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## Trump, Putin, and the OSCE

### *Introduction*

Since the time of the negotiation of the Helsinki Final Act between 1973 and 1975, the OSCE has largely been an institution where the neutral, non-aligned states and the “middle powers” of Europe play the most active role. These countries played an important role in brokering the text of the Helsinki Final Act, and in developing and expanding the normative foundations of a co-operative security regime in Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok. This role was especially important in introducing values based on security co-operation into the Cold War rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and between the two nuclear superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> However, the United States and Russia played a more active role in the CSCE/OSCE, especially after the end of the Cold War in 1990. Although they still ceded much of the political leadership to the middle powers, including the role of the Chairperson-in-Office and other key posts, the two largest powers contributed significantly to the budget of the OSCE, supplied personnel and resources to some of the largest field missions, and utilized the OSCE institutional structures as a venue for quiet negotiation on many issues of mutual concern. At the same time, as major powers, they have succeeded in preventing the OSCE from engaging in activities that one or both opposed, and in keeping the OSCE’s resources and political profile limited in comparison with the United Nations or, in the case of the US, with the NATO alliance. This limited co-operation continued throughout the decade of the 1990’s, but it began to fade after the turn of the millennium in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict and other issues that arose between the US and Russia, and co-operation declined further after the wars in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine from 2014. At times during this period, the attitude towards the OSCE was perhaps best characterized as “benign neglect”, in which the OSCE was increasingly seen as less relevant to the issues affecting the two larger powers, and in which unilaterally defined national interests superseded the commitment to furthering co-operative security.

By 2018, the OSCE was gradually assuming a less significant role in the foreign policies of either the US or Russia. The growing role of nationalism in the domestic politics of the two major powers, especially as represented by the two unique personalities who lead these two countries, namely Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, makes co-operative security in multilateral institutions like

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1 Cf. P. Terrence Hopmann, *From Helsinki I to Helsinki II? The Role of the Neutral and Nonaligned States in the OSCE*, in: Heinz Gärtner (ed.), *Engaged Neutrality: An Evolved Approach to the Cold War*, Lanham, MD, 2017, pp. 143-160.

the OSCE appear largely irrelevant. This contribution reflects the author's personal analysis of how the unusual and often bizarre relationship between these two powerful figures impacts the OSCE, and, for that matter, most multilateral institutions engaged in co-operative security. Both major powers are now led by very strong personalities, whose personal impact on the foreign policies of their countries is unmistakable. Their views of international relations have restored the traditional principles of strict realism in US-Russian relations, in which a narrow definition of the "national interest" prevails over any efforts to achieve co-operative outcomes across a wide range of issues, from trade to environmental policy, and especially the area of security policy. In this era, therefore, all multilateral institutions, including the OSCE, are viewed as largely irrelevant to managing the major issues of contemporary international relations.

I begin this essay with some general comments on the foreign policy of the Trump administration in the US, followed by a brief analysis of the Putin government in Russia, leading to an assessment of the ambiguous relationship between the two individuals and as well as between the two states that they lead. I conclude, then, with a brief assessment of the impact of these two leaders on their countries' policies (or lack thereof) towards the OSCE and their likely consequences for the future role of the OSCE.

### *Donald Trump and US Foreign Policy*

The inauguration of US President Donald Trump in January 2017 raised numerous questions about the commitment of his administration to multilateral international institutions, among them the OSCE. Written two years after Trump's election, this article runs the risk of being outdated by events that could occur prior to its publication, especially in the unprecedented and volatile environment that characterizes US politics in 2018, not least the possibility that Trump could be forced from office prior to the completion of his term either due to impeachment by Congress or resignation in the face of the many investigations that surround his election, business dealings, and covert relationships with Russia. Nonetheless, whether he serves out his term or is eventually replaced by Vice President Michael Pence, his administration's "America First" policy represents a significant departure from many of the main lines of US foreign policy since 1945.

President Trump largely defined the framework for his administration's foreign policy in his speech to the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2018:

[...] America will always choose independence and cooperation over global governance, control, and domination.

