

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

N1HRV

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

CROATIA'S FRAGILE COALITION & THE REGIONAL CRISIS: An Existential Deadline Amidst Global Pressure

DOMESTIC ULTIMATUM & IDEOLOGICAL RIFT

30-DAY DEADLINE

RESET ULTIMATUM

HSLs (Liberal) **PM PLENKOVIĆ (Centrist)** **DP (Far-Right Rhetoric)**

Josip Dabro
Ivan Penava
MEDIA SPIN

Coalition paralyzed by HSLs demand to purge DP radicals over pro-fascist songs. Government operates on a 30-day survival clock.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT & INTEGRATION FAILURE

171,000 Foreign Workers (Nepalese, Filipino)

NO INTEGRATION STRATEGY

70% Report Discrimination

Massive influx creates 'underclass' risk; lack of policy leads to exploitation & social isolation allegations.

REGIONAL UNREST & INSTITUTIONAL PARALYSIS

SARAJEVO & NOVI SAD PROTESTS

SYSTEMIC NEGLIGENCE **STOP POLICE BRUTALITY** **IT'S JUST SPIN**

BIH STALLED

NO QUORUM

HOUSE OF PEOPLES

Civil unrest driven by government negligence is dismissed as 'foreign spin'. Institutions remain stalled.

GLOBAL PRESSURE & FUTURE RISKS

FORCED PEACE IN UKRAINE (GENEVA)

US/TRUMP MEDIATION **Strategic Autonomy Vacuum** **EU/France**

TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS

Aggressive US push for a 'quick deal' pressures Ukraine to cede land, fracturing European consensus.

ENERGY & INFO WARFARE THREATS

HUNGARY (Sanctions Exemption) **Local protest** **JANAF** **SISAK POULTRY MEGA-FARM (€608m)**

AI VOICE CLONING (\$11) **DISINFORMATION & SCAMS**

Geopolitical maneuvering over energy routes & controversial investments; cheap AI tools fuel new disinformation threats.

OUTLOOK & HIGH-RISK SCENARIOS

COALITION COLLAPSE **SOCIAL POLARIZATION** **ENERGY SUPPLY SHOCK**

SHORT-TERM: Cabinet 'purge' likely; protests to intensify.
MEDIUM-TERM: First integration laws debated; hybrid threats rise.
LONG-TERM: Structural labor crisis & reliance on JANAF.

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CROATIA'S FRAGILE COALITION
FACES AN EXISTENTIAL
ULTIMATUM AMID RISING FAR-
RIGHT RHETORIC, WHILE GLOBAL
DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE SHIFTS
TOWARD A FORCED RESOLUTION
OF THE UKRAINE CONFLICT.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Croatian governing coalition has entered a state of acute instability following a public **30-day ultimatum** issued by the HSLS (Liberal Social Party) to Prime Minister Andrej Plenković. The friction centers on the controversial conduct of Homeland Movement (DP) officials, specifically Josip Dabro, whose recent [praising of the Ustaše regime](#) has alienated liberal partners. This domestic crisis coincides with a massive demographic shift, as Croatia issued **171,000 foreign labor permits** in the past year, sparking a debate on integration failure and [alleged labor exploitation](#) by private firms. The administration is struggling to maintain its centrist posture while its far-right partners increasingly assert an "anti-supranational" agenda.

Regionally, the Balkans are experiencing a wave of civil unrest and institutional paralysis. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the **House of Peoples is stalled** due to a lack of quorum driven by ethnic blockades, while citizens in Sarajevo and students in Novi Sad, Serbia, are taking to the streets to protest [police brutality and government negligence](#). These localized instabilities are being framed by state actors, particularly in Serbia, as "spins" or foreign-backed provocations, indicating an intensifying information warfare environment across the region.

Globally, the narrative is dominated by the **Trump administration's aggressive mediation** in Geneva to end the Russia-Ukraine war. Reports suggest a "forced peace" scenario where Ukraine is under [immense pressure to cede territory](#) in exchange for a cessation of hostilities. This shift in US posture is creating a vacuum in European strategic autonomy, evidenced by France's separate diplomatic maneuvers in India and its [ultimatum to Serbia](#) regarding war crimes extradition. The convergence of energy security risks—highlighted by Hungary's demand for [oil sanctions exemptions](#) via the JANA pipeline—and geopolitical realignments suggests a fracturing of the previous European consensus.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Coalition Crisis and the HSLS Ultimatum

- HSLS leader Dario Hrebak has given Plenković 30 days to "reset" the coalition, citing [ideological incompatibility](#) with DP's Josip Dabro.

- The controversy involves the singing of pro-fascist songs and a perceived [rightward drift](#) of the HDZ-led government to maintain its 76-seat majority.
- DP leadership, including Ivan Penava, has responded by [deflecting blame onto the media](#) and "leftist" agitators.

