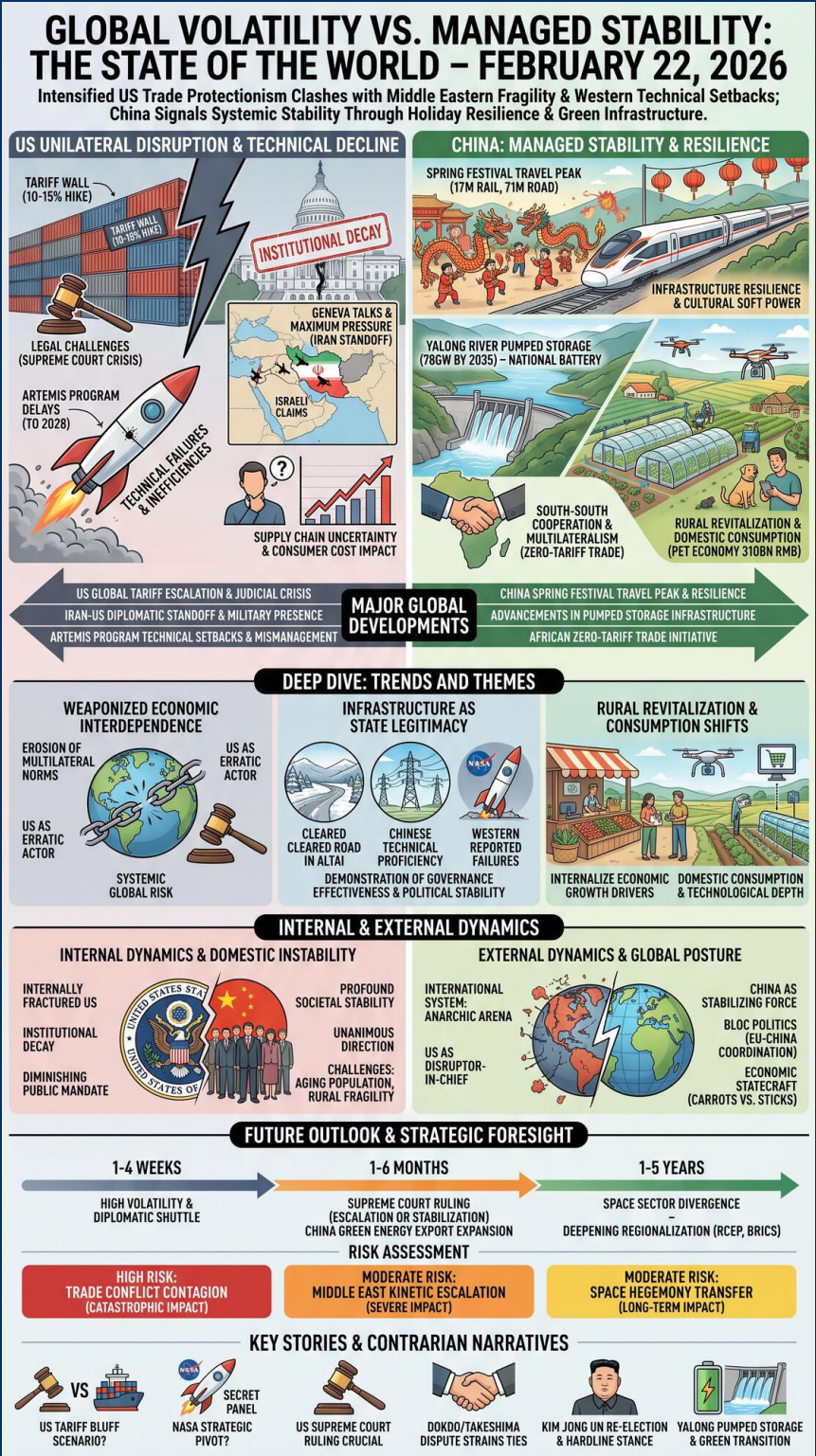


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CCTV13

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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GLOBAL VOLATILITY INTENSIFIES
AS UNILATERAL US TRADE
PROTECTIONISM CLASHES WITH
FRAGILE MIDDLE EASTERN
DIPLOMACY AND TECHNICAL
SETBACKS IN WESTERN
AEROSPACE, WHILE CHINA
LEVERAGES INTERNAL HOLIDAY
RESILIENCE TO SIGNAL SYSTEMIC
STABILITY.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The global risk landscape for February 22, 2026, is dominated by a convergence of economic statecraft and regional instability. The United States under a second Trump administration has signaled a significant escalation in protectionism, announcing a **10% to 15% increase** in global import tariffs, a move that has already triggered **legal challenges** in the US Supreme Court and diplomatic condemnation from EU and Asian partners. This economic aggression appears to be a centerpiece of US policy, intended to force concessions but currently resulting in **supply chain uncertainty** and international legal friction.

In the Middle East, a delicate balance of posturing and negotiation is underway. While the US and Iran participate in **Geneva-led nuclear talks**, the rhetoric remains hostile, with the US maintaining "maximum pressure" tactics and Israel making provocative territorial claims. The network portrays these events with a high degree of skepticism toward US intentions, framing the Artemis lunar program delays as a **symptom of Western institutional decline** and technical inefficiency. This narrative is contrasted against China's domestic focus on **infrastructure resilience** during the peak return period of the Spring Festival travel rush, highlighting the state's capacity to manage massive logistics and energy transitions.

The overarching theme of the day is the contrast between **unilateral disruption** and **managed stability**. As Western powers grapple with internal legal battles and technical failures, the broadcasting nation emphasizes its progress in **green energy infrastructure** (specifically hydro-pumped storage) and the **revitalization of rural economies**. The day's news suggests a world moving toward deeper fragmentation, where economic tools are increasingly weaponized and the "rules-based order" is being actively dismantled by its former architect.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **US Global Tariff Escalation:** The Trump administration has moved to increase [global import tariffs](#) to a range of 10% to 15%, citing national security and trade deficits. This has sparked a [legal crisis](#) as the US Supreme Court evaluates the administration's authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.
