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AGGRESSION POLITICAL CRISIS INTERESTS INTEREST MEMORANDUM OSCE ITALY CONFLICT RUSSIA SECURITY CONFLICT UKRAINE PRINCIPLES TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY CONFLICT SECURITY OBLIGATIONS

# HELSINKI

# PRINCIPLES

INTEREST MEMORANDUM OSCE UKRAINE SOVEREIGNTY BUDAPEST AGREEMENT EXPECTATIONS TREATIES

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## Helsinki Principles

### Editors

Dr. Hanna Shelest  
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

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### Contacts:

website: <http://ukraine-analytica.org/>  
e-mail: [Ukraine\\_analytica@ukr.net](mailto:Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net)  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica>  
Twitter: [https://twitter.com/UA\\_Analytica](https://twitter.com/UA_Analytica)

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# POLICY VERSUS POLITICS WITHIN ITALY'S OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP IN 2018

Dr. Victoria Vdovychenko  
Kyiv Borys Grinchenko University

*The paper presents a study of Italy's OSCE Chairmanship in 2018, in particular how Italy is trying to navigate its OSCE priorities while complying with its own political interests. In 2018, Italy received a chance to check whether it can play the role of a mediator in the dialogue between the West and the East. The focus of the article is within a comparative analysis between the Mediterranean region and Ukraine, prioritized in Italy's agenda for 2018. What is interesting here is how much the statements about maintaining peace and security in Europe could have been and are realized given that some of the OSCE participating countries – Italy and the Russian Federation – were in preparation for elections in 2018.*

## OSCE: In Search of Arguments

In a world where growing dangers affect Europe, security is becoming the touchstone of a debate. The future of the OSCE, as a pan-European organization aiming to achieve lasting peace, prosperity, and stability in Europe, remains questionable given the new challenges.

The need to build bridges united countries in 1975, when in the format of “conference diplomacy” the countries wanted to overcome the Cold War impact and renew a peaceful coexistence of the West and the East. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe proved to serve as a peaceful platform when war was a real “can-do” option, in addition to the concentration of nuclear weapons as well as other conventional arms.

Transformed into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

in the early 1990s, it remained unique due to the fact that prevention of conflicts remained its central component as indicated in the Helsinki Final Act. The Helsinki principles presented a certain compromise between the Western and Eastern interests at the time, having its *raison d'être* in serving as a dialogue platform between them during the Cold War. Moreover, still in 1975 the Final Act was pivotal for principles promoting security in Europe, being “motivated by the political will, in the interest of peoples, to improve and intensify their relations and to contribute in Europe to peace, security, justice and cooperation”.<sup>1</sup>

As a rule, the priorities of OSCE Chairmanship concern the dimensions or “baskets” of the Helsinki Process: political and security, economic and scientific, human dimension and environmental protection. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that the “security concept” nowadays sees a spectrum

<sup>1</sup> Helsinki Final Act, OSCE, p. 2 [<https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act?download=true>].

wider than an absence of military threats to states or regimes, also involving such issues as human rights, democracy, and protection of national or other minorities as contributions to human and societal security.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, through their lenses, the ten Final Act principles recognized the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms as a precondition for security and peace. Moreover, they served to confirm the inviolability of borders and territorial integrity of states. Being accountable to citizens for the respect of its norms, the OSCE was proclaimed a “regional organization” in the sense of the UN Charter. In reality, it means that the OSCE has a unique mandate for numerous peace activities and security protection in Europe. In such a capacity, the OSCE is being viewed as the regional organization to be “first addressed” in order to prevent and settle the disputes in Europe as determined by Article 53 of the UN Charter.<sup>3</sup>

### Italy’s OSCE Chairmanship at a Glance

Italy was approved for the OSCE’s rotating Chairmanship in 2018, supported by the “OSCE Troika” represented by Austria (2017) and Slovakia (2019).<sup>4</sup> The functions of the OSCE chairperson-in-office are performed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, namely Angelino Alfano until 01 June 2018. However, the country had elections, which had an impact on the OSCE Chairmanship



***In 2018, Italy received a chance to check whether it can play the role of a mediator in the dialogue between the West and the East***

agenda implementation. Angelino Alfano had informed that he would not run for the cabinet and it meant in political terms that during Italy’s Chairmanship it has faced chairman-in-office rotation.

