**The Collapse of Soviet Socialist Social System and the Disintegration of the USSR State Are Two Different Issues**

**Disintegration of the USSR was indirectly caused by the Party's Ethnic-National Policy**

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**【Abstract】The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the drastic changes in the Soviet Union are two different concepts. The drastic changes were caused by the communist party’s problems, while the disintegration was caused by the ethnic issues. The ethnic issues in the Soviet Union were the main reason for the split of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Army, and the Soviet Union. The root of the ethnic issues in the Soviet Union was the idea of ​​national self-determination and the system of national autonomy. The highest form of national autonomy in the Soviet Uniun was national federalism. The disintegration of the Soviet Union is a major event in world history. On December 25, 1991, an unprecedentedly powerful empire unexpectedly collapsed without any foreign invasion or internal war, and 15 new nation-states were born on its ruins. Exploring the reasons for the disintegration of the Soviet Union has strong theoretical and practical significance. If the reasons are not clear, there is no way to reflect on history and learn lessons.**

**Many Chinese and foreign scholars believe that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was not caused by a single factor, but the result of various forces working together. Although this judgment is reasonable, when analyzing major events, there is always a problem of the main contradiction and the main aspect of the contradiction. I believe that, tracing back to the source, the ethnic issue is the most fundamental and main reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union, not just one of the important reasons [1]. The root cause of the Soviet Union's ethnic issue is the Soviet Communist Party's idea of ​​national self-determination and the ethnic autonomy system that emerged under this idea (including specific forms such as ethnic union republics, ethnic autonomous republics, ethnic autonomous prefectures and ethnic autonomous regions). The highest form of ethnic autonomy was the ethnic federal system.**

**The origin of a problem: disintegration and upheaval, the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union**

When discussing the disintegration of the Soviet Union, we must first distinguish between two concepts: one is the disintegration of the Soviet state, and the second is the end of the Soviet socialist system. The two concepts should not be confused [2].

**The change of the Soviet socialist system to capitalism was a problem at the level of the social system.** The disintegration of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, was reflected in the establishment of 15 new nation-states, which was a problem at the national or state level. Disintegration and drastic change of the socialist social system are two different concepts, and drastic change of the social system does not necessarily lead to disintegration. The problems of the CPSU can be divided into two levels: degeneration and splitting. Most of the time, the two are mixed together, making it difficult to distinguish.

　　When reflecting on the lessons learned from the Soviet Union, the first socialist country in human history, people tend to think about the problem from an ideological perspective. They believe that the main reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union was that the CPSU abandoned Marxism-Leninism, the general line of "humane and democratic socialism" formulated at the 28th CPSU Congress, the amendment of the Soviet Constitution, the abolition of the leadership of the Communist Party and the guiding ideology of Marxism. This mindset confuses the two issues of drastic change and disintegration.

　　Many articles have mentioned that the CPSU was the only bond that held the Soviet Union together. If the CPSU collapsed, the Soviet Union would no longer exist. So we can conclude that the collapse of the CPSU was the main reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. If this is the case, we can question why the CPSU was the only bond that held the Soviet Union together? Why was the CPSU the only bond? Where did the other bonds that held a country together go? For a country to become a country, it should also have a common sense of historical belonging, common cultural values, common emotional psychology, a strong national identity, close economic and social ties, and strong legal and institutional guarantees. Why didn't the Soviet Union have these? Why was the Soviet Union so fragile that it could only be maintained by the CPSU?

The collapse of the CPSU will inevitably lead to the end of the Soviet socialist system, but it will not necessarily lead to the disintegration of the Soviet state. The disintegration of the Soviet Union was not caused by the collapse of the CPSU.

It is not accurate to say that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was due to ideological reasons or due to the CPSU. **The formation of the CPSU privileged class, the corruption of the CPSU leadership, the relationship between the CPSU and the masses, the problems of individual CPSU leaders, the "Stalin system", the CPSU's economic policies, the CPSU's ideological field, the Soviet Union's foreign policy, etc., are all problems that led to the crisis of the Soviet socialist social system** and these were the problems that led to the change or degeneration of the CPSU, but they were not the main problems that led to the disintegration or the split of the CPSU, let alone the fundamental reasons for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The disintegration of the Soviet state was due to ethnic issues. Of course, if it is said that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was indirectly caused by the CPSU's ethnic policy, this statement is basically accurate.

**Second, the erosion of the national issue on the Soviet state system (Soviet state, Soviet Communist Party, Soviet army)**

　　The nationality issue has posed the most serious and destructive impact on the national unity of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet armed forces. It is also the most effective tool for external forces to exert influence on the internal affairs of the Soviet Union.

　　The disintegration of the Soviet Union was manifested in the establishment of 15 new nation-states. The independence of the national republics one after another announced the actual demise of the Soviet Union. Without the independence of the national republics, there would be no disintegration of the Soviet Union.

　　As we all know, the Soviet Union was a federal state composed of 15 republics. Citizens in the Soviet era were often proud of the vast territory of their motherland and the multitude of ethnic groups. However, with a little analysis, it will be found that the federal system of the Soviet Union had obvious unreasonable factors from the beginning. It was a deformed federal state. The Soviet Union included 15 republics, 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous regions and 10 autonomous regions divided by ethnic identity. In addition, there were various border regions, states and municipalities established in non-ethnic areas (Russians were the majority). Such a complex administrative division system was rare in the world and brought huge management difficulties. Moreover, one of the republics, the Russian Federation, was much larger than the other 14 republics combined in terms of population, territory and economic scale. The area of ​​the Russian Federation accounted for 3/4 of the territory of the Soviet Union and more than 1/2 of the population. In terms of federal structure, it was obviously disproportionate.

　　People outside the Soviet Union saw this more clearly. "In fact, if you create a state structure consisting of one very large unit and several much smaller units, you will get into problems much greater than those faced by existing federations or confederations. Rhode Island is not as large as Alaska, and Alaska is not as populous as California, but these differences are nothing compared to the differences between the Soviet republics... One can imagine how difficult it would be for the federal system to function if there was only one state west of the Mississippi River and all the eastern states retained their existing borders. The Soviet situation is even more severe than this."[3]

　　In the political system of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation is an outlier. The Russian Federation does not have its own Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which is unique among the 15 republics. However, the Russian Federation has its own Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation, which is similar to other republics. However, under the circumstance that all the state and border region committees under the Russian Federation are directly subordinate to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Russian Council of Ministers has almost nothing to do and has become an empty shell. It is impossible for the states of other republics to bypass the Council of Ministers of the Republic and directly have relations with the Central Committee of the Union. The Russian Federation does not have its own republic-level State Security Committee (KGB), Ministry of Internal Affairs, Academy of Sciences, nor its own TV channels and radio stations, while other republics have these. Even in the United Nations, Ukraine and Belarus have their own seats, but Russia does not. The Russian Federation is the largest republic in the Soviet Union, but it is the most unworthy and least powerful republic. However, the vast majority of the leaders of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are Russians.

