

**Author – Alexey Bogdanov**

**Legitimacy, Justice and the International Order's Revision:  
“Status Inconsistency” and Russia's Foreign Policy after Ukrainian  
Crisis**

FIRST DRAFT – NOT FOR CITATION

*“...The pursuit of justice has always been honored in Russia. And there are no threats, which could be able to compel us to reject our values and ideals...”* (Putin V. Congratulation with the National Unity Day. Moscow, Kremlin. November 4, 2014).

**Introduction**

The international order's durability depends, largely, on the major powers' ability to negotiate the basic rules of interactions and on their consent with the existing hierarchy of social statuses. For this reason, the key actors' consent to accept their position within the current social order is crucial for political stability. Besides, the political order's sustainability heavily depends on the existence of the shared understanding of legitimacy – common perception or assumption, that the actions of a subject are desirable, rightful and appropriate within the socially constructed system of norms, values and beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Legitimate international order is marked with relative consent of major powers with the established norms and hierarchy of statuses. If these powers diverge in their understanding of the essence of a legitimate action, the systemic control over the use of international violence weakens, and the sovereign states' behavior becomes much less predictable, eventually more aggressive. Moreover, the absence of shared understanding of legitimacy may “revolutionize” the international order and cause the emergence of a great power, refusing to build its relations with other states on the basis of the established “rules of the game”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Suchman M. Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches // Academy of Management Review. 1995. № 3. P. 574.

<sup>2</sup> Kissinger H. A World Restored. New York: Grosset and Dunlap. 1964. P. 1 – 6.

The outbreak of Ukrainian crisis in 2014 has influenced profoundly both the international setting in Eurasia and normative foundations of post-Cold War security order in Europe. The addition of Crimea to Russia, declaration of independence by Donetsk and Lugansk republics, Russian government's support to these non-recognized entities and refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of Ukrainian president Yanukovich, demonstrated evident divide between "Western" and "Russian" understanding of "legitimacy". In particular, while the United States and major European powers stressed the supremacy of law and juridical norms as the only sources of legitimacy, Russian foreign-policy discourse promoted completely different interpretation, coined in terms of the restoration of "historical justice". Thus, the key justification of Russia's policy towards Ukraine and Crimea was the appeal to moral considerations, while the Western powers have prioritized the importance of the existing formal norms. This situation evoked the fundamental collision, which seems to be able to shatter the mere foundations of European order, based on inviolability of the territorial borders, established after the demise of Soviet Union. This crisis of legitimacy, evidently, poses the profound challenge to the international security and, therefore, provokes detailed investigation of its origins and eventual impact on the current international order.

### **"Order", "Justice" and the International Society**

In a broad sense, the "international order" refers to the set of sustainable patterns of the states' behavior, aimed for achieving of "primary goals of international life" – preserving the current international system, the absence of large-scale conflicts ("major wars"), maintaining of nation-states' sovereignty and so on.<sup>3</sup> The rules and norms, comprising the core of an international order, prescribe policies, consistent with these goals, and assume certain penalties (sanctions) for misbehavior. Durability of any international order depends on the willingness of nation-states to share these rules and to acknowledge their legitimacy. From this point of view, "justice" acquires great importance for the international order's legitimacy, providing a degree of consent among the key actors, that the existing order corresponds with their core interests and objectives. According to H. Bull, states on the international arena are often divided on those, which pursue "just" changes and those, which seek to preserve the existing order,

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<sup>3</sup> Bull H. *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1995. P. 16 – 17.

even at the expense of the considerations of justice.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, if the sense of justice is widespread and stable, the international order remains legitimate in the eyes of major powers. Contrary, if a powerful state (or the group of states) questions the international order's justice (first of all, equality in the distribution of rights and duties among the members of international society), legitimacy of the whole order erodes, resulting in the rise of revisionist attitudes towards established status quo.

