

# MEI Weekly.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (2-R) and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin (L) in a group photo with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani (R) and Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Dr Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah (2-L) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Doha, Qatar on 7 September 2021. Mr Blinken is meeting with Qatari leaders to thank them for the nation's support in the Afghanistan evacuation efforts and discuss the future of US-Afghan relations. Photo: Olivier Douliery / POOL / AFP.

## WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

**READ:** MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino shares his views about the implications of US withdrawal from Afghanistan and how Chinese involvement in the region could play out. Read the full article [here](#).

**READ:** MEI Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja told Tehran Times that he believes Afghanistan's two major neighbours, Iran and Pakistan, can now play a prominent role since US forces have pulled out from the Central Asian country. Read the full article [here](#).

## WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

### Blinken Visits Qatar in Wake of Taliban Takeover

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin met with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and other top Qatari officials in Doha for talks on Afghanistan on Tuesday. Qatar, which hosts a major US airbase, has been the gateway for 58,000 people airlifted out of Afghanistan, nearly half the total number evacuated by US-led forces after the Taliban's takeover. Mr Blinken said Washington would continue to work with Qatar and other regional partners to evacuate US citizens and vulnerable Afghans from the Central Asian country.

### UAE Announces Plans to Boost Economy

The UAE plans to launch 50 new economic initiatives to boost the country's competitiveness and attract 550 billion dirhams (US\$150bn) in foreign direct investment in the next nine years. The projects include investing in technology and creating new visas to attract residents and skilled workers. The Gulf state has launched several measures over the past year to attract investment and foreigners to help the economy recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The changes also come amid a growing economic rivalry with its neighbour, Saudi Arabia, to be the region's trade and business hub.



A panorama of the Dubai skyline with Burj Khalifa in the centre, taken from the sea of Dubai in March 2021. Earlier this week, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced its plans to launch new economic initiatives to boost the country's competitiveness. Photo: Giuseppe Cacace / AFP.

### Lockdown Fatigue Tempts People to Relocate from Asia to the UAE

Hundreds of families have moved from Asia to the UAE in the past six months, with the country proving to be an attractive destination because of the way it has handled the Covid-19 pandemic. Dubai, in particular, is considered a good option for families because of its high vaccination rate, a return to in-school learning and open restaurants and bars. Tired of Singapore's zero-Covid policy which has restricted travel heavily and regular social lockdowns imposed when case numbers creep up, the UAE has seen a 20 percent increase in enquiries from people looking to relocate from here.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### Uncovering the Gatekeepers of Islamic Finance

In this webinar, co-organised by MEI(NUS) and the Centre for Islamic Economics and Finance, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (CIEF-HBKU), two industry experts will explore the sociological dimensions of Islamic finance and its institutions. In particular, the role of Sharia supervisory boards in regulating financial products will be discussed.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 15 September 2021 at 4.00pm** (SGT). For more details and to register, click [here](#).

### ME 101 Lecture Series 2021: Session 4

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 3rd lecture which aims to explore the relationship between China and the Middle East. This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 16 September 2021, at 5.00pm** (SGT). For more details and to register, click [here](#).

### In Conversation with Ambassador Robert Hunter: Making Sense of the Carter Doctrine

The Carter Doctrine, proclaimed in 1980, promised the use of all means necessary, including force, to defend US interests in the Persian Gulf. Once a clarion call enunciating America's stance against Soviet expansion, is the doctrine still relevant today? What lies at the core of America's Persian Gulf interests? Most importantly, is the US rethinking its role there?

MEI(NUS) will host Ambassador Robert Hunter, a top official in the Carter Administration who had in crafting the doctrine itself, to tackle these and other questions on America's evolving role in the Middle East.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 22 September 2021, at 10.00am** (SGT). For more details and to register, click [here](#).

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Ebrahim Raisi Set to Attend SCO Summit

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi is set to travel to Tajikistan next week in his first foreign trip since taking office. Speaking on condition of anonymity, sources in Tehran stated that Mr Raisi will attend the upcoming Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) summit held from 16 to 17 September 2021. Importantly, there are indications that the longstanding deadlock over Iran's accession to the bloc may finally be broken at the gathering.



### Israel to Present Covid-19 Booster Shot Data to FDA

Israel will present data from an extensive rollout of Covid-19 vaccine booster shots to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is weighing White House plans to begin a booster drive in the US. Dr Sharon Alroy-Preis, head of public health at Israel's Health Ministry, said the ministry had been asked by the FDA to brief its advisors at an upcoming virtual meeting on 17 September. A week ago, Israel began offering a Pfizer Covid-19 booster to people as young as 12 in a campaign that began in July among seniors. Israeli health officials said the drive has slowed a rise in severe illness caused by the Delta variant.

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