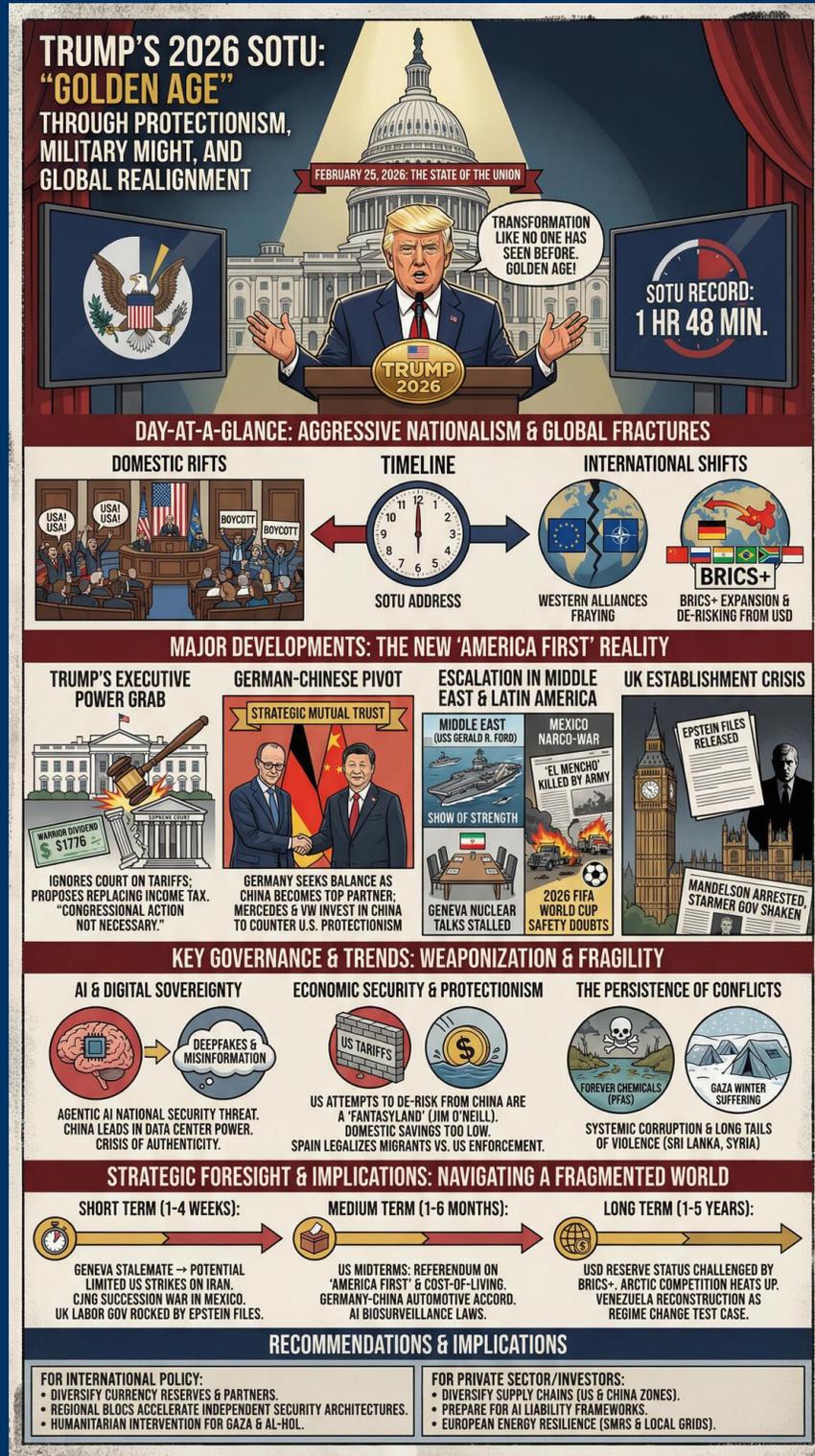


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

ALJAZ

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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DONALD TRUMP'S 2026 STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS PROJECTS A "GOLDEN AGE" OF AMERICAN POWER THROUGH AGGRESSIVE PROTECTIONISM AND MILITARY INTERVENTIONISM WHILE ACCELERATING A GLOBAL PIVOT TOWARD CHINA AND BRICS.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

