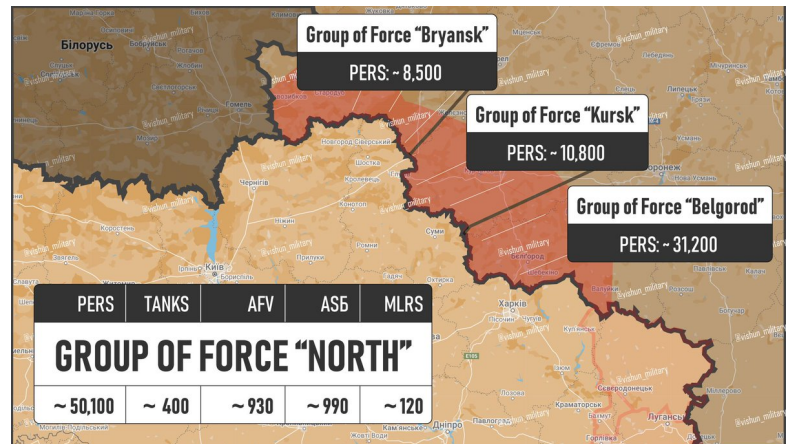


Kharkov Battles: The Battle for Vovchansk

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1. On February 16th, 2024, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in its Saturday morning newspaper that “[outgunned] Ukrainian forces have withdrawn from the beleaguered eastern city of Avdiivka.” The former eastern Ukrainian city, Avdiivka, suddenly became Avdeevka, a Russian controlled territory in a wide belt of contested areas spanning the width of a series of battles for ultimate control over

the geopolitically significant Kharkov direction.

2. It signified the single most important advance for Russia, since the fall of Bakhmut-Artemovsk in May, 2023.[1] It also signified the single most important development for the overall war, since Russia’s expansion of its initial invasion on February 24th, 2022.



3. In the month following the fall of Avdiivka, Russian forces advanced well beyond the lines existing before the fall of Avdiivka. These are all in the Kharkov direction.[2]

Lapin, commander of the newly formed group of troops "North", reportedly at one of the headquarters in the Kursk region, began to circulate widely throughout the internet.

4. The Kharkov direction, whose history as a centre for the manufacture of Soviet tanks pre-dates the outbreak of World War II, stands as a gateway for advancing in either direction in Ukraine. In the east the road to Moscow is paved through Kharkov, in the west to Kiev.

6. On May 10th, 2024, the Russian news agency, *News.ru*, reported the following: “Военный корреспондент Александр Коц сообщил, что Вооруженные силы РФ в ночь на 10 мая активизировались на Харьковском направлении.”[3]

The Beginning of the Battle

5. Shortly before the battle for Kharkiv began, images of Colonel-General Alexander

On May 16th, 2024, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article, detailing how the attack on Kharkiv began on the even of Russia’s holiday, May 9th. The article states: “Sr. Lt. Denys Yaroslavsky, the commander of

a unit in the 57th Brigade defending Vovchansk was in a bunker inside of the city on May 9th, watching from a drone feed as two Russian armored fighting vehicles charged through a fence that demarcates the international border, [while] a group of 15 Russian troops come [entering] the city.”[4]

7. It is alleged that the battle for Kharkiv began with a single front from two sides, one towards Vovchansk, the other towards Lipsti. Russian initiated the battle with a reported 30,000 to 50,000 troops, 400 tanks, 930 IFV, 990 artillery systems, and 120 MLRS.
8. The fortifications, for which Ukraine dedicated more than



\$800 million dollars, have not served to repel the Russians. In

post after post on social media, Ukrainian military bloggers have denounced the fortifications. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of Avdiivka [], “Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal [announced] that almost 31 billion Hryvnia, or around \$800 million, had been allocated for the construction of fortifications.”[5] Most of these funds, however, have been visibly squandered, as Ukrainian military bloggers have noted.

9. In a post by a Ukrainian military blogger named @DeepState_UA



دفاعات رأس التين الروسية

"أسنان التين".. تكتيك روسي "قديم" لصد الهجوم الأوكراني المضاد

استخدم خط "أسنان التين" الدفاعي بكثرة في الحرب العالمية الثانية كخط "سيغفريد" الذي أنشأته ألمانيا أو خط "ماجينو" الذي شيدته فرنسا



نشر في: 29 يوليو، 2023، 06:09 GST
أخر تحديث: 29 يوليو، 2023، 06:57 GST

العربية نت - عنتر سعيد

posted a tweet on May 14th, 2024 with a quarter million views entitled, “Про інженерно-фортифікаційну підготовку

شعار مجموعة الشمال
العسكرية الروسية

الشمال
Север

تقدم بعمق 10 كم

تقدم ب طول 52 كم

مقتل المئات من جنود الجيش
الأوكراني وحرس الحدود

تدمير العشرات من
آليات الجيش الأوكراني

تم تحرير 240 كيلومتر مربع

تم تحرير 12 مستوطنة

+100 اسير أوكراني

Харківщини.” [6] In the tweet, the author notes how Ukrainian dragon’s teeth, an article Al-Arabiya made famous on the Surovkin lines[7], appear to be thrown to the side of the road in huge piles in the vicinity of Liptsi. Subsequent photographs confirm that the contractors

responsible for building Ukraine's fortifications dumped these dragon’s teeth to the side of the road in huge piles. The author of the tweet states: “На даних світлинах — околиці Липців та подарунок від українських платників для ворога. Зі слів бійців, дані

загородження лежать без діла з літа 2023 року.”[6]

10. In response, Ukraine’s *Українська Правда* published an article on Monday, May 13th, 2024, entitled, “Where are the fortifications? Kharkov OVA paid millions to fictitious companies,” alluding to obvious corruption.[8] The corruption, which Ukraine’s domestic intelligence agencies have been unable to limit, continues to pull the rug out from underneath Ukrainians.

