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## **Foreign Relations and Inter-Civilizational Interaction from a Social-Political Perspective: The Case of Russia, Iran and Egypt**

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**Abstract:**

*The article considers the history of the formation and development of Iran-Russia cultural contacts in the framework of time-consistent political and economic discourses. An important role of Russian and Persian languages and literatures of both countries in this process is noted, and a decisive role of societies of cultural relations between Russia and Iran in the development of bilateral cultural relations is emphasized.*

*Particular attention in this context is paid to the last decades, when cultural cooperation becomes an important factor in the foreign policy strategy of the two countries.*

*The article is devoted to the development of Egypt-Russia relations in the aspect of the inter-civilization dialogue; the dynamics of their development in different historical eras are analyzed, factors that have had a decisive influence on the nature of bilateral interaction are considered.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural contacts, Russia, Iran, the Russian language, the Persian language, Russian literature, Persian literature, society of cultural relations, Egypt-Russia relations, intercivilizational interaction, Eastern and Western cultures, architecture, literature, art, science, education, political situation.*

**JEL Classification:** F50, F59.

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## **1. Introduction**

The topic "Russia and the East" has a long-standing tradition in the culturological discourse and attracts attention of both government officials and wide audience. In this context, considering Russia's cultural contacts with two countries with the most ancient civilizations, Egypt and Iran, is of interest both in a historical aspect and nowadays.

The study of Russia's contacts with Egypt and Iran is of great interest in the framework of the intercivilizational interaction, since, despite major differences in culture and lifestyle, these countries have had centuries-long close relations characterized by the interaction and a certain mutual influence of cultures. Mutual sympathy and a desire to get acquainted with each other's culture are basically observed throughout the history of the development of these relations. The re-approchement of Russia with Egypt and Iran has been largely facilitated by a certain commonality of the civilizational mission of the three countries, which are one of the key actors in the system of international relations. It should be noted that the relations of the three countries in the aspect of the intercivilizational interaction have been gradually developed.

The first significant upturn in this process was during the rise of the Russian Empire and consolidation of its positions in the international arena, namely during the reign of Peter the Great and Catherine II, which was due to the active foreign policy of Russia at that time. Afterwards, these relations were extended and strengthened, obtaining an extensive base, covering new cooperation areas, for the development of Egyptology, Iranian and Russian studies through the formation of Oriental studies. The political situation and economic factors had a decisive influence on the dynamics of the development of these relations. At the same time, the historical experience shows that the actual cooperation between the peoples is possible only on a basis of mutual respect for national interests, a meaningful dialogue, a desire to learn about each other, cross-fertilization, and not by imposing alien values.

## **2. Iran-Russia cultural contacts**

The history of Iran-Russia cultural contacts goes back thousands of centuries. Some researchers think that they began during the reign of the Achaemenid dynasty (550-330 BC). However, according to most experts both in Russia and Iran, certain significant shifts in this direction date back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when the Qajar dynasty ruled Iran and the Romanov dynasty ruled Russia. Moreover, even in the first half of the 18th century due to the need to develop economic and diplomatic relations with neighboring Eastern countries, primarily with Persia (Iran) in 1716, Peter the Great sent five students of Moscow Latin schools to Persia to study the Persian language. Thus, the first Persian translators appeared in Russia. Kolushkin and Bratishchev were the most famous of them, though at a later time. In 1732, in Russia the Persian language teaching was

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introduced in the College of Foreign Affairs and a little later, since 1804, this language was introduced in the Charter of Russian Universities along with the other Eastern languages. Professor Boldyrev A.N. was the first Persian teacher at the Moscow University (years of service: 1811-1837). In 1818, the Persian language began to be taught at the Main Pedagogical Institute in St. Petersburg, which was later reorganized into the Saint Petersburg State University. After that, Iranian centers were formed in other Russian cities (Rastorgueva and Pakhalina).

