

# Russia-China ties will be the big story of 2022 - analysis

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a New Year greeting to Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on Friday.

The report was carried in Russia's Tass News. "In that telegram he expressed great satisfaction with the development of Chinese-Russian relations," the report says.

It is one example of how Moscow and Beijing are increasingly coordinating their policies and forming an alliance. The goal is to create a multi-polar world and remove the vestiges of US hegemony that have existed since the 1990s.

With the US exit from Afghanistan, Russia is also saying it could recognize the Taliban, according to Sergei Lavrov.

The "decision to recognize the Taliban government depends on their fulfillment of promises," Lavrov says. This matters because China and Russia could coordinate on Iran and also on Afghan issues.

"I am deeply satisfied with the results of the development of relations between China and Russia," the website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry quoted Xi as saying this week. "In 2022, our countries will celebrate the Chinese-Russian Year of Sports and we will write a new page in the history of friendship between the two countries, passed down from generation to generation," the Chinese leader said, according to Tass.

Putin will attend the China Winter Olympic Games, the report says. "I am sincerely ready to maintain close contacts with you in various formats," the Chinese leader noted.

The report says that Russia and China cooperated very well in 2021. "Predictability and stability are the most crucial factors in world affairs, and Russian President Vladimir Putin has reiterated this several times," Tass News also noted.

In an annual wrap of developments in Russia and of Putin's policies, the Russian

media has claimed that “the United States kept threatening Russia with sanctions. An energy crisis engulfed Europe and Asia. The Taliban, outlawed in Russia, seized power in Afghanistan, while the situation in and around Ukraine went from bad to worse. The southern Caucasus and other hot spots across the globe saw hostilities flare up now and then. And the already well familiar backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic completed the landscape.”

Russian media called former US President Donald Trump a “heavyweight” and also eulogized former German chancellor Angela Merkel’s long time in office, which recently came to an end.

“Putin declared that Russia needed firm guarantees to be sure NATO would not proceed with its eastward expansion,” the report said. Meanwhile, Russia-Ukraine tensions continue. The report says that Moscow views NATO as conducting a “creeping invasion” of Ukraine. “This is happening on our doorstep,” Putin said. “They should realize that we have nowhere further to retreat.”

Moscow also said that Merkel had played a key role in relations with Russia and praised the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. “The Russian president earlier said Merkel and he shared a businesslike relationship.” Russia hopes the pipeline will increase its influence in Europe and erode US influence.

Tensions in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region and the border districts of Armenia’s Syunik Province flared up again in November. Several armed clashes causing casualties took place,” the report says. Russia has hosted Armenian and Azeri leaders to sort things out.

“Last summer, the Russian president intensified contacts with foreign counterparts, primarily from Central Asian members of the CIS, in the light of the situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban came to power without waiting for the completion of the US troop pullout,” the report notes.

“In 2021, Russia and south and east Asian powers pushed ahead with bilateral cooperation. At the beginning of December, Putin paid a visit to India. It was his second foreign visit for the entire year,” it says.

The report also discusses close ties with China. “By and large, the situation on the world stage during the outgoing year often gave Putin a chance to cite Chinese wisdom. ‘One proverb, as you may know, says, “God forbid living in a time of

change.” However, we are there already, whether we like it or not, and these changes are becoming deeper and more fundamental,’ Putin said while speaking at a meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club think tank in October.”

The report appears to indicate that Russia sees the recent global crisis as an opportunity. It will use this to work more closely with China, and Beijing also looks to exploit the opportunity.

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