

Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde Romanya ve Türkiye Arasında Sınırlı Stratejik İş Birliği: Tarihsel Bağlar ve Ayrışan Çıkarlar

Diana-Elena RUSANDA¹

Öz

Makale Türü
Araştırma Makalesi
Başvuru Tarihi
24.07.2025
Kabul Tarihi
23.09.2025
DOI
10.53306/klujeas.1749372
Erişim ve Lisans
 

Bu çalışma, Romanya ve Türkiye arasında tarihi bağlara, coğrafi yakınlığa ve Karadeniz bölgesindeki ortak bölgesel çıkarlara rağmen sınırlı kalan stratejik iş birliğini incelemektedir. Her iki ülke 19. yüzyıldan bu yana diplomatik ilişkilerini sürdürmekte ve NATO üyeliğini paylaşmakta olsalar da, aralarındaki stratejik uyum hala kırılgandır. Romence, Türkçe ve İngilizce akademik, diplomatik ve politika belgelerinin nitel bir belge analizi yoluyla yapılan inceleme, daha derin bir iş birliğini engelleyen temel faktörleri ortaya koymaktadır. Bu faktörler arasında çözülmemiş tarihi sorunlar, farklı jeopolitik yönelimler, bölgesel etki alanı için rekabet ve ekonomik eşitsizlikler yer almaktadır. Romanya, Avrupa-Atlantik entegrasyonuna öncelik vererek Karadeniz'de NATO ve AB'nin daha fazla rol üstlenmesini desteklerken, Türkiye giderek daha fazla bölgesel özerkliği savunmakta ve Rusya ile iş birliği dahil olmak üzere stratejik belirsizliği sürdürmektedir. Çalışma, ikili ilişkiler genel olarak olumlu seyreitse de, bütüncül bir stratejik vizyonun eksikliği ve çelişen dış politika önceliklerinin gerçek bir ortaklığın gelişimini sınırladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu zorlukların aşılması, karşılıklı tavizler, güven inşası ve her iki taraftan daha güçlü bir siyasi irade gerektirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya, Türkiye, Stratejik İş Birliği, Karadeniz Bölgesi,

Bölgesel Güvenlik

Atıf: Rusanda, D. E. (2025). Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde Romanya ve Türkiye arasında sınırlı stratejik iş birliği: Tarihsel bağlar ve ayrışan çıkarlar. *Kırklareli Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14(2), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.53306/klujeas.1749372>

Bilgilendirme: Bu çalışma "Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği" değerlerine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır. Çalışmanın tüm sorumluluğu yazar(lar)a aittir. Çalışmaya ait araştırma ve yayın etiği beyanlarına son sayfada yer verilmiştir.

¹ Yüksek lisans öğrencisi, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Uluslararası İlişkiler, dianarusanda1@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0002-9341-4888

Limited Strategic Cooperation Between Romania and Türkiye in the Black Sea Region: Historical Ties and Diverging Interests

Diana-Elena RUSANDA²

Abstract

This study explores the limited strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye, despite their historical ties, geographic proximity, and shared regional interests in the Black Sea area. Although both countries have maintained diplomatic relations since the 19th century and share NATO membership, their strategic alignment remains fragile. Through a qualitative document analysis of academic, diplomatic, and policy sources in Romanian, Turkish, and English, the paper identifies key factors that hinder deeper cooperation. These include unresolved historical grievances, divergent geopolitical orientations, competition for regional influence, and economic disparities. Romania prioritizes Euro-Atlantic integration and supports greater NATO and EU involvement in the Black Sea, while Türkiye increasingly promotes regional autonomy and maintains strategic ambiguity, including cooperative ties with Russia. The study concludes that although bilateral relations remain generally positive, the lack of cohesive strategic vision and contrasting foreign policy priorities have limited the development of a true partnership. Overcoming these challenges would require mutual concessions, trust-building, and stronger political will from both sides.

Keywords: Romania, Türkiye, Strategic Cooperation, Black Sea Region, Regional Security

Citation: Rusanda, D. E. (2025). Limited strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye in the Black Sea region: Historical ties and diverging interests. *Kırklareli University Journal of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 14(2), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.53306/klujfeas.1749372>

Statement: This study was prepared in accordance with the values of “Research and Publication Ethics”. All responsibility for the study belongs to the author(s). The statements of research and publication ethics of the study are given on the last page.

