

MEI Weekly



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during an event in Jerusalem on 6 June 2021. His 12-year reign will come to an end if a new coalition government is voted in this Sunday, 13 June 2021. Photo: Menahem KAHANA / AFP

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: Our latest MEI Insight piece examines the UAE, which has managed to enter the field of vaccine diplomacy from a position of strength due to its small size and population, relatively low number of Covid-19 infections and solid economic status. How does the UAE leverage its advantages during these hard times? To read the full analysis, click [here](#).

READ: MEI Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja shared with China Daily that a restored Iran nuclear deal is unlikely to affect ties between Israel and the Arab states which have seen significant improvement since the signing of the Abraham Accords last year. Read the full article [here](#).

READ: The Middle East is no stranger to drone warfare and the latest iteration of the Israel–Palestine conflict was no exception. In his latest op-ed for the South China Morning Post, MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino examines the weaponry and tactics utilised during the escalation. Read the full article [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Israeli Lawmakers to Vote on New Government on Sunday

Israeli lawmakers are set to hold a vote of confidence in a new coalition government on Sunday which if successful, could lead to the ouster of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after 12 years in charge. The coalition — which currently holds a fragile majority of 61 out of 120 seats in parliament — comprises parties spanning the political spectrum from far left to hard right and will be led first by far-right leader Mr Naftali Bennett until 2023, followed by the centrist Mr Yair Lapid in a rotation deal. Mr Netanyahu and his Likud party have since accused hard-right parties within the coalition of betraying the country in hopes of dissuading them from participating.

Iraq Announces Plans for Nuclear Energy

Faced with widespread energy shortages that have triggered social unrest, Iraq is looking to build eight nuclear reactors to aid in meeting an expected 50 percent rise in electricity demand by the end of the decade. The \$40 billion plan was announced by Kamal Hussain Latif, chairman of the Iraqi Radioactive Sources Regulatory Authority, who also said that Iraq was in discussion with prospective partners. The oil-rich petrostate was hard-hit last year by falling crude oil prices due to the Covid-19 pandemic and raising financing will constitute a major challenge.



A demonstrator waves the national flag during a protest in the southern city of Basra on 14 July 2020. Widespread electricity shortages have sparked protests in Iraq, which now seeks to build nuclear reactors to meet power demands. Photo: Hussein Faleh / AFP

US to Maintain Hundreds of Iran Sanctions

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said hundreds of US sanctions on Iran is likely to remain even if the Biden administration was to rejoin a nuclear deal with Tehran. Iran has been involved in ongoing nuclear discussions with international powers in Vienna over a revived nuclear accord and has insisted on the removal of all US sanctions. The Biden administration, meanwhile, has insisted that sanctions imposed over other US concerns — such as Tehran's human rights violations and support for extremist groups — will remain.

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 to 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

Turkey and US to Discuss Differences

US President Joe Biden is set to meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at an upcoming NATO summit next week on 14 June. The two leaders will discuss their respective nations' significant differences and the agenda will include topics such as the eastern Mediterranean, Syria, Iran, and Turkey's prospective role in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal. Ties between the two NATO allies have been strained in recent years over various issues including Turkey's purchase of Russian defence systems and Ankara's human rights track record.



Iran to Hold Controversial Presidential Election

Iran's presidential election will take place on 18 June with seven candidates in the running for the post. The election, in which the vast majority of moderate and reformist candidates were barred from participating by the Guardian Council, is expected to produce the lowest turnout in Iran's history. Five of the candidates, including current head of the judiciary Ibrahim Raisi, are associated with the conservative fundamentalist movement.

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