

The Desperate Downward Spiral of U.S. Policy in the Persian Gulf

Washington's military campaign against Iran entered its fifth month with a fourth consecutive night of strikes on 14 July, targeting Iranian coastal defence systems, missile and drone sites, and maritime capabilities around Abu Musa, Bandar Abbas, Bushehr, Chahbahar, Jask and Konarak. President Trump announced that his Gulf-state allies would now have to pay the US for protection, which is odd as the US cannot protect even its own bases in the Gulf and its soldiers are scattered and hiding in fear in civilian accommodations. On 13 July, Trump put in writing that the United States would "reinstate" a naval blockade on Iranian ports and impose a 20 percent fee on all commercial ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz to compensate the U.S. for providing security. This claim to extraterritorial authority over an international waterway, a reversal of U.S. claims to support freedom of navigation, was walked back the following day in the face of international shock and ridicule. Iran's Revolutionary Guard responded to continued U.S. strikes with attacks on U.S. military facilities in Bahrain, Jordan and Kuwait, as well as two tankers associated with the United Arab Emirates, killing one mariner and wounding eight others. Washington's justification of its campaign as a defence of freedom of navigation sits uncomfortably with its unilateral assertion of control over the strait and its imposition of fees on global commerce. This contradiction reveals the coercive logic underpinning U.S. strategic policy, which prioritises American prerogatives over international law and regional stability.

NATO Pledges in the Name of Peace to Prolong the Ukraine War as Large-Scale Missile and Drone Strikes Continue

Russia and Ukraine conducted reciprocal large-scale attacks overnight on 13-14 July, with both sides reporting casualties and infrastructure damage. Ukrainian authorities reported that Russian forces launched 135 drones and 10 missiles, most of them ballistic, striking Kyiv and critical infrastructure in the Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zhytomyr and Odesa regions. Ukrainian authorities stated that seven people were injured in the Kharkiv region and three in the Chernihiv region, while 16 facilities in Kyiv were damaged, including a school and a business. Russian authorities reported that their air defence systems intercepted numerous Ukrainian drones, with the Russian Defence Ministry stating that Ukrainian forces suffered substantial losses across all fronts. Figures from both sides cannot be independently verified and differ substantially. President Zelenskyy, who visited Paris on 13 July for meetings with President Macron and the "Coalition of the Willing" conference of approximately 25 European leaders, called for greater pressure on Russia and the adoption of the EU's 21st sanctions package. The conflict, now in its fifth year, traces its origins to NATO's persistent eastward expansion toward Russia's borders in the hope of draining Russian resources and weakening it. While this policy is hurting Russia it is also hurting European economies, devastating Ukraine and risks horrific escalation. For now, Ukrainian civilians continue to bear the heaviest humanitarian cost of European and U.S. policy.

Death of US Senator Lindsey Graham and Political Reactions

US Senator Lindsey Graham died on 11 July at age 71. The Washington DC medical examiner's preliminary finding attributed his death to an aortic dissection caused by arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease. Graham had returned on 10 July from his tenth visit to Ukraine, where he met President Zelenskyy and inspected a drone manufacturing facility. He spoke with President Trump by phone hours before his death, discussing Russia sanctions and Iran policy. President Zelenskyy expressed being "deeply saddened," calling Graham "a true defender of freedom." Iranian media celebrated Graham's death, with one outlet noting he "took his dream of destroying Iran to the grave." While Graham's career exemplified the bipartisan Washington consensus that prioritises military intervention and regime change over diplomacy, a consensus that has contributed to decades of instability in the Middle East and the current conflict with Iran, none have done so with the intense bloodlust expressed by Graham. Many Americans, even, and some in his own Party, expressed the view that he was a bloodthirsty monster who was too happy to sacrifice the lives of Americans for the sake of the Jewish State. His passing exposes the deep polarisation of American political life, with his legacy as a champion of U.S. military hegemony interpreted across starkly divided lines.

Killing of Former U.K. Conservative Minister Ann Widdecombe Shocks Britain

The killing of former Conservative MP and Reform UK politician Ann Widdecombe is being investigated as a "targeted attack," police confirmed on 14 July, with a counter-terrorism investigation running in parallel to the murder inquiry. A 28-year-old white British man from Rotherham, South Yorkshire, originally arrested on suspicion of murder, has been rearrested on suspicion of commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism. Widdecombe, 78, was found dead at her isolated rural home in Haytor, Devon, on 9 July with serious injuries in an attack police believe took place the previous day. Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing, stated that police are "still working to understand the extent of any planning or preparation, and the motivation that sits behind that attack." Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood told the House of Commons that the suspect was not known to the government's Prevent anti-terror scheme. The killing has renewed debate over the safety of elected representatives, following previous attacks on British MPs in recent years. Security arrangements are under review, yet this response addresses symptoms rather than causes. The rising hostility toward public figures occurs within a broader context of political polarisation, economic dislocation and social fragmentation, trends Britain's political class complains about, but has proven incapable of confronting. Indeed, while the political Parties throw blame against each other, they are all guilty of stirring hate and fear. First, it was the Muslims who were targeted and then the list of internal enemies was widened to immigrants, and the list grows ever longer with the far left and far right facing up in Trumpian fashion directly against each other.