

Xi Jinping's plan to annex Russian territory is there for all to see
Matthew Henderson (Opinion) - The Telegraph

*The long-debated agreement on “Power of Siberia 2” (POS2) – a massive pipeline project to pump gas from Western Siberia to China via Mongolia – has become emblematic of the **one-sided and slightly abusive relationship between China and Russia** since the start of the Ukraine war. It is not good news for Moscow.*



Vladimir Putin fishes in the remote Tuva region in southern Siberia - ALEXEY

Ahead of Xi Jinping's recent visit to Russia, Putin boldly announced that the pipeline deal was ready to be signed off, prematurely labeling it “the deal of the century”.

But Xi, unmoved by such excessive zeal, declined to sign anything. No mention whatsoever of POS2 appears in the official statements Xi made during the meetings. In the final joint communiqué, all a disappointed Putin could comment was that more work still had to be done “on study and approval”.

It is in this context that we should read Xi's parting words to Putin – oracular and ominous – that referred to “changes coming, such as haven't been seen for a century”, which “we can push forward together”.

China watchers have been poring over these words for every last nuance, but it's pretty clear that Xi was framing himself as leader, with Putin nominally by his side, of a revisionist assault on the liberal world order.

Beijing's vision for the People's Republic of China's centenary in 2049 is the global triumph of a “fully developed, rich and powerful China”. This will not include sharing power with a chaotic Russian kleptocracy.

The harder Xi focuses his efforts on realizing the “China Dream”, the more implacably will his political and economic coercion be directed at Putin and Russia, and the weaker and more dependent both will become.

Xi's revisionist goals entail wiping out the shame of historical territorial losses. He has imposed Communist authority on Hong Kong, [seeks to do so in Taiwan](#), and undoubtedly has the same ambition for the 600,000 square kilometres – three times the area of Great Britain – which Tsarist Russia wrested from Opium War-weakened Manchu control in 1858-60 under the Treaties of Aigun and Peking.

This area includes parts of Siberia, from which Putin's much-vaunted pipeline deal would extract resources to sell to China.

Since the Chinese Communist Party regime derives much of what it parades as "legitimacy" from these revanchist campaigns, paying Putin for Siberian resources feels like buying family silver back from a robber.

Beijing regards its loss of Mongolian lands in the same way, given the crucial Soviet role in breaking Mongolia away from the remnants of Chinese authority in the early 20th century.

Already, cross-border economic activity in Siberia by uncounted Chinese communities, including in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, tacitly revive historical Chinese claims to this resource-rich and highly strategic region.

For decades, Chinese gangsters have been smuggling precious Siberian resources back to China through a porous frontier – often in collusion with Russian criminals. It's a clear breach of Russian sovereignty. Putin's disastrous assault on Ukraine may have drawn his gaze far away from Russia's 4,200km border with China, along with many thousands of soldiers who should guard it, but the Chinese remain focused.

Xi Jinping's zero-sum ambition for the "great rejuvenation of China" is imposing itself step by step on Russian soil.