



REPORT

Turkey - Libya Relations: Economic and Strategic Imperatives

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Economic and Strategic Imperatives

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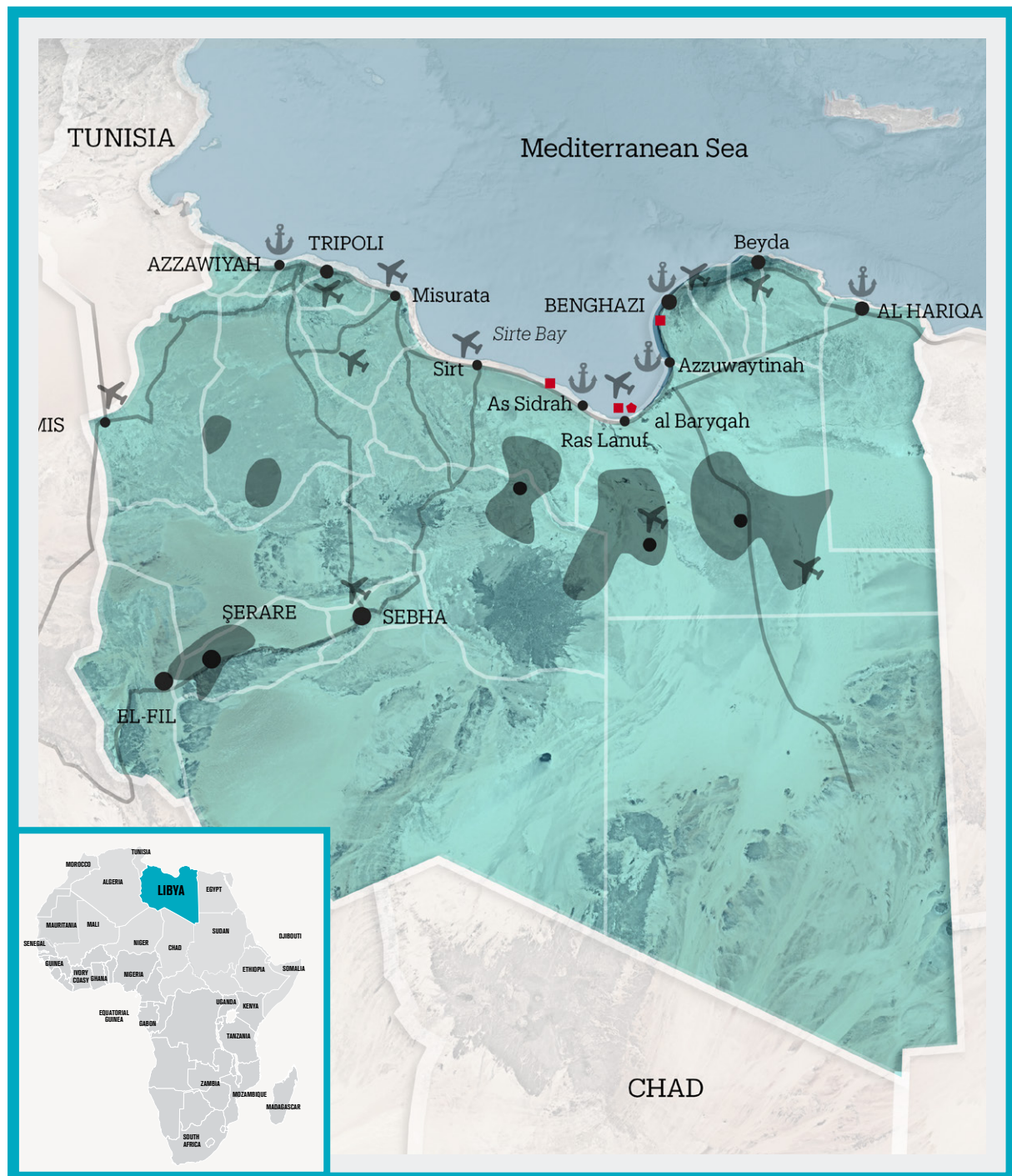


Figure 1. Libya Map

Source: TRT World Research Centre

Introduction

The toppling of the former leader Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011 and the subsequent destruction of Libya's government resulted in a power vacuum, leading eventually to widespread violence, a refugee crisis, the exacerbation of tribal rivalries, economic instability, and the collapse of social welfare. Today, Libya is fragmented, polarized and mired in instability. In many respects it is a failed state, lacking a unified, representative and legitimate government able to exercise authority or hold a monopoly over the use of force. Libya's complex political and security situation has presented significant challenges to the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement between rival factions within the country.

The 2014 civil war split Libya's political spectrum into two main factions: the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) and its rival in the country's Eastern region. On April 4, 2019 General Khalifa Haftar, leader of the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) from the Eastern region began an offensive to take Tripoli from the internationally recognized government. However, the outcome of Haftar's offensive to the capital has brought more conflicts. The interference of international powers and regional actors has been a significant factor in the deepening political fragmentation and polarisation of Libya. Interventions designed to serve foreign states' political or regional interests have been a constant feature of the country's post-revolutionary conflict.

Turkey's approach to Libya in recent years has largely been value-based. Since the fall of Gaddafi's regime, however, Turkey together with Qatar, has been more proactively involved in the resolution of the conflict in Libya. In particular, Turkey is the prominent supporter of the UN-backed GNA.

Recently, Turkey and Libya's internationally recognized government signed two separate memorandums of understanding (MoU), one on military cooperation and the other on maritime boundaries of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean.

These agreements paved the way for additional military and logistical cooperation by launching 'Defense and Security Cooperation Office' in both countries. For instance, some of the provisions after these arrangements are being able to provide military training, consultancy, technology transfer, combat planning and material support, collaboration on intelligence sharing, holding joint peace operations and the establishment of an immediate reaction force covering the police and military responsibilities in the case of request. Hence, the maritime deal delineates an exclusive economic zone between Turkey and Libya to give drilling rights to both countries for exploiting and trading hydrocarbon resources.

In this context, the report will discuss the impact of Turkey's current policies in Libya to respond to the needs of the Libyan people and encourage a resolution to the conflict. The report will provide an analysis of the multilayered dynamics underpinning Turkish - Libyan relations from economic, political and security perspectives.

In the following sections, it will move on to the question of how Turkey's geopolitical and strategic posture towards Libya has shifted from a position mainly focused on soft power to a proactive and pragmatic stance. At last, the report will evaluate the complex paradigm of relations that have emerged and subsequently devolved into a proxy conflict in Libya among local, regional and international actors.

Dynamics of the Economic Relations

The relationship between Libya and Turkey has historically been based on mutual interests. Geopolitical factors appear to have provided the main initiative for this partnership. The first strategic rapprochement between two countries happened in 1974 when Turkish military forces launched a military operation in Cyprus as a guarantor state to stop the massacre of the Turkish population of the island, carried out by the junta under the command of Nikos Sampson. Turkey's Peace Operation in Cyprus received the strong support of Libya. According to

Kologlu (2007), Libya provided the urgently needed military equipment and materials such as airplane spare parts through series of covert operations that could not procure and get supplied due to the USA embargo. After the war, Libyan Prime Minister Abdessalaam Jallud paid a visit to Turkey, and both countries held their first ever high-level meeting after Gaddafi came to power in Libya. At this meeting, both countries concluded several economic partnership agreements and established a joint ministerial committee on various policy fronts (see table 1 below).

Agreements and Protocols between Turkey and Libya	Signature Date
Agreement on Economic Partnership and Trade	05.01.1975
Partnership Agreement on Culture and Tourism	05.01.1975
Partnership Agreement on Science and Technology	05.01.1975
Labour Force and Social Security Agreement	05.01.1975
Partnership Agreement on the Sea and Maritime Transport	30.05.1975
Bilateral Agreement on Aviation	11.08.1975
Agreement on Partnership of Trade and Finance	02.05.1978
Partnership Protocol on Finance, Industry and Agriculture	27.06.1981
Trade Partnership Protocol	27.06.1981
Agreement on the Implementation of the Convention on Social Security, dated 13 September 1984	09.08.1985

