



DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ROMANIA AND TURKEY DURING WORLD WAR II

İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI SIRASINDA ROMANYA - TÜRKİYE DİPLOMATİK İLİŞKİLERİ

 İonuş COJOCARU¹

¹Assoc. Prof. Dr., Universitatea Națională de Știință și Tehnologie Politehnica București, Department of Teacher Career Training and Socio-Human Sciences, ccojocaru2903@upb.ro

Geliş Tarihi / Date Applied
01.07.2024

Kabul Tarihi / Date Accepted
20.09.2024

ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the First World War, Romania and Turkey established a collaborative relationship, with Romania restoring its territorial integrity in 1918 and Turkey proclaiming the republic in 1923. Both states, along with Greece and Yugoslavia, pursued a policy of peaceful development and cooperation, which resulted in the formation of the Balkan Agreement. Despite the efforts of the parties involved to eschew revisionist discourse and adhere to the tenets of the Paris Peace Treaty (1919–1920), the actions of revisionist states created an atmosphere of instability and heightened tensions. This study examines the diplomatic relations between Romania and Turkey during World War II, with a particular focus on the Balkan Treaty and the foreign policy strategies of both states. The findings reveal that the Balkan Pact played a crucial role in the quest for regional security, but proved inadequate in the face of the considerable influence exerted by major powers such as Germany. This study further examines the impact of Romania's alignment with Britain and France, as well as Turkey's strategic approach in line with Atatürk's vision, assessing their implications for regional stability.

Keywords: Romania, Turkey, Balkan Agreement, Munich Agreement, Bulgaria.

ÖZET

Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın ardından Romanya ve Türkiye işbirliğine dayalı bir ilişki kurmuş, Romanya 1918'de toprak bütünlüğünü yeniden sağlamış ve Türkiye 1923'te cumhuriyet ilan etmiştir. Her iki devlet de Yunanistan ve Yugoslavya ile birlikte Balkan Anlaşması'nın oluşturulmasıyla sonuçlanan barışçıl bir kalkınma ve işbirliği politikası izlemiştir. İlgili tarafların revizyonist söylemden kaçınma ve Paris Barış Antlaşması'nın (1919–1920) ilkelerine sadık kalma çabalarına rağmen, revizyonist devletlerin eylemleri bir istikrarsızlık ortamına yol açmış ve gerilimi artırmıştır. Bu çalışma, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında Romanya ve Türkiye arasındaki diplomatik ilişkileri, özellikle Balkan Antlaşması'na ve iki devletin ilgili dış politika stratejilerine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Bulgular, Balkan Paketi'nin bölgesel güvenlik arayışında çok önemli bir unsur teşkil ettiğini ancak, Almanya gibi büyük güçlerin uyguladığı kayda değer etki karşısında yetersiz kaldığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışma ayrıca Romanya'nın İngiltere ve Fransa ile uyumunu ve Türkiye'nin Atatürk'ün vizyonu doğrultusundaki stratejik yaklaşımını inceleyerek bunların bölgesel istikrar üzerindeki etkilerini değerlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya, Türkiye, Balkan Anlaşması, Münih Anlaşması, Bulgaristan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic relations between Romania and Turkey, especially around the Second World War, are of great importance for understanding the foreign policies of the two countries and their position in the international arena. During this period, both countries signed various agreements and alliances with the aim of maintaining peace and stability in their regions. However, these efforts did not always yield the desired results and many international events affected the diplomatic relations of the two countries. This study aims to analyze the diplomatic activities of Romania and Turkey during the Second World War, with a particular focus on regional cooperation, including the Balkan Treaty, the Greek-Turkish friendship treaties, and other significant diplomatic initiatives, such as Turkey's balancing policy between Germany and Russia. In particular, this study will examine the challenges encountered by both countries during this period and the impact of initiatives such as Romania's cooperation with Great Britain and France on diplomatic relations. In particular, the challenges faced by the two countries during this period and their impact on diplomatic relations will be discussed.

The study of diplomatic relations between Romania and Turkey is of great importance not only for understanding the history of the two countries, but also for grasping their impact on regional and international relations. This study will contribute to a broader understanding of the diplomatic developments in the Balkans and the Middle East during the Second World War. Moreover, analyzing the efforts of the two countries to maintain peace and stability and the extent to which these efforts were successful can offer important lessons for the development of contemporary diplomatic strategies. Therefore, the study will make a valuable contribution to the discipline of international relations, both historical and contemporary.

The main objective of this study is to examine in detail the development of diplomatic relations between Romania and Turkey during the Second World War. The study aims to analyze the foreign policy strategies pursued by the two countries during this period, the international pressures they faced and their diplomatic responses to these pressures. Moreover, the effects of the Balkan Agreement on the foreign policies of the two countries will also be analyzed in depth. In this context, the study aims to reveal both Romania's and Turkey's approaches to the war and their reflections on diplomatic relations.

One of the main objectives of this study is to analyze the foreign policy strategies of Romania and Turkey during the Second World War. In this framework, the effects of the Balkan Treaty on the foreign policies of Romania and Turkey were evaluated and the approaches and reactions of the two countries to the war were analyzed. These analyses aim to draw important lessons for the development of contemporary diplomatic strategies.

The literature review analyzes the policies of the great powers towards the states of Central and Southeastern Europe. Furthermore, the effects of Romania and Turkey's economic and trade agreements on the relations between the two countries were analyzed. In the context of the Balkan Treaty, the progress of the rapprochement efforts with Bulgaria and the recognition of Abyssinia were assessed. Moreover, the impact of the Balkan Treaty on regional security was ascertained.

