

India's Diplomatic Balancing Act: Doval's Strategic Meeting with Putin

On September 12, 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin and India's National Security Advisor (NSA), Ajit Doval, met during the BRICS National Security Advisors' meeting in St. Petersburg. Doval's primary objective was to communicate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message regarding his discussions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

During his Kyiv visit in August 2024, Modi discussed potential peace development efforts with Zelenskyy, making it clear that India is prepared to assist in the resolution process. Doval's briefing with Putin followed closely on the heels of Modi's visits to both Ukraine and Russia, signaling India's commitment to facilitating peace in the region.

Certain nations, including Italy, have suggested that India, along with China and Brazil, could act as a mediator in the conflict due to its neutral stance and positive relations with both sides. Reports before Doval's visit indicated that Modi had outlined a peace plan, which Doval was tasked with conveying to the Russian leadership.

Though the details of the plan are undisclosed, Ajit Doval's conversation with Putin indicated that Modi's message carried significant weight, especially given the exclusive and closed format of Modi's discussions with Zelenskyy.

During the meeting, Putin expressed his desire to continue bilateral discussions with Modi, proposing a meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, scheduled for October 2024, to review the outcomes of agreements from Modi's previous Moscow visit in July 2024.

India's involvement in the peace process gained traction after Putin identified India, China, and Brazil as key nations that could help mediate the conflict at the Eastern Economic Forum. Additional discussions with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu focused on strategic security and defense issues, highlighting the depth of India-Russia cooperation.

This meeting is crucial for solidifying defense ties and addressing mutual concerns beyond the immediate scope of the Ukraine conflict. Ajit Doval's engagement with President Putin reflects India's sophisticated balancing act in global geopolitics, portraying India as a pivotal global player committed to mediating between conflicting powers while maintaining strategic autonomy.