

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

## GLOBOVISION

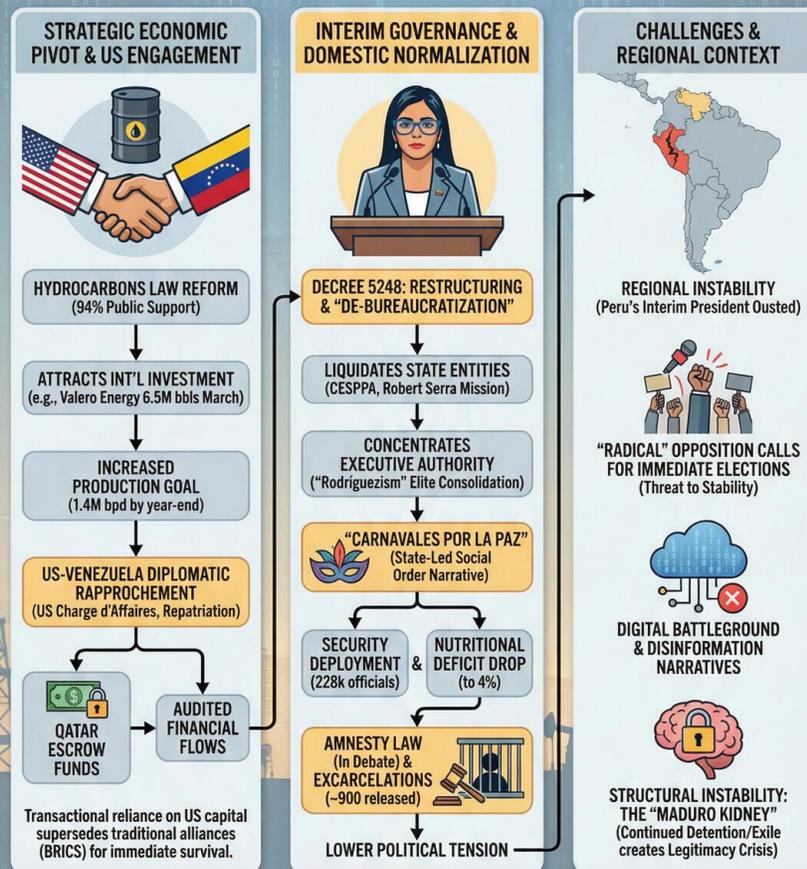
FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

### VENEZUELA'S PRAGMATIC ECONOMIC OPENING UNDER INTERIM GOVERNANCE (POST-JAN 3, 2026 CRISIS)

#### A TRANSITIONAL "GEOPOLITICAL JUDO": LEVERAGING US ENERGY DEMAND FOR STABILITY & NEGOTIATION

Following the Jan 3rd "kidnapping" of Maduro, Interim President Delcy Rodríguez's administration executes a "geopolitical judo" strategy. This pragmatic pivot leverages urgent US energy needs to stabilize the domestic economy via a reformed Hydrocarbons Law, while using diplomatic channels, primarily through Qatar, to negotiate Maduro's release and project social normalization (e.g., "Carnavales por la Paz") masking political fragility.



#### STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & IMPLICATIONS



#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

US intervention sets new global precedent; Qatar "managed sovereignty" model; Regional institutional hollow-out makes Venezuela's relative stability attractive.

#### INVESTOR OPPORTUNITIES & RISKS

Hydrocarbons Law is most significant opening in 25 years; Infrastructure (power, grid) remains a bottleneck; Qatar-based compliance will be rigorous & politicized.

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VENEZUELA NAVIGATES  
PRAGMATIC ECONOMIC OPENING  
AMID INTERIM GOVERNANCE  
FOLLOWING THE JANUARY 3RD  
CRISIS

### DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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The reporting of February 17, 2026, portrays a Venezuela in a profound state of transition following the events of January 3, 2026, which the state media characterizes as the "military aggression and kidnapping" of President Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores by the United States. Under the interim leadership of "Presidenta Encargada" Delcy Rodríguez, the administration is executing a "geopolitical judo" strategy—leveraging the Trump administration's urgent demand for energy to stabilize the domestic economy and secure the release of Maduro through diplomatic channels. This pragmatic pivot is marked by the recent reform of the Organic Hydrocarbons Law, which has received 94% public support and signaled a return to Venezuela's historical role as a primary US energy partner. The administration is aggressively using the "Carnavales por la Paz 2026" (Carnival for Peace) to project a narrative of social normalization and national joy,

masking the underlying political fragility and the recent trauma of the January intervention.

