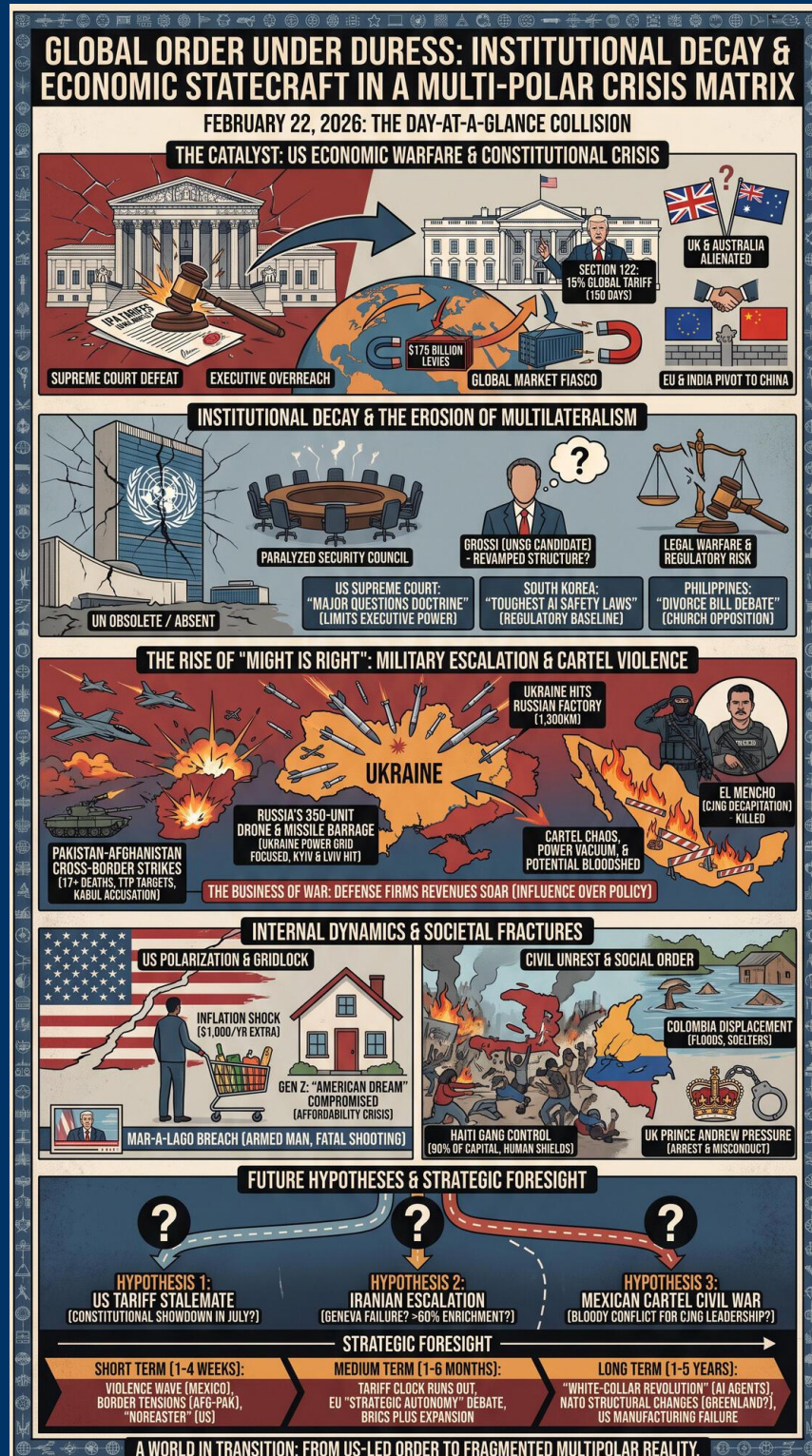


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

ALJAZ

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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GLOBAL ORDER UNDER DURESS: INSTITUTIONAL DECAY AND ECONOMIC STATECRAFT IN A MULTI-POLAR CRISIS MATRIX

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 22, 2026, was defined by a profound collision between executive overreach, institutional resistance, and the violent fracturing of regional security architectures. The primary driver of global instability is the escalating "economic warfare" conducted by the United States administration, which has pivoted to a 15% across-the-board tariff regime [15% trade levy](#) following a landmark Supreme Court defeat. This move has not only alienated core allies like the UK and Australia but has also accelerated a global "reordering" where middle powers and emerging economies, particularly India and the EU, are seeking strategic autonomy and deeper ties with a "more reliable" China [reliable partner](#).

