



## India's PM Visit to Ukraine

**For Prelims:** [Russia-Ukraine War](#), [Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri \(BHISHMA\) Cubes](#), [Mobile Hospitals](#), [Project Aarogya Maitri](#), [India's foreign policy](#), [Sunflower Oil](#), [Talwar Class Frigate](#), [Defence Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#), [Article 370](#).

**For Mains:** Significance of India-Ukraine Relations and Balancing Ties Between Russia and Western Countries.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

India's Prime Minister paid a visit to Ukraine at the invitation of Ukraine's President. It was the first Indian head of state to visit Ukraine since its independence in 1991.

- The visit focused on cooperation in defence as India operates a large inventory of military equipment of Ukrainian origin.

### What are the Key Takeaways from India's PM Visit to Ukraine?

- **Clarification of India's Stance on the Russia-Ukraine War:** India's PM emphasised that India has never been neutral in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and has always stood for peace.
  - India seeks sincere engagement among all stakeholders to find practical solutions for an early resolution of the conflict.
- **Formation of an Intergovernmental Commission:** An Intergovernmental Commission between India and Ukraine has been established to restore and deepen bilateral trade and economic relations to pre-conflict levels.
  - Bilateral trade has reached USD 3.386 billion in 2021-22.
- **Signing of Four Key Agreements:** Both signed four agreements covering areas such as agriculture, the food industry, medical product regulation, and cultural cooperation.
  - The agreements aim to promote cooperation in agriculture and food industry, regulate medical products, provide humanitarian grant assistance, and strengthen cultural ties between the two nations.
- **Bhishm Cubes Gifted to Ukraine:** India gifted four Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri (BHISHMA) cubes to Ukraine, designed to provide emergency medical care through mobile hospitals.
  - These cubes are part of Project Aarogya Maitri, a program to offer crucial medical supplies and ensure rapid deployment of medical facilities in crisis situations.
- **Solidarity with Lives Lost:** PM visited the multimedia Martyrologist exposition on children at the National Museum of History of Ukraine in Kyiv and expressed his sorrow at the tragic loss of young lives.
  - He also placed a toy in their memory mark of respect.
- **Invitation to President Zelenskyy:** India's PM extended an invitation to the Ukrainian

**President to visit India**, marking a significant gesture during his first visit to Ukraine since 1991.

## What are the Dynamics of India-Ukraine Relations?

- **Historic Visit:** Shri Narendra Modi is the **first Indian Prime Minister** to visit Ukraine since diplomatic relations were established in **1992**. India was one of the first countries to recognise Ukraine after it gained independence following the collapse of the **Soviet Union** in 1991.
- **Departure from Traditional Foreign Policy:** Historically, India maintained closer ties with the **Soviet Union (predecessor to Russia)** and had less engagement with Ukraine.
  - The visit is part of India's **broader strategy** to enhance relations with Europe, moving beyond the narrow focus on relations with **Europe's big four i.e., Russia, Germany, France, and Britain**
  - The visit marks a significant shift in **India's foreign policy**, reflecting a broader engagement with **central and eastern Europe**.
- **New Avenues in Bilateral Relations:** High-level interactions have increased with External Affairs Minister, and **National Security Advisor** engaging with Ukrainian counterparts.
- **Strategic Interests:** Ukraine's expertise in defence technology, such as **gas turbines** and aircraft, offers opportunities for collaboration and **joint manufacturing** in India.
- **Economic Opportunities:** Ukraine's strength as one of the world's agrarian powers will add to its **strategic salience** in the years ahead.
  - Pre-war Ukraine was among the biggest sources of **sunflower oil** for India.
- **Independent Foreign Policy:** India's interactions with Ukraine do not undermine its relations with Russia, reflecting India's **de-hyphenated policy**.

