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The following excerpts are taken from an article that appeared anonymously in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 26 March 1997 under the headline "CIS: The beginning or the end of the story?" Later the piece was acknowledged to be the work of Andranik Migranyan, long-term member of the Presidential Council, and Konstantin Zatulin, director of the Institute for CIS Countries. The contents speak for themselves.

(…) In the post-Soviet space Russia is increasingly confronting global and local challenges. Taking advantage of her current weakness, Russia's neighbors have renewed the historical competition for influence in the Baltic States, Crimea, Western Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. The regional challenges from Russia's competitive neighbors are less dangerous; Russia would be able to handle them once it had regained control over the post-Soviet space. The real danger is the West's global challenge to Russia. This challenge consists of the sharpened contours of new power centers in the post-Soviet space that are regarded as limiting factors or counterweights to Russia on the territory of the former Soviet Union. A final consolidation of these western footholds into a Tashkent-Baku-Tbilisi-Kiev axis, with the possible inclusion of Alma-Ata, would bury any Russian hope for becoming the center of a consolidated post-Soviet space. Russia would become isolated to the south and the west, crowded out of all crucial geopolitical zones, and severed from the major communication and trade systems.(…) We will have to rely in the first place on military-political integration or even on total union with particular countries; economic integration will follow. (…)
The unique situation in the post-Soviet space demands a formulation of a special approach to effecting an organization of the post-Soviet space that furthers Russia's interests. Russia and all the other post-Soviet states are far from having completed the process of state building or having found their niche in the international system. (…)

We are aware that today Russia lacks a capable government; however, the general concepts and the specific strategies we suggest in regard to Ukraine, (…) Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus will be claimed as soon as the period of chaos and cruel struggle for power between various clans in the governing structures of our country comes to an end and a (…) great power finally appears. (…)

**Ukraine:** (…) The question of signing a federative treaty between the Ukraine and Crimea, as a guarantee for the Russian majority in the Crimea, should be raised as a condition to confirming Ukraine's borders (…) Sevastopol should be treated as a separate issue in the negotiations (where the Russian delegation should stress that Sevastopol is *de jure* a Russian city that *de facto* has been under Ukrainian governance). (…) We do not exclude other measures as well: the denial of credit to Ukraine; the demand for early payment of Ukraine's debt to Russia; (…) the gradual imposition of an economic blockade against Ukraine on the US-Cuba model.

**Central Asia:** (…) The existing union of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan (the Central Asian Union, TsAS, was created in the summer of 1994) is being built to a significant degree on a foundation of anti-Russian integration (or integration that is potentially dangerous to Russia). (…) Russia should concentrate its efforts on loosening the emerging bloc, splintering it by intensifying regional rivalries. Mutual suspicions between Nazerbayev and Karimov, who are competing for leadership, have on numerous occasions thrown the continued existence of the bloc into question. (…)

Perhaps the firmest step that Russia could take, after we have pulled our forces out of Tajikistan, would be to raise our own and encourage other territorial claims against the Central Asian republics. (…)
The Central Asian states' dependence on Russian transportation infrastructure makes them particularly vulnerable to the dark specter of an economic blockade—in the first place encompassing food and energy. (…)

Tashkent carries out the most anti-Russian policy (…) But Kazakhstan is more vulnerable to Russian influence. (…) It is inadmissible not to use the potentially large internal sources of political influence, their own Russian and Russian-speaking populations, to strengthen the position of Russia in these republics.

Caucasus: (…) Here we should examine the weaknesses of Georgia and Azerbaijan as key links in the anti-Russian axis of Tashkent-Baku-Tbilisi-Kiev. (…)

The immediate lifting of the blockade against Abkhazia is warranted. Further we should take steps to bolster the unity of South Ossetia and North Ossetia; to stimulate separatist tendencies in Ajaria; and to let the Armenian government know that, if Georgia persists in its anti-Russian line, Armenia will be allowed to take de facto control of the area known as Djavakh or Djavahetia. Thereafter we can make a corridor to provide direct communication between Russia and Armenia. (…)

In the first place it is necessary to maintain the superiority of Armenia's military superiority over the Azeris (…) Second, to stimulate the unity of the divided Lezgin nation (…) to push Azerbaijan towards a federal type of government (…) and finally to reactivate the question of the Talysh autonomy. All these measures, taken as a whole, should be aimed at creating a situation under which the risk to capital investment in the extraction and transportation of oil would be prohibitively high. Besides Armenia, Iran can also serve as a Russian ally in the region (…)

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