

Another Cold War?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

This week's news has all been about the invasion of Ukraine, and rightly so.

The Russian military build-up has been going on for months and western powers watched from their satellites and whatever other intelligence gathering sources they have as the number of troops grew to 100,000, then more.

Even while Russian president Putin denied he was planning on invading, you don't mass troops along a border in a friendly show of good will.

Putin claims they are there to liberate some regions in Ukraine, however the real strategy seems to be his attempt to reclaim some of the former glory of the Soviet Union.

European countries are nervous ? and rightly so.

This invasion is too close to western Europe and now Russia is making veiled threats at western countries with the most recent being a mention that 'economic wars often turn into real wars' when France's finance minister said western sanctions would cause Russia's economic collapse.

There is considerable opposition in Russia to the invasion, and we probably don't know the extent of that opposition, because in Russia, speaking out against the government can land you in prison.

Russia claims to be a democracy, however it's ranking on a global scale is very low in terms of rights and freedoms, ranking 124 out of 164 countries in 2020.

Journalists and others who speak out against government corruption have been harassed and arrested.

In 2017, Jehovah's Witnesses were labelled as 'extremists' by the government and were outlawed.

Opposition to this invasion will no doubt start growing when families start getting news that their sons or daughters will be returning in body bags. It's not like they are dying while defending their country ? they are dying while attacking a peaceful neighbour.

Russia has a big military but it is largely conscripts. Until recently, many of those troops were stationed in Belarus with no idea that an invasion plan was even underway.

Conscripted armies, historically do not do well. Soldiers who are forced into service do not have the same motivation as a professional army of volunteers.

This invasion so far has not gone the way the Russian leadership has expected.

They are not making the gains they had planned for and are getting a lot of opposition from Ukrainian forces and even local militias that have been armed.

While many are fleeing Ukraine cities, the government has called for all men between ages 18 and 60 to stay and defend their country.

I'm not a military expert, but this invasion does not seem to be very well planned from a military point-of-view.

The Russians seem to be relying solely on ground forces and they are not making the progress they expected. They are firing missiles indiscriminately into cities with no real target.

This may serve to terrorize the local population but hitting a vacant apartment block with an expensive missile won't stop your enemy from returning fire.

Air power is critical when it comes to modern warfare. Yet there have been few reports of Russian aircraft over Ukraine cities.

Ukraine forces have reported downing five Russian fighters and several helicopters, although these reports cannot be confirmed.

Russia has very little support in their war effort. Even their close allies aren't saying much.

Several countries, including Canada, have announced they will be supporting Ukraine with arms, however, NATO as a military alliance is standing back, unable or unwilling to get involved.

While supporting Ukraine at arms length, NATO cannot get involved in a shooting war unless a NATO country is involved. In that case, all NATO countries are obligated to support them.

Ukraine has expressed interest in joining NATO, which is a major problem for Russia. If Ukraine were to be accepted as a member nation, Russia would have a former Soviet Union member allied with the west and right at its border.

This war will not serve Russia well, in any capacity. They will be losing troops in a shooting war and the economy is going to be in serious trouble after the west applies the economic sanctions that are planned.

Putin seems determined to start another cold war, or worse, but it is his own nation that will suffer the consequences of this poorly planned, unnecessary military action.