

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

PRESSTV

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

GLOBAL FRAGMENTATION & GEOPOLITICAL REALIGNMENT - FEB 22, 2026

The Shift Towards a Multipolar World: Escalation, Judicial Defeats, and Regional Unity

IRAN-EU TERROR DESIGNATION STANDOFF

Iran designates EU naval & air forces as terrorist organizations. Response to EU labeling IRGC. Tehran views EU as US 'puppet'.

EROSION OF EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

US JUDICIAL DEFEAT: TRUMP TARIFFS STRUCK DOWN

SCOTUS declares Trump's global tariffs illegal. Creates temporary 150-day workarounds. Administration viewed as chaotic.

THIRD ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

CONNECTED TRENDS & REGIONAL CRISES

EPSTEIN FILES: GEOPOLITICAL TOOL

3.5M PAGES RELEASED. Implicates global elites, potential for blackmail/influence.

MIDDLE EAST UNITY & GAZA CRISIS

GREATER ISRAEL RHETORIC

WATER WEAPONIZATION DURING RAMADAN

INSTC: EURASIAN INTEGRATION

RUSSIA-IRAN-INDIA-CHINA AXIS. Bypassing Western routes.

PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN STRIKES

Cross-border air strikes. Sovereignty violations and counter-terrorism claims.

DEEP DIVE, FORESIGHT & IMPLICATIONS

KEY THEMES

THE END OF EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY (Diminished Credibility, Internal Fractures)

WEAPONIZATION OF THE PAST & IDENTITY (Editing History, Narrative Control)

EURASIAN INTEGRATION VS. WESTERN PROTECTIONISM (INSTC 'Golden Corridor' vs. Chaotic US Trade Policy)

THE 'ILLUSION OF KNOWLEDGE' & DEATH OF EXPERTISE (Fake News, Rejection of Established Experience)

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & IMPLICATIONS

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS):

Market volatility

Naval confrontation

Protests

Tariff legal challenges, Strait of Hormuz tension, direct action in UK.

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS):

Pipeline valve

Court grantsies

New rail line

Druzhiba pipeline closure, more Epstein fallout, INSTC completion.

LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS):

New alliance treaty

Ballot box

Advanced missile

Iran-Arab military alliance, Irish border poll, qualitative leap in Iran's missile capabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Naval blockade

Diplomatic

Humanitarian aid

Policy: Decide on engagement vs. blockade in Hormuz, monitor Caucasus flashpoint, address Gaza crisis.

FOR PRIVATE SECTOR/INVESTORS

Supply chain map

Investment

Broken financial market

Investors: Brace for trade volatility, diversify from Gulf energy, explore INSTC opportunities.

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GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL
INSTABILITY INTENSIFIES AS IRAN
ESCALATES ITS DIPLOMATIC
STANDOFF WITH THE EUROPEAN
UNION WHILE US PRESIDENT
DONALD TRUMP FACES A MAJOR
JUDICIAL DEFEAT REGARDING HIS
GLOBAL TARIFF REGIME.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 22, 2026, marks a significant inflection point in the shift toward a multipolar world, characterized by high-stakes "tit-for-tat" diplomacy and the erosion of traditional Western alliances. Iran has fundamentally escalated its rhetoric and legal posture by designating the air and naval forces of all EU member states as terrorist organizations. This move is a direct response to the EU's labeling of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity, signaling that Tehran no longer views the European bloc as a neutral diplomatic arbiter but as a direct "puppet" of the United States. Simultaneously, indirect nuclear negotiations in Geneva continue under a cloud of military intimidation, with Iran maintaining its "diplomacy through strength" posture, claiming that US B-2

bomber strikes in 2025 failed to destroy its nuclear infrastructure and that reverse-engineering of unexploded US ordnance is underway.

