

# How Can Better Cooperation Between the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly Advance Global Peace and Security?

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## Abstract

This paper aims to investigate how enhanced cooperation between the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) can strengthen global peace and security in an increasingly polarized international system. While the former organ does hold binding enforcement authority, its current decision-making processes are currently constrained by the veto power of the Permanent 5 (P5) member states, resulting in institutional paralysis during urgent crises. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach with the UN Charter, the 1950 Uniting for Peace Resolution, and comparative case studies of the Korean War between North and South Korea (1950-1953) and the Russo-Ukrainian War (2014-present), this paper assesses how the UNGA-led initiatives can compensate for inaction within the UNSC. The findings demonstrate that although the UNGA resolutions lack legal enforcement mechanisms, they still play a crucial role in restoring legitimacy and enabling quicker diplomatic or humanitarian responses when the UNSC faces deadlock. However, the absence of formal structural mechanisms between the two organs limits the coherence and long-term impact; therefore, to address this, this paper recommends three feasible reforms: establishing a Joint Crisis Council (JCC), adopting UNGA co-endorsement for peacekeeping mandates, and codifying procedures for declaring UNSC paralysis during mass-atrocity situations. In essence, strengthening the linkages between the inter-organs can enhance the United Nations' capacity as a whole to act more decisively and legitimately during global crises.

**Keywords** United Nations; UN Security Council; UN General Assembly; veto power; global peace and security; institutional reform; Uniting for Peace Resolution

## Introduction

As Russia launched a missile on Ukrainian territory back in 2022, within the span of a month in July of that year, they launched a record 6,443 drones and missiles into the country (Brennan, 2025). Despite their various attempts, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) found itself paralyzed by the usage of the veto power from the Russian Federation, one of the P5 members. Just days later, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) convened in an emergency session, invoking a rarely used legal mechanism that had not come into use in nearly three decades, the Uniting for Peace Resolution. Although the decisions of the UNGA are not binding by a legal enforcement mechanism, 141 member states voted to denounce Russia's aggression; this demonstrates that while the UN Security Council did face a gridlock, that didn't necessarily hamper the UN Security Council from seeking solutions.

The tension between the legal authority and democratic legitimacy is what lies at the heart of this paper. According to the UN Charter, the UNSC has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, while the UNGA is only able to make collective recommendations. However, when the UNSC is struck

with a political division, the UNGA has stepped in numerous times in the past. From the Korean War in the 1950s to the more recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict, these moments of crisis have placed the concepts of flexibility and coherence into test; yet, no formal mechanism exists for more coordinated decision-making between these two organs.

This paper argues that enhanced cooperation between the UNSC and UNGA is not just necessary, but also feasible to advance global peace and security in a polarized world. By drawing on a legal analysis of the UN Charter and two comparative case studies of two wars, the lack of structural integration and clarity continues to hinder rapid responses to crises. To address this, this paper argues that institutional reforms are necessary measures to be taken to create a more legitimate multilateral system.

To support this argument, the paper follows a structure that comprehensively analyzes the flaws of the current system and ways for reform. First, it offers a literature review to examine current scholars' view of the system of the United Nations. Second, it introduces the methodology and 5 hypotheses to put to test during the case studies. Next, it offers a legal analysis of the UN Charter's provisions on inter-organ cooperation, highlighting mainly Articles 10, 11.2 and 24. The other two case studies are comparing the responses in which the UN used to respond to the Korean War and Russian Ukrainian War, and by highlighting the instances of paralysis in the UNSC and intervention of the UNGA. Then, a cross case analysis will be conducted by comparing these crises to assess when and how the UNGA-led actions were effective after all. Finally, the last section will provide three institutional recommendations aimed at operationalizing the cooperation, followed by the author's reflections on political feasibility and the legal implications of implementing a structural reform.

In essence, this paper argues that the United Nations's ability to commit to its mission, maintaining global peace and security, is enhanced when the General Assembly and Security Council cooperate through their coordinated responses to crises, especially during Security Council gridlock as the General Assembly's representative legitimacy and ability to act swiftly compensate for the UNSC's structural limitations.

### ***Literature Review***

Established on October 24th, 1945, the United Nations (UN) is a multilateral organization made up of 193 member states guided by the principles in its founding Charter. The organization was created following the end of the Second World War (WWII), with the mission of promoting peace and security and developing friendly relations among nations. Most of its activities lie in working to prevent conflict, endorsing in sustainable development and upholding international law (United Nations). Its predecessor is the League of Nations, created by the Treaty of Versailles after the end of the First World War (WWI) from 1920 to 1946 (Mingst et al., 2025).

Although the UN has six main bodies, often referred to as its "main organs", the UN Security Council (UNSC) and General Assembly (UNGA) each have its subsidiary organs. Each organ, whether main, subsidiary, or ad hoc, is expected to obey the obligations and rights listed in the UN Charter. The UN Charter is the constitutive instrument of the UN, signed on June 26th, 1945 (United Nations 2). It is essentially an international treaty that codifies the basic principles of international relations, including information in regards to the sovereign equality of states to the prohibition of the use of force inconsistent with the mission of the UN (United Nations 2).

The UN Security Council is the premier body of the UN, primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security (Alcover et al., 2024). It has a structure consisting of 15 member states. Five of these members are permanent (P5) and hold veto power: China, France, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The remaining ten members are elected for two-year terms from the General Assembly, with no immediate re-election allowed. They are usually chosen to represent different geographic regions of the world. The Council's duties, a wide array of powers over other subsidiary committees, are under Chapters V to VII of the UN Charter (White, 2016). The Council is charged with taking action with its binding resolutions and decisions on any violations to international peace and security. A resolution in this specific committee is adopted if nine or more of the fifteen Council members vote for the resolution, and if not vetoed by any of the P5 nations (UNRCCA).