Table 1,

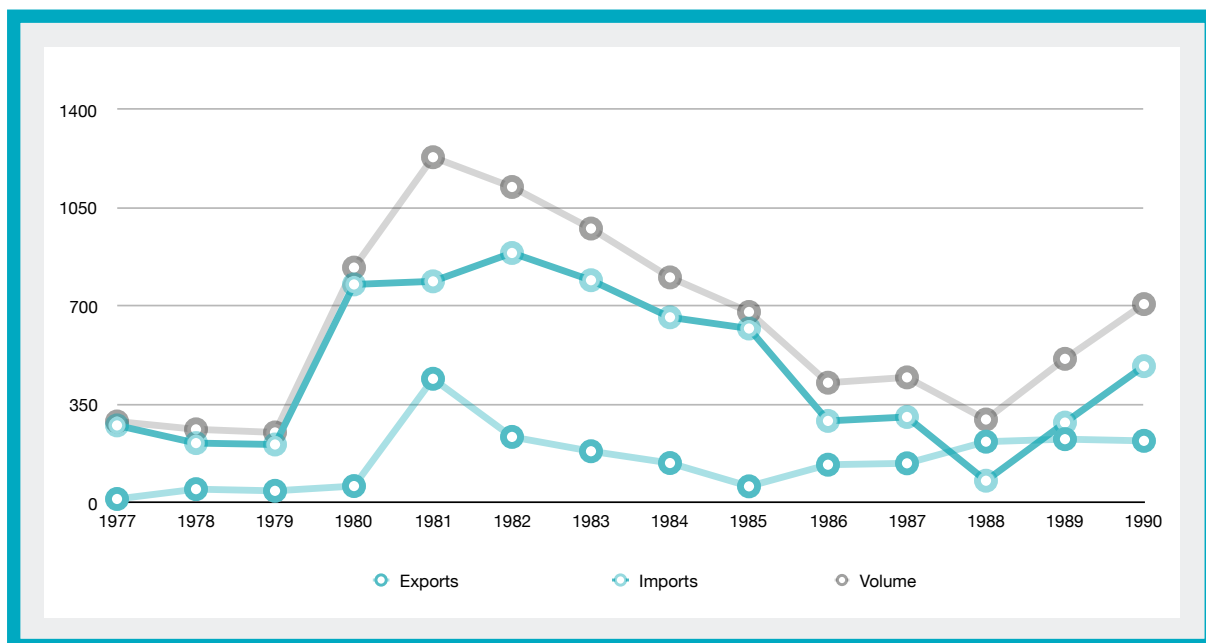
Source: Ministry of Economy – General Directorate of Agreements

Following the conclusions of these agreements, the trade volume between the two countries rapidly increased and several co-projects and companies were founded. For instance, the Turkish-Arab Bank was established in 1978 in Istanbul and it provided credit to many organizations such as the Turkish Central Bank, Turkish Airlines, Agricultural Bank etc. (Kologlu, 2007). Among the agreements, the target of enabling Turkish workers to work in Libya was the most ambitious one. According to Hale (1978), in the course of these discussions, the chief Libyan negotiator reportedly announced that his country needed at least 650,000 Turkish workers. This ambitious target was never met, however, over the years the number of Turkish workers in Libya has increased significantly. By the end of 1976, Turkish workers in Libya reached to 60,000 from a mere 6000 before (Metz, 1987). The Libyan Minister

of Agriculture stated in 1984 that there were 120,000 Turkish guest workers, working for as many as 150 Turkish companies in Libya (Kologlu, 2007). Libya ranked second after Germany for the highest number of Turkish workforce abroad.

In the late 1980s, however, Turkish-Libyan relations were challenged due to changing geopolitics of the region. The fall in world oil prices and the Western pressure on authoritarian regimes were two main obstacles that brought problems to Turkish businesses in Libya. According to Rudnick's report (1985), for instance, Libya's debt to Turkish contractors was estimated at \$700-800 million and, since many of the Turkish contractors operated in Libya at that time were undercapitalized, they became highly vulnerable to cash flow problems when payments by the Gaddafi government were delayed. As a result, in

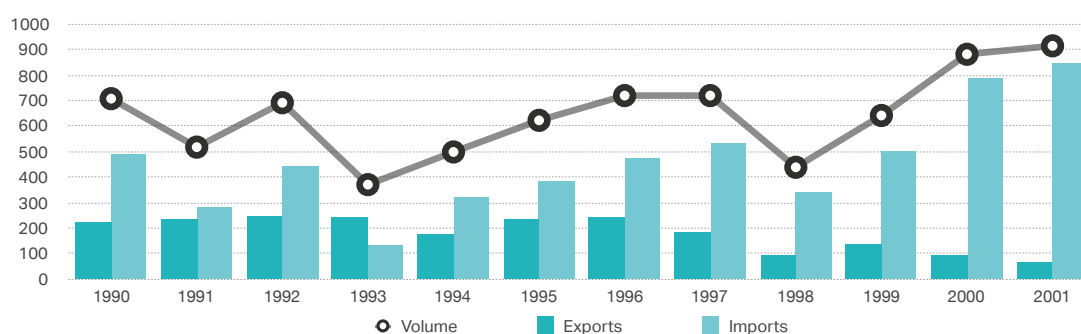
Turkey - Libya Trade Statistics in Years Between 1978 - 1990



Graph 1, Turkey - Libya Trade Statistics in Years Between 1978 - 1990

Source: TUIK & Kologlu 2007

Turkish & Libyan Trade Statistics in Years between 1990 - 2001



	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Exports	221	237	247	240	179	238	244	187	96	140	96	67
Imports	487	281	445	131	320	385	476	533	343	502	786	848
Volume	708	518	692	371	499	623	720	720	439	642	882	915

Graph 2, Turkish & Libyan Trade Statistics in Years between 1990 - 2001

Source: TUIK & Kologlu 2007

1985 the Turkish government intervened to regulate its overseas contractors after the payment problem with Libya led to the collapse of a number of small firms and convinced Gaddafi to agree on terms for the use of Libyan oil exports to repay debts to Turkish contractors (Seccombe & Lawless, 1986). Graph 1 shows the substantial rise and the decline in the trade volume between the two countries from 1978 to 1990.

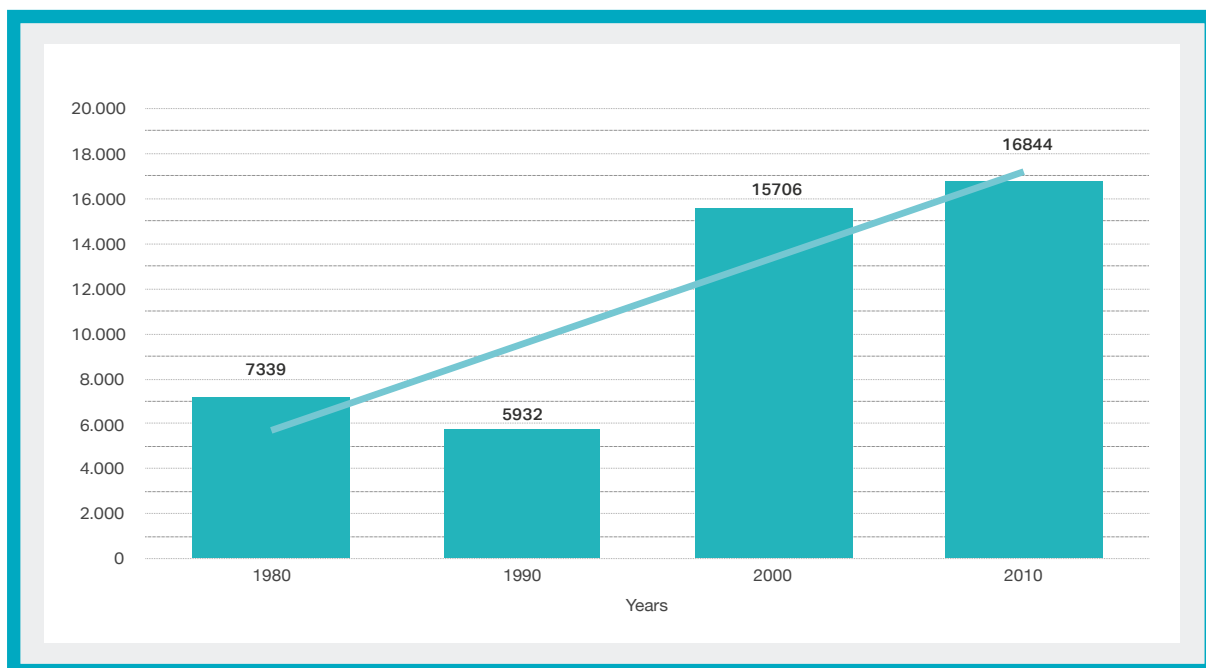
Despite some yearly fluctuations in the 1990s, the trade figures in Graph 2 show that there was a relatively steady course in economic relations between the two countries. The key reason behind these fluctuations was the UN-imposed sanctions on Libya between the years of 1992 and 1999. Graph 2 also in-

dicates that trade volume between the two countries has also been relatively stable over the years. However, it is worth noting that the trade balance has been in Libya's favour due to the sale of petroleum products.

Prior to Gaddafi's fall, overall trade relations between the two countries had a positive trend for four decades. This is visible when these four decades are considered comparatively, as in Graph 3 below. While the accumulated trade decreased in the 1990s in comparison to the 1980s, in the following decade, the total trade volume between the two countries nearly doubled from \$5.932 to \$15.706 billion.

