

Turkey's Strategy in Libya: Rationale and Challenges

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This policy outlook discusses the trajectory of Turkey's engagement with Libya and examines the latest developments on the ground, delineating Turkey's motivations for its initial and continued support to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA). It contextualises the Turkey-Libya maritime agreement, arguing that the deal represents a game-changer with important political consequences for the region. It also contextualises Turkey's recent military actions in Libya as part of a larger effort to preserve its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Introduction

Libya has been mired in turmoil following the ousting of long-time ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. [The overthrow of Gaddafi's regime failed](#) to establish stable political structures. The country steadily fell into conflict fuelled both by internal contradictions underlying the rivalry of various political-military forces, and foreign intervention by regional and international actors seeking their own commercial and political-strategic interests.

The Government of National Accord (GNA) came into being following a United Nations-brokered deal in 2015. The settlement was aimed at transcending the country's political divide after the eruption of civil war in mid-2014 had put an end to the transitional process that followed the downfall of Gaddafi. The reconciliation process was arranged under the sponsorships of the U.N. and not only had the support of the Western powers but also the endorsement of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC).

In April 2019, warlord Khalifa Haftar and his self-declared 'Libyan National Army' (LNA), moved to seize the capital Tripoli from the U.N.-backed GNA. The [war](#) has displaced over 200,000 people and has led to some of the bloodiest military battles the country has experienced in years.

On January 2, 2020, Turkey's Parliament approved a government proposal to deploy troops to Libya to support the internationally recognised government in Tripoli. Faced with another assault on Tripoli, the GNA [requested](#) help from the United States, Britain, Italy, Algeria and Turkey to help them defend their positions.

In practical terms, it would appear as though only Turkey responded with tangible assistance. Ankara has stepped up its attempts to provide substantial military aid to the GNA, including armed drones and air defence systems, which have shifted the balance on the ground.

Turkey's Interests in Libya

In the aftermath of the 2011 uprising, Libya was transformed into a battleground of regional and international competition. As a result, Libya's hoped-for democratic transition has faced significant obstacles originating both from inside and outside the country.

Ankara has been following an approach based on diplomacy and an increase in economic and trade activities. Turkey has various interests in Libya, however, the main reasons for Turkey's involvement include preserving its

economic and geostrategic interests in the country and the Eastern Mediterranean. 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 region. As a result, Ankara has sought to prevent Libya from falling under the sway of the UAE, Egypt, Russia and France which could put Turkey's geostrategic and economic interests in the region at risk.

Turkey has supported the UN-backed government in order to rebalance the situation on the ground with the hope of bringing an end to the Libyan conflict and open a space for the Libyans to come to an agreement among themselves by curtailing foreign drivers of instability in the country. Turkey also seeks to preserve both Turkey's and Libya's rights and interests in the eastern Mediterranean waters. The Turkey-Libya maritime agreement enables both countries to increase their respective maritime zones. Former Chief of Staff of the Turkish Navy, Admiral Cihat Yaycı [claimed](#), in the context of 'Mavi Vatan' or Blue Homeland, that Turkey has rights to a 145,000 km² area in the Mediterranean with its EEZ. Thanks to the Turkey-Libya deal, that area has now expanded to an area of 189,000 km². By signing this agreement, Libya's maritime jurisdiction has expanded to the territorial waters of the island of Girit. According to the former admiral, if Lebanon, Israel and Egypt sign an EEZ agreement with Turkey instead of the GCA, they too would expand and be able to expand their territorial claims. Spokesman of the Turkish President Ibrahim Kalin was reported to have [said that](#) Turkey has received information from different sources including official channels that Egypt was actually "very happy" with Turkey-Libya maritime agreement.



The Second Ministerial Review Conference of the African Union – Turkey Partnership, 12 February 2018, İstanbul - Serhat Çağdaş - Anadolu Agency

Turkey has stepped up its diplomatic representation in Africa over the past few years and bilateral trade with African countries has expanded considerably. Since the AK party came in power in 2002, Africa has come to be seen as a necessary security partner for Turkey, reflected in the signing of military, security and defence [deals with over 25 African](#) countries and establishing special secu-

rity partnerships with the strategically important African states. For instance, Turkey recently [signed](#) a military co-operation deal with Niger intending to secure a partnership against potential spill-over of instability from Libya to West Africa.

