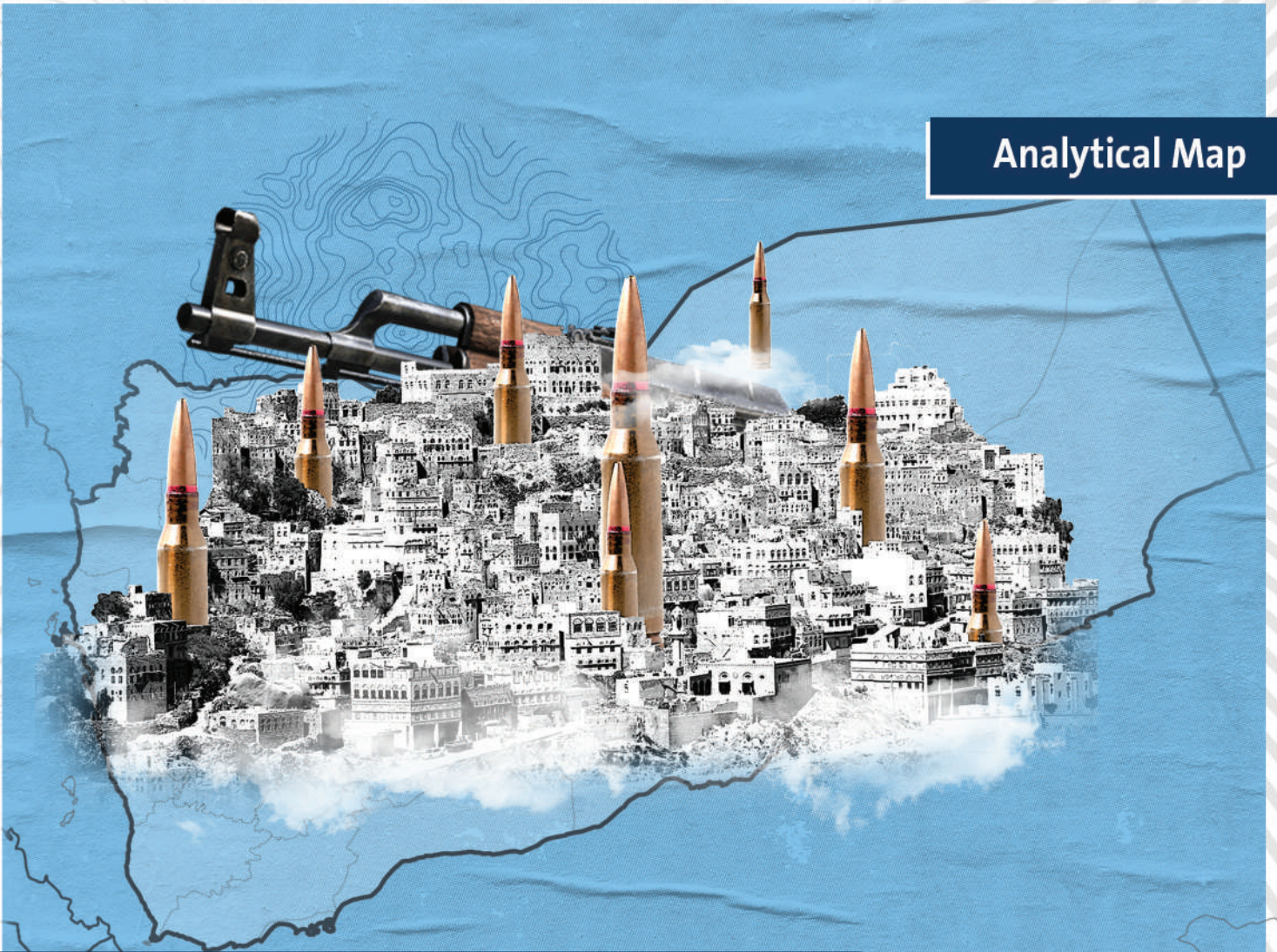




Dimensions
for Strategic Studies

Analytical Map



Map of military forces' control in Yemen

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In cooperation with:
informaGENE

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Dimensions for Strategic Studies

Dimensions Centre for Strategic Studies (DCSS) is think tank, dedicated to the study of the Middle East and North Africa affairs, provides the Arab readers with a substantive insight on the region's political, economic and social issues and dynamics.

