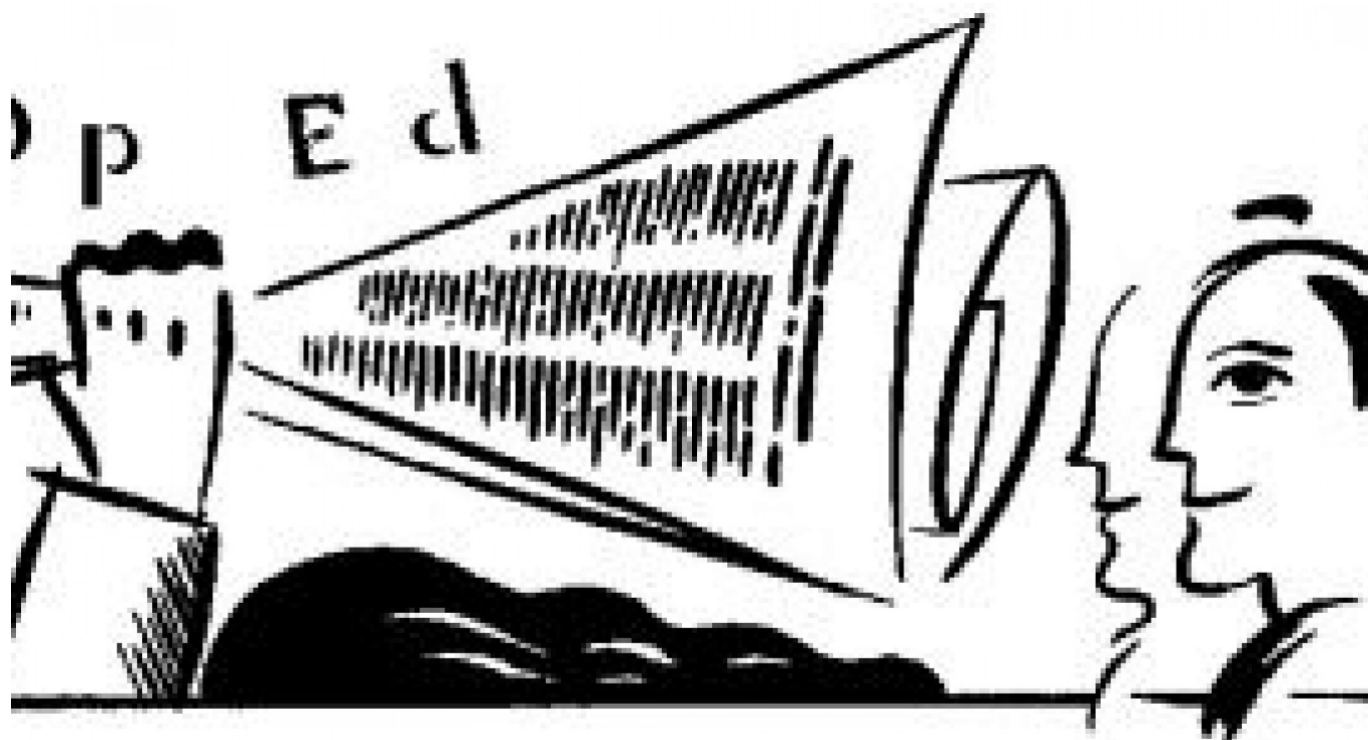


The Two Faces of the U.S. Role in World Affairs

By [Vasily Likhachev](#)

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The recent actions of the U.S. are full of paradoxes. As proof, consider the striking difference between the way that the international community responded to two key events — the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack in New York City and the current situation in Syria. The first was a tragic event resulting in the deaths of innocent people of different nationalities and eliciting a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy for the American people for their suffering at the hands of delusional Islamic radicals and their umbrella organizations. Many countries, including Russia, openly empathized with the pain the U.S. was experiencing.

