

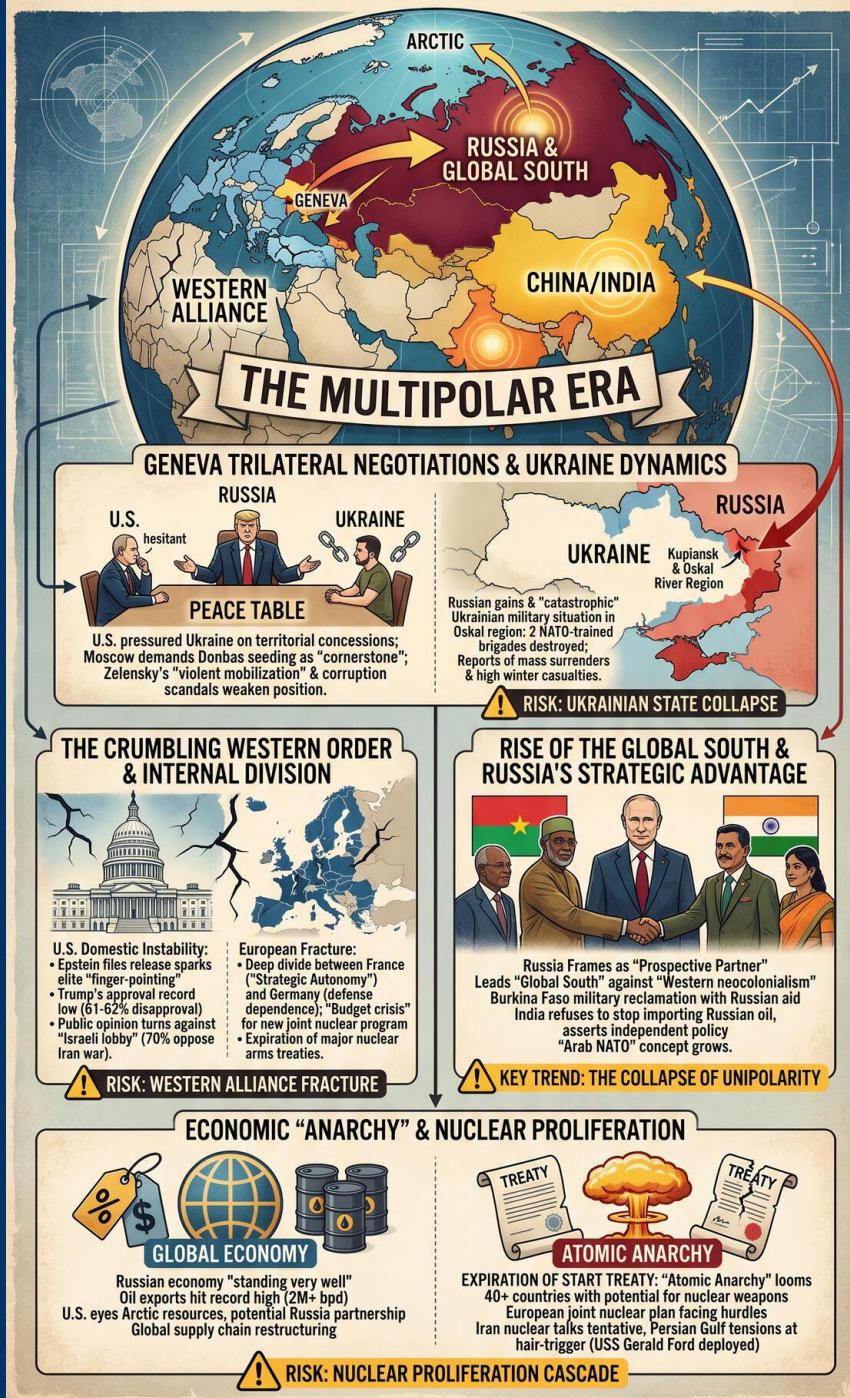
TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

GLOBAL POWER SHIFT ACCELERATES: Trilateral Peace Talks, Western Decline, & Nuclear Anarchy