The DCSS was founded in the United Kingdom on January 2020 ,1, and is headquartered in London.

Dimensions Center for Strategic Studies is interested in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) affairs in particular, addressing influences the region has and the effects of this region's interactions with the rest of the world.

We strive to provide an open and accessible space in order to inform relevant persons of experts and academic readers alike, in a simplified style far from the complexities brought by experts, technicians and academics.

We are keen to provide topics in an intensive manner that goes in line with the challenges of modern times and in brief way which can meet the needs of researchers and readers as well.



Preamble

Ansar Allah group (Houthi group) took control of state institutions in Sanaa on September 21, 2014. Later, they started controlling over the governorates of the Republic. These groups faced resistance in some governorates such as Ma'rib and Taiz.

On March 25, 2015, Saudi Arabia launched Operation Decisive Storm with the aim of restoring legitimacy to Yemeni President, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Since then, the map of military forces' control changed, with the Houthi group losing control of Aden, Abyan, Lahj, Shabwa, and large parts of Al-Dhalea, Marib, and Taiz.

The map of control in Yemen has been constantly changing as the conflicting parties took turns in controlling areas, especially between government forces and the Houthis. Such state of constant control change stopped since the truce was announced between the two parties in April.

At another level, the Transitional Council was established in 2017, and its control began in southern cities, as it controlled Aden, the interim capital of the government, and continued to control large parts of Al- Dhale, Lahj and Abyan.

In 2019, although the Riyadh agreement was signed by the government and the Transitional Council, the latter made many attempts to expand its military control. Accordingly, it took control of Socotra in 2020, after which the areas witnessed a kind of military calm, there were skirmishes in various places.

Once again and After the above-mentioned developments, changes on the map of control on the ground between the government and the Transitional Council occurred, as the Council took control of Socotra, where it completely gained control of Abyan and Shabwa.



After the killing of former Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh by the Houthis on December 4, 2017, his nephew, Tareq moved to fight the Houthi group. In 2018, Tareq established the National Resistance Forces (Guards of the Republic), which concentrated its presence on the western coast and joined the joint forces supported by the coalition .

The map of control in Yemen, that is published by Dimensions for Strategic Studies (DSS), in cooperation with InformaGene, comes as an attempt to determine the positions of the actors at the present time. This map is also designed to show the right picture of the forces' situation on the ground in Yemen eight years after the Houthis seizure of power in Yemen. It also sheds light on what wars between local and international actors these developments led to.



Methodology

Despite the existence of many armed factions in Yemen and the various names the political sides they internally and externally are affiliated to, there are ones that have no power on the ground and other forces that they did not announce their desincion from the legitimate government; though they are not part of the Ministry of Defense of the legitimate government. Othe powers, however, merged with other ones with greater military capabilities or remained with limited power on the ground. For this reason, the map of control was divided among four major powers namely; the government forces, the Houthi group, the Transitional Council and the National Resistance. The criteria for such a classification are the notable presence on the ground and military non-affiliation.

For the purposes of preparing the map, the following definitions were adopted:

- **Government forces:** They are the forces that are affiliated with the defense ministry of the internationally recognized government, or ones that have not announced their divorce with the government, although they do not belong to the Ministry of Defense, such as the Hadrami Elite, which controls the coast of Hadhramaut governorate. These forces depend on the coalition for their military funding and on financial aid provided by Yemeni merchants and actors.
- **Al-Houthi Group:** The armed group that rebelled against the legitimate government in 2014. This group is supported directly by Iran.
- **The Transitional Council:** An entity established in 2017, supported by the UAE, and has military influence. It is politically part of the legitimate government. The head of this Council is a member of the Presidential Leadership Council. However, the Council's forces are not affiliated with the legitimate government, their presence in the areas of influence in the name of "Transitional Council".



● **The National Resistance:** It is the forces of Tareq Affash, the nephew of late president Ali Abdullah Saleh. It is supported by the UAE. Although the head of the National Resistance, Tareq Affash, is in the Presidential Command Council as a member, his forces are not affiliated with the Ministry of Defense of the internationally recognized legitimate government.

