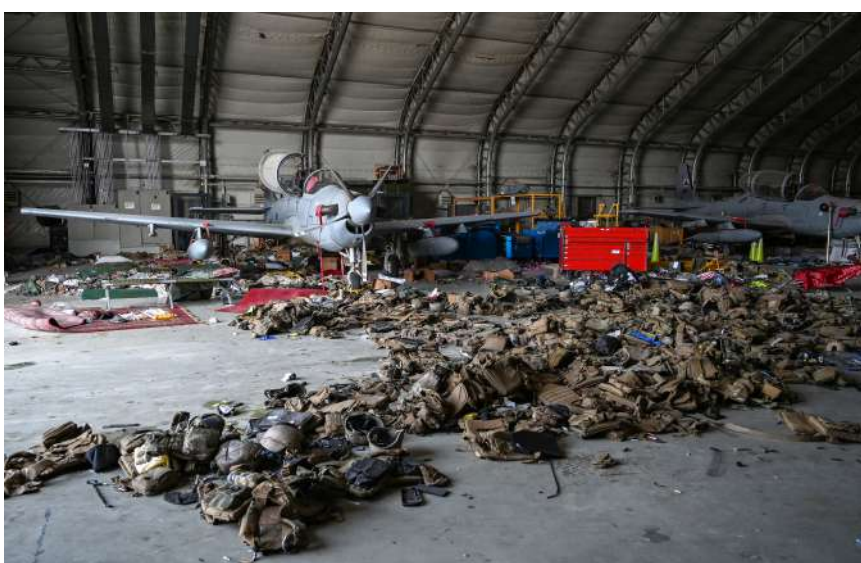


MEI Weekly.



Afghan Air Force's A-29 attack aircrafts and armoured vests lying on the ground inside a hangar at Kabul airport on 31 August 2021 after the hasty US evacuation from Afghanistan came to an end. Photo: WAKIL KOHSAR / AFP

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

LISTEN: In the latest episode of MEI's Boots Off the Ground podcast series, 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](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

US Withdrawal from Afghanistan Bodes New Complications

With the Biden administration coming under heavy criticism for its handling of the American pullout from Afghanistan and the subsequent lightning takeover of the country by the Taliban, both Moscow and Beijing have reacted with glee to what they regard as an indictment of US foreign policy. Yet, while the US withdrawal marked the limits of American hard power, it has also left Washington free to refocus on other areas of superpower competition with Russia and China on the global stage. Moreover, both Moscow and Beijing will have to contend with the direct consequences of a Taliban-run Afghanistan – from refugee flows to terrorism to the drug trade.

Water-stress: Likely to Drive Economic and Social Tensions in the Middle East

Water scarcity around the world is projected to worsen as weather patterns become affected by climate change and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is currently rated as one of the most vulnerable areas. The problem of water scarcity carries a number of implications for MENA, with food security and crop yields expected to be significantly affected over the next few decades. This could lead to food shortages and economic losses. Experts also warn that water-stressed areas may also see mass migrations and domino-like dislocations – deteriorating water security can even drive serious conflicts and escalate hostilities within the region.



Locals, in Yemen's war-ravaged western province of Hodeida, filling their jerrycans with water at a make-shift camp for the internally displaced on 17 April 2021. Water scarcity is projected to intensify social and economic tensions in the region over the next few decades. Photo: Khaled Ziad / AFP

Saudi TV Stations Relocate Their Operations

Saudi Arabian news channels are beginning to relocate their headquarters and operations from Dubai to KSA. Sources from Saudi news channels such as Al Arabiya and Al Hadath said that the aim was to produce 12 hours of news programming from Riyadh by early January. The move is driven by Saudi Arabia's increasing desire to challenge Dubai's dominance as the region's premier business hub – part of Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman's push to get more multinational companies to set up operations within the country. Earlier this year, the kingdom announced that starting 2024, it would stop signing contracts with foreign companies that have their headquarters in any other country in the region.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

ME 101 Lecture Series 2021: Session 3

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 2nd lecture which aims to explore the roles of Iran, Turkey and Russia in the region. This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 9 Sep 2021, at 5.00pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Saudi Arabia and Iran to Resume Talks

Regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran are set to resume talks in the near future. Secret meetings between the two countries were initially held in Baghdad in April this year but were temporarily halted due to Iran's presidential election in June. Iran's new Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that he had spoken with his Saudi counterpart about resuming a fourth round of communications between their respective states.



Turkey and Taliban Set to Close Deal on Kabul Airport

Ankara is set to finalise a deal with the Taliban which will see Afghanistan's Kabul airport being jointly operated by Turkey and Qatar. The draft deal states that Ankara will provide security in the airport through a private firm but it needs to be approved by Turkish President Erdogan, who is expected to hold consultations on the matter with Washington and other NATO allies.

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