This study examines Romania's foreign policy of cooperation with Great Britain and France and its implications for the Balkans. It also analyses Turkey's foreign policy of maintaining a balance between Germany and Russia. The policies of the Romanian government under Patriarch Miron Cristea and their impact on diplomatic relations are analyzed in detail, together with the

consequences for Romania and Turkey of international events such as the Balkan Treaty and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. This section examines the impact of the Greek-Turkish agreement signed in Athens on regional security, the military situation in Romania, and potential scenarios for conflict with Germany. Moreover, this analysis will examine the impact of British policy towards Czechoslovakia on Romania. Finally, this study examines Atatürk's foreign policy strategies and their impact on the Balkan Treaty. It also assesses the effects of Turkey's policies of cooperation with the Western powers, its economic policies, use of international credit and industrialization efforts on regional security and foreign policy.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study is a qualitative research based on document analysis. Document review was used to collect, evaluate and synthesize existing knowledge on a particular topic. This method is suitable for seeking answers to research questions and making new inferences in the light of findings from existing literature (Bowen, 2009).

2.2. Data Collection

The data collection process involved systematic searches of various academic databases (e.g. Google Scholar, Web of Science, JSTOR) using predetermined keywords and criteria. The main keywords used during the search were: "Romania", "Turkey", "Balkan Agreement", "World War II", "diplomatic relations". The research covers primary and secondary sources such as archival documents, diplomatic reports, books, newspapers and academic articles published between 1930 and 1945.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed by content analysis method. Content analysis allows data to be organized under themes and categories and interpreted in a meaningful way (Krippendorff, 2004). In this context, recurring themes and findings in the literature were identified and answers to the study questions were sought in the light of these findings. The data were classified into themes through the coding process and the information collected under each theme was analyzed in detail.

2.4. Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of this document-based study were ensured in accordance with a specific methodological framework. In the data collection and analysis process, a rigorous approach was adopted to avoid bias and ensure objectivity. In addition, data from various sources were compared and checked for consistency to increase the accuracy of the research findings.

2.5. Limitations

This study has limitations due to the nature of document analysis. The research was limited to specific databases and keywords, and it was not possible to access all the sources in the literature. In addition, only English and Turkish publications were analyzed and studies in other languages were excluded.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Balkans and Middle East in International Context

In the context of an increasingly complex international environment, the situation of the states of Central and South-Eastern Europe has become a topic of discussion among the major powers. These perspectives were of equal interest to Romania and Turkey, which were situated within this region. France and Great Britain expressed support for the proposal to form a collective for the smaller, medium-sized states of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Winston Churchill proposed the establishment of a defensive alliance with all states seeking to safeguard their sovereignty. The countries in question were Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland (Calafeteanu, 1980: 29). In pursuit of this policy, the actions of Romania and its Balkan allies, namely Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece, were recorded as a preliminary step. These states also sought to identify effective strategies for integrating Bulgaria into the Balkan Treaty. The relationship between Romania and Turkey was undergoing a period of positive development. On 19 January 1938, an extension of the economic and commercial agreement, initially signed on 11 June 1929, was formalised (T.C. Başvekalet, 1938). In a subsequent development, on 24 January 1938, the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Turkey, Celâl Bayar, articulated his satisfaction with the agreement with Romania. He observed that the contract facilitated the supply of essential commodities to Turkey, namely petrol and gasoline, while simultaneously providing Romania with the requisite cotton and rice (AMAE, 1937-1938, f. 238).

3.2. Balkan Agreement and Regional Security

The discussion was resumed on February 25-th – 27-th, 1938, when the foreign ministers of Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey unanimously decided to try a rapprochement with Bulgaria. The context was favorable, at least for Bulgaria. In 1938, Bulgaria obtained several loans from the German state. Here's what the German Foreign Minister declared in this regard: *"the new loans will benefit to German expansion in the Balkans, will cause an increase in German weapons and ammunitions deliveries to equip the Bulgarian army, will block the request for other credits from the Western powers"* (Popișteanu, 1971: 247).

The question of Abyssinia's recognition within the framework of the Balkan Understanding was a point of contention. The Balkan Agreement members encountered difficulties in formulating a unified stance, shaped by Yugoslavia's unilateral endorsement of Italy's occupation of Abyssinia. This resulted in the group considering a flexible text that would permit Romania, Greece, and Turkey to align their responses based on their respective relations with Italy (AMAE, 1937-1938, f. 263). In a pivotal meeting, representatives from Yugoslavia and Romania expressed support for Italy's actions in Ethiopia, suggesting that Greece and Turkey should adopt a comparable stance (Koçak, 1991: 120). Turkey placed considerable emphasis on the importance of the Balkan Agreement in maintaining regional security, particularly in light of Italian threats, and committed, along with Romania, to provide effective military support in order to ensure collective success (Popișteanu, 1971: 246-247). Turkey sought to preserve its foreign policy autonomy and cultivate constructive relations with all states, with the objective of safeguarding its national frontiers (Kocak, 1991: 127). However, the perspectives of the great powers diverged. The British Ambassador, Sir Percy Horraire, reassured Turkey that the UK's supportive policy would persist, despite the complex international dynamics (AMAE, 1937-1938, f. 266).

3.3. Romania and Turkey's Foreign Policy

Romania's policy was a dynamic one, actively involved in the search of solutions, in the conditions in which the English and French governments pursued a conciliation policy with Germany. Starting from the idea that the Balkan states must maintain the closest relations with Great Britain and at the same time must have friendly relations with Italy and the other Great Powers, T. R. Aras, the Turkish foreign minister, declared that the Balkan Alliance had the interest to avoid any action that would tend or have the appearance of encircling Germany or isolating Russia. These two Powers constitute, through their strength and proximity, a balance factor that they should take into account as well. Another policy could have as German-Russian rapprochement, which would give rise to the most serious inconveniences for the countries of South-Eastern Europe.