The UN General Assembly is the main policy-making organ of the UN, primarily responsible for providing a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues (United Nations 4). Each of the 193 member states has one vote in the Assembly, with a two thirds majority vote required for decisions; the committee may adopt recommendations and resolutions in regards to the maintenance of international peace and security, but they are all non-binding (Blanchfield, 2024). In addition, it is in charge of making key procedural decisions for the UN, including appointing the Secretary-General on the

recommendation of UNSC, electing the non-permanent member states of the UNSC, and approving the UN budget (United Nations).

Despite their formal structures and contributions to addressing pressing issues in the status quo, both the UNSC and UNGA face increasing scrutiny from scholars in regards to their effectiveness due to the increase of power rivalry among countries. Hasan Abu Nimah, a political commentator of the Jordan Times and retired Jordan ambassador, believes that the UN “has failed miserably in preventing many of the raging conflicts in [Jordan’s] region in particular, as well as many other stable, but potentially dangerous, conflicts in many other parts of the world” (Nimah, 2018). He believes that the main advantage of having an international organization is to reach decisions by a majority vote, otherwise also known as having a democratic representation (Nimah, 2018). Admittedly, this doesn’t necessarily guarantee that the decisions made are always right; however, they are always democratic and they are “always better” than individual interest-driven rulings. In addition, the current global landscape is marked by intensifying geopolitical competition, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and wars in Syria, Yemen, and many others that the UN has failed to resolve (Nimah, 2019). These are essentially conditions that undermine the foundational premise of collective action within the UN framework (Nimah, 2018). In this modern era of power rivalry between nations that usually have the veto power, the UN’s capacity to serve as the “global neutral arbitrator” has been called into question with various critics asserting that the organization is structurally paralyzed by the very powers that were meant to safeguard its mission.

The paralysis of the United Nations’ contributions is further exacerbated by the lack of structural integration between the UN Security Council and the General Assembly, two of the main organs of that UN that, while intended to cooperate with each other, often operate separately, which weakens the coherence and impact of the UN’s overall decision-making framework. According to international and European politics professors Martin Binder and Monika Heupel, the UNSC’s legitimacy “deficit results primarily from states’ concerns regarding the body’s procedural shortcomings” (Binder et al., 2015). Among these recurring criticisms in the UNGA debates are that the broader UN membership is excluded from key decision-making processes in the UNSC, which leads to inadequate reporting and transparency, overall making the wider Assembly weak or missing. In their study, both authors conducted a survey in regards to the negative evaluative statement on the UNSC. In fact, of all 1123 negative statements about the UNSC, 65% (731) refer to its procedures. In second, concerns about transparency shortcomings carry the greatest weight, with 20% (229) of all negative statements referring to transparency. For the rest, of all negative statements 19% (212) relate to participation and 16% (175) to accountability (Binder et al., 2015). Among the stakeholders who believed that the procedures within the UN were the main source of the problem, Nicaragua claimed that “[t]here is a need for working methods that transform the [Security Council] into a more transparent, inclusive, and participatory organ, and which render it accountable to the General Assembly in an effective way” (Binder et al., 2015). Overall, a lot of active stakeholders including the authors themselves believe that with regards to the three guards’ legitimacy, more specifically the normative facts, cognitive political authority, and the political will, the number of negative statements clearly outweighs the number of positive ones.

This structural disconnection is further compounded by the mechanisms of the veto power held by the P5 nations of the Security Council, which often paralyze collective action especially in the face of urgent global crises. For the past couple of decades, many scholars have criticized the UNSC for “propagating inequality and power differences amongst countries” (Alcover et al., 2024). During debates, the veto power allows any of the five nations to block resolutions independent of the level of international support the resolution has amassed, meaning that it could not only hinder the UN from implementing solutions but also easily alter the Council’s decisions. (Alcover et al., 2024). This hierarchy of power often marginalizes the stances of the non-permanent members, which results in the decision-making process being biased towards countries not included within the P5 nations. A small team of professors from Indiana University Bloomington and University of Minnesota claimed that the debate on the UNSC’s operations has resolved around a specific criteria used to assess the eligibility of permanent membership in the Rooseveltian model — which suggests that the allocation of permanent membership is based on economic base, military capability, population, and territory (Afoaku et al., 2001). However, the selection of the current P5 nations was not determined based on a clearly defined criteria, which has led scholars, including the research team itself, to believe that a problem within the UN is the absence of a standard procedure for selecting new permanent members of the UNSC (Afoaku et al., 2001).

Given the ongoing debate about the legitimacy of the UN and its efforts to maintain friendly relations among member states and to promote peace and security, this paper believes that the existence of the veto powers entrenches inequality among member states and often obstructs meaningful diplomatic dialogue. Granted, the P5 nations are powerful due to their prominent roles in the aftermath of WWII and their continued influence on global affairs. Despite this, with the unclear criteria on how these nations were selected and the

ability of a single P5 nation to unilaterally block action from the whole organization, there are flaws with the UN's procedural systems that undermine the legitimacy and efficacy of the UNSC. On the contrary, this paper does recognize that the organization has, at times, acknowledged and acted upon its procedural limitations. A notable example of this is the Uniting for Peace resolution, more formally known as the UNGA Resolution 377A (V), that passed during the Korean War. This resolution was created to circumvent a veto from the Soviet Union that likely would have hindered the efforts of the UNSC to defend South Korea from North Korean aggression. As a result, this historical precedent conveys that while structural issues persist, the UN framework does implement mechanisms, albeit limited, that can allay the paralyses caused by the usage of the veto power.

