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INDIA'S RUSSIA-UKRAINE DIPLOMACY

2026 Peace Talks and India's Expanding Role

India's Russia-Ukraine Diplomacy: Latest News

On November 10–11, 2026, delegations from the US, Russia and Ukraine met in Abu Dhabi for the third round of US-mediated peace talks, aiming to end the nearly five-year war — Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II.

Alongside these negotiations, India has emerged as an active diplomatic player, engaging both Moscow and Kyiv at the highest levels, with concrete proposals on maritime security and humanitarian concerns.

1. The Road to Abu Dhabi: Earlier Rounds of Talks

May–June 2025 — Istanbul

- *First direct talks since the 2022 invasion.*
- *A 28-point US–Russia peace plan demanded that Ukraine renounce NATO membership and give up its long-range arsenal; President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rejected it.*
- *Europe countered with demands for an Article 5-style security guarantee based on the principle of collective defence. No consensus was reached.*

February 2026 — Geneva

- *Russia insisted that Ukraine cede the entire Donbas region before any ceasefire.*
- *Kyiv rejected this demand and called for an unconditional ceasefire.*
- *Talks collapsed and were further disrupted by the US–Israel conflict with Iran, which diverted US diplomatic bandwidth.*

2. What's on the Table Now

Territory

Russia controls Crimea, annexed in 2014, and parts of eastern and southern Ukraine. It claims Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Moscow wants Ukraine to withdraw from Donbas; Ukraine rejects this, although US negotiators see room for limited mutual concessions.

Security Guarantees

Ukraine demands credible guarantees against future Russian aggression, having earlier sought NATO membership — a key trigger cited for Russia's 2022 invasion.

European Security Architecture

Russia wants this framework discussed before resolving the immediate conflict, while EU President Ursula von der Leyen insists that it should follow a ceasefire.

Russia has blocked European participation in the talks, even as France, Germany, the UK, Italy, the EU and NATO hold parallel discussions with US and Ukrainian officials in Abu Dhabi.

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3. Impact of US Midterm Elections

Democrats' "blue wave" win in the US Congress could push for greater military aid to Ukraine and tougher sanctions on Russia once new members take office in January.

However, the Trump administration retains control over immediate negotiations. A shift in Congress does not automatically alter foreign policy, which would depend instead on bipartisan legislative support.

4. India's Diplomatic Role

- *A day before the talks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Zelenskyy; hours later, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. This reflected India's engagement with both sides at the highest level.*
- *Zelenskyy urged India to leverage its diplomatic ties with world leaders to help end the war, highlighting food security as an area for cooperation.*
- *Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called India's proposal the "most comprehensive" among those received from India, Egypt, Turkey and the US; President Vladimir Putin praised Modi's "very good ideas."*

5. India's Three-Part Truce Proposal

- *Reduce attacks around the Black Sea to enable Ukrainian agricultural exports.*
- *Halt Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.*
- *Ukraine refrains from attacking Russian positions along the line of contact.*

6. Why the Black Sea Matters

Strategic and Economic Importance

- *Ukraine's three key ports — Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi — handle approximately 90% of its agricultural exports.*
- *Russia transports 77–81% of its grain exports, amounting to 42–44 million tonnes, through the Azov–Black Sea region.*
- *Continued fighting threatens 400 million people across Africa, West Asia and Asia with food shortages and malnutrition.*

India's Direct Stakes

- *Five Indian seafarers have been killed and two remain missing in Black Sea attacks.*
- *India imports approximately 1.97 million barrels per day of Russian crude, around 35% of its total oil imports, making safe shipping a vital national interest.*

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7. India's Broader Regional Concerns

India has also called for free and safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz amid the West Asia conflict, engaging Iran, Israel and the US.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri visited the UAE as part of these sustained diplomatic efforts.

8. What If Talks Fail?

- *Diplomacy would likely continue through separate channels, such as prisoner exchanges and shipping safety, even without a comprehensive deal.*
- *Unresolved territorial and security disputes would mean continued Western support for Ukraine and continued Russian military operations.*
- *The conflict could continue to affect global trade, energy prices and food security.*

9. Conclusion

India's shift from advocating peace to proposing concrete, actionable measures marks a significant evolution in its Russia–Ukraine diplomacy. This approach is driven as much by humanitarian concern as by India's own economic and strategic interests in energy security and global trade.

While India remains outside the formal Abu Dhabi talks, its channels with both Moscow and Kyiv position it as a credible facilitator in an otherwise deadlocked peace process.

