

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

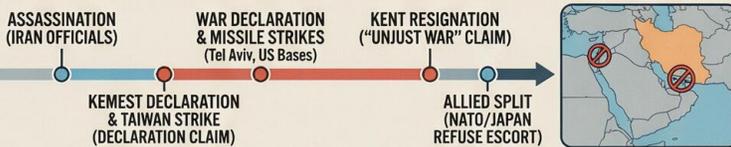
CTV

MARCH 18, 2026

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

GLOBAL INSTABILITY & TAIWAN'S DUAL CRISIS: A MARCH 2026 REPORT

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE: MARCH 18-19, 2026 - US-IRAN WAR TRIGGERS GLOBAL INFLECTION POINT



Impacts: Global Energy Markets Disrupted, Strait of Hormuz Blockaded, Taiwan Energy Sector Losses.

THE DUAL CRISIS: INTERNATIONAL & DOMESTIC FRACTURES

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CRISIS: DEFENSE & GEOPOLITICS

US-IRAN WAR & INTEL FALLOUT



SYSTEMIC PROCUREMENT FAILURES

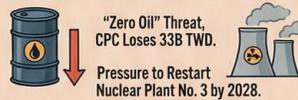


REGIONAL POWER SHIFT



DOMESTIC GOVERNANCE CRISIS: ENERGY, LAW & SOCIETY

ENERGY SECURITY & ECONOMIC IMPACT



DOMESTIC "LEGAL WARFARE"



SOCIAL & POLITICAL EROSION



KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS & LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP



DEEP DIVE, FORESIGHT & RECOMMENDATIONS



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GLOBAL INSTABILITY PEAKS AS US-
IRAN CONFLICT ESCALATES
AMIDST TAIWAN'S DEFENSE
PROCUREMENT CRISIS AND
DEEPENING DOMESTIC POLITICAL
FRACTURES

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The global geopolitical landscape reached a critical inflection point on March 18-19, 2026, as the assassination of high-ranking Iranian officials by US and Israeli forces triggered a full-scale regional war in the Middle East. The resignation of US National Counterterrorism Center Director Kent, who claimed the Trump administration was [misled by Israel](#) into an "unjust war," has exposed deep fissures within the American security establishment and its traditional alliances. With NATO members and Japan showing significant reluctance to participate in maritime escort missions in the Strait of Hormuz, the limits of US "transactional" diplomacy are being tested. The conflict has immediately impacted global energy markets, with [Iran blockading the Strait of Hormuz](#) and forcing major oil shipments to reroute through the Red Sea,

causing significant losses for Taiwan's state-owned energy sector.

Domestically, Taiwan is grappling with a dual crisis of national security and governance. Stalled defense procurements—ranging from [MK48 torpedoes](#) to F-16V fighter jets—have fueled skepticism regarding the reliability of US security commitments, especially following the unannounced redeployment of THAAD systems from South Korea to the Middle East. This strategic anxiety is compounded by a bitter internal political feud over the status of legislator Li Zhen-xiu and the "two-state theory" rhetoric from the Ministry of the Interior, which critics argue is a form of "legal warfare" that undermines social cohesion. Simultaneously, the 12th anniversary of the Sunflower Movement has become a focal point for public cynicism, as once-idealized leaders face a [string of scandals](#), further eroding trust in the political elite.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **US-Iran War and Intelligence Fallout:**
 - The targeted killing of Iranian National Security Chief Larijani and militia leader Soleimani has led to a declaration of war, with Iran responding via [missile strikes on Tel Aviv](#) and US bases in the "Green Zone."
 - Director Kent's resignation underscores a crisis in US intelligence credibility, alleging that war was sparked by "lobbying groups and false intelligence" rather than imminent threats.
 - Allied cohesion is crumbling as France, NATO, and Japan [refuse to join](#) the US-led escort mission, citing the war as a US-centric conflict that does not serve broader international interests.

- **Systemic Defense Procurement Failures:**

- Taiwanese legislators have revealed that critical defense items, including Altius 600 drones and MK48 torpedoes, are facing [multi-year delays](#) despite full payment, with some items failing performance tests in the US.
- South Korea has [denied export permits](#) for key materials for 105mm artillery shells, effectively stalling domestic production for three years.
- Public concern is rising over the "Taiwan Model" of procurement, which critics claim involves purchasing "downgraded" or "experimental" equipment that [cannot be integrated](#) into existing systems.

- **Energy Security and Economic Impact:**

- The Strait of Hormuz blockade has led to a "zero oil" threat for Taiwan, with state-owned CPC Corporation reporting losses of [33 billion TWD](#) in just two weeks due to price freezes amid surging global costs.
- The government is facing renewed pressure to [restart Nuclear Power Plant No. 3](#) by 2028 to mitigate the risk of a complete energy shut-off if natural gas supplies are disrupted by regional conflicts.

- **Taiwanese Domestic "Legal Warfare":**

- Interior Minister Liu Shih-fang's refusal to recognize the rights of legislator Li Zhen-xiu has sparked a constitutional row, with accusations of [institutionalized discrimination](#) against residents of mainland origin.
- The Prosecutor General's attempt to file an extraordinary appeal for a [notorious death row inmate](#) (Wang Hong-wei) based on new constitutional interpretations has sparked a "justice vs. procedure" debate, leading to significant civil outrage.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

AI and Digital Sovereignty: NVIDIA's GTC conference has become a focal point for Taiwan's industrial future, with Jensen Huang announcing the [restart of H200 chip production](#) for the China market following US government permits. This move highlights the tension between US export controls and the commercial realities of the AI supply chain. Locally, "AI Agents" and tools like "Lobster AI" are [going viral](#) in mainland China and Taiwan, with users paying for installation services to automate daily tasks, suggesting a shift toward decentralized AI utilization that may bypass traditional regulatory frameworks.

