

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CURRENTTIME

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: ENTERING THE FIFTH YEAR

Report Summary on the Conflict's Impact, Social Fragmentation, and Emerging Threats

UKRAINE: RESILIENCE & INTERNAL SABOTAGE



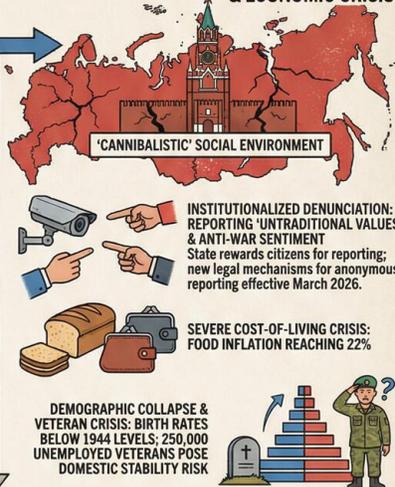
PROTRACTED WAR OF ATTRITION

NEW WAVE OF INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS: TARGETING POLICE STATIONS
Coordinated explosions in Nikolaev, Dnipro, Lviv. Shift toward domestic destabilization and "law enforcement lawfare".

88%
PUBLIC REMAINS RESILIENT, RECOGNIZES INFRASTRUCTURE STRIKES AS SPIRIT-BREAKING, HIGH HOPES FOR EU INTEGRATION

DOMESTIC STABILITY & SOCIAL ORDER
SEARCH FOR 30,000 MISSING PERSONS: CENTRAL POINT OF SOCIAL COHESION

RUSSIA: SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION & ECONOMIC CRISIS



'CANNIBALISTIC' SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

INSTITUTIONALIZED DENUNCIATION: REPORTING 'UNTRADITIONAL VALUES' & ANTI-WAR SENTIMENT
State rewards citizens for reporting; new legal mechanisms for anonymous reporting effective March 2026.

SEVERE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS: FOOD INFLATION REACHING 22%

DEMOGRAPHIC COLLAPSE & VETERAN CRISIS: BIRTH RATES BELOW 1944 LEVELS; 250,000 UNEMPLOYED VETERANS POSE DOMESTIC STABILITY RISK

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS & TRENDS

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|  <p>SYSTEMIC TARGETING Campaign to destabilize Ukrainian internal order through bombings of police facilities.</p> |  <p>RUSSIAN DEMOGRAPHIC & LABOR CRISIS Historic low birth rates, mass exodus of young citizens, significant "grey zone" of idle veterans.</p> |  <p>ELITE EVASION & SMUGGLING High-profile elites import luxury items via Central Asian intermediaries, bypassing sanctions.</p> |  <p>STALLED RECONSTRUCTION MARIUPOL: ONE-THIRD OF CENTER UNBUILT; FOCUS ON COMMERCIAL HOUSING, NOT DISPLACED RESIDENTS.</p> |
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KEY GOVERNANCE & TRENDS

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|  <p>ECONOMIC SECURITY Russian war economy unsustainable; increased taxes, nationalization; state stops publishing wage data.</p> |  <p>DOMESTIC STABILITY Social order fracturing; older generation supports war, youth anxious/pacifist; Ukraine focused on missing persons.</p> |  <p>ELITE POLITICS Children of Russian officials' wealth skyrockets; figures like Dmitry Medvedev grow political and financial power.</p> |  <p>REGIONAL INFLUENCE Central Asia as arena for transnational repression; Tajik opposition leaders kidnapped; Kazakhstan faces pressure.</p> |
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STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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|  <p>SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS) Sharp increase in Ukrainian domestic security measures; Russian high-profile "purge" of independent online content creators.</p> |  <p>MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS) Russia faces localized protests due to food inflation; EU finalizes 90-billion-euro loan to Ukraine.</p> |  <p>LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS) Russian demographic collapse leads to permanent labor shortage; Ukraine's recovery depends on repatriating missing citizens over a decade.</p> |
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RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- International: Increase surveillance of Central Asian logistics, diplomatic pressure on extradition, support decentralized energy in Ukraine.
- Private Sector: Supply chain risk due to Russian oil strikes, regulatory compliance in Central Asia, investment opportunity in decentralized energy.