　　Among the Soviet republics, the three Baltic states were the first to take up the banner of autonomy and independence, and then other ethnic republics followed suit. This in turn stimulated the Russian Federation, and the Russians' sense of sovereignty continued to rise. On June 12, 1990, the Russian Supreme Soviet adopted the Russian Federation's "Declaration of Sovereignty" by an overwhelming majority. Uzbekistan (June 20), Moldova (June 23), Ukraine (July 16), and Belarus (July 27) followed suit. As a result, we saw the most peculiar phenomenon in history. Russia and the other 14 republics, arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder, pointed their spearheads at their common enemy and oppressor - the Soviet Union.

　　It now seems that while the Soviet system restored Russia's sphere of influence, it also restricted its interests and development through institutional construction, and ultimately led to the birth of two different consciousnesses: Russian consciousness and Soviet consciousness. In the Russian Empire era (before 1917), Russian consciousness and imperial consciousness were almost the same. The Soviet Union and Russia in 1991 are like a person and his shadow, fighting each other.

　　The nationality problem not only eroded the Soviet state, but also the CPSU. The nationalization of the CPSU was one of the main reasons for the final split of the CPSU. In the late 1980s, the challenges faced by the CPSU came mainly from two aspects. One was the emergence of different factions within the party due to differences in ideology and reform direction, such as Gorbachev's "Democratic Program Factions", "Marxist Program Factions", "CPSU Program Factions", etc. The second was the nationalization and localization (federalization) of the CPSU. In the Soviet Union, the essence of federalization was nationalization, and the Soviet federal system was the manifestation of the CPSU's nationality theory in the political system.

As the process of "reform", "openness" and "democratization" continued to accelerate, the suddenly relaxed atmosphere of public opinion produced different results in various republics. Discussions on the economy turned into attention to politics, enthusiasm for reform turned into a yearning for independence, and nationalism began to surge. The Communist parties in various republics of the Soviet Union began to face such a dilemma: if they did not highlight their nationality, they would not be able to gain the support of the local masses; and if they emphasized nationality, it was obvious that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would not be able to maintain unity.

By 1990, this situation had intensified, first in the three Baltic countries, then spread to the three South Caucasus countries, and finally to Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The masses accused the Communist Party of the republic of not being an organization of their own nation but only a branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and not serving the local area but serving Moscow. For this reason, many Communists tried their best to express their national identity, clarify their national stance, and try their best to distance themselves from Moscow. This became a fashion.

　　The "Almaty Incident" in December 1986 can be seen as a typical case of the nationalization of the CPSU[4]. The "Almaty Incident" reflects the Kazakh people's defense of the principle of "nationalization of cadres". From this incident, it can be seen that in the eyes of the Kazakhs, their relationship with Moscow is no longer the relationship between the local CPSU branch and the CPSU Central Committee, but the relationship between the Kazakh Communists and the Russian Communists, and the relationship between the Kazakhs and the Russians. On June 22, 1989, the CPSU Central Committee revoked the appointment of the Russian Korbin and selected the former Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic, Kazakh Nazarbayev, as the First Secretary of the Kazakh Central Committee. Gaidar clearly pointed out that the change of candidates showed that "the CPSU Central Committee showed the first signs of decline"[5]. This was not about selecting cadres, but about striking a balance.

　　As the calls for independence from the union republics grew louder, on the one hand, Russian nationalism continued to grow, and on the other hand, the idea of ​​"national equality" was so deeply rooted in the hearts of the people that during the Lithuanian crisis (1990), a Russian Communist in Novosibirsk said, "It is absolutely impossible to have no inter-ethnic Politburo. The federal administration of the country must also be an inter-ethnic government composed of representatives of all 15 union republics, and cannot be monopolized by the Russian Federation alone. Otherwise, it will lead to the disintegration of the party and the state, and we, the Russians, will be responsible for this, not the Lithuanians." [6]

　　From December 19, 1989, when the Communist Party of Lithuania declared independence from the CPSU, to June 19, 1990, when the Communist Party of the Russian Federation was founded, the nationalization of the CPSU was actually completed. It can be said that by this time, the CPSU as a unified political organization no longer existed.

　　On August 17, 1988, the Central Committee of the CPSU announced the program of "The Party's National Policy under Current Conditions". The program proposed that the federal system must be reformed to establish the best relationship between the rights of the republics and the rights of the entire union. However, the program believed that the idea of ​​federalism could not be adopted in principle in terms of party building. However, the new Politburo elected by the Central Committee after the 28th Congress of the CPSU in July 1990 actually introduced federalism into the party.

Table 1 List of members of the Politburo elected at the 28th Congress of the CPSU

Gorbachev (General Secretary, Russian)

Ivashko (Deputy General Secretary, Ukrainian)

Polozkov (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian Federation, Russian)

Gulenko (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Party, Ukrainian)

Sokolov (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Party, Belarusian)

Nazarbayev (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Kazakh Party, Kazakh)

Karimov (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Party, Uzbek)

Masaliyev (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kyrgyz)

Niyazov (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Turkmen Party, Turkmen)

Makhkamov (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Tajik Party, Tajik)

Brokiavičius (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Party, Lithuanian)

Silari (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Estonian Party, Estonian)

Rubiks (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Party, Latvian)

Luchinsky (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Moldavian Party, Moldavian)

Gombalidze (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Georgian Party, Georgian)

Mutalibov (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Party, Azerbaijani)

Movsisyan (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Armenian Party, Armenian)

Zasokhov (Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet, Ossetian)

Prokofiev (First Secretary of the Moscow City Committee, Russian)

Semenova (Editor-in-Chief of Peasant Woman Magazine, Russian)

Stroyev (former secretary of the Central Secretariat, Russian)

Frolov (Editor-in-Chief of Pravda, Russian)

Shenin (First Secretary of the Krasnoyarsk Territory, Russian)

Yanayev (Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, Russian)

As can be seen from the table above, the leaders of the Communist Party of each national republic entered the Politburo, while the leaders of the Soviet Union's central powerful departments, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Chairman of the KGB, and the ministers of the various departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU, did not enter the Politburo.

