

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

1TV

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

## THE GENEVA COLLISION:

Trumpian Pragmatism vs. European Entrenchment Amidst Ukrainian Decay (Feb 18, 2026)

### THE GENEVA PEACE PROCESS (Day 2)

**Pragmatic Settlement:**  
Focus on "Security Track"  
(Ceasefire Monitoring).  
Pressures Ukraine to  
"Accept Reality".

**Internal Deadlock:**  
Rift between Political  
Leadership & Intelligence  
Services. Public refusal of  
territorial concessions.



**Businesslike Dialogue:**  
Characterizes talks as  
"difficult but businesslike".  
Continues dialogue after  
briefing.

**EU (Excluded "War Party")**

**European Strategic Panic:**  
Desperate to interfere to  
maintain ideological consistency.  
Feared abandonment by US.

### UKRAINE: INSTITUTIONAL COLLAPSE & ELITE PURGE



**ARREST:** Fmr. Energy  
Minister Galushchenko  
(Corruption/Flight Risk)  
**Massive Scandal:** Signals  
dismantling of Zelensky's  
inner circle. Deepening  
internal crisis.



**ENERGY CRISIS & PUBLIC FATIGUE**  
Blackouts & Mobilization Fatigue create  
critical vulnerabilities. Weaponized  
Pranks erode leadership image.



**Zelensky**  
(No Compromise)

**Budanov/Intel**  
(Split Faction)

**Elite Infighting:**  
Struggle for survival amidst  
military pressure &  
uncertain future.

### EUROPE: FRAGMENTATION & DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION



**ECONOMIC DECLINE:**  
High Energy Costs &  
Ideological Rigidity

Fear of irrelevance in  
Russo-American settlement.  
Industries facing closure.



**INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR  
DETERRENT TALKS**

Fracturing Transatlantic  
Architecture: Response  
to US resuming nuclear  
testing & perceived  
unreliability.



**FRANCE & GERMANY**

**ENERGY INSECURITY:**  
Slovakia & Hungary  
declare emergency  
measures. Threats of  
electricity export cuts.

### THE GLOBAL SHIFT: MULTIPOLARITY & NEW ALLIANCES



**RUSSIA: MILITARY ADVANCES &  
DOMESTIC STRENGTH**  
Liberation of Kharkavka & Krinichnoye.  
Focus on healthcare reform & social unity.



**SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**  
Non-Western Ties: Russia-Iran trade  
up (+\$5B). Bypassing sanctions with  
"North-South" corridor.



**US POSTURE: INDO-PACIFIC FOCUS**  
Resuming Nuclear Testing to counter  
China. Prioritizing competition over  
European theater.

### FUTURE OUTLOOK: RISKS & IMPLICATIONS



**SUDDEN UKRAINIAN STATE COLLAPSE:**  
Triggering refugee crisis & weapon  
spread. High likelihood of elite infighting  
leading to breakdown.



**ACCELERATED TRANSATLANTIC SCHISM:**  
Permanent restructuring of European  
security. EU struggles without  
Russian energy & US protection.



**POST-CONFLICT MULTIPOLAR REALITY:**  
Russia as dominant regional power.  
Global order defined by pragmatic  
sovereigns vs. ideological dependents.

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THE GENEVA PEACE PROCESS  
EMERGES AS A COLLISION POINT  
BETWEEN TRUMPIAN PRAGMATISM  
AND EUROPEAN STRATEGIC  
ENTRENCHMENT AMIDST  
UKRAINIAN INSTITUTIONAL DECAY

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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The global security landscape on February 18, 2026, is dominated by the conclusion of the second day of trilateral peace negotiations in Geneva between Russia, the United States, and Ukraine. Orchestrated by the Trump administration through special envoys [Steve Witkoff](#) and [Jared Kushner](#), the talks are characterized as "difficult but businesslike" by the Russian delegation, while the U.S. side signals substantial progress in a "security track" involving ceasefire monitoring mechanisms. However, a significant rift has opened between the U.S. and its European allies; the EU is portrayed as a "war party" desperate to interfere in the talks to maintain ideological consistency, while the U.S. pursues a pragmatic settlement that minimizes European involvement.