In Libya, Ankara's persistence and assertiveness have increased Turkey's influence in Algiers and Tunis and the prospect of a permanent Turkish military presence in Libya supports Turkey's ambitions to become a significant power in North Africa with a view of securing its strategic and commercial gains in the region. Between 2010 and 2016, Turkey [opened](#) 26 embassies in Africa and Turkey's presence in Libya now serves as a platform from which Ankara can improve its successful effort to extend Turkey's economic and political presence across the continent¹. As a consequence, concerns have been raised in key regional and international capitals, including in Abu Dhabi, Cairo, Paris, Beijing and Moscow.

For Mehmet Çelik, Managing Editor at Daily Sabah, "geopolitical interests play a role in the making of Ankara's Libya policy. Ankara's geostrategic interests, in the long run, are mainly economic in nature. Therefore, Turkey has tried to restore its economic relationship with Libya by supporting stability and the establishment of a central government. In addition to that, Ankara has been trying to prevent Libya from being controlled by the UAE, Egypt and France, which may harm to Turkey's interests not only in Libya itself but also in the region and the Eastern Mediterranean."

Turkey's position in Libya can thus be seen as an extension of its presence in Africa, which in turn is parts of a more general strategy to position Turkey as a global player in several domains, including the construction and defence industries. Libya represents not only the gate to Africa but is also a very valuable market in and of itself. The fact that Turkey had somewhere between \$19 and \$25 billion worth of contracts in Libya when the 2011 uprising broke out indicates the scale of commercial interests at stake.

Maritime and Security Agreements

In November 2019, Turkey and the GNA signed two separate memorandums of understanding (MoU), one on military cooperation and the other on [maritime boundaries](#) in the Eastern Mediterranean. For Turkey, success in Lib-



Metin Aktaş - Anadolu Agency

ya issue would represent a significant step forward in its attempts to secure its interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Greece, Egypt, Israel and the Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA) have signed [maritime agreements](#) to delimitate their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in the eastern Mediterranean to the exclusion of Turkey. Furthermore, Greece, Egypt and Israel have formed [a consortium](#), through which they have built up the EastMed pipeline project, intending to bring newly discovered gas reserves from the Eastern Mediterranean to southern Europe. The pipeline passes through Turkey's EEZs, however, Ankara was not [consulted](#) on the implementation of the project, prompting the Turkish government to form its own strategy to block the EastMed project by reaching an agreement with Libya's Tripoli-based GNA.

Regarding the agreement, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [stated](#) that "through this deal, we have taken a rightful step within the framework of international law against the stances imposed by Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration, opposing the claims of maritime jurisdictions aiming to confine our country to the Gulf of Antalya".

Turkey had long sought a maritime deal as a means of preserving its rights in the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus, for more than a decade, Ankara has sought maritime boundary delimitation agreements with Libya and Egypt. However, the 2011 uprising in Libya put these plans on hold. In this regard, Turkish President Erdogan [said](#) that a step was taken on the issue long ago, could not proceed due to then Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's death.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Energy Minister Fatih Dönmez [stressed](#) that Turkey's action in the Eastern Mediterranean region was reinforced by the registration of the Turkey-Libya deal. "As we always say, as we will neither be unfair to anybody nor abandon our

¹ The countries [who have defence and security deals with Turkey](#) are as follows: Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Benin, Gabon, Gambia, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Chad, Mali, Congo, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Uganda, Zambia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Madagascar.

rights.” The agreement is not only crucial for advancing research activities, but also for geopolitical and strategic reasons.

Turkey regards the maritime agreement with Libya as a way to effectively fence off disputed areas of the Eastern Mediterranean and possibly prevent other countries from taking advantage of the region’s resources without consulting with or including Turkey in the process. In other words, the agreement, regarded as a game-changer for the region, has become a means for Turkey to [push back](#) against attempts to isolate it in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Furthermore, Ankara does not want energy exporters such as Egypt and Israel to increase leverage over Turkey, a net energy importer and transit state. According to the U.S. [Geological Survey](#), the Eastern Mediterranean contains natural gas worth approximately \$700 billion. According to a Financial Times [report](#), energy imports are the most important component of Turkey’s chronic current account deficit, which has been a persistent source of financial instability for the country over the past ten years. For instance, last year alone Turkey’s energy import bill stood at \$41 billion. Thus, acquiring a degree of energy independence has been a critical objective of the Turkish government.

