

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

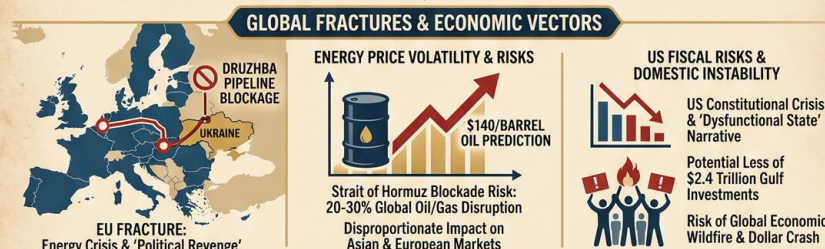
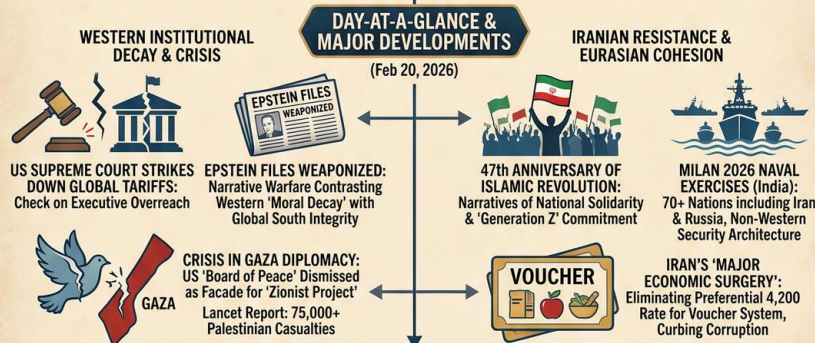
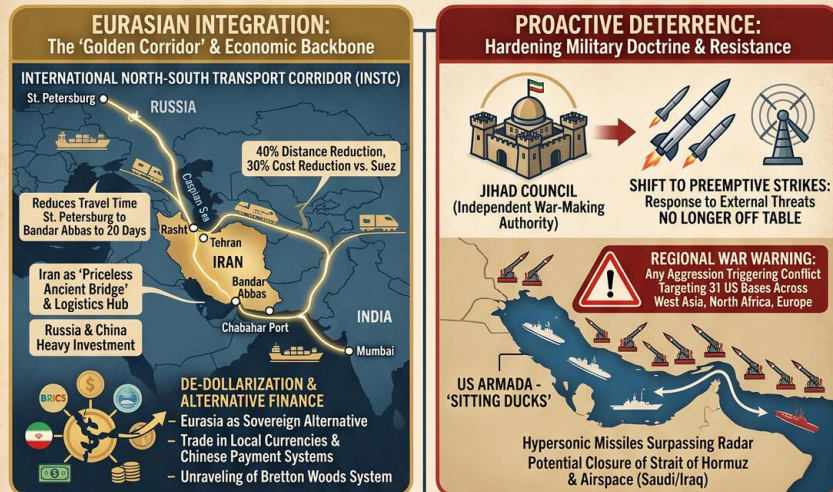
PRESSTV

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

EURASIAN INTEGRATION & PROACTIVE DETERRENCE DEFINE IRANIAN STRATEGIC POSTURE

Amid Escalating Western Pressure and Regional Conflict



THE NEW GLOBAL REALITY: A SHARPLY DIVIDED WORLD - DECADENT WEST vs. RISING, PRINCIPLED EAST (Narrative Frame)

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CONFLICT

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The diplomatic and strategic landscape on February 20, 2026, is characterized by Iran's aggressive pivot toward Eurasian integration and a hardening of its military doctrine. The central theme is the development of the [International North-South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\)](#), which is being framed as a vital economic lifeline and a counter to Western sanctions. This "Golden Corridor" project, involving heavy investment from [Russia and cooperation with China](#), aims to transform Iran into a primary hub for global trade, bypassing traditional Western-controlled maritime routes. Simultaneously, Iran has signaled a shift from a defensive security posture to a [proactive strategy of deterrence](#), warning that any aggression will result in a regional war targeting U.S. and Israeli assets.

