TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

PRESSTV

MAY 25, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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GLOBAL ENERGY SHOCK AND STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT AS IRAN CONSOLIDATES POST-WAR LEVERAGE AGAINST A FRACTURED US-ISRAELI ALLIANCE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The news cycle of May 25, 2026, portrays a watershed moment in West Asian geopolitics, characterized by the conclusion of a major military conflict and the onset of high-stakes diplomatic maneuvering. Iran and the United States appear to be finalizing a memorandum of understanding to end what state media describes as an "unwarranted war of aggression." This potential deal, reportedly mediated by Pakistan and Qatar, involves significant concessions including the release of up to $20 billion in frozen Iranian assets and the lifting of a US maritime blockade. However, the talks are fraught with mutual suspicion, with Iranian officials citing "erratic behavior" by the Trump administration as a primary obstacle to a final agreement.

A secondary but equally critical narrative is the catastrophic economic fallout within the United States. Following the "12-day" and "40-day" conflicts, American consumers are facing a massive energy crisis, with gas prices reaching $8 per gallon in some regions and inflation at historic highs. This domestic instability is constraining the US presidency, as political "hawks" and former officials like Mike Pompeo condemn the proposed deal as a surrender. Meanwhile, Iran is projecting a position of strength, maintaining control over the Strait of Hormuz and reporting significant military successes by Hezbollah in South Lebanon, where the use of FPV drones is described as having fundamentally altered the tactical landscape against Israeli forces.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza and Lebanon remains a focal point, with harrowing reports of torture and sexual abuse against international aid activists detained by Israeli forces. These reports are being weaponized in the information war to isolate Israel and its allies internationally. Simultaneously, Iran is leveraging its perceived victory to foster a new regional order, challenging the US dollar's dominance through the potential birth of the "Petro-yuan" and deepening strategic ties with China and Russia. The convergence of these events suggests a significant erosion of US unipolarity and a shift toward a multipolar system where Iran emerges as a dominant regional power.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Imminent Peace Deal and Diplomatic Deadlock

- Negotiations in Doha and Islamabad are reportedly in the final stages of a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the US.
- Iran insists on a "five-point" demand list, including the end of the war on all fronts and compensation for war damages.

- The US administration is accused of "erratic behavior," with internal domestic pressure from Republican lawmakers threatening the viability of the agreement.

Global Energy Crisis and Hormuz Leverage

- Iran continues to exercise control over the Strait of Hormuz, allowing selective passage of vessels while maintaining a high refinery of geopolitical pressure.
- Oil prices have surged to $107 per barrel, causing the largest supply shock in modern history with 12.8 million barrels lost daily.
- US gas prices have reached $5 to $8 per gallon, devastating President Trump's approval ratings and fueling talk of impeachment-level dissatisfaction.

Hezbollah's Asymmetric Success in South Lebanon

- Hezbollah has deployed cheap FPV drones to target Israeli armor and infantry, causing a "psychological wine" of airborne dread among occupation forces.
- Israeli forces are reportedly withdrawing from several areas in South Lebanon due to the intensity of resistance strikes.
- Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has declared the withdrawal of Israeli forces a national priority.

Allegations of Atrocities and Information Warfare

- International activists from the "Global Sumood Flotilla" have returned home alleging systematic torture, rape, and beatings in Israeli custody.
- Reports from Gaza indicate over 900 Palestinians killed since a supposed ceasefire was announced.
- The hacking group "Handala" has placed a bounty on Israeli soldiers involved in the flotilla raid.

Strategic Pivot to the East

- Iran is positioning the "Strait of Hormuz" closure as a catalyst for the "Petro-yuan," aiming to undercut the petrol dollar.
- China is described as the "only opponent" to the US that remains untested, with Iran increasingly integrated into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization framework.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The US military reports a cost of $29 billion for the war against Iran so far, while Iranian officials estimate the true cost to the US at $100 billion.
- Iran is deploying new air defense systems and claims to have consistently demonstrated that its capabilities remain intact despite US claims of their elimination.

