

Newsletter 69: How Washington Destroyed Ukraine in 2014

Dear Readers,

The new Biden Administration has lost no time turning Ukraine into a renewed hotspot for a possible eruption of a new war between Ukraine and Russia. NATO has been very busy egging the failed regime of President Zelensky to confront Russia and the Biden Administration has promised new arms to Kiev rather than trying to broker a lasting peace. Washington has provocatively ordered US warships into the sensitive Black Sea near Crimea. The treatment in the western mainstream media such as CNN, Washington Post or BBC attempts to portray events as solely an aggressive move by Moscow.

As so few people realize what actually happened in Ukraine in 2014, I want to share some of my analysis from 2014 in what one American geo-strategist termed the “most blatant coup d’etat in US history.” What is notable is that in 2014 US President Obama named his then-Vice President Joe Biden as key responsible for Ukraine and Victoria Nuland, responsible in the State Department for Eastern Europe ran the coup regime change for Washington. Today Biden is President and Nuland is Number Three in the State Department. The geopolitical aim then as now is to break ties between the EU,--especially Germany-- and Russia, by again weaponizing Ukraine as a wedge. This time it might get really ugly.

If you have not yet, please consider a [donation](#) of support for my voice. The relentless censorship of the Internet and social media by the private corporate companies since the 2020 Coronavirus is alarming and can only be compared with book burnings in the 1930s.

I thank you for your interest and support,

William Engdahl

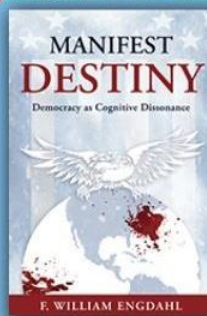
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China's Hidden Economic Time Bomb

By F. William Engdahl

22 October 2019

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The China government statistical agency just released economic data showing the poorest GDP growth

US EU meddling in Ukraine battle

By F. William Engdahl

30 January, 2014

In the heat of recent exchanges and deaths of protesters in Ukraine, many have lost sight of the insidious role key players in Washington and certain EU countries are playing.

Their agenda seems to be to force an immediate end to the elected Yanukovich government in Kiev and lock Ukraine into the EU and, ultimately, NATO. Washington's agenda has little to do with '*democracy and freedom*', and a lot to do with destabilizing Putin's Russia.

On Sunday, January 19, the eight-week-long series of protests and demonstrations against the government of President Viktor Yanukovich in Kiev escalated to a new level of violence. Bands of right-wing militants called Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), attacked Ukrainian police guarding government buildings and attempting to contain the protesters.

Enter the Neo-Nazis

Demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails at riot police from the top of the Dynamo Kiev football stadium in central Kiev beginning January 19. Police responded by using stun grenades and tear gas against the mobs. Vehicles were torched by the hooligans from the neo-Nazi Pravy Sektor. More than 60 police were hospitalized from barrages of rocks, stones and Molotov cocktails.

The core of Pravy sektor is made of the activists of radical groups, including '*Trizub*', '*Patriot of Ukraine*', as well as UNA-UNSO and the '*Svoboda*' (Freedom) ultra-right party, which won nearly 10 percent of votes at the last parliamentary election in Ukraine. They are '*pro-EU*'.

The far-right violent radicals told Radio Free Europe, a US Government media agency tied to the CIA and State Department, that they were preparing full bloody guerrilla war against the government. Andrey Tarasenko, Pravy Sektor's coordinator warned, "*If they attack and try to carry out a bloody crackdown, I think there will be a massacre. Guerrilla warfare will begin in Ukraine.*"

Tarasenko stated that their "*demands*" are to oust the current government and "*build a nation state*" in Ukraine. What kind of nation state we must imagine.

They also demand that Yanukovich step down, but, generously enough, add that they would give him and his family *“24 hours to leave the country safely.”*

On their VKontakte (In Contact) social network website, the organization calls for donations of items such as slingshots, steel balls, gasoline, laser pointers, glass bottles, chains, and pyrotechnics.

