TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TRTWORLD

JULY 13, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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US-IRAN BRINKMANSHIP IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND NATO'S STRATEGIC SHIFT DEFINE GLOBAL RISK LANDSCAPE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The global security environment reached a critical inflection point on July 13, 2026, as the "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding" between the United States and Iran effectively collapsed. Following a month of relative calm, the situation has devolved into a high-intensity "tit-for-tat" military conflict focused on the Strait of Hormuz. US President Donald Trump announced the reinstatement of a comprehensive naval blockade of Iranian ports, extending it to the entirety of Iran's coastline. In response, Iran has asserted unilateral control over the waterway, leading to strikes against US assets in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan, while maritime traffic has dwindled to a "trickle" amid heightening insurance and security risks.

Concurrent with the escalating conflict in the Persian Gulf, the 36th NATO Summit in Ankara concluded with a historic shift in the alliance's defensive posture. Allies reaffirmed their commitment to Article 5 and pledged over $50 billion in new defense procurement. Strategic adjustments include a new target for all members to spend 5% of GDP on defense by 2035 and the licensing of Patriot missile production within Ukraine. These moves signal a move toward "NATO 4.0," a framework designed to address both resurgent Russian aggression and newer hybrid threats such as AI-driven warfare and cybersecurity, while simultaneously attempting to placate a transactional US administration that has threatened to withdraw from traditional security guarantees.

Domestic instability and humanitarian crises continue to haunt several regions. Israel is facing a pivotal election on October 27th as public sentiment shifts away from the Likud party toward a centrist-hawkish coalition led by Gadi Eisenkot. In Sudan, the city of Al-Obeid is under a paramilitary siege that mirrors the catastrophic conditions previously seen in Al-Fasher. Meanwhile, Europe is grappling with the human cost of climate change, recording more than 10,000 excess deaths from a record-breaking heatwave that has triggered devastating wildfires across France, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Collapse of US-Iran Diplomacy:** The Islamabad memorandum is in "crisis" as the US resumes heavy strikes against Iranian military infrastructure and targets Natanz uranium enrichment facilities. Iran has retaliated by striking US bases in neighboring Gulf nations and claiming the right to charge transit fees in the Strait of Hormuz.

- **NATO 4.0 Transformation:** Allies in Ankara have agreed to burden-shifting to keep the US engaged, while Turkey has cemented its position as an "indispensable" mediator and defense industrial hub.
- **Ukraine's "War on Russian Soil" Strategy:** Kiev has intensified its long-range drone campaign targeting Russian energy infrastructure and oil tankers to pressure the Kremlin, while seeking long-term European security guarantees through the "Coalition of the Willing."
- **Israeli Political Realignment:** The Knesset is set to dissolve, with polls showing significant discontent with Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership across multiple fronts (Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, and domestic legal issues).
- **Systemic Climate Failure in Europe:** Extreme temperatures pushing 41 degrees have led to mass mortality and unprecedented wildfire spread, highlighting a critical lack of readiness in national infrastructures.
- **Global Tech and Economic Volatility:** SK Hynix saw a record US public market debut of $26 billion, followed immediately by a 15% sell-off driven by investor profit-taking and anxiety over AI electricity consumption.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The US has launched a third consecutive night of strikes against Iranian coastal targets and military sites.
- Ukraine and nine Western allies formed a coalition to jointly develop a new anti-ballistic missile system.
- Yemen’s warring factions have initiated a "war on airports," with strikes on Sanaa international airport runways to prevent Iranian aircraft from landing.

Climate & Extreme Weather

- Heatwaves across the UK are now considered a major health risk, with researchers attributing 42% of heat-related deaths to human-induced climate change.
- The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) shows signs of slowing, potentially leading to unprecedented shifts in global weather patterns and biodiversity.

