

MEI Weekly.



Saudi Arabia's King Salman giving a rare address to the UN General Assembly via a pre-recorded message which was aired on Wednesday (23 September).

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: In the latest MEI Insight, Dr Hadrien Dubucs examines the sustainability of the United Arab Emirates' economic model of development, which is heavily reliant on foreigners. In light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the demographic imbalance, temporariness of stay and fragility of residency status of these sojourners, who make up 90 per cent of the population, have been thrown into the spotlight.

WATCH, READ & LISTEN: In last week's ME101 Lecture, Mr Kevjn Lim explored the evolution of Israel's regional geopolitical position from waging wars of survival against its Arab neighbours to fostering mutual cooperation and normalisation. He also analysed the current axes of cooperation and competition, against the backdrop of the elusive Israeli–Palestinian peace plan. Revisit the discussion [here](#).

WATCH, READ & LISTEN: Dr Sean McFate, Mr Jamie Williamson and Mr Doug Brooks discussed how mercenaries and private military companies are changing the rules of war and peacebuilding in Monday's webinar. Missed the session? Catch up via this link [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

King Salman Slams Iran in UN Speech

In his first address at the 75th UN General Assembly on Wednesday (23 September), Saudi Arabia's King Salman denounced Iran's "aggressive" policy and called for a comprehensive solution to address the Islamic republic's expansionist policy, which he charged has undermined international peace and security. While he spoke in support of the Trump administration's efforts to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, he conspicuously said nothing about the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, which two close Saudi regional allies, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, had done in recent weeks.

Turkey & Greece Attempt to Resolve Disputes

Turkey is ready to resume talks with Greece through a regional meeting to settle the disputes over maritime boundaries and rights to exploit oil and gas resources, announced Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office on Tuesday (22 September). This statement came amid rising tensions between the two neighbouring states which have been at loggerheads over energy exploitation rights in the eastern Mediterranean. It is not clear when and how the talks would begin. Greek–Turkish talks to resolve disputes were last held in 2016.



US Air Force company grade officers taking their oath of office at a ceremony to mark their transfer into the Space Force on 1 September. The Space Force is the United States' newest service in more than 70 years. Photo: US Air Force.

US Space Force Deployed on Arabian Peninsula

The newly formed United States Space Force stationed a squadron of 20 airmen at Qatar's Al-Udeid Air Base in its first foreign deployment earlier this month. This deployment follows months of escalating tensions between the United States and Iran, which was first ignited by President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear accord. According to Colonel Todd Benson, director of Space Force at Al-Udeid, the deployment is in response to an aggressive preparation by certain states to extend conflict into space.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

Iran–China Relations: Telling Fact from Fiction

The recent leak of an alleged 25-year economic and military agreement between China and Iran has brought about intense debates on the possible changes in the balance of power in the Middle East. Join MEI scholars, Dr James Dorsey and Dr Asif Shuja, as they dissect the different camps in the debate and discuss Iran's and China's perspectives on creating a regional security architecture in the Middle East that could reduce tension and help bring regional conflicts under control.



Join us for this public talk conducted via Zoom on **30 September** from **4pm to 5.30pm**. Registration is free and all are welcome. Sign up via <https://nus.edu/3mVp6jt>.

Israel's Relationship with the Arab World

Decades of failed attempts to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict had hindered efforts to formally widen the circle of Arab–Israeli peace. However, the recent shifts in US policy, shared concerns about common enemies and recognition of potential opportunities had produced a different dynamic — culminating in the recent UAE–Israel normalisation. Join Global Jewish Advocacy's Chief Policy and Political Affairs Officer Jason Isaacson as he analyses the development of Arab–Israeli relations and explores the road ahead.



Join us for this public talk conducted via Zoom on **2 October** from **9am to 10.30am**. Registration is free and all are welcome. Check out <https://nus.edu/3hZMjNF> for more details now!

ME 101: The Challenge Beyond Economics | Whither Oil and Gas?

How is the energy transition impacting energy politics in the Gulf? Is this transition helping the region break free from its reliance on oil and gas? Hear from Mr Philippe Rose in the next ME101 lecture, where he examines the Gulf states' response to these changes, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on these trends, and how alliances have been reshaped by shifts in regional trade dynamics.



Join us for this public talk conducted via Zoom on **1 October** 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

Another Arab Country Expected to Normalise Relations With Israel

On Wednesday (23 September), US Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft told Saudi TV station Al Arabiya that another Arab country is expected to sign a peace deal with Israel "in the next day or so" and that "others are going to be following". Her comment came a week after the UAE and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords to normalise relationships with Israel.



Saudi Arabia to Resume Umrah Pilgrimage

From 4 October, the year-round umrah pilgrimage for Muslims could resume, seven months after it was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, announced Saudi Arabia's interior ministry on Tuesday (23 September). Only 6,000 citizens and residents within the kingdom will be allowed to perform their umrah daily in the first stage. Foreign visitors will be allowed from 1 November, with the daily limit expanding to 20,000 pilgrims. The holy sites are key revenue earner for Saudi Arabia.



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