11. In response to the collapse of its fortifications in Kharkiv, Ukraine appointed a new commander to take charge of the situation in the north. In an article entitled, “Командувача ОТУВ “Харків” змінили на тлі наступу росіян,” the authors indicate that Ukraine replaced the commanding officer in charge of Kharkiv’s defense shortly after the Russians expanded the invasion to the area. [9]

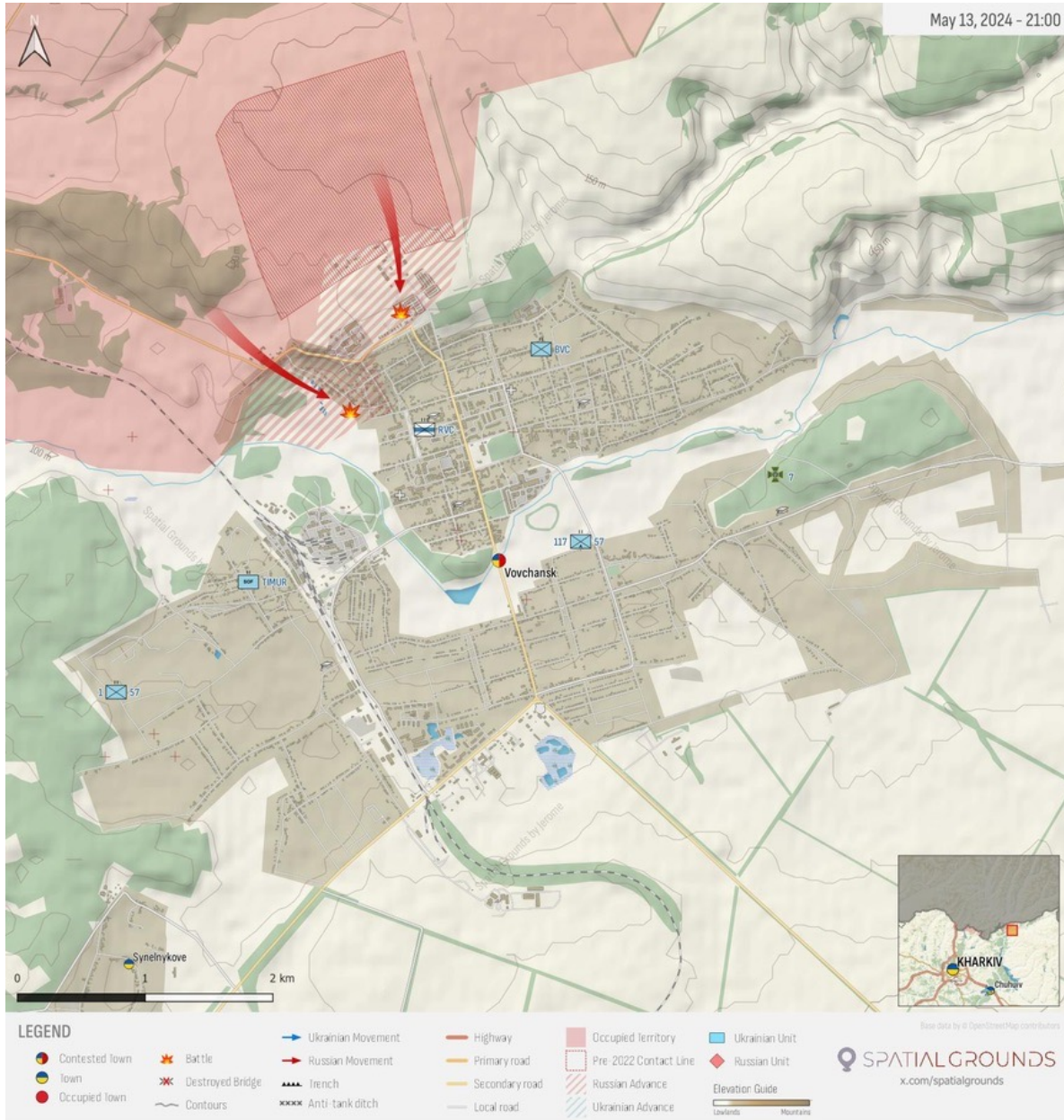
12. The sixth front in northern Kharkiv expands “the several points along the 600-mile front line as [Russia] [sought] to capitalize on after its recent

capture of the eastern city of Avdiivka, its first major battlefield victory in months.”[5] The expansion adds more than 400 additional miles, making the overall frontline more than 1,100 miles long, an extremely long front.

The Battle

13. With relatively little to no resistance to its advances, the Russians reclaimed more than 240 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory within the first three days of its operation. During the operation, more than 12 settlements, or lesser known sparsely populated villages, passed from Ukrainian to Russian control. Among the fallen villages on the Vovchansk side are the villages Огурцово, Плетеневка, Пыльная, Стрелечья, Гатище, Красное, Мороховец, and Олейниково. Russian military bloggers allege that soldiers from both the Azov, as well as the Kraken, battalions, two of the most famous, most reconstituted units, surrendered *en masse* to Russian forces.

14. The pro-Russian blogger, @Su_35m (i.e., اخبار روسيا الاتحادية), announced, for



instance, on May 13th, 2024 the following: “قوات الشمال الروسي في خاركوف تاسر عدد من قوات كييف النازية.” In the tweet, the author displayed a picture of ten Ukrainian soldiers with their names. Although not all of the soldiers’ names are visible, at least one of the names reads as

follows: “Садченко Александр Сергеевич.” [10]

15. It appears as though Ukraine’s 58th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, the RDK (i.e., Русский Добровольческий Корпус), the 24th OShB “Aidar,” which is part of Ukraine’s territorial

defense forces, participated in the Kharkiv's defense. The 58th Infantry Brigade, which participated in the battles for Okhtyrka, Konotop, and Chernigov, participated in Kharkiv's defense. RDK appears to have taken part directly in the battle for Vovchansk.

16. On the Vovchansk side, the Russians appear to be advancing on Старица, one of Ukraine's villages in Kharkiv, located to the south-west of Vovchansk. Russia is advancing from the west and the north on Vovchansk. Russians are blocking the northern part of Vovchansk from the east. It is reported recently that Russia gained fire control over the two lines of communication for supplying Vovchansk.

17. On the Liptsi side, Ukrainians lost control over the highway connecting the city to Kharkiv. Russians now occupy a hill overlooking the entire area, providing the Russians with fire control.

