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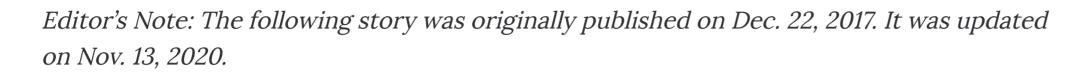
Biden chronicles his frustration with Ukraine in his 2017 book

By **Brian Bonner**. Published Nov. 13, 2020. Updated Nov. 13 at 3:42 pm

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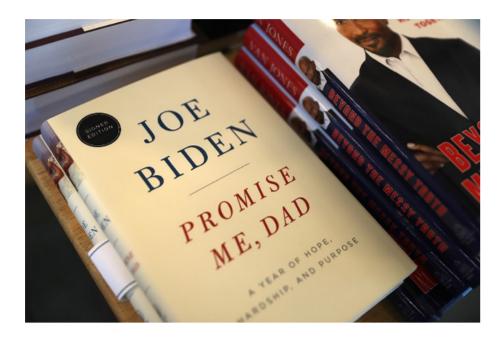
Then-Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden meet in Kyiv in 2014. Photo by **AFP**



Joseph Biden, the former U.S. vice president who was President Barack Obama's point man on Ukraine, writes of his frustrations with President Petro Poroshenko and Ukraine's endemic corruption in his new memoir.

Biden has been touring the United States to promote the book published on Nov. 14 entitled "Promise Me, Dad: A Year Of Hope, Hardship And Purpose." He is also considered to be a strong Democratic Party candidate for president in 2020.

While much of the book is devoted to son Beau Biden's struggle against brain cancer that claimed his life on May 30, 2015, the former vice president writes extensively about Ukraine's crises during his eight years as vice president from 2009 to 2017.

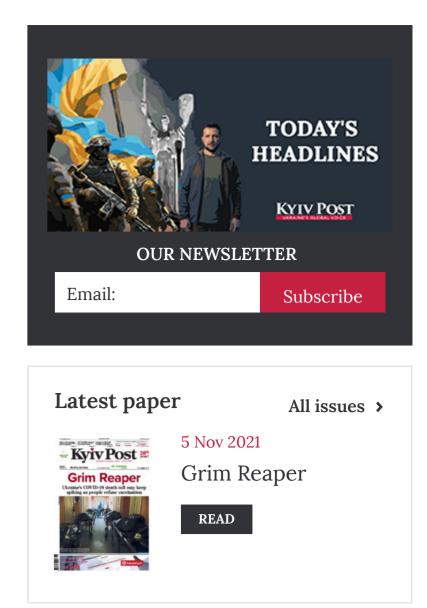


Biden made six trips to Ukraine while in office. He finished the book in the summer of 2017, after leaving office with Obama on Jan. 20, 2017.

Here are five key excerpts:

Yanukovych leaves

Biden writes that he telephoned then-Ukrainian



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Copies of the new book by former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden called 'Promise Me, Dad' are displayed on a shelf at Book Passage on Nov. 14, 2017 in Corte Madera, California. (AFP) President Viktor Yanukovych and told him to leave office because he had lost the trust of the Ukrainian people after Yanukovych's police snipers assassinated dozens of EuroMaidan Revolution demonstrators in late February 2014.

The day after Biden's phone call, Yanukovych fled power and went to Russia, where he lives in exile. He is still wanted in Ukraine on murder and corruption charges.

"I made the last of many urgent calls to Yanukovych in late February of 2014, when his snipers were assassinating Ukrainian citizens by the dozens and we had credible reports that he was contemplating an even more vicious crackdown," Biden writes. "I had been warning him for months to exercise restraint in dealing with his citizens, but on this night, three months into the demonstrations, I was telling him it was over; time for him to call off his gunmen and walk away. His only real supporters were his political patrons and his operators in the Kremlin, I reminded him, and he shouldn't expect his Russian friends to rescue him from this disaster. Yanukovych had lost the confidence of the Ukrainian people, I said, and he was going to be judged harshly by history if he kept killing them. The disgraced president fled Ukraine the next day— owing to the courage and determination of the demonstrators — and control of the government ended up temporarily in the hands of a young patriot named Arseniy Yatsenyuk."

'Bickering' duo

Biden comes across in the book as more of a fan of ex-Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, ousted after more than two years as prime minister on April 14, 2016 after bitter feuding with Poroshenko. Biden writes about his admiration for Yatsenyuk, but has less praise for Poroshenko.