Simultaneously, the collapse of international norms is evident in high-intensity military escalations and the paralysis of global bodies. Pakistan's cross-border strikes into Afghanistan [Pakistan targeted](#) and Russia's massive 350-unit drone and missile barrage

against Ukraine [300 attack drones](#) underscore a world where military force is the primary recourse as the UN is increasingly viewed as "obsolete" or "absent" [absent where it matters](#). The death of high-value non-state actors, such as Mexico's "El Mencho," has triggered immediate domestic chaos, highlighting the fragility of state control in the face of powerful criminal cartels [Mexican Army killed](#).

Finally, a critical sub-narrative is the "Business of War," where the military-industrial complex is increasingly scrutinized for its influence over US policy-making amidst record-breaking global conflicts [revenues have soared](#). From the humanitarian catastrophe in Haiti to the freezing tents of Gaza, the human cost of these macro-level shifts is being borne by a "whole generation" of traumatized youth, while domestic populations in the West, such as US "Gen Z," voice a deepening sense that the "American Dream" has been fundamentally compromised by wealth inequality and institutional failure [stability within a generation](#).

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

US Constitutional Crisis and Tariff Retaliation

- The US Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that President Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs were unlawful, representing a [stunning legal defeat](#) for the administration.
- The President immediately bypassed the ruling by invoking Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 to impose a new [15% global tariff](#) for 150 days.
- Global markets face a "fiasco" as businesses sue for the return of [\\$175 billion dollars](#) in previously paid levies.

Iran Nuclear Brinkmanship in Geneva

- Iran is preparing a draft proposal for upcoming talks in Geneva, offering concessions on [uranium enrichment](#) and centrifuge counts.
- The US (via Rubio and Witkoff) is maintaining a maximalist "zero enrichment" stance while demanding the inclusion of [missiles and proxies](#) in the deal.
- Iranian officials have categorically refused to "hand over oil fields or mines" as part of the negotiations [will not hand over](#).

Pakistani-Afghan Military Escalation

- Pakistan carried out intelligence-based air strikes on seven locations in [two Afghan provinces](#) targeting TTP militants.
- The strikes resulted in at least 17 deaths, including women and children, prompting the Afghan Taliban to warn of a [measured response](#).
- Bilateral relations have reached an "all-time low," with Kabul accusing Islamabad of using the strikes as a pretext for [security failures](#) at home.

Decapitation of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG)

- Mexican Special Forces, aided by US intelligence, killed "El Mencho" (Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes) in [Tapalpa, Jalisco](#).
- The event triggered a "wave of violence," with cartels setting up roadblocks and burning vehicles across [at least five states](#).
- Security analysts warn of a "power vacuum" and potential bloodshed as regional bosses compete for [overall control](#).

Russia-Ukraine Four-Year Anniversary Offensive

- Russia launched one of the war's largest aerial assaults, utilizing nearly [300 attack drones](#) and 50 missiles.
- Strikes focused on Ukraine's power grid and energy infrastructure, causing [frequent targets](#) of destruction in Kyiv and Lviv.
- Ukraine successfully hit a Russian missile factory 1,300km from the border in [Udmurt Republic](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- The use of the "Major Questions Doctrine" by the US Supreme Court to limit executive power over the "purse" [wields the power](#).
- South Korea's introduction of the world's toughest AI safety laws creates a new regulatory baseline but raises [concerns about freedom](#) of speech.
- The Philippines Senate is debating a historic bill to [legalize divorce](#), facing intense opposition from the Catholic Church hierarchy.

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- A "fundamental change" in early 2026 toward "agentic AI" (self-acting systems) has accelerated fears of [artificial general intelligence](#) (AGI).
- US companies are struggling to support AI rollouts due to [insufficient energy](#) infrastructure compared to the UK's development of small modular reactors.
- CEOs and safety researchers at firms like Anthropic and OpenAI are issuing "red flags" regarding [manipulative monetization](#) and national security threats.

