

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

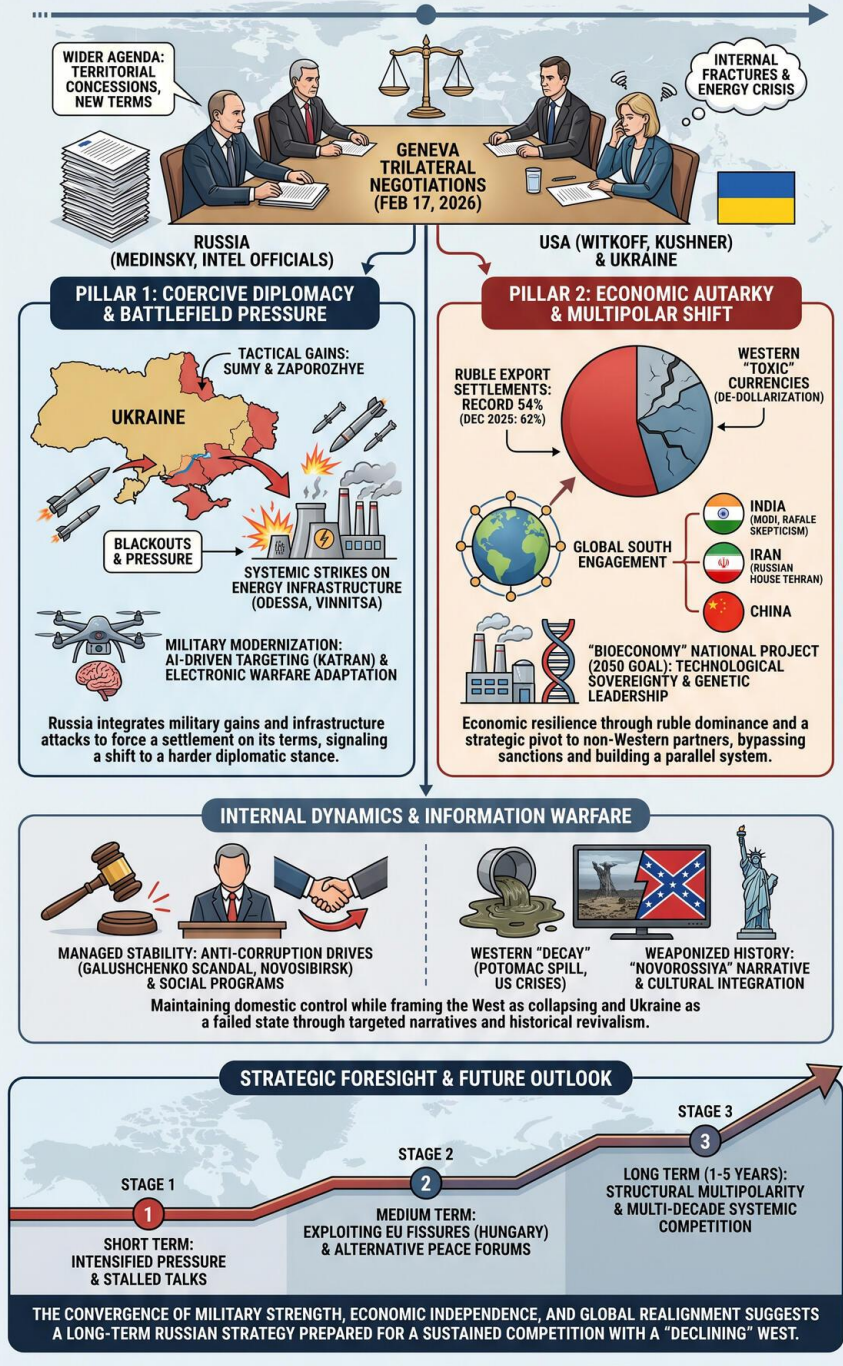
RUSSIA24

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

GEOPOLITICAL RECALIBRATION: RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC PIVOT & THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER

REPORT SUMMARY: LEVERAGING BATTLEFIELD SUCCESS & ECONOMIC AUTARKY AHEAD OF HIGH-STAKES NEGOTIATIONS



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GEOPOLITICAL RECALIBRATION: RUSSIA LEVERAGES BATTLEFIELD SUCCESS AND ECONOMIC AUTARKY AHEAD OF HIGH-STAKES GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 17, 2026, marks a pivotal moment in the ongoing conflict between Russia and the West, as the third round of high-level trilateral negotiations begins in Geneva. The Russian narrative emphasizes a position of strength, combining recent tactical gains in the Sumy and Zaporozhye regions with a massive strategic strike campaign against Ukrainian energy infrastructure. The delegation, led by Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky, entered talks with a stated mandate to discuss a "wider range of topics," explicitly including territorial concessions, signaling a shift from previous, more restricted diplomatic frameworks. This diplomatic push is synchronized with reports of significant internal fractures within the Ukrainian leadership and a burgeoning corruption scandal involving the former energy minister, which the state media utilizes to portray the "Kiev regime" as failing and illegitimate.

Simultaneously, Russia is signaling long-term economic resilience and a deepening pivot toward a multipolar order. Economic data released today highlights a record 54% share of the ruble in Russian export settlements, framed as the definitive failure of Western sanctions and "toxic" currencies. The state is also aggressively promoting a new "Bioeconomy" national project, aiming to lead in genetic engineering and biofuel production by 2050. On the global stage, the broadcasts highlight the deepening split within NATO, specifically focusing on Hungary's opposition to EU policy and the perceived unreliability of US security guarantees, while carefully monitoring Emmanuel Macron's attempts to secure defense contracts in India. The convergence of these events suggests a Russian strategy of "coercive diplomacy"—using military and economic pressure to force a settlement on Russian terms while preparing for a multi-decade systemic competition with the West.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Geneva Trilateral Negotiations:** The third round of talks between Russia, the USA, and Ukraine commenced at the Intercontinental Hotel. Russia is represented by [Vladimir Medinsky](#) and high-ranking military intelligence officials, while the US delegation includes Steven Witkoff and [Jared Kushner](#). The inclusion of territorial questions on the official agenda marks a significant escalation in diplomatic stakes.

- **Systemic Strikes on Ukrainian Energy:** Russian forces launched a massive coordinated strike using high-precision weaponry and drones against energy and military-industrial targets in [Odessa, Vinnitsa, and Ivano-Frankivsk](#). The strikes resulted in localized blackouts and were framed as a response to Ukrainian "terrorist attacks" on Russian soil.
- **Ukrainian Internal Instability:** The arrest of former Energy Minister [German Galushchenko](#) for allegedly laundering over \$100 million has triggered a major political crisis in Kiev. Russian media highlights this as evidence of systemic decay and a likely precursor to a leadership purge by President Zelensky.
- **Ruble Settlement Records:** The Central Bank reported that the share of the ruble in export payments reached [54% in 2025](#), surging to 62% in December alone. This is presented as a structural shift toward "de-dollarization" and economic sovereignty.
- **Macro-Regional Pivot to India:** French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India to sell [114 Rafale fighter jets](#) is scrutinized as a desperate attempt by European powers to find new markets and diplomatic relevance as US-Europe relations fray under the "Trump 2.0" influence.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The liberation of **Pokrovka** in the Sumy region and **Zapasnoye** in Zaporozhye were highlighted as evidence of the ["North" and "Dnepr" groupings'](#) tactical efficiency.

- The Russian military is integrating new **AI-driven target acquisition systems** (Katran) to counter FPV drones on the front lines, signaling a rapid adaptation to [electronic warfare realities](#).

Energy & Critical Infrastructure Security

- Russia is moving toward long-term water security in **Donbas**, with plans to build new pipelines and restore Soviet-era irrigation systems, estimating a [full launch by 2027-2028](#).
- Ukraine's transit blocks on Russian oil to Hungary have forced the **MOL company** to request 250 tons from [strategic reserves](#), weaponizing energy transit ahead of Hungarian elections.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- The State Duma adopted a law requiring operators to **shut down communications** upon request from the [FSB](#) and approved restrictions on the transfer of **genetic data** to foreigners.
- The sentencing of former officials in Novosibirsk and the investigation into the "Midas" crypto-laundering scheme reflect an [intensified domestic anti-corruption drive](#).

