

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RUSSIA1

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

A FRAGILE GLOBAL PIVOT: REALPOLITIK & RESOURCE COMPETITION IN THE 2026 LANDSCAPE



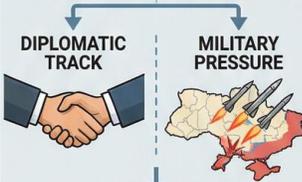
THE GENEVA TRILATERAL & ESCALATING US-IRAN TENSIONS SIGNAL A GLOBAL POWER SHIFT

FEBRUARY 17, 2026: DAY-AT-A-GLANCE - INFLECTION POINT

THEATRE 1: RUSSIA-UKRAINE & GENEVA TALKS (COERCIVE DIPLOMACY)



EU & UK MARGINALIZED:
"Trilateral Plus" Format Excludes Traditional Allies



Russian "Spirit of Anchorage" Rhetoric vs. Massive Coordinated Strikes on Odessa & Kryvyi Rih Energy Hubs during Negotiations

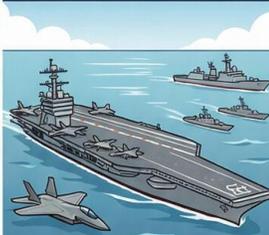


KUPYANSK ENCIRCLEMENT CRISIS: AFU Brigades Trapped, Command Refuses Retreat



KIEV INTERNAL PURGE: Arrest of Galushchenko (\$110M Case) Signals US-Brokered Power Shift Away from Yermak-centric Circle

THEATRE 2: US-IRAN BRINKMANSHIP (RESOURCE REALPOLITIK)



STRAIT OF HORMUZ



US "COERCIVE DIPLOMACY": Military Surge Targets Nuclear Concessions & Access to Iranian Rare Earth Metals/Minerals



IRAN'S RESPONSE: Massive Naval Exercises & Threats to Block Global Oil Transit



Bypassing Multi-Party Frameworks for Direct Resource Acquisition

GLOBAL SHIFTS: ALLIANCE FRACTURES & GOVERNANCE



BREAKDOWN IN ATLANTICIST UNITY: UK Fears "America First" Isolation, Plans Sovereign Payment System to Bypass US Financial Tech



ESTONIA: Codifies Confiscation of Frozen Russian Assets



RUSSIAN DOMESTIC CONSOLIDATION: New Laws Extend Benefits for Large Families & Support "Sovereign Tech" (Starlink Alternatives)



WESTERN MORAL DECAY NARRATIVES: Russian Media Weaponizes US/Canada Social Issues (Transgender Violence) to De-legitimize Western Governance

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS & STRATEGIC FORESIGHT - THE PATH AHEAD

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS)



High Risk of Geneva Failure & Military Incident in Strait of Hormuz; Further Kiev Destabilization

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS)



Potential UK "Financial Brexit", Russia Formalizes New Territories, Possible US-Iran "Resource-for-Peace" Deal

LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS)



Multi-polar Financial System, Re-establishment of "Russian Sphere" in Eastern Europe, Technological Divergence & Decoupling

IMPLICATIONS: EU & UK Sidelines, Middle East Volatility, Investors Must Hedge for Resource Shocks & Financial Infrastructure Risks.

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THE GENEVA TRILATERAL
NEGOTIATIONS AND ESCALATING
US-IRAN TENSIONS SIGNAL A
FRAGILE GLOBAL PIVOT TOWARD
REALPOLITIK AND RESOURCE
COMPETITION

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 17, 2026, marks a potential inflection point in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as trilateral negotiations between Russia, the United States, and Ukraine commence in Geneva. The talks, notably excluding the European Union and the United Kingdom, are being conducted in a closed-door "trilateral plus" format where the Trump administration acts as the primary interlocutor. Russian state media is positioning these talks as a "Return to the Spirit of Anchorage," emphasizing bilateralism and the marginalization of European "party of war" interests. While the diplomatic track proceeds, Russia is simultaneously applying maximum military pressure, launching a massive coordinated strike on Ukrainian energy and transport hubs, particularly in Odessa and Kryvyi Rih, to improve its bargaining position. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

In parallel, the geopolitical focus has shifted toward a secondary crisis in Geneva regarding Iran's nuclear program. The United States has aggressively surged military assets to the Middle East, including aircraft carriers and F-35 squadrons, while Iran has responded with massive naval exercises in the Strait of Hormuz. This "coercive diplomacy" suggests the Trump administration is attempting to leverage military threats to secure resource concessions—specifically access to Iranian minerals and rare earth metals—while bypassing traditional multi-party frameworks. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