Article Type

Research Article

Application Date

2025.07.24

Acceptance Date

2025.09.23

DOI

10.53306/klujfeas.1749372

Access and License



² Master's student, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Institute of Social Sciences, International Relations, dianarusanda1@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0002-9341-4888

Introduction

Located relatively close to each other and being connected by the Black Sea, Romania and Türkiye are considered to be “friendly states” due to their bilateral relations dating back to 1878, at the legation level, and then, from 1938, at the embassy level (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, 2023). Until Romania joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), these countries were not allies, but ad-hoc partners in 1912, playing alongside Serbia and Greece against Bulgaria, being enemies in hostile blocs, in the First World War, partners in the Balkan Entente in 1934, and then a kind of “enemies” during the Cold War. After the breakup of the USSR, as a NATO member state and aspirant for the European Union (EU) integration, Türkiye strongly supported Romania for its integration into the North Atlantic Alliance, and in this context, bilateral political and economic relations began to experience an impressive development (Cioculescu, 2009, p. 35).

Although Türkiye and Romania are two countries that have a common history, having interactions for centuries, their strategic cooperation is quite limited. Despite their geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and common regional interests, establishing a strategic partnership has proven to be a real challenge for these two countries.

In this context, the main aim of this paper is to investigate the limited strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye, after Romania’s accession to the EU in 2007. The motivation for evaluating the limited strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye is based on their strong historical ties, geographical proximity, and their common regional interests. This paper attempts to answer the following research question: “What are the factors that led to the limitation of strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye despite their historical ties and common regional interests?”. By analyzing the factors that led to the limited strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye, namely: the unresolved issues from the past, the geopolitical considerations, the disputes for regional influence, and the economic discrepancies, this study will help us to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities that shape the bilateral relations, and also identify new ways to strengthen the strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye in the near future. In this paper, the document analysis was used as a research method. Moreover, the literature was reviewed in Turkish, Romanian, and English languages. The paper is structured as follows: the first section explores the historical background, followed by geopolitical and economic divergences, and concludes with policy implications. Additionally, the analysis is supported by insights from a semi-structured interview conducted with a senior official from the Turkish Embassy in Romania, offering a diplomatic perspective on the evolving nature of Türkiye–Romania relations in the Black Sea context.

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on document analysis to explore the factors limiting strategic cooperation between Romania and Türkiye. The research relies on primary and secondary sources, including governmental reports, academic articles, policy papers, and media commentary in English, Romanian, and Turkish. Additionally, insights were gathered through a semi-structured interview conducted with a senior official from the Turkish Embassy in Romania in August 2024. This interview provided valuable diplomatic perspectives on bilateral cooperation, regional security, and Türkiye’s strategic approach to the Black Sea.

The method involves thematic content analysis, which allows for the identification and classification of key patterns related to historical relations, geopolitical orientations, regional power competition, and economic discrepancies. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the bilateral dynamics within the broader context of the Black Sea region. By analyzing discourse and policy

narratives from both Romanian and Turkish perspectives, the study provides an in-depth examination of divergences and convergences between the two states.

1. Historical Background of Romania-Türkiye Relations

The history of Romanian-Turkish bilateral relations dates back to the Middle Ages, when in the 16th century the rulers of the Romanian Countries began to send some soles to the High Gate, and in this way the tradition of representing Romanian rulers through diplomatic agents was established. (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, 2023) Despite this fact, the relations between the two countries were largely of a conflictual nature, due to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and its rule over some of the Romanian historical provinces (Moldova, Wallachia, Dobrudja) that left a lasting impact (Lazăr and Butnaru-Troncotă, 2022, p. 171). As historical animosities and disputes severely limit the possibilities for strategic cooperation, this factor is an important one and should not be omitted from the discussion.

Regarding the 20th century, two events took place that had a strong impact on Romania's foreign policy in relation to the Ottoman Empire. First, it was the start of the Second Balkan War, in 1913 in which the Romanians and the Ottomans aligned their interests in the fight against Bulgaria. The second event was the outbreak of the First World War, a context in which Romania joined the political-military bloc of the Entente, and the empire turned towards Germany and the Central Powers, aiming to establish an alliance. In the interwar period, there was a normalization of relations between Romania and Türkiye, especially during the 1930s. For example, in 1934, Romania and Türkiye joined the Balkan Agreement because maintaining the status quo in the region represented a basic objective for both of them. Also, during the diplomatic activity carried out by Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu and his Turkish counterpart Tevfik Rüştü Aras, a Treaty of Friendship, Non-aggression, Arbitration and Conciliation was signed (Tatomir et al., 2021, p. 25).

After the end of the Second World War, Romania entered the sphere of Soviet influence, while Türkiye benefited from the economic aid granted by the USA in the Marshall Plan's context. In fact, an important event was in 1955, when Romania joined the Warsaw Treaty Organization, a political-military organization formed in response to the establishment of NATO, within which Türkiye had become a member in 1952. Contrary, The Cold War had a negative impact on the Turkish-Romanian relations when in September 1957, Romania proposed the gathering of the Balkan states to discuss regional political issues, but Türkiye and Greece rejected this request. The restoration of relations between the two countries took place after the end of the communist regime in 1989 (Koç, 2018, pp. 266-267).

