

ii) Pacific Change

- o Another less violent and dramatic way in which the unity of the USSR and the authority of its central government could disintegrate would be by means of a gradual process, generated by the assertions of diverse nationalisms, including Russian nationalism.
- o In this variant, disintegration does not necessarily follow from the failure of Gorbachev's *perestroika*. It could take place gradually, even if: (a) the Soviet economy had turned around; (b) the "new political system" extended to republican and local levels, and the practice of *glasnost* and democratization became the rule; (c) Gorbachev's foreign policy had led to substantial reductions in armaments and to increased economic cooperation and trade with the West; (d) the two alliance systems had remained in place, though more political and symbolic, and Eastern European countries had moved well ahead of the USSR in economic and political achievements.
- o The factors leading to gradual disintegration of central power could be:
 - (1) the failure to achieve a reformed and unified Communist Party which could play the crucial role of maintaining unity within a reformed federal state;
 - (2) failure of the new nationalities policy and of the federal constitution to attract support generally, and to reconcile profound differences between the centre and the republics. A critical factor could be the development of a strong Russian nationalist leadership in the USSR, anxious to reinforce the rights and satisfy the aspirations of the Russian people;
 - (3) the unevenness of economic progress and its benefits across the country and the existence of "have not" areas;
 - (4) the erosion of the authority and effectiveness of such central institutions as the Army and the KGB as they attempt to deal with popular movements of dissent in the other republics.
- o The factors sketched out above could lead, after some years, to a loose confederation of semi-independent republics or to a breakdown of the Union into several groupings of states based on ethnic-religious divisions. The central and more populous Slavic republics would in any case tend to remain dominant and, if united, to be a formidable force in world politics.