Regarding the issue of international justice IR scholars normally focus on "distributive justice", which involves the allocation of distributable values among the members of some specified group. From this point of view, international justice requires equality in the allocation of values among the actors of the world system<sup>5</sup>, depending from the degree of consent among key powers with the existing distribution of material resources, privileges, rights and duties. At the same time, the notion of "justice" is much broader than this understanding and cannot be reduced exclusively to the "distributive" meaning. In particular, "justice" may be "substantial" (recognition of rights, transferring certain rights or duties), "formal" (equal implementation of the rules to the subjects of one sort – citizens, states, nations etc.), "arithmetical" (equal rights and duties are distributed according to overarching goal) and "mutual" (recognition of rights and duties through trade, when an individual or a group recognize the rights and duties of the others in exchange to the analogic recognition of their rights).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, despite various meanings and interpretations of the concept, "justice" as such inevitably entails the appeal to the idea of "equality" (equal rights or duties and their equal implementation), which is crucial for recognition of the political order's legitimacy by the major actors. For this reason, the great powers' consent about the criteria of "justice" is highly important for systemic stability. The lack of such consent may lead to the situation when one or several great powers question the international order's "justice" and "legitimacy", resulting in unconstrained use of violence and the breakdown of international peace.

The events of Ukrainian crisis in 2014 (the addition of Crimea to Russia, the onset of civil war in Donbas and Lugansk regions) shattered the normative foundations of the European security order and exerted enormous influence on foreign policy discourse of Russian leadership (president Putin's, first of all), which made an effort to

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. P. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Young O. Peace and Justice as Components of World Order // Millennium. 1975. № 1. P. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Bull H. Op. cit. P. 75 – 77.

legitimize its legally dubious policy by using such concepts as “historical justice” and “moral duties”. This new rhetoric, grounded on the assertion of Russia’s mission to protect “Russian World”, questions the established “legal” understanding of international legitimacy, offering instead moral and ethical justifications of Russia’s behavior. Apparently, contested international legitimacy posits the substantial threat to European security order, provoking elaborate consideration of the normative challenges, the international society faced in the middle of 2010s.

### **“Justice” as the source of legitimacy: some evidence from V. Putin’s “presidential discourse”**

Crimean referendum on independence and subsequent inclusion of the peninsula into Russian Federation generated fierce debates among the Western powers, concerned with the overt neglect to the existing international norms, and Russia, arguing that moral and ethical considerations, based on the appeal to “historical justice” as a universal value, push its policy in the right direction. Largely, this collision was caused by the need to justify controversial actions of Russian leadership, sought for additional ways to legitimate its policy. As a result, Russian official foreign policy discourse has enriched with new arguments, revolving around various aspects and understandings of “justice”. Among these arguments the salient place take the appeals to historic and cultural integrity of Crimea and Russia, united by their common roots and memory about their collective past. As V. Putin once stated, “... almost everything in Crimea is penetrated with our common history and proud...” for the performance of prince Vladimir, who adopted Eastern Christianity, which “... defined cultural, value, civilizational ground, uniting the people of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus”.<sup>7</sup> Providing the additional arguments in support of this assertion, Putin reminds that “... Crimea is a place of Russian military glory, having sacral meaning, indigenous Russian land...” possessing, above all, some fundamental features (“unique combination of cultures and traditions of various peoples”, preserving their originality, traditions, language and religion), proving its close cultural relationship with Russia.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, these arguments lead Vladimir Putin to the conviction in de facto unity of Russians and the people of Crimea, the unity, which exists “in people’s hearts and minds...” for which

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<sup>7</sup> *Putin V.* Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Chamber. March 18, 2014. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

“...Crimea has always been and will remain the essential part of Russia...”<sup>9</sup>. This belief, according to V. Putin, “... is founded on truth and justice, is inexorable and passes through generations, overcoming both time and circumstances...” and “... all dramatic changes our country endured in XX century...”<sup>10</sup>

