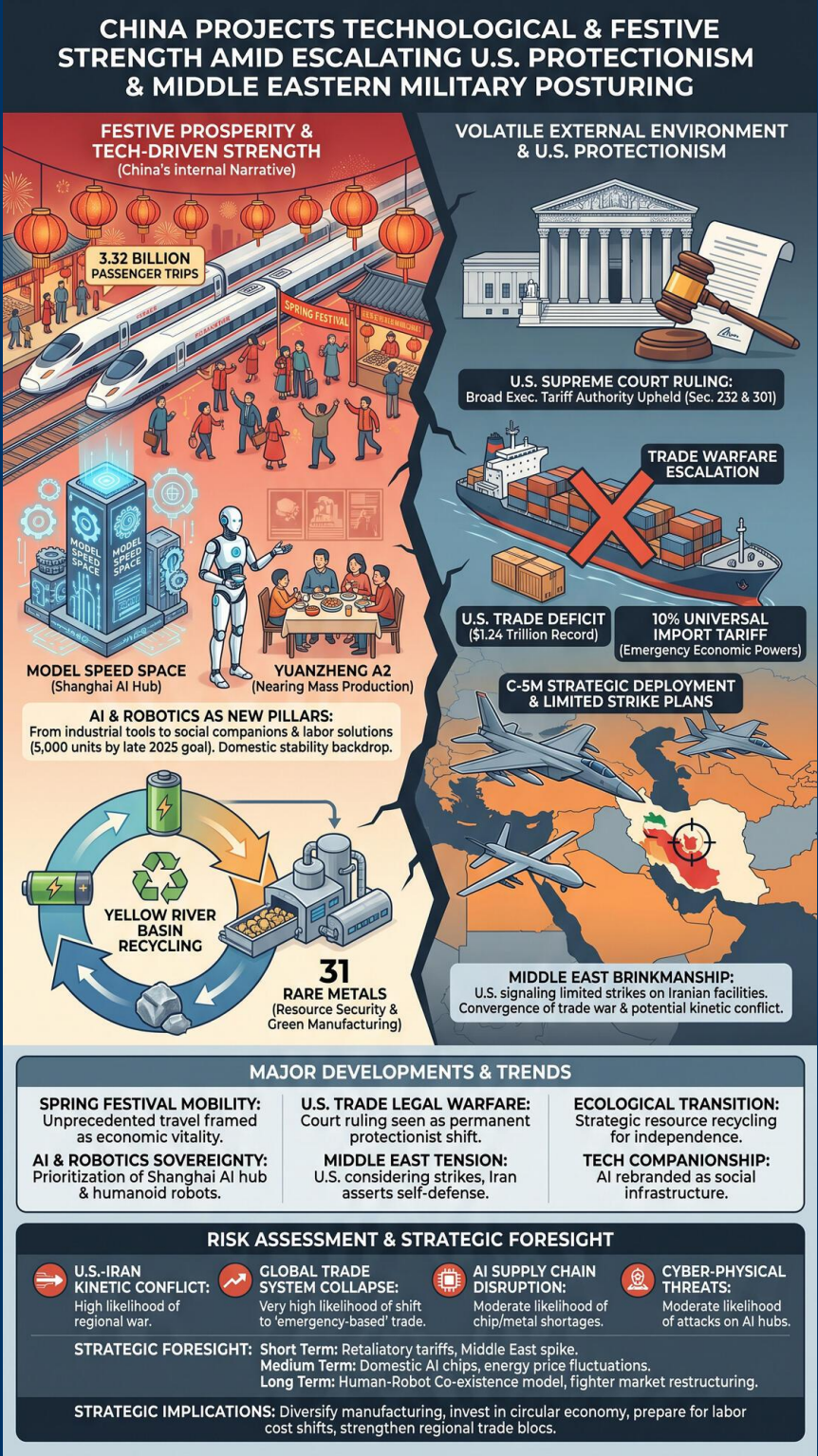


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CCTV1

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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CHINA PROJECTS TECHNOLOGICAL
AND FESTIVE STRENGTH AMID
ESCALATING U.S. PROTECTIONISM
AND MIDDLE EASTERN MILITARY
POSTURING.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 20, 2026, presents a global landscape defined by a sharp contrast between China's internal narrative of festive prosperity and a volatile external environment. Domestically, China is celebrating the Spring Festival with record-breaking mobility, projecting a image of a "warm and auspicious" nation while simultaneously signaling its strategic pivot toward "New Quality Productive Forces." State media is heavily emphasizing advancements in artificial intelligence and humanoid robotics as the new pillars of national strength, framing these as tools for both economic revitalization and daily social companionship. This domestic stability is being used as a backdrop to highlight perceived chaos in the Western-led order.

Internationally, the focus is on a significant escalation in U.S. trade protectionism and military signaling. The U.S. Supreme Court

has recently issued a ruling upholding the executive branch's broad authority to impose tariffs under national security and emergency economic powers, a move that is being portrayed by Chinese analysts as a "weaponization" of trade that harms global supply chains. Simultaneously, reports indicate a hardening U.S. stance toward Iran, with the administration considering limited military strikes to force nuclear compliance. This creates a convergence of trade warfare and potential kinetic conflict that threatens global market stability and energy security.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Spring Festival Mobility Surge:** China reports unprecedented travel figures during the Lunar New Year period, with [3.32 billion passenger trips](#) expected. This surge is being framed as a testament to the "vitality and resilience" of the Chinese economy and the success of its transportation infrastructure.
- **AI and Robotics Sovereignty:** National leadership is prioritizing the "Model Speed Space" AI incubator in Shanghai, which now houses [over 200 leading companies](#). Humanoid robots, such as the "Yuanzheng A2," are being promoted as nearing mass production, signaling a shift toward tech-driven labor solutions.
