

General Assembly (UNGA)

STUDY GUIDE

MUNARJÍ
XIX 2026



TOPIC:

Strengthening the Role of the
General Assembly in Addressing
Security Council Deadlock



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Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and serves as its chief deliberative, policymaking, and representative body. Composed of all 193 Member States, each with one equal vote regardless of geographic size, economic capacity, or political influence, the General Assembly embodies the principle of the sovereign equality of states established in the Charter of the United Nations. This universal representation has made the Assembly the world's most inclusive forum for multilateral dialogue and international cooperation (United Nations, n.d.).

Established in 1945 under Chapter IV of the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly has broad authority to discuss and make recommendations on matters relating to international peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, international law, and other issues within the scope of the Charter. Although its resolutions are generally not legally binding, they carry significant political and moral authority by expressing the collective will of the international community, shaping international norms, and influencing the development of customary international law and global governance (United Nations, 1945; United Nations, n.d.).

Unlike the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the General Assembly cannot impose sanctions, authorize the use of force, or mandate peacekeeping operations. Primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the Security Council under the UN Charter. Nevertheless, the General Assembly plays an essential complementary role by providing a forum where all Member States can debate international crises, promote diplomatic dialogue, and recommend collective action when global cooperation is required (United Nations, 1945).

The General Assembly convenes annually in regular session at United Nations Headquarters in New York, beginning each September with the General Debate, during which Heads of State, Heads of Government, and senior representatives present their national priorities and perspectives on pressing global issues. In addition to its regular sessions, the Assembly may convene special and emergency special sessions to address urgent international situations. Much of its work is carried out through its six Main Committees, each responsible for a specific area of the United Nations' agenda, including disarmament, economic and financial affairs, social and humanitarian issues, decolonization, administrative matters, and legal questions (United Nations, n.d.).

Under Article 18 of the Charter, important decisions—including those concerning international peace and security, the admission of new Member States, and budgetary matters—require a two-thirds majority of Member States present and voting, while most other questions are decided by a simple majority (United Nations, 1945, Art. 18). Although the Assembly cannot substitute for the Security Council's legally binding authority, it remains an indispensable institution for building international consensus, promoting transparency, and reinforcing the legitimacy of multilateral decision-making.

In recent years, growing geopolitical tensions and the repeated use of the veto by permanent members of the Security Council have prevented the Council from taking decisive action in several major international

crises. These situations have renewed international attention to the role of the General Assembly as a forum capable of sustaining diplomatic dialogue and expressing the collective position of the wider UN membership when the Security Council reaches an impasse. A significant development in this regard was the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 76/262 (2022), which requires the Assembly to meet whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council, reinforcing transparency and accountability without altering the Charter's distribution of powers (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Against this backdrop, delegates in this committee will examine how the General Assembly can strengthen its contribution to international peace and security during periods of Security Council deadlock while remaining consistent with the principles and institutional framework of the United Nations Charter. Rather than debating the abolition of the veto or the amendment of the Charter, delegates are encouraged to develop practical, innovative, and politically feasible proposals that enhance multilateral cooperation, improve institutional effectiveness, and reinforce the General Assembly's role as the most representative forum of the international community.

Background to the Topic

Key Terminology

Before analyzing the role of the General Assembly during periods of Security Council deadlock, delegates should become familiar with the institutional and legal concepts that shape decision-making within the United Nations.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

The General Assembly is the principal deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations. Composed of all 193 Member States, it provides a forum where every state has one vote and may discuss any matter within the scope of the UN Charter. While most of its resolutions are not legally binding, they carry significant political authority and contribute to the development of international norms (United Nations, n.d.).

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The Security Council is the UN organ with primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Unlike the General Assembly, it has the authority to adopt legally binding resolutions, establish peacekeeping operations, impose sanctions, and authorize the use of force under the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations, 1945).

Veto Power

The veto is the privilege granted to the five permanent members of the Security Council—China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States—allowing any one of them to prevent the adoption of a substantive draft resolution regardless of the level of international support it receives. This authority is established in Article 27 of the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945).

Security Council Deadlock

Security Council deadlock occurs when disagreements among permanent members prevent the Council from adopting decisions necessary to address threats to international peace and security. Deadlock frequently results from the exercise or threatened use of the veto and can significantly delay or prevent collective international action (Security Council Report, 2024).

Multilateralism

Multilateralism refers to the process through which states cooperate within international institutions to address common challenges according to shared rules and principles. The United Nations

remains the world's foremost multilateral organization for promoting peace, security, sustainable development, and international cooperation (United Nations, n.d.).

Uniting for Peace

Adopted as General Assembly Resolution 377 (V) in 1950, *Uniting for Peace* provides that when the Security Council fails to exercise its primary responsibility because of a lack of unanimity among its permanent members, the General Assembly may convene an Emergency Special Session and recommend collective measures to Member States. Although these recommendations are not legally binding, the resolution remains one of the Assembly's most significant institutional mechanisms for responding to Security Council deadlock (United Nations General Assembly, 1950).

