

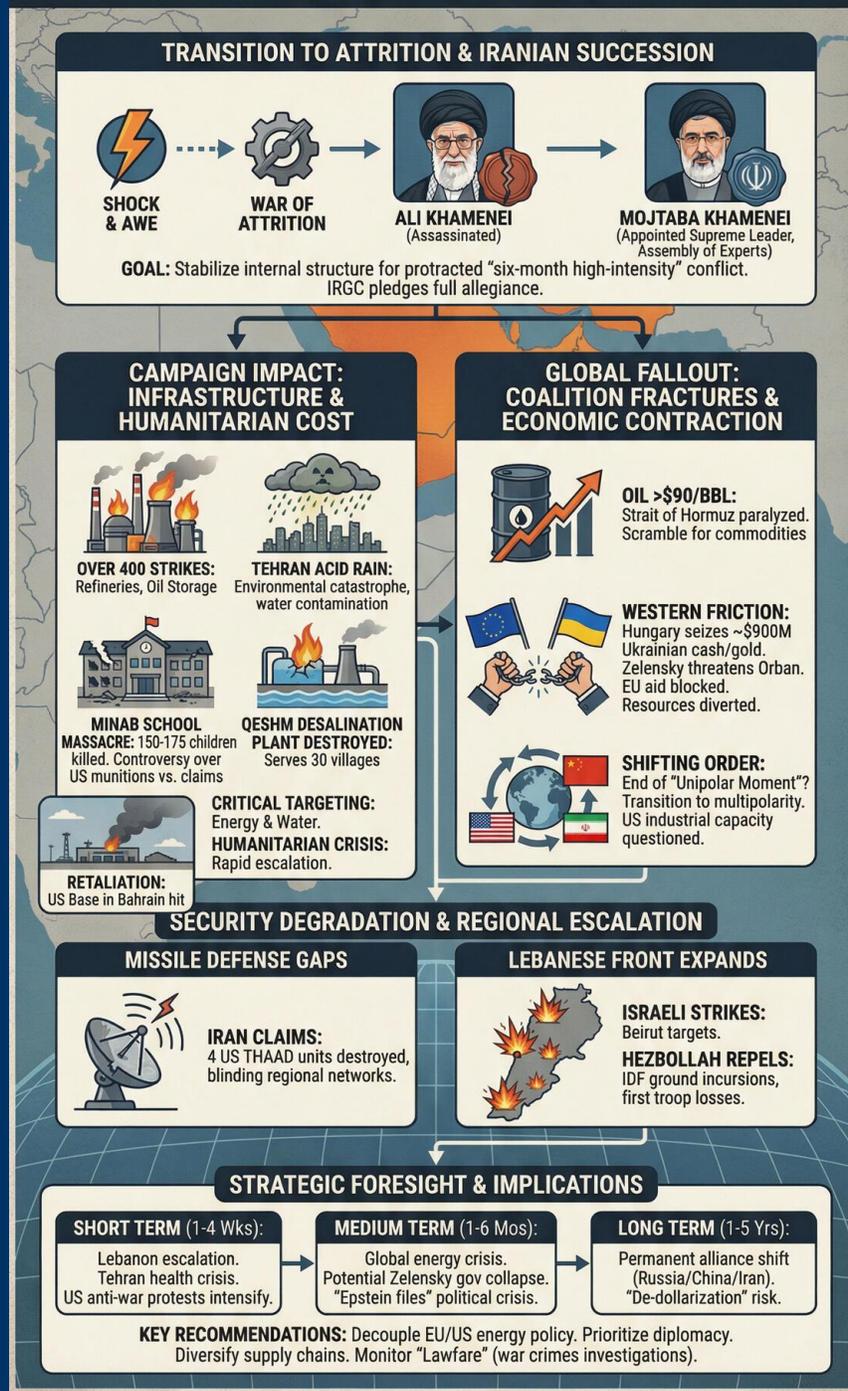
# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

MARCH 8, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

## OPERATION EPIC FURY: A DECISIVE PHASE & THE SHIFTING GLOBAL ORDER (Day 9 Report - March 8, 2026)



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OPERATION EPIC FURY ENTERS A DECISIVE PHASE AS IRAN SECURES SUCCESSION AND THE US-ISRAELI COALITION TARGETS STRATEGIC ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE AMIDST GLOBAL ECONOMIC CONTRACTION

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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March 8, 2026, marks the ninth day of "Operation Epic Fury," a large-scale US-Israeli military campaign against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The conflict has transitioned from initial "shock and awe" strikes into a systematic war of attrition targeting critical infrastructure, including oil refineries, desalination plants, and command centers. In a significant move for state continuity, Iran's Assembly of Experts has officially [appointed Mojtaba Khamenei](#) as the new Supreme Leader, succeeding his father, Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in the opening hours of the war. This succession aims to stabilize the internal Iranian political structure as the nation prepares for a protracted "six-month high-intensity" conflict.