## Methods

To comprehensively examine how enhanced cooperation between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly could advance both global peace and security, in line with its mission, I will be adopting a mixed method approach. More specifically, this mixed method approach would consist of legal analysis, quantitative data, and case study methods. Utilizing these three methodologies will complement one another as they each focus on a different discipline and provide both evidence on the effects of institutional coordination.

### 1. Legal Analysis: UN Charter

The legal analysis of the United Nations Charter would serve as the foundation of my research. The document clarifies the formal powers, constraints, and interactions between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly.

Within the UN Charter itself, special attention would be given to chapters IV and V as they both address the structures and procedural processes within the General Assembly and Security Council, respectively. In particular, this analysis would examine how the Charter distributes the authority between the two organs, including the UNGA's recommendatory powers and the UNSC's binding enforcement powers.

This legal analysis across this crucial document would apply the textual and teleological methods of legal interpretation to critically evaluate how they allow for, or potentially hinder, institutional cooperation during international crises. This legal foundation is instrumental as it allows us to determine the constitutional legitimacy of GA-led action under the conditions of paralysis in the UNSC.

### 2. Case Studies from the Korean War (1950-1953) and Russo-Ukrainian War (2014-present)

To contextualize the legal and statistical findings, this paper will be undertaken in two case studies, both from different periods of time.

- The Korean War (1950-1953): This marks the first implementation of the Uniting for Peace Resolution after a veto from the Soviet Union (USSR) prevented action from the Security Council. This case illustrates how the UNGA was able to mobilize international intervention despite inaction in the UNSC.
- The Russo Ukrainian War (2014-present): The ongoing UNSC paralysis due to Russia's veto has led to a large number of UNGA resolutions condemning aggression and affirming sovereignty in Ukraine. Although this case is similar in essence to the case during the Korean War, it reflects a more modern application of GA-led legitimacy in response to obstruction from one of the P5 nations.

### 3. Case studies of the Russo-Ukrainian War (2014-present) and Uniting for Peace resolution

After Russia vetoed a Security Council draft resolution condemning its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the UNSC invoked the Uniting for Peace procedure for the first time in nearly three decades. This triggered an emergency session of the General Assembly, where the Resolution ES-11/1 passed with overwhelming support from 141 member states. The UNGA's response with this demonstrated its ability to mobilize swift diplomatic and political action in the face of deadlock within the UNSC.

However, as aforementioned, the UNGA resolutions' non-binding nature and the absence of structural coordination mechanisms between the two organs limited the long-term impact of these measures despite the overall strong global consensus reached.

Overall, these cases will be compared to evaluate the efficiency and legitimacy of UNGA responses in contrast to the prevalent inaction within the UNSC. Each case will help assess whether the GA has served as a

meaningful “substitute” to the UNSC in advancing global peace and security, in line with the mission of the United Nations.

### ***Hypotheses***

This paper formulates four core hypotheses to assess how the cooperation between the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) could advance both global peace and security. All of the hypotheses are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Hypotheses

Hypotheses (H#)
H1: When the UN Security Council fails to act due to the usage of veto power by a P5 nation, the UN General Assembly-led initiatives would lead to more efficient and immediate responses to security crises due to its democratic nature.
H2: Greater procedural and agenda setting coordination between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly results in more consistent and unified peacekeeping mandates, which, in turn, improves the mission outcomes.
H3: UN interventions that are jointly endorsed by both the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly enjoy higher levels of international legitimacy, which are measured by broader state compliance and funding.
H4: The absence of structural integration and clarity between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly limits the UN’s ability to respond rapidly and cohesively to emerging conflicts.
H5: The cooperation between the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly will not function efficiently due to the non-binding aspect of resolutions passed in the latter council.

These hypotheses will be evaluated through a structured comparison of case studies from different time periods, more specifically during the Korean War (1950s) and the Russo-Ukrainian War (2022), as well as the legal interpretation of founding documents from the United Nations, and triangulated with quantitative data from the official UN website. By using mixed methods, I will be able to investigate not only what the outcomes of the cooperation were, but also why they unfolded in specific institutional contexts. By collectively using these approaches, the findings will assess whether cooperation between both committees enhances the UN’s legitimacy and capacity in maintaining its mission.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **#1 Legal Analysis: United Nations Charter**

In the context of investigating how better the cooperation between the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly could be advanced in line with the United Nations’ mission, the principles and purposes outlined in the UN Charter serve as the foundational treaty to help us answer that question.

With the United Nations being formed as an organization that strives “to maintain international peace and security” (Article 1.1 UN Charter) and to achieve “sovereign equality of all its members” (Article 2.1 UN Charter), the Charter was created for ambitious but specific purposes (Doyle, 2012). The Charter, consisting of preambulatory clauses and a total of 19 chapters divided into 111 articles, was signed to maintain its mission of:

- Maintaining international peace and security
- Promoting social progress and better standards of life
- Strengthening international law
- Promoting the expansion of human rights.

On October 24th, 1945, the UN Charter was brought into force after its ratification by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and majority of other signatories from member states (History, 2025).

