

The Rise and Fall of Soviet-Egypt Special Relations, 1971-1974

SUN Degang, BAI Xinyi

Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

This article is set to investigate the special relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt in early Sadat administration, 1971-1974. The Soviet-Egypt special relations were based on three factors—international system, states, and decision-makers. From the perspective of international system, since U.S. and Israel were the *status quo* powers, and the Soviet Union and Egypt were the revisionist countries that aimed to challenge such an unfavorable power structure, Moscow and Cairo were forced to form a coalition; from the national level, the pursuit of common security instead of economic interests became the important factor of promoting Soviet-Egypt special relations; from the decision-making level, the Soviet leaders viewed Egypt as the bridgehead to expand her interests in the Middle East. Likewise, Sadat acknowledged that the Soviet Union was the main source of obtaining advanced weapons on the one hand, but meanwhile was concerned that the Soviet Union could manipulate Egyptian leadership and may interfere in the internal affairs of Sadat administration. In fact, the two governments' elites established asymmetrical special relations based on expediency and convenience, and hence such special relations were doom to fall apart with the shuttle diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State in late 1973.

Keywords: Soviet-Egypt relations, quasi-alliance, special relations, Middle East Cold War

Introduction

During the Cold War, alliance and partnership were the two main pillars of Soviet foreign security strategies, which were the most important means for Moscow to use the third world countries' strategic resources from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, and from Africa to Southeast Asia. In 1970s, to consolidate its special relations with target countries, the Soviet Union signed treaty of friendship and cooperation with the third world countries, such as India and Egypt respectively in 1971, with Iraq in 1972, and with Vietnam in 1978. It's worth nothing that India dismembered Pakistan at the end of 1971 after the signing of Soviet-Indian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation; Egypt launched air attack against Israel in 1973 after the concluding of Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation; Vietnam invaded Cambodia soon after it entered into the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow in 1978. The establishment of special relations seemingly prompted Soviet allies to choose war. What were the dynamics for the Soviet Union to build special relations with the third world countries? How was the efficacy? Why were the special relations terminated? This article is set to take the case of Soviet-Egypt special relations in the early Sadat administration as an example to disclose the myth.

SUN Degang, Ph.D., professor, Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China.

BAI Xinyi, graduate student, Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China.

The authors are indebted to China's Ministry of Education program "Theoretical and Empirical Studies of China's Participation in the Middle East Security Affairs" (16JJDGJW011), to the "Shu Guang" Project of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission and Shanghai Education Development Foundation (15SG29).

At present, the declassified historical archives about the relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt in 1970s are not available, but some public documents and memoirs have been published, such as *From Encroachment to Involvement: A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973*, written by Yaacov Ro'i; *The Soviet Union and the October 1973 Middle East War*, written by Kohler, Gouré, and Harvey (1974) from Miami University argues that Soviet Middle East policy was formulated under the background of US-Soviet constructing global “anti-empire united front” and the Soviet Union explored both peaceful coexist with U.S. and expanding its influence in the third world countries. In addition, the *Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis*, written by Golan (1977), Hebrew University, Israel, also contends that the signing of *Soviet-Egypt Treaty of Amity and Cooperation* in 1971 enhanced Egyptian determination to recover its lost ground. It showed Soviet partiality for Arab countries for the Soviet statement about Egypt-Israeli conflict of October 7, 1973 and Soviet warning to Israel of October 23, which seemingly indicated that the Soviet Middle East policy caused the outbreak of the Fourth Middle East War. In 1990, Golan finished his another book—*Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, in which he introduces Soviet and Syrian summit diplomacy after the outbreak of the Fourth Middle East War and stresses that Soviet military assistance to Arab countries was the main tool of penetrating into the Arab world.

British political researcher Dawisha (1979) stresses the numerous factors of Soviet foreign policy to Egypt from the perspective of the relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt and its historic development. He stresses that from the macro level, Soviet military strength, population, the size of its economy, ideology and external environment could affect Soviet foreign policy to Egypt, while from the micro level, its foreign policy to Egypt was influenced by Soviet political system, interest groups and elites, whose foreign policy tools include diplomacy, economic assistance, trade, military, propaganda, culture, etc.

American scholars also achieved some important fruit in this field. For example, U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay J. D. Glassman during George W. Bush administration had explored in depth Soviet-Egyptian relations. In his book—*Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East*, Glassman thought that, since the outbreak of the Second Middle East War in 1956, the Soviet Union had provided all kinds of defensive and offensive weapons to Arab countries and even if the Soviet Union had not publicly supported Egypt and Syria to use force settling the conflict with Israel, the weapons that Soviet supplied made the outbreak of Arab-Israeli hostility possible, including the Suez War in 1956, the Six Day War in 1967, the war of attrition in 1968, and the Fourth Middle East War in 1973. Glassman (1975) adopts a historical approach and refers to news media and government work report.

