

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Rebuttals

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

To maximize these rebuttals:

- **Cite evidence** to back up claims— purely-analytical rebuttals won't always be enough to convince a judge.
- Flow well and adapt your responses to your **opponents' specific arguments**.
- Adapt these rebuttals **for your specific case**, so you don't end up contradicting your case or your other rebuttals by *just* reading them.
- **Make sure you understand these rebuttals before you use them**. Just reading these during a round, without understanding them, is useless and perhaps counterproductive (e.g. saying both 'X is nonunique' and 'X isn't true').
- Supplement these rebuttals with other arguments you hear from teammates, during rounds or elsewhere. LLMs are fantastic for this.
- These rebuttals are all just thoughts that popped into my head. Please prepare better rebuttals for your specific case/circuit/tourney.

Neg Rebuttals (to Aff arguments)

1. **Atrocities:** *The Security Council has failed to stop many atrocities and human rights abuses— changing the structure by abolishing permanent membership could solidify support behind interventions by removing vetoes.*

- a. **No Intervention:** Without the Veto power, the P5, who contribute most of the necessary forces for interventions to stop atrocities and human rights abuses, would leave – this would leave all Security Council resolutions toothless, and would leave the UNSC “weak and incapable”.

let us imagine, for example, that the veto did not exist, and non-permanent members were pushing for military intervention in a small country in turmoil.

The non-permanent members cannot force the permanent members to use their own militaries for a cause...may actively oppose, even militarily. If they cannot coordinate a coalition that is powerful and advanced enough to settle the issue, their resolution is useless, and nations will view the UNSC as weak and incapable.

(Hooper 21, a Master of International Relations student and a public servant in Washington, D.C.)

- b. **Successes:** Despite instances of failure, the Security Council has also successfully intervened in various conflicts and crises, such as in the case of peacekeeping



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operations in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the conflict in Cyprus between Turkey and Greece. These successes would like not have been possible without the support of P5 member countries, whose participation hinges on their Veto power **(Hooper 21: Military Actions / Funding)**.

2. **Decolonization:** *The P5 is highly colonial – abolishing permanent membership would be a step towards decolonizing the UN.*
 - a. **Status Quo:** 80 former colonies have gained independence since the UN began **(Ryder, Baisch & Eguegu 20)** – in other words, the world has already been largely decolonized. (These colonies, by the way, are all already UN members).
 - b. **No Link:** Further decolonization might entail granting independence to remaining overseas territories like French Guiana, the Falkland Islands and Hawaii, or else distributing Colonial economic gains to former colonies, or else reestablishing local cultures, languages and customs. Abolishing Permanent Membership will have an impact on none of these.
3. **Existential Risks:** *Abolishing Permanent Membership can reduce existential risk by precluding vetoes on resolutions that seek to address climate change, contagious disease, and nuclear war.*
 - a. **Turn:** Abolishing Permanent Membership will increase the risk of existential risks by removing military support and economic support from P5 nations towards the UN **(Hooper 21: Military Actions / Funding)**, thus rendering the UN toothless and unable to take effective action.
4. **Gridlock:** *Abolishing Permanent Membership will remove the veto, thus stopping the paralysis that leaves the UNSEC unable to make decisions.*
 - a. **No Gridlock:** Sometimes P5 members disagree with a resolution, and use their vote to shoot it down. But the Security Council has made plenty of progress in many areas. Here's two examples from 2023:
 - i. **Women & Girls:** The Security Council unanimously voted to condemn the Taliban's discrimination against women & girls in Afghanistan **(Fissihi 4/23)**
 - ii. **Haitian Gangs:** The Security Council unanimously voted to condemn the Taliban's discrimination against women & girls in Afghanistan **(Robles & Fassihi 10/23)**

Stewart Patrick talks about two such cases:

the council has suffered previous blows—among them the ill-fated U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003 without its authorization—Russia's brazen



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aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and ability to veto any council response have radicalized reform demands. “Where is this security that the Security Council needs to guarantee?”