Forced Diplomacy in Geneva

- US-mediated peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Geneva are characterized by [intense pressure on Zelenskyy](#) to accept territorial concessions.
- The Trump administration is reportedly seeking a "quick deal" to end the largest European conflict since 1945, despite [Ukrainian resistance](#) to ceding the Donbas.

Foreign Labor Demographic Shift

- Croatia has transitioned to a "high-import" labor model with [171,000 work permits](#) issued in 2025, primarily to Nepalese and Filipino workers.
- Research indicates **70% of these workers** report discrimination, while 64% believe they lack the [same rights as locals](#).

Regional Civil Unrest

- Sarajevo students are [protesting against "systemic irresponsibility"](#) following tragic incidents in the education sector.
- In Novi Sad, students were [physically assaulted by masked men](#) during protests, an event the Serbian government dismissed as a "media spin."

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- Prime Minister Plenković is attempting to distance himself from [DP's radical rhetoric](#) while relying on them for parliamentary survival.
- The appointment of **Alen Ružić** to replace Marin Piletić as minister signals a shift toward [technical/professional appointments](#) to stabilize the cabinet.
- SDP Župan Željko Kolar is under [DORH investigation](#) for alleged irregularities in solar plant permitting, indicating increased judicial scrutiny of regional elites.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- France has issued a [diplomatic ultimatum to Serbia](#) for the extradition of a suspect in the 1991 murder of French volunteer Jean-Michel Nicolier.
- Plenković's visit to India for an AI summit aims to [diversify trade partnerships](#), with bilateral exchange growing 10% annually.
- Iran has threatened to [close the Strait of Hormuz](#) as a bargaining chip in nuclear negotiations with the US.

Energy & Critical Minerals

- Hungary is petitioning the European Commission for an [exemption from Russian oil sanctions](#), citing the Jadranski naftovod (JANAF) as its only viable alternative supply route.
- Controversy surrounds a **€608 million Ukrainian investment** in poultry mega-farms in Sisak, with locals raising [environmental and transparency concerns](#).

Critical Infrastructure Security

- The removal of the **Vjesnik building** and the demolition of the **Maksimir stadium** are highlights of a broader [urban renewal and risk management](#) strategy in Zagreb.
- A **magnitude 4.5 earthquake** near Livno (BiH) has reignited fears regarding the [seismic vulnerability](#) of the Dalmatian coast and regional borderlands.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Failure of the "Sanitary Cordon"

The Croatian political landscape is grappling with the collapse of the "sanitary cordon" previously intended to isolate far-right elements. The Homeland Movement (DP) has successfully transitioned from an [outsider protest group](#) to a core governing partner. However, this inclusion has not led to moderation; instead, it has created a **dual-track government** where the HDZ manages technical governance while the DP focuses on ideological revisionism. The [HSLs revolt](#) suggests that this arrangement is reaching a breaking point, as liberal partners fear being "contaminated" by association with pro-fascist rhetoric.

Demographics as a Security Risk

Croatia is undergoing an unprecedented **demographic transformation** driven by the "liberalization of labor imports." With over 171,000 foreign workers in a nation of 3.8 million, the lack of a [long-term integration strategy](#) is emerging as a social instability risk. The data showing **70% perceived discrimination** and widespread social isolation indicates a brewing "underclass" crisis. Opponents frame this as the

[commodification of humans](#) for private profit, while the government remains reactive, lacking the legislative framework to handle the housing, linguistic, and cultural integration requirements.

The "Trump Effect" on European Security

The Genevan talks represent a significant pivot toward **transactional diplomacy** in Europe. The portrayal of Ukraine as being under "enormous pressure" to make concessions [without ironclad security guarantees](#) signals a potential shift in the US-EU alliance structure. European states are reacting by forging bilateral paths, such as the **\$35 billion Indo-French defense deal**, which may reflect a lack of confidence in collective NATO-led [long-term stability](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Croatia is facing a crisis of **institutional decay and elite polarization**. The HSLs ultimatum has effectively paralyzed the coalition's long-term planning, as partners now operate on a [30-day survival clock](#). Institutional trust is further eroded by the **DORH investigation** into the SDP Župan Željko Kolar, which rivals claim is a [politicized use of the judiciary](#). Meanwhile, labor unrest is manifesting not in traditional strikes, but in a [loss of state mandate](#) to manage the demographic crisis, as citizens in regions like Sisak and Banovina organize against large-scale foreign investment projects that they perceive as [lacking local benefit or environmental safeguards](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The broadcasting nation (Croatia) is attempting to project **strategic maneuverability** by positioning itself as a "key route" for the [Indian-European corridor](#) and a regional energy hub through JANAF. However, this is undermined by a **defensive posture** toward external shocks, such as Hungary's demands for sanctions exemptions and the [forced territorial debates](#) in neighboring Ukraine. The international system is framed as a **fracturing multipolar arena** where small states like Croatia must "pay a price" for stability, either through [political concessions at home](#) or by accepting a diminished role for international law in favor of **Great Power deals**.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Economic indicators suggest a cooling of local labor markets but a surge in foreign-led infrastructure and industrial projects. Inflationary pressures remain present in the housing sector, exacerbated by the influx of [171,000 foreign workers](#) requiring accommodation.

