



Delhi Policy Group

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume II, Issue 8 | February 24, 2020

Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

Volume 2, Issue 8

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.

© 2020 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.....	4
Israel.....	6
Jordan.....	8
Kuwait.....	9
Lebanon.....	10
Oman	11
Qatar	12
Saudi Arabia.....	13
Syria.....	15
Turkey.....	16
UAE	17
Yemen.....	18

Bahrain

[Bahrain Seen Vulnerable To Downgrades If The Coronavirus Outbreak Drags On: S&P Global](#)

February 19, 2020, CNBC

Countries such as Oman and Bahrain are vulnerable to a potential rating downgrade if the coronavirus outbreak lasts longer than expected, according to the chair of sovereign ratings at a credit rating firm.

Egypt

[Egyptian Court Acquits Mubarak's Sons Of Illicit Share Trading](#)

February 23, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The two sons of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak were acquitted on Saturday of illicit share trading during the sale of a bank four years before the 2011 uprising that ended their father's 30-year autocratic rule.

[Egypt Builds Separation Wall On Border With Gaza](#)

February 18, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Last month the Egyptian army began construction of a new separation wall on the border shared with the besieged Gaza Strip, allegedly to reinforce security in the Sinai Peninsula, Israeli media revealed earlier this week.

[Us: Egypt, Ethiopia Dispute Over Renaissance Dam Escalates](#)

February 20, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam could take "months" to resolve, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned yesterday.

[Egypt To Build New Military Base 'to Secure Suez Canal'](#)

February 18, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Egyptian cabinet yesterday said that a new military base would be built on the country's eastern border to secure the Suez Canal.

Iraq

[Iraq's PM Allawi Seeks Vote Of Confidence For New Cabinet](#)

February 21, 2020, Arab American News

Iraq's newly appointed Prime Minister Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi said on Wednesday that he has picked a cabinet of political independents and has called on the country's parliament to hold an extraordinary session next week to give it its vote of confidence.

[U.S. Military Raises Injury Toll In Iran Missile Attack In Iraq](#)

February 22, 2020, Radio Free Europe

The Pentagon has raised to 110 the number of U.S. service members who suffered traumatic brain injuries during an Iranian missile attack on an air base in Iraq last month.

[Iraq Extends Ban On Border Crossings By Iranians](#)

February 23, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Iraq has extended an entry ban for any non-Iraqis coming from Iran, the prime minister said, as authorities in Tehran announced 15 more cases of coronavirus and a death toll of eight.

[Iraq's Sadr Threatens 'million-man' March If Parliament Does Not Vote On New Cabinet](#)

February 22, 2020, Kurdistan 24

Senior Iraqi cleric and politician Muqtada al-Sadr on Saturday called for a "million-man demonstration" in the national capital if parliament did not hold a session to vote on the proposed cabinet of Prime Minister-Designate Muhammad Allawi.

[India Issues Fresh Travel Advisory Asking Citizens To Not Visit 5 Provinces In Iraq](#)

February 18, 2020, India Today

India on Tuesday issued a fresh travel advisory cautioning citizens against visiting large parts of Iraq in view of the deteriorating security situation.

[Iraq And The Us Withdrawal Conundrum](#)

February 19, 2020, Al Jazeera

Disagreement in Baghdad over the presence of US troops threatens to destabilise the country.

Iran

['Iranian Society Is Sick,' Says Son Of Former President](#)

February 23, 2020, The Guardian

Iranian society is physically and politically sick, the youngest son of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, one of the principal architects of the Iranian revolution, has said in a rare interview.

[Neighbours Close Borders With Iran As Coronavirus Concerns Rise](#)

February 24, 2020, Al Jazeera

Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Armenia closed their land borders with Iran on Sunday as officials in Tehran reported three new deaths and 15 new cases of Coronavirus in one day.

[Iran Elections: Record Low Turnout But Hardliners Set For Win](#)

February 23, 2020, BBC News

Iran has seen the lowest turnout in a parliamentary election since the 1979 revolution, with 42.6% of eligible voters casting their ballots. Officials had banned thousands of contenders, many of them reformers. Hardliners are set for big gains in the first vote since US sanctions resumed.

[Global Terror-Finance Watchdog FATF Set to Sanction Iran](#)

February 20, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

A global terror-finance watchdog agency is set to blacklist Iran, broadening a U.S. effort to isolate Tehran financially and potentially straining the already sanctions-battered Iranian economy.

