

MEIWeekly.



The S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture is one of MEI-NUS' flagship events, which aims to provide greater awareness and understanding of the modern Middle East. This year's lecture is on **Wednesday, 27 October 2021** and the UAE's Assistant Minister for Cultural Affairs, His Excellency Omar Saif Ghobash, who is also the author of *Letters to a Young Muslim*, is the speaker. Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Law, Mr K. Shanmugam, will deliver the opening remarks. Click [here](#) to sign up.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

LISTEN & READ: In the 18th episode of our *Boots Off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond* podcast series, hear about how private sector companies are changing their approach to security and human rights, particularly when operating in complex or conflict-affected environments. Listen to the podcast and read the transcript [here](#).

REGISTER: His Excellency Omar Saif Ghobash, this year's speaker at the S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture, happening on **Wednesday, 27 October 2021**, wrote in his book – *Letters to a Young Muslim* – that Islam is not the exclusive property of the Arab world. To hear more about his advice to young Muslims, sign up for the event [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Washington Welcomes News of Direct Talks Between Iran and KSA

The US welcomes the news of direct communication between long-time Middle Eastern rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran, at a time when tensions are high in the region and Iran's recently-elected government has not held back in expressing its animosity towards the West. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud confirmed that the first talks between his country and Iran's new government had taken place, saying that the latest round happened on 21 September 2021. While Riyadh and Tehran have not conveyed any expectations of a major breakthrough, both sides have expressed support for easing tensions.

Dubai Sheikh Set Israeli Spyware on Ex-Wife in Custody Battle

When the hyper-wealthy ruler of Dubai found himself embroiled in a British court case with the Jordanian princess who was once his wife, he did more than hire top-shelf lawyers. He also deployed high-tech software purchased from an Israeli company to hack the cell phones of his ex-wife, two of her lawyers and three other associates. One of the lawyers, Baroness Fiona Shackleton, is a sitting member of the House of Lords — potentially adding friction to the close relationship between the United Kingdom and the UAE, which Dubai is a part of. It appeared to be the first confirmed case of the software, known as Pegasus being successfully used to hack the phone of a sitting British official.



Princess Haya Bint al-Hussein of Jordan (R) leaves the Royal Courts of Justice, accompanied by lawyer Fiona Shackleton (2R) in London in November 2019. This week, a British court found that Dubai's Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum had authorised the use of the Pegasus spyware to hack the phone of his ex-wife Princess Haya and those of her lawyers during the pair's divorce case in London. Photo: Isabel Infantes / AFP.

The Ship That Became a Bomb

A vast, decrepit oil tanker in the Red Sea will likely sink, catch fire or explode any day and there are growing accusations that the Houthis are using this impending ecological disaster as a power play – with potentially catastrophic consequences, not least for Yemenis themselves. The FSO Safer, an ultra-large crude oil tanker stationed near Yemen's Hodeidah port has been “dead” since 2017 – its steam boilers have run out of fuel and can no longer generate the power and steam needed to run vital systems. Since the boilers on the Safer stopped working, the ship – with over a million barrels of oil on board – has been a tinderbox, vulnerable to any incendiary.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

ME 101 Lecture Series 2021: Session 8

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 7th lecture which aims to examine the various dimensions of potential friction from the energy transition happening in the Gulf states. This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 14 October 2021, at 5.00pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

The Eagle Looks East: A Conversation with General (ret.) David H. Petraeus

MEI-NUS will hold a discussion with General (ret.) David H. Petraeus, the former head of the CIA and US Central Command, in which he will share insights about how the US' increasing focus on the Indo-Pacific will shape its military and intelligence strategies.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 19 October 2021, at 8.30pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

Ertuğrul Goes East: Turkey Rising in South Asia

Turkey's relations with the countries of South Asia have undergone significant changes recently. While Ankara and New Delhi enjoy cordial economic ties with two-way trade, they have had an uneasy political relationship due to Turkey's support for Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue and divergent views on the Gülen movement. With Turkey set to become a critical player in post-America Afghanistan, bilateral ties are likely to enter a difficult phase.

The panel discussion will look at the history of Turkey's links with South Asia and extend to exploring geopolitical impacts on the growing Ankara-Islamabad and Ankara-Dhaka ties, while examining the growing distance between Ankara and New Delhi.

This public lecture will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 20 October 2021, at 3.00pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Iran Optimistic about Nuclear Deal Talks Restarting Soon

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that he expects negotiations on the 2015 nuclear deal to restart in Austria soon. President Biden reversed Trump's decision to pull the US from international negotiations on curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions but talks in Vienna to revive the deal have been at an impasse since June this year, when Iran's ultraconservative new president was elected. Russian Foreign Minister Serge Lavrov also said that the negotiations “should be resumed as soon as possible” and called on the US to return to its obligation under the accord.



Former US Foe Likely to Emerge as Kingmaker in Iraqi Election

As Iraq readies for parliamentary elections this Sunday, 10 October, it is the party of renowned Shi'i Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr that look set to be kingmaker. Taking the largest share of the Iraqi parliament's 329 seats would mark the culmination of Sadr's years-long effort to consolidate power at the ballot box, on the streets and throughout the civil service. Sadr is a storied figure with a history of agitation against US troops after their invasion and has fierce loyalty from tens of thousands of pious and working-class followers. Since 2003, he has positioned himself as a sectarian militia leader, revolutionary figure and nationalist who can unify the country.

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