

PRESSTV

JULY 20, 2026

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



TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

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GLOBAL POWER SHIFT: THE COLLAPSE OF WESTERN MARITIME DOMINANCE AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

July 20, 2026, marks a critical inflection point in what the transcripts characterize as a systemic regional war between the United States and the "Axis of Resistance." The day is defined by a massive expansion of conflict parameters: Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz to hostile nations, forcing the US Navy to resort to [smuggling tactics](#) for oil transfers, while Yemen's Ansarullah movement has declared a reciprocal [maritime blockade](#) against Saudi Arabia. These actions have triggered a global energy crisis, with oil prices surging past [\\$90 per barrel](#) and US domestic gasoline hitting a [multi-year high](#) of \$4.55 per gallon, threatening the political survival of the Trump administration.

Simultaneously, a significant leadership transition is underway across the resistance front. Following the assassination of the Iranian Supreme Leader on [February 28](#) (with massive funeral processions involving [millions](#)

of mourners), a new leadership structure under figures such as [Ayatollah Mujtaba Khamenei](#) is consolidating power. Parallel to this, Hamas has appointed [Khalil al-Hayya](#) as its new political bureau chief, signaling a commitment to continued armed struggle despite the ongoing [genocidal conditions](#) reported in Gaza.

The overarching narrative suggests a fundamental failure of US military deterrence. The IRGC claims to have inflicted [substantial damage](#) on 15 US military bases across the region, while the US has focused its retaliatory strikes on Iranian [civilian infrastructure](#) and nuclear facilities like the [Darkhovin plant](#). This convergence of events indicates that middle-sized states and armed movements, utilizing asymmetric "swarm tactics" and favorable geography, have successfully challenged the traditional hegemony of global superpowers.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Regional Naval Blockades and Maritime Attrition

- Yemen announces a [maritime navigation ban](#) on all Saudi-flagged and Saudi-servicing vessels in response to the siege of Sanaa Airport.
- Iran maintains control over the Strait of Hormuz, implementing a [nuanced approach](#) that allows passage to allies like China while targeting vessels from hostile states.
- The US Navy is reportedly unable to force open the Strait, instead overseeing [ship-to-ship transfers](#) under cover of darkness to circumvent the blockade.

Assassination and Succession in the "Resistance Front"

- Hamas selects [Khalil al-Hayya](#) to succeed the slain Yahya Sinwar, emphasizing his role as a chief negotiator who "hopes for peace but prepares for war."
- The transition of the Iranian Supreme Leadership is portrayed as a [massive display of popular legitimacy](#), contrary to Western framing of the system as a "fragile theocracy."
- Iran's new leadership vows "relentless retribution" for the [terrorist acts](#) committed by the US and Israel.

Systemic Military Failure of US Deterrence

- IRGC intelligence reportedly enabled the [destruction of 20 bunkers](#) housing US forces in Jordan.
- Satellite imagery confirms strikes on [228 facilities](#) across 15 US bases in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE.
- US aircraft, including C-17 transports and P-8 control planes, were [targeted at Aqaba Airport](#) with ballistic missiles.

UK Domestic and Foreign Policy Realignment

- Andy Burnham has become [Britain's seventh Prime Minister](#) in a decade, facing a "spiritual and economic mess" left by his predecessors.
- Burnham faces immediate pressure to restore [free speech](#) following the controversial barring of American political commentators.

Escalating Attacks on Critical Infrastructure

- The US military is in its [ninth consecutive night](#) of strikes against Iranian targets, including cities like Tabriz and Bandar Khomeini.
- The [Darkhovin nuclear power plant](#) in Khuzestan province has been struck, drawing strong condemnation for targeting peaceful infrastructure.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The conflict has evolved from naval skirmishes to a [systemic war](#) involving radar systems, air defenses, and insurance markets.
- Iran has successfully integrated AI-driven [suicide vessels](#) and advanced missile tunnels into its defensive posture.
- Israel is [10 kilometers deep](#) into Lebanese territory, attempting to "civilianize" the zone despite ongoing resistance.

Critical Infrastructure Security

- Deliberate strikes on [bridges and power plants](#) are described as war crimes intended to inflict pain on the civilian population.
- The IAEA's silence on the [bombing of nuclear sites](#) is framed as a betrayal of its mandate, turning the agency into a "political tool."

