



How US-backed Maidan coup, Russiagate led to war in Ukraine

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Aaron Maté (AM): Welcome to Pushback, I'm Aaron Maté. Joining me is Simona Mangiante Papadopoulos. She is an attorney, a former EU legal adviser and the lead interviewer on the new documentary film "Ukraine The Everlasting Present", which is the third in the trilogy that began with the Oliver Stone produced film "Ukraine on Fire". This is a bit of the trailer of "Ukraine The Everlasting Present".

Speaker 1 in Trailer: How much of modern Ukraine is controlled by the United States?

Speaker 2 in Trailer: I think completely.

Speaker 3 in Trailer: It seems to me that the West cannot finish a single task.

Speaker 4 in Trailer: You and I have witnessed one of the greatest dramas of the 20th century.

Speaker 5 in Trailer: I never thought that this could happen. This is frightening.

Speaker 6 in Trailer: What is here to celebrate?

Speaker 7 in Trailer: To all Ukrainians, congratulations.

AM: Simona, thank you for joining me.

Simona M. Papadopoulos (SMP): Thank you so much for having me.

AM: So tell us about this documentary that you took part in. You went to Ukraine, interviewed key political figures. What are you trying to accomplish with this film that has just been released?

SMP: We try to understand the history of Ukraine from the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and make an overall assessment of the results of this independence. Was it really independence or this geopolitical strategic position where the West met the East with its sort of client states to leverage Russian influence on the West. This was the key question we dug into in the course of this documentary, which walks the audience through the critical and crucial events that unfortunately resulted in a war today with Russia. I didn't know, obviously, last summer that the outcome would be that tragic. But definitely to help people understand the genesis of this war. And it's not about teaming up with Russia or Ukraine, it's about understanding. Unfortunately, what I noticed in the media, mostly in the mainstream media, is the tendency to simplify the situation, just building up the image of an enemy and completely ignoring the dynamics behind the events that we are assisting to today. Ukraine is a very interesting country, and was the most prosperous in the Soviet republic. It is still marked by bloody revolutions that see and have involvement of agencies from the West. Now these are facts and they deserve to be looked into to actually understand the situation we are living in today better. I can mention a few of these events, trying to simplify as much as I can, a history, which is dense with the political aspects, interferences from the West and the East as well. I would like just to take this a step back into the censorship we are assisting to right now. We know that both, "Ukraine on Fire" and "Revealing Ukraine", which are masterpieces in this Trilogy lead by Oliver Stone, have been banned by Amazon. So right now, we know that Big Tech media is trying to shadow all devices that are out of the core. In reality, it is about inviting everybody to actually have a real perspective, not into siding, it's not a football team. We're all talking about Russia against Ukraine. Everybody I think we agree about the tragedy of the image we will look at in the news, but it's a matter of understanding and not necessarily labelling everyone who tries to understand it as propagandists or worse a Russian protagonist.

AM: Yeah, and "Ukraine on Fire", which I've seen, does a great job of that. I mean, I think my only criticism of it is that it sort of downplayed the corruption of Yanukovich, the president who was overthrown. But aside from that, there was a coup in 2014 and that played such a critical role in this war we're seeing now, where the US has been trying to basically use Ukraine as a pawn in its geopolitical ambitions to weaken Russia instead of acknowledging and letting Ukraine just be neutral and recognising the fact that Ukraine is a very divided country, that while there are people who loathe Russia and want to be a part of the US-led orbit, there are many people in Ukraine who don't feel that way. And so the answer in that situation is obviously to keep it neutral and not try to push it to one side. And I think a refusal to let Ukraine be neutral is what helps explain why it's now going through this catastrophe. I'm wondering your thoughts on that, the division of Ukraine and the voices of

Ukrainians who were not allowed to hear inside the West because they don't go along with this US led narrative that everybody in Ukraine despises Russia and wants to be a US colony.

