

Putin, Xi Hail 'Great Power' Ties at Talks Defying West

By [AFP](#)

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Pool / TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping met for their first face-to-face talks since the start of the conflict in Ukraine on Thursday, hailing their strategic ties in defiance of the West.

Sitting across from each other at two long rounded tables and flanked by aides, the two leaders met on the sidelines of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in ex-Soviet Uzbekistan.

The meeting was part of Xi's first trip abroad since the early days of the pandemic. For Putin, it was a chance to show Russia has not been fully isolated despite Western efforts.

"China is willing to make efforts with Russia to assume the role of great powers, and play a guiding role to inject stability and positive energy into a world rocked by social turmoil," Xi

told Putin at the talks.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV also quoted Xi as saying China was willing to work with Russia to support "each other's core interests."

Putin took a clear broadside at the United States, which has been leading efforts to support Ukraine and impose sanctions on Russia.

"Attempts to create a unipolar world have recently acquired an absolutely ugly form and are completely unacceptable," Putin said.

Embed:

Putin tells Xi Jinping that Russia “understands your questions and concerns” about Ukraine. Does that mean... China has some? pic.twitter.com/Zd5XNW7cMD

— max seddon (@maxseddon) [September 15, 2022](#)

"We highly appreciate the balanced position of our Chinese friends in connection with the Ukrainian crisis," Putin told Xi, while reiterating Moscow's backing for China on Taiwan.

"We adhere to the principle of one China. We condemn the provocation of the U.S. and their satellites in the Taiwan Strait," Putin said, after a US Senate committee on Wednesday took the first step towards Washington directly providing billions of dollars in military aid to Taiwan.

'Alternative' to West

It was the first in-person meeting between the two leaders since Putin saw Xi in early February for the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, days before the Russian leader launched the military offensive in Ukraine.

The Kremlin has touted the SCO summit in the ancient Silk Road city of Samarkand as showing there is an "alternative" to Western-dominated international institutions.

The SCO — made up of China, India, Pakistan, Russia and the ex-Soviet Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — was set up in 2001 as a political, economic and security organization to rival Western institutions.

The leaders of those countries were to attend, as well as Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus.

Putin met the leaders of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan earlier Thursday, as well as with Raisi and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

With both Raisi and Sharif he said ties were "developing positively," while the Iranian leader

told Putin that US-backed sanctions on both countries would only make their relationship "stronger."

"The Americans think whichever country they impose sanctions on, it will be stopped. Their perception is a wrong one," Raisi said.

Related article: [‘Uneasy Allies’: Putin and Xi Set to Meet for First Time Since Ukraine War](#)

For Putin, the summit comes at an important time, as his forces face major battlefield setbacks in Ukraine and amid a continued Western push to make Russia an international pariah.

For Xi, it is an opportunity to shore up his credentials as a global statesman ahead of a pivotal congress of the ruling Communist Party in October.

The Chinese leader also met Thursday with Belarus's strongman leader Lukashenko, who was quoted by state news agency Belta as thanking Xi for China's "serious support in these difficult times."

Lukashenko has been shunned by Western leaders after a fierce crackdown on the opposition two years ago and for backing Russia on Ukraine.

Chinese state media said Xi would also meet Erdogan on Friday.

'No-limits' relationship

Formerly Cold War allies with a tempestuous relationship, China and Russia have drawn closer in recent years as part of what they call a "no-limits" relationship acting as a counterweight to the global dominance of the United States.

The two countries have also stepped up military cooperation, with China sending hundreds of troops to take part in military exercises last month in Russia's far east.

The Defense Ministry in Moscow said Thursday that Russian and Chinese warships were on a joint patrol in the Pacific and planning a live-fire artillery exercise at sea.

Related article: [China, Russia Stage Pacific Navy Drills](#)

Other global leaders sounded alarm about deepening ties between Moscow and Beijing.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said China and Russia "share a vision for the world that is starkly at odds with the vision that's at the center of the international system, the vision that has been at the center of the international system for the past eight decades."

Taiwan's foreign ministry said the two countries were inflicting harm on "international peace, stability, democracy and freedom."

Putin was also set to hold talks Friday with Erdogan and Indian Prime Minister Narendra

Modi.

Security was tight in Samarkand — a city of grand tiled mosques that was one of the hubs of Silk Road trade routes between China and Europe — with a huge police presence on the streets and armored vehicles parked downtown.

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