Within this political discourse, historical, cultural and spiritual unity of Crimea and Russia acquires important political meaning because it shapes the foundation for establishing the common statehood. Thus, according to V. Putin, Crimea is the true place, where exists “...the spiritual origin of multi-faced, but monolithic Russian nation and centralized Russian state”. This state was formed under influence of Christianity – “powerful spiritual force, which enabled the inclusion of diverse tribes of wide Eastern Slavic world into formation of unified Russian nation and common statehood. Exactly this spiritual ground allowed our predecessors to perceive themselves as the one nation, once and forever...”<sup>11</sup> Hence, the cultural and spiritual unity with Russia endows Crimea not only with a nation’s features, but also with the rights of a nation, such as “... unalienable, sovereign right to choose its own way of development, the allies, the form of political organization ... and the way of providing its security...”<sup>12</sup> Recognition of Crimean people as a nation (or a part of Russian nation) presupposes, that considerations of “distributive justice” require, that the inhabitants of Crimea should possess the same rights all other nations are endowed with (first of all, the right for self-determination). The key collision, emerging from this admission, is that the right of Crimean people for self-determination challenges the basic right of Ukraine (as the recognized nation-state) for sovereignty and territorial integrity. This situation reveals the fundamental contradiction between “interstate justice” (every state is endowed with a right for territorial integrity, which should be applied equally to each of them) and “inter-national justice” (every nation is granted with a right for self-determination, which also should be implemented equally to each of them).<sup>13</sup> In case of Crimea, the assertion about the existence of a “nation” and, consequently, recognition of its right for self-determination (as unalienable right of every nation) evoked the question on compliance with “formal justice”, assuming equal implementation of the existing rules

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Putin V.* Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Chamber. December 4, 2014. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *Bull H. P.* 78.

to the subjects of the same sort (the “states” and “nations” alike). In his public addresses Vladimir Putin has been regularly accentuated Russia’s desire to attain “just” treatment from the world leading powers, stressing that “we address with respect to all countries, all nations, we respect their legal rights and interests...” and, accordingly, we “ask everyone to respect our legal interests, including the right for restoration of historical justice and right for self-determination”.<sup>14</sup> Justifying Crimean referendum through the appeal to “formal justice”, Vladimir Putin articulates three core arguments, appealing to several historic precedents.

Firstly, the president of Russia claims, that in 1991 Ukraine itself decided to secede from the Soviet Union, having used the same right it refused to grant the Crimean people twenty-three years later. This apparent injustice, according to V. Putin, was aggravated with the fact that Crimean authorities (Supreme Council of Crimea) acted in consonance with international law, declaring its independence and scheduling referendum, with reference to the United Nations Charter, in which the nations’ right for self-determination is pronounced.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, V. Putin points out, that Crimean authorities, making decision to declare independence from Ukraine, relied on Kosovo precedent, “... when our Western partners in the situation, absolutely identical to the Crimean case, recognized legitimacy of Kosovo’s separation from Serbia, proving that no permission from central government is necessary for the unilateral proclamation of independence...” Further, Russian president again appeals to the considerations of justice, pointing out, that Russians, Ukrainians and Tatars in Crimea were deprived of the right for self-determination, which has been given to Albanians in Kosovo<sup>16</sup>, stressing the unequal treatment to the same-sort subjects and, hence, the violation of “formal justice”.

Thirdly, Vladimir Putin reminds the history of reunification of Germany in early 1990s, claiming that “... during the political consultations ... our country unequivocally supported sincere and uncontainable strive of Germans for national unity...”, and expresses the hope, that “... the citizens of Germany will also support the strive of

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<sup>14</sup> *Putin V.* Address during the Celebratory Concert, Devoted to 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War and 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Liberation of Sevastopol from Nazi Invaders. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/20993>

<sup>15</sup> *Putin V.* Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Chamber. March 18, 2014. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Russian world, historical Russia for the restoration of unity..."<sup>17</sup>, demonstrating the commitment to the values of justice.

Evidently, the president Putin's rhetoric is imbued with the deep sense of injustice, committed by the Western powers towards both Russia and the people of Crimea. However, while the inhabitants of Crimea were refused in implementing their right for national self-determination, Russia itself was deprived of its right for "restoration of historical justice", which is considered by Russian leadership as a "legal interest". Remarkably, that this sense of "historically unjust" attitude to Russia is rooted in the period of the end of Cold War and the Soviet Union's disintegration. Having lost its superpower position, Russia also was deprived of the appropriate respectful treatment from many Western powers (including the United States). Clearly, this inequality pushed Russia to reject both its inferior role within post-Cold War international order and the legitimacy of the latter. The addition of Crimea to Russia in March of 2014 demonstrated, that European security order endures fundamental crises, caused by the erosion of its legitimacy as a result of Moscow's attempt to achieve equal treatment by implementing the principles of "formal" and "distributive" justice. From the Russian viewpoint, "unjust" attitude of the Western powers is directly conditioned by Russia's loss of "great power" status as a result of defeat in the Cold War. Hence, getting back this status is necessary for attaining decent place within international hierarchy. In this sense, restoration of "historical justice" constitutes the essential component of Russia's status concerns and Russian leadership's policies, aimed to revise those normative aspects of the current international order, which impede Moscow's return into the club of world powers.

