

AMONG MEMBERS: ON G-20 OSAKA SUMMIT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

As a forum, the G-20 is often watched more closely for the meetings the event affords on its sidelines, than for substantive outcomes. The countries that make up the G-20 (19 nations and the European Union) account for 85% of the world's nominal GDP, and each has pressing issues it wishes to discuss with other members on bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi used the occasion](#) of the G-20 summit at Osaka for as many as 20 such meetings, including nine bilaterals, eight pull-aside engagements, and of the Russia-India-China, Japan-U.S.-India and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa groupings. The most anticipated were President Donald Trump's meetings with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping and Mr. Modi, given the escalation in trade tensions. Both ended on a cordial note, but with no breakthrough or "big deals". The Indian and U.S. Commerce Ministers will sit down again, as they have on at least three occasions in the past year, to try to resolve the impasse over trade issues, and the U.S. and China have called a halt to raising tariffs until they resolve issues. Both come as a relief to India, given the impact of those tensions on the national and global economies. Mr. Modi raised several Indian concerns at the G-20 deliberations, including the need for cooperation on dealing with serious economic offenders and fugitives, as well as climate change funding. This found its way into the final declaration. India sent a tough message by refusing to attend the [digital economy summit](#) pushed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as his plan for "data free flow with trust", included in the G-20 declaration, runs counter to the Reserve Bank of India's proposed data localisation guidelines. The U.S. wrote in a counter to the paragraph praising the Paris accord, while trade protectionism was not mentioned in the document. On issues such as ocean pollution management, gender equality and concerted efforts to fight corruption, the G-20 found consensus more easily.

With Saudi Arabia hosting the next G-20 in 2020, followed by Italy in 2021, all eyes will soon turn to the agenda India plans to highlight when it holds the G-20 summit in 2022. Many global challenges, such as climate change and its impact, the balance between the needs for speed and national security with 5G networks being introduced, as well as technology-driven terrorism, will become even more critical for the grouping, and the government must articulate its line. India should lead the exercise in making the G-20 more effective in dealing with some of the inequities in its system. The G-20 is an important platform to discuss pressing issues, and it must not be detracted from its original purpose of promoting sustainable growth and financial stability by grandstanding by one or two members.

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