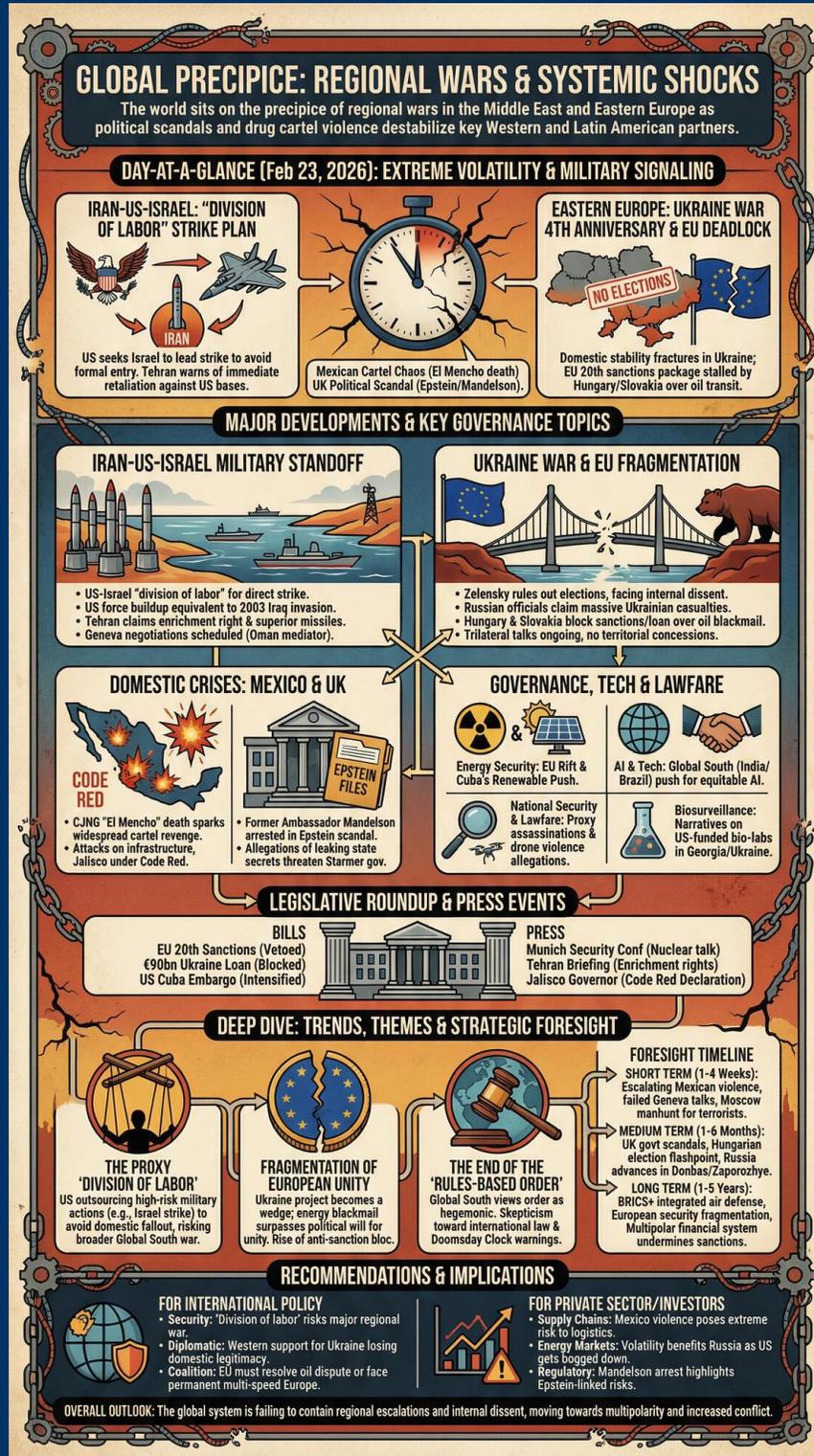


# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE WORLD SITS ON THE  
PRECIPICE OF REGIONAL WARS IN  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND EASTERN  
EUROPE AS POLITICAL SCANDALS  
AND DRUG CARTEL VIOLENCE  
DESTABILIZE KEY WESTERN AND  
LATIN AMERICAN PARTNERS.

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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February 23, 2026, marks a day of extreme geopolitical volatility, characterized by a transition from "diplomatic whispering" to overt military signaling. The primary focus is a reported [division of labor](#) between the United States and Israel regarding a potential strike on Iran. Washington is reportedly seeking to assign the direct mission of striking Iran to Tel Aviv to avoid formal entry into the conflict while providing [offensive and defensive backing](#). This occurs against the backdrop of upcoming negotiations in Geneva, which Tehran warns will be fruitless if military pressure continues. The Iranian leadership has explicitly stated that any attack on its soil will result in immediate [retaliation against US bases](#) and assets in the Persian Gulf.