Energy & Critical Minerals

- The "largest supply shock in modern history" is underway, with the Strait of Hormuz crisis causing cumulative supply losses of 12.8 million barrels per day.
- Global inventories are declining at 4 million barrels per day, with markets unlikely to stabilize until at least October 2026.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- In Iran, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf was re-elected as Speaker of Parliament for a seventh year, signaling institutional stability.

- In the US, President Trump faces mounting criticism from his own party over a deal that "hawks" call a disaster for US interests.

Food & Water Security

- Gaza’s agricultural sector has been 96% damaged or destroyed, with only 7% of infrastructure remaining functional.
- A global food shortage is predicted due to the lack of sulfuric acid for fertilizers, a side effect of the regional industrial collapse.

Geopolitical Competition & Bloc Politics

- The UAE is publicly denying reports of a secret visit by Benjamin Netanyahu, highlighting the fragility of the Abraham Accords during conflict.
- Pakistan is marking Eid al-Adha by dedicating aid to oppressed people in Gaza, linking religious duty to political solidarity.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The "FPV Revolution" and the End of Conventional Dominance The conflict in Lebanon has showcased the terminal decline of traditional armored warfare when faced with cheap, nimble drone technology. Hezbollah's use of FPV drones—described as "$500 gadgets that go shopping for multimillion-dollar tanks"—has created a "math problem with no good answer" for the Israeli military. The psychological wine of the drone rotor has turned once "cushy" logistics hubs into zones of "airborne dread." This trend suggests that the era of uncontested airspace for Western-aligned militaries is over, as low-cost asymmetric technology equalizes the battlefield.

The Weaponization of the Strait of Hormuz Iran has successfully transitioned its control of the Strait of Hormuz from a defensive posture to an offensive economic tool. By shutting the strait to "enemies and their allies," Iran has not only triggered a global energy shock but also forced the US into a "legitimacy vacuum." The Iranian narrative suggests that even a ceasefire will not return gas prices to normal, as the "new regime" of Strait management is now a permanent tool of Iranian sovereignty. This control is being used as a wedge to drive the world toward the Petro-yuan, potentially ending the unipolar era of the US dollar.

Digital Diplomacy and Sarcastic Sovereignty A striking trend noted in the reports is Iran's dominance in the "communication war." Once caricatured as conservative and isolated, Tehran is now using full bandwidth across X, TikTok, and YouTube to project influence with "sarcasm, speed, and a distinctly Iranian sense of humor." Conversely, US leadership is portrayed as stumbling, with AI-generated misfires and viral rants becoming "chaotic internet spectacles." This shift in the "Overton window" of media perception reflects a broader loss of Western narrative control in the Global South.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The United States: A Presidency Under Siege The Trump administration appears to be buckling under the weight of an unpopular war and its economic consequences. Approval ratings have fallen to historic lows, and the President is reportedly in a "bubble," lashing out at reporters over trivial matters like White House ballroom costs while the public suffers from high inflation. The rift between the

White House and "Hawks" in the Republican party suggests a total breakdown in strategic coherence, with some analysts comparing Trump's current standing to the "Richard Nixon era impeachment levels."

Iran: Mobilized Resilience In contrast, Iran projects a image of national unity. State media highlights 80 nights of nightly rallies and women learning to handle Kalashnikov rifles in public squares. The re-election of Ghalibaf suggests a continuity of leadership, and the "Massive response" of volunteers for national service is framed as a society determined to defend its sovereignty "at any cost." This domestic stability is being used as a pillar of strength in the Doha negotiations.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Fracturing of the "Insurance Policy" Regional countries in the Persian Gulf are reportedly suffering from a "withdrawal syndrome," as the US is no longer seen as a credible guarantor of security. The US was once viewed as an "insurance policy," but the failure to achieve military objectives against Iran has led states like the UAE to "distance themselves" from secret coordination. This has opened the door for a "multivector foreign policy" among Gulf states, seeking regional synergy rather than reliance on Washington.