Since then, until now, the Romanian and Turkish diplomatic representatives have repeatedly made official visits with the aim of consolidating the relations between these countries. It is also important to mention that the relations between Romania and Türkiye are taking place under the banner of the Strategic Partnership, signed in 2011 at the level of the President, which was followed by a joint Action Plan, signed in 2013, by the ministers of foreign affairs (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, 2023).

Beyond their political and military ties, Romania and Türkiye have developed solid economic and cultural relations, especially after Romania's transition to democracy in 1989. Türkiye remains one of Romania's main non-EU trade partners, with bilateral trade reaching \$10.7 billion in 2023 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-a). The two countries also collaborate closely within NATO and other regional frameworks. In January 2024, along with Bulgaria, they launched the MCM Black Sea Task Group to counter naval mine threats. Romania continues to support Türkiye's EU accession,

emphasizing shared regional interests (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.-b; Guvernul României, 2024).

Even if Romania and Türkiye maintain relatively good historical ties, it can be seen that in the past there have been conflicts and tensions, which affected to some extent the relations between these countries. While the historical ties between Türkiye and Romania offer a strong basis for cooperation, this shared legacy has not evolved into a cohesive strategic partnership. The post-Cold War period saw the two countries follow different integration paths, Romania moving closer to the EU and NATO, and Türkiye adopting a more autonomous and regionally focused foreign policy.

2. Geopolitical Considerations

Geopolitical considerations represent another factor that must be analyzed, because it can have a great impact on the strategic cooperation between two countries. As a member state of NATO and the European Union, Romania has changed radically compared to the Cold War period, when it was under Soviet influence. Romania is a state that attaches great importance to its European integration and compliance with EU policies, aiming to fully integrate into the EU (Administrația Prezidențială, 2020).

Romania's dual position, as a NATO member and an integral part of the European Union, on the road from political and economic to military, also means Romania's affirmation of a national position in the major issues of regional and global security (Stoica et al., 2015, p. 52). From a geopolitical and geostrategic point of view, Romania's area of interest is represented by two large areas, such as: South-Eastern Europe and the extended Black Sea Area (Stoica et al., 2015, p. 52).

Unlike Romania, Türkiye's EU aspirations have faced challenges for the longest period of time. Since it applied for integration in 1987, its progress in accession negotiations has been slow, facing significant divergences in several areas (Akçay and Yılmaz, 2012, p. 19). As a result, Türkiye has pursued a more independent foreign policy course, sometimes diverging from EU policies and seeking alternative partnerships and alliances (Barkey, 2011, pp. 1-2). Furthermore, Türkiye has a different experience with NATO and also a different approach, which is reflected in its focus on regional affairs, including strategic interests in some NATO neighborhoods such as the Western Balkans, its interest in the Mediterranean Dialogue and even in strengthening its relations with some of the Gulf countries (Naumescu, 2017, pp. 194-195).

Also, at the NATO level, even if Romania and Türkiye are two NATO allied countries, these countries have different goals. While Romania focuses on regional security in the Black Sea area, and pursues cooperation between NATO allies to act against threats in the region, Türkiye serves as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East. From a geopolitical point of view, Türkiye is involved in several conflicts, such as the one with Syria, Libya or Iraq, and pursues regional influence in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East (Atanasiu, 2021, p. 72).

While Türkiye is focusing on its relations with NATO and its role in the Middle East, aspiring for a more independent and assertive foreign policy, Romania is establishing closer ties with the European Union and with its Eastern European neighbors. Therefore, different visions often lead to diametrically opposed priorities and strategic directions for countries, thus preventing the establishment of a sustainable strategic partnership.

Despite their shared interest in regional stability, Türkiye and Romania have developed distinct threat perceptions and strategic orientations, particularly in their approach to Russia. While Romania strongly

aligns with NATO and advocates for greater Western presence in the region, Türkiye often adopts a balancing role between Russia and the West, limiting the depth of the bilateral convergence.

3. Disputes for Regional Influence

Being located at the intersection of Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia, where Romania, Ukraine, Türkiye, and Bulgaria are riparian countries, the geopolitical region of the Black Sea is an important transit area for energy resources and a space for asymmetric risks and conflicts that have a substantial impact on the Euro-Atlantic security (Nicolescu et al., 2021, p. 46).

