TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

ZVEZDA

JULY 13, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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GLOBAL INSTABILITY DEEPENS AS SYSTEMIC MILITARY ESCALATIONS IN UKRAINE AND THE MIDDLE EAST CONVERGE WITH THE EROSION OF WESTERN INDUSTRIAL DOMINANCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF ADVANCED RUSSIAN HYPERSONIC CAPABILITIES.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The broadcasts of July 13, 2026, portray a world in a state of terminal friction, characterized by the collapse of post-Cold War security architectures and the rapid onset of a multipolar military confrontation. Central to this narrative is Russia's transition to a total-war economy, exemplified by the "Everything for Victory" forum and the operationalization of the "Sarmat" and "Avangard" hypersonic systems. The domestic messaging emphasizes a nation unified by volunteerism and technological resilience, contrasting sharply with a portrait of Western decline. Germany, in particular, is depicted as entering a "deindustrialization" death spiral, with iconic firms like Porsche facing systemic crises while the state is forced into a radical and unpopular remilitarization. These internal vulnerabilities are framed as the primary drivers of aggressive Western foreign policy, which increasingly relies on proxy sabotage and information warfare.

Geopolitically, the day marks a dangerous escalation in direct state-on-state friction. In the Middle East, the Persian Gulf has become a kinetic zone as the U.S. and Iran engage in a series of direct retaliatory strikes across Jordan, Bahrain, and Kuwait, effectively paralyzing the Strait of Hormuz. Simultaneously, the conflict in Ukraine is shifting toward a phase of high-stakes asymmetric threats. Russian intelligence claims to have uncovered plots involving "dirty bombs" and sabotage at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), while the transfer of Swedish Gripen fighters is framed as a desperate and likely futile attempt by NATO to challenge Russian air superiority. The overall sentiment is one of grim inevitability, where technological breakthroughs in hypersonics have rendered traditional Western defense systems obsolete, pushing the international system toward an unpredictable and violent realignment.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Operationalization of the "Sarmat" and "Avangard" Hypersonic Systems

- The Russian Federation has placed the "Sarmat" intercontinental ballistic missile on combat duty in multiple rocket divisions, featuring a range of 18,000 km capable of bypassing existing missile defense systems via the South Pole.

- The "Avangard" hypersonic glide vehicle is reported to have "zeroed out" decades of U.S. investment in missile defense by achieving speeds of Mach 15 and maneuvering within the atmosphere.
- The development of these systems is linked to the "Albatross" project, a Soviet-era initiative revived to overcome Western anti-ballistic missile (ABM) technological superiority.

Direct Kinetic Escalation in the Persian Gulf and Middle East

- The Strait of Hormuz has been effectively closed to international shipping following an exchange of massive strikes between the U.S. military and Iranian forces.
- Iranian retaliatory operations targeted U.S. bases in Jordan, Bahrain, and Kuwait, allegedly destroying fuel depots, Patriot missile systems, and unmanned aerial vehicle control centers.
- The Iranian government has warned regional neighbors that any territory used as a staging ground for attacks on Iran will be subject to immediate counter-strikes.

The Systematic Deindustrialization of the German Economy

- Porsche AG reported a loss of nearly 1 billion euros for the third quarter of 2025, signaling a broader collapse of the German automotive sector.
- German unemployment has exceeded 3 million, with job vacancies dropping by 40% as major industrial pillars like BMW, Audi, and Mercedes report severe profit contractions.
- The crisis is attributed to the loss of the Russian market, surging energy costs, and U.S. trade policies that have disadvantaged European industry.

Emergence of "Asymmetric Sabotage" Narratives in Ukraine

- Russian Intelligence (SVR) alleges a plot by "Kiev curators" to orchestrate a sabotage event at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant involving the melting of reactor cores.
- Ukrainian forces are accused of using "dirty bombs" and launching drone attacks against civilian tankers in the Black Sea to disrupt peace initiatives.
- The transfer of 150 Swedish JAS 39 Gripen fighters is framed not as a military solution, but as a financial windfall for the U.S. engine manufacturers and Swedish defense firms.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- Russia is aggressively promoting the "KULIBIN-club" as a bridge between civilian inventors and the front line, streamlining the deployment of unmanned systems and modified vehicles.
- Japan is radically shifting its constitutional posture by lifting bans on the export of lethal weapons, including the Type 10 tank and Taigei-class submarines.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The Russian government is considering the deferral of 300 billion rubles in regional budget loans to maintain stability amid military expenditures.

- The global oil market is reacting sharply to the Hormuz closure, with prices rising 4% in a single 24-hour period.