- **Iran-US Diplomatic Standoff:** Negotiations in Geneva over Iran's nuclear program and [sanctions relief](#) continue amid high tensions. The US maintains a heavy [military presence](#) in the region, including aircraft carrier groups, while Iran signals it will not yield to "external pressure" despite ongoing talks.
- **Artemis Lunar Program Technical Setbacks:** The US NASA Artemis program has faced [significant delays](#), with the next manned mission pushed toward 2028 due to technical failures in launch systems and [management inefficiencies](#).
- **China's Spring Festival Travel Peak:** The nation is navigating the [return travel peak](#) (Chunyun), with over [17 million rail passengers](#) and 71 million highway trips recorded in a single day, testing infrastructure resilience under [adverse weather](#) conditions.
- **Advancements in Pumped Storage Infrastructure:** China has accelerated the construction of [hydro-pumped storage](#) bases along the Yalong River, aiming for a [78GW capacity](#) by 2035 to serve as a "national battery" for renewable energy integration.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The US administration's [new tariff policy](#) is projected to affect 90% of US consumers through **increased costs**, while major trading blocs (EU, South Korea, China) prepare [retaliatory measures](#).
- Global markets are reacting to the [legal uncertainty](#) surrounding US trade authority, with multinational corporations **deferring capital allocation** in affected sectors like automotive and steel.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- The Dokdo/Takeshima territorial dispute between [Japan and South Korea](#) has flared again, with South Korea lodging **strong protests** against Japanese state-sponsored events.
- US diplomatic posturing in the Middle East is framed as [contradictory](#), pursuing talks in Geneva while **threatening military strikes** to achieve regional dominance.

Climate & Extreme Weather

- Severe sandstorms and [high winds](#) in Northern China (Inner Mongolia, Hebei) have disrupted [holiday travel](#), prompting emergency governance responses and traffic control.
- Temperature fluctuations of [22 degrees](#) in Northeast China are challenging **agricultural stability** and winter heating infrastructure.