On February 25, 2026, U.S. President Donald Trump delivered a record-breaking, two-hour State of the Union address that solidified his second-term agenda of economic protectionism, mass deportation, and military assertiveness. Trump touted the [capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro](#) as a major victory for regional security and promised to ignore Supreme Court restrictions on his tariff authority, characterizing his trade policies as a revolutionary replacement for the federal income tax system. However, the address highlighted deep internal rifts, with Democratic lawmakers staging boycotts and [shouting matches erupting in the chamber](#) over immigration crackdowns and the shooting of citizens by federal agents.

Internationally, Trump's aggressive posture is driving a fundamental realignment of global trade and diplomacy. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's inaugural visit to Beijing signals a [European pivot toward China](#) as a counterweight to U.S. volatility. This shift is mirrored in the BRICS+ expansion, which now includes ten members, including Indonesia, as emerging economies seek to [de-risk from the U.S. dollar](#). Despite Trump's warnings of 100% tariffs on countries abandoning the dollar, economists like Jim O'Neill suggest the U.S. is inadvertently legitimizing these alternative blocs through its "predatory" economic stance.

Strategic tensions remain acute in the Middle East and Latin America. As indirect nuclear talks with Iran loom in Geneva, the U.S. has deployed a massive naval armada, including the [USS Gerald R. Ford](#), to Crete as a "show of strength." In Mexico, the killing of CJNG leader "El Mencho" has triggered widespread cartel blockades and violence, raising doubts about the [safety of the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup](#). Collectively, the day's events suggest a world moving toward a fragmented, multipolar order where traditional U.S. alliances are fraying under the weight of "America First" policies and the rise of the Global South.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Trump's 2026 State of the Union and the "Golden Age" Narrative

- President Trump delivered the [longest State of the Union address](#) in history (1 hour and 48 minutes), claiming a "transformation like no one has seen before" in his first year back in office.

- The President vowed to continue [pushing broad tariffs](#) despite a Supreme Court ruling striking them down, suggesting tariffs would eventually replace the income tax.
- Trump announced the "Dalila Law" to [bar commercial driver's licenses](#) for undocumented immigrants and called for the immediate restoration of DHS funding amid a partial government shutdown.
- The speech celebrated military successes, including the raid that [captured Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro](#) and brought him to face "American justice."

Global Trade Realignment: The German-Chinese Pivot

- German Chancellor Friedrich Merz landed in Beijing seeking a [more balanced trade relationship](#) as China surpasses the U.S. as Germany's top trading partner.
- President Xi Jinping urged Germany to [enhance strategic mutual trust](#) to provide stability in a "turbulent world" increasingly defined by U.S. protectionism.
- German car manufacturers like Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen are [increasing investments in China](#) to maintain market share against local EV competitors and U.S. trade barriers.

Nuclear Brinkmanship and Military Buildup in the Middle East

- The U.S. and Iran are preparing for a [third round of indirect talks](#) in Geneva, even as the U.S. Treasury announced new sanctions on Iran's "shadow fleet."

- U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that the [Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group](#) is being utilized to "ensure security and stability" through a show of force.
- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that while [diplomacy is the priority](#), Iran will not give up its civilian nuclear program or surrender to military threats.

Mexico's Narco-War and the Fall of CJNG Leadership

- The killing of Nemesio Oseguera, aka "El Mencho," by the Mexican army has [sparked a wave of violence](#) across 20 states, involving burnt vehicles and retail outlets.
- At least 25 National Guard members were killed in [firefights with the Jalisco New Generation Cartel](#) (CJNG) following the operation.
- President Claudia Sheinbaum offered [full safety guarantees](#) for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, despite mounting fears of a bloody succession battle within the cartel.

