

**T.C. ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE
PRESENT STATE OF THE RUSSIAN-SYRIAN
RELATIONS**

THESIS

Elvin AGHAYEV

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

**POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
PROGRAM**

Thesis Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Filiz KATMAN

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T.C.
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I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis.
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Elvin AGHAYEV

Signature

FOREWORD

First of all, I would like to thanks God almighty for having made everything possible by giving me strength and courage to do this work.

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Elvin AGHAYEV



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ABBREVIATIONS

CAWAT	: Center for Analysis of World Arms Trade
CIS	: Commonwealth of Independent States
IOPS	: Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society
MINATOM	: Ministry for Atomic Energy of the Russian Federation
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PNA	: Palestinian National Authority
SCP	: Syrian Communist Party
UN	: United Nations
UK	: United Kingdom
USA	: United States of America
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



RUSYA-SURİYE İLİŞKİLERİNİN TARİHİ BAĞLARI VE BUGÜNÜ

ÖZET

Sunulan tez tarihsel kökleri, işbirliği gelenekleri ve ikili ilişkilerin gelecekte daha da gelişme perespektifine sahip Rusya ve Suriye'nin ilişkilerine ayrılmıştır. Rusya ve Suriye halkları arasındaki ilişkilerin geçmişi sadece onlarca yıla değil, yüzyıllara dayanmaktadır. Bu tezde Rusya ile Suriye arasındaki ilişkiler, hem Sovyetler Birliği kurulmadan önce ve sonra, hem de 1991 yılında Rusya Federasyon'u kurulduktan sonra ele alınmıştır. Rusya ve Suriye arasındaki ilişkiler SSCB'nin ilk zamanlardan beri başarıyla gelişmeye başlamıştır. Suriye ve Sovyetler Birliği arasında birçok yönden ortak görüşler Ortadoğu'daki durumu belirliyordu. Bu nedenle, bu bölgedeki sorunların çözümü belki de iki ülkenin dış politikasında en önemli alanlarından biri oldu. Suriye ve Sovyetler Birliği uyumlu bir şekilde uluslararası durumun normalleşmesi için hareket ediyorlardı. Suriye her zaman Sovyetler Birliği'nin nükleer tehditi ortadan kaldırmayı amaçlayan, silahlanma yarışını engelleyen ve siyasi yollarla bölgesel çatışmaların halletme yönündeki gibi birçok girişimini destekliyordu. Sovyetler Birliği ise Suriye için hep en önemli stratejik ortaklardan biri olmuş ve hatta en önemli askeri ortağı olarak Suriyeni her zaman Orta Doğu'da destekliyordu. Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşü ve yeni bir Rusya'nın ortaya çıkması, Rusya Federasyonu'nun uluslararası ilişkiler sisteminde rolü, devletin ulusal ve uluslararası siyasi çıkarlarının farkında olması ve bunları sağlamak için en iyi yolu bulmak gibi önemli soruları ortaya çıkardı. Rusya, son yıllarda Suriye Arap Cumhuriyeti ile ilişkilerine büyük önem vermiştir. Ortadoğu'da ve çevresindeki siyasi gelişmelerin temel eğilimlerini dikkate alarak Rusya ve Suriye stratejik ortaklığı devam ettiriyor ve uluslararası arenada da birbirlerine destek veriyorlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *SSCB, Suriye, Rusya, Orta Doğu.*

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE PRESENT STATE OF THE RUSSIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS

ABSTRACT

This thesis touches upon the Russian-Syrian relations, which have historical roots, cooperation traditions and further development prospects. The history of relations between peoples of Russia and Syria should be considered in terms of centuries, not years. In this thesis, we dealt with the relationship between Russia and Syria before and after the Soviet Union was formed, as well as since 1991 when Russia became a federal state. Relations between Russia and Syria have developed harmoniously from the first years of establishment of the USSR. In many respects, similar views and positions of Syria and the Soviet Union were determined by the existing situation in the Middle East. Therefore, resolving the conflict in that region was perhaps one of the most important areas of foreign policy of the two countries. Syria and the USSR in a coherent fashion advocated radical improvements in the international environment. Syria consistently supported a number of initiatives taken by the Soviet Union, which were focused both on removing the nuclear threat and cessation of the arms race, and on enduring solution to regional conflicts by political means. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union has always been one of the most important strategic partners for Syria, and even a primary military partner permanently supporting Syria in the Middle East. Collapse of the Soviet Union and establishing the new Russia raised a number of urgent questions of the role of the Russian Federation within the system of international relations, understanding of national domestic and foreign political interests and searching for the best ways to ensure those interests. Over the recent years, Russia has paid considerable attention to the relationship with the Syrian Arab Republic. Taking into account the major trends in the development of the political situation in and around the Middle

East, Russia and Syria remain strategic partners and continue supporting each other in the international arena.

Key Words: *USSR, Syria, Russia, Middle East.*



1. INTRODUCTION

This research considers the internal and external policies of Russia and Syria, and strategic priorities that determine relations between these two countries both in historical terms, and at the current stage. The international system, as well as the internal dynamics of each country, has played an important role in shaping the political relation the two countries share. According to the neoclassical realism theory on international relations, certain systematic, cognitive and domestic variables determine the course of action a country decides to take in the international system. These variables include how power dynamics are distributed among States, the perception of threats or intentions of other countries as well as the institutions and actors within a state who have a direct influence on the freedom and power of States foreign policy makers. Therefore, the neoclassical realism theory offers a great framework to investigate the individual factors that have made both Syria and Russia to maintain their political relations.

The first chapter of this study touches on historical roots of the relations between Russia and Syria, as well as analysis of these relations since formation to the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Naturally, the differences in ideologies, political forms, and social bases of the ruling regimes in the Arab world gave way to the different attitudes of the Arab countries to the USSR.

The second chapter deals with the process of establishment and implementation of the foreign policy of the Syrian Arab Republic with Russia over the period from 1991 through 2015, as well as with the further analysis of military and economic factors. After the collapse of the USSR, the past historical Syrian-Russian relations receded with the inevitable decline in military and technical cooperation. Other aspects of the relationships between Syria and Russia worsened as well. Bilateral ties were restored only in the new geopolitical conditions after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's formal visit to Moscow in 2005. Syrians influence in the Middle East and in the Arab world as a

whole determined the importance of enhancing cooperation with that country in order to meet the interests of Russia in the region.

Russia has remained as the most influential state to stand by the regime, providing international political support to Syria. Russia's decision to stand by the current Syrian regime is quite interesting and offers a great opportunity to identify some of the motivating factors that have made Russia to Stand up for Assad's regime. Some of the possible factors could be the foreign policy doctrine of multi-polarity, material interests as well as Russia's aim of ensuring that its reputation and influence in the Middle East is maintained. Russia's resolution to provide political support to Syria is likely to enhance the bilateral relations the two States. Both the countries have a number of interests that have shaped their international relations. These interests include military interests, economic and social interests as well as strategic considerations. The next sections will discuss the Syria-Russia relation in greater details.

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND SYRIA (1920-1991)

2.1 Soviet-Syrian Relations Before 1920

Russia-Syria relations date back to the remote past, entrenched within almost a thousand years of tradition (Hopwood, 1969). “The Russians faced Arabs from Syria in the 9th-10th centuries on the Volga, Don, in Byzantine Empire, Sicily, Crete, and Cyprus” (Абдель, 1998). Since the 11th century, contacts between Orthodox Clergy of Russia and Syria have taken place. Later, more or less constant relations were maintained in the 13th-15th centuries by the Muslims of Syria and the Golden Horde. In the 16th-18th centuries, Russia-Syria relations were mainly established through merchants, pilgrims, and scare captives sold to Syria into slavery, which were able to return to Russia. However, those captives, primarily of Slavic or Turkic origin (from the 14th century, the Circassians as well), tended to stay in Syria as warriors, craftsmen, traders, or servicemen.

The Russia-Syria relations experienced the period of rise in the 18th-19th centuries, when Russia came into immediate touch with the Ottoman Empire and Muslims from the Caucasus. The Russians started showing interest in Syrian culture, learning Arabi. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, the Mediterranean squadron of the Russian fleet conducted proficient operations in 1770-1772 on the seaboard of Lebanon and Palestine, with the Russian permanent post staying in Beirut until 1775. It was then that the Arabs living in Syria and Lebanon showed affection for Russia, and the Russians expressed growing interest towards Syria. A number of trends in relations between the two countries arose, including religious (the most old-established one), cultural, economic, and political contacts.

The religious trend mainly expressed in communications between the Russians and Orthodox Arabs from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine (generally, through permanent

relations established by the Russian Orthodox Church with the Jerusalem and Antiochian Patriarchy) was constantly improved. The most outstanding result of that improvement was establishment in the 1880s of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) in Russia. Despite resistance of the Ottoman authorities and western competitors (generally, in a stealthy form), the IOPS acquired lands in the Arabian East, erected buildings, and economic facilities, established temples, medical and educational institutions, thus combining religious activity with economic, educational, and healthcare practices. By 1895, the IOPS organized 15 schools accommodating 1,400 pupils (including 900 girls), and by 1900, 70 schools were opened with 10,000 students in Damascus, Beirut, Homs, Tripoli, Haifa, Beit Sahour, and other places (Гудожник, 1993, P. 12). IOPS normal schools in Beit Djal (female) and Nazareth (male) trained personnel for the IOPS schools from the number of their Arabian students. Although the IOPS ranked below the western competitors in terms of abundance (e.g., by 1900, in the Arabian East 18,000 pupils were trained in 1,293 (Гудожник, 1993, P. 12) Catholic schools guided by French missionaries), often it won in quality. In particular, Mikhail Naimy, a famous Lebanese writer, who finished an IOPS school, believed that “Russia outperformed its competitors” because the IOPS schools offered free education, with their level “meeting the newest pattern, though” (Нуайме, 1980, P. 60).

Development of education in Russian in Syria of the late 19th century at least amongst Orthodox Arabs nevertheless was leading to a certain consolidation of a position of the Russian language, which by the middle of the 19th century had been mastered by many people, not only by those being in sympathy with Russia, i. e. Orthodox Christians or representative of Christian clergy. That phenomenon was determined by communication with the Russian pilgrims, diplomatic officials, travellers (many of them arrived to Syria with a scientific purpose), merchants, and monks. In the 19th century, Hassan Rizkalla, a writer, journalist and public character born in Halab, had to immigrate to Russia persecuted by the Ottoman government, and he lived and worked here in 1863-1867 as the most famous expert in the Russian language. Hassan was well known far beyond Syria as a liberal thinker, founder and publisher of one of the first Arab newspapers *Miraat Al-Ahwal*, which was popular not only in Syria and Lebanon, but also in Egypt and other countries. According to the contemporary Syrian historians, Hassan (who, by

the way, was the first to translate Krylov's fables into Arabic) represented the "new generation" of the Arabian intellectuals in Syria, which tried to enrich the Arabic culture by adding features of European development.

There were also other channels for the Russian language and Russian culture to find their way to Syria. From 1848, there has been a functional church in Moscow presented to the Antiochian Patriarchy named Antiochian Metochion, which always had been guided by an Arabian prior from Syria. Here, appeared an actual training center for Syrian Orthodox church ministers, who afterwards supported strengthening of sympathy towards Russia and familiarization of their natives with the Russian culture. Some Syrians of Orthodox faith stayed in Russia forever assisting in education of their compatriots who arrived from Syria. The extent to which they were influenced by the Russian culture, and, particularly, Russian literature can be judged by the confession made by Mikhail Naimy who has been already mentioned, and almost 50 years after graduation from the Nazareth IOPS school, wrote that then, having been fascinated by the Russian literature, he "was dreaming of composing like the Russian did". The Soviet scientists who met Naimy ten years after that confession, could state that the Arabi author was at home with the Russian language, only sometimes using old words typical of the turn of the 20th century.

From the start of activity of the IOPS, the society became the main source of the Russian culture and influence in Syria. By termination of the IOPS, it possessed eleven churches, seven monasteries, seventeen hotels, four ambulatories, and a hospital. In Syria and Palestine, the society's assets were evaluated at two million rubles, annually accommodating ten thousand pilgrims from Russia, with the ambulatories servicing up to 60,000 patients per year. The IOPS published religious, educational, scientific, and popular literature (up to 400 writings by 1907) (Ланда, 1969, P. 66-68).

Religious, cultural, and spiritual relations between Syria and Russia maintained both through the IOPS and besides, were developed against the background of slowly and gradually, yet continuously growing economic relations. At the turn of the 19th century, the scope of the relations was reduced to export of silk, tobacco, cotton, wool, and olive oil from Syria, and exported grain from Russia. Only two reasons determined the

situation, that is, total control over foreign trade of Syria exercised by the Ottoman Empire, and Western competitors both in supply of goods, and in means of delivery, since the most part of the vessels carrying goods from Syrian to Russian ports were owned by the Greeks, Englishmen, and Frenchmen (only eight ships from three hundred were Russian). At that time (before 1853), Russia ranked the fourth in Syrian import. Later, after the Crimean war, the Ottoman government introduced new restrictions (under the treaty of 1862), inter alia, by increasing customs duties for supplies from Russia from 5 to 8 per cent, and imposing embargo on export from and import to Syria a number of goods traditionally traded by the country. Nevertheless, commercial exchange between Russia and Syria was developing; in 1910-1911 it amounted to 13% of the total Russian export to the Ottoman Empire, while in export from Syria Russia kept ranking the fourth. In 1912, forty-two trading companies owned by the Syrians were linked with Russia with business chains.

Fair personal contacts were an important aspect of relations between Russia and Syria. Graduates and teachers from the IOPS schools informed the Syrians with the events taking place in Russia. In the Arab world, interest in the Russian events was most notably rising after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, and revolution of 1905-1907. It was then that many literary writings by Russian authors were translated into Arabic, and the Arabic literature of that time, especially young authors' compositions (amongst which, Ameen Rihani who came to be well-known afterwards, should be mentioned) reflected what happened in Russia. Unlike the conflict with Japan, which did not earn the sympathy of the Arabs, the Revolution of 1905 was welcomed by many Arab men of letters, chiefly, by young poets.