SMP: Absolutely, thanks for this very interesting question. Actually, you mentioned the first bloody revolution, which is notorious as Orange Revolution that saw the pro-Russian President Yanukovich overthrown in favour of President Yushchenko, which you know to be a pro-Western president, very much sympathising with political leaders in the West. And we can look at pictures of Yushchenko with Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton and many other political leaders. Now why I make this point, it's precisely to connect with what you say, the interference of the West in Ukraine to trigger those revolutions, which are officially presented as people, this content towards having a pro-Russian leader. But in reality we saw massive interference from agencies from the West, including the CIA, and we have witnesses and evidence of these things happening. My opinion is, even this pact happened later in 2014 in that Maidan era, where another bloody revolution was officially triggered by the people rebelling to halt the negotiation between the European Union and Ukraine. Now do we really believe that such bloodshed, such violent protests in the streets can be triggered by the whole thing, the negotiation between the EU and their leader? Of course there is something highly unlikely. Then we had the opportunity to talk about the identity problems in the Ukraine with President Yushchenko, who we know is a nationalist, who we know is a supporter of the people's movement, and under whose presidency we see the affirmation of Svoboda. I had the chance to make a very interesting question to President Yushchenko, basically why he granted the title of the national hero to Roman Shukhevych, I should correct my pronunciation. Now we know Roman Shukhevych is somebody known in the Second World War to cooperate with the Nazi Germans. There is a very interesting discussion. I sat at the table with Yushchenko amongst for at least five hours, and he was explaining to me basically how this nationalistic feeling that is endorsed by the Ukrainian Nazis, de facto are those who build up the idea of the Ukraine as an independent country, using as a unifying idea the confrontation with Russia. Nevertheless, we know the cultural roots shared by these two realities are deeper than that, and there are many people who feel they belong to Russia. Crimea, for example. We know they were democratic - [and] when we talk about democracy, we know people [from Crimea] express their [willingness] to belong to Russia. They feel Russian. Everywhere in Ukraine, including other areas than the east, [are] more known for being pro-Russian [and] having a sentiment of belonging to Russia. They currently speak Russian. We are forcing in some area this sense of identity, which [radiates] mostly into this people's movement in the Ukrainian Nazi. That's why sometimes I think people in the mainstream media misunderstand what deNazification really means. We have to look at the origins of these people movements, origins of Svoboda to understand that the ones who supported the Nazis in Ukraine, where precisely the ones supported by the West, the pro-Western leaders like Yushchenko.

AM: Playing for people, so Svoboda, the party you mentioned, that's a far right party inside of Ukraine, played an integral role in the 2014 Maidan coup. It was founded under a different

name, actually a name that harkens back to the Nazi Party, but then changed its name to Svoboda. And then you mention also this Maidan massacre, just as there was a compromise being brokered, led by the European Union to essentially end the Maidan protests and keep Yanukovich in power, but curtail his authority and hold new elections very, very quickly. Yanukovich agreed to that power sharing agreement with the opposition. The opposition goes back to the Maidan. They share this with the far right leaders of the militant encampment, and the far right says no way this guy has to go. And shortly after that, there was a massacre where snipers killed people in the Maidan. It was blamed on Yanukovich's forces, but there has been research done, especially by a Ukrainian scholar at the University of Ottawa named Ivan Katchanovski that I think shows conclusively that actually the sniper fire came from the pro-Maidan side. And there's even a leaked recording between top European officials in which they discussed that actually. The suspicion is that this was perpetrated by the Maidan coup plotters, not by Yanukovich's forces. And that's why, presumably eight years later, there's been no investigation, no serious investigation done inside Ukraine, no indictments for it. So it seems to me that this wasn't an incident to incite exactly what happened, which is after the power sharing agreement was reached, Yanukovich's forces withdrew as part of that agreement, and the far right took advantage of that and basically threatened violence and forced Yanukovich to flee. And that's when we had a new government installed, which happened to be led by a guy named Yatsenyuk, who we know was the guy chosen by Victoria Nuland in that leaked phone call. So there's a lot we don't know because there are just things we don't know. But on the surface, there's a lot of evidence to suggest that this was a coup with US backing.

