Xi and Putin to discuss Ukraine war at meeting - Kremlin

**China's leader Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin will discuss the war in Ukraine and other "international and regional topics" at their meeting later this week, the Kremlin says.**

The two will meet in Uzbekistan at a summit that will show an "alternative" to the Western world, the Kremlin said.

Mr Xi is making his first trip overseas since the beginning of the pandemic.

He is seeking a historic third term while **[Mr Putin's relations with the West are at rock bottom](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-62817560)** over Ukraine.

Mr Xi is beginning his three-day trip in Kazakhstan on Wednesday. He will then meet Mr Putin on Thursday at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Samarkand, which will run from 15-16 September.

Mr Putin will also meet other leaders including those of India, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran - but his meeting with China's leader "is of particular importance," said Kremlin foreign policy spokesman Yuri Ushakov.

He said the summit was taking place "against the background of large-scale political changes".

China and Russia have long sought to position the SCO, founded in 2001 with four ex-Soviet Central Asian nations, as an alternative to Western multilateral groups.

Mr Xi's visit comes amid a [**fresh set of lockdowns**](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-62830326) in China, where his zero Covid policy is still in place. While the rest of the world has opened up, learning to live with with the virus, Beijing continues to shut down entire cities and provinces every time there is a spurt in cases.

Mr Xi [**last left China in January 2020 to visit Myanmar**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-51166339) - just days before the first lockdown came into effect in Wuhan. He has remained in China since then, leaving the mainland only once in July this year to visit Hong Kong.

Mr Putin [**is also making a rare foray abroad**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-62218696). His meeting with Turkish and Iranian leaders in Tehran in July was only his second foreign trip since Russian troops invaded Ukraine.

This is the two leaders' second meeting this year - they last met at Winter Olympics in Beijing in February.

Following the February meeting, the two leaders issued a joint statement saying the friendship between their countries had "no limits". Russia invaded Ukraine days later - an action China has neither condemned nor voiced support for. Beijing, in fact, has said both sides are to blame.

China is not part of the international sanctions against Russia and trade between the two countries has continued to grow. Indian and Chinese imports of Russian oil have soared since the Ukraine invasion.

China too has seen its relations with the West and especially the US sour in recent months following tensions over self-ruled Taiwan. China claims the island as part of its territory.

Last month, Beijing staged a five-day military blockade around the island in response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit.

China watchers say Mr Xi's decision to leave China after more than two years, despite significant domestic challenges - crippling lockdowns and a faltering economy - show his confidence in his leadership.

Analysts expect him to be re-elected for an unprecedented third term at the upcoming Chinese Communist Party Congress in October.

PRESIDENT OBAMA:  It is wonderful to see once again President Nazarbayev from Kazakhstan.  And I want to first of all congratulate him on his leadership for the issues that are going to be discussed over the next two days.

Twenty years ago, Kazakhstan made a decision not to have nuclear weapons.  And not only has that led to growth and prosperity in his own country, but he has been a model in efforts around the world to eliminate nuclear materials that could fall into the wrong hands.  So I very much appreciate his leadership.

In fact, one of the major deliverables that will take place at the summit is a outstanding effort to deal with nuclear materials that were carried over from the Soviet era.  Working with Russia and the United States, Kazakhstan has been able to secure those materials, and that makes us all safer.

I know that we’ll have an opportunity during this bilateral meeting to also discuss some of the other efforts that Kazakhstan has made when it comes to highly-enriched uranium, plutonium, their efforts at helping to develop a international fuel bank that can lessen the need for countries to pursue their own enrichment capabilities.

So across the board, Kazakhstan has been a key leader on these issues and is appropriately going to be featured during the next two days at this nuclear security summit.

The close relationship between our two countries extends beyond just the nuclear security issue, so this meeting will give us an opportunity to discuss the cooperation that we have built over the last several years with respect to Afghanistan and the help we've received in supplying our troops and helping to assist the Afghan government.

We obviously have commercial tie as well, and we’ll be discussing how we can deepen those.  I’ll be interested in discussing with the President efforts to further expand democracy and human rights within Kazakhstan, which will help to lead to further growth and prosperity in the future.

And so I very much appreciate his leadership and his efforts.  And I look forward to continuing to strengthen the relationship between our two countries.

PRESIDENT NAZARBAYEV:  (As interpreted.)  Well, I'm very grateful for this opportunity to participate in this important summit in Seoul.  We are discussing a very crucial issue of nuclear security.  And I am very grateful to you, Mr. President, for the invitation to participate at the Washington summit, and now we are here in Seoul to discuss a very important issue.

Mr. President, I support your call to all nations to struggle for a nuclear-free world and we fully support the nuclear strategy of the United States, and we say that all the countries that support the Non-Proliferation Treaty will get the support of nuclear powers and will never be threatened by any nuclear state.  And I think this is very important.

You discussed in detail your plan -- the joint work that we carry out between our nations.  And Kazakhstan 20 years ago was the first country to close its nuclear test site -- in Semipalatinsk we voluntarily renounced our nuclear arsenal.  And you know very well that at that time, on the territory of Kazakhstan, there was 1,100 warheads were deployed on the intercontinental missiles.

And in the last years we have worked closely -- Russia, the United States and Kazakhstan -- to demolish the infrastructure that was left over on the polygon, and we did a lot to rehabilitate the part of the Kazakhstan territory that was radiated.  And the people of Kazakhstan who suffered a lot and who lost many lives in that tragedy, they appreciate that effort very much.

And we work very closely with the United States, and we have achieved a lot.  We work jointly on many projects.  About $20 billion U.S. dollars have been invested in the Kazakhstan economy so far.  And 80 percent of all foreign investments that were directed to Central Asia ended up in Kazakhstan.  And I always show this collaboration as a very shining and proud example of good collaboration.  And I talk to all the nuclear powers and those who are threshold countries, and I talked to the leaders of Iran and I explained that they can get better collaboration with the two countries and start to peace.

And of course we work very closely on stopping terrorism, on Afghanistan, and the issues of transportation and transit through the territory of Kazakhstan that we discussed two years ago.

And, Mr. President, we hope that the good and strong relations between us and the United States will strengthen further in the future, especially in economics and politics.  And we're ready to work shoulder to shoulder on this particular issue of nuclear safety and in other -- all of the issues that we believe that will involve our part of the world.

PRESIDENT OBAMA:  Thank you, everybody.