The Syrians, who stayed in Russia for life, however did not lose touch with the native land, or those who stayed here long doing business, engaged in journalism, science (including Arabic studies), working as engineers, doctors, teachers, etc., played a great role in rapprochement with Syria. A native of Tripoli, Salim Naufal, since 1959, has taught Russian and Muslim law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Abdallah Keldy born in Aleppo was employed with the University of Saint Petersburg in the same capacity. Jurgi Morcos, a figure of Damascus descent, having graduated from the Saint Petersburg University, became a professor of Arabic linguistics at the Lazarev Institute

of Oriental Languages in Moscow, gained even higher renown. Afterwards, his students became the best teachers at the IOPS schools. By translating into Russian of the history of a visit of the Antiochian Patriarch Macarios in the 17th century, and of his meeting with the Tsar Alexey, Morcos became, in essence, the first scientist to research historical relations between Russia and Syria.

Some Syrians became merchants, others combined science with business activity. Jamil Antaki was an expert in Islamic religion at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Fauzi Huri became a journalist. Adib Hazin, after his study in Kiev, both at a school of theology, and at a business school, ultimately graduated from a medicine faculty to become an outstanding roentgenologist (later, he worked in Palestine). Michael Attaja invited by Morcos to Russia also changed occupations after the native of Damascus studied for some time both at a business school in Beirut, and at the medicine faculty of the American college (later, the American university) in Lebanon.

Attaja had been a professor of the Lazarev Institute in Moscow for over 50 years, from 1873 through 1924. He compiled an Arabian-Russian dictionary, and a number of teaching aids for learning both Arabic literary language, and everyday Syrian dialect. In total, his writings include over 40 scientific works published in Russia. Though living almost all his life in Russia, Michael Attaja did not lose touch with his native land, holding correspondence with his father, Yusuf Attaja, a doctor, whom Michael often asked to assist his Russian graduates sent to Syria for scientific purposes. Amongst them, Ahatanhel Krymsky, a prospective member of the Academy, a leading expert in Arab studies of Russia and Ukraine worth mentioning.

Amongst the Syrians who devoted themselves to the development of Arabic studies in Russia, N. Saifi, A. Hashab (the author of one of the first in Russia Grammar of the Arabic language, and, particularly, B.S. Dzhauzi (known in the USSR in 1921-1942 as Panteleymon Juze) should be also mentioned. Dzhauzi, who graduated from Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy and Kazan University, was the author of an interesting book about Mutazilites, rector of the Baku University and one of the founders of Azerbaijan alphabet in the 1920s. Regularly, he would leave for Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to deliver lectures and seminars, and meet with the relatives and compatriots, telling them about living in Russia and Caucasus. He was one of the first authors in the USSR to

consider the problems of the Middle East and Muslim regions of the USSR in complex relationship.

Thanks to the efforts applied by the Syrians working in Russia, notably, Morcos and Attaja, scientific travels to Syria of the Russian experts in Arab studies, Ahatanhel Krymsky (in 1896-1898) and Ignaty Krachkovsky (in 1908-1910) who became widely known afterwards, proved extremely fruitful. On their journeys, a well-stocked library was collected, including numerous valuable manuscripts and rare materials on new Arabic literature, historical connections of Arabic culture, customs and living habits of Arabs, and on wonderful results of the activity carried by the IOPS in the development of the Russian culture, language, and literature.

Therefore, in the period short of the World War I, which war interrupted the natural course of rapprochement between Russia and Syria, that process had brought tangible results. Apart from growth of trade and other economic contacts, as well as achievements of cultural and educational (including learning, treatment, and religious) activity of the IOPS, as rightly noted by Gassan Abdul Ghani, “surge of interest in Syria in the Russian printed media, and increased number of merely personal contacts (by correspondence, personal relations, and marriages) between the Arabs and Russians” took place. All that played a big role afterwards, when Syria and Russia turned to have been driven apart for almost 30 years by wars, political events, ideological, administrative, legal, and other obstacles.

2.2 Relations Between the Soviet Union and Syria, 1920-1991

When World War I ended, there was the mandatory rule established by France in Syria (since summer of 1920), while Russia passed through another 4 years of the civil war resulted in formation of the Soviet Union at the end of 1922. France, though having recognized the USSR in 1924 unlike the United States, which were the last to do the same in 1933, was among the winners in World War I, who tried then to dictate the postwar world structure. In particular, France, like any other states in the West, did their best for isolation of the USSR on the international stage, specifically, for prevention the spreading of the Soviet anticolonial propoganda to its African possessions. The French

government tried to keep Syria isolated in the same manner, in order to deprive the patriotic forces of the country of any outside support.

However, the support existed, including on the part of the new authorities of the Soviet Russia, which was still in the embrace of the civil war. First of all, that support manifested itself in distribution of the appeal “To All Laboring Muslims of Russia and East” translated into Arabic, which both in Syria and Lebanon became a Lenin’s personal letter addressed to the leaders of the liberation movement of the Arabs (afterwards, many families kept the text of the appeal as a relic). The proclamation contained the call for overthrow of colonial predators and enslavers, emphasizing ‘Shape your national future. You have the right to, because your fate is in your hands’ (Документы внешней политики СССР, 1957, т. 1, Р. 34-35).

Despite the obstacles of whatever kind, cultural, spiritual, and merely personal communications between the countries did not stop. Starting from 1920, the Syrians faced flat unwillingness of the western powers to respect their sovereign will, including the first Constitution of Syria independently composed in 1920 by the Arabs (Газиз, 1995, P. 1). Struggle against the French occupation and enslavement became the main task of the people. The Syrians knew that the USSR stood against colonial oppression and predatory mandate system, meanwhile, in January of 1919, the President of the USA, Wilson, suggested that the Arabians would choose between the mandate rule of a number of states of the West and the single mandate of the League of Nations over the Arab Asia Confederation (Lloyd-George, 1938, Vol. II, Sf. 1039-1044). Commencing from the First Congress of Peoples of the East and Baku through the conferences held by the Anti-Imperialist League in Brussels in the 1920-1930s, representatives of Syria continuously communicated with the persons representing the Soviet Russia, which leaders, according to Amir Shakib Arslan, ‘had always felt a brotherly friendship to the peoples of colonies (Соркин, 1965, P. 63).

The government of the Soviet Union declared not once the official non-recognition of the mandate rule established in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine by England and France, namely, in 1919, 1923, 1924-1927, and in 1934. The USSR never walled back even after joining in 1934 the League of Nations, which gave birth to the notorious mandate

system. However, the western political figures always tried to downgrade the significance of the anticolonial policy pursued by the USSR by interpreting the same as a part of the 'revolutionary strategy of the Comintern' (which, in fact, passed the proclamation 'In Defense of the Syrian People' in 1924), and as an aspiration of the Soviet Union 'to assert itself as a great or regional power' on the Middle East. A French scientist H  l  ne Carr  re d'Encausse explains the interest the USSR felt in Syria and other countries of the Arab East by all but a wish to acquire 'spheres of influence' in that region, and, above all, to establish 'a base in the Bosphorus Straits'.

It is known, however, that the Syrian Communist Party (SCP), which emerged in 1924 as a section of the Comintern, in every possible way supported the 'great Syrian revolution' of 1925-1927, sought to use solidarity of the Comintern and the Communist Party of France in the best interests of the Syrian revolutionists, spread the corresponding propaganda amongst special units of the French forces in Syria, especially, amongst Lebanon peasants and Syrian Armenians, fought against maneuvers of the colonial authorities aimed at the splitting in the ranks of patriots, and separation of the confessional and ethnical minorities from them. According to Wafik Makhoul, a Syrian researcher, the USSR acquired 'the image that afterwards, over the years of political independence of Syria, made this country the very driving force supporting not only their defense of the national sovereignty conquered, but also implementation of the profound internal alterations and independent foreign policy course' in the eyes of the Syrian patriots (Махлюф, 1997, P.26).

That was not a surprise. Unlike the French authorities, which oppressed Syria and tried to divide it into a number of artificial pocket pseudo-countries, the USSR stood for liberation of the entire state and its inner unity. Administration of the mandatory state tried to destroy the unity of people and their patriotic forces, while the SCP justly considered by the Syrians as the conductor of the policy of the USSR in Syria, advocated for the unity of the Syrian people and all patriots of Syria as a prerequisite for acquiring independency and social progress of the nations. We agree with the corresponding assessment of the activity performed by the SCP, provided both by Wafik Makhoul quoted above, and Doctor Grigory Kosachev, a Russian researcher, who

studied the issue of evolution and significance of the communist parties of the Arab East, as well as with the thesis of emergence of the SCP in the 1920s based on revolutionary and radical moods in the national liberation movement of the Syrian people. Despite many faults and mistakes made in the activity performed by the SCP, which too often adhered to its ideological concepts dogmatically, even when those concepts conflicted with the national reality, and which even more frequently unconditionally approved all and any foreign policy measures taken by the USSR regardless of meeting the general Arab interests, we should acknowledge objectively the ambition of the SCP for continued commitment to the radically patriotic and anti-imperialistic course.

In World War II, France sustained a defeat, its positions in the East damaged. In 1941, the British forces and general de Gaulle's troops entered Syria the general stood up against the 'Vichy government' in France. Under those conditions, administration of de Gaulle had to recognize officially the independency of Syria. In 1943, national sovereignty of the country was legally restored. However, the government of Syria was incapacitated by the fact of presence of foreign forces in the territory of the country. Nevertheless, it was able to come in contact with Nikolai Novikov, the USSR's ambassador to Egypt, and, in June of 1944, to send by hand a letter to the government of the USSR containing a proposal to establish 'friendly diplomatic relations'. Those relations were established on the 28th of June, 1944. Thereby, the USSR became the first great power to recognize the independence of Syria.

Syrians desire to transform its formal sovereignty into actual independency caused France to respond with the aspiration to 'unleash... colonial war (Пир-Будагова, 1978, P. 20). France actually initiated the war in May of 1945 with artillery shelling and air bombardments of Damascus, Homs, and Khami. The USSR demanded to stop aggression and respect independency and sovereignty of Syria. By engaging the mechanism of the United Nations (UN), the USSR demanded through the UN Security Council that all foreign forces should be removed immediately from Syria and Lebanon, specifying in a special note to the governments of the United Kingdom (UK), China, France, and United States of America (USA) that 'Syria and Lebanon are the members

of the United Nations participating in the conference held in San-Francisco' (Майоров, 1941, т. 3, P. 269). The UN that had not been completely formed yet faced a serious test. However, firmness of the USSR helped to overcome the crisis based on principles of justice and international law. In the UN Security Council, a deputy representing the Soviet Union was steadfast to the opinion that 'the circumstances that justified the presence of the English and French forces in Syria and Lebanon, have already gone (Ватолина, ve Беляев, 1957, P. 221). Therefore, the Syrian patriots 'already in 1945, felt friendly support provided by the USSR, which criticized the France's attempt to retain military presence in Syria'. With the help of the USSR, UN, and international community, the citizens of Syria compelled both the French and British forces to leave the country on the 17th of April, 1946.

Since 1947, the tensions between Syria and the USSR have been primarily determined by the differences in Palestine issue, the first war with Israel, which started in May, 1948, and a number of military coups and dictatorships following mainly the pro-Western orientation. However, everything changed after the democratic coup d'état in 1954 resulted in removal from power of the last dictator Adib Shishekly, after which, 'in Syria, the era of the Second Parliamentary Republic began'. The Revolution of 1954 and political life afterwards was highly influenced by the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party (Ba'ath Party), which opposed strongly all plans of the Western powers to involve Syria in a variety of military alliances under the aegis of the USA or the UK. Meanwhile, the Ba'ath Party leaders in the middle of the 1940s in a forward-looking manner emphasized the necessity 'not to show the teeth' towards the USSR, use its anti-imperialist position, and achieve 'establishment of amicable relationships' with the USSR. However, the Ba'ath Party rejected the idea of cooperation with the 'materialistic communism', which they believe to be incompatible with the 'Arabs' spirit. But in the middle of the 1950s, a new view was taken of that issue.

The period from 1949 through 1954 was literally overflowed with the attempts made by the Western powers to draw Syria into the plans of pro-British monarchists of the creation of the 'Great Syria' or 'Fertile Crescent' Union to be supposedly formed by Syria with the neighboring Arab countries under the guidance of the Hashemite dynasty

ruling them not only in Jordan, but also in Iraq. Almost all military dictators regarded the said plans from 1949 to 1951, ultimately rejected though starting from April of 1949, generally pressed by external forces (Saudi Arabia with the USA behind, and with Egypt then being ruled by the king), however, the danger of implementation of those plans remained. At the same time, the USA and the UK acted not only in a roundabout way through their allies in Arab countries, but also immediately. On the 14th of November, 1951, together with France and Turkey, they urged the Arab governments to form the block named 'The Middle East Command'. The USSR provided an immediate feedback by emphasizing in the note dated November 21, 1951, that the new project designed was aimed at the 'actual occupation of the countries of the Middle East by forces of the countries that established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'. In the note, the Soviet state expressed sympathy with the national aspirations of peoples of the East and with their fight for independency, a radical difference of that standpoint from the standpoint of the 'states that used to regard the Middle East countries as their colonies'. In that context the USSR reminded of its support of Syria and Lebanon in 1945 and 1946 touching the issue of removal of foreign forces. All of it had a direct bearing on Syria, because since the early 1951, the UK took efforts to obtain military bases in Syria, the USA offered technical support pursuant to the 'Truman doctrine', and in October of 1951, that is, before the official appeal of four states, Adib Shishekly, the colonel then ruling in Syria, was proposed to join the project of the 'Middle East Command'. However, the further course of events resulted in rejection by Shishekly, who was absorbed in domestic political problems and under pressure of different forces of the Arab world, of the proposal to participate in the said alliance, all the more so Israel was considered as one of the members of the block. Besides, Shishekly opposed to rapprochement with England and Iraq.

After Shishekly was overthrown, Syria rejected even more decisively and definitively whichever participation in pro-Western alliances, in particular, in the Baghdad Pact of 1955, and it refused to adopt the Eisenhower Doctrine developed by the USA. All attempts taken by the West to involve Syria in its plans from 1955 through 1957 were buried under the decisive position of the Ba'ath Party, which criticized those attempts.

