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When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022, the Ukrainians rose to the challenge and defended their country to the maximum degree. With the war already being well into its second year, the ability of Ukrainians to defend against the invading force and perhaps even liberate the territories occupied by Russia, hinge upon a steady supply of Western arms and ammunition and the training of Ukrainian troops by the West. Western arms have proved to be crucial from the very first day when Ukraine was forced to defend itself against the Russian invasion in 2022. The supply of these arms dates back to 2014, when Russia started the war in Donbass. The supply of arms evidently continued even when the war in Donbass appeared to have been frozen for some years.

As Russia was gathering its forces near Ukraine's borders in 2021, the aim of the weapon supplies – modest at the time in comparison with the later levels of military assistance – was to deter Russia from launching a full-scale war. Once Russia invaded, Ukraine showed that it could defend itself successfully, even with minimal support from the West. U.S. president Joe Biden has stated that support for Ukraine is important “because it keeps the peace and prevents open season for would-be aggressors to threaten our security and prosperity” (Biden 2023). The West would not allow autocratic regimes around the world to believe that they could achieve influence by aggression. Ukraine's defeat could possibly encourage Russian aggression elsewhere and would threaten U.S. allies in Europe. Western countries began to provide systematic and regular supplies of weapons to Ukraine to help it defend itself against Russia's aggression.

Ukraine received small arms, armoured personal carriers and artillery systems, anti-aircraft systems and other weapons. However, some types of weapon systems, such as Western-produced fighter jets, long range missiles for HIMARS systems, Western-produced main battle tanks (MBT) and infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) were clearly off-limits at the beginning of the invasion in 2022. In early 2023, the West slowly

overcame its reluctance with regard to IFVs and MBTs.

The intention of this article is to explain why particular military systems have been supplied, while others have not, and why there has been a reluctance to send them to Ukraine. The first section provides a general assessment of the systems that have been provided. The second section looks at specific types of weapons systems that have been off limits and the problems associated with their provision. This article does not provide a description of all weapons systems, as its focus is mainly on MBTs, fighter jets and long-range missiles.

The conclusions made in this article are that a lack of political will and difficulties in discontinuing a policy of not sending arms to conflict zones held back Germany's decisionmakers from delivering *Leopard 2* tanks. In addition, the existing MBT fleet cannot be replaced quickly without weakening the NATO tank fleet. The allies also had some communication and coordination difficulties over fighter jets. However, they were not supplied because they are difficult to maintain and are unlikely to dramatically improve Ukraine's position. U.S. reluctance to provide long-range rockets, however, is related to the expectation that progress on the battlefield can be achieved without them and concerns over the ability to replenish stocks of rockets in the short term, due to the limited capacity of the military-industrial complex.

Keywords: *Fighter jets, main battle tanks, long-range rockets, arms supplies, weapons systems, Ukraine.*

Supply of Western Arms to Ukraine

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the U.S. had already provided Ukraine with 1.5 billion USD in military assistance, beginning from 2014. The armaments received included Humvee's, anti-artillery radars, *Javelin* anti-tank missiles and patrol boats. This assistance was aimed at

strengthening the Ukrainian military so that it could counter Russian aggression in Donbass. In 2015, the U.S. started the *Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine* joint training mission, which was meant to equip and train the Ukrainian army. The training centre was opened in Yavoriv in Western Ukraine where the Ukrainian army trained together with the U.S. and other NATO allies (Kim 2019).

During the Russian military build-up near Ukraine's borders in late 2021 and early 2022, the U.S. and the United Kingdom (UK) announced their military assistance to Ukraine. This assistance included weapon supplies and training missions. UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced this help by saying "Ukraine has every right to defend its borders, and this new package of aid further enhances its ability to do so. Let me be clear, this support is for short range and clearly defensive weapon capabilities. They are not strategic weapons and pose no threat to Russia. They are to be used in self-defence." U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan indicated U.S. support by saying "We have made good on the commitment to get those deliveries into the hands of the Ukrainian armed forces. Those are defensive weapons intended to defend Ukraine against aggression. They are not meant for offensive purposes against any country." (Mills 2023). Western governments increased military support substantially in response to the Russian offensive in February. During the spring of 2022, Ukraine received substantial amount of western anti-tank weapons, small arms and old Soviet-era equipment, including tanks. Ukraine used the weapons effectively in the battle of Kyiv and elsewhere.

