

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

BBCNEWS

JULY 17, 2026

T H E G D E L T P R O J E C T

GLOBAL FRACTURE & UK TRANSFORMATION:

A Leadership Shift Amidst Kinetic Conflict and Disinformation

KINETIC CONFLICT & ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS (GLOBAL CONTEXT)



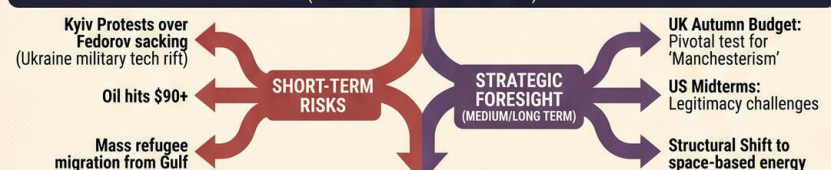
THE UNITED KINGDOM'S SURGICAL TRANSITION: STARMER TO BURNHAM



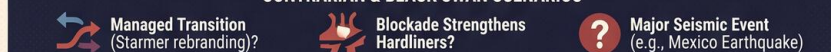
KEY GOVERNANCE VECTORS & VULNERABILITIES



FUTURE OUTLOOK & RISK ASSESSMENT (SCENARIOS & IMPLICATIONS)



CONTRARIAN & BLACK SWAN SCENARIOS



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A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP
TRANSITION IN THE UNITED
KINGDOM UNFOLDS AGAINST THE
BACKDROP OF A DEEPENING US-
IRAN KINETIC CONFLICT AND
COORDINATED GEOPOLITICAL
DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The global security environment is currently defined by the rapid escalation of the US-Iran war, which has entered its [sixth consecutive night](#) of tit-for-tat strikes. The conflict has moved beyond military sites to target [critical infrastructure](#), including power plants and bridges, as the US attempts to enforce a naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. This regional instability is driving Brent crude prices toward [86 dollars per barrel](#), threatening global energy security while the International Energy Agency warns of an impending global shortage if the waterway remains closed.

Simultaneously, the United Kingdom is undergoing a [surgical leadership change](#), with Andy Burnham confirmed as the new Labour leader following the resignation of Keir Starmer. Burnham is framing his premiership,

set to officially begin Monday, as the most [significant political shift](#) in four decades, pledging to dismantle the "neoliberal" consensus of the last 40 years through a program of radical devolution known as "Manchesterism." However, he faces immediate [fiscal constraints](#) inherited from the previous administration and a mandate that relies on maintaining the 2024 manifesto commitments while managing deep-seated factionalism within his party.

In the United States, the informational environment is becoming increasingly volatile as President Trump alleges [extensive Chinese interference](#) in the 2020 election, citing a massive compromise of 220 million voter files. These claims, which the US intelligence community previously dismissed, appear intended to seed the narrative for the [2026 mid-term elections](#) and force through the "Save America Act." This domestic friction coincides with an environmental crisis as [850 wildfires](#) in Canada continue to burn out of control, causing hazardous air quality across the eastern United States and sparking a diplomatic row between Trump and Canadian leadership.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

United Kingdom Leadership Transition

- Andy Burnham has been [confirmed as leader](#) of the Labour Party and is scheduled to meet the King on Monday to form a government.
- Burnham's "Manchesterism" platform focuses on [radical devolution](#), public control of utilities, and a Number Ten North office in Manchester.

- Speculation suggests [Shabana Mahmood](#) is the frontrunner for Chancellor, signaling a potential shift away from the soft-left influence of Ed Miliband.

US-Iran Kinetic War Escalation

- US Central Command has completed a [sixth straight night](#) of strikes against Iranian targets including air defenses and surveillance sites.
- Iran has retaliated with missile and drone strikes against US [military assets in Kuwait](#), Bahrain, and for the first time, a base in Syria.
- The Strait of Hormuz is effectively closed by an [American blockade](#), reducing regional oil exports by approximately 9.5 million barrels per day.

