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## ABSTRACT

The authors of the article give a retrospective review of Russian-Egyptian economic and trade relations over the past centuries, draw historical parallels connected with the development of transport communications. A more detailed

assessment concerns the second half of the last century and the present time. In the final part, the directions of cooperation in the field of transport, its technical part, vehicles and transport education are considered constructively and with projections for the near future.

**Keywords:** transport, Russian-Egyptian relations, retrospective analysis, cooperation.

**Background.** With the development of mass media and the processes of globalization, the transport factor in interstate relations is becoming increasingly important. And the relationship between the Russian Federation and the Arab Republic of Egypt is not an exception.

**Objective.** The objective of the authors is to consider the role of transport factor in relations between Russia and Egypt.

**Methods.** The authors use general scientific methods, historical retrospective method, comparative analysis, assessment method.

## Results.

### 1.

Even in the history of two separate countries, it is easy to find elements of similarity, if you look closely at the retrospective development of their transport communications. Both civilizations, which epitomize Egypt and Russia, were born as crossroads on the way from Europe to the East. Ancient Egyptian civilization began to form in the valley of the Nile – the longest river on Earth, for thousands of years remaining the most notable landmark on the way from the European Mediterranean to Nubia, India, Persia and other countries of the Middle East. Similarly, the ancient Russian state was formed, formed much later on the great waterway «from the Varangians to the Greeks», which for centuries connected the countries of Northern Europe with the same Mediterranean, as well as the Central and Middle East.

Approximately at the same time in both countries railway communication emerged: in Russia in 1851 Moscow–Saint-Petersburg line was built, and already three years later the first trains passed from Alexandria to Kafr–Issa. This line was the first railroad in Africa and the Middle East. It was supposed to become part of a transcontinental railway that would connect Europe with India, just as several decades later the Trans-Siberian Railway connected Europe and China.

However, the original Egyptian project was not destined to come true, for only 15 years later, in 1869, the most ambitious and grandiose transport project of XIX century – the Suez Canal – was launched, which allowed reducing the distance from Europe to India by almost 8000 km. The sea route from the Mediterranean to Red Sea, which existed under the pharaohs, was opened again. All that had passed since almost a century and a half, despite all the difficulties accompanying the historical process in the Middle East, the revolution and the war, the Suez Canal was the most important transport artery, thanks to which a fair share of world trade was realized.

And now the channel maintains the position of one of the main waterways, through passes about 8 % of the total sea traffic and 22 % of all sea container traffic in the world. According to the Egyptian State Statistical Agency, only over the past ten years the country's income from the operation of the channel amounted to almost \$47 billion. During this period, 182,2 thousand vessels passed through it, which transported 8,3 billion tons of cargo.

And last year the world was shocked by new grandiose news. In a year the second channel of the Suez Canal was built. Its laying involved 43 thousand workers and more than 80 contractors, investments amounted to about 8 billion dollars. The new channel will double the capacity of the Suez Canal – from 49 to 97 ships per day due to the possibility of their simultaneous passage in opposite directions. Depth of 24 meters allows piloting through new channel even supertankers. The expected revenue from the operation of the entire complex should reach \$15 billion a year in 2023. And on the way to the project is the construction of the third navigable branch of the canal, through which the passage of ships with maximum draft will become possible [7–9].

On the banks of the new canal, on an area of 76 thousand square meters km it is supposed to create an industrial zone, including shipyards, factories for the production of containers, car assembly shops, etc. It is also planned to build automobile and railway tunnels in the area of Ismailia and Port Said, which will connect the African part of the country with Sinai.

All these grandiose plans can become the starting point for a new stage of Russian-Egyptian economic cooperation, which was announced two years ago, when on August 12, 2014, during the talks between the presidents of Russia and Egypt in Sochi, an agreement was reached on the establishment of a Russian industrial zone in Region of the then projected new channel of the Suez Canal [3, 12].

