

Biden's Real Ukraine Scandal: Regime Change and War

By [Rick Rozoff](#)

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Amid the rash of eleventh-hour stories, claims and counter-claims relating to Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's and his son Hunter's roles in the Burisma Holdings foreign-aid-for-cash-and-influence affair, the historical backdrop of the scandal and its potentially catastrophic geopolitical consequences have largely gone unnoticed. Or commented upon.

Hunter Biden's opportunity to secure a lucrative sinecure job in a nation half the world away with no apparent qualifications, and that immediately on the heels of being cashiered from the U.S. Navy for rampant drug abuse, is a tale hardly out of Plutarch but perhaps one befitting True Crime Magazine.

And it's also a subject worthy of illustrating what one hopes is the dying gasp of what since 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union has been embraced by some as the unipolar moment. That is, Washington's uncontested global sway and ability to dictate terms to and exploit opportunities in every nation on the planet, however remote and obscure.

The rapidity with which the U.S. penetrated and dominated much of post-Soviet territory is breath-taking. Only three years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union former federal republics of the nation were absorbed in NATO's first, as it were, apprenticeship program, the Partnership for Peace. (George Orwell would have nodded in defeat at the hubris of that euphemism.) The first former Soviet nation to join that program was Ukraine in 1994.

In the interim Ukraine has been of the utmost geostrategic, and no little economic, interest to the U.S.

In 2004 and 2005 the U.S. government, along with plausible-deniability outlets like the National Endowment for Democracy and assorted private think tanks and planning bodies as

well as the usual plethora of self-styled non-governmental organizations, assisted overtly and otherwise in the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine, in which the apparent winner of the run-off election, Victor Yanukovych, was declared the loser and the loser, Victor Yushchenko, the winner in an unprecedented and constitutionally dubious third round of polling.

The roles would be reversed in 2010. Victor Yushchenko, according to the West the people's and assuredly Uncle Sam's favorite six years before, received only 5.45% of the vote in the first round. A point worth recalling is that then-sitting president Yushchenko's wife Kateryna (Kathy to Washington insiders) was born and raised in Chicago, graduated from the University of Chicago and worked for the State Department, the Treasury Department and the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress. In the course of her career she also worked for the KPMG Peat Marwick/Barett Group, one of the Big Four accounting organizations, where she met her spouse-to-be Victor Yushchenko. It's bad form to mention such matters, but if an American presidential candidate, if a serving president, were to be married to, say, a Russian-born former official of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs it might be a topic of conversation in the columns of the New York Times and Washington Post, one supposes. Perhaps Rachel Maddow would see fit to comment on the matter. Shrilly as usual.

Victor Yanukovych defeated his opponent Yulia Tymoshenko in the 2010 run-off election and served as head of state in Ukraine without incident until, in November of 2013, he postponed signing an association agreement with the European Union under the [Eastern Partnership initiative](#) which was launched to absorb all former Soviet states in Europe and the Caucasus not already members of the EU; all, that is, but Russia. Its ultimate purpose is to eliminate remnants of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and other organizations formed by Russia with fellow former Soviet states. Ukraine was of more economic and geostrategic value than the other five candidates (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova). Instead Yanukovych accepted a \$15 billion deal offered by Russia, one which offered discounted gas. His administration also abandoned anti-Russian maneuverings with the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline. For the three above offenses Yanukovych's days were numbered.

Almost immediately, ostensibly because of an obscure project that it's doubtful one in ten Ukrainians had even heard of, the capital of Ukraine and other major cities were flooded with "spontaneous" disruptions and thousands of "peaceful" protesters. In Kiev they succeeded, among other actions, in setting on fire over a hundred police officers, killing no less than a dozen of them. A familiar technique, it is one inaugurated by Otpor! (Resistance!) in Yugoslavia in 2000 and replicated afterward in Georgia, Ukraine (2004-2005 and again in 2013-2014), Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan (twice or three times: 2005, 2010 and this year), Egypt, Moldova, Armenia (twice, successfully in 2018) and elsewhere.

This as Senator John McCain and Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland were befriending and passing out pastries to the suddenly geopolitically-informed rioters, who set much of the nation's capital on fire.

Two days before the government was overthrown, on February 22, 2014, and its internationally-recognized head of state fled to Russia, Yanukovych was on the receiving end of a phone call with Vice President Joseph Biden. Such fatal phone calls have become the norm in how the indispensable nation (see Madeleine Albright, Barack Obama, et al.)

conducts international relations, earlier adumbrated in much-loved American movies about La Cosa Nostra and street gangs, but ordinarily and pro forma they are to be initiated by the secretary of state or one of his or her subordinates. Not by the vice president. If the latter occurs and is revealed it might look bad, might cast aspersions on the nobility and purity of national intentions. [As the Associated Press reported](#) shortly after the event, Biden warned (again, see the above Hollywood precedents) that Ukraine had the bad habit of being “‘a day late and a dollar short’” with their “attempts to appease political protesters.” That leaves little doubt about which side Biden and his government were on in the nascent civil war in Ukraine, and as little doubt about which side the “protesters” were on as well.

Biden, Nuland, McCain and company achieved their consummation devoutly wished and a junta of Ukrainian putschists assumed power; intriguingly enough the very persons appointed by former U.S. ambassador to NATO Nuland in a phone call two weeks before the coup succeeded to U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt in a conversation that was not intended to be made public, though as Under Secretary of State Nuland was in the habit of bullying other – weaker – nations over government transparency.