Their published manifesto is nothing short of bizarre: *“All those who at this point would try to tame the revolutionary energy of the masses should be proclaimed traitors and punished in the most severe way. The time of peaceful singing and dancing at Maidan [Independence Square] is over. This is a waste of time. There can be no negotiations, no compromise with the ruling gang. We will carry high the fire of national revolution.”*

Curious is the fact that in the beginning of the protests, Pravy Sektor members were calling themselves *‘the Maidan self-defense force’*. They had been designated by the main opposition leaders – Vitaly Klitschko, Arseny Yatsenyuk and Oleg Tyagnibok - to provide security for peaceful protesters. Now they clearly have split from the peaceful protests.

Even more bizarre is the fact that in recent days ambassadors of several EU-member states, as well as the US and Canada have gone to Maidan to meet Pravy Sektor activists and learn how *‘the headquarters of national resistance’* operates.

Instead of unequivocally condemning the rise of violent Ukrainian nationalism, which could turn Ukraine into another Yugoslavia or Libya, the West is only threatening President Yanukovich with sanctions, while turning a blind eye to the real Pravy Sektor danger.

Boxer Klitschko favorite of West

The Tarasenko demands are virtually the same as ex-boxer-turned right-wing politician, Vitaly Klitschko, the pro-EU apparent favorite of Germany’s Merkel government. Klitschko has lived in Germany for the past several years.

The nominal reason for the latest explosive protests in Ukraine was passage of a series of emergency laws to control the civil disorder by the Parliament on January 16 which, among other things, restrict the right to protest, constrain independent media, and inhibit the operation of NGOs.

Evidence suggests that key players in the Ukraine protest movement are being steered and orchestrated by Washington-funded NGO’s like the National

Endowment for Democracy, the German Marshall Fund in The United States (a Washington think-tank financed by a donation from the German Parliament), and certain key neo-conservative Bush-Cheney leftovers in senior positions at the State Department.

Already on October 11, 2011, the German Marshall Fund hosted Vitaly Klitschko, then-WBC Heavyweight Boxing Champion just entering Ukraine's political boxing ring, at a Washington meeting to discuss Ukraine's European perspective.

Again in 2012 during the October Ukraine elections The German Marshall Fund in the United States hosted a top-level group of UK, French and German journalists to visit Ukraine, where they also met Klitschko. The Marshall Fund journalists were told by the US Embassy officials in Kiev that, *"Ukrainian oligarchs would like to see a strong opposition to the Party of Regions in the new parliament in order to temper the enrichment of President Yanukovich's family."*

That *'strong opposition'* is today headed by three very different political parties. One which won a shocking 10 percent in the last elections and sits in parliament is Svoboda, a neo-fascist nationalist party led by Oleg Tyagnibok. Tyagnibok backed the US-financed 2004 Orange Revolution. He is openly anti-Semitic and anti-Russian, once claiming that Ukraine was ruled by a *"Moscow-Jewish mafia."* The second-largest opposition party, jailed opposition figure, Yulia Tymoshenko's *'Fatherland'*, led by Arseny Yatsenyuk, has signed an agreement to work with the neo-fascist Svoboda.



The opposition figure most attractive to the West is ex-boxer Klitschko, head of UDAR (strike), the smallest opposition party, who has spent the last years living in Germany. In order to have a chance at a Parliamentary majority in 2015, Klitschko will be forced to make a coalition with Svoboda and its policies, even though he is trying a delicate tightrope act of claiming to distance from Svoboda's anti-Semitic ultra-nationalism.

In an Op-Ed in the London Financial Times, Klitschko wrote, *"the official halt in Ukraine's European integration unmasks the true face"* of the Yanukovich regime — *"a cartel of commercial self-interests that has captured public office and believes that political longevity can be bought by selling Ukraine's interests."* Ukrainians, he warned, would not allow Yanukovich *"and his cronies to steal their future"* and if their views were not taken into account, *"more protests are yet to come."*

A central role in encouraging the Ukraine protesters is being played by the US State Department, and especially Victoria Nuland.

State Department's role

A review of the official statements from Nuland, who met personally with opposition leader Klitschko in early December, is instructive of the open interference of Washington in the internal affairs of Ukraine. Nuland - a Hillary Clinton appointee who now is assistant secretary of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in the State Department - did not respect a sovereign decision by Ukraine's government in November 2013 not to accept the dismal terms offered by Brussels for a Ukrainian EU 'Association' status.

