TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

SUDAN

JULY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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SUDAN NAVIGATES INTERNAL REBEL FRACTURES AND RESOURCE SCARCITY AMIDST ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

July 20, 2026, presents a Sudanese state intensely focused on projecting an image of resilience, modernization, and social order despite the ongoing conflict. The government is heavily promoting technological upgrades, notably the **Northern State Television's transition to High Definition (HD)** and its new membership in the Arab States Broadcasting Union. This is framed as a strategic victory in the information space, aimed at countering external narratives and enhancing national prestige. Simultaneously, the state is aggressively highlighting the humanitarian and social welfare efforts of the **National Cooperative Institution**, a military-linked entity, to demonstrate a functioning and caring government mandate in areas like Omdurman, Kadugli, and Sennar.

Strategic instability is highlighted through the reported **collapse of internal cohesion within the SPLM-North (Al-Hulu faction)**. State media portrays the rebel group as fracturing due to dictatorial leadership and disputes over lucrative gold resources in the Dubi area, leading to significant desertions to government-aligned positions. This narrative serves to undermine the opposition while emphasizing the government's role in securing critical resources. Furthermore, the day's coverage is saturated with **allegations of external orchestration** of the war, specifically naming the UAE and Israel as primary instigators seeking to partition Sudan. This geopolitical framing is coupled with domestic crackdowns on criminal networks and "Fifth Column" actors, suggesting a high state of alert against perceived internal and external subversion.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Technological Sovereignty and Media Expansion:** The Northern State has officially launched its HD broadcasting capability and secured membership in the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), a move described as a "strategic leap" for Sudanese media. This transition involved comprehensive infrastructure upgrades, including the replacement of control systems and encoders to meet international standards.
- **Fragmentation of SPLM-North (Al-Hulu):** Internal strife within the SPLM-N al-Hulu faction has reportedly reached a breaking point, driven by disputes over gold resources in the Dubi area and allegations of dictatorial management by Abdul Aziz al-Hulu. This has led to widespread desertions of fighters toward government-held territories.

- **Militarized Social Welfare:** The National Cooperative Institution is aggressively deploying humanitarian aid, including blood drives in Omdurman's Souq Libya and subsidized food sales in Kadugli. These efforts are explicitly linked to the "Dignity War" (Battle of Karama) and intended to bolster civilian morale and support for the armed forces.
- **Mineral Resource Securitization:** The River Nile and Northern states are intensifying efforts to regulate and secure the gold sector. A new gold exchange and mining hub was discussed in Atbara to centralize and secure gold trading, while geological teams are surveying Northern State for new mineral investment opportunities.
- **Combating Transnational Crime:** Security forces in Khartoum successfully dismantled a sophisticated forgery and car theft ring that utilized advanced technology, including Starlink devices, to facilitate illegal operations. The raid resulted in the recovery of multiple stolen vehicles and forged documents.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization The state continues to frame the conflict as a "Dignity War" against external threats, celebrating the graduation of new recruits and emphasizing the central role of the military in all aspects of life, from security to humanitarian aid. The **National Cooperative Institution** functions as a primary vehicle for this militarized governance.

Energy & Critical Minerals Gold remains the strategic linchpin of the economy and a primary driver of conflict. State narratives focus on securing gold-rich areas like Dubi and establishing formal trading hubs in Atbara to prevent smuggling and fund the war effort.

Diplomacy & Statecraft Sudan's relationship with the African Union (AU) is characterized by tension, with officials accusing the AU of bias and incompetence in its handling of the conflict. Conversely, membership in the Arab States Broadcasting Union is lauded as a vital diplomatic success.

Global Health & Biosecurity The war has severely impacted veterinary infrastructure, causing a shortage of animal vaccines. Domestically, medical professionals are warning of a public health crisis related to the unauthorized use and abuse of cortisone, particularly among women and youth.

Information Warfare & Disinformation The government is actively countering allegations of chemical weapon use, framing such reports as foreign propaganda. There is a concerted effort to warn the public against the "Fifth Column" and "alarmists" who spread misinformation to destabilize the state.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Legitimacy of Service Provision The Sudanese state is increasingly using service provision—ranging from complex surgeries to subsidized bread—to maintain legitimacy and public support. The military's deep involvement in these sectors suggests a consolidation of a "garrison state" model where civil and military functions are inextricably linked. The success of the National Cooperative Institution is presented as proof of the government's enduring mandate despite the conflict.