Professor R. O. Freedman (1975) of Baltimore Hebrew University attempted in his book *Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East* to divide Soviet-Egyptian relations into three stages: the first stage was from the death of President Nasser in 1970 to Egyptian expelling of Soviet military experts in 1972; the second stage was from Egyptian banishment of Soviet military experts to the outbreak of Ramadan War of October 6, 1973; the third stage was from October 6, 1973 to the end of October 1973. The author cited a good many of remarks of government officials, as well as reports by newspapers and magazines.

In his book, *Red Star on the Nile*, Rubinstein (1977), derived from a large number of historical materials, studied the huge challenges that Soviet-Egyptian relations faced in the Fourth Middle East War and highlighted the key role of leadership personality traits in maintaining the relations of inter-states. Even if this book was the classics of studying Soviet-Egyptian relations, it was inevitable to avoid bias as the literature was mostly from the West. Another American scholar Garthoff (1985) who is an expert in researching the history of the Cold

War and particularly the Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War, in his book, *Détente and Confrontation*, from the perspective of US-Soviet detente, concluded that there had always been contradiction between détente (seeking cooperation with America) and confrontation (confronting with America in Arab-Israeli conflict) for Soviet leader Brezhnev. On the one hand, Soviet hoped to relax the relations with America to gain most-favored-nation status, solving internal economic issues; on the other hand, it was hard to turn a deaf ear to the demand of Egypt and Syria's arms-buying and Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, the outbreak of the Fourth Middle East War portended the collapse of Soviet defense policy.

In terms of Soviet-Egyptian relations during Sadat administration, Egyptian officials and scholars also made some researches. As an illustration, former Egyptian Foreign Minister Heikal (1978), On the grounds of his own collected documents and memoirs, and Egyptian officials' testimony and other public documents, wrote a book titled *Sphinx and Commissar: the Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World*. The book revealed some important historic pictures and details and highlighted that the Fourth Middle East War was the turning point of Soviet influence from prosperity to decline in Arab world, especially in Egypt. However, as the author admits in the preface that this book has less to do with academic study to the history of international relations than politician's recollection of its own personal experiences.

Even if there are plenty of researches on Soviet-Egyptian relations during Sadat administration, few are from the perspective of special relations. This passage touches down upon Soviet-Egypt special relations in this era as a case study, on the strength of recently declassified archives, memoirs, and the second-hand materials.

The Formation of Soviet-Egyptian Special Relations

In 1970, President Nasser, a Pan-Arab nationalist leader, died of heart attack, and Deputy President Sadat succeeded to the Egyptian president. Compared with Nasser's high prestige in Egypt and the Arab world, Sadat was unknown. In his early administration, Sadat regime was instable and the Soviet Union kept doubts about his direction of Egyptian foreign policy, so the new President had to take a low-profile policy.

With the new regime gradually strengthened, Sadat started to abandon his consistent low-key approach and put forward his own "Policy blueprint". Different from Nasser that firmly advocated defensive strategy after the third Middle East War of 1967, Sadat proposed to execute an offensive strategy—crossing the Suez Canal, defeating Israeli troops and recovering Sinai Peninsula. With regards to this, Sadat posed that "at the expense of one million Egyptians". There were running parallel between Egyptian territorial demands of Sinai Peninsula and Soviet objective of gaining strategic fortress in the Mediterranean and the two countries were complementary to each other. As Albanian relations with China heated up while Albanian-Soviet relations gradually deteriorated, the Soviet Union lost its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Sadat was willing to provide naval port, air base to the Soviet Union and agreed to set up the latter's electronic stations, which made the Soviet Union possible to pay close attention to the trends of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, since the Sixth Fleet was equipped with nuclear weapons and might attack Soviet in case of emergency. To win Egyptian trust, the Soviet promised to supply quality weaponry to Egypt. By 1970, the number of Soviet military experts and consultants to Egypt soared from 2,500-5,000 of 1960s to 10,000 (Mott IV, 2001). While the amount of Soviet military experts and consultants in Egypt increased, Egyptian dependence on Soviet military technology and equipment had also increased. With the gradual expansion of Soviet military and political influence in Egypt, the two countries developed special relations.

