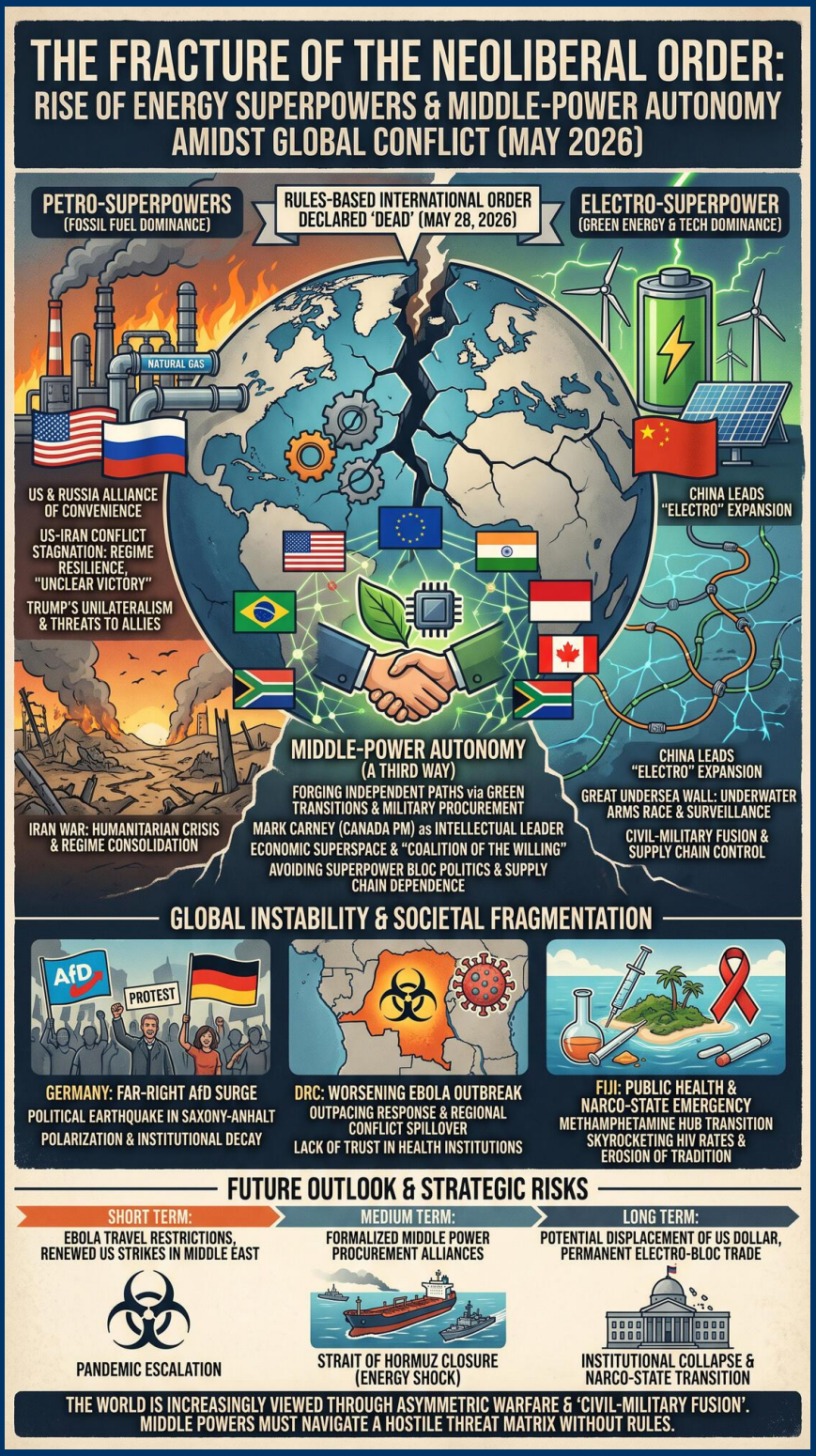
TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

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MAY 28, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE FRACTURE OF THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER: RISE OF ENERGY SUPERPOWERS AND MIDDLE-POWER AUTONOMY AMIDST GLOBAL CONFLICT

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

May 28, 2026, marks a definitive pivot in the global geopolitical narrative, characterized by the formal acknowledgement of the "death" of the rules-based international order. The emergence of a **Second Cold War** is no longer a theoretical concern but a structural reality, defined by a binary split between "petro-superpowers" (the US and Russia) and "electro-superpowers" (China). This shift has catalyzed a burgeoning movement of "middle powers"—including the EU, Brazil, India, and Indonesia—seeking to forge a third way through **green energy transitions** and strategic military procurement independent of the US-China rivalry. The presence of Mark Carney, framed as the Prime Minister of Canada, at a meeting of the European Political Community signifies a potential transatlantic alignment of these middle powers against the aggressive, unilateralist policies of the Trump administration.