SMP: Absolutely. And precisely in these documents, we will walk people through this, highlighting these things that are overshadowed by certain powers. And it's very interesting to hear those facts by the people who deny them because, for example, Yushchenko, I challenged Yushchenko on this, but of course, his narrative was pretty much different. But at the same time, we provide other information from other very controversial individuals, including Andrii Derkach who I had the chance and opportunity to interview and who we know is being wanted by the United States for his attempt to expose Biden's affairs in Ukraine. It also explains to me, pretty much in detail, the corruption scheme with Burisma and how de facto Ukraine turned into a client state of the United States. If we think that Joe Biden at the time he was vice president under Obama, had the power to ask the Ukrainian parliament to overthrow, to fire, a prosecutor looking into his son's [involvement]. So they are all facts that actually show a big presence of the West and the United States in Ukraine and also the European Union on the other side. It looks like this land that's being weaponized, to leverage indeed the Russian influence, but they made a lot of promises to Ukraine that they didn't maintain. So today we have Zelensky which is using basically this emergency war situation to make reckless requests like joining NATO or accessing the EU bloc as a response to Russian attacks. We should know better that this is nothing. This should not be the response, and it's completely reckless to even present the request that they did.

AM: If somebody from the West, from the US and other NATO states were to say to you, what are we missing about Ukraine, what is not being told to us? What is the most important thing for us to know about the context behind this war in Ukraine that we're not being given? What would you tell them?

SMP: Well, I would tell him, first and foremost, to dig into this nationalism that's eradicating in these parties and the leaders that are welcomed by the West and endorsed by the West, who actually emphasise this problem and then triggered and put fire on an issue rather than resolving it. And to understand the history and interference of the West of our interference in this beautiful, wonderful country I had the chance to know, and that it's basically triggering a situation where Putin's interests, of course, on the other side, had been threatened. And we have to understand that without making an apology or any propaganda, the situation for what it is. So I would like to remind the people from the West that propaganda, something that we are really very good experts at, starting from the Russia collusion that some like me were involved in the first case. So I know what I'm talking about in some ways. And also building up the image of Russia and Putin as a demon to finally simplify the situation like that with, Oh look, it was the demon we were portraying him to be. Look, what he is doing is showing horrible, atrocious images, that of course touch the hearts of everybody. But we contributed to cause that, reality is very different and we should truly watch the content that is now banned starting from "Ukraine on Fire" to this last of the documentary from Igor Lopatonok, and I think it's very instructive. But besides the documentary, really dig into the history of the country without the filter of the mainstream narratives.

AM: In your new documentary, it's on YouTube. It also aired on RT.

SMP: Yes, and translated in seven languages since October.

AM: But RT is now banned in many countries in Europe, especially.

SMP: So yes, it's banned. Most of the people can't have access to this documentary from the United States or even most of the European countries. So it's uploaded on YouTube, I posted it to my Twitter page and I invite people first and foremost to watch these massive pieces that precede that, which are Ukraine on Fire and Revealing Ukraine. I think they are really interesting and dense in fact.

AM: But let me ask you about Russiagate, because you were a central figure in Russiagate. You are the wife of George Papadopoulos and George Papadopoulos is the former Trump campaign volunteer, who, according to the official story, triggered the entire Trump-Russia probe because the FBI in late July 2016 opened up its investigation of the Trump campaign after getting a tip from Australia that Papadopoulos had told someone that Russia might have damaging information on Hillary Clinton that it could use to help the Trump campaign. Now we learnt way later on that the tip that the FBI got was incredibly vague, that what it said

about George Papadopoulos, your husband, is that he had suggested some kind of suggestion of Russian help. It was very, very vague and no mention of the stolen emails that are at the heart of Russiagate. So I don't buy the FBI's official story that they opened up the investigation based on your husband, George Papadopoulos's apparent comments. But regardless, that's what happened. And you, I believe and correct me if I'm wrong, you introduced George to Joseph Mifsud, who is..

SMP: No. OK, so sorry to correct you right now.

AM: Let me explain who Joseph Mifsud is and then you can correct me. Joseph Mifsud is apparently this person who George Papadopoulos met in the spring of 2016 and apparently told George about some kind of Russian help for the Trump campaign. And so I have read that it was you who introduced George to him, but that's false?!