Macroeconomics & Trade

- Russia resumed **egg exports to the EU** (specifically Czechia) for the first time since 2023, signaling a potential [cracking of the trade blockade](#).
- Yandex reported a **21% increase in turnover** for its e-commerce services, reaching 200 billion rubles, indicating robust [domestic consumption](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of History and Identity

A significant portion of the day's coverage was dedicated to the "**Novorossiya**" project, framing the industrial development of Donbas not as a recent military acquisition, but as the restoration of a 19th-century [imperial legacy](#). By highlighting figures like Evgraf Kovalevsky, the state creates a narrative of historical inevitability, where Russian engineers and scientists built the "industrial spine" of the region that Ukraine is now allegedly "occupying." This trend suggests that Russia's long-term goal is the complete cultural and structural integration of these territories, moving beyond mere military control.

The Failure of Globalist "Deep State" Institutions

There is a recurring theme of the "**globalist**" **collapse**, with frequent mentions of the "Deep State" in both the US and Europe. The broadcasts link disparate events—from the [Epstein scandal](#) and US environmental disasters to the alleged poisoning of Russian dissidents—to a narrative of Western institutional rot. This framing serves to justify Russia's isolation from these institutions while positioning the "multipolar" alternative (BRICS, etc.) as the only [sane and stable global path](#).

Strategic Economic Autonomy through "Bioeconomy"

The emphasis on the **Bioeconomy Technological Forum** represents a new strategic vector. Russia is signaling that it intends to bypass traditional Western-led tech sectors by dominating [genetic engineering](#),

[bioplastics](#), and [waste processing](#). This "Nature-Like Technology" narrative is positioned as a competitive advantage for a nation with vast natural resources, aiming to achieve "technological sovereignty" by 2050.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Russia is currently projecting an image of **monolithic stability**, contrasting it with the perceived chaos in the West. Domestic instability is largely presented as a **managed process** through anti-corruption crackdowns on regional elites (e.g., Novosibirsk) and the enforcement of "sovereign" laws. Public sentiment is bolstered through social programs like the ["Presidential Rental Housing"](#) initiative in Chukotka, which aims to attract specialized labor (doctors, teachers) to remote regions, effectively using economic incentives to secure geopolitical loyalty in the Arctic.

However, **internal vulnerabilities** exist in the form of extreme weather events. The "Balkan cyclone" has caused significant disruption across Central Russia and Tatarstan, with [record snowfalls \(111cm in Kirov\)](#) and infrastructure failures. The state media manages this by focusing on the "heroic" efforts of emergency services and meteorologists like Evgeny Tishkovets, framing the weather as an external challenge that validates the need for strong [centralized management](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international system is framed as a **fracturing arena** where Western hegemony is in terminal decline. Russia's global posture

is one of **aggressive engagement with the "Global South"** while waiting for the West to exhaust itself. The opening of the "Russian House" in [Tehran](#) and the courting of Prime Minister Modi (through criticism of Macron's Rafale deal) illustrate a strategy of building a robust counter-bloc.

A critical element of this posture is the **demonization of European leadership**. Figures like Macron and German Chancellor Scholz are portrayed as weak, "inept," and subservient to a changing US administration. By highlighting the [crisis in Franco-German relations](#) at the Munich Security Conference, Russia seeks to exploit internal EU fissures, positioning itself as the more [reliable and principled actor](#) for nations like Hungary and Slovakia.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The Russian economic state is characterized by high liquidity in domestic markets and a rapid shift toward non-Western currencies, though the banking sector faces a projected cash deficit as deposits decrease in attractiveness. Market sentiment appears bullish on domestic industrial projects but remains wary of energy transit risks via Ukraine.

- **Ruble Settlement Share:** Reached **54%** for exports in 2025; **62%** in December 2025 ([Source: CBR](#)).
- **Currency Rates:** USD at **76.62**, EUR at **91.03**, Yuan at **11.08 rubles**.
- **Banking Liquidity:** Projected requirement of **2-3 trillion rubles** for 2026 due to increased cash in circulation [and FNB operations](#).

