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Reimagining Turkey-Russia Relations: An Analysis of the Plane Crisis

Türkiye-Rusya İlişkilerini Yeniden Düşünmek: Uçak Krizinin Bir Analizi

Ndzamangwi Isidore
AGHA

Phd Research Fellow,
Uludag University, Faculty of
Economics and Administrative
Sciences.
isidoreagha@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-2563-4790

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Abstract

Turkey and Russia's relationship has often been characterized by conflict, cooperation, and competition. The rise of Vladimir Putin in Russia and the coming into power of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey in the 2000s signaled a positive shift in relations as cooperation increased. The paper reveals that the November 2015 plane crisis, which rocked their tie, was intensified by differences in their geopolitical outlook over Syria. The reactivist Russian sanctions that followed the shooting of their military jet that violated Turkish airspace indicated how Russia could exploit its economic and military comparative advantage over Turkey. President Erdoğan's letter to Putin over the downed plane opened up a rapprochement that has served to mend bilateral relations. Despite the normalization of relations, Turkey must draw a vital lesson from this crisis and diversify its export routes and energy needs from Russia if it must remain resilient to assert itself as a strategic regional power and balancer in Middle East politics.

Keywords: Turkey, Russia, Plane Crisis, Security, Rapprochement.

Öz

Türkiye ile Rusya arasındaki ilişki her zaman çatışma, işbirliği ve rekabet ile karakterize edilmiştir. Vladimir Putin'in Rusya'da yükselişi ve 2000'li yıllarda Türkiye'de Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin iktidara gelmesi, iki ülke arasında işbirliğinin artmasına ve ilişkilerde olumlu bir değişime işaret etti. Bu makale, ilişkilerini sarsan Kasım 2015 uçak krizinin, Suriye üzerindeki jeopolitik farklılıklarına yoğunlaştığını ortaya koyuyor. Türk hava sahasını ihlal eden askeri jetlerin vurulmasını izleyen reaktivist Rus yaptırımları, Rusya'nın Türkiye'ye karşı ekonomik ve askeri avantajını

keşfetmeyi sağladı. Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın, düşen uçağın ardından Putin'e gönderdiği mektup, ilişkileri onarmaya yarayan bir dizi yakınlaşma başlattı. Buna rağmen, Türkiye, Orta Doğu politikasında stratejik bir güç ve dengeleyici unsur olarak kendini ispatlamak için esnek kalmalı, bu krizden güçlü bir ders çıkarmalı ve ihracat yollarını ve enerji ihtiyaçlarını Rusya'dan ziyade diğer ülkelerden de karşılamalı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Rusya, Uçak Krizi, Güvenlik, Yakınlaşma

Introduction

The relationship between Turkey and Russia has evolved over many decades. Turkey-Russia relations have more often than not been shaped by their separate interactions with the United States and how they define and pursue their regional geostrategic interests. Relations between both countries have grown from friendship to strategic levels in the energy, trade, oil, and agricultural sectors. This increased cooperation does not, however, translate into a conflict-free relationship. On 24 November 2015, Russia's military plane, SU-24, violated Turkey's airspace and was shot down by Turkey's military. The shooting of the aircraft led to a breakdown of bilateral relations between Ankara and Moscow as tensions soared. The main aim of this research was to understand how the plane crisis affected Turkey-Russia relations.

Mindful of the complex relationship between both countries, the study sought to answer the following questions. How were the pre-crisis Turkey-Russia relations, how did the plane crisis affect their political, energy, trade, and tourism ties, what measures were taken to solve the problem, and what has continued to shape the normalization of relations between both countries? This research revealed the extent to which Russia is willing and able to exploit Turkey's dependence on it to pressure the latter in times of crisis. The article argues that despite differences in their geopolitical outlook and the periodic challenges to their relations, Turkey and Russia have always found themselves back on the path of cooperation. Even if such cooperation comes with making certain hard concessions, what remains certain is that apart from being vital partners in trade and energy, Russia sees Turkey as a strategic partner to counter the United States' influence in the Middle East and Eurasia. Nevertheless, Russia does not see itself as an equal power with Turkey within these regions. Such an outlook explains why Russia did not hesitate to impose sanctions on Turkey after violating the former's airspace. Turkey understands the dynamics of these relations but has refused to play second fiddle to any such power like Russia.

In undertaking the research for this article, data were obtained from published sources. The study relied on qualitative research methods to critically examine and analyze conflict and cooperation in Turkey-Russia relations during and after the plane crisis. The article adopted an integrated approach to explain the historical evolution of the relationship that exists between Turkey and Russia. The study opines that both countries have relied on factors that define their asymmetric interdependence to shape

their relationship with each other at every given moment.

The Historical Evolution of Turkey-Russia Relations

Pre-Cold War

The relationship between Turkey and Russia has come a long way. From the pre to the post-Cold War years, relations between the two countries have evolved through various stages. The post-Cold War period witnessed a rise of intra-state conflicts as the number of inter-state wars declined (Yılmaz, 2018, pp. 13–16). The emergence of intra-state disputes is not to say that inter-state conflicts had all together come to an end. At each time, Turkish Russian relations have been defined and pursued based on their unique geopolitical outlook of events and circumstances within the regional and larger international scene. Turkey- Russia relations in the pre-Cold War era were characterized by a shared concern on how best both countries could counteract Western dominance of the global system. Consequently, at various moments in the historical evolution of their relations, Turkey and Russia have relied on each other as a strategic choice to balance against the West.

Before the Cold War, the two countries were united not just by trade and commerce but equally by the notion that they, like their western counterparts, they deserved to occupy an essential place within the international system. Being powerful actors meant that they did not want to remain under the mighty shadow of the West. While Russia has asserted itself as a major international actor and regional power broker within the Eurasian region, Turkey has continued to project itself as a vital local actor in the Middle East. There is tangible evidence that strong economic ties between them have been the bedrock of relations between both countries. Economic cooperation and interdependence had spiraled to unprecedented heights, especially at the dawn of the 21st century. While Turkey looks up to Russia for its oil, energy, and natural gas supply, Russia, on its part, is a significant importer of Turkish agricultural goods and other dairy products. Economic cooperation, military, diplomatic engagement, and human relations fostered by tourism have resulted from a renewed strategic partnership forged by Vladimir Putin and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Beneath this seemingly bright outlook of cooperation lies a deep-seated history of competition and rivalry between the two countries, which the plane crisis aggravated. Turkey and Russia's relations have always been characterized by an asymmetric interdependence wherein Russia occupies the more vital position in this relationship. In any such connection as described above, the more

substantial power is often most likely to exploit its powerful position to exert influence on the weaker one where necessary. The above scenario is precisely what played out in the plane crisis.

