Putin's War in Ukraine: Background & Sources

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Source: "Ukrainian tanks move into the eastern city of Mariupol." Scenes From An Invasion: Russia Launches Long-Predicted Attack Against Ukraine, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 24, 2022.

Agenda

- Origins of the War

- The War to Date

- Government (and other) Sources

- Tips for Social Media/Internet

Opening Business

- Video clips containing explosions and destruction will be shown in this presentation

- No footage of dead/injured will be displayed

- All images/videos are borrowed

- Conclusions drawn from news items, analytical articles, official briefings/releases, and careful gleaning of social media content

- All errors are entirely mine

Origins of the War

Source: "Little green men" or "Russian invaders"?, BBC News, March 11, 2014.

Historical Origins

- Russia and Ukraine both trace ancestry back to Kyivan Rus (9th-12th Centuries)

- 989-Prince Volodymyr/Vladimir brings Christianity to Kyiv

- 17th Century: Ukrainian Cossack state

- 1654-Union with Muscovy

- Late 18th century: Ukraine divided between Russia and Habsburg empire

- 19th Century: Growth of Ukrainian nationalism

Source: https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/ukraine-administrative-divisions-political-map-country-2129082242

Historical Origins (Cont.)

- 1918-21: First independent Ukrainian state crushed; most of Ukraine becomes part of USSR

- 1932-33: Holodomor famine, 4 million Ukrainian deaths

- 1941-44: Nazi invasion/Holocaust

- 1944-53: UPA insurgency against Soviet rule

- 1954: USSR gives Crimea to Ukraine

- 1991: Ukraine declares independence as USSR collapses

Post-Soviet Ukraine & the Divide with Russia

- 2005: Orange Revolution – fueled Putin's fear of "color revolutions"

- November 2013-February 2014: Maidan Revolution led to fall of Russian-supported president Viktor Yanukovych

- Motivated by anger at corruption; desire for Ukraine to face westward and associate with Europe, not Russia
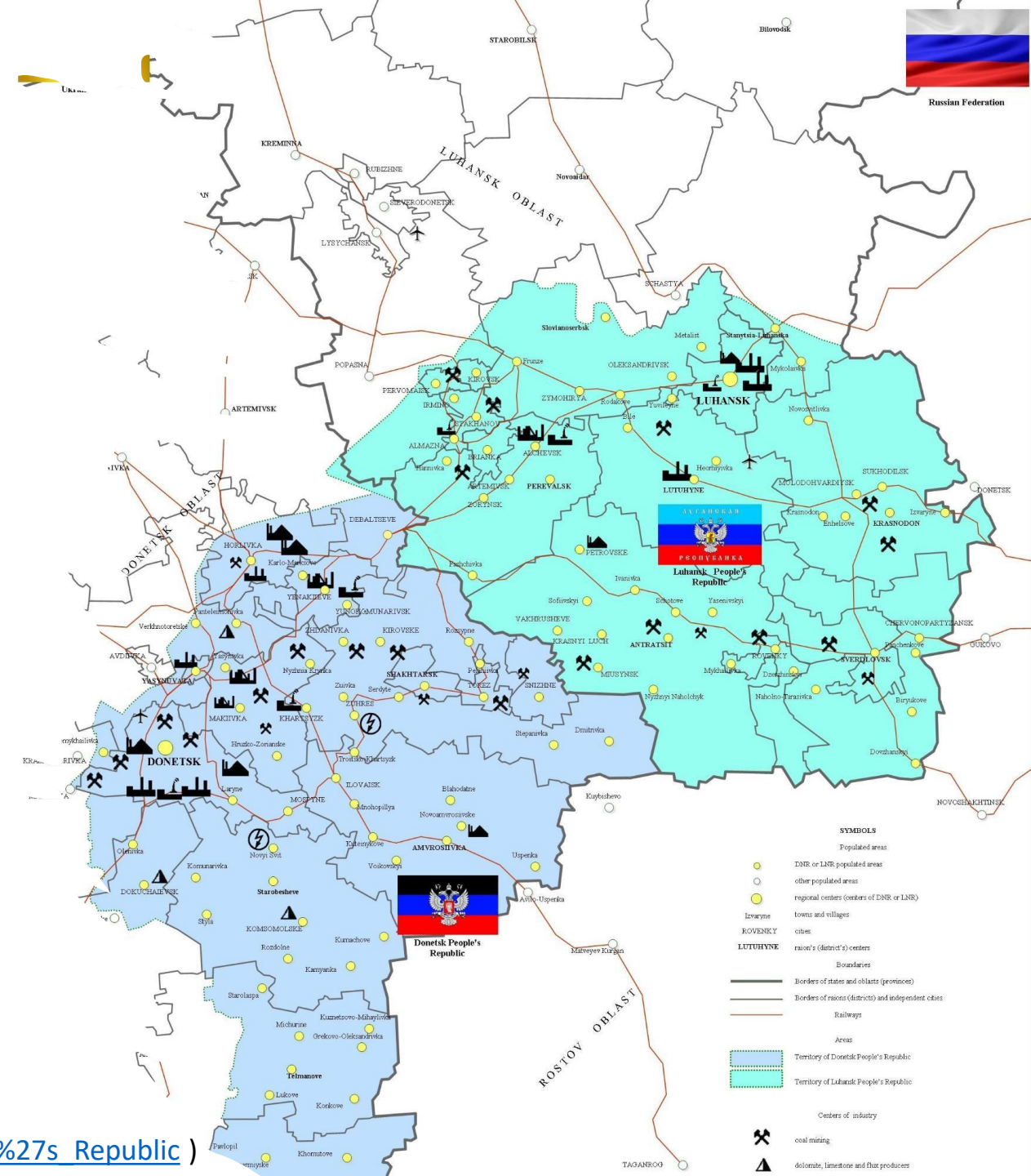
Russia's First Invasion: 2014-2021