- **Energy Costs:** Wood for heating in Estonia reached **80 Euro per cubic meter**, leading to a return to primitive [manual labor](#).
- **Yandex Financials:** Revenue up **32%**, dividends of **110 rubles per share** under [consideration](#).
- **Strategic Reserves:** Hungary (MOL) requesting **250 tons of oil** due to [transit blocks](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Today's reports focus on the erosion of the "Zelensky Cabinet" and the solidification of the "Medinsky-led" diplomatic front. The shifts signal a move toward more technocratic and hardline negotiators as the conflict enters a possible settlement phase.

- **German Galushchenko (Former Ukrainian Energy Minister):** Arrested in a massive **corruption scandal**; his status has shifted from "witness" to "accused," signaling a major [internal power struggle](#) in Kiev.
- **Vladimir Medinsky (Russian Presidential Aide):** Now leading the Geneva delegation; his presence, after being absent from Abu Dhabi talks, signals a [higher-stakes political mandate](#).
- **Igor Kostyuk (Head of GRU):** Included in the Geneva negotiating group, signaling that [military and intelligence considerations](#) are paramount in the peace process.
- **Ruben Vardanyan (Former Artsakh State Minister):** Sentenced by a Baku court to **20 years**, representing a finality to the previous Armenian-Azerbaijani leadership era [in Nagorno-Karabakh](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial hierarchy today prioritizes **diplomatic maneuvering and military superiority**. The Geneva talks are the "Lead Story," but they are framed not as a quest for compromise, but as Russia presenting terms to an increasingly desperate West. A significant amount of time is dedicated to **weather-related human interest stories** (the blizzard in Central Russia and "Presidential Rental" program), serving to ground the high-level geopolitics in domestic stability and paternalistic state care.

Buried Stories: Detailed information on Russian military casualties is entirely absent. The "Starlink" disruption is mentioned only as a failed Ukrainian propaganda attempt. **Conspicuous Omissions:** There is no mention of the potential impact of renewed inflation or the long-term sustainability of the ruble's artificial strength. The protests against the national memorial cemetery in Kiev are covered, but any domestic Russian dissent regarding the SVO is [notably missing](#).

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The world is portrayed as a binary system between a "decaying, chaotic West" and a "stable, constructive East." The USA is increasingly framed as a divided entity, with the "Trump/Kushner" wing seen as potentially pragmatic, while the current "Deep State" administration is [inept and destructive](#).

- **Ukraine:** Weak, corrupt, and crumbling. Portrayed as a "failed state" where leadership is more interested in laundering money than [saving soldiers from frostbite](#).

- **USA:** A chaotic hegemon. Portrayed as "overloaded" and unable to fulfill defense orders, with production lines ["overwhelmed"](#) and domestic crises (Maryland sewage) [ignored by leadership](#).
- **Hungary (Victor Orban):** A "principled friend." Framed as the only [rational actor in Europe](#), resisting the "illusion" of a Kiev victory.
- **India (Narendra Modi):** A strong, independent power. Portrayed as "knowing how to balance" and [resisting Western pressure](#) to abandon Russian oil.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The "Galushchenko Scandal" is being used to prime the international community for the **inevitable collapse of the Zelensky government**, framing it as too corrupt to sustain [Western support](#).
- **Psychological Operations:** The detailed segments on Ukrainian soldiers suffering from "**General Frost**" (hypothermia and frostbite) and the lack of evacuation orders serve to demoralize the [Ukrainian armed forces](#) and public.
- **Disinformation Management:** The "frog venom" and "Starlink" stories are aggressively debunked as "**British-orchestrated fakes**" designed to distract from the [reality of the front line](#).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The Geneva talks will likely **stall or yield only marginal results** as Russia uses them to "clock" Western concessions while maintaining military pressure. A true breakthrough depends on the [internal outcome](#) of the Ukrainian delegation's infighting.
- The **energy crisis in Ukraine** will reach a catastrophic level by early March if the current frequency of strategic strikes continues, potentially forcing a [mass exodus from Odessa](#).
- Russia will formalize its "**Bioeconomy**" **National Project** as a cornerstone of its post-SVO industrial strategy, creating new [investment opportunities](#) in genetics and biotech.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect an intensification of the Galushchenko investigation to include more senior figures in Kiev, potentially reaching the Presidential Office. Military strikes will likely target [secondary electrical nodes](#) to permanently degrade the Western Ukrainian power grid.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Hungary's parliamentary elections in April will become a flashpoint for EU unity, with Russia likely offering favorable [energy deals](#) to bolster Orban's position. The Geneva format may transition to a "peace conference" hosted by a [neutral third party like the UAE](#).

