

# MEI Weekly



A picture of solar panels used to generate renewable energy at the Sustainability Pavilion of the Dubai Expo 2020 in the UAE. Singapore President Halimah Yacob delivered a virtual keynote speech for the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week Summit this week and mentioned there is scope for Singapore to collaborate with the UAE on low-carbon technologies. Photo: Karim Sahib / AFP.

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

**READ:** In our latest *Insights* article, MEI Senior Research Fellow Asif Shuja says the return of the Taliban is a lesser evil for Iran than the continued US presence in Afghanistan and that Iran seems to be better equipped to deal with the group now. Read the article [here](#).

**READ:** MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino opines that this week's attack on Abu Dhabi by the Houthis leaves the UAE with two poor choices: hasten disengagement from the conflict or upgrade its military involvement. Read his piece [here](#).

**READ:** In our latest *MEI Perspectives* article, MEI Research Fellow Aisha Al-Sarihi prescribes what Arab countries should push for since they will be hosting the next two climate change conferences. Read her views [here](#).

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

### Singapore-UAE Join Hands on Climate Crisis

Singapore can work with the UAE on solutions that reduce planet-warming carbon emissions to sustain “robust global responses to the climate crisis”, said President Halimah Yacob earlier this week. These solutions include hydrogen fuel and carbon capture, utilisation and storage. Delivering a virtual keynote speech for the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week Summit held in Dubai, she highlighted green innovations and efforts in the UAE and added that Singapore is keen to collaborate with the UAE on improving the technical feasibility and the establishment of supply chains for low-carbon hydrogen.

### Houthis Behind Latest UAE Attack

Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen used advanced missiles and drones to target the UAE on Monday, 17 January 2022, killing three and causing a fire in a construction area — a deadly demonstration of the expanding threat to Middle East security posed by Tehran's emboldened allies. The strike amounted to the most visible display of the military advancements made by a militia which less than a decade ago, relied on machine guns and rocket launchers. The Houthis have hit the UAE before but this was the first time the Emiratis acknowledged it.



Fighters of UAE-trained troops of the Giants Brigade patrol the Bayhan district in Yemen's Shabwa governorate on Wednesday, 19 January 2022. After an attack on Abu Dhabi by Houthi insurgents on Monday, a Saudi-led coalition killed 14 people in air strikes on Yemen's rebel-held capital. Photo: Saleh Al-Obeidi / AFP.

### Iran and Russia Show Unity Against US

Sitting across a long table from President Vladimir Putin at a Covid-conscious distance, President Ebrahim Raisi reminded his Russian counterpart during his two-day trip to Moscow on Wednesday, that Tehran had been “resisting America for 40 years”. Now that Russia was plunging deeper into its own confrontation with the US, Mr Raisi told Mr Putin it was time to take on “the power of the Americans with an increased synergy between our two countries.” The two leaders discussed a 20-year agreement which includes technology transfers from Russia, purchase of Russian military equipment and the Kremlin investing in Iranian energy infrastructure.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### Iran-Europe Dynamics and the JCPOA Negotiations

It is notable that since the start of the Iranian nuclear controversy about two decades ago, the European Union (EU) has been steadfastly mediating between Iran and the US. Through this webinar, we seek to explore the EU's motivation behind its central role in the nuclear negotiations, the nature of Iran-EU relations and what does the EU foresee Iran's role in the Middle East to be, alongside its own – specifically in the wake of the gradually receding role of the US in the region.



This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 25 January 2022**, from **4.00pm to 5.30pm** (SGT). For more details and to register, [click here](#).

### [Book Discussion] Routledge Handbook on China-Middle East Relations

This book brings together a mix of established and emerging international scholars to provide valuable analytical insights into how China's growing Middle East presence affects intraregional development, trade, security and diplomacy. As the largest extra-regional economic actor in the Middle East, China is the biggest source of foreign direct investment into the region and the largest trading partner for most Middle Eastern states. Join us, as we analyse this further and also consider the reverberations in great power politics as the US, Russia, India, Japan and the European Union also have considerable interests in the region.



This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 27 January 2022**, from **4.00pm to 5.00pm** (SGT). For more details and to register, [click here](#).

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Agreements Shaping Up in Vienna Talks

The spokesperson for the Iranian foreign ministry said a number of differences in views during the talks on the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) have been cleared, as the agreements among the negotiators are being put down on paper. Speaking at a weekly press conference, Saeed Khatibzadeh said many tables have been prepared in the process of expert negotiations in Vienna to revive the JCPOA and remove the sanctions on Iran.



### US Might Re-label Houthis a Terrorist Group

US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday his administration is considering re-designating Yemen's Houthi movement as an international terrorist organisation following the recent drone and missile attacks on the UAE claimed by the group. When asked if he supported returning the Iran-aligned Houthis to the US list of foreign terrorist organisations, from which they were removed nearly a year ago, he replied saying it's under consideration but conceded that it's going to be very difficult to end the conflict.

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