Libya has come to feature prominently in the Turkish effort to secure its position in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to Anadolu Agency’s Enes Canlı, “the events of 2019, Haftar’s attack to capture the capital and international support or indifference obliged Turkey to assume a more active role in Libya. One of the most vital strategic interest for Turkey in Libya is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with the Libyan government ratified by U.N., which stipulates the demarcation of sea borders between Libya-Turkey in the Mediterranean. This agreement is the event that increased the attention of regional players to the Libyan crisis. Libya has become a new zero-sum game for regional actors. Turkey’s abstention from Libya would have meant anti-Turkey forces such as UAE and France filling the vacuum right away”.

The Libya deal represents a turning point that will have a significant impact on the energy geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean for years to come. The maritime deal is a clear signal to other coastal states in the region that the gas game will not be played [without Ankara’s consent](#).

İlker Sezer, an editor at Hürriyet newspaper’s foreign desk, told TRT World Research Centre that “Turkey has well-defined security and economic interests in Libya. Turkey has observed many countries in the region building alliances based on an anti-Turkish agenda and rhetoric. We can take the East Med Gas Forum as a clear ex-

ample. Many countries came together to exclude Turkey from the region’s energy reserves and energy infrastructure projects. Any state would have regarded it hostile. To confront the anti-Turkish stance in the East Mediterranean, Turkey was able to convince Libya for a maritime border deal that it was seeking even during the Gaddafi era. We can safely say that Turkey prevented another country from joining the anti-Turkish alliance. Apart from that, Turkey wants to play a role in the Libyan economy and build strategic military ties with Libya, which may be vital for the future of Turkey’s military and energy companies”.

Military Dynamics

The war in Libya has claimed the lives of tens of thousands and increased instability in North Africa and the Sahel. The civil war, which broke out after the removal of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, culminated in the April 2019 attempt by Khalifa Haftar and the LNA to seize Tripoli, the capital of Libya and the seat of the internationally recognised government. The war has displaced over 200,000 people and caused some of the bloodiest battles the country has seen in years. While the humanitarian situation worsened, no clear military gains emerged for Haftar’s forces.

Countries, including the UAE, Egypt, Russia and France have long supported Haftar financially and militarily. Without these foreign actors, Haftar’s LNA, a ragtag of different militias and mercenary groups, could not sustain its operations.

In the face of Haftar’s offensive on Tripoli, Turkey has provided tangible support to the GNA. It should be said first that the Turkish military support to the legitimate government in Tripoli appears to be reactive rather than part of a previously prepared strategic plan. As discussed above, Turkey’s position in Libya can be linked with its broader efforts in Africa and its efforts to push back against attempts to isolate in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, for Turkey, the fight has never been an ideological one, as can be seen from the fact that Turkey has been trying to strike a maritime deal with the country since Gaddafi’s time. With the outbreak of civil war following Gaddafi’s ouster in 2011, Turkey concentrated its efforts in Libya on reaching a lasting ceasefire between Libya’s warring sides while trying to safeguard a fragile military balance on the ground. However, after Haftar rejected a ceasefire deal brokered by Russia and Turkey in January, Ankara ceased its attempts to persuade him to end his offensive. As a result, Turkey stepped up military and logistical support for the GNA.

The arrival of Russian mercenaries and air support from the UAE have exacerbated the conflict. The UAE has [reportedly](#) made over 150 flights to regions controlled by Haftar, mostly in eastern Libya, between January and April to deliver military equipment to Haftar's forces. Weapons from the UAE have contributed to a massive arms build-up in Libya. As a consequence, Turkey raised the level of its involvement considerably in an attempt to slow the advance of Haftar's military coalition. Furthermore, with Haftar's offensive on the capital, Turkey was concerned that the UAE, Egypt and France were seeking to create a fait accompli that would freeze Ankara not only out of Libya but also the wider region.

As mentioned, in November 2019 Turkey and the GNA [signed](#) a military memorandum of understanding. Contrary to other foreign players operating covertly in Libya, the Turkish Parliament openly voted to approve a one-year mandate for military support to the GNA, and in January 2020, Turkey announced it was deploying troops in the country. The security and military cooperation agreement [allowed](#) Turkey to send military advisers to help coordinate the GNA's war efforts and train local forces.

