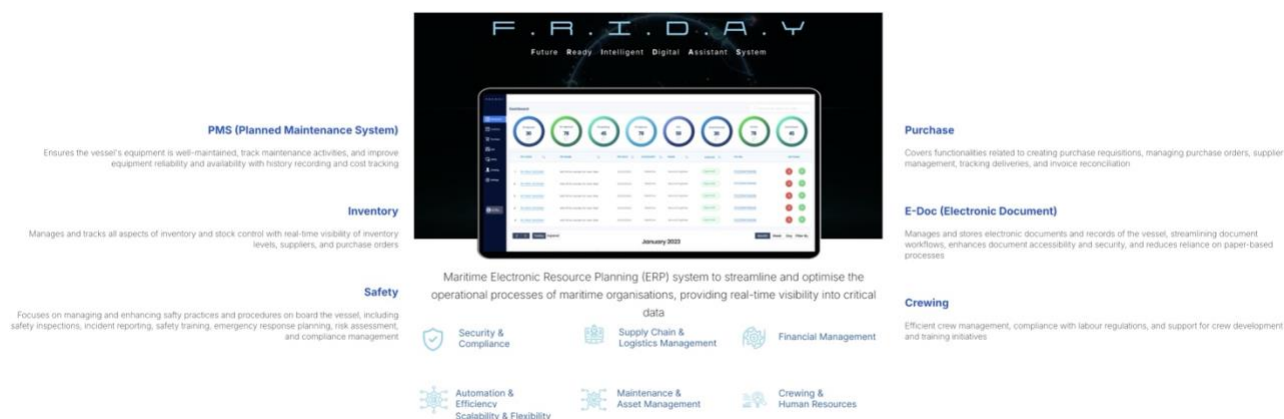




Suppressed Valuations, Suppressed Truths: Thank God It's F.R.I.D.A.Y.!

From *Twilight Zone* to F.R.I.D.A.Y.: The Missing Links

The [previous articles](#) in this series on IOThree Limited (“iO3”, NASDAQ:IOTR) and CBL International (“CBL”, NASDAQ:BANL) explored the speculative hypothesis of a latent M&A, as well as the potential each company has on their own merits as a stand-alone entity. The previous [“Twilight Zone”](#) themed article flagged curious patterns: financial/operational synchronicities, possible customer overlaps, trading anomalies, and murky ownership ties that seemed too consistent to ignore.

This latest report builds on that groundwork. Sometimes, what’s left unsaid in a filing tells you more than what’s written. In iO3’s case, the absence of any reference in its IPO prospectus to its pre-eminent system, F.R.I.D.A.Y. — even as it was undergoing ClassNK approval — isn’t a footnote. It’s one of the key missing pieces that ties together deliberate valuation suppression, CBL’s biofuel pivot, and a likely roadmap to their integration.

The omissions, when lined up against trading data, customer milestones, synchronized subsidiary moves, and other “tells”, suggest less coincidence and more choreography. What looked speculative now strengthens the **speculative hypothesis** of a deliberate playbook.

1. Undervaluation in Plain Sight

The numbers alone tell a story. Even before layering in the strategic overlaps between CBL and iO3, both companies currently trade at valuations that are so deeply misaligned with their fundamentals that the gap is nothing short of dramatic:

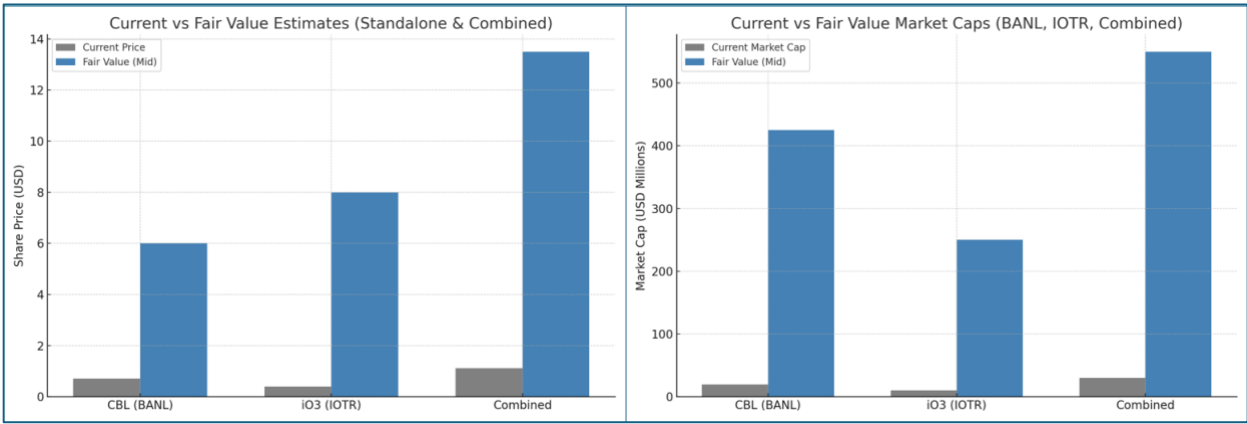
- **CBL International (BANL)** trades around **\$0.71**, with a **market cap of ~\$19.5M**.
- **iO3 (IOTR)** trades around **\$0.40**, with a **market cap of about \$10.3M**.

