

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

MARCH 9, 2026

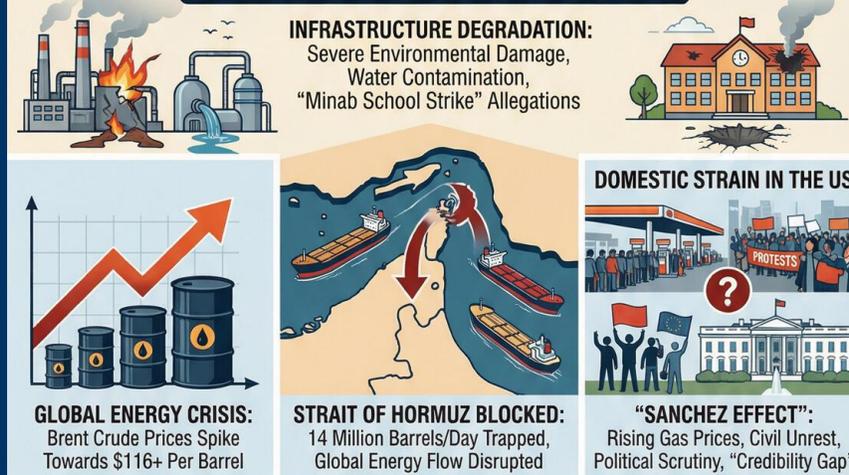
THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

GLOBAL CRISIS: IRAN'S NEW SUPREME LEADER & THE HORMUZ CONFLICT

ESCALATION & ENERGY SHOCK: Mojtaba Khamenei Appointed as Iran's Supreme Leader Amid US-Israeli Air Campaign & Strait of Hormuz Closure



SYSTEMIC WARFARE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



DIPLOMATIC REALIGNMENT & FRACTURE



TRUMP-PUTIN CALL: Moscow as "Reliable" Energy Partner, EU Cohesion Fractured

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS & TRENDS

- 👤 **SUCCESSION STABILITY** (Mojtaba Khamenei)
- ⚡ **ENERGY SECURITY VULNERABILITY**
- 🔥 **ENVIRONMENTAL WARFARE**
- 🌐 **INFORMATION WARFARE** ("Alternative Facts")
- 🌟 **REGIONAL INFLUENCE SHIFTS**

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & IMPLICATIONS

SHORT TERM (1-4 Weeks)	MEDIUM TERM (1-6 Months)	LONG TERM (1-5 Years)
Oil Prices > \$120 Retaliation Spiral Intensified Domestic Pressure	Munitions Shortage Potential Ground Incursion/ Diplomatic Climbdown EU Policy Split	Resilient Clerical System Transition to Multipolar Order BRICS Security Architecture

REPORT DATE: MARCH 2026. RECOMMENDATIONS: Immediate Off-Ramp Strategy, Re-evaluate Environmental War Crimes, Hedge Against Energy Volatility

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THE APPOINTMENT OF MOJTABA KHAMENEI AS IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER AMID A TEN-DAY US-ISRAELI AIR CAMPAIGN MARKS A CRITICAL ESCALATION IN A CONFLICT THAT HAS SHUTTERED THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND DESTABILIZED GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Middle East conflict has entered a transformative phase following the March 9, 2026, announcement that Mojtaba Khamenei has succeeded his assassinated father, Ali Khamenei, as the Supreme Leader of Iran. This transition occurs under heavy fire, as the United States and Israel conduct a sustained air campaign targeting Iranian energy infrastructure and command nodes. Iran has responded with "Operation Lions Roar," a multi-front retaliatory strike involving next-generation missiles and drones launched against US military assets and energy facilities across at least six neighboring countries, effectively [expanding the geography](#) of the war.

The strategic focus of the conflict has shifted from decapitation strikes to systemic infrastructure degradation. US and Israeli forces have reportedly struck over 400 targets in 24 hours, including oil refineries and desalination plants, leading to severe environmental damage and the contamination of civilian water supplies. Iran's counter-strategy focuses on blinding US air defenses by [destroying advanced radar](#) units (THAAD) and disrupting global energy flows via a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. This has resulted in a historic spike in Brent Crude prices toward \$116 per barrel, forcing a diplomatic re-engagement between Washington and Moscow.