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- The broadcast highlights [AI-generated video](#) content as a new frontier for cultural expression, though technical analysis of [US space technology](#) suggests a gap between **theoretical ambition** and **operational reality**.
- Investment in **indigenous high-tech medical equipment**, such as heavy-ion cancer treatment systems, is presented as a key pillar of [technological independence](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Weaponized Economic Interdependence

A significant trend is the **erosion of multilateral trade norms** through the use of executive-led tariffs as a primary tool of statecraft. The broadcast portrays the US as an **erratic actor** whose internal legal conflicts (Supreme Court vs. Executive) create [systemic risk](#) for the global economy. This is framed as a **departure from principled governance** toward a zero-sum competition that threatens global supply chain resilience, particularly in the automotive and tech sectors.

Infrastructure as a Proxy for State Legitimacy

There is a strong emphasis on the **technical proficiency** of the broadcasting state in managing massive logistical operations. The detailed coverage of [Altai snow clearing](#) and [Inner Mongolian power restoration](#) serves to contrast with **NASA's reported failures**. Infrastructure is no longer just about utility; it is presented as a **demonstration of governance effectiveness** and political

stability, especially during sensitive holiday periods.

Rural Revitalization and Consumption Shifts

The focus on **rural e-commerce**, pet economy growth ([310 billion RMB market](#)), and high-tech agriculture (e.g., [automated irrigation in Yunnan](#)) suggests a strategic move to **internalize economic growth drivers**. By showcasing the prosperity of remote regions, the state is countering narratives of economic slowdown and signaling that the next phase of growth will be driven by **domestic consumption** and **technological depth** rather than just export volume.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The broadcasting nation, China, projects an image of **profound societal stability** centered on the Spring Festival. Coverage focuses on **traditional cultural heritage** (woodblock printing, dragon dances) and **grassroots governance** successes. However, the heavy emphasis on [elderly care upgrades](#) and [power grid maintenance](#) in extreme weather subtly acknowledges underlying pressures related to an **aging population** and the **fragility of rural infrastructure** under climate stress. Elite dynamics are not directly discussed, but the **unanimous support** for central directives regarding **rural revitalization** is a persistent theme.

Conversely, the US is portrayed as **internally fractured**. The conflict between the Trump administration and the judiciary over [tariff authority](#) is framed as a sign of **institutional decay**. The network highlights that US consumers will bear the brunt of these

policies, suggesting **diminishing public mandate** and potential for future social unrest. This narrative seeks to undermine the US's global posture by focusing on its **domestic dysfunction**.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is framed as an **anarchic arena** where the US acts as a "disruptor-in-chief." China positions itself as a **stabilizing force**, emphasizing **South-South cooperation** (e.g., [zero-tariff trade](#) for 53 African nations) and the defense of **multilateralism**. The broadcast highlights **bloc politics**, specifically the tightening coordination between the [EU and China](#) in response to US trade unilateralism.

Strategic maneuverability is being exercised through **economic statecraft**. While the US uses tariffs as a "stick," China is using **infrastructure investment** and **market access** as "carrots" to forge new alliances. The network portrays a world where **strategic autonomy** is increasingly sought by secondary powers (like Germany and France) who are **hesitant to follow** the US's aggressive lead in the Middle East or trade.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic environment is characterized by **high volatility** and a move toward **defensive positioning** in response to US trade policy. While China reports strong holiday consumption figures, the threat of **inflationary shocks** from US tariffs looms over global supply chains. Financial markets are pricing in a **sustained trade conflict**, with capital potentially moving toward **green**

energy assets which are shielded by state-led investment.

- **US Import Tariffs:** Proposed **10% to 15% hike** across all categories, currently stalled by [Supreme Court scrutiny](#).
- **Pet Economy:** Chinese domestic market for pets reached [310 billion RMB](#) in 2025, a **4.1% year-on-year increase**.
- **Agricultural Output:** Targeted expansion of greenhouse farming in [Xinjiang and Yunnan](#), with high-tech irrigation [saving 30%](#) more water.
- **Energy Investment:** Yalong River hydro-pumped storage project represents a **multi-billion dollar** long-term capital commitment to [renewable stability](#).
- **Transport Logistics:** Rail passenger volume **exceeded expectations** by 15%, indicating a **strong rebound** in domestic mobility and related consumption.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day's transcripts do not report any major domestic reshuffles, but they emphasize the consolidated control and **unanimous direction** of leaders in China and North Korea. US leadership is presented as **domineering but contested** by domestic institutions.

- **Kim Jong Un (North Korea):** Unanimously re-elected as [General Secretary](#) of the WPK, signaling **absolute political continuity** and zero tolerance for internal dissent during a time of regional tension.

- **Donald Trump (USA):** Facing [judicial headwinds](#) from the US Supreme Court over tariff authority; his leadership is characterized as **aggressively unilateral** and increasingly **at odds** with traditional US bureaucratic structures.
- **Pezeshkian (Iran):** Portrayed as a [principled negotiator](#) holding the line against US pressure while managing internal **economic hardships** from sanctions.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's hierarchy for the day clearly prioritizes **Internal Stability and Cultural Soft Power** over international crisis. The lead stories are consistently the "Walking to the Grassroots" segments and holiday travel updates, occupying the most airtime. These are designed to be **nationalistic and reassuring**. International conflict (US tariffs, Iran, Sudan) is placed in the second tier, often framed as **distractions or signs of Western chaos**. The technical failure of the [Artemis program](#) was given significant analytical depth, likely to contrast with the broadcasting nation's own **space ambitions**. **Conspicuous Omissions** include any detailed reporting on domestic **youth unemployment** or the **real estate debt crisis**, which are likely ongoing issues but were entirely absent in favor of "prosperous rural" narratives.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

Geopolitical framing focuses on the **US as a declining hegemon** and China as a **rising, benevolent leader**. This is supported by contrasting the US's **coercive trade tactics** with China's **inclusive diplomatic initiatives**.

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as **inept and chaotic**. The network cites the [NASA setbacks](#) and [legal infighting](#) as evidence of a superpower "losing its way." Quote: "Repeated delays and management low-efficiency have left the whole plan in a cloud of doubt."
- **Iran:** Framed as a **principled and resilient** actor. Quote: "Iran will not yield to external pressure despite the US continuing to increase military deployments."
- **Japan:** Characterized as **provocative and revisionist** regarding territorial claims against South Korea. Quote: "South Korea lodges a strong protest against Japan's claim to Dokdo."

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a **foe to global stability** through "unpredictable and erratic" trade policies that [harm his own citizens](#).
- **Kim Jong Un:** Presented as a **stable and strong** leader who commands [unanimous support](#) from his party and military.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **NASA:** Framed as **incompetent** due to [technical failures](#) and an inability to replicate past successes.
- **RSF (Sudan):** Characterized as a **destabilizing militant force** responsible for [humanitarian crises](#) in Darfur.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The broadcasting environment is one of **carefully curated narratives**. Domestic content is heavily focused on **Spring Festival harmony** to seed a narrative of national unity and prosperity. On the international front, there is a clear effort to **exploit Western failures** (NASA, US Courts) to suggest that the Western model of governance is failing. The use of [AI-generated celebratory videos](#) and high-tech agricultural displays is a form of **technological propaganda** aimed at proving indigenous innovation. Skepticism is warranted regarding the **uniformity of rural prosperity** portrayed, which likely ignores systemic economic disparities.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Accelerated Trade Fragmentation:** The US tariff policy will likely lead to a **permanent decoupling** of certain supply chains as the EU and China [deepen their own trade ties](#) to bypass US dollar dominance and protectionism.
- **Space Sector Divergence:** Continuous [NASA failures](#) may lead to a shift in global aerospace alliances, with more nations seeking partnerships with **alternative space programs** that demonstrate better reliability.
- **Middle Eastern Flashpoint:** If Geneva talks fail, a **kinetic confrontation** between US/Israeli forces and Iranian assets is increasingly likely given the [military build-up](#) reported today.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- Expect **high volatility** in global shipping rates as companies anticipate the [implementation date](#) of US tariffs.
- Increased **diplomatic shuttle diplomacy** between Brussels and Beijing to coordinate a response to US unilateralism.

Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- US Supreme Court ruling on [emergency trade powers](#) will determine whether the global trade war **escalates or stabilizes**.
- China will likely [expand its green energy export](#) quotas to capitalize on higher Western energy costs caused by trade barriers.

Long Term (1-5 Years):

- A potential **permanent shift** in the global space exploration paradigm if China succeeds in manned lunar landings while [Artemis continues to stall](#).
- Deepening **regionalization of trade**, with the US focused on North America while the rest of the world integrates around the RCEP and expanded BRICS frameworks.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The following risks have been identified as having significant strategic implications based on the current trajectory of events.

- **Global Trade Conflict Contagion:** Triggered by the [US finalization of 15% tariffs](#); Likelihood: **High**; Impact: **Catastrophic** for global GDP and supply chain stability; Mitigations: **Multilateral mediation** via the WTO or new plurilateral trade agreements that exclude the US.
- **Middle East Kinetic Escalation:** Triggered by a [miscalculation during US naval exercises](#) near Iran; Likelihood: **Moderate**; Impact: **Severe** spike in oil prices and disruption of the Strait of Hormuz; Mitigations: **Direct military-to-military deconfliction lines** and continued diplomatic engagement in Geneva.
- **Strategic Infrastructure Collapse in Winter:** Triggered by [extreme weather events](#) during the Chunyun return peak; Likelihood: **High**; Impact: **Moderate** localized disruptions and economic loss; Mitigations: **Advanced deployment** of emergency power and snow clearing teams, as seen in [Altai](#).
- **US Judicial-Executive Crisis:** Triggered by the [Supreme Court striking down](#) Trump's tariff authority; Likelihood: **Moderate**; Impact: **High** domestic political instability in the US and legal chaos for importers; Mitigations: **Legislative reform** of trade laws to clarify executive limits.

- **Space Hegemony Transfer:** Triggered by [continued Artemis delays](#) while rivals achieve milestones; Likelihood: **Moderate**; Impact: **Long-term** loss of US technical prestige and "standard-setting" power in the cislunar economy; Mitigations: **Radical NASA restructuring** and increased funding for private-public partnerships.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

While the broadcasts provide detailed reporting on certain sectors, significant blind spots remain that are critical for risk assessment.

- The **real economic cost** of China's "green battery" hydro projects is omitted, specifically the **displacement of local communities** and environmental impact of massive damming on the [Yalong River](#).
- There is a lack of information on **internal dissent** within the US military regarding potential strikes on Iran, which is a key indicator of **operational risk**.
- The **cyber dimension** of the US-Iran standoff is entirely absent; state-sponsored cyberattacks usually precede or accompany [naval posturing](#).
- The broadcasts fail to mention **inflationary pressures within China** despite the "prosperous" holiday narrative, particularly in **food prices** affected by extreme weather.
- The **financial health** of the companies building the [hydro-pumped storage bases](#) is not discussed, leaving a gap in assessing the **fiscal risk** of these massive state projects.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The US Tariff Bluff:** Trump's [15% tariffs](#) may not be intended for implementation but are a **negotiating gambit** to force a "Grand Bargain" with China and the EU. If so, the current legal and diplomatic chaos is a **controlled theater** designed to maximize leverage before a sudden de-escalation. **Black Swan:** A **sudden US-China trade pact** that blindsides the EU and Japan, reshuffling global alliances overnight.
- **NASA's Strategic Pivot:** The [Artemis delays](#) could be a **misdirection** to hide a surge in **classified military space capabilities**. While the civilian program appears inept, the US may be **quietly achieving dominance** in space-based electronic warfare and surveillance. **Black Swan:** The US **unveils a functional orbital interceptor** that nullifies rival satellite networks, ending the era of technological parity.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Increase **maritime surveillance** in the Middle East to anticipate miscalculations during [US-Iran posturing](#).
- **Economic:** Accelerate the **diversification of foreign reserves** away from the US dollar to mitigate risks from [US tariff unilateralism](#).

- **Diplomatic:** Use the [NASA Artemis failures](#) as a diplomatic opening to propose **new international norms** for space cooperation that are more inclusive of developing nations.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Move toward **near-shoring or friend-shoring** for components currently sourced from regions heavily targeted by [US tariffs](#).
- **Capital Allocation:** Overweight positions in **renewable infrastructure** assets, particularly in [pumped storage](#) and battery tech, as these receive high state priority.
- **Safety/Compliance:** Implement stricter **weather-contingency protocols** for operations in Northern China during the [sandstorm and cold wave](#) season.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The day was marked by high-stakes legal battles in the US and policy consolidations in East Asia. The US Supreme Court's involvement in trade law signals a **potential rebalancing** of executive power.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (US):** The basis for [Trump's tariff authority](#), currently being challenged as an **unconstitutional delegation** of legislative power.
- **Zero-Tariff Policy (China):** Implementation of [comprehensive zero-tariff trade](#) for 53 African nations to strengthen **South-South economic ties**.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **US Supreme Court Oral Arguments:** Focusing on the **legality of unilateral tariffs**; a ruling is expected that will determine the **future of global trade governance**.
- **9th WPK Congress (North Korea):** A high-level [political summit](#) to consolidate power and reaffirm the **nuclear/economic dual-track** strategy.

KEY STORIES

- **US Global Tariff Hike:** Trump administration moves to increase [tariffs to 10-15%](#), sparking legal challenges and global market fears of a **full-scale trade war**.
- **NASA Artemis Program Delays:** Manned lunar mission [pushed to 2028](#) due to technical failures in the SLS and Orion programs, fueling narratives of **US technical decline**.
- **Yalong River Pumped Storage:** China construction of [massive hydro-battery](#) bases to stabilize the national grid and support **renewable energy transition**.
- **Iran Nuclear Diplomacy:** High-tension [Geneva talks](#) continue while US carrier groups maintain a [menacing presence](#) in the Persian Gulf.
- **Chunyun Travel Rush:** Peak return travel for Spring Festival [tests national infrastructure](#) with record passenger numbers and **severe weather interruptions**.
- **Inner Mongolia Power Restoration:** Rapid response to [extreme weather](#) restores electricity to remote border regions, showcasing **governance resilience**.
- **Altai Snow Clearing Operations:** Specialized teams use [heavy machinery](#) to keep vital transport routes open in 2-meter deep snow in Northwest China.
- **African Trade Initiative:** China announces [zero-tariff access](#) for 53 African nations, positioning itself as the **leader of the Global South**.
- **Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute:** South Korea issues [strong condemnation](#) of Japan's territorial claims, straining **trilateral security cooperation** in Northeast Asia.
- **Kim Jong Un Re-election:** North Korean leader [retains absolute control](#) following the 9th Party Congress, signaling a **continued hardline stance**.
- **Sudan Humanitarian Crisis:** Continued conflict in Darfur leads to [mass displacement](#) and calls for international intervention that remain unheeded.
- **Chinese Rural E-commerce Boom:** Holiday sales of pet products ([310bn market](#)) and traditional goods highlight the **resilience of domestic consumption**.
- **Intangible Heritage Promotion:** State-led focus on [woodblock printing and traditional medicine serves as a "soft power" anchor during the Spring Festival](#).
- **Hebei Sandstorm Emergency:** [High-level traffic control and safety alerts](#) issued as sandstorms disrupt travel and pose health risks across **Northern China**.
- **Artemis Management Analysis:** Deep dive into NASA's [bureaucratic inefficiency](#) and the contrast with private space actors like **SpaceX**.

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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