Historical Evolution of the Issue

The structure of the United Nations was shaped by the experiences of the Second World War and the determination of the Allied powers to establish a system capable of preventing future global conflicts. During the negotiations leading to the adoption of the Charter in 1945, the major powers agreed that the permanent members of the Security Council would possess veto power as a condition for their continued participation in the new organization. Although controversial, the veto was considered essential to ensuring that decisions concerning international peace and security would have the support of the world's principal military powers (United Nations, 1945).

While the veto has contributed to preventing direct confrontation among major powers, it has also repeatedly limited the Security Council's ability to respond effectively to international crises. Throughout the Cold War, ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union frequently resulted in prolonged periods of institutional paralysis. Although hopes for greater cooperation emerged after the Cold War, disagreements among permanent members have continued to impede collective action on numerous conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.

Recognizing these limitations, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 377 (V), *Uniting for Peace* in 1950. The resolution established that when the Security Council fails to fulfill its primary responsibility because of the veto, the General Assembly may convene an Emergency Special Session to recommend collective measures aimed at maintaining or restoring international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 1950). Since its adoption, this mechanism has been invoked in response to several major international crises, including the Suez Crisis (1956), the Soviet intervention in Hungary (1956), Afghanistan (1980), Palestine, and, most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Why the Issue Matters Today

In recent years, geopolitical tensions have intensified, increasing the frequency with which the Security Council has been unable to adopt meaningful resolutions on major international crises. The repeated use of the veto in situations involving Syria, Ukraine, and Gaza has generated widespread concern regarding the effectiveness, legitimacy, and credibility of the United Nations' collective security system (Security Council Report, 2024).

As Security Council deadlock has become more frequent, the General Assembly has assumed a more visible role in sustaining international dialogue and expressing the collective views of the broader UN membership. Although the Assembly cannot replace the Security Council's legally binding authority, it has increasingly served as the principal forum through which Member States debate international crises, reaffirm international legal principles, and build political consensus.

A landmark institutional development occurred in 2022, when the General Assembly adopted Resolution 76/262, requiring the Assembly to meet automatically whenever a permanent member exercises its veto in the Security Council. This procedure enhances transparency and accountability by ensuring that the international community can immediately discuss the circumstances surrounding the veto and its implications for international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Existing International Legal Framework

Several provisions of the United Nations Charter and subsequent General Assembly resolutions define the respective roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security.

Charter of the United Nations (1945)

The Charter establishes the General Assembly's authority to discuss matters within the scope of the Charter (Article 10), make recommendations concerning international peace and security (Articles 11 and 14), and determine its voting procedures (Article 18). It also assigns primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council and establishes the veto power of its permanent members under Article 27 (United Nations, 1945).

General Assembly Resolution 377 (V): Uniting for Peace (1950)

Resolution 377 (V) authorizes the General Assembly to convene an Emergency Special Session when the Security Council fails to act because of a lack of unanimity among its permanent members. The Assembly may then recommend collective measures intended to preserve or restore international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 1950).

General Assembly Resolution 76/262 (2022)

Adopted by consensus, Resolution 76/262 requires the President of the General Assembly to convene a formal meeting within ten working days whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council. The objective is to ensure transparency, promote accountability, and allow the wider UN membership to examine the circumstances surrounding the veto and its consequences for international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Veto Restraint Initiatives

Although they are not legally binding, initiatives such as the French-Mexican Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocities and the ACT Group Code of Conduct encourage permanent members to voluntarily refrain from using the veto in situations involving genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. These proposals seek to improve the effectiveness of the Security Council while preserving the institutional framework established by the UN Charter (ACT Group, n.d.; France Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

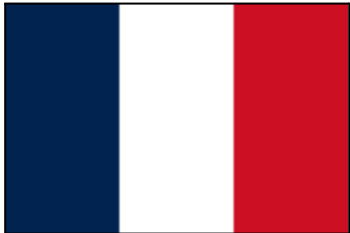


Key Stakeholders and Positions

Before representing their assigned delegation, delegates should recognize that debates concerning Security Council deadlock involve both **institutional principles** and **national interests**. While nearly all Member States support an effective and rules-based multilateral system, they differ significantly on how the United Nations should respond when the Security Council is unable to act. Some governments prioritize preserving the current balance established by the UN Charter, whereas others advocate strengthening the role of the General Assembly through greater transparency, accountability, and political coordination. Understanding these differences is essential for building realistic coalitions and drafting effective resolutions.

