

# MEI Weekly.



A British Petroleum (BP) station sign is seen in Moscow. In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, oil companies BP and Shell have announced their plans to disinvest from Russia. An exit from Russia now could mean financial losses for the companies and kill future opportunities for doing business with the country. Photo: Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP.

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

**LISTEN:** In the latest episode of our *Boots Off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond* podcast series, hear about Russian private military companies from Ukraine to Syria – the emergence of a new tool of clandestine warfare. Listen to the episode [here](#).

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

### BP and Shell Lead Rush to Exit Russia

The rush for British Petroleum (BP) and Shell to disinvest from Russia is impressively quick since it is possible to imagine an alternative script in which the oil companies' boards tried to buy time by issuing woolly "all options are open" statements. A definitive statement to sell its 20 per cent stake in Rosneft – in BP's case – and ditch all partnerships with Gazprom – Shell's position – leaves no ambiguity – there can be no going back. The mechanics of the exit are yet to be determined and BP's route to disentanglement is probably simpler. The company has had a wild ride in Russia over the years but since 2013 it has been reduced to the role of dividend-collecting passive investor in Rosneft.

### Ukraine Invasion Fuels Erdogan-Putin Friction

Last Thursday, two military cargo planes entered Ukrainian airspace soon after midnight to evacuate diplomatic staff and other citizens of Turkey from Kyiv but they ended up stranded. The stuck planes have now become a display of President Erdogan's misreading of the Ukraine situation, opening him to criticism at home and for misjudging President Putin. In recent years, the two leaders have found themselves on opposite sides of conflicts – like in Azerbaijan, Libya and Syria – and this has added to the list.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) meets with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan (L) in Sochi in September 2021. Russia's invasion of Ukraine caught the Turkish government off guard, which resulted in the failure to evacuate Turkish diplomats and citizens from Ukraine before the start of the war. Photo: Vladimir Smirnov / POOL / AFP.

### Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah Allowed to Stay

Israel's supreme court handed a partial victory to a group of Palestinian families whose looming eviction from their homes in East Jerusalem contributed to the tensions that led to last year's 11-day Gaza war. After years of legal struggles, Israel's highest court accepted the main argument of the families, allowing them to remain in their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood until the dispute over the ownership of the property is settled – a process that experts said could take years, if it gets settled at all. The court decision defused a potentially explosive issue, even as tensions in East Jerusalem remain high.

## CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

### #ICYMI Iran-Europe Dynamics and the JCPOA Negotiations

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. This webinar explores the EU's motivations behind its central role in the nuclear negotiations, the nature of Iran-EU relations and the organisation's foresight of Iran's role in the Middle East.



Click [here](#) to catch the informative session we had.

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

Catch the insightful discussion we had with China expert Jonathan Fulton, who shared about the various ways Beijing's presence is growing in the Middle East.



Click [here](#) to know more about the effects of these developments.

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### US, Iran Still Split Over Key Nuclear Issues

Iranian and US officials are entering a crucial week of negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear deal, with significant differences remaining on several key issues and new concerns that Russia's invasion of Ukraine could complicate the talks. With Iran continuing to expand its nuclear work, Western diplomats have warned that the negotiations could collapse if a deal is not reached this week.



### Start-ups to Chase Saudi Arabia Defence Market

Saudi Arabia is set to host some of the world's most exciting start-ups to be part of over 800 exhibitors participating at the World Defence Show early next week in Riyadh. As the kingdom pushes ahead with localising 50 per cent of its defence spending in the Vision 2030 objectives, contracts worth millions of dollars will be up for grabs in the coming years – a slice of which these companies will be chasing during the four-day event. The biennial event will offer a unique platform for defence companies to present their solutions from the air, sea, land, space and security sectors.

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