

French neofascist candidate Le Pen denounces Franco-German alliance

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived yesterday in Washington for talks with US President Joe Biden amid signs of deepening divisions between the major imperialist powers. Tensions in particular between Berlin and Paris, the central powers in the European Union (EU) but who have also fought three bloody wars over the last 150 years, are mounting rapidly.

In Paris, the right-wing daily *Le Figaro* ran an article yesterday titled “Among Europeans, Washington picks Berlin over Paris.” It wrote, “For several months, an invisible power play was on in diplomatic circles, in Paris and Berlin, to get the first slot. France, knowing it was the underdog, for a time hoped that Joe Biden would choose the Franco-German tandem for his first bilateral European meeting.”

The paper lamented that “Germany is considered the Americans’ best ally in Europe.” Referring to Merkel’s expected departure after this September’s German federal elections, it added: “And if Joe Biden wants, as he has said, to rally the Europeans against China, it is unavoidable that he will lean first of all on Germany, whose economic weight is far greater in the relationship between the European Union and Beijing. Even if she is on her way out, the German chancellor remains, economically, the boss of Europe.”

The escalating international crisis driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and US military threats against China are intensifying historically rooted conflicts among the European imperialist powers.

The starkest expression of this fact was the vitriolic comment published by neofascist presidential candidate Marine Le Pen in the magazine *L’Opinion* against Germany. She denounced President Emmanuel Macron’s ties to Merkel, branding Germany a nation whose very identity makes it impossible for France to cooperate with. Instead, Le Pen insisted, Paris should

work out a military alliance with London and work with Washington against China in the Indo-Pacific region.

“Berlin is not the right partner for Paris on issues of sovereignty,” Le Pen wrote, adding: “It is towards other horizons that France, starting in 2022, must turn—first to the UK, with which she has a similar diplomatic and nuclear status; towards the United States, to renegotiate a treaty on the challenges of the Indo-Pacific and of space; and towards its many allies in the world to defend common ideals in struggle against Islamist terrorism. Finally, it must turn to its own history and national identity to finally find the necessary energy to regain its power.”

Le Pen’s comment infused the themes in her 2017 presidential bid—including her support for Brexit, her opposition to the EU, and her calls to abandon the euro, which she however dropped at the end of the 2017 campaign—with an unmistakably more aggressive and militarist tone.

Le Pen’s comments came after she hailed the publication this spring of coup threats by thousands of French reserve and active-duty officers in the neofascist magazine *Current Values*. The first such threats were published on the anniversary of the 1961 far-right Algiers putsch that tried and failed to maintain French colonial rule over Algeria. These threats have tacit support from top officers like ex-Chief of Staff General Pierre de Villiers, now employed at the Boston Consulting Group, where his campaigns receive hundreds of thousands of euros from major French corporations.

And, indeed, it appears that in her threat to carry out a major shift in French policy to Germany after 2022, Le Pen was speaking for important sections of the French officer corps.

Le Pen declared that Macron's attempt to work out a close alliance with Germany was based entirely on illusions. "The first was believing that Germany could detach itself from the United States to build Europe as a military unity," she wrote. The second was to believe in the possibility of Franco-German industrial cooperation on military equipment, which Le Pen insisted Berlin has "betrayed." She asserted, "Paris and Berlin do not see eye to eye on any of the major weapon systems (fighter jets, battle tanks, maritime patrol craft.)"

The third illusion, Le Pen wrote, "is to hope that Germany can ever change." She baldly declared, "Politically, the identity of Germany is in and of itself an obstacle to any form of cooperation."

Such staggering declarations are a warning to the European and international working class. Independently of Le Pen's chances in next year's elections, which are fairly good if she faces the widely hated Macron in the second round, such statements reveal that broad sections of the European ruling elite are convinced that it is virtually impossible to hold the EU together. Five years after Britain voted for Brexit, the disintegration of capitalist Europe is accelerating.

Le Pen presented two arguments to support her assertion that French cooperation with Germany is impossible. The first was a concise summation of insoluble, historically rooted conflicts between the European capitalist powers. These include Berlin's fear of hostile Paris-Moscow alliances that preceded the outbreak of both world wars, and rivalry over France's large former colonial empire in Africa. Le Pen noted that this means Berlin focuses on building heavy tank forces, while France focuses more on training special forces for wars in Africa.

She wrote, "Berlin will always adopt the politics of its geography: federating the center of Europe against Russia which, as an ally or an adversary, is always present in its calculations. ... Militarily, her Atlantist conceptions make her embrace outmoded conceptions: turned to the east, with heavy armor, with limited capacity to adapt. But the French army, more aggressive, more reactive and imaginative, is based on autonomy and thus on using multiple weapon systems."

The second argument, couched as a complaint at Berlin's reservations about French imperialism's nuclear arsenal and its neocolonial wars in Africa, was in reality directed against the German working class.

Apart from the German ruling elite, Le Pen noted, there is deep opposition in the German population, rooted in opposition to the horrific experience of Nazism, to the development of nuclear weapons, to the NATO alliance and to war.

She wrote, "Berlin remains fundamentally antinuclear (except its elites, if the nuclear arms are under US control), neutralist (though paradoxically accepting the diktat of NATO), and pacifist (on army deployments and arms exports)."

While calling for alliance with Britain and cooperation with America against China, Le Pen did not spell out the implications of her arguments. However, if she and her backers believe that "any form of cooperation" between France and Germany is impossible, then the inescapable conclusion is that they must be preparing for war.

The escalating economic, social and political crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the US war drive targeting China are together reviving all the unresolved problems of European capitalism from the 20th century and raising the specter of catastrophe.

Le Pen's anti-German outbursts do not speak for French workers any more than did Macron's call to build an EU military that can fight China, Russia or America. However, they point to the need, as the International Committee of the Fourth International has stressed, to build an international socialist anti-war movement in the working class. The bitter lesson of the two world wars of the 20th century is that European workers' spontaneous solidarity is not enough to halt the capitalist drive to war.

The European working class can only be unified through a conscious revolutionary struggle to overthrow the European Union and replace it with the United Socialist States of Europe.



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