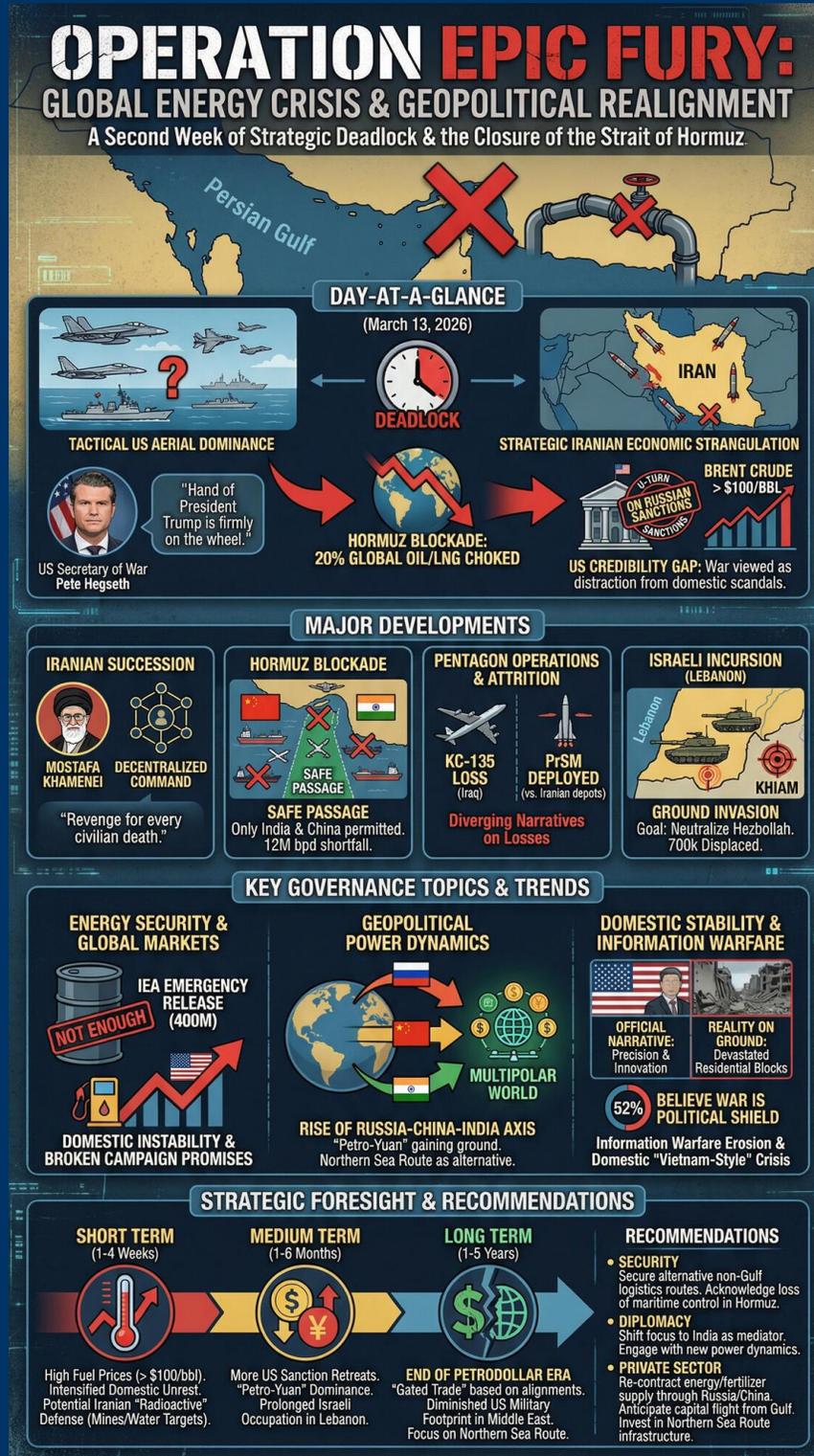


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

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MARCH 13, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE US-ISRAELI "OPERATION EPIC FURY" ENTERS A SECOND WEEK OF STRATEGIC DEADLOCK AS THE CLOSURE OF THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ TRIGGERS A GLOBAL ENERGY CRISIS AND A REALIGNMENT OF EURASIAN POWER.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

As of March 13, 2026, the conflict between the United States, Israel, and the Islamic Republic of Iran has reached a critical inflection point characterized by tactical US aerial dominance and strategic Iranian economic strangulation. While US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth maintains that the [Iranian Navy is combat ineffective](#) and that the "hand of President Trump is firmly on the wheel," the reality on the ground suggests a deepening quagmire. Iran has successfully executed a total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, effectively [choking 20% of global oil](#) and liquefied natural gas supplies. This has forced the US Treasury into a humiliating "U-turn," granting a [temporary waiver on Russian oil sanctions](#) to prevent a total collapse of

global energy markets as Brent crude surges past \$100 per barrel.

