



GEOWATCHER WW3 RISK INDEX

DAILY BASELINE RESEARCH DOCUMENT

April 22, 2026 | Day 53 of Operation Epic Fury | Week 8

Trump extended the ceasefire open-ended without a framework hours after saying he would not, Iran refused the Islamabad second round entirely, and the war entered a suspended-animation state that neither side has accepted rhetorically or resolved diplomatically.

BASELINE: 24.6% ($\pm 0.8%$, n=10,000)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Day 53 of Operation Epic Fury is the day the war stopped escalating without resolving. Trump extended the ceasefire open-ended without a fixed deadline, hours after telling CNBC "I don't want to do that. We don't have that much time." Iran refused to send a delegation to the Islamabad second round. Vance's trip was postponed indefinitely. The channel between the parties remains technically active because Iran attached a precondition rather than a walkout, but no framework, joint statement, or written agreement exists. Both sides are observing a ceasefire neither has formally accepted.

The most consequential analytical story of Day 53 is not the extension itself but the within-a-day reversal that produced it. This is the fourth instance of Trump issuing an explicit kinetic threat and then taking a diplomatic action within 24 hours. The pattern is now analytically settled: rhetoric prices below behavior in this conflict. The will slider moves down further from 0.46 to 0.42 on the compound weight of the extension, three simultaneous approval polls landing at 33-37%, reporting on command-authority fractures inside the administration, an accelerating 25th Amendment discourse, and a War Powers clock approximately 9 days from expiration. The confirmed baseline is 24.6% (plus or minus 0.8%, n=10,000), down 9.8 points from Day 52's 34.4%. The mechanism is documented in full in Critical Question 2 and the Step 5 mandatory double pass: will and econ contracting simultaneously produced a non-linear redistribution, with US Withdrawal rising from 60.3% to 70.7% and Loss falling from 34.4% to 24.6%. Day 53 produced the largest single-session decline in the simulation series.

The ancillary actor picture is the most complex it has been in the simulation series. China's Liaoning carrier transited the Yokoate Waterway. Russia's Lavrov called the blockade unlawful while facilitating. The EU announced Hormuz-specific sanctions expansion. The Macron-Starmer Hormuz Freedom of Navigation coalition now has approximately 28 signatories. Turkey and NATO held a deliberate media-blackout meeting in Ankara. Israel coordinated potential attack plans with the US per Times of Israel. The UAE requested a currency swap. These are not marginal signals. They are the world building a post-conflict architecture around a conflict the principals cannot end.

The economic picture moderated on the extension news. Brent slipped below \$95. WTI closed at \$89.33. S&P 500 closed above 7,100 at all-time highs. Markets priced de-escalation. The structural constraint remains: the blockade is on, the waivers are expired, and Hormuz is at near-standstill. The econ slider moves down from 0.78 to 0.75 reflecting the acute price stress receding while the underlying supply disruption holds.

CRITICAL QUESTION 1: THE CEASEFIRE EXTENSION AND DIPLOMACY PATHWAYS

What Trump actually did versus what he said

On CNBC's Squawk Box Tuesday morning April 21, Trump said: "I don't want to do that. We don't have that much time" when asked about extending the ceasefire per [CNBC](#). By 4:22 PM ET, he posted on Truth Social extending the ceasefire "upon the request of Field Marshal Asim Munir, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif" per [Axios](#) and [Al Jazeera](#). No sunset date. No joint statement. No executive order. No State Department or Rubio announcement. Trump cited Iran being "seriously fractured." He explicitly maintained the blockade and directed the military to remain ready. Four ultimatum cycles, zero executions.

What Iran actually did

IRIB explicitly stated no Iranian diplomatic delegation had traveled to Islamabad as of April 21. Tasnim confirmed Iran's negotiating team notified the US via Pakistani mediators it would not attend per [CBS News](#). FM Araghchi on X called the blockade "an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire." Ghalibaf warned Iran had "new cards on the battlefield." Adviser Mahdi Mohammadi told NPR the extension "means nothing, the losing side cannot dictate terms" per [NPR](#). At the same time, UN Ambassador Iravani stated publicly: "As soon as Washington ends the naval blockade, I think the next round of negotiations will be held in Islamabad." Iran attached a precondition. It did not close the channel.

Pakistan and the mediator architecture

Pakistan produced the ceasefire extension. PM Sharif posted on X thanking Trump for "graciously accepting our request." FM Dar met both the US chargé and Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on April 21 per [Pakistan Today](#). Qatar's anchor is the April 16 Tamim-Sharif Doha meeting. No third round venue has been proposed. Pakistan remains the load-bearing mediator of a process that currently has one active party (Pakistan) and two parties in rhetorical deadlock (US and Iran).

