

MEI Weekly.



An Israeli far-right extremist looks on after clashes with Arab-Israelis in the ethnically mixed city of Lod on 13 May 2021. The unrest accompanies rapidly escalating fighting between Israel and Hamas. Photo: Oren Ziv / AFP.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: What are the top concerns for Saudi Arabia's predominantly youthful population? Find out more about the employment prospects facing the country's "online generation" and the sociocultural factors influencing their attitudes about work in MEI's latest Insight by Mark C Thompson, senior research fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. Read his paper [here](#).

READ: Commenting on a report released by the China Watch Institute on Xinjiang, MEI's Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja shared his views about it with China Daily. Read his comments [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Fighting with Hamas and Civil Unrest Intensify

Israeli ground forces carried out attacks on Gaza early today, 14 May, without entering the densely populated coastal strip in an escalation of recent fighting with Hamas, which began with an exchange of Israeli airstrikes and rockets from Gaza a few days back. While battling Palestinian militants on one hand, on the other, Israel is seeking to head off its worst civil unrest in decades. Clashes between Arab and Jewish protestors and vigilantes have occurred on the streets of several mixed-ethnicity cities within Israel, including the central city of Lod. American and Egyptian diplomats were heading to Israel to begin de-escalation talks.

Qatari Emir Visits Saudi Arabia

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived in Jeddah for his visit to Saudi Arabia after the Al Ula declaration in January this year, which ended the diplomatic and economic boycott of Qatar by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt that began in June 2017. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud welcomed the Emir to Al-Salam Palace and the two discussed ways to develop bilateral co-operation in various fields and also spoke about regional and international developments, according to Alarabiya News.



Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Al-Rayyan, Qatar. Sheikh Tamim visited Saudi Arabia for the second time this year on 11 May, as strained relations with several Arab states were formally set aside by the Al Ula declaration in January 2021. Photo: Karim Jaafar / AFP.

US Fires Warning Shots at Iranian Patrol Boats

In the third naval incident in little more than a month, the New York Times reported that a US coast guard ship fired 30 warning shots after Iranian fast craft approached a group of six US navy ships. Two fast craft had broken off from a larger group of 13 and manoeuvred behind the US vessels, before approaching them at high speed with weapons uncovered and manned, a US Navy official told USNI News. The US ships, which included a guided-missile cruiser and five patrol vessels, were escorting a guided-missile submarine transiting on the surface in the Strait of Hormuz. The incidents occur as Iranian and US negotiators continue indirect talks on resuming compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

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

In 1949, China was committed to fundamentally re-engineering its society and economy through socialist planning but to do so, it needed to first take stock of the country. Listen to historian Arunabh Ghosh as he tells us how China learnt the modern science of statistics through unprecedented exchanges with India even as previous Soviet-inspired methods became increasingly untenable. Dr Ghosh is the author of *Making It Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People's Republic of China*.



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

MEI's Bridging the Gulf Series: Session 5

The Omani sultanate was once under Portuguese control and at one point, had a Swahili ruling class. Uncover the journey of Oman's rich history and learn more about its Vision 2040 project in this session of MEI's Bridging the Gulf series with Mohamed Saad Al Muqadam, Assistant Professor at the Sultan Qaboos University and Yousuf Hamed Al Balushi, Chief Economist of the Oman Vision 2040 taskforce.

Join us for this free public talk conducted via Zoom on Friday, **28 May from 4.00pm to 5.00pm**. Register [here!](#)

Iran-GCC Dynamics and Regional Security

What is the current nature of Iran's relationship with the GCC states and how might it change with attempts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal and an increased Arab-Israeli closeness in the Abraham Accords? A panel of experts will delve into the respective security concerns of the two parties and examine possibilities for cooperation.

Join us for this public talk conducted via Zoom on Tuesday, **1 June from 4.00pm to 5.30pm**. Registration is free and all are welcome. Sign up [here!](#)

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Iran Open to Extending Inspection Deal

Iran's monitoring deal with the International Atomic Energy Agency to maintain data and recordings of the country's civilian nuclear programme expires next week. Iran had previously said it would destroy these records if US sanctions were not lifted by this time. However, senior negotiator Abbas Araghchi has suggested that Iran is open to extending the agreement, although a ranking conservative in Iran's parliament has opposed the move.



Voting to Start for Syrians Living Abroad

Syrians overseas will be able to vote on 20 May, ahead of presidential elections on 26 May. Two other candidates will compete against President Bashar al-Assad in a contest he is expected to win. According to Al Jazeera, Syrian refugees in the Middle East dispersed by the decade-long civil war have expressed their reluctance to vote at the embassy, citing a fear of surveillance and reprisal.

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