A city in ruins

Carilyn Pointer

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Bakhmut during battle

Carilyn Pointer – It took 10 months for Russian forces to seize control of the industrial hub of Bakhmut in Ukraine. The victory cost many lives and left many wondering if the outcome was worth the sacrifice. Understanding about the how boundaries are created and maintained, helps shed light on Russia's motivations, and possible future plans.

Boundaries are the dividing lines between states. People and groups construct territories by creating, maintaining, and defending boundaries. Currently, Ukraine is trying to defend the boundary between them and Russia, but Russia slowly keeps gaining ground. Specifically, the city of Bakhmut was captured by Russia in the process of pushing the boundary between the two warring countries further west. While Bakhmut is a relatively smaller city, gaining control was important for Russia to be able to continue their expansion west and eventually take control on the larger cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. However, because of the difficulty Russia experienced in gaining control of Bakhmut, it is unlikely that they will attempt to make that offensive move soon. The important industrial hub in Bakhumt was another incentive for Russia to take control of the many valuable resources and connections of the city

Another important facet to understand in the creation of boundaries, is how and why boundary disputes occur. Typically, boundary disputes begin when the geography of national or ethnic groups does not match the geography of a country's political boundary. While Russia may believe that they are simply annexing Russian citizens back into their country, in contrast many people see the invasion as Russia's attempt of westward expansion. No matter, whichever country's story you believe, it is clear that the different perspectives are creating the friction that has led over a year of fighting.