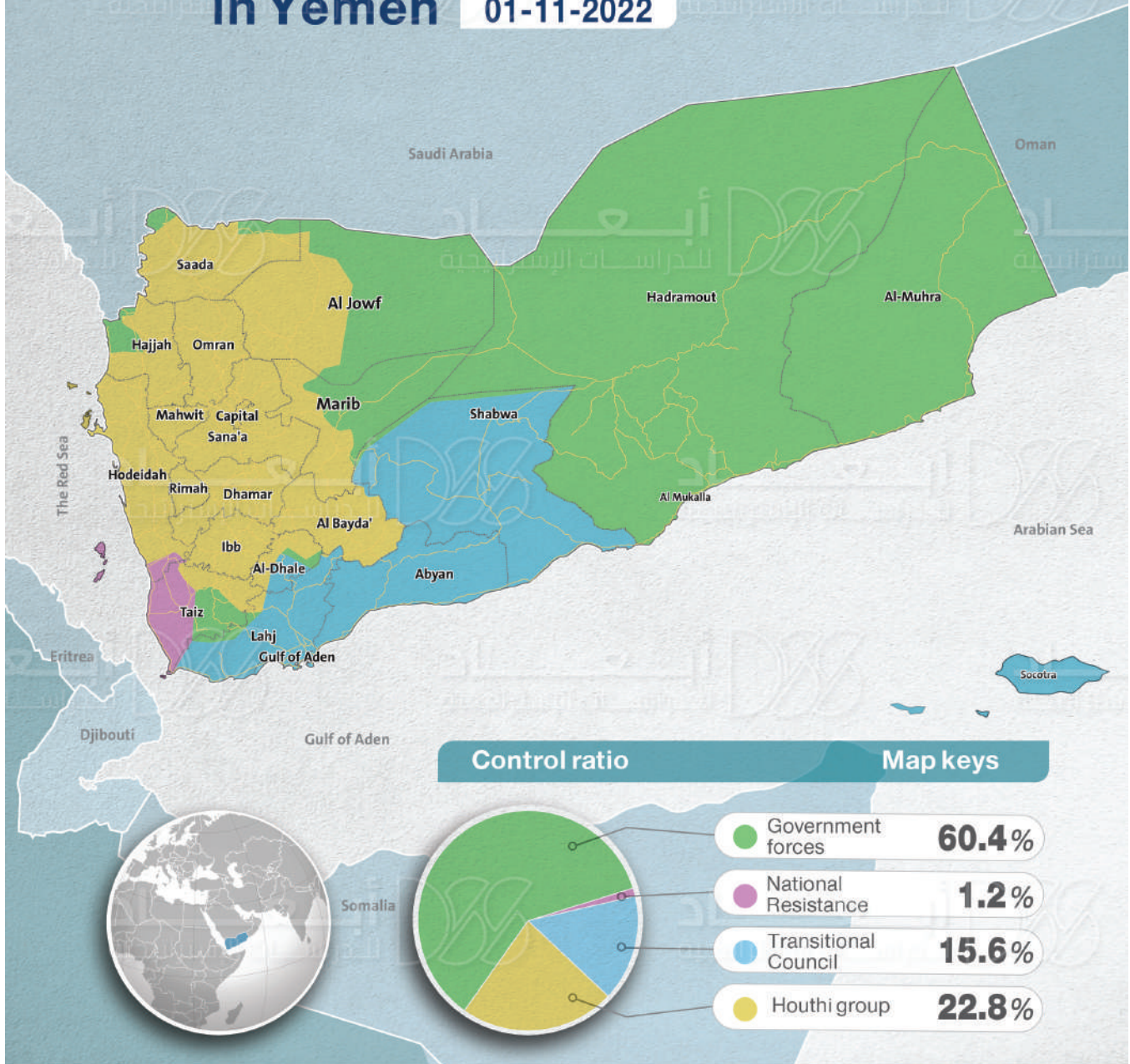
Preparing the map depended on daily follow-up by a team of researchers at DSS Center in addition to the official statements of the dominant parties. After it was prepared, the map was shown, reviewed and approved by specialized experts.

It should be noted that there are some desert areas, over which seizing control is not important. Such areas were drawn in an approximate manner in favor of the party controlling the center of the governorate to which these areas belong.

Despite precise revision of the map, it should be kept in mind that the demarcation of control areas is close to reality; though there is a margin of error between 2-2.5%, especially for small villages, desert areas, and contact lines.