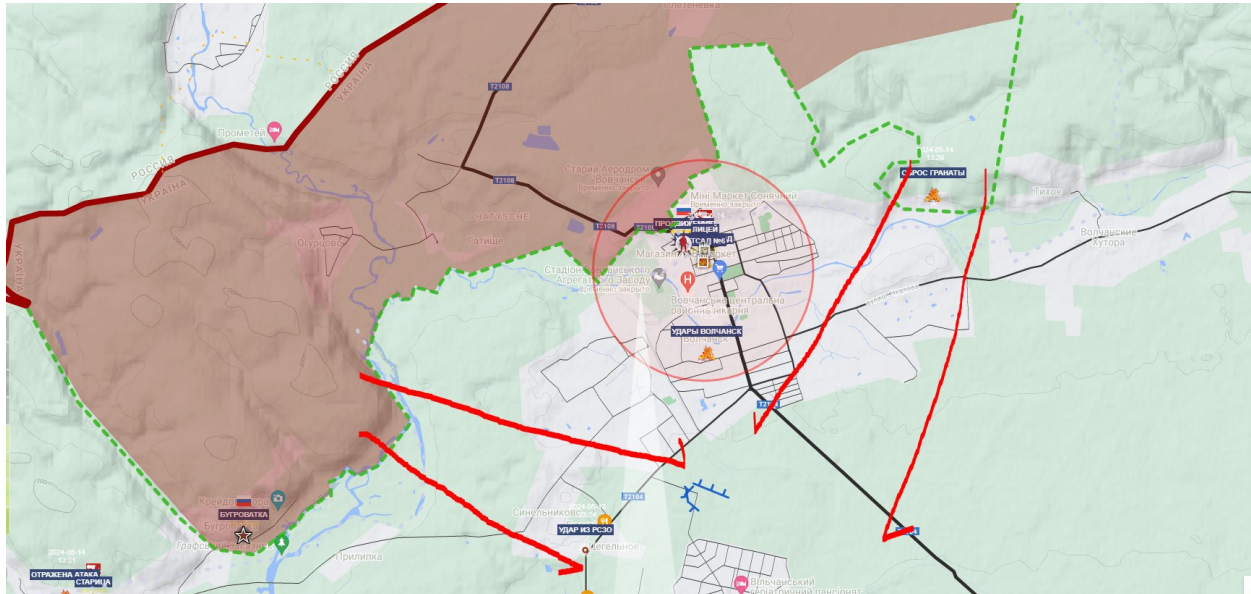
18. On the Liptsi side, one noteworthy example of Ukrainian resistance comes from an Ukrainian blogger who

publishes footage accompanied by extremely detailed metadata, making his data exceptionally useful in the grand scheme of things. The blogger's name is @EjShahid. On May 15th, 2024, @EjShahid published a retweet with the following headline:

“Українські військові штурмують будинок та беруть російських полонених на захід від Глибокого, Харківська область.” [11] The blogger, @EjShahid, added the exact geo-confirmed GPS coordinates of the incident as 50.252566, 36.402520. The fact that Ukrainian soldiers were able to take Russian soldiers prisoner from among the dachas in south-western Hlyboke, Kharkiv, indicates that at least some of the men the Russians dispatched for Kharkiv are inexperienced, an omen. It could be that Russia's sixth front stretches its manpower beyond a reasonable limit.

19. While the battle continues to rage, Vovchansk stands no chance against Russia's onslaught. The city is expected to fall soon.

**Predictions about Ukraine's
'Greater Success'**



20. On Sunday, August 12th, 2023, Mark Galeotti published an article in the *Sunday Times* with the title: “Ukraine is winning the war with Russia, but it won't be over by Christmas.” Published in the immediate aftermath of Ukraine’s failed ‘Spring’ counteroffensive, Galeotti made a prediction about the Ukraine war.[12]

21. Galeotti stated: “One could argue that this summer's fighting sets up the Ukrainians for greater success next spring. They will have even more western equipment, including US M1A1 Abrams tanks and maybe F-16 fighter jets.” It may be trivial to note that Ukraine’s supply of US M1A1 Abrams tanks, more than

seven of which Ukraine’s U.S.-led NATO trained 47th Mechanized Brigade lost during the battle of Berdyachi, is no longer a part of its ‘arsenal of democracy,’ as Ukraine withdrew the remainder of the 31 Abrams Washington initially dispatched shortly after the fall of Ocheretina. The F-16s, for which there are two important sources of information, the first being the *New York Times*, the other being the nationalistic Russian research agency, @*Rybar*, have yet to fly above Ukraine. [13], [14], [15]

22. The more important point in Galeotti’s unqualified prediction, however, is his contention that Ukraine’s failed ‘Spring’ counteroffensive ‘set up the

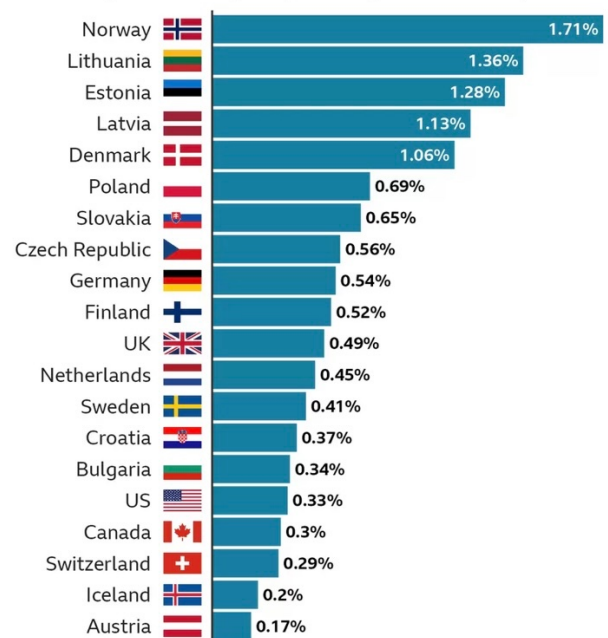
Ukrainians for greater success next spring.’ With front lines throughout the five major axes of Russia’s advance in eastern Donetsk collapsing, the fall of Avdiivka preceding that of Ocheretina and Natailove condemned Galeotti’s prediction to the dustbin of history.

23. Ukraine’s ‘greater success’ comes after billions upon billions of dollars disbursed to the Zelensky regime have failed to effectuate a decisive change of state on the battlefields of eastern Ukraine. A key component, military experts say, is the entrance of Ukraine’s war economy into *Materialschlacht*. This key piece of information comes from commentator, Hlib Parfanov, in an article published at the *Jamestown Foundation* on July 26th, 2023.[16] Citing, ‘*Materialschlacht*,’ a concept designed to explain the Nazi’s increasingly insufficient amount of matériel required for the manufacture of heavy weapon systems like tanks, Parfanov’s analysis rests on the idea that Ukraine’s war economy is like the Nazi’s but at the end of the day Ukraine’s defense budget is altogether different. In contrast with the Nazis, Ukraine’s own

defense budget is nothing but the sum of its sponsors.