- **Labor Statistics:** 171,000 foreign work permits issued in 2025; 84% work full-time; primary sectors: Transport (28%), Hospitality (18.4%), Construction (17.5%). [Source: MUP](#).
- **Major Capital Project:** €608 million Ukrainian investment in Sisak poultry farms; 114 "Maksimir-sized" stadium areas; projected output: 100-120 million chickens annually. [Source: Okrugli stol](#).

- **Trade Defense Deal:** India seeking 114 fighter jets in a \$35 billion contract with France; India currently has [fewer than 30 squadrons](#), target is 40.
- **Energy Costs:** Hungary oil imports via JANAF potentially facing [sanction-driven supply disruptions](#).
- **AI Subscriptions:** Growing market for "AI Companions" (e.g., Eva app) and [voice cloning technology](#) available for as little as \$11/month.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Personnel shifts reflect a strategy of **technocratic stabilization** amid political scandal and the consolidation of power by ideological loyalists in the US administration.

- **Alen Ružić:** Appointed as the new [Minister of Labor/Social Policy](#), replacing Marin Piletić; Ružić is the current director of KBC Rijeka.
- **Tomislav Svetina:** Former HNS Secretary General, [indicted by the state attorney](#) for abuse of position to ensure his re-election.
- **Zana Dolićanin:** Involved in a [diploma scandal](#) in Serbia; accused of entering medical school at 16 with irregular secondary education.
- **Stephen Miller:** Framed as a [hardcore ideologue](#) gaining significant influence in the Trump administration's "second term" planning.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The transcripts portray a world led by **unpredictable strongmen** and reactive institutionalists. The spectrum of framing ranges from the "disruptive strength" of the

US to the "inept revisionism" of regional Balkan leaders.

COUNTRIES and LEADERS

- **Andrej Plenković:** Framed as a **competent but constrained** balancer. He is described as trying to return to the "center" while being held [hostage by irrational coalition partners](#).
- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a **dominant and aggressive** communicator. He is seen as the "ceremonial head" of a [highly ideological administration](#) focused on forcing results in Ukraine.
- **Josip Dabro:** Characterized as a **chaotic liability**. He is framed as an "irrational" actor whose [pro-Ustaše singing](#) is an "anti-Croatian and anti-patriotic agenda."
- **Vladimir Putin:** Implicitly framed as **opportunistic**, waiting for the "forced peace" in Geneva to [secure territorial gains](#).
- **Serbia (Ana Brnabić):** Portrayed as **evasive and defensive**. Her dismissal of student assaults as "spin" is cited as [manipulation of truth](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The "meta-narrative" of the day is the **weaponization of "spin"** to suppress domestic dissent. In Serbia, the government's dismissal of student injuries as a [media fabrication](#) creates a dangerous delta between ground reality and state media. In Croatia, the DP uses a **distraction narrative**, arguing that the focus on "old songs" is a [trap set by leftist media](#) to ignore the demographic "replacement" of Croats by foreign labor. Additionally, the emergence of [voice cloning at low cost](#) (\$11) represents a new frontier for

Business Email Compromise (BEC) and disinformation, as perfect replicas of executive voices can now be used to manipulate employees and public perception.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Coalition Collapse Hypotheses:** The HSLS will likely exit the coalition if Dabro is not removed or censured within 30 days, potentially forcing [early elections](#) by summer 2026.
- **Ukraine "Frozen Conflict":** The US pressure will likely lead to a [ceasefire along current lines](#) by late 2026, leaving 20% of Ukraine under Russian control but avoiding a total state collapse.
- **Demographic Backlash:** Continued high-volume labor imports without integration will trigger [anti-immigrant civil unrest](#) in urban centers like Zagreb and Split within the next 12 months.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a cabinet "purge" or high-level mediation by Tomo Medved to [appease the HSLS](#). A surge in protests in Sarajevo and Novi Sad is likely as student movements [radicalize their tactics](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The first [integration-focused legislation](#) for foreign workers will be debated in the Sabor, likely including mandatory language courses. The Geneva peace framework will [conclude its first formal phase](#), leading to a reduction in active kinetic warfare but a rise in hybrid threats.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Croatia will face a [structural labor crisis](#) as foreign workers

move deeper into Western Europe, forcing a rethink of the "low-wage import" economic model. The JANAF pipeline will likely become the [primary energy artery](#) for Central Europe as the Druzhba pipeline is fully decommissioned.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The transcripts reveal a high-risk environment characterized by political fragility and regional volatility.