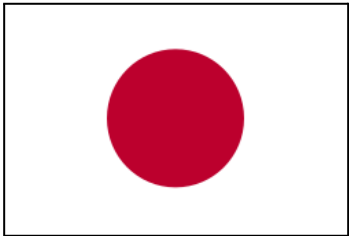
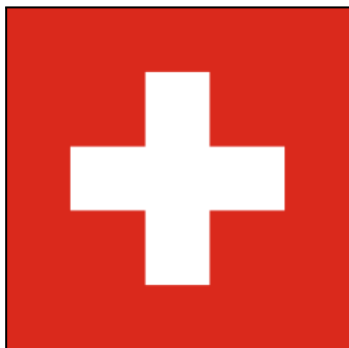
COUNTRY	POSITION
United States of America 	The United States supports the General Assembly as an important forum for international dialogue and consensus-building while maintaining that the Security Council should retain primary responsibility for international peace and security under the UN Charter. It generally opposes reforms that would diminish the authority of the Security Council or weaken the veto system but has supported initiatives aimed at increasing transparency and accountability, including General Assembly Resolution 76/262. The United States is likely to favor practical measures that improve cooperation between UN organs while preserving the institutional framework established by the Charter.
Russian Federation 	The Russian Federation considers the veto an essential safeguard of international stability and the sovereign equality of major powers. It maintains that the Security Council should remain the primary decision-making body for matters of peace and security and opposes initiatives that could transfer its authority to the General Assembly. Russia generally argues that expanding the Assembly's political role should not undermine the Charter's distribution of powers and emphasizes strict adherence to international law and state sovereignty.



People's Republic of China 	China supports multilateralism centered on the United Nations while emphasizing respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in domestic affairs. It considers the veto an important component of the post-1945 international order and generally opposes institutional reforms that would weaken the authority of the permanent members. China supports greater dialogue within the General Assembly but prefers consensus-building over confrontational voting and favors reforms that enhance the effectiveness of the UN without altering the balance established by the Charter.
French Republic 	France strongly supports multilateralism and has been one of the leading advocates of voluntary restraint in the use of the veto in situations involving genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Together with Mexico, France has promoted a political declaration encouraging permanent members to refrain from using the veto during mass atrocity situations. France is likely to support measures that strengthen the General Assembly's political role while preserving the overall institutional framework established by the UN Charter.
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 	The United Kingdom supports a strong and effective United Nations in which both the Security Council and the General Assembly play complementary roles. It recognizes the value of increased transparency following the use of the veto and has supported mechanisms that encourage broader discussion within the General Assembly. While defending the Security Council's primary responsibility for international peace and security, the United Kingdom generally supports practical institutional reforms that improve accountability and multilateral cooperation.
Arab Republic of Egypt 	Egypt has consistently defended multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. As an influential member of the African Group and the Arab Group, Egypt supports strengthening the General Assembly's role while advocating comprehensive Security Council reform to improve regional representation, particularly for Africa. Egypt emphasizes respect for state sovereignty, peaceful dispute settlement, and equitable participation of developing countries in international decision-making.

United Mexican States 	Mexico has consistently promoted multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution, and respect for international law. Together with France, it has led international efforts encouraging voluntary restraint on the use of the veto in cases involving mass atrocities. Mexico supports a more active General Assembly capable of facilitating dialogue, promoting accountability, and reinforcing the legitimacy of the United Nations during periods of Security Council deadlock.
Federative Republic of Brazil 	Brazil promotes multilateral diplomacy and supports strengthening the General Assembly's role in addressing global challenges. As a longstanding advocate of Security Council reform, Brazil argues that greater representation and transparency are essential to maintaining the legitimacy of the United Nations. It generally supports initiatives that encourage dialogue, peaceful dispute settlement, and broader participation by developing countries in international decision-making.
Federal Republic of Germany 	Germany supports a rules-based international order founded on multilateral cooperation and effective international institutions. It advocates reforms that enhance the transparency, efficiency, and representativeness of the United Nations while strengthening coordination between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Germany also supports initiatives aimed at increasing accountability following the use of the veto and improving the effectiveness of collective diplomacy.
Republic of India 	India has consistently advocated comprehensive reform of the United Nations, arguing that the current institutional structure no longer reflects contemporary geopolitical realities. It supports strengthening the General Assembly as the most representative organ of the UN while also seeking expansion of the Security Council's permanent and non-permanent membership. India generally favors greater participation by developing countries in global decision-making and supports reforms that improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of the multilateral system.



