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Democrats Have Mixed Reactions to the Biden-Ukraine Story

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It is clear that the presidential campaign of former Vice President Joe Biden is faltering — fellow Democrat candidate Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has now taken the lead over Biden in a national poll released Wednesday, in addition to moving ahead of him in polls in Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two states to cast votes in the primaries and caucuses. But Biden’s Democratic opponents are offering mixed reactions to the developing story involving Biden and his son, Hunter, and the Ukrainian prosecutor Biden got fired while vice president.

No doubt the Democrats would prefer to keep the focus on President Donald Trump’s interactions with the Ukrainian government, but doing so without exposing Biden to charges of corruption may be like threading a needle. Sure, the Democrats are speaking with one voice in arguing that Trump committed some sort of impeachable offense in discussing Biden with the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, but while they would all like to remove Biden from the Democratic field at the same time, including Biden in their criticisms of Trump could backfire on their own political ambitions.

That explains why Senator Kamala Harris of California dodged a question as to whether Trump’s attacks on Biden over the Ukraine affair reflect on Biden’s own character, by responding, “I’ll leave that up to the pundits. I don’t have a comment on that.” Senator Bernie Sanders also avoided answering a question about whether the Ukraine controversy has weakened Biden.

But Warren subtly criticized Biden by saying that, were she elected president, she would deny allowing the children of her vice president from being directly involved in foreign businesses. Hunter Biden’s involvement in a business in Ukraine was likely what led to the then-Vice President Biden to demand that the prosecutor who was investigating possible corruption in that company be fired.

Other candidates tended to be more defensive of Biden, when asked. Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey said, “We’re not going to let [Trump] do this again to another patriot.” Former U.S. Housing Secretary Julian Castro of Texas was even more defensive of Biden, saying, “Donald Trump is trying to do to Joe Biden what he did to Hillary Clinton, to turn somebody who has given a lifetime of service and done it honorably into the victim of false accusations.”



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Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana dismissed the allegations that Biden had done anything wrong as “whataboutism,” and instead, turned his fire on President Trump, accusing Trump of an “unprecedented, breach of the oath of office by the American president.”

Biden himself said the controversy “isn’t about me. It’s a tactic that’s used by this president to try to hijack an election, so we do not focus on the issues that matter in our lives.”

But whether Biden admits it, the story is not helping his campaign. In the Quinnipiac poll released this week, Warren is now running ahead of Biden nationally among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents by a margin of 27 to 25 percent. The same poll in August had Biden far ahead of Warren, 32 to 19.

At this point, it would appear that the Democratic contest is a two-person race, although that could certainly change. Sanders trailed at 16 percent, followed by Buttigieg at seven and Harris, who has faded all the way to a dismal three percent. Quinnipiac University polling analyst Tim Malloy said, “After trailing Biden by double digits since March in the race for the Democratic nomination, Warren catches Biden. We now have a race with two candidates at the top of the field, and they’re leaving the rest of the pack behind.”

Warren is also leading Biden in Iowa, 22 to 20 percent, where the first caucus contest is to be held, and in New Hampshire, 27 to 25 percent, where the nation’s first presidential primary is scheduled.

Another part of this story is the increasingly biased reporting of the mainstream media, who are using what are supposed to be objective news stories to insert opinions unfavorable to Trump. In the Associated Press story, for example, they write, “*Without evidence*, Trump and his Republican allies continue to suggest that Biden, while vice president, tried to quash a Ukrainian investigation of the company that paid Hunter Biden as a board member.” (Emphasis added.) The story dismissed any allegations against the Bidens as “nefarious,” while correspondingly arguing that Trump’s conversation with the Ukrainian president “could be found to violate U.S. law making it a crime to solicit or accept foreign contributions in an American election.”

Of course, Trump did not “solicit or accept foreign contributions” from the Ukrainian president, but the AP story, supposedly a straight news story, leaves the impression upon the reader who has not read the transcript of the two presidents’ phone conversation that he did. In the effort to drag down Trump in this incident, it could be that Biden will eventually be cast aside as collateral damage.

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