While Turkey maintained a stance against becoming an instrument of German interests during a period when it was not feasible to adopt an anti-German policy, the Balkan allies, including Romania, were confident that Germany would not succeed in separating Turkey from the Balkan Entente. This ensured that their unity would constitute a formidable force that Germany would be compelled to respect. Romania's endeavours to reinforce the bonds between the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe were considerable, with the objective of establishing a bulwark against Germany's advances (AMAE, 1937-1938, f. 266)¹. In the context of these political developments, a new government was established in Romania with Patriarch Miron Cristea assuming the role of Prime Minister on 10 February 1938. This period was characterised by a rise in violence, which threatened to spiral into civil war. By the end of 1938, terrorist acts had placed pressure on the Romanian authorities. In response, King Carol II ordered a crackdown on the legionary leaders, who were led by Corneliu Z. Codreanu, the head of the extremist party. The king authorised Interior Minister Armand Călinescu to take armed action against the legionnaires. This decisive action resulted in a critical confrontation with the Iron Guard. The Turkish legation sent a telegram to Ankara in which it made a profile of each member (T.C. Arsivi, n.d.)². On the eve of these events, 9 February 1938, Codreanu convened with

¹ Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the opposition, stated that with the coming to power of the patriarch: "A coup d'état is being carried out as a result of which spiritual values, perhaps human lives, will be destroyed, and my soul is deeply saddened that this change of things is happening under the protection of the Patriarch of Romania, who is from Transylvania, a former political friend, the son of a Romanian serf, who became Patriarch with my active collaboration and only as a result of my personal action. As a son of Transylvania, with the traditions of that province and as one who took an oath with me for the preservation of the rights of Transylvania and Banat, you no longer have the right to deal the death blow, through your collaboration, to those rights. You are taking a historical responsibility by continuing your work as President of the Council, but which leads to the denial of all Transylvanian traditions, of the activity of your past, of our past collaboration and of the sacrifices of your parents and ancestors. Think that a son of Transylvania cannot preside over the work of stealing the rights of the peasants of the Old Kingdom, who sacrificed themselves by the hundreds of thousands so that dispossessing the Transylvanians, to dispossess them too."

² T.C. Arsivi Basbakanlik Cumhuriyet Arsivi Fond 030-10 / 247-668-19

*"You think I'm guilty?" Calming down, he invited me to take a seat and asked me if I could arrange a meeting with Corneliu Codreanu. "It would be tragic and comic at the same time, he said, for two nationalist movements to confront and destroy each other, to the joy of the common opponent. Couldn't we, at least once, agree?" I asked the Prime Minister to say, without the risk of disproving later, if I can convey to Codreanu that he wants to have an urgent meeting with him. Upon his affirmative and insistent answer, I returned to headquarters, where I communicated Goga's proposal to the Captain. The captain immediately agreed and tasked me with organizing the meeting. Without losing a moment, I went to the government office again, animated by the hopes and prospects that the pleasant news contained. I proposed to Goga that the meeting take place in the village of Tătărani, located about 60 km from Bucharest. I had chosen this place in view of the secrecy that this action required. Goga asked me for a break to give me the answer and, the next day, he proposed that the meeting take place on the same day, at 5:00 p.m., in the residence of his friend Gigurtu, the Minister of Industry and Trade. I do not know the reasons that led Goga to avoid the village of Tatarani as the meeting place. I confess that it

Octavian Goga at the residence of the pro-German politician Ion Gigurtu. This meeting resulted in the Legionnaires' endorsement of the Christian National Party's candidates (Scurtu, 1983: 397-398)

In this context, Mihail Sturdza, after the shooting of two legionnaires, said: *"I went to the government office and, ignoring the doormen, I entered the prime minister's office and asked him bitterly and with indignation if he was up to date or not with what was happening under his administration. Goga, he was deeply troubled, congested in the face, his hair in disarray and his hands trembling"* (Sturdza, 1966). And his narrative continues: "I stayed with Gigurtu for more than two hours, during which many coffees were drunk. Gigurtu seemed to sincerely share with me the joy and hopes occasioned by the reconciliation between the two nationalist leaders, when I read on the faces of Codreanu and Goga and from the prolonged handshake from the moment of separation that reconciliation and understanding had been reached. The captain, answering the question that I did not dare to ask him, said to me: "Yes, of course I agreed." Agreement in the sense that he would not claim that the Guard would become the strongest party in the Parliament. It was a situation that, for the moment, he wanted to keep and he was willing to help Goga to obtain a parliamentary majority for his party. Iuliu Maniu, referring to the act of February 10-th, 1938, declared: "I am the only prime minister who did not accept to be part of the new government." Considering the government unacceptable, the former president of the Council of Ministers declined the offer to join the cabinet with Octavian Goga.

3.4. Regional and International Developments

In February 1938, King Carol II established an authoritarian system, capitalising on the significant political transformations occurring in Romania. In the course of these developments, the constitution was amended, the existing political parties were dissolved, and a single party, the National Renaissance Front, was established, thereby concentrating all power in the hands of the King. The new government implemented a series of measures, including ensuring legislative unity, finalising the Penal Code, reforming national representation, reorganising the administrative structure and establishing guilds (Dandara, 1985: 84). Furthermore, individuals with close ties to the monarch were appointed to lead the Council of Ministers, which resulted in a further centralisation of the administrative apparatus. The political changes that occurred during this period resulted in significant alterations to Romania's domestic and foreign policy, thereby reinforcing King Carol II's control over the country. These developments were designed to enhance the King's personal authority and effect a comprehensive restructuring of Romania's governmental apparatus.