By contrast:

- **CBL’s FY2024 revenue** was **\$592.5M**, with port expansions, biofuel volume up +600%, but trading at **~0.03× P/S**—a fraction of peer multiples (typically **0.3–0.5×**) implying a fair value of **~\$5–7/share**.
- **iO3’s FY2025 revenue** stands at **\$10.48M**, with a contract backlog of **\$4.06M** slated for recognition; even at a modest industry multiple **3–5×**, valuation should be **~\$6–10/share**.

Sum them, and the gap is striking:

Company	Current Price	Market Cap	Fair Value Range ¹	Implied Value (M)
CBL (BANL)	~\$0.71	~\$19.5 million	\$5 – \$7	~\$350 – \$500M
iO3 (IOTR)	~\$0.40	~\$10.3 million	\$6 – \$10	~\$150 – \$300M
Combined	—	< \$30 million total	\$12 – \$15	≥ \$500M



The charts make the undervaluation impossible to ignore. CBL and iO3 together command less than **\$30M** in market cap today, yet conservative peer-based benchmarks point to a combined value of **\$500M or more**. This isn’t a minor discount—it’s an order of magnitude gap, reflecting not poor fundamentals but the unavoidable outcome of deliberate suppression of visibility, muted IR, and trading anomalies that can be easily tracked.

Given the numbers, it’s no longer about optimism—it’s about **visibility**. Not poor fundamentals, but **deliberate opacity**. This seems like undervaluation by design, not by default. And the combined value narrative—fuel logistics plus digital compliance—makes the M&A hypothesis

¹ Earlier articles presented Hybrid Valuation models that projected upside scenarios through 2030–2035. Those models, conservative by design, blended discounted cash-flow forecasts with backlog visibility and assumed margin suppression would persist for several years. As a result, they implied steady upside but understated the true “today” fair value. Here, by contrast, we apply simple peer multiple benchmarks to current reported revenues. For CBL, P/S compares against a marine shipping industry average of ~1.47×. For iO3, it is valued against comparable software/digital tech companies that trade at 3–5×. Both approaches—Hybrid and peer multiple—are valid, but they answer different questions: Hybrid highlights long-term optionality, while peer multiple view exposes the dramatic undervaluation. Sourced from *Damodaran (NYU Stern)* and *Nasdaq comps*.

impossible to ignore. Yet even without a merger, the message is clear: **both CBL and iO3 are significantly and deliberately undervalued today**. The market is not pricing their revenue scale, contract backlogs, or ESG-driven positioning. Instead, it's anchoring to distorted optics—buried margins, quiet disclosures, and muted trading flows.

Dual Suppression: Different Tactics, Same Playbook

Both iO3 and CBL have been signaling growth while simultaneously **suppressing the optics of their true potential** — but in very different ways. Together, the patterns look less like coincidence and more like choreography.

iO3: Revenue Understatement

iO3's FY2024 results showed modest revenue growth (+14% YoY to \$8.6M) but collapsing gross margins (from 30% to 21.5%). Management pointed to higher staff costs (notably 12 IT contractors in Malaysia), reduced engineering fees, and aggressive pricing for key customers. On paper, this looks like weakness. But underneath, the company's **unsatisfied performance obligations** (contract backlog) surged +47% to \$4.06M by March 2025 — a signal of multi-year deals already signed but not yet recognized as revenue.

