

Escalation to DEFEAT: USA Losing on BOTH Fronts | Stanislav Krapivnik

The wars in West Asia and Eastern Europe are merging. And if you think this is coincidence, then I have a bridge to sell to you. As vertical escalation in both theaters is proving to fail big time, Washington neocons seem to have switched tactics: Horizontal escalation to draw in more parties into a multi-theater war. Pascal and Stas discuss the newest strikes from and into Iran, the risk of the Ukraine and Middle East wars becoming linked, U.S. military and energy limits, drone attacks and Russian restraint, the fighting around Ukraine's defensive lines, and possible post-war security arrangements. They also debate whether Ukraine's battlefield position could weaken sharply later this year. Follow Stas here: YouTube: @MrSlavikman X / Twitter: <https://x.com/STANISKRAPIVNIK> Telegram English: <https://t.me/staswasthereenglish2> Telegram Russian: <https://t.me/stastydaibratno> Support us: Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:24 Iran strike claims and wider escalation 00:10:02 The U.S. two-front dilemma 00:18:39 Russian restraint and Black Sea escalation 00:28:10 Ukraine's defenses and front line pressure 00:39:23 Russia's post-war security strategy

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today with an update with the always brilliant Stanislav Krapivnik. Stas, welcome back.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Thank you, thank you. Still on vacation.

#Pascal

Yeah, well, thank you for taking time during vacation. I mean, I hope it's nice over there, but we still need to talk about all the tragedies that keep happening despite the holiday season, the vacation season. Tell me, what were your thoughts when you heard about Zelensky, about Ukraine actually attacking an Iranian tanker in the Caspian Sea, which by now, I mean, most people are absolutely sure you cannot do without the intelligence of the Americans. And by now, they already walked it back. They apologized. How do you make sense out of this one?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

I don't think the Iranians are going to take an apology. I think the Iranians are in the mood of an eye for an eye. But the Iranians have a tendency to up the scale, so maybe an eye for two eyes at this point. Well, they did it on purpose. I mean, there's no apology. It wasn't an accident. The U.S. provided coordinates to any long-distance drones flying all the way to the Caspian. Ukrainians can't see anything even in the central and western Black Sea. It's all provided with intelligence by America or the U.K. I still don't understand why Russia hasn't started taking down, at least start with the American drones and work your way up to the manned planes that are used for spying and target location.

Should have done that a long time ago. The Iranians started doing it quite a long time ago, and my hat's off to them on that. What we're starting to see is a front that's starting to expand out. If you look at World War I, everybody was off to the races. The main conflict that was going on was Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Other than that, everything in Europe was basically peaceful. And then we're off to the races. They had the shot into the air, and everybody's running for that two-month glorious war. World War II started off as a bunch of isolated or semi-isolated conflicts that started to expand and grow, and they combined into solid fronts.

This is what we're seeing here. Because, look, first of all, Iran can reach Ukraine, particularly southern Ukraine. Iran has three options. They can directly shoot into Ukraine and into the shipping, if need be, using Russian satellite or Chinese satellite intelligence. I doubt the Chinese would give them on Ukraine, but Russia would. They can request to use Russian territory to launch strikes from. Or I think the best option, if this continues to expand for Iran—Iran has one problem. They've got a one-million-man army under arms. They can expand it up to two, three million easily enough.

But outside of some special forces, Iran does not have combat experience. They don't. The guys that fought in the Iran-Iraq War are in their 50s and 60s, so they do not have that experience anymore. Where do you get experience? Well, you know, you can send 100,000 troops up to fight NATO in the Ukrainian proxy and get a lot of experience that way. You only need at least one in five, maybe one in three guys with experience to be able to share that and to bring that level of expertise to the rest. You know, you spread the soldiers out, the experienced soldiers, put experienced sergeants into every unit.