In the United States, the Trump administration's domestic and foreign policy "lynchpin"—its global tariff regime—was struck down by the Supreme Court, creating a potential trillion-dollar hole in the federal budget and forcing the White House into a temporary 150-day legislative workaround. This legal setback, combined with a third assassination attempt on Trump at Mar-a-Lago and the destabilizing release of 3.5 million pages of the "Epstein Files," portrays a US government increasingly viewed by international observers as chaotic and overextended. Regionally, the Middle East (referred to throughout as West Asia) is reacting with unprecedented unity against US Ambassador Mike Huckabee's support for Israeli annexation projects, while the humanitarian crisis in Gaza enters a new phase of "water weaponization" during the holy month of Ramadan.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Iran-EU Terror Designation Escalation:** Iran has officially designated the naval and air forces of EU member states as terrorist organizations. This reciprocal move, based on a 2019 Iranian law, follows the EU's decision to label the IRGC a terrorist entity. Tehran argues the EU has violated the UN charter and international law, effectively ending the perception of European strategic autonomy ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **US Supreme Court Overturns Trump Tariff Regime:** In a landmark ruling, the US Supreme Court declared Trump's global tariffs illegal, stating the President misused the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The ruling requires the refund of over \$130 billion to importers. Trump immediately countered by invoking Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act to impose a new 15% baseline tariff for a limited 150-day period ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Arab and Islamic Bloc Condemns "Greater Israel" Rhetoric:** 14 Arab and Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, issued a joint statement slamming US Ambassador Mike Huckabee's remarks supporting Israeli territorial expansion from the "Nile to the Euphrates." This rhetoric is being framed as a direct threat to the sovereignty of all regional states ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Pakistan-Afghanistan Cross-Border Strikes:** Pakistani fighter jets launched deadly air strikes in Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Paktika provinces, targeting what they claimed were TTP and Daesh hideouts. Kabul has condemned the act as a violation of sovereignty, warning of a "measured response," while Islamabad accuses the Taliban of allowing Afghan soil to be used for terrorism ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Release of the Epstein Files:** The release of 3.5 million pages of documents, 180,000 images, and 20 videos related to Jeffrey Epstein is being analyzed as a geopolitical tool. Reports suggest the files implicate global elites, including Emirati leaders and US officials, potentially serving as a mechanism for Mossad-linked extortion and blackmail to influence foreign policy ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) Progress:** Russia is investing 1.3 billion euros in the Rasht-Astara rail line in Iran to complete a critical link in the INSTC. This "Golden Corridor" is designed to bypass the Suez Canal, cutting transit times from St. Petersburg to Mumbai by half and solidifying a Russia-Iran-India-China trade axis ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Geopolitics and International Relations

- The US is amassing a massive military contingent in West Asia, including carrier strike groups and THAAD/Patriot air defense systems, to pressure Iran into a nuclear deal ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Denmark and Greenland have rejected Trump's offer to send a naval hospital ship to the Arctic, viewing the offer as a pretext for establishing a permanent US military presence aimed at Russia ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- EU officials are mediating a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan involving the "Trump Route" corridor, which regional powers fear will be used for a US military base near the Iranian border ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Economic Statecraft and Trade

- The failure of the US tariff regime is expected to cause massive domestic financial volatility and a trillion-dollar federal budget deficit ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Hungary and Slovakia are blocking a 90 billion euro EU loan to Ukraine until the Druzhba oil pipeline resumes deliveries, highlighting fractures in EU unity regarding energy security ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- Iran is offering 20-year tax-free incentives in its Chabahar free trade zone to attract Chinese and Indian investment ([Source](#)).

Domestic Stability and Social Order

- The US is facing a spike in political violence, marked by the shooting of a suspect attempting to breach Mar-a-Lago and the recent assassinations of state legislators and activists ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Northern Ireland is undergoing a demographic shift where Catholics now outnumber Protestants (45.7% to 43.5%), intensifying calls for a border poll on Irish reunification ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Terrorism and Civil Unrest

- Iran claims that Israeli and US operatives were responsible for fomenting recent unrest and "killing scenarios" involving the destruction of property and the deaths of innocent civilians in January 2026 ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The UK High Court found the proscription of "Palestine Action" as a terrorist organization to be unlawful and a violation of free speech, despite government appeals ([Source](#)).

Legislation

- **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977 (US):** Ruled by the Supreme Court to have been misused by the executive for broad tariffs ([Source](#)).
- **Trade Act of 1974, Section 122 (US):** Invoked by the Trump administration to temporarily sustain tariffs for 150 days ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **2019 Reciprocal Action Law (Iran):** The legal basis for Iran designating EU militaries as terrorist entities ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Legacy Bill (UK):** Controversial legislation criticized for "burying" the truth of crimes committed during the Northern Ireland "Troubles" ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Occupied Territories Bill (Ireland):** Proposed legislation to restrict trade with the Israeli regime, currently facing domestic pressure for passage ([Source](#)).

LEGISLATION/POLICY

The day's news was dominated by constitutional crises in the US regarding the limits of executive power over trade, and the invocation of reciprocal "anti-terror" laws by Iran. In the UK and Ireland, legislative debates center on historical accountability and economic sanctions against Israel. International policy discussions focus on the implementation of the "Trump Route" corridor in the Caucasus and the contested 20th sanctions package against Russia.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act (US):** A temporary measure allowing the President to levy tariffs for 150 days to address balance-of-payment deficits. ([Source](#))
- **20th EU Sanctions Package on Russia:** A proposed package currently blocked by Hungary over oil pipeline disputes. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Super-majority Requirement for Irish Unity (UK Proposal):** A bill introduced by Ian Paisley Jr. to move the goalposts for Irish reunification from a simple majority to a super-majority. ([Source](#))

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Indirect Nuclear Talks (Geneva):** Indirect negotiations between Iran and the US mediated by Oman, focused on uranium enrichment and sanction removal. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Milan 2026 International Naval Exercises:** Iranian Rear Admiral Shahram Irani met with Saudi and Russian counterparts in India to discuss collective maritime security. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Epstein Files Judicial Release:** A lengthy judicial process in the US led to the release of massive amounts of data previously considered "conspiracy theory." ([Source](#))

