

WELCOME PRAGMATISM: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY

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With the handover of the gavel from Indonesian President Joko Widodo, [Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over leadership of the G20 process](#) on Wednesday, which will position India at the helm of forming consensus among the most advanced economies over the next year. India's presidency, which begins on December 1, comes at a time when the world faces economic hardships and global recessionary trends. In addition, the political polarisation between the U.S. and European Union, and Russia, all G20 members, will make every meeting that India will host fraught with tensions. But the [G20 summit in Bali](#) provided some positive signals. Despite fears that G20 members would fail to produce a joint statement, Sherpas of each delegation persevered to reach a 17-page consensus document. Expectedly, there was trouble over the paragraphs on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. India's role in tempering some of the language during the negotiations has been highlighted, and Mr. Modi's phrase at the SCO summit in September, that this is "not an era of war", was included in the final statement. The majority of the G20 leadership was not in favour of equivocating on the conflict, as India and a few other countries have been doing, and the joint communique said that "most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine". It was a positive sign that while Russia protested the statement, its Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was present, and President Putin's absence actually contributed to a more manageable summit for Indonesia.

The fact that Mr. Modi also extended his hand to Chinese President Xi Jinping during the banquet is in contrast to their stony demeanour at the SCO summit in September and could signal a thaw in talks between them for the first time since the LAC standoff began in 2020. While Mr. Modi may have to explain the shift domestically, his decision to speak to the Chinese President also reflects the practical reality that India, as host of the G20 and the SCO in 2023, will need to ensure the full participation of those groupings, that include rivals such as China and Pakistan. More such pragmatism will be necessary for India in its year of the G20 presidency, with about 200 meetings planned. To achieve this New Delhi will have to bring on board all countries with its vision for the forum's future — steering the world's economic leadership through this difficult phase, and preparing for future perils including climate change and global warming, food and energy shortages, terrorism and conflict, and bridging the digital divide.

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