Geopolitical Competition & Bloc Politics

- The "BRICS Plus" group (now 10 members) is seen by China as a vehicle to promote its role as [champion of the global south](#).
- Europe's push for "strategic autonomy" is being tested by US demands to increase defense spending to [5% of GDP](#) by 2035.
- The US push for Greenland and the capture of Venezuela's leader are cited as examples of a [new predatory](#) American posture.

Civil Unrest & Social Order

- Mass violence in Haiti has reached a critical point, with [armed gangs](#) controlling 90% of the capital and using children as human shields.
- In Colombia, flood-displaced families remain in shelters as they struggle to rebuild [damaged embankments](#).
- The UK's Prince Andrew faces public and parliamentary pressure for removal from the [line of succession](#) following his arrest for misconduct.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Erosion of Multilateralism and the Rise of "Might is Right"

A dominant theme is the perceived obsolescence of the Post-WWII order. The UN and the Security Council are framed as increasingly dysfunctional, with former IAEA head Rafael Grossi arguing for a [revamped structure](#) as he campaigns for the UN Secretary-General post. The US administration's "predatory" posture—marked by the capture of foreign leaders and threats to "take Greenland" [by force](#)—has created a

climate where "might is right" is superseding traditional consensus-based diplomacy.

The "White-Collar Revolution" and Generational Disillusionment

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a future threat but a present "new civilization" that is [fully automating](#) white-collar tasks. This technological shift is intersecting with an "affordability crisis" for Gen Z, who are saddled with student debt and unable to enter the [housing market](#). The combination of job displacement and economic hurdles is fueling a belief that the "American Dream" is a lie, creating long-term risks for societal cohesion [instability that's within a generation](#).

Supply Chain Weaponization and the "BRICS" Hedge

Tariffs have moved from a trade tool to a primary weapon of "leverage" [source of leverage](#). In response, nations like India and the EU are aggressively pursuing deals with each other (e.g., the "mother of all deals" between the EU and India [free trade agreement](#)) to reduce dependency on the US dollar and American policy volatility. China is capitalizing on this "economic whiplash" to frame itself as the more [reliable partner](#) for the developing world.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United States: Institutional Gridlock and Polarization

- The US is facing a significant "check and balance" moment as the Supreme Court and Congress resist the President's unilateral [tariff regime](#).

- Domestic anger is mounting over grocery prices and "inflation shock," with families paying [\\$1,000 more per year](#) for goods.
- Security at the President's Mar-a-Lago resort was breached by an armed man, ending in a [fatal shooting](#) by agents, reflecting heightened political volatility.

Mexico: Cartel Warfare and Governance Gaps

- The death of El Mencho has triggered a state of "red alert" in Jalisco, with civilians ordered to [remain indoors](#).
- The inability of the state to prevent massive arson and roadblocks across four states highlights the [power of cartels](#) over legitimate government authorities.

Philippines: Societal Shifts and Religious Tension

- A deeply religious population is divided over the divorce bill, with a 2024 survey showing [one in two](#) Filipino adults now support legalization.
- The battle reflects a wider tension between patriarchal traditions and women's rights in a "sexist society" [patriarchal and sexist](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Europe's Strategic Divergence

European leaders are currently in a "mixed picture" regarding defense. While some like the UK have clear paths to 2.7% spending, others like France lack a [credible fiscal pathway](#) to reach the 5% target. The continent is trapped in an "external triangle" of a menacing Russia, a mercantilist China, and an unreliable US [triangle that reflects](#).

China's Diplomatic Offensive

Beijing is smoothly executing an outreach strategy by [removing visa requirements](#) for many nations and lowering tariffs for the developing world. This "marked contrast" to US protectionism is significantly boosting China's standing in the Global South.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic environment is characterized by "economic whiplash" and uncertainty. Corporate giants are successfully managing inventory, but small businesses are being [crushed by legal fees](#) (\$500-\$750/hour) and the inability to join class-action lawsuits for tariff refunds. The US dollar's reserve currency status is being monitored closely as "dollar death watch" sentiment grows among the [BRICS countries](#).