I honor the right of every nation [...] to pursue its own customs, beliefs, and traditions. The United States will not tell you how to live or work or worship.

We only ask that you honor our sovereignty in return. [...]

America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism.

Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance, but also from other, new forms of coercion and domination. [...]

Sovereign and independent nations are the only vehicle where freedom has ever survived, democracy has ever endured, or peace has ever prospered. And so we must protect our sovereignty and our cherished independence above all.<sup>2</sup>

Although Donald Trump is hardly the first US president, or the only national leader, to assert the rights of sovereign states, he has articulated his core beliefs in ways that differ from those of his predecessors. His argument maintains that sovereignty is absolute and that none of it may be transferred to international institutions in ways that limit sovereignty in order to enhance co-operation and serve the long-term interests of states that participate in those institutions. Encapsulated in his foreign policy slogan of his presidential campaign, “America First”, he has emphasized a view of global politics in which the relations among sovereign states are essentially zero-sum, in which any benefit granted to another state or institution somehow detracts from a state’s own self-interest. He made this point most clearly in a political rally in Houston, Texas, during the 2018 mid-term elections campaign:

You know what I am? I’m a nationalist, O.K.? [...] I’m a nationalist. It’s a word that hasn’t been used too much. Some people use it, but [sic] I’m very proud. I think it should be brought back.

Radical Democrats want to turn back the clock [to ...the] rule of corrupt, power-hungry globalists [...] You know what a globalist is? A globalist is a person who wants the globe to do well, frankly, not caring about our country so much. And you know what? We can’t have that.<sup>3</sup>

These and other similar remarks have also led to a political backlash within the US. One prominent retort to Trump’s Houston speech came from Michael McFaul, former US Ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama: “Does Trump know the historical baggage associated with this word, or is he

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2 Remarks by President Trump to the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY, 25 September 2018, at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-73rd-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-ny/>.

3 Cited in: Peter Baker, “Use That Word!”: Trump Embraces the “Nationalist” Label, *New York Times*, 23 October 2018, at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/us/politics/nationalist-president-trump.html>.

ignorant?”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the historical baggage cited by the president’s critics often refers to two ways in which terms such as “nationalist” and “America First” have been used in the past. The term “nationalist” has most often been used by white supremacists or “nationalists” to denote the superiority of the white race over peoples of colour, especially in the southern states of the US. “America First” more notably refers to the slogan adopted by the aviator Charles Lindbergh and his followers who advocated isolationism and sympathy with the Nazi movement in Germany in their opposition to US entry into World War II. Indeed, to some, its roots come from the Nazi programme of National Socialism. To his harshest critics, therefore, Trump’s references hark back to a history of racism and even fascism. Whatever the ideological origins may be, there can be little doubt that the Trump approach to foreign policy dismisses the role of “globalist” institutions and evokes a call for strict adherence to advancing US interests above those of any other country in an essentially Hobbesian world in which states must compete in all domains and in which “making America great again” not only implies raising US interests, but suppressing the relative role of other global political, military, and economic competitors.

This general attitude has carried over into many of Trump’s early foreign policy decisions. After two years in office he has, among other decisions, cancelled the negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, withdrawn from the Paris Agreement on climate change, withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, withdrawn the US from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), denounced the International Criminal Court (ICC), and criticized the European Union while strongly supporting Brexit. He has adamantly refused to criticize Russia’s President Putin about any differences, including the well-documented interference in the 2016 election or its role in the annexation of Crimea and its support for the separatist combatants in the Donbas region of Ukraine. He has surrounded himself with advisors who support his nationalist world view, including two “anti-globalist” ideologues in particular, Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, the latter of whom is reported to have been the primary author of his 2018 UN speech.