The Cold War Years

The Cold War-era came with strategic interests and demands which were challenging to Turkey- Soviet relations. In March 1945, the Soviet's appetite for territorial expansion caused them to break away from the Neutrality and Friendship Treaty, which they had signed with Turkey on 25 December 1925 (Jovanovic, 2020, p. 4). According to this treaty, both countries mapped out their borders and entered into a mutual understanding that prevented either party from carrying acts of aggression against the other. The domination of the Soviet Union of territory within Eastern Europe and the quest of the Soviets to have shared control over the Turkish Straits, Ardahan, and Kars during the Cold War years sent a negative signal to Turkey that the expansionist tendencies of the Soviets did not guarantee it's security.

The expansionist agenda of Russia pushed Turkey to seek support and protection from the United States. Such support that the US provided came through the Truman Doctrine (Denise, 2008, pp. 10–15). Through this doctrine, Turkey and Grece benefitted from the US's economic and military support to deter the Soviets from posing a continuous threat to their survivability. The tension between Russia and Turkey heightened as Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1952 (Şuhnaz, 2012, pp. 481–495). Turkey's membership in Turkey provided it with collective security backing, making it difficult for the Soviets to attack Turkey. Any such attack would have meant an attack on all NATO members. This battle was not one in which Russia was ready to engage, but it left them frustrated that a former ally of theirs had drifted towards the West. Turkey thus shifted from the anti-western sentiments which it once shared with the Soviets to become an ally of the western bloc, which held anti-communist sentiments and pursued a containment policy against the expansionist tendencies of the Soviets.

While Turkey's alliance with the US and NATO blossomed, the events of the 1960s brought Turkey to the realization that it could not entirely rely on its western allies for its protection. The quest for self-preservation forced Turkey to recalibrate and entered into relations with the Soviets. Turkey's renewed partnership with the Soviet Union did not stop its alliance with its western allies. During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States, led by John Kennedy and the leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Krushchev,

entered into secret negotiations for the US to remove its Jupiter ballistic missiles from the Incirlik military base in Turkey (Fuelling, 2017, pp. 6–14). In return, the Soviets agreed to dismantle their nuclear missile in Cuba. The United States and the Soviet Union negotiated without the consent or participation of Turkey.

Consequently, Turkey realized that it could not entirely rely on its western allies for its security, as it felt betrayed. The actions of the US raised anti-American sentiments in Turkey. The US and NATO's unwillingness to support Turkey during the Cyprus crisis of 1963 intensified mistrust between Turkey and its western allies. Turkey's disenchantment with the West forced it to gravitate towards the Soviet Union (M. Çelikpala, 2019, p. 5). Even though Turkey had anti-communist sentiments, it had watched the Soviets developed their technology, military, and economy to admirable standards. The technological advancement of the Soviets explains why by the second half of the 1960s, Turkey began nursing ambitious plans to improve its technical development, broaden its military infrastructure and widen its economic base. After haven sought and failed to secure financial assistance from its western allies, Turkey gravitated towards the Soviet Union, which provided it with a loan of \$200 million (Soli Özel and Uçar, 2019, pp. 5–6). Turkey used this loan to develop its energy sector alongside its aluminium, steel, and iron industries. The above economic cooperation between both countries has continued till date. This investment boosted Turkey's economic growth and ushered both countries into a period of significant economic cooperation. Such partnerships have continued since then. As a matter of fact, in 2018, bilateral trade between both countries stood at \$25.5 billion. The above analysis indicates that Turkey and Russia have always maintained their cooperation ties even in periods of crisis. However, such rapprochement does not rule out that the fact that Turkey can pursue its aspirations independent of either the East or West.

The outbreak of the Cyprus crisis strained relations between Turkey and the US, while on the other hand, Turkey –Soviet relations kept flourishing from 1963 and throughout the 1970s. America had made it clear in the famous Johnson letter that it will not back Turkey's intervention in Cyprus (Bayram, 2018, pp. 264–272). Despite the harsh rhetoric of the above letter, Turkey unilaterally intervened in 1974 to end the killing of Turkish Cypriots. Turkey's decision caused the US to pass an arms embargo on Turkey. This embargo stifled the growth of Turkey's military capability to purchase weapons. The arms embargo gave Turkey the incentive to draw closer to the Soviet Union. Turkey recently purchased the Russian

S-400 defense system at the cost of some \$ 2.5 billion. The purchase of the S-400 seems to be a contemporary response to the historic arms embargo it suffered from the US and a message to the latter that it can no longer put it in a complex military situation like it did in the past.

The 1975-1978 arms embargo taught Turkey very profound lessons and necessitated the development of its military industry to meet its defense needs. In recent times, the Turkish defense industry has produced armored cars, high-capacity military drones, and military vessels (Thomas, 2020, pp. 25–26). Such diversification of Turkey's defense needs is crucial for maintaining its independence over its internal and external military policies. The cordial relations between both countries culminated into the signing of a Friendship Pact in 1978. The 1980s witnessed increased cooperation between Turkey and the Soviet Union, especially in trade and energy domains. This increased cooperation opened the way for establishing business enterprises by Soviet entrepreneurs in Turkey, while Turkish businesses equally entered the Soviet market space.

Post-Cold War

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s ushered in another period of conflict between the two countries. As relations between the two countries got frozen, their geostrategic rivalries increased. The disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the creation of five independent Central Asian Republics. These include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (Öniş Ziya, and Yilmaz, 2015, pp. 4–6). Though the Soviet Union no longer existed, Russia continued to maintain strategic and economic ties with these newly formed states than any other external actor could have. As Turkey recognized these states' independence and forged bilateral and multilateral relations with them, Turkey's contending influence came at odds with Russian interest in the region (Morkva, 2007, p. 534).

