TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

PRESSTV

MAY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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GLOBAL POWER SHIFT AND ECONOMIC CONTAGION FOLLOWING THE 2026 US-ISRAELI-IRANIAN CONFLICT

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The global geopolitical landscape on May 22, 2026, is defined by the catastrophic fallout of a multi-week conflict between a US-Israeli coalition and the Islamic Republic of Iran, a confrontation that has fundamentally altered international energy security and trade norms. Following the assassination of **Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei** on February 28, 2026, and a subsequent "12-day war," the region has entered a state of fragile ceasefire characterized by Iranian consolidation of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has transitioned from a passive presence to an active management regime, instituting the **Persian Gulf Straight Authority** (PGSA), which requires all transiting vessels to pay tolls and obtain permits, a move analysts describe as Iran's "nuclear option" for economic warfare. This has triggered a massive supply shock, removing an estimated **12.8 million barrels of oil per day** from global markets, leading to crude prices surging above $107 per barrel.

Domestic stability in the West is deteriorating as the economic costs of the "war of choice" metastasize. In the United States, the Trump administration faces a high-level exodus of intelligence and counter-terrorism officials, most notably the resignation of **Tulsi Gabbard**, who testified that intelligence assessments showed Iran was not pursuing nuclear weapons prior to US strikes. The American public is increasingly polarized, with internal dissent growing over an unprecedented **$1.5 trillion military budget** for 2027 while the average household faces an extra $5,000 in annual costs due to the conflict. Concurrently, Israel is grappling with a severe manpower crisis and a record 90,000 draft dodgers as its multi-front operations in Gaza and Lebanon reach a strategic stalemate.

The day's events suggest a decisive pivot of global influence toward the East. China and Russia have strengthened their strategic ties with Tehran, viewing Iran as the **linchpin of the Belt and Road Initiative**. As the US and Israel attempt to project power through air strikes and sanctions, they appear increasingly isolated, with even NATO allies like Turkey and regional partners like the UAE distancing themselves from the conflict's escalation. The convergence of **energy insecurity, uncontrolled inflation, and military failure** is threatening the survival of multiple governments, with the broadcast suggesting that up to 60 governments could face collapse in the coming year due to the "strategic self-destruction" of Western foreign policy.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Consolidation of the Persian Gulf Straight Authority (PGSA):** Iran has officially launched a new mechanism for governing maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz. All vessels must now obtain permits and pay tolls to trans-regional powers, effectively ending the era of free navigation as defined by Western standards. Iran argues it is exercising sovereign rights over its territorial waters in response to the American naval blockade.
- **Collapse of US Intelligence Unity:** The resignation of **Tulsi Gabbard** as National Intelligence Chief highlights a profound rift in the US executive branch. Gabbard's dismissal from critical security decisions followed her testimony that Iran had not rebuilt enrichment sites after the 2025 strikes, contradicting the administration's casus belli for continued aggression.
- **Global Economic Contagion:** The closure and subsequent "management" of the Strait of Hormuz has triggered the largest oil supply shock in modern history. Household energy bills in the UK are projected to skyrocket by 13%, while the US economy faces a "consumer crunch" with inflation reaching 4% and wiping out wage gains.
- **Hezbollah's Technological Evolution:** In southern Lebanon, the use of **FPV (First-Person View) drones** has fundamentally altered the battlefield. These $500 gadgets are reportedly destroying multi-million dollar Israeli tanks and breaching radar systems, forcing a re-evaluation of traditional armored warfare doctrine.
- **Pakistan-China Mediation Efforts:** Pakistan's military chief, **Field Marshal Assim Muner**, has arrived in Tehran to facilitate a joint mediation initiative with China aimed at ending the war on all fronts. This underscores the displacement of US diplomatic influence in West Asia.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The conflict is described as a "war of attrition" where the US-Israeli coalition has "lost the strategic initiative." Reports indicate that **Hezbollah** has achieved high-air capabilities that are reshaping the battlefield in southern Lebanon.
- Israeli military officials warn of a potential collapse of the military if draft evasion—currently at record levels—is not addressed through legislation.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The US public debt has hit **100% of GDP**, a milestone not seen since WWII, with projections reaching 190% by 2050 (20260522-36). This is framed as a "terminal crisis" for the American empire.
- Saudi Arabia is reporting a **125 billion rial deficit** in the first quarter of 2026, directly attributed to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and decreased oil exports.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- The UAE is reportedly distancing itself from the US-Israeli alliance, with rumors circulating of a shift toward the petro-yuan to settle transactions, which has sent "shock waves through the economic elite."

