

At G-20, PM does a tight-rope walk

After a trilateral with Trump and Abe, PM holds another meet with Putin and Xi

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India is doing a tight rope-walk, straddling its ties with US and Japan on one hand, and with time-tested friend Russia and China on the other.

Hours after attending a trilateral meeting with US President Donald Trump and Japanese PM Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit in Argentina's Capital Buenos Aires, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held another trilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Predictably, the discussions at the two separate meetings were of a very different nature. While the trilateral RIC (Russia, India, China) meeting sought to focus on global economic issues, ensuring regional peace and stability as well as counter-terrorism efforts, the JAI (Japan, America, India) meeting focused on their strategy in the Indo-Pacific region and a common belief that a "free, open, inclusive and rules based order is essential for the region's peace and prosperity". Experts have seen this Indo-Pacific strategy as a way of dealing with the immense military and economic clout of China in the region.

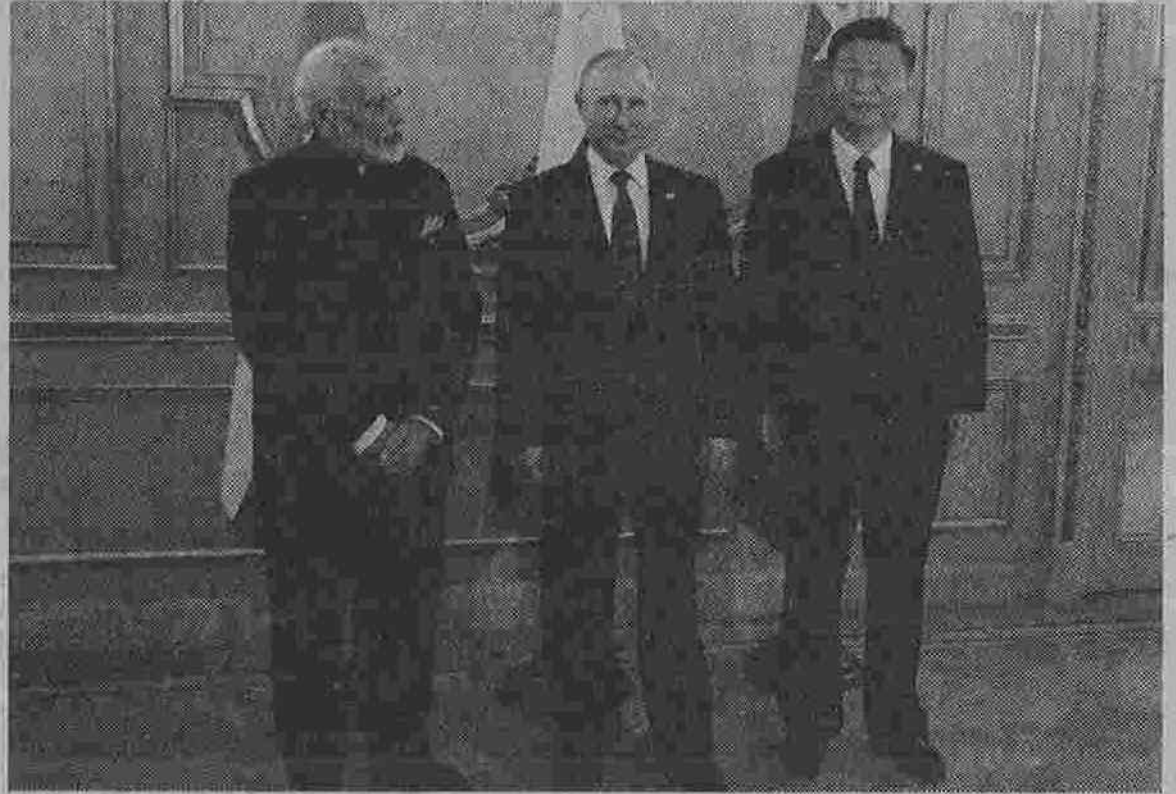
While the US and Japan have been historical allies after the second world war, Russia and China have forged a new partnership with each other to challenge what they see as the dominance of the US globally. India's ties with both the US and Japan have strengthened enormously under the Modi Government.

At the same time, India has taken care to strengthen defence cooperation with time-tested friend Russia. On the RIC

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meeting, foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale told reporters, "It was a very warm meeting. ... The Prime Minister thanked President Putin for initiating this effort and all three leaders felt that given our respective roles as emerging economies and emerging markets, given our respective roles and influence in the world in terms of maintaining peace and stability in the region that it was perhaps important that the three countries should cooperate and coordinate in various areas in order to contribute to global peace and prosperity."

He added, "So the general sentiment in the room, the views expressed by all three leaders were very similar. They all felt that we should work together to steer global economic governance. They felt that the three countries should work together where we could promote peace and stability, that we should work together on terrorism, we should work together on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance and in general the effort would be, not that the cooperation would be directed against anybody but that the cooperation would be based upon how these three countries, each having their own strengths in the world could contribute to global good."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Russian President Vladimir Putin and China President Xi Jinping during a meeting in the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires on Saturday.

— AFP