



Security Council

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Letter dated 28 July 2021 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Chair's summary of the open Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council held on 2 June on the theme "Circumstances of Maidan and its after-effects in the Donbass" (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dmitry Polyanskiy
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



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Summary of the open Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council held on 2 June 2021 on the theme “Circumstances of Maidan and its after-effects in the Donbass”

Introduction

On 2 June, the Russian Federation hosted an Arria-formula meeting with a view to providing members of the Security Council and all other interested States Members of the United Nations with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the accounts of direct participants and witnesses (high-level political stakeholders and media representatives) of the events in Ukraine in 2014 called “Maidan”, which triggered conflict in the Donbass. The discussion contributed to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the root causes of the crisis in Ukraine and of how those events provoked the hostilities in the east of the country, which eventually resulted in the signing of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#).

The meeting was held in the form of a virtual teleconference and was live-streamed online on United Nations Web TV¹ and YouTube.² It was chaired by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzya, and attended by representatives of 28 other delegations. Despite the fact that representatives of all the States Members of the United Nations were invited to attend and to make statements, the delegation of Ukraine expressed no interest in engaging in the discussion. Some Security Council members, namely the United States, the United Kingdom and Estonia, chose to ignore the Arria-formula meeting under the pretext that some of the briefers were included in their unilateral “sanctions lists”.

The guest panellists were Nikolay Azarov, former Prime Minister of Ukraine; Oleg Tsaryov, former member of the Ukrainian Parliament (Rada); Vladimir Oleynik, former member of the Ukrainian Parliament; Dean O'Brien, a British freelance photographer; Anne-Laure Bonnel, a French journalist and a filmmaker.

A concept note was released prior to the discussion, in which the necessary background was provided. It contained a reminder that, starting late in 2013, mass protests in Ukraine, also referred to as “Maidan”, shattered the internal political stability of Ukraine, triggering a regime change that was inspired and widely supported by Western leaders. The overthrow of the legitimate government in Kiev followed, despite the signing on 21 February 2014 by the president of Ukraine, V. Yanukovich, and three Ukrainian opposition leaders of an agreement to resolve the crisis in Ukraine that was mediated and guaranteed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Germany and Poland, as well as the Head of the Department of Continental Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France. Despite these international guarantees, the opposition violated the deal the next day and forcibly changed who was in power in Ukraine. For the supporters of Maidan, the event became “a triumph of the revolution of dignity”, while for many others who had voted for Yanukovich,

¹ Available at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1o/k1oiz1b78g>.

² Available in English at www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi2TcQMXxTE&ab_channel=RussiaUN.
Available in Russian at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs8BVD7DIHg&ab_channel=PressOfficeRussianMission.

including those in eastern regions of the country, it was nothing but a clear illegal coup d'état.

It was stressed in the concept note that, no matter how one characterizes the events of 2014 in Kiev, there were at least two undeniable facts: first – Maidan provoked full-scale conflict in the country, triggering deep controversies among various groups within Ukrainian society; second – violence during the Maidan events, which caused dozens of deaths, was a criminal act, and those responsible were yet to be identified and brought to justice.

Thus, Maidan was not only a part of history, but a cornerstone of the whole state in which Ukraine currently finds itself, which makes it important to give a truthful account of those events and avoid their misinterpretation, as they have a direct relation to the hostilities in the east of Ukraine and consequently to Security Council resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#), in which the Council endorsed the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Statements by the panellists

Before giving the floor to the panellists, Mr. Nebenzya recalled that understanding the root causes of conflicts is an essential condition for their sustainable resolution. He stated that it would be wrong to confuse the real reference point of the crisis in Ukraine, which could not have started inexplicably and out of the blue in the spring of 2014, with the events in the Donbass or the referendum in Crimea, as Kiev had been trying to claim. For that reason, he suggested to address the event that divided the whole of Ukrainian society and split the history of the country into a period “before” and a period “after” – the Maidan coup.

Mr. Azarov, the Prime Minister of Ukraine at the time of Maidan, lamented that because of the coup d'état, his country had transformed into “the poorest country in Europe”, where neo-Nazi gangs thrive on the streets of the cities threatening and killing those who do not support their views. He explained that those gangs, trained since 2000 by the Western special services, first revealed themselves in December 2004 during the so-called “orange revolution”. Back then, they were successfully repelled by Ukrainian security forces. Ten years later, the Government knew that gangs were preparing another attempt to overthrow the regime, but wrongly addressed its timing – instead of elections in 2015, the gangs chose late 2013 as the moment to act, triggering the events of Maidan.

