

SOLIDARITY FOR PEACE: ON THE HIROSHIMA MEET OF THE G-7

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By holding the meeting of the “G-7”, or the so-called group of the world’s most industrialised nations, in Hiroshima, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who belongs to the city, wanted to send out a message of global solidarity for peace. In addition to the symbolism of bringing leaders of all G-7 members with the EU leadership to the peace memorial for the victims of the 1945 atomic bombing, the grouping issued a special “Hiroshima Vision Statement on Nuclear Disarmament”. The summit’s importance was underlined by the fact that the U.S. President, Joseph Biden, only the second sitting American President to visit the city, made a particular point of attending the summit. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s surprise arrival also enhanced the message by turning the spotlight on the horrors of Russia’s invasion; Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s statement that the crisis was one of “humanity” was significant. The G-7 members issued a separate statement on Ukraine, hitting Russia with more sanctions, but failed to highlight a path towards dialogue and ending the war. Despite the invitation of countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and Vietnam with a less black-and-white view of the world, and Mr. Kishida making pertinent references to the views of the Global South, the summit’s statements reflected a much more polarised view of the world — that of G-7 members alone.

If the G-7 grouping wishes to broaden its prism, it must recognise that it is grossly unrepresentative of the world today. While members together represent more than half the world’s net wealth, the G-7 accounts for less than a third of the global GDP, and just over a tenth of the world’s population. Apart from Japan, the G-7 membership comprises an essentially Euro-American worldview, and is not discussing expanding that view soon. It has actually contracted, after it expelled Russia over its annexation of areas of Georgia in 2008 and then Crimea in 2014. It is also hard to justify an economic grouping that does not include some of the world’s largest economies (China and India) or the fastest growing GDPs, or biggest global energy providers. While some efforts were made in Hiroshima to recognise the G-7’s role in, for example, promoting transparent financing and debt sustainability for the developing world, or in compensating for the developed world’s contribution to global warming and greenhouse gas emissions, the summit failed to propose concrete measures to help defray these responsibilities. As the spotlight shifts to the G-20 summit later this year in Delhi, it is hoped the grouping will work towards a more inclusive outlook and help in building a more comprehensive global consensus on some of the bigger challenges the world faces today.

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