[Iran's FM Says His Meeting With US Senator Spooked Trump](#)

February 19, 2020, Voice of America

Iran's foreign minister said Wednesday that he believes his recent meeting with a U.S. senator had spooked the Trump administration because it was an opportunity to talk directly to "the American nation." Mohammad Javad Zarif met last week with Sen. Chris Murphy on the sidelines of an international security conference in Germany.

[Iran Announces 3 New Cases Of Coronavirus After 2 Deaths](#)

February 20, 2020, The Washington Post

Iran said Thursday that three more people have been infected with the new virus that originated in central China, following an announcement the day before that two people had died of the illness caused by the virus in the Iranian city of Qom.

[After Suleimani: Iran's Scramble To Recover From General's Death](#)

February 18, 2020, The Guardian

Loss of revered Quds Force commander and his aides has derailed the country's momentum in the region.

Israel

[Benjamin Netanyahu's Corruption Trial Will Start Two Weeks After Israel's Elections](#)

February 18, 2020, CNN International

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's criminal trial is set to begin March 17, just two weeks after Israel's elections, the Justice Ministry announced Tuesday.

[Week To Election, Netanyahu's Likud Pulls Ahead Of Blue And White For First Time In Polls](#)

February 23, 2020, Times of Israel

For the first time in this election cycle, Likud overtook its centrist rival Blue and White in polls released on Sunday.

[A Secret Mossad Qatar Trip, Hamas Outreach To Egypt And Iran's Threat](#)

February 23, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

In Israel, the Mossad-Qatar-Hamas story was revealed by Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Liberman over the weekend, and was reported locally. The story goes that Mossad chief Yossi Cohen and IDF Southern Command Chief Maj. Gen. Herzi Halevi met with top Qatari officials.

[Israel Carries Out Air Raids In Syria And Gaza](#)

February 24, 2020, Al Jazeera

Two Islamic Jihad fighters have been killed in an Israeli air attack on Damascus, the armed group has said, as Israel confirmed the raid on the Syrian capital as well as in the besieged Gaza Strip.

[Israel's New Type Of War Means Iran Will Never Achieve Its Goals In Syria](#)

February 23, 2020, The Arab Weekly

In the eight years since Iran embarked on an embedding process to establish a permanent presence in Syria, Israel has struck Iranian targets hundreds of times but in recent months there has been a steep uptick in those attacks.

[Second Coronavirus Case In Israel Confirmed, As Panic Increases](#)

February 23, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

A second Israeli who returned to Israel on Friday from the Diamond Princess cruise ship has tested positive for the virus, according to Sheba Medical Center.

The individual is in isolation at the hospital. The medical center said that the individual did not contract the virus in Israel.

[New Joint Ventures Hint At 'burgeoning Relationship' Between Israel And India](#)

February 19, 2020, Defencenews.com

Israel and India are deepening defense industry ties as Israeli companies seek long-term partnerships through India's efforts to encourage products to be locally produced under joint ventures.

[Israel Banks 'Cannot Refuse' Crypto Companies: Attorney General](#)

February 21, 2020, Coin Geek

The attorney general of Israel has said that the country's banks cannot institute a blanket ban on serving cryptocurrency companies, in comments reported by Globes.

[Israel Is Eager To Annex West Bank Lands, But U.S. Says To Wait](#)

February 19, 2020, NPR

President Trump's Mideast peace plan was expected to help Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instantly fulfill a campaign promise to annex occupied land that Israelis and Palestinians have fought over for more than half a century.

[The Rise Of Trump's New Pro-israel And Anti-iran Intel Director - Analysis](#)

February 21, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

US President Donald Trump's Wednesday appointment of Richard Grenell, the American ambassador to Germany as acting director of national intelligence should not ambush foreign policy specialists. Grenell's meteoric rise within the US government was based on high-intensity diligence, tough diplomacy and a rapid –fire analytical assimilation of vast amounts of data to bring about brilliant policy-making changes.

[Defense Minister: Israel Seeing Signs Iran Is Rethinking Its Strategy In Syria](#)

February 19, 2020, Israel Hayom

Defense Minister Naftali Bennett said Tuesday that Israel detected signs that Iran is considering decreasing its presence in Syria, giving the Jewish state an opportunity to go from the defensive to the offensive.

