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WORLD

Challenges From Iran, China and Russia Top Agenda at G-7 Meeting

Diplomats from the world's wealthiest democracies plan to denounce Russia's nuclear threats in Ukraine



Leading G-7 diplomats appear unlikely to make significant progress toward a price cap on Russian oil at the meeting.

PHOTO: POOL/GETTY IMAGES

By [Warren P. Strobel](#) [Follow](#) and [Bojan Pancevski](#) [Follow](#)

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MÜNSTER, Germany—Top diplomats from the world's wealthiest democracies opened two days of meetings Thursday aimed at coordinating their sometimes divergent approaches to Russia, China and Iran.

Foreign ministers of the Group of 7 countries plan to issue a strong denunciation of Russia's nuclear threats in Ukraine when the meeting concludes Friday and to agree on fresh economic support to quickly rebuild Ukraine's energy infrastructure, according to U.S. and European officials familiar with the agenda.

Russia, Western officials say, has been deliberately targeting that infrastructure with waves of military strikes in an effort to increase pressure on Kyiv as Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces struggle on the battlefield.

“The Russian president sinks ever deeper in inhumanity,” German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Thursday. Mr. Putin, she said, is trying to

MINISTER ANNALENA BAERBOCK SAID Thursday. Mr. Putin, she said, is trying to starve and freeze civilians given that he cannot win militarily. The G-7 countries will respond by expanding support for Ukraine, including armaments as well as aid to rebuild infrastructure.

The ministers, a senior State Department official said, will discuss world energy supplies impacted by Russia's war in Ukraine. But they appear unlikely to make significant progress toward a price cap on Russian oil to curb its energy income, with Washington still undecided on the level of the price cap and some doubts still about the measure in the European Union.

They also will attempt to forge a strategy to reduce economic dependency on China, seeking to agree on a campaign to jointly push back against Beijing's global influence, particularly in resource-rich developing countries, the officials said.

Germany, which holds the rotating G-7 presidency, chose the university town of Münster for its symbolism: It was the site of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War. Many commentators now see liberal democracy under threat from authoritarian powers, disinformation and political polarization.

Citing the challenge of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, "If we let that be challenged with impunity, then the foundations of the international order will start to erode and eventually crumble. And none of us can afford to let that happen."

While the G-7—which includes the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan—is attempting to project a united front, some gaps have emerged.

Senior officials traveling with Mr. Blinken expressed caution over Germany's increased economic engagement with China, including a trip this week to Beijing by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and approval by his government of the sale of a 24.9% stake in Hamburg port to China's Cosco. Germany, like other European powers facing stiff economic headwinds from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has longstanding economic ties with China.

Both the Trump and Biden administrations "have been very clear that you need to be careful in these strategic sectors not to allow controlling interest by

to be careful in these strategic sectors not to allow controlling interest by autocratic powers, China being one," the official said.

On Friday morning, the ministers will discuss Iran, including Tehran's crackdown on protesters, Iran's weapons deliveries to Russia and the stalled talks on reviving an agreement that set limits on Iran's nuclear activities.

The EU is working on fresh human-rights sanctions against Iran over the authorities' crackdown on protests that broke out across Iran after the September death of a young Iranian woman in detention for allegedly failing to properly wear her head covering.

Ms. Baerbock has suggested the new measures could include sanctions against Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, already under U.S. terror sanctions, although it is unclear if that would win sufficient support within the bloc.

Germany ordered its citizens to leave Iran on Thursday following a spate of arrests of European citizens by Iranian authorities.

European and U.S. officials are also looking at fresh measures they can take in reaction to Iranian drone supplies to Russia as U.S. officials warn Tehran also appears to be readying surface-to-surface missile deliveries for Russia's war in Ukraine. Tehran and Moscow have denied the weapons transfers.

The U.K., the EU and the U.S. have already imposed some modest sanctions in response to Iran's actions but discussions are ongoing on how to curtail the weapons deliveries and penalize those involved.

The growing Western tensions with Iran come against the backdrop of vanishing hopes in Washington and European capitals about reviving the 2015 nuclear deal that placed limits on Iran's nuclear activity.

The G-7 ministers also invited colleagues from Africa, in a bid to counter Russia's outreach to the developing world for support of its war in Ukraine. The foreign ministers of Ghana, Kenya and other nations were invited as guests to discuss the global effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on food and energy supply.

The foreign ministers were also joined via video-link by Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who urged his G-7 counterparts to provide energy

MINISTER DMYTRO KULEBA, who urged his G-7 counterparts to provide energy transformers, air and missile defenses and other weapons to support Ukraine's war efforts, he said on Twitter.

—*Laurence Norman contributed to this article.*

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