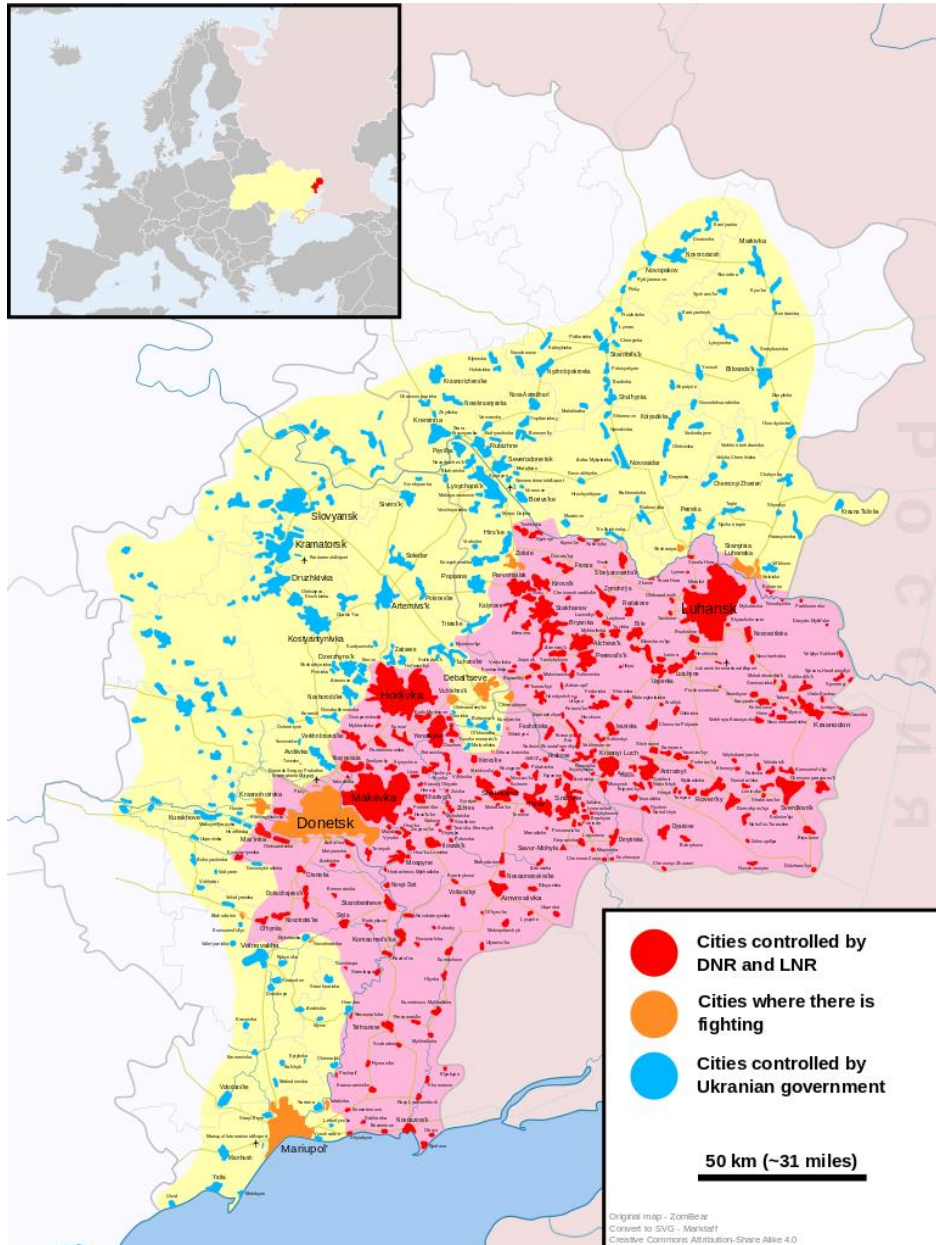


Update 10/8

Since the background guide was written several major events have happened that I hope you have followed. The war in the Eastern Ukraine (hereafter referred to as the war in Donbass) has stayed active thanks to Russian support of separatist in that area, support that led to Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 being shot down when it strayed over the combat zone. Meanwhile NATO held its annual summit and Estonia and Russia have gotten into a dispute about an Estonian spy and world oil prices are cratering.