Map of military forces' control in Yemen

01-11-2022





Government forces

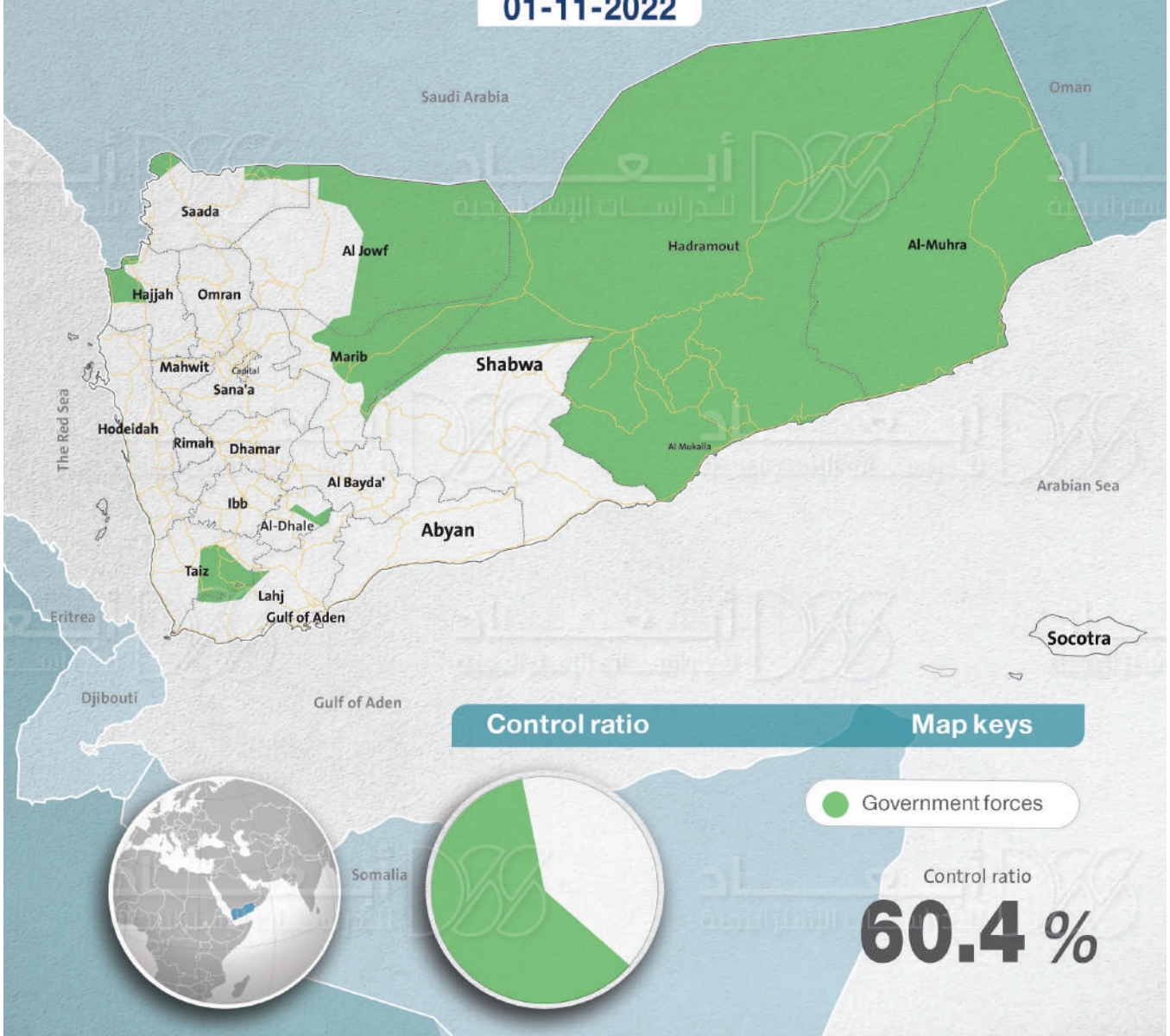
The Government forces completely control the Mahra and Hadramawt governorates. Despite the presence of the Hadrami elite force on the coast of Hadramawt, a faction that is not affiliated with the Ministry of Defense but still recognises the government's legitimacy, it has not declared its independence. The government forces also control the center of Marib Governorate, which is the military and security fortress of the legitimate government and at the same time it is the headquarters of the Yemeni Ministry of Defense.