More importantly, despite the political upheaval in the country resulting in Gaddafi's overthrow and sub-

Turkish - Libyan Comperative Accumulated Trade Volume for the Past Four Decades



Graph 3, Turkish - Libyan Comperative Accumulated Trade Volume for the Past Four Decades

Source: TUIK & Kologlu 2007

sequent conflicts, the volume of trade did not substantially change in the 2010s. In comparison to the first decade of the 2000s, the second decade saw an increase in the trade volume. Increasing as much as \$1.138 billion, the trade budget in total reached to \$16.844 billion.

From a "micro" perspective, Turkish exports to Libya include jewellery, textile, furniture, medicine, carpets, cement and other construction materials, while the basic Libyan exports to Turkey are crude petroleum and liquid petroleum gas, gold, scrap metals, aluminium, mineral oils, methyl alcohol and fertilizers. Graph 4 shows that up until the first decade of the new millennium, the trade balance between the two countries

was consistently in favour of Libya. However, as indicated in graph 5, after 2007 this trend began to shift in favour of Turkey. For instance, while the accumulated trade volume between two countries was \$2.786 billion, Turkey was faced with a trade imbalance of \$180 million in 2006. The following year the trade volume declined to \$1.043 billion, however, Turkey's accounts balance with Libya shifted from decades of negative balance to a surplus. The major reason for this such a drastic change was that the Turkish government in 2007 opted for a policy of diversification in its energy imports such as increasing the share of oil import from Russia, which significantly reduced its oil imports from Libya (EPDK 2007, p. 8).

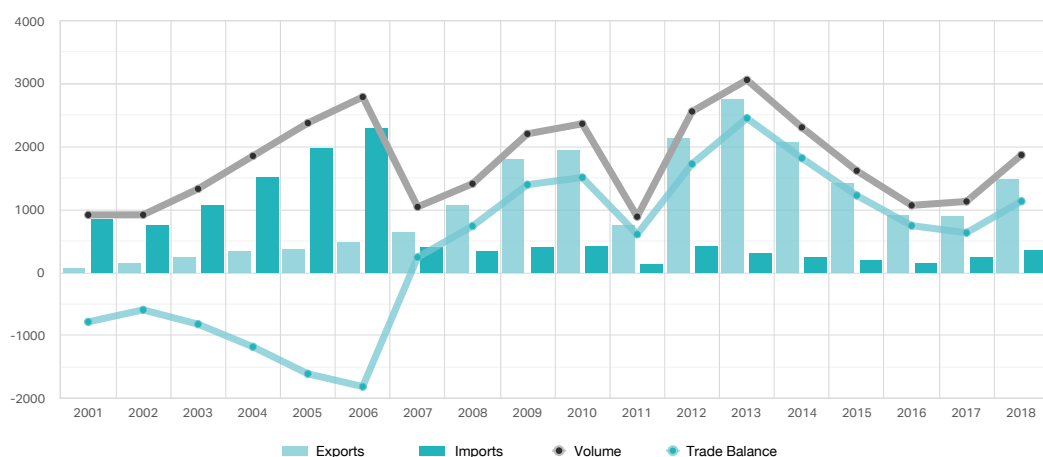
Turkish and Libyan Trade Balance and Volume between 1990 - 2001



Graph 4, Turkish and Libyan Trade Balance and Volume between 1990 - 2001

Source: TUIK & Kologlu 2007

Turkish Libyan Trade Statistics between 2001 - 2018



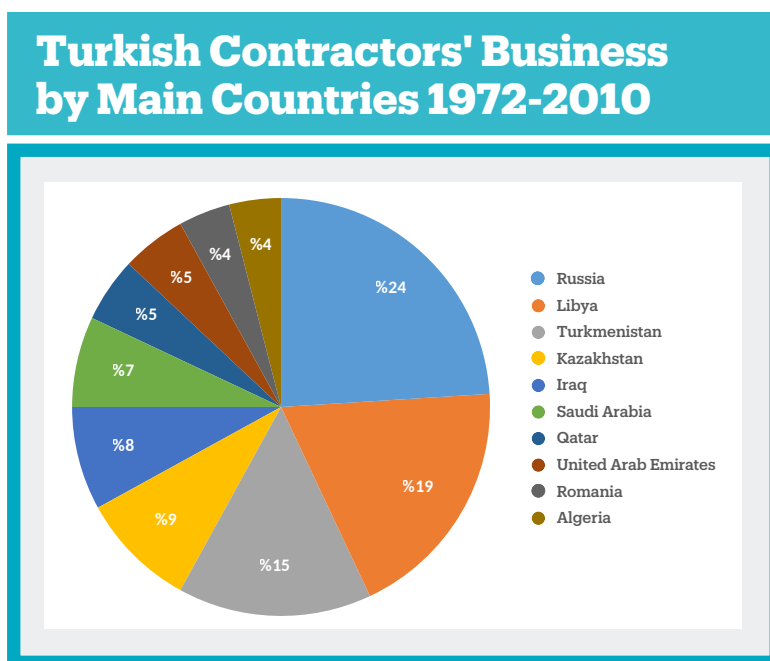
Graph 5, Turkish Libyan Trade Statistic between 2001 - 2018

Source: TUIK & Kologlu 2007

The Construction Sector: The Heart of Turkish-Libyan Economic Relations

The construction sector has a special place in Turkish-Libyan trade relations. Libya is among the first countries that Turkish contractors became active abroad. Beginning in the 1970s, Turkey gained a significant presence in the Libyan construction industry. As discussed in the previous section, the special trade agreements signed by both countries in the late 1970s provided the groundwork for this development. Libya is the second-largest market for Turkish contractors after Russia. Notwithstanding the fluctuations throughout the 1980s, Turkish-Libyan cooperation in the construction industry set a record in the

trade when it amounted to \$14.5 billion in 1993. This number was the highest volume secured by Turkish construction companies in a foreign country (Kologlu, 2007). As illustrated in graph 6 and the table 2 below, the largest share of Turkey's construction businesses abroad from 1972 to 2010 was in Russia, where Turkish firms have completed \$34.132 billion in contracts, which account for 24 percent of all completed jobs. It was followed by Libya with \$26.427 billion and 19 percent, Turkmenistan with \$21.197 billion and 15 percent, and so on.



Graph 6,

Source: Under-Secretariat of Turkish Foreign Trade & DEIK

When the uprising against the Gaddafi regime started in 2011, 12 per cent of the construction contracts that Turkish firms held abroad, worth a total of \$2.460 billion, was in Libya. However, the construction sites of some of these projects were severely damaged by the raids during the uprisings or were put on hold due to Libya's financial problems. To prepare an effective coordination plan on how to respond to the emerging conflict in Libya and its impact on projects carried out by Turkish companies, the Turkish Trade Ministry organized a "Libya Assessment Meeting" immediately following the uprising. High-level officials from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) and Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), as well as representatives of Turkish companies operating in Libya, attended the meeting. In the meeting, Zafer Caglayan, Turkey's Minister

of Trade at the time, said that Turkish companies had around \$15.3 billion worth of projects in Libya. He added that currently over 200 Turkish firms were carrying out more than 214 projects in more than 100 construction sites (NTV, 2011). More specifically, he pointed out that there were 28 Turkish companies in the cities of Tobruk, Benghazi and Derna alone operating on 31 different projects, worth \$3 billion in total (ibid).

Moreover, Table 2 shows that in cities such as Tripoli, Benghazi, and Derna, 14 out of 24 construction sites, which were operated by Turkish contractors, were severely damaged due to raids and fires set by mobs and rebels (Ergan & Kuburlu, 2011). The Turkey-Libya Business Council chairman, Muzaffer Aksoy, in a correspondence with the TRT World Research Centre pointed out that since many of these projects were at the completion stage, Turkish companies have

List of Turkish Contractors Affected by the Raids After the Uprising in Libya

Arsel Construction Company Limited	MRA Construction Company Limited
Aska Construction Company Limited	NA Construction Company Limited
Çukurova Construction Company Limited	Özaltın
Enka	Üstay Construction Company Limited
Mas Construction Company Limited	System Construction Company Limited
Mesa Construction Company Limited	STFA
MNG Construction Company Limited	Tekfen

Table 2,

Source: Ergan & Kuburlu, 2011

had to leave the country without collecting their receivables. They also left behind equipment valued at \$500 million (M. Aksoy, personal communication, May 14, 2019). For instance, Turkish contractor Mesa Construction Ltd's \$200 million worth of university building sites were demolished, Arsel Construction's six building sites were plundered, and the building site of Özaltın Holding, which had undertaken \$1 billion worth of infrastructure projects, was burned to the ground. More notably, Turkey undertook the largest evacuation in its history when violence erupted in 2011. There were some 25,000 Turkish workers and engineers stationed in Libya at that time and almost all of these workers were evacuated at the end of February 2011 (Reuters, 2011).

Most recently, the Turkish-Libyan Contracting Joint Working Group met in Istanbul on the 31st of January 2019 to revitalize the economic relations between two countries. The group's meeting was co-hosted by Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan and Planning Minister of the GNA, Taher al-Jehaimi. The group's meeting was held under the leadership of Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan and Planning Minister of the GNA, Taher al-Jehaimi. The main topic at the meeting the initiation of a dialogue between both countries to provide a legal platform, so that Turkish companies could continue working on their unfinished projects in Libya.