- European governments, while summoning Israeli ambassadors to protest the treatment of **flotilla activists**, have notably failed to issue formal sanctions, reflecting a subordination to current power systems.

Information Warfare & Disinformation

- The media environment is described as a "battle in the realm of the hyperreal." Iran is reportedly winning the narrative war through **AI-generated memes and social media engagement** that undercut Western political figures (20260522-45).
- A significant "online war" is underway, with reports of **Israeli bot farms** attempting to support the Iranian opposition while legacy platforms like X face accusations of censoring pro-Iranian voices.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The End of "Western Exceptionalism": A recurring theme throughout the day is the failure of the "Project Freedom" doctrine and the emergence of a new "Project Nowhere" for the West. Analysts argue that the US has "squandered its wealth pointlessly" and that its military hardware is no longer invincible when faced with persistent resistance and asymmetrical technological adaptation like FPV drones. The perception of the US as an "outpost" rather than a reliable ally is gaining traction even within the Global South.

Resource Weaponization and Chokepoint Sovereignty: The transition of the Strait of Hormuz from an international waterway to a **managed Iranian-Omani zone** represents a fundamental shift in the law of the sea. By applying the 1958 Geneva Convention instead of UNCLOS (which the US has also not ratified), Iran has created a legal basis for maritime control that the West struggles to challenge without further military escalation, which it can currently ill-afford.

Scholasticide as a War Crime: The broadcast highlights a trend of targeting educational and scientific institutions. The **US attack on the Shajarat school in Minab** (168 killed) and the bombing of Sharif University (Iran's MIT) are framed as deliberate attempts to "set back Iran to the stone age" by inducing a "targeted brain drain" through the destruction of infrastructure and the murder of future generations.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United States: The domestic environment is characterized by "profound intellectual dishonesty" and a "bubble of sycophants" surrounding the President. The high-level resignations of Gabbard and Kent signal that even the "loyal soldiers" are turning against the administration's war policy. Public sentiment is shifting as the "America First" constituency realizes their resources are being diverted to **advance Zionist colonization** at the expense of US infrastructure. The mid-term elections on November 3rd are seen as a looming "doomsday" for the Republican Party.

Israel: The "Zionist entity" is facing an existential crisis from within. Draft evasion is not merely a social trend but a **strategic failure**, with 32,000 evading service and another 50,000 refusing to enlist (20260522-28). The far-right cabinet members, such as **Itamar Ben-Gvir**, are criticized for "outrageous behavior," including taunting kidnapped foreign activists, which is

undermining Israel's remaining diplomatic cover in Europe.

Iran: In stark contrast, the Iranian domestic front is portrayed as **singularly unified**. The assassination of Khamenei appears to have backfired, creating a "new wave of unity, resistance and patriotism." Reports indicate a "reverse migration" of **630,000 Iranians** returning to the country to support the war effort (20260522-33). The **National John Fado campaign** has reportedly registered 31 million volunteers for wartime service, suggesting a society that has "taken its historical destiny into its own hands."

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The framing of the international system is one of **"Clash of Wills."** The US-Israeli axis is depicted as a "parasite" that has infested the global body politic, now reaching its limits (20260522-3). The "Outside World" is increasingly rallying around the **China-Russia-Iran axis**, which is framed as a "bastion of stability" compared to the "reckless warmongering" of Washington. Regional states like **Jordan and Saudi Arabia** are seen as being in "dangerous situations," forced to choose between traditional US alliances that bring economic ruin and a new regional order led by Tehran. The Pakistan-China mediation initiative is presented as the only credible path toward peace, further marginalizing the UN and Western multilateral institutions.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic environment is in a state of "biblical proportion" disruption. The **Strait of Hormuz crisis** has not just impacted oil prices but has "sucked the color out of the world," with Japanese snack makers resorting to monochromatic packaging due to petrochemical ingredient shortages. Financial markets are reportedly "pricing in" a prolonged war and regional devastation.

