

Corporate press promotes Susan Rice as Biden running mate

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Over the past week a curious “groundswell” has taken place in the American media. Former Obama national security advisor Susan Rice, someone who has never run for political office and is largely unknown to the American public, has been promoted in a series of press reports as a likely choice of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden to be his running mate.

The *Washington Post* led off the barrage with its July 25 profile, headlined, “Susan Rice’s advantage: A long work history with Biden. Former Obama official has emerged as an underdog VP pick.” The article noted that for four years, 2013–2016, Biden frequently began his work day with a national security briefing from Rice, given jointly to the president and vice president in the Oval Office. The two had offices in the same part of the West Wing, and Biden would drop in to Rice’s office at will.

Two days later, Ryan Lizza in the *Hill* wrote: “The elusive hunt for Biden’s Biden has recently pushed Susan Rice into the top tier of candidates. As Obama’s national security adviser for his entire second term, Rice and Biden worked closely together on an almost daily basis, making her the only potential running mate who Biden knows so intimately... very few of the other candidates come close to meeting that test...”

Lizza went on to quote an unnamed Democratic strategist who described Biden as focused on foreign policy issues, particularly conflicts with rival great powers, for which he would need assistance. To the question who would fill the bill, the strategist answered, “Susan Rice: ready on Day One for Russia and China.”

The same day, the *New York Times* ran a flattering profile under the headline, “Susan Rice Wants to Run for Office. Will Her First Campaign Be for VP?” The article noted Rice’s interest in a Senate race in Maine, where she has family ties, although she ultimately decided not to challenge incumbent Republican Susan Collins. The *Times* wrote that Rice has been demonized by right-wing Republicans for statements she made on television about the attack on a US facility in Benghazi, Libya, in 2012, in which the US ambassador and three others were killed.

More categorical was the headline in *Politico* for an article posted on the evening of July 27: “‘It’s absolutely serious:’ Susan Rice vaults to the top of the VP heap.” This account centered on Rice’s relationship with Biden during the Obama administration, concluding that “allies of others being eyed for the vice presidency are increasingly worried about Rice, especially because of her close ties to Biden, who, as Obama’s No. 2, had an office just steps away from hers.”

From the Rwanda genocide to drone missile assassinations

Susan Rice, now 55, has spent her entire career in the area of US foreign

policy, beginning as a policy aide to Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis in 1988, when she was 23. She worked for eight years each in the Clinton and Obama administrations, either in the State Department or on the National Security Council. When Republicans were in the White House, she was part of the Democratic foreign policy apparatus in exile, working for McKinsey & Co., Intellibridge Inc. and the Brookings Institution, as well as advising Democratic presidential candidates John Kerry and Obama.

Rice is the scion of a black bourgeois family in Washington D.C., where her father Emmett, an economics professor, became the second African American governor of the Federal Reserve, a prominent local banker and member of several corporate boards. Her mother Lois was a longtime executive with the College Board. She helped establish the Pell Grant program in the Department of Education and was a board member or corporate adviser at Firestone, McGraw-Hill, Control Data Corporation and Fleet Bank. She also was a trustee of the Center for Naval Analyses and was named by President Bill Clinton to the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

Clinton appointed Susan Rice to his National Security Council in 1993 and she had principal responsibility for Africa during such disasters as the Rwanda genocide. She was named assistant secretary of state for African Affairs during Clinton’s second term (1997–2001), and was criticized for her close ties to authoritarian rulers such as Paul Kagame in Rwanda and Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia. She was in charge of US policy in Africa in 1998, when twin bombings hit the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and Clinton ordered a retaliatory missile strike that destroyed a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan that had no connection to the attacks.

When Obama won the presidency in November 2008, Rice was a top foreign policy adviser, with wide support in the military-intelligence apparatus and big business. She was named US ambassador to the United Nations and confirmed unanimously by the Senate.

As the WSWS wrote:

While often touted as the first African-American woman to serve as US ambassador to the UN, in reality Rice’s role was in direct continuity with figures such as John Bolton and John Negroponte, appointed by the George W. Bush administration with the aim of bullying other nations into acquiescing to US demands...

Rice was among the closest advisers to Obama, dating back to when he was a US senator, and was one of the first prominent members of the Democratic Party foreign policy establishment to join his 2008 presidential campaign. The affinity between the two gave the lie to Obama’s pretense then of representing some kind of antiwar alternative to the Bush administration.

In the years before Obama’s election, Rice was part of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), a right-wing Democratic think tank that advocated the continued occupation of

Iraq, a military “surge” in Afghanistan and a more aggressive military posture toward China. She publicly supported the US war of aggression against Iraq as well as the “weapons of mass destruction” pretext provided by Bush.