 In other words, iO3 is deliberately loading its pipeline, deferring recognition, and keeping its income statement subdued until the right moment.

CBL: Margin Compression

CBL followed a parallel but opposite tactic. Its 2024 revenues surged +36% to \$592.5M as it expanded to 60+ ports and diversified into biofuels and tanker vessels. Yet gross profit collapsed -25% and the company swung to a net loss of \$3.9M. In 1H 2025, reported revenue fell -4.4% YoY (\$265M vs. \$277M), but volumes were actually up +9.8% and biofuel sales exploded +155%. Gross margins improved slightly to 1.02%, and net loss narrowed by 39%.

 The signal here is clear: CBL chose to **sacrifice margin to win market share**, holding back re-rating pressure while building scale in sustainable fuels.

The Integrated Signal

Viewed separately, these moves could be chalked up to market noise. Viewed together, they look intentional:

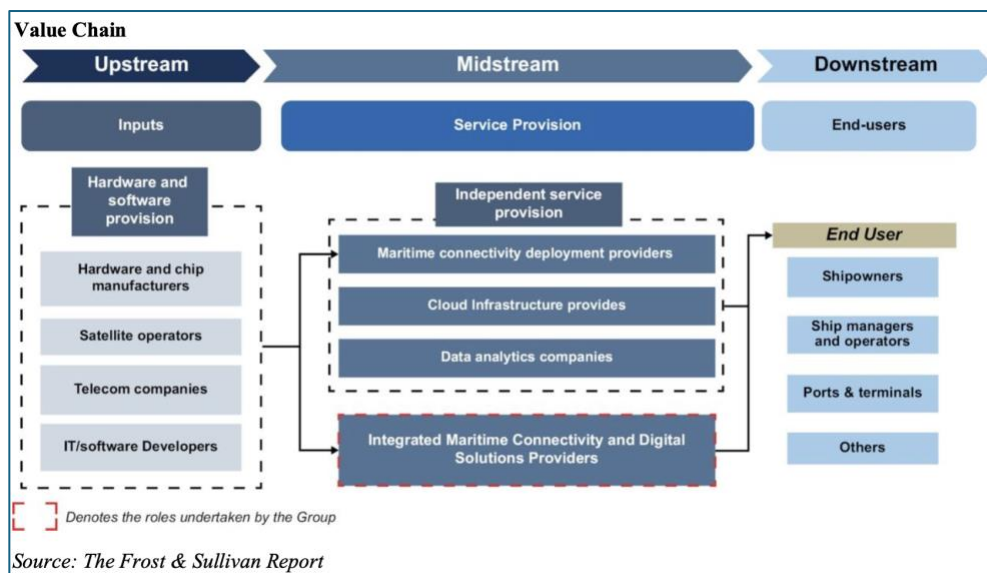
- **iO3 under-reports revenue** by deferring contract recognition.
- **CBL under-reports profitability** by compressing margins in pursuit of scale.
- Both keep valuations low, just as insiders and aligned funds (Shao Qi, Asian Strategy, etc.) position themselves.

Taken together, this seems less like poor execution and more like **dual suppression**. A strategy to keep both equities cheap until integration can unlock the full combined value proposition?

2. The Ghost in the Prospectus

The iO3 IPO prospectus, citing Frost & Sullivan, described a fragmented digital maritime market poised for consolidation. Regulatory deadlines (IMO 2023, EU FuelEU Maritime 2025) are driving adoption, with Asia-Pacific leading implementation and the EU requiring compliance.

The prospectus listed giants like Marlink, Inmarsat, and Speedcast as competitors — companies with hundreds of millions in revenue. But their focus is largely on **connectivity infrastructure and partnerships**, not vertically owned compliance solutions. This is where iO3 claims uniqueness: a full-stack “integrated” offering of connectivity, compliance software, planned maintenance, and AR hardware. Strictly speaking, larger players assemble similar bundles through alliances, but few small-caps control every layer themselves.



That nuance is important. iO3 isn't the *only* integrated provider, but it is the only **small-cap with full-stack control**, nimble enough to bundle connectivity, compliance, and hardware into a single sale. On its own, however, it risks being out-scaled.