North American Environmental Crisis

- Hazardous smoke from nearly [900 Canadian wildfires](#) has enveloped major US cities including New York, Chicago, and Washington DC.
- President Trump has accused Canada of [wilful negligence](#) in forest management and threatened to impose compensatory tariffs.
- Air quality indices in some regions reached [extraordinarily hazardous levels](#), prompting emergency "code purple" health alerts.

Ukraine Internal Political Crisis

- President Zelensky has [sacked popular Defence Minister](#) Mykhailo Fedorov, citing a failure to work with military leadership.
- The removal of the "digital age" minister has sparked [widespread protests in Kyiv](#) and raised concerns among European allies about military modernization efforts.

- The UK has pledged an additional [£255 million](#) in funding to support Ukraine during this period of leadership transition.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The shift from [surgical military strikes](#) to the destruction of dual-use civilian infrastructure in Iran suggests a move toward a war of attrition.
- NATO allies are facing [increased pressure](#) from the US to hike defense spending to 3% of GDP by 2030 to counter Russian and Iranian threats.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- Oil markets are pricing in a [sustained energy shock](#), with Brent crude rising to 86 dollars as supply lines are choked at Hormuz and threatened at Bab el-Mandeb.
- Semiconductor giant TSMC reported a [77% jump in profit](#) but saw stock prices dip as investors fret over the sustainability of the AI investment boom.
- Chinese electric car brands have captured [10% of the UK market](#), prompting concerns regarding data security and the impact of domestic UK steel nationalization.

Information Warfare & Disinformation

- President Trump is [declassifying documents](#) he claims prove 220 million voter files were stolen by China to seed doubt about future election integrity.
- The BBC has apologized to Trump for [manipulative editing](#) in a Panorama documentary while facing a multibillion-dollar defamation lawsuit from his legal team.

Climate & Extreme Weather

- Scientific missions are [departing for Greenland](#) to study how melting glaciers are disrupting the North Atlantic currents, which could lead to more stormy winters in Europe.
- Extreme heat domes in the central US are [trapping wildfire smoke](#) closer to the ground, exacerbating respiratory health risks for over 100 million people.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The End of the "Post-Thatcher" Consensus in the UK The emergence of Andy Burnham as a [consensus leader](#) marks a decisive break from the policy continuity that characterized the Blair-Brown-Cameron-Starmer eras. By explicitly rooting current societal failures in the [outsourcing and deregulation](#) of the 1980s, Burnham is signaling a return to state-led industrial policy. The success of this theme depends on whether "Manchesterism" can be scaled to a national level given the [fiscal straitjacket](#) of nearly 100% debt-to-GDP and the reluctance of financial markets to support increased borrowing.

The Weaponization of Election Integrity A clear trend is emerging in the US where "election vulnerabilities" are being [narratively fused](#) with foreign interference to delegitimize political outcomes. By focusing on "vulnerabilities" rather than specific fraudulent votes, the Trump administration creates a [pretext for federal intervention](#) in decentralized state-run systems. This serves the dual purpose of distracting from economic pressures (like gas prices) and creating a justification for a poor performance in the [upcoming mid-terms](#).

The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare

The conflict in Iran and the internal discord in Ukraine both highlight a generational divide in military strategy. In Ukraine, the sacking of [Fedorov](#) represents a "clash of visions" between digital-first asymmetric warfare (drones, cyber) and traditional Soviet-era command structures. In Iran, the US reliance on [kinetic infrastructure destruction](#) is being met by Iranian hybrid responses that leverage regional proxies (Houthis) and target international energy chokepoints, demonstrating that technical superiority can still be [offset by strategic geography](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United Kingdom The UK government is currently in a state of suspended animation as Keir Starmer [prepares to depart](#). While Labour MPs are [overwhelmingly backing Burnham](#), private anxieties persist over his lack of a detailed mandate. The "surgical removal" of Starmer indicates a high degree of ruthlessness within the party establishment, but the "honeymoon period" is expected to be short—possibly as [brief as six weeks](#)—before the hard choices of a budget and Cabinet appointments trigger factional infighting. The rise of Reform UK continues to [pressure the Labour left](#), forcing Burnham to lean into populist-style economic rhetoric to retain working-class support.