The EU 'offer' would have forced Ukraine to open its economy to 'free market' rules in return for little. When Yanukovich told the EU of his government's decision in November, Nuland's spokesperson issued the following statement: *"We continue to support the aspirations of the Ukrainian people to achieve a prosperous European democracy. European integration is the surest course to economic growth and strengthening Ukraine's democracy."* That was an undiplomatic intervention on the side of the protesters designed to embolden the opposition. It did indeed.

Then on December 5 in Kiev, after her meeting with Vitaly Klitschko, Nuland declared, *"There should be no doubt about where the United States stands on this. We stand with the people of Ukraine who see their future in Europe..."*

She followed her speech with a high-profile bizarre media photo-op where she carried a single plastic bag of food to give to the opposition demonstrators.

Nuland's partisan pro-EU comments were followed by a brazen appearance from Republican war-hawk Senator John McCain a few days later, siding with the opposition in December. McCain is chairman of the Board of National Endowment for Democracy's International Republican Institute, which has been in the middle of all US Color Revolution destabilizations since 2000.

Most recently, on January 15, after attacking Russia for granting a vital \$15 billion bond purchase to help stabilize Ukraine, Nuland all but outlined the standard US government template for election tampering that has been done in countless '*color revolutions*' since the NED's 2000 coup against Yugoslavia's Milosevic.

She told the US Senate, *"the use of violence and acts of repression carried out by government security forces and their surrogates have compelled us to make clear publicly and privately to the government of Ukraine that we will consider a broad range of tools at our disposal if those in positions of authority in Ukraine employ or encourage violence against their own citizens."*



Nuland then issued a direct order to President Yanukovich: *"We call on him to make it credible through concrete actions to restore government accountability, rule of law and engagement with Europe and the IMF."* Then, referencing planned 2015 national Ukraine elections, she added, *"US pre-election assistance to Ukraine likely will include programs to support citizen oversight of the campaign environment and the conduct of the elections, independent media coverage and informed civic awareness and participation."* And finally, *"The State Department and USAID are reviewing how best to support Ukrainian civil society and media."*

USAID is widely cited as a cover for CIA operations in foreign countries.

Victoria Nuland herself is a former assistant to Vice President Dick Cheney, and married to neo-conservative guru, Robert Kagan. She was under fire when caught recently lying to the American people when she was Hillary Clinton's State Department spokesperson. Nuland pushed her superiors then to completely delete numerous references of extremists linked to Al-Qaeda in Benghazi and eastern Libya after the assassination of the US Ambassador. She also persuaded more senior officials to delete information on at least five other attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi by unidentified assailants.

Washington is clearly out to destabilize the new Ukraine-Russia economic cooperation by hook or crook. On January 22, after severe Pravy Sektor violence, the American Embassy in Kiev announced it was revoking the visas of several unnamed Ukraine Government officials responsible for actions taken against protesters in November and December.

Negotiations

The latest negotiations between the Yanukovich government and the three main opposition party leaders—Klitschko, Arseny Yatsenyuk and Oleg Tyagnibok—have led to the resignation of Yanukovich's Prime Minister Nikolay Azarov and his cabinet, and changes in the emergency laws proposed 10 days earlier. Nine out of 12 anti-protest laws passed January 16 were repealed.

At this point, whatever agenda Victoria Nuland's State Department may have had in trying to woo Ukraine away from Moscow, the internal forces of instability, egged on by vocal support from the West, have made the outcome incalculable. That is certainly not in the true interest of the EU, having a critical Central European nation of 45 million ungovernable, and a rising nationalist fascist Svoboda-led party calling the shots. That would prove too much even for the legendary boxing talent of Klitschko.

Friedman Coup Atlantic Bridge is Falling Down, Falling Down, Falling Down...

