

# Boy on the Bridge

## The Story of John Shalikashvili's American Success

Andrew Marble

His life and career completed a compelling multi-generational riches-to-rags-then-back-to-riches story. John Shalikashvili (1936–2011) descended from aristocratic European bloodlines that served with distinction in both battle and government for centuries. His maternal grandfather was a general in the tsarist Russian army. His father, a Georgian military man, later served in the Polish army until its defeat by the Germans in 1939.

Yet the Warsaw-born Shalikashvili was a citizen of no country, and his family, after barely surviving the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, fled to Germany to live off the charity of relatives. Incredible luck brought them to the US in 1952, where he settled in Peoria, Illinois, the nation's heartland. After proudly becoming a US citizen in 1958, Shalikashvili was drafted into the army. He rose steadily through the ranks, serving in every level of unit command from platoon to division.

He fully achieved the American dream in 1993 when President Bill Clinton tapped him to replace Colin Powell as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, becoming the first immigrant, first draftee, and first Officer Candidate School graduate to serve as the nation's highest-ranking military officer.

This first-ever biography of the man reveals how Shalikashvili's distinctive Old World background combined with New World opportunity to turn him into an unusual but potent leader. His was a reputation for being humble, straightforward, and empathetic, with a voice that was "seldom raised but always heard." This unique leadership style proved highly effective, including during his command of the 1991 operation to rescue over half a million Kurds trapped in the mountainous northern Iraqi border; when helping secure "loose nukes" in the former Soviet republics as chairman Powell's assistant; when he joined forces with fellow immigrant Madeleine Albright on the Partnership for Peace and NATO enlargement initiatives of the 1990s; and in retirement when he helped end the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

**Andrew Marble**, PhD, is a writer and editor who has worked in the fields of Chinese politics, Taiwan studies, US policy to Asia, and international food policy. He can be reached at [www.boyonbridge.com](http://www.boyonbridge.com).

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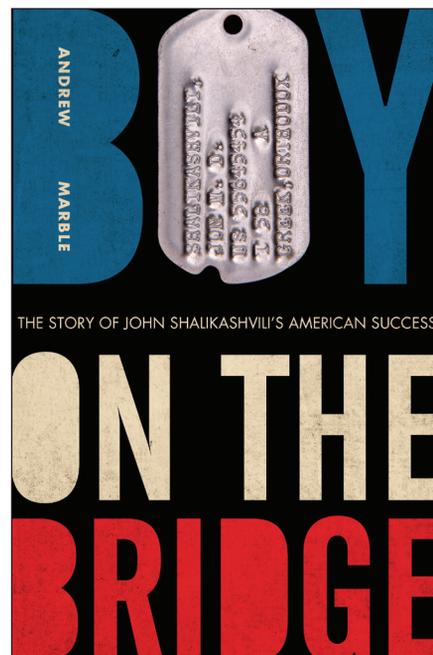
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"General John Shalikashvili was the American dream in living form. In telling his story for the first time, Andrew Marble masterfully weaves together how a man whose family fled war-torn Europe helped shape American foreign policy for decades and lived out the values of conscience and country. This isn't just a must read for military buffs, it's a source of inspiration for every American and anyone who aspires to be one."—**John Kerry**, former US Secretary of State

"This is an astonishingly readable biography of one of the most remarkable leaders in American military history."—**Claudia Dreifus**, Columbia University

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