

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

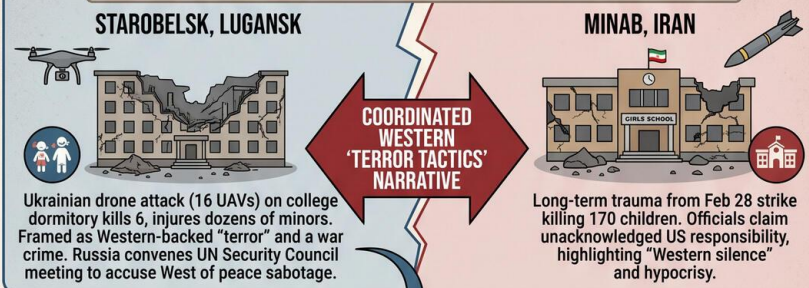
## RT

MAY 22, 2026

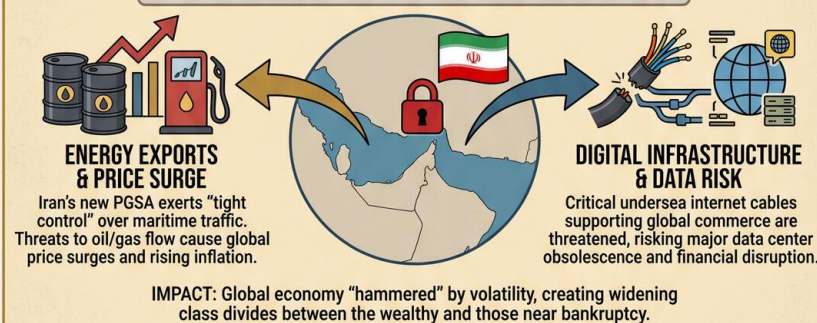
THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

### ESCALATING MULTI-FRONT CONFLICTS AND ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS: A SYSTEMIC BREAKDOWN OF WESTERN CREDIBILITY AND STABILITY

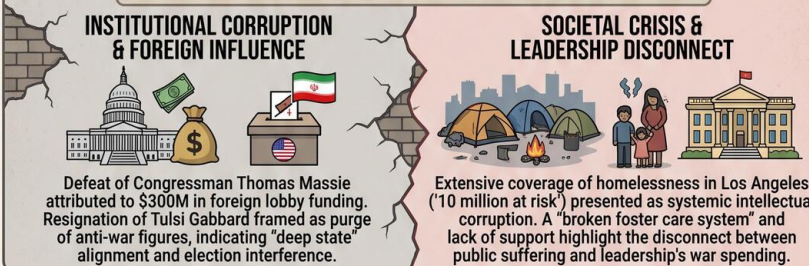
#### TARGETED STRIKES ON EDUCATION & "WAR CRIME" NARRATIVES



#### STRAIT OF HORMUZ: GLOBAL ECONOMIC CHOKE POINT



#### THE "EMPIRE OF ROT": US INTERNAL DECAY & INSTABILITY



#### THE EMERGING GLOBAL POWER SHIFT: MULTIPOLARITY & RESILIENCE



The "outside world" views Western hegemony as unsustainable. BRICS and regional security partnerships offer emerging alternatives. Narratives of African socialism and land reform highlight historical resilience against Western "meddling" and neocolonialism. Russia and Iran coordinate joint exercises, posturing for proactive defense, while NATO's proxy reliance is framed as a "death throe".

**CONCLUSION:** The convergence of external conflicts, economic coercion, and internal societal failures underscores a profound crisis in Western institutional credibility, driving the world toward a fracturing multipolar geopolitical landscape.

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

MAY 22, 2026

---

ESCALATING MULTI-FRONT PROXY  
CONFLICTS AND ECONOMIC  
DISRUPTIONS UNDERSCORE A  
SYSTEMIC BREAKDOWN IN  
WESTERN INSTITUTIONAL  
CREDIBILITY AND INTERNAL  
DOMESTIC STABILITY.