State of Japan 	Japan advocates strengthening the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations through institutional reform and enhanced multilateral cooperation. It supports a more representative Security Council and greater engagement by the General Assembly in addressing global challenges. Japan generally favors practical reforms that improve transparency, accountability, and the peaceful resolution of international disputes while preserving the Charter-based international order.
South Africa 	South Africa supports a more representative and equitable United Nations that better reflects the interests of developing countries. It advocates strengthening the General Assembly as the principal deliberative body of the organization while supporting comprehensive Security Council reform. South Africa frequently emphasizes inclusive multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution, and greater participation by African states in global governance.
Liechtenstein 	Liechtenstein has emerged as one of the strongest advocates for improving accountability following the use of the veto. It sponsored General Assembly Resolution 76/262 (2022), which requires the General Assembly to convene whenever a veto is exercised in the Security Council. Liechtenstein argues that greater transparency strengthens the legitimacy of the United Nations and enables the broader membership to examine the political consequences of Security Council deadlock.
Switzerland 	Switzerland strongly supports a rules-based international order, preventive diplomacy, and effective multilateral institutions. Although not a permanent member of the Security Council, it has consistently advocated greater transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the Council's working methods. Switzerland supports initiatives that strengthen coordination between the Security Council and the General Assembly and encourages dialogue to reduce political polarization within the United Nations. It is likely to support practical reforms that improve institutional effectiveness while fully respecting the UN Charter.



Singapore 	Singapore is a strong advocate of international law, multilateral cooperation, and the effective functioning of the United Nations despite its relatively small size. It consistently supports strengthening the rules-based international order and has promoted institutional reforms that enhance transparency, accountability, and consensus-building. Singapore is likely to support measures that improve the General Assembly's ability to facilitate dialogue and maintain international cooperation during periods of Security Council deadlock while preserving the institutional balance established by the UN Charter.
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Regional and Political Blocs

G4 (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan)

The G4 advocates comprehensive Security Council reform, including expansion of permanent membership. The group generally supports strengthening the General Assembly's role while promoting a more representative and effective United Nations.

ACT Group (Accountability, Coherence and Transparency)

The ACT Group is a cross-regional coalition of Member States committed to improving the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of the Security Council. It promotes responsible use of the veto and supports initiatives that reinforce the General Assembly's oversight role.

African Group

The African Group supports comprehensive Security Council reform through the Ezulwini Consensus, advocating greater African representation while strengthening multilateral decision-making and the role of the General Assembly.

Previous United Nations Actions and Resolutions

Throughout its history, the United Nations has adopted a number of legal instruments, resolutions, and political initiatives aimed at preserving the effectiveness of collective security while respecting the institutional framework established by the Charter. Although the General Assembly cannot replace the Security Council's primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, it has gradually developed mechanisms that allow the broader UN membership to respond when the Security Council is unable to act. The following documents and initiatives constitute the foundation of the current debate.

Charter of the United Nations (1945)

The Charter of the United Nations remains the constitutional foundation of the Organization and defines the respective responsibilities of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Several provisions are particularly relevant to this agenda:

- Article 10 authorizes the General Assembly to discuss any matters within the scope of the Charter and to make recommendations to Member States or the Security Council.
- Article 11 empowers the Assembly to consider general principles relating to the maintenance of international peace and security and to discuss questions brought before it by Member States or the Security Council.
- Article 14 allows the Assembly to recommend peaceful measures for situations that may impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations.
- Article 18 establishes the Assembly's voting procedures, including the requirement of a two-thirds majority for important questions.
- Article 24 assigns primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council.
- Article 27 establishes the voting procedures of the Security Council, including the veto power of its five permanent members (United Nations, 1945).

Together, these provisions establish the balance of authority between the General Assembly and the Security Council that continues to shape debates on institutional effectiveness and multilateral decision-making.

General Assembly Resolution 377 (V): Uniting for Peace (1950)

Adopted during the Korean War, Resolution 377 (V)—commonly known as *Uniting for Peace*—marked the first major effort to address situations in which the Security Council fails to act because of disagreement among its permanent members.

The resolution provides that, when the Security Council cannot exercise its primary responsibility owing to a lack of unanimity among the permanent members, the General Assembly may convene an Emergency Special Session to consider the matter and recommend collective measures to Member States, including, where appropriate, recommendations concerning the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 1950).

Although General Assembly recommendations remain non-binding, *Uniting for Peace* significantly expanded the Assembly's political role during periods of Security Council deadlock and continues to serve as one of its most important institutional mechanisms.

General Assembly Resolution 76/262: Standing Mandate for a General Assembly Debate When a Veto Is Cast (2022)

In April 2022, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 76/262 by consensus, representing one of the most significant institutional developments concerning the veto in recent decades.

The resolution requires the President of the General Assembly to convene a formal meeting within ten working days whenever a permanent member casts a veto in the Security Council. During these meetings, Member States may examine the circumstances surrounding the veto and discuss its implications for international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Although the resolution does not modify the veto itself or alter the Charter, it strengthens transparency, political accountability, and the participation of the wider UN membership whenever the Security Council reaches an impasse.