The Government forces control parts of Saada Governorate (the stronghold of the Houthi group), parts of Hajjah, large parts of Taiz, including the governorate center, and parts of Al Dhale Governorate.

The proportion of what the government forces control of the total Yemeni land is 60.4%, which is the largest percentage in terms of area.

Map of military forces' control in Yemen (Government forces)

01-11-2022





Houthi Group

The group took control of most of the Yemeni governorates between 2014 and 2015. After that, the Decisive Storm was launched to restore order in Yemen. The areas remained under the Houthi forces, until the start of the "Golden Spear" battles in 2017, which took place between government forces with the support of the coalition forces, and the Houthi group.

The Stockholm Agreement in 2018 constituted a major turning point in terms of changing the map of military influence in Yemen, as signing this agreement made the joint forces (formed in 2018, and consisting of the Giants Brigades, the Tihami Resistance, and the National Resistance) stop fighting over taking control of the city of Hodeidah.

Reaching an agreement also let the Houthi group to move to fight in another frontlines, the most important of which was Al-Dhale, Saada and Nehm. Moreover, hit-and-run operations continued on these fronts between the two parties, as the Houthi group was able to achieve some gains and took control of the entire Nehm region, which facilitated its advance towards western Marib. The Group also advanced to the city of Al-Hazm, the center of Al-Jawf Governorate, and controlling it in 2020.

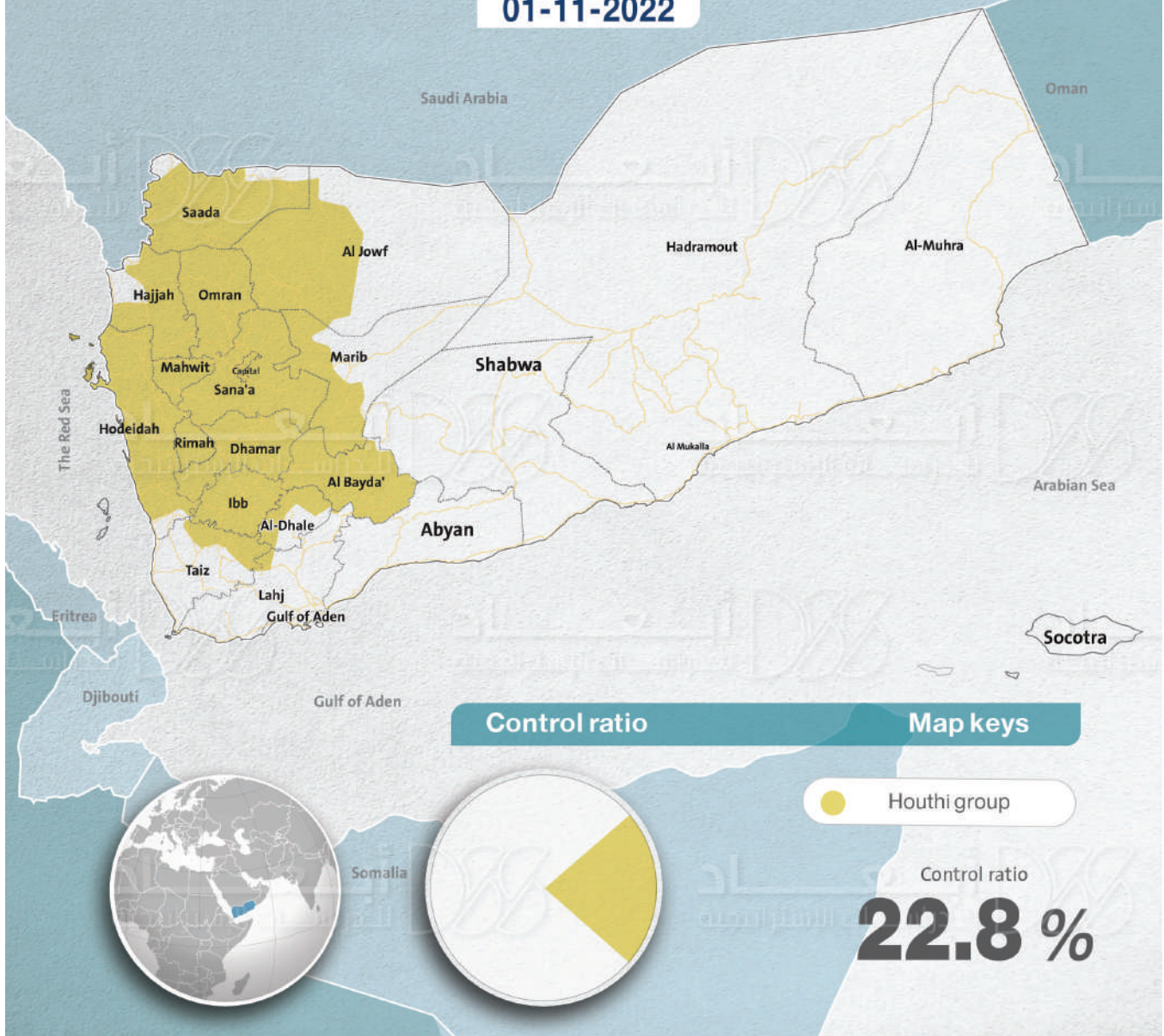
In 2021, the Houthi Group was able to fully seize control of the Al-Bayda governorate, advance to the west of Shabwa governorate and take control of three districts. After that, the Group took control of the southern districts of Marib.

