

MEIWeekly.



(L-R) Russian President Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pose for a photo before a trilateral meeting on Syria in Tehran on July 19, 2022. Photo: Sergei Savostyanov / SPUTNIK / AFP

WHAT'S NEWS: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS, & MORE

- In the latest installment of our Insights series, Dr Jonathan Fulton discusses China's maritime strategy in the Middle East, exploring their investments in ports and industrial parks and how they fit into China's broader BRI strategy. Read the article [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Putin Meets Erdogan and Raisi in Tehran

In a first for Putin since the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian president made an international trip outside the borders of the former Soviet Union to meet with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The leaders discussed the war in Ukraine and highlighted the increased trade between Iran and Russia. Recently declassified US intelligence indicates that Iran plans to sell hundreds of drones to Russia to aid in its war effort, a sign of increasing cooperation among two countries that have been increasingly internationally isolated.

Iconic Mosque Damaged in Restoration Work

The Shah Mosque, a 17th century architectural icon in Iran's third largest city, Isfahan, has been damaged in recent restoration work on its dome. Scaffolding has damaged some of the design, along with one side of the dome appearing uneven and the mosque's distinctive flower design appearing to not match. The restorer, Mehdi Pakdel, says the work is "not yet finished", and the restorers still can rectify the damage.



A 400-year-old iconic mosque in Iran's central city of Isfahan listed as a UN World Heritage Site has been damaged by scaffolding during restoration work, officials said on July 18, 2022. Photo: ATTA KENARE / AFP

Mixed Reviews on Biden's Middle East Trip

President Biden's four day trip to the Middle East last week where he visited Israel, the West Bank, and Saudi Arabia was met with mixed responses from the international community. Biden staffers were said to have celebrated the successes of the trip on the flight back to the United States, while critics scrutinize the US president's friendly fist bump with the Saudi Arabian leader and his ability to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons.

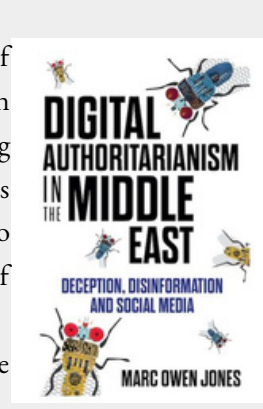
CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

[Book Talk] Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East

In this webinar, Dr Marc Owen Jones will explain the chains of information operations in the Middle East, particularly the main projectors of digital media power in the Gulf Arab states. Describing a new era of Gulf politics as a "post-truth moment," Dr Jones argues that digital technology has been employed in influence operations to the degree that right-wing American policy and foreign policy of Gulf states intertwine.

Dr Jones' upcoming book, Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East, will also address issues such as sportswashing, pseudo-reality industries, and the silencing of journalists and women. Join the Middle East Institute for this book talk with the author.

This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Wednesday, 27 July 2022, from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm (SGT)**. Find more information about the event [here](#).



One Jump Ahead: Is the UAE ahead of the Gulf pack?

Following his ascension, the new President of the UAE, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, has shown no signs of slowing down. From a directive granting children of Emirati mothers the same benefits as other citizens in education and health to a financial package for low-income citizens, he has shown his penchant for supporting domestic constituencies. What is the strategy for harmonising policies among the seven emirates? Crucially, how will the GCC states develop a sustainable plan for Covid-resilience? Are there any social trade-offs for such moves?



The Middle East Institute will welcome two experts, Mr Nasser Al Shaikh and Dr Omar Al-Ubaydli, to address these issues and more. This public talk will be conducted online via Zoom on **Tuesday, 2 Aug 2022, from 4.00 pm to 5.15 pm SGT/ 12pm – 1:15 pm Abu Dhabi/ 11 am – 12:15 pm Manama**. Learn more about and register for the event [here](#).

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

Saudi Arabia to launch new airline "very soon"

Mohammed Alkhuraisi, vice president of strategy and business intelligence at Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation, has told a news outlet that the final touches are being made to unveil a new Saudi Arabian airline. "I know it's going to fly very soon", Alkhuraisi said. The new airline is an

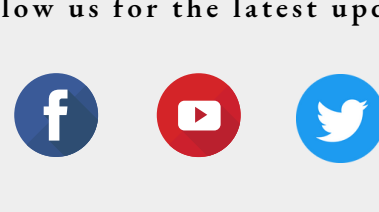


important step for Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 campaign, supporting its goal of attracting 100 million tourists by the end of the decade and creating 1.1 million new jobs throughout the country.

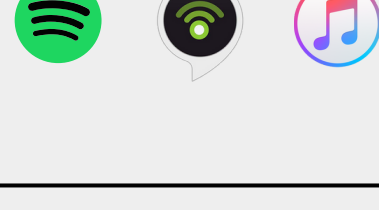
US is committed to the Middle East says Biden

At a meeting during his trip to Saudi Arabia last week, President Biden assured Middle East leaders that the US is "not going anywhere" from the region. "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran", he said.

Follow us for the latest updates!



Can't make it to our events? Listen in your own time!



Copyright © 2021 Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore. All rights reserved. Middle East Institute Events and Publications.

Our mailing address is:
Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Block B, #06-06
Singapore 119620
Singapore

Subscribe to our mailing list [here](#).