Thus we see that the Politburo of the 28th CPSU Congress was obviously nationalized and localized, and became a council of princes, losing the ability to control the situation in the whole Soviet Union. It did not quell the contradictions, but intensified them.

　　The Politburo of the 28th CPSU Congress can be compared with the Politburo members elected at the 27th CPSU Congress (1986) in the table below. The Politburo members elected after the 27th Congress were not only much smaller in number, but were almost all officials of the Union and the Central Committee of the CPSU, which ensured the most basic administrative efficiency and prestige of the Central Committee.

Table 2 List of members of the Politburo elected at the 27th Congress of the CPSU

Gorbachev (General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Russian)

Gromyko (Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Russian)

Ligachev (Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Russian)

Ryzhkov (Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Russian)

Vorotnikov (Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Russian)

Solomentsev (Chairman of the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Russian)

Chebrikov (Chairman of the National Security Committee, Russian)

Zaikov (First Secretary of the Leningrad Provincial Committee, Russian)

Guy Aliyev (First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Azerbaijani)

Shevardnadze (Foreign Minister, Georgian)

Kunaev (First Secretary of Kazakhstan, Kazakh)

Shcherbitsky (First Secretary of Ukraine, Ukrainian)

From the subsequent developments in the Soviet Union, in addition to the confusion in the ideological field, the national consciousness of the members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was another important factor in the ideological and organizational divisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The ideology of nationalism has replaced the ideology of Marxism. The Communist Parties of various republics look at the problems of the whole party and the whole country from the perspective and standpoint of their own ethnicity and region. The concept of class, the concept of the unity of the whole party, and the concept of the country have disappeared. Moreover, from 1989 to 1991, the various newly established "democratic" organizations in the Soviet Union were basically marked by ethnicity or region, and the members were limited to one republic or even a smaller area (for example, "Rukh" in Ukraine, "Sayudis" in Lithuania, etc.). There was no political organization across several republics, let alone a political organization across the Soviet Union. Without a national political party, how can there be a unified country?

　　In the Soviet Communist Party, it was generally believed that the main contradiction was between the "reformists" and the "anti-reformists". The two sides were at loggerheads, fighting to the death. However, nationalist forces took advantage of this situation and emerged as a new force. Whether it was the "reformists" or the "anti-reformists", whether it was the "left" or the "right", whether it was the "democrats" or the "conservatives", in the end, they were all conquered by the nationalist trend.

**National issues were also one of the main factors that led to the collapse of the Soviet armed forces.**

　　The Soviet Army was a microcosm of Soviet society. The long-standing ethnic conflicts in Soviet society were bound to be reflected in the army. For a long time, the relationship between soldiers of different ethnic groups in the Soviet Army was far from harmonious. The lowest status was that of soldiers from Central Asia. They had a low level of education and were not good at speaking Russian. Many of them were influenced by Islam to varying degrees. Next were soldiers from the Transcaucasus, followed by soldiers from the Baltic and Moldavia. Russian soldiers were at the top of the pyramid. Some high-tech arms, such as the Air Force, Navy, and Strategic Rocket Forces, were basically dominated by Russian soldiers. The proportion of ethnic minority soldiers in the engineering and infantry corps was relatively high. In order to avoid discrimination and harm, it was very common for soldiers to stick together based on ethnicity. The Soviet Army officers were mainly Russians and Ukrainians, with Ukrainians accounting for about one-third [7]. The proportion of non-Russian officers, especially senior officers, was very small.

　　In the late Soviet Union, due to the decline in the birth rate of Slavs, more and more soldiers came from Central Asia and the Caucasus, which led to the intensification of ethnic issues in the army. If it is said that during most of the Soviet period, the conflicts and discords among soldiers of different nationalities were at best disciplinary and management issues, and at most criminal issues, then in the late Soviet Union, the awakening and spread of national consciousness intensified this phenomenon, and made the simple fighting and cliques in the past political, and began to have political demands. This is a change in nature, which eventually led to the division of the army. Especially among soldiers, because ordinary soldiers are more susceptible to the erosion of national sentiment and religious consciousness.

　　The erosion of the army by ethnic issues is mainly reflected in three areas. First, the rejection and resistance to the Soviet army's entry and the demobilization of soldiers, which is particularly prominent in the three Baltic countries, Moldavia and the South Caucasus. From 1989 to 1991, the Soviet Union experienced a large-scale disarmament and replacement process. Because the Soviet Union unilaterally announced a disarmament of 500,000 in December 1988, and then signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, at the same time, the unification of Germany and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact also forced the Soviet Union to withdraw a large number of troops stationed in Eastern Europe. The number of troops involved in the disarmament and replacement of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s was more than one million. The ethnic republics were repulsive to providing housing for soldiers, arranging jobs for their families, enrolling their children in school, and relocating new troops. There are economic factors in this, after all, the entire Soviet economy was in recession at the time. But in the ethnic republics, national sentiment is the main thing. The republics are mainly worried that the arrival of soldiers and their families will change the local ethnic composition and become tools of Moscow, and will not support local nationalism and separatist movements.

　　The second was the movement of refusing to serve in the military, which started in the three Baltic states and then spread to the whole country. “When an empire’s army cannot effectively recruit new soldiers, the empire itself is in danger.”[8] In connection with the refusal to serve in the military, there was a demand for serving in the local area. The Soviet army’s tradition was to serve in a different place. In the summer of 1989, the Georgian government required Georgian soldiers to serve only in Europe. In December, the Estonian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution that Estonian soldiers could only serve in Estonia. In February 1990, the Latvian Supreme Soviet passed a measure that allowed citizens to choose to serve in the military. In March of the same year, the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution exempting Lithuanian citizens from the obligation to serve in the military and declaring that the Soviet Union’s 1967 Military Service Law no longer applied to Lithuania. Only four of the 15 republics did not take similar measures: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Belarus. In the last few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, conscription has always been a sensitive and anxious issue for the military. Almost every year, it was unable to recruit enough new soldiers, resulting in most Soviet troops being understaffed.

