

MEI Weekly.



US President Joe Biden (R) speaks with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan prior to a plenary session of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Brussels, on 14 June 2021. Photo: Olivier Matthys / POOL / AFP.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

LISTEN & READ: In the 15th episode of MEI's podcast series *Boots Off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond*, Dr Andreas Krieg illustrates how private security companies are a response to an emerging global phenomenon: surrogate warfare. Listen to the podcast or read the transcript [here](#).



READ: In a piece written for MEI, Dr Hamad H. Albloshi and Dr Banafsheh Keynoush analyse the political future of Iran based on the candidates fielded in the Islamic republic's highly controversial presidential election happening today, 18 June. Read about it [here](#).

CALL FOR PAPERS: MEI is initiating a Call For Papers for a new series focusing on Israel–GCC relations in its journal *Insights*. This series is aimed at taking stock of the Abraham Accords one year since their signing, mainly with a view to understand the shifts that have taken place in the relationships between Israel and the GCC states. Submissions should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words and are due by 30 June 2021. For more information, click [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Biden and Erdogan Attempt to Reset US-Turkey Ties

President Biden met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the first time since taking office, as the two NATO allies attempt to repair a frayed relationship by seeking common cause over their security interests across the world, from Libya to Syria and Afghanistan. The long-time allies' relationship deteriorated in recent years over several issues. Much is at stake for both sides as Mr. Erdogan faces a range of domestic pressures while the US' plan to remove troops from Afghanistan by September could be affected by Turkey's decision on maintaining a military presence there.

Saudi Arabia and the EU Bar Travellers Who Received Chinese-made Jabs

As some countries ease Covid-19 travel restrictions, Saudi Arabia and the European Union (EU) have barred travellers who have been vaccinated with Chinese vaccines, leaving out the biggest groups of foreign visitors in the region. Despite its quick and responsive supply chain, China's five vaccines – including the widely used Sinovac and Sinopharm – are not considered effective by Saudi Arabia and the EU. The bulk of Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines have been given to people in China but China has also distributed more than 115 million of its vaccines to about 60 countries including Brazil, Turkey, Pakistan Malaysia and the Philippines, who could face restrictions in travelling to Saudi Arabia and countries of the EU.



A health worker shows a vial of Chinese Sinovac vaccine used against Covid-19, inside a movie theatre turned into a vaccination centre in Taguig City, suburban Manila, on 14 June 2021. Photo: Ted Aljibe / AFP.

Israeli Airstrikes on Gaza Just Days into New Government

The Israeli military said early Wednesday, 16 June, that it had conducted airstrikes in the Gaza Strip after officials said that Hamas sent incendiary balloons into southern Israel from Gaza, in the first eruption of hostilities since an 11-day air war between Israel and Hamas ended last month. The day of rising tensions was the first test of a new Israeli coalition government just three days into its term. It started when the government permitted a far-right Jewish march to pass through Palestinian areas of Jerusalem on Tuesday night, over the objections of Arab and leftist parties in the coalition and despite threats from Hamas that it would retaliate.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

The Politics of Islamic Pop

Pop *nashid* (or *nasheed*) refers to a vocal music work created according to a particular Islamic tradition or style and such music have often featured in numerous politicised contexts. Through an examination of the Islamic media company Awakening Records, this webinar will analyse the politics of Islamic pop music, looking in particular at its dynamic genealogy.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 23 June 2021**, from **4.00pm to 5.30pm** (SGT). For more details and to register, click [here](#).

[Book Talk] Saudi Arabia and Indonesian Networks: Migration, Education and Islam

What is the "Indonesian legacy" in Saudi Arabia? How have Saudi Arabia's influential Islamic scholars impacted Indonesian Muslims? Join author Dr Sumanto Al Qurtuby in discussing his book *Saudi Arabia and Indonesian Networks: Migration, Education and Islam* which examines Indonesian educational migrants and intellectual travellers in Saudi Arabia who provide a unique portrait of the religious and intellectual linkages between the two countries.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 8 July 2021**, from **4.00pm to 5.30pm** (SGT). For more details and to register, click [here](#).

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Calls for the UN's Intervention in Dam Dispute

Arab foreign ministers on Tuesday, 15 June, backed calls for the United Nations (UN) Security Council to hold an urgent session and intervene in a decade-long dispute between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over a massive dam Addis Ababa is building on Nile River's main tributary. The move was the latest push by Cairo and Khartoum to reach an agreement on the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The dispute now centres on how quickly Ethiopia should fill and replenish the reservoir and how much water it releases downstream in case of a multi-year drought.



Biden to Nominate Tom Nides as US Ambassador to Israel

US President Joe Biden will nominate Wall Street banker and former State Department official Thomas R Nides to be the country's next ambassador to Israel. Nides is vice chairman of Morgan Stanley, the fourth-largest US investment banking firm and had been deputy secretary of state from 2011 to 2013 during Obama's administration. Biden has taken months to formally name his nominee to take up the sensitive post, raising questions from some observers about what the choice would say about his policies in Israel and Palestine.

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