

# MEIWeekly.



Bahraini Minister of Oil and Gas sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa (R), Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar Ismail (C) and Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (L) - Part of the OPEC group arrive to attend the 29th annual Middle East Petroleum and Gas conference in the Bahraini capital Manama, on May 16, 2022. On Monday, Saudi Arabia suggested that OPEC and its allies could cut oil production to stabilize the market, resulting in a sharp rise in prices on Tuesday.  
Photo: Mazen Mahdi / AFP

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

- **READ:** Climate change problems in the Middle East are often overlooked, but their threats are significant. MEI Research fellow Dr. Aisha Al-Sarihi discusses the national and regional risks associated with this problem as well as its impact on the region. Read the article [here](#).

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

### Saudi Hints at OPEC+ Oil-Output Cut

Oil prices soared on Tuesday after Saudi Arabia floated the idea of OPEC+ output cuts to support prices. The Saudi energy minister said that the producer group and its allies had the means to deal with challenges including cutting production. US officials are purportedly in dismay as they had believed the kingdom would ease the market after rising oil costs due to inflation and the Russo-Ukrainian war. Many consider this to be a calculated move as sources point to Riyadh's dissatisfaction with Washington over the Iran nuclear deal among several other issues, further hinting at a deeper disconnect between them.

### China Cements Influence in Iraq

China has grown from strength to strength in oil-rich Iraq and is expanding its presence under a 2019 "oil for construction" deal. A scholar asserts that Beijing has had an interest in "deeply entrenching itself" in the region, which was largely under U.S. control. Under the 2019 deal, China will build schools in Iraq and other infrastructures in exchange for the sale of 100,000 barrels of Iraqi oil each day. In addition to that, more Iraqi businesses have been venturing into Chinese markets, while an association in Baghdad has started to offer Mandarin language classes to locals.



Supervisors talk at the construction site for a school, part of the Iraq-China "oil for construction" deal, in the Sumer neighbourhood of Nasiriyah city, in Iraq's southern Dhi Qar province, on July 20, 2022. China has gained a major foothold in oil-rich Iraq, shaking up Western domination in fields from energy to construction, even as some warn infrastructure projects could leave Baghdad in debt.  
Photo: Asaad Niazi / AFP

### Israel's Gaza Strategy keeps Hamas at bay

Tensions between Israel and Palestinian militants have twice erupted into violence in recent months; however, Hamas has sat out on each event. This is due to the fact that Israel has softened its stance on imports to Gaza and is helping to facilitate exports for the Palestinian enclave. Additionally, more permits have been issued for Gazans to find jobs in Israel, in addition to improved water, food, and gas supplies. The strategy employed has raised the drawbacks for Hamas to engage in any kind of conflict with the Israelis.

## CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

### ME 101 Lecture Series 2022 #02: Geopolitical Competition in the Middle East | Iran & Turkey – Spoilers of the Regional System?

Throughout history, the Middle East has been locked in engagements with the West through crusades, wars, colonialism and terrorism. However, beyond the clichés and convenient facades lie many lesser-known facets from economic transformation to climate change. This series of lectures will give you a more comprehensive overview of the region and its inevitable impacts on Singapore and the rest of the globe.



Join us for the 2nd lecture of 2022 as MEI scholars Dr. Gyorgy Busztin and Dr. Asif Shuja detail the policies of Iran and Turkey to further explain how both of these powerful non-Arab nations are challenging the primarily Arab-dominated regional order. This lecture will be conducted in person at the Level 6 Conference Room at 29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace and online via Zoom on 1 September 2022, at 4.30 PM (SGT). For more details and to register, click [here](#).

### Bridging the Gulf Series 15: Wither Self-Sufficiency? Unpacking the UAE's Food Security Strategy

Concerns about global food supplies have been exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine crisis, compelling states across the Middle East and North Africa to revisit their food security policies. The UAE, for one, announced its "National Food Strategy 2051" in 2018 and has since acquired substantial agricultural and food production assets from Latin America to South Asia. It also aims to become a major player in the production and distribution of fertiliser, while combining this approach with sustainability policies (particularly renewable energy) and the acquisition of shares in global food commodity trading firms. Considering that the UAE imports 80 to 90 percent of its food, how does it address the perennial debate between imports and self-sufficiency? Is value chain management a more appropriate strategy than farmland investments? How does Abu Dhabi manage food accessibility for vulnerable groups such as migrant workers? More broadly, what is the future of global security as several crises loom?



Bridging the Gulf: Session 11 The Middle East Institute will host H.E. Dr. Abdunnasser Al Shaali, the UAE's Assistant Minister for Economic and Trade Affairs, to address these questions and more. Join us for this public talk that will be conducted via Zoom on 30 August 2022, from 4:00 – 5:00 PM (SGT) / 12:00 – 1:00 PM (Abu Dhabi). Sign up for this talk [here](#).

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

### Iran Continues Diplomatic Talks with Saudi Arabia

On Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry indicated that talks with Saudi Arabia over resuming ties are progressing positively, while the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have restored diplomatic ties with Tehran. Eyes are focused on the bigger prize of a diplomatic rapprochement between Tehran and its long-time nemesis, Riyadh. Ties between Iran and both the UAE and Saudi Arabia were cut in 2016 following the execution of Saudi Shi'ite cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

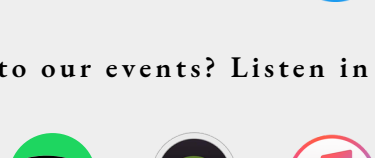


Photo: Joe Klamar, Ozan Kose / AFP

### Middle East May be Too Hot to Live in By the End of the Century

The Middle East might be deemed unliveable by the end of 2100 as experts claim that the region's high heat and humidity levels make it increasingly difficult for the human body to cool down through sweating. The terrain is highly susceptible to rising global temperatures, thereby putting human life at risk. The Persian Gulf is one of the few places in the world that has ever recorded a wet bulb temperature that exceeds the threshold of human survivability of 35 degrees Celsius. While the oil-rich Arab states have equipped themselves against the heat with energy-intensive air conditioning, the lesser privileged countries in the sphere face a looming danger. This is a critical issue that remains to be resolved in the Middle East.

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