The I2c scenario builder update

The I2c scenario builder label has been updated from "Ceasefire extended for another two weeks" to "Ceasefire extended without a fixed deadline." The original label became factually outdated when Trump extended open-endedly rather than for a specific duration. The analytical deltas remain unchanged: economic stress eases marginally and will contract further when an open-ended extension is in effect, consistent with what the model is already registering.

Bottom Line on Ceasefire and Diplomacy

The ceasefire holds in practice and has no fixed expiration. The diplomatic channel is strained but not closed. Iran attached a precondition (end the blockade) rather than a walkout. No framework, MoU, or joint statement exists. The model holds the Diplomatic Track selector ACTIVE and the Airstrikes selector PAUSED, with both under continuous reassessment pressure.

Net Probability Impact: This section holds the Airstrikes selector PAUSED and the Diplomatic Track selector ACTIVE. The I2c scenario label has been updated to reflect the open-ended extension. The swans and volatile toggles hold ON as the structural fragility of a de facto ceasefire with no formal framework sustains tail risk.

CRITICAL QUESTION 2: US POLITICAL WILL AND RHETORIC VS REALITY

The behavior ledger as of Day 53

The operator-directed analytical discipline for this session is calibration to behavior, not rhetoric. The full April 21-22 ledger is as follows. Trump said he would not extend the ceasefire; he extended it indefinitely. Trump preserved the power-plants-and-bridges ultimatum throughout the morning; he took no executive action. Trump said he expected to be bombing; no strike authorization was issued. Vance was announced as going to Islamabad; Vance stayed in Washington. Every directional statement on April 21 was paired with a contradictory action within hours. This is not an anomaly. It is now a pattern with four confirmed data points across the simulation series.

Approval and institutional pressure

Three simultaneous polls landed on April 21. AP-NORC: 33% overall approval per [NBC News](#). Reuters/Ipsos: 36%. NBC Decision Desk: 37%, with 66% disapproving Iran handling including 26% of Republicans. Energy Secretary Wright's earlier statement that sub-\$3 gasoline would not arrive until 2027 drew a Trump rebuke, a rare public cabinet break. 61% of adults oppose further US military action.

Command authority and the 25th Amendment dimension

NPR, NBC News, and The Daily Beast covered reporting that Trump was excluded from commanding or directing a specific military operation in Iran per [NPR](#) and [The Daily Beast](#). NAACP issued its first-ever formal call for Trump's removal under the 25th Amendment per [NAACP](#). Representatives Goldman, Raskin, and Swalwell filed formal 25A requests. White House communications director Cheung's hostile response to the NAACP call generated additional coverage. The War Powers 60-day clock expires approximately April 29 to May 1 per [WRIC](#) [ABC 8News](#). Senator Kaine forces weekly votes.

What the whistle and pres toggles require to flip

Both the whistle and pres toggles enter watch status on Day 53 without flipping. Whistle requires a verified discrete leak with documentable source attribution, not a circulating news report from unnamed officials. Pres requires a Cabinet member invoking 25A procedures, a publicly confirmed cognitive or physical incapacitation, or VP assumption of duties. Neither threshold has been met as of April 22. The watch status reflects that the conditions generating these discussions are real and intensifying, not that the outcome has occurred.

Step 5 mandatory double pass: why -9.8 points is defensible

The Day 53 confirmed baseline of 24.6% is 9.8 points below Day 52's 34.4%, triggering the mandatory double pass threshold. The mechanism requires documentation. Two variables moved down simultaneously in this session: will contracting from 0.46 to 0.42 and econ contracting from 0.78 to 0.75. Three variables moved marginally up: china, russia, and nato. Four variables held. On Day 52, only will moved down while six variables moved up, producing a 3.9-point decline. On Day 53, both will and econ moved down together. These are the two highest-sensitivity variables in the loss-versus-withdrawal redistribution. When they move in the same direction simultaneously, the compound effect is non-linear.

The distribution confirms this mechanism directly. US Withdrawal rose from 60.3% to 70.7%, a gain of 10.4 points. Loss fell from 34.4% to 24.6%, a loss of 9.8 points. The probability mass transferred almost entirely between these two outcomes. Peace moved marginally from 2.9% to 2.8%. Nuclear Exchange fell from 2.4% to 1.9%. The model is not saying the world is safe. The How Close to the Edge dashboard shows the World War 3 peak level at 25% of simulated timelines and Nuclear Brink at 23%. China Aggression remains at 100% CRITICAL. NATO Alliance Unity is at 35% FAILING. US Will is at 10% FAILING, the lowest actor score in the dashboard. These are not safe numbers. They describe a world where the catastrophic tail outcome is becoming less probable not because the threat environment improved but because the actor most capable of driving escalation to that tail is losing the structural capacity to do so.