However, before evaluating the prospects for a new stage of Russian-Egyptian cooperation, it is worth recalling briefly the history of bilateral relations.

### 2.

The first ties between Russia and Egypt date back to the Middle Ages, when very few pilgrims from the Moscow Principality penetrated to Christian shrines in the Sinai Peninsula.

Much later, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, political interests were added to the religious interests of Russia in Egypt. Egypt, striving for independence from the Ottoman Empire, was seen in St. Petersburg as a natural ally in the confrontation with Turkish expansion [1].

In accordance with the Kyuchuk-Kainardzhy agreement of 1774, which ended the Russo-Turkish war of 1768–1774, Russia for the first time had the opportunity to establish its consulates in the Middle East – in Damascus, Beirut, Alexandria.

By the decree of Catherine II, adopted in November 1784, the first Russian consul Kondraty von Tonus was appointed to Alexandria. Since then, Russia has had a permanent representative in Egypt, with the exception of periods of Russian-Turkish wars, as well as the initial period of Soviet power (until 1943) [5].

In the second half of the XIX century, relations between two states – diplomatic, trade, cultural – were established in full, on the banks of the Nile formed the Russian community. In 1862, a diplomatic agency and consulate general of the Russian Empire were established in Cairo. By the same time, the beginning of regular transport links between the two countries also applies. In 1858, a steamer service was established between Odessa and Alexandria, and in 1880 – between Odessa and Port Said. The number of pilgrims from Russia was then calculated in hundreds.

The network of consular institutions was also expanding. In addition to Cairo and Alexandria, Russian representatives worked in Port Said, Suez, Ismailia and other cities. Diplomatic status of Russian offices remained until 1923, because the Egyptian government, which at that time had the status of a protectorate of Great Britain, did not recognize Soviet Russia [5].

It, in turn, from the first years of her existence tried to establish relations with Egypt. In June 1920, in London under the British laws, the Soviet delegation established the joint stock company ARCOS («All Russian Cooperative Society Limited»), which established trade relations with Egyptian firms engaged in the export of cotton. And in 1922 from Egypt, the first batch of flour was delivered to Soviet Russia in 751 thousand poods, and from Russia to Egypt – 16,1 thousand tons of kerosene. In the future, such supplies were brokered by foreign firms.

In December 1922 in Moscow, specifically for trade with the countries of the East, the Russian Eastern Chamber of Commerce or Rosvostorg was established, which paid much attention to the development of trade relations with Egypt. In 1923 the Egyptian authorities allowed the steamers of the Sotvorgflot to call at the ports of Alexandria, Port Said and others, from which they began to export cotton and jute.

In 1925–1926 the USSR exported goods to Egypt for 2923 thousand rubles, which amounted to approximately 0,5 % of all Soviet exports, and imported goods from Egypt for 26561 thousand rubles or 4 % of Soviet imports.

In 1927, a representative office of the Soviet joint-stock company Textile Import was opened in Alexandria, which was engaged in the purchase of cotton. The trade turnover between the two countries has steadily increased. In total, according to Rosvostokorg data for 1926–1927, it amounted to 26,7 million rubles, and in 1927–1928 it grew to 41,1 million rubles, that is, more than 1,5 times.

In the conditions of the world economic crisis that broke out in 1929, the importance of trade with the USSR for Egypt increased even more. In the mid-1930s, according to Egypt's Minister of Trade Abdessalam Fahmy, the Soviet Union ranked fourth in Egyptian cotton imports. In turn, our country supplied oil products and textiles to Egypt. With the aim of importing them in 1933, a special company was created here [6].

### 3.

Full diplomatic relations between two countries were established in a difficult year for us in 1943. And after five years, in the process of restoring the national economy of the USSR, an agreement was signed on the supply of Egyptian cotton in exchange for grain, timber and other products.

The flush of Soviet-Egyptian economic relations occurred in the 1950–1960's.

