

Putin Promised Xi That Russia Will Fight '5-Year War' in Ukraine – Nikkei

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President Vladimir Putin promised Chinese leader Xi Jinping that his invasion of Ukraine would last five years, the Japanese newspaper [Nikkei](#) [reported](#) Thursday, citing multiple anonymous sources familiar with Russian-Chinese diplomatic maneuvering.

Putin's remark apparently came during Xi's visit to Moscow in March 2023, when Russia was already one year and one month into the war and had suffered a series of embarrassing setbacks.

Nikkei interpreted Putin's words that Russia "will fight for [at least] five years" as an assurance that Moscow would emerge victorious in the end and a possible warning for Xi not to reverse China's pro-Russia policy.

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It also said that Putin's comments to Xi call into question [recent reports](#) that the Russian leader is quietly signaling readiness for ceasefire talks, saying Putin may be creating an "illusion" of seeking peace to use to his advantage in the 2024 presidential vote.

Neither the Kremlin nor Beijing have commented on Nikkei's report, which could not be independently verified.

According to the publication, Xi may have not fully trusted Putin's 2023 pledge because he had previously "misjudged" the Russian leader's intentions ahead of the Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine.

On Feb. 4, 2022, the opening day of the Beijing Winter Olympics attended by Putin, the leaders declared a "no-limits" partnership.

Nikkei reported China likely concluded that the Russian troops amassing at the Ukrainian border would only invade eastern Ukraine, where Kyiv had been at war with pro-Moscow separatists since 2014, rather than the full-scale invasion it launched 20 days later.

Following Xi's March 2023 visit to Putin, China dispatched a so-called "peace mission" to Europe, including Ukraine and Russia, in what Nikkei described as a "subtle shift in Xi's pro-Russia stance."

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