

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELEARUBA

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL STRAIN & TRADE REALIGNMENTS: 2026 GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE



STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & KEY THEMES

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS)

Peruvian Impeachment Vote. Expanded "Case Midas" Arrests in Ukraine.

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS)

USMCA Review Fever Pitch. U.S. DHS Shutdown. Narrow Funding Bill.

LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS)

"Illiberal Arc" Solidifies in Europe. Permanently Diminished Traditional Multilateralism.

KEY TRENDS

The Fragmentation of the Liberal Order. Trans-shipment as the New Economic Front. Institutional Decay in the Periphery. U.S. "Civilizational" Foreign Policy. Commodity & Energy Leverage.

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GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL STRAIN AND TRADE REALIGNMENTS DEFINE 2026 GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 17, 2026, reveals a global system grappling with the fourth anniversary of the Ukraine invasion and the resulting strain on international alliances, underscored by a high-stakes [trilateral negotiation](#) in Geneva involving Russia, Ukraine, and the United States. While Washington engages in these high-level diplomatic efforts, the domestic political landscape in the U.S. remains fractured, evidenced by a [partial shutdown](#) of the Department of Homeland Security due to funding disputes over immigration policy. This domestic instability is occurring simultaneously with a pivot toward "America First" regionalism, as the U.S. administration leverages the [136-day countdown](#) to a mandatory USMCA review to pressure Canada and Mexico into tighter supply chain alignment against Chinese "trans-shipment" interests.

In Latin America, democratic institutions are facing severe stress tests. Peru is mired in the

"Chifagate" scandal, where the [interim presidency](#) of José Jerí faces imminent censorship and possible impeachment following allegations of improper meetings with Chinese businessmen and corruption. Similarly, Guatemala is locked in a constitutional crisis as President Bernardo Arévalo struggles to remove [Attorney General Consuelo Porras](#), who is accused by international bodies of obstructing justice and participating in the disappearance of indigenous children. These regional instabilities highlight a trend of institutional decay and judicial warfare that complicates U.S. efforts to secure its southern periphery.

The day's events also signal an escalating ideological shift within the Western alliance. The U.S. administration is overtly cultivating relationships with illiberal leaders in Europe, notably [Hungary's Viktor Orban](#) and Slovakia's Robert Fico, framing these ties as a "golden era" of bilateral relations based on shared views on immigration and sovereignty. This shift is creating friction with traditional multilateral bodies like the UN, which faced [blunt criticism](#) for its perceived impotence in Gaza and Ukraine, while the U.S. simultaneously signals a conditional commitment to NATO, contingent on European nations assuming greater defensive autonomy and aligning with U.S. "civilizational" standards regarding immigration.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

• Ukraine Invasion Fourth Anniversary and Trilateral Negotiations

- Delegations from Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. are meeting in Geneva for a [third round](#) of trilateral negotiations aimed at ending the war.
- Former President Trump has publicly signaled that Russia seeks a deal, placing pressure on President Zelensky to negotiate or face a [lost opportunity](#).
- Systemic corruption in the Ukrainian energy sector continues to plague the war effort, evidenced by the arrest of former Energy Minister [Jerman Galuschenko](#) in the "Case Midas" investigation.

• USMCA Review Countdown and North American Trade Pressure

- The 136-day countdown to the [joint review](#) of the USMCA has begun, with the U.S. administration signaling a potential shift toward annual reviews rather than the current 16-year extension.
- A massive Canadian trade mission led by [Dominique LeBlanc](#) has arrived in Mexico to explore direct investment opportunities, bypassing U.S. intermediaries.
- The U.S. is increasingly focused on Chinese "trans-shipment" through Mexico and Canada, demanding stricter rules to prevent [non-market economies](#) from accessing the North American market.

• Peruvian Political Collapse (Chifagate)

- Interim President José Jerí faces a [censorship motion](#) in Congress following reports of him meeting Chinese businessmen while "encapuchado" (hooded) at a restaurant.
- The scandal includes allegations of [improper state contracts](#) awarded to young women following private meetings at the government palace.
- Constitutional experts are divided on whether the legal path forward is [impeachment](#) ([vacancia](#)) or congressional censorship, with a vote expected imminently.