The War in Donbass and MH17



When the background guide was published in earlier July the Ukrainian government appeared to be on its way to victory. The Russian government responded to this by arming the separatist with tanks, artillery, surface to air missiles (SAMs), and other weapons, leading to intensive fighting around the major cities of Donetsk and Luhansk.

On July 17th Separatist SAMs shot down Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 leading to widespread international condemnation and a renewed offensive by Ukrainian forces. The Red Cross declaring the conflict was a war on July 23rd. By the end of July Russia had begun shelling Ukrainian positions with the U.S. State Department producing satellite photos showing Russian attacks on the 21st, 23rd, 24th and 25th of July.

Russian troops crossed into Ukraine on August 14th under the pretenses of a humanitarian aid mission, Ukrainian forces engaged them the next day. By August 28th NATO claimed that at least 1000 Russian troops were in Ukraine. These soldiers turned the tide and started to push back Ukrainian forces. On September 1st Ukrainian forces had retreated from Luhansk. On September 5th the Separatists and Rebels signed a ceasefire which was partly broken within days.

On September 15th the US led a joint exercise in Western Ukraine called "Rapid Trident" with forces from both NATO members and non-members including Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Romania, and Spain. The next day the ceasefire was totally broken. The situation appears stalemated with a separatist siege of Donetsk airport being in effect since October 1st.