The -9.8-point decline is the largest single-session decline in the simulation series. It is proportional to the compound variable movement, mechanistically sound, and internally consistent with the full distribution. Day 52's call to move both will and econ down together on a session where markets priced de-escalation and Trump executed his fourth within-day reversal produced a result that is analytically defensible, factually grounded, and correctly represents the model's reading of Day 53's conflict state. The mandatory double pass returns PASS on both technical soundness and factual defensibility.

Bottom Line on US Political Will

The confirmed baseline is 24.6% (plus or minus 0.8%, n=10,000), down 9.8 points from Day 52's 34.4%. The mandatory double pass is satisfied. The mechanism: will and econ contracting simultaneously produced a non-linear 9.8-point redistribution from the WWII loss pathway to the US Withdrawal pathway. US Withdrawal now dominates at 70.7%. The model is not pricing safety. It is pricing the historically documented outcome when US authorization structures collapse before conflict objectives are achieved.

Net Probability Impact: *This section drives the will slider DOWN from 0.46 to 0.42. The whistle and pres toggles enter watch status without flipping. The primary mechanism: demonstrated non-execution pattern is now analytically settled as doctrine rather than anomaly, calibrated against an eroding institutional authorization structure.*

CRITICAL QUESTION 3: ANCILLARY ACTOR MOVEMENTS AND FUTURE POSITIONING

China: the carrier signal and the summit balance

The Liaoning aircraft carrier transited the Yokoate Waterway April 20 per [Focus Taiwan](#) and [Taiwan News](#), the first transit since late 2025. Taiwan MND confirmed. This is a hard-power freedom-of-navigation signal timed to the ceasefire-expiry window. China MFA Guo Jiakun continued urging "ceasefire and negotiation" at the April 21 regular press conference per [Chinese MFA](#). Xi spoke with MBS April 20. Wang Yi departed April 22-26 on a five-day Cambodia-Thailand-Myanmar tour per [US News](#). Xi-Trump summit scheduled May 14-15 per [Brookings](#) remains a moderating incentive. China is simultaneously signaling hard-power confidence and protecting the summit track. Net: marginal upward on the carrier signal, china moves to 0.68.

Russia: diplomatic enabler, not weapons supplier

Lavrov-Araghchi phone call April 21 per [GlobalSecurity.org](#). Lavrov called the blockade unlawful and Iran's position "absolutely reasonable." Lavrov separately said Iran has an "inalienable right to enrich uranium" per [Fox News](#). This directly defies Trump's denuclearization demand. No verified new weapons transfers. Russia's posture is diplomatic enablement of Iran's negotiating floor, not active military support. Marginal up: russia moves to 0.76.

NATO and the European coalition building

EU HR Kallas announced April 21 at Luxembourg that EU member states have agreed to widen sanctions against Iran to include those responsible for blocking the Strait of Hormuz, with a May package per [lurer.am](#). The Macron-Starmer Strait of Hormuz Freedom of Navigation Initiative now has approximately 28 signatories, with military planners meeting in London the week of April 20, per the [GOV.UK joint statement](#). Rutte in Ankara April 21-22 with Erdogan, Fidan, and Guler per [Ukrinform](#). Deliberate media blackout; no joint statement on Iran. Hungary Tisza structural positive from April 12 holds. NATO moves up to 0.42.

North Korea: tempo holds, no new launch

No verified new launches April 21-22 in primary sources per [Newsweek](#) and [Korea Times](#). The April 19 Sinpo salvo (five Hwasong-11 Ra SRBMs with cluster warheads, Kim personally supervising) remains the anchor event. Monthly test pattern continues. Analysts noted by Newsweek characterize Pyongyang as deliberately exploiting US preoccupation. Hold at 0.55.

Israel: coordinating, not acting

Times of Israel reported April 21 that Israel "doubts prospects of Iran deal and is coordinating potential attack plans with US" per [Times of Israel](#). US Ambassador Huckabee recalled to Washington for urgent Iran consultations. Lebanon truce intact. Three TV polls show Netanyahu coalition polling below majority but no imminent collapse. The israelcol toggle holds OFF. The coordination report is a contingency-planning signal, not an imminent action indicator.

Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar: Gulf stress building

Saudi Arabia continues urging end to blockade and negotiation per [Abhs](#). No Houthi attacks on Saudi infrastructure. No emergency OPEC+ per [EBC](#). The most significant Gulf signal is economic: Trump confirmed on CNBC April 21 that a UAE currency swap line is "under consideration" per [Investing.com](#). This is an acute Gulf financial distress indicator. UAE sovereign revenues are dollar-denominated oil flows that have collapsed under Hormuz standstill conditions. Qatar backing Pakistan track via April 16 Tamim-Sharif Doha meeting per [Gulf Today](#). Saudi and Turkey hold.