Long Term (1-5 Years): The structural de-dollarization of the Russian economy will likely reach **75-80%** for all non-Western trade. The "Novorossiia" region will be rebuilt as a

[technologically advanced industrial hub](#) centered on automated coal mining and bio-agriculture.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Risk of Ukrainian Energy Grid Total Collapse:** Massive strikes on nodes in Odessa/Ivano-Frankivsk could cause an unrecoverable blackout. **Triggers:** Coordinated strike on the Dniester Hydroelectric Station. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Humanitarian catastrophe and mass migration. **Mitigations:** Immediate Western provision of mobile [Patriot systems](#).
- **Escalation of US-Iran Conflict:** The mobilization of US aircraft carriers and refueling planes near Iran could lead to direct kinetic action. **Triggers:** IRGC strikes on "Elon Musk dishes" [or shipping lanes](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Global oil price spike. **Mitigations:** Successful [Russian-mediated backchannel talks in Tehran](#).
- **Arctic Security Vulnerability:** Increasing militarization of the Finnish border and "hybrid" threats could lead to a localized border skirmish. **Triggers:** Accidental closure of [Finnish-Russian border crossings](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Direct NATO-Russia confrontation. **Mitigations:** Restoring [bilateral emergency hotlines](#).
- **Regional Financial Instability in Russia:** The projected 3-trillion-ruble liquidity deficit could cause a spike in interest rates. **Triggers:** Sudden mass withdrawal of deposits. **Likelihood:** Low. **Impact:** Slowdown in [industrial credit](#). **Mitigations:** Increased [CBR interventions and FNB spending](#).

- **Global Supply Chain Rupture via India:** US-French competition for Indian defense contracts could alienate Delhi from Western security architectures. **Triggers:** US sanctions on India for [purchasing Russian S-400s or oil](#). **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Strategic shift of India [toward the BRICS security core](#). **Mitigations:** G7 granting India ["special observer" status](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts do not explain why Russia resumed **food exports (eggs) to Czechia** despite the ongoing "sanctions war" and political hostility. Is this a silent [barter agreement](#)?
- The **"Starlink shutdown"** narrative is contradictory. Russian sources claim it hasn't affected drone accuracy, yet Western media reports a significant [tactical impact](#).
- The **internal dissent within the Ukrainian delegation** (Budanov vs. Yermak) is presented as fact based on "The Economist," but no primary [evidence or direct quotes](#) are provided.
- The environmental disaster on the **Potomac River** is used as a political weapon against the US administration, but the actual [ecological risk and cleanup efforts](#) are ignored.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Geneva Trap":** Russia's participation in talks is not a sign of diplomatic openness but a stalling tactic to allow for a **major spring offensive** while Western aid is frozen in debate. The focus on "territory" might be a deliberate non-starter intended to [guarantee the talks' failure](#).
- **The "Managed Corruption" Thesis:** The Galushchenko arrest in Ukraine might be a **deliberate cleaning of house** by the Zelensky administration to satisfy US demands for accountability before receiving a new aid package, rather than a [sign of collapse](#).
- **Black Swan Event:** A total **technological malfunction of the Katran AI system** leads to mass "friendly fire" incidents on the Russian side, causing a sudden [front-line tactical retreat](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Accelerate the deployment of mobile electronic warfare units to counter AI-integrated battlefield [targeting systems](#).
- **Economic:** Prepare for a "permanent ruble" environment in energy markets, as the 54% ruble share indicates a [point of no return](#) for dollar settlements.
- **Diplomatic:** Intensify engagement with "neutral" hubs like **Abu Dhabi and New Delhi**, as they have become the critical intermediaries for [peace negotiations](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chains:** Monitor Hungarian election rhetoric; transit through the "Druzhba" pipeline is at [extreme risk of long-term stoppage](#).
- **Regulatory Compliance:** New Russian laws on **genetic data** will require immediate audits for any biotech or [pharma companies](#) operating in the region.
- **Capital Allocation:** High growth potential in the **Russian Bioeconomy sector** (bioplastics, waste-to-energy), but investment is contingent on high-level [political patronage](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The State Duma and government bodies focused today on consolidating **internal security and technological sovereignty** through restrictive data laws and the promotion of a new industrial sector. Legislative efforts are increasingly focused on the Arctic and "Novorossiia" integration.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **DNA Data Protection Law:** Restricts the transfer of Russian genetic information to foreign entities to prevent biological [threats](#).
- **FSB Communications Mandate:** Requires operators to disconnect communication lines upon intelligence agency [request during special operations](#).
- **Cryptocurrency Legalization Update:** Moves toward creating a sovereign framework for crypto mining to facilitate [cross-border payments](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Bioeconomy Strategic Forum:** High-level meeting to define the "National Project" for [biotechnology development through 2050](#).
- **Geneva Press Briefing:** Dmitry Peskov and Vladimir Medinsky defining the ["wider scope" of the peace negotiations](#).
- **Russian-Mongolian Inter-Parliamentary Meeting:** Focused on historical ties and modern [infrastructure cooperation](#).

