

# Beijing Takes the Initiative in the Ukraine Conflict

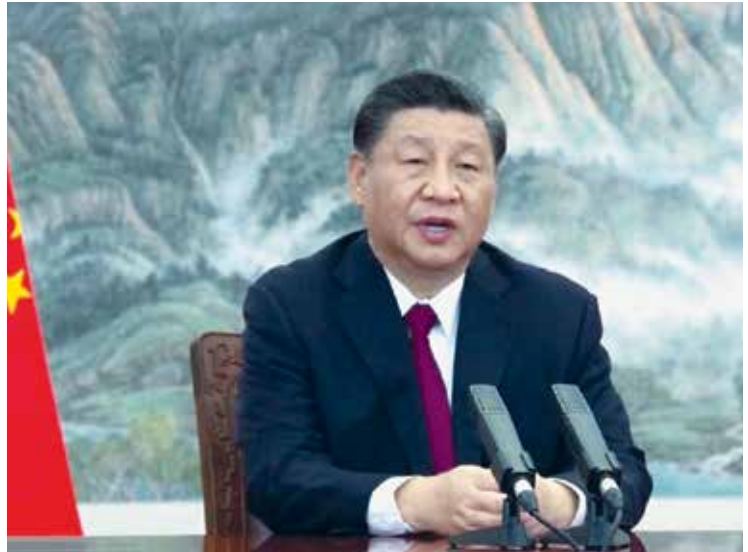
by Ralph Bosshard

*This article, provided to EIR by the author, was translated from the original, which appeared Feb. 27 at [GlobalBridge.ch](https://www.globalbridge.ch) (available in the original German [here](#)). The original article provides footnoted citations in German- and English-language publications.*

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Feb. 27—Just in time for the anniversary of the Russian attack on Ukraine, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a policy [proposal](#), “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis.” With its skillfully formulated and launched peace proposal, Beijing has claimed its right to have a say in important issues of world politics and continues to promote its vision of a multipolar world in which Russia must also find its own place. Far from allowing its Russian partner to drag it into a conflict at an inconvenient time, China is also unwilling to stay on the sidelines.

In the first two paragraphs, Beijing lays out the conflict by pointing out the conflicting norms invoked by the conflicting parties. Ukraine has been complaining for years that its territorial integrity has been violated by the Russian Federation’s annexation of Crimea and the four oblasts of Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporozhye and Kherson. When the People’s Republic of China talks



CGTN

*With its Ukraine peace proposal, China has claimed its right to have a say in important issues of world politics, and to promote its vision of a multipolar world. Shown: President Xi Jinping.*

about territorial integrity, however, it usually has its own claim in mind, that is, its claim to the island of Taiwan and to territorial waters in the East and South China Seas.

In order to avoid the impression that China is being co-opted by the West, the Chinese Foreign Ministry also included a reference to the sovereign equality of states, and its criticism of double standards, in the first paragraph. In particular, violations of the former principle are criticized by those nations who view Western support for so-called “color revolutions” as interference in their internal affairs. The accusation of the application of double standards is a traditional one made by Russia and also by China against the collective West, which allows itself things that it would never, ever accept from its opponents, according to the motto *Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* (“What is permissible for Jupiter is not permitted for the cattle”). This is, of course, a frontal attack on those circles in the West, namely in the U.S.A., which allow themselves a leading role in world politics and claim that democratic states take precedence over all others.

On the other hand, China is also responding to Russia's complaints for many years about the violation of the principle of respecting the national security of all nations. Moscow sees this principle violated by the various steps of NATO's eastward expansion, which has resulted in former members of the Warsaw Pact, now new members of NATO, guaranteeing their security at Russia's expense.

### Beijing's Sense of Reality

The Chinese Foreign Ministry apparently understands that the causes of the current war in Ukraine are too complex to be resolved quickly through a peace agreement, due to the years of war. Other problems have also arisen during the past nine years. By comparison, the call for a comprehensive ceasefire agreement is far more realistic. Of course, the accusation was immediately raised that Russia would only use a ceasefire to improve its military position. However, the Ukrainians and their European allies are also familiar with such tactics: At the very least, allegations that France, Germany and Ukraine only entered into the Minsk Agreements to gain time for preparing a military solution to the conflict have not yet been convincingly dispelled.

Also there is an awareness in Beijing of the problems of the Minsk Agreements of 2014 and 2015, which mixed pure armistice provisions with political provisions. On the other hand, it is to be expected that a stable ceasefire along a ceasefire line of whatever kind will lead to the cementing of the *de facto* state of affairs, in which Ukraine in particular cannot have any interest. The call for the resumption of political talks in Paragraph 4 of the Chinese proposal reaffirms Beijing's sense of reality.