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- The "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) is declared a [dead letter](#) due to alleged US bad faith and excessive demands regarding the Strait of Hormuz.
- Pakistan and Kuwait are negotiating an [expanded defense pact](#), though analysts warn this could entangle Pakistan in regional conflicts.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- Global GDP growth is forecast to drop to [2.2%](#) due to the "war shock" and supply chain disruptions.
- The US [trade deficit](#) surged to \$77.6 billion in May, while small business insolvencies rose by 67% year-over-year.
- Japan is reportedly [dumping US treasuries](#) to defend the yen, straining the bilateral financial relationship.

Global Health & Biosecurity

- A massive [chickenpox outbreak](#) in Gaza, with over 18,000 cases, is linked to the destruction of sewage infrastructure and lack of medical supplies.
- Gaza health officials report that [43% of dialysis patients](#) have died due to the blockade on medication.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The End of the "Sea Power" Era The broadcasts argue that the theories of Alfred Mahan, which underpinned US maritime hegemony for a century, are [no longer valid](#) in an era of asymmetric warfare. The ability of small, low-cost "swarm" forces to close

strategic choke points like Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb demonstrates that absolute control of the seas is a [historical relic](#). This shift is compounded by China's dominance in shipbuilding, delivering [three naval vessels](#) for every one produced by the US.

Narrative Inversion and Information Warfare A consistent theme is the "inversion" of media narratives. Transcripts highlight how Western outlets portrayed the Iranian Leader's funeral through a lens of [selective interpretation](#), while social media footage of millions of participants "debunked" the idea of a legitimacy crisis. The network frames the US as the "main [producer of insecurity](#)" while claiming to be its guardian.

The "Salami Tactics" of Diplomacy Negotiations are viewed with extreme skepticism. Analysts argue that the US uses diplomacy as a ["salami tactic"](#) to slowly degrade Iranian sovereignty, offering minor concessions like unfrozen assets in exchange for structural changes to the management of international waterways. The collapse of the MOU is seen as Iran's [refusal to be "compliant"](#) to US demands.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United States: Polarization and Economic Anxiety The Trump administration is depicted as "arrogant and [unstable](#)," facing a population where 78% [want an end](#) to the war. The depletion of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to its [lowest point since the 1980s](#) and rising borrowing costs [exceeding 2007 levels](#) have created a domestic crisis. Trump is portrayed as more concerned with his "ego problem" and [looking powerful](#) than the survival of US troops.

Iran: Resilience Through Martyrdom

Contrary to Western reports of instability, the internal Iranian dynamic is framed as one of [extraordinary cohesion](#). The death of the Supreme Leader is presented as a unifying event that "reinvigorated" the public's commitment to the Islamic Revolution. The economy, though under sanctions, has achieved [97% self-sufficiency](#) in medicine and wheat production.

United Kingdom: A "Lame Duck" Prime Minister

Andy Burnham inherits a nation where political descent is being [suppressed by police](#). His government is described as a "hollowed-out husk of an authority" [struggling](#) with high taxes and a mass exodus of wealthy citizens.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The "Multipolar" Reality The international system is framed as moving away from a US-led unipolarity toward a multipolar arena where [God-relying governments](#) in the region are "unbreakable." The failure of US operations in Yemen in 2025 and Iran in 2026 is cited as proof that the US [no longer signals](#) absolute control of the seas.

Regional Realignments Nations like Pakistan are attempting a "delicate [balancing act](#)," refusing to provide military access to the US while maintaining ties with both Iran and the Gulf states. The broadcast suggests that true regional security is only possible if it is [indigenous](#) and refrains from antagonizing Iran.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic climate is characterized by extreme [instability](#) driven by the war in

West Asia. The closure of maritime routes has created an energy shock that threatens a "global depression."

- **Energy Prices:** Oil prices have doubled from \$60 to [\\$120](#) (though some segments report \$90), with forecasts of [\\$200 per barrel](#) if the Bab-el-Mandeb remains closed.
- **Financial Markets:** US borrowing costs are at record highs; AI stocks are entering a [chaotic phase](#) similar to the 2008 financial crisis.
- **Trade Deficits:** The US trade deficit reached [\\$77.6 billion](#) as imports outpaced exports in pharmaceuticals and semiconductors.
- **Sanctions Impact:** One-third of the world [lives under](#) US sanctions, which is now "backfiring" by forcing sanctioned nations to build independent economic systems.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Several major personnel shifts across political and militant organizations indicate a strategic hardening of positions.