Simultaneously, the day's developments highlight a significant shift in international relations. US Charge d'Affaires Laura Dogu has arrived in Caracas, engaging in high-level diplomacy that bypasses traditional recognition hurdles, while major US refiners like Valero Energy are already moving to import millions of barrels of Venezuelan crude. Domestically, the government is pursuing a policy of "reconciliation through necessity," debating an Amnesty Law and exarcerelating hundreds of prisoners to lower political tension. However, this stability is challenged by radical opposition elements calling for immediate elections and a volatile regional landscape, exemplified by the sudden ousting of Peru's interim president, José Jerí, on corruption charges. The overarching theme is one of "uncertainty mixed with hope," as the nation bets its future on a massive influx of US capital while navigating a world where traditional alliances (BRICS) appear secondary to immediate transactional survival.

### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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- **Reform of the Organic Hydrocarbons Law and Economic Opening:** The National Assembly approved reforms to attract massive international investment, specifically allowing private investors to assume greater risk and operational control in exchange for lower royalties (down to 15% in some cases). This is viewed as essential to reaching a production goal of 1.4 million barrels per day by year-end ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **US-Venezuela Diplomatic Rapprochement:** Despite the lack of full formal recognition, US Charge d'Affaires Laura Dogu and the US Secretary of Energy have held direct meetings with the Rodríguez administration. The arrival of 110 Venezuelans repatriated from the US further signals a resumption of bilateral cooperation ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **State-Led "Social Normalization" via Carnival:** The government reported a 100% occupancy rate in key coastal regions like La Guaira, using the "Carnavales por la Paz" to demonstrate domestic order and the success of "quadrant" security policies involving over 228,000 officials ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Judicial Reform and Political Amnesty:** Following the January 3rd events, nearly 900 individuals have been excarcerated. The National Assembly is currently debating a 28-article Amnesty Law intended to foster "coexistence" and "non-repetition" of political violence ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Restructuring of the Executive Branch:** Delcy Rodríguez issued Decree 5248, suppressing and liquidating seven key state institutions, including the Robert Serra Youth Mission and the Center for Strategic Security and Protection of the Homeland (CESPPA), to "de-bureaucratize" and adapt to the new political reality ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Regional Instability in Peru:** The Peruvian Congress destituted interim president José Jerí with 75 votes following corruption investigations, marking the eighth president for the country in ten years and highlighting widespread regional governance failure ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Iran-US Nuclear Negotiations in Geneva:** Indirect talks mediated by Omán resumed in Switzerland. Iran signaled a willingness to dilute enriched uranium in exchange for the unfreezing of assets and economic benefits, while Donald Trump warned of "consequences" if a deal is not reached ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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### Geopolitics and International Relations

- The arrival of the Prime Minister of Qatar in Maiquetía highlights Qatar's role as a financial intermediary, holding Venezuelan oil funds in escrow to be audited by external entities ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The Rodríguez administration is balancing continued rhetorical support for a "multipolar world" (China, Russia, Egypt) with a highly transactional reliance on the US for economic survival ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Sudan's ambassador in Caracas highlighted the "external interference" in his country's civil war, drawing parallels between Venezuelan and Sudanese resource-driven conflicts ([Source](#)).

### Economic Statecraft and Energy Security

- Valero Energy is expected to import 6.5 million barrels of Venezuelan crude in March, potentially surpassing Chevron as the top US buyer ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- PDVSA is launching a pilot program for "Super Premium" 97-octane gasoline priced at \$1 per liter in upscale Caracas neighborhoods ([Source](#)).

- The government is prioritizing the "Blue Economy," exporting 108 tons of algae and fish to Japan and Chile to diversify non-oil revenue ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### Domestic Stability and Social Order

- The government reports that the nutritional deficit in Venezuela has dropped to 4%, a dramatic recovery from the 35% peak during the height of the sanctions era ([Source](#)).
- Security forces (PNB, GNB, and military) were heavily deployed during Carnival to prevent any recurrence of the January unrest, with "Aulas Viales" (road classrooms) used to manage the return of over 7 million travelers ([Source](#)).

### Legislation

- **Reform of the Organic Hydrocarbons Law:** Modifies state-private partnership structures to allow private majority operational control and flexible fiscal terms ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Amnesty Law (in debate):** A 28-article proposal to pardon political actors and military personnel involved in recent conflicts ([Source](#)).
- **Law for the Promotion of Exports:** Includes mechanisms for the return of VAT to exporters to enhance competitiveness ([Source](#)).
- **Decree 5248:** Orders the liquidation of seven state entities to streamline the executive office ([Source](#)).

### LEGISLATION/POLICY

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Governance currently focuses on dismantling the highly centralized, ideological structures of the previous decade in favor of a lean,

"pragmatic" state capable of managing rapid foreign investment. This includes aggressive judicial "cleaning" and the simplification of the presidential office to respond to the absence of the elected president.