24. It would be worthwhile to examine, alongside the amount of GDP disbursed in aid, how much the individual contributions count against each of the sponsor's defense budgets. The aid the United States delivers to Ukraine is nearly 8% to 10% of America’s \$800 billion dollar defense budget but the percentage is likely much

European countries have sent significant amounts of aid to Ukraine
The 20 largest donors by the percentage of the country's GDP



Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy

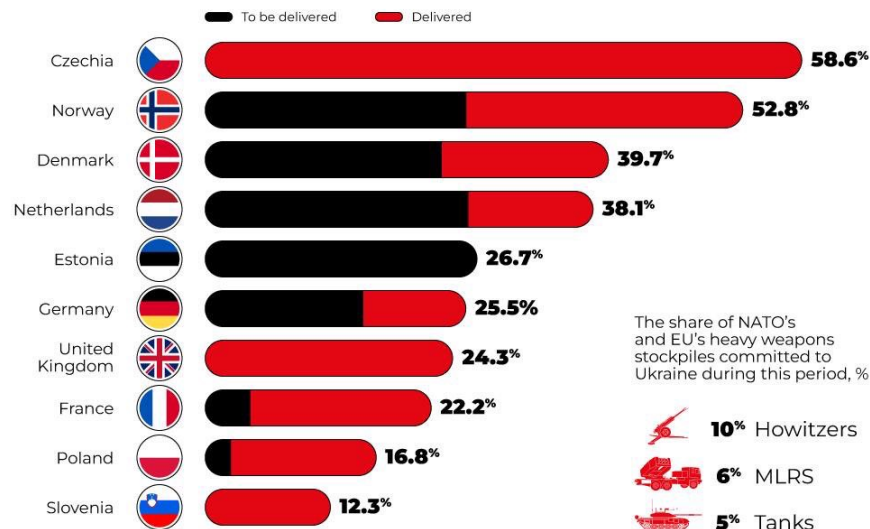


higher for NATO countries, who bare more of the burden on much small defense budgets.

CZECHIA & NORWAY GAVE UA OVER 50% OF THEIR HEAVY WEAPONS

TOP
LEAD

Top 10 countries by the share of their stockpiles of heavy weapons* committed to Ukraine from January 24, 2022 to February 29, 2024, %



Source: Kiel Institute. Data as of April 25, 2024.

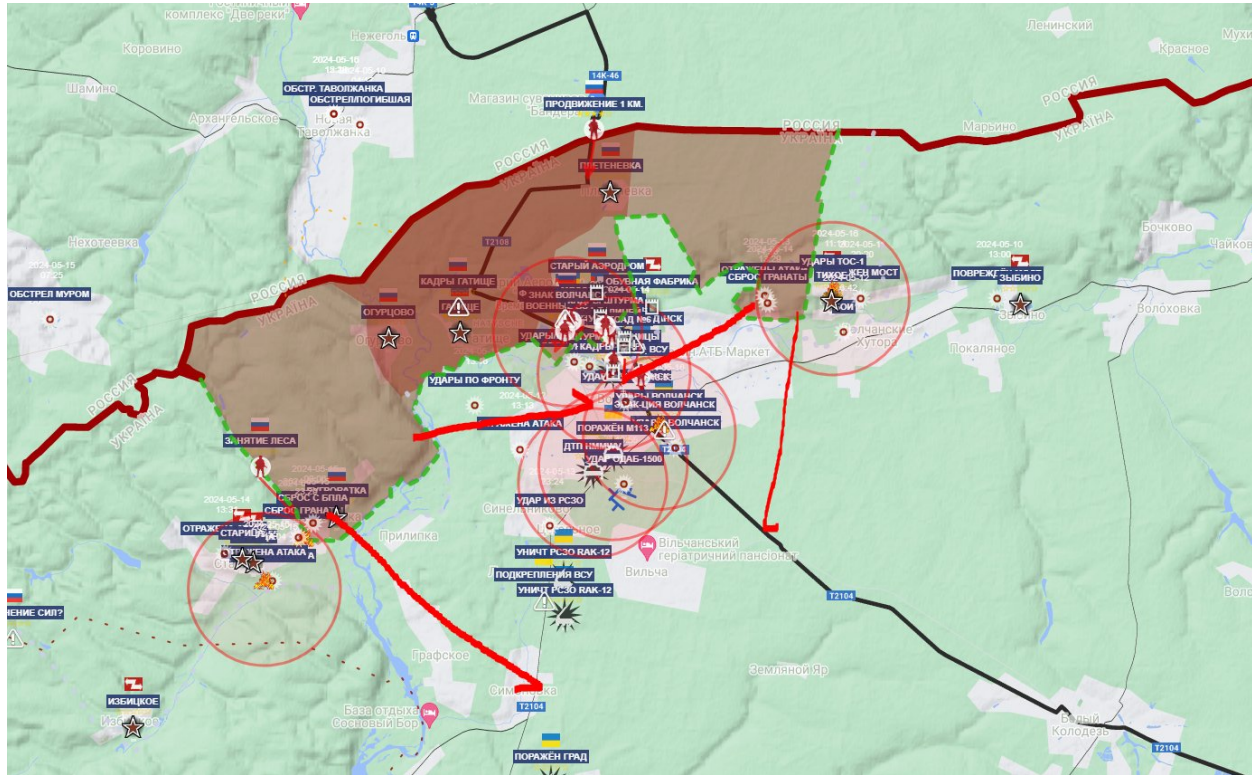
*heavy weapons – tanks, howitzers, MLRS

@TopLeadEU

25. Alongside these donations, which exist on the margins of a sponsor's own defense budget, there are other donations. It appears as though NATO countries have, in some cases, donated more than half of all of their military equipment to Ukraine's war effort. The Czech Republic together with Norway donated, for instance, over 50% of their heavy weapons to Ukraine, as of February 29th, 2024.

