



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



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Delhi Policy Group

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

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## DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW Volume 2, Issue 22

### ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored to these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

### 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](mailto:sanket@dpg.org.in).

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 induced economic crisis continues to impact the region. There has been 5 per cent decline in the Bahrain economy, while 7.5 percent in Abu Dhabi. Bahrain's fiscal deficit is also increasing standing at 12 per cent of the GDP from 4.6 per cent in 2019. Simultaneously region faces major job loses largely impacting workers from Indian sub-continent. In Oman over 27,000 foreign workers lost their jobs this year, in addition the economic impact of COVID-19 is forcing job seekers in the UAE to take 15-20 per cent salary cut. Saudi Arabia in order to strengthen its investment capacity in the present exceptional circumstances has transferred \$40 billion from its reserves to sovereign fund as economic stimulus.

In a major development that could impact regional security, the United States on May 27, 2020 terminated sanctions waivers that allowed countries to cooperate with Iran on civil nuclear projects under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In addition the US (Department of State) approved a possible \$1.425 billion sale of Patriot air and missile defence system components to upgrade Kuwaiti Air Defence. The Trump administration is also considering selling new weapons to Saudi Arabia which includes precision guided bombs.

The Iranian leaders have strongly criticised racism in the United States in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd. On May 31, 2020 Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei tweeted out his support to black Americans through #BlackLivesMatter.

The Cyber conflict between Israel and Iran has escalated dramatically in the past month. The head of Israel's National Cyber Directorate Yigal Unna on May 28, 2020 warned about a cyber-winter in the aftermath of an alleged Iranian attack on Israel's critical water infrastructure. The Iranian government has also banned the use of Israeli (Zionist) technology such as computer hardware and software. In another development Iraq's Military Spokesman Yahya Rasoul has stressed that Daesh (ISIS) has been vanquished and the terror organization no longer poses threat to Iraq.

Finally, Russia is planning to further strengthen its presence in Syria, through increase in its military facilities. Presently Russia operates an air base and a naval port in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Links to major developments in West Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open source media, can be found below.

## Bahrain

### [S&P: Economy to Shrink 5% in Bahrain, 7.5% in Abu Dhabi](#)

May 31, 2020, Asharq Al-Awsat

Abu Dhabi's economy will contract 7.5 percent this year, S&P Global Ratings said, while Bahrain's economy is expected to shrink by 5 percent in the current year of low oil prices. Bahrain's fiscal deficit too is widening to 12 percent of GDP this year from 4.6 percent in 2019, for the same reason of low oil prices.

## Egypt

### [Egypt Says 19 Fighters Killed in Sinai; 5 Casualties among Troops](#)

May 31, 2020, Al Jazeera

The Egyptian military says it has killed at least 19 fighters during security operations in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, which also resulted in five casualties among troops.

## Iraq

### [Iraq Has only 190,000 Tonnes of Rice Left for Food Programme - Ministry](#)

May 31, 2020, Reuters

Iraq has only 190,000 tonnes of rice available in its coffers for its food rationing programme, the trade ministry said in a statement. The country needs around 1-1.25 million tonnes of rice a year to support the programme.

### [Iraq's Military Spokesman: 'Daesh is No Longer a Threat'](#)

May 28, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Brigadier General Yahya Rasoul, military spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, stressed that Daesh, which has already been vanquished, no longer poses a threat to Iraq.

### [Iraq Turns to Neighbours to Ease Economic Strains](#)

May 24, 2020, The Wall Street Journal

Under pressure of low oil prices, Iraq is seeking billions of dollars in debt relief from Kuwait and moving to bolster ties with Saudi Arabia, as the coronavirus pandemic compels Baghdad to court allies that could help it stave off an economic crisis.

## Iran

### [Iranian Leaders Criticize U.S. 'Racism' After George Floyd Death](#)

May 31, 2020, Newsweek

Iran Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted out their support for #BlackLivesMatter and their opposition to racism in a series of tweets criticizing the United States after the death of George Floyd.

