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The UN's New 5+1 Initiative on Cyprus: Diplomatic Efforts and Diverging Visions for a Solution



A New Stage in US-Iran Tensions



The Russia-Ukraine War is Now a War of Attrition



The Ceuta Border Crisis: Spain, the Schengen Area, and the Future of EU Migration Policy



Possible Greek Veto on the 21st Sanction Package Convinced the European Commission to Grant Greece an Exemption



China-US Competition on Critical Mineral Processing, Refining, and Manufacturing Capacity



Taiwan's New Defence Strategy: Moving to a More Resilient Defence Model Against China's Pressure



Two Reported Attacks On Tankers Near Strait Of Hormuz



The UN's New 5+1 Initiative on Cyprus: Diplomatic Efforts and Diverging Visions for a Solution

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has announced his intention to organize an expanded informal “5+1” meeting involving the two sides in Cyprus and the guarantor countries Türkiye, Greece, and the United Kingdom in order to overcome the long-standing diplomatic deadlock on the Cyprus issue and create a new platform for dialogue. Guterres emphasized that this initiative does not automatically mean the immediate resumption of formal negotiations; rather, its main purpose is to explore whether a common ground can be found between the parties. However, the reactions from the Turkish side following the announcement showed once again that Ankara and Nicosia do not support a return to the previous federal solution model and continue to emphasize the principles of sovereign equality and equal international status. The emergence of a new “5+1” format in the Cyprus issue should be evaluated not only as a diplomatic initiative but

also as a reflection of the changing political and security dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean in recent years. After the failure of the Crans-Montana talks in 2017, the gap between the two sides has widened further. The Greek Cypriot side's continued focus on a federal solution model has encouraged the Turkish side to adopt a different approach. The Turkish Cypriot administration and Türkiye argue that the existing UN parameters do not fully reflect the political realities on the island and state that a new process can only succeed if the political equality of both sides is clearly recognized. Therefore, from the perspective of Ankara and Nicosia, the “5+1” meeting is not seen as a simple return to previous negotiations, but rather as an opportunity to present the expectations and visions of both sides once again. One of the main elements of Türkiye's Cyprus policy is the argument that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) should be recognized as an equal political actor in the international arena. Ankara argues that a lasting solution requires the equal political status of the two sides and emphasizes that the federal model has been discussed many times in the past without producing a final agreement. Within this framework, Türkiye considers the two-state solution approach as a more realistic option under current conditions and states that any future negotiation process should not ignore the political existence and decision-making capacity of the TRNC.



The future of the Cyprus issue is also directly connected to discussions over energy resources and maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean. For Türkiye and the TRNC, the use of natural resources around the island and the distribution of maritime areas are not only economic issues but also strategic matters. Therefore, Ankara considers the protection of the TRNC's rights regarding energy resources and maritime jurisdiction areas as one of the key priorities in Cyprus negotiations. The increasing competition over energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean in recent years has made the regional geopolitical dimension of the Cyprus issue more visible. Security and the guarantor system remain among the most important topics in the Cyprus dispute. Türkiye states that it will continue to protect its rights arising from the 1960 Guarantee Agreement and views the presence of Turkish troops on the island as an important factor for the security of the Turkish Cypriot community. On the other hand, Türkiye considers the Greek Cypriot administration's recent defense cooperation with some Western countries and its increasing military partnerships as developments that may affect the security balance in the region. In conclusion, UN Secretary-General Guterres' initiative for a new "5+1" meeting can be considered an effort to revive diplomatic efforts on the Cyprus issue. However, significant differences remain between the visions of the two sides regarding a possible solution. While the Greek Cypriot side and a large part of the international community continue to support the UN framework based on

a federal solution, Türkiye and the TRNC emphasize sovereign equality and a two-state solution. Therefore, the success of the new process will depend not only on the restart of negotiations but also on whether the parties can find common ground between their significantly different political expectations.



A New Stage in US-Iran Tensions

The military tensions between the United States and Iran have increased again in recent days, making the situation one of the most serious security crises in the Middle East in recent years. After Iran launched a missile attack on US bases in Jordan, Washington carried out air strikes against command centres of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, as well as missile, drone, and coastal defence systems. These developments show that the conflict has entered a new stage. US Central Command said that the operation lasted about two hours and targeted dozens of locations. President Donald Trump described the attacks as a "strong response." According to AP News, Iran responded to the US attacks with new



missile strikes. As a result, the conflict is no longer affecting only the United States and Iran. It is also creating security concerns for countries such as Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The fact that US military bases in the Gulf have become targets again has increased concerns that the conflict could turn into direct military confrontation between states. At the same time, rising security risks around the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb have raised new concerns about global energy supplies.