### **Russia's status concerns and the "quest for justice" as a revisionist strategy**

According to the "social identity theory", individuals and social groups (including states) acquire their identity, largely, through the membership in certain communities (national, ethnic, religious, political etc.). They are also prone to compare their position (especially their achievements, qualities and rights) with the position of a "referent group", equal or slightly superior to them.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the social status is defined by collective understandings of what place a person or a group (a state) occupies within

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Brown R., Haeger G. "Compared to What?" Comparison Choice in an International Context // European Journal of Social Psychology. 1999. № 1. P. 31–42.

social hierarchy, according to the distribution of the most valuable attributes (wealth, military might, culture, social-demographic qualities, political organization, diplomatic influence and so on).<sup>19</sup>

After the end of Cold War and the demise of Soviet Union, Russia gave up enormous share of its superpower status, having lost significant part of its territory, economic potential and geopolitical standing. Nevertheless, even in 1990s Russian political and intellectual elites attached great significance to Russia's return into "great powers' club" and restoration of its status. In this era Russia applied enormous efforts in order to become a part of the "Western world" by joining G-7, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO), considering them as the key structures of "liberal democracy community".<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the beginning of NATO enlargement in the middle of 1990s and military involvement of the Alliance into Kosovo crises in 1999 clearly demonstrated, that the Western powers doesn't view Russia as an equal partner, whose opinion should be taken into account.

The coming of 21<sup>st</sup> century and the beginning of "new era" in Russian-American relations after 9/11 terrorist attacks haven't led to the establishment of truly equal relationships between Russia and its Western partners. The United States' withdrawal from the ABM (anti-ballistic missile) treaty, unilateral decision on the beginning of military intervention in Iraq and, most importantly, the support of G. W. Bush-jr.'s administration of "color revolutions" on the post-Soviet space (Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyz republic) convincingly demonstrated the reluctance of American leadership to treat Russia as an equal counterpart. Not less important, that during the last 25 years Russia has been regularly criticized by the Western powers for violation of human rights and rejection of liberal values. This criticism de facto meant, that the United States and most of European countries refuse to recognize Russia's equal membership within "Western democratic community". As a result, conservative and revisionist attitudes, backed up by the perception of discrepancy between Russia's increased capabilities and its current place in international hierarchy, have rapidly proliferated within Russian political elites and the society in whole.

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<sup>19</sup> Larson D. W., Paul T., Wohlforth W. Status and World Order // Status in World Politics. Ed. by T. Paul, D. W. Larson and W. Wohlforth. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. P. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Larson D. W., Shevchenko A. Status Seekers. Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy // International Security. 2010. № 4. P. 79.



By the middle of 2010s, Russian leadership realized growing “status inconsistency” and (after the outbreak of Ukrainian crises) tried to resolve it by correcting the “historical injustice” and, thus, demonstrating to the Western powers, that Russia’s interests could no longer be ignored. This crises and, especially, the presidential rhetoric, accompanied the Crimean referendum and the addition of the peninsula to Russia, clearly reaffirmed two key components of the Russian leadership’s status concerns –

1. Independence and sovereignty as the attributes of a rightful member of the international community;
2. Appeal to Russia’s commitment to “international law” and “justice” as the universal values.

Historically, sovereignty constitutes the fundamental property of any nation-state, some kind of “entry ticket” to the club of formally equal members of international society. Recognition of sovereignty, therefore, gives a political entity the status, endowing it with certain rights and duties, providing the conditions, necessary to attain its goals, and guaranteeing relatively equal treatment from the other states. For Russia “protection of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity...” and satisfaction of “internal and external sovereign needs of the state...”<sup>21</sup> comprise the core of national security doctrine. Notably, that Russian approach, based on strong commitment to the norms of traditional Westphalian sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity, substantially differs from “Western”, liberal understanding, stressing the importance of transnational norms and institutions, governing the nation-states’ behavior in the globalized world. This divergence between Russian and “Western” approaches to sovereignty has become apparent in the middle of 2000s, when Russian government in response to the criticism of human rights abuses, retreat from democracy and, especially, to the number of “color revolutions” on the post-Soviet space, cheered by the United States and major European powers, developed the concept of “sovereign democracy”, stressing the unique historical way of Russia, its legal right to establish its own model of democracy and accentuating the need to protect Russia’s sovereignty

