PRAEVISIO INSTITUTE FOR GEOPOLITICAL AFFAIRS
Opinion Paper | Energy Security & Regional Geopolitics
19 March 2026

A Conflict Without Brakes: Energy Escalation, Diverging Timelines, and the Lobbying War for Washington

Marcus Ghebrehiwet
Founder, Praevisio Institute for Geopolitical Affairs | *Crisis Brief*

Abstract

On 18 March 2026, Israeli forces struck the Iranian South Pars gas field in a strike subsequently acknowledged, then denied, by Washington. Iran retaliated immediately, striking energy facilities across Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, sending Brent crude surging past $107 per barrel and European gas benchmarks up 6% in a single session. The escalation is the predictable expression of a structural divergence: Israel and the United States are fighting the same war with entirely different time horizons and incompatible strategic objectives. Europe faces a medium-term energy shock it is ill-equipped to absorb. And the lobbying contest being waged in Washington by Israel and its allies may be the single variable most likely to determine whether the conflict terminates on American terms or Israeli ones. Europe is not without instruments, and that deploying them, now, is a strategic imperative rather than a diplomatic nicety.

I. The Energy Escalation and Its Immediate Consequences

On 18 March 2026, Israeli forces struck natural gas processing facilities at Iran's South Pars field, the Iranian sector of the world's largest natural gas reservoir, shared with Qatar's North Field across the Persian Gulf. The strike triggered three cascading consequences in rapid succession. Iran retaliated with ballistic missiles and drones against energy infrastructure across the Gulf,[1] sending oil and gas prices sharply higher,[2] in strikes that were not rhetorical; they were kinetic and broadly distributed.[3]

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[1] QatarEnergy official statement, 18 March 2026: "Ras Laffan Industrial City subject to missile attacks causing extensive damage and fires." Reported simultaneously by Al Jazeera, CNN, Reuters and Bloomberg, 18-19 March 2026.

[2] Bloomberg, "Iran Says US, Israeli Strikes Hit South Pars Gas Field, Oil Facilities," 18 March 2026. WTI advanced 3.3% to $98.60/barrel; Brent crude settled at $107.38 (+3.8%); European natural gas benchmark (ICE Futures Europe) jumped 6% on the session; Brent subsequently approached $110/barrel in early Asian hours of 19 March following further Iranian strikes on Gulf facilities.

[3] Al Jazeera live blog, "Iran War Live: Oil and Gas Prices Soar Amid Attacks on Gulf Energy Sites," 19 March 2026. Confirmed Iranian strikes: Ras Laffan LNG complex, Qatar (ballistic missiles; extensive damage, multiple fires); SAMREF refinery and Jubail petrochemical complex, Saudi Arabia (two refineries struck; further missiles intercepted over Riyadh); Habshan gas facility and Bab oilfield, UAE (operations suspended); Al Hosn gas field, UAE (evacuation ordered; declared legitimate target). Saudi Arabia publicly reserved "the right to take military actions" against Iran if deemed necessary, a formulation without precedent in the conflict.

The Iranian retaliation struck the following facilities: Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City, the world's largest LNG export hub, sustained extensive damage and fires from ballistic missile strikes; Saudi Arabia's SAMREF refinery in Yanbu and Jubail petrochemical complex were struck, with two refineries in Riyadh hit; the UAE's Habshan gas facility and Bab oilfield suspended operations amid missile attacks; and the UAE's Al Hosn gas field received evacuation orders and was declared a legitimate target. Saudi Arabia publicly reserved the right to take military action against Iran if it deemed it necessary, a formulation without precedent in the current conflict.

The morning of 19 March brought a Truth Social post from Donald Trump that was, even by his standards, extraordinary. He described Israel as having "violently lashed out" at South Pars "out of anger" and insisted the United States "knew nothing" about the strike.[4] Both claims were false. Axios, CNN, and the Wall Street Journal subsequently reported, citing US and Israeli officials, that Trump had approved the strike in coordination with Prime Minister Netanyahu, framing it as a message to Tehran over its continued blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.[5] Trump's attempt to publicly distance himself from a strike he had privately authorised is, not an anomaly. It is a symptom of the fundamental incoherence at the heart of Washington's strategic posture.