　　The third challenge came from the establishment of independent armed organizations by various ethnic republics. From 1989 to 1991, with the rise of national independence movements, the three Baltic countries, Moldavia, the South Caucasus, and Ukraine all established various forms of national military organizations or paramilitary organizations. In July 1990, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a declaration of sovereignty, one of which was to establish a national army. On January 21, 1991, the Latvian Parliament passed a resolution to establish a special defense force composed of those who refused to serve in the Soviet military. By the end of 1990, almost all ethnic republics had established their own national military organizations. Many of these military organizations were the product of local ethnic conflicts and a manifestation of the fragility of the central state apparatus. Of course, many of these national military organizations were very weak at first, but once the seeds were sown, they would always sprout and grow. In the "Baku Incident" in January 1990, Defense Minister Yazov estimated that there were 40,000 combatants of the Azerbaijan People's Front who confronted the Soviet army. The Azerbaijan People's Front has its own National Defense Committee and General Staff. Its chief of staff, Nuradin Abdullayev, proudly stated: “We have 100,000 militiamen in our ranks. Some of them are in Baku, and some are scattered across the republic. When necessary, we can transfer the Self-Defense Forces from one district to another. If an emergency occurs, we are fully capable of counterattacking or using necessary means.”[9]

　　In response to the growing challenge posed by local ethnic military organizations to the country's armed forces, Gorbachev issued a decree in July 1990 requiring all illegal armed groups to disband within 15 days and their weapons to be confiscated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. If they fail to comply with the order, the Internal Affairs Forces will forcibly disarm them. The General Staff also issued an order requiring the army to cooperate with local governments in implementing the decree. However, the Armenian Parliament immediately rejected Gorbachev's decree. In fact, in the end, no ethnic republic implemented the decree.

　　After the August 19th Incident, a large number of high-ranking officers were replaced, and the army disintegrated rapidly. Telegrams from military regions, fleets, and army groups came in like snowflakes, demanding a solution to the problem of local looting of weapons and seizure of military equipment. All republics tried to nationalize and localize the army. The Ministry of National Defense sent countless working groups to various places, but to no avail.

　　Of course, until the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the national military organizations were still in their initial stages, with a small number of members and no strict training. However, politically and ideologically, they had a great impact on the Soviet army, seriously affecting the morale of the Soviet army and creating a gap between officers and soldiers of different nationalities. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many leaders of national military organizations naturally became the backbone of the national defense forces of the newly independent countries. For example, Dudayev, a former major general of the Soviet Army and winner of the title of "Hero of the Soviet Union", became the president of the Chechen Republic. The process of military division is also the process of national collapse.

**Brothers quarreled within the walls, and foreign aggression loomed. The ethnic issues within the Soviet Union naturally became a natural handle for foreign forces to intervene.**

　　The US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Matlock (1987-1991), advocated that the USSR Constitution clearly stipulate the diplomatic rights of the republics, and that the US should engage in open exchanges with the various republics, including the Russian Federation, without being timid. On this point, the US Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense held the same position. On the issue of relations between the Soviet Central Government and the national republics, Brzezinski once suggested that the United States should implement a dual policy, just as it did in Taiwan. On the one hand, it should maintain normal and formal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Central Government in Moscow. On the other hand, it should take all possible measures to expand the scope of relations with those national republics that are getting rid of the communist ideology and striving to achieve true independence. "The purpose of our development of relations with these republics is to enhance their confidence, consolidate their sense of national identity, and gradually improve their international status." [10] When examining the US government's policy toward the Soviet Union, it actually follows such a dual-track channel.

　　Kryuchkov recalled that when former CIA directors Colby (1973-1975) and Turner (1977-1981) visited the Soviet Union in 1990-1991, their focus was on ethnic issues and the relationship between the various republics.[11]

　　The US government clearly defined the events in the Soviet Union in 1991 as a revolution of a dual nature: an anti-communist revolution and an anti-imperialist revolution[12]. The US policy towards the Soviet Union during this period can be summarized as two goals: to make the Soviet Union's non-communism irreversible; to make the Soviet Union's disintegration irreversible. The former is related to "dramatic change" and the latter is related to "disintegration."

　　External forces exerted influence on the Soviet Union mainly in four ways: creating and provoking ethnic issues, devaluing and demonizing socialist ideology, arms race, economic and technological blockade and trade restrictions. The first of these poses the greatest threat to the integrity of the union. Politically, external forces focus on non-Russian ethnic groups. In terms of activity areas, external forces' activities to separate the Soviet Union are mainly concentrated in the three Baltic countries and Ukraine.

In March 1990, when the Soviet Central Committee announced the implementation of presidential governance in Lithuania, the US government immediately issued a statement linking this with the improvement of relations between the two countries and demanding that the Soviet Central Committee negotiate with the separatist movement. In April, the Soviet Central Committee began to impose economic sanctions on Lithuania, and the United States immediately used the new US-Soviet trade agreement as a weapon of pressure. In January 1991, after bloody clashes between the Lithuanian capital Vilnius and the Latvian capital Riga, the United States announced the postponement of the US-Soviet summit originally scheduled for February.

The European Parliament also suspended the EC's $1 billion emergency food aid plan for the Soviet Union. After the August 19 Incident, the three Baltic countries successively declared independence. The EC immediately recognized them on August 24. On September 2, Bush also announced that the United States recognized the three countries. On September 11, Bush met with the special envoys of the three Baltic countries in the White House and announced the US aid plan. US Secretary of State Baker made a special visit to the newly independent Baltic countries on September 14. On November 27, Bush announced in Washington that if Ukraine decided to become independent from the Soviet Union in the referendum scheduled for December 1, the United States would immediately recognize it. As a result, Ukraine became independent, just as the United States hoped. After the signing of the "Minsk Agreement" on December 8, although it excluded the then Soviet central government and President Gorbachev, no Western country questioned its legitimacy.

　　Judging from the process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, external forces undermined the efforts of some people within the Soviet Union to save the Soviet Union by quickly recognizing the newly independent nation-states one after another and constantly giving these national republics support and confidence.

**National self-determination and national autonomy: the theoretical and institutional roots of the disintegration of the Soviet Union**

　　When talking about the ethnic issues in the Soviet Union, the academic community often mentions Great Russianism, and many people regard it as the main source of the Soviet Union's ethnic issues. In this regard, we need to analyze it dialectically and realistically. The Soviet Union did have the problem of Great Russianism, such as distorting history, not recognizing the foreign conquest and oppression of the Tsarist Russia, and promoting the so-called "liberation" and "voluntary submission"; forcibly promoting agricultural collectivization, causing serious losses in Ukraine and Kazakhstan; the Great Purge in the 1930s, which massacred a large number of ethnic cadres and intellectuals; from 1937 to 1944, more than 20 ethnic minorities were forcibly relocated and exiled from their ancestral homes to Central Asia and Siberia; and the establishment of a single economy in ethnic minority areas, causing their economic development to be abnormal.

　　However, we must also see the other side. During the Soviet period, a lot of useful work was done in developing the economy and culture of ethnic minorities and promoting ethnic unity and integration. For example, universal education, gender equality, weakening religion, encouraging intermarriage, developing the economy, and consciously establishing a complete industrial system and industrial layout across the country.