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<sup>21</sup> Strategy of National Security of Russian Federation until 2020. Official web site of National Security Council of Russia. <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

from the attempts to impose from the outside inorganic political arrangement, ignoring cultural and historical peculiarities of Russia.<sup>22</sup>

After the outbreak of Ukrainian crises in 2014 the idea of strong sovereignty occupied the central place within presidential discourse of president V. Putin, who justified the importance of “real state sovereignty”, which is necessary both for Russia, willing to preserve its national originality and identity<sup>23</sup>, and for Crimea, because “... this strategic territory should be under strong, sustainable sovereignty, which de facto may be provided exclusively by Russia today...”<sup>24</sup> Grounding this statement, president Putin appeals to the actual unity of Russian and Ukrainian peoples, because “Kiev – is a mother of Russian cities...” and “...Ancient Russia – is our common origin and we can’t live without each other...”<sup>25</sup> Consequently, as far as Russians and Ukrainians constitute the one nation, NATO’s pursuit to extend its membership on the part of this nation (Ukraine) and to “begin to housewife near our home or on our historical territories...”<sup>26</sup> poses direct threat to this nation’s “historical” sovereignty. Restoration and preservation of this sovereignty, therefore, is not mere top priority of Russia’s national security policies, but also the only way for Russia to return its previously lost status. Declaring the “historic unity” of the dissociated nation is also grounded on considerations of “distributive justice”, requiring that the right for self-determination should be given to any group of people, realizing themselves a “nation”. The strive to restore this justice is aimed to attach legitimacy to Russia’s policy, providing moral grounds for the actions, which seem to be ambiguous from the legal viewpoint.

The degree of a state’s commitment to the existing legal norms is also crucial either for membership in the international community and for status attribution. From this point of view, Russia’s declared desire to “... build international relations according to the principles of international law, firm and equal security of the states”, to enhance “legal foundations of the international relations, respect international commitments”, to

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<sup>22</sup> *Surkov V.* Sovereignty—Political Synonym of Competitiveness, February 7, 2006 Address to the Students of the United Russia Party Study Center, *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 7 (March 3, 2006), pp. 10–11.

<sup>23</sup> *Putin V.* Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Chamber. December 4, 2014. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>

<sup>24</sup> *Putin V.* Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Chamber. March 18, 2014. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

maintain and strengthen international law<sup>27</sup> reveal Russia's desire to attain equal standing with the major powers. To achieve this goal Russia "...pursues policies, aimed for establishing of stable and sustainable system of international relations, relying on international law and based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and non-interference into domestic affairs of the states".<sup>28</sup>

Besides, securing Russia's great power status presupposes, that UN Security Council plays central role within the international system, providing stability, respect, equality and mutually profitable cooperation among states.<sup>29</sup> Consistent implementation of these principles is expected to provide the establishment of "...just and democratic international system, founded on the collective basics in dealing with the international issues, on the supremacy of international law" and equality and partnership among the states.<sup>30</sup> Russia's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council, inherited from the Soviet period, confirms its authority and recognition from the rest of international community. Besides, the principle of equality of SC permanent members coupled with multilateral approach to the decision-making, assuming the dialogue and seeking for compromise, embody the ideal of "distributive justice", according to which the subjects of one sort (the states-victors in World War II) are endowed with equal rights ("veto" right, first of all). Consequently, the UN Security Council should keep its central role in world politics, providing the great powers' equality, international justice and, therefore, the international order's sustainability.