Domestic stability in the United States is showing signs of strain as the "Sanchez Effect" documents rising gas prices, long lines at fuel stations, and civil unrest. The Trump administration faces growing scrutiny over the "Minab school strike," where evidence suggests a US Tomahawk missile [killed 175 children](#) at an elementary school. Amidst this, Russia is positioning itself as the sole "reliable" energy partner for Europe, offering to fill the supply vacuum if the European Union abandons its looming 2027 ban on Russian hydrocarbons.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Succession and Continuity in the Islamic Republic

- The Assembly of Experts officially appointed [Mojtaba Khamenei](#) as the third Supreme Leader, emphasizing a seamless transition despite the ongoing bombardment of the Assembly's offices.

- The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the regular armed forces have [pledged total allegiance](#) to the new leader, signaling military cohesion during the crisis.
- Regional analysts suggest Mojtaba's leadership will favor "continuity" and deeper integration with the "Axis of Resistance" and BRICS nations.

Systemic Energy and Infrastructure Warfare

- Israeli and US strikes on refineries near Tehran have caused fuel to leak into city drainage systems, leading to [explosions in sewers](#) and severe environmental pollution.
- The IRGC confirmed retaliatory strikes on the "Juffer base" in response to an American attack on the [Kesum desalination plant](#), which serves 30 villages.
- Retaliatory Iranian strikes have targeted oil refineries in Bahrain and energy infrastructure in Kuwait and Qatar, explicitly [raising the costs](#) of the war for US allies.

Global Energy Crisis and the Hormuz Blockade

- The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz has trapped approximately [14 million barrels](#) of offshore oil exports per day, leading to a 30% price gain in a single week.
- Vladimir Putin has offered to increase supplies to "reliable partners" like Slovakia and Hungary while suggesting Europe [review all sanctions](#) to avoid an industrial collapse.
- The IRGC warned that continued aggression will push oil prices to [\\$200 per barrel](#).

The Minab School Massacre and Oversight Failure

- Independent investigators and former intelligence officials claim a [US Tomahawk missile](#) struck a girls' school in Minab twice, utilizing a "double-tap" strike that weaponized excess fuel into a thermobaric explosion.
- Reports allege the strike occurred because the Pentagon [canceled civilian mitigation](#) protocols, deeming them "woke" and ineffective for a "lethal" fighting force.

Diplomatic Realignment

- President Trump and President Putin held their [first phone call](#) in three months, lasting one hour, to discuss a "speedy political and diplomatic resolution" to the Iranian conflict and the Ukraine settlement.
- Turkey has entered a state of high alert after [intercepting a ballistic missile](#) launched from Iran, though Ankara maintains it will not be used as a "tool" for the US campaign.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Succession & Stability: The rapid appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei serves to prevent a power vacuum. The [Assembly of Experts](#) completed the selection process despite direct threats and the bombing of their secretariat, aiming to project strength to both domestic and foreign audiences.

Energy Security: The conflict has demonstrated the extreme vulnerability of the global energy architecture. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the [suspension of production](#) in the Gulf has shifted leverage toward Russia, which is now using energy as a

primary tool of statecraft to fracture EU sanctions cohesion.

Critical Infrastructure & Environmental Warfare: The transition from "precision" military strikes to "intentional chemical warfare" (targeting fuel depots to release toxic substances) represents a significant [escalation in tactics](#). The degradation of desalination plants and water systems suggests a move toward "total war" that ignores Geneva Convention protections for objects indispensable to civilian survival.

Domestic Stability & Social Order: In the US, the combination of a [\\$1 billion per day](#) war cost and surging fuel prices is eroding public support. Protests and attempted bombings, such as the [incident at the home](#) of the NYC Mayor, indicate that the war's effects are manifesting as domestic civil unrest.

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics: The "Sanchez Effect" highlights a crisis of credibility for the Trump administration, citing [FBI interviews](#) regarding alleged sexual abuse and the surfacing of new evidence in the Jeffrey Epstein death, which are being leveraged by critics to suggest the war is a "distraction" from domestic legal woes.

Regional Influence & Power Projection: The UAE and Saudi Arabia are attempting to maintain [strict neutrality](#), refusing to allow US bases on their soil for offensive operations against Iran. However, the use of [NATO assets in Turkey](#) to intercept Iranian missiles suggests that regional players are being involuntarily pulled into the US-Israeli orbit.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Governance activity has centered on the removal of wartime restrictions and the emergency management of energy supplies.

