

# MEI Weekly.



(From left) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump, Bahrain Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan waving from the Truman Balcony at the White House on Tuesday (15 September). This came after they attended the signing of the Abraham Accords where Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates officially recognise Israel, normalising relations between the Jewish and Arab states. Photo: Saul Loeb / AFP.

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

**READ:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made no secret of his intentions to assume leadership of the region. In this article, International Relations Professor Henry J Barkey examines how Turkey's ambitions and revisionist policies have enabled the Israel-UAE peace agreement.

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** In last week's ME101 lecture, Mr Tommy Steiner explored the diminishing American strategic footprint in the Middle East and the implications that has on its allies and adversaries. He highlighted a combination of factors, such as the superpower rivalry, that might rekindle America's strategic appetite in the region. Revisit the discussion [here](#).

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** In MEI's fourth Salon event, Ms Zeinab Hendawi, a native Syrian teacher of Arabic as a foreign language, gave an eye-opening crash course on Arab culture, touching on the topic of taboos in the society as well as the Arabic language. Missed the insightful presentation? Catch up [here](#).

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** In a dialogue moderated by MEI Research Fellow Clemens Chay, a panel of experts discussed how other Arab states might respond to the recent peace agreement between the UAE and Israel, and what solutions are left for the Palestinians. Revisit the dialogue [here](#).

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

### Bahrain & UAE Officially Recognise Israel

On Tuesday (15 September), Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel signed the Abraham Accords to establish diplomatic ties in a historic ceremony hosted by US President Donald Trump at the White House. The US-brokered event saw Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signing agreements with Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani. The deals make them the third and fourth Arab states to take such steps to neutralise ties with the Jewish state, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. Mr Netanyahu hopes that other Arab states will soon follow suit while Palestinians condemn the normalisation of relations.

### US-Qatar Summit Addresses Regional Spat

American and Qatari officials met on Monday (14 September) at the two-day US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue held to address regional conflict between the Middle Eastern country and its neighbours and to strengthen one of America's relationships in the volatile region. In the past three years, Qatar has seen much of its own trade and travel blocked by its Arab neighbours, which has restricted Qatari pilgrims' visits to Mecca, according to Deputy Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. Analysts are hopeful that one possible outcome of the dialogue could be the US persuading Saudi Arabia to end its ban on Qatari flights over its airspace.



Qatari Deputy Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at an event hosted by the Chatham House in London on 5 July 2017. Mr Al Thani was one of the participants at Monday's dialogue with the US. Photo by Chatham House via Wikimedia Commons.

### Iran Considering a Plot to Kill US Ambassador

American intelligence officials have reported an Iranian plot to assassinate US ambassador to South Africa, Ms Lana Marks, in retaliation for the killing of General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated by a US drone strike in January this year. US President Donald Trump claimed that after Soleimani's assassination, Iran has been plotting attacks on American diplomatic missions but officials doubted this. Analysts warned that this plot, if executed, could dramatically exacerbate already serious tensions between the two states and create enormous pressure on Mr Trump to strike back.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### Privatising the State Monopoly of Violence from the Middle East and Beyond

Since the second Iraq conflict, the growing presence of private military contractors has generated the need for effective public and private participation and re-statement of existing international law regarding the contractors' oversight, enforcement and accountability. In this MEI public talk, experts Dr Sean McFate, Mr Jamie Williamson and Mr Doug Brooks will discuss how mercenaries and private military companies are changing the rules of war and peacebuilding.



Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **21 September** from 7.30pm to 9pm. Registration is free and all are welcome. [Click here for more details now!](#)

### Iran-China Relations: Separating Fact from Fiction

The leaking in recent months of an alleged 25-year economic and military cooperation between China and Iran has sparked intense debate among Western and Middle Eastern policymakers. Two Middle East scholars, Dr James M Dorsey and Dr Asif Shuja, will discuss the two different schools of thought that have emerged in the debate about what is real and what is shadow boxing in reports about the deal. In doing so, they will provide a basis for discussion of Iran's and China's perspectives on creating a regional security architecture that could reduce tension and ensure that regional conflicts do not spin out of control.

Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **30 September** at 4pm. Registration is free and all are welcome. [Click here for more details now!](#)

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Egypt to Allow Events in Open Air Spaces

Egypt is set to allow wedding ceremonies and cultural events to be held in open-air venues from next Monday (21 September), after the banning of them in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Funeral prayers could also resume at mosques with outdoor yards, but not at normal prayer times.



### US to Reimpose Iran Sanctions Next Week

The US will return to the UN to reimpose sanctions on Iran next week, according to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, after the UN Security Council rejected American demand to extend arms embargo on the Islamic Republic beyond its expiration in October. Mr Pompeo also said that sanctions on Iran will snap back at midnight GMT on Sunday (20 September).

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