### [Iran's Mosques to Resume Daily Prayers as Lockdown Eases](#)

May 30, 2020, Al Jazeera

Government employees went back to work in Iran on Saturday (May 30) and President Hassan Rouhani said mosques would resume daily prayers across the country, even though some areas are seeing high levels of coronavirus infections.

### [UK, France, Germany 'regret' Latest US Move on Iran](#)

May 31, 2020, Arab News

Britain, France and Germany on Saturday (May 30) strongly condemned a US decision to end sanctions waivers for companies from nations that remain in a nuclear accord with Iran.

### [112 Missile Boats Delivered to IRGC Navy](#)

May 28, 2020, Tasnim News Agency

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy took delivery of 112 missile boats in a ceremony in the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas on Thursday (May 28) morning.

### [Iran's Maritime Power 'Unknown' to Others: IRGC Chief](#)

May 28, 2020, Tasnim News Agency

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Major General Hossein Salami warned enemies against any military adventurism targeting Iran, stressing that a major part of the Islamic Republic's maritime power is "unknown" to others.

### [US Ends Waivers for Iran's Civil Nuclear Programs in Latest Maximum Pressure Campaign Move](#)

May 27, 2020, CNN International

The United States announced the end of waivers that allowed countries to cooperate with Iran on civil nuclear projects under the 2015 nuclear deal. Secretary



of State Mike Pompeo announced Wednesday (May 27) that the waivers will end following a 60-day wind-down period that is meant to allow businesses to cease operations.

## Israel

### [Israeli Police Kill Unarmed Palestinian in East Jerusalem](#)

May 30, 2020, Al Jazeera

Israeli police have shot and killed an unarmed Palestinian near the Old City in East Jerusalem.

### [Cyber Winter is coming,' Top Israeli Official Warns after Iranian Attack on Water System](#)

May 28, 2020, The Algemeiner

The head of Israel's National Cyber Directorate Yigal Unna said Thursday (May 28) that following a recent Iranian cyber-attack on the Jewish state's water system, it was clear that "the cyber winter is coming and coming faster than even I suspected."

### [Fearing Coronavirus Spike, Some Arab Gulf States Turn to a Supposed Enemy: Israel](#)

May 28, 2020, Los Angeles Times

With fears of a second wave of coronavirus infections looming, some Arab Gulf nations have turned for help to an ostensible enemy and a country they don't officially recognize: Israel.

### [Netanyahu: The Palestinians Have to Concede, Not Israel](#)

May 28, 2020, Israel Hayom

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu believes that applying Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, and in the Jordan Valley, in particular, is a historical step. This is nothing new. However, he apparently doesn't view the initiative as the end of the diplomatic process.

### [India Evacuates 115 Citizens from Israel as Part of 'Vande Bharat Mission'](#)

May 27, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

One hundred and fifteen Indian nationals boarded an Air India flight from Ben-Gurion Airport on Tuesday (May 26), returning home to their native country after being stranded in Israel for more than two months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

[Iran Passes Law Banning Use of Israeli Technology](#)

May 27, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

A bill passed last week on “confronting the hostile acts of the Zionist regime against peace and security” prevents any cooperation with Israel. That means the purchase and use of Israeli technology such as computer hardware and software.

## Jordan

### [Jordan Warns US, UK of Dangers of West Bank Annexation Plan](#)

May 30, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The Jordanian Kingdom has warned the US and the UK on Friday (May 29) of the dangers of the Israeli plan to annex vast parts of the occupied West Bank.

## Kuwait

### [U.S. State Department Clears \\$1.4 Billion Sale of Patriot Air and Missile System To Kuwait](#)

May 29, 2020, Reuters

The U.S. State Department has approved a possible \$1.425 billion sale of Patriot air and missile defense system components and upgrades to Kuwait, the Pentagon said on Thursday (May 28) after notifying Congress of the certification.

