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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.

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