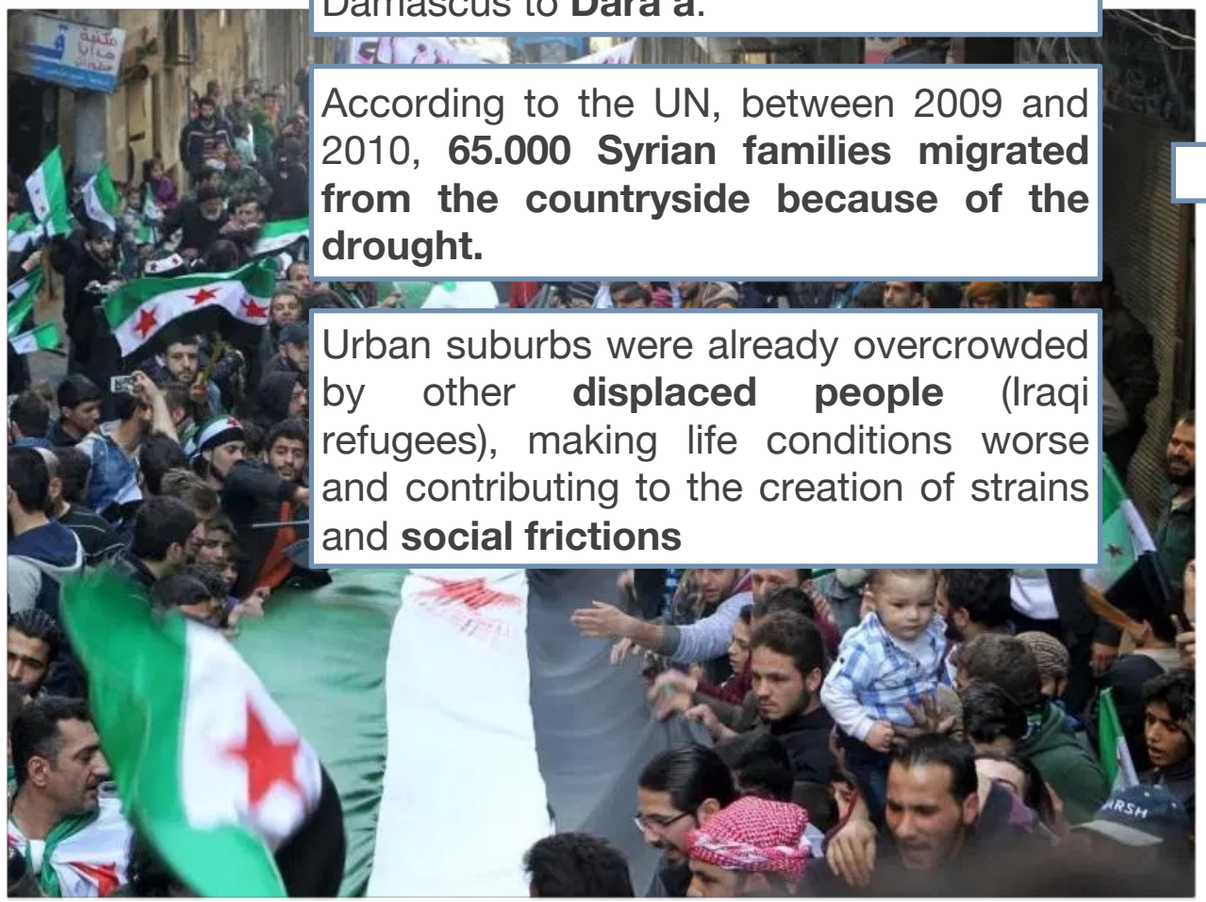
Both, to tackle the shortages authorized an **overuse of groundwater for irrigation purposes**, causing a **draining of the underground aquifer stocks too**.

2008: the north-eastern Al-Hasakah"province, which typically produced 3⁄4 of the total amount of crops in Syria, was at the **verge of collapse**.

The repercussions of the environmental instability were primarily suffered by local **farmers**, and then by the **urban population** was strongly hit by the shortage.

The diminution of livestock caused a skyrocketing rise of the food price, and generating an "**agflation" crisis**.