On May 6–8, 1958, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of the United Arab Republic, a part of which was Egypt, met in Sochi with the Soviet leadership. The result of the visit was the signing of one and two years later the second agreement on rendering Egypt with economic and technical assistance in the construction of the Aswan Dam, according to which the USSR granted loans totaling 130 million rubles. Soviet specialists collaborated with Egyptian colleagues in the construction of the dam. In January 1971, the Aswan complex was put into operation.

In addition, an oil refinery in Suez was built in 1963, an aluminum plant in Nag Hammadi in 1964, and the Helwan Metallurgical Combine in 1974. By the beginning of the 1970s, Egypt had commissioned 33 large industrial enterprises and 32 training centers. All of them still play their considerable role in the country's economy.

Of particular note are bilateral relations in the military sphere and, above all, their transport component. The first agreement was signed in 1955 and provided for the supply of Soviet armament for \$250 million. Subsequently, the Soviet Union supported Egypt with military supplies during the Suez crisis of 1956–1957, during the six-day Arab-Israeli war of 1967, but the largest assistance was provided in the October war of 1973.

We will give only one, but a characteristic detail, concerning transport. It relies on information from foreign sources.

The Soviet Union then supplied the country with weapons, machines, equipment and munitions. The fighting began on October 6, and on October 7, transport ships that headed for Alexandria and Port Said left just a few of the Black Sea ports. Their journey took 3–4 days. But even this time seemed too long, and then it was decided to organize a direct air bridge, which started to operate on October 10. And already from October 12 from 60 to 90 Soviet aircraft arrived daily (!) at Egyptian and Syrian airfields. According to air traffic controllers of Cyprus, for a day in the airspace of the island passed up to 18 boards per hour. In total, from October 10 to October 23, the An-12, An-22, Il-18, Il-62, Tu-154 aircraft carried out 934 flights, 12.5 thousand tons of various cargoes were transported [13, 14].

The next stage of bilateral relations began in 1990, when a long-term program of economic, trade and scientific and technical cooperation was signed for a period up to 2000, which then was prolonged and continues to operate. In 1992,

the joint Russian-Egyptian commission for trade and economic cooperation, successfully existing even now, began its work.

In February 2006, an auto assembly company Lada Egypt (now Al Amal Co) was opened in the suburbs of Cairo. The Russian company JSCAvtoVAZ supplies car parts for the assembly of models 2107 and 2110 (6 thousand cars per year).

Since the autumn of 2008, the Intermodal railway-sea route Lesosibirsk (Krasnoyarsk region) – Alexandria through the port of Rostov-on-Don is operating. TransContainer company sent an accelerated container train on it, formed from 35 wagons loaded with 40-foot containers with sawn timber totaling 120 TEU. Their delivery time is 15 days, six of which are occupied by the railway, seven – transportation by sea and one day – transshipment of containers in the ports of Rostov and Alexandria [10].

May 25–26, 2015 in Cairo took place the most ambitious event in the history of bilateral relations – the forum «Trade and Industrial Dialogue: Russia–Egypt». From the Russian side, more than 200 representatives of business circles took part in it, from the Egyptian one – about 300 organizations and companies. One of its main results was the agreement on creation of a joint investment platform.

A separate topic of the forum was the discussion of projects in the field of transport engineering. The Russian delegation included representatives of such well-known machine-building companies as Uralvagonzavod, Transmashholding, Tractor Plants, AvtoVAZ, UAC, KAMAZ, GAZ, Irkut Corporation, Rostekh, Russian Helicopters.

According to the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Egypt, the volume of trade between two countries for 2014 grew by 86 % compared to the level of the previous year. At the same time, Russian exports doubled, reaching 4,9 billion dollars, while imports – by almost a quarter. The main export items from Russia to Egypt are energy resources and wheat, for which the North African country remains the largest market, providing 25–30 % of all Russian exports (30 million tons), and up to 40 % of the country's needs.