To make better use of the “quasi-ally” of the Soviet Union, Sadat made up his mind to recover the lost ground occupied by Israel in 1967. In January 1971, Sadat initiated the scheme for the battle of crossing Suez Canal and recovering Sinai Peninsula. In February, the new types of Egyptian missiles were shipped to the Suez Canal and started the plan of withdrawing civilians from the Suez Canal battleground. However, to launch air strike against Israel, Egypt need advanced offensive weapons. So in two and a half years, the core agenda of Soviet-Egypt special relations was arms sales. On January 15, 1971, Nikolai Podgorny, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union led strong lineup trade delegation to visit Egypt, nominally celebrating the completion of the Aswan Dam, but actually inspecting the operation of the new government of Egypt under Sadat and evaluating the necessity of Soviet arms sales to Egypt. Sadat pointed out in a speech that “the late President Nasser was a symbol of our national spirit, and Aswan Dam is the symbol of our national strength. Today our most intimate friends are celebrating the successful completion of the Dam together. And the Soviet Union and great Soviet people have provided great help to Egypt” (Israeli, 1978). Chairman Nikolai Podgorny emphasized that only people chose correct roads, kept vigilant against the enemy and sought truly reliable friends and allies, could imperialism and its followers be eliminated (Glassman, 1975). Even if Sadat was dubious of the Soviet hidden motives of controlling the new government, after all, Egypt had not yet finished the reunification of motherland, and the Soviet Union was the only reliable and even the primary supporter of Egypt. Soviet-Egypt complementary in military and political goals pushed the two sides to shelve their differences and gradually drew together in strategy.

In the first three months of 1971, Soviet arms sales turnover to Egypt increased substantially, whose air defense system covered the whole Egyptian territory. But Sadat clearly knew that there was still a large gap for Egypt’s military compared with that of Israel. On May 1, 1971, Sadat visited the Soviet Union secretly and demanded Moscow to meet the following three requirements: (1) Have military and political arrangement between two states; (2) The Soviet Union provides Egypt with as many weapons as Israel has got; (3) The Soviet will sell weapons to Egypt regularly in the future. Sadat was satisfied with the Soviet defensive weapons but demanded that Moscow offer a large number of offensive weapons too. But the Soviet leader set a principle that Egyptian government cannot use the Soviet aircraft without its permission (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). The condition that the Soviet Union proposed chained the Sadat administration and invisibly made Cairo a puppet of the Soviet Union, which was unacceptable to Sadat. He pointed out that if Israel once again launched a large-scale attack against Egypt, should Egypt launch a retaliatory attack only after Soviet permission? “It would put me into an awkward position. I am the head of state and will not abandon the freedom of unilateral action” (Heikal, 1975). Finally, Sadat wished to keep distance with the Soviet and then could create opportunity for improving relations with America. For the newly appointed Sadat, establishing partnership with U.S. or the Soviet Union was a strategic option and Egypt would not stick to any power forever, highlighting the flexibility of Sadat foreign strategy.

Since Sadat was elected president of Egypt with 90 percent of approval and it was not easy for the Soviet Union to control it. In March 1971, the Soviet delegation led by Chairman Nikolai Podgorny visited Egypt again and left on May 8. During this visit, Sadat claimed to have foiled an attempted coup and actually purged the Soviet proxies placed inside Egyptian government—Vice President Ali Sabri and Minister of War Mohammed Fawzi.

After Egyptian government crushed the failed coup, there had been media reports that the Soviet Union was behind the plot to overthrow Sadat regime, so that Soviet-Egyptian relations was subject to certain negative

influence and Soviet leader's distrust of Sadat was further enhanced. Sadat even shook "olive branch" to America in this chance and wished that America could help Egypt to recover the lost ground, while at this time Nixon administration was busy with visiting China and proposed that Egypt-Israel should recognize each other's existence, but the improvement of U.S.-Egypt relation was not included in Nixon's policy agenda, which compelled Sadat to pin his hopes of recovering Sinai Peninsula on improving Soviet-Egypt relations.

After being ignored by Nixon administration, Sadat was more rational to the relation with the Soviet Union. He knew that it was hard to confront with Israel without the help of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was the only dependable super power. To remove Soviet leader's suspicion to him, Sadat took initiative to improve Soviet-Egyptian relations, inviting Chairman Podgorny to revisit Cairo on May 25, 1971 and holding talks on promoting Soviet-Egyptian relations. After negotiations, the two sides finally reached consensus and signed *Soviet-Egypt Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation* valid for 15 years (Ovendale, 2004). According to this agreement, Egyptian leaders promised to consult with the Soviet Union in advance before taking any significant measures; the Soviet responded to provide advanced weapons to Egypt, including MiG-23 and Scud missiles, all of which could hit the heart land of Israel and which were superior to the *Phantom* fighters in performance (Breslauer, 1990). What Sadat expected was that the Soviet Union could treat Egypt as equal partner on the one hand, and reduce Moscow's suspicions to Sadat administration on the other, especially after Vice President Sabri, a pro-Soviet figure was compelled to resign; it was more necessary for Sadat to show his position of anti-Americanism, which was the foundation for the Soviet to extend a large number of military assistance. The sign of *Soviet-Egypt Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation* marked the formal establishment of Soviet-Egypt special relations.