SMP: Well, I didn't introduce Mifsud to George, I knew Mifsud for much longer than George while I was working at the European Parliament. He was an activist in the socialist group. Actually, George and I happened to work for the same company, the London Centre of International Law Practice, where Mifsud was a director, so we met him independently from each other. So I did not introduce Mifsud to George. I just happened to know Mifsud and his connection much beforehand. So that's in this context, where I testified three times to the FBI, the Congress and the Senate of the United States, sharing information I had about Mifsud. Now, of course, the situation with the Russiagate is fake. If it was triggered by my husband talking with Joseph Mifsud about dirt on Hillary Clinton that is supposedly would have transmitted to any other person in the campaign, which she didn't and he denied doing. Where is Joseph Mifsud now? We know this person disappeared from earth. We don't know him dead or alive, which is, of course, a very suspicious fact. One of the things I testified I can share with you is that Joseph Mifsud was an active socialist. He was campaigning for Hillary Clinton in 2016 in Philadelphia. This, of course, makes it highly unlikely that he would set up a member of the Trump team to help Trump to win the election and offer some sort of dirt. Of course, it was, in the best scenario was a set up but in the worst we don't know. He definitely was not somebody working with the Kremlin to help Trump win the election. This is something that is being completely debunked and it's out of any reasonable ground now that we look at the facts from far.

AM: As for him campaigning in Philadelphia, I've never heard that, so I can't vouch for that, but what I can say is that Mifsud, after George Papadopoulos told the FBI about him because the FBI didn't even know about Mifsud, apparently until George.

SMP: No, exactly. Yeah.

AM: After that, Mifsud came to the US in early 2017 and the FBI interviewed him. According to the record of that interview released by the FBI they barely asked him any

questions, and they let him go. And Mueller later said in his report that Mifsud had lied to the FBI. But yet they never indicted him for lying, while meanwhile, they indicted many other people for allegedly lying. So it's so odd what is going on there, and we can only speculate. But the fact is if Mifsud is really some Russian agent who told George Papadopoulos that the Russians had dirt on Hillary Clinton, the FBI certainly never treated them that way because they interviewed him, didn't arrest him and haven't indicted him since.

SMP: Exactly.

AM: So it's very curious and there's all kinds of speculation. I mean, there's speculation that he really is some kind of Western intelligence asset. And again, I've seen no evidence for that. But do you have any suspicion as to who he actually is and then why he's been missing in action for the last six years now or five years. He's gone completely dark.

SMP: Well, definitely somebody can disappear as a physical person in this world, dead or alive. We completely lost track. This person must have had a job, and is estranged now from his family. It seems like nobody can track his presence on earth, which is, of course, highly suspicious. I know for sure that Joseph Mifsud was close to intelligence circles. He was a professor at the Link Campus in Rome, which is known to train intelligence people in Italy. And we know that they are the one who provided Mifsud a living, a place to live in Umbria, a region in Italy. Two years later, this entire situation was exposed. So that's the last known address of Joseph Mifsud. It's in Umbria, in a place paid by the Link Campus, or hosted by a professor within campus. We know that Link campus, being directed by Vincenzo Scotti, who was also a minister in Italy, was managing the Italian secret services. So there are many things that make me believe that it was some sort of a Western intelligence asset. Though I can't, of course, prove it. So that's my understanding judging from the circles he used to be close to. And that's why I think it's very important, it was actually precisely after I gave my testimony about Joseph Mifsud's connection that this sort of smearing campaign about my persona started to take place, saying that I'm not Italian but Russian, that I'm a Russian agent, et cetera, et cetera. All, of course, has been cleared up and I have never been even formally accused of anything or just up from the perception point of view trying to build up an image. What I think today when I look at the Russia delusion and the way we are presenting this war in Ukraine is that the image of Russia, the enemy, is the result of something that's worked to build up- the image of it as an enemy. And much of the propaganda is not true. It's important to have clean and transparent information, and it's important to have a focus like yours, where we can freely discuss these topics and probably add information to the ones already accessed by most.