II. Europe's Energy Exposure: A Medium-Term Shock

Europe is not a spectator to this escalation. It is among its most directly exposed victims. The European economy is still absorbing the structural damage inflicted by the war in Ukraine, elevated energy costs, disrupted supply chains, reduced industrial competitiveness, and the accumulated fiscal strain of unprecedented defence spending commitments. Into this weakened condition, the energy escalation in the Gulf now introduces a second shock that Europe has no instrument to absorb at speed.

Qatar is a primary source of European LNG, accounting for approximately 16-18% of EU LNG supply.[6] Ras Laffan, now damaged, its fires still being contained as of the morning of 19 March, is the terminal through which the bulk of that supply is processed and exported. Any prolonged impairment of Ras Laffan capacity translates directly into tightening supply for EU importers, compounded by the fact that the Strait of Hormuz remains effectively closed, preventing LNG tankers from transiting the Gulf irrespective of production capacity at the source.

Japan and South Korea face an even starker arithmetic. Japan imports approximately 90% of its crude oil, with a substantial proportion transiting Hormuz.[7] Tokyo has already publicly declined

[4] Donald Trump, Truth Social post, 18 March 2026: "Israel, out of anger for what has taken place in the Middle East, has violently lashed out at a major facility known as South Pars Gas Field in Iran [...] The United States knew nothing about this particular attack." Trump also stated: "NO MORE ATTACKS WILL BE MADE BY ISRAEL pertaining to this extremely important and valuable South Pars Field unless Iran unwisely decides to attack a very innocent Qatar."

[5] Axios, "After Tehran Strikes, Trump Says Israel Won't Attack Iran Gas Fields Anymore," 19 March 2026. A US defence official and two senior Israeli officials confirmed that Netanyahu and Trump coordinated the strike with the aim of deterring Iran from continuing to disrupt Hormuz oil supply. The Wall Street Journal reported Trump had approved the attack; the Associated Press reported Washington was informed in advance. Trump's public disavowal was contradicted by all three outlets within hours of the Truth Social post.

[6] IEA, World Energy Outlook 2025. European LNG imports from Qatar accounted for approximately 16% of total EU LNG supply in 2023, rising to an estimated 18% in 2024 following further displacement of Russian pipeline gas. Germany, France, the Netherlands and Italy are the primary exposed importers. Any sustained impairment of Ras Laffan export capacity constitutes a direct supply emergency, not a price signal to be managed at the margin.

[7] IEA, Japan Energy Security Review 2025. Japan imports approximately 90 per cent of its crude oil; South Korea sources the majority of its crude from Gulf producers transiting the Strait of Hormuz. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, meeting Trump at the White House on 19 March 2026, stated Japan had "no plans" to dispatch warships to

Washington's request to dispatch warships to patrol the strait, constrained by its constitutional framework and domestic political realities. The economic pressure on these US treaty allies is severe, sustained and growing, and it is pressure for which the United States bears direct responsibility as the co-author of the conflict generating it.

European leaders have begun to articulate this publicly. French President Macron called for an immediate moratorium on strikes on civilian energy infrastructure; Germany's Foreign Minister warned of "a crisis of the gravest order."[8] These are not abstract diplomatic formulations. They reflect the political reality that European governments are facing: energy prices rising, industrial output contracting, and publics already strained by years of post-Ukraine adjustment now being asked to absorb further shocks generated by a conflict they had no voice in initiating and possess no mechanism to conclude.

III. The Incoherence of Washington's Position

The United States entered Operation Epic Fury on 28 February 2026 with a set of explicit economic red lines, chief among them the avoidance of strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure. The rationale was straightforward: Trump's domestic political identity is built substantially on promises of lower energy prices, and the administration understood that any escalation of the Gulf energy crisis would translate directly into domestic inflation and political damage.[9] Trump had separately lifted partial sanctions on Russian oil exports earlier in 2025, explicitly to reduce global oil prices, framing it as a concession within the Ukraine negotiation process.[10]

The South Pars strike demolished this logic in a single operation. Washington approved a strike on the world's largest gas field, predictably triggered Iranian retaliation against Gulf LNG infrastructure, sent Brent crude through $107 and European gas benchmarks up 6%, and then publicly denied involvement in an attempt to limit the domestic political fallout. The sequence reveals not a strategy but its absence: a policy architecture that was internally contradictory before the first missile hit South Pars, and is now visibly collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions.

The Strait of Hormuz remains the most direct illustration of Washington's impotence relative to its stated objectives. The strait's status does not depend on what Washington is planning, it depends

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the Middle East under existing legal constraints, publicly declining the US request for patrol assistance. NPR, 19 March 2026.