Ukraine Zelensky's decision to sack Fedorov has created the most significant [domestic political crisis](#) in Kyiv since the start of the full-scale invasion. Young Ukrainians, who identify with Fedorov's "high-tech innovator" persona, view the removal as a concession to [corrupt, old-school generals](#) prone to stagnation. The army chief's appeal for unity [highlights the depth of the rift](#) between

civilian technology leaders and the military establishment, potentially slowing the tempo of critical battlefield projects.

United States The US is currently grappling with a "triple threat" of political, economic, and environmental instability. The administration is struggling to control the [narrative of the Iran war](#), which is driving domestic inflation and gas prices. The use of [redacted declassified intelligence](#) to attack political opponents indicates a deepening decay of institutional norms. Furthermore, the [teleprompter operator scandal](#) (Gabriel Perez) involving insider trading on presidential speeches further fuels the perception of "epic corruption" within the White House milieu.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is being framed as a [fracturing multiversal threat matrix](#). European nations, particularly Germany and France, are distancing themselves from the [volatile US-Iran conflict](#) while hiking their own defense spending to secure the continent's resilience. The framing of the US by some allies has shifted from "leader of the free world" to an [unpredictable disruptor](#) that "takes people as they are," according to Sir Simon Fraser.

China is adopting a posture of [pragmatic economic cooperation](#) while maintaining "strategic vigilance." Beijing's pushback against Trump's interference claims was [robust and detailed](#), labeling them "fabricated malicious smears." Meanwhile, the Global South, represented by India, is facing [severe logistical shocks](#), with 15,000 seafarers currently stranded due to the Hormuz blockade, forcing New Delhi to reconsider its neutral stance in the West Asian crisis.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Geopolitical risk is being priced into markets with high volatility, specifically in energy and technology sectors. Despite record profits from AI-adjacent firms, market sentiment remains [bearish](#) due to concerns over high interest rates and the sustainability of long-term demand.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Energy:** Brent crude sitting at [\\$86 per barrel](#); Iranian exports down [9.5 million barrels](#) per day since the start of the blockade.
- **Tech Stocks:** NASDAQ pulled back [1.5%](#) as investors questioned AI sector valuations despite TSMC's record quarter.
- **Currency:** Sterling is the second-best performing G10 currency, benefiting from a perceived ["honeymoon period"](#) for the incoming Burnham government.
- **UK Debt:** National debt approaching [100% of GDP](#), severely limiting fiscal maneuverability for new infrastructure projects.
- **Supply Chains:** 15,000 Indian seafarers [stranded west of Hormuz](#); India directs ship owners to halt deployments to the region.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day has seen several pivotal shifts in national and institutional leadership that signal a broader restructuring of the global political order.

- **Andy Burnham (UK):** Officially confirmed as [Labour leader](#). He is a "winner" in this environment, having successfully orchestrated a smooth transition to power without an opposing candidate.

- **Keir Starmer (UK):** Resigning Prime Minister. He is a "loser" whose broad but ["shallow" support](#) evaporated under poor polling numbers.
- **Mykhailo Fedorov (Ukraine):** Sacked Defence Minister. A digital visionary [removed due to generational conflict](#) and clashes with traditional military leaders.
- **Gabriel Perez (US):** Suspended White House [teleprompter operator](#). Under investigation for \$100,000 in insider trading based on presidential speeches.
- **Nigel Farage (UK):** [Resigned](#) as Reform UK MP to trigger a by-election, citing a "coordinated establishment stitch-up."

