

**CHINA IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS:
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN THE
XI JINPING ERA**

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Executive Summary

1. In the early years of Chinese President Xi Jinping's leadership (since 2013), China has revised its foreign policy and become more assertive on issues concerning China's core interests. This also reshapes China's international organisation (IO) engagement.
2. IO has become a battlefield for ideological contestation, which drives the Xi administration towards employing multipronged measures to tighten internal censorship and refine its policies to the international community.
3. China's IO engagement in Xi's early years can be characterised as first, increasing investment in preparing Chinese nationals to compete for management positions in as many UN organs and IOs as possible, and second, employing a variety of means to solve disputes.
4. China is taking active steps to train more Chinese nationals for IOs as a civil service profession, including providing financial support and degree programmes, and to secure leadership in several IOs.
5. On dispute resolution, China prefers bilateral negotiations for issues having strong political implications, a reason for the divergence in its treatment of various international adjudication systems.
6. The differences could be due to China's staunch defence of sovereignty against any form of compromise, and preference for a mild approach to reforming from-within, insulating the repercussion of reform and continuing with its national development.
7. China's engagement in UN peacekeeping operations is to enhance its credibility, leverage on reshaping norms through participating in peacekeeping operations, while handling with caution new developments on the concept and practice of sovereignty.

8. China also aims to gain more shares in the world market and better leverage in rule-making in international trade with its accession to the WTO. While keeping a low profile in both negotiation and dispute settlement forums, China proactively made proposals in the current Doha negotiation, acting assertively and tackling disputes with knowledge and sophistication.
9. The United States has recently accused China of influencing the WHO (World Health Organisation) in the outbreak of COVID-19. The neutrality and independence of the WHO director general (at the time of his election supported by China) was questioned as well.
10. China's ostensibly cooperative posture to the current international order is likely to continue to enhance its influence in IOs, an area that requires consistent observation and further exploration.