

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

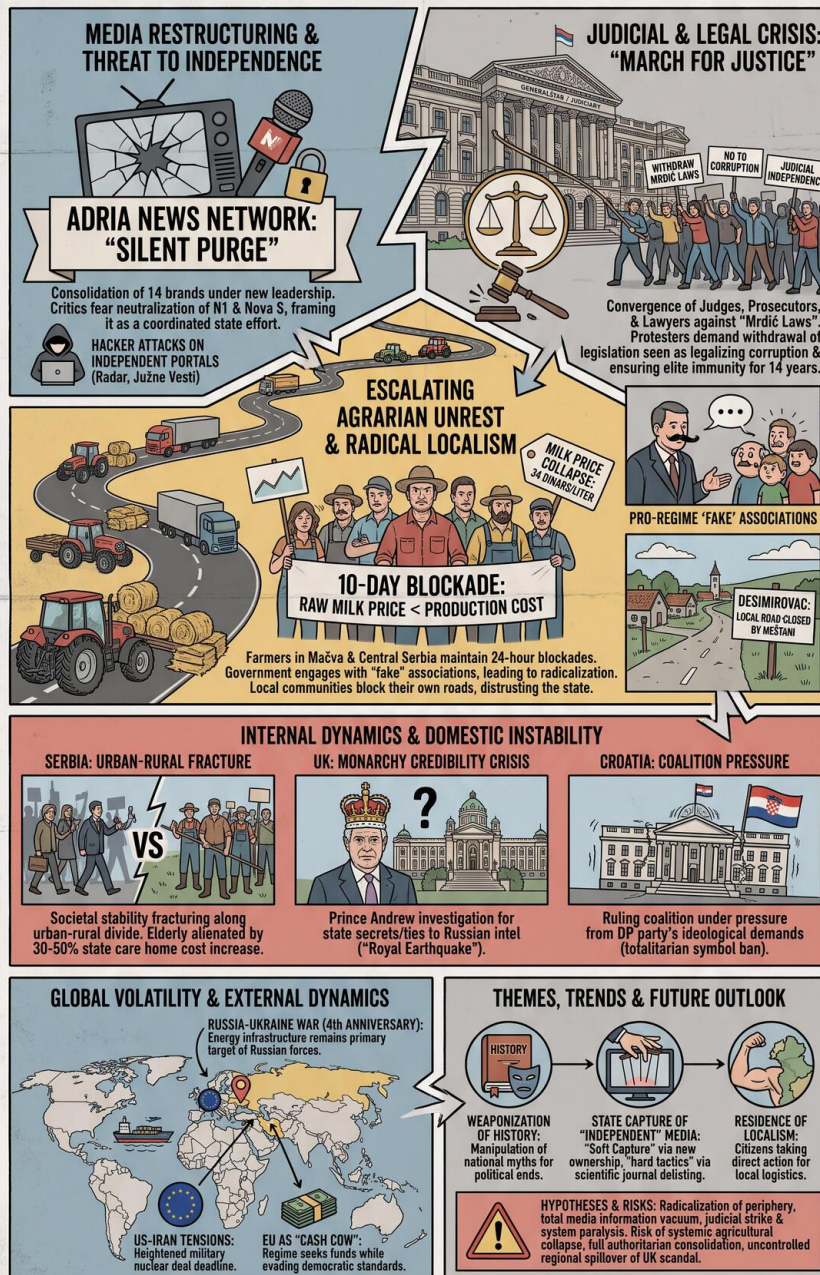
N1SRP

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

CONVERGENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL DECAY & CIVIL DEFIANCE IN THE SERBIAN SPHERE

A Visual Guide to a Multi-Front Assault on Democratic Norms, State Capture, and Grassroots Resistance



ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT: Rising costs, regulatory friction, collapsing milk prices, legal disputes (e.g., retailer Delez suing state). **KEY STORIES:** Adria News launch, farmer blockades, Prince Andrew probe, March for Justice, Kraljevo veteran arrests, AI in schools (Estonia, India).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT: Short-term arrests, medium-term Venice Commission opinion, long-term AI education gap.