Within the Obama administration, she became one of the leading advocates for imperialist intervention in Libya and Syria, on the pretext of pursuing “humanitarian” and “democratic” aims. She was a strong supporter of the Zionist regime in Israel, denouncing as “anti-Israeli crap” any gestures at the United Nations in support of the Palestinians.

In September 2012, after the attack on the US facility in Benghazi, Libya, that left the US ambassador and three other Americans dead, Rice was sent out on the Sunday television interview programs to give the official story that a spontaneous local uprising, not an organized terrorist attack, was the cause of the disaster. The truth, which the Obama administration wished to conceal, was that its policy of relying on Islamic fundamentalist groups to overthrow the Gaddafi regime in Libya had led to “blowback,” as the Al Qaeda-linked groups turned their guns on the US mission.

With congressional Republicans seizing on the Benghazi affair as a weapon against Hillary Clinton, then the US secretary of state and the expected Democratic presidential candidate in 2016, Rice took the fall. She withdrew her name from consideration to replace Clinton and in July 2013 was named Obama’s national security adviser, a position that did not require Senate confirmation but gave her considerable authority in coordinating US foreign policy.

Among the imperialist crimes with which her tenure was associated were the ongoing military interventions in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; the ultra-right coup in Ukraine that overthrew the elected pro-Russian government; the escalating US-backed war by Saudi Arabia in Yemen; mounting US pressure on China, including the elevation of the South China Sea to the level of a major international crisis; and the savage economic squeeze on Iran that produced the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Particularly significant was the ongoing campaign of drone missile assassinations, initially in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, then extended to Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Libya, and eventually including nearly all of North Africa. White House officials spoke about “terror Tuesdays,” where Obama, Rice and then-chief counterterrorism aide John Brennan—later CIA director—would go over death lists and make their selections.

As the WWS explained in 2016, the National Security Council, where Rice held sway, played a central role in the drone missile murder campaign:

The role of the NSC in this process is particularly important. This body has quadrupled in size under the Bush and Obama administrations, as day-to-day direction of national security policy has been concentrated in the White House. Besides giving the president and his closest aides a direct line to the military-intelligence apparatus, the NSC insulates the drone assassination program from outside scrutiny.

Considered part of the White House, the NSC is exempt from any congressional scrutiny as well as the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, under the interpretation of “executive privilege” embraced by Bush and Obama and accepted by Democrats and Republicans in Congress. NSC officials, up to and including current National Security Adviser Susan Rice, cannot be subpoenaed by a congressional committee or otherwise held accountable for their actions.

What a Rice selection would mean

While its article boosting a possible Rice selection was not the first to appear, the *New York Times* has led the way in this campaign, setting the agenda, as is frequently the case, for the corporate media as a whole. On July 21, the *Times* op-ed page published a column by Rice herself, under the headline, “Take the Next Step Toward Racial Justice,” in which she postured as an opponent of police violence and “systemic racism.”

There is little to say about the content of Rice’s column, filled with vague soporifics about improving education, dismantling structural barriers and achieving “racial justice,” all without any fundamental change in the capitalist system, which of course goes unmentioned as the root cause of police repression and racist oppression.

This topic is, of course, an awkward one for someone whose role in government has been John Brennan in a pantsuit. Rice has never had any public association with struggles for democratic rights or against police brutality. Quite the contrary: she was well known as a friend of right-wing African dictators, so long as they toed the line on US foreign policy demands.

Her tenure at the NSC began at the time of the coup by Egyptian military dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, warmly embraced—after a few perfunctory “human rights” noises—by the Obama administration.

But Rice has been attempting to show some “progressive” side in media commentaries over the past few months in an effort to minimize any criticism from the Sanders wing of the Democratic Party should she become the vice-presidential nominee.

She hardly needs to bother. Bernie Sanders has never displayed a trace of independence from the imperialist foreign policy of the Obama-Biden administration, or the Clinton administration before it, bringing out his “antiwar” posturing only when a Republican was in the White House.

In 2020, after closing up his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination and endorsing Biden, Sanders set up six joint committees staffed by Biden and Sanders supporters to work out Democratic Party policy in six key areas. None of them concerned foreign policy—signaling that the incoming Biden administration will have a free hand to pursue its right-wing agenda of military build-up against Russia and China and the forceful assertion of US imperialist interests around the world.

If Biden chooses Rice as his running mate, it will allow him to satisfy the gender and racial warriors of the identity politics wing of the Democratic Party without making the slightest concession to the working class. On the contrary, by selecting the Democratic equivalent of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, an African American advocate and apologist for American corporate interests up to and including imperialist war, Biden would be sending a signal to Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus that his administration will be absolutely ruthless in its defense of the global interests of American imperialism.



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