China as the Strategic Beneficiary China is portrayed as the ultimate winner of the conflict, having "won all the wars... without any fight." Beijing's refusal to pressure Iran during Trump's visit underscores its commitment to a strategic partnership that cannot be "breached or split" by US terms. Iran's shift toward China reflects a broader global movement where "economic intimidation" by the US is losing its effectiveness in an "increasingly wired" world.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic state is described as entering "dangerous territory" due to the conflict's impact on energy arteries. Financial markets are no longer reacting to political announcements, signaling a deep-seated disbelief in the possibility of near-term stabilization.

- **Oil Prices:** Brent crude has surged above $107 per barrel.
- **Supply Chain Shock:** 20% of globally traded oil depends on the Strait of Hormuz, with 12.8 million barrels daily currently at risk.
- **Industrial Impact:** Major shipping lines (Maersk, MSC, etc.) detour around Africa, adding 10 to 14 days to journeys and billions in costs.
- **US Inflation:** April wage growth was 3.6% while inflation was 4%, effectively wiping out wage gains for American workers.
- **National Budgets:** The US President has proposed a $1.5 trillion military budget for FY-2027 to "reverse four years of underinvestment."

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Significant leadership shifts and re-confirmations highlight the differing trajectories of the central actors.

- **Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf:** Re-elected as Speaker of Iran's Parliament with 235 out of 271 votes, securing his post for a seventh year and signaling legislative continuity.

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as an "irritated reality TV host" whose " playground tantrums" and AI-generated social media posts are undermining the "language of statesmanship."
- **Benjamin Netanyahu:** Faced with potential government collapse as ultra-orthodox parties like Aryader Shaz consider joining the opposition for early elections.
- **Ismail Baghaei:** The Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman is the primary voice condemning US "war crimes" in southern cities like Lamberd.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

Press TV's editorial posture is aggressively nationalistic, framing the day's events as a series of "unmitigated defeats" for the US-Israeli alliance. The narrative hierarchy is dominated by (1) the strategic leverage of the Strait of Hormuz, (2) the success of "Resistance" forces in Lebanon, and (3) the exposure of Israeli human rights abuses against flotilla activists. Stories of US domestic failure are prioritized to show the "decline of the superpower."

Conspicuous Omissions: There is a notable absence of any detailed reports on Iranian military casualties or internal dissent within Iran. The "riots" mentioned by some guests are quickly dismissed as "protests" that have transformed into "unity." There is also no mention of the specific Iranian concessions that might be required to finalize the nuclear file, focusing instead on what the US must "surrender."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The subtext of the day's reporting reveals a deliberate attempt to recalibrate global perceptions of power, portraying Western institutions as hypocritical and decaying.

COUNTRIES

- **Iran:** Framed as a "New Superpower" and a "Functioning State" that has "brought the world's most powerful military to its knees" through strategic patience.
- **United States:** Portrayed as a "Banana Republic" and a "Declining Power" where leadership is "trapped in this war" and incapable of restraint.
- **Israel:** Characterized as a "Genocidal Regime" and a "Zionist Entity" that is the sole destabilizer of the region.
- **China:** Framed as a "Tested Strategic Partner" that has rightfully identified US decline.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Described as a "Con Man" and a "Loser" who is manipulating markets for personal gain while lashing out domestically.
- **Masoud Pezeshkian:** Portrayed as a principled leader who will not compromise the country's honor.
- **Benjamin Netanyahu:** Framed as a "Wild Card" who is desperate for war to stay out of jail.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **Hezbollah:** Portrayed as a highly competent and tactically superior force that has defeated conventional armor.