Bottom Line on Ancillary Actors

The ancillary actor picture is the most complex in the simulation series. China, Russia, and North Korea all sustain gradual upward pressure. The EU and UK are building independent Hormuz enforcement architecture. Turkey is negotiating privately with NATO. Israel is contingency-planning. The Gulf is showing acute financial stress. These movements are not peripheral. They represent the world positioning for the post-conflict order before the conflict has ended.

Net Probability Impact: This section drives china UP +0.01 to 0.68, russia UP +0.01 to 0.76, nato UP +0.02 to 0.42. Saudi, turkey, and nk hold. The Macron-Starmer coalition and Kallas sanctions announcement are the primary drivers of the nato move. The structural takeaway: the alliance is hardening around the conflict perimeter even as US political will contracts at the center.

CRITICAL QUESTION 4: IRAN'S FRACTURED STATE AND MOJTABA

What the absence means at Day 58

CNN's April 21 dispatch from Tehran is the most comprehensive open-source accounting of Mojtaba's absence to date: "Iranians have still not seen or heard Mojtaba Khamenei... statements attributed to the 56-year-old cleric have been read out on national television or posted on social media. The regime has even used AI-generated videos to show Khamenei delivering messages, fueling speculation that the new supreme leader is incapacitated or abroad" per [CNN](#). TIME's April 21 analysis describes post-war Iran as "a hardline coalition trying to manage war, diplomacy, and internal competition simultaneously" per [Time](#). Trump's own language, "seriously fractured," is, unusually, corroborated by multiple Iran-watcher analyses.

The AI video dimension

CNN's April 21 report confirms the regime has used AI-generated videos to substitute for Mojtaba's appearances. This is a new qualitative dimension of the mojtaba situation that intersects with the deepfake toggle. The videos are regime-produced rather than adversarially deployed, making them different in character from the F-15 deepfakes that drove the ai toggle activation on Day 51. The deepfake toggle does not flip on Day 53 but enters watch status. The volatile toggle correctly remains ON: a regime governing through synthetic media of its own leader is operating at maximum internal volatility.

IRGC command and the Vahidi question

Axios reported April 21 that IRGC Acting Commander Vahidi and his deputies "refused to offer concessions and opposed negotiations as long as the naval blockade continues" per [Axios](#). This is the clearest open-source signal yet of an IRGC-civilian split on negotiating terms. Araghchi and Ghalibaf attended the Islamabad first round. Vahidi and IRGC hardliners oppose continuation. Iran's publicly stated precondition (end the blockade) may reflect IRGC veto power over the civilian foreign policy track rather than a negotiating position the civilian leadership controls. irandef holds at 0.24: the IRGC's capacity for kinetic action is constrained by succession chaos and the leaderless navy, but its capacity to block diplomatic progress is fully operational.

The Tasnim drone-strike claim

Tasnim News Agency reported April 21 that Iran had "launched drone strikes against multiple American vessels" in retaliation for the Touska seizure. The Pentagon has not confirmed any such event as of April 22. The claim is treated as unverified throughout this document. CENTCOM reporting of 28 vessels turned around since April 13 per [Middle East Monitor](#) does not include any US vessel damage or attack acknowledgment. The model does not price unverified claims. If the Pentagon confirms, l1e-adjacent conditions would require immediate reassessment.

Bottom Line on Iranian State

Iran is being governed by a hardline coalition with an absent supreme leader, a leaderless navy, an IRGC that vetoes diplomatic concessions, and a civilian track that cannot deliver without IRGC authorization. The mojtaba toggle stays LOCKED. The irandef slider holds. The volatile toggle correctly remains ON. The fractured-regime thesis is now corroborated by CNN, TIME, and Trump's own public characterization.

Net Probability Impact: *This section holds irandef at 0.24 and mojtaba LOCKED ON. The deepfake toggle enters watch status on the AI-generated Mojtaba video confirmation without flipping. The primary analytical signal: Iran's fractured command structure is simultaneously constraining its kinetic capacity and its diplomatic capacity. Both are moving in the same direction.*

CRITICAL QUESTION 5: ECONOMIC PICTURE AND MARKET SIGNALS

Oil and energy markets

WTI closed at \$89.33 on April 22 per [TradingEconomics](#), down 0.38% day-over-day. Brent slipped below \$95 on ceasefire extension news per [Fortune](#). The driver: markets priced the open-ended extension as a de-escalation signal. The structural constraint remains unchanged: Hormuz at near-standstill, Iranian oil waivers expired April 19 and will not be renewed, CENTCOM has turned around 28 vessels since April 13, and no Iranian exports are transiting the Strait under blockade conditions.

Equity and volatility

S&P 500 closed above 7,100, an all-time high, per [CNBC](#). Stock futures rose 0.44-0.68% overnight April 22 on the extension news. VIX closed at 19.50 April 21, up 3.3% on the day but still in a moderate range. The "TACO trade" (markets discounting worst-case Trump outcomes) remains intact. The equity signal and the physical supply signal are decoupled: markets are pricing diplomatic preservation while Hormuz remains at near-standstill. AAA national average gas at \$4.02/gal per [AAA](#), plateauing after the early-April peak.

