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By Will Morrow
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Macron-Putin meeting before G7 summit highlights global geopolitical conflicts

Monday's meeting at Fort de Brégançon in southern France between President Emmanuel Macron and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin highlighted the growing conflicts among the world's major powers.

The encounter took place in the lead-up to this weekend's G7 summit in Biarritz, France. Russia was removed from the group in 2014 (when it was known as the G8), in the aftermath of the US- and NATO-backed Kiev coup that installed a far-right, anti-Russian regime in Ukraine.

The Macron-Putin meeting took place in the context of escalating economic and diplomatic tensions between the US and the major European powers—particularly France and Germany. Increasingly, there are calls (and plans) centered in Paris and Berlin for the European Union (EU) to develop its capabilities to wage wars independently of and, if necessary, in opposition to Washington.

On Wednesday, the existence of these conflicts emerged during Macron's conference with 80 members of the presidential press corps. The French president said this weekend's G7 summit would make no attempt to agree on a final communiqué, in an effort to avoid a repeat of last year's embarrassing failure in Canada to reach such common ground, after US president Donald Trump left the meeting early.

Macron also criticized the decision by the US to rip up the Iranian nuclear accord. "We have three European powers and Japan who have a clear position, a relationship with

Iran,” he said, “and the United States which has decided to completely change its line and has denounced the 2015 nuclear agreement.”

Following their two-hour meeting Monday, Macron and Putin held a press conference, at which Macron called for strengthening Russian-European relations, including security ties. “Russia is European, and we believe in a Europe that stretches from Lisbon to Vladivostok,” France’s president commented. “This is why this recomposition; what I believe we have to recreate is a security architecture of trust between the EU and Russia, and France has a role to play.” He added: “Because I believe in a European Russia, because I believe in a European sovereignty, a Europe that is stronger and that must reinvent itself through this dialogue.”

In addition to the Iran agreement, the two reportedly also discussed the military conflict in Syria. Since 2013, France has funded and supported right-wing Islamist forces seeking to overthrow the Russian-backed government of Bashar al-Assad.

Macron noted that France had organized the restoration of Russian voting rights at the Council of Europe in June, after they were removed in 2014. Macron and Trump reportedly also spoke on the phone this week and discussed the possibility of restoring Russia to the G7, which the US president announced he would support.

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Macron called on Putin to hold talks with recently elected Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a precondition for any moves to restoring Russia to the G7. Macron stated that he hoped to organize talks between Russia, Germany and Ukraine in coming weeks.

The Russian news agency Tass cited the comment of Jean de Glinasty, French diplomat and Senior Research Fellow at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, that “French-Russian relations are going through a turning point. France, just like some other European countries, experienced moments of uncertainty in relations with the United States, which was previously considered the pillar of security and economic development in Europe. This conclusion has compelled Paris to reset its dialogue with Moscow.”

In June, as Trump was landing in Britain for a visit commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Normandy landings in World War II, reports emerged of conflicts that had erupted the previous month between the US and EU powers over plans for the development of a European Union army. The Trump administration threatened that if the EU proceeded with

plans to exclude American arms contractors from the development of common European defense projects, then the US would cease providing arms to the EU.

The conflicts between the European powers with the US do not emerge from the personality of Donald Trump. They are rooted in objective, inter-imperialist antagonisms that have twice erupted into catastrophic world wars. All the major powers are responding to the deepest crisis of the global capitalist system since the 1930s and growing social opposition from the working class by building up their armies and preparing for war.

The appeals in Paris and Berlin for a European army and a more independent European foreign policy arise from no less predatory imperialist aims than those of the United States. This week, Germany's new defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer completed a troop visit to the Middle East, meeting with soldiers in Jordan and Iraq, and called for a continuation and increase in Germany's troop deployment throughout the region under the fraudulent banner of combating terrorism.

The Macron administration announced the creation of a new space command last month, involving the development of satellites that can shoot down rival powers' satellites, and that are themselves more difficult to destroy. These military developments are aimed at preparing for war against militarily advanced powers that depend upon satellite targeting for their military operations. France is currently completing its latest generation of nuclear-powered submarines, which are to escort its nuclear-armed ballistic-missile submarines and aircraft carriers.

All the military preparations are taking place without any public discussion and entirely behind the backs of the working class. The great powers are aware that their war plans are deeply unpopular and that the working class will be forced to pay for the military build-up through an assault on their living conditions and social entitlements.

The media widely reported the hypocritical criticisms made by Macron of the Putin government's police crackdown on right-wing opposition protests in Moscow, as well as Putin's reference in reply to the French police crackdown on "yellow vest" protests by Macron's police forces over the past six months. The reality is that both heads of government are representatives of isolated regimes defending the interests of a capitalist elite, united in their fear of the common threat of social opposition in the working class against rising social inequality and determined to respond with police repression.

In an interview with the *Financial Times* in June, Putin made an open appeal to far-right nationalist forces throughout Europe, declaring that "the liberal idea" has "outlived its

purpose” because it presupposes “that migrants can kill, plunder and rape with impunity because their rights as migrants have to be protected.”

Speaking to Putin on Monday, Macron declared that criticisms of Putin’s statements had arisen from a “misunderstanding,” because “behind the word liberal, often we place different things.” In fact, Macron, who last November hailed France’s fascist collaborator Marshal Philippe Pétain as a “great soldier,” makes clear that all factions of the ruling class are united on the need to build-up the authoritarian powers of the state to suppress mounting opposition in the working class.

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