



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



Volume II, Issue 24 | June 15, 2020

Delhi Policy Group

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

www.delhipolicygroup.org



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW Volume 2, Issue 24

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international 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 security policy and 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 within 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.

© 2020 by the Delhi Policy Group

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 24

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Bahrain.....	1
Egypt.....	2
Iraq.....	3
Iran.....	4
Israel.....	5
Jordan.....	6
Kuwait.....	7
Lebanon.....	8
Oman.....	9
Qatar.....	10
Saudi Arabia.....	11
Syria.....	12
Turkey.....	13
UAE.....	14
Yemen.....	15

Abstract

The cruise missiles attack on Saudi Aramco oilfields in 2019 had major geopolitical ramifications for West Asia. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in a report to the Security Council informed that missiles and drones used in this attack were of 'Iranian origin'. Tehran rejected these claims, alleging that the UN report had been drawn up under the U.S. and Saudi influence.

In another development, the U.S. and Iraq reinitiated their strategic dialogue after a decade. In the dialogue the U.S. confirmed its commitment to reduce troops in Iraq in the coming months. The U.S. is also likely to support the struggling Iraqi economy.

China-Iran relations have strengthened significantly during the on-going COVID-19 crisis. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi slammed U.S. for threatening to re-impose an arms embargo on Iran.

On the economic front, Bahrain MP's favour extension to the stimulus package provided to stabilize the economy. Meanwhile the UAE central bank expects the economy to contract by 3.6 percent this year. The continuing economic impact of COVID-19 on account of falling oil prices is also visible on the economies of Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Kuwait declared it will no longer employ expats in the state owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation for the year 2020-21; while Oman is seeking financial aid from the Gulf neighbours to manage the deteriorating economic situation. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia's oil exports plunged by about 21.9 percent in the first quarter of this year.

On June 12, 2020 under Operation Samudra Setu, INS Shardul brought back 233 Indians stranded in Iran. Till date the Indian Navy has brought back a total of 3,107 stranded Indians from Iran, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The UAE's ambassador to the United States has warned Israel against annexing parts of the West Bank. He stated that such a move will hamper Israel's growing relations with the Arab world. Meanwhile in Syria and Lebanon, protests have erupted on account of currency free fall and deteriorating economic conditions. As a sign of mounting internal crisis Syrian President Bashar al-Assad sacked Prime Minister Imad Khamis.

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

Bahrain

[Covid-19: Bahrain MPs Favour Economic Stimulus Package Extension](#)

June 10, 2020, Gulf News

A majority of Bahrain's lawmakers have voiced backing for a proposal to extend a stimulus package launched to mitigate the economic impact of the new coronavirus for three more months, according to media reports.

Egypt

[US Prefers UN Mediation in Libya over Cairo Declaration](#)

June 13, 2020, Middle East Monitor

The US administration is urging a more active Egyptian international role in Libya, in light of recent events on the ground, and the subsequent international movement, to revitalise the political track in the country.

Iraq

[Turkey Intelligence Chief Pays Secret Visit to Iraq](#)

June 13, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Head of Turkish Intelligence Services Hakan Fidan secretly visited Iraq on Thursday (June 11) where he met with Iraqi political and government officials.

[US Vows to Reduce Iraq Troop Presence in First Strategic Talks in over a Decade](#)

June 12, 2020, France 24

The United States said Thursday (June 11) it would reduce troops in Iraq in the coming months as friction between the two countries eased under a new US-friendly premier in Baghdad. The United States also promised support to prop up the struggling Iraqi economy as the two nations held their first strategic dialogue in more than a decade.

Iran

[Iran Rejects UN Report that Arms of 'Iranian Origin' Used in Saudi Attacks](#)

June 13, 2020, CGTN

Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the official IRNA news agency that "Iran denies allegations by the UN Secretariat that appear to have been made under political pressure from the U.S. and Saudi regimes."

[Iran Prepared to Retaliate if US Stopped Venezuela-bound Tankers](#)

June 13, 2020, Arab News

An Iranian news agency close to the elite Revolutionary Guards said on Saturday (June 13) Iran's naval forces were preparing to target US commercial vessels in the Gulf last month in case US forces interfered with Venezuela-bound Iranian oil tankers.

[Indian Navy Ship Brings Back 233 Stranded Indians From Iran](#)

June 12, 2020, The Indian Express

As many as 233 people stranded in Iran reached Porbandar onboard INS Shardul on Thursday (June 11). The naval ship had set sail from Iran two days ago. All of them have been quarantined for seven days at various locations in Porbandar.

[Arms Seized by US, Missiles used to Attack Saudi Arabia are of 'Iranian Origin': UN](#)

June 12, 2020, Khaleej Times

Cruise missiles used in several attacks on oil facilities and an international airport in Saudi Arabia last year were of "Iranian origin," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council in a report.

[Wang Yi Opposes U.S. Move to Reimpose Arms Embargo on Iran in a Letter to UN](#)

June 11, 2020, CGTN

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi has recently slammed U.S. threats to reimpose an arms embargo on Iran, saying it violates the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.

[Iran Says It Will Execute Man Convicted of Spying on Qassem Soleimani for CIA](#)

June 09, 2020, Reuters

An Iranian who spied for U.S. and Israeli intelligence on slain Revolutionary Guards commander Qassem Soleimani has been sentenced to death, Iran said on Tuesday (June 09), adding the case was not linked to Soleimani's killing earlier this year.