Today, the political map of the Black Sea area is influenced by a former superpower, Russia, and two regional powers, Ukraine and Türkiye. As the successor of the USSR, Russia is still a major factor in the Black Sea region (Nicolescu et al., 2021, p. 47).

When looking at Romania and Türkiye, the Black Sea region represents a very important area for both of them, being a bridge in the energy supply between west and east, but also a barrier against transnational threats. Despite these, there have been discussions and occasional disagreements over time between these two countries regarding the security cooperation in the Black Sea region. Türkiye represents an actor that plays an important role for the entire Extended Black Sea Region (EBSR), because it controls the only access route to the basin of this sea, through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. Moreover, Türkiye has a “pivotal” position, because it connects the Balkans with the Middle East and Central Asia, ensuring communication, exchanges, and interactions. Also, the land connection between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea is ensured through Türkiye, a NATO member state, part of the European and Euro-Atlantic security community (Cioculescu et al., 2012, p. 73).

In relation to Extended Black Sea Region, Türkiye has shown its desire to assert itself as a regional power, considering lately that maritime security issues in this area must be managed only by the riparian states (local ownership), excluding external actors (USA, EU, NATO), a fact that poses serious problems, considering the status of NATO member and aspirant for EU integration. Türkiye believes that accepting the presence of the West in the NRM will lead to the modification of the Montreux regime of the Straits. Likewise, Türkiye’s strategic proximity to Russia is clearly the most important and worrying element, because Türkiye, as a NATO member state, has appeared in recent years to be closer to Russia’s interests than to those of its US allies, Romania and Bulgaria. Türkiye seems tempted by the valorization of the role of regional hegemon in the EBSR-Caucasus, alongside Russia, which it no longer perceives as a rival, but as a possible partner (Cioculescu et al., 2012, p. 74).

Romania, as a European maritime state and a member of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has asserted a recognized role in the geopolitical space of the Black Sea region in accordance with its status. For Romania, the Black Sea and the Danube remain the foundation on which its independence was achieved and the binder for further development. Stability and cooperation in the Black Sea area represent one of the main strategic directions regarding its security policy for the coming years (Panait and Crăciun, 2019, pp. 14-15). Therefore, Romania’s greatest interest is the development of international cooperation and security within the Black Sea Region. For this reason, Romania actively supports the need to increase the involvement of relevant actors such as the European Union, NATO, and OSCE by strengthening the regional security and cooperation through their mechanisms (Stângaciu et al., 2011, p. 5). Over the years, in accordance with Romania’s interest in the European and Euro-Atlantic stabilization and integration of the states in the wider Black Sea area, sustained efforts have been made and initiatives have been promoted aimed at accrediting the strategic

importance of the regions for NATO and the EU from the perspective of consolidation requirements of the stability and democratic evolution of the riparian states. Romania actively supported the start of concrete projects under the auspices of implementing the Black Sea Synergy within the EU (Bădescu et al., 2012, p. 48).

Between 2014 and 2016, Türkiye's distancing from Euro-Atlantic values was visible in the relationship between Romania and Türkiye. This period was primarily marked by the increasingly contrasting positions of the two countries regarding the hostile actions of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea region. After the contested annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in March 2014, Romania and Türkiye did not reach a consensus on increasing NATO's profile in the Black Sea. The reactions of Romanian and Turkish officials to the Russian intervention were very different from each other. Romania considered the Russian Federation's intervention in eastern Ukraine to be an act of aggression and supported the US proposal to create the Black Sea Fleet. On the other hand, Türkiye avoided condemning the Russian Federation for its aggression, refusing to introduce sanctions against the Russian Federation, as the EU and the US did (Lazăr and Butnaru-Troncotă, 2022, p. 174). Türkiye's foreign policy strategy regarding Black Sea security and its relationship with NATO have diverged from Romania's. For example, Türkiye has opposed allied efforts to deter Russian actions in Ukraine and to strengthen security on NATO's eastern flank. On July 15, 2016, following the failed coup attempt, Türkiye's foreign policy entered a new stage, adopting a more transactional, unplanned, ad hoc, and opportunistic foreign policy (Lazăr and Butnaru-Troncotă, 2022, pp. 174-175).

Also, looking at the war between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, Romania was on the side of the countries that accused Russia of violating international law, of the principles on which the rules-based international order is based, supporting the idea that the war was not waged only against Ukraine, but also against democratic values and Euro-Atlantic security pillars (Popovici, 2022, p. 1). On the other hand, Türkiye has refused to take part in Western sanctions, maintaining a strong relationship of economic and energy connectivity with Russia (Chausovsky, 2022). Therefore, it can be seen that Romania and Türkiye have contrasting opinions regarding the geopolitics of the Black Sea basin, which has remained a source of tension lately. While Romania prefers to maintain its unipolarity, Türkiye leans towards multipolarity. While Romania wants internationalization and the presence of the USA and NATO in the Black Sea region, next to the EU, Türkiye prefers to have a "special" relationship with Russia.

