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Putin Presents Rings to his Fellow CIS Leaders During Summit

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Russian President Vladimir Putin presented symbolic rings to the leaders of the various former Soviet republics that now make up the Moscow-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) at an informal summit in St. Petersburg on Monday evening.

The summit was held against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has caused a crisis in both Russia's relations with the West and within the CIS itself.

“We have to admit, unfortunately, that disagreements also arise between the member states of the Commonwealth," Putin said in a rare public acknowledgment of the simmering tensions within the group.

"The main thing, however, is that we are ready and will cooperate. And even if any problematic issues arise, we strive to solve them ourselves, together, jointly, providing each other with comradely assistance and mediation,” the Russian president continued.

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Each of the leaders attending the meeting was presented with a gold-coloured ring with New Year's greetings engraved on it, although only Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko put Putin's present on his finger immediately, it was reported.

While the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine on 24 Feb. has left Russia feeling isolated and under pressure internationally, Putin has been using every chance he has to shore up Russia's declining influence over the former Soviet republics.

According to Putin, the leaders discussed cooperation in the field of economy, culture, and security.

The cordial scenes in St. Petersburg are a marked contrast to the tension evident within the group in November, when Armenia's leader Nikol Pashinyan refused to sign the joint communique issued by the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance amid growing wariness about being seen as a Putin ally on the international stage.

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