

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

ALJAZ

FEBRUARY 21, 2026

THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

GLOBAL TARIFFS & IRAN WAR POSTURE: A DUAL CONSTITUTIONAL & GEOPOLITICAL CRISIS

PRESIDENT TRUMP DOUBLES DOWN AMIDST CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS & IMMINENT WAR POSTURE

FEBRUARY 21, 2026: EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY VS. JUDICIAL POWER & REGIONAL STABILITY

THE DOMESTIC CONSTITUTIONAL BATTLEGROUND

SCOTUS STRIKES DOWN "LIBERATION DAY" TARIFFS (6-3 RULING)

SECTION 122 (TRADE ACT OF 1974)

NEW 15% GLOBAL LEVY (150 DAYS)
EMERGENCY POWERS INVOKED. \$175B-\$200B REFUND DEMANDED

COURT IS A "DISGRACE" & "ANTI-AMERICAN"

GOVERNORS & BUSINESSES

INVOICES

EXECUTIVE OVERREACH & RULE OF LAW IN QUESTION

THE GEOPOLITICAL CONFRONTATION & GLOBAL FALLOUT

US NAVAL ARMADA IN PERSIAN GULF: TWO-WEEK ULTIMATUM FOR IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

SIMULTANEOUS CRISES: US INTERNAL DIVISION & EXTERNAL AGGRESSION

IRAN SHIFTS DOCTRINE: 'MASSIVE RETALIATION' & ASYMMETRIC STRIKES ON REGIONAL ENERGY

GLOBAL RIPPLE EFFECTS: THE EROSION OF NORMS

- UK**: REMOVED FROM SUCCESSION. ANDREW MOUNTBATTEN-WINDSOR (SCANDAL) CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
- GAZA**: BOARD OF PEACE. TRUMP-LED NEO-COLONIAL VISION, BYPASSING UN. \$17B PLEDGE & 20K TROOPS
- BRICS+**: ACCELERATING DE-DOLLARIZATION & ALTERNATIVE TRADE FRAMEWORKS
- UKRAINE**: ENERGY BLACKMAIL & POLITICAL SABOTAGE
- EUROPE**: US DEPENDENCY (80%). SORVEGIC STRATEGIC AUTONOMY HAMPERED

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS & THEMES

- IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY & UNILATERALISM (Might is Right)
- WEAPONIZATION OF TRADE & ENERGY (Coercive Tools)
- FRAGILE DOMESTIC RECONCILIATION VS. EXTREMISM
- AI & CRISIS OF AUTHENTICITY (Polycrisis, Troll Farms)

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

- SHORT TERM (1-4 Weeks)**: SME LAWSUITS & PEAK GULF TENSION (Potential Limited Strike)
- MEDIUM TERM (1-6 Months)**: LEGISLATIVE WALL FOR TARIFFS (150-Day Cliff)
- LONG TERM (1-5 Years)**: ALTERNATIVE BRICS+ FINANCIAL SYSTEM & LATIN AMERICA PIVOT TO CHINA

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PRESIDENT TRUMP DOUBLES
DOWN ON GLOBAL TARIFFS AMIDST
A DOMESTIC CONSTITUTIONAL
CRISIS AND IMMINENT WAR
POSTURE TOWARD IRAN

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The geopolitical landscape on February 21, 2026, is defined by a severe escalation in the United States' protectionist trade policies and a deepening military standoff with Iran. Following a landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling that struck down the administration's "Liberation Day" tariffs as an unconstitutional usurpation of Congressional power, President Donald Trump has remained defiant. He immediately leveraged alternative statutes—specifically Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974—to impose a new 15% global levy on all imports. This maneuver has triggered a massive legal and economic crisis, with businesses and state governors de-