On the prospects for development of cooperation with Egypt, Russian President V. V. Putin spoke during a visit to this country in February 2015. He noted that he sees great potential of partnership in the field of high technologies, nuclear energy, space, including the joint use of the Russian system of satellite navigation GLONASS. In addition, Russia is ready to switch to mutual settlements with Egypt in national currencies. Now there is a detailed study of this project.

### 4.

It is clear that the implementation of such ambitious projects is inconceivable without the cardinal development of transport communications.

Constantly increasing tourist flow from Russia to Egypt, which was not affected even by the events of 2011, was provided for a long time by direct air communication between the countries. Regular and charter flights from many Russian cities have been accepted by at least six Egyptian airports. It broke off on October 31, 2015 after the monstrous crash of the Kogalymavia airplane, when the A-321, carrying out the flight Sharm-el-Sheikh–St. Petersburg, was blown up in the sky over the Sinai peninsula. 224 people died, which was the largest air crash in the history of Russia and the USSR.

Of course, for security reasons, the flights of Russian aircraft to Egypt were terminated. This catastrophe served as a serious test of the strength of bilateral ties, but in the end it did not have a negative impact on relations and economic cooperation between Moscow and Cairo.

The second Russian-Egyptian business forum, which took place on January 31, 2016 in the framework of the Russian-Egyptian Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation, discussed the restoration of air communication between two countries. It is clear that the only guarantee of the safety of Egyptian airports and the flights themselves can become the basis for the return of former airlines and tourist flows. And here also opens a wide field of activity for mutual cooperation.

In addition, serious prospects are seen in the field of railway transport. There is no such communication between two countries, but nevertheless railways themselves remain an important element in the transport system of both cooperating parties. And from this it is natural that in the framework of the forums mentioned



above, representatives of railway engineering participated, ready to supply their products and take orders.

For example, Transmashholding plans to supply 700 comfortable passenger cars to Egypt, for which a framework agreement has already been signed<sup>1</sup>. And Bryansk diesel locomotives can again appear on the highways of the country of the pyramids. The envoys of the Egyptian national railways visited the Bryansk Engineering Plant. They are interested in the shunting locomotives TEM-2 produced at the enterprise. In Egypt, similar machines of older generations were supplied during the Soviet era and they proved themselves well in the local climate. Now the plant produces four modifications of the diesel locomotive, which were presented by the delegation from Cairo. In addition to the shunting locomotives the Egyptian railway men were also interested in the main diesel locomotive 2TE25KM, which is intended for long-distance operation, was also interested<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, in 2014, the electrification plan for the Egyptian railways was submitted, according to which in the period from 2017 to 2020, 1051 km of trunk lines should be transferred to the electric traction. Currently, the electrification of local roads does not exceed 15 %, and here a significant field of activity for Russian specialists opens up within the framework of a hypothetical joint project, similar to what was realized in 2008–2012 on Iranian railways (the Tabriz–Azarshahr line). The same can be said about the programs for automation of crossings, construction of second roads, etc.

The next stage could be the participation of Russian specialists in the design of the high-speed main line Alexandria–Cairo–Aswan, which project is also being developed in Egypt.

For its part, Moscow State University of Railway Engineering could train engineers in various areas to implement projects in the field of rail transport. The prospects here are quite real. Our Egyptian colleagues from National Transport Institute intend to create a subsidiary structure under the working title «Transport Technology Institute», which would train specialists on the basis of academic baccalaureate in various disciplines.

Promising forms of cooperation might concern:

- implementation of joint research projects on current problems of modern transport systems with the involvement of well-known Russian experts from transport companies and the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation;
- organization of scientific-practical and educational conferences on issues of mutual interest;
- preparation of joint training programs for railway and other modes of transport;
- Academic exchange of students, researchers and teachers.

**Conclusion.** The existence of such promising proposals, the business cooperation of professionals in the field of transport education from two countries, seems to receive new incentives and prospects for further development in the format of such long-standing and mutually beneficial relations between two countries.

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Article received 15.09.2016, accepted 23.12.2016.