

## **Fall of Mariupol**

### **Why in news?**

The surrender of defensive forces in Mariupol likely marks the end of fighting in the eastern Ukrainian city that has been under Russian siege.

### **What about the city of Mariupol?**

- Mariupol sits on the coast of the Azov Sea between the Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, and the self-declared Donetsk republic.
- Named after Maria Feodorovna, the 18th century Russian empress, Mariupol was part of the Azov Governorate of imperial Russia.
- Over the years, it emerged as one of the biggest trading centres on the Black Sea and Azov coasts.
- By the late 19th century, the city became a steel manufacturing hub, attracting thousands of workers from around the region.
- During the Second World War, Mariupol was occupied by the German Nazis, for almost two years.
- Mariupol, the largest port of the Sea of Azov, was the industrial engine of eastern Ukraine.
- But everything would change in 2014 after the so-called “Euromaidan revolution” and fell into the hands of pro-Russian rebels.
- In June 2014, the rebels retreated from the city, giving it back to the Ukrainian authorities.



## Why is the city of Mariupol critical for Russia?

- **Separation of Donbas from Ukraine-** The city is part of the areas claimed by the Donetsk republic.
- So if Mr. Putin's actual military goal is separating the entire Donbas region from Ukraine, he would need Mariupol.
- **Denazification-** The city hosts the headquarters of the Azov Battalion which is a local neo-Nazi militia.
- As denazification is one of the declared goals of Russia's invasion, they would want to take over the city and declare victory over the neo-Nazi group.
- **Establishing land bridge-** The strategic location of Mariupol is critical for Russia if it wants to establish a land bridge from Donbas to Crimea.
- **Controlling Black Sea-** With Mariupol in their hand, the Russians would be in control of almost 80% of the Black Sea coast.
- With many of the fighters ending the fight and allowing themselves to be evacuated to the Russia-controlled territories of Donbas, the whole city is now in the hands of the Russians.

## What does this hold for Russia?

- Russia has suffered several setbacks in its invasion of Ukraine.
- It started a three-front war but was met with fierce Ukrainian resistance in the north and east.
- Its battleground focus is now almost entirely on the Donbas region where Russian troops are making incremental advances.
- Now, with Mariupol under its control, Russia can free up resources to move to its next target, which suggests that the war could grind on.
- Despite the West's massive financial and military support, Ukraine keeps losing territories.

- The invasion has already prompted Finland and Sweden, which have historically stayed out of military alliances, to formally seek NATO membership.
- Ukraine is losing territories, Russia is witnessing another round of NATO's enlargement, and Europe, battered by inflation and an energy crisis, is likely to be facing prolonged instability and conflicts.

## References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/the-hindu-editorial-on-fall-of-mariupol/article65426546.ece>
2. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/battle-for-the-east/article65261858.ece>

