

# Russia and China make show of unity as US relations falter

Neighboring giants China and Russia have both stressed the value of a strategic partnership amid faltering relations with the US. Russian President Vladimir Putin was handed a medal by his Chinese counterpart.



Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed Russian leader Vladimir Putin to Beijing on Friday, with both men hailing the importance of working together strategically.

Putin joined Xi to review a military honor guard before talks in Beijing's grandiose Great Hall of the People.

The meeting underscored a growing closeness at a time of prickly relations with the US for both countries.

## **What happened at the meeting:**

- After Putin was greeted with a ceremony of military pomp and flag-waving children, the leaders held talks in Beijing's grand Great Hall of the People.
- The two inked a statement saying that "in conditions of a growing global

instability and uncertainty” Russia and China would “deepen their consultations on strategic stability issues.”

- The statement also criticized the US decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, saying they would strive to keep it alive and ensure further trade with Iran.
- The leaders signed a deal to establish the joint \$1 billion (€850 billion) Russia-China Investment Fund.
- Following their talks, in an elaborate ceremony, Xi handed Putin China’s newly-created Friendship Medal.

### **‘Unprecedented’ cooperation**

Putin said he and Xi had enjoyed fruitful talks. “The relationship between Russia and China is a friendly, neighborly one, developing in states in the spirit of overarching strategic partnership,” the Russian leader said. “Cooperation with China is one of Russia’s top priorities and it has reached an unprecedented level.”

Xi, meanwhile said both countries “resolutely supported the other’s core interests ... and jointly proactively participated in international affairs and global governance.”

“No matter what fluctuations there are in the international situation, China and Russia have always firmly taken the development of relations as a priority.”

### **Why are the two leaders meeting now?:**

- Putin is in China for a weekend summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a Chinese and Russian-led security bloc.
- Moscow is increasingly looking to China for investment after a sharp decline in relations with the West after the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and support for pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine.
- China is seeking allies amid growing criticism of its militarization of the South China Sea and continued accusations of human rights breaches unfair trading practices.
- The meeting comes as other heads of government, from the G7 group of leading industrialized nations, meet in Canada.

### **Similar characteristics**

Alexander Gabuev, senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center, told the AFP news agency that the two men had a very similar style of leadership.

Xi and Putin are “soulmates who want to make their countries great again”, Gabuev said. “Both share skepticism towards American hegemony and distrust US intentions, both are authoritarian personalistic rulers.”

“They appear to have an excellent rapport,” Fyodor Lukyanov, a top Moscow-based foreign policy expert, was quoted as saying by the Associated Press. “They have similar horizons and share a common vision.”

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