The USSR as an ally of President Nasser and Nasser's Egypt recognized the right of Syria to unite with Egypt. The USSR cooperated with the United Arab Republic (UAR) included Syria in 1958-1961, among other things fulfilling their obligations under the previous agreements, though some projects (in particular, construction of the Euphrates dam) remained practically scrapped. However, of one hundred industrial objects the USSR undertook in 1960 to build in the UAR, a significant part fell to the share of Syria. After Syria withdrawal from the UAR, the 'separation regime' existing from 1961 through 1963 in Syria attempted to cross over to the Federal Republic of Germany to solve the issue of erection of the Euphrates dam. However, the steady course of the USSR towards cooperation with Syria, renewal of negotiations on the Euphrates project in 1962, support of Syria in its conflict with Israel in August-September of 1963 contributed to continuation of mutually beneficial relations.

The revolution of the 8th of March in 1963 and radical social reforms initiated under the guidance of the Ba'ath Party in Syria, met with complete understanding and support of the USSR not at once. In this context, we agree with Wafik Makhlof analyzing the negative assessment of the Ba'ath Party in the Soviet mass media (Махлюф, 1997, P. 98-105). That assessment was largely determined by the militant anticommunism and savage repressions in Iraq, where the Iraq branch of the Ba'ath Party since February of 1963 was seeking to erase all supporters of overthrown dictator Kasem, largely represented by Iraq communists. Nevertheless, the enemy campaign conducted in the Soviet mass media was both unjust, and illogical, since in Syria, nothing like the events in Iraq occurred. To some extent, the attitude of the USSR towards Syria was affected by the differences between Syria and Gamal Abdel Nasser, who wished to restore Arabian unity on the basis of severe centralism, neglecting peculiarities of each Arab country, and, as it was defined in the Ba'ath Party's official mouthpiece in July of 1963, 'waiving their own role, individual revolutionary experience, and methods of struggle, even if those methods and that experience proved to be significant and correct'. Nasser did not wish to make conclusions from the bitter lessons taught in the period of existence of the UAR from 1958 through 1961, while the USSR reckoning Nasser their major ally, evidently saw it good to support him conceptually, despite the fact that Nasser's regime 'led the single state to collapse', gave power in Syria to their favorites and 'hired

opportunists' 'acting through terror and prosecutions of the true supporters of unity'. Apparently, the Soviet leaders were displeased with some statements of the main program document adopted in October of 1963 at the sixth national (i.e. general Arab) congress of the Ba'ath Party. Despite it rejected the 'reformist social democracy', at the same time, 'Stalinist methods of construction of a social society' were also criticized.

Nevertheless, implementation of the resolutions adopted at the sixth congress displayed the true essence of the progressive transformations started by the Ba'ath Party after the 8th of March, 1963, especially, in January of 1965 and thereafter, when large and, partially, medium enterprises in industry and, significantly in foreign trade, were nationalized, and democratic self-administration was introduced at the nationalized or newly state-built economic facilities. When implementing the said measures, the government was based upon the provision of the sixth congress stating that 'the union of workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals of army men and civilians, as well as of the representatives of the national production capital should be regarded as a revolution-driving force'. All measures taken in 1965 (and the precedent nationalizations of banks, large textile enterprises, and oil resources from 1963 through 1964), the public sector in Syria began controlling about 65% of industrial production and foreign trade of the country (Махлюф, 1997, P. 130).

Those measures taken by the government of Syria, as well as the further shift to the left within the Ba'ath Party resulted from the events that took place on the 23rd of February in 1966, aroused approval and unconditional support with the USSR, although in some circles beyond Syria rumors circulated that allegedly 'the left wing of the Ba'ath... is focused more on Beijing rather than on Moscow' (Махлюф, 1997, P. 130). The assumptions had no influence on the bilateral relations, since under any rule, in the first place, Syria was guided by its own interests. The Soviet Union did its best to assist Syria in the course of progressive reforms, when acting on the international scene for its defense (for example, in the conflict between Syria and Jordan in September of 1966), and providing Syria with a new long-term credit in 1966 to continue the construction of a power transmission line, transport and industrial facilities. The USSR took a grave view of Israel's aggression against the Arabs in June of 1967 by rapturing diplomatic

relations with the state. From May 30 to June 7, 1967 - ten Soviet warships passed through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles thus strengthening the Mediterranean fleet of the Soviet Navy. According to the statement of the Prime Minister of Israel, Levi Eshkol, on the 11th of June, 1967, the USSR transported new weapons consignments to Syria via the air bridge established from the beginning of the war, which weapons made up almost entirely for the loss of the arsenal incurred by the Syrian army.

Diverse assistance rendered by the great friendly power helped Syria to assert itself as a sovereign state. Israel and USA behind it failed to reverse the Arabs movements for independency or impose neocolonial position on them characterized by inequality and oppression. In complex environment of aggravation of the crisis in the Middle East, Syria was able to restore its strength with the help of the USSR, and to eliminate essentially the damage caused by the war of June of 1967. In addition, when assessing the new stage in the relations between Soviet Union and Syria after 1967, it should be considered that they were determined not only by the long-standing friendship both before and after 1917, but also by a broad range of economic, geopolitical, and geostrategic factors. By no means, that was an attempt of the USSR to spread the Brezhnev Doctrine to the Middle East, or increase the 'ability to resist the United States' in the regions of struggle between two super states for the spheres of influence, as many American authors believe (M.A. Heller, N. Novik, D. Simes, D.R. Spechler and others). However, it goes without saying that the USSR and Syria sought by joint efforts to 'put an end to the monopoly of the West' on the Middle East, and restrict to the greatest possible extent the positions of the imperialist powers in economic, political, military, and ideological spheres.

Economic cooperation of the USSR and Syria was developing successfully. The Soviet Union share in the foreign trade turnover grew up from 4.1% in 1961 to 8.1% in 1970, while the share of the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance – from 17.7% to 27.2%. That enabled Syria to conduct more weighed policy due to the strengthening of its international position, and to depriving the Western states of the monopoly of Syria's foreign trade relations. Growth of the foreign trade between Syria and USSR was not the only signal of successful bilateral economic cooperation.

It was left behind by even faster growing technical, scientific, personnel, and other kinds of cooperation. In 1962, economic assistance rendered by the USSR was two times that of the USSR (166 million vs 75.8 million dollars). At that time, in Syria, 425 experts from the USSR were employed. Export of the Soviet equipment to Syria in 1960-1970 increased more than tenfold. In 1970, Syria placed ninth amongst the countries receiving assistance from the USSR, getting up to 4% of the total amount of economic and technical support of the USSR abroad.

Simultaneously, cooperation between the USSR and Syria developed in education and culture governed by the relevant agreements concluded in 1956 and 1962. In August of 1967, in Damascus, the Society for Arab Syrian-Soviet Friendship was formed, while in Moscow – the friendship society ‘USSR – Syria’. In March of 1968, they entered into a cooperation agreement, which extended significantly the relations between both parties in education, science, culture, literature, and art. Later, that agreement was renewed every five years, which contributed greatly to the mutual familiarization of the Syrians and Soviet peoples with lifestyles of each other, extended cooperation between workers of culture, scientists, trade unions and public organizations of the both countries. According to the agreement, the Syrian students came to study in Russia, while Syrian professionals (including military experts) – for training and refresher training; theaters and performance ensembles coming on tour. Since 1954, and regularly since the middle of the 1960s, in Damascus, the SOVIET cultural center was opened, with the Russian language courses offered, attended not only by the students or those going to the USSR, but also by teachers, clerks, and businessmen.

The Soviet Union always met Syria’s wishes. For example, from 1962 through 1965, export from Syria to the USSR exceeded import. However, after strengthening the external threat to Syria in 1966, and, particularly, after the war in June of 1967 unfortunate for the Arabs, the export from the USSR to Syria began exceeding the Soviet import from that country, totaled in terms of money 34.2 million dollars as compared to 18.2 million dollars for import in 1967, almost 48 million dollars as compared to 37.3 million dollars in 1969, and about 58 million dollars as against 29.3 million dollars in 1971. The reason for that growth was the aspiration to help Syria as

much as possible in healing the wounds given by the war of 1969, and establishment of a new balance of forces on the Middle East, excluding unilateral Israel's benefits. Not in vain that already in December, the government of Syria appreciated the assistance rendered by the USSR and expressed 'satisfaction of the fact that the agreements between the Soviet Union and Syria for economic and technical cooperation are being successfully implemented. At the same time, it would be wrong to agree with Helene Carrere d'Encausse who believed that major military cooperation between the USSR and Syria has been launched since 1955 (Karsh, 1991, P. 56).

The weapons' procurement actually took place, but until 1967 it was of non-permanent nature. Agreement for significant military assistance (for 200 million dollars to be paid within ten years) was concluded only on June, 10, 1969, during the visit to Moscow of the head of the Syrian state accompanied by the Secretary of Defense and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic (Васильев, 1989, P. 64-65). As to the regular 'training of a military staff' in the USSR for Syria, even the United States believed it to have been started not earlier than on September of 1972. Helene Carrere d'Encausse practically agrees with that fact, informing of the visit to Damascus of the Vice-Prime Minister of the USSR K.T. Mazurov, and of the agreements he signed.

Summing up the achievements of cooperation between the Soviet Union and Syria in the 1950-60s, special attention should be paid to the positive results in trade, construction (of enterprises, dams, and roads), technical and financial support. A new technology was delivered to Syria, and the personnel both in the USSR and in Syria passed proper training. Before 1970, the Soviet experts developed the geologic map of Syria, located phosphates and rock salt deposits, helped to erect a dam in Rastan, studied the potential of the most beneficial application of water resources, assisted in the establishment of experimental agricultural centers, and oil exploration. Besides, they started working on ten projects more, scheduled under bilateral agreements (Lust, 2013, P. 223).

Relations between Syria and USSR faced a new stage after the 16th of November of 1970, when the Corrective Movement under the guidance of Hafez al-Assad put an end to subjective mistakes, utopianism and adventurism of a part of the former leaders of the Ba'ath Party and the state. In its Address to members of the Party and the nation of Syria

the new government pointed at the consistency of ‘aspiration of the Arabic individuality’, and of the mission of the Arab nation ‘which aims at the unity, freedom, and socialism’. Although considering the Movement of the 23rd of February of 1966 ‘a glorious page of the history of struggle of the party groups for revolutionary transformation of the Arab motherland’, the Address, on the other hand, indicated that ‘the faults caused by attempts to dominate over the party and country should be corrected’, and expressed ‘in isolation from the broad masses of the core of the party’, which required to ‘restore in practice democratic ways of life both in the society, and amongst the members of the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party (Lust, 2013, P. 223).

The policy for ‘mobilization of all progressive people to the best interests of the struggle against aggression and its consequences based on the creation of the progressive front under the guidance of the Ba’ath Party’ was proclaimed. The program of restoration of the parliamentary life involving, alongside with the Ba’ath Party, some other ‘progressive forces’, parties, and organizations was defined. Foreign trade placed special focus on integration with the ‘progressive Arab states’ (then named the UAR), amongst which Egypt ranked the first, as well as on the unity of the entire Arab world against Israel aggression, and on the problem of resolution of the Middle-East crisis on behalf of the Arabs.

Great attention was paid to the development of relations with the USSR determined by its ‘fair stance towards the Arabian national problems’. Changes in the government of the Ba’ath Party and Syrian state were of prime importance for Syria’s authority abroad. The veteran of the Party, Syrian historian, an immediate witness and participant of the 30-year struggle led by the party, General Khaled Husein characterized those alterations ‘by removal of the former leaders who allowed extreme left adventurism, utopianism, and dogmatism in policy’, the Corrective Movement implemented the necessary revolutionary changes, thus placing the Ba’ath Party back on the right track. Credibility and confidence in the policy adopted by the Ba’ath Party was restored, putting an end to isolation of Syria on the international scene. Mass organizations, local governments, army, and the state government obtained confidence and clear perspective in their activities. In the exceptionally stable environment, economy of the country started

growing at a faster rate than ever before.

Ghazi al-Mansur, the other Syrian author, diplomatist, and public figure, wrote as follows, 'In November of 1970, the Corrective Movement became a response to the appeal of the party organizations to form a favorable climate for implementation of important changes in favor of masses'. Even the American experts on Syria had to recognize that 'Syria had experienced over a dozen of *cope d'états* and failed coups in the period from 1946 through 1970, before Assad came to power. Under his rule, Syria not only achieved internal stability, but even started playing a leading part in the regional policy' (Хусейн, 1995, P. 11-12).

The official visits of the Syrian party and government delegations headed by Hafez al-Assad to the USSR in February of 1971 and in June of 1972 resulted in joint statements, with the Syrian party expressed 'sincere gratitude to the Soviet Union for disinterested aid rendered to the Syrian Arab Republic in the development of its economy, strengthening the country's defensive capacity, and training the national staff'. Negotiations 'on measures for further strengthening of the UAR military potential' and continued bilateral military cooperation were conducted. Legally, that cooperation was secured in a relevant agreement signed in Damascus during the visit to Syria of the minister of defense of the USSR, Marshall Grechko in May of 1972 (Lust, 2013, P. 223).

Due to the gradual deterioration of the relations between the USSR and Egypt after Nasser's death in autumn of 1970, Syria stepwise became the most important, and afterwards, the only ally of the USSR on the Middle East. It played a part of an intermediary between the USSR and Sudan during the events in the summer of 1971, which worsened the relations between them. After the Soviet military experts were expelled from Egypt in July of 1972, President Hafez al-Assad declared that he had no intention to follow the example of Egypt even in the absence of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (which was concluded between the USSR and Egypt, yet did not prevent the latter from breaking of link between those states).

The Corrective Movement and Hafez al-Assad personally, in conformity with Syria's

national interests turned friendship with the USSR into a steady strategy of the foreign policy pursued by the country' That was a well-informed and carefully developed choice of the Syrian leaders after 1970, witnessed by the resolution adopted at the Ba'ath's congresses. For example, the resolution of the 11th General Arab Congress of the Party in August of 1971 specified that 'the attempts made by imperialists to deal a hard blow to the relations between the Arabs with socialistic countries, and, first of all, with the Soviet Union, aim at weakening the Arab liberation movements, and isolation of the same from its allies on the international scene'. The resolutions adopted at the next, 12th General Arab Congress of the Ba'ath Party emphasized the 'necessity of enhancing cooperation, development and strengthening the friendship between our countries in all areas of interaction with socialist countries and, above all, with the Soviet Union'.