- **Khalil al-Hayya:** Appointed head of the [Hamas Political Bureau](#); strategic analysis suggests this signals a "negotiate from strength" posture.
- **Ayatollah Mujtaba Khamenei:** Characterized as the new [architect of deterrence](#), taking over after the assassination of his father.
- **Andy Burnham:** Britain's new PM [facing](#) institutional resistance to his plans for power devolution.
- **J.D. Vance:** Framed as the leader of the US faction [favoring negotiations](#), while Marco Rubio is blamed for "sabotaging" peace deals.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

PressTV maintains a posture of [triumphalist resistance](#), prioritizing US/Israeli military setbacks and the perceived resilience of the Iranian state. The hierarchy is dominated by the "Victory 2" operation and the new maritime blockades. Buried or minimized stories include the specific internal economic hardships within Iran, which are only addressed as [overcome challenges](#). The tone is highly emotional, utilizing terms like "genocide," "martyrdom," and "child-killing occupiers" to frame the US and Israel. Conspicuous omissions include any detailed mention of Iranian military casualties, focusing exclusively on the [martyrdom of civilians](#).

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The transcripts portray a world divided between a "satanic" fading superpower and a rising, principled resistance.

- **United States:** Portrayed as an "outlaw regime" and "arrogant [crazy man](#)" (referring to Trump) that is "ignorant about geopolitics." Quote: "America is the greatest [satanic power](#) on the earth."
- **Israel:** Framed as a "parasitical entity" [manipulating](#) US policy. Its military is described as incompetent, unable to protect its own [maritime interests](#).
- **Iran:** Portrayed as a "very [peaceful nation](#)" that only acts in self-defense. It is competent, tech-savvy (AI naval units), and spiritually superior.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Depicted as a "foolish enemy" whose [economy is fragile](#) and dependent on Western protection that no longer exists.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The day's content is a masterclass in "narrative inversion." The network actively [challenges](#) the premise that Iran sabotaged the peace deal, arguing that US bombing during a funeral was the actual violation. There is a deliberate attempt to seed the narrative that the US is [losing control](#) of the world's oceans. Psychological operations are evident in the [public thanks](#) given to "Jordanian people" for intelligence against their own government-hosted bases, intended to sow internal discord in Jordan.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Energy Weaponization:** If the war continues, the Axis of Resistance will likely [escalate blockades](#) to include major terminals like Yanbu, potentially forcing a global economic collapse to trigger a US withdrawal.
- **US Domestic Collapse:** High energy prices and the "suicide mission" [nature](#) of a potential land invasion of Iran may lead to the impeachment of Trump or a collapse of the Republican party in the midterms.
- **Expansion of War:** Syria and Iraq may be [dragged into](#) the conflict more directly as the US attempts to find "non-American" soldiers for ground operations.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect intensified [retaliatory strikes](#) on Gulf states hosting US bases. Maritime insurance premiums will likely reach a point where commercial traffic [ceases entirely](#) in the Red Sea.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): A "downward [revision](#)" in global GDP and a potential repeat of the 2008 financial crisis [driven](#) by AI stock instability. The UK under Burnham may attempt a "diplomatic [re-alignment](#)" away from the US line to secure energy.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Structural change in global alliances, with the "Axis of Resistance" becoming the primary [security guarantor](#) in West Asia, and a shift toward an "indigenous" regional order excluding the US.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Global Economic Depression:** Triggered by sustained oil prices [above \\$200](#); Likelihood: High if naval blockades persist; Impact: Catastrophic; Mitigation: Immediate US return to the [JCPOA framework](#).
- **Nuclear Escalation:** Triggered by continued US strikes on [nuclear plants](#); Likelihood: Moderate; Impact: Permanent regional contamination; Mitigation: IAEA intervention to [condemn attacks](#).
- **Saudi Internal Collapse:** Triggered by the [loss of oil revenue](#) and Yemen's potential ground invasion of Najran; Likelihood: Low-Moderate; Impact: Major geopolitical vacuum; Mitigation: Saudi [lifting of the Yemen siege](#).
- **US Financial Crisis:** Triggered by Japan [dumping treasuries](#) and rising debt; Likelihood: High; Impact: Collapse of the dollar; Mitigation: Restabilizing the [yen relationship](#).
- **Regional Contagion:** Triggered by the [UAE/Saudi split](#) over Yemen and UAE's withdrawal from the conflict; Likelihood: High; Impact: Internal Arab bloc warfare; Mitigation: [Omani mediation](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts do not provide a credible count of [Iranian military casualties](#) or damage to their own industrial capacity.
- There is a lack of information on [Russia and China's](#) direct military involvement beyond "coordinated tactical approaches."
- The broadcasts fail to explain how [student protests in India](#) relate to the broader West Asian conflict, though they are featured prominently.
- Details on the [specific violations](#) that led to the collapse of the Islamabad MOU are one-sided, excluding the US perspective.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Tactical Withdrawal" Hypothesis:** The US Navy's apparent impotence is a [deliberate space](#) meant to "numb" society and lure Iran into over-extension before a massive, more conventional air campaign.
- **The "Managed Crisis" Theory:** The US administration [doesn't mind](#) the Hormuz closure because it benefits US domestic oil producers selling at [inflated prices](#), while using the war as a pretext for regime change.
- **Black Swan Event:** A [major landing operation](#) around Bandar Abbas by US forces, which most analysts consider [suicidal](#), but could occur if Trump feels politically cornered.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Security: Re-evaluate the [Mahanian naval doctrine](#) in light of swarm tactics.
- Economic: Secure alternative [energy shipping routes](#) bypassing the Persian Gulf.
- Diplomatic: Utilize [Omani or Qatari mediators](#) to salvage a "Square Zero" peace framework.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Supply Chain: Divert all maritime assets around the [Cape of Good Hope](#) despite the 10-day delay.
- Capital Allocation: Exit [AI-related stocks](#) and move into gold during this "dark moment" of market volatility.
- Regulatory: Prepare for stringent new [interest rate hikes](#) as central banks battle oil-driven inflation.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Policy discussion centers on the [Islamabad MOU](#) and the proposed "North American foreign policy" [model](#) where regional powers manage their own waterways. UK policy is shifting toward [greater devolution](#) of power under PM Burnham.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:** The Iranian ["Comprehensive Scientific Map"](#) is being revised to prioritize AI and quantum technologies as a matter of national security.
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:** The IRGC press briefing [confirming](#) the strike on 20 bunkers in Jordan. The UK PM's [inaugural speech](#) on stability and resolution.