Sanctions and financial pressure

No new OFAC action April 21-22. The most recent action remains the April 15 Shamkhani shadow-fleet network designation per [World Oil](#) and [Iran International](#). Iranian oil waivers expired April 19 without renewal. Trump's confirmation of a potential UAE currency swap line is the most significant new financial signal in the window, revealing acute Gulf sovereign stress from Hormuz standstill conditions per [Investing.com](#).

Bottom Line on Economic Stress

The econ slider moves DOWN from 0.78 to 0.75. Markets are pricing de-escalation. Oil pulled back on the extension news. The structural supply disruption is unchanged. The UAE currency swap signal is the most significant new economic indicator: it reveals acute Gulf sovereign financial stress from Hormuz standstill that has not yet appeared in commodity prices. The gap between physical supply constraint and market de-escalation pricing is the dominant economic tension heading into Day 54.

Net Probability Impact: *This section drives the econ slider DOWN from 0.78 to 0.75. The mechanism is a market de-escalation pricing reaction to the open-ended ceasefire extension, partially offset by the structural persistence of Hormuz standstill and the new UAE currency swap distress signal.*

VARIABLE ASSESSMENT: DAY 53

All nine sliders. Day 52 confirmed values from HTML source of truth. Day 53 recommendations with all second pass corrections applied.

Slider	Label	Day 52	Day 53 Rec	Direction / Rationale
china	China Posture	0.67	0.68	UP +0.01: Liaoning carrier transited Yokoate Waterway April 20, first since late 2025, confirmed by Taiwan MND. China MFA Guo Jiakun continues ceasefire and negotiation framing. Xi-Trump summit scheduled May 14-15 moderates escalation. Wang Yi on five-day regional tour April 22-26. Marginal upward signal from carrier transit.
russia	Russia Instability	0.75	0.76	UP +0.01: Lavrov-Araghchi phone call April 21 per Russian MFA press release. Lavrov called the blockade unlawful and Iran's position absolutely reasonable. Ridiculed Trump's approach in separate remarks. No verified new weapons transfers. Rhetoric hardened; actions restrained. Classic off-ramp facilitator posture.
irandef	Iran Defense Left	0.24	0.24	HOLD: Fractured regime confirmed by Trump's own language and corroborated by CNN and TIME reporting. IRGC Navy leaderless with no named successor to Tangsiri. Tasnim April 21 drone-strike claim against US vessels is Pentagon-unconfirmed and must be treated as unverified. No new capability demonstration April 21-22. Hold.
will	US	0.46	0.42	DN -0.04: Fourth ultimatum, zero executed. Trump told

	Political Will			CNBC April 21: "I don't want to do that. We don't have that much time." By 4:22 PM ET he extended the ceasefire indefinitely via Truth Social at Pakistan's request. Three simultaneous polls April 21: AP-NORC 33% approval, Reuters/Ipsos 36%, NBC 37%, with 66% disapproving Iran handling. Command-instability reporting: NPR, NBC, Daily Beast covered reports Trump was excluded from a military planning operation. NAACP first-ever 25A call. Goldman, Raskin, Swalwell formal 25A push. War Powers clock approximately 9 days from expiration.
nato	NATO Cohesion	0.40	0.42	UP +0.02: EU HR Kallas April 21 at Luxembourg: EU widening sanctions against Iran to include those blocking Hormuz, May package. Macron-Starmer Strait of Hormuz Freedom of Navigation Initiative approximately 28 signatories including Germany, Netherlands, Korea, Australia, Bahrain; military planners meeting London week of April 20. Rutte-Erdogan Ankara meeting reinforces Turkey NATO embed. Hungary Tisza structural positive holds from April 12.
saudi	Saudi Stability	0.52	0.52	HOLD: No Houthi attacks on Saudi infrastructure April 21-22. MBS continues urging end to blockade and negotiation. No emergency OPEC+. Next ministerial June 7. Aramco posture unchanged. Hold.
econ	Economic Stress	0.78	0.75	DN -0.03: WTI closed \$89.33 April 22 per TradingEconomics, down 0.38% day-over-day. Brent slipped below \$95 on ceasefire extension news. S&P 500 above 7,100 all-time high. Stock futures rose 0.44-0.68% overnight on extension. VIX 19.50. AAA national average \$4.02/gal plateauing. Market pricing de-escalation as baseline. Structural overhang remains (blockade on, waivers expired) but acute price stress has receded.
turkey	Turkey Stability	0.47	0.47	HOLD: Rutte-Erdogan Ankara meeting April 21-22 with deliberate media blackout per Ukrinform. No joint public statement recovered on Iran. Fidan continuing mediation posture. No military developments in window. Hold.
nk	N. Korea Opportunism	0.55	0.55	HOLD: No verified new launches April 21-22 in primary sources. April 19 Sinpo salvo (five Hwasong-11 Ra SRBMs, cluster warheads, Kim personally supervised) remains the anchor. Monthly test pattern continues. Newsweek cites analysts noting Pyongyang deliberately exploiting US preoccupation. Hold.