Government agents, dispersed in the Maidan crowd, reported that there was a special section in the United States Embassy in Kiev that steered the protests towards the coup. The methods included false flag operations aimed at increasing tensions: aggression against law enforcement officers,³ seizure of government buildings, staged kidnappings and beatings, etc. In those circumstances the State was forced to protect the constitutional order, but Western representatives started to pressure president Yanukovich to refrain from the use of force and negotiate with the protesters, which he did. In particular, Mr. Azarov recalled his conversation with the American Assistant Secretary of State at that time, Victoria Nuland, who openly called on him to reshuffle the government by naming specific persons to be included in it, including Arseniy Yatsenyuk.⁴

On 21 February, 2014 president Yanukovich signed an agreement with the Maidan opposition leaders, which was guaranteed by top diplomats of France, Germany and Poland. Nevertheless, according to Mr. Azarov, that did not stop the provocation with the mass sniper shooting on Maidan, when more than 100 people

³ Throughout the Maidan events, more than 2,000 police officers received hospital treatment.

⁴ Mr. Yatsenyuk ultimately became Prime Minister after the coup.

were killed,⁵ including around 30 police officers. It was later confirmed that the orders to shoot were given by the Maidan leaders.

Mr. Azarov compared the events of Maidan with the January 2021 riot at the United States Capitol, where law enforcement did not hesitate to use force to disperse the crowd – “our biggest failure was that we listened to the West and reacted in accordance with the law, while the Maidan leaders disregarded the law completely, feeling the support of Western powers, as American and European politicians openly visited the protesters and campaigned for regime change”.

Referring to the military operation in the Donbass, launched by the new revolutionary authorities, Mr. Azarov explained that, at first, the Ukrainian army refused to open fire against civilians who did not support Maidan. For that reason, interim president Turchinov released hardcore criminals with long criminal records from the jails to form punitive battalions. Throughout the seven years of conflict, the Ukrainian side committed numerous atrocities: missile strikes against Lugansk in June 2014, deadly arson in Odessa in May 2014, where survivors were killed on the spot by Maidan supporters; destruction of the power line to Crimea, when, in November 2015, the peninsula with a population of 2.5 million was cut off from power; a blockade of the water coming to Crimea through a man-made canal, an economic and transport blockade of both the Donbass and Crimea, etc. None of those events was ever condemned by Western states.

Mr. Tsaryov, the former member of the Ukrainian Parliament, elaborated further on the direct American involvement in the preparation of the coup. He managed to get the first-hand information by sending his loyal assistants to act as Ukrainian opposition supporters attending the trainings organized by the United States Embassy in the country. Mr. Tsaryov particularly named the United States Ambassador in Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, who personally supervised the “TechCamp” educational course hosted by his diplomatic mission. The course instructed the Ukrainian protesters-to-be to use social networks to mobilize and encourage the Maidan crowd, as well as to discredit the state authorities. The course was based on the experience of anti-government movements in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

Mr. Tsaryov explained that protests in Kiev needed substantial financial resources, while the modest funds collected by the supporters could not cover the considerable expenses. The curious fact was that, at the time of Maidan, the United States released new dollar bills, which were not officially supplied to any of the Ukrainian banks. However, those bills became widely available in the Ukrainian capital. He linked that to the significantly increased volumes of the United States diplomatic mail that was seen brought to the country by the Lufthansa flights.

The cause of Maidan demanded not only money, but also professional revolutionaries and political engineers, who were also brought into the country. Among them was a Serbian, Marko Ivković (the head of the “Otpor” group that led the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević) and Mikheil Saakashvili (who led the “revolution of roses” in Georgia). Another 36 nationals of Georgia, Germany and the United States were banned from entering Ukraine at the personal request of Mr. Tsaryov.

Explaining the methods used by the Maidan leaders, Mr. Tsaryov pointed out that the “Gene Sharp technique”⁶ did not work out, as the government did not use

⁵ The tragedy known as the shooting of the “heavenly hundred”.

⁶ The Gene Sharp method presumes provoking a government into using force against aggressive actions of the crowd to mobilize even larger protests.

force – the number of injured police officers far exceeded that of the protesters. This made the Maidan leaders switch to undisguised, forcible regime change.

A person called Audrius Butkevičius was brought to Ukraine in January 2014. This “regime change expert” was known for leading the groups of snipers that shot at protesters in Vilnius in 1991 and in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, as well as for leading a private military company amid the Georgian “revolution of roses”. The first place Butkevičius visited in Kiev, prior to meetings with the Maidan leaders, was the United States Embassy. Apart from him, the Ukrainian capital was flooded with various specialists from Poland, Australia and the Baltic states, who trained the Maidan squadrons. Among the foreigners were Georgian snipers, featured in the Italian documentary “The hidden truth about Ukraine”,⁷ who were engaged in the shooting known as the killing of the “heavenly hundred” that triggered the regime change.

