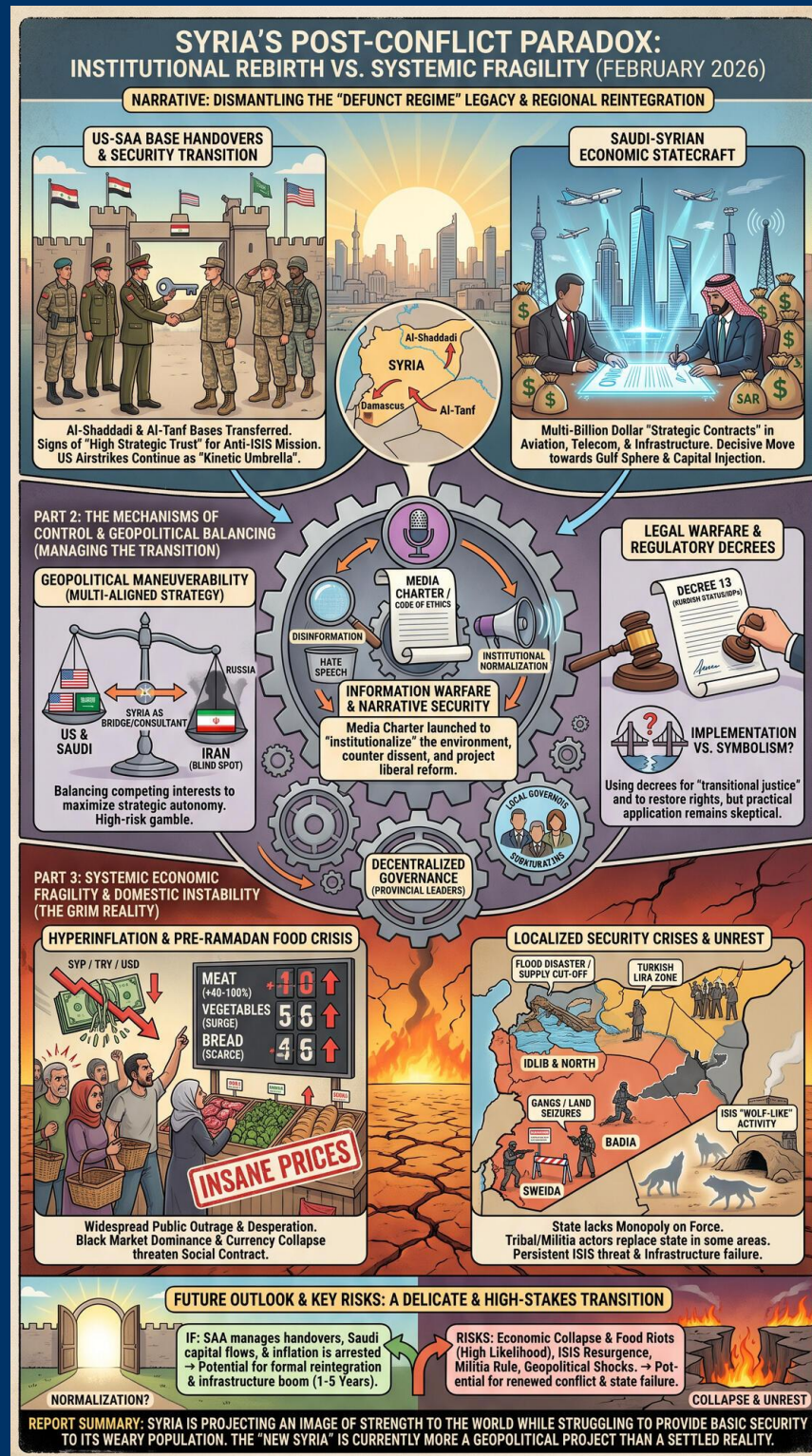


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

SYRIANNEWS

FEBRUARY 15, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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SYRIA'S POST-CONFLICT
INSTITUTIONAL REBIRTH COLLIDES
WITH SYSTEMIC ECONOMIC
FRAGILITY AND STRATEGIC
SECURITY HANDOVERS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 15, 2026, marks a pivotal moment in the narrative of the "New Syria," characterized by a concerted effort to dismantle the legacy of the "defunct regime" (Al-Nizam al-Ba'id) while navigating a complex landscape of reconstruction and regional reintegration. The central theme of the day's coverage is institutional normalization, highlighted by the strategic handover of the Al-Shaddadi and Al-Tanf bases from US-led Coalition forces to the Syrian Arab Army (SAA). This transition is framed not as a retreat, but as a sign of "high strategic trust" between the new administration of President Ahmed al-Shara and the United States, signaling a shift toward a central government capable of managing its own security and the anti-ISIS mission. Simultaneously, the state is leveraging economic statecraft, finalizing multi-billion dollar "strategic contracts" with Saudi Arabia in aviation, telecommunications,

and infrastructure, representing a decisive move toward the Gulf sphere of influence.

However, this veneer of institutional progress is sharply contrasted by severe domestic instability. Hyperinflation and price gouging—with meat and vegetable prices rising up to 40% ahead of Ramadan—have sparked widespread public outrage and desperation, particularly in frontline regions like Idlib and Deir ez-Zor. The government's inability to regulate the "black market" exchange rates (involving the US Dollar, Turkish Lira, and Syrian Lira) threatens the social contract. Furthermore, localized security crises, such as the gang-led land seizures in Sweida and the continued "Wolf-like" ISIS activity in the Badia, demonstrate that while the state is regaining territory, it has yet to secure a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. The day reflects a nation in a delicate transition: projecting an image of liberalizing reform and strategic sovereignty to the world, while struggling to provide basic economic security to a population weary of decades of war.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The top developments of the day focus on the intersection of military sovereignty, regional diplomacy, and internal institutional reform.