In the US, the "Department of War" (formerly Defense) has reportedly bypassed long-standing civilian casualty mitigation directives, while in Europe, individual member states are moving to block EU-wide financial aid to Ukraine in protest of energy blockades.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **US Civilian Mitigation Directive Cancellation:** A policy shift by the Secretary of War to [cancel oversight](#) of target selection, allegedly leading to the Minab school strike.
- **EU Energy Sanctions Review:** Proposed by Hungary to [suspend all sanctions](#) on Russian energy in response to the Ukrainian oil blockade and the Middle East war.
- **Ukrainian 90 Billion Euro Loan:** Blocked by Hungary and Slovakia due to Kiev's [closure of the Druzba pipeline](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Trump-Putin Call (March 9):** A one-hour "business-like" discussion focused on [political and diplomatic resolutions](#) for Iran and Ukraine.
- **White House Press Briefing:** The administration [denied involvement](#) in the Minab school strike, dismissing it as Iranian "propaganda."
- **Ankara Diplomatic Briefing:** Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan warned of [serious retaliation](#) if Iranian projectiles continue to enter Turkish airspace.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Anti-Radar "Eyes and Ears" Strategy:

A primary military trend is Iran's tactical shift toward neutralizing advanced US/Israeli surveillance. By [targeting THAAD radar units](#) in six countries, Iran is attempting to render the US missile defense architecture "blind," effectively compensating for its lack of traditional firepower with highly accurate, intelligence-driven strikes on critical nodes.

The Fracture of Western Bloc Cohesion:

The "skyrocketing energy prices" are driving a wedge between the US and its European and Gulf allies. Countries like Slovakia and Hungary are now [openly defying](#) Brussels and Washington, seeking a separate peace with Russia to ensure energy survival, while Gulf states are [evacuating civilians](#) and shuttering US bases to avoid Iranian retaliation.

Information Warfare and "Alternative Facts":

Both sides are engaged in extreme narrative control. The US labels reports of civilian deaths as "propaganda," while RT and Iranian sources accuse the US of [intentional slaughter](#) via "double-tap" strikes. The use of "AI-generated" or "censored" footage makes verifying the actual [fog of war](#) increasingly difficult for the global public.

The Return of Decolonial Rhetoric:

A recurring theme in the discourse (from Tehran to Africa) is the framing of the US-Israeli campaign as a "colonial" effort to [dictate the policy](#) of independent nations. This is being used to build a "multipolar" narrative that appeals to the Global South, positioning Iran, Russia, and China as defenders of sovereignty against "global arrogance."

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Global oil prices are likely to [exceed \\$120](#) if the Strait of Hormuz remains blockaded. Expect a "retaliation spiral" between Turkey and Iran if projectiles continue to land in Turkish territory. In the US, domestic political pressure will intensify as the "Sanchez Effect" continues to highlight [long gas lines](#) and allegations of executive misconduct.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The US may face a [critical shortage](#) of precision munitions (Tomahawks and interceptors), as production rates cannot match the current expenditure. This could force the Trump administration to consider a ground incursion or a significant diplomatic climbdown mediated by Moscow. Europe may see a [formal split](#) in its energy policy, with eastern members ignoring EU mandates to purchase Russian gas.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The successful succession of Mojtaba Khamenei suggests that the Islamic Republic's clerical system is more resilient than Western intelligence predicted. The conflict will likely accelerate the transition to a [multipolar world order](#), with BRICS nations establishing a separate security and energy architecture that excludes the United States.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- The failure of the "Shock and Awe" strategy to force a quick surrender necessitates an [immediate off-ramp](#) strategy to prevent a global depression.

- The targeted destruction of desalination and energy infrastructure requires a re-evaluation of [international law](#) regarding environmental "war crimes."
- The US must address the "credibility gap" regarding civilian casualties to maintain coalition support in the Middle East.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Energy Volatility:** Investors should hedge against [\\$150-\\$200 oil](#) if Iran continues targeting Saudi and Kuwaiti production capacity.
- **Supply Chain Fragility:** The closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupts not just oil, but [fertilizer and chemical](#) shipments, threatening global food security.
- **Geopolitical Risk:** Companies with assets in the GCC must prepare for [blinded air defenses](#), as Iran's "eyes and ears" strategy reduces the effectiveness of Western protective umbrellas.

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.

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