• Guatemalan Institutional Warfare

- Attorney General Consuelo Porras continues to defy President Arévalo, seeking [judicial immunity](#) through appointments to the Constitutional Court or the Supreme Court.
- UN experts have linked Porras to the [forced disappearance](#) of at least 80 indigenous children, further isolating her office internationally.
- Porras's office launched [illegal raids](#) on the Bar Association during judicial elections, escalating the conflict between the executive and the Public Ministry.

• U.S. Domestic Policy and Border Security Stalemate

- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security remains in a [partial shutdown](#) as Democrats and the administration clash over immigration raid protocols.
- Despite the shutdown, essential personnel are required to [work without pay](#), minimizing immediate public disruption but stressing institutional morale.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Geopolitical Competition & Bloc Politics

- The U.S. is fostering a new ideological bloc within the West, centered on [illiberal alignment](#) with Hungary and Slovakia, prioritizing national sovereignty over EU-style multilateralism.
- Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces conducted drills in the [Strait of Hormuz](#) just hours before nuclear negotiations were set to begin in Geneva, a classic show-of-force tactic.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- In Guatemala, the "Public Ministry" is being weaponized as a tool of [institutional capture](#), using judicial processes to shield officials from corruption and human rights charges.
- The U.S. administration is utilizing [Section 232 tariffs](#) on steel and aluminum not just as economic tools, but as leverage for political concessions within the USMCA framework.

Energy & Critical Minerals

- Venezuela is witnessing protests by students opposed to [U.S. negotiations](#) at the Miraflores Palace, where oil resources are being used as a bargaining chip for political legitimacy.
- The mining sector in Mexico remains a high-risk zone for foreign capital, highlighted by the disappearance and death of [10 miners](#) at a Canadian-owned silver mine in Sinaloa, likely linked to cartel influence.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Fragmentation of the Liberal Order

A recurring theme throughout the day is the overt rejection of traditional multilateral institutions by the U.S. and its new allies. The UN is being framed as a [failed entity](#), unable to resolve conflicts in Gaza or Ukraine. This sentiment is echoed in the Munich Security Conference rhetoric, where NATO is portrayed as a [conditional alliance](#) rather than a foundational security guarantee. The U.S. is shifting toward a "hub-and-spoke" model of bilateralism, rewarding "ideological allies" like Orban while placing transactional pressure on neighbors like Canada and Mexico.

Trans-shipment as the New Economic Front

Economic statecraft is increasingly focused on the "trans-shipment" problem—the use of third countries by China to circumvent U.S. tariffs. This has become the primary [frictional point](#) in the USMCA relationship. Canada's Dominique LeBlanc is forced to defend a [limited arrangement](#) with China regarding canola and seafood, while the U.S. demands a total blockade of Chinese electric vehicles and critical components. This represents a trend of "de-risking" evolving into aggressive "bloc-based" protectionism.

Institutional Decay in the Periphery

The political crises in Peru and Guatemala are not isolated events but part of a broader trend of [democratic backsliding](#) in Latin America. The use of "hooded" meetings in Peru and the systematic use of the judiciary to protect criminal interests in Guatemala suggest a breakdown in the rule of law that creates a

power vacuum. This vacuum is increasingly being filled by external actors (like China in Peru's "Chifagate") or non-state actors (like the cartels impacting the [mining sector](#) in Mexico).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United States: Institutional Paralysis and Rhetorical Polarization

- The [DHS shutdown](#) exemplifies a government unable to fulfill basic functions due to partisan deadlock over immigration, a core identity issue.
- The escalating rhetoric between current and former leadership is stark; Barack Obama's criticism of [ICE tactics](#) as "similar to countries with dictatorships" highlights the extreme polarization of the American security apparatus.

Peru: Crisis of Legitimacy

- The interim presidency of José Jerí is suffering from a [total loss of mandate](#). The "Chifagate" scandal has galvanized both the public and Congress against him, with the military's stance remaining a critical unknown variable.
- The rapid succession of presidents—potentially [eight in ten years](#)—indicates a systemic failure in the Peruvian constitutional order.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The U.S. "Civilizational" Foreign Policy

The U.S. posture has shifted from promoting democracy to protecting "civilization." In

Munich, the administration's message focused on [immigration](#) as a threat to European and American identity. This framing is being used to justify new alliances with right-wing governments in Hungary and Slovakia, while simultaneously distancing the U.S. from traditional Western European allies who do not share this "civilizational" priority. The world is being framed not as a market, but as a [zone of ideological conflict](#) where immigration and sovereignty are the primary battlefields.

