

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RUSSIA24

MARCH 9, 2026

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

THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF 2026: IRANIAN SUCCESSION WAR & THE ENERGY SHOCK

CATALYST: MARCH 9, 2026 - THE ASSASSINATION & SUCCESSION

ALI KHAMENEI
(ASSASSINATED)



MOJTABA KHAMENEI
(NEW SUPREME LEADER)



THE "IDEOLOGY OF RESISTANCE" INTENSIFIES. IRGC PLEDGES ALLEGIANCE.

DAY 1: GLOBAL ESCALATION BEGINS

REGIONAL KINETIC WAR & MILITARY CRISIS (MIDDLE EAST & BEYOND)

30TH WAVE: HYPERSONIC FATTAH & HEAVY BALLISTIC STRIKES

TEL AVIV
HAIFA
IRAN
US 5TH FLEET (BAHRAIN)
AL-JUFEI BASE (QATAR)
US FACILITIES (ERBIL/KUWAIT)

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE TARGETED: DESALINATION PLANTS & REFINERIES (FUJAIRAH, SAUDI ARABIA)

THE HIGH-INTENSITY MUNITIONS CRISIS: "MISSILE BANKRUPTCY"

US MISSILE INTERCEPTORS (PATRIOT, THAAD)

\$50K "SHAHEED" DRONE → \$3M PATRIOT MISSILE EXPENDITURE

ECONOMIC ASYMMETRY: CHEAP DRONES DEplete WESTERN STOCKS (\$5.7B IN WEEK 1)

GLOBAL ENERGY & ECONOMIC SHOCK

\$119+/BBL OIL PRICE SURGE

BRENT CRUDE +20-25% IN ONE DAY

HORMUZ BLOCKADE: 20-40% GLOBAL OIL STALLED. LNG FREIGHT +530%

EU RIFT & MARKET PANIC

HUNGARY & SLOVAKIA DEMAND RUSSIAN ENERGY, REJECT SANCTIONS

ASIAN MARKETS CRATER (NIKKEI, KOSPI -6-8%)

DRUZHBA PIPELINE (RUSSIA)

ORBAN SEEKS RUSSIAN RESUMPTION

GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS & THE "WEAPONIZATION OF DISTRUST"

UKRAINIAN THEATER EXPLOITATION

RUSSIA CAPTURES GOLUBOVKA (DNR). WESTERN RESOURCES DISTRACTED

DIPLOMACY FAILS. NARRATIVE: WESTERN NEGOTIATIONS AS "DISTRACTION"

THE "NUCLEAR THRESHOLD" NARRATIVE

FEARS OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR USE. "END OF HISTORY" RHETORIC

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS (1-5 YEARS)

PERMANENT ENERGY SHIFT

MULTIPOLAR ENERGY MARKET. REDUCED DOLLAR ROLE

NEW POWER BLOC

RUSSIA-CHINA-IRAN STRATEGIC BLOC CONSOLIDATES. IRAN AS REGIONAL HEGEMON

RECOMMENDATIONS & FUTURE DEFENSE

INVEST IN CHEAP, HIGH-VOLUME COUNTER-DRONE TECH. DIVERSIFY ENERGY AWAY FROM GULF

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THE ASSASSINATION OF ALI KHAMENEI AND THE SUCCESSION OF MOJTABA KHAMENEI HAVE TRIGGERED A GLOBAL ENERGY CRISIS AND A HIGH-INTENSITY MISSILE WAR BETWEEN THE US-ISRAELI COALITION AND IRAN.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

March 9, 2026, marks a transformative escalation in global instability as the Middle East descends into a state of total war following the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The rapid election of his son, **Mojtaba Khamenei**, by the Assembly of Experts signals a commitment to the "course of the father" and an intensification of the "ideology of resistance." In retaliation for the killing of the senior leadership, Iran has launched its [30th wave of strikes](#) using hypersonic and heavy ballistic missiles against Tel Aviv, Haifa, and various US military installations across the Persian Gulf, including the 5th Fleet base in Bahrain and facilities in Kuwait and Qatar.

The economic fallout is catastrophic, with Brent crude oil prices [surging to \\$119 per barrel](#), a 20-25% increase in a single day. This

energy shock has caused Asian stock markets to crater, with the Nikkei and Kospi indices seeing drops of 6-8%. In Europe, the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has triggered a panic over fuel supplies, leading to a significant diplomatic rift within the EU. Hungary and Slovakia are now openly [demanding the lifting of sanctions](#) on Russian energy to prevent domestic economic collapse, while the US administration under Donald Trump faces mounting domestic pressure, with 60% of Americans opposing the war as gasoline prices soar.

