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Starting Washington visit, Macron pledges endless war in Syria

Before French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Washington, DC for a three-day state visit last night, he granted an extensive interview to Fox News calling for long-term NATO war in Syria. As tensions between Europe and America continue to mount over Trump's threats of trade war and of an assault against Iran, the major imperialist powers are trying to resolve their differences on the basis of an aggressive militarist program.

These proposals are a warning that Macron's calls for a return to the draft in France, and similar calls in Sweden and across Europe are directly bound up with plans for escalating war. Faced with the collapse of their proxy forces' military position in the seven-year war in Syria, the major NATO powers are preparing an aggressive escalation in the Middle East that will require vastly larger forces, and to push to recruit those forces among the youth.

Fox News reporter Chris Wallace began with a question obliquely referring to the mounting internal crisis in the United States. Wallace asked if the nomination of a special counsel investigating Trump affected the US presidency's international credibility, and if Macron thought Trump would serve out his term in office.

Macron, who came to office last year with France under a state of emergency suspending basic democratic rights and wrote many of its provisions into a new antiterrorist law, clumsily tried to dismiss the significance of the unprecedented factional warfare in Washington: "You have your system. You are a free country with a rule of law, which is—I mean, very good, I have the same in my country."

Despite mounting speculation and alarm in ruling elites internationally over the meltdown in Washington and the threat to the political survival of the US president, Macron improbably claimed that it did not concern him: “I never wonder about that. I mean, I work with him (Trump) because both of us are very much in the service of our country.”

Asked about the NATO proxy war in Syria, Macron insisted that he believed that it was vital for French interests that the United States—and, implicitly, its European allies—exert control over the former French colony. “We will have to build the new Syria afterward, and that’s why I think the U.S. hold is very important,” he said.

Macron continued, “I will be very blunt. The day we will finish this war against ISIS, if we leave, definitely and totally, even from a political point of view, we will leave the floor to the Iranian regime, Bashar al-Assad and his guys, and they will prepare the new war. They will fuel the new terrorists. So, my point is to say, even after the end of the war against ISIS, the US, France, our allies, all the countries of the region, even Russia and Turkey, will have a very important role to play in order to create this new Syria and ensure Syrian people to decide for the future.”

Macron’s justification for the war drive against Syria was, as usual, a pack of lies. It is not the Syrian regime and its Iranian allies, but the Islamist “rebel” militias and their Saudi and NATO allies, that carried out terrorist attacks in Syria and across Europe. The pretense that an endless war in Syria would serve to fight terrorism is a political fraud, underscored by the fact that already in 2012, US officials admitted they were fighting in Syria in an alliance with Al Qaeda-linked groups.

The “war on terror” is simply a convenient pretext for the major imperialist powers to assert their financial and strategic interests in the oil-rich heart of the Eurasian landmass, and to escalate attacks on democratic rights at home. At the same time, it allows the major NATO powers to posture as united, despite the growing and explosive commercial and military rivalries between them, which twice in the 20th century exploded into world war.

Wallace asked Macron about two key disputes between Washington and the European Union (EU), on US threats to suspend the Iranian nuclear treaty and to impose trade tariffs on EU exports to the United States. The responses of the French president suggested mounting confusion and panic in ruling circles in Paris, faced with the growing threat that US policies will provoke a collapse of trading relations and large-scale wars with nuclear-armed enemies.

On US threats of trade war against Europe, Macron baldly predicted that Trump “will not implement these new tariffs and he will decide for an exemption for the European Union.

You don't make trade war with your ally... It's too complicated if you make war against everybody. You make trade war against China, trade war against Europe, war in Syria—come on, it doesn't work. You need allies. We are the ally.”

Macron restated the position of the major European powers, which are all hostile to Trump's threats to scrap the 2015 Iranian nuclear treaty. He called the treaty “a perfect thing for our relationship with Iran, no. But for nuclear, what do you have as a better option? I don't see it. What is the what-if scenario, or your plan B? I don't have any plan B...”

Macron expressed doubts as to whether Trump's threats could take credit for forcing North Korea to negotiate with Washington over its nuclear arsenal, and insisted that he wanted to “work with” Russian President Vladimir Putin while also blaming Moscow for alleged “fake news.”

Macron's remarks are a warning that the world capitalist system is passing through a mortal crisis. Notwithstanding the deep and growing tensions between US imperialism and its European counterparts, all of them are set on a course of escalating war. After a quarter century of imperialist war across the Middle East and Africa since the first Gulf War against Iraq and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Paris just like Washington is moving for a neocolonial redivision of the world.

Macron joined in the US-led missile strikes on Syria on April 14, which risked provoking a direct military clash with Russian forces stationed in Syria and showed that the world is on the brink of a conflict between the major nuclear-armed powers.

Macron's visit itself points to growing conflicts among the NATO powers themselves provoked by their attempts to redivide the world among them. Trump's invitation to Macron for a three-day visit, including a joint press conference today and an address to both houses of the US Congress tomorrow, contrasts very sharply with the treatment of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Her invitation for a one-day working visit on Friday, after the three-day state visit accorded to Macron, amounts to a deliberate US snub to Berlin.

Coming only shortly after Berlin and Paris announced plans to lead the EU in the formation of a European army, which provoked US concern and demands for assurances that these plans would be compatible with the NATO alliance, this amounts to an attempt to split the Berlin-Paris axis—coming as Berlin has indicated its opposition to Macron's calls for a reform of the EU's financial institutions, and amid growing jockeying after

Brexit between the European powers over which EU power can develop the closest relations with Washington after Britain leaves the EU.

Despite their bitter differences among each other, the ruling elites are united in insisting that the working class be made to pay for the military build-up and plans for war, despite growing opposition and strike struggles by the working class.

Asked by Wallace whether he could defend his policy of increasing taxes on retirees in order to fund a multibillion-euro tax cut for the rich, Macron brazenly defended it as a necessary measure to keep business from leaving France. He replied that he thought the measure was “fair,” adding: “Because when people succeeded with a company and so on, especially entrepreneurs, they had to leave the country if they wanted to escape. So, we lost a lot of opportunities.”

Asked about strikes in the railway industry against plans to privatize the national railways and slash rail workers’ wages and social rights, Macron said: “I know the situation, I know what is fair and unfair, and what can be delivered and what cannot be delivered.”