On the other hand, the Russian armory and military personnel stationed in Ukraine, Georgia, and Crimea caused relations between Turkey and Russia to enter a rigid phase. Turkey interpreted Russia's military presence around its neighborhood and near encirclement of Turkey as an existential threat to its security which it was not ready to welcome. The controversies surrounding Azerbaijan and Armenian relations are equally a sticky point where Turkey and Russia seemed not to have agreed with each other for long (Köni, 2015, pp. 247–250). With Turkey backing the Azeris and Russia supporting the Armenians on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, their rivalry became complex and multifaceted.

Moreover, the sometimes indirect support of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) by Russia has led to tensions in Turkey-Russia relations (Erşen, 2017a, p. 88). The PKK, known for its separatist tendencies posed an existential threat to Turkey's territorial integrity and stability (Orhan, 2014, pp. 34–37). Consequently, the empathy accorded to the group by internal and/or external actors is not treated lightly by Turkey. Nevertheless, Turkey-Russian relations witnessed an increased bond of friendship in the 1990s. This development replaced the confrontation which had once characterized Turkey's relation with Russia. The leadership of Putin and Erdoğan brought in some flare of economic cooperation that served to revamp the relationship between the two countries to the level of strategic partnership. While this strategic partnership brought mutual benefit to both countries, their relationship did not remain static. Among many other things, the Syrian crisis is one of the issues that has revived new differences in the geopolitical outlook of Russia and Turkey. While Turkey pushed for a more democratic Syria with the possible ousting of Bashar Al Assad, Russia, on the other hand, embarked on giving massive support to the Assad regime. These differences in the view over Syria's future have put Turkey and Russia at logger's heads based on their preferences for a post-civil war Syria. The shooting down by the Turkish military of a Russian SU-24 military aircraft, which was hovering unauthorized over Turkish airspace on 24 November 2015, put a rift in the seemingly benign relationship which the two nations had enjoyed from the beginning of the early 2000s. This event, which raised new tensions between Russia and Turkey, has come to be described as the Turkey-Russia Plane Crisis.

The Plane Crisis

The world woke up to an unprecedented event on 24 November 2015, as Turkey-Russian relations sank into crisis, which stemmed from the shooting down of a Russian SU-24 that entered Turkish airspace from the Syrian border and moved into Yayladağı, a town situated in Turkey's Hatay Province (BBC, 2015). Despite several warnings given to the straying Russian aircraft, one of the planes left while the other hovered. The latter did not heed the Turkish military's warnings to move out of its airspace. In reaction to the Russian jet's hesitance to obey the signs to leave, two Turkish F-16s responded with air-to-air missiles shooting down the Russian SU-24 bringing it down with its two pilots. Though shot over Turkish airspace, the plane finally crashed on the Syrian side of the Turkish-Syrian border. Both pilots parachuted before the jet fell. One of the pilots was shot by Syrian rebels while parachuting down, while they killed the other. (MailOnline, 2015). The killing of the pilot sparked

severe controversies as Russia insisted that the jet did not violate Turkish territorial airspace.

The Russian President Vladimir Putin described the aircraft's downing as a 'stab in the back from Turkey' (Guardian, 2015b), while Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described it as a 'planned act (Ellyat, 2015). These comments made by both Putin and Sergey generated anguish among Russians towards Turkey. President Erdoğan expressed regrets for the unfortunate incident of shooting down the aircraft of such a critical partner as Russia (Hurriyet Daily News, 2015). However, it remains that Turkey was acting solely in line with preserving and executing its sovereignty over its airspace. The security of any country's land, air, and sea borders are vital yardsticks in determining its territorial sovereignty (Moon, 1963, pp. 330–335).

Consequently, Turkey's reaction to have shot an unauthorized plane within its airspace is aptly justified. In an era where terrorist attacks have become increasingly sophisticated, states have embarked on taking strict measures to secure their territorial boundaries (Odontan, 2012, pp. 133–115). In the same light, Turkey is ready to do all it can to preserve its air, land, and sea through enhanced security strategies and actions

In addition to the above, Turkey finds itself at the crossroads of many regions, representing a symbol of stability. Despite the threats and conflicts within its neighborhood, Turkey has continued to remain stable and resilient. Amid such an atmosphere, Turkey has learned to buckle up its security and strengthen its defense apparatus to keep threats off its shore and, in a perfect demonstration of realism, maintain a hegemonic status as a condition necessary for its survival (Bilgin, 2007, pp. 740–756). The shooting of the Russian plane broke up the cooperation that existed between Turkey and Russia. As Turkey further sought and reassured NATO's support in the wake of the crisis, this deepened tensions with Russia. Hence it was only logical for Turkey to have taken such steps to shield itself from any unforeseen brawl with Moscow. In the wake of the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, the United States' reaction was replete with mixed messages that neither condemned nor embraced the coup. The lukewarm attitude of the United States generated a bitter feeling in Turkey and further raised questions about their strategic partnership.

Differences in Geopolitical Outlook: The Faultlines of Shared Dissent

The shooting of the Russian SU-24 was not the beginning of tension in Turkey-Russian relations. Thus, the plane crisis was an outer manifestation

of an internal dissent that had characterized Turkey-Russian ties in the months leading up to the jet crisis, intrinsically linked to the Syrian crisis. These two regional great powers have maintained opposing views over Syria (E. B. and M. Çelikpala, 2020, pp. 9–10). Russia's involvement in the Syrian civil war as an ally of Bashar Al Assad posed serious setbacks to Turkey's geopolitical and security interests (Haddad, 2015). Russia's airstrikes of 30 September 2015, which targeted moderate rebel forces supported by Turkey, significantly changed the Syrian crisis. While Turkey had hoped for a Syria without Assad, Russia's intervention in the crisis supporting Assad foiled Turkey's ambitions, which wanted the authoritarian Syrian ruler ousted (Rüma and Çelikpala, 2019, pp. 65–84). That wasn't the first strike that Russia had orchestrated on the territory of another country after the Cold War (Guardian, 2016) because it did the same during the 2008 Russian-Georgian War. It argued that the strike aimed to destroy the arsenals of the Islamic State (ISIS). Meanwhile Russian strikes equally targetted Syrian Turkmen who did not fall within the ISIS-occupied space in Syria. This move did not go well with Ankara. Turkey expressed its displeasure with the Russian strike because it targeted the Turkmen who have ethnic links to Turkey. By targetting ISIS, Russia was, directly and indirectly, throwing its weight behind the Assad regime. Russia's support for Assad caused panic within the corridors of western democracies who were aiming for a Syria without Assad.