King Carol II assumed a great risk, changing the political system. The annexation of Austria by Germany, and the revisionist policy of the Axis, forced Romania to look for allies and methods to avoid the expansion of these states. Romania was satisfied with its territory and did not want to enter into any conflict, thus, together with the member states of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, it campaigned for the respect of the territories, their guarantee, respectively the respect of the treaties through who had established the borders, wanting their respect and implicitly peace.

The transformations that Romania went through, the adoption of a new Constitution through which the king acquired full powers, the change of the democratic regime, the abolition of

was not about a certain personal emotion, which would have been even less flattering for Corneliu Codreanu and for me. Apart from this, the events would demonstrate that the choice of Bucharest and the residence of a minister for a meeting that was to be kept secret for several days, did not prove to be the most inspired.

political parties, the intensification of the extremist current, the legionary attacks at the end of the year caused a status of tension in the country, which ended with the arrest of the leading legionnaires and their killing.

At the end of April 1938, the Greek-Turkish treaty was signed in Athens. On the occasion T. Rustu Aras declared: "Turkey and Greece are particularly satisfied with the Anglo-Italian agreement that brings peace and relaxation to the Eastern Mediterranean. It would be ideal to be able to achieve a Franco-Italian agreement, but in these conditions it is difficult to achieve due to Franco-Russian and Italian-German relations."

Regarding Romania, on April 19, 1938, the Superior Council of the Romanian Army, examining the country's situation from a military point of view, concluded: "*the imminent danger is in the west where Hungary and especially Germany could put us in the situation of waging a war in very difficult conditions, without help from Czechoslovakia*" (Moisuc, 2003: 258)"

The statement of the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain is telling in this regard, according to which Great Britain cannot offer Czechoslovakia any special and prior guarantee because in this area it does not have as vital interest as in France or Belgium. From a legal point of view, Great Britain's obligations towards Czechoslovakia are only those which result from the Covenant of the League of Nations and which may arise indirectly from the continental obligations which it has towards France and Belgium and which have their origin in the Pact of Locarno and The pact of mutual assistance between France and Czechoslovakia (Universul, 1938, March 31).

3.5. Balkan Treaty and Military Cooperation

In 1938, a number of significant diplomatic and military activities served to illustrate the intricate complexities of regional alliances and the dynamics of international power. In a reflection on the Italian-British pact concluded in Rome on 16 April, Nicolae Petrescu Comnen emphasised Romania's commitment to both the Little Entente and the Balkan Agreement, with the objective of consolidating its stance alongside other member countries (Universul, 1938, 14 May). Similarly, during his Balkan tour, Celâl Bayar, the President of the Ministers Council of the Republic of Turkey, reaffirmed the strength of the Balkan Agreement and the enduring friendship between Turkey and Yugoslavia following discussions with regional leaders. He also observed Bulgaria's keen interest in fostering friendship and collaboration during his visit to Sofia (Universul, 1938, 21 May). Concurrently, military developments served to underscore the growing threat from Germany. Winston Churchill, for instance, noted the substantial strength of the German army, which was at least twice that of the English army at the time (Universul, 1938, 9 March). The appointment of von Papen as ambassador to Ankara served to underscore Germany's aspirations for hegemony in Central Europe and the Middle East (Universul, 1938, April 15). Notwithstanding these tensions, a press conference held subsequent to the Balkan Agreement affirmed that the member states were gratified with their existing borders and remained dedicated to maintaining peace and stability in the region, with no disputes over neighbouring territories (Universul, 1938, April 15).

Greek-Turkish relations and the special situation of the treaty between the two countries, continued towards a perpetual development. Thus, a new treaty was concluded in April 1938. It represented an extension of the old treaties of friendship and cordial understanding signed in 1930 and 1933. In addition, the essence of the new treaty was integrated into the wider structure of the Balkan Pact, at the same time expanding the Turkish- Greek cooperation, beyond the Balkan area, in the region of the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, where the two

states had common interests. The treaty was not directed against anyone and could not be viewed by Italy, with which both states had actual treaties of friendship. The content of the treaty was defined as follows: *"extends mutual guarantees to all territorial and maritime borders. For common territorial guarantees, the obligations of automatic assistance from the Balkan Pact remain in force."* For the others, the formula of armed neutrality and mandatory consultation was chosen, which cannot make anyone upset. This formula fixes the minimum of mutual insurance, but does not limit the maximum, meaning that it does not exclude, even implies the existence of the army, only avoiding the idea of an automatism. The treaty does not imply the conclusion of an immediate military convention, but requires contacts, information and certain coordination between the Great Military Powers". T.R. Aras mentioned that this, more than the Balkan Pact, clearly implied for Greece and Turkey the obligation of not being able to conclude a treaty with a third power without consulting between them regarding their actions (AMAE, 1937-1938, p. 275).

Before the start of the tour in the Balkans, the president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, declared: "Balkan Union is an ideal that, sincerely, has always attracted us. I am happy to note that this ideal is expanding even more, day by day, the foundations on which it is built".

Greece, Celâl Bayar, the president of the Council of Ministers, together with T.R. Aras, Minister of Foreign Affairs, announced their visit in Belgrade (Universul, 1938, May 7). On the occasion of this diplomatic stay, Milan Stojadinovici, the president of the Ministers Council of Romania, declared: *"the visit you are paying us is not only a proof of the cordial relations that exist between our countries and an opportunity for a useful exchange of views on all the issues that interests us, but it is at the same time a new manifestation of the constructive and peaceful spirit of the Balkan Agreement, this precious international organization that connects our two countries with the neighboring and friendly kingdoms of Romania and Greece"* (Universul, 1938, May 13).