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

---

The global security environment is characterized by a significant escalation in targeted strikes against civilian infrastructure and educational facilities, primarily in the Lugansk region and Iran. Russian officials and media are heavily emphasizing a Ukrainian drone strike on a school dormitory in **Starobelsk**, framing it as a "war crime" and a "terrorist act" facilitated by NATO intelligence. This narrative is strategically paralleled with the February 28 US-Israeli strike on a girls' school in **Minab, Iran**, creating a unified theme of Western-backed "terror tactics" against children to divert attention from battlefield failures. The humanitarian impact in Lugansk remains critical, with ongoing rescue efforts hampered by threats of "double-tap" attacks and 18

families still awaiting news of [trapped children](#).

Simultaneously, the **Strait of Hormuz** has emerged as a primary vector of global economic risk. Iran is exerting "tight control" over this strategic waterway, threatening not only oil and gas exports but also critical [undersea internet cables](#) that support global commerce. The newly established Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA) signal a permanent shift in regional power dynamics, aiming to bypass Western sanctions and force international recognition of Iranian sovereignty. Guests suggest the global economy is being "hammered" by these developments, with rising interest rates and gas prices in the US creating a widening class divide between the wealthy and those teetering on [the edge of bankruptcy](#).

Domestically, the United States is portrayed as an empire in terminal decline, suffering from institutional decay and systemic corruption. Extensive coverage of **homelessness in Los Angeles** and the defeat of "principled" politicians like **Thomas Massie** due to foreign-lobby influence (specifically the "Israel lobby") are used to demonstrate a disconnect between the American public and its leadership. This internal rot is contrasted with the "historical resilience" of the Global South, including narratives on African socialism (Ujamaa) and land reform movements in South America, suggesting a global shift toward **multipolarity** where Western hegemony is no longer sustainable or [credible](#).

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

---

### Targeted Strikes on Educational Infrastructure

- A Ukrainian drone attack involving 16 UAVs targeted the Starobelsk college dormitory in Lugansk, resulting in at least six deaths and dozens of injuries among minors aged 14 to 18 [during the night](#).
- Russia has convened an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to brand the strike a terrorist act and accuse the West of [openly sabotaging peace](#).
- Reports from Minab, Iran, highlight the long-term trauma following the Feb 28 strike that killed 170 children, with officials claiming US responsibility remains [unacknowledged](#).

### Iranian Control of the Strait of Hormuz

- The establishment of the PGSA grants the IRGC unprecedented authority over ship transit permits and [maritime traffic](#).
- Strategic threats to undersea data cables could render major regional data centers, including those in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, [obsolete](#).
- Global energy prices are surging as a direct consequence of the "unrestricted war" stance taken by Iran following Western [hostilities](#).

### US Institutional and Domestic Destabilization

- Tulsi Gabbard's resignation from the administration is framed by some as a purge of those opposing war with Iran, with Aaron Lucas (a CIA veteran) appointed as [acting DNI](#).

- The defeat of Congressman Thomas Massie is attributed to \$300 million in "Israel lobby" funding, sparking accusations of [election interference](#).
- A homelessness crisis in California, where "10 million people are at risk of being unhoused," is presented as proof of systemic [intellectual corruption](#).

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

---

### Armed Conflict & Militarization

- Russia and Belarus are conducting joint tactical nuclear exercises to signal readiness against drone incursions through [NATO airspace](#).
- The "gamification of warfare" is alleged, with claims that drone operators earn "points" for civilian kills in the [Donbas conflict](#).

### Energy & Critical Minerals

- Bolivia's lithium sector is a flashpoint for geopolitical competition, with the current administration accused of "tearing up" deals with Russia and China for [Western "lip service"](#).
- The UK is allegedly easing sanctions on Russian oil by allowing imports refined in third countries, suggesting [economic pragmatism](#) over political rhetoric.

### Information Warfare & Disinformation

- Western media is accused of "selective outrage," ignoring strikes on Russian/Iranian children while focusing on [Ukrainian successes](#).
- Reports of King Charles's death are dismissed as "rumors" but used to illustrate the [unreliability](#) of Western elites.