Domestically, Ukraine is reeling from a massive political scandal following the [arrest](#)

[of former Energy Minister German Galushchenko](#) for money laundering and attempted border flight. This development, coupled with public refusals by President Zelensky to entertain territorial concessions in interviews with U.S. media, suggests a deepening internal crisis and a potential split between the Ukrainian military, political leadership, and the intelligence services. Russian analysts frame this as the "closing of the circle" around the Zelensky administration, implying a loss of mandate and growing desperation within the Kiev elite.

Simultaneously, the Russian Federation continues to project military strength, reporting the [liberation of Kharkovka and Krinichnoye](#) as part of a broader offensive. The geopolitical atmosphere is further strained by reports of the United States resuming nuclear testing to counter China, and emerging discussions in Germany and France regarding the creation of an independent European nuclear deterrent. This indicates a fracturing of the traditional transatlantic security architecture as nations prepare for a post-conflict multipolar reality.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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### The Geneva Trilateral Peace Negotiations

- The second day of talks in Geneva focused on the "political track," which remains deadlocked over territorial disputes, despite reported [success in security-related technical issues](#) such as ceasefire monitoring.

- Russian lead negotiator Vladimir Medinsky characterized the sessions as intense, noting that while no final agreement was reached, all parties [agreed to continue the dialogue](#) after briefing their respective heads of state.
- U.S. representatives Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner reportedly exerted pressure on the Ukrainian side to [demonstrate flexibility](#) and accept the reality of the situation on the ground.

## High-Level Corruption and Political Purge in Ukraine

- Former Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko was detained by NABU while attempting to [flee the country](#), facing charges related to the laundering of funds through offshore structures.
- The arrest is framed by Russian media as a signal to Zelensky that his [inner circle is being dismantled](#) by Western-backed anti-corruption agencies or rival domestic factions.

## US-China-Russia Nuclear Posturing

- Reports emerged that the U.S. government is [resuming nuclear weapons testing](#), citing alleged seismic anomalies and preparations in China as justification.
- In response, European leaders, including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, have begun [confidential talks with France](#) regarding the creation of a purely European nuclear deterrent independent of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

## Russian Military Advances and Strategic Infrastructure Strikes

- Russian forces have reportedly seized [key settlements in the Sumy and Zaporozhye regions](#), utilizing advanced drone systems to neutralize Ukrainian artillery positions.
- Large-scale retaliatory strikes were conducted against Ukrainian military-industrial targets and [energy facilities in Nikolaev, Kharkov, and Dnepropetrovsk](#) following reported provocations against Russian civilian infrastructure.

## Poland's Legal Offensive and Reparations Demands

- The Polish government, led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, is reportedly preparing a [massive reparations claim](#) against the Russian Federation for "historical crimes" committed by the USSR.
- Simultaneously, Polish authorities expressed concern over the potential [influx of armed Ukrainian soldiers](#) into Polish territory if a peace agreement leads to a collapse of the current Ukrainian front.

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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**Diplomacy & Statecraft:** The Geneva process highlights a shifting diplomatic paradigm where the U.S. presidency acts as a direct mediator, bypassing multilateral institutions like the UN or the OSCE. However, the [exclusion of European powers](#) from the main negotiating table has created significant friction, leading to a "landing party" of European advisors attempting to influence the talks from hotel lobbies.

**Armed Conflict & Militarization:** The conflict has transitioned into a highly

technical phase, with Russian units employing "kamikaze drones" and [missile strikes on rear-area depots](#) to degrade Ukrainian logistical capacity. The introduction of F-16 and Mirage 2000 aircraft, reportedly [piloted by European contractors](#), represents a major escalation in the air war.