- Late February 2014: "Little Green Men" (Russian special forces) seize Crimea, soon annexed to Russia

- March-April 2014: Russia-sponsored separatists try to seize Donetsk and Luhansk in E. Ukraine (Donbas)

- Donetsk & Luhansk "Peoples' Republics" (DPR/LPR) established

- August 2014: Russia openly intervenes to save DPR/LPR from defeat

- September 2014: Minsk agreement

- February 2015: Minsk 2

The Road to Full Invasion

- Neither Minsk agreement implemented

- War in Eastern Ukraine drags on, 14,000 deaths by 2021; LPR/DPR control 1/3 of Donbas

- Spring 2021: first Russian troop buildup on Ukrainian border

- October 2021: Second, much more extensive, troop buildup begins, accompanied by sweeping demands

- US/UK warn of impending Russian invasion throughout Fall 2021/Winter 2022

- February 21, 2022: Putin recognizes DPR/LPR as independent

- February 24: Invasion

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luhansk_People%27s_Republic)

The Essential Issue

- Ukrainian aspirations to be a fully integrated member of Europe/EU, controlling its own destiny, westward focused, distinct identity separate from Russia

VS

- Russian view of Ukraine as birthplace of Russian civilization and essential part of Russian imperial state/Ukrainians as Russians who don't want to admit it

Ukraine: Putin's Perspective

"I am confident that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia. Our spiritual, human and civilizational ties formed for centuries and have their origins in the same sources, they have been hardened by common trials, achievements and victories. Our kinship has been transmitted from generation to generation. It is in the hearts and the memory of people living in modern Russia and Ukraine, in the blood ties that unite millions of our families. Together we have always been and will be many times stronger and more successful. For we are one people."

-Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,", July 12, 2021.

Source: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181

The War to Date

The Initial Invasion

- Russian heliborne assault on Hostomel Airport, day 1 of war:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tHCmx6AQ8Y

The Initial Invasion (Cont.)