OPERATIONAL SELECTORS TABLE

Five selectors from HTML source of truth. Day 53 assessment. All five hold existing states.

Selector	Current State	Rationale
Naval Blockade (iran.blockade)	ACTIVE (true) LOCKED	Blockade enforcing. Trump April 21 Truth Social explicitly: "continue the Blockade and, in all other respects, remain ready and able." 28 vessels turned around since April 13 per CENTCOM. HOLD ACTIVE + LOCKED.
Airstrikes (iran.airstrikes)	PAUSED (false)	No US strikes on Iranian territory April 21-22. No execute authority issued. Ceasefire now open-ended without a fixed deadline. HOLD PAUSED. Flag for reassessment if Iran

		executes kinetic action or formal talks collapse entirely.
Ground Ops (iran.ground)	PAUSED (false)	No indicators of change. HOLD PAUSED.
Ukraine Aid (aid)	REDUCED	No change in window. US strategic attention consumed by Iran theater. Zelensky April 19 condemnation of Russian crude waiver reflects continued Ukraine erosion. HOLD REDUCED.
Diplomatic Track (diplo)	ACTIVE (true)	Channel strained but not closed. Iran conditioned return on blockade end; did not formally walk away. UN Ambassador Iravani April 21: "As soon as Washington ends the naval blockade, the next round of negotiations will be held in Islamabad." Pakistan actively mediating. Dar meeting US and Chinese ambassadors. HOLD ACTIVE.

WILDCARD TOGGLE ASSESSMENT TABLE

All 14 toggles. Three enter watch status: deepfake, whistle, pres. No toggles flip state this session.

Toggle (HTML key)	Display Name	Current	Rec	Rationale
swans	Black Swan Events	ON	ON	Open-ended ceasefire with no framework, fractured Iranian command, Mojtaba absence Day 58, and War Powers clock at approximately 9 days all sustain elevated tail risk. HOLD.
volatile	Volatile Leadership	ON	ON	Trump executing 180-degree reversal within a single trading day. Mojtaba governing through AI-generated proxies per CNN. IRGC acting independently of diplomatic track. HOLD.
drone	Drone Saturation	ON	ON	Background operational tempo continues at established level. Day 51 activation basis intact. No discrete deactivating event. HOLD.
ai	AI-Enabled Escalation	ON	ON	Day 51 activation basis intact. CNN April 21 confirms AI-generated videos used to substitute for Mojtaba appearances, a new dimension of AI use in the conflict. HOLD.
bio	Biological Incident	OFF	OFF	No CBRN indicators. No CISA or Defense.gov advisory. HOLD.
sat	Satellite Denial (ASAT)	ON	ON	GPS and AIS interference continuing in Arabian Gulf. Kalinka jammers against Starlink ongoing. Jolfa arrests remain operative anchor. HOLD.
deepfake	Deepfake Disruption	OFF	OFF WATC H	CNN April 21 confirms AI-generated Mojtaba videos circulating on Iranian state media. This is a new discrete use of synthetic media in the conflict. Does not yet meet the threshold of a destabilizing information event, but enters watch status. Flag for dedicated session assessment if a second AI video incident occurs.
debt	US Debt Crisis Trigger	OFF	OFF	No new debt-ceiling or X-date pressure. No acute Treasury crisis event. HOLD.
whistle	Whistleblower Leak	OFF	OFF WATC H	NPR, NBC News, and The Daily Beast covered reporting that Trump was excluded from commanding a military operation in Iran. The sourcing circulates from a single original report. Does not yet meet the qualifying threshold for a verified leak, but enters watch status given the 25th Amendment discourse accelerating around

				it.
social	Social Media Cascade	OFF	OFF	Social:false is a permanent protocol setting. No qualifying cascade event. HOLD.
pres	US President Incapacitated	OFF	OFF WATCH	25th Amendment discourse accelerated sharply: NAACP first-ever 25A call, Goldman, Raskin, Swalwell formal push, Trump's within-day reversal on ceasefire extension generating command-authority questions. No Cabinet action, no VP assumption of duties, no cognitive assessment. Enters watch status only. HOLD.
putin	Putin Removed	OFF	OFF	Putin domestically stable. H1 2026 China visit confirmed. No removal indicators. HOLD.
mojtaba	New Iranian Leadership Unstable	ON (LOCKED)	ON (LOCKED)	Day 58 zero authenticated audiovisual. CNN April 21 dispatch: "Iranians have still not seen or heard Mojtaba Khamenei." Regime using AI-generated videos to substitute for appearances. TIME April 21: hardline coalition managing war, diplomacy, and internal competition simultaneously. LOCKED until verified audiovisual confirmed.
israelcol	Israel Government Collapse	OFF	OFF	Israel-Lebanon truce intact. Three TV polls show coalition weak but not collapsed. No imminent indicator. HOLD.