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DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

Serbia is currently navigating a period of profound internal instability, characterized by a multi-front assault on democratic norms and the rule of law. The broadcast highlights a **systemic effort** by the state to neutralize independent media through the creation of the **Adria News Network**, a restructuring viewed by critics as a mechanism for [editorial neutralization](#). This occurs alongside the "March for Justice," a significant mobilization of legal professionals and citizens protesting **legislative maneuvers** (the "Mrdić laws") designed to subordinate the judiciary and prosecution to executive control. The state is framed as employing "state terrorism," using [police repression](#) against students and veterans while simultaneously attempting to co-opt grassroots movements.

Simultaneously, the **agrarian sector** has reached a breaking point, with farmers across Mačva and Central Serbia maintaining [24-hour blockades](#). The government's strategy of engaging with "pro-regime" associations

rather than actual protesters has led to a **radicalization of sentiment** in the periphery. This domestic turbulence is mirrored in an increasingly volatile global environment, marked by the unprecedented investigation of the UK's Prince Andrew for [leaking state secrets](#) and ties to Russian intelligence, and the approaching fourth anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where **energy infrastructure** remains a primary target. The overarching narrative is one of traditional institutions—monarchies, judiciaries, and independent media—struggling to survive against **authoritarian encroachment** and technological shifts.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Media Restructuring and Threat to Independence:** The launch of **Adria News Network** has sparked fears of a "silent purge" of independent voices. Critics allege the new leadership, led by [Rani Rad](#) and [Brent Sadler](#), may be part of a coordinated effort with the Serbian state to **neutralize N1 and Nova S**. This is underscored by reports of **hacker attacks** on the Radar and Južne Vesti portals [targeting critical reporting](#).
- **Escalating Agrarian Unrest:** Farmer protests have entered their **tenth day**, with protesters in Bogatić and Cerovac rejecting government overtures. They claim the Ministry of Agriculture is conducting [staged meetings](#) with unrepresentative "regime" associations while **raw milk prices** remain below the cost of production.

- **Judicial and Legal Crisis:** The "March for Justice" represents a rare convergence of **judges, prosecutors, and lawyers** against the government. Protesters demand the withdrawal of laws they claim will [legalize corruption](#) and provide immunity to the ruling elite.
- **Prince Andrew Intelligence Scandal:** In an unprecedented development, Prince Andrew is under investigation for **trafficking state secrets** to Jeffrey Epstein and potential [cooperation with Russian intelligence](#). This has been described as a "royal earthquake" threatening the stability of the British monarchy.
- **Global AI Integration in Education:** Nations like **Estonia and India** are moving to formally integrate AI into their primary and secondary education systems, raising both **opportunities for personalized learning** and [risks to critical thinking](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Civil Unrest & Social Order The Serbian government is facing a **localized but intense** breakdown of social order in the agricultural heartlands. Protesters describe [radicalizing their tactics](#) due to government "humiliation." In Kraljevo, the arrest of **veterans of the 63rd Parachute Brigade** for allegedly holding "trophy weapons" is seen as a [preemptive intimidation tactic](#) to discourage participation in students' and farmers' protests.

Information Warfare & Disinformation The creation of Adria News Network is framed as a **sophisticated information operation**. State-linked figures are accused of "tonalizing" media to project a **false sense of neutrality** while actually serving regime

interests. The [exclusion of independent journalists](#) from state press conferences and the subsequent **verbal abuse** of those who do attend are cited as key components of this environment.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk The introduction of the "Mrđić laws" in Serbia is characterized by legal experts as **regulatory capture** aimed at ensuring "criminal irresponsibility" for the ruling SNS party [over the next 14 years](#). This mirrors similar dynamics in **Italy**, where the judiciary faces efforts to "clip its wings" regarding [anti-mafia legislation](#).