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- Apple has filed a lawsuit against OpenAI, alleging that former employees stole trade secrets related to hardware components and AI gadgets.
- Investors are increasingly concerned about the geometrical increase in electricity consumption required to maintain AI capabilities.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- The EU is considering a phased ban on social media access for children under 16, following reports of mental harm and addiction.
- The US healthcare watchdog recovered over $5.6 billion in expected savings and recoveries over a six-month period.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Weaponization of Maritime Geography

A significant shift is occurring where "geography is being weaponized" as a

strategic tool more effective than nuclear development. Iran's strategy to treat the Strait of Hormuz as an "ATM machine" and a lever against Gulf states demonstrates a fundamental core requirement to control regional traffic. This is countered by the US attempt to impose a 20% cargo toll for "safety and security," which many observers view as an absurd position against international law that could permanently stop global oil flow.

The Evolution of NATO and the "Trump Factor"

NATO is undergoing a painful transition into a "more European alliance" while struggling to keep the US engaged. The Ankara Summit highlighted a "trust gap" between Washington and its allies. While US President Trump praised individual leaders like Erdogan and Meloni, his blatant criticism of Spain and recurring interest in "returning Greenland" to the US (which Denmark rejects) underscores the volatility of current transatlantic relations. The new 5% GDP spending target is seen as a necessary "pampering" of the US administration to ensure the alliance's survival.

Climate Adaptation vs. Response

There is a growing trend of moving from "reactive" to "systemic proactive" climate measures. Reports indicate that current infrastructures in the UK and Europe are extremely unprepared for the new "climate reality." This has sparked a debate on the necessity of mandatory heat breaks for outdoor workers and the integration of traditional indigenous conservation methods—such as the Karuk and Hopi people's use of fire and drought-resistant seeds—into modern land management.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Turkey: The host nation showcased its "soft power" through the NATO Summit organization, but remains on high alert against sabotage from terrorist organizations like PKK and Daesh. The state is actively promoting its burgeoning defense industry and a $100 billion trade target with the US as a means of domestic economic stabilization.

Israel: The country is in a state of "exhaustion" following years of political chaos and three years of multi-front war. Internal polarization is at an all-time high, with a bruised public demanding a formal commission of inquiry into the failures of October 7th. Netanyahu's survival instincts are noted as "legendary," but the latest polling data suggests a substantial lead for the opposition (44% to 37%).

United States: The administration is facing pressure from upcoming midterm elections in November. President Trump is balancing his "America First" rhetoric with an unpopular involvement in a "forever war" in the Middle East that he previously campaigned against. Internal leadership divisions on foreign policy are apparent, with contradictions between Trump's statements and those of his Secretary of State.

Iran: The regime faces extreme economic pressure with inflation reported at over 300%. Despite this, the leadership appears unified and defiant, leveraging the funeral of its assassinated supreme leader as a show of "victory" and resistance against "nuclear regimes."

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is being framed as a "fracturing multipolar arena" where authoritarian alignments (Russia, China, North Korea, Iran) are actively challenging sovereign states in Europe and the Middle East. NATO allies are attempting to navigate this by accelerating military capabilities and seeking "new found unity," yet bilateral agreements—such as the UK-Turkey defense deal—suggest that individual states are also "hedging" against the failure of larger multilateral blocs.

Russia's global posture is depicted as increasingly maximalist and angry, responding to Ukrainian drone strikes with amplified attacks on civilian territory. The Kremlin has labeled the European defensive efforts as a "coalition of warmongers." Conversely, South Africa is reacting defensively to its own internal economic pressures by deporting over 53,000 foreign nationals, primarily to Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, amid widespread anti-immigration sentiment.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is dominated by energy supply anxiety and the massive capital flows associated with the AI sector. Geopolitical escalations in the Gulf have driven oil prices up by more than 4-5% on Monday, erasing recent declines. Iranian inflation has reached a staggering 350%, a direct consequence of the war and sanctions. In the corporate sector, major tech debuts are meeting high expectations but still facing wall street skepticism regarding the sustainability of record-level capital spending.

