

Joe Biden Discusses Turkey

Excerpt from an interview with the *New York Times*

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Bolded parts and square brackets added by Daniel Pipes

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/17/opinion/joe-biden-nytimes-interview.html>

Kathleen Kingsbury: Do you feel comfortable with the United States still having nuclear weapons in Turkey, given Erdogan's behavior?

Joe Biden: The answer is **my comfort level is diminished a great deal**. I've spent a lot of time with Erdogan. More than anybody in our administration did because **Erdogan concluded that he'd only talk to me because he thought I wasn't anti-Islam**. Remember when I made that speech to NATO saying, when he got elected, "You had to reach out. This is an opportunity to bring another Muslim country." And you knew why they were acting the way they did in other countries in Europe, to not reach out at all for the first election. We have had —

KK: You mean because of anti-Muslim bias?

JB: Yeah. I've spent a lot of time with him. **He is an autocrat**. He's the president of Turkey and a lot more. What I think **we should be doing is taking a very different approach to him now, making it clear that we support opposition leadership**. Making it clear that we are in a position where we have a way which was working for a while to **integrate the Kurdish population** who wanted to participate in the process in their parliament, etc. Because we have to speak out about what we in fact think is wrong. He has to pay a price.

He has to pay a price for [the S-400 system and we must decide] whether or not we're going to continue to sell certain weapons [i.e., the F-35s] to him. In fact, if he has the air defense system that they're flying F-15s through to see how they can try to figure out how to do it. So I'm very concerned about it. I'm very concerned about it.

But I'm still of the view that if we were to **engage more directly** like I was doing with them, that **we can support those elements of the Turkish [opposition] leadership that still exist and get more from them and embolden them to be able to take on and defeat Erdogan**. Not by a coup, not by a coup, but by the electoral process. He got blown out. He got blown out in Istanbul, he got blown out in his party.

So what do we do now? We just sit there and yielded. And the last thing I would've done is yielded to him with regard to the Kurds. The absolute last thing. **I had a couple of those meetings with him about the Kurds, and they did not clamp down at the time**.

We have to make it clear that if they're looking to, because, at the end of the day, Turkey doesn't want to have to rely on Russia. They've had a bite out of that apple a long time ago. But they got to understand that we're not going to continue to play with them the way we have. So I am very concerned. I am very concerned. **I'm very concerned about our airfields and access to them** as well.

And I think it takes an awful lot of work for us to be able to get together with our allies in the region and deal with **how we isolate his actions in the region, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean in relating to oil** and a whole range of other things which take too long to go into. But the answer is yes, I'm worried.