The ACT Code of Conduct Regarding Security Council Action Against Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, or War Crimes

The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group introduced a voluntary Code of Conduct encouraging all Security Council members to take timely and decisive action in situations involving genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes.

Although the Code of Conduct is not legally binding, more than one hundred Member States have endorsed it. The initiative seeks to improve the Security Council's effectiveness by encouraging responsible decision-making and reducing political paralysis during humanitarian crises (ACT Group, n.d.).

The French-Mexican Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocities

Launched by France and Mexico in 2013, this political initiative calls upon the five permanent members of the Security Council to voluntarily refrain from using the veto in situations involving genocide, crimes against humanity, or large-scale war crimes.

The proposal does not seek to amend the UN Charter or eliminate the veto but instead encourages its responsible use in exceptional humanitarian circumstances. Although it remains voluntary, the initiative has received broad international support and continues to influence discussions concerning Security Council accountability and institutional reform (France Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Why These Actions Matter Today

Together, these legal instruments and political initiatives illustrate the gradual evolution of the General Assembly's role within the United Nations system. While none of them transfers the Security Council's primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, they demonstrate increasing efforts to strengthen transparency, accountability, and multilateral cooperation during periods of institutional deadlock.

For delegates, these actions establish the legal and political framework within which any proposed solutions must operate. Effective resolutions should therefore seek to enhance the General Assembly's capacity to facilitate dialogue, build international consensus, and reinforce the legitimacy of multilateral decision-making while remaining fully consistent with the Charter of the United Nations.

Current Challenges and Debates

The United Nations was founded on the principle of collective security, with the Security Council entrusted with primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. However, increasing geopolitical rivalry among the permanent members has made it progressively more difficult for the Council to reach consensus on many of the world's most pressing crises. As a result, Member States are increasingly debating how the General Assembly can contribute to preserving the effectiveness, legitimacy, and credibility of the multilateral system when the Security Council is unable to act.

Security Council Deadlock and the Use of the Veto

One of the most significant challenges facing the United Nations today is the growing frequency of Security Council deadlock resulting from the use of the veto by one or more permanent members. Although the veto was incorporated into the UN Charter to ensure the participation and cooperation of the major powers in the collective security system, its repeated use has often prevented the Council from responding effectively to armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and threats to international peace and security (United Nations, 1945).

Recent conflicts—including those in Syria, Ukraine, and Gaza—have demonstrated how geopolitical divisions among the permanent members can prevent the adoption of substantive Security Council resolutions. These situations have intensified debate over whether the current use of the veto continues to fulfill its original purpose or has instead become a significant obstacle to effective multilateral action (Security Council Report, 2024).

Transparency and Accountability in the Use of the Veto

A second challenge concerns the transparency and political accountability surrounding the exercise of the veto. For much of the United Nations' history, permanent members were not formally required to explain or publicly defend their decisions after blocking a Security Council resolution.

The adoption of General Assembly Resolution 76/262 (2022) represents an important institutional response to this concern. By requiring the General Assembly to convene whenever a veto is cast, the resolution allows all Member States to examine the circumstances surrounding the veto and assess its implications for international peace and security. Although the measure does not limit the legal authority of the permanent members, it strengthens political accountability and reinforces the General Assembly's role as a forum for multilateral dialogue (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Representation and Institutional Legitimacy

Another major debate concerns whether the current structure of the Security Council adequately reflects today's international community. The Council's permanent membership continues to mirror the

geopolitical realities of 1945, despite profound changes in global demographics, economic power, and regional influence over the past eight decades.

Many Member States—particularly from Africa, Latin America, and Asia—argue that the concentration of decision-making authority within the five permanent members undermines the legitimacy and representativeness of the United Nations. Groups such as the G4 (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) and the African Union have repeatedly advocated comprehensive Security Council reform, including expanded representation for underrepresented regions and greater participation by developing countries in global governance (United Nations, 2024).

Defining the Limits of the General Assembly's Authority

While many Member States support strengthening the role of the General Assembly, there is considerable disagreement regarding the extent to which its authority should evolve. The Assembly is the most representative organ of the United Nations and has demonstrated its ability to mobilize international political support during periods of Security Council deadlock. However, its resolutions remain generally non-binding, limiting its capacity to compel state action or enforce collective decisions.

This has generated an important institutional debate: should the General Assembly assume a more active political role during Security Council deadlock, or would expanding its influence risk disrupting the balance of powers established by the Charter of the United Nations? Delegates must carefully consider how to enhance the Assembly's effectiveness while respecting the legal responsibilities assigned to each principal organ of the Organization (Annan, 2005).

Preserving Effective Multilateralism in a Changing International Order

Beyond institutional reform, the United Nations faces the broader challenge of maintaining effective multilateral cooperation in an increasingly polarized international environment. Growing strategic competition among major powers, regional conflicts, climate-related security risks, emerging technologies, and transnational threats have made international cooperation more complex than at any point since the end of the Cold War.