Enzo Moavero Milanesi was appointed Italy’s foreign minister after a new “yellow-green” government was formed following the 04 March elections.<sup>5</sup> However, it is still difficult to evaluate his steps as a Chairman-in-office due to the shortness of time and immense work of his ministry.

Italian slogan for the OSCE 2018 Chairmanship is three key words – “dialogue, participation, responsibility”. As Ambassador of Italy to the OSCE Alessandro Azzoni says, “The OSCE is a kind of theatre. Italy forms the stage, but the participating states [act on] it”.<sup>6</sup> It means that the priorities presented on the security scene will address numerous issues and search for solutions to various challenges and long-standing conflicts, in particular for: Nagorny Karabakh, Georgia, Transnistria, and Ukraine. However, how the OSCE various regional actors should effectively interact

<sup>2</sup> B. Moller, *European Security: The Role of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, Working Paper 30, Regional and Global Axes of Conflict, February 2008, p. 16 [<http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csrc-working-papers-phase-two/wp30.2-european-security-and-the-osce.pdf>].

<sup>3</sup> B. Moller, *European Security: The Role of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, Working Paper 30, Regional and Global Axes of Conflict, February 2008, p. 5 [<http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csrc-working-papers-phase-two/wp30.2-european-security-and-the-osce.pdf>].

<sup>4</sup> *Italy’s 2018 OSCE Chairmanship: Priorities and Programme*, OSCE [<https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/priorities-2018>].

<sup>5</sup> *Italy’s 2018 OSCE Chairmanship*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation [[https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/politica\\_estera/osce/la-presidenza-italiana-dell-osce.html](https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/politica_estera/osce/la-presidenza-italiana-dell-osce.html)].

<sup>6</sup> M. Pugliese, *L’Italia ha assunto la presidenza di turno dell’Osce: immigrazione, sicurezza e terrorismo restino priorità (Italy Receives OSCE Chairmanship: Migration, Security and Terrorism Remain the Priority)*, “Huffington Post” [[https://www.huffingtonpost.it/matteo-pugliese/litalia-ha-assunto-la-presidenza-di-turno-dellosce-immigrazione-sicurezza-e-terrorismo-restino-priorita\\_a\\_23330903/](https://www.huffingtonpost.it/matteo-pugliese/litalia-ha-assunto-la-presidenza-di-turno-dellosce-immigrazione-sicurezza-e-terrorismo-restino-priorita_a_23330903/)].

remains a conceptual and practical dilemma especially in 2018.

In general, the issue of “protracted conflicts”, the security of the Mediterranean region, and the challenges of migration, which include the fight against human trafficking and all forms of discrimination, are all the main priorities of the Italian Chairmanship in the OSCE during 2018. This was stated by Italian Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano in Vienna on 11 January 2018 during the OSCE Permanent Council. Countering trafficking networks, supporting the protection of victims, and strengthening cooperation with the Mediterranean and Asian partners for cooperation will be at the core of Italy’s 2018 strategy.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, Italy has already made steps to address a new rising challenge for the OSCE countries – foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) who are returning or relocating from conflict zones. Italy supported the initiative to search for legal efforts to criminalize FTF activities listed in UNSCR 2178 (2014), to address the terrorism-organized crime nexus, as well target the terrorist networks’ disruption by developing an analysis of the ICT use by terrorists.<sup>8</sup>

Within the first politico-military “basket” of the OSCE, Italy paid attention to the OSCE Structured Dialogue, which was successfully launched under the leadership of German Ambassador to the OSCE Eberhard Pohl. It is a format to search for possibilities

to overcome divergences that marked European security in the previous periods. Conventional arms control was also touched upon during the first half of the Italian Chairmanship. Entering into its second half, the responses to these issues, hopefully, will be presented at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Milan at the end of 2018.

