MEIWeekly.



recording of Mr Zarif commenting about the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran's foreign policy was leaked, causing significant controversy. Photo: Atta Kenare / AFP.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

provide cost-effective services that allow regular military forces to focus on their core missions? Can the militaries of small states like Singapore take advantage of the capabilities and savings they offer? Find out what president emeritus of the International Stability Operations Association, Doug Brooks, has to say about this in MEI's latest Insight. Read his paper here.

READ: Are private contractors in the stability operations industry "mercenaries" or can they

Minister Javad Zarif, MEI's Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja said this could have happened to dissuade Mr Zarif from running for president and discussed the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran's political system. Read his comments here.

READ: In an article by Arab News about the leaked audio recording of Iranian Foreign

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Brutally frank leaked comments by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif have led

Iranian Foreign Minister's Tape Leaked

to an uproar in Iran, with critics calling for his resignation. In a taped conversation which was part of an oral history project, Mr Zarif spoke of his difficult position as foreign minister and the place of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in decisions about Iran's security issues and foreign policy. The New York Times reports that Mr Zarif was heard making critical comments about the former commander of the IRGC's Quds Force General Qassim Suleimani, who was killed last year in a US strike but a foreign ministry spokesperson said the recording did not represent the full scope of the minister's comments about his respect and love for the general.

Long-Haul Carrier Having spent years in the shadow of its rival Emirates Airline, Qatar Airways has eclipsed Emirates - for now - as the world's biggest long-haul carrier by capacity. In the past 12

Qatar Airways Emerges as World's Biggest

months, Qatar Airways has flown more seats than any other airline on cross-border routes. It has flown near-empty planes on global routes to increase its market share and is also taking the opportunity to pursue new landing rights while other airlines have reduced services so as to emerge stronger after the pandemic. Whether Qatar Airways retains this position will partly depend on how quickly other airlines restore their flight schedules and if it will be able to start filling flights when the world resumes travel in earnest.



Saudi Crown Prince: Peace with Iran Possible In a wide-ranging interview on state television, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin

Salman Al Saud said his country is not keen about perpetual hostility with Iran and is open to talks if Iran stops sponsoring regional militias. He also said that Saudi Arabia's interests align with those of US President Joe Biden's administration by more than 90 per cent and described

the US as a strategic and historic partner to Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the crown prince described in detail aspects of his country's Vision 2030 programme for economic reform,

linking its success to the establishment of pragmatic foreign relations. **CALENDAR:** UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

Protecting China's Interests Overseas: From

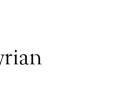
discuss these issues and the development of a Chinese strategic approach to defending its overseas interests. Join us for this public talk conducted via Zoom on Wednesday, 5 May from 4.00pm to 5.30pm. Registration is free and all are welcome. Sign up here! Revisiting The Northern-Tier: Syrian

Reconstruction Inside-Out

6.30pm. Register here!

the Middle East to Central Asia

What challenges does China face in managing risks from terrorism, crime, and other non-traditional security issues across the Middle East and South and Central Asia? Andrea Ghiselli, author of the book Protecting China's Interests Overseas: Securitisation and Foreign Policy, alongside Raffaello Pantucci, a researcher at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, will



MEI's Arabia-Asia cluster has been working on the concept of the loose two-tiered geopolitcal order emerging within the Middle East - 'Southern Tier' (involving the maritime Gulf states, Israel, India and the US) and the 'Northern Tier' (Russia, Iran and Turkey).

This talk will revisit the concept of the 'Northern Tier' through an inside-out view from Syria, a country where one can observe the dynamics between the three key Northern Tier states. Transnational historians and anthropologists will ground the ongoing involvement of these players in a range of border-traversing networks of merchants, tribal diasporas and paramili-

tary groups. What will these bring? Collaborations or conflicting rivalries?

Making It Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People's Republic of China

Join us for this free public talk conducted via Zoom on Wednesday, 12 May from 5pm to

One of the biggest challenges facing leaders of the new People's Republic of China back in 1949 was how much they did not know. The government of one of the world's largest nations was committed to fundamentally re-engineering its society and economy via socialist planning while having almost no reliable statistical data of the country. Making It Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People's Republic of China is the history of efforts to resolve this "crisis in counting". Listen to author and historian Arunabh Ghosh, as he takes us through his book.

Join us as for this public talk conducted via Zoom on Wednesday, 19 May at 7.30pm. Registration is free and all are welcome. Sign up here!

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's mandate to form a government expires on 4 May. Despite offers to the leaders of two parties on the Israeli right, Yamina and New Hope, for a rotating

Will Netanyahu Form a Coalition?

prime ministership, it appears unlikely that Mr Netanyahu will succeed. The two parties are also in talks with centrist party Yesh Atid on a coalition that could involve several other ideologically diverse parties on both the right and left as well as Arab party Ra'am. The Fight for Marib Intensifies