- Narrow "regime-change" operation rooted in hopelessly overoptimistic assumptions
  - Lack of Ukrainian will to fight
  - Government would quickly collapse
  - Agents of influence would emerge to sabotage resistance and give Russia local partners

- Russian forces were dispersed, not concentrated; lack of coordination

- Lack of appropriate caution: heliborne assaults, unsupported columns, lack of logistical preparation, limited air/precision missile strikes

- Unprepared to face serious armed resistance

The Russian Advance Stalls

- Ukrainians Ambush Russian armored column:

- https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x88z46p
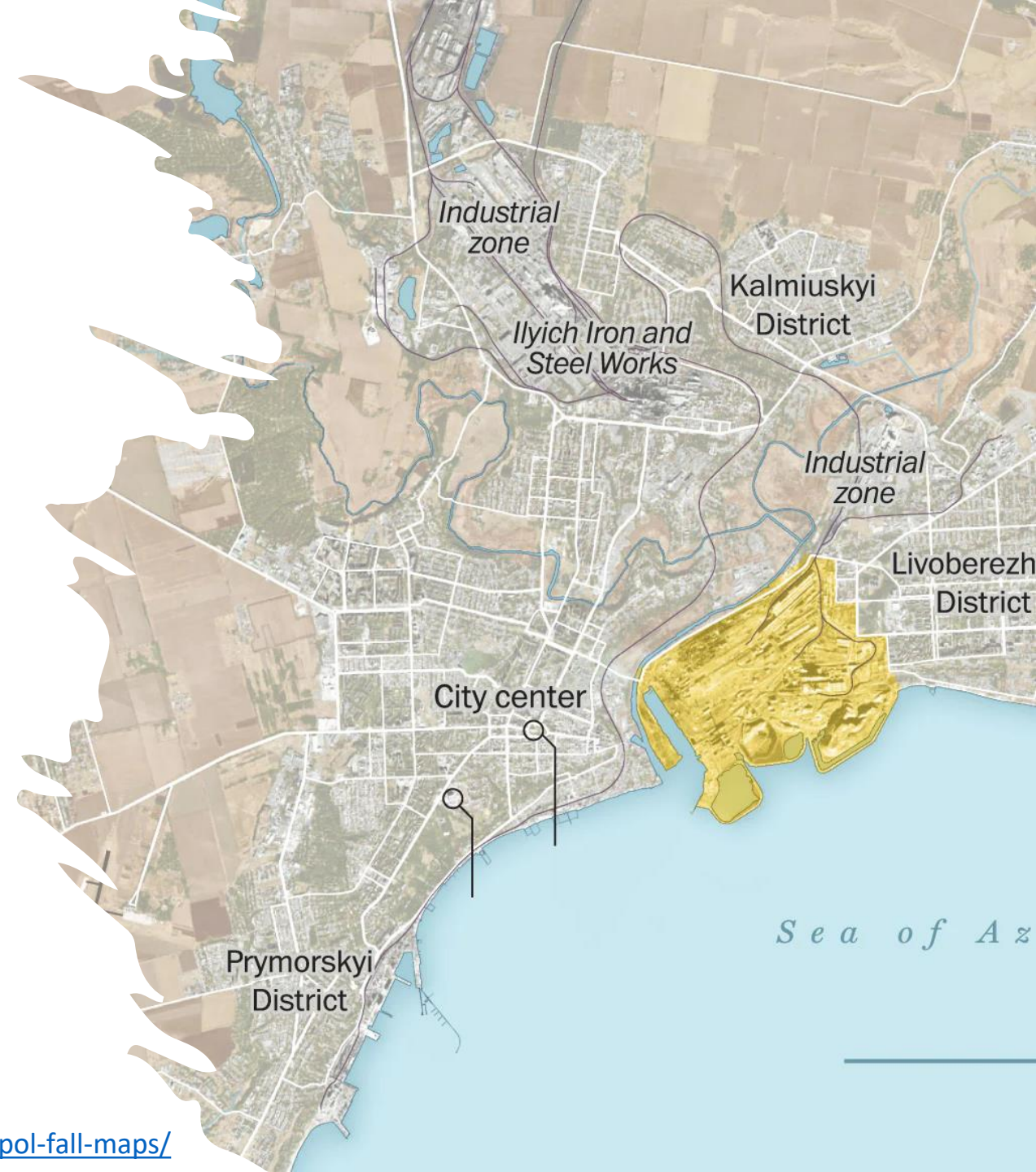
The Russian Advance Stalls (Cont.)