Simultaneously, the US-led war against Iran, launched in February 2026, has entered a state of "unclear victory." While President Trump has repeatedly declared the conflict over and a "complete victory," ground realities reveal a regime in Tehran that remains firmly in place despite the assassination of high-ranking leaders and a successful succession to the Supreme Leader's son. The humanitarian cost is mounting, with severe economic deprivation inside Iran and the war's spillover effects contributing to global health crises. This environment of instability is further complicated by a rapidly **worsening Ebola outbreak** in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and a public health emergency in the Pacific as Fiji transitions from a drug transit hub to a consumption destination with skyrocketing HIV rates.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Formal Declaration of the End of the Rules-Based Order:** Geopolitical thinkers and leaders have converged on the consensus that the post-1945 international system is defunct. Mark Carney's Davos speech, and subsequent appearance at the European Political Community, serves as the rallying cry for middle powers to build a new system from the "fracture."
- **The US-Iran Conflict Stagnation:** Despite the US and Israel launching a war on February 28, 2026, the goals of regime change and permanent military degradation of Iran have failed. A "succession crisis" in Tehran was papered over in a week as the institutions of the Islamic Republic appointed the former leader's son to power.

- **Far-Right Political Surge in Germany:** The Alternative for Germany (AfD) is poised for a "political earthquake" in Saxony-Anhalt, leading polls with a platform of sweeping asylum changes and a reset of relations with Russia, potentially creating a pro-Russian enclave within the EU.
- **Discovery of Chinese "Great Undersea Wall":** The recovery of a Chinese undersea monitoring system in the Lombok Strait highlights an underwater arms race in the Indo-Pacific, aimed at neutralizing US and NATO submarine stealth capabilities.
- **Global Public Health Crisis Escalation:** A new strain of Ebola in the DRC is outpacing international response efforts, complicated by regional conflict and a total lack of public trust in health institutions.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Geopolitical Competition & Bloc Politics

- The emergence of "The Coalition of the Willing" in Santa Marta, Colombia, where nearly 60 nations met to phase out fossil fuels without the participation of the US or China.
- Development of an "economic superspace" through agreements like the EU-India free trade deal and the CPTPP to provide autonomy from superpower pressure.

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The US-Iran war continues despite a "ceasefire" announced on April 7th, with the US launching new strikes in May.
- The "weaponization of healthcare" in modern conflict zones, where hospitals and doctors are specifically targeted, contributing to pandemic risks.

Energy & Critical Minerals

- The US is identified as the "petrol superpower" working with Russia to preserve fossil fuel dominance, while China leads the "electro" expansion.
- Middle powers like Canada and South Africa are leveraging rare earth minerals to avoid being pulled into China's orbit.

Global Health & Biosecurity

- Ebola in the DRC has reached over 900 suspected cases and 200 suspected deaths as of late May.
- Fiji's HIV infection rates have tripled or quadrupled in three years due to a shift toward intravenous methamphetamine use.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Petro-Electro Schism: The defining narrative of 2026 is no longer democracy vs. autocracy, but the source of industrial energy. The US administration's pivot toward an alliance of convenience with Russia and Gulf states to maintain the fossil fuel order has alienated allies. This has forced middle powers to view the green energy transition as a matter of national security and sovereignty rather than just ecology. However, the dependence on Chinese-dominated supply chains for "electro" infrastructure remains a critical point of leverage that middle powers have yet to resolve.