Despite strategic divergences, Romania and Türkiye have found common ground in several recent regional initiatives, particularly in maritime security and energy cooperation. Romania and Türkiye, situated at critical geopolitical junctions in the Black Sea region, contribute significantly to regional security and energy sustainability. Romania's position as an EU member state with modern port infrastructure, combined with Türkiye's role as a strategic bridge between Europe and Asia, renders them essential actors in maintaining maritime stability. Their cooperation spans enforcement of international maritime law, protection of sea lanes, and coordinated responses to hybrid threats, including cyberattacks on maritime infrastructure.

Both states have strengthened operational interoperability through joint naval exercises and NATO-led drills. A key outcome of this cooperation is the establishment of the Black Sea Mine Countermeasures Naval Group, formalized through an agreement with Bulgaria, aiming to mitigate the threat of naval mines resulting from Russia's aggression in Ukraine and ensure navigational safety across the region's vital sea routes (Council of the European Union, 2024, p. 22).

In the energy domain, Romania and Türkiye have accelerated efforts in offshore gas exploration to bolster energy independence and reduce reliance on external suppliers. These initiatives align with the broader Black Sea commitment to climate neutrality by 2050. Parallel to fossil energy cooperation, projects supported by the EU—such as the deployment of a 5 MW floating wind turbine tailored to Black Sea conditions—highlight the region’s renewable energy ambitions. Additionally, Romania and Bulgaria are developing both fixed-bottom and floating offshore wind facilities to diversify the clean energy portfolio (Council of the European Union, 2024, p. 16).

From a broader perspective, Romania and Türkiye also engage in multipurpose maritime operations coordinated by Frontex, with support from EU maritime agencies. These operations enhance maritime surveillance, combat illicit trafficking, and cross-border crime, and support search and rescue missions. Complementing NATO’s activities, these EU-led actions reinforce the resilience of the Black Sea’s maritime security framework (Council of the European Union, 2024, p. 22).

A notable example of their commitment is the support provided to Ukraine’s Black Sea Corridor, designed to maintain civilian cargo transport amid ongoing conflict. This initiative illustrates not only regional solidarity but also the shared strategic interest in safeguarding freedom of navigation and sustaining commercial routes despite geopolitical risks (Council of the European Union, 2024, p. 5).

Overall, Romania and Türkiye’s proactive engagement with EU frameworks such as the Black Sea Synergy underscores the growing relevance of multilateral cooperation in addressing complex regional threats. Their combined contributions reflect the evolving nature of maritime governance in one of Europe’s most sensitive geopolitical zones. Although both states share concerns about Black Sea security, differing threat perceptions and foreign policy priorities, especially regarding Russia, have limited the scope of strategic convergence.

4. Economic Discrepancies

The economic discrepancies between two countries can affect their strategic cooperation. According to the latest statistics, from an economic point of view, Romania is Türkiye’s major partner in the Balkans and is the second largest partner in the Black Sea region, after the Russian Federation. Also, Türkiye is Romania’s first trade partner outside the EU and the fifth partner in Romania’s total foreign trade. Romania is also an important commercial partner for Türkiye, ranking 15th in exports and 17th in imports (Tatomir et al., 2021, p. 28). Furthermore, Türkiye has shown a special interest in becoming one of the most important foreign investors in Romania, by increasing the number of Turkish companies operating on the Romanian market, which currently stands at 16,200 (Lazăr and Butnaru-Troncotă, 2022, p. 177). Despite these, there are several factors that lead to economic discrepancies between these two countries.

Türkiye represents an important economic and commercial node, connecting different regions of the world, regardless of the historical period or the form of territorial organization it followed (Atanasiu, 2021, p. 21). Türkiye is located in the center of the economic and political area known as “Eurasia”, at the intersection of Europe, the former USSR and the Middle East. Also, Türkiye is a member of global and regional economic organizations, such as: G20, the Organization for Economic Cooperation for the Black Sea (OECD), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), etc. Türkiye’s proximity to the Balkans and the rest of Europe, as well as emerging markets in Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, represent unique business opportunities for this country.

Also, GDP is an important factor as it reflects the difference in economic scale and the potential between the two countries. Türkiye has a higher GDP compared to Romania. Romania's nominal GDP reached approximately USD 350.8 billion in 2023, with growth decelerating to 0.9% in 2024 (Trading Economics, 2025a). In contrast, Türkiye's economy recorded a nominal GDP of around USD 1.12 trillion in 2023, growing by 5.1%, before easing to a projected 3.2% in 2024 (Trading Economics, 2025b).

