



July Periodical

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Abstract — This periodical examines four developments that shaped July across the Middle East, Ukraine, and the transatlantic policy landscape. We open with the U.S. airstrikes against Iran, and the escalation they signal in an already fraught standoff. We then turn to the continued Russian missile strikes on Kyiv throughout the month, and what that persistence of these attacks reveals about the state of the war. We examine the newly signed U.S.-Saudi nuclear cooperation agreement and the last-minute conditions that have complicated its path forward. We close with Spain's FIFA World Cup victory, a rare moment of celebration in a month of tension and uncertainty.

Keywords — Iran airstrikes, Ukraine, Kyiv missile strikes, FIFA World Cup, Spain, US-Saudi Nuclear deal, nuclear nonproliferation

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2026 was a month marked by escalating global conflict alongside exuberant celebrations. US airstrikes against Iran on July 23 escalated an already tense conflict, while ongoing Russian missile strikes on Kyiv throughout the month (July 2nd, 6th, 11th, and 19th) underscored a brutal war with no resolution in sight. Adding to the geopolitical anxiety, a new uncertainty, a newly signed US-Saudi nuclear agreement (July 22) quickly became complicated after last minute conditions. Amid this suspense, Spain's FIFA

World Cup win on July 19 offered a bright spot, a shared moment of joy in the midst of the month's heavy headlines. But Spain's catastrophic Andalusia wildfire (beginning July 9) highlighted the growing human and environmental costs of extreme climate conditions. Overall, July's emotional tone, driven by unresolved military and diplomatic tension, highlighted global unease. Despite tensions, the World Cup provided the world with much-needed relief.

II. POINTED SUMMARY

- **US-Iran Escalation:** Tensions between the United States and Iran escalated into direct military conflict after Iran launched ballistic missiles at US forces following weeks of regional attacks. US retaliatory strikes, joined by Saudi Arabia, are now heightening fears in the global community of a prolonged regional war. The lengthening of any war in the region risks worsening disputes over the Strait of Hormuz that continue to send oil prices soaring.
- **Russian Missile Strikes on Kyiv:** Russia launched repeated missile and drone

attacks on Kyiv, prompting renewed calls for Western support as the US Senate advanced tougher sanctions on Russia.

- **US-Saudi Nuclear Agreement:** The US signed a civilian nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia, but concerns over nuclear proliferation and congressional approval leave its future uncertain.
- **2026 FIFA World Cup:** The 2026 FIFA World Cup ended with record success; however, there is renewed criticism of FIFA's governance and leadership that sparked strong debate over the organization's future.
- **Spain's Wildfires:** Extreme heat, prolonged drought, and strong winds fueled one of the country's deadliest wildfires in recent history, killing 13 people, destroying thousands of hectares of land, and forcing mass evacuations.

A. US-Iran Escalation

The conflict between the US and Iran has now escalated into a major war this July. The violence peaked when a drone attack on a military base in Jordan killed three US service members. After a brief pause meant to give peace talks a chance, Iran broke the diplomatic lull on July 28th, launching a direct, surprise ballistic missile assault targeting US troops¹. While the American forces were successful in shooting down the missiles, this aggressive move has now ended most hope of peace and has pushed the region as a whole into war.

In response to these attacks, the US launched massive retaliatory airstrikes. For the first time,

¹ Associated Press. "US military identifies third soldier killed in Iranian attack on Jordan base." *The Guardian*, 22 July 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jul/21/us-military-third-service-member-jordan-attack>. Accessed 31 July 2026.

Saudi Arabia joined the US military to strike an Iran-backed group. On July 29th², President Trump ordered a heavy wave of retaliatory bombings, hitting dozens of Iranian military sites and island infrastructure bases.