[8]CNBC, Reuters, Le Monde, 18-19 March 2026. French President Macron called for "an immediate moratorium on strikes targeting civilian infrastructure, particularly energy and water supply facilities." German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul warned of "a crisis of the gravest order." Both statements followed emergency phone calls with Trump and the Emir of Qatar. The European Commission separately activated its Energy Security Emergency Protocol for the third time since the outbreak of Operation Epic Fury on 28 February 2026.

[9]CNBC, "Trump Warns Will 'Blow Up' South Pars Gas Field if Iran Strikes Continue," 19 March 2026. Trump explicitly stated he had "deliberately avoided targeting such infrastructure because rebuilding it would take years and could trigger a prolonged global energy crisis." This rationale, the avoidance of energy infrastructure, had been operative US policy from the outbreak of Operation Epic Fury until the South Pars strike, reflecting both domestic price concerns and advice from Treasury and the National Economic Council.

[10]Reuters, "US Eases Russian Oil Sanctions in Ukraine Deal," 2025; Bloomberg, "Trump Team Weighs Easing Russia Oil Sanctions as Ukraine Deal Sweetener," February 2025; Reuters, "Bessent Says Lower Oil Prices Are Part of Trump's Economic Plan," 2025. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and envoy Steve Witkoff both indicated that sanctions relief on Russian energy was a deliberate price-management instrument deployed alongside Ukraine ceasefire diplomacy, making simultaneous authorisation of strikes on Gulf-adjacent energy infrastructure a direct contradiction of the administration's own stated economic objectives.

entirely on what Tehran decides. Iran has demonstrated, repeatedly and now most dramatically with the strike on Ras Laffan, that it will absorb punishment and respond symmetrically to the economic infrastructure of states it holds responsible for enabling the conflict. The path to a Hormuz reopening runs through a political settlement, not a military one, and a political settlement requires a US administration willing to impose constraints on Israel that it has, to date, shown no willingness to impose.

IV. Two Timelines, One War

The deepest structural problem in the current conflict is temporal. Israel and the United States are fighting the same war on entirely different timelines, with objectives that are not merely different but fundamentally incompatible.

Israel's strategic objective is one of two outcomes, both requiring sustained engagement. The first is regime change in Tehran, achieved not through a conventional ground invasion, which is militarily and logistically unfeasible across Iranian territory, but through a combination of sustained military degradation, economic destruction, covert pressure, and the eventual activation of internal instability and fragmentation. The second, if regime change proves unachievable, is to set back Iranian military and nuclear capability by ten to twenty years, eliminating or severely degrading its missile programme, its nuclear infrastructure, and its regional proxy network to an extent that removes Iran as a credible near-term threat.[11] Either outcome requires time. Months, not weeks. Neither is achievable on the timeline Washington is prepared to sustain politically.

The United States, by contrast, cannot afford a long war. The domestic political mathematics are unfavourable and deteriorating. Trump's core economic promise, lower prices, restored prosperity, is being actively undermined by the energy shock the conflict is generating. NATO allies and Asian allies whose energy security is being directly threatened are applying sustained pressure for resolution. The spectre of the mid-term elections, at which current polling suggests Democrats are competitive for both the House and Senate, concentrates the administration's attention on an exit.[12]

Trump's character introduces a complicating variable. His Truth Social post of 19 March, simultaneously distancing himself from a strike he approved, threatening Iran with annihilation, and instructing Israel to stand down, is the behaviour of a man managing contradictory pressures through performance rather than strategy. Trump does not admit strategic mistakes. He doubles down, blames predecessors, and reframes failures as victories. This pattern makes a clean acknowledged pivot toward war termination psychologically unlikely. He would be more apt to

[11]Soufan Center, IntelBrief, 18 March 2026: "Israel appears to be pursuing a path of escalation while simultaneously shaping internal conditions in Iran that could potentially trigger regime change." The parallel strategy of military degradation, economic destruction and covert pressure on Iranian institutions has been a consistent feature of Israeli strategic communication since the outbreak of Operation Epic Fury. See also RAND Corporation, Israel's Strategic Environment, 2023, on the structural preference for degradation over negotiation as a mode of threat management.