At the same time, referring to security in the Balkans, Stojadinovici highlighted that the friendly relations with all our neighbors strengthen the guarantees arising from international treaties and ensure the maintenance of order in this part of Europe (Universul, 1938, May 13). His counterpart, Celâl Bayar, concluded that their countries, guided by the same ideal that sought to maintain peace and a maximum of common welfare, together with the other member countries of the Balkan Agreement, aimed to ensure a growing solidarity between its members, allowing them to maintain and develop the best relationships with the other powers.

3.6. Regional Security and Foreign Relations

As a member of the East-Central European space, Edvard Benes, the Czechoslovak president, supported the idea of preserving territories integrity and finding a solution to resolve the German-Czechoslovak dispute (Universul, 1938, May 7)³. In June 1938, the Romanian King Carol II traveled to Istanbul where he had a series of meetings with Turkish officials (Carol II, 1995; 259). On June 19-th, he meets Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the board of his new vessel Savarona (Universul, 1938, June 22), the largest yacht in the world at that time, 6200 tons (Carol II, 1995;

³ Benes' statement, from "Universul" of March 7, 1938: "1. Czechoslovakia will never be able to negotiate directly with any foreign power regarding the issue of minorities; 2. however, it will recognize the moral right of Europe to take an interest in a matter so important for peace; 3. Czechoslovakia considers that the improvement of relations with Germany is of vital interest and therefore 4. it is ready to contribute to any general European regulation, although it excludes as impossible the idea of a federal autonomy for the 3,000 .000 Germans living within its borders". Regarding the Western powers, he declared: "Of course, we will never leave the Western powers with which we are linked through common democracy. We hope they will not leave us either. We are a western country linked to the evolution of Western Europe".

263). In his meeting with the Turkish head of state (Carol II, 1995; 262-263)⁴, Carol tried to get closer to the Soviet Union, using Turkey as an intermediary: *"We are up for entering the Bosphorus. At Buyukdere, a corvette docks with T. R. Aras and Celal Bayar on board, who come to greet me on behalf of Kemal Atatürk, who, being seriously ill, regrets not being able to receive me. I'm talking to them until we drop anchor in the port of Istanbul. We are talking, of course, about international politics. The most important part is the relations with Bulgaria, Aras tells me that he has full confidence in King Boris and that he sees an absolute need to conclude an agreement with them as soon as possible, because there is a great need for the Balkans to be pacified. I replied that I have always had this opinion, my whole policy has been one of understanding with the neighbors, but that, although we want to make this understanding, we do not gain anything, we, like the all others, grant a moral gain to Bulgaria, as the right to rearmament, without receiving any compensation in return. I asked them, and they promised, to say a decisive word in Sofia. I also asked to decide on an exchange of ambassadors, and here we had a favorable result, but still postponed until the meeting of the Balkan Understanding" Council.*

Ioannis Metaxas, the acting president of the Balkan Agreement, was authorized on May 28-th to start negotiations with Bulgaria for its accession to the Balkan Agreement. As a result of these, the agreement concluded in Thessaloniki, on July 31-th, 1938, by the representative of the Balkan Agreement, Ioannis Metaxas, and the Prime Minister Gheorghii Kiosseiovanov from the Bulgarian side resulted. The parties undertook to renounce the application of the naval, military, air causes and the causes related to the demilitarization of the Turkish-Bulgarian border, of the Peace Treaty with Bulgaria, from Neuilly, as well as those provided for in the Lausanne Convention, and Bulgaria expressed its readiness towards the strengthening of peace in the Balkans and the maintenance of good neighborly relations, trust and collaboration with the Balkan states. Great Britain, France and the USSR welcomed these prospects for detente in the Balkans. France and Great Britain even tried to distance Bulgaria from the Axis through some economic agreements, but the revisionism of the Bulgarian foreign policy received encouragement from Germany and due to the change in the forces balance in Europe, its policy remained largely the same (Moisuc, 2003).

The agreement stipulated that Bulgaria is attached to the policy of strengthening peace in the Balkans, and the member states of the Balkan Agreement are inspired towards Bulgaria by peaceful aspirations and the same desire for collaboration. Through the signed agreement, the

⁴ Carol II, *Between duty and passion*, Bucharest, Silex Publishing House, 1995, vol 1, Carol notes in his diary the meeting with Atatürk: "It is understood that the conversation between us was sliding on the Balkan Agreement, the community of interests between us, the friendship that binds us together, Romania from Turkey. It speaks of the strong friendship between Turkey and Greece, an amazing example of two nations that have been enemies for centuries and which today are closely united. And who did this miracle, on the one hand Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the one who expelled the Greeks from Asia Minor, after the cruel battle at Yenisehir and Afin Karahisar, and on the other hand Venizelos, the eternal rebel against the Turks in Crete and in the war of 1913, and General Metaxas, the chief of staff of the Greek armies defeated by Kemal. It is a beautiful example and should be an impetus for the future. We are talking about the Bulgarians and the ongoing projects, Kemal expressed his admiration and confidence in Boris, from here the conversation naturally shifted to the need for the Balkan Understanding to be not only a political one, but also a military one, our armies to be more and more tighter. I also add that economic ties are also a primary point of understanding. I would also like to add that once Bulgaria is drawn into our sphere of action, it will be possible to extend the understanding through Poland to the Baltics. Answer, Turkey is very happy with the Romanian-Polish alliance and sees, through it, the means of being able to have the best ties with Poland, as Romania must take advantage of the ties of the Turks with the USSR. I know that this is where the weight lies for this project, the Russians do not really see the direct links with Poland with good eyes. However, I do not believe that there are insurmountable difficulties and, with patience, that supreme virtue of kings, I will one day be able to see that dream come true, the Baltic Union-Black Sea-Balkans. I then attack the problem of the Turks emigrating from us and get it not to be rushed. Kemal welcomes with pleasure. I also mention the matter of the ambassadors, receiving assurances, with the reservation that Aras made to me yesterday" op. quote pp. 262-263.

parties undertook to refrain in their mutual relations from any recourse to force, in accordance with the non-aggression agreements that each of them signed (Popișteanu, 1971: 220-221).

