

Xi and Modi renew ties to offset US trade war

China and India leaders vow at regional forum to be 'partners not rivals'

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China's Xi Jinping and India's Narendra Modi have sought to reassure each other that they are "partners not rivals" as the world's two most populous countries seek to repair ties amid the fallout from Donald Trump's trade war.

In a meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security forum, Xi told Modi that China was not a threat to India, despite a history of clashes along

their Himalayan border and Beijing's support for Pakistan.

"China and India are co-operation partners, not rivals," state media Xinhua quoted Xi as saying at the meeting in Tianjin, northern China. The two nations "are each other's development opportunities rather than threats", he said.

The attempt at reconciliation with Modi comes as Xi seeks to use the SCO meeting, whose other attendees include Russia's Vladimir Putin and the leaders of Iran, Pakistan and central south-east Asian countries, as a show of regional solidarity.

China is also aiming to portray itself as a more dependable partner for developing countries than the Trump adminis-

tration, whose trade measures have hit allies and adversaries in the region alike.

Last year nuclear-armed China and India began patching up damage to their relationship, from a fatal border clash in 2020, when Modi met Xi in Kazan.

But the push has gained momentum in recent months, especially after Trump alienated Modi's government, which until then had been moving

'[Our nations] are each other's development opportunities'

Xi Jinping, President of China

closer to the US, by slapping tariffs of up to 50 per cent on Indian exports.

"Our co-operation is linked to the interests of 2.8bn people of our two countries," Modi told Xi.

The Indian prime minister, making his first trip to China in seven years, said de-escalation efforts included resuming direct flights between the countries and an agreement to ease border tension.

"After the disengagement at the border, an atmosphere of peace and stability is now in place," Modi told Xi.

India's Ministry of External Affairs said Modi "noted that India and China both pursue strategic autonomy, and their relations should not be seen through a third-country lens".

But in a hint at other tensions over

trade — India runs a huge trade deficit with China — the Indian ministry said the leaders "underlined the need to proceed from a political and strategic direction to expand bilateral trade and investment ties and reduce [the] trade deficit".

"I wouldn't call this a rapprochement in the strict sense of the word but we are certainly seeing tensions being reduced and a move towards stability in the relationship," said Nirupama Rao, a former foreign secretary of India and ambassador to Beijing.

The SCO comprises 10 members and another 16 "dialogue partners" and observers. Xi is due to begin a formal summit today at which they will agree on a joint declaration.