The familiarization with the diaries, travel sketches, articles and other materials, as well as with travel books in the genre of safar-nameh, which began to appear in both countries since the first third of the 17th century, was of great importance for studying the history of the development of cultural contacts between Russia and Iran in this period. They contained the information that was interesting for their people: about ethnography, everyday life, manners, customs, art crafts, architecture, music, book printing and literature, theaters, school education and much more. On the one hand, Russian merchants, diplomats and orientalists were the authors of these materials. For example, Fedot Kotov provided such information, describing his trip to Persia in the early 17th century. "Letters on Persia" written by a Russian diplomat, traveler and orientalist Pashino P.I., which contained many everyday sketches, including descriptions of marriage and funeral ceremonies, are also of great interest. It should be noted that the number of Russian scientists, specialists and cultural figures, who visited Iran, constantly increased, which contributed to the extension of cultural contacts between the two countries.

At the same time, the Iranians also traveled both to Russia and through its territory to other countries and got acquainted with the life and culture of the Russian people. Thus, members of the Shah's Redemption Mission, which was sent to Russia due to the assassination of Griboyedov and almost the entire Russian diplomatic mission in Iran on January 30, 1829, recorded their travel notes and impressions of the trip across Russia in the form of a diary. Published and unpublished private diaries are also of interest; among them special attention should be paid to the diary entries of Mirza Salekh Shirazi, a young man who went for completion of a course of sciences across the territory of Russia to England and later described his impressions of the Russian economy, culture, education, history, everyday life and customs of the inhabitants of big cities and provincial towns of Russia (Komissarov, 1982).

The acquaintance of the Russian reader with Persian literature that first happened in the first half of the 17th century played an important role in the development of Iran-Russia cultural contacts. In that period the excerpts from "Golestan" and "Bustan" by Saadi were translated into Russian and these were the first translations of Persian literature into Russian (Komissarov, 1982). Then the works of Nizami, Saadi, Hafiz, Jami, Firdousi, Anvari, Attar were translated. Translations became better, their quality became higher and they were often accompanied by scholarly commentaries. At the same time, political, economic and cultural relations intensified already in the 19th century between the two countries contributed to the growing interest of Iranian

writers in Russian literature, with the samples of which they got acquainted through translations into West European languages, as well as through the intellectuals of Transcaucasia, who had close links with the Iranians due to the proximity of the language, everyday life, manners and customs. The Iranian writers had some idea of the masters of Russian literature, for example, of Pushkin, already in the beginning of the 19th century. But the first translations of Russian literature works into Persian appeared only in the early 20th century. They included Griboyedov's play "Woe from Wit", stories by Tolstoy and Gorky, a play by V. Gogol "The Inspector General" (Komissarov, 1982).

The beginning of the 20th century coincides with such important milestone events in the history of both countries as the constitutional revolution of 1905-1911 and the formation of a constitutional monarchy in Iran, on the one hand, and three Russian revolutions, the fall of tsarism and the formation of a new state, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialistic Republic, and later the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the international arena, on the other hand. The difference in political regimes could not seriously affect the cultural contacts of two neighboring states. Representatives of the Iranian youth received education in Russian universities and this led to the spread of Russian culture in Iranian society. Poetic and prose works of Russian authors became more and more popular in Iran and a peak in their translation into Persian took place during 1940s-1950s, when the rise of democratic sentiments was noted in Iran. At that time, a significant part of the works of classical Russian literature was translated from French and English, but direct translations from Russian were also carried out. Because of Russia's closeness to Iran, Russian classical literature was more popular in Iran than literature of other countries, and educated Iranians knew Russian writers such as Pushkin, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, Gogol, Lermontov, Dostoevsky and others well. It should be noted that there are Persian motifs in the works of Russian poets, first of all, representatives of the Silver Age – Yesenin, Gumilev, Khlebnikov.

Analyzing Iran-Russia cultural contacts in the 20th century, which were widely implemented during the existence of the USSR, one cannot ignore the activities of the Iranian Society of Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union and the Soviet Society of Cultural Relations with Iran. The social activities of both societies, complementing the state contacts, had an important positive impact on the history of cultural relations between our two countries. The Iranian Society of Cultural Relations with the USSR established in a difficult historical situation on October 30, 1943, set a task of *"the development and strengthening of cultural contacts between the peoples of Iran and the USSR on the basis of all-round cooperation in all areas of the intellectual activity and primarily in the sphere of science, art, literature and sports"* as its priority, according to its Charter (Avdeeva, 2006). Close business contacts were established with all the centers of Iranian and Oriental studies in the Soviet Union, numerous Russian language clubs and courses were established, a magazine "Peyame Nou" and later "Peyame Novin", an official body of the Society, was published. The Soviet Society of Cultural Relations with Iran was established

