# Macron’s weakened stance exposed amid post-Brexit fishing deal fallout



Emmanuel Macron, the French president, is once again on the back foot as the ongoing fallout from the post-Brexit negotiations reveals his weaknesses. The 2021 negotiations over a fishing deal with the UK were marked by his futile attempts to tie fishing rights to broader defence agreements, a strategy that crumbled under pressure. Macron’s initial hardline stance quickly unraveled, leading to concessions that undercut his credibility and exposed the failure of his government to effectively negotiate with the UK.

Initially, Macron sought to create a firm connection between fishing rights and defence talks—an approach that was not only contentious but ultimately self-defeating. The discussions deadlocked for five painful days, as the reality of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement became apparent. In a desperate bid to break the impasse, Macron accepted a compromise that allowed mutual access for UK and EU vessels until June 2026—far from the four-year concession linked to defence cooperation he had demanded.

His climb-down was further complicated by the UK's revelation of the truth behind the fishing licence debacle. Macron's administration exaggerated claims, suggesting that over 40% of French applications had been denied, when the actual figure was less than 4%. Similarly, the assertion that up to 10% of EU licences went ungranted was shot down, with the real number resting at a mere 2.1%. Faced with such embarrassing inaccuracies, Macron's bargaining position weakened considerably.

This situation highlights the fragile nature of relations between the UK and France in the aftermath of Brexit, where fishing rights are only one of many dispute hotspots. Macron’s temporary suspension of threats against the UK was perceived not as a diplomatic effort but as an acknowledgment of an untenable stance. The previous UK government may have pushed for a vision of ‘Global Britain’, but Macron’s floundering negotiations have only illustrated the complexities and challenges inherent in these post-Brexit relationships.

As we approach the expiration of current fishing arrangements, the stakes couldn't be higher. Sir Keir Starmer’s upcoming summit, aimed at recalibrating UK-EU relations, signals a further attempt to navigate these turbulent waters. However, rather than fostering trust, the environment remains fraught with doubt, as previous miscommunications threaten to resurface, complicating already delicate negotiations.

Macron’s inability to secure a strong position amid these challenges underscores the crucial need for clarity and accurate data in diplomacy. With the future of bilateral relations hanging in the balance, the necessary negotiations could well determine whether meaningful economic collaboration can emerge or if both sides will plunge into another period of contention. Macron's shortcomings have not only revealed his strategic failures but also highlighted the importance of effective leadership in a rapidly changing political landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2055797/humiliation-emmanuel-macron-eu-huge-surrender> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2021/11/01/emmanuel-macron-suspends-sanctions-deadline-talks-continue-brexit/> - In November 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron suspended his threat of sanctions against the UK over fishing rights, allowing further negotiations to take place. This decision followed a proposal from Macron's government and was announced just hours before the initial deadline for implementing retaliatory measures. The move was seen as a de-escalation in the post-Brexit fishing dispute between the two nations, with both sides agreeing to continue discussions to resolve the issue.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/nov/01/uk-braces-for-french-trade-reprisals-from-midnight-in-fishing-row> - In November 2021, France's President Emmanuel Macron postponed his threat to impose trade reprisals against the UK over fishing rights, stating that talks should continue. This decision came after a proposal from Macron's government and was announced just hours before the initial deadline for implementing retaliatory measures. The move was seen as a de-escalation in the post-Brexit fishing dispute between the two nations, with both sides agreeing to continue discussions to resolve the issue.
4. <https://www.axios.com/2021/11/01/uk-fish-wars-france-macron> - In November 2021, the United Kingdom and France were nearing a crisis in their post-Brexit relationship over a fishing dispute, which could escalate into a trade war. French President Macron had delayed imposing sanctions to allow more time for negotiations past his initial deadline. The UK, under Prime Minister Johnson, had promoted the 'Global Britain' vision, which advocates for a significant global impact outside the European Union. Despite these aspirations, the Brexit debate continued, with the U.K. government's fiscal watchdog predicting that leaving the EU would be more detrimental to the economy than COVID-19.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/2fe9ba21-3885-424b-9c9a-b533ccb39a91> - In April 2025, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were set to finalize a UK-EU defense pact and extend current fishing rights arrangements. This agreement, to be formally announced at a summit on May 19, aimed to enhance bilateral trust and pave the way for broader economic cooperation, including youth mobility, energy partnerships, and eased trade barriers on food products. The defense pact came amid ongoing tensions in Ukraine and could potentially grant UK defense firms access to the EU's €150bn SAFE fund. While fishing rights remained sensitive, a two-year extension to existing quotas was expected. Negotiations also involved future alignment on carbon trading systems, a veterinary agreement, migration issues, and electricity market integration. Despite some unresolved issues, particularly concerning youth mobility and ECJ jurisdiction, both sides showed optimism. The summit was anticipated to showcase a roadmap for deeper future cooperation.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/d2303c3e-29d2-4436-b012-0836d8e6bda0> - In April 2025, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were set to finalize a UK-EU defense pact and extend current fishing rights arrangements. This agreement, to be formally announced at a summit on May 19, aimed to enhance bilateral trust and pave the way for broader economic cooperation, including youth mobility, energy partnerships, and eased trade barriers on food products. The defense pact came amid ongoing tensions in Ukraine and could potentially grant UK defense firms access to the EU's €150bn SAFE fund. While fishing rights remained sensitive, a two-year extension to existing quotas was expected. Negotiations also involved future alignment on carbon trading systems, a veterinary agreement, migration issues, and electricity market integration. Despite some unresolved issues, particularly concerning youth mobility and ECJ jurisdiction, both sides showed optimism. The summit was anticipated to showcase a roadmap for deeper future cooperation.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/3fb38bd6-c1a3-4ba7-80d7-290d4bea06fb> - In April 2025, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were set to finalize a UK-EU defense pact and extend current fishing rights arrangements. This agreement, to be formally announced at a summit on May 19, aimed to enhance bilateral trust and pave the way for broader economic cooperation, including youth mobility, energy partnerships, and eased trade barriers on food products. The defense pact came amid ongoing tensions in Ukraine and could potentially grant UK defense firms access to the EU's €150bn SAFE fund. While fishing rights remained sensitive, a two-year extension to existing quotas was expected. Negotiations also involved future alignment on carbon trading systems, a veterinary agreement, migration issues, and electricity market integration. Despite some unresolved issues, particularly concerning youth mobility and ECJ jurisdiction, both sides showed optimism. The summit was anticipated to showcase a roadmap for deeper future cooperation.