Internationally, the legitimacy of the U.S. administration is being challenged both

domestically and abroad. The [U.S. Supreme Court's decision](#) to strike down sweeping global tariffs is portrayed as a major check on executive overreach, while the "Board of Peace" for Gaza is dismissed by regional actors as a [unilateral facade](#) intended to sideline the United Nations. Narrative warfare is intensive, with prominent coverage given to the "Epstein files" to delegitimize the U.S. political elite as [morally compromised](#) and vulnerable to Zionist coercion. This is contrasted with the "national solidarity" observed during the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The economic environment remains volatile, with Iran continuing its "major economic surgery" by [eliminating the preferential exchange rate](#) (the 4,200 Toman rate) in favor of a goods voucher system. This move, while causing short-term price shocks, is presented as a necessary step to curb corruption and rent-seeking. Globally, the prospect of an Iranian [blockade of the Strait of Hormuz](#) remains a significant risk factor, with analysts warning of a potential 20-30% disruption in global oil and gas flows that would disproportionately affect Asian and European markets.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **The "Golden Corridor" Strategic Expansion:** Iran and Russia have formalized agreements for the [162 km Rasht-Astara rail line](#), a critical link in the INSTC that reduces travel time from St. Petersburg to Bandar Abbas to just 20 days. This project is framed as the **backbone of a new Eurasian economic order** that leverages Iran's geography as a "priceless ancient bridge" between East and West.

- **Shift to Proactive Military Doctrine:** Leadership in Tehran has articulated a new policy where [preemptive strikes](#) are no longer off the table. The formation of a "Jihad Council," led by former IRGC officials, indicates an **independent war-making authority** designed to respond to external threats with immediate and decisive action against the "United States Empire."
- **U.S. Judicial Check on Executive Power:** The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that [President Trump overstepped authority](#) by imposing global tariffs under emergency powers. This development is analyzed as a "stop gap" against a president attempting to transition from an "elected consul" to an "emperor."
- **Crisis in Gaza Diplomacy:** The U.S.-led "Board of Peace" is facing widespread skepticism and [backlash from regional powers](#) like Pakistan. Critics argue the initiative is a "drama" intended to facilitate a "Zionist project" of reoccupation and genocide, rather than a genuine peace process.
- **Narrative Weaponization of Elite Scandal:** The release of the "Epstein files" is being used to [contrast Western moral decay](#) with the perceived integrity of Global South leaders. Narratives suggest that U.S. policy toward Iran is dictated not by national interest, but by **blackmailed officials** and Zionist donors.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization: The completion of the [Milan 2026 naval exercises](#) in India, featuring over 70 countries including Iran and Russia, underscores a trend toward **non-Western security architectures**. Simultaneously, Iran has issued stern

warnings that any attack on its soil will trigger a regional conflict involving [31 U.S. bases](#) across West Asia, North Africa, and Europe.

Diplomacy & Statecraft: Tensions have escalated between [Ukraine and EU members Hungary and Slovakia](#) following the blockage of the Druzhba pipeline. This is being framed as "political revenge" orchestrated by the European Commission against states that opposed loans to Kiev, signaling a **deepening fracture** within the European Union.

Macroeconomics & Trade: Iran's domestic governance is focused on the removal of the [preferential currency rate](#). This "economic surgery" aims to replace subsidies with a voucher system to eliminate "rent-seeking" and price distortions. Official data suggests commercial forex market volume has [risen to \\$145 million daily](#) following the reform.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance: The arrest of [Prince Andrew in the UK](#) on suspicion of misconduct and his links to Jeffrey Epstein are being used to highlight "institutional decay" in the British monarchy and government. This is presented as another example of a "dramatic downfall" for Western elites.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of History and Memory: A significant portion of the day's programming is dedicated to **anti-colonial documentaries**. Reports on [British colonization of Ireland](#) and [CIA interventions in 1950s Indonesia](#) serve as a meta-narrative to frame current U.S. and Israeli actions as a continuation of long-standing imperialist tactics. This "psychological preparation" of

the audience reinforces the idea that **resistance is the only rational choice** for Global South nations.

