

How a War 2,000 Miles Away Killed India's Breakfast

Date: April 24, 2026 | Model: anthropic-batch:claude-opus-4-6

Source: PDF: No dosa today_ India's cooking gas crisis.pdf

Contents

1. Explanation (Ages 14–18)
2. Key Terms Glossary
3. Reading Comprehension Quiz (10 questions)
4. Answer Key with Explanations

Note: the original article is provided as a separate file (attached to the email or downloadable from the website).

1. Explanation (Ages 14–18)

When restaurants in Mumbai can't make a dosa because of a naval blockade near Iran, you're watching energy dependence turn an entire nation's daily life upside down in real time.

What's Going On?

India — the world's most populous country — is in the grip of a cooking gas crisis. The Iran war has choked off shipments of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway through which roughly 90 percent of India's imported LPG travels. Because India is the world's second-largest LPG importer, and only 5 percent of Indian homes have piped gas, most of the country's 1.4 billion people depend on portable LPG cylinders just to cook meals.

The fallout is immediate and visceral. Households are queuing for hours to get cylinders. Restaurants have slashed menus or switched to electric induction stoves. Street-side tea sellers — chaiwalas — have shut down entirely or switched to diesel, which is dirtier and more expensive. Some daily-wage laborers, unable to afford black-market gas prices, have simply left the cities. The government has rationed commercial supplies and placed emergency orders from the United States, but the shortages persist.

How To Think About It

The core lesson here is about supply-chain concentration risk — what happens when a country puts nearly all its eggs in one geographic basket.

- Think of it like a school that relies on a single road for all deliveries. If that road floods, the cafeteria can't serve lunch, the science lab runs out of supplies, and everyone scrambles — even though the school itself is perfectly intact. India's 'single road' is the Strait of Hormuz.
- Or consider how the global chip shortage during COVID crippled car production worldwide. Automakers had optimized for cost by sourcing chips from a handful of Asian fabs. India made a similar bet with Middle Eastern LPG — cheap and convenient until the one chokepoint gets blocked.

Key Things To Know

- About 85–90 percent of India's LPG consumption goes to households for cooking — this is not an industrial problem, it is a kitchen-table crisis affecting hundreds of millions of families daily.
- The Strait of Hormuz, only 33 miles wide at its narrowest, is the world's most critical oil and gas chokepoint. A blockade there doesn't just affect India; it rattles global energy markets.
- Prime Minister Modi's BJP party faces upcoming elections in opposition-held states like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, making the crisis politically explosive — voters who can't cook dinner tend to punish incumbents.
- The crisis is accelerating India's push toward electrification, solar power, coal, and even opening its nuclear sector to private investment — a structural energy shift that might not have happened this fast without the shock.
- What most people get wrong: this isn't just about war disrupting oil. LPG is a separate product from crude oil, and India's specific vulnerability comes from its unusual dependence on portable

cylinders rather than piped gas infrastructure – a legacy of decades of underinvestment in gas pipelines.

Why It Matters

This story is a masterclass in how geopolitical events ripple into ordinary life – and it's the kind of interconnection you'll encounter constantly as adults. Whether you're thinking about careers in energy, international relations, or supply-chain management, the lesson is the same: diversification isn't just a stock-market concept, it's a national survival strategy. If you're studying economics or considering fields like renewable energy engineering, this is exactly the kind of crisis that creates massive demand for new solutions and new jobs.

The Bigger Picture

India has now been hit by energy disruptions twice in rapid succession – first from complications around Russian oil after the Ukraine war, and now from the Iran conflict. Analysts at Bernstein, a major research firm, bluntly declared that 'electrification is no longer an option' – meaning India must accelerate its shift away from imported fossil fuels. Watch for second-order effects: a boom in India's solar and nuclear sectors, rising political pressure on Modi, potential inflation in food prices as restaurants pass costs to consumers, and a possible long-term decline in LPG dependence that reshapes India's entire energy map. Historically, energy shocks – from the 1973 Arab oil embargo to Europe's scramble after Russia invaded Ukraine – have been the single greatest catalyst for countries to reinvent how they power themselves.