(**Patrick 23**, senior fellow and director of the Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)

5. Legitimacy: *Abolishing Permanent Membership will stop the P5 from unjustly dominating the UN, thus lending democratic legitimacy to the body.*

- a. **Turn:** Abolishing Permanent Membership will increase the risk of existential risks by removing military support and economic support from P5 nations towards the UN (**Hooper 21: Military Actions / Funding**), thus rendering the UN toothless and unable to take effective action.
- b. **No Democratic Alternative:** While the current structure of the Security Council may seem undemocratic, there is no guarantee that abolishing permanent membership would lead to a more democratic system—in fact, given China’s immense soft power in the UN, it’s likely that China would begin to dominate the system without the checks-and-balances currently possible with the Veto.

6. P5 Perpetrators: *The P5 members are themselves often perpetrators of violence and war—we should remove the Veto power from these nations who are themselves causing geopolitical instability.*

- a. **Role of the Veto:** The Veto was never intended to be a ‘reward for good behavior’ – it’s was an incentive for the world’s largest and most powerful militaries at the time to stay in the Council. And now, it’s an incentive for them to remain. Absent the Veto, we’d have no Security Council at all – and no forum for the world’s great nuclear powers to hash out their differences. David Bosco explains:

the alternative to the Security Council veto is really no Security Council...

As frustrating as it is, the Security Council is still an enormously useful body, not least because it institutionalizes the practice of great-power security consultations.

(**Bosco 12**, a professor at Indiana University’s Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies)

- b. **Root Causes:** Conflicts have many causes—historical grievances, territorial disputes, geopolitical defense & offense, ethnic tensions, economic changes, opportunities



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for conquest, arms proliferation, and failure of diplomacy—but none of these root causes are addressed by abolishing Permanent Membership—instead, we’ll just be left with a less-stable and more-volatile world.

7. Palestine: *Abolishing Permanent Membership would help to end Israel’s tyranny of Palestine, as Israel would no longer be protected by America’s veto power.*

- a. **US Role:** Abolishing Permanent Membership would chance the US leaving its role in the United Nations— the host nation of the UN, its founder, and protector of the Pax Americana may leave the world’s body for coordinating issues of human rights, security, and existential risk.

Abrams 22 expands on this:

The veto is a critical tool of self-defense for the United States in the UN, and for the defense of U.S. allies.... And how does permitting the passage of bad resolutions that undermine U.S. interests make the Council “credible and effective?”

- b. **No Palestine Solvency:** The Israel-Palestine conflict is deeply rooted in historical, political, and religious factors, and its resolution requires comprehensive and negotiated solutions. Simply removing the veto power of one country may not lead to an end to the conflict—instead, we need constructive dialogue, mutual recognition, and compromises from all parties involved—solutions the Security Council is more likely to address as-is.

8. Representation: *Abolishing Permanent Membership would make the UNSEC more democratic, as the Global South and poorer countries could participate more, and colonial P5 powers would stop dominating the Council.*

- a. **Instability:** The question of whether or not the P5 accurately represent the world is one question—but whether we should abolish the Veto is a completely different question—and the answer is no!

should we hope that the world be a better place if the Permanent Five are stripped of their veto power? My answer is “no”. The world will not be a better place, it will be more unstable place and while we can legitimately ask the question if the current permanent members of the Security Council are indeed still the great powers of our age, the question about their veto powers should be treated separately.

(Krajev 15, a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and a founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations)



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- b. **Geography:** The P5 members hail from 3 continents, covering 16 time zones—geographically, the P5 *is* actually fairly representative.
9. **UN Legitimacy:** *Permanent Membership means the UNSEC is largely controlled by the G5, leaving it unable to function properly and leading the Security Council and the UN as a whole to lose legitimacy.*
- a. **Effectiveness:** The UN may or may not have Legitimacy in different country's eyes, but the Security Council can certainly function properly – for example, in the 6 months after the 2022 Ukrainian invasion began, the Security Council passed 30 resolutions—that's 30 times Russia and the US put aside their differences to move forward with Security Council actions.
 - b. **Stability:** UN Legitimacy comes from being able to achieve things in the real world. And the P5, representing most of the world's major powers, gives the UN and its Security Council exactly that stability. Completely abolishing permanent membership could undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Security Council as a key forum for conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts.
10. **Vetoes:** *The Veto Power is used to shield G5 members from any resolution that doesn't fit their interests – this degrades confidence in the Security Council.*
- a. **Bad resolutions:** Countries that use their Veto often have legitimate critiques of the resolutions in question—that they're rushed, or don't consider some crucial factors, or that they come at the wrong time—removing the Veto would more easily let bad Vetoes pass.
 - b. **Necessary check:** Stripping the P5 of their veto power could lead to increased instability and the potential for unchecked power dynamics in the international system.