Institute for the Study of War

26. In addition to 'greater success,' Galeotti also asserted that Russia's 'overheating' economy, claiming that "it cannot replace destroyed systems at anything near the rate they are being destroyed," even though "Moscow has worked its way around some production bottlenecks, including domestic production of Iranian 'suicide drones.' The assertion, however, is untenable, especially in light



of a report published by the Institute for the Study of War on May 8th, 2024.[17] The report came to the following conclusion: “Recent satellite imagery of depleted Russian military vehicle and weapon storage facilities further indicates that Russia is currently sustaining its war effort largely from storage rather than by manufacturing new vehicles and certain weapon systems at scale.” The ISW’s limited scope of vehicles or weapon systems severely limits the persuasiveness of its claims.

27. The three open source projects the ISW utilized focused, for instance, on Russian warehouses where Russian IFV (i.e., Infantry Fighting Vehicles) were housed together with those where Russia’s most famous artillery pieces, the D-20 or 30, were housed. In response to these compilations, which were limited from the outset by a focus on IFVs together with artillery pieces, the ISW concluded that the vast majority of Russia’s newly delivered weapon systems came from storage rather than from production.



28. Several pieces of information, however, not only underscore the limited nature of the ISW's conclusions but also Russia's actual production power. In particular, footage of Russia's UAC (i.e., United Aircraft Corporation) displays transfers of new Su-35S aircraft to the Ministry of Defense, as the Su-35S Multirole 4++ generation fighters underwent a cycle of ground and flight tests in various operating modes, before flying from the KnAAZ

airfield to their new home base. These are not from a storage.

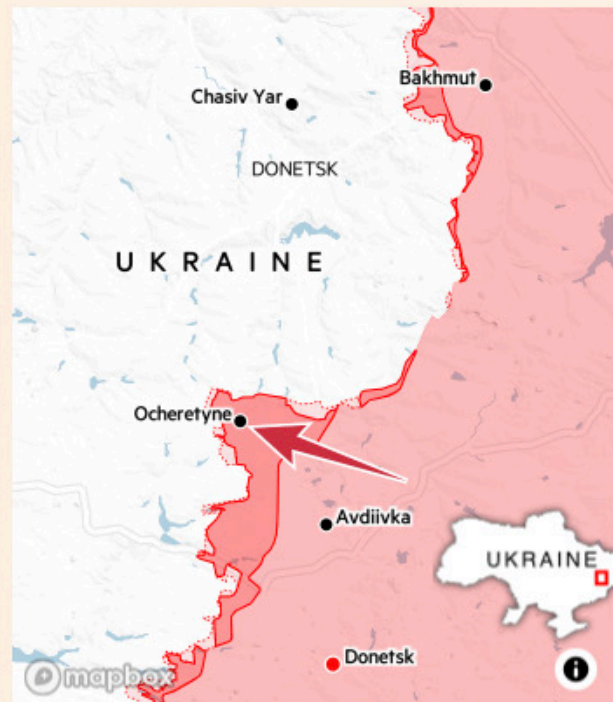
The T-90 'Breakthrough'

29. On May 6th, 2024 Uralvagonzavod, for instance, sent a trainload of T-90M Proryv tanks to the Russian army in the SMO zone, as footage of the trainload of Russian tanks circulated widely throughout social media.
30. These tanks, which received a significant amount of coverage in the world press, were delivered around the same time that a video depicting the tank's new visor demonstrated its ability to defeat incoming drone threats, one of the primary reasons many armor enthusiasts have sought to downplay the role of the tank in the 21st century.[18]
31. Military bloggers celebrated the demonstration, retweeting the video with small descriptions in Arabic. At least three separate Arabic language channels published videos on the T-90M Proryv's successful deflection of two drone strikes. On May 10th, 2024 an Arabic milblogger (i.e., @ashrafnsier Arab-Military)

- tweeted the following in Arabic: “دبابة روسية نوع ت-٩٠ تصمد امام ضربتين من درونات انتحارية اوكرانية... عمل جيد لهذه الدبابة اذا ما قارنا بسعر [19] On May 11th, 2024 an Arabic milblogger (i.e., @mog_Russ | الموجز الروسي | Russia news) tweeted the following in Arabic: “صمدت دبابة الروسية المزودة بقناع وقائي لعدة ضربات من طائرات بدون طيار انتحارية”. [20] On May 11th, 2024 an Arabic milblogger (i.e., @Roaastudies (رؤى لدراسات الحرب) tweeted the following in Arabic: “T-90M دبابة” روسية تلقت عدة ضربات من طائرات وصمدت واحتفظت بفعاليتها FPV مسيرة القتالية.” [21]
32. Shortly thereafter, the Saudi news agency, *Al-Arabiya* (i.e., العربية), published a short video montage on the T-90M ‘Breakthrough.’ In the headline of its tweet from May 12th, 2024, *Al-Arabiya*, which references the video the other three Arabic military bloggers tweet, states the following: “اعتبرها #بوتين أفضل مركبة قتالية في العالم وتنجو من المسيرات حتى لو حاصرتها من كل الجبهات وتقفز من فوق القنابل... قدرات مذهلة للدبابة الروسية T-90M.” [22]
33. The Arab world, comprised primarily of competing nations, who cannot reach the status of a great power for lack of a domestic defense industrial base or military industrial complex, are forced to purchase their armor from great powers. It is clear that in opposition to the German Leopard, British Challenger or American Abrams, the Arab world views the vast array of Russian tanks as more formidable armor for expanding its military. *Al-Arabiya*’s description of the T-90M ‘Breakthrough’ as the most ‘preferred’ main battle tank suggests that the Arab world, as Saudi Arabia is one of its foremost representatives, views the Russian tank as the most competitive. The *Al-Arabiya* tweet, for instance, references the tank deflecting drone attacks, indicating that a tank evolving its armor to deflect drone threats is a relevant feature for the marketability of tanks in the global defense industry.
34. While the *Institute for International Strategic Studies* does not mention the ISW’s May 8th assessment, the IISS, nonetheless, comes to a similar conclusion in one of its most

Russian troops in northern Kharkiv have not yet made the breakthrough they did in Avdiivka

- Territory gained by Russia
- Russian-claimed control
- Russian assessed advances
- Russian troop movements
- Under Russian control
- Assessed Russian presence
- Russian-claimed control



FINANCIAL TIMES

Sources: [Institute for the Study of War](#), [AEI's Critical Threats Project](#), FT research • Last updated May 13 8:30am GMT

recent reports, entitled: “Tanks take a sharp turn to remain relevant.” While the article does not mention the T-90 Прорыв whose recently updated armor with visor led to the publication of a sensational piece in Al-Arabiya, the author’s thesis applies. His thesis is that tanks

are adapting in ways to armor themselves against new threats, even though the T-90 Прорыв’s visor is not ‘adaptive’ armor.