During the summer, Russia relied on the massive use of artillery in its military offensive in Donbass. The West reacted to it and sent artillery systems. In September, Ukraine launched its own military offensive in the Kharkiv region and later liberated Kherson city. In response to its military defeats, Russia began missile and drone attacks on Ukraine's critical infrastructure, with a particular focus on energy infrastructure. The West responded by sending air defence systems to defend Ukraine from Russian missile attacks. The aim of the weapon supplies to Ukraine gradually changed from deterrence and defensive, to military platforms and equipment that was needed for offensive operations. In the next stage of the war, MBTs, IFVs, and other mechanized platforms, as well as long-range artillery, will be crucial. Therefore, the initial hesitation in handing these capabilities over to Ukraine should be examined in greater detail.

Main Battle Tanks

Since the start of the invasion, Poland has provided Ukraine with around 270 MBTs, including the old Soviet-era *T-72* and its modernized version, the *PT-91*. As there have been talks about the delivery of Western produced MBTs to Ukraine, Germany's *Leopard 2* tank has been mentioned as the most suitable for the Ukrainian army, due to its wide availability in Europe. The British *Challenger 2* was also a good candidate but was only available in smaller quantities. American *Abrams* tanks were considered to be unsuitable, because they use different fuel and are more difficult to maintain. The *Leopard 2* was considered to be the best option. It needed the agreement of the German government for their delivery from Germany, or from the other countries that had the *Leopard 2* in stock.

On 26th February 2022, Germany announced that it would provide Ukraine with lethal weapons. *Politico* cited Olaf Scholz as saying that "...In this situation, it is our duty to do our utmost to support Ukraine in defending itself against Vladimir Putin's invading army. Germany stands closely by Ukraine's side." (Herszenhorn et al 2022). With this announcement, Germany was ready to supply small arms and other light equipment. However, Scholz was reluctant to send MBTs. "Look at what our close allies are doing", and he indicated that other allies had not pledged or provided Ukraine with Western-made heavy tanks (Chazan 2022). The allies put steady pressure on Germany on the issue of the MBTs, but Scholz was reluctant. The allies looked for Germany to be the first to announce MBT delivery, while Germany expected the US to take the leading role.

In June 2022, Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles confirmed that Spain was planning to send *Leopard 2* tanks to Ukraine (SEIBT 2022). However, a few days later, German authorities warned Spain that it would not support the transfer of the *Leopard 2* to Ukraine, because it "would contradict Western allies' decision not to supply tanks to Ukraine." (Spiegel, 2022). In August, Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles announced that Spain was withdrawing its offer to supply the *Leopard 2* tanks to Ukraine (Saballa 2022). Germany subsequently announced the *Ringtausch* program, according to which Germany would send some of its *Leopard 2* tanks to the Czech Republic to replace old Soviet tanks that were given to Ukraine by the Czech Republic (Stickings 2023). Germany avoided sending its tanks directly to Ukraine by this action.

Germany was having its own internal debate concerning the delivery of tanks. While many other parliamentarians in Germany encouraged the government to deliver heavy weapons to Ukraine, Scholz was cautious. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Chair of the Parliament's Defence Committee, stated that "Germany has to also supply Ukraine with heavy weapons to help it defend itself, as long as they can be handled by the Ukrainian army." Anton Hofreiter, a member of the left Green party, said that "We have to finally start supplying Ukraine with what it needs, and that's heavy weapons" (German chancellor 'stalling on heavy weaponry to Ukraine' 2022).

The pressure on Germany increased further at the beginning of 2023. Poland and Finland expressed their willingness to send the *Leopard 2* to Ukraine. This decision still required a re-export license from Germany. The Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki announced that "We will either obtain this consent quickly, or we will do it ourselves...". Through saying this, he probably expected to speed up Germany's decision to send MBTs to Ukraine (Sabbagh 2023).