3.7. Munich Agreement and its Consequences

Despite the protests of public opinion, without consulting the Czechoslovak government, the Chancellor of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, the head of the Italian government, Benito Mussolini, the prime minister of Great Britain, Neville Chamberlain, and the prime minister of France, Edouard Daladier, signed on September 29-th, 1938 an agreement by which Czechoslovakia was obliged to cede part of its territory to Nazi Germany, namely the Sudetenland, the agreement leaving the possibility of new territorial cessions (Calafeteanu, 1980: 58) in favor of Poland and Hungary. One of the history paradoxes was that the after the signing of the act of September 29-th, 1938, Daladier and Chamberlain were applauded by their countrymen as saviors of peace.

For Romania, a country that had structured its foreign policy on cooperation with Great Britain and France and on partnerships within the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, the stance taken by these two Western powers at the Munich Conference was a significant disappointment and a serious setback. The September 30, 1938, signing of the German-English declaration of non-aggression and the initiation of similar negotiations between France and Germany were viewed as clear evidence that the French government was ready to withdraw from its commitments to Central and Eastern European countries, essentially sacrificing Czechoslovakia (Talpeș, 1988: 247)⁵. Romania, which opposed the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia following the occupation of the Sudeten region, made diplomatic appeals in London and Paris for economic and financial aid but to no avail. When Hortist Hungary occupied 12,000 square kilometers of Czechoslovakia, housing over 1 million inhabitants, and Poland annexed the Teschen region, the European states did not intervene. Furthermore, Romania declined to annex the eastern part of the Subcarpathians, adhering to the principles set at the Munich conference that regions with a Hungarian population exceeding 50% would be annexed to Hungary (AMAE, 1936-1938, p. 363). In early October 1938, Romanian officials were informed that France and Great Britain had provided at least a formal guarantee regarding the territorial status of Czechoslovakia, yet the clarifications received by V. Grigorcea, the Romanian minister in London, from the Foreign Office were influenced by internal political considerations, suggesting that Great Britain had no intention of preventing the further dissection of Czechoslovakia (Campus, 1980: 388).

Concerns regarding Romania's national defense potential continued to occupy a secondary place in the policy of successive governments. In the years 1938-1939, the political and military alliances of which Romania was a part proved their weaknesses caused by multiple factors. In the responsible forums in Bucharest, special attention was shown to the development of own means of defense. The Romanian General Staff indicated that, after the dismantling of the Little Entente, as a result of the Munich agreement, the political and military decisionary forums had to consider primarily the situation and their own defense needs and only secondarily those results of the alliances in force. The orientation of the General Staff in solving the strategic problems of the country, took into account the shift in the forces balance on international level in the favor of revisionist and revanchist states. The Romanian state appreciates that the importance of the western border is taking on new dimensions. A war with Hungary alone was

⁵ The Polish foreign minister proposed to King Carol II to occupy territories from the Czechoslovak body. The Romanian state refused to participate in the division of Subcarpathian Ruthenia.

becoming unlikely, it was stated in a report of the General Staff of October 27, 1938, but it was expected that in this conflict Romania would have Germany as its adversary.

The new political orientation required the mobilization of all the material and human resources. The north-west, west and south-west constituted the main directions of danger for the integrity of the country. As long as there were good neighborly conditions between Romania, the USSR and Bulgaria, the borders in the eastern and southern part of the country were given completely secondary attention. The army was insufficiently equipped for the requirements of the mechanized war that was foreshadowed, not having monitored infantry units, enough tanks, autocannons and aviation units. The efforts made in the years '38-'39 (Zaharia & Botoran, 1981: 326-327) did not recover the deficit in armaments and combat equipment, especially in the conditions when France and Great Britain had long ceased to grant Romania the credits necessary for equipping the army, despite its insistent efforts.

In our opinion, the weak points of the Balkan Agreement were represented, first of all, by the failure of ensuring an adequate protection against the interference of the Great Powers in the Balkan Peninsula. No member country of the Balkan Entente was willing to defend the interests of another member against a Great Power. Just as Greece had no intention of being involved in an Italian-Yugoslav conflict, the same Turkey did not want to be involved in a Russian-Romanian war either. In these circumstances, the agreements had no real basis. They had value only if one of the states was attacked by Bulgaria, which is unlikely to adopt an offensive policy without the support of a Great Power.

During a period of relative peace and security, the Balkan states struggled to establish a solid foundation for cooperation and mutual defense. This situation became more complex with the rise of Germany and Italy, and France's disengagement from Eastern European affairs, compelling these states to adjust their foreign policies. This adjustment led to the rise of totalitarian regimes that mirrored the fascist and authoritarian ideologies prevalent in Central Europe at the time, resulting in significant changes in the landscape of external relations (Jelavich, 2000: 195). Concurrently, Turkey, in an effort to maintain regional stability, sought to align with Western powers, primarily to counterbalance the influence of the Soviet Union and maintain the existing geopolitical status quo (Jelavich, 2000: 196).