The UK Establishment Crisis: Mandelson and Epstein Files

- British Parliament approved a motion to [release confidential documents](#) related to Prince Andrew's role as trade envoy and his links to Jeffrey Epstein.
- The Speaker of the House, Lindsay Hoyle, admitted to being the [source of the tip-off](#) that led to the arrest of Peter Mandelson on suspicion of misconduct in public office.
- The scandal is reportedly shaking the foundations of the [British establishment](#) and questioning the judgment of Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Sovereignty

- The AI Impact Summit in New Delhi saw industry leaders warning that [agentic AI](#)—self-acting systems—could be the most serious national security threat of the century.
- Concerns were raised regarding [crisis of authenticity](#) as AI-generated deepfakes and misinformation become pervasive in political discourse and warfare.
- China appears better positioned than the U.S. to support [large-scale AI data centers](#) due to its more straightforward path toward increasing electricity generating power.

Economic Security and Protectionism

- Trump's defiance of the [Supreme Court on tariffs](#) marks a significant shift in the U.S. rule of law, with the executive branch moving toward independent revenue generation through "tested alternative legal statutes."
- Economist Jim O'Neill argues that U.S. attempts to "de-risk" from China are a ["fantasyland"](#) unless the U.S. significantly raises domestic savings rates to reduce dependence on foreign capital.
- The Spanish government approved a landmark plan to give [legal status to half a million](#) undocumented migrants, contrasting sharply with U.S. enforcement trends.

Energy Security

- Hungary and Slovakia have accused Ukraine of [deliberately slowing repairs](#) to the Družba oil pipeline, which carries Russian crude, following damage from a drone strike.
- Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has [deployed troops to protect](#) energy infrastructure, adding to tensions within the EU over support for Ukraine.
- Energy costs remain a domestic vulnerability for the U.S., with electricity prices [rising 6.3%](#) despite Trump's claims of falling gas prices.

Geopolitical Power Dynamics: The Rise of BRICS+

- The BRICS club, now expanded to ten members, is struggling to find a [coherent strategy](#) but serves as a vital platform for China to champion the "global majority."
- Jim O'Neill notes that [Indonesia](#), now the 10th member, is the most interesting emerging market due to its youthful labor force and potential for 10% growth.
- Trump's threat of [100% tariffs](#) on countries creating a BRICS currency is seen by some as a move that "legitimizes" the bloc more than any internal consensus could.

Domestic Stability and Civil Unrest

- In the Philippines, mass protests erupted against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. over [multi-billion dollar flood control fraud](#), with police clashing with activists on the 40th anniversary of the People Power Revolution.

- Iran is facing university-led [anti-government protests](#) marking the killing of students in previous crackdowns, even as the state runs military drills to project unity.
- The Syrian government reported a [mass escape from Al-Hol camp](#) after Kurdish forces withdrew, leading to chaos and threats to public security.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

U.S. legislative activity is currently stalled by a partial government shutdown and a fierce battle over immigration and trade authority. President Trump is attempting to bypass congressional and judicial hurdles through executive action and the proposal of new, highly specific laws targeting illegal immigration and domestic savings.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Dalila Law:** Proposed by Trump to [bar states from granting](#) commercial driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, named after a girl injured in a truck collision involving an undocumented driver.
- **Save America Act:** A proposed mandate for [voter ID in all elections](#) to prevent alleged "rampant cheating."
- **Trump Accounts:** A tax-free [investment account for every child](#), proposed to encourage long-term domestic savings and market participation.
- **Clemency Law (Venezuela):** A landmark law adopted to grant [amnesty to political prisoners](#) following the U.S.-backed change in leadership.
- **Divorce Reform (Philippines):** A pending bill in the Philippine Senate to [legalize divorce](#), which is currently forbidden except in the Vatican.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **SOTU Joint Session:** A boisterous event where Republicans chanted "USA" while [Democrats boycotted](#) or staged silent protests inside the chamber.
- **Senate Armed Services Committee:** Chaired by Roger Wicker, who is pushing to [increase military spending to 5% of GDP](#) amid questions regarding campaign donations from defense contractors.
- **Syrian Interior Ministry Briefing:** Confirmed that [thousands escaped Al-Hol camp](#) following a "haphazard" withdrawal of Kurdish SDF forces.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of the Executive Branch

A major theme emerging from the day is the U.S. presidency's increasing comfort with [ignoring judicial and legislative oversight](#). Trump's explicit statement that "congressional action will not be necessary" for his new tariff regime suggests a move toward a "unitarian executive" model. This is reinforced by his [use of "Warrior Dividends"](#) (\$1776 payments) to buy military loyalty and his public shaming of Supreme Court justices in the front row of the SOTU. This trend toward "lawfare" and executive dominance is creating a domestic political environment where norms are replaced by pure shows of strength.

