

Syria Crisis Risks Becoming ‘Suez Crisis and Cuban Missile Crisis’ Rolled Into One

By [Sputnik](#)

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On Saturday, Russia on one side and the US and its allies on the other clashed at the Security Council over Syria. As expected, the two sides weren't able reach a compromise. Unfortunately, analysts say, Syria is no longer just a local conflict, and not even just a clash between Russia and the US - but a struggle of entire geopolitical coalitions.

This, experts warn, tremendously increases the risks of a global conflagration sparking off over the conflict in the Middle Eastern country.

On October 8, Russia [vetoed](#) a French-drafted Security Council resolution calling for a halt to airstrikes over the city of Aleppo, where the Syrian military is currently engaged in a campaign to liberate eastern sections of the city from a hodgepodge of militant groups.



Syrian pro-government soldiers hold a position as they advance in Aleppo's restive Bustan al-Basha neighbourhood on October 6, 2016

Soon afterward, Russia introduced its own resolution, based on an idea by UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura, to get Nusra Front terrorists to withdraw from Aleppo altogether, thus bringing down the violence and allowing for the resumption of the comprehensive Russian/US-sponsored ceasefire agreement of September 9. Russia's resolution went to a vote, but was [voted down](#) by the US and its allies.

Commenting on the tensions, barely masked, between the two sides over the competing Syria resolutions, Svobodnaya Pressa columnist Andrei Ivanov [suggested](#) that "it's enough," for a start, "to look at the harsh tone of the statements made by the Russian Foreign Ministry over the French proposal."

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"The coauthors of the French resolution, encouraged by the most rabid critics of Damascus, were not able to show political wisdom," the Foreign Ministry said. "Instead of negotiations aimed at achieving positive results, they chose an ultimatum - a loud PR campaign, exploiting the humanitarian issue for short-term political purposes removed from the real

interests of the Syrian people, and those of other nations in the region,” it added.

The other side too certainly wasn't afraid of making sharp comments, Ivanov noted. Prior to the vote, President Hollande “threw in a phrase to the effect that any country that vetoes the French resolution would be ‘discredited in the eyes of the world.’”

Ultimately, the journalist suggested, “behind these words is nothing more than another threat to isolate the ‘savage and barbarian Russia’ from the ‘civilized’ world. Frankly speaking, this is the rhetoric of the Cold War...”

What's more, Ivanov noted, in a situation where Washington makes [direct threats](#) to attack those who fight the terrorists, it's very difficult to imagine a compromise with the Kremlin. In fact, he added, “it seems like the chances of compromise have disappeared altogether.”

“But if we do not hold negotiations, what is left?” the journalist asked. “US generals are ready to bomb Assad's troops. In response the Russian Ministry of Defense has threatened to shoot down any ‘unidentified objects’ over Syria's skies. Neither side is prepared to step back. Washington cannot allow Aleppo to be liberated, since it would hearten the Syrian army and be a triumph for Assad. Hence, the US may have to use their aircraft, and Russia cannot just allow the successes of our efforts in Syria to be erased...”

An S-400 air defence missile system deployed for a combat duty at the Hmeymim airbase to provide security of the Russian air group's flights in Syria

“For now, the worst scenario imaginable – the destruction of US aircraft, has not yet materialized,” Ivanov noted. “But the situation is heating up with each passing day. The termination of nuclear cooperation, the end of business contracts, the veto at the UN – in a calmer period each of these news stories would have been discussed for weeks. Today, analysts can barely keep up with the situation enough to comment.”



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Asked to comment on the dangers that the Syrian crisis poses in escalating to a global conflagration, Alexander Krylov, a senior researcher at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations' Center for Middle Eastern Studies, confirmed that the dangers exist, and they are very pressing.

“The situation is very serious, and looks similar to the Suez Crisis of 1956, or the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis,” the analyst recalled. Accordingly, he suggested, today it is necessary “to understand that the crisis in Syria could lead to far more serious consequences,” thus forcing the parties to make amendments to their calculations.

Unfortunately, the analyst noted, US foreign policy decision makers want to ensure that their country continues its post-Cold War reign of setting the agenda and “playing a dominant role across the entire globe. When this doesn’t work, as is the case in Syria, Washington gets severely irritated.”

For now, Krylov explained, Damascus and Moscow can stick to their existing policy, since the US election cycle makes it virtually impossible for US leaders to take any drastic foreign policy decisions. However, with election of a new president, the Kremlin will be forced to exert itself to get the new administration “to understand the complexity of the situation and try to find a diplomatic solution” to the existing problems, including on Syria.

At the same time, the analyst added, as long as the Obama administration is in office, so too will US policy aimed at toppling Assad remain in force, no matter the cost (even if it means cooperating with Islamist terrorists). “Given this approach, resolving this crisis will be impossible. And there won’t be any liberation of Aleppo either, because Washington will do anything and everything in its power to ensure that any Syrian army offensive gets bogged down.”



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confer at the conclusion of their press conference about their meeting on Syria in Geneva, Switzerland September 9, 2016. The ceasefire that Moscow and Washington eventually agreed to was disrupted after being in force for just over a week.

Ultimately, Krylov suggested, in the current situation, pending the outcome of the November elections, “there is no one with whom to engage in dialogue...It’s another matter that uninvited foreign intervention too certainly isn’t conducive to a settlement. I’m talking specifically about the Turkish invasion, and about the active involvement of the Persian Gulf states, the US, the EU and Israel in the crisis. All this only exacerbates the conflict.”

“The situation truly is critical. Politicians and military men must come to recognize that the situation today is similar to that of the Suez Crisis. Back then, in spite of the difficult relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, politicians were able to find a compromise. A wider war was stopped, and the US – for the only time in history, even adopted a resolution against Israel,” the analyst concluded.

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For his part, political scientist Leonid Kurtakov admitted that a diplomatic solution must continue to be searched for, but work to do so will be difficult given the differing conceptions on how the world should function. “According to the first concept, only one power has the right to determine the values of political, economic and trade relations [around the world]. According to the second concept, justice in international relations is of primary importance,

and important decisions must be made by consensus. The two concepts contradict each other – hence this intransigence in the rhetoric of the two sides.”

Kurtakov suggested that for the US, the situation in Aleppo literally could not be more critically important, given its broader significance for US policy worldwide. “As soon as Assad’s army liberates Aleppo and puts an end to Daesh, this will immediately end the US game in the Middle East – along with their effort to stage color revolutions and overthrow legitimate governments; for the US it will mean the end of its current foreign policy, and of the economic model of globalization.” In other words, “this would be an economic and political collapse.”

Moscow, meanwhile, has no room to back down, according to the analyst, not only because it has international law on its side (something even Secretary of State Kerry [has admitted](#)), but also because the war in Syria is a precedent-setting event. “As soon as we allow chaos to be organized in one country, so will it spread to others. We made mistakes with regard to Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya. International law came to be associated with the order established by Washington. It’s for this reason that attempts to return things to the legitimate order of things by Russia or China have been seen as an ‘anomaly’ or, worse, a ‘threat to stability’” by the US.

Ultimately, Kurtakov suggested, “if we recognize that in the world there is only one ‘policeman’ – we can forget about our sovereignty...We can calm geopolitical tensions, kneel down and wait to be forgiven.” However, the analyst noted that in his own time, Mikhail Gorbachev already tried this approach, and it didn’t work. “As Churchill said, those who choose humiliation over war will get both humiliation and war.”

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