

Turkey's President Erdogan Mulls Joining the Eurasian Bloc, Nuclear Cooperation With Moscow, "Balancing Between NATO, Russia and China"

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Ankara is deepening nuclear ties with Russia, and considering full SCO membership – while remaining a NATO member. Erdogan's multi-alignment strategy also includes an expanding Turkic agenda. The result is a delicate geopolitical balancing act between the West, Eurasia and Turkey's own regional ambitions.

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In recent days Turkish **President Recep Tayyip Erdogan** has made a series of statements that leave little room for doubt about Ankara's current shift. Relations with Russia, he declared, have reached their "**most advanced level**", and further **nuclear** projects with Moscow are under active discussion. At the same time Erdogan confirmed that his nation is prepared to consider **full membership** in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a Chinese-Russian-led security bloc he has described as a "**rising star**".

Erdogan is **careful to insist** that none of this amounts to "**turning its back**" on the West, but rather is a "**360-degree vision**" aimed at increasing Turkey's global weight. Yet, the message is clear enough: the country is deepening its Eurasian options – while still claiming a place inside the Western alliance system.

These steps fit a broader pattern of Turkish multi-alignment. Much like **India** (another full member of the SCO), which **balances** deepening ties with the US and the **QUAD** against continued engagement in BRICS plus relations with Russia and China, Ankara has also long sought to keep doors open in multiple directions.

Albeit a NATO member, Turkey has maintained strategic links with Moscow on energy, Syria, and trade – not to mention the **S-400** issue. This, among other things, has produced a longstanding "Turkish Question" within the Western alliance – also involving Eastern Mediterranean claims, and Black Sea policy.

Recent American **steps** under **President Donald Trump**, including talk of sanctions relief and possible F-35 sales, have only highlighted how Ankara's position continues to test the alliance's cohesion.

The latest Eurasian shift raises sharper questions about just how far this balancing can stretch.

The emerging power is simultaneously pursuing three geopolitical vectors: (1) the Western/NATO track with the US and Europe; (2) a Eurasian track (centered on Russia, China, and the SCO); and (3) a **Turkic** regional track built around Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS).

Maximizing all three at once is no simple task, to say the least. The SCO, while not an "Eurasian NATO" by any means, does carry a security dimension that sits uneasily alongside formal NATO commitments.

Thus far Ankara has managed the contradictions through pragmatic diplomacy, but the prospect of full membership makes the tension more visible.

At the same time, Turkish structural competition with Russia remains clear: in the Black Sea, Turkey has **employed** the **Montreux Convention** to restrict Russian naval reinforcements – while expanding its own presence near Sinop, Samsun, and planned facilities farther east.

This **assertion** of maritime **control**, tied to the "**Blue Homeland**" doctrine has the potential to collide with Moscow's interests also, even as the two states cooperate elsewhere.

The **Middle Corridor** adds yet another layer: running from China through Kazakhstan, the Caspian, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, it provides a route to Europe that **bypasses** Russia.

Turkish officials and the OTS promote it as a supposedly efficient alternative to routes disrupted by the Ukraine conflict. China in turn can gain a direct route to Europe, while the Anatolian state strengthens its position as the western hub of a Turkic-linked network.

From Moscow's perspective, however, the corridor also potentially channels a share of Central Asian trade away from traditional Russian transit routes.

The regional power's expanding OTS presence also builds a transnational network based on Turkic identity – one that also encompasses regions where Russia itself has sizable Turkic populations. This does not imply imminent confrontation, but it points to a potential structural rivalry beneath otherwise strong bilateral ties.

Parallel sensitivities exist on the Chinese side. Beijing can benefit from Turkey's role at the western end of the Middle Corridor, and Ankara has generally kept Turkic cultural outreach separate from open confrontation with China. Still, the Uyghur question remains a latent point of ethnopolitical friction.

The country has historically been a center of pan-Turkic solidarity with the Uyghurs, and a sizable diaspora remains there. Although Ankara has adopted a more cautious approach as ties with China have deepened, this [underlying tension within pan-Turkism](#) remains latent and can resurface.

[European and NATO frictions](#) are another part of the picture: [disputes with Greece over the Aegean](#) and Cyprus repeatedly expose the alliance's internal contradictions – while some European voices have often treated Turkey more as a problematic peripheral actor of sorts than a partner. Ankara's response has been to pursue greater strategic autonomy rather than accept being sidelined.

Some analysts do caution against interpreting “neo-Ottomanism” as a coherent strategy of imperial revival: a recent Brookings [study](#), based on interviews with Turkish decision-makers, portrays Ankara as more pragmatic and focused on managing regional disorder. That assessment has merit. Still, Turkic regionalism, Middle Corridor geopolitics, and multi-vector autonomy are all simultaneously alive.

Moreover, expansive [Turkic nationalism](#) – encompassing Pan-Turkism and [Turanism](#) – remains politically active, informing or intersecting with policies and ambitions in [Syria](#), the [Aegean](#), [Northern Cyprus](#), [Libya](#), [Kazakhstan](#) and, more broadly, [Central Asia](#). And sometimes pushing “turkification” policies.

Erdogan's statement that SCO membership would not mean abandoning NATO neatly captures this multi-aligned approach. Yet security commitments are not infinitely elastic, so to speak: deeper involvement in Eurasian frameworks, particularly those with security dimensions, will test trust within NATO – and its Cold War mentality. The “Turkish Question” therefore shows no sign of disappearing.

Geography, energy and identity will keep Turkey straddling different systems. Yet the tensions between its Western, Eurasian and Turkic vectors – and the persistence of Pan-Turkic nationalism – will continue to create potential friction with both Russia and China. Even so, a deeper Eurasian orientation is clearly underway.

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