Turkey has also provided crucial military equipment including armed drones. Air defence systems have also been installed at the Tripoli and Misrata airports, provisioned with Turkish technicians to operate them and train GNA forces in their use. Turkey's deployment of airpower and efficient use of drones contributed greatly to its military success in Libya.



Baykar - Anadolu Agency

In this regard, Turkey's defence minister, Hulusi Akar, [stated](#) that "the Turkish army's training and guidance contributed "very significantly" to the recent military success of Libya's U.N.-backed Government of National Accord (GNA)".

Turkish support for GNA forces has changed the dynamics in the country and transformed the course of the

battle, leading to the retreat of Haftar's LNA from major western coastal cities, Tripoli, the al-Watiya airbase, and the city of Tarhuna.

For Mehmet Çelik, "the Turkish military role supporting the internationally recognised government in Tripoli increased after Haftar attacked the capital in April 2019. Ankara's military support allowed Tripoli to "restore balance" in Libya. The UN-backed government welcomed Turkey's military support as a life jacket that has saved them from Haftar's LNA artillery attacks are relentless and ruthless, designed to [harass](#) Tripoli's innocent residents indiscriminately."

A few months later, the Turkish military venture paid off. Haftar's LNA quickly unravelled, and its different militias and mercenaries retreated from western Libya.

For Enes Canli "Turkey has proven its significance in Libya with the events of 2020. The dialogue environment for Libya achieved today has only become available by way of the Turkish role in pushing Haftar from the gates of the capital. Turkey's standing with the GNA and repelling of Haftar from the west of Libya has led to a balance of power in Libya, which paved the way for cessation of hostilities and the consequent dialogue. Turkey is the only official [international] actor in Libya. We know many other foreign actors are active on Libyan soil, but they have to run their operations in a clandestine way and behind a veil of deniability. Such a covert approach limits the scope of their activities in Libya. Turkey, on the other hand, has signed a security and military cooperation MOU with GNA".

[Reportedly](#), Turkey and the GNA are discussing possible Turkish use of two military bases in Libya: the Misrata naval base and the al-Watiya airbase, which were recently retaken by forces loyal to the GNA. This suggests that Turkey would like to operationalise both air and naval bases as swiftly as possible in order to prevent any potential counter-attacks from the East.

Since the military agreement was ratified with Libya, Turkey began sharing its military resources and experience with the GNA by training Libyan forces. Recently, the defence ministers of Turkey and Qatar [agreed](#) with Libya's GNA to provide resources for military training and to send consultants and military personnel to the country. Turkey will reportedly set up and run a military academy to train officers for the GNA with the aim of transforming GNA-allied militias into a standing army.

In September 2020, Libya's Defence Minister Salah Ed-dine al-Namrush [stated](#) that both countries have begun to implement programmes, which include the restructur-

ing of the armed forces, air defences, counterterrorism units, special operations units and the naval forces. Most recently, the Turkish Navy has [started](#) a six-week training course for Libyan Navy diving personnel.

The Turkey – Libya Partnership: Strategic Gains

The relationship between Libya and Turkey has historically been based on mutual interests, as the two countries have important and longstanding economic and political relationships in addition to deep-rooted and longstanding historical and cultural bonds.

Agreement on Economic Partnership and Trade	1975
Partnership Agreement on Science and Technology	1975
Trade and Financial Cooperation Agreement	1978
Partnership Protocol on Finance, Industry and Agriculture	1981
Trade Partnership Protocol	1981

