



**THEMATIC DOSSIER:
Contours of Non-Western Peacekeeping**

**ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОЕ ДОСЬЕ:
Контуры незападного миротворчества**

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**Justice in the Process of Regional Conflict Settlement:
Analysis of Russia's Strategy, 1992—2021**

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Abstract. Research in the field of regional conflict resolution rarely touches on the issue of justice. This paper aims to identify what understanding of international justice underlies Russia's actions as a mediator/peacekeeper in the process of regional conflict resolution in the 1990s—2010s. The study also contributes to the understanding of Russia's foreign policy by clarifying Moscow's views on the essence and parameters of a just global order. The paper provides a study of the dominant Russian views on the essence of justice in international relations. It offers an insight into Russia's peace-making and conflict resolution activities in the context of the three concepts of global justice and taking into account the factor of national interests. The study concludes that the dominant understanding of international justice in Russia is that which corresponds to Allen Buchanan's concept of subjective justice. In Moscow's view, international justice is a set of rules developed in the process of consensus driven negotiations between the great powers. According to this logic, a just settlement of the regional conflict is possible only on the basis of the consensus of the parties to the conflict and in accordance with the interests of the global and regional powers concerned. The fair interaction of the great powers in the settlement of the regional conflict and the impact that the conflict resolution could have on the development of the international order were of crucial importance for Moscow within the period under consideration. Moscow's activity in the conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space generally corresponded to the model of justice as mutual recognition, but with absolute priority of Russian national interests. The strategy for resolving regional conflicts in the post-Soviet space could only be understood in the broad context of relations with Western countries and has changed in line with the development of these relations.

Key words: justice, regional conflicts, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, Russian foreign policy

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Справедливость при урегулировании региональных конфликтов: анализ стратегии России в 1992—2021 гг.

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Аннотация. Исследования в области урегулирования региональных конфликтов редко затрагивают проблематику справедливости. В данной работе предпринята попытка выявить, какое понимание международной справедливости лежало в основе действий России как посредника в урегулировании региональных конфликтов. Проведено исследование доминирующих в России взглядов на суть справедливости в международных отношениях. В контексте трех концепций глобальной справедливости и учета фактора национальных интересов исследована активность России в области миротворчества и урегулирования конфликтов с акцентом на постсоветское пространство в целом и приднестровский конфликт в частности. Показано, что в России доминирует понимание международной справедливости, соответствующее концепции субъективной справедливости Аллена Бьюкенена. С точки зрения Москвы, международная справедливость — это набор правил, выработанных в процессе переговоров на основе консенсуса между великими державами. В рамках этой логики справедливое урегулирование регионального конфликта возможно на основе консенсуса сторон конфликта и в соответствии с интересами заинтересованных глобальных и региональных держав. Для Москвы основное значение имеет справедливость взаимодействия великих держав по поводу урегулирования регионального конфликта и влияние, которое урегулирование конфликта окажет на формирование справедливого международного порядка. В исследованный период активность России в сфере конфликтного урегулирования на постсоветском пространстве в целом соответствовала модели справедливости как взаимного признания, но при абсолютном приоритете национальных интересов. Стратегия урегулирования региональных конфликтов на постсоветском пространстве была вписана в широкий контекст взаимоотношений со странами Запада и эволюционировала вслед за изменением этих отношений.

Ключевые слова: справедливость, региональные конфликты, урегулирование региональных конфликтов, миротворчество, внешняя политика России

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Introduction

Research in the field of international relations, and in particular regional conflict resolution, rarely touches on the problems of justice. Conflict studies usually focus on typology of conflicts, analysis of interests and resources of participants, forms of international engagement, strategies of external actors in the process of conflict resolution, effectiveness of

conflict settlement (for example, see: (Nikitin, 2017)).

Nevertheless, many studies implicitly address the problem of justice. Richard Rubenstein (1999, p. 1) states: “A longing for justice animates much of the work in the field [of conflict resolution. — *Author's note.*], even though certain factors militate against discussing such matters openly”, in particular, researchers don't want to look woolly minded,

and practitioners — utopian. However, the vast majority of studies assess justice from the point of view of the parties of the conflict. In general, the question of what the mediators promoting conflict resolutions consider to be just remains beyond the scope of research. Among the conceptual studies on this topic only a few works can be mentioned, such as those of Oliver Richmond (2018) and Ian Shapiro (2012). The research by Anders Persson (2015) is a rare example of empirical study.