2. Key Terms Glossary

LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas)

A flammable hydrocarbon gas (mainly propane and butane) compressed into liquid form for storage and transport. In India, it's delivered in portable metal cylinders and used primarily for cooking.

Strait of Hormuz

A narrow sea passage between Iran and Oman connecting the Persian Gulf to the open ocean. Around 20-25 percent of the world's oil passes through it, making it the most strategically important energy chokepoint on Earth.

Rationing

Government-imposed limits on how much of a scarce resource each person or business can purchase, used to prevent hoarding and ensure wider distribution during shortages.

Black market

An illegal or unofficial market where goods are traded above their official price, typically flourishing when legal supply cannot meet demand.

Energy security

A country's ability to reliably access affordable energy sources without being vulnerable to disruptions from conflict, trade disputes, or supply-chain failures.

Electrification

The process of replacing fuel-burning systems (gas stoves, gasoline cars) with electric alternatives, often powered by renewable sources like solar or wind.

Induction stove

An electric cooking appliance that uses electromagnetic fields to heat pots and pans directly, rather than burning gas. It requires electricity but is highly energy-efficient.

Chokepoint (geopolitical)

A narrow geographic passage — usually a strait, canal, or mountain pass — through which large volumes of trade or military assets must flow, making it a point of strategic vulnerability.

BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party)

India's ruling Hindu-nationalist political party, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is the largest political party in the world by membership.

Supply-chain concentration risk

The danger that arises when a business or country sources a critical input from too few suppliers or through too few routes, leaving it exposed if any single link breaks.

3. Reading Comprehension Quiz

Circle the best answer for each question.

- Q1.** What is the primary cause of India's cooking gas crisis as described in the article?
- A) A sudden increase in domestic LPG demand due to population growth
 - B) The Iran war disrupting LPG shipments through the Strait of Hormuz
 - C) India's government deliberately cutting LPG imports to promote electrification
 - D) A global LPG production shortage caused by declining oil reserves
- Q2.** According to the article, approximately what percentage of India's LPG consumption is used by households?
- A) 50-60 percent
 - B) 70-75 percent
 - C) 85-90 percent
 - D) 95-100 percent
- Q3.** Which of the following best describes the structure of the article?
- A) A technical analysis of global LPG markets followed by policy recommendations
 - B) A personal anecdote that opens into a broader examination of India's energy vulnerability and political consequences
 - C) A chronological history of India's energy policy from independence to the present crisis
 - D) A comparison of energy crises across multiple countries affected by the Iran war
- Q4.** In context, what does the phrase 'political hot potato' most nearly mean?
- A) A popular campaign issue that politicians eagerly embrace
 - B) A controversial and uncomfortable problem that leaders struggle to manage
 - C) A minor policy disagreement between rival political parties
 - D) A crisis that only affects politicians rather than ordinary citizens
- Q5.** Based on the article, what is the most likely reason daily-wage laborers have left Indian cities?
- A) The government ordered evacuations of urban areas during the crisis
 - B) They could not afford black-market LPG prices and the rising cost of living in cities
 - C) Rural areas offered better-paying jobs during the energy shortage
 - D) Employers shut down factories due to electricity rationing
- Q6.** What can be inferred about why only 5 percent of Indian homes have piped gas?
- A) Indian consumers prefer the taste of food cooked on LPG cylinder stoves
 - B) India's government banned piped gas infrastructure for safety reasons
 - C) India historically underinvested in gas pipeline infrastructure, relying instead on portable cylinders
 - D) Piped gas is exclusively available to commercial users in India
- Q7.** What is the author's tone when quoting the oil minister's statement that India 'remains an oasis of energy security'?
- A) Enthusiastically supportive of the government's reassurance
 - B) Neutral and purely informational
 - C) Implicitly skeptical, given the extensive evidence of crisis presented throughout the article
 - D) Openly hostile and dismissive of the minister's credibility

Q8. Why does the author open the article with a personal anecdote about a shrunken dosa?

- A) To review the restaurant's food quality for readers
- B) To make an abstract geopolitical crisis tangible and relatable through a concrete, everyday detail
- C) To argue that Indian cuisine is declining in quality due to modernization
- D) To demonstrate his expertise in Indian food culture

Q9. The Bernstein analysts' statement that 'electrification is no longer an option' most likely means which of the following?

