

# MEI Weekly.



An Iranian man fills his car with petrol at a gas station in Tehran on 27 October 2021. Gasoline stations in Iran were disrupted by a mysterious cyberattack which targeted a payment system, leading to unprecedented interference to the country's fuel distribution network. Photo: ATTA KENARE / AFP

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

**READ:** In our latest Insight piece, MEI Senior Research Fellow James M Dorsey writes that the Taliban's ability and willingness to control militants within its country is emerging as the key to the group gaining international recognition of its rule. Read his article [here](#).

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

### Gas Stations in Iran Disrupted by Cyberattack

A cyberattack targeting a payment system caused disruptions at gas stations across Iran, earlier this week. The attack, which resulted in long lines outside gas stations for hours, continues to be of unidentified origin and happened shortly before the anniversary of the November 2019 anti-government protests that erupted over rising fuel prices. Photographs on social media also depicted digital billboards in Tehran displaying the message "Khamenei, where is our fuel?", suggesting a political motive behind the attack. Iran has been no stranger to cyberattacks in recent years, with some directed at its nuclear programme and others, like the one that caused chaos in Iran's railway system in July, are aimed at its infrastructure.

### Erdogan Backpedals on Threat to Expel 10 Western Ambassadors

On Monday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stepped back on his threat to expel 10 Western ambassadors from the country, after co-ordinated statements were issued by the embassies confirming their compliance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Last week, the embassies had jointly called for the release of jailed Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala, leading Mr Erdogan to cast the incident as a threat to Turkish sovereignty. The reversal is a rare show of humility from the president and analysts say it has averted a potentially major diplomatic rift between Ankara and its Western allies that could have resulted in severe economic consequences and political instability for Turkey.



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan gestures during the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara on 27 October 2021. Mr Erdogan backpedalled on a recent threat to expel 10 Western ambassadors from Turkey, over calls to release a jailed Turkish philanthropist. Photo: ADEM ALTAN / AFP

### Kuwait Faces 'Unbearable' Heat Due to Climate Change

The Middle East continues to be hard-hit by the impact of climate change, with the region heating up at twice the global average. Since 2016, Kuwait has been recording unprecedented temperatures of 50 degree Celsius repeatedly and extreme weather changes have been occurring more frequently. With the mercury topping 53 degrees Celsius, a growing area of the country is becoming desert and the scorching heat is taking a toll on Kuwaitis. Activist Om Naief has called for more trees to be planted in the desert to eliminate pollution and to lower temperatures, while experts say more needs to be done to address climate issues in the region.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### Bridging the Gulf: Session 11

We would have all heard that Newcastle United has Saudi Arabian owners now, making KSA the third Gulf country to own a major football team after Qatar and the UAE, which own PSG and Manchester City, respectively. Will football be the new frontier for regional competition?



Join us, as we host Professor Simon Chadwick, who will examine the politics of sport among the Gulf states. This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 3 November 2021, at 5.00pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

### ME 101 Lecture Series 2021: Session 11

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 10th lecture which looks at the impacts that religion and political Islam in the Middle East have on Southeast Asia. This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Friday, 5 November 2021, at 5.00pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

### From the Middle East to Afghanistan: The Evolution of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province

Keen to know about the evolution of the Islamic State's footprint from Syria to Afghanistan and its current relationship with the Taliban? Will the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) launch an assassination campaign to eliminate high-level Taliban cadres with the same tactics previously used by the Taliban themselves when they attacked Afghan government officials? Will the Taliban seek greater co-operation with the West and/or other external powers to target ISKP?

To know all these and more, join us for this public talk which will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 9 November 2021, at 5.00 pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Iran Nuclear Negotiations to Resume in November

The international negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme is set to resume next month, although it is still unclear whether the US will be participating in them. Iran's chief negotiator and Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani met with Enrique Mora, a European Union negotiator, earlier this week to discuss the resumption of discussions. Mr Kani said that the exact date for the new talks will be announced within a week. Washington had been at odds with Tehran throughout the negotiations, which were stalled since the election of hardline Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi earlier in June.



### Erdogan to Discuss F-35 Jet Programme with Biden

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday that he will meet US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the upcoming COP26 global climate summit to discuss Turkey's ouster from the US-led F-35 jet programme. The summit is to be held in Glasgow between 31 October and 12 November. The US had removed Turkey, a NATO ally, from its programme in 2019 over Ankara's purchase of Russia's S-400 surface-to-air missile defence system.

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