

that crisis had fundamental disagreements, they in fact began from the same premise that the conflict was caused by personal hatreds and animosities that they labeled ethnic. The black-and-white portrayal of ethnic conflict that characterized discussion of the Yugoslav case is, in fact, an understandable and potent way to generate sympathy and mobilize loyalties and support for action, particularly when there are clearly innocent victims of armed aggression and when the weaponry of late twentieth-century warfare is so destructive and in abundant supply. This tendency is reinforced by the effects of global interdependence on the formulation of domestic foreign policy. Political and intellectual migration has made ethnic lobbies of émigrés potent single-interest groups in major capitals. The global mass media can truly internationalize the tactics of local contests through vivid televised images of human cruelty and through the use of apparently familiar religious, racial, and cultural symbols. The resulting empathy and personal identification are more influential than the less governments see a strategic interest to define early action because foreign policy is then more vulnerable to the domestic electoral calculations of governing parties and the political pressures of legislative assemblies.

The definition of the Yugoslav crisis as ethnic conflict was a major source of the quicksand into which intervention fell. Although they were accused of excusing the crimes of nationalist demagogues, those who held the view that this was ethnic conflict and civil war ran into difficulty because they accepted the argument of nationalists, giving credence to the war propaganda of politicians and generals who sought national states and accepted the necessity of war to that end. Those who insisted that this was not civil war but external aggression were drawn increasingly toward the same conclusion—an ethnically defined solution in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Croatia, because they defined that aggression and its victims ethnically—Serbs against Bosnian Muslims or Croats. But by giving in to an ethnic account of the conflict and defending only one nation in a multinational context, proponents of the aggression theory abandoned the non-ethnic understanding and constitutional mechanisms necessary to protect that group (and all citizens in general) against discrimination, expulsion, and death on the basis of their ethnicity/nationality.¹³

That these wars are a form of aggression is indisputable. But the focus on aggression diverts attention from its immediate cause—the breakup of a country and the contest over the location of new frontiers—and from the role that the United States and European powers together played in that process in 1990–92. And while the distinction between external and internal aggression and between aggressive and defensive military action may be the only perch for international actors who seek to hold to international norms those responsible for the atrocities, detention camps, and forced

migrations, it is of very little use in influencing behavior when the driving political dynamic is nationalism. In order to combine moral principles with effective policy, the interactive character of competing nationalisms cannot be ignored, and the escalatory spiral of defensive perception and aggressive behavior must be counteracted to stop the violence.

The counterintuitive character of such a dynamic can be seen particularly in the outcome of the argument that such aggression in the Yugoslav case was the plan of one man, Slobodan Milošević. This argument ignores the conditions that make such leaders possible and popular and therefore also ignores the policies necessary to end their rule. It also led people to ascribe so much power to the man that foreign governments came to rely on him to end the wars and therefore could not risk his fall from power even while they accused him of crimes against humanity. Why did Yugoslav society take the turn it did at the end of the 1980s? Why did the economic and political reform of a socialist country bring nationalists to the fore in most of its regions? Why is the dynamic in the former Yugoslavia so similar to that seen elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and in parts of Africa?

The Argument in Brief

The real origin of the Yugoslav conflict is the disintegration of governmental authority and the breakdown of a political and civil order. This process occurred over a prolonged period. The conflict is not a result of historical animosities and it is not a return to the precommunist past; it is the result of the politics of transforming a socialist society to a market economy and democracy. A critical element of this failure was economic decline, caused largely by a program intended to resolve a foreign debt crisis. More than a decade of austerity and declining living standards corroded the social fabric and the rights and securities that individuals and families had come to rely on. Normal political conflicts over economic resources between central and regional governments and over the economic and political reforms of the debt-repayment package became constitutional conflicts and then a crisis of the state itself among politicians who were unwilling to compromise. Such a contest over fundamentally different views of the role of government and its economic powers would be fought between competing political parties in parliamentary and democratic regimes. But in this transitional, one-party, but highly decentralized federation, the contestants were government leaders fighting to retain or enhance their political jurisdictions and public property rights over economic resources within their territories. The more they quarreled, the more they contributed to the incapacity and declining authority of the central gov-

ernment to regulate and to resolve those conflicts over economic rights and political powers of subordinate governments.