Some sources argue that the recent attacks should not be seen only as military retaliation. They believe that Washington is trying to restore deterrence after the recent Iranian missile attack ended the ceasefire. However, this approach could also increase the possibility of larger US military operations if Iran carries out further attacks. Such a situation could cause the conflict to grow beyond a manageable crisis and increase the risk of a wider regional war.

The economic impact of the tensions is also as important as the military developments. According to The Guardian, market uncertainty increased after the US attacks, oil prices rose, and investors began to expect that the conflict could spread to a wider region. Since a large part of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, another crisis in the area could affect not only Middle Eastern economies but also energy-importing countries in Europe and Asia.

Another important aspect of the conflict is its effect on US domestic politics. According to AP News, public opinion polls show that support among Americans for continuing the conflict with Iran is decreasing. Rising military spending, higher energy prices, and economic uncertainty are putting pressure on the Trump administration in both foreign and domestic policy. Efforts in Congress to limit military operations also show that Washington's Iran policy is becoming more controversial.

From Turkey's perspective, these developments could increase energy import costs and create additional pressure on inflation. They could also affect the security situation in Iraq and Syria, which may have an indirect impact on Turkey's border security and counterterrorism policies. For this reason, it has become more important than ever for Turkey to follow a balanced foreign policy in managing the crisis.

Overall, the latest developments show that the tensions between the United States and Iran are no longer only a military rivalry between two countries. Energy security, maritime trade routes, regional alliances, and great power competition are all becoming part of the crisis, making it a major challenge for global security. If diplomatic efforts do not increase in the coming days, the conflict in the Middle East could develop into a much wider regional security crisis.



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The Russia-Ukraine War is Now a War of Attrition

The Russian offensive on July 30, 2026, targeting numerous Ukrainian cities, primarily Kyiv and Lviv, with dozens of ballistic and cruise missiles and hundreds of drones, when considered alongside Ukraine's counterattack of over 400 drones aimed at Moscow during the same period, demonstrates that the war was evolving towards a symmetrical attrition strategy by mid-2026. The significant retreat of limited Russian territory held by Ukraine in the Kursk and Belgorod regions suggests that there has been no strategic breakdown in ground combat, but rather that the parties have effectively reached a point of equilibrium on the conventional front. In this context, estimates that Ukraine's deep-strike campaign has disabled between 20% and 40% of Russian refinery capacity indicate a shift in the center of gravity of the war from classic territorial gains to an indirect pressure strategy targeting the enemy's economic and logistical resilience. This trend can be seen as a modern adaptation of the classical theory of strategic bombardment.

Instead of direct military gains, it involves attempting to acquire bargaining power by collapsing the critical infrastructure that fuels the enemy's war economy. Indeed, the temporary closure of Kazakhstan's main export terminal on the Black Sea due to Ukrainian attacks, and the halving of daily oil production, demonstrates that this strategy has generated externalities extending to third countries not directly involved. From a complex interdependence perspective, this reveals that the tightly interconnected nature of regional energy networks has consequences that transcend the strategic calculations of the warring parties. Russia's intensified attacks on urban targets can be interpreted as a tool of coercive diplomacy aimed at both testing Ukraine's societal resilience and creating pressure at the negotiating table. On the Ukrainian side, the strikes on energy infrastructure can be seen as an attempt to compensate for the power imbalance on the ground through an asymmetrical cost-imposing strategy. This is achieved not by directly seeking military superiority, but by targeting Russia's domestic economic and political systems, refinery capacity, export revenues, and consequently, the Kremlin's capacity to sustain the war. Within this framework, it can be said that both sides have settled into a protracted war equation that prioritizes wearing down the other's tolerance threshold rather than achieving ultimate victory.