By F. William Engdahl

6 February, 2015

Washington created something called NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 to weld Western Europe firmly to the future foreign policies of Washington, however destructive that might prove to the genuine interests of Germany, France, Italy and the other nations of Europe. In 1986 the twelve nations of the then-European Economic Community modified the 1957 Treaty of Rome and signed the Single European Act. That mandated the creation of a single EEC market by end of 1992, and set forth rules for European Political Cooperation, the forerunner of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Then on November 9, 1989, an event of historic dimension intervened to disrupt the EEC strategy for a single market. Gorbachev's USSR surrendered the German Democratic Republic to the West. The Cold War was de facto over. Germany would be reunited. The West had apparently won. Most Europeans were jubilant. Many believed the decades of living on the brink of possible nuclear war were over. The emerging Europe seemed proud, confident of the future. NATO was an entity created by Washington, in the words of its first General Secretary, Lord Ismay, to "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

European Defense Pillar or US NATO?

The Maastricht Treaty, a document with fatal flaws, was introduced at a meeting of the EEC in December 1991. A shocked Helmut Kohl was told by France's Mitterrand and Britain's Margaret Thatcher that Germany must agree to creation of a single currency to control the Bundesbank. That became today's Euro and an independent supranational European Central Bank. It was blackmail as precondition for their accepting German unification. The Germans swallowed hard and signed.

What was little discussed at the time was that the Maastricht Treaty also included a section mandating establishment for the first time of a Common Foreign and Security Policy. The twelve nations signed the treaty and intense discussions were underway of establishing a European defense pillar independent of NATO. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the *raison d'être*

for NATO was gone. The Warsaw Pact had dissolved. Washington had assured Gorbachev that NATO would never extend to the east.

Bush Destroys EU Defense Pillar

US President George H.W. Bush was a man who left a blood-soaked legacy, from his early years in Washington... He went on to head the CIA in the 1970's and to lure Saddam Hussein to occupy Kuwait in 1990 to provide the excuse for a bloody war Operation Desert Storm against Iraq.

As President, Bush also set in motion the events that would result in the destruction of Yugoslavia beginning the 1990's, much as Washington is destroying Ukraine today. The central purpose behind that US-incited war that ravaged the Balkans for a decade, was to make clear to the EU nations that NATO, under US Pentagon control, would remain and, in fact, would go east. In effect, he used the Yugoslav war to destroy the emerging threat of an independent EU defense capacity, the EU defense pillar. As US Presidential adviser and Trilateral Commission former founder, Zbigniew Brzezinski openly described Washington's view of Germany, she was a "vassal" of US imperial power, not a sovereign nation.

In 1999 Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic were officially invited in Washington to join NATO as the dismemberment of Yugoslavia was capped by President Bill Clinton's shameful and illegal bombing of Serbia in the so-called Kosovo War that year, with the even more shameful participation of German Foreign Minister, the Hungarian butcher's son, Joschka Fischer.

By 2004 Washington was gleefully bringing NATO to Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. It was also secretly preparing its now infamous Color Revolution coups in Georgia and Ukraine that would bring in US-chosen candidates, the corrupt Viktor Yushchenko in Kiev's so-called Orange revolution and Mikhail Saakashvili in the Georgia Rose Revolution. Both presidents pledged to join NATO as part of their campaign. Little wonder that by 2007, as Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld announced the Pentagon would install ballistic missile devices in Poland and the Czech Republic aimed de facto at Russia, Moscow was becoming more than a little uneasy about being choked on its strategic perimeter by NATO and a military alliance that ultimately brought the world's sole superpower to the gates of Moscow.

A German French Ukraine intervention

When the foreign ministers of Germany and France intervened in a desperate last-minute effort to broker a compromise in Kiev on February 21, 2014 to avoid civil war there they explicitly excluded one interested party from the talks—the US Government. They won a compromise that lasted less than 48 hours before CIA-backed snipers in Kiev ignited riot and panic causing the democratically-elected (a forgotten point in the slavish German media version of events) President, Viktor Yanukovich to flee for his life.

The next day, the Obama Administration, led by State Department hawk Victoria “F**k the EU” Nuland, US Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, and legions of CIA operatives inside the Maidan Square protests openly installed their hand-picked puppets, using overt neo-nazis of Pravy Sektor and Svoboda Party to do so.