At the center of this two-week battle is a fierce disagreement over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for global oil. While Iran, threatening closures, has demanded complete control over who travels through the strait, the US and its allies are refusing to concede it. This has since caused massive economic panic, pushing global prices for oil well above \$90 a barrel³ and causing stock markets to plunge. On July 31st, President Trump has warned that even harsher strikes are coming this weekend unless Iran backs down, while Tehran is preparing its forces for a protracted war.

B. Russian Missiles on Kyiv

A series of militaristic escalations have been initiated by the Russian Federation on the Ukrainian capital. The Kremlin has slowly shifted its narrative from naming its invasion of Ukraine a "special military operation" to now calling it a full-scale war, with Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov blaming support from the West for this transition.⁴ This change in rhetoric isn't a long-delayed admission of truth either, it is a

² Gritten, David. "Saudi Arabia joins US in strikes on Iran-backed militias in Iraq." *BBC*, 29 July 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70g6y24d76o>. Accessed 31 July 2026.

³ Lee, Justina. "Brent oil jumps back above \$90 after Trump threatens to hit Iran hard." *CNBC*, 29 July 2026, <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/07/29/oil-prices-today-brent-wti-iran-us-hormuz.html>. Accessed 31 July 2026.

⁴ Kanyshai Butun. 2026. "Kremlin Says Direct Western Involvement Turned Ukraine Operation Into 'Full-Scale War.'" *Anadolu. Anadolu Ajansı*. July 7, 2026. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/kremlin-says-direct-western-involvement-turned-ukraine-operation-into-full-scale-war/3989632>.

calculated move to allow the Russian government more leeway in expanding mobilization and justifying economic strain.

The wave of assaults began on July 2nd, when Russia bombarded Kyiv with dozens of missiles and hundreds of drone attacks overnight.⁵ As families sought cover in bomb shelters, the attacks destroyed about 130 buildings, killing 27 civilians and injuring more than 100. The destruction continued on the 11th when Russia launched another combined missile and drone attack that left at least two dead and 19 wounded.⁶ Another overnight offensive targeted the Ukrainian capital on the 19th, killing at least one and leaving 19 injured.⁷ Ukraine responded by neutralizing incoming missiles and drones while rescue operations were promptly deployed.

Russia claims to have launched said assaults in retaliation to Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil refineries and infrastructure while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urges partners to deliver “more than words” and pointed out the damages caused by delayed aid packages.⁸ The United States has become more sympathetic to

Ukraine despite seemingly sour relations between President Trump and President Zelensky, with the Senate voting 83 to 12⁹ to advance a bill that would sanction Russian leaders and the energy sector to pressure President Putin into bringing an end to his invasion.

C. U.S. Nuclear Agreement with Saudi Arabia

On July 22, 2026, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed a nuclear cooperation deal (“123 agreement”).¹⁰ It gives Saudi Arabia a path to enrich its own nuclear fuel and commits it to buying US reactors and fuel supply.¹¹ The day afterwards, Trump announced a new condition on social media; Saudi Arabia must first normalize relations with Israel before the deal proceeds.¹² The two countries have been negotiating for years, spanning from Trump’s first term through the Biden administration. Under Biden, the nuclear deal was conceived as part of a broader package that would include Saudi-Israel normalization, but the Hamas attacks on October

⁵Gretsky, Will, Chris Boccia, Jack Moore, Britt Clennett, Dada Jovanovic, and Kevin Shalvey. 2026. “27 Dead, More Than 100 Injured in Kyiv as Ukraine Hit With ‘Massive’ Russian Strike.” ABC News. July 2, 2026. <https://abcnews.com/International/kyiv-fire-missile-drone-attack-russian-strike-mayor/story?id=134395585>.

⁶Reuters. 2026. “Two Dead, 19 Wounded as Russia Strikes Ukraine With Missiles, Drones.” NBC News, July 11. <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/ukraine/two-dead-wounded-russia-strikes-ukraine-missiles-drones-rcna453306>.

