TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CURRENTTIME

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

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TRUMP’S "PEACE COUNCIL" REDEFINES GLOBAL ALLIANCES AMID KREMLIN EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE A $12 TRILLION SANCTIONS EXIT

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 20, 2026, marks a pivotal moment in the restructuring of the post-Cold War order, dominated by the inaugural meeting of President Donald Trump’s "Peace Council" in Washington. This new political structure, ostensibly aimed at resolving the Gaza conflict but rapidly expanding into a broad geopolitical and economic platform, has successfully drawn in twenty nations, including the key Central Asian powers of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The summit highlights a growing rift between the U.S. and the European Union, as several European nations have declined participation. This shift is accompanied by massive U.S. domestic investment in migration control—specifically a $38 billion plan for detention centers—and a highly politicized approach to immigration enforcement that has begun to impact international sporting events and diplomatic relations with Central Asian neighbors (Source, Source).

Simultaneously, the Kremlin is engaged in a high-stakes effort to "buy" its way out of international isolation. Reports of a proposed $12 trillion "Big Deal" between Moscow and Washington reveal a desperate Russian strategy to offer vast resources—including Arctic oil, rare earth minerals, and a Bering Strait tunnel—in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. However, this economic overture is undermined by continued reports of systemic war crimes in Ukraine, specifically involving General Roman Dimurchiev, and a deepening domestic crackdown in Russia. The Russian State Duma is fast-tracking legislation to pathologize political dissent as "historical distortion" and "draft evasion," signaling a potential move toward renewed mobilization as military losses in Ukraine reportedly exceed the rate of volunteer recruitment (Source, Source, Source).

Strategic tension is also rising on NATO’s eastern flank. While NATO conducts massive maneuvers in northern Germany to practice rapid troop transfers, European intelligence agencies remain skeptical of any near-term peace in Ukraine, viewing Russian diplomatic maneuvers as a theater designed to stall for time and secure sanctions relief. As Russia finds itself increasingly a "lonely power," failing to support traditional allies like Venezuela and Cuba under U.S. pressure, the global energy transition provides a counter-narrative of resilience. Examples from Uruguay’s 98% renewable grid and Japan’s "Zero Waste" initiatives suggest a long-term structural shift away from the fossil fuel dependencies that currently fund the Kremlin’s geopolitical ambitions (Source, Source, Source, Source).

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Inauguration of Trump's Peace Council in Washington**
  - Representatives from 47 states (including 20 high-level delegations) met to discuss the management of the Gaza Strip and broader regional stability. (Source)
  - The council seeks to establish a 20,000-strong international stabilization force for Gaza, including troops from Kazakhstan, Morocco, Kosovo, Albania, and Indonesia. (Source, Source)
  - Major economic agreements were reached, including a $35 billion U.S.-Uzbekistan cooperation program and plans for a joint investment platform. (Source, Source)
  - European nations and traditional players like China and India have remained largely on the sidelines, highlighting a shift in the U.S. alliance structure. (Source)
- **The Russian "$12 Trillion Big Deal" Proposal**
  - The Kremlin is reportedly offering the U.S. a massive investment package in exchange for lifting sanctions, including Arctic energy development and rare earth mineral extraction. (Source)
  - Specific projects include a data center powered by nuclear energy and a tunnel under the Bering Strait. (Source, Source)
  - Analysts suggest the deal is a "poison pill" designed to force U.S. business interests to lobby against sanctions, though actual investor interest remains low due to legal and political risks in Russia. (Source)
- **U.S. Migration Policy Expansion and International Backlash**
  - The U.S. plans to spend $38 billion to build eight "mega-centers" for migrant detention, each housing up to 10,000 people, with a goal of total capacity exceeding 92,000 by November. (Source)
  - The White House has used the case of a Kyrgyz truck driver (Bekzhan Bishikeev) involved in a fatal accident to criticize the "CBP One" app and justify mass deportations. (Source)
  - European football fans are expressing fear over visiting the U.S. for the World Cup due to aggressive immigration enforcement. (Source)
- **Evidence of Systemic War Crimes and General Staff Brutality**
  - Investigations into Russian General Roman Dimurchiev's correspondence revealed him bragging to his wife and colleagues about torturing and executing Ukrainian POWs, including sending photos of severed ears. (Source, Source)
  - The evidence suggests that such brutality is not only known by the Russian high command (including General Mityaev) but actively rewarded with state honors. (Source, Source)