Trump’s disdain for internationalism is also clearly reflected in his choice of foreign policy advisors. His first National Security advisor, Lt. General Michael Flynn, served only 24 days, resigning after it was revealed that he had lied about unauthorized contacts during the presidential campaign with the Russian Ambassador in Washington on behalf of the Trump candidacy, attempting to undermine the Obama administration’s policies on Russia while they were still in office. He was followed by Lt. General Herbert Raymond McMaster, a West Point graduate and a combat veteran of the Persian Gulf and Iraq wars, who tried to keep the administration on an even keel during his 14 months in that office. He was dismissed by Trump in April 2018, in part

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4 Cited in: *ibid.*

because he had concluded publicly that there was incontrovertible evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, which, among other issues, put him in direct opposition to his boss. In April 2018 he was replaced by John Bolton, a well-known foreign policy “hawk”. Bolton served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs under President George H.W. Bush. Shortly after resigning from that position, he expressed very strong views about the UN at a 1994 conference of the World Federalist Association: “There is no United Nations. There is an international community that occasionally can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that’s the United States, when it suits our interests and when we can get others to go along.”<sup>5</sup> He also stated: “The Secretariat building in New York has 38 stories. If you lost ten stories today, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference.”<sup>6</sup> In spite of these views, he was granted a “recess appointment” as US Ambassador to the UN by President George W. Bush, but faced with strong opposition during confirmation hearings in the US Senate, he eventually withdrew from that position. His views expressed throughout his career thus coincided more closely with Trump’s nationalism and contempt for multilateral institutions than had been the case for his predecessor as National Security Advisor to the President.

Over at the State Department, Trump’s first Secretary of State Rex Tillerson focused on “down-sizing” the department rather than developing any consistent foreign policy priorities. Having spent his entire career as a business executive, his foreign policy experience was largely limited to negotiating energy contracts for Exxon-Mobile, including numerous negotiations on energy exploration with Russia. As Secretary of State, however, he behaved more like a corporate executive than a diplomat and foreign policy-maker. He proposed cutting the State Department budget, already miniscule when compared to the Department of Defense, by some 31 per cent, while cutting personnel by at least eight per cent. Many senior-level positions in both the department’s headquarters in Washington and ambassadors to posts overseas were left unfilled. As a result of the huge personnel gaps at the level immediately below the Secretary of State, policy-making largely fell to a coterie of advisors brought in from the conservative American Heritage Foundation.

This produced a significant decline in the morale of career State Department officials, and many senior officials resigned or retired earlier than planned in open disgust. Former Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns and former US Ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker, summarized the consequences of these actions in the *New York Times*: “This is not about belt tightening. It is a deliberate effort to deconstruct

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5 Cited in: Daniel W. Drezner, John Bolton is right about the United Nations, *FP*, 14 April 2015, at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2005/04/14/john-bolton-is-right-about-the-united-nations/>.

6 Cited in: Interview with Secretary Condoleezza Rice on NBC’s Meet the Press with Tim Russert, Washington, DC, 13 March 2005, *US Department of State, Archive*, at: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43345.htm>.

the State Department and the Foreign Service. [...] We are ringing the village bell of alarm because Mr. Trump's neglect of the State Department will harm our country at an already dangerous time."<sup>7</sup> Tillerson was eventually forced to resign, and he was replaced in April 2018 by Trump's CIA Director, Michael Pompeo, previously a four-term conservative Republican member of Congress from Kansas and a veteran of the US Army. Pompeo has restored some semblance of professionalism in the State Department, although the *Washington Post* reported that seven months after his arrival "nearly half of key posts at State remain empty."<sup>8</sup> He has also pursued a more hardline foreign policy on many issues, especially on relations with Russia and North Korea, which has often seemingly put him at odds with President Trump. In addition, Pompeo has done nothing to reverse the nationalist, ultra-realist framework that guides US foreign policy under President Trump.

While pursuing his "America First" foreign policy, which has considerable support among his base of political supporters, he remains overall an unpopular president for a majority of the US population, and his legitimacy is frequently questioned. Two years after his election, in November 2018 he saw the Republican Party lose 40 seats in the House of Representatives, giving the Democratic opposition a majority in that chamber while the Republicans remained in control in the Senate. According to polls taken at the time of these "midterm" elections, some 52 per cent of the US public disapproved of his performance as president, with only 42 per cent showing approval.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, he is the second president in recent history to assume his office despite losing the popular vote by some three million votes. Trump was elected in 2016 by slim majorities in three states with large numbers of votes in the electoral college, namely Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The electoral college is itself a product of a compromise at the time that the US Constitution was drafted in 1787. Advocates of strong federalism and states' rights won over those who favoured a stronger central government. In particular, the idea that states should be assigned electors in proportion to their representation in both houses of Congress was advocated by mostly rural southern states that feared the powers of a strong central government to abolish their cherished institution of slavery. In the electoral college, the winner in each state, no matter the size of their victory, receives all of the votes of each state's electors. The electoral

