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China's Xi Says Ties With Russia Grew Stronger in 2023

By AFP

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People seen dining at a restaurant as Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers his New Year's speech on Sunday. **Pedro Pardo / AFP**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday said his country's ties with Russia had grown stronger in 2023, as he exchanged New Year greetings with his counterpart Vladimir Putin, state media reported.

Beijing and Moscow are staunch allies and have strengthened their relations as Western countries turn their backs on Russia over its military invasion of Ukraine.

Both sides have also played up the personal relationship between the two leaders, with Xi referring to Putin as his "good friend."

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Xi said "The material and public opinion foundation of our relationship has become stronger" in his recap of the year to Putin on Sunday, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

"In the face of changes unseen in a century, and a turbulent regional and international situation, China-Russia relations have maintained healthy and stable development and moved steadily in the right direction," the Chinese leader added.

"Under our joint leadership, political mutual trust between the two sides has further deepened, strategic coordination has drawn closer, and mutually beneficial cooperation has continued to achieve new results," Xi was quoted as saying.

Xi noted that the volume of bilateral trade exceeded $200 billion ahead of schedule, and he added that Beijing was looking forward to marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral ties in 2024.

During a visit to Beijing by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin earlier this month, Xi said maintaining close ties with Moscow was a "strategic choice."

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