manding the refund of approximately \$175 billion to \$200 billion in previously collected duties. The administration's rhetoric has turned sharply against the judiciary, with the President accusing justices of being influenced by foreign interests, signaling a profound internal breakdown in the U.S. separation of powers. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)) Simultaneously, the threat of high-intensity conflict in the Middle East has reached a critical juncture. The U.S. has moved significant naval assets, including aircraft carrier groups, into the Persian Gulf, issuing a two-week ultimatum for Iran to accept a new nuclear deal. While Tehran claims to be preparing a counter-proposal that maintains its right to enrichment, it has simultaneously shifted its military doctrine to one of "massive retaliation," threatening U.S. regional bases and energy infrastructure if attacked. These developments coincide with a controversial "Board of Peace" meeting in Washington, which critics view as a Trump-led vehicle to bypass the United Nations and impose a neo-colonial vision for Gaza's reconstruction. Collectively, these events suggest an administration using aggressive external economic and military statecraft to consolidate executive authority and reshape the international order through unilateralism. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **U.S. Supreme Court Strikes Down Global Tariffs:** The court ruled 6-3 that the President exceeded his authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977 to impose broad tariffs, designating them as taxes that only Congress has the power to levy. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **President Trump doubles down with 15% Levy:** Within hours of the ruling, Trump signed a new executive order for a 10% levy under Section 122, subsequently raising it to the legal maximum of 15%. He attacked the court as a "disgrace" and "anti-American." ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Iran Nuclear Ultimatum and Military Build-up:** Trump issued a two-week deadline for a nuclear deal. Iran is preparing a technical proposal but refuses "zero enrichment" demands. The U.S. has massed an "armada" in the region, while Iran has warned of asymmetric strikes on energy targets if hit. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **UK Royal Scandal and Succession Crisis:** Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested on suspicion of misconduct in public office related to sharing confidential documents with Jeffrey Epstein. The UK government is now considering emergency legislation to remove him from the line of succession. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Ukraine Energy Blackmail by Slovakia and Hungary:** The two nations have threatened to cut electricity to Ukraine unless Russian oil transit through the Druzhba pipeline is restored, accusing Kyiv of political sabotage. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

- **The "Board of Peace" for Gaza Reconstruction:** A Trump-convened body met in Washington, pledging \$17 billion for reconstruction and 20,000 international troops (mostly Indonesian) for a stabilization force, though Hamas disarmament remains a massive hurdle. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **India-Brazil Trade Alignment:** Prime Minister Modi and President Lula de Silva met to discuss diversifying supply chains for rare earth minerals to reduce dependence on the U.S. and China following tariff pressures. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

- **Geopolitics and Regional Order:** The U.S. is increasingly acting as a "predatory hegemon," threatening to retake the Panama Canal and carrying out military strikes on suspected drug trafficking vessels in the Pacific. This has pushed middle powers (Bricks+) to accelerate de-dollarization and alternative trade frameworks. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Domestic Stability and Legal Conflict:** Democratic governors (Pritzker of Illinois, Newsom of California) are in open conflict with the White House, issuing multi-billion dollar "invoices" for tariff refunds. The President's direct attacks on his own judicial appointees signal a looming constitutional crisis regarding the rule of law. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Economic Statecraft:** The use of Section 122 (balance of payments) and Section 232 (national security) represents a shift from emergency law to "legalized" protectionism. However, these tools are time-limited (150 days) and require Congressional approval for extension, setting up a political cliff. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

- **Artificial Intelligence:** The UN is pushing for science-led global governance of AI, while the White House technology advisor has "totally rejected" global oversight, arguing it serves as an excuse for centralization. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Energy Security:** Europe is grappling with an 80% dependency on U.S. LNG while simultaneously being pressured by its own members (Hungary/Slovakia) to maintain Russian oil links. The U.S. is also weaponizing fuel supplies to Cuba, pushing its medical sector toward collapse. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency:** Pakistan has carried out air strikes in Afghanistan targeting the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), while Ghana has suspended tomato imports due to ISIL/Al-Qaeda attacks on traders in Burkina Faso. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Legislation:**
 - **Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974:** Invoked by Trump to impose 15% tariffs for 150 days. ([Source](#))
 - **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977:** Ruled invalid for broad tariff imposition by SCOTUS. ([Source](#))
 - **UK Succession Reform (Proposed):** Law to remove Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor from the royal line. ([Source](#))
 - **Ukraine Referendum/Election Law:** Signed by the Rada to allow elections and territorial referendums during the war. ([Source](#))
 - **Section 232/301:** Existing trade laws for national security and unfair practices remaining in use. ([Source](#))

LEGISLATION/POLICY

The legislative focus is dominated by the fallout of the U.S. Supreme Court decision, which re-established that the power to tax imports resides with Congress, not the Executive. In response, the administration is cycling through dormant trade statutes to maintain its protectionist agenda, while the UK government moves toward unprecedented constitutional changes regarding its monarchy.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Proposed Act of Parliament (UK):** A specific legislative move required to remove Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor from the line of royal succession following his arrest. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Ukraine Constitutional Amendment/Referendum Law:** Recently passed by the Rada, this law enables a path toward a peace deal by allowing territory to be ceded via public vote, which was previously unconstitutional. ([Source](#))
- **Divorce Act (Philippines):** A bill passed by the House and pending in the Senate to legalize divorce in the Philippines, facing heavy opposition from the Catholic Church. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **White House Briefing Room (Tariffs):** A rare appearance by Trump to denounce the Supreme Court's "Liberation Day" ruling as a "disgrace" and announce new levies. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Board of Peace Summit (Washington):** A Trump-led international gathering focused on Gaza, where multi-billion dollar pledges were made without UN participation. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