Germany's Defence Minister, Boris Pistorius denied that Germany was blocking the delivery of *Leopard 2* tanks by stating that "there are good reasons for the deliveries and there are good reasons against, and in view of the entire situation of a war that has been ongoing for almost one year, all pros and cons must be weighed very carefully." (Alarabya News 2023). At that point, the U.K. announced its own plans to send *Challenger 2* tanks to Ukraine, but the German government pointed out that "there is no change in the situation now because of the step that the British government has announced." (von der Burchard, H. et al 2023). There were reports that Germany wanted a collective decision from the allies. However, later Steffen Hebestreit, the press secretary of the German government announced that *Leopard 2* supplies to Ukraine are not linked with similar deliveries from the U.S. and he also noted that Germany has not received any requests from Poland to re-export the tanks (*Lēmums par tankiem 'Leopard' nav saistīts ar ASV plāniem, pauž Berlīne* 2023).

A week after the Ramstein conference on 24th January 2023, Germany announced that it would allow Poland to deliver *Leopard 2* tanks (Radford 2023). On 25th January Germany announced that it would finally agree to send its own *Leopard 2* tanks to Ukraine. Scholz said "...it is the right thing for us to never provide these weapons systems on their own, but always in close cooperation." The same day, the U.S. also announced its plans to send MBTs to Ukraine

(Schmitz et al 2023). Finland, Poland, Spain, Canada, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden also announced that they would send the *Leopard 2* and its variants after Germany's decision (Oltermann and Roth 2023). Denmark and the Netherlands announced their plans to provide 100 *Leopard 1* tanks and later pledged *Leopard 2* tanks (Walton and Abramson).

What are the key takeaways from the debate on the MBTs? Germany was hesitant and resisted delivering MBTs because it did not want to act alone without a common decision from its allies and its main partner, the U.S. Germany was also reluctant because there were different opinions at the Bundestag and within German society. Its hesitation was also linked to its political course not to deliver heavy weapons to conflict zones. Germany came up with different reasons. For example, that it does not have enough tanks for itself, that there are no good reasons to deliver them and that other allies have not made similar decisions. Spain did not deliver MBTs, because Germany did not give permission. Poland tried to speed up the process by announcing that it could supply the *Leopard 2* without Germany's permission.

There may have also been a technical challenge. The *Leopard 2* has one of the best reputations among Western tanks. Only a few articles in the Western media mention that the Turkish *Leopard 2A4* suffered losses in Syria when it was used against *ISIS* rebels near Al-Bab. Photos from the battlefield show that some *Leopard 2* tanks had their turrets blown off completely. They were struck by improvised explosive devices and Russian made *AT-7 Metis* and *AT-5 Konkurs* antitank missiles. Some were taken out by kamikaze trucks. *The National Interest* reports that the tank has a weak belly and side armour. The report also says that the fact that Turkey had no infantry to protect the vehicle, as being a tactical error. However, Turkey described this battle as a trauma and asked Germany to modernize its *Leopard 2A4* version (Roblin, 2019). The *Leopard 2A4* version has problems with ammunition storage which is placed in the hull and can explode when the tank is hit on the weak side (Let's talk about tanks - Ammunition storage. Part 1. 2020).

The overall number of MBTs that Ukraine's Western partners have pledged to deliver may not be very significant. Germany has pledged 18, Portugal 4, Poland 14, Norway 8, Spain 6, Canada 8, Sweden 10, Denmark and the Netherlands 14 *Leopard 2* tanks, and Finland 6 *Leopard* mine clearing vehicles. Only 22 of them will be the *A6* variant, which has an improved gun and armour. Germany knew that the older model

had several disadvantages. Thus, it decided to send the newer version which is better protected and has an L/55 gun which has much better penetration. The Swedish *Stridsvagn 122* is similar to the A5 version. It has the same gun as the *Leopard A4* version, but it has improved armour. Other participants, except Portugal, announced plans to provide the older A4 version which may not be as effective as expected, because of its weaker side armour and much the weaker L/44s gun. The U.S. pledged 31 *M1A2 Abrams* tanks, but it is likely that they will be delivered in the latter part of 2023. The UK pledged 14 of the *Challenger 2*, which have a very good reputation, but their availability may not increase their numbers significantly. The *Leopard 7*, which has been pledged by Denmark and the Netherlands is much older and might not match the Russian *T-90* and *T-80* on the battlefield. They may, however, prove to be useful in supporting infantry. These numbers may increase in the future, but the tanks already sent to Ukraine cannot be replaced quickly, except for those from Poland, which has recently bought significant number of new MBTs from South Korea (Walton and Abramson; Chuter 2023; Axe 2023).