For our empirical research, we use an analytical scheme developed within the framework of the GLOBUS project (Eriksen, 2016; Sjørnsen, 2017; Tomić & Tonra, 2018). The aim of the project was to critically reflect on the EU's contribution to strengthening global justice.¹ In this scheme, three concepts of global justice are formulated: non-domination, impartiality and mutual recognition (see Table for basic elements of operationalization).

Justice as non-domination is based on the principles of the Westphalian system, primarily on the principles of state sovereignty, inviolability of borders and non-interference in internal affairs.

Justice as impartiality emphasizes the universal nature of individual rights and freedoms in their Western understanding and relies on the institutions of global governance as a tool to ensure them. In this context, the focus is not on interaction between states, but on strengthening international (sometimes even supranational) structures and procedures for protecting individuals and presenting their reasonable demands for justice and protection.

Justice as mutual recognition emphasizes the inevitability of differences and inequalities in the modern world. It involves reliance on consensual deliberative structures of global governance aimed at ensuring more equal access to global goods and global governance.

We choose this analytical scheme because it establishes a clear link between the general understanding of justice and the actions of the state as a mediator/peacemaker in regional conflicts. A clear operationalization of the three above-mentioned concepts is also an advantage of this analytical scheme; it formulates a number of parameters describing the behavior of an actor (intermediary state) adhering to one or another understanding of justice. This makes it easy to use this scheme for empirical research.

Three Conceptions of Global Justice

Criteria	Non-domination	Impartiality	Mutual recognition
Reasons for actions of mediator	Beneficence	Moral duty	Protection of vulnerable elements of global / regional / public sphere
Rightful claimants of justice and security	States	Individuals	Groups, individuals, states
Main principle of action	Non-interference in internal affairs	Priority of autonomy and interests of individuals	Due hearing
Core organizational principle of global politics	State sovereignty (external aspect)	Human rights protection	Reciprocity, interaction
Institutional organization of international relations	Multilateral	Supranational	Collaborative

Source: compiled by the author at the basis of: (Eriksen, 2016; Sjørnsen, 2017; Tomić & Tonra, 2018).

It is easy to formulate how these three concepts of global justice determine the goal-setting of the mediator in conflict resolution. From the point of view of non-domination, the inviolability of borders is of unconditional priority, which makes any manifestations of separatism unacceptable. Justice as impartiality does not exclude the possibility of changing borders if the protection of people's lives, their

¹ Reconsidering European Contributions to Global Justice (GLOBUS). URL: <https://www.globus.uio.no> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

well-being and rights is impossible within existing borders. Justice as mutual recognition implies attention to the causes of conflict, in particular, to the imbalances of power, welfare, etc. The task of conflict resolution is to settle the accumulated complex of mutual claims through consensus-based dialogue; changing borders is not excluded, but is only one of the options for resolving deep-rooted contradictions.

This paper aims to identify what understanding of international justice underlies Russia's actions as a mediator/peacekeeper in the process of regional conflicts resolution in 1990s — 2010s.² The study also contributes to the understanding of Russia's foreign policy by clarifying Moscow's views on the essence and parameters of a just global order.

We should point out three fundamental limitations of the research. First, the three above-mentioned concepts of justice represent ideal types, which in reality cannot be observed in pure form. Second, the actor's strategy is based not only on his understanding of justice, but also on pragmatic considerations, in particular, on understanding the limits of the possible. Third, policy actor inevitably balances normative aspect and interests. Different international actors construct this balance differently, depending primarily on internal political factors, features of political culture, available resources, and place in the international system. The latter consideration is of particular importance for analysis of Russia's foreign policy.

² The paper considers only those cases where Russia played the role of mediator *stricto sensu*, and the Russian military presence in the conflict region had the status of a peacekeeping operation. This excludes the conflict that began in 2014 in the south-east of Ukraine out of the scope of research. The time frame of the study (up to 2021) is explained by the fact that the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has led to a radical review of Russia's foreign policy strategy. To answer the question of to what extent this has led to the transformation of Russia's activities as a mediator in regional conflicts, additional research based on additional empirical material is needed.