So this is a— which, by the way, the North Koreans did exactly the same thing, except where North Korea was in a defensive alliance with Russia, and they were fighting the NATO incursion into Kursk on absolute Russian territory, you know, indisputable Russian territory. Yeah. Iran is at war with the U.S., just another American undeclared war, but it was a war of aggression. Ukraine has struck Iran, an act of war, no matter how much they want to suddenly apologize for it. And, you know, what's going to happen if Iran accepts this apology? There will be other strikes. This will set a new pattern until Kiev gets struck, or struck hard enough. But Iran has an opportunity to send 100,000 troops up into Russia to gain combat experience. You think Russia would welcome that?

#Pascal

Because it's a question like, do you want that? Because it's, I mean, even with the North Korean troops, for the longest time Russia said, like, no, we don't have any of them. And it was not clear whether that's actually an asset or a liability, right?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, the North Koreans fought well. They took decent casualties, all things considered, because they were inexperienced and they didn't have experienced combat officers with them. That's something that always happens with green troops. But they fought well. And I think the Iranians will fight quite well. And for Iran, I think that would be a very big plus, to get that combat experience. Look, you know, we are fighting NATO. We've been fighting NATO from day one, actively fighting NATO. Sure, they're not carrying their country flags, but 10,000-plus Poles didn't die because they were volunteers. Well, they might have volunteered. They volunteered as an entire battalion.

Poland took a lot of casualties to get that combat experience. Its troops are rotating battalions through. The first time I went down, I was 500 meters from the front line. It was the 24th of December, 2022, and across the line were all Poles. There were no Ukrainians. And the radio intercepts were all Polish. So, yeah, NATO's been actively fighting Russia for quite a while now. Then, when 2,000 soldiers of the Finnish armed forces suddenly quit, you know, that's understandable where they're heading to. And they're not mercenaries—well, not in the real sense. We're not mercenaries. So I think Iran would have an excellent opportunity, and more than likely Russia would welcome it.

#Pascal

Hey, just a very quick note. The best way to support this channel is by signing up for my free Substack. You can also help with a paid subscription there, or you can get some of our new merch on neutralitystudies.com. Links below. See you there. So, in your view, I mean, the chatter on YouTube for the last couple of days has been that these two wars are now in the process of merging. Do we also see that happening? It's like the fronts are extending. And I mean, Zelensky does have a very clear incentive to do that in order to draw in the Americans, which are at war with Iran but officially still neutral in the war with Russia, right? And the only thing that could potentially somehow change things for Ukraine is, of course, drawing in the Americans completely. But it just seems like a very foolish thing to do if that was actually something that the Americans agreed to. Well.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Ground forces-wise, there's not that much America can do. Let's be realistic about it. The combined forces of the United States Army plus the Marine Corps is under 600,000. But that's the combined

forces of those armies. That's not combat soldiers. People tend not to understand that. That's truck drivers. That's medics. That's finance guys sitting at a desk that wouldn't know what to do with a pistol, let alone an assault rifle. Their biggest worry is not to get stapled in the hand or a paper cut. And I'm quite serious. When you look at it, the actual combat strength of the United States Army and the Marine Corps is under 200,000. And they would have to strip them from everywhere, including the embassies. You'd have to strip those soldiers from everywhere to gather them up.

Okay, so if the U.S. goes full tilt without a draft—and starting a draft in the U.S. would probably be a Civil War-level event at this point—you throw in 200,000 troops against Iran, against a million men dug in mountains. Whether it's winter or whether it's summer, it doesn't really matter. They're going to disappear in those mountains. They're not coming back out of them. You could take the coastal areas, sure, but you'd be under constant artillery barrage. You'd be under constant drone barrage. You'd be under constant counterattacks. This is, by the way, what happened to the Iraqis. They took the lowlands northeast of Kuwait, but they couldn't really go any further into the mountains, into these prepared dugout mountains.