The possible combat failure of the older *Leopard 2A4* version in Ukraine may cause those countries delivering and still operating it, to ask Germany for the modernization of those tanks like Turkey did. It would harm not only Germany's reputation as an arms seller, but also its arms producer, Rheinmetall. Germany's hesitation to deliver MBTs may have already harmed its arms industry and might have delayed Ukraine's spring offensive.

Fighter Jets

Just three days after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell announced "We want to do everything to support Ukraine. We have decided to use our capacities to provide arms, lethal arms, lethal assistance to [the] Ukrainian army," (Handagama 2022). This help would have also included fighter jets. The Ukrainian Air Force Command announced that Ukraine would receive the Soviet-era fighter jets *Mig-29* and *SU-25* from Poland. This deal would include some other planes from Slovakia and Bulgaria (Gaafar 2022). This announcement happened to be premature, however, and the deal fell apart.

On 1st March, the Polish President claimed that "we will not send our planes, it will mean that NATO is involved in military intervention..." (Piątkowski 2022). On 2nd March, Anthony Blinken announced that the U.S. would give a green light, if Poland decided to send fighter jets to Ukraine (CBS News, 2022). On 6th March, Blinken indicated that that the U.S. "were talking with our Polish friends right now about what we might be able to do to backfill their needs if in fact they choose to provide these fighter jets to the Ukrainians." (U.S. stopped Poland giving Ukraine *Mig-29* jets in secret deal with China – media reports 2022). On 8th March, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs changed their position and announced that Poland was ready to deploy all their *Mig-29* fleet to Ramstein base (MFA of Poland). The U.S. suddenly changed its position and announced that "the transfer of *Mig-29* jets to Ukraine may be mistaken as escalatory and could result in significant Russian reaction that might increase the prospects of a military escalation with NATO." (U.S. stopped Poland giving Ukraine *Mig-29* jets in secret deal with China – media reports 2022).

It is likely that the U.S. cancelled the fighter jet offer because it was a risky move to deliver them by air. In March 2022, it was still unclear, whether Russia's air force was able to achieve air superiority in Ukrainian airspace. On 8th March, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby stated that "...The prospect of fighter jets "at the disposal of the Government of the U.S. of America" departing from a U.S./NATO base in Germany to fly into airspace that is contested with Russia over Ukraine raises serious concerns for the entire NATO alliance..." (Statement by Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby on security assistance to Ukraine 2022). Later, it became clear that fighter jets were not the decisive factor because providing Ukraine with state-of-the-art air defence was more important. After the chaotic communication by Western officials, the fighter jet saga went silent for some time.

The Commander of the U.S. European Command, Gen. Tod D. Wolters announced that it was more useful to deliver Ukraine anti-tank weapons and anti-aircraft systems than fighter jets. "Adding aircraft to the Ukrainian inventory is unlikely to change the effectiveness of the Ukrainian Air Force relative to Russian capabilities (Statement by Gen. Tod D. Wolters, Commander, U.S. European Command 2022). At that time, the U.S. intelligence community and the Pentagon also opposed the fighter jet transfer plan because it risked dragging NATO into the conflict. It may be that there had been behind-the-scenes consul-

tations between the allies and that the main obstacle was the public announcement by Borrell (McLeary et al 2022).

In April 2022, the U.S. position changed again. John F. Kirby announced that “Without getting into what other nations are providing, they (Ukrainian forces) have received additional platforms and parts to be able to increase their fleet size”. In April, Ukraine received 14 *SU-25* jets, which NATO bought from Bulgaria and 4 *SU-25* jets were delivered by North Macedonia in August (Oryx 2022).

The chaotic communication indicates that many of the announcements were premature, and they were made public without consultations and with little preparation. This could explain why Poland and U.S. changed their positions many times. From the perspective of the U.S., the delivery of those planes was a risky move at the start of the conflict. At the end of January 2023, U.S. President Joe Biden said to journalists that the U.S. will not provide fighter jets to Ukraine. This statement did not rule out other European partners sending their planes (Biden rules out sending *F-16* fighter jets to Ukraine 2023).

