

MEI Weekly.



(L-R) Bahrain Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani, then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former US President Donald Trump, and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan hold up documents after signing the Abraham Accords in Washington on 15 September 2020. Reports this week said Saudi Arabia is engaging in serious talks with Israel as it senses a shift among its public in favour of establishing official ties with the majority Jewish state. Photo: SAUL LOEB / AFP

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: In the latest compiled volume of our Insights series, learn about the new developments under the Taliban's control of Afghanistan and the longterm effects of the US' disentanglement in the Central Asian country. Read the compilation [here](#).

READ: MEI Research Fellow Aisha Al-Sarihi says that the US needs to solve shortterm oil and gas price shocks while finding ways to not ignore its commitment to climate priorities. Read her piece [here](#).

READ: MEI Research Fellow Aisha Al-Sarihi shares her views on Iran's climate change policy in ISPI's Mediterranean Dialogues newsletter. Read it [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Saudi Arabia Seeks to Build Ties with Israel

In an about-face from previous policy, Saudi Arabia is engaging in talks with Israel to build business relations with the country and create new security arrangements. The kingdom sensed a shift in its population towards establishing diplomatic relations. This comes just one week after the UAE signed a free trade deal with Israel, signifying that this is part of a regional shift of warming relations towards the majority Jewish state. The US is also involved in building new agreements between the countries and the revelation brings renewed discussion of the longterm effects of the Abraham Accords.

Retired General Embroiled in Lobbying Scheme

According to newly released court documents, retired US four-star Marine general John R. Allen secretly lobbied for the government of Qatar and lied about his role to investigators. Allen, who has been serving as president of the Brookings Institution think tank since 2017 until he was put on leave when the news broke, was the deputy commander of the US Central Command. The lobbying occurred after he left the military and before he joined the Brookings Institution while Qatar was under a blockade imposed by some of its neighbours. Allen did not register to lobby for Qatar which is required under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act.



Retired Marine Corps Gen. John Allen, special presidential envoy for the global coalition to counter the Islamic (IS) group, testifies before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 25 February 2015 in Washington. The committee heard testimony on the topic of "The Fight Against ISIS: Building The Coalition And Ensuring Military Effectiveness." AFP PHOTO/BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI

BJP Spokeswoman Comments Bring Backlash

A spokeswoman for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) made offensive televised remarks about the Prophet Mohammad last month which has caused major backlash across the Middle East. The UAE, Oman, Indonesia, Iraq, Maldives, Jordan, Libya and Bahrain are the most recent additions to countries that have condemned the remarks, prompting an apology from the BJP. This poses a major hit to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has made significant effort during his tenure to strengthen Middle East relations.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

Innovation and Collaboration. The 25th Anniversary of the Singapore-Israel Industrial Research and Development Foundation

2022 marks the 25th anniversary of the Singapore-Israel Industrial Research and Development Foundation which has funded about 190 projects since its inception. The active collaboration between the two innovative countries – Singapore and Israel – which has continued to strengthen over the past five decades, will be discussed in detail.



This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 15 June 2022, at 4.00 pm (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: In Search of Silver Linings in the Energy Transition

The war in Ukraine has forced Europe to re-examine its security strategy and energy dependence on Russian oil and gas but it is not just Europe, and energy, that will be affected. What will the various impacts of the war be? What is the outlook for Singapore and other countries in Asia? Will the climate emergency return to the headlines? Join us for this event to find out.



This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 21 June 2022, at 11.00 am (SGT)**. For more details and to register, click [here](#).

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

PA Awaits Biden's Visit to the Region

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince MBS is set to embark on his first major extra-regional tour since 2018. He will reportedly travel to Egypt, Algeria, Cyprus and Greece this month. As part of the tour, he will also travel to Turkey in a sign of warming relations between the two regional powerhouses. A Saudi official said that the purpose of the crown prince's tour is for the kingdom to enhance relations with its EU partners and end its dispute with Turkey.



KSA Opens Genteel World of Pro Golf

In a sudden escalation of an increasingly bitter fight for control of elite professional golf, PGA Tour suspended 17 players who are participating in the first event of the new Saudi Arabia-backed tour, the LIV Golf International Series, not long after they had hit their first tee shots. The tour's action seemed to be designed to ward off one of the biggest threats it has faced and consumed professional golf in recent months. The feud features star players, Saudi billions and manicured courses – all in the genteel world of elite golf, an unlikely and uneasy forum for a public spat over money.

FOLLOW US FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!



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