And, you know, sure, there's valleys, there's roads, and they're overwatched by prepared positions, and you're stuck fighting in the mountains. The Korean War all over again. Except the Korean War was fought by American veterans of World War II. This would be fought by guys that are used to safari warfare in Afghanistan, you know, places like Iraq, just driving around patrolling. And the other thing is, is if the U.S. was to drop those troops into the Russian front, okay, that's 200,000 more in a war that's already—you probably maybe double what the Ukrainians have on the battlefield right now. Russia has 350,000 troops sitting in reserve and can always increase another mobilization round. So again, how far do you want to go? And when body bags are coming back en masse... I mean, Trump's already lost most of his popularity.

#Pascal

This is why I think it makes absolutely no sense if there was any kind of U.S. strategy behind trying to link these two theaters of war. I mean, the one thing the United States needs right now is somehow to keep this separate and to keep the Ukraine proxy war a proxy war where Ukraine fights on behalf of the U.S. And in the Middle East, in West Asia, actually, the best thing would be to extricate itself. But unfortunately, Israel found out a way to use the Americans to fight its war.

And you can see how Israel is, like, leaning back and basically saying that we're not attacking anything. You know, we kind of—we're peaceful now. I mean, this is America's problem. It's like, well done, Netanyahu, of, like, playing politics, doing to the U.S. what the U.S. did to Ukraine. But, I mean, even there, like, the fact now that they're not able to strike anymore in Iran, that they're running out of missiles and of stuff to actually use for war. I mean, that should mean that this should be kept separate, right? Or is there anything that I'm not seeing? Yeah.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, first of all, by the way, Netanyahu was on the news in the U.S., on Fox in this case, and he's reading the Americans the Riot Act on who they elected in New York. Think about this: the head of another country, by the way—you want to call it a vassal country, but it's not. It's more like an ownership country—is now telling you peasants how you should have voted in one of your cities.

#Pascal

Yeah.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

That itself is an insult of incredible proportions, no matter where you fall on the line of pro-Ukraine, anti-Ukraine, globalist, anti-globalist. I mean, the fact that the head of a country that's smaller than New York by population, by maybe twice, is reading you the riot act on who you should have and should not have voted for. Who the hell are you? You know, it's the same thing as Ursula von der Leyen going over to Beijing and reading the riot act to the Chinese about who they should have voted for in one of their cities. It's the same level.

#Pascal

It just shows me that the hubris actually is not so much, you know, big state versus small state. It's just baked into the entire system. It's like, you know, the Israelis and Netanyahu feel just as entitled to tell the peasants how they're supposed to vote, just as the EU center feels entitled to tell the Romanians how to vote and who they can have and cannot have in their leadership positions. It's, you know, this is just a collective West kind of sickness.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

But the Romanians are at least part of this organization, right? But the Israelis, at least officially, aren't part of the United States. They're not the one state to rule them all.

#Pascal

Officially. I mean, I think by now we all understand this is one heart and one soul. They're one intricate kind of system. But maybe back to the whole battlefield situation, because it seems to me that in both theaters, in both, the Americans managed to create quite deep piles of problems for themselves that they're unable to work themselves out of now.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah, the fans are no longer spinning. There's so much shite flying into them. And it may get worse. You've got the renewed neocons in the U.S. Congress screaming for closing the airspace in Ukraine.

This is something that came up in '22, '23, and they were told basically that would be World War III, direct conflict, and the U.S. would lose a lot of planes. And they seem to have backed off of it, but now they feel emboldened, and they're going forward again. Let's close the skies over Ukraine.

