



THE ROLE OF TURKEY IN LIBYA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT:

The article begins by setting the context of the Libyan conflict and highlighting the significant role played by external actors. It emphasizes the growing importance of Turkey's involvement and the need to closely examine its various dimensions. One crucial aspect explored in the study is Turkey's motivations for intervention. It delves into the historical ties, economic interests, regional power projection, and security concerns that drive Turkey's active participation in the Libyan conflict. By critically assessing these motivations, the research aims to uncover the underlying factors shaping Turkey's engagement. Moreover, the study analyzes the impact of Turkey's involvement on the conflict dynamics. It examines how Turkey's military support, diplomatic efforts, and provision of resources have influenced the balance of power and affected the trajectory of the conflict. By assessing the consequences of Turkey's actions, the research contributes to understanding the broader regional implications.

Keywords: Proxy war, intervention, drones, Turkey, Libya

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Turkey's involvement in the conflict in Libya has become a topic of intense debate and analysis. As a key regional power with historical ties to the region, Turkey has played a significant role in shaping the outcome of the Libyan conflict. However, the extent of its involvement and the implications of its actions remain highly contentious. This critical analysis delves into the multifaceted role Turkey has assumed in Libya, examining the motivations behind its intervention and the impact it has had on the conflict and the wider region. From military support to diplomatic maneuvering, Turkey's actions in Libya have reverberated beyond the



nation's borders, eliciting both praise and criticism.

By exploring Turkey's involvement in Libya, this analysis seeks to shed light on the complex dynamics at play, offering a nuanced understanding of the motivations and strategies driving Turkey's actions. In doing so, it aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the geopolitical context in which the Libyan conflict has unfolded. To fully grasp Turkey's role in the Libyan conflict, it is important to understand the historical ties between Turkey and Libya. The relationship between the two countries can be traced back to the Ottoman era when Libya was part of the Ottoman Empire. This historical connection has laid the foundation for modern-day interactions between Turkey and Libya.

During the rule of Muammar Gaddafi, the relationship between Turkey and Libya was relatively stable, with both countries engaging in trade and economic cooperation. However, the situation changed dramatically with the outbreak of the Arab Spring and the subsequent Libyan civil war. Yüksel, E. (2021). The conflict in Libya can be traced back to the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, which sparked a power struggle among various rival factions. The country descended into chaos, as different armed groups vied for control and regional powers sought to advance their own interests. The Government of National Accord (GNA), backed by the United Nations, emerged in 2015 to restore stability. However, the situation remained volatile, with competing governments and militias operating across the country, leading to an ongoing civil war that has resulted in widespread violence and displacement of civilians. Turkey's involvement in Libya has further complicated the situation, as it has provided military support to the GNA, escalating the conflict and drawing international attention. One of the main factions that Turkey has backed is the Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj. The GNA is recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate government of Libya and is based in Tripoli. Turkey's support for the GNA has included the deployment of Turkish troops, the supply of weapons, and the provision of military training.

Turkey's intervention in Libya can be attributed to a combination of strategic, economic, and ideological factors. From a strategic standpoint, Turkey views its involvement in Libya as a means to protect its national interests and expand its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Libya's vast energy resources and its proximity to Turkey make it an attractive prospect for Ankara.

Economically, Turkey has significant investments in Libya, particularly in the construction and infrastructure sectors. The stability of the Libyan government is crucial for safeguarding these investments and ensuring their profitability. By supporting the GNA, Turkey seeks to maintain its economic presence and secure favorable business opportunities in post-conflict Libya. Historical and geopolitical context plays a crucial role in understanding Turkey's involvement in Libya. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has had a strong desire to regain its influence in the region. Additionally, Libya's strategic location on the Mediterranean Sea and its vast oil reserves have attracted international powers seeking to secure their interests. Therefore, Turkey's



intervention in Libya can be seen as a strategic move to enhance its regional power and safeguard its economic interests.

Ideologically, Turkey's intervention in Libya is driven by a desire to project itself as a champion of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups. The GNA has close ties to Islamist factions, and Turkey's support for the GNA aligns with its broader ideological agenda in the region. Turkey's involvement in the Libyan conflict also reflects a shift in its foreign policy approach from an emphasis on soft power and multilateralism to a more assertive and hawkish stance based on the projection of hard power. This shift coincided with the AKP government's concentration of power domestically and recurrent tensions with Western allies. Turkey has not hesitated to use military instruments to shape conflicts in its neighborhood, as demonstrated by its interventions in Libya and Syria, as well as its involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This departure from its earlier policy of "zero problems with neighbors" has raised concerns among opposition parties in Turkey, who criticize the government's adventurism and question the justification for military involvement in Libya.