## Lebanon

### [1,600 Schools in Lebanon Face Closure in Economic Meltdown](#)

May 30, 2020, Arab News

The future of thousands of Lebanese students is at stake as private educational institutions assess their ability to continue operations in the next academic year, due to the economic crunch facing Lebanon.

## Oman

### [Tens of Thousands of Foreign Workers Lose their Jobs in Oman](#)

May 26, 2020, The National

Over 27,000 foreign workers, mostly from the Indian subcontinent, lost their jobs in Oman this year, official figures on Tuesday (May 26) show. The National Centre for Statistical Information did not state the reason for the job losses but recorded a dip from 1.67 million foreign workers in February this year to 1.66 million in March and 1.65 million in April.

## Qatar

### [Qatar Denies GCC Exit Rumours](#)

May 29, 2020, The Business Times

Qatar denied on Thursday (May 28) that it plans to quit the Gulf Cooperation Council as it prepares to mark three years of isolation led by the regional bloc's heavyweight Saudi Arabia.



## Saudi Arabia

### [Saudi Arabia Moved \\$40bn in Reserves to Sovereign Fund](#)

May 30, 2020, Al Jazeera

Saudi Arabia transferred 150 billion riyals (\$40 billion) from its central bank to its sovereign wealth fund as it went on an investment spree seeking to take advantage of recent market turmoil.

### [Saudi Arabia Reopens Mosques after 2 Month Coronavirus Lockdown](#)

May 31, 2020, Arab News

Across Saudi Arabia 90,000 mosques have reopened for the first time in more than two months.

### [Pentagon confirms its 'long-term' Commitment with Saudi Arabia](#)

May 28, 2020, Arab News

The United States remains committed to long-term defence contracts with Saudi Arabia, Pentagon spokesman Sean Robertson told Arab News sister newspaper Asharq al-Awsat in a statement.

### [Trump Administration Considering New Weapons Sale to Saudi Arabia](#)

May 27, 2020, CNN International

Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Bob Menendez said he discovered that the administration is pursuing a previously undisclosed arms sale to Saudi Arabia, which includes "thousands more precision-guided bombs to the President's 'friend,' Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman."

## Syria

### [Russia Aims to Boost Military Facilities in Syria](#)

May 30, 2020, Deutsche Welle

President Vladimir Putin has called for talks with the Syrian government over expanding Russian military facilities in the country. Moscow currently operates an air base and naval port in Syria.

## Turkey

### [Egypt Announces International Anti-Turkey Alliance](#)

May 31, 2020, Al-Monitor

Egypt announced an international alliance that includes Greece, Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates and France to confront Turkish provocative moves in Libya and the Mediterranean.

### [Turkey Discusses Situation in Libya with US](#)

May 23, 2020, Libyan Express

Turkish Presidential Spokesman İbrahim Kalin had a telephone conversation with the US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien. The two officials discussed strengthening bilateral ties, contributing to the fight against coronavirus pandemic, and unprecedented developments in Syria and Libya, the Turkish government said in a statement.

## UAE

### [#UAE To Maharashtra: Don't Ignore us,' Plead Stranded Indians Seeking Repatriation Flights](#)

May 31, 2020, Gulf News

Several stranded Indians from the state of Maharashtra, who have been desperately seeking repatriation flights from the UAE, have intensified their campaign on social media.

### [Covid-19 Impact: Get Ready for a 15-20% Cut in Salary offers in UAE](#)

May 29, 2020, Gulf Today

There aren't that many job vacancies right now – but be prepared for a 15-20 per cent cut in salary expectations even for those positions that are still open. Businesses in the UAE are definitely not in a generous mood when it comes to hiring, with salary cuts now part of the new normal.

## Yemen

### [UN Urges \\$2.4 Billion in Aid for War-torn Yemen](#)

May 29, 2020, ABC News

The UN humanitarian chief is urgently appealing for \$2.4 billion to help millions in war-torn Yemen cope with the conflict and COVID-19, saying programs are already being cut and the situation is “alarming.”



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