Among the 19 chapters in the UN Charter are 4 chapters that define the powers and functions of both organs. The UN General Assembly is explicitly mentioned in Chapter IV of the Charter, stating that it “may consider the general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of international peace and security” and “may call the attention of the Security Council to situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security” (Articles 11.1 and 11.3 UN Charter). Essentially, the organ may discuss any issue within the scope of the Charter and make non-binding recommendations. Despite the fact that their efforts, such as their resolutions, are not legally binding, they play a major role in peacebuilding and leading diplomatic discussions. Accordingly, the UN Security Council is explicitly mentioned in Chapter V of the Charter, stating that “[the Council’s] members confer on [the Council] primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf” (Article 24.1 UN Charter). Fundamentally, it holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security by taking binding decisions, including the use of force and imposing sanctions, if necessary.

In terms of how the UN charter addresses the cooperation between the UNSC and UNGA, in Article 10, the Charter states that the General Assembly is able to make recommendations to the Security Council, which establishes a channel of cooperation. Because of the wide range of the powers of the UNGA under this Article, a large number of resolutions adopted by the Assembly made “implicit reference” to that provision (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 10). In addition, the UNGA adopted resolutions and had a bearing on the report of the Secretary General, named “An Agenda for Peace, Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peace-keeping”, which sought to ensure better coordination among the organs, whether main or subsidiary, of the UN in all activities related to peacekeeping (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 10). During the meetings within the organ, there were numerous references to decisions of the Assembly which several member states stressed the importance of a certain resolution and the need to implement it” (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 10). By stating that the UNGA could discuss any questions or matters “relating to the powers and functions of any organs”, including the UNSC, the Charter does not discourage overlap, but rather encourages deliberative cooperation. In turn, this opens a space for the UNGA to contribute to or influence the matters typically under the domain of the UNSC, such as international peace and security. In fact, the representative of the Netherlands was more open to the transparency of the work between the two councils, stating that it would be “a very positive development in the institutional relations between the Council and the General Assembly, which will, [he hopes], enhance the spirit of solidarity needed to cope with the increasing challenges of the Organization” (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 10).

From the standpoint of Hypothesis 2 (H2), these examples convey that agenda alignment and procedural cooperation under this Article enhance the legitimacy of UN peacekeeping mandates. This type of coordination also allows the General Assembly to look into the often-overlooked crises from the Security Council and to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of multilateral peace efforts. Nonetheless, while Article 10 does provide a legal ground for cooperation between the two organs, the lack of formalized mechanisms from the UN for joint planning is still a structural limitation, which accordingly supports H4. Institutional reforms that promote systematic consultation could potentially bridge such gaps and help the UN system act more cohesively in response to similar pressing issues.

Furthermore, Article 11.2 of the UN Charter claims that the UN General Assembly “may discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security brought before it by any Member of the United Nations, or by the Security Council [...]”. In response to this, the UNGA adopted a number of resolutions that contained recommendations to the UNSC on matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 11). Among some of the resolutions, the UNGA raised particular issues in regards to the maintenance of peace and security or specifically requested the UNSC to take measures regarding such issues, as it is permitted to do under the Article.

For example, in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the General Assembly urged the Security Council to consider “the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory”, more specifically requesting it to “consider the necessary measures with a view to securing international protection of Palestinian civilians in the Palestinian territory under Israeli occupation since 1967, including Jerusalem” (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 11). This request, formalized in United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-10/20 (2018), followed the UNSC’s failure to act due to the usage of the veto power from the United States. The resolution was from the Tenth emergency special session of the UNGA, when it was brought upon after weeks of violence along the border of the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians participated in “the Great March of Return” protests (United Nations, 1). It was sponsored by Algeria, Turkey, and the State of Palestine, passed with 120 states voting in favor, 8 against, and 45 abstentions (United Nations, 1). Overall, this exemplifies how the UNGA uses its moral and political authority to amplify urgent concerns when the UNSC is gridlocked.

Admittedly, the solutions and recommendations of the UNGA are not legally binding, but they still reflect the collective will of the international community and place additional pressure for the UNSC to act upon pressing issues. This outcome exemplifies how, in cases where the UNSC faces paralysis due to the usage of the veto power, the UNGA could exercise its procedural authority to highlight urgent security concerns and act instead of the Council. In fact, the Secretary-General is quite firm in regards to the maintenance of international peace and security, stating that “the General Assembly’s capacity “to consider and recommend appropriate action must be recognized” (UN Legal Repertory, Art. 11). While Article 12 states that “the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute or situation unless the Security Council so requests” during situations of dispute (Article 12, UN Charter), Article 11.2 provides the legal foundation for the UNGA to raise issues and recommend discussions and solutions during times when the Council fails to exercise its enforcement capacities. This claim supports H1; H1 hypothesizes that UNGA-led initiatives offer more democratic and timely responses to global crises. As aforementioned, despite the non-binding nature of UNGA resolutions, they represent the will of the majority of the member states, therefore they enhance the legitimacy of their calls for intervention.

Another notable article from the Charter is Article 24, which states the functions and powers of the UN Security Council. Essentially, it outlines the basic principle of the primary responsibilities of the Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. With the article in mind, member states not only have to “confer” to the responsibilities of the Council but also agree that in carrying out its duties the Council “acts on their behalf”, according to Article 24.1. (Wasiq, 2023). All member states of the United Nations, therefore, share responsibilities the Council assumes and are all expected to follow any obligation it imposes (Wasiq, 2023).