George Friedman, head of Stratfor, a US strategic consultancy whose clients include the Pentagon and CIA, as well as Israeli agencies, told the Russian Kommersant in a December interview, the US-organized coup d’etat in Ukraine was “the most blatant coup in history.”

When Washington spat in the face not only of Germany and France and the EU, but in the face of Russia and of Ukraine itself, by dictating the persons to run the new Kiev coup regime, headed by their choice of Prime Minister, reputed high-ranking Scientologist, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Germany and France swallowed hard. They groveled behind the lead of the Washington warhawks in the Obama Administration. The EU unanimously voted US-dictated sanctions repeatedly against Russia after the March, 2014 referendum on Crimea. German industry protested openly. Merkel’s government bowed before NATO and Washington, and the German economy began to go into recession along with the rest of the EU.

Now something highly unusual is taking place. France and Germany are openly again defying Obama’s Washington. On the night of February 4, Merkel and French President Hollande quickly decided to fly together to Moscow to meet Russia’s Putin. The purpose, as Putin spokesman stated was that the, “leaders of the three states will discuss what specifically the countries can do to contribute to speedy end of the civil war in the southeast of Ukraine, which has escalated in recent days and resulted in many casualties.”

The most interesting part of the quick trip is that the “vassal” heads, Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande did not ask permission from Washington first according to a French government source. Announcing the spontaneous Moscow trip, Hollande told the press, “Together with Angela Merkel we have decided to take a new initiative.”

More interesting, their “new initiative” comes as US Secretary of State John Kerry was in Kiev meeting President Poroschenko to discuss possible US weapons deliveries to Kiev, Washington’s preferred brand of “diplomacy” at the moment. The Moscow talks between Putin, Merkel and Hollande reportedly followed “secret” talks between Paris, Berlin and Moscow.

In early December, Hollande made a surprise visit to Moscow to meet with Putin on Ukraine. At that time the French President declared, “I believe that we have to avoid having more ‘walls’ that separate us. At this moment we have to be able to overpass the obstacles and find solutions.” Washington was not at all happy with that. There is strong suspicion in certain circles that the January 7 false flag attack on the Paris Satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo was the reply of the Washington-Tel Aviv war faction to the Hollande diplomacy.

The latest joint German-French diplomatic moves come as John Kerry was in Kiev discussing US weapons for Ukraine. *Le Nouvel Observateur* journalist Vincent Jauvert says Hollande and Merkel’s sudden decision to talk with Putin in Moscow came as an attempt “to get ahead of the Americans who are trying to impose their solution to the problem on Westerners: a transfer of weapons to Ukraine.” He said the two leaders went to Kiev straight after Kerry, as they “distrust the American administration,” and want to “present their diplomatic solutions just before US Vice President Joe Biden presents the US plan of sending lethal weapons to Kiev at the Munich security conference on Saturday.”

The coming weeks will clearly be decisive for world peace. To parody an old children’s song I sang as a kid, Atlantic Bridge is Falling Down, Falling Down, Falling Down... (To be sung to the melody of London Bridge is falling down). It is time for a new, stable bridge in its place, but that won’t come from the Munich Security Conference message of Joe Biden.

Stench of Corruption a Ukraine Oligarch Shale Gas Civil War and Baby Biden

By F. William Engdahl

5 August, 2014

Hunter Biden & A Dodgy Company Called Burisma



Ukrainian politics has had the stench of corruption since the free-for-all to loot the country following the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. However today, some five months after the gangster-led Washington-orchestrated coup d'état that put the present regime illegally in power in Kiev, that stench is becoming unbearable. Now it involves the case of Ukraine's deposits of shale gas.

According to a survey done for the US Department of Energy two years ago, Ukraine could have 42 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of shale gas resources technically recoverable from 197 tcf of total shale gas in place. Annually, to put that into perspective, Ukraine is transit (or was until a few weeks ago) to 3 Tcf of Russian natural gas destined for Germany, Austria and other countries. Ukraine itself consumes some 1.8 Tcf annually of natural gas. So some shrewd Ukrainian businessmen along with the ever-politically engaged Royal Dutch Shell—the Dutch-UK energy giant, decided they would drill that shale and frack it like they are doing in Texas today. Here is where it gets really interesting.