It is difficult just to list numerous agreements concluded in the 1970s, or the previous ones renewed, namely, the agreement for construction of Euphrates dam dated April 1966 (the works started in March of 1968), agreement for technical cooperation of 1966, trade agreement of 1970, contract for the construction of a railway from the Euphrates valley to the Mediterranean coast (730 km at a cost of 96 million dollars, the works started in March of 1967), agreement for economic and technical cooperation dated July 11, 1970, generally providing for the creation of oil industry, agreement for the construction of oil reservoirs, oil pipelines (e. g. between Tartus and Suede, erected from June of 1967 by the USSR Technoexport for 2 million dollars), agreement of 1967-1970 in the area of broadcasting, telecommunications, and education. New agreements were concluded in November of 1970 (for scientific and technical cooperation), in December of 1970, and in August of 1971 (for the construction of power supply lines Tabka-Aleppo), in July of 1972 (for economic and technical cooperation and establishment of the joint permanent committee for implementation of the same), in April of 1973 (for export by the USSR of all products manufactured by Syrian textile enterprises for 1973 at a total cost of 3.3 million dollars).

The increased clashes between the forces of Syria and Israel in the Golan made the USSR establish an air bridge on September 23 through October 2, 1972, again, to transfer up to two tons of the modern military equipment to Syria. On the 1st of January,

1973, the USA declared that the USSR provided Syria with 35 military aircrafts MIT of improved design. In July of 1973, the American press stated that there were 1,400 Soviet military experts in Syria and that only for the first quarter of 1973, the USSR supplied arms to Syria for 185 million dollars, while over 1972, for 150 million dollars only (Абдель, 1998, P. 19).

During the war in October of 1973, which was more successful than any previous war between the Arabs and Israel, the USSR continued supplies of weapons and military equipment for the Syrian army, strengthened its fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, and provided Syria with political support. The USSR made a protest in the United Nations against attacks from Israel missile boats on the port Tartus on October 12, 1973, when a Soviet vessel carrying equipment for the hydropower complex on Euphrates, as well as against barbarous air strikes carried out by Israel to Damascus, Homs, and Ladhqiya that killed a number of innocent civilians, including Soviet citizens (when the Soviet cultural center in Damascus was destroyed). At the summit meetings between the Syrians and representatives of the Soviet Union in the period from 1974 through 1978, the USSR noted with appreciation fortitude and courage of the Syrian armed forces, while Syria acknowledged full support rendered by the Soviet Union. During the visit of the Prime Minister of the USSR, Alexey Kosygin to Damascus, and Hafez al-Assad to Moscow, 'steady development and deepening of the relationships between the USSR and Syria in political, military, economic, cultural, scientific, and technical areas' was mentioned.

Economic cooperation between both countries was developing dynamically and consistently. In terms of money, export from the USSR to Syria reached about 57.7 million dollars, in 1975 – 139.5 million, in 1980 – 258.2 million dollars. Over the same years, import from Syria to the USSR was 29.3 million dollars, 95.6 million dollars, and 236.4 million dollars, respectively (Абдель, 1998, P. 19). By 1972, oil industry in Syria set up with the USSR assistance, not only met the needs of the country, but also began exporting products beyond the Arab world, including to the USSR.

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation between the USSR and Syria was signed in October of 1980 and ratified in December by both parties. That was a logic result of the

development of the relationships between the Soviet Union and Syria over the period from 1955 through 1980, which provided for the continued interaction in 'political, economic, military, scientific, technical, cultural, and other areas based on the principles of equality, mutual benefit, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-intervention in internal affairs of each other'. Both parties stood for increased 'exchange of experiences between them in industry, agriculture, irrigation, and water resources, as well as in communications, transport, and other areas of economy, training the national staff, science, art, sport, and in other areas'.

Naturally, the West noticed mainly the military significance of the Treaty, since they believed that increased ability of Syria to oppose Israel alters the geopolitical situation and the general balance of forces on the Middle East. In April of 1974, the British press, for example, stated that due to the supplies of weapons from the USSR, the military potential of Syria exceeds that before the October war of 1973. The Israelis stating the same believed that there were up to 3,000 soviet military experts in Syria, though the Americans asserted that value to reach 2,000 persons (Karsh, 1991, P. 56). The Western mass media constantly manipulated the issue of the Soviet military assistance to Syria. Of course, the assistance rendered by the USSR was of great importance for the defense capability of Syria, since constant aggressive behavior of Israel forced Syria to spend huge resources for military purposes, viz. up to 3 billion dollars in 1983 and 1984 by estimations of the press of the USA, England, and Israel.

Since accurate data on that assistance were secret, it is impossible neither confirm nor rebut the said figures distributed in the West. It could have been mentioned only that in 1990, the USA asserted that the USSR sold weapons to Syria in the period from 1982 to 1986 for 9.6 billion dollars, and sent about 4,000 military experts and instructors. The Englishmen said that there were 1.5 to 2 thousands of military men assisted by 500 civilians. Later, Russia announced the figure of 10.5 billion dollars paid by Syria for the arms bought from the USSR for the period from 1982 through 1989 (Karsh, 1991, P. 56). However, these data are not official either.

By the beginning of 1984, in Syria, 66 economic facilities were erected with the assistance of the USSR, of which 41 projects were already almost completed (Lust,

2013, P. 82). The Euphrates hydropower complex with a capacity of 800 thousand kW, a dam 58 m high and 4 km long, two power transmission lines with a voltage of 220V, and length of 154 km each. By the end of 1985, the complex produced 21 billion kW*h of electric power. Its share in the total generated power in the country was 55%. By the middle of the 1980s, Euphrates dam was able to irrigate up to 620 thousand hectares of previously waterless lands. Overall increase in the growing areas and power production facilities, creation of new enterprises and improvement of the existing ones, growing number of trained employees were not long in coming (Деловой мир, 1991, P. 6). According to the United Nations data, over the period from 1970 to 1981, the industrial production index of Syria increased more than twice. The share of industry in the GDP of Syria grew from 12.3% in 1963 to 18% in 1980. From 1970 through 1983, per capita income increased from 480 to 930 dollars, while the gross national product – from 936 to 9 billion dollars over the period from 1953 to 1984. As compared with 1970, the number of engineers in the country increased from 2,603 to 29,756 persons by 1988, the number of agriculturists from 1,021 to 11,545 persons in 1987, respectively. Amongst the intellectual class, those with higher technical education prevailed over legal advisors, doctors, or journalists, in contrast to the previous years. By 1987, over a half of the Syrians had dwelled in the urban environment (Столяров, ve Клековский, 1977, P. 125).

To a large extent, this was made possible through a visionary and well-balanced policy of the Corrective Movement developed and implemented under the personal guidance of the leader of the movement, the Secretary General of the Ba'ath Party and President of the Syrian Arab Republic Hafez al-Assad. Full cooperation with the USSR was a part of that clearly tuned developments, when dozens of thousands of the Syrian experts with higher education were produced, industrialization of the country and modernization of the economy system significantly accelerated, development of a number of industries of the national economy were promoted focused on permanent purchasing the traditional Syrian commodities (cotton, leather, fabrics, carpets, perfumes, etc. by the Soviet Union and countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid. From 1970 through 1985, trading between Syria and all countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid, including the USSR increased almost by 9 times. Syria's export to these countries grew

by 13.4, and import by 6.2 times. Over the period from 1971 to 1980, trading between the USSR and Syria multiplied by 4 times, while from 1980 to 1985 only – by 3.3 times. The USSR purchased 85% of the Syrian export of wool and jersey, 65% of carpets (manufactured), 90% of towels, 40% of fabrics (Филоник, 1992, P. 215-217).

Based on the Russian reports, with the help of the USSR, both in the Soviet higher educational facilities, and in Syria, up to 40 thousand Syrians received higher and intermediate technical education (Филоник, 1992, P. 215-217). However, the contribution made by the USSR to the creation of the modern Syrian economy was even more significant, given that even in the 1970s the centers of vocational technical training in Damascus and Aleppo arranged under support of the Soviet professionals, annually produced 500 skilled workers and foremen of a variety of specialties (Филоник, 1992, P. 215-217). In 1976, the center in Damascus training staff for machine-building, electrical engineering and metal processing, started producing up to 1.5 thousand graduates per year. Since 1984, similar centers have been established in Ladhikiya and Hama.

It is logical that all the above contributed enormously to the further rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Syria. In 1980, the Society of Syrian Arab-Soviet Friendship was headed by a member of the regional leadership of the Ba'ath Party in Syria. The administrative board of the Society was composed of many outstanding representatives of the Ba'ath and other parties of the country comprising the National progressive front formed under the guidance of the Ba'ath Party in 1972. In 1990, the Society supported by the Syrian government and local authorities coordinated work of 21 primary organizations, divisions in 4 cities, and 2 establishments of Soviet-Syrian friendship (Филоник, 1992, P. 215-217). The activity carried out by the Society acquired increasingly growing dimensions. It celebrated memorial days and holidays observed by the USSR, held commemorative events, decades, weeks, and days of Arabian-Soviet Friendship, invited scientific, sports, and cultural delegations from the USSR, arranged evenings, meetings, and exhibitions of diverse nature, as well as the tours of Syrian performers and musicians to the Soviet Union (Филоник, 1992, P. 215-217).

Unfortunately, over the last years of existence of the USSR, the Soviet-Syrian relations faced serious complications. Trade turnover between the countries reduced determined by changing trade policy, which started in the middle of the 1980s, when 'the goods the USSR previously exported to the Arab countries... were removed from export to be reallocated for domestic needs'. Syria ranking the second in trading between the USSR and Arab world (over a quarter of the Soviet-Arabian turnover in 1989 was accounted for by Syria) was affected most of all. Besides, raising inability of the Soviet Union to 'meet the increased demands of the new Syrian industry', since there was a growing demand for machinery and equipment 'not mastered by the Soviet industry' played its role. Yusuf Ibrahim Harbi attributes the decrease in the foreign-trade Soviet-Syrian turnover to a mere 'increasing the stagnant processes in the economy of the USSR'.

The disagreements regarding international issues, in particular, the issues of the Middle East crisis resolution, attitude towards Israel and finding the solution regarding the Palestine issue, as well as the issue of the role to be played Syria in Lebanon after the Syrian forces were sent to that country to stop the civil war and internal conflicts took place between Syria and the USSR before as well. Western mass media, particularly, American press fanned those disagreements in many ways (Гарби, 1993, P. 16). However, an actual derogation of the former foreign policy principles by the USSR, step back in Europe, and inconsistent behavior during the crisis of 1990-1991 in the Arabian Gulf greatly undermined the former prestige of the USSR among the Arabs, moreover, the defeat of Iraq in the war despite tremendous supplies of weapons from the USSR in the 1980 as compared with other Arab countries added to a fall in prestige of the USSR in the Arab world, including Syria. Sharp decrease in the food export from the USSR to the Arab countries (by 6.5 times by 1990 against 1980) also played a negative role (Lust, 2013, P.85). Syria was affected the least owing to its food-import independence. Nevertheless, its extreme sensitivity to general Arabian moods cannot be disregarded.

2.3 Military-Technical Cooperation Between the Soviet Union and Syria

On the 30th of March, Syria saw the coup d'état led by Husni al-Za'im. However, in August of 1949, the colonel was overthrown and shot down in the officers' counter-coup organized by Heneawi. The new government asserted the democratic path. In November of 1949, the country held the election to the Constituent Assembly to adopt a new Constitution. However, in December of the same year, the third military coup d'état took place. Heneawi was removed, and then killed. Nevertheless, the parliamentary regime was retained, and the Constituent Assembly continued carrying out its activity. On the 5th of September, 1950, the new Constitution of Syria was approved, which established bourgeois democracy vesting extensive powers in the Chamber of Deputies. The Constituent Assembly was transformed into the Parliament, which elected Hashim al-Atassi the president of Syria. The government accountable to the Parliament was formed.

On the 29th of November, 1951, the country experienced another takeover. That one was headed by the Chief of Defense, Alib al-Shishakli. The President and government were removed, the Parliament dissolved, political parties forbidden. In July of 1953, the new Constitution was approved. Executive power was absolutely vested in the President. A. Shishakli who was the only nominee was elected.

In August of 1953, underground political parties and groups opposite to the government decided to consolidate to start fighting Alib Shishakli's power. On February 24, 1954, Aleppo garrison led by M. Hamdun rose in rebellion. On the 25th of February, the rebellion covered Latakia, Homs, and Hama. H. Atassi's comeback to the post was announced. In the situation created, Shishakli had to disclaim his authority and go abroad. On the 1st of March, H. Atassi arrived in Damascus to assign the government headed by S. Asali of the representatives of the People's and National parties. The Constitution of 1950 was re-established.

In 1955, Shukri al-Quwatli was elected the President of Syria and he set a course for the weakening of foreign influence in the country. On October 20, 1955, the new government speaking against the Baghdad Pact concluded the military alliance with

Egypt, and in 1956, during the Suez crisis, ruptured diplomatic relations with England and France. Simultaneously, contacts with the Soviet Union were established to supply limited amount of military property and equipment to the country.

The policy pursued by Shukri al-Quwatli set off a negative response from the 'discriminated' states. In November of 1956, in the country, an anti-government conspiracy was uncovered. In 1957, two another plots arranged with the western secret services involved were unmasked.

In the autumn of 1956, President Shukri al-Quwatli visited the USSR, where the representatives of the countries reached an agreement for rendering economic assistance to Syria. Following the treaty signed in autumn of 1957, the Soviet Union provided Syria with the credit for implementation of the plan for economic development, i. e., irrigation, industry, transport, etc.

By that time, in spring of 1956, the Soviet Union and Syria had already signed the first military agreement for supply to Syria of the T-34 (later, T-54) tanks, self-propelled guns SY-100, armored vehicles BTR-152, air-defense and artillery-type weapon of caliber 37 mm, and howitzers of caliber 122 mm (Яременко, 2000, P. 205). In the same year, with the Soviet experts participating, in the Katan barracks, two tank brigades started forming. Groups and detachments were reorganized, battalion force design formed. Each brigade consisted of one tank and one mechanized battalion.