In late 2021, the Giants Brigades, in cooperation with government forces, and with the support of the Coalition, managed to recapture the three districts of Shabwa, and the Harib district in Marib.

Currently, the Houthi group controls Sana'a, Amanat Al-Asimah, Amran, Dhamar, Al-Bayda, Ibb and Raymah completely. It also controls most of the areas of each of the governorates of Saada, Hajjah, Al-Hodeidah and Al-Jawf. This constitutes 22.8% of the total land area of Yemen.

Map of military forces' control in Yemen (Houthi group)

01-11-2022





Transitional Council

The Transitional Council was established in 2017 as a popular movement calling for the secession of southern Yemen from its north.

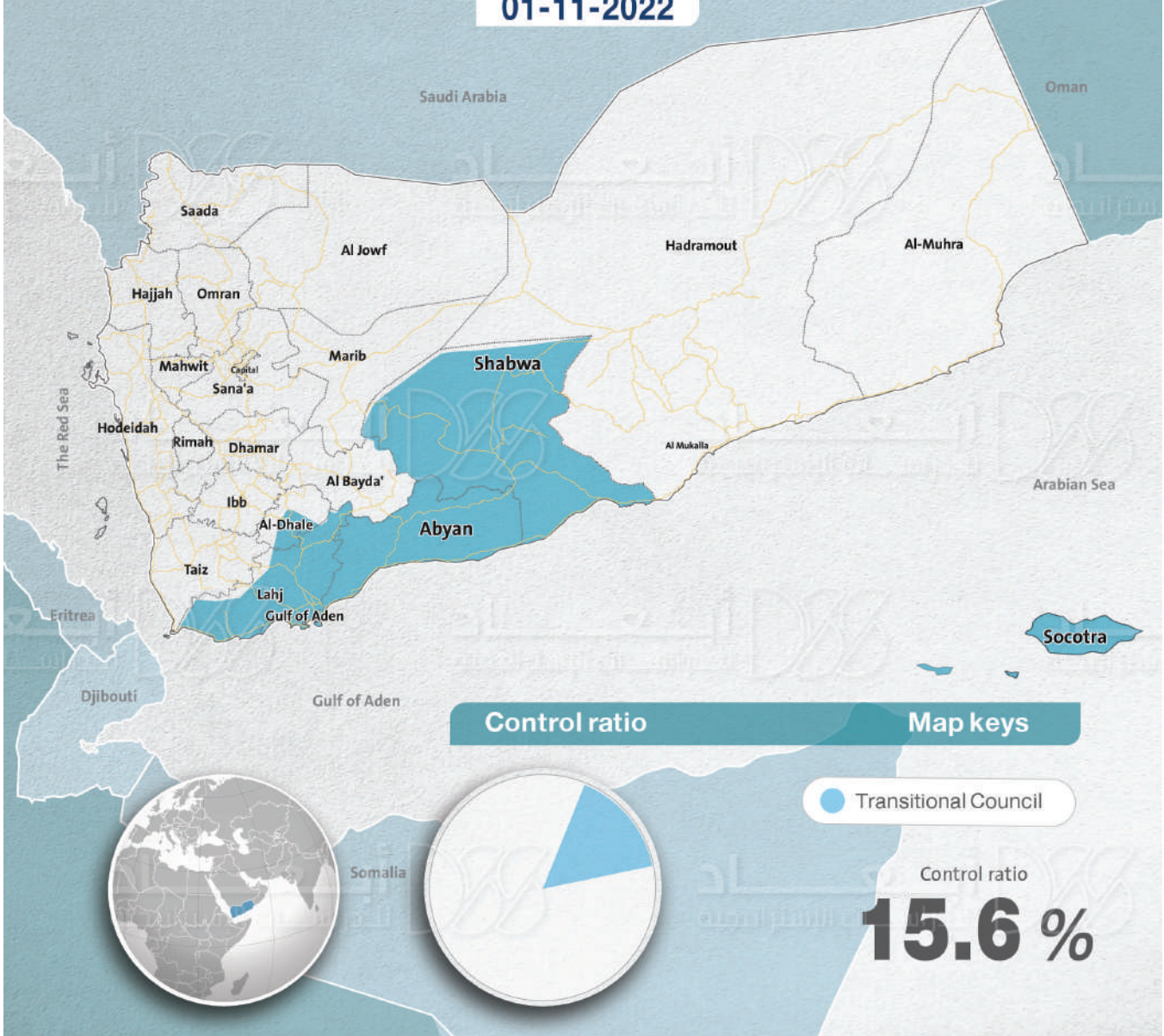
In 2019, the Council took control of the city of Aden, then it headed to Abyan, before heading to Shabwa. However, the Council was militarily defeated by the government forces, which drove the Council to step back towards Aden.