After the Arab Spring, Turkey was conscious that it is a major actor in Middle Eastern politics. It now had to serve as an example and prescriber of democracy and human rights in the region. Consequently, the instability in the region heightened by the Syrian crisis precipitated a recoinage of Turkey's national interests (Ziya, 2012, pp. 46–50). The PKK insurgent group and the Syrian civil war were not issues that Turkey could afford to take lightly because the spillover effects of these issues became a significant concern for Turkey's national security (Demir, 2016, pp. 90–93). Moreover, Turkey viewed Assad's removal from power as a necessary step towards resolving the crisis. However, Russia's sudden intervention in the crisis meant Turkey's ability to wield its democratic scepter and reshape regional developments by ensuring Assad's departure was no longer a possibility. In the face of these, Russia's steadfast support for Assad further widened Ankara and Moscow's rivalry. Russia's involvement in Syria was a calculated move to prevent the US from getting into Syria as they did in the other Middle Eastern countries. Russia has always sought to keep NATO out of its neighborhood (Hazar, 2009, pp. 81–82) By so doing, Russia was exploiting the Syrian scenario as political capital for offsetting power balances in the region by reasserting its position as a major

actor. The Syrian conflict has produced one of the worst humanitarian crises in the area. However, Turkey has succeeded as a regional power to manage the humanitarian crisis and open its borders for Syrian refugees (Pirinççi, 2018, pp. 42–49). The geopolitical gymnastics played by Russia did considerable hurt to Turkey's security ambitions. The shooting of the Russian jet was not revenge tactics on the part of Turkey. The incident, however, unveiled hostilities that had already developed between the two states.

Before the plane crisis, Russia had equally invaded the airspace of other countries. Russian fighter jets repeatedly violated the airspaces of Finland and Sweden in 2013. The Defense Ministry of Finland raised the alarm in June 2013 that Russia's T-22M bombers and SU-27 fighter had violated the Finnish airspace (Aviationist, 2013). Russia responded by saying that the planes had accidentally strayed into the Finnish airspace because of poor weather conditions. This same incident occurred over the Swedish borders (Gotkowska, 2013). Before the November plane crisis, Russian SU-30 and SU-24 in October encroached on Turkey's airspace on October 3 and 4, in Hatay, where the Russian SU-24 got shot in November (Aljazeera, 2015). Russia's excuse for violating Turkey's airspace relied on the fact that the pilots got lost in the air because of navigation difficulties they encountered. Such an excuse was doubtful given that the above Russian jets were sophisticated modern aircraft, wired with advanced technological capabilities to fly with accuracy and precision.

In the quest to set a new discourse on the Middle East via the Syrian crisis, Putin's revisionist tendencies to reshape the geopolitical landscape brought Russia in the opposite direction with Turkey, one of its closest cooperation partners. Russia's foreign policy in the Middle East is to dismantle the hegemonic status of the United States. In doing so, Russia is trying to replace the US's influence with a concert of regional powers, including Turkey and Iran (Jovanovic, 2020, pp. 2–10). In pursuing this strategy, Russia does not share equal status with these countries. It still asserts itself in a somewhat superior position. Despite Turkey's economic dependence on Russia, it has continued to maintain its place as a regional power, pulling its weight and charting an independent course for itself. As a stakeholder in the Syrian crisis, Turkey's position explains why it maintained that Assad had to leave office as a prerequisite for resolving the Syrian problem.

On the other hand, Russia supported Assad, and it has since helped him stay in power. The inability of both Russia and Turkey to reconcile their

priorities over the Syrian issue led them to dwell in an atmosphere of uneasy calm as tensions raged against each other in Ankara and Moscow. However, Turkey's seemingly apologetic position during the crisis is not a sign of weakness. In opening a new front in its foreign policy agenda, Russia tried to avert the international isolation it suffered due to the Ukraine crisis. Hence Russian support for Assad was perceived as a leeway towards having leverage over the Eastern Mediterranean, which by extension signified a strategic choice for Russia to occupy a pride of place, serving as a balancer to US influence in the Middle East. The energy resources found in the Eastern Mediterranean emerged as a significant source of geopolitical rivalry between Turkey and Russia (Balcer, 2015). In pursuing its geopolitical interest, Russia did not consider Turkey's interests and aspirations. Thus relations between the two countries prevailed, but with deep attendant mistrust as manifested during the plane crisis.

The Downing of Russian War Plane: Implications for Turkey -Russian Relations

The shooting of the Russian SU-24 sparked controversies that were already imminent in Turkish-Russian relations. Russia's president Putin labeled the incident as a 'stab in the back' as his country went ahead to prescribe sanctions against Turkey. He further described Turkey as a country that backs ISIS (The Guardian, 2015). Turkey received this statement with a lot of mixed feelings towards Russia. Putin was quick to label strong accusations against the Turkish leadership in the wake of the Russian plane's downing. The cooperation which had hitherto existed between the two countries got sacrificed on the altar of sanctions. Relations between the two countries entered an unprecedented atmosphere characterized by insecurities, mostly as Turkey was not sure of what immediate reactions of Russia. Labeling Turkey's leaders as sponsors of ISIS was a move by Russia, which was unnecessary in such a situation, given that it was dealing with a strategic partner with whom it had enjoyed warm economic and diplomatic ties in the years before the plane got shot in November.

Russia's reactions at the onset of the crisis were nothing short of burning diplomatic bridges. Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov immediately nullified a trip he was to make to Turkey on 25 November. His mission to Turkey was to discuss bilateral cooperation to combat ISIS. He equally called on Russians to give up any trip to Turkey during that period (Hurriyet, 2015a). Simultaneously, reporting the crisis, the

Russian media fuelled the Russian public with propaganda that generated anti-Turkish sentiments in Russia and beyond. Hence Turkey became the target of negative press in Russia. The negative press against Turkey in Russia came as no surprise because the Russian media, for the most part, functions under the strict supervision of the Russian regime (Kakışım, 2019, p. 102). The impetus for such propaganda grew because of the inability of Russian leaders to localize the crisis. Public opinion on the image of each other was incredibly mixed in the two countries. In an opinion poll carried out, 58% of Russians had an entirely negative view of Turkey (Russian Aviation, 2015).