Simultaneously, the Russian Federation is leveraging the global distraction to advance its objectives in the Ukrainian theater. The capture of [the village of Golubovka](#) in the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the continued suppression of Ukrainian drone operations highlight a strategic pivot where Western resources are being depleted across two fronts. The US Pentagon is reportedly facing a [critical shortage of interceptor missiles](#) (Patriot, THAAD) as the volume of Iranian drone and missile salvos outpaces the American defense industrial base's ability to replenish them.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

• Succession and Consolidation of Power in Iran

- The Assembly of Experts elected **Mojtaba Khamenei** (56) as the new Supreme Leader, defying US threats of strikes during the voting session. [The IRGC immediately pledged](#) total allegiance to him.
- The transition signals a move toward a more military-aligned leadership, as Mojtaba has long-standing ties to the IRGC and oversaw the [Supreme Leader's office](#) for over 20 years.
- Public demonstrations in Tehran and other cities show a [rally-around-the-flag effect](#) following the deaths of Ali Khamenei and General Qasem Soleimani.

• Regional Kinetic Escalation

- Iran utilized **hypersonic Fattah missiles** and heavy ballistic systems to target the [cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa](#), overwhelming some missile defense batteries.
- The US 5th Fleet base in Bahrain, the Al-Udeid base in Qatar, and US facilities in Erbil, Iraq, have [come under sustained drone](#) and missile attack.
- A significant fire broke out at the **Fujairah refinery (UAE)** and the [Bahrain refinery](#) following Iranian strikes, directly impacting US naval fuel supplies.

• Global Energy and Economic Shock

- Oil prices hit [peak levels of \\$119.50](#) before stabilizing near \$115, prompting G7 finance ministers to discuss [releasing 30% of strategic](#) oil reserves.
- The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has stalled [20-40% of global oil](#) transit, leading to a 530% spike in LNG tanker freight rates.
- Russia reports that its GDP [surpassed \\$2.5 trillion](#), moving into the world's top 8 economies as high energy prices bolster federal revenues.

• Attrition in Western Missile Defense

- The Pentagon has spent over **\$5.7 billion on interceptor missiles** in just the first week of the Iran campaign. [Annual production of THAAD](#) missiles is already exceeded by the current rate of expenditure.
- Iran's use of \$50,000 "Shahed" drones to force the expenditure of \$3 million Patriot missiles is described as a ["game on money"](#) designed to bankrupt Western defense budgets.

• Ukrainian Theater Developments

- Russian forces captured **Golubovka** (DNR), putting increased pressure on the [Kramatorsk-Slavyansk axis](#).
- Zelensky is reportedly offering [to send Ukrainian PVO experts](#) to the Middle East to teach Western forces how to intercept Iranian drones, a move seen as a desperate attempt to maintain relevance.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Energy Security

- The "Hormuz blockade" has rendered European bureaus panicked; UK gas reserves are estimated to last [only 1.5 days](#) if fully utilized under current conditions.
- Hungary's Viktor Orban is leveraging the crisis to [demand a resumption of oil](#) through the "Druzhba" pipeline and a total reversal of EU energy sanctions against Russia.

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics

- Donald Trump is framing the war as a ["small price for security."](#) but reports indicate friction within his cabinet over the lack of a clear exit strategy for Iran.
- The removal of **Kristi Noem** from her post is cited as a [major domestic political error](#) and a sign of instability within the Trump administration.

Critical Infrastructure

- Iran has targeted **desalination plants** in the Persian Gulf as a retaliatory measure for US strikes on Iranian civilian infrastructure, threatening a [humanitarian catastrophe](#) as countries like Kuwait receive 90% of their drinking water from these facilities.
- Iranian radar installations, specifically the **FPS-132** early warning system in Qatar, were [destroyed by IRGC strikes](#), "blinding" US surveillance in the region.

Strategic Alignment & Bloc Politics

- The US is attempting to leverage **Kurdish ethnic minorities** to launch a ground invasion into Iran, a strategy analysts suggest will fail due to [strong institutionalization](#) in Tehran and Ankara.
- Russia and China are positioning themselves as the "beneficiaries of stability," with Putin emphasizing that Russia remains a [reliable partner](#) for any state that rejects "political conjuncture."