3.8. Atatürk's Predictions and Turkey's Strategy

Aware of the geostrategic role played by Turkey, Atatürk stated: *"In the political field, our efforts are to ensure order, internal security, collaboration and respect for external commitments"* (Ankara, 1938, April 5: 477-3). Regarding the security of the state, he argued: *"first of all we trust in our own strength, then we rely on our alliances. Our geographical position makes us believe that we will play an important role in Europe and the Near East. This role does not take into account any foreign ideological suggestions; however, far be it from us to rise up against one of these ideologies, we only want to pursue peace"* (Ankara, 1938, April 5: 477-3). " Skilled politician, Atatürk foresaw the conflict that was grazing the world: *"Very soon a global conflict will break out. Adventurers like Hitler and Mussolini will drown the world in blood. The balance of power will change. During this conflict, Turkey must not make any mistakes"* (Ankara, 1938, March 14: 378-3).

The Kemalists activity in 1938 reveals the fact that holding political power was in disagreement with democratic principles. The progress achieved in the period 1923-1938 was attributed to

the personality of Atatürk. Since 1938, the population showed distrust in the ability of some of the Kemalist leaders.

Regarding Turkey's foreign policy, especially concerning the Balkan Agreement policy, after Atatürk's death, it was faithfully followed by the new president of the republic, İnönü, and the new Celâl Bayar government. Foreign Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu assured that Turkey's policy would remain the same. On the international relations scene, Germany, along with other major powers, was making efforts to attract Turkey to the sides of the two emerging alliances. Germany, in particular, developed sustained efforts to draw Turkey to its side, primarily due to Turkey's strategic position and past good relations. This was a delicate issue, as Turkey was a member of the Balkan Agreement and, along with Romania, was trying to convince Bulgaria to abandon its alliance with Germany in order to join the Balkan Pact. In fact, Atatürk had declared that the "adventurer Hitler" only wanted to develop plans of a revisionist character that would ultimately lead to war. Since Turkey favored a defensive policy for the preservation of borders and for cooperation based on equality among the states that are part of the Balkan Alliance, it declined Germany's offer. On the other hand, Great Britain and France urged the states in the Balkan area to resist and cooperate for peace.

Internally, Turkey's economy has experienced continuous change. Even if the Kemalists were aware that the country's industrialization required foreign capital, they had an attitude of restraint and, worried that they would not be able to ensure the balance of public expenditures, they refused to see in the international loan procedure a way to solve the problem..

In conclusion, attention was paid in having a balanced state budget within the framework of the mixed economic system and strict necessary measures to prevent inflation were applied. An attempt to balance the foreign trade deficit was made. Contrary to the resistance policy to imperialism and foreign capital, the turk government adopted the use the international loan capital under the condition that it does not prejudice the existence and independence of the state. (Şahinler, 1998: 114-115).

In 1938, Turkey's foreign policy took shape in the conclusion of agreements and treaties with neighboring countries, all with the aim of consolidating peace in the area and contributing to maintaining peace. Countries like Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Iran, Iraq, the Soviet Union, which had been in a permanent conflict with the Ottoman Empire, now became Turkey's friends. Moreover, Atatürk and his collaborators had won the trust of foreign countries. Even Great Britain, which had created great difficulties for Turkey in the recent past, had accepted Turkey's independent foreign policy.

Romania's efforts were considerable in the attempt to tighten the ties between the center and south-east of Europe countries, in order to create a group of states that would constitute a dam in the way of Germany's advance (Şahinler, 1998: 114-115). Grigore Gafencu, secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and director of the *Timpul* newspaper, has the opinion that the state interests of Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, which were united around the Subcarpathian corridor, should not lead to clashes, but to lead to implementation of a good understanding and friendly neighborhood policy between the four countries (Timpul, 1938, November 6)⁶.

⁶ On March 26, 1926, the Romanian-Polish guarantee treaty was signed in Bucharest by I. G. Duca and J. Wielowieski, the Polish minister. This agreement contained the commitment "to mutually respect and maintain against any external aggression, their territorial integrity and their present political independence"

Supported on one hand by the Balkan Pact and, on the other hand, by the Romanian-Polish alliance*, both of them still alive today, Romania and Yugoslavia were waiting with the same interest for the political and economic conditions of the countries around them to stabilize for all countries benefit and for the strengthening of their hard tried friend, Czechoslovakia (Timpul, 1938, November 9).

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the diplomatic relations between Romania and Turkey during the Second World War, evaluating their impact within the broader regional and international context. The findings demonstrate that both countries sought to develop their own foreign policy strategies in response to the challenges posed by the war. However, these endeavours did not always achieve the desired outcome, due to the influence of the major powers of the period and the volatile international environment.

4.1. The Balkan Pact and Regional Security

The Balkan Pact constituted an important element in the efforts of Romania and Turkey to ensure their own security and to maintain regional stability. However, this pact was ultimately inadequate, particularly in light of the considerable influence exerted by major powers in the region. The growing influence of Germany and Italy, coupled with France's withdrawal from Eastern European affairs, highlighted the challenges faced by the Balkan states in maintaining their own security. The lack of a concrete basis for mutual defence and cooperation among the countries of the region, as provided by the Balkan Pact, contributed to the emergence of regional security problems. This illustrates that diplomatic initiatives at the time were largely symbolic and had a limited practical impact.

4.2. Foreign Policy Strategies of Romania and Turkey

Romania's policy, based on cooperation with Britain and France and its efforts to strengthen regional solidarity against Germany's expansionist tendencies, represented an important diplomatic manoeuvre in the dynamic international relations environment of the period. Nevertheless, it was evident that these endeavours were constrained in the context of Germany's ascendant influence, and Romania encountered challenges in establishing its position within the international system. In accordance with Atatürk's vision, Turkey pursued a strategy of preserving the status quo through collaboration with Western states and meticulous observation of the Soviet Union's actions in the region. This strategy served to reinforce Turkey's influence within the Balkan Pact, thereby contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. An analysis of Turkey's foreign policy during this period reveals that its pursuit of a balanced approach between Germany and Russia, coupled with its efforts to maintain relations with the West, are crucial in understanding the geopolitical dynamics of the era.