Climate & Extreme Weather In the **Alps**, researchers report a **20% projected drop** in the Rhine's water levels due to declining snow cover, threatening [long-term water security](#) for European agriculture. Meanwhile, **Romania** faced immediate disruption from [40cm of snowfall](#), leaving 200,000 homes without power.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of History and Identity A recurring theme is the **manipulation of nationalistic myths** to serve modern political ends. In Serbia, the regime is accused of "hiding behind" the [heroic history of ancestors](#) while privatizing state assets. Similarly, in **Croatia**, the proposed **ban on totalitarian symbols** is framed as a [political ultimatum](#) by the DP party to force ideological concessions from the HDZ-led coalition.

State Capture of the "Independent" Fourth Estate The transition of United Group's media assets to the **Adria News Network** is analyzed as a template for

indirect censorship. By appointing "international experts" with ties to states friendly to the current Serbian administration (such as the UAE), the regime seeks to create a **veneer of credibility** while [restricting critical inquiry](#). This "soft capture" is supplemented by **harder tactics**, such as the **removal of scientific journals** from official lists [for including footnotes](#)

The Resilience of Localism Despite state pressure, there is a visible trend toward **radical localism**. Farmers in **Desimirovac** have blocked their own village roads to prevent [heavy machinery](#) from destroying infrastructure while bypassing larger blockades. This demonstrates a shift where citizens no longer trust the state to manage even **basic local logistics**.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

- **Serbia:** Societal stability is fracturing along the **urban-rural divide**. The "intelligentsia" and legal class are marching in Belgrade, while the **agrarian class** is blockading the provinces. The [30-50% increase](#) in the cost of **state elderly care homes**, despite a lack of pension increases, has further alienated the **senior demographic**, a traditional core of support for the ruling party.
- **United Kingdom:** The monarchy is facing an **existential credibility crisis**. The arrest of a member of the royal family for [serious criminal offenses](#)—the first such event since 1647—is described as an "earthquake" that may force a **redefinition of the institution's role** in the 21st century.

- **Croatia:** The ruling coalition is under pressure from the **DP party's ideological demands**, threatening the survival of the [liberal-conservative balance](#) in the Sabor.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

- **The European Union:** The EU is framed as a "**cash cow**" by the Serbian regime, which seeks funds while [evading compliance](#) with democratic standards. Conversely, EU institutions (like the Venice Commission) are viewed by the opposition as the **last external arbiter** of legal sanity, although their **slow response times** are exploited by the state to [calculate profit over reforms](#).
- **Russia-Ukraine War:** The conflict is increasingly defined by **energy warfare**. As the fourth anniversary approaches, Russian forces continue to [target the electrical grid](#), attempting to break Ukrainian civilian morale through **prolonged energy insecurity**.
- **Middle East Tension:** US-Iran dynamics are characterized by **heightened military readiness**, with the carrier **Gerald Ford** moving into position and Trump threatening ["really bad things"](#) if a nuclear deal is not reached within 10-15 days.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic climate is one of **rising costs and regulatory friction**. The Serbian agricultural sector is suffering from a **collapse in raw milk prices** (down to 34 dinars/liter) while input costs like [fuel and seeds](#) continue to rise. Market sentiment is further dampened by **legal disputes** between

the state and major retailers over **margin restrictions**.

- **Inflation and Social Costs:** State nursing homes have increased prices by **30-50%**, with some costs reaching [120,000 dinars monthly](#), far outstripping the average pension of 56,000 dinars.
- **Corporate Conflict:** The retailer **Delez** has sued the Serbian state over [price ceiling measures](#) it claims are unconstitutional and ruinous to profitability.
- **Media Capital Flows:** The sale and restructuring of United Group assets are viewed as a **capital maneuver** to allow state influence while protecting [owner interests](#) at the expense of journalistic independence.
- **Sports Economics:** High-end basketball budgets are escalating, with **Panathinaikos** spending [27 million euros](#) on player salaries alone, highlighting the **financial polarization** in European sports.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Leadership shifts are currently **consolidating control** rather than promoting diversity, particularly in the media and legal sectors.