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on March 14, 1963, i.e. 20 years after the establishment of a similar society in Iran, during which cultural contacts between the two countries were widely implemented through the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries. The activities of the Societies were extremely multifaceted. First of all, these are traditional forms of cultural cooperation – thematic photo exhibitions, film weeks, book exhibitions and fairs, national art festivals, lectures, seminars, conferences, events dedicated to significant and anniversary dates in the life of both peoples. Specialized tourism was widely spread and the exchange of delegations was regular (Avdeeva, 2006).

The second half of the 20th century was characterized by an increase in mutual interest in literature of both countries. The 1960s – early 1980s were a period of activation of translations into Russian of the best works of contemporary Iranian authors, for example, Jamal-Zade, Sadek Hedayat, Bozorg Alyavi and many others. At the same time, primarily such popular Soviet publishers as Mir, Progress and APN sent to Iran the works of Russian and Soviet authors translated into Persian. In Iran they also began to publish translations of works of Soviet authors.

In the Soviet Union, the practical study of the Persian language and its scientific description was further developed. The number of Iranian study centers was growing. They conducted their activities in Moscow, Leningrad, in the capitals of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics, where qualified specialists in Iranian studies were trained.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 have made changes to the development of cultural contacts between the two countries. It should be noted that for today's Iranian leadership culture is both an important component of the state-political doctrine and a significant factor of its foreign policy (Sanai, 2016). In recent years, the development of cultural contacts is also one of the priorities of the foreign policy strategy of Russia. Moreover, the relations between two countries in the sphere of culture were not always at the desired level. It should be noted that in the last decade they have been developing at a progressive pace. The cultural cooperation between Iran and Russia is regulated by the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was signed during the visit of the ex-Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation Avdeev A.A. to Iran in 2010, and takes place in the sphere of science, education, museum and archive affairs, library science, cinema, music, theater, literature translation, sports, tourism, religious dialogue. The visit of the current Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation Medinsky V.R. to Iran in 2012 confirms the importance given by the leaders of the two countries to culture in the overall complex of bilateral relations (Dunaeva, 2015). The Cultural Representation opened in Moscow in 1999 at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia plays an important role in establishing and extending the cultural dialogue between Russia

and Iran. In addition, in 1998 the Society of Cultural Relations with Iran was established upon the initiative of Russian iranists. The Society set a task to disseminate the Persian language, Iranian studies and Iranian culture in close contact with the Cultural Representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Persian language is very widely studied in the territory of the Russian Federation. It is taught in 18 higher educational institutions of our country. These are universities in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Astrakhan, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Saratov, Krasnodar, Ufa, republics of the North Caucasus. In many cities, where there is a base for Iranian studies, there are Persian language courses. Only in Moscow there are about ten of them. Online study mode is developing. Contemporary Iranian prose and poetry are translated into Russian. In Russia, an interest in Iran is growing, as well as the number of centers engaged in its comprehensive study, including the Persian language learning. The cities of Voronezh and Chelyabinsk can be mentioned as an example of new Iranian studies centers. The popularity of the Russian language in Iran is also gaining momentum.

The Russian language learning in the country dates back to 1934, i.e. to the time of the establishment of the Tehran University. The Russian language teaching and the study of Russian literature are currently conducted at other major universities of the country – the Allameh Tabatabai University, Gilan, Isfahan, Mashhad universities, Al Zohra College for Women and some others. The Russian language and Russian literature are rather popular in Iran. The work on translating Russian classics into Persian continues (Kameneva and Motakhar, 2015).

As for the last co-projects in the sphere of culture implemented in 2016, the following examples can be mentioned: the traditional participation of both countries in the International Book Fairs in Tehran and Moscow in May and September 2016 respectively, the participation of the Iranian Islamic Studies Foundation in the book exhibition "Non-fiction" in Moscow in November 2016, the organization of ceremonies for awarding the winners of the award "The Book of the Year. Islam and Iran in the Russian-speaking space" and the holding of the All-Russian Iranian Forum in December 2016, the tour of the Russian Puppet Theater in Iran in late 2016, and much more.