- **U.S. Trade Legal Warfare:** A U.S. Supreme Court ruling has affirmed the legality of [broad executive tariffs](#) (under Sections 232 and 301), despite opposition from domestic businesses. This is seen as a permanent shift toward protectionism that may trigger retaliatory trade measures globally.

- **Middle East Brinkmanship:** The U.S. is reportedly considering [limited military strikes](#) against Iranian Revolutionary Guard facilities to force a return to nuclear negotiations. Iran has responded by asserting its right to self-defense under UN Charter Article 51.
- **Ecological Transition and Rare Metal Security:** Initiatives for recycling waste batteries in the Yellow River basin are now capable of [extracting 31 types](#) of rare and scarce metals, highlighting a strategic focus on resource independence and green manufacturing.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The U.S. military is reportedly refining plans for [strikes against Iran](#) using strategic assets like the C-5M for logistics. Germany is simultaneously debating the acquisition of F-35 fighters while managing internal conflicts regarding the [sixth-generation fighter](#) development program.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- Multilateral negotiations in Geneva between the U.S., Russia, and Ukraine have [concluded without a signed document](#), indicating a persistent stalemate. Meanwhile, Iran maintains its diplomatic stance, insisting on "principled" negotiations while rejecting "oil-for-peace" concessions [without fair terms](#).

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- China has integrated AI into its "14th Five-Year Plan" and the "19th Party Congress Report," establishing a [top-level design](#) for the industry. The goal is to move from laboratory prototypes to [mass production of 5,000](#) humanoid units by late 2025.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The U.S. merchandise trade deficit reached a record [\\$1.24 trillion](#) in 2025. In response, the U.S. is implementing a [10% universal import tariff](#) for a 150-day period, citing emergency economic powers.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Technological Companionship as Social Infrastructure A burgeoning theme in state broadcasts is the rebranding of AI and robotics from industrial tools to "companions" for the citizenry. The "Model Speed Space" in Shanghai is not just a commercial hub but is framed as a birthplace for [AI that truly accompanies](#) people's lives. This narrative serves to normalize high-tech surveillance and pervasive AI while addressing demographic challenges (aging population) by positioning robots as domestic caregivers and social partners.