This article most directly reinforces Hypothesis 3, which states that “UN interventions that are jointly endorsed by both the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly enjoy higher levels of international legitimacy, which are measured by broader state compliance and funding”. Article 24.1 of the Charter implies that the binding decisions of the Security Council derive their force not only due to their legal obligation to do so, but also from the collective delegation of authority among the organs of the United Nations by all member states. In cases where the UNSC does act with consensus, the compliance tends to be a lot broader and more lasting. Simultaneously, this article emphasizes the institutional asymmetry between the UNSC and the UNGA, as it refers back to Hypothesis 4, which, in summary, claims that the lack of structural integration limits cohesive action. Because only the UNSC has the power to impose obligations that all member states are obligated to follow under the Charter, there is an inherent imbalance of institutional authority, which renders equal cooperation difficult. This structural gap, in the sense that only one organ can bind member states while the other could only advise, non bindingly, makes procedural coordination more difficult without any type of structural reform.

With this in mind, while article 24 does list the duties of the Security Council and its role of being the primary organ of the United Nations in making binding decisions, the institutional legitimacy is maximized when it works alongside the General Assembly, with the UNSC exercising authority and the UNGA broadening political support and reaching an international consensus.

## **#2 Case Study: Uniting for Peace Resolution (1950) during the Korean War (1950-1953)**

Under Articles 35.1 and 35.2 of the UN Charter, “any Member of the United Nations may bring any dispute [...] to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly” and that “a state which is not a Member of the United Nations may bring to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly any dispute to which it is a party if it accepts in advance [...]” (UN Charter). This authorization is solely restricted by the provision that while the UNSC is in charge of resolving any dispute or situation based on the functions assigned to it by the Charter, the UNGA is not permitted to make any recommendation in regards to the dispute without a request from the Council (Fomerand et al., 2025).

However, the “Uniting for Peace” resolution from 1950 is an exception to this case. In June and July, 1950, the UN Security Council passed three resolutions pertaining to the defense of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) after forces from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) invaded the nation (Matray, 2023). At the time, the Soviet Union could have used its veto power to obstruct such measures from occurring, but six months prior, it had begun a boycott against the United Nations to protest the denial of membership from the UN to the People’s Republic of China (Matray, 2023). Once it returned to the UNSC, their likely use of the veto to take measures against North Korea threatened to paralyze the Council and prevent further action against North Korea.

It is imperative to grasp that the issue of referring the UNSC's duties to the UNGA raises scrutiny among scholars in regards to the legal nature of transferring a particular authority to another UN body (Eltawila, 2021). Mohamed Eltawila, a chief judge at the Technical Bureau of the Court of Cassation, believes that this situation may seem that "the Council is offering a *carte blanche* to the Assembly to act in accordance with Chapter VII which the Charter inferred to its powers only to the former" (Eltawila, 2021). While he does realize that the legality of such an action is not as straightforward as it may seem, he emphasizes that the delegation of powers involving enforcement actions cannot occur either informally nor implicitly. Rather, the UNSC would need to fulfill a specific legal criteria, such as adopting a formal resolution and making an explicit determination under Article 39 of the Charter in regards to the existence of a threat to peace. Without taking these prerequisites, any transfer of binding authority from the Council to the General Assembly would potentially lack a legal foundation and go against the integrity of the institution as outlined in the Charter.

To fully grasp the significance of the UN's involvement during the Korean War, it is imperative to comprehensively examine the historical relationship between South Korea and the United Nations, particularly the organization's strong support towards the country during and after the war. In response to North Korea's attack on South Korea on June 25th, 1950, the United States, one of the P5 nations, called for an emergency meeting among the Security Council members (Ministry on Foreign Affairs). The Council defined the attack as a breach of peace, and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of the North Korean armed forces to the 38th parallel (Ministry on Foreign Affairs). A few days later, on June 29th, the Council adopted Resolution 83, which recommends "Member of the United Nations [to] furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area" (United Nations Digital Library, 1965). As mentioned, once the Soviet Union returned to the UNSC to assume the chair and began to take vetoes, it effectively blocked the Council from implementing measures in regards to the situation on the Korean Peninsula (Ministry on Foreign Affairs). In response to this, the General Assembly adopted resolution 377, more well-known as the "Uniting for Peace Resolution", with the hopes of transferring the duties of the UNSC to the UNGA (Ministry on Foreign Affairs).

On October 3rd, 1959, the Uniting for Peace resolution had several provisions. First, it permitted the seven members, or majority, of the UNSC in a procedural vote to call an emergency session of the General Assembly within 24 hours (Matray, 2023). Second, it created the Peace Observation Commission to provide independent information about areas with threats to peace (Matray, 2023). For context, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) of the United Nations is an intergovernmental body, with 31 member states elected from the UN General Assembly, Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council, that supports peace efforts in countries of conflict (United Nations 1). In addition, the top financial contributing countries and the top troop-contributing countries to the UN system are also members (United Nations 1). Third, in the case of a threat to peace or security, opposing the UN's mission, if the UNSC, due to the "lack of unanimity of its permanent members" does not fulfill its primary responsibilities, then the UNGA is able to intervene and democratically make recommendations following its standard rules of procedure (Matray, 2023).

This thorough analysis strongly endorses Hypothesis 1, which posits that when the UN Security Council fails to act due to the usage of veto power from a P5 nation, the UN General Assembly could utilize their initiatives to facilitate more immediate responses to emergency crises. The Korean War illustrates a very rare moment in UN history where the UNGA is able to intervene an institutional forum left by the return of the Soviet Union; Hans Kelsen, an Austrian-American jurist and legal philosopher, described this as "the most striking modification of the law of the UN" (Brady, 2021). This, in turn, helped avert the paralysis and permitted the UN to continue international action upon all of its member states. By proceeding with the emergency session under the terms of the resolution and launching military and humanitarian assistance, this case demonstrated that a democratic body could overcome gridlock within the UNSC and commit to the mission of "maintaining peace and security" (UN Charter).