- **US Military Withdrawal and Base Handover:** The Syrian Arab Army officially took control of the Al-Shaddadi military base in Hasakah following a coordinated withdrawal by US-led Coalition forces. This development is described as a [milestone in national sovereignty](#) and evidence of growing US trust in the new Syrian military leadership. The handover includes the assumption of the anti-ISIS mission and management of detention facilities, though [US airstrikes against ISIS remnants](#) in the Badia continue to provide a kinetic security umbrella during the transition.
- **Syrian-Saudi Strategic Realignment:** Damascus and Riyadh announced the signing of massive strategic agreements covering aviation, infrastructure, and telecommunications. This partnership is framed as a [pillar for future stability](#), effectively formalizing Syria's reintegration into the Arab fold and providing a much-needed capital injection for reconstruction efforts.
- **Launch of the National Media Charter:** Over 1,000 journalists and media professionals signed the "Journalistic Code of Ethics," a document six months in the making. This initiative is presented as a [foundation for free and responsible media](#), explicitly designed to replace the censorship models of the "defunct regime" with a self-regulatory framework aimed at countering hate speech and disinformation.

- **Escalating Pre-Ramadan Economic Crisis:** Widespread reports indicate a "insane" surge in food prices, with meat and basic commodities becoming [unaffordable for the average citizen](#). The crisis is exacerbated by the lack of effective price monitoring and a "monopoly" by traders, leading to public calls for the Ministry of Internal Trade to intervene against "economic vultures."
- **Civil Unrest in Sweida:** The government issued a [stern warning to armed gangs](#) in Sweida who have reportedly seized public and private agricultural lands. The provincial governor emphasized that the state would no longer tolerate "the law of the jungle" and signaled a forthcoming security crackdown to restore judicial authority over the region.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization: The transition from US to SAA control in the East is the dominant military narrative. The state is attempting to portray the SAA as a **professional, inclusive force** capable of absorbing former SDF/PYD elements. Simultaneously, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) remains active, conducting 10 airstrikes against [30 ISIS targets](#) to prevent the group's "silent return" during the security transition.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk: The government is aggressively utilizing "Presidential Decrees" (notably Decree 13) to address the status of Kurds and displaced persons. These legal instruments are framed as [transitional justice mechanisms](#) intended to restore rights stripped by the previous regime. However, skeptical voices within the transcripts question whether these decrees

will be [effectively implemented on the ground](#) or remain symbolic gestures.