#Pascal

At the same time, we have now in Congress a bill that, you know, the Graham-Blumenthal bill, that actually wants to put up to 100% tariffs on states that still trade with Russia—of course, China, India, a couple of others—at a moment when already you have the world economy in tatters because of what is going on in the Strait of Hormuz, and the United States economy actually struggling. I mean, it just seems that they're digging deeper and deeper. And this thing is not through yet. And if it goes through, it will become discretionary kind of power for Donald Trump. So this is not a given at all. But it just seems like a very weird, bizarre kind of development.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

It's self-hurting even more than before. It's always even worse than that because, by the way, you have the AI bubble, and the AI bubble is growing on a foundation of nuclear energy. Because guess what? When you're setting up data centers that are 10, 15 kilometers in length of servers, and you need to cool them down to minus 250 Fahrenheit, plus the amount of electricity they're grabbing and the heat that they're generating with that much server power, the only way you're going to do that is by having nuclear power. You're needing gigawatts, and probably more than a few gigawatts. I mean, some of these big centers that they're planning are going to need multiple nuclear power plants.

It's insane, the amount of energy you're talking about. And right now, the smaller data centers, like the one in Tennessee, it's running off of gas. And guess who gets to pay for the extra power bills? The peasants do, not the corporation. To get the corporation to build in Tennessee, they were given free energy. That's insane. People are screaming bloody murder because their energy bills have spiked like crazy. They're talking about around \$250 more per household per year. You multiply it by several million households. That's a hell of a lot of money. But at this point, guess who processes 70% of the world's uranium?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Right, Russia. Russia.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

By the way, the continental U.S. has no uranium to begin with, let alone being able to process it. And what Canada does, on the other hand. But the problem is, what do you do with it? You have no processing capability. France has a good chunk. China has a chunk. But Russia has 70% of the

world's uranium. And the U.S. buys enriched uranium for its nuclear power plants from Russia. So, you know, go ahead. But there's even issues of leveraging 500% tariffs on anything imported into the U.S. So sure, yeah, they'll continue buying Russian uranium at five times, six times the cost. Welcome to our power bill.

#Pascal

You know, 2022, '23, '24, it was easier to follow the logic of where this is supposed to go because there was this kind of... It wasn't clear how well the different economic systems would keep up, and the industrial capacities would... for manufacturing all of the implements of war that you need and the tactics on the battlefield. It wasn't clear. But by now, it's very clear. And if we listen to what Vladimir Putin actually said this week when he was addressing the... I think it was the Duma deputies that... Or was it the officer corps? I forgot. But he was quite in a cheerful mood and saying, like, well, we deal with what they're using against us, meaning the drones, and we are sticking to our guns.

We continue the military, the special military operation because it's yielding results. Russia, it's going according to—I mean, the war of attrition is working, and the going forward is working, and the prudence of not having too many of your own soldiers die is working, so we just stick to our guns and we don't let the others provoke us. I don't see that Russia will change that approach soon, which actually puts me a little bit at ease because I was worried that Russia would get so angry about also the Wildberries factory, the warehouse attacks, that it would actually do something, you know, out of anger. But it seems that Vladimir Putin is quite determined not to do so and just stick to their guns. Is that also your analysis?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah, that is. How long he could do that for, I don't know, because the pressure is on, particularly because Ukraine and the West are aiming more and more for civilians. That's the soft target. And sooner or later, Russia has to respond to it a lot more. Well, we've seen Russia do this, by the way, by closing the Black Sea. The Black Sea is effectively closed. And it's hit non-Russian, non-Ukrainian tankers. It's hit Turkish tankers. It's hit NATO tankers going in there, NATO-owned countries. They close it down. You're going to come in there, we're going to hit you. That's it. And we haven't seen NATO trying to rush their navy to become reefs. They complain. They bitch. They moan. But they aren't going to do anything directly because the last thing... the last thing the Turks need is a big war with Russia.

And Ukraine has struck Turkish ships. It's struck Greek ships. It's struck numerous NATO ships. Ukraine, for all intents and purposes, all of its ports on the Danube and on the Black Sea are closed, which is a disaster for them on several levels. One, a lot of the heavier equipment was coming in that way by ship. Plus, they were exporting some of the heavy weapons that the U.S. gave them. Believe you me, the U.S. knows about this, no matter how much they say they don't. So the

countries via those ports cover them in grain and ship them out. For Ukraine to have their own grain exports would be very difficult to export by rail, especially considering the limited assets they have now, or by truck, which I'm sure makes Poland and Romania and everybody else very happy.