- **Commodities:** Brent Crude briefly topped $80 a barrel. Gold, usually a safe haven, saw weekly losses as high interest rate bets persisted.
- **Financial Markets:** SK Hynix raised over $26 billion in a blockbuster NASDAQ debut, the largest for a foreign firm. Samsung electronics reported an 1,800% jump in operating profit to $58.4 billion.
- **Supply Chains:** Extreme heat in the US is disrupting agricultural supply chains. Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is severely disrupted, with container shipping costs from Dubai rising from $2,200 to $8,500.
- **Labor Dynamics:** Unionized workers at Ford (Canada) and Hyundai (South Korea) have reached tentative agreements or launched partial strikes over wage negotiations and job security in the age of AI.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day's events highlighted several key shifts in global political and military leadership, signaling both institutional decay and the rise of new political stars.

- **Gadi Eisenkot:** Emerging as a frontrunner in Israeli politics, beating Netanyahu in recent polls and positioning himself as a more "trustworthy" leader.
- **Mark Rutte:** The NATO Secretary General is flatly credited as the only leader Trump praised, effectively "taking one for the team" to manage the US president's ego.

- **Abdul Hamed Aakil Al-Awak:** Elected as the new parliamentary speaker in Syria as the country attempts to draft a new constitution post-Assad regime.
- **Lindsay Graham:** The influential US Senator died at age 71 after a brief illness, leaving a vacuum in the US-Israel hawkish advocacy space.
- **President Tomas (Hungary):** Removed from office via a constitutional amendment for allegedly acting as a puppet of former PM Viktor Orban.
- **Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani:** Qatar held a funeral for its former Amir, who died at age 74.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

TRT World's coverage is heavily dominated by the **US-Iran escalation** and the **NATO Summit results**, reflecting a priority on high-stakes international security and regional power dynamics. The tone is analytically skeptical of US leadership, particularly regarding Trump's "off-the-cuff" policy making and contradictory statements on maritime tolls. Significant weight is given to the **humanitarian crisis in Sudan** and the **ongoing war in Gaza**, ensuring these stories are not "buried" despite the dominance of Western-centric geopolitical news. The network maintains a nationalistic pride in Turkey's "indispensable" role at the NATO summit.

Conspicuous Omissions: While the Srebrenica genocide commemoration was covered, there was a relative lack of detail on the current state of humanitarian access into the Tigray region or the recent developments in the South China Sea, which would typically be relevant given the global risk focus. The internal specifics of the "Islamabad MOU" that were allegedly violated were also kept vague by all reporting sources.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's framing presents a world in a "limbo state" of no war and no peace, where traditional alliances are being stress-tested by transactional leadership and asymmetric threats.

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as an erratic superpower that is "desperate" for deals but quick to use force when negotiations falter. "What the president says often doesn't mean very much" in the eyes of allies and foes alike.
- **Iran:** Characterized as "weaponizing geography" and maintaining a "culture of resistance" that successfully survived attacks from "two nuclear regimes."
- **Turkey:** Framed as a rising, hospitality-driven leader capable of mediating between warring factions and leading NATO in defense industrial innovation.
- **Russia:** Portrayed as a maximalist power struggling to advance territorially but persistent in its use of ballistic missiles against civilian targets.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Viewed as a "protection racketeer" who treats international relations as a business transaction, with a "personal chemistry" with authoritarian leaders that both helps and complicates diplomacy.

- **Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as "maximalist" and "relentless," uninterested in peace unless it is on his own terms.
- **Benjamin Netanyahu:** Framed as politically finished, with his survival instincts failing against a tide of "failures" across Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **Rapid Support Forces (RSF):** Described as using civilians as "cannon fodder" in their siege of Al-Obeid.
- **Houties (Ansar Allah):** Framed as declaring a "war on airports" to retaliate against Saudi blockades.
- **OpenAI:** Portrayed as a corporate target for litigation over intellectual property theft while navigating massive energy constraints.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The metadata of the day reflects a "new normal" where rhetoric and force are used simultaneously as signals. The meta-narrative on the US side is a "secret letter to Congress" attempting to frame offensive strikes as "defensive" to bypass legislative hurdles. On the Iranian side, the narrative of "victory parades" during the Supreme Leader's funeral is used to project stability and strength to the domestic population and the diaspora.

