



By: *The Editorial Board*

Will Antony Blinken get evidence of a change in China's policy towards Russia?



If US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had travelled to China just a week ago, he would have been accompanied by not very high expectations.

His negotiation bag would not contain many more persuasive tools than the US had three weeks ago, when Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping **spoke** on the phone.

Meanwhile, the US-China negotiating platform has changed considerably, particularly regarding the issue that Washington wants to emphasise during Blinken's visit, which is China's attitude towards the burning global crises and, in particular, Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Secretary Blinken arrived in China with the newly **approved** \$95 billion in support of Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan.

His mission would have been different without this decision made over the weekend following House Speaker Mike Johnson's shift.

Changed circumstances

Billions of US aid to Ukraine, which were blocked in the US Congress thanks to conservative Republican representatives, provided an opportunity for Russia, and even China, to carry out plans leading to Moscow's supremacy on the Ukrainian battlefield.

Furthermore, they cleared the way for a strategy of a peace settlement, which would harm Ukrainian interests and at the very least leave Russia with the capital acquired by the invasion in the form of four occupied areas in the east of the country.

The approval of a gigantic US fund to support Ukraine obligates Kyiv's other allies to curb any hesitation and follow the US example

That would be a non-negotiable capital for

Moscow, which Beijing would most likely agree to, stressing the need to reach peace as soon as possible as a priority.

The shift regarding the approval of a gigantic US fund to support Ukraine has changed this calculation from the ground up.

Besides guaranteeing the flow of large quantities of modern weapons, it obligates Kyiv's other allies to curb any hesitation and follow the US example.

Breaking the curve of Chinese support for Moscow

On the eve of Secretary Blinken's visit, Beijing reacted defensively to announcements that China's position on Russia would be one of the principal topics raised by the American guest.

First, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing, and soon after, the government's China Daily, in its commentary, **published** an identical position: "The Ukrainian issue is not an issue between China and the United States, and the United States should not turn it into an issue between China and the United States".

However, time and events have long since overtaken China's traditional insistence on the strict separation of bilateral and global issues. After all, even Beijing has not adhered to this once-firm principle in international relations for a long time.

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There are many reasons for this, and the package of \$61 billion in American aid to Kyiv is not only the freshest but also the most convincing in the last two years.

Beijing has not delivered military material since the Russian aggression against Ukraine started, or at least there is no convincing evidence for that. However, the other business ties between the two countries show partner support through trade growth, providing a lifeline for the Russian war economy.

There is an increase in Chinese energy imports from Russia as the principal Russian export item, given that China has replaced not all but a significant part of Russia's losses in the European market.

In the opposite direction, Chinese exports of technological equipment, semiconductors, machines, and parts, which had become an insurmountable deficit on the Russian market overnight, have increased since the imposition of Western sanctions.

A large portion of this import has both civil and military purposes, and thus the Chinese export channel of technical equipment has a direct impact on the Russian military industry's situation.

Is Beijing as serious as Washington?

The multi-billion-dollar package of American support for Ukraine therefore serves Secretary Blinken as proof of US determination to stand with Ukraine until its victory. Beijing has nowhere near as convincing evidence of its commitment to Russia's objectives in Ukraine.

Given that the war between Russia and Ukraine is not only a matter between those two countries (even though officials in Beijing have been trying to explain the opposite), the Chinese calculation regarding further support for Russia will also be faced with other global hotspots in which China certainly sees its interest.

This brings us back to the US foreign aid package approved over the weekend: \$26.4 billion for Israel and humanitarian relief worldwide, including Gaza. This fund will

provide \$15 billion for direct military aid to Israel, ending any questions about the US's continued support for Israel.



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China's attitude towards the crisis in the Middle East is declaratively neutral, as in the case of Russia. However, its alliance with Iran, as its principal oil supplier, has been demonstrated on both the political and military levels through participation in joint naval manoeuvres in the Gulf of Aden.

Finally, the \$8.1 billion of US aid to Taiwan and other partners in the Indo-Pacific does not leave a dilemma about the US attitude towards China's aggressive behaviour in the region.

Months of blockades of financial aid to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan in the US Congress enabled Beijing to create a desirable strategy towards the US—a strategy in which the US loses its reputation as a partner that allies could rely on.

This encouraged China not to change its principally neutral, peace-making, and actually patronising attitude towards the partners who caused the crises, above all Russia and Iran.

America's large financial support for partners in the three most dangerous crisis zones fundamentally changes the starting point for China's current position. Antony Blinken came to Beijing to get at least a hint, if not proof, that this change is ongoing.