⁷RFE/RL’s Ukrainian Service. 2026. “Russia Launches Major Missile, Drone Attack on Kyiv as Ukraine Hits Black Sea Tankers.” RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, RFE/RL, July 19. <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-kyiv-russia-zelenskyy-ballistic-missile-attacks/33806851.html>.

⁸Neha Mustafi, Kay Johnson, Kylie MacLellan, et al. 2026. “Russia Launches Deadly Missile and Drone Attack Against Kyiv – as It Happened.” Reuters, July 3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/ukraine-russia-war/live-russia-attacks-ukraines-kyiv-with-drones-missiles-2026-07-02/>.

⁹Ewing, Giselle Ruhyyih. 2026. “Senators Vote to Advance Russia Sanctions Bill in Graham’s Name.” Politico, Politico, July 29. <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/07/28/senators-advance-russia-sanctions-bill-lindsey-graham-01014368>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Energy, “United States and Saudi Arabia Reach Historic Nuclear Cooperation Agreement,” July 22, 2026, <https://www.energy.gov/articles/united-states-and-saudi-arabia-reach-historic-nuclear-cooperation-agreement>.

¹¹ Evan Halper, “U.S. Signs Nuclear Deal with Saudi Arabia That Gives It Path to Enriching Fuel,” *Washington Post*, July 22, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/07/22/us-nuclear-deal-with-saudis-includes-path-enriching-fuel/>.

¹² “Trump Says Saudi Arabia's Nuclear Deal Hinges on the Kingdom Normalizing Israel Ties,” *NPR*, July 23, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/23/nx-s1-5904327/us-saudi-arabia-iran>.

7th, 2023 and the ensuing war have derailed that possibility.¹³

There are many risks that come with this agreement. A primary hazard is proliferation, congressional documents and arms-control groups warn Saudi Arabia may gain uranium enrichment capabilities under the deal, raising proliferation concerns amid the ongoing US-Iran nuclear standoff. The apparent lack of enrichment restrictions has drawn concern that it opens a pathway to weapons development, especially since Crown Prince MBS has said Saudi Arabia would pursue a bomb if Iran obtained one.¹⁴ Congress has 90 days to review the deal and pass a resolution to block it, but that would need a two-thirds majority to override an expected presidential veto.¹⁵ The administration frames the deal as historic cooperation that brings American nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia “with a firm commitment to nonproliferation.” Secretary of State Rubio has said the US won’t sign any deal that risks proliferation. Nevertheless, there has been criticism from congressional democrats, Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) has criticized the administration for allowing uranium enrichment that “could enable Riyadh to produce nuclear material and a nuclear bomb,” warning it could inflame Iran-Saudi and US-Iran tensions. Consequently, this deal is far from resolved. While the deal is signed, it is not yet locked in: it

¹³ "U.S. Reaches Landmark Nuclear Deal with Saudi Arabia," *Time*, July 23, 2026, <https://time.com/article/2026/07/23/us-saudi-arabia-nuclear-deal-explainer/>.

¹⁴ "Trump Administration Signs Commercial Nuclear Deal with Saudi Arabia," *NPR*, July 22, 2026.

¹⁵ "Republican Lawmaker Breaks Ranks with Trump over U.S.-Saudi Arabia Nuclear Deal," *Time*, July 27, 2026, <https://time.com/article/2026/07/27/republican-senator-ken-nyeddy-breaks-ranks-trump-us-saudi-arabia-nuclear-deal/>

still needs to be formally transmitted to Congress to start the 90-day clock, and Trump’s surprise Israel-normalization condition has thrown the near-term path into uncertainty. Saudi Arabia hasn’t publicly responded to that condition, and analysts expect a period of quiet, wait-and-see diplomacy on both sides before it’s clear whether the deal actually moves forward.