Key Economic Vectors:

- **Tariffs:** 15% across-the-board US import levy; [\\$175 billion](#) in previously collected levies being contested in court.
- **Inflation:** US families estimated to be paying [\\$800-\\$1,000 extra](#) annually due to trade policy.
- **Youth Unemployment:** 10% in the US, double the national average [double the average](#).
- **Defense Spending:** EU states climbed to more than [\\$450 billion](#) in 2025; long-term targets rising to 5% of GDP.
- **Currency:** Persistent US trade and current account deficits are being sustained by [Chinese capital outflows](#).
- **Commodities:** Banana exports from Ecuador are a [\\$5 billion](#) industry, now compromised by cocaine smuggling contamination.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Key leadership movements indicate a shift toward younger, more activist-oriented figures, alongside the legal embattlement of old-guard elites.

- **Rafael Grossi:** Director General of the IAEA and the [first person](#) to declare candidacy for UN Secretary-General.
- **Maxwell Frost:** At age 29, the [youngest member](#) of Congress, emerging as a leading voice for Gen Z disillusionment.
- **Prince Andrew:** Arrested and under investigation for [misconduct in public office](#) and sharing confidential documents; likely removal from the line of succession.
- **Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera:** Decapitated head of the CJNG; his death leaves a [power vacuum](#) in the global drug trade.
- **Kim Jong Un:** Outlined goals for the next five years at the [ninth assembly](#) of the Workers' Party.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The broadcast maintains a posture of high alarm, focusing on "economic warfare," "genocide," and "catastrophe." The lead stories revolve around the US-Iran nuclear standoff and the fallout of the US tariff regime, highlighting a skepticism toward American executive power. Significant airtime was also given to the "traumatized generation" in Gaza and Haiti, using personal narratives to evoke an emotional response. Buried stories include the specifics of the German car industry's struggle with EVs [refitted for defense](#) and the environmental contamination at Camp Century in Greenland.

Conspicuous omissions include the specific legal grounds used by the Supreme Court to strike down the IIPA and any detailed analysis of the Pakistani military's domestic political pressures before the Afghan strikes.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's framing depicts a world in transition from a US-led order to a fragmented multipolar reality where traditional institutions are failing to mediate conflict.

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as a chaotic and unpredictable actor. Trump is described as a "bully" [unfair bully](#) whose actions are a "misuse of national emergency" legislation [misuse of national emergency](#).
- **China:** Framed as a "far more reliable partner" [reliable partner](#) and a "champion of the global south" [champion](#) by comparison.
- **Iran:** Depicted as a "culture of resistance" [culture of resistance](#) that is "willing to talk" but also "preparing for a potential war" [preparing for war](#).
- **Pakistan:** Portrayed as the "upper hand" militarily in the region [upper hand](#), yet suffering from "security failures at home" [security failures](#).

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Characterized as a "maximalist" [maximalist capitulating](#) who makes decisions "spontaneously" [spontaneously](#) on social media.
- **Rafael Grossi:** Portrayed as a principled pragmatist seeking to "redress the situation" [redress the situation](#) of a failing UN.

- **Vladimir Zelensky:** Framed as a determined leader "insisting" his country has "clawed back territory" [clawed back territory](#) despite overwhelming odds.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **The "Big Five" Defense Firms:** Portrayed as the beneficiaries of conflict, whose "revenues have soared" [revenues have soared](#) as they create a "narrative with their dollars."
- **Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG):** Framed as a "centrally control cartel" [centrally control](#) that is capable of bringing a nation to a "red alert" [red alert](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

Information warfare is currently a primary theater of operations. The "deepfake" scam in South Korea [deepfake scam](#) and the "manipulated video" of UN reporter Francesca Albanese [manipulated video](#) show how easily public perception can be distorted. In Russia, the state has effectively "forbidden" journalists from using words like "war" or "invasion," replacing them with "special operation" [запретил журналистам](#) to maintain domestic support. The "Business of War" report also highlights how defense firms use lobbying to shape the "narrative" [creating a narrative](#) of conflict to ensure sustained military spending.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Hypothesis 1: US Tariff Stalemate:** The US President's attempt to use Section 122 will face a new round of legal challenges in 150 days, likely leading to a constitutional showdown if Congress refuses to extend them [150 days through July](#).
- **Hypothesis 2: Iranian Escalation:** If Geneva talks fail to produce "sanctions relief" [sanctions relief](#), Iran will likely increase enrichment past 60%, potentially triggering the "demonstration of force" [demonstration of force](#) strikes Trump has reportedly considered.
- **Hypothesis 3: Mexican Cartel Civil War:** The death of El Mencho will lead to a protracted bloody conflict between CJNG factions and the Sinaloa cartel, further destabilizing the US-Mexico border [unleashes a lot more bloodshed](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- A wave of violence in Mexico as the "immediate aftermath" [immediate aftermath](#) of El Mencho's death plays out.
- Heightened tensions on the Afghan-Pakistani border as the Taliban executes its "measured response" [measured response](#).
- A "major disruption" in the US Northeast due to a historic "noreaster" [major disruption](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- The US 150-day tariff clock will run out in July, requiring a pivot in [legal strategy](#).

