

MEI Weekly.



Anti-aircraft guns guarding Natanz Nuclear Facility, Iran. Photo: Hamed Saber via Flickr

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ & LISTEN: In the eighth episode of “Boots off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond”, MEI Principal Fellow Alessandro Arduino and Research Fellow Ameen Lutfi interviewed Professor Simon Chesterman on the possibilities and limitations in regulating private military and security companies. Listen to the podcast and read the edited transcript [here](#).

READ: In the latest MEI Insight, MEI Senior Visiting Research Fellow Tilak Doshi takes a look at the players within the shifting landscape of energy geopolitics, scrutinising in particular the consequences of the Middle East’s weakened position in the wake of America’s emergence as the world’s largest crude oil producer. Read the full article [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Trump Wanted Strike on Iran’s Nuclear Programme

In a meeting last Thursday (12 November), US President Donald Trump met with senior advisors to discuss his outgoing administration’s possible options for striking Natanz — Iran’s main nuclear site — in the coming weeks. The meeting occurred in the wake of a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran’s uranium stockpile is now 12 times larger than permitted under the nuclear accord that the Trump administration abandoned in 2018. While dissuaded by his advisors from a direct military strike, officials said Mr. Trump might still be pondering other options to target Iranian assets and allies, including militias in Iraq.

Palestinians Resume Cooperation with Israel

The Palestinian Authority (PA) said on Tuesday (17 November) that it would resume its cooperation with Israel, marking an end to the harsh measures imposed by the PA’s president, Mr Mahmoud Abbas, in response to Israeli annexation plans for the occupied West Bank. The measures had included the rejection of routine transfers of more than US\$100 million a month in taxes that Israel collects on the Palestinians’ behalf, resulting in reduced salaries for thousands of public-sector workers at a time of economic crisis brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. The victory of Mr Joseph Biden, who has stated his opposition to unilateral moves by Israel, in the US presidential election gave the Palestinians enough assurances to return to status quo.



The Palestinian Authority announced that it would resume cooperations with Israel, ending its stringent measures in response to Israeli settlement plans in the West Bank. Photo: DEAZLB via Pixabay

Tensions as Erdogan Visits Northern Cyprus

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited disputed territory in northern Cyprus on Sunday (15 November), and continued to voice his support for a two-state solution to the dispute over Cyprus. Turkey, which invaded the northern part of Cyprus in 1974, recognises the territory as Northern Cyprus, while the remaining two-thirds of the island remain under the control of the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus. Mr Erdogan’s decision was condemned by Greek and Cypriot leaders who saw it as a provocation that hindered the United Nations’ efforts to revive peace talks. The visit also occurred amid a backdrop of tensions between Turkey and other Mediterranean countries over disputed gas-rich territory in the eastern Mediterranean region.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

[Book Launch] Vision or Mirage: Saudi Arabia at the Crossroads

In his new book, Mr David Rundell, who served for 15 years as a US foreign service officer in Saudi Arabia, provides a unique and granular analysis of the inner workings of the kingdom, and illustrates King Salman’s long-standing focus on combatting corruption that is at the core of Saudi reforms. Mr Rundell also argues that King Salman may have made Saudi Arabia less stable by concentrating absolute political and military power in the hands of his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who now rules over a young population that aspires for greater transparency and accountability.

Join us for this public talk conducted online via Zoom on **26 November** (Thursday), from 4pm to 5.30pm (SGT). [Click here for more details!](#)

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Israeli Delegation to Visit Sudan

A second Israeli delegation is set to visit Sudan in the coming weeks, following a small delegation that was dispatched to Khartoum this week to discuss security cooperation between Israel and Sudan. The agenda will mainly focus on economic issues, including water and agriculture. The Israeli delegations highlight the growing ties between the two countries following their announcement last month that they would be establishing diplomatic ties.

Virtual Hosting of G-20 by Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia will host the G-20 summit online this weekend (21–22 November), signalling the challenging decade ahead for the kingdom, as it figures out how to accomplish the ambitious aims of its Vision 2030 campaign, while oil prices remain slow in its recovery and greater diversification of the economy beyond hydrocarbons is sought.



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