Macroeconomics & Trade: Syria is pursuing a "Liberal/Competitive" economic model, seeking to move away from the state-dominated economy of the past. The strategic deals with Saudi Arabia and the focus on "Competitive Free Trade" [contracts](#) suggest a push for foreign direct investment (FDI). Yet, the continued use of the Turkish Lira and US Dollar for daily transactions in the North and East [undermines the Syrian Lira's](#) central authority.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance: The leadership of President Ahmed al-Shara is being positioned as a "technocratic and moderate" alternative. Governance is increasingly decentralized, with provincial governors in [Raqqqa and Hasakah](#) taking lead roles in public service restoration, MRI facility launches, and local security management.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The "New Syria" Narrative vs. Institutional Decay: The overarching strategic narrative pushed by state media is the "birth of a new nation" from the ashes of the old. Every event, from the [Damascus Book Fair](#) (celebrating the return of banned books) to the MRI launch in Deir ez-Zor, is framed as a repudiation of the "Assad era." However, the transcripts reveal a deep underlying anxiety: the "new" state is still using many of the "old" tools of central authority to manage dissent, and the institutional capacity to manage the economy is near a breaking point. The persistence of "gangs" in Sweida and "militias" in the North suggests that the "New Syria" is currently more of a **geopolitical project** than a settled internal reality.

Strategic Maneuverability and the "Middle Path": Syria's global posture is trending toward a "multi-aligned" strategy. By accepting US handovers while simultaneously signing major deals with Saudi Arabia and maintaining dialogue with Russia, the Shara administration is attempting to maximize [strategic maneuverability](#). The goal appears to be transforming Syria from a "hostile threat matrix" into a "zone of economic opportunity" that can serve as a bridge between the East and West. This is a high-risk gamble, as it requires balancing the competing interests of the US, Riyadh, and Tehran within Syrian territory.

Information Warfare as a Pillar of Statecraft: The launch of the Media Charter is a sophisticated attempt to **institutionalize the media environment**. By labeling certain forms of dissent as "hate speech" or "disinformation" under a self-regulatory code, the state is creating a mechanism to maintain "narrative security" while claiming to adhere to liberal democratic values. This reflects a trend where the "New Syria" seeks to win the information war by adopting the [language of international NGOs](#) and human rights organizations.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Societal stability remains fragile due to a growing "economic-security disconnect." While the elite in Damascus celebrate strategic wins, the periphery faces systemic neglect. In **Idlib**, citizens report that ["everything is on fire"](#) regarding prices, with many unable to afford the basics for the Ramadan fast. This economic pressure is creating a loss of government mandate in marginalized areas, where residents feel the

transition has only benefited the politically connected.

Institutional decay is most visible in the justice and security sectors. The Sweida crisis highlights a scenario where **tribal/militia actors** have effectively replaced the state in land management. The governor's warning suggests that the state's capacity to enforce law is currently limited to "persuasion" and "threats" rather than a consistent presence. Partisan polarization is also evident in the discussions regarding the **SDF/PYD reintegration**, with significant segments of the population still viewing these groups as "separatist threats" despite the official government line of [reconciliation and inclusion](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The "outside world" is increasingly framed as a **partner in recovery** rather than a source of conspiracy. State media emphasizes the "official invitations" and "strategic partnerships" with the Gulf and the West. The Munich Security Conference (MSC) attendance by FM Shaibani is used to project a [global presence](#), where Syria is no longer a pariah but a "consultant" on regional stability. This indicates a defensive reaction to external shocks has been replaced by a proactive "projected power" posture—specifically the power to stabilize the region through economic and security cooperation.