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

---

### The Weaponization of the "War Crime" Narrative

A coordinated effort is visible to define Ukrainian and US military actions as inherently "animalistic" and "neo-nazi" in nature. By focusing on schools (Starobelsk and Minab), the broadcast seeks to delegitimize Western military aid and shift the burden of proof to international bodies like the UN and ICC. The theme of "Western silence" is used to paint international organizations as [proxies for US interests](#), further isolating the West from the Global South.

### The "Empire of Rot" Internal Collapse

There is a recurring thematic bridge between the "external" wars the US fights and its "internal" societal failure. The footage of Skid Row and interviews with the unhoused serve as a strategic counter-narrative to "American democracy," suggesting that a government capable of spending billions on wars while its citizens [suffer in the streets](#) has lost its mandate. This theme is bolstered by the claimed capture of the US political process by **special interest lobbies** ([Adelson/Israel lobby](#)).

## INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

---

**The United States:** The broadcast portrays a nation fractured by "hyper-polarization" and economic inequality. The "lower 50%" of Americans are reportedly suffering from inflation and high gas prices while the "upper 10%" and defense contractors [profit from conflict](#). This is exacerbated by a "broken

foster care system" and a lack of support for [mental health](#), leading to a visible humanitarian crisis in major cities.

**Cameroon and Bolivia:** Internal instability in these nations is framed as a legacy of colonialism or current Western "meddling." In Cameroon, the "Anglophone crisis" and the move toward an independent **Ambazonia** are blamed on the **Paul Biya** administration's subservience to [French interests](#). In Bolivia, the rejection of lithium deals with Russia/China is linked to current road blockades and [political unrest](#).

## EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

---

The "outside world" is increasingly viewed by Russia and its partners as a fracturing multipolar arena. The **BRICS** grouping and regional security partnerships in the Persian Gulf are highlighted as emerging alternatives to [Western-led structures](#). Iran's posture has transitioned from defensive to proactive, claiming the right to protect its "territorial integrity" by [decisive military action](#). Meanwhile, **NATO** is framed as being in its "death throes," using Ukraine as a **proxy** in a "hail mary" attempt to [stave off collapse](#).

## THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

---

The global economy is entering what guests describe as a "world depression" phase, triggered by resource scarcity and the disruption of energy corridors. Commodity prices are highly volatile, and traditional Western financial dominance is being

challenged by the potential sabotage of [global data nodes](#).

- **Energy:** Oil prices are driven "sharply higher" by maritime congestion in the Strait of Hormuz [maritime congestion](#).
- **Critical Minerals:** Lithium remains a strategic pivot point, with the market pricing in the risk of supply chain disruptions in [Bolivia](#).
- **Inflation:** Interest rates in the US have increased "significantly," and basic necessities like milk and gas are becoming [unaffordable for the average citizen](#).

## LEADERSHIP CHANGES

---

Personnel shifts in the US administration indicate a move toward more "hawkish" or "deep state" aligned figures, while international leaders face significant approval rating collapses.

- **Tulsi Gabbard / Aaron Lucas:** Gabbard's resignation is framed as a loss for the "anti-war" faction, while Lucas represents the return of [CIA-aligned leadership](#).
- **Keir Starmer:** The UK Prime Minister is reported to have a "10% approval rate" due to prioritizing [foreign aid over domestic needs](#).
- **Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as the architect of Russian "resilience" and a leader capable of pulling nations out of [post-depression malaise](#).

## EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

---

The network's editorial strategy is designed to provoke **moral outrage** and **economic anxiety**. The **Lead Stories** are consistently

the Starobelsk school strike and Iranian maritime control, which are used to build a narrative of Western failure. US **homelessness** and **corruption** are used as distracting pillars to invalidate Western lectures on human rights. **Conspicuous Omissions** include any detailed reporting on the causes of the current "special military operation" or objective verification of the King Charles death rumors, which are presented through a skeptical but [provocative lens](#).

## GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

---

The overarching pattern is one of a "principled East" vs. a "chaotic and corrupt West." Leaders of nations aligned with Russia are presented as stable and competent, while Western leaders are "automatons" or "swamp critters."