The statistics of pre-crisis Russian tourists in Turkey show that in 2014, about 4,479,049 Russian tourists came to Turkey. Russian tourists contributed \$3,471,263 in revenue to the Turkish tourism sector (Uslu and Akay, 2019, pp. 63–65). In 2015 the number of Russian tourists stood at 3,649,003, amounting to \$2,609,037 in revenue. The crisis year of 2016 witnessed a significant decrease in the number of Russian tourists who came to Turkey. In 2016, the number of tourists from Russia to Turkey was about 866,256, signaling a 76,26% decrease from the 2015 tourism records (Uslu and Akay, 2019, pp. 63–65). This drop in the number of tourists from Russia equally affected the tourism revenue for 2016. Turkey generates a good percentage of its tourism revenue from Russian Tourists who come into the country each year because these tourists make up a large part of the total number of tourists who come into Turkey each year.

Consequently, the decrease in tourism revenue showed the vulnerable extent to which Turkey's tourism industry relies on Russia. On the other hand, a public opinion poll carried out by MAK Consultancy revealed that 65% of the Turkish public showed support for the government's action to shut down the Russian jet. The Turkish government maintained its calm and reassured its citizen of its ability to protect them and its willingness to pursue peaceful relations with Russia.

A significant fall out of the jet crisis was that Putin passed economic and travel sanctions on Turkey. Russia exploited its dominant position and market size to enact sanctions over Turkey four days after the Russian jet's downing. With a presidential decree signed by Putin, chartered flights from Russia to Turkey halted. The ban on chartered flights meant that tourists could no longer come freely to Turkey, as it had been the case hitherto the plane crisis. This ban put a significant strain on the Turkish tourism industry, which generally received most clients from Russia (Haaretz, 2015). Tourism plays an essential part in the Turkish economy.

About 4.5million Russian tourists came to Turkey annually (Ozertem, 2017, pp. 126–127).

The ban on Turkish agricultural products equally harmed Turkey's economy. Worth noting is that 3.8% of Turkish exports to Russia accounted for 0.7% of Turkey's GDP. Russia is one of the biggest partners of Turkey as far as trade is concerned. The ban on visa-free travel promulgated by Putin put a considerable strain on movement, not just of persons but also of commerce. The Russian state suppressed the activities of Turkish firms. All these measures had negative consequences for both economies. Turkey's economy suffered losses estimated to the tune of 9 billion dollars (Hurriyet, 2015b). Russia, however, did not cut energy and natural gas supply to Turkey. About 60% of Turkey's natural gas comes from Russia. Hence Russia closing Turkey off natural gas would have spelled extreme doom for the Turkish economy. Russia itself would have incurred significant losses in gas revenue, given that Turkey is its second-largest energy partner after Germany. In the discourse surrounding this crisis, most of the literature has focused on examining Turkey's dependence on Russian products. However, it is of equal relevance to note that Russia equally benefits enormously financially from the economic ties its shares with Turkey.

Turkey has always shown commitment to its US and EU allies. However, Turkey has not received the same engagement. In a bid to strategically position itself, Turkey became a dialogue partner of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2012. The plane crisis seriously hampered Turkey's moves to advance its ambitions within the SCO. Just Like China, which is one of the two most potent and founding members of the organization, Russia has leverage over who becomes a member. In this case, Turkey's desires were forestalled by the jet crisis as relations between Russia and Turkey plummeted. Even though relations between the two countries have somewhat stabilized, Turkey still took steps to recalibrate its foreign policy towards the US.

The first step towards this was Erdoğan's visit to Trump on the latter's coming into power in 2016 as the United States Commander-in-Chief. The collaboration which Trump's administration forged with Ankara was somewhat frosty. This complicated relationship resulted from the United States' support for the Kurdish fighters and their refusal to grant Turkey's request to extradite Fethullah Gulen, who masterminded the 15 July 2016 coup plot to unseat president Erdoğan (Aktürk, 2019, pp. 100–103). If these two issues played out in Turkey's favor as they had expected, then

relations between Washington and Ankara would have seen some normalcy at Russia's near expense. Turkey has continued to remain dismayed in its relations with the US because the latter did not adhere to Turkey's call to extradite Fethullah Gülen. At the peak of the crisis, the European Union, NATO, and the US all threw their weight behind Turkey and supported it (Erşen, 2017a, p. 87). This move was reassuring for Turkey, though it did not give Turkey the complete assurances to rely on these alliances. The above analysis is vital in understanding Turkey-Russian relations because it gives one insight into why despite its asymmetric interdependence with Russia, Turkey continues to pursue close bilateral ties with the former. Such distrust results from Turkey's inability to fully trust and rely on the United States or the European Union's support.

On the one hand, Turkey's relations with Russian and the US do not precisely fit the criteria of a perfect alliance. Nevertheless, Turkey has continued to maintain these alliances, balancing each against the other as a strategic move to remain relevant in both camps. The relevance here means that Turkey can find an alternative partner on either side when its strategic interest is not recognized or served by one of the camps.

Mending Fences: Rapprochement between Turkey and Russia

The international arena is wrought with many states and non-state actors, each pursuing different goals and seeking to assert themselves as vital actors. In the midst of all this, states often than not become threats to other states, in the realist sense of it, depending on what interest they chose to pursue within their regional blocs or on the larger international stage (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 1–2). Surviving threats or provocations from other states is a reality that states must deal with in their interstate relations. Dealing with confrontations hence sometimes requires diplomatic engagements, appeasement, and military tact. At other times strategic patience is vital, based on who the aggressor is. In the Turkey-Russian jet crisis, Turkey chose to adopt strategic patience. (Özel, 2016). In defending its action to shoot the plane, Turkey sought to show that the Russian Su-24 violated its airspace, and consequently, Turkey acted within the framework of its self-defense policy. On the other hand, Russia, which is a more powerful state than Turkey, did argue, using its comparative advantage, that Turkey's apology remained the only way to renew relations between the two countries. While Russia responded by imposing economic and visa sanctions on Turkey, the latter was conscious of the military, political, and economic inequality between them and adopted a softer and somewhat restrained approach to calm down the

tensions.