The beginning of 2017 was marked by the holding in Tehran of the Representative Iran-Russia Scientific Conference dedicated to the 515th anniversary of the establishment of relations between Russia and Iran, as well as the 13th Regional Universiade on the Persian language (the Russian Federation and the CIS countries) and the opening of the classroom "Russian World" in the Tehran University. Major planned joint cultural events include the participation of Iran in the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Nizhny Novgorod fair, the organization of the exhibition of book products of the Publishing House "Sadra" in Nizhny Novgorod, etc.

### 3. Egypt-Russia Relations in the Aspect of the Intercivilizational Interaction

Despite the considerable remoteness of Russia and Egypt from each other, major differences in culture and lifestyle, these countries have had centuries-long close relations characterized by the interaction and a certain mutual influence of cultures. For historical reasons, the bilateral cooperation began in the religious sphere and further covered other spheres of material and spiritual culture. Mutual sympathy of the peoples, manifested in a great interest in each other's culture and a desire to get acquainted with it, are basically observed throughout the history of the development of Egypt-Russia relations. A certain commonality of historical destinies and civilizational mission of the two countries, the geographical position of which made them the links between Eastern and Western cultures, contributed to the mutual attraction, rapprochement and enrichment. In addition, Russia and Egypt are among the key countries in the system of international relations, acting as poles of influence in the world.

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire Moscow presented itself as "third Rome" and saw its mission in preserving and protecting the Orthodox faith. Russian pilgrims rushed to holy places, including those located on the territory of the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. Wishing to render the necessary support to coreligionists, the Russian tsars regularly transferred significant financial resources to the Patriarch of Alexandria and the Archbishop of Sinai. A famous Russian traveler Alexander Vasilievich Yeliseyev wrote: *"From time immemorial Athos, Sinai and Palestinian holy places have been places of worship for Russian pilgrims"* (Belyakov, 2005). Preserved sources mention that the first pilgrimage of Russians to Sinai took place around 1370. However, the contacts between the Russian and Sinai Orthodox churches were quite regular already at that time. In 1376, the Bishop Mark visited Moscow in order to receive donations for St. Catherine's monastery. In 1390, the Sinai monks brought to Moscow a stone with the image of the Burning Bush, which was placed in the Annunciation Cathedral of the Kremlin.

Russian merchants and pilgrims, who visited Sinai, left interesting notes of their trips, which were the only source of information about Egypt at that time. They were very popular in Russia among the people and included in hundreds of lists. The popularity of these works showed a considerable interest of educated Russians in holy places located in the territory of Egypt.

Traditionally, Russia had the closest relations with the Sinai Monastery of St. Catherine (Saint Catherine), which was founded in the 6th century in the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian around the Burning Bush, which was related to the great popularity of St. Catherine in Russia. It is interesting that the Liberation Order of St. Catherine the Great Martyr was the first female order established by Peter the Great in 1714. The most valuable icons, including the icons painted by Russian icon painters, are exhibited in the Treasury (Museum) of the monastery.

During the reign of Peter the Great in Russia, a new stage in the study of the Eastern countries began and this was caused by the needs of the active foreign policy of Russia. In 1700, Peter issued a decree on the learning of Oriental languages by the Russian; a new discipline appeared in Russian educational institutions – Oriental Studies. The study of the East, primarily in the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, dynamically developed during the reign of Catherine II, when Russia became the largest empire and a significant force on the world arena, being in the focus of attention of many peoples, including the Egyptians. As noted by an Egyptian researcher Mohammed Sabri ad-Daly, the Egyptians' great interest in Russia was observed after Russia inflicted the first crushing defeat to the Ottoman Empire, which included Egypt at that time, and annexed significant territories, including those inhabited by Muslims, intensified its relations with holy places located on the territory of Egypt (Daly, 2008).