The drought produced an unprecedented social impact on the population: **exodus of Syrian farmers**, who started to settle down in cities and urban centres, from Damascus to **Dara'a**.



According to the UN, between 2009 and 2010, **65.000 Syrian families migrated from the countryside because of the drought.**

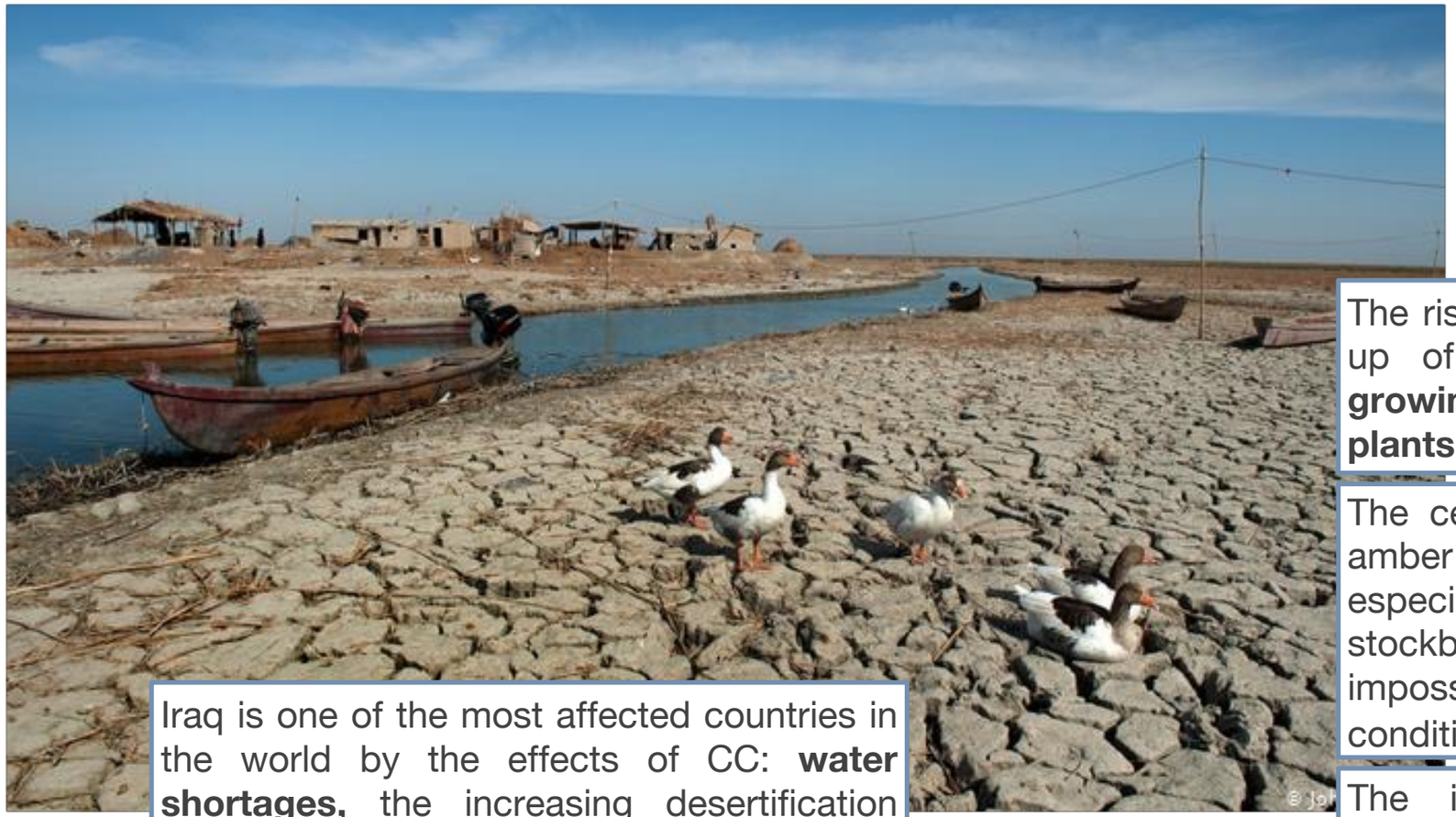
Urban suburbs were already overcrowded by other **displaced people** (Iraqi refugees), making life conditions worse and contributing to the creation of strains and **social frictions**

The Syrian case makes evidence of this, showing how **changes in density of population, combined with poor economic and social conditions**, acted as stressors, igniting to enlarge the protest against Assad's regime.

The demographic mixture generated by 2007-2011 migration fluxes is recognized as one of the **triggering factors** of what has been described as a "**rural and urban Intifada**" (Dara'a).

There is a nexus between **people displacement, caused by CC**, and the other socio-political factors generally recognized as the **main triggers of the internal war**.

Case study 2



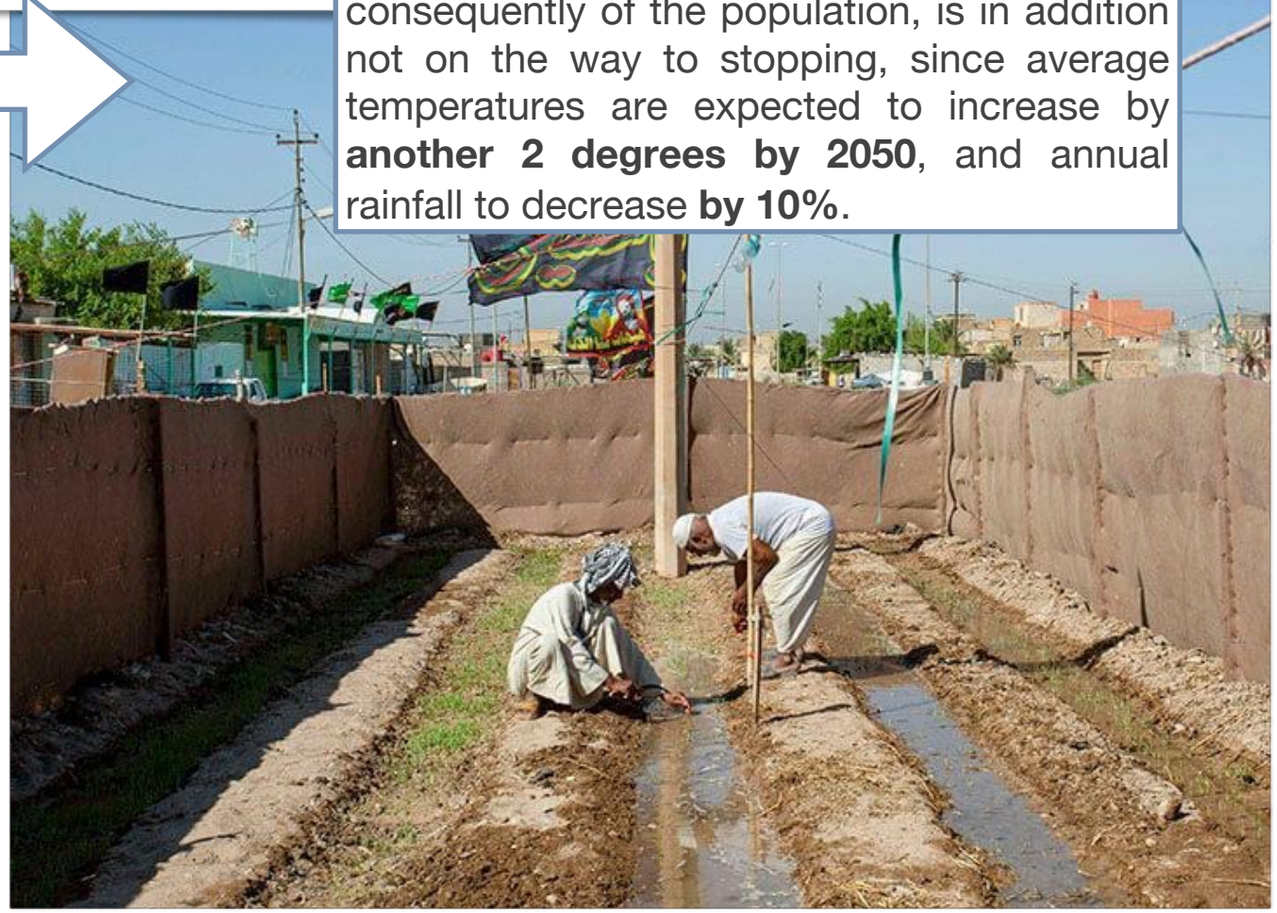
Iraq is one of the most affected countries in the world by the effects of CC: **water shortages,** the increasing desertification (31% total lands), and the **government inaction**.