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity today focused on emergency war funding in the US and a collapse of the sanctions consensus in the EU. High-level diplomatic interventions by Russia are seeking a "five-power" summit to redefine international law in the wake of the UN's perceived failure.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **US Emergency Supplemental Funding:** The Pentagon is [requesting billions from Congress](#) to replenish missile stockpiles (Patriot, Tomahawk, THAAD) exhausted in the first 10 days of the Iran war.
- **EU Sanctions Reversal (Proposed):** Hungary and Slovakia are [proposing the suspension of all](#) energy sanctions against Russia to mitigate the impact of the Middle East war.
- **Kazakhstan Mercenary Law:** Proposals in Astana to [soften penalties for citizens](#) participating in foreign conflicts due to "social difficulties."

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Putin-Trump Telephone Consultation:** A "substantive and useful" call where both leaders expressed interest in [speeding up a ceasefire](#) in Ukraine, though Trump remains committed to the Iran operation.
- **G7 Finance Ministers Meeting:** Emergency session called to [coordinate the release](#) of strategic petroleum reserves to combat \$120 oil.
- **Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Board:** Putin addressed [rising teenage crime](#) and the need for preventive measures while the state is occupied with external defense.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Distrust

A recurring narrative in Russian media today is the [historical "unreliability" of Western negotiations](#). Broadcasters highlighted past examples (Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya) to argue that the US uses negotiations only to "distract" while preparing for strikes. The current war in Iran is framed as the ultimate proof of this, with claims that the US struck Iran [just 48 hours](#) after a "successful" negotiation round in Geneva. This theme serves to reinforce the IRGC's "ideology of resistance" and justifies Iran's rejection of any diplomatic off-ramps.

The High-Intensity Munitions Crisis

A critical trend is the looming "missile bankruptcy" of the US military. The transcripts suggest that the intensity of the Iran conflict has [exhausted precision munitions](#) faster than any previous 21st-century conflict. The economic asymmetry—

where Iran uses cheap drones to [deplete multi-million dollar interceptors](#)—is a strategic success for Tehran, potentially leaving the US and Israel vulnerable to a secondary wave of heavy ballistic attacks once defensive stocks are dry.

The Rise of the "Nuclear Threshold" Narrative

There is a growing, dark discussion about the **third temple in Jerusalem** and the potential for nuclear escalation. Analysts on Russian state media are openly discussing the possibility that if the US and Israel [fail to win a quick victory](#), they may resort to tactical nuclear strikes. This is coupled with a theological-political analysis suggesting that some elements in the West and Israel [view this conflict](#) as a catalyst for the "end of history" and the restoration of the Third Temple.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks)

- Oil prices likely to test \$150 if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed and additional refineries in Saudi Arabia or the UAE are hit. [Global logistics chains](#) for energy and grain will face severe disruption.
- A potential ground incursion by US-backed Kurdish forces into **Iranian Azerbaijan or Khuzestan** may be attempted, likely triggering a broader regional spillover into Turkey and Iraq.

Medium Term (1-6 Months)

- The US administration faces a "midterm massacre" in November if energy prices remain at historic highs, potentially forcing a [sudden and messy withdrawal](#) or a massive escalation to "end the war quickly."

- European political unity will continue to fray, with [pro-Russian and anti-war parties](#) gaining ground in Finland, Germany, and France as winter energy needs approach.

Long Term (1-5 Years)

- A permanent shift in global energy flows: the West's "strategic mistake" in limiting Russian oil [will be fully exposed](#), leading to a multipolar energy market where the dollar's role in the "petro-system" is significantly diminished.
- Iran's survival of this "Epic Fury" campaign would cement it as the [unchallenged regional hegemon](#) and a primary node in a new Russia-China-Iran strategic bloc.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- Security: Prepare for a global shortage of **PVO and interceptor missiles**; the US can no longer guarantee the "missile umbrella" for all allies simultaneously. [Ukraine is already seeing](#) a reduction in defensive support.
- Diplomatic: Monitor the "five-power" summit proposal; a shift away from the UN toward a [direct directorate](#) of nuclear powers (Russia, China, US, UK, France) is being actively promoted by Moscow.
- Humanitarian: Urgent focus on **water security** in the Gulf; the targeting of desalination plants could trigger a refugee crisis of millions [overnight](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Logistics: Diversify away from Persian Gulf maritime routes; [freight and insurance](#) for Hormuz transit are effectively un-insurable without state guarantees.
- Energy: Shift focus toward **non-Gulf energy sources** and Russian infrastructure as the only current "reliable" alternative to the unstable Middle East, despite ongoing sanctions risks. [Slovakia and Hungary](#) are the early indicators of this trend.
- Defense: Invest in **cheap, high-volume counter-drone** technologies; the "high-cost interceptor" model has proven to be [economically unsustainable](#) in a prolonged conflict.

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 GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.