



Delhi Policy Group

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume I, Issue 5 | December 23, 2019

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

www.delhipolicygroup.org



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

Volume 1, Issue 5

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group is among India's oldest independent think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. Over the past decades, the Delhi Policy Group has established itself in both domestic and international circles, particularly in the area of national security.

In keeping with India's increasing global profile as a leading power and the accompanying dynamism of India's foreign and security policy, the Delhi Policy Group has expanded its focus areas to include India's broader regional and global role; India's initiatives to strengthen its strategic periphery; India's political, security and connectivity challenges and policies across the Indo-Pacific; and the strategic partnerships that advance India's rise. To support these goals, the DPG undertakes research, publishes policy reports and organises conferences on strategic and geo-political, geo-economic, and defence and security issues.

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

DPG West Asia Review contains major developments in West Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open source media. To subscribe please [click here](#).

Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

© 2019 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.
www.delhipolicygroup.org

Contents

Bahrain.....	1
Egypt	2
Iraq	3
Iran.....	5
Israel.....	8
Jordan.....	11
Kuwait.....	12
Lebanon.....	13
Oman	14
Qatar	15
Saudi Arabia.....	16
Syria.....	18
Turkey.....	19
UAE	20
Yemen.....	21

Bahrain

[Bahrain's King Hamad confers kingdom's highest civil award on PM Imran Khan](#)

December 16, 2019, Dawn News

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan was awarded Bahrain's highest civil award by King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, during his trip to the Gulf country.

Egypt

[Egypt to begin gas imports from Israel by mid-Jan 2020](#)

December 22, 2019, Reuters

Egypt will begin importing natural gas from Israel by mid-January 2020, Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz told Israel Radio.

[Key ministries remain unchanged in Egypt cabinet shake-up](#)

December 22, 2019, The National

Egypt reshuffled its cabinet on Sunday, keeping the prime minister and key members of his government unchanged but naming or shifting around 10 ministers and appointing 11 new deputy ministers.

[Egypt concerned over Turkey's push in Libya - Arab Weekly](#)

December 18, 2019, Ahval

Deals between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj over military cooperation and maritime demarcation are ringing alarm bells over regional tensions for Tunisia and Egypt, the Arab Weekly said.

[Egypt's top Islamic institution calls on India to reconsider citizenship new regulations](#)

December 19, 2019, Xinhua Net

Egypt's Al-Azhar, the most prestigious Islamic learning institution in the Sunni Muslim world, voiced on Thursday concerns about excluding Muslims from the citizenship regulations in the Indian law.

[Egypt: Giant solar park in the desert jump starts renewables push](#)

December 17, 2019, Middle East Monitor

Near the southern Egyptian city of Aswan, a swathe of photovoltaic solar panels spread over an area of desert so large it is clearly visible from space. They are part of the Benban plant, one of the world's largest solar parks following the completion last month of the second phase of the estimated \$2.1 billion project.

Iraq

[Thousands rally in Iraq against Iran's political influence](#)

December 22, 2019, Times of Israel

Thousands took to the streets in Iraq's capital and across the south Sunday to protest against Iran's kingmaking influence as the latest deadline for choosing a new prime minister loomed.

[Isis in Iraq: Militants 'getting stronger again'](#)

December 23, 2019, BBC News

There are growing indications that the Islamic State (IS) group is re-organising in Iraq, two years after losing the last of its territory in the country. Kurdish and Western intelligence officials have told the BBC that the IS presence in Iraq is a sophisticated insurgency, and IS attacks are increasing.

[U.S. State Department plans to reduce staffing levels in Iraq](#)

December 18, 2019, CNN International

The State Department plans to dramatically downsize the number of American personnel in Iraq, according to a memo sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

[Iraq's government linked to murder as protest leaders assassinated](#)

December 17, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

Leading Iraqi political parties, many closely linked to Iran, will select a new Prime Minister in the coming days. The selection comes amid a report by Human Rights Watch that accuses Iraq's government of being complicit in the killings of protesters since early November.

[Iraq must 'take action' after attacks on US interests](#)

December 17, 2019, Al Jazeera

The United States has called on Iraq to "take action" to protect American interests in the country after a flurry of attacks blamed on Iran-backed groups.

[Political deadlock delays choice of new PM to steer Iraq out of crisis](#)

December 19, 2019, Reuters

Iraqi lawmakers said on Thursday that deadlock in parliament was holding up the selection of an interim prime minister, meaning leaders would miss a deadline to name a replacement for Adel Abdul Mahdi and prolong nationwide unrest.