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7 Nicholas Burns/Ryan C. Crocker, Dismantling the Foreign Service, *The New York Times*, 27 November 2017, at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/27/opinion/dismantling-foreign-service-budget.html>.

8 Jackson Diehl, Mike Pompeo swaggers his way to failure, *The Washington Post*, 9 December 2018, at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/mike-pompeo-swaggers-his-way-to-failure/2018/12/09/0c7dd626-f977-11e8-8c9a-860ce2a8148f\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.05802301166b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/mike-pompeo-swaggers-his-way-to-failure/2018/12/09/0c7dd626-f977-11e8-8c9a-860ce2a8148f_story.html?utm_term=.05802301166b).

9 Cf. How Popular Is Donald Trump? *FiveThirtyEight*, 29 November – 2 December, accessed on 1 December 2018, at: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/politics/>. The poll numbers are updated regularly, but these ratios have not changed significantly throughout the first two years of the Trump presidency. All polls previous to the current one can be found at: [https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-approval-ratings/?ex\\_cid=rrpromo](https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-approval-ratings/?ex_cid=rrpromo).

college has largely become an anachronism, but it remains the law of the land as the US Constitution is very difficult to amend. Although there is no challenge to the fact of Trump's election on technical legal grounds, there is broad reason to doubt whether he can legitimately claim to have received a mandate to undo virtually all the policies, both domestic and international, of the Obama administration and of its immediate predecessors. This contrasts with his own self-proclaimed mandate to act by executive fiat.

A second, and perhaps more serious obstacle to the legitimacy of Trump's presidency involves the manner in which he was elected, especially the role played in the election by Russian engagement, both directly through contacts with many of his campaign advisers, and indirectly through manipulation of social media. At the time of writing, the alleged ties between the Trump campaign and Russia are the subject of investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mueller appears to be moving forward aggressively in an investigation of Trump's personal, family, and associates' links to Russian efforts to support Trump's election and, going back even further, to Trump's possible ties to Russian financial interests, both legal and criminal, that may have gained influence over his foreign policy priorities. This may go a long way to explaining his totally uncritical support for Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, and his often-repeated desire to improve relations with Russia while avoiding any overt criticism of Russia's role in Ukraine, Georgia, and Syria or even its alleged violation of relevant arms control agreements.

For the present, it is only necessary to emphasize that the legitimacy of Trump's election and his foreign policy priorities may well be put in greater doubt by the outcome of Mueller's investigation of his engagement with Russian interests. Focus has been placed on the role of his first campaign manager, Paul Manafort, previously political advisor to Ukraine's ousted President Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions, from which he apparently received huge financial remuneration. Other figures in his campaign had close connections with Russia, including members of his family who allegedly met with Russian operatives to try to find "dirt" on Hillary Clinton. The Mueller team has indicted twelve Russian alleged intelligence agents accused of interference in the 2016 US election, although none can be brought to trial unless they enter US territory. However, many close associates of Trump have also been indicted, charged with money laundering and other economic ties that might reveal illegal business activities and unlawful solicitation of Russian assistance in Trump's campaign for the presidency in 2016. Perhaps of even greater concern is the possibility, not yet demonstrated by any direct publicly disclosed evidence, that these activities might have made him vulnerable to blackmail by Russian intelligence services. If the Mueller investigation reveals evidence of such activity, this could readily make Trump susceptible to a charge of "high crimes and misdemeanors" as defined in the US Constitution, which constitutes grounds for impeachment. It is necessary to emphasize that

much of this has not been proven at the time of writing, but it is certainly within the range of possibility that the outcome of the Mueller investigation could reach conclusions that might justify impeachment or push Trump to resign before the 2020 presidential election. All of the investigations surrounding the Trump administration, therefore, carry significant implications regardless of their eventual outcome. Even though Trump governs with a swagger that might seem to suggest his great confidence in his leadership, it is at least plausible that his self-promotion may be a convenient cover for the uncertainty that affects his legitimacy and possible longevity in office.

