

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

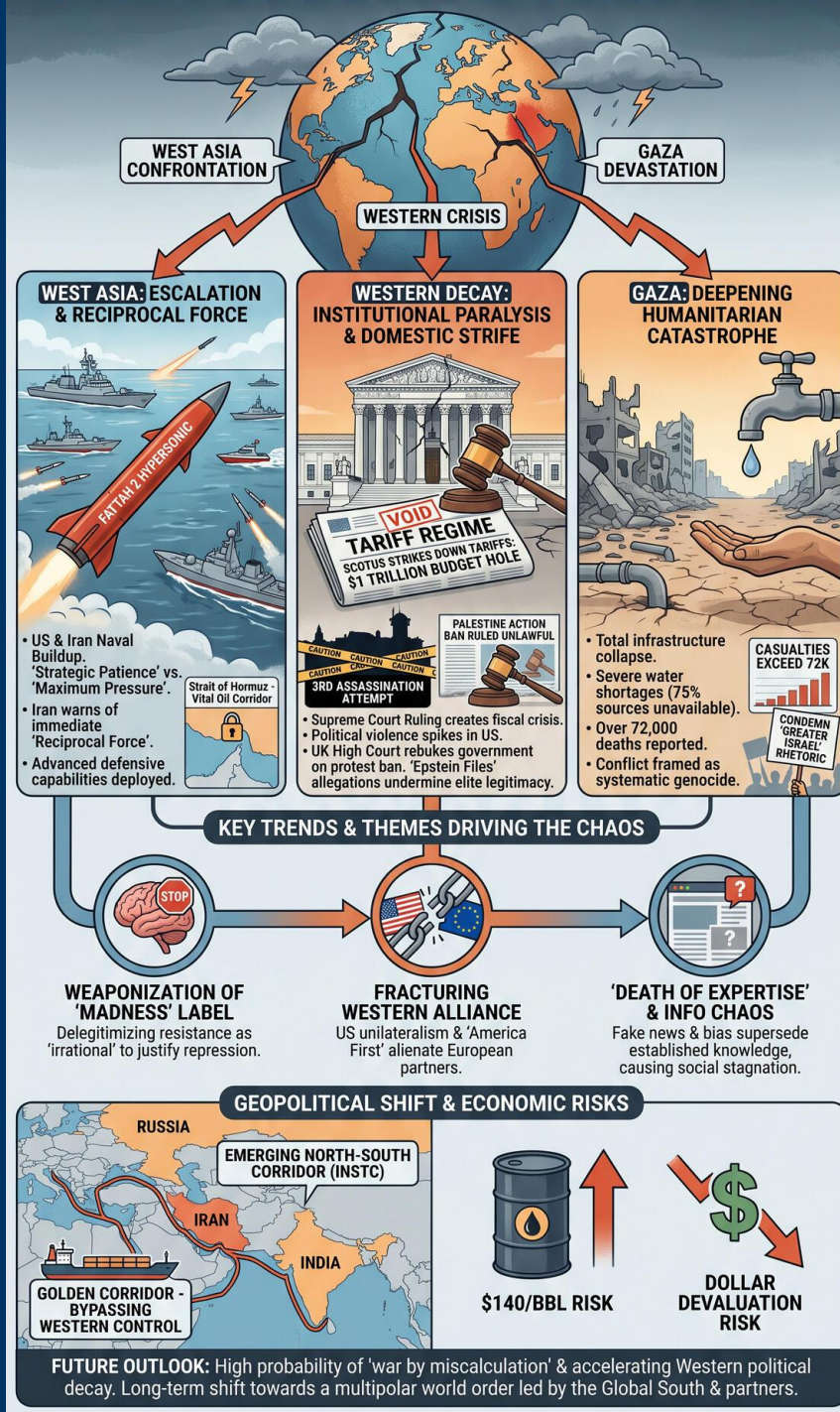
PRESSTV

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

GLOBAL VOLATILITY 2026:

WEST ASIA WAR THREAT, WESTERN INSTITUTIONAL DECAY, & GAZA CATASTROPHE



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GLOBAL VOLATILITY IN EARLY 2026
IS MARKED BY THE THREAT OF
REGIONAL WAR IN WEST ASIA,
WESTERN INSTITUTIONAL DECAY,
AND A DEEPENING HUMANITARIAN
CATASTROPHE IN GAZA.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The reporting from February 22, 2026, depicts a world in a state of extreme geopolitical and domestic tension. In West Asia, the risk of a military confrontation between the United States and Iran has reached a critical threshold, with significant naval buildups in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea. The Iranian leadership maintains a posture of "strategic patience" but has signaled that any "limited strike" by the U.S. or Israel will be met with immediate, **reciprocal force** targeting both regional bases and shipping corridors. This external pressure coincides with the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which saw a massive public turnout, used by the state to project national unity despite recent internal unrest in January 2026. The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, with reports of total infrastructure collapse and severe water

shortages, framing the conflict as a systematic genocide in the eyes of the broadcaster's regional partners.

Simultaneously, the United States is portrayed as undergoing a period of severe institutional crisis and "unhinged" executive action under the Trump administration. A landmark Supreme Court ruling has struck down the administration's broad tariff regime, creating a trillion-dollar deficit hole and triggering a search for legal "end runs." Domestic stability is further compromised by a spike in political violence, exemplified by a recent shooting at the Mar-a-Lago resort—the third assassination attempt against the President in two years—and the looming fallout from the "Epstein files," which are being used to allege deep-seated corruption among the Western elite. These domestic vulnerabilities appear to be driving an aggressive, diversionary foreign policy, including a widely condemned proposal to "colonize" Greenland and increased trade friction with European allies.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Escalation toward Iran-US Military Confrontation

- The U.S. has amassed a "huge military contingent" and armada in West Asia, with potential targets including refineries in Abadan, Isfahan, and Tehran [sustained air campaign](#).
- Iran has unveiled advanced defensive capabilities, including the **Fattah 2** hypersonic glide vehicle and the Bover 373 integrated network [deadliest missile](#).
- Special Envoy Steve Witkoff reports that President Trump is "curious" why Iran has not yet capitulated to the "maximum pressure" strategy [curious why](#).

Collapse of the US Tariff Regime and Economic Blowback

- The US Supreme Court overturned the lynchpin of Trump's trade policy, ruling that the president lacks unbounded authority to levy tariffs without **Congressional approval** [6-3 decision](#).
- Analysts predict a \$130 billion refund mandate to importers and a potential \$1 trillion hole in the federal budget [trillion dollar hole](#).
- Trump has responded by announcing a new 15% baseline tariff as a temporary 150-day measure [15% baseline](#).

Humanitarian Crisis and Water Security in Gaza

- Gaza City's water infrastructure has been shattered, with 70 wells destroyed and 75% of water sources unavailable [70 water wells](#).
- Casualty figures are reported to exceed 72,000 deaths and 171,000 injuries since the conflict's inception in 2023 [72,000 Palestinians](#).
- Regional states and international protesters condemn the "Greater Israel" expansionist remarks made by the US Ambassador [Mike Huckabee](#).

Resurgence of Global Political Violence

- U.S. Secret Service agents shot and killed a 21-year-old suspect attempting to breach the secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago with a shotgun and fuel can [shot dead](#).
- This is the third assassination attempt on Trump in two years, reflecting what analysts call an "enduring wave" of political violence in the U.S. [third assassination attempt](#).

- In France, the killing of far-right activist Quentin Derank has led to the summoning of the US Ambassador [Quentin Derank](#).

Pakistan-Afghanistan Cross-Border Conflict

- Pakistani fighter jets launched air strikes on seven militant camps in Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Paktika provinces [seven militant camps](#).
- The Taliban government in Kabul condemned the act as a violation of sovereignty, while Islamabad claims the targets were linked to **Daesh** and TTP [militant hideouts](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- Iran has implemented a "tit-for-tat" policy, designating the naval and air forces of EU member states as terrorist organizations [terrorist organizations](#).
- Ongoing military drills by the Iranian navy emphasize the ability to shut down the **Strait of Hormuz**, a vital corridor for 20-30% of global oil [Straight of Hormuz](#).

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The U.S. is facing a potential devaluation of the dollar as allies consider dumping US bonds due to "wars of choice" [dump US bonds](#).
- Iran is positioning itself as a central hub for the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, aimed at connecting Russia to India via Bandar Abbas [North-South corridor](#).

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- The UK High Court issued a stunning rebuke to the government, ruling the proscription of **Palestine Action** as a terrorist group was "unlawful" and an attack on free speech [prescription of palestine action](#).
- The ruling has resulted in the potential reinstatement of activists and the invalidation of over 300 arrests [unlawful arrests](#).

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- Omani-mediated talks between the U.S. and Iran are scheduled for Thursday in Geneva, with Tehran demanding the removal of sanctions as a prerequisite [indirect talks](#).
- Denmark and Greenland have rejected Trump's offer of a naval hospital ship, viewing it as a pretext for "colonial" intervention [reject Trump's offer](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of the "Madness" Label

- A recurring theme in the day's reporting is the historical and modern use of the "madness" or "irrationality" label to delegitimize resistance movements [When Resistance Is Called Madness](#).
- Analysts argue that colonial powers consistently frame sovereignty-seeking actors (from 19th-century indigenous Americans to modern Palestinians) as pathologically insane to justify repression and ignore political demands [eliminate the rationality](#).

Fracturing of the Western Alliance

- Tensions between the U.S. and its European "vassals" are accelerating due to U.S. economic unilateralism and the Greenland proposal [rift between the EU and the US](#).
- The "America First" policy is increasingly characterized as "Israel First, America Second" by critics who believe U.S. policy is entirely "owned" by the Zionist lobby [owned by Israel](#).
- EU members are beginning to shift trade interest toward Beijing to hedge against U.S. dominance [interest away from Washington](#).

The "Death of Expertise" and Information Chaos

- A documentary segment highlights a global crisis where "uninformed, frankly stupid views" are treated as equal to established knowledge [death of expertise](#).
- This "artificial literacy" is linked to the rise of fake news and a public that is "more comfortable with their biases" than new information, leading to social stagnation [fake news](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United States: Institutional Paralysis and Civil Strife

- The U.S. government is experiencing frequent shutdowns, creating "usual confusion" and rendering the government "completely dysfunctional" [government was shut down](#).

- The release of the "Epstein files" has allegedly undermined the legitimacy of the administration among the "white anglo and protestant working class" [potential legitimacy](#).
- Paramilitary raids on American streets and failing infrastructure are reported as evidence of a "collapsing" state [raids by uh paramilitaries](#).

Iran: Resilience through Nationalism

- Internal unrest from January 2026 is framed as an "enemy conspiracy" aimed at creating "wrong statistics" regarding deaths [unrealistic number](#).
- The state leverages the 47th anniversary of the 1979 Revolution to demonstrate that the "strength of the Islamic Republic comes from its people approving the system" [strength of the Islamic Republic](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Emergence of "West Asia" and the North-South Corridor

- The region is actively discarding the term "Middle East"—a "configuration of the former British empire"—in favor of "West Asia" [terminology itself speaks](#).
- Iran and Russia are aggressively developing the **Golden Corridor** to bypass Western-controlled maritime routes, aiming to reach Mumbai from St. Petersburg in 20 days [Golden Corridor](#).
- Chabahar is being positioned as the "maritime capital of Iran," providing a vital link for landlocked Central Asian nations [maritime capital](#).

US Global Posture: Defensive and "Unplanned"

- Critics argue the U.S. has "no plan B" for an invasion of Iran, as the American public has no "appetite" for significant military casualties [no plan B](#).
- The administration's proposal to "colonize Greenland" is seen as a strategic play to establish a base "halfway to Russia" [base halfway to Russia](#).

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is dominated by the threat of a "catastrophic" disruption to global energy supplies and the unraveling of U.S. trade policy. Financial markets are currently pricing in the risk of a Strait of Hormuz blockade, which could drive oil prices to **\$140 per barrel** and bankrupt small businesses in the West.

- **Energy Costs:** A war with Iran would drive global oil prices "through the roof," with 80% of Asia's oil dependent on West Asian supply [oil price hike](#).
- **US Military Expenditure:** Current U.S. military maintenance in the region costs \$2.5-\$3 billion per month, potentially rising to **\$30 billion per month** in a prolonged conflict [\\$30 billion dollars per month](#).
- **Supply Chain Shock:** A Hormuz closure would jeopardize 10% of Europe's LNG imports, hitting Italy, Belgium, and Poland the hardest [Italy alone accounts for half](#).
- **EV Competition:** China's automobile production (26 million cars/year) is now nearly double that of the U.S. (15 million), highlighting a major shift in industrial dominance [China produced 26 million](#).

- **Trade Pacts:** President Trump is privately considering quitting the USMCA trade pact, a move opposed by U.S. agricultural groups [quitting USMCA](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Leadership dynamics are characterized by factional battles within the U.S. executive and a transition toward new nationalist leadership in Northern Ireland.

- **Donald Trump:** Facing extreme domestic pressure, including a Supreme Court defeat on tariffs and a reported third assassination attempt [third assassination attempt](#).
- **Steve Witkoff & Jared Kushner:** Portrayed as the "dynamic duo" leading sensitive talks without official diplomatic capacity [dynamic duo](#).
- **Michelle O'Neill:** Her appointment as the first Sinn Féin First Minister in Northern Ireland is hailed as a "moment of very great significance" [Shin Fain first minister](#).
- **Evet Cooper:** The former UK Home Secretary faced a legal defeat after her "unlawful" ban on Palestine Action [Evet Cooper](#).
- **Jeffrey Donaldson:** His resignation following the DUP's boycott of the devolved government is noted as a key turning point in Irish politics [Donaldson resigned](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial posture is **highly nationalistic and regionalist**, focusing heavily on the concept of "West Asian" resistance against "U.S. and Zionist imperialism." The lead stories are consistently the Gaza humanitarian crisis, the military

buildup against Iran, and the 47th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution. Critical Western stories, such as the U.S. Supreme Court ruling and the Mar-a-Lago shooting, are framed through the lens of a collapsing superpower. Omissions are conspicuous: there is virtually no mention of internal Iranian dissent or the specifics of the "January 2026 Unrest" beyond dismissing it as a foreign plot. The emotional tone is one of **moral indignation** and **strategic confidence**.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

Geopolitical relationships are framed as a zero-sum struggle between the "unipolar hegemony" of the United States and the emerging "multipolar world" led by the Global South and its partners in Russia and China. Western nations are frequently characterized as hypocritical, while regional actors are portrayed as principled and resilient.

• COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as a declining, "lawless," and "unhinged" empire governed by a "cursed elite" [lawlessness the United States](#).
- **Iran:** Characterized as a "resilient political economy" that has survived 50 years of sanctions and is now a primary technological and logistics hub [resilient political economy](#).
- **Israel:** Framed as a "terror state" and a "frankenstein monster" that has "turned on the US" [frankenstein monster](#).
- **Greenland:** Depicted as a target of "brazen aggression" and U.S. "colonialism" [colonize Greenland](#).
- **China:** Portrayed as the "big threat" to the U.S. empire but a beacon of hope for the "Global South" [big threat to the US](#).

• LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as "delusional," incompetent in economics, and potentially driven by the "Epstein file" extortion [delusional partner](#).
- **Ali Shamkhani:** Framed as a steady military strategist warning of a "regional war" [Sham Khani](#).
- **Mike Huckabee:** Characterized as a "religious zealot" and an "ignoramus" for his annexation remarks [ignoramus like Hukaby](#).

• NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **Palestine Action:** Framed as a heroic "heroic disruption" group fighting genocide in the UK [heroic disruptions](#).
- **Zionist Lobby:** Portrayed as an all-powerful entity that "owns the United States government" [own the United States government](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The "Epstein File" is being aggressively framed not as a sex scandal, but as a "network of influence" and "extortion" used by Israel to control U.S. and UK politicians [network of influence](#).
- **Psychological Operations:** The U.S. is accused of "choreographed leaks" designed to intimidate Tehran, while the Iranian media uses segments on "Madness" to inoculate the public against Western psychological warfare [choreographed leaks](#).

- **Media Fragmentation:** Reporting suggests Western mainstream media viewership has dropped by **75%**, as the public turns to social media for "the truth" [drop of viewership](#).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The U.S. administration may attempt a "Black Swan" military event, such as a limited strike on symbolic Iranian targets, to reclaim domestic legitimacy following the tariff setback [symbolic targets](#).
- If the Strait of Hormuz is closed for more than "just a few days," a crash of Asian economies could trigger a "Daro Doctrine" where China seizes the moment to annex Taiwan [attack Taiwan](#).
- The UK High Court ruling on Palestine Action could lead to a wave of "legacy bill" reversals, further complicating UK-Israel relations [legacy bill](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect heightened civil unrest in Western cities following the UK legal victory for Palestine Action. The Geneva talks on Thursday will likely fail unless the U.S. offers immediate sanction relief, leading to a new round of Iranian "tit-for-tat" designations.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The U.S. budget deficit will expand as a result of the tariff ruling, likely forcing the administration to choose between domestic social spending and its \$30 billion/month regional military footprint. Tensions in the South Caucasus may boil over following J.D. Vance's visit to Yerevan and Baku [Vance visited Yerevan](#).

Long Term (1-5 Years): The completion of the North-South Golden Corridor will fundamentally shift global trade power toward a Moscow-Tehran-New Delhi axis, making Western maritime blockades less effective. Northern Ireland may move toward a reunification referendum within a 10-year timeframe as unionist "demographic dominance" fades [10-year time frame](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current risk landscape is defined by the high probability of a "war by miscalculation" in the Persian Gulf and the accelerating decay of Western political systems.

- **Regional War Escalation:** Trigger: A "limited" U.S./Israeli strike on Iranian Soil. Likelihood: Moderate-High. Impact: Catastrophic (global energy crisis). Mitigation: Full U.S. return to nuclear diplomacy and lifting of sanctions [US attack on Iran will trigger regional war](#).
- **Global Energy Shock:** Trigger: Iranian closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Extreme (\$140+ oil). Mitigation: De-escalation of naval presence in the Gulf [oil price hike](#).
- **US Domestic Instability:** Trigger: Continued release of Epstein-related extortion materials. Likelihood: High. Impact: High (institutional collapse). Mitigation: None apparent in the transcripts [cursed elite](#).
- **Pakistan-Afghanistan Escalation:** Trigger: Taliban "response in kind" to airstrikes. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Moderate-High (regional instability). Mitigation: Successful Qatar/Turkey mediation [Taliban... respond in kind](#).

- **Gaza Famine/Genocide:** Trigger: Failure to restore water infrastructure during Ramadan. Likelihood: High. Impact: Extreme humanitarian loss. Mitigation: Immediate ceasefire and restoration of the 70 destroyed wells [water has become a scars commodity](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts fail to provide a detailed independent account of the "January 2026 Unrest" in Iran, instead relying on the state's characterization [unrest in Iran](#).
- The specific contents of the "Epstein Files" and their direct link to current policies are stated as fact but remain unverified in the text [Epstein file](#).
- There is a lack of information on Russian military casualties in the Ukraine war, which is nearing its 4th anniversary [fourth anniversary](#).
- The "Trump Route" corridor in Armenia is described without detailing the Armenian government's specific opposition or support [Trump route](#).

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Stalling" Diplomacy:** The U.S. and Iran are participating in Omani-mediated talks not to reach a deal, but to buy time—the U.S. to complete its "armada" buildup and Iran to finish its hypersonic missile deployments [carefully choreographed leaks](#).

- **The Managed Ruin of Europe:** Far from being a mistake, U.S. trade policy and energy shocks (like the Nord Stream explosion) are an intentional strategy to deindustrialize Germany and force European capital into U.S. markets [deindustrialized Germany](#).
- **Black Swan Event:** A coordinated cyber-attack on "Starlink" by Iran, which is claimed to have the capability, could blind Western communications during a flashpoint [disable starlink](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Prepare for "multiple fronts" if an attack on Iran occurs, including the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz [activating multiple fronts](#).
- **Economic:** Diversify energy supply chains immediately to mitigate a \$140/barrel scenario [oil price hike](#).
- **Diplomatic:** Use the Geneva talks to prioritize water security in Gaza to prevent further regional radicalization [resolution... is diplomacy](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** European importers must seek immediate regulatory clarity following the U.S. Supreme Court tariff reversal [refunded to importers](#).
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Companies with UK operations should re-evaluate relationships with arms firms in light of the Palestine Action legal victory [resounding victory](#).

- **Logistics:** Shift long-term logistics planning toward the North-South Golden Corridor as a hedge against Atlantic route volatility [Golden Corridor](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Major legislative developments include the U.S. Supreme Court overturning a 1977 law misused by the executive and the UK High Court quashing a Home Office terrorism proscription.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (1977):** Struck down by the US Supreme Court for misuse in justifying broad tariffs [misused a 1977 law](#).
- **UK Occupied Territories Bill:** Legislation aimed at restricting trade with the Israeli regime, currently facing delays in the Irish government [occupied territories bill](#).
- **UK Terrorism Proscription (Palestine Action):** Quashed by the High Court as "unlawful" and "disproportionate" [prescription... was unlawful](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Omani Phone Call (Arakchi/Busaidi):** Discussed the next round of indirect talks in Geneva [Arakchi was talking](#).
- **Munich Security Conference:** Featured a "strange and delusional" speech by Marco Rubio on imperialist pride [Munich Security Conference](#).

KEY STORIES

- **US Supreme Court Overturns Trump Tariffs:** A landmark 6-3 ruling that the President cannot levy tariffs without Congress, creating a \$1 trillion budget hole [Supreme Court has overturned](#).
- **Mar-a-Lago Shooting Incident:** Secret Service killed a 21-year-old suspect attempting a breach with a shotgun at 1:30 AM [breach secure perimeter](#).
- **Gaza Water Crisis:** Report on 70 destroyed wells and the humanitarian emergency for 2 million people during Ramadan [shattered wells](#).
- **Pakistan Strikes in Afghanistan:** Fighter jets hit seven camps in Nangarhar and Paktika; civilians reportedly killed [Pakistani fighter jets](#).
- **UK High Court Ruling on Palestine Action:** The group's terrorist designation was ruled "unlawful," leading to a campaign victory [momentous legal triumph](#).
- **47th Iranian Revolution Anniversary:** Millions gathered in Tehran to demonstrate support for the state against external threats [two million people](#).
- **Golden Corridor Logistics:** Geopolitical analysis of the North-South corridor connecting St. Petersburg to Mumbai via Iran [Golden Corridor](#).
- **Epstein File Influence Scandal:** Claims that 3.5 million pages of released documents expose a "Zionist" extortion network over U.S. elites [network of influence](#).
- **Northern Ireland First Minister Appointment:** Michelle O'Neill becomes first Sinn Féin First Minister after DUP boycott end [Shin Fain first minister](#).
- **West Bank Abductions:** Over 100 Palestinians reported abducted by Israeli forces during Ramadan raids [100 Palestinians have been abducted](#).
- **Russia-Germany Relations Critique:** Sergey Kilov analyzes the "tatters" of the German economy following the Ukraine conflict [tatters](#).
- **Greenland Colonization Proposal:** Denmark and Greenland reject Trump's "hospital boat" as an interventionist move [colonize Greenland](#).
- **British Museum Label Controversy:** Protest over the museum removing the word "Palestine" from 1700-1500 BC artifacts [removal the word Palestine](#).
- **Iran-US Negotiating Stance:** Iran refuses to yield on uranium enrichment rights during upcoming Geneva talks [right to enrich](#).
- **Jan 2026 Unrest Statistics Controversy:** Iranian forensic head claims foreign "unrealistic" death tolls of 1200 are false [unrealistic was the number](#).
- **Fattah 2 Missile Capability:** Details on Iran's Mach 15 hypersonic glide vehicle designed to target U.S. warships [fattah 2](#).
- **Pakistan-Taliban Border Closure:** Months-long border closure leading to food scarcity in both nations [scarcity of some food products](#).
- **Ireland Reunification Debate:** Analysis of the "copper fison partition" and shift in unionist identity since Brexit [copper fison partition](#).
- **Death of Expertise Documentary:** Analysis of Crimea geographic ignorance among Americans and its link to war-hawk sentiment [where is Ukraine a map?](#).

- **Starlink Disabling Claims:** Iranian military analysts claim the capability to disable the Starlink satellite network [disable starlink](#).

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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