

OBSERVATIONS ON THE RUSSIA INVASION OF UKRAINE

Comments by Ret. Major (CAF) Brian Hamilton on Integrated Wealth Management Webinar

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Qualifying note: this is one day after the eastern Donbas offensive. The future is unpredictable so these remarks must be taken in context of today's understanding, and may not be valid in future.

Donbas region has massive natural gas resources worth billions to the oligarch friends of Putin. This is why Russia has been attempting control of this region for years. Follow the money.

Russian military ordnance: outdated, poor repair. Often military contracts to buddies were overpriced and underspent.

Soldiers largely unprofessional, conscripts, 1-2 years service and in reserve. Military command is oldschool and does not embrace modern communication or ability of modern weaponry. Corruption is normal and expected. Soldiers forced to fight. Awareness of this war has many refusing. 50-75% of available soldiers have been committed to this battle all ready.

Maintenance of military gear affected by corruption and skimming by oligarchic corporations, considered normal. EG Salaries to troops overstated, the troops never existed. Putin was aware of this in 2019 and began to clean up military corruption but did not change chain of command structure.

Attempting a pincer-play from north and south to squeeze the Ukrainian defenders. This is a last stand attempt using old ordnance and low morale troops.

Communication is a weak point, their cellphones are being monitored, no military encryption available since 5G towers were knocked out by their own forces early on. Western communications systems are being commandeered by Ukraine, monitoring of kills and war crimes is open to multi media so there will be trials after. Every tank and armoured vehicle struck has been geo-tagged and recorded by the West. So has every war crime of murder or rape or civilian attacks.

Putin will have a huge problem at home if he does not bring home some sort of victory, many dead soldiers, he is excellent a disinformation and propaganda and quelling dissent but it's there. He needs a win in Eastern Ukraine.

Putin severely underestimated Sanctions. He also received no assistance militarily from Syria, Kazakhstan, or Belarus, token amounts only. He did not get support in the field. China cannot assist. India cannot assist. Both those nations cannot tolerate embargos and sanctions, China especially, its economy relies on exports. 85% of its economy relies on shipping, cannot stand an embargo. China and its ambitions are an utterly different game than Ukraine and are not directly tied to this conflict.

Russia has relied on lies and misinformation, propaganda, untruths, since 1916. It is cultural. No news releas from Russian sources is reliable, all are state censored. The issue is decisions are being made internally based on their own misinformation due to lack of vertical truthful communications. Putin is distrustful of computers and the internet and is likely unaware of its power and influence.

The west also partakes in Deception, such as WMD talk in Iraq. That was an offensive war and this is a defensive war, there are no parallels. Deception is one of the fundamental prinicipals of any war and always has been. Expect it.

Ukraine military: 500,000 reservists called in, been conscription since 2016 after Crimea action. Troops and officers combat hardened in Eastern Ukraine since 2014, veteran soldiers and officers. Flexible chain of command, NATO support indirectly.

Ukraine is severely outnumbered but has better gear and morale and are defending their homeland. However they could lose.

NATO gets a D- grade for military leadership, caught in disbelief of Putin's move, slow "committee" decisions, nothing Churchillian about their war effort. NATO is bowing down to political and economic preservation of the west instead of going to war, letting Ukraine do the fighting and slow on supplying needed materiel to them. **Putin gets a A** for being decisive but **his military gets an F**.

Western interests regard the war as a political and economic mess and are not accepting it militarily. Their decisionmaking is based on hope and disbelief and economic preservation of contracts and relationships, hence Russian gas still flows to western Europe. ***This will prolong the war.*** Disbelief last fall gave Putin the early upper hand. Disbelief is still a large component of western thinking.

Information regarding this conflict:

People need to be skeptical of all news. To be believed, it needs to be timely, reported from multiple sources independent of a central control or owner, without obvious bias, and able to receive a reality check regarding weather, geography, location.

The reporter needs to be legitimate. Both sides are displaying civilian reports from cellphones that are incomplete, non factual, lacking the larger picture, opinionated. The person lacks qualifications and accountability and not to be considered reliable news or information.

Historians and Academics are pontificating based on research of articles. This is unrealistic. This war is a brand new data point in history. History cannot define this one. Academic and historian accounts and observations are most likely lacking reality. They may guess right some times adding to their credibility but even a broken watch is right twice a day.

Two measurements of breaking news are (1) Reliability and (2) Credibility. They are not the same.

Ranking reliability from A to F and Credibility from 1-6, one can see that source of questionable reliability can be quite credible or a Credible account of an event can come from a totally unreliable source, such as a senior citizen witnessing executions.. All news reported should be viewed critically.

Talking heads, of all stripes, will predict the future. As an example, a US General predicted a Russian win in 5 days. No one has a crystal ball, predictions are useless to dangerous as they lead to complacency and inaction. They are also unprofessional if you are deemed an expert and you offer a prediction. Don't.

Will Putin use nuclear weapons? There have been no indications to date that he is actively setting this up from western Intelligence sources. Also there is a consensus that Putin cannot unilaterally press the big red button and his caucus would collectively stop him, fearing the devastation to their own families and interests if this happened. (*Putin may be terminally ill, speculation*)

The Economy:

General behaviour of western Europe suggests they see the war as an economic threat. Not a war. Their behaviour is not war-like, it is corporate. Loss of life seems secondary to loss of profit.

NATO nations are involved but not committed: the analogy is bacon and eggs—the chicken is involved in breakfast but the pig is committed. NATO is the chicken.

Sanctions will likely stay on until after the military tribunals on war crimes are done, this will be years.

Europe will scramble and adapt to a lack of Russian energy and raw materials, Ukraine needs to repair its grain ports to deliver wheat to north Africa asap or there will be new famines.

Canada may be encouraged to bolster its military budget, patrol the Arctic, and build pipelines, but that is speculation.

Europe is more concerned with their economies and internal politics than with Russian in Ukraine and therefore the equipping of aid to Ukraine is slow and indecisive. This will create a war of attrition: it will drag on until the resources (human and material) are exhausted.

Putin cannot be assassinated by the west, he is too cagey. He would have to be taken out by his own inner circle, and thankfully, there is a history of this activity in Russian government.

What to expect as a Canadian: higher prices, new opportunity, government blunders (they don't understand a war), not much involvement. Note a disconnect between North America and Europe on issues of trade, protection, and economies. A general Balkanization occurring in which regions look out for themselves. At this time, the conflict appears to be confined and seems likely it will remain confined, with global effects being food, fertilizer for crops, and energy as well as security of energy.

Final thoughts :

1. Russia has been fighting border and internal wars for a century.
2. There are very few leaders of Winston Churchill stature today to resolve these conflicts.
3. Group decisions are slow and ineffective against maniacs.
4. Any trauma involves Shock-Disbelief-Emotional Response-Action, there is a tendency to bounce back and forth between the middle two when the solution is to get to Action. *Universal advice.*
5. News and information sources have been exposed as utterly manipulated, critical thinking is in short supply. Keep your own counsel. Groupthink is not safe.