Russia's Approach to Conflict Resolution through the Prism of International Justice

The classic juxtaposition between reciprocity justice and subject-centred justice is fundamentally important for any analysis of Russian discourse on justice in international relations. According to Allen Buchanan (1990), subject-centred justice is based on the normative principles of an individual actor (group) that this actor considers correct in comparison with the justice claims of other actors. This understanding is based on the implied or explicitly expressed superiority of this actor over others: a "civilised" person over a "wild native," a democratic country over country that has not yet built a democracy, etc.

Another type of justice — reciprocity justice — is not a normative ideological principle that a priori cannot be shared by all, but instead rules of interaction based on the agreement of actors.

Russia is, or at least perceives itself, a global power and therefore pays a great deal of attention to the basic characteristics of the international order. In line with the concept of realism that dominates Russian political thought, the most important feature of an (un)just international order — is the extent to which it ensures security as the main national interest.

The vast majority of what Russian politicians say about the (in)justice of the international order is based on the principle of reciprocal justice. This is rarely said out loudly, precisely because it is understood as one of the foundations of foreign policy ideology. The idea of justice as result of an agreement can be found in all official documents of recent decades. For example, the Concept of Russian Foreign Policy of 2008 called "the establishment of a just and democratic world order based on *collective* principles... as well as on *equal* and partnership relations between states" among the main goals

of Russia's foreign policy (highlighted by the author. — *Author's note.*).³

The well-known Russian international relations theorist Alexey Bogaturov, analysing three generations of Russian foreign policy doctrines, placed two ideas at the centre of his analysis: solidarity and resources. According to this opinion, Moscow's foreign policy in the first half of the 1990s was based on the premise of "democratic solidarity" — all democratic countries, including Russia, "will behave in solidarity, taking into account each other, as states with common interests should do" (Bogaturov, 2007). In this context, solidarity means both collective agreement and justice. Interpreting the West's policy in the 1990s as an injustice, sometimes even as a deception, contemporary Russian politicians and the vast majority of experts consider this as one of the most important factors that prompted a transformation of Russian foreign and domestic policy in the 2000s.

Thus, in Russian discourse, reciprocity justice and subject-centred justice are not only different but even antagonistic interpretations of justice. This forms the basis for the generally accepted assessment of the unipolar international order: it is both inconsistent with Russia's interests and fundamentally unjust. In the words of President Vladimir Putin, Western countries, succumbing to euphoria, "have sacrificed objectivity and justice to political reasonability, legal norms were replaced by arbitrary interpretation and biased assessments."⁴

Thus, the injustice of today's international order is linked with structural parameters (the dominance of one group of actors) and with value parameters (the dominant group has appropriated the monopoly on 'truth' in the last

instance).⁵ Not being a part of the dominant Western "international society," Moscow, or at least the dominant political elite, is not willing to accept the values it diffuses worldwide because: 1) these values are not shared by the broad strata of Russian society and elite; 2) the West instrumentalizes such values to achieve its own selfish interests; and 3) the West is not ready to take into account Russia's legitimate interests.

Russia's position on the main characteristics of a just international order was clearly expressed in the 2016 Concept of Foreign Policy. Among its priorities, the Concept mentions the formation of a "just and stable world order." This is "a system of international relations based on universally recognised norms of international law and the principles of *equality*, mutual respect, and *non-interference* in the internal affairs in order to ensure *reliable and equal security* for each member of the international community" (highlighted by the author. — *Author's note.*). At the same time Russia sees a new concert of great powers as the basis for this stable and just international order: "Collective leadership of the leading states, which should be representative in geographical and civilizational aspects."⁶

In this respect, the following initiative by Vladimir Putin is very typical. During his visit to Israel on January 23, 2020, he proposed to hold a meeting of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who "have a special responsibility for safeguarding the civilization," to discuss "collective responses to modern challenges and threats."⁷

⁵ Bordachev T. Power, Morality, Justice // *Russia in Global Politics*. 2014. Vol. 12, no. 2. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/articles/sila-moral-spravedlivost/> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

⁶ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 640, 30.11.2016 "On approval of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" // President of Russia. November 30, 2016. (In Russian). URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

⁷ Forum "Preserving the Memory of the Holocaust, Fighting Anti-Semitism" // President of Russia. January 23, 2020. (In Russian). URL:

³ The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation // President of Russia. July 15, 2008. (In Russian). URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/785> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

⁴ Putin V. V. World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules? Speech at the XI meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club // President of Russia. October 24, 2014. (In Russian). URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

According to Moscow, a just international order implies sovereignty of states, non-interference in internal affairs, equality of states and mutual respect for legitimate interests. Of course, Moscow assumes that this fully applies to the great powers only, since they are only ones who have full real sovereignty and bear special responsibility for the stability and justice of the international order. In Moscow's eyes, only on this basis is it possible to carry on full-fledged negotiations and develop rules of the international world, which would be equally (un)suitable for all great powers. For Russia, the justice of the international order is impossible without the right of Russia, as one of the great powers, to influence decision-making on the most important issues of international life, first of all — issues of war and peace.