To “legitimize” the outcomes of the coup, the revolutionary authorities arranged new presidential elections, for which Mr. Tsaryov registered as one of the candidates representing the interests of those who did not support Maidan. He described the broad campaign of threats and intimidation launched against him by Maidan supporters and neo-Nazi groups in which he ended up being beaten in public in front of the cameras on 14 April 2014, when Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) observers refused to appear at the scene to prevent or at least record the threats against and the attack on a presidential candidate. He said that he had been lucky to survive because of the presence of the cameras, unlike four of his colleagues, members of the parliament, who were killed by pro-Maidan forces in the first months after the coup. Thousands of other anti-Maidan activists fell victim to the neo-Nazi “death squads”. Mr. Tsaryov stressed that no one had been held accountable for multiple killings across Ukraine. There was also no reasonable explanation for why the suspects arrested in connection with the murder of Ukrainian writer Oles Buzina were released in the courtroom.

Another former member of the Ukrainian Parliament, Mr. Oleynik, who is also a lawyer, addressed legal aspects of the coup d’état. He named foreign officials who appeared on Maidan cheering on the protesters for unconstitutional actions and provided the list of government buildings seized by “peaceful” pro-Maidan activists across the country. It included at least 13 regional administrations, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Justice and a number of ammunition depots. Captured firearms were immediately delivered to Maidan and distributed among the protesters.

Mr. Oleynik stated that the crimes committed by the Maidan leaders were very well documented because the very first thing they did after seizing power was forcing the members of parliament to adopt an amnesty law. With threats and intimidation they pressured the parliamentarians to adopt a law that lifted any responsibility for certain crimes. The list of such crimes included 80 items and speaks for itself: forcible change of the constitutional order or seizure of power,⁸ offences against the territorial integrity of the country,⁹ sabotage, kidnapping, larceny, looting, robbery, organized crime and racketeering, terrorism, involvement of youth into crime, killing of a law enforcement officer, etc. This list had nothing to do with what the West called “a peaceful protest and a revolution of dignity”.

The above-mentioned amnesty law provided for the destruction of all the existing evidence of the crimes listed and prohibited the collection of new evidence. No wonder that, immediately after the adoption of the law, a Maidan activist, Ivan

⁷ “The hidden truth about Ukraine” part 1, available at <https://youtu.be/wR1NF16TBH0>; part 2, available at <https://youtu.be/V0rR2Fh1zWI>.

⁸ Basically the Maidan activists recognized that they committed a coup d’état.

⁹ The leaders of Maidan called for creation of a “Lvov People’s Republic” in case their attempt to seize power in Kiev would fail.

Bubenchik, boasted in front of the cameras of shooting at police on 20 February 2014. Such an open confession of a crime, unheard of in civilized states, became possible in Ukraine because of the impunity allowed by the law.

The next thing the Maidan leaders did in the parliament was to introduce, on 21 February 2014, changes to the Ukrainian constitution. The resolution of the Ukrainian parliament that amended one-third of the country's fundamental law was adopted within 8 minutes. Obviously, due process was not observed, as the constitutional court was never consulted. That, according to Mr. Oleynik, made the existing Ukrainian constitution null and void.

He also shared his personal experience of violence against his son, who was beaten (and spent a month in the emergency room) by the pro-Maidan nationalists who had tried to force Mr. Oleynik to change his political stance.

Mr. Oleynik also stated that, using his rights as a political refugee and guided by international practice, he appealed to a Russian court with a view to establishing the nature of events in Ukraine in 2014. All the materials related to the criminal case, including testimonies of former Ukrainian president Yanukovich, former Prime Minister Azarov and former Attorney General Pshonka, were collected in a book entitled *Ukraine: coup d'état*.¹⁰ At a public presentation of the book, Mr. Oleynik explained that the coup had been prepared by Western powers from 1990.

A freelance photographer from Coventry (United Kingdom), Mr. O'Brien, who documented situation in Ukraine for over a decade, highlighted the transformations the country went through with the rise of far-right groups in 2012 and after the Maidan events. He clarified that, at the beginning of his observation, Russian was widely spoken across the majority of the regions in Ukraine; however nationalists and neo-Nazi groups, and later the authorities in Kiev, started to deliberately target the Russian-speaking communities and regions of the country.

He showed photos depicting Nazi books openly sold at book stands in Kiev, as well as nationalists at the Maidan equipped with military-grade gear posing against the backdrop of seized governmental buildings. Stating that the crisis in Ukraine started with Maidan and not with alleged "Russian involvement", he explained that the illegal overthrow of the government in Kiev was rejected in certain parts of Ukraine. This rejection was met with a military operation launched by the Maidan authorities against the Donbass, as a result of which over 13,000 people were killed.