The Ceuta Border Crisis: Spain, the Schengen Area, and the Future of EU Migration Policy

The deepening irregular migrant crisis in Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta as of August 1, 2026, alongside escalating debates regarding Spain's potential exclusion from the Schengen Area, marks a critical threshold for the European Union's (EU) border security and asylum policies. Mass irregular crossings from the Moroccan border reaching uncontrollable levels and pushing border infrastructure to the brink of collapse have drawn severe criticism toward the Madrid administration from Schengen Group members and EU states. The situation has evolved beyond a traditional bilateral border friction between Spain and Morocco into a comprehensive security crisis that challenges the EU's external border integrity, burden-sharing mechanisms among member states, and the core principles of free movement within the Schengen Zone. Examining the military and diplomatic dimensions of the crisis reveals that relaxed border patrols by Moroccan authorities triggered

an influx of thousands of irregular migrants reaching the enclave by land and sea, forcing the Spanish Government to deploy military units and additional police reinforcements to the region. Spain's inability to stem this permeability along the Moroccan border prompted Schengen members such as Austria, Hungary, and the Netherlands to voice concerns over internal security within the free movement zone, increasing pressure on Madrid to reinstate temporary border controls or apply phased restrictions. Although no legal framework exists to outright expel a member state from the Schengen Area, relevant provisions under the Schengen Borders Code allow other member states to reintroduce temporary internal border controls on flights and travel originating from Spain, creating a risk of de facto isolation. This development highlights the vulnerability of the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum and exposes the operational limits of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The security of Ceuta and Melilla—the EU's only land borders on the African continent—demonstrates the fragility of the EU's strategy of externalizing border management to third countries like Morocco. While the Madrid administration maintains that the crisis represents a shared external border challenge for all of Europe and demands urgent financial and logistical support from EU institutions, Northern and Eastern European states accuse Madrid of



compromising border controls due to bilateral negotiations with Morocco and relaxing Schengen standards. This rift along the Western Mediterranean migration route and the Ceuta corridor carries direct implications for Ankara's migration and border diplomacy with the EU. Türkiye remains a primary transit country managing a similar burden across the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean routes. The EU's willingness to question the Schengen free movement regime in response to a Western Mediterranean crisis underscores the bloc's defensive and crisis-driven approach to migration management. Spain's predicament indicates that the EU may intensify pressure on member states to enforce border security while imposing stricter conditions in negotiations with origin and transit countries. Furthermore, the strain within the Schengen Area caused by the Ceuta crisis risks further tightening Schengen visa procedures, which are already challenging for Turkish citizens and the business community due to visa bottlenecks and extended appointment wait times. The migration pressure in Ceuta and the ensuing debates surrounding Spain threaten the delicate balance between the European Union's border security and its Free Movement Regime. Should Madrid fail to re-establish control along the border and should EU member states prove unable to construct a functional burden-sharing mechanism, this crisis in the Western Mediterranean will continue to deeply impact

not only Spain's internal political dynamics but also the very Schengen architecture that underpins European integration.



Possible Greek Veto on the 21st Sanction Package Convinced the European Commission to Grant Greece an Exemption

While Von der Leyen and the European Union Commission is seeking new ways to undermine the Russian war efforts by the new sanction package Greek side declared that they would veto "the 21st Sanction Package" against Russia unless the related articles on the purchase and the transportation of Russian NLG (Liquefied Natural Gas) are lifted or at least modified in accordance with the needs of Greece. The sanctions reinforced the ban on the purchase and introduced a ban on the transportation of Russian NLG to third parties either directly or indirectly. It is known that the use of NLG is particularly critical for the maritime economic activities, additionally Greek maritime companies compose of the biggest maritime fleet,



tconsisting of around %21 of the total number of maritime companies globally. It is asserted that the Greek maritime company named “Dynagas TLD” is one of the actors behind the Greek veto, encouraging the Greek government to use vetoing as an instrument to discourage the European Union from implementing the beforementioned clauses. Greek side alongside with the heads of some companies, with “Dynagas TLD” leading the negotiation on the behalf of the others, claimed that the sanction package would be hardly any beneficial to harm the Russian economy but rather it would disrupt the economic wellbeing of the EU members by impairing their trade capacity. Therefore, Greece, and naturally Greek companies as well, was granted with an exemption to transport NLG to non-EU countries after negotiations between the EU Commission and the Greek representatives. The exemption states that the contracts that have been signed by Greece and third-party countries before the Russo-Ukrainian War should continue without any disruption. We can confidently argue that after 21 sanction packages, the European Union is still struggling to get each member of the union on the same terms regarding the sanctions. Similarly to Greek case, Bulgarian government has clearly stated that they would veto “the 21st Sanction Package” if the articles related to the travel ban on Patriarch Krill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church is not lifted, and they succeeded in convincing the EU Commission to lift the article. Furthermore,