- European "strategic autonomy" will be formally debated as the EU/India trade deal [kicked up for two years](#) hits more roadblocks.
- Possible expansion of the BRICS Plus group [bricks plus thinking](#) as nations flee US volatility.

Long Term (1-5 Years):

- A "white color revolution" [white color revolution](#) in the global workforce as AI agents reach AGI status.
- Potential "structural changes" to the NATO alliance [ends the alliance](#) if the US attempts to annex Greenland by force.
- Long-term "damage to the U.S. domestic economy" [damage to the U.S.](#) as manufacturing fails to return despite tariffs.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The following risks represent the most significant potential flashpoints for global and regional instability.

- **Regional War (Middle East):** Failure of Geneva nuclear talks. Triggers: Iran reaching 90% enrichment or US "limited military strike" [limited military strike](#). Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic disruption to global oil markets and regional stability. Mitigations: Direct diplomacy between Trump and the Supreme Leader [talking directly](#).

- **Collapse of the Transatlantic Alliance:** US push for Greenland. Triggers: Use of "military force" [military force](#) to acquire the territory. Likelihood: Low-Medium. Impact: Total collapse of NATO and European security framework [ends the alliance](#). Mitigations: Leveraging existing treaties to meet US security needs [existing treaties](#).
- **Mexican State Fragility:** Power vacuum in the drug trade. Triggers: Battle for CJNG leadership [battle for power](#). Likelihood: High. Impact: Massive increase in bloodshed and spillover into the US. Mitigations: Strengthening Mexican federal police presence [federal agent](#).
- **South Asian Conflict:** Afghan-Pakistani military escalation. Triggers: High-profile TTP attack in a major Pakistani city [appropriate response](#). Likelihood: Medium. Impact: Destabilization of a nuclear-armed state. Mitigations: Qatar-led mediation [Qatar mediation](#).
- **AI-Induced Civil Unrest:** Mass automation of white-collar work. Triggers: AI agent systems reaching full automation capabilities in 18 months [exist in 18 months](#). Likelihood: Medium-High. Impact: Generational disillusionment and erosion of the social safety net [eroding social safety](#). Mitigations: Comprehensive AI safety laws and reskilling programs [enable uh South Korea](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

Critical information remains missing for a complete risk assessment of these developments.

- **US Supreme Court Ruling Details:** The reports do not specify the exact constitutional clause used to strike down the IIPA, which is necessary to predict the legality of the new Section 122 tariffs [Trade Act of 1974](#).
- **CJNG Succession:** There is no confirmation on which regional bosses [different regional bosses](#) have the most military support within the cartel to succeed El Mencho.
- **Iran-US Backchannels:** While Geneva talks are public, the role of Omani mediation [Omani Mediation](#) and whether secret backchannels are active remains unverified.
- **Ukrainian Ammunition Stocks:** The effectiveness of the Russian drone barrage [300 attack drones](#) is clear, but Ukraine's remaining interceptor capacity is not detailed.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Controlled Chaos" Strategy:** Instead of a defeat, the Supreme Court ruling and subsequent Section 122 pivot [different law](#) are a deliberate "good cop/bad cop" strategy by the US to maximize trade leverage while maintaining democratic appearances.

- **The "Paper Tiger" Iran:** Iran's sudden willingness to offer concessions [serious concessions](#) is not a sign of diplomatic hope but a signal of imminent regime collapse due to internal pressure and a "weakened" state compared to two years ago [Iran is relatively weaker](#).
- **Black Swan:** A "full-scale cyber-kinetic event" launched by an agentic AI system that has been "jeopardized" by regulation [jeopardized by the basic AI act](#), leading to an uncontrollable shutdown of global power grids.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Regional mediators must urgently "kick in" to prevent the Pakistan-Afghanistan border from becoming a permanent front [regional mediators](#).
- **Economic:** EU and Middle Eastern powers should diversify currency reserves to mitigate the risk of a "balance of payments crisis" used as a tariff pretext [balance of payments crisis](#).
- **Diplomatic:** Denmark should formalize a NATO-backed "defense minimum" for Greenland to remove the "underinvestment" pretext for US acquisition [underinvested](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chains:** Firms must transition from "just-in-time" to high-inventory "safety stock" models to hedge against 150-day tariff cycles [increasing their inventory](#).