Propaganda and narrative seeding are also evident in the investigations into "Grock" on X, where the platform is accused of "creating and producing child sexual abuse material" using AI remakes—a claim that intersects with the broader debate on social media accountability and free speech. Additionally, the continued denial of the Srebrenica genocide in certain parts of Serbia and Republika Srpska illustrates the persistence of historical revisionism as a tool for regional destabilization.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- If the US-Iran naval blockade persists, global oil prices will likely reach $100 per barrel within the next two weeks, triggering systemic inflation in Western economies.
- The 5% NATO spending target will likely face significant domestic resistance in countries like the UK, where it will be pitted against spending on health and education.
- The Israeli election on October 27th will likely lead to the first non-Netanyahu government in years, potentially shifting the approach to the Gaza and Lebanon conflicts toward a more centrist-military consensus.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Continued military flare-ups in the Strait of Hormuz will lead to retaliatory attacks on US bases in the Gulf. Expect a formal announcement from the EU regarding age-related social media restrictions. The Al-Obeid siege may lead to a humanitarian collapse if no aid corridor is opened.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The licensing of Patriot production in Ukraine will begin the multi-year process of bolstering Kiev's defenses. Domestic political shifts in Israel and the US midterms will reshape the diplomatic landscape in the Middle East.

Energy markets will remain in a "limbo state" of high volatility.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A new "NATO 4.0" will see a rebalanced alliance with Europe taking more defensive responsibility. Climate adaptation—such as cooling centers and fire-adapted forestry—will become standard national policy across the Northern Hemisphere.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The primary risk to global stability is the decoupling of the world's energy supply from secure transit routes, driven by the collapse of the Islamabad agreement and transactional US foreign policy.

- **Total Maritime Shutdown in the Strait of Hormuz:** Triggered by an Iranian strike on a cargo vessel or a miscalculation in the US blockade. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic for global energy prices and supply chains. Mitigations: Establishment of a regional coordination system for free navigation and the return to the negotiating table.
- **Sudanese Civil War Partitioning:** Triggered by the fall of Al-Obeid to the RSF. Likelihood: Moderate-High. Impact: Decades of ethnic violence and a permanent humanitarian vacuum in Central Sudan. Mitigations: International pressure on regional actors (UAE) to stop arming paramilitaries.
- **Systemic Healthcare Collapse during European Heatwaves:** Triggered by consecutive temperatures above 40C. Likelihood: High. Impact: Tens of thousands of excess deaths and severe economic disruption. Mitigations: Immediate investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and mandatory worker protection laws.
- **US-Israel-Iran Full-Scale War:** Triggered by a US strike on the Natanz uranium enrichment site. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Total regional destabilization and potential global conflict. Mitigations: Third-party mediation (Pakistan, Qatar, Turkey) to revive the interim peace agreement.
- **AI Infrastructure Energy Crisis:** Triggered by AI electricity demand exceeding current grid capacity. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Rolling blackouts and a crash in tech sector valuations. Mitigations: Rapid investment in renewable energy and nuclear power specifically for data centers.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts mention the censorship of "Sparked online's" documentary but fail to provide the content of the documentary itself, which is crucial for evaluating the state of free speech.
- There is no mention of the UAE's specific response to claims that they are arming the RSF in Sudan, only a general "repeated denial."
- The actual details of the UK-Turkey security partnership signed in Ankara were not disclosed, leaving its impact on NATO cohesion unclear.

- The exact number of January protesters killed in Iran remains unverified, with figures ranging from "thousands" to "tens of thousands," preventing an accurate assessment of regime stability.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The Blockade as a Pre-Election Bluff: The US reinstatement of the naval blockade and 20% toll may not be a strategic military objective, but a high-risk political performance for the US domestic audience ahead of midterms. If Trump believes the elections are already "lost," the escalation may be an attempt to force a "Black Swan" victory to secure his legacy, rather than a sustainable foreign policy.

NATO Expansion as a Strategic Liability: While the summit in Ankara was hailed as a success, the expansion from 16 to 32 nations and the Budgetary focus on 5% GDP might actually increase the "genetic predisposition" of Russia and China to form a hard counter-alliance. This would make the defense of peripheral members like Montenegro functionally impossible despite Article 5 guarantees.