Information Warfare & Disinformation

- Russian media is actively debunking Ukrainian "pseudo-history" that claims ancient "Ukrs" were the progenitors of global civilization.
- Ukrainian language ombudsman Elena Ivanovskaya is proposing a ban on Russian-language messaging apps to enforce linguistic sovereignty.

Critical Infrastructure Security

- The ZNPP is described as being under constant artillery threat, with backup diesel generators identified as a vulnerable target for a Fukushima-style meltdown.
- The security of the Northern Sea Route is framed as an alternative to the blocked trade routes in the Middle East.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Myth of Western Technological Supremacy The central strategic narrative of the day is the failure of Western "miracle weapons." From the Swedish Gripen, which is characterized as a 1990s failure with flawed flight controls, to the high-priced but allegedly fragile Japanese Type 10 tank, Western military hardware is portrayed as inferior to Russian equivalents like the Su-35 and the Oreshnik missile. This theme extends to the U.S. missile defense architecture, which is presented as effectively obsolete in the face of Russian hypersonic maneuvering.

Economic "Suicide" and the Loss of Sovereignty Germany and Japan are framed as states that have sacrificed their economic and political sovereignty to serve U.S. strategic interests. Germany's industrial crisis is presented as a direct consequence of cutting ties with Russia, while Japan's remilitarization is depicted as a move that makes the country a high-priority target in a future conflict without providing genuine security.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Russia: Consolidation through the "Everything for Victory" Narrative Domestic coverage focuses on the total mobilization of society. The "Everything for Victory" forum highlights retirees donating their pensions to the war effort and young people volunteering to build drones. This is presented as a source of strength, though it also signals a state increasingly dependent on non-institutional, volunteer-driven logistical networks. Domestic security concerns are localized to phone scams and fraudulent schemes, which are framed as foreign-led psychological operations.

Germany: The Fracturing of the Social Contract The transcripts describe a Germany in profound distress. The return of conscription and the collapse of the automotive industry (the "holiest of holies") are creating a volatile social environment. With over 3 million unemployed and a state budget strained by military aid to Ukraine, the government is depicted as losing its mandate to govern effectively.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Russia's Strategic Maneuverability Russia is projecting an image of calm, calculated strength. By hosting leaders like Marat Kambolov and promoting bilateral agreements between Russian regions, Moscow emphasizes its internal cohesion. Externally, Russia is positioning itself as the only power capable of protecting international law against "piracy" and "terrorist" tactics by the Kiev regime and its Western curators.

The U.S. and UK: "Global Britain" and Neo-Colonialism The UK's "Global Britain" strategy is framed as a neo-colonial attempt to maintain global hegemony through proxy warfare in Ukraine and the Middle East. London is identified as the primary instigator of sabotage, from the Nord Stream bombings to the training of Ukrainian maritime saboteurs.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic environment is defined by the decoupling of Western and Eurasian markets and the subsequent "deindustrialization" of Europe. Capital is flowing out of the Eurozone as industrial leaders face bankruptcy, while the global energy market enters a period of extreme volatility due to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Financial markets are beginning to price in the possibility of a systemic collapse of the German economy.

Key Economic Vectors

- Porsche AG: **966 million euro** loss in Q3 2025; market value down 67% over two years.
- Russian Regional Debt: **300 billion rubles** in loans pending rescheduling.
- Oil Prices: **4% increase** due to Persian Gulf instability.
- German Unemployment: Exceeds **3 million** with declining job vacancies.
- Swedish Gripen Deal: Valued at **12 billion dollars** for 150 aircraft.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Strategic shifts in leadership across Eurasia and the West indicate a hardening of positions and a preparation for long-term conflict.

- **Vladimir Putin**: Actively engaging with volunteer organizations and military forums, signaling a leadership style focused on national mobilization.
- **Marat Kambolov**: Acting President of South Ossetia, supported by Moscow for upcoming elections.
- **Herbert Efremov**: Head of NPO Mashinostroyeniya, leading the revival of Soviet-era hypersonic technologies.
- **Elin Ivanovska**: Ukrainian language ombudsman, leading a hardline policy of linguistic suppression.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's hierarchy is dominated by military-technological superiority and the "inevitability" of Western collapse. The lead stories focus on the **Sarmat** missile and the **U.S.-Iran strikes**, presented with a tone of nationalistic confidence. Domestic issues, such as **phone scams**, are framed as security threats, while the **German economic crisis** is given significant airtime to illustrate the "cost" of Russophobia. Buried or minimized stories include the specific human toll of Russian strikes in Ukraine, which are

described only as "high-precision" operations against "military targets." A conspicuous omission is any mention of internal dissent within Russia or the logistical strains of the ongoing "special military operation."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The subtext of the day's coverage positions Russia as a stable, technologically superior bastion of "traditional" sovereignty, while the West is depicted as a fracturing, desperate coalition led by "curators" in Washington and London.