#Pascal

They don't want Ukrainian grain.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, the government may. The people, the farming industry, sure as hell doesn't. Which, by the way, a lot of it was actually heading into France and heading into Germany. So it will drive up the cost of food somewhat in those areas. But for Ukraine, that's also a big loss of a profit center. Sunflower seeds, sunflower oil, grain, and so on going out. They've lost those ports. That's it. Ports are destroyed. Shipping is being hit on a constant basis. The Geran-4 drones are out, which, by the way, the Geran-4 drones, I think we've mentioned this before, they carry anti-aircraft missiles.

The Ukrainians tried to shoot them down with helicopters, and they got shot down by a Geran-4 drone that then continued flying to its target. Yeah, we've got to that level of sophistication. So this all came from the Ukrainian—well, Ukraine-NATO campaign in the eastern Black Sea and the Azov Sea, which was countered by a Russian campaign to close down the western Black Sea. So, yes, there is escalation. It's not maybe a direct hit on European countries, on non-Russian European countries at this point, but it could easily escalate to that.

#Pascal

Yeah, the danger of escalation is definitely not gone. But what do you think Russia is now doing about these drone strikes? Because even now that Fyodorov, the old Minister of Defense in Ukraine, has been replaced, apparently his whole drone strategy is still being implemented. There are still almost nightly attacks with hundreds of drones. How is that one impacting Russia at the moment?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, the anti-aircraft systems are being upgraded constantly and expanded. Russia has gone after the logistics side of these drones, which forced them to be launched further out because they've taken out the fueling stations, any of the storage facilities for these light trucks, civilian trucks that are used. But mainly it's the fueling facilities. They've destroyed, quite literally destroyed, every fuel station in several of the bordering provinces, and now they're working their way deeper in. So it makes the logistics side much harder, so the drones have to be launched from further in, which gives you a lot more notice on the radar signatures to pick them up and prepare and take them out and trip that number as they're flying in.

However, there are continued hits on civilians, and that's on a constant basis. I'm not going to say where I'm at, obviously, for obvious reasons, but I'll say that the sirens come on a lot of times per day from drones flying over in different directions in these areas. And, you know, most Russians are like, "Okay, sirens are going again." There's not much of a reaction from the people. It's hard to faze Russians. But they are striking, and what they're striking, if you look at it, is almost predominantly civilian housing: single-family residences, multi-story buildings. That's what they're going after. The refineries are being brought back online. The ones that have been damaged, refineries now have their own gun trucks defending them. So that is expanding, but you can't put a gun truck on every building.

10-story or 20-story apartment building. So that's a big problem. And the Ukrainians are aiming primarily—well, Ukrainians, NATO, U.S., NATO is aiming primarily at civilians. This is a terrorist war. The U.S. has always gone to murdering civilians when it cannot hit the military. It's done that since, if you go deep enough in U.S. history, the U.S. has basically always done that. But if we're just going to go into more modern history, 5 million dead Germans from firebombing all of Germany. What does the world remember? It remembers Dresden. Dresden was just the last city. Every German city was firebombed. 70,000 killed in France from firebombing northern French villages and towns, a lot of which didn't even have German soldiers in there, forever.

Nobody really understood why they were being wiped out, quite literally, apocalyptically wiped out. And then, you know, what happened in Japan. To begin with, the firebombings of Japanese cities: half a million killed in Tokyo in one attack, much more than Nagasaki or Hiroshima. And then we had the same thing in North Korea. We had the same thing in Vietnam, northern Vietnam, and so on and so on. I mean, we can jump forward to Mosul, where the U.S. just wiped the city out to, quote, liberate it. And this is the common tactic. The U.S. did it in Yugoslavia. They can't find a military; they start murdering civilians. That is America's policy, like it or not, but that's the reality, and that's the history of it, no matter how much you want to candy-coat it.