Domestic instability within the Ukrainian administration is being heavily messaged, with the arrest of former Energy Minister German Galushchenko on charges of laundering \$110 million. This is being framed as a "signal to Zelensky" from the U.S., suggesting that the current Kiev leadership is being systematically purged of figures loyal to the previous "Yermak-centric" power structure in favor of those willing to accept a US-brokered territorial compromise. Simultaneously, the United Kingdom, fearing financial isolation under a "America First" trade regime, has begun planning a sovereign payment system to bypass Visa and Mastercard, signaling a profound breakdown in Atlanticist unity. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Trilateral Negotiations in Geneva:** High-level delegations from Russia (led by Medinsky), the US (led by Witkoff and Kushner), and Ukraine (Umerov and Budanov) have met for six hours. The agenda includes territorial status (Donbass), security guarantees, and economic normalization. Reports suggest a deep split in the Ukrainian camp between Budanov (favoring a quick deal) and Umerov (resistant to territorial concessions). ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Massive Strikes on Ukrainian Infrastructure:** Russian forces launched a coordinated strike using over 100 "Geran" drones and ballistic missiles against energy and transport nodes in Odessa, Kryvyi Rih, and Kirovograd. The Odessa electrical substation "Tairov" was reportedly destroyed, leading to a total blackout in 90% of the city. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Kupyansk Encirclement Crisis:** Two AFU brigades (1st Special Purpose and 43rd Mechanized) are reportedly trapped on the eastern bank of the Oskol River. Radio intercepts describe catastrophic conditions, including widespread frostbite and a refusal by command to allow retreat under threat of "barrier detachments." ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **US-Iran Brinkmanship:** Negotiations on Iran's nuclear program are occurring simultaneously in Geneva. The US has deployed the USS Gerald Ford and E-3 Sentry AWACS to the region. Iran has warned it will target "all US infrastructure" in the region if attacked and is conducting drills to block the Strait of Hormuz. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **The Galushchenko Corruption Case:** The High Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine ordered the detention of former Energy Minister Galushchenko. The prosecution alleges involvement in laundering \$112 million through British offshore accounts. The massive 425 million hryvnia bail is being framed as an insurmountable "sentence" to force cooperation against the Yermak/Zelensky inner circle. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **UK Financial Autonomy Shift:** Fearing potential US-led financial sanctions or exclusion (due to the Greenland dispute), the UK government and major banks are meeting to develop a sovereign payment system to end 95% reliance on Visa and Mastercard. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Russian Sovereignty in Communication:** The Ministry of Defense announced that the disabling of Starlink terminals in the SMO zone has not affected Russian operations, as "domestic analogs" and reserve channels have successfully maintained combat control. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

• **Geopolitics:**

- The exclusion of the EU from the Geneva talks indicates a move toward a G2 (US-Russia) or G3 (US-Russia-China) management of regional conflicts. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- The UK's panic over Greenland highlights the breakdown of traditional NATO-bloc loyalty in favor of mercantilist territorial disputes. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Azerbaijan's sentencing of Ruben Vardanyan to 20 years is interpreted as a final consolidation of regional control and a snub to both Russian and Western mediation efforts. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

• **Domestic Stability & Social Order:**

- Reports of "energy riots" in Odessa after five days without power suggest a critical erosion of the Ukrainian home front. ([Source](#))
- Massive snowstorms ("Vivian" and "Balkan Cyclone") have paralyzed infrastructure in Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, and Anadyr, requiring federal intervention and "remote learning" for schools. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- Russian media is emphasizing reports of transgender-perpetrated mass shootings in the US and Canada to frame Western "gender-affirming" policies as a source of terminal social decay and mental health crises. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

• **Economic Statecraft:**

- Russia is utilizing the "Digital Construction" service to streamline individual housing construction, aiming to stimulate domestic investment. ([Source](#))
- The Russian government extended tax holidays for businesses and residents in the Kursk border region until December 2027 to maintain stability in conflict-adjacent areas. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

• **Corruption & Governance:**

- The Galushchenko arrest is being leveraged to expose the "Mindich Schemes," allegedly involving the funneling of state energy funds to private interests linked to the Ukrainian presidency. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- The "Dzhigan Case" in Moscow regarding a prenuptial agreement is being monitored as a potential precedent for "incapacity" claims in major asset disputes. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

• **Legislation:**

- Russian State Duma (2nd and 3rd reading): A law allowing families with three or more children to retain unified benefits even if their income slightly exceeds the subsistence minimum (by up to 10%). ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- UK Ministry of Education: New "recommendations" requiring teachers to use a child's preferred pronouns from age 4 without parental consent. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- Estonia: Finalized legal mechanism for the "confiscation of frozen Russian assets," the first in the EU to codify such "theft." ([Source](#))

LEGISLATION/POLICY

Policy discussion focused on social safety nets for large families in Russia, the legal mechanisms for asset seizure in the Baltics, and the drastic "social transformation" policies being implemented in British schools. Financial policy was highlighted by the UK's pivot toward sovereign payment infrastructure.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Unified Benefit Retention Law (Russia):** Passed by the State Duma. Ensures large families do not lose state support if their income increases slightly above the poverty line, preventing a "benefit cliff." ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Strategy for Spatial Development 2030 (Russia):** Duma proposal to create "rural agglomerations" alongside city centers to ensure infrastructure funding reaches agrarian regions. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Estonian Asset Confiscation Law:** A new legal framework allowing the state to permanently seize frozen Russian sovereign assets. ([Source](#))
- **UK Sovereign Payment System Proposal:** Not yet a bill, but a high-level government directive to decouple from US-owned financial networks. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Mishustin Operative Meeting:** Detailed the extension of tax breaks for Kursk and discussed the growth of the domestic tourism sector (89 million trips in 2025). ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Putin-Kalimatov Meeting:** Focused on investment projects in Ingushetia, including an aluminum cluster and IT academy, and systemic support for families of SMO participants. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

