



MIDDLE EAST WEEKLY

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Middle East in a Week

Regarding international relations and world politics, the Middle East may be the most controversial region in the current times. On the one hand it sits on most of the world's oil reserves, while on the other hand, it inhibits the followers of the most controversial religion in the world, Islam. These matters combined have created a region filled with drastic events. Every day, there are new wars erupting in the region and every day, there are new ways through which the west and the far east try to increase their influence in the region. This region inhibits 411 million people out of which 28 % are under the age of 25 years old. This newsletter tries to give weekly updates on the important issues in the Middle East and combining them with some analysis, hopes to have a role in changing the region's situation to the better.

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ONCE AGAIN AT THE DRAWING BOARD¹

With Donald Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2017 and Joe Biden's tip toing since he assumed office, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of action or as the news calls it, Iran's nuclear deal, has lost all its purpose and meaning. With the rate it goes now, Iran and the other signatories need to restart the negotiations from the scratch; especially, considering the fact that Iran has scaled back from its commitments in the JCPOA. On the other hand, Iran and the US both seem reluctant to take the first step towards a common ground. What is worse, is Iran's government's officials who are against an agreement. They are dead set on preventing any sort of agreement to be achieved with the so called "imperialistic king of evils". As a result, there seems to be two trends going on inside Iran with respect to the JCPOA. As things go for the time being, Iran and the US might need to restart everything and get back to the drawing board.



ANOTHER LIFE TAKEN BY ISRAEL²

Just recently, a new report has shed some light on a murder committed by Israeli forces last year. Ahmed Erekat was shot at the Container checkpoint in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank in June 2020 and left to bleed to death for more than an hour after Israeli soldiers stopped a Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance from treating him. In a report published on Tuesday, Forensic Architecture said that the 27-year-old posed no threat to the Israeli soldiers, or to any property, and noted that he was not given any first aid treatment following the shooting, even when he showed signs of life. Erekat, who was the nephew of then-Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Secretary-General Saeb Erekat, was on his way to pick his mother and sisters up, who were at a beauty salon getting ready for his sister's wedding that evening, when he was killed. His own wedding was due to take place two weeks later. Israeli security forces said Ahmed had attempted to ram his vehicle into a soldier at the checkpoint before they opened fire. Israeli police spokesperson Micky Rosenfeld said the man "drove his vehicle quickly towards the direction of a female border police officer who was injured lightly".



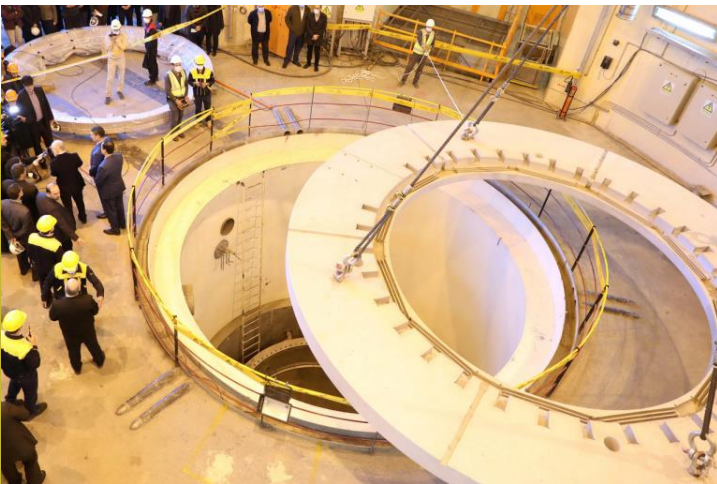
BIDEN AND KING SALMAN ON KHASHOGGI³

A US intelligence report will be released shortly which might point some accusations towards King's son. President Joe Biden is expected to call Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud on Wednesday, ahead of the scheduled release of a US intelligence report detailing the disappearance and murder of prominent journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Citing a source, the news website Axios reported late on Tuesday that the "imminent release of the explosive report" could entangle one of the king's sons without mentioning any names. The unclassified report from the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) reportedly implies that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also known as MBS, was involved in Khashoggi's murder and the dismemberment of his body. US media outlets later reported that the CIA had concluded MBS was involved. MBS has vehemently denied the accusations but has accepted responsibility as the kingdom's de facto leader.



A CAT STOCK IN A CORNER⁵

Few days ago, an Iranian Parliament member gave a whiff of the possibility of developing nuclear warheads. That is of course, if the US keeps insisting on the heavy sanctions it has imposed on Iran. Later on, Iran's supreme leader claimed that Iran could reach 60 percent enrichment soon. "We are determined to gain nuclear capabilities proportionate to the country's needs and for this reason, the limit for Iran's enrichment won't be 20 percent," Khamenei was quoted as saying in a speech on Monday to members of the Assembly of Experts. "Iran will act to whatever level is necessary. For instance, for nuclear advancement, we might even increase it to 60 percent." Khamenei, however, emphasised that this does not mean Iran is after nuclear weapons, saying the West and Israel know this as well but want to use the excuse to "extort" Iran. "If the Islamic republic had made the decision to achieve nuclear weapons, [Israel] and those bigger than that couldn't stop it," he said. The nuclear deal capped Iran's uranium enrichment purity at 3.67 percent.



OPPOSITION TO A DEAL FROM BOTH SIDES⁴

There is a fundamentalist faction inside Iran whose members are hard set against a deal with the United States. They are willing to go as far as accusing Iran's president to be a traitor. Hardline Iranian lawmakers say an agreement reached recently between the government and the United Nations' nuclear watchdog is "illegal" and the president must be punished for it. In a public vote on Monday, an overwhelming majority of lawmakers voted to send a report by the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission on the agreement reached with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the judiciary for review. As per the law, the government of President Hassan Rouhani must stop the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol, which gives broad authorities to IAEA inspectors, from Tuesday. However, detractors have said the agreement reached after IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi visited Tehran violates the December law, in that Iran would unilaterally record the monitoring data the nuclear watchdog's inspectors would normally be able to access under the Additional Protocol, but would not share the data.



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