Black Swan Event: An accidental AI-controlled drone strike in the Persian Gulf, autonomous and unauthorized by either Tehran or Washington, leads to a global maritime conflict that neither side can politically de-escalate.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Regional powers (Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain) must immediately reinforce defensive radars and air defense systems to counter the "new status quo" of tit-for-tat missile strikes.
- **Economic:** EU member states must prepare for the impact of higher energy tariffs as they debate the 21st sanctions package against Russia.
- **Diplomatic:** Turkey should leverage its "indispensable" status to create a regional coordination system for navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, bypassing the failed US-led MOU.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Logistics firms must re-evaluate reliance on Dubai-based shipping as costs skyrocket due to Gulf hostilities.
- **Compliance:** Tech companies operating in the EU should prepare for stringent new age-verification requirements and potential blanket bans for minor users.
- **Capital Allocation:** Investors should pivot from "pure AI sentiment" to hardware ecosystems that can survive the impending chip supply shortage and energy crunch.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity this day centered on emergency measures for regional security and the regulation of emerging digital harms. Significant debate occurred in the EU regarding children's online safety, while national parliaments in Israel and Syria underwent structural changes.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **EU Social Media Ban Proposal:** A proposed regulation to ban social media access for children under 16, with French delegates pushing for a 15-year limit.
- **Hungary Constitutional Amendment:** Passed to remove President Tomas from office and dismantle the political remnants of the Orban administration.
- **Knesset Dissolution Bill:** Confirming that the Israeli parliament will dissolve this Friday, triggering the October election.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Ankara NATO Summit:** The final press conference reaffirmed Article 5 and set the new 5% defense spending benchmark.
- **Fed Chair Face-to-Face:** Kevin Warsh is scheduled to face Congress within 24 hours to discuss the hawkish rate stance in light of energy inflation.

KEY STORIES

- **US Naval Blockade Reinstatement:** President Trump declares the Strait of Hormuz blockade is back in effect, targeting all Iranian coastline and charging 20% tolls on neutral cargo ships.
- **Strait of Hormuz Military Escalation:** US launches third night of strikes on Iranian military targets; Iran retaliates by striking US bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan.
- **Ankara NATO Summit Conclusion:** Allies pledge $50 billion for procurement and $80 billion for Ukraine, setting a 5% GDP spending target.
- **Ukraine "War on Russian Soil":** Kiev launches 130 drones overnight, hitting Russian energy hubs and causing a fuel crisis in the Moscow region.
- **Bangkok Bar Fire:** At least 27 dead and 70 injured in a massive blaze at a popular bar; investigators cite electrical fault and blocked exits.
- **Siege of Al-Obeid (Sudan):** The RSF surrounds the city, trapping 500,000 residents and 100,000 refugees without water or medicine.
- **European Heatwave Death Toll:** Over 10,000 excess deaths recorded; wildfires consume 8 sq km near Paris and rage in North Wales and Spain.
- **Apple vs. OpenAI Lawsuit:** Apple alleges theft of trade secrets by former employees who moved to OpenAI to develop hardware.
- **Israeli Political Shift:** Knesset set to dissolve as Gadi Eisenkot emerges as a primary contender to unseat Benjamin Netanyahu.
- **Srebrenica Genocide Anniversary:** Commemorations held for the 8,000 victims of the 1995 massacre amidst ongoing denial by Serbian officials.
- **Nigeria School Kidnapping Release:** 44 pupils and teachers returned home after two months in captivity; two teachers were killed.
- **SK Hynix Stock Plunge:** Shares drop 15% after historic $26B NASDAQ debut as investors take profits amid AI market volatility.
- **Death of Lindsay Graham:** The US Senator dies at 71, sparking tributes and controversy over his hawkish foreign policy legacy.

- **South Africa Migration Crackdown:** 53,000 foreign nationals deported in one month as anti-immigrant protests sweep the nation.
- **Ebola Outbreak in DRC:** Confirmed cases surpass 1,900 with 700 deaths across five provinces.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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