The CC effects are a source of a serious **humanitarian crisis**, but also the source of **diplomatic and political conflicts** (Turkey).

The rise in temperature has led to the drying up of land and waterways and to the **growing difficulty for the populations, plants and animals**.

The cereal crops, and particularly those of amber rice, are completely collapsed, especially in **the south of the country,** and stockbreeding has become almost impossible because of unsustainable climatic conditions.

The impoverishment of the land, and consequently of the population, is in addition not on the way to stopping, since average temperatures are expected to increase by **another 2 degrees by 2050**, and annual rainfall to decrease **by 10%**.

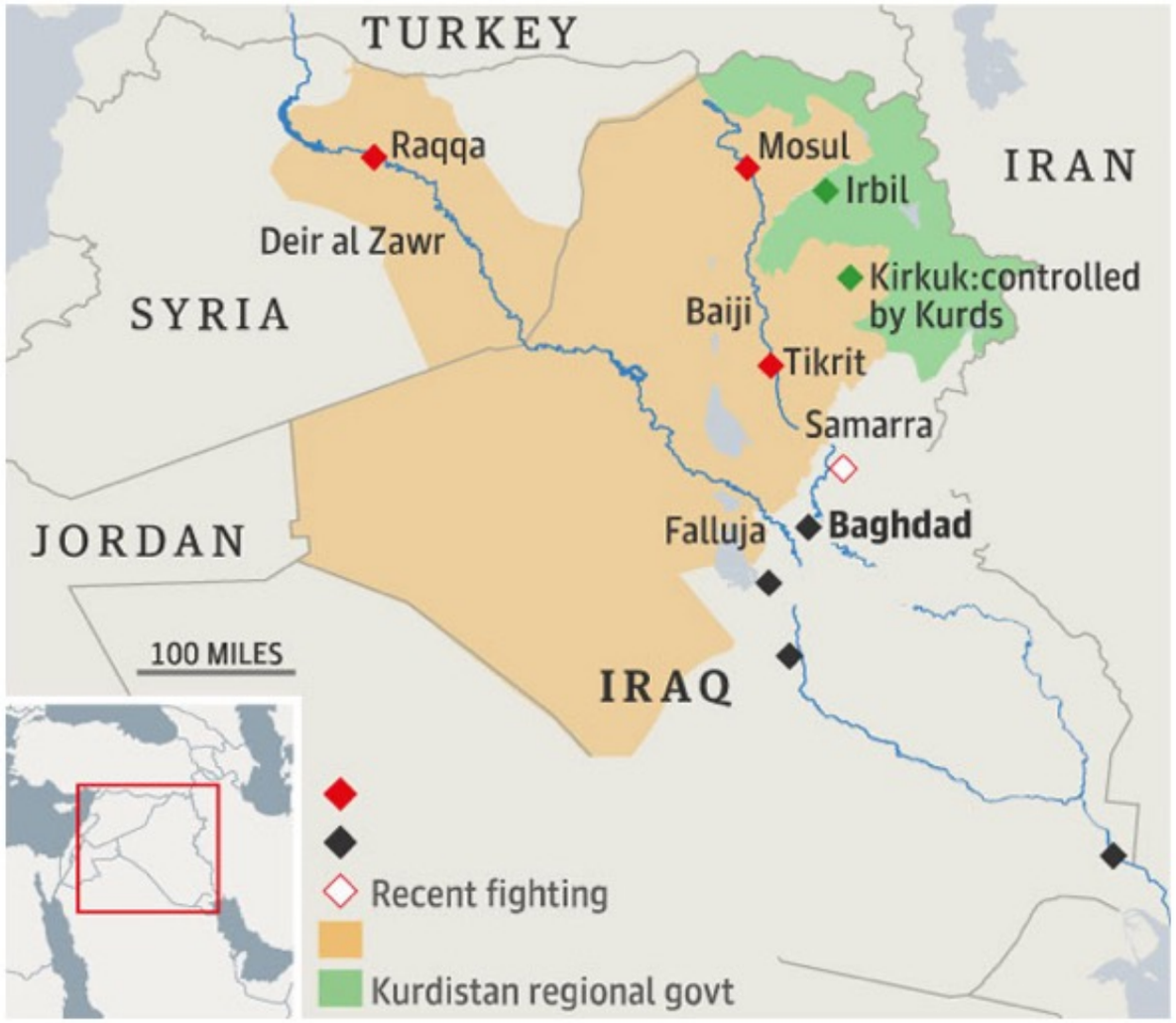


Nowadays, about **9 million 15-24 year olds** are **protesting in Iraq**, seeking help and political change.