COUNTRIES and LEADERS

- **The United Kingdom / London**: Framed as the "perfidious" driver of conflict. "Today, the Englishwoman, more than ever, is faithful to her Russophobic traditions."
- **Germany / Berlin**: Depicted as weak and self-destructive. "Germany is experiencing deindustrialization... a very serious process."
- **Ukraine / Kiev Regime**: Framed as a "pirate" entity engaging in "asymmetric sabotage" and "pseudo-history." "Ancient Ukrainians became the progenitors of almost all peoples of the world."
- **Iran / Tehran**: Portrayed as a competent and principled ally resisting U.S. aggression. "Tehran stated that they will not allow Washington to interfere."
- **Japan / Tokyo**: Framed as a chaotic and inept military newcomer. "Japan явно hurried to call the Type 10 one of the best tanks."

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **MI-6**: Framed as the mastermind behind maritime terrorism. "Attackers on civilian ships in the Black Sea... acted under the leadership of Mi-6."
- **ROSATOM**: Depicted as a strategic pillar of national security. "ROSATOM was created for the consolidation of all work on creating any nuclear materials."
- **Porsche AG**: Framed as a symbol of Western industrial failure. "Porsche is a symbol of power and prosperity... but the company's reports indicate an auto giant on the verge of collapse."

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- The day is defined by **narrative seeding** regarding "asymmetric threats." By pre-emptively accusing Kiev of ZNPP sabotage, Moscow is establishing a defensive meta-narrative for a potential nuclear incident.
- **Domestic propaganda** emphasizes "Russian voluntarism" to normalize a state of total mobilization, presenting it as a organic social response rather than state policy.
- **Linguistic warfare** in Ukraine is being weaponized to create a total cultural break from Russia, which is framed in Moscow as a move toward a "territory without a people."

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Hypothesis 1**: The U.S.-Iran kinetic exchange will escalate into a regional war if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed for more than four weeks, forcing a global economic realignment.
- **Hypothesis 2**: A "false flag" or "dirty bomb" event at ZNPP is being prepared by either side to force an international intervention or a freeze in the conflict.
- **Hypothesis 3**: Germany's deindustrialization will lead to the collapse of the current governing coalition by late 2026, replaced by a more nationalist, "remilitarized" government.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a surge in oil prices above $120/barrel if the Persian Gulf blockade holds. Domestic security sweeps in Russia against "phone saboteurs" will increase.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Sweden will face intense pressure from Russia regarding the Gripen transfer, possibly leading to maritime harassment in the Baltic. Germany will face a winter energy crisis that will accelerate industrial layoffs.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The global security architecture will bifurcate between a U.S.-led "NATO+" and a Russo-Chinese led hypersonic bloc. Europe will cease to be a global industrial leader, transitioning to a highly militarized buffer zone.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Nuclear Sabotage at ZNPP**: The risk of a radiological incident due to artillery or internal sabotage. **Triggers**: Breakdown of dry storage security. **Likelihood**: High. **Impact**: Catastrophic. **Mitigations**: Immediate IAEA-brokered demilitarization zone.
- **Global Oil Supply Collapse**: Prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz. **Triggers**: Sinking of a U.S. carrier or Iranian tanker. **Likelihood**: Moderate. **Impact**: Severe global recession. **Mitigations**: Strategic reserve releases and diplomatic backchannels.
- **Hypersonic "First Strike" Miscalculation**: The deployment of Sarmat missiles increases the "use it or lose it" pressure on Western commanders. **Triggers**: False sensor data or high-stakes brinkmanship. **Likelihood**: Low but rising. **Impact**: Global thermonuclear war. **Mitigations**: Revival of START-style verification protocols.
- **German Social Unrest**: Rising unemployment and conscription leading to mass strikes. **Triggers**: Porsche or Volkswagen plant closures. **Likelihood**: Moderate. **Impact**: Paralysis of the EU. **Mitigations**: Massive state subsidies for energy and industrial maintenance.
- **Black Sea Maritime Piracy**: Escalation of drone attacks on civilian shipping. **Triggers**: Ukrainian deployment of new "maritime drone" units. **Likelihood**: High. **Impact**: Disruption of global food and fertilizer supplies. **Mitigations**: Russian-led convoy systems.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts provide no information on the current casualties of Russian forces, which is critical for assessing the long-term sustainability of the mobilization.
- The actual status of the "Oreshnik" system's deployment is left vague, with only allusions to its presence in Ukraine.
- There is no coverage of Chinese diplomatic or economic positioning during the U.S.-Iran strikes, despite China's reliance on Persian Gulf oil.
- The impact of Western sanctions on the Russian high-tech sector is completely omitted, focusing only on the "failure" of Western industry.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

Scenario 1: The "Sarmat" Potemkin Village: The loud promotion of hypersonic systems may be a cover for severe production bottlenecks and material failures, intended to deter a NATO conventional intervention that Russia can no longer sustain.