[Iraq protests: Increase in number of disappearances](#)

December 20, 2019, Al Jazeera

Human rights organisations warn of an increase in protest-related enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in Iraq.

[China oil refiners risk Iraq's wrath](#)

December 19, 2019, The Daily Star

China's independent refiners are buying oil from Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region as they scour the globe for cheaper crude to cope with margins near record lows. Kurdish oil is typically traded under the radar as buyers fear incurring the wrath of Iraq's state-owned SOMO, which markets grades of a similar quality, said six traders and refiners who buy and sell Middle Eastern crude.

Iran

[Iran urges fight against US 'economic terrorism' at KL Summit](#)

December 19, 2019, Malay Mail

The president of sanctions-hit Iran called today for Muslim countries to cooperate in fighting US "economic terrorism" at the opening of a summit aimed at tackling the Islamic world's woes.

[In rare move, U.S. and Iranian envoys talk after U.N. meeting on nuclear deal](#)

December 20, 2019, Reuters

The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations made a rare compassionate public gesture toward her Iranian counterpart in the Security Council chamber on Thursday, expressing condolences over the death of an Iranian toddler.

[Iran's President Rouhani warns his nuclear experts are testing new advanced centrifuges](#)

December 19, 2019, Daily Mail

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has warned his nuclear experts are testing advanced centrifuges and claims the economy is rebounding despite crippling US sanctions.

[Iran's Rouhani to visit Japan in hope of easing nuke impasse](#)

December 20, 2019, Arab News

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is visiting Tokyo to meet with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday, in hopes of easing a nuclear impasse between Tehran and Washington and reduce tensions in the Middle East.

[EU countries say Iran nuclear deal fundamental to regional, international peace](#)

December 20, 2019, Xinhua Net

Six UN Security Council members from the European Union (EU) on Thursday said the Iran nuclear agreement is fundamental to regional and international peace and security and called for its fulfillment.

[US to UNSC: We won't sit idly by while Iran destabilizes region](#)

December 20, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

The United States won't allow Iran to ignite the Middle East, the country's Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft told the Security Council on

Thursday as she pointed to the latest evidence that Tehran was arming regional proxies.

[Iran and US both undermining nuclear deal says UN political affairs chief](#)

December 19, 2019, UN News

Both Iran and the United States have been putting strain on the groundbreaking 2015 deal to monitor Iran's nuclear programme, which remains a "cornerstone of international peace and security", said the UN's political affairs chief

[US hits Iran with new sanctions, visa restrictions](#)

December 20, 2019, Anadolu Agency

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced new sanctions and visa restrictions on Iran Thursday in what he billed as an attempt to defend human rights in the country.

[India gets relief from US sanctions on Chabahar port in Iran](#)

December 19, 2019, Deccan Herald

The US has provided a rare exemption to India from sanctions on the Chabahar port in Iran as it recognises that the strategic project is a lifeline for war-torn Afghanistan to get humanitarian supplies from India, according to a senior Trump administration official.

[Head of Iran's Quds Force in Yemen Who's Behind Saudi Oil Attack 'Identified'](#)

December 18, 2019, Haaretz

Western intelligence sources cited by the French newsletter Intelligence Online say Gen. Reza Shahi has 400 fighters behind him. He's just one card in the hands of the Tehran regime, as a CIA veteran tells Haaretz.

[US indicts Indonesian for breaking Iran sanctions](#)

December 17, 2019, France 24

The US Justice Department charged an Indonesian Tuesday with violating sanctions on Iran in supplying millions of dollars worth of new and refurbished aircraft parts to Iran's blacklisted Mahan Air.

[U.S. Seeks to Squeeze Shipping, Metals in Iran Sanctions Bid](#)

December 18, 2019, Bloomberg News

The Trump administration plans to strengthen enforcement of Iran sanctions now that it's driven oil exports down to unprecedented lows, with a plan to

increase pressure on global shippers, Chinese state-owned enterprises and exporters of raw materials used in metal production.

[Israeli defence minister working to step up campaign against Iran in Syria](#)

December 17, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

Defense Minister Naftali Bennett is working to intensify Israel's steps against Iranian forces in Syria, with the aim of persuading the Islamic Republic to withdraw its forces from the war-torn country in the near future.