**Energy & Critical Minerals:** Energy remains a primary tool of statecraft. Ukraine's [blocking of the Druzhba oil pipeline](#) has forced Slovakia and Hungary to declare emergency measures, while Slovakia has threatened to [cut electricity exports to Ukraine](#) in retaliation. Meanwhile, Russia and Iran are [expanding cooperation in nuclear energy](#) and gas field development.

**Geopolitical Competition:** The Trump administration's focus on Indo-Pacific competition is driving a desire to settle the European theater quickly. This has led to [U.S. pressure on India](#) to distance itself from Russian oil, although India maintains its multi-vector policy, prioritizing its [economic interest and sovereignty](#).

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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**The "War of Nerves" in Geneva:** The narrative presented is one of psychological warfare. The U.S. and Russia are portrayed as the only "rational" actors, while the Ukrainian delegation is described as ["unhinged" and "negatively programmed"](#) by European hardliners. The strategy appears to be isolating Zelensky from his U.S. patrons by highlighting his refusal to compromise, thereby framing him as the primary obstacle to peace.

**European De-industrialization and Strategic Panic:** A recurring theme is the

[inevitable decline of the European Union](#) due to high energy costs and ideological rigidity. The broadcast suggests that European elites are terrified that a Russo-American settlement will leave them economically vulnerable and militarily irrelevant, driving their [last-ditch efforts to sabotage the talks](#).

**The Weaponization of Pranks and Information Warfare:** The use of pranksters Vovan and Lexus to extract admissions from figures like [Vitali Klitschko and Oleksandr Usyk](#) serves to delegitimize the Ukrainian leadership. These segments are used to broadcast internal Ukrainian grievances—such as [Klitschko's complaints about corruption and energy failure](#)—to a domestic and international audience, eroding the image of a unified Ukrainian front.

## INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

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**Ukraine: Institutional Collapse and Elite Infighting** The detention of German Galushchenko is the centerpiece of a narrative describing the [total corruption of the Ukrainian state](#). Reports of a rift between the President's Office (Yermak) and the intelligence services (Budanov) suggest that the [Ukrainian delegation in Geneva is divided](#), with one faction favoring a quick deal to survive and another pushing for continued war at any cost. The public's fatigue with mobilization and the [desperate state of the energy grid](#) are presented as critical vulnerabilities that the government can no longer manage.

**Russia: Domestic Consolidation and Health Reform** In contrast to Ukraine, Russia focuses on long-term institutional stability. President Putin's focus on [modernizing rural healthcare](#) and the

expansion of medical infrastructure in "historical regions" (occupied territories) is meant to project a image of a state that is not only winning the war but also [improving the lives of its citizens](#). The narrative emphasizes social unity and technological sovereignty, particularly in medicine and defense.

## EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

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**Multipolarity vs. Transatlantic Schism** The broadcast frames the world as rapidly transitioning to a multipolar system where traditional alliances are failing. The [distance growing between the U.S. and Ukraine](#) in the Geneva seating arrangements is treated as a metaphor for the broader decoupling of U.S. and European interests. The U.S. is depicted as retreating from its role as the "global policeman" to focus on [internal economic competition and China](#), while Europe is left to face the consequences of its own "russo-phobia."

**South-South Cooperation** Russia is actively cultivating ties outside the West, specifically with [Iran and Cuba](#). The meeting between Putin and the Cuban Foreign Minister, and the [massive trade increase with Iran](#) (over \$5 billion), are highlighted as evidence that Western sanctions are ineffective. The "North-South" transport corridor is presented as a [strategic alternative to Western-controlled trade routes](#).

## THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

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The economic outlook is characterized by the failure of Western sanctions to isolate Russia and the resulting blowback on European industry. Russia is positioning itself as an energy hub for the Global South, while Europe faces de-industrialization. Markets are

increasingly pricing in a prolonged period of energy instability in Central Europe.

