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By Alex Lantier
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Macron warns Economist magazine of world war, collapse of NATO alliance

Intractable divisions between the imperialist powers that twice in the 20th century exploded into world war are again undermining international alliances key to the affairs of world capitalism. This was the content of a long, deeply pessimistic interview French President Emmanuel Macron granted to Britain's *Economist*, declaring the NATO alliance between America and Europe to be dead. The interview contained statements virtually unprecedented for a French president in living memory.

Macron first expressed his bewilderment at the world situation and his frustration at US policy. "I'm trying to be lucid, but look at what is happening around the world," he said. "It would have been unthinkable five years ago. Exhausting ourselves with Brexit this way, Europe having so much difficulty advancing, an American ally that turns its back on us so quickly on strategic issues—no one would have thought it possible."

Stressing the danger of world war, Macron indicated that he sees US policy on a broad range of topics from the Middle East, to Russia, China, and global finance as threats to vital French interests. He attacked Trump's pull-out of US troops from Syria, green-lighting a Turkish attack on Kurdish militias that were serving as proxies for the NATO war in Syria.

"What we are seeing, I think, is that NATO is brain dead," Macron said. He indicated his concern that Article 5 on collective NATO self-defense could drag France into a war launched by its nominal NATO ally, Turkey, against Syria and Syria's main ally, Russia: "What does Article 5 mean tomorrow? If (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad's regime

decides to counterattack against Turkey, will we commit ourselves militarily? ... From a strategic and political standpoint, what has happened is an enormous problem for NATO.”

Macron also attacked US policy towards Russia, a major nuclear-armed power: “When the United States is very harsh with Russia, it is a form of governmental, political and historical hysteria.”

Macron stressed that US policy could provoke all-out war with Russia, calling instead to develop an alliance with Moscow: “If we want to build peace in Europe and rebuild European strategic autonomy, we must reconsider our position towards Russia.” He added that France can “talk to everyone and so build relations to prevent the world from going up in a conflagration.”

Macron also warned of “the emergence, in the last 15 years, of a Chinese power that raises a danger of bipolarization and clearly marginalizes Europe. The danger of a US-China ‘G2’ is added to that of the return of authoritarian powers near Europe,” such as Russia and Turkey. Just back from a trip to China, where he signed \$15 billion in contracts and denounced US trade war tariffs against China and Europe, Macron said he was “neutral” on Huawei, a company Washington has tried to keep from setting up European and global internet architecture.

Macron highlighted the bitter struggles over markets among the leading capitalist states. Pointing to fears of a US financial collapse dragging Europe down with it, he attacked US trade war policies, declaring: “Europe is a continent with a lot of savings. Much of these savings goes to buy US debt. So our savings finance the future of the United States, and we are exposed to its fragility. This is absurd.”

Stressing that he views US trade war policies as unacceptable, Macron added: “Trump ... poses the question of NATO as a trade issue. For him, it’s a plan where the United States provide a kind of geopolitical coverage, but in exchange, there is an exclusive commercial relationship. It is a reason to buy American. But France did not sign up for such an alliance.”

Macron repeatedly stressed that he and other European heads of state are drawing far-reaching conclusions on the viability not only of ties to Trump, but the 70-year NATO alliance with America.

Citing Trump’s dismissals of his concerns over the Middle East with private remarks that “This is your neighborhood, not mine,” Macron added: “When the President of the United

States says that, to act responsibly we cannot fail to draw conclusions from it, or in any case to start to reflect, even if we do not want to. ... Some alliances or the reliability of certain ties are in question. I believe many of our partners have seen this, and that things are starting to move on this issue.”

Though the *Economist* hid its English translation of Macron’s interview behind a pay wall, it caused consternation among NATO officials. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in Europe for the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, replied to Macron: “I think NATO remains an important, critical, perhaps historically one of the most critical, strategic partnerships in all of recorded history.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Macron’s remarks “drastic words,” adding: “I don’t think such sweeping judgments are necessary, even if we have problems and need to pull together.”

In fact, however, broad sections of the European bourgeoisie agree with Macron. In a column titled “Macron is right,” Germany’s *Der Spiegel* magazine wrote: “The French president has declared NATO brain-dead, and there is much outrage. But essentially, Macron’s analysis is correct.”