The conflict is increasingly defined by its regional spillover and domestic political instability within the United States. Israel has expanded its operations into [southern Lebanon](#), aiming to establish "failed state status" for its northern neighbor, while Iran has pivoted to a decentralized "asymmetrical warfare" model following the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei. Domestically, the Trump administration faces a "credibility gap," with significant portions of the American public viewing the [war as a distraction](#) from the Jeffrey Epstein scandal and related federal investigations. The emergence of a "Russia-China-India" axis, granted [safe passage through Hormuz](#) by the new Iranian leadership, signals a fundamental shift in the geopolitical order and the potential demise of petrodollar hegemony.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Iranian Succession and the Mostafa Mandate:** Following the death of his father, newly appointed Supreme Leader Mostafa Khamenei has issued his first public dictate from an undisclosed location. He has vowed [revenge for every civilian death](#), specifically citing the "blood of our children" in reference to the [Minab school strike](#). His leadership has shifted the Iranian military focus toward decentralized command structures capable of sustaining long-term conflict without a central headquarters.

- **Strategic Blockade of the Strait of Hormuz:** Iran has effectively weaponized global energy transit, permitting only [Indian and Chinese vessels](#) safe passage. The resulting supply shortfall of [12 million barrels per day](#) of Gulf crude has triggered a global recession warning. Despite US claims that the straits are "open for transit" if Iran stops firing, commercial shipping has largely ceased due to [artillery and submersible drone](#) threats.
- **Pentagon Operations and Attrition:** US Central Command confirmed the loss of a [KC-135 refueling tanker](#) over Iraq, resulting in the death of at least four airmen. While the Pentagon attributes the crash to non-hostile causes, independent military analysts suggest the [plane was shot down](#) by Iraqi air defenses. Concurrently, US artillery units have deployed the first [Precision Strike Missiles \(PrSM\)](#) in combat to neutralize Iranian naval depots.
- **The Russian Oil "Lifeline":** In a significant policy reversal, the US Treasury Department issued [General License 111](#), allowing the sale and offloading of Russian oil currently stranded at sea. This move is intended to alleviate the [spiraling inflation and energy shortages](#) caused by the Hormuz closure, though it undermines the administration's long-term goal of isolating Moscow.
- **Israeli Incursion into Lebanon:** The IDF has launched a ground invasion into southern Lebanon, focusing on the [strategic heights of Khiam](#). Israeli officials state the goal is to "strike the head of the snake" by neutralizing Hezbollah, Iran's primary regional arm, though the offensive has already [displaced 700,000 civilians](#) and caused significant casualties.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Energy Security & Global Markets

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) has authorized the [largest emergency oil release](#) in its history, totaling 400 million barrels. However, experts warn that the [maximum discharge capacity](#) of 4.4 million barrels per day cannot offset the 20 million barrels lost via the Hormuz closure.
- US petrol prices have surged nationwide, leading to [domestic instability](#) and questioning of President Trump's campaign promises regarding energy independence.

Geopolitical Power Dynamics

- The war has accelerated the transition toward a "multipolar world," with [BRICS nations](#) utilizing the crisis to promote alternative payment systems and delink from the US dollar.
- Russia is positioning its [Northern Sea Route](#) as a safe and effective alternative to the increasingly volatile southern logistics routes.

Domestic Stability & Social Order

- Public trust in the US government is at a historic low; [52% of voters believe](#) the war's primary purpose is to shield the administration from the [Jeffrey Epstein investigation](#).
- In Michigan, an active shooter situation at [Temple Israel](#) highlights rising domestic tensions and the risk of the Middle East conflict triggering localized sectarian violence.

Succession & Stability

- Iran's decentralized command structure, designed to [withstand leadership decapitation](#), has prevented the state collapse anticipated by US and Israeli planners.
- The ascension of Mostafa Khamenei suggests a hardline continuation of [revolutionary principles](#), focusing on "regret-inducing defense" rather than diplomatic capitulation.

Diplomatic Engagement & Lawfare

- The UN Security Council remains deadlocked, with the US and Israel [vetoing a Russian resolution](#) for a ceasefire. Russia's envoy described the situation as a "theatre of the absurd."
- In the Philippines, the ICC investigation into Rodrigo Duterte faces [corruption allegations](#) involving "suitcases of cash" used to bribe foreign investigators to target the former president.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative and executive actions today focused primarily on emergency economic measures and military authorization. US Treasury officials have utilized "narrowly tailored" licenses to bypass previous sanctions regimes, while the Pentagon is moving to [restructure civilian harm oversight](#) to streamline the "tempo" of operations. Press events from the Pentagon were notable for their [highly jingoistic tone](#), dismissing

Congressional and media concerns about "mission creep."

