

# MEI Weekly.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan showing King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia the way after the group photo at the 13th Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit at the Istanbul Congress Center in 2016. Photo: Ozan Kose / AFP.

## WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

**READ:** In the latest edition of MEI Insights, Dr Gawdat Bahgat examines the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the non-Arab Middle Eastern powers, mainly Iran, Israel and Turkey. He highlights the various factors which hinder reconciliation between them like geopolitics, Turkey's support of transnational movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and a lack of domestic support in Saudi Arabia to reconcile Saudi–Israel relations. Read the full article [here](#).

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** Think Iran is not a tourist destination due to how it is often portrayed in the media? Ms Mandy Tay proves everyone wrong with her life-changing solo journey around Islamic Republic. Missed the MEI Salon talk where she shared a very different side to Iran? Catch up via our event summary, event video or podcast [here](#).



## WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

### Iran's Covid-19 Death Toll Hits Record High

The daily Covid-19 death toll in Iran has reached a record high on Tuesday (28 July), with officials scrambling to handle the recent surge in cases which followed the lifting of several lockdown restrictions in April. Although Iran's experience is similar to other countries which are struggling to contain a second wave of the pandemic after reopening their economies, it is in a particularly tight spot due to the immense economic pressure it is under. As of now, the state is hesitant to reimpose lockdown rules, but the rise in cases means that option is on the cards.



US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson meeting Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj at the US Department of State in Washington, DC, in 2017. Amid growing tensions between Russia and the US, Libya has become one of the key fronts upon which the two superpowers battle for influence in the Middle East. Photo: US Department of State via Flickr.

### Oil Grab in Libya Fuels Russia–US Tensions

Since June, armed fighters linked to a Russian firm with ties to the Russian government have moved in to secure Libya's largest oil facilities. This has triggered a harsh response from the US, where the Treasury Department cited Russian involvement in Libya for a new round of sanctions applied in July to a Russian businessman with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The series of events have worsened relations between US and Russia that were already unfriendly to begin with, and goes to show how Libya is increasingly becoming significant as a front in the battle between the two superpowers for influence in the Middle East.

### Iran's Fake US Aircraft Carrier on the Move

Satellite images have shown that Iran's giant fake US aircraft carrier, which is usually docked in Bandar Abbas, has been moving around the Persian Gulf within the last few days. The Islamic Republic usually deploys the ship in its naval drills to show that Iranian forces are capable of attacking US carriers should they need to. Though not as big as a real US aircraft carrier, the massive ship could still pose threats if it breaches naval territories in the Gulf outside of Iranian control. Hence its recent moves have been viewed as an attempt to intimidate the international community.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### The Japanese View on Co-operation between Middle East and Asia in a Post Covid-19 Environment

The Middle East, as the world's biggest oil-producing region, and Asia, as the world's largest growing consumer of energy, have good reasons to co-operate. In this talk, Mr Masakazu Toyoda, chairman and CEO of the Institute of Energy Economics in Japan (IEEJ), aims to explain how both sides could benefit by keeping oil prices balanced and predictable in the post Covid-19 world. Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **5 August from 4pm to 5.30pm**. Registration is free and all are welcome. [Click here for more details now!](#)



### ME101 2020 Lecture Series

The ME101 Lecture Series is back for its fifth iteration this year! The series will feature 12 free lectures, each focusing on a different aspect of the Middle East, to help participants gain a fundamental understanding of some of the key issues that affect the region. Participants who attain 70 per cent attendance will receive a certificate of attendance at the end of the series. MEI Chairman Bilahari Kausikan will kick off the opening lecture on 13 August. Lectures will run every Wednesday via Zoom from 5pm to 6.30pm, with the final session on 29 October. [Click here for more details now!](#)



## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Lebanon to Impose Two-week Lockdown

Starting on Thursday (30 July), Lebanon will be imposing a two-week lockdown after the country saw the number of new Covid-19 cases spiking to the highest since February. The Lebanese health minister criticised the lack of community discipline for the resurgence of the coronavirus. The total lockdown of the country will be from 30 July to 3 August and from 6 August to 10 August, which will include the days of Eid Al-Adha.



### Qatar to Reopen Borders and Allow Travel

Qatar will be re-opening its borders on this Sunday (1 August) to foreign travellers and will allow citizens and permanent residents to travel in and out of the country. This is part of the third phase in Qatar's four-phase re-opening plan, which is supposed to reach completion on 1 September. Arrivals into Qatar from "low-risk countries" will be required to take a coronavirus test at the airport and sign a formal pledge to adhere to a week-long quarantine at home. Travellers from countries that are not on the safe list will have to obtain a "virus-free certificate" from a recognised Covid-19 testing facility no more than 48 hours before travelling and adhere to the home quarantine policy upon reaching Qatar.

## FOLLOW US FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!



## CAN'T MAKE IT TO OUR EVENTS? LISTEN AT YOUR OWN TIME!