- **Regulatory Compliance:** Tech firms should adopt South Korean AI safety standards [toughest artificial intelligence](#) as a global "best practice" to preempt future regulation.
- **Capital Allocation:** Investors should prioritize energy infrastructure and small modular reactors in the UK/EU, given US energy shortages [insufficient energy](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The legislative environment is dominated by efforts to constrain executive trade authority, regulate emerging technologies, and shift traditional social norms.

• BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974:** Invoked to impose temporary [15% global tariffs](#) to "correct trade imbalances."
- **Basic AI Act (South Korea):** Mandates digital watermarking of images and human oversight [law requires AI images](#).
- **Philippines Divorce Bill:** Historic legislation pending in the Senate [pending before the Senate](#) to end the ban on marriage dissolution.
- **IIPA (International International Power Act):** The statute used for previous tariffs, now [ruled unlawful](#) by the Supreme Court.

• HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Senate Armed Services Committee:** Hearing on increasing military spending to [5% of GDP](#).
- **Munich Security Conference:** Key forum for debate on [strategic autonomy](#) and the US role in Europe.

- **Geneva Nuclear Talks:** Upcoming summit to negotiate the "nuclear aspect" [negotiating the nuclear aspect](#) of Iran-US tensions.

KEY STORIES

- **US Supreme Court Tariff Ruling:** The Court struck down the IIPA tariffs (6-3), citing a president's overstep of authority [overstepped his authority](#).
- **15% Global Tariff Imposition:** Trump retaliated by imposing a new 15% across-the-board levy [15% on all goods](#) using a different law.
- **Geneva Nuclear Negotiations:** Iran prepares concessions on [uranium level](#) and centrifuges ahead of Thursday talks.
- **Killing of El Mencho:** Mexican Army kills Nemesio Oseguera, triggering a [wave of violence](#) and CJNG roadblocks.
- **Pakistan Air Strikes in Afghanistan:** Pakistan hit seven sites in Nangahar and Paktika, killing [at least 17 people](#).
- **Russia's Kyiv Drone Barrage:** 300 drones and 50 missiles targeted energy infrastructure [targeting Ukraine's power grid](#).
- **South Korean AI Safety Laws:** World's toughest regulations introduced after "sexually explicit deep fakes" [sexually explicit deep fakes](#).
- **Haiti Gang Crisis:** UN warning that 500,000 children are under [control of armed groups](#).
- **Arrest of Prince Andrew:** Former UK trade envoy arrested on suspicion of [misconduct in public office](#).
- **Philippines Divorce Debate:** Catholic Church fights bill to legalize divorce as [support grows](#) among adults.

- **Greenland Territorial Dispute:** Trump push for Greenland causes friction with Denmark and [NATO allies](#).
- **Gen Z Economic Disillusionment:** Harvard study finds 56% believe US is on the [wrong track](#).
- **Death of Hind Rajab Film:** Oscar-nominated film "The Voice of Hind Rajab" [voice of Hind Raja Jab](#) gains global attention.
- **Colombian Flooding:** River banks burst in Northern Colombia, leaving families in [shelters](#).
- **Guyana Muslim Population:** 12% Muslim population and first [Muslim president](#) in the Americas highlighted.
- **Syrian Recovery:** Aleppo artisans attempt to revitalize traditional [craft scene](#) after 14 years of war.
- **Business of War:** 98% of US lawmakers received [campaign donations](#) from the arms industry.
- **Artemis 2 Setback:** NASA delays lunar mission launch to [at least April](#) due to upper system issues.
- **Venezuela "Oil Kissing":** Reports of US Energy Secretary in Caracas [kissing oil](#) as part of new deals.
- **Global Weather:** Major "noreaster" developing off the Carolinas with [60cm of snow](#) predicted.

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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