Almost all major stakeholders of the trade between the two countries were present at this meeting. These include the Turkish Contractors Association, DEİK, Turkey-Libya Business Council, the Banks Association of Turkey (TBB), the Association of Contractors Doing Business in Libya, as well as the representatives of the employer administrations running infrastructure and superstructure projects in Libya, infrastructure and transportation projects enforcement agencies, the Libyan National Audit Office and the Organization for Development of Administrative Centres (ODAC). At the end of the meeting, a memorandum of understanding

(MoU) was signed between the two countries and it was noted to be acknowledged as a framework of consensus on how firms and employers of the unfinished projects of Turkish companies in Libya should carry on their dialogue.

According to a report by Daily Sabah Business, the Turkish Contractors' Association (TMB) Chairman, Mithat Yenigün, stated in this meeting that the MoU presented a new roadmap on how to tackle the long-standing problems of Turkish contractors within three months. Due to the domestic turmoil in Libya, the Turkish firms' operations were significantly affected. In a written statement released by Yenigün after the conference pointed out the total amount of unfinished projects of Turkish firms amounted to \$19 billion, while non-collected accrued receivables stand at \$1 billion, the collateral amount at \$1.7 billion and other losses stand at about \$1.3 billion (Daily Sabah Business, 2019). Nevertheless, Yenigün added regarding the recent MoU: "We believe the work will be an important step toward resolving our long-standing problems" in spite of the ongoing conflict.

Today, Turkish and Libyan officials continue to work together on various policy fronts to increase common investments in the fields of energy, small and medium-sized enterprises, technology, education consultancy, banking, transportation and agriculture. In February 2019, the committee of Libyan and Turkish businesses held a joint meeting in Istanbul to discuss and prepare an action plan to expand trade relations. In this meeting, Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan emphasised the mutual benefits of a stable and growing trade volume between the two countries, highlighting that the 65.3% increase of trade volume during the previous two years had reached \$1.9 billion.

Quest for Peace and Stability

Diplomatic Support

From the first day of the NATO operation in Libya in 2011, Turkey's policy toward Libya prioritised the principle of territorial integrity, insisting on the indivisibility of natural resources and emphasising that such natural resources belonged to the Libyan people. After the fall of Gaddafi, Turkish President Erdogan was one of the first world leaders to visit Libya. Turkey was also the first country to appoint an envoy to Tripoli in September 2011. Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed their political as well as financial support for the National Transition Council (NTC). They kept the way open for cooperation with the future government, thus making significant efforts to support the urgent needs of the NTC. For example, along with its partners, Turkey seized Gaddafi's assets as per UN Security Council resolutions and made these funds available to the NTC for the reconstruction and other basic needs of the country. Turkey provided a line of credit as well as donations through the Arab Turkish Bank and a Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (Bagci & Erdurmaz, 2017). The fourth meeting of the Libya Contact Group was held in Istanbul, where Turkey occupied an active role among 37 other countries and 7 international institutions in an effort to articulate leadership mechanisms.

Despite these initial efforts, which sought to bring stability and peace to Libya, the NTC and its successor, the General National Congress (GNC), struggled to reinstate state institutions and consolidate authority. (See Figure 2). During the following two years, the situation turned into a battle for control over Libya that crossed tribal, regional and political lines. Several coalition groups were created which sought to consolidate power and leadership in an effort to control key Libyan institutions. To resolve the conflict, then UN

Special Envoy to Libya, Bernardino Leon, succeeded by Martin Kobler, both facilitated a series of talks between conflicting parties from the Eastern, Western and Southern regions of the country. On December 17, 2015, the talks resulted in the creation of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). The later was based upon four principles: 'ensuring the democratic rights of the Libyan people; a consensual government based on the principle of the separation of powers, oversight and balance; empowering state institutions to address the serious challenges ahead and respect for the Libyan judiciary and its independence'.

A wide range of representatives took part in the signing ceremony of the agreement. These groups included members of the Libya House of Representatives (HoR) and the GNC, as well as prominent public figures from Libyan political parties and civil society. On February 15th, 2016, the resulting political agreement led to the establishment of a single Government of National Accord (GNA) with Fayeze Al-Sarraj as Prime Minister. While the LPA initially brought a degree of stability to Libya, this was short-lived. A major conflict has persisted between the UN-backed GNA in Tripoli, under the leadership of Sarraj, and the HoR in Tobruk, backed by the LNA, under the influence of General Khalifa Haftar. Turkey has thrown its full support behind the program initiated by the LPA.

Turkish officials believed that by the inclusion of conflictual parties in multilateral dialogue mechanisms, the agreement has the potential of enforcing de-escalation zones and bringing a sense of stability. Haftar, who aims to rule the country by sheer force of arms rather than by seeking political solutions, however, has constantly undermined the objectives of this treaty (Araby, 2017). He is not alone in his mission to weak-

en initiatives brought forward from the international community for peace and stability. He commands an army of former Gaddafi loyalists, tribal forces, Salafi militias and mercenaries, and enjoys the support of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, France and Russia (Pizzi, 2014). Muzaffer Aksoy stated that “Libya is fragmented and polarised and mired in instability and insecurity. It is therefore currently difficult for Turkish authorities and businesses to support reconstruction and development in Libya.” As these comments illustrate, the conflict in Libya restricts the ability of advance economic ties it. His comments also validate the fact that the current situation in Libya should be dealt with collectively.

The international community should take the position of providing its full support to Libyans to reorganise their country’ institutions for a sustainable and

well-functioning Libyan state. For this reason, as the friction between conflictual groups in the Libyan civil war increased, Turkey sided with the UN-backed Tripoli government. In June 2014, the Tobruk-based HoR, under the influence of General Haftar, took a position against Turkey and forced all Turkish citizens and businesses to leave the regions under the control of his LNA forces (Reuters, 2014). Nonetheless, Turkey maintained its position and continued to support the UN-backed GNA in Tripoli.

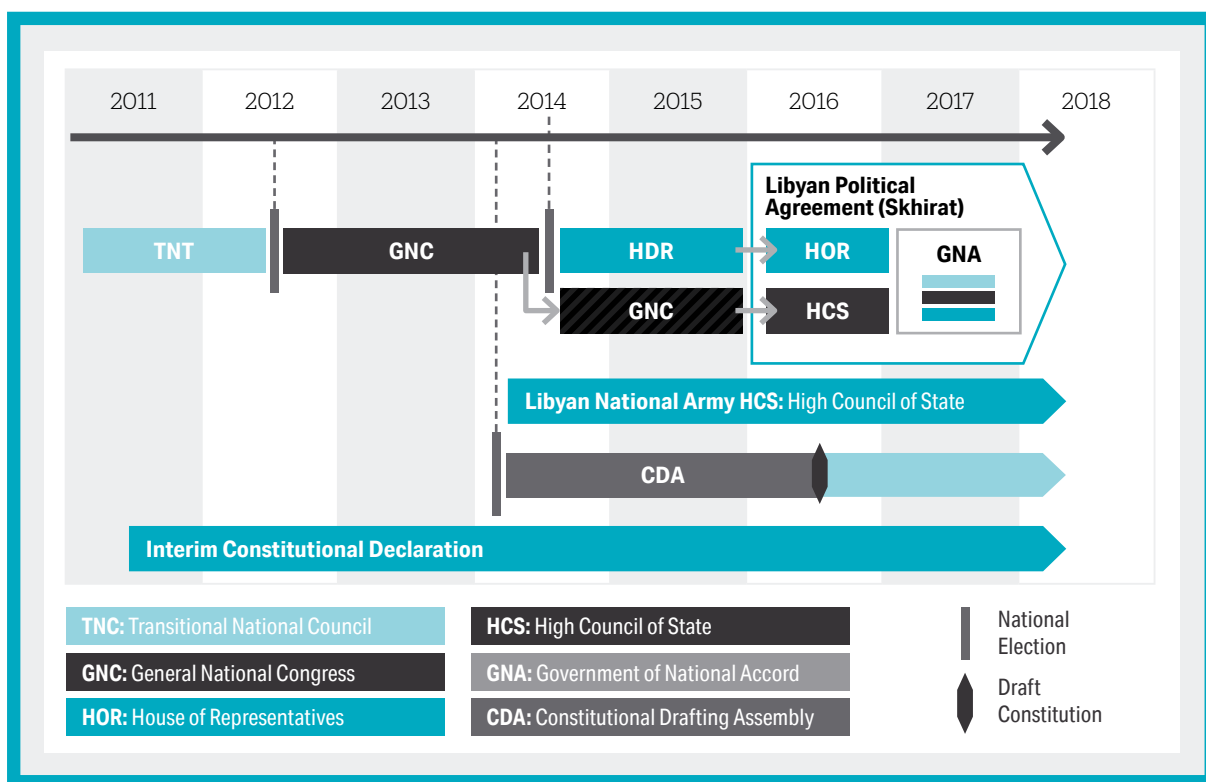


Figure 2, Libya's Contested Transition (Select Actors and Developments, 2011-2018)

Source: Blanchard, 2018

Humanitarian and Development Assistance

Since the beginning of AK Party rule in 2002, Turkey has invested heavily in the creation of a new Turkish foreign policy comprised of multiple dimensions and faces in the international arena. One of those is the humanitarian dimension. Speaking at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul on May 23, 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that “humanitarian diplomacy is one of the main components of Turkey’s approach towards Africa.” Scholars have also noted Turkey’s transformation from an aid recipient to an aid donor country, and Turkey has been characterised as a ‘new humanitarian power’ (Ali, 2011; see also Ozkan, 2012 and Keyman & Sazak 2014).