#Pascal

Yeah, the only Swiss city in which civilians died—a couple of dozen civilians died—during the Second World War was Schaffhausen, which got bombed by the Americans, not the Germans. It was the Americans. They apologized that day. They thought it was a German city, and it's close enough to the border, so who knows. But yeah, targeting civilian infrastructure is just standard practice. And this is apparently what the U.S. has worked itself forward into, right? Salami-slicing itself into the ability to strike civilian targets at will within Russia without Russia being willing to do something similar on the other side.

So this is this asymmetry, something that Brian Berletik and others point out, that actually now has made these direct attacks on Russia very possible. Again, the red lines have been pushed back and back and back and back. And this is where people like him then say, like, this is unsustainable, and Russia, something needs to happen. Otherwise, they're going to push further and they're going to

escalate even more in the hope that Russia will keep to maximum restraint. What about that maximum restraint? Because it seems to me that the strategy is to keep to it.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

It is. It's obvious enough from the West. How long Russia will keep on that restraint? Well, first of all, Russia is not fully restrained. We've seen that. We've seen—well, I'll just say there have been ministry fires and things like that breaking out all over Europe, in industrial areas. We don't know where it's coming from. It may be accidental. It may be not accidental. I cannot rule that out. But second of all, Russia's closed—like I said, Russia's closed the Western Black Sea, and it's hit European and other tankers, ships coming in to Odessa and to other ports. So it's not fully keeping to restraint. How long it'll keep to the restraints it's keeping on, that's a good question. But the pressure is growing. Every dead civilian, the pressure grows on Vladimir Vladimirovich, on the government. So that's something, sooner or later, that's going to crack. And the counterstrikes will come. I mean, there's only so long you can keep poking the bear before it takes a swipe back at you. That's the reality of politics.

#Pascal

Yeah, I think on NATO's side, that's actually one of the calculations, right? To make it—to keep these provocations going. But that's all because the actual battlefield situation is deteriorating for them. And maybe, I mean, you've got a very detailed overview of, like, what's actually happening. And the last thing I know, also thanks to the good people from The Duran, is that the current battles are for the last fortifications in the Donbas, after which it will be open plains all the way to the Dnieper and maybe even beyond that. What is your assessment, like, how the defenses of Ukraine are doing at the moment? Because, like, let's face it, for the last four years, they were able to keep these defenses, right, and to stand their ground. I mean, they retreated, but bit by bit. So where are we now?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, yes, the Donbas in particular is this gigantic agglomeration of towns and villages, not only in length, north to south, but east to west. So they've had defense in depth. They've been preparing these positions for quite a long time, since 2012—sorry, 2014. Problem is, this is it. You know, before they were able to stand their ground until they couldn't stand their ground, or until the casualties on the Ukrainian side were so big they couldn't get anybody back in there, and they would retreat out or get pushed out eventually. And they did fall back three, four, five kilometers into the next town and then the next town, sometimes even less than that, you know, maybe two kilometers in depth from line to line to line to line. And then there's the end of the line. Quite literally, there's the end of the line behind the agglomeration of...

#Stanislav Krapivnik

It's open fields. Those open fields are already under fire by drones and artillery and by aviation. So bringing things in is hard enough, but you can do it across the fields. Come the end of, or second half of, September, depends when the rains really kick in, all that turns to mud, and the only thing you have left is roads, hard-packed roads. And that becomes much more difficult. So anybody sticking around, any Ukrainian soldiers that are still there by the end of September, are going to die there. Or they may surrender, but they're not leaving. There's no place for them to leave. There are small villages after that. They're unprepared. There's no particular line. There's some field fortifications that they've dug, trenches, but they're not a continuous line. They don't have the manpower to man them. And they're in open fields.

