

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE NEW WORLD ORDER?

As we enter the last decade of the millennium, we find ourselves at a pivotal point in world history. The bipolar competition that has undergirded international politics for nearly half a century has collapsed, giving way to a period of transition in which the scaffolding of the next world order is being constructed.

The stunning breadth and pace of change has been overwhelming. Events that were unimaginable even five years ago have become commonplace. The unfortunate result is that many political observers and policymakers have been reduced to quibbling about what has *not* happened, while at times ignoring the ramifications of what already has. For example, although recent events in the Soviet Union warrant skepticism about the pace of further reform, they hardly justify cynicism regarding the permanence of changes that have occurred in that country and throughout the world. Similarly, those who point to the Gulf War as evidence that the "new" world order bears a striking resemblance to the old, overlook the unprecedented exercise of international cooperation.

Whatever direction events take in the next decade, the world will never return to the status quo *ante bellum frigidum*. And while the emerging world order will no doubt contain elements of its predecessors, its departure from cold war strictures and consequent potential for dynamic change will certainly be new.

In order to gain some insight into the effect these developments will have on the international system in the next decade and beyond, the editors of *The Fletcher Forum* asked each of our authors to identify current trends in his given area of expertise and extrapolate predictions from them. George Quester leads off with an overview of post-cold war issues. Brad Roberts posits the universal appeal of democracy and contends that democratization will enhance stability. Daniel Nelson questions the utility of realpolitik and proposes an alternative method of ensuring international security. Benjamin Cohen argues that economic relations among the industrialized countries will remain cohesive despite friction caused by the decline of US economic power and the absence of a common external threat. David Forsythe details the growing international focus on human rights, and argues that it will encroach upon but not erode national sovereignty. And Leon Gordenker uses the United Nations system as a case study of the evolving role of international organization.

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