

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

PRESSTV

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

A GLOBAL ORDER IN FRAGILE TRANSITION: TRUMP'S UNFULFILLED PEACE MANDATE FACES LEGAL DEFEATS, REGIONAL REBELLIONS, AND ENERGY FRAGMENTATIONS

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A GLOBAL ORDER IN FRAGILE
TRANSITION: TRUMP'S
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FRAGMENTATIONS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 23-24, 2026, marks a period of profound systemic stress for the "Pax Americana" as the second Trump administration enters its second year. The administration's signature "Peace through Strength" doctrine is currently failing to deliver on its primary campaign promises, most notably the [pledge to end the Ukraine war within 24 hours](#), which remains unfulfilled one year into the term. Simultaneously, the administration's domestic authority suffered a landmark blow as the [Supreme Court overturned the lynchpin of Trump's tariff policy](#), ruling that the executive branch lacks the constitutional authority to levy duties without Congressional approval. This decision creates a potential trillion-dollar hole in the federal budget and signals a significant weakening of the President's international leverage.

In the Middle East, a regional "Cold War" is rapidly heating up. Iran is demanding international accountability for "Daesh-style" terrorist attacks in January 2026 that resulted in nearly [3,000 fatalities](#), which Tehran attributes to US and Israeli instigation. In Iraq, the political process has reached a stalemate as candidate [Nouri al-Maliki refuses to withdraw](#) from the premiership race despite explicit threats from Washington to cut financial support and impose sanctions. The broader region is also reacting with alarm to inflammatory rhetoric from the US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, regarding the [expansion of Israeli territory](#), further isolating the US from its traditional Arab partners.

The European theater is increasingly fragmented. Hungary and Slovakia have transitioned from passive dissent to active obstruction, [threatening to block EU sanctions on Russia](#) and suspend energy exports to Ukraine in retaliation for the disruption of the Druzhba oil pipeline. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, the state's attempt to criminalize pro-Palestine activism faced a major setback as the [High Court ruled the ban on Palestine Action unlawful](#). Across the globe, from the abduction of the Venezuelan president to the assassination of Mexican drug lords, the mechanisms of traditional statecraft are being replaced by hybrid warfare and legal combat, suggesting a world moving toward a "Hobbesian" state of might-makes-right.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Executive and Constitutional Crisis in the United States

- The Supreme Court ruled that the [President lacks unbounded authority to levy tariffs](#), necessitating Congressional approval for all taxes and duties.
- The ruling implies a massive [refund of \\$130 billion](#) in collected tariff revenue to importers, destabilizing federal fiscal projections.
- The administration's credibility is further strained by the [continued release of Epstein-related files](#), which analysts suggest are being used as a geopolitical distraction from domestic policy failures.

The Iran-Iraq Resistance Bloc vs. Maximum Pressure

- Iran has entered indirect talks with the US in Geneva but maintains that [uranium enrichment remains a non-negotiable](#) matter of national dignity.
- The Iranian military warns of a [decisive response to any military conspiracy](#), pointing to recent US naval build-ups in the Persian Gulf.
- In Iraq, the "Coordination Framework" maintains its support for Maliki, viewing US interference as a [violation of national sovereignty](#).

Fragmentation of the Western Coalition in Europe

- Hungary and Slovakia are [vetoing a 90 billion euro loan](#) for Kyiv, blaming Ukraine for energy supply outages.

- Denmark and Greenland have [rejected a US offer of a naval hospital ship](#), viewing it as a pretext for deeper US intervention in the Arctic.
- France has [banned the US Ambassador](#) from meeting government officials after he failed to respond to a summons regarding inflammatory social media posts.

Escalation of Conflict in Central and South Asia

- Pakistan launched [cross-border airstrikes into Afghanistan](#), targeting TTP and Daesh positions, leading to civilian casualties and heightened border tensions.
- The Mexican government, reportedly using US intelligence, [killed CJNG leader "El Mencho"](#), sparking retaliatory violence across eight Mexican states.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Energy Security & Global Supply Chains

The global energy market is under extreme duress due to the [potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz](#), which carries 20% of the world's petroleum. Analysts warn that a US-Iran conflict would send oil prices to [\\$300 per barrel](#). In Europe, the weaponization of the [Druzhba pipeline](#) has forced Hungary to blackmail Ukraine into restoring flows by blocking EU aid.

Rule of Law & Legal Warfare (Lawfare)

The use of the judiciary to challenge executive power is a dominant theme. In the UK, the [High Court quashed the designation](#) of Palestine Action as a terrorist organization, citing a "disproportionate attack on free speech." Conversely, the US administration is accused of [abducting Venezuelan President Maduro](#), a move Caracas labels an illegal

military action under the guise of legal process.

Terrorism & National Security The definition of terrorism is being contested globally. Iran is seeking [justice at the UN](#) for the 2,500 security forces and civilians killed in January 2026, while the UK government attempts to appeal a ruling that [reverses its own anti-terror legislation](#) against direct-action groups. Russia has responded to the expiration of the New START treaty by [prioritizing its nuclear triad](#) to ensure global strategic balance.