KEY STORIES

- **Operation Victory 2:** IRGC reports [simultaneous strikes](#) on US military facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan.
- **Yemen's Naval Blockade:** Ansarullah [declares war](#) on Saudi maritime trade after Sanaa Airport was bombed.
- **Hamas Leadership Transition:** Appointment of [Khalil al-Hayya](#) as the movement's new political head.
- **Strait of Hormuz Gridlock:** Oil tankers [refused entry](#) by Iran, causing prices to surge to \$90/barrel.
- **Darkhovin Nuclear Strike:** US bombing of an Iranian [civilian nuclear plant](#) still under construction.
- **UK Political Crisis:** Andy Burnham becomes [seventh PM](#) since 2016, replacing Starmer.
- **Gaza Health Crisis:** Over [18,000 cases](#) of chickenpox and high mortality among dialysis patients.
- **US Base Casualties:** Reports of [under-reported deaths](#) of US soldiers in Jordan and Iraq.
- **Indian Protests:** Tens of thousands [protest](#) in New Delhi over exam paper leaks and education reform.
- **World Cup 2026:** Spain [defeats](#) Argentina in extra time in New Jersey.
- **Pakistan-Kuwait Pact:** Negotiations for a new [defense agreement](#) that analysts call a "geopolitical puzzle."
- **The Shadow CIA:** Report on the [Stratfor Center's](#) role in shaping the "Next 100 Years" forecast of US maritime control.
- **German Repression:** German police [raiding homes](#) of activists and banning pro-Palestinian slogans.

- **Japan's Debt Dumping:** Strategic investigation reveals Japan is [selling US treasury bonds](#) to save the yen.
- **Gaza Resurrected:** Story of [Hamada Albanna](#), who was presumed dead but found in an Israeli prison after a year.

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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