



The Kremlin's Conference Bully Pulpit

OE Watch Commentary: The Kremlin leadership continues to host and exploit international security conferences to spread its narrative regarding Russia's role in the global environment. Besides the annual Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS) hosted by the Russian Ministry of Defense, the Kremlin also sponsors an annual security conference arranged by the Russian Federation Security Council to discuss matters related to terrorism, illegal narcotics, and other transnational issues. As the accompanying brief excerpt from the moderate daily, *Kommersant*, points out, this year's conference was held in Sochi, where "delegations from 118 countries took part," and where these representatives were treated to the Kremlin's perspective on global security.

Attendance among visiting countries at this conference has more than doubled since its inception in 2010. While this year's conference was ostensibly dedicated to combating terrorism and narcotics trafficking, many of the Russian speakers used this forum to criticize US/Western policies and actions. Indeed, when opening the conference, Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev, presented an address by President Vladimir Putin, which stated that "certain members of the international community are increasingly frequently trying to ignore universally recognized norms and principles of international law, resorting to the use of military force while bypassing the UN Security Council, abandoning negotiations as the key instrument for resolving disputes between states." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov clarified which "certain members" Putin was referring to when Lavrov asserted that "the United States and its closest allies did not support" an attitude of "mutual respect," but "preferred to take the course of building mechanisms to dominate in all areas."

Lavrov went on to stress Washington's designs "to create a unipolar world order," asserting that "updated key US doctrines (on nuclear issues, national security, and defense) are permeated with confrontational ideas." He labeled Western sanctions against Russia as "illegitimate means of economic coercion," failing to mention the Kremlin's continued aggression against Ukraine. Instead, Lavrov blamed the "Ukrainian leadership" for "not only sabotaging the [Minsk] peace process, but also trying to undermine its very essence," warning that "the conflict in the east may erupt with new force. They [the Ukrainians] are playing with fire."

The article ends on a cautionary note, pointing out that in between conference sessions, attendees had the opportunity to learn about "the Russian military-industrial complex," where they could have "their photographs taken with grenade launchers, fire at targets in an electronic shooting gallery, examined unmanned aerial vehicles, etc..." In its bid to dominate the information realm, the Kremlin continues to host and exploit international conference platforms to promulgate its views towards global security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov continued... 'All these years we have done as much as possible to promote cooperation based in mutual respect. Unfortunately, the United States and its closest allies did not support this attitude'."

Source: "Pavel Tarasenko and Mikhail Korostikov, "Силовики провели игры в Сочи: Конференция по безопасности побила олимпийский рекорд (Law Enforcers Hold Games in Sochi. Security Conference Breaks Olympic Record)," *Kommersant*, 26 April 2018. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3613944>

The two-day international meeting of high-ranking officials responsible for security issues in Sochi ends on 26 April. This time the event, which is held every year under the aegis of the Russian Federation Security Council, was unprecedented in size -- delegations from 118 countries took part....

...Note that this is the ninth time the Russian Federation security officials have held a meeting like this. Forty-three countries were represented at the first forum in 2010, which was also in Sochi.

...Opening the conference, Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev explained which issues these were. First, he read an address by President Vladimir Putin, which said: "Certain members of the international community are increasingly frequently trying to ignore universally recognized norms and principles of international law, resorting to the use of military force while bypassing the UN Security Council, abandoning negotiations as the key instrument for resolving disputes between states."

Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov continued... "All these years we have done as much as possible to promote cooperation based in mutual respect. Unfortunately, the United States and its closest allies did not support this attitude. They preferred to take the course of building mechanisms to dominate in all areas."

...The Minister said that the updated key US doctrines (on nuclear issues, national security, and defense) are permeated with confrontational ideas. He criticized the "use of illegitimate means of economic coercion and the reliance on unfair competition." ...He warned against further attempts "to create a unipolar world order."

...As well as the United States and NATO, the Minister also criticized the Ukrainian leadership because it is "not only sabotaging the peace process, but also trying to undermine its very essence." "The conflict in the east may erupt with new force. They are playing with fire," he warned.

...In the breaks between debates, attendees at the Sochi conference learned about the achievements of the Russian military-industrial complex from an exhibition -- they had their photographs taken with grenade launchers, fired at targets in an electronic shooting gallery, examined unmanned aerial vehicles...