

MEI Weekly.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on 29 April 2018. US Department of State via Flickr.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: Writing for Cambridge Middle East and North Africa Forum, MEI Research Fellow Clemens Chay explores how the stateless Bidoon community may be the answer to filling jobs in the Gulf that nationals are reluctant to undertake, highlighting the need for a degree of integration and provision of basic services for the marginalised Bidoon population.

READ: Saudi Arabia has ambitions of becoming the regional hegemon in the Middle East, but lacks the power and legitimacy for this role, writes Dr F Gregory Gause, III, a professor of international affairs at Texas A&M University in this latest issue of Insight. Read the full article here.

READ: In the latest MEI's Heard @ the Souq, Dr N Janardhan traces the chronology of the UAE's relationship with Israel, and how the recent formalisation of UAE–Israel ties align with the Emiratis' push for a diversified foreign policy vision that prioritises pragmatism which can boost its status as a rising power in a competitive regional theatre.

WATCH, READ & LISTEN: What are the costs of participation in the global art world? In this week's MEI Salon, Associate Professor Anneka Lenssen highlights recent debates about the value of art in Syria both before and after the 2011 uprisings, regime reprisals and devastating wars. Revisit the dialogue here.

WATCH, READ & LISTEN: What are the implications of Iranian and Turkish ambitions on the region and the global world order? In this week's MEI01 lecture, MEI Research Fellows Asif Shuja and Serkan Yolacan analyse the visions and capabilities of Turkey and Iran, their cooperation with Russia and political reach into Asia. Revisit the discussion here.

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Pompeo Mixes Diplomacy with Partisan Politics on Middle Eastern Trip

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who planned to use the views of Jerusalem's Old City as a backdrop for his speech to the Republican National Convention, has come under fire for mixing diplomacy with partisan politics. Mr Pompeo visited Israel on Monday (24 August) as part of a five-day Middle Eastern tour to discuss regional peace and security. He also visited UAE, Sudan and Bahrain in an effort to further reconcile Arab–Israeli ties.

UAE and Greece Hold Joint Military Drill

The UAE sent four F-16 fighter jets to Crete for joint training with the Greek military amid mounting maritime dispute over Turkish gas and oil exploration in the eastern Mediterranean. The deployment took place after the UAE announced its normalisation of ties with Israel on 13 August, a deal that angered Ankara. Israel maintains broad cooperation with Greece and has participated in numerous military exercises, following the worsening of Jerusalem's relations with Turkey. Abu Dhabi's move marked the latest sign of renewed regional opposition to Turkish ambitions in the Mediterranean.



Turkey's *Oruc Reis*, a seismic research vessel which searches for energy reserves, docking at Haydarpasa port on 23 August amid tensions with Greece and the rest of the EU. Photo: Ozan Kose /AFP.

Iraq's Energy Rapprochement with the Gulf

With American backing, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are pushing to connect their electricity generation grids, which would mark a major reconciliation between the two parties. Deteriorating relations between Saudi Arabia and Iraq were exacerbated by the latter's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which set the stage for the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The linkup would also eliminate Iraq's energy dependence on Iran, altering regional dynamics. To facilitate the rapprochement, US officials have facilitated meetings in recent months between Iraqi electricity and energy officials and counterparts in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other states. Besides energy, Baghdad and Riyadh are also discussing the building of a US\$1 billion, 100,000-seat sports stadium in Iraq, which would be financially and logistically supported by the kingdom.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

MEI Salon: Build a Connection with Arab Culture

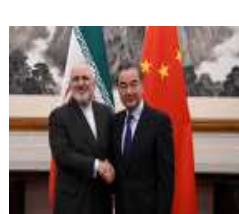
Keen to dive into the fascinating world of Arab culture? In this episode of MEI Salon series, Arabic instructor and educator Ms Zeinab Hendawi will look at the cultural diversity of the Arab world that is depicted in their customs, manner of dress, architecture, variety of food and political structures. Despite these differences, Arabs share many things in common, as reflected throughout all aspects of their life and language.



Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on 2 September from 5pm to 7pm. Registration is free and all are welcome. Click here for more details now!

ME 101: Geopolitics in the Middle East | China

Can the dragon tame the Middle East or will the Middle East tame the dragon? In the next ME 101 lecture, MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino will be exploring the growing Chinese geopolitical influence in the region, which extends beyond energy deals.



Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on 3 September from 5pm to 6.30pm. Registration is free and all are welcome. Check out <https://nus.edu/3gCwRXO> for more details now!

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Israeli Delegation to Visit UAE Next Week

Following the historic US-brokered deal, top American officials are set to escort an Israeli delegation for their first trip to UAE on Monday (31 August). They will fly on board an Israeli airliner directly from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi in the first-ever commercial flight between the two countries. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told *Al Jazeera* that the visit aims to discuss ways to facilitate cooperation between the two Arab states in sectors such as aviation and tourism, trade, finance, health, energy and security.

Saudi and UAE to Begin Distance Learning

With more than 297,000 and 64,000 Covid-19 cases in Saudi Arabia and UAE respectively, alternative learning arrangements will be introduced to students for the new academic term which begins on 30 August. Students at Saudi Arabia's public schools will be educated via distance learning while parents in UAE would be able to choose whether they would like their children to attend physical or online classes.



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