In a bid to end tensions between Turkey and Russia, president Erdoğan in June 2016 sent a letter to Putin expressing his regret for the downing of the Russian military aircraft and extended his solidarity and comfort to the families of the two Russian pilots who lost their lives in the incident (Hurriyet, 2016). Though this letter did not use the word apology, it carried in it the Turkish president's willingness to normalize the frosty relations that had marked the two countries for seven months. Putin's eventual acceptance of the letter was an open door for rapprochement, which began between the two countries. Before the arranged meeting between the two heads of states, Turkey encountered an abortive coup on 15 July 2016. Putin was the first world leader to call Erdoğan and showed his solidarity and support for the Turkish government. President Putin's show of solidarity was a significant step that reassured Turkey that Russia cared about its internal stability. Just like Russia had provided Turkey with military and economic aid in the 1960s and 1970s when their relations were not in good standing, Russia's reaction after the coup was indicative that both countries enjoy episodes of rapprochement even when their relationship seems to be in dire straits.

The mitigating circumstances which necessitated a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia went far beyond normalizing ties into geopolitical and foreign policy spheres. In this regard, it is relevant to underpin that the abortive Gulenist coup's geopolitical ramifications necessitated the two countries to coalesce. Before the coup, Gulenists' position on Russia and Iran had always been hostile when it came to matters in the two countries. They have always maintained strict foreign policy views concerning Russia and Iran (Aktürk, 2019, p. 103). Consequently, beyond their strategic military consideration and national pride, Erdoğan and Putin needed to reconcile their differences over the plane crisis. The failure of the coup was a strategic victory for both countries. Had it succeeded, then Russia and Iran would have been far-flung from Turkey's foreign policy and cooperation center. The coup plotters would have equally reshaped the entire geopolitical landscape of the region.

In line with reconciling Turkey and Russia after the plane crisis, the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and Turkish business magnet Cavit Çağlar used their deep economic ties with Russia to facilitate the process of rapprochement. (Hurriyet, 2016). The success of their endeavors laid the groundwork for the St. Petersburg meeting, which

followed. This meeting was the first time both presidents met to discuss the crisis and to find a solution. The Putin-Erdoğan summit also initiated a new regional rapprochement between the two countries regarding their divergent policies over the Syrian crisis. The meeting established a three-pillar mechanism based on enhanced consultations between their foreign ministries, intelligence agencies, and general staff units (Erşen, 2017b, pp. 5–10). Apart from strengthening communication to prevent the emergence of another military confrontation between Turkish and Russian forces in Syria, a meeting took place in Russia on 11 August 2016. This meeting aimed to develop a much more extensive political and military dialogue between Ankara and Moscow.

In response to threats hovering around its borders, Turkey had made it known on 24 August 2016 that it was willing to engage its existing self-defense rights enshrined in the United Nations Charter Article 51. Turkey's launch of Operation Euphrates Shield to Northern Syria was a vital step towards maintaining its security and keeping threats off its territorial boundaries (Jagar, 2016, pp. 1–10). In line with this, Turkey launched the operation to target ISIS and cripple the Kurdistan Workers Party, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), and the Peoples Protection Units (YPG). The successful recovery of Jarbulus and Dabiq was made possible by a collaboration between Turkish and Russian forces. However, the Russians later criticized Turkey's presence and its military operations in northern Syria. Russia's criticism of Turkey's military presence resulted from the fact that Turkey's military operation in the zone was not backed by the UNSC nor by Bashar Al Assad's regime. What underlined Russia's concern was the fear that such a process could extend into thwarting the operation of Assad's forces. Putin later on retracted from this position and turned to maintain support for Operation Euphrates Shield, based on the conviction that Turkey's stability was on the balance due to Syria's security threats.

Furthermore, Putin's visit to Turkey in October 2016 was significant. The two governments signed the agreement to construct the TurkStream natural gas pipeline, which will serve as a channel to transport substantial Russian natural gas to Europe through Turkey. In line with protecting its air defense system against external threats, Turkey engaged military arrangements with Russia and purchased the Russian S-400 long-range missile defense system. Turkey's purchase of the S-400 met with mixed feelings from the United States and its NATO partners.

Moreover, shooting of the Russian Ambassador in Ankara was another

high point in the Turkey-Russia relations that many feared was going to escalate tensions between both countries. Contrary to widespread speculation, the two countries resorted to addressing the issue through diplomatic means. The assassination of Ambassador Andrei Karlov on 19 December 2016 sent shock waves throughout the international community as expectations were high that the renewed relations between the plane crisis rivals were going to shrink. The assassin who shot the Ambassador was a police officer Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş. The killer's motive was to destroy the rapprochement, which was already ongoing between Turkey and Russia, and cause a further breakdown in their relations. President Putin reacting to the incident indicated that it was unfortunate but would not affect his country and Turkey's reconciliation process. On its part, the Turkish government praised the excellent sense of judgment of the Kremlin leader. Though the assassin got shot on the spot, Turkey reassured Moscow that it was engaged in investigations to uncover the other masterminds behind the Ambassador's assassination. Turkey's prosecutors have linked the assassin to the FETO terror group, which staged a coup d'état in Turkey on 15 July 2016. On 9 March 2021, a court in Ankara, hearing the matter handed prison sentence to eight people found guilty of participating in the crime.

In line with the spirit of rapprochement, Turkey and Russian continuously took steps to sink their differences and forged new cooperation ties that could benefit them. On 20 December 2016, the Moscow Declaration witnessed a strategic turning point in Turkey- Russian relations. Russia, Turkey, and Iran officials met in Moscow to find solutions to the Syrian crisis. The meeting resulted in an eight-point statement which called for and laid down guidelines for a ceasefire in Syria. These three countries equally pledged to act as guarantors to safeguard Syria's territorial integrity and pursue strategies to end the civil war (Therme, 2018, pp. 27-39). Iran and Russia have never shied away from showing their unwavering support for the Assad regime. The outcome of the Moscow Declaration was a strategic move by the two countries to stabilize Syria. Turkey's participation in the Declaration signaled its willingness to reconcile its geopolitical rivalry over Syria with Russia. However, Turkey's internal challenges, border security issues, and the issues surrounding its involvement in the Syrian crisis make it unclear whether Turkey will continue to seek Assad's removal from power. Before the plane crisis, Turkey's position on Syria was in favor of Assad leaving office. Whatever the case, the Moscow Declaration did bring Russia and Turkey closer. During the Sochi summit of 3 May 2017, both presidents met to deliberate on the tariffs, energy, and weapon sanctions. During this

meeting, the Russian side was categorical: it would lift sanctions on other products except for tomatoes. Despite signing an agreement in Istanbul on 22 May 2017, to lift trade sanctions and improve bilateral relations, Russia continued to maintain its position that limited travel sanctions will continue on Turkey while remaining unchanged in its stands on the tomatoes issue(Hurriyet, 2017).