The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) is the state institution, which carries out projects related to social and development assistance. TIKA has a strong presence in Libya, spon-

soring various local projects. More specifically, it is heavily involved in programs related to soft infrastructure, which includes institutions that enable, sustain and enhance the economic, health, social and cultural standards of Libya (Eldeen, 2018).

The current activities in Libya are divided into six segments. Projects related to healthcare, agriculture, and education have the largest shares, with 42.69%, 34.77% and 12.03% respectively (TIKA, 2019). Other activities in Libya are largely related to hard infrastructure, such as telecommunications and the construction of public and state institutions. For example, in 2018 Turkey opened a youth and sports centre in Tripoli. It has also provided approximately 16 tons, or 700 packages, of basic food items to 700 displaced families in various locations in Libya’s capital.

Anatomy of the Libyan Civil War

The civil war has had a considerable impact on the relationship between Turkey and Libya. After Gaddafi was ousted as discussed, the political scene in the country was fractured, eventually coalescing into two major blocs. Both factions now have a government and parliament as well as a capital city, central bank and a National Oil Company of their own. The intensity of the rivalry between GNA in Tripoli and HoR in Tobruk has a tendency to increase each time it comes to agreeing on the arrangements for control of the country’s vast oil wealth and its assets at home and abroad. However, the dispute between the two forces took a drastic turn when forces loyal to Haftar launched an offensive to take over the capital city, Tripoli, from the forces of GNA.

An approximate assessment of the forces under the control of Haftar is illustrated in Figure 3 below. According to Delalande’s (2018) report for the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), the total number of fighters in armed groups supporting Khalifa Haftar is approximately 25,000. This figure is not a fixed one and is subject to fluctuation for various reasons as each militia group has its own objectives and ambitions. The first important branch of Haftar’s military power is composed of former Gaddafi-era military personnel. Their number is estimated to be about 7,000 men (Delalande, 2018). The inner circle of the ground forces is made up of the 106th brigade headed by Haftar’s son, Khaled, and the 73rd Brigade headed by Saleh al-Quta’ani. Saiqa Special Forces also play a

Libyan National Army

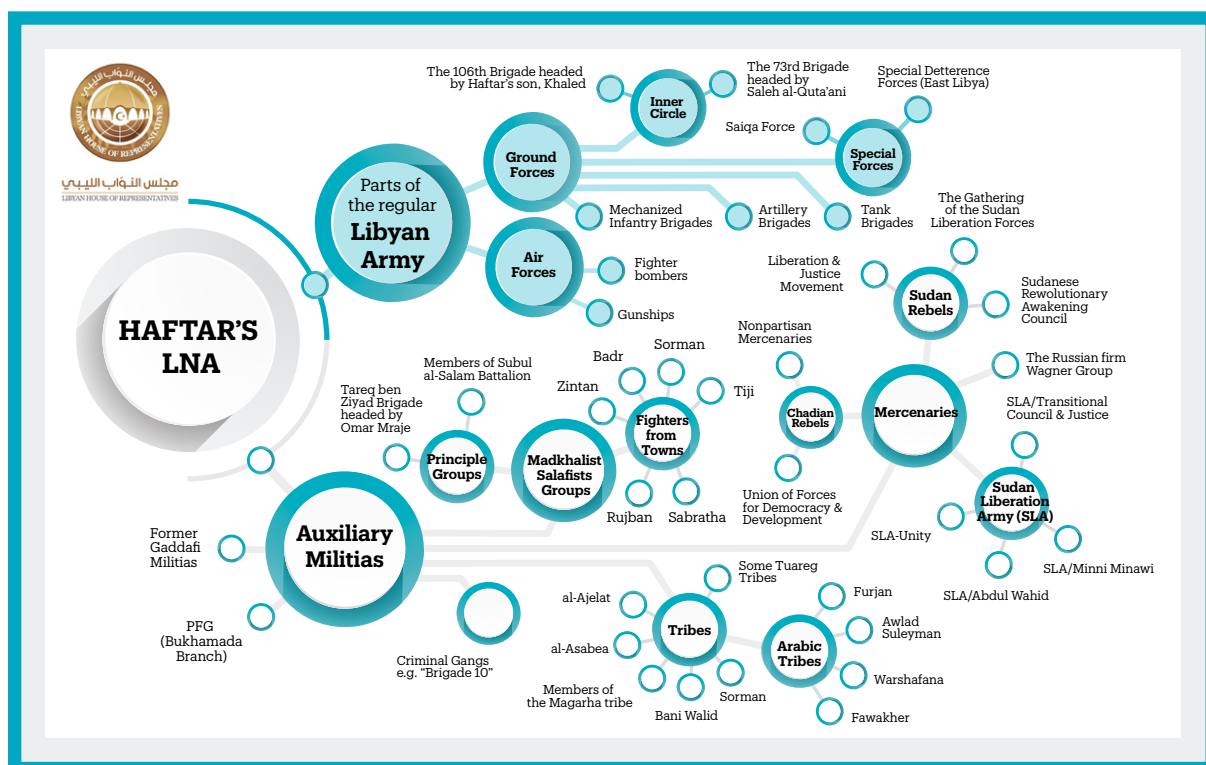


Figure 3. *Libyan National Army - TRT World Research Centre*

Source: Lacher 2019; Harchaoui and Lazib 2019

crucial role in terms of keeping Haftar's ragtag ground forces organised for tactical and strategic operations. He also has a relatively active air force, thanks in particular to the UAE, Russia and Egypt.

Figure 3 further illustrates that the major part of Haftar's forces is composed of auxiliary militia members. Their numbers are much greater than initial military members under his command. This figure is considered to be around 12,000 men (Delalande, 2018). Some of these forces are the communities of Warshafana, Si'aan, and Nuwail. Tribes such as Awlad Suleiman contribute fighters to Haftar's forces. Mercenaries from the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Chad also constitute an important element of the LNA.

However, Madkhali Salafists form the largest part of these militias. Joffe (2018) described Madkhalism as a “Trojan horse” for Saudi influence in Libya. The Madkhalis are the followers of the hard-line Saudi theologian Rabi’ al-Madkhali, who teaches an ultra-conservative version of Salafism that is fully co-opted by the Saudi state. This cleric has been closely associated with the Saudi state throughout his career. He became the head of the Faculty of Hadith at one of the Kingdom’s premier government-funded institutions of religious thinking, the Islamic University of Medina. He then became part of a movement of Salafi clerics known as the “al-Jami” (led by the cleric Muhammad Amān al-Jāmi). He later surpassed his mentors and became a staunch advocate of the al-Saud monarchy.