They don't have the advantages of being anchored to anything seriously built up. So you've got a huge issue right there. There's, you know, the forward front is about five, five and a half kilometers from Kramatorsk and Druzhkivka and Sloviansk at this point. It's all stopped moving forward because Russia's consolidating, because they had different—it had different spear points going in. Now they're consolidating the territory in between those pockets of Ukrainian resistance, and they're starting to inch their way forward. Then in the last town south of Druzhkivka, there's already combat going on. That almost bleeds into that town. That's the southern wing going up the road that goes all the way through all these towns, the main highway. And Krasny Liman is a cleanup operation at this point.

And that's about 10 kilometers north of Sloviansk. And it's on the high ground, so you just look straight down on Sloviansk for artillery, for drones, and so on. So that front is going to start moving before the end of summer into Sloviansk. And then Dobropillia, DNR, the Donetsk province, Donetsk People's Republic. The Russian forces came up on the Dnipropetrovsk, got to the edge of it, locked in the Ukrainian soldiers there, and have now started going in several different directions around it. There's a big breakthrough in the south that's been gaining ground in the direction of Dnipropetrovsk. But the biggest threat of all is what's going on in the north of Dnipropetrovsk. So instead of investing that town, investing the assets to try to take it down, they fixed the Ukrainians in there so they can't leave.

Otherwise, the town will fall. But there's a big push that's coming up directly north, which will bring it up behind Druzhkivka, Kramatorsk. So it's an envelopment in depth on top of that. So you've got a pincer movement, you've got a frontal assault, and now you've got an envelopment in depth that's happening in that area. So, you know, even if you're getting pushed out of town, you may not have any place to run because you're going to have Russian forces already behind you. Now what do you do? And this is going to be a big disaster. But this is the area that's sucking up most of the Russian attention at the moment. But it's not the only place. Northeastern Kharkov Oblast is almost fully taken.

That's about 15% of the oblast. But that would actually cut the front lines down by about three-fourths in that area, so you'll be able to concentrate troops a lot better. This is everything that's east

of the Seversky Donets River, which runs east of Kharkov. Sumy—Russian troops are on the edge of Sumy, so that's another town. And Sumy, while not a key town as far as any kind of defensive lines, Sumy is a key logistical hub. You've got key interstates going from Kiev, from Chernigov into Sumy, going to Kursk from Sumy, and then going down into Kharkov, southeast into Kharkov. So that's Kharkov's main lifeline to the east. You cut that, Kharkov is basically surrounded. It's got rivers to the south.

You can cut the bridges on the Seversky Donets River, and Kharkov is basically isolated. So this is a cut in the logistics and an encirclement in depth of Kharkov because you're cutting it off in the area. So, you know, that's still rolling on. It's going to continue rolling on. There's not much the Ukrainians at this point can do. They are overstretched. They can bring in NATO, you know. France could toss in another country 40,000 combat soldiers. That'll make a blip for a week or two or a month before there's not much left of them. Germany could do even less. Poland, if it really wants to fight. But, you know, Poland—if you think of the situation between Poland and Warsaw and Kiev—it's primed now for Warsaw to go.

#Pascal

And I think we're going to take our territories back. Thank you very much.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

You know, the whole western, northwestern portion of Ukraine will make a protectorate for the citizens that we've given out, or the people that we've given out the Polish Card to, which gives them basically—they're not citizens, but they have basically green, like American green cards. They have permanent residency allowed to them in Poland anytime they want to come in there. So just one step short of being citizens. So Poland has a foundation now, a political foundation, to go ahead and take it in. And anti-Ukrainian violence in Poland is skyrocketing right now.

