

Can BRICS Broker Peace? The Future of Ukraine Peace Summits

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An in-depth analysis of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, has highlighted Indian efforts and proposed role in peace mediation process between Russia and Ukraine.

Modi's official visit to Kiev on August 23 was the first for an Indian head of government since the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Ukraine in 1992. While the significance of this cannot be underestimated, it also exposed a few controversial questions. Some experts interpreted the official visit, though as friendly and symbolic, it was also considered as a combined attempt to solidify India's economic diplomacy after a series of corporate agreements were reached after the deliberations and their joint talks over peace mediation. Modi and Zelenskyy have agreed to often-suggested 'peace summit' – several of such high-powered meetings have already been held since Russia began its 'special military operation' in neighbouring Ukraine.

For some reasons in the first place, India's proposal on hosting second peace summit explicitly shows the importance it attaches within the context of its bilateral relations with Russia. India and Russia have had cordial relations dating back to Soviet times, and that has been described lately as 'friendly' and, in terms of economic benefits, referred to as highly appreciable as bilateral trade statistics vividly show in ministerial documents. During one official visit, Modi was photographed giving President Vladimir Putin a warm embrace, both have a long-running relationship. India's bilateral trade with Russia stood at \$65.6 billion in FY24, up 33 per cent year-on-year, and nearly 5.5 times higher than the pre-pandemic trade of \$10.1 billion. The bilateral trade has increased especially since 2022 with Indian fuel importers snapping up discounted Russian crude despite repeated criticism by Western nations.

Image: Ukrainian President Zelensky's meeting with India's PM Modi ([Source](#))



On the opposite side with Ukraine, Modi's support was seen as a factor that could bolster efforts toward peace negotiations. At the same, the Indian leader took the opportunity to strengthen his country's economic cooperation in Ukraine, possibly in the wider region. Modi and Zelenskyy discussed at length Ukraine's peace formula, which prioritizes territorial integrity and the withdrawal of Russian troops, according to the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With devastating consequences arising from more than two-year conflict, Modi passionately urged for early resolution of Ukraine conflict in August phone conversation with Russia's

Putin.

“Reiterated India’s firm commitment to support an early, abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict,” Modi said in a post on X, describing the conversation.

Modi shared “insights” from his visit to Ukraine with Putin and “underlined the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as well as sincere and practical engagement between all stakeholders” to find peace, the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement.

“We are on the side of peace,” Modi added. “Personally, as a friend, if there is any role that I can play, I would very much like to play that role toward peace.”

Modi and Zelenskyy spent two and a half hours behind closed doors before they signed cooperation agreements in the spheres of agriculture, medicine, and culture. The joint statement said both countries agreed on the importance of closer dialogue to “ensure a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.”

Since Russia-Ukraine conflict began in February 2022, China and India (BRICS), have all along avoided condemning Russia’s invasion and instead have been urging Moscow and Kyiv to resolve the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. Analysts earlier argued Modi’s neutral stance, as it is the case with Brazil, China and South Africa. One Ukrainian analyst said the outcome of Modi’s first visit was modest, as that was just “the beginning of a complex dialogue between India, Ukraine and Europe.” If India were to support Ukraine’s approach to a peace settlement, it could enhance Kyiv’s chances of gaining more backing from other countries in the “Global South” where “India remains China’s main competitor for influence.”

Reports show that ongoing negotiations with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Switzerland regarding the second summit on peace shared on social media. In addition to India and South Africa as BRICS members, China also has historically warm ties with Russia.

South Africa has attempted at peace resolution, and that was followed by China. Sergey Lavrov underestimated South Africa (BRICS chair in 2023), saying that the African peace initiative which consisted of ten (10) elements, was not well-formulated on paper. Similarly, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said:

“The peace initiative proposed by African countries is very difficult to implement, difficult to compare positions.”

As far back in May 2024, President Xi Jinping “clearly articulated that the Chinese side will support the convention of an international conference which will reflect the interests of both Russia and Ukraine equally and will be based on a large number of ideas and initiatives.”

For the discussions here, it is necessary to consider carefully, in the context the China’s Global Security Initiative (GSI) that could play important role in resolving the Russia-Ukraine crisis and possibly many others around the world. In the first place, China prominently places “cooperation” as the key component in its foreign policy, as oppose to Russia that is confrontational and yet talk about multipolar - in fact ‘multipolar’ in its basic sense means inclusive and integrated approach to global developments including conflict resolutions.

According to China’s concept, its Global Security Initiative principally aims at eliminating the

root causes of international conflicts, improve global security governance, encourage joint international efforts to bring more stability and certainty to a volatile and changing era, and promote durable peace and development in the world.

The concept is guided by six commitments or pillars, which are

- (i) pursuing common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security;
- (ii) respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries;
- (iii) adhering to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter;
- (iv) taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously;
- (v) peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation; and
- (vi) maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains.

Gleaning from these core principles, it's safe to say that the Global Security Initiative could and probably would become a catalyst for the world to chart a new path to building sustainable peace, stability and development. The Global Security Initiative was first proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference on April 21, 2022.

Late August 2024, China reiterated the call for more support for its Ukraine peace plan created with Brazil. Both as BRICS members have endorsed a comprehensive peace plan for Ukraine, after rounds of diplomacy consultations with Indonesia and South Africa to support the proposed plan. It is important to remind that China and Russia were absent from first peace summit hosted in Geneva, Switzerland in June. Russia was not invited while China chose not to attend.

Despite that, Chinese Envoy Li Hui has insisted on dialogue for conflict resolution, adding that "important global forces in promoting world peace" share similar positions on diplomacy and dialogue with China.

"They have maintained communication with both Russia and Ukraine and stay committed to a political settlement to the crisis through dialogue and negotiation," said Li, China's special envoy for Eurasian affairs.

Within the unfolding geopolitical context, BRICS in their declaration on 23 August, 2023, in Sandton, South Africa, underlined the fact that BRICS is ready, "as sovereign states cooperate to maintain peace and security" and further against actions that are "incompatible with the principles of democracy and multilateral system" in this modern world.

The declaration also re-affirmed their collective stand "on strengthening cooperation on issues of common interests within BRICS" and yet China, India and South Africa, through their previous efforts, could not find common interest to establishing relative, better still sustainable peace between Russia and Ukraine. The entire saga of settling the Ukrainian problem is now reaching a very critical point, even BRICS unable to find an acceptable promising solution on their BRICS association's platform. In any case, the Russia-Ukraine

crisis continues threatening global security, largely influencing the world economy.

Absolutely there is no need taking quotes to support the arguments in the article here, but it is necessary to reiterate that the Joint Statement of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations meeting on 1 June 2023 and the 13th Meeting of BRICS National Security Advisors and High Representatives on National Security held on 25 July 2023, stated (Point 12 in the 94-Point Declaration) categorically noted:

“We are concerned about ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world. We stress our commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences and disputes through dialogue and inclusive consultations in a coordinated and cooperative manner and support all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises.”

Interestingly BRICS members especially South Africa, China and India have made several practical steps without any substantial results. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation has, in fact several times, clarified that BRICS is an informal association which comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. At the beginning of this year, as agreed at the XV BRICS Summit in South Africa, five countries – Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates became full-fledged members. At this point, experts have asking the level its committed role as collective BRICS in the mediation process and within the basic principles adhered by the global multipolarity. Russia has held the BRICS presidency since January 1, 2024.

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