Moscow's foreign policy ideology is defensive and conservative. Defensive, as Moscow seeks to confirm *de facto* the positions it has *de jure* as a member of the UN Security Council, and to maintain its influence in the near abroad region from the expansion of other actors. Conservative, since the main interest is to ensure external security from hard security threats and to maintain full sovereignty in domestic affairs; this has absolute priority over the interest of social, economic and even technological development.

Reviewing Russia's Practice in Resolving Conflicts

In recent decade, Russian military contingents have not participated in the UN peacekeeping missions. This can be explained by two reasons. First, since the early 1990s, Russia has carried on several of its own peacekeeping operations in the near abroad, which required significant resources. Second, the vast majority of UN missions took place in regions where Moscow had no essential interests. Nevertheless, there have been several cases of Moscow's active participation

in conflict management outside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including military engagement in peacekeeping operations over the past three decades.

The most famous of these was Kosovo. Moscow did not try to justify Slobodan Milosevic's policy towards the Albanian people. However, in order to prevent harsh international measures against Belgrade, Moscow actively tried in 1998—1999 to persuade the Serbian leadership to take urgent measures to stabilise the situation, in particular to stop military operations, to provide conditions for the return of refugees, to take measures to overcome the humanitarian crisis and grant Kosovo broad autonomy (Primakov, 2015, pp. 271—273, 301—319). At the same time, Moscow was not ready to give the US *carte blanche* to launch military strikes against Serbia, insisting that the use of force could be possible as a last resort option only on the basis of a special UN Security Council resolution. The US willingness to act against Moscow's objections and to bypass the Security Council "explains the sharpness of Moscow's reaction to the airstrikes on Yugoslavia, which created a dangerous precedent of ignoring Russia's status as a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council" (Zagorsky, 2017, p. 64).

Moscow's reaction and subsequent events are well known. In the context of this research, we should mention the main motives for Moscow's participation in conflict management: to maintain its influence in the region, to preserve its status as a great power participating on an equal basis in a dialogue with other great powers, and to ensure a political solution based on the interests of all participants in the conflict. In this case, Moscow's approach was based on the non-domination approach (absolute priority of territorial integrity). But the claim for dialog and equality with other great powers reflects understanding of justice as mutual recognition.

The discussion on the possibility of cooperation between Russia and the EU in the field of crisis management, which took place in the first half of 2000, is of interest. The

<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62646>
(accessed: 09.08.2022).

EU summit in Seville in 2002 approved a document — the so-called Seville formula — on the parameters of Russia's possible participation in EU crisis management operations.⁸ This approach was unacceptable to Russia precisely because it describes modalities for Russian participation in crisis management operations led by the European Union. Moscow insisted on the recognition of the equal status of both parties. Without excluding the possibility of participation in EU operations, Moscow wanted to fix the possibility of EU participation in Russian operations, as well as the possibility of conducting joint operations, which implied joint bilateral political decision-making and operational planning (Zagorsky, 2017, p. 116; Danilov, 2012, p. 530). These claims evidently demonstrate Moscow adherence to justice as mutual recognition.

In principle, both sides expressed their readiness to cooperate. The Road map on external security adopted by the EU — Russia Summit in Moscow on May 10, 2005 envisaged the goal of “promoting conflict prevention and settlement through mutual result-oriented cooperation, including through elaboration of possible joint initiatives.” This included cooperation “in regions adjacent to the EU and Russian borders.”⁹ However, it can be seen that both parties had a similar approach — to aspire to a leading role in such cooperation. On the eve of signing the Road map, the European Commission in the press-release noted the desire to expand cooperation with Russia in crisis management in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, and openly expressed its desire “for Russia's participation in specific events, as well as in political dialogue, in order

to facilitate the efforts that the EU is already making in these regions.”¹⁰

In other words, the EU completely ignored all conflict management operations that Russia had been carried on since early 1990s and instead offered Russia to join some hypothetical EU activities as a third party. The EU's desire to play a leading role in conflict resolution in the region of Russia's special interests was unacceptable to Moscow. This became a reason to resist any attempts to involve the EU in ongoing conflict management operations and conflict resolutions formats, in particular in the negotiation process on crisis management in Transnistria (Danilov, 2012, p. 531).

