

The West

- o Uncertainty about the Soviet future makes it difficult for the NATO allies to act together. The European allies prefer to maintain their ties with Moscow while at the same time attempting to build a "European House" that allows for the membership of the Baltic Republics on an equal basis. The US is more cautious and cuts back on exchanges with the USSR, except for the talks on strategic arms, which proceed. Allied differences centre on the issue of the extent of conventional force reductions in Europe and of the price to be paid for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Germany. Hopes of a peace dividend decline. However, public pressure to "end the Cold War" remains strong and the image of a Soviet threat is impossible to revive. Western governments are sensitive to the risks of acting in ways which might precipitate a Soviet return to repressive policies.

Scenario 4: Loss of Effective Central Control

This scenario could materialize in at least two quite different ways:

- i) Violent Change
 - o It could result simply from the loss of power and political will at the centre as a result of decentralization, nationalist and ethnic demands and unrest, and the collapse of support for the Soviet Communist Party. Insurrection and violence could flare up in more and more areas, overtaking the control capacity of the central government and its security forces. Divisions could set in within the armed forces on the basis of nationalist and ethnic allegiances. The country in other words would be overcome by chaos and violence, in a matter of weeks or months.
 - o This outcome is not implausible, but it presupposes an inordinate fragility in the armed and security forces. It may also underestimate the capacity of democratic institutions and the rule of law to hold the country together.