Soviet-Egypt special relation is a complete expediency to them, which planted the seeds for the deterioration of the bilateral relations in the future. In July 1971, as to Sudanese civil war, the contradiction between the Soviet Union and Egypt appeared again—both Egypt and Libya supported Sudanese government to suppress the rebels and maintain the regime stability while the Soviet Union accused Egypt of helping Sudan to suppress progressive forces. When the Soviet Union exerted pressure on Egyptian government, Sadat reiterated that Egypt would not succumb to the outside power's pressure (Mott IV, 2001). As can be seen from Sudanese incident, both Egypt and Libya opposed "Communism in Africa" and viewed it as a curse. For Sadat, both internal and external threat can affect the stability of his own regime, while the former was even more destructive.

The Consolidation of Soviet-Egyptian Special Relations

Soviet-Egypt special relations were mainly manifested between inter-governmental exchanges. On October 11, 1971, Sadat visited Moscow and held talks with three Soviet giants—General Secretary Brezhnev, Chairman of the Council Ministers Kosygin and Chairman Podgorny respectively, which aimed at eliminating the impact of Egyptian government's arrest of Sabri on Soviet-Egyptian relations. He expressed his gratitude to strong Soviet support to Egypt's national liberation cause and social progress and meanwhile demanded that the Soviet Union sell advanced weapons at the end of November 1971, so that 1971 could become the "year of decision"—to recover the Sinai Peninsula, illegally occupied by Israel, because Egypt was forced to take a significant measure. However, despite of promising to strengthen the defense capabilities of Egypt and other Arab countries, the Soviet Union did not support Egypt wholeheartedly to launch a war against Israel and even argued that it was unrealistic to settle Arab-Israeli conflict by military means because Arab countries were bound to be defeated (Breslauer, 1990).

In addition, to eliminate the negative impact of Egyptian government's supporting Sudanese government on Soviet-Egyptian relations, Sadat had to change his gesture and condemned the "anti-communist movement" in Arab world and stressed that this was discrimination against the mass who called for progress and emancipation. In return, Soviet expressed support to Sadat new government and hoped that Egypt, Syria, and Libya could also become the progressive forces (Laqueur, 1974). After returning home, Sadat embarked on the military struggle of recovering Sinai Peninsula. On November 21, 1971, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat delivered a speech at an advanced air base and stressed that: "The USA is pursuing an ambiguous policy. We have lost all hopes for a peaceful solution and have no alternative but to fight in order to recover our land and regain our honor". However, on December 8, 1971, since India and Pakistan broke out an inter-state war, the Soviet had to put the main focus onto South Asia and even unilaterally withdrew experts who served to protect Egyptian Aswan Dam, aircraft and air defense equipments. It was very obvious that the Soviet did not hope that Egypt stirred up a crisis in the Middle East again before India-Pakistan conflict ended. Without Soviet support, Egypt's "year of decision" turned out to be a "year of inaction". Even if the Soviet Union had put forward to provide MiG-23, Tu-22 fighters and surface-to-surface Scud missiles to Egypt for several times, it had not been enacted, because the Soviet Union worried that once Egypt got these weapons, there was possibility for Egypt to launch a total war with Israel, while at this moment the Soviet Union reckoned that the primary target was to avoid the escalation of US-Soviet conflict and consolidate crisis management (Breslauer, 1990).

Soon afterwards, through the Soviet Ambassador in Egypt Vladimir Vinogradov, Sadat requested to visit Moscow again in January 1972 but was required to postpone the date of visit to February 1972, indicating that Moscow disagreed with Egypt's plan of attacking Israel. Egyptian government learned that Nixon administration sold \$6 million worth of weaponry, which far exceeded the amount of assistance during Johnson administration to Israel in the year of 1971 (*Insight Team of the Sunday Times*, 1974, p. 54). On February 1972, USA also announced to sell 42 F-4 fighters and 92 A-4 fighters, chalking a new record of U.S. arms sales to Israel. U.S. military assistance to Israel added Egyptian dissatisfaction of the Soviet Union, which became the main reason why Sadat demanded that the Soviet Union provide more military assistance during his visit to The Soviet Union.