- **Rani Rad & Brent Sadler:** Appointed to lead **Adria News Network**. Their tenure signals a **strategic pivot** for N1 and Nova S, likely toward a more "regime-tolerant" neutrality [based on past ties](#).
- **Dragan Glamočić:** The Minister of Agriculture is under fire for **marginalizing legitimate protesters** in favor of state-friendly "fake" [farmer associations](#).

- **Marko Kričak:** The new head of Criminal Police is accused by the opposition of **authorizing the intimidation** of war veterans to [stifle civil dissent](#).
- **Nihad Uk:** The Prime Minister of Sarajevo Canton **resigned**, forcing a [major government reshuffle](#) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial posture is **defensive and alarmist** regarding its own survival. The **Lead Stories** center on the restructuring of United Group and the farmer blockades, framing them as **existential threats** to a free and fed Serbia. The tone is **skeptical** of all government "agreements" and **deeply sympathetic** to grassroots protesters. **Buried Stories** include international developments like the **science reports** on carbon cycles, which are treated as "filler" between more urgent domestic reports. **Conspicuous Omissions** include any detailed government defense of the Mrdić laws; the network frames these solely through the **opposition's critical lens**.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The world is portrayed as a **hostile arena** where rule of law is failing even in established democracies like the UK, while **authoritarian tactics** are being refined in the Balkans.

- **Aleksandar Vučić:** Portrayed as an **opportunistic autocrat** who "hates professional journalism" and is "uljuljkan" (lulled) into a sense of [total control](#). Protesters describe him as a leader who uses **"state terrorism"** to [silence critics](#).

- **Donald Trump:** Characterized as a **unilateralist force** whose tariffs were ruled unconstitutional by his own Supreme Court [in a 6:3 decision](#), yet who remains a **destabilizing factor** in Middle East diplomacy.
- **Prince Andrew:** Framed as a **failed elitist** who "disgraced his title" and is now a [victim of his own hubris](#) and secret associations.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The government's claim that N1 has been "**sold**" is identified as a **deliberate misinformation tactic** intended to undermine the channel's [authority before its audience](#).
- **Censorship of Academia:** The removal of the journal "Innovation in Education" from scientific lists because it [refused to delete footnotes](#) supporting students is a clear act of **ideological policing** within the Ministry of Science.
- **Digital Repression:** The use of **Instagram reporting** to disable journalists' accounts is highlighted as a **new frontier** of state-directed [online suppression](#).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Radicalization of the Periphery:** As farmers feel the state is "staging" negotiations, the likelihood of **violent clashes** at blockades increases. Protesters have already stated they ["must radicalize"](#) their struggle.

- **The End of "Independent" Mainstream Media:** If Adria News Network successfully **neutralizes N1's critical edge**, Serbia will lose its most significant counter-narrative platform, likely leading to a **total information vacuum** outside of social media.
- **Judicial Strike:** The "March for Justice" could escalate into a **total work stoppage** by judges and prosecutors, [paralyzing the legal system](#) and potentially triggering an EU-led sanctions regime.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect **further arrests** of protesters and veterans on "unrelated" charges (like illegal possession of trophy weapons) to [thin the ranks](#) of the blockades. The March 1st expiration of **price controls** will lead to a [sharp spike](#) in food prices.
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The Venice Commission's **June opinion** on the Mrdić laws will be a **pivotal diplomatic flashpoint**. If negative, it may [halt Serbia's EU accession](#) path indefinitely.
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** The integration of AI into education in **Estonia and India** will create a **widening gap** in human capital between early adopters and nations that fail to [modernize pedagogy](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current environment in Serbia and the broader region presents several high-impact

risks that could deteriorate rapidly if triggers are pulled.