AM: I am still putting the pieces together. But there is a huge connection between Russiagate and the war in Ukraine today. But before I get into that, let me just ask you quickly, so you were interviewed by the FBI and by Congress back when they were doing their Russia investigations. Have you or George Papadopoulos been interviewed at all by special counsel

John Durham, who was looking now into the origins of Russiagate and the intelligence misconduct that took place?

SMP: No, none of us. I believe the records of my interviews and also that George testified once to Congress are available to John Durham and I know he already came to Italy to do his due diligence. So he definitely had access to those testimonies, but were not yet interviewed by him.

AM: Well, OK, so then just trying, just connecting Russiagate to now this war in Ukraine, so many of the key players in Russiagate have a major role now. And first of all, there was this overlooked interference by Ukrainians in the 2016 election when they leaked claims about Paul Manafort to get him fired. And they leaked the so-called Black Ledger of these secret payments that he was getting, which appeared to be frauds. And Ukrainian officials openly admitted this was in the Financial Times that they were interfering in the election because they were worried about Trump. Because Trump at the time was criticising NATO and was talking about cooperating with Russia. And Ukrainians who were put in power by the US in the 2014 coup saw this as a threat to them. So they actually, for all the hoopla about Russian interference in the election, it was documented that Ukrainians actually did interfere and they resulted in getting Paul Manafort fired and fuelling innuendo about Trump being beholden to the Kremlin. And also that summer there was a controversy that arose when at the Republican National Convention, there was some proposed platform language in the RNC platform that was calling for arming Ukraine in its fight against Russia. And some language that called for, you know, that was more hawkish was rejected. The final platform, which by the way is meaningless- these platforms don't even matter- but anyway, the final platform still called for arming Ukraine and was actually far more militaristic than the Democratic Party platform was that same summer. But somehow, this was turned into a controversy that the Trump campaign had intervened, so watered down the platform in order to please Russia. And then Christopher Steele and his dossier, he wrote that this was part of the quid pro quo between Trump and Russia, that Trump was going to stop making Ukraine a campaign issue in exchange for Russian help. And meanwhile, Christopher Steele is very tight with Victoria Nuland. Victoria Nuland, who was the official who helped back the coup in 2014, is now a top official running Biden's policy today. And Christopher Steele was sending Victoria Nuland reports about Ukraine and even before, and this gets back to, you know, your husband's involvement, even before the FBI opened up the Trump-Russia investigation, Christopher Steele sent Victoria Nuland parts of his dossier, and she said this has to go to the FBI. And Victoria Nuland also signed off on an FBI agent who was based in Rome named Mike Guyette. And I wrote about this recently, and I'll link to this. She authorised him to go meet with Christopher Steele in early July 2016, and this is weeks before the FBI officially opened up its Trump-Russia probe. So there's a lot of just strange connections there and this overall climate, as you're talking about demonising Russia, painting Russia as this enemy, which has the ability to brainwash millions of Americans via social media memes and hacked emails and calling alleged Russian hacking the equivalent of 911 in Pearl Harbour as so many

top Democratic politicians and pundits have done, all of this, I really do believe, as you say, has set the stage for now, we're in this hot war where diplomacy with Russia is just off the table, and there is this current, the strong current to encourage even more war and using Ukraine as cannon fodder for all that.

SMP: Absolutely, and if any collusion ever happened, as you mentioned, it is the Ukrainian collusion trying to interfere in the US election. We know that even Poroshenko on record said that the Ukrainians had interest in Hillary Clinton to become president, rather than Trump at the time of the 2016 election. We know these people are masters in projections, and we have no access to a certain number of elements, facts and evidence to make our own assessment.

AM: Let me ask you also something I forgot to mention before, which is the war in the Donbass that's been going on for eight years. And people right now are rightly horrified at the civilian toll of Russia's assault on Ukraine, the refugees, civilians being killed, all sorts of awful allegations against Russia. Well, what people don't understand is that this war actually has been going on, or a war in Ukraine, has been going on for eight years. And that is when the people in the Donbass, rebels in the Donbas, took up arms against the US backed coup government that was waging an assault on essentially Russian heritage inside of Ukraine, banning the Russian language and having a government that was dominated in key cabinet positions by the far right and even some neo-Nazis. So in the course of your research inside Ukraine, what did you learn about the war in the Donbass, 14000 people killed, the majority of them on the rebel-held side and the overlooked reality of what life has been like for people living under this assault.