A notable trend is the framing of **Turkey and Iran**. The transcripts contain subtle critiques of Iranian "militia influence" while seeking a "just solution" to the [Kurdish issue](#) that involves Turkish cooperation. The administration is positioning itself to "secure its interests" by playing regional powers

against each other, using the US withdrawal as a catalyst to force regional actors into new, Syria-centric security arrangements.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Syria's economy is in a state of hyper-inflationary shock, partially mitigated by large-scale capital promises from regional allies.

- **Inflationary Pressures:** Basic food prices (meat, chicken, vegetables) have surged by an estimated **40% to 100%** in the last 30 days. Meat prices in some areas have reached [600 Lira per kilo](#) (in local units/context), making it a luxury item.
- **Currency Fluctuations:** The coexistence of the SYP, Turkish Lira, and US Dollar in the market is creating massive [transactional risk](#) and price instability. Traders are accused of "Dollarization," basing prices on the black-market USD rate while citizens earn in devalued Lira.
- **Capital Flows:** The state has announced **5 billion USD** in potential investments from the "Strategic Contracts" with Saudi Arabia and [10 million USD](#) specifically allocated for Hasakah health infrastructure.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Severe weather (flooding in Idlib) and destroyed infrastructure (collapsed bridges in Al-Rabia) have [severed local supply chains](#), causing localized shortages of wheat and fuel.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day's transcripts emphasize a consolidation of the new technocratic elite under President al-Shara.

- **President Ahmed al-Shara:** Positioned as the ultimate authority, issuing decrees (Decree 13) to [reintegrate Kurds](#) and oversee the Saudi contracts. His status is described as "principled and reform-minded."
- **Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani:** Emerging as the primary international face of the regime, conducting high-level [diplomacy at Munich](#). He is a clear winner in the current political environment, successfully shifting the focus from war to reconstruction.
- **Mazloun Abdi (SDF Commander):** Framing is shifting from "militia leader" to a [national partner](#) in the anti-ISIS struggle, reflecting his faction's integration into state security structures.
- **Governor of Sweida, Bassam Barsik:** Taking a "law and order" stance against local gangs, his status is being tested by the [Sweida unrest](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's **Lead Stories** were the Al-Shaddadi handover, the Saudi strategic contracts, and the Media Charter. These stories were given maximum airtime and presented in a triumphalist, "reassuring" tone. The **Buried Stories** were the specific details of civilian protests over food prices and the full extent of flood damage in the North, which were presented as "technical challenges" or blamed on "greedy traders" rather than government failure. The tone

toward the US has shifted significantly: from "imperialist occupier" to a **"partner in security transition."** **Conspicuous Omissions** include any mention of Iranian military presence or the specific status of political prisoners from the previous regime who have not yet been released.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The media landscape projects a multipolar world where Syria acts as a bridge between competing blocs.

- **United States:** Portrayed as **strong but retreating**, now acting as a "trust-based mentor" to the SAA. Quotes refer to the ["historic transition"](#) of base management.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Framed as a **principled, deep-pocketed brother**. The relationship is described as a ["long-term vision"](#) for regional prosperity.
- **Turkey:** Portrayed as **chaotic and opportunistic**. While the media seeks a "just solution" for the border, it remains skeptical of Ankara's "Kurdish obsession."
- **ISIS (Daesh):** Characterized as a **weak but persistent "Wolf-like" threat** that justifies continued security centralization. Reports cite ["constant raids"](#) and "silent return" attempts.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The state is engaged in a high-stakes **narrative seeding** operation. By launching the Media Charter, they are attempting to define the "truth" around the "New Syria." Disinformation is actively countered by framing price spikes as **"trader conspiracies"** rather than inflation. The "meta-narrative" is one of **"Institutional**