Source, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Trade and TUIK

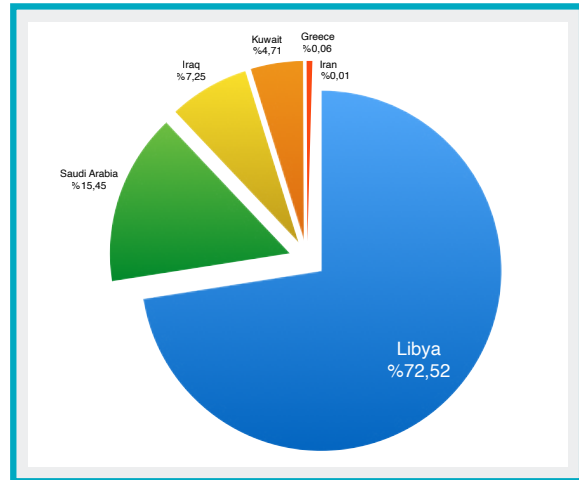
The first strategic rapprochement between the two countries [happened](#) in 1974. Turkey's diplomatic relations with Libya were enhanced following Libya's support for the 1974 Cyprus operation. Through a series of covert operations, Libya [provided](#) urgently needed military equipment and materials that could not be procured owing to a US-imposed military embargo. Following this, Turkish-Libyan commercial relations were significantly enhanced, particularly in the construction sector.

The legal framework of commercial relations between Turkey and Libya was made up of the following:

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.

The trade agreements signed by both countries in the late 1970s provided the groundwork for this development. During the first decade of the 2000s, Turkey won a big share of the lucrative construction contracts in Libya. In 2010, the two countries [agreed](#) to increase common in-

Distribution of International Works by Country (1972 - 1979)



Source, Ministry of Economy of Turkey

vestments in the fields of energy, small and medium-sized enterprises, technology, education, banking, transportation and agriculture. As a result, as many as 25,000 Turkish citizens were employed and doing business in Libya by 2011. Turkish investors poured billions of dollars into the construction sector in Libya, and Turkish business firms were involved in over 300 contracts.

The troubles that followed Gaddafi's downfall and the subsequent civil war harmed Turkish commercial interests considerably, as there were a reported \$19 to \$25 billion in unpaid contractual obligations at the time of Gaddafi's ouster. Thus, Ankara seems to have clear interests in the re-establishment and consolidation of the Libyan State to recover and further its political and economic interests.

Recently, Turkey and Libya [signed](#) a deal to boost trade and strengthen economic ties. The deal aims to resolve issues between Turkish firms and their Libyan counterparts after several Turkey-led construction projects in Libya had been stopped and companies were left with unpaid invoices. Al-Hadi Al-Taher Al-Juhaimi, Libya's planning minister, [stressed](#) the importance of the deal for clearing up pending issues between Turkey and Libya.

Turkey could help the GNA to restore Libyan institutions once the country is stabilised as Turkish companies have had a great experience in helping to the development of the country including, energy, construction and aviation as likely fields of collaboration.

On 4 October 2020, Libya's GNA and the Turkish government [met](#) in Istanbul with strong representation on both sides. During the meeting, Turkish President Erdogan [stated](#) that "Turkey would continue to stand in full solidarity with Libya and its sole legitimate representative, the Government of National Accord". Both leaders also

agreed to boost cooperation in security, defence, economic and investment fields.

According to İlker Sezer, "Turkey proved its significance when it helped the GNA push Haftar out of Tripoli. However, Turkey's support for Libya is much more than military help. In case there is a political settlement for the Libyan crisis, Turkey's role in helping Libya to restructure its economy and political system will be more clear and easier to observe. Libya wants to get rid of the huge public sector, create employment for the private sector and slowly turn Libya's highly subsidized economy into a free market. Turkey and Libya are developing projects for this aim. There are also energy partnership prospects between both countries. These facts prove that Turkey's role in Libya is likely to increase over time".

In March 2020, the Turkey-Libya Business Council [announced](#) plans to negotiate \$120 billion in reconstruction contracts with Libya. Murat Karanfil, chairman of the Turkey-Libya Council of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK), stated that "there is a call from Libya in this direction and Libya was undergoing a reconstruction process and that there were major opportunities in all of the country's sectors", adding that "during the reconstruction process, houses, public buildings and roads will be rebuilt in Libya".

The first Turkish-Libyan Economic Forum was [launched](#) in Istanbul with participation by a group of institutions and businessmen from both countries. The forum seeks to improve commercial relations between the two countries by [setting up](#) many new projects in Libya, principally in the infrastructure, construction, education, energy and health fields.

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Turkey's trade relations with Libya are not restricted to the construction sector. The cooperation in the oil and gas sector has also expanded notably after the two countries in late 2019 signed a pact on maritime borders in the Eastern Mediterranean.