Sadat's revisit of Moscow started on February 2, 1972, who was given a grand reception by General Secretary Brezhnev. Both sides emphasized that the talk was a "great success", portending that the relations have entered an important turning point and the friendship would endure forever (Walter Laqueur, 1974, p. 13). Leaving aside these diplomatic discourses, Sadat's second visit to Moscow was actually a failure and he went home with empty hands, thereupon the contradiction between the Soviet Union and Egypt started to gradually surface. For instance, Soviet leader stressed that Egypt should stick to the UN Security Council Resolution 242 of settling dispute by peaceful means. For the demands of arms buying, General Secretary Brezhnev even sneered that if every Egyptian tanks were able to shoot a shell in 1967, the situation would have been totally different, but Egyptian weaponry was simply not used at all (*Insight Team of the Sunday Times*, 1974, p. 55). As can be seen from the complaint of General Secretary Brezhnev, the Soviet Union thought the crux of the matter was not the lack of weapons but the incapacity for using the existing weapons; this was Soviet leader's "reason" of rejecting Egyptian arms purchase.

Failed to obtain the advanced Soviet weapons, Sadat suffered from the consistent criticism from domestic political circles, especially the "year of decision" in 1971, turned out to be a "year of inaction", challenging the legitimacy of Sadat's domestic rule. In April 1972, Sadat started his third visit to Moscow and stressed that

Egypt had no choice but to recover the lost land by way of war. In a Joint Communiqué issued on April 29, the Soviet Union and Egypt consistently thought Israel had been pursuing a hostile policy and America was not interested in solving Arab-Israeli conflict by political approach, hence it was necessary for Egypt to use other means to recover the land illegally occupied by Israel (Alvin Rubinstein, 1977). The “other means” implied that it was possible for Egypt to use military force to recover land. This was the first time for the Soviet government to recognize that Egypt had right to recover the occupied land by non-peaceful means, which was a turning point.

After the end of “Six-Day war”, with the excuse of protecting Egypt, the Soviet Union constantly sent military personnel to Egypt; in the early stage of Sadat administration, there were a total of 5,000 military advisers, 10,000 to 15,000 other military personnel, establishing 50 Sam-2 and Sam-3 missile defense bases and 200 MiG-21J fighters with pilots of The Soviet Union. On July 13, 1972, the Soviet government provided an analysis report for Egypt and thought that U.S. stand on the Middle East did not change at all, because Egypt and other Arab countries were like motionless corpses while the USA would only follow the logic of “might is right” (*Insight Team of the Sunday Times*, 1974, p. 56). This move mainly attempted to provoke U.S.-Egypt relations, however, it played a stimulating role for Sadat’s offensive plan objectively. Sadat deemed that only through preemptive war, could Egypt break dead lock of “neither war nor peace” and challenge the legitimacy of Israeli occupation of Sinai Peninsula as well as recover the dignity and honor of the Arab world.

On June 1972, President Sadat sent a letter to General Secretary Brezhnev, interrogating if the Soviet Union was willing to provide offensive weapons. Considering upcoming U.S.-Soviet “honeymoon”, the Soviet Union did not respond publicly. In order to reduce the criticism and accusations from domestic forces, Sadat decided to send Prime Minister Aziz Sidki to the Soviet Union on July 13 but still in vain. It made Sadat extremely annoyed that the Soviet government refused to provide MiG-2 fighters, and was opposed to Egyptian war against Israel with a view to maintain Middle East status quo. Hence, on July 18, 1972, Egyptian central committee made a decision—expelling Soviet military advisers and experts. Despite expressing gratitude for the help of the Soviet military experts, Egypt demanded that Soviet weaponry should either be sold to Egypt or must be withdrawn to the Soviet Union. According to *Soviet-Egypt Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation*, Egypt appealed that both countries should hold advanced bilateral consultations. President Sadat explained the reason of Egyptian banishment of Soviet military advisers and experts:

I had told Soviet leaders, there were three things with which I couldn’t agree to: first, unless eliminating the threat of Israeli aggression, we won’t agree with the Soviet’s limited arms sales to Egypt, otherwise Israeli weaponry would always be superior; second, we couldn’t accept the situation of “neither war nor peace”; and third, Egypt would dig in its heels on the territorial issue. (Maghroori & Gorman, 1981, pp. 6-7)