### *Trump, Putin, and US-Russian Relations in 2018*

Throughout the presidential campaign in 2016, candidate Trump advocated improved relations with Russia, without suggesting any details of how this might be achieved. During the campaign, he made several references to ending sanctions imposed on Russia for its policy in Ukraine, without asking for any *quid pro quo* from Russia. Curiously, this occurred at a time when he was negotiating with senior Russian officials about the possibility of constructing a “Trump Tower” in Moscow, which included an offer of a penthouse apartment for President Putin valued at some 50 million US dollars. He frequently offered praise of President Putin as a strong leader, and he seemed to focus his efforts for improved relationships on the personal relationship between the two leaders. This no doubt reflected his business experience in which transactional deals between two individuals constituted his *modus operandi*. At the same time, he was clearly naïve about the difficulty of translating a personal relationship between two leaders of powerful states into actual policy changes. He largely disregarded the reality that most foreign policy and military professionals in the US opposed removing these sanctions in the absence of a resolution of the Ukraine conflict. In Congress, ironically, his position forced many leading Democratic senators and representatives, who normally would have favoured improved relations with Russia on issues such as arms control and combating climate change, to be highly critical of Putin and Russia, not only on substantive grounds, but in part for domestic political reasons in order to attack Trump.

The two presidents have held several meetings, both on the margins of larger conferences and in bilateral sessions. The most prominent of these was a bilateral summit in Helsinki in July 2018, in which the two presidents reported positive results in general terms and spoke positively about one another, with Trump emphasizing that Putin was a strong leader, a style he greatly admires. However, Trump failed to prepare for this meeting by familiarizing himself with the complex issues in the relationship between the two countries, and he was accompanied in the meeting only by a translator, without any expert who could take notes. As a result, months after the meeting there is no evidence



that any of the issues discussed were followed up in any serious way (a pattern also evidenced in his meeting with North Korea's President Kim Jong-un on the issue of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula). Trump appears to approach all of these meetings as transactions rather than as complex issues to be negotiated. He demonstrates a "black and white" view of foreign relations, in which other states are either "friends" or "enemies." He is incapable of distinguishing between common interests shared by the US and Russia on issues such as arms control and environmental policy and issues about which serious differences exist such as Russian policy in its "near abroad", especially in Ukraine, and its apparent intervention in democratic elections in the US and several Western and Central European states, generally in support of right-wing political parties. Increasingly, however, there has been a growing disconnect between Trump's personal admiration for Putin and refusal to offer any criticism of Russian behaviour in international affairs, and the attitudes of high-level officials in Trump's administration, many of whom have been long-term critics of Russian policy and of President Putin. As a result, there is little, if any, evidence that this apparently warm relationship between the two leaders has had any significant impact on the basic policies of either country towards the other. Indeed, many critics, including some within the Trump administration, apparently fear that Trump has been manipulated by Putin, believing that he has taken advantage of the US President's naivety in conducting important international negotiations on complex issues on a purely interpersonal basis.

A major factor in President Trump's relationship with Vladimir Putin is his admiration for the latter's authoritarian tendencies reflected in the Russian leader's approach to "managed democracy". In various ways, Putin has assured his longevity as the country's leader far into the foreseeable future. Having advanced his roles as president and alternately as prime minister since 1999, he has managed to change the Russian Constitution to extend the president's term in office to six years, allowing him to be re-elected in 2018 and thereby remain in power at least until 2024. He has presented himself as a leader who has "made Russia great again," having in many ways reversed the decline of the first post-Soviet decade by improving the economy (largely based on the energy sector) and strengthening internal security, while granting political access to oligarchs who are loyal to him and marginalizing his political opponents. He has also wrapped his identity in the traditions of Russian Orthodox Christianity, symbolized by the statute constructed outside the Kremlin of the Viking ruler of medieval Kievan Rus', Volodymyr, who adopted Orthodox Christianity from Constantinople in 988, and whose son, Yaroslav, brought Christianity to Russia at the beginning of the eleventh century. In Moscow, the name appears in its contemporary Russian version as Vladimir, allowing Putin to claim that history has come full circle after the debacle of communism and of Boris Yeltsin's post-Soviet Russia to a restoration of its greatness under the guidance of the contemporary leader named Vladimir. In his address to the

