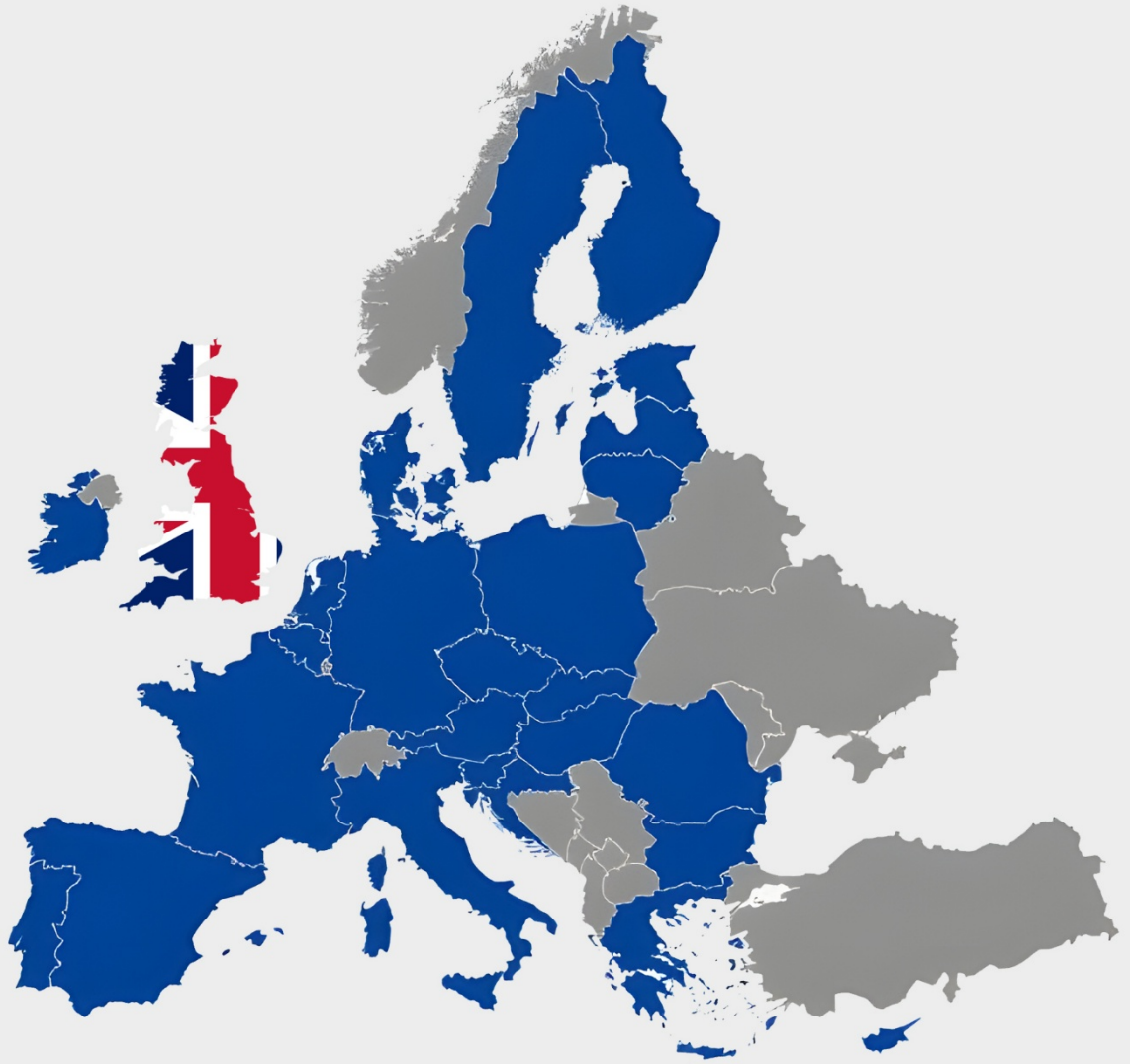


# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Nomita Chandola

## **GERMANY NEWS**

### **1. Germany in a Gray Zone Amid Russian Threat, Says Defense Chief ([DW, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))**

Germany's top military official, General Carsten Breuer, has stated that the country is currently in a "gray zone" in its relationship with Russia—neither at war nor at peace. Highlighting Russia's use of hybrid warfare tactics, Breuer emphasized that Moscow does not operate within traditional categories of conflict and is instead waging a continuous, ambiguous campaign. He warned that Russia is significantly boosting its military capabilities, including producing 1,500 tanks annually and expanding its armed forces to 1.5 million soldiers. Breuer projected that by 2029, Russia could be in a position to potentially attack NATO territory. To prepare, he urged that the Bundeswehr grow to 460,000 personnel and called for a national effort to build societal resilience through collaboration between government, military, business, and citizens.

