

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

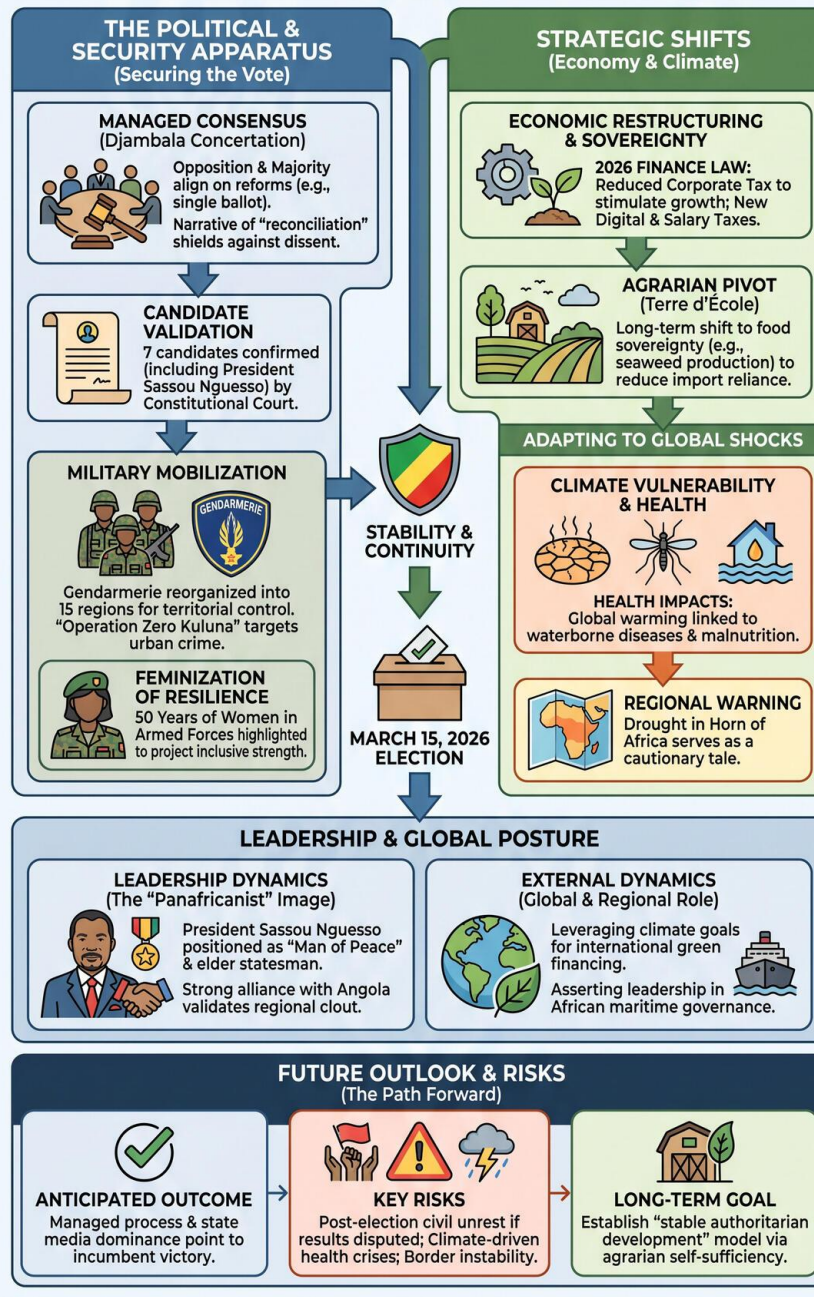
FEBRUARY 21, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

CONGO 2026: CONSOLIDATING POWER AMIDST VULNERABILITY

The State's Strategy for the March Presidential Election.

Managed Political Consensus & Military Mobilization secure the path to re-election, while addressing systemic Economic & Climate pressures.



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THE CONGOLESE STATE IS
CONSOLIDATING POWER THROUGH
MANAGED POLITICAL CONSENSUS
AND MILITARY MOBILIZATION
AHEAD OF THE MARCH 2026
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WHILE
ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC CLIMATE
AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Congolese government is engaged in a multifaceted strategy to ensure institutional continuity as the March 15, 2026, presidential election approaches. Central to this is the Constitutional Court's [validation of seven candidates](#), including incumbent President Denis Sassou Nguesso, under a legal framework that state media portrays as rigorous and transparent. This political maneuvering is bolstered by the results of the "political concertation" in Djambala, which aims to present a unified front of opposition and majority factions supporting electoral reforms. However, the heavy emphasis on "reconciliation" and "peace" serves as a narrative shield against potential civil unrest, framing any dissent as a threat to national stability.