- **Governmental Instability:** The risk of the Croatian coalition collapsing. **Triggers:** Failure to censor Dabro; HSLs withdrawal. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Severe political paralysis. **Mitigations:** Cabinet reshuffle; [resetting coalition values](#).
- **Social Polarization:** Violent clashes between students and masked pro-government groups in Serbia. **Triggers:** Continued [state-sponsored "spin"](#) of brutality. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Escalation to broader civil unrest. **Mitigations:** Independent oversight of police.
- **Energy Supply Shock:** Disruption of oil flows to Hungary and Central Europe. **Triggers:** Failure of [sanctions exemptions](#); maintenance issues on JANAF. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Regional economic recession. **Mitigations:** Strategic oil reserves; alternative shipping routes.
- **Biosecurity Risk:** Cross-species jump of Avian Influenza or other zoonoses. **Triggers:** [Accidental lab leaks](#) or uncontrolled jumps in poultry farms. **Likelihood:** Low/Moderate. **Impact:** Global pandemic. **Mitigations:** Increased "One Health" surveillance; gain-of-function transparency.

- **Information Collapse:** Loss of truth in the public square due to AI cloning. **Triggers:** [BEC scams](#) using executive voice clones; deepfake political statements. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Financial theft and loss of democratic legitimacy. **Mitigations:** Regulatory labeling of AI content.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The Sabor and regional parliaments are focused on labor migration, judicial oversight, and institutional stability amid crisis.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
 - **Law on Foreigners (Zakon o strancima):** Proposals to [abolish quotas](#) and allow "stochastic" labor imports; criticized for lacking integration safeguards.
 - **Law on Graveyards (Zakon o grobljima):** A DP-pushed initiative [reviving ideological debates](#) over historical monuments.
 - **Judicial Selection Reform:** Debates on [choosing Constitutional Court judges](#) as terms expire in April 2026.
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**
 - **Penava Press Conference:** Aimed at [deflecting Dabro's scandal](#) through historical equivalence.
 - **Sisak Poultry Roundtable:** Civil initiatives [confronting investors](#) on environmental impact studies.
 - **Sarajevo Security Commission:** Discussion on [police-prosecutor cooperation](#) following student protests.

KEY STORIES

- **Hrebak's 30-Day Ultimatum:** Dario Hrebak gives Plenković a deadline to "clean" the coalition of [ideological radicals](#).
- **The Dabro "Ustaše Song" Scandal:** Footage emerges of VP Josip Dabro [praising fascist figures](#) during a festive gathering.
- **Croatia's Foreign Labor Explosion:** MUP confirms [171,000 work permits](#) issued in a single year, highlighting integration failures.
- **Geneva Ukraine Talks:** US/Trump mediators [pressuring Ukraine](#) to accept territory loss for peace.
- **Livno Earthquake:** A [4.5 magnitude quake](#) shakes the BiH-Croatia border; felt in Split and Sinj.
- **Sisak Poultry Mega-Project:** A [€608 million Ukrainian farm project](#) faces fierce local opposition over transparency.
- **French Extradition Ultimatum:** France demands Serbia [extradite a war crimes suspect](#) or face diplomatic consequences.
- **Kolar DORH Investigation:** SDP Župan under [investigation for solar plant](#) permitting irregularities.
- **Indo-French Rafale Deal:** India nears a [\\$35 billion contract](#) for 114 French fighter jets.
- **Sarajevo Civil Unrest:** Hundreds of students [gather at the Zemaljski muzej](#) to protest education sector negligence.
- **Novi Sad Masked Assaults:** Protesting students [physically attacked](#) during rallies; Brnabić claims "spin."

- **Constitutional Court Deadlock:** Imminent [expiration of judge terms](#) threatens to leave the court without a quorum by April.
- **JANAF Energy Hub:** Hungary seeking [Russian oil via Croatia](#) to bypass transit blocks.
- **AI Voice Cloning Threats:** Security experts warn of [high-fidelity voice spoofing](#) targeting corporate finance.
- **Garonne Floods:** 1,600 people [evacuated in Southwest France](#) following record rainfall.
- **Zana Dolićanin Diploma Probe:** Serbian authorities [investigate a 16-year-old medical student's](#) suspect credentials.
- **Vjesnik Demolition:** Demolition of the iconic [Zagreb skyscraper](#) to begin within 30 days.
- **Mikaela Shiffrin Victory:** Shiffrin wins [slalom gold](#); Croatia's Zrinka Ljutić finishes 26th.
- **Hormuz Closure Threat:** Iran [signals intent to block](#) the strait if nuclear deal terms aren't met.
- **SakaSpin Innovation:** New [cleaning technology](#) promising fastest-ever debris removal.

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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