

# MEIWeekly.



Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (L) is toured around Expo 2020 Dubai by the United Arab Emirates's Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (R) in December 2021. In recent weeks, Saudi and Emirati leaders have declined to speak to President Joe Biden as the US is working to build international support for Ukraine and contain a surge in oil prices. Photo: AFP.

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

**READ:** In the latest piece of our *MEI Perspectives* series, experts provide their views on what some of the spillover effects of the war in Ukraine will be, for the Middle East and beyond. Read the article [here](#).

**READ:** In our latest *Insight* article, find out about the rise of new thalassocracies — states possessing significant assets to assert their power over maritime spaces — in the western Indian Ocean region due to distributions of power in the international system and the meteoric rise of Arab Gulf states. Read it [here](#).

**READ:** MEI Research Fellow Clemens Chay notes there is renewed buoyancy for the Omani economy but the bigger question revolves around the country's ability to break free from the vicious cycle of dependence on its hydrocarbons. Read his piece [here](#).

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

### Saudi, Emirati Leaders Decline Calls with Biden

The White House unsuccessfully tried to arrange calls between President Biden and the de facto leaders of Saudi Arabia and the UAE as the US was working to build international support for Ukraine and contain a surge in oil prices. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the UAE's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan both declined US requests to speak to Mr Biden of late, as they have become more vocal in their criticism of American policy in the Gulf. The two countries share concerns about the restrained US response to recent missile strikes by Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen against the UAE and Saudi Arabia as well as the revival of the Iran nuclear deal.

### UAE Could Undermine Sanctions on Russia

Since the invasion of Ukraine, much of the world has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russian financial institutions and the circle around Russian President Vladimir Putin — except for the UAE. At least 38 businessmen or officials linked to Mr Putin own dozens of properties in Dubai — collectively valued at more than \$314 million. Although a close partner to the US in Middle Eastern security matters, the UAE has in recent years also become a popular playground for the Russian rich, partly because of its reputation for asking few questions about the sources of foreign money. Now, the Emirates may undercut some of the penalties on Russia by continuing to welcome targeted oligarchs.



A picture showing the Palm Jumeirah in Dubai — where two dozen close allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin own luxury properties. While much of the world has imposed sanctions on Russia since the invasion of Ukraine, allies of Mr Putin are still welcome in the UAE which has yet to condemn the act or enforce sanctions. Photo: Giuseppe Cacace / AFP.

### Israel's President Visits Turkey

President Isaac Herzog was received on Wednesday in Ankara, with pomp and ceremony by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a state visit described by both sides as an effort to reset broken relations between the one-time regional allies. Though the historic visit was more about mood and optics than executive decisions, it is believed to be a new turning point in the two countries' ties.

## 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

### Iran's Envoy Back in Vienna for Final Talks

After a brief trip to Tehran for consultations, Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani has returned to Vienna to resume talks about the deal. Iran has been striving to portray the US as the party that needs to make the final political move. However, a last-minute hangup came with Russia's demand for guarantees that Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over the Ukraine war will not impact future trade with Iran.



### UN Aims for Libya Elections Agreement Soon

A senior United Nations (UN) Libya official is seeking agreement this month on election laws and constitutional arrangements, with rival factions locked in a dangerous stand-off. Stephanie Williams said she wanted the talks between members of the parliament and high state council, the country's two recognised legislative bodies, to take place before 1 April. Libya faces a political crisis after the parliament last week swore in a new government with the incumbent administration refusing to cede power.

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