In particular, Biden writes about frequently trying to get both of them to put the nation's interests ahead of their own. One such attempt at crisis management came in November 2014, six months after Poroshenko came to power and shortly after Ukraine on Oct. 26, 2014, elected a new parliament.

Biden had just returned home to the U.S. after a Nov. 21–22, 2015, trip to Kyiv in an attempt get Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk to work together. The two top factions in parliament, led by Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk, were having trouble forming a coalition as Russian President Vladimir Putin pressed ahead with his war against Ukraine, Biden writes.

"Ukraine's newly elected democratic government was in real danger of crumbling under the weight of Putin's cynical push. Ukraine's new president and its new prime minister, meanwhile, were having ongoing trust issues. President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk were from competing parties, and the recent elections had been bruising and divisive," Biden writes. "Their constituencies remained more invested in scoring political points than in governing. The Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk factions were wasting energy bickering with one another when they should have been creating institutions and security forces capable of defending against Putin."

Biden writes that he worried that "the bravery and sacrifice of so many Ukrainian people" in toppling Yanukovych in favor of a democratic future in theEuropean Union "would come to nothing."

"I had spent months exchanging phone calls with both Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk, trying to convince them each, separately, to put loyalty to country over loyalty to political party," Biden writes. "I had invested two full days in Kyiv the previous week trying to make Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk see the danger of their stubborn unwillingness to work together. I was still working the problem on my way out of Kyiv on Nov. 22, just four days earlier."

After he returned home, Yatsenyuk called him that Thanksgiving Day weekend to tell Biden that a coalition government had been formed. Biden writes that he felt "pretty good" about the news.

'Hard on Poroshenko'

Biden writes of his frustration with Poroshenko's lackluster fight against corruption since his

election in May 2014.

"I had been hard on Poroshenko since his election nine months earlier. I'd made it clear to him that he could not afford to give the Europeans any excuse for walking away from the sanctions regime against Russia. He had to continue to fight the elements of corruption that were embedded in the political culture of Ukraine's Soviet and post-Soviet governance — both in Yatsenyuk's rival party and in Poroshenko's own," Biden writes.



Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (R) welcomes U.S. Vice President Joe Biden upon his arrival for their meeting in Kyiv on Jan. 16, 2017. (Volodymyr Petrov)

Biden continued to press authorities to fight corruption throughout his tenure as vice president.

He writes about another episode in summer 2015, when Yatsenyuk came to Washington, D.C., as part of the first U.S.-Ukraine Business Forum on July 13.

During the forum, Biden exhorted Ukraine's leaders to get tough on corruption. "Now you've got to put people in jail," the vice president told Yatsenyuk in the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, in one of the speech's many memorable lines.

In the book, Biden writes: "Prime Minister Yatsenyuk was visiting Washington that day, and I needed to be there to deliver the message that we were standing by the Ukrainian people and their government, but also to make sure he understood that he and Poroshenko needed to speed up anticorruption reforms if they wanted continued assistance."

'Penchant for corruption'

Biden also writes that he was worried about the European Union resolve in supporting Ukraine and standing up to Russia in the war. He, in particular, writes about his disappointment that German Chancellor Angela Merkel, during the Feb. 6–8, 2015, Munich Security Conference, wasn't harder on Putin.

"She was not strong enough for my taste," Biden writes of Merkel's speech. "And I was disappointed when, after her speech, she flatly refused to consider providing any real weaponry to Ukraine's overmatched military."

About EU leaders, he writes that "none of them were hot to spend their political capital to save an emerging democracy whose leaders had exhibited a penchant for corruption, self-dealing and self-destructive behavior."

He writes about Obama's refusal to arm Ukraine without criticizing the former president, but making it clear that he sympathizes — if not supports — those who believe that Ukraine deserved stronger help from the West in defending itself, including generous supplies of modern weaponry.

Epilogue: Uncertainty

Biden ends on a note of uncertainty about whether Ukraine's leaders will be able to stop their own corruption and transform the nation into a democratic, law-abiding one demanded by the EuroMaidan Revolution — also known as the Revolution of Dignity.

He ends with an extensive section about his Dec. 8, 2015, speech to the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, in which he again called on lawmakers to battle corruption and put the nation's interests first. He also writes near the end of his book: "It might take a generation or more to know if the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine had truly succeeded."

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