- **NATO Maneuvers and European Skepticism**
  - 10,000 NATO troops are conducting exercises in Northern Germany to practice rapid deployment to the Eastern flank, notably without U.S. participation but with Ukrainian presence. (Source)
  - European intelligence heads warn that Russia is using peace negotiations in Geneva as a "theatrical performance" to stall for time while planning to continue the war for at least 18-24 more months. (Source, Source)

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

- **Legislation and Social Control**
  - **Draft Bill on "Prevention of Historical Distortion and Draft Evasion":** A new Russian law passed in its first reading that expands the rights of law enforcement to conduct "preventative conversations" with those who criticize the military or "distort" history. (Source, Source)
  - **Sanctions Extension:** Despite ongoing negotiations, President Trump extended sanctions against Russia related to the 2014 Crimea annexation for another year. (Source)
  - **Russian Government Decree No. 87:** New regulations that allow Russia to suspend certificates of conformity from EAEU partners (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Armenia), effectively creating a trade barrier under the guise of safety standards. (Source, Source)
  - **Kazakhstan "Foreign Agent" Law:** Implementation of laws restricting non-commercial organizations, leading to the marginalization of urban activists and feminist groups. (Source)

- **Economic Statecraft and Energy Security**
  - Uruguay has achieved a 98% renewable energy grid, demonstrating the viability of total transition for small nations, which now allows them to export surplus energy for profit ($90M in the last year). (Source)
  - German cities like Mannheim are aggressively pursuing a 10-year plan to exit gas and coal, utilizing river heat pumps and geothermal energy to decouple from Russian fossil fuels. (Source)
  - The global market for energy storage is projected to exceed $230 billion in seven years, with a shift from Li-ion to safer, scalable Redox Flow batteries. (Source)
- **Corruption and Governance**
  - In Kyrgyzstan, the reappearance of Alexey Shirshov—a figure synonymous with 2000s-era energy corruption—within an official government delegation to Moscow has sparked a major scandal. (Source, Source)
  - Kazakhstan's asset recovery efforts are under fire as the ex-wife of Kairat Satybaldy (nephew of Nazarbayev) reports the state is seizing her only residence following Satybaldy's "donation" of the property to the government. (Source)

LEGISLATION/POLICY

Governance in the Russian Federation has shifted toward "legislative duresse," where new laws are being used to pathologize and criminalize the avoidance of military service and any dissent regarding the state's historical narrative. Simultaneously, the U.S. is formalizing a massive infrastructure for migrant detention, signaling a hard-line shift in domestic security policy that has international diplomatic consequences.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED**
  - **Russian Bill on Historical Truth and Draft Evasion:** Aimed at allowing police to "proactively" intervene with citizens who hold views deemed contrary to state military or historical interests. Analysts view this as a precursor to or a tool for silent mobilization. (Source, Source)
  - **U.S. Migration Detention Expansion:** A $38 billion policy to establish a permanent network of large-scale detention centers and repurpose 16 existing buildings for short-term migrant processing. (Source)
  - **Russian Decree No. 87:** A trade policy allowing the unilateral suspension of quality certifications for goods from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, used as a geopolitical lever. (Source, Source)
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS**
  - **Peace Council Summit (Washington):** President Trump and various leaders discussed the formation of a Gaza stabilization force and signed bilateral trade deals. (Source, Source)
  - **Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) Briefing:** Vladimir Kolokoltsev reported that 72,000 foreigners were deported in 2025 and stated the government could deport ten times more if funding were available. (Source, Source)
  - **Geneva Peace Talks:** Vladimir Medinsky reportedly used the sessions to "lecture" the Ukrainian side on Russian imperial history, leading to accusations of bad-faith stalling. (Source)