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GLOBAL POWER SHIFT
ACCELERATES AS TRILATERAL
PEACE TALKS IN GENEVA COINCIDE
WITH WEAKENING WESTERN
ALLIANCES AND NUCLEAR
PROLIFERATION RISKS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The international landscape on February 17, 2026, is dominated by high-stakes trilateral negotiations in Geneva aimed at resolving the conflicts in Ukraine and de-escalating tensions with Iran. The Trump administration, represented by special envoys [Steve Witkoff](#) and [Jared Kushner](#), is pressuring the Ukrainian leadership to accept [territorial concessions](#) as the Russian military consolidates significant gains on the battlefield. Moscow is leveraging reports of a "catastrophic" situation for Ukrainian forces in the [Oskal river region](#), characterized by mass surrenders and high non-combat casualties due to extreme winter conditions, to force a diplomatic breakthrough that favors its strategic objectives. Simultaneously, a parallel track of indirect talks between the U.S. and Iran in Geneva shows tentative progress on a nuclear framework, though

[tensions in the Persian Gulf](#) remain at a hair-trigger level with the deployment of the USS Gerald Ford and threats from Tehran's supreme leader.

The internal stability of Western powers appears increasingly compromised by domestic scandals and ideological fractures. In the United States, the release of [redacted Epstein files](#) has sparked a "storm of finger-pointing" between political elites, while President Trump's approval ratings hit [record lows](#) amidst a shift in public sentiment regarding the U.S.-Israel relationship. In Europe, a deep divide has opened between the "strategic autonomy" ambitions of [France](#) and the [defense dependence](#) of Germany, exacerbated by the expiration of major nuclear arms treaties. This vacuum of Western leadership is being actively filled by a "multipolar" bloc, with countries like Turkey and India asserting [independent oil and security policies](#), and African nations like Burkina Faso deepening military and nuclear ties with Russia to escape what they term "Western neocolonialism."

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Geneva Trilateral Negotiations and Ukraine Battlefield Dynamics

- The third round of talks between Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. began in Geneva, with Moscow demanding the [seeding of Donbas territories](#) as a "cornerstone" for any deal.
- The Russian Defense Ministry reported the "liberation" of [Kupiansk, Bakrovka, and Minkovka](#), claiming the total destruction of two NATO-trained brigades during recent war games.

- Ukraine faces a fresh internal crisis following the arrest of a [former energy minister](#) for extorting \$100 million, adding to the narrative of systemic corruption within the Zelensky administration.

Nuclear Escalation and the Expiry of Arms Treaties

- The expiration of the START treaty has led to warnings of ["atomic anarchy,"](#) with up to 40 countries now possessing the technological potential to develop nuclear weapons.
- Germany and France have announced plans for a [joint European nuclear program](#) to counter the loss of the U.S. nuclear umbrella, despite Berlin's non-nuclear status.
- Iran insists on its right to [civilian nuclear energy](#) under the NPT while the U.S. maintains a policy of "maximum pressure" and threats of military strikes.

The Rise of Global South Autonomy

- Burkina Faso's Foreign Minister detailed a successful military [reclamation of 74% of its territory](#) with the assistance of Russian instructors, bypassing traditional French security structures.
- India has refused to comply with U.S. pressure to [stop importing Russian oil](#), citing national interest and the need to maintain an independent foreign policy.
- A growing "Arab NATO" concept and alliances between [Saudi Arabia and Pakistan](#) signal a shift toward regional security self-sufficiency.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- Russian forces are reporting high success in using [drone operators to destroy](#) exposed Ukrainian positions in flooded trenches.
- The deployment of the [USS Gerald Ford](#) to the Persian Gulf serves as a deterrent against Iranian retaliation if nuclear talks fail.
- Investigation into the "Russian Volunteer Corps" (RDK) claims the group is a [purely media-driven project](#) managed by Ukrainian intelligence and Western agencies.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- The "spirit of anchorage" is cited by Russia as absent in current U.S. diplomacy, as Moscow claims Washington [ignores previous agreements](#).
- Turkey's strategy of ["multipolarity"](#) allows it to maintain ties with NATO, Russia, China, and the Arab world simultaneously.