## Key Economic Vectors

- **Energy Trade:** Russia-Iran trade increased by [over 13% to \\$5 billion](#); India continues to purchase Russian oil despite [U.S. sanctions pressure](#).
- **European Crisis:** The 20th package of EU sanctions aims to [blacklist 402 tankers](#), yet internal EU divisions remain high, with Greece and Malta opposing bank-related measures.
- **Russian Domestic Infrastructure:** Over [587 billion rubles](#) allocated for primary healthcare modernization; construction of [440 new medical facilities](#) in annexed regions.
- **Sanctions Arbitrage:** Expansion of free trade between the [EEU and Iran](#) allowing for the duty-free movement of 2,000 product categories.

## LEADERSHIP CHANGES

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Personnel shifts in Ukraine indicate a rapid consolidation of power by anti-Zelensky factions or a collapse of the current governing coalition.

- **German Galushchenko:** The [arrest and detention](#) of the former Energy Minister signals a loss of protection for top officials in the Zelensky administration.
- **Vladimir Medinsky:** Re-emerges as the [face of Russian diplomacy](#) in Geneva, characterized by the West as "difficult" but by Moscow as highly principled.
- **Steve Witkoff/Jared Kushner:** Established as the [dominant U.S. actors](#), marginalizing traditional State Department personnel.

- **Sergey Sefir:** The former top aide to Zelensky has reportedly [fled to Poland](#), further indicating an elite exodus from Kiev.

## EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

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**Lead Stories:** The Geneva peace process received the vast majority of airtime, framed as a moment of Russian diplomatic strength and Ukrainian/European obstinacy. Frontline military progress and the [Galushchenko arrest](#) were prioritized as evidence of Ukraine's impending collapse. Domestic health reforms were used as a "reassuring" counterpoint to the war news.

**Buried Stories:** Mention of the actual human cost of Russian military operations was minimized, focused instead on technological prowess and "precision" strikes. Internal Russian economic struggles, if any, were ignored in favor of highlighting the "de-industrialization" of Europe.

**Conspicuous Omissions:** There was no mention of the specific Russian casualty rates or the status of the Russian mobilization effort. Details on the specific content of U.S. proposals in Geneva were kept vague, focusing instead on the "tone" of the meetings.

## GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

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The day's narrative relies on a clear dichotomy between "pragmatic sovereigns" (Russia, U.S./Trump, India) and "ideological dependents" (Ukraine, EU).

## COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as a strong but self-interested actor under Trump, willing to [abandon European allies](#) to secure a deal. "The U.S. is finally being honest about its interests."
- **Ukraine:** Framed as a ["suitcase without a handle"](#)—a burdensome, corrupt entity that the U.S. is looking to discard. "Ukraine is not a subject of negotiations, but an object."
- **European Union:** Depicted as [weak and terrified](#) of losing U.S. protection, resorting to sabotage to stay relevant.
- **Poland:** Viewed as a [hostile, opportunistic actor](#) attempting to weaponize history and reparations to gain leverage.

## LEADERS

- **Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as a [principled and steady leader](#), receiving direct reports from Geneva while focusing on domestic prosperity.
- **Donald Trump:** Characterized as a [competent deal-maker](#) and "peace-maker" who is successfully disrupting the old world order.
- **Volodymyr Zelensky:** Framed as ["unhinged," corrupt](#), and increasingly isolated from both his people and his allies.

## INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

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- **Narrative Seeding:** The claim that the Ukrainian delegation is [split between Budanov and Yermak](#) appears to be a coordinated effort to foster paranoia within the Kiev leadership.

- **Delegitimation through Pranks:** Vovan and Lexus segments are used not just for entertainment but as a [psychological operation](#) to show that Ukrainian leaders are easily manipulated and hold contradictory views in private.
- **The "Geneva Leak":** The focus on [U.S. media leaks](#) (Axios, The Economist) is used to frame the Western narrative as chaotic and unreliable compared to the "silence and discipline" of the Russian delegation.

