

Will Ukraine Cut Diplomatic Relations with Russia? Will Kiev Resume Military Operations against Donbass?

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)
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Reported by [Pravda.ru](#) (November 8, 2017), the Ukrainian Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada “will introduce a relevant paragraph into the law about the reintegration of the Donbass, which the parliament is to consider in the second reading on November 16...”.

This decision which is expected to be ratified by the Parliament, would be followed by a presidential decree signed by President Petro Poroshenko, “after which Russian diplomatic institutions in Ukraine, and Ukrainian ones in Russia will be closed”. [Pravda.ru](#),

The logic of the parliamentary decision is that “as soon as the Verkhovna Rada approves the law on the reintegration of the Donbass, Russia will be recognized [by Kiev] as an aggressor country”.

“Preserving diplomatic relations after this will be a criminal act on the part of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry. In fact, these relations have already been terminated. There are no ambassadors, and the diplomats, who work in the embassies are not diplomats of the first rank. We need to have this move recorded on the legislative level,” Vinnik said. ([Pravda.ru](#))

There is no confirmation that this decision has been ratified.

The Suspension of Bilateral Trade

The economic and geopolitical ramifications of this decision are far-reaching.

They affect bilateral trade between Ukraine and Russia which is already at an all time low. In 2013, prior to the EuroMaidan crisis (February 2014), 24% of Ukraine’s exports were directed to Russia.

Ukraine’s transborder exports to Russia in 2013 amounted to \$15 billion. In 2014 they were of the order of 9.8 billion declining to \$3.6 billion in 2016, representing about 8% of Ukraine’s trade. These figures do not account for bilateral commodity trade between Russia and Donbass in the wake of the Euromaidan, Nor do they account for internal trade between Crimea and the Russian Federation.

The Resumption of Military Operations against Donbass

The decision of the Kiev Parliament would also provide a de facto “green light” to resume

military operations directed against Donbass. Needless to say, they foreclose the reaching of a peace agreement.

In recent developments which have a direct bearing on the parliamentary decision, the Kiev government has put Airborne Commander Lieutenant General Mykhailo Zabrodskiy, in charge of military operations against Donbass.

According to Ukraine's Ministry of Defense: Zabrodskiy was appointed due to his "immense experience" and abilities of in "planning military operations of various kinds." (Kyiv Post Report, November 9, 2017).

The real reason for Zabrodskiy's appointment is his close relationship with the US military and the Pentagon.

Zabrodskiy received advanced training at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The College includes a **School of Advanced Leadership and Tactics** (SALT) for high ranking military officers. Essentially, Zabrodskiy is a US protégé, who is now head of the so-called "anti-terrorist operation" (ATO) directed against Donbass, in close liaison with the Pentagon.

Lethal Defensive Weapons for Kiev

On November 15, Verkhovna Rada Chairman Andriy Parubiy "called on Washington to provide lethal defensive weapons to Kyiv."

"Today we had a strategic and constructive meeting with newly appointed U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Wess Mitchell. His visit is a reassurance of the U.S. support to Ukraine. I called on the U.S. State Department to provide lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine," Parubiy wrote on Twitter on November 15 after a meeting with Mitchell. ([Interfax](#), November 16, 2017)

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About the author:

Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of

Global Research. He has taught as visiting professor in Western Europe, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Latin America. He has served as economic adviser to governments of developing countries and has acted as a consultant for several international organizations. He is the author of 13 books. He is a contributor to the Encyclopaedia Britannica. His writings have been published in more than twenty languages. In 2014, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit of the Republic of Serbia for his writings on NATO's war of aggression against Yugoslavia. He can be reached at crgeditor@yahoo.com

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