

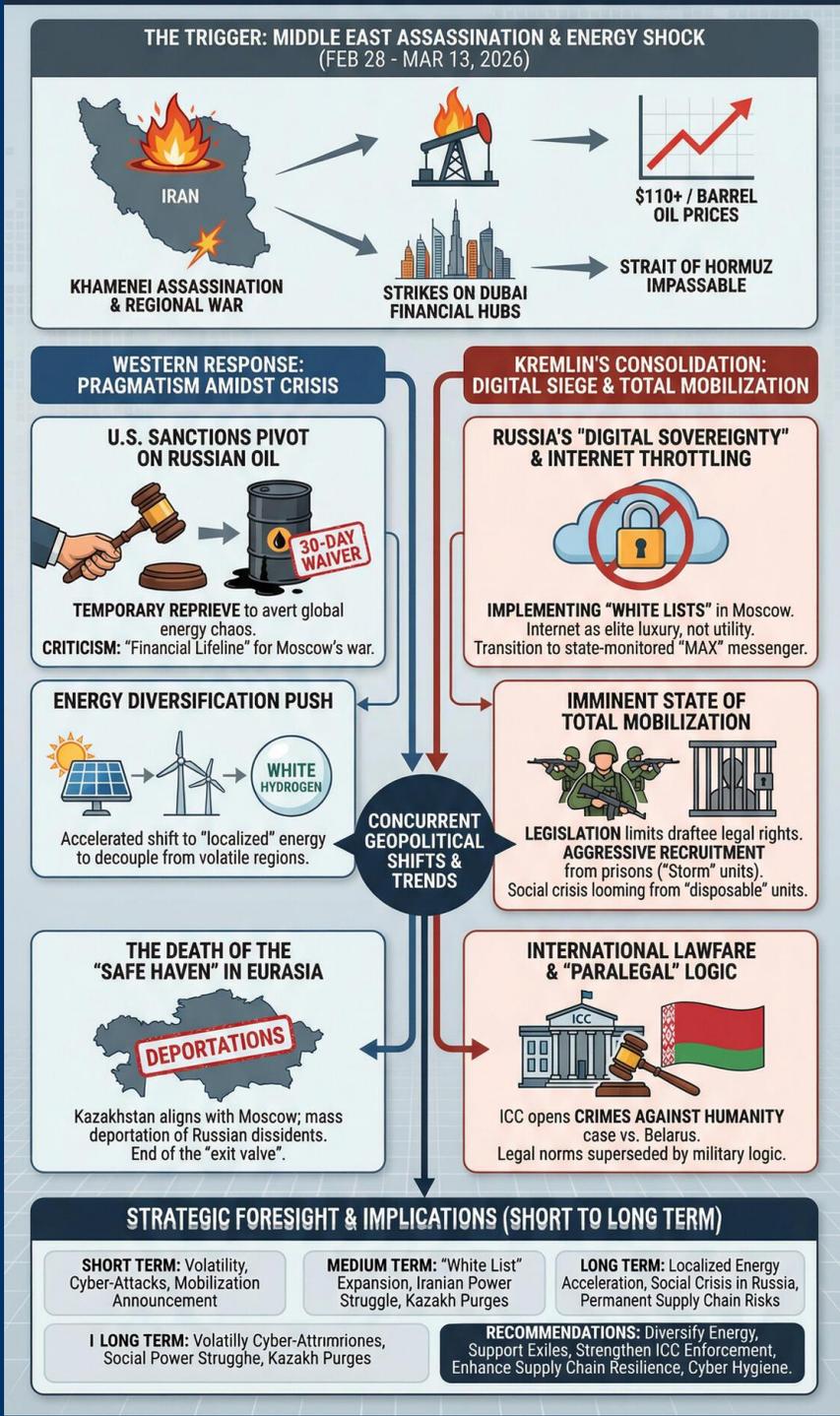
TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CURRENTTIME

MARCH 13, 2026

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

GLOBAL INSTABILITY & THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL ORDER: A MARCH 2026 EXPLAINER



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GLOBAL INSTABILITY ACCELERATES AS THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT TRIGGERS AN ENERGY CRISIS, FORCING WESTERN SANCTIONS SHIFTS WHILE THE KREMLIN TIGHTENS DOMESTIC DIGITAL AND MILITARY CONTROL.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

March 13, 2026, marks a critical inflection point in global security, characterized by the widening fallout of the February 28 assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The Middle East has descended into a high-intensity regional conflict involving the U.S., Israel, and Iran, leading to direct strikes on global financial hubs like Dubai and driving oil prices above \$110 per barrel. This energy shock has forced the U.S. Treasury into a pragmatic but controversial 30-day sanctions reprieve for Russian oil currently in transit, a move sharply criticized by Kyiv as a financial lifeline for Moscow's war effort. The succession of Mojtaba Khamenei in Iran remains precarious as reports surface of his wounding in recent strikes, suggesting the "decapitation" strategy employed by the U.S. and Israel has yet to achieve regime collapse

but has succeeded in destabilizing the regional order.