As already mentioned above, the Christian community of Sinai monks was especially revered in Russia: Russian rulers and princesses donated to the monastery a golden cover for St. Catherine's tomb, two silver shrines for the storage of her relics, nine cast-iron bells. The bell tower of the monastery was built on the donations of the Russian Orthodox Church; moreover, the monastery was granted the land in the Odessa governorate, the proceeds from which were spent for its needs. The Archimandrite Antonin (Andrei Ivanovich Kapustin), a head of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem, a founder of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, made active efforts here. In particular, he systematized Greek manuscripts stored in the monastery library and compiled their catalogue. In the work, he found 38 texts in the Old Slavonic language.

In the first half of the 19th century, during the reign of the Egyptian pasha-reformer Muhammad Ali, who admired Peter the Great and Catherine II, the Egyptian delegations visited Russia for education and scientific knowledge. At that time, the first works on the history of Russia were published in Egypt. These were translations of Voltaire's works into Arabic, performed by order of Muhammad Ali by Sheikh At-Tantavy, who worked in Russia for many years and subsequently wrote a book about Russia entitled "A gift for the quick-witted with reports of Russia" ("Tukhfat al-azkiyya bi-ahbar billad Rusiia", 1850).

At the beginning of the 19th century, Russian universities began the systematic teaching of Oriental languages and Oriental studies: departments of Oriental languages were opened in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan universities. In 1815, the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages was founded in Moscow. In 1854, Nicholas I signed a decree on the opening of the Faculty of Oriental Languages at the St. Petersburg University. Outstanding Russian orientalists of the 19th century made a great contribution to the formation and development of the main directions and schools of research in the sphere of Oriental studies, in particular, Arabic studies (works of Senkovsky O.I.) and Egyptology (Rozen V.R., Golenishchev V.S., Turaev B.V.). In 1840 the above-mentioned Sheikh Mohammed Ayyad At-Tantawi, who



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also worked at the St. Petersburg University, a graduate of the largest theological university of the Muslim world Al-Azkhar University (Egypt), was invited to teach the Arabic language in the Educational Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the work, he collected a magnificent collection of Oriental manuscripts, which are now stored in the library of the Oriental Faculty of the St. Petersburg University. Since 1846, he worked as a professor and subsequently headed the Department of the Arabic language and Literature, replacing Senkovsky O.I. At-Tantawi taught grammar, translation from Russian into Arabic, the Egyptian spoken language, Oriental calligraphy and manuscript reading, gave lectures on the history of the Arab Caliphate. 35 works by At-Tantawi are preserved. The most famous of these works are as follows: the "Textbook of Spoken Arabic Language" (in French, 1848) and "A gift for the quick-witted with reports of Russia" (1850).

An interest in the ancient Egyptian attributes (such as clothing, sculpture, architecture, writing, literature, decor, etc.) in Russia can be regarded as one of the manifestations of the newest trends of that time. A phenomenon "Egyptomania" was a special form of Europe's reaction to the discovery of the treasures of the ancient Egyptian civilization. The decoding of the Rosetta stone by a famous French archaeologist Champollion (1822) was a significant event in the history of mankind, which gave rise to the Neo-Egyptian style in art. This style has found its vivid embodiment in the architecture of a number of Mediterranean countries (Spain, Italy, and France) and a capital of the Russian Empire – St. Petersburg.

In general, Egyptian motives appeared in Russian art long before this discovery. For example, the Pyramid fountain in Peterhof appeared in the era of Peter the Great upon the initiative of the Emperor. Obviously, its shape largely resembles the shape of the Obelisk Fountain in Versailles. In 1826, the so-called Egyptian bridge was opened in St. Petersburg. The Egyptian Gate decorated with the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs was built in Tsarskoe Selo in 1829.

In the 19th century, a scientific school of Egyptology was gradually forming in Russia, an Egyptian collection of originals appeared in St. Petersburg; therefore, the "Egyptian Museum" located on the first floor of the Kunstkamera was opened at the Academy of Sciences.