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is also an important feature in measuring the economic discrepancies between two countries. FDI contributes to the integration of developing countries into the global economy and plays an important role in the globalization process (Çakır, 2014, p. 78). Türkiye's positioning in the geographical space between the Middle East, Russia, and the Caucasus and the large energy markets of Europe and the West give this country many more strategic advantages for energy transit (Atanasıu, 2021, p. 23).

Türkiye, having a larger economy, through its strategic location and market potential, attracts more foreign investors, being more influential in regional trade and investment, compared to Romania. Even though Romania has made efforts to attract foreign investment, it receives relatively less FDI compared to Türkiye (CEIC, 2023).

Economic cooperation between the two countries has grown in terms of trade volume, yet structural differences remain. Romania's EU membership and regulatory alignment contrast with Türkiye's diversified economic strategies and fluctuating currency environment, making long-term economic integration more complex.

5. Interview Insights-Diplomatic Perspectives on Bilateral Cooperation

In an interview conducted in August 2024 with a senior official from the Turkish Embassy in Romania, valuable insights were shared regarding Türkiye's approach to the Black Sea region, its stance in the Russia-Ukraine war, and its evolving cooperation with Romania.

The official emphasized that Türkiye views the Russia-Ukraine conflict as a destabilizing force for the entire region. While firmly supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and having provided military and technical aid early in the conflict, Türkiye has also maintained open dialogue with Russia. The country continues to advocate for diplomacy, stressing the importance of inclusive peace negotiations. Initiatives such as the Black Sea Grain Deal and Türkiye's mediation efforts in Antalya and Istanbul were cited as examples of Türkiye's constructive engagement.

The interviewee underlined Türkiye's strict adherence to the Montreux Convention, which allowed Ankara to restrict the passage of warships through the straits, helping prevent further militarization of the Black Sea. This move, the official noted, indirectly supported Ukraine by limiting Russia's naval activity in the region.

On NATO's presence, the official rejected the notion that NATO is absent from the Black Sea, pointing out that Romania, Türkiye, and Bulgaria, strong regional NATO allies, ensure active defense collaboration. Türkiye favors a regional ownership approach, where littoral states lead security efforts rather than relying heavily on outside powers.

Bilateral ties between Türkiye and Romania were described as historically strong and currently at their most dynamic. The official highlighted the launch of the Mine Countermeasures Naval Group (MCM Black Sea) as a recent example of successful cooperation. Further areas of cooperation include joint

naval training, radar infrastructure, and ongoing discussions on co-producing defense equipment, including advanced maritime systems.

Energy security was also identified as a promising area for expanded cooperation. Turkish companies are involved in pipeline infrastructure linked to Romania's Neptun Deep project, and both countries are increasingly interconnected through gas transit routes.

While political sensitivities-such as the presence of FETÖ-affiliated institutions in Romania-remain a concern for Türkiye, the official stressed that this issue has not hindered the broader strategic relationship. The interview concluded with a call to deepen cooperation in defense production, maritime surveillance, and energy connectivity, in line with shared regional security objectives.

The interview with the Romanian diplomatic source confirms that while there is political goodwill and acknowledgment of mutual interests, concrete regional initiatives remain scarce. Strategic cooperation appears to be reactive and project-based, rather than institutionalized or long-term in nature.

Conclusion

The relationship between Romania and Türkiye can be likened to a puzzle that has been continuously assembled and reassembled over time, resulting in the loss of some crucial pieces. While the puzzle's border remains clearly defined, significant gaps persist in its center, preventing the formation of a coherent and comprehensive picture of the potential cooperation between the two countries.

Throughout history, Romania and Türkiye have generally maintained positive relations, with the notable exceptions of the First World War and the Cold War period. In the present, despite their strong historical ties, flourishing diplomatic and economic relations, and a shared commitment to regional security initiatives, cooperation in the form of concrete joint regional projects remains limited. At times, differing strategic priorities have emerged in the extended Black Sea area. While Türkiye, maintaining a delicate balance in its relations with Russia, tends to emphasize regional ownership and limiting external involvement, Romania advocates for a more internationalized approach, actively supporting the engagement of NATO and the European Union in regional security frameworks.