[Iranian parliament approves creation of special economic zone at Jask port](#)

December 18, 2019, Xinhua Net

The Iranian parliament on Tuesday approved the establishment of a special economic zone (SEZ) in the southern port of Jask, located to the east of the Gulf.

[UK Navy Chief Says Iran Remains Threat to Marine Navigation in Gulf](#)

December 17, 2019, Asharq Al-Awsat

Iran's threat to British shipping in the Gulf "hasn't gone away", said head of the Royal Navy Admiral Tony Radakin. He described the Iran Revolutionary Guards' capture of the British-flagged tanker the Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz in July as "aggressive" and "outrageous".

Israel

[Israel airstrikes target Iran-linked military base in Syria](#)

December 23, 2019, Fox News

Israel conducted an airstrike into Syria on Sunday night as air defenses in the country opened fire on missiles that had entered, state media reported. Residents in Damascus said explosions could be heard near the capital; there were no immediate reports on casualties.

[Netanyahu applauds UAE Foreign Minister's tweet supporting Gulf-Israel pact](#)

December 22, 2019, AMN Al-Masdar

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed his contentment over United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan's retweet of a journalist's analysis about "an Arab-Israeli alliance taking shape in the Middle East."

[Hague tribunal being weaponized against Israel'](#)

December 22, 2019, Arutz Sheva

PM Benjamin Netanyahu slams 'absurd' decision by ICC chief prosecutor to open 'war crimes investigation' against Israel.

[Boris Johnson: UK will curb 'nauseating frequency' of Israel boycotts](#)

December 19, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

The new conservative government in the UK will stop local authorities from supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Thursday, presenting his plans for the coming years.

[In blow to environmentalists, Israel clears way for offshore gas](#)

December 20, 2019, Al Jazeera

In a major blow to Israeli environmentalists and climate activists, Israel's energy ministry gave its final approval for the start of production at the giant Leviathan offshore gas field.

[UN vote on Palestinian independence: NGOs tell Canada to choose Israel](#)

December 18, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

Several nonprofits have urged Canada to stand with Israel at the United Nations on Wednesday when the General Assembly votes on a resolution in favor of Palestinian self-determination.

[US denies report of 3-way deal between Israel, PA, Hamas in peace plan](#)

December 18, 2019, Times of Israel

The White House on Tuesday denied reports from a Lebanese television channel that its supposed peace plan will include a three-way deal between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, the Islamist terror group that rules the Gaza Strip.

[Anti-Israel stalwarts blame Zionists and Jews for Corbyn's defeat in UK election](#)

December 18, 2019, Times of Israel

More anti-Israel stalwarts across Europe are coming forward to blame the Jewish state and Zionism for the defeat of Britain's Labour Party in last week's elections.

[Hamas plans attacks against Israel from Turkey - report](#)

December 18, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

Hamas operatives are being allowed to plan attacks against Israel from Turkey, according to an eye-opening report in The Telegraph. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warmly greeted Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Istanbul on Saturday, but the relationship between the two is deeper and closer than with Turkey's surrounding nations.

[Israeli military law stifles Palestinian rights, watchdog says](#)

December 17, 2019, The Telegraph

Palestinians in the West Bank are still being prosecuted under military orders that were designed to keep the peace in the early days of an occupation and that have stifled civil rights in the territory for more than 50 years, a watchdog group says.

[Israel ready to discuss building gas pipeline with Turkey - report](#)

December 18, 2019, TRT World

Israeli officials are open to talks with Ankara on its proposal to build a gas pipeline from Israel through Turkey to Europe if the Turks are serious, a correspondent for the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation (KAN) said on Monday.

[Israel: Gideon Saar moves to unseat party rival Netanyahu](#)

December 16, 2019, The Guardian

Veteran Israeli politician Gideon Saar has launched his bid to unseat prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu as head of the ruling Likud party.

Jordan

[Jordan, Greece discuss bilateral ties, regional developments](#)

December 20, 2019, Xinhua Net

Jordan and Greece discussed on Thursday the means to enhance bilateral relations and the latest regional developments. In a meeting in Amman between Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias, they discussed efforts to expand the economic, investment and tourism cooperation while calling for increased efforts to enhance trade exchange.

[EU approves \\$557m soft loan to Jordan](#)

December 18, 2019, The Financial Express

Jordan has said that the European Parliament approved with a vast majority to grant Jordan a soft loan of 500 million euros (557 million US dollars) with a low-interest rate.