- **International Energy Agency (IEA):** Used as an objective source to validate the severity of the economic shock caused by US policy.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The transcripts detail a pervasive environment of narrative seeding and psychological operations. Press TV is actively using social media "viral mockery" to undermine US presidential authority. The network highlights the "Community Notes" feature on platform X, accusing it of being used to spread propaganda against pro-Iranian voices. Meanwhile, the hacking group "Handala" is conducting "Legal Warfare" by releasing names of Israeli naval officers to facilitate capture and prosecution. The "meta-narrative" is that the Western media is "failing to hide the cracks" in a "carefully manufactured image" of strength, while Iran's transparency (e.g., showing women without hijabs at rallies) is intended to counter negative stereotypes.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Scenario 1: Negotiated Surrender:** The US, driven by catastrophic gas prices, accepts a deal that allows Iran to remain a "Nuclear Threshold" state while securing the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Scenario 2: Escalation Trap:** "Hawks" and the Israeli government successfully "good Trump into resuming the bombing" through a false flag operation, leading to an all-out regional conflict and a permanent global depression.
- **Scenario 3: Multipolar Stabilization:** China and Russia broker a separate regional security pact that excludes the US, effectively ending the era of American hegemony in West Asia.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks)

- High risk of mass civil unrest in the US and Israel as economic conditions and political rifts peak.
- Possible implementation of a "Regional Ceasefire" that includes South Lebanon as a condition for the Hormuz reopening.

Medium Term (1-6 Months)

- Structural shifts in global oil settlements, with more trades occurring in non-dollar currencies.
- The US election cycle will likely be dominated by "War Reparations" and the failure of military objectives.

Long Term (1-5 Years)

- Iran emerges as the "Dominant Force" in West Asia, with its asymmetric model of warfare becoming the global standard for resistance movements.
- The total collapse of the "Greater Israel" agenda as internal Israeli fractures lead to a "Society Broken" beyond repair.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Overview: The current situation presents multiple critical flashpoints that could trigger a global systemic collapse.

- **Total Energy Collapse:** If the Strait of Hormuz remains closed for "one or two more months," the hit is "almost inevitable" against the EU and US economies. **Triggers:** Failure of Doha talks. **Likelihood:** Moderate-High. **Impact:** Global depression. **Mitigations:** Immediate US sanctions relief.
- **Israeli Political Disintegration:** Netanyahu may launch a "terrorizing" strike on Beirut to save his political career. **Triggers:** Coalition collapse. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Regional firestorm. **Mitigations:** Rapid international recognition of a Palestinian state.
- **US Domestic Conflict:** The $300 per month extra fuel cost per household could lead to "French Revolution" style peasant revolts. **Triggers:** Gas reaching $10/gallon. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Loss of governance mandate. **Mitigations:** Strategic reserve releases or peace deal.
- **Nuclear Miscalculation:** Accusations of Iran "striving for nuclear weapons" could lead to a desperate "last ditch" strike by the US. **Triggers:** False flag event. **Likelihood:** Low-Moderate. **Impact:** Fatal war. **Mitigations:** Joint monitoring by China and Russia.
- **Global Food Riots:** Shortage of fertilizers and energy could lead to "food becoming unaffordable." **Triggers:** Industrial sulfuric acid shortages. **Likelihood:** Moderate-High. **Impact:** Widespread riots. **Mitigations:** Resumption of regional manufacturing.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Iranian Military Attrition:** The broadcasts completely avoid discussing Iranian losses, which are likely significant after a "40-day" conflict.
- **The "Third Man" in Negotiations:** The role of the Central Bank of Iran in Doha is mentioned, but the specific financial mechanisms for bypassing US sanctions are not detailed.
- **Russian Inactivity:** Despite being an ally, Russia's direct military or economic contribution during the war is not clarified beyond "support for dialogue."
- **Israeli Internal Defense:** The reports focus on Israeli retreats but fail to explain why Iron Dome and other systems were reportedly ineffective against simple drones.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Stalling Tactic" Hypothesis:** The Iranian overture for a deal is actually a move to buy time for military mobilization and completion of a nuclear deterrent while the US economy bleeds out.
- **The "Controlled Collapse" Hypothesis:** The US administration is intentionally letting the regional situation deteriorate to "target the source of Iranian strength" through an unavoidable economic war that bypasses the battlefield.
- **Black Swan:** A sudden, AI-driven global hacking event by "Handala" or similar groups targets the US power grid, forcing an immediate and humiliating surrender.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Immediately invest in "Acoustic and Optical" anti-drone technology to counter the FPV drone threat which has rendered conventional armor obsolete.
- **Economic:** Diversify strategic energy reserves and prepare for a "Petro-yuan" era to avoid total currency devaluation.
- **Diplomatic:** Engage in "Multivector Diplomacy" by strengthening ties with regional power brokers in Qatar and Pakistan to bypass failing US-mediated frameworks.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chains:** Transition to monochromatic or simplified packaging immediately to mitigate shortages in chemical inputs like sulfuric acid and color dyes.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Prepare for "China's new counter-sanctions framework" (Decree 835) which could penalize firms following US sanctions against Iran.
- **Capital Allocation:** Shift investments toward "Unusual Machines" or similar firms providing drone components, which are becoming the backbone of the new industrial economy.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The news reports highlight several critical legislative and policy developments both within Iran and the United States, indicating a shift toward institutionalized economic and military mobilization.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - **US FY-2027 Military Budget:** A $1.5 trillion request from President Trump to modernize forces and address "underinvestment."
  - **Decree 835 (China):** A new counter-sanctions framework designed to protect international firms from US extraterritorial reaching.
  - **May 17th Agreement (Lebanon, 1983 context):** Recalled as a cautionary tale against unequal peace treaties with Israel.
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
  - **Pete Hegseth Congressional Testimony:** Defense Secretary grilled over the $29 billion cost of the "Iran War."
  - **Ismail Baghaei Weekly Press Briefing:** The Iranian spokesman detailed the stalemate in Doha and criticized US administration policy.
  - **Melborne Airport Reception:** Australian activists held a press conference detailing abuse in Israeli custody.

