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978-1-107-02003-0 - Diplomatic Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Bosnia and Herzegovina

Philippe Leroux-Martin

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Diplomatic Counterinsurgency

War does not stop when the armed conflict ends. This compelling eyewitness account of a key political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2007 demonstrates how interventions from foreign powers to end armed conflict can create new forms of conflict that are not only determined and resilient, but can lead groups to challenge the power of fragile states through political and legal means. Countering such challenges is an integral but often ignored part of peace processes. How do these nonviolent wars evolve? How can the power of fragile states be challenged through nonviolent means in the aftermath of armed conflict? And what is the role of diplomacy in countering such challenges? This book offers key insights for policy makers dealing with fragile states who seek answers to such questions.

Philippe Leroux-Martin is a Canadian lawyer who worked for the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a member of a team of legal advisors who oversaw the legal aspects of the Dayton peace agreement implementation. Mr. Leroux-Martin also acted as chief legal advisor to the Police Restructuring Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina chaired by former Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens. Following his work in Sarajevo, he headed the legal department of the International Civilian Office, an organization established to supervise and coordinate Kosovo's accession to independence in 2008–9. He is currently a Fellow with the Future of Diplomacy Project of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School.

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To those affected by war

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Foreword

The violent breakup of Yugoslavia and resulting wars in Bosnia and Kosovo were among the most difficult international crises of the 1990s. One of the most dramatic moments came during the summer and autumn of 1995. From the Srebrenica massacre in July to the decision by the United States and NATO to intervene militarily in September to the Dayton peace agreement in November, the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a dramatic and pivotal event. That story has been chronicled by many, including most notably the late Richard C. Holbrooke, who deserves eternal credit for having stopped the fighting, in the riveting account of his bulldozer diplomacy, *To End a War*.

The story not yet told, however, is the stolid, difficult, complex, and vital work done in the eighteen years since the Dayton Accords by an army of international civil servants, diplomats, and lawyers to save Dayton's peace and build it brick by brick in a sometimes hostile and unforgiving landscape. In the years following Dayton, more than a few skeptics charged that Dayton delivered a weak and seemingly ungovernable state where power was shared uneasily among the former warring factions – the Muslim, Croat, and Serb residents of Bosnia. There were many occasions when the unstable state threatened to collapse amid the political infighting and power struggles of these three competing groups.

The work to preserve Dayton and build a new state was led by the UN-appointed High Representative and his staff. The great majority of these people were not high-profile generals or diplomats but mainly young, often idealistic, and dedicated international civil servants and government officials from Europe, Canada, and the United

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States like Philippe Leroux-Martin. Their job was to implement the Dayton Accords by convincing the people of the country to live and work together, to compromise, and to share power grudgingly if not always peacefully. More often than not, the local political factions representing Serb, Croat, and Muslim interests appeared as political insurgents in a fight to preserve the past or, at least, the interests of one group above the other. The High Representative and his staff can be seen as practitioners of counterinsurgency to maintain the peace. And, thus the title of this interesting and important book – *Diplomatic Counterinsurgency*.

“War does not stop with the end of armed conflict,” writes Leroux-Martin in his own Introduction to this book. Political battles continued over some of the very issues that caused war in the first place. The story he has written thus fills in the blank pages of the war in Bosnia and its aftermath. It tells the story of how peace was preserved and violent conflict did not recur as many had predicted following Dayton’s hesitant and unstable beginning. The lessons of this time are well worth learning for all of us who believe that the challenge of building and preserving peace is the core work of the United Nations in an often unstable world.

In a much larger sense, Leroux-Martin’s book is a tribute to diplomacy – the sometimes forgotten art of preserving peace and stability among the more than 195 states in the world today. Diplomacy is often misunderstood and unappreciated because it is the antithesis of war – slow, begrudging, painstaking, difficult, and sometimes inconclusive. But diplomacy’s great promise is that we humans can find a way to resolve or regulate our differences and find a better way forward than by fighting each other.

Philippe Leroux-Martin is the right person to tell this story. Like hundreds of others, he worked for peace in a country torn apart by war. A young attorney from Montreal, he spent years in the Balkans, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo, to help the people of the region to recover from the bitter and bloody conflicts of the 1990s and find their way to stability and then an uncertain peace. He tells the story of the twists and turns, pressures and compromises of the daily work of peace from the perspective of an insider.

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Philippe is a Fellow in a program I direct at the Harvard Kennedy School, the Future of Diplomacy Project, under whose auspices he wrote this book.

This is an important book with a vital message. Peace in places like Bosnia can only be built by the tireless work of people who understand that a return to violent conflict is unacceptable. Although he is too humble to say it, Leroux-Martin's book is a tribute to both him and the many others who had the courage, dedication, and tenacity to work for a better future in the Balkans and in the world.

Nicholas Burns

Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Politics

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I had the great fortune to meet and live alongside exceptional people during my time in Bosnia and Kosovo. I would like to thank each of them for their friendship and support during these years. I want to

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