35. It states: “The International Institute for Strategic Studies has assessed that Russia may have lost more than 8,000 armored

fighting vehicles in the first 24 months of the war. Among those are the more than 3,000 main battle tanks (MBTs), or as many MBTs as it had at the outset. It has had to replenish its stocks by taking old equipment from storage.” The IISS report, however, appears to have proceeded without preliminary open source analysis of MBTs, or, at the very least, failed to reference any previous analysis regarding ‘storage.’ [23]

36. In addition to both fighter jets, as well as tanks, one of Ukraine’s military intelligence agents, Вадим Скібіцький, gave an interview, explaining how robust Russia’s ability to produce missiles is. [24]

37. According to a well-known agent from Ukraine’s own intelligence agency, Вадим Скібіцький (i.e., Vadim Skibitsky), who appears to be far more intelligent than the fully extendable NATO marionette Kiril Budanov, the Russians continue to produce weapon systems.[8] Among the weapon systems Russia continues to produce are the following:

- вони мають можливість виробляти 100-115 ракет саме цього оперативно-тактичного класу (на кшталт Х-31, Х-59 тощо)
 - вони можуть виготовити (стільки вони, наприклад, зробили протягом грудня) 330-350 одиниць цих БПЛА
 - про артилерійські боєприпаси 122 та 152 калібру, то російські підприємства виготовили близько 2 мільйонів таких боєприпасів у 2023 році.
 - вони можуть відрізнятись 115-130 стратегічних ракет в залежності від місяця.
38. The ISW’s May 8th report does not discuss tanks, fighter jets, or missiles. The ISW’s May 8th report therefore conspicuously lacks any of discussion of Russia’s primary weapon systems, as both artillery as well as IFVs are subordinate to tanks, fighter jets, or missiles. Russia’s ability to replace these more advanced, superior weapon systems, casts a shadow of doubt over the conclusion the ISW reached in its May 8th report regarding ‘storage,’ highlighting

its severely limited
persuasiveness.

The Air War

39. Вадим Скібіцький's figures from a few weeks ago gain significance now as per the *Wall Street Journal's* recently published article from Tuesday, May 14th, 2024. The article, which indicates how "Ukraine Downs Fewer Russian Missiles," details a recent change of state on in the overall air war. In the *Journal's* report, an analysis of existing data indicates that Ukraine's overall ability to apply countermeasures to Russia's intensified strikes throughout the country continues to decrease. [25]

40. It states: "In the past six months, Ukraine intercepted about 46% of Russian missiles, compared with 73% in the preceding six-month period." In just the last month alone, "the interception rate fell to 30% of missiles." The decrease in Ukraine's ability to apply countermeasures to Russian air strikes, however, is likely a result of the fact that "[during] the past six months Russia fired about 45% more drones and missiles than in the

preceding six month period." These statistics indicate that Ukraine is unable to match increasing Russian strikes with the increasing application of countermeasures.

41. "Russia," the *Journal* reports, "fired nearly double the number of Shahed drones, at 2,628 in the past six months compared with the previous period." With the destruction of Kyiv's Patriot batteries, many of which were destroyed in March, "Ukraine's only reliable way to shoot down ballistic, S-300, or hypersonic missiles" becomes diminished.

42. In conclusion, the article ends by saying, "[The] air war may come down to which side can outlast the other on missile supplies." The article, which is based on concealed data, makes no mention of Russia's bombs with 'glide kits.' These bombs, however, play a decisive role in Russia's ability to advance deep into Ukraine's territory.

43. While during the battle of Avdiivka, Russia achieved local air superiority, as according to the YouTube channel, DefenseTV, in subsequent battles, Russia avoided contact

with Ukraine's anti-air defenses by launching bombs with 'glide kits' from distances far removed from the scope of Ukraine's radar. These empowered Russia to continue advances not just in Avdiivka, but along the five major axes of advance in eastern Ukraine.

44. Alongside these advances, Ukraine's allies in NATO have failed to ramp up the shipment of new Patriot batteries. Greece, for instance, declined to transfer its Patriot batteries, citing Washington's failure to provide a security guarantee against Turkey, should Greece transfer the system. Poland, the main logistics hub for all of Ukraine's war effort, refused to provide a new Patriot battery, citing Washington's failure to deliver seven years later. Germany is expected to dispatch three of its twelve systems. The United States, which owns sixty systems, has dispatched none.
45. The Patriot system, which is a glorified trailer with a box of switches for attached batteries of missiles, is unnecessarily complex, requiring thousands upon thousands upon thousands of dollars, hours upon hours

upon hours of time, to create new units. Owned, controlled or operated by defense contractors, Washington cannot allow for a cheaper, faster, simpler system to be built that might challenge the monopoly Lockheed Martin's legacy maintains. Washington's lack of independence, therefore, threatens its ability to advance its own foreign policy beyond the military industrial complex.

46. Ukraine's beleaguered Air Force recently began to engage in so-called 'weasel tactics' designed to lure Russia's own anti-air defense out in the open for counterstrikes. These appear to have little to no effect on the overall balance of power.
47. With Russia's ability to produce missiles undeterred by cross-border strikes, sanctions, or the war itself, unremitting losses to Ukraine's diminished *Flugabwehr* have begun to provide indications of a situation in which Ukraine may no longer be able to resist Russia's ever encroaching assertion of air superiority.

On the Way to the Dnipro

48. One of the consequences of Russia's decision to launch its offensive on Kharkov became the transfer of troops from southern to northern fronts. While limited information on transfers in the Ukrainian press appears in the headlines of its newspapers, the Russian press followed by Arabic language military bloggers noted Ukraine's decision.