This story would be incomplete and might easily have had a quite different outcome, however, if the internal events had not been accompanied by a disintegration of the international order in which the country found its place. As is characteristic of small states, the domestic order of socialist Yugoslavia was strongly influenced by its place in the international order: its geopolitical location, its patterns of trade and foreign alliances, and the requirements of participation in the international economy and its various organizations. The viability of the Yugoslav regime, in fact, depended on its foreign position and a policy of national independence and nonalignment tied to the organization of the cold war world. By the 1960s that viability had also come to depend on access to foreign credits and capital markets on the basis of Yugoslavia's strategic position in the Balkans and its independent foreign policy. The process that brought the cold war to an end challenged and undermined that strategic significance, the role of the Yugoslav army, and the country's alternative markets in the East and in the third world without providing any new bases for security and domestic political and economic viability.

In the collapse of Yugoslavia the link between these two processes, the domestic and the international, is the state. The global campaign of major powers and financiers during the 1980s to promote economic liberalization had as a premise the idea that states had taken on too much control in managing their economies during the stagflationary conditions of the world economy during the 1970s. Economic revival required liberalization, privatization, and cuts in public expenditures for welfare, public employment, and social services. At the same time anticommunists within communist-ruled countries and in the West were declaring the problem of socialism to be the power of their states—so-called totalitarian control and overweening bureaucracies. The West's euphoria over the collapse of communist states and its insistence on market reform, privatization, and slashed budgets as conditions for economic aid and trade paid little regard to the alternative hypotheses—that the crisis of these countries grew from governments that were too weak; that to achieve the prescribed reforms required an extremely effective administrative capacity; that foreign creditors will lend only to governments that guarantee repayment; and that foreign investors demand favorable governmental regulations and political stability.

The more unstable an international order, the more governments must resume responsibility for external defense and for negotiating foreign trade and the conditions for it on which all modern economies depend. Radical reorientation to market demand of exports and production cannot occur without new investment for structural adjustments, and successful open-

market economies require a centralized capacity for macroeconomic policy. Entrepreneurship and civil freedoms depend on a context of civil order, predictability, and individual security.

Economic reforms such as those demanded of Yugoslavia by foreign creditors and Western governments ask for political suicide: they require governments to reduce their own powers. They also do so at the same time that the demands on governments, particularly the necessity to protect civil order and to provide stability in the midst of rapid change, are ever greater. Without a stable civil and legal order, the social conditions that are created can be explosive: large-scale unemployment among young people and unskilled urban dwellers; demobilized soldiers and security police looking for private employment; thriving conditions for black market activities and crime; and flourishing local and global traffic in small arms and ammunition. A sense of community under these circumstances is highly prized, but not because of the historical persistence and power of ethnic identities and cultural attachments, as the ethnic conflict school insists, but because the bases of existing communities have collapsed and governments are radically narrowing what they will or can provide in terms of previously guaranteed rights to subsistence, land, public employment, and even citizenship.¹⁴

The Road to Tragedy

This is the broader story told in this book, which begins by describing the complex system of constitutional rights and international relations that made Yugoslavia stable after 1945. The country's breakdown over a decade of economic reform and constitutional crisis is detailed in chapters 3, 4, and 5. The speed of the process of disintegration, particularly when it entered a nationalist dynamic, is a major lesson of the Yugoslav crisis. That speed increasingly deprived alternative forces of the time needed to do the political work that would reverse disintegration: to create new political alliances, to bargain compromises, to develop alternatives to the previous order, to create procedures for resolving systemic conflicts peacefully, to build new governmental capacity, and to await adjustment and membership in Western organizations for which they were redesigning their domestic order.

Less than six months after the first democratic elections were held in the former Yugoslav republics, the country was at war. In July 1991, three weeks after war had broken out between an independence-seeking Croatia and units of the Yugoslav army defending the country's territorial integrity and, in some localities, Serbs who opposed Croatia's secession, top-level political advisers in Zagreb and Belgrade insisted that a political solution