In Russia, the government is leveraging the external crisis to finalize a total "digital sovereignty" framework, implementing widespread internet throttling and "white lists" in Moscow. These technical measures, combined with new legislation aimed at preventing draftees from legally blocking their conscription, signal an imminent state of total mobilization. Concurrently, the safety of the Russian diaspora in Central Asia has evaporated; Kazakhstan has begun mass deportations of Russian dissidents, signaling a strategic realignment with Moscow's security services. From the battlefields of Ukraine to the halls of the ICC, where Belarus now faces crimes against humanity charges, the day reflects a world where legal norms are being superseded by "paralegal" military logic and survivalist statecraft.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Iranian Succession and Regional Conflagration:** Following the death of Ali Khamenei, his son Mojtaba has been named Supreme Leader but was [recently wounded](#) in ongoing strikes. The conflict has expanded to include [missile and drone strikes](#) on Dubai's financial district and infrastructure, targeting U.S. interests and causing global transit disruptions.
- **U.S. Sanctions Pivot on Russian Oil:** To mitigate the global energy crisis, the U.S. Treasury has issued a [30-day waiver](#) for Russian oil and petroleum products loaded before March 12. This temporary easing aims to stabilize markets as Middle East supplies through the Strait of Hormuz [drop toward zero](#).

- **Russian Domestic Digital Throttling:** Moscow is experiencing severe [mobile internet disruptions](#) as authorities test "white lists" and throttle Telegram. Analysts view these shutdowns as a precursor to unpopular domestic policies, including [potential new mobilization](#) waves.
- **Kazakhstan Realignment and Mass Deportations:** The Kazakh National Security Committee (KNB) is investigating [fraudulent residency permits](#), leading to the mass deportation of Russians who fled the war. Human rights groups warn that Kazakhstan is no longer a [safe haven](#) for those opposing the Kremlin.
- **International Legal Warfare against Belarus:** The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an investigation into the [Lukashenko regime](#) for crimes against humanity, specifically the mass deportation and persecution of political opponents, mirroring the [legal precedents](#) set against Russian leadership.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Energy Security The global energy market is in a state of "unprecedented disruption" as the Strait of Hormuz becomes impassable. This has led to a [spike in fuel prices](#) in the Baltic states, with diesel reaching €1.93 in Riga. The U.S. decision to allow [100 million barrels](#) of Russian oil to enter the market is a desperate measure to prevent a global "energy chaos" that could see prices "skyrocket" further, despite the political cost of appearing to fund the Kremlin.

Technology Policy & Digital Sovereignty Russia is moving toward an "archaic" digital model where the internet is treated as an [elite luxury](#) rather than a public utility. The implementation of the "Sovereign Internet"

law has progressed to active [DPI \(Deep Packet Inspection\)](#) usage to block VPNs and transition the populace to domestic messengers like "Max," which are under total state surveillance. Meanwhile, in Lithuania, the government is debating [temporary social media shutdowns](#) during elections to prevent pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns.

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics The death of a dictator remains the primary shock to personalized regimes. Analysis of the [Khamenei succession](#) suggests that while "decapitation" strikes disrupt operations, the "Hydra-like" nature of ideologically driven networks like the IRGC allows for systemic resilience. Similarly, in Russia, the "Putinism" project is evolving into a [collective management](#) of repression, where technocrats like Kiriienko oversee the "re-socialization" of the state through war.

National Security & Conscription The Kremlin has introduced legislation to [limit the legal rights](#) of draftees, making court-ordered stays of conscription "optional" for judges. This is paired with an aggressive "recruitment" of [prisoners and migrants](#), where prison terms are effectively traded for front-line service in "Storm" units, which some analysts describe as a "utilization program" for marginalized populations.

Lawfare (Legal Warfare) Lithuania's referral of Belarus to the [ICC](#) marks a significant use of international law to pressure the Minsk-Moscow axis. In Russia, the sentencing of [Crocus City Hall suspects](#) to life imprisonment is being used to justify a broader "anti-migrant" legislative surge, despite rights groups highlighting [major inconsistencies](#) in the trial evidence.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity on March 13 focused on hardening mobilization pipelines and reducing the legal friction for state security actions, particularly in Russia and Kazakhstan.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Russian Federal Law on Military Duty (Amendment):** Proposed by Andrey Kartapolov, this bill makes the suspension of a conscription order [discretionary for courts](#) rather than mandatory when an appeal is filed. This effectively forces draftees to litigate their cases while already serving.
- **Russian Migrant Child Deportation Law:** A government-initiated bill requiring children of migrants to leave Russia [within 30 days](#) of turning 18 unless they secure independent residency. It also allows for the cancellation of work patents if income falls [below the subsistence level](#).
- **Kazakhstan Constitutional Referendum:** A major overhaul of the [basic law](#) that expands presidential powers, allowing the executive to appoint the Prosecutor General and KNB head without parliamentary approval.
- **Russian Law on Non-Extradition of Foreign Soldiers:** Signed by Putin, this prevents the [extradition of foreign nationals](#) serving in the Russian military to their home countries for criminal prosecution.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **U.S. Treasury Press Release:** Secretary Scott Bessent announced the [temporary easing](#) of oil sanctions to "stabilize global markets" and prevent further inflation.