GNA Fighters

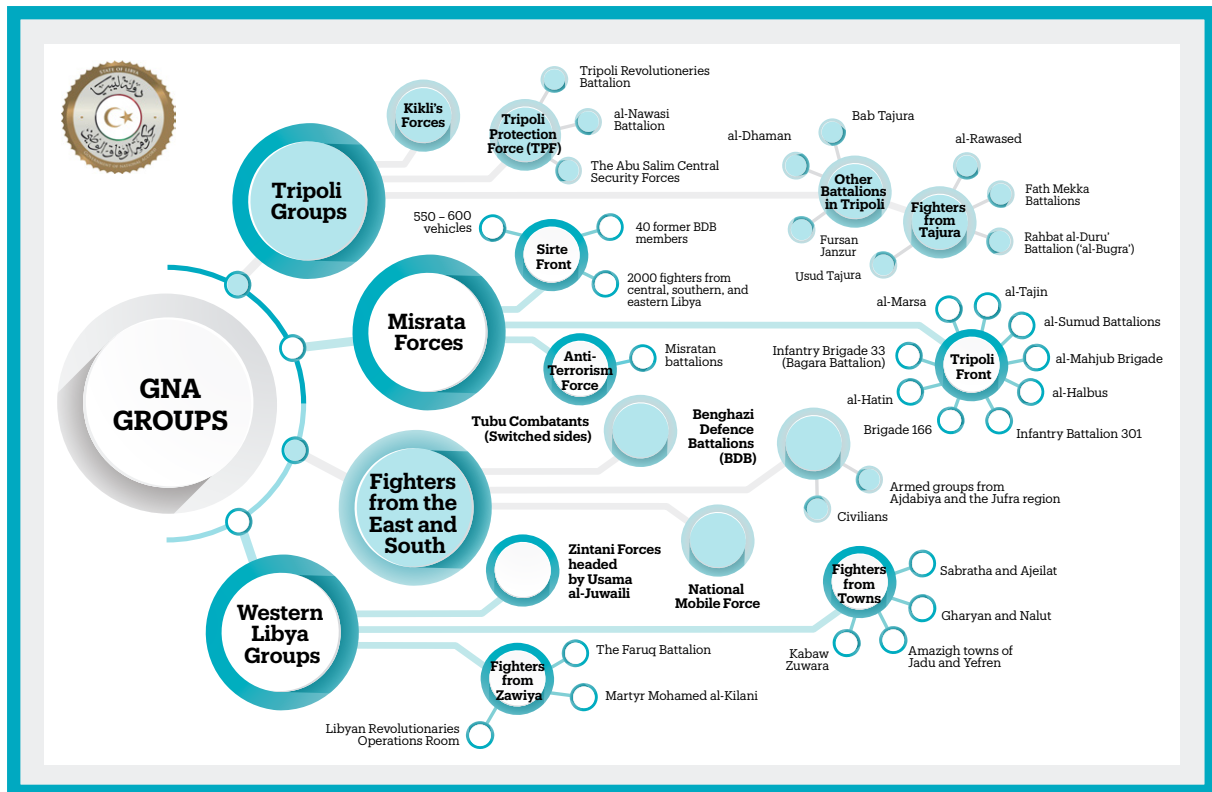


Figure 4: GNA Fighters, TRT World Research Centre

Source: Lacher 2019; Delalande 2018; Harchaoui and Lazib 2019

The latter returned the favour and made him their primary conduit for assistance to the Salafi movements worldwide.

Seen in this light, it is hardly surprising that the Madkhali groups have been patronised and utilised by the Saudi establishment. This is why many observers in Libya are wary that the Madkhali groups are advancing Saudi Arabia's political and security interests first. Riyadh's blatant backing of the Haftar-led offensive against Tripoli in early April 2019 has reinforced such fears. In fact, several reports reveal the role of the Saudis in the ongoing conflict in Libya (Crisis Group 2019 p30; Joffe 2018).

The Tareq ben Ziyad Brigade, for instance, is a Madkhali-dominated unit that continues to play a significant role in Haftar's army as it presses towards Tripoli (Crisis Group 2019, p13). This is the first clear-cut case where Madkhalis have engaged in military conflicts, are equipped with the most advanced weaponry, and operate in military units under their control. This is a concerning situation not just for Libya but for neighbouring countries too. For instance, in the interview for the report on Madkhalis by the Crisis Group (2018, p30), an eastern government official stated that some of the Egyptian officials are concerned about the rising power and influence of Madkhalis across the border in eastern Libya and how that may affect Egypt's own Madkhalis.



Photo: Hazem Turkia - Anadolu Agency

The GNA is externally supported by the United Nations, Turkey, Qatar and Italy. The internationally recognised institutions of Libya are protected by military forces that belong to four groups as illustrated by Figure 4. The total number of these forces is estimated to be between 20,000 and 35,500 men (Lacher, 2019). Forces from the city of Misrata are the largest and the most active units against Haftar's LNA. They have a presence in nearly all fronts for the GNA's leadership. The most notable brigades and battalions are under the command of the anti-terrorism force based in Sirte. As indicated in the above figure, two other important armed groups supporting the defence of the GNA are mainly fighters originating from Tripoli and Western Libya. During Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, three local groups from the city defended the city. The first faction are the forces under the command of Abdelghani 'Ghaniwa' al-Kikli, which were fighting on the front around Tripoli International Airport and has suffered heavy losses.

Next is the group of battalions under the name of Tripoli Protection Forces (TPF) such as Revolutionaries, al-Nawasi battalions and Abu Salim Central Security Forces. Lastly, other battalions from cities and tribes around the city of Tripoli took part in the GNA's defence against Haftar's forces. They include Bab Tajura, Fursan Janzur, Dhaman brigades and fighters from Tajura. From Western Libya, the Zintani forces headed by Usama al-Juwaili played a key role against Haftar's militia groups in the province of Zintan. Fighters from Zawiya such as the Faruq and Martyr Mohammed al-Kilani battalions provide their support to al Juwaili's forces in this region. As demonstrated in Figure 4, there are many other fighters from various western towns such as Garyan, Nalut, Sabratha and the Amazigh towns of Jadu and Yefren. The last major groups fighting for the GNA come from the East and South regions of Libya. They are the Benghazi Defence Battalions, National Mobile Force and Tubu Combatants who have recently switched sides.

Turkey's Proactive Posturing in Libya

The aftermath of the 2011 uprising saw Libya turn into a battleground for regional competition. Rivalries between opposition factions produced competing patronage networks that include regional and international forces. Turkey's position in this rivalry is simple. It supports a roadmap based on humanitarian politics, diplomacy and increase in economic and trade activ-

ities. Turkish officials in Ankara take the position that it is impossible to achieve a viable pathway for peace-building in Libya without making progress in these three areas. This can be seen from a number of press releases from both the foreign affairs and presidency offices. To exemplify this position, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributed the statement after

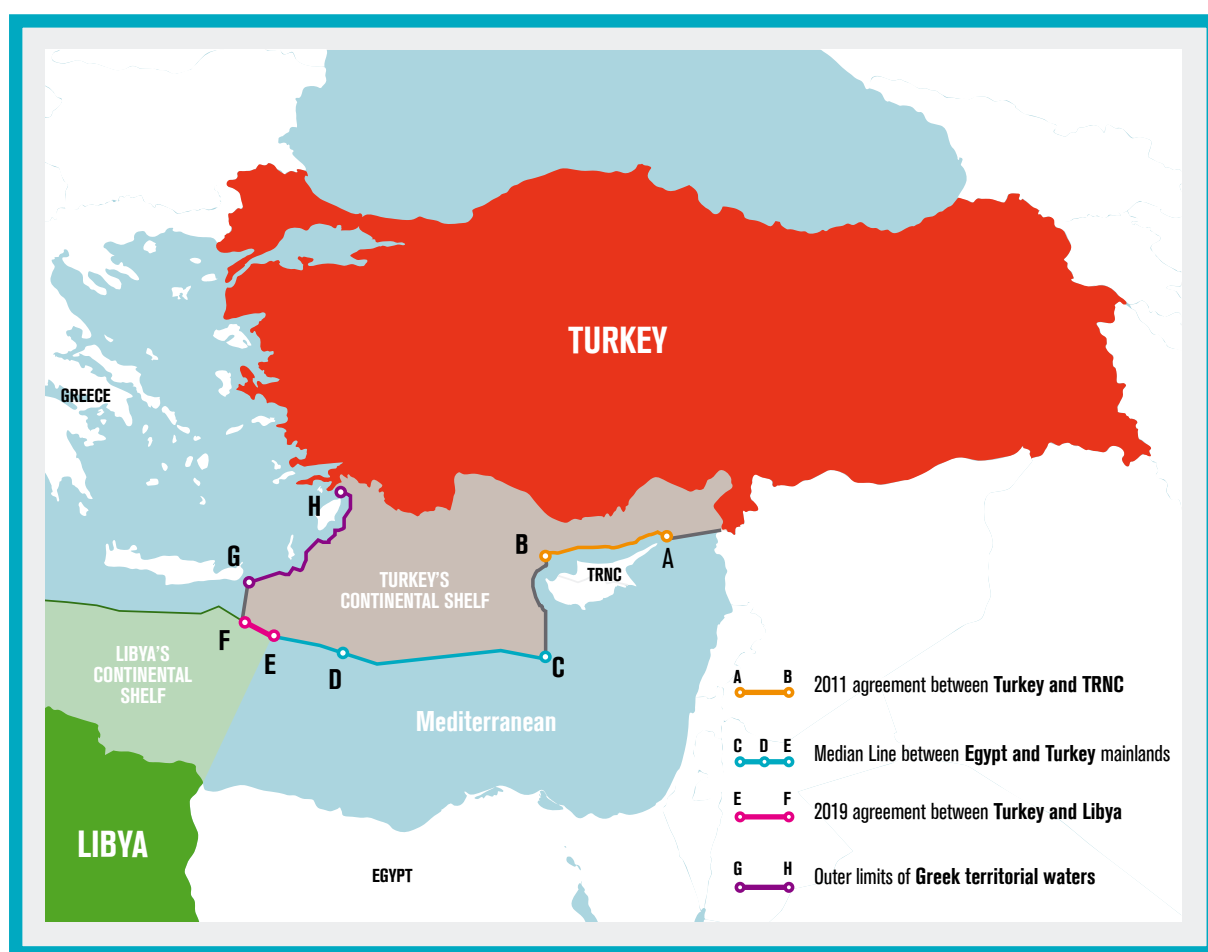


Figure 5: Maritime deal between Libya and Turkey

Source: TRT World Research Centre

the Ministerial Meeting for Libya Joint Communiqué on 16 May 2016 in Vienna, which stated that:

“We express our strong support for the Libyan people in maintaining the unity of Libya. We reaffirm our support for the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) of Skhirat, Morocco signed on December 17, 2015, and for the Government of National Accord (GNA) as the sole legitimate government of Libya, as stated in the Rome Communiqué of December 13, 2015, and endorsed in UN Security Council Resolution 2259. We renew our firm support to Libya's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity. We share the Libyan people's aspiration to transform Libya into a secure and democratic state, achieve unity and reconciliation, and restore the rule of law and state authority. We express our solidarity with the Libyan people in the face of the humanitarian and economic hardship that the political crisis has created. We reiterate our determination to assist Libyan institutions as they work to re-establish prosperity and urgently deliver basic services.”