Fighter jets have not been delivered because it is cheaper and more effective to provide Ukraine with anti-aircraft capabilities which are more important than jets. If Ukraine had received financial aid to buy fighter jets, there would have been less funding for artillery rounds and more important weapons systems. Fighter jets are a long-term investment. There are still doubts that such investment could change the situation, because Russia possesses significant anti-aircraft capabilities.

The U.S. and the UK have been the most active in considering the provision of fighter jets, but there has not been much action. The UK has pledged a training program for Ukrainian pilots to use NATO standard airplanes. The U.S. has already used simulators to train Ukrainian pilots for *F-16* jets (Russell 2023). In March 2023, Poland and Slovakia announced that they would provide old Soviet *Mig-29* fighter jets to Ukraine. Slovakia pledged 13 jets, and Poland pledged four. It is too early to say whether the Polish and Slovakian deliveries will accelerate the process of providing Western fighter jets. However, they will strengthen Ukrainian air forces (Euronews 2023). The delivery of older Soviet-era fighter jets can also be interpreted as a way to delay the decision on giving Ukraine's air force modern Western planes.

Debate on Long-Range Rockets

In May 2022, Biden said that the US was “not going to send to Ukraine rocket systems that strike into Russia”. However, the U.S. President was positive about sending rocket systems to strike Russian targets inside Ukrainian territory “That’s why I’ve decided that we will provide the Ukrainians with more advanced rocket systems and munitions that will enable them to more precisely strike key targets on the battlefield in Ukraine” (Williams 2022).

U.S. officials decided to send modern rocket systems (*HIMARS* and *M270*) to Ukraine in the early summer of 2022. U.S. officials claimed that the Pentagon had modified *HIMARS* systems so that they would be unable to fire long-range missiles into Russian territory. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that this had been done because the Biden administration was being cautious and did not want to escalate possible conflict with Russia (Gordon and Lubold 2022). In the summer of 2022, Ukraine received *HIMARS* systems which could reach up to 85 km. Not long after the delivery of the *HIMARS*, Oleksii Reznikov, the Minister of Defence of Ukraine, said that “*HIMARS* had already helped Ukraine destroy approximately 30 Russian command stations, as well as ammunition storage areas.” In this regard, the *HIMARS* was a game-changing weapons system.

In early February 2023, the U.S. announced an arms package which also included *GLSDB* missiles that could reach up to 150 km. The range was twice as long as the rockets previously sent to Ukraine. “This gives them a longer-range capability... that will enable them to conduct operations in defence of their country and to take back their sovereign territory”, said Pentagon official, Pat Ryder (France 24, 2023).

Ukraine is still expecting to receive *ATACMS* missiles that could reach up to 300 km, to target Russian supply lines behind the frontline (Tucker, 2022). In January 2023, Undersecretary of Defence, Colin Kahl said, “We think the Ukrainians can change the dynamic on the battlefield and achieve the type of effects they want to push the Russians back without *ATACMS*.” NBC cited senior U.S. defence officials saying that they will not deliver *ATACMS* because U.S. policy is not to support striking targets inside Russia (Hamilton, 2023). However, it is unlikely that Ukraine would do this anyway, if the U.S. is not allowing it, as Ukraine is dependent on U.S. arms supplies.

According to U.S. officials, it requires some *ATACMS* missiles for its own use. “With any package,

we always consider our readiness and our own stocks while providing Ukraine what it needs on the battlefield", reported *Politico*, on the U.S. government's position on the possibility of delivery of ATACMS to Ukraine in February 2023 (McLeary et al 2023). The U.S. decision not to provide ATACMS missiles, however, does not seem to be connected to the possibility of U.S. stocks of these rockets being depleted as a result of the delivery of a large number of them to Ukraine. The U.S. has produced around 4,000 missiles and many of them have been provided to its allies in Europe. Their use in Ukraine would not trigger a nuclear response by Russia as Ukraine has already struck targets inside Crimea and deeper into Russia. The Pentagon is already planning to replace the ATACMS, and thus some could be sent abroad. Russia would not start a war with NATO in the present situation, because most of its forces are in Ukraine (Brobst et al 2023).