4.3. Great Power Influence and International Dynamics

The study's findings demonstrate that the foreign policy strategies of Central and Southeastern European states during this period were significantly influenced by the policies of the region's great powers. In particular, Germany's growing influence in the region and the policies of the Western powers towards this influence played a critical role in shaping the relations and regional security dynamics between Romania and Turkey. The expansionist policies of Germany and the aggressive behaviour of Italy prompted the Balkan states to seek new alliances and

strategies to safeguard their security. This illustrates the flexibility and adaptability of the foreign policies of the states in the region in response to great power pressure and international developments.

4.4. Atatürk's Foresight and Turkey's Strategic Approach

The geostrategic vision of Atatürk provided the foundation for Turkey's balanced foreign policy strategy both before and during the Second World War. Atatürk was conscious of the imminent global conflict and perceived that any strategic missteps made by Turkey during this period could potentially compromise the country's independence and integrity. Consequently, he posited that Turkey should adopt a balanced stance towards Germany and the Soviet Union while collaborating with the Western powers to safeguard its national interests and regional security. This approach had a considerable impact on Turkey's role in the Balkan Pact and its diplomatic relations in the region.

4.5. Contribution of the Results to the Discipline of International Relations

The findings of this study demonstrate that the diplomatic relations of Romania and Turkey during the Second World War not only illuminate the history of the two countries, but also facilitate an understanding of the broader dynamics at play in regional and international relations. The analysis of the Balkan Pact and the diplomatic relations that characterised this period demonstrate the intricate nature of regional security and cooperation initiatives, as well as the significant influence exerted by major powers in these processes. In this context, the findings of the study offer significant insights that should be considered in the formulation and implementation of contemporary diplomatic strategies.

In conclusion, an analysis of Romania and Turkey's diplomatic relations during the Second World War in the context of the international conjuncture and regional dynamics of the period reveals the complexity and multi-layered nature of these relations. This study offers a valuable contribution to the discipline of contemporary international relations and regional security strategies, as well as providing a historical analysis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (AMAE). (1920-1944). *Fond 71/1920-1944. Turcia* (vol. 48).
- AMAE. (1936-1938). *Fond Înțelegerea Balcanică* (vol. VI General Martie).
- AMAE. (1937-1938). *Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (fond 71 Turcia vol. 60).
- AMAE. (n.d.). *Fond 71/Turcia Documente* (vol. 54).
- AMAE. (n.d.). *Fond 71/Turcia Documente* (vol. 55).
- Ankara. (1938, April 5). Ankara.
- Ankara. (1938, March 14). Ankara.
- Calafeteanu, I. (1980). *Diplomația Românească în Sud Estul Europei 1938-1940*. București: Editura Politică.
- Campus, E. (1980). *Din politica externă a României 1913 - 1947*. București: Editura Politică.
- Carol II. (1995). *Între datorie și pasiune* (Vol. I). București: Editura Silex.
- Dandara, L. (1985). *România în vârtoarea anului 1939*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Gafencu, G. (1991). *Însemnări politice 1929-1939*. București: Editura Humanitas.

- Gafencu, G. (1992). *Ultimele zile ale Europei*. București: Editura Militară.
- Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*. Sage Publications.
- Jelavich, B. (2000). *Istoria Balcanilor sec. al XX-lea* (Vol. II). Iași: Institutul European.
- Kocak, C. (1991). *Türk-Alman ilişkileri 1923-1939: iki dünya savaşı arasındaki dönemde siyasal kültürel askeri ve ekonomik ilişkiler*. Ankara: Editura Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Sage Publications.
- Moisu, V. (2003). *Istoria relațiilor internaționale*. București: Editura Fundația România de Măine.
- Popișteanu, C. (1971). *România și Antanta Balcanică* (Ediția II). București: Editura Politică.
- Scurtu, I. (1983). *Din viața politică a României (1926-1947)*. *Activitatea Partidului Național Țărănesc*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Scurtu, I. (2002). *România și marile puteri (1933 - 1940) Documente*. București: Editura Fundația România de Măine.
- Sturdza, M. (1966). *România și Sfârșitul Europei*. Rio de Janeiro: Editura Dacia.
- T.C. Arsivi Basbakanlik Cumhuriyet Arsivi. (1935). *Fond 030-10 / 247-668-19*.
- T.C. Basvekealet Karalar Dovesi Mudurlugu. (1938, January 19). *Karar Sayisi 2 8089*.
- Talpeș, I. (1988). *Diplomație și apărare 1933-1939*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Titulescu, N. (1994). *Politica externă a României (1937)*. București: Editura Enciclopedică.
- Universul. (1938, April 15). Universul.
- Universul. (1938, June 22). Universul.
- Universul. (1938, March 31). Universul.
- Universul. (1938, March 9). Universul.
- Universul. (1938, May 14). Universul.
- Universul. (1938, May 21). Universul.
- Zaharia, G., & Botoran, C. (1981). *Politica de apărare națională a României în contextul european interbelic 1919-1939*. București: Edit. Militară.

* * * * *

Conflict Declaration: The author of the article declares that he/she has no financial relationships with any person, institution or organization that may be a party to this study and therefore has no conflict of interest.

Support and Acknowledgments: No support was received from any institution or organization in the study.

Ethics Committee Approval: Data were not collected from living organisms in the article and ethics committee permission was not required.

Contribution Rate: The article has a single author.