

# Joe Biden's "Gaffes" Could Trigger World War III. Calls for "Regime Change" in Russia

By [Michael Jansen](#)

Global Research, March 31, 2022

[The Jordan Times](#) 30 March 2022

Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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*Joe Biden is well known for gaffes. He admits that he is a "gaffe machine". He has a 47-year history of making confusing, embarrassing and misleading public statements, bigoted comments and angry outbursts. His gaffes have generally been shrugged off by his entourage, colleagues and world leaders but revealed by journalists. Since he became US president Biden's gaffes have, however, become risky and downright dangerous.*

World leaders who came to distrust the US under a capricious and disruptive Donald Trump are feeling dubious about Biden's gaffes which have sustained mistrust of Washington although he had pledged to stabilise the US political scene and foreign policy. Concerns over his behaviour have increased after he appointed himself commander of the NATO campaign against Russia.

In 2011, as Barack Obama's vice president, Biden forged an awkward relationship with the Russian leader. During a charged meeting in the Kremlin while standing next to Vladimir Putin, Biden told journalists he said, "I'm looking into your eyes, and I don't think you have a soul." According to Biden, "He looked back at me, and he smiled, and he said, "'We understand one another.'"

Despite Putin's chilling response, the remark, coming from a man claiming to be a devout but tolerant Catholic, amounted to a major insult. Russians are steeped in their country's millennial history and Orthodox Christianity. "Soul" is deeply embedded in the Russian psyche and persona.

This cold assessment of Putin more than a decade ago could very well have driven Biden's strident advocacy of Ukraine after Russia deployed troops around that country in January and invaded on February 24. Biden took the lead and dragged a reluctant Europe into an all-out campaign against Putin and Russia without pausing to think about how the war could be

brought to an end. When Biden has called Putin a “thug”, “a butcher” and a “murderous dictator”, the Kremlin responded by saying the US president was suffering from irritability and fatigue and should not be uttering personal insults.

During last week’s trip to Europe, Biden committed four serious gaffs. When asked what the US would do if Russia used chemical weapons in Ukraine, he said this “would depend on the nature of the use” but then added the US would respond “in kind”. While visiting the US 22nd airborne, he told troops that they would witness Ukrainians resisting Russia “when you’re there”, suggesting that they would be deployed in Ukraine. He had previously vowed not to intervene and start World War III.

Biden went beyond insults when he breached US protocols by saying war crimes were being committed by Russia in Ukraine and called Putin a “war criminal” as this has legal implications. In addition to applying this term to the Russian president, the Biden administration has established its own mechanism for gathering evidence of Russian war crimes in Ukraine. Until Biden’s statement, the administration had avoided accusing Russia of war crimes.

Last Saturday, Biden escalated his rhetoric by saying Putin “cannot remain in power”, effectively calling for regime change in Russia. Although the White House promptly attempted to get round this existential gaff, no one has been convinced by its efforts. The Kremlin responded by saying, “That’s not for Biden to decide. The president of Russia is elected by Russians.”

French President Emmanuel Macron reacted by saying,

“We want to stop the war that Russia has launched in Ukraine without escalation, that is the objective... If this is what we want to do, we should not escalate things, neither with words nor actions.”

Forty-eight hours after his dangerous gaffe, Biden said the US does not have a policy of regime change in Russia but refused to apologise and said he was expressing personal “moral outrage” at Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. As US president he must keep personal opinions out of the public sphere and stick to describing policy.

Since Biden’s gaffes generally spring from his lips when he is offscript, his handlers need to ensure that he does not have a chance to go off-script by turning off the microphone as soon as he stops reading the approved text on a teleprompter and limiting appearances where he can speak independently. Biden’s gaffes could, indeed, cause World War III.

By insulting Putin and calling for his removal from power, Biden has made it all the more difficult for the US and Europe to find a way to end the Ukraine war.

Biden’s verbal stumbles have prompted Greek legislator Yanis Varoufakis to warn,

“The West Is ‘Playing with Fire’ If It Pushes Regime Change In Nuclear-Armed Russia”,

“Whenever the United States tried regime change, it didn’t turn out very well and has never been tried with a nuclear power”. (quoted in Democracy Now)

He said while the West is unified and has the backing of many countries, India, China and

and many other countries, with half of the world's population, do not agree with the campaign against Russia.

Varoufakis referred to the Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu who

"once said that if you are faced with a formidable enemy... what you should do... is to build a golden bridge behind your enemy from which your enemy can escape, to give him an opportunity to withdraw while claiming that he has achieved something".

But, by calling Putin a war criminal, Biden

"is not leaving any room for a compromise, then he is effectively jeopardising the interests of Ukrainians.. a quagmire in the Ukraine is not exactly in the interests of any Ukrainian I know of".

Instead of arming Ukraine and imposing sanctions on Russia, Varoufakis said the world should discuss

"Biden's proposals for a resolution [of the conflict] that would mean an immediate ceasefire and an immediate withdrawal from the Ukraine in an exchange for some kind of deal that Putin can sell to his own henchmen as something of a victory. Instead of that, Biden is doubling down, and he's speaking in a language which is consistent with regime change, which will be catastrophic for the people of Ukraine."

In Varoufakis' view, a deal would render Ukraine neutral, provide arrangements for the Russian-controlled Donbas area, and postpone discussion of the status of Russian-annexed Crimea. Such a deal would dissatisfy all partners but end the threat of nuclear war.

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