In this context, it is easy to understand the only example of Russia's participation in the EU peacekeeping mission. Russia sent a helicopter group (about 200 military personnel with regular weapons, ammunition and military equipment) to participate in the European Union Force (EUFOR) Chad / the Central African Republic (CAR) mission in 2008.¹¹ Moscow decided to join the EU mission immediately after the August 2008 war in the Caucasus. This was a clear signal that the European vector of foreign policy remained a priority for Moscow. The participation of the Russian military in the mission in Chad provided important experience of interoperability. It also demonstrated Moscow's willingness in principle to participate in CFSP operations as a third party. However, in the area of common neighbourhood, Moscow was ready to cooperate with the EU exclusively on an equal footing. This required the creation of special mechanisms for joint peacekeeping, for which the EU was not ready.

Another example of Moscow's approach to crisis management was its cooperation with

⁸ Presidency Report on European Security and Defence Policy // Council of European Union. June 22, 2002. P. 21—27. URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/71189.pdf (accessed: 09.08.2022).

⁹ Road Map on the Common Space of External Security // Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union. May 10, 2005. URL: https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/road_map_on_the_common_space_of_external_security_2005_english.pdf (accessed: 09.08.2022).

¹⁰ EU/Russia: The Four “Common Spaces” // European Commission. March 18, 2005. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_05_103 (accessed: 09.08.2022).

¹¹ A group of Russian Air Force servicemen is heading to the Republic of Chad // RIA Novosti. November 14, 2008. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20081114/155009778.html> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

NATO in Afghanistan. In this case, the interests of Russia and NATO were almost completely aligned: to ensure the formation of an effective and legitimate government in Afghanistan that can hold back the Taliban¹² (Zagorsky, 2017, p. 112). Russia also had special interests in minimising drug trafficking. Since 2005, under the aegis of the NATO — Russia Council, anti-drug services in Afghanistan and Central Asia states were trained.¹³ In 2008 Russia allowed NATO to transit military and civilian cargo through its airspace.¹⁴ From 2011, at NATO's request, Moscow also supplied the Afghan army with Mi-35 military helicopters, organised training for Afghan pilots and assisted with parts and maintenance for the fleet.¹⁵ Since Moscow did not consider Afghanistan to be a part of the Russian area of special interests, it demonstrated its willingness to interact with NATO and perform limited support tasks within the framework of the NATO crisis management operation. Russia's approach based on the principle of justice as mutual recognition was in this case compatible with Western actions, in particular the West's willingness to engage in dialogue on an equal footing and to take Moscow's interests into account.

In contrast to other regions of the world, Russia has been very active in conflict resolution and peacekeeping in the CIS countries. The three largest Russian peacekeeping operations have taken place in

¹² Hereinafter, an organization included in the list of terrorist organizations in the Russian Federation is mentioned.

¹³ NATO and Russia begin a training program on anti-drug warfare methods in Afghanistan // NATO. November 4, 2008. (In Russian). URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/news_21364.htm?selectedLocale=ru (accessed: 09.08.2022).

¹⁴ Russia has allowed the transit of weapons to Afghanistan // Izvestia. November 20, 2008. (In Russian). URL: <https://archive.is/20120802211817/www.izvestia.ru/news/news192704#selection-767.0-767.48> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

¹⁵ Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation: do not confuse the Mi-17B5 contract and the creation of a Trust fund with NATO // RIA Novosti. June 1, 2011. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20110601/382870021.html> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, where regions pursued greater autonomy or independence, clashing with their respective central governments in Georgia and Moldova.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which quickly turned into an interstate conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, looks different. Moscow consistently demonstrated impartiality and balanced accurately between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This was only possible because the conflict is not seen as one of the local points in the complex confrontation between Russia and the West. On the contrary, Nagorno-Karabakh remained for a long time a unique point in Eurasia where Russian, the US and French diplomats work together to achieve a common goal.¹⁶

We can identify some common features in Moscow's policy in conflict management in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria.