- **Galushchenko Bail Hearing (Kiev):** A high-stakes court session where the defense argued that the \$10M bail is a political assassination tool. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Geneva Press Briefings:** Limited statements by Trump (pushing Kiev to settle) and Peskov (warning of no immediate results). ([Source](#), [Source](#))

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Marginalization of Europe

A dominant theme is the strategic "orphaning" of the European Union. By negotiating directly with the US, Moscow is exposing the EU's lack of military autonomy and internal cohesion. The exclusion of France and Germany from the Geneva room, while their emissaries wait in the "lobby," is a deliberate humiliation intended to signal that European security will henceforth be decided in Washington and Moscow. This is further exacerbated by the UK's fear of being sanctioned by its own ally (the US) over Greenland, suggesting that the "Western Bloc" is decomposing into competing national interests. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

Coercive Diplomacy and "Total Energy War"

The timing of the massive strikes on Odessa during the Geneva talks indicates that Russia is no longer separating diplomacy from military operation. The objective is to make the cost of continuing the war unbearable for the Ukrainian civilian population, thereby forcing Zelensky's hand or precipitating a domestic collapse. The framing of the Kupyansk "cauldron" serves a similar purpose—demonstrating that the AFU is militarily exhausted while

the leadership discusses "victory" in Munich. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

The Resource-Nuclear Link in the Middle East

The negotiations with Iran are revealing a shift in US strategy toward "Resource Re-politik." Reports that the US is seeking access to Iranian rare earth metals in exchange for nuclear concessions suggest the Trump administration is prioritizing the "Green Transition" supply chain over traditional proliferation concerns. However, the accompanying military surge indicates that if resource concessions are not granted, the US is prepared to use force to "change the regime," a threat Iran is taking seriously enough to threaten global oil transit via the Strait of Hormuz. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

Weaponized Moral Decay Narratives

Russian state media is aggressively using US domestic social issues (transgender violence, Epstein files) to de-legitimize Western governance. By linking "liberal gender policies" to mass shootings and "globalist elites" to pedophilia rings, the Kremlin is constructing a narrative where Russia is the last bastion of "sanity" and "humanity." This serves both domestic consolidation and an appeal to conservative elements within the US and EU. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

• Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- Failure or "suspension" of the first Geneva round is likely as Ukraine resists territorial demands, followed by even more intensive Russian strikes on Western Ukrainian logistics hubs.
- The Galushchenko case will likely produce "leaks" implicating Andrey Yermak, further destabilizing Zelensky's inner circle.
- A military "incident" in the Strait of Hormuz is at high risk as US carriers move into position and Iran completes its naval drills.

• Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- The UK will likely accelerate its independent payment system project, potentially leading to a "Financial Brexit" that strains relations with US-based tech and finance giants.
- Russia will formalize the incorporation of newly seized territories if the Geneva process fails to produce a roadmap by April.
- A significant "Resource-for-Peace" deal may emerge between the US and Iran if the US can successfully isolate the "hardliners" in Tehran.

- **Long Term (1-5 Years):**

- A permanent shift to a multi-polar financial system where the US dollar remains dominant but no longer holds a monopoly on transaction security (G20 fragmentation).
- The re-establishment of a "Russian Sphere" in Eastern Europe, with the EU potentially being forced to pay for Ukrainian reconstruction while having no say in its governance.
- Technological divergence: Russia and China will finalize a "sovereign internet/tech stack" that is fully decoupled from Western components (e.g., successful Starlink replacement).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Diplomatic Sidelining:** EU and UK policymakers must recognize that they are currently excluded from the primary security architecture talks. Continuing a "policy of war" while the US negotiates a "policy of business" will lead to a strategic vacuum in Brussels.
- **Middle East Volatility:** The risk of a "controlled" military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities is at its highest point in a decade. Neutral states should prepare for a potential 30-60 day closure of the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Ukraine Transition:** External supporters should prepare for a "post-Zelensky" or "reformed Zelensky" administration that is prioritized for US interests over EU integration.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Hedge:** Investors should hedge against a massive spike in oil prices and a shortage of rare earth metals if the US-Iran situation deteriorates into kinetic conflict.
- **Financial Infrastructure Risk:** Businesses operating in the UK should monitor the development of the sovereign payment system; a transition away from Visa/Mastercard would involve significant compliance and integration costs.
- **Asset Security:** Firms with frozen assets in Estonia or other Baltic states should assume a 100% loss rate as legal confiscation mechanisms are finalized. Conversely, the Russian "Digital Construction" and "Rural Agglomeration" policies may offer niche opportunities for domestic industrial and tech firms.

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. You can also learn more about the GDEL T Project at <https://blog.gdel tproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.