Eurasia as a Sovereign Alternative: There is a clear trend toward describing the "Global North" as a **decline-phase empire** and the "Global South" (led by China, Russia, and Iran) as the future of civilization. The [BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#) are highlighted as the new centers of power that allow nations to maintain "true sovereignty" outside the U.S. dollar-based system.

Information Warfare and Media Criticism: The broadcasts engage in **direct critique of Western media framing**. Analysts argue that outlets like The Economist and The Guardian "package" war as diplomacy and [quietly legitimize](#) assassination threats. By deconstructing these narratives, the network seeks to condition its audience to view all Western diplomatic overtures as **traps or delaying tactics**.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

- **Iran:** Despite external pressure, the state portrays high **internal cohesion**. The [millions attending the 47th anniversary rallies](#) are used as proof that "Generation Z" and the youth are committed to the revolutionary paradigm of resistance. However, the mention of "6,500 unfinished projects" and the need for \$33.3 billion in investment suggests **significant fiscal constraints** being managed through austerity measures and subsidy reforms [to prevent total economic collapse](#).

- **United States:** The U.S. is depicted as being on the verge of **constitutional crisis**. The Supreme Court ruling on tariffs and the public outcry over "unhinged" foreign policy toward Greenland and Canada suggest a [failing government mandate](#). Narrative focus on "ICE agents murdering innocents" and widespread poverty aims to portray the U.S. as a **dysfunctional state** that uses war as a diversion.
- **Argentina:** Widespread labor strikes against ["ultra-capitalist" labor reforms](#) indicate severe domestic instability and a rejection of the free-market agenda, which unions describe as "labor slavery."

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The "outside world" is framed as a **fracturing multipolar arena** where the U.S. is losing its "mandate of heaven." Iran is adapting by **forging deep strategic partnerships** with Russia and China. This is not merely economic but military; the "trilateral agreement" signed in January 2025 provides Iran with [security guarantees and technological upgrades](#) in air defense and radar, enabling it to hit "sitting duck" U.S. armadas with high accuracy.

In Europe, the framing is one of **enforced vassalage** that is starting to crack. The energy crisis in Europe is blamed on "U.S. profiting off the war in Ukraine," leading states like Hungary and Slovakia to seek **alternative oil routes** and diplomatic settlements with Moscow, despite the European Commission's "orders" to the contrary [to destroy their own economies](#).

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic focus remains on **de-dollarization** and the resilience of sanctioned economies. The unraveling of the Bretton Woods system is cited as a major trend, accelerated by the "illegal economic warfare" of the West. Iran is positioning itself as a **logistic hub for Eurasia**, offering tax-free zones and specialized incentives to attract foreign investment into its ports and manufacturing sectors.

Key Economic Vectors:

- **Energy Prices:** Predictions suggest oil could hit [\\$140 per barrel](#) if conflict escalates in the Persian Gulf.
- **Trade Routes:** The INSTC is expected to offer a [30% reduction in costs](#) and a 40% reduction in distance for goods traveling from Russia to the Persian Gulf compared to the Suez route.
- **Currency Reform:** The Toman/Dollar official rate of 4,200 has been [abolished](#) to reflect market realities and stop the "leakage of resources" through smuggling.
- **U.S. Fiscal Risks:** Analysts warn that a conflict with Iran could lead to the **loss of \$2.4 trillion** in Gulf state investments in the U.S. and cause former allies to "dump U.S. bonds" [crashing the value of the dollar](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Personnel shifts and legal actions against high-profile individuals are used to signal the **erosion of Western institutional trust**.

- **Prince Andrew (UK):** Formally stripped of his title in October 2025; his [arrest for misconduct in public office](#) in early 2026 is highlighted as a symptom of a "dramatic downfall" of the British establishment.