After the outbreak of Ukrainian crises Russian leadership developed this logic, having interpreted the addition of Crimea to Russia as the "historical reunification", which has been done not merely according to the "...will of the people and the norms of international law" but also in consistence with "conscience, justice and ... truth".<sup>31</sup> Thus, the reunification of Russia, Crimea and Sevastopol has occurred both in accordance with the "norms of international law and common democratic procedures" and consistence with "justice", because Russia has taken back the territory, which "spiritually and

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<sup>27</sup> Strategy of National Security of Russian Federation until 2020. Official web site of National Security Council of Russia. <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

<sup>28</sup> The Concept of Foreign Policy of Russian Federation. February 12, 2013. Official web-site of Russian Foreign Ministry. [http://archive.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F](http://archive.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F)

<sup>29</sup> Strategy of National Security of Russian Federation until 2020. Official web site of National Security Council of Russia. <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

<sup>30</sup> The Concept of Foreign Policy of Russian Federation. February 12, 2013. Official web-site of Russian Foreign Ministry. [http://archive.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F](http://archive.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F)

<sup>31</sup> *Putin V.* Address on the Ceremonial Reception on the Occasion of National Celebration – the Russia's Day. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/45899>

culturally has always been with our country – despite of the decisions, made in Soviet period, and the borders, inherited from this epoch”.<sup>32</sup> This discourse blends the notions of “justice”, “law” and “truth”, appealing to the necessity of combining both moral and legal considerations in decision-making. Moreover, the Russian leadership, appealing to such concepts as “historical justice” and “historical nation”, claims its intention to restore the status, which has been lost by Russia because of a number of “injustices”, committed in the past (such as ceding of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, the collapse of Soviet Union and the “dissociation” of Russian nation, Western powers’ consistent disregard of Russia’s vital interests in 1990s and 2000s). Therefore, “status inconsistency”, which is normally understood as discrepancy between material capabilities of a state and its position within international hierarchy, in the given case is conditioned mostly by the Russian elites’ realization of unequal distribution and implementation of rights among the “states” and the “nations” alike. It is also seems apparent, that Russia’s “quest for justice” in international politics constitutes the core of its revisionist agenda, embodied in foreign-policy discourse, and challenging several fundamental pillars of the current international order.

First, the concepts “historical nation” and “historical sovereignty” question both the existing territorial borders and the distribution of rights among the nation-states (post-Soviet states, first of all). International justice, being expressed in terms of equality of “historical rights” and “moral duties”, undermines the current European order, resting on the legal rights’ equality. Thus, “legal” approach assumes that certain rights are distributed according to a juridical status (for example, the “nation” or the “nation-state”), while “moral” understanding asserts, that both “nations” and “nation-states” may claim for the certain rights (“self-determination”, “restoration of historical justice” and so on) on the grounds of cultural, historical or spiritual unity, disregarding existing legal frameworks.

Second, declared by Russian leadership right for “restoration of historic justice”, according to the principles of “distributive justice”, should be given to each state within the system. In this case, the rise of revanchist attitudes and sharpening of historical controversies among numerous states across the world may destabilize the whole regions (post-Soviet space, Balkan peninsula, Middle East). As a result, the international

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<sup>32</sup> Medvedev D. The Addition of Crimea has Restored the Historical Justice. April 22, 2014. <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3352693-prysoedynenye-kryma-vosstanovylo-ystorycheskuui-spravedlyvost-medvedev>

order will be inevitably broken due to the loss of common understanding of legitimacy among the members of international society.

Third, the advance of moral and ethical categories in the foreground in Russia's foreign policy decision-making produces fundamental collision with the norms of international law. Namely, the moral arguments, having been used by the Russian leadership, assert that despite the international law endows all nations with the self-determination right, in practice this right is implemented unequally (Kosovo Albanians vs. Crimean people). Appealing to this case, the Russian leadership de facto states that "formal justice" has been broken and questions the effectiveness of international law, contesting legitimacy of the current international order. In turn, restoring the international order's legitimacy presupposes that major powers should converge in their understanding of "international justice" as one of the key parameters of legitimate action. In this sense, the Ukrainian crises of 2014 has clearly demonstrated, that considerations of justice matter substantially in international politics of a day. Particularly, these concerns become especially sound when a "great power" experiences the "unjust" treatment from the other states, coupled with realization of its own "status inconsistency". In response, this power questions legitimacy of the existing international order as incapable to maintain the international justice. At the same time, the principles of "distributive" and "formal" justice effect increasingly the policy and discourse of "unsatisfied power", which regards the existing distribution of rights (and the way they are implemented) as the key parameter of the international order's legitimacy.