Furthermore, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally transformed the geopolitical dynamics of the Black Sea region. What was once considered relatively stable, semi-enclosed maritime area now stands at the heart of global strategic contention. NATO has responded by enhancing its military presence along the eastern flank, including intensified joint naval exercises, air policing missions, and enhanced maritime surveillance (NATO Defence Ministers, 2024). This shift has sparked renewed debate over NATO's deterrent capability in the region. While Ukraine is still not a member, NATO leaders have affirmed the irreversible nature of Ukraine's Euro Atlantic path and the alliance's commitment to support Kiev with military aid and training, conditional on the cessation of hostilities and democratic reforms within Ukraine (NATO Defence Ministers, 2024).

Despite its NATO membership, Türkiye continues to pursue a pragmatic balancing act with Russia. Ankara actively maintains security and economic cooperation with Moscow, such as in energy projects like TurkStream and multilateral negotiations like the Black Sea Grain Initiative, while simultaneously asserting its NATO credentials and regional leadership role (Reuters, 2025). This strategic dual posture has enabled Türkiye to act as a mediator in high-profile diplomatic initiatives and regional security frameworks (Atlantic Council, 2024). However, as Türkiye deepens economic integration with Russia, experts warn that this could undermine its credibility within NATO and limit its long-term alignment with Western strategic objectives (Reuters, 2025).

Although there is a possibility for strengthening strategic cooperation, only ingredients like real efforts, the will to make concessions, effective regional cooperation by investing in the defense industry and the common membership of the EU could ensure a real strategic partnership for Romania and Türkiye in the near future. Future strategic alignment between Romania and Türkiye could benefit from structured policy dialogues, joint maritime exercises, and EU-NATO coordinated initiatives. Strengthening mutual trust through inclusive regional cooperation frameworks remains essential.

References

Administrația Prezidențială. (2020). *Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării pentru perioada 2020-2024*.

https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf

Akçay, B. and Yılmaz, B. (Eds.). (2012). *Turkey's accession to the European Union: Political and economic challenges*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Atanasiu, M. (2021). *Turcia: Evoluția situației politice și de securitate și implicațiile la nivel regional* [studiu de specialitate, București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”.] https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_studii/turcia_evoluția_situației_politice_si_de_securitate.pdf

Atlantic Council. (2024). *Political and diplomatic dialogue: Challenges and opportunities for Black Sea cooperation between Turkey and the West in the post-2022 environment*. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/part-1-political-and-diplomatic-dialogue-challenges-and-opportunities-for-black-sea-cooperation-between-turkey-and-the-west-in-the-post-2022-environment/>

Bădescu, P., Cioculescu, Ș. F., and Stoica, A. (2012). Zona extinsă a Mării Negre: Provocări și oportunități. *Monitor Strategic*, 3-4, 45-50.

Barkey, H. J. (2011). Turkish foreign policy and the Middle East. *CERI Strategy Papers*, (10), 1-13.

Çakır, M. (2014). An economic analysis of the relationship between Turkey and the Balkan countries. *Adam Academy Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 77-86.

CEIC. (2023). *Romania foreign direct investment*. <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/romania/foreign-direct-investment>

Chausovsky, E. (2022). The Russia-Ukraine conflict: Accelerating a multi-polar world. *Aljazeera*. <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/analyses/russia-ukraine-conflict-accelerating-multi-polar-world>

Cioculescu, Ș. F. (2009). Evoluții recente ale relațiilor româno-turce: Dificultățile unei geometrii imprevizibile. *Monitor Strategic*, 3-4, 35-44.

Cioculescu, Ș. F., Lazăr, A., and Naumescu, V. (2012). Viziunea Turciei și Rusiei asupra regiunii extinse a Mării Negre: Rolul și influența actorilor locali. *Monitor Strategic*, 3-4, 68-80.

Council of the European Union. (2024, July 3). *Joint staff working document - Black Sea Synergy: 4th review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2019-2023*. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11900-2024-INIT/en/pdf>

Guvernul României. (2024, May 20). *Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu: The Republic of Türkiye is Romania's main non-EU trading partner. We aim to increase trade to 15 billion dollars.* <https://gov.ro/en/news/prime-minister-marcel-ciolacu-the-republic-of-turkiye-is-romania-s-main-non-eu-trading-partner-we-aim-to-increase-trade-to-15-billion-dollars>

Koç, E. (2018). Turkey and Romania bilateral relations: Past and future. M. Okur, V. Aksoy, Y. Küçüker, and A. N. Ünalmış (Ed.), *Jeostratejik ve Jeopolitik Açidan Karadeniz: İlkçağlardan Günümüze* (ss. 265–273). Akçağ Yayınları.

Lazăr, A. and Butnaru-Troncotă, M. (2022). Assessing a decade of Romania-Turkey strategic partnership in an era of ambivalence and 'De-Europeanisation'. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 22(1), 165-185.