Normalization." The delta between this "spin" and ground truth is significant: the state claims total control and freedom, while the transcripts simultaneously show [land seizures in Sweida](#) and citizens forced to use [Turkish Lira](#) because the Syrian currency is non-functional.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Normalization of the North-East:** If the SAA successfully manages the Al-Shaddadi transition without an ISIS surge, it will pave the way for a total US withdrawal from Al-Tanf and the full reintegration of the East into the Damascus fold within 12 months.
- **Social Unrest Catalyst:** If food price inflation is not arrested before the end of Ramadan, the current "desperation" could evolve into a second wave of organized [civil protests](#), potentially targeting the Ministry of Internal Trade.
- **Saudi-Iranian Friction:** As Saudi investment deepens, Damascus will likely face increased pressure to [reduce Iranian influence](#), potentially leading to a quiet "purge" of pro-Tehran elements in the security services.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a localized military "law and order" operation in [Sweida](#) to clear gangs. Markets will see intensified "price inspections," but they are unlikely to lower costs without currency intervention.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The formalization of the Saudi aviation and telecom deals will lead to a visible **infrastructure boom** in Damascus and

Aleppo. The Media Charter will be used to revoke the licenses of several independent or "regime-skeptical" bloggers.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Syria will likely petition for **re-entry into international financial systems** (IMF/World Bank), using the "New Syrian" branding and Saudi backing to bypass existing sanctions.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Risk 1: Economic Collapse and Food Riots.** Triggers: Lira dropping below the 20,000 mark or grain shortages during Ramadan. Likelihood: High. Impact: Extreme instability. Mitigations: Emergency food subsidies and Saudi-backed "stabilization funds."
- **Risk 2: ISIS "Silent Return" in the Badia.** Triggers: A security vacuum during the SAA-Coalition base handover. Likelihood: Medium-High. Impact: Severe localized violence. Mitigations: Continued US [airstrike support](#) and joint SAA-SDF operations.
- **Risk 3: Militia Gang Rule in Sweida/South.** Triggers: Failure of the state to enforce the land seizure warnings. Likelihood: Medium. Impact: Permanent loss of central control in the South. Mitigations: Targeted [strikes on gang leadership](#) and tribal co-option.
- **Risk 4: US Policy Reversal.** Triggers: Political shifts in Washington or an ISIS attack on SAA personnel. Likelihood: Low-Medium. Impact: Re-freezing of the conflict. Mitigations: Diplomatic guarantees and "Joint Anti-Terror Councils."

- **Risk 5: Infrastructure Failure due to Extreme Weather.** Triggers: Heavy spring rains causing bridge collapses in the West. Likelihood: High. Impact: Severed food supply routes. Mitigations: Emergency [bridge repairs](#) using new Saudi capital.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Iranian Presence:** The transcripts are almost entirely silent on the status of IRGC and Hezbollah forces, which remains a massive geopolitical "blind spot" for a nation claiming total sovereignty.
- **The Exchange Rate Mystery:** While the network discusses high prices, they fail to report the **actual current exchange rate** of the SYP, hiding the magnitude of the currency's collapse from the audience.
- **Political Prisoner Status:** There is talk of "transitional justice" and "rights," but no specific accounting for the thousands of [disappeared from the defunct regime's era](#).
- **Russian Posture:** Russia's current role in the base handovers is obscured, leaving it unclear if Moscow is supportive or being sidelined by the US-Syrian-Saudi rapprochement.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Potemkin Normalization": One scenario is that the US withdrawal and the Saudi deals are merely a "desperate cover" for a state on the verge of bankruptcy. In this view, the "Media Charter" is not about ethics, but a **last-ditch censorship effort** to prevent news of a looming famine from spreading.