- Broad Russian advance from Russia/Belarus throughout northern, eastern and southern Ukraine

- Some success in south; northern/northeastern axes stall; unable to take Kyiv or Kharkiv

- Combat power dissipated by broad approach

- Fierce Ukrainian resistance/widespread upsurge in Ukrainian nationalism

- Ukrainian small unit tactics frustrate Russian operations; ambush unsupported columns and supply convoys

- After heavy losses, Russians abandon N. and NE at end of March

Mariupol

- Urban Combat in Mariupol: Ukrainian APC:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt06PvmqD7Q

Mariupol (Cont.)

- SE Ukrainian port city

- Pre-war Population: 500,000

- Besieged by Russians starting in early March

- Took most of city by April 21 after weeks of bitter urban combat

- Azov Steelworks held out until May 16 (2,500 Ukrainians surrendered)

- Estimated that 80% of city was destroyed

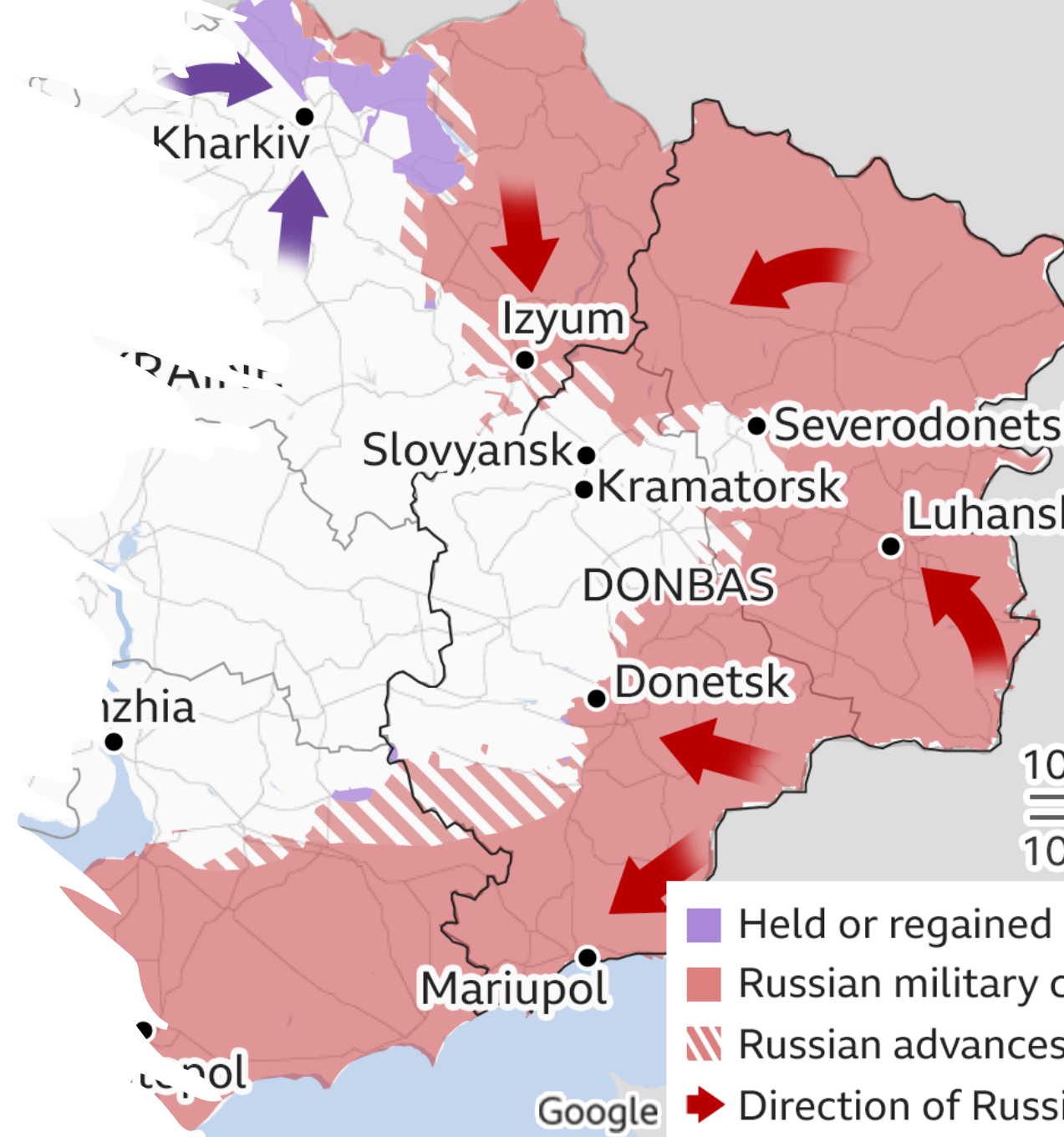Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/21/ukraine-russia-mariupol-fall-maps/

Second Phase of Operations

- Russian TOS-1 rocket launches:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOkIu7w9fi8

Second Phase of Operations (Cont.)