- **Systemic Collapse of Serbian Agricultural Production:** Triggers: Sustained raw milk prices below 34 RSD and continued blockade violence. Likelihood: High. Impact: Critical food insecurity and rural mass migration. Mitigations: [Direct state purchase](#) of milk for schools and kindergartens.
- **Full Authoritarian Consolidation in Serbia:** Triggers: Passage of the Mrđić laws and successful neutralization of N1/ Nova S. Likelihood: Very High. Impact: Total loss of domestic check on power. Mitigations: **Mass civil disobedience** and aggressive EU [diplomatic pressure](#).
- **Uncontrolled Regional Spillover of UK Royal Scandal:** Triggers: Formal indictment of Prince Andrew for **cooperation with Russian intel**. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Severe damage to Western diplomatic cohesion. Mitigations: [Full transparency](#) and stripping of all remaining royal protections.
- **Ukraine Energy Grid Failure:** Triggers: Sustained **100+ drone attacks** targeting substations during peak cold. Likelihood: High. Impact: Humanitarian catastrophe and [secondary refugee wave](#). Mitigations: Accelerated delivery of anti-missile systems.
- **US-Iran Kinetic Conflict:** Triggers: Expiration of Trump's **15-day ultimatum** without a deal. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Global [energy price shock](#) and regional war. Mitigations: Urgent **EU-brokered** back-channel negotiations.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Financial Backing of Pro-Regime Groups:** The broadcast identifies "fake" farmer associations but fails to **investigate the funding sources** or specific state [officials coordinating them](#).
- **The Role of the UAE in Media Restructuring:** While Rani Rad's ties to the UAE are mentioned, the **specific geopolitical trade-offs** between Belgrade and Abu Dhabi [regarding this deal](#) remain unexamined.
- **Prince Andrew's Defense:** The reporting is heavily skewed toward the prosecution; any **counter-intelligence or defense perspective** is [entirely absent](#).
- **Infrastructure Degradation Stats:** The meštani of Desimirovca complain of road destruction, but there is **no technical assessment** of whether [rural roads](#) can actually handle the current rerouted traffic.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Controlled Chaos" Hypothesis The current protests and blockades may be **partially tolerated** or even encouraged by elements of the state to **identify and catalog** the most radical opposition elements before a more decisive crackdown. The arrest of veterans in Kraljevo for "trophy weapons" could be a [trial balloon](#) for wider arrests.

The "Prince Andrew as Asset" Scenario The investigation into Prince Andrew for Russian intelligence ties might actually be a **deception operation** or a way for the UK to **purge pro-Russian elements** from its elite structures in a highly public way, using Epstein as the [convenient catalyst](#).

Black Swan Event: The "Bread and Milk" Riots A sudden, state-wide **failure of the food supply chain** due to a combination of farmer blockades and retailer lawsuits could lead to **uncontrollable urban rioting** that bypasses organized opposition entirely, leading to **military intervention** in domestic logistics.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Serbia must immediately **depoliticize police action** against veterans and students to avoid [escalating civil unrest](#) into armed resistance.
- **Economic:** Implementation of the **Polish model**—state purchase of surplus milk [for social distribution](#)—is required to stabilize the agrarian economy.
- **Diplomatic:** The EU should **fast-track the Venice Commission's opinion** to prevent the permanent [institutionalization of corruption](#) in Serbia.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Investors in Balkan retail should **diversify logistical routes** to avoid the increasing number of [localized rural blockades](#).
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Companies operating in Serbia should **audit their legal exposures** in light of the [shifting judicial landscape](#).
- **Tech:** The move toward **AI in education** presents a **high-growth opportunity** for software developers in the [Estonian and Indian markets](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Today's legislative activity centers on **ideological demarcation** and **institutional capture** across Europe and the Americas.

• BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Mrdićevi zakoni (Serbia):** Laws intended to **subordinate the prosecution** and judiciary to the executive; described by protesters as the ["legalization of all-inclusive corruption."](#)
- **Ban on Totalitarian Symbols (Croatia):** Proposed legislation to ban **communist and fascist imagery**, specifically targeting the [Red Star](#).
- **Zakon o amnestiji (Venezuela):** An ambiguous law intended to allow **political reunification**, though critics say it [fails to define eligible crimes](#).
- **Take It Down Act (USA):** Legislation aimed at **criminalizing non-consensual deep-fake pornography on social platforms**.

• HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **March for Justice (Belgrade):** Mobilization against **judicial capture starting at Generalštab**.
- **Ministry of Agriculture Presser:** Minister Glamočić's **failed negotiations** with [non-representative associations](#).

KEY STORIES

- **Launch of Adria News Network:** 14 media brands, including N1, consolidated under a **new management structure** led by [Rani Rad](#) and [Brent Sadler](#), raising censorship concerns.

- **The 10-Day Farmer Blockade:** Ongoing provincial road closures in **Bogatić, Cerovac, and Mrčajevci** over [unsustainable milk prices](#).
- **Investigation of Prince Andrew:** Unprecedented detention for **espionage and sex trafficking** linked to [Jeffrey Epstein](#) and [Russian intelligence](#).
- **The March for Justice:** Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers protest **Mrdić's laws** in Belgrade, calling for [judicial independence](#).
- **Kraljevo Veteran Arrests:** Preemptive **police raids** on members of the **63rd Parachute Brigade** participating in [anti-government protests](#).
- **Ukraine Infrastructure Attacks:** Continued Russian **drone strikes** on Ukrainian [energy and heating systems](#) in the Hersun and Harkov regions.
- **AI in Schools:** Estonia and India **mandating AI training** for millions of students and [teachers](#).
- **Elderly Care Home Inflation:** Serbian state homes increasing prices by **up to 50%**, leaving seniors with [18,000 dinars](#) for medicine and food.
- **Dijana Hrkalović Trial:** Re-trial of the former **MUP official** delayed by [procedural requests for judge removal](#).
- **Innovation in Education Scandal:** Scientific journal **delisted by Ministry of Science** for a footnote [supporting student protesters](#).
- **Croatia Political Crisis:** DP party threatens to **quit the coalition** unless a **ban on communist symbols** is enacted within [30 days](#).
- **Trump Iran Ultimatum:** A **15-day deadline** set by Trump for a new [nuclear agreement](#) or military action.
- **Venezuela Amnesty Law:** Signing of a law that **lacks clarity** on which political crimes are [covered](#).
- **Romania Blizzard:** **40cm of snow** causing [200,000 power outages](#) and grounding flights.
- **Alps Water Crisis:** Researchers predict a **20% decline** in Rhine [water levels](#) due to snow cover loss.
- **Hacker Attacks on Independent Media:** **Radar and Južne Vesti** websites [rendered inaccessible](#) during critical news cycles.
- **Mionica Community Art:** Artist Ana's return to **Mionica** to create [public installations](#) and join the local council.
- **Vasil Hadžimanov Interview:** Jazz musician discussing his **return from New York** to Serbia [under sanctions](#).
- **Mexico Domestic Violence Chatbot:** 260,000 women using the **Violetta AI** [to seek help](#) for abuse.
- **Prison Restaurant in Milan:** A **gourmet restaurant** staffed by [convicts](#) achieving 10 years of success.
- **Vjesnik Tower Demolition:** Contract signed for the **mechanical removal** of the [iconic Zagreb building](#).
- **Crvena Zvezda Europa League:** Historic victory against **Lille** [in France](#).
- **Korać Cup Finalists:** **Red Star and Partizan** vying for the Serbian [basketball trophy](#).
- **NBA All-Star Weekend:** Denver Nuggets lose to **Clippers** [115-114](#).

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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