The Weaponization of the U.S. Legal System for Protectionism State media is weaving a narrative that the U.S. legal system, via the Supreme Court, has been co-opted to support a "mercantilist" agenda. By upholding tariffs that many [businesses find harmful](#), the U.S. is portrayed as a state in institutional decay, where executive power overrules market logic. This is contrasted with China's

"orderly" and "principled" opening of its own domestic markets during the festival season.

Resource Independence through Circular Manufacturing A critical trend is the industrial-scale recycling of "urban mines." The waste battery recycling projects are no longer just environmental initiatives but are [strategic resource security](#) operations. By recovering 31 types of rare metals, China is building a domestic loop to bypass potential Western sanctions or supply chain disruptions in the critical minerals sector.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

China's internal posture is one of carefully curated unity and traditionalism. The broadcast focuses heavily on President Xi's visits to rural areas like [Shenshan Village](#), reinforcing the narrative of "Common Prosperity" and rural revitalization. This focus on rural health is a strategy to maintain the government mandate among the agrarian population while the urban elite focuses on AI and tech. There are no mentions of internal dissent; instead, the "Chunyun" travel rush is used as a proxy for social cohesion and public trust in the state's logistical capacity.

Conversely, the U.S. internal dynamic is portrayed as deeply polarized. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling on tariffs is shown to have [split the conservative wing](#) of the court, with two justices reportedly "falling away" from the administration's position. This highlights elite infighting and institutional tension between the executive's desire for trade control and the judiciary's traditional role in mediating trade law. The U.S. administration is depicted as being at odds with its own business community over these protectionist measures.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The world is framed as a "fracturing multipolar arena" where the U.S. is increasingly isolated in its protectionist and militaristic tendencies. China, through its "Belt and Road" narratives (e.g., the China-Laos Railway), frames itself as the [hub of global connectivity](#). The "outside world" is depicted as eager for Chinese culture and commerce, with reports of "Spring Festival Fever" in Southeast Asia and Europe, while the U.S. is portrayed as a "threat matrix" creating artificial barriers through tariffs and military posturing in the Middle East.

China's adaptation involves a "defensive projection of power." It is not seeking kinetic conflict but is weaponizing its technological lead in AI and robotics to ensure economic sovereignty. By projecting an image of cultural and technological magnetism, China seeks to forge "New Quality" alliances that bypass U.S.-controlled financial and trade systems.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is characterized by a "consumption boom" within China and a "regulatory shock" originating from U.S. trade policy. Chinese domestic sectors, particularly tourism and cinema, are seeing record pre-sales, with the Spring Festival box office [surpassing 6 billion yuan](#). However, global trade is under pressure from U.S. tariff volatility.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Trade Deficit:** U.S. 2025 merchandise trade deficit at [\\$1.24 trillion](#), a record high.

- **Tariff Impact:** U.S. businesses and consumers expected to bear [96% of the cost](#) of new tariffs.
- **Box Office:** China's 2026 annual box office pre-sales reach [6 billion yuan](#).
- **Infrastructure Investment:** China's National Development Bank issued over [360 billion yuan](#) in highway loans in 2025.
- **Resource Recovery:** Recycling projects extracting [31 rare metals](#) from 1,000 tons of waste.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The broadcasts highlight a consolidation of leadership around technological and rural stability themes in China, while suggesting factional cracks in the U.S. administration's trade and legal strategy.

- **Xi Jinping:** Continues to solidify his role as the [architect of the "New Era,"](#) merging traditional rural support with high-tech industrial policy.
- **The U.S. Supreme Court Factions:** A [6:3 split](#) on tariff powers reveals a fragile conservative consensus, with hints that the administration's legal mandate is being tested by internal dissent.
- **Prince Andrew (UK):** Mentioned in the context of [eviction from Royal Lodge](#) and ongoing scandal, used as a subtext for the "decay" of traditional Western elite institutions.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial hierarchy is dominated by "The Warmth of the Spring Festival." This is the lead story across all time slots, using massive travel and consumption figures to project

national health. AI and robotics are the secondary "hero" stories, positioned as the future of the nation. Stories regarding U.S. tariffs and Middle East tensions are positioned as "external threats," used to justify China's drive for self-reliance. Buried stories include the specifics of the Geneva stalemate and any domestic economic headwinds in China's property sector, which are entirely absent.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcasts portray a world where China is the "principled stabilizer" and the U.S. is the "chaotic disruptor." U.S. leadership is framed as desperate, using tariffs and missiles to maintain relevance in a system it can no longer lead economically.

