

## Back on track: on India and China's united front at BRICS

By putting up a [united front at the BRICS summit](#), and proposing a revival of the Panchsheel principles of peaceful cooperation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have signalled they are trying to put the bitterness of the past few months behind them. The tenor of the meetings between the two leaders was particularly remarkable given that the [long Doklam military stand-off](#) was [resolved just a week ago](#). In fact, their agreement that Doklam-like situations must not recur is an indication that India and China are looking for new mechanisms to strengthen the border defence agreements that have held in the past. It is also significant that both countries expressed similar views about resisting economic protectionism of the kind that the Trump administration in the U.S. has been espousing; the BRICS countries have together committed to an "open and inclusive" multilateral trading system. Another area of welcome consonance was the North Korean nuclear tests. All five countries, Brazil, Russia and South Africa being the other three, condemned them unequivocally, while advocating dialogue and not the use of force. The messaging that emanated from both the Indian and Chinese delegations at Xiamen smoothed the interactions between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi, and allowed for a productive BRICS declaration that belied fears that bilateral tensions would overtake multilateral concerns. The government's determination to hush any triumphalism over the Doklam outcome certainly helped. China's nod to the inclusion of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed among the terrorist groups threatening regional stability, and its choosing not to speak of the contentious Belt and Road Initiative at the summit suggested it was heeding India's concerns.

### Agreeing to disagree: ending the Doklam stand-off

With the BRICS meet concluded, it is doubly important that Indian and Chinese officials re-engage in a sustained manner to address all areas of discord which led to the charged situation at Doklam. They must, for starters, review where the border defence standard operating procedures failed. Second, the two countries must convene the delayed meeting of the Special Representatives, and add the latest claims and counter-claims over the Sikkim boundary and the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction to the agenda for discussions. It is necessary to see that the [much-acclaimed BRICS language on terrorist groups](#) like the LeT and JeM is translated into actionable points as a show of good faith. Beijing will have an early opportunity to do so in October when the issue of designating JeM chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist comes up at the UN Security Council and when the UN's Financial Action Task Force takes stock of Pakistan's actions against the LeT. It is imperative that the gains of the BRICS summit in terms of the India-China bilateral atmospherics are optimised.

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