- **Ali Shamkhani (Iran):** Indicated as the [leader of the "Jihad Council,"](#) signaling a more militarized and independent decision-making structure in Iranian foreign policy.
- **Donald Trump (U.S.):** Characterized as a "narcissistic deviant" being [manipulated by the "Epstein files"](#) and the Zionist lobby (specifically Miriam Adelson) to launch an unpopular war.
- **Michelle O'Neal (Northern Ireland):** Her election as [First Minister](#) is framed as a historic nationalist victory and a step toward the reunification of Ireland and the end of British "jurisdiction."

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial hierarchy prioritize **strategic infrastructure (INSTC)** and **geopolitical defiance**. Lead stories focus on Iran's regional military drills and the failure of Western-led peace initiatives. Buried stories include specific details on domestic inflation or opposition voices within Iran, which are replaced by a focus on foreign "manufactured consent" and media manipulation. The tone is **consistently nationalistic and anti-imperialist**, using historical analogies to provide a "long-view" perspective that favors the Global South. A conspicuous omission is any detailed discussion of the **military capabilities of Western allies** beyond their perceived vulnerabilities; the U.S. armada is repeatedly dismissed as a "sitting duck."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's narrative patterns suggest a world sharply divided between a decadent, failing West and a rising, principled East.

COUNTRIES

- **Iran:** Framed as a **resilient, principled civilization** that is the "only thing preventing Israel from being the most powerful country" in the region [through the axis of resistance](#).
- **Russia:** Portrayed as a **loyal and powerful ally** that is "restoring its relationship" with the East after being betrayed by European leadership [during the cold war era](#).
- **United States:** Characterized as a **predatory and chaotic empire** that is "mired in propaganda" and governed by blackmailed elites who are "high on their own supply" [of misinformation](#).
- **Israel:** Depicted as a **violent "Zionist entity"** whose global ratings have "plummeted crazily" and which acts as an "outpost for imperial interest" [masked by Zionism](#).

LEADERS

- **Ayatollah Khamenei:** Portrayed as a **visionary and bold leader** with a "direct line to the people" who cannot be intimidated by "mafia don" tactics [from Washington](#).
- **Donald Trump:** Characterized as an **inept and "unhinged" enforcer** who makes "unprovoked attacks" while facing internal judicial defeats [from the Supreme Court](#).
- **Benjamin Netanyahu:** Framed as a **delusional partner in war** who has spent 30 years urging the U.S. to "knock out Iran" to ensure Israeli hegemony [over West Asia](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The persistent mention of the ["Epstein files"](#) acts as a psychological operation to undermine the moral authority of Western negotiators. By labeling the U.S. administration as "morally compromised," the broadcast preemptively invalidates any future diplomatic demands.
- **Psy-ops through Historical Analogy:** The focus on the [1958 Indonesian coup](#) is a clear warning to the current domestic audience about the potential for CIA-led "color revolutions" and sabotage during periods of unrest.
- **Deconstruction of "Manufactured Consent":** The program **Exposé** specifically identifies Western media terminology (e.g., "limited attack," "red lines") as [colonial language](#) designed to make "international crimes into debate topics."

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Escalation of Kinetic Conflict:** Based on the "lying" nature of diplomatic settlements and the buildup of naval forces, analysts hypothesize an [attack on Iran within 24 to 36 hours](#). Iran is expected to respond with hypersonic missiles that "surpass radar systems."
- **Fracturing of NATO Airspace:** A critical hypothesis is that [Saudi Arabia and Iraq will close their airspace](#) in the event of a U.S. attack, fundamentally altering the corridors available for air operations and forcing a "regional war" involving up to eight countries.