- **Energy Prices:** Brent crude remains above **$107/barrel**; Iranian officials warn that continued war will lead to a permanent exit of Middle Eastern oil/gas from the market.
- **US Fiscal Status:** Public debt at **100% of GDP**; war cost estimated at **$29 billion to $100 billion** depending on source; 2027 military budget request of **$1.5 trillion** (20260522-41).
- **Supply Chain Shock:** A "cumulative supply loss" of **12.8 million barrels per day**; severe shortages of **sulfuric acid** (essential for fertilizers and electronics) and **NAFTA** inputs (20260522-48).
- **Consumer Impact:** UK energy bills average **1,850 pounds/year**; US inflation at 4% with **3.8% April surge**; McDonald's CEO reports customers "escaping breakfast entirely" due to costs (20260522-48).
- **Industrial Vulnerability:** EU chemical manufacturing facing **35-40% cost structure vulnerability**; steel production at 45% energy cost exposure (20260522-46).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The "palace intrigue" in Washington suggests an administration in terminal decay, while the Iranian leadership has been martyred but immortalized.

- **Tulsi Gabbard:** Resigned/Forced out as US National Intelligence Chief after challenging the administration's war narrative regarding Iranian nuclear progress.

- **Joe Kent:** Resigned as US counter-terrorism chief, calling the "Iran threat a lie" (20260522-7).
- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a "tyrannical figure" and a "child who broke into a candy store," now facing all-time low approval ratings even among Republicans.
- **Nitin Yahoo (Netanyahu):** Facing internal revolt and a "deepening political crisis" as his coalition partners push for early elections that he may not survive.
- **Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei:** Posthumously framed as the "bedrock of resistance," whose death has **galvanized the global anti-imperialist movement** (20260522-30).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network maintains a **highly nationalistic and celebratory tone** regarding Iranian resilience and Western failure. The lead stories focus on the **Tulsi Gabbard resignation** and the **success of the Hormuz "New Management" regime**, framing them as evidence of the collapse of the US-led world order. Buried stories include the specifics of **internal Iranian dissent** (only alluded to as something that has "died down" or been "censored in mainstream media"). Conspicuous omissions include any detailed accounting of **Iranian military losses** during the "12-day war" or a neutral assessment of the **environmental impact** of Iranian oil platform strikes. The editorial hierarchy consistently prioritizes **Western economic suffering** as a karmic result of their "war of aggression."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's framing follows a strictly **multipolar versus imperialist** dichotomy, with the US and Israel presented as "monsters" and "parasites" while the "Resistance Front" is framed as the "heart of humanity."

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as a "weak, emotionally irresponsible" actor that has "maxed out its credit card." The broadcast claims the US is "not in a position to start a full-fledged aggression" due to a lack of missile interceptors.
- **Iran:** Characterized as a "civilization state" that is "more than capable of escaping" sanctions through "innovative solutions." It is framed as the defender of territorial integrity for all of West Asia.
- **China:** Framed as the "bastian of stability" and the "wealth engine" of the world. China is seen as a principled mediator that does not force peace but "gets people to the table."
- **Israel:** Depicted as an "artificial settler colonial entity" that is "kidnapping people in international waters" and using "inhumane torture techniques" against activists.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Defined by "crudeness" and "arrogance." He is accused of **insider trading**, manipulating markets with Friday/Monday statements to enrich his circle (20260522-42).
- **Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as a strong, independent power whose visit to China signals a coordinated effort to curtail US aggression.

