

EDITORIALS - 10TH SEP 2026

1. AT BRICS, INDIA'S TASK IS TO KEEP THE UKRAINE PEACE PROCESS MOVING

(GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'At BRICS, India's task is to keep the Ukraine peace process moving' was published in **The Indian Express** on 10th Sep 2026, highlights India's role in sustaining Ukraine **peace diplomacy** and representing the **Global South** through its **BRICS chairmanship**.

Renewed peace diplomacy

- Modi reiterated to Putin in Bishkek that the **Ukraine war** must end through sustained **dialogue and diplomacy**.
- Visits by Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner revived **peace negotiations** after six months of lost **diplomatic momentum**.
- Washington's focus had shifted towards Iran and the West Asian conflict, leaving **Ukraine diplomacy** temporarily **stalled**.
- The **Alaska process**, including Geneva and Abu Dhabi negotiations, could produce a ceasefire or Trump-Putin-Zelenskyy trilateral meeting.

Territorial deadlock and India's approach

- Negotiations remain divided over **territorial control** and **security guarantees**, particularly Crimea, Donbas, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.
- Russia reportedly seeks the entire **Donbas** while offering Ukraine retained territories elsewhere in exchange for **sanctions relief**.
- Washington can sustain negotiations but cannot compel Kyiv's territorial concessions or reduce Moscow's claimed **war gains** and **security demands**.
- Jaishankar's Moscow-Kyiv diplomacy supported the existing **American peace track**, conveying messages without promoting a separate **Indian framework**.

Global South and BRICS role

- India's engagement, requested by both sides and coordinated with Washington, reminded parties that continued war causes **human suffering** and global economic damage.
- Ukraine's war disrupts **energy security**, food, fertilisers, inflation, sovereign debt and multilateral institutions far beyond the battlefield.
- Such widespread costs make **peace in Ukraine** a global public good, giving the **Global South** a legitimate diplomatic stake.
- India's energy position prioritises affordable imports and rejects **sanctions-driven diplomacy**, reflecting concerns shared by many developing countries.
- As **BRICS chair**, India must secure a balanced New Delhi declaration reflecting conflict realities without endorsing any single party.

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Priorities for post-war reconstruction in Ukraine

- **Financing burden:** The World Bank-led RDNA5 estimated Ukraine's ten-year recovery needs at \$587.7 billion, requiring sustained public, private and multilateral financing.
- **Housing recovery:** RDNA5 found 14% of Ukraine's housing damaged or destroyed, affecting over three million households and making secure resettlement a major priority.
- **Infrastructure restoration:** Energy-sector damage increased by about 21%, while transport needs rose 24%, highlighting the urgency of rebuilding power grids, railways and ports.
- **Humanitarian demining:** Around 139,000 square kilometres remained potentially contaminated by mid-2025, although UNDP helped release over 7,600 hectares during 2025.

- **Refugee reintegration:** A UNHCR survey found 61% of refugees hoped to return, but OECD evidence shows housing and employment largely determine actual return decisions.
- **Governance safeguards:** The €50-billion Ukraine Facility links support with reforms, while the 2025 controversy over NABU and SAPO demonstrated the importance of anti-corruption autonomy.
- **Frozen assets:** Using roughly €210 billion in Russian assets held within the European Union remains contested because of litigation, retaliation and settlement-related concerns.

2. AFD SUCCESS ISN'T JUST A GERMANY STORY

(GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'AfD success isn't just a Germany story' was published in **The Indian Express** on 10th Sep 2026, highlights the **structural drivers** behind the **far-right's** growing **political influence** across Germany and Europe.

AfD's electoral breakthrough

- The **AfD** became Germany's first far-right party since World War II to decisively win a **state election**.
- In Saxony-Anhalt, it secured **43.8% votes**, far exceeding the second-placed Christian Democratic Union's **17.2%**.
- Despite its state branch being classified as **right-wing extremist**, the AfD achieved its strongest result under Germany's **firewall strategy**.
- The AfD's national polling lead and strength beyond eastern Germany show its rise is not merely **region-specific** or **temporary**.

Drivers and wider European implications

- The AfD consolidated **voter grievances** around immigration, economic uncertainty and established parties' inability to provide credible solutions.

- Since the **2015 refugee crisis**, weak growth, high energy costs and employment anxieties have intensified opposition to **immigration**.
- Germany's export-led **industrial model** faces severe pressure from China's rise, weakening confidence in the traditional **political centre**.
- Political isolation allowed the AfD to portray itself as the only **authentic opposition**, making the firewall strategy **counterproductive**.
- Similar gains by France's National Rally and Italy's Brothers of Italy reflect a broader **European far-right** surge driven by economic and migration failures.

