

A Tibetan Experience: Reflections on the 9th Raisina Dialogue

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“More than half of the world population goes to vote this year....” This was one of the major openings by the Chief guest of the 9th Raisina Dialogue, the Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis. This observation resonated deeply with me, as someone following the elections. It underscored a significant shift away from authoritarian regimes, emphasizing the empowerment of the masses to select their own leaders barring a few exceptions. As my native India gears up for elections commencing on April 19th, this sentiment holds particular relevance.

Attending my first Raisina Dialogue proved enlightening, as it lived up to its reputation as India’s preeminent geopolitical forum. The central theme, "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate and Create," elucidated by Samir Saran, President of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), in conjunction with the Ministry of External Affairs, encapsulated the multifaceted nature of global challenges. Across three days, discussions revolved around six thematic pillars: Tech Frontiers, Peace with the Planet, War and Peace, Decolonising Multilateralism, The Post-2030 Agenda, and Defending Democracy.

One felt how India is taking the onus and clearly directing the ship with a clear ear for suggestions when it comes to Global South besides the ever presence of QUAD. The inclusive participation of diverse nations facilitated informal exchanges, laying the groundwork for official collaboration. Consensus emerged on the imperative to reform the United Nations, particularly the structure of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

However, amid these deliberations, the conspicuous absence of Chinese delegates, even from academia this time, loomed large. While a hawkish Chinese official might attribute this to the presence of Taiwanese delegates at the event, the absence underscores the strained India-China relations since the 2020 Galwan Valley Incident, officially labelled as "Abnormal" by the Indian Government. Regardless of this absence China seemed to be sprinkled and brought up in the various sessions that showcased how it loomed over the proceedings. The Indian Minister of External Affairs Shri Jaishankar expounded on “Mind Games” when it came to China and how it was preventing India’s entry to the permanent UNSC. Sujan Chenoy, former Ambassador of India and Director General of Mahnohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis stated on Chinese influence on the maritime space and its contestation happening in the Indo-Pacific. General Anil Chauhan, the current Chief of Defence Staff of the Indian Armed Forces made it clear as to the long term challenges when it comes to China and how India must create capacities in every domain and not confiding itself to conventional warfare.



As a Tibetan, alongside my colleague Rinzin Namgyal, I anticipated engaging with participants and fellow Tibetans. However, to our disappointment, we appeared to be the sole representatives. This absence contrasts with recent calls within the Tibetan community for increased engagement with India's policymakers and think tanks. While virtual participation is an option, the value of in-person interactions remains undeniable. We did our best to represent Tibet and fill this gap here. We were able to meet several friends of Tibet including Paula Dobriansky, Lisa Singh, Nalin Kohli, Vijay Kant Karna, Amish Mulmi and several others all of whom echoed their support to Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama in particular.

In summary, the Raisina Dialogue provided a platform to forge connections, deepen understanding, and showcase India's vision of "Vishwamitra" (Global Friend). India's proactive engagement, exemplified by its G20 Presidency in 2023, positions it as a crucial bridge between the Global South and North. This contrasts with China's recent reticence, particularly evident since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking this opportunity I express my sincere gratitude to the Observer Research Foundation and the Ministry of External Affairs in bringing together this remarkable event which, convened thousands of global stakeholders, fostering critical discussions on geopolitics with the shared objective of advancing global welfare and cooperation.



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