[Jordan, Japan discuss cooperation, anti-terror war](#)

December 23, 2019, Xinhua Net

Jordan and Japan on Sunday discussed ways to boost cooperation in economic and defense fields and efforts in the war against terrorism.

Kuwait

[Kuwait unveils new cabinet amid protests, royal family infighting](#)

December 22, 2019, The Arab Weekly

After allegations of corruption and infighting within the royal family, the Kuwaiti government unveiled a new cabinet to address issues that sparked anti-corruption protests and caused the resignation of government officials.

[Kuwait, Saudi Arabia set to sign neutral zone deal](#)

December 22, 2019, Kuwait Times

A high-ranking Saudi delegation headed by Saudi Oil Minister Prince Abdul Aziz bin Salman will arrive in Kuwait to sign an agreement on resuming oil production in the shared neutral zone jointly run by both countries.

[Fossil fuel to form 75 percent of global energy in 2035: Kuwait Minister of Oil](#)

December 22, 2019, The Peninsula Qatar

Fossil-based fuel will form 75 percent of global energy by 2035, according to expectations of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

[Exports to Kuwait helps revive cardamom prices](#)

December 16, 2019

The start of cardamom exports to Kuwait has helped revive prices at the auctions market on Monday in India.

Lebanon

[Hezbollah-backed professor Hassan Diab to form new Lebanese government](#)

December 19, 2019, An-Nahar

Lebanon's president Thursday asked Hassan Diab, an university professor and former education minister supported by the militant Hezbollah group to form a new government, breaking a weeks-long impasse amid nationwide mass protests against the country's political elite.

[Thousands protest against new Hezbollah-backed PM in Lebanon](#)

December 22, 2019, Times of Israel

Thousands of protesters demonstrated in central Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon on Sunday against the country's new prime minister, saying he should abandon the post because he is a member of the ruling elite.

Oman

[Oman readies baroque succession process as sultan's health worsens](#)

December 22, 2019, The Guardian

Elaborate discussions are under way in the Omani court about a potential successor to Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who has ruled the Arab nation for nearly 50 years but whose long-term illness has been worsening.

Qatar

[Qatar reaffirms its support for refugees](#)

December 22, 2019, Gulf Times

At the high-level Global Refugee Forum (GRF), which took place in Geneva, on December 17 and 18, Qatar reiterated its support for refugees, the communities that host them and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), it was announced Sunday.

[Qatar announces 2020 budget, its biggest in five years](#)

December 17, 2019, Al Jazeera

Qatar said on Monday that it plans to spend 1.9 percent more in 2020 than in 2019, outlining a 210.5 billion Qatari riyal (\$58bn) budget to complete infrastructure projects including facilities for the 2022 football World Cup.

[Qatar foreign minister says early talks with Saudi Arabia have broken stalemate](#)

December 16, 2019, Reuters

Qatar's foreign minister said recent talks had broken a protracted stalemate with Saudi Arabia and that Doha would study demands by its Gulf rivals but not turn its back on ally Turkey.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia sentences 5 people to death over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi](#)

December 23, 2019, Russia Today

A Saudi court has handed death sentences to five suspects charged in connection to the gruesome murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Three others have received lengthy prison terms for their roles in the killing.

[Saudi Arabia denies asking Pakistan to skip Malaysia summit](#)

December 21, 2019, Arab News

The Saudi Embassy in Pakistan on Saturday denied a claim that the Kingdom had exerted pressure on Islamabad to dissuade it from participating in the Kuala Lumpur Summit.

[Three development projects to boost Saudi Arabia's holy city Makkah](#)

December 22, 2019, Arab News

The civic infrastructure of Makkah is developing at a rapid pace and with the completion of three development projects the city will get a fresh look as slum areas will be eliminated.

[KL Summit shaken by Imran's absence, Saudi ire](#)

December 19, 2019, Asia Times

The Kuala Lumpur Summit being hosted by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur this week was originally conceived as a landmark event in the politics of the Muslim world. It still is, albeit on shakier ground after being abandoned by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan at the last minute.

[Attacks on Saudi Aramco facilities came from the north, not Yemen, US says](#)

December 19, 2019, Middle East Eye

Attacks on two Saudi oil facilities earlier this year came from the north and were carried out by drones similar to ones developed by Iran, according to a report published by the US.