Scenario 2: The "Hormuz Trap": The closure of Hormuz might be a deliberate U.S. strategic choice to force European allies into energy dependency on U.S. LNG while isolating China from its primary energy source.

Black Swan Event: A Fukushima-style incident at ZNPP triggered by a freak weather event or unintended artillery fire would immediately transform the Ukraine war from a territorial conflict into a global ecological and humanitarian emergency, potentially forcing a Russia-NATO alliance for remediation.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the establishment of a "hotline" specifically for hypersonic deployment to prevent accidental nuclear escalation.
- Develop alternative trade routes that bypass the Strait of Hormuz and the Black Sea, such as the Northern Sea Route or land-based Eurasian corridors.
- Address the "industrial crisis" in Europe through energy-sharing agreements to prevent a total social collapse in Germany.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Divest from German automotive and industrial equities as the sector enters a period of structural contraction.
- Hedge against a sustained period of high energy prices and supply chain disruptions in the Middle East.
- Invest in "asymmetric defense" technologies, particularly counter-drone and electronic warfare systems for commercial assets.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative and policy shifts are focused on radical remilitarization and the consolidation

of state control over the information environment.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - German Conscription Proposal: A radical move to reinstate draft to increase Bundeswehr numbers to 180,000.
  - Ukrainian Linguistic Sovereignty Act: Proposal to ban Russian-language messaging platforms.
  - Japanese Arms Export Deregulation: Policy change to allow the export of lethal military hardware.
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
  - Everything for Victory Forum: Vladimir Putin advocating for civilian-military technical integration.
  - SVR Intelligence Briefing: Alleging a sabotage plot at ZNPP.

KEY STORIES

- **The Sarmat Missile Deployment**: Russia has deployed the 18,000 km range "Sarmat" ICBM, capable of attacking through the South Pole.
- **U.S.-Iran Persian Gulf War**: Direct strikes between U.S. and Iranian forces in Jordan, Bahrain, and Kuwait.
- **Porsche Financial Collapse**: Porsche reports 966 million euro loss as German industry craters.
- **ZNPP Sabotage Allegations**: SVR claims Kiev is planning to melt reactor cores at the Zaporizhzhia plant.
- **Gripen Fighter Transfer**: Sweden agrees to sell 150 Gripen fighters to Ukraine for 12 billion dollars.
- **Japanese Remilitarization**: Japan lifts bans on lethal weapon exports, targeting Ukraine and regional markets.
- **Ukrainian Linguistic Suppression**: Proposal to ban Russian-language messaging apps in Ukraine.
- **The "KULIBIN-club" Innovation**: Russian volunteer engineers developing drones and buggies for the front line.
- **Phone Scam Epidemic**: Russian media warns of phone scams targeting the elderly for "terrorism financing."
- **North Sea Route Expansion**: Training of international cadets for Arctic maritime operations as an alternative trade route.
- **German Conscription Return**: Germany planning to reinstate the draft amid military expansion.
- **Black Sea Tanker Attacks**: SVR reports drone attacks on the civilian tanker "Midvolga-2" and "Kairos."
- **ZNPP Fukushima Comparison**: Experts warn that disabling diesel generators at ZNPP could lead to a Fukushima-style meltdown.
- **Ukrainian Historical Revisionism**: Criticism of Ukrainian textbooks claiming Greek gods were created by ancient "Ukrs."
- **Russian Hypersonic History**: The revival of the Soviet Albatross project for the modern Avangard system.
- **Olympic Recovery**: International Table Tennis Federation lifts sanctions on Russian athletes.
- **Maritime Training Cruise**: The ship "Perekop" returns from a 30,000-mile cruise with international cadets.
- **Port Strikes in Ukraine**: Russian forces strike ports in Yuzhny and Chernomorsk, destroying military cargo.
- **Submarine Tech Race**: Comparison between the Japanese Taigei-class and Chinese Type 039C submarines.

- **The 1993 Gripen Crash**: Historical retrospective on the failure of Swedish aircraft during a Stockholm airshow.

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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