



India, China push to deepen ties

Both Modi and Xi drew positives from the SCO Summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in the Chinese city of Qingdao to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, but the visit appeared to be more about the continuing task of resetting India-China ties after last year's military standoff at Doklam. The SCO is a grouping whose relevance is growing, primarily as a platform for combating terrorism and enhancing security cooperation focused on Afghanistan and the Central Asian region. This was the first summit since India and Pakistan were admitted as full members of the bloc. The Qingdao Declaration of the SCO spoke of the need for multi-polar and interdependent structures that can help nations surmount uncertainties created by increasing instability around the world.

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Some have pointed to China's growing clout in organisations such as the SCO while juxtaposing the meet in Qingdao with the acrimony witnessed at the G7 Summit in Canada. But such a comparison is superficial as most of the members of the SCO do not wield the same influence on the global stage as the G7 states. For India, much of the attention was on Mr Modi's meeting with President Xi Jinping on the margins of the SCO Summit. Besides Mr Xi's acceptance of an invitation to participate in the next informal summit in India, the two sides will go ahead with a series of high-level meetings that appear to be aimed at keeping the disputed border peaceful while moving ahead with discussions that narrow the divergences. There was forward movement on the sharing of data on the Brahmaputra River and some minor steps to boost trade.

But Mr Modi did not dilute New Delhi's position on Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative as India is the only SCO member not to endorse the connectivity project in the Declaration. He used his speech to drive home the message that India would back all such projects that are inclusive, transparent and respect the territorial sovereignty of nations. This reinforces the view that New Delhi is willing to work with Beijing for greater regional stability and development, but on its own terms as a key regional player.