- TOS-1 Thermobaric warhead detonations:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A72QsQ3MXyg

Second Phase of Operations (Cont.)

- Russian forces regroup, reorganize and concentrate on seizing Donbas

- Operations begin April 18

- Deliberate, methodical advances, heavily supported by massed artillery

- Limit losses and preserve Russian combat power

- Make the Ukrainians fight on Russian terms

- Destroy Ukr. Forces through attrition

...titute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 5 June)

Second Phase of Operations (Cont.)

- Russians have made slow, but steady gains

- Now control most of Donbas, and 20% of all Ukraine pre-2014

- Inflicting heavy casualties on Ukrainian forces

- Ukrainians are strongly resisting, but materially outgunned and overmatched

- Ukr. Army being worn down by attrition and forced to cede ever more ground

LUHANSK REGION

DONETSK REGION

Luhansk

Donetsk

RUSSIA

Google

100km

100 miles

UKRAINE

- Russian-backed separatist-held areas
- Russian military control
- Russian advances
- Held or regained by Ukraine

Source: Ukraine War in Maps: Tracking the Russian Invasion, BBC News.

Brief Observations on the Campaign so far

- Artillery still the most decisive weapon, inflicts most casualties

- Importance of UAVs for spotting/reconnaissance/attacking

- Timely intelligence

- Secure communications (or lack thereof)

FAQ: Explaining the Z (and V, O, etc.) symbol

Source; https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/international/ukraine-war-from-z-to-q-when-letters-become-political-symbols

