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Putin and Xi Tout Deepening Ties Ahead of Beijing Military Parade

By AFP

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Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. **Kremlin Press Service**

President Vladimir Putin told his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Tuesday that relations between their two countries had reached an "unprecedented level," as the two leaders met in Beijing ahead of a large-scale military parade.

The parade, scheduled for Wednesday to commemorate 80 years since Japan surrendered in World War II, will bring together more than two dozen heads of state, including North Korea's Kim Jong-un. Kim is expected to hold separate talks with both Putin and Xi, according to South Korean officials.

Meeting with the Chinese president, Putin invoked history to underscore Moscow's wartime alignment with Beijing. "We were always together then, and we remain together now," he said, adding that close communication between the two leaders reflected the "strategic nature" of the partnership.

“China-Russia relations have withstood the test of international changes,” Xi said in televised remarks, adding that Beijing was ready to work with Moscow to push for a “more just and reasonable” global order.

Putin also met on Tuesday with Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico, who has angered fellow European leaders by criticizing aid to Ukraine and resisting efforts to cut Russian energy imports. During that sit-down, Putin suggested Slovakia should cut off energy supplies to Ukraine in retaliation for Ukrainian drone attacks on the Druzhba pipeline, which it relies on for Russian oil imports.

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Both Putin and Xi have used the gathering in China to sharpen their criticism of the West. At the summit on Monday, Xi denounced what he called “bullying behavior,” a pointed jab at Washington. The Kremlin leader, meanwhile, defended the ongoing war against Ukraine and blamed Western governments for fueling the conflict.

Their meeting came as Russian state media reported that Gazprom had signed new agreements with China’s national energy company to expand gas supplies by about 15%. The two sides also reaffirmed plans for a deeper energy partnership, part of the “no limits” relationship they announced in early 2022, weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Beijing has refused to condemn Moscow’s invasion, casting itself as a neutral broker while accusing the West of prolonging the war by arming Kyiv. Western governments, however, see China as an enabler of Russia’s war effort, pointing to its purchases of discounted Russian energy and technology exchanges that have softened the blow of sanctions.

North Korea has gone further, openly siding with Moscow and even sending troops to fight in Ukraine, according to South Korean intelligence. Seoul estimates that some 2,000 North Korean soldiers have been killed in the conflict.

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