Italy continued to work on the economic and environmental dimension in line with the Austrian and German chairmanships (2016-2017). In such a way, Italy wanted to support economic progress and security advancement via human capital, innovation, and good and responsible governance.<sup>9</sup> One of the events, the 26th Economic and Environmental Forum, was conducted in Venice (24-25 May 2018) in order to become a major meeting-cycle to talk with the business and academic communities about economic and environmental issues.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Italy would like to prioritize the third, “human” dimension of the OSCE. In this regard, it advocates for respect of fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Italy focuses on the fight against corruption in all of its forms that “undermines trust between citizens and the state”. Towards this end, Alfano announced the appointment of Paola Severino, former Italian minister of justice, as a special representative on this issue.

At the same time, Italy should think how to continue to enhance cooperation with other

<sup>7</sup> OSCE 2016-2017 Report, p. 13 [<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/360796?download=true>].

<sup>8</sup> The Reverse Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs): Challenges for the OSCE Area and Beyond, OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference, 10-11 May 2018, Rome [<https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/377557?download=true>].

<sup>9</sup> Italy’s 2018 OSCE Chairmanship, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation [[https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/politica\\_estera/osce/la-presidenza-italiana-dell-osce.html](https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/politica_estera/osce/la-presidenza-italiana-dell-osce.html)].

<sup>10</sup> Closing Remarks of the Ambassador Vuk Žugić, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities at the 2nd Preparatory Meeting of the 26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, OSCE [<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/382495?download=true>].

<sup>11</sup> Italy’s 2018 OSCE Chairmanship, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation [[https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/politica\\_estera/osce/la-presidenza-italiana-dell-osce.html](https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/politica_estera/osce/la-presidenza-italiana-dell-osce.html)].

security organizations operating in Europe (the EU, NATO, and the UN) in order to be supported given the financial constraints, on the one hand, and the necessity to advocate for professional exchanges opting for synergy, on the other. In such a way, Italy could support the OSCE in its closer cooperation dynamics.

It is worth mentioning that financially, in 2018 Italy remains the third contributor to the OSCE's budget, representing a quota of 9.3% contributing to the OSCE administrative expenses and a quota of 11% for the OSCE field operations. Moreover, Italy additionally provides support for those Italians who work within the OSCE as well as in the ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) election observation missions.

### **Mediterranean Region: Italy's Dividend First**

One of such "synergy responses" is a focus on a closer cooperation with Mediterranean partners and within the Mediterranean region. The idea of developing an ambitious strategic plan for the Mediterranean region is not new for Italy. Therefore, it is common knowledge that Italy will make more efforts to address the challenges in the Mediterranean region, which traditionally shapes its strategic interests. Thus, it will continue to play its role as the Mediterranean countries' protector within the OSCE. Italy started to chair the OSCE Contact Group on the Mediterranean in 2017 and continues to implement the elaborated Action Plan for the Mediterranean region.

Starting from January 2018, Italy continues to underline that the OSCE's original *raison d'être* was effectively broadened. According to the then OSCE chairperson-in-office, Angelino Alfano, the OSCE has to become a Mediterranean "bridge builder" and, in such a way, complement the Eurasian dimension, covering the issues of migration, extremism, and terrorism.

"Helsinki for the Mediterranean" – that is how the then Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni called the OSCE community to draw attention to the problems of illegal migration, refugee flows, and other security challenges. Consequently, Italy seeks to highlight the priority of the Mediterranean debate: from the contact group to the Permanent Council – the OSCE decision-making body. However, here we hear the undisputed criticism from the United States and Russia of such an Italian lobby.