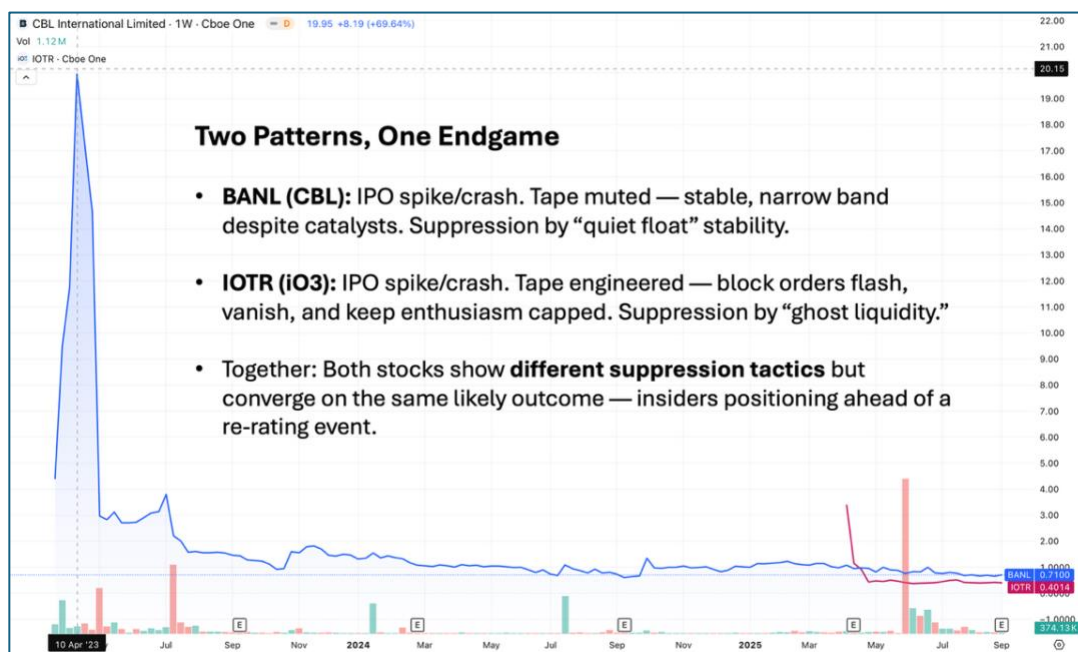
The Missing Link: F.R.I.D.A.Y. Reveals the Hidden CBL–iO3 Play

Most IPO prospectuses oversell. They inflate addressable markets, trumpet “pipeline opportunities,” and stretch definitions of product readiness. Companies normally hype even the faintest idea of a “next-gen platform.” iO3 did the opposite and stayed silent. This wasn't a mistake. It was deliberate.

In 2025, while listing at a \$100M valuation, the company omitted any reference to its most advanced product: F.R.I.D.A.Y., a ClassNK-reviewed compliance and vessel management system that now looks like the keystone in its entire strategy. This ERP-style platform covering

planned maintenance, inventory, safety, crewing, purchasing, and e-docs, was likely under **ClassNK regulatory review throughout 2024**. By April 2025, it was fully approved — enabling auditable IMO/EU emissions reporting, a must-have for ESG compliance.

This omission looks deliberate. By withholding their most advanced, and potentially most monetizable, product from the IPO narrative, iO3 avoided drawing the kind of speculative premium that “AI/ERP for shipping” could have commanded. The result was a \$100M IPO valuation that, absent context, appears inflated. But in the context of a future CBL tie-up, the logic changes: keep the price suppressed, let insiders accumulate, and spring the integrated story later. The omission strengthens the case that iO3’s IPO was less about raising cash and more about **setting a valuation reference** for an eventual integration. This isn’t just two companies running in parallel. It looks like preparation for integration.



3. CBL’s Evolution and iO3’s Entry: A Converging Trajectory

On the other side of the ledger, CBL International had been building quietly since 2016 as a logistics-first traditional fuel supplier. By its March 2023 IPO, it served 36 ports, primarily container liner clients but its model was volume-driven and margin-thin. To break out, CBL pivoted in 2023–24 into sustainable fuels. Armed with ISCC EU and ISCC Plus certifications, CBL rolled out B24 biofuels in Hong Kong, China, and Malaysia, expanding its network to more than 60 ports by year-end 2024.