It should be noted that the active development of the bilateral cooperation was greatly facilitated by the activity of the Russian Company of Navigation and Trade founded in 1856. The Company had two lines of urgent communication with Egypt and owned the railway, ships, etc. Russian scientists, researchers, experts, who traveled to Egypt through the Russian Geographical Society, often wrote notes-memoirs of their trips, which were very popular among intellectuals of pre-revolutionary Russia. The notes *"Throughout the World. Essays and Paintings from Trips to three parts of the Old World by a physician Eliseev"* written by the Russian physician Alexander Vasilievich Eliseev, who was fond of the East and sensitive to its culture and specifics, were ones of the most popular. They were published in St.

Petersburg in 1894-96 in three volumes with illustrations of 11 famous artists. The author wrote: *"The developed habit of communicating with the oriental peoples, the allurements of objects to be observed and the mass of interesting material found at every turn – all this began to beckon me to the East whenever there was a possibility and extra money in my pocket..."* (Gerasimov, 1993). The Egyptians also treated the Russians with sympathy. Moreover, the attitude towards the Russians improved after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78, when hundreds of thousands of captive Muslims saw the cordiality and hospitality of the Russians.

All this caused a great interest in Egypt in the literary and artistic circles of Russia, as evidenced by the appearance of Egyptian motifs in the works of Russian classics A.S. Pushkin, M.Yu. Lermontov, F.M. Dostoevsky, L.N. Tolstoy, A.P. Chekhov, I.A. Bunin, a number of architects, sculptors, painters.

L.N. Tolstoy was very interested in the Arab world and Islam, which was largely caused by his studies at the Faculty of Oriental Literature at the Kazan University, where he tried to learn Arabic. Subsequently, L.N. Tolstoy corresponded with an Egyptian imam-educator, innovator, prominent public figure, Egypt's Grand Mufti Muhammad Abdo (1849-1905); they discussed the issues of morality, ethics and spiritual development of man. Muhammad Abdo shared the philosophical views of L.N. Tolstoy in many aspects and recognized his strongest influence on all progressive, educated people of the era. It must be pointed out that L.N. Tolstoy was considered by the Egyptian intelligentsia not only as an outstanding writer and philosopher, but also as a prophet, whose departure from Yasnaya Polyana was perceived as the social injustice and the insignificance of the material world. Many of his stories and novels were translated into Arabic in his lifetime at the turn of 20th century, but this was an indirect translation from English or French, performed by Egyptian emigrants, who lived in England and France. In the 1950s, "Anna Karenina", "Sunday", "War and Peace" in the abridged form were published in Egypt during the educational project "Kitabi" of a publisher Helmi Murad. The novel "War and Peace" was completely translated from French by an Egyptian writer and translator Edward Harrat. Numerous republications of the novel indicate a great interest of the Egyptian reader.

L.N. Tolstoy's novels "Anna Karenina" and "Sunday" were filmed in Egypt, but the film "Nahr al-Hob" ("The River of Love"), which was shot in the 1960s based on the novel "Anna Karenina", was the most popular. Famous Egyptian actors Omar Sherif and Faten Hamama starred as Vronsky and Anna Karenina. The plot of the novel was adapted to the Egyptian reality: the action takes place at the present time, the characters have Arabic names.

Egypt was visited by many "Silver Age" writers, who went on a pilgrimage to holy places. A famous Russian writer, a Nobel Prize winner in literature Ivan Alekseevich Bunin, who visited Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said, Aswan and other cities, was one of them. Vivid impressions he received during his travels around the

country of the pyramids and the treatment in the health center in Helwan inspired him to create a number of works that have become significant milestones in his creative activity. These works include a story about Alexandria "Delta", an essay about Cairo "Light of the Zodiac", verses "Cairo", "Alexander in Egypt", "Flight into Egypt", etc.

A well-known Russian Egyptologist Vladimir Semyonovich Golenishchev, a rich man who had been fond of ancient Egypt since childhood and knew the ancient Egyptian language well, traveled to Egypt every year and collected Egyptian antiquities during these trips. Later he went bankrupt and was forced to sell to the state a collection containing more than 6 thousand exhibits. Before the 1917 revolution he was a curator of the collection of Egyptian antiquities in the Hermitage Museum. He translated more than 50 ancient Egyptian texts into Russian and made comments to them. It should be noted that he founded the Department of Egyptology at Cairo University. The Egyptian Hall of the Museum of Fine Arts named after A.S. Pushkin in Moscow is almost 100% filled with his personal collection. He bequeathed his archive to a Frenchman Garno, who took him to Paris, where it became a basis of V.S. Golenishchev Scientific Institute-Center.