Hereafter, the Soviet withdrew a good many of Soviet military advisers and experts from Egypt, only 700-900 left. Sadat attempted to pressure the Soviet Union and pushed her to value Soviet-Egyptian for one thing, and for another tried to shake olive branch to the USA, and neutralize the USA after the outbreak of Arab-Israeli conflict. Sadat announced to expel the Soviet experts, which made Soviet-Egypt special relations suffer from huge setbacks. To avoid over dependence on Egypt and meanwhile to expand its influence in the Middle East, the Soviet Union began to provide a large number of weaponry to Syria and supplied assistance to South Yemen, Morocco and Algeria, as well as signing *Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation* with Iraq in April 1972 (Ro’I, 1974). General Secretary Brezhnev and President Sadat conducted ending both countries

special relations as bet, deteriorating the bilateral relationship and even recalling the ambassadors stationed in each other as well as forcing counterpart to make compromise, but Sadat wasn't touch the red line—terminating the diplomatic relations with Soviet, because Egypt was not willing to sacrifice the relationship with The Soviet Union when improving the relations with USA. The later six months of 1972 was the time when Soviet and Egypt relation was gradually restored, for instance, by the end of July 1972, Soviet military advisers and experts came back to Egypt and reached more than 20,000 (O'Balance, 1978).

After Egypt expelled Soviet military advisers and experts, Syrian President Assad began to play the role of mediator. On October 16, 1972, President Assad visited Moscow and hoped that the Soviet Union and Egypt were able to reestablish strategic partnership. Soon afterwards, Egyptian Prime Minister Aziz Sedki revisited Moscow and swore to Brezhnev that Egypt would never betray the Soviet Union and would never surrender to the USA; Egypt had always been the strategic partner of the Soviet Union, but in exchange, Egypt hoped that the Soviet Union could be able to provide advanced MiG-23 fighters. To fawn the Soviet Union, Sadat replaced the Minister of War Sadik who was not favored by the Soviet Union to Ahmed Ismail Ali. To restore congenial relationship, the Soviet Union also announced to support Arab countries to recover occupied land by any necessary means (Golan, 1977). Soviet-Egypt special relations were active again after more than three months of crisis.

There were some associations between the restore of Soviet-Egypt special relations and the stagnation of U.S.-Egypt relation. Even if Sadat actively made a nod to USA, Nixon administration was disinterested in improving Egypt-Israeli relations and even announced to sell "Phantom" fighters to Tel Aviv on January 1, 1973. A week later, U.S. government declared the new military cooperation agreement with Israel, according to which America would help Israel to achieve military modernization and provide new vessels to Israeli navy (*Insight Team of the Sunday Times*, 1974, p. 210), which disappointed Sadat. The harsh reality was placed in front of the Egyptian government—its good willing could not exchange for U.S. balanced position on Arab-Israeli issue, so Sadat had to retreat to the old track of Soviet-Egypt special relations.

In order to restore Soviet-Egyptian relationship, both countries were active. In 1973, bilateral cooperation in the field of arms sales was even higher than that of 1972. President Sadat said with gratitude in January 1973 that the Soviet Union now provided a surprising number of weapons to Egypt now (Kimche, 1991). During that time, Soviet did provide a significant number of defensive and offensive weapons, including the "Frog" surface-to-surface rockets with a range of 65 km, the "Scud" surface-to-surface missiles with a range of 300 km, the Sukhoi-20 fighters, the new MiG fighters, etc. (Tal, 2000, p. 161).

On February 1, 1973, The Soviet Union sent military delegation to Egypt for the first time after Soviet-Egypt diplomatic crisis of 1972. Both sides reached an agreement: The Soviet navy could continue to use Egyptian naval ports in the future. On February 7, Sadat and his Security Advisor Hafiz Ismail returned a visit to Moscow. The Soviet government was committed to supply advanced military technology and weapons to Egypt, and there was a "honeymoon" for Soviet-Egyptian relations (Kohler, Gouré, & Harvey, 1974). On February 27, General Secretary Brezhnev and Soviet Minister of Defense Andrei Grechko met Egyptian Minister of War Ismail Ali respectively in Moscow, and the talks were positive and friendly, especially it was more gratifying to Sadat that the Soviet Union restored arms sales to Egypt. In these talks, the Soviet government officials were no longer mentioning the issue of settlement of Egyptian occupied land by political means, but highlighted that Arab countries had the legitimate rights to take any means to recover the occupied land. In March 1973, Senior Soviet military delegation successfully visited Egypt, implying that the bilateral

special relations had entered a new stage of development after experiencing a setback since the mid of 1972. Soon after, The Soviet Union sold advanced "Scud" surface-to-surface missile and resent related experts to instruct Egyptian troops as to how to use the new missiles. After Egypt got those advanced weaponry, Sadat became increasingly hawkish in his foreign policy. As before the war broke out in 1973, Egypt purchased 1,000 main battle tanks from the Soviet Union, including advanced T-62 tanks; more than 1,000 armored cars, 120 helicopters, over 100 surface-to-surface Sam-2 and Sam-3 missiles, etc., which not only enhanced Egyptian defense capability but also its offense force too.