Economic Security & Financial Resilience The US "Maximum Pressure" campaign is hitting significant hurdles as [China moves to create a global reserve currency](#) to bypass US dollar dominance. Internal US economic stability is also at risk, with [stagnant job markets and rising healthcare costs](#) fueling domestic discontent, which the administration seeks to mitigate through populist trade rhetoric.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Governance on February 23-24 was characterized by judicial pushback against executive overreach and the collapse of international treaties. Key legal debates centered on the separation of powers in the US and the legality of domestic counter-terrorism applications in the UK.

BILLS & POLICIES DISCUSSED

- **US Baseline Tariff Policy (Section 301/232 revisions):** Following the SC ruling, Trump proposed a [new 15% baseline tariff](#), though its legality remains dubious without Congressional consent.

- **UK Terrorism Act 2000 (Prescription Orders):** The High Court scrutinized the [unlawful prescription](#) of Palestine Action, challenging the government's power to label non-violent groups as terrorists.
- **EU 20th Sanctions Package:** Currently [blocked by Hungary](#) pending the resolution of the Druzhba oil pipeline dispute.
- **UK Legacy Bill:** A controversial piece of legislation attempting to **shield British soldiers** from prosecution for crimes during the "Troubles" in Ireland, currently facing [international condemnation](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS

- **UN Human Rights Council (Geneva):** Iran's deputy foreign minister [addressed the council](#) regarding US/Israeli crimes; Venezuela demanded the release of President Maduro; Iran's Gharibi discussed the [fabrication of casualty numbers](#) by Western media.
- **Geneva Nuclear Talks:** Indirect negotiations between Iran and the US (mediated by Oman/EU) focused on [uranium enrichment rights](#).
- **Palestine Solidarity Trial (London):** Trial began for [Ben Jamal and Chris Nineham](#) regarding the January 18th march restrictions.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Erosion of International Law and the "Hobbesian" Transition There is a growing consensus among analysts that the world has entered a [Hobbesian state](#) where might-makes-right and international law serves only as a "symbolic" tool for the powerful. This is evidenced by the US ignoring the sovereignty of [Venezuela](#) and [Iraq](#), while also disregarding

the findings of the UN and ICC when they conflict with the "Board of Peace" (derisively termed the "Board of Genocide" by critics). The [expiration of the New START treaty](#) and the failure to engage in new arms control suggests a return to an unrestricted nuclear arms race.

The Failure of the "24-Hour" Peace Doctrine One year into the Trump term, the campaign promise to [end the Ukraine war in one day](#) has been exposed as a rhetorical device rather than a strategic reality. The conflict has instead mutated into a [privatized war effort](#) that benefits the US tech sector (Palantir, SpaceX) while the front lines remain static. This trend suggests that Washington may prefer a "managed conflict" over actual peace, utilizing Ukraine as a live testing ground for [drone and AI technology](#).

The "Illusion of Knowledge" and Information Warfare A recurring theme in the day's reporting is the [death of expertise](#) and the rise of headline-driven policy. The NPR "April Fools" experiment and the viral spread of fake tweets about explosions at the White House illustrate a public increasingly susceptible to [disinformation](#). Governments are exploiting this by [fabricating casualty figures](#) (according to Tehran) or using "political theater" like the release of the Epstein files to mask significant policy shifts.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a [constitutional crisis in Iraq](#) if the parliament attempts to elect Maliki, potentially leading to US sanctions on the Iraqi Central Bank and a collapse of the Iraqi Dinar. In the UK, the [February 20th hearing](#) on Palestine Action will determine if the group can resume operations immediately, likely triggering a surge in

direct-action protests against Elbit Systems. A "muddy season" offensive by Russia in [Zaporizhzhia](#) is imminent.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The US Supreme Court ruling will force a [realignment of US trade policy](#). Trump will be forced to negotiate with a divided Congress for tariff authority, likely leading to legislative gridlock. As the [Ukraine war drags into its fifth year](#), European fatigue will reach a breaking point, potentially leading to a "separate peace" initiated by the Visegrád Group (Hungary/Slovakia) with Moscow.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A structural shift toward [BRICS and a Chinese global reserve currency](#) will accelerate as the US continues to weaponize the dollar. The "International North-South Transportation Corridor" ([INSTC](#)), connecting Russia to India via Iran, will become the primary alternative to the Suez Canal, permanently reducing Western economic leverage in Eurasia. The [reunification of Ireland](#) may enter a formal referendum phase as Brexit's economic failures make the UK union unsustainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Security Architecture:** Western powers must prepare for a [nuclear arms race](#) without verification regimes following the total collapse of START and INF treaties.
- **Diplomatic Realism:** The US must acknowledge that ["Maximum Pressure" has reached diminishing returns](#), as Iran has built sufficient domestic and regional resilience to withstand prolonged isolation.

- **Coalition Management:** Failure to address [European energy insecurity](#) will lead to the collapse of the anti-Russia sanctions regime within the EU.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Disruption in the [Strait of Hormuz](#) is no longer a tail-risk but a primary strategic concern; diversification away from East Asian manufacturing reliant on Gulf oil is advised.
- **Regulatory Volatility:** The US Supreme Court's [tariff ruling](#) creates a window for legal claims by importers for billions in refunds; corporations should audit 2024-2025 customs payments.
- **Operational Safety:** Direct-action groups like [Palestine Action](#) are "emboldened" by legal victories; defense and aerospace firms in the UK and Europe should expect increased facility incursions.

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 Project at <https://blog.gdelproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.