"The Mediterranean dimension is complementary, not an alternative, to the Eurasian dimension of the OSCE," said Minister Alfano, pointing in particular to the migration crisis. "We are determined to address this challenge not only from the point of view of security but also through combating discrimination, promoting pluralism, including intercultural and inter-religious dialogue that underpins peace and security." Accordingly, such a political dimension of the dialogue with Italy encompasses the implementation of the long-term prospect of an "enhanced Mediterranean partnership" – from the Persian Gulf to the Sahel (Africa).

Italy's second ambition is to promote the appointment of the OSCE Special Representative for the Mediterranean in order to counter-balance the role of Pascal Allizard as the Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs. This new position will increase the significance of the countries of the Mediterranean partnership and at the same time make its decisions more politically influential. For this purpose, Italy's desire is seen as a way to improve trust and security in a region that is facing permanent danger and the threat of terrorism.

Due to the efforts of Italy and a number of other partners, the OSCE managed to introduce a new training project to combat human trafficking within migration routes

at the Centre of Excellence of Police Units (CoESPU) in Vicenza, Italy. The ability to effectively respond with such a practical and result-oriented initiative proved Italy's ability to introduce novelties to the OSCE.<sup>12</sup>

The period of instability, characterized by multidirectional challenges and, most notably, unpredictability, makes us think that the risk of tension in the Middle East, the Gulf, and Asia will only intensify also in the other OSCE dimensions. Therefore, Italy promotes the idea that combined efforts of policymakers and academia are needed to address current challenges facing the OSCE activities within the economic and environmental pillars. Italy advanced scientific insights to the evidence-based discussion during the meetings of the 26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, conducted in Venice on 24-25 May 2018. The outcomes stipulate that human capital, as well as investment policies, should be of utmost importance for the further sustainable economic development of the MENA region.<sup>13</sup>

The Mediterranean dimension works smoothly at other dimensions' level, especially what concerns youth engagement. "Youth and the Mediterranean" conferences became a normal practice for Italy to support. Conceived as an opportunity to address a number of strategic and thematic issues from the standpoint of MENA youth,

the events engage the participation of outstanding young scholars and activists from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia as well as other countries<sup>14</sup> and their OSCE Youth special representatives.<sup>15</sup>

One of the innovative approaches that Italy tried to address was presented in an attempt to unite in a genuine manner all major international organizations dealing with current challenges: migration, digitalization, and language policies. It was one of the steps to present the idea of a joint work of the OSCE, Council of Europe, and the United Nations. "To respond to these new challenges is essential for effective conflict prevention," emphasized the OSCE High Commissioner Lamberto Zannier, marking the 20th anniversary of the Oslo Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).<sup>16</sup>

Italy's new approach to revive the OSCE talks at the level of ambassadors happened during the two-day "Ambassadorial Retreat" in Trieste (8-9 June 2018), gathering 41 OSCE participating states and four partners for cooperation. Italy welcomed these 41 ambassadors and a dozen officials who arrived from Vienna. "The meeting in Trieste is important for us to identify the areas, in which the OSCE can do something in the Mediterranean without overlapping with other international organizations, including

<sup>12</sup> *OSCE 2016-2017 Report*, p. 13  
[<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/360796?download=true>].

<sup>13</sup> *IIASA at the 2nd Preparatory Meeting of the 26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum*, IIASA  
[<http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/about/events/180525-OSCE.html>].

<sup>14</sup> A. Dessi, *Youth and the Mediterranean: Exploring New Approaches to Dialogue and Cooperation*, IAI, February 2017  
[<http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1703.pdf>].

<sup>15</sup> "Matteo Pugliese was appointed as Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Youth and Security by Austria in 2017, and has been reappointed by Italy in 2018. Together with his colleagues, he advises the Chairperson-in-Office on youth policy issues and countering violent extremism" [in:] *Matteo Pugliese*, OSCE  
[<https://www.osce.org/node/298591>].