Information Warfare & Disinformation

- The new CEO of TikTok reportedly designated the term ["Zionist" as a proxy for hate speech](#), which critics claim is an attempt to suppress criticism of Israeli policies.
- Russian reports emphasize "biolabs" in Ukraine, alleging [Pentagon-funded experiments](#) involving toxins and pathogens that were kept hidden from the public.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Collapse of Unipolarity and the "Multipolar Date"

- The narrative of an ["empire collapsing"](#) is pervasive, with analysts suggesting the U.S. is facing the choice of staying with an "old team" (Europe/UK) or finding new "partners to dance with" (China/Russia/Brazil/India).
- Russia is framed not as an enemy, but as a ["prospective partner"](#) for a pragmatic U.S. administration focused on hydrocarbons and rare earth minerals in the Arctic.
- Western institutions like the UN and NATO are increasingly described as ["circuses"](#) or "supper clubs" that have lost their ability to mediate global security without the participation of rival powers.

Institutional Decay and the "Epstein Shadow"

- Domestic instability in the U.S. is tied to a "storm of finger-pointing" over the [Epstein files](#), suggesting that the elite class is compromised regardless of party lines.
- The weaponization of the [Department of Justice](#) is a recurring theme, with claims that Pam Bondi is being used as a tool to protect partisan interests rather than uphold the rule of law.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Ukraine: Military Collapse and Corruption

- Societal stability is fracturing under ["violent force mobilization"](#) where men are reportedly snatched off streets for the "meat grinder" at the front.
- The [arrest of the former energy minister](#) and the flight of "Zelensky's wallet" (Timur Mindic) to Israel underscore a regime struggling to maintain legitimacy amidst massive Western funding.

United States: Polarization and Record Low Approval

- President Trump's approval is at a record low, with [61-62% of Americans disapproving](#) of his handling of the presidency.
- A significant trend shows the [public turning against the influence](#) of the "Israeli lobby," with 70% of Americans opposing a war with Iran.
- The documentary on the [Sruitman family](#) highlights a counter-intuitive migration trend: traditional Christian Americans moving to Russia to escape what they perceive as "LGBT propaganda" and the loss of free speech in the West.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Frame of "Atomic Anarchy"

- The international system is portrayed as entering a period of ["anarchy"](#) due to the expiration of the START treaty and the inability of the U.S. and Russia to renew limits on warheads.

- European powers (France and Germany) are attempting to build a ["joint nuclear program"](#) as a hedge against a potential U.S. withdrawal from NATO, though analysts suggest they lack the budget and military commitment to succeed.

Russia's "Strategic Advantage"

- Moscow is projecting power through the trilateral format while simultaneously highlighting [battlefield gains](#) to prove its "special military operation" has been successful.
- Russia is framing itself as the leader of the ["Global South,"](#) championing African sovereignty and the transition to a multipolar world order.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic environment is characterized by a "price tag" attached to strategic sovereignty and the restructuring of energy supply chains. Russia's economy is described as ["standing very well,"](#) claiming it is the least indebted major economy and has successfully bypassed Western sanctions through increased exports to China and India.

- **Oil & Energy:** Russian oil exports reached a [new record high](#) this month, surpassing 2 million barrels per day. The G7 is considering a maritime services ban on Russian oil to curtail this income [at a significant price](#).
- **Arctic Resources:** The U.S. administration is reportedly eyeing [Arctic Ocean coastlines](#) for rare earth minerals and fishery potential, driving its interest in a partnership with Russia.

- **Military Expenditures:** The German Defense Minister noted that Germany is ["all out of military equipment"](#) and can only send money, highlighting a crisis in defense manufacturing capacity.
- **Supply Chains:** Hungary and Slovakia have requested that Croatia enable the [transport of Russian oil](#) via its territory to bypass the destabilized Ukrainian route.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Strategic shifts are being driven by a mix of pragmatic new appointees in the U.S. and a perceived weakening of established leaders in Ukraine and the UK.