After the intervention of the Emirati aviation, the government forces withdrew to the city of Shuqra in Abyan Governorate, and the government forces and the forces of the Transitional Council continued to share influence in Abyan until 2022. At that point, the two parties agreed that the Transitional Council would control Abyan entirely, after the Council took control of the Shabwa governorate as a whole. In 2020, the Transitional Council also entirely took control of the island of Socotra.

Currently, the Transitional Council controls the interim capital, Aden, in addition to the governorates of Abyan, Lahj, and Shabwa in full. It also controls part of the Al-Dhalea governorate. This constitutes 15.6% of the total land area of Yemen.

Map of military forces' control in Yemen (Transitional Council)

01-11-2022



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National Resistance Forces

On January 7, 2017, government forces, with the support of the coalition forces, launched Operation Golden Spear to take control of the western coast. By doing so, they were able to control the strategic city of Dhubab, which overlooks the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and control the city of Mocha, in which the strategic port of Mocha is located, in Taiz Governorate.

Furthermore, the forces took control of the Al-Khawkhah area in the city of Al-Hodeidah. The operation continued til large parts of the Hays district were captured by the attackers in 2018.

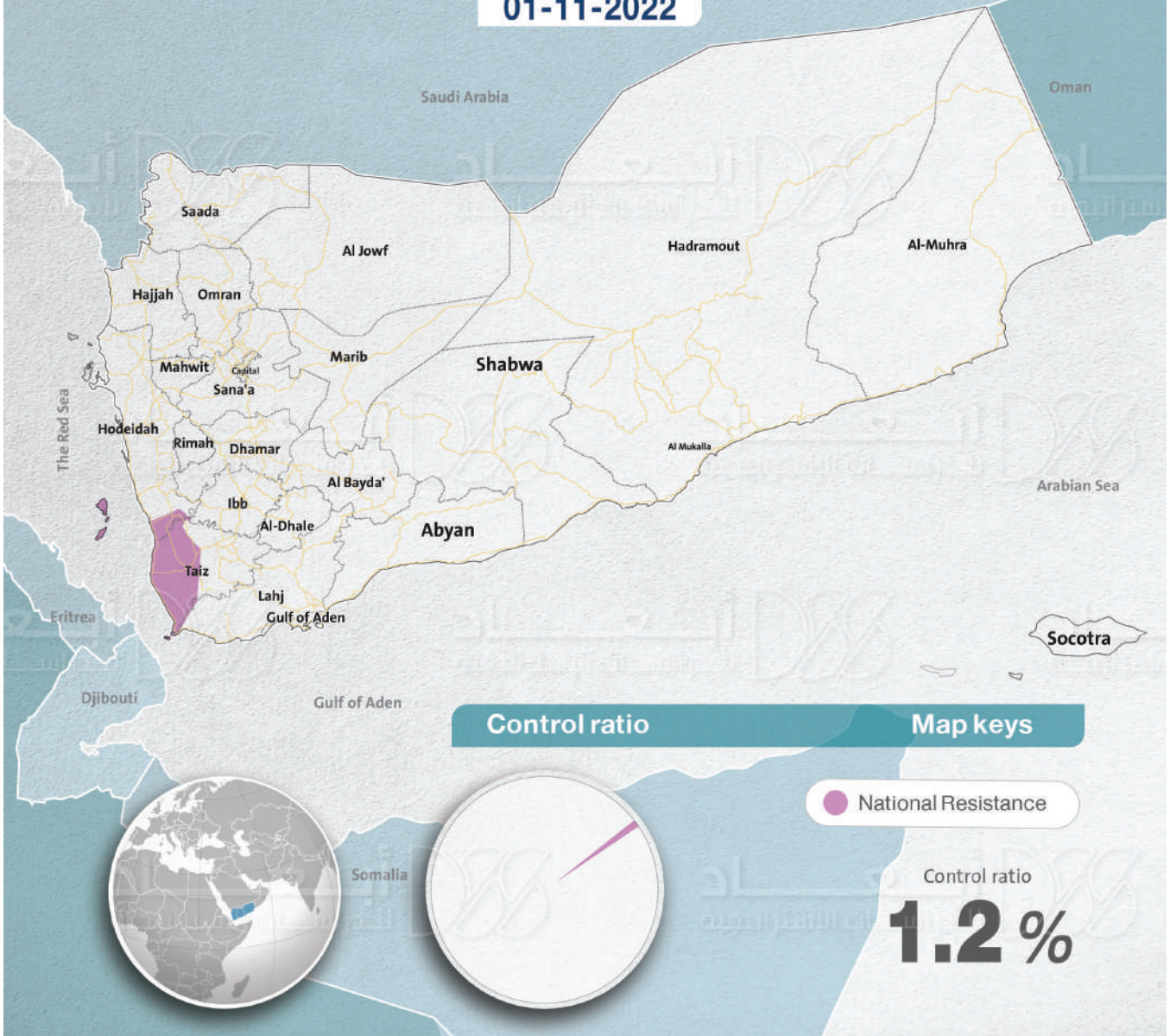
After that, the joint forces were formed, which consisted of the Giants, those of the National Resistance, and Tihama. The joint forces advanced to the city of Hodeidah, however they stopped as a result of the Stockholm Agreement, which was signed between the legitimate government and the Houthi group on December 13, 2018.