The international community quickly adopted the fight against terrorism — in all of its forms — as a priority of interstate cooperation, rapidly creating the necessary legal and law enforcement framework needed to battle that social evil. What's more, the United Nations adopted 13 conventions against terrorism in the wake of that tragedy, with the U.S. playing an extremely active role in their development and implementation.

Twelve years later, the U.S. — the world's "leading democracy" — is attempting to play the role of global arbiter. However, it has become a "repeat offender" for violations of its legal

obligations, including those it holds as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. That, in turn, has undermined the fundamental principles, or mandatory provisions, of world order and accelerated the growth of legal nihilism around the world. A global "peacekeeping corporation" led by Washington and Co. has sought to achieve its goals through force in such countries as Iraq and Libya. It is attempting to institutionalize rules of conduct based on purely geopolitical self-interest that, judging by the hotspots in international relations, are far removed from the goals and principles of the UN.

This trend has reached a culmination with Washington's aggressive threats toward Syria and a policy that is not supported by the international community. Such actions destabilize world order, stimulate the arms race and destroy faith in justice and the rule of law. Guided by the principle of "might makes right," U.S. diplomacy casts aside as useless the general principles and norms of international law. It violates and threatens the universally recognized rights of all states — and of the international community as a whole — to exist and develop.

This explains the reaction shown by a great many countries, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, religions and international media to the cynical plans of the U.S. president, the hawks among the Democratic and Republican parties, national security agencies and the military-industrial complex to punish the Syrian people. The global response was, and remains, so strongly anti-war that it is impossible not to notice. That outcry prompted the search for a new solution to the crisis, including the agreement to place the chemical weapons under international control.

The initiative and energy shown by Russian diplomacy as well as the signs of common sense coming from U.S. President Barack Obama, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and assorted members of Congress offers some hope for a peaceful solution to the situation. That positive momentum needs to be intensified in all areas at both the national and international levels. Otherwise, the destabilizing fault lines and fractures already present in international relations will only deepen.

All states, regardless of their size and political or economic influence, must contribute to global security by continuing to respect the UN and international law. The members of the international community have a great deal of work ahead. It is very important that Russian parliamentary and public diplomacy work wisely and actively during this period. Both the executive and legislative branches of Russian government must work in sync to prevent the threat of a direct military intervention in Syria.

All international players, including Russia, the U.S. and other capable countries, should monitor the effectiveness of existing international security institutions and give critical consideration to the questions of nonproliferation and disarmament. They should develop a substantial program to increase trust and respect between states and to improve the international legal order.

It is clear that the community of nations needs to convene a special session of the UN General Assembly devoted to an analysis of peace-building measures in the world and to overcoming differences in interstate, interfaith and interregional relations. Particular emphasis should be given to strengthening the UN, regional security and harmonious interaction within the framework of international law.

Russia's foreign policy and its work with partners should be aimed at fully integrating the efforts of all states and organizations interested in the progressive development of the global community in the 21st century, and there are prospects for that in the psychological, intellectual and legal spheres.

We must be realistic: It will not be easy. But the fact that global diplomacy is focused on finding a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis speaks well for logic and common sense. In this situation, it is extremely important that a new force becomes part of global affairs. And in contrast to others, it must recognize the sovereignty of other states, the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of those states, respect for the UN Charter and the fulfillment of the obligations of a permanent member of the Security Council. It must actively participate in the search for effective multilateralism, the fight against nihilism and all manifestations of a cold war. That is the type of substantial player that is attractive to the world community, creates an atmosphere of mutual understanding in international affairs and satisfies the requirements for best managing global relations.

The nature of world politics today imposes high standards on all states and requires that they behave responsibly. Their actions should meet the needs of the times and should adhere to fundamental principles of international order. This political and legal standard also applies to the U.S.

The forces of democracy and progress have the right to make these demands, and they are based on the imperatives of international law and morality. It is in the interests of the U.S. government itself to recognize those demands and the type of actions they require. Adherence to them will improve its image in the world. The international community can channel U.S. diplomacy in the right direction by providing course corrections to its political initiatives. International security in this new century can only be achieved collectively.

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