<sup>16</sup> *OSCE, UN, Council of Europe and Experts Explore Challenges of Digitalization, Migration and Gender for Developing Language Policies at Event in Oslo*, OSCE, 01 June 2018  
[<https://www.osce.org/hcnm/383274>].



in the management of flows and security, not just migrants,” informed Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni, vice-president of the OSCE Permanent Council.<sup>17</sup>

However, there have been a number of challenges for the Mediterranean region during Italy’s OSCE Chairmanship. One of them is connected with Italy’s new governmental leadership, which opts for opposing migration talks. The newly appointed minister of interior, Matteo Salvini, has already asked NATO to help dealing with migration flows and addressed NATO Secretary General with such a request during his official visit to Rome (09 June 2018). It is still unclear whether the new government will change Italy’s agenda within the OSCE Chairmanship.

### **Ukraine: Italy’s Hard Landing in Reality**

The results addressing the Ukrainian challenges were low within Italy’s OSCE Chairmanship. The year 2014 became the saviour for the OSCE’s need to reaffirm building bridges between the West and the Russian Federation. The Russian military intervention in Ukraine and the subsequent illegal annexation of Crimea raised concerns about violation of the OSCE’s fundamental principles: the inviolability of borders, respect for the territorial integrity of states, and refraining from threat of violence. The Crimea and Donbas crises became a litmus paper to show that hopes for Russia to be changed politically and geopolitically are simply vain, revealing that Russia’s policy is always nuanced and standing more on the hidden political actions inside the country.

These modalities became crucial for the OSCE to remain an essential vehicle in order to provide stability in the region. Its response within a new field mission marked the OSCE’s remarkable comeback. However, the Normandy Format (Germany, France, Russia, and Ukraine) was outside the OSCE but played a crucial role to manage the crisis. A special role was due to Germany being a member of the “OSCE Troika” in 2015-2017, linking the OSCE and the Normandy. As for 2018, there is no more such a link between the Normandy Format and the OSCE.<sup>18</sup> Italy reaffirmed that it would work to “intensify negotiations within the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group”; however, due to political elections in both the Russian Federation and Italy, this process could not be fully implemented.

One of the first Italy’s Chairmanship steps was to prolong the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine that was to run out on 31 March 2018. As a result, the Italian Chairmanship reappointed the Special Representative in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik. Italy has repeatedly emphasized that the creation of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in March 2014 was an exceptional example of collective multilateral efforts to peacefully resolve conflicts.

Italy highlighted the priority of giving full political support to efforts to find a solution to the Ukrainian crisis. The Minsk agreements established an uneasy and precarious truce, which is being frequently violated. Angelino Alfano was able to witness it during his OSCE Chairmanship visit to

<sup>17</sup> *Mediterraneo e migrazioni i temi dell’Osce*, “Gelocal”, 08 June 2018 [http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2018/06/09/news/mediterraneo-e-migrazioni-i-temi-dell-osce-1.16945231].

<sup>18</sup> C. Nunlist, *Reviving Dialogue and Trust in the OSCE in 2018*, CSS Background Papers, 2018, p. 7 [http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/N%C3%BCnlist-121818-BackgroundPaperOSCEin2018.pdf].



***In the view of the OSCE's decisions spectrum, the fact remains: There is no more a common view on the evolution of Europe's security since 1990 within the OSCE***

Donbas (31 January 2018) and emphasized that “it is an unacceptable situation in the centre of Europe”.<sup>19</sup> Back in 2017, Italian Foreign Minister A. Alfano in his statement at the presentation of the program for the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for 2018 emphasized, “On the one hand, this crisis has called into question the very principles on which the OSCE is based. On the other hand, however, it has demonstrated – once and for all – how much the world needs the OSCE to solve this problem”.<sup>20</sup>

In the view of the OSCE's decisions spectrum, the fact remains: There is no more a common view on the evolution of Europe's security since 1990 within the OSCE. From one side, different perceptions within the OSCE participating states made an impact on the logic of its decision-making process. At the same time, from the other side, one of the important features to understand the nature of the OSCE decision making is that it does not result in the adoption of formal treaties or other traditional sources of international law, but elaborates political, and not legally binding, decisions and documents.<sup>21</sup> Until now, a majority of the OSCE participating states,

the US in particular, tried to maintain the OSCE's flexible and non-bureaucratic “status quo”, not transforming it into a full-fledged organization with its own charter and legal personality. Consequently, participating states make political commitments that remain just commitments. Moreover, joint OSCE efforts will be continuously hampered until the present cycle of the “cold war”-type hostility between Russia and the West continues.

