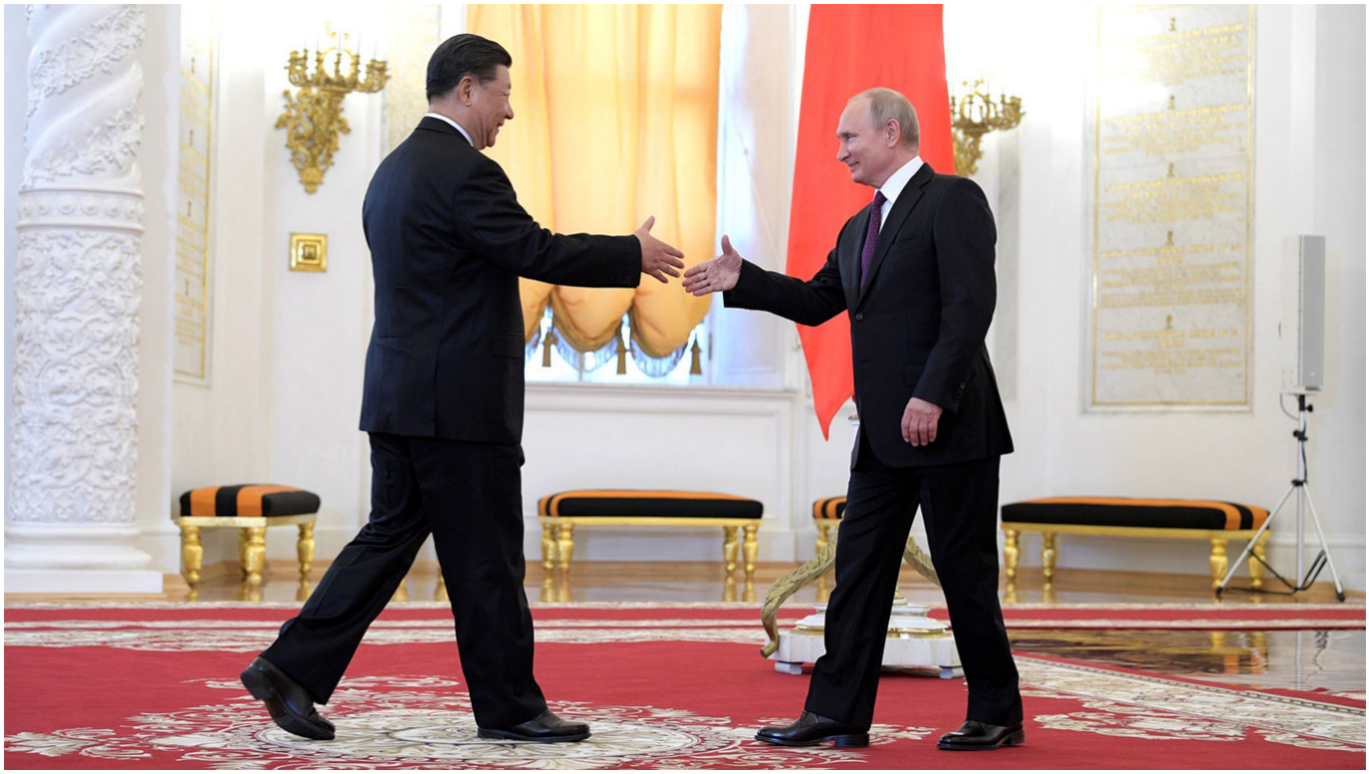
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China's Xi to Visit Russia on March 20-22, Kremlin Says

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Putin invited Xi to visit Moscow this spring during a video call between the leaders on Dec. 30, 2022. **kremlin.ru**

Chinese leader Xi Jinping will travel to Russia for a three-day visit early next week in an apparent show of support for Moscow as it wages war in Ukraine, the Kremlin announced Friday.

"On March 20-22, 2023, the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping will pay a visit to Russia for a state visit at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin," the Kremlin said.

Xi and Putin plan to discuss "deepening Russian-Chinese cooperation in the international arena" and sign "important" bilateral documents.

The Kremlin's statement made no mention of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which entered its second year last month, nor of Beijing's recent efforts to broker a peace deal between the countries.

China’s Foreign Ministry confirmed Xi’s upcoming visit, adding that Beijing will “maintain an objective stance on the Ukrainian crisis and play a constructive role in promoting negotiations,” according to the Russian state-run news agency RIA Novosti.

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Yury Ushakov, the Kremlin's foreign policy adviser, told reporters that Xi's proposed peace plan would be discussed during the talks.

“Of course, the conflict in Ukraine will be discussed. We highly appreciate the restrained, measured position of the Chinese leadership on this issue. We know about the Chinese settlement plan. And I am sure that both our leader and the Chinese leader will exchange assessments of the current situation in the context of the development of the conflict in Ukraine. What thoughts will appear after that, we'll see," Ushakov said in remarks carried by Russian news agencies.

Following Putin and Xi's talks, Ushakov said, the leaders plan to sign two joint statements: a declaration on ties entering a "new era," and another which outlines plans to develop key areas of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation until 2030.

"This is the most important event in our bilateral relations and it confirms the unique nature of the Russian-Chinese partnership. And we have no doubt that the upcoming talks will give a new powerful impetus to the development of the entire complex of bilateral cooperation," Ushakov said.

Beijing’s diplomatic efforts have been met with skepticism by Western officials given China's close economic and political ties with Moscow.

Putin and Xi have touted their countries’ “no-limits” partnership in recent years, claiming that together the countries acted as a counterweight to the global dominance of the United States.

Washington warned last month that China was considering sending “lethal support” to Russia in its war against Ukraine, though Beijing has denied the claims and told the U.S. to stop “spreading false information.”

Putin invited Xi to visit Moscow this spring during a video call between the leaders on Dec. 30, 2022.

Xi, who secured an unprecedented third term in office last week, had been expected to travel to Moscow in April or early May.

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