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Institutional safeguards against far-right normalisation

- **Constitutional threshold:** Germany's Constitutional Court rejected banning the NPD in 2017 because it lacked the capacity to realise its unconstitutional objectives despite its extremist ideology.
- **Funding restrictions:** In 2024, the Constitutional Court excluded Die Heimat, formerly the NPD, from state financing for six years under Article 21(3).
- **Judicial oversight:** A Cologne court temporarily blocked the AfD's nationwide extremist designation in 2026, showing that security scrutiny remains subject to proportional judicial review.
- **Platform accountability:** The Digital Services Act requires platforms exceeding 45 million European users to address electoral risks; WhatsApp Channels crossed this threshold in 2025.
- **Advertising transparency:** European Union rules effective from October 2025 require political-ad sponsor disclosure and restrict targeting, prompting Meta and Google to discontinue such advertisements.
- **Civic resilience:** Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education promotes democratic participation, while a 22-member Bundestag committee monitors its effectiveness and political neutrality.

- **Regional inclusion:** Germany's €1.75-billion support for the Lusatia coal transition includes employment-related social costs, illustrating how economic cushioning can reduce regional resentment.

3. A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE IS LINKED TO OUR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'A special relationship with Europe is linked to our strategic autonomy' was published in **The Indian Express** on 10th Sep 2026, highlights how deeper **economic and security cooperation** with Europe can strengthen India's strategic autonomy.

Strategic rationale for closer ties

- American tariff threats, protectionism and scrutiny of India's energy choices have made **United States commitments** increasingly **unpredictable**.
- India must preserve **strategic autonomy** through multi-alignment rather than dependence on a single mercurial **superpower**.
- New Delhi has expanded ties with Japan, Australia, Singapore and Gulf states, while Europe offers greater **structural stability** and **diplomatic predictability**.
- Europe has evolved from an inward-looking economic bloc into a reliable **strategic partner** suited to India's long-term **foreign policy**.

India-EU economic partnership

- The **India-EU Free Trade Agreement**, concluded after the 16th India-EU Summit, connects two billion consumers and nearly one-fourth of global GDP.
- For India, the agreement provides a **macroeconomic buffer**, protection against global shocks and access to a high-value European market.

- For Europe, it supports the **China Plus One** strategy by reducing economic dependence on China and diversifying supply chains.
- Eliminating tariffs on over **96% of goods**, alongside rules for services, digital trade and technology, creates a durable **economic anchor**.

Security cooperation and strategic autonomy

- India and Europe support a **rules-based multipolar order** threatened by Chinese expansionism and growing American unilateralism.
- European leaders' joint participation in India's **77th Republic Day** reflected a shift from commercial engagement towards genuine **strategic partnership**.
- The **Security and Defence Partnership Agreement** institutionalises cooperation in maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism and artificial intelligence.
- India gains access to Europe's **€150-billion security initiative**, enabling joint production, co-development and transfer of advanced **military technologies**.
- European cooperation can diversify India's defence procurement, strengthen **domestic manufacturing** and reduce dependence on unreliable **legacy suppliers**.
- Joint security engagement can counter Chinese coercion, protect critical **maritime lanes** and address operational gaps across the **Indian Ocean**.

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Constraints on operationalising the India–EU partnership

- **Implementation delays:** The 2026 trade agreement required five to six months of legal vetting before formal signature, with implementation expected only within a year.
- **Carbon costs:** The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism became operational in January 2026 without immediate FTA relief for Indian steel, cement, aluminium and fertiliser exporters.

- **Protected sectors:** Rice, dairy, beef, sugar and soya were excluded from the trade agreement, reflecting persistent domestic sensitivities despite extensive tariff liberalisation.
- **Data barriers:** India lacks a European Union adequacy decision, requiring additional GDPR safeguards for personal-data transfers and raising compliance costs for digital businesses.
- **Defence conditionalities:** The €150-billion SAFE instrument requires substantial eligible-country content, while participation by non-European firms may need additional agreements and regulatory approvals.
- **Russia divergence:** European sanctions policy contrasts with India's continuing Russian energy and defence engagement, creating periodic disagreements over strategic priorities and diplomatic signalling.
- **European fragmentation:** A 2026 European Court of Auditors assessment highlighted fragmented defence systems and industrial bottlenecks despite a 79% spending increase during 2020–25.