

NATO: Contention and Collusion

The French President Emanuel Macron in an interview with *The Economist* given in the first week of November last said: “What we are seeing, I think, is that NATO is brain dead,”

Expressing his concern over the NATO’s Article 5 of collective self defence, he said: “What does Article 5 mean tomorrow? If (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad’s regime decides to counterattack against Turkey, will we commit ourselves militarily? ... From a strategic and political standpoint, what has happened is an enormous problem for NATO.”

He also expressed frustration at US policy: “Exhausting ourselves with Brexit this way, Europe having so much difficulty advancing, an American ally that turns its back on us so quickly on strategic issues—no one would have thought it possible five years ago.”

Macron also attacked US policy towards Russia: “When the United States is very harsh with Russia, it is a form of governmental, political and historical Hysteria If we want to build peace in Europe and rebuild European strategic autonomy, we must reconsider our position towards Russia.”

Macron highlighted the bitter struggles over markets among the imperialist states. Pointing to fears of a US financial collapse dragging Europe down with it, he attacked US trade war policies, declaring: “Europe is a continent with a lot of savings. Much of these savings goes to buy US debt. So our savings finance the future of the United States, and we are exposed to its fragility. This is absurd.”

Macron also admitting that the policies of the major NATO governments over the last 30 years were all politically criminal when he said: “Sometimes we committed mistakes by trying to impose our values and change regimes without getting popular support. It is what we saw in Iraq or Libya ... and maybe what was planned for Syria, but that failed. It is an element of the Western approach, I would say in generic terms, that has been an error since the beginning of this century, perhaps a fateful one.”

Finally the reactionary perspective Macron behind these outbursts came out when he said: “We must clearly re-think the strategic relation ... how to reconstruct what I have called an architecture of confidence and security,” Macron said, adding: “We will make our intelligence agencies work together, share a vision of the threat, intervene may be in a more coordinate manner against Islamist terrorism in our entire neighborhood.”

Contrasting Islamism with “our model built in the 18th century with the European Enlightenment,” Macron called Islamism the “worst enemy of European humanist values that rest on free and reasoning individuals, equality between women and men, and emancipation.”

The intractable divisions among the imperialist powers have once again spilled over. It is apparent that the differences among them relates to the division of world markets, political and military domination to safe guard their plunder of the third world countries. Macron’s interview sparked a heated discussion on the future of NATO. While the German Chancellor dismissed the opinions of Macron as “drastic words” and “sweeping judgments”, the German media echoed them calling “Macron is right.” The intense discussion among the ruling circles in Europe reflects the accentuation of contradictions among themselves and with US imperialism and indicates a deepening of all round crisis of world capitalist system.

The discussion came up again during the two day meeting at London in the first week of December. The differences are so extensive that they could not sign s joint meeting at the end of the meeting and Trump left London to avoid the joint press conference.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was a military combine forged by the US imperialism after the end of Second World War. Initially it had 12 member states. As a reaction to NATO formation Soviet Union made Warsaw pact with East European countries. During the cold war period, apart from show of flexed muscles, the NATO has not conducted any military operation.

After the collapse of Russian social imperialism in 1991 the Warsaw Pact was wound up. Despite unwritten agreement to disband NATO in return to the dismantling of Berlin wall and end of cold war, the US imperialism continued NATO with much vigour and involved NATO in its plans for world hegemony. Thus NATO played key role in disintegrating Yugoslavian Federation. NATO joined the invasion of

Afghanistan. It also undertook a regime change operation in Libya. NATO extended towards the east and incorporated most of Warsaw Pact countries in to it. Now its member ship stood at 29 and talks are going on with another 12 countries on joining NATO.

During the cold war period, US imperialism set up a net work of military bases housing nuclear weapons in Western Europe. The peace movement of that time demanded withdrawal of nuclear missiles and military bases as they became a threat to Europe. After the end of cold war, under the NATO framework, this military base net work was extended to Eastern Europe. The US imperialism unilaterally scrapped the nuclear and missile treaties. Particularly, the scrapping of Intermediate range Nuclear Force treaty with Russia by the Trump administration angered the European powers.

The West European imperialist powers are unhappy with the Trump's moves in west asia such as withdrawal from nuclear deal with Iran and its tacit approval of Turkey's military action in Syria. This stocked fears among not only the ruling circles but also among the people that Article 5 may drag them into war if the situation worsens in Syria.

Article 5 is the cornerstone of NATO alliance. It stipulates that an attack on a member is an attack on all its members. This has been invoked only once after the terrorist attack on world trade centre in New York. Even today NATO considers Islamic terrorism as the main enemy, as expressed by Macron in his interview.

Trade issues also cropped up between US and EU members. Trump threatened to unleash trade war on France. Germany and France were talking about the need to create independent European army.

Trump during his election campaign called NATO "obsolete" and said it was set up to counter Soviet Union and not designed to counter terrorism. Now he called Macron's comments on NATO as 'nasty' and 'insulting'.

The contradictions among the imperialist powers are clear. Trump wants to bring the European powers into his design to target Russia which they are resisting. The European ruling classes wants their share in the world markets to be raised which the US is thwarting. The European imperialist powers wanted what they call strategic autonomy which the US is trying to counter. The essence of their differences is nothing but their contention to exploit the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

At the same time they are colluding to oppress the toiling people of the world. The so-called war on Islamic terrorism is one major weapon they are using against the people. Their opinions and actions converge when the time comes to suppress the oppressed nations. Macron expressed his fear that the war in west Asia may drag them into war and critical of Trump's unilateral action on Iran. Now France, Germany and Britain decided to nullify the nuclear accord with Iran a concocted plea.

The foreign ministries of Berlin, London and Paris said that they would submit a complaint against Iran for allegedly violating the 2015 Iranian nuclear treaty. This would allow them to then repudiate the treaty, which Washington repudiated in 2018, and support the re-imposition of UN sanctions—aligning them with the US campaign against Iran.

The European claim that Iran is on the verge of building nuclear weapons has no factual foundation. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors remain in Iran to oversee its nuclear plants. Iran has not repudiated the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it signed. Echoing US actions in the run-up to the illegal US invasion of Iraq in 2003, however, the European powers are effectively dismissing the IAEA inspections, and aligning themselves with unsubstantiated US and Israeli government allegations that Iran is close to building a nuclear weapon.

This decision of European imperialist powers taken in the middle of January this yearly underscores the fact that contention and collusion among the imperialist powers ultimately leads to the oppression and exploitation of toiling people and countries of the world. As Kanya's national leader Kenyatta once said, when elephants fight it is the grass that gets trampled and again it is the grass that gets trampled when they love.