Resource-Centric Rebel Infighting The framing of the SPLM-N al-Hulu's internal fractures as a dispute over gold rather than political ideology is a deliberate attempt to delegitimize the group. By highlighting that fighters are deserting because of unequal resource distribution, the state portrays the rebels as opportunistic warlords rather than a liberation movement. This trend highlights the growing importance of "conflict minerals" in shaping the local dynamics of the Sudanese war.

Anti-Multilateralism and Sovereignty There is a growing narrative of skepticism toward international organizations. The African Union is portrayed as ineffectual or complicit, while "foreign agendas" (UAE/Israel/US) are blamed for the country's woes. This aligns with a broader trend of distrust toward international aid flows, with officials questioning the efficiency and motives of foreign NGOs compared to state-run programs like the Zakat foundation or the National Cooperative Institution.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Domestic stability is maintained through a combination of nationalist fervor and targeted social support. The "Dignity War" narrative appears to be the primary unifying force, supported by state media that minimizes reports of government losses and maximizes coverage of military successes and community spirit. However, the heavy emphasis on community policing and the "Fifth Column" indicates persistent fears of internal dissent or subversion. The reliance on the National Cooperative Institution for basic goods suggests that the formal civilian economy is severely strained, creating a dependency on military-managed supply chains that could become a vulnerability if these chains are disrupted.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Sudan portrays itself as a victim of a transnational conspiracy led by the UAE and Israel, with the aim of "dividing Sudan into two states." The external environment is framed as a **hostile threat matrix** where regional powers and international organizations (like the AU) are working to undermine Sudanese sovereignty. In response, Sudan is seeking to project power through media expansion (ASBU) and by actively challenging foreign disinformation. The state's global posture is one of defensive defiance, characterized by a retreat from multilateral cooperation in favor of transactional alliances and a focus on domestic self-sufficiency.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Sudan's economy is increasingly militarized and resource-dependent. Gold mining remains the primary source of revenue, but its management is plagued by conflict and smuggling. Inflation and supply chain disruptions have made basic goods unaffordable for many, necessitating the state-led subsidization programs. The discovery and survey of new mineral sites in the north suggests an effort to expand the resource base to sustain the prolonged conflict.

- **Commodities:** Brent crude oil prices exceeded $85 per barrel, adding pressure to local fuel costs. Gold prices remain a central concern for both the government and rebel factions.

- **Supply Chain:** Severe disruptions in livestock vaccine supply chains are threatening the critical agriculture sector.
- **Social Welfare Spending:** The Zakat foundation and National Cooperative Institution are significant vehicles for domestic capital flow, effectively acting as the state's economic safety net.
- **Resource Infrastructure:** Development of a gold exchange center in Atbara aims to formalize and capture revenue from the artisanal mining sector.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The transcripts highlight key regional figures and administrative heads who are central to the state's resilience strategy.

- **Governor Abd al-Rahman al-Hamid (Northern State):** Promoted as a modernizing leader, overseeing the TV transition and mineral surveys, signaling a strong government mandate in the north.
- **Abdul Aziz al-Hulu (SPLM-N):** Portrayed as a failing dictator whose grip on his faction is slipping due to mismanagement of gold resources and internal rebellion.
- **Ahmad Madawi Musa (Central Darfur Registrar):** A key figure in the humanitarian registration process, his role is central to managing the displaced population and maintaining administrative order in conflict zones.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial focus is heavily weighted toward stories of **national success, modernization, and social order**. The transition of Northern State TV to HD and the activities of the National Cooperative Institution were given top billing, often overshadowing tactical updates from the front lines. The emotional tone is **nationalistic and reassuring**, aimed at projecting a sense of government competence and stability. Conspicuous omissions include detailed accounts of military setbacks or the full scale of the humanitarian catastrophe in rebel-held areas, which are only addressed through the lens of international NGO inefficiency.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The Sudanese state media employs a sharp binary framing of the international community, distinguishing between hostile instigators and respected partners.