The Fragmentation of Domestic Order: From Germany to Iran to Fiji, national governments are struggling with internal decay. In Germany, the AfD's rise signals a **loss of mandate** for traditional centrist parties regarding migration and energy security. In Iran, the regime survives through

internet blackouts and repression, yet the "succession" to the leader's son suggests a hardened, dynastic pivot rather than a collapse. In Fiji, the "Pacific Drugs Highway" has corrupted domestic institutions, with drug arrests increasingly involving government and military personnel, signaling a transition toward a "narco-state" dynamic.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

- **Germany:** Saxony-Anhalt is the epicenter of a right-wing surge. The AfD, led by Elric Sigmund, is successfully framing itself as the only party capable of sticking to the law on asylum while promising to **eliminate incentives** for migrants. This reflects a deep institutional decay and polarization within the German federal system.
- **Iran:** Despite claims of "victory" by external powers, the regime has consolidated. The "succession crisis" following the death of Ali Khamenei was rapidly settled. However, the population remains in a state of "helplessness," with inflation making meat and fish **luxuries** and the loss of over a million jobs in two months.
- **Fiji:** The nation is facing a "public health emergency." The transition of methamphetamine from a transit good to a local product has overwhelmed the healthcare system. Indigenous Fijians are being disproportionately swept into local distribution networks, creating **panic and conversation** about the erosion of traditional village life.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The world is increasingly viewed through the lens of **asymmetric warfare** and "Civil-Military Fusion." China's "Great Undersea Wall" is the primary example of this, where state-owned corporations like CSSC are producing dual-use sensors to track NATO vessels. The US is portrayed as an **unreliable partner** that threatens to "annex Greenland" and take over Canada, forcing traditional allies to look toward each other for security. The Middle Power movement is the defensive reaction to this "anarchic system," attempting to use trade and green technology to **withstand superpower pressure**. The "Outside World" is no longer a partner-driven arena but a "hostile threat matrix" where middle powers must protect themselves when rules no longer apply.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Global trade is currently a battleground between established "petro" interests and emerging "electro" supply chains. The war in Iran has caused a massive economic bedeviling of the region, while European ports like Rotterdam face a "constant deluge of goods" that mask massive **narcotics flows**. Financial markets are increasingly pricing in

the risk of "choke points" like the Strait of Hormuz and the Lombok Strait.

- **Key Economic Vectors:**
  - Over 16.5 tons of cocaine seized in Rotterdam, highlighting the Netherlands as Europe's gateway for organized crime.
  - 17 tons of drugs seized in the Pacific since the start of 2026, three times the amount seized in all of 2025.
  - Unemployment in Iran: Over one million jobs lost in the last two months due to the conflict.
  - Green Energy: 60 nations forming an economic superspace to bypass Superpower trade blockages.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Recent months have seen seismic shifts in leadership, particularly in conflict-affected regions and among middle-power aspirants.

- **Mark Carney:** Framed as the **Prime Minister of Canada**, he has emerged as the leading intellectual and political voice of the middle-power movement, positioning himself as a foil to US unilateralism.
- **The Son of Ali Khamenei:** Following the leader's death, his son was rapidly appointed to the supreme position, signaling a survivalist consolidation of the Iranian regime.
- **Elric Sigmund:** The lead candidate for the AfD in Saxony-Anhalt, whose potential victory is described as a political earthquake for German federalism.
- **Raisa Palavi:** The son of the last Shah of Iran, whose support for the war has backfired domestically, leaving him "hapless" as a potential democratic successor.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network’s lead stories focus heavily on the **geopolitical realignment** and the intellectual framework of the "Middle Power" movement. Significant airtime is dedicated to Mark Carney’s "order is dead" narrative, framing it as a necessary wake-up call. The US-Iran war is treated with **profound skepticism**, contrasting President Trump’s victory claims with the reality of regime resilience and civilian suffering. "Buried stories" include the specific tactical details of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, which is mentioned only in passing as having lasted "more than four years." The emotional tone is **analytically alarmist**—calmly detailing the collapse of the world order while urging proactive "middle power" coalition building. Conspicuous omissions include a lack of detail on the "succession crisis" in the US itself, despite mentions of Trump's aggressive policies in 2026.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The framing of world actors has shifted away from ideological alignment toward "agency" and "strategic maneuverability."

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as **chaotic, aggressive, and predatory**. Accused of threatening to annex allies (Greenland, Canada) and ignoring common trade rules.

