

# MEI Weekly.



Despite curbs on public assembly, Israeli anti-government protesters were marching on the streets of Tel Aviv on Tuesday (6 October) and calling for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down over his government's mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic. Photo: Jack Guez / AFP.

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

**READ:** What role can alternative energy play in helping Saudi Arabia realise its Vision 2030 goals? In the latest MEI Insight, two experts, MEI Adjunct Fellow Mattia Tomba and Ms Sara Corradini, examine how the kingdom aims to reduce its carbon emissions and create sustainable renewable energy capacities while also remaining a major producer of hydrocarbons.

**READ:** Weighing in an *Al Jazeera* news analysis on what lies ahead for the Gulf Cooperation Council following the death of the emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, MEI Research Fellow Clemens Chay said there would likely be no major change in the country's foreign policy or vulnerability to external pressures. He attributed that to the standing of Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the recently sworn-in emir.

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** Writing for *South China Morning Post*, MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino examines how the escalating conflict between Russia-backed Armenia and Turkey-backed Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, exacerbated by the use of Syrian mercenaries and social media barrages, represents a possible third front for Turkish-Russia proxies and a troubling omen for the future of warfare. Read the full article [here](#).

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** How might climate change affect economic stability and the availability of food and water in the Gulf region? Environmental expert Aisha Al-Sarhi examined what can be done to strive towards effective climate action in this week's ME 101 lecture. Revisit the discussion [here](#).

**WATCH & LISTEN:** The UAE and Bahrain have normalised ties with Israel. Who's next? Global Jewish Advocacy's Chief Policy and Political Affairs Officer Jason Isaacson analysed the development of Arab-Israeli relations and examined the road ahead. Missed the session? Catch up via this link [here](#).

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

### Israel's Lockdown Sparks Protests

Israel seems to be unravelling further under a second national lockdown as the country struggles to cope with a surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths that are among the worst in the world, despite being one of the first to reimpose nationwide measures last month. Tens of thousands of demonstrators have been calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over his government's mishandling of the pandemic. The possibility of a fourth election looms as the newly formed governing coalition is largely considered a failure.

### Dubai Hit by Emirates Airlines' Decline

Emirates Airlines propelled Dubai to become one of the world's largest intercontinental hubs. But the coronavirus pandemic and the economic devastation it has wrought have forced the first major downsizing for the airline which has weathered regional conflicts and oil-market shocks. The flag carrier's woes are tearing through Dubai's economy as Emirates has slashed tens of thousands of jobs, after the pandemic ceased much of global air travel, posing severe consequences for the hospitality sector. To attract people to travel, the airline is covering passengers' medical expenses if they are diagnosed with Covid-19.



A tourist receiving instruction at Dubai airport on 8 July, as the United Arab Emirates reopened its doors to international visitors in the hope of reviving its tourism industry after nearly four months of closure. Photo: Giuseppe Cacace / AFP.

### Qatar Requests for F-35 Fighter Jets

Qatar has sent the United States a formal request to purchase F-35 fighter jets in a deal that, if pursued, could strain America's ties with Saudi Arabia and Israel. The request follows a deal between US and the United Arab Emirates in which Washington agreed to consider giving the Gulf state its approval to buy the fighter jets in return for establishing diplomatic relations with Israel in August. Israel has signalled its stiff opposition to the sale of F-35s to the Emirates and would likely be just as resistant to the Qatari request over fears that this would undermine its military advantage in the region.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture 2020

Can small states prosper while they are continuously facing threats to their existence? Hear Qatari Assistant Foreign Minister Lolwah R M Al-Khater share how her country thrived despite being illegally blockaded by its neighbours at this year's S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture. She will also explore the similarities between Singapore and Qatar as small states navigating their geopolitical position in this contested era.



Join us for our annual flagship lecture on **21 October** from **3pm to 4.30pm**. The event will be conducted via Zoom this year due to social distancing measures. Places are filling up fast so register now. [Click here for more details now!](#)

### Arab Public Opinion – Ignore It at Your Peril

In a world of autocracy, repression and conflict, polls often offer ordinary citizens a rare opportunity to express an opinion. The polling lifts the veil on public sentiment towards issues such as Israel, Palestine and Iran as well as hot button items, including religion, protest and political Islam. The polling data demonstrates that failure to understand public sentiment or take it into account produces misinformed and misguided policies not only by rulers in the region but also by governments like that of the United States. In this webinar, Director of Arab Barometer Michael Robbins and Washington Institute's Bernstein Fellow David Pollock will provide insights into trends in public opinion in the Middle East as well as how they operate in a restricted environment.

Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **14 October** from **9am to 10.30am**. Registration is free and all are welcome. [Click here for more details now!](#)

### ME101: Women & Youth | Forces for Change

Youths make up 16 per cent of the world's population today. Over the next 30 years, the youth population is expected to continue to grow in some regions like the Arab Middle East, which will, in turn, change the demography of the region. In next week's ME 101 Lecture, Dr Alanoud Al-Sharekh, an associate fellow at the Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Programme, will examine how these demographic shifts and political instability are labouring social expectations, especially for women. Disrupted "visions" and changing labour force demands are intersecting with painful political changes in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and will continue to impact the uncertain future of youth and gender politics of the region.

Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **15 October** at **5pm**. Registration is free and all are welcome. [Click here for more details now!](#)

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Talks on New Government in Lebanon to Start

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said parliament will meet next Thursday (15 October) to begin consultations on the formation of a new government, following the resignation of the previous one on 10 August, in the wake of the devastating blast in Beirut, and after Mr Mustapha Adib, who was initially tasked with forming a new cabinet, quit last month.



### Turkey to Test S-400 Defence System

Ankara's military intends to test its Russian-built S-400 air defence system within the next two weeks according to a notice issued by the government. Nato Secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg has urged Turkish officials to seek "alternative solutions" to the country's air defence needs and the United States has also repeatedly warned Turkey that acquiring and activating the S-400 may lead to economic sanctions.

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