- **United Arab Emirates (UAE):** Consistently framed as a primary foe and financier of the "rebellion," accused of seeking to partition the country. "The UAE is the head of the profit-taking execution... orchestrating the war."
- **Israel:** Portrayed as a competent but malignant foe, providing the strategic blueprint for Sudan's destruction since 2008.
- **African Union (AU):** Framed as weak and inept, failing to uphold Sudanese sovereignty and being manipulated by external powers.
- **Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU):** Framed as a strong friend and a platform for Sudanese soft power and legitimacy.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The information space is a critical theater of operations. The state is actively engaged in

narrative seeding, framing rebel infighting as a simple dispute over loot rather than a political movement. It also employs **censorship of dissenting voices**, labeling them as the "Fifth Column." A significant effort is dedicated to psychological operations, such as public blood drives and recruitment ceremonies, to demonstrate overwhelming public support for the military. The delta between the state's "modernization" narrative and the reality of widespread conflict and resource scarcity suggests an attempt to create a "Potemkin" state to deter further external interference.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Escalation of Gold-Based Conflict:** The fracturing of the SPLM-N al-Hulu over gold resources suggests that mineral-rich areas will become increasingly violent flashpoints as various factions and state actors compete for control.
- **Deepening Militarization of the Economy:** The success and prominence of the National Cooperative Institution likely heralds a long-term shift where the military becomes the primary distributor of basic goods and services in Sudan.
- **Diplomatic Pivot to the Arab World:** The focus on the ASBU and the framing of the AU as hostile suggests a strategic pivot toward Arab regional partners as Sudan's primary diplomatic and media arena.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect an increase in community policing operations and crackdowns on perceived "Fifth Column" actors as the state hardens its domestic security posture. Continued desertions from SPLM-N ranks are likely if gold-related disputes remain unresolved.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The gold exchange in Atbara will likely become operational, serving as a key indicator of the state's ability to centralize resource revenue. The impact of the vaccine shortage on livestock could lead to a localized food security crisis by autumn.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A permanent **structural shift toward a military-led command economy** is possible, with entities like the National Cooperative Institution replacing civilian administrative functions. The relationship with the African Union may suffer lasting damage, leading to Sudanese isolation or a permanent shift toward alternative regional blocs.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Resource War Escalation:** Competition over gold mines in the Dubi area leads to intense localized fighting and civilian displacement. **Triggers:** Discovery of new gold veins or leadership changes in local mining cartels. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Severe regional instability. **Mitigations:** Establishment of secure, state-managed mining corridors.
- **Public Health Crisis (Cortisone Abuse):** Unregulated sale and use of cortisone leads to a surge in chronic health conditions among youth. **Triggers:** Continued breakdown of formal healthcare regulation. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Long-term strain on the health system and workforce. **Mitigations:** Stringent regulation of pharmacies and public awareness campaigns already initiated.

- **Livestock Sector Collapse:** A lack of veterinary vaccines leads to a massive die-off of cattle, devastating the agricultural economy. **Triggers:** Prolonged disruption of international vaccine supply chains. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Widespread famine and economic ruin. **Mitigations:** Domestic vaccine production or emergency airlift of supplies.
- **Infrastructure Sabotage:** The newly modernized media and technological infrastructure becomes a target for rebel groups or cyber-attacks. **Triggers:** High-profile media broadcasts that provoke opposition forces. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Disruption of state communications and propaganda. **Mitigations:** Enhanced physical and cyber security for media hubs.
- **Escalation of Regional Tensions:** Allegations of UAE/Israeli interference lead to a direct diplomatic or military confrontation. **Triggers:** Public release of "hard proof" of foreign military aid to rebels. **Likelihood:** Low. **Impact:** A wider regional conflict. **Mitigations:** Backchannel diplomacy and neutral international mediation.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Ground Truth in Rebel Territories:** The transcripts provide no independent verification of the internal collapse of the SPLM-N, relying solely on state-aligned narratives.
- **Economic Impact of Sanctions:** While foreign "interference" is blamed for the war, the specific **impact of international sanctions** on the Sudanese economy is conspicuously absent from the coverage.
- **Civilian Casualties:** The reports focus on humanitarian aid but provide no data on **civilian casualties** resulting from military operations in the Dubi gold areas or elsewhere.
- **Operational Details of "Fifth Column":** The frequent warnings against internal subversives are not backed by specific examples or arrests, making it unclear if this is a real threat or a tool for social control.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Potemkin" Modernization Scenario The heavy emphasis on HD TV and digital upgrades is not a sign of strength, but a **desperate information operation** to project stability to foreign investors and regional allies while the state's physical control of the country is actually receding. The transition to HD after 11 years may be a diversion from a critical military or economic failure that has not yet reached the media.

