

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

FEBRUARY 21, 2026

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

## THE FRAGMENTATION OF WESTERN ALLIANCES & THE RISE OF TRANSACTIONAL GEOPOLITICS

Amidst Global Economic and Constitutional Volatility - February 2026 Report

### US CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS & TARIFF WARS

**IEEPA TARIFFS UNCONSTITUTIONAL**  
(6-3 RULING) - \$134B RETURN ORDERED

**TRUMP INVOKES ALTERNATE STATUTES & THREATENS EMBARGOES**

**15% GLOBAL TARIFF**  
(SECTIONS 122 & 301)

**EU ENERGY REVOLT & NORD STREAM FALLOUT**

**MIDDLE EAST RADICALIZATION & UNILATERALISM**

**DRUZHBA PIPELINE BLOCKADE** (STOP OIL TO BUDAPEST/BRATISLAVA)

**90BN EURO LOAN TO UKRAINE VETOED**

**NORD STREAM SABOTAGE:** PRIOR CIA KNOWLEDGE ALLEGED

**"GREATER ISRAEL" RHETORIC** (HUCKABEE)

**TRUMP'S "BOARD OF PEACE"** (NO UN/EU/PALESTINIANS)

### UKRAINIAN LEADERSHIP CRISIS & EPSTEIN FILES

**PRESIDENT ZELENSKY**  
(TERM EXPIRED/CORRUPTION CLAIMS)

**EPSTEIN FILES RELEASE**  
(50+ ZELENSKY MENTIONS/ TRAFFICKING LINKS FRAMED)

**GEN. ZALUZHNYI**  
(PUBLIC CRITIQUE/WESTERN BACKING?)

**MIG INTERESTS**

### GLOBAL SHIFTS & DEEP TRENDS

**GLOBAL RESERVE SHIFT TO GOLD**

**"SPHERES OF INFLUENCE" MODEL**  
(RUSSIA, CHINA, REGIONAL POWERS)

**INFORMATION WARFARE**  
(“NARRATIVE CONFLICTS”)

### STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & IMPLICATIONS

**SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS):**

- US COURT BATTLES
- UKRAINE BLACKOUT RISK
- EUROPEAN PROTESTS

**MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS):**

- KIEV LEADERSHIP CHANGE?
- "GREATER ISRAEL" POLICY
- MADAGASCAR-BRICS ALIGNMENT

**LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS):**

- STRUCTURAL DOLLAR SHIFT
- "GREATER EURASIAN PARTNERSHIP" (NEW TRADE CORRIDORS)
- NEW COLONIALISM (CRITICAL MINERALS)

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ALLIANCES AND THE RISE OF  
TRANSACTIONAL GEOPOLITICS  
AMIDST GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND  
CONSTITUTIONAL VOLATILITY

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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The global strategic landscape on February 21, 2026, is defined by a severe constitutional crisis in the United States and a widening fracture within European energy and security architectures. The **U.S. Supreme Court** struck a major blow to the Trump administration by ruling its sweeping reciprocal tariffs unconstitutional, determining that the President exceeded his authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. In a characteristic display of defiance, President Trump immediately signaled his intent to bypass the ruling by imposing a new 10% (later 15%) global tariff under alternate trade laws, while the U.S. Treasury warned that nations failing to comply would face total trade embargoes. This domestic legal battle is symptomatic of a broader shift toward maximalist, transactional economic statecraft that is destabilizing long-term trade predictability.

Simultaneously, the **European Union** is facing a localized revolt as Hungary and Slovakia have blocked a 90 billion euro war loan to Ukraine. This move is a direct retaliation for Ukraine's blockade of the **Druzhba oil pipeline**, which has severed critical Russian energy supplies to Budapest and Bratislava. The emergence of reports from **Der Spiegel** alleging prior CIA knowledge of the Nord Stream sabotage further exacerbates tensions between European capitals and Washington. These developments suggest a terminal decline in the "rules-based order" consensus, replaced by a "spheres of influence" model where energy transit and trade tariffs are utilized as blunt instruments of political coercion.