Simultaneously, the administration is projecting an image of modernized governance and resilience. This includes the [comprehensive reform of the tax code](#) in the 2026 Finance Law, which reduces corporate taxes to stimulate the economy while introducing new environmental and salary taxes. On the social and security front, the state is celebrating the 50th anniversary of women in the armed forces and reorganizing the Gendarmerie into 15 regions to combat "grand banditisme" and secure the electoral process. The inauguration of the "Terre d'École" project in Kintélé further integrates education with agrarian industrialization, signaling a long-term pivot toward food sovereignty as a pillar of regime survival amidst global climate instability.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Electoral Readiness and Candidate Validation

- The Constitutional Court officially [confirmed seven presidential candidates](#) for the March 2026 poll, citing adherence to Article 66 of the Constitution.
- The political "concertation" in Djambala concluded with a [bilan of 12 recommendations](#), with six reported as fully executed, including administrative redistricting and enhanced CNI independence.
- The official campaign period is set to [commence on February 28](#), with youth mobilization efforts intensifying under the MJP (Movement of Young Presidentials).

Military Modernization and Structural Reform

- The Congolese Gendarmerie is [expanding from 12 to 15 regions](#) to improve territorial coverage and specialized responses to urban crime.
- The 2026 planning conference for the Armed Forces emphasized [securing the electoral process](#) and integrating intelligence-led policing through "Opération Zéro Kuluna."
- A significant documentary series is [highlighting 50 years of female service](#) in the military, promoting a narrative of inclusive institutional strength.

Fiscal and Economic Restructuring

- The 2026 Finance Law [reduces Corporate Tax \(IS\) from 30% to 28%](#) but introduces a new tax on digital terminals to target environmental externalities.
- Introduction of the [Tax on Salaries \(ITS\)](#) is framed as a benefit to household purchasing power, though it tightens state control over formal labor revenues.
- The state is pushing for [autonomous seed production](#) and seaweed cultivation to reduce dependence on imported agricultural inputs.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Climate & Extreme Weather

- Extensive reporting on the [health impacts of climate change](#), linking global warming to rising mortality, injuries from floods, and the spread of waterborne diseases.

- Severe drought in the Horn of Africa is [driving malnutrition in Kenyan refugee camps](#), with state media using this as a cautionary tale for the Central African region.
- Local initiatives like ["Honggonie" city cleaning](#) and reforestation are framed as "salutary actions" for environmental preservation.

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- President Sassou Nguesso is [receiving international accolades](#), such as the Angolan "Order of Peace and Independence," to bolster his domestic "Panafricanist" credentials.
- The [inauguration of the Terre d'École campus](#) by the President serves to project a legacy of "capacity for listening" and concern for future generations.
- State mourning for figures like [Saturnin Okabé and Firmin Ayessa](#) reinforces a culture of regime continuity and respect for the revolutionary old guard.

Global Health & Biosecurity

- An [epidemic of measles has been declared](#) in neighboring regions, prompting a vaccination campaign for new arrivals up to age 29.
- Focus on [peditatric cancer awareness](#) and facial reconstruction surgery for "bec de lièvre" (cleft lip) children indicates a strategic use of public health as a "soft power" narrative.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Feminization of National Resilience

A prominent theme is the celebration of women as the backbone of national progress, ranging from the [legacy of Émilie Manima](#) (the country's first female minister) to current female military mechanics and pilots. By marking [50 years of women in uniform](#), the state is not only projecting social progressiveness but also tapping into a new demographic of loyalists ahead of the elections. This "masculinité positive" (positive masculinity) narrative encourages men to support women in public life, effectively broadening the regime's base of support under the guise of gender equity.

Managed Democracy and the "Concertation" Model

The Djambala concertation is framed as an [unprecedented dialogue between opposition and majority](#), yet the output is a highly structured set of recommendations that largely benefit the incumbent's administrative control. The [adoption of the single ballot](#) (bulletin unique) and CNI parity are significant concessions, but they are presented as gifts from the leadership rather than hard-won rights, reinforcing the "Father of the Nation" archetype for Sassou Nguesso.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The domestic environment is characterized by a "calm before the storm" as the election cycle enters its final phase. While state media emphasizes ["peace, unity, and democracy,"](#) the Gendarmerie's focus on "grand banditisme" and "urban security" suggests an underlying fear of pre-election unrest. The ["Zéro Kuluna" operation](#) indicates that the state is actively targeting marginalized urban youth, a demographic often susceptible to opposition mobilization. Furthermore, the [public debate](#)