- A) India should abandon its electrification plans because they are too expensive
- B) Electrification has become an urgent necessity rather than merely one possible path forward
- C) Electric stoves have proven unreliable during the crisis and should not replace gas
- D) India's electrical grid cannot support additional demand from cooking appliances

Q10. How does India's LPG crisis connect to the broader global pattern of energy shocks reshaping national policy?

- A) It is unique to India and has no parallels in other countries' experiences
- B) It mirrors how past disruptions — like Europe's response to Russian energy cutoffs — forced countries to accelerate transitions to alternative energy sources
- C) It proves that renewable energy cannot replace fossil fuels in developing economies
- D) It demonstrates that free markets always resolve energy shortages without government intervention

My Score: _____ / 10

4. Answer Key with Explanations

Q1. What is the primary cause of India's cooking gas crisis as described in the article?

Answer: B

The article explicitly states that the Iran war has 'sharply curtailed India's supply of liquefied petroleum gas' because most shipments pass through the blockaded Strait of Hormuz. Option A is wrong because the crisis is a supply disruption, not a demand spike.

Q2. According to the article, approximately what percentage of India's LPG consumption is used by households?

Answer: C

The article states that 'households account for about 85-90 per cent' of LPG cylinder use. Option D is too high because restaurants and hotels make up most of the remaining demand.

Q3. Which of the following best describes the structure of the article?

Answer: B

The article begins with the author's personal experience of receiving a shrunken dosa in Mumbai, then expands outward to cover the national LPG shortage, its political implications, and India's broader energy future. Option A is wrong because the tone is journalistic and narrative, not technical.

Q4. In context, what does the phrase 'political hot potato' most nearly mean?

Answer: B

The fund manager uses 'political hot potato' to describe a problem that is difficult for leaders to handle without getting burned – it's sensitive and contentious. Option A is the opposite; politicians would prefer to avoid this issue, not embrace it.

Q5. Based on the article, what is the most likely reason daily-wage laborers have left Indian cities?

Answer: B

The article states that 'many daily wage labourers, struggling with the high black market rates, have left the cities altogether.' The inference is that the cost of basic necessities like cooking fuel became unaffordable. Option D is not supported – the article focuses on LPG, not electricity rationing for factories.

Q6. What can be inferred about why only 5 percent of Indian homes have piped gas?

Answer: C

The article presents the 5 percent figure as context for India's vulnerability – the country depends overwhelmingly on portable cylinders rather than fixed infrastructure. This implies a legacy of underinvestment in pipelines. Option B is fabricated and not supported by the text.

Q7. What is the author's tone when quoting the oil minister's statement that India 'remains an oasis of energy security'?

Answer: C

By placing the minister's optimistic quote near the end of an article filled with evidence of severe shortages, panic buying, and government raids on hoarders, the author creates an implicit contrast that reads as skeptical. The tone is not openly hostile (D), but the juxtaposition speaks volumes.

Q8. Why does the author open the article with a personal anecdote about a shrunken dosa?

Answer: B

The dosa anecdote serves as a narrative hook, grounding a complex story about energy geopolitics in a vivid, human-scale moment. It makes readers feel the crisis before understanding it. Option A misreads the purpose entirely – this is not a food review.

Q9. The Bernstein analysts' statement that 'electrification is no longer an option' most likely means which of the following?

Answer: B

In context, 'no longer an option' means electrification is no longer optional – it's now imperative. The analysts are arguing that India must diversify away from imported fossil fuels. Option A reverses the meaning; the analysts are advocating for electrification, not against it.

Q10. How does India's LPG crisis connect to the broader global pattern of energy shocks reshaping national policy?

Answer: B

The article explicitly draws a parallel to India's earlier disruption around Russian oil and quotes analysts arguing the crisis demands electrification. This fits the historical pattern where energy shocks – from the 1973 oil embargo to Europe's post-2022 pivot – catalyze structural energy transitions. Option C contradicts the article's point that India is now accelerating solar, nuclear, and electrification.