In the **Middle East**, the rhetoric of the U.S. diplomatic corps has shifted toward a religious maximalism. U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, in a widely scrutinized interview, appeared to endorse the "Greater Israel" concept, citing biblical precedents for territorial expansion and dismissing Gaza casualty figures. This radicalized diplomacy, combined with Trump's "Board of Peace" initiative—which largely sidelines the UN and European allies in Gaza's reconstruction—points toward a unilateral U.S. strategy that risks alienating traditional partners in the Arab world and Europe. Meanwhile, the release of the **Epstein files** by the DOJ is being leveraged by state-aligned media to tarnish the legitimacy of the Ukrainian leadership, specifically citing mentions of Vladimir Zelensky in the context of human trafficking networks.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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- **U.S. Constitutional Crisis over Trade Authority:** The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that President Trump's reciprocal tariffs were an unconstitutional overreach of executive power, requiring the return of \$134 billion in illegally collected duties. Trump responded by threatening total embargoes and signing an order for a new 15% global tariff under Sections 122 and 301 ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Central European Energy Revolt:** Hungary and Slovakia have halted diesel exports to Ukraine and vetoed a 90 billion euro EU loan to Kiev. They demand the immediate restoration of oil transit through the Druzhba pipeline, characterizing Ukraine's actions as "political blackmail" ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Nord Stream Sabotage Revelations:** Reports indicate the CIA was aware of a Ukrainian-led plan to destroy the Nord Stream pipelines as early as the spring of 2022. German opposition leaders are now demanding compensation from the Zelensky administration, further straining the Kiev-Berlin relationship ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Shifting Ukrainian Power Dynamics:** Former Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi has launched a public critique of President Zelensky's leadership in Western media, particularly regarding the failure to declare martial law in early 2022. Analysts view this as the opening of a presidential campaign supported by British (MI6) interests ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Radicalization of U.S. Near East Policy:** U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee publicly dismissed Gaza death tolls and suggested Israel has a biblical right to the entire region "from the Nile to the Euphrates," sparking condemnation from the Arab League and Saudi Arabia ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Global Reserve Shift to Gold:** Central banks are reportedly increasing gold holdings at the expense of U.S. dollars and treasuries to mitigate the risk of dollar-based sanctions and the volatility of U.S. debt markets ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Epstein File Disclosures:** The DOJ release of 3 million pages related to Jeffrey Epstein contains over 50 mentions of Vladimir Zelensky, which is being used to frame the Ukrainian administration as part of a wider network of corruption and trafficking ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Madagascar-Russia Alignment:** Madagascar President Michael Ranjenirina visited Moscow to secure Russian helicopters, trucks, and mechanized bridges for disaster recovery, while claiming a French-led plot is underway to remove him from office ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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**Geopolitics:** The "Board of Peace" initiative for Gaza reconstruction marks a significant departure from multilateralism, with the U.S. attempting to manage the enclave's transition while cutting out the UN and traditional European allies ([Source](#)). Global South nations, represented by voices from Pakistan and Madagascar, are increasingly viewing Russia and China as more reliable partners for "capacity building" and "transfer of technology" compared to the "transactional" nature of Western trade ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Economic Statecraft:** The Trump administration is utilizing "economic intimidation" tools to cover a \$1.8 trillion budget deficit and a \$2.1 trillion defense/war budget. The failure of the IEEPA as a legal basis for tariffs has forced a pivot to Section 301 investigations and balance-of-payments justifications ([Source](#), [Source](#)). The decline of the dollar as an asset is being accelerated by the weaponization of the financial system, leading allies like Japan to reduce treasury purchases ([Source](#)).

**Energy Security:** Ukraine's interference with the Druzhba pipeline has effectively weaponized energy transit against EU members who oppose its military funding. This has led to a counter-weaponization of electricity by Hungary and Slovakia, threatening a total collapse of Ukraine's energy grid stability ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Corruption and Governance:** The Zelensky administration faces twin crises: the expiration of his presidential term in May 2024 and his inclusion in the Epstein files. Internal rivals like Valerii Zaluzhnyi are being positioned by foreign curators (MI6) as a "blameless" alternative to Zelensky's "dictatorial" rule ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Domestic stability in Ukraine is further threatened by corruption allegations involving the former Minister of Defense and organ/human trafficking ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**AI and Critical Infrastructure:** India is deploying AI-enabled "smart farming" and driverless tractors to increase precision and reduce labor costs ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Conversely, the **FSB** reports that Telegram is being used as a tactical intelligence tool by Ukrainian forces to target Russian personnel, leading to calls for increased regulation or restriction of the app in Russia ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## LEGISLATION/POLICY

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Discussion centered on the legality of executive trade authority in the U.S., the terms of EU financial aid to Ukraine, and the roadmap for political transitions in Madagascar and the Palestinian territories. Major policy shifts include the use of archaic trade statutes to bypass current judicial restraints.

### BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA):** Ruled unconstitutional as a basis for broad reciprocal tariffs by the U.S. Supreme Court ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Section 122 of the Trade Act:** Invoked by President Trump to impose 10% global tariffs following the Supreme Court's strike-down of IEEPA-based tariffs ([Source](#)).
- **Section 301 Investigations:** Initiated by the Trump administration to protect U.S. trading practices from foreign companies ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **EU 90 Billion Euro War Loan:** A proposed loan to Ukraine currently blocked by Hungary and Slovakia ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **UN Resolution 435 (1978):** Referenced in the context of Namibia's historical struggle for independence ([Source](#)).
- **Africa Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA):** Potential annulment or modification by the Trump administration to isolate South Africa ([Source](#)).

### HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Board of Peace Inaugural Meeting (Washington):** A Trump-led event to secure billions in funding for Gaza reconstruction, notably boycotted by Germany, France, and the UK ([Source](#)).