[over online commerce scams](#) reflects a growing digital friction and a breakdown of trust in informal economic structures, which the state seeks to regulate through "responsible" digital citizenship narratives.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Congo-Brazzaville is positioning itself as a [pivotal state in African geopolitics](#), leveraging its historical support for Angolan and Namibian independence to maintain regional clout. The state's [alignment with WHO and UN climate goals](#) serves to attract international green financing, while book launches on ["maritime governance in Africa"](#) signal aspirations to lead on continental security issues. The relationship with Angola remains a strategic cornerstone, with the "Grand Panafricanist" label for Sassou Nguesso being used to insulate him from Western democratic critiques by emphasizing his role as an anti-colonial elder statesman.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The 2026 economic outlook is defined by a transition toward "rationalized" taxation and agricultural industrialization to mitigate global supply chain shocks.

- **Taxation:** Corporate Tax (IS) [reduced to 28%](#); minimum perception set at 1% of turnover; introduction of the ITS salary tax.
- **Green Finance:** Introduction of an [environmental tax on digital terminals](#) and polluting activities.
- **Agriculture:** Promotion of [seaweed production prototypes](#) for animal feed to replace expensive imported "pre-mix" products.

- **Connectivity:** Expansion of [Canalbox fiber optic internet](#) for 15,000 FCFA/month, signaling a push for digital economic integration.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Personnel shifts reflect a tightening of military and administrative control over the electoral apparatus.

- **Denis Sassou Nguesso:** Formally [validated as a candidate](#) for re-election, consolidating the Majority's position.
- **Colonel Désiré Bienvenu Mundelingolo:** Appointed as the [new commandant of Academy Marien Ngouabi](#), tasked with elite military formation.
- **Colonel Major Emmanuel Gilbert Ndakebonga:** Installed as [commandant of Defense Zone No. 2 \(Dolisie\)](#) to oversee regional security during the election.
- **Jervet Akwangu:** Promoted to [Gendarmerie Commandant](#), spearheading the "Zero Kuluna" anti-crime initiative.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial hierarchy is dominated by state ritual and institutional milestones. The "Lead Stories" focus on [presidential candidate validation](#) and the results of political dialogues, designed to project an air of inevitability and order. "Buried Stories" include the [measles epidemic and rising malnutrition](#) in the region, which are framed as foreign problems despite the shared border vulnerabilities. The tone is heavily nationalistic and reassuring, with [historical documentaries on women in the military](#) and Angolan independence used as a distraction from current economic hardship. A

conspicuous omission is any mention of opposition protests or critiques of the election process, which are entirely absent from the transcripts.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The world is framed as a hostile arena of climate catastrophe and insecurity, where the Congo stands as a "beacon of peace."

- **Angola:** Portrayed as a ["sister republic"](#) and a guarantor of historical truth, validating Sassou Nguesso's leadership.
- **The UN/WHO:** Framed as [essential but overwhelmed](#) partners, whose data is used to justify state-led environmental interventions.
- **Kenya/Somalia:** Depicted as [zones of chaos](#) (drought, disease) to highlight Congolese stability by contrast.
- **Denis Sassou Nguesso:** Framed as ["The Man of Peace"](#) and an "architect of modern infrastructure" who possesses a "capacity for listening" that exceeds Western democratic standards.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The concept of "Masculinité Positive" is being used to [reframe traditional gender roles](#) as a state-sponsored modernization project.
- **Censorship by Omission:** Opposition figures like [Dave Frem and Zinga Mabio](#) are mentioned only in the context of their formal validation by the Court, with no airtime given to their platforms.

- **Disinformation Management:** Government officials are [warning against "social media experts"](#) and "misinformation" regarding online commerce and political arguments, urging citizens to rely only on "responsible" state channels.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Election Outcome:** Given the managed candidate list and the overwhelming state media support, a [first-round victory for Sassou Nguesso](#) is the intended outcome, with security forces already pre-positioned to suppress post-election dissent.
- **Economic Pivot:** The 2026 Finance Law's tax cuts suggest the state is [anticipating a period of slow growth](#) and is attempting to prevent capital flight before the election.
- **Military Intervention:** The reorganization of the Gendarmerie [points toward an escalation](#) of domestic policing under the guise of "national security" in the coming weeks.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a massive increase in [youth-led pro-government rallies](#) as the Feb 28 campaign start date approaches. Security "sweeps" in urban centers under Operation Zero Kuluna will likely intensify to "sanitize" cities before voting.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Following the likely re-election, the government will move to [implement the new ITS salary tax](#) and digital taxes, possibly leading to localized labor friction or inflation in digital services.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The Terre d'École model will be [exported to other departments](#) as a way to create a self-sustaining agrarian economy that is less vulnerable to global price fluctuations, serving as a template for "stable authoritarian development."