- **Zelenskyy-Macron Joint Briefing:** President Zelenskyy criticized the U.S. sanctions shift, arguing it allows Russia to fund [drone production](#) that eventually targets Ukraine.
- **International Memorial Press Event:** Rights activists in Prague and Berlin detailed the [systemic destruction](#) of historical memory in Russia and the persecution of researcher [Yury Dmitriev](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Architecture of Digital Siege

The internet disruptions in Moscow are not mere technical glitches but a strategic exercise in "state capacity" to isolate the population during a crisis. By implementing [white lists](#), the state is moving toward a "Gated Web" where only approved governmental and commercial services function. This digital siege serves two purposes: preventing the coordination of domestic unrest during mobilization and shielding the populace from [unfavorable news](#) from the Middle East and Ukraine front lines. The emergence of the "Max" messenger as a [state-monitored alternative](#) suggests a future where digital privacy is entirely non-existent in the Russian sphere.

Pragmatism vs. Ideology in the New Oil War

The U.S. administration's decision to permit the sale of [Russian oil](#) reflects a brutal geopolitical reality: the "Green Transition" and current Western production levels cannot yet offset a total loss of Middle Eastern and Russian crude simultaneously. This creates a "Sanctions Paradox" where the West must [partially fund its adversary](#) to prevent

domestic economic collapse. The divergence in the Western bloc is visible, with France and Germany [criticizing the move](#) as they struggle with their own energy transitions and security commitments to Ukraine.

The Death of the "Safe Haven" in Eurasia

For two years, Kazakhstan served as a primary "exit valve" for Russians fleeing autocracy. That era is ending as the Tokayev administration pivots toward [consolidated authoritarianism](#) and closer security cooperation with the Kremlin. The use of "administrative irregularities" regarding [residency permits](#) as a pretext for deportation demonstrates a sophisticated form of "legalized" repression where the state can target specific individuals without appearing to perform "political" extraditions.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks) Global energy markets will remain highly volatile as the 30-day U.S. waiver on Russian oil is priced in. Expect a [surge in drone and cyber-attacks](#) against regional oil terminals as Iran and its proxies attempt to maintain pressure. Inside Russia, the internet throttling will likely coincide with a [formal announcement](#) regarding new mobilization quotas or the closure of borders for those on the "unified register."

Medium Term (1-6 Months) The "white list" internet model will likely expand from Moscow to other major Russian cities. In the Middle East, if Mojtaba Khamenei's health [continues to decline](#), a power struggle between the IRGC and the "Council of Expediency" may lead to internal Iranian instability, potentially slowing their regional offensive. Kazakhstan's constitutional changes

will result in a [purge of the remaining](#) "old guard" elites and a further crackdown on independent media.

Long Term (1-5 Years) The global shift toward "localized" energy (White Hydrogen, [small-scale hydro](#)) will accelerate as the risk of transcontinental supply chain collapses becomes a permanent feature of state planning. The Russian military's reliance on ["disposable" prisoner units](#) will create a long-term social crisis as traumatized and "heroized" criminals return to civilian life, potentially overwhelming the domestic police force and judicial system.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Energy Diversification:** The fragility of the Strait of Hormuz dictates an immediate acceleration of [alternative energy technologies](#), including the exploration of "white hydrogen" and advanced nuclear reactors to decouple security from Middle Eastern stability.
- **Legal Support for Exiles:** Western nations should prepare for a [new wave of refugees](#) from Central Asia as former "safe havens" like Kazakhstan coordinate more closely with Russian intelligence.
- **ICC Enforcement:** Support for the ICC investigation into [Belarusian crimes](#) should be prioritized to prevent a legal vacuum in the "Grey Zones" of Eastern Europe.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Logistics firms must account for a permanent [risk premium](#) in Middle Eastern transit, potentially shifting permanent routes toward the "Middle Corridor" through Georgia and Azerbaijan, despite [regional complexities](#).
- **Cyber Hygiene in Russia-Adjacent Markets:** Businesses operating in the CIS should prepare for [advanced malware](#) campaigns and "internet-downs" that could disrupt regional banking and retail operations, as seen in [Moscow's recent outages](#).
- **Labor Compliance:** Companies must audit their supply chains to ensure they are not inadvertently utilizing labor from "re-socialized" [Russian prison populations](#) or migrants under state coercion.

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>.