- **China:** Portrayed as **strong and visionary**. Xi Jinping is quoted emphasizing that "the countryside will have a [brighter future](#)" through modernization.
- **United States:** Portrayed as **protectionist and aggressive**. Its trade policy is described as "harming others and [harming itself](#)" through excessive tariff use.
- **Iran:** Portrayed as **defiant but reasonable**. Foreign Minister Araghchi states that "one thing I must emphasize is that there is [no military solution](#)" to the nuclear program.
- **Germany:** Portrayed as **conflicted and indecisive**, particularly regarding its [military procurement](#) of F-35s versus local fighter development.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The "meta-narrative" of the day is "Technological Sovereignty as Cultural Celebration." State media is effectively

merging the lunar new year with the "New Quality Productive Forces" campaign. By showing robots [participating in temple fairs](#), the state is conducting a psy-op to reduce public anxiety about automation and surveillance. Simultaneously, the focus on U.S. "legal failures" in trade is a narrative seeding intended to prepare the domestic and international audience for a more permanent economic decoupling.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Trade Decoupling Acceleration:** The U.S. Supreme Court ruling on executive tariffs will likely lead to an "irreversible" trade war, where China focuses entirely on its domestic "Dual Circulation" model.
- **Robotics as Labor Hedge:** If the mass production of [5,000 units](#) is successful by year-end, it will mark the beginning of a large-scale replacement of human labor in the service and domestic sectors in China.
- **Middle East Kinetic Escalation:** The U.S. "limited strike" rhetoric is likely a prelude to a significant military operation before the 2026 mid-terms, potentially disrupting global energy markets.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect retaliatory tariff announcements from China and potentially the EU following the U.S. SC ruling. Middle East tensions will spike as U.S. strategic assets [move to the UK](#) for deployment.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): China's AI "Model Speed Space" will begin releasing the first generation of commercially viable domestic AI chips to replace Western

alternatives. Global energy prices may fluctuate by [15-20%](#) if U.S.-Iran strikes occur.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The establishment of a "Human-Robot Co-existence" social model in China. The complete restructuring of the global fighter jet market as Germany and France either reconcile or split on the [sixth-gen fighter](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **U.S.-Iran Kinetic Conflict:** Potential for limited U.S. strikes to escalate into regional war. **Triggers:** Iranian nuclear enrichment beyond 90% or a "miscalculation" during U.S. military posturing. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Catastrophic for global energy and logistics. **Mitigations:** Immediate multilateral de-escalation via Geneva-based intermediaries.
- **Global Trade System Collapse:** Transition from rules-based to "emergency-based" trade. **Triggers:** Immediate implementation of the U.S. [10% universal tariff](#). **Likelihood:** Very High. **Impact:** Severe inflation in Western markets. **Mitigations:** Strengthening of regional RCEP and BRICS+ trade blocks.
- **AI/Robotics Supply Chain Disruption:** China's pivot to mass production of humanoid robots. **Triggers:** Shortage of specialized domestic chips or rare metals. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Delay in China's industrial automation goals. **Mitigations:** Accelerated [rare metal recovery](#) from Yellow River recycling zones.

