



Five to Rule Them All: The UN Security Council and the Making of the Modern World

By David L. Bosco

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From the Berlin Airlift to the Iraq War, the UN Security Council has stood at the heart of global politics. Part public theater, part smoke-filled backroom, the Council has enjoyed notable successes and suffered ignominious failures, but it has always provided a space for the five great powers to sit down together.

Five to Rule Them All tells the inside story of this remarkable diplomatic creation. Drawing on extensive research, including dozens of interviews with serving and former ambassadors on the Council, the book chronicles political battles and personality clashes as it opens the closed doors of its meeting room. What emerges here is a revealing portrait of the most powerful diplomatic body in the world. When the five permanent members are united, David Bosco points out, the Council can wage war, impose blockades, redraw borders, unseat governments, and levy sanctions. There are almost no limits to its authority. Yet the Council exists in a world of *realpolitik*. Its members are, above all, powerful states with their own diverging interests. Time and again, the Council's performance has dashed the hope that its members would somehow work together to establish a more peaceful world. But if these lofty hopes have been unfulfilled, the Council has still served an invaluable purpose: to prevent conflict between the Great Powers. In this role, the Council has been an unheralded success. As Bosco reminds us, massacres in the Balkans and chaos in Iraq are human tragedies, but conflicts between the world's great powers in the nuclear age would be catastrophic.

In this lively, fast-moving, and often humorous narrative, Bosco illuminates the role of the Security Council in the postwar world, making a compelling case for the enduring importance of the five who rule them all.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Bosco, former senior editor at *Foreign Policy*, examines the United Nation's global salience—from its roots in the League of Nations to its controversial decision to sanction military action against Saddam Hussein that nearly splintered the organization's collective political clout. Founded on the principle that a permanent Security Council comprising WWII's victors could and should preserve peace worldwide, the organization's constitution and relative importance has evolved with every major shift in international politics—European decolonization in Africa and Asia that resulted in dozens of new political entities, the ongoing Middle East conflict and the threat of terrorism. Bosco punctuates formal details of U.N. resolutions with balanced analysis and entertaining anecdotes about the personalities behind iconic historic events. He concludes with well-reasoned and plausible suggestions for how the organization can change to better reflect political realities, such as the introduction of a dedicated seat for the European Union, a regional organization that takes an increasingly unified position on security issues. (Sept.)

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Review

"Bosco punctuates formal details of U.N. resolutions with balanced analysis and entertaining anecdotes about the personalities behind iconic historic events. He concludes with well-reasoned and plausible suggestions for how the organization can change to better reflect political realities."--*Publishers Weekly*

"This thorough, well-researched history is appropriate for all with a serious interest in international relations."--*Library Journal*

"An outstanding contribution to scholarship on the United Nations. David Bosco's impeccable research, astute judgment, and beautiful prose make this book a must read for academics and practitioners alike."--Sam Daws, Executive Director of the United Nations Association of the UK and former First Officer to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

"This lucid and succinct history of the UN Security Council is worth the good read it generously offers. It sets out clearly the 'highs and the whys' and the 'lows and the blows' experienced by the Council and its Permanent Five dominant players over the last fifty-plus years. A must for those who want to know how the Council, despite its many failures and shortcomings, keeps coming back as the one place where we are, can, and should be working to resolve the world's major problems of peace and security."--Thomas R Pickering, former US Ambassador to the United Nations

"... a balanced and generally non-ideological history of the Security Council (a rare achievement in today's super heated partisan wars over most everything)...Bosco makes a good case that the world has been a bit

safer due to the existence of the Council than had it never been created." --*American Thinker*

"The real value of this work is the combination of in-depth historical survey combined with insightful analysis." -- *Choice*&*R*

"*Five to Rule Them All* is a well researched book that reaches scientific standards but is also accessible and a genuinely interesting read as it is full of many examples and provides an avenue to exploring and understanding the nuances of the UNSC in a way that allows readers to more openly relate to it. In all, this book should be included in the 'must read' list of anyone concerned with the state of international affairs and the potential of the UN and the UNSC to act in-sync with the demands of the 21st century international citizen." --*Central European Journal of International Security and Studies*

"One of the more important books concerning the United Nations published in the last quarter century...A cross between narrative and analytical insight...crammed with insight." -Gary B. Ostrower, *Diplomatic History*

"A well researched book that reaches scientific standards but is also accessible and a genuinely interesting read as it is full of many examples and provides an avenue to exploring and understanding the nuances of the UNSC in a way that allows readers to more openly relate to it...This book should be included in the 'must read' list of anyone concerned with the state of international affairs." --*Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*

"This significant contribution to the history and evolution of the UN Security Council is a fabulous reader for any relevant course -- and all readers in search of a succinct, gripping, and vividly portrayed account of the inner workings of the Security Council. The author's rich background in international affairs renders him well equipped for having undertaken this daunting task."
--ASIL UN21 Newsletter, Issue #42, September 2011

About the Author

David L. Bosco is Assistant Professor in the School of International Service, American University. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he is a former Senior Editor at *Foreign Policy* and has been a political analyst and journalist in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and deputy director of a joint United Nations-NATO project in Sarajevo. His writings have appeared in a variety of publications, including the Washington Post, Slate, the New York Times Book Review, the Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal-Europe, The American Prospect, and the American Scholar. He has provided commentary and analysis for CNN, National Public Radio, Voice of America, and other outlets.

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