

War in Ukraine

Narendra Modi chides Vladimir Putin over Ukraine war

Indian PM's 'concerns' publicly acknowledged by Russian president at meeting in Uzbekistan



According to a Kremlin transcript, Vladimir Putin, right, told Narendra Modi: 'We will do our best to stop this as soon as possible' © Alexander Demyanchuk/Pool/Reuters

John Reed in New Delhi, **Nastassia Astrasheuskaya** in Riga and **Max Seddon** in Moscow 3 HOURS AGO

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Indian prime minister Narendra Modi has told Russian president Vladimir Putin that now is “not an era of war”, in some of his most pointed public remarks yet about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

At a meeting between the Indian and Russian leaders in Uzbekistan on Friday, Putin publicly acknowledged New Delhi’s “concerns” about the conflict for the first time — a day after doing [the same thing](#) during an encounter with Chinese president Xi Jinping.

The exchanges at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation gathering in Samarkand are Russia’s most public recognitions yet of the [disquiet in Beijing](#) and New Delhi about the implications of the Ukraine invasion.

Though Xi and Modi have both attempted to remain neutral on Ukraine, their strong ties with Russia are crucial to Putin’s attempt to show that Moscow remains a major player on the world stage.

Putin’s new deference to Modi and Xi’s concerns about the [war in Ukraine](#) highlight how Moscow has become increasingly dependent on their willingness to buy its

now Moscow has become increasingly dependent on their willingness to buy its exports after western nations imposed sanctions on Russia.

“I know today’s era is not an era of war and we have talked to you many times over the phone on the subject,” Modi told Putin in remarks published by India’s foreign ministry. India’s prime minister added that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue kept the world together.

“I know your position on the conflict in Ukraine, your concerns that you constantly express,” said Putin, according to a Kremlin transcript. “We will do our best to stop this as soon as possible.”

But Putin sought to blame Kyiv for the conflict continuing, saying: “Only, unfortunately, the opposing side, the leadership of Ukraine, announced its abandonment of the negotiation process, declared that it wants to achieve its goals by military means, as they say ‘on the battlefield’.”

The remarks on the war, which Putin usually calls a “special military operation” to calm public opinion in Russia, appeared to differ from his usual mantra that “the tasks will be carried out in full”.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has caused disquiet in New Delhi centred on the disruption to food and raw energy supplies and the forced evacuation of thousands of [Indian medical students](#) from Ukraine.

India, whose political elite have long courted close ties with Russia, has previously called for an end to hostilities in Ukraine, but has mostly been reserved in public commentary on the war.

“Certainly, it’s a change in tone,” said Indrani Bagchi, chief executive of the Ananta Aspen Centre, a New Delhi think-tank, of Modi’s remarks on Friday. “The tone is not overtly critical, but the fact that he has actually said this is not a time to be fighting a war is implied criticism.”

Putin’s comments to Modi came a day after his first face-to-face meeting with Xi since the start of the conflict, where he also publicly acknowledged Beijing’s “questions and concerns”.

“What you heard in Uzbekistan by both the leaders of China and India are indicative of the fact that Mr Putin doesn’t have a whole lot of sympathetic ears out there to what he’s been doing in Ukraine,” said top US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Friday.

India and China have ramped up their purchases of Russian oil since the war in Ukraine began in February, allowing Moscow to mostly compensate for the loss of budget revenue because of sanctions.

India's imports of Russian oil jumped more than tenfold to 8.42mn tonnes in the second quarter of this year, from 0.66mn tonnes in the first quarter.

In his meeting with Modi, Putin spoke warmly of Russia's "strategic, privileged partnership" with India. He hailed the "constructive" economic relations between the two countries and their growing trade.

"Deliveries of fertilisers from Russia to India increased more than eightfold — not by some percentage, but more than eight times," said Putin. "I hope that this will help Indian farmers to solve the difficult task of providing food for the country's population."

Russia is also India's biggest supplier of arms, though New Delhi is stepping up purchases from other countries in a bid to diversify supplies, while also trying to build up its domestic defence production.

India's foreign ministry said the two leaders "appreciated the sustained momentum in bilateral ties" during their meeting.

Additional reporting by Felicia Schwartz in Washington

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