The first groups of military experts were sent to Syria pursuant to decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR No 1929 dated April 9, 1956, No 6628 dated November 1956, and No157-84 dated February 12, 1957. In 1956, the Ministry of Defense posted totally 60 persons, including 5 interpreters, to the Syrian Arab Republic. In the 1960s, every year, there were about 150 Soviet military men, in the 1970s – up to 56 persons in the country (Яременко, 2000, P. 205).

On October 7, 1961, the Soviet Union recognized the Syrian Arab Republic. Military property, equipment, as well as military experts and advisors were provided to the country again. The Six-Day War of 1967 became a serious test for the Soviet 'strength' in the Asian region (Third Arab-Israeli War). For six days, the Israeli armed forces

inflicted a crushing defeat on the units of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The military and political logic suggests that the war was to seriously damage the Soviet prestige in the Middle-East region. Not only the serious defeat of the 'pro-Moscow' Arab regimes, but also the information and psychological war unleashed by the West, was conducive to that like never before. It was univocally asserted that the 'Arab fatality' was determined by the commitment to the Communist alliance, as well as by obsolete and deactivated Soviet weapons. An idea was advanced that the USSR was allegedly not seeking piece in the Middle East, and that it strived for bully the Arab people into submission to make them dispirited puppets.

However in fact, the Soviet reputation in the Arab world did not in the least suffer. Indeed, public and political processes taking on momentum in the 1950s and early 1960s held on. Moreover, the war of 1967 was an accelerating factor for them. While the operations conducted by the Soviet military advisors and experts on the Egyptian and Syrian military bases strengthened the authority of the Soviet Union even more. The ships of the USSR naval forces sent to the coast of Syria at the time of the peak tension had no small share in that strengthening. An amphibious landing operation in Latakia was planned.

It should be added that from November of 1967 through April 1968, for the purpose of exercise of anti-airborne defense of the coastline by the Syrian overland combat units at the border with Lebanon, as well as for the defense of the naval bases of Syria in Latakia and Tartuss, there was the BDK-13 ('Tomsky Komsomolets') escorted by the reinforced marine battalion of the Baltic fleet in Syria. From the end of 1968 through April 1969, with a view to suppression of acts of provocation of the Israelite overland units, the surface ships from the 5th operation squadrons of the USSR naval forces, together with the Syrian military units exercised the defense of the port being then under construction, and Tartus naval base. The Six-Day War, which ended by Israel's squeaky victory proved demonstratively the necessity of strengthening and extension of the positions of the Soviet Union in the Middle East. The defeated countries were seeking the same. Therefore, the USSR increased supplies of the weapons and military property to the Arab countries, primarily, to Syria, and the number of advisors and experts.

The Soviet experts who arrived in Syria in summer of 1973 to create and deliver to the Syrian party two brigades for air-defense missile systems 'Cube' (or 'Square', for export modifications) also showed high professional skills and courage. Initially, each brigade engaged the Soviet commanders and five experts for control posts, reconnaissance and targeting stations, safety launching systems, and intercept missiles. The 79th air-defense missile brigade included the officers P.K. Fausek, K. Gladky, G. Rybalko, N. Bazanov and V.G. Kuzmenko. According to the latter, the brigade fired 47 missiles to destroy 36 targets (Яременко, 2000, P. 209). That high efficiency was due to the employment of the latest air defense assets and air forces, use of the progressive tactical techniques and failures of the Israelite command to assess correctly the air defense assets of Syria.

At the same time, in the territory of the USSR, intensive primary training of the Syrian military men was conducted. Thus, by the middle of the 1980s, in the Soviet military schools, academies, and special courses (centers), 90% of ship officers and 70% of the officers of the Syrian naval coastal units, over 60% of the officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers of the air-defense anti-aircraft troops of the country had passed training. By January 1 of 1987, 7,326 representatives of the armed forces of Syria had obtained the formal Soviet diplomas. Amongst them were President of the country, general H. Assad, Minister of defense, corps general M. Tlas, Chief of the General Staff, corps general A. Hikmet, his deputy, corps general T. Hassan, Director General of Signals of the General Staff, division general A. Jusuf, Chief of the Air Staff and Air Defense, division general M. Mohhamed, Naval Force Commander, Commander of Primorsky military district, division fleet general T. Mustafa, commanders of the 107th and 110th brigades brigade generals A. Abdalla and A. Ajub, etc (Яременко, 2000, P. 205).

In autumn of 1980, H. Assad flew in Moscow again, and on the 9th of October of 1980, a new treaty of amity and cooperation providing for rendering the military assistance by the Soviet Union when required was signed. Next day, the Chief of the USSR Armed Forces General Staff, Marshal of the Soviet Union N.V. Ogarkov, when giving directions to the newly appointed Chief military advisor in Syria Colonel General G.P. Yashkin, set a task to the latter 'to create a well-organized, skilled, efficient, and

disciplined team of military advisors in the Syrian armed forces. On that basis, within the shortest possible time, to arrange an up-to-date organization structure taking into consideration the combat capabilities of our military equipment delivered to Syria, and develop new forms and methods of conducting operations with a specific enemy' (ЯШКИН, 1988, No. 4).

In February of 1984, the US marines were withdrawn from Lebanon. After their departure, presence of the Soviet troops in the territory of Syria lost the point, and by July of 1984, they also were repatriated. At the same time, the Soviet military experts and advisors continued working. Thus, for example, in 1985 and 1986, at H. Assad's request, a group of experts stayed in Syria, entrusted with the task of detection, disposal, and removal of audio interception systems installed by the western secret services. All those anti-disturbance interceptors were disguised as local objects. The attempts made by the Syrians to remove some of them independently came to a tragic end, several persons died or injured. The Soviet group headed by the expert from the State technical commission, captain I rank A.F. Tokar, investigated the main government and military communication lines, detected and disposed of more than ten interceptors of different modifications and marks. All members of the group engaged in the operation were awarded Syrian orders (Брусницын, 2000, P. 263).

In the early 1990s, military cooperation between Russia and Syria was frozen because of the debts for the Soviet supplies. In total, from 1956 through 1991, the Soviet Union supplied to Syria the weapons for 26 billion dollars, including combat aircrafts such as fighter-bombers Su-22, fighters MiG-29 (1987-1988), and front bombers Cu-24MK (1988-1989). Around 14 thousand Soviet military men visited the country in a capacity of military advisors and experts. The Soviet military higher education institutions trained over 9.5 thousand Syrians (Яременко, 2000, P. 209).

2.4 Economic and Cultural Ties Between the Soviet Union and Syria

Syrian-Soviet cooperation was of multifaceted nature embodied in a variety of economic, cultural, and other areas. In order to study the opportunities for further

development of economic and trading relations between the Soviet Union and Syria, the Permanent Soviet-Syrian Commission for economic cooperation was formed under the agreement of July 8, 1973. Foreign trade appeared a primary form of economic cooperation between Syria and the USSR implemented in accordance with interstate agreements and treaties. Generally, they were of long-term nature.

Syrian-Soviet cooperation started with the trade and payment agreement dated November 16, 1955, signed in Damascus. It was concluded for one year subject to annual extension upon agreement between the parties. The treaty covered the development of trading relations based on equality and mutual benefit, mutual provision of the most favorable conditions for trade and shipping, as well as promotion of transit trading. Trading ties between Syria and the Soviet Union were based on the trade agreement of the 4th of February, 1965, for the period from 1966 through 1968 subject to further extension for a new one-year time period. Pursuant to the agreement, both parties provided each other with favorable treatment in respect of trading relations and navigation, i. e. the agreement regulated all customs affairs without any restrictions or bans. At the same time, payment agreements were concluded making provisions for a debt of 50 thousand pound sterling.

In Syria, mining industry is primarily based on production of oil discovered in the territory of Syria by foreign companies in the second half of the 1950s, with the development activities starting in the late 1960s. Oil production industry of the country was created with direct involvement of the Soviet Union, which supplied the most part of the equipment required, rendered invaluable assistance in carrying out research activities, preparation of the industrial development programs, exploration, arrangement and development of the oil deposits As-Suwayda, Rumelan, and Karachuk (in northwestern Syria), stipulated by the agreement for rendering economic and technical assistance to Syria by the Soviet Union signed on the 25th of February, 1972, further developed into the Protocol on Economic and Technical Cooperation for the period from 1976 through 1980 signed on the 3rd of June, 1978.

One of the most important industries where Syria and the USSR cooperate is power production. Currently, the hydroelectric plants al-Rastan and Shazer on the Asi river; as-

Saura, Suk Vadi-Barad on the Barada river, with a capacity of 18 thousand kW each; as-Saura on the Euphrates with a capacity of 800 thousand kW built in 1974 through the help of the USSR operate.

Increased general capacities led to the increased energy production. In 1985, over 8 billion kW*h was generated. The share of hydroelectric plants in energy production is three times less than the share of thermal stations. Mostly, this can be attributed to the irregular river flow, as well as to the exhausting of the water reservoir al-Assad under excessive load exerted onto the hydraulic complex making up for the regular downtimes of some units on the HPP, in a number of cases covering up to 40% of the existing facilities. In the second half of the 1980s, such situation inevitably resulted in the increased electrical shortage in the country. In order to avoid the emergencies, the Syrian government began looking to continued implementation of its energy production programs under the auspices of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The construction of the hydraulic power system al-Baas and pre-control dam on the Euphrates river, with the HPP up to 80 mW, and HPP Tirshin of 40 kW, were performed at different stages (Сборник действующих договоров, 1964, Вып. 28. P.182-186).

With the assistance of the Soviet party, the thermal electric power plant Tirshin with a capacity of 400 thousand kW*h was constructed in Syria near Damascus, as well as the nuclear electric power plant equipped with two electric power units of 440 thousand kW*h. All those structures played an immense part in the life of the country, both in industry and in illumination of urban and rural settlements in Syria (Сборник действующих договоров, 1964, Вып. 28. P.182-186).

Cooperation with the USSR in the area of metallurgy and machine building, which were the key industries for successful advance of the country towards economic independence, was of particular importance. The most significant was the fact that the creation by the USSR and other socialist countries of the large state enterprises in the critical industries of Syrian economy enabled consolidation of a number of component enterprises of medium and small scale, both public and private, which resulted in the involvement thereof in the circle of productive relations being formed. That was of primary importance for Syria, which had taken the route of profound social and

economic reforms.

The scope and array of the Syrian-Soviet trading ties were regulated by the agreement on goods circulation for the period from 1971 through 1975, which provided for the growth of exchange by half over five years. In 1980, as compared with 1970, the actual volume of foreign trade between the USSR and Syria multiplied by 5.5, while in 1990, that volume increased threefold as compared to 1980.

Such reduction in the volume of foreign trade can be attributed to buildup of stagnant processes in the economy of the USSR resulted in deterioration in the terms of trade. Over 34 years of cooperation between Syria and the Soviet Union, the latter has become the largest supplier of machines and equipment (they represented 75% of the Soviet export to Syria, a kind of a world record of the Soviet foreign trade, since in general export, those goods accounted for 10-15%) (Сборник действующих договоров, 1964, Вып. 28. P. 182-186). The list of Syrian goods included cotton, wool, leather, seed cakes, dried onion, crushed fruit kernel, fabrics, medicines, and hygiene items.

At the turn of the 1990s, being the USSR's legal successor, Russia paid insufficient attention to optimal use of the strong trade and economic links with many developing countries, including Syria. Supplying goods, foods, and medicines, Syria was diligently paying off its debts to the Soviet Union. According to the data as of November 1, 1980, the debt of the foreign countries to the Soviet Union was 85.8 billion rubles, of which 6.742 billion rubles were accounted for by Syria. However, in the early 1990s, the volume of foreign trade between Syria and the USSR dropped. While at the beginning of 1990, the USSR foreign trade volume was 936.2 million rubles, in 1991, it was 613.3 million rubles (Обнинский, 1981). It should be noted that expansion of economic and technical ties between Syria and the Soviet Union became one of the most important factors significantly affecting the social and economic development of Syria. Again, it is important to note the significant role played by the facilities constructed by Syria under the auspices of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

The most significant aspect of cultural cooperation of Syria with the USSR implied training of the national personnel sorely needed in Syria. The training was performed

based on the treaty on cultural cooperation signed by the USSR and Syria on August 19, 1962. The Parties agreed upon the development and intensification of cooperation, exchange of experience in science, education, art, healthcare, and development of links between higher educational facilities. The key point in that agreement was the arrangement of payment scholarships to students and post-graduate students, as well as research activities in higher educational facilities. The treaty covered a wide area of cultural links such as exchange of art exhibitions, cooperation in translations, and publication of the most valuable books on literature, science, and technology, as well as other critical areas of the cultural life.

In subsequent years, a number of cultural agreements were signed, since the first one covered three years and was automatically extended for the same term. The Soviet Union played a great role in training of the national staff of Syria. The forms of training were quite diverse. One of them implied teaching the Syrians to working specialties during construction of industrial facilities. At the time of the hydropower complex on the Euphrates, over 15 thousand workers were trained. Also, many Syrians achieved qualification during oil-exploration facilities in Syria.

The Soviet Union took part in training of the variety of experts so critical to Syria. Under the auspices of the Soviet experts in the early 1970s in Aleppo, a center of vocational training was created, which prepared annually around 500 skilled workers and foremen in different professions. In 1976, in Damascus, another education center was formed to prepare experts for the most promising sectors of economy (machine building, electric engineering, construction, and other specialties). Every year, about 1.5 thousand experts graduate from the center (Обнинский, 1981, P. 156).

Besides, the USSR assisted in the creation of agricultural centers for study of forestry, irrigated and rain-fed agriculture. All those centers are provided with the Soviet equipment and teaching aids. Pursuant to the agreement for cultural cooperation, in 1972, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR received the delegation of the Scientific Council of the Aleppo University to familiarize with the findings of the research conducted at the scientific institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in organic chemistry, oriental studies, and operative surgery. In February of 1973, E. P. Lebedev, a

famous Soviet scientist, chairman of the department of Arab countries at the Institute of Oriental Studies, visited Syria. In Damascus, he provided advice and recommendations on history and economics of Arab countries at the libraries of Damascus and other scientific centers.

