

RUSSIA WILLING TO TALK WITH UKRAINE, PUTIN TELLS XI

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

In ruins: A woman standing next to her house damaged in a rocket attack in Kyiv, Ukraine. APEMILIO MORENATTI | Photo Credit: EMILIO MORENATTI

Russian President Vladimir Putin told China's President Xi Jinping in a phone call on Friday that Moscow was willing to hold high-level negotiations with Ukraine, the Chinese government said.

Mr. Xi, in the call, broadly expressed support to Russia by calling for Europe to address "the legitimate security concerns of all countries" — a point emphasised by China in recent days referring to Russia's concerns over NATO — and did not criticise Russia's invasion.

The official Xinhua news agency said in a readout of the call that Mr. Putin conveyed that Russia was willing to conduct "high level negotiations with Ukraine".

Later on Friday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Mr. Putin is ready to send a delegation of high-ranking officials to Minsk, the capital of Belarus, to talk with Ukraine officials. Whether there are conditions for those talks, as Russia's invasion continued on Friday, remains unclear.

The phone call between Mr. Xi and Mr. Putin, who held a summit meeting in Beijing earlier this month, once again reflected Beijing's two-pronged approach to the Ukraine crisis: calling for dialogue and a peaceful negotiation, while at the same time refraining from criticising publicly the actions of its close ally, Russia. The Chinese position has been broadly similar to India's on the crisis, which has also called for a diplomatic resolution but hasn't criticised Russia's invasion.

China has also been explicitly critical of NATO and has blamed it for the tensions. In the call, Mr. Xi said it was "necessary to abandon the Cold War mentality" and "respect the legitimate security concerns of all countries and form a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism through negotiations."

"China supports Russia and Ukraine to resolve the issue through negotiation," he said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry made a similar point on Friday, saying China "always believes that there is a complex historical background and context on the Ukraine issue" and that "the legitimate security concerns of all sides should be respected". "In the future, China will continue to make its own efforts to promote a political settlement of the Ukraine issue," spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, adding that "China's approach is in sharp contrast to the U.S. approach that aims to create a crisis and benefit from the crisis."

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