

Communist League under Joseph Broz Tito. Yugoslavia was Marxist but anti-Soviet. It didn't want to become a Soviet satellite, and actually cooperated with the Americans. Caught in the force field between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Yugoslavia hung together, however precariously.

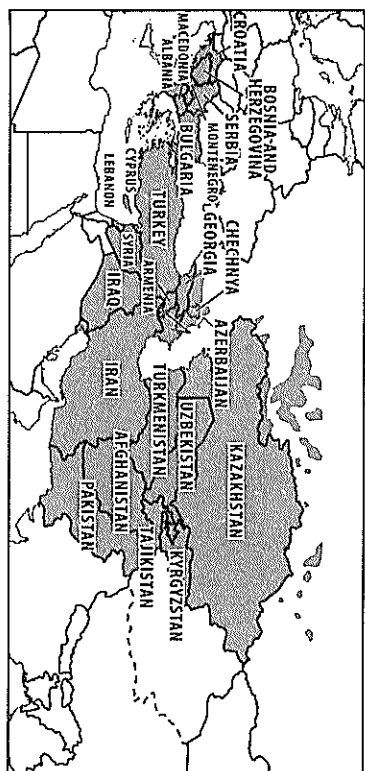
In 1991, when the force field disintegrated, the pieces that made up Yugoslavia blew apart. It was as if a geological fault had caused a massive earthquake. The ancient but submerged and frozen nationalities suddenly found themselves free to maneuver. Names that hadn't been heard since before World War I suddenly came to life: Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia. Within each of these nations, other ethnic minorities from neighboring nations also came alive, usually demanding secession. All hell broke loose—and this moment would be an important one in the early framing of the twenty-first century.

The Yugoslavian war has been misunderstood as simply a local phenomenon, an idiosyncratic event. It was much more than that. It was first and foremost a response to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Passions that had been kept in check for almost fifty years abruptly reignited. Frozen boundaries became fluid. It was a local phenomenon made possible—and inevitable—by a global shift.

Moreover, war in Yugoslavia was not a singular phenomenon. This was just the first fault line to give—the northern extension of a line that ran all the way to the Hindu Kush, the mountains that dominate northern Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Yugoslavian explosion was the prelude to an even bigger earthquake that began as the Soviet Union collapsed.

THE ISLAMIC EARTHQUAKE

The U.S.-Soviet confrontation spanned the periphery of the Soviet Union. At the end of the Cold War, there were three sections to this border. There was the European section, running from Norway to the German-Czech frontier. There was the Asian section, running from the Aleutians through Japan and into China. And there was the third section, running from northern Afghanistan to Yugoslavia. When the Soviet Union collapsed, this last section was the most heavily affected. Yugoslavia collapsed first, but the



chaos eventually ran the entire length of the sector and engulfed even countries not adjacent to the front line.

The region from Yugoslavia to Afghanistan and Pakistan had largely been locked into place during the Cold War. There was isolated movement, such as when Iran moved from being pro-American to being both anti-Soviet and anti-American, or when the Russians invaded Afghanistan, or the Iran-Iraq war. But in a strange way, the region was stabilized by the Cold War. No matter how many internal conflicts there were, they never grew into full-blown, cross-border crises.

With the Soviets gone, the region destabilized dramatically. This is primarily a Muslim region—one of three major Muslim regions in the world. There is North Africa, there is the Muslim region in Southeast Asia, and then there is this vast, multinational, highly divergent region that runs from Yugoslavia to Afghanistan, and south into the Arabian Peninsula (see map, page 36). This is certainly not a single region in many senses, but we are treating it as such because it was the southern front of the Soviet encirclement.

It's important to remember that the demarcation line of the Cold War ran straight through this Muslim region. Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan were all predominantly Muslim republics that were part of the Soviet Union. There were Muslim parts of the Russian Federation as well, such as Chechnya.