

WORLD NEWS

Leaders Display Unity in Message to Trump

Xi, Modi and Putin put president's foreign-policy approach to the test

BY YAROSLAV TROFIMOV

TIANJIN, China—The leaders of China, Russia and India held hands at a regional summit and promised to cooperate, a display of unity aimed in part at President Trump—and that underscores the challenges faced by his unorthodox approach to world affairs.

No major decisions were adopted at the Tianjin summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which was also attended by the leaders of Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Belarus and Central Asian and Caucasus states.

But the carefully choreographed imagery of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin embracing each other sent a powerful message to Washington as Trump seeks to contain Beijing, to break Russia's bond with China, and to pry India away from Russian oil.

The cordiality of the Tianjin confab will sound alarm bells in Western capitals, said Michael Fullilove, executive director of the Lowy Institute think tank in Australia. "President Trump's gentle treatment of Vladimir Putin has done nothing to pull Russia away



From left, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday

from China," he said. "His rough treatment of Narendra Modi, on the other hand, is pushing India closer to Russia and warming up its relations with China."

Modi traveled to China for the first time in seven years after Trump's abrupt move to impose 50% tariffs on India, half of them as punishment for New Delhi buying cheap

Russian oil, sparked widespread outrage in India.

The meeting in Tianjin represented a reset between China and India, and a message for Washington that India cherishes its strategic autonomy, said Kabir Taneja, deputy director of the Observer Research Foundation. "Washington is not backing down in any shape or form,

and no prime minister of India, which is the world's largest democracy, can ignore public opinion. This means you have to stare down the U.S. and say we will not be cowed," he said.

In his remarks at the talks with Modi, Xi said the world's two most populous nations should be friends, enable each other's success, and choose

"the cooperative pas de deux of the Dragon and the Elephant." The Indian leader highlighted "the positive momentum" in bilateral ties.

For Putin, whose country exports most of its oil to China and India, Monday's summit was just the first leg of a multi-day trip to China that will include standing next to Xi and North Korean leader Kim Jong

Un at a military parade in Beijing on Sept. 3. Modi and Putin rode in the same car to their Monday meeting and the Indian leader said he expected his Russian counterpart to visit India in December.

"Even in the most difficult situations, India and Russia have always walked shoulder to shoulder," Modi said. "Our close cooperation is important not only for the people of both countries but also for global peace, stability and prosperity."

While Xi didn't mention the U.S. in his remarks, he called for "an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization" and for making "the global governance system more just and equitable."

While the final statement of the summit didn't mention Ukraine, Putin dedicated much of the speech to the war, saying that the "crisis" didn't begin with the Russian invasion but with what he described as a Western-backed coup in 2014. He added that, for the war to end, the so-called root causes must be addressed—a Kremlin shorthand for Ukrainian aspirations to pursue policies independent from Moscow.

Watch a Video



Scan the code to watch a video of the summit in China.

ALEXANDER KAZAKOV/KREMLIN/REUTERS