Another batch of his photos depicted the war-torn Donbass region: ruined roads and buildings, the everyday deaths that became the reality for those who found the courage to oppose the regime change. He refuted the propaganda claims about the alleged presence of the Russian soldiers in the Donbass, saying that, traveling across the region, he had never met any. Instead, those fighting against Kiev forces were all inhabitants of the Donbass who protected their values and freedoms.

He was distressed by the fact that Western media outlets did not report on the ordinary people of the Donbass, who were caught inside their homes because of the actions of Ukrainian forces and who were left with no other choice but to protect their homes.

A French filmmaker and professor of journalism at Sorbonne University, Ms. Bonnel introduced her documentary *Donbass*,¹¹ which she had filmed from November 2015 and throughout 2016. She explained that the idea of the film had been inspired by the report of 25 March 2015 at the Defence Committee of the French

¹⁰ Available in Russian under its original title, *Ukraina: gosudarstvennyi perevorot*, at <https://disk.yandex.ru/i/nCJeRuUAqv8Zcg>.

¹¹ Available at <https://vimeo.com/202792798>.

National Assembly, which had come to the conclusion that there were no Russian forces in the Donbass.

She recalled that the Ukrainian government overthrown in February 2014 was democratic and legitimate, as was proven by the OSCE account of the preceding elections, which had been called “fair and transparent”. Ms. Bonnel confirmed that the main driving force behind Maidan had been nationalists and neo-Nazi groups, who had been well-trained and organized, but represented the views of only a fraction of the Ukrainian population. In particular, those groups had rejected the rights of those who had voted for president Yanukovich.

She expressed outrage at the double standards of the Western policy of condemning alleged “Russian involvement” in the crisis in Ukraine, but at the same time turning a blind eye to the very real coup d’état that had taken place in Kiev in February 2014; the policy of recognizing legitimate interests of one part of the Ukrainian population, while rejecting the rights of the other part.

Speaking of her documentary, Ms. Bonnel recalled that the filming had coincided with the signature of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#), which was supposed to bring a ceasefire and calm to the Donbass. Nevertheless, the situation on the ground was better characterized with the term “humanitarian catastrophe”. Ukrainian forces deliberately bombed shelters and hospitals, while elders, women and children were forced to hide in cellars. With all that, Kiev called its military offensive an “antiterrorist operation”. She stressed that the territory of the Donbass was relatively small and, unlike the Ukrainian forces, the population in that region had nowhere to run or hide from the artillery strikes.

Summarizing, Ms. Bonnel stated that, essentially, the people of Donbass were being attacked by the Ukrainian forces for their views and beliefs, which was unacceptable in the twenty-first century.

Statements by delegations to the United Nations

Representatives of eight delegations took the floor after the panellists.

The Western members of the Security Council did not refer to the presentations by the briefers and expressed unwavering support for Kiev, accusing the Russian Federation of “promoting a false narrative” about the history of the conflict in Ukraine and the misuse of the time of the Security Council members. They reaffirmed their commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its “internationally recognized borders” and supported the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine as well as the efforts within the Minsk Contact Group.

The representative of France extended his country’s commitment to continue cooperation with Germany within the “Normandy Four” format to achieve the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

The Indian representative thanked the briefers for providing their perspectives of the situation in Ukraine and confirmed that his country had always been advocating the diplomatic and political solutions that respect the legitimate interests of all countries in the region.

The Chinese delegate stressed that the issue of Ukraine, which has a very complicated historical background, could not be resolved by force and thus the only feasible comprehensive solution could be achieved through dialogue and negotiations.

The representative of Mexico and the Permanent Representative of Niger recalled of the importance of compliance with the Security Council resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#).

The Permanent Representative of Belarus highlighted that understanding the root causes of conflicts was essential for their resolution and indicated that foreign interference in the mass protests was often overlooked or ignored by those who try to analyse the events in various countries.

Conclusions

Despite different views being expressed by the participants, the participants in the meeting reaffirmed overall support for the settlement in Donbass in line with the provisions of Security Council resolution [2202 \(2015\)](#) and the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements. This pivotal document had no alternatives and should not be misinterpreted, distorted, undermined or substituted by other formats. Direct dialogue with those who have first-hand experience of the events related to the Security Council agenda is indispensable for an in-depth analysis of these issues. The fact that the Arria-formula meeting discussion was snubbed by the delegation of Ukraine unveiled the lack of genuine commitment to peace in Kiev and its unwillingness to advance the settlement in the Donbass, based on the parameters approved by the Security Council.