At 14:05 on October 6, 1973, Egyptian launched fierce attack against Israeli stronghold of the Eastern Suez Canal. Meanwhile, 250 Egyptian fighters crossed Balef defense line and attacked Israeli rear position, and recovered more than 3,000 square kilometers of land at East of the Suez Canal (Dupuy, 1978). According to the memories of Israeli Minister of Defense Dayan, by the first day of the outbreak of war, about 300 Egyptian tanks entered into Sinai Peninsula that Egypt had deployed along the Suez Canal. Unlike the Arab countries during the third Middle East War of 1967, Egyptians in fact, had been equipped with advanced air defense missile system and even Sam-6 fighters (Dayan, 1976). At the early stage of the war, the Soviet government didn't make comments. On October 7, the Soviet supreme leader Brezhnev, on the one hand, reached a consensus through formal diplomatic channel with the U.S. that the Soviet and Americans would never allow the conflicting parties to break out U.S.-Soviet détente; on the other hand, the Soviet government issued a formal statement for the first time accusing Israel as the chief culprit of war with expansionist ambitions and criticized that Tel Aviv failed to abide by UN Security Council Resolutions. On October 8, the Soviet Minister of Defense Andrei Grechko issued a comment on Middle East situation. During his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister, General Secretary Brezhnev issued a warning against Israel (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1987). Hence, in the early stage of the outbreak of war, Moscow generally fulfilled its security obligations to Egypt, and strongly supported Sadat administration morally and politically.

In order to avoid Egypt being defeated like the Second and Third Middle East War, on October 9, General Secretary Brezhnev sent a letter to Algerian Prime Minister Houari Boumediene, appealing Algerian government "to take any necessary measures to support Egypt and Syria and help them solve difficulties that war with Israel had brought" (Golan, 1976, p. 58). On October 9, Israel hit a Soviet cultural center building in Syria during its air strikes in Damascus, resulting in one Soviet death at least. On the second day, The Soviet Union sent more naval forces to the Mediterranean and provided Cairo with more military supplies by airlift and ocean shipping. According to the data provided by the U.S. Air Force, The Soviet Union supplied about 85,000 to 115,000 tons of materials to Egypt. To show its supports to its ally, the Nixon administration also announced to use American transport aircraft to airlift military supplies to Israel, transporting a total of 22,300 tons of supplies, including 19 M-60 tanks (Rabinovich, 2005).

After the war entered into a stalemate, the Soviet Union began to worry about Egyptian military situation, because the Salon's troops of Israel had crossed the Suez Canal and built a firm stronghold in the west coast of Canal, directly threatening Cairo, Egyptian Capital. Therefore, the truce between Arab and Israel had been a pressing problem. On October 15, Brezhnev, Kosygin and other Soviet government officials held a politburo meeting to analyze the Middle East situation. On the evening of October 16, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Kosygin visited Cairo. To avoid arousing the vigilance of the USA and Israel, Mr. Kosygin originally planned a secret visit; however, for the purpose of getting rid of the plight, Kosygin's visit was hyped by Egyptian government and Egyptian Security Affairs Advisor Hafiz Ismail, and Soviet Ambassador to Egypt

Vinogradov and other Soviet and Egyptian officials greeted Kosygin at the airport (Israelyan, 1995). Sadat attempted to highlight Soviet supports to Egypt and prevent Israel from continuing launching military attack on Egypt.

On October 22, After Egypt-Israeli cease-fire resolution was adopted by the UN Security Council, Israel continued to attack Egyptian troops in Kissinger's acquiescence and even attempted to surround the Egyptian Third Army in Sinai Peninsula. Both General Secretary Brezhnev and Kosygin felt very angry and deemed that Nixon and Kissinger were deceiving the Soviet government (Lesch, 2003). As retaliation, The Soviet Union strengthened its supports to Egypt and Soviet-Egypt special relations reached the highest level.