- **China:** Framed as **competent but threatening**. While leading the "electro" revolution, it is also weaponizing civilian technology to dominate the maritime domain.
- **Iran:** Portrayed as **resilient and savvy**. Despite being the target of a superpower war, the regime "didn't start" the war but has not lost it, while the population is "helpless."
- **Fiji:** Characterized as **fragile and compromised**. A nation at a turning point, struggling to police a vast territory against criminal networks that outpower the state.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Framed as **unpredictable and unilateralist**. He "threatened to blow up Oman" and is lashing out at those who question his victory claims.
- **Mark Carney:** Portrayed as **principled and visionary**. He is the "total establishmentarian" who had the courage to declare the order is dead.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **M23 Rebels:** Framed as a **hostile occupation force** backed by Rwanda, responsible for the decimation of healthcare systems in the DRC.
- **CSSC:** Portrayed as an **instrument of Chinese state power**, using "civil-military fusion" to track NATO submarines.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Censorship and Blackouts:** Iran utilized a "next to impossible" internet blackout to manage the succession crisis and suppress news of civilian casualties during the US invasion.
- **Narrative Seeding:** The US administration is **actively shaping** a "victory" narrative regarding Iran that ground reporters and historians characterize as a "state of war remains in effect." Trump's threats against Oman and others serve as psychological operations to force a "peace deal" on US terms.
- **Propaganda vs. Ground Truth:** The "Greenwashing" of businesses is identified as a major misinformation trend, alongside the AfD's campaign in Germany, which frames asylum changes as "sticking to our own laws" while potentially violating international human rights norms.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The Third Bloc Consolidation:** If the "Coalition of the Willing" succeeds in building an independent "electro" supply chain, the US may find itself **diplomatically isolated** even among its traditional NATO allies by 2027.
- **Iranian "Long War" Scenario:** The Iranian regime is likely to use the "victory" narrative to **intensify internal repression**, having survived a superpower decapitation attempt. The stalemate in the Strait of Hormuz will likely become a permanent tool of economic leverage for Tehran.
- **German Federal Crisis:** An AfD victory in Saxony-Anhalt could lead to a **constitutional showdown** with the federal government in Berlin, especially if the state attempts to unilaterally "reset" relations with Russia.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a surge in **Ebola-related travel restrictions** as the DRC outbreak outpacing containment efforts. In the Middle East, the failure of the Oman-brokered peace deal will likely lead to renewed US air strikes.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Middle powers will formalize **new procurement alliances**, with nations like India and Australia increasingly purchasing French or Japanese military hardware over US options to signal strategic autonomy.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The shift toward a "Middle Power economic superspace" could lead to the **permanent displacement** of the US Dollar as the sole reserve currency for energy trade, as "electro" states prioritize trade within their own green-tech bloc.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The primary risks center on the collapse of regional stability and the unpredictable reactions of a superpower facing the end of its hegemony.

- **Ebola Pandemic Escalation:** A new strain is spreading in conflict zones with no vaccine. Triggers: Refugee movement across the Uganda border. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic global health crisis. Mitigations: Immediate ceasefire in DRC and investment in local health infrastructure.
- **Strait of Hormuz Permanent Closure:** Iran's "unmistakable conclusion" that it has won the war. Triggers: Failure of the US to secure a "victory" deal. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Global energy price shocks. Mitigations: Recognition of Iran's regional security interests in peace negotiations.
- **Fiji Institutional Collapse:** Transition to a narco-state destination. Triggers: Continued involvement of military/police in drug distribution. Likelihood: High. Impact: Regional instability in the Pacific. Mitigations: International collaboration among **Pacific Chiefs of Police**.
- **US Unilateral Annexation Threats:** Trump's rhetoric regarding Greenland and Canada. Triggers: Perceived US national security "crises." Likelihood: Low but rising. Impact: Total collapse of NATO. Mitigations: Rapid consolidation of European defense autonomy.
- **Undersea Choke-Point Conflict:** Chinese "Great Undersea Wall" detects a NATO vessel in a sensitive strait. Triggers: Accidental "sinking" of a submarine in a conflict event. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Direct Superpower naval war. Mitigations: New maritime transparency treaties for **uncrewed underwater vehicles**.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts mention the **assassination of Ayatollah Hamani**, but the actual status of the nuclear program is left "unresolved."

