

# MEI Weekly.



The MEI Annual Conference 2022 is happening online over two days this month – 18 & 19 May. This year's edition will examine how Asian giants China and India are staking positions in the Middle East. Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean will speak at the opening, while Minister for Home Affairs and Law K. Shanmugam will deliver a keynote. Click [here](#) to register.

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

**LISTEN & READ:** In the latest episode of our *Boots Off the Ground: Security in Transition in the Middle East and Beyond* podcast series learn about how Russia's use of mercenaries exposes what may be critical vulnerabilities in the Russian will to fight and the country's state power. Listen to it or read the transcript [here](#).

**REGISTER:** At this year's MEI Annual Conference, international experts such as Dr Martin S. Indyk, author of the book *Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of the Middle East Diplomacy*, Ambassador Shivshankar Menon, former national security advisor and foreign secretary of India, Ambassador Yuval Rotem, former director-general of the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, and Dr Nasser Saidi, ex-chief economist at the Dubai International Financial Centre, are among the panellists. Don't miss the chance to get insights from them. Sign up [here](#).

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

### Israeli Parliament Narrowly Avoids Dissolving

The Islamist Ra'am party rejoined a fragile eight-way coalition, having suspended its involvement a month ago in protest of police actions at the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The government has narrowly avoided needing to call another general election – it would have been Israel's fifth in less than four years. However, despite the coalition's current respite, recent developments have only underscored the diminishing prospects of the government which was formed less than a year ago in an effort to end a chaotic political stalemate. Since it is operating without a majority, making it difficult to pass legislation, many Israelis expect to be heading back to the polls soon enough.

### Aramco: World's Most Valuable Company

Higher oil prices pushed shares of the state-backed Saudi Arabian oil company to record levels, marking the first time that Saudi Aramco has regained the top spot in global market capitalisation since 2020. They have overtaken Apple as the world's most valuable company; although the tech giant recently recorded its third-best quarter for revenues ever, it is grappling with supply shortages and lockdowns in China. Saudi Aramco is expected to announce bumper profits when it reports first-quarter earnings on Sunday.



Visitors stop at the Saudi Aramco exhibition section at the Misk Global Forum on innovation and technology held in Riyadh on 13 November 2019. The oil company's market capitalisation on Wednesday was \$2.426 trillion, exceeding Apple's \$2.415 trillion by just over \$10 billion. Photo: FAYEZ NURELDINE / AFP

### Al Jazeera Journalist Killed in the West Bank

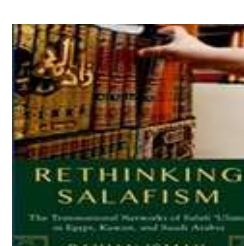
Shireen Abu Akleh's colleagues claim she was killed by Israeli fire shortly after arriving at the scene of a raid near Jenin. Israel has contested the claim, suggesting that Palestinian gunmen may have been responsible. Ms Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American, has been recognised by fellow journalists as a veteran journalist and an inspiration, breaking barriers as a female Arab reporter. Israel's foreign ministry said that it had offered to conduct a joint investigation with the Palestinians but the Palestinian Authority had refused; this was refuted by a senior Palestinian official.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

### [Book Talk] Rethinking Salafism: The Transnational Networks of Salafi 'Ulama

Despite receiving scrutiny as the one of the main ideological sources for extremist violence perpetrated by jihadi groups, Salafism is not monolithic. Learn about the different approaches to Salafism in Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and how they cooperate to foster a collective Salafi identity.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Thursday, 26 May 2022, at 5pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).



### Turkey's Middle East Ambitions and Regional Role

In the wake of Washington recalibrating its position in the Middle East, Turkey's role becomes crucial not only because of its intrinsic strength but also due to its relative standing by virtue of its NATO membership which could make it a conduit for Western powers. The discussion aims to delve into understanding Ankara's Middle East ambitions and its regional role.



This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 1 June 2022, at 4pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Spain and Morocco Reopen Borders

Land borders between Spain and Morocco are set to reopen next week – they had been closed due to Covid-19 restrictions and tensions between the two countries. The announcement came as Madrid and Rabat are working to mend relations after a months-long spat centred on the disputed region of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony annexed by Morocco in 1976.



### National Dialogue in Egypt

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has assigned the National Youth Conference, which is affiliated with the presidency, to organise a political dialogue with all forces and has promised to attend the final sessions. Al-Sisi also called for the reactivation of the presidential pardon committee, tasked with reviewing the conditions of political detainees and assessing their release; its work has been mostly ineffective since 2016. Opposition figures, many of whom were imprisoned by the al-Sisi government, have voiced concerns that the conference will be dominated by those who are pro-regime.

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