- **Syrian Youth National Conference (Aleppo):** A government-sponsored workshop to involve youth in rebuilding national strategy post-Assad. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Geneva Trilateral Negotiations:** Ongoing talks between the U.S., Russia, and Ukraine regarding the Donbas region and security guarantees. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

1. The "Imperial Presidency" and the Erosion of Global Norms: The transcripts portray a U.S. administration that views international law and domestic judicial checks as obstacles to be circumvented. By attacking the Supreme Court and threatening to annex the Panama Canal or Greenland, the President is signaling a return to 19th-century power projections. This "might is right" philosophy is manifesting in the creation of the "Board of Peace," an entity intended to oversee the UN and manage global conflicts according to U.S. business interests. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

2. The "Weaponization of Everything" in Energy and Trade: Economic statecraft is no longer just about market access; it is being used as a coercive tool for unrelated political goals. The President admitted to raising tariffs on Switzerland because he "didn't like the way the leader spoke to him," while Slovakia and Hungary are using electricity supplies to blackmail Ukraine. Energy is at the heart of this, with Cuba facing a total sector collapse due to a U.S. "energy siege" and Europe's "strategic autonomy" being hampered by its massive dependency on U.S. natural gas. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

3. Fragile Domestic Reconciliation vs. Growing Extremism: In Iran and Syria, governments are attempting to bridge the gap

with their populations through youth conferences and economic promises, yet the threat of war and internal repression remains high. In France, the death of a far-right activist has sparked clashes between the left and right, mirroring the political polarization in the U.S., where governors are openly "invoicing" the President. This suggests that while global leaders focus on high-level statecraft, domestic social contracts are fraying. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

4. AI and the Crisis of Authenticity: The proliferation of AI is creating a "polycrisis." While CEOs warn of a 20% chance of AI "killing us all," they continue to aggressively monetize the technology. The normalization of "troll farms" in the Philippines—historically used by individuals like Jeffrey Epstein to scrub their records—and the use of AI-manipulated videos to smear UN officials like Francesca Albanese, indicate that the information ecosystem is becoming a primary theater of warfare. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a wave of lawsuits from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) following the SCOTUS ruling, as they cannot afford to wait years for refunds. Tensions in the Persian Gulf will peak as the two-week ultimatum for Iran expires; a "limited" U.S. strike could occur if no deal is reached, likely targeting air defenses and missile sites. The UK Parliament will likely fast-track the removal of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor from the line of succession to prevent further damage to the monarchy's reputation. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The new 15% tariffs will hit a legislative wall at the 150-day mark, forcing a showdown in a divided U.S.

Congress during an election year. In Europe, the "Strategic Autonomy" push will struggle as France and Germany remain divided on nuclear umbrella cooperation and joint defense procurement. A potential summit in Beijing in April between Trump and Xi Jinping may provide a temporary "off-ramp" for the trade war, but only if the U.S. yields on some tech sanctions. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

Long Term (1-5 Years): The "Bricks+" block will likely formalize an alternative financial system to bypass the dollar, driven by fear of U.S. tariff volatility. If the U.S. continues its energy siege tactics, we may see a pivot by Latin American and Caribbean nations toward China for critical infrastructure and security. In the U.S., the precedent of a President ignoring the Supreme Court's spirit regarding trade could lead to a permanent restructuring of executive power, regardless of who wins the 2028 election. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Security:** Allies should prepare for a "burden-shifting" rather than "burden-sharing" U.S. posture. The risk of unintended regional escalation in the Middle East is at its highest since 2024. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Diplomatic:** The "Board of Peace" model suggests that future conflict resolution may happen in ad-hoc, U.S.-led forums rather than through the UN Security Council. ([Source](#))

- **Economic:** Nations should immediately review trade deals signed in 2025 to determine if they were predicated on now-unlawful IEEPA tariffs, as this may provide legal leverage for renegotiation. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Regulatory Compliance:** Large importers should prepare individual refund applications for tariffs paid since April 2025, as the administration has ruled out automatic rebates. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Supply Chain:** Significant "disarray" is expected in manufacturing hubs like Vietnam and India. Investors should prioritize "stable" partners like China in the short term, given the unpredictability of U.S. executive orders. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Investment Opportunity:** The 783% increase in tourism infrastructure in wildlife hotspots (e.g., Serengeti-Mara) offers high yields but faces massive ESG and legal risks as migration routes are blocked. ([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 yester-

day'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 connec-

tions, 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>.