SMP: Well, definitely, we have access to information that all these conflicts are caused by the neo-Nazi and have been weaponised by Zelensky to justify irrational attacks at the border. We have a different type of information coming from our investigative journalists like George Allison who I would like to mention in this podcast, because he is in Donbass and has real information over there, which just shows a completely different reality. But most importantly, we know this conflict has been going on for eight years, but our empathy comes just now. A reality is again very different from what it's portrayed to be and this region as being under constant threat of the Ukrainian Nazis when we're talking about the nationalist movements and that they are being exploited to justify and to stage conflict attributed to Russia in the first place. So it's a very different type of information. This investigative journalist there is actually reporting from the region and it's very interesting. It's worth a follow. Let's talk about this world and the West's concern for protecting democracy without really understanding what's going on. I mean, I'm stunned how Americans really forgot what's happening in Afghanistan. They reckless withdraw troops from Joe Biden without a real plan, exposing again the Taliban to take over with terrible, catastrophic things happening right now there. They already forgot, and that's how people are. They already forget they embrace the cause and obviously it's always about Russia. But you know, it's pretty poor as an assessment of a war, outlook on facts.

AM: Simona, any final words for us as we wrap?

SMP: Well, I would like to thank you for this very interesting conversation. I see you're very much, you know very well what's going on, and it's very enriching to talk to somebody who actually has an understanding of the history of Ukraine and the different interests playing there. And I would invite people to not buy into football teams, and to not think with their feelings. There are many places in the world where democracy is at stake. This is not a war for democracy. This is not Putin's imperialistic wimp coming up from nowhere and invading Ukraine. He is not crazy, as I read in a few articles here in Europe. There are many reasons for this conflict that we need to understand. And we need to understand our own responsibilities and how to guarantee peace. Peace comes from truth and not from inflaming propaganda wars. And to understand that in times of crisis it is always convenient to build the image of an enemy. But you know, at some point we should ask ourselves this question, is it really Russia only, just dig into that.

AM: By the way, one thing I forgot to mention because there's so much just to go over. Just to underscore what a central role Russiagate has played in this current conflict of today. Right after Russiagate failed when Robert Mueller gave his testimony in late July 2019 and it was such a disaster, Democrats immediately pivoted to Ukrainegate, where they impeached Trump after he paused some weapons sales to Ukraine. And of course, the allegation was that he was doing that to pressure Ukraine to spread some dirt about Joe Biden. But a major part of that impeachment trial was Democrats embracing this view that we needed to, in Adam Schiff's words, use Ukraine to, quote, fight Russia over there. And Trump by briefly impeding that by pausing some weapons sales was deemed to be this national disaster and a grave threat to the country. So it just speaks to how important the Ukraine proxy war has been to the bipartisan foreign policy establishment. And now we're seeing the consequence of that by using Ukraine to fight Russia over there, in Adam Schiff's words. Now Russia is fighting back to end the fight in a really disastrous and catastrophic way. And that's why it's so important to have dissenting voices like yours, who can give people an alternative perspective on how all this has come to be.

SMP: Thank you. It's true, it's really true. We are using any sort of excuses and pretexts, and now we are fighting Russia over there after we build up Russia as the enemy of humanity. And we forgot that the biggest loss of everything is the permanent loss of these points of true peaceful cooperation with Russia, which gave a lot to humankind in terms of technology, science and a lot of the things we should have built on rather than antagonise.

AM: Especially since they have nuclear weapons, which makes this all the more reckless to continue to fuel. Simona Mangiante Papadopoulos, former legal adviser to the European Union, attorney and lead interviewer for the new documentary film, which hopefully people

can still find if it hasn't been censored by the time this goes out and we'll link to it. It's called "Ukraine The Everlasting Present". Simona, thank you very much.

SMP: Thank you very much for having me.

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