The Fragility of the Multipolar Transition

While the BRICS+ and European moves toward China suggest a desire for a multipolar world, the data shows a [lack of cohesion](#). BRICS+ members have divergent

interests, and Germany's Chancellor Merz still views China as a "risky" partner despite the economic necessity of the relationship. The transition is not toward a new stable alliance but toward a [world of "transactionalism,"](#) where countries constantly rebalance their ties to avoid being crushed by U.S. tariffs or Chinese market dominance. This fragility is heightened by the AI race, where the first nation to achieve [Artificial General Intelligence](#) may effectively end the multipolar experiment.

The Persistence of "Forever" Contaminants and Conflicts

Across disparate reports—from the "forever chemicals" (PFAS) [environmental trial in Italy](#) to the return of water to [Lake Chilwa in Malawi](#)—there is a theme of enduring legacies. The 2019 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka are only now seeing [high-profile arrests](#) of intelligence officials, suggesting that systemic corruption and state-sponsored violence have long tails. Similarly, the "temporary" tents in Gaza have become semi-permanent sites of [winter suffering](#), and the psychological scars of the [Greenland crisis](#) continue to define Greenlandic-Danish relations. These reports collectively point to a global failure to resolve underlying crises, leading to a build-up of systemic risks.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks)

- The Geneva nuclear talks will likely reach a stalemate as the U.S. maintains its "no enrichment" red line, potentially leading to a [limited military strike](#) on Iranian facilities.

- Expect increased violence in Guadalajara and Jalisco as CJNG factions enter a ["Game of Thrones" succession war](#), testing President Sheinbaum's new "hardline" security policy.
- A "volcano of fresh evidence" from the Prince Andrew/Mandelson Epstein files will likely [shake the UK Labor government](#), possibly forcing ministerial resignations.

Medium Term (1-6 Months)

- U.S. midterm elections in November will be a [referendum on "America First,"](#) with Trump's base solidified but moderates and independents increasingly alienated by cost-of-living issues.
- Germany and China may formalize a new ["Automotive Accord"](#) to circumvent U.S. tariffs, creating a deeper economic rift between Washington and Berlin.
- AI regulation will move from "warning bells" to **biosurveillance and data sovereignty** laws as governments realize they are [losing control](#) to private AI firms.

Long Term (1-5 Years)

- The U.S. dollar's role as the [dominant reserve currency](#) will be fundamentally challenged if BRICS+ successfully integrates its digital payment systems and common eurobond-style instruments.
- The [Arctic region](#) will become the primary theater for US-Russia-China competition as ice recession opens new trade routes and mineral deposits become accessible.
- The total [reconstruction of Venezuela](#) under U.S. oversight will serve as a test case for 21st-century regime change and its ability to deliver stable economic gains.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Diplomatic Flexibility:** Middle powers must [diversify their currency reserves](#) and trade partners to avoid becoming "sucker nations" caught in the U.S.-China tariff crossfire.
- **Security Coordination:** Regional blocs (EU, ASEAN) should accelerate [independent security architectures](#), as U.S. commitment to NATO and traditional alliances is increasingly transactional.
- **Humanitarian Intervention:** Immediate international pressure is needed to [restore aid flows to Gaza](#) and secure AI-Hol returnees, as these sites are becoming breeding grounds for future instability.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Manufacturers should [front-load imports](#) and establish production facilities within both U.S. and Chinese trade zones to mitigate the "roller-coaster" of tariff announcements.
- **AI Ethics and Risk:** Companies deploying [agentic AI](#) must prepare for rigorous new liability frameworks as governments respond to deepfake-driven social unrest.
- **Energy Resilience:** European businesses should invest in [small modular reactors \(SMRs\)](#) and localized grids to insulate themselves from pipeline sabotage and U.S.-demanded energy diversions for AI centers.

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>.