

Macron visits Algeria amid escalating NATO war on Russia

Kumaran Ira
4 September 2022

French President Emmanuel Macron made a three-day visit to Algeria on August 25-27 to strengthen French imperialism's strategic influence in Africa. Amid the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, Macron also sought energy guarantees from Algeria, Africa's biggest natural gas exporter, as the NATO countries' threats not to pay for Russian gas risk catastrophic energy shortages and social dislocation in Europe this winter.

Macron was accompanied by Engie natural gas company CEO Catherine MacGregor, billionaire telecommunications magnate Xavier Niel, several ministers, and military officers. Nonetheless, the Elysée presidential palace implausibly claimed Algerian gas was "not really the subject of the visit," adding that there would be "no announcements of major contracts."

"It's clear that Algeria has become more important on the energy front [for France]. But the Italians got in first, the Ukraine crisis was already bad in November last year and they started negotiations," said energy expert Francis Ghilès from the CIDOB research center in Barcelona, referring to a €4-billion deal signed last month between Algeria and Italy.

For French imperialism, relations with Algeria are essential not only for the profits of major French companies, especially due to Algerian gas resources, but also for waging war in the Sahel. France launched a war in Mali in 2013, following the 2011 war in Libya. As it withdraws its troops from Mali nine years later, France is seeking to expand its influence across West Africa as it faces challenges from economic rivals in the region, including China and Russia.

Macron's visit to Algeria comes as the NATO imperialist powers led by the United States intensify the war against Russia in Ukraine and are stepping up war threats against China. While supporting all-out

NATO war with Russia, Macron pledged to boost military spending while intensifying attacks against the working class.

French imperialism is deeply concerned about the rising influence of China and Russia, which have strengthened their bilateral relations with the Algerian regime over the past years. France is no longer Algeria's main trading partner, having long ago been replaced by China. Visiting Algeria this May, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia-Algeria trade had reached \$3 billion last year.

Algeria abstained when the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution in March demanding Russia withdraw from Ukraine. In early August, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune declared that Algeria may apply to join the BRICS, the bloc of emerging economies that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. "The BRICS interest us," Tebboune said in a televised interview. "They constitute an economic and political force."

During his trip, Macron made bellicose statements against Russia, China and Turkey. Amid growing opposition to French imperialism in the region, Macron accused them and Islamist forces of presenting France as "the enemy" of their countries. Macron told young Africans "not to be fooled" by the "immense manipulation" of "networks" controlled by foreign powers hostile to France.

"I want to say simply to African youth: explain to me the problem and do not let you embark because your future is not with anti-France," said Macron. He warned, "Let's be clear. Many activists of political Islam have an enemy: France. Many of its networks are guided underhand, by Turkey, by Russia, or by China, and have one enemy: France." He denounced the "agenda of influence, both neo-colonial and

imperialist” of these three countries.

Remarkably, Macron branded them as part of “anti-France,” a term employed by the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime during World War II to describe Jews and communists targeted for deportation and extermination.

Macron’s denunciation of China and Russia as “imperialist” powers is an absurd historical and political lie. It was French imperialism—not China, Turkey or Russia—that colonized northwest Africa, and which still aims to impose its neo-colonial interests by waging war across the region. French imperialist wars in Libya and Mali have plunged all of North Africa into war, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands of people.

Indeed, Macron’s visit coincided with the 60th anniversary of the end of the eight-year Algerian War (1954-1962) that ended 132 years of French rule with the proclamation of Algeria’s independence in 1962. His visit to Algeria was widely reported as an attempt to repair relations with Algeria after a diplomatic crisis erupted between Paris and Algiers over Macron’s incendiary remarks about Algeria last October.

Macron had provocatively claimed “the post-1962 Algerian nation was built on exploiting historical memory.” This was a reference to the Algerian people’s heroic and bloody struggle against French colonialism in the 1954-1962 war for independence. Macron accused Algeria of rewriting history and of encouraging “hatred towards France.” He also questioned whether Algeria existed as a nation before French colonization. Algeria responded by recalling its ambassador to France for three months in protest.

On the first day of his trip to the country, Macron claimed he wanted to open “a new page” in bilateral ties with Algeria with more honesty and openness on the French role in Algeria.

“We have a common past, it is complex, painful and it has sometimes prevented us from looking at the future,” Macron said, calling for “great humility” in looking ahead. He announced the creation of a “joint commission of historians, opening our archives and allowing us to look at the whole of this historical period, which is decisive for us, from the beginning of colonization to the war of liberation.” This must be done “without taboos, with a willingness to work freely, historically, with full access to our archives,” he

claimed.

Bowing before Macron, Tebboune hypocritically welcomed what he claimed were “encouraging results” from discussions and hailed “promising prospects to be drawn up in the special partnership which binds us.”

With the assistance of the Algerian bourgeois nationalist regime, Macron is trying to whitewash French imperialism’s crimes in the Algerian War. The criminal colonial war waged by French imperialism left half a million Algerians dead. Of 10 million Algerians at the time, France detained 3 million in internment camps. Twenty-five thousand French soldiers died in the war and over 60,000 were wounded. Of the 1.5 million French soldiers involved in the war, most of them young conscripts, many returned traumatized by the crimes they had seen or committed.

Through the attempt to revise the history of French imperialism in Africa, Macron is escalating attacks on Africans—in particular, by slashing the number of visas it grants to citizens of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The French government said the decision had been made necessary by its former colonies’ failure to do enough to allow it to deport illegal migrants back home.

Pursuing a far-right policy of witch-hunting and deporting immigrants, Macron vows to combat immigrants arriving in France. He said he wished to “work together” with the Algerian capitalist regime to be “more effective” in fighting illegal immigration. “What we have decided upon is to work together with a certain collective confidence. ... We will be very rigorous in struggling together against clandestine immigration and networks and be much more efficient to stop them and accompany people back home effectively.”

The struggle against the imperialist onslaught Macron is preparing on the working class requires the unification and mobilization of the working class in France, in Algeria and across Africa against imperialist war in an international struggle for socialism.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact