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# BULLETIN - 7



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### **Iran-US-UAE Tension: A New Stage of the Strait of Hormuz Crisis**

The tension between Iran and the United States has moved to a new stage in the last three days, centered on the Strait of Hormuz. It is also important that the United Arab Emirates has become one of the direct sides of the crisis. On August 17, Iran warned that it could start a new attack if diplomatic efforts with the US failed, while Washington did not accept Tehran's approach to the control of Hormuz and the conditions for passing through it. On August 18, the crisis became an open diplomatic and political disagreement about the status of Hormuz. US President Donald Trump said that the strait was open and working, while Iran said the opposite. At the same time, Iran and Oman continued working on an arrangement about managing sea transportation. However, Washington opposed the proposals for Iran and Oman to jointly manage some parts of the strait. One of the most important developments in the crisis happened on August 19, when the UAE stopped all financial and economic transactions with Iran.

Abu Dhabi made this decision after ballistic missiles that it said were launched from Iran toward the UAE. Iran denied the claim that it launched missiles at the UAE. Despite this, the UAE cutting its trade relations can seriously limit Iran's economic access through the Emirates, which is an important center for Iran's foreign trade under sanctions. According to Reuters data from August 19, oil prices reached their highest level in about four weeks. Reuters data published on August 20 shows that the number of commercial ships passing through Hormuz stayed very low. According to Kpler data, only nine cargo ships passed through the strait on both August 19 and August 20. This shows the difference between the US statement that "the strait is open" and the actual sea traffic. Therefore, the current crisis should not be seen only as a military competition between Iran and the US. Iran is using its geographical position around Hormuz as a strategic pressure tool against the United States, while Washington sees keeping the strait open to international trade as one of the main parts of its economic and security policy. The UAE cutting its economic relations with Iran also moves the crisis into a new area of security and economic conflict for the Gulf countries. In conclusion, the developments in the last three days show that the Hormuz crisis is becoming more complicated instead of being solved. If diplomatic negotiations do not give results, Iran is likely to continue its control over Hormuz, the United



States may increase economic and military pressure, and the UAE may expand its economic isolation of Iran. The global result of this could be continued uncertainty in energy supplies and stronger upward pressure on oil prices. For Türkiye, the sustainability of Gulf energy flows and the increase in oil prices are also important risks that could create direct economic effects.



### **Securitization Through Transnational Actors: Political Communication Strategies in Israeli Elections**

The billboards erected on the streets of Tel Aviv by Israel's ruling Likud Party as part of its election campaign have sparked widespread reaction in the international community. The posters, which feature images of regional and global figures such as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Mojtaba Khamenei, Naim Qassem and Zohran Mamdani, include the message: "They want Netanyahu to lose. Do not let them win," this points to a noteworthy strategy in terms of public diplomacy and political communication. This move aims to rally voters around the current leader by positioning regional actors in foreign policy as "the other" and "a threat," thereby

leader by positioning regional actors in foreign policy as "the other" and "a threat," thereby triggering domestic security concerns. Consequently, these posters clearly demonstrate that the tools of public diplomacy have been transformed into a political campaign mechanism that, rather than creating a cross-border impact, facilitates internal consolidation and securitization through the construction of an external threat narrative. The election poster transforms the political race in Israel from a mere domestic political contest or a choice of leadership into a matter directly related to national security and survival. Bringing together regional powers such as Turkey and Iran, along with the Hezbollah leadership and figures from New York politics, within the same visual framework aims to construct a broad perception of an "adversarial bloc" in the minds of voters. The Likud Party is building its campaign entirely on a strategy of "securitization" using these symbols to convey the message that "Netanyahu's defeat would mean victory for Israel's regional and global rivals." In this way, social divisions and political criticism are overshadowed; the choice of whom to vote for is transformed into a strategic defensive reflex that requires rallying around the current leader. President Erdoğan and Turkey are perceived in Israeli domestic politics particularly among right-wing and conservative voters as a strong, uncompromising, and regional adversary. Reinforcing this image through visuals is



intended to directly trigger emotional and nationalist reactions among the domestic public. The use of regional competition and foreign relations as propaganda tools in this manner demonstrates that public diplomacy has completely departed from its function of fostering dialogue and building a positive image on the international stage, transforming instead into a pragmatic instrument of domestic political campaigns. In summary, the Likud Party's election strategy is a concrete example of how public diplomacy tools are instrumentalized and integrated into domestic politics. By framing powerful leaders and actors beyond its borders as a "common threat," this approach shifts the electoral discourse away from political principles and reduces it to a struggle for survival centered on national security and the leader. Consequently, Likud has turned foreign policy tensions and regional opposition into a tool for consolidating the domestic public; it has used diplomacy not to project influence abroad, but as a communication strategy to rally votes at home.



**Ibar Bridge: The Struggle for Sovereignty in Kosovo**

As of August 10, KFOR (Kosovo Force) announced that it would gradually decrease its military presence on the Ibar Bridge. Following this announcement, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić sent a letter to NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte concerning the issue. In the letter, Vučić stated that KFOR forces should not withdraw from the bridge and that such a withdrawal would be detrimental to the Serb population. He also called on KFOR to prevent arrests targeting Serbs. At the same time, Serbian Deputy Speaker of Parliament Marina Raguš met with U.S. Embassy official Katherine Croft, expressing her view that KFOR's withdrawal could lead to instability throughout Kosovo. As indicated by the reactions of Serbian officials, the Ibar Bridge represents much more than merely a transportation route or a local architectural structure. By separating North and South Mitrovica, the bridge is also regarded as a symbol of the ethnic division between Serbs and Albanians. For this reason, it carries significant political importance. Accordingly, KFOR's reduction of its presence on the bridge can be interpreted as a step toward transferring responsibility for security and governance in the area from international forces to the Kosovo authorities. Serbia, however, views this development as a threat to the Serb population in Mitrovica. The underlying reason for this reaction can be interpreted as Serbia's concern that the Kosovo authorities, whose statehood Serbia does not recognize and over whose territory it continues to claim sovereignty, will establish stronger control over the area.



From Kosovo's perspective, the withdrawal has the potential to increase the security authority of Kosovo's institutions in the region. In this way, Kosovo may gain an opportunity both to strengthen its de facto sovereignty in the area and to enhance its institutional capacity.

In conclusion, KFOR's decision to reduce its military presence on the Ibar Bridge in Mitrovica, one of the areas where ethnic divisions in Kosovo are most pronounced, is a significant development due to the bridge's symbolic and strategic importance in the long-standing Serb-Albanian conflict. However, this does not mean that international military forces are withdrawing completely from Kosovo. Rather, it can be regarded as an indication of a transition toward a security system in which local forces will also bear a greater role in maintaining regional security.