In Eastern Europe, the conflict in Ukraine reaches its fourth anniversary with no path

toward resolution. Domestic stability in Ukraine is reportedly fracturing as President Zelensky [rules out national elections](#), citing the necessity of wartime focus, while facing allegations of [brutal force mobilization](#) and corruption. Simultaneously, the European Union's attempt to pass a 20th sanctions package against Russia has stalled due to a [veto by Hungary](#) and Slovakia. These nations are leveraging their position to demand the restoration of Russian oil transit through the [Drushba pipeline](#), which they claim has been cut off by Kiev as "political blackmail."

Domestic crises in Mexico and the United Kingdom further complicate the international landscape. The death of Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho," has sparked a [wave of chaos](#) across Mexico, resulting in the deaths of at least 25 National Guard officers and widespread civil unrest. In London, the arrest of former ambassador Peter Mandelson in connection with the [Jeffrey Epstein files](#) threatens the stability of the Starmer government, with allegations involving the [leaking of state secrets](#). These disparate events suggest a global system where traditional power structures are failing to contain regional escalations and internal dissent.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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### Iran-US-Israel Military Standoff

- A knowledgeable military source reports a new "division of labor" where Israel will [lead a direct strike](#) on Iran to shield Washington from being cast as the primary initiator.
- The US has [amassed military forces](#) in the region equivalent to the 2003 buildup during the invasion of Iraq.

- Tehran maintains its right to [peaceful uranium enrichment](#) (up to 20% for medical research) while warning that its [missiles have superiority](#) over Israeli airspace.
- Negotiations are scheduled for Thursday in [Geneva](#), mediated by Oman.

### Ukraine War Fourth Anniversary and Internal Crisis

- President Zelensky has [refused national elections](#), claiming they are impossible during a war, despite his term having expired in May 2024.
- Russian officials claim Ukraine has lost over [1.5 million combatants](#) since the conflict began, with 520,000 in 2025 alone.
- Reports from within Ukraine describe [social disharmony](#) and violent conscription tactics used by the government.
- Trilateral talks between Moscow, Washington, and Kiev are [ongoing](#), though Zelensky remains unresponsive to territorial concession demands.

### EU Sanctions Deadlock

- Hungary and Slovakia have [blocked the 20th sanctions package](#) and a 90 billion euro loan to Kiev.
- The dispute centers on the [Drushba pipeline](#); Budapest claims Kiev is withholding oil to influence upcoming Hungarian elections.
- Slovakia has halted [emergency electricity supplies](#) to Ukraine in response.

### Mexican National Security Crisis

- The killing of CJNG leader "El Mencho" in a joint US-Mexico operation has triggered [revenge attacks](#) across the country.

- Cartel members have [attacked airports](#), state penitentiaries, and military bases.
- A "Code Red" has been declared in Jalisco, with [schools suspended](#) and public transport halted.

### UK Political Instability (Epstein/Mandelson Scandal)

- Former UK Ambassador Peter Mandelson was arrested for [misconduct in public office](#) related to Jeffrey Epstein.
- Evidence suggests Mandelson passed [classified information](#) to Epstein, possibly involving tax policy and state secrets.
- The scandal has forced the resignation of Prime Minister Starmer's [chief of staff](#).

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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### Energy Security

- The [unilateral shutdown](#) of Russian oil supplies by Ukraine has created a rift within the EU, pitting Hungary and Slovakia against the European Commission.
- Iran claims it needs [nuclear energy](#) for civilian purposes and medical isotope production, citing its research reactor built by Americans before the revolution.
- Cuba is accelerating its move to [renewable energy](#) (currently 12-16%) to counter the tightening US blockade on fuel supplies.

### AI & Technology Policy

- India and Brazil are positioning themselves as [pillars of the Global South](#) at an AI summit in New Delhi.
- President Lula de Silva and PM Modi emphasize the use of AI through [open infrastructure](#) to benefit developing nations rather than unipolar powers.

## National Security & Lawfare

- The Russian FSB claims to have uncovered a [British connection](#) in the attempted assassination of General Vladimir Alexeyev.
- Western actors are accused of using [Ukrainian special services](#) as proxies for high-level assassinations in Moscow.
- In Israel, the Arab community reports a [surge of violence](#) involving drone-dropped grenades, accusing the government of [deliberate inaction](#) to destabilize the population.

## Biosurveillance / Bio-Defense

- Transcripts highlight a recurring narrative regarding [US-funded bio-labs](#) in Georgia and Ukraine.
- Whistleblowers claim these labs were used for [illegal research](#) on dangerous pathogens under the guise of peaceful study.
- The Russian Ministry of Defense alleges these facilities are [components of biological weapons](#) programs targeted at specific ethnicities.

## Trade and Strategic Alignments

- India and Brazil are pushing for reforms in the [UN Security Council](#) and the IMF to better represent the Global South.
- BRICS nations are increasingly [using local currencies](#) to bypass Western-controlled financial institutions.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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Legislative and policy discussions today focused heavily on the [20th EU sanctions package](#) against Russia and the [US blockade of Cuba](#). The EU's efforts to reach a

unanimous decision on sanctions and a 90 billion euro loan to Ukraine have been [effectively paralyzed](#) by internal opposition. Meanwhile, the Trump administration's "War on Drugs" policy has expanded into [kinetic strikes](#) against alleged smuggling vessels in the Caribbean.

### BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **EU 20th Sanctions Package:** Proposed measures to ban European companies from servicing ships carrying Russian [oil, gas, and coal](#). Vetoed by Hungary and Slovakia.
- **90 Billion Euro Ukraine Loan:** A proposed financial aid package for Kiev, currently [blocked by Budapest](#) pending oil transit resolutions.
- **Cuba Embargo/Sanctions:** Intensified US policy targeting third-country [trade with Cuba](#), described by the Cuban ambassador as a violation of the UN Charter.

### HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Munich Security Conference Post-Analysis:** Discussions on the "Munich mindset" where European leaders are [musing about nuclear weapons](#) to counter Russia.
- **Tehran Foreign Ministry Briefing:** Foreign Minister Arakchi confirms that Iran will [guarantee no nuclear weapons](#) in exchange for recognized enrichment rights and the removal of sanctions.
- **Jalisco Governor Press Conference:** Declaration of a [Code Red](#) following the death of El Mencho.

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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### The Proxy "Division of Labor"

A significant shift in US foreign policy is emerging under the Trump administration, characterized by "outsourcing" high-risk military actions. The reported strategy to have Israel conduct the primary [strike on Iran](#) suggests a desire to achieve strategic objectives (regime change or nuclear degradation) without the domestic political fallout of another "forever war." However, analysts warn that this is a [transparent maneuver](#) that the Global South will still interpret as US-led aggression, potentially leading to a broader war against the [entire BRICS bloc](#).

### **The Fragmentation of European Unity**

The "Ukraine Project" is no longer a source of cohesion but a wedge driving the EU apart. Hungary and Slovakia are no longer just dissenting voices; they are actively [retaliating against Kiev](#) and Brussels. The use of [energy blackmail](#)—allegedly by both Ukraine (oil) and the dissenting states (electricity)—indicates that the economic costs of the war have surpassed the political will for unity. The emergence of [Greece and Malta](#) as opponents to maritime sanctions suggests that the economic pain is spreading to the EU's periphery.

### **The End of the "Rules-Based Order"**

Across the transcripts, there is a pervasive skepticism toward international law. Cuban and Iranian officials repeatedly state that the US [does not care](#) about UN votes or the rule of law. This sentiment is echoed by David Swanson, who notes that the [Doomsday Clock](#) is closer to midnight than ever before. The "rules-based order" is being reframed by the Global South as a [hegemonic scheme](#), with nations like India and Brazil seeking to build an alternative [multipolar world](#).

## **STRATEGIC FORESIGHT**

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

- Expect an immediate escalation of [cartel violence](#) in Mexico as the CJNG leadership structure reorganizes and retaliates against the National Guard.
- The Geneva talks on Thursday are likely to fail or result in only [token strikes](#) and prisoner exchanges, as neither the US nor Iran is willing to back down from core enrichment/sanction demands.
- A "manhunt" in Moscow following the [car blast](#) that killed a policeman may lead to further accusations of Ukrainian/Western-sponsored terrorism.

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

- The Starmer government in the UK faces a potential [avalanche of scandals](#) as more names from the Mandelson/Epstein files are released, potentially leading to a leadership challenge.
- The Hungarian election in seven weeks will be a [geopolitical flashpoint](#); if Orban loses, the EU's anti-war opposition may collapse, but if he wins, the block will face permanent paralysis.
- Russia is expected to [liberate the last of the Donbas](#) and move toward a siege of Zaporozhye City by the end of the year.

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

- The Global South (BRICS+) will likely finalize an [integrated air defense](#) and electronic warfare system involving Russia, China, and Iran, permanently closing the window for Western military intervention in the Middle East.

- European security may [fragment into nuclear-capable](#) regional alliances if the US continues its "unpredictable" withdrawal from traditional NATO commitments.
- The transition to a [multipolar financial system](#) using local currencies will likely reduce the effectiveness of Western sanctions as a tool of statecraft.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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### For International Policy:

- **Security:** The "division of labor" strategy for Iran [highly increases the risk](#) of miscalculation and a regional war that could draw in Russia and China.
- **Diplomatic:** The Western position on Ukraine is [losing legitimacy](#) among its own populations, who increasingly favor funding social infrastructure over weapons.
- **Coalition Cohesion:** The EU must find a way to resolve the [oil transit dispute](#) or risk a permanent "multi-speed Europe" where Eastern members defect from central policy.

### For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chains:** The [violence in Mexico](#) poses an extreme risk to logistics and manufacturing, particularly in Jalisco and near major airports.
- **Energy Markets:** Oil prices are expected to [benefit Russia](#) as tensions in the Middle East drive volatility and the US becomes "bogged down."
- **Regulatory/Compliance:** The [Peter Mandelson arrest](#) highlights significant risks for investment banks and public relations firms associated with individuals named in the Epstein files.

## 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 GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet

Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.