49. Russia's РБК, for instance, noted the following: "На харьковское направление переброшены резервные подразделения Вооруженных сил Украины (ВСУ)."[26]

50. Ukraine's decision to transfer troops from southern to northern fronts continues to limits its ability to mount additional offensive operations against areas of Crimea or Kherson or their environs. An Arabic blogger, @mog_Russ, reported on May 11th, 2024, one day after the beginning of the Kharkiv offensive, the following: "كما هو متوقع يتم نقل القوات الأوكرانية من منطقة قريبة من خيرسون إلى منطقة خاركوف، وهو يستبعد أي سيناريو أوكراني لعبور نهر الدينيبرو على نطاق واسع. ويأتي ذلك أيضا في وقت تجري فيه القوات الروسية

"مناورات" عبور نهر الدينيبير والإنزال.
[27]

51. In the weeks leading up to the Kharkiv offensive, Ukrainian armed forces launched an attack on the swampy island called Nestryha, an island located in the south western part of Kherson on the northern border with Crimea. On May 6th, 2024, for instance, the *Kyiv Independent* reported "Russia trying to regain control of Nestryha island." It stated: "Russian forces have launched repeated assaults in an attempt to retake the recently liberated Nestryha island in the Kherson Oblast, a military official said." [28]

52. The operation initially succeeded with Ukrainian armed forces occupying parts of the island. Shortly after Ukrainian armed forces occupied parts of the island, Syrsky, the commander of Ukrainian armed forces, declared the territory under Ukrainian control as early as May 1st. The Russian press vehemently denied the validity of Syrsky's declaration.[29] The Russian news agency, Известия, published an article, stating the following: "Заявление

главнокомандующего
Вооруженными силами
Украины (ВСУ) Александра
Сырского о «захвате» острова
Нестрого на Днестре не
соответствует
действительности.” [30]

53. Russia immediately launched counteroffensive operations to reoccupy the swampy island. Within a short period of time, the Russians reoccupied the island. A geo-confirmed video with a Russian soldier raising a Russian flag absolved Ukrainian claims of control. By May 11th, 2024, less than ten days after initial reports on Syrsky’s declaration, Russian soldiers raised a flag in the island’s center.
54. Operations such as the one on Nestryha island are now less likely than any previous time. It is the author’s opinion that the Kharkiv offensive is a shaping operation similar to the withdrawal from the right bank of the Dnipro in Kherson that resulted in a situation in which Ukrainian troops became rechanneled north to the meat-grinder at Bakhmut-Artemovsk. Just like the battle of Bakhmut-Artemovsk, of which the

withdrawal from the right bank of the Dnipro in Kherson shaped subsequent Ukrainian decisions, the Kharkiv offensive is designed to shift the balance of Ukrainian power from the south to the north, making it much more difficult than any previous time to lay siege to Crimea, southern Kherson or its surrounding islands like Nestryha.

55. Crimea is the jewel in the crown for Ukraine, as in 1789, 1853, 1918, 1941. It is an imperative of the Russian military’s high command that any or all troops that may threaten the Crimean peninsula be transferred from the south to the north. The Kharkiv offensive is the second most successful operation to shift Ukraine’s troops from the south to the north.
56. The most important front, however, remains the Avdiivka direction, since the Avdiivka direction’s proximity to the Dnipro, the natural land barrier for Russia’s left flank, is the closest. Should the Russians manage to advance beyond Pokrovsk, where Ukraine’s last stronghold of fortifications stands, there is little to nothing

- left to prevent a further Russian advance on the Dnipro.
57. The defensive line the Ukrainians built along the left bank of the Dnipro is a Maginot Line for which the Russians seeks to advance an Ardenne maneuver directly on the Dnipro. In the future historians, who examine the Ukraine war with the benefit of hindsight, will describe those defenses as a mistake.
58. Arabic bloggers who favor Russia published many tweets, in one of which the account @hosamalkrbash, for instance, raised issue with Russia's aim. In it he wrote: "لا يزال غير واضح، هدف القوات الروسية من هجوم خاركوف، هل هو تأمين الحدود ومنطقة عازلة أو السيطرة على أراضي واسعة وتحقيق مكاسب كبيرة. كانت خاركيف محدودة التحصينات والقوات الأوكرانية مشغولة ببقية الجبهات، كلما تاخر الروس بتحقيق مكاسب قامت أوكرانيا بتعزيز الدفاعات. [31]"
59. Russia, however, needs only come within artillery range of the capital, Kyiv, to sue for peace. In the short term, however, the Vovchansk front is far more significant than Liptsi's due to the former's proximity to the Pechenihiy reservoir, a natural land barrier the Russian history of warfare on the eastern front suggests the Russians would most certainly exploit to secure its eastern flank in Vovchansk before shifting its weight towards Liptsi upon coalescence. Given Russia's current pace, it is likely that prior to an advance on Kharkiv from Vovchansk's side, Russian forces may seek to entrench fortifications at a depth of five to fifth teen kilometers all along the right bank of the Pechenihiy reservoir as a way to secure its flank in an emergency.
60. It is more than two years after the day on April 29th, 2022 that Russia's Chief of the General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, took personal control of the front in city of Izyum in the Kharkov region, an emergency the Russians failed to foretell ahead of time. In an article published by the news agency, תיק דבקה, the author details how הרמטכ"ל הרוסי הגנרל גרסימוב ינהל את הכוחות גם בדרגה המבצעית וגם בדרגה הטקטית. [32]"
61. The fall of Izyum represented a catastrophic defeat for the Russians in 2022. With the

assault on Kharkiv now advancing from two sides, Liptsi, on one the one hand, Vovchansk, one the other, there is a high likelihood that within a short period of time Ukraine's armed forces may no longer be able to prevent the city's third fall.

62. The fall of Novomikhailovka [33] in the Ugledar direction, the fall of Netailove and Ocheretine in the Avdiivka direction and advances in the Tokmak and Bakhmut directions, hasten Russia's advance on the Dnipro.

63. With the collapse of Ukraine's defensive lines in the Avdiivka direction, Russia is now "On the Eve of the Last Fall of Kharkov,"[34] edging closer to the Dnipro, the point around which Russian forces are expected to coalesce for a major assault from multiple directions on the Kharkiv direction, which initially fell to Russia [חרקוב] before Ukraine ultimately reclaimed the territory in "a lightning offensive in September 2022." [חארקיב], [4]

64. "With Ukraine's stockpiles of munitions depleted, many of its D-20 or D-30 Soviet made

howitzers destroyed, as per a most recent Russian strike in the Sumy region, or decommissioned, its Caesar [whose corn wiring nightmarish rats devoured] or M777 155mm howitzers malfunctioning or misfiring or not firing at all for "a lack of shells," as Kirby states, the Ukrainian military is expected to suffer a defeat in the battle over the last fall of Kharkov." [34]