A joint Soviet-Syrian space flight in July of 1987 initiated a new stage of cooperation between Syria and Soviet Union. Syria became the second Arab country after Saudi Arabia to send its citizen Mohammed Faris to the space. For the Syrians, the space flight was not only very prestigious, but, first of all, it was the action meeting the national Syrian interests, and bringing practical results for its economy and development of the national science.

During the joint Soviet-Syrian flight, using modern methods such as remote sensing of the Earth, the better understanding of mineral resources of Syria was obtained. Agricultural land plots of Syria were also studied to define the available land resources. Since Syria is situated in a semiarid region, to manage soil intensively and to receive stable yields, the country needs to expand the areas of the irrigated fields.

In 1988, about 5,000 Syrian students studied in the Soviet Union, in 1983, their number was 3,354 (Волгин, 1988, P. 88). Besides Moscow, dozens of the Syrian students, trainees, and post-graduate students got education in a number of higher educational facilities of the former USSR. The Soviet Union also participated in the training of the national staff of Syria by posting Soviet lecturers and guidance teachers and counselors in the Russian language to Syrian educational establishments. The universities exchanged groups of teachers to carry out scientific research in various areas, as well as scientific materials and information on economic, social, and scientific life of both countries. Cultural collaboration was beginning to be seen in different areas, namely, cooperation between cultural, scientific, historic, and art museums; exchange of exhibitions, music, theater, and other artistic groups; organization of cinema festivals, exchange of artists and other cultural figures; translation and publication of books on literature, science, and technology. Therefore, based on the abovementioned, we can assert that over the 1970s and 1980s, economic and cultural ties between Syria and Soviet Union developed rather dynamically, some success was achieved. Construction of

the Euphrates dam became the symbol of friendship and fruitful economic cooperation. That construction gave rise to an absolutely new industry for Syria, i. e. oil production, which began playing a significant part in the national economy. The development of cooperation between Syria and Soviet Union in the period concerned was promoted by a number of economic and cultural agreements, mostly of long-term nature.



3. RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND SYRIA AFTER THE EMERGENCE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION UNTIL PRESENT TIME.

3.1 New Aspects in Russian-Syrian Cooperation

Despite the fact that starting from the early 1990s, trade and economic as well as technical cooperation between Russia and Syria faced obstacles primarily determined by the unresolved issues concerning repayment of the Soviet loans and credits and termination of the state support of the Russian export to Syria, Russia did remain a potentially important economic partner for the Syrian Arab Republic. The Russian organizations assisted Syria in construction of the hydroelectric complex 'Tirshin' on the Euphrates river, continued the development, irrigation construction, and exploitation of the lands in the Meskene and Aleppo areas, and rendered support in oil production and in a number of other projects. The facilities constructed and operated with the assistance from Russia played an important part in the economy of Syria. In the middle of the 1990s, the facilities generated 1/3 of total electric power in the country, produced almost 30% of oil, irrigated over 50 thousand hectares of dry lands in the Western Meskene area, and in the coastal region (Ахмедов, 2012).

As before, the New Russia required strategic allies in the Middle East. The more so Russia's another historical strategic partner in the region, Iraq, which might support Moscow, proved to be completely insulated and removed out of the sphere of Russian influence because of the blockade and robust sanctions regime. Yemen was focused on the internal political problems, which arose after the unification of the country, and involved in the border settlements. The Palestine Liberation Organization through the active mediation efforts of the West expressed the readiness to enter into separate agreements with Israel. Afghanistan was mired in the civil war worse and worse, while Iran was emerging from the long-running bloody war with Iraq. Relations with Israel were just gathering pace, while search for new strategic partners in the Arab monarchies

of the Gulf could not yield rapid and desired results.

Nevertheless, the Russian Federation despite the existing internal and external political problems, repeatedly took initiatives to set conflicts in the Middle East. At the end of 1997 it was the Russian diplomacy that succeeded in preventing the outbreak of the armed conflict between Israel and Syria, when both countries having suspected each other of an intention to deliver a pre-emptive strike, concentrated their forces on the cease-fire line. As a result, there was a risk of spinning the situation out of control. The shuttle diplomacy pursued by the Minister of External Affairs of the Russian Federation Evgeny Primakov who convinced the Syrians and Israelis that their mutual suspicions were groundless was of great significance. In 1996 and 1997, the Russian Minister of External Affairs conducted a series of negotiations with the governments of a number of Arab countries, Israel, and Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

In May of 1997, the Russian diplomacy continued taking efforts to create a favorable climate in the Arab-Israeli negotiations, searching to convince Syria and Iran to exert pressure on the radical movements and groups in the region, which tried to undermine the reconciliation between Palestine and Israel. Ultimately, Damascus and Teheran essentially agreed upon the necessity to fight terrorism 'in any situation and in all circumstances'. In November of 1997, Viktor Posuvalyuk, the Deputy Minister of External Affairs of the Russian Federation, was appointed a special representative of the Russian President at the peace negotiations between the Arabs and Israelis, enjoying the status and authorities similar to those vested in the American representative Dennis Ross. Within those efforts, the Russian diplomacy emphasized the potential benefits to Russia from its historically close ties with Syria and Palestine.

In 1997, Syria and Russia resumed negotiations concerning the terms of repayment by the Syrian Arab Republic of the debt to the Russian party (about 11 billion dollars) (Ахмедов, 2012). In June of 1997, the Russian party made clear that it was searching for setting the issue through dialogue, the debts must not be an obstacle to increased cooperation between Russia and Syria in a number of areas, but the terms turned to be severer than those established, for example, for India (deferral for 40 years), or Jordan (cancellation of over 80% of debt).

By that time, Damascus practically had adapted to rather frosty relations with Moscow, not having a pressing need for the expeditious resolution of the problem of the debt. A hard-line approach towards the Syrian debt resulted in the direct economic loss for Russia, not to mention the political profit lost. Furthermore, the overdue debts complicated the possibility of prospective mutually acceptable terms on the debt repayment, however, that circumstance was not a fatal barrier for the further development of cooperation in economy.

At the end of 1997, Russia initiated cooperation between the Ministry for Atomic Energy of the Russian Federation (MINATOM) and a Syrian company for nuclear power. The Syrian party showed interest in conducting the corresponding negotiations to define possible directions in cooperation and in signing a relevant memorandum. The Russian government declared the necessity of development of the relations in the area (Черномырдин, 1997, № 1792).

Temporary weakness was followed by increased military and technical cooperation between Russia and Syria. In spring of 1992, there were held negotiations between the state company 'ROSVOORUZHENIE' and the Syrian company concerning the contracts signed in 1992 and 1993, in Damascus. In summer of the same year, Russia welcomed a high-profile delegation from Syria to sign the contracts on manufacture and supply to the Syrian Arab Republic of some kinds of modern weapons. In June of 1997, the Russian ambassador to Damascus announced resumption of export supplies of the Russian weapons to Syria, and later, some Arabic mass media provided information on the Russian-Syrian negotiations conducted in August of 1997, concerned with the supplies of the Russian AME to the Syrian Arab Republic for 3 billion dollars through financial support from Iran. The Syrian party showed a special interest in supplies of the new types of AME, in particular, aircrafts MiG-31, MiG-29, Su-27, Su-22, helicopters Ka-50, tanks T-90, air defense systems S-300, communication facilities and electronic warfare units (Ахмедов, 2012).

The Syrian arms market acquired special significance for Moscow, which almost completely lost the Iran's market because of the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council. Under the identified contracts already signed, the amount of supplies of the

Russian arms and weapons to Syria for the following 4 years (2010-2013) was estimated at 600 million dollars (Коротченко, 2011). Negotiations with Syria on a number of prospective projects were conducted. In particular, on supplies of two diesel-electric submarines, upgrading the air defense system S-125 Neva, supplies of up to 50 MiG-2 SMT, up to 75 combat-capable trainer aircrafts Yak-130. Supplies of long-range air defense missile systems, short-range ballistic missile systems Iskander-E, main battle tanks T-90S, various types of surface ships and a number of other weapons were not excluded (Центр анализа мировой торговли оружием, 2010).

The fact that Russia had a logistics center in Tartus, which was the only Russian naval control point in the Mediterranean Sea, played an important part in the area of military and technical cooperation with Syria. However, over the period from 2002 through 2009, Syria ranked the second in the amount of identified import of the Russian weapons in the Middle East region, which was 1.325 billion dollars (the seventh amongst all countries importing the Russian weapons), being inferior to Iran only (2.058 billion dollars, ranking No5) (Полуторамиллиардные контракты на поставку Сирии российских вооружений находятся в стадии реализации, 2012). Totally, for the period from 2002 through 2009, Iran and Syria imported around 10% (Полуторамиллиардные контракты на поставку Сирии российских вооружений находятся в стадии реализации, 2012) of the overall Russian export of weapons. In this respect the experts believe that after the loss of Iran market, Russia must not leave the Syrian market in favor of Israel and USA, since that would become an irretrievable loss for Moscow not only in the Middle East, but also would tell on the overall Russian weapons export.

It should be noted that the Syrian Arab Republic was ready for escalation of military cooperation with the Russian Federation, inter alia, because that could prompt Moscow to more decisive actions in support of Russia. It is symptomatic that after conclusion of a treaty between Washington and Warsaw on arrangement in Poland of the elements of the American air defense system, in 2008, Bashar al-Assad declared that Syria would be ready to consider a probable proposal from Moscow to arrange the Russian Iskanders in the territory of the country.

In the post-Soviet period, economic ties between Syria and Russia were promoted by the visit to Russia of Abdul Halim Khadam, the Vice-Prime minister in January of 2003. On the eve of the visit, in 2002, at the negotiation between the Russian and Syrian economic delegations in Moscow and Damascus, a number of significant agreements for trade and economic, and scientific and technical cooperation were signed. That created favorable conditions for the foreign economic activities by the Russian companies in the Syrian market, and revealed new opportunities for cooperation with Syria in financial and banking spheres, investments, credit, tourism, and other areas.

In November of 2003, the Russian company TATNEFT won the tender for the right to prospect and develop one of the large oil fields in the Syrian Arab Republic (Татнефть начала добычу нефти в Сирии, 2010). However, the problem of Syrian debt was a significant obstacle for the development of economic interaction with Russia. Apparently, it was the issue discussed at the negotiations in Damascus by the Deputy Minister of Finance of the Russian Federation A. Ulyukaev with the Syrian Prime Minister Naji Otri and the Minister of Finance of the Syrian Arab Republic M. Hussein in the early December of 2003. In December of 2003, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Alexander Saltanov also visited Damascus to be accepted by the President of Syria Bashar al-Assad and deliver the latter a personal message from Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia.

In January of 2005, during the visit of Bashar al-Assad, the President of Syria, to Moscow, the debt was settled. At the negotiations, the overall amount of debt relief was defined at 73%. A part of the credit was transferred to military supplies. It was supposed that the overdue amount of 3 billion 618 million dollars would be settled in the following installments: the first one, 40% or 1.5 billion dollars to be repaid within 10 years. The remaining part 2 billion 118 million dollars will be converted into Syrian lira to be credited to Russia's account opened with the bank of Syria after all domestic procedures are performed. At the rate of conversion of the total debt into dollars agreed upon, taken into consideration the counter debts and obligations of Russia, general debt of Syria to Russia based on the cross-cancellation was 13.4 billion dollars (Татнефть начала добычу нефти в Сирии, 2010).

In general, over the last years, bilateral cooperation between Syria and Russia continued rapid development. Double taxation agreement reached by Syria and Russia in Damascus in September of 2000 provided even more numerous opportunities for the development of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Agreement for cooperation signed by the Federation of Trade Chambers of the Russian Federation in 2000, contributed to the strengthening and extension of business links between business circles of two countries. In 2004, the process was followed by the creation of the bilateral Russian-Syrian business Council. Several months later, Russia and Syria signed the Declaration on deepening friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The agreements achieved by Syria and Russia in tourism increased bilateral cooperation and construction by the Russian investors of tourist facilities for 130 million dollars.

The Federation of Trade Chambers of Syria and the Russian-Syrian Business Council continued intensifying relations in economy and trade by arranging exhibition fairs in both countries, and relieving the goods presented from customs duties. Both countries were seeking for signing a treaty for increased cooperation in the area of investments and transport, as well as for the establishment of the joint Russian-Syrian Fund to promote the commodities exchange between the countries. In 2008, the exchange of goods reached the record level and in the same year, the countries introduced the visa-free regime for the citizen holding official passports.

One of the major spheres of collaboration between the countries was the fuel and energy complex including oil and gas production and processing, and construction of power generating facilities. Besides, the countries cooperated in irrigation and reclamation of lands, in transport, construction, tourism, and space exploration. A special attention should be paid to the ties between Russia and Syria in science and culture. This area has always been an inexhaustible source for holding inter-civilization and intellectual dialogues. The bilateral intergovernmental Agreement for cultural and scientific cooperation (1995) was used as a basis for the Syrian-Russian ties in science and culture. From December of 2004, the practice of regular weeks of the contemporary Russian cinema was resumed in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Higher Academy of Arts in the Syrian capital and its branch in Aleppo (the educational institution combines the

functions of music conservatory, dramatic and artistic facilities, as well as ballet school) employed primarily Russian teachers. Unfortunately, the protest movements, which arose in Syria forced many professionals to leave the country.

The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation from year to year developed bilateral exchange of students, post-graduate students, scientists, and lecturers promoted further development of cooperation between educational facilities of Russia and Arab countries, including the SAR, in higher education, scientific and research activities. Therefore, Syria was pursuing a multifaceted foreign policy over the period concerned, including the direction towards Russia. It was implemented supported by diplomatic intercourse at the high and highest political levels. Thus, Bashar al-Assad, the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, visited the Russian Federation three times commencing from 2005. In August of 2008, he met with Dmitry Medvedev, the then President of Russia, in Sochi. In 2010, Dmitry Medvedev visited the Syrian Arab Republic. The visit proceeded for the purpose of strengthening strategic partnership between the countries, development of bilateral relations in all spheres, and expansion of the horizons of cooperation in trade and economy. In their turn, Sergey Lavrov, Alexander Saltanov, and other senior officials of the Russian Federation repeatedly visited Damascus. Syrian summitry brought definite success, which could not but lead to breaking the foreign policy insulation of Syria and strengthening its positions on a regional and global levels.