　　More importantly, the Russian Federation bears the majority of the Union's expenses, supplies cheap energy and resources to other republics, and trains a large number of professional and technical personnel from various ethnic minorities. According to statistics, Russia exports 30 billion rubles more products to other republics each year than it imports. In 1988, 61% of Russia's total profits were turned over to the central government for the development of the entire Soviet Union and other republics[13]. During the disintegration of the Soviet Union, one of the main grievances of the Russian Federation was that it felt that it had acted as the "big cow" of the entire Union, hindering its own development and being treated unfairly, so it also demanded independence. This exacerbated the severity of the problem.

　　In fact, in the last few years of the Soviet Union, the conflicts between non-Russian ethnic groups were no less intense than those between Russians and various ethnic minorities. The conflict between Uzbeks and Turkish Meskheti in the Fergana Valley, the fight between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh Oblast, the dispute between Tajiks and Uzbeks over Samarkand, the confrontation between Georgia and South Ossetia, and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region were all very bloody. Each ethnic group opposed each other, which was the true portrayal of ethnic relations in the late Soviet Union. All of this has nothing to do with Great Russianism, and the reasons can only be found in the Soviet Union's ethnic system and ethnic policies.

　　Speaking of Great Russianism, in fact, the United States also has the problem of Great Whiteness in history, which is what the American academic community calls WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Puritan), that is, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Historically, the United States has made no fewer policy mistakes on ethnic issues than the Soviet Union, such as: the genocide policy against Indians; the long-term slavery and racial segregation system against blacks; and the historical discrimination and persecution of people of color such as Chinese, Japanese, and Jews. However, the United States of America has not split.

　　It can be seen that it is one-sided to explain the Soviet Union's national issues only with Great Russianism. The Soviet Union had the problem of Great Russianism and the problem of suppressing Russianism. And it was the latter point that finally caused a strong backlash from the Russian Federation. Yeltsin's coming to power was inseparable from his firm advocacy of maintaining Russia's rights. The complexity of the Soviet Union's national issues lies in the fact that there are both traditional Great Russianism factors and the superposition of various wrong policies later. Among them, the Soviet Communist Party's idea of ​​national self-determination and the system of national autonomy are the key to the problem. The concept of "national self-determination" can be said to be a modern idea. In this concept, the nation and the state are unified, and every nation has the right to determine its own destiny and form its own country. This concept was emphasized by Lenin and Wilson in the early 20th century. Lenin said that national liberation is part of class liberation and the liberation of all mankind. As soon as the October Revolution was victorious, the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" and the "Letter to All Muslim Working People in Russia and the East" were promulgated, proposing that the Soviet Russian nations "enjoy the right to self-determination and even to separate and organize independent states." During the Paris Peace Conference after World War I, Wilson proposed the Fourteen Points of Peace, which included "national self-determination".

　　From the perspective of modern history, “national self-determination” originally refers to the issue of national rights under colonial rule, foreign occupation or feudal monarchy. It does not refer to specific blood groups, but more to regional groups, such as the Italians’ rebellion against the Habsburg monarchy, the Greeks and Serbs’ rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, and even the anti-Dutch uprising in Indonesia. It has a specific historical background and implementation restrictions. “However, the subsequent development of nationalism not only emphasizes political rights, but also emphasizes blood, language and other characteristics as markers of national identity, that is, ethnic nationalism, which has increasingly become negative.”[14]

　　Academician Alexeev of the Russian Academy of Sciences once pointed out that at the end of the 19th century, the awareness of the right of national self-determination among the various ethnic groups in Russia increased, forcing the Bolsheviks to write the principle of national self-determination into the party's program. The same provision was made when the Soviet Union was founded in 1922. Since then, the issue of national self-determination has become a time bomb in Soviet politics and ethnic affairs.[15]

　　As early as the beginning of the 19th century, some "Decembrists" had clearly pointed out that when establishing administrative divisions in the future, Russia should not establish administrative divisions based on ethnicity, but should establish multi-ethnic integrated states. Otherwise, it will eventually lead to the disintegration of the Russian state.

　　Lenin was also originally opposed to federalism. "Marxism is incompatible with nationalism, even the most 'just,' 'pure,' refined and civilized nationalism." [16] "Marxists are opposed to federalism and decentralization for the simple reason that capitalism, for its own development, requires a state that is as large and as centralized as possible. Other conditions being equal, the conscious proletariat will always insist on building a larger state." "The extensive and rapid development of capitalist productive forces requires a vast territory that is united and unified into a state. Only in such a territory can the bourgeoisie - and its inevitable and mortal enemy, the proletariat - unite and eliminate all ancient, medieval, class, narrow-minded, ethnic, religious and other barriers." "In the case of a unified state composed of various different nations, and precisely because of this situation, Marxists will never advocate any federal principle or any decentralization. A large centralized state is a great historical step from the decentralized state of the Middle Ages to the future socialist unity of the world." [17]

　　After the October Revolution, when foreign enemies invaded, ethnic regions declared independence, and the Bolshevik regime was in turmoil, Lenin changed his view and advocated national federalism and "concessions" by large nations to small nations in exchange for the rapid establishment and stability of the country. "The internationalism of oppressed nations or so-called 'great' nations should not only abide by formal equality, but also have a kind of inequality, that is, the inequality of compensation given by oppressed nations and large nations." [18] In April 1923, the 17th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) supported Lenin's view. Bukharin said, "Only by implementing such a policy, that is, only by artificially placing ourselves in a lower position than others and paying such a price, can we win the true trust of the formerly oppressed nations." [19]

　　Stalin advocated that Ukraine and other countries join the Russian Federation as autonomous republics. However, Lenin and Lenin agreed on the principles of national self-determination and national autonomy, and the only difference was at what political level national autonomy should be implemented.