- **Extreme Weather and Logistics:** High-pressure systems causing "extreme winds" during the peak Chunyun rush. **Triggers:** Arrival of the forecasted [cold air mass](#) with level 9-11 gusts. **Likelihood:** Certain. **Impact:** Significant delays and risk to elderly travelers. **Mitigations:** Real-time dynamic adjustments to [railway operation plans](#).
- **Cyber-Physical Threats to AI Hubs:** Strategic hubs like "Model Speed Space" becoming targets. **Triggers:** State-sponsored cyberattacks targeting [200+ companies](#) simultaneously. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Long-term damage to China's tech sovereignty. **Mitigations:** Hardening of local server infrastructure and air-gapped data clusters.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts mention [high EV pressure](#) but fail to detail the health of the power grid under the 3.32 billion trip load.
- There is no mention of the inflationary impact within China of the Spring Festival consumption boom.
- The "limited strike" plans for Iran are based on "anonymous sources" or Iranian state TV, leaving U.S. official confirmation unverified.
- The environmental impact of mass-producing [5,000 humanoid robots](#) (waste, chemical usage) is entirely ignored.
- Details on the "stalemate" in Geneva are missing, specifically Russia's latest territorial demands.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Potemkin" Robot Economy:** The humanoid robotics push may be a desperate cover for a massive labor shortage and a failing education-to-employment pipeline. If mass production fails to deliver functional utility, it could lead to a strategic capital "black hole."
- **The Trump-Iran "Grand Bargain" Blocker:** The strike rhetoric may actually be a "madman theory" play to force a grand bargain that excludes European and Chinese interests, a move that would leave China strategically isolated in the Middle East.
- **Black Swan:** A massive cyber-event during the [Spring Festival](#) that shuts down the high-speed rail network, turning the "vitality" of mobility into a humanitarian crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the creation of non-U.S. dollar payment systems to mitigate the impact of emergency tariffs.
- Establish "Robotics Ethics" treaties to manage the cross-border proliferation of humanoid technologies.
- Increase maritime security in the Persian Gulf as U.S.-Iran strike rhetoric intensifies.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Diversify manufacturing into RCEP nations to hedge against the U.S. [10% universal tariff](#).

- Invest in "Circular Economy" technologies, specifically [battery recycling](#) and rare metal recovery.
- Prepare for a significant shift in labor costs as humanoid robots move into service sectors by 2027.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Recent legislative activity is dominated by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on executive economic powers and China's integration of tech industry policy into its national planning documents.

- **U.S. Sections 232/301 Ruling:** Affirms broad executive power to ignore standard trade norms in favor of "national security" tariffs. Strategic intent: Trade protectionism.
- **China 14th Five-Year Plan AI Addendum:** Prioritizes "Human-AI Companionship" and humanoid mass production as national security priorities.
- **U.S. Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA):** Invoked to justify the [150-day 10% tariff](#) on all global imports.
- **U.S. Supreme Court Tariff Ruling:** A [6:3 decision](#) allows the U.S. administration to impose emergency tariffs without congressional approval.
- **U.S.-Iran Military Posturing:** U.S. considering "limited strikes" against Revolutionary Guard facilities; [C-5M transport planes](#) deployed to UK bases.
- **Yellow River Battery Recycling:** A new facility is [extracting 31 rare metals](#), aiming to reclaim "city mines" for resource security.
- **Geneva Peace Talks Conclusion:** U.S., Russia, and Ukraine talks [conclude without agreement](#) after several days in Switzerland.
- **China-Laos Railway Prosperity:** Passenger volume [increased 1.64 times](#) since opening, handling over 100,000 foreign tourists this season.
- **Agricultural Insurance Lead:** China becomes the [world's largest agricultural insurance](#) market with 155.5 billion yuan in premiums.
- **Weather Emergency:** Cold air mass to drop temperatures by [6 to 10 degrees](#) across northern China during festival peak.
- **Germany F-35 Debate:** Internal government [denial of F-35 purchases](#) amid friction over the Franco-German sixth-gen fighter project.
- **Speed Skating Records:** Ning Zhongyan wins the [1500m speed skating gold](#), setting a new Olympic record.
- **U.S. Trade Deficit Hits:** The 2025 deficit hits [\\$1.24 trillion](#), with 90% of tariff costs borne by domestic consumers.
- **Spring Festival Travel Records:** China expects [3.32 billion trips](#), with highway traffic exceeding 63 million vehicles per day.
- **Shanghai Model Speed Space:** Xi Jinping visits the [AI innovation hub](#), hosting 200+ firms focused on large model development.
- **Humanoid Robot Records:** The "Yuanzheng A2" (A2) robot sets a Guinness world record for humanoid walking [distance \(106.28 km\)](#).

KEY STORIES

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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