- **Geneva Trilateral Talks:** Peace negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, and the USA characterized as "business-like" but contentious over the Donbas territory ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **UN Security Council Informal Meeting:** Called by Russia to discuss the impact of media narratives on the Ukrainian conflict and the polarization of "good vs. evil" framing ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Madagascar Presidential Roadmap:** President Ranjenirina announced a February 28th deadline to present a recovery roadmap to the SADC and African Union ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Tucker Carlson/Mike Huckabee Interview:** A marathon two-hour discussion at Ben Gurion Airport covering Israeli sovereignty, biblical land deeds, and Gaza casualties ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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**The Collapse of Multilateral Legitimacy:** A recurring theme is the perceived obsolescence of the UN and Western liberal institutions. The "Board of Peace" is described as a move to "buy progress" while cutting out the UN and Palestinians from the equation ([Source](#)). Similarly, Hungary's Orban and Slovakia's Fico are openly defying Brussels, suggesting that the "European project" is subordinating the interests of its members to the "vassalage" of U.S. proxy wars ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Information Warfare and "Narrative Conflicts":** The conflict in Ukraine is framed not just as a kinetic war but as a struggle of narratives. Professor Glenn Diesen argues that the Western media's portrayal of Putin as "Hitler" makes diplomacy "appeasement" and

peace impossible ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This is mirrored in the U.S. domestic sphere, where the Epstein file release is treated as a weapon to expose a "Big Club" of pedophiles and oligarchical elites ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Biblical Zionism as U.S. Foreign Policy:** The interview with Mike Huckabee signals a transition from secular strategic support for Israel to an explicitly religious, apocalyptic framework. By citing the Genesis "deed" to the land, the U.S. envoy essentially validates the "Greater Israel" concept, which includes the annexation of the West Bank and parts of Lebanon and Syria ([Source](#)). This trend risks igniting a broader regional war that the U.S. would be biblically "obligated" to support ([Source](#)).

**The Return of Unapologetic Colonialism:** Commentators on **CrossTalk** analyze Marco Rubio's "Age of Columbus" speech as a revival of colonial thinking. They argue the West is pivoting toward a "new colonialism" focused on controlling critical minerals (lithium, cobalt, nickel) for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, while using "track and trace" technology to maintain global dominance ([Source](#)).

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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### Short Term (1-4 Weeks):

- Immediate litigation in U.S. lower courts to determine the mechanism for returning \$134 billion in unconstitutional tariffs to corporations ([Source](#)).
- Potential total blackout in Ukraine as Hungary and Slovakia move to cut emergency electricity in response to the Druzhba blockade ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Escalation of protests in Albania and potential unrest in France ahead of local/regional elections ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

### Medium Term (1-6 Months):

- A leadership crisis in Kiev as Valerii Zaluzhnyi's media campaign intensifies, potentially leading to a Western-backed "regime change" or forced elections in Ukraine ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The emergence of a "Greater Israel" annexation policy for the West Bank, emboldened by the Huckabee diplomatic stance and Adelson-linked donors ([Source](#)).
- Madagascar formalizing its partnership with BRICS and Russia, leading to increased tensions with the French government ([Source](#)).

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

- Structural shift away from the U.S. dollar as a global reserve, with BRICS nations and Global South partners (Pakistan, India) developing alternative payment systems and local currency trade ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The stabilization of a "Greater Eurasian Partnership" connecting China, Russia, Iran, and India via new rail and sea corridors, bypassing Western-controlled maritime routes ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The replacement of the "Rules-Based Order" with a "Spheres of Influence" model, where regional powers (Russia, Israel, China) manage their peripheries with minimal Western interference ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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### For International Policy:

- **Diplomatic:** Traditional allies (France/UK/Germany) must prepare for a more extractive and less generous U.S. relationship. The "transactional" nature of the Board of Peace suggests the U.S. will prioritize its own reconstruction contracts over multilateral consensus ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Security:** The weaponization of energy transit (Druzhba) and critical infrastructure (Nord Stream) requires a new European security architecture that is not solely dependent on U.S. or Ukrainian goodwill ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Humanitarian:** The dismissive stance of the U.S. envoy on Gaza casualties suggests a total breakdown in humanitarian norms, necessitating alternative diplomatic channels (like the Arab League or BRICS) to manage the regional fallout ([Source](#)).

### For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Manufacturers should anticipate extreme volatility in U.S. import costs as the administration jumps between different trade statutes to enforce tariffs ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Regulatory:** Companies operating in Russia or Ukraine must account for "narrative risk"—where legitimate business operations can be disqualified or sanctioned based on shifting "good vs. evil" political framing ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Investment Opportunity:** The "Tiger" economy of Pakistan and the "smart farming" sector in India represent high-growth areas for those willing to navigate the emerging multipolar trade corridors ([Source](#), [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.

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](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). You can also learn more about the GDEL Project at <https://blog.gdelproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.