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## **A foreign policy model to emulate**

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The following exchange between Senator Bob Menendez and Secretary of State Antony Blinken on March 22, 2023, exemplifies the Foreign Relations Committee chairman's uncompromising commitment to human rights and the rule of law:

Senator Menendez: "What do you call a country: That violates another country's airspace and territorial waters without provocation?"

"Drills in another country's Exclusive Economic Zone?"

"Buys Russian military equipment in violation of US law?"

"That has more lawyers and journalists in jail than almost any other country and jails its main political opponent, right before elections?"

"That seeks by force to block the rights of an EU country to explore its energy deposits off its outer continental shelf?"

"Has not only NOT joined EU-led sanctions against Russia but HAS exported roughly \$800 million worth of goods to Russia?"

"That continues airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, including against US partners like the Syrian Democratic forces?"

"That stopped the critical enlargement of NATO?"

"That continues to occupy an EU country with 40,000 troops and, in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions, seeks to open up an area that the United Nations has frozen?"

"That denies religious freedom to the religious leader of millions of citizens of the Greek Orthodox faith?"

“That converts a church into a mosque in violation of its UNESCO commitments?”

“That arrests and jails US Embassy locally employed staff?”

Blinken: “I think I will call that a challenging ally.”

Menendez: “Well, I call the country Turkey. And the reality is that I don’t believe that such a country deserves to have F-16s sold to it.”

The State Department shares an enormous responsibility for the way Turkey turned out. Appeasing the Turkish leaders for decades has made them feel they can do whatever they want.

Michael Rubin, a former Pentagon official, traced the US’ appeasement of Turkey and its adverse effects to 1974 when Henry Kissinger “green-lighted” the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

“No matter their provocation, Turkish leaders now believe that Washington will defer to their size and throw any smaller country under the bus. Not only does the northern part of Cyprus, therefore, remain Europe’s last occupied territory, but Erdogan now believes force might win him possession of Greece’s Aegean islands,” he wrote.

“It will take crippling sanctions on Turkey... and further US deployments in the Eastern Mediterranean to right historical wrongs and deter new conflict,” Rubin stressed.

Arming Turkey with F-16s with which it could theoretically attack America’s allies, Greece, Cyprus, and the Kurds in Syria will not strengthen the NATO alliance. It will tear it apart. Even from a realpolitik perspective, therefore, selling Turkey the F-16 air fighters is not in the interests of the West.

Turkey has repeatedly stated that Russia is its friend. “Turkey is buying Russian weapons, inhibiting allied naval operations in the Black Sea, and resisting allied sanctions against Moscow,” wrote Doug Bandow of the CATO Institute. Believing that Ankara wants the F-16s to defend the West against Russia is absurd.

Menendez frequently denounces Turkey for not acknowledging the Armenian genocide. He condemns Azerbaijan’s aggression on Nagorno-Karabakh and Turkey for supporting Baku and enabling the massacre of innocent Armenian civilians.

The Senator is also a vigorous supporter of Ukraine. The war in Ukraine, he lauded, is “about the freedom of the Ukrainian people to decide their own future, but it is also to stand up for the universal declaration that you cannot by force take another country’s territory.”

The United States and its democratic allies, he continued, will show to the authoritarian states of the world that “the invasion and subjugation of Free People are unacceptable in the modern world.”

In an op-ed in The New York Times, Senator Menendez declared his unyielding support for Taiwan. He staunchly supports the rule of law and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean.

He is a potent opponent of Cuba’s totalitarian government. The Senator denounced China’s treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority, Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen, the genocide of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar, and Sudan and Ethiopia for their countless war crimes and atrocities in the Tigray War.

Senator Menendez’s foreign policy approach should be a model to emulate. It is morally right and in America’s paramount national interest to protect an international order based on the rule of law. The United States must hold on to this supreme interest and not relinquish it to other less critical considerations or short-term strategic objectives. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is the most recent frightening example of what can happen when states believe they can defy international law and violate human rights without consequences. The Turkish regime’s aggressiveness and misbehaviour, inside and outside Turkey, is another.