In 1869, delegations from many European countries arrived in Egypt for the opening of the Suez Canal. Russia sent a steamship, on board which, as part of the Russian delegation to Egypt, there was a famous maritime artist Ivan Aivazovsky, who was commissioned to sketch the opening of the Suez Canal. He was fascinated by the greatness of the desert, pyramids, and sphinxes, and on return he painted a number of paintings on Egyptian subjects: "Caravan in the Oasis. Egypt" (1871), "Pyramids" (1895), "Scenes from the Cairo Life" (1881).

A new wave of interest in Egypt was observed in Russia in the era of decadence, at the turn of the century. This was largely due to the search for a new worldview accompanied by an appeal to mysticism, as can be seen in the works of V. Soloviev, V. Rozanov and A. Benois. In 1908, A. Arensky's ballet "Egyptian Nights" was staged. In 1916, V. Bryusov published a stylized continuation of Pushkin's poem "Egyptian Nights". In late 1909, Balmont visited Egypt and wrote a series of essays, which later became part of the book "The Edge of Osiris" (1914).

In the Soviet era, the ideological tasks of art changed dramatically; the glorification of the revolution, its heroes and leaders became the main purpose of art. The revolution was represented as a worldwide event, which inevitably brought the monumentality to the forefront as a stylistic dominant. This primarily affected the appearance of Moscow. In these conditions, the relevance of an obelisk and pyramid was especially evident against the search for new symbols different from forbidden Christian ones. An obelisk becomes one of the main forms of revolutionary monuments (for example, "Obelisk of Freedom", 1918), which has become widespread due to its simplicity, laconicism and expressiveness of its image. A monument-obelisk in the Alexandrovsky Garden initially built for the 300th

anniversary of the Romanov dynasty was changed into a monument in honor of the revolution heroes. It is no accident that during the construction of the Lenin Mausoleum an architect A. Shchusev used a theme of the pyramid symbolizing the greatness of the deceased.

Egypt-Russia relations experienced an unprecedented heyday in the era of President Gamal Abdel Nasser. After the 1952, revolution Nasser began to implement socialist-oriented reforms, orienting Egypt's foreign policy toward close cooperation with the USSR. In this period (1955-1975), the unprecedentedly large-scale bilateral cooperation is observed in the military sphere. According to the former USSR Ambassador to Egypt A. Belonogov, during these 20 years the USSR delivered weapons, ammunition and various military equipment to the Arab Republic of Egypt in the amount of more than 5 billion rubles (at that time, the ruble rate was higher than the dollar rate – *author's note*) on preferential conditions (50% of the cost). During this time, about 8,000 Egyptian soldiers were trained in the USSR (Belonogov, 2008, p. 113). Representative offices of Aeroflot, Intourist, Vneshtorgbank, Sovexportfilm, International Book, Minmorflot, Minrybkhhoz, and News Agency Novosti were opened in Egypt and this shows the development of bilateral contacts in a wide variety of spheres. The construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, an energy base of the Egyptian economy, with the help of Soviet specialists was a peak of this cooperation. In celebration of the completion of the construction, a 76-meter monument in the form of a blossoming lotus was erected in honor of the Soviet-Egyptian friendship.

Against these transformations, a socialist direction, which was based on the artistic principles of Russian and Western European realistic classical literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, dominated in Egyptian literature. The analysis of the development of an individual and society became a focus of literary works. The generation of Egyptian writers-innovators declared the creation of local, national literature as their priority. Refusing to revive genre forms of classical medieval literature, without rejecting the tradition, "new realists" of the 1950s were guided by Chekhov's story and Italian neo-realism. Epic novels like "War and Peace" by L.N. Tolstoy were created, thus completing the formation of a new genre system of Egyptian prose. At that time, the novels of F.M. Dostoevsky (along with the works of Sartre, Camus, and Hemingway) also had a considerable impact on Egyptian literature. His collected works were published in Egypt in the late 1950s. The works of A.M. Gorky became very popular. In 1956, they (in particular, a play "The Lower Depth") inspired an Egyptian writer Noaman Ashura to write a play "An-Nas illy Takht" ("People Who Are Below"). The play became a great event in the theatrical life of Egypt, laying the foundations of the author's theater. Many researchers note a considerable impact of A.P. Chekhov on the creative activity of one of the most talented Arab writers of the 20th century – Yusuf Idris. For example, these are his stories "Alia Asyut" ("To Assiut"), "Mazlum" ("Not Guilty"), "Mishvar" ("Walked"), etc. Indeed, the general motives of the early stories of two writers are obvious; however, this is not borrowing and imitation, but a result of the similarity