- **Vladimir Medinsky:** Re-emerges as the [lead Russian negotiator](#), signaling a shift from military-only topics (handled by Kostukov) to broader territorial and political settlements.
- **Marco Rubio:** Characterized by critics as a ["snake oil salesman"](#) but seen as a key architect of the new "America First" foreign policy that challenges European strategic autonomy.
- **Timur Mindic:** The reported ["Zelensky wallet"](#) has fled to Israel, suggesting an internal collapse of the Ukrainian leader's financial support network.
- **Jessie Jackson:** The death of the civil rights leader at [age 84](#) is used to reflect on the era of "balanced economic growth" and the failures of modern banking policies.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network prioritizes narratives that suggest a failing Western order and a rising, pragmatic Russian-led multipolar alternative.

The **Lead Stories** are the Geneva trilateral talks, the "catastrophic" state of the Ukrainian military, and the U.S. public's growing opposition to Middle Eastern wars. **Buried Stories** include any significant Ukrainian military successes or the detailed legal arguments for Israeli defense, which are framed largely as "hypocrisy" or "delusions of grandeur." The emotional tone is one of **cynicism** toward Western elites, balanced by **nationalistic reassurance** for Russia and its allies. **Conspicuous Omissions** include any detailed reporting on internal Russian dissent, the economic costs of the "special military operation" to ordinary Russians, or a non-partisan analysis of the legitimate security concerns of Baltic states bordering the conflict.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcast frames the world through a spectrum of "pragmatic multipolarity" versus "delusional unipolarity." Global leaders are judged by their willingness to accept a "reordered world" where the U.S. is no longer the sole superpower.

COUNTRIES

- **Russia:** Framed as **strong, competent, and principled**. It is the "prospective partner" that won't be a "cheap date" [in negotiations](#). It is a land of "immense wealth" and "traditional values" [attracting Western migrants](#).
- **Ukraine:** Framed as **weak, corrupt, and inept**. It is a "meat grinder" [regime](#) that is "dragging their feet" on peace while pillaging taxpayer cash.
- **United States:** Framed as **chaotic and polarized**. It is a superpower in **decline**, "dogging behind Israeli demands" [against its own interest](#).

- **Israel:** Framed as a **pariah state** using "machinations" and a powerful lobby to dictate **U.S. policy through "moneyed interests"**.
- **France:** Framed as **ambitious but under-resourced**, attempting to "champion strategic autonomy" without **opening its wallet at home**.

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a **pragmatic businessman** who "doesn't want anything that is going to be a disaster" [like a prolonged war](#), yet faces record disapproval.
- **Vladimir Zelensky:** Characterized as a **delusional "puppet clown"** whose statements sound like a ["comedian's stand-up routine"](#) detached from reality.
- **Benjamin Netanyahu:** Framed as a **narcissist** driven by "delusions of grandeur" who is ["keeping himself in office" through war](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

[The media landscape is being actively weaponized to shape the outcome of the Geneva talks and domestic public opinion.](#) Narrative seeding is evident in the repeated use of phrases like ["collapse of a big empire"](#) and "Rusophrenia," which pathologizes Western fear of Russia. Psychological operations are implied in the report on [RDK "masquerade"](#) operations, where fighters were allegedly given patches to simulate a domestic Russian uprising for Western media consumption. Censorship is a major sub-theme, with the TikTok policy change on

"Zionism" and the [firing of Rick Sanchez](#) 15 years ago cited as proof of a monopolized, pro-Israel corporate media that suppresses "half truths" and "lies." The delta between media spin and ground truth is most visible in the reporting on [India's oil policy](#), where the network claims Western media falsely "confirmed" import bans that New Delhi never officially sanctioned.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The Zelensky Exit Strategy:** It is hypothesized that once [Zelensky is "out of the way,"](#) real negotiations can conclude, suggesting an impending internal or Western-led leadership change in Kyiv.
- **U.S.-Russia Arctic Merger:** There is a strong suggestion that the U.S. will pivot from Europe to forge a ["future marriage"](#) with Russia to exploit Arctic resources and contain China.
- **Regional Conflict Expansion:** If Geneva talks fail, a ["regional war"](#) in the Middle East is seen as inevitable, with Iran prepared to strike U.S. bases in Arab countries and "bomb down Israel."

