

MEIWeekly.



Supporters of the Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr (image) protest at a rival bloc's nomination for prime minister, in the city of Nasiriyah in Iraq's southern Dhi Qar province, late on July 27, 2022. The protests are the latest challenge for oil-rich Iraq, which remains mired in a political and a socioeconomic crisis despite elevated global energy prices. Photo: ASAAD NIAZI / AFP

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

- **READ:** MEI Visiting Professor Gyorgy Busztin discusses how Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to Tehran reshapes Iranian ties with the Gulf countries. Read the article [here](#).
- **LISTEN AND READ:** In the latest instalment of the MEI's Boots Off the Ground podcast series, MEI Principle Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino talks with Cybint founder and CEO Roy Zur about the future of cyber warfare and cybersecurity. Listen to the episode or read the transcript and [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Middle East Countries Hit by Climate Crises

From 50 degrees Celsius temperatures throughout the region and sandstorms in Iraq to rising soil salinity in Egypt's Nile Delta and drought in Afghanistan, the Middle East is feeling the effects of climate change. Temperatures have risen far faster than in other regions of the world, and the World Bank expects the region to lose six to fourteen per cent of its GDP due to water scarcity by 2050. The IMF estimates that countries must spend the equivalent of 3.3 per cent of GDP every year for the next 10 years to adequately adapt their infrastructure and economies. The Middle East is vulnerable to climate change, with regional instability, unemployment and often hindered civil society preventing policy change.

MBS Meets with Leaders of Greece, France

In his first visit to Europe since the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss the rattled oil markets following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A presidential aide said the Iran nuclear deal and human rights in Saudi Arabia were also on the agenda. The leader also visited Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in Athens, and stated that their two countries would sign a deal on renewable energy as well as discuss other investments and security.



French President Emmanuel Macron hosts Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for talks in Paris on July 28, 2022, outraging rights groups and the fiancée of slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Photo: BENOIT TESSIER / POOL / AFP

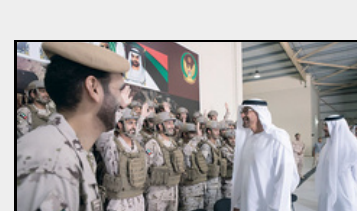
Iraqi Protesters Storm Parliament Building

Hundreds of protests broke into Baghdad's Green Zone and into the Parliament building on Wednesday. The protesters, supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr, a Shia cleric critical of American and Iranian influence in Iraq, oppose Mohammed al-Sudani's bid for prime minister as they believe him to be too close to Iran. Al-Sadr won the election last October, but has been unable to build a governing coalition since.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

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](#).

#ICYMI: [Book Talk] Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East

In this webinar, Dr Marc Owen Jones explains 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 was conducted online via Zoom on Wednesday, 27 July 2022, from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm (SGT). Learn more and watch a recording of the event [here](#).

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

Japanese PM Eyeing Trip to ME in Late August

With oil markets in disarray in the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is considering traveling to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to help stabilize them, sources say. Japan imports much of its energy needs, and 90 per cent of its crude oil is imported from the Middle East. The visit would come after his planned trip to Tunisia for TICAD, an international conference on African development on 27 and 28 August.



'Mirror Line' Concept Revealed for SA's Neom

According to hundreds of pages of confidential planning documents seen by the Wall Street Journal, a major component of Saudi Arabia's Neom project has been revealed. Fleshing out previous statements from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman about an idea for a linear city, the 'Mirror Line' calls for a parallel set of two buildings 75 miles long and 1,600 feet tall running across the desert. The project faces challenges ranging from a 2030 completion deadline to the curvature of the Earth.

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