

# MEI Weekly.



Abbas Araghchi, Political Deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, arriving at the Grand Hotel in Vienna on 6 April 2021, where diplomats of the European Union, China, Russia and Iran held talks on ways to get Tehran and Washington back into the nuclear deal. Photo: Joe Klamar / AFP.

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

**READ:** In the latest volume of MEI's Insights, *The UAE in a Changing Geopolitical and Economic Landscape*, seven experts seek to shed light on how the Emirates is responding and adapting to new realities on various fronts, such as the economy, technology, manpower and foreign policy. Read the full issue [here](#).

**LISTEN & READ:** In the 13th episode of MEI's *Boots Off the Ground* podcast series, Jason O'Connor, Deputy Director (North America) of Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF), speaks about protecting people working in the development and humanitarian response sectors from physical violence and cyber risks, and ways to improve the security of aid workers in challenging environments. Listen to the podcast or read the full transcript [here](#).

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

### Major Powers Meet Regarding Iran Nuclear Deal

Diplomats from major powers met separately on Wednesday (7 April 2021) with Iran and the United States to discuss bringing both parties back into compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal that Washington abandoned three years ago. Neither the United States nor Iran expect fast breakthroughs in the talks because of the indirect format employed, the history of US-Iran mistrust and the complexity of the issues, although both countries have agreed on a path back to a nuclear deal. Diplomats from the participating countries have agreed to form two expert-level groups who will marry lists of sanctions that the United States could lift with nuclear obligations Iran should meet.

### Jordan King Declares Royal Family Feud Over

Jordan's King Abdullah II addressed the unprecedented public rift within the royal family by saying that it had been "nipped in the bud", but had caused him anger, pain and shock. On one hand, the monarch appeared to be doubling down on allegations against former Crown Prince Hamzah, while on the other, he tried to reassure Jordanians that the nation was returning to business as usual. But even if the current crisis is eventually defused, major challenges loom for the monarchy as it confronts growing internal dissent.



King Abdullah II of Jordan (R) and his half-brother former Crown Prince Hamzah (L) and Prince Faisal attend a lunch gathering held by representatives of Jordanian bedouin tribes in Amman's Royal Palace in May 2004. Photo: Mohammed Keswany / AFP.

### Saudis: Only 'Immunised' Pilgrims Allowed

From the start of this year's Ramadan, only Muslims immunised against Covid-19 will be allowed to perform the umrah pilgrimage, Saudi authorities announced. The Hajj and Umrah Ministry said three categories of people would be considered "immunised": Those who have received two doses of the vaccine; those administered a single dose at least 14 days prior, and Covid-19 victims who have recovered from the virus itself.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### Hebrew Language and Culture Colloquium

This two-day online conference will explore the potential for growth of the Hebrew language and culture at the university level in Southeast Asia and possibilities for co-operation and collaboration in the learning and teaching of the language.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Saturday, 17 April 2021 and Sunday, 18 April 2021**. Both sessions will start at 7.30pm (SGT), and all are welcome to attend. This event is free, but registration is compulsory. Click [here](#) for more details.

### Singapore and Israel: Navigating the Technological Superpower Competition

Cutting-edge technologies and innovative capabilities are becoming increasingly essential in determining the superpower race and defining the future position and role of smaller states. Innovative leaders such as Singapore and Israel have to increase cooperation and develop joint strategies to prepare for a geopolitical landscape that is growing more uncertain and divided.

This special event by the Middle East Institute (NUS) and the Abba Eban Institute for International Diplomacy (AEI) will examine the different challenges and opportunities faced by Middle Eastern countries in the tech sphere.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 20 April 2021, from 2.00pm to 3.30pm** (SGT). All are welcome. This event is free, but registration is compulsory. Click [here](#) for more details.

### MEI's Bridging the Gulf Series

Beyond the headlines, what else do we know of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf? Are these societies as conservative as many have perceived them to be? Is Dubai just about its spectacular architecture? How does leadership transition work in these dynastic monarchies?

If you are intrigued by these questions, then we have just the programme for you. In this new webinar series by MEI, we invite experts to shed light on the history, politics and culture of the Gulf states to provide a refreshing perspective of the changes in these societies.

The series will be conducted online via Zoom **every Friday starting 23 April 2021, from 4.00pm to 5.00pm** (SGT). All are welcome to participate. This event is free, but registration is compulsory. Click [here](#) for more details.

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### EU Supports Libya's Efforts at Reconciliation

European Union (EU) Council President Charles Michel called for the departure of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya, describing it as a "precondition" for a return to stability in the war-torn country. Michel, who met the leaders of the newly appointed government, said the EU was supporting efforts at national reconciliation. Other European leaders are expected to visit Libya in the coming days, reflecting the importance of EU-Libyan ties.



### US Defence Chief to Visit Israel

US Secretary of Defence Lloyed Austin is expected to visit Israel next week for meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Gantz. Mr Austin will be the first Cabinet-level member of the Biden administration to visit Israel.

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