



China in the UN Security Council

Speaker: Amb. Dilip Sinha

Chair: Amb. Vinod C Khanna

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This presentation is a work in progress for Ambassador Dilip Sinha. His presentation largely dealt with the two aspects of China in the Security Council: i) How did China become the permanent member of the Security Council and ii) How had China progressed with its position in the Council and its resolutions on the various questions of peace and security around the world?

According to the speaker, China has the most colorful or chequered membership among the P5. Initially, Republic of China was the part of UN Declaration which was signed on 1 July 1942, then People's Republic of China swapped the horses with Taiwan in 1971 and became an unlikely member which was not fully involved in both the world wars¹. As he further explained, China became the part of the core group because Ambassador T. V. Soong was one of the four leaders who announced the famous declaration of United Nations as war alliance soon after the pearl harbor when US joined the war. According to Amb. Sinha, China was a superficial partner of the alliance as it was never the part of the various consultations going on in the course of the war. It was also ignored in the preparatory years of the United Nations establishment. China was neither the part of the elementary conferences of Cairo (1943), Tehran (1943), Yalta (1945) and Potsdam (1945) nor the participant in deciding the outline of the new international world order. Even in the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, China was present just for being the part of the historic conference.

¹ United States and United Kingdom had extra territorial rights in China that they gave up in the course of the war.

The speaker was of the opinion that Roosevelt was the main force behind China's permanent membership in the Security Council because of both personal and geopolitical reasons. According to him, Roosevelt had 'soft corner' for China due to his family connection with Hong Kong and also it was the only country in the whole Asia- Pacific which could be counted as the force of some kind against Japan. Shifting its focus from membership to the main role of China in UN Security Council (SC), the speaker divided Security Council in four phases, depended on the balance of the power in SC, the veto exercise and the inactivity and activity of SC in the course of these phases. These are the following phases: i) January 1946- January 1970, ii) March 1970- December 1991 iii) January 1992- 17 March 2011² iv) Till modern times.

In the first phase, Kuomintang regime led Republic of China was a stooge of the United States according to the speaker. It was hardly part of any discussion with the Council. It was only after Communist Party came to China in 1949, United Kingdom and India brought the proposal to bring China to be a part of discussion with regard to Korean Crisis in the east. In 1951, General Assembly even presented China as an aggressor nation. The whole phase, China was persistent in accusing UN of being United States imperialistic tool. The speaker also emphasized on India's favourable gestures for China in the phase such as proposing a committee to deal with Taiwan question and also supporting Albania's resolution to make PRC a lawful representation of China. China accepted its permanent membership with the gesture that it is not for the China itself but for establishing SC as a world organization as the speaker had put it.

In its second phase also, China kept the low profile but protected the interest of the countries it thought were its friends. As the speaker highlighted China did not exercise any vetoes in the time-period but also did not stand for any thing particular. With the dissolution of Soviet Union i.e. the third phase for the speaker, a more active Security Council came to play. Russia was showing very narrow and core national interest as a priority and China kept the profile low by abstaining most of the resolutions but was being vocal in criticize the resolution. As speaker illustrated, China worked with the SC where its interest laid such as Somalia in the case of Iraq balance, Bosnia, Zaire in the case of Albania but abstained the others for Haiti, Kosovo and Rwanda. It also exercised its the veto power twice in resolutions

²This day the last resolution was adopted by Security Council to authorise enforcement action in Libiya.

related to Taiwan but chose not to contribute its troops for the UN mandate on Macedonia (1999) in excuse of not wasting money for Europe when it can be used for African continent.

For its fourth phase, speaker emphasized the synchronized decisions of China and Russia on enforcement matters, Syria being the forward example. China has strongly opposed the military actions but stood for the imposing sanctions in cases of Korea, Sudan and Iran. According to Ambassador, these facts charts out the over policy of China towards the organization. It is the 3rd largest contributor to the UN budget and 2nd largest to the UN peacekeeping budget. The countries it selects for peacekeepers contribution have both political and economic implications. The speaker ended the talk with question that ‘Does China deserve to be a member of Security Council?’ Financially certainly yes but where does China fit in terms of new approach of the UN towards democracy and human rights?

Report prepared by Naina Singh, Research Assistant, Institute of Chinese Studies.

About the Speaker

Dilip Sinha, who joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1978, was India's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva. He was also ambassador to Greece and has served in India's missions in Islamabad, Dhaka, Cairo, Bonn and Brasilia. He was head of the United Nations and the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran divisions in the Ministry of External Affairs. He served in the Prime Minister's Office during the term of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. He was most recently Chairman of the Manipur Public Service Commission. He is conversant in German and French.

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