As the new American-appointed “transition government” (in Latin America traditionally known as a junta) was consolidated by attacks on the recent ruling and other parties in the parliament, general street-tough thuggery against news media and other personnel and overtly, as in World War II-level anti-Russian rhetoric – not only as in Russia but as in Russians and Russian-speakers – the eastern part of the nation, that bordering Russia, the Donbas, announced its non-recognition of the junta and declared the creation of independent republics in Donetsk and Lugansk. A war ensued, one which lingers to this day, ebbing and flowing, which in 2014 led to war on Russia’s border with several Russian civilians injured and at least one killed by Ukrainian government shelling.

At about this point Biden made a return visit to Ukraine to survey the results of his efforts and to consolidate control of the new military and energy satrapy. When he arrived in Kiev on April 22 he was the most senior U.S. government official to do so since the coup two months earlier. In doing so he reprised the role he had performed in Georgia in 2008. He was then, while serving in the Senate and under consideration for Barack Obama’s vice presidential running mate, the first major American official to arrive in the capital after the five-day war between Georgia and Russia following Georgia’s invasion of South Ossetia, which itself followed shortly after major U.S.-NATO war games in the Caucasus nation. In both cases he issued warnings (see above) to Russia. Georgia is a key hub in various oil and gas pipelines originating in the Caspian Sea which must have proven enticing to Biden father and son, to the extent the latter took much note of that or anything else at the time.

Among the carrots in his quiver as it were was an offer (see above under warning) [“to benefit Ukraine’s economy \[and\] energy sector.”](#) The newly-installed regime in Ukraine was told in no ambiguous terms to get with Washington’s program or, in characteristically choice Bidenese, [“And then you’d be screwed and left at the mercy of Moscow.”](#)

Again usurping the role customarily allotted to the State Department or the president, [as the Washington Post put it](#) at the time: “Biden in recent weeks has become the administration’s highest-ranking emissary to Eastern European governments worried suddenly over Putin’s ambitions in the region. Last month, he visited Poland and Lithuania, NATO member nations, where he reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the pact’s essential collective security pledge.”

That is to say, more offers to Ukraine, more warnings to Russia, when there's any difference between the two. The Post added, "[an] official traveling with Biden said the vice president will also listen to additional military aid requests from Ukraine's leaders, following the administration's decision last week to send nonlethal assistance to Ukrainian security forces."

Lastly, and most to the current purpose, the report stated:

"[The] new U.S. support to be announced by Biden will focus on economic expertise, which will emerge from an assessment now being conducted by a U.S. team here on shifting Ukraine's Russian-dependent energy supply toward one that relies more on domestic and Eastern European gas production.

"The official said the U.S. energy consulting team will travel from here to Slovakia and Hungary to work on ways of reversing the flow of some of Ukraine's pipelines now supplying Europe. Over the longer term, the official said, the U.S. government will work with Ukraine to help the government increase domestic gas production."

Speaking to the Rada, the country's parliament, he left little room for ambiguity in saying, ["with the right investments and the right choices, Ukraine can reduce its energy dependence and increase its energy security."](#)

And he had just the "energy consulting team" to do so. The very next month Hunter Biden joined the board of Burisma, Ukraine's largest oil and gas company.

At the time of the appointment, [ABC News asked White House press secretary Jay Carney](#) about "potential conflicts of interest" with the fact that the son of the man who seems to have ordered the dismissal of one government and was giving orders to its replacement was, just months after his disgraceful discharge from the military, afforded an extremely high-paying position in a country he had no familiarity with in a field where his knowledge was no greater. Carney replied, "Hunter Biden and other members of the Biden family are obviously private citizens, and where they work does not reflect an endorsement by the administration or by the vice president or president."

One wonders what the response would have been had the prime minister of the Yanukovich government secured a comparable post for his son at Exxon Mobil. And that after that prime minister had been instrumental in replacing the government of the U.S. with one more to his liking; in fact of his designation.

In 2015 Biden chimed in with U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, who with Victoria Nuland the preceding year had selected the personnel to constitute Ukraine's post-coup government, in demanding the resignation – in fact the head – of Prosecutor General Victor Shokin, who has confirmed he was investigating Burisma at the time.

In the waning days of the Obama-Biden administration, indeed just days before the 2016 presidential election, [Foreign Policy ran a feature](#) with the sentimental title of What Will Ukraine Do Without Uncle Joe?, which includes this excerpt:

"The vice president's impact is largely based on the force of his big personality, his backing from Obama, and his long track record of promoting a robust American role in Eastern Europe – from supporting NATO's enlargement to pushing for U.S. military intervention in the Balkans in the 1990s.

“Biden speaks to Ukrainian leaders on the phone two or three times a month, and ‘he is very hands-on,’ the administration official told Foreign Policy.”

The article above laments the fact that if Hillary Clinton were to lose the election that year, Biden’s Ukraine policy (and by implication his son’s career) might suffer, celebrating the fact that “No one in the U.S. government has wielded more influence over Ukraine than Vice President Joe Biden.”

And [as the Los Angeles Times phrased it](#), “Obama essentially outsourced the portfolio to his vice president – a task, by most accounts, Biden enthusiastically embraced.” Solely out of disinterested concern for the Ukrainian people, some would have us believe.

Only four days before he left the White House (though perhaps not for good), Biden made his seventh trip to Ukraine in six years. Rarely if ever has a major American government official taken such a concentrated interest in the nation of slightly over 40 million people. He has left behind a nation riven by division and war, one which at any moment may see a resumption of military conflict near or on Russia’s western border. A future Russian government may not react as complacently as the current one has over the past six and a half years.

The price of gas and oil deals, of self-serving geopolitics, political patronage and nepotism will then prove to be catastrophic to an extent unimaginable.

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Rick Rozoff, renowned author and geopolitical analyst, actively involved in opposing war, militarism and interventionism for over fifty years. He manages the [Anti-Bellum and For peace, against war website](#).

He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).

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