

India and Ukraine Peace Diplomacy

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Summary

India's recent diplomacy suggests a willingness to move beyond calls for peace towards practical support to end the war in Ukraine. Its opportunity lies in facilitating second order agreements and humanitarian arrangements as a supplement to the larger political settlement being explored by Washington, Kyiv and Moscow.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's engagement with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Bishkek on 31 August 2026, followed by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visits to Kyiv and Warsaw in early September 2026, point to a more active Indian search for a diplomatic role to end the war in Ukraine. New Delhi is offering support to a peace process, whose basic terms on a ceasefire, territorial settlement and long-term security guarantees are being negotiated under the auspices of the United States (US).

This is very different from New Delhi's initial response to the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine in February 2022. India's caution then reflected the weight of its enduring partnership with Russia in defence and energy domains. India's focus in the immediate aftermath of the hostilities was to evacuate its nationals and manage the significant economic consequences. Its diplomatic reluctance to condemn Moscow's invasion coexisted with principled support for the United Nations (UN) Charter on non-aggression and territorial integrity. The tension between these positions was driven by interests on the one hand and ideals on the other.

Modi's remarks to Putin in September 2022 that it was [no era for war](#) had indeed signalled New Delhi's unease. India's present activism builds on that position. To be sure, India's early diplomacy was mere rhetoric. New Delhi supported the Black Sea grain arrangement brokered by the UN and Türkiye. [Jaishankar also disclosed](#) in October 2022 that India had pressed Moscow over the safety of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. These interventions established a useful principle: limited cooperation to reduce civilian harm need not await agreement on the war's political causes or final settlement.

As American and European criticism of "Indian tilt to Moscow" gathered ground, New Delhi sought to rebalance its position soon enough. Modi's visit to Kyiv and Warsaw in August 2024 marked an effort to better appreciate the European dynamics of the Ukraine war. In Ukraine, Modi [reaffirmed respect](#) for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and supported diplomatic engagement towards peace.

The Bishkek summit saw India take an important step forward. [Modi urged Putin](#) to move from an "endless war" towards an "end of war". [Traveling to Kyiv and Warsaw](#) soon after the Bishkek summit, Jaishankar offered India's assistance to end the war. Jaishankar's engagement with the top leaders of Ukraine and Poland and his public remarks highlight

India's willingness to play an active role in supporting the peace process and the European welcome to it. This is just the beginning and will take hard diplomatic work for India to insert itself effectively into the peace process.

Driving the new peace effort are New Delhi's expanding European partnerships that demand a broader view of the old continent than the traditional preoccupation with Russian relationship. India can no longer treat Europe's security concerns as marginal to its core interests.

The immediate context for India's interest in Ukraine peace diplomacy is [renewed American effort](#) to bring the war to a close. US President Donald Trump's envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, met Putin on 5 September 2026 and traveled to Kyiv to meet Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The hope in New Delhi is that India could complement this American effort.

India has a historical precedent for a supporting role. A newly independent India, far weaker than today, found a way of supporting the peace process in Ukraine, when in 1953, it chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and supplied the force entrusted with custody of prisoners awaiting resolution of their repatriation. Since the Russian invasion, the world has seen several states, including Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar contribute to the peace process. That record shows there is considerable room for an Indian role in shaping the outcomes in Ukraine.

In Ukraine, comparable opportunities might include convening, consultation and support for humanitarian arrangements, security of civilian shipping and facilitating nuclear safety measures. These are possibilities, not announced assignments yet. Each would require a clear mandate, consent and the capacity to deliver. Some could be pursued while fighting continues; others would arise only after a ceasefire. Calling them secondary issues should not obscure their political difficulty or their importance to sustaining peace.

New Delhi has no reason to either exaggerate its influence or minimise it. Close ties with Moscow provide access but do not guarantee Russian concessions. Engagement with Kyiv must build confidence and diplomacy with Central European states demands more communication and trust building.

India's larger opportunity lies in recalibrating its great power relations. An active diplomatic role would connect its longstanding Russian relationship, growing European interests, a deepening partnership with the US and concern for the war's global economic costs. Its contribution will be judged by the specific agreements it helps make possible and the responsibilities it is prepared to carry.

Russia's war in Ukraine had severely tested India's effort to simultaneously develop new partnerships with the US, Europe and the broader West while retaining its traditional ties to Moscow. While India has been accused of being partial to Russia, Moscow's reliance on China has grown at a time of testy ties between New Delhi and Beijing. Any accommodation between Russia and the West, therefore, would be a positive strategic outcome for India.

That agreement is not guaranteed at this moment but any contribution India could make now would be a worthwhile political endeavour.

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