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East European countries.

Russia also proposed a Union of Europe between Russia and the EU. The Union would have co-ordinated energy, military, political, and strategic matters. In October 2014, Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that the Agreement with the EU would be based on a system of indivisible security where no country would strengthen its security at the expense of the others. He repeated the same message a year later. Such provisions could prevent the EU from acting independently of Moscow or the other former Soviet republics from associating with the EU. North America would be in practice excluded from Europe.

The Medvedev proposals apparently remain the basis of Russian policy. At the latest since 2012, there have been many Russian speeches and articles advocating a return to the Yalta-Potsdam or Cold War system of East-West relations, in which the Soviet Union had a veto.

Furthermore, Foreign Minister Lavrov, speaking in October 2014, stated that the Ukrainian civil war could have been avoided if Russia's proposed treaties on European security had been concluded.

In the same month, Putin declared that the Ukrainian civil war would "certainly not be the last" without a clear system of mutual commitments and agreements.

Let us now examine Russia's attempt to bring the other former Soviet republics to heel. In August 2013, Ruslan Pukhov, the director of the Moscow

recognized Ukraine's borders, would no longer apply, and Russia might support secessionist movements in Ukraine.

During that autumn, Russia maintained its pressure on Ukraine. Eventually, the then Ukrainian President Yanukovich abandoned the EU Association Agreement, and all but joined the Eurasian Economic Union. His actions provoked the Maidan uprising leading to his downfall.

The overthrow of President Yanukovich of Ukraine in February 2014, and the decision of the new government to sign the EU Association Agreement, and perhaps its intention to apply again for NATO membership, led President Putin to activate long prepared plans to seize Crimea and to instigate revolts in the East and South-East of Ukraine.

The Russian treatment of Ukraine may cast a light on Russia's attitude towards the other former Soviet republics.

If so, their statehood is contingent on their relationship with Russia. In March 2014 President Putin had declared that as a result of the pro-Western revolution, the Ukrainian state should perhaps be deemed to have ceased to exist, and therefore all treaties signed with it should be considered invalid.

Furthermore, Russian laws and doctrines allow Moscow to invade the other former Soviet republics and annex their territory.

Putin asked the Duma for the authority to invade Ukraine so as to protect Russian citizens and compatriots. Under Russian law, since 1999, the term "compatriot" includes Russian citizens, former Russian citizens, and descendants of the citizens of the former Soviet Union or the Russian Empire, in other words, almost the entire population of all former Soviet republics, as well as that of Poland and Finland.

There may be also emerging a new Brezhnev Doctrine allowing military intervention against revolutions in Russia's neighbourhood. The new National Security Strategy that President Vladimir Putin signed at the end of 2015 goes further than previous Russian official documents in treating presumably foreign inspired regime change in the near abroad as a security threat.

Armed with these weapons, Russia does not hesitate to bully its neighbours into doing its will.



Abandoning sanctions at this point, or accepting the Russian positions on Ukraine, either of which could lead democratic Ukraine to fall, would not