The humanitarian and environmental costs of the campaign are escalating rapidly. Tehran is currently blanketed in [toxic acid rain](#) resulting

from the destruction of massive oil storage facilities, while a controversial strike on a primary school in Minab has resulted in the deaths of approximately 150-175 children, sparking a global wave of protests. While the US administration officially denies responsibility, internal leaks and media reports suggest the strike was a result of US munitions. Simultaneously, the conflict has paralyzed the Strait of Hormuz, driving global oil prices above \$90 per barrel and causing a scramble for strategic commodities among world powers.

Beyond the Middle East, the war is causing significant friction within Western coalitions. Tensions between Ukraine and Hungary have reached a breaking point, with Hungarian authorities [seizing nearly \\$900 million](#) in cash and gold from Ukrainian couriers. The incident has led to open threats from Ukrainian President Zelensky against Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, highlighting a breakdown in European solidarity as resources are diverted from the Ukrainian front to the Middle East. Global analysts now suggest that the "Third World War" has effectively begun, characterized by a reshaping of the global order away from US hegemony toward a multipolar system led by Russia, China, and a resilient Iran.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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### The Succession of Mojtaba Khamenei

- The Assembly of Experts finalized the selection of [Mojtaba Khamenei as the third leader](#) of the Islamic Republic, ensuring clerical and military continuity despite ongoing bombardment of government offices.

- The IRGC has pledged full allegiance to the new leader, signaling a unified front against the US-Israeli coalition [despite acute war conditions](#).

## Strategic Targeting of Energy and Water Infrastructure

- US and Israeli forces have struck over 400 targets in the last 24 hours, focusing on [refinery complexes near Tehran](#) and oil storage warehouses.
- The destruction of oil depots has created an environmental catastrophe, with [massive plumes of toxic smoke](#) leading to acid rain that is contaminating local water systems.
- Retaliatory strikes by the IRGC hit a US base in Bahrain following the destruction of an [Iranian desalination plant](#) on Qeshm Island that serves 30 villages.

## Degradation of US/Israeli Security Architecture

- Iran claims to have destroyed four [highly advanced US Thad radar units](#) across the GCC, potentially rendering regional missile defense networks "blind."
- Iranian officials state they have only utilized "first and second generation" missiles so far, reserving their [most advanced underground arsenals](#) for a prolonged conflict.

## The Minab School Massacre and Information Warfare

- Controversy persists over the bombing of a girls' school in Minab, where [150 children were killed](#) on the first day of hostilities.

- President Trump has publicly blamed Iran for the strike, citing [inaccurate munitions](#), while US media reports (CNN/NBC) suggest the Pentagon has internally admitted US responsibility.

## Expansion of the Lebanese Front

- Israel has intensified strikes on central Beirut, targeting the [Ramada Hotel](#) and killing displaced civilians.
- The IDF admitted to losing its first troops in southern Lebanon as Hezbollah [fighters repelled ground incursions](#), including an elite airborne landing attempt in the Bekaa Valley.

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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### Energy Security and Resource Scramble

The global energy market is facing a paradigm shift as the security of the Persian Gulf collapses. Oil prices have [surged above \\$90 per barrel](#), and Kuwait and the UAE have reportedly halted production due to the conflict. Analysts predict a [scramble for strategic commodities](#) as world powers attempt to secure domestic supplies through military and economic force.

### Succession and Political Stability

The rapid appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei is a critical indicator of state capacity and the failure of Western "regime change" strategies. Contrary to White House expectations that the government would [collapse like a house of cards](#), the Islamic Republic has maintained a functional leadership transition during active bombardment.

### Corruption and Coalition Cohesion

The seizure of [Ukrainian cash and gold](#) in Hungary highlights a deepening crisis of trust between Kiev and Budapest. Hungarian officials

suspect the funds—totalling nearly a billion dollars—were intended to [finance anti-Orban protests](#) or represent high-level money laundering by the Ukrainian military.

**Legal Warfare (Lawfare)** Iran's Foreign Ministry and Red Crescent are preparing [investigations into war crimes](#), specifically citing Article 54 of the Geneva Convention, which prohibits attacks on objects indispensable to civilian survival. Critics of the US administration suggest [President Trump could be indicted](#) in international courts for his role in targeting schools and water facilities.

