



# **Dubious Mandate: A Memoir of the UN in Bosnia, Summer 1995**

*Phillip Corwin*

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A critical year in the history of peacekeeping, 1995 saw the dramatic transformation of the role of United Nations' forces in Bosnia from a protective force to being an active combatant under NATO leadership. Phillip Corwin, the UN's chief political officer in Sarajevo during the summer of that year, presents an insider's account of the momentous events that led to that transformation. *Dubious Mandate* interweaves personal experiences of daily life in a war zone—supply shortages, human suffering, assassination attempts, corruption—with historical facts, as Corwin challenges commonly held views of the war with his own highly informed, discerning, and trenchant political commentary.

Sympathetic to the UN's achievements, yet skeptical of its acquiescence to the use of military force, Corwin is critical both of the Bosnian government's tactics for drawing NATO into the conflict and of NATO's eagerness to make peace by waging war. He challenges the popular depiction of the Bosnian government as that of noble victim, arguing that the leaders of all three sides in the conflict were “gangsters wearing coats and ties.” Highly caustic about Western reportage, he examines the policies of various Western political and military leaders and gives a detailed account of a pivotal phase of the war in Bosnia, a period that culminated with NATO's massive bombing of Bosnian Serb targets and ultimately led to the Dayton Peace Agreement. Without a proper understanding of this critical period, he argues, it is difficult to understand the greater scope of the conflict. Corwin also offers insightful portraits of some of the leading players in the Bosnian drama, including Yasushi Akashi, the UN's top official in the former Yugoslavia in 1994–95; General Rupert Smith, the British commander in Sarajevo in 1995; and Hasan Muratovic, a future Bosnian prime minister. Capturing the essence of a tense and difficult time, *Dubious Mandate* will interest diplomats, politicians, military personnel, scholars, and those still trying to fathom the continuing mission of the United Nations and the unfolding of events in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

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