The ISIS-Government Secret Pact: A contrarian view of the ISIS "Wolf-raids" is that the group is being **tactically tolerated** by

elements of the state to justify the continued centralization of security and the maintenance of emergency powers.

Black Swan Event: An **assassination of a high-level Saudi diplomat** or investor in Damascus by pro-Iranian elements. This would instantly collapse the reconstruction narrative and trigger a massive regional security crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector: International actors should tie reconstruction aid directly to the **verifiable release of prisoners** and the actual enforcement of Decree 13. Security cooperation on the anti-ISIS mission should remain "Coalition-led but SAA-implemented" to ensure no vacuum during the [handover phase](#).

For Private Sector/Investors: The Saudi-Syrian deals create a "First Mover" opportunity in telecom and aviation, but the **regulatory risk** remains high until a new constitution is fully ratified. Investors must account for the **multi-currency chaos** in northern and eastern markets, which necessitates local "hedging" strategies against the Lira.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity is centered on Decree 13 and the formalization of transitional laws ahead of new parliamentary elections. The government is focused on **legalizing the**

status of Kurds and securing property rights for the displaced.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED: Decree 13:** Grants legal status to "stateless" Kurds (Maktoumeen) and reintegrates them into the citizenship registry. **The National Media Charter:** A binding "soft law" that establishes a disciplinary council for journalists to enforce ["narrative responsibility."](#)
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS: The Sweida Governor's Proclamation:** A public ultimatum to militias to return seized lands or face military intervention. **Munich Security Conference Panel:** FM Shaibani's presentation on **"The Syrian Model of Post-Regime Recovery."**

KEY STORIES

- **Al-Shaddadi Base Handover:** The Syrian Arab Army officially assumed command of the Al-Shaddadi base in Hasakah from US forces, including detention centers for **5,700 ISIS fighters**. The handover followed 10 days of high-level coordination [\(20260215-14\)](#).
- **Saudi-Syrian Strategic Contracts:** A multi-billion dollar agreement signed in Damascus covering aviation, telecommunications, and a "long-term vision" for **infrastructure reconstruction** [\(20260215-3\)](#).
- **Launch of Journalistic Media Charter:** 1,000+ media professionals signed a new code of conduct in Damascus, aimed at distancing the industry from **defunct regime censorship** and focusing on "transitional media" [\(20260215-33\)](#).
- **Pre-Ramadan Price Surge:** Reports from Deir ez-Zor, Hama, and Idlib detail "insane" inflation, with meat prices rising up to **40%** as traders prepare for the fasting month [\(20260215-9\)](#).
- **Sweida Gang Ultimatum:** Governor Bassam Barsik warned armed groups in Sweida that the state would use force to reclaim **stolen agricultural lands** if they are not returned within the week [\(20260215-30\)](#).
- **ISIS Badia Raids:** CENTCOM confirmed 10 airstrikes on 30 ISIS targets in the Badia to prevent a **"silent return"** of the group during the base handover phase [\(20260215-17\)](#).
- **Damascus International Book Fair:** For the first time, previously banned books are on display. Organizers report **80,000+ visitors** and 500 publishing houses participating in the "intellectual rebirth" [\(20260215-1\)](#).
- **Deir ez-Zor MRI Launch:** The Ministry of Health inaugurated the first MRI machine in Deir ez-Zor North, funded by **international aid**, to prevent patients from having to travel to Damascus for basic diagnostic imaging [\(20260215-12\)](#).
- **Hasakah Health Grant:** A **10 million USD** allocation was announced for the "Al-Shaddadi Hospital" and kidney dialysis centers to support the reintegrated Eastern region [\(20260215-11\)](#).
- **Idlib Flood Disaster:** Heavy rains caused a "catastrophic" situation in the Khirbet al-Joz refugee camp, with bridges collapsing and **NGOs calling for emergency aid** to prevent a food supply cut-off [\(20260215-34\)](#).

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.

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