Burisma Holdings

The Ukrainian company that has grabbed (literally) the lease rights to the lion's share of Ukraine's shale area is called Burisma Holdings. Burisma Holdings is Ukraine's largest natural gas producer so that in itself is not that surprising. But wait. It gets smellier. Burisma Holdings is the company that raised eyebrows a few months ago when they announced they had hired the son of the US Vice President to handle their legal division and all international relations of the company. Hunter Biden was also given a seat on Burisma's board of directors.

What's wrong with that, you ask? Is the father responsible for his adult son? Or could it be something uglier still. Was "Baby" Biden explicitly chosen as Billy Carter was chosen by the Libyan government, because he was the son of a powerful man in Washington and would be the link between Burisma Holdings and the Obama Administration? Here we can make an educated guess that the answer is yes.

Joe Biden and son Hunter Biden came under fire back in 2005 when Joe Biden was an influential Senator before becoming Vice President. MBNA, then the world's largest private credit card issuer hired Baby Biden as the company's Vice President. At the same time Senator Biden was then receiving his largest campaign contributions from MBNA and, conveniently for MBNA, was lobbying other Senators to pass bankruptcy reform legislation supported by MBNA. US media referred critically to Senator Biden at the time as the "Senator from MBNA."

But it gets far worse in Ukraine. This April Hunter Biden agreed to join the board of one of the most politically-charged, scandal-ridden companies in scandal-ridden Ukraine just as his father, Joe, is up to his eyeballs in US illegal operations with the State Department's Victoria Nuland in orchestrating forced regime change in Ukraine. The Biden board post at Burisma was made public at the same time Vice President father Joe was in Kiev wheeling and dealing with the new US-installed regime there.

And son Hunter also sits on the Chairman's Advisory Board for the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The NDI is a project of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the taxpayer funded organization that does what the CIA did covertly 25 years ago, according to one of its founders, Alan Weinstein.

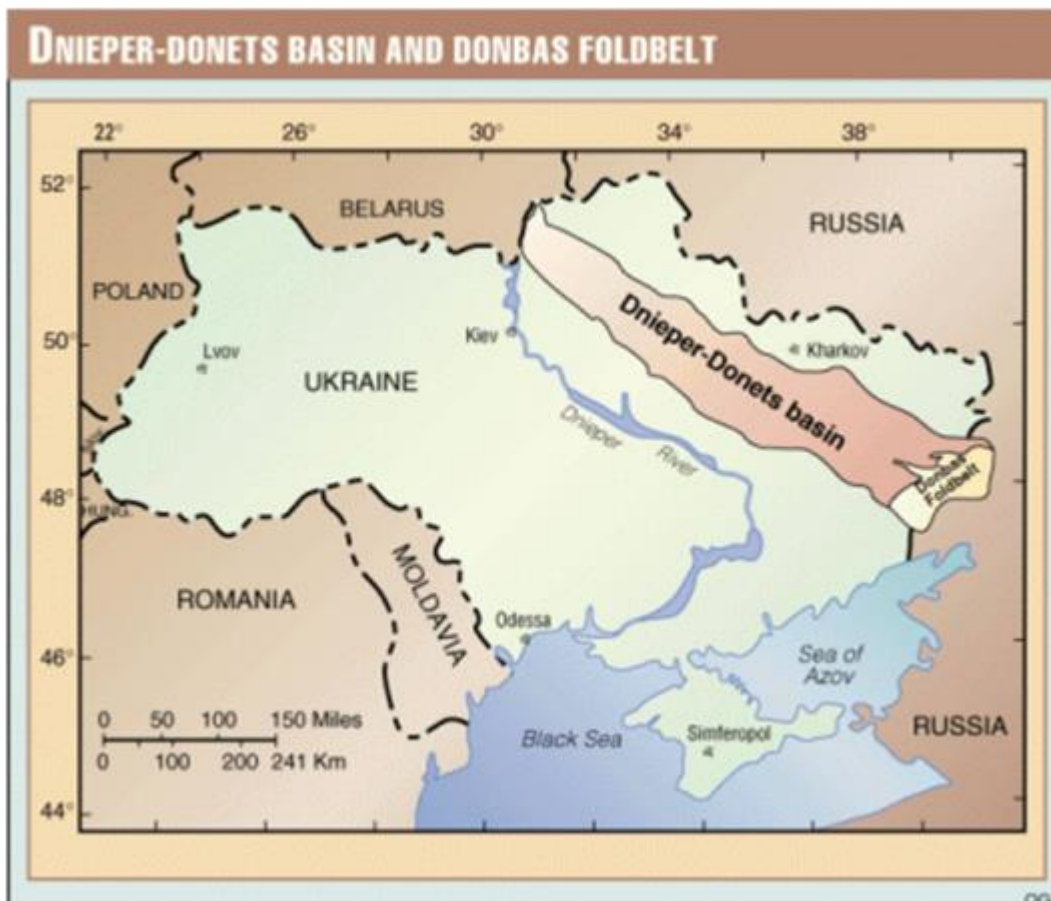
Burisma Holdings is part of the vast business empire of Ukraine's second richest billionaire oligarch, Ihor Kolomoisky. Joining Hunter Biden on the Burisma Board of Directors is no less than Aleksander Kwaśniewski, named in January just weeks before the US Kiev coup. Kwaśniewski was President of the Republic of Poland during the G.W. Bush presidency. Chairman of Burisma is a Wall Street former Merrill Lynch investment banker named Alan Apter. Finally, Burisma also at the same time named to the board Devon Archer, Hunter Biden's partner at a US investment firm, Rosemont Seneca Partners, and a manager of the family wealth fund of Secretary of State John Kerry's wife Theresa Heinz Kerry, widow of Henry Heinz III. Archer also sits on the board of the family's Howard J. Heinz trust. So with these two board appointments in April, Burisma gained the son of the Vice President of the United States and the