Jordan

[Jordan And Lebanon Take Precautionary Measures Against Coronavirus](#)

February 23, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

The Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Lebanon said on Sunday they have taken precautionary measures to prevent the outbreak of the coronavirus in their territories.

[Jordan Ranked 13th Among Arab Countries For Expected Gdp Growth In 2020 – Report](#)

February 23, 2020, MENAFN

Jordan ranked 13th among 20 Arab economies in terms of expected GDP growth for the year 2020, according to the Prospects for Arab Economies Report, with a growth rate that is likely to reach 2.4 per cent.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Airlifts 900 Citizens From Virus-hit Iran](#)

February 23, 2020, Gulf News

Kuwait has launched an airlift to evacuate 900 citizens from Iran over an outbreak of the new coronavirus there, Kuwaiti media reported Sunday.

[Kuwait Opens Military Office In India In Bid To Up Security Co-operation](#)

February 20, 2020, Arab Times

The State of Kuwait has opened an office for military engagement in the Republic of India in an effort to realize the wish of Kuwaiti leadership to increase cooperation between the two friendly countries in the defense and security fields.

[Kuwait To Nationalise 'entire' Energy Sector By 2021](#)

February 18, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Kuwait has established "an urgent plan" to nationalise 100 per cent of all the technical, supervisory and executive jobs in the oil sector by January 2021, the country's state-run Supreme Petroleum Council announced yesterday.

[Kuwait Ports Suspend Travel And From Iran Amid Coronavirus Fears](#)

February 21, 2020, Reuters

Kuwait's ports authority suspended the movement of people to and from Iran until further notice because of concerns about the coronavirus outbreak in that country, state news agency KUNA said early on Friday.

Lebanon

[France 'ready To Support Lebanon Financially' Says Finance Minister](#)

February 24, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

France is ready to support Lebanon financially - bilaterally or multilaterally - its finance minister said on Sunday, warning against mixing economic recovery in the small Mediterranean state with US-led efforts to counter Iran in the region.

[Lebanon, IMF Discuss All Possible Options For Overcoming Crisis - Finance Minister](#)

February 21, 2020, Reuters

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team discussed on Friday all possible options with Lebanese officials seeking technical advice for the country's crippling financial crisis, a finance ministry statement said.

Oman

[Pompeo Reaffirms 'close Ties' With Oman In Meeting With New Sultan](#)

February 22, 2020, Times of Israel

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Oman's new leader Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in Muscat on Friday, Omani state media said, during the top American diplomat's final stop in a tour of African and Gulf states.

[AIIB Offers \\$60 Million for Oman's 500 MW Solar Project](#)

February 19, 2020, Mercom India

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a multilateral development bank, has offered a loan of \$60 million (~₹4.3 billion) for a 500 MW solar project in Oman. The independent power project is located at Ibri.

Qatar

[Qatari Leader Visits Jordan, Signaling a Warming of Ties](#)

February 23, 2020, The Media Line

A three-day visit to Jordan by Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani of Qatar, which began on Sunday, is being hyped by media outlets in both countries as the start of a new phase in diplomatic relations after Amman downgraded ties in 2017.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia Seeks To Contain Ankara's Regional, International Pursuits Through Diplomacy](#)

February 23, 2020, The Arab Weekly

Saudi Arabia and Turkey once had affable relations, particularly during what has been described as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's "moderate phase." However, when Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates supported popular protests and a military coup that resulted in the removal of a Muslim Brotherhood-controlled government in Egypt in 2013, Turkey was on the other side of the issue.

[Iran's Houthi Proxies Targeted G20 In Saudi Arabia](#)

February 23, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Even as Iranians were lining up to buy masks to help stop the coronavirus from spreading, the regime was urging the Houthis in Yemen to attack Saudi Arabia amid the G20 gathering.

[Saudi Arabia: G20 Ready to Adopt Policies to Limit Economic Impact of Coronavirus](#)

February 23, 2020, Voice of America

Finance officials from the Group of 20 major economies agreed on Sunday to continue monitoring the risk from the coronavirus outbreak and to adopt appropriate policies to limit the global economic impact, Saudi Arabia's finance minister said.