SCENARIO BUILDER CHANGE RECORD

One scenario builder change executed this session per Template 6 format.

SCENARIO BUILDER CHANGE

Key: l2c

Old label: "Ceasefire extended for another two weeks"

New label: "Ceasefire extended without a fixed deadline"

Weight changes: NONE. Deltas unchanged (econ: -0.04, will: -0.04).

Logic changes: NONE.

Rationale: The original label became factually outdated when Trump extended the ceasefire open-endedly without a fixed deadline on April 21, 2026. "For another two weeks" described a duration that was never specified in the actual extension. The updated label accurately describes the current state: an indefinite extension with no sunset date, no framework, and no joint statement. The analytical deltas remain appropriate for any extension scenario.

Cap check: Confirmed. econ $0.75 - 0.04 = 0.71$. will $0.42 - 0.04 = 0.38$. Both within SB_CAPS (min 0.02, max 0.97).

MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT: APRIL 21-22

Trump's within-a-day reversal from "I don't want to do that" to an open-ended ceasefire extension is the single most consequential development of the April 21-22 window, and it is more analytically significant than the Day 52 Bloomberg slip precisely because it is now a pattern, not an anomaly.

The Day 51 mandatory double pass documented a 22.6-point jump driven by technology wildcards. The Day 52 standard review documented a 3.9-point decline driven by will contracting against the non-execution pattern. Day 53 is the session that confirms that contraction as doctrine. Four ultimatums, four paired diplomatic actions within 24 hours. The model is not guessing about presidential behavior at this point. It is reading a settled pattern.

The extension accomplished something the prior three ultimatum cycles did not: it produced a clear public articulation of why Trump will not execute. His own language on CNBC: "I don't want to do that. We don't have that much time," combined with the Truth Social extension post and the Pakistan framing reveals the operative constraint. Trump needs the channel to stay open because the alternative (executing the ultimatum with no diplomatic off-ramp) produces outcomes he cannot control. That is a structural will constraint, not a tactical choice.

The ancillary actor dimension is the secondary story. The Kallas sanctions announcement, the Macron-Starmer coalition at 28 signatories, the Rutte-Erdogan Ankara meeting, and Israel's coordination on contingency plans all happened in the same 24-hour window. The world is not waiting for the US-Iran bilateral to resolve. It is building the architecture of the post-conflict order. That is what makes the ancillary movements analytically important on Day 53: they are structural, not reactive.

SUMMARY FOR CALIBRATION

Escalatory Signals: April 21-22

Liaoning carrier transit of Yokoate Waterway. Lavrov calling blockade unlawful and Iran's position "absolutely reasonable." Lavrov asserting Iran's inalienable right to enrich uranium. Israel coordinating contingency attack plans with US. Ghalibaf threatening "new cards on the battlefield." Iran maintaining Hormuz standstill; 28 vessels turned around. Tasnim drone-strike claim (unverified). AI-generated Mojtaba videos confirmed by CNN as regime-produced. Vahidi and IRGC hardliners blocking concessions. UAE requesting a currency swap line from Treasury and the Fed. Mojtaba Day 58 absence. 25th Amendment discourse accelerating. Command-authority fracture reporting circulating. Kallas EU sanctions widening to Hormuz. Macron-Starmer coalition at 28 signatories.

De-escalatory Signals: April 21-22

Trump extended ceasefire indefinitely with no fixed expiration. No US kinetic action April 21-22. No new Iranian ballistic missile launches or confirmed drone strikes. No Houthi Red Sea commercial attacks. No Iraqi militia escalation. Israel-Lebanon truce intact. Brent slipped below \$95 on extension news. S&P 500 at all-time high. Stock futures rose overnight. Iran's UN Ambassador Iravani kept the channel open with conditional return language. Pakistan actively mediating. Turkey mediating in Antalya. Saudi urging negotiation. Qatar backing Pakistan track. No OPEC+ emergency meeting.

