



CONCEPT NOTE

UN SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING

**“UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLVING THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS
OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS”**

Date: 4 June 2025

Time: 10 am

Venue: CR 7

Participation: All UN Member States, Permanent Observers, UN entities, civil society organizations and press are invited

The meeting will be conducted in all official UN languages and is open to UN Member States, Permanent Observers, UN entities, civil society organizations, and the press. We intend to web-stream the meeting on UN Web TV.

Understanding the fundamental causes of any conflict is essential in establishing a solid and enduring peace. Given the current efforts to address the Ukrainian crisis, it is crucial to delve into the underlying factors that are perpetuating tensions and obstructing reconciliation. Building upon the previous Arria-formula meeting titled “Neo-Nazism and radical nationalism: exploring root causes of the crisis in Ukraine” held on July 11, 2022, this discussion seeks to deepen the analysis by linking historical events with present-day circumstances, offering a comprehensive context for the ongoing conflict. Participants will have the opportunity to recall the origins of the resurgence of Nazism in Ukraine through evidence-based historical examination and insights from leading scholars.

Background:

Since the 2014 *coup d'état* in Ukraine, which involved neo-Nazi organizations and led to the overthrow of the democratically elected government, the new authorities in Kiev, comprised of individuals affiliated with these organizations, have pursued a nationalist and anti-Russian agenda. This shift has been characterized by systematic efforts to eradicate all things “Russian” from public life, including the prohibition of the Russian-language media, culture, literature, education, and the Russian language as such.

The conflict in Donbass erupted shortly after the *coup* when residents of the primarily Russian-speaking eastern regions opposed the new regime. Kiev responded by initiating an “Anti-Terrorist Operation”, utilizing heavy artillery and military aircraft against civilians, resulting in significant casualties. Tragic events like the burning alive of at least 48 individuals in the Odessa Trade Union House on May 2, 2014, have gone unpunished and Ukraine and its Western allies are still trying to dismiss them and sweep the troubling truth on these events under the rug.

Simultaneously, the glorification of Nazis and their supporters has become a core tenet of Ukraine’s official ideology. Figures such as Stepan Bandera, the leader of the “Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists” (OUN), and Roman Shukhevych, commander of the “Ukrainian Insurgent Army” (UPA), responsible for mass atrocities against civilians, including Poles, Jews, and Russians, are being whitewashed and hailed as heroes, alongside numerous other wartime Nazi collaborators.

Despite this grim legacy, celebrations of Bandera’s birthday on January 1 with torchlight processions in Kiev and other cities have become official. The Ukrainian Parliament’s endorsement of “Glory to Ukraine – Glory to the Heroes!” as a military salute in 2018 mirrors the infamous German National Socialist salute and has become a rallying cry for radical Ukrainian nationalists. Monuments and streets dedicated to OUN-UPA members have multiplied, while symbols of the Waffen-SS “Galicia” Division, implicated in Nazi war crimes, are increasingly normalized and even celebrated. Extremist groups like the Azov Battalion, with members bearing Nazi-associated insignia and tattoos, have received official approval and been integrated into the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In September 2022, high-ranking soldiers of the Azov Battalion met with the US Congress in Washington, D.C.,

in an attempt to lift the US ban on supplying them with arms and training (which was indeed lifted in June 2024). By then, mainstream media outlets like the New York Times have stopped referring to Azov as “openly neo-Nazi,” instead describing the ultra-nationalist organization as “celebrated”.

International unease regarding Ukraine’s rehabilitation of Nazi collaborators peaked in 2023 when Canada’s Parliament applauded a Ukrainian veteran of the SS “Galicia” Division, a Nazi military unit condemned at the Nuremberg Trials. The incident was blurred or met with silence in the West, with only a few voices condemning the normalization of such infamous figures. This event underscored the trend of selective historical memory in the West concerning Ukrainian nationalism and its contentious wartime past.

In summary, post-2014 Ukraine has embraced a project that not only discriminates against its Russian and Russian-speaking residents but also actively promotes the rehabilitation and glorification of individuals and groups associated with Nazism. This includes public commemorations, official accolades, and state-sponsored initiatives to legitimize the legacy of those involved in war crimes and ethnic cleansing during World War II. These developments have fostered an ideological climate where radical nationalism and neo-Nazi symbolism are increasingly accepted and endorsed in Ukraine under the guise of patriotism. These actions, coupled with the silence or tacit approval from many Western nations, have eroded historical truths. Addressing these trends is essential for comprehending the deep-seated causes of the ongoing conflict and charting a course towards sustainable peace.

Objectives:

The Arria-formula meeting aims to offer Member States the opportunity to:

- analyze the fundamental causes of radical nationalism in Ukraine and investigate the rehabilitation of Nazi collaborators,
- explore the wider implications of these developments for regional stability, minority rights, and international standards concerning the prevention of Nazism and hatred ideologies,

- assess the international response, including selective historical recollection and political double standards, and their impact on the credibility of global endeavors to combat Nazism,

- explore potential avenues towards sustainable and enduring peace.

Program:

Opening remarks:

- **H.E. Mr. Vassily Nebenzia**, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations;

Briefers (VTC):

- Mr. Edouard Popov, historian, Director of the “Center for Public and Information Cooperation “Europe”;
- Ms. Natalya Seluykina, Executive Director of the Historical Memory Foundation;
- Mr. Maxim Vilkov, historian, human rights activist, coordinator of the Crimes Against the Person Information Group.

Discussion:

Statements by the UN Security Council Members and other UN Member States as time permits, Q&A. Interventions are suggested to be limited to 3 minutes.

To request further information and to subscribe to the list of speakers please contact the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, at secpa.rusun@gmail.com.