

# It Is Zugzwang for Biden in Ukraine

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*There is a cardinal difference between the Washington Post report of June 18, 1972 by Alfred Lewis breaking the news of the Watergate burglary and the sensational claim by the New York Times on Tuesday — [per a CNN report](#) — that “intelligence suggests that a pro-Ukrainian group” sabotaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines.*

The WaPo reported on Watergate several months after Richard Nixon's thumping victory for a second term as president, while the Times' claim has been advanced even before Joe Biden has announced his candidacy for the November 2024 election.

A common thread, though, could be that while the Lewis story was followed up a day later by two young Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the Times report also hopes to be a developing story but with a contrarian purpose.

If Watergate wiretapping forced Nixon to resign eventually, the big question is whether the Nord Stream sabotage will also be the undoing of the Biden presidency?

These are early days. But the reverberations of the Times' claim are already being felt in Europe — Ukraine and Germany — although the report was carefully worded to keep out Ukrainian leaders outside its purview.

But the bottom line is the caveat that the Times report was not made with high confidence and is apparently not the predominant view of the US intelligence community, and that the Biden Administration has not yet identified a culprit for the attack — succinctly put, this isn't necessarily the last word on the subject!

That's smart thinking — with an eye on Seymour Hersh, perhaps? Meanwhile, Ukraine has flatly denied involvement and German media reports stressed that there's no proof that Ukrainian authorities ordered the attack or were involved in it. Evidently, Kiev and Berlin (and Washington) prioritise that the business of war must continue as before. And neither is in a position to hit back in defence.

But Moscow is plainly derisive. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [told RIA Novosti](#),

“Clearly, the authors of the terrorist attack want to distract attention. Obviously, this is a coordinated stuffing in the media.”

Indeed, when asked about the Times report, the highly opinionated US National Security Council coordinator for strategic communications, John Kirby referred questions to investigating European authorities and excused himself saying he was “not going to get ahead of that investigative work.” Kirby played it safe.

So, as Lenin would have asked: *‘Who stands to gain?’* To be sure, what we have here is a high level leak planted in the Times by the US intelligence, which is non-attributable but probably serves as kite flying to see how far it will travel, especially in Europe, or, equally, it could just be, as Peskov put it, the stuff of “obvious misinformation campaign coordinated by the media.”

Either way, someone high up in the Biden Administration is playing for high stakes. This is taking place at a time when Biden himself has been implicated by Seymour Hersh for ordering the destruction of Nord Stream — an act of international terrorism — and of course Biden is yet to announce his candidacy for the 2024 election.

As things stand, candidate Biden will not want the Nord Stream scandal to be another Albatross around his neck. The point is, if he stands for election, which he likely intends to, Biden can be sure that the scandalous Ukraine stories concerning him and his son Hunter Biden, dating back to his time as vice-president, will roar back to the centre stage.

The questioning that the US ambassador to Estonia Senator George Kent was subjected to by Senator Tom Cruz at the hearings on his appointment in Tallinn in December suggested that the Republicans have a lot of dope on Hunter Biden’s activities in Ukraine and are waiting for the right moment to strike.

Kent, a career diplomat and former deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs with three stints in Kiev — the second time as DCM from 2015 to 2018 and the third as Charge d’Affaires a.i, in 2021 during Biden presidency— is in Senator Cruz’s crosshairs.

Last week, again, Sen. Cruz returned to the topic. This time around, he tore into attorney general Merrick Garland accusing the Justice Department of leaking uncontrollably in a calibrated bid to save Biden’s reputation.

Conceivably, the implication by the Times report that a “pro-Ukrainian group” may have been behind the Nord Stream attack can be seen as a veiled threat to the powers that be in Kiev to understand which side of their bread is buttered if push comes to the shove.

So far, Zelensky has played ball. Biden is bending over backward to appease Zelensky, in the manner in which the move to sack the Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov, a close ally of the president, was [summarily shelved](#) is any indication.

The western media was copiously reporting on a purge under way in Kiev but when the trail

came to Reznikov and Zelensky dug in, the US inspectors deputed from Washington to investigate the corruption scandal in the defence ministry simply disappeared.

Indeed, Biden must willy-nilly remain in power beyond 2024 or else he becomes extremely vulnerable. Therefore, Biden desperately needs a second term. He cannot be too sure even if some other Democratic candidate wins in 2024. God forbid, if the Republicans seize the presidency, Biden and his family members will be fighting with their backs against the wall.

But there is also the flip side. Biden's candidacy will bring Nord Stream, Hunter Biden, Ukraine war, et al, to the centre stage of the election campaign. Is it worth the risk?

Frankly, it is a 'zugzwang' for Biden. It is his turn to move, but all of his moves are so bad that having to move can lose the game — and in chess, there is nothing like "pass," either.

The sabotage of the Nord Stream forms part of the Ukraine issue. Whoever destroyed that pipeline did it with the intention to eliminate any residual prospect left of a revival of the post-cold war Russian-German alliance in Europe built around the two countries' energy cooperation and interdependency.

The Biden team in sheer naïveté thought that sabotage of the Nord Stream would be a geopolitical masterstroke to humiliate Germany and make it a vassal state, destroy all bridges leading from Russia to Europe, and consolidate the US' transatlantic leadership. They overlooked, out of sheer hubris, that it still remained a cowardly criminal act.

To compound matters, the war in Ukraine flowed out of Biden's decision to destroy the Nord Stream (which, according to Hersh, dated back to September 2021.) Today, Biden cannot easily end his war as he is also beholden to Zelensky (who knows far too much about Hunter Biden's escapades in Kiev.)

Will Biden Administration succeed in hushing up the Nord Stream scandal? Hersh is sure to revisit the topic. Biden cannot walk away from the crime now. [But it doesn't cease to be a crime.](#)

Biden's remaining option may be to announce he's going to contest the 2024 election because [Build Back Better Framework](#) is still a work in progress.

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