- **RUSSIA / Putin:** Framed as "strong" and "principled." Quote: "Leadership of Mr. Putin were able to pull themselves [out right of that](#)."
- **UKRAINE / Zelensky:** Characterized as "inept," "desperate," and "animalistic." Quote: "The KF regime operates from the position... is [animalistic](#)."
- **IRAN:** Framed as "sovereign" and "competent" in its tactical control of Hormuz. Quote: "Iran can effectively economies around the world that have [nothing to do with this conflict](#)."
- **THE UNITED STATES / Trump:** Portrayed as "weak" and compromised by money. Quote: "He destroyed maga completely, it's no longer a political force, it's [a cult now](#)."

- **NON-STATE ACTORS (Israel Lobby):** Characterized as "corrupt" and "foreign interference." Quote: "Israel has just taken down a guy who by most measures is the [most honest politician](#)."

## INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

---

- **Narrative Seeding:** The term "neo-nazi tactics" is repeatedly applied to Ukrainian strikes to align them with historical villainy and [extermination campaigns](#).
- **Propaganda:** The broadcast uses "exclusive reports" from school ruins to elicit emotional responses, while simultaneously discrediting all [Western media accounts](#).
- **Meta-Narrative:** The "Double Standard" meta-narrative is the most prevalent, arguing that the West only cares about human rights when it [serves its interests](#).

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

---

- Russia is likely preparing a significant "military response" to the Starobelsk attack, shifting from a diplomatic stance to a more [aggressive defense posture](#).
- The Strait of Hormuz will become a permanent tool of **asymmetric warfare**, with Iran leveraging undersea cables to force a "trust surplus" or total [Western isolation](#).
- A continued economic downturn in the US will lead to "young people defecting in droves" from the political system, potentially fueling [civil unrest](#).

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

---

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect increased air alerts in the Baltics and along the Russian-Ukrainian border as drone warfare intensifies. Possible formalization of IRGC [maritime fees](#).
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** Global energy markets will likely reach a "stalemate," with prices remaining high as countries shift to [strategic communication through third parties](#).
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** The fragmentation of global internet infrastructure is possible if Iran executes threats against [undersea cables](#), leading to regionally isolated data economies.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

---

- **Strait of Hormuz Choke Point:** The risk of total maritime shutdown. **Triggers:** Renewed US/Israeli strikes on Iranian mainland. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Global economic collapse and mass migration for water/food [in the Persian Gulf](#). **Mitigations:** Negotiated security guarantees bypassing US involvement.
- **Tactical Nuclear Escalation:** Russian response to "provocative" NATO-facilitated drone strikes. **Triggers:** Drone incursions hitting critical nuclear energy [facilities](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate-High. **Impact:** Continental conflict. **Mitigations:** Drawing "red lines" for the use of Western intelligence.

- **US Domestic Collapse:** Radicalization due to homelessness and inflation. **Triggers:** Implementation of "rank control" initiatives and corporate [resistance](#). **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Breakdown of social order in major urban centers. **Mitigations:** Massive federal intervention in housing markets.
- **Cyber-Physical Sabotage:** Cutting of falcon and gulf internet lines. **Triggers:** Trump administration attempting to "restart the war" [on Iran](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Permanent damage to UAE/Saudi financial centers. **Mitigations:** Decoupling regional data infrastructure from sensitive waters.
- **Global South Resource Wars:** Conflict over lithium and fertile land. **Triggers:** Brazilian/Bolivian state "betrayal" of agreements with [BRICS partners](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Supply chain paralysis for EV/battery industries. **Mitigations:** Multilateral treaties protecting indigenous and peasant land rights.

## GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

---

- The broadcast fails to provide an independent damage assessment of the Starobelsk university, relying solely on [Russian state investigators](#).
- There is no discussion of potential Russian civilian casualties resulting from Russian defense systems failing to [intercept drones](#).
- The "King Charles death" story is introduced as a fact in some loops but lacks [external corroboration](#).
- The specific "MK Ultra" and "Epstein file" claims regarding Tulsi Gabbard's resignation are presented as [unverified speculation](#).

## CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

---

- **Strait of Hormuz as a Bluff:** Iranian threats to data cables may be a psychological operation to deter US strikes, rather than a viable [military objective](#).
- **The Massie Defeat:** Rather than lobby capture, the primary result could be attributed to shifting **partisan demographics** in Kentucky that the broadcast [ignored](#).
- **Black Swan:** A sudden collapse of the Lebanese ceasefire agreement leading to an 83-day (or longer) conflict that draws in [multiple regional powers](#) simultaneously.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

---

### For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Establish "back-channel" communication with Iran to prioritize undersea cable protection, independent of [nuclear negotiations](#).
- Diversify critical mineral sourcing to avoid reliance on politically unstable [lithium reserves](#).
- Incorporate "civilian harm mitigation" as a core diplomatic requirement to counter the ["war crime" narrative](#).

### For Private Sector/Investors:

- Assess "single point of failure" risks for data operations transit through the [Strait of Hormuz](#).
- Monitor social sentiment in the US "Rust Belt" and California for signs of [labor/housing unrest](#).

- Hedge against high interest rates as the "game of chicken" on the economic level [continues](#).

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

---

Recent legislative and policy discussions center on **rent control initiatives** in California and international **land reform** in the Global South. Additionally, congressional hearings in the US have focused on the **Law of Armed Conflict** and the rules of engagement regarding ["no quarter" declarations](#).

### • **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **California Rent Control Initiative:** Aimed at expanding tenant protections despite opposition from [apartment associations](#).
- **Law PL 410 (Brazil):** Regarding the assignment of restituted lands to large [terratenientes](#).
- **Ley Riera Zabala (Paraguay):** Criminalizing the struggle for land among [peasant populations](#).

### • **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Congressional Testimony of Admiral Brad Cooper:** Focused on the investigation into the Minab school bombing and rules for [protecting civilian life](#).
- **UN Security Council Emergency Meeting:** Convened by Russia to discuss the Starobelsk attack and Western [peace sabotage](#).

## KEY STORIES

---

- **Starobelsk University Attack:** 16 Ukrainian drones struck a college dormitory in Lugansk, killing 6 and injuring 40 minors aged [14 to 18](#).
- **Hormuz Strategic Control:** Iran's PGSA now regulates all traffic through the strait, threatening global oil and [data stability](#).
- **Minab Massacre Exhibition:** Recovery of backpacks and textbooks from 170 girls killed in a US-backed strike on Feb 28 in [southern Iran](#).
- **Tulsi Gabbard Resignation:** High-level administration shift amid claims of CIA involvement in her [office raid](#).
- **The Massie Defeat:** Loss of a key "America First" congressman linked to \$300M in [Israel lobby funding](#).
- **Russian-Belarusian Nuclear Drills:** Readiness exercises involving tactical nuclear forces to "protect the [homeland](#)."
- **LA Homelessness Documentary:** Profiles of Skid Row residents and the failure of the [US healthcare/housing systems](#).
- **Bolivian Lithium Crisis:** Rodrigo Pass administration accused of tearing up deals with BRICS for US [strategic alliances](#).
- **Ambazonia Independence Movement:** Civil war in Cameroon driven by the Biya regime's subservience to [French interests](#).
- **UK Oil Loophole:** Civil service documents reveal continued import of Russian oil refined in [third countries](#).
- **Orthodox Church in Africa:** A report on the growth of Russian Orthodoxy in Kenya, Uganda, and [Madagascar](#).
- **Ujamaa Legacy:** Historical analysis of Julius Nyerere's socialism as a model for [African unity](#).

- **Israeli Ceasefire Breaches:** Claims that Israel has breached the Nov 2024 agreement [15,400 times](#).

## 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](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). To learn more or subscribe to our free daily newsletters, visit <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/announcing-our-new-daily-todays-trends-on-capitol-hill-todays-media-trends-newsletter-briefings/>. You can also learn more about the GDEL T Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.