This case is also pertinent to Hypothesis 4, which states that "the absence of structural integration and clarity between [both organs] limits the UN's ability to respond rapidly and cohesively to emerging conflicts". While the UN General Assembly was able to proceed in discussions with all member states participating and coming up with non-binding resolutions, the lack of mechanisms within the UN Charter itself in regards to coordinated crisis response forced the UN system to rely on exceptional resolutions rather than routine cooperation. Granted, Article 10 states that the General Assembly "may discuss any questions or matters [...] and may make recommendations to the [...] Security Council; Article 11.2 states that "the General Assembly may discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security brought before it by [...] the Security Council. [...] Any such question on which action is necessary shall be referred to the Security Council by the General Assembly either before or after discussion". However, these provisions are largely

procedural and lack the necessary structural clarity needed to enable coordinated and timely decision-making moments during times of war. The articles do not provide either any specific mechanisms for aligning agendas nor any joint crisis protocols. Hence, cooperation remains rather ad hoc and dependent on political dynamics, which weakens the UN's ability of responding quickly and cohesively to emergency situations.

Furthermore, while H5 posits that “the cooperation between the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly will not function effectively due to the non-binding aspect of resolutions passed in the latter council”, the Korean War raises complications to that perspective. Although resolutions from the General Assembly are non-binding, the political authority behind the committee enabled international action and enhanced the legitimacy with the US-led defense operations in South Korea. According to UNGA Agenda Item 41 from November 15th, 1973, the “General Assembly is, of course, entitled to have its own judgement on this matter in spite of the well known decisions of the Security Council” (United Nations, 1973). This reinforces the idea that the UNGA is still able to have its own representative weight in the United Nations, even when its decisions lack the legal force that the UNSC has. In the context of the Korean War, its broad-based support provided moral legitimacy during a time when the Council was vulnerable to paralysis due to the Soviet Union. In addition, Dominik Zaum, a professor of international relations and political science at the University of Reading, described this whole situation as “one of the most important attempts by the US and its allies to change the institutional balance of power between the Security Council and the General Assembly” (Brady, 2021). Therefore, this case suggests that the non-binding aspect of the UNGA shouldn't hinder the UN from reaching solutions to defend a country in conflict, but could be used as a way to rally an international consensus.

### **3rd Case Study: Russo Ukrainian War (2014-present) and Uniting for Peace Resolution**

Around three years ago in 2022, the United States dusted off the Uniting for Peace Resolution to condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine (Scharf, 2023). This was the first time in almost 30 years that the UN Security Council and General Assembly proceeded with this mechanism. A day after the invasion on February 25th, 2022, the UN described Russia's attack as a violation of Article 2.4 of the Charter, which encourages all member states to “refrain [...] from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations” (Schrijver, 2022). In addition, the Council demanded that Russia must immediately “cease its use of force against Ukraine” and that it must “immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders” (Schrijver, 2022). The draft resolution with these commandments was able to pass with 11 out of 15 member states voting for, China, India, and United Arab Emirates abstaining, and the Russia casting a veto by which, despite the majority in favor of the resolution, impeded the resolution from adopting (Schrijver, 2022).

On March 2nd, 2022, 11 members of the UN Security Council referred to the Uniting for Peace resolution and called an emergency session for the UN General Assembly to take measures to respond to Russia's aggression in circumvention of Russia's veto in the UNSC (Scharf, 2023). During the special session on March 2nd, Resolution ES-11/1, prepared by the European Union with Ukraine and countries from all regions in the world, passed in the General Assembly with 141 votes in favor, 5 against, and 35 abstentions (European Union, 2022). Clause 7 of the resolution states that the Russian Federation must “abide by the principles set forth in the Charter and the Declaration on Friendly Relations” (Resolution ES 11-1). As a whole, it “deplores in the strongest terms” the aggressive act by Russia and “reaffirms [the international community's] commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Ukraine” (Resolution ES 11-1).

Until this crisis arose in 2022, the UN Security Council and General Assembly had not unilaterally invoked the Uniting for Peace procedure since 1997 (Scharf, 2023). While it was used in 1967, 1980, 1982, and 1998 to condemn and recommend sanctions against Israel, the United States wasn't quite in favor of using it (Scharf, 2023). Professor Christian Tomuschat, a professor emeritus of Humboldt University Berlin, claimed that the inactivity could potentially reflect a concern that the resolution “has a potential that could subvert the well-equilibrated balance of power within the United Nations” (Scharf, 2023). In addition, former Deputy Legal Counsel of the United Nations Larry Johnson argued that the resolution is no longer needed, specifically stating that “there is no bar to the General Assembly taking up a matter of which the Security Council is seized with or without invoking the Uniting for Peace Resolution” (Scharf, 2023).

Three years later, on February 24th, 2025, the UN Security Council adopted its first resolution in regards to the issue (Barabanov, 2025). Initially, it was a draft resolution from the United States, without condemnation of Russia. It consisted of two preambular paragraphs: first, grieving the number of lives lost

during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and second, a statement that the mission of the UN is to settle disputes peacefully; it also contained a single operative paragraph that the organization “implores a swift end to the conflict and further urges a lasting peace”. (Barabanov, 2025). After multiple amendments raised by China, Britain, and other nations, the Security Council was able to adopt its first resolution, resolution 2774, pertaining specifically to this war since 2022.