65. Accordingly, Axel Springer's Washington based *Politico*, previously owned by the billionaire banker, Robert Allbriton, provided a most recent time estimate "on the last fall of Kharkov," arguing that "Ukraine is heading for defeat," as early as this summer. [35]

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[1] — ["Kharkov Battles: On the Fall of Avdiivka," *LeftOpposition*, February 17th, 2024]

[2] — ["Российские войска за март освободили в зоне СВО пять

населенных пунктов,” *Телеканал 360*, 04.02.2024]

[3] — [“Военный корреспондент Александр Коц сообщил, что Вооруженные силы РФ в ночь на 10 мая активизировались на Харьковском направлении,” *News.ru*, 05.13.2024]

[4] — [“Russian Forces Intensify Kharkiv Push,” *WSJ*, May 16th, 2024]

[5] — [“Russia Steps Up Attacks Along Front Lines,” *WSJ*, March 8th, 2024]

[6] — [@DeepState_UA posted a tweet on May 14th, 2024 with a quarter million views entitled, “Про інженерно-фортифікаційну підготовку Харківщини.”]

[7] - [“أسنان التنين” — تكتيك روسي قديم لصد الهجوم الأوكراني المضاد، العربية، ٠٧.٢٩.٢٠٢٣]

[8] - [“Where are the fortifications? Kharkov OVA paid millions to fictitious companies,” *Українська Правда*, May 13th, 2024]

[9] — [“Командувача ОТУВ “Харків” змінили на тлі наступу росіян,” *ТСН*, 05.13.2024]

[10] — [@Su_35m (i.e., اخبار روسيا الاتحادية), announced, for instance, on May 13th, 2024 the following: “قوات الشمال الروسي في خاركوف تاسر عدد من قوات كييف النازية.”]

[11] — [On May 15th, 2024, @EjShahid published a retweet with the following headline: “Українські військові.”]

[12] — [Ukraine is winning the war with Russia, but it won't be over by Christmas.” *Sunday Times*, August 12th, 2023]

[13] — [“Ukraine Could Deploy F-16s as Soon as July, but Only a Few,” *NYT*, March 11th, 2024]

[14] — [“Getting F-16s and Training Pilots Proves Slow Going for Ukraine,” *NYT*, March 12th, 2024]

[15] — [@Rybar, “On the training of Ukrainian pilots in France,” April 27th, 2024]

[16] — [“Ukraine’s Manpower Requirements Reaching a Critical Threshold,” *Jamestown Foundation*, July 26th, 2024]

[17] — [“Recent satellite imagery of depleted Russian military vehicle and weapon storage facilities further indicates that Russia is currently

sustaining its war effort largely from storage rather than by manufacturing new vehicles and certain weapon systems at scale,” *Institute for the Study of War*, May 8th, 2024]

[18] — [“Do Tanks Have a Place in 21st Century Warfare,” *NYT*, April 20th, 2024]

[19] — [*@ashrafnsier*, “دبابة روسية،” May 10th, 2024]

[20] — [*@mog_Russ*, “صمدت دبابة،” May 11th, 2024]

[21] — [*@Roaastudies*, “T-90M دبابة،” May 11th, 2024]

[22] — [“اعتبرها #بوتين أفضل مركبة قتالية،” *Al-Arabiya*, May 12th, 2024]

[23] — [“Tanks take a sharp turn to remain relevant,” *IISS*, May 14th, 2024]

[24] — [“Вадим Скібіцький: У росіян є мотивація воювати за гроші, щодня до армії йде близько 1000-1100 осіб, РБК-Україна, 15 Січня 2024]

[25] — [“Ukraine Downs Fewer Russian Missiles,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 14th, 2024.]

[26] — [“ВСУ объявили о переброске резервов на харьковское направление,” *РБК*, 05.13.2024]

[27] — [*@mog_Russ*, reported on May 11th, 2024, the following: “كما: هو متوقع يتم نقل القوات الأوكرانية من منطقة قريبة من خيرسون إلى منطقة خاركوف، وهو يستبعد أي سيناريو أوكراني لعبور نهر الدينبيرو على نطاق واسع. ويأتي ذلك أيضا في وقت تجري فيه القوات الروسية مناورات ” عبور نهر الدينبيرو والإنزال]

[28] — [“Russia military trying to regain control of Nestrzha island,” *Kyiv Independent*, May 6th, 2024]

[29] — [“Морпех заявил, что главком ВСУ Сырский наврал о взятии острова Нестрига,” *Газета.ру*, 05.01.2024]

[30] — [“Украинские СМИ уличили Сырского во лжи о «захвате» ВСУ острова на Днестре,” *Известия*, 04.30.2024]

[31] — [*@hosamalkrbash*, for instance, raised issue with Russia’s aim. In it he wrote: “لا يزال غير واضح هدف القوات الروسية من هجوم خاركوف، هل هو تأمين الحدود ومنطقة عازلة أو السيطرة على أراضي واسعة وتحقيق مكاسب كبيرة. كانت خاركيف محدودة التحصينات والقوات الأوكرانية مشغولة ببقية الجبهات، كلما تاخر

الروس بتحقیف مکاسب قامت أوکرائیا بتعزيز
[.الدفعات]

[32] — “הרמטכ”ל הרוסי הגנרל וואלריי] —
גרסימוב בגיע לזירת המלחמה באוקראינה
ולקח אישית את הפיקוד על חזית איזום. הצי
הרוסי בציב דולפינים בנמלמים בים השחור
להגן עליהם מפני אמשי צפרדע. “ תיק דבקה,
04.29.2022]

[33] — [“Kharkov Battles: On the
Fall of Novomikhailovka,”
LeftOpposition, April 17th, 2024]

[34] — [“Kharkov Battles: On the
Eve of the Last Fall of Kharkov,”
LeftOpposition, April 10th, 2024]

[35] — [“Ukraine is heading for
defeat,” *Politico*, April 17th, 2024]

[חרקוב] - [צבא רוסיה נכנס למרכז העיר] -
חרקוב, העיר השנייה בגודלה באוקראינה.
רוסיה: הצלחנו לכתר שתי ערים בדרום
אוקראינה – חרסון וברדיאנסק, תיק דבקה,
02.27.2022]

[חארכיב] - [אם הצבא האוקראיני יצליח לשים] -
מצור על הכוחות הרוסיים ליד חארכיב זו
תהייה המפלה הגדולה ביותר של צבא רוסיה
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09.10.2022,]