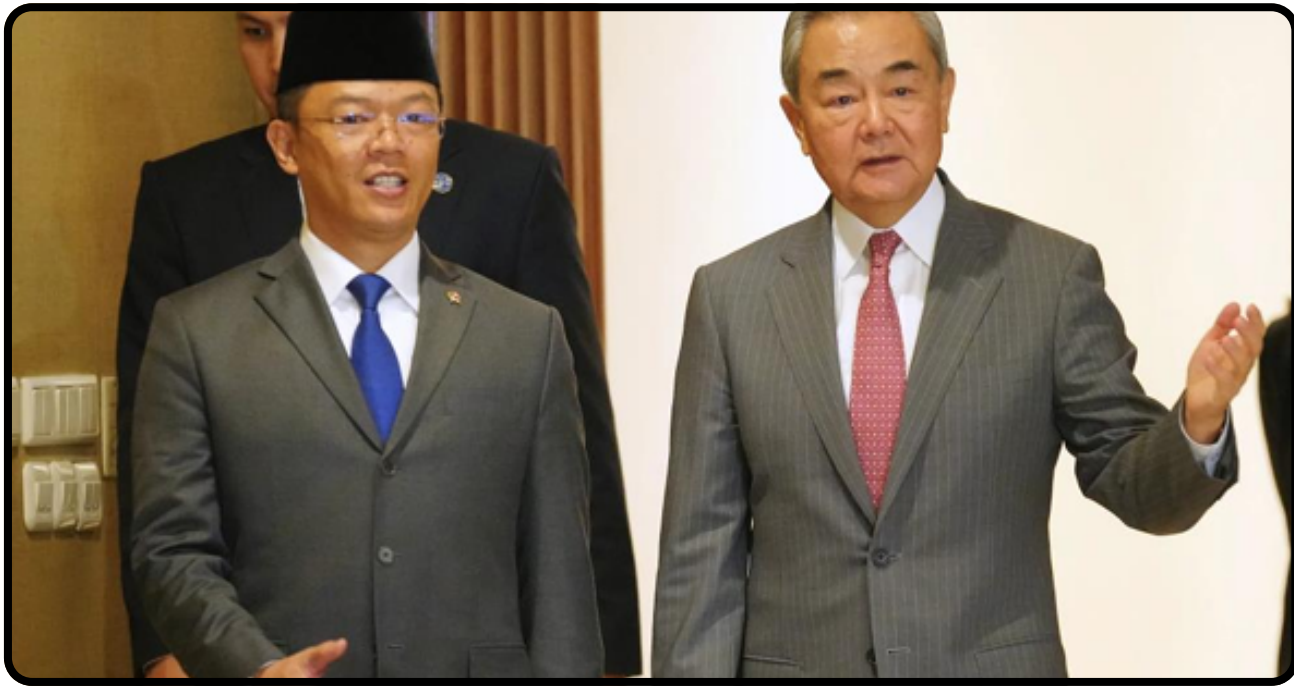
### **The US Economic D-Day Against Iran**

The Trump administration has launched a new economic pressure campaign against Iran, described as "economic D-Day." Instead of starting a large-scale military operation,

Washington is focusing on sanctions and economic pressure. The US is targeting not only Iranian actors but also countries and companies that buy Iranian oil, transfer money, or cooperate with Iran. This suggests that Washington wants to weaken Iran without starting another major war. However, rising fuel prices, the long conflict, and the approaching midterm elections are increasing political pressure on Trump. The main challenge for this strategy is China, which buys most of Iran's oil exports. Beijing has rejected US sanctions and does not seem willing to support Washington's campaign. The US also has limited options against China because stronger economic pressure could create serious costs for the American economy. China's important role in supplying rare earth elements also gives Beijing an important advantage in responding to US pressure. Iran has also developed different ways to resist sanctions. Its "shadow fleet" and alternative trade networks allow Tehran to continue exporting oil and maintaining economic relations with countries such as China, Russia, and Turkey. These networks make it difficult for the US to completely isolate Iran. Iran can also use the Strait of Hormuz as an important economic and strategic tool. By restricting maritime traffic, Tehran could increase pressure on global energy markets. At the same time, Iran is trying to strengthen its relations with countries outside the Western system, especially through BRICS and regional partnerships. While some



Iranian officials call for diplomacy and a peaceful agreement that protects Iran's interests, military officials continue to warn that Iran could respond more strongly if the conflict escalates. This shows that Tehran wants to keep both diplomacy and military deterrence as possible options. Overall, the US campaign increases pressure on Iran but does not provide a clear long term solution. Washington appears to be trying to avoid another major war while continuing to pressure Iran through sanctions and military movements in the region. However, China's support for Iran, Iran's alternative trade networks, and the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz make a complete economic blockade difficult. Therefore, the current situation may lead to a longer period of economic pressure and military tension rather than a clear political solution.



**China and Indonesia Expand Defense Cooperation:  
A New Search for Balance in the Indo-Pacific**

High-level talks between China and Indonesia, attended by the foreign and defense ministers of both countries, show that bilateral relations are becoming broader in the areas of security and the economy. The two sides agreed to expand military exercises and increase cooperation in mining, energy, critical minerals, and technology. This shows that relations between Beijing and Jakarta are no longer limited to economic ties. As one of Southeast Asia's largest economies, Indonesia's decision to increase its defense cooperation with China also reflects the impact of the competition between the United States and China on the foreign policy choices of regional countries. For Indonesia, this closer relationship should be considered within the framework of its long-standing "active and independent" foreign policy. While developing its relations with China, Jakarta is not completely moving away from its security ties with the United States and other regional countries. China's capital and production capacity are particularly important for Indonesia in areas such as the processing of critical minerals like nickel, energy investments, and technology. The addition of joint defense activities and military exercises shows that relations between the two countries are expanding into a wider area. From China's perspective, strengthening defense relations with Indonesia is important for increasing its influence in Southeast Asia.