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's hierarchy prioritized the **UK Leadership Transition** and the **US-Iran War**, reflecting an editorial focus on state power and security. The **Canadian Wildfires** were used as a narrative bridge between environmental concerns and political attacks, with extensive airtime given to [dramatic railway footage](#). A noteworthy "Lead Story" was the **death of Sir Garfield Sobers**, which was used to provide a [reassuring, nostalgic interlude](#) amidst high-intensity news. **Buried Stories** included the [Ebola epidemic in the DRC](#) and the [earthquakes in Venezuela](#), which were relegated to short updates. The emotional tone was largely **fear-inducing** regarding the war and climate, while remaining **optimistically skeptical** about Andy Burnham's domestic plans. A conspicuous omission was a detailed explanation of the **mechanisms behind Starmer's resignation**, which was treated as a fait accompli rather than an internal coup.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The global arena is framed as a struggle between established democracies and disruptive, technologically-advanced adversaries.

COUNTRIES

- **Iran:** Portrayed as [duplicitous and dug-in](#), using vague diplomatic wording while targeting civilian power plants in Kuwait and Bahrain.
- **Canada:** Framed by the US as [wilfully negligent](#), though Canadian officials defend their record and highlight their assistance to the US during past disasters.
- **China:** Characterized as a [sophisticated cyber-threat](#) and "top geopolitical foe" that "compromises 220 million" voters while publicly preaching non-interference.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as [master of the narrative](#) but also a "free bird" who is "unfettered" and potentially using justice as a weapon for personal business interests.
- **Andy Burnham:** Framed as a ["great people person"](#) who is "authentically Labour" but currently "lacking in policy" and "coy" about his team.
- **Volodymyr Zelensky:** Characterized as being in an ["invidious position"](#) where he must choose between modern innovators and traditional commanders.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **TSMC:** Portrayed as a ["technology pioneer"](#) that is successfully diversifying away from China but facing internal profit margin pressures.

- **FIFA:** Criticized as ["weak-spined"](#) and "political" for failing to enforce rules on political banners during the World Cup semifinal.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

A high-density information warfare environment exists, with several actors actively seeding strategic narratives. The US administration is [narrowly tailoring](#) its language to use "vulnerabilities" as a synonym for "interference" to avoid the burden of proof while [redacting documents](#) to prevent independent verification. This is a classic "potpourri of greatest hits" meant to confuse the domestic electorate [underwhelmingly](#).

In the UK, "naughty briefings" against Ed Miliband [have already leaked](#), suggesting that despite Burnham's "one labor team" rhetoric, internal factions are already weaponizing the press to influence Cabinet picks. The delta between media "spin" (Burnham as a "King of the North") and ground truth (a leader without a general election mandate [handcuffed by fiscal rules](#)) remains a critical point of potential future failure.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- If the US-Iran war continues to target power and desalination plants, we will see a **mass refugee migration** from the Gulf states within the next [38 days](#).
- The sacking of Fedorov will likely lead to a **degradation of Ukraine's drone capabilities**, allowing Russia to regain the upper hand in strike volume by winter.

- The UK financial markets will **react violently** to any attempt by Burnham to nationalize water utilities unless he identifies a new revenue stream, potentially a [wealth tax](#).
- Trump will use the ["Save America Act"](#) as a litmus test for Republican loyalty ahead of the mid-terms, potentially purging "election-denier" skeptics.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- Mass protests in Kyiv continue, potentially forcing Zelensky to [reinstate Fedorov](#) or appoint a highly visible technocrat to the Foreign Ministry.
- Oil prices likely to hit [\\$90 a barrel](#) as Houthi rebels in Yemen threaten to close the Red Sea route.

Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- The UK government's autumn budget will be the [pivotal moment](#) for the Burnham premiership, determining if "Manchesterism" is a viable model or a rhetorical device.
- US midterm elections will be defined by [legitimacy challenges](#) and legal warfare over voter identification rules.

