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Byron King's Thoughts.

10-13 minutes

I am sure you will be able to get access to a full piece soon. But it is almost full here.

First things first. I may be a newsletter writer, but I'm also a retired U.S. Navy officer. I'm obliged to tell you that what follows are personal opinions. I do not speak for the Navy, Department of Defense or U.S. government. Now, something else to mention up front: The price of gold is up as are futures for oil and natural gas. This while "stocks tumble" is the headline in Yahoo News. In other words, we have a flight toward safety and away from risk. To the extent it matters, that's what we've been counseling readers here in Lifetime Income Report for some time now. Did you buy some gold or invest in energy? War or no war, one way or another your dollars are losing value against gold and definitely in terms of what you can buy. Whether it's gas at the filling station, heating your home this winter, or food at the grocery store, prices have been going up. And now with the smell of gunpowder in the air, it appears the inflationary trends will stay that way.

Byron continues:

"War is a dark room," said one of my old professors at the Naval War College. Yes, because it's hard to know exactly what's going on while so many other things are happening in the complex arena of combat. It's the classic fog-of-war issue. To

phrase it another way, pretty much everything you see or hear about the early phases of a war are wrong. Okay, yes. You may see a photo of a smoking hole in the ground or a burning truck. And likely somewhere there's a smoking hole in the ground, or a burning truck. But that doesn't explain what's really happening. Meanwhile, it's not as if Western media are all that good at covering wars in general, despite all the practice over the past 30 years and more. And it's not like many colleges or universities teach anything like real "military history." (No, that course you took on the Civil War doesn't cut it.)

Byron's focus on Western media and the way they "report" war is crucial.

Still, there are a few basics that matter, things that help you make sense, at least at the strategic or operational level. Begin with the basic point of la guerre now raging in Ukraine. Plenty of reports of Russian missiles and aircraft; Russian troops, tanks and artillery; Russian electronic warfare and cyberwar and much more. But for now, don't worry about tactical details; focus on what's called "operational maneuver." The proverbial balloon went up last night when military-grade fireworks lit off. But in reality, Russia has been preparing the battlefield for weeks, months and even years. That is, the Russian Army has been making plans for "how" to fight in Ukraine for over 300 years. This is something deep in the military DNA of Russia.

In the 1770s-80s, Catherine the Great roused the Turks from much of what is now Ukraine, and not incidentally seized Crimea. More recently, Ukraine was the site of major conflict during World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution and Russian Civil War, and World War II. Then post-war, Ukraine was a keystone of the Soviet state, filled with Soviet-built industrial and military assets, and totally covered by Soviet defense doctrines and

plans.

The takeaway here is that Russia's General Staff are quite capable of planning combat operations in and around Ukraine. Do not underestimate Russian planners or equipment for even a moment. In my professional opinion (my 30 years of association with the U.S. Navy) they are outstanding at what they do.

As just an aside, and to illustrate the point, I should mention that Russian military maps are beyond excellent; they are works of art. Long story, but it goes back to the Napoleonic Wars when Russian generals realized they needed better maps. So they set up a cartographic branch that is nothing but superb, and that legacy continues today.

Meanwhile, Russia's military cartographers work hand-in-hand with Russia's extremely competent intelligence services (another legacy of the Napoleonic Wars) to identify pretty much everything; and I mean everything! They know the weight-bearing capacity of every bridge. They know what's inside every factory. They know where every petroleum pipeline is buried. All this and more.

The point is, I've seen many Russian military maps, and Russia's generals, colonels, company commanders and assault teams collectively know where everything is located that's worth a bomb, a missile or a tank attack.

Byron, then goes to purely operational and geopolitical assessment:

Russia began its operation with lightning-fast, precise missile and air strikes on Ukrainian airfields, radar systems, supply sites, communication nodes, military headquarters and other targets of warfighting import. Plus, paratroops and special forces landed behind lines or on top of important objectives, all

coupled with blistering artillery and rocket strikes.

And Russian weapons are very good. They hit where they aim. So early on, Russian strikes (the air, rocket, artillery and special forces) took out pretty much all of the Ukrainian command structure, thus neutralizing higher headquarters. Right now, Ukrainian troops in the field have no leadership or coordination above the tactical level.