#### • **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **Amnesty Law:** Seeks to institutionalize the recent wave of prisoner releases and provide a legal framework for "political reconciliation" ([Source](#)).
- **Hydrocarbons Law Reform:** Permanently integrates "Anti-Blockade" law flexibilities into the standing organic law to provide "legal certainty" to US oil majors ([Source](#)).

#### • **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Delcy Rodríguez at the National Assembly:** Presented charts showing the production "limit" reached under the old model and the necessity of the new "Participation Contracts" ([Source](#)).
- **Vice-Minister Héndez Palencia at Tazón Peage:** Operational balance of the "Safe Carnival" deployment ([Source](#)).

### DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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#### The Transition to "Rodríguezism" and Elite Consolidation

A clear trend is emerging where Delcy and Jorge Rodríguez are consolidating power by distancing themselves from the "failed" hyper-ideological models of the past while maintaining the "Chavista" branding. Analysts describe this as a transition from within, comparable to the post-Gomez era in Venezuela. By restructuring the presidential office and eliminating missions (Decree 5248), they are concentrating authority and preparing for a governance model that is more palatable to Western capi-

tal markets. The recognition of Delcy Rodríguez by the military high command as the legitimate "holder of the baton" is a critical indicator of elite cohesion in the absence of Maduro ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### **Geopolitical "Judo" and the US Energy Thaw**

The narrative of "kidnapping" serves a dual purpose: it maintains the revolutionary base's fervor while allowing the administration to negotiate with the US from a position of "sovereign grievance." The term "Geopolitical Judo" is used to describe using the US's own energy needs against it to force a lifting of sanctions and a flow of dollars into Qatar-based accounts. This trend suggests that Venezuela is willing to revert to being a "safe" US oil province in exchange for political survival and the release of its leadership ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### **Social Media as a Battleground for Chaos**

The transcripts reveal a hyper-fixation on "fake news" and "laboratories of disinformation" (specifically mentions of Alex Saab or Gorrín being arrested). This points to a trend where the Rodríguez administration feels vulnerable to digital-led unrest. The obsession with "normalization" through Carnival reporting is a direct counter-psyop to the narrative of a country in collapse following the January 3rd intervention ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## **STRATEGIC FORESIGHT**

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**Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect the formal passage of the Amnesty Law and the release of additional military prisoners to fulfill US demands for "reconciliation." Air connectivity will continue to expand, with Air Europa already resuming flights and Plus Ultra/Iberia scheduled for March/April. Tensions may rise if "radical" opposition protests turn violent,

potentially triggering a "re-closing" of the current political opening ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The impact of the \$500 million Escrow funds in Qatar will start to hit the economy, likely through a significant increase in the public sector "bonus" system or a partial salary adjustment. Major US oil service companies (Halliburton, Schlumberger) will likely re-establish full-scale operations under the new law. The "Mid-term" US elections in November will dictate whether Trump continues this pragmatic engagement or pivots back to a "regime change" stance if his domestic popularity wanes ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Long Term (1-5 Years):** Venezuela is on a trajectory to reintegrate into the Western financial system, potentially re-entering the Mercosur and seeking debt restructuring. However, the "Maduro Kidney" (his continued detention or exile) remains a structural instability. If he is not returned, a "Legitimacy Crisis" could fracture the PSUV in the lead-up to any future general election ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS**

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### **For International Policy:**

- **Security:** The US-led intervention has created a precedent that challenges the UN-based global order (as noted by Slovakia's PM). Allies must decide whether to support the Rodríguez "normalization" or the "legitimacy" of the January 3rd event ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Diplomatic:** The "Qatar Escrow" model represents a new form of "managed sovereignty" that could be applied to other sanctioned states (Iran, Afghanistan) ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Regional:** The collapse of the Jerí government in Peru confirms a trend of "institutional hollow-out" in the Andes, making Venezuela's relative stability (even under interim rule) an attractive outlier for energy-hungry nations ([Source](#)).

#### **For Private Sector/Investors:**

- **Investment Opportunity:** The Hydrocarbons Law reform is the most significant opening in 25 years. Private majority ownership in joint ventures is now a viable, though politically risky, path ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Operational Risk:** Infrastructure remains the primary bottleneck. The Secretary of Fedecámaras Aragua explicitly warned of continued weaknesses in the electrical grid and fuel supply, suggesting that investors must bring their own power/logistics solutions ([Source](#)).
- **Regulatory Compliance:** While US sanctions are being "flexibilized," the use of Qatar-based accounts and "external auditors" means that financial compliance will be rigorous and highly politicized ([Source](#)).

## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

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**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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