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DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOE BIDEN'S REMARKS ABOUT TURKEY

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As the US approaching election in November, some may question what would be the implication of the result to the already strained relations between the US and Turkey due to policy differences. Turkey's acquisition of the S — 400 air defence system from Russia remains a concern for the US and one of the factors contributed to the strained relations.

Trump administration had announced in July 2019 that Turkey was being removed from the F — 35 Joint Strike Fighter participation, as a response to the S- 400 delivery. Although recently, the indefinite delay of activation of S-400 missile system may be seen as a sign of Ankara's return to Washington. Also, there is a tension between the two in Syria mainly focused on Kurdish-led militias that have partnered with the US against the Islamic

State over Ankara's strong objections because of these groups' ties with terrorism. U.S. charges against a Turkish state bank has also been one of the lists of factors contributing to the strained relations.

Both Presidential candidates share profound differences in key areas of the US foreign policy. The most prominent difference is how they view alliances. Retired Adm. James Stavridis, a former North Atlantic Treaty Organization commander mentioned, their view of alliances "is the greatest and most important difference between the candidates, even above their differing views on climate, Iranian nuclear programs, and maintaining minimal troop levels in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan." Biden is keen on returning to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal accord, as the time when he served as the vice president.

Biden also [criticized](#) the incumbent for weakening the US alliances, strengthening ties to dictators and failing to curb Iran's nuclear program after withdrawing from a 2015 accord negotiated when Mr Biden was serving under President Obama. In Biden's view, Trump administration has weakened America's world standing.

In the late August, a video of Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden's comments about President Erdogan during a meeting with the New York Times editorial board in January surfaced. His remarks caused a stir in Ankara. Biden said that if he is elected in November, his administration will pursue a policy of intervention against Turkey's elected government, called for toppling down the Government of Turkish President Erdogan through elections, not a coup. Some

would interpret that he indicated meddling in a country's domestic affairs.

In the video, Biden said, "What I think we should be doing is taking a very different approach to him now, making it clear that we support opposition leadership," which is [verified](#) by a transcript published in January by the Times. [Biden also added](#), "He (President Erdogan) has to pay a price. He has to pay a price for whether or not we're going to continue to sell certain weapons to him." In response, Turkish Communication Director Fahrettin Altun said that these remarks are not in line with democracy and the nature of Turkish-American relations. Mr [Altun](#) added, "We believe that these unbecoming statements which have no place in diplomacy by a presidential candidate from our NATO ally, the United States, are unacceptable to the current administration too."

Biden received a backlash from senior members of Turkish opposition on the issue of domestic interference. The spokesman of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), Faik Oztrak criticized Biden's remarks and said, "[Our democracy](#) and endeavour for freedom do not need any imperialist favours. Independence is our character."

As reported by *Anadolu Agency* news, the head of opposition Felicity Party, Temel Karamollaoglu had slammed Biden's remarks in a written statement and said his party would not let any foreign actors design domestic politics of Turkey. Same goes for Ahmet Davutoglu, the former Turkish Prime Minister and the leader of Future Party, also criticised Biden's remarks and said that the Turkish nation was the only actor to decide who would govern the country and his party did not recognize any other power than the will of

the Turkish nation. Despite differences that may occur, Turkey is united on certain issues, foreign intervention is one of them.

Without noticing that Turkey is a member of NATO and also an important ally for the US strategic interests, Biden also mentioned that Turkey must be isolated from the Eastern Mediterranean deal.

In 2014, Joe Biden apologized to President Erdogan for his [remarks](#) at Harvard University when he said that President admitted wrongdoing in allowing foreign fighters to cross Turkey's border to Syria, leading to the formation of the group that is known as ISIS or ISIL. President Erdogan demanded an apology for this, as he mentioned he never made such remark about Biden.

As what reported by the *New York Times* in October 2014, his Spokeswoman Ms Barkoff in an [emailed statement](#) mentioned that the two leaders spoke on the phone, "The Vice President apologized for any implication that Turkey or other allies and partners in the region had intentionally supplied or facilitated the growth of ISIL or other violent extremists in Syria," Ms Barkoff said. "[The United States](#) greatly values the commitments and sacrifices made by our allies and partners from around the world to combat the scourge of ISIL, including Turkey." That makes the video that surfaced in the late August concerning Biden's remarks about Turkey, not the first one.

However, it is expected that Turkey would still pursue dialogue and cooperation, regardless of who is elected. If Biden is elected, it does not necessarily mean both countries would have more strained relations. After all, despite his remarks about Turkey, Biden is known as a

statesman with many years of international experience as a former senator and vice president during the Obama administration. Also, it is important to highlight that Turkey remains a critical ally for the US.

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