Turkey's proactive stance to strengthen the democratic forces is contributing positively both Turkey's and Libya's national interests. For example, the most serious problem in Libya has been the lack of security due to the dysfunction of both law enforcement and military personnel. This was seen when the Libyan armed forces failed to disarm and demobilise rebel militias before the war. Therefore, upon the new government's request, Turkey immediately became involved in training forces once Gaddafi's regime was ousted. According to an Anadolu Agency (2012, July 17) report, for instance, 804 police officers and 299 soldiers were trained over the course of 7 months in 2012.

In this regard, former Head of Research and Studies at Aljazeera Network, Ismail Rashad, informed the authors that since Haftar's forces attempted to capture the capital in March 2019, Turkey has become more assertive in supporting the security forces of the UN-

backed government by supplying them with weapons and military equipment. Additionally, there have been some reports indicating that Turkey transferred military equipment to the UN-backed government based in Tripoli. The Kirpi, a mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle built by Turkish manufacturer BMC, Bayraktar combat drones and Russian-made Metis ATGMs, were among the equipment said to have been supplied (Megerisi, 2019; Al-Atrush, 2019; BBC 2019; Lacher 2019, p14)

Moreover, according to foreign reporters who held a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President confirmed the purchase of the military equipment mentioned above. Ragip Soylu (2019) from Middle East Eye reported that President Erdogan made the following statements in this meeting:

“We have a military cooperation agreement with Libya. We will provide weapons for them upon their request and if they are able to pay for them. They have had a real problem in terms of defence needs and equipment.” According to Soylu, President Erdogan then added, “Egypt and the UAE's [Crown Prince] Mohammed bin Zayed are supporting Haftar's forces. They gave very strong support in terms of equipment and drones. Now there is a balance after the latest reprisals. We will update the security agreement we have with Libya.”

The above statements indicate that the objectives of Turkish foreign policy towards Libya's conflict are shifting from a more value-based stance to a realist one. The main intention of Turkish officials is still to provide solutions to the conflict in Libya through diplomacy and multilateral dialogue. However, the competing states in the region have intervened in the conflict and supported the opposition of the UN-backed Tripoli government by providing them with weapons and mercenaries. This situation has also led Turkish policymakers to become more proactive in their approach and offer military assistance in the defence of

the GNC.

On November 28, 2019, Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya Fayez al-Sarraj and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed two separate memorandums of understanding (MoU), one on military cooperation and the other on maritime boundaries of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey was the first country to announce the accord to the world and with a statement highlighting the aim of the deal as to expand the security and military cooperation to protect Ankara and Tripoli's rights over energy exploration in the eastern Mediterranean. The Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement asserted Turkey's rights in the Eastern Mediterranean in the face of unilateral drilling by the Greek Cypriot administration, clarifying that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) also has rights to the resources in the area.

As a result, the conflict in Libya will likely intensify, as the Eastern Mediterranean dispute may well have an additional spillover effect on this conflict. Turkey will probably increase its support for the legitimate government in Libya while preserving its sovereign rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In fact, the new security and military cooperation agreement signed by Ankara and the Tripoli government, which was ratified by both the cabinet of the Government of National Accord and the Turkish Parliament on 19th and 21st of December 2019 respectively, seems to have triggered Haftar's latest offensive against the legitimate government in Tripoli. All these developments allow Ankara to step up its military support for the internationally recognized Libyan government. The security and military cooperation agreement includes highly decisive provisions, such as;

- Launching an "Immediate Reaction Force" – in the case of request by officials at Libya's capital Tripoli.

- Establishing a 'Defense and Security Cooperation Office' in both countries to coordinate military training, counseling, and support on combat planning, allocating of air, ground and naval vehicles.
- Forming the legal ground for allocation of land, sea and air vehicles, weapons, and training bases in both countries.
- Organizing joint military exercises, collaboration on intelligence sharing, and taking part in joint "peacekeeping" operations.
- Pledges a legal basis for substantial cooperation in the field of military training.
- Permission for sale, hire and donation of military equipment.
- Granting licenses to Libya for technology transfer.
- The memorandum of understanding will be valid for three years, then it will be extended for a period of one year when it ends.

However, it is not known whether military assistance will begin immediately after the agreement is ratified in both countries. For instance, Emrullah Isler, Turkey's envoy to Libya, said no ground troops were foreseen at the moment. He added "If the legitimate government of Libya asks for help for military training or the formation of military institutions following the approval of the memorandum of understanding on Saturday, then they would be deployed like in Somalia or Qatar" (Wintour, 2019). The next section will highlight the dynamics of this emerging geopolitical rivalry and discuss why Turkish officials have altered Turkey's approach to Libya.

A Complex Paradigm: The Quest for Regional Dominance

The conflict between competing socio-political and economic forces to elect leadership in Libya have become increasingly complex since the fall of the Gaddafi regime. This situation has also forced competing states in the region to reevaluate the shifting geopolitical context when deciding upon their foreign policy objectives towards this country. Since the 2011 Arab uprisings, for instance, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have pursued aggressive foreign policies to enhance their influence in the region. However, these policies have sent shockwaves throughout the Middle East since they were immediately acknowledged by the protestors as regional monarchies who are not in favour of their core demands such as democracy and freedoms. Hanieh (2018), for instance, argued that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi took these geopolitical shifts as a signal that they should become more interventionist to counter the rise of what has been branded and chastised from the outset as 'political Islam', which they currently regard as an existential threat to their monarchies.

In this context, the Saudi and the UAE axis began to pursue an aggressive agenda in the region through economic, political, cultural, and military means. However, some authors consider that the impact of these aggressive policies, rather than being constructive, have accelerated the Arab world's split into two distinctive camps (Cherkaoui, 2019). The first includes forces that seek to establish constitutional political processes, pluralism, inclusive politics, and the prevention of any downward spiral into violence. The second camp represents the so-called counter-revolutionary forces, which aim to impede the spread of democracy and preserve authoritarianism at all costs (ibid). In this complex web of relations, Turkey together with Qatar belong to the first camp seeking to provide support for political and diplomatic initiatives de-

signed to advance stability and achieve a long-lasting peace in the region.

The situation in the region is further complicated by the realpolitik pursued by Western nations. Rather than adopting a progressive and ethical foreign policies aligned with their slogans, Western states have often articulated a discursive strategy which seeks to legitimise existing security agendas, economic interests and patterns of domination in the Middle East (Flint & Falah, 2004; O'Loughlin and Kolossov, 2002; ÓTuathail, 2000; Power, 2003; Roberts et al., 2003; Sparke, 2007). Notably, by focusing on Western arms exports to developing countries, Perkins and Neumayer (2010) examine the gap between political comments and material outcomes. Their study uses various quantitative data on large weapons transfers from France, Germany, the UK and the US over the period 1992-2004.

According to O'Huiginn's study, published on the Datablog page of the Guardian, between the years of 2005 and 2009, when Gaddafi was still in power, the EU countries exported €343 million worth of weapons per year. Italy, France and UK had the most varied arms exports, including products such as "chemical or biological toxic agents, 'riot control agents', radio-active materials, related equipment, components and materials." These findings contribute to an analysis where the official commitment to a 'value-based' arms control policy is largely a matter of symbolic politics. States are reluctant to sacrifice national interests in economy and security for the sake of protecting or advancing the rights and freedoms of extraterritorial citizens (Perkins & Neumayer, 2010, p. 254).

In the specific case of Libya, following skirmishes between forces loyal to the UN-backed national unity government and Haftar's forces in Gheryan, a moun-

tain range 40 miles south of Tripoli, pro-government fighters uncovered a stack of four American-made Javelin missiles at an abandoned base (Walsh, Schmitt, & Ismay, 2019). These missiles are classified as 'fire and forget' weapons, but the Javelins are listed at the top of their class. They have the capability to destroy all currently fielded main battle tanks via infrared technology. It was first reported that, based on the markings on these missiles' shipping containers, they could be part of the \$115 million order for Javelin missiles that were placed by the United Arab Emirates and Oman in 2008. A statement by the French defence ministry, however, claimed that these missiles belonged to them. Other crates containing 155 mm artillery shells with markings from the Emirati military were also captured at the military base.