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): The conclusion of the [six-hour Geneva sessions](#) will likely lead to a temporary ceasefire or a "guiding principles" document, though formal agreements will be delayed by territorial disputes. Expect further [unrest in Ukraine](#) as mobilization continues.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The U.S. will likely finalize its [National Security Strategy](#) focusing on the Western Hemisphere, potentially leading to the "appropriation" of

Venezuelan oil. Europe will face a **budget crisis** as it tries to fund its new nuclear shield.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A permanent shift toward a [multilateralist system](#) where the U.S., Russia, and China manage spheres of influence. The "Donro Doctrine" could lead to the U.S. [attempting to acquire Greenland or Canada](#) as the 51st state to enlarge its resource base.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Nuclear Proliferation Cascade:** The expiration of START and the lack of U.S. response to [Russia's moratorium](#) creates a vacuum. **Triggers:** Resumption of nuclear tests by Trump or China. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Catastrophic global security breakdown. **Mitigations:** Immediate return to trilateral arms control frameworks in Geneva.
- **Ukrainian State Collapse:** Military exhaustion combined with [systemic corruption scandals](#). **Triggers:** Loss of the Oskal river supply line. **Likelihood:** Very High. **Impact:** Humanitarian crisis and potential Russian push for total control. **Mitigations:** Negotiated settlement involving immediate territorial concessions.
- **Persian Gulf Conflagration:** Naval tensions between the [USS Gerald Ford](#) and Iranian missile batteries. **Triggers:** Accidental fire or "green light" for an Israeli sneak attack. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz and global oil shock. **Mitigations:** Success of the parallel indirect nuclear talks.

- **Western Alliance Fracture:** The "rocky" relationship between [France and Germany](#) over security commitments. **Triggers:** U.S. withdrawal of the "security blanket" in favor of isolationism. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Economic collapse of Western Europe and loss of NATO coherence. **Mitigations:** Formalization of a European strategic autonomy budget.
- **Information Suppression Backfire:** Attempts to control narratives via [acquisitions of platforms like TikTok](#). **Triggers:** Public discovery of "Zionism" moderation as state-mandated. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Mass migration to "freedom-based" platforms (Bitchute/Rumble) and radicalization. **Mitigations:** Increased transparency in content moderation standards.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcast fails to provide any **verifiable evidence** for the claim that [Israeli billionaires bought TikTok](#) specifically to suppress Palestinian support, treating it as a "mandate" from Netanyahu.
- There is a lack of perspective from the **Ukrainian civilian population** regarding their willingness to accept territorial concessions, with reports focused exclusively on "forcible mobilization."
- The details of the ["Alaska Agreement"](#) mentioned by Sergey Lavrov are not explained, leaving a critical piece of diplomatic history uncontextualized.
- Claims about ["biolabs"](#) rely heavily on a single "whistleblower in Karkieve" and archival state department releases without independent forensic verification of the alleged experiments.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Pragmatic Stalling" Theory:** Contrary to the narrative that Trump wants a quick deal, his participation in Geneva could be a stalling tactic to allow for the [massive movement of U.S. combat aircraft](#) into position for a decisive strike on Iran, using the "businessman" persona as cover for traditional hawkish objectives.
- **Russian Military Overextension:** The focus on "catastrophic" Ukrainian losses may hide Russian overextension; the use of ["volunteers"](#) and the high casualty rates for both sides could mean Moscow is also desperate for an "exit ramp" but projecting strength to maintain its domestic mandate.
- **Black Swan Event: A Chinese military purge mentioned in passing** could lead to an internal coup in Beijing, suddenly removing Russia's primary economic partner and collapsing the "multipolar" alliance before the Geneva accords are signed.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Diplomats should prepare for a **post-Oslo Accord Middle East**, as Israeli changes to [Areas A and B laws](#) indicate a move toward de facto annexation that requires a new international legal response.
- Security agencies must audit **defense supply chains** given the reported exhaustion of [Patriot and THAD interceptors](#) in a high-intensity drone/missile environment.