Israel

[Israel's Annexation of the West Bank would 'upend' Improving Ties with Arabs: UAE Envoy](#)

June 12, 2020, Al Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates' ambassador to the US has warned Israel against annexing parts of the occupied West Bank, saying the move would "upend" Israel's efforts to improve ties with Arab countries.

[Pro-Haftar official: 'We Will Never be Enemies of Tel Aviv'](#)

June 12, 2020, Middle East Monitor

An official close to Libyan General Khalifa Haftar has sought support from Israel in its conflict against the internationally-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli, according to a Hebrew newspaper.

[PM Modi Congratulates Netanyahu on Assuming Charge as Israel's Prime Minister](#)

June 10, 2020, Times of India

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on Wednesday (June 10) congratulated Benjamin Netanyahu on assuming Prime Ministers office in Israel for a record 5th time.

Jordan

[Jordan to Mull Cancelling Peace Deal if Israel Annexes West Bank – Report](#)

June 07, 2020, Times of Israel

Palestinian sources have reportedly warned that if Israel goes ahead with a plan to annex parts of the West Bank, Jordan will review its peace agreement with Israel and could decide to cancel it.

Kuwait

[Kuwait Will No Longer Employ Expats in Oil Sector](#)

June 11, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Kuwait's Minister of Oil and acting Minister of Electricity and Water, Dr. Khaled Al Fadil announced that the Gulf state will no longer hire expatriate workers in state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries for the year 2020-21.

Lebanon

[Nationwide Protests Grip Lebanon as Currency Tanks](#)

June 11, 2020, CNN International

Anti-government protesters took to the streets in multiple Lebanese urban centres on Thursday (June 11), setting up burning barricades and forcing road closures as the country's currency fell rapidly.

Oman

[Oman Weighs Seeking Financial Aid from Gulf Countries](#)

June 11, 2020, Gulf News

Oman has discussed the possibility of financial aid with other Gulf States to help it cope with the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic and low oil prices, according to two officials in the region and a U.S. government official familiar with the contacts.

[Monthly OPEC Decisions Not Good for the Market: Oman Oil Minister](#)

June 11, 2020, S&P Global

Deciding the OPEC+ oil production cuts on a monthly basis during the oil price and COVID-19 crises undermines market stability, Oman's oil minister Mohammed Al-Rumhy has told S&P Global Platts.

Qatar

[Expats Working for Qatar Government Face Pay Cuts and Lay-offs](#)

June 11, 2020, Al Jazeera

Qatar told government-funded entities to cut spending on non-Qatari staffers' wages as it tries to shore up its finances to cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Saudi Arabia

[Saudi Arabia Considers Cancelling Hajj for First Time in Modern History](#)

June 12, 2020, Financial Times

Saudi Arabia is considering cancelling the hajj pilgrimage season for the first time since the kingdom was founded in 1932, after cases of coronavirus in the country topped 100,000.

[Saudi Arabia's Oil Exports Plunge \\$11 Billion in First Quarter](#)

June 07, 2020, The Economic Times

The value of Saudi Arabia's oil exports plunged by 21.9% year on year in the first quarter to \$40 billion, corresponding to a decline of about \$11 billion.

Syria

[Syria's President Bashar al-Assad Sacks PM as Economic Hardship Grows](#)

June 11, 2020, Al Jazeera

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has dismissed Prime Minister Imad Khamis in a move that follows weeks of deepening economic woes and a rare outbreak of protests in government-held areas.

[Syria on the Brink of Economic Collapse amid Looming US Sanctions](#)

June 12, 2020, TRT World

After nearly a decade of war, the country is crumbling under the weight of years-long Western sanctions, corruption, a pandemic and an economic downslide made worse by the financial crisis in Lebanon, Syria's main link with the outside world.

Turkey

[Turkey Dismisses Egyptian Proposal for Libya Ceasefire](#)

June 10, 2020, Middle East Monitor

Turkey dismissed Egypt's proposal for a ceasefire in Libya, saying the plan aimed to save Khalifa Haftar after the collapse of his offensive to control the capital Tripoli.

[Turkey Slams 'Propaganda Machine' Twitter over Removal of Accounts](#)

June 12, 2020, Reuters

Turkey fiercely criticised Twitter for suspending more than 7,000 accounts that supported President Tayyip Erdogan, saying the company was smearing the government and trying to redesign Turkish politics.

[Top Russian officials' Visit to Turkey Postponed](#)

June 14, 2020, Anadolu Agency

A planned Sunday (June 14) visit to Turkey by Russia's foreign and defence ministers has been postponed, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said.

UAE

[UAE-India Non-oil Trade Surges by 15.3% to \\$41.4 Billion](#)

June 13, 2020, Khaleej Times

The non-oil bilateral trade between the UAE and India surged 15.3 per cent to \$41.4 billion (Dh151.6 billion) in 2019, firmly positioning the third Asian economy as the second largest trading partner of the Emirates, which recorded an overall 4.4 per cent jump in its global non-oil trade to Dh1.603 trillion last year.

[UAE Economy to Contract by 3.6% this Year, Central Bank Says](#)

June 10, 2020, Al Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) economy is likely to contract by 3.6% this year after economic activity slowed because of the coronavirus pandemic, the central bank said on Wednesday (June 10).

Yemen

[Funding Shortfall Affecting Critical Water, Sanitation Services in Yemen](#)

June 12, 2020, UN News

More than eight million people in the war-torn Yemen, nearly half of them children, directly depend on the agency for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), amid on-going conflict, cholera outbreaks and the COVID-19 pandemic.



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

www.delhipolicygroup.org