

# FOR AN HONEST BROKER: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON RUSSIA AND INDIA-CHINA TIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Russia

Days after [meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) in Delhi, Russian President [Vladimir Putin held a summit via video conference with Chinese President Xi Jinping](#). While the two meetings may have focused on bilateral issues, the conversations appear to have overlapped in unusual ways. According to a senior Kremlin official, after discussing with Mr. Modi India's problems with Chinese aggression, which were raised publicly during the visit by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Mr. Putin "briefed" Mr. Xi on his talks in Delhi. The official then indicated that [a trilateral summit of the leaders of Russia, India and China \(RIC\) could be held in the near future](#), which would pick up on the Modi-Putin-Xi conversation during an RIC summit on the sidelines of the Osaka G-20 summit in 2019. However, much has occurred between that summit and today. China's aggression at the Line of Actual Control has dented hopes of peaceful coexistence and growth between the neighbours that had been outlined during the RIC as well as the Modi-Xi Mamallapuram summit, when the leaders last met face to face. Since April 2020, the two leaders have not spoken directly once, and while they have attended the same multilateral summits (BRICS, SCO, G-20, etc.), it would be hard to see them engaging in a face-to-face format unless the situation at the LAC considerably eases. In addition, the RIC summit should not be held before promises made by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in meetings with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar are fulfilled.

While India-Russia defence and bilateral ties have considerably strengthened, especially after the Modi government's decision to go ahead with its purchase of the S-400 missile defence systems despite the U.S. threat of sanctions, New Delhi must tread cautiously in its trilateral and multilateral cooperation with Moscow and any hint that Russia could play a facilitator of talks with China must be scrutinised closely. Russia and China have consolidated their support for each other in the face of U.S. concerns over Russian action against Ukraine and Chinese action on Taiwan. Russia is also deeply dependent on Chinese investment, particularly in the 30-year \$400 billion gas pipeline. On Afghanistan, Russia has shown that it was prepared to cut India out of negotiations held by the Troika plus group with the U.S., China and Pakistan. Any expectation that Mr. Putin could play "honest broker" between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi must take these factors into account. While India must continue to walk the tightrope between Moscow and Washington, and its partners in Eurasia versus those in the Indo-Pacific, it needs to disentangle these threads from the very potent threat it faces directly and bilaterally from its northern neighbour, where it has little choice but to follow an independent path.

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