

# Murderous legacy of the dragon

**W**HAT "New World Order"? As more sober-minded world watchers predicted back in 1989, when the "old" world order collapsed along with the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War was unlikely to bring about everlasting peace. And they were right.

The all-encompassing East-West conflict is over, but that bloodless, ritualised duel between the US and the Soviet Union has given way to lots of real wars around the globe. The dragon is dead, but now we must slay an army of snakes. Beyond the sound and the fury, the Cold War was not for real. Yes, there were lots of nuclear weapons, and occasionally the two superpowers would snarl at each other across the divide. They even fought proxy wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan. But they never fought each other because they understood only too well the basic message of the nuclear age: whoever shoots first, dies second.

So both superpowers took care not to approach the brink. That also required them to rein in allies and clients who might drag their patrons into an existential battle with each other. In an intact bipolar world, Saddam Hussein would never have attacked a US possession like Kuwait. His sponsors and armourers, the Soviets, would have said "nyet".

In short, the bipolar conflict was also a bipolar order – the longest and most stable peace in the history of the modern state system. The Cold War is over because the Soviet Union has self-destructed. But it is hardly a paradox to state the obvious. Precisely

## Josef Joffe on why Germany should not have a seat on the UN Security Council

*because the dragon is dead, the snakes are having a field day.*

Look around. The "New World Order" was launched with a bang when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. Since then, war has broken out in the Balkans and between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The war in Angola is back. There is real war in Somalia and latent war in Cambodia. There is civil war in Georgia.

On the other side of the ledger is a peace-making machine strained to breaking point. Last week, the UN Security Council finally authorised the use of force to protect the beleaguered Muslim enclaves in Bosnia. But who will send in the troops? The British? No, they have already fielded more than enough. The French? Ditto. The US? Sorry, no ground troops.

So why not spread the burden? This was precisely the idea of the US ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright. Last week she proposed on behalf of the Clinton administration that two new permanent members be admitted to the council: Japan and Germany.

At first sight this looks like a splendid idea. First, the sorely underfunded UN peacekeeping machine could tap the coffers of two of the richest nations in the world. Second, with Japan and Germany in the council they might be more forthcoming with peacekeeping troops. Third, the idea has a ring of practical justice. Japan and Germany are great powers in



Balkan tragedy: the UN is losing the battle for peace in Bosnia

all but name. Therefore they should be given status commensurate with their clout. On closer inspection, though, the idea has two flaws. The most critical is that neither Japan nor Germany is capable of shouldering the responsibilities that go with knighthood in New York.

Japan's constitution forbids – in the strictest terms – even the existence of an army. Germany's constitution is far more permissive but this week the Social Democratic opposition has sued Helmut Kohl's centre-right government over 250 men sent to Somalia in a non-combat role. It claims that the constitution prohibits military action save in self or alliance defence.

The moral is simple: nations unwilling to shoulder the burden should not be elevated to the quasi-world government of the UN Security Council. Without responsibility, no special status.

Nor have Japan and Germany shown any special eagerness to assume responsibility for the rest of the world. They behave – for good historical reasons – like classical small powers who prefer to benefit from the order built by others than contribute blood and treasure to it.

The second flaw has to do with numbers. Yes, there is something anachronistic about the notion that the victorious powers of the Second World War will run the world forever. But assume that the five turn into seven. If justice is thus served, then why stop with Germany and Japan? Surely India, Brazil and

Nigeria, all big and populous, could then claim a permanent seat too, and with the added justification that the Third World deserves representation in this club dominated by rich and/or white nations?

With ten rather than five veto powers, "proportional representation" would be enhanced. But could we say the same about the power to act? It is difficult enough to get the five to decide unanimously. How much more difficult would it be when ten must reach agreement? Justice and fairness will thus be bought at the price of a far greater probability of stalemate. And that can hardly serve the cause of a "new world order".

Let's not put the cart before the horse. Let Tokyo and Bonn show that they are willing to shoulder the burdens of world peace, not just with money but also with men. Let them *earn* their generals' stars and then we can talk about promotion. But even in this case, which seems a good many years off, we will have to think carefully about the dilemma of enlargement versus cohesion.

The world is a fractious place. If the choice is between fair representation and unity of purpose then let us opt for the latter. The "New World Disorder" is trouble enough. To turn the Security Council into a mini General Assembly will salve the pride of Japan and others, but it will not make peace enforcement easier.

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