Russia had two strategic objectives in the CIS region. First, to prevent instability being imported from the near abroad. Second, to maintain the new status quo in Europe, that is, to keep the neighbouring countries, some of which were counting on the prospect of joining NATO and the EU, in the zone of Moscow's privileged interests (Zagorsky, 2017, p. 64).

Since the early 1990s, Russia has made active efforts to freeze the hot phase of these three conflicts, even conducting peacekeeping operations using the armed forces of the former USSR stationed in the conflict regions. In general, these actions were successful and led to a ceasefire and stabilization of the immediate humanitarian situation. Russia's priority was to prevent further human casualties and human security problems.

The presence of Russian peacekeepers in conflict zones is based on agreements with all parties to the conflict and local ownership of security activities. The mixed peacekeeping

¹⁶ Markedonov S. M. Nagorno-Karabakh settlement: Is the acceleration justified? // Russian International Affairs Council. March 3, 2020. (In Russian). URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/nagorno-karabakhscoe-uregulirovanie-opravdano-li-uskorenie/?sphrase_id=41449618 (accessed: 09.08.2022).

forces in South Ossetia, deployed in 1992, consisted of three battalions — Russian, Georgian and South Ossetian.¹⁷ A Joint Control Commission was set up to monitor the situation. The Presidents of Russia and Moldova signed the Agreement on the Principles of Peaceful Settlement of the Transnistria Conflict on July 21, 1992.¹⁸ It was agreed that peacekeeping contingents of Russia, Moldova and Transnistria should play the main role in maintaining peace in the region. The Joint Control Commission was established to take decisions by consensus of the delegations of three parties. The deployment of a Russian peacekeeping contingent in Abkhazia was based on the decision of the Council of the CIS Heads of State of August 22, 1994.¹⁹ Formally, any CIS member state can contribute to the operation under Russian command, but only Russia sent troops. Georgia, as a CIS member state, regularly maintained decisions of the Council of the CIS Heads of State to extend the mandate of peacekeeping mission.

In the 1990s, Russia welcomed the engagement of international organisations in conflict resolution. Negotiations on Abkhazia took place in 1992—1994 under the UN aegis with mediation by Russia and the participation of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General. The

¹⁷ Agreement on the Principles of Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict // Electronic fund of regulatory, technical and regulatory information of the Consortium “Kodex”. June 24, 1992. (In Russian). URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1902246> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

¹⁸ Agreement on the principles of the peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova // Electronic fund of regulatory, technical and regulatory information of the Consortium “Kodex”. July 21, 1992. (In Russian). URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901857454> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

¹⁹ Decision of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the use of Collective peacekeeping forces in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict // UN Association of Georgia.

1996 Memorandum on Measures to Ensure Security and Strengthen Mutual Trust between Georgia and South Ossetia was developed with the mediation of Russia and the OSCE.²⁰ Typical of the mid-1990s, that Russian Minister on CIS Affairs Boris Pastukhov, commenting in 1997 on the role of the OSCE in an interview, said: “We do not monopolise the right to participate in the settlement of the conflict, we do not feel jealous of anyone. There is enough room for everyone in this noble cause.”²¹ Russian closely cooperated with the OSCE mission in Georgia and the UN monitoring mission in Georgia until 2008.

Russia also used international organisations as tool to legitimise its peacekeeping activity. As abovementioned, the deployment of Russian peacekeeping contingent in Abkhazia was based on a decision by the Council of CIS Heads of State.

In the mid-1990s, Russia was keen to facilitate a political agreement of abovementioned conflicts on the basis of territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova. This policy was based on the desire not to fuel separatist movements within Russia, especially in the North Caucasus. Moreover, at that time, Moscow did not perceive these conflicts as being elements of competition between Russia and the West. This can explain Moscow actions in terms of justice as impartiality (priority of human security, readiness to engage in operations in the region of the conflict, close cooperation with international institutions).