- **Rami Shath:** Framed as a "heroic refugee" and victim of a "growing anti-Palestinianism" in the French government.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The US is accused of using "liquid political communication"—animations and entertainment clips—to **illusionize public opinion** and mask its military failures (20260522-40).
- **Censorship:** The broadcast claims that **X (formerly Twitter)** has "eliminated" popular Iranian accounts and labeled activists as "paid propagandists" without evidence to protect the Israeli narrative.
- **Psychological Operations:** The "high-pitched mosquito whine" of Hezbollah's FPV drones is described as a psychological weapon that ensures "no outpost is safe" and induces airborne dread in Israeli soldiers.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The Collapse of the Petro-Dollar:** If the UAE and Saudi Arabia successfully transition to the petro-yuan or local currencies for Hormuz tolls, the US dollar faces a near-term collapse in its role as the global reserve currency.
- **Regional Hegemony Shift:** Iran's successful management of the Strait of Hormuz suggests that it will become the **de facto security guarantor** of the Persian Gulf, necessitating a total withdrawal of US forces from bases in Qatar and Bahrain.
- **Global Famine Trigger:** The convergence of the "El Niño" weather pattern and the **fertilizer shortage** caused by the Hormuz closure will likely lead to "riots breaking out worldwide" by Q4 2026.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect a "record-breaking" **UK energy bill hike** and potential "bread riots" in the Global South as agricultural inputs remain blocked. Further "high-level resignations" are likely in the US National Security Council.
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The **November mid-term elections** in the US will likely result in a "lame duck" presidency, effectively paralyzing US military support for Israel. **Israel** may face a mandatory government dissolution due to the draft evasion crisis.
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** The completion of the "Belt and Road" rail network will **bypass Western maritime control** entirely, making the US naval presence in the Indo-Pacific strategically obsolete. The Middle East will likely unify under a non-Western security architecture.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current geopolitical state is a "time clock" ticking toward regional or global escalation.

The following are the most acute risks identified.

- **Global Recession Transitioning to Depression:** Triggers: Continued closure of Hormuz into August 2026. Likelihood: **High**. Impact: Catastrophic "2008-style" global industrial collapse. Mitigations: Unilateral US lifting of all secondary sanctions on Iranian oil (20260522-11).
- **Nuclear Escalation (90% Enrichment):** Triggers: A new US/Israeli strike on Iranian "missile cities." Likelihood: **Medium**. Impact: Iranian move to 90% uranium enrichment and plutonium production. Mitigations: Sincere US commitment to the Pakistan-China mediation framework.
- **Israeli State Fragility/Civil Strife:** Triggers: Continued merkava tank losses and draft dodger record highs. Likelihood: **High**. Impact: Political collapse of the Netanyahu regime and potential civil war within the "Gaza Envelope." Mitigations: Immediate withdrawal from southern Lebanon.
- **US Domestic Insurrection:** Triggers: Extra $5,000 household war tax combined with 4% inflation. Likelihood: **Medium**. Impact: Widespread social unrest and the "doom" of the MAGA movement. Mitigations: Immediate reprioritization of the $1.5T budget toward domestic infrastructure.
- **Babel Mandeb Total Closure:** Triggers: Ansarullah (Houthi) response to further Red Sea intercepts. Likelihood: **High**. Impact: Losing 95% of imported fuel for dependent regions and a 600% surge in shipping rates. Mitigations: Recognition of Yemeni maritime sovereignty.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Verification of Casualty Figures:** The broadcast repeatedly cites **168 killed** at the Shajarat school and **350 murders** in Lebanon in 10 minutes. These figures are not independently verified and lack a US/Israeli counter-perspective (20260522-127).
- **Internal Iranian Dissent Status:** While the broadcast claims opposition has "died down," it does not address whether this is due to **genuine unity or state repression** following the Khamenei assassination.
- **Russian/Chinese Strategic Objectives:** The broadcast frames their mediation as "principled," but fails to explore the potential for **exploitative energy contracts** being signed by Tehran in its moment of isolation (20260522-100).
- **The "Bunker Buster" Efficacy:** Iran claims US bunker busters only "sealed the entrance" to missile cities without destroying payloads; the **actual status of the Iranian arsenal** remains speculative despite NYT reports of 70% capacity (20260522-99).

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Potemkin Unity" Hypothesis:** The surge in returnees and volunteers is not a sign of state strength but a **propaganda operation** to mask a collapsing Iranian economy. In this scenario, the PGSA tolls are a desperate attempt to fund a state that can no longer provide basic services, and the mediation efforts are a **stalling tactic** for a regime on the brink of internal revolt.

