

Post Cold War Era. How A Russian Security Analyst Sees Russia's Relationship with the U.S. and the West

Interview with Nikolai Patrushev

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Mr. J.L. kindly shared this English translation of an interview with Mr. Nikolai Patrushev, current Secretary of the Russian Security Council (since 2008), and former Director of Russia's FSB (Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti, the renamed KGB) from 1999-2008. As such, it is a lengthy and detailed interview, but important to see how the current leadership surrounding Mr. Putin in Moscow views the world, and particularly its relationship with the USA and the West since the days of the Cold War:

[Cold War II: Interview with Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian Security Council](#)

There are many things to be noted about Mr. Patrushev's frank analysis. Most notably, Mr. Patrushev points out that the strategy of "vulnerabilities" that brought down the USSR was a deliberate orchestration of a collapse of energy prices, upon which the USSR built its export economy, a strategy that Mr. Patrushev strongly hints is behind the recent drop of oil prices, which, he is suggesting, will not work this time as Russia has been actively promoting new types of political and economic alliances:

"Our country's main "vulnerability," as defined by the CIA, was its economy. After detailed modelling, the American experts identified its "weakest link", namely the USSR budget's extremely high dependence on the export of energy resources. A strategy of provoking the financial and economic bankruptcy of the Soviet state was formulated, envisaging two interconnected objectives: the bringing about of a sharp reduction in revenue to the USSR's budget from foreign trade, combined with a substantial increase in expenditure on resolving problems created from outside.

"A reduction in world oil prices was envisaged as the main measure for reducing the income side of the budget. This was successfully achieved by the mid-1980s when, as a result of US collusion with the rulers of a number of oil extracting countries, an artificial surplus of crude was created on the market and oil prices fell almost by a factor of four."

Note that Russia's response and determination to prevent what it viewed as clear attempts to break up the Russian Federation gained a dramatic impetus as a result of Washington's meddling in South Ossetia:

"After 7-8 August 2008, when the Georgian leadership, with US support, attempted to annihilate South Ossetia, the world once again

changed substantially. For the first time in many decades Washington provided direct support to a foreign state that had perpetrated an attack on Russian citizens and peacekeepers.

“Everything was staked on surprise. The Georgian dictator believed that a military incursion on the opening day of the international Olympic Games would put Russia in a difficult position, and the Georgians, taking advantage of this, would carry out their “blitzkrieg”. However, the Russian leadership reacted promptly to the sharp deterioration in the situation and the necessary measures were adopted to halt the aggression.

“[Yegorov] It was at that time that people started talking about the shaping of a new geopolitical reality - the multipolarity of the modern world. How did the United States react to this?

“[Patrushev] After the August events in the Caucasus, Washington was clearly alarmed by Russia’s obvious intention to take its place among the world powers of the 21st century and uphold the principle of equal opportunities and full autonomy in global politics. And also to convert the state’s financial income from the exploitation of natural resources into real economic and defence potential and human capital.

The American leadership clearly also disliked the prospects of Russia’s collaboration with China and India, the introduction of the practice of summits in the BRICS format, the successful activity of other organizations in which Russia occupies leading positions (the CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization], the SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organization], and the EAEC [Eurasian Economic Community]), and the formation of the Customs Union.” (All emphasis in the original)

Thus, from the long term perspective of history, Mr. Patrushev and the current Moscow leadership believe that the ultimate goal is simply to break the Russian Federation apart:

“Analysis shows that by provoking Russia into retaliatory steps the Americans are pursuing the very same objectives as in the 1980s with regard to the USSR. Just like back then, they are trying to identify our country’s “vulnerabilities”. At the same time, incidentally, they are pursuing the objective of neutralizing European economic competitors who have, in Washington’s opinion, grown excessively close to Moscow.”