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Post-Election Civil Unrest:** High likelihood of localized protests if the election is viewed as fraudulent. **Triggers:** Disputed results or heavy-handed policing. **Impact:** High economic disruption in Brazzaville/Pointe-Noire. **Mitigation:** The [Djambala concertation's "consensus"](#) framework is the primary preemptive tool.
- **Climate-Driven Health Crisis:** The link between [warming and waterborne disease](#) could overwhelm provincial health systems. **Triggers:** Seasonal flooding in the Congo Basin. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Significant strain on state resources.
- **Border Spillover:** Narcotraffic and "grand banditisme" [remains a structural threat](#) from neighboring instabilities. **Triggers:** Election violence in DRC or CAR. **Impact:** Destabilization of the Sangha/Likouala regions.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts mention [seven validated candidates](#) but provide zero information on the specific policies or criticisms offered by the six non-incumbent challengers.
- There is no mention of the [national debt level](#) or how the tax cuts in the Finance Law will be reconciled with international lending (IMF/World Bank) requirements.

- The actual status of the [measles epidemic](#) inside Congo remains opaque, with coverage focused almost exclusively on border arrivals and foreign camps.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Brittle Peace":** The heavy emphasis on ["reconciliation"](#) and ["consensus"](#) may not be a sign of strength, but a desperate attempt to co-opt an opposition that the regime can no longer afford to fight directly, suggesting an underlying fiscal or military fatigue.
- **Black Swan:** A [climate-induced crop failure](#) in the "Terre d'École" or other agrarian projects could turn the state's "sovereignty" narrative into a liability, sparking food riots in the lead-up to the March vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Monitor the [Gendarmerie reorganization](#) as a bellwether for human rights risks during the election.
- Engage the [Terre d'École model](#) as a potential point of cooperation for regional food security initiatives.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Assess the [impact of the new digital tax](#) on telecom and IT hardware supply chains.
- Capitalize on the [Corporate Tax reduction to 28%](#) for new entries in the agribusiness sector.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The legislative focus is on [implementing the 2026 Finance Law](#) and formalizing electoral administrative changes.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:** 2026 Finance Law (Tax reform, IS reduction, ITS salary tax introduction, digital terminal tax); Decree 2026/86 (National mourning and flag protocol).
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:** Ernest & Young seminar on tax orientations; Djambala political concertation plenary; Constitutional Court validation ceremony.

KEY STORIES

- **Climate Health Impacts:** WHO and state medical experts link global warming to a surge in waterborne diseases and malnutrition in regional refugee camps. [Read more.](#)
- **Presidential Candidate Validation:** The Constitutional Court approves seven candidates for the March 15 election, including incumbent Denis Sassou Nguesso. [Read more.](#)
- **2026 Finance Law Presentation:** Government and private sector experts detail tax code revisions, including a drop in corporate tax to 28% and new salary taxes. [Read more.](#)
- **Gendarmerie 2026 Planning:** Structural reorganization into 15 regions and focus on urban crime "Operation Zero Kuluna" to secure the nation. [Read more.](#)
- **50 Years of Women in the Military:** A documentary series highlights the integration and technical achievements of female soldiers and pilots. [Read more.](#)

- **Terre d'École Inauguration:** President Sassou Nguesso opens a pilot educational and agricultural campus in Kintélé. [Read more.](#)
- **Djambala Concertation Results:** Opposition and Majority agree on 12 recommendations for electoral reform, including the single ballot. [Read more.](#)
- **Measles Outbreak:** An epidemic declared in Somali refugee zones prompts preventive vaccination for young adults in Congo. [Read more.](#)
- **Angolan Recognition:** President Sassou Nguesso is honored in Luanda for his role in regional independence and peace. [Read more.](#)
- **Seaweed Production Prototype:** Local agrarian industrialization efforts aim to produce indigenous animal feed. [Read more.](#)
- **National Mourning for Firmin Ayessa:** Official tributes paid to the deceased Minister of State, signaling regime continuity. [Read more.](#)
- **Lake Tanganyika Documentary:** A historical exploration of David Livingstone's search for the Nile and the region's riverine heritage. [Read more.](#)
- **Childhood Cancer Initiative:** Foundation Kalissa Ikama and local mayors launch pediatric oncology awareness days. [Read more.](#)
- **Hospital Medical Campaign:** Blanche Gomez Hospital prepares for a facial reconstruction surgery campaign for children. [Read more.](#)
- **Maritime Governance Book Launch:** New academic work explores the Congo's role in African maritime security. [Read more.](#)

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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