Russia's Ministry of Defense claims that Ukrainians are surrendering in droves, and I actually believe that. Russian Defense Minister Shoigu has given instructions to treat all prisoners with respect. I believe that too.

As Day One closes and Day Two plays out, it's fair to say that Russia has destroyed all significant Ukrainian air power and bases. One report, confirmed by NATO sources, had a Ukrainian jet make a dash to safety in Romania, escorted by NATO F-16s.

And Russia has destroyed all Ukrainian air defense systems, except for mobile, shoulder-fired weapons. Russia also destroyed all Ukrainian drones, or at least the command-and-control systems. And for what it's worth, Russia has collapsed all Ukrainian naval power.

Right now, Russian troops are moving into and across Ukraine from the south, east and north, under a blanket of air superiority if not supremacy. The electronic battle space is entirely controlled by Russian operators. In this respect, Ukrainian ground forces are blind and being surrounded. And in any case, they are heavily outgunned by superior numbers of Russian machinery and outclassed by Russian systems that are truly state of the art.

When people say, "Russia is just a gas station with nuclear

weapons,” I have to wonder about their overall knowledge. Because no, Russia is a highly sophisticated manufacturing and energy powerhouse full of well-educated people. Russia has everything from vast oil and gas fields to a space program that spent the past dozen years flying American astronauts into low orbit. And there’s much else of an advanced nature within the Russian economy, so don’t discount the place for even a second.

From where things stand right now, in all likelihood the war will be over soon. Expect a few more days of intense combat. Then over the weekend or early next week, things will culminate in some version of a general “surrender” by whatever Ukrainian government remains and follow-up neutralization of opposing forces.

Here in the West, politicians and pundits are apoplectic. They fill the airwaves with diatribes against Russia-Russia-Russia. They make it quite personal about Russian President Putin, too. And of course, there’s no discounting the will and power of one man to reshape history.

At the same time, Russia’s Ukraine operation is proceeding at national scale, not per the whim of one person. This military expedition reflects Russia’s pursuit of long-held national interests — again, going back to the days of Catherine the Great, the Napoleonic Wars and more recent adventures by other actors contra Moscow.

Prudently, President Biden and NATO leadership have publicly disclaimed any intent to send U.S., NATO or other Western forces to confront Russia in Ukraine. Good idea, right? Do not get into a war with Russia!

Russia has long made it crystal clear that it opposes NATO

expansion towards its borders, and in the past eight years the Ukraine matter has been a top-shelf complaint. Russia watched what was happening and how, despite not being part of NATO-proper, Ukraine integrated itself into NATO force structures. This was never a secret; it was open and notorious.

Until recently, Russia was willing to make a deal that Ukraine not become a member of NATO and that the country play a neutral role in terms of any threat it might pose. But lately, and more to the point, for 31 years since the fall of the Soviet Union, the West has failed to work things out with Russia.

Two generations of U.S. and European leaders and policymakers have forgotten the sage advice of Germany's long-ago Iron Chancellor Otto von Bismarck who once quipped, "The secret of politics? Make a good treaty with Russia."

No treaty. No deals. And so now we have a war. Things will play out in unpredictable ways.

The West is placing economic sanctions on Russia, to which Russia scoffs because the country is about as autarkic as a country can be. Russia self-produces almost everything. That, and sanctions work both ways.

Shut off banking or trade with Russia? Russia can shut off natural gas to Europe.

Kick Russia out of the international SWIFT money-clearing system? Russia and China have an alternative system in place, Plan B so to speak. Or Russia could demand gold for sales of vital materials like titanium or uranium.

Isolate Russia diplomatically? Russia can terminate airline overflight permission to Western airlines, essentially shutting down much of the international air commerce system.

And it goes on. We will have to wait and see how things play out.

For now, gold and energy look good. And Russia or no, the U.S. and Western world will still be stuck with growing rates of inflation. The war only masks our collective problems, and certainly will not solve them.

On that note, I rest my case.

Interestingly, UK imposed "sanctions" on Aeroflot. As Byron correctly points out--if Russia imposes sanctions on British Airways denying its right to fly in Russian airspace. Boy, look at the map--a major major bypass. And you know, oil is not cheap nowadays. So, here is Byron superb piece and I wanted to share with you with Byron's eloquence and clarity, which by now have become his trade mark.