D. The Fifa World Cup

The 2026 FIFA World Cup concluded on July 19, becoming the largest tournament in FIFA history, featuring 48 teams across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. While the competition was widely praised for its attendance and commercial success, it also reignited longstanding concerns surrounding FIFA’s governance. During and after the tournament, FIFA President Gianni Infantino faced mounting criticism over allegations of opaque decision-making and financial mismanagement. Critics accused FIFA of prioritizing commercial interests over transparency, while several football confederations questioned the organization’s governance and accountability.¹⁶

The controversy intensified following Infantino’s proposal to transfer a stake in FIFA’s commercial rights to a private investment group, prompting accusations that the organization was sacrificing the long-term integrity of international football for financial gain. UEFA, CONCACAF, and the Asian Football Confederation criticized the lack of consultation, with some European football associations threatening to boycott future FIFA

¹⁶ Associated Press. “FIFA’s Infantino Sets Deadline for \$20M Offer to Members in World Cup Investor Plan.” *AP News*, July 29, 2026. <https://apnews.com/article/world-cup-fifa-investors-kushner-infantino-uefa-e66dc5d5f9907f9ea5323716b7e49ca2>. (*AP News*)

competitions should the proposal proceed. Supporters argue that the plan would generate significant revenue for member associations and expand investment in global football, while opponents warn it concentrates power within FIFA's leadership and weakens institutional oversight. As debates over governance continue and opposition to Infantino's leadership grows ahead of the 2027 FIFA presidential election, the controversy remains unresolved and may very well reshape the future administration of international football.¹⁷

E. Spain's Wildfires

On July 9, 2026, a catastrophic wildfire ignited near Los Gallardos in Spain's Almería province, rapidly spreading across the Andalusia region due to extreme heat (nearing 40°C), prolonged drought, and strong winds. The fire became one of the deadliest in Spain's recent history, killing at least 13 people, destroying 7,000 hectares of forests and farmland, and forcing the evacuation of over 1,000 residents. The blaze overwhelmed local communities within hours, with flames fanned by inadequate forest management and climate change-induced dry conditions. Emergency responders, including hundreds of firefighters, military personnel, and helicopters, were deployed to combat the fire, but the scale of destruction exposed critical weaknesses in Spain's disaster preparedness and response systems. Investigations into the fire's cause are ongoing, with human activity such as agricultural burning, discarded cigarettes, or arson likely contributing to its ignition.

¹⁷ Reuters. "Infantino Calls Plan to Sell World Cup Stake a Proposal, 'Not an Obligation.'" Reuters, July 29, 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/infantino-calls-plan-sell-world-cup-stake-proposal-not-an-obligation-2026-07-29/>. (Reuters)

The consequences of the wildfire have been severe and far-reaching. Beyond the tragic loss of life, the disaster has caused massive environmental damage, including the destruction of protected habitats and farmland, which will have long-term economic repercussions for local agriculture. The fire has also displaced communities, disrupted livelihoods, and strained emergency services. Policy responses have varied: environmental groups and opposition politicians are calling for stricter land management policies, reforestation programs, and investment in firefighting infrastructure, while the Spanish government has emphasized short term relief efforts and temporary bans on outdoor activities in high risk areas. However, critics argue that decades of neglect in forest management and climate adaptation have left Spain vulnerable to such disasters. As of now, the fire is contained but not fully resolved, with lingering risks of new outbreaks due to persistent drought conditions. The disaster has reignited debates over Spain's climate resilience and long term policy reforms, but no comprehensive solution has been implemented yet. The situation remains unresolved, with calls for urgent action to prevent future tragedies.

III. CONCLUSION

July has seen escalations in global conflicts including the Russian-Ukrainian war and the U.S. - Iran conflict, controversial developments in transnational deals between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and possible investigations for alleged corruption against the FIFA president, and much more. Tense global events did not dampen the worldwide celebrations as the quadrennial World Cup, historic in its size, setting, and success, came to a close. With uncertainty looming, August may bring further intensification of international conflicts and

scandal, however, increased cooperation between and among nations can bring about a starting point to which global tensions may eventually dissipate.

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