- Policy makers should engage with **Turkey as a primary mediator** in a multipolar system, rather than viewing it strictly through a NATO lens.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Investors in **hydrocarbons** should monitor [Russian oil flows through India and China](#), as these trade routes are proving resilient to sanctions and indicate a long-term eastward shift in demand.
- The **Arctic frontier** represents a high-risk but high-reward sector; if a U.S.-Russia "marriage" [materializes](#), shipping and extraction logistics in the region will see massive capital allocation.
- Companies using **social media platforms** for political engagement should diversify toward "freedom-based" sites [like Rumble or Bitchute](#) to mitigate the risk of state-influenced algorithmic suppression.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centers on the [release of DOJ documents](#) and the redefinition of international law regarding territory and sovereignty. Treaties once thought stable, like the NPT and START, are under active revision or abandonment.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
 - **START Treaty Moratorium:** Russian internal policy to continue observing qualitative limits [only if the U.S. complies](#).
 - **Israel Security Council Law Changes:** Sweeping changes to West Bank land registration [laws](#), allowing Jewish individuals to buy land in Palestinian-controlled areas A and B.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
 - **Munich Security Conference:** Speeches by Rubio and European leaders [exposed "cracks"](#) in the EU family over military commitments.
 - **UN Disarmament Conference:** Address by Iran's Foreign Minister slamming [U.S. "military aggression"](#) and unilateral treaty withdrawals.

KEY STORIES

- **Geneva Trilateral Peace Talks Begin:** Representatives from the U.S. (Kushner/Witkoff), Russia (Medinsky), and Ukraine (Umerov) meet to discuss territorial concessions and a ceasefire [under heavy secrecy](#).
- **Ukrainian Frontline Collapse:** Russian forces take control of Kupiansk and report a "catastrophic" situation for Ukrainian units trapped by [winter weather and flooding](#).
- **U.S.-Iran Indirect Nuclear Talks:** Progress is reported in Geneva on a new nuclear framework while [naval tensions escalate](#) in the Persian Gulf.
- **Epstein Files Finger-Pointing:** The DOJ release of Epstein documents causes a political storm in Washington, implicating [elites from both parties](#).
- **West Bank Annexation Moves:** Israel moves to register large swaths of the [West Bank](#) and includes Jerusalem under a new legal mechanism for settlement expansion.
- **Burkina Faso-Russia Alliance:** The Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso details military success with Russian help and signs [nuclear energy agreements](#) with Ross Atom.

- **The Munich Security "Circus":** A divide is highlighted between [France and Germany](#) over strategic autonomy and U.S. relations.
- **Death of Jesse Jackson:** The passing of the 84-year-old civil rights leader leads to reflections on [economic equity and banking greed](#).
- **TikTok Zionist Speech Ban:** A change in platform policy is framed as a [political maneuver](#) by pro-Israel billionaires.
- **Ukrainian Biolab Investigation:** Reports of "peaceful" labs conducting dangerous experiments with [pathogens and toxins](#) under Pentagon oversight.
- **RDK Proxy Operation Exposed:** Captive testimony suggests the "Russian Volunteer Corps" is a [Western-funded media ploy](#).
- **Sruitman Family Migration:** A Texas family moves to Russia to raise six children according to [traditional Catholic values](#).
- **India Defies Oil Sanctions:** New Delhi confirms its oil policy will be based on [national interest](#) rather than U.S. pressure.
- **Germany's Military Exhaustion:** Reports that the Bundeswehr is "all out of equipment" to [send to Ukraine](#).
- **Zelensky Corruption Scandals:** Arrest of former ministers and the flight of top associates [embroil the Kyiv government](#).

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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