It continued, “The body of a brain-dead person seems to live, but in fact he is dead and any form of therapy is meaningless. This is what France’s president thinks of NATO.” Dismissing Merkel’s criticism of Macron’s “sweeping judgment” on NATO, *Der Spiegel* declared: “In reality, this is a quite tepid defense of NATO. It is clear also to Merkel that the patient really does find himself in such a situation.”

Discussion in ruling circles of the collapse of a 70-year alliance between imperialist powers that twice in the 20th century plunged into world war points to a very dangerous crisis. The capitalist system is again threatening humanity with a global conflagration, this time fought with nuclear arms. Significantly, Macron himself stressed that what is emerging is not a passing spat inside NATO, but a deep-going breakdown of international relations prepared over decades of imperialist wars since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) explained that the liquidation of the Soviet Union was not the product of the bankruptcy of Marxism, but of the nationalist, autarkic and anti-Trotskyist economic program of Stalinism. The Stalinist regimes were overtaken by capitalist states able to directly engage with the world market’s resources, thanks to capitalist globalization. Faced with growing working class militancy

in the 1980s, the Stalinist bureaucracy restored capitalist property and established close ties with imperialism.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ICFI opposed bourgeois propagandists like Francis Fukuyama who claimed this spelled the “End of History,” the death of Marxism and the final triumph of capitalist democracy. In fact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was one reflection of an intensifying crisis of the nation-state system in which capitalism is rooted. This crisis was also undermining the capitalist states, however, particularly amid the wave of NATO imperialist wars across the Middle East and Africa.

Macron the banker-president is undoubtedly a ferocious opponent of socialism, but this analysis is clearly discussed inside his government. He told the *Economist*: “There was a pervasive conception that developed in the 1990s and 2000s around the idea of the End of History, an endless expansion of democracy, that the Western camp had won and would universalize itself. It was the history we were living in until the 2000s, when a series of crises showed that it was not true.”

Macron admitted, “Sometimes we committed mistakes by trying to impose our values and change regimes without getting popular support. It is what we saw in Iraq or Libya ... and maybe what was planned for Syria, but that failed. It is an element of the Western approach, I would say in generic terms, that has been an error since the beginning of this century, perhaps a fateful one, due to the convergence of two tendencies: the right of foreign intervention and neo-conservatism. The two meshed, with dramatic results.”

Macron is admitting that the policies of the major NATO governments over the last 30 years were all politically criminal. Macron did not recall it, but Trump stated in a tweet that America alone spent “8 trillion dollars” on wars in which “millions have died,” and “based on a false and disproven premise.” As for Macron, he himself is deeply implicated, as a former minister in the French government that pushed to bomb Syria in 2013.

Macron’s statements are an indication of the urgent necessity of building an anti-war movement in the international working class based on a revolutionary, socialist perspective. The capitalist system is not only bankrupt and criminal. Its escalating conflicts over markets and strategic advantage are, by the admission of leading capitalist officials themselves, placing the world on the brink of an all-out conflagration.

The reactionary perspective Macron outlined to address this situation—namely, stepped-up international collaboration between the spy agencies against Islamist terrorism—will not resolve the underlying inter-imperialist conflicts over markets and strategic advantage.

Indeed, it is quite obvious that the solution that Macron proposes on a capitalist basis will only intensify the conflicts.

“We must clearly re-think the strategic relation ... how to reconstruct what I have called an architecture of confidence and security,” Macron said, adding: “We will make our intelligence agencies work together, share a vision of the threat, intervene maybe in a more coordinate manner against Islamist terrorism in our entire neighborhood.”

Contrasting Islamism with “our model built in the 18th century with the European Enlightenment,” Macron called Islamism the “worst enemy of European humanist values that rest on free and reasoning individuals, equality between women and men, and emancipation.”

This is absurd. Macron is not a defender of the Enlightenment, but a right-wing banker and politician who, as part of his police crackdown on mounting opposition to his policies of austerity and social inequality, has bemoaned the French revolution and declared that France needs a king. As for his canned invocation of “humanist values,” they are belied by his constant appeals to neo-fascistic hatred of Islam, which is rife and growing in the French security forces.

What Macron is proposing is a policy not to halt the drive to war, but to further build up the agencies of state repression that would be mobilized against an anti-war movement.

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