Long Term (1-5 Years):

- A structural shift in European energy toward [space-based solar power](#) and biocomputers will be required to mitigate the systemic risks of Middle East instability.
- The [Japanese imperial system](#) may face an existential crisis if public support for a female emperor clashes with a sexist legislative framework.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Regional War Spillage:** The risk of the US-Iran conflict expanding to Iraq and Oman is high. **Triggers:** Iranian missile strikes on [Oman radar systems](#). **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Catastrophic for global energy prices. **Mitigations:** Immediate Pakistani or Qatari mediation for a [renewed MOU](#).
- **UK Fiscal Collapse:** Market loss of confidence in UK debt stability. **Triggers:** Unfunded [£9 billion defense spending](#) increase. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Significant (Liz Truss-style meltdown). **Mitigations:** Adherence to strict [debt-to-GDP ratios](#).
- **Systemic Health Failure in US:** Respiratory crisis for 100 million people. **Triggers:** Persistent wildfire smoke combined with [extreme heat stress](#). **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Overwhelming of emergency rooms. **Mitigations:** Upgraded building filtration (Merv 13) and [N95 masking](#).
- **Ukraine Military Stagnation:** Loss of tech advantage. **Triggers:** Sacking of [digital-first leadership](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** High (Russian battlefield gains). **Mitigations:** Ensuring "ecosystem of innovation" remains [independent of command rifts](#).
- **Ebola Pandemic:** Uncontrolled spread in Central Africa. **Triggers:** Crossing borders into [Uganda](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** High. **Mitigations:** Rapid WHO-coordinated [international response](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts do not explain the [specific constitutional mechanism](#) used to remove Keir Starmer without a general election.
- There is a lack of clarity on [US civilian casualty figures](#) in Iran, which Tehran is using as the basis for war crimes accusations.
- The specific content of the [declassified 300-page dossier](#) regarding China is missing, leaving its impact purely speculative.
- The reports fail to account for the [financial viability of "Manchesterism"](#) given the current UK interest rate environment.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The Managed Transition:** The Starmer-Burnham handover was not a "surgical removal" but a **pre-planned "rebranding" exercise** to allow Labour to distance itself from unpopular winter fuel payment cuts [before the mid-term slump](#) became permanent.
- **The Blockade Blunder:** The US naval blockade is not "degrading" Iran but is actually **strengthening the hardline regime** by providing an external enemy that suppresses the [rising voice of internal dissent](#).
- **Black Swan:** A **7.3 magnitude earthquake** in Mexico [triggers a Pacific Tsunami](#) that destroys critical ports in California, immediately ending US-China trade and collapsing the global tech sector overnight.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** UK must maintain [equanimity](#) with the US under Burnham to ensure the nuclear umbrella remains intact despite erratic presidential rhetoric.
- **Economic:** India must pivot from "neutrality" to [diplomatic mediation](#) to secure its 300,000 seafarers and global shipping interests.
- **Diplomatic:** Canada and the US must formalize [shared responsibility agreements](#) for climate disasters to prevent tariffs from being used as environmental weapons.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Diversify shipping routes away from [Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb](#) immediately; project 20% increases in logistics costs.
- **Regulatory:** Tech firms should prepare for [First Amendment legal challenges](#) regarding misinformation and broadcast license revocations in the US.
- **Capital Allocation:** UK property investors should hedge against [wealth and land taxes](#) as Burnham looks to fund social care reform.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The current legislative agenda is dominated by controversial measures aimed at reshaping election integrity in the US and social conduct in the UK. International attention remains fixed on a special tribunal in Gambia aimed at [investigating Jammeh-era crimes](#).