Revolts and demonstrations have emerged, including from the younger generation, in a city that has been particularly affected by CC and ecological disasters: **Basra**.

Criticizing the lack of **concrete measures and actions** by the ruling class, considered "corrupt and incompetent", to address the situation, the inhabitants Basra have been rebelling against their government for several years now, **generating instability.**

The **Shatt-al-Arab river** that runs through the city, is now so **polluted** it threatens the lives of the more than **4 million inhabitants** of Iraq's second city.



These problems of **drought and water scarcity are not new.** The HRW estimates that the government's inability to guarantee access to drinking water for Iraqis has been going on for **30 years now.**

Water shortages due to **political inabilities** and i**nter-state disputes**.

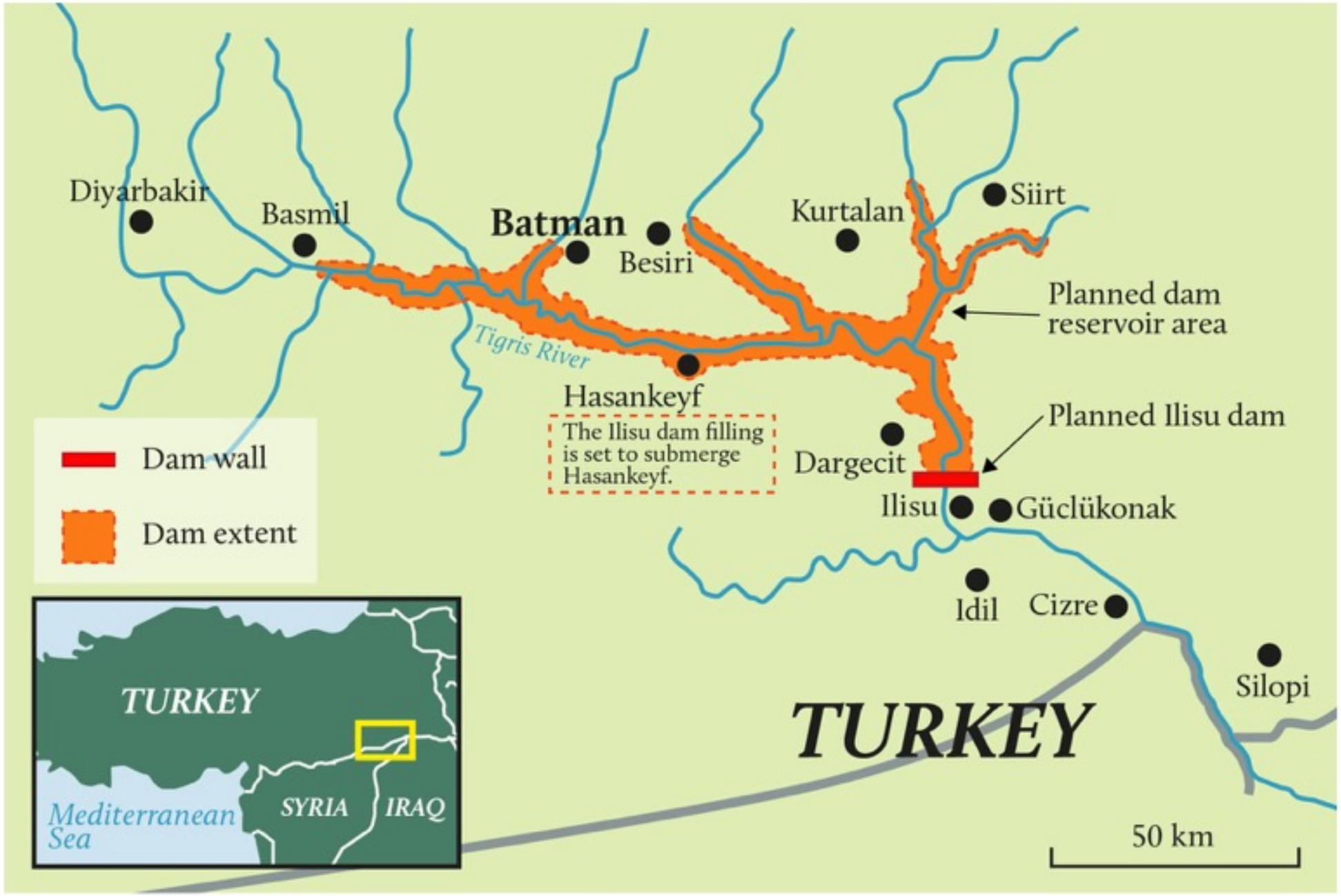
Nearly **91% of Iraq's water** is not of domestic origin but passes first through Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