The Astana Peace Process.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2254 promulgated a call for ceasefire and cessation of hostilities in the Syrian conflict. However, both the Syrian government and the armed opposition's failure to respect the terms of the truce further aggravated the conflict. The failure of 2254 meant the collapse of the western-style approach to resolve the conflict in Syria. Consequently, Russia came in to fill the gap and, by so doing, invited Turkey and Iran. The coming together of the above countries led to the Astana Peace Process, which began in Astana-Kazakhstan on 23-24 May 2017. Though the peace process aimed to resolve the conflict in Syria, it equally marked an essential step towards the consolidation of Turkey-Russia-Iran relations. By championing this peace process, these three countries became the guarantors of the negotiations and ceasefires, which emerged due to the process. Apart from Turkey, Russia, and Iran, the Syrian government and other armed groups in Syria were in attendance during the initial peace talks. The Astana process marked the first time that the Syrian regime sat alongside the rebel opposition movements to negotiate peace for Syria.

On the other hand, it brought together Russia and Iran, supporting the Assad regime, and Turkey, which backs the moderate opposition fighters. It is crucial to note that though Russia and Turkey had not fully resolved the fallouts of the plane crisis, they could still converge to seek solutions for the Syrian crisis. From 2017-2019, the Astana peace process witnessed more than a dozen rounds of negotiations. The process continued to remain difficult because ceasefires and de-escalation agreements have hardly been adhered to by the belligerents in the conflict. Despite the limited success of the peace process, it provided Turkey and Russia a platform to strengthen their cooperation. The role of these regional powers in the Astana process has projected the image of Turkey, Russia, and Iran as powerful regional actors who can solve issues within their neighborhood without necessarily relying on the West.

Pandemic Era and its Influence on Turkey-Russia Relations

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) came as a shock to many states worldwide. The pandemic's destabilizing effects affected the political, economic, trade, and strategic relations of states. After the World Health Organisation declared the virus to be a global pandemic, states went into lockdown, shut their borders, and restricted their citizens' travel and movement. Turkey and Russia followed the above trend and locked down their borders as a primary measure for curbing the virus from spreading. The travel restrictions imposed had adverse effects on both countries' trade, economy, and tourism sectors.

The plane crisis caused considerable strain on the Turkey-Russia relations, but as both countries made attempts towards reconciling their differences, Turkey's tourism sector picked up once again. The increase in tourism figures was because Turkey is a touristic destination preferred by a majority of Russians. Russian tourists rank first among all other tourists who came into Turkey yearly. During the crisis in 2016, Russian tourists who came into Turkey were about 866.000. With the normalization of relations in 2017, the number of Russian tourists who came to Turkey rose to 4.715.438 with a corresponding \$2.159.671 as tourism revenue increased from Russian tourists. In 2018, the number of Russian tourists was about 5.964.000, amounting to about \$3.484.000 (Uslu and Akay, 2019, pp. 63-66). Increased corporation and collaboration between both countries positively affected the image of each other. This increased cooperation paid off for Turkey as the number of Russian tourists increased to 6.7 million in 2019.

The outbreak of the coronavirus reversed the considerable tourism success which Turkey registered in the post-crisis years. The travel limitations caused by the pandemic led to a significant decrease in the number of Russian tourists who came to Turkey. The number of Russian tourists dropped from 6.7 million in 2019 to about \$2 million in 2020, indicating a 70.4% drop (Digest, 2020). The reduction in tourists was because Istanbul had the highest number of Covid-19 cases. Istanbul has always been a place where most Russian tourists like to spend most of their time. The virus scare caused many Russian tourists to resort to tourism within Russia. The relaxation of restrictions in the first quarter of 2021 saw an inflow of Russian tourists into Turkey, but the numbers are nothing compared to the pre-pandemic figures.

The production of vaccines is another significant area that demonstrated the improvement of Turkey and Russia's relations in the pandemic era.

On 16 August 2020 Russian Direct Investment Fund signed a contract with Turkey's VisCoran Ilac Sanayi. (Birinci, 2021) The deal aimed to harness both companies' expertise to produce Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in Turkey. The production of the Russian vaccine in Turkey is a channel through which Russia will transfer medical and technological skills to Turkey. According to the vaccine agreement, Turkey will be the first beneficiary, before exporting the rest of the vaccine to other parts of the world.

Furthermore, Turkey and Russia have, over the decades, collaborated as partners in the energy sector. Turkey has for a long time been the second-largest importer of natural gas from Russia (Şimşek et al., 2017, pp. 2–6). Apart from Russia, Turkey has traditionally imported gas from Iran and Azerbaijan. On the other hand, Turkey's gas deal with Nigeria and Algeria has gradually taken its dependence off its traditional trading partners. Besides taking such measures to diversify its energy needs, the Turkish economy's challenging conditions and the pandemic's effects caused Turkey to significantly reduce the volume of its natural gas imports from Russia and Iran. During the first half of 2020, Turkish imports of natural gas from Russia decreased by 41%.

Meanwhile, at the onset of the plane crisis in 2016, Russian gas constituted 50% of all Turkey's gas imports. However, from 2016 to 2020, Turkey's gas imports from Russia reduced by 14% (Mammadov, 2020). This decrease in the volume of gas imports from Russia is premised on Turkey's ambition to diversify its energy needs away from its traditional suppliers like Russia. In the heat of the plane crisis, Russia placed sanctions on Turkey. Still, it left the steady flow of gas to Turkey because it was financially beneficial for Russia to do so, not because it cared much about Turkey. Though relations between both countries have since normalized after the plane crisis, there is little guarantee that Russia will not revert to placing stricter sanctions on Turkey in the future should such an event as the plane crisis repeat itself.

