

TBWS K.T. McFarland

Speaker 1 ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.

Bill Walton ([00:23](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton. Today, I'm delighted to be joined by K.T. McFarland, who we all know was Deputy National Security Advisor for President Trump, served in the Pentagon for President Reagan, and is author of a terrific book, *Revolution: Trump, Washington and We the People*. I'm also delighted to be a fellow board member with K.T. of CPAC, American Conservative Union. And K.T. will be joining our lineup on the CPAC Now channel in the not too distant future, and so we're delighted to have her on with her insights and all the smart people that she knows to help us learn about the world. So K.T., welcome.

K.T. McFarland ([01:12](#)):

Well it's just wonderful to be with you on your show, and I'm really excited about starting my own show on the CPA, as well, because as you pointed out and what you've done with your podcast and with your show is, you have the access and the ability to talk to people that the average person in the country doesn't get to hear from, either because these people don't go on cable news or they don't have podcasts, but they are the real thought leaders. And so that's what I'm very excited about doing, more of this long-form interview to talk to the people who everybody else is listening to.

Bill Walton ([01:46](#)):

Well yeah, I'm very much looking forward to that and your show. Well let's jump right in. There are a couple issues on my mind that are the issues du jour, I think. One as we speak, Putin has stepped up his campaign in Ukraine and is now sending missiles into cities all over the country. And the other issue is that the Chinese are holding their Congress next week, and President Xi is likely to be anointed as president for life, and that has tremendous implications for national security. And I think, K.T., as you've often pointed out, China, in the near future, looms a lot larger than Russia. But let's start with Ukraine and what's going on now and what's Putin hope to achieve?

K.T. McFarland ([02:39](#)):

Well it is worth pointing out that both the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, and the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, they've got the same sort of mindset problem. They think that they have been designated by fate to restore the greatness of their nations and that they personally want to achieve this during their time in office. And they're both in their seventies, so the clock is ticking.

([03:00](#)):

With regard to Vladimir Putin right now in Russia, he's so desperate that he realizes that he cannot stay in office, or probably even stay alive, if he has to return with Russian forces to Russia in defeat. He can't be defeated in this. He will escalate to whatever point he needs to because in his mind, he is Russia. So it's not just him personally, he is Russia. He cannot accept defeat.

([03:25](#)):

So what does that mean he's likely to do in the days and weeks ahead? Well I think he escalates, and one way it's going to escalate, he started to do it and he'll probably do more of it, is to attack civilian sites. So not just by accident hitting a hospital, but deliberately targeting civilian facilities, schools, hospitals, the places where people go to, the daily shopping mall. That's where he's going to go next because that's all he is got left to bomb.

[\(03:49\)](#):

The other thing he's likely to do is to really rattle the Europeans. Now he's already not going to give them oil and natural gas for the winter months, shooting the price up, probably pushing all of Europe into a severe recession. But the other sort of warning shot across the bow he's fired, is two weeks ago, there was underwater blasts of two gas pipelines.

Bill Walton [\(04:16\)](#):

Yeah, Nord Stream.

K.T. McFarland [\(04:17\)](#):

The Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2. Now nobody's taken credit for it, but everybody realizes it was Russia, because Russia had the ability to do that, because these gas pipelines were not doing anything for Russia. They weren't delivering oil anyway.

Bill Walton [\(04:29\)](#):

Why would he do that though, because he could have just turned off the spigot. He didn't need to blow it up. Is that a...

K.T. McFarland [\(04:33\)](#):

Yeah, but by blowing it up, absolutely.

Bill Walton [\(04:35\)](#):

Is that a symbolic message that he could blow it up, and therefore, he could blow other things up?

K.T. McFarland [\(04:39\)](#):

Well it's two things. One thing, it is a symbolic message because guess what lying right next to those gas pipelines under sea. It's all the fiber optic cables, which means all the communications in Europe. But the other reason he did it was he could then go to his own people and say, "See, I told you those Americans, they're invade... This is us invading Ukraine, this is America invading Russia. And what better example do I have than those Americans blew up the gas pipelines." In other words, a false flag operation because he knows that his war is becoming increasingly unpopular in Russia. He was supposed to win this thing really quickly, it was going to have no problems for the Russian people, and they were going to be great again because they would have all of Ukraine. That's not what's happened.

[\(05:18\)](#):

So I think that for a whole lot of reasons, it points to Russia doing it. And by doing it, again, he gets two things out of it. He gets some bragging rights at home that, "Oh well, let's all rally around the flag." And then he also has made it pretty clear to the Europeans what the consequence would be.

