



REPORT

Turkey's Evolving Role in Libya

Chatham House + Online
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On 12 November 2025, Chatham House hosted a research webinar examining Turkey's expanding political, military, and economic influence in Libya and its implications for conflict resolution and the wider international order. The session, featuring analysts Emadeddin Badi, Tim Eaton, and Nebahat Tanrıverdi Yaşar, explored how Ankara has positioned itself as a central external actor capable of shaping Libyan political developments across both the west and east of the country.

Panellists highlighted the events of May 2025, when Tripoli appeared on the verge of major armed confrontation following the killing of Abdelghani al-Kikli. Over the summer, Turkish mediation played a key role in brokering an understanding between the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Special Deterrence Forces, preventing escalation. In eastern Libya, Turkey's relations with Khalifa Haftar have also warmed considerably, reflected in growing military-to-military engagement and the willingness of the House of Representatives to revisit the 2019 Memorandum of Understanding originally signed with Tripoli. At the same time, the panel noted a rise in Turkish corporate activity in Libya, signalling Ankara's intent to consolidate long-term economic partnerships.

Speakers observed that Libya's political trajectories increasingly "run through Ankara," prompting discussions on whether Turkey has become the pre-eminent foreign power in Libya. The panel assessed how Libyan factions perceive Turkish involvement, what leverage Ankara holds over local actors, and how Turkey may respond to ongoing international diplomatic efforts, including those led by the UN and by emerging US policy under Special Envoy Massad Boulos. The session concluded that Turkey's deepening engagement offers both opportunities and challenges for conflict resolution: while Ankara's influence can stabilise certain dynamics, it also reshapes the balance of power in ways that external stakeholders must navigate carefully.

In the discussion, speakers also reflected on the strategic calculations driving Ankara's approach. Turkey's engagement was described as a blend of security assurance, economic expansion, and geopolitical positioning, rooted in its long-term aim to remain a decisive actor in the Mediterranean and North Africa. The panel noted that Ankara's relationships with Libyan actors are not uniform: in the west, its influence is tied to military backing and political sponsorship, while in the east, cooperation is increasingly pragmatic and interest-driven, reflecting shifting regional alignments. This dual-track engagement allows Turkey to maintain leverage across Libya's fractured political landscape, but also raises questions about dependency, sovereignty, and the future balance of external powers competing for influence.