Duma after resuming the Russian presidency in 2012, Putin literally laid personal claim to the heritage of Vladimir as the fulfilment of a millennial cycle.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, Putin also gave Russia a spiritual and transcendent place in world history that lay claim to a civilization without borders that unites all lands of Slavic Christianity under Russian leadership. However, such civilizational arguments, founded on nationalism and patriotism above all else, inevitably pose an oppositional relationship to other civilizations.

In this light, it appears that Presidents Trump and Putin share an essentially similar view of international relations based upon a highly competitive international system and an ideology that values both “America First” and “Russia First” in the implementation of their foreign policies. Thus, their similar world views can incorporate both a basis for positive relations within a world in which the national interests of the great powers must take priority over international co-operation to improve security or to advance shared values, while they still compete to protect and extend their “spheres of influence” in a contemporary game of *realpolitik*.

Furthermore, Putin has made no secret of his support for the presidency of Donald Trump in the US. At a session of Valdai Club in Sochi in 2018, Putin suggested that Trump’s re-election in 2020 would free him to normalize relations with Russia and end US sanctions and other hostile behaviours, which motivates him to try to maintain contact with the US President, even if it fails to produce meaningful results in the short term. As Dmitri Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Center writes: “To Putin, Trump represents a new departure in U.S. foreign policy. What Putin considers positive for Russia is the disruption Trump is creating for the global system that the United States has underwritten since the end of the Cold War. Trump is replacing universalism with a version of great-power politics that is not focused in promoting U.S.-favored values. To be sure, it is a policy of strength, but it is clearly preferable to the policy of values, since it rests on a transactional approach to international affairs and allows for compromise.”<sup>11</sup> In short, Putin supports Trump precisely for his role in undermining international institutions and traditional alliance relationships that have been at the foundation of US foreign policy since 1945.

### *Implications for the OSCE*

The analysis above suggests some rather dismal implications for the OSCE. No one would suggest that the OSCE has been a primary institutional framework for the conduct of foreign policy for either the United States or the Russian Federation since the end of the Cold War. In the case of the US, until

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10 Cf. Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*, New York 2018, pp. 63-66.

11 Dmitri Trenin, *Why Putin Isn’t Sweating the Midterms*, *Politico Magazine*, 6 November 2018, at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/06/why-putin-isnt-sweating-the-midterms-222224>.

recently the primary emphasis was placed on NATO, but even support for NATO has declined since the arrival of the Trump administration in Washington. Similarly, over the past three decades, Russia has focused primarily on the recovery of its own economic and military strength, as well as establishing its influence in the lost republics from the Soviet period, that is in its “near abroad”. It has also sought to build its relative strength by weakening its historic rivals in the West, sowing chaos and disorder and undermining confidence in democratic institutions, in part to compensate for its own loss of empire.

Throughout most of the post-Cold War period, the United States has maintained a low profile in the OSCE while contributing resources and some of its best diplomatic personnel, especially to the OSCE field operations. At the same time, it has consistently sought to keep the operating budget of the OSCE low, to limit the power of the Secretary General, and to avoid granting the OSCE any significant legal personality. It has consistently privileged its commitments to NATO and even to the UN over the OSCE. Under previous administrations, this was characterized by passive support without active initiation of new proposals. However, under the Trump administration, the OSCE has been marginalized even further, and it is unlikely that senior administration officials pay any serious attention to the activities in Vienna; it is doubtful that Trump would even know what the Organization is if asked about it. The Trump administration has also significantly diminished support for human rights and the rights of persons belonging to minorities as a fundamental principle of US foreign policy, thereby also implying reduced support for an important component of the OSCE *acquis* that focuses on these issues, as well as OSCE institutions such as the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