If the states located upstream of the rivers act unilaterally and ignore the needs and potential difficulties of the countries downstream, their behaviour can then become **threatening for the latter, disadvantaged by their position.**

Ankara’s **irrigation and dam projects** have decreased river inflows to Iraq’s parched plains.

TR is located **upstream**, the construction of dams clearly reduces the access of **Syrian populations,** and even more so of Iraqi populations, to water.

TR stands out as more powerful than its bordering countries in economic and military terms, and enjoys what specialists agree to call a "**hydro-hegemony**" over the region. (**blackmail weapon**)



Sources: Google Maps, Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive (HYG)

MEE

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The latest dam construction project launched by Turkey (**South-eastern Anatolia Project**), should eventually reduce the flow of the two rivers by 40% in Syria, and 80% in Iraq.

The lack of concern for environmental issues has indeed turned into a **problem of general insecurity**, deepened by a visible negligence towards the needs of the populations affected.

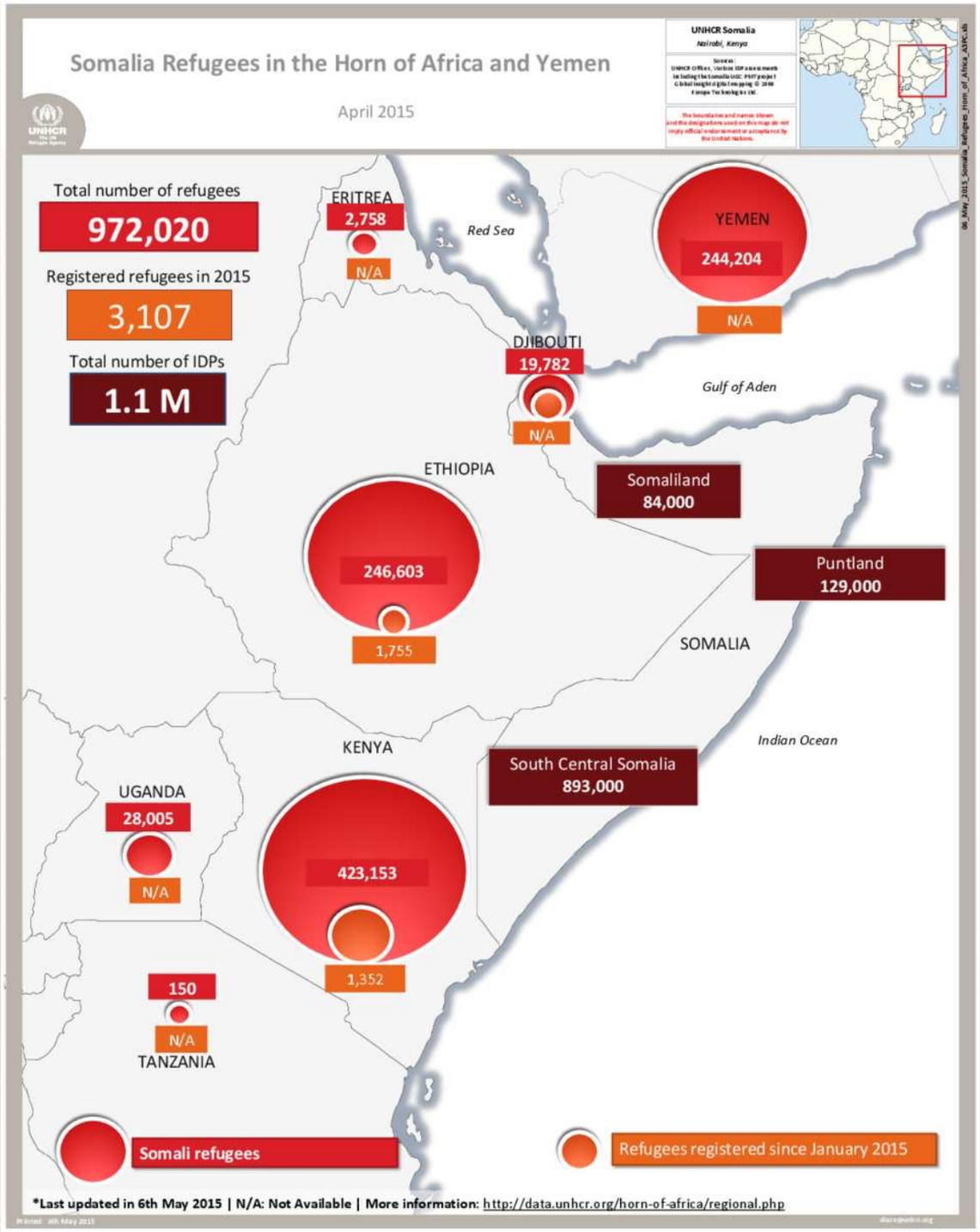
Bad practices & water pollution: in the city of Basra alone, in 2018, no less than **24,000 people** were victims of water poisoning.

The cause: the **contamination of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers by various pollutants**, and the consequent increase in the salinity level of the Shatt al-Arab crossing Basra.

A**gricultural practices** are completely unsuited to the environment throughout the territory, such as the mass use of **pesticides and herbicides** that gradually d**estroy the ecosystem** and eventually end up in the tap water of many Iraqi households.