Recognizing these challenges, the Pact for the Future, adopted by the General Assembly in 2024, emphasizes the need to strengthen multilateral institutions, improve international cooperation, and ensure that the United Nations remains capable of responding effectively to twenty-first-century challenges (United Nations, 2024). For many Member States, strengthening the General Assembly during periods of Security Council deadlock represents an important step toward preserving confidence in the rules-based international order.

The Challenge of Achieving Institutional Reform

Despite widespread recognition that the United Nations must adapt to evolving global realities, meaningful institutional reform remains exceptionally difficult. Amendments to the UN Charter—including proposals affecting the composition or voting procedures of the Security Council—require the approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly and ratification by all five permanent members of the Security Council (United Nations, 1945).

This creates a fundamental political paradox: the states possessing the greatest authority within the current system are also those whose approval is required to alter it. Consequently, many Member States have increasingly focused on developing practical, politically feasible reforms—such as improving transparency, strengthening cooperation between UN organs, and expanding the General Assembly's procedural role—rather than pursuing Charter amendments that are unlikely to obtain universal support (Security Council Report, 2023).

Case Studies

Throughout the history of the United Nations, the General Assembly has played an increasingly significant role during periods when the Security Council has been unable to fulfill its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The following case studies illustrate how Member States have relied on the Assembly to preserve multilateral dialogue, adopt political recommendations, and reinforce international legitimacy despite Security Council deadlock.

The Suez Crisis (1956)

The Suez Crisis marked the first major application of General Assembly Resolution 377 (V), *Uniting for Peace*. Following Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956, military operations were launched by Israel, the United Kingdom, and France. Efforts to adopt Security Council action were blocked after the United Kingdom and France exercised their veto power as permanent members of the Council.

Unable to reach a decision, the Security Council referred the matter to the General Assembly under the *Uniting for Peace* procedure. During the First Emergency Special Session, the Assembly adopted several resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign forces, and the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I)—the first large-scale UN peacekeeping operation (United Nations General Assembly, 1956).

Although the General Assembly lacked authority to impose legally binding measures, its actions demonstrated that broad international political consensus could influence the peaceful resolution of major international crises when the Security Council was deadlocked.

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine (2022-Present)

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 generated one of the most significant institutional challenges faced by the United Nations in recent decades. Multiple Security Council draft resolutions condemning the invasion or proposing collective action were blocked by the Russian Federation's veto, preventing the Council from adopting substantive measures.

In response, the General Assembly convened an Emergency Special Session under the *Uniting for Peace* framework and adopted several resolutions reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence while condemning the use of force against a Member State (United Nations General Assembly, 2022a).

The conflict also led to the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 76/262, which established that every future use of the veto in the Security Council would automatically trigger a formal General Assembly debate. This resolution significantly strengthened the Assembly's role in promoting transparency

and accountability during periods of Security Council deadlock, even though it did not alter the legal status of the veto (United Nations General Assembly, 2022b).

The Israel-Hamas Conflict and the Humanitarian Situation in Gaza (2023-Present)

Following the attacks of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent conflict in Gaza, the Security Council struggled to reach consensus on several draft resolutions concerning humanitarian ceasefires, civilian protection, and humanitarian access. Repeated vetoes by permanent members prevented the Council from responding promptly during the initial stages of the crisis.

As Security Council negotiations stalled, the General Assembly assumed a more active diplomatic role by convening emergency meetings and adopting resolutions calling for humanitarian assistance, civilian protection, respect for international humanitarian law, and expanded humanitarian access to Gaza (United Nations General Assembly, 2023).

Although these resolutions were not legally binding, they demonstrated the Assembly's capacity to represent the views of the broader international community, maintain multilateral dialogue, and increase political pressure during one of the most contentious international crises of recent years. The case illustrates both the opportunities and the limitations of the General Assembly when responding to Security Council deadlock.

Lessons Learned

These case studies demonstrate that the General Assembly cannot replace the Security Council's legal authority, but it can play a vital role in preserving international dialogue and reinforcing the legitimacy of multilateral decision-making when the Council is unable to act.

- **Security Council deadlock does not necessarily prevent multilateral action**, as the General Assembly can provide an alternative forum for debate and political coordination.
- **Political legitimacy and legal authority are distinct concepts**; while General Assembly resolutions are generally non-binding, they can influence international opinion, diplomatic negotiations, and the development of international norms.
- **The role of the General Assembly has evolved over time**, particularly through mechanisms such as *Uniting for Peace* and Resolution 76/262, which have strengthened its capacity to respond to institutional deadlock.
- **Future reforms are likely to focus on improving transparency, accountability, and coordination** rather than altering the Charter itself, recognizing the legal and political constraints associated with Charter amendment.