Canadian Strategic Hedging

Canada is attempting a difficult balancing act. By joining the [European "Safe" program](#), Ottawa is seeking security alternatives outside the North American orbit. Simultaneously, the large-scale [trade mission to Mexico](#) suggests an effort to build a "bilateral defense" against U.S. protectionism within the USMCA. However, Canada remains vulnerable to U.S. pressure regarding its [China ties](#), a major leverage point for Washington.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Market sentiment is dominated by the uncertainty surrounding the USMCA review and the proliferation of sectoral tariffs. While the U.S. pushes for protectionist measures, business leaders in Canada and Mexico are expressing deep concern over the [instability](#) caused by the possibility of annual trade reviews. Inflationary pressures from tariffs on steel, aluminum, and automobiles are expected to increase as the 136-day countdown progresses.

- **Commodities:** Oil remains a central geopolitical tool, with U.S.-Venezuela [negotiations](#) focused on resources despite political protests.

- **Trade Friction:** U.S. [Section 232 tariffs](#) continue to disrupt integrated supply chains, particularly in the automotive and aluminum sectors.
- **Foreign Investment:** Mexico's film industry is receiving a [30% tax incentive](#) to attract international productions, a rare bright spot in a high-risk investment environment.
- **Corporate Risk:** The mining sector in Sinaloa, Mexico, faces significant operational risks from [cartel activity](#), impacting Canadian silver producers like Visla Silver.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day's transcripts highlight several leaders whose positions are under extreme pressure or whose roles are shifting due to domestic and international crises.

- **José Jerí (Peru):** The interim president is the primary "loser" of the day, facing [imminent removal](#) following the "Chifagate" scandal. His political survival appears unlikely.
- **Consuelo Porras (Guatemala):** Despite international condemnation, Porras remains a powerful figure, [fighting to retain immunity](#) and control over the judicial system against President Arévalo.
- **Dominique LeBlanc (Canada):** Emerging as a key diplomatic fixer, LeBlanc is leading the charge to [protect Canadian interests](#) in Mexico while managing tensions with Washington.
- **Jerman Galuschenko (Ukraine):** The [arrested](#) former Energy Minister represents the high-profile casualties of Zelensky's efforts to purge corruption and maintain Western support.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

TeleAruba's coverage prioritized international geopolitical crises—particularly Ukraine and the U.S.-Iran negotiations—over local Aruban news, reflecting its status as a regional hub for CNN-sourced content. The lead stories were heavily focused on the [Geneva talks](#) and the USMCA countdown, emphasizing a tone of global instability and economic anxiety. The "Chifagate" scandal in Peru was given significant airtime, presented as a cautionary tale of institutional collapse. Locally, the [license plate shortage](#) and Carnival security were the primary focus, treated with a mix of bureaucratic frustration and cultural pride. Conspicuously omitted was any deep analysis of the impact of climate change on these supply chains, despite the [flooding in Colombia](#) and the mention of "climate emergencies."

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The global arena is portrayed as a fracturing landscape where "principled" national sovereignty is clashing with "inept" international organizations. The U.S. is framed as a disruptor, competent in its pressure tactics but unstable in its internal governance. Latin American nations are portrayed as zones of chaos, requiring either U.S. intervention or harsh "Bukele-style" [mano dura](#) tactics to restore order.

COUNTRIES

- **Hungary:** Portrayed as a **principled ally** and an ideological model. "The leadership of Orban is vital for the interests of the [United States](#)."

- **Peru:** Framed as a **chaotic and corrupt** actor. The political situation is described as a "series of [scandals](#)" that have compromised the presidency.
- **Canada:** Portrayed as a **reliable but pressured** partner, attempting to maneuver between U.S. demands and its own economic needs. "Mexico for us is a [very reliable partner](#)."

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as **strong and transactional**. He is seen as the driving force behind the Ukraine peace efforts and USMCA [pressure tactics](#).
- **Bernardo Arévalo:** Framed as a **weak/beleaguered** reformer, unable to overcome the "institutional capture" by [Consuelo Porras](#).
- **Viktor Orban:** Portrayed as a **competent and vital** ideologue whose relationship with the U.S. is in a "[golden era](#)."