In November 2021, the joint forces withdrew from the center of Al-Hodeidah Governorate to its south, and stationed in Al-Khawkhah as they took full control of Hays. In December of the same year, the Giants forces moved to the southern regions, leaving the National Resistance in control of the western coast.

Currently, the National Resistance controls parts of Governorates Al-Hodeidah, and parts of Taiz. The percentage of their control is 01.2% of the total area of Yemeni territory.

Map of military forces' control in Yemen (National Resistance)

01-11-2022



Conclusion

The map of military forces' control in Yemen has witnessed stability since the beginning of the truce, which was announced at the beginning of April 2022, for a period of two months, and renewed three times.

The Stockholm Agreement marks an important milestone that has its impacts on the map of control as it changed in favor of the Houthi Group, in Al-Jawf, Niham, Al-Dhalea, Al-Bayda and Saada. The Group also continued to advance in 2021 towards the Marib governorate. However, it was unable to continue advancing towards the center of the governorate, despite the constant attempts made.

During the period of the truce, fundamental changes took place in the map of influence in advantage of the Transitional Council, which took full control of Shabwa Governorate, during the month of August 2022, in battles it fought against government forces to control Abyan Governorate, as part of an agreement between the two forces.

It is expected that battles might resume in the coming period, in conjunction with the Houthi group's refusal to renew the truce.



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