[\(05:33\)](#):

The third thing he's threatening now, and this is the one that's really scary, is potentially using tactical nuclear weapons. Now I've studied Vladimir Putin for, I don't know, 30 years at least, going back to his graduate school dissertation in the 1990s when he left the KGB. He's not a subtle guy. He tells you in advance of what he's going to do, and whether it was to invade Ukraine, whether it was 10 years ago to invade Crimea, whether it's Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

[\(06:07\)](#):

Now what he said is a couple of things that are kind of scary, and he said this in the last two weeks. Number one, he said, "America ended World War II quickly, decisively, by using nuclear weapons." So he is already saying, "Maybe I'll do that, maybe I'll end this war decisively." The other thing he's done, which is equally kind of scary, is that by annexing the four eastern provinces of Ukraine, which aren't really under his control, what he said is that, "These areas of Ukraine are now Russian, so any attack against them, we will..."

Bill Walton [\(06:40\)](#):

Sovereignty.

K.T. McFarland [\(06:40\)](#):

"Assume is attack against Mother Russia." It's a sovereignty thing. So in a weird way, crazy as this sounds, I think he's almost looking forward to an escalation and to a European response because that keeps him in power at home.

Bill Walton [\(06:52\)](#):

Well he's...

K.T. McFarland [\(06:53\)](#):

And At this point, he has nothing left to lose.

Bill Walton [\(06:55\)](#):

Yeah, well he's brought in General Sergei Surovikin, who did the bombing air and land campaign in Syria. And he's known there, I guess, that his nickname is General Armageddon, and so he...

K.T. McFarland [\(07:11\)](#):

Yeah, he's a butcher. Yeah, he's going after civilian sites.

Bill Walton [\(07:15\)](#):

So we've escalated this. You mentioned it's unpopular in Russia. It's getting very unpopular, I would think, and will grow more so this winter in Europe.

K.T. McFarland [\(07:26\)](#):

Yes.

Bill Walton [\(07:26\)](#):

And here in the United States, I think there are a lot of us that feel like it's time to wrap this thing up...

K.T. McFarland ([07:33](#)):

Yes.

Bill Walton ([07:33](#)):

And try to bring it to a negotiating table, Trump's big beautiful table. I think Trump's now taken to calling Biden a war monger, and I agree with him.

K.T. McFarland ([07:46](#)):

I do, too. What it is is the leftover neocons, the war wing of the Republican party, Any war anytime, they're in favor of, and then the Biden neoliberal internationalists who keep insisting, well Vladimir Putin needs to be punished for this, he needs to be rolled back. And anybody who's saying, like you're saying, like I'm saying, like Elon Musk is saying, like Trump is saying, "Look, maybe we better find off ramps for everybody here. Maybe we better have a negotiated solution," those people are criticized. "Well you must love Vladimir Putin. You must think this is okay." No, none of us think this is okay. We all know it's Vladimir Putin's fault, but I look at the bigger picture, and we do not want this to escalate.

([08:26](#)):

And I listened to President Biden's interview the other day, and he said, "Well I don't think Vladimir Putin's going to use nuclear weapons." Okay, great. I don't think he is either, but it's not the odds I'm concerned with. It's the stakes. What if he does use nuclear weapons? Where is that going? And President Biden and others have sort of blithely said, "Well then we're in World War III and then we're in Armageddon." I personally think we ought look for a lot more off ramps before we get to that point.

Bill Walton ([08:52](#)):

How do we bring pressure on the Biden administration? From day one, they've been bent on regime change with Putin. Some of them still actually believe their own cooking that Putin and Trump were hand in hand, and by getting rid of Putin, somehow they continue to punish Trump. It seems lunatic to me, but who's the... Victoria Nuland, I think, is in there...

K.T. McFarland ([09:18](#)):

Yes.

Bill Walton ([09:19](#)):

Guiding all this, and she's Ms. Regime Change. We don't do regime change very well, and I think we're likely to find out we're not going to be any more successful this time than we have in the past.

K.T. McFarland ([09:33](#)):

And if there's regime change in Russia, what's the guarantee that the guy who comes in next is a peacenik?

Bill Walton ([09:39](#)):

Right.

K.T. McFarland ([09:39](#)):

He's probably going to be more hawkish.

Bill Walton ([09:40](#)):

Right.