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The End of European Strategic Autonomy

Iran's decision to designate EU militaries as terrorist organizations reflects a strategic conclusion in Tehran: the EU is no longer a separate diplomatic entity but an integrated wing of US policy. Analysts suggest this "diminished credibility" stems from the EU's failure to maintain the JCPOA and its participation in proxy conflicts. This trend is further complicated by internal EU fractures, such as Hungary and Slovakia's rebellion against the 20th sanctions package, suggesting that the "Brussels-dictated" model is under existential pressure from both external adversaries and internal dissenters ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

The Weaponization of the Past and Identity

A recurring theme is the "editing of history" as a form of modern warfare. Protests at the British Museum over the removal of the word "Palestine" from ancient exhibits highlight an

ideological project to erase Palestinian history to manufacture "ancient antiquity" for the Israeli state. Similarly, the "Black Box" analysis frames the labeling of resistance as "madness" as a colonial psychological tactic used from 19th-century America to modern-day Gaza. In Northern Ireland, the "Legacy Bill" is viewed as an attempt by the British state to "sweep its crimes under the carpet," showing that the control of historical narratives remains central to maintaining or challenging state legitimacy ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

Eurasian Economic Integration vs. Western Protectionism

While the US faces judicial roadblocks to its protectionist tariff policies, the "Global South" and Eurasian powers are accelerating infrastructure integration. The INSTC and the development of Chabahar port represent a "New Silk Road" that bypasses Western-controlled maritime routes. Iran is positioning itself not just as a transit hub but as a "route designer." This contrasts sharply with the "chaotic and unmanageable" US trade policy, where institutions appear increasingly weak and dependent on "one person not following the rules" ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

The "Illusion of Knowledge" and the Death of Expertise

A philosophical through-line in the day's coverage is the global crisis of "artificial literacy." Using the 2014 Crimea annexation as a case study, researchers noted that those with the least geographical or historical knowledge were the most likely to support military intervention. This "narcissism" of the masses—believing they know more than trained specialists—is being linked to modern phenomena like "fake news," alternative facts, and the rejection of established scientific or diplomatic experience, creating a dangerous environ-

ment where public opinion is easily manipulated toward war ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- Expect immediate legal challenges to the Trump administration's 150-day tariff work-around. Market volatility will likely spike as importers prepare for the new 15% baseline while seeking refunds for previous illegal levies.
- Iran may escalate maritime "inspections" or drills in the Strait of Hormuz to test the "terrorist" designation of EU naval forces, potentially leading to a naval standoff.
- The 20th of February hearing for "Palestine Action" in the UK may spark a new wave of direct action against arms firms if the group's "terrorist" label is not immediately suspended.

Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- The closure of the Druzhba pipeline could lead to a state of emergency in Slovakia and Hungary, forcing the EU to choose between abandoned member states or a fundamental compromise on Ukraine funding.
- The release of more Epstein files will likely lead to high-profile resignations in European capitals, while the US "immune system" of corporate-political interest will continue to shield its own elites, deepening the "transatlantic trust gap."
- Completion of the Rasht-Astara rail line will begin to measurably shift trade volumes away from the Suez Canal toward the INSTC.

Long Term (1-5 Years):

- If the US continues its expansionist rhetoric via officials like Huckabee, expect a formal military-security alliance between Iran and traditionally Western-aligned Arab states (Saudi Arabia, UAE) to protect regional sovereignty.
- The demographic shift in Northern Ireland will likely culminate in a 2027-2028 border poll, potentially resulting in the end of the UK in its current form.
- Iran's reverse-engineering of unexploded US ordnance from the 2025 strikes may lead to a qualitative leap in its domestic cruise missile and bunker-buster capabilities, altering the regional balance of power permanently.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Security Implication:** The designation of EU militaries as "terrorists" by Iran effectively removes the "Red Sea protection" shield for European commercial shipping. Policy makers must decide whether to engage Tehran directly or risk a total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Diplomatic Implication:** The "Trump Route" in the Caucasus should be monitored as a flashpoint. US mediation there is perceived by Iran and Russia as a military encirclement tactic, which may provoke a preemptive security response from the regional "Bricks" powers.

- **Security Implication:** The humanitarian crisis in Gaza (specifically water) is reaching a breaking point that could trigger a wider regional insurrection, as Arab governments face "freak out mode" due to public pressure and US expansionist rhetoric.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Importers into the US must brace for a period of extreme "pointless theater" in trade policy. Relying on long-term tariff exemptions is no longer feasible given the judicial instability of the current administration.
- **Investment Opportunity:** The INSTC "Golden Corridor" presents massive long-term opportunities for logistics and infrastructure firms capable of operating within the Iran-Russia-India-China framework, particularly in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone.
- **Financial Risk:** A potential closing of the Strait of Hormuz, even for a few days, would trigger a global economic crash starting in Asian markets. Investors should diversify away from assets heavily dependent on Gulf energy transit or East Asian production chains.

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.

For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.