- **US Treasury General License 111:** Authorization permitting the [purchase and docking](#) of Russian oil vessels loaded before March 12, 2026, valid until April 11. This is a direct response to the [energy supply shortfall](#) caused by the Hormuz blockade.
- **IEA Emergency Oil Stock Release:** A coordinated release of [400 million barrels](#) of oil by 32 member nations to stabilize the global market.
- **DOD Civilian Harm Mitigation Cuts:** Proposed reductions in the [Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response](#) framework, cutting personnel by 90% to reduce "bureaucracy" in the targeting process.
- **Pentagon Press Briefing (Hegseth/Kane):** SecWar Hegseth suggested the press should use headlines like "[Iran Shrinking](#)" and dismissed reports of strategic miscalculation as "patently ridiculous."

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of the Global Commons

The current conflict has moved beyond the "front lines" and into the "choke points" of global trade. Iran's use of [artillery to control a 21-kilometer midpoint](#) in the Strait of Hormuz demonstrates that regional powers can now hold the global economy hostage regardless of US naval presence. This represents a "failed deterrence" on the part of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet. The Iranian strategy of granting [safe passage to "friends"](#) like India and China while blockading "adversaries" creates a two-

tiered global trade system that marginalizes Western economies.

Decentralized Asymmetrical Resilience

The US-Israeli strategy relied on "decapitation" to induce regime collapse. However, Iranian command has [dispersed missile authority](#) across autonomous regions. This means that even with the loss of the Supreme Leader, the "mechanized structure" of the Iranian state continues to function. This suggests a major [intelligence failure in Western planning](#), which did not account for Iran's lessons from the 2003 Iraq War.

Information Warfare and Domestic Erosion

The Pentagon's messaging is increasingly diverging from the perception of the American public and the international community. While Secretary Hegseth speaks of "[precision and rapid innovation](#)," independent footage shows [devastated residential blocks](#) in Tehran's Resalat Square. The narrative that the war is a [political shield for the Trump administration](#) is gaining traction, potentially leading to a domestic "Vietnam-style" credibility crisis as energy prices continue to bite.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect global fuel prices to remain above \$100/barrel despite SPR releases. Domestic unrest in the US and Europe will likely intensify as "short-term pain" becomes a prolonged economic reality. Iran may [increase the "radioactivity"](#) of its defense by deploying advanced naval mines or targeting desalination plants in the Gulf, which [Israel and the GCC](#) are 75% dependent upon for drinking water.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The US will likely be forced into more formal "sanction retreats" regarding Russia and potentially Venezuela to keep the domestic economy afloat. The "petro-yuan" will gain significant ground as [China and India](#) leverage their "safe passage" status to consolidate energy dominance. Israel's offensive in Lebanon may devolve into a [prolonged occupation](#) without a clear exit strategy.

Long Term (1-5 Years): This conflict likely marks the end of the [petrodollar era](#). Nations will move toward "gated trade" based on strategic alignments rather than global standards. The US military "base footprint" in the Middle East will be [irreversibly diminished](#), as host nations like Qatar and the UAE realize that US presence brings more risk than security. Structural changes to global supply chains will prioritize the [Northern Sea Route](#) and land-based Eurasian corridors over maritime choke points.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- **Security:** Neutral countries should immediately secure alternative logistics routes that bypass the Persian Gulf. The [failure of Western naval escorts](#) to resume activity in the Strait of Hormuz suggests a total loss of maritime control in that sector.
- **Diplomacy:** Diplomatic efforts must shift focus to [India as a mediator](#), given its unique position as a partner to both the West and its newly secured "safe passage" status with Iran.

- **Economic:** European states must prepare for [fertilizer shortages](#) as 30% of global urea production is affected by the Gulf crisis, threatening the spring planting season.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Companies reliant on Gulf-sourced fossil fuels or nitrogen-based fertilizers must [re-contract through Russia or China](#) immediately, as the Hormuz blockade shows no signs of lifting.
- **Investment Climate:** The "brand" of the Gulf monarchies as a [safe haven for capital](#) is broken. Wealth management firms should anticipate a massive capital flight from Dubai and Doha toward [alternative gold-backed](#) or digital assets.
- **Energy Strategy:** Investors should pivot toward companies developing the [Northern Sea Route](#) infrastructure and specialized nuclear-powered shipping, as traditional maritime arteries remain highly volatile.

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>.