**Critical Infrastructure and Cybersecurity**  
The war has extended into the "gray zone" of environmental and utility warfare. The use of [solid-fueled pinpoint missiles](#) to target desalination and energy nodes indicates a shift toward "intentional chemical warfare" via the collateral release of hazardous materials into civilian environments.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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Policy discussion today centered on the legality of presidential war powers and the fracturing of international coalitions regarding financial aid and military logistics.

### BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **European Union 90-Billion Euro Loan to Ukraine:** Currently [blocked by Hungary and Slovakia](#) following Zelensky's threats against Viktor Orban and the disruption of oil pipelines.
- **US War Powers Authorization:** Critics argue the carpet bombing of Iran was [initiated without congressional approval](#), citing a manufactured "imminent threat" to bypass legislative oversight.

## HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Senate Hearing on Operation Epic Fury:** Disrupted by anti-war protesters; a former Marine was [forcibly removed by police](#) after questioning the war's benefit to the American people versus Israeli interests.
- **Assembly of Experts Proclamation:** The clerical body announced the [ascension of Mojtaba Khamenei](#), affirming the state's religious and political continuity.
- **Pentagon Press Briefing:** Secretary of War Pete Hegseth faced scrutiny over the Minab school strike; he stated the incident [remains under investigation](#) while maintaining that only Iran targets civilians.

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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**The End of the "Unipolar Moment"**  
Strategic commentators suggest the current conflict is the catalyst for the [reshuffling of the global world order](#). The inability of US missile defenses to protect regional allies, combined with Iran's resilience, is signaling to Russia and China that US [industrial capacity and munitions stocks](#) may be insufficient for a multi-theater conflict. This is leading to a faster transition toward [multipolarity and a BRICS-led economic system](#).

### Narrative Control and Domestic Dissent

The US administration is engaged in a high-stakes battle for narrative control. Polls show that less than [23-30% of Americans support](#) the war. Critics argue the administration is using the conflict as a [distraction from domestic scandals](#), specifically the "Epstein files," and that the war is being framed as a "crusade" by religious and ideological hardliners within the Trump cabinet.

**Resource Colonization and Indigenous Resistance** A recurring theme across global documentation is the link between military conflict and the [extraction of resources](#). From the Navajo Nation in the US to the Philippines and Colombia, indigenous groups are framing their struggle against multinational corporations like [Glencore and BHP](#) as part of a global resistance to "resource colonization," mirroring the Iranian resistance to Western control over its oil fields.

## **STRATEGIC FORESIGHT**

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**Short Term (1-4 Weeks)** Expect a [massive escalation on the Lebanese front](#) as the IDF attempts to compensate for slow progress on the ground in Gaza and the West Bank. In Tehran, the death toll from respiratory issues related to [acid rain and refinery smoke](#) will likely surpass direct combat casualties. Domestically, US anti-war protests may intensify if the 82nd Airborne is [deployed for a ground invasion](#).

**Medium Term (1-6 Months)** A global energy crisis is imminent if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed. European nations may be forced to [ration electricity and heat](#), potentially leading to the collapse of the Zelensky government as Western focus and funds are permanently diverted to the Middle East. The [Epstein file revelations](#) may trigger a secondary political crisis in Washington.

**Long Term (1-5 Years)** The conflict will likely result in a permanent [structural change to global alliances](#). Russia and China will cement a security architecture that excludes Western powers from Central and West Asia. The US may face "de-dollarization" as energy markets shift to [local currencies to bypass sanctions](#) and war-related financial freezes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS**

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### **For International Policy:**

- Coalition partners should prepare for a [decoupling of European and US energy policy](#) as the costs of supporting Operation Epic Fury become unsustainable for EU economies.
- Diplomatic channels through Oman or Qatar should be prioritized, as Iranian officials indicate a [negotiated settlement was possible](#) just hours before the war began.
- Security agencies must re-evaluate the [effectiveness of Thad and Patriot systems](#) against high-volume drone and pinpoint missile swarms.

### **For Private Sector/Investors:**

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Immediate diversification away from the Persian Gulf is required. The "scramble" for critical minerals will [accelerate domestic mining](#) in North America and Russia.
- **Investment Climate:** The aerospace and defense sector will see [unprecedented production demand](#), though current industrial capacity is severely lagging behind the "attrition rate" of the conflict.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Investors must monitor evolving "Lawfare" as international sanctions and war crime allegations [target logistics hubs](#) and energy corporations operating in conflict zones.

## **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.

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.

For questions or suggestions, please contact [kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.