



Assessing a decade of Romania-Turkey strategic partnership in an era of ambivalence and ‘De-Europeanisation’

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ABSTRACT

The redefinition of Turkey’s national identity under the rule of President Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) influenced its foreign policy. For many years, Turkey maintained an ambivalent position towards the EU, and as a NATO ally and only by the end of 2020 it disclosed an openly anti-Western position. In this context, there is a rich literature studying Turkey’s actions to reassert its influence in the Western Balkans, but there is less scholarly attention on Turkey’s relations with Romania – its Black Sea neighbour and NATO ally. Building on recent literature on Turkey’s regional strategies and tendencies of ‘De-Europeanisation’, we scrutinized the country’s bilateral relations with Romania between 2008 and 2020. The analysis relies on mainly qualitative data and offers a chronological account of the main diplomatic interactions between the two governments, placed in the context of significant regional events. The article concludes that, compared to the Balkans, there are the same ambivalent tendencies in Turkey-Romania relations. It shows that Turkey acted as a relevant economic partner and security ally for Romania at the Black Sea, while distancing more and more from the EU and asserting a more active role as a regional player in the Middle East and in the Balkans.

KEYWORDS

De-Europeanization; foreign policy; Romania; regional security complex; Turkey

Introduction

Back in 2011, after a renewed electoral victory of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP), Turkey’s foreign policy priority was to join the European Union (EU). The last decade, however, brought decisive changes to Turkey’s foreign policy due to domestic factors and regional events, as well dynamics inside the EU. In the years following the Arab Spring, Turkey started to adopt new foreign policy practices in its neighbourhood (more visible in the Western Balkan countries with a Muslim population), while its EU accession negotiations ground to a halt. By 2021, not only has the EU membership ceased to be a priority for Turkey anymore, but the EU-Turkey relations have even deteriorated to their ‘lowest point’ in decades.

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