## Why is Ukraine Important for India's Defence Sector?

- **Soviet Era Equipment:** India has a significant inventory of Soviet-era defence equipment still operational, including **gas turbine engines** for Indian Navy Warships and **An-32 aircraft** operated by the IAF (Indian Air Force).
- **Indian Air Force:** In June 2009, India signed a USD 400 million agreement with **Ukraine's SpetsTechnoExport (STE)** to upgrade its fleet of **105 AN-32 aircraft**, extend their life by 40 years, and improve their avionics.
  - The IAF is heavily dependent on the AN-32 for air maintenance of **army troops deployed** along our northern frontier, **air cargo drop-off** and **para drop-off**.
- **Indian Navy:** Ukraine is supplying critical components for the construction of two **Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates** at the **Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)**.
  - For the Indian Navy, the impact is most acute as over 30 **Indian frontline warships** are powered by engines from **Zorya Nashproekt** of Ukraine.
  - Ukraine's state-owned **Zorya-Mashproekt** is in talks with Indian private sector companies to jointly manufacture gas turbines used by warships like **Talwar-class frigates**.
- **Defence Trade:** After the **Balakot air strike** in 2019, IAF made emergency procurement of **R-27 air to air missiles** from Ukraine for its **SU-30MKI fighters**.
  - At Aero India in February 2021, Ukraine signed four agreements worth USD 70 million which includes sale of new weapons as well as maintenance and upgrades of existing ones in service with the Indian military.
- **Boosting Indian Defence Industry:** Ukraine has been looking to procure some military hardware from India in addition to efforts to deepen its presence in the Indian defence market.
  - Ukraine also held discussions with the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** for possible collaborations in research and development.

## What are Irritants in India-Ukraine Relations?

- **Russia-Ukraine War:** The ongoing **Russia-Ukraine war** has been a persistent irritant in India's relationships with Ukraine and its Western partners.
  - India has **maintained a neutral stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine**, avoiding direct condemnation of Moscow while advocating for diplomacy and dialogue.
  - India has refused to join the **West's sanctions** on Russia and has stepped up buying **Russian fuel** at a discounted price.

- India has largely **abstained** from voting in a **UN General Assembly** resolution that condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- **Supply Chain Interruptions:** The war disrupted supply chains for critical defence equipment. For instance, the upgrade of the Indian **Air Force's An-32 aircraft** has been delayed due to the conflict's impact on Ukrainian factories.
  - Russia has delayed the delivery of the remaining two squadrons of the **S-400 Triumph air defense system** to India until **August 2026**.
- **Ukraine's Stance on Kashmir:** Ukraine's occasional comments and positions on the **Kashmir issue** have been a source of friction between the two nations.
  - In 2019, following the revocation of **Article 370** by India, Ukraine expressed **concerns over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir**, which was seen by India as interference in its internal matters.
- **Diplomatic Misalignments:** Differences in foreign policy priorities and global alignments have sometimes created friction in **India-Ukraine relations**.
  - India's strategic partnership with Russia contrasts with Ukraine's opposition to Russian actions, leading to a **diplomatic balancing act** that complicates bilateral relations.

## Way Forward

- **Balanced Approach to Russia-Ukraine Conflict:** India must continue to carefully navigate its stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
  - While maintaining its **strategic relationship** with Russia, India should also express concern for Ukraine's sovereignty and **territorial integrity**.
- **Strategic Autonomy and Non-Alignment:** India should continue to emphasise its policy of **strategic autonomy** and **non-alignment**.
  - By doing so, it can avoid being drawn into geopolitical conflicts that do not directly serve its national interests.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Support:** India can enhance its relationship with Ukraine by offering **humanitarian assistance** and support.
  - This could include medical aid, reconstruction assistance, and technical expertise for rebuilding war-torn areas.
- **Mediation and Peace Initiatives:** If the opportunity arises, India could offer to **mediate** between Russia and Ukraine, given its cordial relations with both nations.
  - This would **position India as a responsible global player** and could help in finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict.
- **Leveraging Global South Solidarity:** India should engage with other **Global South** countries to build a coalition that promotes peace and development in conflict regions like Ukraine.

### Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Examine the potential areas of cooperation between India and Ukraine in the light of the Russia-Ukraine war.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

Q. Consider the following countries (2023)

1. Bulgaria
2. Czech Republic
3. Hungary
4. Latvia
5. Lithuania
6. Romania

How many of the above countries share a land border with Ukraine?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) Only five

**Ans: (a)**

**Q. Which of the following countries share borders with Moldova? (2008)**

1. Ukraine
2. Romania
3. Belarus

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

**Code:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**

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