K.T. McFarland ([09:40](#)):

He's probably going to be the guy who says, "Well we're going to win this war at any cost." Look, I think that we still have time for solutions, and here's what I would propose to him. Number one, Jesus, stop this war on American fossil fuels. Let America use oil and natural gas, not just to fix our own economy, but to fix everybody else's economy, so we could be the energy source of Europe. And at the same time, the prices of oil and gas will go down. It'll bankrupt Russia. So Vladimir Putin may want to continue this war, but he won't have the money to buy the weapons he needs, and he won't have the money to pay the 300,000 conscripts he's got.

[\(10:16\)](#):

And then the second thing is, what happens after the war stops if we have some kind of negotiated solution. I play the long game, and the long game set looks like this. Russia and Ukraine stop the fighting. Everybody gets a little something, nobody gets everything they want. But then five years out, the West will immediately rush to rebuild Ukraine, and within a couple of years, Ukraine will be so integrated into the Western economies, into Europe, that no way Russia can come back for another bite of Ukraine. And meanwhile, five years after the fighting stops, where's Russia? Well they're just as broke as they would be with oil and gas prices low. And nobody in the world is going to rush to rebuild Russia, not with Russia being a pariah nation at this point.

Bill Walton ([11:05](#)):

So how do we get the Biden administration to start bringing people together and getting to a negotiated solution? I know that both France and Germany are beginning to talk about that's what ought to happen. If you could force the issue, how would you do it?

K.T. McFarland ([11:26](#)):

Well I don't think he's going to listen to you and me, Bill. So I think that President Biden and Victoria Nuland are getting their advice elsewhere. But one thing would be if the Europeans would pressure them. Another thing is, look, if this election means that the Republicans take the House and the Senate, one way to force the Biden administration to put pressure on the Ukrainians and the Russians is to start cutting budgets. All this special aid to Ukraine costs a lot of money, and maybe the only way to get their attention is to say, "Look, we're going to knock the knees out from under you unless you pay attention. Unless you push both countries to a negotiated solution, you're going to be out there on your own." So I think that the combined pressures will be there.

[\(12:07\)](#):

And I sure hope so, because I think for the first time in my adult lifetime... And Bill, I studied nuclear weapons at MIT. I taught nuclear weapons at MIT in the '80s. I was in the Reagan administration. I even go back to the Nixon and Ford administrations, so I have a long 45, 50 year old career, and I have never been as nervous about the threat of escalation to the point where it runs out of everybody's control as I am right now.

Bill Walton ([12:34](#)):

Well and you know that tactical nukes are a different degree but not in kind from regular nukes, and you can't... People starting to say, "Well the wind won't blow towards NATO and therefore, it won't be an

escalation." Just like I hate counting on what's on Putin's mind, I hate counting on the direction of the wind. So what's...

K.T. McFarland ([12:59](#)):

Yeah, so when I was at MIT, one of the first things you learn studying the military and weapons systems is, don't look at the capabilities of the weapons. Don't look at the attitude of the leader for what he's saying, because that can change overnight. There's an election, there's a coup. Look at the capabilities of that country, of the military capabilities. Don't look at the intentions, because the military capabilities can't be turned on overnight. And I'm looking at the military capabilities of Russia, of Europe, of the United States right now and of China, and I'm saying, "We've got enough problems on our plate. We do not need an escalated U.S.-Russia war." Why? Because the only country that wins that war is China.

Bill Walton ([13:40](#)):

Well, let me veer into something a little different. Our nuclear triad, the submarines, the B-52s, the ICBMs, we've been neglecting that for decades, and so we act like maybe we have all this capability. I'm not sure we do. I'm not sure I'd want to go toe-to-toe. We've been so neglectful of that, acting as if that were never going to be used. Now that we're coming to that point, I wonder what we really have.

K.T. McFarland ([14:10](#)):

Well you're right. The triad is composed of submarines, which can launch missiles to our adversary, airplanes that can drop bombs, and missiles that can go from ground-to-ground, so those three kinds of weapons. We have not modernized or done the next generation off it, but I'm more concerned that what we haven't done is missile defense.

Bill Walton ([14:30](#)):

Right.

K.T. McFarland ([14:30](#)):

Now I was in the Pentagon when President Reagan gave the Star Wars speech. In fact, I wrote the first draft of that speech. I wrote the part nobody cared about. But when President Reagan challenged the country and he said, "American scientists and American military experts, we could maybe build a missile shield that would protect us against incoming Russian missiles of any variety." And Reagan started it. There was a little bit of interest in funding early on. It's probably the one thing that convinced the Soviet Union to surrender in the Cold War, because they knew they couldn't do it. They weren't sure we could do it, but they knew they couldn't do it. But then now over the years, any real funding for serious missile defense has gone by the wayside. We should have that missile defense, whether it's to help our European allies, to help our Asian allies, or really to protect the United States.