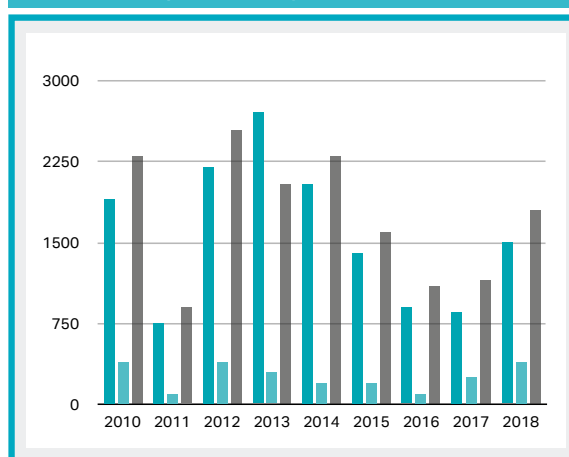
According to the head of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) Turkey-Libya Business Council, "Libyan authorities have invited Turkish gas and oil companies to Libya [...] Turkish energy companies did not get an adequate share of oil and gas reserves in the country and should receive a higher share". As a result, [reportedly](#), 35 Turkish firms together with officials from the Libyan Council for Oil and Gas, with an agreement on oil and gas explorations looking to be signed shortly.

Libya has [unique advantages](#) as an oil producer, and its reserves remain vital. With over 48 billion barrels, the deposit is Africa's largest. Oil is the heart of the Libyan economy and the country's principal source of revenue. Libyan oil is also easy to extract, and the installation of production and transport infrastructure has historically been straightforward, providing the oil-rich hinterland with links to several specific export terminals on the more inhabited coast. This pipeline structure is vast, meaning the capacity exists for a considerable extension of production when it becomes available.

Recently, Turkish Industry and Technology Minister Mustafa Varank and Libyan Central Bank Governor Saddek Omar El Kaber and the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA) Chairman Dr Ali Mahmoud also [signed](#) an economy, technology cooperation protocol. Turkish Minister Varank stated that "so far a higher level of cooperation has been achieved in political and military cooperation, but now it is time to boost economic cooperation as well".

Both countries could seek joint projects in the fields of investment, entrepreneurship and technology development. According to İlker Sezer, "Turkish President Erdogan signalled that Turkey could help Libya in state restructuring. This endeavour includes disbanding militia groups, strengthening the central authority, and building a healthy banking and finance system to build a diversified, non-subsidised and productive economy. Libya will decide on the peace process and political settlement. What Turkey needs is a friendly, trustable and stable government".

Turkey-Libya Foreign Trade Volume (million USD) between 2010 and 2018



Source, Ministry of Economy of Turkey

Dynamics between Turkey and Libya concerning the economy, diplomacy and military relations are expected to grow further in the coming months.

Peace Talks and Potential Challenges

Libya's rival sides recently [reached](#) a permanent ceasefire agreement, a pact that the UN described as an important turning point toward peace and stability in Libya. However, the situation remains fragile, particularly in Sirte, a key city in Libya's 'oil crescent' region, which accounts for 60% of Libya's oil exports. The ceasefire agreement is viewed as a move toward broader political talks and a potential way out of the conflict. However, the threat of renewed conflict remains.

Haftar has been played the role of spoiler over the last two-three years, repeatedly breaking ceasefire agreements put forward by the international community. For instance, on 19 January 2020, world leaders attended the [Libya peace summit in Berlin](#) in an attempt to restore stability and peace to Libya. During the summit, Haftar and Prime Minister Sarraj [agreed](#) to hold talks on a permanent ceasefire, however, the day following the summit, forces loyal to Haftar [violated](#) the cease-fire, firing mortar shells on southern areas of the capital. [Reportedly](#), Haftar's LNA has violated the ceasefire agreement four times since it was declared in August.

Turkey's determination to be more involved in Libya has created a new momentum for peace and given some life to the nearly dead UN-led political agreement. Turkey has long supported the UN-backed GNA diplomatically, economically and militarily. There are very few international players that have given the same level of assistance to the UN-backed government.

In Enes's opinion "Turkey is very flexible in terms of an endgame in Libya and proved this with its approach to recent dialogue efforts. Regarding Turkish officialdom, as long as there is dialogue and agreed upon transitions, Turkey is ready to grant its blessing for such a process [...] It is too early to talk about peace in Libya. First, there needs to be a permanent ceasefire agreement on which the belligerent parties are signatory. Meanwhile, Turkey is increasing the engagement with regional countries that have similar approaches to Libya".