Bottom Line on Day 53

The confirmed baseline is 24.6% (plus or minus 0.8%, n=10,000), down 9.8 points from Day 52's 34.4%, the largest single-session decline in the simulation series. The mechanism: will and econ contracting simultaneously produced a compound non-linear redistribution, with US Withdrawal rising to 70.7% and Loss falling to 24.6%. The world is not safer. The US is less likely to sustain engagement through to a decisive outcome. 24.6% is the first sub-25% reading in the series since the early escalation phase. It represents a conflict in suspended animation: no kinetic escalation, no agreement, a ceasefire neither side has formally accepted, a blockade Iran calls an act of war, and a

succession regime whose declared supreme leader has not been seen in 58 days.

KEY UNKNOWNNS

KEY UNKNOWNNS: OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE GAPS

1. Mojtaba Khamenei physical and political status

Day 58 with zero authenticated audiovisual. CNN April 21 confirms regime is using AI-generated videos to substitute for Mojtaba's appearances, a qualitative escalation in concealment. Article 110 of Iran's constitution requires the Supreme Leader to personally ratify any ceasefire extension or peace agreement. Whether Mojtaba has the physical and legal capacity to execute this ratification from his current undisclosed location is not determinable from open sources.

Black Swan Pathway: *Confirmed death or incapacitation forces Assembly of Experts reconvening under active war conditions with IRGC assuming de facto command, activating I5a and invalidating any agreement framework in negotiation.*

2. Whether the Tasnim April 21 drone-strike claim reflects any actual kinetic event

Tasnim News Agency reported April 21 that Iran had "launched drone strikes against multiple American vessels" in retaliation for the Touska seizure. The Pentagon has not confirmed any such strike as of April 22. The US has suppressed acknowledgment of Iranian kinetic actions before when doing so served ceasefire preservation goals. Whether the Tasnim claim represents a genuine unreported attack, Iranian information operations, or a mischaracterization of background militia activity is not verifiable from open sources.

Black Swan Pathway: *A confirmed Iranian drone strike on a US naval vessel in the Hormuz theater would constitute an I1e-adjacent event, collapsing the ceasefire on its primary air-axis and triggering immediate kinetic reauthorization regardless of the extension framework.*

3. Rutte-Erdogan Ankara meeting substantive outcomes

Rutte conducted an Ankara visit April 21-22 with Erdogan, Fidan, and Defense Minister Guler under a deliberate media blackout per Ukrinform. No joint public statement on Iran was recovered from open sources. Whether Turkey and NATO reached any private understanding about the conditions under which Turkey would participate in a Hormuz Freedom of Navigation deployment, modify its Iran mediation posture, or shift its position on the July Ankara NATO summit agenda is not known.

Black Swan Pathway: *A private Turkey-NATO commitment to participate in Hormuz FON deployment would materially harden the alliance posture, elevate the nato slider, and increase the probability of a multilateral confrontation with Iran independent of US political will constraints.*

4. The UAE currency swap request status and Gulf financial stress depth

Trump confirmed on CNBC April 21 that a UAE currency swap line with Treasury and the Fed is "under consideration." MBZ has not commented publicly. This is the first signal of acute Gulf sovereign financial distress from the blockade. Whether the request reflects a routine hedging move or a genuine liquidity crisis among Gulf states whose dollar-denominated oil revenues have collapsed is not determinable from the currency swap announcement alone.

Black Swan Pathway: *A confirmed Gulf sovereign liquidity crisis would force an emergency OPEC+ extraordinary meeting, accelerate pressure on MBS to break with the US blockade position, and drive the econ slider sharply upward regardless of Brent spot price.*

5. Iran's "new cards on the battlefield": capability or signaling

IRGC Commander Ghalibaf warned April 21 that Iran had "prepared to reveal new cards on the battlefield." This

phrase is ambiguous by design. It could refer to new proxy activation orders, undisclosed missile reconstitution, a cyber operation, or a diplomatic maneuver disguised as a military threat. IRGC Navy Commander Naqdi's April 18 claim of a "May 2026 production date" for missile replenishment is unverifiable. The actual content of Ghalibaf's threat is not recoverable from open sources.

Black Swan Pathway: *If Iran activates a simultaneous Hezbollah, Houthi, and Iraqi militia operation alongside a verified ballistic missile launch against a US position, the compound effect would overwhelm the model's current toggle configuration and drive a rapid cascade through swans, volatile, and possibly I1e simultaneously.*

6. Command authority status inside the Trump administration after exclusion reporting

NPR, NBC News, and The Daily Beast covered reporting that Trump was excluded from commanding or directing a specific military operation in Iran, with Hegseth managing operational authority. No executive order, court filing, or Congressional notification has confirmed this claim. The gap between statutory command authority (President as Commander-in-Chief) and reported operational practice (Hegseth acting as operational director) is not resolvable from open sources.

Black Swan Pathway: *If command authority is genuinely fractured between Trump and Hegseth and this is exposed publicly through a whistleblower, a Congressional hearing, or an operational failure: the pres and whistle toggles would flip simultaneously, compressing the will slider and creating a constitutional crisis overlay on an active conflict.*