The most likely reason for hesitation by the U.S. is that it does not want to reveal that its arms production capacity is not able to replace ATACMS stocks quickly enough. Colin Kahl, Undersecretary of Defence for Policy stated that "What the Ukraine conflict showed is that, frankly, our defence industrial base was not at the level that we needed it to be to generate munitions" (Ryan, 2023). He did not mention ATACMS missiles or any other weapons systems. It may take some time for the U.S. to assess how to replace those missiles in its stocks, prior to sending them to Ukraine.

Conclusion

The debate on the delivery of Western high-end weapons systems has evolved since early 2022. Some of the systems have been already delivered to Ukraine, while others have not. Western MBTs were not provided in 2022, because the basic aim of Ukraine at the beginning of the war was to defend its territory and not to go on the offensive. During the year, it became clear that without Western MBTs Ukraine could not liberate its occupied territories. The focus of the supply of arms then shifted from small arms and anti-tank weapons to heavier weapons, especially artillery. At the beginning of the Russian invasion, it was too early to deliver MBTs immediately, because the West had to see whether Ukraine would be able to put up a serious fight and how Russia would respond to arms deliveries.

Germany hesitated with the *Leopard 2* tanks because its government was internally divided and looked to other allies to take the initiative. There may also have been doubt about whether old cold war *Leopard 2* variants could live up to expectations, since their use in Syria has revealed several vulnerabilities. The decision to deliver MBTs was taken only after serious pressure from the U.S., other allies and after the UK's announcement about delivering the *Challenger 2*. Ukraine would probably need more tanks to mount a successful offensive, but this could weaken the tank fleets of NATO allies and pose maintenance challenges.

Initial announcements regarding deliveries of fighter jets to Ukraine turned out to be premature. The communication that followed in March 2022 was chaotic due to a lack of calculation on how the jets would be delivered and what the impact of those deliveries would be on the capabilities of allies on NATO's eastern flank. From the strategic perspective, it turned out that jets were not the decisive tool in the war. Therefore, the U.S. decided to deliver other weapon systems as they were higher on Ukraine's priority list and less expensive. Importantly, high-end air defence systems, such as *PATRIOT* and *IRIS-T*, were provided to Ukraine because of Russia's attempts to wipe out Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the winter. Nevertheless, the allies came to the decision to deliver some Soviet-era planes and their parts. There is little doubt though that Ukraine will need a capable air force in the future and, therefore, the acquisition of modern fighter jets is probably just a matter of time.

Ukraine needs long range rockets to destroy Russia's supply lines before it can regain its territories. The U.S. has provided missiles for ranges of 80 km and 150 km. There are a variety of reasons why ATACMS missiles that can reach up to 297 km have not been pledged. The reasons include the Russian response and the risk of much wider conflict in the region, that the U.S. needs them for its own use, and that Ukraine can achieve results without them. There may be enough missiles to provide, but U.S. does not want to expose that its arms industry is struggling to meet the demand, and that it is not able to replenish U.S. stocks quickly enough.

The West could provide weapons, but only as long as ammunition is provided, maintenance ensured, and the allies' military stockpiles are not drained to critically low levels. This is especially relevant in the case of MBTs, fighter planes, and long-range rockets. The

training of a tank crew or jet crew is a long-term process. Giving away Western weapons systems may also temporarily weaken the allies, and sensitive technology may fall into Russia's hands. In this regard, three key conclusions can be drawn from the debate on the delivery of Western weapon systems to Ukraine. First, it has been easier to provide Ukraine with purely defensive weapons systems, such as air-defence, because such capabilities shield Ukraine's cities and critical infrastructure from Russia's missile attacks. Achieving a consensus on weapons that would play a major role in Ukraine's counter offensive is more difficult. Second, some of the weapon systems were only provided when Ukraine's ability to defend itself was clearly at risk. *HIMARS* systems were only provided when Ukraine's inability to disrupt Russia's logistical networks became apparent. Third, the debate on the delivery of certain Western weapon systems is still ongoing, and modern Western fighter jets can still be provided, but this debate is only likely to intensify if Ukraine's existing air force becomes severely weakened to the extent that this would threaten Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

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