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Save America Act:** Proposed US legislation to mandate [proof of citizenship](#) for voting and restrict mail-in ballots; declared "dead on arrival" in the Senate.
- **Hillsborough Law:** UK legislation [ending the "cover-up culture"](#) in government authorities; framed as Keir Starmer's parting legacy.
- **High-Caffeine Energy Drink Ban:** UK policy banning sales to [children under 16](#) starting next April.
- **Never Again Memorial Act:** Gambian legislation to [repay and honor victims](#) of political torture and murder.
- **Japanese Imperial Succession Bill:** Controversial bill [averting a male-heir crisis](#) by adopting male descendants from former royal branches.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **White House Prime-Time Address:** President Trump alleging [China acquired 220 million](#) voter files.
- **DHS Press Conference:** Secretary Markwayne Mullin announcing [mandatory scrub of state voter rolls](#).
- **Trump Tower News Conference:** Joint appearance of [Trump and FIFA President Infantino](#) to discuss World Cup success and officiating.

KEY STORIES

- **Burnham's Coronation:** Andy Burnham officially [named Labour leader](#) in an unopposed contest, paving the way to become PM on Monday.

- **US-Iran War:** Conflict escalates to the sixth night; US [targets bridges and airports](#); Iran strikes US assets across the Gulf.
- **Chinese Meddling Allegations:** Trump declassifies ["potpourri of greatest hits"](#) claims about voter file compromise; China issues a ["robust pushback."](#)
- **North American Smog Crisis:** 850 wildfires in Canada shroud [Washington and New York](#) in toxic haze; Trump threatens Canada with tariffs.
- **Ukraine Defense Sacking:** Zelensky replaces [Fedorov with Syrskyi](#), leading to massive youth protests in Kyiv over military modernization.
- **Manchesterism Philosophy:** Burnham's plan to [decentralize power](#) and move the UK toward a redistributive economic model.
- **TSMC Financial Peak:** Record 77% profit [underscores AI demand](#), but stock falls on diversification and production costs.
- **Strait of Hormuz Blockade:** US Marines board [tanker in the Gulf of Oman](#); oil prices rise due to supply chain disruption.
- **Death of Sir Garfield Sobers:** The legendary West Indian cricketer and "hero across the Caribbean" [dies at 89](#).
- **Falkland Islands Controversy:** Argentina World Cup players unfurl banner [claiming sovereignty](#) over the UK territory, triggering FIFA investigation.
- **Ebola Epidemic:** Over [2000 cases](#) and 828 deaths confirmed in DRC as the epidemic spreads faster than previous outbreaks.
- **Netflix Growth Slowdown:** Shares [tumble](#) after lower-than-expected engagement numbers and guidance.
- **Prostate Cancer Breakthrough:** Study confirms [focal therapy](#) using heat/cold is as effective as radical surgery with fewer side effects.
- **Japanese Monarchy Crisis:** Lawmakers pass bill to adopt [male descendants](#), ignoring public support for Princess Aiko.
- **Genoa Bridge Verdict:** 32 people [convicted of manslaughter](#) for the 2018 bridge collapse.
- **Farage Resignation:** Reform leader [resigns from Parliament](#) after allegations regarding his finances and relationship with George Cottrell.
- **Bayeux Tapestry Return:** The 11th-century embroidery [returns to Britain](#) for the first time in nearly 1000 years under police guard.
- **Greenland Glacial Mission:** RRS Sir David Attenborough [sets sail](#) to study ice shelf collapse and Atlantic current disruption.
- **SpaceX Launch Failure:** Starship launch [halted with one second remaining](#) due to engine failures.
- **Prince Harry Legal Loss:** Court [dismisses claims](#) against Associated Newspapers; Harry ordered to pay partial costs.
- **Bristol Zoo Project:** New African forest habitat [opens](#), shifting zoo focus to 85% endangered species.
- **Gambia Prosecution:** Martin Hackett [sworn in](#) as special prosecutor for crimes under the Jammeh regime.
- **BBC Proms Launch:** Dalia Stasevska [conducts first night](#), celebrating America's 250th anniversary and Ukrainian identity.
- **Hospitality Ethics Badge:** "Very Fair" scheme launched by Justine Murphy to [combat bad behavior](#) toward staff.

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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