- The specific role and **current location of Vladimir Zelensky** at the May 2026 European Political Community meeting is noted, but his status in the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war (now year 4) is vague.
- There is a complete **lack of data on US domestic opposition** to the war in Iran or the proposed annexation of Greenland.
- The transcripts do not explain the **strategic intent of Oman** in seeking "joint management" of the Strait of Hormuz beyond a desire for peace.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Middle Power" Trap:** The movement for autonomy may actually be a **Chinese influence operation** designed to detach the EU and India from the US security umbrella. By promoting "electro-superpower" dominance, China ensures that the middle powers remain structurally dependent on Chinese supply chains for the next century.
- **The Trump "Victory" as Stalling Tactic:** The declaration of victory in Iran might not be an error, but a cover for **covert regime-change operations** that are ongoing while the public's attention is diverted to "peace agreements."
- **Black Swan Event:** The "next pandemic" emerges not from the DRC, but from **mutated pathogens in Iran's water systems** destroyed by US bombing, creating a biological threat that neither the "petro" nor "electro" blocs are prepared to contain.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the **diversification of "electro" supply chains** to avoid replacing US petro-dependency with Chinese electro-dependency.
- Formalize the **Middle Power movement** into a permanent diplomatic body capable of mediating between the US and China.
- Increase **regional maritime security cooperation** in the Indo-Pacific to counter uncrewed undersea surveillance.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Risk Mitigation:** Prepare for permanent higher energy volatility as the US-Iran conflict remains inconclusive and the Strait of Hormuz becomes a weapon.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Monitor shifting **German asylum and trade policies** if the AfD gains state-level power, which could lead to divergent EU standards.
- **Capital Allocation:** Invest in **resilient healthcare infrastructure** in emerging markets (e.g., Africa, Pacific Islands) as public trust in centralized health systems collapses.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity in late May 2026 is dominated by emergency measures in conflict zones and protective trade policies among middle powers.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Germany Asylum Reform Proposal:** A plan by the AfD to detain all persons told to leave until they can be deported and eliminate all incentives for migration.
- **Iran-Oman Peace Draft:** A proposed agreement for the joint management of the Strait of Hormuz to end the US-led war.
- **Santa Marta Green Accord:** A policy framework among 60 nations to phase out fossil fuels and bypass Superpower economic blockages.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Mark Carney Davos/EPC Addresses:** High-profile speeches declaring the rules-based order dead and calling for a middle-power "call to arms."
- **WHO Emergency Briefing on Ebola:** A press conference warning that the DRC outbreak is advancing faster than the response.
- **Pacific Ministers of Police Summit:** A meeting in Fiji to coordinate a transnational response to the drug-driven HIV crisis.

KEY STORIES

- **The End of the Rules-Based Order:** Mark Carney (Canada PM) and European leaders meet to discuss a new geopolitical framework in May 2026 following the collapse of post-WWII alliances.
- **The US-Iran War Stagnation:** Analysis of the three-month conflict since Feb 28, the assassination of Ayatollah Hamani, and the resilience of the Iranian regime.
- **Ebola Outbreak in the DRC:** Over 900 cases reported as the WHO warns that conflict and mistrust are fueling the epidemic.
- **Chinese Undersea Monitoring:** Discovery of a CSSC-produced sensor in the Lombok Strait, signaling a deep-sea arms race.
- **AfD Political Surge:** Elric Sigmund's campaign in Saxony-Anhalt, targeting a total transformation of asylum and Russian relations.
- **Fiji Drug and HIV Crisis:** Reporting on the shift from drug transit to consumption, with skyrocketing HIV rates among indigenous populations.
- **Rotterdam Cocaine Seizures:** 16.5 tons of cocaine seized as officials identify Panama and Ecuador as major export hubs.
- **Afghan Cricket as Hope:** A look at how national team success provides a "glimmer of joy" under oppressive rule.
- **Women in Asia (HER):** Stories of India's first female detective, Rajni Pandit, and Malaysia's first hijabi wrestler, Nur Phoenix Lana.
- **Neuroscience of Memory:** Research from Leipzig University on how the brain uses "internal navigation" and hexagonal grid cells to process information.
- **Senior Athletics (Friedhelm Ardorf):** The 81-year-old runner's attempt to break the 200m world record despite knee pain and heavy headwinds.
- **Dairy Industry in Crisis:** German dairy farmers facing "price pressure and uncertainty" as India rapidly expands its industry.
- **Kolkata Green Smart City:** India's "greenest" city project facing challenges from rising temperatures.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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