[Saudi Arabia Jumps 72 Global Positions in Trading Across Borders Ranking, World Bank Reports](#)

December 20, 2019, Business Wire India

Saudi Arabia has been ranked as the world's top ease of doing business improver by the World Bank Group's Doing Business 2020 report. The report indicates Saudi Arabia to have jumped 72 global positions in "Trading Across Borders", an indicator which compares the time and cost of exporting and importing goods.

[Saudi Aramco falls for the first time since its record-breaking IPO, putting a halt to its 4-day run](#)

December 17, 2019, Business Insider

Saudi Aramco fell for the first time since its record-shattering initial public offering, closing roughly 0.7% lower on Tuesday after rising for four days.

Syria

[Syria in 'serious dialogue' with China about joining Belt and Road initiative, says Assad](#)

December 16, 2019, The Telegraph

Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president, revealed he is in talks with China to join its Belt and Road Initiative, as he looks for funding to rebuild Syria and Beijing looks to extend its influence in the region.

[Pompeo rebukes China and Russia for vetoing UN aid to Syria](#)

December 21, 2019, CNN International

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo harshly criticized a veto by Russia and China of a United Nations security council resolution that would allow humanitarian aid to reach Syrian rebels, calling the action "shameful."

[More than 25,000 flee Idlib as Syrian and Russian bombardment intensifies](#)

December 22, 2019, The Telegraph

Over 25,000 civilians fled northwest Syria's Idlib province over the weekend as they came under increasingly heavy bombardment from Syrian and Russian forces trying to reclaim the country's last opposition bastion.

[Syria war: Air strikes and shelling kill 24 civilians in Idlib](#)

December 18, 2019, BBC News

Twenty-four civilians were killed by air strikes and artillery fire in the opposition-held Syrian province of Idlib on Tuesday, first responders say.

Turkey

[Turkey-Iran-Qatar-Malaysia alliance to seek own gold trade standard](#)

December 21, 2019, The Jerusalem Post

The new Turkey-Iran-Qatar-Malaysia economic alliance could also involve a barter system to benefit Hamas because currently economic support for Gaza must go through Israel.

[Erdogan: Turkey will increase military support to GNA if needed](#)

December 22, 2019, Al Jazeera

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that Turkey will increase its military support to the internationally recognised government of Libya if necessary, a day after the Turkish parliament ratified a security and military cooperation deal signed between Ankara and Tripoli last month.

[Europe 'will feel' new refugee wave, warns Turkey's Erdogan](#)

December 23, 2019, DW News

The Turkish president has described a new humanitarian crisis as thousands of Syrians flee renewed bombing in Idlib. But he warned that Turkey "will not carry such a migrant burdens on its own."

[Libyan government activates cooperation accord with Turkey](#)

December 20, 2019, The Guardian

The UN-recognised Libyan government has agreed to activate a military cooperation agreement with Turkey, bringing closer the possible dispatch of Turkish advisory troops to help defend the capital, Tripoli, from an attack by forces supported by the United Arab Emirates and Russia.

[Turkey, Iran, Qatar gather for major Islamic forum in Malaysia](#)

December 19, 2019, Ahval

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Thursday gathered at Kuala Lumpur Summit organised by Malaysia.

UAE

[China-UAE week kicks off in Beijing](#)

December 17, 2019, China.org.in

A major China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) cultural exchange event kicked off in Beijing on Monday to build closer ties between youth from both countries.

[UAE, China to enhance economic cooperation in various key sectors](#)

December 19, 2019, Gulf Today

The Ajman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) received an economic delegation from Yueyang city, Hunan Province – People's Republic of China, with the aim of enhancing the economic cooperation and exploring the investment opportunities available to both parties in various fields.

[Calling app ToTok used as 'spying tool' by UAE: Report](#)

December 23, 2019, Al Jazeera

A chat and voice calling app is being used as a "spying tool" by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a New York Times (NYT) investigation has revealed.

Yemen

[US adds Yemen's Houthis to list of groups violating religious freedoms](#)

December 20, 2019, Middle East Eye

The United States has designated Yemen's Houthi movement as an "Entity of Particular Concern" for violations against religious freedom, the State Department said in a news release.

[Iran and Houthis sign first military cooperation agreement](#)

December 23, 2019, AMN Al-Masdar

The Ansarallah Movement (var. Houthis) and Iran have signed their first ever military cooperation agreement, Yemen's Al-Masirah TV reported.



Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi - 110003
India

www.delhipolicygroup.org