This case study relates the most evidently to Hypothesis 1. In short, H1 supports that when the UNSC fails to act due to a veto, the UNGA could provide more immediate responses to crises. Russia’s initial veto in 2022 in the UNSC blocked action despite the consensus reached by majority of the member states, yet the UNGA was able to respond by holding the 11th emergency session and passing resolution ES-11/1 with an overwhelming majority between 193 member states. This perfectly encapsulates how, in times of gridlock in the UNSC, the UNGA could serve as a more effective and deliberative body that amplifies global condemnation and mobilizes diplomatic pressure despite the fact that it cannot authorize force or implement binding measures unlike the other.

Moreover, this case allows us to comprehensively assess Hypothesis 4, which states that the absence of structural integration between both organs limits the UN’s ability to respond to conflicts. In this context, the case exemplifies more specifically on how institutional fragmentation could delay, and potentially dilute, the UN’s capacity to respond to such issues. While the UNGA was able to move swiftly after the emergency session and the adoption of Resolution ES 11/1, the UNSC remained in gridlock due to Russia’s usage of veto power despite the near consensus among other member states. The bridge between the ways the two committees responded to this issue reflects not only the existing political gridlock, but also a lack of procedural continuity and operational coordination mechanisms in the UN Charter.

Admittedly, Article 24 of the UN Charter does outline the functions and powers of the UNSC, stating that it has a primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security. However, it does not provide any formal procedure for joint resolution drafting with two committees or establishing synchronized emergency protocols between the two organs. As a result, the UNGA’s response was able to execute more swiftly while the Council failed to adopt a resolution or solely reach a consensus in the span of over three years. The eventual adoption of resolution 2774, three years later after the conflict, emphasizes the Council’s institutional stagnation in the absence of structural reform. The lack of synchronization between both organs severely limits the UN’s ability to perform unified responses during crises. Had clearer mechanisms existed within the Charter in regards to cooperation between both organs, the diplomatic responses to the invasion could have been more impactful and strategic in the long term.

In regards to Hypothesis 5, which claims that the cooperation between both organs wouldn’t function efficiently due to the non-binding nature of UNGA resolutions, this case complicates this claim. On one hand, Resolution ES 11/1 was able to garner support from the majority of the member states in the UNGA and encouraged sanctions and aid through collective efforts. However, its non-binding status has brought limitations to its legal value. In Chapter V of the UN Charter, it explicitly states that resolutions from the UNGA are not legally binding, and that they depend entirely on voluntary compliance. Thus, while the GA may have succeeded in reaching a moral and political consensus of the international community, it cannot successfully persuade Russia to cease its aggression or impose any defensive measures for Ukraine.

Overall, this case clearly depicts how structural gaps and non-binding limits of resolutions that come with how the UN is designed hinder its ability to act cohesively when faced with major crises. Although the UNGA was able to successfully respond quickly with an overwhelming majority, the lack of structural integration with the UNSC and the absence of binding authority within the former organ severely put a limit on the impact of all actions. As a result, such limitations endorse the argument for reforms within the United Nations that would enable more coordinated and unified peace and security mechanisms.

### ***Cross Case Analysis***

Across all three case studies, there is a clear pattern: when the UN Security Council faces a gridlock to the veto usage of a P5 member, the UN General Assembly could serve as an alternative mechanism to sustain international action and maintain international peace and security. During both the Korean and Russian-Ukrainian War, the Uniting for Peace resolution granted the UNGA to work through the gridlock induced by the veto and issue resolutions that gathered global support. This consistency across very different geopolitical contexts supports H1; however, the extent of “success” also depends on the case. The Korean War saw the deployment of a UN-led military coalition to support South Korea, while in Ukraine, the UNGA resolutions were symbolic, not to mention delayed, due to the lack of activity and the inability to reach a consensus in the

UNSC. Thus, while the procedural mechanism worked, the outcome was conditional on geopolitical alignment especially among powerful member states.

More importantly, all three cases highlight the lack of structural integration between the two organs, which validates H4. In the case of the Korean War, it required the intervention of an emergency mechanism, while the Russian-Ukraine case demonstrated that even after years since the attack, the UN was unable to reach a consensus and lacked formalized procedures for a formalized response. Articles 10, 11.2, and 24 of the UN Charter solely permit ad hoc procedures and not institutionalized coordination; in other words, none of the cases demonstrate a permanent joint agenda-setting mechanism, nor do they involve co-drafted resolutions or real-time operational links. Thus, while both wars reveal that legitimacy and action do not always require binding resolutions, they still require the need of reaching a global consensus and operation carried beyond the current framework of the United Nations.

Overall, the cross-analysis with all three cases confirms my thesis; the improved cooperation between the UNGA and the UNSC has the potential to uphold international peace and security, but only if structural integration mechanisms are embedded and political will exists to transform normative consensus into collective action. To achieve the goals of rapid crisis response, such reforms could be implemented as formalized practice to address the issues of today.

### ***Recommendations***

To enhance the effectiveness of international law and the United Nations' response to times of conflict and war, the cooperation between the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council should be reformed through the following policies: 1. Establishing a Joint Crisis Council (JCC) in the United Nations between the operations of the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly; 2. Using the UN General Assembly resolutions to co-endorse peace-keeping mandates; 3. Codifying a UN General Assembly practice of declaring paralysis in the UN Security Council during cases of mass atrocity.