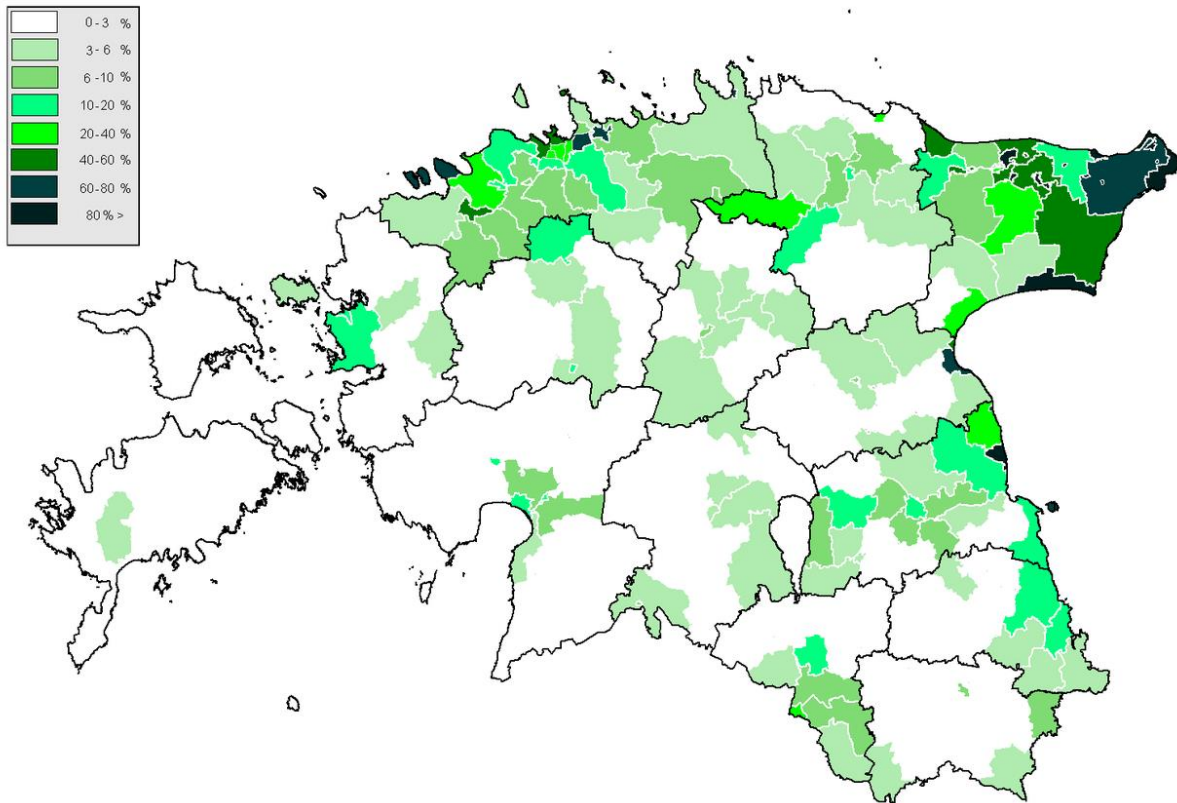
NATO Wales Summit 2014

NATO held their annual summit in Cardiff, Wales from September 3rd to the 5th. NATO members agreed to spend at least 2% of GDP on defense, which British PM David Cameron called the "Welsh pledge", a mark that only the US, UK, Greece and Estonia currently hit. They also agreed to create a new rapid reaction force that will be able to be deployed anywhere in 2-5 days and to improve their strategy against cyber warfare and ambiguous warfare.

Many larger members agreed to help the US if it attacked ISIL in a coalition of the willing.

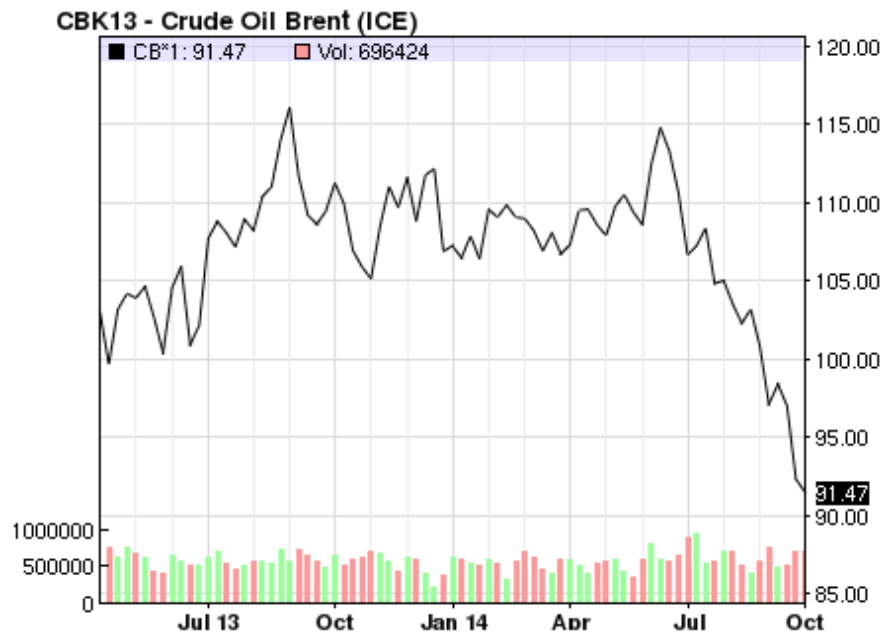
Montenegro was noted for its progress in meeting NATO goals and could become the next member state in 2015 as could Macedonia, as soon as they resolve their naming dispute with Greece.

Tensions in Estonia



On September 5th Russia captured an Estonian spy. Russia claims that he was on the Russian side of the border and spying. Estonia claims that he was on the Estonian Side of the border and was kidnapped at gunpoint. Estonia like the Ukraine has many ethnic Russians as evidenced by the map of percentage of Russian speakers above. The Russians have a pattern of funding separatist, not only in Ukraine, but also in Georgia, Moldavia, and Azerbaijan.

Energy Politics



The price of oil powers Russia's economy through exports. It has dropped dramatically in recent months. Between the tough economic sanctions imposed by the US and Europe and the decline in oil prices, and a predicted further decline, the Russian economy may totally collapse. The effect that this has on Russian policy is unknown and could range anywhere from increased aggression to a totally withdrawal.