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THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR ENTERS
FIFTH YEAR AMIDST RUSSIAN
DOMESTIC SOCIAL
FRAGMENTATION AND RISING
INTERNAL SABOTAGE IN UKRAINE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

On the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the conflict has transitioned into a protracted war of attrition that is profoundly reshaping the social and economic fabric of both nations. While Ukrainian leadership reflects on the successful defense of Kyiv and the [Battle of Hostomel](#) in 2022, the present reality is defined by a new wave of internal security threats. A series of [coordinated explosions](#) targeting police stations across Nikolaev, Dnipro, and Lviv suggests a shift toward domestic destabilization and "law enforcement lawfare" within Ukrainian borders. Despite these pressures, the Ukrainian public remains resilient, with 88% recognizing that the ongoing strikes on infrastructure are intended to break their spirit, yet [maintaining high hopes](#) for eventual EU integration.

In Russia, the "new normal" is characterized by a "cannibalistic" social and economic environment. The state is aggressively institutionalizing a [culture of denunciation](#), rewarding citizens for reporting on "untraditional values" or anti-war sentiment, while the elite continue to evade sanctions through complex [international smuggling networks](#) involving Central Asian intermediaries. Economically, the Russian population is facing a severe cost-of-living crisis, with food inflation reaching 22% and a demographic collapse that has seen [birth rates drop](#) below 1944 levels. The return of 250,000 unemployed veterans presents a growing risk to domestic stability, as the state struggles to integrate traumatized former combatants into a society increasingly fragmented by age and ideology.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Systemic Targeting of Ukrainian Law Enforcement:** A series of bombings and "terrorist acts" targeted police facilities across Ukraine on the anniversary, resulting in [one officer killed](#) and dozens of injuries. Officials characterize this as a [deliberate campaign](#) to destabilize the system of internal order.
- **Russian Demographic and Labor Crisis:** Russia's birth rate in 2024 has hit historic lows, comparable to [World War II levels](#), compounded by the [exodus of up to 1 million](#) young citizens. Simultaneously, roughly [250,000 war veterans](#) remain unemployed, creating a significant "grey zone" of potentially volatile, idle individuals.

- **Institutionalization of Denunciations:** The Russian government is introducing new legal mechanisms, effective March 1, 2026, to [facilitate anonymous reporting](#) on media and individuals who violate "traditional spiritual and moral values." This marks a return to Soviet-style social control.
- **Sanction Evasion through Central Asia:** High-profile Russian elites, such as Alexey Repik, are successfully importing luxury items and [valuable artworks](#) (including Dali and Renoir) by routing shipments through [Uzbekistan and Turkey](#), highlighting the limitations of Western maritime and trade sanctions.
- **Stalled Reconstruction in Occupied Mariupol:** Despite Kremlin propaganda, satellite data reveals that [one-third of Mariupol's center](#) remains unbuilt as of late 2025. Restoration efforts have shifted toward [commercial housing projects](#) rather than replacing the homes of displaced residents.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Economic Security & Financial Resilience

The Russian war economy is becoming increasingly unsustainable. The state has been forced to shift the financial burden of the war to the [private sector and population](#) through increased taxes and nationalization of assets. Real-world consequences for citizens include a [53% decrease in pork consumption](#) due to soaring prices and a [22% surge](#) in overall food costs since early 2026. The Russian government's decision to [stop publishing data](#) on public sector wages further obscures the severity of the fiscal crisis.

Domestic Stability & Social Order Social order in Russia is fracturing along

generational lines. The [older generation \(born in the 1950s\)](#) remains the primary support base for the war, while the youth are increasingly anxious, [pacifist-leaning](#), and focused on individual survival. In Ukraine, the search for [30,000 missing persons](#) has become a central point of social cohesion and grief, while the government struggles to manage the [trauma of thousands](#) who survived Russian captivity and torture.

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics The wealth of the children of Russian officials has skyrocketed, earning over [10 billion rubles](#) in the last three years, largely through banking interest and state-linked ventures. Meanwhile, figures like Dmitry Medvedev have seen their [political and financial influence](#) grow, with funds linked to him amassing a record 86 billion rubles for private development projects in Crimea and Krasnodar.