- **Global Economic Collapse:** A blockade of the Strait of Hormuz is anticipated to trigger a ["global economic wildfire,"](#) disproportionately impacting the fragile, "stagnant" U.S. economy and potentially ending the U.S. dollar's status as the reserve currency.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect heightened **maritime incidents** in the Persian Gulf as drills conclude. Likely domestic unrest in Argentina and the UK as labor and social scandals reach peak intensity. Potential for a "limited strike" by the U.S. met by [Iran's rejection of symbolic targets](#), leading to rapid escalation.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The formalization of **Iranian-Egyptian diplomatic relations after 47 years** could radically shift the axis of power in North Africa. U.S. midterm elections will likely be dominated by the fallout from the SCOTUS tariff ruling and potential military involvement in West Asia.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Completion of the [INSTC rail links](#) will consolidate a permanent "Eurasian Fortress," making Western sanctions largely ineffective. Continued "militarization of American society" under current leadership could lead to a [transition toward authoritarian governance](#) in the U.S., as suggested by analysts comparing current leaders to Julius Caesar.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current environment is high-risk, with several flashpoints capable of triggering global-scale catastrophes.

- **Regional War Escalation:** Triggers: A "limited strike" on Iranian soil or nuclear facilities. Likelihood: High, given the "failing diplomacy" narrative. Impact: Catastrophic, involving direct conflict between U.S., Israel, Iran, Russia, and potentially China. Mitigations: Return to [JCPOA protocols](#) and UN-led mediation.
- **Global Energy Shock:** Triggers: Closure of the Strait of Hormuz or the Druzhba pipeline. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: \$140+ oil, widespread industrial shutdowns in Europe and Asia. Mitigations: Strategic diversification of routes and [oil price caps](#).
- **U.S. Constitutional Instability:** Triggers: Executive defiance of the SCOTUS tariff ruling or further use of "emergency powers." Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Domestic civil unrest and ["vicious games"](#) to distract from economic collapse. Mitigations: Stronger legislative checks on the presidency.
- **Humanitarian Collapse in Gaza:** Triggers: Failure of the "Board of Peace" to allow the [minimum 600 trucks daily](#). Likelihood: Very High. Impact: Mass starvation and a "third Intifada." Mitigations: UN-mandated international stabilization force that includes regional players.

- **Collapse of the Petro-Dollar:** Triggers: Successful implementation of the [Chinese cross-border interbank payment system](#) by Iran and Russia. Likelihood: High (Long-term). Impact: Drastic reduction in U.S. global economic leverage. Mitigations: Fundamental reform of the Bretton Woods institutions.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Economic Impact of Sanctions on Russia:** While the broadcast focuses on Europe's suffering, it fails to detail the **long-term damage to the Russian internal economy** despite its pivot to the East.
- **Internal Dissent in Iran:** The narrative of total "national solidarity" ignores **underlying social tensions** regarding the removal of the 4,200 rate, which has historically led to civil unrest.
- **Capabilities of Israel's "Iron Dome":** The broadcast dismisses the system's effectiveness as "nonsense" [and propaganda](#), without providing verified technical data on Iranian missile success rates.
- **U.S. Political Nuance:** The framing of the U.S. government as a "gang" governed by "gangsters" obscures the **genuine policy debates** within the U.S. State Department and Pentagon regarding the risks of war.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Paper Tiger" Infrastructure:** While the INSTC is hailed as a game-changer, the [paradox of vast potential vs. serious infrastructure limitations](#) (like the missing 162 km rail gap) suggests that Iran may be years away from being a truly viable transit hub, using the project as a **propaganda tool for current resilience**.
- **Strategic De-escalation through Chaos:** Trump's "Board of Peace" and "unhinged" threats might be a **deliberate "Madman Theory" application** to force all regional parties—including Iran and the Arab states—to the negotiating table out of fear of unpredictable total war.
- **Black Swan Event:** The **death or assassination of a high-ranking cleric** during the Ramadan tension [at Al-Aqsa](#) could trigger an immediate, non-state religious conflict that surpasses state-level control and renders formal military doctrines irrelevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize **multilateral maritime security** to prevent the closure of critical chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz, which are now being openly used as geopolitical leverage.
- Establish **independent communication channels** with the Iranian "Jihad Council" to avoid miscalculation during the transition to a proactive military doctrine.

