

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مباد      بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2016/11/22/major-foreign-policy-shift-turkey-abandoning-eu-sco.html>

## Major Foreign Policy Shift: Turkey Abandoning EU for SCO

PETER KORZUN

11/22/2016

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on November 20 that Turkey did not need to join the European Union «at all costs». Instead, it could become part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), or Shanghai Pact. The Turkish leader said he had already discussed the idea with Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organization founded in 2001 in Shanghai. Its members are Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan speak Turkic languages.

India and Pakistan are to become full-fledged members by the next meeting at Astana in 2017. Mongolia, India, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan are SCO observers. In 2013, Turkey got the status of SCO's «dialogue partner». The other country with the same status is Belarus. Dialogue partners are entitled to take part in ministerial-level and some other meetings of the SCO, but do not have voting rights.

Turkey formally applied to become a member of the European Union in 1987 and accession talks began in 2005. Its ambition to become part of the bloc dates back to the 1960s. Its prospects of joining look dim after 11 years of negotiations. The human rights are a divisive issue.

The EU has stepped up its criticism of Ankara since the failed July 15 coup d'état, saying the country's anti-terror laws were being applied too broadly. Luxembourg and Austria, as well as some European lawmakers, called on the bloc to halt membership talks with Turkey or punish it with other sanctions.

For its part, Turkey is frustrated with the long stalemate over EU membership. Ankara has accused the EU of treating the country differently regarding its accession attempt and failing to unlock all the cash it had promised to disburse to Turkey on the back of the refugee deal. Turkey plans to revive the death penalty. The move will make EU accession impossible. President Erdogan plans to call a referendum on the future of Turkey's EU membership bid.

Turkey's SCO accession would be a milestone bringing together the organization and the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS) - an international organization of Turkic countries, comprising Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. The General Secretariat is in Istanbul, Turkey. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are possible future members of the council.

The international organization also functions as an umbrella body for all other autonomous collaboration mechanisms like the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA), International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), and Turkic Academy.

Since its establishment in 2009 the CCTS has made meaningful progress on institutionalizing the interaction. The 6th Summit of the Heads of States of the Turkic Council is expected to take place till the end of the year in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan).

President Erdogan's statement is another sign of Ankara's moving away from the West to other partners. For instance, Turkey has just announced it is in talks with Russia on purchasing the advanced long-range S-400 air defense systems to protect its skies. It also seeks procurement deals in electronic systems, ammunitions and missile technology. General Hulusi Akar, the head of the Turkish armed forces' General Staff, visited Russia this month to discuss military cooperation.

During Erdogan's two-day visit to Pakistan on November 16, the editor of a pro-government newspaper in Turkey said the country needed to develop its own nuclear deterrent. He might have expressed his personal opinion but it confirms the general trend of Turkey's reorientation away from the NATO's concept of cooperative security under the US umbrella.

During the August 9 summit in Saint-Petersburg, Russia and Turkey signed a declaration on unprecedented partnership in defense industry. The parties also agreed to form a joint military and intelligence mechanism to coordinate their activities in the Middle East. Russian-Turkish

economic cooperation is expected to make further progress with the revival of Turkish Stream gas project.

It should be noted that Russia, not the US or any other NATO member, was the first country to be visited by the Turkish president after the failed coup.

In late October, Turkey and China also held a trade symposium in Istanbul, signing a total of 36 new deals amounting to \$300 million in value. Due to its geography, Turkey has a crucial role to play in implementation of China's One Belt One Road (Silk Road) project. Turkey is again taking the position as a key investment and cooperation partner that will help bridge the East and the West.

It has risen to become the world's 17<sup>th</sup> largest economy and an increasingly important destination for Chinese companies that want to trade and invest. Currently, China is Ankara's third-largest trading partner, with trade amounting to \$28 billion. Turkey is popular among Chinese tourists, and cultural relations between the two countries are developing.

Turkish Customs Minister Bulent Tüfenkci announced in January that the country now aims to triple trade with Iran, an SCO observer, to \$30 billion «as soon as possible».

Turkey's gradual shift from the West to Eurasia and other partners is part of a broader process as the West gets weakened and divided. The very notion of "Western unity" is fading away. Unsurprisingly, as its relations with the West sour, Turkey is reaching out to other poles of power. Further progress on the way of Ankara's to integration with the SCO will facilitate the multi-dimensional foreign policy to strengthen Ankara's standing in the world.