Krastev 15:

A kind of 'checks and balances' of our time, P5's veto option remains an instrument of last resort in the resistance against uncontested power.

(Ivan Krastev is permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and a founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations)



Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Rebuttals

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11. War: Abolishing permanent membership would stop the P5 from monopolizing the Security Council, thus expanding representation and helping to solve more conflicts

- a. **No Solvency:** Changing the Veto won't change the incentives for war—companies and nations will continue to profit from war. Jean-Marie Mbombo describes trying to end war through changing the Veto:

Given that veto power hides behind military power...As long as the sale of weapons of war remains a lucrative business among Western nations with veto power, violent conflicts will still affect poor nations.

(Mbombo 22, senior lecturer and researcher at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies)

Aff Rebuttals (to Neg arguments)

1. **Effectiveness:** *The Veto makes the Security Council effective, providing necessary political defense for major world powers, and ensuring that they remain committed to solving important global issues.*
 - a. **Significance:** The Veto power ensures that all the most consequential issues are never acted on, because P5 members with an interest in the conflict will always Veto that resolution.

This is described by Gérard Araud, the former French ambassador to the UN:

“When you have a crisis where a major power has a national interest involved they will try to block interference by the Security Council,” said Gérard Araud, the French ambassador to the United Nations...“The U.N.,” he said, ends up being “in charge of crises that are of no interest to anybody.”

(Sengupta 14, an international reporter for the New York Times)

- b. **Accountability:** The Veto also removes all accountability from the P5, who can act with impunity both inside and outside the Security Council.



Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Rebuttals

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2. **Funding:** *If you removed the incentive for the P5 to participate in the Security Council, they'd leave – and because they're such big funders of the UN, the UN would be left without money and unable to operate.*

- a. **Formula:** UN funding is determined by each country's 'capacity to pay', which is based on a country's income, population, debt and other variables.

For the regular budget, each country's contribution is based on a formula intended to represent a country's "capacity to pay." The formula starts by using a country's share of global gross national income. Adjustments are then applied for factors like their debt and population.

(Better World Campaign 21)

- b. **Alternate Sources:** Even if the P5 *did* withdraw funding, the UN has other sources, including no-government, private donations – in fact, 28% of UN funding comes from sources other than direct government contributions.

(UN MPTF –<https://mptf.undp.org/page/how-united-nations-funded>)

3. **Major Power Backing:** *The Veto power was designed to—and works to—keep major powers in the UN. Without it, major powers may not respect the Security Council's decisions, and they could also cut off funding to the UN.*

- a. **Antiquated P5:** The P5 were the winners of World War 2, but 80 years later, the 'Major Powers' have changed—not completely—but considerably.

For example, India, Japan and Germany all have larger economies than 3 out of 5 of the Permanent Members (France, UK, Russia).

Likewise, India and Saudi Arabia both spend more on their militaries than 2 of the Permanent Members (France, UK), and 4 non-P5 countries have become nuclear powers.

Finally, France is #20 on the global population list, and the UK #22.

So—by what means are the P5 'great powers', where these other countries are not?

- b. **Not Sufficient:** The P5 members, as will all countries, recognize the benefits of multilateralism in tackling challenges that affect us all, from terrorism to economic growth to climate change. The P5 wouldn't participate if the UN were useless—so why would they leave only because they've lost their Veto?



Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Rebuttals

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

4. **Military Actions:** *Removing the Veto power would also remove incentives for the major powers to provide troops and backing to UNSEC missions – because as-is, at least 5 major military powers have to accede to any resolution. This would make the UNSEC ineffective and toothless.*
 - a. **Status Quo:** In the Status Quo, non-P5 countries routinely engage in Peacekeeping missions with their militaries, including the current Kenyan mission to Haiti (**Robles & Fassih 10/23**)—or India, which routinely contributes to Peacekeeping missions. If anything, other countries would be more willing to contribute troops to missions on which they were fully represented, absent the Veto power.
 - b. **Collective Security:** The primary purpose of UN peacekeeping missions is to promote collective security and address threats to international peace and stability—not to stroke P5’s egos by “allowing” them to approve the resolution. Major powers have a shared interest in supporting UN peacekeeping efforts to prevent conflict escalation and conflict spillover, and to protect civilians. Removing the veto power could encourage greater cooperation and burden-sharing among member states in addressing global security challenges.
5. **New Members:** *A Council with more members—like BRICS, the African Union, a German or EU seat, and representation from South America, would all make the Security Council stronger—abolishing Permanent Membership would prevent more members from being added to the P-group.*
 - a. **No Permanent Seats:** In the words of Ryder, Baisch & Eguegu 20, “**There is no country in the world that deserves a permanent seat.**”

We’re not arguing here that some countries should replace the current P5 countries. We’re arguing that *no country should have the Veto power over the rest of the world*—including other aspirant countries like Japan or India.
 - b. **Slippery Slope:** Should we only add one more country? Or 5 more? Or all aspirants? And to achieve the best representation, and the best democracy—why not all countries? The logical conclusion of ‘adding new members’ is Affirming the resolution, by abolishing Permanent Membership altogether.
6. **Nuclear Conflict:** *The P5 are all major nuclear powers—removing the Veto power may end their participation in the UNSC, increase the chance of conflict between the countries, and hence nuclear war.*
 - a. **P5 Participation:** There are 188 countries in the UN without the veto power—and they all participate. Some of them have larger economies, larger populations, and



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larger militaries than some P5 members. Why would the P5 suddenly walk away, while the others don't?

- b. **No SC Permission:** P5 countries launch wars without the Security Council's permission—like the US invasion of Iraq, or the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Security Council can't reign in all Superpower behavior, and they wouldn't likely ask the Council for permission to nuke another country.

7. **Responsibility:** *The P5, as Great Powers, have a special obligation and responsibility to maintain peace in the world. As 'guarantors of peace', they also need the ability to block resolutions contrary to their national interests.*

- a. **P5 Aggressors:** If the P5 actually defended global peace, the Veto might be an earned privilege—but this is not the case. The P5, too often, are themselves the aggressors in major conflicts.

Stewart Patrick talks about two such cases:

the council has suffered previous blows—among them the ill-fated U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003 without its authorization—Russia's brazen aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and ability to veto any council response have radicalized reform demands. "Where is this security that the Security Council needs to guarantee?"

(Patrick 23, senior fellow and director of the Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)

- b. **Accountability & Transparency:** While the P5 may have a significant role in maintaining peace and security, their ability to veto resolutions can sometimes hinder the Security Council's effectiveness and undermine efforts to address urgent global challenges. This unchecked power can lead to situations where national interests take precedence over the broader common good, potentially perpetuating conflicts or allowing human rights abuses to continue unchecked.

8. **Solvency:** *The P5 would never accept a change to the Veto powers—therefore, Aff's plan will never come true.*

- a. **Fiat:** Solvency is a non-Argument in debate, as Aff is always granted Fiat power—according to NSDA rules, we can assume the resolution's plan will take place. What we're debating here is not *if* it will happen, but *what* the world will look like afterwards.



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9. **Stability:** *The Veto power keeps the P5 at the Security Council table—without it, the Council would be less stable and more likely to fracture or lose its power.*

- a. **Turn:** In the Status Quo, countries are turning to other organizations to find representation—Abolishing the P5 and the Veto power is the only way to provide true stability to the UN. **Pant 20** describes the situation for India—but the same logic holds true for many countries:

...a weakening United Nations is leading to a proliferation of self-selected groups—the so-called plurilateral and minilateral forums. These coalitions of the willing are viewed as more effective and efficient ways of dealing with not only traditional security issues but also nontraditional ones....
For India, as with many other states, the status quo is no longer a viable option. If UN reforms fail....
India would feel it necessary to look elsewhere for solutions.
And India wouldn't be the only country doing so.

(**Prof Harsh V Pant** is Vice President of Studies and Foreign Policy at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi)