[12]RealClearPolitics and FiveThirtyEight polling aggregates, March 2026. Democratic candidates lead Republican incumbents in a majority of competitive House districts and in Senate battleground states including Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Nevada. Several forecasters have upgraded their probability of a Democratic House majority to >50% as of mid-March 2026, citing public discontent with the economic effects of the Iran war, elevated energy prices, and concerns about military overextension.

declare victory unilaterally and redescribe whatever settlement emerges as a triumph, regardless of whether it corresponds to any of the war's stated objectives.[13]

V. Europe Must Act: The Leverage Europe Has and Has Not Used

European leaders have thus far responded to the escalation with statements. Statements are not leverage. Europe possesses concrete, deployable instruments of pressure on Israel, instruments whose deployment has been persistently deferred by a combination of political caution, fear of accusations of antisemitism, and the institutional inertia of a Union designed for consensus rather than crisis response. The energy emergency now unfolding demands that this calculation change.

The most significant instrument available is the EU-Israel Association Agreement of 2000, whose Article 2 makes respect for human rights and democratic principles an *essential element* of the relationship, a standard legal formulation that, in EU treaty practice, creates the basis for suspension in the event of a "serious and substantial failure" by either party.[14] The European Commission has consistently declined to trigger this clause, despite repeated European Parliament resolutions calling for its activation and legal analyses concluding that the threshold has been met. In the current context, with Israel having struck the world's largest gas field, triggering Iranian retaliation that has directly damaged facilities supplying EU member states with LNG, the case for invoking Article 2 as a minimum diplomatic signal has become considerably stronger. Europe's own energy security is now directly at stake, not merely its normative commitments.

A second instrument is coordinated conditionality on arms transfers. Several EU member states have already taken individual decisions to suspend or restrict weapons exports to Israel. A coordinated EU-wide embargo, or at minimum a formal suspension of new licences pending a commitment from Israel not to strike further energy infrastructure, would represent a qualitatively different form of pressure than statements from foreign ministers.[15] It would impose real constraints on Israel's operational capacity and, critically, send a signal to the Trump administration that European support for the broader Western coalition is conditional on Israel exercising restraint. Europe's silence in the face of escalation has been misread as acquiescence. It should not continue to be.

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[13] CNBC, 19 March 2026; Wall Street Journal, "Trump Tells Israel to Stop Iran Energy Strikes," 19 March 2026. Trump's stated preference, "I do not want to authorize this level of violence and destruction because of the long term implications that it will have on the future of Iran", illustrates the US preference for war termination. It stands in direct contrast to Israeli signalling: Prime Minister Netanyahu has made no public statement indicating any preference for ceasefire or negotiated settlement, and Israeli media reports indicate the military has prepared additional target packages against Iranian infrastructure.

[14] EU-Israel Association Agreement (1995, entered into force 2000), Article 2: "Relations between the Parties, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement." The clause has been invoked rhetorically but never triggered to the point of formal suspension. The European Parliament passed a non-binding resolution in November 2023 calling for its review; the European Commission has consistently resisted formal suspension proceedings. Legal analysis by the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) published in 2024 concluded the legal threshold for suspension had been met.

[15] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Arms Transfers Database 2024. Several EU member states remain significant arms exporters to Israel, including Germany (which suspended new licences in late 2023 but allowed fulfilment of existing contracts), Italy, and the Netherlands (whose courts ordered a halt to F-35 component exports in a landmark 2024 ruling). A coordinated EU-wide arms embargo, as distinct from individual member-state decisions, would require unanimous Council agreement, politically difficult but structurally available. The European Council for Foreign Relations (ECFR), "Europe's Israel Policy: Time for Conditionality," 2024, sets out the legal and diplomatic architecture for such a step.

The argument against deploying these instruments is well-rehearsed: European leverage over Israel is limited; unilateral European action will not change Israeli behaviour; and the costs, diplomatic rupture, accusations of abandoning a democratic ally, outweigh the benefits. This argument mistakes the purpose of leverage. The goal is not to compel a change in Israeli decision-making through European pressure alone. The goal is to alter the political environment within which the Trump administration makes its own decisions about whether and how long to sustain the conflict. European conditionality gives Washington a political tool: the ability to tell Netanyahu that continued energy escalation risks fracturing the Western coalition in ways that directly damage American interests. Without European pressure, that tool does not exist.