And there was this:

Information Technology and Automation

CBL has upgraded its back-end systems, implementing real-time order tracking, data analytics, and workflow automation to streamline operations. While the Company's current IT strategy focuses on internal process improvements, it has deployed resources to explore AI applications for future automation and decision-making enhancements.

Source: CBL 2024 Annual Report.

This strategic initiative and subsequent events seemingly confirm when the two companies' trajectories directly converged:

- **May 2024:** Fratelli Cosulich launched its methanol-ready Marta Cosulich in Singapore.
- **Feb 2025:** Marta conducted its first B100 delivery, with iO3's monitoring systems believed to be active.
- **Mar 2025:** CBL executed its first B24 biofuel supply in Singapore, anchoring its ESG credentials.
- **Apr 2025:** iO3's FRIDAY platform secured ClassNK approval, validating its compliance software.

The timeline suggests that F.R.I.D.A.Y. — iO3's flagship vessel management and compliance system — was being built with CBL's biofuel pivot squarely in mind. The platform entered ClassNK regulatory review in 2024, precisely as CBL was ramping its biofuel initiatives and expanding into bunker tanker operations. CBL provided the **fuel logistics backbone**, while iO3 layered on **digital oversight and regulatory validation**. For Fratelli — and by extension, other European customers under strict ESG mandates — the pairing meant they could bunker in Asia with certified fuel, verified digitally for emissions compliance, without building their own local supply or IT infrastructure. Seen together, the pieces fit tightly:

- iO3's contracts prove demand for integrated digital oversight, but its financials show the limits of going it alone.
- CBL's scale in biofuel bunkering secures customers and volumes but needs technology to improve efficiency and a compliance layer to satisfy ESG-driven clients.
- By early 2025, the operational choreography (Fratelli's B100 voyage, CBL's B24 supply, iO3's ClassNK approval) suggests that the joint value proposition is already live.

In short, the data no longer reads as coincidence. F.R.I.D.A.Y.'s omission from iO3's IPO was not an oversight but a calculated move. Both companies suppressed their own valuations, a deliberate alignment, in service of a larger play; one that would only make sense when unveiled together. This is precisely where a merger with CBL changes the calculus: iO3 gains scale and distribution through CBL's 65-port network and growing biofuel/LNG/methanol customer base, while CBL gains a differentiated compliance and digital layer it cannot build alone.

This backdrop strengthens the logic of a CBL-iO3 tie-up: CBL's expansion into Europe and alternative fuels pairs with iO3's compliance-ready software to address both geographies and both halves of the regulatory equation. Whether formally through M&A or informally through commercial partnerships, the design positions both firms as indispensable in the next era of marine fuel logistics and compliance.

Subsidiaries as Chess Pieces

In spring 2025, both CBL and iO3 adjusted their subsidiary structures in ways that appear minor in isolation but become striking when viewed together.

On April 23, 2025, iO3 incorporated iO3 Sdn. Bhd. in Malaysia through its Singapore arm. Officially described as a software development center, it houses the team of 12 IT contractors hired in 2024. Functionally, this became the technical backbone for FRIDAY, JARVISS, and related platforms, along with the compliance alignment needed for IMO and EU reporting. Importantly, this move came only after iO3's IPO prospectus was filed and pricing completed — neatly sidestepping any disclosure of FRIDAY's development base or regional expansion during the valuation process.

Just five weeks later, on May 26, 2025, CBL rebranded its Singapore subsidiary from Majestic Energy to Banle International Singapore, positioning it explicitly as the Group's ESG-forward hub. The announcement followed its first B24 biofuel supply in Singapore (March 2025) and underscored Singapore as the anchor market for sustainable fuels.

In less than five weeks, both companies planted their flags: Malaysia as the software development hub for digital compliance, Singapore as the ESG showcase hub for alternative fuels. Sequenced directly after iO3's FRIDAY ClassNK approval (April 2025) and CBL's first Singapore biofuel delivery (March 2025), the choreography feels deliberate.