KEY STORIES

- **Third Round of Geneva Peace Talks:** Delegations from Russia (Medinsky), USA (Kushner/Witkoff), and Ukraine (Umerov) meet to discuss territory and conflict resolution. Russia is presenting a "broad agenda" while emphasizing [battlefield advantages](#).
- **Strategic Strikes on Odessa and Western Ukraine:** Coordinated missile and drone attacks targeted the **Tairov substation** and energy hubs in Ivano-Frankivsk, causing [wide-scale power outages](#).
- **Galushchenko Corruption Arrest:** Former Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko accused of a **\$112 million laundering scheme** involving Swiss funds and offshore [crypto-accounts](#).
- **Ruble Settlement Milestone:** The Russian ruble now accounts for over **half (54%)** of export trade, effectively ending the dominance of ["toxic" currencies](#).
- **Macron's India Sales Pitch:** The French President attempts to secure a deal for **114 Rafale jets** while inviting PM Modi to the [G7 summit in Italy](#).

- **Liberation of Pokrovka and Zapasnoye:** Russian forces took control of strategic settlements in Sumy and Zaporozhye, utilizing [coordinated armor and drone strikes](#).
- **Estonian Heating Crisis:** Severe energy prices in Tallinn lead citizens to return to **manual wood chopping** as wood hits **80 Euros per meter**.
- **Novorossiia Water Security Project:** Plans announced to rebuild Soviet irrigation networks to secure the [long-term industrial viability of Donbas](#).
- **Potomac River Sewage Spill:** [A massive infrastructure failure in the US capital releases 900,000 tons of waste, used as an example of American internal decay](#).
- **Bioeconomy National Project:** Russia signals a pivot to biotech, genetics, and biopharmaceuticals as the [industrial base of the future](#).
- **Ruben Vardanyan Sentence:** A Baku court sentences the former Nagorno-Karabakh official to **20 years** for "terrorist financing" and [illegal border crossing](#).
- **Balkan Cyclone Weather Alert:** Record snowfalls (up to **111cm**) disrupt transit in Central Russia and Tatarstan, forcing [school closures and emergency responses](#).
- **Russian House Opens in Tehran:** A new cultural center established to deepen ties with Iran amid [shared Western pressure](#).
- **Figure Skater Nazarychev "Relocant" Criticism:** The network mocks a Russian athlete who fled to New York, framing his life as [impoverished and unpatriotic](#).
- **Maryland Ecological Emergency:** Donald Trump criticizes local authorities for the [Potomac sewage spill](#).

- **Lunar New Year Celebrations:** Russia and China celebrate the "Year of the Red Fire Horse" with mass [drone shows and festivals](#).
- **Novosibirsk Anti-Corruption Trial:** Former Deputy Prosecutor Lyubov Kuzminok sentenced to **8 years** for [protecting illegal markets](#).

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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