Russian strategy began to change in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Rising NATO — Russia

August 22, 1994. (In Russian). URL: <https://civil.ge/ru/archives/172171> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

²⁰ Memorandum of 1996 on measures to ensure security and strengthen mutual trust between the parties to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict // Electronic Fund of normative-technical and normative-legal information of the Consortium “Kodex”. May 16, 1996. (In Russian). URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1902534> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

²¹ Pastukhov B. There is a movement towards each other // *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. 1997. No. 88 (May 16). (In Russian).

tensions after the military operation in Yugoslavia and the EU's growing influence in Eastern Neighbourhood countries led Moscow to reevaluate its conflict resolution strategy. Georgia's aspiration to join NATO and the strengthening of pro-Western (and to certain extent — anti-Russian) political forces in Moldova were also assessed as elements of a wider anti-Russian shift inspired by the Western countries. From that point Moscow sought to use unresolved territorial conflicts as a tool to maintain the dependence of abovementioned countries (Arbatova, 2019, p. 93). Conceptually, this demonstrates a shift in Russia's understanding of justice from impartiality to mutual recognition, as well as the instrumentalization of conflicts in the post-Soviet space in order to assure the West to recognize the equality of relations, i.e. the Russia's great power status and crucial role in the post-Soviet space.

The Georgian offensive on South Ossetia in August 2008 prompted the Russia — Georgia military conflict and the subsequent recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Consequently, the status of Russian military contingent in these regions has changed. Moscow also blocked the prolongation of the OCSE and the UN missions in Georgia. Since then, Transnistria has remained the only case of a Russian peacekeeping mission in the CIS region in the strict meaning of the term 'peacekeeping.'

Evolution of the Russia's Approach to the Crisis Management in Transnistria

In the context of our study, the evolution of Moscow's approach to the conflict resolution in Transnistria is of particular interest. This issue can be analysed by comparing Primakov plan and Kozak memorandum.

The OSCE Summit in Istanbul on 8—19 November, 1999 linked the ratification of the adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) with the withdrawal of Russian troops from several CIS regions, in

particular, from the territory of Moldova, by the end of 2002.²² After that Moscow paid the highest possible attention to the Transnistrian settlement. Under the leadership of ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Evgeny Primakov, the Commission developed the concept of a "Common state" — the so-called Primakov plan. Russia proposed a fairly balanced project that took into account the interests of both sides of the conflict. In addition, the document laid down the possibility of partial internationalization of the peacekeeping mission, while maintaining Russian leadership. After the failure of the Primakov plan, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE presented a new settlement plan, the so-called Kiev document. This was the first and the last document that expressed the consolidated position of all mediators. Even after this document was rejected, Moscow sought to internationalise the conflict resolution efforts in 2002 by supporting the establishment of a new negotiation format — the so called 5+2 format (Moldova and Transnistria as parties of the conflict, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE as mediators, and the EU and the US as observers).

Taking into account geopolitical considerations (the development of a stable conventional arms control regime in Europe) and in the context of the positive dynamics of relations with the West, Russia pursued efforts for a political settlement of the Transnistria conflict, assuming the role of an honest broker and even exerting limited pressure on its client — Tiraspol (Devyatkov, 2012). Indeed, the Russian efforts might well be seen to include elements of justice as impartiality: support for the internationalization of the settlement process and linkage to elements of regional security governance. There were also some elements of justice as mutual recognition: attempts to develop open and equal dialog with all actors involved, the creation of deliberative security formats.

²² Istanbul Document // OSCE. November 19, 1999. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.osce.org/ru/mc/39573> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

The refusal of Western countries to ratify the adapted CFE Treaty placed geo strategic competition at the centre of Moscow's analysis. In this context, Moscow policy towards Moldova and the Transnistrian settlement was aimed at preventing both further NATO expansion and any move by Moldova towards Romania and European integration (Markedonov & Gushchin, 2016).

Unlike all previous Russian mediation efforts, Kozak memorandum was developed in an atmosphere of secrecy and in the absence of coordination with the OSCE (Devyatkov, 2010). On November 18, 2003, the initial draft of the Memorandum was submitted to the parties to the conflict and the OSCE.²³ A few days later, a second version of the Memorandum appeared.²⁴ This provided that the EU, the OSCE and Ukraine would provide political and economic guarantees to Moldova, while only Russia would provide military guarantees. The latter would be based on a bilateral agreement between Russia and Moldova on the deployment of a peacekeeping contingent. The Russian mediators deliberately avoided agreeing on the provisions on guarantees with other mediators and international organizations.

On November 24, 2003, the President of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, met with the US Ambassador Pamela Hyde Smith, and held telephone conversations with both OSCE Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and the EU High Representative for CFSP Javier Solana. They were unanimous that V. Voronin should not sign the Memorandum. V. Voronin duly refused to sign the Memorandum, pointing out that Moldova's aspiration for European integration necessitated the support for any peace plan of all major

European organisations foremost of the OSCE (Devyatkov, 2010).