In reducing the number of its gas imports from Russia, Turkey relied on other alternative sources like the United States, Algeria, and Nigeria, from where it imported liquified natural gas. The diversification of Turkey's energy needs is relevant for achieving its goal to be energy sufficient by 2023. It goes then without saying that Turkey's decision caused economic losses to Russia, with whom it had for over four decades traded. The reduced energy dependence on Russia equally means that the latter can no longer enjoy the leverage it had over Turkey. Consequently, this

puts Turkey in a steady place where it can challenge Russia's threats and interests without fear of retaliatory measures that may arise from Moscow.

Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis

Furthermore, the reescalation of hostilities over Nagorno- Karabakh compelled Turkey and Russia to enter once more into competition and cooperation in 2020. The reescalation of the Nagorno- Karabakh dispute occurred when both countries were grappling with controlling the pandemic within their respective territories. The dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh is an age-old territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The two countries each claimed to be the rightful owner of the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The disputed area had remained under Armenian control from 1994. However, by the standards of international law, the region rightfully belonged to Azerbaijan.

While Turkey supported Azerbaijan because of the linguistic, economic, and religious connection, it shares with the latter, Russia, on the other hand, backed Armenia (Isachenko, 2020, pp. 1–4). Though there were combat exchanges between the Armenian and Azeri forces, Turkey and Russia never fully engaged in the fighting. It is worth noting that Turkey and Russia have strategic partnerships and military agreements with their ally in the dispute. Turkey remotely backed the Azeris by providing them with sophisticated military drones and high-capacity defense equipment. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had remained frozen since 1994 when the parties reached a ceasefire agreement. The reescalation of the war in September 2020 had dire consequences for the military and population of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The eruption of renewed fighting triggered the displacement of ordinary citizens who were already struggling to cope with the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a bid to end hostilities, the Minsk Group made up of France, the United States, and Russia called for a ceasefire. Unfortunately, neither the Azeris nor the Armenian military respected the armistice (Abilov, 2018, pp. 143–153). The failure of the truce called by the Minsk group allowed Putin to demonstrate Russia's strength as a regional power broker. Russian President Putin summoned the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to negotiate a ceasefire and broker peace. In negotiating peace for Nagorno-Karabakh, Putin consistently recognized that President Erdoğan was a vital facilitator in the peace process. The collaboration between Russia and Turkey enhanced the peace process. As a result of Putin and Erdoğan's collaboration, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a peace deal on 9 November

2020 (ICG, 2020, pp. 1–5), putting an end to the six weeks war which had ravaged parts of both countries and left their people fleeing for safety.

Within the framework of the peace deal, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to the ceasefire. Armenia equally agreed to recognize the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. The signing of the peace deal led to the Armenian military's withdrawal from the territory (ICG, 2020, pp. 1–5). The success of the peace deal spearheaded by Putin with the facilitation of Erdoğan was a landmark victory for the conflict which had lasted for decades. The noninvolvement of the United States or any other European state in the peace process is a testament to Putin's anti-western agenda and his ambition to keep the West away from meddling in issues around its neighborhood. Just like Russia, Turkey and Iran had convened in Astana in 2017 to negotiate peace for the Syrian conflict, the November 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal reflected its front liners' ambition to handle their regional affairs devoid of Western interference. The peace deal over Nagorno-Karabakh demonstrated Russia's position as a regional hegemon capable of managing the affairs of its neighborhood. On the other hand, the Azeri victory in the deal boosted Turkey's image as a strategic regional power and friend in need of the Azeris. The peace deal equally increased the political capital of President Erdoğan in Turkey, as Turks celebrated the victory and hailed the president for his support to Azerbaijan.

Russia and Turkey may have succeeded in collaborating to resolve the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. This collaboration does not automatically translate into the end of differences in their view over other issues. In light of the above, Turkey does not agree with Russia over the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. Turkey maintains strong ties with the Crimean Tatars and thus sees Russia's annexation of Crimea as illegal and unacceptable. Nevertheless, Turkey's disagreement over Russia's annexation of Crimea has not gone beyond mere condemnation. Despite being a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance and an EU aspirant, Turkey has continued to remain indifferent to sanctions against Russia.

Conclusion

The relationship between Turkey and Russia has always been characterized by conflict, cooperation, and competition. Relations between the two countries have followed this pattern since the Ottoman and the Russian Tsarist Empires' eras. While it is true that Russia has assisted Turkey at various points in history, it is equally suitable to say Turkey has

collaborated with Russia from time to time reasonably well. However, at the bottom of Turkey- Russian relations lies a deep-seated geopolitical rivalry. The plane crisis that rocked their relationship emerged out of their geopolitical differences over Syria. The Russian sanctions that followed the shooting of its military jet, which violated Turkish airspace, indicated the extent to which Russia could exploit its economic and trade comparative advantage over Turkey. For seven months following the sanctions, Turkey's economy stagnated as exports to Russia remained under the Russian embargo.

In a bid to resolve the issue, President Erdoğan took an intelligent step in June 2016 to mend relations with Russia through a letter he sent to Putin expressing regret for the unfortunate downing of the plane. This move opened the St. Petersburg Summit, where the two leaders finally met to iron out issues in their damaged relations and sort out ways of amending them. Thus, this summit laid the groundwork for reconciliation between the two countries, leading to enhanced cooperation to seek a ceasefire on the Syrian crisis. The Moscow Declaration and Astana process proved to be significant steps towards solidifying relations between Ankara and Moscow. Consequently, it will be in Turkey's best interests to seek alternative larger markets for its agricultural exports. Securing sources of energy other than that which come from Russia will enable Turkey to shield itself from future Russian sanctions while asserting itself to play a broader role in shaping geostrategic and geopolitical developments within the Middle East. Turkey's reliance on alternative sources of energy will make it less vulnerable to Russia. Indeed, Russia did not cut its oil and energy supply to Turkey during the plane crisis. However, the economic sanctions which Russia placed on Turkey must serve as an eye-opener for the latter to rethink, redefine and diversify its economic and trade relations with Russia.

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Declaration

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