In July of 2009, Damascus and Moscow celebrated the milestone anniversary, 65 years from the date of establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and Syrian Arab Republic. On that occasion, the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries, Sergey Lavrov and Walid al-Muallem, exchanged congratulatory addresses. Both parties expressed satisfaction by the sustained development of the Russian-Syrian relations, and accentuated their mutual intention to hold on strengthening of those relations in favor of friendly nations of Russia and Syria, fair and durable peace in the Middle East.

In June of 2011, on occasion of the Day of Russia, the Council of the Russian Federation in Syrian capital organized a state reception, where many guests of high standing were present, namely, Ahmad al-Ahmad, General Secretary of the Movement of Arab

socialists, Yaser Hurrie, a member of the regional government, Ali Habib, Minister of Defense, Sufian Allyau, Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources, Muhammad Nidal Ash-Shaar, Minister of Economy and Trade, a number of deputies of the People Council and heads of departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives of diplomatic missions in Damascus, figures of religion, culture, and public, and businessmen. The Russian Ambassador to Syria Sergey Kirpichenko declared that the national holiday, the Day of Russia, was celebrated that year on the Syrian land under exceptionally difficult conditions. However, the ambassador noted that the long-term and strong friendship between Syria and Russia could not be neglected. He also confirmed that the position of the Russian Federation in support of Syria is based on the following unshakable principles of the Russian foreign policy, freedom of choice by nations of their own way, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and regard for their sovereignty.

Since the beginning of the tragic events in Syria, i.e., from spring of 2011, several delegations from the Russian Federation comprising the outstanding journalists, experts in Oriental and Arabic Studies, party and public figures visited Syria in solidarity and support of the friendly nation. The Russian guests were welcomed both at the official and at the public level. In particular, representatives of one of the delegations succeeded to meet the head of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, who expressed appreciation and hope for the further development and consolidation of mutually favorable ties.

In the conflict that involved the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic and so called 'Syrian opposition', as well as the terroristic organization ISIS, the Russian diplomacy consistently supported the president Bashar al-Assad elected on a legitimate basis, standing against interference into the Syria's internal affairs, which drew strong criticism from the USA. Thus, the representative of the United States Department of State Victoria Nuland expressed confidence that the policy conducted by the Russian Federation towards Syria was neither 'morally adequate' nor compatible with the status of Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council (PBK, 2012).

The declaration made by an American diplomat at the briefing held on October 13, 2012, was the answer to the question of the legitimacy of the Russian supplies to Syria and of

the incident with the Russian aircraft arrested by Turkey. However, V. Nuland confessed that in legal terms the supplies of equipment from Russia to Syria are legitimate, since the Russian Federation and China had previously blocked the anti-Syrian sanctions at the UN Security Council. In summarizing the foregoing, we can say that Russia, a legal successor of the USSR, conducted a friendly policy focused on the strengthening of multifaceted, i.e. military and political, trade, economic, and cultural ties. Russia and Syria had partner cooperation on many international and regional problems expressing general or close view. Currently, the Russian Federation makes efforts to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in prevention of the internal armed conflict, actively standing against interference of external forces into the crisis.

3.2 Development of the Russian-Syrian Military Relations in Modern Conditions

Commencing from 1993, the Russian political elite has reexamined the national interests and turned towards the East, to the Arab world. It made an attempt to regain leadership, develop and strengthen the military and political relations on a new basis. The relations with Syria were resumed in all and any directions, including coordination of military doctrines, military technical equipment and development of mutual military and political resolutions and plans. While Russia initially pursued rather moderate aims as compared with the USSR, much progress has been made. Military and political relations between these two powers started being built after 2015. A number of contracts on arms supply signed by the countries testify to this fact.

Coordinated position of Russia and Syria towards non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can be provided as an example of cooperation between the countries, in particular, this applying to the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon. Fears over deformation of the non-proliferation regime are not groundless, the world community having a serious concern about the issue. The problem of preventing the nuclear arms race in the Middle East is in question not for the first decade.

The NPT Review Conference held in 2010 decided on convening of a conference in 2012 on the creation in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear and other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, with all countries of the region involved, with the full

support and participation of the nuclear-weapon States. At the Conference, Syria focused mainly on the issue of the Israel's nuclear program. Representatives of Damascus declared that Syria cannot agree upon extension of the NPT until Israel joins to it to place its nuclear facilities under international safeguards. Syria made a new proposal to postpone the Review Conference until the 'deficiencies of the Treaty' are not corrected. Generally, Russia supported the position of Syria, though making the statement on the importance of indefinite extension of the Treaty (Трушкин, 2011, № 3 (98), Т. 17, Р. 57).

The current military and political relations between the countries are beneficial for both parties. Russia can benefit from Syria being a potential buyer of its weapons and military equipment, which enhances the scope and potential of their collaboration in this direction, particularly, with regard to the precision weapons designed for the Army. This enables Russia, on the one hand, to be sought-after in the Middle East market, and on the other hand, to maintain the capacity of the national military-industrial complex. In its turn, owing to supplies of the Russian arms, Syria has an opportunity to maintain a certain balance of power in the Middle East, oppose to the international terrorism and hold down the strong country's foreign policy image. Now Russia supplies to Syria weapons and military equipment of exclusively defensive nature in compliance with the bilateral trade treaties reached (Калининой, 2010. Р. 35).

Based on the primary directions of the military and political relations of these countries, let us identify the basic structural constituent parts:

1. the ties between the states including rendering mutual support in implementing the political interests, namely long-established historical relationship between the countries; supporting the political interests of each other by strictly following the UN Charter, international rules, regulations, arrangements, and bilateral agreements; opposition by Russia to the attempts made by the USA to interfere with the internal affairs of Syria pursuant to its own strategic goals and national security;
2. military and technical equipment, i.e. increased influence of the military equipment; providing weapons and ammunition; training the military staff of the Syrian armed

forces; emergence of new forms of military and technical cooperation;

3. joint military and political plans and solutions, namely, cooperation between the power structures of both states in the Middle East peace process; support of each other's positions in non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and combating terrorism; enhancing the international authority and prestige of the countries and display of their power.

Military and political aspects of the Russian-Syrian cooperation play an important part in the expansion and strengthening of the interstate relations. It should be noted that Russia enhances its military and technical cooperation with foreign countries in general, and with Syria, in particular. This gives rise to the new process both of positive and of negative nature.

While considering the military and political cooperation, we cannot neglect the present day trends taking place in the global policy. Syria represents a kind of the center of the Arab world, the events that take place in this country influencing the majority of the countries in the region. Political crisis in Lebanon and Iraq, the problem of finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have a severe impact on the internal political stability in the country, the Syrian political leaders having to take it into consideration.

Therefore, the fact can be stated that over the last years, relations of Russia with the Middle East countries showed sustainable positive dynamics. This allows for the counting on further fruitful development of the Russian-Syrian military and political relations. In today's global environment, Syria is of particular interest to many international policy players. The situation around Syria has deteriorated. The unrest provoked by the opposition inspired by the radical circles has made the world community increase its focus on the internal political processes taking place there.

Many researchers have concluded that the complexity of the political scene is determined by the fact that Syria closely cooperates with Iran adversely treated by the West. That caused increased escalation in the relations between Syria and the USA, which, subsequently, cannot but affect the Russian-Syrian military and political dialogue (Филоник, 2011, № 2, P. 177). The Syrian leadership repeatedly expressed the

willingness to cooperate with the West provided that the USA stops pursuing a policy of double standards towards Syria.

In 2012, Syria has finally become the hottest spot of tension in the Middle East region. On August 15, 2012, it was excluded from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which became a really painful political blow after November of 2011, when it was exiled from the League of Arab States. The conflict zone was significantly expanded. The outcome of the opposition between the Syrian ruling group enjoying the support of a significant part of the public and the radical opposition essentially supported by outside forces largely depends on the loyalty of the army and law enforcement structures towards the ruling regime, as well as on the position of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, and particularly, of Russia.

Russia considers it important to prevent the internal Syrian conflict from escalating into the full-scale civil war, its calls focused on the immediate ending violation on both sides, and on the launching national dialogue without preliminary conditions and foreign interference. It supports the measures associated with implementation of the political reform proposed by Damascus including the referendum held not so long ago on amendment of the Constitution of the country.

The situation concerning Syria remains complex despite active search for alternatives and responsible decisions on concessions in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this process, Russia plays a determining part standing for observation of international law and prevention against the use of force from outside towards the sovereign state.

Russia also supports territorial integrity of Syria and undertakes operations against the ISIS, which represents a serious threat to the Middle East. Thus, the military and political relations between Russia and Syria attract attention of the world community. To a large extent, this is determined by the increased interest both to the events taking place in the region, and to the Middle East itself. In general, the history of development of the Russian-Syrian military and political relations is unique; therefore, it needs to be studied in more detail.

3.3 Present Situation and Prospects for Economic Relations Between Russia and Syria

Before 1992, export from Syria to Russia included a wide range of goods against indebtedness under the loan provided. In 1992, after Syria stopped repayment under the debt to the USSR, and clearing trade came to a halt. Important articles such as oil and cotton were excluded from the list of goods. Russia sold machines and equipment, vehicles, miscellaneous equipment, tools and spare parts, rolled iron, saw wood, and a number of other raw materials to Syria for the freely convertible currency. Syria exported confectionary, fruit, fabrics, wearing apparels, and a number of other raw materials.

Before 1992, annual sales volume reached 1 billion US dollars and included, in particular, a wide range of Syrian goods such as oil and cotton against indebtedness under the state loans provided (Евсеев, 2008). Since thereafter the Syrian party stopped repayment of the said debt, and the countries shifted to the settling in a freely convertible currency, the mutual sales volume were reduced significantly, according to the Russia's Trade mission in Syria, the turnover being characterized as below (without special supplies).

By the middle 1993, Syria established diplomatic relations almost with all countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). That was mainly promoted by an official tour made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs F. Shaar across these countries in March of 1992, when it was agreed on the establishment of diplomatic relations, a number of agreements in science, culture and information signed. Over the period from 1992 through 2000, the Syrian Arab Republic opened embassies of Armenia, Belorussia, Ukraine, and Turkmenistan. There are no representative offices of the Syrian Arab Republic at the level of embassies, consulates general, or honorary consulates in the territory of the independent states. The SAR embassy in Moscow is authorized to fulfill consular functions in relation to the CIS.

Creation of the contractual legal framework of the Syrian-Russian trade and economic cooperation followed the signature of the Treaty on Trade, Economic and Technical

Cooperation on April 15, 1993, which Treaty involved mutual providing the most-favored-nation treatment, transfer from clearing form of payment to payments made, primarily, in the free convertible currency.

In 2000, the Double Taxation Treaty, Agreement for Cooperation between the Federation of Trade Chambers of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, as well as the Agreement for Cooperation in Tourism were signed. In the 2000s, the Russian companies intensified technical assistance to the Syrian organizations in construction and operation of important facilities of the national economy of Syria, as well in supplies of miscellaneous machines, equipment, spare parts and materials. In 2001, the Contract for International Carriage of Goods by Road was signed. This Contract will contribute to the increase of goods exchange between Syria and Russia.

Considerable increase in the Russian export to the Syrian Arab Republic in recent years promoted, in particular, by the increased number of the Russian companies performing in the market of Syria, provides consistent growth of the inter-trade despite the constantly decreased import from Syria. In 2005, the Syrian-Russian arrangement for mutual debts settlement was signed. The Minister of Finance of Syria Mohhamad al-Hosin noted that in such a way the parties were moving to a next level in cooperation. The Russian Minister Alexey Kudrin said that Russia directly benefited from the debt settlement. Therefore, both countries were interested in that arrangement, since it concerned considerable sums of money and continuation of trade and economic relations. Total amount of the Syrian debt to Russia reached 13,400 million dollars. Pursuant to the agreement, Russia cancelled 73% (around 9.8 billion dollars) of the Syrian debt, the remaining portion of the debt (3.6 billion dollars) to be repaid within 10 years by allotments of 150 million dollars annually, and by supply to Russia either of the Syrian or the third parties' goods, or by transfer to the Russian investments in Syria within 6 years.

Syrian and Russian businessmen conducted negotiations on construction of plants for production of olive oil, fertilizers, chemical products, basalt-plastic pipes, construction of strategic warehouses for storage of oil products, laying power lines, creation of

touristic centers, and other. Over the recent years (2005-2008), the sales volume has grown in average by 15-20% and, in some years, even higher (Евсеев, 2008). The Syrian debt to Russia was not serviced for ten years; therefore, the 'arrangement' was especially conducive to the revival of trade relations in energy generating industry, and in supply of equipment and spare parts. Thus, in 2007, the international trade between the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic was 1,300 million dollars; as compared with 2006, it increased by 13.4% due to the growing export (Евсеев, 2008).

Russia supplies to Syria machines and equipment, vehicles, tools and spare parts, rolled ferrous metals and pipes, timber, and corns. Syria exports light industry goods (ready-made clothes, fabrics, tulle, knitwear, footwear, hosiery, etc.), food products (citrus, fruit, preserves, confectionery products etc.), machinery, and cosmetics. In 2007, the Russia's share in Syrian goods turnover was 5% (Евсеев, 2008). A number of factors hindered cooperation, namely, the absence of state support of the Russian exporters; underdevelopment of contractual and legal framework in foreign trade between Russia and Syria.

The Russian organizations cooperate with the Syrian state companies in energy generating industry, oil production, irrigation, water management, lands development, and transport to enable proper performance of the facilities constructed before with the assistance of the USSR and Russian Federation, and the projects currently being under construction. Foreign trade also forms an integrated part of economic cooperation.

There are good prospects for bilateral cooperation. The State organization for chemical industry of the Ministry of Industry of the Syrian Arab Republic considers the technical and business proposals from the international business association JSC VO 'Tyazhpromexport' for the construction in Syria of the plants for production of triple super phosphate fertilizers and pesticides. The Syrian party is interested in cooperation with the Russian company in implementation of the said projects. The Ministry of Industry of the Syrian Arab Republic invites Russian organization to cooperate in other promising projects as well, which are the construction of nitrogen fertilizers, upgrading the plant for production of phosphate fertilizers, plant for production of tyres, extension of the cement plant in Adra, reconstruction of the Pulp and Paper Mill, and construction

of the enterprises for silicon metal production. The State organization of industrial enterprises of the Ministry of Industry of the Syrian Arab Republic invited the JSC VO 'Tyazhpromexport' to prepare the technical and economic assessment for the construction of the plant in Al-Zara. It is supposed that the said projects will be implemented at the cost of credits from the Arab funds.