**Ultimately, the Soviet Union was established in accordance with Lenin's ideas. From the beginning, the Soviet Union's ethnic policy had two serious institutional risks, which became clearer as time went on.**

　　First, the constitution stipulates that the Union republics have sovereignty and the right to withdraw from the Union. Article 4 of Chapter 2 of the 1924 Constitution of the Soviet Union stipulates that "each Union republic reserves the right to freely withdraw from the Union." Article 6 stipulates that "the territory of each Union republic may not be changed without the consent of each republic. The amendment, restriction or abolition of Article 4 of the above-mentioned Constitution shall require the consent of all the republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." [20] These provisions actually make it impossible to adjust the republic's borders and the right to withdraw from the Union. The 1924 Constitution also stipulates that the republics have "sovereignty." Article 17 of the 1936 Constitution states that "each Union republic has the right to freely withdraw from the Soviet Union." Article 18 states that "the territory of each Union republic may not be changed without the consent of each republic. Each Union republic has the right to have direct relations with foreign countries, to sign agreements with them, and to exchange diplomatic representatives and consuls. Each Union republic may organize its own army." [21] Article 72 of the 1977 Constitution states that each Union republic reserves the right to freely withdraw from the Soviet Union. Article 78 states that the territory of a Union republic may not be changed without its consent. Article 80 states that the Union Republic has the right to establish relations with foreign countries, to conclude treaties with foreign countries, to exchange diplomatic and consular representatives, and to participate in the activities of international organizations.[22] The Union Republic has sovereignty and can have direct relations with foreign countries, which obviously conflicts with the sovereignty principle of a modern country.

　　Second, the structure and composition of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was defined by ethnic identity. From 1936 to 1988, the Supreme Soviet consisted of the Union Council and the National Council, both of which had equal rights. Representatives of the Union Council were elected in constituencies with equal populations, while members of the National Council came from various ethnic units. The 1936 Soviet Constitution stipulated that the distribution of representatives of the National Council was: 25 from the Union Republics, 11 from the Autonomous Republics, 5 from the Autonomous Regions, and 1 from the Autonomous Regions. The 1977 Constitution increased the number of representatives of the Union Republics to 32. The essence of these provisions is to allocate seats in the legislature according to ethnic identity and bloodline.

　　The Soviet Constitution, as amended in December 1988, stipulated that the Soviet People's Congress would be established as the highest organ of state power in the Soviet Union, and the former highest organ of state power, the Soviet Supreme Soviet, would be changed into a permanent organ of state power in the Soviet Union. The Soviet People's Congress was composed of 2,250 people's deputies. Among them, 750 deputies were elected from regions according to population ratio; 750 deputies were elected from ethnic regions according to the following quotas: 32 deputies from each union republic, 11 deputies from each autonomous republic, 5 deputies from each autonomous state, and 1 deputie from each autonomous region; the remaining 750 deputies were elected from national social groups in the Soviet Union. This practice of designating seats for deputies according to ethnic blood continued. As a result, the proportion of ethnic representatives in the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union was obviously too high, and ethnic demands were strong. When the discipline and constraints of the party were weakened, ethnic sentiment naturally prevailed. From 1985 to 1991, a series of laws that shook the Soviet system could be frequently proposed and successfully passed, and a series of resolute measures were difficult to implement, which was closely related to the composition mechanism and representative composition of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union.

　　Judging from the Soviet practice, ethnic autonomy has faced inevitable inherent contradictions since the beginning. First, the normal relationship between the central and local governments is often mixed with ethnic factors. Second, there are contradictions between non-ethnic autonomous regions and ethnic autonomous regions. Third, there are contradictions between autonomous ethnic groups and non-autonomous ethnic groups within autonomous regions.

　　When discussing the negative effects of this principle of defining nation-building based on ethnicity, Dr. V.I. Kozlov, a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, pointed out that this practice is "in principle incompatible with guaranteeing equal rights to all Soviet citizens, since ethnic groups within their borders cannot dream of obtaining the priority status of 'named' nations, as reflected, for example, in resolutions on the 'indigenization' of state institutions.[23]

　　Members of non-autonomous ethnic groups in ethnic autonomous areas, feeling that they were not treated equally, moved out one after another, making the ethnic distribution in ethnic autonomous areas more unbalanced, leading to stronger ethnic bloodline consciousness and xenophobia. Non-ethnic autonomous areas are also often dissatisfied with the preferential treatment and concessions given to ethnic autonomous areas. During the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, where Russians are the majority, unilaterally declared sovereignty in order to align with the various ethnic republics, established a complete set of Russian federal state teams, completely hollowed out the Soviet central state apparatus, and competed with the central government of the union for financial, military, and administrative power, making the situation more complicated and ultimately irreversible.

　　Judging from the actual situation in the Soviet Union, the most fundamental disadvantage of national autonomy is that it is conducive to the formation of narrow national identity and blood identity, but is not conducive to the formation of national identity, ethnic identity[24] and cultural identity. Now it seems that Lenin's plan was determined by the historical conditions at the time. It was intended to ensure the survival of the newly born red regime, avoid disputes in various regions, and quickly establish a socialist superpower to resist external subversion and interference. At the same time, it could be used as a model to show the world the new type of proletarian ethnic relations and promote Lenin's imagined "world revolution". It can be said that it is temporary and a compromise. Moreover, the process of establishment was very hasty, and it is difficult to say that there are any objective standards and strict scientificity in the identification of union republics and autonomous republics. For example, why can't Tatarstan and Chechnya-Ingushetia be union republics but only autonomous republics?

　　The concept of "nation" itself is illusory, and it does not have a strict scientific boundary. Lenin and Wilson emphasized "national liberation" and "national self-determination" in the past, more in response to the special situation after World War I, targeting old colonial empires such as Britain, France and Germany, and not excluding diplomatic strategic considerations. If later scholars and politicians naively believe in these propositions, or even rashly apply the idea of ​​"national self-determination" to a country that already has a mature national identity and national identity, it will cause great harm. The problem of the Soviet Union is due to this.

　　Judging from the situation in Eastern Europe, the three countries that implemented the system of national autonomy: the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia all experienced national disintegration, the demise of the party and the country. This is by no means accidental. Because in terms of the choice of system, it was wrong from the beginning. Later, it was found that too much was given, and it was suppressed and attacked through non-legal means and through the practice of Great Russianism, going to the other extreme. After the consolidation of the Soviet state, the ethnic policy should have been adjusted and the system of national autonomy should have been changed. But Stalin used force to make the national issue temporarily less prominent. In the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era, it was naively believed that a new historical community had been formed in the Soviet Union - the "Soviet people", and the friendship between the people of all ethnic groups was unbreakable, so there was no need to make adjustments.

　　The federal system of the Soviet Union is different from the federal systems of most countries such as the United States and Germany. Its biggest feature is that it is based on ethnic divisions rather than geographical divisions. Therefore, we generally call it ethnic federalism. If we are sensitive enough, we can find that the federal system of the Soviet Union is very similar to the feudal system of ancient Chinese dynasties. The only difference is that in this system, "princes" are replaced by "ethnic groups".