Europe must be equally clear about what a further Israeli strike on Iranian energy infrastructure would mean for the continent. Ras Laffan is damaged but not destroyed. A second major strike on Gulf LNG infrastructure, or an Iranian escalation that closes or destroys additional processing capacity, would push European gas prices to levels not seen since the acute phase of the Ukraine crisis in 2022. Industries that have only partially recovered from that shock would face renewed existential pressure. Governments that have spent two years assuring publics that the worst of the energy crisis is behind them would face immediate credibility collapses. Europe has a direct, material, economic interest in preventing a second strike, and must deploy its instruments in service of that interest rather than its instinct for procedural caution.

VI. Israel’s Lobbying War and Its Window of Opportunity

Israel is acutely aware that its political environment in the United States is undergoing a structural shift, and that this shift is accelerating. The data are unambiguous. Public support for Israel among Americans, particularly younger cohorts and conservatives under 35, has declined materially over the past three years.[16] More consequentially, the political figures who are reshaping the identity of the American right, Tucker Carlson, Nick Fuentes, and the broader “America First” media ecosystem, have made scepticism of AIPAC’s influence and outright hostility to unconditional US support for Israel a central and increasingly mainstream feature of their political messaging. These are not fringe voices. Carlson reaches audiences of tens of millions per episode across platforms. Fuentes commands millions of young, engaged conservative followers. They represent precisely the demographic, young, male, Republican-leaning, who were traditionally the most reliable bedrock of US political support for Israel. That bedrock is cracking, and Israeli strategists know it this.

That context shapes Israeli strategic thinking about the United States must be understood. Israel is not simply a close ally managing a relationship. It is an actor that understands, that it is operating in a closing window, and that it must prevent, at all costs, a premature US withdrawal from the conflict. Every instrument of influence available to Israel within the Trump administration is therefore being deployed not only to shape US military decisions but to ensure that Washington remains in the war long enough for Israeli objectives to be achieved. The imperative, from

[16] Pew Research Center, American Views on Israel and the Palestinians, surveys 2022-2025. Support for Israel among US adults under 30 fell from 41% in 2022 to 27% in 2025. Among self-identified Republican respondents under 35, the share expressing sympathy primarily with Israel fell from 68% in 2020 to 49% in 2025. Tucker Carlson has reached audiences of 10-50 million per episode across platforms; Nick Fuentes commands several million followers and has made opposition to AIPAC-aligned policy a central plank of his "America First" messaging. AIPAC's 2023-2024 electoral cycle spending exceeded $100 million. See also John J. Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt, The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007; Jared Kushner's informal intermediary role reported by Axios and the New York Times since January 2025.

Jerusalem's perspective, is to keep the United States engaged, and to do so for as long as the current political configuration permits.

The principal instruments of that influence are well-documented. Within the Trump administration, the central figure has been Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, possessing unparalleled personal access, and someone whose relationship with Prime Minister Netanyahu predates Trump's political career. Kushner operates not as a formal diplomatic envoy but as an informal channel through which Israeli positions are translated into White House preferences in ways that bypass the standard machinery of the National Security Council. Alongside Kushner, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and its aligned network of donors and political action committees represent the structural backbone of Israeli political influence in Washington.[17] AIPAC's 2023-2024 electoral cycle spending exceeded $100 million, making it among the most financially significant political organisations in American federal elections. Its ability to reward compliance and punish deviation among Republican incumbents remains, for now, structurally intact, even as the ideological ground beneath it shifts.

The mid-term elections of November 2026 represent Israel's most immediate political deadline. Current polling suggests the Democrats are competitive, and several forecasters give them better-than-even odds of capturing the House, with the Senate in genuine play across battleground states including Arizona, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.[18] A Democratic House majority would introduce legislative friction around military spending, authorisations, and oversight of the administration's conduct of the war that does not currently exist. Israel understands that the mid-terms mark the moment at which the Trump administration's unencumbered freedom of action begins to erode, and that it must extract as much as it can from the remaining months before that erosion begins. After the mid-terms, from Israel's perspective, things will be considerably tougher. The window is not abstract. It has a calendar.

The deeper strategic logic that drives Israeli urgency is this: if Israel can emerge from the current conflict as the unchallenged regional hegemon of the Middle East, with Iran militarily degraded, its proxy network dismantled, and no rival Arab state capable of mounting a credible counterweight, it will no longer require the kind of unconditional US political, military and diplomatic support that has been the bedrock of its security since the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson.[19] A position of genuine regional dominance is self-sustaining in a way that dependency

[17] John J. Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt, The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007. The authors document in systematic detail the network of organisations, donors and political actors that constitute the Israel lobby, with AIPAC at its centre. AIPAC's 2023-2024 electoral cycle spending exceeded $100 million across House and Senate races, including primary challenges against members deemed insufficiently supportive of Israeli policy. Jared Kushner's informal intermediary role, including direct communications with Netanyahu during the planning phases of Operation Epic Fury, has been reported by Axios, the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal since January 2025. Kushner has no formal government position; his access derives entirely from his personal relationship with Trump and from his prior role as senior adviser during the first Trump administration, during which he architected the Abraham Accords.