Z — **Eastern Military District**

Z (in square) — **Forces from Crimea**

O — **Forces from Belarus**

V — **Naval**

X — **Kadyrov's**

A — **Alpha Group**

Source: https://euromaidanpress.com/2022/03/24/why-do-z-and-v-become-russians-pro-war-symbols/
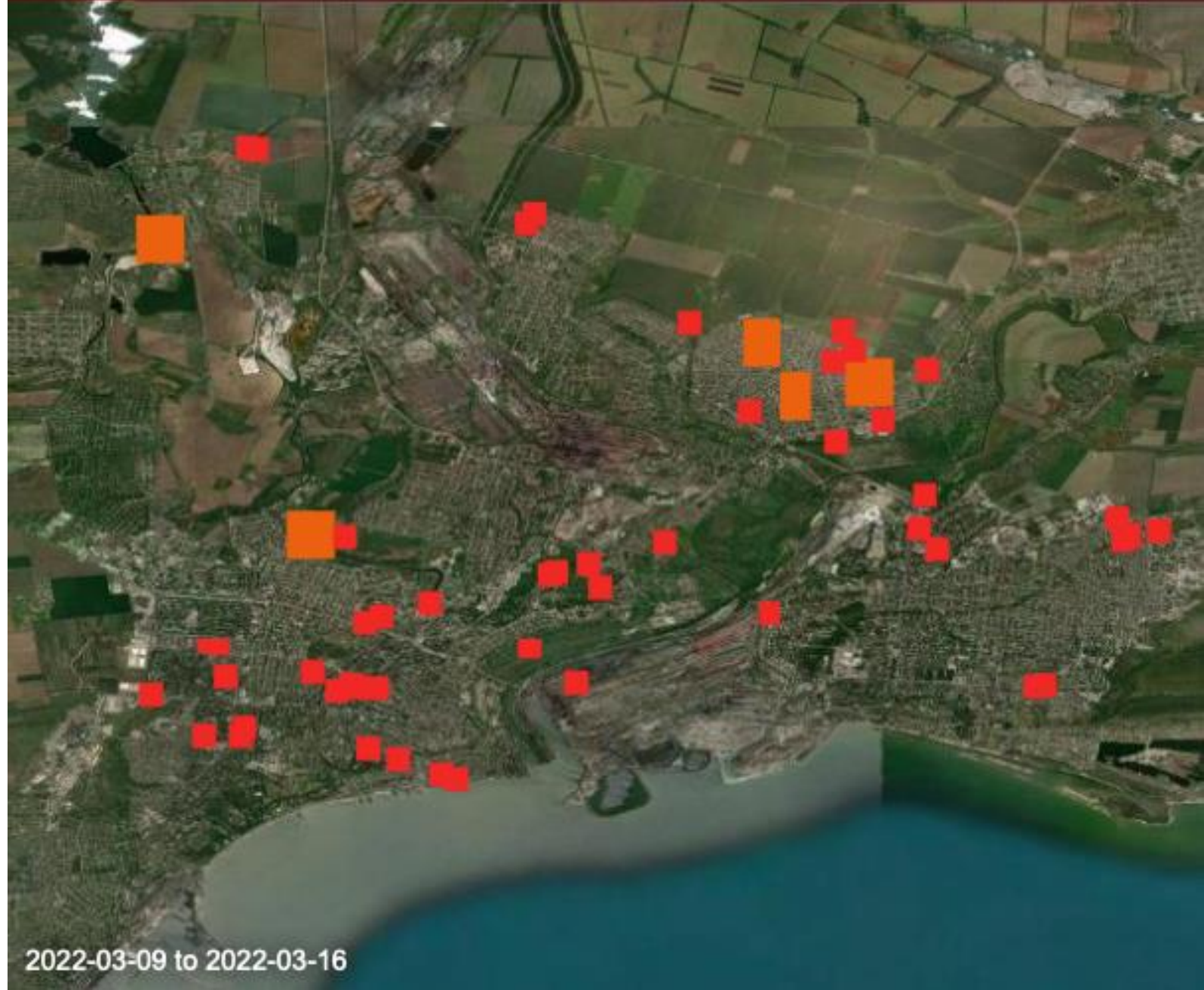
Government (and other) Sources

US Government Sources

- State.gov: United With Ukraine

- Department of Defense: Support for Ukraine

- Treasury Department: Ukraine/Russia-Related Sanctions

- Congressional Research Service Reports: Russia

- Congressional Docs: Govinfo, GPO Catalog, Congress.gov, committee websites

NASA Firms Data

- Satellite imagery used to detect fires

- Used as a means of detecting areas of artillery fire/intense combat by OSINT analysts

- https://www.earthdata.nasa.gov/learn/find-data/near-real-time/firms

Other Governments

- Ukraine: [Russia Invaded Ukraine](#)

- United Kingdom: [UK Stands With Ukraine](#)

- France: [France in the United States: Situation in Ukraine](#)

Refugees/Human Rights/War Crimes Sources

- [Amnesty International: Russia's War on Ukraine](#)

- [Freedom House: The Invasion of Ukraine](#)

- [Human Rights Watch: Russia-Ukraine War](#)

- OSCE: '[Report On Violations Of International Humanitarian And Human Rights Law, War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity Committed In Ukraine Since 24 February 2022](#)'

Military/Strategic Analysis

- [Understanding the Russo-Ukrainian War: A Guide From War on the Rocks](#)

- [Royal United Services Institute: Crisis over Ukraine and European Security](#)

- [Institute for the Study of War: Ukraine Conflict Updates](#)

Tips for Social Media/Internet

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- If unsure, stick to known news outlets: NYT, Wash. Post, WSJ, Economist, etc.

- OSINT community: vary greatly in quality/credibility (recommend Rob Lee, Michael Kofman, @OSINT Aggregator)

- Social media heavily pro-Ukrainian: beware of groupthink, wish casting, "OSINT" fan fiction

- You will encounter potentially disturbing images on social media

- Disinformation, rumor, "smartphone game," fake accounts

Questions?

- Slides and additional sources at CWIS Blog: https://sites.ecu.edu/cwis/

  – Federal Docs/Intro sources

  – Military/Strategic sources

  – Historic/retrospective docs on Russia and Ukraine

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