For İlker Sezer, "many Western pundits commenting about Turkey's diplomatic role in Libya argue that although Turkey had a significant military win against Haftar, its diplomatic influence remains very weak. Many say that Turkey does not have enough power in controlling the GNA and does not have a strong say to prevent political rifts inside Tripoli. Those comments are misleading since Turkey's aim has not been to create a satellite state. Turkey sees the GNA as a multi-dimensional, strategic partner with which Turkey can develop mutual economic interests and break

the chain of anti-Turkish alliances. However, the danger of the increasing disputes inside Tripoli may change Turkey's role in the country".

In the past few months, Haftar's backers in Egypt and Russia have been reaching out to other Libyan political leaders, the most notable of which is the aforementioned Aguila Saleh. Haftar's losses in western Libya have caused fractures within his eastern camp. His recent rejection of the political settlement and dismissal of the ceasefire announcement seems to have angered many of his political allies, including Aguila Saleh, leader of a rival parliament in eastern Libya. Thus, Saleh is increasingly being viewed as the new political representative from eastern Libya with regards to negotiations with the GNA. As a result, Haftar seems to no longer enjoy the lead role he previously had. However, Haftar may try to stay on in a military capacity. Thus, he may still have enough military power to spoil ongoing peace negotiations. However, it would appear as though he has very little foreign support left. The Egyptians and Russians seem to view Haftar in a less favourable than before, while he retains key support from the UAE.

For [Samuel Ramani](#), a researcher at the University of Oxford's Department of Politics and International Relations, "despite Turkey's successful military campaign and potential to profit from a diplomatic resolution to the Libyan war, the LNA's partners continue to dominate diplomatic proceedings in Libya and create barriers for Turkey's entry as an arbiter".

The GNA is consolidating its position in the west as Turkey attempts to reform Libya's militia-based security sector. For Enes, "Turkey has more space and scope to pursue its activities in Libya than the rest of the de facto actors. Nevertheless, there are many constraints for Turkish aspirations in Libya. First and foremost, the GNA camp is showing signs of division among its ranks. Hence, Turkey is trying to unite these ranks under an umbrella with one chain of command, taking orders from the political authority. However, this is a very difficult and long-term task and very hard to manage in an environment of instability".

Conclusion

Turkey came to the assistance of the GNA in a moment of need. At the same time, others have failed to give practical support to the GNA, despite their official stances of recognising it as the legitimate government entity. As a result, Turkey has become the GNA's most reliable supporter against Haftar and his backers. Turkey has become a key factor in Libya internally and also on a global stage.



Hazem Turkia - Anadolu Agency

Turkey has turned the tide in the war. Since June 2020, Turkey has also been trying to increase its diplomatic activities. This increase is meant to capitalise on the gains that have resulted from the use of hard power. There appears to be a transition from hard power to smart diplomacy in a way that is engaging with NATO countries including Italy, Malta and the US, as well as interested regional countries, to consolidate the security situation in the country. These efforts, spearheaded by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, could potentially pave the way for a permanent solution to the conflict as well as new elections.

The deepening anti-Turkey positions of France the UAE and Egypt in the region could continue to inform their policy towards Libya, and they might take steps that could undermine the current ceasefire in the hopes of limiting Turkey's role in the country. Therefore, their actions in the coming weeks and months will be the key issue to watch.

Turkey now seeks to transition its military victories into strategic and geopolitical gains. For instance, Turkey and the UN-backed GNA are continuing with a military build-up. As a result, the operational capacity of the GNA has improved. Furthermore, Turkey will continue to train GNA forces to act as an army. At the same time, there has been a technological advantage that has been provided by Turkish weaponry supplied to the GNA. In the commercial and energy fields, Turkey seems willing to play a key role in construction, oil and gas exploration, as well as the defence and health sectors.

At the time of writing, the political track continues to progress. It is the first time in a few years that the conversation appears to be shifting to something more constructive. However, the situation remains fragile, as many factors and dynamics surrounding the talks could still derail the process. Considering these complexities and the multitude of actors engaged in the Libyan conflict, a long-lasting peace remains a precarious prospect.