Managed Rebellion Collapse The reported fracturing of the SPLM-N al-Hulu over gold could be a **psy-op designed to encourage desertion** rather than a reflection of reality. If the state can convince enough fighters that their leaders are corrupt, it may trigger a real collapse that the military has been unable to achieve on the battlefield. A **Black Swan event** could be the sudden reunification of rebel factions in response to these state propaganda efforts, leading to a new, coordinated offensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Prepare for intensified conflict around artisanal gold mines as they become the primary source of war funding for all parties.
- **Economic:** Engage with the gold exchange in Atbara as a key barometer for Sudanese state revenue and economic stability.
- **Diplomatic:** Monitor Sudanese outreach to the Arab States Broadcasting Union as a precursor to broader regional diplomatic realignments.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Diversify away from Sudanese livestock products due to the growing risk of a vaccine-related livestock crisis.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Exercise extreme caution in any mineral trading involving Sudan to avoid "conflict gold" sourced from disputed areas like Dubi.
- **Safety Standards:** Monitor the cortisone abuse crisis as an indicator of broader pharmaceutical and public health regulatory breakdown.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Governance activity focused on regional coordination and economic regulation, with a significant emphasis on formalizing resource sectors and harmonizing state-level fiscal policies.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - **River Nile and Northern State Fiscal Coordination:** A policy framework to align tax collection and revenue management between the two states to fund joint infrastructure and humanitarian efforts.
  - **Gold Sector Regulation:** Proposals to centralize gold trading through state-monitored hubs to combat smuggling.
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
  - **Northern State Media Launch:** A high-profile ceremony marking the HD TV transition, attended by Governor Abd al-Rahman al-Hamid.
  - **Nelson Mandela Day Prison Event:** A press event at Kosti prison to showcase government adherence to human rights and prisoner welfare standards.

KEY STORIES

- **Northern State TV HD Launch:** Northern State Television transitioned to high-definition broadcasting and joined the Arab States Broadcasting Union. Governor Abd al-Rahman al-Hamid presided over the event.
- **SPLM-N al-Hulu Fractures:** Reports of internal infighting within the rebel faction over gold resources in the Dubi area, with fighters deserting to government positions.
- **National Cooperative Institution Aid Convoy:** A major aid shipment reached Kadugli, providing subsidized food and school supplies to the conflict-affected region.

- **Forgery Ring Takedown:** Khartoum traffic police dismantled a sophisticated document and car forgery network that used Starlink for communications.
- **Gold Exchange Development:** Plans for a new gold trading hub in Atbara were discussed to formalize artisanal mining revenue.
- **FAO Agricultural Aid:** The UN Food and Agriculture Organization provided seeds to 36,000 families in River Nile State to bolster food security.
- **Nelson Mandela Day in Kosti:** Prison authorities in Kosti held an event commemorating the day, focusing on humanitarian improvements for inmates.
- **Cortisone Abuse Warning:** Medical experts issued a public health warning regarding the widespread and unauthorized use of cortisone.
- **Livestock Vaccine Crisis:** The war has severely disrupted vaccine production for the Sudanese livestock sector.
- **Zakat Foundation Inauguration:** A new Zakat facility was opened in Wad al-Nura, Gezira State, to provide social welfare services.
- **Children's Eye Health Initiative:** A campaign at Makkah Eye Hospital focused on early detection of eye issues in infants.
- **Sennar Humanitarian Coordination:** Regional officials in Sennar met to coordinate aid flows for displaced populations.
- **Fifth Column Warnings:** State media repeatedly broadcast warnings against internal "alarmists" spreading disinformation about the war.
- **Kadugli Subsidized Markets:** The military cooperative opened subsidized markets in Kadugli, offering goods at 50% of market value.
- **Traffic Safety Digitalization:** The Traffic Police Department launched a new digital service portal to streamline vehicle registration and safety inspections.

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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