LIST OF KEY STORIES

- **Iran-US Peace Deal Negotiations:** Ongoing talks in Doha aimed at ending the war, with Iran demanding $20 billion in asset unfreezing.
- **Strait of Hormuz Control:** Iran wielding the "lever of global energy" by restricting passage to selective vessels, driving oil to $107.

- **Ghalibaf Re-election:** Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf re-confirmed as Speaker of Parliament with 235 votes.
- **Global Sumood Flotilla Atrocities:** Detailed reports of sexual assault and rape with handguns against activists in Israeli jails.
- **US Gas Price Crisis:** Fuel costs hitting $8 per gallon in Virginia, leading to a domestic political crisis for Trump.
- **Lamberd Missile Strike:** A US strike killed 24 civilians, including a two-year-old girl, using 180,000 tungsten pellets.
- **Gaza Healthcare Destruction:** Reports that 94% of Gaza's hospitals have been damaged or destroyed since October 2023.
- **Hezbollah FPV Drone Warfare:** The use of $500 drones to defeat multimillion-dollar Israeli tanks in South Lebanon.
- **Berlin Solidarity Protests:** Thousands march in Germany against zionism and imperialism.
- **Targeting of Historical Sites:** Iran claims the US and Israel deliberately struck 150 historical sites, including UNESCO-listed locations in Isfahan and Khuzestan.
- **Pakistan Eid Aid for Gaza:** Largest charity allocates $8 million in sacrificial meat for the people of Gaza and Lebanon.
- **Netanyahu secret UAE visit denial:** UAE Foreign Ministry issues public formal denial of an alleged visit by the Israeli PM.
- **Handala Hacking Bounty:** $100,000 reward offered for info leading to capture of 69 Israeli officers.
- **US "Insurance Policy" Collapse:** Analysts argue the US has lost its credibility as a security guarantor in the Gulf.

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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