Possible Solutions and Future Perspectives

As the international community continues to confront complex global challenges, strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations requires solutions that respect the institutional framework established by the Charter while promoting greater cooperation among Member States. Since amending the Charter or altering the veto system remains politically difficult, many recent initiatives have focused on improving transparency, accountability, coordination, and the capacity of the General Assembly to facilitate multilateral dialogue during periods of Security Council deadlock.

Delegates are encouraged to develop practical, innovative, and politically feasible proposals that reinforce the General Assembly's contribution to international peace and security without exceeding its mandate.

Strengthening Transparency and Accountability

One possible approach is to expand mechanisms that increase transparency following the use of the veto. Building upon General Assembly Resolution 76/262, Member States could explore additional procedures requiring more detailed explanations of veto decisions, voluntary reporting by permanent members, or structured debates that encourage greater political accountability.

Delegates may also consider ways to improve public access to Security Council deliberations and strengthen communication between the Security Council and the broader UN membership while respecting the institutional responsibilities assigned by the Charter.

Enhancing the General Assembly's Role During Security Council Deadlock

Rather than replacing the Security Council, the General Assembly could strengthen its ability to facilitate international dialogue and coordinate political responses when the Council is unable to act.

Possible proposals might include improving procedures for convening Emergency Special Sessions, enhancing coordination between the General Assembly and other principal UN organs, or developing new recommendations that encourage preventive diplomacy, mediation, and peaceful dispute settlement.

Delegates should consider how these initiatives could reinforce multilateral cooperation while preserving the respective responsibilities of each UN organ.

Promoting Voluntary Restraint in the Use of the Veto

Although the General Assembly cannot modify the veto established by the Charter, it may encourage Member States to support voluntary political commitments that promote its responsible use.

Examples include expanding support for the French–Mexican Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocities and encouraging broader endorsement of the ACT Code of Conduct, both of which seek to reduce the use of the veto during situations involving genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or ethnic cleansing.

Delegates may also explore additional confidence-building measures that encourage constructive engagement among the permanent members without requiring formal Charter amendment.

Strengthening Preventive Diplomacy and Early Warning Mechanisms

Many international crises become more difficult to resolve once violence has escalated. The General Assembly could therefore explore initiatives that strengthen preventive diplomacy, mediation, and conflict prevention before situations reach the Security Council.

Potential proposals include improving cooperation with the Secretary-General, encouraging earlier discussion of emerging crises, supporting regional organizations engaged in conflict prevention, and promoting greater information-sharing among Member States.

Preventive approaches may reduce the likelihood of Security Council deadlock by encouraging diplomatic engagement before geopolitical divisions become entrenched.

Improving the Inclusiveness of Multilateral Decision-Making

Many Member States argue that strengthening the legitimacy of the United Nations requires broader participation by developing countries and underrepresented regions in international decision-making.

Although comprehensive Security Council reform falls beyond the direct authority of the General Assembly, delegates may consider recommendations that promote more inclusive consultations, expand opportunities for participation by non-Council members during debates on major international crises, and strengthen cooperation with regional organizations and civil society where appropriate.

Greater inclusiveness may contribute to more representative and widely supported multilateral outcomes.

Preparing the United Nations for Future Global Challenges

The international system continues to evolve in response to emerging security threats, technological innovation, climate-related risks, global health emergencies, cyber threats, and increasingly complex humanitarian crises. These developments require multilateral institutions capable of responding rapidly while maintaining legitimacy and broad international support.

The Pact for the Future (2024) emphasizes the importance of adapting the United Nations to contemporary global realities through stronger international cooperation, more effective multilateral governance, and renewed commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter (United Nations, 2024). Within this context, delegates should consider how the General Assembly can continue to evolve as the world's most representative diplomatic forum while complementing the Security Council's primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Looking Ahead

The future effectiveness of the United Nations will depend not only on institutional reform but also on the willingness of Member States to cooperate in good faith, uphold international law, and seek common solutions to shared challenges. While the General Assembly cannot resolve every instance of Security Council deadlock, it remains uniquely positioned to promote dialogue, foster political consensus, and represent the collective voice of the international community.

Throughout this committee, delegates should seek solutions that are realistic, legally grounded, politically feasible, and consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Successful resolutions will recognize both the opportunities and the limitations of the General Assembly while proposing practical measures that strengthen multilateral cooperation, reinforce institutional legitimacy, and contribute to a more effective and responsive United Nations.

Guiding Questions for Delegates

The following questions are intended to support delegates in preparing for committee discussions and developing comprehensive, realistic, and well-researched policy proposals. While they are not exhaustive, they highlight some of the key legal, political, and institutional issues that Member States should consider throughout the debate.