　　The origin of federalism is that the member units of the federation existed before the federal state. For example, in the United States, there were 13 colonies in North America before the United States of America. In the Soviet Union, there are actually two situations. One is that at the level of the whole union, many of its member units did exist before the federal state, such as the three Baltic countries, the three South Caucasus countries and Ukraine. These republics briefly gained independence after the February Revolution or the October Revolution in 1917. The second situation is that in Central Asia, especially within the Russian Federation, most of the many ethnic autonomous republics, autonomous regions and autonomous regions in the Russian Federation were gradually identified and established after the establishment of the central government of the union. So, we see a strange phenomenon. In Central Asia, in the Russian Federation, a central government is artificially preparing federal conditions and artificially creating a federal state in accordance with the principles and legislative provisions of the federal system.

　　After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this phenomenon of "republicification", that is, unilaterally declaring the establishment of a republic and demanding the same rights as other ethnic republics, continued to spread within the Russian Federation. For example, in 1993, Sverdlovsk Oblast declared itself the "Ural Republic", Chelyabinsk Oblast declared itself the "South Ural Republic", and so on. Of course, some regions are not really seeking to secede from the federation, but are just venting their dissatisfaction and demanding equal treatment.

　　The ethnic issues in the Soviet Union can be compared with those in the United States. The history of the United States is shorter than that of Russia, and the history and concept of the nation-state are not as well formed as in Russia. The United States was a country before the states, and has a strong tradition of local autonomy. In terms of national identity, the innate conditions are not stronger than those of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the ethnic composition of the United States is even more complex than that of the Soviet Union.

　　Today, the United States does not have a black state, an Indian state, or a Jewish state. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives will not allocate seats based on ethnicity, artificially ensuring that each ethnic group has its representative. The total number of U.S. senators is 100, with 2 from each state, which is strictly stipulated according to region. The number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives is determined by the population of each state. The federal system of the United States implements a kind of local autonomy rather than ethnic autonomy. This right of local autonomy and the national rights of the federal government have clear legal definitions, ensuring that local governments cannot interfere in national affairs within the scope of sovereignty. The words on the U.S. national emblem are "E Pluribus Unum". In 1861, in order to respond to the challenge of independence from the southern states, the United States specially formulated the "Anti-Secession Act" to strengthen the union.

　　Although various drawbacks were exposed in the process of implementation, the national autonomy based on the national republics has never been adjusted. "In the Soviet Union, the federal system, as a concession policy, temporarily gained the support of other ethnic groups and consolidated the union state, but at the same time, it also left room for national separatism." [25] Lenin's plan made the Soviet Union a success, but also buried it in the end. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation was established. It is a mixed federal state. Its members are based on both ethnic and regional principles. This mixed federal system is the legacy of the Soviet Union, and Russia has not gotten rid of it. Such a federal system itself has huge contradictions and hidden dangers. The demands for independence from autonomous republics such as Chechnya and Tatar followed.

　　The Russian government also recognized the problems of this federal system, and took a series of measures to remedy them, both during the Yeltsin and Putin periods. The new constitution of 1993 clearly stipulates that the ethnic republics do not have the right of self-determination to withdraw from the federation; the Russian Federation enjoys sovereignty over all its territories, and the republics do not have sovereignty; the Constitution and laws of the Russian Federation are superior to the laws of the republics; and the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation is guaranteed. After Putin came to power, the Russian Federation also abolished and merged some federal entities; established a new level of institution between the state and the federal subjects on a territorial basis - the federal district, and sent presidential plenipotentiary representatives to the federal district; prohibited members of the Federation Council, the upper house of the parliament, from holding local positions at the same time; weakened the authority of the leaders of the federal subjects, and changed direct elections to appointments and removals by the central government.

　　Putin's measures are aimed at strengthening the power base of individuals or the ruling party, and also at enhancing national cohesion. We should not ignore the latter point in particular. In 2004, Putin said: "Back in the Soviet era, people talked about a unified community - the Soviet people. There was a certain reason for saying this. I think today we have every reason to say that the Russian people are a unified nation. In my opinion, there is something that connects us all. People of different races and religions in Russia feel that they are a truly unified people. We should maintain and consolidate our national historical unity." [26] Putin's measures have played a certain role. However, these remedial measures are incomplete because the system of national autonomy itself has not been touched, and the essence of the federal state composed of ethnic federal entities has not changed. The Russian state will still face acute problems brought about by ethnic federalism in the future.

**The key to the disintegration of the Soviet Union was political issues, and the core of political issues was ethnic issues.**

　　There is a view in the academic community that the situation in which the various ethnic republics rose up in rebellion under the Soviet Union was the result of "federal deformation", that is, the failure to implement the provisions and clauses of the federal system. The Soviet Union was called a federal system, but in reality it was a unitary system, which aroused dissatisfaction among the republics.

　　This understanding is only partially correct. The Soviet federal system does have a false side. It can be called a "legal federal system", that is, all rights seem to remain on paper. But the question is, why did this superficial federal system, a unitary system in reality, eventually lead to the disintegration of the country? Doesn't a unitary country have stronger control? In fact, the Soviet federal system has a deformed side and a real side. The constitutional provisions on the sovereignty of national republics and the right to withdraw from the union, the state's mandatory provisions on the identities of some officials and parliamentarians, and the state's various preferential treatments for ethnic minorities are all real. In the late Soviet Union, when the unified Soviet Communist Party was fragile and internally disturbed; when the balancing ability of the central government of the union was slightly insufficient and the external temptation was great enough, this superficial federal system became a veritable federal system. All regulations were activated and all rights were implemented. The final disintegration of the Soviet Union was not due to "federal deformation" but because of "federal implementation."

　　Some people believe that the inadequate handling of ethnic issues was one of the important reasons for the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but it was not the most important or fundamental reason. The failure of the Soviet Union to develop its economy, especially the serious lag of the people’s living standards and quality compared with capitalist countries, was the most fundamental reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Roy Medvedev believes that “it is not nationalism and separatism that led to the failure of the reform, as some ‘reform designers’ believe. On the contrary, it was the mistakes in reform ideas and designs, the domestic economic and financial crisis, the loss of political will, and the paralysis of the state and the central government of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that fueled nationalism and separatism. As the Soviet Union’s economic situation continued to deteriorate, such an illusion arose that as long as it became independent from Moscow, people’s lives would be stable and prosperous.”[27]

　　In fact, no matter how serious the economic problems are, no matter how failed the economic policies are, no matter how sharply the people's living standards decline, it will not lead to the disintegration or division of a country. At most, the government will collapse, the political parties will rotate (such as in most countries in the modern world) and the dynasties will change (such as the dynasties in ancient China). The country's territory will not change much, and the people's national identity will not be shaken. In fact, the vast majority of Eastern European countries (except Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which implemented the same ethnic federal system as the Soviet Union) did not change their territories after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Poland is still Poland, Hungary is still Hungary, and Bulgaria is still Bulgaria. It's just that the country's political system has changed, and the so-called "democrats" or "opposition" have come to power. In fact, it is normal for a country's economic development to rise and fall. The Soviet Union had a period of rapid development, and its economy stagnated after the 1980s. This kind of cyclical economic development has also occurred in Western countries. However, if economic stagnation or economic crisis finally leads to the complete division of the country, there must be other reasons.