Hungary was one of the leading countries among those which resorted to vetoing the sanctions for years owing to the close relations between Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin. However, the list of countries who resorted to vetoing are not limited to these countries as Slovakia, Czechia, Cyprus and Malta have demanded modifications and exemption from the sanction packages because of their heavy reliance on the Russian natural gas and oil. Regardless of the reasons they come up with since the first day of the war the European Union failed to achieve a consensus regarding the implementation of the sanctions against Russia exposing the strategical weakness of the union as well as proving the poor institutional integrity of the members. The reality of interdependence of the members especially concerning the field of energy constrained the political manoeuvring of the union impairing its ability to be a fully aligned proper deterrent force against the Russian aggression on Ukraine so far. As Von der Leyen stresses the importance of the full integration and consensus of the member countries in executing common policies in the matters of international politics and economy, the economic and sometimes historical-cultural boundaries make it hard for the union to act as one. At this point, the recent visits of Von der Leyen to Azerbaijan in the last month makes sense in the European Union’s efforts to create alternatives and execute an “energy diversification” policy to prevent further complaints regarding the sanctions from the member countries.



Since the Hungarian government has been replaced with Peter Magyar, who stated that he will follow pro-EU policies and he will try to restrengthen their ties with the EU by showing a grater compliance with the EU policies, besides Bulgaria little to no resistance against the further sanctions is expected related to cultural, historical and governmental reasons. In other words, the expectations of a fully integrated Europe, who is determined regarding the sanctions in all matters, against Russia might happen soon only if an alternative for the energy needs of the members can be sufficed by providing decent and cheap alternatives to the members by the European Union administration.



China-US Competition on Critical Mineral Processing, Refining, and Manufacturing Capacity
Critical minerals have become a key area of competition because they are necessary and widely used for electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, electronics, and defense industries. According to the International Energy Agency-IEA, competition is not only about accessing mineral resources anymore but more on

processing, refining, and manufacturing capacity. So, countries that control these industries have gained more influence over international supply chains. Reuters reported on July 16, 2026, that the IEA warned China's rare earth export restrictions could endanger production worth around \$6.5 trillion outside China. Meanwhile, China still dominates global rare earth processing despite new projects in countries such as the United States, according to the IEA. This shows that China's advantage comes not only from producing critical minerals but also from controlling processing and refining. This leaves other countries dependent on China even if they increase mining. Reuters reported on July 20, 2026, that President Trump signed an order making it more difficult for defense suppliers to receive waivers which allow them to purchase critical minerals and materials from China and other restricted suppliers. Companies must prove that they searched for alternative suppliers, report where the materials come from, and present plans to reduce dependence on foreign sources. Meanwhile, US government is required to identify weaknesses throughout the defense industry. These measures reflect a shift in US policy from securing mineral supplies to reducing dependence on supply chains controlled by China and treating critical minerals as a national security issue. Reuters also reported on July 27, 2026, that the US will still have to continue importing minerals from China because



domestic production and processing cannot meet the demand before the January 2027 deadline. Domestic capacity is still under national demand even though Washington has invested billions of dollars. Processing projects continue to have delays, and many critical minerals still rely on China's processing sector. This shows that reducing dependence on China cannot happen through mining projects alone. Developing processing facilities, technology, and manufacturing capacity needs major investment and years of industrial development.

On July 30, 2026, Reuters reported that President Trump signed an order allowing restrictions on exports of electronic waste containing critical minerals. The policy aims to strengthen domestic recycling and reduce dependence on imported minerals by keeping valuable materials inside the country while new mining and processing projects are still under development, showing that competition over these minerals is expanding beyond traditional mining. Latest US-China discussions also show that rare earth supplies become a key issue in geopolitical negotiations, as Washington continues to push Beijing to fulfill its agreements regarding the exports. Competition is becoming about industrial capacity rather than mining. While China continues to benefit from its dominant position in refining and processing, the US is trying to reduce this dependence through stricter regulations, domestic investments, and recycling policies. These efforts also show how difficult it is

to replace Chinese supply chains. It seems future success will depend on the ability to process, refine, and manufacture critical minerals through secure and diversified supply chains.