### No Role for the West

So far, Ukraine, in particular, has rejected the direct dialogue between Ukraine and Russia demanded by Beijing. With the corresponding demand in Point 3 of

the Chinese proposal, Beijing is also making it clear who it does not want to play a role in the peace process, namely the collective West. Apparently, the Ukrainian President Zelensky understood that quickly and he immediately declared his willingness to hold talks with China's strongman, President Xi Jinping

A new problem that has arisen as a result of the long war is the humanitarian one. Of course, Ukraine and its European allies will try to use this point in the Chinese peace plan to pillory Russia, but it is not to be expected that China will allow itself to be exploited here. Beijing will be aware that Russia will also use this point to bring its accusations against Ukraine to the table.

By combining its rejection of the threat to use nuclear weapons with its opposition to the development of biological and chemical weapons in Paragraph 8 of its proposal, China shows that it will not be unilaterally co-opted by either side.

### Routes for Everyone

The reference to the Black Sea Grain Initiative to maintain grain supplies from Ukraine probably indicates that Beijing consulted with Ankara before initiating its peace plan. The Chinese leadership is probably also using this to score points with the countries of Africa and Asia.

The rejection of unilateral sanctions in Paragraph 10 is to be interpreted as a very clear criticism of the collective West, and at the same time represents a bitter pill for Ukraine, which, in the absence of

other options for action, would prefer to maintain sanctions that are as severe as possible against Russia in the long term. However, Ukraine does not have the political and economic clout to motivate other states to do this, let alone force them to do so, neither now nor in the foreseeable future. Realistically, Kiev will have to reckon with the fact that the economic interests of many states will at some point result in the economic sanctions against Russia being maintained only formally, but hollowed out in practice.



DoS/Chuck Kennedy

*Foreign politicians from the West can no longer appear as rich uncles with fat checkbooks. Now they appear in the role of the annoying supplicant. Here, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.*

Finally, Beijing is promoting its own economic interests, namely its Belt and Road Initiative, fully aware that it is also serving Russian interests, because Russia attaches great importance to its International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and has no interest in blockades of any sort.

### Beijing's Determination

The knee-jerk rejection of the allegedly questionable Chinese peace plan will soon have to give way to a more realistic assessment. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is apparently already preparing for a hard slog that will take him to several Asian countries, where he will have to court support for his own plans. The Americans and Europeans will probably be made to pay the price of political support. Foreign politicians from the West will no longer be able to appear as rich uncles with fat checkbooks; those days are over. Now they appear in the role of the annoying supplicant.

On the other hand, Beijing is apparently also pre-

pared to apply military pressure to help its peace plan achieve a breakthrough, as the various speculations about the delivery of drones and ammunition to Russia show. Doubtful or not, Beijing will make its peace plan, one that serves its interests, a success, and Ukrainian sensitivities will not stop it.

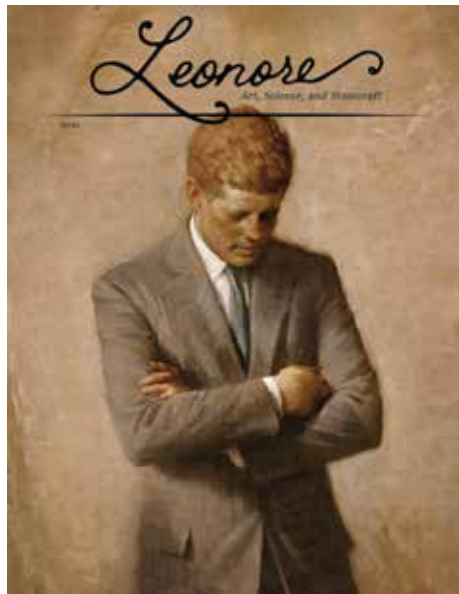
In Kiev, Brussels and Washington there will probably be no avoiding a thorough examination of the Chinese proposals, especially since they have already found the support of important players in world politics and may have been coordinated with another important player, Türkiye. The West, which previously believed itself to be the determining factor by supplying arms to Ukraine, is becoming just one of several actors as a result of the Chinese initiative, because Beijing apparently does not want to allow its proposals to be brushed aside so easily. With the Chinese peace proposal, a door is now open for face-saving, as Western policy shifts toward opening talks with the unloved Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

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