Although the Emirati authorities have not made any comments about their connection to these artillery shells, they are seen as one of Haftar's most committed foreign backers. The UAE under the de facto leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed does not hide its intention to demonstrate its military muscle against its opponents (Kirkpatrick, 2019). Together with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the UAE has been using American-made weapons against targets in western Libya since 2014 (Schmitt, 2014). Haftar's forces also operate both armed and surveillance drones such as Chinese-made Wing Loong and Austrian-made S-100 Camcopter drones, which have reportedly been obtained from the UAE (Binnie, 2019; Lacher 2019, p14). Moreover, a UN team of experts documented that the UAE operates an airbase in eastern Libya. According to the satellite pictures, the Al-Khadim military base near the city of Marj in eastern Libya was under construction for nine months in 2017. The UN report concluded that the UAE along with its Saudi and Egyptian allies were behind this redevelopment project.

More recently, it was reported by Africa Intelligence and the New Arab that the UAE is about to open a military base in northern Niger close to the border with Libya. The objective of such an airbase is to support the forces led by Haftar in his bid to capture the capital. Jane's Defence Weekly reported that the UAE has sent the Pantsir Defence System S1 to Haftar's forces,

allowing them to target fighter jets of the GNA. In addition to the Pantsir Defence System, the report indicated that the military aid included anti-aircraft missiles, artillery ammunition and night vision devices (Binnie, 2019).

The position of Russia in the Libyan conflict is most-often understood as opportunistic. Haftar is seen as another 'strongman' that can advance the Kremlin interests as opposed to a pluralistic coalition in Tripoli, which may tilt in favour of the West, and thus could hypothetically undermine Russian interests in Libya. Therefore, Moscow seeks to gain an advantage in Libya. Russia's biggest concern is that if it does not take an active role in the Libyan conflict, it will be excluded from any participation in the settlement of the conflict and could be deprived of the post-war economic spoils (Kozhanov, 2017).

Although Russia seems to play both sides in Libya, it has been supplying substantial support to Haftar. For instance, Russia has printed dinars for distribution by Haftar's parallel Libyan Central Bank. According to the data obtained by Reuters, the LNA received nearly 4.5 billion Libyan dinars (\$3.22 billion) between February and June 2019 (Sagdiev & Lewis, 2019). Furthermore, Binnie and Vranic (2019) reported in Jane's Defence Weekly that Russian technicians were materialising the support of Russia to the Libyan National Army (LNA) by repairing their Soviet-era supplied armoured vehicles and artillery. Based on a leaked document, in the period between the 17th of October and 12th of March 2019, a 23-member specialist team from Russia conducted an inspection, damage/defect assessment, and overhaul of armoured vehicles and equipment. The date of this document is important, as Haftar launched his offensive against Tripoli shortly after it was signed. It is worth noting that most of these repaired armoured vehicles and artillery were used in this campaign.

Russia's presence in Libya has been unofficially bolstered by the Wagner Group, a private military firm that supports the Russian armed forces in countries such as Syria, Ukraine, Central African Republic and Sudan (Due-Gundersen, 2019). Officially, the Wagner

mercenaries sign contracts for guarding oil and gas fields in these countries. However, the sign of their presence is often traced directly to the armed struggles taking place in these countries. In the case of Libya, Wagner Group's mercenaries are deployed mostly in oil fields and seaports in the eastern part of the country controlled by Haftar's forces (Al-Atrush and Kravchenko, 2019). Haftar cooperates with Russia as it is an ally with great power has the means to provide him political cover and a degree of legitimacy. Russia, on the other hand, considers this relationship as an opportunity to expand and strengthen its influence throughout the region, particularly in the Mediterranean basin.

America's main priority in Libya has been security. In 2017, US President Donald Trump made it clear that he did not foresee a role for the United States in Libya beyond counter-terrorism. However, he has since shifted US foreign policy in Libya from supporting the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord to supporting Haftar. The United States so far, along with Italy, Turkey and Britain, has held a similar position: there is no military solution possible in Libya, only a UN-backed process. Throwing a wrench into the process, President Trump made a surprise phone call to Haftar on April 19, 2019 to lend support to his offensive on Tripoli.

The Trump administration has been sending mixed signals about its Libya policy. The State and Defence departments have consistently expressed support for the GNA and recently, the US called on Haftar to stop his offensive on Tripoli (Reuters, 2019). A senate committee on foreign relations formally asked President Trump to call for a ceasefire and support the UN process to find a diplomatic solution (Cohen & Atwood, 2019). Other key countries in the region, including Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have chosen a path of neutrality, endorsing a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Turkey's position in this interregnum is to provide its full support to the UN-backed national unity government. Turkish officials are determined to continue to call on the international community to pressure Haftar and his backers to accept that the LPA is the only way forward and that there are no military solutions to this

conflict. To move ahead and achieve reconciliation between rival groups, President Erdogan has reiterated that Turkey would support the legitimate government in Libya, i.e. the 'Government of National Accord', and that there can be no military solution to the crisis as the political process was the only way out of the current conflict (Observer, 2019).

Reflecting upon the dynamics initiated by these competing powers, Turkey had to adopt a foreign policy outlook and tactics that consider the implications of these rivalries. It has pursued a proactive approach, providing material support to the Libyan army under the command of the GNA. Turkey has aligned with Qatar, a regional rival of the Saudi, UAE and Egyptian-led bloc of countries. They have intervened to send combat drones and armoured vehicles to assist the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

As previously stated, President Erdogan confirmed during a press conference with foreign journalists that Turkey is supplying defence equipment to the GNA, based on a military cooperation agreement previously established with Libya. The discourse of the top officials in Ankara has sharpened after the detention of six Turkish citizens by Haftar's militias. A statement released by the Turkish foreign minister was as follows: "Detention of six Turkish citizens by Haftar's illegal militia in Libya is an act of banditry and piracy. We expect our citizens to be released immediately. Otherwise, Haftar elements will become legitimate target[s]." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).

After Haftar's forces launched their offensive on Tripoli, President Erdogan said that Turkey would mobilise all available resources to "disappoint those who want to turn Libya into a new Syria." This was a clear reference to the broader regional struggle for power, and the hypocrisy of the countries that had initially voiced support for the Libyan democratic process, but then pulled away from their support halfway, leaving the country to the forces of destruction. For this reason, the lack of coherent and credible commitment from the international community has once again brought the effectiveness of conventional international mechanisms into question.

Conclusion

This report has reviewed the economic and strategic imperatives of Turkish-Libyan relations. The Turkish government has concerns that the Libyan civil war could have a spill over effect, leading to protracted instability, and providing anti-Turkey forces with more leverage in the entire region. Simply put, this report highlighted that the implications of the emerging power vacuum in Libya forced Turkish authorities to formulate a new set of pragmatic and sensible policies towards this country and the region as a whole.

Through a humanitarian- and value-driven intervention, Turkey offers solutions to problems related to democratic order and political reconciliation. In this sense, Turkish priorities in Libya are reflected through three aspects of its soft-power capacity: 1) improvement of economic relations to enhance trade volume between the two countries, 2) provision of diplomatic support to the UN-backed Tripoli government in order to foster unity, and 3) the supply of humanitarian aid to increase the Libyan people's standard of living.

This report also provided a detailed overview of the civil war in Libya and offered an in-depth analysis on its impact on Turkey-Libya relations. In particular, the report focused on major internal and external actors who caused great division in the country and made it harder to undertake a credible process of national reconciliation. External interference pulled some local actors into the conflict by granting them financial, military, and political means.

This report lists five key conditions for peace and stability in Libya:

The first and the most important element for the peace and stability in Libya is that international community should build credibility with the Libyan people as a whole. Currently, it seems that international

community is divided in two blocs. Countries such as France, Saudi, Emirates, the UAE and Egyptian on the one hand, and Turkey, Qatar, and other regional forces that support the United Nations on the other hand.

We also emphasize in this report that the current situation is not sustainable, and to resolve this deadlock, there should be a new initiative to coordinate international engagement, so that all parts share a single common agenda. Otherwise, it will be difficult to find a cohesive and common goal among the key local forces fighting against each other when regional and international forces pursue opposing interests.

Unified sovereign and military institutions should be protected from political, economic and international interference. These institutions must operate in the interest of all Libyan people. Therefore, regional and international actors should support the UN-led process, which proposed a roadmap to build a new national security architecture for Libya.

Libya's national resources need to be protected, and economic reforms should also be initiated. Gaining technical support from international financial institutions may harmonize economic and financial policy between rival authorities, which may enable the emergence of a consensus for a credible process of institutional reunification in Libya. Finally, there should be a collective action in providing assistance to humanitarian crisis in Libya, particularly as it relates to vulnerable migrants.

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