Taiwan's New Defence Strategy: Moving to a More Resilient Defence Model Against China's Pressure

Taiwan's Han Kuang Exercise, which will be held in August, is more than just an annual military training exercise. It is seen as an important sign of a major change in the island's defence system. According to the new plan announced by the Ministry of National Defense, weapons production facilities will be moved to different locations for the first time. Civilian factories will also be included in defence production during wartime, and the operation of critical infrastructure will be tested. This approach shows that Taiwan wants to protect not only its military forces but also its industrial capacity in the event of a possible Chinese attack. According to Reuters and Focus Taiwan, the exercise has been designed in response to China's increasing military activities in recent years. The training

includes different scenarios, such as China turning its regular military exercises into a surprise attack, targeting fixed defence facilities with missile strikes, and disabling communication infrastructure. For this reason, Taiwan plans to spread its defence production across the country instead of keeping it in one place. This is intended to protect its production capacity during the early stages of a conflict. The Defense Post and Taiwan News say that this change is not only a military strategy but also an economic and social security strategy. Including civilian industries in defence production increases the role of the private sector in crisis management and helps the country become more resilient during a long conflict. This approach is also in line with the idea of "societal resilience," which has become more important in international security studies in recent years.

Some sources point out that one of the most important parts of the exercise is the decision to spread weapons production facilities across different locations instead of keeping them in fixed places. Because China has advanced missile capabilities that can target fixed military facilities, spreading production lines is seen as an important part of Taiwan's deterrence strategy. This shows that mobility and flexibility are becoming more important in Taiwan's defence planning.

According to an analysis by Business Insider based on satellite images, the Chinese People's Liberation Army has built full-scale models of US warships, military bases in Japan, and important government buildings in Taiwan to practise attack scenarios. This also suggests that Beijing is trying to send a deterrent message to Taiwan and its allies. From a regional security perspective, Taiwan's new defence strategy is also in line with the Indo-Pacific strategies of the United States and Japan. In recent years, Washington has encouraged Taiwan to build a defence system that can continue operating during a long conflict. For this reason, spreading defence production, using civilian industries for military purposes, and protecting critical infrastructure reflect a new security approach that focuses on resilience rather than only traditional deterrence. Overall, Taiwan's new exercise plan is not simply a technical change that expands military preparations. Instead, it represents a new security strategy that brings together state institutions, the private sector, and civilian infrastructure within the same defence plan in response to growing tensions with China. The success of this approach will depend not only on Taiwan's level of preparedness but also on the future of China's military pressure and the continued political and military support of the United States and Japan.



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Two Reported Attacks On Tankers Near Strait Of Hormuz

The recent tandem attacks targeting commercial tankers off the coasts of Lima and Khasab in Oman provide a stark, undeniable illustration of the deep disconnect between official military narratives and the physical realities of maritime security along the Strait of Hormuz. While U.S. Central Command continues to assert that the strategic chokepoint remains open for international commercial navigation, the deployment of asymmetric tactics—ranging from untraceable kinetic strikes damaging engine rooms to proximity explosions designed to intimidate merchant crews—demonstrates that a vital energy corridor can be rendered functionally unnavigable without the necessity of a formal naval blockade. This latest escalation directly mirrors the complete collapse of diplomatic safeguards and deterrence frameworks, particularly following the unraveling of the June memorandum of understanding and the subsequent cycle of high-intensity military exchanges involving continuous American

airstrikes against Iranian Revolutionary Guard infrastructure and retaliatory Iranian missile barrages directed at regional U.S. military bases. Because this narrow maritime bottleneck serves as the conduit for nearly a quarter of global seaborne petroleum trade, even isolated incidents of non fatal damage generate instantaneous, systemic shockwaves throughout the global economy; international shipping syndicates are forced to adopt immediate risk aversion measures, marine insurance underwriters exponentially raise coverage premiums, and logistics operators face the costly imperative of rerouting or delaying transit. Ultimately, this crisis underscores the fundamental inadequacy of relying on tactical military attrition to safeguard commercial shipping lanes, proving that as long as Washington and Tehran remain locked in a cycle of rhetoric and military posturing without an enforceable political agreement, commercial vessels will inevitably remain primary targets in an escalating conflict of economic and regional disruption.