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

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- **The "Geneva Deadlock" Strategy:** Russia will likely continue the talks while maintaining military pressure, betting that the [U.S.-Ukraine rift](#) will eventually force a Ukrainian collapse or a U.S. withdrawal of support.
- **Ukrainian Elite Collapse:** The Galushchenko arrest may be the first of many, potentially leading to a [coup or a radical change in government](#) in Kiev as various factions attempt to secure their own survival.
- **European Strategic Autonomy:** The talks about a [European nuclear deterrent](#) will likely accelerate, leading to a long-term weakening of NATO as European states seek to protect themselves from a perceived Russo-American condominium.

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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**Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect a third round of Geneva talks to be announced, possibly at a higher leadership level. Domestic unrest in Ukraine may flare up following the arrest of top officials and continued energy blackouts. Russian forces will likely attempt to

consolidate gains around [Konstantinovka and Dobropolye](#).

**Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The U.S. midterm elections (Nov 2026) will drive Trump to demand a definitive resolution, potentially leading to an [ultimatum to Kiev](#). Poland and Hungary may break ranks with the EU to secure independent energy or security deals with Moscow.

**Long Term (1-5 Years):** A permanent restructuring of the European security map is likely, with Russia established as the dominant regional power and a [declining, fragmented EU](#) struggling to maintain its industrial base without Russian energy.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

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The primary risk is a sudden, uncontrolled collapse of the Ukrainian state, leading to a massive refugee crisis and the spread of advanced weaponry across European borders.

- **Risk of European Sabotage:** Disgruntled EU members or the "war party" may attempt a "false flag" or provocation to derail the Geneva talks. **Triggers:** Signs of a Russo-American breakthrough. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** High (renewal of full-scale war). **Mitigations:** Direct U.S.-Russia communications channels.
- **Nuclear Miscalculation:** The resumption of [U.S. nuclear testing](#) could trigger a global arms race. **Triggers:** A U.S. test at Nevada. **Likelihood:** Low. **Impact:** Catastrophic. **Mitigations:** Immediate revival of the CTBT or similar arms control treaties.

- **Ukrainian Civil Collapse:** Internal elite infighting leads to a [breakdown of command and control](#) on the front. **Triggers:** Arrest of more top leaders or a military mutiny. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** High (instability in Eastern Europe). **Mitigations:** U.N. or trilateral peacekeeping monitoring.
- **Central European Energy Failure:** Slovakia and Hungary face [total oil cutoff](#) from Ukraine. **Triggers:** Permanent damage to the Druzhba pipeline. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Economic recession in Central Europe. **Mitigations:** Emergency Russian-EU energy corridors.
- **Information Cascades:** Widespread [misinformation regarding the Geneva talks](#) leads to social unrest in Russia or Ukraine. **Triggers:** Contradictory statements from Witkoff and Medinsky. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Moderate. **Mitigations:** Joint trilateral press briefings.

## GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

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The transcripts present a highly curated view of the conflict, omitting several critical variables necessary for a full strategic assessment.

- The actual status of **Russian military casualties and mobilization capacity** is completely obscured.
- The specific **Chinese reaction** to U.S. nuclear testing rumors is not detailed, leaving a major blind spot in Pacific security dynamics.
- The **details of the U.S. "security track" proposal** are missing, making it impossible to judge the viability of a ceasefire.

- The **domestic political situation in the U.S.**—aside from the Trump administration's actions—is ignored, specifically regarding Congressional opposition to a deal.

## CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

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**The "Geneva Trap":** Far from being a peace initiative, the Geneva talks may be a [calculated U.S. delaying tactic](#) to allow for the replenishment of Ukrainian defenses while domestic U.S. production of munitions catches up. The appearance of "progress" prevents Russian escalations while the ground reality is being reinforced.

