



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# The G7's call to China to press Russia - a ploy that could pay off



The G7 leaders made a very clear call to China from the Hiroshima summit to use its influence on Russia to stop aggression and unconditionally withdraw from Ukraine.

It is also the only one in the series of G7 positions in the joint statement regarding China, to which Beijing did not respond.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded quite harshly the same day to the equally harsh G7 leaders' statement from Hiroshima.

The fast and furious war of words regarded Taiwan, security in the Pacific, human rights violations in China, and particularly the "economic coercion", that is, China's use of economic influence to reshape regional and global relations to its own liking.

However, there was no reaction from Beijing to an important part of the G7 leaders' statement, where they confirmed a joint commitment to support Ukraine and end the war solely with the withdrawal of Russia.

"We call on China to press Russia to stop its military aggression, and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine. We encourage China to support a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on territorial integrity and the principles and purposes of the U.N. Charter, including through its direct dialogue with Ukraine", says the joint statement from the Hiroshima summit.

## A vocabulary that China understands

Beijing certainly did not fail to read this part, but their lack of reaction might mean that, unlike many other positions of the G7, they did not dismiss it.

One of the reasons is the vocabulary used in the G7 leaders' statement, particularly the part where China's support for achieving peace in Ukraine is sought based on "territorial integrity" and "principles and purposes of the UN Charter".

These are the two elements China wants international relations to be based on, including the resolution of the Ukrainian crisis, so the G7 leaders gave Beijing the chance and support to put pressure on its allies in Moscow to stop aggression under these principles.

Beijing's silence regarding this part of the G7 joint statement might also mean that they accept the "window" provided to them to remain in the game as one of the factors for achieving peace in Ukraine, because Beijing's peace plan published on the anniversary of Russian aggression impressed no one, nor did it cause any positive changes.

## Correcting policy towards Moscow

The G7's call for Beijing to put pressure on Russia is not new, but the context in which it occurs gives it a much better chance of success than before.

It remains clear after 3 months that China could not gain serious international support with its peace plan, although it has persistently tried.

With the invitation from Hiroshima, China received some credit from Western leaders not to rule it out as a peace mediator, if only as a means of pressuring Moscow to stop aggression and withdraw.

In other words, with this invitation, the G7 leaders told China that they see the solution for Ukraine with Beijing's inclusion, not in conflict with it. There are enough points of conflict on other sides.

In the last few months, and particularly after the meeting of President Xi and President Putin in Moscow last March, Beijing has given signals that it could correct its policy towards Russia.

Xi's phone conversation with Volodymyr Zelensky at the end of April was one, but there was also a European tour by the newly appointed Chinese envoy to Ukraine Li Hui, which included Kyiv.

The recent summit between China and five Central Asian countries in Xian showed that the relations between Beijing and Moscow do not have to be "no limits friendship", as the two leaders boasted during the March meeting in Moscow, where China clearly showed its desire to replace Russia in the region.

## Western unity in a new context

The G7 leaders have used some cunning rhetoric that shows respect for China (probably influenced by France and Germany) and formulated a demand regarding Russia that Beijing will find difficult to ignore.

The head of the Russian diplomacy, Sergey Lavrov, recognised the intention of the

Western leaders and the possibility that Beijing would agree to the request from Hiroshima, so he reacted like a younger sibling who felt that he was losing the protection of the elder sibling.

"Look at the decisions discussed and taken today at the G7 summit in Hiroshima, which aim to contain both Russia and China", said Lavrov, emphatically aligning his country with China and against its G7 partner. The question is whether Beijing is still comfortable with Moscow's parasitism.

The Hiroshima summit and messages regarding Ukraine came at a time of new and stronger confirmation of unity among Western partners, primarily through the change in the US position regarding pilot training and the possible sending of modern fighter jets to Kyiv.

Decisions on new sanctions against Moscow were also announced from Hiroshima, which will affect its supporters in circumventing the previous sanctions, and this is precisely where Chinese companies could find themselves under attack and lose a lot.

The G7 summit generated a lot of support for Ukraine, again demonstrating that persistent predictions of eroding support are off. ~~The G7 leaders~~

Ukraine was strong and, critically, did not push Kyiv toward negotiations on Russian President Vladimir Putin's terms", said Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs during the George W. Bush administration.

The G7 summit in Japan was also a clear message to Beijing not to expect success in sowing disunity among key Western partners, which it certainly tried to do, and which was particularly visible after the recent visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to China.

The pragmatism of China's foreign policy could be demonstrated precisely through its pressure on Moscow, just as the G7 leaders requested.

It is an issue still low on China's list of priorities than the rest of the package from Hiroshima, which it has to solve with the G7, and as such, is easier and cheaper to solve.