There is no doubt that Russia's actions during the preparation of the Kozak Memorandum were unilateral, based on the principle of zero-sum game and aimed at obtaining maximum dividends from its own leadership. It aimed to achieve a final political settlement under the auspices of Russia, which in the end would make the presence of the Russian-led military peacekeeping contingent in Moldova inevitable. However, Western countries opposed the Memorandum for similar considerations, playing a zero-sum game and competing for influence over Moldova.

As a result, Moscow's approach to conflict resolution in this instance resonates greatly with that of justice as mutual recognition. But actions of the Western countries did not meet Moscow's aspirations for equality of great powers and due hearing, i.e. they did not take into account Moscow's priority interests. The growing geopolitical competition between Russia and the West has generated competition for leadership in resolving the Transnistrian conflict and determining Moldova's future. The external actors (Moscow, Brussels and Washington) had enough resources to block each other's efforts, but were unable to unilaterally conduct effective mediation.

Because of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, the conflict resolution process was stagnating further and was transforming into the crisis management dialogue.

Conclusion

Russia's understanding of international justice is based on Buchanan's (1990) model of reciprocity justice. From Moscow's point of view, international justice is a set of negotiated rules based on consensus. Obviously, this means a consensus among the great powers. A just global order is thus the result of a consensus among great powers; all other countries must, in accordance with Thucydides' Melian

²³ Russian Draft Memorandum on the Basic Principles of the State Structure of a United State in Moldova // RIA Novosti. November 16, 2003. (In Russian). URL: <https://ria.ru/20031116/1719495.html> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

²⁴ "Kozak Memorandum": The Russian plan for the unification of Moldova and Transnistria // IA Regnum. May 23, 2005. (In Russian). URL: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/458547.html> (accessed: 09.08.2022).

dialogue, “accept what they have to accept.”²⁵ A just regional order, in Moscow’s view, should be based on the consensus of regional powers and interested global powers; just conflict resolution is possible on the basis of a consensus of conflicting parties, which should be in line with preferences of engaged global and regional powers.

For Moscow, the resolving of any regional conflict was obviously part of the grand strategy of the country’s foreign policy. In this respect, for Moscow, the just cooperation of the great powers and the impact that the resolution of the regional conflict can have on the formation of a just international order were of crucial importance. The extent to which the outcome of the conflict was just for the conflicting parties was important, but of secondary importance. As Nadezhda Arbatova (2019) mentioned, Moscow was interested in equality with other actors more than in efficient conflict resolution.

Moscow’s engagement in conflict resolutions far from its borders was prompted by a desire to maintain equal status with other global powers. The strategy of conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space was inscribed in the broad context of relations with Western countries and has evolved as these relations have changed.

Russia’s activity in the conflict resolution in the post-Soviet space, after some fluctuations of the 1990s, generally corresponded in the

²⁵ Thucydides’ Melian dialogue. Excerpt from Thucydides’ “History of the Peloponnesian War” // HSE. 2017. (In Russian). URL: https://we.hse.ru/data/2017/12/29/1160703552/Melosskiy_dialog.pdf (accessed: 09.08.2022).

2000s — 2010s to the model of justice as mutual recognition. In particular, one should mention Moscow’s aspirations of interaction with other great powers on crises management, as well Moscow was ready to ignore the principle of territorial integrity if due hearing of the situation required. However, the absolute prioritization of national interests in the post-Soviet space led to a gradual transformation of the essence of the dialogue: for Moscow, the dialogue not about the conflict resolution, but about the recognition of Moscow’s right to dominate the process of crisis management in the region was important. Such an understanding of justice corresponded to Russian main interests in the region: to support stability in the region, to keep political leadership in the region, and to use this as another argument for ensure equality with other global actors.

The question of the relationship between normative considerations and national interests in foreign policy is extremely complex. It is obvious that the dominant understanding of international justice of the Russian elite was formed on the basis of the consolidated understanding of national interests. However, to answer the question of whether these normative ideas were a deep faith or just a rationalization of the strategy to maximize one’s own achievements, a comprehensive study of the operational code of politicians is required. Taking into account this limitation, the conducted research has demonstrated the relevance of the GLOBUS methodology and analytical scheme used for the study of Russia’s foreign policy.

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