Understanding the Issue

- What are the principal causes of Security Council deadlock, and how has the use of the veto contributed to institutional paralysis?
- How have geopolitical rivalries among the permanent members influenced the Security Council's ability to maintain international peace and security?
- In what ways has Security Council deadlock affected the credibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy of the United Nations?

Evaluating Previous International Responses

- How effective have existing mechanisms—such as Uniting for Peace and General Assembly Resolution 76/262—been in responding to Security Council deadlock?
- What lessons can be drawn from previous General Assembly interventions during international crises?
- Which past UN initiatives could be strengthened or expanded to improve multilateral decision-making?

Institutional Challenges

- What legal and political limitations restrict the General Assembly's ability to respond when the Security Council is unable to act?
- How can the General Assembly strengthen its contribution to international peace and security while respecting the distribution of powers established by the UN Charter?
- What practical obstacles might Member States face when implementing proposed reforms?

The Role of the General Assembly

- How can the General Assembly promote greater transparency, accountability, and international cooperation during periods of Security Council deadlock?
- Are existing mechanisms—such as Emergency Special Sessions and the Uniting for Peace procedure—sufficient to address contemporary international crises? Why or why not?

- What additional procedural or political tools could strengthen the General Assembly without requiring amendments to the UN Charter?

Responsibilities of Member States

- What responsibilities do the permanent members of the Security Council have in ensuring the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations?
- How can non-permanent members, emerging powers, and small and medium-sized states contribute to overcoming institutional deadlock?
- What role should regional organizations play in supporting the United Nations during major international crises?

Looking Toward the Future

- How can the United Nations preserve effective multilateral cooperation in an increasingly polarized international environment?
- Should Member States encourage voluntary restraint in the use of the veto? What mechanisms could promote greater political accountability while respecting the Charter?
- Which realistic and politically feasible measures could strengthen the role of the General Assembly in addressing Security Council deadlock?
- How should the United Nations balance the principles of state sovereignty, collective security, and institutional effectiveness when responding to future international crises?

Suggested Readings and Resources

The following resources provide delegates with reliable, up-to-date information on the structure and functions of the United Nations, the role of the General Assembly, the use of the veto in the Security Council, and ongoing discussions regarding multilateral reform. Delegates are encouraged to consult official United Nations documents, policy research produced by recognized institutions, and open-access academic literature to develop well-informed and balanced positions.

Official United Nations Documents and Resources

United Nations General Assembly

The official portal of the General Assembly, providing information on its structure, sessions, resolutions, committees, and current activities.

<https://www.un.org/en/ga>

United Nations Charter (1945)

The founding legal document of the United Nations, establishing the responsibilities and powers of the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Organization's other principal organs.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

UN Digital Library

The official repository for United Nations resolutions, reports, meeting records, voting data, and other primary documents.

<https://digitallibrary.un.org>

General Assembly Resolution 377 (V): Uniting for Peace (1950)

The landmark resolution establishing the procedure by which the General Assembly may convene Emergency Special Sessions when the Security Council fails to act because of a lack of unanimity among its permanent members.

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209972>

General Assembly Resolution 76/262 (2022): Standing Mandate for a General Assembly Debate When a Veto Is Cast in the Security Council

Introduces the requirement for the General Assembly to meet whenever a permanent member exercises its veto in the Security Council, strengthening transparency and political accountability.

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3972149>

Pact for the Future (2024)

The outcome document of the Summit of the Future, outlining Member States' commitments to strengthen multilateral cooperation, reform global governance, and enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations.

<https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>

Research Institutions and Policy Analysis

Security Council Report

An independent research organization providing detailed analyses of Security Council meetings, veto statistics, country situations, and institutional reform proposals.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org>

Security Council Report - Veto Tracker

A comprehensive database documenting every veto cast in the Security Council since 1946, including voting records, historical trends, and analytical commentary.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>

Center for UN Reform Education

Provides accessible research and educational materials on Security Council reform, General Assembly reform, peacekeeping, and broader United Nations institutional development.

<https://www.centerforunreform.org>

Open-Access Academic Articles and Books

United Nations University (UNU)

Publishes open-access research on multilateralism, international peace and security, global governance, and the future of the United Nations. Many publications are freely available and written by leading scholars and practitioners.

<https://unu.edu>

International Peace Institute (IPI)

Produces freely accessible reports, policy briefs, and analyses on Security Council reform, peace operations, preventive diplomacy, and multilateral governance.

<https://www.ipinst.org>

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Offers open-access policy analyses examining United Nations reform, Security Council working methods, multilateral cooperation, and emerging global security challenges.

<https://www.csis.org>

The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations (3rd ed.)

Edited by Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws (2022). A comprehensive reference work examining the history, institutions, and contemporary challenges of the United Nations, including chapters on the General Assembly, Security Council, collective security, and institutional reform. Selected chapter previews and supplementary materials are available online.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-on-the-united-nations-9780198803164>

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