Considering Indonesia's important position within ASEAN, closer relations with Jakarta could provide Beijing with greater diplomatic space in the region. While disputes between China and some ASEAN countries over the South China Sea continue, increasing military cooperation with Indonesia can be seen as part of Beijing's effort to diversify and strengthen its regional relations. In the coming period, developments in China Indonesia relations are also expected to be closely followed because of their possible effects on the balance within ASEAN. Indonesia's decision to increase military exercises with China while continuing its defense cooperation with the United States and other partners suggests that Jakarta will continue to avoid making a clear choice between the two major powers and instead pursue a balancing policy. At the same time, stronger cooperation with China in nickel and other critical minerals could have important effects on global supply chains. In conclusion, the latest talks between China and Indonesia show that the two countries are becoming closer not only in economic relations but also in defense and security. However, it is still too early to say that this closer relationship will move Indonesia completely toward the Chinese side. Jakarta's continued relations with the United States and other regional partners suggest that Indonesia will likely continue to pursue a balanced foreign policy in the coming period.



### **Serbia's Refusal to Align with EU Sanctions against Belarus Complicates Serbia's Balancing Strategy**

Recent developments once again highlighted the contradictory, and controversial for some, nature of Serbia's foreign policy. While the sanctions against Belarus, which is deemed to be one of the strategic partners of Russia, is supported and reinforced by the EU member, and the EU candidate states as well, Serbia refused to align itself with the sanctions. At this point, sanctions against Belarus should be considered one of the essential points to undermine the Russian war effort since Belarus has provided substantial strategic support to Russia since the start of the war. Therefore, Serbia's refusal to comply with sanctions against Belarus should be interpreted as another example of how Serbia continues to distance itself from pursuing a fully aligned pro-EU foreign policy despite Serbia still carries commitments to the EU owing to their EU Accession Negotiations. Although Russia cannot compensate for the economic importance of the EU for Serbia's overall economic well-being, with



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the partial exception of the energy sector, Serbia continues to attach considerable value to Russian political and diplomatic support from a geopolitical perspective, particularly regarding Kosovo. Consequently, Russia's importance for Serbia exceeds the economic terms by providing strategic support to Serbia in terms of Serbian geopolitical interests in the Balkans. Not to mention the fact that this traditional partnership between Russia and Serbia could be also observed in countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro. Although a recent visit from Volodimir Zelenskyy led some people to believe that Serbia was about to realign their foreign policy in accordance with the EU's geopolitical interests, thus giving up on their traditional Russian partnership for good, this case proves that Serbia is still not ready to abandon the Russian partnership. In other words, Zelenskyy's visit should be seen as a move of diplomatic manoeuvring for Serbia to strengthen their ties with the EU side rather than a symbol of realignment of Serbia's foreign policy. Since Russo-Ukrainian War turned the EU Enlargement Process into a geopolitical issue maintaining their balancing strategy for Serbia becomes extremely complicated forcing Serbia to make sacrifices either in terms of economic or geopolitical interests of Serbia.



### **Corporate Control and Political Activism on Gaza Issue: An Analysis of the Ben & Jerry's Case**

The conflict between Ben & Jerry's and its corporate owners shows how difficult it can be for a company to continue its political activism after becoming part of a multinational corporation. According to Reuters, when Unilever bought Ben & Jerry's for \$326 million in 2000, it agreed to protect the company's independent board and social mission. This gave Ben & Jerry's an unusual level of freedom to speak about political and social issues. But the relationship became more difficult after the company decided to stop selling its products in Israeli-occupied parts of the West Bank in July 2021. The conflict grew more after the Gaza war, as Ben & Jerry's tried to publicly support a ceasefire and Palestinian rights. The dispute has since moved from public statements to the company's internal structure. In November 2024, Ben & Jerry's filed a lawsuit accusing Unilever of silencing its attempts to support Palestinians and speak about the Gaza war.



