

# European war flotilla en route to the Strait of Hormuz

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While the US war against Iran remains deadlocked in a fragile ceasefire, a European war flotilla is en route to the Strait of Hormuz.

The French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and its escort ships transited the Suez Canal on May 6 to take up positions for operations in the strategic strait. The United Kingdom, which is leading the mission alongside France, has deployed the destroyer HMS Dragon, the landing ship RFA Lyme Bay, and the Tomahawk-armed submarine HMS Anson. Representing Germany are the minesweeper Fulda and the supply ship Mosel, and Greece, Spain, and Italy have also sent warships.

The mission was discussed on 17 April at a conference in Paris, to which President Emmanuel Macron had invited around 40 countries from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, whose representatives participated in person or via video link, including India and China. The warring parties—the US, Israel and Iran—were not invited, however.

The governments sending warships emphasise that they will not participate in the US-Israeli war against Iran. The mission serves exclusively to secure shipping in the Strait of Hormuz “as soon as circumstances permit.”

President Macron announced on Wednesday that he had spoken by phone with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and encouraged him to consider the British-French plans for a neutral mission in the strait. He also said he intended to discuss the matter with US President Trump.

In reality, the mission is neither peaceful nor neutral. The former colonial powers France and Britain are pursuing their own imperialist interests in the Middle East, which do not align with those of the US. The same applies to Germany and the European Union.

They all share Washington’s goal of rolling the region back to its former colonial state. They support the sanctions against Iran and Trump’s efforts to overthrow the regime that came to power in Tehran after the 1979 revolution against the Shah’s dictatorship. And they all stand behind the Israeli regime and crack down all the harder on its critics the more outrageous its war crimes become.

But they fear that Trump’s criminal attack on Iran will end in a debacle for which they will have to foot the bill. Already, the consequences of the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz are having devastating effects on prices and economic growth in Europe and on world trade. That is why the European powers are trying to gain a military foothold in the Strait of Hormuz before the US—as in Vietnam in 1973 or Afghanistan in 2021—is forced into a humiliating withdrawal.

The Strait of Hormuz is just one flashpoint in the region where American and European interests clash. With the imposition of new punitive tariffs on European cars, the withdrawal of 5,000 US troops from Germany, and Trump’s public attacks on German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, transatlantic relations have recently become significantly strained once again.

The summit of the European Political Community (EPC) held on May 5 in the Armenian capital of Yerevan demonstrated the far-reaching geopolitical interests at stake.

The EPC was founded in 2022 on the initiative of French President Macron to isolate Russia following its attack on Ukraine. In doing so, he interpreted the term “European” very broadly. The EPC comprises 47 member states—nearly twice as many as the European Union—including the United Kingdom, all Balkan states, Ukraine, Georgia, as well as Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, all three of which border Iran. Canadian

Prime Minister Mark Carney also attended the Yerevan summit.

The summit aimed to firmly anchor Armenia to the EU. The country, which had relied on Russian military aid during its conflict with Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, had long been considered Moscow's stronghold in the Caucasus. But in 2023, Azerbaijan captured Nagorno-Karabakh. Under pressure from the US, Armenia felt compelled to sign an agreement and has since been orienting itself toward the West.

At the EPC summit, Armenia signed a so-called Connectivity Partnership with the EU, covering the areas of transport, energy and digital affairs.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who attended the summit, praised Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the highest terms. She commended the "Velvet Revolution" of 2018 that had brought him to power. The country thereby demonstrated its commitment to European values, she said. President Macron, accompanied by a piano, even performed a song by the Armenian-French singer-songwriter Charles Aznavour to flatter the hosts.

A central component of the partnership with the EU is the restoration and modernisation of the transport link between Azerbaijan and Turkey, which runs 43 kilometres through Armenian territory in the so-called Zangezur Corridor. It is part of a new trade corridor, the so-called Global Gateway program, which connects the EU with Central Asia and China while bypassing Russia, Iran, and the Black Sea.

Via the approximately 4,000-kilometer-long Central Corridor, goods can then be transported by rail or road through Kazakhstan to the Caspian Sea, shipped to Azerbaijan, and from there brought overland through the Zangezur Corridor to Turkey, which has numerous land and sea connections to Europe. Instead of taking 42 days by sea, goods could be transported from China to Europe in 12 days.

The only problem is that the Zangezur Corridor is in US hands. It was at the centre of the US-mediated peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2023 and is being developed exclusively by US companies. To leave no doubt as to who controls this strategic chokepoint, it bears the official name "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity" (TRIPP).

The EU, of course, emphasises that its plans are "100

percent" in line with the US initiative. But that is diplomatic rhetoric. The US and the imperialist powers of Europe are increasingly coming into conflict as rivals. This was also evident at the EPC summit in Yerevan. It served as a stage for the European powers to push forward their rearmament plans, which are intended to decouple them from the US.

EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner Kaja Kallas said that Trump's announcement to withdraw troops from Germany came as a surprise. It shows "that we really need to strengthen NATO's European pillar and do more." EU Commission President von der Leyen said that Europe must "now" ramp up its arms production and invest a great deal of money.

President Macron argued that Europe needs "greater independence in matters of defence and security." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for increasing pressure on Russia through sanctions and "developing a common European voice for talks with the Russians."

The imperialist powers are caught in the spiral of an escalating world war. One conflict leads to the next. The war that NATO is waging against Russia in Ukraine and the US war against Iran are, as the summit in Yerevan shows, closely intertwined. Places whose names were previously known to few—"Strait of Hormuz," "Zangezur Corridor," or "Suwa?ki Gap" (the link between Poland and Lithuania)—are becoming strategic flashpoints where a global conflagration could ignite.

Only an independent movement of the international working class, fighting against the war and its root cause, capitalism, can prevent such a catastrophe. The deployment of European warships to the Strait of Hormuz must be categorically rejected, and their immediate withdrawal demanded.



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