Regional Influence & Power Projection

Central Asian states continue to be a primary arena for [transnational repression](#). Tajik opposition leaders are being [kidnapped from Turkey](#) and forcibly returned to Tajikistan, while Kazakhstan faces internal pressure over its [investigations into activists](#) and "undesirable" religious figures who oppose Russian aggression.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity in Russia is focused on tightening social control and managing the migrant population to bolster the war effort. In Central Asia, governance shifts are aimed at consolidating executive power over security services.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Russian Traditional Values Media Amendment:** Effective March 2026, allows for the [revocation of film licenses](#) and social media content removal based on "traditional values" violations.
- **Russian Migrant Youth Law:** Mandates that children of migrants [must leave Russia at 18](#) unless they obtain their own labor patent, a move designed to force military service or formal labor registration.
- **Kyrgyzstan Investigative Committee Reform:** A proposal to [create a new committee](#) reporting directly to the President, stripping powers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Zelensky's 4th Anniversary Address:** Speaking from a [bunker on Bankova Street](#), the Ukrainian President emphasized the transition to a long war and the need for [strategic uncertainty](#) in weapons systems.
- **Transparency International Briefing:** Noted a global [democratic rollback](#) and highlighted massive corruption in the Russian Ministry of Defense linked to the Timur Ivanov case.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Social Responsibility Russia is successfully converting public anxiety into a state-managed [surveillance apparatus](#). By rebranding "snitching" as "patriotic vigilance," the state has seen a [record spike in reports](#) to the FSB. This is no longer merely about suppressing dissent but creating a "digital reception" where [any perceived social](#)

[infraction](#) can become a criminal case. This trend suggests the Kremlin is moving toward a more atomized society where trust is destroyed at the communal level to prevent organized opposition.

The Emergence of "Post-War" Marginalization A critical trend is the failure of the Russian state to reintegrate its veterans. The existence of [250,000 unemployed former soldiers](#) is a "time bomb" for the regime. These individuals, many of whom were recruited from prisons or impoverished regions, now find themselves [back in the penal system](#) or drifting into criminal "grey zones." This indicates that while the state can mobilize for war, it lacks the [institutional capacity](#) for veteran welfare, which will likely lead to a surge in violent domestic crime over the next year.

Strategic Resource and Energy Sovereignty The war is driving a bifurcated energy landscape. While Russia faces [drone attacks](#) on its oil processing plants (such as the strike in Almet'yevsk), European border states are accelerating their own [energy independence projects](#). The focus on [micro-grids and solar cooperatives](#) on islands like Krk in Croatia serves as a model for decentralized resilience against the kind of infrastructure warfare currently [devastating Ukraine's grid](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a sharp increase in domestic security measures within Ukraine as the SBU investigates the source of the [police station bombings](#). In Russia, the March 1 implementation of [new censorship laws](#) will likely result in a high-profile "purge" of remaining independent online content creators and films.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Russia's food inflation will likely trigger [regional localized protests](#) or "passive resistance" (e.g., hoarding), forcing the government to consider price controls or further [VAT adjustments](#) on imports. The EU will likely finalize the [90-billion-euro loan](#) to Ukraine despite continued friction with Hungary and Slovakia.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The Russian demographic collapse will manifest as a [permanent labor shortage](#), necessitating either further automation or a heavy reliance on a [highly controlled migrant workforce](#). Ukraine's recovery will depend on the successful [identification and repatriation](#) of its missing and abducted citizens, a process expected to take over a decade.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- Global law enforcement agencies should increase surveillance of [Central Asian logistics hubs](#), which have become the primary corridor for high-value sanctioned goods.
- Diplomatic pressure should be applied to prevent the further [extradition of opposition figures](#) from Turkey to Central Asian autocracies.
- Support for Ukraine must shift toward [decentralized energy infrastructure](#) to mitigate the impact of long-term grid vulnerability.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Ongoing drone strikes on [Russian oil facilities](#) will continue to inject volatility into the global energy market, specifically affecting refined products.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Companies operating in Central Asia must conduct [enhanced due diligence](#) to ensure they are not inadvertently facilitating Russian elite art or luxury smuggling.
- **Investment Opportunity:** The move toward [self-sufficient energy communities](#) in the Balkans and Eastern Europe offers growth potential for decentralized solar and battery storage technologies.

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>.