

# MEI Weekly.



Lebanese protesters gathering around a torch that commemorates the anniversary of the beginning of a nationwide anti-government protest in front of the devastated Beirut port. Photo: Anwar Amro / AFP.

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

**READ:** In the latest MEI Insight, Dr Martin Hvidt, an associate professor at the Centre for Modern Middle East and Muslim Studies, University of Southern Denmark, explains how increasing the United Arab Emirates' indigenous technological capacity is essential for the country's sustained economic development. Read the full article [here](#).

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** In the closing lecture for this year's ME101 lecture series, MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino discussed the significant opportunities within Central Asian economies and the challenges that come with them. Missed the lecture? Watch the video recording, listen to the podcast or read the summary [here](#).

**WATCH, READ & LISTEN:** Mr Robin Miller, founder of Qamar Energy in Dubai, and Dr Steven Griffiths, senior vice president for Research and Development and Professor of Practice at the Khalifa University of Science and Technology, gave an insightful assessment of the status and future outlook of Gulf Cooperation Council initiatives in renewable energy. Revisit the highlights of the lecture or read the transcript [here](#).

**READ:** Writing for the Centre for Iranian Studies in Ankara, MEI Senior Fellow Asif Shuja examines the challenges to an increasingly strained bilateral relations between India and Iran. Dr Shuja argued that energy relations are not enough to keep ties between the two countries strong, and that they each have vital strategic geopolitical significance for the other. Read the full commentary [here](#).

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

### Lebanese Flee an Imploding Economy

Lebanese have a long history of moving abroad during times of crisis, sending billions in remittances back home that helped kept the country afloat. Their country's multiple crises, however, exacerbated by the explosion at Beirut port in August and the Covid-19 pandemic, have resulted in a new wave of emigrations. With its economy set to shrink by 25 per cent this year and the value of its currency dropping by 80 per cent against the US dollar since last year, many are desperate to leave despite the difficulties of hardened borders due to the coronavirus pandemic, resulting in cross-border smuggling networks and many taking the perilous voyage to Cyprus by sea beside Syrian refugees.

### Rouhani Signals Tough Times Ahead as US Counts Votes

In a televised speech on Wednesday (4 November), Iranian President Hassan Rouhani mentioned that it is inconsequential who wins the US presidential election as Iran has prepared for the worst, echoing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei speech earlier on Tuesday. He further asserted that whoever wins the elections should respect international treaties and laws, a poke at current US President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018. He made this assertion despite the significant damage harsh sanctions and Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign incurred on Iran's economy.



American citizens in Boston participating in the Iran War/Peace Protests on 25 January, 2020. Iran is reportedly preparing for the worst no matter the outcome of the US presidential election. Photo: Kai Medina, as shared on Wikimedia Commons.

### Oman to Break Gulf's Income Tax Taboo

Oman plans to break the Gulf taboo of taxing the income of wealthy individuals to address a growing budget deficit, a step unheard of in the region. The ambitious plan is projected to bring down the country's budget deficit from 19 per cent of gross domestic product in 2020 to 1.7 per cent in 2024. Though Arab Gulf states have long shied away from imposing taxations of any kind in order to attract foreign labour and companies, the oil crash of 2014 and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic have forced them to re-evaluate their approach. Governments in the Gulf will be watching Oman's implementation of the tax closely as they, too, consider the viability of such a move.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### [Prelude] Middle Eastern Film Festival 2021

The Middle East Institute and Singapore Film Society are delighted to partner The Projector to promote two Middle Eastern titles this November and December. Enjoy \$2 off each rental [Promo Code: MEFF2off] when you watch the films on The Projector's online platform.



Tickets are available now at Projector and for viewing in Singapore only.

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Jordan to Hold Parliamentary Elections Soon

The US is preparing to enforce anti-corruption sanctions against Hezbollah's allies, consisting of Lebanese politicians and businessmen, in response to the Beirut blast. US officials told The Wall Street Journal America hopes that by sanctioning carefully selected people, America can compel Lebanon's political class to target endemic corruption and weaken Hezbollah, which has long been part of the Lebanese coalition government.



### Gérald Darmanin to Visit Tunisia and Algeria

On Monday (2 November), four days after the Nice attack, French Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin announced that he would visit Tunisia and Algeria at the end of the week to give the authorities a list of radicalised individuals whom France wishes to deport. This came after a series of terrorist attacks shook France over the last few weeks.

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