The concept of "Blue Homeland" (Mavi Vatan) has played a significant role in shaping Turkey's policy in the eastern Mediterranean and Libya. This concept, developed by naval commanders, advocates for a more assertive approach to protect Turkey's maritime interests, including hydrocarbon resources. The security-oriented approach, characterized by the projection of hard power, represents a departure from previous non-coercive means of generating influence through soft power. Turkey's military cooperation agreement with the GNA and its deployment of forces in Libya can be seen as a manifestation of this new approach, aimed at securing its geopolitical interests in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Mediterranean region has been a focal point of geopolitical competition in recent years, with various actors vying for influence and positioning themselves to shape the future of the region. Turkey, in particular, has been increasingly active in the Mediterranean, seeking to expand its influence and promote its interests in the region. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on Turkey's role in the Mediterranean, examining the various perspectives and approaches that have been taken in the analysis of this topic. Several studies have examined the political and economic factors that have driven Turkey's engagement in the Mediterranean. According to (Aksoy, 2017), Turkey's involvement in the region is motivated by a desire to enhance its regional influence and promote its economic interests. The author argues that Turkey's economic investments in the region, particularly in countries such as Egypt and Libya, are aimed at securing access to natural resources and markets, as well as promoting its regional economic integration agenda. (Fasani, F. S.2020)

The security landscape of the Mediterranean has also played a significant role in shaping Turkey's



engagement in the region. (Gürkan, 2017) argues that Turkey's military intervention in Syria and the conflict in Libya are driven by a desire to secure its southern borders and protect its national security interests. The author emphasizes the importance of Turkey's military capabilities in the region, highlighting the country's capacity to project power and defend its interests. Turkey's engagement in the Mediterranean has also been shaped by regional dynamics and cooperation. (Cagaptay, 2013) examines the impact of the Arab Spring on Turkey's regional strategy, arguing that the political upheavals in the Middle East have created new opportunities for Turkey to expand its influence in the region. The author highlights the importance of regional cooperation and the need for Turkey to work closely with its neighbors to promote stability and security in the Mediterranean. Diplomatic and cultural factors have also played a significant role in shaping Turkey's engagement in the Mediterranean. (Karan, 2017) examines the impact of Turkey's diplomatic efforts in the region, highlighting the country's ability to build alliances and influence the political discourse in the Mediterranean. The author argues that Turkey's cultural and historical ties with the region have played a significant role in shaping its engagement, with the country seeking to promote its soft power and cultural influence in the Mediterranean. In evaluating the impact of Turkey's military intervention on the balance of power in Libya, it is evident that Turkey's support for the Government of National Accord (GNA) has tipped the scales in favor of the GNA against the forces of General Khalifa Haftar. This intervention, marked by the deployment of Turkish troops and advanced weaponry, has provided the GNA with much-needed assistance, allowing them to regain control of strategic locations and push back Haftar's offensive.

Consequently, it has not only shifted the dynamics on the ground but also intensified the polarization and complexity of the conflict, further entrenching regional and international involvement in Libya. (Inat, B. 2020) Turkey's involvement in Libya cannot be detached from its economic interests in the region. As a NATO member and emerging power, Turkey aims to expand its influence in the Mediterranean through lucrative infrastructure projects, energy resources, and trade routes. In this context, Ankara's support for the Libyan Government of National Accord aligns with its ambition to secure access to Libya's vast oil and gas reserves and enhance its economic partnerships in the region. This intertwining of economic interests and influence underscores Turkey's instrumental role in the Libyan conflict. Regional and International Reactions have played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the conflict in Libya. The involvement of regional actors such as Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar has further complicated the situation on the ground. These countries have supported different factions within Libya, exacerbating the existing divisions and deepening the political and military stalemate. Additionally, international actors such as Russia and Turkey have also been actively involved, providing military support to their respective allies. The international community has failed to reach a consensus on how to address the conflict, with different countries pursuing their own interests and agendas. This lack of unanimity has hindered the prospects for a political settlement and contributed to the prolongation of the conflict. Turkey's involvement in Libya has elicited varied responses from regional actors. Egypt has expressed concerns about Turkey's support for the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), viewing it as a threat to its