Frankly speaking, neither the Italian chairmanship nor the OSCE in general are to address effectively the conflict in and around Ukraine in 2018 or to mediate efficiently in the overwhelming conflict between the West and Russia. Driven by consensus, the OSCE would need a true political will of all 57 OSCE participants.

Meanwhile, some of the OSCE instruments, such as the Informal Working Group (IWG), continue to address the Ukrainian challenges. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the EU address to the IWG in Vienna (06-07 June 2018), pointing out the importance of launching the Structural Dialogue due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea<sup>22</sup>.

However, the general OSCE response to Ukraine's challenges can be also explained by the coincidence with the OSCE institutional crisis. According to an OSCE expert, the organization is far from certain in order to produce a “remarkable recovery” or effective responses.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, no creative

<sup>19</sup> Клімкін і новий голова ОБСЄ Альфано побували на Донбасі (Klimkin and the New Head of the OSCE Alfano Visited Donbas), “Gordon”, 31 January 2018 [<http://gordonua.com/ukr/news/war/klimkin-i-novij-glava-obsje-alfano-pobuvali-na-donbasi-229636.html>].

<sup>20</sup> Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Angelino Alfano, at the 1155th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Presentation of the Programme of the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for 2018, 20 July 2017, OSCE official website [<https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/332831?download=true>].

<sup>21</sup> O. Herman, J. Wouters, *The OSCE as a Case of Informal International Lawmaking?* Working Paper No. 192, December 2017, p. 17 [[https://ghum.kuleuven.be/ggs/publications/working\\_papers/2017/wp192hermanwouters](https://ghum.kuleuven.be/ggs/publications/working_papers/2017/wp192hermanwouters)].

<sup>22</sup> EU Statement on the Structured Dialogue, European Union on OSCE 69th Joint FSC/PC Meeting Vienna, 06 June 2018, p. 1 [[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/69th\\_joint\\_osce\\_fsc\\_pc\\_eu\\_statement\\_on\\_the\\_structured\\_dialogue.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/69th_joint_osce_fsc_pc_eu_statement_on_the_structured_dialogue.pdf)].

<sup>23</sup> W. Zellner, *Old and New Challenges for the OSCE*, [in:] OSCE 2016 Yearbook, p. 33.

solutions are to be expected from the OSCE due to its relatively low annual budget and subsequent decrease in political importance in the US, Russia, and the EU countries.

Ukrainian discussions remain at a level when the situation tends to be narrowed down to only “conflict, crisis, and corruption” issues, rather than a full-spectrum hybrid war. While Ukraine faces problems in these areas, such a reductive approach does not provide it with effective and sustainable security solutions. Moreover, Italy’s changing “yellow-green” government still has not presented its ideas towards how Italy within the OSCE will continue to address the issues referring to Ukraine.

At the same time, Italy has been promoting a resolution of another conflict – Transnistria. As an example, it already had a number of rounds and conferences on this issue. The latest negotiations on the Transnistrian settlement were held in Rome (29-30 May 2018). The cChairmanship continued to analyse and evaluate the progress being made within Vienna meeting protocol implementation within the 5+2 format (27-28 November 2018) and agreements signed in November 2017 and April 2018.<sup>24</sup>

## **Conclusions: Reality Checks Are Needed**

The OSCE serves as an important multilateral forum for continuous and regular dialogue on a wide range of political, economic, and security challenges. Among its 57 member states, where one can find both the EU and non-EU countries, the OSCE remains the most inclusive security format. As such,

it has opportunities for its participants to operate closer and engage more effectively with the USA, Canada, Russia, Norway, Turkey, Ukraine, and many others. Dispersed geographically, it makes a certain influence on national trajectory within the OSCE, especially during the important period of the OSCE chairmanship. In such a way, the “security-speak” is sometimes different from a real “security-do” in what concerns the OSCE participating states’ priorities.