The “meme” that will drive this, Patrushev suggests, is that Russia’s vast natural resource holdings are somehow “unfair” to the rest of humanity, the implication being that the Russian Federation should be broken up (read, placed under Western control), for “the good of humanity”:

“Many American experts, in particular former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, assert that there are vast territories “under Moscow’s power” that it is incapable of exploiting and which therefore “do not serve the interests of all humanity”. Assertions continue to be heard about the “unfair” distribution of natural resources and the need to ensure so-called “free access” to them for other states.

“The Americans are convinced that people must be thinking in similar terms in many other states, particularly those neighbouring on Russia, and that in the

future they will, as is nowadays the custom, form “coalitions” to support the corresponding claims on our country. As in the case of Ukraine, it is proposed to resolve problems at Russia’s expense but without taking its interests into account.

“Even during periods of a relative thaw in relations between Russia (the USSR) and the United States, our American partners have always remained true to such notions.”

This, of course, Russia will not permit, and in language echoing President Putin’s recent statements at the Valdai conference, Mr. Patrushev serves notice that this is a “pipe dream”:

“Therefore irrespective of the nuances in the behaviour of the Americans and their allies the Russian leadership still faces this task as a constant: To guarantee the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Motherland, to defend and multiply its riches, and to manage them correctly in the interests of the multiethnic people of the Russian Federation.”

So why am I taking such pains to cite so much of Mr. Patrushev’s interview in *Rossiskaya Gazetta*? And my answer is, not so much because of what he says, but what his remarks *imply* might be a long term analysis and strategy being pursued by Moscow. First, note that he has drawn attention to the “analysis and strategy of vulnerabilities” conducted under the Reagan Administration, and the economic warfare in all its various forms. Mr. Patrushev mentions the manipulation of oil prices, and though he does not mention the infamous Farewell spy case, he as former Director of the FSB no doubt knows that this economic warfare included more active measures, such as the deliberate shipping of corrupt hardware and software components from the west into Soviet industry, using the KGB’s own industrial spying program to do it. (In the Farewell case, the result was that the French-run mole within the KGB supplied Paris and Washington with the KGB’s shopping list, which Washington very obligingly and covertly supplied. One result was the massive explosion of a Soviet gas pipeline – visible from space – due to the corrupted software.)

In short, Mr. Patrushev has implied the FSB has undertaken *its own vulnerabilities studies of the West and of the USA*, and that a *similar goal – the prying of US allies and satellites out of the Western Alliance system “space”, is the long term goal, with the implosion of the USA itself as an even longer term goal*. In confirmation of this analysis, consider Mr. Patrushev’s own statements about the two-fold goal behind the formation of NATO:

“As you know, after World War II the confrontation between the USSR and the West headed by the United States took the form of a “cold war”. The military-political component of this standoff was entrusted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), formed on the initiative of the United States on 4 April 1949. An analysis of NATO’s practical activity indicates that in creating the alliance the United States was pursuing two main objectives.

“First, a military bloc directed against the USSR was formed under American leadership.

:Second, Washington forestalled the emergence in Western Europe of an autonomous grouping of states that could have competed with the United States. It should be recalled that the territory of the United States itself, which essentially established unilateral military control over the allies, is not included

in NATO's zone of responsibility." (Emphasis added)

Recall the similar statements of Zbigniew Brzezinski in his own book, *The Grand Chessboard*, that NATO was as much about containing German power as it was about containing Soviet power.

By highlighting NATO, and backhandedly indicating the pivotal position of Germany within the NATO-EU bloc, Mr. Patrushev is, I believe, indicating what a long term Russian strategy will be, namely, to use world opinion, the already strong European-Russian international trade in energy, and the growing BRICSA bloc to leverage Europe away from NATO, or, failing that, to significantly reduce American influence within the organization.

What remains to be seen, however, is how that strategy will emerge in its operational and tactical details. But given Mr. Patrushev's analytical tone and careful review of the world situation from the Moscow point of view, we can rest assured that some of those details are probably already worked out.

As the old Chinese proverb has it, "May you live in interesting times," seems to be true. Time will show what those details are. One thing does emerge, however, from Mr. Patrushev's remarks: the last time around, the Soviets played the American game (poker), and this time around, they mean to play Russia's game (chess).

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