[OPEC "Emperor" Saudi Arabia Has Fallen For Russia's Tricks](#)

February 23, 2020, Bloomberg News

As the Covid-19 virus hit demand for oil, OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia wanted an urgent meeting among the cartel's members and their international partners in order to bring in deeper and longer output cuts. Russia didn't agree, and now the emergency gathering of the 23-nation coalition known as OPEC+ won't happen.

[Saudi Arabia's Double Game In South Asia](#)

February 22, 2020, TRT World

Saudi Arabia's prioritising of profit over principle has grown exponentially under Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman which is evident from some of its recent policies in South Asia.

[FATF: China, Saudi Arabia Set New Deadline For Pakistan](#)

February 20, 2020, One India

In a major development, China has joined India and the US to send a strong message to Pakistan to act on terror funding. Saudi Arabia too has joined the above mentioned countries and has told Pakistan to complete its commitments on action against terror funding and money laundering given by the Financial Action Task Force.

[Despite Saudi Ban, BAE Predicts 2020 Growth](#)

February 20, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Britain's BAE Systems forecast another year of growth in 2020, saying the company was well-placed to take advantage of increased defence spending that could help to offset any future impact from a German ban on arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

Syria

[Syria: Bomb Kills 16th Turkish Soldier This Month In Idlib](#)

February 23, 2020, Middle East Monitor

A Turkish soldier was killed in Syria's Idlib region in a bomb attack by Russian-backed government forces, the defence ministry said on Saturday, Turkey's 16th military death during a month in which talks between Ankara and Moscow have stalled.

[US Lost Track Of \\$715m In Weapons Sent To Anti-Daesh Allies In Syria](#)

February 20, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The US government has failed to account for nearly \$715.8 million in weapons and equipment funnelled to its Syrian allies involved in the multinational counter-offensive against Daesh, according to a report released on Tuesday by the Department of Defence.

[Turkey, Russia Discuss Joint Patrols In Syria](#)

February 20, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Turkey and Russia are discussing possible joint patrols as one way to reach a deal to halt fighting and stem an exodus of civilians in Syria's Idlib region, a Turkish official said today, a day after Ankara threatened military action to push back Syrian government forces.

[Russia Says 'no' To Syria Ceasefire, Top UN Diplomats Say](#)

February 20, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Russia opposed the UN Security Council's declaration for a ceasefire in north-west Syria, top UN diplomats said, after a tense closed-door meeting in New York.

Turkey

[Several Dead In Turkey After Earthquake Hits Iran Border Area](#)

February 23, 2020, Al Jazeera

At least nine people were killed and 37 others injured in Turkey's Van province following an earthquake early on Sunday, the country's health minister has said.

[Is There A Turkey-Pakistan Deal To Host Pakistani Jihadi Commanders In Turkey?](#)

February 21, 2020, MEMRI

Under President Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey is providing refuge to Pakistani jihadi terrorists, notably Ehsanullah Ehsan. On February 13, 2020, the Turkish president landed in Pakistan for a two-day visit during which he addressed Pakistani parliament and the two nations signed 13 bilateral agreements, including one for military training. Pakistani media stood in awe of Erdoğan. "He came, he saw and conquered," wrote an Urdu daily on its frontpage.

[Stern Message To Pak From FATF Members, Turkey Sole Exception](#)

February 20, 2020, Hindustan Times

One of the delegates at FATF said that while Pakistan was desperately trying to mislead its own public through wrong and selective media leaks, the fact is that the onus is on Islamabad to act on FATF parameters to avoid being blacklisted in the future.

UAE

[UAE Probes Pakistan Bank For Financing Terrorism, Money Laundering](#)

February 21, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The Central Bank of the UAE is investigating the largest bank in Pakistan to determine whether it has violated laws prohibiting money laundering and financing terrorism.

[UAE Banks Lay Off Hundreds, Close 49 Branches Due To Slow Economic Growth](#)

February 24, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The English-speaking Emirati Khaleej Times newspaper reported that in the third quarter of 2019, the merger of two local banks caused licensed commercial banks to drop to 59, including 21 national banks and 38 foreign banks.

Yemen

[Houthis Unveil Four New Air Defence Systems](#)

February 24, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The Houthis announced on Sunday in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, the unveiling of four new air defence systems.

[Tribal Forces In Eastern Yemen Clash With Saudis](#)

February 18, 2020, Al Jazeera

Saudi troops have clashed with tribal forces in eastern Yemen's al-Mahra province near the Omani border, a tribal source told Al Jazeera.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org