### **2. Stricter Migration Policy in Germany ([AA, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))**

Chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz announced a tougher migration policy as part of the CDU/CSU-SPD coalition agreement. Key measures include national border controls, deportations, ending voluntary asylum admission and family reunification, and reversing citizenship reforms by extending the naturalization period to five years. The coalition also plans to expand police powers, digital surveillance, and establish a Federal Security Council and crisis team. The shift comes amid rising support for the far-right AfD and declining CDU/CSU popularity. If approved by party bodies, Merz could be elected chancellor on May 7.

### **3. Voluntary Military Service in Germany ([DW, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))**

Germany's new CDU-SPD coalition plans to reintroduce a form of military service modeled on Sweden's system, starting voluntarily. All 18-year-old men will be required to complete a questionnaire assessing their fitness and willingness to serve, while it will be optional for women. This aims to rebuild a military registration system, suspended with the end of conscription in 2011, to better prepare for future crises. With only 182,000 active soldiers and critical personnel shortages, the Bundeswehr

seeks to attract more recruits but faces infrastructure limits, able to handle just 5,000 additional volunteers for now. If voluntary service proves ineffective, full conscription — still legally possible — may return.

#### **4. Berlin's housing crisis** ([DW, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

Germany's new CDU-SPD government plans to tackle the housing crisis by ramping up construction, including on Berlin's Tempelhofer Feld. Despite a 2014 referendum protecting the site, officials propose building up to 20,000 apartments on its edges. Supporters cite urgent housing needs, while critics argue it threatens a vital green space and favors investors over affordable housing. The preservation law remains, but could be overturned, fueling tensions over urban development and environmental protection.

#### **5. US Remains Germany's Top Export Market** ([DW, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

The US remained Germany's largest export market in 2024, receiving €161.3 billion worth of goods—about 10.4% of Germany's total exports. Key sectors include pharmaceuticals, machinery, and vehicles, with the US accounting for nearly 24% of German pharma exports and significant shares of immunological products, engines, and turbines. Despite a strong €69.8 billion trade surplus, US tariff policies under Donald Trump, including a current 10% levy and a possible 20% increase, are creating uncertainty and threatening Germany's already fragile economy, particularly impacting major industrial sectors.

### **FRANCE NEWS**

#### **6. France highlights Indonesia's Partnership** ([Reuters, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

French Trade Minister Laurent Saint-Martin emphasized the importance of strategic partnerships, like France's with Indonesia, as trade tensions between the EU and the U.S. escalate. Speaking in Jakarta, he underlined France and Europe's desire to avoid further escalation and stressed the need for cooperation amid looming EU countermeasures against U.S. tariffs imposed by President Trump.

## **7. France announces cut in Public Spending** ([Le Monde, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

Ahead of a Moody's, a ratings agency, debt rating update, France's Budget Minister Amélie de Montchalin announced a €5 billion spending cut to help control public debt, with some funds redirected to defense to support Ukraine and bolster national security. The government aims to reduce the deficit from 5.4% of GDP this year to below the eurozone's 3% target by 2029. France's debt reached €3.3 trillion in 2024, or 113% of GDP, prompting fiscal tightening amid pressure from international ratings agencies.

## **8. India Approves French Rafale Jets** ([Reuters, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

India has approved the purchase of 26 Rafale fighter jets from France's Dassault Aviation for approximately \$7 billion to strengthen its navy amid rising Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean. The deal, comprising 22 single-seaters and four twin-seaters, was cleared by the cabinet committee on security chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It aims to modernize India's military, reduce reliance on Soviet-origin equipment, and enhance domestic defense capabilities. France's defense minister is expected to visit India ahead of the deal's signing. The Indian Air Force already operates 36 Rafales.

## **9. France lowers 2025 Growth Forecast** ([France 24, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

France has cut its 2025 growth forecast from 0.9% to 0.7% due to escalating global trade tensions, sparked by U.S. tariff hikes. Finance Minister Eric Lombard confirmed the downgrade but reaffirmed plans to reduce the budget deficit without raising taxes. The revision aligns with forecasts from the Bank of France and the OFCE. Lombard noted further changes depend on upcoming negotiations with the U.S., following President Trump's temporary suspension of new tariffs on all countries except China. European leaders remain cautious amid uncertainty over U.S. trade policy.

## **10. EU's interest in US-Iran Nuclear Talks** ([Brussels Morning, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot emphasized that any renewed US-Iran nuclear negotiations must align with European security interests. Talks between Washington and Tehran, facilitated by Oman, have been described as positive, with plans to continue next week. Iran's Foreign Minister Araqchi expressed optimism about

reaching a negotiation framework soon. However, France remains cautious, warning that failed diplomacy could lead to military conflict. Barrot reaffirmed that Iran must never acquire nuclear weapons, and that a verifiable, long-term agreement is essential for regional stability.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **11. US commitment to NATO** ([Politico, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025](#))

During a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio reassured allies of America's continued commitment to the alliance, dismissing fears over U.S. disengagement as "hysteria and hyperbole." While backing President Trump's call for NATO members to raise defence spending to 5% of GDP, Rubio emphasized that the U.S. is not demanding this immediately but wants a clear path toward that goal. He clarified that Trump is not anti-NATO, but against an underprepared alliance. Despite domestic pressures, Rubio stressed the necessity of hard power amid ongoing global conflicts, particularly referencing the war in Ukraine.