- Re-evaluate **sanction effectiveness** in light of the accelerating integration of the Eurasian economic bloc.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Diversify **supply chains away from reliance on U.S.-China trade** as the two blocs continue to fracture and use trade as a weapon.
- Prepare for **extreme energy price volatility** by hedging against a \$140/barrel oil scenario in the next quarter.
- Monitor **de-dollarization trends** in the "Golden Corridor" region, specifically the shift toward Chinese and local currency payment systems.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Recent legislative activity in the U.S. and Iran signals a move toward **crisis management and structural protectionism**.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (1977) - U.S.:** Scrutinized by the Supreme Court; ruling established that [it does not authorize general tariffs](#) without a "true national emergency."
- **Currency Subsidization Reform - Iran:** Legislative decision to [eliminate the 4,200 rate](#) and implement a "goods voucher system" for the poor.
- **Labor Reform Bill - Argentina:** controversial overhaul aimed at providing [flexibility in dismissal and collective bargaining](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Trump "Board of Peace" Inaugural Session:** Held in Washington; [publicly praised Pakistan's PM](#) while facing criticism for lacking Western allies' support.
- **Milan 2026 Opening Ceremony:** Naval exercise in India; [Iran's Rear Admiral Irani](#) met with counterparts to discuss maritime security cooperation.

KEY STORIES

- **The Golden Corridor (INSTC):** Iran and Russia formalize a massive 7,200 km trade route project reducing distance to Russia by 40% and costs by 30%. [The 162 km Rasht-Astara line](#) is the final missing link funded by a 1.3 billion euro Russian investment.
- **U.S. Supreme Court Tariff Ruling:** The Court strikes down Trump's global tariffs, ruling that the 1977 IEEPA law [cannot be used for broad taxes](#) during a "national emergency."
- **Iranian Proactive Military Shift:** Leadership moves to a [proactive strategy](#) including potential preemptive strikes on U.S. bases if attacked. [A "Jihad Council"](#) is reportedly managing these escalatory military decisions.
- **The Gaza "Board of Peace":** A U.S.-led initiative to rebuild Gaza with a [\\$70 billion goal](#) is widely rejected as a "drama" and a Zionist project to sideline the UN.
- **Lancet Casualty Report:** A new survey in the Lancet Global Health Medical Journal reports [over 75,000 Palestinians killed](#) in the first 15 months of conflict, far exceeding the official 49,000 figure.

- **Arrest of Prince Andrew:** The younger brother of King Charles is [arrested on suspicion of misconduct in public office](#) following a massive release of "Epstein files" in early 2026.
- **Milan 2026 Naval Exercises:** A 70-nation exercise in India featuring [Iran and Russia](#) signals a shift toward a "multipolar maritime security" environment.
- **Iran Economic Turning Point:** The Iranian government [removes the 4,200 preferential currency rate](#) to end smuggling and "rent-seeking," resulting in short-term price shocks in food categories.
- **Argentina General Strike:** Unions launch a [24-hour strike](#) against labor reforms they characterize as "labor slavery."
- **Ramadan Tensions at Al-Aqsa:** Israeli forces [limit access to 10,000 worshippers](#) on the first Friday of Ramadan, leading to hundreds being sent back at the Qalandia checkpoint.
- **The Druzhba Pipeline Blockage:** Ukraine blocks oil flows to [Hungary and Slovakia](#), sparking an intra-EU crisis over energy and political "retaliation."
- **Indonesia 1958 Documentary:** A report detailing the [CIA's role in the 1958 coup attempt](#) against Sukarno, drawing parallels to modern regime change tactics.
- **Ireland/The First Colony Documentary:** A historical analysis of [British colonial policy in Ireland](#) and its impact on the current "Troubles" legacy and reunification movement.
- **Trump's War Dilemma Exposé:** A deep dive into Western media's ["packaging" of a war on Iran](#) as diplomacy, highlighting "colonial language" in modern journalism.

- **The Epstein File Weaponization:** Analysis of how the ["Epstein files" provide leverage](#) to the "Zionist lobby" over the U.S. executive branch.
- **Chabahar Port Expansion:** Focus on the port as a ["gateway to Eurasia,"](#) offering 20-year tax-free status to investors from India, China, and Central Asia.

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.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

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