1. To have cooperation between both organs to operate in the first place, **the United Nations should create a Joint Crisis Council (JCC) between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly**; membership in this Council would fall under a rotating basis, with representatives from both primary organs. In essence, this council would serve as a permanent consultative body that meets during security emergencies to facilitate the process of aligning agendas and proposing coordinated frameworks. The difference between the emergency special sessions under the Uniting for Peace resolution and this council is the fact that the former is reactive; the ad hoc measures are solely triggered only after the Security Council is deadlocked, often too late to prevent escalation. Unlike the ad hoc emergency sessions, the JCC would enable both organs to engage in the exchange of information in a more swiftly manner and draft mutually agreeable resolutions before conflicts escalate even further. Article 11.3 in the UN Charter states that "the General Assembly may call the attention of the Security Council to situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security" (UN Charter), meaning that both organs could come together to address peace and security; the JCC would not infringe on currently existing mandates, but rather serve as a consultative bridge. Politically, it is more feasible than submitting amendments to the UN Charter, as it builds on procedural innovation; adoptions of amendments to the document would require a vote of two thirds of the members of the General Assembly, meaning two thirds of the members of the United Nations, including all five of the P5 nations in the Security Council. Modeled on the Peacebuilding Commission's hybrid structure, the JCC would strengthen institutional synergy and enhance the UN's capacity for preventive diplomacy.

2. A second recommendation is for the **UN General Assembly to co-endorse UN Security Council peace-keeping mandates through its formal, yet non-binding resolutions**. Although there is no legal enforcement mechanism behind resolutions in the UNGA, they still provide political legitimacy and reflect the collective will of the broader 193 member international community. This strategy becomes particularly important when legitimacy is in question, especially during the cases of deadlock due to veto usage in the UNSC. In addition, this practice would draw on Articles 10 and 11.2 of the UN Charter, as both permit the UNGA to make recommendations to the UNSC on peace and security. It also reinforces H1 and H3, which both state that UNGA-led initiatives under gridlock may potentially lead to more immediate action, and joint endorsement enhances legitimacy. The case studies on the Korean War and the Russian-Ukrainian War both emphasize the

importance and power of moral authority and multilateral support even with the absence of a binding power.

3. The final recommendation involves the UNGA **to codify a procedural mechanism, whether it be through an amendment to its rules of procedure or another, that allows it to formally declare the paralyzes in the UNSC during cases of mass atrocity.** Once declared, this would activate a series of responses led by the UNGA, mostly based on the precedents on the Uniting for Peace resolution. This mechanism would not operate based on an amendment to the Charter, but would rather be institutionalized within its practice under Article 11 of the charter and past emergency special session rules. As shown in the case of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the absence of a formal process delays the GA's response to the lack of action in the UNSC, leaving it more vulnerable to inconsistencies with adhoc practices. In turn, by codifying the criteria, the UNGA could legitimize its own role. This recommendation endorses H4, which states that "the absence of structural integration and clarity" between both organs hinders the UN from developing solutions to conflicts. Unlike the prior effort of reforming the Charter a few times during the 20th century, this solution is more politically viable in the sense that it is only an internal procedural change, and not a legal reform.

All together, these recommendations aim to transform the fragmented dynamic between the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly into more cooperation between the two. These proposals collectively draw from historical precedents while simultaneously offering more feasible reforms. In addition, not only do they respect the foundational principles of the UN Charter, but they also adapt its mechanisms to meet the complexity of the status quo and its many conflicts. Ultimately, the implementation of these recommendations may potentially ensure that the United Nations remains capable of upholding peace and security in an increasingly divided world.

## Conclusion

This paper was written to answer the research question: *How can greater cooperation between the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly advance global peace and security?* Through the legal analysis and comparative case studies, this paper argues that while the UN Charter does have a foundational framework for cooperation, the structural gaps between the UNSC and UNGA hinder effective and timely multilateral Action. Through its examinations of the conditions under the UNGA intervened to address the paralysis in the UNSC. This paper supports the hypothesis that meaningful coordination across both sides is crucial to uphold the UN's mission of collective security.

Both case studies are different in the sense that the Korean War illustrated how the UNGA, especially with its adoption of the Uniting for Peace resolution, was able to bridge the gap with it and the inactive UNSC. These moments were able to validate two of my hypotheses, both summarizing that the UNGA can act more efficiently in veto-stalemate conditions, but that the absence of formal mechanisms weakens the long term legitimacy and cohesion of the efforts. The paper's recommendations towards the end are grounded in these historical lessons and offer feasible solutions towards a more cooperative organization.

Some critics may argue that the UNGA lacks binding authority and that further expanding its role is not only infeasible, but that it could destabilize the delicate balance of power outlined in the Charter. However, this paper is not advocating for UNGA supremacy over the UNSC. Rather, it proposes mechanisms for more coordinated engagement during exceptional crises; more specifically, mechanisms that could potentially maintain legal fidelity while enhancing the operational legitimacy. Others may question whether such reforms are politically viable in the first place, especially given that there could be resistance among the P5 nations. While these concerns are understandable, the proposals mentioned in the paper were designed to work within the existing Charter, without any necessary amendments, and emphasize procedural collaboration, thereby increasing their feasibility. Still, this paper recognizes that more empirical research is needed to quantify the long-term outcomes of the UNGA-led initiatives compared to the UNSC-led operations, especially in peacebuilding efforts.

Ultimately, this paper emphasizes that the UN's legitimacy depends not only on its adherence to the formal authority it has, but also on the responsiveness to the international community's moral and political will. In moments when the UNSC faces gridlock, the UNGA has shown that it could be a forum for a more democratic response with the engagement of all 193 member states. As a result, institutionalizing the pathways for cooperation between both organs could make the UN more cohesive in confronting the abrupt challenges and crises our world encounters.

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