Bill Walton ([15:18](#)):

How does this affect what we're doing? I mentioned China at the outset. They've got their Congress coming up. How do you see this playing out with them, and would raising the stakes in Ukraine make it more likely that they go after Taiwan while we're distracted?

K.T. McFarland ([15:36](#)):

Well I think they're sitting on the sideline. I've thought this from the very beginning, going back to February and the Olympics, when Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping met to talk about their plan for the future, and Putin said, "I'm going to go for Ukraine." And we've got to assume the Chinese leader said, "Well, I'm going to go for Taiwan." I think the Chinese, at this point, are sitting back with a bag of popcorn and they're watching the movie to see how this unfolds.

[\(16:00\)](#):

China historically, for thousands of years, doesn't necessarily invade countries. It just wants to conquer them economically and in other ways. So I think with time, probably the Taiwan situation would've worked its way out. It's a much smaller population. There's a lot of investment across straights, so Taiwanese companies invest in China's companies and vice versa.

[\(16:25\)](#):

The problem is that Xi Jinping, who will be declared emperor for life in just a few short weeks...

Bill Walton [\(16:32\)](#):

Yeah.

K.T. McFarland [\(16:32\)](#):

His pledge to himself is to get this accomplished not in 10 years or 20 years or a hundred years, but in his time in office, which, for a 70 year old man, is drawing close. So I think he will precipitate a crisis there, not necessarily a military crisis, but it could be an economic crisis or a blockade. And I think he's going to say, "I'm not going to do what Putin did. That didn't work out real well for him. I think I'll try a different tactic."

Bill Walton [\(17:02\)](#):

I was surprised, but it turns out the reports out of China is they fear these semiconductor rules we've put in place restricting exchanges of technology and supply chain interrelationships. They think it might really hurt the Chinese semiconductor production and technologies and R&D. And you look at Taiwan. Taiwan is at the apex of a lot of that. Does that change the calculation at all?

K.T. McFarland [\(17:40\)](#):

Sure, and here's how it does. So the United States, our engineers, they invent the best chips in the world, but then they're all made in either China or, most importantly, in Taiwan. So Taiwan makes like 95% of the most advanced chips and exports them to the world, which is one of the reasons that China is so interested in Taiwan, not only for national bragging rights and historic purposes, but there are two really important other reasons that China wants control of Taiwan. One is the chip industry. If China controls Taiwan, then China controls worldwide electronics. China controls the technology and economy of the world. And then the other reason is Taiwan's position as an island in the Western Pacific, that from Taiwan, China could project power and really control the entire Western Pacific all the way to Hawaii. So it's a military reason and it's an economic reason and it's a historic reason, and sadly, I think Xi Jinping feels the clock is ticking.

Bill Walton [\(18:34\)](#):

Well it's an exciting world we're in. I'm glad you're here to explain it, and I hope we get a chance to get back in charge in a couple of years and try to bring about some of these sensible long-term policies that you're recommending. And you're right, becoming the world leader in energy production, particularly

fossil fuels, is the key to this, and it seems to me, long term we've got to do that. And unfortunately, the Biden administration, every single agency in government, seems aimed at shutting down the fossil fuel industry. So there's some sort of a reckoning ahead, and maybe when that starts shaping up, you and I can talk some more. Of course, now we're all going to be in CPAC now together and we can...

K.T. McFarland ([19:26](#)):

Right.

Bill Walton ([19:27](#)):

Go back and forth every few weeks.

K.T. McFarland ([19:29](#)):

But I agree with you. Energy is the key to all of this.

Bill Walton ([19:31](#)):

[inaudible 00:19:32].

K.T. McFarland ([19:32](#)):

America, we have the energy that we can power the world with, cheap, clean, abundant American natural gas, and that's what we should be doing. It'll fix our economy, it'll bankrupt our adversaries, and frankly, it'll be extremely good for the environment because countries and companies will switch from dirty coal to clean natural gas.

Bill Walton ([19:55](#)):

K.T., thank you. Thanks for joining me. And as always, thanks for taking in the Bill Walton Show. We can be found on all the major podcast platforms, YouTube and Rumble and Spotify and iTunes, the usual lineup. And we hope you enjoyed this. This show should be airing next Monday night on CPAC Now at 7:00. And hope you'll enjoy it. All right, so thanks so very much, and we'll talk with you soon.

K.T. McFarland ([20:24](#)):

Thank you so much for the opportunity. It's been a pleasure.

Bill Walton ([20:27](#)):

Great, K.T.

([20:29](#)):

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