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The U.S. administration is actively seeding the narrative that the UN and NATO are [obsolete](#) in their current forms, preparing the public for a more isolationist or bilateral foreign policy.
- **Psychological Operations:** Iran's drills in the [Strait of Hormuz](#) are a blatant psy-op aimed at strengthening their hand in the Geneva nuclear negotiations.

- **Domestic Disinformation:** The conflict between Obama and Trump over [racist caricatures](#) and ICE tactics represents a weaponization of cultural grievances to distract from institutional failures like the DHS shutdown.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The End of USMCA Extension: The U.S. will likely move toward an annual review of USMCA, using it as a rolling tool for political concessions rather than a long-term trade agreement. This will create [permanent uncertainty](#) for North American investors.

Peruvian Coup or Collapse: If José Jerí is removed, Peru faces a high risk of military intervention or a complete breakdown of civilian rule, especially if no clear successor emerges from the [divided Congress](#).

The "Bukeleization" of Guatemala: As the Arévalo administration remains paralyzed, the public demand for "mano dura" (iron fist) policies like those in [El Salvador](#) will likely empower more authoritarian actors, potentially including Porras or her allies.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): The [impeachment vote](#) in Peru will be the primary regional flashpoint. Expect further arrests in the Ukrainian energy sector as the "Case Midas" [investigation expands](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The USMCA review will reach a [fever pitch](#), potentially leading to pre-emptive Canadian or Mexican countermeasures against U.S. tariffs. The U.S. [DHS shutdown](#) will likely end through a

narrow, temporary funding bill that kicks the immigration problem further down the road.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A new "Illiberal Arc" will likely solidify across the Atlantic, [realigning NATO](#) and the EU around immigration control and national sovereignty, permanently diminishing the influence of traditional multilateralism.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current global environment is characterized by high institutional fragility and escalating trade friction, creating several high-impact risks for both state and private actors.

- **Risk of North American Trade Breakdown:** The move toward annual USMCA reviews could lead to a [cascade of tariffs](#) that breaks the integrated supply chain. **Triggers:** U.S. formal rejection of a 16-year USMCA extension. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Massive disruption to auto and steel industries. **Mitigations:** Diversification of supply chains into South America or Southeast Asia.
- **Peruvian Constitutional Collapse:** The removal of President Jerí without a clear successor could lead to [widespread civil unrest](#). **Triggers:** Failed censorship vote followed by violent protests. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Regional instability and disruption of mining exports. **Mitigations:** International mediation through the OAS.
- **Escalation in the Strait of Hormuz:** Iranian drills could lead to a [miscalculation](#) during sensitive negotiations. **Triggers:** Accidental collision or seizure of a tanker. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Immediate spike in global oil prices. **Mitigations:** Maintaining back-channel communications despite public drills.

- **Capture of the Guatemalan Judiciary:** The permanent shielding of corrupt officials could turn Guatemala into a [pariah state](#). **Triggers:** Appointment of Consuelo Porras to the Constitutional Court. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Cutoff of international aid and increased migration. **Mitigations:** Targeted international sanctions on judicial officials.
- **Expansion of Cartel Influence in Mexican Infrastructure:** The death of miners in [Sinaloa](#) highlights the threat to critical infrastructure. **Triggers:** Direct cartel takeover of a major foreign mine. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Withdrawal of foreign capital from Mexican mining. **Mitigations:** Joint security task forces between government and private industry.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

While the transcripts are dense with political and trade analysis, several critical areas remain under-covered, creating significant blind spots for risk assessment.

- The transcripts mention [climate emergencies](#) in Colombia but fail to detail how these environmental shocks are impacting regional food security or migration patterns.
- The role of the **Peruvian military** in the current crisis is completely absent, leaving a critical gap in understanding whether a coup is a viable outcome of "Chifagate."
- While "trans-shipment" from China is discussed, there is no mention of how **Chinese state-owned enterprises** are reacting to these USMCA threats or if they are planning to relocate manufacturing directly into North America.