For the first time ever, the US has not sent an ambassador-level representative to the OSCE. Since August 2017, the US has been represented in Vienna by Harry Kamian, a 24-year veteran of the US Foreign Service. As a career diplomat, he fortunately represents a professional rather than political role in the US Mission to the OSCE. However, in contrast to ambassadors who are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, his primary point of reference is to the mid-level bureaus in the State Department. Unlike politically appointed ambassadors, who often have personal connections to the President, his access to higher levels of decision-making in Washington, especially to the White House, is likely very limited. Furthermore, as a career diplomat, he has served in posts in multiple world regions, but the only OSCE participating State in which he has served in his career was Turkey. Therefore, he inevitably comes to this post with limited exposure to the history and traditions of the OSCE, and little deep knowledge of the many issues involving security co-operation in Europe. On one level, this may enable the OSCE to

escape some of the scorn directed by White House officials to other institutions, including the UN, NATO, and the EU, because the OSCE is far less visible to senior officials in Washington, especially to those in the White House. This enables the US Mission to conduct low-level “business as usual” in Vienna, but in the event of a crisis such as the one that occurred in Ukraine in early 2014, it is unlikely that Washington policy-makers would look to the OSCE to play a major role in managing the situation, or that the US Mission to the OSCE would be able to exert much influence on a US response.

Similarly, although Russia has not prevented the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine from operating in the country, it has shown little support for the role of the OSCE, including the effort to enforce the cease-fire provisions of the Minsk Agreements and to move towards a resolution of the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Nor have Russian officials expressed much interest in expanding OSCE-based arms control and confidence-building measures, especially in the regions where NATO and Russian forces confront one another directly in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. Just as Russia bypassed the OSCE by taking unilateral action in Crimea in 2014, so it is unlikely to make use of the OSCE mechanisms for conflict management in any future crises. Very much like the US, Russia asserts the supremacy of its sovereign right to act in its own security interests as it unilaterally defines them. Its nationalism, as promoted by its powerful leader, eschews dependence on supranational institutions to serve its security and foreign policy goals. Like the US under Trump, Putin’s Russia also has little interest in advancing the OSCE agenda on human rights, freedom of the media, and the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

In conclusion, the CSCE/OSCE was founded largely as a normative institution designed to promote co-operative security, even among competing states, and after the end of the Cold War its institutional structures were strengthened to enable it to carry out these value-based functions more effectively in a more benign environment. Without sidelining national sovereignty altogether, the foundations of the OSCE, like all similar international institutions, require states to relinquish a little sovereignty in order to gain the security and prosperity that international co-operation can provide. By 2018, however, these values have largely disappeared in the ideas that dominate foreign policy decision-making in the United States and the Russian Federation. They have been replaced by a transactional set of relationships that seek agreements based on narrowly defined national interests. They see diplomacy as an activity between powerful heads of state, only minimally limited by their own policy-making elites and largely unconstrained by the complex networks of multilateral institutions that embody both collective values and shared expertise.

As a result, the OSCE likely faces some serious challenges over at least the next few years, and probably further into the future. It can no longer depend on the active support and co-operation of the two most powerful states that

participate in the OSCE, the US and Russia, as catalysts for new initiatives or even to maintain traditional co-operative policies. At times, both states may even become disruptors rather than supporters of a co-operative security order. As a result, the OSCE is likely to have to focus on maintaining “business as usual”, trying to operate “below the radar screen” of the opponents of multilateralism and globalism in Washington and Moscow, as well as in an increasing number of European states. As in its early years, the OSCE is likely to have to depend on many smaller states, many of them formally neutral, that have long supported the CSCE/OSCE, such as Switzerland, Finland, Austria, reinforced by more powerful European states such as Germany and France, in order to survive through this period of renewed nationalism and hyper-realism. In the final analysis, the institution is very much worth preserving, and we can only hope that the OSCE region rediscovers the norms and values that inspired the Helsinki process before it is too late.