financial adviser to the family of the Secretary of State. Not bad for an almost unknown Ukraine-Cyprus company.

Burisma itself seems very dodgy as a company. It is based in Cyprus and little information about the business is possible to find. The company lacks a profile in Bloomberg, and had no Wikipedia presence whatsoever.

Now it gets really interesting, though. The illegal Kiev regime on March 3 only days after their bloody coup, presumably under guidance from Nuland's State Department, appointed Kolomoisky as Governor of Dnipropetrovsk oblast in eastern Ukraine, precisely the region where Ukraine's shale gas deposits lie. Burisma Holdings has drilling rights to just that part of eastern Ukraine in the Dneiper-Donets Basin near Kharkiv where the fiercest resistance to Kiev dictates is found.

As we detailed in a previous article, Kolomoisky, a Ukrainian who also holds an Israeli passport and who runs his Privat Group empire from Switzerland, has raised his own private army as governor to wage war against the east Ukraine rebels. Rebels who just happen to live in the area where he has a joint venture with the Anglo-Dutch energy giant, Shell, to drill for shale gas.



An estimated 90% of Ukraine's estimated shale gas reserves are in eastern Ukraine and Oligarch Kolomoisky's Burisma Holdings has leases together with Royal Dutch Shell. Source: Oil & Gas Journal

Ukraine Army Guards Shale Fields

Now Russian media reports that the private army soldiers are actually secretly bringing in oil and gas fracking equipment and drilling rigs into the region where Kolomoisky's army has secured the area. On July 25 Itar-Tass reported from Donetsk that Ukrainian troops were helping to install shale gas production equipment near the east Ukrainian town of Slavyansk, which they bombed and shelled for the three preceding months. "Civilians protected by Ukrainian army are getting ready to install drilling rigs. More equipment is being brought in," they said, adding that the military are encircling the future extraction area.

Slavyansk is in the heart of the Yzovka shale gas field, where local residents before the February coup had staged numerous protests against its shale fracking development. In May 2012, Ukraine's State Service for Geology and Mineral Resources granted the right to develop the Yuzovka shale gas deposit to British-Dutch Shell. Burisma also has the right to develop the shale gas fields in the Dnieper-Donetsk basin of Eastern Ukraine.