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The creation of the Yugoslav and Rwanda Tribunals, spurred on by actions of the United States government, involved making fundamental choices concerning the Tribunals' authority, method of creation, basic structures and procedures, and jurisdiction. These tribunals revived international prosecution as a means of providing justice in the wake of atrocities, managing conflicts, and deterring future crimes.

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The international criminal tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda reshaped international criminal law. This article highlights three themes permeating these changes: contemporary values, collective criminality, and fundamental principles of justice. Situating the tribunals within the broader trajectory of the field, the article suggests that the formal design of the tribunals influenced their substantive contribution.

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