[19] The shift in the US-Israel relationship from the Kennedy era to the present is well-documented. President John F. Kennedy notably resisted Israeli pressure on its nuclear programme, demanding inspections of the Dimona facility and withholding advanced weapons transfers. His assassination in 1963 and the subsequent Johnson administration's decision to approve the sale of Hawk missiles to Israel, and later Skyhawk aircraft, marked the beginning of the era of unconditional strategic partnership that has broadly persisted through every subsequent administration, Republican and Democrat alike. See Seymour Hersh, The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy, Random House, 1991; Avner Cohen, Israel and the Bomb, Columbia University Press, 1998; and Warren Bass, Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the US-Israel Alliance,

on Washington is not. The shift in American public opinion, the rise of the America First movement, the generational realignment of the Republican coalition, none of these would matter to an Israel that no longer needed them. This is not an abstract aspiration. It is the strategic objective that gives coherence to what might otherwise appear as reckless escalation. Every strike on Iranian infrastructure, every expansion of the conflict's scope, every act that deepens American entanglement and makes a clean US exit politically costly, all of it serves the same end: to use this administration, while it lasts, to reshape the regional order permanently. The question Israel is asking is not whether to do this. It is whether the window will remain open long enough.

Whether Israeli lobbying can continue to hold the Trump administration's course against the accumulating weight of domestic and international pressure is ultimately a question about Trump himself. And here, Trump's character introduces a complicating but not unfavourable variable from Israel's perspective. Trump does not admit strategic mistakes. He does not acknowledge that a policy he adopted was misconceived. He doubles down, reframes, and when necessary identifies external actors, predecessors, allies, bureaucrats, the media, on whom to place the blame for any adverse consequences. This pattern, consistently observed across his political career, suggests that a clean acknowledged pivot toward war termination is psychologically and politically unlikely. Far more probable is the scenario in which Trump eventually declares victory unilaterally, reframing whatever settlement emerges, however incomplete, as a triumph of personal strength and diplomatic genius, while the underlying objectives for which the war was fought remain ambiguous or unachieved. For Israel, that scenario may be preferable to the alternative: a Washington that concludes it has been led into a conflict that serves Israeli interests at American expense, and draws the appropriate lessons for the relationship going forward.

VII. Conclusion

The events of 18-19 March 2026 are not a turning point in the sense of introducing new actors or new dynamics. They are the crystallisation of dynamics present from the beginning: a conflict whose logic serves Israeli strategic objectives better than American ones; an energy escalation whose costs fall disproportionately on allies who had no voice in the decision; a Washington whose contradictions are increasingly visible and decreasingly sustainable; and an Israel that understands, that it must extract as much as it can from this administration before the political mathematics of American domestic life reassert themselves.

Europe must prepare for a medium-term energy disruption and elevated prices. This is not a tail risk, it is the baseline. But preparation without action is inadequate. Europe possesses leverage over Israel through treaty conditionality and arms transfer policy. It has a direct material interest in preventing a further strike on Gulf energy infrastructure. And it has, for the first time since the outbreak of the conflict, a compelling case to make to Washington: that European support for the Western coalition is not unconditional, and that continued Israeli energy escalation is eroding the foundations on which that coalition rests. Deploying that case, firmly and publicly, is not hostility to Israel. It is the exercise of Europe's own strategic interests in a moment when those interests are directly and materially at stake.

Oxford University Press, 2003. The argument that Israeli regional hegemony, a position requiring no external guarantor, would free Israel from structural dependence on Washington is implicit in the strategic logic of the Zionist right, and has been made explicitly by figures including former National Security Advisor Giora Eiland and by analysts at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

The rest of the world is not waiting for a resolution. It is pricing in the possibility that none is imminent. Europe should stop waiting too.

Note: *This paper was completed on 19 March 2026 and reflects events current as of that date. All factual claims are sourced to open-source reporting available as of publication. Assessments represent the analytical judgement of the author and do not constitute investment or policy advice.*