

War in Ukraine

Macron says China's ability to pressure Russia is 'extremely useful'

Xi able to use partnership with Putin to warn him against nuclear option in Ukraine, French president claims



France's president Emmanuel Macron at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Bangkok on Thursday. He said he hoped peace talks would be possible after Russia's war in Ukraine was condemned at a G20 summit in Bali this week © POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Tom Mitchell in Bangkok NOVEMBER 18 2022

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China's ability to pressure Russia is proving "extremely useful", as the international community ramps up efforts to stop the war in Ukraine, according to French president Emmanuel Macron.

Macron met the Chinese president Xi Jinping on Tuesday at the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, where he helped secure a joint statement [condemning the war](#) in Ukraine.

Xi has refused to blame Moscow directly for the war and its effects, accepting Russian president Vladimir Putin's argument that Nato's eastward expansion over recent decades has threatened Russia's security.

His administration has, however, expressed concern over the Russian president's threats to use nuclear weapons and has never recognised Moscow's annexation of various Ukrainian territories, including Crimea in 2014.

"China has an important role . . . to exercise pressure on Russia," Macron said in an interview with Nikkei and the Financial Times in Bangkok, where he is attending the

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum leader's summit.

Xi, he added, had the ability to tell Putin that “we work together, we respect each other but you cannot cross the line on nuclear [weapons] and you have to pay attention to international law”.

“This reminder is extremely useful,” Macron said.

The ability of the G20's host, Indonesian president Joko Widodo, Macron and other leaders to secure a [statement condemning the Ukraine war](#) and its global impact surprised many observers, who expected an intractable divide to wreck what had been billed as “the first global summit of the [second cold war](#)”.

“What we decided at the G20 with China, India and a lot of others around the table was very important because we expressed this concern — it was a call for peace,” Macron said. “Russia received the message from the international community, and especially from China, about the fact that peace has to be restored.”

Putin's last-minute decision not to attend the G20 summit was a relief for Beijing, which used the event to try to stabilise relations with the US and other western nations in what was only Xi's [second trip abroad](#) since the Covid-19 pandemic erupted out of [central China](#) almost three years ago.

The prospect that the Ukraine war could spark a larger conflict between Russia and Nato was dramatically illustrated on the G20's opening day when a missile struck a village in Poland, killing two people. Ukrainian and western military officials are at odds over whether the missile was fired by Russian or Ukrainian forces.

Macron called for an end to the sparring pending the outcome of an investigation by Poland, a Nato member.

“We should not have an open and public confrontation about what happened exactly,” the French president said. “We have to help the Polish authorities to clarify . . . what happened.”

Macron added he was hopeful that, in the wake of the G20 summit, meaningful peace talks could be held in Ukraine.

“The Ukrainians will, this is my hope, will come back to the table with the Russians, and the international community will be around this table,” he said.

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