

### Description for the general public:

Many were deeply surprised when the majority of Russians supported the annexation of Crimea. Annexing a neighbouring country's territory seemed in the West like an act from the past and made Angela Merkel famously comment that Putin was out of touch with reality. It's true that the Russian authorities tried to present the annexation as conducted in accordance with the formal (legal) requirements – therefore the referendum. However, this was not the main reason for Russians to approve (often enthusiastically) of it. The common understanding was that the annexation might not have been completely legal but it was definitely an act of justice. (in Russian *не совсем легально, но справедливо*).

The **goal of the project** in the most general terms is to analyse *Russia's take on (in)justice in international relations*. The project seeks to reconstruct **how Russia refers to justice (and injustice) in foreign policy** and **why** she does it. The project seeks answers to **four main questions**: (1) what is the **content** of justice discourse in Russian foreign policy; (2) in what **context** does the "justice argument" appear in relation to foreign policy and international affairs?; (3) what is the **role** of justice discourse in Russian foreign policy?; (4) what are the **implications** of Russia's take on justice for her vision of the world order, the ways she legitimises her actions and how she approaches the current power shift in the international system. The main **research problem** is the role of the ideas in foreign policy exemplified by the analysis of the idea of justice in the official discourse on Russian foreign policy. **The time frame: 2012-2022.**

Developing this project is important because of the current geopolitical situation. With the weakening of the hegemonic position of the West has diminished also its capacity to impose liberal ideas globally. As China is getting stronger and the tensions in relations with the West are growing, Russia appears an important ingredient of any new future power settlement. Therefore, it is crucial to understand why she criticizes the current order and what kind of order she is ready to support. A prevalent assumption in the studies on International Relations is that states prioritize order over justice. This is true but, nevertheless, each order is based on some idea of a "just arrangement"; it must entail some idea of justice to be legitimate and durable. Getting a sense what is Russia's take on justice (and injustice) in international relations allows us to understand better actions undertaken by Moscow. It enables a deeper comprehension of what kind of future order Russia would deem fair. The findings of the project would help us understand and hence react more accurately to another potential "Crimean scenario", i.e. a violation of norms, which is perhaps 'not completely legal, but fair'. In the face of Russia's invasion on Ukraine it is of utmost importance. Russia's aggression turns questions about justice and the role of ideas to seem trivial and irrelevant but paradoxically the task to grasp Russia's take is now more urgent than ever before. Following exclusively the logic of power in explaining Russian actions won't help to find a stable peaceful settlement in Europe.

To my knowledge, there are no in-depth studies on Russia's take on (in)justice in international relations. It just shows that there is an important gap in the state of knowledge which this project aims to address. Its contribution is in two areas. Firstly, it will strengthen Russian studies by filling in the missing pages on Russia's take on justice in international relations. It will improve our understating of Russia's self-identification process and her foreign policy driven by identity needs. Secondly, it will contribute to the discussion on the role of justice (or more broadly – ideas) in foreign policy.