

Macron warns of “fracturing” of NATO alliance on state visit to Washington

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French President Emmanuel Macron’s three-day visit to Washington revealed the bitter economic and geopolitical rivalries tearing apart the NATO alliance as it wages war on Russia in Ukraine.

On Wednesday, Macron publicly attacked the \$430 billion Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed by the US Congress this year. Some \$370 billion of IRA funding will subsidize production in the United States or North America—but not in Europe—of advanced green technologies, as corporations worldwide retool to shift to electric cars, make more advanced electronics, and cut greenhouse gas emissions amid the climate crisis. Macron warned that such protectionist US policies, which threaten to exclude European products from US markets, could “fracture” the NATO alliance.

Thursday, however, Macron held a friendly press conference with Biden in which he called on the United States and France to fight as “brothers in arms” in Ukraine. Maintaining total silence on the impact of the war, which threatens to provoke a catastrophic energy crisis in Europe this winter, Macron then signed a bellicose Joint Statement aligning France with Biden’s aggressive policies against Russia and China.

Macron’s performance must be taken as a warning on the mortal political and economic crisis of world capitalism. Deeply-rooted economic conflicts that twice in the 20th century exploded into world wars between the United States and Germany, conflicts aggravated today by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, are erupting to the surface of political life. Moreover, the NATO powers are finding no way to paper over their differences beyond escalating military threats against major nuclear-armed powers.

Arriving in Washington, Macron made clear that his visit is part of a struggle between American and European capitalists over control of global markets. Criticizing the IRA at a lunch Wednesday at the US Congress on climate

and biodiversity issues, he said: “This is super-aggressive for our companies.”

Macron added, “I don’t want to become a market for American products, because I have the exact same products as you. I have a middle class that needs to work, and people who need to find work. And the consequence of the IRA is that you may solve your problems, but you are going to make mine worse. I am sorry to be so blunt.”

Speaking later on Wednesday at the French embassy in Washington, Macron again raised the IRA and said: “The choices made ... are choices that will fracture the West.”

Macron stated that the mounting US war threats against China, notably over Taiwan, are also aimed at European interests. He said, “We should not fool ourselves, there is a risk here: the United States is looking after first of all the United States—which is normal, we do the same for ourselves—and then to its rivalry with China. And in this, in some sense, Europe and thus France are treated as a variable it can use to adjust its policies.”

Despite mounting conflicts between Berlin and Paris, Macron was also speaking for powerful factions of the ruling class in Germany, the European Union’s (EU) hegemonic power. The German news magazine *Der Spiegel* aired some of these issues in an article titled, “Why there is a threat of a trade war between the United States and the European Union.”

Der Spiegel noted that the IRA continues former US President Donald Trump’s threats of massive US tariffs against German cars. The IRA, it wrote, “stipulates that [subsidized] products must be of North American origin, suspiciously recalling the ‘America First’ strategy. European politicians are looking across the Atlantic with horror. ... Even the Chancellor is angry. During his last trip to Asia, Olaf Scholz constantly called for ‘more free trade’ and ‘great progress’ on globalization. Neither the content nor the timing of the US initiative correspond to his remarks.”

Noting the likelihood of flight of auto, battery and high-tech production facilities from Europe to America, *Der Spiegel* wrote: “Europe is in systemic competition not only with China but also to some extent with America, says Joe Kaeser, the longstanding boss of Siemens ... Given how the US government is encouraging investment in America via the Inflation Reduction Act, [Kaeser added,] it is unsurprising that there is ‘flight of capital and production facilities out of Europe and into the dollar.’”

The flight of production facilities out of Europe is accelerated by the mounting energy crisis caused by the US-led war on Russia in Ukraine. Washington demanded that the EU cut off Russian natural gas imports, and Biden invited Scholz to Washington, warning him that the US government would know how to “bring an end” to EU imports of Russian gas via the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea. In September, the two Nord Stream pipelines suddenly blew up in massive explosions whose authors remain unidentified, but the event proved very lucrative for US imperialism.

Energy costs in Europe have surged, as US companies demanded ruinous prices for US liquefied natural gas (LNG) exported to Europe to replace Russian gas. This summer, US LNG exports had risen 15-fold over their levels a year earlier, and they surged again after the Nord Stream bombing.

The NATO war in Ukraine not only threatens to bankrupt European firms with energy-intensive operations, however. In line with the global rise in prices for food, energy and other vital products, it is setting into motion a new, catastrophic social crisis for the working class in Europe.

As Macron arrived in Washington, *Le Monde* reported on orders his government is sending police authorities across France to prepare for unprecedented electricity cutoffs. The plan calls for rolling blackouts hitting 6 million people at a time (9 percent of the French population), mainly from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Subways and trams would shut down, and schools—without heating or light—would close. Cell phone coverage and the functioning of emergency call numbers for fire, police and medical services could also break down.

Le Monde added that the Macron government is also preparing for a “blackout scenario” of a longer collapse of the electricity grid, “but without believing in it,” the newspaper claimed.

Under these conditions, Macron’s pledging that the

French people will serve as Biden’s “brothers in arms” in wars around the planet is politically criminal. Macron no doubt hopes European financial aristocrats will thus get a share of the spoils from NATO’s plundering of Russia, China, and the world. The criminality of this calculation is compounded by Macron’s blatant disregard for its impact on the health and livelihood of working and toiling people in France and across Europe.

The only way forward against this policy is the building of an international movement among youth and workers, uniting strikes against inflation that are erupting in America, Europe and around the world against imperialist war and the capitalist system.

The Stalinist bureaucracy’s dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 not only paved the way for NATO to wage bloody wars in resource-rich countries from Iraq and Yugoslavia to Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. It threw Eurasia open to US and European corporations and vastly exacerbated the geopolitical rivalries of world capitalism. Washington uses these wars not only to plunder weaker and poorer countries, but also to put its European imperialist rivals on rations.

Workers cannot oppose the imperialist war drive on a national basis, by supporting America’s imperialist rivals. Macron’s decision to bide his time and sign up as Washington’s junior partner, at least for now, only shows that the European powers’ policies of war, austerity and rearmament are not fundamentally different from the standpoint of the working class than those of Washington.

Workers and youth who want to wage a genuinely revolutionary struggle against the war are invited to follow the International Youth and Students for Social Equality webinar to oppose the war in Ukraine on December 10.



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