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

- **The Weaponization of History and Identity**
  - The Kremlin is increasingly using historical narrative as a primary tool of statecraft. From Medinsky's "history lessons" in Geneva to the Duma's "Historical Truth" bill, the state is attempting to define the past to justify the present war. This is coupled with a "nostalgia for the USSR" which is being packaged into modern Russian cinema (e.g., Cheburashka 2, Buratino) to provide citizens with an "escapist" fantasy that masks the grim reality of the war. (Source, Source, Source)

- **Fragmentation of International Norms and Institutions**
  - The traditional "unity" of the West is fraying as the U.S. leads the Peace Council without major EU partners. This fragmentation extends to the Olympic movement, where the admission of Russian and Belarusian athletes under "neutral" or national flags (for the Paralympics) has prompted boycotts from Ukraine and highlighted the corruption/politicization of the IOC and FIFA. (Source, Source, Source)

- **Economic Desperation vs. Technological Sovereignty**
  - Russia's $12 trillion offer represents a "fire sale" of national sovereignty to the U.S., suggesting that the impact of current sanctions is far more severe than the Kremlin admits. Meanwhile, China continues to lead in EV and battery tech (e.g., CATL's investment in Germany), forcing Europe to choose between dependence on Chinese tech or lagging behind in the energy transition. (Source, Source)

- **Central Asia's Delicate Balancing Act**
  - Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are capitalizing on Trump's Peace Council to secure direct U.S. investment ($35B for Uzbekistan) and elevate their status as regional mediators. However, they remain vulnerable to Russian trade pressure (Decree 87) and domestic social tensions related to labor migration and religious influence. (Source, Source, Source)

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a surge in Russian law enforcement activity following the "Historical Truth" bill, including more arrests for small-scale donations to opposition groups (as seen in Riazan). In the U.S., the formalization of the Gaza stabilization force will likely face immediate logistical challenges and potential backlash in participating countries like Kazakhstan. (Source, Source)

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Russian recruitment shortages may reach a breaking point, forcing either a shift to "student contracts" (currently being piloted in VShE and MFTI) or a formal mobilization of the 2-million-man reserve. The U.S. will likely complete its detention center expansion by November, coinciding with the congressional elections and a potential push for mass deportations. (Source, Source)

Long Term (1-5 Years): Russia risks becoming a "vassal state" either to U.S. capital (via the Big Deal) or Chinese manufacturing (via the Made in China 2025 plan). The energy transition in Europe and South America (Uruguay model) will permanently erode the market for Russian fossil fuels, making the Arctic projects in the $12T deal potentially stranded assets. (Source, Source)

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- **For International Policy**
  - **Security:** European nations must accelerate the development of autonomous defense capabilities, as NATO exercises currently indicate a readiness to act without U.S. participation. (Source)
  - **Diplomatic:** Policy toward Central Asia should shift from viewing them as Russian satellites to recognizing them as independent actors now actively bidding for U.S. patronage through the Peace Council. (Source)
  - **Human Rights:** The documentation of war crimes by officers like General Dimurchiev provides a clear legal basis for future tribunals, which should remain a diplomatic priority to counter Russian "normalization" efforts. (Source)
- **For Private Sector/Investors**
  - **Risk Management:** Investors should treat Russian resource offers ($12T package) with extreme caution; historical data used for these valuations are outdated, and the Russian legal system offers no protection against state-sanctioned seizure. (Source)
  - **Supply Chain:** The shift in U.S. migration policy and the $38B investment in detention centers suggests increased labor volatility and border delays for sectors dependent on cross-border logistics. (Source)
  - **Energy Opportunities:** The rapid growth of the energy storage market and the success of the Uruguay/Mannheim models present high-growth opportunities in non-lithium storage technologies and decentralized "people's energy" systems. (Source)

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 GDELT Project at https://blog.gdeltproject.org/ and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at https://archive.org/details/tv.