of the attitude and understanding of the human personality, which is partly explained by the common profession and medical practice. Thus, by the middle of the 20th century, the experience of Western European and Russian realistic prose was adopted and transformed by Egyptian writers; it became an integral part of their artistic consciousness (Kirpichenko, 2003; Bezpалov, 2017; Polyakova *et al.*, 2017; Serebryakova *et al.*, 2016; Surzhikov *et al.*, 2017).

At the same time, the formation of a system of music education took place in Egypt. A significant role in this process was played by Soviet musicians invited to work in Egypt. On the other hand, many Egyptian musicians studied at USSR musical universities.

Afterwards, the political situation played a decisive role in the development of bilateral relations: during the era of President Anwar Sadat, who reoriented the country to the West, the areas of the development of Soviet-Egyptian relations were considerably decreased; in particular, the cooperation stopped on most sites (98), Soviet specialists continued to work only on 13 sites, where they were mainly engaged in modernization (Helwan metallurgical plant, cement plant in Assiut, at-Tabin refractory plant, etc.). Soviet propaganda basically depicted Egypt in a negative light, emphasizing the American presence. Egyptian propaganda responded in the same way, criticizing socialist ideas and the Soviet leadership. Gradual normalization of relations and their return to the previous level began only when a pragmatic politician Hosni Mubarak came to power.

The receipt by Russia of the right to excavate in Egypt became a remarkable achievement in the development of bilateral relations in the scientific sphere. After the completion of archaeological works under the supervision of B.B. Piotrovsky in the early 1960s, Russia had no opportunity to excavate in Egypt for a long time, although scientific expeditions from other countries continued to work actively there, as the legacy of the ancient Egyptian civilization is so great that Egypt is forced to seek help from foreign Egyptologists for the search for and study of artifacts. After many years, Russia could begin excavations in Giza again with the support of a famous Egyptian archaeologist Dr. Zahi Hawass, who was appointed the Director General of the Supreme Archaeological Council of Egypt in 2002, in the Permanent Committee on Egyptian Antiquities.

At the present stage, bilateral relations are also actively developing in the sphere of education. In both countries, the leading educational institutions train specialists in the sphere of Arabic studies, Egyptology, Russian studies. In Russia, these are Moscow State University, St. Petersburg University, Moscow State University of Foreign Affairs, People's Friendship University of Russia, Kazan University, etc.; in Egypt, these are Cairo University, Ain Shams University. The establishment of the Egyptian Russian University in the suburb of Cairo in 2006 under the leadership of Dr. Sherif Helmi, the first university in the Arab world, which had partnership relations with seven leading Russian universities, including with the People's

Friendship University of Russia, was a milestone in this direction. Under these agreements, academic exchanges, an exchange of scientific publications are carried out, summer and winter schools for students and teachers are organized.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Thus, it can be said that bilateral relations in the aspect of the intercivilizational interaction have been gradually developed. The first significant upturn in their development was during the rise of the Russian Empire and consolidation of its positions in the international arena, namely during the reign of Peter the Great and Catherine II, which was due to the active foreign policy of Russia. Afterwards, these relations were extended and strengthened, obtaining an extensive base for the development through the formation of Oriental studies, Egyptology, Russian studies, covering new areas. The political situation and economic factors had a decisive influence on the dynamics of the development of Egypt-Russia relations. At the same time, the historical experience shows that the actual cooperation between the peoples is possible only on a basis of mutual respect for national interests, a meaningful dialogue, a desire to learn about each other, cross-fertilization, and not by imposing alien values.

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