On the one hand, Italy’s role in the OSCE is shaped by challenging environments within greater Europe, where a myriad of unsolved and emerging crises exist. Moreover, the potential to destabilize European security lies in the instability and uncertainty of current and future political regimes and political systems of a number of countries in the OSCE regions, including Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Europe stands facing the challenges of a mixed internal and external nature, between which it is difficult to draw a line. On the other hand, the palette of approaches to better reform the OSCE is still not effective.

Currently, even if the OSCE entered turbulent times, there have been some positive progressive steps. For example, experts indicate that the response to the conflict in and around Ukraine made the OSCE come back to the international formats of strategic importance after a decade of silence. However, the experts insist that the “Steinmeier Initiative” and the Structured Dialogue (SD) only somewhat stopped disputes on the future of conventional arms control even though there still is an urgent need to modernize the OSCE arms control.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Protocol of the Official Meeting of the Permanent Conference for Political Questions in the Framework of the Negotiating Process on the Transnistrian Settlement*, p. 1, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Integration [[https://delegazioneosce.esteri.it/delegazione\\_osce/resource/resource/2018/05/protocollo\\_di\\_roma\\_en.pdf](https://delegazioneosce.esteri.it/delegazione_osce/resource/resource/2018/05/protocollo_di_roma_en.pdf)].

<sup>25</sup> C. Nunlist, *Reviving Dialogue and Trust in the OSCE in 2018*, CSS Background Papers, Zurich, 2018, p. 7 [<http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pds/N%3%BCnlist-121818-BackgroundPaperOSCEin2018.pdf>].

Moreover, the challenges remain in “second basket” – economic one, which are not addressed in full manner.

The selected regional priorities for Italy’s OSCE Chairmanship, mainly the Mediterranean region and Ukraine, demonstrated a somewhat unbalanced approach in addressing security challenges there. With regards to addressing Ukraine’s challenges, the OSCE perceptions turned out to be not the same as truths. However, some of its meetings within the Informal Working Groups succeeded in demonstrating the realities Ukraine is living in 2018 to the politicians, diplomats, military, and experts from the OSCE countries.

Italy continues to advocate more for the Mediterranean region at the expense of balancing its interests with other “sensitive” security regions and conflicts. In this regard, a trajectory not to Ukraine but mostly to the Mediterranean countries was observed. Even Transnistria received much more attention than the situation in Crimea and Donbas.

Moreover, Italy’s internal challenges in the government, due to the parliamentary elections in March 2018 and subsequent long way towards building a coalition, influenced

the vision of what Italy will be within the second half of its OSCE Chairmanship. At the same time, it is quite clear even now, that it would be a mistake to pin too high hopes on the Italian Chairmanship or on the OSCE in 2018 in the mentioned conflicts’ resolution.

It is still quite a challenge to transform the OSCE’s recent achievement into long-lasting effective solutions in order for them to become a comprehensive European security pillar. In this situation, the international community can make necessary steps in order to demonstrate consolidated democratic will with further concrete actions. It should reassert its voice by developing new legal remedies for dealing with security challenges and demonstrating the value of human diversity.

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*Victoria Vdovychenko, Ph.D., Associate Professor at Kyiv Borys Grinchenko University and researcher. She is working on the challenges of the European Union, Euro-Atlantic integration, hybrid warfare, strategic communication, collaborating with different institutions and media, including “Evropejska Pravda” and “Ukrainian Interest” outlets. She is one of the key experts on Italy’s foreign policy in the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”.*

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