### **12. First EU-Central Asia Summit** ([European Council, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

The first EU-Central Asia summit was held on 4 April 2025 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, with leaders from the EU and five Central Asian countries agreeing to upgrade relations to a strategic partnership. Key outcomes included commitments to regional security, support for Ukraine, joint efforts on climate action, energy, connectivity, and the fight against terrorism, disinformation, and sanctions circumvention.

The EU pledged deeper economic ties through trade, investment, and infrastructure under the Global Gateway strategy, while reinforcing cooperation on critical raw materials and water-energy management. Human rights, rule of law, education, and civil society engagement were reaffirmed as shared priorities. The summit builds on growing EU-Central Asia ties and a 2023 roadmap for cooperation.

### **13. EU Launches Retaliatory Tariffs** ([Euro News, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

The EU has approved 25% retaliatory tariffs on a wide range of US products, including soybeans, poultry, tobacco, and aluminium, in response to US tariffs on EU steel and



aluminium worth €26 billion annually. The EU's measures, affecting about €21 billion in US exports, mark the bloc's initial response to President Trump's global tariff campaign. Hungary opposed the move, while France, Ireland, and Italy successfully pushed to exclude Bourbon whiskey to avoid a severe US counter-tariff on European alcohol. The tariffs, set to begin between April 15 and December 1, may be suspended if a fair agreement is reached with the US. A second set of EU retaliatory measures is being prepared.

#### **14. Meloni's US Visit Sparks French Concerns** ([Politico, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's planned visit to U.S. President Donald Trump on April 17 has triggered unease in France, with Industry Minister Marc Ferracci warning that bilateral talks could weaken the EU's united stance against American tariffs. While Meloni positions herself as a bridge between Europe and the Trump administration, French officials fear her solo approach could aid Trump's divide-and-conquer strategy amid a deepening trade conflict. Italy pushed back, with Europe Minister Tommaso Foti accusing France of hypocrisy, referencing past visits by President Macron. French officials stressed the need for collective EU action and urged the use of the Anti-Coercion Instrument to counter U.S. tariffs, as the EU imposed retaliatory duties on €21 billion worth of U.S. goods following Trump's steep tariff hikes.

#### **15. China reaching out to other countries** ([AP, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

As President Trump escalates tariffs on Chinese goods to 145%, citing fentanyl-related sanctions, China is reaching out to other countries to form a united front against the U.S., but has seen only limited success. China has imposed retaliatory tariffs of 84% and vows to "fight to the end," rejecting negotiations under current U.S. conditions. Efforts to court support from the EU, ASEAN, and other nations have produced mixed results, with countries like India and Australia distancing themselves, and Russia not being targeted by U.S. tariffs at all. Despite market relief from Trump's temporary 90-day tariff pause for most nations, China remains defiant and hints at further non-tariff retaliation. Meanwhile, global markets have surged, though U.S. futures dipped, and Chinese stocks saw only modest gains due to continued trade tensions.

#### **16. Spain Strengthens ties with China** ([The Independent, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited China to deepen economic ties and attract investment, particularly in renewable energy and electric battery sectors, as U.S. President Trump's aggressive tariff policies disrupt global trade. Sánchez met with President Xi Jinping and Chinese business leaders, emphasizing that Spain seeks to diversify its markets amid the risk that 80% of its U.S. exports could be impacted by tariffs. The visit highlights Spain's increasingly pro-China stance within the EU and its interest in clean energy collaboration and pork exports to China. Despite U.S. warnings, Spanish officials maintain that expanding trade with China is a strategic move aligned with national interests.

#### **17. India and Italy advance Strategic Partnerships** ([The Print, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025](#))

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with Italian Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani and Minister Anna Maria Bernini to review and strengthen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, maritime security, IMEC, technology, education, and culture. They reaffirmed commitment to the India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025–2029, established by Prime Ministers Modi and Meloni at the G20 Summit in Brazil. Discussions also included global developments in Europe, the Mediterranean, and West Asia. Jaishankar emphasized shared democratic values and a common vision for a stable, rule-based global order, highlighting the potential for innovation, co-production, and academic collaboration.

## About the Author

**Nomita Chandola** is a dedicated scholar in International Relations, with a strong academic foundation and a passion for understanding complex global issues. She recently earned her master's degree in International Relations from the University of Leeds, where she focused on modules such as global governance and climate security. Prior to this, she completed her bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Economics from Kamla Nehru College, University of Delhi.

Currently, Nomita is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where she delves into critical issues of strategic affairs and geopolitical dynamics. Her primary area of interest lies in South Asian studies, emphasizing security dynamics and their intersections with global politics. She aspires to pursue a PhD to further explore these themes. With a keen eye for policy analysis and research, Nomita aims to contribute meaningfully to the academic and policy discourse on international security and regional stability.



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