

Bitter conflicts dominate G20 summit in Germany

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The two-day G20 summit convenes in Hamburg, Germany today, dominated by global economic and political crises, threats of military confrontation and multisided geostrategic conflicts. The atmosphere resembles nothing so much as a meeting between greater and lesser mobsters in which no one knows who will be the first to shoot.

First held in 2009 in London, the G20 Summit was supposed to serve as a forum for a collective effort by the major powers to rescue world capitalism from the financial meltdown begun on Wall Street in 2008 and to ward off the danger of protectionism. Today, under the impact of the ever-deepening and insoluble capitalist economic crisis, the conflicts between these powers have become so advanced, severe and unconcealed that there is every reason to believe that this could be the last of these world gatherings.

US President Donald Trump set the tone for a summit of bitter and open confrontation by preceding his arrival in Germany with a trip to Poland, which has been sharply at odds with Germany's rise as the new hegemon in Europe. Hosted by one of the most right-wing governments on the European continent, he delivered a fascistic speech warning of the collapse of "our civilization" and calling for a struggle "for family, for freedom, for country, and for God." Invoking Polish resistance to German occupation in the Second World War, Trump left no doubt that he was seeking to align the US with Poland in order to pursue American imperialism's present-day rivalry with Germany.

Trump also addressed the 12-central and eastern European nation "Three Seas Initiative Summit" in Warsaw, a body that follows in the tradition of the so-called Intermarium alliance formed in the 1920s by various fascistic and nationalist regimes directed against both the Soviet Union and Germany and supported by the US.

The agenda of the White House echoes the statement of then-US defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who in 2003 denounced France and Germany for failing to support the US drive to war against Iraq, dismissing them as "old Europe" and indicating that Washington was oriented to a "new Europe" composed of the former Warsaw Pact states in the east.

A decade and a half later, the geostrategic conflicts exposed by the divisions over Washington's criminal war against Iraq have metastasized, affecting every area of relations between Europe and America and playing out on a global stage.

Trump comes to Hamburg as the personification of the backwardness, criminality and parasitism of America's ruling financial oligarchy. His aim is to use the threat of war, from a potentially world catastrophic attack on North Korea to an equally dangerous confrontation with Iran and Russia in Syria, to bludgeon US imperialism's rivals into submission to his administration's economic nationalist, "America First" agenda.

Trump, however, is by no means alone in pursuing an aggressive imperialist agenda. German Chancellor Angela Merkel held her own meeting in the run-up to the G20 summit with China's President Xi Jinping, both invoking free trade and climate change, condemning protectionism and implicitly opposing the policies of the Trump administration. Merkel embraced Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" project of developing infrastructure for transport and energy networks linking China to Central Asia, Russia, all of Europe and the energy resources of the Middle East, an initiative viewed by Washington as an existential threat.

Xi's government, confronting growing military pressure from Washington both on the Korean peninsula and in the South China Sea, is seeking to forge closer bonds with a rising and increasingly independent—both politically and militarily—German imperialism.

To the same end, he preceded his trip to Germany with a two-day visit to Moscow, where he and Putin defied Washington's demands that China starve North Korea into submission after Pyongyang's test firing of an ICBM. Instead, they issued their own demands for the US to remove its antiballistic missiles from South Korea and halt its provocative military exercises on the peninsula.

Meanwhile, on the very eve of the summit, the European Union and Japan announced the conclusion of a free trade pact that would encompass a third of the world's GDP. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared that the agreement demonstrated "our strong political will to fly the flag for free trade against a shift toward protectionism."

"Although some are saying that the time of isolationism and disintegration is coming again, we are demonstrating that this is not the case," European Council President Tusk added.

The agreement has been struck at the expense of US-based transnationals and both statements were clearly directed against Trump, who on the eve of the summit wrote on Twitter: "The US made some of the worst trade deals in world history. Why should we continue these deals with countries that do not help us."

With the continuously escalating conflicts between the economic powers that constitute the core of the world economy, the increasingly open and acrimonious divisions within the NATO alliance itself, and the forging of multiple pacts directed at furthering the interests of one or another power against its rivals, the situation resembles more and more that described by Lenin during World War I in which the imperialist powers were "enmeshed in a net of *secret treaties* with each other, with their allies, and *against* their allies."

The rising threat of war and the breakdown of international institutions that were created in the aftermath of the United States' emergence from World War II as the dominant imperialist power are the end product of processes that have matured over the quarter century since the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The emergence of what US strategists described as a "unipolar moment" set the stage for a series of imperialist wars and interventions in which US imperialism sought to exploit its military advantage to counterbalance its declining position in the world economy.

While these wars shattered Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and other countries, claimed millions of lives and unleashed the greatest

refugee crisis since World War II, they utterly failed to alter the fortunes of US imperialism.

Now, a new stage of the crisis has been reached in which Washington's global rivals are challenging US imperialism's global hegemony.

Underlying these increasingly dangerous developments are the fundamental contradictions of the world capitalist system between, on the one hand, globally integrated and interdependent economy and its division into antagonistic national states, and, on the other, between the socialized character of global production and its subordination, through the private ownership of the means of production, to the accumulation of private profit by the ruling capitalist class.

Imperialism's only means of resolving these contradictions is through a new world war that poses the destruction of humanity. These same contradictions, however, are laying the foundations for a revolutionary upsurge of the working class on an international scale.

As the International Committee of the Fourth International spelled out in its 2016 statement "Socialism and the Fight Against War":

"The great historical questions arising from the present world situation can be formulated as follows: How will the crisis of the world capitalist system be resolved? Will the contradictions wracking the system end in world war or world socialist revolution? Will the future lead to fascism, nuclear war and an irrevocable descent into barbarism? Or will the international working class take the path of revolution, overthrow the capitalist system, and then reconstruct the world on socialist foundations? These are the real alternatives confronting humanity."



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