Energy Security: The vulnerability of Taiwan's energy mix has been laid bare by the Middle East crisis. While the government maintains a [1.5-year timeline](#) for safety reviews to restart nuclear facilities, the immediate threat of "energy starvation" is driving a wedge between the anti-nuclear platform of the ruling party and the pragmatic needs of the industrial sector. The CPC's massive losses indicate that current price-stabilization mechanisms are [fiscally unsustainable](#) in a prolonged conflict scenario.

Domestic Stability & Social Order: A disturbing trend of "towing mafias" has emerged in Northern Taiwan, where criminal groups use [deceptive contracts](#) to extort tens of thousands of dollars from motorists, with at least 60 victims reported. This, combined with high-profile courtroom violence where a [woman slapped a lawyer](#) association leader, suggests a fraying of the social fabric and a lack of confidence in local law enforcement's ability to maintain order in public spaces.

Regional Influence & Power Projection: The unannounced [removal of THAAD batteries](#) from South Korea by the US has sent shockwaves through the "First Island Chain." This move, interpreted as prioritizing Middle Eastern security over East Asian deterrence, is forcing a re-evaluation of "Strategic Ambiguity" and the actual "weight" of US security guarantees in the region.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity has been dominated by debates over the legality of budget "segmentation" and the validity of defense special budgets that critics say bypass standard oversight. Tensions peaked during

interpellations involving the Ministry of the Interior and the National Security Council.

• **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **Defense Procurement Special Regulation:** A proposed 1.25 trillion TWD budget for advanced weaponry; current debate centers on ["extra" funds](#) suspected to be allocated for election-year maneuvering.
- **718 Billion TWD "Star Plan":** A civilian-focused budget intended to address livelihood issues; opposition parties are questioning why this has been [separated from the main budget](#) to expedite passage without full review.
- **National Security Law Amendments:** Discussed in the context of "fifth column" concerns and the [exclusionary policies](#) regarding legislators with ties to the mainland.

• **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Kent Resignation Press Statement:** Outlined the [intelligence failures](#) leading to the Iran war and the role of Israeli lobbying.
- **Interior Ministry Press Briefing:** Minister Liu Shih-fang addressed the controversy over her [clash with journalists](#), though critics noted she failed to answer questions regarding the constitutional status of mainland-origin legislators.
- **Economic Ministry Interpellation:** Officials admitted to massive [losses at CPC](#) and provided a vague timeline for nuclear restarts.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Erosion of "Strategic Reliance": A recurring theme across the transcripts is the growing realization that US commitments are conditional and highly volatile. From the [delay of F-16Vs](#) to the prioritization of US missile defense for Saudi Arabia over Taiwan, the narrative is shifting from "US-led security" to "Strategic Self-Defense." This is further complicated by the perception that the US is using Taiwan as a [clearinghouse for obsolete](#) or unproven military inventory (e.g., the Volcano Landmine System).

Lawfare as a Political Tool: The use of administrative rules to bypass electoral results—seen in the attempt to [disqualify or silence](#) certain legislators—suggests that legal warfare is being used to settle domestic political scores. This "internal lawfare" mirrors the international "lawfare" used to navigate complex trade sanctions and sovereignty claims, creating a climate of constant legalistic friction.

Post-Sunflower Cynicism: The 12th anniversary of the Sunflower Movement is being treated not as a celebration, but as a [post-mortem of lost ideals](#). The focus on the personal and legal failures of former movement leaders (scandals involving drugs, fraud, and sexual misconduct) serves as a potent political tool for the opposition to frame the ruling party's rise as being built on "manipulated youth" and "political opportunism."

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect global oil prices to remain volatile as the Strait of Hormuz blockade persists. Domestic pressure on CPC and the Taiwan government to raise fuel and electricity prices will [reach a breaking point](#), potentially leading to localized protests. Increased military posturing by the PLA in the Taiwan Strait is likely, as Beijing observes the US's distraction in the Middle East.
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The "Trump-Xi Summit" (Chuan-Xi 会) will be a [pivotal moment](#) for Taiwan; any delay or "grand bargain" struck between the two superpowers could see Taiwan's interests sacrificed for Middle Eastern stability. The internal constitutional row over legislator status will likely move to the Constitutional Court, further polarizing the 2026 election cycle.
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** Taiwan will likely accelerate its indigenous defense programs (missiles/submarines) as trust in [foreign supply chains](#) reaches a historic low. A structural shift toward a more diverse energy portfolio, including the likely extension of nuclear power and faster offshore wind development, will become the only viable path for national survival.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- The US must urgently address the "commitment gap" in East Asia; failure to deliver [paid-for weaponry](#) will permanently alienate allied populations and fuel anti-American sentiment.

- Multilateral energy security frameworks are needed to bypass the Hormuz bottleneck; Taiwan should seek [Arctic or Alaskan](#) energy partnerships to reduce reliance on the Middle East.
- Diplomatic efforts should focus on de-escalation between US and Iran to prevent a global [supply chain collapse](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Diversify away from single-source manufacturing in regions subject to US export controls, as NVIDIA's [struggle with China compliance](#) indicates high regulatory volatility.
- **Energy Costs:** Industrial players in Taiwan should prepare for a [significant rise](#) in energy tariffs as state-owned subsidies become untenable.
- **AI Integration:** The rapid adoption of AI Agents suggests that enterprise productivity will increasingly depend on [automated workflows](#), but this brings new cybersecurity risks that must be addressed at the board level.

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>.