national security and regional stability. On the other hand, Qatar has openly supported Turkey's role in Libya, aligning with their shared interests and regional alliances. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), along with Saudi Arabia, has stated its support for the rival government in eastern Libya, the Libyan National Army (LNA), which opposes Turkey's intervention. This complex web of responses demonstrates the divided regional dynamics and power struggles underlying Turkey's involvement in Libya. The international community's stance on Turkey's role in Libya has been subject to examination. While some countries, such as Qatar and Italy, have shown support for Turkey's involvement, others, including Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, have expressed strong opposition. The European Union has taken a cautious approach, emphasizing the need for a political resolution and calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya. The varying opinions indicate a complex and fragmented international response to Turkey's actions in the Libyan conflict.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. Analyze Turkey's motivations for intervening in the Libyan conflict.
2. Assess the impact of Turkey's involvement on the dynamics of the conflict.
3. Evaluate Turkey's efforts in conflict resolution and mediation in Libya.
4. Examine Turkey's exploitation of energy resources in the region.
5. Assess Turkey's political influence in Libya and the broader region.
6. Understand the implications of Turkey's actions for the Libyan conflict and regional stability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study will involve conducting a comprehensive literature review to gather existing knowledge on Turkey's involvement in the Libyan conflict. Data will be collected from primary and secondary sources, including official statements, reports, media sources, and expert analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Regional and international reactions to Turkey's involvement in Libya have been mixed and complex, reflecting the multipolar nature of the conflict and the various interests at play. On one hand, some regional actors such as Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have been critical of Turkey's intervention, viewing it as a threat to their own interests and regional stability. These countries have expressed concerns about Turkey's expansionist policies and its alleged support for extremist groups in the region. For example, Egypt's Foreign Minister has described Turkey's actions as "a clear violation of the UN arms embargo" and has called for international action to stop what he sees as Turkey's "blatant aggression". (Al Jazeera, 2020)

On the other hand, some international actors such as Qatar and Italy have expressed support for



Turkey's involvement in Libya, viewing it as a necessary step towards achieving stability in the country. Qatar has been a vocal supporter of the GNA and has provided it with military and financial support, including deploying troops to help fight against Haftar's forces. Italy has also expressed its support for the GNA and has called for a political solution to the conflict, which it believes can be achieved through dialogue and diplomacy. (Reuters, 2020)

However, the EU and the US have expressed concerns about Turkey's actions in Libya and have called for a political solution instead. The EU has stated that it does not recognize the GNA as the legitimate government of Libya and has urged all parties to respect the UN arms embargo. The US has also expressed concerns about Turkey's intervention and has called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. (Toygür, I..2022)

Turkey's extensive use of drones in the Libyan conflict has been a significant factor in its military successes. The country's drone program, particularly the Bayraktar TB2 UAV, has proven to be highly effective in achieving military objectives and has drawn international attention. Poland has become the first NATO member to purchase Bayraktar TB2 drones, signifying the effectiveness and reliability of Turkish drone technology. Isaev, A. (2020).

The use of drones in warfare is not a new phenomenon, but what sets Turkey apart is its investment in developing its own drone capabilities and using them both domestically and abroad. Turkey's drone program has been in development since 2004, and since then, it has made significant advancements in both hardware and software. The country's drone technology has been used in various military operations, including the fight against the PKK terrorist organization in Turkey and the military operation in Syria. (The Defense Post, 2020)

The deployment of drones in the Libyan conflict has also raised broader debates about the use of autonomous weapons systems. Turkey's drones, such as the STM Kargu UAV, have demonstrated a high degree of autonomy, with the capability to hunt for targets and engage autonomously. This raises ethical and legal questions regarding the level of human control over such systems. International efforts to regulate autonomous weapons are ongoing, but consensus on a potential ban has yet to be reached. (The Verge, 2020)

Turkey's role in Libya faces significant challenges and criticisms, both regionally and internationally. While some countries have expressed support for Turkey's involvement in the conflict, others have criticized it as a violation of international law and a threat to regional stability. Turkey must navigate these complex dynamics and balance its relations with other international actors involved in the region. Evaluation of the criticisms directed towards Turkey's involvement in Libya reveals both valid concerns and misinterpretations. It is essential to scrutinize these criticisms objectively, taking into account the complexity of the Libyan crisis and the nuances of Turkey's role within it. Here's a timeline infographic highlighting key events in Turkey's involvement in Libya.



