

23 SEPTEMBER 2022

Remarks by Ambassador of Russia to the United States Anatoly Antonov before the Participants of the Conference on the 60 Years since the Cuban Missile Crisis (Moscow, the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation)

I am grateful for the opportunity to join your conference given how crucial are the issues it raises. On the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis it is important to analyze its lessons and try to draw parallels with the situation we are facing today.

I would like to stress that there are slight differences in assessments of those events by such immediate participants as the famous Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, renowned U.S. politician Henry Kissinger and contemporary political scientists. I believe that the main lesson they teach regarding the Russian-American relations is the utmost importance of recognizing the danger, not only for our countries but also for all other states, of direct confrontation between the two great powers.

If we choose to speak the media language, it is safe to say that in the most acute moment of the clash (on October 23, 1962, according to Anatoly Dobrynin), both Premier Nikita Khrushchev and President John Kennedy flinched. They looked into the eyes of the nuclear peril and were frightened by it emotionally. They understood the need to search for compromise and de-escalation. As Kennedy's advisor Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote later, "Cuba made vivid the sense that all humanity had a common interest in the prevention of nuclear war – an interest far above those national and ideological interests which had once seemed ultimate".

The solutions found during the crisis subsequently led to a few milestones in Soviet-American relations. Thus, the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed in 1963 along with the agreement for the establishment of the "hotline" between the Kremlin and White House.

In general, the final settlement of the crisis resulted neither in decisive victory nor in major defeat for either Washington or Moscow. John Kennedy essentially was able to restore the status quo around Cuba that had existed before the deployment of the Soviet missiles. However he had to accept the de facto presence of the Soviet military personnel on the island. Nikita Khrushchev's top priority was to obtain John Kennedy's guarantees not to invade Cuba and an additional commitment to withdraw the U.S. missiles from Turkey. However, the last arrangement was not formalized in a written statement. It became a great propaganda point for the U.S. president and could safely be called a negative aspect of the "missile deal".

By the way, this situation is somewhat similar to the promise given to Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand eastwards as a part of the German reunification settlement provisions. Western countries in the same manner refused to put their obligation on paper and eventually forgot about it.

In fairness it should be noted that with time the Soviet Union succeeded in removing the American missiles from Turkey.

Henry Kissinger assesses the outcome of the Cuban missile crisis somewhat differently. He believes that the events around Cuba and Berlin revealed the deeply rooted weakness of our country. In his opinion, after the crises the Soviet Union refrained from interfering with the U.S. "right of exceptionalism" and did not risk challenging the United States directly in the following years except for the brief skirmish in the Middle East.

Anatoly Dobrynin admittedly shares this point of view to some extent. He believes that October 1962 dealt a blow to the Soviet state's prestige that, according to the diplomat, was akin to defeat. Our country had to admit our weakness in front of the whole world and remove the missiles from Cuba. I would like to stress that nobody talked publicly about the American missiles in Turkey.

The Cuban missile crisis teaches a good lesson in diplomacy – maintaining continuous, including covert, contacts between the opposing parties is of great value. We know about the closed lines of communication between Anatoly Dobrynin and President John

Kennedy's brother. This confidential channel helped conduct an open dialogue between the leaders of both countries and constantly "feel each other's pulse".

It seems that a direct comparison of the situation in the 1960s with the current state of affairs in the Russian-American relations does not work. Many factors and circumstances did not exist at that time.

The feeling is that we have not yet reached the lowest level in our bilateral relations. The little light that still glimmers in the contacts between the two states is bleaker day by day.

I hope that in spite of all the difficulties, the relations between our countries have not reached the dangerous "threshold" of falling into the abyss of a nuclear conflict. Russia is committed to the principle stating that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

It is important to emphasize that because of the Cuban missile crisis, the international order created after World War II swayed, but survived. Today the situation has changed dramatically. Washington supported by its satellites has declared itself the winner in the Cold War and proclaimed a new concept of the world order in which Americans played the key role. As a result, the United States, its foreign and domestic policies had to become, in the succinct expression of Henry Kissinger, a guiding star for humanity.

The United States has destroyed almost everything created in arms control over the recent decades. The New START Treaty is barely alive today. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is enduring severe trials. The prospects for future agreements on strategic stability remain vague.

While the Cuban missile crisis resulted in the recognition of the possibility of peaceful coexistence of the two great powers, nowadays Washington pursues the goal of defeating Russia and bringing it to its knees. Even better option seems to be to divide of our country and subsequently establish several separate "principalities" within our territory, depriving it of nuclear weapons and a legitimate permanent member seat in the UN Security Council.

The United States exert severe pressure along the entire perimeter of Russian borders, making Ukraine a testing ground for the most hostile plans.

It is difficult to predict now just how far Washington is ready to go in its attempts to aggravate relations with Russia. The question is open whether the American ruling elites will be able to stop at the dangerous line, as it happened during the Cuban missile crisis.

One thing is clear: the country that focuses its foreign policy on the spread of democracy to foreign states, imposing its development formulas and Western human rights ideals on others is doomed to failure. It is obvious that much of the planet rejects Washington's mentoring methods and the very idea of America as a God's chosen nation.

We are witnessing attempts by the majority of the world community to find ways to create an equitable system of international relations where there will be no first-class or pariah states. A system based on international law, the UN Charter and the principle of indivisibility of security. A good example to support this ideas is the successful outcome of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's September 14-16 summit which addressed challenging issues of global engagement to correct the mistakes made by the United States over the recent years.

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