If CC is one of the main causes of the ecological disasters and humanitarian crisis in the country, the inability of policymakers to provide lasting solution aggravating it, **fuelling the revolt of the local populations and their indignation**.

Case study 3



Implications for **the peace and security**: climate-related **displacement and migration** can fuel tensions at the community and national levels and disrupt ongoing conflict resolution initiatives.

Droughts and floods undermine **food security and worsen livelihood conditions**, adversely affecting **marginalized groups**, fuelling grievances, increasing competition over scarce resources and exacerbating existing community tensions and vulnerabilities.

Armed groups like Al Shabaab can take advantage of climate impacts by **positioning themselves as service and relief providers** following droughts and floods

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are particularly vulnerable t**o identity-related conflicts** and armed group recruitment

Droughts and floods can **link local resource conflicts to broader insecurity**, as **elites may exploit** the impacts to advance their influence over communities and resources.

Case study 4

The forced displacement of entire communities generates instability and insecurity by increasing **disputes over-exploiting natural resources** such as water and land. In West Africa, the trend affects mainly **Fulani communities**, one of the largest **ethno-linguistic** groups in the world.

Predominantly Muslim and livestock farming, Fulani communities stretch from **Senegal to Sudan**. Despite their widespread presence, they are an ethnic minority in all the states (subject of **discrimination).**

