

MEI Weekly.



View of protests in Beirut, Lebanon. The protests have grown to be the largest and most diverse since the country's independence. Photo: Shahrar Araboghlian, shared on Wikimedia Commons.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

Energy Politics in the Gulf

The dominance of the Gulf countries over world crude production is set to continue for the foreseeable future. But after a century of growth, global primary energy demand will plateau in a decade. How will the energy transition impact energy politics in the Gulf? Join us on 30 October for the MEI101 Lecture as Mr Phillippe Rose discusses changes in domestic institutions, the risk of instability, and the possibility for the region to break free from its reliance on oil and gas.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Lebanon Protests Unite Sects

The largest protests since independence have united sects to demand a complete overhaul of Lebanon's political system. The reforms proposed on Monday by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, including halving the salaries of officials and addressing dysfunction in the electricity sector, have been met with derision. "It's not about cutting expenses here and there," said Dr Nasser Yassin from the American University of Beirut. "People are now demanding major change."



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands following six hours of talks on Tuesday. Photo: Official Website of the President of Russia.

Russia and Turkey Announce Plan for Syria

Russia and Turkey will take joint control over a vast swath of formerly Kurdish-held territory in northern Syria, as the United States-brokered ceasefire comes to an end. On Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss how regional players would divide control. The change strengthens the rapid expansion of Russian influence in Syria at the expense of the US and its Kurdish former allies. With the US increasingly removing itself from the region, Russia has emerged as the dominant force in Syria.

Israel's Netanyahu Fails to Form Government

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu abandoned his latest attempt to form a government on Monday. However, his chief rival, Mr Benny Gantz, has no clear path to assembling the required majority within 28 days. Arguing that 80 per cent of Israelis agree on 80 per cent of the issues, Mr Gantz has promised to seek a broad government with conservative partners by working "from the centre out". If he does not succeed, Israel may be forced to undergo an unprecedented third election.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Russia Urges Kurdish Fighters to Withdraw

Russia has given Kurdish forces up to next Tuesday (29 October) evening to withdraw from the Turkey-Syria border or risk getting "steamrolled" by the Turkish army. The military police will help facilitate the withdrawal of Kurdish forces. There is no response yet from the Kurdish fighters about the Russia-Turkey agreement.

India's Developing Ties with Saudi Arabia

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is due to visit Saudi Arabia next week, following a visit in February, when the two countries reached an agreement to set up a Strategic Partnership Council and increase cooperation on counterterrorism. India also recently condemned Turkey for the 9 October attack against the Kurds in northeastern Syria.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: Saudi-Iran ties have followed a pattern determined by the world order and the presence, or absence, of regional powers, says Dr Emir Hadzikedunic, Bosnia and Herzegovina's ambassador to Malaysia. This historical pattern can help us divine the future track of Saudi-Iran relations, explains the former ambassador to Iran in the latest MEI Insight paper.

<https://nus.edu/2Pirc1N>

A group of Russian hackers piggy-backed on an Iranian cyber-espionage operation to deploy its own malicious code to target organisations in at least 20 different countries in the last 18 months, said American and British security officials on Monday. Though they were masquerading as attackers from the Islamic Republic, there is no evidence of collusion.

<https://bit.ly/2qHPOTZ>

TWITTER: How can Singapore become a start-up nation like Israel? Read an edited transcript of Professor Eugene Kandel's speech published on TODAYonline. Prof Kandel was this year's speaker at the S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture last Thursday (17 October).

<https://bit.ly/2qEkk0N>



Get unique insights from MEI and keep up-to-date with hot news and fresh perspectives:



Can't make it to our events? Listen at your own time!