Conducive conditions are created for further cooperation between the countries in construction of dams and hydraulic structures, technical survey and implementation of projects on construction of irrigation facilities, lands development, and upgrading and reconstruction of the hydro power plant 'Al-Baas' and 'Al-Furat'. In compliance with the protocol signed in 2005 in Moscow by the Ministers of Natural Resources of Russia and the Minister of Irrigation of Syria, the parties agreed upon exchange of the proposals on implementation of the directions and focus areas of cooperation in irrigation, water management, and lands development of the SAR.

In recent years, new markets for the construction of plants producing fertilizers, cements, upgrading the oil and gas and energy complexes, creation of the present day communication system, development of transport infrastructure have formed. Syria has a constant need for supplies of oil and chemistry products, fertilizers, synthetic fiber, metal, timber, paper, electronic means of information and communication, process equipment for processing of agricultural products, transport equipment, some kinds of medicines.

Russian manufacturers and exporters satisfy the listed needs of Syria by supplying to Syrian customers various kinds of machinery, equipment, and materials under the trade contracts. However, their activity in getting orders for construction of the facilities participating in the international tenders is hampered with their limited financial capacities.

In terms of the investments and supplies of equipment, materials, and spare parts, the oil and gas complex has remained one of the leading economies of Syria. The western companies participating in the development of Syrian oil and gas deposits invest considerable financial resources in this industry. When Israel started oil and gas

exploration in 2009, it became evident that the entire Mediterranean basin is put in play, and that either Syria will be attacked, or the entire region will coexist in peace, since the 21st century is believed to become a century of pure energy.

The Syrian party repeatedly insisted on participation of Russian companies and organizations in implementation of the projects for exploration, development and transportation of oil and gas, irrigation and water management construction, reconstruction of transport and railway network, and creation of “technopolis” and “electronic village”. In particular, during the visit of the Minister of Industry, Science, and Technologies of the Russian Federation to Syria in 2002, the Parties confirmed their interest in development of the Russian-Syrian business relations in industry and technologies. Inter alia, the Parties noted the possibility of cooperation in construction of a plant for producing triple superphosphate fertilizer in the region of Palmira, construction of a plant for producing metal silicon and upgrading the tyre works in the city of Hama. An agreement for investigation of a possibility for Russian organizations to participate in implementation of the project for the creation of a “technopolis” in Syria was reached. The Minister for Finance A.V. Kudrin who visited Syria in 2005 confirmed the existing enhanced opportunity for economic cooperation, including foreign trade.

The third meeting of the Commission chaired by the Minister V. Jakovlev and the Minister for Trade of Syria Amer Lutfi was held in Damascus in 2005. The meeting defined strategic trends for development of bilateral relations. On January 16, a meeting of the Minister for Industry and Energy I. Khristenko and the Minister for Natural Resources and Oil of Syria Abdul Halim Khaddam took place to reach an initial agreement on the construction by Stroytransgaz of the Kirkuk-Baniyas pipeline, a central main oil pipeline, a Syrian section of the Syrian-Jordan (Pan-Arab) oil pipeline (to Hums). The Russian party expressed interest in the project “Gas-Palmira”.

From the 14th through the 16th of March, 2006, the fourth meeting of the Commission was held in Moscow, when joint venture agreements with Russian enterprises willing to cooperate with Syria were signed, such as “Uralmash” (January, 2005), “Tatneft” (March, 2005), “Souzneftegaz” (2005), and “Stroytransgaz” (December, 2005) (МИД

РФ, 2014). In March of 2005, “Tatneft” signed a contract for new exploration and development of oil in Syria, in December of the same year, “Sogoztransgaz” signed a US\$200 million contract for the construction of a new refinery and contract for the construction of a new gas pipeline for 160 million US dollars. In the same month, a US\$ 2.7 billion project for the construction by Russia of a new refinery and petrochemical complex was signed. These examples testify to the persistent efforts made by the Trade and Economy Commission of these two countries, with bilateral meetings held on a regular basis.

The Russian companies such as the Russian international business company “Zarubezhneft”, international business company “Tyazhpromexport”, CJSC “Stroytransgaz”, business company “Alfa-Eco”, OJSC “Uralmash”, and other companies continue cooperating with the Ministry for Petroleum and Mineral Resources of the Syrian Arab Republic and its subsidiary companies according to the directions and facilities proposed by the Syrian party, both on bilateral basis and by tender, including design, exploration and integrated development of Syrian oil and gas deposits; construction of oil and gas pipelines and petroleum storage facilities, servicing wells and drilling equipment, supply of equipment, materials and spare parts, as well as training staff.

Russian organizations, including regional ones (from the Ural, North-Western, Trans-Baikal regions, and Tatarstan) continue or plan to compete in other international tenders in Syria, including for the construction of oil and gas pipelines, petroleum storage facilities, oil laboratories, a cement mill in Adra; for the supply of motor vehicles, spare parts, removable equipment and materials for power-generating and oil-drilling equipment, rail tracks, rolling stock, etc. Currently, tender proposals for total amount around 400 million US dollars presented by Russian companies are pending with Syrian customers.

The decisions made by the Syrian party on possible re-investment of a portion of Syria’s debt as the Russia’s ownership in the joint venture, as well as on its use as bank guarantees for the Russian companies participating in international tenders in the SAR gave a powerful impetus to the development of cooperation between the countries in

investment activity. One of the main problems of the Russian-Syrian relations constraining full-scale development of trade and economic, and military and technical cooperation consisted in the outstanding debts under the state loans provided to Syria by the former USSR. Four rounds of negotiations in the period from 1992 to 1994 had no positive results. In 2005, as it has been mentioned before, the problems of cross indebtedness were solved after the leaders of the countries signed several relevant agreements.

At the meeting of the co-Chairs of the Committee held in Damascus in 2000, the state and prospects of inter-trade, investment and scientific and technical cooperation were discussed, the Long-term program on implementation of the Treaty on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation, and the Double Taxation Treaty signed. In 2001, the second meeting of the Committee was held in Moscow, where the Parties emphasized their mutual interest in further development of long-term cooperation throughout the range of trade and economic and scientific and technical ties, and agreed upon joint efforts for the development of foreign trade both in the historical areas listed above, and in the comparatively new areas of cooperation in industry, geology and natural resources, in utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in scientific and technical cooperation, healthcare, and interbank relations.

The Russian organizations are working actively in the Syrian market under the conditions of tough competition. For Russian, the Syrian Arab Republic has remained one of the leading trade partners in the Middle East. In terms of long experience of cooperation, the developing economy of Syria still needs modern Russian equipment, spare parts, and materials. Russia has remained an attractive market for the national products.

In general, trade and economic cooperation between the SAR and Russia currently has rather favorable opportunities, participation of the Russian companies in international tenders in the SAR, reached arrangements for settlement of the Syrian outstanding loans by investing a portion of the debt in the authorized capital of the joint Russian-Syrian ventures, and utilization of the same as bank guarantees for the Russian companies participating in tenders, as well as by supplying national goods to Russia, the level of

trade and economic relations between this countries will be high.



4. CONCLUSION

Building relations between Syria and the USSR has passed through several stages. They existed even before the World War I began. The Soviet-Syrian cooperation reached a heyday after the Corrective Movement won in Syria in 1970, which eliminated errors and corrected weaknesses of the former leadership to improve performance of the Arab Ba'ath Party, state machine, local authorities, and mass organizations by adding their actions confidence, stability, maturity, and political vision. In this context, the pace of economic development of Syria accelerated even more, including due to the increased trade flows with the USSR and overall Syrian-Soviet cooperation. After 1970, friendship with the USSR has become a permanent strategic line of the country's foreign policy. That was affirmed in the Treaty of 1980 providing for close cooperation between these two countries in economy, policy, culture, science, technology, and defense based on the principle of equality and mutual benefits.

The changes in the policy of the USSR that emerged after 1987 could not but cause certain complications in relations with Syria. Economic recession in the USSR, contraction in trade with the Arab countries, as well as in financial support and supply of technology, and more importantly, rapprochement with the USA, including by yielding to the Americans in the Middle East could not remain hidden. In its turn, the USA not intending to depart from the former strategy continued following the course of undermining the USSR's position in the Arab world, and eliminating of the ability to compete with the USA in the region. That circumstance ultimately led to return of the post-Soviet Russia to the Middle East, awareness of the new leadership, which once condemned foreign policy of the USSR, need not only for de-ideologization of the foreign policy and rapprochement with the West, but also for advocacy for Russia, which had much in common with the interest of the collapsed USSR in geopolitics, economy, defense, cultural, historical and human relations, although implemented by different means and under different conditions.

With each year, the Russian Federation becomes more and more significant strategic partner for Syria, both in terms of strengthening domestic political positions of the country, and in terms of military modernization and consolidation of the international standing. Russia also needs this strategic cooperation determining its position on the international scene. When Bashar al-Assad assumed the Presidency, he decisively embarked upon institution of a new stage of economic, social and political liberalization trying to accelerate the pace of modernization of Syria, particularly, by implementing the program of military modernization.

Notwithstanding economic difficulties, Syria still maintained relationships with Russia, although not so actively. Occupation of Iraq by the United States in 2003 and Israel's air assault on Syria made the country undertake certain actions on increasing the capacity of the armed forces, and, in this context, take care of strengthening cooperative relations with Russia. Recently, Syria has bought air-to-surface, surface-to-air, and sea-to-air missile systems. Another Israel's air assault and tense situation in Lebanon became the key reasons for the measures Syria undertook for the strengthening Syrian-Russian relations. Today, Russia has everything to meet the needs of Syria building up its military capabilities.

In Syria, the mechanism of decision making in the full sense of the word was under control of Bashar al-Assad's regime supporters. The Ba'ath Party is not only active in identification of urgent problems and in design of the country's development strategies, but also, acting within the scope of sovereign regime established by Bashar al-Assad, demonstrates these strategies to public, which promotes Assad's family and inner circle. Since that governing party consisted of representative of the highest levels of military and security organizations, it supported greatly the development of steady relations with Russia, giving preference to the Russian organizations in terms of weapons and economy.

It is known that the major portion of the arsenals of the Syrian Armed Forces was made in the Soviet Union/Russia. The issues of standing of Syria in the region, domestic problems of the country and conflicts in the region led to the situation when the Armed Forces and military structure of the state became important state policy. In manufacture and supply of the missiles, Russia, as the most reliable partner, especially, in the area of

air defense and providing equipment to the Army, remains the only country, which may satisfy Syria's needs. Russia provides Syria not only with missiles, but also with other weapons, also being a strategic partner for training soldiers. Today, Russia can withstand international pressure, it has geopolitically beneficial regional positions, and it is only Russia that can produce on a large scale the weapons meeting Syria's strong demands.

Russia has lesser influence on Syria's economy than on arms export and military modernization. In view of economic policy aimed at the rapprochement with the West pursued by Hafez al-Assad after 1990, and measures taken by Bashar al-Assad within the frame of the economic reform after 2000, it is impossible to say that Russia held exclusively important position in economic development of Syria. The projects implemented within the overall framework of economic reform in Syria, and bilateral foreign trade relations testify to the fact that Syrian-Russian relationships are built up based on political and security grounds, they intended to support these or other areas of cooperation. It should be noted that although economic relations between these two countries were given little attention, both states have been always interested in their intensive development. Currently, trade and economic bilateral cooperation is at the stage of development, although, it still does not rank first. Bashar al-Assad executes both long-term draft agreements and actual contracts of urgent nature. This policy involves economic expenses amongst other factors, which, in turn, provides an opportunity for Russia to ensure needed support for the country.

Radical and secular groups posing a major threat to Bashar al-Assad's policy choice not only defend their ideology but also take serious steps in consolidation against the "common enemy". That process also involved the followers of the Ba'ath Party who became exiles opposing the current regime, falling into neither group, including even Alawites kindred to Assad. The government of Syria could not treat calmly these groups, since threat they posed increased. Therefore, Bashar al-Assad's regime supporters seeking to save the regime were extremely concerned about the issues of state security, which were the gauge of national stability. The military methods Hafez al-Assad frequently applied to have still remained demanded. In this view, current President of Syria Bashar al-Assad also has to continue developing relations with Russia like it was in his father' reign. Bashar al-Assad's regime, which can be deemed inherited from Hafez al-Assad, still tends to receive external support, e.g. from Russia. On the other

hand, supported by Russia, Syria has a chance to strengthen its position in the international scene. International pressure and the events that took place in the region imposed significant challenges to the current regime, which encouraged the opposition. It is then when Syria was involved in open conflict with the USA to a certain extent supported by the UN that Syria faced Russia as the strongest and most promising country.

Internal capacity of Syria, unique geopolitical position in the region, global trends, and Russia's foreign policies allow for making assertions that Syria maintains relations with Russia within the frame of policy of the center of power against the background of policy of prestige. It also should be mentioned that Syria pursues a radically different policy towards Russia than towards other countries. Peculiar features of this policy consist in the following: Syria does not develop direct strategy of foreign policy towards Russia, it does not make Russia a specific object of its foreign policy, but treats Russia as an essential factor supporting its policy towards other countries, both in the region, and internationally.

For Russia, the policy of return to the Middle East remains urgent, moreover, it does not have other reliable ally in the region than Syria; therefore Russia also needs Syria, with the government headed by Bashar al-Assad offering such a chance. The influence of Syria on the Middle East, and on the entire Arab world determines the importance of increased cooperation with this country to safeguard the interests of Russia in the region. All treaties made by and between these two countries were initiated by Bashar al-Assad in accordance to his regime preferences.

The fall of the current regime in Syria is inadvisable for Russia, since it will weaken its positions both in the Syrian region, and in the Middle East. If the Assad's regime falls, Russia will lose a number of treaties and investments, original strategic intentions will be defeated. For example, an important strategic object, a naval base in Tartus will be lost. Furthermore, this can both mean the loss of a reliable partner in the region, and be a matter of support of the outstanding issue of radical movements in the region. The government of Syria being well aware of strategic susceptibility of Russia shows and confirms that to maintain the status quo is of prime importance for the development of bilateral relations.

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