- The [DHS shutdown](#) is treated as a political event, but the transcripts provide no data on the actual degradation of border security operations during the funding lapse.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Chifagate" Smokescreen:** The scandal surrounding President Jerí may be a deliberate **diversion** orchestrated by the Peruvian Congress to pass unpopular judicial reforms or facilitate a quiet sale of state assets to non-Western interests while the executive is paralyzed.
- **Strategic Incompetence in the DHS Shutdown:** The shutdown may not be a failure of negotiation but a **deliberate tactic** by the administration to create a visible crisis at the border, justifying a future emergency decree or a pivot toward even more radical immigration restrictions.
- **Black Swan: The Russo-Ukrainian Pivot:** The Geneva talks could result in a **sudden, unexpected realignment** where Russia and Ukraine agree to a deal that excludes NATO, creating a new Eastern European security bloc that leaves the U.S. and EU strategically marginalized.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Security: Prepare for a [leadership vacuum](#) in Peru and its potential to draw in Chinese influence through "Chifagate"-style clandestine diplomacy.

- Economic: Establish a [formal monitoring mechanism](#) for Chinese trans-shipment to provide objective data for the upcoming USMCA review.
- Diplomatic: Reassess the "Illiberal Arc" in Europe; the U.S. must balance its ties with Orban against the risk of alienating core NATO and EU institutions.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Supply Chain: De-risk automotive and steel dependencies on the [USMCA framework](#), as the shift toward annual reviews will make long-term capital allocation impossible.
- Regulatory Compliance: Enhance due diligence in [Mexican and Peruvian](#) investments to account for the breakdown in judicial independence and the increased risk of cartel interference.
- Safety Standards: For mining and infrastructure companies, the Sinaloa [tragedy](#) signals a need for sovereign-level security protocols for foreign employees in high-risk zones.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The day was marked by legislative paralysis in the U.S. and institutional warfare in Central

America, with several high-stakes bills and hearings defining the governance landscape.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **DHS Funding Bill:** The core of the [U.S. shutdown](#), centered on Republican demands for restricted immigration raid protocols versus Democratic insistence on oversight.
- **Amnesty Law (Venezuela):** The Venezuelan National Assembly is debating a [second discussion](#) of an amnesty bill for political prisoners, a key condition in U.S. oil negotiations.
- **USMCA Annual Review Proposal:** A U.S. administration [proposal](#) to move from a 16-year extension to a year-by-year review, effectively weaponizing trade policy.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Rubio-Orban Press Conference:** A [joint event](#) signaling a "golden era" of bilateral relations and shared illiberal priorities.
- **Dominique LeBlanc Press Event (Mexico):** A Canadian effort to [reassure investors](#) and distance Canada from U.S. USMCA pressure.
- **Geneva Trilateral Presser:** A [highly controlled event](#) where delegations signaled minimal progress on the 4th anniversary of the Ukraine war.

KEY STORIES

- **Geneva Trilateral Talks:** U.S., Russia, and Ukraine meet for the third round of [peace negotiations](#) as the war hits the four-year mark.

- **USMCA 136-Day Countdown:** The [clock begins](#) on a critical review that threatens to move North American trade to an annual review basis.
- **Peruvian Chifagate Scandal:** Interim President José Jerí faces [impeachment](#) over hooded meetings with Chinese businessmen and improper contracts.
- **Guatemalan Judicial Crisis:** AG Consuelo Porras defies President Arévalo and is [linked by the UN](#) to the disappearance of 80 indigenous children.
- **DHS Partial Shutdown:** A [funding lapse](#) in Washington over immigration policy leaves thousands of federal employees working without pay.
- **Sinaloa Mining Tragedy:** Ten miners are missing or dead at a Canadian-owned [silver mine](#) in Mexico, highlighting the security risks in cartel-controlled zones.
- **US-Hungary "Golden Era":** Marco Rubio ensnares Viktor Orban in a [new ideological alliance](#), praising his leadership as vital to U.S. interests.
- **Ukraine Corruption Arrests:** Former Energy Minister [Jerman Galuschenko](#) is detained in the "Case Midas" corruption probe.
- **Iranian Drills in Hormuz:** Revolutionary Guard forces conduct [military exercises](#) just hours before nuclear talks begin in Geneva.
- **Nancy Guthry Disappearance:** The FBI releases suspect descriptions and DNA evidence from a [targeted kidnapping](#) case in Tucson, Arizona.
- **Aruba License Plate Shortage:** A local [logistical crisis](#) involving a shortage of thousands of license plates due to a spike in registrations since late 2025.

- **Nintendo Switch 2 Debut:** Tech news confirms the release of [Mario Tennis](#) for the next-generation Nintendo console.

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.

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