- **The "Israeli Strategic Trap":** The reported "fatigue" and "draft evasion" in Israel are **seeded disinformation** meant to lure Hezbollah and Iran into a false sense of security before a massive, coordinated "Greater Israel" offensive (20260522-4).
- **Black Swan - The Hormuz Environmental Disaster:** A "targeted strike" by a non-state actor on a tanker in the managed Strait could cause an oil spill so vast it **permanently destroys the desalination capacity** of the Gulf states, triggering a regional water war that forces a total US re-entry into the theater (20260522-121).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Develop counter-drone systems that are **economically viable**; using $50,000 missiles against $500 drones is a path to strategic bankruptcy (20260522-39).
- **Economic:** Accelerate the **diversification of energy supply chains** away from chokepoints like Hormuz and Babel Mandeb.
- **Diplomatic:** Formalize a "Permanent Ceasefire" that includes **reparations and asset release** as a precursor to any nuclear discussion.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Move toward "monochromatic" or simplified packaging **now** to anticipate petrochemical input shortages (20260522-47).
- **Regulatory:** Prepare for a shift in maritime law where **transit tolls** are standard in formerly international straits.
- **Capital Allocation:** Hedge against the **USD/Yuan shift** by diversifying into gold and hard assets, noting the record US gold exports (20260522-121).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity today is focused on the **War Powers Act** in the US and **Draft Legislation** in Israel, both of which are under intense scrutiny as mechanisms for political survival.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - **US House Resolution on War Powers:** Aimed at limiting Trump's ability to continue attacks on Iran without congressional approval. Strategically intended to **curtail executive overreach** but failed to pass (20260522-35).
  - **Israeli Draft Legislation:** A proposed bill in the Knesset to address the "manpower crisis" by enforcing enlistment among the ultra-orthodox. Intended to **prevent military collapse** (20260522-28).

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
  - **Tulsi Gabbard Congressional Testimony:** Provided evidence that Iran was **not pursuing nuclear weapons**, leading to her subsequent dismissal (20260522-2).
  - **UN Economic and Social Council Special Meeting:** Focused on "safeguarding energy supply flows," where Iranian ambassadors argued the US was the root cause of instability (20260522-32).
  - **French Administrative Commission Hearing:** Ruled the expulsion of activist **Rami Shath** as "unlawful," a symbolic blow to French-Israeli cooperation (20260522-23).

KEY STORIES

- **The PGSA and the "New Management" of Hormuz:** Iran has consolidated control over the Strait, guiding **31 to 35 vessels** in the last 24 hours after permit issuance and toll payment (20260522-20).
- **Resignation of US Intelligence Chief Tulsi Gabbard:** Gabbard was forced to resign after testifying that Iran was **not building nuclear weapons** in June 2025 and March 2026 (20260522-7).
- **Massacre at Shajarat School, Minab:** Details emerge of a **US Tomahawk missile strike** on a school in southern Iran, killing **168 children and teachers** (20260522-34).
- **Global Oil Supply Shock:** International Energy Agency reports a **12.8 million bpd loss**; Brent crude surges to **$107/barrel** (20260522-163).
- **Hezbollah's FPV Drone Campaign:** A "three-minute clip" from southern Lebanon shows **$500 drones** overwhelming Israeli armor and radar (20260522-39).
- **Saudi Arabia’s Growing Public Debt:** Public debt has multiplied **12-fold in 10 years**, reaching $440 billion as Hormuz closure impacts exports (20260522-137).
- **Rumbo a Cuba Flotilla:** A humanitarian mission from Malaga, Spain, delivers **solar panels and medical supplies** to Havana to combat the US blockade (20260522-23).
- **Israeli Draft Evasion Crisis:** Nearly **32,000 evading draft**; military officials warn the army could "collapse" without new legislation (20260522-72).
- **Assassination of Paramedics in Tyre:** Israeli strikes kill **six paramedics** and a journalist near Tyre, Lebanon (20260522-36).
- **Greenland Protests Against US Consulates:** Thousands rally in **Nuuk** to protest the opening of new American diplomatic outposts (20260522-104).
- **Explosion at Tomer Missile Facility:** A "massive and deeply suspicious" blast rocks an Israeli missile manufacturing site near **Beit Shemesh** (20260522-107).
- **Assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei:** Post-war coverage reflects on the **February 28, 2026** attack that killed the Iranian leader, triggering the current crisis (20260522-31).
- **UK Energy Bill Skyrocket:** Telegraph reports jump to **1,850 pounds per year** starting in July due to the "Iran war" (20260522-21).
- **Iranian "Missile Cities" Integrity:** Satellite imagery reportedly shows **90% of Iranian capabilities intact** despite US bunker buster use (20260522-99).

- **Gaza Medical Crisis:** Israeli blockade of **gypsum and medical plaster** halts orthopaedic surgeries and prosthetic limb manufacturing (20260522-76).

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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