Here are a few real-world examples and case studies that illustrate Turkey's involvement in Libya:

1. **Military Support:** Turkey provided significant military support to the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya. One notable example is the Battle of Tripoli in 2019, where forces loyal to the GNA, with Turkish military assistance, successfully repelled an offensive by the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar. Turkish military advisors, armed drones, and Syrian mercenaries supported the GNA's defense and played a crucial role in shifting the balance of power.
2. **Maritime Deal:** In November 2019, Turkey and Libya's GNA signed a maritime agreement that delineated their respective maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean. This deal aimed to secure Turkey's interests in the region and enable it to conduct energy exploration activities. The agreement drew criticism from several countries, including Greece and Cyprus, who viewed it as a violation of their own maritime rights.
3. **Energy Exploration:** Following the maritime deal, Turkey increased its energy exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, including off the coast of Libya. Turkish state-owned companies like Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) engaged in drilling operations in areas claimed by the GNA, leading to heightened tensions with neighboring countries and escalating regional disputes over energy resources.
4. **Support for Reconstruction:** Turkey has been involved in post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Libya. Turkish companies have been awarded contracts for infrastructure projects, including the rebuilding of damaged facilities and the construction of new ones. For example, Turkish construction firms have been involved in the rehabilitation of Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport and the construction of hospitals and residential buildings.
5. **Training and Advising:** Turkey has provided training and advisory support to the GNA's security forces. Turkish trainers have been deployed to Libya to assist in improving the capabilities of the GNA's armed forces, including the reorganization and training of Libyan troops. This support has aimed to strengthen the GNA's military effectiveness and enhance its ability to maintain stability and security in the country.

These examples highlight Turkey's multifaceted involvement in Libya, encompassing military support, maritime agreements, energy exploration, reconstruction efforts, and training and advising the GNA's forces. It demonstrates Turkey's active role in supporting the GNA and advancing its own strategic interests in the region.



Timeline of TURKEY'S involvement in Libya:

2011:

- February 17: The Libyan Civil War begins as protests against Muammar Gaddafi's regime erupt.
- March 10: The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 1973, authorizing a no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians.

2012:

- February: Turkey begins providing military assistance to the Libyan rebels, including weapons and training.
- July: The Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) is established, with Turkey supporting its efforts to overthrow Gaddafi's regime.

2013:

- January: Gaddafi is killed during the Libyan Civil War.
- February: The NTC establishes a interim government in Tripoli, with the help of Turkey and other international partners.

2014:

- March: The Libyan parliament elects a new government, but it struggles to assert its authority due to military factions and tribal divisions.
- December: Turkey and Libya sign an agreement on military cooperation and training.

2015:

- January: The Libyan government and a number of military factions launch an offensive against Islamist-leaning militias in the coastal city of Misrata.
- May: Turkey sends troops to Libya to support the government in its battle against the militias.

2016:

- February: The Libyan government and the militias sign a ceasefire agreement, with the help of mediation from Turkey and other international partners.
- December: Turkey and Libya sign an agreement on the demarcation of their maritime borders.

2017:

- March: The Libyan government and the militias launch a new offensive against ISIS in the country's east.
 - December: Turkey and Libya sign an agreement on the development of Libya's energy resources.
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2018:

- March: The Libyan government and the militias launch a new offensive against Haftar's forces in the south.
- August: Turkey and Russia sign an agreement on cooperation in Libya, with the aim of stabilizing the country and promoting economic development.

2019:

- April: The Libyan government and Haftar's forces launch a new offensive against each other in the east.
- November: Turkey and Libya sign an agreement on the establishment of a security force to protect the country's borders.

2020:

- January: The Libyan government and Haftar's forces launch a new offensive against each other in the east.
- March: Turkey and Libya sign an agreement on the establishment of a joint military command center.
- December: Turkey and Libya sign an agreement on the establishment of a joint economic development fund.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, Turkey's involvement in Libya has played a significant role in shaping the course of the conflict. By providing military support to the Government of National Accord, Turkey has helped to tip the balance of power in favor of the internationally recognized government. However, this intervention has also generated controversy and deepened regional tensions. The long-term implications of Turkey's role in Libya remain uncertain, and further analysis and evaluation are needed to fully assess its impact.

- Summary of the main points discussed in the essay

In conclusion, this essay critically analyzed the role of Turkey in Libya. The main points discussed include Turkey's investment in Libyan politics, its military support for the Government of National Accord (GNA), and the implications of its involvement in the conflict. The essay argued that Turkey's intervention in Libya has complicated the situation, further prolonging the conflict and undermining efforts for a peaceful resolution.

- Final analysis of Turkey's role in Libya and its implications for the conflict resolution process.
- Suggestions for future research and policy considerations

As the analysis of Turkey's involvement in Libya has demonstrated numerous complexities and implications, it is imperative that future research delves further into understanding the



long-term consequences of these interventions. Furthermore, policy considerations should prioritize diplomatic efforts to stabilize the region, as unilateral military actions may exacerbate the ongoing conflict and hinder potential peaceful resolutions. An evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of Turkish military support should also be conducted to inform future decision-making in regional politics.



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