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In May 2025, its independent board described the war in Gaza as a “genocide.” In December 2025, Ben & Jerry’s removed its independent board chair Anuradha Mittal, and by January 22, 2026, Reuters reported that Magnum had accused Mittal of serious misconduct as more directors were pushed out of the board. Mittal rejected the allegations and accused Magnum and Unilever of trying to discredit her because of her support for Palestinian rights. Finally, on August 22, 2026, a US judge dismissed most of Ben & Jerry’s claims that Unilever had tried to limit its social activism and interfere with its independent board.

The importance of this conflict comes from the way political pressure can work without direct censorship. Control over a company’s board, management and financial resources can make political activism harder. Even if a company is free to express its views, removing directors, launching investigations or creating long legal disputes can make companies more careful about taking controversial political positions. These possible consequences can discourage companies from taking political positions in the future.

The Gaza issue makes this especially important. Companies that support Palestinian rights face strong political disagreement. Taking a public position can bring pressure from investors, governments, consumers and business partners. The Ben & Jerry’s case shows that this pressure can go beyond criticism of a company’s message and affect the people who control the company and its decisions.

The long conflict between Ben & Jerry’s and its corporate owners shows how control over a company can also affect its ability to take political positions. This could also affect other companies, especially those considering taking a position on Gaza. If companies see that political statements can lead to internal conflict, legal disputes or changes in leadership, they may decide to stay silent. The Ben & Jerry’s case shows that companies do not always need to face direct censorship to be discouraged from speaking out. Pressure from within the company can also make political activism more difficult.



### **The Arctic’s Growing Role in Global Shipping and the Northern Sea Route as an Alternative to Conflict-Affected Routes**

China’s decision to start a regular shipping service through the Arctic has brought the Northern Sea Route back into the international agenda. On August 15, the Chinese shipping company Sea Legend started a regular service between China and Europe through the Arctic route along Russia’s northern coast. According to The Guardian, the journey from China to the United Kingdom can take around 18 days, while



the same journey through the Suez Canal can take more than 40 days. The timing of this development is also important. The war between the United States and Iran has created new problems for international trade and shipping, especially around the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. It was reported that Chinese state-owned oil companies have started avoiding some major shipping routes because of the existing risks caused by the conflict. For China, the Arctic route could become another option when traditional routes become less safe. The route has been described as an “Ice Silk Road”. This reflects China’s growing interest in using the Arctic as an alternative trade route to Europe. Russia also has an important position in this process. The Northern Sea Route passes mainly along the Russian Arctic coast, which gives Russia significant control over this route. According to Reuters, Russia sent around six million barrels of oil to Asia through the Arctic route in 2026. China was the main buyer of this oil. There are still serious limits to the development of Arctic shipping. This route cannot be used in the same way throughout the year because of ice and difficult weather conditions. Ships also need special equipment, and infrastructure and insurance costs are still very high. Some also argued that Arctic shipping is still very limited compared with traditional global trade routes. It would be difficult to say that the Arctic can replace the Suez Canal or the Strait of Hormuz in the near future.

China and Russia are also not the only Asian countries that shows interest in the Arctic route. According to Reuters reports on August 20, South Korea is preparing to send a container ship to Europe through the Arctic on August 22. This means that countries may become more interested in the Arctic, but Russia will still have an important role in controlling access to it. The recent problems around major maritime routes have shown how much global trade depends on a small number of important areas. If these areas become unsafe because of war or political tensions, alternative routes can become more valuable. The main uncertainty is the future of the Northern Sea Route. Its difficult conditions, high costs and dependence on Russia may continue to limit its use as a global trade route. The Arctic is not replacing the existing and commonly used trade routes yet, but it is becoming an important alternative as more Asian countries begin to test its commercial potential, safety and usability.