Ministerul Afacerilor Externe. (2023). *Republica Turcia*. <https://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/1746>

NATO Defence Ministers. (2024, October 18). *NATO Secretary General: Strengthening deterrence "Top Priority"*. <https://www.act.nato.int/article/nato-defmins-oct-2024/>

Naumescu, V. (2017). Stability, ambiguity and change in the discourses of NATO allies in the Black Sea region: The cases of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. *Croatian International Relations Review*, 23(80), 187-209.

Nicolescu, V., Tatomir, M., and Butnaru-Troncotă, M. (2021). Romania, regional stability pillar. *Annals-Series on Military Sciences*, 13(1), 46-60.

Panait, M. and Crăciun, I. (2019). Rolul României în realizarea ordinii regionale la Marea Neagră. *Buletinul Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”*, 6(4), 13-19. <https://doi.org/10.12753/2065-8281-19-02>

Popovici, O. C. (2022). Romania external relations briefing: Romania's diplomatic choices in the new geopolitical framework. *China-CEE Institute*, 55(4), 1-4.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.-a). *Türkiye's commercial and economic relations with Romania*. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-romania.en.mfa>

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.-b). *Relations between Türkiye and Romania*. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkiye-and-romania.en.mfa>

Reuters. (2025, June 18). *Turkey's economic alignment with Russia is a dangerous bet*. <https://www.reuters.com/default/turkeys-economic-alignment-with-russia-is-risky-bet-2025-06-18/>

Stângaciu, A., Nicolescu, V., and Ciorbea, A. (2011). Romania and the Black Sea geopolitics. *Online Journal Modelling the New Europe*, 3, 3-18.

Stoica, A., Cioculescu, Ș. F., and Tatomir, M. (2015). The geopolitical and geostrategic environment in the Romanian area of interest, in the current international context. *Strategic Impact*, 55, 51-63.

Tatomir, M., Cioculescu, Ș. F., and Crăciun, I. (2021). Dinamica relațiilor turco-române în regiunea extinsă a Mării Negre. O perspectivă neoliberală. *Impact Strategic*, 81(4), 23-32. <https://doi.org/10.53477/1842-810X-21-18>

Trading Economics. (2025a). *Romania GDP*. Accessed on May 27, 2025 from <https://tradingeconomics.com/romania/gdp>

Trading Economics. (2025b). *Turkey GDP*. Accessed on May 27, 2025 from <https://tradingeconomics.com/romania/gdp>

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanları
Research and Publication Ethics Statements

Benzerlik Oranı <i>Similarity Rate</i>	Çalışmanın intihal.net tarafından gerçekleştirilen taramada benzerlik oranı %6 olarak tespit edilmiştir. <i>The similarity rate of the article performed by intihal.net was determined as 6%.</i>
Hakem Değerlendirmesi <i>Peer-Review Evaluation</i>	Bu çalışma Editör Kurulu tarafından belirlenen ve çalışma konusunda uzmanlığı bulunan 2 hakem tarafından çift yönlü kör hakemlik prensibiyle değerlendirilerek yayıma uygun görülmüştür. <i>This study has been evaluated by 2 referees determined by the Editorial Board and having expertise in the field of study with the principle of double-blind peer-reviewing and deemed suitable for publication.</i>
Tekrar Kullanım <i>Reuse</i>	Çalışma herhangi bir tez veya bildiriden üretilmemiştir. <i>This study has not been derived from any thesis or conference paper.</i>
Yapay Zekâ Kullanımı <i>Use of Artificial Intelligence</i>	Çalışmada yapay zekâ teknolojilerinden yararlanılmamıştır. <i>Artificial intelligence technologies were not used in this study.</i>
Katkı Oranı <i>Contributions</i>	Bu makale, taslak metnin konsepti, araştırması, yazımı ve düzenlenmesine %100 katkı sağlayan, sadece Diana-Elena RUSANDA tarafından yazılmıştır. <i>This article is authored solely by Diana-Elena RUSANDA, who contributed 100% to the conception, research, writing, and editing of the manuscript.</i>
Çıkar Çatışması <i>Conflict of Interest</i>	Herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır. <i>There is no conflict of interest with any institution or individual.</i>
Destek/Teşekkür <i>Support/Acknowledgement</i>	Çalışma için herhangi bir kurum, kişi veya projeden destek alınmamıştır. <i>No support was received from any institution, individual, or project for this study.</i>
Etik Kurul Onayı <i>Ethics Committee Approval</i>	Etik Kurul onayına gerek bulunmamaktadır. <i>Ethics Committee approval is not required.</i>
Ölçek Kullanım İzni <i>Scale Use Permission</i>	Ölçek iznine gerek bulunmamaktadır. <i>Scale permission is not required.</i>