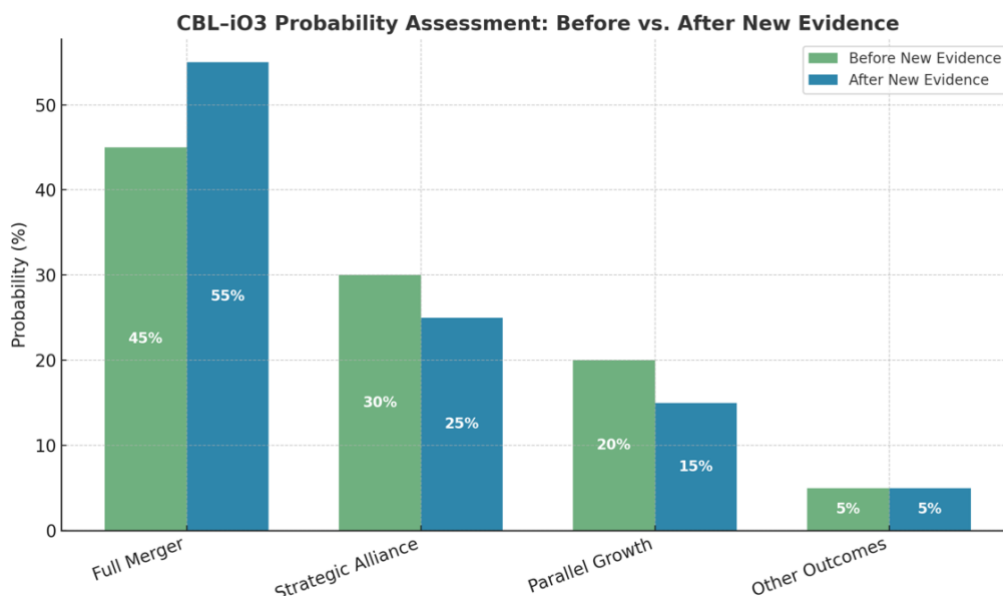
When viewed together, these moves create a dual-platform structure that could support multiple futures: a merger integration vehicle, parallel but aligned expansion, or even a spin-off platform designed to attract green capital. Each scenario is possible, but the sequencing — IPO → FRIDAY approval → Malaysia incorporation → Singapore rebrand — most strongly suggests a staged integration pathway. Rather than routine administrative steps, these look like pieces being positioned on a chessboard, preparing for the next phase of convergence.

4. Conclusion: From Coincidence to Choreography

One interpretation is that CBL and iO3 are simply reacting in parallel to the same forces: regulatory clocks (IMO's CII in 2023, EU FuelEU Maritime in 2025), shifting customer demand, and volatile macro headwinds (Red Sea rerouting, tariffs, and fuel price swings). Under this view, Fratelli's B100 voyage, CBL's B24 supply in Singapore, and iO3's ClassNK approval are less a master plan than synchronized responses to the same pressure points.

But that explanation increasingly strains credulity. F.R.I.D.A.Y.'s total omission from iO3's IPO prospectus — even while under ClassNK review. CBL's aggressive port buildout and biofuel pivot, timed almost perfectly with iO3's customer upfits. And now, the post-IPO choreography of subsidiaries — iO3's Malaysia incorporation and CBL's Singapore rebrand within weeks of each other — landing precisely after milestone fuel and compliance rollouts. Layer in valuations still trading at just 5–10% of peer-based fair value, and the counterfactual begins to collapse.

The addition of multiple data points — valuation suppression, F.R.I.D.A.Y.’s omission, synchronized 2025 milestones (Fratelli’s B100, CBL’s B24, iO3’s ClassNK approval), and the subsidiary chess moves in Singapore and Malaysia — shifts the balance of probabilities. The “parallel growth” explanation weakens further, while a full M&A pathway now carries the highest likelihood. Even if structured initially as a phased alliance, the deliberate alignment of strategy, timing, and corporate structure strongly suggests preparation for convergence.



Even absent a merger, the outcome is unmistakable: fuel plus compliance, logistics plus digital, ESG supply plus ESG proof — converging into a system the market has not yet priced. Suppressed valuations, whether by design or inertia, cannot hold indefinitely. As our valuation analysis shows, both stocks already have 10x re-rating potential on fundamentals alone. When the re-rating comes, it will not be gradual. It will be sharp.

This article is part of an independent research series exploring potential strategic pathways for iOThree (NASDAQ:IOTR) and CBL International (NASDAQ:BANL). The conclusions presented here are speculative hypotheses based on publicly available filings, trading data, and industry context. They should not be interpreted as certainties, inside knowledge, or investment recommendations. Readers should view this analysis as one perspective to inform discussion, not a forecast or advice.