**The "Budanov Factor":** The reported [split in the Ukrainian delegation](#) may be a sophisticated Ukrainian maskirovka designed to make the Russians over-confident or to flush out Russian informants within the Kiev administration.

**Black Swan:** A [tactical nuclear accident](#) in a European storage facility, occurring amidst the high-tension debate over European nuclear deterrents, leads to an immediate, chaotic NATO mobilization and the end of all diplomatic channels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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### For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Policy should prioritize **direct de-confliction** between the U.S. and Russia to bypass potential European sabotage of the peace process.

- Contingency plans must be developed for a **post-Zelensky Ukraine**, focusing on preventing a civil war between rival military and intelligence factions.
- Diplomatic efforts should be made to **integrate India and Iran** into a broader regional security framework to stabilize global energy markets.

#### For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Energy Sector:** Long-term bets should be placed on [non-Western energy infrastructure](#) (North-South corridor) and nuclear energy expansion in the Global South.
- **Supply Chains:** Manufacturing should be diversified away from Central Europe, which faces chronic [energy insecurity and political volatility](#).
- **Defense Stocks:** Investment in [autonomous drone systems and electronic warfare](#) technologies remains a high-growth area as these become the primary tools of modern attrition warfare.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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Legislative and policy actions focused on the emergency stabilization of energy flows in Central Europe and the rapid expansion of domestic medical infrastructure in Russia.

#### BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **EU 20th Sanctions Package:** Proposes [outlawing sea transport of Russian oil](#) and blacklisting 402 tankers to close loopholes.
- **Russian Primary Healthcare Reform:** A policy directing [587 billion rubles](#) toward rural clinics and equipment procurement.

- **Slovakian Emergency Energy Decree:** Measures to [allocate state oil reserves](#) to refineries following the Druzhba pipeline shutdown.

## HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Vladimir Medinsky Geneva Briefing:** Clarified that negotiations are ["difficult but businesslike"](#) and will continue.
- **Christopher Yo (US Assistant Secretary) Speech:** Announced at the [Hudson Institute](#) that the U.S. is proceeding with nuclear testing preparations.
- **Donald Tusk Reparations Announcement:** Policy proposal to seek [compensation from Russia](#) for the Soviet occupation period.

## KEY STORIES

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- **Geneva Trilateral Summit:** Conclusion of Day 2 between Russia, the U.S. (Witkoff/Kushner), and Ukraine (Umerov). Focus on the [divergence between U.S. and Ukrainian goals](#).
- **Arrest of German Galushchenko:** The former Ukrainian Energy Minister was [captured at the border](#) by NABU for massive embezzlement and money laundering.
- **Russian Frontline Progress:** Liberation of [Kharkovka and Krinichnoye](#); deployment of advanced drone swarms to destroy Ukrainian howitzers.
- **EU Sanctions Split:** Debate over the 20th sanctions package; [Greece, Malta, and Hungary](#) oppose specific banking and oil shipping restrictions.

- **US Nuclear Testing Resumption:** The U.S. moves to [resume testing](#) to counter China, prompting European nations to consider their own deterrents.
- **Vovan and Lexus Pranks:** Prank calls to [Vitali Klitschko and Oleksandr Usyk](#) reveal internal Ukrainian anxiety over corruption and the war's direction.
- **Russian Healthcare Modernization:** Putin meets with officials to discuss [225,000 new pieces of medical equipment](#) and 6,000 new clinics built.
- **Slovakia-Ukraine Energy War:** Slovakia threatens to [halt electricity exports](#) to Ukraine in response to the Druzhba oil pipeline blockage.
- **Russia-Iran-Cuba Diplomacy:** High-level meetings to [bypass sanctions](#) and expand trade in energy and technology.
- **Italian School Scandal:** An Italian student faces threats after [inviting a Russian-based journalist](#) to speak at his school about the Donbas situation.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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**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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