　　Gates, an American expert on Soviet issues and former CIA director (1991-1993), also mentioned: "In the end, it was not the economy that accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union, although it did play a big role, but the determination of various ethnic groups to separate, especially the Ukrainians, and finally the Russians themselves, who abandoned the Soviet system and the Union government." [28] The disintegration of the Soviet Union was not an economic issue, but a political issue, and the core of this political issue was the ethnic issue. The long-term and unremitting promotion of ethnic identification, national self-determination and national autonomy laid the biggest root cause of the disintegration of the Soviet state.

　　From the above analysis, we can draw several basic conclusions: First, the nationality issue is the fundamental and main reason for the Soviet Union's demise. The root of the Soviet Union's nationality issue is the idea of ​​national self-determination and the system of national autonomy, and the highest form of national autonomy is national federalism.

　　Second, judging from the Soviet practice, the system of national distinction and national autonomy does have a negative impact on national identity and national unity.

　　Third, the country's important political system, the administrative division system, should be a unitary system rather than a pluralistic system. Too complex administrative divisions are not conducive to the effective administration of the central government.

　　Fourth, from a long-term historical perspective, no ethnic policy is the best ethnic policy. Policies of ethnic concessions and preferential treatment, as well as policies of ethnic discrimination and oppression, are not conducive to national stability and unity and the harmonious coexistence of the people.

　　Notes:

　　[1] For discussions on the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the ethnic issues, see: Elena C. Doncos, The Falling Empire: National Resistance in the Soviet Union, Xinhua Publishing House, 1982; Zhao Changqing, The Disintegration of the Soviet Union from an Ethnic Perspective, Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, No. 5, 1998; Hao Shiyuan et al., eds., National Crisis and the Disintegration of the Union, Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1993; Gregory Gleason, Federalism and Nationalism: The Struggle for Republic Rights in the USSR (Colorado: Westview, 1990); Ma Rong, Reflections on the Effectiveness of the Soviet Nationality Policy, Leaders, No. 35-36.

　　[2] In the preface of the book The Collapse of a Superpower: An Analysis of the Causes of the Disintegration of the Soviet Union, it is mentioned that: “Although disintegration and drastic change are related, they are not the same thing after all. One refers to the change of social system, and the other refers to the change of state organizational structure. In addition to the common causes related to drastic change, disintegration also has its own special causes. Even if there are common causes, the analytical perspectives and the end points of the discussion are different.” This understanding is very accurate.

　　[3]Jack F. Matlock, Jr., Autopsy on an Empire. New York: Random House, 1995. p. 630～631.

　　[4] In December 1986, Gorbachev dismissed the Kazakh First Secretary Kunaev and appointed the Russian Korbin as the new First Secretary. On December 16, a rally took place in Almaty, with the crowd shouting slogans such as "Every ethnic group should be led by its own people" and clashing with Soviet military and police. This was the Almaty Incident.

　　[5] Gaidar, The Collapse of Empire: Lessons for Contemporary Russia, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2008, p. 221.

　　[6] Mikhail Gorbachev, Memoirs of Mikhail Gorbachev, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2003, p. 1269.

　　[7]William Walker, “Nuclear Weapons and the Former Soviet Republics,” International Affairs, vol. 68, no. 2 (Apr 1992), p. 263.

　　[8]William E. Odom, the Collapse of the Soviet Military. Yale University Press, 1998, p. 272.

　　[9] N.I. Ryzhkov, The Tragedy of a Great Power: Causes and Consequences of the Disintegration of the Soviet Union, Xinhua Publishing House, 2008, p. 103.

　　[10]Zbigniew Brzezinski, “the Taiwan Solution,” Washington Post, March 4, 1991, pA13.

　　[11] Vladimir Kryuchkov, Personal File: The Prison Account of the Chairman of the Soviet KGB, Oriental Publishing House, 2000, p. 80.

　　[12]James Baker, “America and the Collapse of the Soviet Empire: What Has to Be Done,” US Department of State Dispatch, Dec 16, 1991, p.891. James Baker, speech at Princeton University, December 16, 1991.

　　[13]Hao Shiyuan and Ruan Xihu, eds., Ethnic Issues and Ethnic Policies in the Contemporary World, p. 26.

　　[14] See Cheng Yawen, “National Self-determination: A Modern Proposition That Requires Reflection,” Global Times, April 18, 2008.

　　[15] Ding Jianding, “Regionalism, Ethnic Issues and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union: Academician Alexeev of the Russian Academy of Sciences on the Main Reasons for the Disintegration of the Soviet Union”, World Ethnic Groups, No. 3, 2000.

　　[16] Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, in The Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. 24, People’s Publishing House, 1990, p. 136.

　　[17] Ibid., pp. 148–149.

　　[18] Lenin: “On the National Question or on “Automation””, quoted from N. I. Ryzhkov, The Tragedy of a Great Power: Causes and Consequences of the Collapse of the Soviet Union, Xinhua Publishing House, 2008, p. 69.

　　[19] N.I. Ryzhkov, The Tragedy of a Great Power: Causes and Consequences of the Disintegration of the Soviet Union, pp. 69-70.

　　[20] Institute of Soviet and East European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Policy Research Office of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, ed., Selected Documents on Ethnic Issues in the Soviet Union, Social Sciences Academic Press, 1987, p. 111.

　　[21] Ibid., p. 147.

　　[22]Ibid., p. 380.

　　[23] National Translation Series, No. 4, 1994.

　　[24] For the concept of nation, see Ren Junfeng, Regionalism and National Identity: An Analysis of Regional Structure in American Political Development, Tianjin People’s Publishing House, 2004, pp. 4-6 and 242-259.

　　[25]Gregory Gleason, Federalism and Nationalism: the Struggle for Republic Rights in the USSR (Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1990), p.5.

　　[26] Putin, Collected Works of Putin, Chinese Social Sciences Press, 2008, p. 80.

　　[27] Roy Medvedev, The Last Year of the Soviet Union, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005, p. 229.

　　[28]Robert M. Gates, From the Shadows: the Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War. New York: Simon &Schuster Paperbacks, 2006), p.535.