Table 1

Statistics of Soviet-Egypt Delegation Visits

Year	Political purposes		Military purposes		Economical purposes		Cultural-social purposes	
	Soviet Union to Egypt	Egypt to Soviet Union	Soviet Union to Egypt	Egypt to Soviet Union	Soviet Union to Egypt	Egypt to Soviet Union	Soviet Union to Egypt	Egypt to Soviet Union
1970	6	6	1	0	2	2	12	9
1971	4	6	0	1	4	3	13	10
1972	2	6	2	2	2	2	12	13
1973	4	4	1	2	0	1	11	8
1974	3	5	0	0	3	3	14	11

Conclusion

Soviet-Egypt special relations were like “a fortress in the sand”—it seems majestic from the outside but easy to be broken from the inside, and even collapse by itself. Soviet-Egypt special relations were not only “a fortress in the sand” but also more like a “fortress engraved by sand”—lacking durability. The termination of Soviet-Egypt special relations, which was not accidental, happened in 1974 after US Secretary of State Kissinger implemented his shuttle diplomacy between Israel and Egypt, which started the Middle East peace process. Firstly, Mr. Kissinger had an outstanding diplomatic art and communication skills, and reestablished U. S. prestige through starting Egypt-Israeli negotiation and cutting Soviet influence in Middle East, so that it was the major reason for the termination of the Soviet-Egypt special relations during Sadat administration. As it was hard for the Soviet Union to meet Egyptian core demands, Egypt sided with the U.S. and developed a friendly relation with U.S. From the point of mutual trust, the termination of Soviet-Egypt special relations was mainly affected by Leaders' personalities of two sides.

On the whole, Soviet-Egypt special relations were not a successful diplomatic activity. It was worthy of reflection that almost all Soviet special relations with the developing countries ended up with termination or crisis, such as its special ties with Somalia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, China, Vietnam, Albania, etc., during the Cold War.

References

- Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (1987). *Israel, the superpowers, and the war in the Middle East*. New York: Praeger.
- Bickerton, I. J., & Klausner, C. L. (2002). *A concise history of the Arab-Israeli conflict*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Breslauer, G. W. (1990). *Soviet strategy in the Middle East*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Dawisha, K. (1979). *Soviet foreign policy towards Egypt*. London: Palgrave.
- Dupuy, T. N. (1978). *Evasive victory: The Arab-Israeli wars, 1947-1974*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Dayan, M. (1976). *The story of my life*. New York: William Morrow.
- Documents and source material: Arab documents on Palestine November 15, 1971-February 15, 1972. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1(3), 59.
- Freedman, R. (1975). *Soviet policy towards the Middle East*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Golan, M. (1976). *The secret conversations of Henry Kissinger: Step-by-step diplomacy in the Middle East*. New York: New York Times Books.
- Golan, G. (1977). *Yom Kippur and after: The Soviet Union and the Middle East crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Golan, G. (1990). *Soviet policies in the Middle East: From World War Two to Gorbachev*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glassman, J. D. (1975). *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Garthoff, R. (1985). *Détente and confrontation*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Heikal, M. (1975). *The road to Ramadan: The inside story of how the Arabs prepared for and almost won the October War of 1973*. London: Quadrangle.
- Heikal, M. (1978). *Sphinx and commissar: The rise and fall of Soviet influence in the Arab World*. London: Collins.
- Israeli, R. (1978). *The public diary of President Sadat, pt. 1, the road to war (October 1970-October 1973)*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Israelyan, V. (1995). *Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Insight Team of the Sunday Times. (1974). *The Yom Kippur War*. London: Andre Deutsch.
- Kohler, F. D., Gouré, L., & Harvey, M. L. (1974). *The Soviet Union and the October 1973 Middle East War: The implications for Détente*. Coral Gables, Fla.: Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami.
- Kimche, D. (1991). *The last option: After Nasser, Arafat & Saddam Hussein*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Laqueur, W. (1974). *Confrontation: The Middle-East war and world politics*. Abacus: Wildwood House.
- Lesch, D. W. (2003). *The Middle East and the United States: A historical and political reassessment*. Boulder: Westview.
- Maghroori, R., & Gorman, S. M. (1981). *The Yom Kippur War: A case study in crisis decision-making in American foreign policy*. Washington DC: University Press of America.
- Mott IV, W. H. (2001). *Soviet military assistance: An empirical perspective*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press.
- Ovendale, R. (2004). *The origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*. London and New York.
- O'Ballance, E. (1978). *No victor, no vanquished: The Yom Kippur War*. San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press.
- Rubinstein, A. (1977). *Red Star on the Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian influence relationship since the June War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ro'I, Y. (1974). *From encroachment to involvement: A documentary study of Soviet policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973*. New York: John Wiley.
- Rabinovich, A. (2005). *The Yom Kippur War*. New York: Random House.
- Tal, I. (2000). *National security: The Israeli experience*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger.