

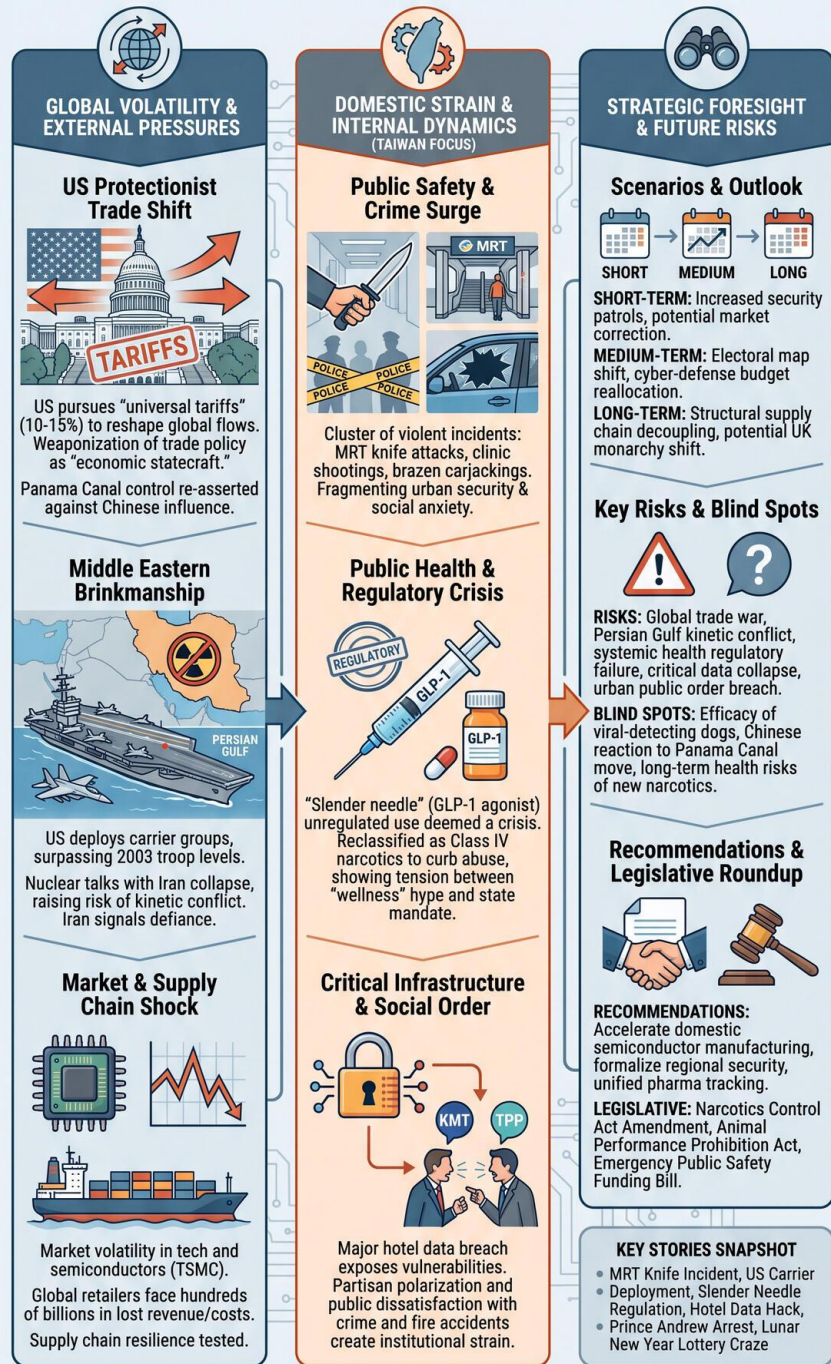
TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TTV

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

GLOBAL TRADE VOLATILITY & MIDDLE EASTERN BRINKMANSHIP COINCIDE WITH DOMESTIC SURGE IN VIOLENT CRIME & PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATORY SHIFTS



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GLOBAL TRADE VOLATILITY AND
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DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The reporting period of February 22, 2026, reveals a landscape defined by significant geopolitical friction and domestic instability. Internationally, the global trade order faces a major shock as the U.S. administration moves to implement aggressive **universal tariffs**, triggering fears of a retaliatory trade war and economic disruption. This protectionist stance is mirrored by heightened military posturing in the Middle East, with the deployment of U.S. carrier strike groups to the Persian Gulf as nuclear negotiations with Iran reach a critical impasse. These external pressures are compounding market volatility, particularly in the semiconductor and tech sectors, where supply chain resilience is being tested by shifting U.S. policy toward China and Taiwan.

Domestically, Taiwan is grappling with a cluster of **violent crime incidents** and public safety failures that have rattled urban centers.

Reports of random knife attacks, clinic shootings, and brazen carjackings suggest a straining social fabric during the Lunar New Year period. Simultaneously, a public health crisis is emerging around the unregulated use of "slender needles" (GLP-1 agonists), prompting urgent calls for stricter medical oversight and enforcement against illegal online sales. The convergence of these events—trade wars, military escalation, and domestic unrest—indicates a period of high strategic risk, requiring a recalibration of both security and economic policy to maintain stability.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

US Protectionist Trade Shift and Global Market Reaction

- The U.S. has announced a planned [10% global import tariff](#), with potential escalations to 15% if legal challenges fail, aiming to reshape global trade flows.
- Taiwanese officials and industry leaders are analyzing the [impact on semiconductor exports](#) and local manufacturing as Trump-era policies re-emerge.
- Global markets are reacting to the [U.S. move to regain control](#) over the Panama Canal, citing Chinese influence as a national security threat.

Escalation of Middle Eastern Military Tensions

- The U.S. has deployed the [USS Gerald R. Ford](#) to the Mediterranean/Persian Gulf region, surpassing 2003-level troop concentrations in the area.

- Iran has signaled it will not yield to pressure, as [nuclear negotiations](#) show signs of total collapse, raising the probability of kinetic conflict.

Domestic Public Safety and Criminal Surge

- A series of violent incidents, including a [random knife attack](#) at MRT Exit M8 and a carjacking in Sanchong, have heightened public anxiety.
- Law enforcement is investigating a high-profile [shooting at a Taipei clinic](#) involving a 200-million-dollar dispute.
- A recurring pattern of [mental health-related incidents](#), including bridge jumps on major expressways, indicates a gap in social support systems.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- U.S. military buildup in the Middle East includes [additional air assets](#) deployed to the Azores to support Persian Gulf operations.

Civil Unrest & Social Order

- Partisan polarization continues as the TPP and KMT explore [cooperation in local elections](#), while public dissatisfaction with crime rates grows.

Critical Infrastructure Security

- A significant [hotel data breach](#) has exposed the vulnerabilities of the hospitality sector to external cyber actors.

Global Health & Biosecurity

- Authorities are cracking down on the [illegal sale of weight-loss drugs](#), designating certain compounds as Class IV narcotics to curb abuse.
- The use of [specially trained dogs](#) to detect viral infections in asymptomatic individuals is being piloted in Thailand and elsewhere.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on trade laws has [invalidated certain exemptions](#), forcing a re-evaluation of Taiwan-U.S. trade agreements.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Trade Policy

The shift toward **universal tariffs** and the aggressive pursuit of infrastructure like the Panama Canal suggests a U.S. strategy of "economic statecraft as warfare." This is no longer about balancing trade but about decoupling and asserting dominance over critical logistical nodes. The [U.S. stance on the Panama Canal](#) specifically highlights a pivot toward direct confrontation with Chinese economic influence in the Western Hemisphere.

Public Health Regulation in the Age of "Wellness" Hype

The "slender needle" craze represents a broader trend where medical technology outpaces regulatory frameworks. The [proliferation of GLP-1 agonists](#) through gray-market channels has forced the state to intervene with heavy-handed legal designations (narcotics status) to regain control over public health, illustrating the

tension between consumer demand for "bio-hacking" and state safety mandates.

Fragmenting Urban Security

The day's reporting shows a distinct cluster of **unpredictable violence**. Whether it is the [bridge jumps on expressways](#) or the [knife brandishing at transit hubs](#), there is a sense that the holiday period has exacerbated underlying mental health and economic stressors, leading to visible ruptures in public order.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Taiwan is experiencing a period of **institutional and social strain**. The Lunar New Year, typically a time of stability, has been marred by a spike in [violent crimes and fire accidents](#). Partisan maneuvering between the KMT and TPP regarding New Taipei City elections suggests that elite infighting remains a priority even as public safety concerns escalate. The [political rhetoric](#) around "blue-white cooperation" indicates a focus on power consolidation ahead of the next electoral cycle, potentially at the expense of addressing immediate civil concerns like the rising crime rate and the [phasing out of controversial animal performances](#) which has triggered niche but vocal debate.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is framed as a **hostile threat matrix** centered on U.S. unilateralism. Taiwan finds itself in a defensive posture, attempting to maintain its alliance with the U.S. while bracing for the [economic shocks](#) of new tariff regimes. The portrayal of the U.S. is one of a "chaotic but

necessary" partner—principled in its opposition to Iran and China, yet inept in its disregard for the stability of global supply chains. Taiwan's adaptations include [investing in domestic semiconductor capacity](#) to ensure self-reliance while actively seeking new diplomatic formalizations to mitigate the impact of U.S. trade shifts.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Market sentiment is characterized by **caution and strategic realignment**. The semiconductor sector remains the primary focus, with TSMC's stock performance closely tied to U.S. policy changes. Inflationary pressures are expected to rise as a direct result of new tariff proposals, while domestic consumer behavior is driven by holiday spending and lottery participation.

- **Semiconductors:** Analyst reports indicate [synchronous rises](#) in semiconductor indices alongside TSMC, despite trade uncertainty.
- **Trade Disputes:** The [US 10% tariff proposal](#) is projected to cost global retailers hundreds of billions in lost revenue and increased logistics costs.
- **Public Finance:** The Lunar New Year "red envelope" economy has injected [millions into the local market](#), primarily through lotteries and scratch-offs.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Leadership dynamics are characterized by **electoral positioning** and the fallout from personal scandals. The focus remains on the

upcoming local elections and the international standing of high-profile figures.

- **Lai Ching-te:** Currently projecting an image of [national unity](#) through support for the 2026 WBC team and sports diplomacy.
- **Huang Kuo-chang:** Consolidating influence within the [TPP to negotiate](#) with the KMT, positioning himself as a kingmaker in New Taipei City.
- **Prince Andrew:** Framed as a [legal liability](#) for the UK monarchy following his arrest and the unsealing of new documents related to the Epstein case.
- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as the [primary driver](#) of global trade and security disruption.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's lead stories focus heavily on **domestic crime and public safety**, particularly the MRT knife incident and the expressway bridge jumps, creating a fear-inducing tone. International news regarding **U.S. tariffs and Middle East tensions** is given secondary prominence but framed with high urgency due to their economic implications. "Buried" stories include the long-term environmental impacts of [invasive species](#) and the nuanced debates over [animal rights legislation](#). There is a conspicuous omission of any deep analysis regarding the host nation's own defense budget adjustments in response to the growing U.S. military presence in the Pacific.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's narrative portrays a world in **transition toward bipolarity**, with the U.S. and China as the primary poles, while regional

actors like Taiwan, Iran, and the UK are forced to react to the erratic movements of these giants.

- **United States:** Framed as a **strong but chaotic** actor. Quote: "US tariff policy [changes once again](#), causing global concern."
- **Iran:** Portrayed as **stable but defiant** and an impending foe. Quote: "Iran will [not bow to pressure](#) as carrier groups approach."
- **Taiwan:** Framed as **principled but vulnerable**. The emphasis is on maintaining its "classic" status in global tech and sports while navigating [internal political shifts](#).
- **United Kingdom:** Framed as **institutionally weak** due to the scandals surrounding the royal family. Quote: "Prince Andrew's [arrest on his birthday](#) further damages the monarchy."

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The day's "meta-narrative" is one of **managed anxiety**. Specific state actors are weaponizing information to seed narratives of economic doom or security necessity.

- **Narrative Seeding:** U.S. officials are seeding the narrative that the [Panama Canal](#) is under imminent Chinese threat to justify military and economic intervention.
- **Public Manipulation:** The heavy coverage of [random violence](#) at MRT stations serves to justify increased police presence and potentially more restrictive social monitoring.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Trade Escalation:** Retaliatory tariffs from China and the EU are highly likely within the next four weeks if the U.S. follows through on the [15% tariff ceiling](#).
- **Regional Conflict:** The failure of nuclear talks and U.S. carrier movements suggests a high probability of a [limited strike](#) against Iranian assets within six months.
- **Regulatory Tightening:** Taiwan will likely implement mandatory [identity verification](#) for all online pharmaceutical purchases within the next two months.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Increased security patrols in Taipei transit hubs; potential market correction as tariff details are formalized; diplomatic protest from Iran over [carrier deployments](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Shift in Taiwan's electoral map as KMT-TPP alliance solidifies; budget reallocation for **critical infrastructure cyber-defense** following the hotel hack [investigation](#).

Long Term (1-5 Years): Structural decoupling of U.S. and Chinese supply chains; potential **regime change** in the UK monarchy if legal scandals persist; widespread use of [bio-detection animals](#) at all major ports of entry.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The global risk landscape is currently dominated by **trade-induced instability** and the fragility of **public order**.

- **Global Trade War:** Trigger: U.S. implementation of universal 10% tariffs. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic for export-led economies. Mitigation: Diversification of markets and [strengthening of regional trade blocs](#).
- **Persian Gulf Kinetic Conflict:** Trigger: Collapse of Iran nuclear talks + U.S. carrier provocation. Likelihood: Medium-High. Impact: Energy price spike and global logistical paralysis. Mitigation: Immediate [re-engagement](#) via third-party mediators (Oman).
- **Systemic Health Regulatory Failure:** Trigger: Death or mass injury from unregulated "slender needle" use. Likelihood: Medium. Impact: Loss of public trust in pharmaceutical systems. Mitigation: Designation of GLP-1 agonists as [Class IV narcotics](#).
- **Critical Data Collapse:** Trigger: A second, more expansive hack of the hospitality or banking sector. Likelihood: Medium-High. Impact: Erosion of economic security and privacy. Mitigation: Mandatory [cyber-security audits](#) for all large corporations.
- **Urban Public Order Breach:** Trigger: A mass casualty event resulting from a random knife attack. Likelihood: Low-Medium. Impact: Social panic and draconian security measures. Mitigation: Expansion of [mental health intervention programs](#) in urban centers.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts fail to provide specific data on the **actual efficacy** of the viral-detecting dogs beyond pilot program claims.
- There is a lack of information on the **Chinese reaction** to the U.S. move to regain control over the Panama Canal.
- The reports do not detail the **long-term health risks** associated with the newly designated Class IV weight-loss narcotics.
- The strategic rationale for [Prince Andrew's arrest](#) at this specific moment is not explored beyond the surface-level scandal.
- Missing context regarding the **economic viability** of small businesses under the new tariff regime.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The Managed Crisis:** The apparent rise in random violence is not a sign of collapse but a **deliberate media amplification** to secure public support for a significant expansion of the surveillance state and police budgets ahead of the elections.
- **The Stalling Tactic:** The U.S. carrier deployment is not an offensive move but a **stalling tactic** to prevent Israel from taking unilateral action while the U.S. secretly negotiates a new trade-for-peace deal with Iran.
- **Black Swan Event:** A **massive cyber-attack** on the global semiconductor supply chain—originating from a non-state actor—that disables the very tech sovereignty both the U.S. and China are fighting to control, leading to a decade-long global "analog" depression.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Accelerate [domestic semiconductor manufacturing](#) to mitigate tariff and supply chain risks.
- Formalize a **regional security framework** for transit hubs to address the rise in random violence.
- Implement a **unified pharmaceutical tracking system** to eliminate gray-market drug sales.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Hedge against **currency volatility** resulting from U.S. trade policy shifts.
- Prioritize [cyber-insurance and data security](#) for all hospitality and service-sector holdings.
- Invest in **alternative logistical routes** that bypass the Panama Canal and Persian Gulf.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislation this period is focused on **public safety, health regulation, and animal rights**. Several key bills are being debated in

the context of the Lunar New Year holiday and the rising crime rate.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **Narcotics Control Act Amendment:** Designates GLP-1 agonists as [Class IV narcotics](#) to prevent unauthorized sale and abuse.
- **Animal Performance Prohibition Act:** A proposal to phase out [dolphin and sea lion shows](#), citing welfare concerns.
- **Emergency Public Safety Funding Bill:** Proposed in response to the [MRT knife attacks](#) to increase surveillance and transit security.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **WBC Team Support Event:** President Lai Ching-te addressed the [national baseball team](#), emphasizing sportsmanship and unity.
- **Trade Policy Briefing:** Vice Premier Zheng Li-jun chaired an [emergency meeting](#) on U.S. tariff impacts.

KEY STORIES

- **Taipei MRT Knife Incident:** A man brandished a 10cm fruit knife at [Taipei M8 exit](#), causing mass panic. No injuries were reported, but the suspect was detained after a 17-minute standoff.
- **U.S. Carrier Deployment:** The [USS Gerald R. Ford](#) has entered the Mediterranean as nuclear talks with Iran stall; U.S. forces in the region have reached their highest levels since 2003.
- **Panama Canal Control:** The U.S. has announced intent to [re-assert oversight](#) of the Panama Canal, citing threats from Chinese-owned port operations.
- **Slender Needle Regulation:** Health authorities have reclassified [weight-loss injections](#) as Class IV narcotics following widespread illegal online sales and reports of adverse reactions.
- **Sanchong Carjacking:** Two men stole a taxi at knife-point in [Sanchong](#), later fleeing to Central Taiwan. Police have identified the suspects via CCTV.
- **Prince Andrew Arrest:** The UK royal family faces a new crisis after [Prince Andrew was arrested](#) following the unsealing of new documents in the Epstein investigation.
- **Expressway Bridge Jump:** A 35-year-old man [jumped from the Wuyang Elevated Expressway](#) (49.5km mark) after a mental health crisis in a taxi. He was pronounced dead at the scene.
- **Hotel Data Hack:** A major hotel chain reported a [system breach](#) on Lunar New Year, compromising the personal and financial data of thousands of guests.
- **Tiger Deaths in Thailand:** 72 Bengal tigers have died in [Thailand](#) within 12 days due to a feline parvovirus outbreak, triggering a biosecurity alarm.
- **Viral-Detecting Dogs:** A pilot program in [Thailand](#) uses dogs to detect COVID-19 and other viruses in asymptomatic people with a 90% accuracy rate.
- **Sagrada Familia Completion:** New reports indicate the [Sagrada Familia](#) is nearing completion after 143 years, with the final towers expected to be finished by June.
- **2026 WBC Preparations:** The Taiwan national baseball team is in [training camp](#) for the upcoming WBC, with high expectations from fans and political leaders.

- **Lunar New Year Lottery Craze:** Lottery outlets report [record sales](#), with one shop selling 1,000 scratch-off tickets in a single day.
- **Sanchong House Fire:** A major fire in [Sanchong](#) left three family members injured; the cause is suspected to be faulty electrical wiring.
- **Invasive Species Study:** Researchers in [Chiayi](#) discovered a rare deep-sea fish species not seen in over 100 years, highlighting the impact of warming ocean temperatures.

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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