

# MEIWeekly.



Protesters take part in a rally over a hike in energy prices in Almaty, on 5 January 2022. On the same day, the Kazakhstan government declared a nationwide state of emergency after protests erupted into clashes and saw demonstrators storm government buildings. Photo: Abduaziz Madyarov / AFP.

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

**LISTEN:** In the 21st episode of our *Boots Off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond* podcast series, find out about weapons used in the conflict in Syria and open-source investigation tools and techniques. Listen to the podcast [here](#).

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

### Putin Seizes on Unrest in Kazakhstan

Long adept at stoking unrest in the West, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Kazakhstan yesterday to try to extinguish the latest in a series of dangerous fires to engulf the lands of the former Soviet Union – territory that Moscow views as its own sphere of influence but has struggled to keep calm. The turmoil in Kazakhstan has once again exposed the vulnerability of the strongman leaders the Kremlin has trusted to keep order, in addition to presenting Russia with yet another opportunity to reassert its influence in its former Soviet domain – one of Mr Putin's most cherished long-term goals. The arrival of 2,500 troops in Kazakhstan from a Russian-led military alliance amid continuing spasms of violent protest was the fourth time in just two years that Moscow has flexed its muscle in neighbouring states and once Russian troops arrive, they seldom, if ever, go home.

### Turkish Inflation at Highest in Erdogan Era

Turkey's annual inflation rate surged to 36.1 per cent last month, its highest in the 19 years that President Erdogan has ruled, laying bare the depths of a currency crisis engineered by his unorthodox interest rate-cutting policies. In December alone, consumer prices took a rare step into double-digits, rising 13.58 per cent, as Turkish Statistical Institute data showed, eating deeper into the earnings and savings of Turks rattled by the economic turmoil. Some economists predict inflation could reach as high as 50 per cent in a few months unless the direction of monetary policy is reversed.



A demonstration against hikes in the price of consumers' electricity and gas bills taking place in front of the Ministry of Energy in Ankara on 6 January 2022. Turkey's annual inflation rate surged to its highest level since 2002, propelled by a currency crisis linked to President Erdogan's unconventional economic approach. Photo: Adem Altan / AFP.

### Attacks on US Allies Raise US-Iran Tensions

Yemen's Houthi rebels seized an Emirati-flagged ship, explosive-laden drones targeted the Iraqi capital's airport and hackers hit two Israeli newspapers, raising tensions in the Middle East as Iran-aligned militias attacked US allies on the second anniversary of the killing of one of Tehran's top generals, Qassem Soleimani. Meanwhile, Iran held a massive memorial for him in the country's capital to mark the anniversary of the American drone strike in Iraq that killed the military leader and an Iraqi militia commander on 3 January 2020. It was not immediately clear if Monday's attacks were co-ordinated or backed by Iran but they came following protests by Iran-allied paramilitary groups in Iraq over the weekend. The attacks also come as Iran negotiates with the US and other world powers in Vienna to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

## 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

### Time is Running Out for Iran Nuclear Deal

The latest round of talks on the Iran nuclear deal kicked off on Monday, with pressure on Tehran to "add real urgency" to the negotiations or risk losing any chance of the deal being revived. Some officials close to the talks said the window to negotiate a return to the 2015 deal could close by the end of January or the beginning of February, although others claimed that there is no fixed date.



### First of Turkey-Armenia Talks

Special envoys from Turkey and Armenia will hold the first round of talks aimed at normalising ties on 14 January 2022 in Moscow, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said. Though neighbours, Armenia and Turkey have been bitterly at odds for the killing of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915, which Armenia considers a genocide, alongside other issues. Both countries signed a landmark peace accord in 2009 to restore ties and open their shared border but the deal was never ratified and ties have remained tense.

## FOLLOW US FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!



## CAN'T MAKE IT TO OUR EVENTS? LISTEN AT YOUR OWN TIME!

