

The War in Ukraine. Scott Ritter's Switcheroo: "Why I Radically Changed My Overall Assessment"

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On Sunday, the foreign policy blogs were abuzz with the news that Scott Ritter had done "an about-face in his assessment of the war". It appears that the ex-Marine had examined recent developments in Ukraine and concluded that it's going to be much harder for Russia to win than he had originally thought...

Naturally, the news of Ritter's reversal sent shockwaves across the internet, especially among the people who follow events in Ukraine closely and who greatly admire his even-handed analysis. Some of these people clearly felt betrayed by Ritter's comments and blasted him as a "concern troll" which refers to a person who feigns sympathy while actually feeling the opposite. This is a terrible way to treat a guy who's devoted so much of his time to informing people about an issue of which they might know very little without his research. Besides, Ritter is no hypocrite. Quite the contrary.

It's fair to say, however, that Ritter has probably been the most outspoken proponent of the "Russia is winning" theory, a hypothesis that runs counter to everything we read in the legacy media or see on the cable news channels. Unfortunately, Ritter's views on the matter have changed dramatically, and that's due almost entirely to developments on the ground. As Ritter candidly admits, **"The military aid the west is providing to Ukraine is**

changing the dynamic and if Russia doesn't find a way to address this meaningfully... the conflict will never end."

That's quite a turnaround from a statement he made just weeks earlier that, "Russia is winning the war, and winning it decisively."

So, what changed? What are the so-called developments that led to Ritter's volte-face?

Here are a few excerpts from the interview that triggered the fracas. Ritter was joined by Ray McGovern and host Garland Nixon on **Saturday Morning Live**. (The quotes are copied from video. I accept blame for any mistakes.)

Scott Ritter (start at 47:50 minute mark) — "The thing that frustrates me... is that, **it was my assessment that it would be very hard for Ukraine to absorb this new equipment and material** (Material- the additional lethal weapons that have recently been shipped to Ukraine) **but the howitzers are already operating against Russia. (And) They are having an effect in the Kharkov region.** Not all 90 of them, but they have several batteries in place that are being used.

How did this happen?

And **this is why I have radically changed my overall assessment, because I had been operating on the assumption that Russia would be able to interdict the vast majority of this equipment, but Russia has shown itself unable or unwilling to do this and- as a result- the Ukrainians are having meaningful impact on the battlefield.** Not in the areas of main contention, like the Donbass, but on the periphery. This is why Russia has carried out tactical withdrawals north of Kharkov, because in order to match Ukraine's best capabilities, Russia would have to divert resources from its main effort which Russia has decided not to do. So, they are re-configuring the battlefield. (trading land in different areas)...(["Saturday Morning Live with Scott Ritter and Ray McGovern](#), You Tube)

So, while Ritter's sympathies have not changed in the slightest, it's clear that his analysis has. At first, he didn't think that the deluge of lethal weaponry would affect the outcome of the war. Now he's not so sure. It's a honest mistake but, still, he needed to 'come clean' and explain the factors that contributed to his U-turn. Here's more from the same interview:

Scott Ritter- This is a transformative moment in the war, because what it means is that demilitarization is not taking place. For all the forces Russia is destroying in the east, **Ukraine is rebuilding significant capability** (in the west) I liken this to Moscow in December 1941, when the Germans were moving towards Moscow and the Russians just started throwing things at them., sacrificing everything to slow the German offensive. until General Winter and the combination of Siberian divisions gave them the ability to counterattack. **The Germans were bled white and they were stopped and turned back. If Russia doesn't change the calculation, then that is the trajectory we are heading on.,**because 200,000 troops-however capable they may be, are only capable of doing so much. And the fighting that's taking place right now -even though it is slaughtering Ukrainians- it isn't cost free to the Russians. They're losing equipment, they're losing men, they're losing material, and unless Putin mobilizes or transfers forces in, those aren't being replaced. So, instead of

having 200,000 online, Russia might have 180,000 men. And if you don't think removing 20,000 men doesn't change the options available to the Russian leadership, then you don't know anything about war."

So, I believe Russia is going to win in the east, they are grinding them down as we speak, they are slaughtering them; the amount of death and destruction that is being dealt to the Ukrainians is unimaginable, but I believe **the Ukrainians are willing to take these losses in order to buy time to reconstitute a military that will challenge Russia** Because **unless Russia is willing to jump across the Dnieper River and head into western Ukraine where it can eliminate the strategic depth that the Ukrainians are being gifted by the Russians, then demilitarization of Ukraine is not going to take place.** It can't take place when tens of billions of dollars of equipment is pouring in and Russia is not able to interdict it. **The fact that these advanced howitzers are operating on the front lines right now, shows there's something wrong with the Russian methodology. And-unless they alter that methodology- I think we're in for a very long summer.**" (["Saturday Morning Live with Scott Ritter and Ray McGovern](#), You Tube)

It's hard to grasp what Ritter is saying here. Is he actually suggesting that Putin expand the current "special operation" into a full-blown World War? At one point, he casually opines that Russia will have to mobilize 1 and a half million men (Note: Russia currently only has 200,000 in Ukraine) if they want to prevail in Ukraine and then move on to Finland. It's impossible to tell by Ritter's tone whether he is simply making an objective observation of 'what is needed' to succeed or if he is making an explicit recommendation that he thinks Russia's High Command should consider. I can't answer that. Here's more from the interview:

Scott Ritter (5:20 mark)- "The idea that the Ukrainian military has been eliminated as an effective fighting force is a flawed concept, and unless Russia broadens its special military operation- probably to the point of changing it from a special military operation to a war which includes the totality of Ukrainian battle-space-(then) this is a conflict that is dangerously close to becoming unwinnable by Russia which means that while they can complete their objectives in the east with 200,000 troops, they aren't able to prevent Ukraine from rearming and reequipping when Ukraine is being provided with tens of billions of dollars of equipment by NATO —**Whenever you provide your enemy with "safe space" to rebuild military capability, you're never going to win. ...**

Yes, Russia is winning in the east which is what they said their objective was all along. And they are accomplishing that. That is the special Military Operation. But **now we're talking about "war", and I don't think Russia has made that transition yet.** This is a defacto proxy war between the west and Russia using Ukrainian forces as NATO's sword. The object of this is to "bleed Russia dry". And if Russia doesn't change the dynamic, Russia will be bled dry." **Zelensky has indicated that he's willing to mobilize a million people, at a time when the west is ready to provide the funding and equipment to turn those million men into a real military threat.**

So, I see **what has been happening in the last few weeks as being decisive.**

The military aid the west is providing is changing the dynamic and if Russia doesn't find a way to address this meaningfully, and to eliminate it as a

military capability... then the conflict will never end.” ([“Saturday Morning Live with Scott Ritter and Ray McGovern, You Tube](#))

There it is from the horse’s mouth. Readers will have to draw their own conclusions.

IMHO, Scott Ritter is gradually adjusting to the idea that the conflict in Ukraine is not a just regional skirmish between two quarrelsome neighbors, nor is it a proxy-war between NATO and Russia. No. Ukraine is the first phase of a broader plan for crushing Russia, collapsing its economy, removing its leaders, seizing its natural resources, splintering its territory, and projecting US power across Central Asia to the Pacific Rim. Ukraine is about hegemony, empire, and pure, unalloyed power. Most important, Ukraine is the first battle in a Third World War, a war that was concocted and launched by Washington to ensure another unchallenged century of American primacy.

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