#Pascal

This all sounds quite dramatic, actually, for Ukraine. I mean, and what is your gut feeling? Like, at some point, something is going to speed up, right? Something is going to change the situation. At the moment, there's still this fight, man on man, but at some point this thing will open up, right? And it will cause quite a bit of panic that Ukraine, also Kiev, becomes maybe exposed enough to the advancement. What do you think? Is it still—because it seems to me that Vladimir Putin is actually quite optimistic at the moment—do you think this might be the summer that then will lead to quite a dramatic shift on the map that will also enable then a change in the politics of what is possible and what not?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Maybe this will be the summer, but it'll be toward the end of summer. Maybe it'll be fall and into early winter, autumn season. It all depends how long Ukrainian morale holds out in that last line of defense. Because once that cracks—one, once that cracks, at least up until you get up to Dnepropetrovsk—that releases a lot of Russian forces that can be shifted into other areas. Two, that's going to be a major morale blow to the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population. Once that's completely gone, that last major defensive line is gone, and Russian advancement—even, say, Russian advancement goes up to, say, 300, 400 meters a day, so two, three kilometers in depth per week—that's already a lot compared to everything that's been going on for the last five months.

That's a massive breakthrough. And in truth, it's going to accelerate because even drone warfare—you know, those drone operators are usually pretty close up to the front. And it's all fine and dandy while the front's not moving much or at all. They can get up there, they can do their missions, they can get back. But if the front's moving on a continuous basis, it's much harder to get your drone operators up there and keep them alive. Because ahead of that front, by the way, are going to be lots and lots of recon and sabotage units fanning out, basically the skirmishers of the modern world. They're going to be fanning out forward. It's going to be making a massive, massive problem for anybody trying to get drone operators.

But drone operators are going to have to start working from in depth, which is going to limit their capability of striking any further out past the Russian lines. So it's going to make a lot of issues. And the panic—there's going to be societal panic, a lot more than it is right now. Societal fatigue is very high in Ukraine. By the few polls that can be trusted, over 60% want some kind of negotiated end. Yeah. And probably, if you start asking them, "Do you want to have a referendum? Do you want to stay in Ukraine and go to Russia or go to Poland or go to Hungary?" you'd be surprised how little Ukraine would be left at that point around Ukraine. So that's the situation. And I don't know how long the internal elements are going to be able to hold on to power.

#Pascal

Last point, what do you think Russia's political strategy will be from here on forward, to kind of envision a post-war situation? Because, I mean, if they manage to do that, if they manage to win the war and wind it down, then the Europeans and the natives are going to lose their little toy, right, with which to strike at Russia. So how is Russia, do you think, going to try to approach this situation? What it wanted for four and a half years, a security situation, a security zone?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

It's very hard to answer because there's a lot of what-ifs. There's a what-if if NATO rushes into this war, makes a stupid mistake. Well, you'd think it'd be a mistake, but it may be preplanned by Ursula. She doesn't mind if the Spanish are burning, the French are burning. She probably doesn't mind if

whole cities are burning, as long as it's not her and her family. So there's that element, you know, how much are they going to enter the war on a full basis. That could change the arithmetic to some degree.

Whether Kiev is taken, whether Kiev is annexed, whether Kiev is not annexed, what's left of the Ukrainian state, if anything? Uh, you know, if Russian forces are looking across the border from Polish forces that are somewhere in the middle of western Ukraine, that would probably actually be a peaceful issue because I doubt if the Poles have won a big war with Russia at that point. They want to absorb what they've taken back. That may actually be a very stable border at this point, considering the last polls. Seventy-two, seventy-three percent of Poles show that they couldn't stand the Ukrainians. You know, that whole, "we need to help them," has gone away, has evaporated away totally. So there's a lot of what-ifs. It's very, very hard to say how it's going to end, and it depends on what the Americans and the British do, the biggest warmongers on this earth at the moment. I've got another point. I've got to run to. I have a minute to get on.

#Pascal

Yeah. And I just want to wind it down right here. Thank you very much, Stas, for the overview. It is too complicated, but we will talk to you again. And a wonderful finish to your vacation.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Bye. There's always something to talk about with world affairs these days.