

MEI Weekly.



A family evacuated from Afghanistan is led through the arrival terminal at the Dulles International Airport in Virginia, on Wednesday, 25 August 2021 to board a bus bringing them to a refugee processing centre. The White House announced that since 14 August 2021, the US has facilitated the evacuation of approximately 82,300 people via US military and coalition flights. Photo: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images/AFP.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: MEI Visiting Research Professor Gyorgy Busztin opines that Afghanistan, like Iraq before it, has shown that when foreign interventions prop up corrupt regimes without a care for their people, disaster ripples throughout the world. Read the full article [here](#).

LISTEN: In the 17th episode of MEI's podcast series *Boots Off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond*, hear about the involvement of migrant labour in the vast transnational logistical infrastructure employed in running day-to-day US military affairs around the world. Listen to the podcast [here](#).

READ: MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino says the quantity and quality of weapons that the Taliban is hoarding since its swift advance across Afghanistan will arguably have unintended negative consequences outside of the country too. Read the full article [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Biden Sticks to Afghan Deadline

President Biden said that the US intended to withdraw completely from Afghanistan at the end of the month as planned, rebuffing pleas from Britain, France and other NATO allies to keep troops in Kabul. The result – hastening the end of a frantic evacuation that has become a grim coda to two decades of war. The US began reducing its military presence at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, sending about 300 of the 5,800 Marines and soldiers home, in anticipation of the rescue mission ending within a week. However, Mr Biden had also asked the Pentagon and the State Department for contingency plans in case it became necessary to stay longer.

Iraq Seeks Role as Mediator with Regional Summit

After decades of conflict, Iraq will pitch itself as a regional mediator as it hosts a leaders' summit tomorrow, despite foreign influence on its territory and a grinding financial crisis. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah II have said they plan to attend, as has French President Emmanuel Macron who is the only official expected from outside the region. Leaders from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have also been invited. Organisers have been tight-lipped on the meeting's agenda but Baghdad has already hosted closed-door encounters in recent months between Tehran and Riyadh.



Iraqi President Barham Saleh (2-L) and Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi (R) receive Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (2-R) and Jordan's King Abdullah II (L), in the capital Baghdad on 27 June 2021. This week, Iraq will be hosting the two leaders again, alongside French President Emmanuel Macron as well as officials from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Photo: Ahmad Al-Rubaye / AFP.

New Israeli Leader Backs Hard Line on Iran but Softer Tone With US

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has said he would oppose American-led attempts to reinstate a lapsed nuclear agreement with Iran and continue Israel's covert attacks on Iran's nuclear programme. He also said he would expand West Bank settlements that President Biden opposes, declined to back American plans to reopen a consulate for Palestinians in Jerusalem and ruled out reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians under his watch. While these policies differed little in substance from those of his predecessor Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr Bennett said he hopes to reset the tone of Israel's relationship with the US which was rocky between Mr Netanyahu and democratic administrations.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

ME 101 Lecture Series 2021: Session 2

Throughout history, the Middle East has been locked in engagements with the West through crusades, wars, colonialism and terrorism. However, there are many lesser known facets too. This series of lectures will give you a more comprehensive overview of the region and its inevitable impacts locally and worldwide.

Join us for the first lecture which focuses on the Gulf states and will be presented by MEI Research Fellow Clemens Chay. The session will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 2 September 2021, 5pm to 6.30pm (SGT)**.

Click [here](#) to register.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Taliban to Announce Afghan Government Soon

Amid Pakistan foreign minister's visit to Kabul, the Taliban has announced that talks on the formation of a new government with Afghan political leaders are underway and that a new government will be announced very soon. Over the weekend, members of the Taliban's political office met a number of politicians in Kabul and discussed the overall political situation, including the formation of an inclusive government.



Israel to Allow Goods into Gaza to Ease Tensions

Israel said that it would be easing commercial restrictions on the Gaza Strip and expand entry of goods to the Palestinian enclave following demonstrations of heightened tensions. The announcement came after hundreds of Palestinians held demonstrations near the Israeli border, calling on Israel to ease a crippling blockade days after a similar gathering ended in deadly clashes with the Israeli army. The easing of restrictions would be "conditional upon the continued preservation of the region's security" and could be further expanded if the border situation improves, the defence ministry body in-charge of Israel's crossings with the Palestinian territory said.

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