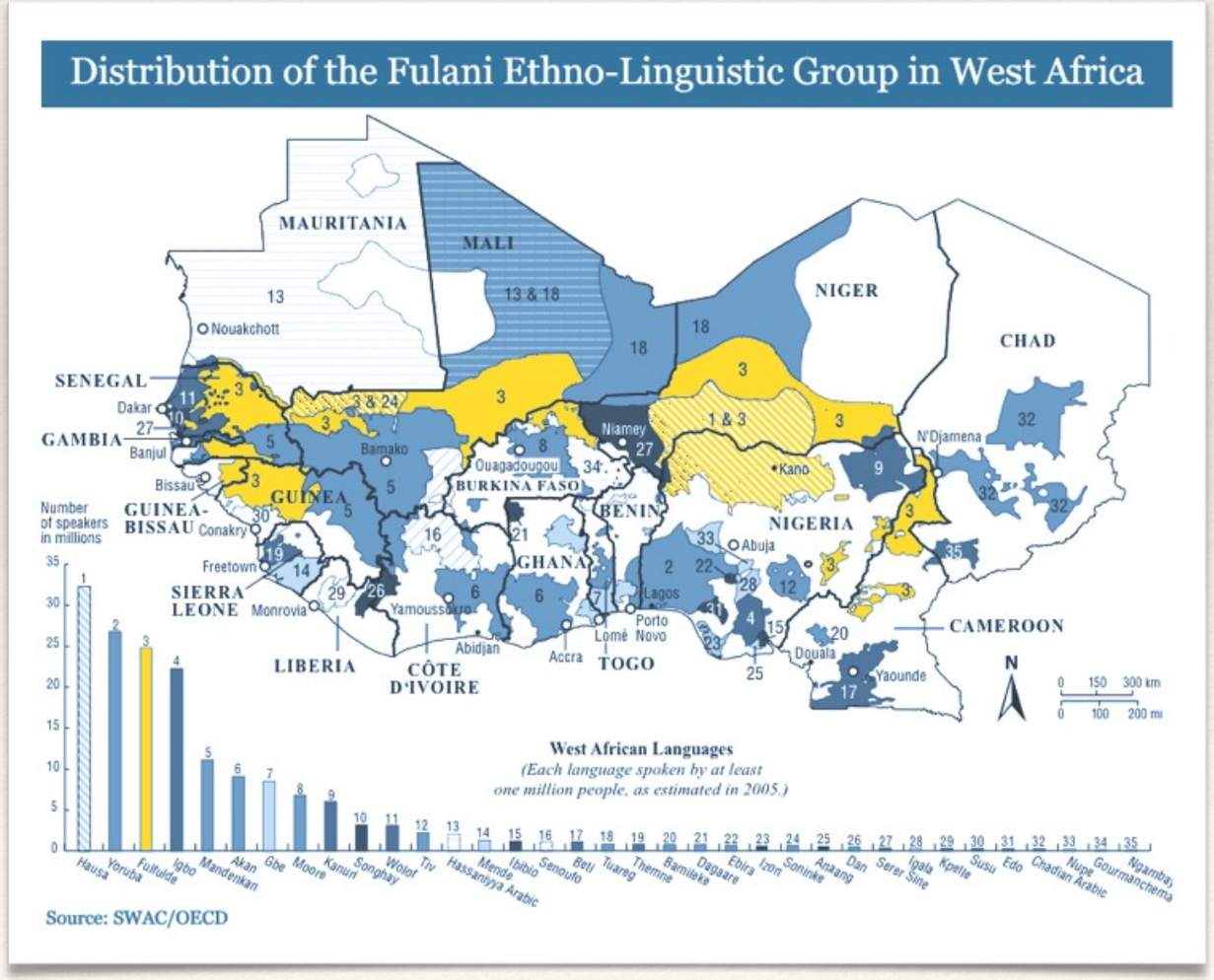
Fulani seasonal movements have undergone a dramatic transformation due to a variety climate change effects: reduction of resources (water and land), **intensive cultivations**, and the **desertification.**

Displacement and cross-border movements have intensified inter-community tensions (rural). Weak authorities have favoured the outbreak of low-**intensity violence** and the proliferation of illicit economic activities

Jihadist movements have exploited the **Fulani marginalized status** and the violence perpetrated against them to recruit fighters.

Fulanis are fighting among the ranks of movements affiliated with Islamic or Qaedist-inspired groups, such as the **Macina Liberation Front** (MLF) and **Ansaroul Islam**.

In some contexts, such as **Niger, Mali**, and, more recently, **Burkina Faso** the idea of a "Fulani jihad" has spread without rational bases.



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